The State and the Integration of the Towns of the Provinces of the Swedish Baltic Empire

The Purpose of the Paper

During the hundred years between 1561 and 1660, Sweden expanded along the coasts of the Baltic Sea and throughout Scandinavia. Sweden became the dominant power in the Baltics and northern Europe, a position it would maintain until the early eighteenth century. At the same time, Swedish society was experiencing a profound transformation. Sweden developed into a typical European early modern power-state with a bureaucracy, a powerful military organization, and a peasantry bending under taxes and conscription. The kingdom of Sweden also changed from a self-contained country to an important member of the European economy.

During this period the Swedish urban system developed as well. From being one of the least urbanized European countries with hardly more than 40 towns and an urbanization level of three to four per cent, Sweden doubled the number of towns and increased the urbanization level to almost ten per cent. The towns were also forced by the state into a staple-town system with differing roles in foreign and domestic trade, and the administrative and governing systems of the towns were reformed according to royal initiatives.

In the conquered provinces a number of other towns now came under Swedish rule. These towns were treated in different ways by the state, as were the provinces as a whole. While the former Danish and Norwegian towns were completely incorporated into the Swedish nation, the German and most of the east Baltic towns were not. The aim of this paper is to summarize the treatment and integration of the towns of the provinces compared to the situation of the Swedish towns.

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The Swedish Urban System

In the sixteenth century Sweden consisted of the area of present-day Sweden except the southern counties of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge and the island Gotland, which were parts of Denmark, and the counties Bohuslän, Jämtland and Härjedalen, which belonged to Norway. Finland, on the other hand, made up the eastern part of the kingdom.

The towns were mainly situated in the central parts of the realm around the lake Mälaren, in south-western Finland and in the counties of Östergötland and Västergötland. Northern Sweden had no towns at all, nor did the interior of Finland. The largest town by far was Stockholm, which in the early century had six or seven thousand inhabitants. Besides Stockholm, only a handful of the Swedish towns had more than a thousand people. Those small places looked more like villages but were towns nevertheless, with their own town charters and under the Swedish urban law.²

In the course of the sixteenth century no great changes took place. A few new towns were founded but the level of urbanization showed minimal growth. During the next century, however, the Swedish urban system was totally transformed. In the old Swedish realm, something like 40 new towns were founded during the first half of the century. This means that in the middle of the seventeenth century there were about 85 towns in Sweden. Most of the new towns were situated in parts of the country that were not urbanized before, like the coast around the Bothnian Gulf, Bergslagen – that is the metal producing parts of central Sweden – and even the interior of Finland. Although almost all of the towns that were founded were very small, the urbanization level at the end of the seventeenth century had risen to nearly ten per cent.

The early modern Sweden that existed prior to the big conquests was a relatively homogeneous society. Although a vast country, the regional separatism, which in the Middle Ages had been quite significant, was not especially profound, and it became even less important during the early modern centuries. There were ethnic and linguistic differences; the Finnish part of the population spoke its own language although many people in Finland spoke Swedish, in the northern areas of both Sweden and Finland the Lapps had a culture and language of their own, and especially in some of the old medieval towns a considerable part of the popu-

lation was still German. But religious differences were not particularly deep. From the early seventeenth century all Swedes were required to be Lutherans or face the penalty of death, although later in the seventeenth century some other confessionists among immigrants were tolerated because of the need for competent foreign professionals.

Legally, the group which stood out most predominantly from other Swedes was of course the nobility. In the sixteenth century, there were few noblemen and they were not very wealthy, but in the next century they rose considerably in number and wealth. Among the privileges they received from Gustavus Adolphus upon his acquisition of the throne in 1612 was the sole right to all higher offices in the state, both civilian and military. At the same time as this provided the nobility with a large share of the power it also turned the group into a serving order. As Sweden was developing its administration and expanding its borders, the need for noblemen multiplied, and a lot of domestic as well as foreign competent men were ennobled. Especially the higher nobility got its share of the spoils of war and the conquered provinces; High chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, for instance, owned approximately two fifths of the cultivated land in the province Livonia. But even if the nobility stood out from other Swedes, all peasants were free men, many owned their farms, and all were ruled by the same law.

