

Jäla – an early ‘prepositional name’?

By Lennart Elmevik

Summary

Jäla is the name of a village and a parish in Vilske *härad* in the province of Västergötland. First documented as (*jn, de*) *Ialum* in 1308 and 1311, and recorded in the 15th century as *Jæla* (*Sochn, sokn*) etc., the name has previously, with some hesitation, been interpreted as a bog name (or possibly a lake name) OSw. **Iali* ‘the yellow one’, formed from a stem Gmc **elûa-* ‘yellowish’ that is found in the adjective OHG *elo*. The present author prefers to draw on lexical material known from the Scandinavian area, and suggests that *Jäla* is a ‘prepositional name’, a well-documented type of place-name in which a preposition has fused with a place-name; in this instance, the preposition *i* ‘in’ with a form *Al-* or *Āl-*: *i Al-*, *i Āl-* > *Ial-*, *Iāl-* > *Iæ-*, *Iǣ-*. In the case of *i Al-*, the author would interpret *Al-* as containing the much discussed Scandinavian place-name element **al* – here, in his view, in the sense of ‘protected, enclosed place’. With the alternative *i Āl-*, he would trace *Āl-* to a counterpart of, among other forms, OWScand. *ál* f. ‘strap, rope’. This would be a reference to the elongated bog which the earlier suggested interpretation of *Jäla*, too, sees as a possible source of the name.

Ortnamnssällskapet i Uppsala årsskrift (Yearbook of the Place-Name Society of Uppsala) 2007, ISSN 0473-4351, pp. 21–26.