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Scenes of a Union: The Accession of Christopher I of Norway and the Agency of the Norwegian Elites (1439–1442)

Abstract: Research on the Kalmar Union usually regards the Kingdom of Norway as a passive junior partner that seemed almost willing to follow the lead of its larger neighbours. This applies not least to the acceptance of King Christoffer I in 1442, which is often seen as a logical consequence of prior developments in Denmark and Sweden. The present paper puts this widespread assumption to the test. On the basis of an actor- and process-oriented analysis of the written record, the study investigates Christopher's accession in three distinct phases: its preconditions, the decision-making process and the establishment of his rule. The results illustrate that Norwegian elites were by no means without power, but sought to expand and defend their own scope of action in order to serve their interests and those of the realm. The study thus indicates that the Kingdom of Norway must be considered more strongly as an autonomous actor within the negotiation processes within the Kalmar Union.

Introduction

In early 1434, a delegation from southern Germany departed for a journey to the Kingdom of Denmark. In keeping with noble customs, Prince Christopher of Palatinate-Neumarkt (Pfalz-Neumarkt), the only son of Count Palatine Johann of Palatinate-Neumarkt (fl. 1383–1443) and his wife, Katharina of Pomerania-Stolp (fl. 1384–1426),¹ was to reside at the court of his maternal uncle, the Nordic Union King Erik III.² The aim of his residence was presumably to be educated in courtly manners and thus pre-

1 On the marriage in 1407, see Olesen, Christopher (2016), 241–244. On Katharina, who was initially supposed to marry the Prince of Wales, Henry of Monmouth, the later King Henry V, see *Frauenknecht*, Katharina (2010); Bruun/Erslev, Catharina (1955). On Johann, son of the Roman King Ruprecht (1352–1410), see e. g., *Männer*, Pfalzgraf Johan (1983). Christopher had six elder siblings, who all died in their infancy. See *Frauenknecht*, Katharina (2010), 21 note 21.

2 As king of three kingdoms, Erik had three different ordination numbers. While he is usually referenced as Erik VII of Denmark (besides his quite popular designation as Erik of Pomerania, expressing his ancestry from the said principality and thus his foreignness), he was the third of his name in the kingdom of Norway and the 13th in Sweden. As this article will mainly focus on the Kingdom of Norway, the Norwegian designation will be used in the following.

pared for his pending reign in the Upper Palatinate (Oberpfalz), an area southeast of Nuremberg.³ On this occasion, Christopher came to witness the important negotiations in Vordingborg between Erik III, representatives from several cities of the Hanseatic League, and Count Adolf VIII of Holstein, as word came in of the uprising in the central Swedish province of Dalarna. To be able to devote himself fully to securing his contested Swedish crown, Erik III had to put his other conflicts in both Denmark and Norway (at least temporarily) on hold. In a matter of days, an agreement was reached on the disputed status of the Norwegian Earldom of Orkney,⁴ which was followed by a truce with both the Count of Holstein and the Hanseatic towns the next year.⁵ In those days, Erik allegedly even had his nephew promise that he would neither enter into an alliance with any of Denmark's enemies nor ever enter the kingdom without being explicitly asked to do so – an indication that he even considered his own nephew to be a potential threat.⁶

What may have been rather theoretical concerns at that time, soon became reality. After Erik III had been deposed in Denmark and escaped into exile on the Baltic island of Gotland,⁷ the Danish Council of the Realm (Rigsråd) appointed Christopher of Palatinate-Neumarkt as regent ad interim in October 1438, paving the way for a Nordic union kingdom in control of the House of Wittelsbach.⁸ As for Christopher,

3 Christopher's stay is attested only via Hanserecesse 2, 1. Ed. *von der Ropp*, no. 366, 250, 262 as well as in no. 371, 267. *Huitfeldt, Krønike VIII* (1977), 510 mentions him only implicitly as *hertug (...) aff Beyern*, who *vaare der tilstede*. *Larsson, Kalmarunionens Tid* (1997), 250 f. ties the trip to the journey of some Bridgetines from Maribo abbey to the Gnadenburg filial, which is recorded shortly afterwards. On the abbey during the reign of Christopher, see *Schmid, Christoph* (2017), 54–56; *Frauenknecht, Katharina* (2010), 22–31; *ead.*, *Spiritualität* (2003). For criticism of older statements according to which Christopher had been in Denmark more often or even raised there, see *Olesen, Rigsråd* (1980), 537 note 5 with further references.

4 *Grohse/Magnussen, Earldom of Orkney* (2023).

5 On the events in the summer of 1434 and the Swedish revolt in general, see e. g., *Rock, Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 159–174; *Larsson, Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson* (1984); *Olesen, Rigsråd* (1980), 19–24; *Carlsson, Senare Medeltiden* (1941), 240–293; *Daenell, Hansestädte* (1902), 366–374, 395; *Erslev, Erik af Pommern* (1901), 327–349. In detail about the Vordingborg assembly in 1434, see *Neustadt, Kommunikation* (2018), 367–386.

6 Yet, as this agreement has only been handed down indirectly via Erik III (Aktstykker. Ed. *Hude*, no. 6, 36: *doch hadde he uns gelauet unde secht myt hand unde mund, dat he nummer wolde wesen uppe unse ergheste unde nicht to komende tho Denmark ane myt unseme willen unde witschopp, unde wy boden na em senden*), its historical substance has been called into question, see e. g. *Zeilinger, Herrschaft* (2006), 23 note 8.

7 On his exile, cf. e. g. *Olesen, Eric of Pomerania* (2001); *id.*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 398–421.

8 The invitation to Christopher was issued at a meeting in Korsør, Zealand, cf. *Olesen, Rigsråd* (1980), 86–92. The letter is edited at *Aktstykker*. Ed. *Hude*, no. 2.

who was by no means the “well-fed and cosy little Southern German Junker”⁹ or even a tyrannical King, as which he has long been viewed in Scandinavia,¹⁰ but already a well renowned young man, this opportunity may have fallen into his lap rather unexpectedly, as his education may have been primarily directed towards taking over the dominion of his paternal principality in Neumarkt.¹¹ But next to his Nordic kinship, it was his foreignness that might have made him an ideal candidate, since he had no domestic power of his own in northern Europe.¹² On 9 April 1440, he was elected King of Denmark by the council of the realm,¹³ a move that was followed the same year by the Swedish¹⁴ and then, one and a half years later, by the Norwegian council. The whole process, which lasted almost three years, was concluded by Christopher’s ritual coronation in Ribe Cathedral on New Year’s Day 1443, during which he was assigned the peculiar ornamental designation of *archirex regni daniae*.¹⁵

But the new King was granted only a short regency, for Christopher died unexpectedly – possibly of blood poisoning – in Helsingborg in 1448, just 31 years of age.¹⁶

9 Bruun, Christoffer (1934), 240 (translated by S. M.).

10 This picture is largely based on the depiction in the Karlskrønika, cf. Lönnroth, Sverige (1968), 200–203. On his portrayal in Norway, see Imsen, Norge (1977), 384 f. In German chronicles, Christopher is treated rather positively, cf. Zeilinger, Herrschaft (2006), 34–36; Schmid, Christoph (2017), 67 f.

11 He inherited this after his father’s death on 13 March 1443. On his appearances at imperial and princely diets, see Schmid, Christoph (2017), 41 f.; Deutinger, Unionskönig (1995), 28 f.; Carlsson, Senare Medeltiden (1941), 460–467. Niitemaa, Kaiser (1960), 206 f. even suggests a friendship between Christopher and King Albrecht II (fl. 1397–1439). On the education of princely sons in the late Middle Ages, see generally Müsegades, Fürstliche Erziehung (2014), especially 71–118.

12 Rock, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 179. Whether this was done “on purpose” (Schmid, Christoph [2017], 45) must be left open for debate, as there was no further candidate with the corresponding pedigree besides Christopher.

13 Rock, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 184 f.; Christensen, Christoffer (1996), 272–277; Olesen, Rigsråd (1980), 128–133; Hoffmann, Königserhebung (1976), 158–160. The royal oath is edited at Den danske rigsløvgivning 1397–1513. Ed. Andersen, no. 9. A key factor was that count Adolf VIII of Holstein could be won over, who in return was guaranteed the Duchy of Schleswig as a hereditary fief, cf. Olesen, hertug Adolf VIII (1983), 14 f.; id., Rigsråd (1980), 133–139.

14 Cf. Rock, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 185–188; Larsson, Kalmarunionens tid (1997), 253–258; Olesen, Rigsråd (1980), 143 f., 158–162, 171 f., 196–203; Carlsson, Senare Medeltiden (1941), 467–500; Lönnroth, Sverige (1968), 177–185.

15 The term originates from a letter by the archbishop of Lund, Hans Laxmand (Den danske rigsløvgivning 1397–1513. Ed. Andersen, no. 15). For a recent discussion of the term, see Rock, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 191–195 with further references. This dignity, however, was never part of his official title, contrary to what Schmid, Christoph (2017), 43 implies, cf. e. g. Lönnroth, Sverige (1968), 217.

16 The cause of death is reported by the Karlskrønika (Svenska Medeltidens Rim-Krönikor. Ed. Klemming, 251 line 7328). For folkloric treatment, see Olesen, Rigsråd (1980), 578 note 2 as well as Deutinger, Unionskönig (1995), 39 on theories in German historiography. On the immediate consequences, see Olesen, Rigsråd (1980), 375 f.

