

This thesis deals with all still existing medieval baptismal fonts in the province of Småland.

One of my objectives was to, as comprehensively as possible, present the results of this collection and at the same time critically analyse and discuss it. In order to achieve this my investigation also includes many differently related aspects such as the form, décor and production of baptismal fonts as well as the production of baptism fonts and other objects crafted of stone. The thesis shows that stonework was carried out in different ways, whether church buildings were built with ashlars or ground stone, i.e. there were big differences between cathedral construction workshops and the travelling country church craftsmen or stationary stone masonry shops. This study discusses how such shops may have appeared, how the craftsmen organised their work and how they lived. The ritual rules for the most important sacrament of the Catholic Church, the baptism and its cult, are exclusively accounted for and the thesis discusses the role of the baptismal font as a baptismal vessel, the problems of emptying and the consecrated baptismal water and its protection, use of lid and vessel inserts. I have taken up and discussed an international and a national outlook on baptismal fonts. I try to formulate a general answer to questions of style and the sculptural idiom of the Middle Ages and the process of change that the baptismal fonts go through during the Romanesque and Gothic Era. The images on the fonts and how they are interpreted and examined while originals have come to use together with the image programs that have characterized the fonts have been discussed. All the baptismal fonts dealt with in this research can be found in a catalogue published in parallel with this thesis.

Keywords: Baptismal font, craftsman, cult, culture, font mason, gothic style, iconography, medieval baptism, masonry shop, medieval parish church, Middle Age, romaneseque style, sandstone, stone sculpture, stone relief, stonework.

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