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## FROM PRISON TO PRINT.

Johannes Messenius' *Scondia illustrata* as a co-product of early modern prison writing

Susanna Niiranen

Prison writing became a characteristic cultural form in many areas of early modern Europe, although the tradition holds a prominent position in a long line of literary, political, and religious works produced by authors from Boethius and Thomas Malory to Antonio Gramsci, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Nelson Mandela, to name a few. The early modern period, in particular, saw a dramatic increase in the prison population, including literate elites imprisoned for debt or, increasingly, for politics or religion – the latter two reasons sometimes intertwined as in the case of Swedish historian and author Johannes Messenius (1579–1636). The group of ideological prisoners had an expanded audience of political and religious sympathisers, which, along with the growth of the book trade, contributed to the emergence of prison writing as a significant literary and political phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

An exceptionally large number of human agents were involved in converting Messenius' *opus magnum*, *Scondia illustrata* (Scandinavia described),<sup>2</sup> written during his incarceration in Kajaani Castle (1616–1635), into print approximately seventy years later, but the process has not gained much attention. His other historical works produced while he was imprisoned were printed after an even longer time period. For instance, according to a later version, his chronicle

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this article was made possible by the Department of History and Ethnology (University of Jyväskylä) and the project *Late Medieval and Early Modern Libraries as Knowledge Repositories, Guardians of Tradition and Catalysts of Change* (Lamemoli, Academy of Finland and University of Jyväskylä, no. 307635, 2017–2021). I had the pleasure of participating in the stimulating final colloquium of the project *Transmission of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Academy of Finland and University of Jyväskylä, no. 267518, 2013–2017) at the Danish Academy, Rome, 26–27 July 2017) and presenting the submitting for discussion the first version of this article. – Early modern prison writing research is a rapidly growing field, especially in England. See, for example, Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Messenius, *Scondia illustrata, seu chronologia de rebus Scondiæ, hoc est Sueciæ, Daniæ, Norvegiæ, atque una Islandiæ, Gronlandiæque, tam ecclesiasticis quam politicis; â mundi cataclysmo, usque annum Christi MDCXII, gestis*, ed. by Johan Peringskiöld, 15 vols (Stockholm: Typis Olavi Enæi, 1700–1705) (Scandinavia described, or chronology of the things of Scandinavia, that is Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Greenland, (things) both ecclesiastical and political; from the destruction of the world [the Flood] until the year of our Lord 1612).

of the settlement of Finland, currently known as *Rimkrönika om Finland och dess inbyggare*<sup>3</sup> (Verse Chronicle of Finland and its Inhabitants), was not published until 1774. It is obvious that the content of prison writings was often delicate and easily censured by the establishment. This was also the case with Messenius' history works, since the Swedish government was more than eager to have the *Scondia* in its possession. This article investigates the possible motives in the harsh race of possessing and completing the manuscript and charts the main characters and organizational structures which were involved in the complex course of events. The study covers the period between c. 1630, when Messenius finished writing the manuscript in prison, and 1705, when the print publication was completed by Johan Peringskiöld.

My aim is to discuss the texts *bibliogeographically*. The term bibliogeography has been used, although quite rarely, in book historical scholarship as a bibliographical method to reveal where books were moved to as they were reclassified and how shelf-marks have been altered in a library.<sup>4</sup> In this study, the method is applied to not only reveal the knotty journey of the manuscripts into print but also to investigate meanings related to the texts (to be printed) by various agents in the process.<sup>5</sup> For example, Messenius himself repeatedly makes remarks about the printing plans in the manuscripts; the title pages bear witness to his dashed hopes. Year after year in prison, he had to alter the planned date of publication. However, the editor, Peringskiöld, did not generally include these remarks in the printed version. Another example is the *Scondia* manuscript, which was discussed by representatives of the Swedish government, although there were several drafts, which nobody had read, and their exact location was unknown after Messenius' death. Count Peter Brahe's role, which has been largely neglected in previous studies, is taken into consideration in the process. The term *Scondia* was used to refer not only to the physical manuscript but also to the idea of the text. When the manuscript

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<sup>3</sup> Johannes Messenius, *Berättelse om några gamla och märkvärdiga Finlands handlingar...* (Account of some old and important Finnish documents...), ed. by Johan Bilmark (Åbo: Frenckell, 1774); reprint: *Rimkrönika om Finland och dess inbyggare*, ed. by Johan Bilmark and others (Helsingfors: Edlunds, 1865).

<sup>4</sup> See Robyn Adams and Louisiane Ferlier, 'Building a Library without Walls: the Early Years of the Bodleian Library', in *Libraries, Books, and Collectors of Texts, 1600-1900*, ed. by Annika Bautz and James Gregory, Routledge Studies in Cultural History (New York: Routledge [In press]), <<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1528793/>> (accessed on 21 Oct 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Harold Love encourages textual critics to use the *bibliogeographical* approach in addition to the *bibliographical* one: *To a bibliographer, a given copy of a work is an item on a particular page in a bound volume on a particular shelf. To the bibliogeographer, that copy is merely a resting point on the text's journey through space and time.* Harold Love, 'The Work in Transmission and its Recovery', *Shakespeare Studies*, 32 (2004), pp. 73–80, (p. 75).

was finally printed, meanings were omitted, emphasized or created by the paratexts, which are generally considered crucial vehicles in the production of meanings.<sup>6</sup>

