

SWEDISH OR LIVONIAN PATRIA? ON THE IDENTITIES OF LIVONIAN NOBILITY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY*

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The concept of fatherland or *patria* became a popular catchword in the political rhetoric of the early modern period. It was used in a broad variety of meanings. The rulers could call upon their subjects as “true patriots” to make sacrifices for the community, including the ultimate sacrifice of dying for the fatherland. A reference to the interests of *patria* could be used for the justification of political innovation by the government, but it could also be employed to legitimize resistance to the government. In all these contexts, *patria* is used when the duties towards the community as a whole – in contrast to narrow self-interest – need to be emphasized. In recent years a number of scholars have profitably followed the concept of *patria* in these various contexts, providing a better understanding of early modern political morality, especially with regard to the ideas about the content and limits of political obligation.¹

In this paper, rather than going into the intricacies of political morality, I am looking at the usage of the concept *patria* from a different perspective. Namely, the rhetoric of *patria* also points to the extent of political obligation in the spatial sense: when one refers to *patria* as an object of commitment, one has a distinct geographical space in mind. Thus the usage of *patria* gives us information about the identities of early modern people. It is clear that early modern individuals – not unlike the contemporary ones – identified themselves with various communities, from one’s

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¹ E.g. “*Patria*” und “*Patrioten*” vor dem Patriotismus: *Pflichten, Rechte, Glauben und die Rekonfigurierung europäischer Gemeinwesen im 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Robert Friedeburg (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Alexander Schmidt, *Vaterlandsliebe und Religionskonflikt: politische Diskurse im Alten Reich (1555–1648)*, Studies in medieval and reformation traditions: history, culture, religion, ideas (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Eva Piirimäe, “Dying for the fatherland: Thomas Abbt’s theory of aesthetic patriotism”, *History of European Ideas*, 35:2 (June 2009), 194–208.

immediate local community (village, parish, town) where one was born up to the *communitas christiana* which united all God's people.² Between the extremes of the village and the world was the early modern state, which, far from being a homogenous territory, also consisted of overlapping levels of political authority. In everyday politics it was hardly a problem, as people could identify themselves, and feel committed to, all these levels simultaneously. In Germany, for example, it was quite natural to denote both the imperial territory (*Land, Reichsstadt*) and the Empire as a whole as *patria*. Only when conflict emerged between layers of political authorities, as it happened during the Thirty Years' War, the claims to obedience could become exclusive – so the duty of a “true Saxon patriot”, for example, could be the resistance to the Imperial authorities in defence of their constitutional rights and religious freedom.

The aim of this essay is to study the political identities in Sweden's Baltic provinces, focusing mainly on the usage of the concept *patria* by the Swedish authorities and Livonian political elites. The Baltic provinces of Estland and Livland were not incorporated into the Swedish realm but preserved their own distinct legal systems and a share of self-government, exercised by the corporate bodies of the estates (*Ritterschaften* consisting of matriculated noblemen and city councils elected by bourgeois merchants). Thus the political commitment of the elites was at least dual: the personal obligation to the king or queen that was explicitly confirmed in the oath of allegiance, renewed whenever a new monarch had come to office; and the obligation to the province or the city, for the well-being of which one was personally responsible through the exercise of self-government. The latter one coincided with “natural *patria*”, the place of birth, which one was bound to through special ties of natural affection and obligation to parents.³ But there was also a third layer between these two – historical “Livland” comprised both Swedish Baltic provinces and Courland, uniting them into a single historical-geographical space.⁴

The questions that I am going to ask in this paper are how the local elites juggled these different levels of identity and whether or not any changes

² Cf. Axel Gotthard, “Vormoderne Lebensräume: Annäherungsversuch an die Heimaten des frühneuzeitlichen Mitteleuropäers”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 276 (2003), 37–73; Axel Gotthard, *In der Ferne: Die Wahrnehmung des Raums in der Vormoderne* (Campus Verlag, 2007), 72ff.

³ For early modern adoption of Cicero's distinction between natural and political *patria*, see Schmidt, *Vaterlandsliebe und Religionskonflikt*, 14.

⁴ For the sake of clarity, I use “Livonia” to signify this broader unit, and “Livland” and “Estland” to signify the provinces.

occurred during the Swedish period. As I already suggested, in the periods of stability all layers of identity could exist in mutual harmony, and there was thus no need to reflect on the question to which *patria* does one owe the ultimate obedience. Thus, for methodological reasons, I am going to focus on the periods of transformation, which brought the latent conflicts into daylight. The language of *patria* is one of the rhetorical tools that were used in such situations by both the royal authorities and local elites. In particular, I am going to study two periods when the Swedish central government attempted to achieve greater uniformity between the provinces and Sweden proper: first, at the beginning of the seventeenth century during the reign of Duke Charles and, second, at the end of the seventeenth century during the reign of Charles XI. The focus will be on the province of Livland, as on both these occasions it caused more problems for the central government than any other political entity in the Baltic provinces.

Baltic provinces in the Swedish rule

Seventeenth-century Sweden was a “composite monarchy”⁵ or “conglomerate state”,⁶ the various parts of which had different constitutional relationships with the realm as a whole.⁷ On the whole, the entire realm or “the Swedish Crown” (*Sveriges Crona*) consisted of two kinds of areas that were clearly distinguished from one another. First, there was the so-called Sweden proper (*egentliga Sverige*), also called “Svenska riket”, that was formed from the old Swedish kingdom and Finland.⁸ Secondly, there were external provinces (*uthrijkes provincierne*) that had been attached to the realm by contract and conquest since 1561. This dividing line between

⁵ J. H. Elliott, “A Europe of composite monarchies”, *Past and Present*, 137:1 (1992), 48–71.

⁶ Harald Gustafsson, “The conglomerate state: a perspective on state formation in early modern Europe”, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 23:3–4 (1998), 189–213.

