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# Two texts by Eneas Silvius Piccolomini on Denmark

by

Michael von Cotta-Schönberg<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Two texts of Eneas Silvius Piccolomini on Denmark are presented. One is the chapter on the Danish king, Eric VII of Pomerania, from *De Viris Illustribus*, and the other is the chapter on Denmark and the other Scandinavian realms from *De Europa*. The two texts form the basis of a picture of Denmark as held by an international European personality towards the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

*Subject terms: Eneas Silvius Piccolomini; Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Denmark; Scandinavia; King Erich VII of Pomerania; Emperor Sigismund; Queen Margaret I of Denmark; King Christopher III of Denmark; The Holy Roman Empire; Renaissance historiography; Fifteenth century*

## 1. Introduction

The Italian renaissance humanists took virtually no interest in Northern Europe. One significant exception from this rule is Eneas Silvius Piccolomini, poet, author, diplomat, cardinal and, from 1458 to 1464, pope under the name of Pius

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<sup>2</sup> The present text is a translation into English of a slightly revised version of an article published in a peer-reviewed anthology: Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg, *To tekster af Æneas Silvius Piccolomini om Danmark*. In: *Umisteligt – Festskrift til Erland Kolding Nielsen*. Edited by John T. Lauridsen and Olaf Olsen. Copenhagen, the Royal Library, 2007, pp. 55-74. The other Piccolomini texts on Denmark are discussed in an article published in a peer-reviewed anthology: Michael v. Cotta-Schönberg, *De Daniae regno aliqua non indigna cognitu: Danmarksbilledet hos en italiensk renaissancehumanist Æneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pius II)*. In: *Renæssancen i svøb : dansk renæssance i europæisk belysning 1450-1550*. Edited by Lars Bisgaard, Jacob Isager and Janus Møller Jensen. Odense, Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2008, pp. 83-110.

II. In his many works we find scattered passages relating to Denmark as well as two proper texts of a few pages each. Between them they provide an impression of Denmark as entertained by somebody who held a central position in European political and cultural affairs in the mid-15th century.

Three European institutions were to shape Piccolomini: the Council of Basle (from 1432), the imperial court of Frederick III (from 1442) and the papal court (from 1445). He was born in 1405 in the village Corsignano, approximately 30 kilometres south of Siena. By lineage he came from an impoverished Siena noble family which, like the rest of the nobility, had been deprived of all political influence. During the 1420s he was a student at the University of Siena, and in 1431 he attached himself to Cardinal Capranica, who was passing through Siena while fleeing the newly elected pope, Eugene IV. Eneas accompanied the cardinal to the Council of Basle where, with interruptions occasioned by several missions to other parts of Europe, he remained until 1442, initially as a secretary to several bishops and cardinals, then as an official of the council, and finally as secretary to Felix V whom the council had elected antipope. The offices that Eneas executed for Felix V brought him into contact with the court of the newly elected German king, Frederick III. He was crowned poet laureate by the king in 1442 and appointed to the imperial Roman chancery. He advanced rapidly and soon became a trusted imperial diplomat; he was also considered an eminent specialist in Italian affairs. In 1445 he was reconciled with Pope Eugene, and from 1446 enjoyed a meteoric ecclesiastical career. From that time onwards he lived in celibacy – in marked contrast to his previous lifestyle. In rapid succession he received Holy orders, was appointed Bishop of Trieste in 1447, and during the following years he played a prominent role in the normalization of relations between the Holy See and the German Nation as well as in the conclusion of the Concordat of Vienna (1448). In 1450 he received the Bishopric of Siena, his hometown. However, for several years more he remained a member of the imperial court and was in charge of the preparations for the Emperor's coronation itinerary to Rome in 1452; he also officiated at the wedding of the Emperor and the Empress in Siena. In 1455 he left Austria and Germany never to return and settled at the papal court. In 1456 he was appointed cardinal by Pope Calixtus III whom he succeeded as pope in 1458. His pontificate lasted for six years. His principal concern as a pope was the crusades against the Turks, but together with the Duke of Milan he also took part in the Neapolitan War of Succession. In so doing he succeeded in maintaining a Spanish dynasty on the throne of Naples, thus keeping the French out of southern Italy. By means of a third "war" in the Papal State itself he contributed to curbing the regional lords, thus securing this territory as a power base for the Holy See.

During his pontificate he gave his home town Corsignano its new name, viz., Pienza – as a tribute to himself. The village was given the status of an Episcopal

Residence, and several palaces and a cathedral were erected. Today the town is an architectural renaissance gem untouched by subsequent architectural styles. As pope he succeeded in promoting his own family: one nephew was married to the King of Naples' illegitimate daughter and was made Duke of Amalfi. Another nephew was appointed 'the Cardinal Nephew' (il cardinale nipote) – in accordance with the custom of the time – and later himself became pope under the name of Pius III.

Pius II died at Ancona in 1464 on his way to the Crusade which remained one of the predominant ideas of his life as well as a tremendous political mistake and tragic disappointment.

Piccolomini's extensive literary efforts include a large collection of letters, a number of historical/geographical works, monographs on various subjects (hippology, education of children, rhetoric, court life, the empire, Islam) and poetry. His erotic novel, *De Duobus Amantibus*, from 1444 – i.e. two years before he embarked upon his ecclesiastical career – would not have caused a sensation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but most certainly did in his own day. His two works on the Council in Basle are remarkable, not least because they are written from diametrically opposed angles: one looks at events from the point of view taken by the Council, and the other is completely 'papal' in its approach. His most outstanding work, *Commentarii Rerum Memorabilium quae Temporibus suis Contigerunt*, consists of 1000 pages of memoirs concerning events taking place during his own pontificate from 1458 to 1464. It is a unique document in this genre and constitutes an invaluable testimony of the function and development of renaissance papacy.

To these works we may add a number of dialogues on contemporary issues and, of course, the hundreds of official letters he wrote as a secretary and official serving two popes, an antipope, an emperor, an ecumenical council, and a series of cardinals and bishops, and later, as a prince of the church in his own right and finally as a pope.

The texts rendered below are the two longest among Piccolomini's fifteen texts in which mention is made of Danish matters. They have previously been presented and published in *Scriptores Rerum Svecicarum*<sup>3</sup>.

## **2. On King Eric of Denmark (Eric of Pomerania)<sup>4</sup> from *De Viris Illustribus* (1450)<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> *Scriptores Rerum Svecicarum* (SRS). Vols. I-III. Uppsala, 1818-1876. The two Piccolomini-texts are published in vol. III, pp. 324-326. The original text (manuscript, printed edition) has not been quoted.

