

Avhandling från institutionen för historiska studier

Rödsot i Sverige 1750-1900

En sjukdoms demografiska och medicinska historia

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Abstract

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Dysentery or *rödsot*, as the disease was previously known in Sweden, remains a major scourge in developing countries. In Sweden and the rest of the Western world, however, the disease is almost gone. These circumstances were very much different before the decline of infectious diseases among causes of death in the 19th century. Prior to that, dysentery affected Sweden at times with powerful epidemic outbreaks. This thesis describes the demographic consequences of dysentery in Sweden and at the same time analyzes the causes behind the presence and disappearance of the disease. The disease is mapped over Sweden with focus on changes over time as well as regional and local differences. Jönköping County is used as a case study.

For the statistical surveys in this thesis, *The Demographic Data Base* (DDB) digitized source material has been used. The database contains all demographic statistical data left behind by the government office *Tabellverket* from the Swedish parishes between the years 1749 and 1859. For the time period 1860-1900, statistical data published by the governmental office *Statistiska centralbyrån* in the book series *Bidrag till Sveriges officiella statistik (BiSOS)* have been used. To analyze factors that may have been crucial for disease outbreaks, other sources than the aforementioned statistical material have been used, such as reports from district medical officers, newspapers, parish registers and maps.

This study highlights dysentery's sometimes devastating effects and the disease's epidemic nature is clarified. The analysis emphasizes the complex interaction between different variables which all contributed to the demographic consequences of dysentery outbreaks. This thesis brings to the fore valuable knowledge of dysentery's historical consequences and also clarifies the importance of studying the history of these complex issues, all of which enhance our understanding of this historical period.

Keywords: History of medicine, demography, mortality, epidemic, endemic, dysentery, bloody flux, Sweden, Jönköping County