⁷ For the development of the constitutional relationship between the central state and the provinces, see especially Torbjörn Eng, “Riksbegreppet Sverige: inrikes och utrikes områden 1561–1721 sedda utifrån statsrättsliga akter”, *Stat-kyrka-samhälle: den stormaktstida samhällsordningen i Sverige och Östersjöprovinserna*, ed. by Torkel Jansson and Torbjörn Eng, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 21 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 331–424; Torbjörn Eng, *Det svenska väldet: ett konglomerat av uttrycksformer och begrepp från Vasa till Bernadotte = Swedish forms of dominion: a conglomerate of expressions and concepts from Vasa to Bernadotte*, Studia historica Upsaliensia, 201 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2001).

⁸ On some occasions Finland was not viewed as part of „egentliga Sverige“ but it was always seen as part of „Svenska rike“, see Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk: nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförl. Symposion, 2000), 42–49.

the historical core and more recent acquisitions was reflected in important constitutional arrangements. Only the estates of the core territories were represented in the Diet (*Riksdag*), which legislated together with the king and the Council of State (*Riksråd*).⁹ Accordingly, their legislation was valid only in these territories; the unrepresented external provinces had their own laws, which could be changed only with the consensus of the local estates. There were cases when provinces became fully incorporated into the “rike”, e.g. the estates of the Scanian provinces acquired from Denmark in 1658–1660 were incorporated after the Scanian war (1679) into the Swedish estates and became thus represented in the Diet. Incorporation, as a rule, was accompanied by the introduction of uniformity, i.e. the implementation of Swedish laws and institutions in the province.¹⁰

The Baltic provinces were, however, different from Scania, Halland, and Blekinge in several important respects. First of all, the latter were viewed as reconquered parts of “old Sweden”, the incorporation of which was desirable and natural.¹¹ Also, the preservation of Danish laws presented a continuous security threat in the face of possible future claims by Denmark. These factors were absent in the Baltic provinces which, first, were seen as new additions to the realm and, second, had their own distinct laws and privileges, rather than those of a neighbouring power. Nevertheless, a tendency towards greater uniformity can be observed throughout the seventeenth century. Historians have pointed to three periods when the program of incorporation was especially clear-cut: the reign of Duke Charles (later King Charles IX), the general-governorship of Johan Skytte during the reign of Gustav Adolf, and the period of ‘absolutist’ rule by Charles XI from the 1680s.¹² Due to a variety of reasons, the incorporation was never brought to a conclusion, but a number of institutional and legal developments testify to the increasingly stronger presence of the central state in the provinces.¹³ Beginning with the arrival of Johan Skytte as the

⁹ For the division of power between these institutions, see Nils Runeby, *Monarchia mixta: maktfördelningsdebatt i Sverige under den tidigare stormaktstiden*, Studia historica Upsaliensia, 6 (Stockholm: Svenska bokförlaget, 1962).

¹⁰ Jerker Rosén, “Statsledning och provinspolitik under Sveriges stormaktstid: en författningshistorisk skiss”, *Scandia*, 17 (1946), 224–270.

¹¹ Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk*, 56–64.

¹² Rosén, “Statsledning och provinspolitik”; Aleksander Loit, “Läänemere provintside riigiõiguslik asend Rootsi suurriigis 1561–1710 (1721)”, *Läänemere provintside arenguperspektiivid Rootsi suurriigis 16./17. sajandil*, ed. by Enn Küng (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2002), 7–26.

¹³ For a broad overview of these developments, see Ralph Tuchtenhagen, *Zentralstaat und Provinz im frühneuzeitlichen Nordosteuropa*, Veröffentlichungen des Nordost-

governor-general in 1629, the center for the exercise of royal power in the Baltic provinces was Tartu (Dorpat), which became the seat for the highest judiciary (*hovrätt*), ecclesiastical government (*consistorium*), and higher education (*Academia Dorpatensis*). During Charles XI's reign, provincial autonomy was curbed even more drastically: the Swedish Church Law of 1686 became implemented in all provinces; the reduction of noble estates meant not only the loss of income but also of *jura patronatus* and judicial rights; and finally, the resistance by Livonian noblemen to the reduction led to the abolishment of their corporate rights of government (*Landesstaat*) in the province of Livland.

Rhetoric of patria during Charles IX and Gustav Adolf

The identities of the different parts of the realm had even deeper historical roots than did the constitutional differences. For the Swedes, *patria* usually comprised only Sweden proper, while Finland was considered a separate *patria*. Inken Schmidt-Voges has shown how seventeenth-century thinkers such as Johannes Messenius and Georg Stiernhielm developed the idea of historical continuity between the present Swedish *fädernesland* and *patria Gothorum*, the homeland of ancient Goths. They stressed the common heritage, language, law and political authority of all Swedes, thus creating “congruence of the past and the present”.¹⁴ An increasing emphasis on historical-cultural roots that strengthened the distinct identity of Sweden proper could, of course, only work against any potential unification of the entire realm. Except for the provinces “reconquered” from Denmark, these projects never amounted to a “Swedification” of the provinces: their distinct historical heritage was acknowledged and so was their separate identity. Heiko Droste has pointed out that not only the provincial elites but even the Swedish governors in German provinces described themselves as “true patriots of the province”, i.e. the defenders of the interests of the province rather than of the mother country or the realm as a whole.¹⁵ Such language, rather than reflecting the actual position of royal

Instituts, 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).

¹⁴ Inken Schmidt-Voges, “‘Vincat amor patriae’: zum Verhältnis von Historiographie und patria-Verständnis im Schweden des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts”, *“Patria” und “Patrioten” vor dem Patriotismus: Pflichten, Rechte, Glauben und die Rekonfigurierung europäischer Gemeinwesen im 17. Jahrhundert*, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 266–268.

