


# Skiringssal, Kaupang, Tjølling – the Toponymic Evidence

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 This article deals with the toponymic evidence – the place-names – in the Tjølling area, and the historical evidence they may reflect. In the settlement district (*bygd*) of Tjølling we find a few, probably very old, settlement-names, in *-vin* and *-heimr*, presumably to be dated to the first half or the middle of the first millennium. These are grouped around a lake whose name is probably to be found as the first element of one of these names, namely *Vittersen*. This name may be interpreted as denoting a sacral lake, probably of importance in some cultic activity here, containing a word related to the ON noun *vítr*, *vétr*, *vettr*, *vætr* ‘supernatural being, spirit, god’. Other settlement-names portray the settlement district as a large archipelago during the Iron Age, with several large and small islands, the names of some of which have been preserved. Finally the names *Huseby* (< *Skiringssalr*), *Tjølling* (< *Þjóðalyng*) and *Kaupang* are interpreted and discussed. These names are to be seen as evidence of the socio-economic importance of this district, with an aristocratic chieftain’s or royal farmstead controlling a major harbour/market-place (*Kaupangr*).

The Tjølling settlement district has enjoyed a lot of attention in archaeological and historical research for centuries, for obvious reasons. The toponymic evidence, which also is very interesting, has not been scrutinized and discussed to the same extent, and that is a pity. Here we find some illuminating place-names together with some really obscure ones. One of the challenges to the analysis of these names is to establish some kind of chronology in the toponymic milieu, a common problem when working with the place-name material in Scandinavia.<sup>1</sup>

The Tjølling area received a lot of attention from early historians, who constructed their narratives on the basis of the sagas in particular, and declared this region the “cradle of Norway” (see Skre, this vol. Ch. 2; Munch 1850; Sørensen 1900, 1909a, 1909b; Storm 1901; Bugge 1909, 1915; Kjær 1909a, 1909b). This scholarship was later discredited, especially from the 1950s onwards, mainly for its insufficient evaluation of the sources and over-reliance on sagas, which shifted focus away from the Tjølling area. Instead Charlotte Blindheim’s sensational archaeological excavation at Kaupang, coupled with the new interest in Borre amongst other sites (see, e.g., Myhre and Gansum 2003), changed the disciplinary standpoint from history to archaeology in respect of Tjølling, with a new

focus on Kaupang. The shift can in broad outlines also be said to be one from the area being seen as a major political site, one of the significant royal strongholds important in state-formation in Norway (*rikssamlingen*), to it being regarded as perhaps the most important port and market site in early Norway, vital for trade and mercantile contact with Europe.

So what is the evidence that the place-names of the Tjølling area can bring us? Do they underline or reduce the political and mercantile importance of Tjølling? Although not so easy to interpret, coupled with the chronological uncertainties, they seem to

1 Normally phonetic notations from the dialect are used when analyzing names, together with early name-forms from (preferably medieval) documents. In this case, dialect name-forms are to be found in Rygh 1897–1936:VI and in the Place-Name Archive in the University of Oslo (*Seksjon for Namnegransking*). Since dialect forms have not been of decisive importance for the interpretations presented in this article, I have chosen to omit them. Anyone interested is referred to Rygh 1897–1936 or *Seksjon for Namnegransking*. Older forms of the names here cited are from Rygh 1897–1936; as for the sources, see Rygh 1897–1936.

Figure 4.1 The settlement district of Tjølling with a reconstructed shore line towards the end of the Early Iron Age, c. 500 AD (c. 5 meter higher sea level than today). During this time there were several more straits, inlets and islands than today. These are possible to identify and couple with place names. Contour interval 5 meter. Map, Julie K. Øhre Askjem, Anne Engesveen.

hint at the Tjølling district as one of the most interesting areas in Norway, with indications of social and political significance in prehistory and the early Christian Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4.1 The Early Iron-age names