Johannes Messenius' turbulent life and works were largely explored in early twentieth-century Swedish historiography. Many of the later studies are based on Schück's biography (1920), which contains some (lost) documents of Messenius' own time but, unfortunately, the work lacks footnotes.<sup>7</sup> In the same vein, Söderberg published his biography of Johannes Messenius' son Arnold Johan Messenius, who was closely involved in the process, in 1902.<sup>8</sup> Olsson's doctoral thesis (1944) specifically investigates *Scondia illustrata*, focusing on its creation and the medieval sources Messenius plausibly used during the writing process in Kajaani. Olsson also touches upon differences between the manuscript and printed versions, which are not the focus of this study.<sup>9</sup> On recent scholarship, one may mention philological studies and editions on Messenius in both Latin, by Ann-Mari Jönsson on *Chronologia Sanctae Birgittae* (originally planned to be a part of the *Scondia*), and Swedish, by Harry Lönnroth on *Rimkrönika*.<sup>10</sup>

## I. An incarcerated historiographer

On 15 October in 1616, Johannes Messenius, his wife Lucia Grothusen, children Arnold and Anna, and a servant or a couple of servants began their journey to the distant place of punishment, the fortress of Kajaani in Northeastern Finland. The penance was extremely severe for a man of his standing, a former professor and the current Archivist-in-Chief at the National Archives, *Riksarkivet*, although his death sentence was commuted to a life sentence. Messenius was suspected of being a secret Catholic and accused of having treasonable connections with

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<sup>6</sup> Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Henrik Schück, *Messenius: Några blad ur Vasatidens kulturhistoria* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1920). Schück naturally exploited Linder's earlier study on Messenius's early life: Ludvig Linder, *Bidrag till kännedom om Messenii tidigare lif 1579 (c.)–1608*, Meddelanden från det litteraturhistoriska seminariet i Lund, 3 (Lund: Berling, 1894).

<sup>8</sup> Verner Söderberg, *Historieskrifvaren Arnold Johan Messenius* (Diss. Upsala: Berling, 1902).

<sup>9</sup> Harald Olsson, *Johannes Messenius Scondia illustrata: studier i verkets tillkomsthistoria och medeltidspartiets källförhållanden* (Diss. Lund: Gleerupska Universitets-Bokhandeln, 1944).

<sup>10</sup> Johannes Messenius, *Chronologia Sanctae Birgittae, a Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. by Ann-Mari Jönsson (Lund: Department of Classical Studies, University of Lund, 1988); Johannes Messenius, *Suomen riimikronikka*, ed. and tr. by Harry Lönnroth and Martti Linna, *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia*, 913 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004).

Catholic Poland, the politico-religious archenemy of Lutheran Orthodox Sweden at the time. During an interrogation, it was shown that Messenius had contact with persons who had been in Poland. Messenius explained that he had only attempted to retrieve historical documents left behind in Poland, which he himself had seen in the Cistercian monastery of Oliva in Prussia.<sup>11</sup> These documents were left there by persons who had fled from Sweden at the time of the Reformation. In his previous works, Messenius had argued that *Scania* was rightfully Swedish. He also attempted to prove how the Swedes fell into servitude under the rule of the Danish kings of the Kalmar Union. The interest in the documents shown by the Swedish kings was associated with Swedish claims to the sovereignty of Gotland (a Danish territory since 1570 due to the Treaty of Stettin, Polish Szczecin) and to the use of the Three Crowns in Swedish state heraldic iconography instead of the Danish royal coat of arms into which it was now incorporated.<sup>12</sup> At the trial, Messenius brought forward witnesses who confirmed that the defendant had requested help from them to bring medieval sources from Poland for his studies and, therefore, believed they could prove his innocence, which did not happen.<sup>13</sup>

In the background, there were quarrels between Messenius and Johannes Rudbeckius, Professor of Hebrew and Chaplain to the King, as well as between Messenius and Erik Jöransson Tegel, one of his closest friends and later his most bitter enemy. Messenius started a lawsuit, which initially went in his favour, but then Tegel began spreading rumours of his Catholic tendencies. Messenius' connection to Catholicism began in childhood at the town school of Vadstena. During this period, he was in contact with people from the Abbey of Vadstena. When the celebration of Catholic service was forbidden in Sweden in 1595, Messenius was already registered at the Jesuit College of Braunsberg (Polish Braniewo). Young, Catholic-minded Swedes were sent abroad to different colleges for the purpose of getting the education and training that were considered vital for the recatholisation of Sweden. At Braunsberg, Messenius received a comprehensive humanistic education, which prepared him for the historical works he would later write. In the early 1600s, he travelled in Europe and finally settled in Danzig (Polish Gdańsk). In 1607, he married Lucia Grothusen, a wealthy

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<sup>11</sup> Olsson, *Scondia*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: Jesuit Educational Strategy, 1553–1622* vol. 3, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, 46 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), p. xlvii.

