

PROTO-NATIONALISM IN SCANDINAVIA: SWEDISH STATE BUILDING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

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Introduction

Before Gustav Vasa—or Gustav I of Sweden—established a new hereditary monarchy and Swedish state in the early sixteenth century, following the collapse of the Kalmar Union (1397-1523), Swedish kings had already developed a long tradition of invoking the Legend of St. Erik the Holy throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to legitimize their rule over the proto-nation of Sweden.¹ Since St. Erik was the former King of Sweden during the Baltic Crusades—who expanded the Swedish kingdom into Finland and Estonia—his royal lineage, in combination with his representation as the protector of the realm, contributed to the martyrization of St. Erik and his popular association as the hero of the realm. Additionally, in the fifteenth century members of the Swedish clergy at the see of Uppsala would even craft mythologized histories and invoke the Legend of St. Erik by pointing to proto-national themes such as *common descent* and *common history* to justify what they perceived as the need for an independent Sweden.

However, for most religious legends about saints, many historians struggle with deciphering between fact and fiction. This is due to a myriad of difficulties—one being the ability to acquire validated medieval texts that confirm key aspects of the legend. Similarly, for most of Swedish history, the facts of the legend of Saint Erik were elusive to many historians despite his popular representation as a national icon and the protectorate of the Swedish realm. But in 2014 archeologists at Uppsala University and Stockholm University reopened a 1946 study on St. Erik the Holy. As the legend of Saint Erik goes: “[it] is said in his late thirteenth-century legend to have fallen in an uneven battle against invading troops led by a Danish

¹ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* (Stockholm: Department of History, Stockholm University, 2007) 108-113. Karl Knutsson even claimed that he was a descendent of St. Erik in trying to claim legitimacy to the Swedish throne.

usurper, Prince Magnus,” where he was ultimately beheaded outside the cathedral of Uppsala after partaking in mass.²

Well, after conducting research on the bones of a man presumed to be the former crusader king, the researchers presented evidence that potentially confirm the legend’s claim that he was “killed by a Danish pretender to the throne in 1160 on a site where the Uppsala Cathedral was later built.”³ Now while the potential confirmation that a “Danish pretender” martyred King Erik bears little relevance to today’s political discourse between the Scandinavian nations, when the Kalmar Union (1397-1523) collapsed and Gustav Vasa established a hereditary monarchy in Sweden, the legends of St. Erik the crusader king, the king martyred by a Danish usurper, had more significance especially after the Stockholm Bloodbath of 1520 where Christian II of Denmark beheaded roughly eighty nobleman and clergy (including Gustav Vasa’s father) for their earlier revolts against the Union King. Furthermore, even though these narratives at first glance loosely mimic modern nationalist rhetoric, after situating them in the proper social, political, and religious contexts of the Middle Ages, these narratives exhibit elements of nationalism, or what I call proto-nationalism.

Traditionally the scholarship on nationalism focuses on Western, Central, and Eastern Europe. It is on these regions that most nationalism theory rests and is then extrapolated (wrongfully so) onto other regions. Besides the implicit and insensitive ethnocentrism exhibited

² Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, ed. by Carsten Selch Jensen, Tracey R. Sands, Nils Holger Petersen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, (Medieval Institute Publications: Western Michigan University, 2018) 237. The legend of St. Erik establishes him as a builder of churches, a lawgiver, and the epitome of a just monarch

³ Hanna Hellzén Cramér, “The Legend of Erik the Saint May Be True,” The legend of Erik the Saint may be true - Stockholm University, March 18, 2016, <https://www.su.se/english/research/the-legend-of-erik-the-saint-may-be-true-1.275762>. In the report, the specialists point to carbon-dating analysis, estimated age of death, estimated height, and how the injuries on the bones correspond with the documented injuries King/St. Erik sustained. The most convincing of these injuries corresponds with the legend’s claim that King Erik was beheaded as one of the cervical vertebrae was severed.

by some scholars of nationalism,⁴ this impertinent error must be ameliorated by acknowledging the different manifestations of nationalism in other regions, including Northern Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. The whole world does not operate like Western, Central, or Eastern Europe. Yet, when taking a geographical survey of the scholarship done on nationalism, most of it tends to hyper focus on France, the United States, Great Britain, the Habsburg Empire, and Russia. Even though some recent scholarship has analyzed countries in Latin America, East Asia, and South Asia, there remains large regional gaps in the scholarship of nationalism. This project seeks to begin filling in the regional gap of nationalism for Scandinavia.

In addition, some prominent scholars of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm excluded religion as a mechanism of nationalism, creating a gap in the discipline and ignoring an important analytical perspective. Adrian Hastings—a historian and Catholic priest—pushes against these modernist notions and claims that religion is a “neglected dimension” of nationalism studies. As it currently stands, modern nationalism theory’s dismissal of religious nationalism is even incompatible with nineteenth century forms of nationalism where national and religious identities intersected—such as Schönerer’s German nationalism that embraced anti-Catholicism, anti-Slavism, and anti-Semitism.⁵ While this was an adversarial relationship between nationalism and religion, this example nonetheless demonstrates how nationalism and religion can interact. This project will directly link the secular and religious spheres of medieval Sweden and highlight the interactions between church politics and secular politics; the systemic interconnectedness between church and realm (later state); and lastly situating these events in the

⁴This probably contributes to the disagreement surrounding the definitions of “nationalism,” “sovereignty,” and “nationhood.”

⁵ **Speeches by Schönerer.** From Heinrich Schnee, ed., Georg Ritter von Schönerer. Ein Kämpfer für Alldeutschland [Georg Ritter von Schönerer. A Fighter for Pan-Germany], third, improved and expanded edition (Reichenberg: Sudetendeutscher Verlag Franz Kraus, 1943), pp. 126-27, 140-42, 175, 238-39. Translated by Jeremy King & Rachel Coll, 2001.

corresponding social and religious movements that transpired during the time period such as the Renaissance and the Reformation. By doing so these erroneous assumptions made by modern nationalism scholars can hopefully be redressed.

Next, rather than going down the rabbit hole of determining the “origins” of nations and nationalism, this project theorizes nations and nationalism (in a European context) as a combination of religious, social, economic, political, and even early ethnic movements that rise and dip over centuries across different regions. By disentangling the effects of modernization when considering the formation of national identities, nationalism theory can then better incorporate pre-modern contributions to national identity formation. To do this, I will be building upon the work of Susan Reynolds—an Oxford professor in medieval history—to demonstrate how medieval communities in general, and in Scandinavia in particular, have been misconstrued by modern historians. Furthermore, studying religion’s impact on national identity formation in the Middle Ages is essential to tracing the development of pre-modern nationalism, or rather proto-nationalism. To prove this I intend to explore how Scandinavian religious traditions impacted national identity formation, and how Swedish state building, in particular, reinforced religious proto-national narratives as the region transitioned from the late Middle Ages to the Early-Modern era. Although this argument would be strengthened by also analyzing non-European nations, it is beyond my expertise and ability to analyze nationalism in these regions—while also respecting cultural diversity.

Looking first at modern nationalism theory, I will provide a brief survey of accepted theories by prominent scholars of nationalism. After situating the literature for this project, I will then delve into some of the fundamental and erroneous assumptions within modern nationalism theory that need revision—most notably, the exclusion of religion’s impact on national identity

formation. In addition, I also find it necessary to disentangle nationalism theory from the effects of modernization by extending its development into the Middle Ages. This modernist narrative wrongfully conceives the Middle Ages as “the Dark Ages,” and records the period as a long pause in Europe’s development after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Under this logic, the European nations were backwards and slumbering only to be awoken by the French and Industrial Revolutions. Yet, if these are the type of monumental changes a polity would need to experience to engender nationalism, then why would not the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, or the “Discovery of the New World” engender proto-nationalism during the Middle Ages? ⁶ Next, I will provide a brief history of the Renaissance (1300s-1600s) and the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) to situate these movements in Europe before delving into the particulars of Scandinavian political and religious history. From here, I explore the secular and religious developments leading up to the collapse of the Kalmar Union, and the effects of ethno-religious narratives on the formation of proto-national identities. I then demonstrate how these ethno-religious narratives contributed to the production of proto-national histories and their corresponding proto-national identities. Finally, after establishing a firm grasp of the region’s history—filling the gap in the literature for both nationalism and reformation studies—I will demonstrate how these building blocks to nationalism culminated under the rule of Gustav Vasa with the establishment of the Swedish state and the introduction of Protestantism in the realm.

Furthermore, these systemic changes were probably more impactful in the Swedish realm because the peasantry were for the most part free from serfdom, or *thralldom*. Under feudal systems, this means that the peasantry probably enjoyed more freedoms than their European counterparts. Additionally, the peasantry, miners, and burghers were integrated into the judicial

⁶ I would imagine “discovering” “new” groups of people would shake European identity, positionality, and cosmology; let alone cause the reflective question of “Who am I?” and “Who are my people?”

systems as local *tings*, or juries, served as pillars to early Swedish judicial systems.⁷ In fact to reinforce this point, the majority of Swedish peasants owned their own land,⁸ and this is important because Ernest Gellner points to the emancipation of the serfs during the nineteenth century as pivotal to the development of nationalism and modernization in Eastern and Central Europe.

Since the Swedish peasantry enjoyed more freedoms and were more integrated into the judicial system compared to their European counterparts, the power relations between the local peasantry and the crown were different. In his article “No Taxation Without Negotiation: War economy, taxation, and the peasantry in Sweden in the early 16th-Century,” Dag Retsö notes that while Gustav Vasa implemented structural changes in Sweden, the local peasantry worked with royal bailiffs and crafted rhetorically persuasive arguments to renegotiate their tax burdens.⁹ From this exchange, it becomes clear that the local peasantry held a significant degree of agency as they demonstrated ways to appeal to secular authorities, and actively participated in shaping Gustav Vasa’s new tax system. Moreover, the relatively normalized integration of the local population into the Swedish judicial system and the interactions between locals and the early state bureaucracy probably contributed to the tendency of Gustav Vasa to employ populist appeals that echo modern nationalist rhetoric.

Nonetheless, during the early instability and wars of Gustav Vasa’s reign, Sweden was undergoing immense structural reform and regime change. Not only did Gustav Vasa

⁷ Thomas Lindkvist, “Law and the Making of the State in Medieval Sweden: Kingship and Communities,” 223-227.

⁸ Thomas Lindkvist, “Law and the Making of the State in Medieval Sweden: Kingship and Communities,” 212. I think it is also to point out that the Scandinavian countries currently have different conceptions of land rights than other European countries i.e. Allermansratten laws.

⁹ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, “The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no. 1 (2014): pp. 1-24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2014.976839>. Also during this period taxes were much greater than during the times of the Kalmar Union, yet even though Gustav Vasa did deal with peasant revolts, the discourse surrounding taxes during the Union and post-Union should be further investigated.

successfully manage to establish a hereditary monarchy in Sweden by his death in 1560, but he also restructured the tax system—changing the tax status of Church lands in particular—doing away with *libertas ecclesiae*. He began the process of converting the realm to Lutheranism. And he transitioned Sweden into an early absolutist state. His successors would later further his cause by nationalizing the army instead of hiring mercenaries, which made Sweden the first European country to have a national-standing army that resembles the modern. And this modern army would inherit the title “Lion of the North” in the 30 Years War as Sweden under Gustav Adolf became the “defenders of Lutheranism.” It should be stressed here that this transitional period was not an abrupt shift, but rather a gradual shift; thus, within this new system there were certainly societal, economic, and political relics of the earlier Middle Ages, but there were also aspects and phenomena that resemble modernity. Proto-nationalism is one of these phenomena.

Moreover, at the turn of the sixteenth century, *proto* building blocks of Swedish nationalism transitioned the realm from a medieval socio-political and religious system—with the collapse of the Kalmar Union in 1523—to a modern nation-state system.

Throughout the fifteenth century in particular, the clergy and secular rulers propagated myths of common descent, common customs, and common history as justifications for an independent Sweden. Overseeing the transition, Gustav Vasa I of Sweden (1523-1560) politicized the existing proto-national histories to maintain his hold on power and legitimize his *invention* of a Swedish state.