This homogeneity applied as well for the towns, or anyway for the burghers who constituted about half of the town inhabitants. The towns were ruled by a common Town law from the middle of the fourteenth century, and they belonged to a similar judicial system. They had their own individual town charters, but in most cases the charters were fairly similar. The differences between them were due primarily to locally determined conditions relating to trade and other sources of income.

All towns were governed in mainly the same dualistic way, except that the administration could be more or less complicated according to the size of the town. On one hand, the Town law gave the towns the right to manage their own affairs. They were governed by burgomasters and council, which also served as the town court. On the other hand, the Town law also guaranteed the king’s influence and ability to intervene. According to the law, no decisions or judgements were to be made by burgomasters and council without the presence of the king’s sheriff or other officer. The sheriff had a supervisory role and could intervene if he wanted. The towns were in no way autonomous.

In the seventeenth century, the government tried to reorganize town admi-
nistrations. From the 1620’s and onward, the government appointed what has been called ‘royal burgomasters’ in Stockholm, literate and professional civil servants who did not belong to theburghership of the town. Thereafter this custom spread to some other towns. In the 1630’s moreover, the government of Stockholm was remodelled after the same lines as the reformed central administration and government, with different boards for different activities such as finances and trade. This trend also spread to some other towns, but most of them were too small to have the need for such administration. What we do see, though, is a growing royal influence over the towns as well as over the courts and local administration of the countryside, and that this goes hand-in-hand with the development of the central administration and governmental institutions. This tendency reached its climax with the absolutist monarchy in the 1680’s.

**The Swedish Conglomerate State**

The Swedish expansion started in 1561 when Reval and the German-Baltic nobility in the northern part of present-day Estonia placed themselves under the protection of the Swedish king. Thereafter, Sweden became engaged in wars with either Russia, Denmark or Poland more or less all the time up till 1629. In 1581, Sweden conquered the town of Narva in eastern Estonia. In the peace with Russia in 1617, Sweden gained Ingria and all the land between the Finnish Gulf and Lake Ladoga. In 1621 Sweden conquered Riga, and in the following years from Poland the rest of the province Livonia.

In 1630 Sweden entered the Thirty Years War in Germany, which in the end gave it the north German territories Vorpommern, a part of Hinterpommern, Wismar and the bishoprics Bremen and Verden. In the meanwhile, Sweden gained from Denmark the islands of Gotland and Ösel off the Estonian coast and the Norwegian counties of Bohuslän, Jämtland and Härjedalen. Finally at the end of the 1650’s, Sweden also conquered the counties of Skåne, Halland and Blekinge.

As a result of the expansion, Sweden gained a number of new towns around the Baltic Sea. The total number of conquered towns was at least 65, depending upon how you define ”town”. Of these, 16 were eastern Baltic, 27 German and 22 either Danish or Norwegian.

The new provinces were all treated differently by the Swedish government, constitutionally and administratively, and the treatment was also subject to change over time. The positions the provinces received and the ways they were treated depended on several factors. Among those were the circumstances under which
the province became Swedish, the social structure in the province itself and the charters the different groups of the province were able to gain from negotiations. Other factors included the economic and political importance of the province or town, its geographical and strategic position, Sweden’s relations to foreign powers, and not least the situation in Swedish domestic politics during different periods.

Therefore, one should not expect a uniform and consistent policy from the Swedish government in relation to the provinces. Moreover, even prior to the expansion Sweden was not a uniform country. I have described Sweden as a relatively homogeneous society, but that is a description which has to be seen in comparison to the rest of Europe, not as an absolute account. Although Sweden was one of the rising power states in early modern Europe, it was definitely not a uniform national state.

In the seventeenth century, Sweden was a composite state with three different peoples and three different languages: Swedish, Finnish and Lappish, although the Lapps were not treated as equal subjects. In coastal towns there was also a relatively important German population, although the Germans were few in absolute numbers. Finally, the different Swedish counties were not altogether integrated with each other. Gustav Vasa in the first half of the sixteenth century had done his best to force the peasants to accept the central government, but still there remained considerable divergences between different parts of the country. It may be true that Sweden was essentially uniform both judicially and socially compared to many other countries in Europe, but that has more to say about early modern Europe than about Sweden.