<sup>4</sup> Eric of Pomerania: born 1381/82, king of Denmark as Eric VII 1396, deposed 1439, dead 1459.

Texts on famous men and women were a recognized literary genre during the renaissance<sup>6</sup>, and had roots in Antiquity, cf. Plutarch's lives. Boccaccio had taken up the genre as had one of Piccolomini's few contemporary models, Leonardo Bruni. Piccolomini also corresponded with an acquaintance of his in Naples, Bartolomeo Fazio, who wanted to include a biography of Piccolomini in his own work, *De Viris Illustribus*.

Piccolomini's *De Viris Illustribus* contains 25 profiles of famous men of his time as well as one woman, the Empress Barbara of Cilly. They are thought to have been written over the period 1440-1450.

In this work, Piccolomini has included a profile of the Danish king, Eric of Pomerania. This choice may seem somewhat surprising, given the context, but Eric's fate must have made an impression on the imperial court where Piccolomini heard of it.

### a. Text<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Enee Silvii Piccolominei postea Pii pp. II De viris illustribus. Ed. A. van Heck. (Studi e Testi; 341). Città del Vaticano, 1991, pp. 122. The text *De Erico Stetinensi* is found on pp. 96-97.

<sup>6</sup> Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. Chicago, 1981, pp. 44 ff., 393 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *De Erico Stetinensi*. Ericus ex domo stetinensi ex fratre matris Sigismundi generis filius admodum juvenis Daciae atque Norvegiae regnum adeptus est. Cumque aliquot annis rexisset, seditionem adversus se nasci sensit volensque furori cedere Jerosolimam ire statuit venitque ad Sigismundum fratrem in Hungaria pluribusque diebus apud eum fuit honorifice receptus. Erat autem corpore pulchro, capillis aureis, oculis grandioribus, facie rufa, cervice longa atque nivea; vestibus utebatur privatis; nam lineo collari, quamvis aureo ligamine, gulam candidam claudebat. Solus ipse e terra sine adjutorio non tactis strepis ascendebat equum, mulieresque omnes, et praesertim imperatricem, in suum spectaculum cum amoris desiderio trahebat. Cum venisset Venetias, admodum honoratus est ivitque Jerosolimam et redivit incolumis. Cumque in Prusciam reversus adhuc seditiones vigere adversus se in regno sensisset, vocatis Fratribus Theutonicis "Ego" inquit "ex Jerosolima nunc redeo devotionemque meam peregi. Sed major adhuc animo instat. Jam mihi nulla saeculi voluptas est, nulla mihi soboles est, uxor mortua est. Quid amplius restat nisi ut Deo serviam? Quod si vos mihi habitum vestesque Ordinis dederitis atque me quasi unum ex Fratribus communi praebenda alueritis, stat mihi mundo cedere. Daciam ego vobis Norvegiamque Gothiamque relinquo, ut sit religionis; nec enim mihi quisquam est necessariorum, quem regno dignum aestimem. Vos bene haec regna gubernabitis atque illorum hominum proterviam compescetis; nam mihi parum obiedientes sunt." Ad haec Pruteni dicunt se non velle tantum principem vestire habitu; sed quamdiu apud eos manere voluerit, daturus se sibi victum et provisionem rege dignam. Nam et alii apud eos principes fuerunt (Vitoldumque Lituaniae ducem commemorant) offeruntque sibi in regnum compescendum auxilia. Ille non contentus in regnum revertitur ubi, cum luxuriose vixisset, cum justitiam negligeret, cum virgines ac maritas violaret desidiaequae succumberet, rursus major seditio oritur, scribuntque principes et praelati atque communitates Sigismundo Caesari. Regnum Daciae quamvis ex sui magnitudine archiregnum dici possit (nam quattuor in se continet amplissima), fateri se tamen romano imperio subjectos inquit petuntque uti Sigismundus regem eis tradat auctoritate romana; nam quem habent regem inutilem dicunt, regni pessumdatorem. Sed Sigismundum magis vinculum carnis quam imperii decus movit; postponere namque utilitatem imperii, quam cum justitia tueri poterat, voluit quam fratrem relinquere, quem non poterat honeste tueri. Misit igitur oratores in Daciam cumque his fecit, uti principes magis timore quam amore Erico conciliarentur; timebant enim Sigismundum, qui frater ejus erat et imperator. Sicque vivo Sigismundo Ericus regnavit. At eo mortuo, cum vetusta vigerent odia et Erici vitia non essent minora, rursus primates regni ad Albertum Caesarem mittunt novumque regem petunt, cujus opera Christoforus dux Bavariae in regem Daciae

## On Eric of Stettin

Eric belonged to the House of Stettin. He was related to Sigismund<sup>8</sup>, the son of his maternal uncle<sup>9</sup>. While still very young, he was made King of Denmark [1396] and Norway.

A few years into his reign, he learned that a rebellion against him was brewing. He preferred to evade the fury of the gale and decided to travel to Jerusalem. First he went to his cousin Sigismund in Hungary, where he was made welcome with honour and stayed for several days [February 1424]. He was a handsome man with golden hair, fairly large eyes, a glowing complexion and a long white neck. He dressed unostentatiously and covered his white neck with a linen scarf, albeit fastened with a golden buckle. Alone and without any assistance he could jump onto his horse without touching the stirrups. Every woman who saw him, and especially the Empress, was aroused by desire. When he arrived in Venice [24 August 1424], he was given a glorious welcome, and from there he travelled on to Jerusalem whence he returned unharmed.

When he returned to Prussia [in the spring of 1425] he learned that the rebellion against him was still underway in his realm. He then summoned the knights of the Teutonic Order and said, ‘I have now returned from Jerusalem and have done my holy duty there. However, I am contemplating something even greater. I no longer care for this world, I have no issue, and my wife has passed away. What is left for me to do except serving God? If you will clothe me in your habit<sup>10</sup> and provide for me at the expense of the community as one of your brethren I shall retire from the world. I shall give you Denmark and Norway and the Lands of the Goths<sup>11</sup> so that they may become the property of the Order. None of my relatives do I find worthy to rule. You will govern these lands well and keep in check the impudence of these unruly people.’

The Prussians replied that they did not want to clothe such a magnificent prince in their habit, but for as long as he wished to stay with them they would nourish him and provide him with other necessaries worthy of a king. For they had been visited by other princes (and still remembered Duke Vitout of Lithuania). They also offered him their assistance in bringing his realm to heel.

assumptus est, Erico proximus sanguine. Sed nec sanguis nec ullum vinculum jura imperii tenet. Ericus igitur, ubi se omnibus videt exosum ac timet impetum, furori cedens in Gothiam navigavit, ubi usque in hanc diem inglorious dies agit.

