

Centaurea cyanus in Urban Cultural Layers in Southern Finland

Abstract

Pollen of *Centaurea cyanus* usually occurs in Finnish pollen diagrams in very low, sporadic frequencies, only having been connected with rye cultivation in the vicinity of the sample site.

In three urban Late Medieval sites along the southern coast of Finland the pollen frequencies of this plant, however, exceed 2% of the total pollen sum (Vuorela, 1985, 1991; Vuorela and Hiekkänen, 1991). Simultaneously, the relative rye pollen frequencies decrease, thus showing that *C. cyanus*, in these soil layers, hardly represents the weed vegetation.

The explanation of this phenomenon could either be 1) that *C. cyanus* was cultivated as a decorative garden plant in the Late Medieval towns of Finland as was the case in Sweden, for instance, or 2) that *C. cyanus* continued to grow among the natural mineral soil vegetation of the former rye fields which had been left fallow when the urban landscape was developed, or 3) that the pollen grains originate from pollen sticking to the remains of straw or cereal chaff brought into the town (Greig, 1982).

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