<sup>13</sup> Olsson, *Scondia*, p. 12.

daughter of Arnold Grothusen, the Catholic Sigismund's former tutor during the prince's adolescence in Sweden.<sup>14</sup>

Messenius began to write genealogical works, including *Genealogia Sigismundi* (Genealogy of Sigismund),<sup>15</sup> dedicated to King Sigismund III of Poland and printed in Danzig in 1608. The work shows Messenius' familiarity with both the Swedish Vasa and Polish-Lithuanian Jagiellon families. His knowledge on the Catholic Jagiellons was incomparable in early modern Scandinavia.<sup>16</sup> Since Sigismund showed no interest in the work and failed to employ the historian, Messenius turned to King Charles IX of Sweden. After having slightly modified the genealogy, he dedicated it to King Charles under the name *Schema familiare* (Family tree, Dantisci: Vidua Guilmothana, 1608). Upon returning to Sweden, Messenius was initially viewed with deep suspicion, but the King soon noticed his education and consensual utility, which led to his nomination as a professor in Uppsala and later on, Archivist-in-Chief, which gave him access to medieval documents. Before the trial, Messenius was also a diligent editor of medieval manuscripts. He published extensively, among others, *Sveopentaprotopolis* (History of the five most important Swedish towns) and *Chronicon episcoporum per Sveciam, Gothiam et Finlandiam* (Chronicle of bishops in Svealand, Götaland, and Finland), both in 1611, which he exploited in writing the *Scondia*.

Messenius was found guilty in an exceptionally tense political situation when rumours circulated about Catholic conspiracies by King Sigismund and his followers. Recatholization efforts of Jesuits in particular were under suspicion, which was not completely an unfounded fear, since the Jesuits' hopes of returning Sweden to the Roman Church had previously been centred on the court and networks of the Catholic, Polish-born Queen Catherine Jagiellon and, after her death in 1583, on her son, King Sigismund.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Messenius was deported to

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<sup>14</sup> Sigismund I, King of Sweden, 1593–1599, known in Poland as Sigismund III, King of Poland, 1587–1632; on Arnold Grothusen, see Birgitta Lager, 'Arnold Grothusen', *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, <<https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/13234>> (accessed on 23 October 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Johannes Messenius, *Genealogia Sigismvndi tertii, Poloniae, atqve Sveciae regis potentissimi* (Dantisci: Vidua Guilmothana, 1608).

<sup>16</sup> See the volume produced by the ERC project *The Jagiellonians: Dynasty, Memory, Identity* based at the University of Oxford (2013–2018), Natalia Nowakowska, Ilya Afanasyev, Stanislava Kuzmova, Giedre Mickunaite, Susanna Niiranen and Dusan Zupka, *Dynasty in the Making: the Jagiellonians, c.1386–1640s*, forthcoming in 2019.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g. Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: The Age of Gustavus Adolphus and Queen Christina of Sweden, 1622–1656* vol.4, Studies in the history

the remote Kajaani Castle in Finland but was permitted to take his wife and children with him, which was not unexceptional among early modern political prisoners. However, the family suffered from cold, hunger, and the lack of daily necessities. Messenius frequently described his bad treatment in Kajaani in letters, as well as in his historical works,<sup>18</sup> and his jailers complained about his serious mistreatment in a letter in 1622, after the children were taken from their parents and sent back to Sweden proper in 1621. The measure was taken to ensure they received a Lutheran education and to shield them from their father's religious influence, which was considered harmful to Messenius' offspring.<sup>19</sup> However, Messenius was allowed to bring his large library, notes, and files to the prison. He was also able to receive material to the prison by mail. Despite these extremely difficult circumstances, he succeeded in writing his most famous work, *Scondia illustrata*, and the Chronicle of Saint Bridget of Sweden, the *Chronologia Sanctae Birgittae*, which was planned to be a part of it. The *Rimkrönika* is a vernacular and rhymed version of the tenth volume of the *Scondia*. The Chronicle of Saint Bridget is dedicated to a royal person, most certainly Prince Ladislaus, the eldest son of King Sigismund III of Poland, to whom Messenius addresses his loyalty referring to his hereditary goods and possessions as well as his mercy on Vadstena Monastery. With these words, he put himself in jeopardy. Ann-Mari Jönsson suggests that had the manuscript come into the hands of the Swedish Government at that time, Messenius would probably have been executed. The Chronicle of Saint Bridget was added to the original plan of the volumes of the *Scondia* in 1632. He later excluded the Chronicle, however, and made plans for its separate publication.<sup>20</sup>

The attitude towards Catholics, and especially converts, became even more heated in Sweden during the 1620s. A group of suspected Catholics with a Jesuit educational background were tortured and executed in Stockholm, but there is no evidence of their relationship with the Kajaani prisoner.<sup>21</sup> Messenius' hopes for being released were shattered when he heard that his son, Arnold Johan, was found guilty of high treason in 1624 and imprisoned in Kexholm Castle (Finnish Käkisalmi, on the Carelian isthmus, near the eastern border of the Swedish Realm at

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of Christian thought, 47 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992); *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to institutionalisation of Reform*, ed. by Ole Grell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 174.

<sup>18</sup> Schück, *Messenius*, pp. 251–53.

<sup>19</sup> The letter of Peer Rotmestare and 17 other jailers of Kajaani Castle is published in Schück, *Messenius* pp. 245–50.

