

Abstract

This thesis engages in the discussion on the nature of nationalism by posing the questioning the modern and primordial essentialist conceptualizations. Instead it argues for the view of seeing aspects of nationalism as highly mutable. To demonstrate this view, two case studies are posited of the development of a myth of origin, a strong element of nationalism, both in the context of the Low Countries (1517-1610) and Sweden (1523-1612). It concludes that as a consequence of the developing political situation, the scholarly discourse on the myth of origin in both cases became increasingly intertwined with the political debate, even though the scope and content differs. With this coalescence the myth is accompanied by a change in content and interpretation in order to fit the political rhetoric better, thus demonstrating the mutability of this aspect of nationalism.

Today a Patriot, Tomorrow a Nationalist?



The Mutability of Nationalism in the Low Countries (1517-1610) and Sweden (1523-1612)

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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
CHAPTER 1 – The Batavian Myth in the Low Countries (1517-1610)	9
1.1 The Birth of a Myth on the Eve of the Rebellion	10
1.2 Hadrianus Junius' <i>Batavia</i>	13
1.3 Hugo Grotius' <i>De Antiquitate Reipublicae Batavicae</i>	19
1.4 The Case of the Low Countries: Reflections and Conclusions	23
CHAPTER 2 – Gothicism in Sweden (1523-1612)	25
2.1 Gothicism and the Nationalist Victory over Unionism	25
2.2 Olaus Magnus's <i>Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus</i>	29
2.3 Johannes Messenius's <i>Retorsio Imposturarum</i>	35
2.4 The Case of Sweden: Reflections and Conclusions	38
Conclusion	40
Bibliography	43

Introduction

The academic discourse on the concept nationalism has grown into gigantesque proportions. The field is now a quagmire in which a myriad of scholars feud over definitions, causes and consequences of the phenomenon. Case studies pertaining to nationalism in the early modern era have proven to be particularly controversial.¹ In most of these cases historians identified discourses, practices and symbolism that closely resembled what they believed to be propagating or invoking the 'nation'. While the existence of these 'nationalist' elements in the early modern period is rarely denied, the value that should be ascribed to them is still highly contentious. To illustrate, the so-called Hebraic myth – that is, the strong presence of biblical metaphors and rhetoric in analogy to events and persons in the Netherlands, supposedly with a purpose to increase solidarity and unity among the Dutch has stirred such dissension. Philip Gorski, for one, appraised the Hebraic myth as nationalism in the strict sense of the word at least by the end of the 17th century. Simon Schama, in contrast, is very hesitant to go beyond terming the same symbolism Hebraic or biblical patriotism.²

Thus the emphasis in the scholarly debate on nationalism in the early modern era seems to shift increasingly from the actualities of history, that is how nationalism manifested itself to the question of how to define these manifestations in theory. How an author defines nationalism and whether he emphasizes culture, ethnicity, politics or ideology as the propelling factor in the creation of national identity and consciousness to a large extent determines his conclusions. As a result, an increasing amount of scholars, such as Joep Leerssen, Peter Hoppenbrouwers, and Philip Gorski, have lamented a certain artificiality in the semantics of nationalism. While still conforming

¹ Examples are *inter alia*: L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New Haven, 1992); A. Duke, *The Elusive Netherlands. The Question of National Identity in the Early Modern Low Countries on the Eve of the Revolt*, in: *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 119 (1) (2004), pp. 10-38; S. Jacobson, *'The Head and Heart of Spain': New Perspectives on Nationalism and Nationhood*, *Social History*, Vol. 29 (3) (2004), pp. 393-407; Cf. For example John Breuilly's scepticism: J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd edn (Manchester, 1993), pp. 1-16.

² P.S. Gorski, *The Mosaic Moment: An Early Modernist Critique of Modernist Theories of Nationalism*, *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 105 (5) (2004), esp. pp. 1433-52. Cf. L. Campos Boralevi, 'Classical Foundational Myths of European Republicanism: The Jewish Commonwealth', in M. van Gelderen, Q. Skinner, (eds), *Republicanism vol. 1: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe: A Shared European Heritage* (Cambridge 2002), pp. 247-62; S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches, An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York, 1988), pp. 93-125.

to typifying the early modern cases either as nationalism *stricto sensu*, national-consciousness, proto-nationalism, national-identity or merely collective solidarity they add that nationalism should *not* be seen in essentialist terms. Instead, they emphasize the dynamics and volatility of the phenomenon, as well as group identity in particular.³ Nationalism should be seen as a complex phenomenon, which can materialize very differently in varying periods and countries, wherefore any essentialist claims on the nature of nationalism negate its complexities and thus, to a large extent, void.

Ideas on the dynamic nature of nationalism have only developed quite recently in the debate and are to a large extent a reaction to arguments posed by both modernist and primordialist outlooks – insofar as any generalizations can be made regarding such fragmented and diversified standpoints. Adherents of the modernist position regard modernity, and concomitant processes, as a *conditio sine qua non* for nationalism.⁴ Accordingly their emphasis is mostly on intellectual, political and socio-economic factors as propellants of nationalism. Primordialists, in contrast, emphasize cultural and ethnic bonds to be the prime unifying aspects of nationalism and as such contend nationalism to be a condition inherent in human society.⁵ Naturally, this very brief historiographical overview generalizes the sophistication and merit that many of these arguments possess. Nevertheless, the discourse stands to gain from a refined understanding of the dynamics of nationalism, especially with regard to the contentious early modern period.

³ See Gorski, *The Mosaic Moment*, pp. 1458-62; P. Hoppenbrouwers, 'The Dynamics of National Identity in the Later Middle Ages', in J. Pollmann, R. Stein, (eds), *Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries 1300-1650* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 19-42; J. Leerssen, 'Identity/Alterity/Hybridity' and 'Nation, Ethnie, People', in J. Leerssen, M. Beller, (eds), *Imagology, the Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters*, (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 335-41, 377-81.

⁴ The main proponents are *inter alia*: E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1994 [1962]), E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 2006 [1983]), E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990), Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*.

⁵ See for example A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Oxford, 1986), L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge MA, 1992), A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997) and more recently A. Gat, A. Yakobson, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2013).

Consequently, the ensuing thesis will aim to test these dynamics by means of a comparative case study. Principally, it will add to the hitherto rather theoretical debate on the discussion of these dynamics by utilizing this perspective with regard to concrete historical examples. It will *not* provide another exercise in subjecting the discourses, symbolism and movements to criteria posed by a definition of nationalism in order to establish whether in actual fact they constitute such nationalism. Instead it scrutinizes the progression, mutability and dynamics of these same discourses, symbolism and movement without giving such a final verdict. Notwithstanding that I do not wish to define nationalism in order to establish whether early modern nationalism exists or not, a discussion of nationalism without any definition at all will only confuse. Therefore I will, merely as an instrument, utilize the broad definition of nationalism provided by Philip Gorski, in order to not exclude any forms of nationalism from the discussion *a priori*. He defines nationalism as “*any set of discourses or practices that invoke “the nation” or equivalent categories.*”⁶ Finally, when the mutability of such discourses and practices is ascertained special attention will be dedicated to analysing what prompts this mutability. That is, when and why does a nationalist discourse or practice become more, or less, important and how does that influence the contemporary perception of the particular element and debate?

With the aforementioned reasoning in mind, the research question can be formulated thus: “To what extent can discourses and practices that invoke the nation in the early modern period be considered mutable and what propels this dynamic?” This question will be applied to two case studies divided into subsequent chapters: a scrutiny of the development of the so-termed Batavian myth in the Low Countries between 1517 and 1610 and Gothicism or the *storgöticist* paradigm in Sweden between 1523 and 1612.

The Batavian myth concerns the idea that the contemporary Hollanders, or Netherlanders, descend from the Batavian people. As such it presupposes certain continuities in the characteristics

⁶ Gorski, *The Mosaic Moment*, p. 1461.

and geography from Batavians to contemporary Hollanders or Netherlanders. The story of the Batavians is subjected for the first time to historical scrutiny in 1517 by Cornelius Aurelius, which is therefore the point of departure in the case study presented in this thesis. It was subsequently debated among scholars whether this ancient Batavian settlement was in the contemporary state of Holland or Guelders. When the Dutch Revolt broke out in 1568, the story of the Batavians was used increasingly in the political rhetoric of the rebelling states as a story of shared origin and descent. The publication of Grotius's *De Antiquitate Reipublicae Batavae* in 1610 will be endpoint of this case, as it was published one year after the 12-years truce it marks a highpoint in the necessity of the particular rhetoric related to the Batavian myth.⁷

Similarly, Gothicism is the idea that contemporary Swedes descend from the Goths. As a result, the Swedes inherited their characteristics, values and country. Furthermore, according to this view, the Swedes are the only people that can legitimately claim this ancestry. Swedish independence from the Kalmar Union with Denmark and Norway in 1523 was of decisive importance to the interest in the Gothic ancestry of Sweden. The new state was in need of a legitimate reason for their break with Denmark and the story of the Gothic ancestry as distinctly Swedish fit conveniently. Moreover, the authors of the two core works on Gothicism, Johannes and Olaus Magnus, were deeply involved and influenced by the Swedish independence war and the subsequent legitimization of the new state. Therefore 1523 is the logical starting point for discussing Gothicism. This thesis traces the discussion on Gothicism until the publication of Johannes Messenius's *Retorsio Imposturarum* in 1612. Mainly due to the prohibition on defamatory writings against the Danes in 1570, Messenius's work, published during the Kalmar War which

⁷ I. Schöffer, 'The Batavian Myth during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in J.S. Bromley, and E.H. Kossman, (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands: Some Political Mythologies*, vol. 5 (The Hague, 1975), pp. 78-101.

nullified the prohibition, provided another uncensored and serious work that can demonstrate the development of Gothicism in Sweden.⁸

The comparison between the early modern Low Countries and early modern Sweden is particularly interesting. Both countries experienced a period of political uproar in the form of a war, or rebellion, in order to establish independence. Hence, some of the classical conditions in which nationalism flourishes are met; the newly established 'nation' is in desperate need of legitimacy, and there is, ubiquitous and looming, the presence of an 'other', in opposition to whom the new nation can build an identity. Furthermore, In addition to the comparative outlook on nationalism, this thesis will cover a rather lengthy timeframe, as its aim is to assess the mutability of certain aspects over time. Consequently, a somewhat broader survey merits the investigation and its subsequent conclusions. However, in order to retain the balance with the primary material the two case studies will be structured thus: first, I will sketch the historical context, secondly, two specifically relevant primary sources are discussed in detail after which a synthesis will integrate the results and answer the research question with regard to the particular case.

