

Between London and Hanover: Succession to the English throne from the perspective of the memoirs and correspondence of Sophia of Hanover

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ABSTRACT:

The present article primarily deals with the personality of Sophia of Hanover and her claims to the succession to the English throne. Sophia and her descendants (specifically George I) were appointed by the Act of Settlement as heirs to the throne upon the death of Anne Stuart. The life of Sophia, as well as her relations with the English monarchs and the Stuart family as such, will be outlined through the memoirs not only of Sophia herself but also of her family members, as well as through the correspondence of Sophie herself, including the English monarchs of the period under review.

KEY WORDS:

England; Sophia of Hanover; George I; Hanoverian succession; 17th century; 18th century

INTRODUCTION

The question of succession was the hottest topic in English history in terms of the country's internal and foreign policy at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries. Neither the reign of the restored King Charles II Stuart nor his brother James II Stuart was enough to halt the impending succession crisis. The full weight of it, however, befell the enthroned King William III and his wife Mary II, and the final Stuart queen at the English court, Queen Anne. The childlessness of the English kings and queens marked out a clear path to finding a new dynastic line that would successfully take over the rule of England, and Great Britain. The House of Hanover became the new line of succession, in particular Sophia of Hanover and her children. Although the journey of Sophia and her descendants to the English throne might seem almost straightforward and unstoppable to many, it was, in fact, a lengthy and often complicated process, in that Sophia herself acknowledges in her memoirs that she had lost hope of achieving her dream — the English crown.

The story of Sophia of Hanover, and in particular that of her son, King George I, would appear to be a very popular topic in English modern historiography. However, the popularity of the subject in the past five years is in most cases linked to the anniversary of the accession of the House of Hanover, namely George I, to the throne. We see many new articles, monographs, editions, or conference proceedings from



the years 2014–2020 that deal with the Hanoverian monarchs. George I is naturally a popular topic, but many papers also deal with the Hanoverian era in England as such, both from a political and a cultural-social point of view, from the patronage of the arts to the construction of new gardens and palaces. Several new papers on the person that was Sophia of Hanover were also published during this period but to a far lesser extent than on her children and grandchildren.

For this article, I drew on the established contemporary authors of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, on older publications from the middle of the last century, and on entirely new ones, those mentioned above, published to mark the occasion of the anniversary of the accession of George I to the throne.¹ The most important information to outline the whole situation from the perspective of the main protagonists, however, must be sought in sources — namely unpublished archival sources and published editions of sources. Unpublished archival sources available in The National Archives in Kew, London, in The British Library, and in Staats Archive in Hanover were used for this paper. These are mainly archival materials in the form of personal and state correspondence and memoirs. Among the published sources, we are primarily concerned with the published memoirs of Mary II, William III, and Sophia of Hanover, or editions of the correspondence of Queen Anne, George I, and many other protagonists.²

SOPHIA'S STORY: FROM PRINCESS IN EXILE TO PRETENDER TO THE ENGLISH THRONE

Sophia lived an uneasy life long before she could even begin thinking of becoming the queen of England, whether alongside her mother Elizabeth Stuart or later her

1 R. HATTON, *George I*, New Haven — London 2001; C. CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings: The Finest Queen Britain never had*, Yorkshire 2019; J. A. WINN, *Queen Anne — Patroness of Arts*, Oxford — New York 2014; A. GESTRICH — M. SCHAICH (eds.), *The Hanoverian Succession — Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture*, London 2015; B. S. SIROTA — A. I. MACINNES (eds.), *The Hanoverian Succession in Great Britain and its Empire*, Suffolk — New York 2019; R. STEELE, *The Press and the Hanoverian Succession (1713–1716)*, Lancaster 1982; A. W. WARD, *The Electress Sophia and the Hanoverian Succession*, London — Paris — New York 1903; R. S. RAIT (ed.), *Five Stuart Princesses*, Oxford 1902; F. E. BAILY, *Sophia of Hanover and her Times*, London 1936.

2 A. KÖCHER (ed.) — H. FORESTER (translated by), *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover (1630–1680)*, London 1888; R. DOEBNER (ed.), *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England (1689–1693), together with her letters and those of kings James II and William III to the Electress Sophia of Hanover*, Leipzig — London 1886; G. MacGOWAN (ed.), *Elizabeth Stuarts — Winter Queen and Queen of Hearts*, Heidelberg 1963; B. C. BROWN (ed.), *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne*, London 1968; H. W. CHAPMAN (ed.), *Queen Anne's son: A Memoir of William Henry, Duke of Gloucester*, London 1954; H. COLBURN (ed.), *Memoirs of Sophia Dorothea, consort of George I — includes a diary of the conversation, letters and other documents*, Vol I., London 1845; W. H. WILKINS (ed.), *The Love of an Uncrown Queen Sophia Dorothea, consort of George I, and her correspondence with Philip Christopher Count Königsmarck*, London 1903.