Literature Review

Nationalism in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century was primarily studied by historians, philosophers, and philologists; however, in the latter half of the twentieth century (after the collapse of Nazi Germany), the study of nationalism gained more traction in other

social-scientific disciplines. Today, scholars of nationalism vary across disciplines from communications studies, economics, sociology/anthropology, and more recently, ethnic studies. These emerging disciplines, therefore, demonstrate the need for the revision of nationalism theory because so many concepts related to one's identity (such as ethnicity) were barely explored before the "orthodoxy" was established. Despite this need, nationalist schools of thought continue to be dominated by an orthodoxy of modernist historians, philologists, and sociologists who claim that the origins of nations and nationalism are inventions of the nineteenth and twentieth century nation-states that sought to establish horizontal community based on key facets of society such as common language and common history.¹⁰ This is a weakness for modern-nationalism theory because these early scholars assumed too much in their theories and their biases are quite visible. Additionally, scholars do not agree on the origins of nationalism and its fundamental components. This project, therefore, reexamines the traditional understandings of nationalism, and will explore the impact religion—more specifically Protestantism in Northern Europe—had on the formation of a national-consciousness.

While some scholars readily accept the assumptions made in modern nationalism theory, I approach the topic with more skepticism. Upon examination of nationalism theory, there appears to be a modernist orthodoxy that has undergone little revision to remove the biases and assumptions made by its leading theorists: Ernest Gellner (1925-1995), Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2015), and Benedict Anderson (1936-2015). For the modernists, nationalism was a product of modernity as the French and Industrial Revolutions reshaped one's relationship to their government, society, and economy. Historians such as Adrian Hastings and Susan Reynolds, however, reject this modernist narrative by demonstrating pre-modern examples of emerging

¹⁰ Most of this history, may I point out, is chronologically newer compared to the history of the Middle Ages (which has and continues to be revised by medievalists after errors were found in nineteenth century scholarship).

national consciousnesses in Europe.¹¹ By revising modern assumptions of the regnal institutions, and finally expanding upon the agency and identity shared by the collective peasantry,¹² Hastings and Reynolds reveal that the conditions for nationalism were present during the Middle Ages. Moreover, even though Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson offer incredibly insightful postulations to modern nationalism, the origins of nationalism should not be bound to modernity. Rather the work of these men should be reframed as pivotal contributions to understanding the modern manifestations of nationalism, but still acknowledging its gradual development over the pre-modern period.

Before demonstrating the development of nationalism and all its complexities, it is essential to have a firm understanding of Gellner's, Hobsbawm's, and Anderson's work. For Gellner, the need for cultural homogeneity among modern societies engenders nationalism, which he purports is the product of the transition of agro-literate societies to industrial societies.¹³ As societies and economies became more complex after the Industrial Revolution, literacy and technological competency became more important for a nation's, or empire's, citizenry. However, multi-national empires struggled with this in the modern era as the differing national groups competed among each other in an effort to establish their own vernacular as the official, or administrative, language of instruction. It is from this competition (which Gellner tries to demonstrate in the context of the Habsburg Empire), that nationalism exploded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, the role education played in society became evermore

¹¹ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). This was done by examining the entrenched relationship between church and state.

¹² Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities In Western Europe, 900-1300*, E-book, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01503>. Accessed 14 Aug 2020. Downloaded on behalf of University of Puget Sound.

¹³ Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism and Modernization," in *Nationalism*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, 55-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press (1994) 161-162.

crucial as nationalists competed over the language of instruction. Overall, Gellner's analysis is useful for describing the events transpiring in Central Europe; however, his work is equally problematic because he binds nationalism to modernity. He ascribes too much causality to the French and Industrial Revolutions, and he offers little acknowledgment of his own biases and assumptions—which I suggest are the reason for his dismissal of nationalism's existence in the Middle Ages.

Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) similarly brings his own biases to this discourse by retroactively applying modern legal concepts of society and politics in his analysis. For Hobsbawm, nationalism and the nation were “invented traditions” created to distract the masses from vertical inequalities in society by focusing on horizontal solidarity in order to maintain a system ruled by the political and economic elite during the age of democracy.¹⁴ Although very logical, Hobsbawm continues with these assumptions to lay out his theory that nationalism is a product of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. In doing so, Hobsbawm overlooks religion's—in a pre-modern European context, Christianity's—contributions to the formation of nations and nationalism. While the bourgeoisie and aristocracy contributed to the development of nationalism, the clergy—who were also members of a religious elite—also actively participated in the formation of nationalist narratives. This omission—which possibly stems from his more Marxian analysis—neglects the role religious institutions played in shaping early modern European identities and demonstrates how religion is, as Adrian Hastings puts it, a “neglected dimension” of nationalism theory.¹⁵

¹⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Nation as Invented Tradition*, in *Nationalism*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, 76-83, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994) 13. The nation is ‘invented’ because the political elite crafted the concept of the nation to legitimize their power in a period of revolution and democratization (modernity) and it is a ‘tradition’ because it harks to the mythic past; thus, crafting a ‘national history.’

¹⁵ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood* 1-6.

For theorists such as Hobsbawm, Marxist ideology hinders their ability to fully analyze earlier variations of nations and nationalism because they delineate between the church's power and the power of secular institutions—which for medieval society were almost inseparable. Keep in mind, separation of church and state is an Enlightenment principle and it obviously (per the case above) was retroactively applied by Hobsbawm in his theories and historical analysis in an implicit manner. This is a historical error and only contributes to a sort of confirmation bias, or a “crisis of historiography.”¹⁶ This confirmation bias leads scholars to wrongfully reject the presence of nationalist tendencies among the elite and lay during the Middle Ages and early modern period. According to Hugh Seton-Watson (1916-1984), “to attribute [nationalism] to the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie is an error,”¹⁷ because the developments that occurred during this period in Central and Eastern Europe should not be extrapolated to the entire globe.

In his book *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (1977), Watson distinguishes between “old” and “new” nations. To Watson, “old nations had a process that took place at a time much harder to pinpoint,” while on the other hand, for “new nations,” national consciousness and the modern doctrine of nationalism advanced together as these new nations underwent state formation (i.e. Germany).¹⁸ For example, in England, France, and Sweden, national identity was acquired before the conception of the modern state. Thus, it requires more historical research to determine when nationalism could have emerged in these regions.¹⁹

¹⁶ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 21-23.

¹⁷ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, (Boulder: Westview Press 1977) 15-88.

¹⁸ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 1-14.

¹⁹ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 15-88.

Adrian Hastings (1929-2001) begins to unravel this history for the French and English national consciousnesses by claiming that both were already established by the Middle Ages and were simply reinforced by the French and Industrial Revolutions.²⁰ They were not a product though;²¹ these national consciousnesses were developed over long periods of time and demonstrate certain patterns. For example, both nations have an “extensively used vernacular,” a long struggle against an external threat—usually each other—and the “nation [formed from one or more ethnicity’s] claims the right to political identity and autonomy over a territory.”²² Once these components were present, the French and English nation-states then formed under the ruling monarchies and the state identified itself with the nation (as a people). It is at this point that Hastings notes that the people were no longer viewed as “subjects of the sovereign, but a horizontally bonded society.”²³ Once the society was bonded, it was then easier for the monarchs and later the bourgeoisie to direct national efforts in most aspects of society such as the economy and culture. Religion then further solidified this in England in particular when King Henry VIII established the Church of England—making the Church subservient to the crown’s decrees. At this moment, essential political, economic, religious, and other cultural institutions became more entrenched with the monarchy, and later with the state, and became pillars of the nation of which nationalists claim to defend.²⁴ Note here too, that a sub-feature of proto-nationalism in these

²⁰ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood* 1-6.

²¹ Brian Stanley, review of *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, by Adrian Hastings, *Church History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²² Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 30-34. It is also important to note here that the “idea of a people” was reinforced by Christian teachings of the Bible and the story of Moses leading his people from to salvation and away from a foreign oppressor.

²³ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 3.

²⁴ It is worthy to note here that Hasting’s hyper focus on the “origins” of nations and nationalism does limit his findings because he mainly focuses on France and England and continues the narrative that these western countries were the first nation-states.

early European Kingdoms tend to glorify the monarchy and fuse the identity of the realm with the crown.

Deviating slightly from other modernist scholars, however, Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) offers some space to suggest an earlier origins story for nationalism.²⁵ Famously coining the phrase “imagined community,” to Anderson, the nation is “*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”²⁶ It is also a “*community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”²⁷ With these theoretical underpinnings guiding most of his work, Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* offers the most flexibility in theory and acknowledges (at least to some degree) the fluidity and multiplicity of identity. This can explain Anderson’s claim that nationalism originated with the American and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, and can, also, explain why he categorizes the construction of nations and nationalism as a New World phenomenon.

For Anderson, the “nation only arose when, and where, three fundamental cultural conceptions, all of great antiquity, lost their axiomatic grip on men’s mind.”²⁸ These three upheavals consisted of: (1) the collapse of Latin as the language of the educated elite, (2) the challenge to divine rule with the Enlightenment concept of “consent of the governed,” and (3) the rise of a new conception of “temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical.”²⁹ Anderson

²⁵ Anderson marks the emergence of nationalism with the American Revolution; thus, demonstrating even some disagreement among the established “orthodoxy.”

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, ed. by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, 89-96, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994) 36.

²⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37.

²⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 36.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

attributes this shift in “men’s minds” to the rise of print-capitalism which individualized education and thought, and offered profound changes to the ways in which individuals saw themselves in relation to others.³⁰ However, before the printing revolution individualized education, it individualized one’s connection with God as the Bible was translated into the many European vernaculars during the Reformation.

The impact of the Reformation cannot be underscored enough in fracturing the medieval framework of the universal church headed by singular pope and in restructuring the social and political hierarchies in Europe. Even before the Thirty-Years War (1618-1648) the Peace of Augsburg (1555) established the precedent of *cuius regio eius religio*. What makes the Peace of Westphalia (1648) significant, moreover, is that the treaty is considered a turning point in European history, which ushered in the rise of nation-states. While this history is more complex and warrants its own discussion, the Dutch Revolt (1566) and the 80 Years War (1568-1648) best exemplifies how differing confessional practices among various protestants and Catholics contributed to the establishment of the Dutch Republic in the Treaty of Münster (1648)—which was one of two treaties in the Peace of Westphalia—and an early Dutch-national identity.³¹

In addition to print media³² and the establishment of national sovereignty, it is also important to note that the laity’s relationship to antiquity started to change before these political developments with the Copernican Revolution (1545).³³ In medieval and early-modern Europe mankind was no longer placed at the center of the cosmos. Despite the Catholic Church’s early

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 40.

³¹ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd edn (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 284.

³² Print media is essential to both Anderson’s argument and mine. I will qualify Anderson’s by demonstrating the ways in which the Swedish Crown monopolized print production and engaged in early state propaganda and censorship.

³³ Breaking away from the Ptolemaic model of the heavens, Copernicus’s model began to shift European cosmology by placing the Sun at the center of the Solar System. Although the theoretical technicalities of Copernicus’s discoveries would be incomprehensible to the laity, his model inverted Christian cosmology and contributed to the destabilization of social order in the sixteenth century.

sponsorship of Copernicus's work, its later branding as heresy not only prefaced the Church's response to the Scientific Revolution (1543-1687), but also the Reformation—an even greater threat to the Church's authority. Therefore, given these developments during the late Middle Ages and early modern Europe, the continent was already transitioning away from classical cosmology. Moreover, even within Anderson's framework, the conditions for nationalism are identifiable in the later Middle Ages.

Examining this more closely, it is, also, important to recognize the new histories that have revised outdated assumptions of the Middle Ages. From a historical perspective, Susan Reynolds' (1921-present) *Kingdoms and Communities In Western Europe, 900-1300* redefines modern assumptions of the Middle Ages and subverts the preconceptions held by many scholars who merely have a general knowledge of the pre-modern world. According to Reynolds:

Medieval historians today do not always realize how many of their assumptions derive from arguments put forward by lawyers, historians, and political writers of the 18th and 19th century...whose preoccupations were different from the time of the Middle Ages.³⁴

This is important to understand because most nationalist scholars disregarded the Middle Ages due to their faulty interpretations of the period.³⁵ For example, she rejects the modernist narrative that tends “to see medieval councils and parliaments as purposeful strivings towards representative government.”³⁶ These assumptions, which nineteenth and twentieth century theorists purported, blind academics from scrutinizing the unanswered questions of nations and nationalism because they neglect to analyze the pre-modern developments and early variations of

³⁴ Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities In Western Europe, 900-1300*, E-book, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.01503>. Accessed 14 Aug 2020. I would extend this argument to modern historians as well.

³⁵ Andrew W. Lewis, review of *Kingdoms and Communities*, by Susan Reynolds, *Speculum*, April 1987, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 1987), pp. 467-469.

³⁶ Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities In Western Europe, 900-1300*, “The Community and the Realm,” 250-251.

nationalism. Thus, by undoing this nineteenth century narrative Reynolds revises the preconceived notions of the Middle Ages. This in turn requires the revision of early modern and modern European historiography of nationalism so that these faulty assumptions are removed from the field's theories.