Recently, the Swedish historian Harald Gustafsson and others have used the term ”conglomerate state” to describe the typical early modern European state. A conglomerate state is defined as a state consisting of different territories, each with its own privileges and laws, different social and political structure, varying relationships with the prince, and of course differences in language and culture. Gustafsson’s point is that the conglomerate state was not merely one kind of state coexisting with national or uniform states, but that almost all early modern European countries were actually conglomerate states.3

The occurrence is striking. Gustafsson uses the two sixteenth century Scandin-

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avian countries as examples of conglomerate states, but as he himself admits, the
Swedish great power of the seventeenth century is an even better example than
the relatively uniform Sweden of the sixteenth century.4

If we look at Sweden during the great power period as a conglomerate state,
the Swedish policy towards the provinces will appear in a different light. There is
really no reason to expect a clear and distinct policy regarding all the provinces.
Instead of searching for a uniform and definitive policy position from the side of
the government, we should consider it natural that each province was treated in
its own way. It was not before the absolutist period at the end of the seventeenth
century that the Swedish government began to regard the country as something
we could call a uniform state.5

The Incorporation of the Danish and Norwegian Towns
So with the conglomerate state in mind it is to be expected that the new provinces
were treated in different ways by the Swedish government, and accordingly also
their towns.

With the exception of Ösel, the former Norwegian and Danish provinces were
within a few decades totally incorporated into the old Swedish and Finnish terri-
tory. Culturally and linguistically, these new counties resembled the rest of Swe-
den, and they all bordered to the old realm.

In the 1640’s and 1650’s Sweden fought three wars with Denmark, which were
followed by different peace treaties. The first two – the Peace of Brömsebro in
1645 and the Peace of Roskilde in 1658 – were successful from Sweden’s point of
view, while the third in Copenhagen just two years after Roskilde meant a slight
drawback. This was caused by the the great powers of western Europe, who had an
interest in preventing Sweden from becoming too powerful.

In these peace treaties, Sweden gained a number of new provinces, which are
still part of Swedish territory. Some of the provinces included a small number of
towns. In the peace of 1645, Sweden received from Norway the provinces Jämt-
land and Härjedalen in the north, as well as a smaller part – Särna – of what is
now the province Dalecarlia. None of these Norwegian provinces had any towns,

4 In a later work Gustafsson has developed the theme; Gamla riken, nya stater. Statsbildning, politisk kultur
och identiteter under Kalmarunionens upplösningsskede 1512–1541 (Stockholm, 2000).
5 This is an issue, which has been emphasised by Jonas Nordin in his recent dissertation thesis Ett fattigt
men fritt folk. Nationell och politisk självbild i Sverige från sen stormaktstid till slutet av frihetstiden (Stockholm,
2000).
and, with the exception of the central part of Jämtland around the lake Storsjön, they were sparsely populated. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the town Östersund was founded in that area, and Östersund is still the only town in these former Norwegian territories.

From Denmark, Sweden in 1645 received the islands of Gotland and Ösel, as well as the province of Halland for 30 years; the last as a pledge for the exemption of duty in Öresund for all Swedish merchant ships which Sweden gained in the treaty. 6 Apparently, the Swedish government had no thought of giving Halland back to Denmark, and it never did.

These former Danish provinces did contain some towns, even if they were few. On the island of Ösel off the Estonian coast, there was the town of Arensburg, on Gotland the once important Hanseatic town of Visby, and in Halland there were the five towns of Kungsbacka, Varberg, Falkenberg, Halmstad and Laholm. Of these seven towns, Arensburg, with the rest of Ösel, was brought under the Estonian Governor General and was never incorporated. Visby, with its approximately 1,700 inhabitants, was a relatively large town according to Scandinavian standards; in the town ranking order at the Diet of 1647 Visby was ranked as number eleven among the 73 towns listed. 7 The towns in Halland were smaller. Halmstad was the most populated with about 700 people, perhaps a handful more than in Varberg. Laholm and Falkenberg had less than half this number, while Kungsbacka had around 200 inhabitants. 8 Only the two largest towns had more than a hundred burghers. 9

In the third peace treaty with Denmark – signed in Copenhagen in 1660 – Sweden gained the provinces of Bohuslän from Norway and Skåne and Blekinge from Denmark, as well as permanent possession of Halland. In the second treaty in Roskilde in 1658 Sweden had also received the province of Trondhjem from Norway and the island of Bornholm from Denmark, but they were restored in the final treaty, Bornholm in exchange for the ownership of some land in Skåne.