husband Ernest Augustus, Elector of Hanover. The experience that Sophia gathered at the court of her mother, brother and Elector Palatinate, or at her own court in Hanover meant that she was able to move in close diplomatic circles and find her way around high-level European foreign policy. These abilities in particular subsequently helped her gain the English throne for her children, especially her eldest son George Louis, the future King George I of England.³

Sophia, like her siblings, spent her youth in exile. After the failure of her father, Frederick Palatinate, in Bohemia and the confiscation of her father's hereditary land, Upper and Lower Palatinate, the former Bohemian king moved to The Hague with his wife and children. It was there, thanks to financial assistance from James I and later Charles I, that they maintained a modest court and, in the case of the ambitious Elizabeth Stuart, planned to regain hereditary lands and secure favourable marriages for their offspring. Sophia, like her siblings, was to fall victim to her mother's plans to marry into the most important families in Europe, and in doing so regain her family's good name and honour. Elizabeth Stuart did not show much interest in her children, and until they reached the age of marriage or a career in one of the leading European courts they were sent from her court to Leiden, where they remained in the care of governesses. Sophia, the youngest child of the Winter King and Queen, was the last to leave the care of her governesses. Her stay at her mother's court, however, was short-lived. After frequent disagreements with her mother and an inability to adjust to her demands, she moved to Heidelberg, the seat of the Elector Palatinate⁴, to follow her brother Charles Louis.

If we focus in Sophia's memoirs on the period of her youth, which she herself did not expect to be made public, we find out how complicated her relationship was with her mother, Elizabeth. Unlike the English princess and former Bohemian queen, Sophia could be considered a relatively well-educated young lady who was interested in politics, philosophy, and music, these interests later connected her with her husband Ernest Augustus. Sophia herself, however, repeats several times in her memoirs that despite their many disagreements and conflicting natures, she understood and shared her mother's opinion on one thing, namely the question of her position in society and within the high European nobility. Elizabeth, despite lacking finances and territory over which she could rule, never forgot that she was the daughter of the King of England and that she had the right to the English crown. The English princess, particularly following the death of her husband, made such efforts to return to England and restore her position that she even used her youngest daughter, Sophia, to achieve this.⁵

The court in The Hague, and later in Heidelberg, was frequented by eminent personalities and members of royal families, among them William II of Orange, Queen

3 R. CAVENDISH, *Birth of George I*, in: *History Today*, May 2010, Vol. 60, No. 5, p. 10.

4 Lower Palatinate and the title of Prince of Palatinate were returned to Charles Louis with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648: HATTON, *George I*, pp. 15–17; CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 12–18, 25–28; KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 3–12.

5 The originals of the memoirs of Sophia Hanover, which she decided to write at the age of fifty, were not preserved. They could, however, be published thanks to a copy owned by a close friend of the duchess, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (a scientist and theologian who spent many years at the court of the Duchess of Hanover): KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 1–3.



Henrietta Maria of England, and the future Charles II, who spent time there during his exile and built friendly relations with Sophia. Believing in the return of the Stuarts to the English throne, Elizabeth tried to negotiate Sophia's marriage to the hitherto unmarried future King Charles, but her plans failed. Charles was not interested in marriage and was brought to The Hague mainly by his need for financial assistance. Charles knew that Elizabeth herself was not in the best shape financially, but she could secure her court thanks to the considerable financial assistance of William, Earl of Craven, and it was in this man, a long-time friend of the Stuart princess, that the future King of England saw the hope of assistance. The true motives that led Charles Stuart to visit The Hague and re-establish contacts with his Stuart relatives in exile came to light sometime around 1650, when, as she wrote in her memoirs, Sophia came to understand during a visit to Breda that Charles was merely using her and her mother's contacts and friendship with Craven for his own ends.⁶

It is a great surprise that in spite of so many possible candidates for marriage, Sophia did not marry until she was twenty-eight years old, her husband the younger son of John Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Sophia was also in the sights of Adolf Johann von Zweibrücken, brother of King Charles X of Sweden, and their marriage seemed to be practically a done deal. However, Swedish King Charles delayed permitting the marriage for so long that a new suitor, George William, Duke of Calenberg-Göttingen (the eldest son of Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg), was found, and the Swedish prince was rejected. The position of the Swedish king at that time was very complicated when it came to foreign relations. Charles X was trying to maintain good relations with Cromwell's England, and his brother's potential marriage to the daughter of a Stuart princess could have disrupted those fragile ties. Therefore, instead of immediately rejecting the marriage, he decided to hesitate for so long that they in Heidelberg would understand that the marriage would never take place.⁷

However, the marriage agreement signed by Charles Louis Palatinate with George William in 1656 did not actually lead to his own marriage. George William changed his mind during his regular trip to Venice with his younger brother Ernest. George did not want to marry, but because he could not break the agreement already signed without tarnishing the good name of his family, he agreed with his younger brother Ernest Augustus that he instead would propose to her. As a younger brother, he was not exactly the best catch at the time of their marriage, given that his father's inheritance was shared between him and his three other brothers.⁸

Charles Louis, Elector Palatinate, whom Ernest Augustus addressed as part of negotiating his marriage to Sophia, is said to have remarked on the situation in the

6 In 1650, Charles met Scottish ambassadors in Breda, where they offered him the royal crown of Scotland. He was accompanied to Breda by Elizabeth Stuart and her daughter Sophia. : KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, s. 23–24; CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 18–22.

