

später dort als Hafenbaumeister tätig war.⁸⁰ Wohl auf Bestellung einer Privatperson wurde 1791 auch in Libau ein neues Schiff gebaut.⁸¹

Das Thema der Schifffahrt und des Schiffbaus im Herzogtum Kurland ist noch lange nicht erschöpft. Um die Bedeutung der Flotte für den Handel der Herzöge einschätzen zu können, brauchen wir jedoch mehr Studien. Das betrifft vor allem den herzoglichen Handel mit Europa, den Zoll, die Handelsaktivitäten verschiedener Kaufleute in Kurland und die Entwicklung der Städte.

SUMMARY

Myth and Reality: On the Fleet and Shipbuilding in the Duchy of Courland

This article discusses the prominent topic of the fleet of the Duchy of Courland in the 17th century, created by the representatives of the Kettler-dynasty, Duke Jakob (1610–1681) and Duke Friedrich Kasimir (1655–1698). In research and in Latvian historical memory this topic hitherto has been stamped by myths and exaggerations. Against those myths the article proves that there never has been a fleet of the dukes for military purposes. Of course, Courland's ships at least partly were equipped with canons, but this was meant for self-defence only. Never has any ship of the Duchy been active in any sea battles, only rarely were the weapons used against pirates or buccaneers for mostly, the ships if attacked, gave in quite instantly. For the Dukes of Courland the imperative throughout the time under scrutiny since the 1620s has been to maintain their neutrality in all of the numerous European conflicts of the age.

Still today in literature or the Internet one can find exaggerated numbers of ships allegedly built in the shipyards of Windau. Although it is extremely difficult to give exact numbers, we can assume that during the era of the Kettler-dynasty from 1562 to 1737 the fleet of the Duchy consisted of approximately 160 to 200 ships. At their zenith from the 1640s to the 1690s, the Dukes had approximately 15 to 35 at their disposal at the same time. The first shipyard was built around 1639 by Duke Jakob in Windau, another one operated in Libau since 1677. Although many authors created the impression that sea ships were built as well in Goldingen, this actually was never the case.

⁸⁰ Brief des Licent-Inspectors Johann Christian Grundt an Herzog Biron, Windau, 16.4.1768, in: LVVA, 554-3-2035, Bl. 171; Untersuchungs-Protocoll wider den Licent-Inspector J. Chr. Grundt, Windau, 20.–24.3.1770, in: LVVA, 554-3-2032, Bl. 142-149, hier Bl. 147.

⁸¹ Specification der Waren und Schiffe in Libau 1791, in: LVVA, 554-3-1924, Bl. 157.