

PhD-topic Eric Ladenthin

The development and impacts of Swedish alliances during Sweden's age as a great power, 1597-1721

My research project aims to analyse the cultural, scientific or economical background of Swedish diplomatic alliances in the light of the struggle for the "Dominium Maris Baltici" and its rise and fall as a great power from the 16th to the 18th century. The reasons for Sweden's ascendance from a backward, medieval country to its reign over the Baltic Sea Region weren't only established through top-to-bottom reforms and a successful warfare under the Vasa-dynasty and chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, but also through neat negotiated alliances. Since the protestant Sweden was involved in several wars within the whole Baltic Sea Region, their diplomats established partially long-lasting and frequent alliances e.g. with Brandenburg-Prussia, and also with the catholic France and the Calvinistic United Netherlands. By doing this, all coalition partners crossed not only geographic and military, but also cultural and mental borders in order to set up a partnership. Diplomats and residents were during the early modern period in the political and religious dense Baltic Sea Region constant physical and mental border crossers, who questioned, shifted or even erased "old" boundaries. These constant exchanges of people, trade goods and knowledge kept an ongoing transformation process running.

My main aim is to analyse how these alliances between the kingdom of Sweden and his allies were established and which factors affected the development of alliances within its rise and fall as a great power of the Baltic Sea. Another research topic is, how, through the finding of new allies, the process of bordering in political, economic and especially cultural purposes changed, so that old schemes vanquished and new "borderlands" could be discovered and redrawn. During these negotiations for military alliances not only political reasons and strategies mattered, but social and cultural concepts or coherences were important as well. The uniting cultural perspective with indicators like exchanges of artists, students and dynastical or economic relations, as well as personal friendships, which foster the development of an alliance are further focuses of my research.