To give some chronological framework for the area, we can establish that Roman Iron-age finds are known from the places where today we find the settlements Slottet, Auby, Klåstad, Valby, Huseby, Håkestad, Grønneberg and Vestad, and Migration-period finds from Roligheten, Amundrød, Vik, Skalleberg, Eide, Istre and Skåra, plus finds from either the Roman Iron Age or the Migration Period from Hosle (Blindheim 1974).<sup>3</sup> To place these finds topographically, it seems important to note that in the very centre of the Tjølling district there is nowadays a small lake, *Vittersentjørn*, surrounded by quite a large marsh. This seems, most probably, to represent a fairly large lake, c. 1 km x 0.5, of the Iron Age, which like several other lakes in Scandinavia has been lowered and partly drained in the 19th century (Skre, this vol. Ch. 17:Fig.17.2). It is notable that this lake has a central – maybe even focal – location in relation to the distribution of the Roman Iron-age and Migration-period finds.

If we look for the earliest settlement-names in Tjølling, four names stand out: *Guri*, *Lauve*, *Vittersen* and *Lingum*. The first three are to be identified as *-vin* names, while the latter is clearly a *-heimr* name. Both the *-vin* and the *-heimr* names are, in my opinion, mainly to be dated to the Roman Iron Age or the Migration Period in Norway, although both types continued in use into the Late Iron Age.<sup>4</sup> In the latter period, however, it would appear that they occur as developed and stereotyped forms, such as several instances of *Askim*, *Solheim* etc., and *-vin* names showing no *i*-umlaut (cf. Olsen 1926:154 and 158; Jansson 1951; Ståhl 1976:75; Pamp 1974:34; Brink

1988:73, 1991). The names that may be from the Early Iron Age are of course only a mere fraction of the names once in use during this early period, a point that it may be necessary to call attention to when addressing scholars other than toponymists. As for the *-vin* name-element we have also the complication that the word *\*vin* originally denoted a kind of meadow (cf. Gothic *winja* ‘pasture, fodder; meadow’), and

- 2 Normally, in an analysis of this kind of a settlement district, one would have to be much more minute and penetrating, analyzing early cadastral registers and survey maps from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, analysing dialect forms, collecting and analysing natural-feature and field-names and other minor names, together with a topographic analysis in the field. This has been impossible for me when writing this article. For the potential for a more minute analysis, see (below) the information from maps and the document from 1439 regarding the boundary between Østby, Huseby, Lauve etc., and the mention of a name *Helgefjell* in the vicinity, which probably has wide and important implications for understanding the early landscape here. This article is hence to be looked upon as preparatory for a more minute analysis of the Tjølling *bygd*.
- 3 It may be important to stress from the outset for non-toponymic specialists that these finds do not, of course, date the historical farms and hamlets in the vicinity here mentioned. The question of if and when archaeological finds can be used for dating a prehistoric settlement whose name seems to have survived into modern time is a wide and complicated one (see, e.g., Brink 1984), which I will touch upon in passing later on.
- 4 I here use Early Iron Age for the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period combined (c. AD 1–600) and Late Iron Age for the Merovingian and Viking Periods together (c. AD 600–1050); roughly, because it is so difficult to be precise on chronology for place-names.
- 5 All early name-forms here and below are from NG.



a semantic development during the Iron Age to the sense of ‘settlement’ seems very likely (Brink 1988: 74). The problem is, then, to decide if we can identify an original sense of ‘meadow’ or a later one of ‘settlement’ for *-vin* names.