Modernists excluded nationalism from the Middle Ages based on the biases expressed in the works of early modern lawyers and scholars. They argued that there was a lack of evidence of national consciousness in pre-modern texts primarily on the notion that it was “medieval,” and that “feudal” institutions lacked the state capacity to engender such horizontal bonds of solidarity. However, as the old legal maxim states: the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence—meaning the evidence of absence can be proven, while the absence of evidence cannot, and thus, the two should not be conflated.³⁷ Revisions to “medieval history” have ameliorated this situation by providing newer understandings of existing texts and by undoing the assumptions and broad stroke generalizations made by modern scholars concerning feudalism and feudal relationships. Given these recent advancements, this project seeks to harmonize the literature by first acknowledging the pre-modern existence of national consciousness; next demonstrating its transition from its early religious and regnal roots to its modern manifestations in society, economy, and politics; to finally demonstrating that the two varying analyses of nationalism are not necessarily mutually exclusive of each other.

For the purpose of this project, rather than outright disputing modern analysis of nationalism or the existence of pre-modern nationalism altogether, I propose that nations, nation-state formation, and nationalism are examples of the combination of social, political, economic, religious, and ethnic movements that include periods of flux and vary across regions.

³⁷ Douglas G. Altman, Martin J. Bland, *British Medical Journal*, 311 (19 August 1995) 485, [doi:10.1136/bmj.311.7003.485](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7003.485).

Theoretically, as newer nationalism theories have emerged from rising academic fields, it calls into question the scope and the validity of past theories; historically, given the cultural and national distinctions in Scandinavia, and their deviations from modern nationalism theory, more research into these nations is necessary to better analyze nationalism's emergence in the region.³⁸ Therefore, upon examining late medieval and early modern Scandinavian and Swedish history, the *proto* building blocks of Swedish nationalism appear to predate modernity.

The following sections underscore these *proto* building blocks of nationalism—many which even precede the Reformation. Beginning with the Swedish cult of saints and related liturgical calendars, the inordinate amount of veneration of local saints and martyrs—some of whom were never canonized by the Catholic Church—reveal some early ways Scandinavians, and in particular Swedes, identified with their respective realms. Next, looking at the century long power struggle between Sweden and Denmark during the Kalmar Union, there are examples of a collective Swedish culture that encompassed the provinces of the realm and Swedish proto-nationalism that spurred Swedish separatism from the Union. Finally, after the Swedish War of Liberation (1521-1523), the new Swedish King, Gustav Vasa, would then use the Reformation to take power and restructure the tax code to push what could be considered an early national economy. Additionally, wielding the power of both the crown and the newly established national Church, Gustav Vasa would also ride a wave of populist support and establish the early Swedish nation-state—crushing all who revolted and deviated from his proto-nationalist agenda.

A Brief Look at the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe and Scandinavia

Before the fracturing of the universal church, Christendom could be considered an *imagined community* much like a nation—Benedict Anderson who even coined the phrase would

³⁸ This should be stressed even more due to the regional gap of nationalism theory in Scandinavia.

come to admit this.³⁹ There were clerical and secular members of the elite social ranks who operated under the Church's hierarchy; who, also, studied at Church founded universities across the continent; who worked in the same vernacular, Latin; who operated across the borders of every duchy and kingdom; who settled regnal disputes; who managed provinces in the form of parishes; who collected taxes in the forms of tithes and indulgences; and all under a single ruler in Rome, Pontius Maximus (God's divinely chosen representative on earth). Given the stark parallels between the Church bureaucracy and modern nation-states, from an institutionalist perspective, the medieval and Renaissance Church should be regarded for laying the foundations for modern European nation-states as the Church's bureaucracy served provided the early model.⁴⁰

Therefore, to view the Middle Ages as backwards, or even as a hiatus in European nation-state development, would be ahistorical because it implies that history has a prescribed trajectory towards modern nation-states. Nonetheless, if the prerequisites for nationalism "require" monumental changes for a polity and region, then there is no point to bind the concept to modernity. Relative to the effects of the famed French and Industrial Revolutions, the Renaissance and the Reformation restructured European politics, economics, cultures, and societies too. During the period—which transverses the Middle Ages and Early Modern Europe—the impact of Renaissance humanism across European universities inspired theologians such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1546) to focus on studying Greek and Hebrew (the other "sacred texts" that accompany Latin according to Anderson).⁴¹ Upon studying the Greek and

³⁹ Anderson R. Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2006) 12-19.

⁴⁰ Mary Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat: Money, Ambition, and Everyday Life in the Court of a Borgia Prince* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2006), 168-228.

⁴¹ The importance of Greek is also partially caused by the wave of Greek Orthodox migrants fleeing the Fall of Constantinople 1453.

Hebrew translations of the Bible, Erasmus famously retranslated the Bible into Greek replacing the Vulgate translation of “do penance” with “repentance.”⁴² If one must simply repent their sins, there was less of an incentive to perform good works as penitence, or if privileged enough to purchase an indulgence. Therefore, Erasmus’s translation laid the theoretical foundations upon which Martin Luther would later critique the Church on and interrupted the economy of salvation.⁴³ Moreover, the impact of Renaissance humanism contributed to Martin Luther’s argument that salvation was by *sola gratia* (by grace alone), *sola fide* (faith alone) and *sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone)—in what would become the Protestant Reformation.

By questioning the authority of the papacy, early reformers who studied Renaissance humanism, therefore, laid the foundation for Martin Luther and his followers such as Philip Melanchthon to question whether the Church should be headed by the Pope at all. While Erasmus would critique Pope Julius II for similar reasons as Luther did later, Erasmus sought to reform the papacy rather than delegitimize its authority. Nonetheless, despite Erasmus’s intentions, the door was opened, as both Luther and Melanchthon challenged the authority of the papacy over both “spiritual” and “temporal” power. In fact, in Luther’s *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520), and Melanchthon’s later *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Papacy* (1537), both authors directly attack the Church’s assumed powers over the two. Luther, as he put it, tore down the three walls that the papacy built to legitimize their authority, and opened the door further for other Lutheran reformers and protestants to replace the Church’s universal hold on spiritual power with temporal power and the establishment of national churches. Since salvation was by faith alone (*sola fide*), obedience to the pope did not predicate one’s salvation as argued in Pope Boniface VIII’s *Unam Sanctam* (1302).

⁴² Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd edn (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 51-63.

⁴³ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd edn (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996), 378.

Furthermore, on the point of *sola scriptura* if salvation was achieved by faith and grace alone, then it became essential to read the Bible in the common vernacular. This individualized and liberalized education as literate individuals could read the Bible in the common vernacular. A key point to Luther's argument to translate the Bible from Latin. This also increased literacy rates across Europe and contributed to the standardization of modern national-languages. In tandem, the advent of the printing press reinforced these changes upon eventually out producing the developed manuscript economy. To provide an example as to just how much faster information was spreading as a result of the printing press, the Lollard priest John Wyclif's (1330-1384) religious ideas spread slowly by the written hand, whereas Luther's ideas circulated across Europe in months.⁴⁴ In particular, the production of pamphlets in the common vernacular also popularized the way people received information and began standardizing local vernaculars into nation languages so that they were sellable to a greater audience.⁴⁵ Moreover, while the printing press revolutionized media and spurred the opinions of Reformers, "the Reformation [also] gave the printed book a new function: the transmission of opinions."⁴⁶ This cannot be underscored enough because all these factors contributed to growing lay participation in politics, and greater literacy itself changed how people interacted and participated in society as learned individuals.

As the effects of the Renaissance and Reformation reached Scandinavia in 1520, there appears to be different motivations for why the Reformation in particular took hold. In Denmark-Norway, Frederick I's, and later Christian III's, decision to promote Protestantism was in part by both their own religious interpretations and political environment, whereas in Sweden-Finland,

⁴⁴ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996) 32-36.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“Gustav Vasa’s interest in Protestantism was predominantly determined by political and economic considerations.”⁴⁷ To give an example, Christian III of Denmark considered himself as *custos utriusque tabulae* (keeper of the two tablets of the Law of Moses), whereas Gustav Vasa cared immensely to seize the Church properties and revenues to enrich the crown and pay for his rise to power.⁴⁸ Furthermore, as in other protestant realms, in Denmark and Sweden the success of the Reformation hinged on the complex political changes with emergence of the nation-state.⁴⁹

Just like in Germany, the Reformation challenged traditional social and political hierarchies in Scandinavia and profited from the collective grievances that began during the late Middle Ages. In Sweden, the Reformation weakened the political center and accelerated the dissolution of the Kalmar Union (1397-1523) into territorial nation-states.⁵⁰ Once the Scandinavian nations eventually broke with the Catholic Church, they established national-churches, and the church lost the privilege of *libertas ecclesiae* as the temporal power assumed jurisdiction over the spiritual power. For example, under Gustav Vasa the church bureaucracy and town councils were flooded by Protestants and reformed Catholics who were loyal to the crown and the realm, and not appointed by the pope—since this was essential to his seizure of Church properties and revenues. Gustav Vasa was so successful that his son Karl IX would even subordinate the Lutheran Church to the mercantilist agenda of the crown by 1590.⁵¹ So while Gustav Vasa and his heirs probably cared more about just seizing wealth for the crown—

⁴⁷ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 2-3.

⁴⁸ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 5.

⁴⁹ E. I. Kouri, “The early Reformation in Sweden and Finland c. 1520-1560,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 42-69, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 45.

⁵⁰ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 5.

⁵¹ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 9.

rather than their own piety to the Protestant cause—Luther and the Reformation provided Gustav Vasa the theological reasoning to subvert the spiritual power of the Church to the agenda of the emerging Swedish nation-state.

Although historians have poorly integrated the Scandinavian Reformation into the greater movement of the ‘European Reformation’—as they have done with the Holy Roman Empire, Swiss Confederacy, France, and England—its effects warrant further investigation given the region’s importance in the religious wars of the seventeenth century. As religious and national tensions spilled over in the seventeenth century the religious wars of the Reformation contributed to the establishment of harder borders in Europe that were negotiated and codified by treaties i.e. the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that were built on concepts such as *cuius regio eius religio* founded in the Peace of Augsburg (1555). Remember it was Lutheran Scandinavia and in particular Sweden under Gustavus Adolphus that secured the Peace of Westphalia at Münster and Osnabrück, and it was in the *Treaty of Münster* where the Dutch nation-state would also receive international recognition.⁵² Moreover, as the concepts of sovereignty were negotiated in religious terminology, so too were the proto-national building blocks of modern nationalism.

The Political and Historical Landscape of Late Medieval Scandinavia

As discussed above, the study of nationalism primarily relies on the historical analyses of Western Europe (i.e. France and Great Britain), Central Europe (i.e. Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy), and Eastern Europe (i.e. Poland and Russia); however, there appears to be little historical analysis of nationalism in Northern Europe (i.e. Sweden and Denmark). In Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia in particular, these nations formed early national consciousnesses quite

⁵² Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 1. It was also at Münster where the Peasant’s Revolt (1524-1525) converged trying to upheave the existing social and religious hierarchies in northern Germany.

differently than those of the 19th century. For example, the “need” for a common language and culture were not as important to the “old nations” of Scandinavia because their languages were more similar in the Middle Ages than they are now, and communication among merchants and those who lived near borders was easily facilitated. Not to mention, the written language was hardly standardized, and would not be until the advent of the Reformation and the printing press. For these nations, economic cleavages, different regnal and legal institutions and traditions, and distinct religious and confessional practices slowly developed the national consciousnesses of Sweden and Denmark.⁵³ The following sections should hopefully demonstrate how, even before the Reformation, the *proto* building blocks of nationalism were already underway by the late Middle Ages as the Union was destabilized by a century long struggle between Sweden and Denmark. Although war was not constant during this period, there were key inflection points during the fifteenth century when violence and conflict divided the members of the Union, which ultimately culminated in Sweden’s cessation from the Union in the early sixteenth century—establishing the Swedish nation-state.

The Kalmar Union (1397-1523)

Before conflict and war divided the Scandinavian nations of Denmark-Norway and Sweden, the Scandinavian people and their colonies in Iceland, Greenland, and Finland formed the Kalmar Union in 1397. Denmark and Norway were already united into one kingdom via the marriage of Queen Margareta I of Denmark and King Haakon VI of Norway and Sweden. King Haakon was the son of King Magnus IV of Sweden, Norway, and Skåne (currently the southernmost province of Sweden). While the monarchies of Denmark and Norway were

⁵³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 66-75.

traditional, the Swedish aristocracy elected their king;⁵⁴ thus, Haakon and Margareta could not automatically inherit the Kingdom of Sweden from Magnus IV. Additionally, after a civil war amongst the aristocracy and the crown in 1363, Magnus IV fled to Norway—vacating the throne—where he died in 1374. His replacement was Albert of Mecklenburg, who was crowned king in 1364. While Swedish nobles elected him and gave him the crown in exchange for his support to overthrow Magnus IV, Albert was German. It was quite common for the monarchs of other kingdoms to originate from other parts of Europe; however, for Sweden, this was chronically contentious during the Middle Ages because the King of Sweden should be a man of native origins under the c. 1341 Law of King Magnus Eriksson (The *Stadslag* and *Landslag* as they are called).⁵⁵ Thus, Albert taking the throne frustrated some of the more conservative aristocracy who, also, had their own political aspirations.