⁸ J. Svennung, *Zur Geschichte der Goticismus* (Uppsala, 1967).

Chapter 1 – The Batavian Myth in the Low Countries (1517-1610)

“Concordia res parvae crescunt”

Motto of the States General, and later the Dutch Republic¹

In this first chapter I analyse the genesis and development of the Batavian myth between the publication of Cornelius Aurelius’ *Divisiechroniek* en Hugo Grotius’ *Antiquity of the Dutch Republic* against the background of the Dutch Revolt. The first subchapter describes this political context in detail and with regard to the Batavian myth. Subsequently the extent to which Hadrianus Junius’ *Batavia* (1586) invokes the “nation” will be analysed as well as the *Batavia*’s position in the context. Then, I will similarly survey Hugo Grotius’ *De antiquitate reipublicae Batavae* after which the last subchapter integrates the observations from the sources into the larger argument on the mutability of nationalism. As a final note, the nomenclature with regard to the area now known as the modern Netherlands and Belgium is very contentious in contemporary sources. Sometimes the region is referred to as (*Gallia*) *Belgica* in resonance to the classical authors, but in the sixteenth century names like *Batavia* and *Germania tertia* or *inferior* are also used. Often the actual area these names refer to remains vague. That is, *Batavia* can either refer to just a part of the state of Holland, or the entirety of the Northern Netherlands, depending on the author. Wherever possible, I will indicate the area referred to. To avoid any confusion, I will use the term Low Countries when referring to the seventeen provinces, Spanish Netherlands as the provinces under Spanish dominion after the official act of abjuration in 1581 and Northern Netherlands or Dutch Republic (after 1588) when referring to the seven member states of that same Republic.²

¹ “Concord will make small things (states) flourish” – sometimes translated as “Eendracht maakt macht/Unity makes strength”, see H. de Vries, *Wapens van de Nederlanden: de historische ontwikkeling van de heraldische symbolen van Nederland, België, hun provincies en Luxemburg* (Amsterdam, 1995).

² For a more detailed discussion of geographical terms during this period, see Duke, *The Elusive Netherlands*, esp. the table on p. 38.

1.1 The Origins of a Myth on the Eve of the Rebellion

1517 marks the year of the first major publication on the Batavians by Cornelius Aurelius (1460-1531), the *Cronycke van Hollandt, Zeelandt ende Vrieslant* also known as the *Divisiechroniek*. Following the rediscovery of Tacitus' *Germania* in 1470 and a brief adage by Erasmus on the *Auris Batava*, Aurelius was the first to treat the Batavians as an integral part of the history of the province of Holland.³ Although he published some earlier treatises on the topic of the Batavians, they remained unnoticed and unpublished. In contrast, his chronicle, a history of the provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Frisia from God's creation to contemporary times in the vernacular, became so well known that it was used as an educational tool up until the eighteenth century. It symbolizes a move away from the study of literature, as was done by Erasmus, to a more serious attempt at historiography proper. With regard to the Batavians, the story is divided into two separate strands. First of all, it concerns the migration of the tribe from Germania to the region that Aurelius' recognized as a precursor of the state of Holland on the banks of the Rhine. Secondly, it recounts the narrative of Claudius Civilis and the Batavian rebellion against the Romans.⁴ Civilis, "cappeteyn van Hollant [...] edel van gheboorte, ende ofcomende van conincklicken gheslachte"⁵ was a leading figure in Batavian society who accused the Romans of betraying their friendship to satisfy their greed. The story of the Batavians as told by Aurelius was soon to be contested, for example by Gerardus Geldenhauer. The exact place of the Batavian settlement stirred particular dissension amongst scholars. Altogether, Aurelius historicized the narrative that along with its ensuing

³ See K. Tilmans, *Aurelius en de Divisiechroniek van 1517. Historiografie en humanisme in Holland in de tijd van Erasmus*, Hollandse Studiën 21 (Hilversum, 1988). On Erasmus' adage and an emerging sense of national identity see A. Wesseling, *Are the Dutch Uncivilized? Erasmus on the Batavians and his National Identity*, Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook 13 (1993), pp. 69-102

⁴ Nowadays the name Claudius is seen as an error in the manuscript of Tacitus, whose real name was most likely Julius. However, in the contemporary sources of Junius and Grotius, he is referred to as Claudius Civilis. See N. Roymans, *Ethnic Identity and Imperial Power: The Batavians in the Early Roman Empire* (Amsterdam, 2004), p. 61-184.

⁵ "Captain of Holland [...] noble of birth and descendant of a royal family" – Aurelius 'Divisiechroniek' 1.17 – transcribed by K. Tilmans, (ed), *De Divisiechroniek van 1517*, (n.d.) webpublication retrieved 5th of June, 2014 from: <http://karintilmans.nl/pdf/dk1-29.pdf>, p. 34.

humanist controversies has most commonly been termed the 'Batavian myth' by present historians.⁶

Two years before the publication of the *Divisiechroniek*, in 1515, Margaret of Austria withdrew her regency of the Burgundian territories in favour of the 15-year old Charles V. Chief among these territories were the Low Countries, of which he was officially the lord since 1506. After assuming his position Charles became entangled in a series of conflicts that involved the northern and eastern Netherlands, most notably the Frisian rebellion (1515-1523) and the Guelderian Wars (1502-1543). Although both conflicts were eventually settled in favour of the Habsburgs, they did have a large polarizing impact on the inhabitants of all the Northern Netherlands' states and particularly Holland and Guelders. This is mostly the consequence of the state of Holland being most actively involved on the Habsburg side, providing troops as well as funding. As a result, the conflict polarized the states and nurtured such antagonism that the establishment of a unified Republic as it was established in 1588 seemed unthinkable at the end of the conflicts in 1543.

The political discord caused by the conflict was closely reflected by the controversies surrounding the Batavian myth. Aurelius, along with scholars such as Willem Hermans and Reinier Snoij equated the Batavia they discovered in the classical authors with their own state of Holland. Gerardus Geldenhauer, however, as a resident of the city of Nijmegen in Guelders argued in his *Lucubrationcula de Batavorum insula* (1520) and *Historia Batavica* (1530) that the Batavians settled in Guelders.⁷ The controversy proved persistent and although Holland eventually won out, there was little sign of that for the remainder of the sixteenth century. This is an early sign of the mutability of the myth depending on the political context, as the raging conflict is closely illustrated by the dichotomy and polemic in the intellectual discourse. However, it seems that the narrative

⁶ Term introduced by Schöffers, 'The Batavian Myth'. Schöffers' term is both criticized by Sandra Langereis and Aafke van der Woud as being too politicized. However, the alternatives 'Batavengedachte' [Batavian idea] and 'Batavenconcept' [Batavian conception] remain too vague to serve as useful rather than confusing instruments. See, S. Langereis, 'Van Botte Boeren tot Beschaafde Burgers: Oudheidkundige Beelden van de Bataven 1500-1800', in L.J.F. Swinkels, et al. (eds), *De Bataven: Verhalen van een Verdwenen Volk*, (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 76; A. van der Woud, *De Bataafse Hut*, (Amsterdam, 1990), p. 26.

⁷ See Schöffers, 'The Batavian Myth', pp. 78-101; esp. p. 91.

here is still in a phase of nationalism that is restricted exclusively to the realm of intellectual discourse.

Charles V realized that the particularism and internal discord in the now unified Low Countries might be hazardous to his position as well as his heirs'. Hence, he affirmed his position with the 'Pragmatic Sanction' issued in 1549. The sanction stated the indivisibility of the Seventeen Provinces as well as the hereditary right of the Habsburg dynasty to its rule. Thus, as Nicolette Mout remarks: "it seemed guaranteed that in future all the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands would stay united under one Habsburg ruler and be kept outside the Empire in perpetuity."⁸ It was this right to rule the Low Countries that Philip II inherited together with the Spanish throne when he succeeded his father in 1556.

Charles V did enact some measures with regard to the Low Countries that were unpopular with the Dutch nobility, such as the increased centralization of political power in the *de facto* capital, Brussels. Nevertheless, as he was born in Ghent, Flanders and spoke Dutch fluently he was generally loved in the Low Countries. Philip II, by contrast, was seen "as a Spanish king, ruling a Spanish empire in the interests of the Spaniards."⁹ Already in the first few years of his reign, his deteriorating finances pushed him to request heavy taxes from the Seventeen Provinces. Moreover, he continued Charles' policies regarding the shifting of political power to Brussels, thereby slowly curbing the power of the local authorities. In addition, Philip interfered heavily in religious affairs. Being a stern opponent of tolerating the Protestant minorities he alienated the localities which fostered an attitude of peaceful coexistence by sending the Duke of Alba, who relentlessly persecuted the Protestant minorities. While this is just a small survey of some of the chief causes of the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648), it is paramount to understand that in the early stages of the conflict there was little hostility toward Philip as the monarch. Rather it was aimed at the tyranny of the

⁸ M.E.H.N. Mout, 'Core and Periphery: The Netherlands and the Empire from the Late Fifteenth to the Early Seventeenth Century', in R.J.W. Evans, P.H. Wilson, (eds) *The Holy Roman Empire, 1495-1806: A European Perspective* (Leiden, 2012), p. 208.

⁹ M. van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555-1590* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 32.

Duke of Alba and Cardinal Granvelle who trampled on the privileges and freedoms granted to the Dutch by earlier princes, under the “pretence of religion and service to the king.”¹⁰ It was only in 1581 and with extensive justification, essentially a long list of grievances towards the king, that the Act of Abjuration declared the states to be absolved from their oath of allegiance to the king. Furthermore, even after dethroning Philip the States General desperately tried to find another foreign monarch to rule the Northern Netherlands in his stead and only became a republic when this search ultimately failed.¹¹ It nevertheless indicates the effort put into preventing self-rule.

During the slowly developing revolt the threatening presence of the Spanish urged a need for unity and cooperation among the rebelling states. However, the aforementioned discord that was the result of decades of conflict was still fresh in the minds of regular people and politicians alike. Notwithstanding, there was need for a rhetoric that propagated the idea of unity among the states when facing a common enemy. As a result, two main discourses can be identified in respect to this purpose: the Hebraic myth and the Batavian myth.¹² The following subchapters will trace the shift of the Batavian myth from a purely intellectual discourse to political rhetoric in the works of Hadrianus Junius and Hugo Grotius.