Accordingly, his short regency is seen “in many ways as an intermediate episode”¹⁷ and thus ascribed only a minor role in the generally wide-ranging research on the so-called Kalmar Union.¹⁸ Especially his dual role as Union King in the north and prince of the small territory of Palatinate-Neumarkt has only become part of his biography in the more recent past.¹⁹ The lack of attention is no less true for Christopher’s brief regency in Norway, which is epitomized by his common designation in literature as Christopher III, a designation relating only to Denmark.²⁰ As a result, the transition process in Norway is often, if at all, discussed rather marginally, almost as a mere formality. This leads to a widespread perspective of Norway as a passive junior partner of the two neighbouring realms, with little attention being paid to its internal political processes and configurations;²¹ as a recent article in the *Medieval Magazine* put it: “the Norwegians followed suit”.²²

The present article puts this implicitly attributed predetermination of Christopher’s accession to power in Norway to the test. With reference to recent research emphasising that the “Norwegian society of this period” had “more political vitality than modern accounts often assume”,²³ the contribution investigates the scopes of action of the Norwegian Council of the Realm, its key figures and the negotiation processes. The guiding questions are: a) was the transition from Erik III to Christopher inevitable? b) was Christopher the obligatory successor? c) did the change of rulership pay off for both sides?

17 Bratberg, Christoffer (2000) (translated by S. M).

18 To this day, there is no monography on Christopher III who has so far been explored exclusively in terms of the general history of Scandinavia, lexicons, or individual articles, which are widely featured throughout this article. On the lack of consideration in Bavarian historiography, see most recently Schmid, Christoph (2017), 38 f.

19 Pivotal for this development was the edition of Christopher’s charters for recipients from the Upper Palatinate (Breve. Ed. Olesen) and the associated study (*id.*, *Forleningspolitik*). See more recently Schmid, Unionskönig (2018); *id.*, Christoph (2017); *Frauenknecht*, Katharina (2010), 31–34. The reconsideration of Christopher in his upper Bavarian home area epitomized in the erection of a memorial plate in 1988, cf. Schmid, Christoph (2017), 69. It was transferred to the local court building in 2016, cf. Pollok, Königsdenkmal (2016). Christopher’s relationships to the Roman emperors were, however, already examined by Niitemaa, Kaiser (1960), 206–208, 210–218.

20 Often used in the quite odd hybrid form “Christopher III of Pfalz-Neumarkt” or “of Bavaria”, see e. g. the title of the recent study of Schmid, Christoph (2017) or Jexlev, Christopher (1983). In Sweden and Norway, he was the first of his name.

21 In some cases, it appears to be only mentioned for the sake of completeness, cf. e. g. Zeilinger, Herrschaft (2006), 24; Jexlev, Christopher (1983); Enemark, Kalmarbrev (1979), 36; Kjersgaard, Borgerkrig (1977), 560. Etting, Fællesskab (1998), 98 f. doesn’t mention Norway at all.

22 Larrea, Downfall (2021).

23 Opsahl, Conflict (2008), 175.

Was the Transition from Erik to Christopher inevitable?

The question of whether a transition had to take place might seem trivial at first – how freely could Norway operate when it had been agreed on at the establishment of the union in Kalmar in 1397 that the three Nordic realms should henceforth have one and the same king?²⁴ The depositions that had already taken place in Denmark and Sweden had indeed set precedents that unquestionably expressed a clear expectation in the direction of Norway,²⁵ which was given further emphasis by several letters.²⁶ But such political pressure did not fall on fertile ground, which is why tougher measures such as the closure of the Øresund in 1440 were applied, which sought to prevent further communication between Norway and its exiled king on Gotland.²⁷ Yet, such measures were unable to change anything about Norway's adherence to King Erik III. Although the Norwegian Council of the Realm had outlined a self-confident political and aristocratic programme as early as 1437,²⁸ the councillors did not attend any of the Union meetings at which the issue of the unpopular monarch and a possible successor was to be discussed,²⁹ and instead declared its allegiance to the king almost unanimously as late as July 1440.³⁰

The circumstances of the Norwegian adherence cannot be clearly determined based on the few documents available. It certainly was a factor that Erik III was able

24 *Først at nw scule thisse thry riken havue thenne koning, som ær koning Eric, i hans lifdaghe, oc sidhen ewinnelicæ scule thisse thry riken en koning hafue oc ey flere ouer alle thry riken, suoa at riken aldre at scilias meer, om gudh wil* (Den danske rigsløvgivning 1397–1513. Ed. Andersen, no. 2).

25 On Erik's formal deposition in Sweden e. g. Rock, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 182–184; Larsson, *Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 234–249; Olesen, *Rigsråd* (1980), 123–128; Carlsson, *Senare Medeltiden* (1941), 436–459.

26 This is implied by a statement of the Norwegian Council of the Realm from 4 July 1439, NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 1 (= *Jahn, Historie* [1835], no. 17, 517 f.): *at wii hafue nw i Aar, swo oc før, fanget manghe breff oc ænkethe budh, bothe aff Danmark swo ok aff Swerike, met hvilke the hafue krafft oss till (...) at sætte oss till met them at wære amot ether Nadhe.*

27 Olesen, *Rigsråd* (1980), 147–157.

28 DN 2, no. 727. The settlement was a response to the suppression of the uprising led by Amund Sigurdsson Bolt, see the references further below in notes 54.

29 Christensen, Christoffer (1996), 269–272.

30 A letter of petition dated 4 July 1440 (NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 1 [= *Jahn, Historie* [1835], no. 17, 517 f.]) was issued by a total of 26 councillors and others and sealed by ten members of the council, including Archbishop Aslak Harniksson of Nidaros, the bishops of Hamar, Bergen and Drost Sigurd Jonsson. The associated letter of deposition (NGL 2.1, no. 97), which was presumably issued at the same time but post-dated to 7 August, even lists 41 persons as issuers, among them now also the participants of the delegation to Gotland (see below). Interestingly, Henrik Skakt, who was not yet named among the councillors in the first letter, appears as a councillor in the second, among whom the Swedish noble Johann Ummereise is now also found. See below for more on both.

to exert a strong influence on the composition of the Council of the Realm in Norway and was thus able to fill it with loyal followers.³¹ However, many scholars also point to the structural weakness of the Norwegian elites, who had only modest resources and were thus dependent on income from royal offices; as Grethe Authén Blom summarized, they did not exercise political power “against royal power, but in concert with it”.³² Yet this raises the key question of whether the Norwegian Council of the Realm really expected a significant change by deposing their monarch, for any successor would have been able to do little about these structural issues. Thus, the key motive may rather be seen in the hereditary tradition of Norwegian succession. Apart from the lack of an electoral handfast, from the violation of which one could have reasoned in favour of a deposition,³³ one should not underestimate the existence of a deeply rooted loyalty towards Margrete Valdemarsdatter, who had been formally installed as the new royal ancestress as recently as in the winter of 1388/89.³⁴ In any event, the councillors might have been aware that it was exactly this heredity foundation of succession that provided them with significant means of power³⁵ and thus were not inclined to shake the system established by their ancestors. It is therefore probably inappropriate to label the Norwegian persistence as “political naivety”,³⁶ as it is more likely to reflect a quite pragmatic assessment of Norway’s situation that also recognized opportunities to shift the balance of power in its own favour.

In view of the narrow source base available, it is difficult to determine the key figures in those years, but the existing evidence at least provides some clues. It may be assumed that the councillor Sigurd Jonsson was among the driving forces of the Norwegian policy.³⁷ Although he was directly involved in the negotiations only once,³⁸ his bi-

³¹ This was especially due to the high influence that both Margrete Valdemarsdatter and Erik III had on the appointment of new bishops, mostly out of the royal chapel clergy, who thus automatically took over the vacant seat of the predecessor in the Council of the Realm. Since the crown rarely appointed new secular councillors to replace deceased members, the share of power held by the clergy and thus the Crown grew, cf. e. g. Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 338–342; Haug, *Provincia Nidrosiensis* (2006), 287–296; Hamre, *Church* (2003), 671; Imsen, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 339; *Benedictow*, *Norge* (1971), 29 f.

³² Blom, *Warum* (1973), 74–76 (translated by S. M.), also *Helle*, *Norge* (1974), 31 f., 204 f. On the Norwegian nobility, see generally *Benedictow*, *Norge* (1971), on their dependency of royal duties 14–18, 25 f.

³³ Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 351. It was not until 1449 that Christian I (NGL 2.2, no. 3, though only preserved as a copy, cf. Imsen, *Arv* [1972], 66) and Karl I (NGL 2.2, no. 5) issued an electoral handfast.

³⁴ NGL 2.1, no. 2; Haug, *Margrete* (2000), 157; Imsen, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 306 f.; Imsen, *Arv* (1972), 30–33.

³⁵ Imsen, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 364, 377.

³⁶ Blom, *Warum* (1973), 77.

³⁷ Blom, *Warum* (1973), 76 f.

³⁸ He was as one of three guarantors of a truce between Karl Knutsson and Erik III (ST 3, no. 477) concluded 21 August 1439. Unlike his two companions, however, he did not subsequently join the Swedish fraction. On him in general *Opsahl*, *Sigurd Jonsson* (2004).

ography alone sets him apart from his contemporaries. Not only was he a great-grandson of King Håkon (V) Magnusson, also his marriage with Philippa, a daughter of Count Hans of Eberstein-Naugard, directly refers to the immediate circle of Erik III.³⁹ His loyalty towards the Norwegian king is demonstrated by the fact that he personally resided at the exiled court on Gotland until the late autumn of 1439. When the Council of the Realm took the reins in the face of a crumbling royal governance and demanded the reappointment of a Drost, they consequently appointed Sigurd Jonsson. He thus took over the highest secular office which entrusted him with deputising for the absent monarch in the kingdom.⁴⁰ He returned to Norway no later than December of the same year,⁴¹ where he appears several times in written documents, but always within the borders of the realm.