All three *-vin* names in Tjølling are problematic in respect of their qualifiers. This, in its own right, is an indication that they are ancient. Only *Lauve* seems to be fairly uncomplicated. In 1370 it was written *a Laufuini*, in 1391 *a Laufuine*, and in 1397 *a Lauuine*

and *i Laufvine* (Rygh 1897–1936:V:295),<sup>5</sup> which seems to indicate an older *Laufvin*, containing the ON noun *laufn* ‘leaf, leaves’, here probably indicating deciduous forest. Maybe this *vin*, ‘meadow (of some kind)’, was used for the harvest of leaves, cf. ON *laufadrátt m.*, *laufhogg n.*, *laufhogstr m.* If this interpretation is correct, it is also evidence of the age of this name, according to the criteria noted. *Lauve* is thus to be looked upon as a really old name, probably to be dated to the Early Iron Age. The other two are more



difficult to interpret. *Guri* was written *Gudrina* (in acc.) in 1419 and in 1444 *Gudrine* (in nom.). As Rygh (1897–1936:VI:292–3) assumes, it looks as if the first element could contain the word *guð* n. ‘god(s)’, but the *-r-* is a problem that has to be addressed. Different attempts to solve this question have been proposed, but all are very intricate and rather dubious. It is, however, difficult to ignore the possibility that the first element in the name contains the word for ‘god(s)’. As *Guri* is in the centre of the Tjølling district, interesting perspectives open up when this name is considered in conjunction with the following one, *Vittersen*. Nevertheless, the distance between *Guri* and the lake has to be recognized as a potential obstacle to connecting them.

*Vittersen* is a most interesting name. In Røde Bog (RB) it is written *i Vittrixsyni*; in 1440 *i ... Vittrissinne*; in 1512 *Vittersøn*; and in a translation from 1555 of a letter from 1320 we have the form *Wettersiø* (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:295). It is notable that in the 16th century the name has transformed and wrongly (? cf. below) been identified with the lake (*-siø*). The oldest forms indicate that this name is an old *-vin* name, but what the first element may be is more obscure. Here, it is tempting to see an older name for the lake, a possibility already proposed by Oluf Rygh (1897–1936:VI:295), but what this name may have been is uncertain. The problem relates to how we understand the *-xs-* in the name-form in Røde Bog, a cadastral register of estates under the Bishop of Oslo prepared by Bishop Eystein in Oslo c. 1400. Normally *-xs-* stands for *-ks-* (or *-gs-*), which gives a first element *\*Vittik-* which is most difficult to explain. However, there are known cases of *-x-* in 15th-century Norwegian documents being used for *-s-*, such as *Gerixstadhom* (ON *Giristaðum*), *Aurixstade* (ON *Øyristaðum*), *Høixstadhom* (ON *Heiðistaðum*) etc. (ABJ:xxx–xxxi) in Aslak Bolts *jordebok* (cadastral register) from the 1430s, and several other sources. A possible interpretation of the first element in the name *Vittersen* could therefore be as an old name of the lake, *\*Vitrir/Vettrir*, producing a compound *\*Vitrivín/Vettrivín*. Such a qualifier would fit very well with a possible ancient lake-name, Pr.-Germ. *\*Wehtr-iaR*, which would plausibly be identified with ON *vítr*, *vétrr*, *vettr*, *vætrr* f. ‘supernatural being, spirit, god’, Sw *vittra* ‘fairy (of the forest)’;<sup>6</sup> cf. OE *with* ‘being, demon’, OHG *with* ‘spirit, being’ (< *\*wehti-/wehta-*) (NO:507; SEO:1402; AEW:672). This etymology makes it possible to interpret the lake-name *\*Vehtriar* > *\*Vitrir/Vettrir* as ‘the lake where supernatural being dwell’, or perhaps ‘the lake dedicated to gods and super naturals’. Hence, such a name of the lake is semantically to be connected to Scandinavian lake-names such as *Guðsiör*, *Tissø* (‘Týr’s lake’), *Odensjö* etc. A plausible assumption may thus be that here, in the very central part of Tjølling district, there was a sacral lake during the Iron Age, dedicated to gods and natural beings, per-

haps a lake where offerings were made to the deities, a well-known practice during prehistoric time in Scandinavia.<sup>7</sup> This old lake has today only two remnants in the form of *Vittersø-tjønna* and the small *Lille-tjønna* in the south-east (see Skre, this vol. Ch. 17: Fig.17.2). It would be interesting to see if there are any votive deposits to be found in this marsh and lake, as have been found at Tissø on Sjælland, Kärringsjön in Halland, Skedemosse on Öland and more. *Vittersen-tjørn* would therefore qualify for a potential successor to Kaupang for future archaeological surveys.

