

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

Fabian Persson

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dynastic Inclusion and Exclusion

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

² Magnus, *Swea och Götha Crönika*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Duindam, *Dynasties*.

8 Duindam, *Dynasties*, p. 131.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

11 Ibid.

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

Casimir and his two sons Charles Gustav and Adolf Johan walked directly behind the coffin.¹³ Even though the leading councillors governing the realm during the Queen's minority tried to hold them at arm's length, it was difficult to ignore the presence of the Queen's closest kin and they were thus given this prominent ritual position. Similarly, Adolf Johan served his cousin the Queen at the coronation meal in 1650.¹⁴

Dynastic Fragility

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

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

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

¹³ Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt*, p. 155.

¹⁴ Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt*, p. 182.

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

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

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

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

16 Chatelet-Lange, *Die Catharinenburg*.

17 Kappelmayer, *Johann Casimir*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At this stage, several of the younger Palatines had managed to get a foothold in the royal palace. They are somewhat elusive in the sources as their presence in the palace was largely informal. However, in letters from a Palatine tutor it is clear that Charles Gustav and Christina Magdalena were in the palace in 1635.³⁵ They appear to have lived there permanently and they took part in various ceremonies with the Queen their cousin, such as funerals and weddings.³⁶ In 1636, the breakthrough came as the Council

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

37 SLA Slottshuvudböcker G I:4 (1638).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Absence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Soft-Edged Dynasty

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

69 *Ibid.*

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

71 Isogaeus, *Carla Seger-Skiöld*.

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

Epilogue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bibliography

Published Sources

Borgarståndets riksdagsprotokoll (Stockholm, 1945–).

'Dagbok, förd vid 1650 års Riksdag i Stockholm, af Riksdagsmannen, Doctor Jonas Petri, Pastor i Hassle', *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia* 22 (1837), pp. 60–253.

Hildebrand, Sune (ed.), *Karl XI:s almanacksanteckningar* (Stockholm, 1918).

Isogaeus, Simon *Carla Seger-Skiöld* (Stockholm, 1714).

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

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

81 Laine, 'Kungliga slott', p. 105.

- Kullberg, N.A., et al. (eds), *Svenska riksrådets protokoll* (18 vols, Stockholm, 1878–1959).
- Lundvall, Carl Johan (ed.), *Sverige under Ulrica Eleonora och Fredric I, eller ifrån 1718 till 1751. Efter den af framledne Hans Excellens, Riks-rådet Grefve Gustaf Bonde författade handskrift* (Stockholm, 1821).
- Magnus, Johannes, *Swea och Götha Crönika*, transl. Ericus Schroderus (Stockholm, 1620).
- Prästeståndets riksdagsprotokoll* (Stockholm, 1949–).
- Stiernman, Anders Anton (ed.), *Alla Riksdagars och mötenes besluth samt arfföreningar* (Stockholm, 1728).

Bibliography

- Chatelet-Lange, Liliane, *Die Catharinenburg. Residenz des Pfalzgrafen Johannn Casimir von Zweibruken. Ein Bau der Zeitenwende 1619–1622* (Stuttgart, 2000).
- Duindam, Jeroen, *Dynasties: A Global History of Power, 1300–1800* (Cambridge, 2016).
- Fryxell, Anders, *Berättelser ur svenska historien* (46 vols, Stockholm 1823–79).
- Grundberg, Malin, *Ceremoniernas makt: Maktöverföring och genus i Vasatidens kungliga ceremonier* (Lund, 2005).
- Kappelmayer, Andreas, *Johann Casimir von Pfalz-Zweibruken-Kleeburg (1589–1652): Standeswahrung und Fremdheitserfahrung im Schweden Gustavs II. Adolf und Christinas* (Münster, 2017).
- Laine, Merit, 'Kungliga slott som nationella byggnader under frihetstiden', in Åsa Karlsson and Bo Lindberg (eds), *Nationalism och nationell identitet i 1700-talets Sverige* (Uppsala, 2002).
- Malmström, Carl Gustaf, *Sveriges politiska historia: från K. Carl XII:s död till statshvälfningen 1772* (6 vols, Stockholm, 1855–77).
- Meyer, Ernst, *Svenska Parnassen* (2 vols, Stockholm, 1889).
- Nowakowska, Natalia 'What's in a Word? The Etymology and Historiography of Dynasty — Renaissance Europe and Beyond', *Global Intellectual History* (2020).
- Oresko, Robert, 'Bastards as Clients: The House of Savoy and Its Illegitimate Children', in Charles Giry-Deloison and Roger Mettam (eds), *Patronage et clientélismes 1550–1750* (Lille, 1995).
- Tegenborg Falkdalen, Karin, *Vasadöttrarna* (Lund, 2010).
- Thiry, Steven, 'Forging Dynasty: The Politics of Dynastic Affinity in Burgundian-Habsburg Birth and Baptism Ceremonial (1430–1505)', in Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastiaan Derks (eds), *The Key to Power? The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400–1750* (Leiden, 2016).

About the Author

Fabian Persson (Linnaeus University) is Associate Professor in History. His main expertise lies in the history of the early modern court, but he has also written on patronage, corruption, élites, gender, aristocratic marriage and duelling. Two recent books are *Survival and Revival in Sweden's Court and Monarchy, 1718–1930* and *Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity*.