Next to Sigurd Jonsson, Kolbjørn Gerst may have played a particular important role, as he was the only envoy to participate in every delegation: to Gotland in September 1439⁴² and late summer 1440,⁴³ to Lödöse in Sweden in February 1441⁴⁴ and June 1442⁴⁵ as well

³⁹ *Imsen*, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 370.

⁴⁰ NGL 2.1, no. 95. In restoring this office, which had been vacant since 1386, Erik responded to a demand addressed to him in 1437 (DN 2, 727), cf. generally *Johnsen/Rosén*, *Drottsede* (1958). *Imsen*, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 375 attributes this to the Council of the Realm taking over control in Norway. *Larsson*, *Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 247 points towards the failed Norwegian siege of the Älvsborg at the estuary of the Göta älv. Sigurd Jonsson was preferred over two other candidates, the councillors Olav Håkonsson and Erlend Eindridesson (NGL 2.1, no. 95), although the latter was a son of Eindride Erlendsson, who played a pivotal role in the early years of Erik III's reign and was among the king's main defenders during the peasant uprisings of 1437, cf. *Bjørkvik*, *Eindride Erlendsson* (2000); *Benedictow*, *Norge* (1971), 29 f.

⁴¹ DN 9, no. 276.

⁴² NGL 2.1, no. 95. The embassy formed by Kolbjørn Gerst, Matthias Jakobsson (Rømer) as well as the two *Lagmaðr* Simon Bjørnsson (Oslo) and Niels Aslaksson (Oppland, around Hamar) transmitted a letter from the Council of the Realm to Erik III, which offered him the continuation of his regency and the confirmation of Bogislav IX of Pomerania-Stolp's right of inheritance (see below) in return for the expansion of the council's power, which led to the appointment of Sigurd Jonsson. Cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 124 f.; *Imsen*, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 369; *Taranger*, *Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 1, 315 f.

⁴³ NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 1 (= *Jahn*, *Historie* [1835], no. 17, 517 f.). The delegation led by Kolbjørn Gerst, the Bishop Jens Jakobsson of Oslo, the Provost of the Apostelkirke in Bergen, Sigurd Bjørnsson, and the Swedish councillor Johann Ummereise was supposed to solicit the king's support for Norway, but also carried the provisional letter of refusal (NGL 2.1, no. 97). It was intercepted in København and thus never reached its destination, cf. DN 5, no. 700; NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 2 (= *Jahn*, *Historie* [1835], no. 17, 519 f.).

⁴⁴ ST 3, no. 479. The third legation featuring Provost Sigurd Bjørnsson, Kolbjørn Gerst, Matthias Jakobsson (Rømer) and Henrik Skakt negotiated the deposition of Erik III with the Danish and Swedish Councils of the Realm after a Norwegian assembly in Båhus, where an alliance with Sweden was concluded. On the assembly in Lödöse, see e. g. *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 282–286; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 163–167; *Taranger*, *Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 1, 318 f.

⁴⁵ Numerous councillors were present at the homage in Lödöse, but only Archbishop Aslak Harnikts-son (Bolt) and Bishops Jens Jakobsson of Oslo, Auðun Eivindsson of Stavanger, Olav Brand of Bergen, Gottschalk of Hólar, Gunnar of Hamar and Hemming of Færøer are mentioned by name, cf. DN 4 885, XVI 141.

as Kalmar in late summer 1441.⁴⁶ It therefore comes with no surprise that he received a key office as captain of Båhus castle in southeast Norway prior to the Lödöse assembly of 1441.⁴⁷ Using the same indicator for other actors, the list of potential key figures can be extended to the councillor Matthias Jakobsson (Rømer) and the provost of the Apostelkirke in Bergen, Sigurd Bjørnsson, who also repeatedly took part in diplomatic missions.⁴⁸ In contrast, Johann Ummereise may have been unable to assume a substantial role due to his premature death.⁴⁹ This could have also been the case with Olav Marquardsen Buk, the captain of Akershus castle, who led the Norwegian advance on the Swedish Älvsborg in the summer of 1439 together with the aforementioned Johann Ummereise but may have lost his life during this operation.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that archbishop Aslak Harniktsson Bolt, who had been one of the driving forces behind the aristocratic programme of 1437, did hardly appear as leading figure in written sources.⁵¹

However, just as in Sweden and Denmark, it must not be assumed that the process of decision-making in Norway went on harmoniously, but rather that there was internal dissent.⁵² The general tendency towards dissent is implied by various contemporary events such as the determination on Christopher's succession in 1449,⁵³ or the various local uprisings, in which discontent with the rule of Erik III and his officials

46 Erlend Eindridesson, Sigurd Bjørnsson, Kolbjørn Gerst, Matthias Jakobsson, Hendrik Skakt, Simon Bjørnsson, Bengt Harniktsson, Erik Bjørnsson, as of ST 3, no. 479, 189. The announcement of the delegation can be found at DN 5, no. 707. The occasion was the renewed negotiation with Christopher about the accession in Norway, see further below. On the assembly of Kalmar in 1441 cf. *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 196–198; *Hamre*, Norsk Historie (1968), 116.

47 DN 2, no. 743, appointed by Sigurd Jonsson. However, this appointment is rarely put into context, cf. *Rock*, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 189; *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 164; *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 376; *Blom*, Warum (1973), 78 (not even mentioning his name); *Taranger*, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 1, 319. From the fact that the other three newly appointed captains of these years – Olav Nilsson (Bergen), Eindride Erlendsson (Tønsberg) and Sigurd Jonsson (Akershus) – belonged to the king's inner circle, it can be deduced that Kolbjørn Gerst was a confidant of Erik III as well, cf. *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 376.

48 See the references in notes 42–46.

49 NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 2 (= *Jahn*, Historie [1835], no. 17, 519 f.).

50 Svenska Medeltidens Rim-Krönikor. Ed. *Klemming*, 204, line 5954–5969. See the complaint of the Swedish council at DN 5, 698. Cf. *Daae*, Bidrag (1875), 33–35. Olav Marquardsen Buk descended from the Pomeranian nobility on his father's side and was a central figure in the suppression of the peasant uprising of 1438/39, see below. He is last attested in April 1439 (DN 2, no. 737).

51 *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 363.

52 *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 379.

53 Generally, *Enemark*, Kriseår (1981), especially 168–185. See also *Rock*, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 227; *Opsahl*, Conflict (2008); *Moseng* et al., Norsk Historie (2007), 353–358. *Hamre*, Norsk Historie (1968), 129–134, here 129 draws the dividing line not regionally, but between adherents of a strong central power and those of a council constitutionalism (Rigsrådskonstitutionalismen).

was also vented in Norway.⁵⁴ There is also some evidence concerning bishop Jens Jakobsson of Oslo, a native Dane who is considered to be one of the most loyal follower of Erik III.⁵⁵ Although he is listed among the issuers of the provisional letter of refusal of August 1440,⁵⁶ a later letter reports on his unwillingness to attend the assembly in Sarpsborg, where preparations were to be made for the deposition of Erik III.⁵⁷ Obviously, one can only speculate here, but perhaps this could be understood as an indication that the bishop was unwilling to go along with the changes of course. The same could have been the case with his colleague Auðun Eivindsson of Stavanger,⁵⁸ whose name is missing among the issuers of the aforementioned letter of deposition, as are those of the bishops of Skálholt, the Færoe islands and Orkney, and that of the Jarl of Orkney, William Sinclair.⁵⁹ We do not know the background of any of the cases, but for Auðun Eivindsson in particular, a letter from the Council of the Realm has survived, in which several councillors tried to convince him to attend the assembly in Lödöse in February 1441,⁶⁰ which could lead us to suspect a non-conformist position here as well.

But the Council of the Realm remained committed to Erik III, even though he himself did little to justify it.⁶¹ Despite having issued the provisional letter of deposition,⁶² they withdrew their support only hesitantly, even after Erik's position of power had become almost desperate due to the collapse of the coalition with Duke Philipp III of

54 Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 346–348; *Imsen*, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 359–366; *Blom*, *Warum* (1973), 73 f.; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 107–118; *Taranger*, *Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 1, 298–300, 305–309; *Storm*, *Amund Sigurdsson Bolt* (1890).

55 *Njåstad*, Jens Jakobsson (2002).

56 NGL 2.1, no. 97. It is possible, however, that the letter was post-dated, see *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 146 f.; *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 278. *Blom*, *Warum* (1973), 78 suspects that the composition of the letter may have targeted at increasing pressure on the king. Following her reasoning is *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 189.

57 NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 2, 191–193. Cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 163 f.

58 This is also emphasized in *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 116; *Taranger*, *Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 1, 319, but without elaborating on the possible reasons.

59 NGL 2.1, no. 97. The absence of bishop Søren of the Færoe islands could have to do with the fact that he was busy as vicar in Lund, cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 147.

60 DN 5, no. 700. The letter was issued by Sigurd Jonsson, Sigurd Bjørnsson, Kolbjørn Gerst and Henrik Skakt. Cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 163.