There were 16 towns in these new provinces: eleven in Skåne, three in Bohuslän and only two in Blekinge. Malmö had the largest population with approxima-

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6 The Peace Treaty of Brömsebro is printed for instance in *Sverges traktater med främmande magter*, vol. 5:2 (Stockholm, 1909), pp. 595-626.
7 *Borgarståndets riksdagsprotokoll före frihetstiden* (Uppsala, 1933), pp. 327f.
tely 2,500 people, followed by Ystad and Lund with an estimated 1,500 and Ronneby and Helsingborg with about 1,000 inhabitants each. The remaining towns appear to have had between 200 and 900 inhabitants, which made them comparable with most of the old Swedish towns. Of all the former Danish or Norwegian provinces, only Skåne was slightly more urbanized than the rest of Sweden. On the other hand no town in the new provinces except Malmö made the top ten of the Swedish urban hierarchy.

The towns in these counties, with, as was mentioned before, the exception of Arensburg, were within a few years treated in the same way as the old Swedish towns. The Swedish Town law was introduced, and the people got the right to send representatives to the Swedish Diet. In fact, it proved to be easier to incorporate the towns than the other estates because the Swedish towns and its burghers were already accustomed to a slightly different status vis-à-vis each other and the Crown. The incorporation of the Danish and Norwegian towns did not change the structure of the Swedish urban system.

**The German Towns**

The German provinces and their towns, on the other hand, were not incorporated at all into the Swedish realm. In the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, they were received by the Swedish monarch as fiefs in the German empire, with the right to be represented at its institutions. They also had their own assemblies, which continued to exert a certain degree of influence, and Swedish laws were never introduced.

In the peace, Sweden gained 27 towns on German soil. The majority of these towns, 22 in all, were situated in Pomerania. Only three belonged to Bremen-Verden and one to Wildeshausen, while the last was the free town of Wismar.

The provinces which Sweden received in the treaty were in no way amongst the more urbanized parts of Germany. Vorpommern did have some important towns along the Baltic coast, but with one exception the former bishoprics of Bremen and Verden did not. The exception was the old Hanseatic town of Bremen by the river Weser, but Sweden was never able to gain control of this important trading city.

According to the Swedish Crown, the city of Bremen was a part of the archbishopric of Bremen and should therefore be included in the province, which Swe-
den received in the peace treaty. The magistrate and the burghers of the city, on the other hand, maintained that Bremen was a free imperial city and was subject to no one but the emperor. The wording in the treaty was vague. It stated that the city was to remain in its present state with all its freedoms, rights and privileges concerning religious and political matters intact. Only two years before the signing of the treaty, the emperor had issued a diploma granting the city the position of a free imperial town. This was not recognised by the Swedish Crown, which claimed that Bremen was a town within the duchy. Twice later on – in 1654 and 1666 – Sweden tried without success to conquer the city by force and was forced to accept that the town Bremen remained outside the province.\(^{11}\)

Without the city of Bremen, the duchy Bremen-Verden had only three minor towns: Stade, which was made the seat of the Swedish government in the duchy, Buxtehude and Verden. The level of urbanization was only a few percent, which was even less than in Sweden proper. Moreover, these three towns were economically dependent on the two dominant trading cities in this part of Germany: Bremen to the west and Hamburg by the river Elbe to the east. All the expectations the Swedish Crown had on commerce and accordingly on customs duties in the province Bremen-Verden proved to be in vain.\(^{12}\)

The three towns of the duchy had been chartered since the Middle Ages. In spite of the fact that the duchy was conquered by force and the Swedish monarchs therefore were not required to confirm the existing charters, the monarchs were restricted by their position as member of the German empire. This meant that they had to respect the laws of the empire, including the estates’ social and economic privileges. These were confirmed after negotiations and the subsequent homage to the Swedish queen in 1651–52.\(^{13}\)

Since the Swedish Crown was restricted by the peace treaty and by the fact that the duchy was part of the German empire, Swedish law was never introduced in the province. The towns kept their old laws as well as the right to issue their own statutes and to use their old courts. On the other hand, the Swedish queen had received in the peace treaty *privilegium de non appelando* or the supreme jurisdiction over her German provinces. This was given on the condition that the Crown followed the laws of the German empire as well as the local laws. A new supreme


\(^{12}\) Fiedler, pp. 131f.

