

Gotland as a Borderland in the Baltic Sea Region during the Period of the Kalmar Union between Denmark and Sweden

Since the end of the 14th century up to the beginning of the 16th century Gotland was almost permanent object of confrontations in the Baltic Sea area. The period of investigation starts with the conquest of Gotland by the so-called Victual Brothers in 1394 and ends with the maritime campaign of Lübeck against Gotland in 1525. International trade and political relations could be influenced massively from Gotland – those who ruled the island and the important castle Visborg in Visby (from 1411 onwards) were able to play a powerful role in the Mare Balticum. Furthermore, the residents of this European region were inextricably linked by common political and economic interests. This time is characterized by the founding of the Kalmar Union, which lasted from 1397 to 1520 and which united the three Scandinavian kingdoms temporarily under the reign of one king. The large islands of the Baltic Sea region have so far not been systematically investigated by research. Due to their location at the intersections of sea routes, such islands can at specific points of time be of crucial geopolitical importance. The borderland approach allows researchers to better understand the complexity of these islands historical role than application of conventional centre-periphery paradigms alone. My thesis aims to analyze Gotland as Baltic borderland in the union's history of Denmark and Sweden from the end of the 14th to the beginning of the 16th century. The conflicts around the legal status of Gotland are seen as a boundary dispute of pre-national stakeholders in a maritime environment. Gotland and the Baltic Sea are seen as specific borderlands, which enabled the different parts of the border-society on Gotland as well as the several players from the outside to act more free than in a terrestrial context but simultaneously set boundaries for these actions. One of the specifics of islands is their openness for interactions from all sides and to all sides. My work thus sees Gotland as micro-region with manifold connections to the macro-region Baltic Sea area. It aims also at contributing to the question of borderlands in maritime surroundings.