61 *Blom*, *Warum* (1973), 72 explains the inactivity of the Norwegian king by speculating that the idea of being king “exclusively for the Norwegians must have seemed an absurdity” to Erik and thus he also recognised the “infeasibility” of such a situation sooner than the “loyal Norwegian Council of the Realm” did (translated by S. M.). Following *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 292 f., it might rather be assumed that Norway played no role in Erik III's return strategy, which centred on the disposition of Gotland. On the centrality of the Gotland issue for Christopher's reign, see also *Lönnroth*, *Sverige* (21968) 203–216.

62 NGL 2.1, no. 97.

Burgundy and the loss of the key castles at the Øresund.⁶³ However, next to the letter of deposition,⁶⁴ there are also other signs of a gradual change of course, which in the spring of 1441 led to the rather apologetic resignation of allegiance.⁶⁵ This brief description of the developments thus indicates that Christopher's path to the Norwegian throne was by no means the logical conclusion of the Danish-Swedish precedent.

Claiming the Inheritance

This seemingly cleared the way for the Wittelsbacher to ascend the Norwegian throne, bringing the once envisioned realisation of a joint rule of the union within reach. But despite being formally accepted as new king on 1 June 1442, the process turned out to be quite ambivalent. Especially the example of neighbouring Sweden demonstrates that it was one thing to depose your old king, but another to decide on a new one. Especially regarding the repeatedly raised possibility of decoupling the union from the principle of a common monarch in those years,⁶⁶ one has to ask: did it have to be Christopher?

The situation in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway differed in the fact that the Norwegian succession to the throne was based far more, though not exclusively, on the

⁶³ Cf. in summary *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 128–143, 147–154; *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 274–276. The Dutch fleet anchored off Marstrand in Norway, cf. DN 5, no. 699. Philipp III of Burgundy was also count of Holland, Zeeland, Frisia and Hennegau since 1433. As such, he partook in the so-called Dutch-Hanseatic-War from 1436–1441, which made him a natural ally to Erik III, cf. e. g. *Christensen*, Union-skongerne (1895), 38–68; *Jørgensen*, Københavnertraktaterne 1441 (1966); *Fritze*, Seekriege (2007), 127–131.

⁶⁴ This can be seen for example in the fact that there was a deviation from the older promise to give the castles of the realm only to the heirs of Erik III (NGL 2.1, no. 95). Kolbjørn Gerst now stated that he would hold this castle *til miins nadhugha herra konung Eriks ok Noreghes rikes hand* (NGL 2.1, no. 98), which left out Bogislav IX or any other Pomeranian heir unnamed, cf. *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 164. Prior to 4 October 1440, the Norwegian Council of the Realm declared its allegiance to the Swedish Council of the Realm, as can be seen from the Swedish reply (DN 5, no. 698).

⁶⁵ On the language, see *Rock*, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 189; *Blom*, Warum (1973), 78 (“tränenfeucht”); *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 372; *id.*, Arv (1972), 41; *Taranger*, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 1, 319. Axel Pedersen Thott's letter of rejection of Erik III in February 1441 was written in a similar tone, cf. *Jahn*, Historie (1835), no. 18. See also *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 281.

⁶⁶ See already the Treaty of Kalmar of 1438 (ST 3, 476), also *Lönnroth*, Sverige (21968), 196 f. This is also found later, for example in the Swedish-Norwegian alliance of 1441, see below. It was ratified in the Treaty of Halmstad of May 13, 1450 (NGL 2.2, nos. 11, 13). This move towards decoupling the existence of the Union from the institution of a joint monarch might have inspired the so-called Kolding Union of 1466, which established a procedure for determining the succession of Christian I in Denmark, the Duchy of Schleswig and the County of Holstein. On the Treaty of Kolding, see *Auge*, 555 Jahre (2021), 231–235; *Zangel*, Kolding Union (2013).

principle of heritability.⁶⁷ This made Christopher quite an distinguished choice, as he not only counted monarchs from all three realms among his ancestors but was able to trace his pedigree directly back to the Norwegian ancestress Margaret Valdemarsdatter via his mother Katharina,⁶⁸ a sister to King Erik III. This promised a smooth succession to the Norwegian throne.

However, a look at earlier successions in Norway demonstrates that hereditary claims were often a tricky business, as they were rarely exclusive. In fact, the accession of Margrete Valdemarsdatter in 1388 and thus that of her adoptive son Erik III bypassed the previously established succession to the throne, which would have favoured the Swedish king Albrecht.⁶⁹ In 1343, Håkon (VI) Magnusson had ascended the throne in place of his elder brother, Erik Magnusson.⁷⁰ Only one accession after 1319, that of Olav (IV) Håkonsson in 1381, was executed according to the legal framework.⁷¹

In addition, there was still the risk of further claims brought forward by others. However, it is unknown whether there has been an internal contender similar to Håkon Jonsson, who forfeited his legal claims to the throne in 1388,⁷² or the Earl of Orkney, William Sinclair, who was mentioned as a possible candidate to succeed Christopher in rural parts of Norway⁷³ just as Duke Adolf I of Schleswig was in Denmark.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, with Sigurd Jonsson there was at least one candidate with the

67 Codified in 1302, cf. NGL 1.3, no. 14. See *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 15–20 and *Hervik*, Nordisk politikk (2012), 381–385, the latter calling it a “arvelig valkgongedømme” (381).

68 Like her brother, Katharina was born a daughter of duke Vartislav VII of Pomerania-Stolp and Maria of Mecklenburg, herself a daughter of duke Heinrich III of Mecklenburg and Ingeborg Valdemarsdatter. This made Christopher a great-grandson of Valdemar (IV) Christophersen of Denmark (*Atterdag*, r. 1340–1375). Moreover, Heinrich III of Mecklenburg was a son of Albrecht II of Mecklenburg and Eufemia Eriksdatter, who was a granddaughter of King Håkon (V) Magnussen of Norway (r. 1299–1319) and thus a sister of King Magnus (II) Eriksson of Sweden (r. 1319–1363, also Magnus VII of Norway [r. 1319–1355/74]). Eufemia's other grandfather had been the Swedish king Magnus Birgersson (*Ladulås*, r. 1275–1290). Cf. the simplified genealogy at *Moseng* et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 355.

69 On 16 February 1388, the Norwegian Council of the Realm formally liquidated any claims of King Albrecht of Sweden (NGL 2.1, no. 2). See *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 30 and *Haug*, Margrete (2000), 152, 159 f., although she recently (*ead.*, *Power Base* [2019], 20–24) has challenged the existence of any of Albrecht's legal claims.

70 Instead, Erik became king of Sweden in 1344, see e. g. *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 57–62; *Blom*, *Hyllingen* (1980); *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 21–26.

71 *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 64 f.

72 DN 3, no. 478. Since he was an illegitimate great-grandson of Håkon (V) Magnusson, it is questionable whether he could have filed serious claims at all, cf. *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 29 f.

73 He was suggested a candidate by the central Norwegian communities of Hedemark and Uppland, cf. ST 3, no. 489d. Cf. *Moseng* et al., *Norsk historie* (2007), 353 f. *Burkhardt*, *Zwischen Räten und Reichen* (2006), 49 confuses Sigurd Jonsson, who was also thrown in the mix, with said earl. On William Sinclair, see e. g. *Crawford*, *Northern Earldoms* (2013), 349–370.

74 *Olesen*, *Hertug Adolf VIII* (1983), 20–22; *id.*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 382 f.

appropriate biographical background available, who indeed enjoyed considerable support as a viable candidate to succeed Christopher.⁷⁵

The prehistory thus shows that succession, even based on inheritance, was rarely a God-given event, but had to be actively negotiated. Yet, this could also provide windows of opportunity, as Christopher himself found himself facing a competitor with a stronger legal claim. As the marriage of Erik III to the English princess Philippa, a sister of King Henry V of England, failed to produce any offspring,⁷⁶ the Pomeranian prince Bogislav IX became the focus of succession and was successively built up as a successor from 1416 onwards.⁷⁷ But in the mid-1430s, displeasure grew in both Denmark and Sweden, who considered Bogislav to have been installed by force, as the Danish Council of the Realm complained in July 1439.⁷⁸ These grievances were a welcomed opportunity for Christopher, who was apparently well acquainted with the conditions in the north.⁷⁹ They enabled him to link the Swedish and Danish displeasure with Erik III to his own biography, since Erik had technically excluded his mother from succession in order to materialize his ambitions towards a hegemony of the House of the Griffins in the Baltic Sea area.⁸⁰

But the Swedish and Danish resentment towards Erik III's policy did not resonate in Norway. There, it corresponded to the line of succession established in 1389, according to which the crown was to pass to Erik's paternal uncle in case there were neither son nor brother.⁸¹ Although this technically positioned his uncle Bogislav VIII of Pomerania-Stolp as the legitimate heir to the throne, both his already advanced age and the political circumstances – he was banned by the church – possibly did not

75 ST 3, no. 489g (*at wii h l st wildom hafwa her Sigwr dh Joenson til Norigis konung, vm thet kundheske*). Cf. Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 353 f.; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 128 f.

76 On Philippa, see *Flemberg*, *Filippa* (2014).

77 He was the son of Bogislav VIII of Pomerania-Stolp (fl. c.1364–1418) and Sophia of Holstein (fl. c.1375–1450), a daughter of count Heinrich II of Holstein-Rendsburg (fl. c.1317–c.1384) and thus also a cousin of duke Adolf I of Schleswig. See generally *Olesen*, *Aspekte* (2018), 69–73; *Werlich*, *Bogislav IX* (1991), 40 f.; *Christensen*, *Kalmarunionen* (1980), 184–186; *Erslev*, *Erik af Pommern* (1901), 113–115. It is unlikely that he already was Erik's choice in 1434, as *Bratberg*, *Christoffer* (2000), 207 suggested.