Simultaneously in Denmark, both Haakon and Olaf (the son of Haakon and Margareta) unfortunately died prematurely. This left Margareta as the regent of Denmark-Norway, but with no heir to inherit the Danish-Norwegian throne and be elected to the Swedish throne. In 1388, she adopted Eric of Pomerania (who was in fact German and not Scandinavian) in hopes that he would take the throne once old enough. After establishing her line of succession and keeping a firm grip on the Danish throne, Margareta also unified Sweden and incorporated the kingdom to establish the Kalmar Union in 1397. In Sweden, King Albert was “tyrannical”⁵⁶ and the aristocracy revolted. Queen Margareta (who saw a growing threat with the Hanseatic League to

⁵⁴ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 82. The Danish and Norwegian monarchies were elected as well but followed a model of direct royal lineage which Sweden did not have.

⁵⁵ “Magnus Erikssons Stadslag [Elektronisk Resurs],” LIBRIS, accessed November 19, 2020, <http://libris.kb.se/bib/19508472?vw=full>. Same as Magnus IV.

⁵⁶ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, “The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40, no. 1 (2014): pp. 1-24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2014.976839>.

the south) agreed to aid the Swedish aristocracy to defeat Albert of Mecklenburg,⁵⁷ in exchange for Sweden entering into a union with Denmark-Norway by electing King Eric of Pomerania to the Swedish throne. And so, the Kalmar Union was established on September 25, 1397 with each kingdom in the *Treaty of Kalmar* retaining their original governing institutions,⁵⁸ while also legally agreeing to protecting the interests of the Union and the King. So when King Eric was crowned the “union-king,” the Hanseatic threat was confronted by a united Scandinavia and her colonies.

From an economic perspective, this union united the commercial efforts of the Scandinavian peoples—making them a powerful economic force in the Baltic Sea. As with most economic shifts though, there are beneficiaries and then there are those who undergo a reciprocal experience that can be quite displeasing.⁵⁹ Moreover, the economic policies of the Union (in addition to the wars that were fought) demonstrate the early ways in which the crown attempted to direct the economy towards their self-interests, and by extension the Union (potentially a precursor to the concept of a national economy). Nonetheless, it is also important to note that the Union could be considered as a binary response to the formation of the Hanseatic League. All of these more subtle details and events that are transpiring in the region, such as the ousting of King Albert, are representative of the Scandinavian kingdoms’ overall response to growing Hanseatic competition in the Baltic.

In the beginning the Union brought stability to the peninsula, something that could be attributed to the policies during Queen Margareta’s regency; however, in the fifteenth and

⁵⁷ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, “The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified,” 6. It is important to note here that King Albert aligned more with his home Hansa city, and thus to Queen Margareta, the Hanseatic League were becoming too powerful in the Baltic.

⁵⁸ Margaretha Nordquist, “Eternal Bonds of Love or Foreign Oppression? Entangled Identities in Late-Medieval Scandinavia,” *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 23 (2018): 387. This includes the Swedish råð.

⁵⁹ I would like to note here that the entire system is not zero-sum, but that there is a spectrum of between those positively affected by economic shifts and those negatively affected.

sixteenth centuries, Danish political dominance in the Union was considered foreign oppression in the Swedish kingdom, and a grievance that spurred Swedish cessation for over a century.

Almost in the same manner as in the Netherlands—where the northern Dutch provinces viewed Spanish rule as foreign oppression—some of the Swedish nobility and peasantry viewed the Union as means for Danish oppression and intervention in Swedish affairs. And to some extent, this notion is not unfounded. Recall that in the *Treaty of Kalmar* each kingdom maintained their legal and regnal institutions, and the Union King was bound separately to Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish law. However, when Danish and German bailiffs—who were unbound to Swedish law—came to collect taxes to pay for the Union’s ongoing wars, it appears to be perceived as an attack on the Swedish institutions and traditions that were explicitly negotiated at Kalmar for the realm. While this in itself serves as a proto-nationalist building block, popular anti-Danish and anti-German reactions also point to proto-nationalism—especially when the kingdom and the Church would build memorials and produce chronicles that reinforced a mythic common history.

Eric of Pomerania (1381-1459) and Christian I of Denmark (1426-1481)

While the threat of the Hanseatic League contributed to the Union’s formation, the aristocracy and the leaders of Sweden and Denmark delicately balanced their political relationships in the Baltic. In periods of peace, the Union would for the most part function and benefit the trading interests of Scandinavian merchants and burghers.⁶⁰ However, in periods of intra-Union conflict, both the Swedish and Danish aristocracy coordinated with Lübeck (the leading Hanseatic city) to finance their local rebellions.⁶¹ Not only would a divided Scandinavia potentially strengthen Hanseatic trading position and political dominance in the region, but it also made both Denmark and Sweden indebted to the banks in Lübeck.

⁶⁰ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, “The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified,” 6-8.

⁶¹ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, “The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified,” 15.

Although the early years of the Union enjoyed initial peace and stability, King Eric's wars against the Hanseatic cities (specifically Lübeck) became quite costly, and in response the Danish crown raised taxes throughout the Union kingdoms.⁶² For Danish nobles, who felt more threatened by the power of the Hanseatic League, they were more willing to pay the new taxes of the realm. However, to the Swedish nobility and even to some of the peasantry, these taxes seemed too burdensome.⁶³ For example, in 1434 miners and peasants in the province of Dalarna revolted against King Eric in what is now called the Engelbrekt Rebellion (1434-1436). Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson was a prominent miner in Bergslagen, and when King Eric barred Swedish iron exports to continental Europe but continued to enforce his high taxes to support his war efforts, the parish revolted.⁶⁴ Ultimately all Danish forces were driven out of Sweden and King Eric was deposed in 1439.⁶⁵ Engelbrekt then proclaimed himself king employing what Mats Hallenberg calls "pseudo-national rhetoric."⁶⁶ To Hallenberg, Engelbrekt's representation as a hero of the people mimics those of national icons. However, Engelbrekt was killed by competing aristocratic members trying to seize the Swedish throne.⁶⁷ Although his death was untimely, Engelbrekt's Rebellion could be considered an early patriotic movement in Sweden.⁶⁸

After Engelbrekt's death, the Union was only partially realized again in the subsequent years. After Eric was deposed, the Union was briefly reunited under Christopher of Bavaria;

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Dag Retsö and Johan Söderberg, "The Late-Medieval Crisis Quantified," 8-13.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Note that the Swedish "provinces" were, and still are, equated to parishes. This demonstrates how the original bureaucratic management of both the kingdom/state and Church overlapped. Of course this system does secularize over time.

⁶⁵ King Eric's heirs also died causing another line of succession crisis.

⁶⁶ Mats Hallenberg, "For The Wealth of The Realm: The Transformation of the Public Sphere in Swedish Politics, c. 1434–1650," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37, no. 5 (2012): pp. 561, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2012.716638>.

⁶⁷ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 121-140.

⁶⁸ Mats Hallenberg, "For The Wealth Of The Realm: The Transformation of the Public Sphere in Swedish Politics, c. 1434–1650," 557-577.

however, he died in 1448 causing another crisis of succession. Even more worrisome to some of the Scandinavian aristocracy, the Union was at its most fragile state—possibly even more fragile than in the early days of its formation. To make matters worse for the Swedish aristocracy, the Danish crown elected Christian I of House Oldenburg as the next King of Denmark in 1448 with the expectation that the Swedish nobility would do the same. They did, begrudgingly.⁶⁹ There was nearly a 10-year period between Christian I being elected the Danish King (1448) and the Swedish King (1457). During this 10-year period in Sweden, Karl Knutsson declared himself king as he invoked the religious legends of the crusader king, Saint Erik, to legitimize his claims to the throne.⁷⁰ He even tried to trace his lineage to Saint Erik.⁷¹ Unlike Denmark who had a royal blood line, Sweden lacked one. Moreover, Karl's attempt to legitimize his rule by claiming direct lineage to the protector of the Swedish realm—Saint Erik—serves as another *proto* building block of nationalism and exhibits the myth of common descent via divine, royal lineage. However, due to the political instability in the Swedish Kingdom, and the competing interests of other lords, Karl was more of a king in name rather than in practice. This would explain why over 1448-1470 Karl would sporadically rule for three short periods (sharing power with the *Riksråd*—the state council composed of clergy and members of the aristocracy) as Sweden intermittently flipped between a regency and monarchy. It is overwhelmingly agreed upon that this period could be categorized as an aristocratic republic (with periods of flux in power between the king and the *råd*).⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 108-114.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Erik Lönnroth, *Sverige och Kalmarunionen: 1397–1457*, (Gothenburg: Elander 1937). The *råd* was originally the name of the state council and is now also synonymous with the modern term “state.”

Even though Karl Knutsson was unable to hold the throne, Christian would never see the Swedish throne again after 1464. During these unstable times, Christian I of Denmark was very unpopular in the Swedish realm. In fact, when Christian attempted to reclaim Sweden in 1471, he faced defeat at the *Battle of Brunkeberg* (outside Stockholm).⁷³ This battle was pivotal for the Swedish nobility, burghers, and miners. Not only did the Sture family replace the Oxenstierna family—who were predominant leaders in the Swedish Catholic Church and close allies with the Danish Crown—as the regents of the Swedish realm.⁷⁴ This battle also reinforced the earlier divisions and political instability of the 1430s and 1440s within the Kalmar Union.⁷⁵ So as the Union’s appeal waned, the Swedish nobility (and even some clergy) harked to the past of an independent Sweden and regional divides strengthened. Using Anderson’s framework, it is clear nonetheless that there existed some sense of a Swedish *imagined community* that was built on a common history associated with martyr and veneration of Saint Erik.

In addition to these intra-Union trends, within Sweden, Sten Sture began crafting a narrative of Swedish independence, and the establishment of a Sture monarchy (rather than just a regency). Like Karl Knutsson, Sten Sture invoked the legends of St. Erik⁷⁶ and King Magnus Ericksson’s *Landslag*;⁷⁷ clinging to the notions of an old but also a new sense of “Swedishness” at the end of the Middle Ages. For example, Sten Sture commissioned a plate which “In the foreground depicted a scene from Erik’s legend: the king falling into the hands of his Danish captivators. His right hand however pointed to a battle scene occupying most of the table. It

⁷³ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 7-8.

⁷⁴ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 6-13,

⁷⁵ Margaretha Nordquist, “Eternal Bonds Of Love Or Foreign Oppression?” 392-393.

⁷⁶ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 109.

⁷⁷ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 111.

displayed knights fighting under the Swedish banner overpowering a Danish force.”⁷⁸ While the plate is riddled with historical inaccuracies, it conceptualizes the changes in the realm quite nicely. Just like the plate, on the one hand Sten Sture’s Sweden adhered to the traditions of an elected monarch, whose ascension to the throne “paralleled” St. Erik’s, but on the other hand, he began the process of establishing a more centralized Sweden that stripped the power of the Catholic Church and some of the nobility.⁷⁹ And even better, by commissioning this plate, Sten Sture harks to a mythic past that original viewers would have commonly associated with realm.

Additionally, Sten Sture sought to cement his legacy by commissioning a sculpture that memorialized his victory at Brunkeberg. On New Year’s Eve 1489, a *papal nuncio* inaugurated the sculpture that depicted St. George slaying a dragon.⁸⁰ The Pope himself even contributed some of the bones of St. George in the commemoration of this statue.⁸¹ With the sculpture’s inauguration in 1489, the destination became both a national memorial and a religious sight of pilgrimage. Now while this crusader iconography was quite common in the Middle Ages, what distinguished this source from its contemporaries was that St. George was Sten Sture’s personal patron-saint, and the Danes were traditionally represented by a dragon similar to King Christian I’s coat of arms. Thus, given the apparent intentions of employing this crusader iconography, the sculpture also demonstrates how religious symbols were employed by secular authorities and reconstructed to further their politicized narratives of the realm.

⁷⁸ Svanberg, J. & Qvarnström, A., *Sankt Göran och draken* (Stockholm 1998), pp. 39-41. Found in Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai’s Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 88.

⁷⁹ Sten Sture is only partially successful with this.