\(^{13}\) Fiedler, pp. 141f.
court for the duchy – the Board of Justice – was founded, and a tribunal was established in Wismar as the highest court of appeal for all the German provinces under Swedish possession.\(^\text{14}\)

The burghers of the towns constituted one of two estates participating at the diet of the province, but they were never summoned to the Swedish *Riksdag*. Even at the local diet the towns were too weak to have any profound influence, and the estates anyway lost their participation in the government after the Swedish succession. They kept the right to negotiate in regard to certain questions but not to decide.\(^\text{15}\)

The estates – the nobility and the towns – had the privilege of being exempted from taxes. The Swedish policy though, was that each province should finance its own costs, which was seldom possible. In the case of Bremen-Verden the cost for the defence of the province was high. The duchy was strategically very important for Sweden, but at the same time it was extremely exposed to military threats.

Sweden had to keep a considerable number of soldiers in garrison and to ensure that the fortifications were maintained in readiness. Most of the time the duchy kept more than 2,000 enlisted soldiers and at times also cavalry troops. These soldiers were normally stationed in the towns, including some smaller, non-chartered market towns. They were quartered in the homes of the burghers, who were required to provide them with food as well as lodging. According to a decision by the Imperial Diet at Regensburg in 1654, the German princes – including the Swedish monarch – had the right to claim contributions from their subjects to cover military costs. Therefore the towns were forced to pay for the quartering of troops as well as for the maintenance of fortifications and the storing of supplies.\(^\text{16}\)

Even if the towns as well as the nobility were relieved from taxes, they were occasionally forced to make extraordinary contributions, which made their exemption from taxes an illusion. Moreover, another cost imposed upon the towns and their inhabitants was various kinds of custom and excise duties. In the 1690’s, excises were levied not only on beer, wine and tobacco, but also on salt and grain and some other commodities.\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{14}\) Fiedler, pp. 99f, 104, 116.
\(^{15}\) Fiedler, pp. 138-44.
\(^{16}\) Fiedler, pp. 124-29.
\(^{17}\) Fiedler, p. 128.
Swedish Pomerania

The towns in Swedish Pomerania were far more numerous than those in Bremen-Verden. There were no free Imperial cities, but there were some important trading ports which formerly belonged to the Hanseatic League. The largest of these, Stralsund, had been in Swedish hands since 1630, even if during the first few years it was more of an ally than a province.

The towns formed the second Kurie at the diet in Swedish Pomerania. The diet consisted of two Kurien, the first including the nobility and until 1670 also the clergy. The towns in the diet numbered 22 in the seventeenth century, but after 1720 only eight.\(^1\) Five of the 22 towns were located in Hinterpommern, while the other 17 belonged to Vorpommern. Apart from the towns which were members of the diet there were also a few towns that did not belong to the estate.\(^2\) Four of the towns at the diet were considered leaders (vorsitzende Städte) – Stralsund, Stettin, Greifswald and Anklam – while the others were less important (nachsitzende) and did not always send representatives.\(^3\)

In the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, Sweden received Vorpommern as an Imperial fief, but for eternity and with no obligation to give it back. The conditions were the same as with the other German provinces: Sweden was granted privilegium de non appellando but was required to respect German laws. There was, however, a difference in practice as Pomerania was not conquered in war as Bremen and Verden had been. Instead, it had been an ally and therefore could not be treated in the same off-handed manner. The four leading towns were autonomous in regard to the court system, but in the other towns the Crown retained the right to appoint judges. From the town courts cases could be appealed to a supreme court for Swedish Pomerania in Greifswald, and in the highest instance to the tribunal in Wismar.\(^4\)

The diet in Swedish Pomerania had a much stronger position than the diet in Bremen-Verden. It maintained the right to impose taxes, it could control a part of the finance administration and it was not merely a negotiating partner but participated in its own right in the decision-making process. The Crown had at its dis-

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\(^3\) Buchholz, pp. 243, 245.