¹⁵ Heiko Droste, “Patrioten ausländischer Herkunft: zum Patriotismus in Schweden im 17. Jahrhundert”, *“Patria” und “Patrioten” vor dem Patriotismus: Pflichten, Rechte,*

governors, served to maintain the appearance of consensual politics even in cases of fundamentally antagonistic interests between the province and the imperial center.

The position of the king in this situation was thus determined by the underlying tension between the “natural” obligation to the historical fatherland and the political obligation to the provinces that arose from the king-vassal relationship confirmed by the oath of allegiance. King Gustav Adolf emphasized in his crowning speech that he felt compelled to accept the crown because of the natural feeling of affection that every good man feels for his fatherland and its welfare: “God has implanted the love of fatherland in the heart of most people, although some exist who are so inhuman that such natural love has cooled down and slackened in them.” He explains that *fädernesland* comprises “parents, friends and peers who live in the country of forefathers, to which we owe our love and gratitude for extraordinary munificence that we have enjoyed through our upbringing and communal life.”¹⁶ The obligation to the provinces, on the other hand, was based on a more recent contractual relationship, rather than on natural duty to one’s place of birth. In the same speech Gustav Adolf refers specifically to Swedish possessions on the eastern coast of the Baltic, explaining that his uncle Johan, in the course of defending the country against the Danes and the Russians, “rescued the oppressed Livonians from the tyranny of the Russians, and out of gratitude they became Swedes.”¹⁷ Thus in Gustav Adolf’s interpretation, King Johan helped the Livonians in a just war against their oppressors, which brought them under Swedish protection, creating the relationship of mutual obligation.

Yet the phrase used by Gustav Adolf, “they became Swedes”, reminds us that the situation was more complex than a simple dichotomy between natural fatherland and the parts of the state acquired by contract. The phrase seems to suggest that the ties of natural affection should encompass not only Sweden proper but also Livland. Perhaps this remark should be interpreted in the context of the royal policy of incorporation? Michael Roberts has pointed out that “the Swedish empire lacked those binding and unifying ties of sentiment which link colonies to the motherland.”¹⁸ Gustav

Glauben und die Rekonfigurierung europäischer Gemeinwesen im 17. Jahrhundert, Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung, 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 331.

¹⁶ *Tal och skrifter av Konung Gustaf II Adolf*, ed. by Carl Hallendorff (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & söner, 1915), 56–57 [all translations from contemporary sources are mine].

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁸ Michael Roberts, *The Swedish imperial experience 1560–1718* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 87.

Adolf's remark could be viewed as an attempt to find a basis for such a sentiment – if this could not be found in common history and ancestors, then at least the shared hostility to “tyrannical” Russians could provide a foundation onto which a common identity could be built. Binding ties of sentiment would also justify the policy of incorporation: if Livonians had become “Swedes”, they should also be treated like Swedes.

The incorporation policy of the Swedish kings had started already during the reigns of Erik XIV (ruler of Estland from 1561) and Johan III (1568–1592).¹⁹ From the 1580s onwards, the royal government attempted to persuade the towns and nobilities of Estland to send representatives to the Diet, or to declare the resolutions of the Diet as binding for Estland even without their representation.²⁰ These policies were forcefully continued by Duke Charles of Södermanland who governed as regent from 1595 and was crowned as King Charles IX in 1604. Charles fought with his nephew Sigismund over the possession of the province of Livland, and his negotiations with the Livonian noblemen and the cities of Tartu and Riga in 1600–1602 give an interesting insight into the identities of the Livonians, and into the ideas behind the policy of incorporation. A number of letters are preserved, which the supporters of Duke Charles sent to the noblemen and city councils that had not yet surrendered to Sweden.²¹ The *Ritterschaft* of Estland, for example, calls upon the *Ritterschaft* and the city of Tartu to make up their minds on this issue because “we would like nothing more than to bring this entire province again into one *corpus*, which would promote peace, quiet and unity in these lands.”²² Thus the Baltic elites insisted on the establishment of Livonian unity as a precondition for the welfare of its inhabitants. What is quite remarkable is that the nobles speak here about the *re*-creation of Livonian unity, interpreting the medieval Livonian confederation as a single political body.

Duke Charles, however, used the body metaphor in an even more extensive way. In 1601 Charles promised to confirm the privileges of Tartu, at the same time expressing his firm belief that once the Swedish laws

¹⁹ Loit, “Läänemere provintside riigioiguslik asend”, 11–13.

²⁰ Roberts, *The Swedish imperial experience 1560–1718*, 87; Nils Ahnlund, *Ständsriksdagens utdaning 1592–1672*, Sveriges riksdag Avd. 1, bd. 3 (Stockholm, 1933); Nils Ahnlund, “Die Ostseeprovinzen und der Reichstag Schwedens”, *Pirmā Baltijas Vēsturnieku Konferencc* (Riga, 1938).

²¹ Published in Friedrich Gustav Bienemann, “Zur Geschichte der livländischen Ritter- und Landschaft 1600–1602: Briefe und Aktenstücke”, *Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Ehst- und Kurland's*, 17 (1900), 463–600.

²² *Ibid.*, 473ff.

were translated into German, the burgomasters and the council would be happy to adopt them. This is because “these lands and the town, as well as the Dukedom of Estland together with the city of Tallinn (Reval) form an incorporated member (*incorporirtes gliedmass*) with the kingdom of Sweden, and therefore it is beneficial that they also use the same laws.”²³ Charles also sent to the Livonian noblemen hiding from the war in Alūksne (Marienburg) the text of an oath, which they had to swear if they accepted Swedish protection. In this they had to promise “to be forever, together with the Dukedom of Estland, an incorporated member unified with the crown of Sweden.”²⁴