<sup>8</sup> I.e. the Emperor Sigismund, born 1368, Holy Roman emperor 1410, coronation 1433, died 1437.

<sup>9</sup> ‘... ex fratre matris Sigismundi generis filius’. Text unclear.

<sup>10</sup> I.e. receive him into the order

<sup>11</sup> ‘Gothia’. i.e. Sweden

With this he was not satisfied, and so he returned to his realm [24 May 1425]. There he led a life of dissipation, flouted justice, ravished young as well as married women, and sank into idleness. Then another and more extensive rebellion arose. The princes, prelates and cities wrote to Emperor Sigismund: although the Danish realm was large enough to be considered an archkingdom<sup>12</sup> (as it encompassed four extensive parts<sup>13</sup>), they did recognize that they were subject to the Holy Roman Empire, and they asked Sigismund in his capacity of Roman Emperor to give them another King. Because the one they had was useless and was ruining the realm.

However, Sigismund attached more importance to family ties than to the honour of the Empire. He would rather set aside the interests of the Empire, which in this instance he could further legitimately, than fail his cousin, though he could not reasonably defend him. He therefore sent orators<sup>14</sup> to Denmark and through them he managed to settle the dispute between the princes and Eric – more through fear than love; for they feared Sigismund, who was both Eric's cousin and Emperor.

Thus Eric reigned for as long as Sigismund was alive. But when he died [1437] and the old hatred was still running hot, and Eric's vices had not abated, the leaders of the realm<sup>15</sup> again sent a message to the Emperor<sup>16</sup>, Albert, and asked to be given a new king. The Emperor saw to it that Duke Christopher of Bavaria was made King of Denmark<sup>17</sup> [1439]. He was, of course, a close relative of Eric, but neither family considerations nor any other ties restrict imperial rights. When Eric realized that he was universally abhorred, and as he feared being attacked, he yielded to the gale and sailed for Gotland [1437] where he lives in dishonour to this very day.

## **b. Commentary**

The opening factual information provided by Piccolomini concerning Eric of Pomerania is correct: Stettin is the principal city of Western Pomerania. His

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<sup>12</sup> archiregnum

<sup>13</sup> 'amplissima' – regna presumably implied. The three parts must be Denmark, Norway and Sweden. We cannot now for certain which fourth part Piccolomini is thinking of: Gothia? Or Finland, Schleswig-Holstein, Pomerania?

<sup>14</sup> To avoid anachronisms in the translation of the term used by Piccolomini for diplomatic emissaries of any kind, the direct English equivalent is used

<sup>15</sup> I.e. members of the Council of the Realm (Rigsrådet).

<sup>16</sup> Sigismund's son-in-law and successor, Albert II. He was never crowned as emperor, but remained king of the Holy Roman Empire until he died. His reign only lasted from 1438-39.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher of Bavaria, nephew of Eric of Pomerania through his sister Catherine of Pomerania, married to Duke John of the Upper Palatinate of the ducal house of Bavaria.

father, Wartislav II of Pomerania had a sister, Elisabeth, who was married to Emperor Charles IV, and by him – this was his fourth marriage – had a son, Sigismund. This Sigismund was Eric’s cousin. Eric himself was recognized as King of Denmark and Norway in 1396 and 1389, respectively. Piccolomini does not mention Sweden in this context.

It is also correct that in 1424 Eric went on a long journey abroad, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. However, it is not correct that he did so in connection with a rebellion against him. On the contrary, at that time, things were quite peaceful, and the perpetual problem of North Schleswig had been brought before the Emperor, and this suit was the direct cause for Eric’s journey.<sup>18</sup> Piccolomini’s story is rather more reminiscent of the situation of another Danish king, Valdemar Atterdag, when, in 1368, he left Denmark to travel to Central Europe; however, Valdemar did so not because of domestic but rather because of international problems.<sup>19</sup> As no archival material can have existed in the Imperial Chancery documenting any domestic motive for Eric’s journey, Piccolomini must either himself have made a mistake, or else the error originates in oral information confusing the situations of the two Danish kings despite there being nearly two generations between them.

The description of Eric as a man is interesting because of its vividness. This very vividness must be the cause of the error on the part of Vilho Niitema stating that the description was based on personal knowledge as Piccolomini, “den Unionskönig während dessen Aufenthalt in Ungarn persönlich getroffen hatte”.<sup>20</sup> In 1424 Piccolomini was a 19-year-old student at the University of Siena and only became attached to the imperial court at the time of Frederick III, i.e. in 1442. To be sure, Piccolomini’s description of Eric of Pomerania is so vivid that you can virtually see him before you, but this was precisely the nature of his art. The question is: where did he get this information? A likely source is Kaspar Schlick, chancellor to Frederick III; he had also been chancellor to the Emperor Elect, Albert II, and before that to Emperor Sigismund. Schlick had probably been present at court in 1424, and as he was Piccolomini’s friend and mentor at the Imperial Chancery, it seems reasonable to assume that Piccolomini may have received his information from him. The information about the impression Eric of Pomerania made on the Empress must be seen in connection with Piccolomini’s profile of the Empress Barbara of Cilly elsewhere in *De Viris Illustribus* as a princess who was fond of handsome, young men as well as the things that go with them. Jumping onto his horse without using any stirrups may

<sup>18</sup> Kristian Erslev, *Danmarks Historie under Dronning Margrethe og Erik af Pommern*. Bd. I-II. Kjøbenhavn, 1882-1901. Cf. II, 95.

<sup>19</sup> Vilho Niitema, *Der Kaiser und die Nordische Union bis zu den Burgunderkriegen*. (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae; B, 116). Helsinki, 1960, p. 84. Also see Erslev II, 156.

<sup>20</sup> “had met with the King of the Union in person during his stay in Hungary”. Vilho Niitema: *Der Kaiser und die Nordische Union bis zu den Burgunderkriegen*. (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae; B, 116). Helsinki, 1960, p. 84. Also see Erslev II, 156.



seem striking in a 42-year-old king, but the presence of the empress and her ladies-in-waiting might have acted as a particular stimulus.