1.2 Hadrianus Junius’s *Batavia*¹³

Hadrianus Junius’s *Batavia* opens with a dedication “ad illustres, generosos, et prudentes reipub. [icae] Hollandiae ordines”.¹⁴ Indeed, in his role as the official historiographer of the states of Holland, Junius was commissioned in 1565 to write a history of Holland to defend its rights and

¹⁰ Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, p. 120.

¹¹ See for a more complete accounts of the causes leading up to the Dutch Revolt, J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 9-230; G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (London, 1985); Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*.

¹² On the Hebraic myth see *inter alia*, Gorski, *The Mosaic Moment*, pp. 1434-43; Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, pp. 93-125; C. Huisman, *Neerlands Israël: het Natiebesef der traditioneel-gereformeerden in de achttiende eeuw* (Dordrecht, 1983).

¹³ For this section I have employed a reprint of the 1588 Leiden edition, published in 1652 in Dordrecht and a translation of that edition into Dutch by Nico de Glas (2011). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations into English are my own.

¹⁴ “[I]llustrious, honourable and wise lords of the states of Holland” – Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, p. 2

privileges against the centralization in Brussels. The initiator of the commissioned work was the influential noble and informal leader of the revolt, William the Silent of Orange.¹⁵ While presently most of his fame has waned, in his time, Junius was considered one of the great humanist scholars, a 'second Erasmus', whose fame reached intellectuals across Europe.¹⁶ With a *horror vacui* Junius meticulously planned to write three volumes to cover the entirety of Holland's history without missing even a single scrap of the available information. In a thoroughly humanist fashion this information consisted predominantly of the work of revered classical authors. Of the three intended volumes none were finished before his death in 1575. The *Batavia* was a preliminary study and accumulation of materials that was to precede and summarize the said volumes, yet encompasses a bulky 500 pages. Written chiefly between 1567 and 1570 in Latin, further additions and amendments were made between 1570 and his death in 1575. These changes were most likely due to the rapidly shifting political conditions, such as the siege of Haarlem, Alkmaar and Leiden in 1572-3, 1573 and 1574, respectively.¹⁷

In his preamble, Junius clearly defines his goal in writing the work: "quo me Hollandiae, quae mihi parens est antiquissima, studium atque amor impellit ac commouet, ut genuinam gloriam e mangonum illorum manibus extorqueam, styliq. lumine illustrem.." ¹⁸ The work can be roughly subdivided into three parts, each of which relate and contribute in greater or lesser degree to the narrative of the Batavian myth. Therefore, the subsequent discussion of the parts will be guided by themes pertaining to the myth. These themes concern the geography of Batavia, the qualities and values of the Batavian people, a perceived continuity between ancient Batavia and contemporary Holland and Junius's attitude to monarchism and other forms of governmental structure. The first

¹⁵ B.A. Vermaseren, 'Het ontstaan van Hadrianus Junius' *Batavia* (1588)', in M. Nijhoff, et al., *Huldeboek Pater Dr. Bonaventura Kruitwagen, O.F.M., aangeboden op St. Bonaventura, 14 Juli 1949 ter gelegenheid van zijn gouden priesterfeest en zijn vijf en zeventigste verjaardag* (The Hague, 1949), pp. 415-6. See for a more recent source in English, N. de Glas, 'Context, Conception and Content of Junius' *Batavia*', in D. van Miert, *The Kaleidoscopic Scholarship of Hadrianus Junius (1511-1575): Northern Humanism at the Dawn of the Dutch Golden Age* (Leiden, 2011), p. 73.

¹⁶ De Glas, *De Batavia van Hadrianus Junius*, pp. 10-8.

¹⁷ See De Glas, *De Batavia van Hadrianus Junius*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, 'Historiae Utilitate': p. 5.

part, chapters 1 to 12, is a description of the geography and culture of the Batavians and surrounding peoples, the second, chapters 13 to 20, provides a *laus Hollandiae*, a panegyric and description of contemporary Holland, while the third, chapters 21 to 23, discusses the origins of the German (in Tacitus' Germania's sense) peoples and the etymology of their personal and city names. Note that this categorization is far from balanced, as the final part is only three chapters and the chapters vary in size.

The first chapters recount the origin of the Batavian peoples, which Junius admits to be shrouded in fantasies. However, separating fact from fiction he concludes that the Batavians were lead by their king Bato to the area between the rivers of the Rhine and the Waal. He terms this area the Old-Batavian island (*Insula Batavorum*): surrounded on all sides by water. However, when Drusus connected the Rhine with the IJssel with a channel many years after Bato, he surrounded a much larger area with water, which Junius calls the new or Plinian Batavian island.¹⁹ This new Batavia is significantly larger than its predecessor, encompassing most of his contemporary Holland, and several small areas outside it. While including his own city of origin, Hoorn, it still excludes the state of Guelders and the rest of the contemporary Low Countries. Finally, the eleventh chapter laments, "Quamquam istam unitatem fatalis [...] diuellit atque abruptit"²⁰, hinting at the belligerence of both the bishops of Utrecht and Duke of Guelders in annexing several areas and cities that used to belong to Batavia. Essentially, Junius implies that these areas should rightfully be a part of the descendant of Batavia, that is: the state of Holland. Thus he persuasively stretches the geography of this ancient Batavia to fit his purposes of glorifying the history of Holland.²¹

Mostly on the basis of the works of Tacitus, Plinius and Caesar, Junius surveys the qualities and values for which the Batavians were famed in Roman world. As the Batavians were deeply involved in Roman military affairs and even constituted a palace guard for the first Roman

¹⁹ See with regard to Drusus' channel, Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, pp. 59-65.

²⁰ "Alas, this unity of Batavia is now torn and broken" – Ibid, p. 123.

²¹ For the sections that concern the geography of Batavia, see Ibid, pp. 1-9; 13-7; 32-4; 47-66; 124-38 and 358-60.

emperors, most of these qualities are described in relation to the Romans themselves or the other peoples involved in these military affairs.²² According to the authors quoted by Junius, the Batavians were a martial people, unrivalled equestrians and swimmers who settled many a battle in Roman favour by the sheer ferocity and loyalty of their cohorts.²³ The Batavians were friends, rather than allies, of the Romans for over two centuries. However, the quotations utilized by Junius speak almost exclusively of *Germani*, that is the entirety of the Germanic tribes, not of the Batavians *per se*. To justify this rather grand interpretation, if not appropriation, Junius states that the Roman authors only use this generic classification to “ut certius loquerentur, minusque in illa multiplici barbarorum nominum cyceone atque confusione errarent”.²⁴ When discussing the Batavian revolt against the Romans led by the aforementioned Claudius Civilis, Junius emphasizes that it was the greedy Romans who oppressed the rights and freedoms of the Batavians, thus forcing Civilis into rebellion: “ut impotentem ac superbum Romanorum dominatum, quem nobiscum communem sustinetis, & quo libertas omnis armis victa penitus concidit.”²⁵ In this regard, there seem to be several allusions to the contemporary Dutch Revolt, yet any clear parallels are absent. For example, the hints at the rights and freedoms of the Batavians, is reminiscent of the violation of the ‘*oude regten*’ and privileges of the Dutch by the Spanish throne.²⁶

Additionally, Junius responds to some classical and contemporary characterizations of both the Batavians as the Hollanders as *stupidus* and *crassus*, in other words, blunt, dumb, stupid and gullible. His answer to these stereotypes, or as he calls them a people’s “*peculiares morum ideae*” is ingenious:

²² Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, pp. 33-44. These ‘Batavians’ were actually Frisians.

²³ Ibid, pp. 33-46; 137-68.

²⁴ “as not to get lost in a Babylonian confusion of tongues regarding all those different names of barbarians” – ibid, p. 35. See also De Glas, *De Batavia van Hadrianus Junius*, p. 100, footnote 12.

²⁵ “We [the Batavians] want to break free from that tyrannical and arrogant Roman Empire, sustained by you [the Gauls] and us and which beat and murdered our entire freedom.” – Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, p. 146.

²⁶ For another example see ibid, p. 44. Also see De Glas, *De Batavia van Hadrianus Junius*, p. 109, footnote 7. Also the parallel between the Mercurius in the cult worshipped by the Batavians and Jesus is peculiar, see p. 296 and footnote 48. Cf. p. 21.

Sed video nos hac in nota eiusdem esse conditionis ac loci cum Spartanis, quibus coelo parum benigno natis rerum inscitia & crassum ingenium a Romanis suarum laudum amplissimis praeconibus, alienarum detractoribus, attributa fuere: illi rudes, imperiti, planeque hebetes, rest amen domi militiaeque decantatissimas, vel hostium testimonio, prorsusque inauditas gessere: et nos Bataui olim crassi ingenij, & tantum non bardi Poetis habiti...²⁷

Thus with this rhetoric trick Junius twists the supposed bad characteristics of the Batavians into good characteristics, which enabled both Spartans as Batavians to achieve global praise. Furthermore, he employs a parallel which poses an 'other', an equal counterpart to the Romans. The revered classical authors are swiftly dismissed as arrogant in their unfairness to other venerable peoples. Finally, he states that his contemporary Hollanders are no longer gullible as they have been polished by years of trade and intercultural exchange and thus transformed into cunning Ulysses [Ulyseos mutauit]. Finally, he praises the thrift of the Hollanders as well as the beauty and diligence of their women.²⁸

As mentioned before, Junius perceives both continuity in the geography of the ancient Batavia and contemporary Holland and a persistence and enhancement of the old Batavian qualities over time. Junius frequently employs linguistic constructs that link the Hollanders, mostly in the form of 'we', 'us', and 'our', to the Batavians. Examples range from: "we Batavians" and "our Batavia" to a less conspicuous "Batavian island."²⁹

Finally, with regard to Junius's attitude towards governmental rule, it must be said that to him, in line with the developments of the early revolt, Philip II was still the rightful monarch over

²⁷ "But I notice that we, with our bad name, are in the same corner as the Spartans. They also lived in a country with an unpleasant climate. They were labelled with ignorance and uncivilized, by the Romans of course, who always loudly sing their own praise whilst belittling that of others. Yet these 'rough, ignorant and simply stupid' Spartans have achieved in war as in peace things, which were globally applauded and of unprecedented quality, even according to their enemies. Likewise we Batavians were considered blunt and almost backward by the ancient writers." – Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, p. 219

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 220-2.