⁸⁰ Bernt Notke, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/8423>, *Swedish biographical dictionary (species by Jan Svanberg)*, retrieved on 14 November 2020. This is a prime example of religion interacting with nationalistic commemoration of the state. The sculpture was done by an artist from Lübeck, Bernt Notke.

⁸¹ They reside within the bottom of the sculpture.

Since his victory in battle secured his regency, Sten Sture inaugurated new Swedish traditions by memorializing the *Battle of Brunkeberg* and tying its victory to God, the realm, and himself in what appears to be a pseudo-populist appeal. For example, the battle was knowingly commemorated every year until 1528, and probably reminded the townspeople of the victory and sacrifices of Brunkeberg.⁸² In fact, in the *Sturekrönika* there is a reference to the 1495 procession that described the memorial's "emotional and popular" impact on observers as the kingdom prepared for war with the Russians in Finland.⁸³ While the source should not be interpreted literally, it does, however, demonstrate the intentions of the chronicler and the crafting of a common mythic history of the realm. Similar to the romanticized narratives of nationalism in the nineteenth century, the author of the *Sturekrönika* intended (either consciously or sub consciously) to frame this event in this proto-national manner as a struggle for the realm. This reference reinforces the constructed narrative of the realm put forth by Sten Sture by politicizing multiple religious and political symbols and icons. As the sculpture proceeded through Stockholm in preparation for war, the kingdom (which appears to exhibit behaviors comparable to modern nation-states) directly connected itself to the power of the Church (if not attempting to supplant its power) and the victories of past national struggles. In other words, Sten Sture began institutionalizing a proto-national history as both the kingdom and the Church invested in memorializing the *Battle of Brunkeberg*.

Hans II and Christian II of Denmark (1455-1513)

⁸² Margaretha Nordquist, "Celebrating the Memory of Victory: Tracing the memories of the Battle of Brunkeberg (1471)," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 1 (2020): 134.

⁸³ Klemming, *Svenska medeltidens rimkrönikor*, 126-7; Nyberg, 'The Shield of the Kalmar Union', 230. Found in Margaretha Nordquist, "Celebrating the Memory of Victory: Tracing the memories of the Battle of Brunkeberg (1471)," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 1 (2020): 134. Interestingly enough too, even though Muscovy and Sweden would fight in Finland, usually the borders returned to those outlined by the *Treaty of Nöteborg* (1323). This would be further codified in the *Treaty of Teusina* (1595)

Even though Sture the Elder, and later Svante Nilsson (father of Sten Sture the Younger), failed to establish a Sture monarchy, he still managed to maintain his position as the second most powerful man in Sweden even after King Hans (Christian I of Denmark's son) defeated him in battle in 1497. In 1501 Hans was deposed after losing several wars against the Hanseatic cities, and Sten Sture the Elder reigned as regent for another two years until his death. Svante Nilsson and Sten Sture the Younger subsequently reigned over Sweden as regents, almost establishing a monarchy. In fact, Sten Sture the Younger even adopted the Sture surname from his great-grandmother—an intentional choice to invoke his predecessor's legacy and craft a potential, royal lineage. However, under Sture the Younger's regency, Christian II of Denmark actively worked to isolate the regent in order to reconquer the Swedish realm.⁸⁴ Coinciding with the Danish efforts to renew the Union via more taxes, economic tariffs, and war, in 1514 Pope Leo X (a Medici pope) named Gustav Trolle archbishop to replace Jakob Ulvsson. Trolle—whose father lost the election of regency to the Young Sture—was ordered to reassert the power of the Church and restore Church lands confiscated during the Sture regencies.⁸⁵ Accomplishing this would restore the power of the papacy and Sweden would be once again reincorporated into the Union.

Unfortunately for Trolle, as he pursued his papal orders, Sten Sture the Younger branded Trolle a traitor, devising a rumor that Trolle worked with Christian II, and imprisoned him in 1517.⁸⁶ Trolle quickly sent messages to Rome, and to some shock, the pope excommunicated

⁸⁴ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 10-11.

⁸⁵ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 12-13. Trolle probably performed his duties just fine given family allegiance and grievances; also given that King Christian II was related to Charles V, and Pope Leo X cooperated with Charles, this transcontinental connection via the Church bureaucracy definitely played an important role in secular and church politics.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Trolle spoke favorably of Christian after 1517 but it is unclear if he actually coordinated with Christian II. It is more likely that as the Church's ambitions in Scandinavia overlapped with Danish ambitions and so both operated towards similar, yet still distinct, goals.

Sten Sture from the Catholic Church.⁸⁷ This was very devastating to Sten Sture's legitimacy and during this instability, Christian II attacked Stockholm in 1520. After Sten Sture the Younger was mortally wounded in combat fighting against the Danes, Christian II declared himself King of Sweden.⁸⁸ By conquering the city, and by extension the realm, Christian II, with the newly reinstated Archbishop Gustav Trolle by his side, executed 80 noblemen in what is now called the Stockholm Bloodbath, which lasted for three days from November 9 to November 11, 1520. Adding to the horror of the event, Christian II—who was partially motivated by Gustav Trolle's accusations of heresy—even reneged on his promise to pardon the nobles if they surrendered the city; he executed a few bishops—shocking the Catholic Church—and on his return to Copenhagen he executed a few lords and peasants.⁸⁹

Among the deceased was Gustav Vasa's father—giving the young Vasa a personal motivation for his revolt—however, what initiated this conflict were the varying grievances between the Sture party and the Catholic Church. In trying to establish a hereditary monarchy by riding a wave of separatist and anti-Danish populism, the Sture's (especially under Sture the Younger) tried to strip the Church of their land and privileges, and they imprisoned Archbishop Trolle on false accusations of corroborating with Christian II. “Thus, from the very beginning, the national struggle for freedom became linked with the effort to diminish the power of the Catholic Church in Sweden.”⁹⁰ For Gustav Vasa (who escaped the bloodshed in Stockholm), he sought to expel Christian II from the Swedish throne, and so he worked with the banks in Lübeck

⁸⁷ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 14.

⁸⁸ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 15-20. Sture the Younger left behind his wife and infant son who would cause some issues for Gustav Vasa's later ascension to the throne.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Trolle exercised caution with this policy because he primarily wanted to reassert Church power, but Christian went along.

⁹⁰ E. I. Kouri, “The early Reformation in Sweden and Finland c. 1520-1560,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 45-46.

to fund his revolt and he rallied the peasants of Dalarna, sparking outright war.⁹¹ In order to pay back the banks of Lübeck, however, Gustav Vasa would use the Reformation to finish what the Sture's did not and strip the Church of its special tax privileges and confiscate Church property for the benefit of the crown.

Although Sweden had withdrawn from the Kalmar Union in the past, Gustav Vasa would end up being the only Swedish nobleman to succeed at solidifying Swedish secession in 1523. Even though Sweden could have rejoined the Union like times past, they did not. To be clear, the collapse of the Union did not “awake” Swedish-national consciousness, nor did it fragment into perfect nation-states. The development of national-consciousness and state-building took time and were more complex as society, the economy, and political institutions were restructured. In fact, Gustav Vasa's early reign was rocked by rebellion and instability too when he restructured the tax systems and enriched the monarchy, and when Catholic enclaves of rebels in the southern province of Småland revolted. However, by politicizing these early Swedish religious and proto-national histories, Gustav Vasa not only maintained his authority as King of Sweden, but also transitioned Sweden from an elected monarchy to a hereditary monarchy—laying the early foundations for what becomes an early absolutist state.

The Integration of Church, Realm, and Nation

During the Kalmar Union, the three Scandinavian kingdoms maintained their own laws and governing institutions, while the Union King bound himself to the individual laws of the realms (at least in theory). As stated earlier, the Union Kings' taxes and wars were unpopular to some in the Swedish realm, who then used these grievances to foster sentiments of Swedish separatism from the Union. Even more frustrating for the *riksråd*—who, since King Eric's reign,

⁹¹ Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611*, 43-49.

tried to remind the Union Kings of their oaths to subject themselves to the laws of the Swedish realm—“Union monarchs considered that their kingship placed them above all national laws.”⁹² This would contribute to the generally contentious relationship between Copenhagen and Stockholm. While Stockholm and Copenhagen were (for the most part) the political capitals of their respective realms in the late Middle Ages, the Church’s history in the region maps out differently. Between Lund and Uppsala, the archdioceses disputed their jurisdictional claims over the Swedish realm. This history stretches far back to the twelfth century and would become just as pivotal in establishing different national consciousnesses in conjunction with the political events of the later Middle Ages. The legend and the cult of St. Erik in Sweden, for example, would become national symbols for the realm. In addition, the large degree of overlap between Church politics and secular politics is important to note, as Church and secular institutions shared power in the medieval hierarchy. Pope Boniface VIII in the *Unam Sanctam* (1302) would superciliously characterize this medieval relationship as: “the spiritual and the temporal, are in the power of the Church. The former is to be used by the Church, the latter for the Church; the one by the hand of the priest, the other by the hand of kings and knights but at the command and permission of the priest.”⁹³

To look for proto-nationalism in Europe during the late Middle Ages and Early Modern periods, it is, therefore, essential to examine how secular politics and Church politics overlapped and conflicted among the Scandinavian kingdoms. While secular political events and wars were stressed in proto-national histories, they do not alone explain how different national-consciousnesses developed in Scandinavia. Their political implications are also somewhat

⁹² Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 244.

⁹³ *A Reformation Sourcebook: Documents from an Age of Debate*, ed. Michael W. Bruening (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), doc. 1 “Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, 1302.

restricted to living memory (plus or minus a few decades). For example, as described in the memorialization of the *Battle of Brunkeberg* (1471), the ceremonial procession of the statue commemorating the battle only lasted until 1528.⁹⁴ So, to further understand nationalism during this period it is better to analyze religious traditions and liturgical practices because these measures are more enduring and were more defining for the Swedish polity. Moreover, the Reformation becomes pivotal in this discussion as former powers and revenues of the Church shifted into the hands of secular rulers, who established national churches—directly overseeing and shaping the confessionalization for the people within their realms. In doing so, secular rulers established new *imagined communities* via national churches centered on both religious and national identities.

National Saints—A Late Medieval Concept

To reinforce the religious and political connections that sainthood had in the Middle Ages, recall the important connection between Sten Sture's patron saint, St. George, and the dually religious and nationalist symbolism employed in the statue by Bernt Notke (1481). Also recall the historiography on the legend of Erik the Holy. Well, in the *Treaty of Kalmar* (1397) each kingdom was also represented by the realm's patron saint: Sweden (St. Erik), Denmark (St. Canute), and Norway (St. Olaf).⁹⁵ "These saints were regarded or promoted as eternal protectors of their respective kingdoms."⁹⁶ In fact, Stockholm's Coat of Arms has been the portrait of St. Erik since the fourteenth century. Yet within all of this, it is even more intriguing that St. Erik was never canonized by the Pope, whereas the royal St. Canute—Canute IV of Denmark—was

⁹⁴ Margaretha Nordquist, "Celebrating the Memory of Victory: Tracing the memories of the Battle of Brunkeberg (1471)," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 45, no. 1 (2020): 134.

⁹⁵ *Kalmarunionen*, "Treaty of Kalmar" September 25, 1397.

⁹⁶ Tracey R. Sands, "Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala," 230.

recognized as the patron saint of Denmark in 1101.⁹⁷ Confusing this story even more, St. Birgitta of Sweden—who had few royal connections—was canonized in 1391 by Pope Boniface IX and she would be considered the patron saint of the Kalmar Union.⁹⁸ Despite Birgitta’s canonization and recognition by the Catholic Church, the secular and religious leaders who drafted the Kalmar Union, intentionally recognized St. Erik to represent the realm of Sweden. These actions not only contradicted the directions of former popes, but also codified an uncanonized saint in a secular document. Given this intentional fusion between religious and national iconography by the Swedish clergy and aristocracy, medieval saints, thus, contributed to the development of national consciousnesses for the Scandinavian Kingdoms.

As Haki Antonsson argues: “It was [primarily] in Sweden that cults of missionary saints became a notable feature of the medieval religious landscape, especially as patron saints of the Swedish bishoprics.”⁹⁹ However, remembering the medieval historiography of the Legend of Erik the Holy, the cult of saints, like St. Erik’s, were not just limited to the religious landscape, but were also recycled by secular leaders in the Middle Ages. According to Tracey Sands: “Monarchs during the Kalmar Union period showed strong awareness of the symbolic importance of national, and perhaps especially, royal saints [such as St. Canute and St. Erik], and both moved to exploit its potential.”¹⁰⁰ Recall as well, Karl Knutsson tied his lineage to St. Erik’s

⁹⁷ Pope Alexander III possibly even referenced his disapproval of St. Erik in a papal Bull that outwardly condemned the Swedish clergy for celebrating St. Erik because he was accused of debauchery. Additionally, members of the Danish royal family were more successful at canonizing their royal saints and were even able to canonize St. Canute Lavard in 1170—who was killed by his cousin Magnus I of Sweden because he was perceived a threat to the Danish throne.