The story about Eric wishing to join the Teutonic Order upon his return sounds unlikely. Mention has indeed been made of Eric's membership of the Order, but the facts should be turned around. At one point the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order invited Eric to join the Order, probably as an honorary member, but Eric declined the offer.<sup>21</sup> Also in this instance, as was the case with attributing Eric's reasons for travelling abroad to domestic politics, a parallel can be found in the time of Valdemar Atterdag. His brother, Otto, was admitted to the Teutonic Order as part of a political transaction concerning Estonia<sup>22</sup>.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that in the course of his travels abroad Eric not only made friendly contacts with the Teutonic Order but also concluded an alliance with the Order and the Pomeranian dukes as an element in a Danish political balancing act focusing on creating a counterweight against Holstein and the dominant power of the Duchy of Brandenburg (15 September 1424)<sup>23</sup>. On his way back to Denmark from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Eric also paid a visit to the Grand Master of the Order at Marienburg.<sup>24</sup>

Eric's alleged statement to the Grand Master about not having any relatives that he found worthy of ruling is inconsistent with the fact that Eric, who was in fact childless, had declared that he wanted his relative Bogislav of Pomerania to be his successor as early as in 1416, and had gone as far as jeopardizing the integrity of his kingdom for this reason<sup>25</sup>.

The fact that Piccolomini uses direct speech in his description of the meeting between Eric and the Grand Master cannot, of course, be explained by his having had access to written minutes of the meeting. However, the method is very much in keeping with that of historians of Antiquity, e.g. Tacitus, and their other renaissance successors, who freely rendered the sayings and speeches of historical persons as these might or should have worded them – the latter, in any case, being a temptation that Piccolomini, the poet, public speaker and rhetorician could in no way resist.

His rendition of Eric's distaste for ruling his country was not, however, pure conjecture despite its chronological misplacement, cf. Erslev: "it became more and more evident [1336-37] that he was fed up with his royal powers that had now been so severely restricted; for himself personally he wanted nothing

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<sup>21</sup> Erslev II, 80.

<sup>22</sup> (Politikens) Danmarks Historie. Bd. 4. Copenhagen, 1966, pp. 270-271.

<sup>23</sup> Erslev II, 96; Niitema, p. 149.

<sup>24</sup> Erslev II, 108.

<sup>25</sup> Erslev II, 113, 391, 423-4.

more...”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, it was not in 1424-25 that he sought the help of the Teutonic Order to curb the insurgents, but only later, viz. in 1437.<sup>27</sup>

It is doubtful that after his return from his lengthy journey abroad Eric led a life of dissipation. Following the demise of Queen Philippa, he acquired a permanent mistress, Cecilia, who accompanied him to Gotland and Pomerania. The Council of the Realm (Rigsrådet) blamed him for not marrying another princess, but rather choosing to lead a life that ‘caused great scorn and detriment’<sup>28</sup> for the realms, whatever that might mean. Piccolomini may have heard rumours of this from his sources at the imperial court or through the Council of Basle, which, in 1434-35, received written complaints about Eric of Pomerania from the Swedish Council of the Realm (Rigsråd)<sup>29</sup>. His comments are a literary figure, a repetition of criticism levelled at princes that recur elsewhere in his works. It seems unlikely that any particular weight should be attributed to this passage as a contemporary source on debauchery on Eric’s part. The complaints levelled at Eric by the Council of the Realm focus more on his infringements as a ruler than on his personal moral character.<sup>30</sup>

The first letter to Emperor Sigismund concerning the removal of Eric of Pomerania from the throne is unknown to Hude<sup>31</sup>, Erslev, or Niitema; the same applies to the statement in the letter about Denmark being subject to the Holy Roman Empire.

Piccolomini’s characterization of Denmark as an archkingdom, has not been noted by the historians who have hitherto studied the coronation of Christopher I as an archking<sup>32</sup>. According to a notarial attestation dated the day of the coronation, 1 January 1443, Christopher was crowned an archking, ‘Dominus Johannes archiepiscopus ... dominum Christophorum in archiregem Daniae consecravit et inunxit’. This is a unique event never to be repeated in Danish

<sup>26</sup> Erslev II, 391 ”... mer og mer trådte det frem [1336-37], at han var led og ked af denne kongemyndighed, for hvilken man nu trak så snævre Grænser; for sig selv ønskede han intet mere”

<sup>27</sup> ”Han [Erik] stannade kvar i Preussen i 6 veckor, men på hans begäran om understöd, för att med vapenmagt genomdrifva sina fordringar hos undersåtarna, ville eller kunde Högmästaren ej ingå.” [He, [Eric] remained in Prussia for 6 weeks, but the Grand Master could not or would not accommodate him in his request to impose his demands on his subjects by force of arms.] Carl Gustav Styffe, *Bidrag til Skandiaviens Historia ur utländska Arkiver*. Bd. I-V. 1859-1884, bd. II, p. cx.

<sup>28</sup> Erslev II, 192: “til stor hån og fordærvelig skade”.

<sup>29</sup> Beata Losman, *Norden och Reformkonsilierna 1408-1449*. (Studia Historica Gothoburgensia; 11) Göteborg, 1970, p. 186. Also see Erslev II, 337.

<sup>30</sup> Erslev II, 380 ff.

<sup>31</sup> Anna Hude, *Aktstykker vedrørende Erik af Pommerns afsættelse som konge af Danmark*. København, 1897.

<sup>32</sup> Jens E. Olesen, ”Archiregem regni Daniae”. I: *Twenty-eight Papers Presented to Hans Bekker-Nielsen on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday 28 April 1993*. Odense, 1993, pp. 205-216; Niels Skyum-Nielsen: *Ærkekonge og Ærkebispe*. I: *Scandia* 23 (1956) 1, pp. 45-47; Erich Hoffmann: *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung in Dänemark bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*. Berlin, 1976, pp. 160-161; Idem: *Coronation and Coronation Ordines in Medieval Scandinavia*. I: *Coronations: Medieval and Early Modern Monarchical Ritual*. Berkeley, 1990, pp. 132-137; Jan Liedgren: *Ärkekonungen av Danmark och det tyskmorska rikets indelning*. I: *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 40(1955), pp. 76-77.

history, and the notarial report is the only source we know of in the matter. For this reason, Piccolomini's note is interesting. It was written no later than 1448/49, see below, and it confirms that the Danish emphasis of Denmark being an archkingdom was known to the Imperial Chancery of Frederick III, which is where Piccolomini will have heard of it. It is interesting that, whereas in the notarial report it is the king who is characterized as an archking, in Piccolomini's text it is Denmark that is designated as an archkingdom with reference to its size and structure. We know of various modern interpretations of Christopher's coronation as archking. Piccolomini's text probably supports the interpretation that its purpose was to 'emphasize Denmark's status compared to the other countries within the Nordic Union'<sup>33, 34</sup>.