In this connexion it is extremely interesting to note a natural-feature name, *Helgefjell*, for a small but very distinct hill immediately to the east of *Lille-tjønna* (Skre, this vol. Ch. 17: Fig. 17.2), a hill with a very steep side to the west, which must have fallen steeply into the former lake. This is obviously an old name, mentioned, for instance, by Alexander Bugge in *Tjølling bygdebog* (1915:41),<sup>8</sup> but found already in a document from 1439, cited in a judicial survey document from 1703, dealing with the boundary between the farms Austby, Huseby, Lauve etc. in Tjølling parish.<sup>9</sup>

In this letter six men in the local law court announce that they have walked the boundary between Austby, Huseby, Lauve etc., and in the letter the different boundary marks, in the form of bedrocks by the sea, a stone by a gate, a pine with a cross cut in it, the flat rock in the road, “og saa ouster i Helgafjeld”, i.e. and then Helgefjell to the east, etc. are mentioned. Boundary-marks were normally noticeable and easily identified natural features, and Helgefjell seems to qualify for this purpose.

The name *Helgefjell* has many counterparts in Scandinavia and Iceland. The most famous is perhaps the *Helgefjell* in western Iceland mentioned in the often cited passage in the *Eyrbyggja Saga* when the settler Thorolf took land in *Breiðafjörð* and there built a hall with a high seat and a small cult house

6 The etymology for *vittra* f., proposed by Elof Hellquist (SEO:1363–4 and 1402), that the *-r* is analogously introduced from the nominative singular *vættir* of the word Sw *vätte* ‘supernatural being’, is probably wrong. It seems more satisfactory to connect the word to the group ON *vítr*, *vétrr*, *vettr*, with the same or similar meaning of ‘a spirit, a supernatural being’, and hence to derive the word from a stem *\*wehtr-*, with a radical *-r*.

7 See e.g. Brink 2001:96–8 with refs.

8 “I skillet mellom Østby og Vittersen, som er en av de ældste gaardene i Tjølling og i gamle dager maa ha været meget større end nu, laa Helgefjeld (‘det hellige fjeld’), sikkert et ældgammelt kultsted” (“At the boundary between Østby og Vittersen, which is one of the oldest farms in Tjølling and which in earlier days ought to have been much larger than now, was Helgefjeld (‘The Holy Mountain’), certainly an ancient cult site”).

with an altar on which he placed an oath ring. The saga continues to relate that (*Eyrbyggja saga* pp. 9–10):

Þórólfr kallaði Þórsnes milli Vigrafjarðar og Hofsvágs. Í því nesi stendr eitt fjall; á því fjalli hafði Þórólfr svá mikinn átrúnað, at þangat skyldi enginn maðr óþveginn líta og engu skyldi tortíma í fjallinu, hvárki fé né mönnum, nema sjálfst gengi í brott. Þat fjall kallaði hann Helgafell og trúði, at hann myndi þangat fara, þá er hann dóei, og allir á nesinu hans frændr. Þar sem Þórr hafði á land komit, á tan-ganum nessins, lét hann hafa dóma alla og setti þar heraðs-þing; þar var og svá mikill helgistaðr, at hann vilði með engu móti láta saurga völlinn, hvárki í heiptarblóði, og eigi skyldi þar álfrek ganga, og var haft til þess sker eitt, er Dritsker var kallað.