7 CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 36–42.

8 According to the last will and testament of John Frederick, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the Duchy of Calenberg-Göttingen was to fall to the eldest George Willam; the Duchy of Lüneburg-Grubenhagen to Christian Ludwig; and Ernest Augustus was to inherit the Bishopric of Osnabrück.: HATTON, *George I*, pp. 20–22.



Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg: “How...could four dukes sit on one steed?”. Primogeniture was not in place in the duchy, and everything depended on the will of the previous ruler. It was therefore not certain whether Ernest Augustus would ever receive the title of duke. He had only a bishopric in Osnabrück, where he was appointed successor to the current bishop. This was a very interesting situation when a secular ruler was also a bishop, whereby in the case of Ernest Augustus, who was a Protestant, it was an even more remarkable event. Ernest became Elector only as a result of helping the Emperor in battles against France during the Nine Years’ War.⁹

However, based on the memoirs of the future duchess, it is clear that the marriage was a liberation for her from the court of her brother, the Elector Palatinate, in Heidelberg, where she was forced to suffer the intolerant behaviour of her sister-in-law. Ernest Augustus’ position was therefore not of such importance to her at the time. It should also be mentioned that the future spouses had known each other for many years, and had even exchanged correspondence for some time on account of their common interests in music and art. Before arranging his sister’s marriage, however, Charles Louis demanded Sophia’s consent to the possible marriage. Sophie is said to have replied, “...good establishment was all I cared for, and that, if this secured to me by the younger brother... I would gladly do whatever he (Charles Louis) thought best, for looking on him as my father, I trusted myself entirely to his care”. In retrospect, however, Sophia’s marriage was very successful, and evidently the most advantageous in comparison to those of her siblings.¹⁰

From a young age, and particularly after her marriage to Ernest Augustus, Sophia had been very active in monitoring the situation in the British Isles, practically waiting for the opportunity to see her family reinstated to the position to which she was entitled. She used correspondence and personal meetings with members of the Stuart family in attempts to maintain the best possible relations with her relatives, regardless of their faith, and at the same time to remain well-informed about events in England and at other European royal courts.

A crisis in such good relations between the Stuarts came after the Glorious Revolution when James II had to leave England with his family and take refuge in French exile in St. Germain with the support of Louis XIV. Sophia was very close to both James II and William III, whom she had known as a young child, and his father, Wil-

9 A change to the matrimonial contract in favour of Ernest Augustus was carefully discussed. George William promised, in a written agreement signed by his own hand, that he would never marry, and therefore his younger brother and Sophia, and their children, would become the sole heirs of his duchy. “I neither will nor shall...any marriage contract with any person, and wish nothing else than to spend what remains to me of life entirely “in coelibaty ”to the intent that the heirs male of...Princess and od my brother...may attain and succeed to the sovereignty over one or both of these our principalities.” This agreement was designed to increase Ernest Augustus’ chances of becoming Sophia’s husband, which succeeded and a new matrimonial contract was signed: KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 61–67, 74–75; A. GESTRICH — M. SCHAICH, *The Hanoverian Succession: Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture*, London 2015, pp. 49–52.

10 HATTON, *George I*, p. 16; KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 46–47, 52–62.



liam II, was a frequent guest to his mother's court in The Hague. As Sophie later wrote in her memoirs, she found herself in a very tricky situation. She sympathised with James II, with whom she exchanged several letters, and, as a well-bred Stuart princess, disagreed with the removal of the rightful king from the throne, but at the same time understood the circumstances that had led to it. Sophia had always acted very pragmatically, with the main goal of maintaining good relations with the English monarchs, and so it is no surprise that despite her doubts about the course and consequences of the Glorious Revolution, she wrote a letter to William III congratulating him on the English crown and assuring him of her support and loyalty: "...King James, who honoured me with his friendship. I should be afraid that Your Majesty would have a bad opinion of my sincerity if I concealed from this sentiment...I make you of my prayers for your prosperity, and of the opinion I have, that you deserve the crown which you wear...However as it has pleased God to make Your Majesty the protector of our religion..."¹¹

Maintaining good relations with William might also have been a key factor in the future succession of her line to the English throne. Mary and William were childless, and in the event of their death without a legitimate heir, only Princess Anne would stand between Sophia and the English Crown. Sophia had a far closer relationship with William than with Anne, who had been estranged from the duchess and her son for a very long time. Even her older sister Mary did not get on well with Anne, as their correspondence shows. Once Mary and William had acceded to the throne, Anne was asked by Mary to move away from the English court. Anne did so, not returning to court until Queen Mary had died. Anne's antipathy to the Hanoverian family was so great that even after her accession to the throne, she refused to invite Sophia and George to London, with neither of them staying at the English court while she was alive. William, on the other hand, showed considerable sympathy for the duchess' family, and above all for Sophia herself. These sympathies were partly the result of the time he spent in her company.¹²