²⁹ See *inter alia*, "we Batavians" – ibid, p. 1 (*Historiae Utilitate*), 33, 219-20 "our Batavia" – p. 1 (*dedicatio*), 96, 124 "our island (*insula Batavorum*)" – p. 5.

the Low Countries, calling him “our invincible king Philips II”.³⁰ The Spaniards as a whole, however, are less fortunate. Especially in the later added sections recounting the sieges of various cities, “*infesto & superbo [...] Hispano communi patriae hoste.*”³¹ How big this fatherland is, though, remains unclear and several scornful remarks on the defendants of the city of Alkmaar reveal that even within the state of Holland unity seems implausible.

Altogether it seems particularly surprising that the same States of Holland that commissioned the work prohibited the publication of this glorification of Holland’s historical roots in 1570. While Junius was awarded his honorarium, the States declared that “*hy en hebbe andere last van de staten*”, implying that the resulting work was not what the States had ordered him to write. As the work was commissioned to “defend Holland’s privileges against the central government in Brussels”³² it apparently did not meet these criteria. Although the exact reason for the prohibition remains unclear, scholars of Junius, such as Dirk van Miert, Nico de Glas and Bernard Vermaseren suspect that it could have been due to the fact that the shifting political conditions would have demanded a more rigorous denunciation of the Spanish and their king.³³ Another reason might have been that the privileges and rights were not clearly delineated. Although it was the political sphere that commissioned the work for their purposes, the *Batavia* failed to deliver and remains very much a history within the intellectual discourse on the Batavians. In conclusion, Junius’ work does *not* provide antiquity to a fatherland that can unify the varying states, nor does it legitimize explicitly the cause of the rebelling provinces. Nonetheless, it does provide ample evidence of the mutability of Batavia, both in geography, qualities and perceived continuities with contemporary times.

³⁰ “Regis nostri nomen referentem Regem Philippum temerario ausu, praeter Soloecismi, quam incursurus esset, notam nominaverit?” – Hadrianus Junius, *Batavia*, p. 252. Two other praises were omitted in the version published in 1588 (after the Act of Abjuration) by Janus Dousa.

³¹ *ibid*, p. 259; “enemies of the common fatherland” – *ibid*, p. 283.

³² De Glas, ‘Context, Conception and Content of Junius’ *Batavia*’, p. 74-5, footnote 20.

³³ The most rigorous parts of the *Batavia* with respect to condemning the Spanish were only added after the prohibition in 1570. See *ibid*.

1.3 Hugo Grotius' *De Antiquitate Reipublicae Batavae*³⁴

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) was appointed official historiographer of the States of Holland in 1604, succeeding Janus Dousa, who in turn was a successor of Junius. Up to that point he had written and published predominantly legal works and set forth to write a commissioned defence of “your [the States of Holland] power, your rights and sovereignty.”³⁵ Seemingly, not much has changed since Junius' *Batavia*, as both commissions were similar in purpose. Yet, the political situation had changed rather drastically. After the Act of Abjuration in 1581 and many failed attempts to find a replacement monarch, the States General resolved to rule the seven rebelling provinces themselves. Thus originated the *Republiek der Zeven Vereenigde Nederlanden*, or, in short, the Dutch Republic in 1588. Throughout its history, foreign monarchs had almost continually ruled the Low Countries. Hence, the young republic needed strong political legitimacy, which was provided to some extent by the large preamble to the Act of Abjuration. When the twelve years' truce was signed in 1609, this need for legitimacy was still there. Hence the commission of Grotius's work, along with the stated aims, was far from surprising. In concurrence with the political dynamics, the narrative of the Batavians also developed. Through the writings of the two Janus Dousa (Junior and Senior), Peter Scriverius, Justus Lipsius, and, to a lesser extent, Hugo Grotius, the myth became increasingly politicized. It was Janus Dousa the Elder who first explicitly made the parallel between the rebellion of the Batavians against the Romans and the contemporary revolt in his *Odae Lugdunenses* (1575).³⁶ Furthermore, Dousa deemed the evidence for the existence of the Batavians' mythical monarch, Bato, unscientific and he was consequently removed from the story, although this might also have had a political imperative as monarchy became increasingly disfavoured. Grotius' *De Antiquitate* ties in with this trend, but most significantly adds the existence of a

³⁴ For this section I utilized the edition (Leiden, 1610) provided by Jan Waszink's bilingual (Latin/English) edition and translation into English, J. Waszink, (trans), et al. (eds), *Hugo Grotius: The Antiquity of the Batavian Republic*; with the notes by Petrus Scriverius, *Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae*, (Assen, 2000). Page referral will henceforth be in the format: page number original / page number translation.

³⁵ Hugo Grotius, *The Antiquity of the Batavian Republic*, p. 48/49

³⁶ Waszink, *The Antiquity of the Batavian Republic*, pp. 9-10

sophisticated Batavian governmental structure, which he argues is similar to the system adopted by the Republic. Grotius work is relatively short, some 30 pages, and written in clear and brief Latin, contrasting with the style utilized by Junius. It was translated into Dutch in the same year of publication and enjoyed considerable success.

The subsequent discussion of the *De Antiquitate* will follow the themes set forth with regard to Junius' work, that is: the geography of Batavia, qualities and characteristics of the Batavians, perceived continuities and parallels between ancient Batavia and contemporary Holland or the Low Countries and finally, views on governmental structure.

With regard to the theme of the geography of Batavia, Grotius provides an interesting contrast with Junius. The work is clearly less geared toward proving a particular geography. Batavia is not seen in constant reference to the state of Holland, which only enters the discussion in chapter five. However, when a direct parallel is mentioned Grotius seems to have ancient Batavia coincide with the entirety of the rebelling provinces. This becomes most clear in a passage on the workings of the "large council", a governmental organ representing all estates of every Batavian tribe and which held supreme power:

Nam quod 'omnes' ait, non ita intelligendum est, quasi singuli tanquam ad comitia convenerint, relictis laribus ac focus. id enim in gente magna, qualis praesertim Batavorum, in qua nationes septem Plinius numerat, Batavos proprie ita dictos, Caninefates, Frisios minores, Frisiabones, Cauchos minores, Tusios, Marsacios; fieri omnino non poterat. Sed 'omnes' dicuntur ipsum concilium, quo ex omni regione omnique ordine idonei homines mittebantur.³⁷

This shows that the Batavians for Grotius consisted of the entirety of the peoples listed by Pliny, even though some, the *Batavos proprie*, were more 'Batavian' than others. Additionally, it shows

³⁷ "For the fact that he says "all" must not be understood to mean that every individual came to these meetings as if they were assemblies, leaving his home and family alone. In a large population, which the Batavians distinctly were (Pliny counts seven tribes: the Batavians proper, the Caninefates, the minor Frisians, the Frisiabones, the minor Chauci, the Tusii, and the Marsacii) this was out of the question. "All" implies the [large] council mentioned above, to which competent men from every district and every estate were sent" - Hugo Grotius, *The Antiquity*, p. 64/65.

the similarity between the cooperation of the ancient 'states' and the contemporary States General, as is defined in the following passage much later in the work:

lam vero quia Traiectino federe belli, pacis, et externarum societatum, multarumque praetera rerum, instituta est inter complures populos communio, quorum hodie perstant in federe Geldri, Hollandi, Zelandi, Traiectini, Frisii, Transisalani, Groningani, omnes olim Batavorum, Mattiacorum ac Frisiorum dicti nomine, solent pro se quisque legatos mittere, qui in medium consulant. horum conventus raro dissolvitur, eique Ordinum Federatorum nomen est.³⁸

Noting that according to Grotius, both the Frisians and the Mattiaci were considered or called Batavians, the comparison of the two passages shows that both in antiquity and in contemporary times there was a unity of peoples represented in a supreme governmental body.³⁹ Furthermore, these bodies seemed to have operated in a similar way, sending representatives of every district and estate to decide on those matters important for everyone. Nevertheless it is only these two passages in which the geography of Batavia is dissected into its constituencies, whilst in the other references to Batavia, its constituencies are implied. For example, when discussing the Dutch Revolt, Grotius refers to "Philip's [...] act against the Batavians and the Belgi", thus indicating and distinguishing between the Northern Netherlands and Southern, Spanish, Netherlands.⁴⁰ It is clear, in conclusion, that Grotius's use of Batavia is that of the unity of the entirety of the rebelling provinces, even though his work was only commissioned to defend the rights and privileges of Holland.

The argument regarding the qualities and characteristics that Grotius refers to in continuity between the ancient Batavians and his contemporary Batavia is fairly simple. Instead of the martial qualities so revered by Junius, Grotius emphasizes the Batavians' healthy lust to be free as well as their prudence in funnelling this lust into the best governmental system possible. Only briefly does

³⁸ "Further, with the Union of Utrecht, a union in matters of war, peace, foreign alliances and many other things has been established between several peoples, of which today there remain Gelderland, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel and Groningen. Consequently, all those who were once called Batavians, Mattiaci or Frisians, now have the custom of sending representatives in order to consult with each other about the common interest. The assembly consisting of these representatives is rarely dissolved, and is called the States General" - Hugo Grotius, *The Antiquity*, p. 110/111

³⁹ See for considering the Frisians and Mattiaci as Batavians *ibid*, p. 79, 83, 85.

⁴⁰ "Batavos Belgasque" *Ibid*, p. 98/99

Grotius cover the old Batavian warlike qualities when discussing their rebellion against the Romans. However, rather than the Batavian strength in battle, their loyalty and betrayed friendship with the Romans is emphasized. Consequently this situation is paralleled with contemporary circumstances by stating that:

Certavit quidem diu populorum fides cum libertate. sed cum violatis palam legibus, contemptis Ordinibus, illa tot saeculorum respublica et posterorum libertas salva diutius esse non posset [...] maiorem secuti exemplum, qui in Romanos dominationem captantes arma susceperant, bellum contra Albanum decernunt: exsules per iniuriam pulsos restituunt: Wilelmum Arausionensem ducem agnoscunt.⁴¹

The quote nicely illustrates Grotius' Leitmotif of the people's loyalty and sense of freedom and the antiquity thereof. Furthermore, it too ties in with the last theme of this analysis: Grotius's perspective on governmental systems and the ideal form of government.