Thorolf called the headland between Vigrafjord and Hofsvag Thorsnes. The headland is in the form of a mountain, and Thorolf invested so much reverence in it that no one was allowed to look towards it without having washed and nothing was allowed to be killed on the mountain, neither man nor animal, unless it died of natural causes. He called this mountain Helgafell and believed that he and all his family on the family on the headland would go there when they died. At the place where Thor had come ashore, on the point of the headland, Thorolf held all court sessions and he established a district assembly there. He considered the ground there so sacred that he would not allow it to be defiled in any way, either by blood spilt in rage, or by anybody doing their “elf-tremblers” there – there was a skerry called Dritsker [Shit-Rock] for that purpose. (Hreinsson 1997:134)

Here on *Þórsness*, ‘the headland dedicated to Thor’, Thorolf named the mountain *Helgafjell*, ‘Holy Mountain’, into which he then believed he would enter when he died, and he created a cult site for cult practices and a *thing* site for legal matters. How much truth there may be in this story is very uncertain. However, there are several other *Helgafjell* etc. in Scandinavia, and we may conclude that many of these must have had a cultic-legal background (cf. Brink 2001).

Since this name here in Tjølling is evidenced as early as 1439, and in the letter it is said that 70- to 80-year-old men could verify the boundary marks 50 years before, hence c. 1390, this name may well qualify as an old name, most probably of pre-Christian origin. The situation of this *Helgefjell* in the immediate vicinity of a lake to which it may be possible to assign a name *\*Vitrir/Vettrir* with its own cultic-religious background inevitably makes this a most intriguing place. If the interpretations are valid, *Helgefjell* seems to strengthen the hypothesis of previous cultic-religious activity at this former lake, and it would be extremely interesting, as mentioned above, to have an archaeological survey of the area.

North of the lake and the settlement of Vittersen we find *Lingum*. The name is written *Limaemsbygdh* in 1495; in 1496 *Lingemsbygd*; in 1512 *Limgemsbygd*; later on in the 16th century the *-bygd* is dropped and we find *Lindem*, *Lingem* etc. (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:297). Rygh (loc. cit.) assumes that this name goes back to ON *Lindheimr*. However, the medieval name-forms point in different directions; the qualifier could be interpreted as: 1) *ling* ‘heather’ or perhaps ‘moor, heath, sandy land’,<sup>10</sup> going back to ON *lyng* n. ‘heather’ (< *\*lengwa-*) (AEW:370), or a word *\*ling* (< *\*lingwa-*), a cognate with *lyng*, found in Swedish place-names and in Sw *lingon* ‘lingonberry’ (SEO:xxx); 2) *lím* n. ‘lime’ (cf. Henningsmoen 1974:25–6); or 3) *lind* f. ‘lime (tree)’ or ‘well, water’ (AEW:357). This place-name is most definitely to be understood as a name in *-heimr*, but the settlement has evidently been looked upon as a habitative isolate and therefore as a separate *bygd*, ‘settlement district’, or perhaps it had a wider spatial denotation. Since the Tjølling settlement district probably bore the name of its central occupied area, the *bygd*, during the Early Iron Age and in the middle of the first millennium, this name, ON *Limheimsbygd*, could be a candidate for this.

There may be another early place-name in the Tjølling district, namely *Hem*, situated on a small former island between the mainland and a larger island *Possey* (to all appearances < *Þórsøy*). This name seems to be a *-heimr* name. In *Røde Bog* it is written *i Hæme i Possøynne*; in 1393 we have *a Hæme*; in 1374 *a Hæm*; and in 1427 *i Hææm* (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:300). Rygh (loc. cit.) interprets the name as an older *Háheimr*, with the first element *hár* ‘high’, but notes that the hill, which might be the reason for the name, is small (“Den Høide, som her kan have givet Anledning til Navnet, er liden.”). An alternative interpretation, perhaps more plausible, could be that the first element is to be connected to the homonym *há* ‘bay’, found in several Swedish place-names (Zetterholm 1936), cf. ON *hár* m. ‘the fork on a boat to have the oar; shark (a name given the fish from its sharp, triangular fin)’ (SEO:327; DEO:144). In the Early Iron Age and still during the Late Iron Age, a small but

9 “... byriadae mer ta ganga og siuna klippenom, [...] og saa i fieldenden, som ligger ved Vichgarstæden, og i grindestædet, og saa ouster i Helgefield, schillrissa (dvs -rika) merche Ousby og Wittersyn schieret, og hellen j vejen, end merche-estejnen som ligger i vejen schil Ousby og Lyfinæ, end Ryf-nestejnen schil adt Vich og Ousby. var dissæ dælæ gangen for 50 aar af 70 og 80 aar gamble mannum, til sandingæ sette vj vore insigle for dette bref som giort var aar og degj som for siger.” (DN 12:201, also published in Berg 1915:182 and Krohn-Holm 1970:298).

