

**PhD -topic Teemu Korpijärvi**

**From Power to Margins, From Margins to Power – Waterways and Power During the Baltic Crusades From 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Century**

My research project analyses the impact of waterways in the formation of power centres and border-areas through the interactions between the Christian settlers and indigenous people in the Baltic area from the 10th to 15th century. During the Latin Christian expansion around the Baltic Sea, in case of this study the southern coast, waterways played an important role, as they allowed Christian merchants, missionaries, settlers and crusaders penetrate more easily deep inland. The “wilderness” of the target area of the Latin expansion was however highly subjective. Tribal communities, chiefdoms and societies ruled by their own strong men – quite similar to their western and southern counterparts – formed a patchwork of power in the area. The water systems of the Baltic knit not only the local tribes and chiefs to a network of trade and traffic, but connected the Baltic Sea, Scandinavia and the whole of Northern Europe to the rich trade routes to the east and south. These routes led all the way to the Caspian Sea, Black Sea and the Mediterranean. This lucrative trade, and the possibility of controlling it, had drawn earlier merchants and mercenaries – like the Scandinavian traders, raiders and settlers labelled Vikings or Varangians – to the waterways of the Baltic rivers and lakes, mingling their own customs and culture with the local ones.

I aim to use historical method, human geographical theory and a modified version of social network analysis, to look at the continuities, changes and developments in the power structures along the waterways. This is done by cross referencing written and archaeological sources. The comparison allows the analysis of the dynamics between the encroaching Latin Christians, Baltic tribal societies and the Principality of the Kievan Rus’. The analysis offers further insight to the mechanics that made waterways important in the territorialization and taming of the Baltic frontier and the development and change in the borderlands between the Christian fiefdoms, tribal lands and the Kievan Rus’.