Charles thus also took the unity of the Swedish province of Estland and the former Polish province of Livland for granted, as it was based on the historical identity of medieval Livonia. But he was also convinced that the future of the unified province laid in the incorporation with Sweden proper. When he persuades the local elites to accept this idea, he also makes use of the rhetoric of *patria*. Notably, however, he did not argue that the Livonians have an obligation to their new Swedish *patria*. On the contrary, he pointed to their duties as true Livonian patriots to act in the interest of their own fatherland. For example, in February 1601 he commended the decision of the noblemen of Cesvaine (Sesswegen) to accept his protection: “... you as reasonable people have acted laudably and wisely, advancing both your own welfare and that of the entire province of Livland, your fatherland.”²⁵ In May of the same year he sent his proposals to a meeting of the Livonian nobilities which, among other things, requested that they fulfil their military duties “in order to avoid the destruction of the Swedish state and their fatherland”, clearly distinguishing their dual commitment both to Sweden and their natural *patria*.²⁶ In a preliminary confirmation of privileges that Duke Charles gave on 13 July to the nobility of the former bishopric of Tartu, the existence of separate fatherlands in a fully incorporated Swedish state is expressly acknowledged and accepted: “The nobilities and other estates of Tartu (*stift Dorpt*) have declared that as they are prepared to do anything for the amplification of Godly honour, for the advancement of the kingdom of Sweden and its provinces, in particular of their beloved fatherland, Tartu, they want to be forever united with us and the estates of Sweden.”²⁷

²³ Bienemann, “Zur Geschichte der livländischen Ritter- und Landschaft”, 484.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 488.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 495.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 537.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 577–581.

Rhetoric of patria during the reduction controversy

The unification attempts by Charles IX and Gustav Adolf had only limited success, as the Baltic noble corporations and towns preferred to maintain their autonomous status within the realm. In the decades following the death of Gustav Adolf, when the royal government was relatively weak, the autonomy of the corporations only strengthened. Historians who have studied the constitutional relationship between Sweden and its Baltic provinces have pointed out that this relationship was never determined by constitutional acts, nor were they systematically discussed in theoretical treatises.²⁸ Rather than deciding the matter once and for all, the Swedish government preferred to tackle the various problems of this relationship as they emerged in connection to specific political initiatives. Similarly, even when the Baltic elites were opposed to some practical policies proposed or implemented by the central government – as indeed they often were – they preferred to defend their position by negotiating in very specific terms, rather than presenting a full-scale constitutional theory. One can describe it as the politics of seeming consensus – even though there was actually no agreement over fundamental issues, the controversies were kept under the lid so that the fiction of consensual politics could be achieved and maintained. Neither side wished to alienate the other by speaking out on issues where the actual agreement was difficult or impossible to achieve. Thus both sides could conveniently assume that their own vision of the constitutional order was the correct one, and both sides took their vision as a guideline for practical politics.

This fragile consensus broke down in the 1680s when the policy of the incorporation of the provinces was forcefully relaunched by King Charles XI.²⁹ This was accompanied by completely novel political rhetoric that emphasized the personal role of the king and the unity of Swedish *patria* under his government. The Swedish statesmen and scholars introduced this new rhetoric also in the overseas provinces. For example, in November 1691 a festive poem was presented in Tartu to celebrate the occasion of the 36th birthday of Charles XI.³⁰ Its author was a young Swedish scholar,

²⁸ Loit, “Läänemere provintside riigiõiguslik asend”; Runeby, *Monarchia mixta*.

²⁹ See Anthony F. Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish absolutism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 179–200.

³⁰ “Ite procul curae”, published in *O Dorpat, urbs addictissima musis ... : valik 17. sajandi Tartu juhuluulet*, ed. by Kristi Viiding, Jana Orion, and Janika Päll (Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2007), 310–313; See the analysis of the poem by Timo Sironen, “The celebration of the restarting of the Academia Gustavo-Carolina at Dorpat on the eve of the birthday of Charles XI on November 24th 1691”, *Itämeren Itälaidalla* 2, ed. by

Olaus Hermelin, who was serving as the professor of rhetoric at the recently reopened University of Tartu.³¹ There are some interesting aspects in the poem that are worthy of mentioning in the context of the political and constitutional ideas in the Swedish Baltic provinces. First, Hermelin refers to King Charles as *pater patriae* (father of the fatherland): “May everyone, who loves the fatherland and the Father of the fatherland, applaud and congratulate you”.³² *Pater patriae* is, of course, the Roman honorific title which after the end of the republican period became one among the number of titles of the Roman emperors. In Sweden, the spread of this title can be viewed in the conjunction with the turn towards absolutism in the year 1680, when both the high nobility represented through the Council of State and lower estates represented through the Diet lost their effective participation in government. In Sweden, such extraordinary changes were carried through without any noticeable resistance, in the spirit of consensus between different political groups.

This brings me to the second interesting passage in Hermelin’s poem. Hermelin writes: “Let not the pain of secret bites torment the heart nor a nasty whining pollute the flattering voices. Let the quarrels of the court be interrupted on this day”. Whose “secret bites” and “nasty whining” was Hermelin referring to? Hermelin was well aware that the policies of the central government had caused serious discontent among the Livonian nobility.³³ What annoyed the nobility was not the absolutist turn in Sweden but one of the chief initiatives of the new absolutist government, namely the introduction of the reduction of noble goods in the Baltic provinces. The reduction meant the resumption to the Crown of the noble estates that previously had belonged to the public domain but then had been donated to the nobles by earlier Swedish rulers (and in the Livonian case, also by Polish-Lithuanian rulers). The reduction was adopted without any serious controversy in Sweden, but in the Baltic provinces it caused great consternation. The *Ritterschaft* of Estland insisted in 1681 that the implementation of the reduction without its consent was a violation of its privileges, but the discontent never amounted to organized resistance. In the end, a settlement was negotiated between the royal authorities and the representatives of the nobility. In Livland, however, the *Ritterschaft* never gave its consent to the

Kari Alenius, Anita Honkala, and Sinikka Wunsch, *Studia historica septentrionalia*, 58 (Rovaniemi: Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, 2009).