<sup>20</sup> *Chronologia*, ed. by Jönsson, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Schück, *Messenius*, pp. 253–54.

the time). There are good reasons to believe that had Messenius been released, he might have intended to leave Sweden and publish his works abroad or leave for Poland and try to gain some advantage through his works there.<sup>22</sup> At the end of 1635, due to the initiative of Messenius' former Uppsala student, Melcher Wernstedt, who was now the regional governor of Ostrobothnia (1635–1641), the prisoner was moved to Oulu Castle where his situation improved. Wernstedt even turned to Karl Karlsson Gyllenhielm, illegitimate son of King Charles IX of Sweden, who, indeed, was interested in Messenius' *opus*, as he called it in a letter.<sup>23</sup> Around this time, the government began to realize the potential of the *Scondia*, which in Swedish documents is often referred to in a general way, such as *opus* or *Svenske historier* (Swedish histories).<sup>24</sup>

## II. Editing work begins

In 1636, a student who would later become a lexicographer, Ericus Johannis Schroderus, was sent to Oulu by the Swedish government to inspect the manuscripts. First, professor Lars Fornelius was assigned the task, but for an unknown reason, he never travelled out to Oulu.<sup>25</sup> Messenius was known as a quarrelsome and boastful person — his temperament is documented on many occasions — and he expressed doubts regarding the sincerity of Schroderus' intention to transcribe his texts.<sup>26</sup> However, shortly afterwards, Messenius died in Oulu, and his wife, Lucia Grothusen, came into possession of the manuscripts. The Swedish government was now eager to possess Messenius' work. The established explanation is that as a new great power in the 1630s, Sweden needed a National Swedish Chronicle after *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus* (History of all the Kings of the Goths and the Swedes) written by Johannes Magnus, the last Catholic Archbishop of Sweden, was published in 1544 and *Historia Suecorum Gothorumque* (History of the Swedes and Goths) written by Messenius in 1615. One may also think that the government did not want to take the risk that the manuscripts would have been published abroad without first seeing the content. The intention was to acquire them and ensure their political and religious correctness, as well as have the opportunity to make the

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<sup>22</sup> *Chronologia*, ed. by Jönsson, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Schück, *Messenius*, p. 265.

<sup>24</sup> 27 November 1635, *Svenska riksrådets protokoll* 18vols, ed. by Severin Bergh, Handlingar rörande Sveriges Historia, Tredje serien (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1878–1959), V (1888), p. 337.

<sup>25</sup> Karl G. Leinberg, 'Handlingar rörande Messenierne (Johan 1636 och Arnold 1651)' in *Historiallinen Arkisto* XIV (Helsingfors: Finska Historiska Samfundet, 1896), pp. 719–745 (p. 732); see also Ericus Johannis Schroderus, *Dictionarium Quadrilinguae. Suedicum, Germanicum, Latinum, Graecum*, ed. by Bengt Hesselman (Uppsala: A&W, 1929).

<sup>26</sup> Söderberg, p. 7.



final revisions regarding decisive matters.<sup>27</sup> It is possible that Messenius left the manuscripts unfinished intentionally; the final revisions depended on which side (i.e. Sweden or Poland) would publish his work.<sup>28</sup> Olsson explains that Messenius ran out of material in Kajaani, and in Oulu, he was too tired and sick to finish the manuscript, although he asked for some new material for his rhymed chronicle, e.g. *Swarte Boken* (The Black Book of Åbo Cathedral), in Latin *Registrum Ecclesiae Aboensis*.<sup>29</sup>

Messenius' former student from Uppsala, now the regional governor in Ostrobothnia (1635–1641), Melcher Wernstedt, informed the Swedish government of the death of the historian in Oulu. According to the correspondence, the widow wished to transfer the corpse to Vadstena, which did not happen.<sup>30</sup> Messenius was buried in Oulu Cathedral, where his portrait is the oldest identifiable portrait in Finland.<sup>31</sup>

After Schroderus, there were also other people expressing their interest in editing the work. A certain Adler Salvius declared that he had practically been Messenius' assistant and corrector in printing matters for three years. His claim is highly dubious, since this Swedish diplomat and general war commissioner stayed for years in Lower Saxony, only moving back to Sweden as late as 1636.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, Messenius' upfront fear of someone taking credit for his work was not merely speculative.

Lucia Grothusen was unwilling to hand over the manuscripts to the Swedish government, although she was offered a sum of 400 or 500 riksdaler. The promises of getting her son, Arnold Johan, released from his imprisonment at Kexholm Castle were too loose.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, she was very aware of the symbolic value and importance of the manuscripts, and above all, their possible utility for eventually having Arnold Johan released, the condition her late husband had

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<sup>27</sup> According to the government, the work should be subject to censorship, Schück, *Messenius*, p. 270.

<sup>28</sup> See, Mirkka Lappalainen, *Maailman painavin raha: kirjoituksia 1600-luvun pohjolasta* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2006), p. 59.

<sup>29</sup> Stockholm, RA, Enskilda samlingar (Rothovius), Messenius to Isak Rothovius 30 Sept 1636, cited in Olsson, *Scondia*, p.16.

<sup>30</sup> Olsson, *Scondia*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>31</sup> On Messenius's portrait, see the website of Oulu parish (only in Finnish). <http://www.oulunseurakunnat.fi/messeniuksen-muotokuva> (last accessed on 23 Oct 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Schück, *Messenius*, p. 269; Josef V. Polišenský, *The Thirty Years War*, trans. by Robert Evans (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p. 240.

<sup>33</sup> Leinberg, *Messenierne*, pp. 735–45.

also settled with the government on in exchange for delivering the manuscript. Consequently, Lucia Grothusen left Sweden to join her daughter, Anna, who was married to Hans Jacobsson Rechenberger, the head stableman at the court of Hessen-Kassel. She took the *Scondia illustrata* manuscript with her, which was an unpredicted impediment for the Swedish government.

