

Wiener Studien zur Skandinavistik (WSS)

Band 15

Der Norden im Ausland – das Ausland im Norden

Formung und Transformation von Konzepten und Bildern des Anderen vom Mittelalter bis heute

herausgegeben von Sven Hakon Rossel

Redaktion: Roger Reidinger, Matthias Langheiter-Tutschek

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herausgegeben von Robert Nedoma (Wien) und
Sven Hakon Rossel (Wien)

zusammen mit Hans Basbøll (Odense), Poul Houe (Minneapolis),
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und Stephan Michael Schröder (Köln)

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Die Stadt an der Donau

Kennst Du die Stadt wo Apfelstrudel glühn
Dem müden Wanderer auf seinem Pfade
Entgegen, wo bei heißer Schokolade
Am Morgen Künstler-Utopien blühn.

Wo Wittgenstein und Freud und Klimt und dann
Auch Schnitzler tranken aus des Geistes Quelle,
Wo Paul Celan von Schwelle bis zur Schwelle
Floh nach Paris, verfolgt vom Dritten Mann.

Wo vor dem Neuen Rathaus sich verlieren
In dem Sublimen stille Existenzen,
In Wagner, Verdi alte, kluge Menschen,
Die später einsam durch die Nacht spazieren.

Nach Hause. Reis´ zur Stadt nicht weit von Baden,
Hier ißt man Mozart-Torte und wird süß,
Hier treffen sich – und sagen froh: Gott grüß –
Beim Marsch Radetzky Alte Kameraden.

Wien 7.8.2004
Hanus Kamban

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Rex Vandalorum – The Debates on Wends and Vandals in Swedish Humanism as an Indicator for Early Modern Patterns of Ethnic Perception

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For more than four hundred years, up to the accession of the present king Carl XVI Gustaf in 1973, did the Swedish monarchs hold the title “King of the Wends“. The first evidence of this claim dates from the reign of Gustav I Vasa (1523-1560), who adopted the title *Sveriges, Göthes och Wendes Konung* in official sources around the year 1540. In Latin documents, the threefold title was translated as *rex Suecorum, Gothorum Vandalorumque*.

The equation of *Wendes konung*, “King of the Wends”, and *rex Vandalorum*, “King of the Vandals” in administrative and diplomatic usage provides a vantage point for discussing the relationship between these two ethnonyms in Swedish humanist resp. gothicist thought.¹ This specific case study on Wends and Vandals promises valuable insights concerning the patterns of self-perception, the concepts of identity and otherness as well as the importance of ethnicity in the scholarly discourses of early modern Sweden.

The German word *Wenden* is documented as a synonym for Slavs since the 6th century A.D. (Jordanes, *Getica ed. Mommsen* 62: *Venethi, Var. -ti, -di*). Medieval authors also used *Wandali* instead of *Wenden/Slavs*.² The

¹ The question has been touched briefly by Hans Hildebrand, “Heraldiska studier I. Det svenska riksvapnet.” *Antiqvarisk tidskrift för Sverige*, 7 (1884), 59; Emil Hildebrand, *Svenska statsförfattningens historiska utveckling från äldsta tid till våra dagar* (Stockholm 1896), 231; Olof Söderqvist, “Sveriges, Götes och Wendes konung.” *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift*, 12 (1909), 299ff. In the early 1980s, the Finnish historian Matti Klinge discussed the topic of Wends and Vandals in greater details, devoting special attention to Johannes Messenius’ *Scondia Illustrata*. Cf. Matti Klinge, *Östersjövålden. Ett illustrerat historiskt utkast* (Stockholm 1985), 140-166.

² Cf. Friedrich Seibt, “Wenden.” *Handwörterbuch zur deutschen Rechtsgeschichte* 5, 1259-1261; Christian Lübke, “Wenden (Winden).“ *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 8, 2181f.; Jutta Reisinger/Günter Sowa, *Das Ethnikon Sclavi in den lateinischen Quellen bis zum*

first sources containing this equation are the glossary of Wessobrunn, dating from the 9th century, and the so-called glossary of Salomon. The “Frankish Table of Nations” – a brief genealogy of peoples that, in essence, proceeds from Tacitus’ threefold division of the Germans – can be regarded as the main source for the identification of Slavs/Wends with the Vandals. Traces of this text can be isolated in several medieval sources; especially in the *Chronicon Vedastinum* and the 13th century Polish chronicle of Mierszwa. Danzig, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, Königsberg, Riga and other Hanseatic cities were known as *wendische Städte/vandalicae urbes* since the 14th century. This denomination is undoubtedly a relic of the early medieval identification of Wends and Vandals.³