³¹ On Hermelin, see Sven Olsson, *Olof Hermelin en karolinsk kulturpersonlighet och statsman* (Lund: Gleerup, 1953).

³² The translation of the poem is by Timo Sironen.

³³ Cf. Sironen, “The celebration of the restarting of the Academia Gustavo-Carolina”.

reduction and it was implemented by a royal mandate. The *Ritterschaft*'s continuing fight against the reduction ended with a harsh punishment of its leaders, and the abolishment of the Livonian *Landesstaat* in 1694.³⁴

What was at stake here was not so much economic survival or prosperity, but the rights and privileges of the Livonian nobility, which formed the very core of their identity. After all, the overwhelming proportion of Swedish donations that were subject to reduction belonged to the Swedish high nobility, and the local Livonian nobility stood to lose only about 10–15% of their landholdings (in total, the reduction affected 85% of the land in Livland and 53–54% in Estland). Rather than dreading a loss of livelihood, the debates indicate that the leaders of the *Ritterschaft* had the feeling that if they yielded to the pressure from the central government, this would bring along further encroachments of their privileges. The fight over reduction was in effect a fight over the constitutional status of the province within the realm. It became obvious that the root of the trouble was the allegiance of the Livonian noblemen. They did not really identify themselves with the Swedish realm at all, and were thus convinced that the political community that they owed their service to was, first and foremost, the province rather than the realm as a whole.

This can be seen clearly in their usage of the word “fatherland”. This term came up quite often during the debates. One example is the *Deputationsbericht*, a report of the actions of the *Ritterschaft*'s embassy in Stockholm against the reduction that was written in 1692 by Johann Reinhold von Patkul (1660–1707).³⁵ The report emphasizes that the embassy made everything possible for the benefit of the “beloved Fatherland” – meaning Livland, of course. In another place, Patkul related that a new memorial was drafted in order to amplify the *Ritterschaft*'s reasons to fight the reduction (*rationes pro avertenda reductione*). The draft was discussed thoroughly among the ambassadors because, as the report put it, “the welfare of the entire fatherland” (*Wohlfahrt des gantzen Vatterlandes*) depended on it.

³⁴ *Eesti talurahva ajalugu*, ed. by Juhan Kahk (Tallinn: Olion, 1992), 552–560; Cf. Juhan Vasar, *Die grosse livländische Güterreduktion: die Entstehung des Konflikts zwischen Karl XI. und der livländischen Ritter- und Landschaft 1678–1684* (Tartu (Dorpat): J. G. Krüger, 1931); Aleksander Loit, *Kampen om feodalrätten: reduktionen och domänpolitiken i Estland 1655–1710*. 1, *Studia historica Upsaliensia*, 71 (Uppsala, 1975); Alvin Isberg, *Karl XI och den livländska adeln 1684–1695: studier rörande det karolinska enväldets införande i Livland* (Lund: Lindstedts universitetsbokhandel, 1953); Alvin Isberg, “Baltiska privilegiefrågor 1697–1700”, *Svio-Estonica*, 15 (1960), 103–115.

³⁵ Published in *Recesse der livländischen Landtage aus den Jahren 1681 bis 1711*, ed. by Carl Schirren (Dorpat: Karow, 1865); also Johann Reinhard Patkul, *Der Landtag zu Wenden 1692: nach dem Originalconcept Patkuls* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1841).

We can see that the Livonians used the word “fatherland” in exactly the same way as it had been used by Duke Charles nearly a century earlier; it was identical with Livland, their natural *patria*. Of course, the nobility never implied in their public rhetoric that the interests of Livland and of the Swedish realm could clash. In a petition (*Bittschrift*) that they sent to the king after the embassy returned from Stockholm, far from suggesting that the king was exploiting the provinces for the benefit of Sweden, they stressed that the unintended impoverishment of the provinces resulting from the reduction would be harmful to the entire realm. With this they suggested that the defense of the interests of the province can in no way be considered as prejudicial to the interests of the state as a whole. Nevertheless, this seemingly innocent argument, which would have been perfectly acceptable in Duke Charles’s time, was completely out of line with the new official concept of the united Swedish fatherland, the interests of which were represented by king alone. What infuriated the Swedish central authorities was the pretension of the Livonians to decide what did or what did not lie in the interests of the state. The Livonians’ self-image as the defenders of the interests of the province was wholly inconsistent with Hermelin’s notion of the Swedish king as “*pater patriae*” – as a patrimonial ruler of the whole kingdom. And this is exactly the reason why Hermelin emphatically used this notion, reminding the citizens of Tartu and the noblemen of Livland where their true allegiances lay. He was not alone in using such terminology in the Baltic provinces; it seems that it became a rather common way of demonstrating one’s political allegiance. For example, pastor Christian Kelch, a well-known chronicle writer from Estland, dedicated the first volume of his *Liefländische Historia* (1695) to King Charles XI whom he called “a never sufficiently praised father of the fatherland”.³⁶

Real or personal union?

The failure of the *Ritterschaft* of Livland to realize that the only person who was entitled to speak in the name of the fatherland was now the king eventually led to the trial of their leaders in Stockholm. In 1694, Johann

³⁶ “[...] ein niemals genug (sic!) gepriesener Vater des Vaterlandes [...]” Christian Kelch, *Liefländische Historia, Oder Kurtze Beschreibung Der Denkwürdigsten Kriegs- Und Friedens-Geschichte Esth- Lief-Und Lettlandes; Vornehmlich in Sich Begreifend Einen Kurtzen Bericht Von Den Nahmen, Entheilung Und Beschaffenheit Der Provintz Liefland, ... Theils Aus Ein- Und Ausländischen Geschicht-Schreibern* (Reval: Mehner, 1695), dedication, unpaginated.

Reinhold von Patkul was sentenced to death and two *Landräte* to imprisonment. Patkul's sentence was particularly harsh, but he was considered the author of writings deemed seditious by the tribunal. One of these writings was the same *Deputationsbericht*, which had so often referred to Livland as *Vaterland*. It also presented a constitutional theory in a nutshell.

