

The Power of the Court Preacher
Career and Politics of the Court Cleric Basilius Sattler
in Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel 1569-1624

In 1586, Julius, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, appointed the Lutheran theologian Basilius Sattler (1549-1624) as his court preacher. Three years later, the prince assigned the function of the director of the Consistory to him. Sattler remained in both offices under the government of three dukes for a period of almost 40 years. In spite of many political and theological conflicts, Sattler gained considerable influence over varied political fields, in particular the dogma and constitution of the young Lutheran church in Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, the development of the administration and the education system of the principality. This long incumbency engendered an extraordinary abundance of historical sources, for instance records, letters, sermons, tractates, surveys, and reports.

On the basis of this complex material the project aims to analyse the individual requirements, the resources, the scope of action, and the social strategies of Basilius Sattler as an stakeholder in the political and administrative processes at the court in Wolfenbüttel and in the territorial administration around 1600. In this time, the Lutheran clergy claimed self-confidentially a precedence in all questions of theology, church law and the administration of churches and schools. Therefore, the study focuses particularly on the question to what extent and under which conditions Sattler really wielded political influence on these fields.

Methodically, the project combines approaches of a historical biography with the analysis of micro-social processes. In this way motifs and the course of political action could be recognised as well as social networks and rivalries. The interplay of the preacher and leading church counsellor Sattler with other stakeholders shed light on the functionality and the rules of politics at the court and in the administration of the principality. The career of the theologian could be used as a probe into the political culture of the critical decades between Reformation and Thirty Year's War.