In Junius still, writing in around 1570, loyalty to the monarch ran deep. Even in the case of deposing a particular monarch as devised by the Act of Abjuration this did not mean that the monarchy as a system was to be abandoned. In Grotius' writing, there was little praise for monarchism as an organisation of state, although he admitted that it might be acceptable for people in some countries, depending on the character of the people.⁴² Preferable in all cases, though, is a middle ground between monarchy and people's sovereignty. He quotes Tacitus noting: "The princes decide in matters of minor importance, in major matters everyone: the princes, however, also discuss these matters in which the decision lies with the population", the prince is just a *primus inter pares*, but the people provide a restriction on the power of the prince.⁴³ Thus Grotius justifies the legitimacy of the organization of state in the Dutch Republic, in respect to the monarchies that surround the newly established state.

⁴¹ "However, for a long time, the loyalty of the people fought with their sense of freedom. But when, given the open violation of the laws and contempt of the States, the form of government of so many centuries and the freedom of future generations could no longer be preserved [...] Following the example of their ancestors, who took up arms against the Romans who tried to secure domination, they [the nobility and most of the towns] declared war on Alva: they called back those who were unjustly exiled, and acknowledged William of Orange as their leader" - Hugo Grotius, *The Antiquity*, p. 102/103.

⁴² Ibid, p. 115

⁴³ Ibid, p. 65. This rhetoric and view on the organization of state is frequently referred to as 'Tacitism', see Waszink, J., *Lipsius and Grotius: Tacitism*, History of European Ideas vol. 39:2 (2013), pp. 151-68.

As was mentioned before, *De Antiquitate*, in contrast to *Batavia*, was very popular and already translated in the vernacular in 1610. It is very likely that this success was due to the work being a closer representative of what was expected of the work, both in terms of the literal defence of Holland's rights and privileges and that it was exemplary of the intellectual and political beliefs of the time.⁴⁴ While Junius was still very engaged in maintaining an intellectual debate that became politicized, Grotius found a more rewarding balance between academia and politics.

1.4 The Case of the Low Countries: Reflections and Conclusions

Reiterating the material provided by Junius and Grotius, as well as the developing discourses on the Batavian myth during the evolving Dutch Revolt, can any conclusions be drawn with regard to the research question of this thesis? In other words, does the particular development of the Batavian myth between 1517 and 1610 provide any evidence towards the claim that nationalism should be seen as a dynamic rather than rigidity? The creation of a common past strengthens the legitimacy of a particular collective in the present. However, it is shown by the discussion of the geography of Batavia in both Junius and Grotius that exactly who and which areas belong to this commonality is a frequent source of debate and highly flexible in nature. What is the *patria* that Junius and Grotius refer to? Even though the States of Holland commissioned both works, there seems to be a development occurring between the works. While Batavia accounts for the history of a small 'island' in 1530, it encompasses most of Holland in 1575. After that point, the importance of its actual geography wanes and Batavia becomes a symbol and a synonym for all the rebelling provinces by the early seventeenth century.

With regard to the values there seems to be a slight shift in emphasis away from the warlike qualities of the Batavians towards prudence and the love of freedom. However, this shift might be accommodated by the different emphasis in Junius and Grotius' works, one being rather a history or ethnography, the other being a legal and governmental history. Over time, the parallels between

⁴⁴ Waszink, J. (trans), et al. (eds), *The Antiquity of the Batavian Republic*, pp. 18-24.

the Batavian rebellion and the Dutch Revolt grow stronger, indicating that contemporary political developments and events influence the development of the myth. However, it would be too strong to argue that the authorities created, or invented the story of the Batavian to suit their purposes. Rather it was a slow shift of the story from the intellectual, if not scientific sphere towards the realm of politics. With the goals stated in the commissions of both Junius and Grotius, the States of Holland seemed to have been very conscious of the potential of such an amalgamation of science and politics. Consequently, the myth as well gradually became a discourse that invokes the “nation”. While the works were initially geared towards legitimizing the political actions of the States of Holland in the eyes of the neighbouring states, the swift translation of Grotius’ *De Antiquitate* into Dutch seems to indicate that it also found resonance within the Dutch Republic. The rhetoric of the States did have an audience, and certainly would have raised awareness towards a collective course, that is “*concordia res parvae crescunt*”, “unity makes strength.”

Chapter 2 – Gothicism in Sweden (1523-1612)

"Out of the north cometh golden splendour"

Job 37:22, quoted by Olaus Magnus, *Historia* p. 8.

The second chapter of this thesis will analyze the development of the *Storgöticist*, or Great Goth, paradigm in Sweden between the establishment of the Swedish independence in 1523 and the publication of Johannes Messenius' *Retorsio Imposturarum* (1612) in the middle of the Kalmar War (1611-13). The first subchapter will again sketch the political context that envelops the development of the paradigm. Subsequently, the second subchapter is concerned with analyzing Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* together with some references to his brother Johannes Magnus' *Historia de Omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque Regibus*. The third chapter aims to discern how the paradigm developed after the publication of the works by the Magnus brothers culminating in the highly polemical treatise by Johannes Messenius in 1612. The final subchapter will reiterate the results and briefly reflect on them. Finally, in this subchapter I will be slightly more liberal with using the term 'nation' as it is very commonly used in the literature. However, it does not necessarily carry the modern connotations.¹

2.1 Gothicism and the Nationalist Victory over Unionism

On the sixth of June 1523 Stockholm capitulated and Gustav Vasa was elected to the Swedish throne, thus ending the 126 years old Kalmar Union between Denmark, Sweden and Norway (1397-1523). In the words of historian of Sweden, Michael Roberts, Vasa's ascension meant that "Unionism had been defeated by Swedish nationalism."² At the start of the Union, the three kingdoms developed a council of state (Swedish *riksråd* or *råd*) that together was responsible for

¹ Harald Gustafsson, for one, disagrees with discerning *nationalism stricto sensu* in early modern Sweden, see, H. Gustafsson, *The eighth argument. Identity, Ethnicity and Political Culture in Sixteenth Century Scandinavia*, Scandinavian Journal of History, vol. 27 (2002) pp. 91–113.

² M. Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 23. See also p. 152.

electing a king, or a regent during an interregnum. In Sweden, the authority of the council was laid down in the National Law (*Landslagen*) of 1350, which formed the basis for the kingdoms elective monarchy.³ Overall the Union caused an uneasy relationship between the nobility and the elected monarch, who was particularly vulnerable when levying extra taxes and in danger of being deposed. Gustav Vasa's election in 1523 and subsequent coronation in 1528 was the result of almost two decades of struggle between the Swedish aristocracy and the Danish monarchs and kings of the Union: Hans and Christian II, who ruled between 1481-1513 and 1513-1523 respectively. Additionally, the Swedish church was heavily involved in the matter. When Gustav Trolle, the archbishop and *ex officio* leader of the *råd* crossed swords with the appointed regent Sten Sture the Younger in 1515, the latter bolstered the power of the relatively young parliament (*Riksdag*) against the old council of states. Sture won and Gustav Trolle was exiled: "State and Church were now in violent conflict."⁴

In light of this political uproar, Gustav Vasa sought to establish a stable and hereditary monarchy in now independent Sweden.⁵ This was of particular importance as the nobility, in spite of their disagreements with some of the Unionist kings, were still divided in those supporting the legitimate Unionist king Christian II vis-à-vis those supporting the newly elected Gustav Vasa. Furthermore, Vasa further aggravated the conflict with the Church by mending the deplorable financial state of the kingdom by extorting large amounts of silver from the clergy. He took advantage of the coinciding Lutheran reform movement by appropriating their principles to argue that the "property of the church was the property of the people" and thus of the king.⁶ It is clear

³ On the Union see Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, pp. 1-24. Also I. Andersson, *A History of Sweden* (London, 1955), pp. 71-119.

⁴ Andersson, *A History of Sweden*, p. 112. Cf. E.I. Kouri, 'The early Reformation in Sweden and Finland c. 1520-1560', in O.P. Grell (ed), *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalization of Reform* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 42-69; A.A. Stomberg, *A History of Sweden* (London, 1931), pp. 238-59.

⁵ Finally institutionalized in 1544, see M. Roberts, 'On Aristocratic Constitutionalism in Swedish History, 1520-1720', in M. Roberts, *Essays in Swedish history* (London, 1967).

⁶ K. Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths in Sixteenth-Century Sweden. Johannes and Olaus Magnus as Politicians and Historians*, trans. by J. Larson (Oxford, 1991 [1982]), p. xii. Cf. L.O. Larsson, *Gustav Vasa: Landsfader eller Tyrann* (Stockholm, 2002), pp. 125-139.

from this brief overview that the Swedish kingdom Gustav Vasa founded was immediately faced with immense external and internal struggles, with both nobility and clergy.

Gothicism, sometimes referred to as the *Storgöticist* (Great Goth) Paradigm, concerned the idea that the contemporary Swedes descend from the Gothic people referred to by the classical authors, in this case mostly Pliny, Jordanes, Cassiodorus, Tacitus and, to a lesser extent, Procopius.⁷ In the early 15th century, Gothicism emerged as a counterargument of Nordic renaissance humanists against the prevailing view that the Goths were the ravaging barbarians that caused the downfall of the noble Romans. Rather, on the basis of the work by Cassiodorus and Jordanes, who praised the Goths, they argued for a more positive image of this ancient people as noble, brave and hospitable.⁸ Most commonly mentioned as the starting point of Gothicism is a speech by Nicolaus Ragvaldi, bishop of Växjö and later archbishop of Uppsala, in 1434 to the council of Basel, in which he traces Swedish history back to the Goths. Additionally in 1470 Ericus Olai wrote his *Cronica regni Gothorum*, which only circulated in manuscript and had, therefore, very little impact.⁹ It was not until the struggles between Christian II and the Swedes and the latter's consequent independence that the narrative of the Goths in Swedish history was subjected to detailed scrutiny.

In contrast to the Dutch humanist interest in the Batavians, which was quite expansive, the more serious writing on the history of Sweden and the Goths in particular culminated in only two seminal works. The main cause for this seemingly modest quantity was Gustav Vasa's monopoly of print, reached in 1526 with the closure of several church-owned printing presses. While this by no means obstructed the publication of an official historiography, this did not exceed what historian

⁷ See Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*; K. Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Political Polemics in Early Modern Scandinavia', in A. Eriksen, J.V. Sigurðsson (eds), *Negotiating Pasts in the Nordic Countries: Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Memory* (Lund, 2009), pp. 79-98.