Yet before we proceed to Patkul's specific arguments, let us have a closer look at the status of the province of Livland within the Swedish state. I have pointed out that as an overseas territory, it was not represented in the Diet and, accordingly, the Diet had no right to legislate over it. In some circumstances references were also made to differences between the provinces of Estland and Livland, and these differences resulted from different ways they were incorporated into the realm. Estland had joined Sweden purely on a contractual basis in 1561. Livland, on the other hand, was considered a land conquered from Poland by arms and thus governed by the right of war (*iure belli*). This distinction has become commonplace in modern historiography, but has not always been that clear-cut. The Swedish authorities never expressed it in an official document, nor was it adopted as a foundational principle of the official policy. Throughout the seventeenth century, Sweden maintained a policy of unification towards the provinces, which meant that they were to be treated on an equal legal basis. The *Ritterschaft* of Livland, for their part, was obviously more interested in refuting the *iure belli* argument. They cultivated the view that the incorporation of both provinces into the realm was similar, because the *Ritterschaft* – having suffered from the recatholizing and centralizing policies of Poland-Lithuania – had supported the Swedish takeover of the lands. They also maintained that various Swedish rulers had promised to reward their loyalty with the confirmation of their pre-Swedish privileges. Nevertheless, their more precarious constitutional situation goes a long way to explain their greater sensitivity about their rights during the reduction.

One of the reasons for the failure of the Swedish policy of unification throughout the seventeenth century was the resistance of Baltic nobilities who realized that they had more to lose than to win from the representation. They could hardly have made a serious impact on the *Riksdag*'s decisions, thus it seemed a much safer option to maintain their right to negotiate over the application of the realm's policies to the provinces. The downside of this approach was, of course, that the provincial nobilities learned about the central policies only in retrospect, and politically they were hardly in the position to veto them if they were pushed hard enough as this would have destroyed the consensus and possibly the very privileges

that gave them such an autonomous status. This is exactly what happened in the 1690s when the nobility of Livland, in the king's view, went too far in exercising of their special status, and as a result, their political autonomy was abolished.

Now back to Patkul's specific arguments. Patkul used the *Deputationsbericht* as an opportunity to outline his views on the constitutional status of Livland within the Swedish empire and on the corresponding rights and duties of the central government and the Livonian estates. His main point was that the union that connected the Baltic provinces to Sweden was not a real union but only a personal union, which meant that constitutionally they were only connected through the person of the king and all royal policies in the provinces that did not acquire consent by the local estates were illegitimate. It is quite obvious that this theory was not an original invention by Patkul, but it had been the viewpoint of the Livonian nobility for a long time, most probably since the Polish era. Patkul's predecessors, including Landrat Gustav von Mengden (1627–1688), had been equally vehement in defense of the special "nature and privileges" of the province.³⁷ But Patkul developed this viewpoint into a coherent constitutional doctrine and presented it publicly in greater detail than anybody had done before him.

The *Deputationsbericht* tells how the nobility's privileges came under discussion at the royal council in Stockholm. The Governor-General of Livland, Johann Jacob Hastfer – the most vocal adversary of the *Ritterschaft's* privileges – objected to the delegation's account of the privileges that the Livonians had supposedly acquired during the Polish time. He said that the famous *privilegium Sigismundi Augusti* of 1561 was invalid because it had only been signed by the king but not by the Republic of Poland. For Livonians, however, the lack of the signature was not a deficit, but on the contrary: it was a clear sign that Livland had not been subjected to the state of Poland but only to the king in his capacity as the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Patkul argued that after the unification of Poland and Lithuania in 1569, Livland was subjected to neither but existed as an equal member in a "systema civitatum". It was connected to the other members of this system only by "vinculum sociorum" and a "caput morale", the king of Poland-Lithuania – thus through a personal union.³⁸

This was definitely not an accurate description of the circumstances of Livonia's submission because the contract between Gotthard Kettler, the

³⁷ E.g. Mengden's Memorial to the Livonian Diet in 1681, in Schirren, *Recesse der livländischen Landtage aus den Jahren 1681 bis 1711*, 11ff.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

last Master of the Livonian Order, and Sigismund II August in 1559 was a submission and protection contract, not a union contract. Also, the *diploma unionis* between Poland and Lithuania of 1569 prescribed that Livland would be joined with the union on the same basis as it had with Lithuania – thus by subjection and not by a personal union.³⁹ The fact that Livland was fully incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian realm found its expression in rather harsh policies of centralization and unification imposed on Livland by the union kings.

But Patkul's account shows how the fiction of a "Golden Polish Age" was invented and used to make a political point a hundred years later. When during the same discussion Charles XI himself intervened and asked, "how can one separate the king from his country?", the delegation replied that it was not uncommon in history. They shrewdly pointed to the current status of Livland as an example of such a relationship. This was a clever (albeit demagogical) move, because Livland's status as a part of the personal union was the point they needed and wished to prove in the first place. Now they argued that Livland was not subjected to the Swedish *state* but only to the king and therefore "both stand in the separate liberty of their rights and privileges".⁴⁰ What this implied was clear: reduction could not be imposed on Livland without the consent of the nobility who represented the *land* in this contractual relationship.

With this argument the Livonian nobility's habitual usage of the word *patria* received a theoretical foundation. The Livonians thought of themselves as patriots who did not fight for their own private interest but for common welfare. Also Gustav von Mengden had in 1681 rejected the accusations that he was acting "nicht *propter interesse et bonum publicum*, sondern nur *de privato et propter privatum commodum*". But this common welfare or *bonum publicum* was not that of the Swedish realm, nor that of the Baltic provinces as a whole, but solely the *bonum publicum* of Livland. Mengden said simply that he had been completely devoted to "his beloved Fatherland".⁴¹

Johann Reinhold von Patkul expressed this sentiment even more explicitly in his *Deduction of innocence*, which was an extensive treatise written in self-defense after he had managed to flee the country. It contained the

³⁹ Enn Tarvel, "Livlands statsrättsliga ställning före uppgången i svenska väldet 1625", *Stat-kyrka-samhälle: den stormaktstida samhällsordningen i Sverige och Östersjöprovinserna*, ed. by Torkel Jansson and Torbjörn Eng, Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 21 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 311.