⁹⁸ In 1999 Pope John Paul II named St. Birgitta as a patron saint of Europe, suggesting a greater degree of internationalism with her cult.

⁹⁹ Haki Antonsson, “Sanctus Ericus rex Danus (Plovpenning),” in Stephan Borgehammar, Karsten Friis-Jensen, Lars Boje Mortensen and Åslaug Ommundsen, eds., *Medieval Nordic Literature in Latin* (2012), [https://wikihost.uib.no/medieval/index.php/Sanctus_Ericus_rex_Danus_\(Plovpenning\)](https://wikihost.uib.no/medieval/index.php/Sanctus_Ericus_rex_Danus_(Plovpenning)); Jørgen Skaft e Jensen, “Erik Plovpenning”, *KLNM*, vol. 21, cols. 156–57; Ellen Jørgensen, *Helgendyrkelse i Danmark* (Copenhagen, 1909), 26–32.

¹⁰⁰ Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 230.

to legitimize his claim to the Swedish throne. In doing so Karl Knutsson crafted a mythologized history (*Karlskrönika*) to legitimize his claim to throne via the myth of *common descent*. Thus, the popular significance of St. Erik's representation of the realm could be viewed as a late medieval example of proto-nationalism.¹⁰¹

Church & Realm

Around 1104, the Archdiocese of Lund was established as the ecclesiastical authority of the entire Scandinavian region. While Lund and the province of Skåne are currently within the borders of Sweden, during the Middle Ages the territory fluctuated between Sweden and Denmark—primarily residing within the borders of the Danish realm. By the middle of the twelfth century, though, the Archdiocese of Nidaros was established in 1153 which “made Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and the Western Isles independent of Lund.”¹⁰² Unlike Nidaros, however, “when the Archdiocese of Uppsala was established [in 1163] ... the archbishop of Lund had been named papal legate on behalf of Uppsala and Sweden.¹⁰³ As a consequence of this title, the relationship between Lund and Uppsala was filled with tension. Likewise, the narrative of Uppsala would also mimic the later narrative put forth by Swedish separatists in the Union: a desire to be independent of Danish influence in both regnal and religious matters.

While the Archdiocese of Uppsala would ultimately separate from Lund in 1164, Lund retained its privileges as *primas* over Sweden,¹⁰⁴ and this competing relationship between Lund and Uppsala caused tensions over ecclesiastical authority that would persist into the fifteenth

¹⁰¹ While St. Birgitta would ultimately become the saintly figure who promoted and protected the interests of the Kalmar Union, but her cult was hardly militarized, compared to the royal crusader saints.

¹⁰² Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 240.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Eljas Orrman, “Church and Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. Knut Helle (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 430–31; *Diplomatarium Suecanum*, ed. Johan Gustaf Liljegren (Stockholm, 1829), 1:70–72, no. 49, Pope Alexander III's charter establishing the Archdiocese of Uppsala, found in Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018) 240.

century. Furthermore, given that secular and religious spheres overlapped tremendously during the Middle Ages, the proto-nationalist behaviors of the Swedish Kingdom must be contextualized by the competition over regnal authority between Stockholm and Copenhagen as well as the competition over ecclesiastical authority between Lund and Uppsala. For example, while the reign of Christopher of Bavaria (1440-1448) was a relatively calm period in the sphere of secular politics, in the sphere of church politics, religious tensions lingered. In 1444 for instance, the new archbishop of Lund—Tue Nielsen—marched to the Nordic Council at Kalmar, but he was proceeded by a cross when moving through the Swedish realm.¹⁰⁵ “The Swedish bishops interpreted this act as an assertion of the authority of Lund over Uppsala, implying that Sweden belonged to the Danish ecclesiastical province, and as a reassertion of the matter of primacy maintained by the Danes and denied by the Swedes.”¹⁰⁶ Even more compellingly, this would happen again in 1482 at Kalmar where representatives of the three realms met to discuss the election of King Hans to the throne.¹⁰⁷ As the new archbishop of Lund, Jens Brostorp, again marched to Kalmar with a processional cross carried before him, while the archdiocese of Uppsala would interpret this as a threat.¹⁰⁸ In fact, archbishop Jakob Ulvsson of Uppsala even wrote to Pope Sixtus IV asserting that the two realms remain separated and “accus[ed] his Danish counterpart of putting the Kalmar Union at risk”¹⁰⁹ by claiming primacy over the

¹⁰⁵ Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 244.

¹⁰⁶ Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 245.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. It is important to note here that this occurred after the Battle of Brunkeberg and a period of Swedish secession.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. This was Brostorp’s first Union meeting.

¹⁰⁹ Gösta Kellerman, *Jacob Ulvsson och den svenska kyrkan under äldre Sturetiden 1470–1497* (Stockholm, 1935), pp. 142–44; Archbishop Jacob Ulvsson’s letter of protest addressed to the Pope, dated May 28, 1483, is listed in the main catalogue of *Svenskt diplomatarium* [SDHK] as no. 41351. It has been published in *Historiska handlingar 8: 1. Bidrag till den katolska hierarkins historia*, ed Carl Gustaf Styffe (Stockholm, 1879), 441 and also digitised: https://sok.riksarkivet.se?SDHK=41351&postid=sdhk_41351, found in Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018) 245.

Swedish realm. These performative actions by the members of the clergy could not go unnoticed in the secular sphere as well—especially if the clergy also comprised the *riksråd*.

Unlike the modern separations between church and state, “the division typically made in the present day between religious and secular spheres of life would have been utterly foreign to people living in the Middle Ages.”¹¹⁰ From a systemic perspective, the structure of the Church bureaucracy overlapped with the realm’s bureaucracy. For example, the *riksråd* (Danish *rigsråd*) was composed of both ranking clergy in the realm, as well as secular actors such as regents, noblemen, and bailiffs. This was quite common among European political systems in the Middle Ages. Likewise, in all of the Nordic realms, “archbishops tended to be regarded as the leading members of the councils, and other bishops tended to hold powerful positions and wield political influence.”¹¹¹ Since leading clergy regularly worked with secular actors to legislate and manage the region, they therefore actively contributed to the development of the Scandinavian realms.

In the secular sphere, “many rulers (not least Union monarchs) exercised significant influence over the church in a number of different ways, including the selection of archbishops, bishops, and other prelates, the donation and confiscation of property, and sometimes even physical threats toward or imprisonment of clergy.”¹¹² From this relationship it is important to stress here that the Church’s integration and participation in the secular realm’s bureaucratic functions, and vice versa, indicate a more complex power relationship than originally assumed by modernist historians. Church and state were far from separated. In fact it is better to frame the relationship between these two institutions during the late Middle Ages as two institutions

¹¹⁰ Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 229.

¹¹¹ Herluf Nielsen, Knut Helle, Hans Gillingsam and Seppo Svante, “Rigsråd,” KLNLM, vol. 14, cols. 220–33, found in Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018) 230.

¹¹² Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” 230-231. This exchange between secular and religious authorities was heavily exploited with the Renaissance movement. Additionally, the quotation indirectly mentions the imprisonment of both archbishops Jakob Ulvsson and Gustave Trolle.

sharing power—both needing the other to reinforce each other’s authority and legitimacy. While religious and secular institutions at times competed for power over the Scandinavian realms, their relationship was primarily mutual and to each other’s benefit, until the power of the Church was ultimately supplanted by that of the nation-state. It would be worthwhile to also note that as secular leaders modeled themselves off the Church bureaucracy and administration of the realm in establishing nation-states.

Delving further into the fusion between Church and realm, it is also important to analyze the internal politics of the Church. For example, the differences in the religious calendars between the archdioceses of Uppsala and Lund demonstrate how religious and national narratives were constructed by the clergy and secular elite to achieve their respective political goals. At Uppsala, the religious calendar overwhelmingly celebrated religious holidays and saint days closely connected to the Swedish realm and who were notoriously uncanonized by the papacy. By contrast, Denmark (who viewed itself as the primate of Scandinavia at the time) incorporated Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish religious holidays in an attempt to project its primacy in Lund as the leader of the Catholic Church in Scandinavia.¹¹³ In doing so, not only did this establish religious and political tensions between the Danish and Swedish churches, but these differences demonstrate that Swedish Christianity intentionally excluded other saint days, whereas Danish Christianity was not as exclusive. It is fair to say that this practice was based on some notion of a proto-national identity that was distinctly tied to one’s liturgical practices and patron saint of the realm. Thus, the Swedish Catholic Church established its own distinct traditions beknown and practiced mainly amongst Swedes. For Denmark, the archbishop of Lund

¹¹³ Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, ed. by Carsten Selch Jensen, Tracey R. Sands, Nils Holger Petersen, Kurt Villads Jensen, and Tuomas M. S. Lehtonen, (Medieval Institute Publications: Western Michigan University, 2018) 233.

contributed to the Danish Crown's projection of power and leadership among the Scandinavian realms in the *Danish Rhyme Chronicle*. Nonetheless, the competition between the archbishops at Lund and Uppsala demonstrated how liturgical differences contributed to the formation of two *imagined communities* that celebrated different saint days, at various reverences, and whose loyalties were to the opposing *sees*.

The Significance of The Chronica Regni Gothorum (1471)

Cathedrals, like the archdiocese of Uppsala (where Ericus Olai would publish the *Chronica regni gothorum*), were also places of scholarship and home to many universities in medieval Europe. Within the walls of these early institutions political, theological, and later humanist ideas were transmitted by members of the clergy to those who studied at university.

In particular, the *Chronica regni gothorum* (1471), which translates into English as the “Chronicle of the realm of the Goths,” by Ericus Olai (a professor in theology at Uppsala) was a touchstone of Swedish proto-nationalism as it constructed a mythologized origins story of the Swedish people. For example, according to Olai's chronicle, the origins of the Swedish people date back to when the Svea and the Goths united as one people and united the lands that include Svealand (central Sweden) and Götaland (Västergötland, Östergötland, and Småland)—establishing the early Swedish Kingdom. Like modern nationalism, Olai's ethno-historical origins story was established on the myths of *common history* and *common descent* and should represent a medieval precursor to the arguments laid out by modern nationalists. In addition, the chronicle continued the discourse of the late medieval Swedish Church, which stressed an ecclesiastical separation in jurisdiction between Lund and Uppsala (the religious capitals) and would further separatist claims in Sweden during the late fifteenth century.¹¹⁴ The *Chronica*

¹¹⁴ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 134.

regni gothorum presented pseudo-historical and theological justifications for the independence of a Swedish realm and people. Thus, in tandem with the effects from the *Battle of Brunkeberg* (1471) and the regency of Sten Sture, the production of Olai's origins narrative contributed to the development of a proto-national, Swedish identity, and furthered anti-Danish attitudes.

As Sten Sture crafted a popular national history that furthered some national divisions between Swedes and Danes,¹¹⁵ Ericus Olai—according to Biörn Tjällén in *Church and Nation: the discourse authority on Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum*—simultaneously contributed a national history that conceptualized the Swedish realm, which “verged towards the modern.”¹¹⁶ Tjällén maintains that Ericus's chronicle traces the lineage of the Swedes to the *Sveas* and the *Goths* who were the ancient people that took possession of the land.¹¹⁷ This primordial conception of what could be considered an *ethnie* was a pillar of Ericus's chronicle, and future conceptions of the nation and the fatherland.

While Tjällén speaks mainly about the *Chronica regni gothorum*, he also states that the “historical role of national thought or nationalism in this epoch remains a matter of inquiry.”¹¹⁸ By situating the *Chronica regni gothorum* in the greater context of this new historiography of nationalism, there is evidence to suggest from the sources that the Swedish people in the Middle Ages exhibited proto-nationalist behaviors. For example, in Ericus's own words, he pushed a narrative insinuating that the Danes actively sought to conquer the Swedish realm:

¹¹⁵ Sven Helander, *Den medeltida Uppsalaliturgin* (Lund, 2001), pp. 208-210, found in Tracey R. Sands, “Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala,” in *Saints and Sainthood around the Baltic Sea*, (Western Michigan University: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018) 243. Note that the border provinces did not express these divisions as much.

¹¹⁶ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 139.

¹¹⁷ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 67. Also there is a Gothicist world view in Sweden that argued that mankind originated in Scandinavia.

¹¹⁸ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 12.

