

**"Women's Rosegarden" and "Womens Herbgarden":
Two Symposia on the Sexuality of Medieval Women**

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In 1985 and in 1987, two Nordic symposia were held on the topic that in modern terminology is defined as women's sexuality. Medieval scholars from Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden participated, representing the disciplines of history, including legal history, philology, religion, literature, archaeology, anthropology and ethnology.

The title of the symposia was taken from the handbook dealing with pregnancy, childbirth, and midwifery, which was written by Eucharius Rösslin and published in 1513 as *Den Swangeren frawen und hebammem Roszgarten*. A translation into Danish was made shortly after but never printed and exists only as a ms. at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

The first symposium, entitled "Kvinders Rosengård" (Women's Rosegarden) was held on August 4–8, 1985, at Moesgaard near Aarhus, Denmark, and the following papers were presented:

The fifteenth-century ms. "Kvinders Rosengaard".

"Thomas Aquinas' view of sexuality" which included a discussion of his views on marriage and original sin.

"The Mortality of Women due to pregnancy and childbirth in prehistoric and medieval times" which was based on anthropological material and archaeological finds.

"Exposure of infants" which dealt with infanticide in Old Norse literary and legal sources.

"Unwelcome children?" which included a discussion of nursing and the care of infants in Iceland from the earliest times to around 1850.

"Secret births", which criminalized young women during the early modern period was discussed by a Danish criminologist.

A discussion of the medieval concept of Virginity.

A presentation of the medieval and early modern Icelandic mss. of the Legend of Saint Margaret, patron saint for parturient women. The mss. were apparently used as aids during births in Iceland.

"Women's sexuality in Swedish *Miracula*".

"Women in Languedoc", a study of the sexuality of the women of Montaignou in the early fourteenth century.

The second symposium, entitled "Kvinders Urtegård" (Women's Herb-garden) was held on September 19-23, 1987, in Visby on Gotland, Sweden, where the following papers were presented:

"Women and medical magic", presented by a philologist and historian of religion.

"The diseases of women in the medieval Danish medical literature".

"Menstruation" which focused on more recent Swedish history and presented by a Swedish ethnologist.

"The health and diseases of women" discussed by an anthropologist on the basis of skeleton finds.

"The diseases of women in the Nordic medieval towns" which was based on archaeological finds.

"Rules concerning health and illness at the Bridgittine convent of Vadstena in Sweden".

"Women, medicine and health in legends and folk-lore" discussed by an ethnologist.

"Hildegard of Bingen".

The papers from the symposia will be published together as *Kvinnors rosegård och örtagård*. Skrifter utgivna av Centrum för Kvinnoforskning. Stockholms Universitet. Expected date of publication: January 1989.

The articles are written in the Scandinavian languages with summaries in English.

It should be noted that the symposia were part of the biennial meetings of Nordic scholars to discuss aspects of the lives of medieval women. Meetings have been held in Sweden (1979), Iceland (1981) and Norway (1983).

The Nordic symposia grew out of the international St. Gertrud Symposium on "Women in the Middle Ages", held in 1978 in Copenhagen.

Papers from the symposia have been published as:

Aspects of Female Existence: Proceedings from the St. Gertrud Symposium "Women in The Middle Ages", Copenhagen, September, 1978. Ed. by Birte Carlé, Nanna Damsholt, Karen Glente, Eva Trein Nielsen. Copenhagen, Gyl-dendal, 1980. All articles in English or French.

Kvinnans ekonomiska ställning under nordisk medeltid. Uppsatser framlagda vid ett kvinnohistoriskt symposium i Kungälv 8-12 oktober 1979. Red. Hedda Gunneng and Birgit Strand. Göteborg, 1981; distributed by Viktoria Bokfor-lag, Box 320, S-44127 Alingsås, Sweden. With English summaries.

Förändringar i kvinnors villkor under medeltiden. Uppsatser framlagda vid ett kvinnohistoriskt symposium i Skálholt, Island, 22. -25. juni 1981. Red. Silja Adalsteinsdóttir and Helgi Torlaksson. Reykjavík: Sagnfrædistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 1983; distributed by Forlaget Valmuerne, Badstuestræde 8, DK-8700 Horsens, Denmark. With English summaries.

Kvinnearbeid i Norden fra vikingtiden til reformasjonen: Foredrag fra et nordisk kvinnehistorisk seminar i Bergen 3-7 august 1983. Bergen, 1985; distributed by Forlaget Valmuerne, Badstuestræde 8, DK-8700 Horsens, Denmark. With English summaries.

For a survey of sources, dealing with pregnancy and childbirth, in English see Grethe Jacobsen, "Pregnancy and Childbirth in the Medieval North: A Typology of Sources and a Preliminary Study," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, volume 9, nr. 2 (1984), p. 91-111.

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

NEWSLETTER 15

QUOTIDIANUM
SEPTENTRIONALE

ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE IN MEDIEVAL DENMARK

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KREMS 1988

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters. Körnermarkt 13, A-3500 Krems, Österreich. — Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. — Druck: HTU-Wirtschaftsbetrieb Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8–10, A-1050 Wien.

