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Royal Marginalia: King Eric XIV of Sweden as Organiser of Knowledge

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King Eric XIV of Sweden (b. 1533, d. 1577) owned a library of over 150 volumes. In 1568, a list of his book collection was drawn up, and it is still preserved. Most of his books were probably destroyed in 1697, when the old royal palace in Stockholm burned to the ground. In this paper, I shall discuss the four known remaining books, and the marginalia found in them, as an example of how Eric used his books for organising knowledge.

My main focus is Eric's personal copy of Johannes Magnus' *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sueonumque regibus* (1554), arguably the most influential work of Swedish history ever. In the margins of this work, King Eric drew over a hundred tiny pictures, which correspond to underlinings in the text, as a way of organising the information he found there into categories. My ongoing study aims at identifying the meaning of the little pictures, and at investigating if and how he used the information in other writings, in order to explain why it was important to him. The other remaining works represent three different disciplines: history (Sabellico's *Enneades*), geography (Strabo's *De situ orbis*), and astronomy (Stadius' *Ephemerides*).

King Eric is however not known mainly for his erudition as a Renaissance prince, but for his dramatic life. In 1568, he was deposed after murdering several noblemen in a fit of mental instability, which together with other information has led to his being described in later research as insane, as schizophrenic or as a psychopath, though this is actually uncertain. In any case, Eric spent the remainder of his life imprisoned, and his mental condition deteriorated in the final years. His younger brother John took over as king, and allegedly had his brother murdered with arsenic in a bowl of pea soup. Unfortunately, Eric's suspicious death and his reputation as a murderous madman tend to overshadow other aspects of his life, such as his considerable erudition as a Renaissance prince, to which this paper is devoted.