So far, historical research has failed to provide an adequate explanation for the equation of Wends and Vandals. The primary aim of the identification, however, seems to have been the integration of the Slavs, the “new-comers and nomads”⁴ of early medieval Europe, into a western and Frankish conception of history. Several early modern scholars tried to justify the equation with deliberate distortions of history referring to the so-called Pseudo-Berosos and Tacitus.⁵

The Hamburgian humanist Albertus Krantz (1448-1517) discussed the interaction of Slavs and Vandals in his *Chronica regnorum aquilonarium*. The threefold name of the Slavs in the famous passage in Jordanes’ *Getica* is explained by Krantz in the following way: The three Slavic groups – the *Veneti*, the Slavs and the *Antes* – were identical with the ancient Vandals. The existence of three different names was merely a consequence of the large number of these Slavo-Vandals and the many different places they inhabited. The name Slavs was the one used most regularly, whereas the

Jahr 900 (= *Glossar zur frühmittelalterlichen Geschichte im östlichen Europa*, Beiheft 6; Stuttgart 1990), 18-20; Frantisek Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter* (= *Nationes* 3; Sigmaringen 1980), 61.

³ Cf. Roland Steinacher, “Wenden, Slawen, Vandalen. Eine frühmittelalterliche pseudo-logische Gleichsetzung und ihre Nachwirkungen.“ *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*. Walter Pohl, ed. (= *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 8; Wien 2004), 329ff.; Roland Steinacher, “Vandalen – Rezeptions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte.“ *Der Neue Pauly* 15/3, 942-946.

⁴ Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs. History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700* (= *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought*. Fourth Series; Cambridge 2001), 23.

⁵ Apart from Krantz and Cromer the topic has been discussed by Johannes Dubravius, Johann Christoph Schurtzfleisch, Nicolaus Marschalk, Bernhard Latomus, Johannes Simonius, David Chytraeus and Nicolaus Leuthinger. Cf. Roland Steinacher, “Vandalen im frühneuzeitlichen Ostseeraum. Beobachtungen zur Rezeption antiker ethnischer Identitäten im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert.“ *Die Geschichte der Antike aktuell: Methoden, Ergebnisse und Rezeption*. Karl Strobl, ed. (= *Alturtumswissenschaftliche Studien Klagenfurt* 2; Klagenfurt 2005), 279-298.

term *Vandali* was the oldest one, which can be traced back to Tacitus.⁶ In Krantz's main work, *Wandalia*, he therefore avoids *Sclavi* and uses *Wandali* instead, even if *Sclavi* are mentioned in a cited source. Thus, according to Krantz, the Slavs are not Asian Scythians, but Europeans as testified by Tacitus and Berossos. The rule and seigniorial power of the Holy Roman Empire over the Slavic peoples are stressed and legitimated with this deliberate alteration of history.⁷

The Polish humanist Martin Cromer (1512-1589) strove to create a Polish history independent from the western neighbours and therefore tried to confine the ample concept of Vandal identity designed by Albertus Krantz. In 1555 his Polish history in thirty books was printed, entitled *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*. Cromer confronted the historical ideas of German humanists with a pronouncedly Polish and Slavic attitude in order to generate a genuine Slavic prehistory. Cromer starts his treatise with the remark that the Polish are a Slavic people first and foremost (*Primum omnium constat, Polonos Slavicam gentem esse*). The Slavs are Sarmatians, descending not from Noah's son Japheth, but rather from Sem. According to Cromer, the Slavs settled in former Vandal territories. Rebutting Krantz' equation of Vandals and Wends, he unmistakably distinguishes between Germanic Vandals on the one and Slavic Wends on the other hand.⁸

Both Krantz' and Cromer's theories were well-known in early modern Sweden and were the cause of significant debates and discussions. The 16th and 17th centuries marked the heyday of Swedish Gothicism, when the Swedish monarchy asserted its Gothic heritage to increase its prestige and justify its expansionist policies.⁹ Though far from undisputed, the elaborate

⁶ Albertus Krantz, *Rerum Germanicarum historici claris regnorum Aquilonarium, Daniae, Sueciae, Norvagiae chronica* [...] (Cologne 1546), 241; Cf. Viktor Anton Nordmann, *Die Wandalia des Albert Krantz* (= *Annales Academiæ scientiarum Fennicæ* B 29: 3; Helsinki 1934), 28ff.; Steinacher, "Vandalen im frühneuzeitlichen Ostseeraum" [footnote 5].

