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The Swedish Kings in Progress – and the Centre of Power

The medieval travelling kingdom

The present article is a study of what we can know about Swedish rulers' choices of residences in the age of the travelling kingdom.¹ This type of state – whose name is my own translation of *Reisekönigtum*, a term used in German research – was characterized by the absence of a permanent seat of residence of the royal court and the central administration, who were constantly migrating from place to place.² The travelling kingdom was a characteristic of medieval Western Europe, where it lingered on until the Renaissance. All West European courts lived under similar conditions.³ The royal suite was a collection of households the size of which is difficult to estimate. According to one English assessment, no self-respecting lord or lady travelled with fewer than fifty persons, often 250 or so. Narrative sources give the impression that Swedish magnates travelled with a few dozen companions, while the kings may have been followed by a few hundred men.⁴ Unfortunately there is no way to verify these Swedish figures by comparing them with royal account books; the fourteenth-century accounts kept by the magnate Raven van Barnekow give us a hint of the costs of feeding the royal suite and its horses, but they never explicitly mention its size.⁵ The travelling household was highly organized. The luxury of the court followed the magnates from place to place. “Chambers” and “halls” were transported from one place to the next. Gentlemen sometimes had to apologize to unexpected visitors for the absence of essentials which had been sent on ahead for the next removal. The travelling suite had its own doctors.

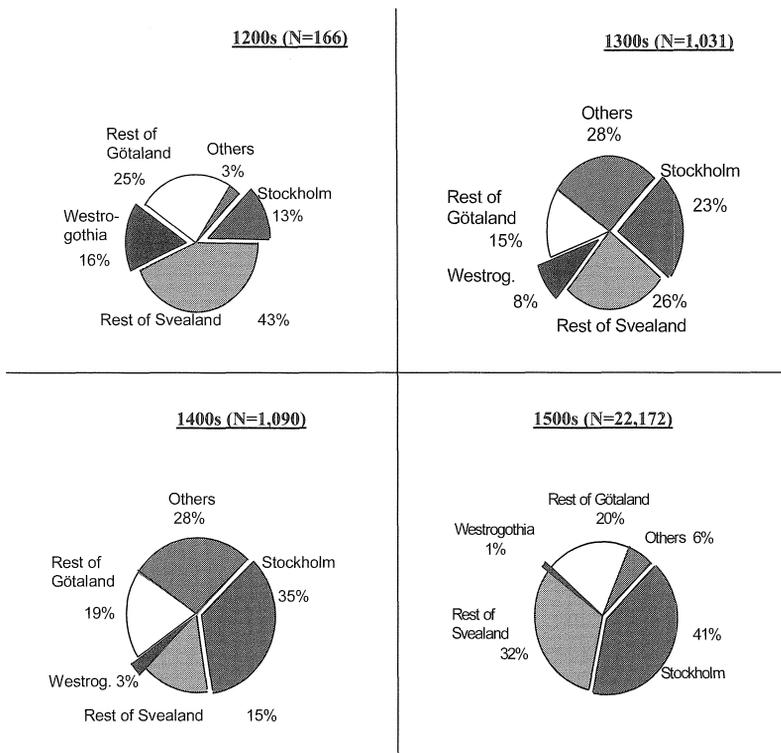
Fools and dwarfs were highly esteemed. A noble retinue would also include six to ten musicians. The Swedish marshal Karl Knutsson, later to become king, was accompanied by a little orchestra in 1439 at the siege of Stegeborg castle.⁶

Why did the rulers travel? One reason was purely *financial*: the economy demanded a constant movement of the household. Once the food supplies in one place of abode had been eaten up it was easier to move to a new residence than to transport provisions over long distances. Mobility contributed to the proper utilization of the produce of manors. But it is not possible to explain the travelling kingdom as a mere adaptation to economic necessities. Royal migrations cannot always be attributed to “rational” motives. One factor behind the mobility of the rulers was, however, *political*: the necessity of showing themselves to their people as a way of gaining loyalty, to exhibit power, frightening the subjects with a large retinue. Also, visits allowed inspection of the government of the realm. The primitive medieval state demanded a constant tour of inspection. The royal jurisdiction was ambulating. (In times of war there were of course additional demands for mobility.)⁷

Since migrating kingdoms existed for such a long time and in so many different countries, it should be stressed that they could take varying shapes depending on the circumstances. This type of kingdom *originally* belonged in a society with a rudimentary state, where the ruler supported himself mainly on the agrarian yield of royal demesnes and family estates. At this stage of development it might have seemed natural for him to distribute his time fairly evenly across his territory, which would enable him to make the most of his fringe benefits, without impoverishing some parts of it by staying there too often with his suite. However, peripatetic rule did not automatically disappear with the rise of a stronger and more sophisticated state apparatus. It lingered on for centuries after the rulers had liberated themselves from dependence on their estates, by establishing a state supported by taxation which made it possible to concentrate wealth in a fiscal centre, thus also creating a theoretical possibility for a permanent residence.

By then the original, “genuinely” peripatetic rule had changed into something different; still ambulating, but also clearly tending towards establishing itself in a certain place or region. It can be assumed that the ruler’s choices of residences were no longer dictated mainly by economic considerations, but by political conditions. It is this *latter* type of travelling kingdom that will be the main object of this article. What I wish to clarify is whether or not the royal travel routes followed a pattern

Diagram 1: Places where royal documents were issued



Sources: Diplomatarium Suecanum/Svenskt Diplomatarium; Riksarkivet, pergaments- och pappersbrev; Riksarkivet, pergamentsbrev förbigångna i Svenskt Diplomatarium;

Riksarkivet, kopior av handlingar i svenska arkiv utanför Riksarkivet; Riksarkivet, sturearkivet; Riksarkivet, riksregistraturet; Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, pergaments- och pappersbrev; Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, pergaments- och pappersbrev i enskilda samlingar; Diplomatarium Suecanum/Svenskt Diplomatarium, kronologiskt huvudkartotek.

– and if so, how did this change over the course of time? How mobile or how stationary were the sovereigns? Did they favour certain places or areas of the Swedish kingdom in their choices of residences, or did they distribute their presence equitably across the country?

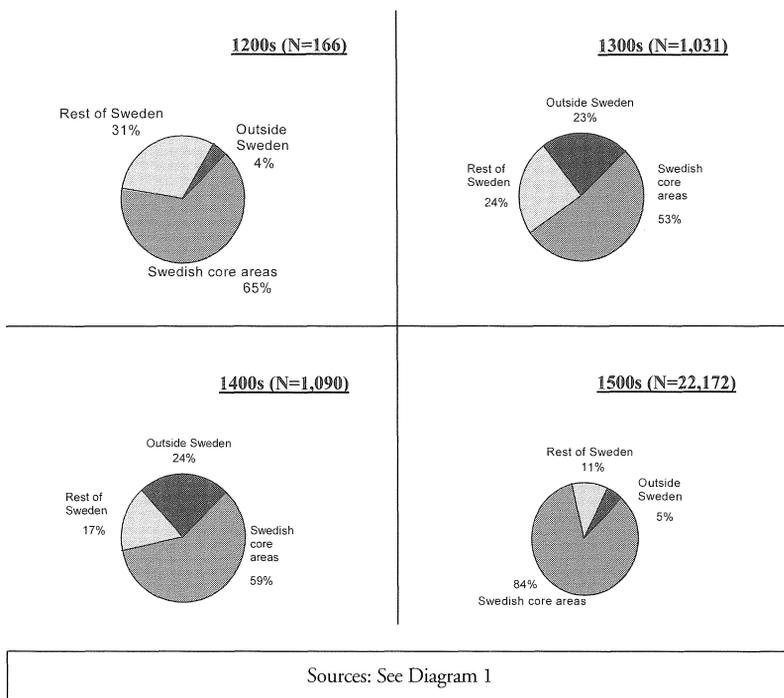
The underlying assumption which motivates my interest in this problem is that the physical presence of the supreme political leaders in a given area indicates that this part of the kingdom was politically *central*, whereas their absence in other areas signals that these regions were *peripheral* and played a less important role in the political process. One main

characteristic of the modern state is its control of coherent territories from a geographic-political centre. Much of the European history from the late Middle Ages onwards is a story of how such power centres tried to establish a control over other, more peripheral geographic areas. During a long process of integration, diffuse frontiers became fixed borders.⁸ In order to interpret the history of an age when there was no permanent seat of government, no capital city, it can be important to establish where the political decisions were made. This enables us to better understand what sort of a kingdom it was. It can help us decide to what extent political power had a geographic centre of political gravity, and add new dimensions to a better understanding of political events. It might also contribute to an explanation of how, when and why the Swedish centre of political power finally ended up where it did, in Stockholm.

The Swedish kings in progress: a statistical summary

What can we know about the travel pattern of Swedish rulers? One easy method of “measuring” to what degree a given area was politically central – if we accept the idea that a frequent physical presence of the rulers is an indication of centrality – is by counting the royal documents (the most reliable source material) to see what percentage of them were written there, and what percentage were written in other places. From the 1200s onwards, Swedish royal documents in most cases contain information about where they were issued, which enables us to roughly estimate the royal whereabouts. If there is a document dated on a certain day, we can establish the ruler’s location that day, provided of course that the information in it is correct. A clear pattern appears in **Diagrams 1–2**, based on all known documents (either preserved in the original or known through copies or descriptions) which were issued between 1200 and 1599 – i.e. from the earliest available source material until the 1600s, when Stockholm had become the undisputed capital of Sweden and the travelling kingdom ended – by people who, at least *de facto*, exercised Swedish “royal power”: kings, queens, regents (*riksföreståndare*), or the aristocratic collective known as the Council of the Realm (*rikets råd*). The credibility of the statistics, which will be discussed below, is affected by the relative scarcity of material from the earlier part of the 400-year-long period: we have 166 documents from the thirteenth century, 1,031 from the fourteenth, 1,090 from the fifteenth, compared with 22,172 from the sixteenth. But let us nevertheless start this discussion by constructing a few daring hypotheses (as one is usually compelled to do when dealing with the Middle Ages) based on the statistical evidence.⁹

Diagram 2: Places where royal documents were issued



In **Diagram 1** the documents from the 1200s–1500s are divided according to where they were issued: Svealand, Götaland, or “other areas” – usually places outside Sweden during unions with other Scandinavian countries, but also referring to the northern and Finnish areas. One part of Svealand (the city of *Stockholm*) and one part of Götaland (the province of *Westrogothia* or *Västergötland*) have been put into separate categories because their percentage of the source material displays especially remarkable variations during the period of investigation

In the 1200s we find that the places where the documents were issued are rather evenly distributed across Svealand and Götaland, although the Götaland documents are somewhat fewer in number.¹⁰ The only remarkable feature is that documents issued in the newly founded city of Stockholm are almost as numerous as the material from the entire province of Westrogothia. This tendency is gradually enhanced. With each new century, Stockholm’s share has increased by ten per cent. The percentage of documents from Westrogothia, on the other hand, constantly diminishes.

By the 1500s the general impression is that the rulers usually resided in Svealand, where 73 per cent of the documents were issued; most of the remaining material was issued in Götaland. (Documents from places outside Sweden now occur only exceptionally, which is normal since Sweden was not united with other countries during most of this century.) Westrogothia stands out as an area that was very seldom visited. Stockholm is the opposite extreme. The fact that the material from this city alone amounts to as much as 41 per cent is quite remarkable in the age of the travelling kingdom; the sixteenth-century documents were issued in about three hundred different places, but typically only one or two documents come from each individual place. Localities where more than 3 per cent of the material from each century were issued are only a handful (cf. below, **Table A**).

The pattern emerging from this very quick and superficial statistical summary is that the rulers' choices of residences were gradually centralized, concentrating themselves around a few areas. This meant that the western parts of the country became more and more peripheral. The eastern parts of Sweden proper (i.e. excepting the Finnish part of the kingdom) distinguished themselves as the areas where the rulers were physically present. If these statistics are to be trusted, a political centralization process had begun in the Swedish travelling kingdom at least as early as the 1300s. It was less accentuated than in centuries to come, and for a long time it was affected by Sweden's successive unions with other countries. But it was clearly there. The centralization process was not completed until after our period of investigation. Sixteenth-century Sweden was still a traditional peripatetic kingdom, but the documents of the royal chancellery also give a clear impression that the rulers travelled mainly between places located within a very small part of their territory. This idea can be compared with the conclusions of a study by Harald Gustafsson. Judging from the geographic distribution of sixteenth-century political meetings, Gustafsson has concluded that during this century a *core area* existed in the Swedish kingdom, where political decisions were normally made.¹¹ The presumed core consisted of the Mälaren district and – to a lesser degree – Ostrogothia (Östergötland), and this was probably also the normal place of residence of the monarchs and the upper nobility since they found it practical to summon the meetings there. This conclusion agrees very well with my own results. **Diagram 2** shows the geographical distribution of the sixteenth-century documents, with a classification based on Gustafsson's theory. Obviously, very few documents were issued outside the presumed core areas during

the 1500s. The general impression is that this sixteenth-century core was politically central in the preceding century as well, although not to the same degree; the remaining parts of Sweden were peripheral, although less peripheral. In fourteenth-century material, the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area is not as dominant as in the material from the following centuries, but more than one-half of the known documents were issued there. The (very few) documents from the 1200s give us a similar pattern. The main impression is that, although the sovereigns divided their presence across the country in a less uneven way than the fourteenth-century rulers, documents from the assumed “core” area clearly make up the majority of the material. In other words: the pattern remains more or less the same, but it grows clearer as one moves forward in time.

What did the most frequent places of issue (those where more than 3 per cent of the material from each century was issued, **Table A**) have in common? Fortified royal castles existed in all the residences that were preferred during the 1500s, and it is likely that the documents in the statistics above were normally issued there. The castles were generally located inside the presumed core area. (The only exception is Kalmar, the most important fortification near the border with Denmark.) Vadstena and Stegeborg were strategically located along the western and eastern border of Ostrogothia. The remaining castles were situated in the Mälaren district, mainly in the eastern parts. Ostrogothian castles seem clearly

Most frequent places of issue (assumed favourite residences)			
1200s	1300s	1400s	1500s
Stockholm (13%)	Stockholm	Stockholm	Stockholm
Adelsö (7%)	(23%)	(35%)	(41%)
Uppsala (7%)	Helsingborg	Copenhagen	Svartsjö (8%)
Linköping (6%)	(4%)	(8%)	Uppsala (7%)
Skara (5%)	Lödöse (4%)	Vadstena (6%)	Gripsholm
Dävö (5%)	Örebro (3%)	Kalmar (4%)	(5%)
Örebro (4%)	Turku/Åbo	Helsingborg	Västerås (4%)
Söderköping	(3%)	(4%)	Vadstena (4%)
(4%)	Nyköping		Kalmar 4%)
Visingsö (3%)	(3%)		Stegeborg
Nyköping (3%)	Bohus (3%)		(3%)

Sources: See Diagram 1

less important as royal residences than the castles around Lake Mälaren, judging from the statistics. But the most noticeable difference, as to the number of issued documents, is that between Stockholm and all the other castles. The future capital already stood out as exceptional.