78 *Aktstykker*. Ed. *Hude*, no. 4 § 3: *he io wolde hertoch Bugslawe indrengen myt gewalt koning to werdende wedder des rykes recht unde vrygheit (...) unde wedder rad unde willen des rykes inwonre*. This is already evident in a previous letter of the council to Christopher, which started with a complaint about the succession, cf. *ibid.*, no. 2. See also the response by Erik III, cf. *ibid.*, no. 6. Cf. generally *Olesen*, *Aspekte* (2018), 73–79.

79 *Olesen*, *Christopher* (2016), 246.

80 DN 5, no. 669, speaking of the *odium iniustissimum in matrem nostram diue memorie*. Cf. also *Olesen*, *Rigsr d* (1980), 87 f.; *Carlsson*, *K nig Erich* (1938), 7 f. On Katharina's early involvement as subsidiary recipient of power, see especially *Christensen*, *Kalmarunionen* (1980), 182–184. On the hegemonial ambitions, see *Carlsson*, *K nig Erich* (1938); *Auge*, *Handlungsspielr ume* (2009), 88–94.

81 DN 18, no. 34. See also *Haug*, *Margrete* (2000), 231 f. Still, the Union Charter of 1397 stipulated that the succession should be determined by election of the councillors if the regent remained childless, cf. *Den danske rigsl vgivning 1397–1513*. Ed. *Andersen*, no. 2, 24 § 1.

make him a promising candidate.⁸² When Erik III appointed Sigurd Jonsson as the new Drost in September 1439, he accordingly had him swear an oath that he would never hand over the kingdom to anyone else than the designated heir to his throne, Bogislav IX.⁸³

Considering that it was not until June 1442 – and thus almost two years after the provisional letter of deposition had been issued – before Christopher was formally accepted as the new Norwegian king, it might be reasonable to challenge the generally assumed futility of Bogislav IX's claim to the Norwegian crown. Perhaps there was a faction within the council that was quite willing to accept the deposition of Erik III but preferred a continuation of the codified line of succession from 1389. Especially Christopher's then rather close relations with the Hanseatic cities might have provided reasons for concern to some.⁸⁴ There are no sources providing any information on this matter and it might very well be that all claims of the Pomeranians expired with the deposition of Erik III,⁸⁵ in analogy to those of the house of the Obotrites in 1389.⁸⁶ The fact that considerations on satisfying Bogislav IX's claims are principally conceivable is demonstrated by the discourse on Christopher's succession in 1448/49, when numerous voices – especially in north-western Norway – believed it to be preferable for the old King to return to the throne rather than having an unrelated Dane or German as king.⁸⁷ Bearing in mind that the succession of Bogislav IX had not been discussed controversially in Norway⁸⁸ and accordingly was not the subject of the letter of deposition,⁸⁹ it cannot be ruled out completely that there still was a (however tiny) window of opportunity for Bogislav IX to win the Norwegian crown – although this would hardly have met with approval in the neighbouring kingdoms and thus would have jeopardized the union.⁹⁰

At this point, it is worthwhile to briefly outline the process of decision-making in favour for Christopher. A closer look at the records reveals that he is not explicitly

⁸² Werlich, Bogislav IX. (1991), 40; Carlsson, König Erich (1938), 8. Regardless of this, his death in 1418 eliminated him as a potential heir to the throne. Cf. also Schmidt, Bogislav VIII. (1983).

⁸³ NGL 2.1, no. 95: *Wore thet oc swa, at wij dæthe oc aff ginge før æn for^{de} Sigwordh Jonsson wor drotzste, oc han thet æmbite hafðe, tha scal han holde oc gøre dette for^{ne} wor ffadherbrodheresson her-tug Bugelaff aff Pommern j alle made likerwiis, som han oss gøre wilde j wort leuende liff.* See Imsen, Arv (1972), 40 f.

⁸⁴ See e. g. Olesen, König Christopher (2016); Taranger, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 2, 10–49.

⁸⁵ Hamre, Norsk Historie (1968), 117, also Taranger, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 2, 3.

⁸⁶ See note 69.

⁸⁷ ST 3, no. 489, 234. At that time, Bogislav IX had already been dead for three years, which could explain why he was not mentioned explicitly. There was also discussion in Sweden regarding a possible return of Erik, cf. Rock, Herrscherwechsel (2016), 223–226; Olesen, Königswahl (1992), 223 f.; Ene-mark, Krisear (1981), 8–13; Lönnroth, Sverige (²1968), 252–261.

⁸⁸ Cf. Imsen, Treriksunionen (1977), 358, 364 f.; Blom, Warum (1973), 76; Imsen, Arv (1972); 38–41.

⁸⁹ NGL 2.1, no. 97 Tillæg 2 (= Jahn, Historie [1835], no. 17, 519 f.). The issue of succession was also not a matter of concern in the negotiations surrounding the revolt of 1437, see DN 2, no. 727.

⁹⁰ Christensen, Christoffer (1996), 296; Imsen, Treriksunionen (1977), 372.

mentioned as a legitimate candidate in any Norwegian source for a long time. For example, the above-mentioned letter to the Norwegian bishop Auðun Eivindsson from late autumn 1440 only refers to him as *hertogh Cristoffer*, even though he had already been paid homage to as Danish king.⁹¹ Although Christopher actively advocated for his legitimate claims and probably directly asserted them in letters of late summer 1440,⁹² it was not until a year after the deposition of Erik III that his regency was formally confirmed. This rather long period of time was also a consequence of the rejection of the delegation sent by Christopher at the beginning of 1441, which, as both the Swedish and Norwegian councils thought, failed to provide the necessary mandate.⁹³ Furthermore, it was certainly a sign that the Norwegian Council of the Realm did not want to hand over the reins completely and thus negotiated a deadline to formally settle the case of Erik III.⁹⁴ The postponed negotiations in Kalmar in late summer 1441 failed as well when Christopher did not show up in time.⁹⁵ However, the Norwegian and Swedish councillors used this gathering to confirm a mutual agreement from earlier that year. This document stipulated that the eternal alliance of the two realms should continue regardless of whether there was a common king;⁹⁶ a phrase that had not been employed in the draft from the beginning of the same year!⁹⁷

The decisive impulse may rather have been the Swedish homage to Christopher, since from then on there are numerous indications of a decision in favour of his claim. On the one hand, this can be taken from a letter written by the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, on the other hand, Christopher referred to himself as *Danmarcs, Swerighes, Norghes, Wendis och Gotes koning* in a charter dated 5 September 1441.⁹⁸ This may have been premature, but it fits well into the general picture. For instance, a letter from Vadstena dated February 1442 refers to a petition from the convent of the Munkeliv abbey in Bergen, to which Christopher allegedly declared that he would see to it as

⁹¹ DN 5, no. 700.

⁹² DN 5, no. 700, now lost. On the possible contents, see *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 152.

⁹³ DN 5, no. 707, see also the invitations at *ibid.*, nos. 697 f., 702.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 164–167. *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 282 f. suspected that Christopher had deliberately refrained from issuing a sufficient mandate in order to prevent a timely decision in Lödöse, as he wanted to shift the negotiations to København, where he might have expected a better outcome.

⁹⁵ *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 196–199.

⁹⁶ ST 3, no. 479, 189–191: *at Suerighe ok Norghie faa ok blifwa badhe widh en konung eller hwart thera sarlestes sin konung* (quote from 189). The treaty was issued on paper and was meant to be ratified by the respective councils. Although there is no evidence for such a charter, it's reasonable to assume that it was issued, cf. *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 292. See also the references in note 66.

⁹⁷ ST 3, no. 479, 187 f.

⁹⁸ *Diplomatarium*. Ed. *Barner*, no. 69. In Norway, he styled himself as king for the first time on 11 June 1442 (NGL 2.1, no. 102). The earliest document dated according to his assumption of power is also from the same day (DN 5, no. 713: *vars virdulegs herræ herræ Kristofær mæd gudz nad Noregs konungs*).

soon as he would reach an agreement with the Norwegian Council of the Realm.⁹⁹ The expectation of a pending homage is also reflected in a letter from some Hanseatic towns, which were usually quite familiar with the political developments in the north. On 22 May 1442 – about a week before Christopher’s accession – their representatives sent a complaint by the town of Stralsund, which addressed the violation of their privileges by *juwer gnaden vndersaten vnde jnwoenere to Anslo vnde Tunsberg* to the Danish and Swedish but not yet Norwegian king.¹⁰⁰ Last but not least a charter confirming Christophers homage points in the same direction, since it relates that the 36 envoys of the Norwegian counties reported that Christopher had asked them to come to Lödöse to pay homage. Although this request has not survived, we know of a reply from a congregation dated 9 April 1442.¹⁰¹ Thus a picture emerges in which the decision in favour of Christopher must have been made by late summer 1441 at the latest,¹⁰² although the intent was evident in early 1441.¹⁰³

The Establishment and Consolidation of Christopher’s Rule

Only about a month after receiving homage, Christopher was coronated as the new king of Norway on 2 July 1442.¹⁰⁴ Considering the patience that the claimant had to demonstrate, it is surprising that so little effort was made to symbolically manifest the rule of house Wittelsbach in Norway. While his accession to power in Sweden was marked by a series of symbolic acts¹⁰⁵ and his succession in Denmark celebrated with a prestigious coronation ceremony in Ribe on New Year’s Day 1443,¹⁰⁶ the process in Norway seems to have been rather short and simple. His short stay in Oslo, which

⁹⁹ DN 16, no. 137.