⁷ Albertus Krantz, *Wandalia. De Wandalorum vera origine* [...] (Cologne 1519), I, 6 and Praefatio; The content of this voluminous tome is summarized by Nordmann, *Die Wandalia des Albert Krantz* [footnote 6], 49-74.

⁸ Martin Cromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri XXX* (Basle 1550), 32f. Cf. Steinacher, "Vandalen im frühneuzeitlichen Ostseeraum" [footnote 5].

⁹ Important literature on Swedish Gothicism includes: Sten Lindroth, "Göticismen." *Kulturhistorisk leksikon för nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid* 6, 35-38; H[arald] Ehrhardt, "Goticismus." *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 4, 1573-1575; F[ritz] Paul, "Gotizismus." *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* ² 12, 461-466; Gustav Löw, *Sveriges forntid i svensk historieskrivning* (Stockholm 1908-10), I, 50-160; Johan Nordström, *De yverbornes ö. Sextonhundratsstudier* (Stockholm 1934); Josef Svennung, *Zur Geschichte des Goticismus* (= *Skrifter utgivna av K. Humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Uppsala* 44: 2B; Stockholm 1967). In her recent dissertation, Inken Schmidt-Voges displays a critical attitude towards these older research traditions, characterising Gothicism and its mythic subtext as an example of

doctrine of Gothicism played a crucial role in the intellectual life of early modern Sweden.

It is therefore undoubtedly appropriate to start an overview of Vandal hypotheses in early modern Sweden with the most prominent exponent of 16th century Gothicism: Johannes Magnus (1488-1544), the exiled last Catholic archbishop of Uppsala. His *Gothorum Sueonumque Historia* was finished in 1540 and printed in 1554. Magnus broadly follows Jordanes' 6th century *Getica*. In a short passage he explains his view of the relation between Wends and Vandals: After having defeated the *Heruli* the Goths ruled by their king Armanaricus¹⁰ attacked the *Veneti*. Johannes Magnus alters Jordanes' report and replaces the *Veneti* with *Vandali*. He states that the latter – according to the ancient author Ablavius – are a part of the Slavs (*nec Sclavonica gens a Vandalica, nisi solo nomine differebat*). Because of the *Sclavonica gens* being split up in so many *nationes*, they bear different names. Thus the Vandals differ from the *gens Slavonica* only by their ethnonym. Armanaricus defeated the Vandals and was able to establish his reign in vast territories up to the coast of the *Maris Germanici*. Johannes Magnus thereby demonstrates the great variety of possible political interpretations of ancient history.¹¹

The protestant theologian and reformer Olaus Petri (1493-1552) is commonly regarded as the most ardent critic of Gothicism in 16th century Sweden. In his Swedish chronicle, *En svensk cröneka* (~1540), Olaus displayed a pronouncedly sceptic attitude towards the genealogical connections between ancient Goths and contemporary Swedes that formed the core of gothicist self-perception during Gustav I Vasa's reign. Olaus subsequently fell from grace and was condemned for high treason in Örebro 1539/40. Early drafts of his chronicle were quoted in the accusation to prove that Olaus had slandered king and nobility.

The *Swenska cröneka* touches the topic of Wends and Vandals in a brief excursus¹² that might seem insignificant. Bearing the chronicle's complicated development in mind,¹³ it proves, however, to be a significant indica-

ethnocentric historiography. Cf. Inken Schmidt-Voges, *De antiqua claritate et clara antiquitate Gothorum. Gotizismus als Identitätsmodell im frühneuzeitlichen Schweden* (= *Imaginatio borealis* 4; Frankfurt 2004).

¹⁰ In Jordanes' *Getica* 117-118, Armanaricus is named Hermanaricus. (Jordanis *Romana et Getica*, Theodor Mommsen, ed. [= *MGH AA* 5, 1; Berlin 1882], 88.)

¹¹ Johannes Magnus, *Gothorum Sueonumque Historia* (Rome 1554), VI, XXII, 219.

¹² Olavus Petri, "En Svensk Cröneka", Jöran Sahlgren, ed. *Samlade skrifter af Olavus Petri* 4. Bengt Hesselman, ed. (Uppsala 1917), 9.