\(^4\) Buchholz, p. 253.
posal the revenues from the domain, the regal rights and the excise and other con-
sumption taxes. Land taxes on the other hand could only be raised with the con-
sent of the estates at the diet.\textsuperscript{22} The diet granted a contribution, which became annual in 1681. Half of the contribution fell on the towns, but in 1698 the towns were exempted from the contribution and instead paid a more general consump-
tion tax. This meant a profound relief in the tax burden of the towns.\textsuperscript{23} In Stralsund and the other seaport towns of Barth, Stettin, Greifswald and Wolgast, of course a duty was levied on all foreign trade as well, both on exports and on im-
ports. Also the trade with Sweden and Finland was subject to this duty, but only in one direction.\textsuperscript{24}

The Eastern Baltic Provinces
The question of the eastern Baltic provinces is the most complicated. There, the Swedes met a society which differed socially from their own. The German-Baltic land-owning nobility had not previously recognized a single state authority, and the native peasants were serfs. The nobility never admitted that the eastern Baltic provinces were incorporated into the Swedish realm, but instead saw their lands joined to Sweden in a union with the Swedish king as the sovereign and unifying element. They never acknowledged the Swedish diet as having any authority in the eastern Baltic provinces, and they did not – and were normally not allowed to – send representatives to its meetings. The German-Baltic nobility had their own assemblies, which they held to be the institutions with which the king should ne-
gotiate. Moreover in the case of Estonia, the fact that the territory had placed itself under the Swedish Crown by way of a treaty made it more difficult to incorpora-
te without taking the opinion of the nobility into consideration.\textsuperscript{25}

All the eastern Baltic provinces were not treated in the same way, however. In-
gria, where there was no German nobility forming an assembly, and the province of Kexholm north of Ingria and west of Lake Ladoga were treated more or less like

\textsuperscript{22} Back, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{23} Buchholz, p. 256.
\textsuperscript{24} Buchholz, p. 271.
the Danish provinces in Scandinavia, i.e., they were incorporated into the Swedish realm.

**The Eastern Baltic Towns**

The eastern Baltic provinces were hardly more urbanized than Sweden. There were two sizable towns by Baltic Sea standards: Reval and Riga. At least Riga was, when it became Swedish, larger than Stockholm, even if the Swedish capital in the course of the seventeenth century outgrew both towns. In addition to these two cities there were three more important towns: Narva, Pernau on the Estonian coast and the inland town of Dorpat or Tartu. The total number of towns in the Swedish provinces of Estonia, Livonia and Ingria was 16, including Arensburg but excluding Nyen, a town which was founded by the Swedish government.\(^{26}\)

Depending on the circumstances, the towns were treated in a manner consistent with the rest of the provinces. Their burgurers did not send representatives to the Swedish diet, and with the exception of Ingria and some of the smaller Estonian towns Swedish law was not introduced in the towns.

The three most important towns may serve as examples. Reval had submitted itself to the Swedish king in 1561, and in return had its charters confirmed. The old Hanseatic town of Reval followed a German town law and power was held by the council. During the entire Swedish period, the council and the burghership stubbornly guarded Reval’s privileges and autonomy against all attempts to reform the administration or to alter its trading rights. The Swedish government tried to make Reval accept a more effective administration, but found that it really lacked the means of enforcement. Reval retained its own law and administration throughout the Swedish period.

Riga was the largest town in the northern Baltic Sea area when it was conquered by Sweden in 1621. As with Reval, Riga was governed by German town law, which it maintained during both Polish and Swedish supremacy. When Riga came under Poland in 1581 its old charters were confirmed by the Polish king, and when taken by the Swedes, Gustavus Adolphus did the same. Riga defended its autonomy during the Swedish rule with the same vigour as Reval. But since Riga, because of its successful trade, was more important for the Swedish state finances, the government never tried with the same vigilance to overcome the town’s opposition as it had in the case of Reval.