For it was [Eric of Pomerania's] whole intention to snatch away the name of realm from Sweden and to make use of the realm just as he wished, thinking that this wretched region should have no councilors, just as the Romans took away the name of realm from Judea. For in Danish matters and undertakings the parliament [Concilium maiorum] was used and there he had councilors. In Swedish undertakings and matters however he had not Swedish councilors but Danes and Germans.¹¹⁹

From this example it is clear that Ericus pushed a narrative that stressed foreign oppression at the expense of the “true people” of the Swedish realm—the Swedes. This kind of “othering” not only harks back to Magnus Ericksson's *Landslag*—which promoted that the king be of native origins—but it is a prime example of proto-nationalism. Just because the idea of the nation was expressed in religious terms should not discredit the existence of a national identity altogether. It is clear from the text that Ericus operated under a medieval conception of Danishness, Germanness, and Swedishness. Thus, it is necessary to further explore national identity formation in Scandinavia.

Furthermore, in a direct and dramatic analogy to the Jewish diaspora (with broad claims like the romanticized narratives of nineteenth century nationalism), Ericus Olai positions the Swedish realm and people as victims of Danish invasion and foreign oppression both before and during the Kalmar Union. While there were tensions among the Union realms both before and during, it was not a systematic offensive invasion as Ericus indicates in the chronicle, which pinpoints to just how much Ericus is filling in spaces in his origins story with his own opinion. This history making, therefore, although expressed via biblical allegory, operates under a medieval conception of the Swedish people, and rhetorically complements the mythologized

¹¹⁹ Ericus Olai, *The Swenskes och Göthers Historia*, translated by Joh Sylvio, (Stockholm: tryckt hoos Niclas Wankijf, 1678) 395.

history Ericus is crafting. Given this, the *Chronica regni gothorum* is, an even better example of proto-nationalism in the Middle Ages because it demonstrates how ecclesiastical scholarship at Uppsala contributed to developing an origins story of the Swedish people, and a Swedish identity. This at times would also overlap with secular forms of national propaganda employed by secular leaders to legitimize their claims to the monarchy and the realm.

In Ericus's description of the Engelbrekt Rebellion, his proto-nationalist narrative is on full display. According to Ericus, Engelbrekt was "moved to act by compassion and a duty felt to liberate the fatherland, and as unselfish in this pursuit to the extent that he was prepared to die for his countrymen."¹²⁰ Not only does Ericus characterize Engelbrekt as a patriot of the fatherland, but he also portrays Engelbrekt's efforts in this early fifteenth century rebellion as altruistic, radical, and loosely synonymous to St. Erik as the protector of the realm. Ericus is even almost nostalgic in descriptions of St. Erik's rule—harking to a past "Golden Age". Likewise, in comparison to his descriptions of Karl Knutsson—who is openly discredited in the chronicle for tracing his lineage to St. Erik—Ericus's martyrization of Engelbrekt was distinct because Engelbrekt served Ericus's more populist and proto-nationalistic narrative in the chronicle that harked to this *mythic past*.¹²¹ Additionally, while Ericus discredits Karl Knutsson's claim that his lineage descended from St. Erik, Ericus still promotes the false rumor that the Danes stole and destroyed the Swedish lineages, exposing the realm to constant chaos and instability because unlike Denmark who could trace their royal lineage to St. Canute, Sweden could not.¹²² This claim was not invented by Ericus, but his publication of the rumor in a

¹²⁰ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 110.

¹²¹ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum* (c. 1471) 108-114.

¹²² Ibid.

scholastic work demonstrates a general distrust of Danish intentions among Swedes, and anti-Danish attitudes even among the Swedish clergy. Moreover, Ericus attributes the political turmoil in Sweden to foreign rule by the Danes, and Sweden's inability to elect a native king like St. Erik. Essentially the Swedish clergy and aristocracy were waiting for their prophesized king.¹²³

Consequently, this proto-national scholarship and anti-Danish discourse were present in Uppsala while Gustav Vasa attended university there.¹²⁴ For clarity, Gustav Vasa's interaction with the *Chronica regni gothorum* did not inspire a nationalist agenda to become King of Sweden. In fact, Gustav Vasa actually disliked the *Chronica regni gothorum* because the work placed the crown and the church equally under a dual system represented by Saint Erik and Saint Henrik.¹²⁵ By invoking the legends of St. Erik and St. Henrik, Ericus crafts an allegory using the relationship between the two men as an ideal model of balance between the secular and religious spheres of authority. Again, another example of how the cult of saints was employed by theologians for secular uses. Just as states crafted histories around national heroes in the "Age of Nationalism", Ericus builds a proto-national history highlighting a myth of *common descent* with St. Erik and a myth of *common history/origins* with the Engelbrekt rebellion and the origins of the Swedish people. More importantly, by rhetorically employing Swedish religious and regnal symbolism in his chronicle, Ericus constructs a proto-nationalist narrative that calls for the liberty of church and realm from Danish influence. A call that Gustav Vasa answered, and that Martin Luther would provide the theological justifications for.

¹²³ This rhetoric is somewhat unique for this period and mimics Nicolo Machiavelli's final chapter of *The Prince* which calls for an Italian leader to unite the peninsula and drive out

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 94-98. it is no coincidence that the patron of Uppsala is St. Erik and the mirroring patron of Åbo in Finland (a Swedish colony) was St. Henrik.

Gustav Vasa (1496-1560) and the Making of a State

According to Ole Peter Grell in *The Scandinavian Reformation* (1995): “The Reformation of the Nordic countries...was largely a by-product of Luther’s Reformation.”¹²⁶ Similar to the events in the Holy Roman Empire, just as Luther’s publications benefited from more pressing political events such the Siege of Vienna (1529) and the wars with France and England that distracted the pious Charles V, the Reformation in Scandinavia benefited from the political and social upheavals which have been outlined in the sections above. Additionally, while the influence of the Petri brothers and their close ties to Martin Luther cannot be overlooked in substantiating Grell’s claim, the Swedish Reformation must be analyzed by itself as well and in the context of the social and political history of Sweden to trace the development of a Swedish proto-national identity. Furthermore, the Reformation weakened the political center and accelerated the dissolution of the Kalmar Union (1397-1523) into territorial nation-states.¹²⁷

While Danish efforts to renew the Union with the help of the Catholic church coincided with the emergence of evangelical preaching in Sweden—most notably in the town of Strängnäs—the call for national independence became associated with the effort to diminish the power of the Catholic church and expel Danish influence in the realm.¹²⁸ Once Sweden was independent from Denmark after 1523, the newly elected King of Sweden, Gustav Vasa, would turn his gaze towards the properties and revenues of the church to enrich the crown and pay back his debts to the banks of Lübeck. To be clear, Gustav Vasa’s motivations for supporting Protestantism were primarily personal compared to his Danish counterparts Frederick I and

¹²⁶ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 1.

¹²⁷ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 2.

¹²⁸ It was at Strängnäs, where Gustav Vasa would be crowned King of Sweden in 1523.

Christian III who appeared to prioritize both religious and political motivations in their support of the Reformation. Nonetheless, by doing so, the success of the Reformation and first-generation reformers became entirely contingent on the success of Gustav Vasa and the establishment of the Swedish nation-state. Therefore, as in other protestant realms, in Denmark and Sweden the success of the Reformation hinged on the complex political changes with emergence of the nation-state.¹²⁹ Moreover, while Gustav Vasa and his heirs probably cared more about just seizing wealth for the crown—rather than their own piety to the Protestant cause—Luther and the Reformation provided Gustav Vasa the theological reasoning to subvert the spiritual power of the Church to the agenda of the emerging Swedish nation-state.

However, these princely reformations had various levels of popular support. Compared to Denmark, where there appears to be more popular support for the Reformation, “the uniformity of the Swedish literature is indicative of an evangelical movement which, apart from developments in Stockholm, depended primarily on princely initiatives,” and the formation of the early modern nation-state.¹³⁰ For instance, in the newly and tenuously independent Sweden-Finland, Gustav Vasa would be plagued with peasant revolts well into the 1540s—most notably the Dacke War (1542-1543)—whose participants clung to the “old faith” and revolted against the confiscation of church lands and heavy taxes.

Ultimately, Gustav Vasa would succeed at maintaining his grip on the Swedish throne and church, and after ruling for nearly forty years, he successfully subverted the powers of the church to the crown; rather than the temporal power serving the spiritual power per the *Unam Sanctam* (1302), the spiritual power was at the behest of the temporal power. Furthermore, by the

¹²⁹ E. I. Kouri, “The early Reformation in Sweden and Finland c. 1520-1560,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 45.

¹³⁰ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 4.

end of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, reformers such as Bishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus in his sermons would link Swedish national-patriotism with the Reformation—a trend that drew strong parallels between Biblical history and Swedish history for as God controlled the history of Israel, he too controlled Sweden's.¹³¹ Indeed, “Gustav Vasa and his successors were portrayed as staunch defenders of the faith on par with the heroes of the Old Testament,”¹³² and from these parallels arose a new national consciousness in conjunction with new forms of confessionalization. Thus, in a direct analogy to the Israel of the Old Testament, Sweden was viewed as a nation chosen by God, and the Swedish people as God's new chosen people.

Sweden Post 1523

While it was somewhat historical luck that Gustav Vasa would manage to become King of Sweden after 1523, his nearly forty-year rule over Sweden, and the establishment of a hereditary monarchy, were the products of his constant efforts to ward off foreign invasion, form a new Swedish state with the church subservient to the crown, and quell internal unrest. After Christian II of Denmark was driven out of Sweden, Gustav Vasa signed the *Treaty of Malmö* (1524) which was negotiated with Frederick I of Denmark (Christian II's uncle) who was the Duke of Holstein-Schleswig and sought to usurp Christian after losing a series of wars in the Baltic.

This was a difficult task for Frederick because Christian II was related to Charles V via his marriage to Isabella of Austria—Charles's sister. In fact, upon losing Sweden and disrupting the Danish legal and political system, Christian fled to the Spanish Netherlands in hopes of

¹³¹ Ingun Montgomery, “The institutionalisation of Lutheranism in Sweden and Finland,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 144-178, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 172.

¹³² *Ibid.*

seeking foreign intervention from his brother-in-law Charles V. The lingering threat of Christian's possible return was a fear held by both Frederick I and Gustav Vasa, hence their peace agreement at Malmö. However, similarly to Charles's reaction to the Reformation, there were more stressing matters for the King of Spain, Holy Roman Emperor, to deal with rather than aiding his brother-in-law who lost his own throne as a result of his flirtation with heresy—Protestantism. Nonetheless, the possible return of Christian II—or in Sweden, Christian the Tyrant—to the Danish throne was a constant fear of Gustav Vasa's. His paranoia, as Swedish historians have characterized it,¹³³ helps explain Gustav's decision to aid Frederick I and Christian III in the Count's War (1534-1536), but later restoke anti-Danish attitudes—a continuation of anti-Danishness from the late Middle Ages—and flirt with renewing Swedish claims over Skåne, Blekinge, and Gotland.¹³⁴ Gustav Vasa would go as far back as the fourteenth century and reference the reign of Magnus Ericksson—who lost the lands after the invasion of Valdemar IV of Denmark in 1360—to legitimize his claims over the southern provinces of the Scandinavian peninsula.

Although these claims never manifested into territorial gains until the *Treaty of Roskilde* (1658), Gustav Vasa's rhetoric and language in framing the events in his speeches clearly operate on distinct religious and proto-national notions of "Swedishness" and its counterpart "Danishness." In his speech to the peasantry and aristocracy of the border provinces of Halland and Skåne in 1523, "Gustav Vasa tried to persuade the people that they ought to join Sweden,

¹³³ Laura A Oland, "The Break From Rome: A Comparison Between Henry VIII and Gustav Vasa," (History Thesis, Arcadia University, 2017) 85.

¹³⁴ Swedish claims over Skåne and Blekinge were supposed to be renounced in the *Treaty of Malmö*. The conclusion of these territorial disputes would later be codified in the *Treaty of Roskilde* (1658) which concluded the Second Northern Seven-Years War and established the southern and western territorial borders of modern day Sweden.

since they, according to him, had ‘one tongue and all customs’ common with the Swedes.”¹³⁵ By referencing a *common tongue* and *customs* in his attempt to expand Swedish territory, and state, at the expense of Danish power in the Baltic, Gustav Vasa’s rhetorical strategies employed proto-nationalist rhetoric and serve as precursors to modern nationalism. In addition to his nationalist rhetoric, Gustav Vasa also pointed to a *common history*—another rhetorical strategy of modern nationalists—in his speeches crafting pro-Swedish and anti-Danish propaganda. At the meeting of the *riksråd* in Västerås in 1523, Gustav Vasa would echo the myths put forth by Ericus Olai in the *Chronica regni gothorum* (1471) in referencing the struggles of the Swedish people when under the rule of foreign—mainly Danish—kings.¹³⁶ Not only does this history include the period of the Kalmar Union, but it also stretches as far back to the reign of Albert of Mecklenburg and the ousting of King Magnus Eriksson—the author of the famed *Landslag* and *Stadslag* which, again, promoted that the king of Sweden be of native origins. Moreover, it was under Gustav Vasa’s reign and the emergence of the Swedish nation-state in conjunction with the Reformation that the culmination of these proto-national developments were on full display and employed in royal publications to garner popular appeal and legitimation.