10 Cf. the cognate Sw *lung*, which denotes ‘a sandy ridge, an esker’ (Bucht 1951; Brink 1979:29–31). For Sw *ling*, see Mele-fors 1984.

conspicuous bay reached up to the settlement site of Hem from the east (Fig. 4.1). This could explain the name.

It is possible that the Early Roman Iron-age (c. AD 100–200) finds, in the form of a set of jewellery, a knife and a gold finger-ring which were excavated by Slottet in 1888 in the burial mound (12 m in diameter) of a woman interred in a small chamber (Blindheim 1974:72), may be connected to *Vittersen*. This hypothesis finds support in the fact that Early Iron-age names in *-heimr* and *-vin* seem to have denoted not so much settlements but rather larger home territories, as I have suggested and discussed elsewhere (Brink 1991, 2002b:688–9). The archaeological finds here at Slottet may well qualify as being within the home territory of an Early Iron-age *Vittersen*, although this is, of course, merely a hypothesis to be tested. Two Roman Iron-age burials at Huseby excavated by Nicolaysen in 1867 (Blindheim 1974:76) may be connected in the same way to an Early Iron-age *Guri* settlement immediately to the west of Huseby. The risk of circular argumentation is naturally – as often in the interface between archaeology and toponymy – a direct problem in cases like this, but observations of these kinds must be noted and eventually applied systematically in more extensive investigations in the future.

Thus the earliest settlement-names in Tjølling are interestingly grouped around the lake (*\*Vitrir/Vettrir*), with *Guri* to the south, *Lauve* to the east and both *Vittersen* and *Lingum* to the north of the lake. When comparing this settlement situation, which I assume to represent the Early Iron Age, with the Late Iron-age settlement situation in Tjølling, one gets the impression that the focus has moved from around and north of this lake to the area south of the lake, between the lake and the sea at Viksfjorden, with *Huseby* at the centre. This shift in settlement structure may partly be due to the shore displacement (land upheaval), with new, dry land to cultivate, and partly to the draw of the sea for seafaring, fishing and trade.

This leads us to the question of landscape change over time, and here the place-names can provide interesting evidences for an earlier maritime landscape and help us to reconstruct an Iron-age situation. The Tjølling area has been affected by the shore displacement (Sørensen et al., this vol. Ch. 12:267–72). When *Kaupang* was established the sea-level was c. 3.5 m higher than it is today, and during the Early Iron Age it is possible that it was 5–6 m higher. During the Late Iron Age, with a shoreline c. 3–4 m higher up the land, there was a long, narrow bay, pointing up towards *Grøtting*, to the west. This bay must have been narrow and maybe quite long. It would therefore be plausible to connect the place-name *Dreng*, a settlement immediately to the west, with this former bay. The name *Dreng* (*i Dræng* RB; *i Dræng* 1440)

could be interpreted as containing the ON *dreng* m. ‘thick log’ (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:290; cf. AEW:82), originally used in a figurative sense for the long and narrow bay.

Another, smaller, bay was at *Kaupang*, pointing to the north, towards *Guri*. *Malmøya* and *Lamøya* were present, but smaller than today, and the large *Vikeroya*, at the end of *Viksfjorden*, then consisted of several smaller islands. A significant bay went from *Viksfjorden* to the north-east, up to *Vik*. This Iron-age bay is evidently the explanation of this name, *Vik* ‘bay’. Next to *Vik*, by the ancient shoreline, we find the settlement *Varil* (*a Varareldi* 1376; *Vararelli* 1378; *i Varello* 1385; *i Warelli* 1391). The name probably originally denoted a landing place for ships. It contains the word *vǫr* f. ‘landing place’ (*varar* in the gen. sing.) and *hellir* m. ‘rock, flat rock’: hence ON *Vararhellir*.