¹⁰⁰ DN 6, no. 487 f. (quote taken from 487). On the backgrounds, see *Taranger*, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 2, 12–14.

¹⁰¹ DN 5, no. 711. See DN 3, no. 771 on the request.

¹⁰² *Carlsson*, *Senare Medeltiden* (1941) 497. Interestingly, this coincides with a shift in Christopher’s relations towards the Hanse, cf. *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 289–291.

¹⁰³ *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 285. This is also implied by *Lönnroth*, *Sverige* (21968), 184, who supposed that Christopher was also to be acclaimed Norwegian king in Kalmar in 1441.

¹⁰⁴ The date is only transmitted via a short note in the *Codex Tunsbergensis* in an entry from 13 March 1362: *sambycte Christoffer konunger i Oslo i hans krøneng a Sti Swituni dag anno Domini m.c.d.xl secundo vnder hans incigle*, cf. NGL 2.1, no. 104, 207.

¹⁰⁵ See on homage, coronation and the following so-called. *Erikskatan*, the traditional journey through the provinces of the realm *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 185–188; *Larsson*, *Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 255–258; *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 291–295.

¹⁰⁶ The coronation was the first in Scandinavia to be chronicled, cf. *Den danske rigsgivning* 1397–1513. Ed. *Andersen*, no. 9. Cf. also *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 191 f.; *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 299–302; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 215–219; *Hoffmann*, *Königserhebung* (1976), 160 f.

would be his last in the kingdom,¹⁰⁷ appears almost rushed. It is thus only fitting that the coronation did not take place in the symbolic venue of Nidaros, far to the northwest, but in Oslo, in close proximity to the border.¹⁰⁸ Only the approval of 36 representatives sent from numerous (but by no means all) Norwegian provinces¹⁰⁹ to confirm Christopher's accession carried the whiff of a symbolic act, but even this did not take place in the realm itself, but in the Swedish town of Lödöse.¹¹⁰ Even more than the notoriously absent Erik III, Christopher may have been perceived as a foreign king by the Norwegians. In turn, Norway probably was a rather foreign realm to Christopher as well, despite his previous promises towards the Swedish Council of the Realm to treat every realm almost equally.¹¹¹

The establishment of his rule in Norway thus rested entirely on an agreement with the Council of the Realm, which the latter could use to shift the balance of power in its favour. This transformed the Council of the Realm from a rather consultative body of mediators into an "council empowered by the people".¹¹² But how was his

¹⁰⁷ Unlike in Sweden, where he stopped regularly. See e. g. Lönnroth, *Sverige* (21968), 217; Larsson, *Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 257.

¹⁰⁸ Besides Christopher, Christian II (1514) was the only Union King crowned in Oslo, while Christopher's successors Karl I (1449), Christian I (1450) and Hans (1483) were all crowned in Nidaros. Christian I was, however, crowned by the famed impostor bishop Marcellus of Skálholt, as archbishop Aslak Harniksson had died shortly before (*Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* [1968], 134, on Marcellus, see *Dybdahl*, Marcellus [2003]). Christopher's predecessor Erik III was crowned in Nidaros, but not in the cathedral, although he possibly received homage on the local thing square, cf. *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 394–396. Looking further back, both Håkon (V) Magnusson and Magnus (VII) Eriksson may have also been crowned in Oslo (*Storm*, *Kroningsstad* [1898], 398–406), which may have placed Christopher's choice of Oslo in a more recent tradition, contrary to what *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 298, suggested. Eldbjørg Haug's theory of Erik III's coronation in Oslo in 1392 (*Haug*, *Norske kroning* [1995]) is viewed rather critically, cf. *Rock*, *Herrscherwechsel* (2016), 130–135 with further references. The symbolic significance of Nidaros as a coronation site was also emphasised in 1449 in the context of the coronation of Karl I: *vpa then stadt, som war beskriwfen lagh uthwijhsa, som rättwijser konunger bôr at wâlies och cronas, som är i Troendhem* (ST 3, no. 489g). This was certainly aimed at Christian I, who had been named Norwegian king in Marstrand. *Deutinger*, *Unionskönig* (1995), 33 mistakenly moves the traditional coronation site to Bergen, where it had not been since the coronation of Erik (II) Magnusson in 1280, cf. *Storm*, *Kroningsstad* (1898), 406.

¹⁰⁹ On the role of the Norwegian communities in electing the new monarch, see *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 59–64.

¹¹⁰ *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 295–298; *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 203–211; *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 43 f.; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 117 f. On the symbolism of electing him beyond the confines of the realm, cf. *Imsen*, *Treriksunionen* (1977), 373. *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 295 assumes that this was deliberately planned as a "nordisk fællesmøde af ligberettigede riger" (joint nordish gathering of equal realms). *Kern*, *Norwegian Origins* (2013) suggests that Lödöse could once have been a Norwegian foundation and thus have had a shared a common Norwegian-Swedish heritage.

¹¹¹ ST 3, no. 480, 192. This is already found in earlier agreements with Erik III, cf. ST 3, no. 475 f. See also *Hervik*, *Nordisk Politikk* (2012), 294.

¹¹² *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 296. On the earlier development of the Council of the Realm, see e. g. *Benedictow*, *Norge* (1971), 15.

rule established, and how successful turned it out to be? Considering Christopher's premature death, it is difficult to assess what essentially remained an unfinished business. Accordingly, the ongoing scholarly discourse brings forwards different, sometimes even contradictory judgements, which only rarely refer explicitly to Norway. The scope of interpretations ranges from the more recent, rather benevolent characterisation of a strong reformer who "tolerated no resistance to [his] kingship"¹¹³ to the quite disparaging assessment of him having been little more than a "staffage figure",¹¹⁴ unable to exert "any appreciable influence on the policies of the council of the realm".¹¹⁵

But especially the studies by Jens E. Olesen, even if focused mainly on Denmark, have shown that the truth is probably to be found in the middle: In contrast to the rather authoritarian and centralized regency of Erik III, Christopher's rule was based on a carefully balanced but always negotiated equilibrium between extensive self-administration of his territories and royal central power – a consensual rule from a modern perspective.¹¹⁶ How else could he have governed his enormous domain effectively, a domain that not only extended across the three Nordic kingdoms, but also included the principality of Palatinate-Neumarkt as well as the Norwegian crown domains in the North Atlantic such as Iceland and Orkney?¹¹⁷

The political hub of this territorial conglomerate was the Danish island of Sjælland with København as its political centre and chief residence.¹¹⁸ Located here was not only the closest court, but also the "Union Chancery",¹¹⁹ a rather obscure institution which supported Christopher in the execution of his main tasks, above all the symbolic representation of the Union and its diplomatic affairs.¹²⁰ Within this framework, Christopher's position can be seen as the "bracket (...) that held the Nordic union together".¹²¹ It is thus not without reason that his reign is often regarded as the "last great flowering" of Norwegian self-rule¹²² – or, in the somewhat pathos-fuelled words of the Swedish historian Lars-Olof Larsson, as the "best period of the Union".¹²³

¹¹³ Schmid, Christoph (2017), 47 (translated by S. M.).

¹¹⁴ Lönnroth, Sverige (²1968), 224.

¹¹⁵ Deutinger, Unionskönig (1995), 36 (translated by S. M.).

¹¹⁶ Schneidmüller, Konsensuale Herrschaft (2000), see also the translation in *id.*, Rule by Consensus (2003).

¹¹⁷ Imsen (Ed.), Rex Insularum (2014); Wærdahl, Incorporation (2011).

¹¹⁸ On København during the reign of Christoffer III, see *Kjersgaard, Byen og borgen* (1980), 131–143.

¹¹⁹ On the Chancery during the reign of Christopher, see *Olesen, Rigsråd* (1980), 267–271; *Jexlev, Christoffer* (1978).

¹²⁰ *Larsson, Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 261 f.; *Imsen, Norge* (1977), 387; *Lönnroth, Sverige* (²1968), 231.

¹²¹ *Zeilingner, Herrschaft* (2006), 25 (translated by S. M.). On the integrative role of Nordic kingship, see also *Auge, Integrationsmodell* (2005).

¹²² *Imsen, Treriksunionen* (1977), 390: "den siste store oppblomstringsperiode for selvstendig norsk politikk".

¹²³ Thus, the title of *Larsson, Kalmarunionens tid* (1997), 250–262. Herman Schück (Political System [2003], 694–696) defines it as "the heyday of council constitutionalism". Somewhat surprisingly, *Schmid, Christoph* (2017), 46 recently sketched Christopher's reign as being marked by "ongoing rival-

Although there are very few sources for analysing Christopher's governance in Norway, the absence of a handfast or any oaths in particular are a methodological obstacle, three essential pillars of the probable agreement between the council and Christopher can be deduced by taking into account the corresponding charters of this era, such as the aristocratic agenda from 1437, codified in the armistice following the revolt led by Amund Sigurdsson Bolt,¹²⁴ or the two surviving handfasts of his competing successors, Christian I and Karl I.¹²⁵ Once these are freed from situational content,¹²⁶ a profile resting on three pillars appears: The first pillar corresponds to the strengthening and restitution of the eroded institutions of the realm. Not only was the college of the councillors of the realm expanded in number and diversified regionally,¹²⁷ but the pivotal offices of the drost and chancellor were restored into their traditional 14th century shape as well – though the latter with only limited authority.¹²⁸ Norwegian governance thus regained a political hub within its own realm.¹²⁹ Furthermore, internal order was restored via the codification of a new law, which not only heavily reflected the interests of the councillors,¹³⁰ but was also safeguarded by a new (though informal) body emerging from the council itself.¹³¹

ries with internal forces" ("andauernde Rivalitäten mit den inneren Kräften"), which is why it had been a "very combative and turbulent period in Scandinavian history" ("sehr kampferfüllte und unruhige Phase in der skandinavischen Geschichte").