Count Per Brahe, the Governor General of Finland, travelled to Kexholm in March 1638 and February 1639,<sup>34</sup> when he met the prisoner Arnold Johan Messenius and noticed the potential of his international background and education. Although Per Brahes' grandfather Per Brahe 'the Older' was in favour of the former kings Gustavus Vasa and Erik XIV, some of his paternal uncles were supporters of Catholic Sigismund and, thus, had fled to Poland after King Sigismund's dethronement in Sweden in 1595. However, other members of the Brahe family had managed to receive significant positions under the new rule of Charles IX.

Only six days after Brahe's second visit to Kexholm, Arnold Johan wrote to the Governor General that his mother Lucia Grothusen needed help and that he wanted to finish the history of Sweden manuscript his father had started.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, history was one of the accomplishments and interests of the Count, but as a patron, he was also searching for new clients and perhaps saw a useful surplus for his networks in Arnold Johan. Nevertheless, patron-clientage was always a mutual deal; Brahe's support consisted of protecting, sponsoring, or benefitting his client in other ways, and the younger Messenius was expected to offer his services to the patron as needed.<sup>36</sup> It seems that the main service was regaining the older Messenius' historical manuscripts. In his November 1639 letter to the Regency Council of Queen Christina (the Queen was of minor age at the time), Brahe justified that Arnold Johan should be released because he needed to continue his father's work. The regency replied by accepting the

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<sup>34</sup> Jorma Hytönen, 'Matkalla jossain suuriruhtinaskunnassa: På resa någonstans i storfurstendömet', in *Pietari Brahe matkustaa*, ed. by Kostet and others, pp. 7–62 (p. 14 and p. 23).

<sup>35</sup> Arnold Johan Messenius to Peter Brahe, 4 March 1639, *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia* 14 vols, ed. by Charles Dantzai and Johan Henrik Schröder (Stockholm: Elméns och Granbergs Tryckeri, 1816–60), 9 (1821), pp. 182–86.

<sup>36</sup> Hakanen demonstrates the patron-client –relationship of Governor General Brahe and the younger Messenius in his thesis, Marko Hakanen, *Vallan verkostoissa: Per Brahe ja hänen klienttinsä 1600-luvun Ruotsin valtakunnassa*, Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities 157 (Diss. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2011), pp. 346–47.

suggestion of releasing the prisoner in March 1640.<sup>37</sup> Brahe also organised economic support for the Messenius family from the crown.<sup>38</sup> Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, who served as the head of the regency, expressed doubts regarding the younger Messenius, but according to Brahe's opinion, he was harmless.<sup>39</sup>

In reality, Count Brahe was interested in history and genealogies, like many men of his standing. In early modern genealogies, as well as in history writing, the past was primarily viewed as a means to validate the present rather than an 'objective' field of study. Even long-established families with no need to 'improve' their ancestors by inventing successful ones were eager to create their own history based on legends and stories. The custom reflected early modern European historiographical trend of writing 'national histories' in which construction of fabulous antiquity was the main objective. In genealogical terms one should construct as fabulous past as possible! These narratives were taken seriously but not necessarily literally. Royal or biblical/saintly origins were particularly valued as manifesting immense symbolic capital, which could be deployed in the constant struggle for status and advancement.<sup>40</sup> For Brahe and most of his contemporary aristocrats, one's birth was considered more important than one's capabilities.<sup>41</sup> He built a castle named Brahehus, in addition to several other castles, and was one of the main benefactors who helped transform the medieval Ströja Church into the splendidly decorated family church, the Brahe Church, with the tombs of the family members, coats of arms, and other powerful symbols of the family's history, ensuring the preservation of its memory. Moreover, he commissioned family genealogies that 'proved' the

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<sup>37</sup> Queen Christina's regency to Peter Brahe 26 March 1640, in Leinberg, *Messenierne*, p. 738.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Brahe to Queen Christina's Regency council 6 July 1640, in Leinberg, *Messenierne*, pp. 739–40.

<sup>39</sup> 18 Sept 1640 *Svenska riksrådets protokoll* 18 vols, ed. by Severin Bergh, Handlingar rörande Sveriges Historia, Tredje serien (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1878–1959), VIII (1898) pp. 269–71.

<sup>40</sup> Hamish Scott, 'Conclusion. 'The line of descent of nobles is from the blood of kings': reflections on dynastic identity', in *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities*, ed. by Liesbeth Gevers and Mirella Marini, Politics and Culture in Europe 1650–1750 (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 240; Tero Anttila, *The Power of Antiquity: The Hyperborean Research Tradition in Early Modern Swedish Research on National Antiquity*, Acta Universitatis Ouluensis, B 125 (Diss. Oulu: University of Oulu, 2014), p. 17 and p. 236.

<sup>41</sup> Ilkka Teerijoki, 'Pietari Brahe Ruotsissa ja maailmalla: Per Brahe i Sverige och i världen,' in *Pietari Brahe matkustaa: Per Brahe d.y. på resa*, ed. by Juhani Kostet and others (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2004), pp. 63–104 (p. 96).