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\(^{26}\) The eastern Baltic towns are treated more thoroughly in the author's unpublished paper “Städerna och borgerskapet i de nya provinserna” *(The towns and the burghers in the new provinces).*
Ingria was treated similarly to the former Danish provinces. Ingria had no important town except Narva, which may be considered an Ingrian town because the Swedish government preferred to have Narva located in the province of Ingria rather than in Estonia. Narva is nowadays an Estonian border town between Estonia and Russia.

Between 1558 and the Swedish conquest in 1581 Narva had been in Russian hands and used as a staple for the Russian trade. The Swedish government hoped that Narva would continue to hold the same important position in Russian trade after becoming Swedish, but it never did. Russian trade went by the newly founded town of Archangelsk at the Arctic Sea in the north, or by Riga.

Contrary to Reval and Riga, Narva adopted the Swedish Town law, and the government attempted to reform the town administration in the same way as in Sweden; for example, a royal burgomaster was appointed in Narva as well. The same was the case with Nyen, which the Swedish government founded in the 1630’s at the mouth of the Neva in Ingria. Nyen was conquered by tsar Peter the Great in 1703. At once Peter ordered his new city St. Petersburg to be built at almost the same spot.

The Swedish government wanted to reform the administrations in the eastern Baltic towns along the same lines as in mainland Sweden. In most cases it was not successful, at least not before the introduction of the absolute monarchy in the 1680’s.

But what concerned the government more than the town administration was the organization of the trade. The objective was to force Russian trade to go through Swedish territory so that the authorities would to be able to tax the trade by levying customs duties in the sea ports. To achieve this, the government wanted to direct the foreign trade to certain staple towns and to form the other towns into market towns without the right to foreign trade. In Sweden and Finland, all the towns were forced into this staple-town system by a series of trade ordinances, which were enacted between 1613 and 1637.

In the eastern Baltic provinces this strict system was not enforced. The government gave some of the eastern Baltic towns staple rights while withdrawing them from others, causing endless quarrels, but the government never organized the entire eastern Baltic area as a common urban system. There was an attempt in the 1650’s to regulate the urban system in Estonia, but never in Livonia. Moreover, the government never tried to tie the towns of the eastern Baltic provinces to the Swedish-Finnish staple-town system. Ships from the eastern Baltic towns were nor-
mally treated as foreign ships in Swedish ports in regards to customs duties, and vice versa. This meant that even the important grain trade moving from the provinces to the motherland was often subject to the same customs duties as imports from foreign countries.

**Conclusions**

I will end this paper by giving a summary of the conditions for the towns throughout the Swedish realm during the great power period.

1. The old Swedish and Finnish towns, as well as the newly founded towns in Sweden and Finland, were quite homogeneous. They were all represented at the diet, they were subject to the same types of taxes which they themselves agreed upon at the diet, they were all under the same Town law and incorporated in the same judicial organization, and they were all integrated into the Swedish staple-town system. All of these towns had charters however, which together with the trade ordinances gave each town a unique legal position, even if the differences were normally small.

2. After the conquest in the middle of the seventeenth century, the towns in the old Danish and Norwegian counties were treated in the same way as the other Swedish towns. These former Danish and Norwegian towns were also incorporated into the old Swedish urban system.

3. Narva and one or two additional small towns of Ingria were also legally incorporated, even if in reality the incorporation never totally succeeded.

4. Most of the east Baltic towns were comparatively untouched by Swedish supremacy. They were never represented at the diet, they kept their own German laws although they were placed under the Swedish supreme court in Dorpat, and they contributed their own taxes. They also retained a considerable amount of autonomy and they were never incorporated into the Swedish urban system.

5. The German towns were even more untouched than Estonian and Livonian towns. The Swedish government never tried to make the German towns abandon their old legal system and administration. The towns – among which the
most important were the former Hanseatic towns of Stettin, Greifswald, Stralsund and Wismar – had their privileges guaranteed, and the taxes which they paid were self-imposed contributions. Neither the nobility nor the towns were represented at the Swedish Diet. A town such as Stralsund in Pomerania remained Swedish for 180 years, but without ever being integrated into the realm.
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