¹³ The following assumptions are based on Efraim Lundmark, "Redaktionerna av Olavus Petris Svenska krönika. Översikt och gruppering av handskrifterna." *Vetenskaps-Societeten i Lund, Årsbok* 1940, 13-76. Differing opinions on the development and the various revisions of Olaus Petri's *Swenska cröneka* have been put forward by Lars Sjödin and Gunnar T. Westin. (Lars Sjödin, "Tillkomsten av Olaus Petri krönika."

tor for the importance of Wends in gothicist thought: The initial version dismisses a linguistic affinity between the Goths – the putative ancestors of the Swedes – and the Wends as very unlikely. Later revisions dating from the years after the Örebro trial extenuate the initial repudiation and concede that there might be a certain relatedness between Goths and Wends after all. Olaus and his revisers, possibly including his brother Laurentius Petri, included references to Albert Krantz and to Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum* – which had been edited for the first time in 1556 – in later versions of the chronicle, in order to prove that they were familiar with the latest literature on Wends and Vandals.

His initial scepticism concerning a kinship between Goths and Wends had not been mentioned at Örebro, and Olaus was therefore not explicitly forced to change this passage. It seemed, however, that he and his revisers realised the importance of the Wendish title in the self-perception of the Vasa court, and decided to make pre-emptive amendments to avoid further complications and bring the *Swenska cröneka* in line with the official historiography of the Swedish kingdom.

The importance of the Vandals in Swedish Gothicism is further emphasised by two contracts between King Erik XIV and the royal secretary Petrus Marsilius, dating from 1565.¹⁴ Marsilius, a French humanist in Swedish service, was instructed to write an extensive Vandal history. The king, himself a devoted follower of Gothicism, wished that the errors of Danish scholars were to be corrected with better sources. The contract contains the concept of several books on Swedish history up to the 16th century and a separate book dealing with the *externis Gothis*. Another book was planned to shed light on the history of the Vandals as well as the Finns. Erik XIV was deposed three years later, in 1568, and it seems that Marsilius' remarkable historiographical project was never realised.

Johannes Messenius (1579-1636), one of the most influential, but also controversial Swedish historians of the 17th century, introduced a new concept to the debate. In the tenth volume of his *Scandia Illustrata* (~1624), Messenius speaks of *Vendi boreales*, "Northern Wends".¹⁵ The phonetic similarities between *Venedilandia*, *Venelandia*, *Fenlandia* and *Finlandia* prompted him to identify these Northern Wends as the ancestors of the Finns. According to Messenius, the entire Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea

Historisk tidskrift 41 [1921], 49; Gunnar T. Westin, *Historieskrivaren Olaus Petri. Svenska krönikans källor och krönikaförfattarens metod* [Lund 1946], 9.) These conflicting theories, however, do not concern the discussion on Wends and Vandals.

¹⁴ Eric Jöransson Tegel, *Konung Ericus den XIV:des Historia* [...]. Anders Anton von Stiernman, ed. (Stockholm 1751), 332-336

¹⁵ Johannes Messenius, *Scandia Illustrata* [...]. Johan Peringskiöld, ed. (Stockholm 1700-05), X, 2ff.

had once been *Venelandia*, the realm of the Wends, but after numerous foreign incursions, only Finland retained the ancient Wendish heritage.

Messenius agrees with Martin Cromer that it is necessary to distinguish between Wends respectively Finns on the one hand and Vandals on the other. The former are considered Slavonic Sarmatians, descendants of Noah's son Sem, while the latter had originated from Scandinavia and were closely related to the Goths. The fact that both Vandals and Wends had, at different times in history, settled in Finland does not allow neglecting the fundamental ethnic and genealogical differences between the two ethnic groups.¹⁶

Later scholars such as Michael Wexionius Gyldenstolpe and Daniel Juslenius adopted Messenius' basic assumptions, but chose to ignore his distinction between Wends/Finns and Vandals.¹⁷ In their writings, Wends, Vandals and Finns merge into a blurry and indistinct ethnic terminology that permitted a wide range of far-fetched historical speculations.