The duchess' memoirs and correspondence make this friendship clear, and we could argue that William had a far closer relationship with Sophia than with his sister-in-law, the future Queen Anne. Assurances of friendship and respect are repeated in the letters that he and his wife Mary exchanged with Sophia throughout the 1680s. Compared to later correspondence with Queen Anne, these letters were often of a more personal nature, with information about the health of family members, and the desire for a meeting in person in the near future.¹³

On the question of succession, however, William and his sister-in-law Anne agreed on several points. The first of these was an attempt to establish contact with the exiled James II, hoping to negotiate a compromise that would make it possible for his son James to accede to the throne. However, any accession of the exiled pretender

11 CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 120–123; GESTRICH — SCHAICH, *The Hanoverian Succession: Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture*, pp. 37–38; A. BAILEY, *The Succession to the English Crown*, London 1879, pp. 223–224.

12 B. C. BROWN (ed.), *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne*, London 1934, pp. 53–54.

13 R. DOEBNER, *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England (1689–1693) together with her Letters and those of kings James II and William III to the Electress, Sophia of Hanover*, Leipzig 1886, pp. 65–66.

to the throne was conditional on the prince converting to the Anglican faith, which James II and his wife Mary of Modena refused. Only after this unsuccessful attempt by William to reconcile with the exiled monarch did William and Anne agree that the only possible solution to the situation, one that would ensure the protection of the faith and people in England, was to set in law the impossibility of a Catholic pretender taking the English throne.¹⁴

William was not the only one to correspond with James. His daughter Anne kept up active correspondence with the exiled monarch, as did duchess Sophia. James mainly contacted the duchess following his accession to the throne in 1685, when he argued that his brother, the late King Charles II, had a good relationship with Sophia and that he would like to stay in touch with her and maintain the friendship. His letters to Sophia continued even during the Glorious Revolution, and which time he informed the duchess of everything that was happening in England and sought her support. In September 1688, Sophia received letters from both William of Orange and King James II. While William did not go into detail in terms of his preparations to land in England, James told Sophie what he was trying to do in-depth and how disappointed he was with his behaviour: “...it was long before I could be capable believe that my nephew and sonne in law could be capable of so very ill an enterprise and so started to provide againts it...”. Correspondence between the duchess and James continued in the 1690s when he was in exile in St. Germain.¹⁵

Any Hanoverian succession to the English throne seemed so remote in 1688/89 that even Sophia herself did not see it as a realistic possibility in the near future. If we were to believe that Ernest Augustus not only supported his wife but also helped her achieve her goals during the whole of this diplomatic game, designed to lead to the future possibility of obtaining the English crown, we would be far from the truth. Sophia and Ernest Augustus’ marriage was a purely arranged one, without much affection, as was customary at the time. Although the couple had a warm relationship and, at least at the beginning of the marriage, shared common interests, Ernest Augustus was pursuing his own policy, which included the unification of his father’s inheritance lands under a single Duke of Hanover, helped in this as he was by the Emperor, whom Ernest Augustus actively helped in the fight against France. The Duke of Hanover, however, did so for the sole purpose of having primogeniture approved

14 It is clear from the correspondence that James II and William III exchanged during the life of Charles II that relations between them were very friendly, on account of which William apparently tried to reconcile with his father-in-law even after the Glorious Revolution. James was very active in writing to his son-in-law, particularly at the time of approval of the Test Act and what is known as the Exclusion Crisis in England, when he described the situation in the country in detail, including the Popish Plot and accusations of the Queen conspiring against King Charles II. In his letters, he also assured him of his undying friendship. The friendship that James II felt for his son-in-law can also be proven by the fact that the then Duke of York literally addressed the letters “For my Sonne the Prince of Orange”: James II: fifty-four letters as Duke of York to his nephew and son-in-law, William of Orange, 29 Oct (1678) — 27 Nov (1679), Add MS 86848, British Library.

15 R. DOEBNER, *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England (1689–1693) together with her Letters and those of kings James II and William III to the Electress, Sophia of Hanover*, Leipzig 1886, pp. 68–72.



in his duchy, which would ensure that his firstborn son, George Louis, would be the sole duke, and to have the duchy elevated to an electorate.¹⁶

The unification of the duchy under a single ruler was indeed achieved at least in part during Ernest Augustus' life. The youngest duke survived his other two brothers and as a result, took their land under his control. The duchy that came under the rule of its eldest brother, George William, was also to have passed to George Louis after his death based on an agreement that he had signed before Ernest's marriage to Sophia. Ensuring the unification of the Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg was also designed to help arrange the marriage of George William's daughter, Sophia Dorothea, and George Louis. Although Sophia had initially planned a wife for her son from the wider Stuart family to bring him closer to the throne, Ernest Augustus was thinking more about the stability of the duchy, which could in the future act as a united sovereign whole thanks to this marriage.¹⁷