Brahes descended from Saint Bridget's family and the house of King Sverker. One of them begins with the following statement: 'The Brahes have always been the first noble family in Sweden'. Brahe understood the importance of international, dynastic glamour and paid for a genealoger, Nicolaus Rittershusius, in Nürnberg to include the family in his *Genealogiae imperatorum, regum, ducum, comitum* (Genealogies of Emperors, Kings, Dukes and Counts) in 1658.<sup>42</sup> Being active in the brand development work for his family, Brahe, like many other early modern aristocrats, consciously participated in building a dynastic (self-)identity and memory, which were not necessarily based on real facts but rather reflected a dynasty's claims compared to competing dynasties. In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that he supported the younger Messenius both economically and politically, taking a huge risk by backing this restless, probably slightly unstable (if so, likely due to his childhood and youth experiences) adventurer, who himself and his father were both sentenced to prison for high treason. Brahe was certainly satisfied when found that his family was mentioned several times in the *Scondia* volumes.<sup>43</sup> It is impossible to say whether he was more motivated by the reputation of his home country or by that of his family since nation building and the identity of the nation's loyal servants (i.e., nobility) were synonymous.

Governor Brahe managed to get Arnold Johan released for the purpose of sending him to retrieve his father's writings from Poland. Furthermore, due to Brahe's initiative, the Council of the Realm guaranteed funding for the trip.<sup>44</sup> Arnold Johan consented to the arrangement. In a letter, he explains his travel plans to Brahe.<sup>45</sup> Having arrived in Danzig, he realised that her mother was in Warsaw, where she had given the manuscripts to King Ladislaus, who in turn had entrusted them to another person for revision. With the help of her Polish contacts, Lucia

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolaus Rittershusius, *Genealogiae imperatorum, regum, ducum, comitum...* Editio secunda priore auctor et emendatio (Tubingæ: Brunnii, 1658); on the strategies employed by Brahe to strengthen the family's aristocratic status, see Fabian Persson, 'To give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name: creating two great Swedish noble families' in *Dynastic Identity in Early Modern Europe: Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formation of Identities*, ed. by Liesbeth Gevers and Mirella Marini, Politics and Culture in Europe 1650–1750. New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 179–95.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* (1700), vol. 4, p.101; Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* (1701), vol.5, p. 22, p.78, p.81; Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* vol. 6 (1702), p.2, p.4, p.5, p.6; Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* vol.7 (1702), p. 82, p. 103; Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* vol. 8 (1702), p. 13, p. 23, p. 102; Messenius, *Scondia illustrata* vol.10 (1703), p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Anders Fryxell, *Berättelser ur svenska historien*. Nionde delen (Stockholm: L.J. Hierta, 1841), p.141; Söderberg, 15–16.

<sup>45</sup> Arnold Johan Messenius to Peter Brahe, 20 Aug 1640, *HRSH* 9, pp. 187–90.

succeeded in obtaining the manuscripts on 13 December 1640. Finally, Arnold Johan returned to Sweden with the manuscripts in May 1641. The manuscripts now belonged to the Swedish government. Arnold Johan planned to edit them as a Swedish National Chronicle. In the same year, he was appointed the royal historiographer and ennobled. In 1649, he became a member of the Swedish Parliament. After a short period of good luck, Arnold Johan found himself again at a trial in 1651, when he was accused of taking part in a conspiracy. A pamphlet had been spread accusing Queen Christina of serious misbehavior and advocating a rebellion against the Queen. Arnold Johan and his son, Arnold, were found guilty of lese-majesty and high treason. At the end of the year (on 22 December in 1651), they were both beheaded.<sup>46</sup>

The editing work Arnold Johan had started was brought to a standstill. It did not proceed for long since the previous attempt turned out to be a disaster or, rather, a tragedy. When an enthusiastic editor finally appeared, the publishing project faced strong objection from the usual sources.

Johan Peringskiöld, ennobled in 1693 and appointed a secretary to the Board of Antiquities a year later, was a devotee of the Swedish Great Power. Along with Charles XII's wars on neighbouring countries, the prints of Peringskiöld became increasingly more frequent.<sup>47</sup> He was familiar with the *Scondia* manuscript and thought it was finally time to publish the comprehensive work on the Great Power's history. However, Professor Olof Rudbeck, the son of Johannes Rudbeckius and author of *Atlantica*, was infuriated by the news concerning the proposed publication of *Scondia illustrata*. The Rudbeck and Messenius families had been vehement enemies in the first half of the seventeenth century, but since 1686, the Swedish Crown had decided to support Rudbeck's *Atlantica* and *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna* (Ancient and Modern Sweden) as national histories. To stop Peringskiöld's project, Rudbeck's strategy was to prove Messenius' research was erroneous. One of the controversial questions was the dating of the Uppsala Temple. While Messenius argued that the Uppsala Temple had not existed before the Nativity, Rudbeck stated (according to him, based on Plato and Diodorus and earlier scholars, such as Olaus Magnus, Loccenius, Verelius, Hadorph, Schefferus, and Lundius) that it existed before the Trojan War. Rudbeck also asserted that the work of Messenius, therefore, did not follow the 'domestic tradition' and was against it. King Charles

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<sup>46</sup> Leinberg, *Messenierne*, pp. 719–45.

<sup>47</sup> Linas Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities* (Bruxelles, Bern, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang 2004), p. 196.