The personal relationship between the cousins, the Emperor Sigismund and Eric of Pomerania, was good, and this is thought to have influenced the Emperor's policy vis-à-vis the king of the Nordic Union. In the litigation relating to Schleswig-Holstein, the Emperor found in favour of the Danish crown in 1424. At the time as well as subsequently, criticism was levelled at his decision, as it was thought not to have been in the best interest of the Holy Roman Empire. Piccolomini reproduces this criticism which he must have known about from people attached to the imperial court – Kaspar Schlick again, perhaps? His perception that in his own lifetime the Emperor was always in favour of Eric remaining on the throne is something Niitema considers 'wenn auch übertrieben, doch nicht ganz unbegründet'<sup>35</sup>. What Piccolomini fails to see in his assessment is the genuine political advantages which Sigismund himself gained from this relationship<sup>36</sup>.

The appointment of Christopher of Bavaria was hardly something which the Roman King Albrecht 'saw to', but as the head of the Holy Roman Empire it was necessary to get his approval for the wish expressed by the Danish Council of the Realm to have a Bavarian Duke made king. Of course, he was quite happy to give it considering the closeness of the relationship between the two men. Piccolomini's information concerning a letter from the Danish Council of the

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<sup>33</sup> Niels Skyum-Nielsen, *Archirex. I: Kulturhistorisk Leksikon for Nordisk Middelalder fra Vikingetid til Reformationstid*, I (1956), p. 203.

<sup>34</sup> The rendition of the text of the earlier Danish letter to the Emperor Sigismund in *Scriptores Rerum Svicicarum* contains an important error. It says. '...scribuntque principes et prelati atque communitates Sigismundo cæsari regnum dare, quamvis ex sua magnitudine archiregnum dici possit; nam quattuor in se continet amplissima. Fateri se tamen Romano imperio subjectos iniquunt ...'<sup>34</sup>. The text provided by van Heck, the Piccolomini expert in his authoritative edition of *De Europa* has. '...scribuntque principes et prelati atque communitates Sigismundo Cæsari. Regnum Dacie quamvis ex sui magnitudine archiregnum dici possit ..., fateri se tamen romano imperio suietos iniquunt ...'<sup>34</sup>. The error in SRS is due to the fact that the word 'Dacie' has been read as 'dare', which would mean that the Council of the Realm (Rigsrådet) makes an offer of the Realm of Denmark to the Holy Roman Emperor. The Swedish version considers this information to be dubious ('ipsa res dubia est'), and rightly so since it is based on a reading or transcription error somewhere in the line of transmission.

<sup>35</sup> "if somewhat exaggerated not entirely unjustified". Niitema p. 205.

<sup>36</sup> *Erslev II*, 12, 76, 103-4, 182, 183; Niitema, pp. 163 ff., 195 ff, 205.

Realm to Albrecht is, incidentally, confirmed by another contemporary source, *Detmars Chronik*<sup>37</sup>.

The remark concerning imperial rights not being restricted by family or any other considerations is very much in keeping with Piccolomini's overall political theory about the Holy Roman Empire. In his treatise *De ortu et auctoritate imperii Romani* (1446) Piccolomini summarizes the conventional arguments in favour of the emperor's universal authority. Although Piccolomini's views on imperial authority were to become much more nuanced – and disillusioned – later in life, there is no doubt that as far as Piccolomini/Pius is concerned, the Emperor represents the highest secular authority in Europe, which means that in a manner of speaking he has a right of suzerainty over all European realms even though this right is, of course, less important vis-a-vis the kingdoms that do not form part of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany and Northern Italy).

Christopher of Bavaria died in 1448, and Eric of Pomerania was evicted from Gotland in 1449. These events are not mentioned by Piccolomini; therefore we must assume that he had completed his profile of Eric before 1448/49.

### **3. On Denmark – from *De Europa* (1458)**<sup>38</sup>

This work written during Piccolomini's brief period as cardinal in Rome is a geographical/historical presentation of the European realms, the first of its kind. States are reviewed one by one from east to west and from north to south. For each individual country – country here meaning political unit or state – information is provided concerning geography (location) and its ancient history in those instances when writers of Antiquity have recorded anything about them. To this he adds notes on the more recent political history of the country in question. Descriptions vary a great deal and depend on Piccolomini's personal, specific knowledge about things.

#### **a. Text**<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Niitema, p. 206.

<sup>38</sup> Enee Silvii Piccolominei postea Pii pp. II de Europa. Ed. A. van Heck. (Studi e Testi; 398). Città del Vaticano, 2001, pp. 313. The text on Denmark is found on pp. 133-136.

<sup>39</sup> Hoc loco, quoniam Saxoniae Dania jungitur, priusquam Germaniae reliquas partes absolvere, de ipso Daniae regno vicinisque regionibus in aquilonem versis aliqua referre institui non indigna cognitu. Tria sunt in septentrionem vergentia regna sibi invicem cohaerentia: Danorum, quod hodie Dacum appellant, Sveciorum ac Norvegiarum. Dania (sive Daciam dicere volumus, consuetudini servientes) Germaniae portio est, cheronnesi

“As Denmark borders on Saxony, I should, at this point, like to explain a number of things worthwhile knowing about the kingdom of Denmark and her neighbouring regions to the north. There are three northern neighbouring realms: That of the Danes (customarily referred to as Dacia<sup>40</sup>), that of the Swedes, and that of the Norwegians.