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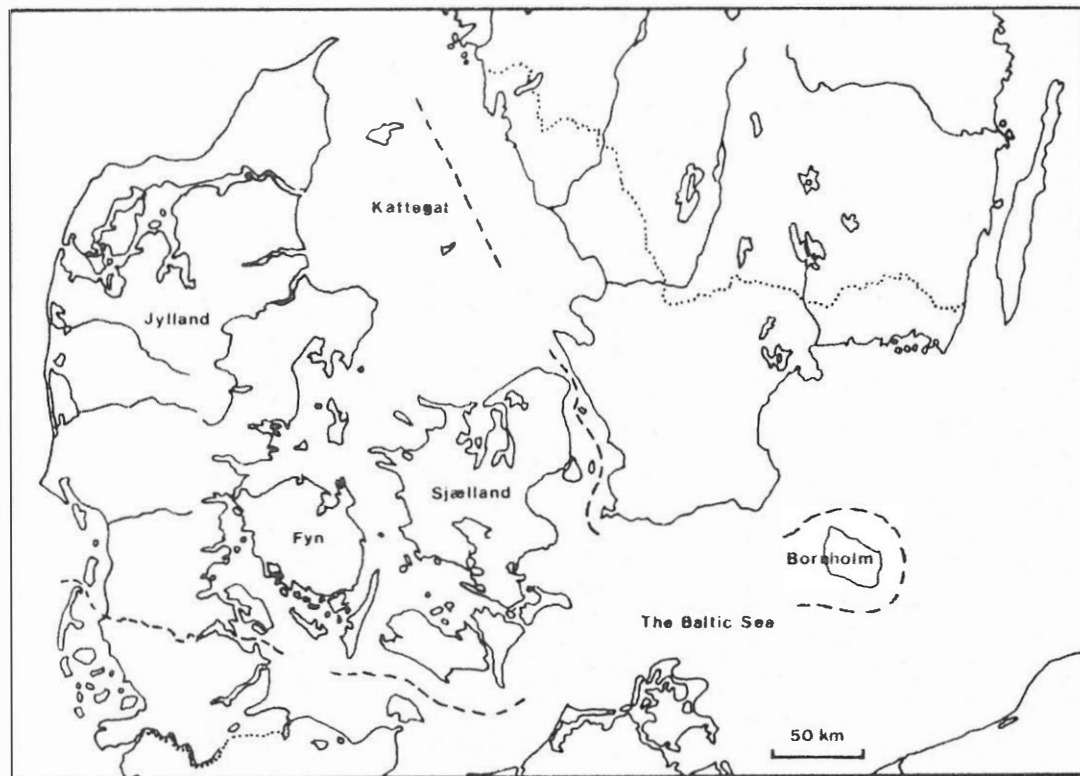
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Introduction

The articles in this issue all deal with current research on life in medieval Denmark. Though comprehensive within their respective fields, they represent only a part of the multi-faceted research currently being undertaken in Denmark, in spite of the adverse work and job situation of many younger scholars. Due to a very short deadline for articles, many scholars were unable to comply with our request for a contribution but expressed interest in participating in international communication of current research. We hope to bring more articles on research on medieval Danish life at a later date.

In Denmark, no particular stress is laid on the topic: medieval daily life. Yet, the by now established social and economic history as well as the renewed interest in political history, has made historians focus on daily life and on its material as well as mental aspects. The articles by Nanna Damsholt and Brian Patrick McGuire concern the religion and the Church of medieval Denmark and their fusion with secular life.

With the development of the discipline of medieval archaeology, our understanding of the material aspects as well as the physical frames for medieval life has been greatly expanded. In contrast to the finite number of written documents, the quantity of archaeological sources keeps increasing, adding valuable information to our knowledge of medieval society. The challenge to historians and archaeologists has been to combine and interpret written, artistic and material sources as Ebbe Nyborg discusses in his article while Marianne Johansen and Ingrid Nielsen present a project combining archaeology and written sources. All three authors are historians as well as archaeologists. In this connection, one might mention the periodical *hikuin* (published by Forlaget Hikuin, Moesgård, DK-8270 Højbjerg, Denmark) which began in 1974 and appears at irregular intervals, the latest volume being number 14 (1988). The periodical brings articles on medieval archaeology primarily in Danish but also in Swedish and Norwegian with resumes in English. Special issues have been devoted to church archaeology, urban archaeology, coins and pottery. We should also like to mention the research tool *Nordic Archaeological Abstract* (NAA) which indexes all articles on medieval archaeology (see p. 95).



The Jutland peninsular and the Danish islands. The borders of the core of the Medieval kingdom are marked with dotted lines and the modern boundaries with broken lines. The areas in present-day Sweden were the medieval province of Skåne (Scania), Halland and Blekinge.

Ingrid Nielsen has also produced the map, accompanying the introduction, which shows the medieval as well as the present boundaries of Denmark. As she and Marianne Johansen point out in their article, the latter boundary also determines the boundaries of much archaeological and historical research. In part to make up for this, meetings have been held between Danish and Swedish historians and archaeologists (the latter primarily from Skåne) dealing with aspects of the town-country relationship. The publications of these meetings are mentioned in the article by Bjørn Poulsen.

The article by Jens E. Olesen on tolls and toll collection deals with a topic, hitherto seen as part of political or financial history; but this was, in fact, of great importance to the common people, especially the many men and women engaged in trade or commerce whether on international, inter-regional or local level. Similarly, his other article, describing the development of the royal chancellery, reminds us that bureaucracy and bureaucrats, whether viewed negatively or positively by contemporaries, are neither modern phenomena nor ones, appearing during Absolutism.

Bjørn Poulsen's article makes us aware that medieval people did not live and produce in isolation but were integrated into the European economy, though the extent of involvement and the awareness of international connections would vary according to time and place. Poulsen also stresses that town and country, so often seen as mutually exclusive, were both part of the daily life of many medieval women and men.

The contribution by Helle Reinholdt and Bodil Møller Knudsen points to the gender aspect, so often overlooked in traditional history which has concerned itself mainly with the action of men. We have chosen not to have an article on "Women and Daily Life" which would make women merely one ingredient in the daily life of men but have urged the authors to include the gender aspects, making the reader aware that history, whether of daily life or of extraordinary events, is made by women as well as men.

September 1988

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