In the material from the 1400s we find the same statistical difference between the importance of Stockholm and that of all other residences, although the contrast is less accentuated. Most dissimilarities between the two centuries in the choices of “favourite residences” are explained by the differences in political conditions, i.e. the Scandinavian union. Two Danish castles were frequently visited: Copenhagen, which gradually emerged as the most important dwelling-place of the Danish kings during this century, and Helsingborg, strategically located near the border between Denmark and Sweden.¹² Kalmar was an important residence just as in the following century, but its function was different – it was not a border fortification but a strong castle in the centre of the Scandinavian kingdom; the union was founded there, and negotiations concerning its future were often held there. Vadstena was also frequently the meeting-place of deliberations about the union. In the 1400s there was not yet a fortification there; the place owed much of its importance to the foundation of a famous convent, which attracted pilgrims and other visitors.

In the material issued during the 1300s we find a sharp contrast between Stockholm and the other residences, but the contrast is less clear than in the 1400s and 1500s. The centralizing tendencies that may have existed at this time seem weaker. Only Stockholm and Nyköping were located in the sixteenth-century “core” area. Five of the castles were situated outside it, although Örebro was not too far away. It is probably a mere coincidence that as many as 3 per cent of the known documents were dated in the castle of Turku/Åbo, Finland.¹³ The prominence of Helsingborg, Lödöse and Bohus can be explained by unions with other countries. King Magnus II Eriksson, as well as his successor and antagonist Albrecht of Mecklenburg, claimed the sovereignty over the Danish territories in the south, which accounts for the importance of Helsingborg castle. Lödöse and Bohus were prominent residences only for as long as Magnus was king of both Sweden and Norway. The union treaty obliged him to share his time equitably between his two kingdoms, which made it practical for him to reside in castles situated near the border. The statistics are also influenced by the fact that Magnus continued to reside in the western borderlands, and issue documents where he still called himself the king of Sweden, long after he had been

stripped of all his authority in the eastern provinces; so did his son Hakon, the king of Norway, who nominally inherited his father's claim to the Swedish throne.¹⁴

Even during the 1200s our statistical evidence gives an impression that Stockholm was the most important residence, but since 13 per cent only means 21 documents, this may very well be totally misleading. Stockholm did not even exist in the first half of the thirteenth century, so it is remarkable – if there is any reality behind the statistical figures – that it developed into the main royal residence in such a short time. The remaining places, except Skara, Örebro and Visingsö, are all located in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area. In most of them there was a royal castle, although some unfortified “favourite residences” also occur.¹⁵

It would have been interesting to map out exactly how the individual rulers travelled around the kingdom, but it is not always possible to give more than a rough idea of this. We have enough source material to construct a reasonably coherent itinerary only from the ascent of the Vasa dynasty in the 1520s, starting with Gustavus I (Gustav Vasa). We can establish where this monarch resided during about 35 per cent of his reign, or, to be more exact, during 4,849 days (**Map 1**).¹⁶

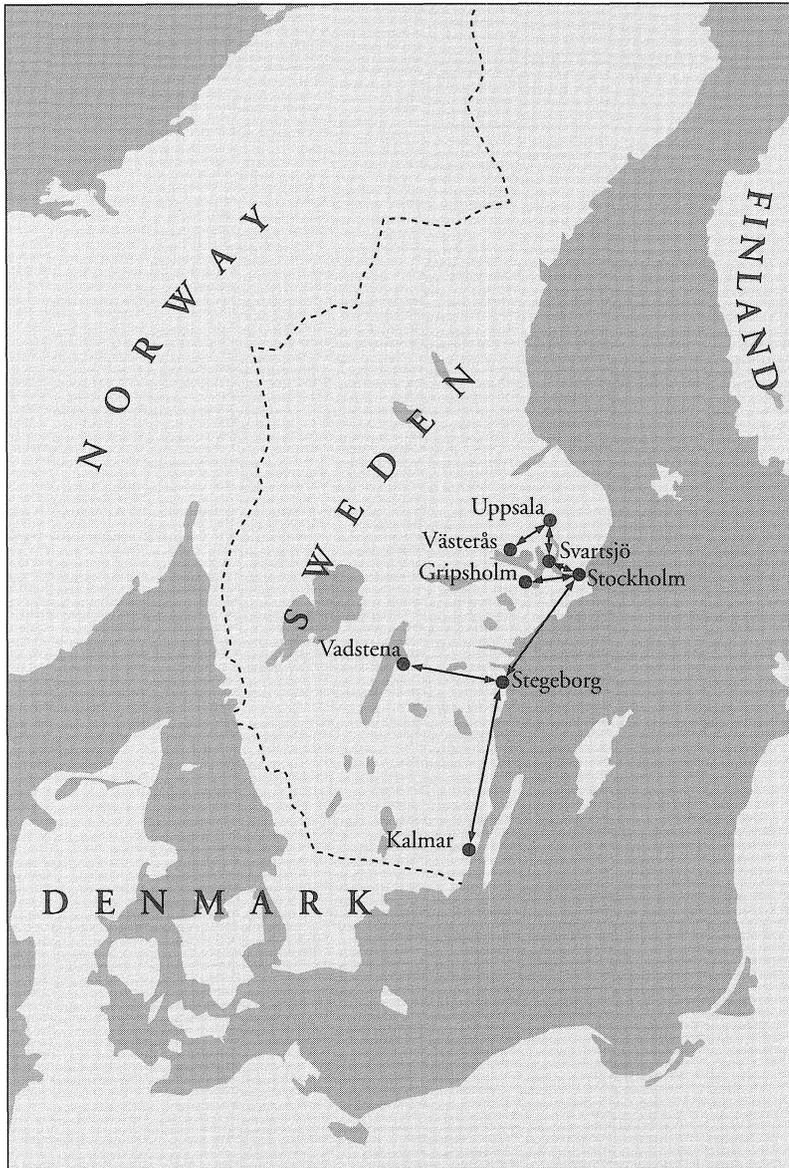
It is much more difficult to chart the residences of the earlier sixteenth-century rulers. Among these, the best-known itinerary is that of the regent Svante Nilsson. A comparatively large amount of his documents are known to us, in the original or in copies, but they still only enable us to identify his place of residence during approximately 3.5 per cent of his reign, that is 102 days. **Table B** shows how much time the two rulers spent in the core areas, compared with other regions. The general impression is that they both resided mainly in the presumed core area, especially in the Mälaren district. One difference is that Svante Nilsson seems to have distributed his presence somewhat more evenly across the kingdom than Gustavus I, according to what little we know. (He spent more than a third of the days when his place of residence is known outside the core area, whereas Gustavus only left this area for a tenth of the known days.) If this impression is true, it corresponds with another theory proposed by Harald Gustafsson: that the “centre” of political power was gradually shrinking in the course of the sixteenth century, increasingly concentrating itself around the Mälaren district and Stockholm.¹⁷

The same development seems to have continued during the latter half of the century. The travel pattern of Eric XIV was not very different from that of his father Gustavus I (**Map 1**). But his brother and succes-

Table B						
Amount of time spent by rulers in various regions						
	No. days when residence is known	Stockholm	Mälaren	Ostro- gothia	Westro- gothia	Others
<i>1200s</i>						
Magnus I	81	10%	42%	16%	14%	18%
<i>1300s</i>						
Magnus II	482	23%	20%	6%	10%	41%
Albrecht	251	25%	33%	8%	0.8%	33.2%
<i>1400s</i>						
Charles VIII	170	61%	8%	14%	4%	13%
Sten Sture	605	44%	19%	6%	2%	29%
<i>1500s</i>						
Svante Nilsson	102	37%	19%	8%	3%	33%
Gustavus I	4,849	35%	43%	11%	2%	9%
Sources: See Diagram 1						

sor John III appears to have lived a much more stationary life; he spent most of his time at the Stockholm castle, at the nearby castle of Svartsjö, or sometimes at the castle of Uppsala a few miles away. He sometimes did stay away from Stockholm for long periods; e.g. in 1572 when not a single one of his known documents was dated in Stockholm, and also in 1585–88 when the newly renovated Kalmar castle stood out as one of the most important royal residences. But these periods are mere exceptions to the rule that a few castles around Lake Mälaren, especially Stockholm, almost had a monopoly of the king's presence at this time.¹⁸

During the 1400s the Danish kings spent a great deal of their time outside Sweden and were, in this respect, not "representative" as fifteenth-century Swedish monarchs. For our purposes it is more interesting to study the whereabouts of the secessionist rulers. Our knowledge of where Charles VIII (Karl Knutsson) and the regent Sten Sture the Elder resided



Map. Travel pattern of Gustavus I and Eric XIV (1523–1568)

is limited to only 5 per cent or less of their respective reigns. The general impression, however, is the same – although less accentuated – as the results of the sixteenth-century material presented above. King Charles spent nearly all his time in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area, especially in

Stockholm. His successor Sten Sture favoured the same territories, even though he was also noticeably often in Finland (which explains the large amount of days in the category “others”), in part because there was a war there in 1495–96, but also during other periods of his reign.¹⁹

Concerning the 1300s, our possibilities to map out a travel pattern of the individual monarchs are about as limited: not even five per cent of their respective reigns are known to us. The clear residential differences between King Magnus and King Albrecht are rather truistic, given the political situation. Albrecht concentrated his presence in the sixteenth-century “core” – the Mälaren area rather than Ostrogothia – much more than his predecessor.²⁰ Westrogothia was a central area only to King Magnus, whereas Albrecht seldom went there, presumably because he had difficulties in establishing his authority in this hostile borderland. Albrecht also spent more time in Stockholm and the Mälaren region. But what Magnus and Albrecht had in common was that both kings were there rather often in the course of their reigns.

Even less is known about the 1200s. Only Magnus I has produced enough known documents to render possible the establishment of anything remotely reminiscent of a coherent itinerary.²¹ We know where this king was during 81 days (which is not even 1.5 per cent of his reign). More than half of them were spent in the Mälaren district. He was roughly as often in Westrogothia as in Ostrogothia. Stockholm, where he spent a tenth of the days, is the only individual place that holds an especially prominent position in his itinerary.

Preliminary conclusions

What did we learn from all these diagrams and tables? We seem to have found out that the Swedish peripatetic rulers did *not* distribute their time equitably across the kingdom. Their travel pattern gradually changed, in the course of the four centuries studied in this article, towards less mobility. We can formulate a hypothesis, based on some reasonable degree of certainty, that a clear centralization of royal residences was already a fact in the Swedish travelling kingdom from about the 1300s onwards. It may have started earlier, in the preceding century, but the scant source material does not suffice for more than a wild guess about this.

At this point I want to return to what I mentioned initially about the implications of this study in a general European perspective. The travelling kingdom was not a Swedish peculiarity but the current form of regiment in Western Europe. Nor was it an isolated phenomenon that some areas of the kingdom were visited much more often by the

ambulating court than others. Differences between a political centre and a political periphery existed all over Western Europe, and it was also a universal line of development that this contrast grew ever stronger as the state evolved into more advanced forms. From about the fourteenth century there was an obvious tendency towards centralization: one single place in the kingdom increasingly tended to become the predominant main residence of the ruler and his court. Capital cities began to emerge. London and Paris took their first decisive steps towards becoming political capitals at this time.²² Full-fledged capital cities, real control centres with a stationary administration from which the kingdom could effectively be ruled, did *not* exist in Western Europe until after our period of investigation. What we had at this time were centralizing tendencies, counteracted by other, centrifugal forces. Only in some cases did the evolution continue until it culminated in the rise of a capital. Often enough it was interrupted. Prague and Brussels, for example, also tended to become central residences in the fourteenth century, and so did Buda; but the centralization was halted again and these cities did not become capitals until several centuries later, as a result of a largely independent development.²³

In Sweden there was evidently no interruption of the process, even though the unions with other countries may have slowed it down. Judging from the statistics presented above, the Swedish travelling kingdom of the 1200s–1500s was indeed the story of a gradually shrinking centre. Stockholm, it seems, grew into its role as the political centre of the kingdom very gradually. This did not mean that Sweden was ruled from Stockholm during our period of investigation. As far as we know, there was no central administration permanently stationed there until the early 1600s. What the statistics do seem to show, however, is that this country in the outskirts of Europe was affected by the same centralizing tendency that was prevalent elsewhere.²⁴

A test of the validity of the conclusions

But is there any way of telling whether the impression provided by the material is really correct? Since the validity of all the conclusions above depends on the reliability and representativity of the source material, I will first dedicate a few words to the question of how these documents have survived to our time, to better establish whether the known material is representative or if the picture might be distorted. I will then compare the results of the statistics with what we know from other sources about the rulers' choices of residences.

Incomplete preservation of source material

I have already mentioned the most important factor that might limit the validity of the conclusions: scarcity of source material, especially from the Middle Ages. In comparison with other countries, Sweden has very few known medieval letters and charters.²⁵ The sixteenth-century material is known mainly from royal letter-books and registries. No similar collections of copies of public documents have been preserved from the preceding centuries, and consequently our knowledge is much more limited.²⁶ Only a few selected parts of the ruler's life and activities have left any traces in his preserved letters and charters. Most of his reign was either never documented, or the records did not survive to our time. The main objective of archives during our period of investigation was not to preserve sources of historical research but to provide their owners with such documents as might serve in claiming their rights.²⁷ In other countries, notably England and France, the medieval monarchs had their own archival repositories, often in a strong and reliable castle situated in or near an important town. The archival store-rooms that may have existed in Swedish royal castles were not, however, capable of preserving the documents for any long period of time.²⁸

The most common practice is that the records are preserved in the archives kept by the addressee. Here, too, we find a bias in the material. Nearly all the known royal documents from the period between the 1200s and the 1400s deal with bestowals, mainly to the Church. Uneven chronological distribution is another problem, especially concerning the period before 1275. Only 36 documents are older, and only 7 date from the first half of the century.²⁹ The one reasonably safe "archival institution" was ecclesiastical: the cathedrals of Uppsala, Strängnäs and Linköping (all situated in the assumed "core") are known to have preserved royal archival documents. But not even the repositories of the Church were left intact, since documents were taken out of them whenever a new political ruler needed acts that could substantiate his claims. In that way Gustavus I, during the sixteenth century, ordered his men to search through the state archives in Uppsala and Strängnäs and transport the documents to the Stockholm castle; this can be considered the first archival centralization in Sweden since it was carried out in such a massive scale, but it was also a repetition of what medieval monarchs traditionally did when they ascended to the throne.³⁰

The sixteenth-century material, on the other hand, is largely preserved in the rulers' own letter-books and should consequently be a more reliable source. It is obvious that the most solid conclusions about royal

travel patterns can be drawn from the documents of the 1500s since they are so much more numerous. The bulk (98%) of the material from this century is, however, drawn from only one source: a letter-book containing copies of public documents (*riksregistraturet*), kept from the 1520s by the kings of the Vasa dynasty. Only from this time onwards do we have a reasonably clear picture of how the rulers travelled. And even then, the registration was far from complete.³¹

Consequently, the medieval sources only permit a working hypothesis, a starting point for investigations of other sources which may corroborate or falsify it. The sixteenth-century material, on the other hand, provides us with a much firmer ground. Nevertheless, it is wise to keep in mind that we do not know with absolute certainty even where the kings of the Vasa dynasty spent most of their time.

Other potential royal residences: castles, towns, mints

Since the statistics may very well give us a distorted picture, especially during the medieval periods, their results must be checked against the testimony of other source material. Let us start with archaeological evidence. One important source of knowledge is the geographical distribution of potential residences, mainly the **royal castles**, where the rulers are most likely to have resided.