⁴⁰ Schirren, *Recesse der livländischen Landtage aus den Jahren 1681 bis 1711*, 162.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

copies of the acts of the Stockholm process, the expert opinions on this process written by the law professors at the Universities of Leipzig and Halle who fully exonerated Patkul, and a collection of the copies of Livonian privileges. In the *Introduction* to this volume Patkul responded to the accusations that he had “betrayed his fatherland”.⁴² Patkul wrote that his *Vaterland* had always been Livland, and he had risked his life for its sake as an honorable patriot. He makes his peculiar concept of fatherland quite explicit here: “But he regards as his fatherland his dear brothers, namely his fellow defendants and the whole *Ritterschaft* of Livland”.⁴³ Thus Patkul’s concept of fatherland was fundamentally defined through the corporate privileges of the nobility. He writes that he did everything to defend the Livonian privileges as could be expected from a faithful patriot.

Patkul’s concept of *patria* is very much an indication on what basis the territorial identities formed in the Baltic provinces. Livland and Estland were not just amalgamations of lands, but they were corporate identities that stood in a specific relationship to the person of the king. The boundaries of the provinces did not emerge on the basis of natural, ethnic, or cultural boundaries but rather from a mix of various bilateral treaties during and after the wars of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Just to bring an example, the northeastern border of Livland was determined by the fact that King Gustav Adolf refused the request of the vassals of the former bishopric of Tartu to be incorporated in the *Ritterschaft* of Estland with all the accompanying privileges.⁴⁴

Yet, however accidental the origins of the provinces, the nobilities developed rather strong provincial identities, as their status and welfare depended on the preservation of the rights and privileges by which those provinces were defined in the first place. At the same time, it is quite obvious why the Livonian way of using the concepts of patriotism and *bonum publicum* ran contrary to the very essence of the absolutist ideology that was prevalent in Sweden beginning in the 1680s. According to this ideology,

⁴² “Deductio Innocentiae”, *Gründliche jedoch bescheidene Deduction der Unschuld Hn. Joh. Reinhold von Patkul, ... wider die ... Lästerungen, mit welchen Derselbe von Seinen Feinden ... belegt worden : nebst denen völligen wider Ihn in Schweden Anno 1694 Ergangenen Acten, und zweyen rechtlichen Teutschen und Lateinischen Responsis, auch angefügten Collectaneis Livonicis, ...* (Leipzig: Gross, 1701), §1, unpaginated.

⁴³ “Vor sein Vaterland aber erkennet Er fürnemlich Seine wertheeste Mitbrüder/ nemlich die Mitangeklagte und die gesammte Lieffländische Ritterschaft [...]”, *ibid.*, §10, unpaginated.

⁴⁴ Heinz von zur Mühlen, “Estland und Livland unter der Herrschaft Schwedens”, *Baltische Länder*, ed. by Gert von Pistohtkors, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas* (Berlin: Siedler, 1994), 193.

the sole representative of the interests of the country was the king, who acted for the common good of all subjects. This was emphasized in the libel against Patkul, which pointed out that king's decision to implement the reduction in the Baltic provinces was not taken in the interest of Swedish home territories but in the interest of the Swedish realm as a whole. In this document, the expression "Vaterlandes auch Reichs Wolstand" was again used in its new and more extended meaning, signifying the entire Swedish realm.⁴⁵

Conclusions

The study of the usage of the concept *patria* by Livonian nobilities and the Swedish central authorities with respect to Livland has revealed the development of identities that eventually brought these actors to a head. The identity of the nobility of Livland was relatively stable throughout the seventeenth century. There were no abrupt changes, but we can speak about a gradual consolidation of the corporate identity on the provincial level, within the administrative boundaries established by the Swedish state. At the center of this identity were the corporate right to self-government and other privileges. The Swedish perception of the relationship between the mother country and the provinces, on the other hand, underwent a major shift during the seventeenth century. While Charles IX fully acknowledged the corporate *patria* concept of the Livonian noblemen at the beginning of the century, and Gustav Adolf spoke only tentatively about his Baltic subjects as "Swedes", it was with Charles XI that the ideology of the king as the sole representative of the interest of the entire realm, and the sole focus of the political obligation, was developed. This was symbolized in the rhetoric of *pater patriae*, to whom all subjects of the realm stood in an equal relationship of obedience. It was this forced shift of identity that carried a danger of losing the elevated status that the Livonian noblemen derived from their political rights and responsibilities, rather than economic interest, which prompted them to resist the reduction – a potent mechanism and symbol of the policy of unification. The nobility of Estland, in comparison, felt much more secure in the enjoyment of their privileges and constitutional position, and the new winds from Stockholm did not alter their politics of consensus. The elites belonging to other estates, the

⁴⁵ "Rechtliche Acta: Libellus", *Gründliche jedoch bescheidene Deduction der Unschuld Hn. Joh. Reinhold von Patkul, ... wider die ... Lästerungen, mit welchen Derselbe von Seinen Feinden ... belegt worden.*

clergy and the burghers, also were much more accommodating towards the policies of unification, in particular because they were not too fond of the pretensions of the noble corporations to represent the entire country.

To conclude, the joyful and optimistic exhortations by Olaus Hermelin did not go down very well with the leaders of the nobility of Livland who continued with their “nasty whining”, albeit more secretly. In the end, the incompatibility of their particularistic identities with the new ruling ideology made it much easier for them to submit themselves to the Russian Tsar, who was more willing to grant a distinct status to his newly acquired provinces than Charles XI and his son Charles XII had been. The capitulations of 1710 became the foundation for new long-term constitutional myths.