XI and his royal officers favoured *Atlantica* and *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna* over Peringskiöld's plans. This was not reassuring enough since Rudbeck referred to the honour and reputation of Swedish antiquarian research and pleaded with his patrons to not give Peringskiöld a permit to publish the manuscript. After quarreling over the issue, Peringskiöld was finally allowed to publish the almost 70-year-old manuscript of *Scondia illustrata* in 1698.<sup>48</sup>

When Peringskiöld published *Scondia*, Messenius was also topical in Oulu, where his tombstone's inscription was being prepared. Simultaneously, Peringskiöld ordered the portrait (painted in 1611 or 1616 by Cornelius Arendtz in Stockholm) of Messenius be sent from Oulu to Stockholm to be copied for the illustration of *Scondia* in 1703. According to Olsson, Peringskiöld plausibly corrected and made some additions to the suggested epitaph.<sup>49</sup>

### III. The end result – printed version by Peringskiöld

The order of the printed volumes of *Scondia* by Peringskiöld did not systematically follow Messenius' work. First of all, Messenius had prepared twenty volumes,<sup>50</sup> while Peringskiöld's edition only takes up fifteen. Messenius himself altered the titles and order of the volumes several times, but Peringskiöld organised them in a new way. In general, it would be a huge undertaking to trace all the layers from the source manuscripts to the print versions, since there are different versions of manuscript drafts, as well as preserved notes, the *Schedae* (Notes),<sup>51</sup> which have been exploited by several editors, at least by Arnold Johan Messenius and Peringskiöld.<sup>52</sup> The manuscripts show numerous changes, mostly made in Messenius' own, humanist cursive hand. The same hand is found in the *Schedae*. Some of the various alterations or corrections in manuscripts are written in a slightly different hand, while others are marked in block letters. As Jönsson has pointed out, the changes include cross-outs, both horizontal and vertical, deletions, and additions in the margin, above or below the line. Occasionally, the author(s) invert(s) the word order, which is indicated by the numerals 1 and 2 placed above the

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<sup>48</sup> Gunnar Eriksson, *Rudbeck 1632–170: liv, lärdom, dröm i Barockens Sverige* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002), pp. 607–608; Anttila, *Power*, pp. 234–35.

<sup>49</sup> Olsson, *Scondia*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>50</sup> The list of 20 volumes in addition to three rhymed chronicles and two dramas written by Messenius in Kajaani is given in Schück, *Messenius*, p. 268.

<sup>51</sup> See, Jan Liedgren, 'Messenii Schedae', in *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid*, ed. by John Granlund, 22 vols (Malmö: Allhems förlag, 1956–1978), XI (1966), p. 562.

<sup>52</sup> The list of more than 20 preserved manuscripts directly related to the *Scondia* is given in Olsson, *Scondia*, p. 315–16.

words concerned. Some changes are made with the help of *lingulae* (inserts), which are bound in the manuscript. The author has marked where they should be included in the text. At times, the changes are easily noticeable: a word is crossed out or deleted, with a new one written on the same line. Certain changes or corrections are written in an ink of a slightly lighter colour than the actual text, which means that they were plausibly produced during one of the several revisions.<sup>53</sup>

Like medieval annals, the *Scondia* deals with historical events year-by-year from the Flood to Messenius' own time but leaves lacunae if there were no events significant enough to relate for a particular year. His approach falls within the tradition called Gothicism. Gothicism (*göticism*) embraced the idea that Swedes descended from the Gothic people referred to by classical authors, such as Pliny, Jordanes, Cassiodorus, Tacitus, and Procopius. The ideology flourished in Scandinavian academic circles in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and promoted a positive image of Goths, in contrast with many Nordic renaissance humanists. Messenius' history writing has been considered at its best when he writes about his own time. For instance, historian Michael Roberts characterises Messenius by saying that he was 'as good a historian as a *storgöticist* could be'.<sup>54</sup> In short, the long-term ideas of early modern Swedish Gothicism can be regarded as a branch of the Hyperborean research tradition. However, from the 1740s onwards, the critical voices rose in history writing and the biblical chronology traced back to Noah and his sons, which was the starting point of Messenius in *Scondia*, for instance, was put under serious scrutiny.<sup>55</sup>

In conformity with books of this genre at the time, the layout of the title page of each volume of *Scondia* was formalised to comprise an array of conventional, established items. The hierarchy between various levels of information is indicated by different sizes of fonts. At least seven paratextual features can be distinguished on the title pages of the *Scondia* X, for instance, which includes the author, title with genre indicators, illustration, place of printing, printer and year: *Ex Johannis Messenii Scondia illustrata tomus x seu chronologia de rebus venedarum borealium...* [Illustration]. *Stockholmiae Typis Olavi Enaei, Anno Christi MDCCIII. Stockholmiae Typis Olavi Enaei, Anno Christi MDCCIII.* (From the Johannes Messenius'

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<sup>53</sup> Olsson, *Scondia*, pp. 26–41; *Chronologia*, ed. by Jönsson, p. 24.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Roberts, *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden 1611–1626* (London, New York: Longmans and Green, 1953), p. 517.

<sup>55</sup> Anttila, *Power*, pp. 280–282.