The original, “genuine” peripatetic kingdom lacked the institutional possibilities of concentrating the wealth at a centre of taxation. This was Sweden before the latter half of the 1200s. During the final decades of the thirteenth century, however, a more advanced state machinery took shape. The evolution of military technique had by then reduced the importance of royal demesnes and family estates as royal residences. These unfortified places could easily be captured by the king’s enemies.³² Instead, he now preferred to reside in the safety of a castle. The Swedish castles were constructed mainly from the late 1200s, as military fortifications and centres of regional taxation. From this time the ruler had better possibilities to reserve his personal presence for the politically most important parts of the country. Like other West European subjects, Swedish peasants had an obligation to cater for the needs of the king and his court during their journeys across the country. In the course of time this obligation was instead transformed into a tax in cash, sent to the castles. A similar evolution took place in other West European kingdoms. This probably reflects a transition from a mobile to a more stationary type of kingdom, where the ruler was less dependent on the right to lodge in the houses of local people. He would, however, still

demand his traditional rights whenever he actually needed them.³³

The royal castles were not necessarily located in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area. At least the south-eastern parts of Götaland may have been more frequently visited than we can understand from the royal documents since important castles were always located there: Visingsö, Kalmar, Borgholm. There were also many castles to the west of the “core”. During our entire period of investigation the rulers issued documents in Örebro. They also had several castles in Westrogothia, notably in Skara and Lödöse; fourteenth- and fifteenth-century monarchs sometimes resided in Axvall. The Finnish castles, especially Turku/Åbo, were militarily important and may have attracted the presence of their masters more often than the scant source material can substantiate.³⁴

The **towns** were also places where the rulers increasingly preferred to reside. During our period of investigation, it became more important for them to look after their regal incomes from urban activity than the yield of their demesnes. Their documents give the impression that they generally resided in towns where there was also a royal castle. The urban landscape is an interesting reflection of where royal power concentrated its efforts, since a town often evolved in the protective vicinity of a castle, or a castle was soon constructed once a town had started to become important. The foundation of towns was by no means restricted to the “core” area; urban centres existed in all parts of the kingdom except in the north. A general impression based on the archaeological experience is, however, that urbanization tended to be weaker and more unstable in western Sweden than in the east; this observation has led to conclusions about a royal presence mainly in the eastern parts of Sweden proper, where our presumed core area is located, from the 1200s onwards.³⁵

A phenomenon closely related to the commercial activities in towns is **royal coinage**. The geographical distribution of mints might be an indicator of the king’s presence. On the other hand, it is likely to indicate mainly the commercial importance of the place where the minting took place. Coins were frequently made in the assumed core area (increasingly often in Stockholm), but also in other places which can hardly have been visited by the kings very often.³⁶

Conclusion: the urban landscape and the distribution of mints and castles do not contradict the statistical hypothesis concerning the rulers’ whereabouts. Some of the evidence is rather well in harmony with it. The archaeological material merely highlights the possibility of a different travel pattern.

The testimony of narrative sources: Stockholm always prominent

The mere existence of a castle or a town does not, however, in itself mean that it was often (or ever) visited by its master. The testimony of the statistics can be corroborated or falsified only if it is compared with what we know from other contemporary written source material. This chapter will deal with how the rulers' choices of residences are described by narrative sources. I will restrict this part of the investigation to the medieval rulers' travel pattern since we do, after all, get a reasonably fair idea of the sixteenth-century royal itineraries from the statistics alone. Swedish provincial laws state that the king had to visit some parts of the kingdom during a tour (*eriksgata*) following his election. These "compulsory" regions included the Mälaren district and Ostrogothia, but also adjacent areas (Westrogothia, Närke, Småland). We do not know, however, whether this ritualized journey had anything to do with the normal whereabouts of the rulers.

The medieval travelling monarchs and regents are depicted in a number of narrative sources. The *Erikskrönikan* (EK), a fourteenth-century verse chronicle, contains a great deal of information about royal residences during the late 1200s and early 1300s.³⁷ Fifteenth-century verse chronicles – *Karlskrönikan* (KK), *Sturekrönikorna* (SK) – provide us with similar evidence about the 1400s. The KK and the SK are partly based on contemporary documents which were available to the authors.³⁸ Another important source is the *Diarium Vadstenense*, a diary kept by the Vadstena convent which contains numerous notices about Swedish history from 1344 to 1545, not least about royal visits. One of the advantages of narrative sources is that they sometimes provide us with information about the *reasons* for the rulers' choices of residences. On the other hand, since visits to a place are often motivated in the chronicles by the fact that a war or a rebellion was going on there, it is difficult to decide whether the royal presence was normal or exceptional.

In this chapter we will be concerned with the period from the 1200s to the 1400s. Let us again take a closer look at the material, moving backwards in time from the better known periods to the more remote and obscure ones. There is comparatively ample source material from the 1400s. The KK contains many descriptions of how Marshal Karl Knutsson (later King Charles VIII) travelled across the kingdom. There is a certain correspondence between the destinations of his journeys and the assumed favourite residences in the statistics, although some divergences can also be observed.³⁹

Stockholm is mentioned much more often than other places in con-

nection with the political leaders, in good conformity with the statistics. It was the castle which Charles tried to reserve for himself. The KK explicitly says that Stockholm was his main residence after his rise to the position of marshal. It is also described as the place where the Council of the Realm usually assembled. Charles was elected regent of Sweden in Stockholm, and most other major events in his political career were also connected mainly with that city. Here he was married, and here he and his wife died. His many journeys to other places often started or ended here.⁴⁰ The *Diarium Vadstenense* says in 1467 that he spent nearly an entire year in Stockholm after his return from exile in Finland.⁴¹

But the statistical conclusions do not always coincide with the evidence of the narrative material. The **Nyköping** castle may have been a more important residence than we can tell from the number of known documents issued there. It is described by the KK as the best castle in the kingdom, beside Stockholm and Kalmar.⁴² The statistics do not give the impression that Nyköping was often visited.

Kalmar was one of the favourite residences according to the statistics. This is not really confirmed by the chronicle. Kalmar may be portrayed as the third top-ranking castle, but the KK never says that it was an important residence. Kalmar appears in the chronicle as a fortification rather than a place where the political leaders were present. It was sometimes visited, but the explanation is usually either negotiations with Denmark or conflicts on nearby Öland. Visits to the Borgholm castle there are described in the same way.⁴³

Västerås castle, on the other hand, may have been much more frequently visited by the court than we can tell from the statistical evidence. Charles was there several times according to the KK. He passed by on his way to or from Stockholm, or some of the towns around Lake Mälaren. His visits to the mining districts started from Västerås. The mining districts themselves appear as peripheral areas; the same can be said about northern Sweden, visited only when he toured the kingdom after his coronation.⁴⁴

A distinction should evidently be made between the military strength of a castle and its ability to attract the presence of the monarch. The places where the rulers stayed were generally fortified castles, but not necessarily. Some fortifications were apparently seldom visited, despite their military importance.⁴⁵ Several rulers frequently honoured entirely unfortified places with their presence. Thus, in spite of its insignificance as a military stronghold, **Vadstena** appears as one of the most important fifteenth-century royal dwelling places according to both the KK and

the statistics. Charles had his dead wife removed to a grave there after she had previously been buried for a year in Stockholm. Later his next wife was also interred in Vadstena. We have no evidence that Charles resided there for any longer periods, but he was present from time to time. Vadstena was a place where he met his political allies and opponents for negotiations. The *Diarium Vadstenense* says in 1451 that he “spent several days in Vadstena”. Since this is especially mentioned, the ordinary practice may have been short visits.⁴⁶ Charles also travelled to other unfortified places according to the KK, although less often. These were nearly always located in the Mälaren district.⁴⁷ He hardly ever resided in unfortified places outside the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area.

The factor that attracted the ruler to certain places, it seems, was not just whether or not a strong castle was to be found there. It also had a lot to do with whether or not the castle was situated in a certain region. **Westrogothian** castles give the impression of being as peripheral to Charles as the statistics suggest they were. They are mentioned only briefly in the KK. Castles in **Finland** were also seldom visited, according to this chronicle.⁴⁸

The SK is a rich source of information about the travel pattern followed by the regent Sten Sture the Elder and the other supreme political leaders during the final decades of the 1400s. The general picture of centre and periphery is rather similar to that of the KK, only more accentuated. It usually conforms rather well with what the regent’s documents tell us about his choices of residences and with the idea of a gradual centralization of power.⁴⁹ **Stockholm** accordingly has a very dominant position. It is described as the place where the Council of the Realm assembled. The regent celebrated Christmas here. In 1495, before the departure of Swedish troops to the war in Finland, the banner of St Eric was taken in procession from Uppsala Cathedral to be handed over to him at a solemn ceremony in Stockholm. The decisive battles between Sweden and Denmark were fought in and around Stockholm. The Danish king came to Stockholm to be hailed as king of Sweden and often held negotiations with the regent there; and when the latter had regained power, this was the first place he went to. Finally his dead body was taken to Stockholm from another part of the country.⁵⁰ Other castles and demesnes stay in the background. **Kalmar** was visited only in connection with wars and negotiations with Denmark. Neither is **Nyköping** described as an important residence, except when the regent had been ousted from power. **Vadstena** is hardly mentioned. **Westrogothia** only attracted brief visits during wartime.⁵¹ The statistics gave an impression

that the regent visited **Finland** more often than other rulers, but this is not corroborated by the chronicle; his visits in the SK to the Finnish part of the kingdom always occur either during the war there or during the period when he was deposed from power.

The earlier centuries are less well documented. Apart from the EK, which deals with the late 1200s and the first two decades of the 1300s, no similar narrative source is available to shed light on the travel pattern of *fourteenth-century* Swedish rulers. Our main source of information about royal residences during the reign of Albrecht of Mecklenburg (1364–89), apart from his own documents, are some short notices in German sources, which are not very helpful in a study of the ruler's itinerary.⁵² Since the late 1300s is the period when a centralization of royal residences is assumed to have started, this lack of narrative source material is indeed lamentable.

Now to the earliest periods. The evidence of the statistics and the way in which the assumed favourite residences of the 1200s and early 1300s are described by the EK display several incongruities, which was only to be expected given the small source material. Some "favourites" are not even mentioned by the EK. Others are mentioned but are not described as particularly important.⁵³ The EK connects the rulers mainly with fortified castles. These are not always among the places where the documents used in the statistics were issued. We find the same three top-ranking castles in the EK as in the KK: Stockholm, Kalmar and Nyköping.

There is a chance that some truth regarding the position of **Stockholm** at this time is actually reflected in the statistical figures. The EK undoubtedly describes that city as a particularly important royal dwelling-place. Militarily, it was a stronghold that protected the other towns around Lake Mälaren. Prisoners of the state were generally incarcerated in Stockholm Castle. Sometimes these were taken from other parts of the country, even if they had been captured far away, to be imprisoned and executed in Stockholm. The chronicle also describes Stockholm as a place where important royal ceremonies took place. Political meetings, royal weddings and burials etc. occurred here. From this we get the impression that the rulers were often physically present in Stockholm. On the other hand, Stockholm is the only place portrayed as strong enough to *defy* the ruler. The king was sometimes refused the right to enter within its walls.⁵⁴

Kalmar, not one of the most frequently visited residences judging from the statistics, is described by the EK as a very prominent castle.

When King Birger started his attempt to recapture the kingdom, his first plans were to go to Stockholm and Kalmar to secure the loyalty of these two strongholds. But otherwise Kalmar is seldom mentioned as a royal dwelling-place.⁵⁵

Nyköping, a fairly important royal residence at this time judging from the statistical evidence, is also described by the chronicle as a first-rank castle. On the other hand, its importance seems to have been connected with other functions than the role as a royal dwelling-place. Nyköping became King Birger's main residence in the final part of the chronicle, but only after his brothers had taken over substantial parts of the kingdom and the political conditions were not normal. Otherwise the rulers do not seem to have been physically present there more often than in other castles.⁵⁶

The remaining assumed favourite residences in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area are seldom connected with visits by the ruler. The same can be said about assumed favourite residences outside that region. The statistical figures gave the impression that **Westrogothia** was less peripheral in the 1200s and early 1300s than later, but the EK does not lend much support to this idea. The castles in Westrogothia are seldom connected with the monarchs. On the contrary, the chronicle associates western Sweden with rebellion against royal power.⁵⁷

Conclusion: the only place which stands out as a royal "favourite residence" according to *both* the statistics and the narrative sources is *Stockholm*. Some places (Nyköping, Västerås) may have been more frequently visited than we can tell from the statistics. Other residences (Vadstena, Kalmar, castles in Finland and Westrogothia) may, on the contrary, be over-represented in the statistical material.

Royal manifestations: enfeoffment, burials, coronations, political meetings

The narrative sources have thus corroborated at least some characteristics of the statistical evidence. Another way of testing the validity of the results is by comparing them with what is known about the sovereigns' **financial treatment** of the various regions. Ingrid Hammarström's extensive study of the early sixteenth-century state finances displays clear variations that fit rather well into the idea of a gradual centralization towards the Stockholm area (although perhaps not to Ostrogothia) of the royal presence. That castle was financially favoured above all others in the early sixteenth century. Westrogothia, on the other hand, was enfeoffed nearly in its entirety. The same unequal tendencies continued

as the century proceeded.⁵⁸ In other words, the sixteenth-century enfeoffment policy displays a regional pattern that conforms reasonably well with what is known about the rulers' itineraries through their letters and charters. But what about the Middle Ages? Here, there are no simple answers. Conclusions about royal presence cannot be based on knowledge of enfeoffment policy alone, because enfeoffment did not necessarily mean royal absence.

Kjell-Gunnar Lundholm has studied the situation in the late 1400s. In his itinerary of Sten Sture he concludes that the regent seldom visited castles that had been enfeoffed – this did, however, occur on two or three occasions. His acquisitions of new estates also had a certain influence on his travelling pattern, but the source material permits very few solid conclusions.⁵⁹ A hundred years earlier, King Albrecht visited the Nyköping castle several times even though it was enfeoffed to his father, and administered by the magnate Raven van Barnekow. Whether an enfeoffed territory was visited or not by the ruler obviously depended on the relationship between him and the possessor of the fief. When King Magnus divided the kingdom with his son Eric in 1357, their travel pattern was not affected by this division; both kings visited territories belonging to the other king. But when King Albrecht made peace with King Magnus in 1371 the situation was different.⁶⁰ In the fourteenth century it was common for the rulers to give castles and territories as a pledge to their creditors. This form of enfeoffment meant that the sovereign lost much more of his authority over the fief than if it had been given in return for rendering service to him. One would consequently expect that he visited these territories especially seldom, but again the correlation is not altogether clear. In 1336 Magnus had enfeoffed vast territories in return for money: Ostrogothia, the castle and city of Kalmar, the eastern parts of Uppland, and extensive areas in the western and northern parts of the kingdom. No visits to these places are recorded in his itinerary during that precise year, but he did go there some time later.⁶¹ During the 1362 crisis which led to the downfall of Magnus II, the king and his son Hakon gave up much of their influence over south-eastern Götaland in return for money. Their itineraries show that they did not visit this area after it had been enfeoffed, but on the other hand they had seldom been there while it was still under their command.⁶² Enfeoffment *could* mean royal absence, but it is difficult to find any clear evidence that this was necessarily the case.