In 1647 the three books on Swedish history by Johannes Loccenius were printed in Stockholm. Loccenius attempts to summarise the discussions he knows. Many scholars, he states, persist in the distinction of Vandals and *Vinuli* or Wends. The Vandals are said to be descendants of Germanic or Gothic origin, the Wends are of Slavic heritage. But Helmold of Bosau and some other authors made one people out of these three. These writers either believed that the *Vinuli*/Wends originated from the Vandals, or they thought they had overtaken the Vandals' settlements and soils after their departure for Gaul, Spain and Africa. The most important contribution Loccenius adds to the discussion is one episode taken out of a Slavic chronicle (most likely Helmold of Bosau's *Chronica Slavorum*). The Swedes ruled by their king Harald and the Danes led by King Hemming conquered the mythical Vinneta or Jummeta, the capital of both Vandals and Wends. This is the reason, Loccenius argues, why the Swedish kings were the rightful heirs of the kings of Vinneta and thus also heirs of their title *Wendes konung resp. rex Vandalarum*.¹⁸

Genealogical speculations in the wake of Swedish Gothicism reached their final peak in Olaus Rudbeck's magnum opus *Atlantica* (1679-1702). Rudbeck (1630-1702) adhered to the basic assumptions of ancient Greek ethnography that divided the inhabitants of Europe into three groups: the Scythians, the Celts and the Greeks. Sweden was, for Rudbeck, the cradle of European civilisations, and by using the Scythian ethnonym as a syn-

¹⁶ Cf. Johannes Messenius, *Scandia Illustrata* [note 15], XI, 16; XIII, 17.

¹⁷ Michaël O. Wexionius, *Epitome descriptionis Sueciae, Gothiae, Fenningiae, et subiectarum provinciarum* [...] (Åbo 1650); Daniel D. Juslenius, *Aboa vetus et nova* (Åbo 1700).

¹⁸ Johannes Loccenius, *Antiquitatum Sveo-Gothicorum libri tres* (Stockholm 1647), 155-158.

onymous designation for the Swedes, he placed them among the indigenous people of Europe.

In accordance with the majority of scholars in the 17th century, Rudbeck refutes the equation of Wends and Vandals. The Vandals are mentioned several times among the conquering tribes that had originated from Scandinavia and are therefore ranked among the Swedish Scythians, whereas the Wends, being of Slavic heritage, do not belong to the prestigious community of indigenous Europeans.¹⁹ Like the Finns, they are mere newcomers that have migrated from Asia to Europe. Therefore, Rudbeck explicitly denounces the royal title and the translation of *Wendes konung* as *rex Vandalarum*:

Till det andra, seer man hwar det rätta *Venden* är, och hwarföre våra Konungar än skrifwa sig Swears, Göthars och *Wenders* Konung, hwiket i de Latinske uttolkningar kallas *Vandali* men borde stå *Venedorum*, ty *Vandali* äre Swänske (...)²⁰

In addition to the prominent writings mentioned above, little known dissertations provide valuable insights into the academic mainstream of Gothicist Sweden. One of them is *Vandalorum in Africa Imperium* (1697) by Inge-mund Bröms from the University of Uppsala. The Vandal origins, Bröms concedes, are difficult to describe. Nearly every Northern people tries to prove that the Vandals descended from their own country and everybody tries to be heir of the Vandals' triumphs. Bröms is unsure whether different migrating Gothic peoples were called Vandals or if the name was indeed unique. For Bröms scholarly sloppiness is the reason that the Vandals were regularly confused with the *Venedi* and the Wends. Known sources, however, indicate that Vandals and Wends had totally different customs and habits. The *Venedi* are Slavic and their homeland is around the Vistula river. The Vandals are certainly of Scandinavian origin and most likely from Swedish territory. As relatives of the Goths, the Vandals are also covered with glory. Procopius and Conradus Abbas testify that many peoples lived in the North, amongst them the Goths, Visigoths, Gepids and Vandals. Bröms' final argument is especially peculiar: One should not underrate the fact that the Vandals had been pirates in the Mediterranean Sea. Their Scandinavian origin is therefore beyond doubt, because no other part of the world than the land of the Vikings could possibly be responsible for such formidable pirates.²¹

Another dissertation of the late 17th century is Andreas Hessel's *Dissertatio Historica de Vandalis* (1698). Hessel depicts the Vandals as near relatives of the Goths. Albert Krantz, he explains, wanted to make Germans

¹⁹ Olaus Rudbecks *Atlantica. Svenska originaltexten*. Axel Nelson, ed. (= *Lychnos-bibliotek* 2; Stockholm 1937-50), I, 54f.; III, 196.

²⁰ *Olaus Rudbecks Atlantica* [footnote 19], III, 199.