Denmark (or Dacia if we use her habitual name) is, geographically speaking, part of Germany and takes the form of a peninsula. Once it was inhabited by the Cimbri and from there came the flood of Barbarians who swamped Italy and threatened to overthrow the Roman state and who were annihilated by Marius

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habens formam. Hanc quondam Cimbri tenuere, unde illa inundatio barbarorum emersit, quam Marius Arpinas Italiam petentem ac res romanas evertere minitantem ad internicionem dedit. Possidonius, ut Strabo refert, conjecturam facit, quod Cimbri latrocinando incertis errabundi sedibus ad paludem usque Meothim militiam agitarint; ab eis enim, Cimerium vocari Bosphorum arbitratur, quasi Cimbricum, cum Graecorum lingua Cimerios Cimbros nominet. Suecia cincta undique mari plures continet insulas, inter quas Scandavia est apud Veteres late memorabilis. Hinc quoque populorum innumerabilis multitudo egressa omnem olim Europam armorum turbine ac procella involvit; nam Gothi, qui Hunnos bello vicere, Pannoniam, Mysiam, Macedoniam et omnem Illiridem occupavere, Germaniam, Italiam ac Galliam vastavere, et demum in Hispania consedere. Hinc fuit origo Norvegiae, quae de ipso septentrone sortita est nomen. Continenti per Ruthenos jungitur et in Arcton protensa incognitae terrae seu structo glacie oceano, ut plerique fabulantur, contermina est. Ad orientis partem ac meridiem baltheo mari alluitur, ad occidentem britannicus finit oceanus. Daciam Theutones hodie Danorum appellant Marchiam, cujus lingua Germanis incognita est. Ex Norvegia venisse putant, qui Cimbrorum occupaverint loca. In hac terra patrum nostrorum memoria Voldimarus regnavit, in Svecia Magnus, Aquinus in Norvegia, quem ferunt divinum fuisse hominem, miro provincialium amore atque obsequio cultum. Huic conjunx Margaretha fuit, Voldimari filia, ex qua natus Olaus patri succedens, brevi tempore vita functus, regnum matri reliquit. Ea et paternum adeptae est extincto Voldimaro. At Magno in Svecia hominem exigente Albertus dux magnipolensis vocatu populi diadema suscepit, qui dominatum vicinae feminae contemnens bello Daciam Norvegiamque lacessere cepit. Occurrit ei Margaretha coactis copiis. In campis late patentibus pugnatum est tamquam ipsa viri, hostis feminae animum induisset. Victus Albertus captusque et in triumphum ductus regnum amisit. Dimissus tandem infame senium in paterna domo finivit. Margaretha clarissima mulier, tribus imperans regnis, ad senectutem usque magnifice ac religiose subditos gubernavit. Demum senio confecta, cum tantum per se ferre nequiret imperium, Henricum [sic!] Pomeraniae ducem, quattuor et decem annos natum sibi filium adoptavit regnaque illi commisit, et Philippam, Regis Angliae filiam, dedit uxorem. Is, cum conjuge sine prole defuncta nubere ulterius nollet jamque quinque et quinquaginta regnasset annos, ad extremum sub imperio Friderici populari tumultu ex regio solo deturbatus est et Christophorus, Boioariae dux, sibi ex sorore nepos, in ejus locum suffectus, qui avunculum suum decem annis, quibus ipse imperavit, in insula gothica regnare permisit. Christophoro autem ex humanis abeunte Daciae ac Norvegiae coronam Christigernus accepit. Sueci vero in electione Regis discordantes alii Carolum, equestri dignitate insignem, alii Canutum, ejus fratrem natu minorem regno praeficiunt. Pendente adhuc electionis negotio Carolus immissis militibus Stocolmiae oppidum clam occupat, in quo regia sedes habetur. Canutus per amicos arcem invadit. Hinc bellum inter fratres de regno ortum et pugna diu anceps. Occisis utrinque pluribus ea demum lege indutiae pactae, ut potestas eligendi regem exclusa nobilitate plebi fieret, in qua cum Carolus gratiosior esset, majestas regni ad eum defertur. Canutus privatam vitam degit. Carolus vero novo regno tumidus atque insolens armatis navibus Henricum, aetate confectum, nulli noxium, sibi ipsi viventem e Gothia propulsavit, qui etiam hodie in humanis agens apud Pomeraneos, unde illi origo fuit, parvo contentus vitam agere fertur, quam sint incerta mortalia et quam inania suo exemplo docens, qui tribus potentissimis regnis exutus nec parvam insulam, in qua decem annis delituerat, usque ad mortem retinere potuit aetate plenissimus. Sed neque Carolo scelera sua impunita fuere qui, dum Christi ecclesias persequitur, religionem contemnit, sacerdotes dispoliat, festos dies observari prohibet, jura divina et humana confundit, a Joanne Benedicti filio, Upsaliensium praesule, viro cordato et impigro, a quo nobilitas regni excitata est, magno proelio superatus ac regno pulsus in parva insula non longe ab ostio Viscelae exilium agit. Christigernus in locum ejus assumptus, pietate ac justitia melior, iterum tria regna nostro tempore in unum redegit, cui et Gothia paret, Gothorum quondam sedes et patria.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Dacum’ the form is uncertain; we would expect to find Daciam or Dacorum. At this time the name Dacia is still in use at the European chancelleries; also see the comment below.

the Arpinate. As mentioned by Strabo<sup>41</sup>, Poseidonius propounded the hypothesis that the Cimbri advanced from place to place in their quest for plunder, and in their military advance they pressed forward to the Meothian swamp. For he believes that they call the Bosphorus Cimerium, i.e. Cimbricum because in Greek the Cimbri are called Kimerioi.

Sweden is surrounded by sea on all sides and consists of a number of islands, of which Scandavia is generally known<sup>42</sup> by the writers of Antiquity. A vast host of people emigrated from this place, too, and threw all of Europe into chaos and a storm of warfare. For the Goths who defeated the Huns, conquered Pannonia, Moesia, Macedonia and all of Illyria, devastated Germany, Italy, and France and finally settled in Spain.

Here Norway, too, originates. The country owes its name to the very word north, and is connected to the Continent<sup>43</sup> via Russia. It stretches into the Arctic regions and borders on an unknown country or glacial sea mentioned by quite a few people. To the east and the south Norway's rivers run into the Baltic Sea and to the west it borders on the British Sea.

Today the Germans refer to Dacia as 'The March of the Danes'. Their language is unknown to the Germans. They are thought to have come from Norway originally and to have taken over the land of the Cimbri. In the days of our fathers, Valdemar ruled this country<sup>44</sup>, Magnus ruled Sweden, and Håkon Norway. This latter king is said to have been a very pious man, beloved and admired by his countrymen. He was married [1363] to Margaret, Valdemar's daughter, who bore him a son, Oluf. He succeeded his father, but soon died [1387] leaving the kingdom to his mother. When Valdemar died [1374] she also inherited her ancestral realm.

As Magnus in Sweden had no male heirs, the crown went to Duke Albert of Mecklenburg at the wish of the people. He despised the neighbouring female monarchy, began harrying Denmark and Norway by waging war against them. Margaret mobilized her troops and went to war against him. Hostilities covered a large area: she displayed manliness, and her adversary displayed effeminacy.