Introducing primogeniture to the Duchy of Hanover was no simple matter. Sophia and Ernest Augustus had other sons alongside their first-born, George Louis, and in particular, their second-born son, Frederick Augustus, did not want to accept the fact that he would not get what he was entitled to after his father's death. Ernest Augustus not only wanted to unify the duchy with primogeniture but also to avoid possible disputes between siblings, which could culminate in civil war. Ernest Augustus had experience of this from disputes with his brothers, as did Sophia, who was at court in The Hague during the English Civil War, Charles II and his mother taking refuge there for some time. The execution of Charles I in 1649 was a disaster for the king's offspring and wife, and for Elizabeth Stuart, whom parliament continued in its refusal to pay an annual allowance for her humble court.¹⁸

THE YEARS 1689–1714

The passing of the *Bill of Rights* in England in 1689 was deeply disappointing for Sophia. While the law primarily dealt with the curtailment, by parliament, of the monarch's power, the part that interested Sophia the most dealt with possible succession to the throne in the case that Mary and William remained childless. The law strictly determined who in the future could even consider taking the English crown, and removed all persons of the Catholic faith from this notional list of candidates.

16 Ernest Augustus and Sophia also feared that, under the influence of his wife, George William would decide to break the promise he had confirmed with a signature that his descendants would not be entitled to the legacy of Ernest Augustus and that none of his descendants would bear the title of Duke or Duchess. The marriage of George and Sophia Dorothea was to have brought the family closer together and secured the Duchy of Celle for their offspring: CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 110–112; KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 170–174.

17 The Duchy was elevated to the Electorate by Ernest Augustus in December 1692, when Emperor Leopold I gave his consent to the act. KÖCHER — FORESTER, *Memoirs of Sophia, Electress of Hanover*, pp. 170–174.

18 HATTON, *George I*, pp. 42–47.



The greatest concern among the English people and members of parliament alike — a Catholic monarch on the English throne who would threaten the liberties and rights of the people, as well as the position of the Church of England in the country — was to have been eliminated by law. As the direct heir to the English throne, the law then designated Princess Anne and her offspring, entirely disregarding the possibility that Princess Anne would remain childless and the issue of eventual succession after her death. Sophia saw many future advantages in the new law in terms of the possibilities of succeeding to the English throne. The law greatly narrowed the number of candidates for the post of pretender and excluded certain relatives who were closer to the throne than Sophia and her descendants. However, the duchess was also unpleasantly surprised to learn that her possible line of succession was not even mentioned in the law.¹⁹

Sophia realised that, unlike her, Princess Anne was of productive age and could still have many children, even though none of her children had lived to adulthood until then. Her assumptions proved true when it was announced in July 1689 that Anne Stuart had given birth to a healthy son, William, Duke of Gloucester. Little William became the Crown Prince of England and the last hope for the continuation of the royal Stuart line in the country. Princess Anne refused to accept that anyone other than her child would become the future king or queen of England. Even though William showed health problems almost since childhood, the symptoms dangerously consistent with those seen in his deceased siblings, the princess believed that her son would be the new king.²⁰

The 1690s were a great test of Sophia's diplomatic and negotiating skills, as she not only had to resolve disputes within her own family but also maintained active contacts with William III and Princess Anne, designed to ensure the future priority of the Hanoverian line in succession. Approval of the *Bill of Rights* meant that potential Catholic pretenders were excluded, including those among Sophia's siblings. In her marriage policy, Elizabeth Stuart had apparently failed to take faith into account to any great extent, but instead, the influence of the noble, and so many of Sophia's sisters had converted to the Catholic faith in order to marry well, particularly into influential French aristocratic families. Most of the duchess' brothers were already dead, and she, although not originally the most suitable candidate for English succession or the closest relative to the monarchs currently ruling, became a pretender to the throne right after Princess Anne. The succession

19 In December 1689, William III wrote to Sophia about the *Bill of Rights*, specifically asking if Sophia was satisfied with the wording of the law, which also regulated succession. According to the letter, William tried to persuade members of parliament to directly mention Sophia and her family as the alternative line of succession to Princess Anne, which he said himself had failed: R. DOEBNER, *Memoirs of Mary, Queen of England (1689-1693) together with her Letters and those of kings James II and William III to the Electress, Sophia of Hanover*, Leipzig 1886, p. 76; 'William and Mary: February 1689', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William and Mary, 1689-90*, ed. William John Hardy (London, 1895), s. 1-11. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/will-mary/1689-90/pp1-11> [accessed 29 March 2023]; BAILEY, *The Succession to the English Crown*, pp. 227-228.