²¹ Inge-mund Bröms, *Vandalorum in Africa Imperium* (Uppsala 1697), 12f.

out of the Wenden/Winden. Hugo Grotius explained the name of the Vandals as the term for those among the Goths who led a nomadic life (*vandelen* > *Vandali*). The ethnonyms *Vandali*, *Vinduli* and *Vinuli* are to be understood as *Vagabondi*, the term for these wandering Goths, descending from *Scandia* and afterwards devastating all Europe. Throughout their migrations they adopted different names. The Vandals reaching the area near the Vistula river called themselves *Venedi* or *Venethi* and were the reason for the toponym *Sinus Venedicus* in the Baltic Sea. In Livonia they left the *urbs Wenden*, in Courland the village *Windau* and in Pommerania the Duchy of Wenden (*ducatus Vandaliae*). Even Andalusia in Spain was interpreted as *Vandalusia*.²² Of course, these histories imply a legal claim of the *rex Suecorum, Gothorum Vandalarumque* to all these territories.²³

The preceding examples are selected highlights from a scholarly discourse of moderate, yet by no means negligible, intensity. The debates on Wends and Vandals, their relationship to each other and their significance for the Swedish realm, were embedded in contemporary notions of ethnicity. The discourse was by no means devoid of political implications. In 16th century Sweden, the equation of Wends and Vandals that can be traced back to medieval times found many adherents in the wake of Albert Krantz's *Wandalia*. During the 17th century, the perception of Wends and Vandals changed gradually. Scholars increasingly rejected Krantz's theories and regarded the two ethnic groups as distinct and categorically different historical entities.

The various Vandal hypotheses never formed a clear-cut, elaborate historiographical conception comparable to the dogmatic paradigm of Gothic ancestry. They remained contradictory and imprecise. In 16th and 17th century scholarship, the Vandals are usually mentioned in the context of Sweden's Gothic heritage, forming a minor, subordinate pillar of Gothicism, second to the Goths themselves. Despite their limited importance, the Vandals were firmly rooted in Swedish self-perception.

The Wendish ethnonym proves to be an extraordinarily versatile ethnic designation. The common concepts of ethnicity and nationhood that rely almost exclusively on language as determining criteria – shaped during the 19th century and still prevalent today – are by no means applicable to early modern scholarship. From the Swedish point of view, the word “Wend” could refer to anyone living on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, no matter whether he or she spoke a Slavic, a Baltic or a Finno-Ugric language. In 16th and 17th century scholarly literature, the area between Finland and

²² This far-fetched assumption can even be found in present scholarship. The connection between the name Andalusia and the Vandals has been convincingly denounced by Heinz Halm, “Al-Andalus und Gothica Sors.” *Der Islam*, 66 (1989), 252-263.

²³ Andreas Hessel, *Dissertatio Historica de Vandalis* (Uppsala 1698), 24f. and 57f.

Pommerania, “*inter Torne Norrebotnicum, & Saxoniam*”,²⁴ appears as a vaguely defined Wendish continuum with no unequivocal structuring. It is not language that unifies the inhabitants of these areas and assigns them a distinctive Wendish identity in the eyes of the Swedish academic elite. In this case, the determining factor, the common denominator that constitutes Wendish ethnicity, seems to be their dubious reputation as quasi-pagans. Having been christianised just some centuries ago, these people were suspected of practising sorcery and secretly adhering to heathen beliefs. In the ethnic discourses of early modern Sweden, the term “Wend” summarised all those inhabitants of the Baltic Sea region who were regarded as slightly barbarous and whose Christian faith was considered doubtful.

Despite the mentioned inconsistencies in the perception of Wends and Vandals, Swedish scholars of the 16th and 17th century agreed that there was some connection between the two groups; be it that they considered them as identical or rather perceived them as different ethnic entities that had interacted, fought or conquered each other at some point in history. It was a widely accepted conviction that a certain relation existed between the Gothic, and therefore Swedish, Vandals and the suspect, almost pagan Wends. The ambiguity of this relationship made it possible to justify various political claims and adjust the Vandal/Wend hypotheses as needed. The enumeration of Vandal settlements in Livonia, Courland and Pommerania in Hessel’s *Dissertatio de Vandalis* is only one example demonstrating how the Vandal respectively Wendish heritage was invoked to justify Swedish sovereignty over the Baltic Sea Area.

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²⁴ Johannes Messenius, *Scandia Illustrata* [footnote 15], X, 1.

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