The general impression provided by a study of the enfeoffment policy is, however, that the political “core” areas were not the same in the

fourteenth century as in the sixteenth. This seems convincing at least about Ostrogothia, which can hardly have been the place where royal power felt most at home in the 1300s (except maybe for a short time after the 1310 division of the kingdom, when King Birger found a base there after having been excluded from many important parts of Sweden). Fourteenth-century castles in Ostrogothia were in the hands of magnates; the province was a stronghold of the Church and the nobility rather than of the Crown. From the 1360s to around 1390, when Stegeborg had been rebuilt, the Crown entirely lacked a castle or an administrative centre in Ostrogothia.⁶³

It is also more difficult to identify areas outside the assumed “core” as “peripheral” during this century.⁶⁴ The financial treatment of Westrogothia confirms that this province was more central to royal power during the reign of King Magnus II than during more “normal” periods, when Sweden was not united with Norway. The one thing in the statistical evidence that seems to be corroborated by all other sources is the prominent position that Stockholm held as a royal residence. During the entire period of investigation the rulers reserved the Stockholm castle and the area around it for themselves, except during brief periods when some political rival was stronger than the nominal king.

Are there any other ways of testing the conclusions? Political ceremonies, which, to borrow an expression from Clifford Geertz, mark the centre as centre, are also indicators of royal presence.⁶⁵ The places chosen for **royal funerals** have often been interpreted in this way by historians. It has been assumed, explicitly or implicitly, that the location of the kings' tombs may give a hint as to where the monarchs preferred to stay. When they settled down in London and Paris, respectively, English and French kings could – according to these interpretations – claim that they were at home there since earlier members of their dynasties had been laid to rest in those cities, or at least in that part of the country. It should, on the other hand, be stressed that the place chosen for the royal necropolis is not necessarily a reliable indicator of where the rulers spent most of their time when they were still alive. Furthermore, the geographical location of royal graves was far from unchanging. Several English and French kings may have been buried in the London and Paris areas, but this was not always the case.⁶⁶ We also know that in some countries the kings had no royal ancestors buried near their favourite dwelling-place that could add some extra legitimacy to their presence there. Philip II of Spain did not have this advantage, when he made El Escorial outside Madrid his permanent residence, since medieval kings of the various

Spanish kingdoms had often chosen the most important of the cities they conquered during their reign as the place of their tomb; his final solution to the problem was simply to move his ancestors' graves to El Escorial.⁶⁷

In an international perspective it is thus uncertain to what extent itineraries of rulers are reflected in the geographical distribution of their graves. The same is true about Sweden. We find very few discussions in the source material about *why* a king should be buried in a certain place, but it seems that the prominence of the localities where they were interred could vary considerably. King John III explicitly wrote in 1577 – defending himself against the accusation that his elder brother and predecessor King Eric had been given an unsuitable grave – that important medieval Swedish rulers often rested in rather *humble* burial grounds. In this category he included not only rural places like Alvastra and Vreta in Ostrogothia and Varnhem in Westrogothia, but also the Franciscan church in Stockholm. King John's remark was made as part of a controversy with his younger brother Duke Charles, who sent him angry messages because he had decided not to bury their dead brother next to their father's tomb in the Uppsala cathedral. Since the two siblings were both very interested in their predecessors' tombs, in royal graves as “ritual and representation”, this issue was highly sensitive. The duke accused King John of “persecuting a dead body all the way into its grave”, adding that if he insisted on punishing their brother by denying him a grave in the cathedral – which was obviously the case – the only *other* acceptable burial place for an anointed king of Sweden was the Franciscan church in Stockholm, where some kings already rested, and which the duke did not consider to be humble and insignificant.⁶⁸

The controversy between the king and his brother illustrates that there was a certain correspondence between the assumed sixteenth-century favourite residences and the choices of suitable burial sites. But it also shows that the rulers of the preceding centuries had *other* ideas about where a royal grave ought to be located. The “unsuitable” tomb was situated in Västerås, a rather important town in the western Mälaren area. As recently as in the early 1500s, a grave in Västerås had not been considered unworthy of the regent Svante Nilsson. Many kings of earlier centuries rested in places far away from Stockholm and Uppsala. The different choices of burial sites are sometimes explained by the fact that the rulers had been deposed from the throne before they died, or by the fact that Sweden was united with other countries.⁶⁹ One important reason for choosing a church or a convent as the site of one's tomb must

Table C

Places where Swedish political meetings were held

1200s	Σ	1300s	Σ	1400s	Σ	1500s	Σ
Stockholm	6	Stockholm	11	Stockholm	9	Stockholm	33
Mälaren	8	Mälaren	10	Mälaren	19	Mälaren	34
Ostrogothia	13	Ostrogothia	7	Ostrogothia	3	Ostrogothia	20
Others	10	Others	34	Others	2	Others	12

Sources: Tunberg, Schück 1985, Svenska riksdagsakter

have been the likeliness that many people there would pray for one's soul, a factor which has little to do with the political importance of the place or region. This makes it difficult to use the locations of royal graves as an indication of where the sovereigns spent their time while they were still alive.

The places chosen for royal **elections** and **coronations** were more geographically concentrated. Kings were traditionally elected outside Uppsala in the Mälaren district, although they were sometimes *de facto* appointed in other places at improvised ceremonies prior to the formal election. The coronation, a Christian version of the pagan election ceremony, was originally also supposed to be held at Uppsala, the archiepiscopal see. This rule, which only occurs in the thirteenth-century law of the province of Uppland, was often neglected, but all known coronations except one took place inside the sixteenth-century core area, mainly in the Mälaren district.⁷⁰ The one exception was when Eric of Pomerania was crowned king of all the Scandinavian countries in 1397, in Kalmar; since this was an all-Scandinavian ceremony it was probably considered more suitable to hold it in a place near the border with Denmark. The geographical distribution of royal elections and coronations thus seems to corroborate the idea of a "core" area.

The location of the **parliament** is often considered in discussions about political centre and periphery. Political meetings between the ruler and the estates, which would eventually evolve into a Swedish parliament (*riksdag*), were of course a very important manifestation of royal power. I have already mentioned that Harald Gustafsson's theory about the Mälaren/Ostrogothia "core" area is based on a study of the geographical distribution of sixteenth-century political assemblies; as we have seen, his conclusions agree rather well with the statistics based on the royal documents.⁷¹ We can compare them with what we know about political assemblies in the preceding centuries; if these were normally held in a certain area, it is likely that the rulers spent most of their time there. Political assemblies were held under a number of different

names. The less important ones were simply called “meetings”. There were also council meetings, election meetings and various types of so-called “days” or “diets” (*riksdag, herredag, hovdag*).⁷² The geographical distribution of the most important assemblies, excluding those which are simply called “meetings” and were probably less prominent, during the 1200s–1500s is illustrated in **Table C**. During the 1500s most assemblies were undoubtedly held in the “core” area, mainly in Stockholm and a few other towns around Lake Mälaren. There is a concordance between the choices of meeting-places for the assemblies and the assumed “favourite residences” (especially regarding the dominant position of Stockholm), although there are also some discrepancies.⁷³ The idea of a political “core” thus seems well founded as far as the 1500s are concerned. The figures from earlier centuries are different. Nevertheless, assemblies held during the 1400s were also seldom located outside the assumed “core” area. Stockholm, Vadstena and Kalmar were the most important meeting-places, and also the most prominent residences according to the documents issued by the rulers.⁷⁴

The fourteenth-century assemblies present a more fragmented picture. More than half of them were located in places outside the “core”. This fact seems to corroborate an impression provided by the enfeoffment policy: that at least Ostrogothia could hardly have been a “core” district of the Crown at this time. On the other hand, most of the recorded meeting-places were used only once. Places where more than one political assembly was held during this century were few in number: a group of towns in the Mälaren area (among them Stockholm) and Ostrogothia. With one exception, all the assumed “favourite residences” were used as political meeting-places at least once during this century.⁷⁵ In the material from the 1200s we also find a certain conformity between the choices of meeting-places and the “favourite residences”. Places where more than one meeting was held are nearly always situated in the “core” area.⁷⁶ Six political meetings took place in Stockholm.

To sum up this discussion, the political assemblies were nearly always held in about twenty recurrent places. This changed very little throughout the four centuries. Most of them were located in the assumed “core” area, Mälaren/Ostrogothia, and some were obviously more prominent as meeting-places than others. Regions outside the “core” were seldom the scenes of these power manifestations. Sometimes the idea of holding an important political meeting in, say, Westrogothia could occur to the rulers, but this was very unusual.⁷⁷ The enfeoffment policy and the locations of political ceremonies also give the impression that this area was where

the rulers must have spent most of their time, although Ostrogothia had a less prominent position during some periods. The study of the narrative sources gave a similar impression. Conclusion: there seems to have existed some sort of political core area both in the sixteenth century and earlier, although its exact extension shifted somewhat.

Centre and periphery: Stockholm as capital city

So far, the method used for testing the validity of the statistical conclusions has been of a source-critical character, a comparison of various sources with each other. Another, perhaps more interesting procedure would consist in clarifying the reasons for the rulers' choices of residences. Theoretically, this could be done in several different manners. One way is to search through the source material for explicit explanations of why the king was in a certain place; in practice, this is not feasible since usually there is no such evidence. Another method would be to attempt a causal explanation, by interpreting the rulers' geographical presence in the light of the demands of the political situation at each given moment; future research will probably make additions to our knowledge here, but within the framework of this article I find it impossible to even try to figure out exactly how the political situation changed day by day during the quatercentenary period of investigation. Here, I will have to settle for something much less pretentious: functional explanations, based on our knowledge of natural conditions.

Apparently Swedish rulers neither followed a fixed route – a *turnus* – on their journeys, nor had “summer” and “winter” residences. They could reach all important parts of the kingdom during any season if they wanted to.⁷⁸ It is nevertheless likely, and this substantiates the theory of a political “core” in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area, that they travelled mostly in areas that were easy for them to access. Since the technical possibilities of travelling were very sparsely developed in Sweden during our period of investigation, the relative importance of the various parts of the country was conditioned by their natural accessibility. Those districts which could be reached from the other regions only by sea or only by land became more loosely attached to the Swedish kingdom than those which were accessible both by sea and by land.⁷⁹

A supposedly peripheral area like Western Sweden, including Westrogothia, could only be reached overland. This made it rather isolated, often in the hands of rivals who challenged the power of the kings and regents. An additional reason for this condition was the vicinity between Westrogothia and the Danish and Norwegian borderlands. Finland and

other territories across the Baltic were also remote areas since they could be reached only by sea and only when the weather conditions were right. A supposedly central area like the Mälaren district, on the other hand, could be reached both by sea and by land. The same was true about the Ostrogothian coast, and to some degree also the inland parts of that province. With Stockholm as the only obstacle between Lake Mälaren and the Baltic Sea it was easy to go by boat from Ostrogothia to the Central Swedish provinces. And even overland journeys were uncomplicated since the distance was short.⁸⁰

But what about Stockholm, this place which is so frequently mentioned by the source material? What was Stockholm's political position during our period of investigation? All available evidence says that it was certainly not political periphery. But to what extent was it centre? It was no doubt more geographically central than today, considering that the borders were different. The kingdom was stretched out in a west-east direction – with Westrogothia in the western extreme, Finland in the eastern, and Stockholm roughly in the middle. Stockholm is called “capital” in some fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts, but we should not be misled by this fact. “Capital” means that Stockholm was a prominent place, not necessarily that political power was based there. Medieval authors frequently described prominent places as “heads” or “headquarters” of a state or a territory (*caput regni, caput imperii, sedes regni*).⁸¹

Stockholm was a place of great possibilities, but it was also potentially dangerous to the rulers. Its importance as a royal residence is probably best explained by its unique geographic position as the “lock” of Lake Mälaren, which gave it the possibilities to seal off the fairway into some of Sweden's most important provinces. It controlled international trade in the Mälaren area. If it was under the authority of the Swedish king it would enrich him. If the king also controlled the iron ore districts and the other commercially interesting areas around the great lake, he would be interested in stimulating trade between them and Stockholm, to their mutual benefit. But if Stockholm was in the hands of some Swedish magnate who did not control the remaining territories around Mälaren it could instead be used as a customs station, an obstacle to trade. Stockholm was capable of generating great wealth, but it also had the ability to stifle it. No similar fortification existed in other parts of the Swedish Kingdom. After its foundation in the 1200s, Stockholm rapidly established its undisputed rank as the financial metropolis of the country. A strategic geographical position quickly made it more important than

the older and more venerable Swedish towns. This, however, did not automatically make it a political headquarters. The fact that Stockholm was a financial centre before it became a political centre remained significant throughout our period of investigation. The castle of Stockholm was controlled by the kings, but the city itself was to a not negligible extent in the hands of powerful Hanseatic merchants, who often opposed the will of the sovereigns. As long as they were united, the castle and the port were almost invincible. But if divided, neither of them were able to resist an enemy for very long.⁸² They were often divided.

Stockholm was besieged 19 times during our period of investigation. No hostile army ever managed to conquer it by military force, but neither was it ever really successful at war. In eight cases the siege was interrupted after negotiations. In seven cases Stockholm surrendered because of open disunity between the royal castle and the mercantile city – a factor which may also have influenced the decision whenever a siege was discontinued. Only in four cases did the castle and the merchants stick together and successfully resist the enemy. The medieval rulers did not control Stockholm and could never be sure of its loyalty.⁸³

In a way Stockholm was two places, one “royal” and one “bourgeois”, and they were afraid of each other. The Swedish kings controlled the northern parts of Stockholm, the castle, but the southern parts of it were to a great extent ruled by the burghers themselves. The castle was often beleaguered from the city, after the burghers had opened the city gates to the enemy. The strongest part of the city wall in the 1540s was built, not around Stockholm, but between the castle and the mercantile city.⁸⁴ At least some Swedish rulers apparently regarded the mercantile city as more or less foreign territory. It was not even alien to the mentality of the royal troops to burn down the city in order to prevent the enemy from taking advantage of its resources.⁸⁵ And even in times of peace the burghers were allies rather than subjects of the Swedish monarchs and regents. They insisted on preserving their traditional privileges. Their municipal autonomy may have been less extensive than that of many foreign cities, but for Swedish conditions it was exceptional. The mercantile city was not altogether a part of the Swedish kingdom. Conflicts arose when the state tried to incorporate Stockholm.⁸⁶ Only towards the end of our period of investigation did Stockholm’s population become dominated by servants of the Crown rather than by merchants.⁸⁷

Stockholm was a place which the monarchs needed to control. This attracted their presence. But at the same time the city was unreliable, sometimes hostile. The king’s solution of the dilemma caused by this

combination of magnetic and repelling forces was probably often to establish himself in what could be called a satellite residence: a place situated near Stockholm, but not *too* close to it. Some of the assumed “favourite residences” (e.g. Gripsholm, Svartsjö) are likely to have been visited so often because of their geographical vicinity to Stockholm, not because they were important in themselves. It was by no means unique that a dominant financial centre became involved in conflicts with kings, princes or other representatives of political power who might threaten its autonomy. In this respect Stockholm’s evolution into a political capital resembles London’s, although the latter was much larger and more advanced.⁸⁸

Another important difference between medieval Stockholm and the later capital of Sweden was the absence there of a royal bureaucracy. There is no reason to believe (although little is known about this) that a stationary royal chancellery – separate from the ruler’s person – ever existed in Sweden during the studied period, in Stockholm or elsewhere. The medieval central state administration consisted of a few scribes – all of them clerics, since no secular literary education existed at the time – who normally followed their master. A large Scandinavian chancellery, during the Middle Ages, probably consisted of about a dozen people. The state administration was not an institution which could function independently of the king himself. Whenever a new monarch ascended to the throne, the entire administrative staff was probably replaced with a new one.⁸⁹

The statistics presented above are based mainly on documents issued after around 1275; the rulers before that time have left very little material. Why? The most likely explanation, suggested in a study by Herman Schück, is that it was only from this time that the royal production of written documents increased to a size that demanded an organized chancellery.⁹⁰ Earlier, the addressees of royal charters had mainly been cathedrals and convents. These institutions had the possibility of producing ready-made charters in their own chancelleries, which the king only needed to confirm. It is consequently probable that the few documents issued before 1275 do not provide us with a correct picture of where the rulers usually resided; they were simply issued where a scribe could be found, i.e. usually in or near an ecclesiastical institution.