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<sup>41</sup> Strabo 7.2.2: Poseidonius' '... conjecture is not a bad one, that the Cimbri, being a piratical and wandering folk, made an expedition even as far as the region of lake Maeotis, and that also the "Cimmerian" [Kimmerios] Bosphorus was named after them, being equivalent to "Cimbrian" [Kimbrikos], the Greeks naming the Cimbri [Kimbrous] "Cimmerii" [Kimmerios]'. Quotation from Howard Leonard Jones' English translation – with Greek words in brackets. From the Loeb Edition of the Geography of Strabo. T. I-VIII. London, 1917-1932, t. II, p. 169. Strabo was a Greek historian and geographer who lived from 64/63 B.C. and at least until 21 A.D. Poseidonius was a Greek philosopher and scientist living from c. 135 to c. 51/50 B.C.

<sup>42</sup> 'late memorabilis'.

<sup>43</sup> 'continenti'.

<sup>44</sup> The kings mentioned are Valdemar Atterdag, Magnus Eriksson Smek, Håkon VI Magnusson, Margaret I, Oluf III, Alfred of Mecklenburg

Albrecht was captured<sup>45</sup> and displayed in a triumphal procession thus losing his realm. Finally he was sent home<sup>46</sup> and spent the rest of his life devoid of honour at his ancestral house. Margaret, this illustrious woman, ruled three kingdoms and until old age she governed her subjects with distinction and piety. In the end, when she grew old and could no longer rule such a large kingdom on her own, she adopted Henry [sic!] of Pomerania<sup>47</sup>, who was 14 years old. She made over the kingdom to him and gave him the hand of Philippa, daughter of the English king, in marriage [1406]. When his wife died without issue [1430], he did not wish to remarry. When he had reigned for 55 years – in the latter part of his reign Frederick was emperor [from 1440] – he was overthrown by a popular rebellion and was succeeded by Christopher<sup>48</sup>, Duke of Bavaria and his own nephew through his sister. During the ten years of his reign, Christopher allowed his uncle to govern the island of Gotland. On Christopher's death, Christian<sup>49</sup> acceded to the Danish and Norwegian throne.

The Swedes were in disagreement over the choice a new king. Some wanted Charles<sup>50</sup>, a noble knight; others wanted Canute, his younger brother. While they were negotiating about the choice to be made, Charles secretly smuggled troops into Stockholm, the Royal Residence, and occupied the city. However with the help of allies, Canute gained access to the castle. Therefore, the brothers went to war for supremacy, and for a long time the matter remained undecided. Many were killed on either side, and finally a truce was agreed on the condition that it should be left to the people to choose a king without interference by the nobility. As Charles was the most popular of the two, the crown<sup>51</sup> was awarded to him. Canute continued his life as a private individual. Charles became conceited and arrogant because of his new powers. He fitted out ships and drove out of Gotland Henry [sic!] who was enfeebled by age, although he was harmless and lived in isolation. He still lives in Pomerania, whence he hailed and is said to live there content with little. His fate is a good illustration of the fickleness and emptiness of human life: three mighty realms were wrested from him, and he was not even allowed to keep the tiny island, where he hid away for 10 years, until death in old age. However, Charles' crimes did not go unpunished. He persecuted the Church of Christ, despised religion, robbed the clergy, banned the celebration of church festivals and trampled God's and man's law underfoot. In the end [1457], Jöns Bengtsson<sup>52</sup>, the wise and vigorous Archbishop of Uppsala, stirred up the nobility of the kingdom against him and he was vanquished in a huge battle. He was ousted from the kingdom and now lives in exile on a small

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<sup>45</sup> In the battle of Falköping, February 1389.

<sup>46</sup> Following the Peace at Lindholm 1395

<sup>47</sup> Henry: slip of the pen by Piccolomini or transcription error for Eric, i.e. Eric of Pomerania.

<sup>48</sup> Christopher of Bavaria, 1416-1448, king of Denmark (1439), Norway (1442), and Sweden (1441).

<sup>49</sup> Christian I, 1426-1481, king of Denmark (1448), Norway (1450), and Sweden (1457).

<sup>50</sup> Karl Knutson, regent in Sweden 1438-1439, king 1448-57, 1464-65, 1467-70.

<sup>51</sup> 'majestas regni'.

<sup>52</sup> Jöns Bengtsson Oxenstierna, Archbishop of Uppsala 1448-1467.

island not far from the mouth of the river Vistula. Christian was installed in his place. He is a better king, both in terms of piety and justice, and in our own time he has reunited the three kingdoms. Gotland, too, obeys him; this is the island which used to be the home and country of the Goths.'

## **b. Commentary**

Sweden and Norway do not have separate articles in *De Europa*, but are included in the article on Denmark.

Piccolomini does not doubt that geographically speaking Denmark belongs to Germany, and the county's proximity to Saxony is also mentioned elsewhere in his writings. He knows that the three Nordic realms are neighbours, but he does not seem to have comprehended the internal geography of the countries. He is familiar with Jutland, but not with the Danish islands, and he does not know how Scania, Halland and Blekinge fit into the region's geography.

In Antiquity, Dacia was the name of a Roman province located in an area which today is covered by Hungary and Transylvania. Late Roman authors mention Dacia in connection with Gothia, the land of the Goths, which is perceived as bordering on Dacia. The geographical proximity between the province of Dacia and the lands of the Goths, Gothia – later Gotland and Sweden – is probably the reason why Denmark was subsequently referred to as Dacia. In a dictionary article Jarl Gallén writes that the error was only detected by the humanists, and in this connection he refers to Sebastian Münster (1488-1552) and Olaus Magnus (1490-1557). Piccolomini's text documents that the error was actually pointed out by an Italian humanist far earlier, and he did so at a time when the Royal Danish Chancery as well as the Roman Curia were still using the official name of Dacia.

As far as Gothia is concerned, it is obvious that Piccolomini has doubts about the relationship between this area and Sweden. In his text on Eric of Pomerania he has Eric telling the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order that he will let him have the realms Denmark, Norway, and Gothia. This text seems to indicate that he identifies Sweden with Gothia. Further on in the same text he writes that following the rebellion against him, Eric travelled by ship to Gothia where he then took up residence. In the later text from *De Europa*, the three realms have become Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. However, he does perceive Sweden as an island kingdom. One of the islands is Scandavia whence the Goth are said to have originated. Later in the text he refers to Gotland as an island, apparently not identical with Scandavia. Thus he has arrived at the correct conclusion that



Gotland is an island, but has not understood that Sweden is part of the Scandinavian Peninsula.

One reason why Piccolomini perceives Sweden as an island kingdom and does not understand its physical connection with Norway is his uncritical acceptance of the classical authorities, in this case Jordanes' work on the history of the Goths<sup>53</sup>.