⁸ It is hardly surprising as Cassiodorus was senator and scribe of the Ostrogoth king Theoderic the Great (r. 493-526). Jordanes, himself of Gothic origin, is best known for his *Getica* (c. 551), a summary of Cassiodorus's now lost history of the Goths. See A.S. Christensen, *Cassiodorus, Jordanes and the History of the Goths: Studies in a Migration Myth* (Copenhagen, 2002).

⁹ P. Fisher, H. Higgins (trans.), J. Granlund (annotation), P. Foote (ed.), *Olaus Magnus: Description of the Northern Peoples, vol. 1* (London, 1996), pp. xviii-xix.

Michael Roberts calls Vasa's "*ad hoc* pamphleteering".¹⁰ This 'pamphleteering' mainly attacked Vasa's political adversaries, and particularly the Danes, but made little serious attempt to scrutinize its history in a serious manner.¹¹ Yet this added all the more to the impact of the two works that did. The first was the *Historia de Omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque Regibus* (History of all the kings of the Goths and Swedes) written by Johannes Magnus (1488-1544) and published posthumously in 1554 in Rome and the second by his brother Olaus Magnus's (1490-1557) *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern Peoples) published in 1555, also in Rome. Olaus Magnus published both during the exile of the brothers from 1526 onwards. Their personal history and involvement in Swedish political affairs was complex and deeply influential on their work and perspective of Gothicism. Both Johannes and Olaus were passionate Catholics, but supported first Sten Sture the Younger and later Gustav Vasa in the war against Christian II.¹² In 1523, after his election, Gustav Vasa insisted that the archiepiscopal see, which still belonged to the exiled Gustav Trolle, was vacant and appointed Johannes Magnus as his successor. Olaus was similarly favored by supporting Vasa's cause and attained several influential positions in the Swedish church. In their position, the Magnus brothers were frequently sent on important diplomatic missions to defend the cause of the new state vis-à-vis other powers, such as Poland, the Hanse city of Lübeck, Russia, as well as the pope in Rome. However, when Vasa turned increasingly towards supporting Lutheranism the Catholic brothers were made redundant and were *de facto* exiled in 1526.¹³

As a result, Olaus, but particularly Johannes Magnus's work did not only have the political impetus to show and defend the antiquity of the Swedish 'nation', it also had the religious argument that the nation should return to the pure faith, which it never did. Consequently, the reception of the works after 1554 and 1555 is particularly interesting. As the reformation consolidated and became slowly institutionalized in Sweden between 1531 and 1541, Vasa had little

¹⁰ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, p. 153. Cf. Larsson, *Gustav Vasa: Landsfader eller Tyrann*, pp. 98-101.

¹¹ Skovgaard-Petersen, *Political Polemics*, pp. 79-81; Johannesson, *Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 46-7.

¹² Johannesson, *Renaissance of the Goths*, pp. 5-14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24; 27-32.

interest in the religious claims of the books. However, some of the geographical claims and arguments to the regions of Skåne and islands of Öland and Götland and the strong anti-Danish and anti-Russian sentiments were valuable and taken for Vasa's propaganda, without quoting the source during the final years of his reign.¹⁴ In totality, and especially after Gustav Vasa's death in 1560, the Gothicism as put forward by Johannes and Olaus Magnus became increasingly valued by the kings that succeeded Vasa. However, to establish what exactly this Gothicism is, a more detailed scrutiny of the works is necessary and provided by the next subchapter.

1.2 Olaus Magnus's *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*¹⁵

Although the title and subject of this subchapter concerns Olaus Magnus's work, it is difficult to separate it entirely from Johannes's history. Both were written in Latin, scrutinized similar themes and expressed similar sentiments. However, as Olaus's work was written between around 1545 and 1554 some years after his brother's, which was composed mostly in 1540, it served both as a summary and complement to it, sometimes quoting or referring to it.¹⁶ As such, it furthers the understanding of those themes and sentiments provided by the accounts better by surveying Olaus's, rather than Johannes's work. Nevertheless the reception of the works differed, so particular attention will be dedicated to surveying the successes and interpretations of the works.

To illustrate the intellectual success of the Magnus brothers, Kurt Johannesson, who has written in most detail on the two histories can be quoted stating that "[a]s no other Swede – his older brother excepted – Olaus Magnus was known and respected among men of learning and culture in sixteenth-century Europe. He could count a number of popes and cardinals as protectors

¹⁴ Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 213; Skovgaard-Petersen, *Political Polemics*, pp. 81-4.

¹⁵ For this section I have employed an unabridged critical translation into English in three volumes of the 1555 print edition (no manuscripts survived), which was published in Rome: P. Fisher, H. Higgins (trans.), J. Granlund (annotation), P. Foote (ed.), *Olaus Magnus: Description of the Northern Peoples, vol. 1,2,3* (London, 1996). When quoting, I will cite the book number, chapter number and page number as provided in the translation.

¹⁶ See 'The Inception of the *Historia*' in Foote (ed.), et al. *Description of the Northern Peoples, vol. 1*, pp. xxxvi-ii.

and confidants, just as he figured in the emperor's [Charles V] plans and papers."¹⁷ Just as his brother, he can be described as "a papist, a fugitive and an exile", but, nonetheless, "he had not ceased to be a patriot."¹⁸ In the work, Olaus, just as his brother, set out to argue that the northern lands, in all their glory were worthy of being reclaimed by Catholicism. In addition to showing the glory of his fatherland and justifying its independence, this has to be seen in light of his own religious mission to persuade both emperor and pope of the importance of Sweden as a part of Catholic Europe.¹⁹ In his effort to do so, he employed many of the themes that can also be discerned in Junius's and Grotius's efforts to show the antiquity of the Hollanders. Consequently, the subsequent discussion will be guided by the following themes: the geography of Sweden and its historic claims to particular areas, the characteristics of the Goths, perceived continuities between the ancient Goths and Swedes, and, finally, Olaus Magnus's views on the structure of government.

Before considering the exact geography of the old Goths and therefore Sweden, it was first of major importance to connect the Goths as described by the classical authors with the Swedes as distinct from the Danes, Norwegians and any other peoples that laid claim on Gothic ancestry.²⁰ The evidence for this was already provided by Johannes's summation of the biographies of every Gothic and Swedish king from the first, Magog, to Gustav Vasa. Olaus, then, mostly affirms this continuity by using Goth or Swede almost indiscriminately and as distinct from the other Nordic peoples.²¹ The lands inhabited by the ancient Goths, therefore, conformed to his contemporary Sweden. This was with the exception of several contended areas, most prominently the region of Skåne and the islands of Öland and Gotland, for which Olaus duly defended the Swedish claims. He argued that

¹⁷ Johannesson, *Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 162.

¹⁸ Roberts, *The Early Vasas*, p. 153.

¹⁹ P. Foote (ed.) et al., *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 1, pp. xxxvii-xxxix

²⁰ Such as Maciej Miechowita in Poland and Wolfgang Lazius in Austria. See Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 87-8. For other countries see Svennung, *Goticismus*, for Austria see pp. 46-51; for Germany see pp. 56-62; for England see pp. 62-7.

²¹ See for example Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 1, 1:30, p. 67. Sometimes in translation the Goths are divided into Geuts (Göta) and Svear or Scandza-Goths, but as both tribes were perceived to be Goths it did not affect the idea that the Goths (both Göta and Svear) were the ancestors of the Swedes. See J. Svennung, *Jordanes und Scandia: Kritisch-Exegetische Studien*, (Stockholm, 1967), esp. pp. 168-92.

they too were lands belonging to the historic Goths and thus were also a part of Sweden.²² This argument had the implication that both Olaus and Johannes had a vision and idea of what did belong to the Swedish nation and what was outside it. Finland, for example, which was, at the time, a part of Sweden, was seen as distinct from the Swedes, who merely governed them. The distinction was made on the basis of ethnicity, that is, the Finns, being an 'overfierce and vexatious' people that did not descend from the Goths, did not inherit the same qualities and were thus separate from the Swedes.²³

In general, Olaus Magnus described the qualities of the Goths and Swedes in relation to war, to which a large part of his work is dedicated. Both are described as valiant, noble warriors and generally men hardened by the tough, but beautiful, environment.²⁴ Surprisingly, these characteristics sometimes also extend to the women, who received a similar education. Nevertheless, in women the most praiseworthy characteristics were chastity and modesty.²⁵ Another value specific to the Goths was hospitality and the intention help to others.²⁶ In various ways the imagery of the characteristics and values of the pagan Goths seem to be very reminiscent of Christian morality. According to Olaus, this was due to the education that the Goths gave their children: "The Götar of old, particularly the noble families, cultivated a very strict system of rearing their children, to nurture them in upright habits and honest practices suitable to their developing years."²⁷ Finally, the values and characteristics were often seen in direct opposition to the 'others' of the story, mainly Denmark and Russia. These barbarous and greedy countries and their tyrant kings preyed needlessly on Swedish domains.²⁸ For example in book eight, chapter thirty-eight,

²² For Öland, see Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 1, 2:23, pp. 120-2; for Götland, see, vol. 1, 2:24, pp. 122-3, for the city of Kalmar, see, vol. 2, 9:21, pp. 431-2, For Skåne, see, vol. 2, 9:30, p. 442

²³ Ibid, vol. 2, 11:13-5, pp. 536-9.

²⁴ See for example, ibid, vol. 1, 1:20-31, pp. 49-70.

²⁵ Ibid, vol. 1, 5:33, pp. 279-80.

²⁶ Ibid, vol. 3, 16:12, p. 783-4.

²⁷ Ibid, vol. 1, 5:33, p. 279-80.

²⁸ See for Denmark for example, ibid, vol 2, 7:22, pp. 340-1, 8:38-9, pp. 393-5; for Russia for example, ibid, vol. 1, 4:5, pp. 201-2, vol. 2, 6:13, pp. 302-3, 11:11, pp. 534-5, 18:19, pp. 900-1, 20:2, p. 1032.

pointedly titled “Why Danish kings seek to gain neighbouring realms and, after these have been acquired, very soon lose them”, he recounts:

In earlier centuries a number of discussions had been held in many princes’ councils about the union of Denmark and the aforementioned realms [Norway, Götaland and Sweden], with the idea that in time to come one king, chosen from these kingdoms and crowned, should govern them. But insatiable greed and desire for power could allow neither time nor place for sound friendship to undertake and produce any long-lasting furtherance of the plan. [...] But not even in this way were the Danes’ unsurfeited pretensions to grandeur satisfied and set at rest, nor were they restrained from an unceasing aspiration to dominion and pre-eminence in their neighbour countries.²⁹

Besides demonstrating the greed and lust for power of the Danes, the passage also noted the impossibility of a Union because of it. Finally, considerable emphasis was placed on describing the splendor of the northern lands, its climate, natural resources and wildlife, which does contribute to the specificity of the characteristics of the Nordic peoples.