The only medieval experiment with a central administration permanently based in one place occurred in the 1300s, when Sweden was united with Norway under Magnus II Eriksson. Or rather, there was *both* a stationary chancellery and a travelling one that followed the king

and his court. But the stationary institution was located outside Sweden – at the Church of St Mary in Oslo. In other words it was a part of the Norwegian administration, which was kept separate from the Swedish despite the personal union between the two countries. Furthermore, the royal charters issued in Magnus II's name do not give the impression that Oslo at that time was of any exceptional importance as the base of the royal administration; this place only appears as one of several residences. The respective central administrations of Magnus II's medieval successors were all short-lived, lasting only during the ruler's own reign, and they were connected with a number of different residences.⁹¹

The sixteenth-century central administration of the Vasa dynasty did not evolve out of any medieval predecessor; the king simply appointed his personal servants to handle bookish matters. For a long time he also remained dependent on clerical scribes. Although the royal chancellery had one of its main residences in Stockholm at this time, no fixed administrative institution appears to have existed there. There were some tendencies towards a more advanced administration in 1538–43, when Gustavus I was strongly influenced by his German counsellors, but even then it was probably normal for the central administration to follow the king on his journeys and work under his supervision – a special “boat of the chancellery” was used at sea. In a charter from 1544 the king even expressed as a matter of principle that his servants should by no means consider themselves permanently based in Stockholm; he expected them to live the same ambulating way of life as he did himself. This attitude is likely to have obstructed the evolution of a more elaborate sort of administration. According to the studies of Nils Edén, the royal chancellery – more or less in its entirety – continued to follow the ruler throughout the respective reigns of King Gustavus' sons. King Eric XIV's chancellery instructions order that accommodation should be provided for the chancellery near the king's own quarters; the chancellery secretaries are normally included in lists of the travelling royal suites of Eric XIV and John III.⁹²

During most of the studied period, thus, the royal chancellery evidently followed the travelling ruler. The concepts of political “centre” and “periphery” must have remained more loosely defined than in larger and more advanced European kingdoms. There is some evidence that an embryonic stationary central administration had evolved by the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁹³ But typically, the ruler's place of abode was also that of his secretaries and the royal residences constantly changed. Stockholm was only one of them, although exceptionally prominent.

Before centralization: potential earlier core areas

Do we know anything at all about royal residences in the centuries that preceded the period of investigation? One of the weakest spots in this study is that it first assumes a gradual centralization of the physical presence of royal power as a result of the rulers' greater independence of their traditional agrarian incomes, after the establishment of a new state machinery based on taxation, and *then* bases most of its conclusions on source material which is not older than the latter half of the 1200s when this new state already existed. What was the original condition, before the assumed centralization? We can only produce inspired guesses, judging from indirect evidence, from manifestations of royal power. For example, it was more normal to locate coronations or political meetings in Götaland – mainly in Ostrogothia, but sometimes in other provinces – during the earliest part of our period of investigation than later. Some early royal funerals even took place in Westrogothia, a province that became very peripheral to the rulers of later centuries. This suggests that central political power may have been less identified with the Mälaren area before the latter half of the 1200s, when Stockholm was founded. Did the geographic centre of political gravity shift, during our period of investigation, to the Mälaren area from some former “core” area that was located elsewhere?

This difficult question becomes especially interesting since several scholars have concluded that twelfth-century kings spent most of their time in Götaland.⁹⁴ Even though there is very little evidence to corroborate or contradict this, I am personally inclined to say that there is no compelling reason to believe in it. Several conclusions about the whereabouts of these early rulers are drawn only from superficial impressions (e.g. narrative sources mention a certain king in connection with a certain place, “so consequently he normally must have spent his time there”). Theories of this type are very daring – not to say worthless – since the source material is far too scant to provide a representative picture. If we had known in what part of the country most of the royal demesnes were located at this time, this would have enabled us to formulate at least a hypothesis about the kings' choices of residences.⁹⁵ The source material does not permit us to map out the royal demesnes; all we know is that they existed in many different parts of the country.

The most convincing hypotheses about royal presence in Götaland are based on studies of known disposals of royal demesnes, and on regional variations in the tax system.⁹⁶ If the monarchs disposed of many estates in a certain area, we can draw the conclusion that they had established

themselves as landowners there and probably were physically present from time to time. But the disposals do not prove that they did not have a considerable quantity of demesnes in other parts of the kingdom as well, which they chose to keep for themselves. An interesting regional variation in the tax system is the fact that by the late 1200s the obligation to cater for the king and the royal court had been transformed into a permanent tax in Götaland, which had to be paid regardless of whether they were there or not, whereas in Svealand it was paid only when the court was actually present. In a study by Thomas Lindkvist the Westrogothian tax system has been described as “based on the physical presence of royal power”. The fact that the tax was permanent only in Götaland may seem to support the idea that the court was there more often than in Svealand. But on the other hand it should not be forgotten that the Svealand laws also contain guarantees that the king and his retinue were well provided for whenever they visited a place there.⁹⁷ The king may even have preferred to transform the obligation into a permanent tax because he seldom visited Götaland, and wanted to make sure that people there paid the same duties as the inhabitants of Svealand had to do whenever he came to their provinces.

There are also other interesting regional variations in how medieval provincial laws describe the relationship between the local people and the monarchs, which do *not* suggest that royal presence was stronger in Götaland. On the contrary they give the same impression as later source material, of a more emphatic royal presence in the Mälaren area. Kings are seldom mentioned in the two versions of the *Westrogothian* law; this law is primarily interested in codifying their obligations *vis-à-vis* the local magnates.⁹⁸ An exception to this rule is a narrative passage in the older version which mentions royal personal visits. The importance of this source has probably been overestimated in previous research; it documents only the rather obvious fact that the province was sometimes visited. Laws from the northernmost provinces mainly regulate the relationship between the king’s local representatives and the province; personal visits by the ruler are never mentioned.⁹⁹ The laws from the Mälaren area, on the other hand, contain detailed descriptions of how the king should be elected and what his rights and obligations were when he was in the province; the laws grant him comparatively strong authority to take action against local magnates.¹⁰⁰ The *Ostrogothian* law mentions the king very often, but gives him a comparatively weak authority.¹⁰¹ (Laws from the remaining Swedish provinces have not been preserved.)¹⁰² All this suggests that the kings hardly ever visited the North,

and that they were more often in the sixteenth-century “core” area than in western Sweden. The preserved manuscripts of the laws were, however, written down in the late 1200s and early 1300s except the older version of the Westrogothian law, parts of which were composed a few decades earlier. It is impossible to know if they document age-old traditions or the contemporary reality, or if they simply codify what the authorities wished the reality should be like.¹⁰³

Older material is all but entirely lacking. A few narrative sources briefly mention places visited by Swedish kings in the early 1200s and the preceding centuries, but no coherent travel pattern can be reconstructed. Only seven royal documents older than 1250 contain information about where they were issued.¹⁰⁴ From the period before 1219, no known royal document contains information about where it was issued. In this absence of source material, the location of royal graves is often adduced as evidence of royal presence in Götaland. Two rivalling royal dynasties had ruled Sweden since the 1130s. The Sverker dynasty was Ostrogothian, and the tombs of these kings – those that are known to us – are located in that province, where the Alvastra convent was their family necropolis. The geographic habitat of the rival Eric dynasty is less clear, but some of their royal tombs are situated in Westrogothia, in the Varnhem convent. Earl Birger, the founder of the succeeding Folkung dynasty, was also buried there. The places chosen for these burials thus display a regional pattern. It is on the other hand very doubtful, as I have already mentioned, whether or not the location of royal tombs is really an indication of where the monarchs resided. In any case the kings of both dynasties also had clear connections with Svealand.¹⁰⁵ The founder of the Eric dynasty was buried in Uppsala. Although there must have been some sort of special relationship between the monarchs and their necropolis, the location of royal tombs does not necessarily mean that the kings spent most of their time in the same places or regions when they were still alive. Furthermore, the graves of most kings from this time are unknown to us. Our knowledge of the early royal residences, thus, must remain fragmented. We will never be able to establish with any reasonable degree of certainty where the rulers resided before the end of the 1200s. We can only assume that they were very mobile between the different parts of the kingdom and that a political core area was much more difficult to discern than during the following centuries.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion

One purpose of this article was to establish the geographical habitat of central political power in an age when Sweden did not yet have a capital city or other permanent residence of the court. As we have seen, the meagre source material indicates that the various regions were very unequally blessed with royal presence. A clear core region, Mälaren/Ostrogothia, can be perceived in the sixteenth-century material. During earlier centuries this territory was also important, although the individual provinces appear to have had a varying degree of “political centrality” at different times. Some of the variations can be explained by changing political situations, e.g. unions with other countries. But a few constant features can also be seen in the material, which grow steadily stronger and clearer during our period of investigation. One such feature is the importance of Stockholm as a royal residence, another is the diminishing importance of western Sweden, an area that may have been more politically central before the 1200s although it is not possible to establish with certainty where the court usually resided at that time.

Another purpose was to establish the political rulers’ degree of mobility. We have found that they became noticeably less mobile in the course of our period of investigation, especially during the sixteenth century. This agrees well with the fact that the state apparatus itself grew increasingly sophisticated. The importance of royal demesnes and fringe benefits decreased. The economic assets of the Crown took the form of ready money, concentrated in a few places where the court tended to stay.

Knowledge of the royal whereabouts can be of interest to historians because it reflects power structures. It can also be used to add more depth to an explanation of a concrete political situation. During the 1500s there was, for example, a clear concordance between how frequently a region was visited by the rulers and how often separatist rebellions broke out there.¹⁰⁷ A similar conformity is likely to have existed during the preceding centuries, although this question has not been dealt with in the present article.

The travel pattern of the peripatetic court can also contribute to an understanding of how the capital city evolved. Although this is a study of a period when there was still no permanent seat of royal power, it is nevertheless difficult not to see any relation at all between the research findings and the fact that Stockholm finally became the capital of Swe-

den. Since political capitals began to emerge in other European countries during our period of investigation, one is tempted to conclude that this process had also started in Sweden.

It seems probable that Stockholm's ever more prominent position in the statistics really reflects a gradually enhanced position as a political centre. We must, however, be very aware of the fact that this is a theory based on very fragmentary source material. It would be an oversimplification to describe the place as an emerging capital city. Throughout our period of investigation, Stockholm remained very much a city controlled more by international merchants than by the Crown. There was an absence of royal bureaucracy, the state apparatus was rudimentary.

Also, royal charters and letters seldom explain the *reasons* for the sovereigns' choices of residences. Most of their documents are deeds of gifts or purchases, issued by them mainly in their capacity as wealthy landowners rather than heads of state. Another common theme of the documents is the royal jurisdiction, an important function performed by the travelling king and probably one of the main reasons why the peripatetic kingdom survived for so long.¹⁰⁸ In fact, resolving conflicts between citizens is likely to have been *the* central function of the medieval state. Apart from these two very common types of documents, concerned mainly with land ownership, there is also a minority of royal charters in which the kings and regents express their wishes concerning how the kingdom should be ruled, regulating trade, lawlessness, taxes, road-building, diplomatica, war, mining, finance.¹⁰⁹

One thing the documents do reveal is that even though there were centralizing tendencies at this time, Sweden was still a travelling kingdom. If the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area had really been so "central" to the political rulers that this territory could be regarded as the control centre of the kingdom, one would have expected the royal charters issued there to be of a different nature from those issued in more peripheral areas. If Stockholm was anything reminiscent of a capital city it would seem likely that documents concerned with political matters were produced there, and that documents from other territories dealt mainly with local matters. But this was not the case. During our period of investigation, there is no evidence that certain types of documents were issued at certain places or in certain regions. A decision concerning how the kingdom should be ruled could be written down in Stockholm just as well as in any other part of Sweden.¹¹⁰ Despite its great importance to the rulers, Stockholm was not a political capital at this time, it was not the place

from which Sweden was ruled. But on the other hand, there is very little evidence that Sweden's capital city could just as well have ended up in any other place than Stockholm.

Stockholm's bureaucratization process was begun in the 1620s, and it would rapidly go on until it had transformed the city into a full-fledged political capital, towards the end of the same century. Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna was one of the leading architects behind the process. Administrative reforms carried out by him and his contemporaries created a state elaborate enough to make the stationary and permanent political centre a necessity. These seventeenth-century politicians meant very much to the evolution of the capital city in Sweden. But they hardly ever argued about where to locate the capital.¹¹¹ The chancellor's own words may serve as an illustrative example of what kind of future he was designing for Stockholm:

The most important thing [for the state], that which promises the most remarkable future development, is the construction and growth of towns, and above all of Stockholm. We must always keep our eyes on Stockholm. Before everything else, Stockholm must become a real city. Stockholm enriches the Crown more than all the other towns of our Kingdom, and because of its economic position it has the necessary foundations to become the capital of Sweden. All measures must be taken to raise and populate Stockholm. Then Stockholm will surely put the other towns on their feet. For no other towns in Sweden have the urban foundations which Stockholm has.¹¹²

Stockholm's political supremacy among Swedish towns was also an established fact long before the absolutist state. Stockholm already had the "foundations", to use the great chancellor's own expression, which the other towns lacked. Chancellor Oxenstierna did not make Stockholm the centre of power; he merely wanted to stimulate and take advantage of a first-rank position which Stockholm already had.

It is impossible to identify any precise moment when Stockholm became the capital of Sweden. To claim that this happened in the seventeenth century would be an oversimplification, just as it would be wrong to call Stockholm a capital in the sixteenth century or in the Middle Ages. The formation of the Swedish political metropolis began with the foundation of Stockholm in the 1250s and was completed about four hundred years later. The seventeenth-century reforms were the final touch, the ultimate confirmation of Stockholm's first-rank position. They can be conceived as the top of an iceberg, a visible result which rested firmly on a long

evolution hidden below the surface. The “foundations” of a capital city, which made Stockholm the self-evident choice, had gradually been laid in the age of the travelling kingdom.