Piccolomini has grasped Norway's northern and western geographical connections, but not its location in relation to Sweden on the Scandinavian Peninsula.

We must take note of the way in which Piccolomini uses the geographical designation Europe. Europe as a geographical name goes back to Antiquity when, together with Africa and Asia, it was used to indicate the three continents known at the time. During the Christian period the name Europe was widely eclipsed by Latin terms for Christianity (*christianismus*, *christianitas*), but it stayed extant throughout the Middle Ages and enjoyed a renaissance thanks to Dante and Petrarch<sup>54</sup>. This trend is partly linked to the development of the secular nation state, partly to the preference of the renaissance humanists for classical terminology rather than mediaeval (e.g. *templum* rather than *ecclesia*; *divus* rather than *sanctus*)<sup>55</sup>. Actually, Piccolomini frequently uses the terms *christianitas*, and others in a broad geographical sense, but with him the name Europe, and in particular the adjective *Europaeus* as a designation for Europeans and things European, have come to stay.

The historical and dynastic information relating to Denmark is actually fairly correct, despite going back three generations. When Piccolomini wrote about these matters, he was a cardinal at the Roman Curia, and in this capacity he had access to the, by necessity, fairly correct information concerning the dynastic conditions in Europe.

Piccolomini's passage concerning Queen Margaret fighting as bravely as a man, while King Albert fought as inefficiently as a woman refers back to a text in Cicero's *De Officiis* with which he was very familiar and used diligently, 'You young men behave like women, while the girls are of manful courage and heart'<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> Jordanes, *De origine actibusque getarum*, chapter III. The book was written c. 551 A.D. Piccolomini himself wrote a treatise, *Historia Gothorum*, based on Jordanes' text, which in turn rests on a work by Cassiodorus, now lost.

<sup>54</sup> Denys Hay, *Europe - the Emergence of an Idea*. Edinburgh, 1957, *passim* and especially p. 58-59.

<sup>55</sup> Hay, p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> 'Vos enim juvenes geritis muliebrem, illa virgo viri.' Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 61.

Piccolomini's information about the ousting of Eric of Pomerania from Gotland and his residence in Pomerania is correct, and he is au courant with the election of Christian I as King of Sweden in 1457.

The story of the rivalry of the two brothers, Charles and Canute, is entirely unsupported by fact. Piccolomini does not normally rely on fanciful invention; however, it is not possible to establish what information he may have used as a basis for his story<sup>57</sup>.

#### 4. Piccolomini's Picture of Denmark

Naturally, Piccolomini's picture of Denmark underwent a change from the time when, as a young official of the Council of Basel, he came into contact with people from the Nordic region (among them possibly the adventurer Marcellus, and certainly the Bishop of Växjö<sup>58</sup>) and until the time when as pope he had an official relationship with King Christian.

His dependence upon the writings of preceding geographers and historians (Strabo, Jordanes) was replaced by genuine personal knowledge gained from his travels in nearby areas (Germany, Scotland); from the diplomatic activities of the imperial and later the papal court as well as from the papal administration of the Nordic ecclesiastical province.

In terms of geography Piccolomini places the three Nordic countries as neighbouring realms in Northern Europe. He is not aware of the significance of the islands as far as Denmark is concerned; on the other hand, he overestimates their importance for Sweden. Gothia, a term he borrows from Jordanes, generally confuses his concept of Sweden. In the early parts of his work he practically uses it synonymously with Sweden as an island kingdom; later on he appears to be aware of its status as a relatively large island.

In terms of politics Piccolomini clearly sees Denmark as a 'regnum', i.e. a kingdom at par with the other kingdoms in Europe. In one instance it is even characterized as an 'archiregnum' – an archkingdom – allegedly on the basis an official Danish text.

As regards the relationship between Denmark and the Holy Roman Empire Piccolomini's texts reflect the duality which characterized this relationship over

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<sup>57</sup> SRS III, 324.

<sup>58</sup> Nikolaus Ragvaldi. Like Piccolomini he participated in the peace conference in Arras in 1435, cf. Losman, p. 208 ff.

the centuries. As a result of this duality Denmark recognizes the suzerainty of the Emperor during those periods in which the Holy Roman Empire is strong and Denmark is weak, whereas during other periods she maintains her independence, i.e. her immunity from any duty of allegiance to the Emperor<sup>59</sup>.

On the one hand Piccolomini claims that in the above letter to the Emperor Sigismund, the representatives of Denmark recognized ‘that they were subject to the Holy Roman Empire, and they asked Sigismund, in his capacity of Holy Roman Emperor, to give them another King’.

On the other hand, as an imperial official and later as pope when convening international meetings concerning the crusade against the Turks, Piccolomini invites the participation of the Danish king as a sovereign prince at par with the kings of France, Hungary, Scotland, etc.

Perceptions of the relationship between Denmark and the Holy Roman Empire were not only made more complicated by the fluctuating political power structures. Contemporary concepts of nationality may also have played a part. In 1418 Martin V concluded a concordat on ecclesiastical matters with the German Nation, which included Denmark as part of this nation<sup>60</sup>. In the same vein, at a later date King Christian I himself stressed to the Roman Curia that pope Nicholas V’s concordat with the German Empire, the Concordat of Vienna (1448), also included Denmark as part of the German Nation<sup>61</sup>

The two texts by Piccolomini discussed above provide us with a convincing picture of his perception of Denmark. It is, however, incomplete. Other – short - passages concern the influence of the towns of the Hanseatic League in Denmark, Denmark’s geographical and economic position in Northern Europe, and Denmark’s actual power basis for involving herself in contemporary crusades. These texts provide us with a far more nuanced picture of this large realm and the powerful princes of the North, which we see reflected in the two texts and they deserve special presentation in another context.

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<sup>59</sup> Niitema, p. 22, 24 ff., 55, especially p. 55: ”Die Frage des Lehnsverhältnisses des Königs von Dänemark zum Kaiser ... wurde auch nur in dem Fall verwirklicht, dass die Stellung des Kaisers stark, Dänemark aber innerlich schwach war.” [‘The question of the feudal relationship of the kings of Denmark to the Emperor ... was only realized in the situation when the position of the Emperor was strong, whereas Denmark was internally weak.’]

<sup>60</sup> Losman pp. 21 and 31.

<sup>61</sup> Johannes Lindbæk: Pavernes Forhold til Danmark under Kongerne Kristian I og Hans. København, 1907, p. 23.