

Gysta in Bälinge

By Lena Peterson

Summary

Gysta is the name of a village in Bälinge parish in Uppland, currently being enlarged into a suburb of Uppsala. The name is recorded in charters from 1344 AD onwards as (dat. pl.) *Gystum*, *Gyistum* etc. Clearly, it is a name formed with the generic (nom. pl.) *-staðik*, which is very common in Uppland place-names. According to the present author, the specific of this place-name contains the male personal name *Gȳi*, found on no fewer than six Viking Age rune-stones in Uppland. Among the questions discussed in this article is the syncope and/or realization of the expected genitive ending **-a* of the specific. Crucial to the interpretation of the village name is the assumption that the man's name *Gȳi* cannot date from before the Viking Age, since it presupposes a name that has already undergone *i*-mutation.

The village of *Gysta* seems to have been settled very early on. Situated close to it is an unusually large Iron Age burial ground, and the author therefore attempts to find an alternative etymology for the specific. Inspired by some Norwegian place-names in *Gy-*, she arrives at an obsolete word PrGmc **gāw-* 'gorge, cleft'. However, such a word turns out to be incompatible with both the medieval forms recorded and the character of the terrain surrounding the village.

The archaeological dating of the settlement to the early Iron Age does not mean, though, that the place-name is as old as that. According to the author, *Gysta* – in the absence of other possible alternatives – must be assumed to contain the Viking Age man's name *Gȳi*.

Ortnamnssällskapet i Uppsala årsskrift (Yearbook of the Place-Name Society of Uppsala) 2006, ISSN 0473-4351, pp. 51–58.