20 CHAPMAN, *Queen Anne's son*, pp. 25-30; B. HOFFMAN, *They Never Reigned: Heirs to the British Throne Who Never Became the Monarch*, London 2023, pp. 153-155.



of the Hanoverian line was not to be jeopardised, and Sophia made great efforts to make sure of this.²¹

Those efforts, however, were greatly complicated by the marriage of her first-born son, George Louis. The marriage, originally designed to help unite the duchy, turned into a disaster. George Louis had married his cousin Sophia Dorothea, the daughter of George William, the younger brother of Ernest Augustus. Sophia Dorothea, however, was unable to reconcile with her husband's mistresses, and despite persuasion from Duchess Sophia, decided to take a lover in the form of Philip Christoph von Königs-marck. Knowledge of this love affair spread very quickly among family members, including George himself, and soon became a public matter of discussion at the imperial court. George Louis did not seem all that interested in dealing with his wife's affair, and so Ernest Augustus stepped in. Sophia Dorothea and George Louis were divorced, and Sophia Dorothea was no longer allowed to see her own children for fear of her having a bad influence on their upbringing. Duchess Sophia's primary interest was in ensuring that her daughter-in-law's behaviour did not damage the good name and reputation of her family at the English court and did not jeopardise their succession to the English throne.²²

In England, meanwhile, Queen Mary II died in 1694. Sophia, however, did not see any pronounced change with the passing of the monarch which would further support her succession to the English throne, and after her husband Ernest Augustus took seriously ill, she had to focus her attention on the Duchy of Hanover. After the death of his father, in 1698, George Louis became the new Duke and Elector, as a result of the last will and testament of Ernest Augustus and, above all, thanks to enforced primogeniture. The Duchy of Hanover was now united under a single duke, as Ernest Augustus had wished during his lifetime. The position of bishop in Osnabrück was

21 CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 122–123; G. LOCK, *The 1689 Bill of Rights*, in: *Political studies*, 1989 — 12, Vol. 37, No.4, pp. 540–561; G. DAVIES — E. L. KLOTZ, *The Habeas Corpus Act of 1679 in the House of Lords*, in: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 1940, pp. 469–470; H. A. NUTTING., *The Most Wholesome Law — The Habeas Corpus Act of 1679*, in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, 1960, pp. 527–543; A. L. TYLER., *A “Second Magna Carta”: The English Habeas Corpus Act and the Statutory Origins of the Habeas Privilege*, in: *Notre Dame Law Review*, Vol. 91, No. 5, 2016, pp. 1949–1996; A. BROWNING, *English Historical Documents Vol. VIII*, p. 123; *Bill of Rights; With comments and extracts from Magna Charta, The Declaration of Rights of the People of England*, London 1689; G. MAGLIUCA, *The Heart of the Constitution: How the Bill of Rights Became the Bill of Rights*, Oxford 2018, pp. 10–14; 153–156; ‘House of Commons Journal Volume 10: 28 January 1689’, in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 10, 1688–1693* (London, 1802), p. 14. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol10/p14> [accessed 29 March 2023]; *Briefe des Prinzen und Kurfürsten Georg Ludwig (George I) an seine Mutter Sophia 1681–1704*, Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover, VVP 51, NR. 135, pp. 271–273.

22 HATTON, *George I*, pp. 65–69; H. COLBURN (ed.), *Memoirs of Sophia Dorothea, consort of George I – includes a diary of the conversation, letters and other documents*, Vol I., London 1845, pp. 191–202; W. H. WILKINS (ed.), *The Love of an Uncrown Queen Sophia Dorothea, consort of George I, and her correspondence with Philip Christopher Count Königsmarck*, London 1903, pp. 82–94; CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 130–133; B. HOFFMAN, *They Never Reigned: Heirs to the British Throne Who Never Became the Monarch*, London 2023, pp. 156–159.



taken by the youngest of the sons born to Sophia and Ernest, Ernest Augustus. Son Maximilian, who had initially rebelled against his father's decision to enforce primogeniture, now had to submit to his older brother and accept a high annual appanage as compensation for the loss of the possibility of inheriting part of the duchy.²³

The question of English succession came to the fore again in 1700. In July of that year, Queen Anne's only surviving son, William, Duke of Gloucester, died at the age of eleven. King William III realised that only his sister-in-law Anne stood between Sophia and the English crown. During a visit to the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands in 1700, the King of England had the opportunity to meet the Duchess of Hanover and discuss with her the possibility of taking the English crown. Very pragmatically, however, Sophia did not want her relationship with Anne to deteriorate any further, and so she refused to take any step that the future queen could interpret as an assault and an attempt to attack her preferential right of succession.²⁴

The approval of the Act of Settlement in 1701 can be considered a triumph for Sophia, when her Hanoverian line of succession was recognised as the only line that would sit on the throne in the event of the death of the childless Queen Anne: "...the most excellent Princess Sophia, Electress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover...be and is hereby declared to be the next in succession, in the Protestant line, to the imperial Crown..." There was still the possibility that Anne's half-brother, James Francis Stuart, would convert to the Protestant faith and claim the English throne, but this did not happen.²⁵