Notes

- 1 The article is based on the main conclusions of my licentiate dissertation *The Travelling King and the Rise of the Capital City*, written at the University of Uppsala, Department of History, in 1993. The dissertation, however, contains a number of errors and imperfections which I hope have been to some degree emended here. Helpful comments have been made by Professor Carl Göran Andræ, Birgitta Fritz, PhD, former chief editor of the *Diplomatarium Suecanum/Svenskt Diplomatarium*, Lars Gahrn, PhD, Thomas Lindkvist, PhD, and Robert Sandberg, PhD. None of them, however, should be held responsible for the conclusions presented in this article. I am also indebted to Susan M. Reinhart, Michigan University, for many helpful linguistic comments concerning my English.
- 2 A great number of scholars have dealt with the travelling kingdom, e.g. Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis*, Cologne/Graz 1968; Edith Ennen, “Funktionen- und Bedeutungswandel der ‘Hauptstadt’ vom Mittelalter zur Moderne”, in Theodor Schieder & Gerhard Brunn (Hrsg.), *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, Munich & Vienna 1983; Bernard Guenee, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, Glasgow 1985, pp. 283–284; Marjorie Nice Boyer, “Travel and transport”, in Joseph R Strayer (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, vol. 12, New York 1989, p. 159; and Johannes Fried, *Die Formierung Europas*, Munich 1991, pp. 162–163. The general traits of the European travelling kingdom are described by Hans Conrad Peyer in “Das Reisekönigtum des Mittelalters”, *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, vol. 51, 1964. Somewhat outdated but very vivid descriptions are to be found in J. J. Jusserand, *English Wayfaring Life in the Middle Ages [XIVth century]*, 2nd revised and enlarged edition, London 1921, and Grace Stretton, “The travelling household of the Middle Ages”, *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. 40, 1935, pp. 76–79. The early Danish travelling kingdom is analysed in Thomas Riis, “Det middelalderlige danske rejsekongedømme indtil 1332”, in *Middelalder, metode og medier: Festskrift til Niels Skyum-Nielsen*, Viborg 1981. The Danish travelling kingdom of the 1400s is dealt with in Kristian Erslev, “Naar blev København Danmarks hovedstad?”, *Tilskueren* 1889. Concerning the German travelling kingdom, cf. Wilhelm Berges, “Das Reich ohne Hauptstadt”, in *Das Hauptstadtproblem in der Geschichte: Festgabe zum 90. Geburtstag Friedrich Meineckes*, Tübingen 1952; Karl Otmar von Aretin, “Das Reich ohne Hauptstadt?”, in Theodor Schieder & Gerhard Brunn (Hrsg.), *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, Munich & Vienna 1983.
- 3 The mobile court has, in fact, even older traditions. After the beginning of the fourth century AD, under Diocletian, the Roman imperial court no longer had a

- fixed residence and moved from place to place. Ernst Posner, *Archives in the Ancient World*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1972, p. 194. Cf. Lucien Febvre, *Life in Renaissance France*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1977, pp. 12–14; Boyer; Stretton. T Duffus Hardy, *A Description of the Patent Rolls*, London 1835, contains an itinerary of King John. Cf. Jusserand, pp. 83, 104. Concerning royal residences in pre-Norman England, cf. Peter Sawyer, “The Royal Tun in Pre-Conquest England”, in Patrick Wormald (ed.), *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford 1983. Other royal itineraries are included in R. W. Eyton, *Court Household and Itinerary of Henry II*, Dorchester 1878, and Ferdinand Opll, *Das itinerar Kaiser Friedrichs Barbarossa*, Vienna 1978.
- 4 Grace Stretton. See also Lars Gahrn, *Bland svear och götar*, Gothenburg 1989, p. 95 and Thomas Riis. The Icelandic sagas contain several descriptions of how the Norwegian kings travelled around their kingdom, e.g. *Sverris saga* (*Sverris saga etter Cod. AM 327 4°*, Gustav Indrebø [ed.], Kristiania 1920), *Hákonar saga* (“Hakonar Saga and a fragment of Magnus Saga”, Gudbrand Vigfusson [ed.], *Icelandic Sagas and Other Documents Relating to the Settlement and Descents of the Northmen on the British Isles*, Vol 2, London 1887), and *Heimskringla 2* (Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, Nóregs Konunga Sögur*, Finnur Jónsson [ed.], Copenhagen 1893–1901: *Ólafs saga Helga*, chapters 38, 162). The saga of Olaf the Saint (*Heimskringla 2*, chapter 231) also contains a vivid description of how easily an eleventh-century army was disbanded after the battle; the same was probably true about the royal suite, it was a temporary rather than a fixed unit. (The sagas are not contemporary sources, but they were written in the Middle Ages and are likely to reflect the conditions in the earlier parts of our period of investigation.)
- 5 Birgitta Fritz & Eva Odelman (red.), *Raven van Barnekows räkenskaper för Nyköpings fögderi*, Stockholm 1994, p. 51. According to Barnekow’s accounts, the average fodder consumption of the visiting king’s horses and animals was substantially larger than that of his own animals. Noblemen in the king’s service were not supposed to ride with more than 12 horses (*Diplomatarium Suecanum*, vols. I–X, Stockholm 1829–2002 [DS], 2773, 3175), but it is not possible to draw any conclusions about the size of the royal suite from this.
- 6 Grace Stretton 1935; KK (*Karlskrönikan: Nya eller Karlskrönikan*, G. E. Klemming [red.], Stockholm 1866), verses 6142 etc. Cf. GIR (*Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur, Handlingar rörande Sveriges historia, första serien*, vols. I–XXIX, Stockholm 1861–1916) 1554 Dec 25 (p. 486).
- 7 At least some of the rulers, who were extremely mobile, must simply have preferred to live on the road. Travelling was a way of life, including diversions like hunting and hawking. Marjorie Nice Boyer, p. 159; J. J. Jusserand, p. 83. On political motives, see also Grace Stretton, p. 76; cf. Kristian Erslev and Lars Gahrn, *Sveariket i källor och historieskrivning*, Gothenburg 1988, p. 134; Thomas Lindkvist, *Plundring, skatter och den feudala statens framväxt*, Uppsala 1988, p. 26.
- 8 Cf. Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, vol. 2, *The Nation State and Violence*, Berkeley 1985, pp. 49 etc.; Charles Tilly (ed.),

- The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton 1975; Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer & Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back in Again*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1985; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990*, Oxford 1990; Harald Gustafsson, "Statsbildning och territoriell integration", *Scandia* 1991:2.
- 9 The investigation is based mainly on the printed versions of the DS, on a chronological catalogue of medieval documents made by the editorial staff of the same publication (*kronologiska huvudkartoteket*), and on the documents and inventories of the Swedish National Archives (*riksarkivet*). During some periods the royal authority was so seriously challenged that it is difficult to decide whether the nominal monarch or his rivals should be considered the "ruler" of the country; in such cases I have included documents issued by both sides in the conflict.
 - 10 Use of present tense indicates that I am merely describing the impression I get from the few sources that are known to us today.
 - 11 Harald Gustafsson.
 - 12 Cf. Kristian Erslev.
 - 13 Charters from Turku/Åbo are numerous, but typically issued in rapid succession during rare visits.
 - 14 O. S. Rydberg (red.), *ST (Sveriges traktater med främmande magter*, vols. 1–3, Stockholm 1877–1895) I No. 192; *Regesta Norvegica* (vols. 1–7, Oslo 1898–1997) III No. 1129. Cf. Grethe Authén Blom, *Norge i union på 1300-tallet: Kongedømme, politikk, administrasjon og forvaltning 1319–1380*, Tapir Forlag 1992, p. 39. The western territories were given to Magnus by his rival Albrecht.
 - 15 The exceptions are royal demesnes, Örebro Uppsala, Linköping and Dävö. According to an unconvincing theory, some sort of early fortification existed in Uppsala (Nils Sundquist, *Östra Aros, Uppsala stads historia I*, Uppsala 1953, pp. 360–364). The construction of a castle in Örebro was begun at an early date, but the project was abandoned again.
 - 16 Source: Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Riksregistratoret (RR), published as *Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur*, GIR. (It is of course also possible to construct more or less well-founded theories about the days when the king's whereabouts are not explicitly mentioned in the source material; if we know, for example, that he was in Arboga on the 5th, the 8th and the 11th of June, it is likely that he was also there on the 6th, the 7th, the 9th and the 10th.)
 - 17 Sources: Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Sturearkivet, kopiebok A4 (also published in *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, vols. 19–20, Stockholm 1834–1835); *Diplomatarium Suecanum/Svenskt Diplomatarium*, kronologiskt huvudkartotek. Cf. Gustafsson.
 - 18 Source: RR. An itinerary of Charles IX is included in Christer Öhman, *Nyköping och hertigdömet 1568–1622*, Uppsala 1973. After he had become king, Charles concentrated his presence in Stockholm and the surrounding area.
 - 19 Royal documents and fifteenth-century verse chronicles (KK, and SK: "Nya krö-

- nikans fortsättningar eller Sturekrönikorna”, *Svenska medeltidens rimkrönikor*, G. E. Klemming (red.), Stockholm 1867–1868) give the impression that the Danish kings visited Sweden only occasionally. An itinerary of Sten Sture is included in Kjell-Gunnar Lundholm, *Sten Sture den äldre och stormännen*, Lund 1956, pp. 243–259. The figures concerning King Charles are based on documents used in diagrams 1 and 2 in this article. Sten’s visits to Finland usually seem to have lasted less than a month, except during the years when he was deposed from power (which are not included in the figures in table B).
- 20 The figures are based on royal documents and on itineraries in: Karl Gustaf Grandinson, *Studier i hanseatisk-svensk historia*, vol. II, Stockholm 1885; Sten Engström, *Bo Jonsson*, vol. I, Uppsala 1935; Viljo Adolf Nordman, *Albrecht, Herzog von Mecklenburg, König von Schweden*, Helsinki 1938.
 - 21 The figures in table B are based on the king’s documents.
 - 22 Cf. Brühl, maps I–VII. Concerning the evolution of capital cities in general, cf. Alfred Wendehorst & Jürgen Schneider (eds), *Hauptstädte, Entstehung, Struktur und Funktion*, Schriften des Zentralinstituts für fränkische Landeskunde und allgemeine Regionalforschung an der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, vol. 18, Neustadt an der Aisch 1979; Agnes Ságvári, “Stadien der europäischen Hauptstadtentwicklung und die Rolle der Hauptstädte als Nationalrepresentanten”, *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, ed Theodor Schieder & Gerhard Brunn, Munich/Vienna 1983; Bernhard Guenee, pp. 126 etc., 283 etc.; Johannes Fried, pp. 162–163. On London’s evolution into a political capital, cf. Thomas Frederick Tout, “The Beginnings of a Modern Capital: London and Westminster in the Fourteenth Century”, *The Collected Papers of Thomas Frederick Tout*, vol. III, Manchester 1934; Bernhard Guenee loc. cit. On Paris, cf. Gustav Roloff, “Hauptstadt und Staat in Frankreich”, *Das Hauptstadtproblem in der Geschichte*, Tübingen 1952; Roland Mousnier, *Paris, capitale politique au moyen-âge et dans les temps modernes (environ 1200 à 1789)*, *Paris, fonctions d’une capitale*, Paris 1962; Karl Hammer, “Paris als exemplarische Hauptstadt”, *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, ed. Theodor Schieder & Gerhard Brunn, Munich/Vienna 1983; Bernhard Guenee loc. cit. Lisbon also tended to become a political capital at the same time, cf. Joel Serrão, “Capital”, *Dicionário de história de Portugal*, vol. I, Porto 1981. Moscow showed similar tendencies, cf. Hans Lemberg, “Moskau und St Petersburg”, Theodor Schieder & Gerhard Brunn (Hrsg.), *Hauptstädte in europäischen Nationalstaaten*, Munich & Vienna 1983.
 - 23 Agnes Ságvári 1983. See also Frantisek Graus, “Prag als Mitte Böhmens”, in F. Meynen (Hrsg.), *Zentralität als Problem der mittelalterlichen Stadtgeschichtsforschung*, Vienna & Cologne 1979 and Martens Mina, “Bruxelles, capitale de fait sous les Bourguignons”, *Vierteljahrschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* 1964:2.
 - 24 Berhard Guenee (pp. 264–266) claims smaller states had the same centralizing tendencies as the large kingdoms, but less markedly.
 - 25 Birgitta Fritz, “De svenska medeltidsbrevens trading till 1800-talets början”, *Meddelanden från svenska riksarkivet*, Stockholm 1976–1977; Birgitta Fritz & Clara

- Nevéus, "Medeltidssamlingarna, Riksarkivets beståndsoversikt", vol. I:1, chapter 1, James Cavallie & Jan Lindroth (red.), *Skrifter utgivna av Svenska riksarkivet 8*, Stockholm 1996. *Minor* deviations in the figures can occur by the addition of new documents; some letter-books, for example, still remain to be catalogued.
- 26 Letter-books: Riksarkivet, Stockholm, kopiebook A4, RR. It is especially lamentable that the *registrum regni*, kept by the Council of the Realm, disappeared after the Middle Ages. Cf. Herman Schück, *Rikets brev och register*, Stockholm 1976, pp. 545 etc. It is likely that Marshal Karl Knutsson, later King Charles VIII, registered his correspondence in a letter-book which later disappeared; Herman Schück 1976, p. 348.
- 27 Arnaldo D'Addario, "The Development of Archival Science and its Present Trends", *Archival Science on the Threshold of the Year 2000*, Macerata 1992; Friedrich Merzbacher, Ius archivi, *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 1979, pp. 135–147; Inger Dübeck, *Statsmagt og arkiver*, Odense 1982, pp. 10 etc. Sven Lundkvist, "Riksens arkiv och makten – en studie i riksarkivets utveckling före 1618", *Årsbok för riksarkivet och landsarkiven*, 1994; Birgitta Fritz 1976–1977.
- 28 Herman Schück 1976, pp. 19, 135. On Stockholm: DS 4669, see Herman Schück 1976, p. 103. The SK contains a description of how the Danish king brought important archival records with him on his ship along with his most valuable treasures, and then lost them when the ship caught fire (verses 3507–3509: *siith fathabur konunghen ther ynne ladhe / och saa thz bästa som han hadhe / ther war och priuilegia breff och scripther*).
- 29 A fact of particular importance to this study is that, for reasons unknown to us, very few archives from western Sweden have been preserved. If we assume that documents sent by the rulers to Westrogothian addressees were issued mainly when they visited Westrogothia, the mere scarcity of surviving archives there may have created a misleading impression that this province was very seldom visited. This information and this hypothesis have been conveyed to me orally by Birgitta Fritz, former chief editor of the DS. The seven charters from before 1250 are DS 181, 185, 229, 240, 339, 365, 367.
- 30 Cf. Herman Schück 1976.
- 31 Nils Edén, *Om centralregeringens organisation under den äldre vasatiden (1523–1594)*, Uppsala 1899, p. 106; Ivan Svalenius, "Rikskansliet i Sverige 1560–1592", *Skrifter utgivna av svenska riksarkivet 7*, Stockholm 1991, pp. 67–68, 72–73, 81. Several of the "sixteenth-century" documents in the RR were in fact not written into the letter-books until the *seventeenth* century.
- 32 EK (*Erikskrönikan*, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet 47, Rolf Pipping [red.], Uppsala 1921), verses 2576 etc.
- 33 Per Jacobsson, "Gästgifveri- och skjutsningsbesvärens uppkomst och äldsta utveckling", *Ekonomisk Tidskrift* 1919. A provincial law from the fourteenth century (Södermannalagen [SdmL], *Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar*, H. S. Collin & C. J. Schlyter [red.], 1827–77, Konungabalken III) states that the king has the right to send a message to any province he wishes to visit, ordering its inhabitants to tax

for the needs of the court.