Restructuring of Church and State

After already witnessing the Sture family’s struggle with establishing a hereditary monarchy, Gustav Vasa sought to further weaken the power of the *riksråd* and the Church in order to elevate the power of the crown. However, unlike the Stures, Gustav Vasa’s success in seizing church properties and revenues was in large part due to the greater continental effects of the Protestant Reformation. As E. I. Kouri states in “The Early Reformation in Sweden and

¹³⁵ *Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur* I–XI, Stockholm 1861–1888 (*GR*), I, p. 48–53 f. Translation found in Harlad Gustafsson “The Eighth Argument. Identity, Ethnicity and Political Culture in Sixteenth-Century Scandinavia.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 27, 91–114.

¹³⁶ *GR* 121–123. The most shocking and recent example being the Stockholm Bloodbath.

Finland”: “[Gustav Vasa’s] church policy was determined primarily by the wealth of the Catholic church rather than Luther’s teachings. Yet it was Luther who provided him with the theological rationale for crushing the church’s political power and confiscating its superfluous riches.”¹³⁷ This included appointing members of the former Sture party and other reformers to prominent positions in the Church of Sweden and *riksråd*. As a result of these royal appointments, when Gustav Vasa met with the Diet at Västerås 1525, he received an oath of allegiance from the estates, making both the Church and the *riksråd* subservient to agenda of the crown. Additionally, in 1527 at Västerås again, the parliamentary synod approved the confiscation of church properties and revenues to solve the financial difficulties of the realm as a result of Gustav Vasa borrowing money from the banks of Lübeck. Moreover, while the establishment of a hereditary monarchy would not materialize in law until the Diet of Västerås met again in 1544, the early developments in the 1520s provided the legal grounds for Gustav Vasa to appoint his son Erik as the next King of Sweden in the succession.¹³⁸ Not only did Gustav Vasa secure his son’s position before his death in 1560, but it also solidified his legacy with the establishment of a new Swedish monarchy and state.

Coupled with Gustav’s personal attempts to propagate a proto-nationalist narrative, he also restructured the governing systems of the realm, which once fully realized, transitioned Sweden from a medieval political system to a more modern-state system. This was not a natural progression as national histories romanticize, but more of a product of Gustav Vasa’s intentional efforts to secure his position on the throne.¹³⁹ Since Sweden could have rejoined the Kalmar

¹³⁷ E. I. Kouri, “The early Reformation in Sweden and Finland c. 1520-1560,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 48.

¹³⁸ Ingun Montgomery, “The institutionalisation of Lutheranism in Sweden and Finland,” in *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, 145.

¹³⁹ It is state sponsored because Gustav Vasa’s establishment of a hereditary monarchy also resulted in the formation of an absolutist monarchy. In an absolutist system monarchs view themselves as the state “L’État c’est moi.”

Union, Gustav Vasa propagated a proto-national history to legitimize his claim on the Swedish throne and promote an independent Sweden. As a testament to Gustav Vasa's success, recall that he was the only monarch in the past three centuries to successfully establish a lasting hereditary monarchy. He did this by crafting a narrative that again connected him to the legend and cult of St. Erik, and by stoking populist appeal after the "Stockholm Bloodbath."¹⁴⁰ Second, he restructured the tax system in 1526, which for the first time taxed all Church lands and wealth, as well as the aristocracy's, and he began engineering a national economy by directing the flow of commerce through Stockholm.¹⁴¹ Third, he broke with the Roman Catholic Church and like Henry VIII of England—who used the Reformation to appoint his own advisors to prominent positions such as archbishoprics—Gustav Vasa laid the foundations for the later Swedish Lutheran Church which would be formally established in 1591. Nonetheless, these structural changes required the expansion of the monarchy's bureaucracy and authority, and the religious conversions to Lutheranism neatly integrated with the already distinctive national religious practices in Sweden and prompted an opportunity for Gustav Vasa to make the church subservient to the crown.

Understanding that members of the clergy could even employ this proto-nationalist rhetoric for their own political gain, Gustav Vasa saw this as a threat to his power as the Church sought to reassert its authority in the region. Per the example of Ericus Olai, while his national history "fostered allegiance to an impersonal, perennial political entity, a Swedish state: a common patria to fight and to be martyred for,"¹⁴² it also fostered an allegiance to the church by

¹⁴⁰ Tracey R. Sands, "Saints and Political Identities in Late Medieval Lund and Uppsala," 563-565.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Lindkvist, "Law and the Making of the State in Medieval Sweden: Kingship and Communities," in *Legislation and Justice*, edited by Antonio Padoa-Schioppa, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 211-219

¹⁴² Biörn Tjällén, *Church and Nation: the Discourse on Authority in Ericus Olai's Chronica Regni Gothorum (c. 1471)* 139.

tying the institution to the legacy of St Henrik. So, to Gustav Vasa, this potentially threatened his intentions to further centralize the Swedish crown. To thwart this dualist system, Gustav Vasa restructured the church during the Protestant Reformation. Gustav Vasa accomplished some of his goals by seizing the printing presses at the cathedral at Uppsala and throughout the realm, censoring the narratives produced and producing his own propaganda meant to crush any challengers to the throne. During Gustav Vasa's reign within the castle walls in Stockholm, all the pamphlets produced were meant to serve the interests of Gustav Vasa and his construction of a new Swedish state apparatus. Moreover, similar to Benedict Anderson's analysis of print-media on the development of nationalism, print-media was an essential element of Gustav Vasa's state building efforts and the development of a Swedish proto-national identity.

Additionally, Gustav Vasa's subjugation of the Swedish Church to the crown in 1527 (a consequence of the Reformation) and his harnessing of the power of the printing press should be branded as a proto-nationalist ploy which built on earlier medieval understandings of a Swedish people rooted in religious tradition. Even though Gustav Vasa's intentions were out of his self-interests, rather than religiously driven, that does not necessarily contradict the reality that his propaganda (and the early contributions by other actors) engendered a proto-nationalist reaction in the realm. With the church subservient to the crown, Gustav Vasa pushed what should be considered a religious proto-national agenda in the Church by instructing the clergy to translate all works from Latin to the common vernacular—which aided in increasing literacy in the region.

To spearhead this project, Gustav Vasa instructed Olai Petri (the first leader of the Swedish Lutheran Church) to construct the *Svenska Krönika* that reinforced an already distinct Swedish religious tradition. As part of the new national and Lutheran agenda of the crown, Olai

Petri produced a new way to perform mass to delineate between Catholic and Lutheran in the *Svenska Krönika*.¹⁴³ Although Gustav Vasa would later remove Olai Petri from power and highly censor his theoretical works, the new mass served Gustav Vasa's original intentions because it established a new understanding of what it meant to be both Christian and Swedish. In addition, the Gustav Vasa Bible was published in 1541 in the Swedish vernacular offering literate Swedes the first chance to read the Bible and began standardizing the Swedish language with the rise of the printing press.¹⁴⁴ Even though Gustav Vasa did not formally establish the Lutheran Church to not further upset the peasantry and expose his rule to further internal revolt—after the Dacke Rebellion in Småland and similar ones in Dalarna—he did, however, force the clergy to perform all church sacraments in the common vernacular to push his agenda along. Traditionally, sacraments such as mass, which were essential to Christian life, were performed in Latin and were for the most part dictated by the Catholic clergy—headed by the Pope in Rome. So Gustav Vasa's emphasis on the common vernacular for church sacraments demonstrate a transition away from Catholic practices of the sacraments to newer and more regional Swedish ones.

However, this did not come without its consequences. Even when after the violent revolts were put down, “It proved difficult to eradicate Catholic traditions and superstition. The Lutheran clergy in Scandinavia had to fight a constant battle against the adoration of images, and the worship of saints and relics throughout the sixteenth century,” which we know from the sections above, were heavily tied to Scandinavian proto-national identities.¹⁴⁵ By participating in religious saint day celebrations, such as St. Erik's, and other saints in the Swedish liturgical calendars which served as a cultural adhesive for the realms of the late Middle Ages, the new

¹⁴³ Olai Petri, *Svenska Krönika*, (Stockholm: G. E. Klemming, 1500-1860).

¹⁴⁴ This translation was the official Bible with few revised editions until the beginning of the twentieth century.

¹⁴⁵ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 10.

imagined community as result of the Protestant Reformation required new traditions. As Ole Peter Grell puts it: “It quickly became evident that the population needed a replacement for the rituals and traditions they had lost at the Reformation.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, by crafting a new Lutheran and Swedish mass, not only were people participating regularly in a new religious experience, but they were also simultaneously participating in a new national experience that established a new *imagined community* distinct from the late Middle ages—as a Swedish peasant in Dalarna could still connect with a peasant in Småland, it became harder to do so with a Danish peasant as a result of the collapse of the *corpus christianum*. More importantly though, the emerging national church was not headed by the pope in far off Rome, but by the king in Stockholm. Thus, at the top of this new community was king who both wielded the spiritual power and the temporal power for both his own benefit and the new nation’s.

Conclusion:

In conjunction with the importation of the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation—which had also reverberated across the European continent—at the turn of the sixteenth century, Scandinavia underwent a transition from medieval socio-political and religious systems to an early modern nation-state system after the collapse of the Kalmar Union (1397-1523). Most notably, during a process of defeudalization, the early modern concept of the nation-state became the popular mode of governance and contributed tremendously to the success of the Reformation in the Nordic countries as elsewhere. Consequently, the fracture of the universal church under the papacy resulted in the formation of national churches headed by secular rulers. In Sweden, Gustav Vasa did accordingly and established a hereditary monarchy that ushered in an era of royal absolutism and the Swedish nation-state. Building upon a longer proto-national history in

¹⁴⁶ Ole Peter Grell, introduction to *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform*, 11.

Scandinavia, Gustav Vasa—who was already aware of existing proto-national discourses—propagated them for his own benefit. Key touchstones such as: the cult of saints, the myth of *common history*, *common descent*, and *common language/customs*, and history making, directly framed the Swedish people similarly to the Israelites of the Old Testament. Furthermore, these pre-modern developments demonstrate how *proto* national consciousnesses formed and were expressed in religious symbolism and allegory. These proto-national developments are understudied by modern nationalism scholars and, therefore, warrant further investigation.

Although modern historians have discredited the existence of pre-modern nationalism and understudied the emergence of proto-nationalism in Scandinavia, this project hopefully demonstrates the need for future research. While the modern nation-state may want to point to political and military history to memorialize moments in its constructed national history, by investigating religious practices and other social phenomena it is clear that the people of the Middle Ages conceptualized some sense of a national identity, albeit different from modern nationalism. However, modernists blanket these identities as “pre-national,” and with that prefix—pre—the modernist bias is blatant. To ameliorate this error this project employed the term *proto-nationalism* to properly conceptualize a more befitting historical framework to view these historical events through. The use of proto-nationalism, “rather than pre-nationalism”, removes the temporal divide in the language and leaves space to trace nationalism from its earlier forms. While the idea of the nation might have been fully realized during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, religion’s impact on crafting a national myth cannot be underscored enough. Based on the historical evidence presented in this project, it appears that national histories borrowed lessons from the Bible regarding the conception of “a people” and a “promised land”. Additionally, in Scandinavia these notions were reinforced by the cults of royal

saints (most notably St. Erik). The modernist exclusion of religion's contributions to the discourse of nationalism requires this necessary revision to modern nationalism theory to root out its entrenchment in modernity.

In addition, this project demonstrated how Gustav Vasa politicized ethno-religious narratives to legitimize his authority and maintain Swedish secession from the Kalmar Union. As Sweden underwent immense social, religious, and political restructuring, proto-nationalism was recycled by the state—a process that reconceptualized the Swedish realm and established a new understanding of what it meant to be Swedish. Finally, more research should be dedicated to studying the relationship between religion and nationalism more broadly. For Swedish national consciousness in particular, more research should be done on Swedish and Danish nationalism in the border province of Skåne given that during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (the time period for this project) Skåne belonged to Denmark but by 1720 Skåne was incorporated and fully assimilated into the Swedish state.

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