Från kål till Paradis

Medeltidens trädgårdar inom dagens Sverige

Anna Andréasson Sjögren

Akademisk avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i arkeologi med inriktning mot allmän arkeologi vid Stockholms universitet som offentligen kommer att försvaras fredagen den 24 januari 2025 kl. 13.00 i Lilla Hörsalen, Naturhistoriska riksmuseet, Frescativägen 40.

Abstract

From Kale to Paradise. Medieval Gardens in Sweden

How were gardens shaped, utilised, and viewed in the Middle Ages (c. 1050–c. 1525) in the area that today is Sweden? In the present study historical-archaeological methods inspired by an assemblage perspective are used to approach this question. The source material consists of archaeological remains, written material and images. Only sources that physically originated in, or were made for use within, the studied area are included.

First, the origins of the popular myth that advanced horticulture and a large group of cultivated plants were introduced to Sweden by monks in the mid 12th century is examined, as well as the developments within Archaeology, Archaeobotany and Garden History that led to these perceived truths being called into question.

Next, the direct archaeological remains of medieval gardens in 13 towns and 12 rural settings are mapped. The town gardens belonged to burgers, religious and secular aristocracy and religious orders, the rural gardens to five palace and castle environments, four rural monasteries and nunneries, two village farms and one solitary farm. The results are summarised and analysed thematically and chronologically.

The written sources includes both documents and narrative, normative and instructive written material. Of the first category, mainly diplomas and town books are preserved, but also a few examples of late medieval accounts. Of the second category, the study includes laws, manuscript sections on herbal medicine in Old Swedish, the Revelations of Saint Birgitta, translated literature, and passages on Paradise, Gethsemane and The Garden of the Holy Sepulchre. In the concluding chapter the written sources are summarised, analysed, and compared with the archaeological material and images, both chronologically and thematically.

The image material consists of almost 650 representations of gardens preserved in Sweden, 100 dated 1100–1400, the remainder 1400–1525. Most depict three Biblical garden environments: Paradise, Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, and the Garden of the Holy Sepulchre. About 20 images dated c. 1425–1525 show scenes in other gardens. In the concluding chapter the garden imagery, and the garden elements depicted, are summarised, analysed, and compared with the archaeological and written sources.

The last chapter contains a final summary and analysis, relating the findings presented in the three previous concluding chapters to each other, and to current knowledge of medieval gardens within a wider European context. Finally, some suggestions for future research are given.

The thesis shows that gardens in the Middle Ages within Sweden were complex and ever-changing spaces. Gardens played important roles in food, fiber and medicine production, recreation, as well as social and cultural interaction.

Keywords: *Garden Archaeology, Garden History, Medieval Horticulture, Orchard, Fruit Cultivation, Medieval Landscape Architecture, Interdisciplinary Studies, Archaeobotany, Historical Archaeology, Assemblage Thinking, Medieval Art, Medieval Literature, Medieval Law, Herbals, Revelations of Saint Bridget, Eden, Adam, Eve, Noli me tangere, Christ the Gardener, Garden of Mary, Hunt of the Unicorn.*

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Institutionen för arkeologi och antikens kultur

Stockholms universitet, 106 91 Stockholm