124 DN 2, no. 727, with the confirmation at *ibid.*, 728.

125 NGL 2.2, no. 3 (Christian I) and 5 (Karl I). The handfast of Karl I was largely influenced by Christian I's, cf. *Hamre*, Norsk Historie (1968), 133. On the ideological background of the handfasts in general, see *Hervik*, Nordisk politikk (2012), 338–382.

126 The charter of 1437, for example, involved a general amnesty for the rebels and a possible enfeoffment of their leader with the Færoe Islands.

127 *Imsen*, Norge (1977), 387; *Benedictow*, Norge (1971), 31, 33 f. On the dynamics of the Council of the Realm during Margrete Valdemarsdatter's and Erik III's reign, see note 31.

128 The Provost of the Mariakirke in Oslo, Anders Mus, is first mentioned as *righens canceler* in the letter of the council towards Erik in 1440 (NGL 2.1, no. 97). *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 125 suggests that he had already been appointed chancellor by Erik III and thus had replaced his predecessor, Bishop Jens Jakobsson of Oslo. *Nielsen*, Riksråd (1880), 292 attributes this to the policy of the new Drost, Sigurd Jonsson, who installed Anders Mus as a deliberate measure against the "meget kongetro biskop Jens", see also *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 376. Generally on the role of the chancellor in Norway, *Agerholt*, Kansler. Norge (1963).

129 *Nielsen*, Riksråd (1880), 292.

130 NGL 2.1, no. 106. See e. g., *Moseng* et al., Norsk Historie (2007), 352; *Larsson*, Kalmarunionens tid (1997), 258 f.; *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 297 f.; *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 241–245; *Imsen*, Treriksunionen (1977), 390; *Hamre*, Norsk Historie (1968), 120 f.; *Taranger*, Tidsrummet (1915), vol. 2, 5–7. On the Swedish version, the so-called Christopher's Landslag, see *Ehrhardt*, Landslag (1983).

131 In this body, members of the council were supplemented by *Lagmenn*, municipal heads of law. It later evolved into the Retterting, see e. g., *Moseng* et al., Norsk Historie (2007), 352; *Imsen*, Norge (1977), 390; *Tobiassen*, Lagman. Norge (1965); See also the provision Den danske rigsløvgivning 1397–1513. Ed. *Andersen*, no. 13.

The third pillar was the right of priority for the domestic nobility in appointing central offices, which particularly concerned the captaincy of the four castles of the realm: Akershus, Tønsberghus, Bergenhus and Båhus. The fact that these offices were initially given to councillors who loyally supported Erik III can be seen as a clear concession to the leading cadres of the former opposition by Christopher,¹³² cadres who also received a personal boost, as they all belonged to a group of noblemen receiving elevation to knighthood during the coronation.¹³³ Whether Norway also witnessed the appearance of new court offices, as was agreed upon in the electoral charter of Karl I,¹³⁴ cannot be inferred from the sources. However, it seems rather unlikely in view of the peripheral situation of Norway within the union and the general architecture of union rule.¹³⁵ This also explains why, unlike in Denmark, we cannot observe significant numbers of migrants to Norway from amongst Christopher's Bavarian retinue, as they mainly operated in the inner court at København.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the nobility immigrating from Denmark or Northern Germany almost entirely married or had married into the Norwegian nobility and therefore can be considered naturalised.¹³⁷ Thus, Christopher's reign seems to have represented a phase of continuity rather than a caesura.

However, this system of governance was not set in stone, since it gave room for constant negotiations. But the king's leeway was – unlike that of Margrete Valdemarsdatter several decades earlier – rather limited due to the close collaboration across the realms and ideological congruence of the three Councils of the Realm,¹³⁸ as especially as

¹³² For Denmark, see *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 255–263.

¹³³ Sigurd Jonsson, Kolbjørn Gerst, Olav Håkonsson, Narve Jakobsson, Erlend Eindridesson, Hartvig Krummediek and Hermann Moltke, cf. *Daae*, Bidrag (1875), 42.

¹³⁴ NGL 2.2, No 5 § 4: *Item lofuom wer, at naar wer her efter inkoma i Noreghis rike, þa vilium wer styre vaar gard med embitzmen, sem er hofmestare, cancellær, køghemestare, fodhermarsk oc alle andra (...).*

¹³⁵ *Moseng et al.*, Norsk Historie (2007), 351.

¹³⁶ *Schmid*, Unionskönig (2018); *id.*, Christoph (2017), 49–53; *Olesen*, Christopher (2016), 261–267; *Zeilinger*, Herrschaft (2006), 29–34; *Olesen*, Rigsråd (1980), 263–271; *Galster*, Christopher (1966). With a stronger emphasis on Sweden, see *Lönnroth*, Sverige (2016), 217 f., 222 f.

¹³⁷ DN 2, no 727 (*vndantaknom theim vtlenzskom monnom som nw ær gifte j Norighe*). NGL 2.1, no. 3 § 3 (*oc skwille vij ingen vtlenk mand faa sloth, land eller leen her i Norge og ingen vtlenk haffwe i Norges raad vtthen the, nw inne ere eller met giifftermool kwnne her effther indh komme vtj ricketh*). Cf. also *Moseng et al.*, Norsk Historie (2007), 370: “Innfødte norske stormenn må (...) ha betraktet inngiftete utlendinger som en positiv tilvekst til standen som gjorde den bedre i stand til å heve standsinteressene sine”. See *Opsahl*, Conflict (2008), 171; *Benedictow*, Norge (1971), 34; as well as *Grohse*, Nativism (2017) for a critical survey of nativism at the level of society.

¹³⁸ Established through the alliances of the Swedish council with their Danish (1438) and Norwegian (1441) counterparts. However, the Swedish council ensured that certain points of friction remained, which prevented the councils from growing too close to each other which could ultimately have led to the creation of a joint council of the union, cf. *Christensen*, Christoffer (1996), 306.

the menacing scenery of the exiled king Erik III presented a constant threat.¹³⁹ However, Christopher was by no means without influence in Norway and certainly not the executive of a powerful nobility or the “symbolic figure” envisioned in the programme of 1437.¹⁴⁰ This is not least shown by the fact that the council was unable to implement all of its demands from the said agenda.¹⁴¹ The Council of the Realm was able to secure neither the return of the seal of the realm,¹⁴² the establishment of a separate Norwegian treasury,¹⁴³ nor an archive of the realm,¹⁴⁴ which meant that both charters and taxes were still kept in København. Furthermore, the increasing influence of the nobility loyal to Christopher,¹⁴⁵ a tight grip on the Union’s finances¹⁴⁶ and the royal intervention against the anti-Hanseatic attitude of the Norwegian elites,¹⁴⁷ to name just a few political issues, demonstrate that Christopher was by no means a silent observer on the side lines of the Norwegian pitch, but was willing and able to assert his own interests. As Jens E. Olesen emphasised in his seminal study, Christopher’s rule proved to be flexible and marked by a certain sense for political realities.¹⁴⁸ Given the signs of an increasing

¹³⁹ See e. g. *Enemark*, *Kriseår* (1981), 57–64; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 399–407.

¹⁴⁰ *Imsen*, *Treriksstaten* (1977), 364 (translated by S. M.).

¹⁴¹ Still, it is misleading to assume that none of the demands were implemented, as *Larsson*, *Kalmarunionens tid* (1977), 259 claims.

¹⁴² *Moseng et al.*, *Norsk Historie* (2007), 351.

¹⁴³ This may be one of the reasons why Karl I had to promise to establish a Norwegian treasury, cf. NGL 2.2, no. 5: *þa viliom wer havua eit fatabwr her i riket*. In the last years of Christopher’s reign, tax income from the Upper Palatinate had to be transferred to København, too, cf. *Schmid*, *Christoph* (2017), 64.

¹⁴⁴ This can be derived from the handfast of Christian I (NGL 2.2, no. 3 § 6: *Oc the breff, som vth ere førde aff Norge oc tiill Danmarck, som Norges ricke anrørendes er, them villia vii lathe ighen komme tiill Norge, i huare the kwnne finnes i Danmarck*). Cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 323; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 131 f.

¹⁴⁵ A key figure in this context was Hartvig Krummediek from southern Jutland, son of the influential Danish councillor Erik Krummediek, who is often seen as a central vehicle for Christopher’s expansion of power in Norway (*Zeilinger*, *Herrschaft* [2006], 26; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* [1980], 321–323; *Imsen*, *Norge* [1977], 388). However, this perception somewhat simplifies his role, as he was not just a nobleman from Holstein brought to Norway by Christopher (cf. in this sense e. g. *Zeilinger*, *Herrschaft* [2006], 26). When he succeeded Sigurd Jonsson as captain of Akershus Castle in 1445 (DN 2, no. 766), he had long been a Norwegian nobleman in his own right. In his first marriage, he had married the sister of the Norwegian councillor Olav Marquardsen Buk and had already received his first offices under Erik III in the late 1430s, using them to build a major estate. As one of the most powerful magnates in Norway, he was one of the men raised to knightly rank in 1442. On him, see e. g. *Benedictow*, *Krummedike* (2002).