Olaus’s views on the characteristics and values of the Swedes is perennial in the sense that they persisted through centuries and are only further ameliorated after the people’s conversion to the pure Christian faith. Further continuities can be discerned in the eternal rivalry between Danes and Swedes, which found its genesis in the times of the giants.³⁰ In general, though, the continuities were implicit in the writing rather than meticulously explicated, as is shown already in the almost careless use of the term Goth.

Interestingly, Olaus’s view on governmental structure was in line with Swedish independence from the elective monarchy posed by the Kalmar Union, which still enjoyed considerable support among the Swedish aristocrats and clerics at the time of the *Historia*’s publication in 1555.³¹ He argued in favor of a strong and stable hereditary monarchy led by a king of ‘good character’. Explaining by example what character such monarch must have, Olaus put forward the case of king Ferdinand of Spain by recounting a long list of his qualities. Prime amongst

²⁹ Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 2, 8:38, p. 393.

³⁰ See especially *ibid*, vol. 1, 4:1, pp. 194-6; 5:1-33, pp.231-80.

³¹ Roberts, *On Aristocratic Constitutionalism*, pp. 19-31.

his qualities were faithfulness to his oaths, a sense of justice, compassion, moderation and piety; he was “ready with alms, just in his decisions, highly circumspect in judgment, despising none but embracing everyone in his goodwill, loving all and himself beloved by all.”³² Subsequently, Olaus contrasted Ferdinand with Christian II, who was, in his view the exact opposite of a king with good character and described as: “so harsh and savage that he respected neither a given oath, nor a sealed document, nor the awesome receiving of Our Lord’s body, and sympathized with no one’s cause for pity.”³³ Implicitly, Olaus defended the hereditary monarchy adapted by Gustav Vasa. However, as the monarch who was responsible both for Sweden’s independence and its subsequent turn to the heretical Lutheranism, Olaus seemed divided on how to describe Vasa. Was he a king of ‘good character’? As Kurt Johannesson discerns, Vasa was largely omitted from direct description, but nevertheless implicitly criticized throughout the text.³⁴ On the one hand the brief mention of the noble Gustav Vasa as the liberator and expellant of the tyrant Christian II is praiseworthy.³⁵ On the other hand when describing his own and Johannes’s toils a different image of Vasa appears: “All the good that he [Johannes Magnus] and God’s other revered bishops did in ample measure for the salvation of his very harsh, not to say ungrateful country will, as far as necessary, be shown to everybody.” With country, Olaus implicitly pointed at Gustav Vasa, who was mentioned in the previous sentence.³⁶

A final theme that can be discerned in both Olaus and Johannes’s work is religion and the return of Sweden to the pure faith. Christian values, such as hospitality, chastity and modesty were, according to Olaus, characteristic to the Goths and the Swedes. However, “the princes of northern lands will need to feel no less contrition because, contemptuous of their ancestors’ peaceable instructions and pious customs, they have allowed teachers of error to come in and gratify their

³² Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 2, 8:4, pp. 353-55.

³³ Ibid, pp. 394.

³⁴ Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, pp. 193-200.

³⁵ Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 2, 6:14, pp. 303-4; 7:5, pp. 321-2.

³⁶ Ibid, vol. 1, 4:20, p. 223.

ears.”³⁷ Subsequently, these “teachers of Lutheran impiety” were strongly and extensively condemned as sacrilegious heretics. This anti-Lutheranism permeated the work, but was often conveniently omitted by later Lutheran Swedish kings and writers, as shown by the case of Messenius.

As was mentioned previously, Vasa largely ignored and dismissed the publications of the Magnus brothers, though adapting some of the arguments for his propaganda. However, his son and successor was an admirer and was crowned Eric XIV, faithful to the succession of kings that was established by Johannes Magnus in his history.³⁸ During his reign, Eric was strongly opposed by the remnants of unionist Swedish aristocrats and thus the Magnus’s work was a very welcome legitimization for his rule. Furthermore, in 1563 the Scandinavian, or Nordic, Seven Years’ War broke out between Sweden, Denmark and Lübeck over the aforementioned contested areas. Whilst no real advancement was made on either side, the war was accompanied by staunch political polemic, now known as the ‘literary feud.’ Johan Friis, advisor to the Danish king Frederick II commissioned a refutation of Johannes Magnus’ history from a Danish historian called Hans Svaning.³⁹ This culminated in the *Refutatio calumniarum cuiusdam Iohannis Magni Gothi*, which discarded Johannes Magnus’ history as insane and an absurdity that need not be taken seriously. Up until the end of the war in 1570 – the mentally instable Erik was replaced by his brother John III in 1568 – the political polemic alternated. Yet the contributors often wrote in reference to the core texts provided by the Magnus’ brothers and Svaning. With the peace treaty of 1570, the kings also signed an agreement to prohibit all defamatory writings between the two countries, which remained in force for 105 years. All historical and political writing was to be censored before publication, removing any possibly agitating passages. The agreement was considerably well kept, keeping in mind that neither country defined ‘defamatory’. As a consequence of the prohibition,

³⁷ Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 3, 16:32, pp. 803. In general on Lutheranism see book 16, pp. 771-829.

³⁸ A few fictitious Eriks preceded him, which is also true for Charles IX (r. 1604-11).

³⁹ Skovgaard-Petersen, *Political Polemics*, pp. 79-84.

Karen Skovgaard-Petersen states, “a degree of caution can be observed in the national historical writing in times of peace.”⁴⁰ Hence, it is likely that this gave an enormous boost to the enduring position of the histories as written by the Magnus brothers as core works.

Yet there was a distinct difference between the receptions of the works. Johannes’s account, which was specific to Sweden and in Ciceronian Latin, was most influential in Swedish national history writing and the subsequent literary feud with Denmark. It was, therefore, not surprisingly translated into Swedish four times in contemporary times with the last being published in 1620.⁴¹ Nevertheless, its scholarly basis was disproved after the discovery of the Icelandic sagas and particularly Snorri Sturluson’s history of the Norwegian kings in the second half of the seventeenth century. In contrast, the influence of the work of Olaus Magnus proved more durable and enjoyed wider international acclaim.⁴² In spite of its obvious bias to Sweden, it was a description of all Nordic people and much less specific to political matters. It enjoyed half a dozen editions up to 1669 and was translated in Italian in 1565 and German in 1567, though not in Swedish until 1909. Additionally an abridged version published in 1558 was translated into French published in 1560-61, Italian 1561, and Dutch in 1562 and even into English a century later in 1658.⁴³

2.3 Johannes Messenius’s *Retorsio Imposturarum*⁴⁴

As Karen Skovgaard-Petersen’s quote illustrates, the Swedish-Danish prohibition on defamatory writings was in effect only in times of peace. When the fighting resumed during the Kalmar War (1611-1613), the polemic continued. Up to that point, Charles (IX) Vasa, Gustav’s youngest son, had largely repressed the counter-reformation spearheaded by Gustav Vasa’s nephew, the Catholic

⁴⁰ Skovgaard-Petersen, *Political Polemics*, p. 84.

⁴¹ M. Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden 1611-1626* (London, 1953).

⁴² P. Foote (ed.) et al., *Description of the Northern Peoples*, vol. 1, pp. lxx-lxxii

⁴³ Ibid, pp. lxx-lxxi.

⁴⁴ For this section I utilized the 1612 print edition published in Stockholm. Additionally I employed some of the translations provided by K. Skovgaard-Petersen in her, *Political Polemics*.

Sigismund who ruled Sweden between 1592 and 1599 and firmly established Sweden as Lutheran.⁴⁵

At the start of the war, shortly before his death, Charles IX requested a Swedish reaction on Hans Svaning's refutation of Magnus's work. Johannes Messenius heeded the call. It was published in 1612 during the reign of Charles' successor, Gustav Vasa's grandson, Gustavus Adolphus the Great. He is still one of the most celebrated of kings in Swedish national historiography, who induced what has been termed the *Stormakstiden*, the age of great power. Just as Erik and Charles before him, Gustavus was an avid reader of the Magnus brothers' work. Josef Svennung, in his study of Gothicism, states that Gustavus Adolphus "war fest davon überzeugt, dass die *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus* die einzige glaubwürdige schwedische Geschichte war und dass sein Reich die „Präeminenz“ vor allen anderen Königreichen hatte."⁴⁶ As such, he also supported Messenius' effort and later appointed him royal historiographer.⁴⁷

The biography of Messenius is particularly interesting. Born in 1579, he was educated in Germany at a Jesuit school with the aim to reclaim Scandinavia for Catholicism. However, when Messenius failed to please the Catholic king Sigismund and realized that in order to be successful in Sweden, being a Catholic was a detriment. When he returned to Sweden in 1608, he changed sides completely and, in a vigorous manner attempted to erase his papist past.⁴⁸ Michael Roberts characterizes Messenius by saying that he was "as good a historian as a *storgöticist* could be."⁴⁹ His *Retorsio imposturarum quibus inclytam Suecorum Gothorumque nationem Petrus Parvis Rosefontanus Eques Danus, sola calumniandi ductus libidine impudenter admodum insectatur*, was the fruit of his conversion, published in 1612.⁵⁰ Due to its success, it was swiftly translated and a

⁴⁵ See M.E. Carlson, *Johannes Matthiae and the Development of the Church of Sweden during the First Half of the Seventeenth Century*, Church History, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Dec., 1944), pp. 289-309.

⁴⁶ "was firmly convinced that the *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus* was the only credible history of Sweden and that his empire had "precedence" over all the other kingdoms" - Svennung, *Goticismus*, p. 84.

⁴⁷ Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 222.

⁴⁸ Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, pp. 101-5.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 517, in general see pp. 510-27.

⁵⁰ "Refutation of the deceits with which the knight Petrus Parvus Rosefontanus quite shamelessly persecutes the renowned Swedish and Gothic nation, out of pure desire to calumniate" – trans. by. K. Skovgaard-Petersen.

