

Summary

Maisa – at the bottom of society

By Lennart Ryman

This essay is about the Swedish female name form *Maisa* and its bearers. It examines all the early occurrences of the name, from the period 1490–1524, all of which are linked to the city of Stockholm. The name form and the women who bore it are subsequently traced in selected sources down to the beginning of the 17th century. The name bearers from this later period come from a wider eastern and northern area of the Swedish kingdom.

Maisa is formed from the name *Mar(g)it* – two of its early bearers are referred to alternately as *Maisa* and *Mar(g)it* – by the addition of a suffix *-sa* that occurs only rarely in the formation of Scandinavian personal names. The name form is uncommon in the sources and was no doubt very informal; the individuals bearing it are for the most part servants or others without property, and often find themselves in a vulnerable position in the machinery of justice. It is the author's definite impression that, in written sources from this period, the form *Maisa* is used only of women of low status, and often expresses disdain.