¹⁴⁶ Cf. e. g. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 263, 267.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Taranger*, *Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 2, 10–49, but also *Moseng et al.*, *Norsk Historie* (2007), 352, with 375 on the motives; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 352–354, 357 ff.; *Imsen*, *Norge* (1977), 385 f.; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 122–126; *Christensen*, *Unionskongerne* (1895), 69–112. Regarding England, however, Christopher acted jointly with the Norwegian council, cf. *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 377.

¹⁴⁸ *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 241. See also *Christensen*, *Christoffer* (1996), 306–308.

level of power during the last years of his reign,¹⁴⁹ it can only be speculated on the measure of influence a more and more established and self-confident union king might have been able to exert, had he not departed his life prematurely.

Discussion

Which conclusive thoughts can be derived from this case study? For both the Council of the Realm and the monarch, the accession of 1442 was of little lasting effect. Representing the house of Folkung, Christopher was the last of his lineage, and the House of Wittelsbach was apparently taken by surprise when their Scandinavian monarch passed away before a successor had been born or a proper succession arrangement agreed upon. Their rule in the north thus remained only a (first) brief interlude.¹⁵⁰ But the Norwegian Council of the Realm, too, was unable to establish a sustainable system of governance at the level of the realm. Unlike in Sweden, Norway witnessed a return to regionalism based around the political centres Bergen and Oslo, which would characterise politics in the following decades and, facilitated by the general societal processes of decomposition triggered by the plague,¹⁵¹ ultimately led to a disintegration of the institutions of the realm.¹⁵²

Yet, there was a winner, and he was sitting in Trondheim. In the wake of the deposition of Erik III, Archbishop Aslak Harniksson Bolt, who was a staunch supporter of conciliarism,¹⁵³ succeeded in loosening the royal grip on church institutions and bring-

149 Olesen, Rigsråd (1980), 361–363; *Bendictow*, Norge (1971), 31.

150 *Imsen*, Arv (1972), 45 suggests that Christopher's German relatives were not seen as serious candidates to the Norse throne. On the succession in Palatinate-Neumarkt, see *Schaab*, Geschichte (1988), 156–158. With Karl X Gustav (fl. 1622–1660), son of Johann Kasimir of Palatinate-Zweibrücken-Kleeburg (fl. 1589–1652), and Katharina Vasa (fl. 1584–1638), daughter of Karl IX Gustav (fl. 1550–1611), and thus half-sister of Gustav II Adolf (fl. 1594–1632), the house of Wittelsbach returned to the Swedish throne in 1654. The second Wittelsbach episode in Scandinavia ended after the third generation with the death of Karl XII (fl. 1682–1718) and the abdication of his sister Ulrika Eleonore (fl. 1688–1741) in 1720. On the Wittelsbacher as kings of Sweden, see *Schwarzenbeck*, Wittelsbacher (2014), 79–138; *Holzfurtner*, Wittelsbacher (2005), 344–346; *Immler*, Wittelsbacher (2013), 65–67; *Heigel*, Wittelsbacher (1881). Less attention is paid to the Elector Palatine Friedrich II, who, as the husband of Dorothea, the eldest daughter of King Christian II of Denmark and Norway, became a possible candidate for the Danish throne, cf. *Bisgaard*, Christian 2. (2009), 369–373 (though with a misleading description of Neumarkt as a “castle in Heidelberg”, 372); *Lausten*, Christian 2. (1995), 402–45; *Neumaier*, Heiratspolitik (2013), 115 f.

151 *Moseng et al.*, Norsk Historie (2007), 282–317; *Imsen*, Norge (1977), 391–393; *Bendictow*, Norge (1971), 23–27.

152 *Imsen*, Norge (1977), 389.

153 *Haug*, Norske kirkes utvikling (1998), 130–136.

ing religious affairs back under the umbrella of the archdiocese. Contrary to the process of gradual extinction of the Norwegian nobility,¹⁵⁴ the archdiocese thus emerged as the central integrative institution, into whose apparatus and destiny the question of political autonomy of the Norwegian realm was increasingly being woven.¹⁵⁵

It can thus be concluded that Norway and its Council of the Realm, despite its often inferior and at times even disparaging¹⁵⁶ consideration within the history of the Kalmar Union, was by no means a devoted junior partner within the union that simply *followed suit*, but an ambivalent actor. Rather, the path to the deposition of Erik III and the subsequent homage to Christopher appears to have been the result of an “intensive political game on several fronts”,¹⁵⁷ which, in relation to Norway, ran along the borders of the realm as well as within the social groups. And it is precisely the insufficient attention paid to the latter that feeds the still widespread impression of a junior partner who willingly implemented the dictates from Sweden and Denmark.

Key to understanding Norwegian politics during the transition from Erik III to Christopher is a reform conservatism rather typical for that time, which always sought to preserve old laws, traditional institutions and thus the autonomy of the realm, while adapting to the demands and circumstances within the union.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the long adherence to Erik III, maintained against external pressure, is perhaps not so much a reflection of fealty towards him, but rather to the institution he embodied – the succession, which, as the bottleneck to hegemonic union rule, was the pivotal asset and the unifying bracket of the council’s policy between 1437 to 1442, and even before.¹⁵⁹ It was only when Erik III repeatedly failed to provide the requested support that the Norwegian Council of the Realm found itself in a position to disintegrate this institution – at a time when it was probably already too late for them to act effectively, leaving them only with the option to open the door for Christopher.¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, we see a fragmentation of the Council of the Realm when, after Christopher’s

154 Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 370–376; *Benedictow, Norge* (1971), 35 f.

155 Following Moseng et al., *Norsk Historie* (2007), 371 (“Det norske rikets politiske selvstendighet ble i økent grad vevd inn i den katolske kirkens apparat og skjæbne”), see also 376–379; *Hamre, Church* (2003), 670–673; *Imsen, Treriksunionen* (1977), 379–382; *Benedictow, Norge* (1971), 35 f.; *Taranger, Tidsrummet* (1915), vol. 2, 53–57. On Archbishop Aslak Harniktsen Bolt, cf. *Dybdahl, Bolt* (1999). In Karl I’s electoral charter, ecclesiastical rights were accordingly emphasised as worthy of protection (ST 3, no. 479 f.). This also applies to Sweden, cf. *Lönnroth, Sverige* (21968), 228 f.

156 *Blom, Warum* (1973), 79: “König Erik [sah] die Hoffnungslosigkeit – das Unrealisierbare – viel klarer als der loyale norwegische Reichsrat, der die Folgen einer norwegischen Separatpolitik unter der Leitung Erichs von Pommern bestimmt nicht hat überblicken können”.

157 *Olesen, Rigsråd* (1980), 158: “Kristoffers vej til unionstronen var præget af et intent og sammensat politisk spil på flere fronter”.

158 *Imsen, Treriksunionen* (1977), 377. According to *Opsahl, Conflict* (2008), 168, this was especially true for the rural population.

159 Cf. also *Imsen, Treriksunionen* (1977), 364; *id.*, *Arv* (1972), 64 f.

160 *Imsen, Treriksunionen* (1977), 379.

death and the subsequent extinction of Margrete Valdemarsdatter's line of inheritance, there were no more heirs and a new king had to be formally elected.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the establishment of Christopher's rule rested on a promise of continuity, which on the one hand guaranteed the restitution of traditional offices and the continued existence of the communal structures that were so crucial for Norway,¹⁶² but on the other hand left them in the updated corset of the castle administration established during the regencies of Håkon (VI) Magnusson, Margrete Valdemarsdatter, and Erik III.¹⁶³

This system was mutually beneficial: Norway, like the two neighbouring realms, was granted greater autonomy, accompanied by the transformation of the Council of the Realm. At the same time, the realm benefited from the rank and dynastic connections of the new king, which gave Norway greater diplomatic weight than it would have had on its own – later extended via Christopher's marriage to Dorothea of Brandenburg-Kulmbach (fl. 1430–1495) from the house of Hohenzollern.¹⁶⁴ Thus, the present contribution does not paint a fundamentally different picture of Christopher's accession and consolidation of rule in Norway than previous studies, but one that is more nuanced and places greater emphasis on consensuality and agency.

But what can this study add to the general scope of the present volume? Within its programme, the transition from Erik III to Christopher was placed within the first section, which was concerned with “regular dynastic changes”. But how can this be credibly argued when the Pomeranian Griffin was succeeded by a Wittelsbacher from the Upper Palatinate? Thus, the second section, devoted to changes of dynasty, might have been a better choice. But what about section III with its focus on depositions? It seems that the present case study on Christopher's succession defies stringent categorisation: In a way, it was a dynastical change, the result of internal and external impulses, irregular and regular at the same time – and ultimately a failure in some respects. But perhaps this should not be considered a specific feature of Christopher's accession but a general characteristic of changes of rulership.

¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, Christian of Oldenburg was also presented as the legitimate heir in 1449 (NGL 2.2, no. 3), which he was only to a limited extent, cf. *Moseng et al.*, *Norsk Historie* (2007), 356; *Olesen*, *Rigsråd* (1980), 410 f.; *Hamre*, *Norsk Historie* (1968), 130; See also Benedictow, *Norge* (1971), 32 who views this handfast as a “juridisk maskering”.

¹⁶² *Imsen*, *Bondekommunalisme* (1990); *Schück*, *Political System* (2008), 703, 705.

¹⁶³ See generally *Finbråten*, *Forvaltningen* (2016).

¹⁶⁴ *Jahnke*, *Enkedronning* (2018), 308–311; *id.*, *Hochzeiten* (2014); *Olesen*, *Christopher* (2016), 254–258; *id.*, *Rigsråd* (1980); 303–317.

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