Scandinavia described, volume 10 or Chronology of the things of the Northern Wends...) [Illustration]. Stockholm, [Printed] from the type of Olav Enaeus, in Christ's year 1703). The illustration is the same in every volume. It consists of a combination of Christian and national symbols. The crowned lion is in the middle holding a cross and a sword. It is surrounded by various ornamental figures and two trombone-playing angels. Flags are hanging from the trombones; one is decorated with the Three Crowns and the other with the lion rampant. The motto 'Secula cana canent' runs on the ribbon.<sup>56</sup> The title '*Scondia*' bears the biggest font, complementing 'illustrata', which is second-most important. The author's name and the volume number follow. The long subtitle, including genre indicators, such as the historical time period (from the Flood to the year 1628), is composed of smallish fonts varying by line. According to the layout of the title page, the printer and printing year seem to be the least significant information. Messenius addresses the tenth volume of the *Scondia* to

generosis, amplissimisque viris, Finlandiae, Livoniae et Curlandiae, gubernatoribus et castellanis s.d.  
(generous and most esteemed men, governors and castellans in Finland, Livonia and Curonia, no date).

He does not miss the opportunity to remind his potential readers, government officials in particular, of his situation since he begins the preface with the words '*In meo Cajanaburgo ergastulo*[...]<sup>57</sup> (In my Kajaani dungeon [...]). Messenius hence appropriated the site of the prison for his own agenda. His actions and writings may be interpreted as means to express his own story as part of Swedish history and a sign of autonomy within strict disciplinary structures.

The last paragraph of the tenth volume of the *Scondia* touches upon the year 1628. In addition to a short description of some international and domestic events, the text ends by referring to Messenius' own life in the same year, the long captivity and harsh treatment simultaneously expressing his wish to be freed from his *ergastulum*:

Detentus adhuc in captivitate mea Cajanaburgensi [...] & malè tractatus fueram. Johannes Messenius<sup>58</sup>  
(Still detained in my Kajaani captivity [...] and I had been treated badly. Johannes Messenius).

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<sup>56</sup> Messenius, *Scondia illustrata*, X, title page at [https://books.google.fi/books?id=oWAOkLvQVvwC&hl=fi&source=gbs\\_similarbooks](https://books.google.fi/books?id=oWAOkLvQVvwC&hl=fi&source=gbs_similarbooks) (accessed on 23 Oct 2018).

<sup>57</sup> Messenius, *Scondia illustrata*, X, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Messenius, *Scondia illustrata*, X, p. 44; see Olsson, *Scondia*, p. 32.



However, it seems that the publisher Peringskiöld has picked the passage from another draft, which was dated 1618,<sup>59</sup> since it does not exist in the original manuscript.<sup>60</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

While England had Thomas More, Lady Jane Grey and many other famous early modern prison writers, the religious and political instability of the Swedish Vasa reigns after the death of King Gustavus Vasa in 1560 provided the conditions for the practice to also thrive in Sweden. Because of the politico-religious power struggle between Vasa descendants, Johannes Messenius' life is closely related to no less than four rulers: Sigismund I of Sweden, III of Poland, the usurper Charles IX and his son Gustavus II Adolphus, who induced what has been termed the *Stormaktstiden*, the Age of Great Power in Swedish national historiography, as well as his daughter, Queen Christina, and regency during her minority.

Their and their representatives' views and actions reveal that the idea of the text (Messenius' *Scondia*) circulated in minds long before the matter (manuscript or print) or the final reading performance itself. It is good to bear in mind that archives and libraries do not contain just original manuscripts, drafts, proofs, and editions, but all the subsequent textual modifications which the work undergoes in its transmission.<sup>61</sup> One aim of this article was to discuss by what kind of organisational structures Messenius' texts written in prison were actually transmitted. The attitude of royal personalities and eminent protectors, such as Count Peter Brahe, was important in defining good and bad history writing in early modern Sweden. However, early modern histories were never appreciated solely for their truthfulness; their value also depended on their capacity to strengthen the right dynasties. Patrons behind dynastic history writing with more or less fictitious genealogies chose their history writers carefully since they fully understood the link between dynasties, social advancement, and nation-building. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates the crucial role played not only by high-placed individuals but also by family ties, friendships, and informal connections. A historiographer, on the other hand, was marginalized in prison. The *Scondia* process exemplifies the function of the networks in that

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<sup>59</sup> Stockholm. KB; D. 337, X, p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> Stockholm. KB; D. 337, XVII.

<sup>61</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1991), p. 62.

time (and probably any time) and especially outlines the significance that family relations had in early modern Swedish society, particularly in intellectual activities, such as historical research and the publishing process.

It also demonstrates that while print allowed prisoners' works to circulate to a much wider readership than was possible through manuscript transmission, they became subject to a range of textual shackles, such as modifications, alterations, paratexts, and silent editing. Since it took 70 years to publish the *Scondia*, the process challenges the idea that the print publication of prison writings metaphorically liberated these texts. And finally, although the process may have taken place in marginal locations and biblical genealogies and year-by-year annalism would soon become old-fashioned, Messenius' prison writings had a long-term impact on the religious and political landscapes, as well as on the tradition of history writing, in both Sweden and Finland.

Fig. 1: [https://www.kuvakokoelmat.fi/pictures/view/HK10001\\_333](https://www.kuvakokoelmat.fi/pictures/view/HK10001_333) Portrait of Johannes Messenius in *Scondia illustrata* (1703). Copperplate engraving by Truls Arvidsson. The original portrait dates between 1611 and 1616. (The Picture Collections of the Finnish Heritage Agency).[COPYRIGHT? –ON VAPAASTI KÄYTETTÄVÄ]