This law was certainly the most important moment in the issue of Hanoverian succession, but Sophia and George did not yet have the English throne in their hands. Anne still had the opportunity, even after the death of the Duke of Gloucester, to give birth to a legitimate pretender to the throne. If this happened and the child survived through childhood, George could say goodbye to the crown. Even Queen Anne herself did not lose faith in having another child. The moment that ended all hope for a possible heir came in the year 1708 with the death of George of Denmark, the queen's husband. Queen Anne subsequently declared that she was not interested in marrying again, and now had to recognise George, or Sophia at the time, as the future ruler.²⁶

George had been preparing for his role as the future King of England ever since the Act of Settlement was passed. He actively corresponded with Queen Anne, negotiated with English diplomats, and administered the duchy after his father. This, of course, also brought with it the need for involvement in an international conflict, the War of the Spanish Succession, where he fought on the side of the Queen of England and the emperor quite successfully. His commanding skills as the leader of an army

23 CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, pp. 134–135.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 137–139; BAILEY, *The Succession to the English Crown*, pp. 235–236.

25 *Genealogical tree of the royal house of Great Britain, showing that George, Elector of Brunswick in 58th in line of succession to the throne, 1714*, National Record of Scotland in Edinburgh, fond GD45/26/34 NRS; BROWNING, *English Historical Documents Vol. VIII*, pp. 129–132; CURZON, *Sophia, mother of kings*, p. 141; G. M. TREVELYAN, *England under Queen Anne: The Peace and the Succession*, London 1934, pp. 91–93; T. SOMERVILLE, *The History of Great Britain during the Reign of Queen Anne with a Dissertation concerning the Danger of the Protestant Succession*, London 1798, pp. 112–113; BAILEY, *The Succession to the English Crown*, pp. 229–230.

26 BAILEY, *The Succession to the English Crown*, p. 244.



of German princes on the Rhine were also praised by Queen Anne herself in more than one of the letters she exchanged with George. In the meantime, the English parliament was discussing the possibility of inviting Sophia Hanover and Elector George Louis to London so that the future ruler could better acclimatise to local conditions and would not be taken as a foreigner by the English people. Queen Anne, however, refused to share the same court with the pretender and his family. In order to prevent rumours of poor relations with the heirs to the throne, the Queen named the pretender's eldest son, George II, the Duke of Cambridge and made him a knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. In a letter sent by the Queen to the Elector in April 1706, she mentions how great an honour it is to become a knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, and that this privilege, which she had bestowed on the Elector's son, was merely further proof of her friendship. Charles, Lord Halifax, was sent to Hanover as the Queen's chief envoy at the same time, his main task, as we learn from the Queen's instructions, being to familiarise the Hanoverian family with the new laws which the Queen had enacted for the protection of the Hanoverian succession.²⁷ However, another task of the new envoy was to assure Sophia and George of the Queen's favour, and thus avoid any disagreements in relation to parliament's efforts to invite them to the country. The Elector's son, now as Duke of Cambridge, could run for a seat in the House of Lords, which he was legally entitled to on account of his title. However, his father, George Louis, clearly understood from Queen Anne's stance that they were not welcome in England, and warned his son off making any such efforts.

While the Queen, at least outwardly, consolidated her good relations with the Hanoverian family, problems with Scotland culminated in the union of Scotland and England as one, the United Kingdom. English monarchs had been seeking a union of this type since the time of James I. However, the first of the Stuart rulers achieved only a certain union, or rather cooperation between the two countries in relation to the economy. In view of the different faiths of the two countries and the Scottish parliament's approach to a possible merger of England and Scotland, James failed to reach any agreement on a union at the state level. The only connecting elements between the countries therefore remained the person of the monarch and a certain customs union. Queen Anne was faced with a situation in which it was necessary to reach a consensus between the Scottish and English parliaments on the question of her successor, so she offered the Scots two options. In reality, however, only one could be accepted that would not mean losses for Scottish merchants and for Scots permanently living in England, and that was to consent to the union.²⁸

²⁷ The problems that the Queen feared were undoubtedly related to the Jacobite movements, but also to Scotland's and the Scottish parliament's opposition to recognising the Hanoverian dynasty as the new ruling line: Beatrice Curtis BROWN (ed.), *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne*, London 1934, pp. 183–187; S. HANDLEY, *The Members of the House of Lords and the Hanoverian Succession* in: *Parliamentary history*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2020, pp. 126–142.