Swedish version was published in the same year.⁵¹ This raises the question: how does Messenius defend the Catholic works of the Magnus brothers in view of his Lutheran lords?

Messenius work is, above all, a refutation of a Danish refutation of the histories of Johannes and Olaus Magnus written in the political context of the Kalmar War. As such, he singled out those themes that were politically relevant: the threat of a return of the Kalmar Union and Swedish historical claim to Skåne which were both enshrined in a rhetoric that polarized the inherent qualities of the Swedes vis-à-vis the Danes. For example, the following passage illustrates this rhetoric quite well:

Quae molitio occulta, non in aliam finem instituta, quam ut Suecos ad perpetuam Dani redigerent servitutem. O miserrimam semper patriae meae conditionem, cujus simplicitate & candore toties Danorum abusa et astutia, in gravissimum sui detrimentum! Ubi jam, Spinefontane, fides data in confaederatione? Ubi vigor juramentorum, sigillorum, litterarumque?⁵²

The theme of the everlasting war between Danes and Swedes as well as the formers slyness into luring the somewhat naïve Swedes into submission and their lust for power was clearly a continuation of the arguments posed by the Magnus brothers. Additionally, the impossibility of the re-establishment of the Union as intended by the Danish king Christian IV also relied heavily on the rhetoric of Dano-Swedish polarity of character. He stated that the *"non minor antipathia intercedat, inter Suecum et Danum, quam inter ovem & lupum, gallinam & accipitrem, anserem & vulpeculam"* and thus prevented any kind of union.⁵³ It is particularly interesting that Messenius, when refuting the possibility of the Union based this on an incompatibility of character of both Swedes and Danes thus perpetuating the argument of the Magnus brothers. However, he was less absorbed by the historicity of Swedes as being from Gothic ancestry as distinct from the Danes. Rather the clash of

⁵¹ Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, p. 259.

⁵² "This secret manoeuvre had no other purpose than that the Danes should lead the Swedes into perennial slavery. O, what a very sad situation my fatherland always finds itself in! Its simplicity and candour has so often, to its own severe damage, been abused by the Danes' slyness. Where now, Spinefontanus [a parody of Svaning's pseudonym: Petrus Parvus Rosefontanus], is the promised loyalty to the covenant? Where is the strength of the oaths, the seals and letters?" – Johannes Messenius, *Retorsio Imposturarum*, p. 76, trans. provided by K. Skovgaard-Petersen.

⁵³ "the not so small antipathy intercedes between Swedes and Danes, as between the sheep & the wolf, the hen & the hawk, the goose & the fox" - ibid, p. 56.

character was perennial and derived from the nature of being a Swede or a Dane. Finally, Messenius, with regard to Skåne, carefully repeated the argument of Johannes Magnus who laid claim to two documents that showed the historical claim of Sweden to the area.

The continuity in argument from the writing of the Magnus brothers some sixty years before seems obvious. However, it was in the selection of content where it differed. In Messenius's work the internal religious struggle between Catholicism and Lutheranism that can be defined as a Leitmotif in Olaus and Johannes Magnus' studies, was entirely absent, although religion, or God, in a more general sense was referred to.⁵⁴ It seemed that the content and image of Gothicism remained stagnant throughout the sixty years of writing: the fatherland was still defined by including the same regions of Skåne, Öland and Götland and excluding the Finns, Danes and Norwegians, the line of kings in succession of the Goths is continued into Erik, Charles and later Gustavus Adolphus and the characteristics of the Goths and Swedes vis-à-vis the Danes. Messenius's work was in essence an elaborate pamphlet which selection and rendition of the historical material provided by the Gothicism of the Magnus brothers was of a predominantly political rather than scholarly demeanor. Although Messenius, and his fellow Swedish scholars, did ultimately provide such a scholarly effort later in the seventeenth century the politicized nature of the discourse was symptomatic of the Swedish historiography between 1554 and approximately 1640. Overall the discourse on the historic Goths became increasingly embedded in the political context and in that regard also became more selective in its *topoi*.

2.4 The Case of Sweden: Reflections and Conclusions

When tracing the development of Gothicism, three particular stages can be discerned. What started the writings of Nicolaus Ragvaldi and Eric Olai in the fifteenth century was a cry against the supposed barbarity of the Goths, a counter-argument to centuries of writing on the barbarian Goths that destroyed noble and civilized Rome. In this sense they were almost exclusively engaging in an

⁵⁴ See for example Johannes Messenius, *Retorsio Imposturarum*, pp. 122-3.

academic discourse on the character of the ancient peoples. When Johannes and Olaus Magnus, became interested in the story of the Goths during the Swedish liberation war, their interest was motivated by this political development and the legitimacy of their new nations' independence. However, when their interest was turned into writing, their, as well as the political conditions changed. As a result, beside the praiseworthy character of the Goths and Swedes and the geographical and historical legitimacy of their new nation, Johannes and Olaus Magnus's ideas on the internal religious struggle of the reformation and later the counter-reformation permeated the works. Yet, in spite of their clear political agenda the works were not pamphlets. Both contained a wealth of information, source material and, for that time, legitimate historical research. The works aspire to give a complete picture of the lives of the Gothic and Swedish kings, in the case of Johannes's work, and a description of the northern peoples in their northern lands, in the case of Olaus. Consequently, both volumes are extensive and almost encyclopedic. The many translations of especially Olaus Magnus's work testified to its wide intellectual reception and acclaim, which proved to be particularly enduring. However, some sixty years later in Messenius's work this grand narrative of the northern peoples in general and Swedes in particular was extensively diluted. Only those themes relevant to the contemporary Kalmar War are reiterated and amplified. The specific historicity of the Swedes as Goths was taken for granted and only the contemporary political context in favor of the intellectual discourse which stagnated for almost a century. It was only throughout Gustavus Adolphus' reign, who fiercely supported the development and sophistication of arts and literature that the static academic debate on the ancient Goths advanced. It is therefore fitting to end with the final words of Michael Roberts in his work on Gustavus Adolphus:

Storgöticism was the creed of a nation in the springtime of its vigour, in the first intoxicating unfolding of its glory; and in Gustav Adolf [Swedish name of the Latinized Gustavus Adolphus] Sweden had a sovereign whose victories and personal character made him, in the eyes of his subjects, the proper instrument of destiny, the agent of the historic process, the fulfiller of the prophecies, and the inspired architect of a long-overdue Gothic revival.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus*, p. 527.

Conclusion

This thesis has put forward two case studies in order to demonstrate how the nationalistic element presented by a myth of origin, a story of common descent is a dynamic. Both case studies traced almost a century of changing intellectual, political and religious discourse to show that what often was initiated as an intellectual debate can turn into a political debate rather quickly. Admittedly, neither of the case studies have the pretension to give a complete or comprehensive view of the development of the political context, the emergence of certain discourses that invoke the 'nation' or even of the particular myth of origin itself. However, its aim was to trace the mutability of the Batavian myth and Gothicism and thus the larger timeframe was a necessity to discern these trends over time.

As such, when comparing the Batavian myth with the Gothicism paradigm, what can be concluded on the mutability of said narratives? A similarity between both cases is that the narrative of the ancient ancestors of a particular people, whether as small as the Hollanders or as expansive as the Swedes, emerged first as a completely intellectual undertaking. Humanist scholars attempted to shake the foundation of what in their eyes is a persistent misconception of the classical authors, that is: the polarized view of dichotomizing the ancient people in noble Romans, and sometimes Greek, and barbarians. Furthermore, in both cases the narrative moved out of this specifically scholarly debate when its rhetoric became of use in the political context of the debate. For example, the Batavian myth as a narrative gained particular popularity outside the intellectual domain when Northern Netherlandish independence was looming. When it was eventually achieved, Grotius clearly legitimized its existence by showing the antiquity of its system of government from the Batavians onwards; it was almost exclusively this legitimization that characterized the work. Junius, on the other hand, who wrote before and during the start of the Dutch revolt is more easily characterized as a transition between a purely academic work and a political work, although undoubtedly more of the former than the latter. It was written with the

purpose of engaging in the polemic of the academic discourse on the Batavians rather than the political emphasis of defending the rights and privileges of Holland, which may account for the fact that it did not get published by the authorities that commissioned it. In the case of Sweden, this transition from a purely academic discourse to a political one on the basis of the developing political context was also visible. In this case the works by Johannes and Olaus Magnus provided a transition between the academic discourse and a political one, whilst Messenius diluted their argument to an almost exclusively political work. This is not to say that the scholarly debate disappeared completely, or became exclusively political, although in the Swedish case there is some evidence for this, but rather that academic and political discourse became increasingly intertwined when there was need for a rhetoric that fit the political rhetoric of independence, legitimacy and unity. However, it is another question, not answered in the scope of this paper whether this rhetoric correctly reflected the actual attitudes in contemporary society.

Another conclusion of this paper, and this is one aspect where the case studies differ, is that with the move from a scholarly to a political debate, the narrative of common descent itself also changed accordingly. For example, in the case of the Batavian myth, the warlike qualities of the Batavians, as demonstrated by Junius, were conveniently replaced with features, such as prudence and a love of freedom that characterized Grotius's contemporary society more. Furthermore, the emphasis on the particular geography of the ancient Batavian settlements, whether in Holland or Guelders, vanished almost completely to make way for a Batavia that implicitly encompassed the entirety of the Northern provinces. In Sweden, however, the content of the *storgöticist* paradigm remained fairly stagnant over time, similar characteristics, values and geography is emphasized in Olaus and Johannes Magnus as in Johannes Messenius. However, there was also development, or rather regression in the Gothicist discourse. While religion, and Catholicism in particular, was deeply intertwined with the characteristics and values of the ancient Goths and Swedes in Johannes and Olaus Magnus's work, this whole dimension was ignored in the later uses of the narrative.

In conclusion, it might be difficult to expand the implications of the dynamics exposed by this paper to include the entirety of the nationalist discourse in either of the cases. Nevertheless, it shows that to view nationalism in essentialist terms, is denying the complexities in its emergence and development. Furthermore, the mutability of the nationalist elements hints at a view of nationalism as a process that does not necessarily *progress* over time. Rhetoric of the 'nation' that is invoked in the case studies is largely fuelled by the political necessity and context, which indicates that the reverse might also be true. That is, when a state is well established and the need for a nationalist discourse is less pressing, political and scholarly debate may logically disassociate and consequently nationalism may become less dominant. However, more research is needed on the topic.

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