- 34 The places that were most frequently visited according to the documents were, however, not always militarily significant (e.g. Svartsjö, Gripsholm, Vadstena, Uppsala and Adelsö). The standard work on Swedish royal castles is Birgitta Fritz, *Hus, land och län i Sverige 1250–1434*, vols. 1–2, Stockholm 1972 & 1973.)
- 35 Hans Andersson, “Städer i öst och väst – regional stadsutveckling under medeltiden”, *Bebyggelsehistorisk tidskrift*, 1982:3.
- 36 Concerning the geographical distribution of mints, cf. Lars O. Lagerqvist, *Svenska mynt under vikingatid och medeltid*, Stockholm 1970, especially p. 142. During our entire period of investigation, coins were frequently made in Gotland, which can hardly have been a common royal residence due to its politically independent status. Apart from the Gotland coinage, in the 1200s, coins were made both inside the assumed core area (Uppsala, Sigtuna, Nyköping, Västerås) and outside (Örebro, Lödöse). In the following centuries, the places where royal coins were made became fewer and increasingly concentrated in the Mälaren/Ostrogothia area. (1300s: Stockholm, Västerås, Turku/Åbo, Kalmar, Lödöse, Silvberget; 1400s: Stockholm, Västerås, Söderköping, Turku/Åbo; 1500s: Stockholm, Västerås.) Johan Söderberg (*Sveriges ekonomiska och sociala historia*, Malmö 1996, pp. 72–74) talks about a “shift in the financial centre of gravity” from Götaland to Svealand during the 1400s. However Brita Malmer, his source, does not draw this explicit conclusion. (*Den senmedeltida penningen i Sverige*, Stockholm 1980, pp. 72–73.)
- 37 Unreliable source of Swedish history, but there is no reason why it should distort the truth about the rulers’ choice of residences.
- 38 Herman Schück 1976, pp. 263, 400.
- 39 The KK gives the impression that the Danish kings visited Sweden only occasionally, going either to Stockholm or to Kalmar, the site of inter-Scandinavian negotiations. (KK, verses 107, 1498, 1522, 1694, 2006 etc., 3056, 3230, 4557, 5019, 6838, 6858, 6862 etc., 6895, 6897, 6924, 7202; SK, verses 640–657, 659.) Some Stockholm visits occurred during times of conflict. (SK, verses 827, 941–2, 974–5, 1037.) Occasional residences were Vadstena and Söderköping. (KK, verses 470 etc., 1126 etc., 1476, 3036 etc., 3255, 3292 etc.; cf. SK 9361–4). The chronicles propagandistically claim that Danish kings neglect Sweden, but the absenteeism is confirmed by their own charters. Cf. *Repertorium Diplomatum regni Danici mediaevalis* (series I–II, Copenhagen 1894–1933).
- 40 KK, verses 1683, 4521; KK, verse 2323; KK, verses 2997, 2852 etc., 3271, 6230, 6346, 8534; KK, verses 7338, 7542, 1133, 1244–5, 1570–1573; KK, verses 2933 etc., 5080 etc., 5147 etc., 1936. Journeys from Stockholm to other places, or vice versa, are frequently described. KK, verses 2913, 8534, 9125, 9388 (Nyköping); 371, 3122, 9047–9, 9594 (Vadstena); 3464–3467 (Söderköping); 3687, 3758 etc., 5323 (Västerås); 3758 etc., 9479 etc. (Örebro); 4058 etc. (Dalecarlia); 4842–3 (Enköping); 5126 (Södertälje); 6230, 6346 (Stegeborg); 6424 (Kalmar); 6601, 6997 (Turku); 7338 (Viipuri/Viborg); 7597 (Öland); 7675 (Westrogothia); 8118 (Norrland and Norway); 8795 (Scania); 8991–9013 (Lödöse); 443 (Strängnäs).

- 41 *Diarium Vadstenense, the memorial book of Vadstena Abbey*, ed. Claes Gejrot, Stockholm 1988, year 1467. Since this is explicitly mentioned, it might very well mean that the author considers it unusual for the king to reside for such a long time in Stockholm. On the other hand, the charters issued by Charles also clearly hint that he spent much time there.
- 42 KK, verses 1683, 2901 etc., 2948–3035, 5690 etc., 5917, 8521.
- 43 KK, verses 6545 etc., 6602, 8421; SK, verse 405, cf. 302; 7581.
- 44 KK, verses 3502 etc., 3619 etc., 3687, 4060, 4104, 4175 etc., 4291, 5323, 5337, 5376, 5459. On Dalecarlia: KK, verses 4625 etc., 4663, 5372–4. Cf. SK, verse 1043 etc. KK, verse 8115.
- 45 Örebro: KK, verses 3220–3226, 4892, 5679, 5895, 9451. Stegeborg: KK, verses 5750 etc., 6055.
- 46 KK, verses 2933 etc., 8405, 8491, 9057–9, 9572; Cf. SK verse 119. Cf. *Diarium Vadstenense*, years 1400, 1403, 1451.
- 47 Uppsala, Trondheim (KK, verses 7226, 8007); Svartsjö (7266 etc.); Arboga (1609, 3544, 4148, 4988, 6752, 7968, 8228); Strängnäs (4495.); Enköping, Södertälje (4051, 4674, 5094, 5404 etc., 6355); Söderköping (3255, 3292 etc., 5464 etc.).
- 48 Älvsborg, Lödöse, Skara (KK, verses 5662 etc., 5679, 7092, 8138, 8991–9013, 7670 etc., 9511 etc.). Turku, Viborg, Raseborg (6590 etc., 6971, 7063. Cf. SK, verses 727, 1154–5).
- 49 Sadly, residences of regents Svante and Sten Sture Jr are poorly documented by SK and charters. (Schück 1976, p. 448.)
- 50 SK, verses 2670 etc., 2810 etc., 3204–5; SK, verses 3069–3071; SK, verses 3651 etc.; SK, verses 4723 etc.; SK, verses 5103 etc., 5111, 5237–5242; SK, verses 5477–8.
- 51 SK, verses 3535 etc., 5011 etc., 5087, 5336, 5382; 2610, 5178, 5237–5242; 5331, 5424; 2902 etc., 4647, 4665 etc.
- 52 RvB mentions royal visits to Nyköping, places in the same province, and to Kalmar, Västerås and Torshälla.
- 53 Unmentioned: Helsingborg and Bohus (naturally), Turku/Åbo, Adelsö (second most important according to the statistics).
- 54 EK, verses 510, 1302, 4326; 1081 etc., 2446–2474, 4230; 1264 etc., 1386 etc., 1667, 1956, 4282–3, 4432 etc.; 1146 etc.; 668–9, 785, 1148, 1264–6; 2616–2620, 3998 etc. Division of kingdom, cf. *Diplomatarium Danicum*, series I–IV, Copenhagen 1938–1990 [DD], 2r, 6 b, No 287–288; ST vol. I, No 174; *Scriptores rerum Suecicarum medii ævi*, vol. I–III, Uppsala 1818–1876 [SRS], II:1, pp. 89–90.) Hans Jägerstad, *Hovdag och råd under äldre medeltid*, Lund 1948, pp. 208, 212–218, 220–222.
- 55 EK, verses 802 etc., 3250; cf. Nils Blomkvist, *Kalmars uppkomst och äldsta tid*, Kalmar 1979.
- 56 EK, verses 540–1, 640, 668–9, 1282–3, 2620, 2836 etc.
- 57 Uppsala (EK, verse 785), Dävö (813, 3670), Linköping (1202, 4170), Söderköping,

- Stegeborg (1807, 4056, 4174), Örebro (2817), Visingsö (1244, 1257, 4031), Ymseborg (1060), Lödöse (990–1, 2270, 3225 etc.), Skara (1036 etc., 1074 etc., 3980, 4253 etc.).
- 58 Ingrid Hammarström, *Finansförvaltning och varuhandel 1504–40. Studier i de yngre sturarnas och Gustav Vasas statshushållning*, Uppsala 1956, pp. 21, 24, 36–38, 42 etc., 68, 85, 201, 210, 262, 464. There was a tendency, during the 1500s, to distinguish less and less between the finances of the Stockholm castle and those of the royal household, without increasing the administrative staff; see Birgitta Odén, *Rikets uppbörd och utgift*, Lund 1955, pp. 90–91, 113.
- 59 Kjell-Gunnar Lundholm, p. 243.
- 60 RvB, pp. 140, 154 etc., 162. DS 5730. Cf. DS x79, x82–84, x87.
- 61 DS 3267, 3282, 3350.
- 62 DS 6592, 6676, 6630, 6518.
- 63 DS 1690; Birgitta Fritz 1973, pp. 80–90.
- 64 Enfeoffment of Småland confirms statistical impressions that this province, except for the coastal region with the Kalmar castle, was seldom visited by the rulers. An anomaly, the 1310 division of the kingdom, can be explained by the fact that the king was the weaker party in the conflict. DS 2134; Birgitta Fritz 1973, pp. 105–106.
- 65 Clifford Geertz, “Centers, Kings and Charisma. Reflections on the Symbolics of Power”, in Joseph Ben-David & Terry Nichols (eds), *Culture and its Creators. Essays in Honour of Edward Shils*, Chicago 1977.
- 66 Berhard Guenee, p. 129. The English known burial places are: Westminster, Windsor, Winchester, Glastonbury, Wimborne, Malmesbury, Wareham, Shaftesbury, York, Reading, Worcester, Gloucester, King’s Langley, Canterbury, Chersey Abbey, Leicester. After the Norman conquest some kings were buried in France: Caen, Fontevrault, Faubourg St. Jacques. When London had established its position as a political capital it became very unusual for kings to be buried in other parts of the country. French kings were normally buried in the monastery of Saint-Denis outside Paris. There were exceptions, however (Aachen, Saint-Arnould-de-Metz, Sens, Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire). It is also doubtful whether the graves in Speyer have anything to do with where German rulers resided.
- 67 Teófilo F. Ruiz, “Unsacred Monarchy: The kings of Castile in the late Middle Ages”, in Sean Wilentz (ed.), *Rites of Power. Symbolism, Ritual and Politics Since the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 1985 and Luis Fernández, “España en tiempo de Felipe II”, R. Menéndez Pidal (ed.), *Historia de España*, tomo XXII, vol. II, cuarta edición, Madrid 1981. Cf. Paul Binski, *Medieval Death, Ritual and Representation*, Avon 1996.
- 68 RR 1577, March 24, p. 70 (King John himself admitted that the decision to deny his brother a grave in the cathedral was a way of showing him disrespect), March 28, p. 75; *ibid.*, Hertig Carls registratur, March 10, pp. 33–35, March 17, pp. 37–38, April 1, pp. 52–54. Simultaneously, the two brothers discussed plans to move the regent Sten Sture from the parish church in Gripsholm to a more

- “suitable” tomb in the cathedral of Strängnäs.
- 69 Most rulers of the 1400s died and were buried outside Sweden, but Charles VIII (*Karl Knutsson*) and Sten Sture the Elder both rest in the Mälaren area (the former in Stockholm and the latter – who had, however, expressed a wish to be buried in Stockholm – in the convent he had founded in Mariefred). No ruler at all was buried in Sweden during the 1300s, although Magnus II expressed a wish in his last will and testament to be interred in the Vadstena convent in Ostrogothia. (Cf. Birgitta Fritz, “Kung Magnus Erikssons planer för Vadstena klosterkyrka – och Birgittas”, *Kongsmenn og krossmenn: Festskrift til Grethe Authén Blom*, Trondheim 1992.) In the 1200s rulers were occasionally buried in the Mälaren district, but many tombs from this period are also situated in Götaland. From the 1100s until the mid-1200s there was a rivalry between the two competing dynasties who each had their favourite necropolis: Alvastra in Ostrogothia (the Sverker dynasty) and Varnhem in Westrogothia (the Eric dynasty, whose founder was however buried in Uppsala). Cf. Gahrn 1988, pp. 117–122.
- 70 Albrecht of Mecklenburg and Marshal Karl Knutsson were appointed in Stockholm. Eric of Pomerania was appointed in Skara, Westrogothia. (SRS 1:1, pp. 66, 94; *ibid.* 3:1 pp. 195, 206–208; *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, vol. 14, p. 270; *ibid.* vol. 20, p. 624.) MEL (*Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar, Magnus Erikssons landslag*), Konungabalken, paragraph 8; UL (*ibid.*, *Upplandslagen*), Konungabalken; SöDL (*ibid.* *Södermannalagen*), Konungabalken. Only a few early coronations took place in Ostrogothia (Valdemar’s in Linköping, Birger’s in Söderköping; SRS I:1, pp. 27, 42, 54, 63, 64, 86, 87, 92). The first known coronation in Uppsala, in 1276, was that of Magnus I. (SRS I:1, pp. 25, 41, 54, 86.) From the fourteenth century the ceremony was normally located in Uppsala, sometimes in Stockholm. Only Magnus II and two Danish union kings – John II (*Hans*) and Christian II – were crowned in Stockholm. Stockholm did not become the normal place of coronations until long after the end of our period of investigation, possibly because the Catholic Church opposed this idea during the Middle Ages and later because the Protestant kings wished to manifest their dominance over the ecclesiastical power by locating their coronation in the archiepiscopal see. Cf. Hugo Yrwing, *Gustav Vasa, kröningsfrågan och Västerås riksdag 1527*, Lund 1956, pp. 9–10, 12–13, 21, 23, 24, 120–121, 123.
- 71 Harald Gustafsson.
- 72 The figures are based on Sven Tunberg (“Den svenska riksdagens uppkomst och utveckling intill medeltidens slut”, *Sveriges riksdag*, vol. I, Stockholm 1931) and Swedish parliamentary documents (*Svenska riksdagsakter, 1521–1718*, I:1–2, Stockholm 1881–1899). Cf. Herman Schück, “Riksdagens framväxt, tiden intill 1611”, *Riksdagen genom tiderna*, Stockholm 1985.
- 73 Stockholm, Arboga, Uppsala, Västerås and Strängnäs were the most common places. There were exceptions. An occasional Council meeting was sometimes held in Westrogothia (Lödöse, Skara). Sometimes the estates assembled in Kalmar near the border with Denmark or in nearby Jönköping, both in the province of Småland.

The Örebro castle in Närke was also a rather common meeting-place outside the “core” area. No political assemblies were held in Gripsholm, an important residence; on the other hand this castle was situated in a *region* where the estates often met with the ruler. The same is true about Svartsjö, a prominent residence but used only once for a council meeting. The Stegeborg castle – another assumed favourite residence – was used only once for a council meeting, but three such meetings were held in nearby Söderköping.