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KOKKUVÕTE: *Rootsi või Liivimaa isamaa? Liivimaa aadli identiteedist 17. sajandil*

Kui uusaja lõpu Euroopas saab inimeste identiteedi juures määravaks kuuluvus rahvusriiki ja lojaalsus sellele, siis varauusajal saame kõnelda pigem eri tasandi identiteetide kogumist. Inimesed samastasid end ühelt poolt kohaliku küla või kihelkonnaga, samas tunnetati kuuluvust ka kõiki Jumala lapsi hõlmavasse kristlikku kogukonda (*communitas Christiana*). Nende kahe tasandi vahele jääb kuulumine mingisse poliitilisse ruumi, millega kaasnes kuulekus riigile või täpsemalt valitsejale. Homogeensete rahvusriikide eelsel ajastul hõlmas ka selline kuuluvustunne sageli erinevaid tasandeid, näiteks Saksa-Rooma keisririigis oli inimeste poliitiline lojaalsus suunatud üheaegselt nii vürstile (või vabalinnale) kui ka keisrile. See võis põhjustada keerulisi lojaalsuskonflikte juhul, kui need tasandid omavahel põrkusid, nii nagu juhtus Kolmekümneaastase sõja ajal.

Käesolev artikkel käsitleb poliitiliste identiteetide kujunemist Rootsi Läänemereprovintsis 17. sajandi jooksul. Rootsi Läänemereprovintsid on hea näide kattuvatest identiteetidest, mis konflikti korral võisid omavahel vastuollu minna, nii et inimesed olid sunnitud tegema otsuse oma tegeliku poliitilise lojaalsuse kohta või siis selle avalikustama. Artikkel

keskendub Liivimaa provintsi aadlile, kelle poliitilises identiteedis võib eristada kolme põhilist tasandit: provintsi tasand, ajaloolise Vana-Liivimaa tasand ning Rootsi riigi tasand. Kuna toleaegetes tekstides ei arutleta otsesõnu identiteediküsimuste üle, saab järeldusi teha kaudsemate tõendite põhjal. Artikli meetodiks on ühe keskse identiteeti tähistava mõiste – „isamaa“ (*patria*) – tähenduse muutumise uurimine. Selleks vaadeldakse *patria* mõiste kasutamist nii Liivimaa aadlike kui ka Rootsi riigivõimu esindajate poolt 17. sajandi vältel.

Eesti- ja Liivimaa provintside puhul on oluline märkida, et neid ei inkorporeeritud Rootsi riigi koosseisu, vaid nad säilitasid oma õigusliku eripära ja teatava poliitilise autonoomia. Samas on 17. sajandil mitmeid perioode, mil Rootsi kuningavõim üritas saavutada provintside tihedamat integreerimist riigi kui tervikuga. Identiteetide osas on sajandi jooksul vaadeldavad kaks vastandlikku tendentsi, mis viisid lõpuks terava konfliktini keskvoimu ja Liivimaa rüütelkonna vahel. Ühelt poolt näeme rüütelkonna provintsiaalse identiteedi formeerumist ja tugevnemist. 17. sajandi algul Poola käest vallutatud aladel puudus algselt ühtne identiteet. See kujunes Rootsi loodud administratiivsetes piirides järk-järgult, kusjuures olulisimaks teguriks oli rüütelkonna kui poliitilist rolli kandva korporatsiooni formeerumine. Kui sajandi algul oli mõeldav, et Rootsile truudusvande andnud aadlikud hakkavad käsitlema tervet Vana-Liivimaad kui oma isamaad, siis provintsiaalse omavalitsuse väljakujunemisel kinnistus *patria* mõiste kitsalt Liivimaa provintsidele. Selline identiteet oli 17. sajandi lõpuks vaid tugevnenud.

Teiselt poolt tegi Rootsi kuningavõimu suhtumine Liivimaa provintsi läbi tõsiseid muutusi. Karl IX tunnustas Liivimaa aadlike käsitlemist Liivimaast kui isamaast, millele nad võlgnesid oma esmase poliitilise kohustuse. Ent Karl XI, kes kehtestas Rootsis absolutistliku kuningavõimu, eeldas, et liivimaalaste esmane poliitiline lojaalsus kuulub kuningale ja Rootsi riigile kui tervikule, mitte Liivimaa provintsidele. Rootsis hakati kuninga kohta kasutama retoorilist kujundit *pater patriae*, millega väljendati tema isalikku rolli, ainuõigust riigi kui terviku huvide esindamisele ning kõigi alamate võrdset alluvussuhet kuningaga. See pörkus teravalt Liivimaa aadlike partikularistliku identiteediga, millega kaasnes endi pidamine provintsi huvide kaitsjaks ja esindajaks kuningavõimu juures. See käsitluste erinevus ilmneb kujukalt 1680.–90. aastatel reduktsiooni üle toimunud vaidlustes, mis päädisid Liivimaa rüütelkonna juhtide süüdimõistmisega Stockholmi kuninglikus kohtus. Kuningavõimu ja Liivimaa aadlike erinevad arusaamad Liivimaa konstitutsioonilisest seisundist Rootsi riigis väljendusid kõige

selgemalt Johann Reinhold von Patkuli kaitsekõnes kuninglikus kohtus ja hilisemates kirjutistes, kus ta esitab teooria Liivimaa ja Rootsi seotusest personaaluniooni läbi. Patkuli tekstidest tuleb esile ka Liivimaa aadlike *patria*-määratlus: nende isamaa oli Liivimaa provints või veelgi kitsamalt Liivimaa rüütelkond, mitte kogu *Livland* ajaloolise Vana-Liivimaa mõttes, ega ammugi mitte Rootsi riik tervikuna.