²⁸ Negotiation of the Anglo-Scottish union was entrusted to commissioners, including James, Duke of Queensberry and Marquis of Tweeddale. Members of the Scottish parliament, however, rejected any proposal made to them by the commissioners during negotiations. Queen Anne thereafter expressed her dissatisfaction in several letters to members

The international situation began to escalate after 1710–1711 in light of the death of Emperor Joseph I, and Queen Anne was well aware of the possible threat of Habsburg hegemony. As part of efforts to achieve peace as soon as possible, the Queen of England found herself in dispute with Hanoverian Elector George. There was still consensus between the two rulers on foreign policy, but the Elector refused to negotiate with France and to back down in peace negotiations, arguing that a compromise with the French king would bring losses for German princes and for the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. Peace with France under these conditions would, according to George, be a betrayal of English allies. Anne reassured the Elector by saying that such peace terms would be negotiated in such a way so as not to damage any of Great Britain's allies. Positive relations between the English and Hanoverian courts would be tested once more before the Queen's death, in May 1714. In her letters, an outraged Queen Anne informed Sophia and George that information had reached her of the Elector's ambition to become King of England during her lifetime. Even though Anne assured the Elector and his mother in her letters of the trust she had in them, and that this was certainly just an attempt by enemies to damage their good relations, it is clear that she took this threat quite seriously. The Queen also assured George that he had no reason to do anything of the sort, as the Hanoverian succession was assured and any aggression would damage his legacy, or even preclude him from succession as such.²⁹

CONCLUSION

It is quite clear that the issue of English succession would have looked considerably different had there not been several key circumstances involved. Such circumstances, for example, I consider to be the arranged marriages of several members of the Stuart family. Firstly the marriage of Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I, to Frederick Palatinate, then the chief representative of Protestant nobility in the empire, in 1613. The fate of Elizabeth and her husband after their loss in Bohemia and expulsion from Palatinate greatly influenced the future of their numerous offspring, including the future Duchess Sophia.

It is not certain in which circles Elizabeth would have sought counterparts for her sons and daughters had she and her husband still been the rulers of Palatinate, and possibly Bohemia, but they would probably have been higher members of the European nobility of that time than Ernest Augustus, the youngest son of the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg. This view can be supported by Elizabeth's efforts to arrange her

of parliament.: „We expect...this session of Parliament shall be brought to such a happy conclusion as shall lay the foundation of a firm union and understanding betwixt us and our people as it necessary for the happiness of both.“ in: B. C. BROWN (ed.), *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne*, London 1934, pp. 80–90; 145–147; The National Archive in Kew, Privy Council Register, Oct. 1705 to Feb. 1707/8, N. 2/81, f. 338–344; The Scottish Parliament and the Union of 1707, The National Archives of Scotland, 1999, pp. 1–28.

²⁹ BROWN, *The Letters and Diplomatic Instructions of Queen Anne*, pp. 372–373; 413–415; HATTON, *George I*, pp. 100–104; TREVELYAN, *England under Queen Anne: The Peace and the Succession*, pp. 89–94.



daughter's marriage to the future King Charles II of England while Sophia was still at court with her mother in The Hague. As we now know, it was Charles and his childless marriage to Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza that plunged England into what is known as the Exclusion Crisis for several years, and almost caused a new civil war. If, however, Elizabeth had succeeded at that time and her daughter's marriage to Charles had taken place, the crisis as such would probably never have occurred. Charles and Sophia were certainly not infertile, as evidenced by the king's many illegitimate children and the numerous offspring that Sophia bore to Ernest Augustus.

Another key marriage might have been the union of future King of England George Louis (George I) and Sophia Dorothea (the daughter of Duke George William of Brunswick-Lüneburg). That marriage ended in divorce, but even before the separation of the spouses on account of Sophia Dorothea's infidelity, another heir to the English throne was born, the future George II. However, even this marriage would not have needed to take place if the plans hatched by Duchess Sophia for her son to marry the second-born daughter of the Duke of York, the future Queen Anne, had come to fruition. Sophia used all her diplomatic skills and good relations with members of the Stuart family to achieve this marriage. It was, in fact, supported by the King of England himself and by William III of Orange, who by that time was already married to the elder daughter of the Duke of York, Princess Mary. The young George Louis was sent to the English court, introduced to King Charles II, and introduced to Princess Anne. It is not entirely clear why the marriage was not arranged, with George returning from the English court to Hanover very soon after. It was the only journey George Louis made to England before his accession to the throne in 1714. Queen Anne did not invite him to the English court during her lifetime. All negotiations regarding succession thereafter took place through correspondence and the English ambassadors at the Hanover court. Apparently, Princess Anne did not agree to the marriage, but some sources also claim that George did not even speak to her about a possible marriage and that this was merely his mother's plans to bring her son closer to the English crown. Although Anne and George respected each other, as is evident from their correspondence, their relationship was not overly friendly. It was merely state correspondence, so it is not surprising that both rulers showed respect and esteem for each other in the letters, in particular Elector George to the Queen. This, however, does not necessarily reflect their personal opinions. It has been proven that Queen Anne acknowledged Sophia and her son as heirs to the throne, but refused to invite them to England or establish any closer personal ties with them before her death. George was not at first inclined toward the idea of life in England, either as the husband of one of the members of the Stuart family or as king. This opinion did not entirely disappear even after he had taken the English throne in 1714 when he continued to try to spend as much time as possible in Hanover and often put the interests of his native land before those of England, which often met with negative reaction from members of the English parliament.³⁰

³⁰ HOFFMAN, *They Never Reigned: Heirs to the British Throne Who Never Became the Monarch*, pp. 156–159; SOMERVILLE, *The History of Great Britain during the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 112–113.