- 74 Sven Tunberg. Danish “favourite residences” (Copenhagen, Helsingborg etc.) were naturally not used for Swedish assemblies.
- 75 Source: Sven Tunberg. Several assemblies were held in the first decades of the century, when Sweden was divided; the *hovdag* was often assembled where the king’s *brothers* had strongholds (western Sweden, Norway). Assemblies in the Mälaren area: Stockholm, Nyköping, Uppsala, Södertälje. In Ostrogothia: Söderköping, Stegeborg. (Stockholm had a less dominant position than in the following centuries, but it was the most important scene of the aristocratic *hovdag*, held until 1331 and also often located in Westrogothia, e.g. Skara and Lödöse.) The exception is Turku/Åbo, which confirms that in spite of statistical evidence it was *not* one of the most common royal residences. (National political assemblies were not located in the Finnish part of the kingdom, only complementary regional meetings.)
- 76 Exception: Örebro. Also, no assemblies were held at Dävö, Visingsö or Nyköping. Sources: Tunberg, Jägerstad.
- 77 The Mälaren district had four “first-rank” meeting places (Stockholm, Uppsala, Arboga, Södertälje), and five of secondary importance (Adelsö, Nyköping, Strängnäs, Västerås, Enköping), nearby Örebro also being relatively important. In Ostrogothia, the most common was first Stegeborg/Söderköping, later Vadstena. “Second-rank”: Linköping and Skänninge. The 1452 meeting in Varnhem, Westrogothia, was summoned by the Danish king who called for a rebellion against his rival in Stockholm (Tunberg, p. 121.) Westrogothia had a few prominent meeting places (Skara, Lödöse); so did Småland (Jönköping, and Kalmar which housed those inter-Scandinavian negotiations which were not located in the Danish town of Halmstad).
- 78 Concerning the *turnus* theory, cf. Thomas Riis. The rulers often visited Stockholm during the summer, journeys to Westrogothia or the island of Öland tended to occur before summer had ended. Known royal documents issued during the cold season are somewhat fewer than those issued during the warm season, hinting at possible shifts in the royal activity.
- 79 Lars Gahrn 1989, pp. 23, 48–49. There were three places in Sweden where ships could sail – at least part of the journey – from the sea into the inland territories: the Göta Älv (being only partly navigable and located dangerously near the Danish and Norwegian borders), Motala Ström in Ostrogothia, and Lake Mälaren. The third was the most important (because of prominent towns, mining districts and some of the country’s richest agricultural areas). Stockholm guarded the passage into it, the city sealed off the lake much more efficiently than the Stegeborg and

- Älvsborg castles were able to impede unauthorized transport into Westrogothia or Ostrogothia. Lake Mälaren was connected with another great lake, Hjälmaren, via a short river; after a brief journey overland (after Torshälla) the traveller could change to a new boat and continue all the way to the castle of Örebro.
- 80 The normal access to Westrogothia was via Ostrogothia, or sometimes Närke. The coastal regions of Småland and northern Sweden (accessible both by land and by sea) were firmly incorporated into the Swedish kingdom from an earlier date than the inland parts of the same provinces, but because of their location (either in sparsely populated areas or dangerously near the Danish border) they were clearly outside the core areas. It makes sense that in these areas, according to the statistics, only Kalmar was ever an important royal residence.
- 81 The earliest known example of the word “capital” (*hovetstad*) being used about Stockholm occurs in a manuscript written in Low German around 1394 (SRS III, p. 195.) The word is somewhat later used in Swedish sources, e.g. in Stockholm’s earliest preserved charter (1436, published in *Privilegier, resolutioner och förordningar för Sveriges städer 1:79*, Nils Herlitz (red.), Stockholm 1927. In an attempt to clarify the meaning of expressions like these, the German historian Edith Ennen (p. 157) has introduced a distinction between a full-fledged capital (*Hauptstadt*) and a “head-place” (*Hauptort*). Stockholm during our period of investigation would qualify only as a *Hauptort*, a place that was especially important to the rulers without being a permanent seat of political power.
- 82 Stockholm was still a “closed” town, a medieval urban centre whose foreign and domestic politics were not necessarily the same as those of the state. It could become Sweden’s political capital only after it had lost its independence and become a “subject town”, the state’s instrument of domination; Fernand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400–1800*, Harper & Row, New York, 1973, pp. 402–406. On Stockholm’s political position in general, cf. Nils Ahnlund, *Stockholm före Gustav Vasa*, Stockholm 1953; Gunnar Bolin, *Stockholms uppkomst*, Uppsala 1933; Göran Dahlbäck, *I medeltidens Stockholm*, Stockholm 1988; Staffan Högberg, *Stockholms historia*, vol. I, Stockholm 1987; Ingvar Peterzén, *Studier rörande Stockholms historia under Gustav Vasa*, Stockholm 1945; C. C. Sjödén, *Stockholms borgerskap under Sturetiden med särskild hänsyn till dess politiska ställning*, Stockholm 1950, p. 21.
- 83 An example: Charles VIII became king largely because of support from the burghers of Stockholm, but when a rebellion against him broke out in 1457, he dared not trust their loyalty, preferring to escape in exile (SK, verses 491 etc.; SRS II:1, p. 162, Ericus Olai). Cf. Sven Ulric Palme, *Stockholms krigshistoria*, Falköping 1964.
- 84 Hans Hansson, *Stockholms stadsmurar*, Stockholm 1956, p. 204, cf. pp. 85, 117, 149.
- 85 Episodes when Stockholm was at war with itself include a crisis in 1497; *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, vol. 18, Stockholm 1833, p. 139; *Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid*, vol. 1–4, Stockholm 1876–1944, 2:3, p. 333.), and another in 1501; C. C. Sjödén p. 119; *Diarium fratrum minorum Stockholmensium* [SRS

- I:1, p. 76]; *Olai Petri svenska krönika*, G. E. Klemming (red.), Stockholm 1860, p. 298.
- 86 The people of Stockholm may not at all have *wanted* their city to become the centre of Swedish politics since this also made it an arena of struggle – often in the form of physical violence – between the mighty men of the kingdom (cf. C.C. Sjöden 1950). The burghers became willing to accept Stockholm's role as a capital only after the city had grown too large and complex for the merchants to rule it on their own. Cf. Lars Ericson, *Borgare och byråkrater. Omvandlingen av Stockholms stadsförvaltning 1599–1637*, Stockholm 1988 and Robert Sandberg, *I slottets skugga – Stockholm och kronan 1599–1620*, Stockholm 1991. Other studies about Stockholm's rise to the position of capital city: Åke Sandström, *Mellan Torneå och Amsterdam – en undersökning av Stockholms roll som förmedlare av varor i regional- och utrikeshandel 1600–1650*, Stockholm 1990; Arne Jansson, *Bördor och bärkraft – borgare och kronotjänare i Stockholm 1644–1672*, Stockholm 1991; Christina Unger, *Makten och fattigdomen – fattigpolitik och fattigvård i 1600-talets Stockholm*, Stockholm 1996, and Linnea Forsberg, *Stormakstidens Stockholm tar gestalt – gaturegleringen i Stockholm 1625–1650*, Stockholm 2001.
- 87 Birgitta Lager, *Stockholms befolkning på Johan III:s tid*, Stockholm 1962, p. 53.
- 88 Thomas Frederick Tout; Bernhard Guenee, pp. 126–136.
- 89 Authén Blom, p. 776; cf. Herman Schück, "Tillägg till Kansler och capella regis under folkungatiden", *Historisk Tidskrift* 1963:4.
- 90 In some cases (not always) the title "chancellor" probably simply expressed the fact that its holder was a powerful man, a rather unspecified power designation which was not connected with any Swedish administrative organization. (Schück 1963.) – For a long time people evidently preferred to arrange legal matters in an entirely oral way. Cf. Åke Ljungfors, *Bidrag till svensk diplomatik före 1350*, Lund 1955, chapter II.
- 91 The central administrations were connected with the bishops of Uppsala, Linköping and Strängnäs, respectively. According to Grethe Authén Blom, the importance of the administrative institution in Oslo should not be over-emphasized; neither Norway nor Sweden at this time had a geographically fixed administration (Authén Blom, pp. 186, 192, 199, 205, 206, 238, 732, 733, 737, 774). For a short time, Bohus functioned as some sort of archival repository for important documents; Herman Schück 1976, pp. 145–146. Its importance was due to its location between the two kingdoms.
- 92 GIR XVI:64; Nils Edén, p. 126, 217, 218; cf. pp. 11, 17, 28, 32, 56, 106, 107, 126, 127. On the king's dependency of clerical scribes, before and after the Reformation, see for example GIR 23 August 1526; GIR undated in May 1544 (p. 302).
- 93 Ivan Svalenius, pp. 25, 37, 43, 52–53, 88.
- 94 For a survey of the discussion, cf. Lars Gahrn 1988, pp. 105–108.
- 95 This was the case in Denmark; cf. Anders Andréén, "Städer och kungamakt – en studie i Danmarks politiska geografi före 1230", *Scandia* 1983:1.

- 96 Thomas Lindkvist & Kurt Ågren, *Sveriges medeltid*, Stockholm 1985, pp. 104–105.
- 97 Thomas Lindkvist 1988, p. 26; Lars Gahrn, “Svearna i de uppländska folklanden och det svenska rikets uppkomst”, *Uppland*, Uppsala 1993, pp. 36–37.
- 98 Typically, the YVgL (*Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar*, Yngre västgötalagen, Jordabalken XIII) states that “a bishop’s words should be heard before a king’s words, and a local landowner should be heard before both the bishop and the king”. A few privileges are granted to the monarch (Urbotamål I, Jordabalken XII, Additamenta I, Rättslösabalken II–III), but most of the law’s regulations concerned with the king must have been of doubtful value to him (Kvarnbalken VIII, Giftermålsbalken I, Rättslösabalken I). The older version of the law contains even fewer privileges for the king (e.g. *ibid.*, Äldre västgötalagen [ÄVgL], Rättslösabalken III). However, comparisons between laws of different age and background history may be misleading.
- 99 DL (*ibid.*, Dalalagen), Edsöresbalken VI, Byggningsbalken XXXVIII; HL (*ibid.*, Hälsingelagen), Kungabalken VII, XI, Kyrkobalken II, Byalagsbalken XVIII.
- 100 The VmL (*ibid.*, Västmannalagen) grants a number of privileges to the king (without specifying his obligations in the same way as the Westrogothian laws do). The king’s powers in this law are sometimes directed against the local magnates, which is not the case in the laws from Westrogothia. (VmL, Konungabalken VI, VII, Rättegångsbalken I, XIV, XIX, XXIV, Köpmålabalken XIII, Manhelgdsbalken X, XXIV, Byggningsbalken XXIII.) The SdmL mentions the king much more often. Several royal privileges as well as obligations are written into the law (Konungabalken I, Giftermålsbalken XXIV, Manhelgdsbalken XXVI, Rättegångsbalken I, IV, VIII, XI, Tjuvabalken XV, Köpmålabalken VI, XI, XII, XIII, Additamenta). The UL (*ibid.*, Upplandslagen) mentions the king less often than the SdmL, but grants him the same strong authority (Konungabalken IX, XI, XIV, Manhelgdsbalken XVII, Köpmålabalken X, Rättegångsbalken I, VI, X, XIII).
- 101 The ÖgL (*ibid.*, Östgötalagen) mentions the king more often than any other provincial law, but does not grant him the same strong authority as the laws from the Mälaren provinces do. In this law, local landowners have a strong position *vis-à-vis* the monarch in disputes concerning the ownership of land (Jordabalken II). The king does not have the same possibilities to take action against local magnates as in the Mälaren area. Several of his powers can also be carried out by a local representative (Edsöresbalken X, Rättegångsbalken IV, Ärvdabalken IV, Giftermålsbalken XIX, Dråpsbalken V, XV, Vådåmålsbalken XXI, Byggningsbalken VIII, XXVII, XXVIII). The law presupposes that the king visited the province from time to time since it specifically orders that the roads must be in a condition good enough for a king to ride on them (byggningsbalken V).
- 102 There are also fragments of a Småland law. Gotland and Scania also had their own laws, but these territories were Swedish only during parts of our period of investigation and will not be dealt with here.
- 103 Elsa Sjöholm (*Sveriges medeltidslagar – europeisk rättstradition i politisk omvandling*,

- Lund 1988) claims that the Swedish medieval laws had very little to do with old traditions. Her theories have, however, been questioned by other historians, e.g. Thomas Lindkvist, “Svar till Elsa Sjöholm”, *Historisk Tidskrift* 1990:4.
- 104 DS 181, 185, 229, 240, 339, 365, 367.) Cf. *Annales Suecici medii ævi*, Göte Paulsson (red.), Lund 1974, pp. 24, 55, 68–69, 87, 124, 152, 205, 208, 210–211; *ÄVgL*, p. 299.
- 105 Lars Gahrn 1988, pp. 111 etc., 119–120.
- 106 The *earliest* known Swedish kings, connected with the Mälaren area (Uppsala, Birka, Sigtuna), will not be dealt with here.
- 107 Harald Gustafsson.
- 108 This theory is proposed by Thomas Riis.
- 109 I will give a few examples of the different types of documents in this and the following notes. The examples are chosen from the earliest part of our period of investigation since these documents are easily accessible to the reader in printed versions, but little changed during the four centuries, except that documents of a diplomatic and political nature are more common in the sixteenth-century material than in the medieval material. Examples of documents that regulate the right to *trade* with Sweden: DS 601, 604, 607, 619, 850, 611, 556, 1736, 1125, 2308, 2334, 3242, 3243, 3246, 3581, 3421, 3718, 3737, 3787, 3830, 3832, 3833, 3918, 4461. *Trade* in general: DS 2097, 2922, 3624, 3647, 4246. Order to obey *laws*: DS 799, 813, 3175, 3864, 3972. *New regulations*: DS 1154, 2624, 3018, 3019, 3020, 3106, 3473, 3797, 4142. *Taxes*: DS 815, 2420, 2773, 3126, 3187, 3281, 3267, 3442, 3499, 3880, 3917, 3972, 4059, 4060, 4060, 4140, 4204, 4213, 4214, 4220, 4221. *Roads*: DS 3285. *Diplomatica*: DS 817, 818, 1728, 1731, 1836, 2134, 3413, 3718, 3743, 3817, 3904. *Peace agreements*: DS 1577, 2555, 3412. *Borders*: DS 4332. *Defence*: DS 3267. *Natural resources*: DS 1318, 3485, 3526. *Money-lending*: DS 630, 2134.
- 110 The only visible difference between Stockholm and the rest of the country, as to the nature of the royal documents issued there, is that charters about international trade are often dated in Stockholm – which is natural, given its financial position.
- 111 As far as I know, that question has only been raised once. During the 1643–45 war, the Council of the Realm discussed plans to conquer Denmark, which according to some called for a new capital closer to that country (e.g. Norrköping, Vadstena). The idea was rejected since – as they expressed it – everything had already “settled down” (*satt sigh*) in Stockholm, which probably meant that it was too late to relocate the capital because a state bureaucracy had by then already evolved in Stockholm. (The other main reasons for the rejection were that the province ought not to be inconvenienced, and that Stockholm was geographically closer to Sweden’s Finnish and Baltic territories.) *Svenska riksrådets protokoll*, Severin Bergh (red.), vol. X, Stockholm 1905, p. 478.
- 112 *Ibid.*, vol. VI (1636), pp. 53, 213, 406. A recurrent theme of discussion during the 1630s. Cf. Robert Sandberg 1991, p. 383.