To the east, west of *Sandefjorden*, there was a long and narrow peninsula stretching to the south. The delimitation of this elongated peninsula at the western side was a long and narrow inlet, a bay that opened out at the landward end (Fig. 4.1). This kind of small bay, with a lake-like end, was called a *mar*, ON *marr* m., or a *\*marm*, a word found, inter alia, in some Swedish place-names (Moberg 1988:7–8). This word is to be found in the place-name *Marum* (< *Marheimar*) on the Tjølling side of the fjord, in 1341 written as *Maræimar* and a *Maræimum*, and in *Røde Bog Mareimar*.

East and south of *Viksfjorden* there were three islands in the Iron Age, which became connected towards the end of this period, creating the large, crooked peninsula we still have today. Thus *Viksfjorden* was in contact with *Sandefjorden* to the east for some or all of the Iron Age through two channels or sounds (cf. Blindheim 1976b:76). For the outermost of these islands, with the settlements *Eftang*, *Fristad* and *Skjeggstad*, the name seems to be lost. The name of the largest island is, however, known from medieval documents. In *Røde Bog* we find *i Sandakre i Possøynne* (*Sandakr* being a now lost settlement), *i Klæpakre i Possøy*; *Sannæs i Possøynæ*; *i Hæmæ i Possøynne*; *Sannæsruð i Porsøy* and *Sannesruð i Possøy*; and finally *i Holtom i Possøy*. The name of this large island during the Middle Ages was therefore *Possøy*, which Rygh (1897–1936:VI:304) derives from *Pórsøy*, an interpretation that may find support in the form *Porsøy* in *Røde Bog*. This island name is then to be placed in the typological group of theophoric island names such as *Frösö* and *Norderö* (< *Njærðarøy*). It is notable that on this old island we find the place-names *Hovland* (*Hofland* RB) and, nearby, *Skisåker* (*Skesager* NRJ), both of which can be given a pagan, cultic interpretation, and so perhaps represent a cult site on the island.

Between the mainland of Tjølling and the large island of *Possøy* during the Iron Age there was a smaller island. We may find its name in the settle-

ment-name *Hosle*, which in 1401 was written *a Hoslu* (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:299). Rygh (loc. cit.) attempted to derive the name from a river-name, but had to admit that no potential river or stream is to be found here. Instead, this name inflected as a feminine noun, could be the older name of the island: hence *\*Hasla* ‘the island known for hazel’. When the shore displacement had proceeded to the point that this small island was joined together with the mainland via a small passage of land, a small isthmus, this became a site in the waterway where one had to haul the ship or boat over the small isthmus between the inlet from the east and the Viksfjorden, which may be reflected in the settlement-name *Eide*. The name is the dative singular form of the word *eið* ‘portage; isthmus where one has to haul the boat between areas of water’.

That the sea once formed a passage, and later on a bay, north of the former island with the assumed name of *\*Hasla* is corroborated by the name *Syrrist* (*i Siaugharystrw*, *i Siagharystrv* RB), which goes back to a *Sjóvaristra*, containing in its second element the name of a river, *\*Istra* (also found in the neighbouring name *Skallist*, in RB found as *i Skalistrw*), and the word *sjór* ‘sea’ as the qualifier, giving the meaning that here, at this site, the river *\*Istra* flowed into the sea.

This river-name, *\*Istra*, is also found in the settlement-name *Istre*, upstream. The name of the settlement was written *a Istru* in 1390 and in 1439 as *Istre*. This river-name has parallels in Scandinavia, but its etymology is quite obscure. Per Hovda (1971:141) thinks the river-name is a derivative with an ancient *-str*-suffix to a stem in the word ON *íss* m. ‘ice’, because this calm-flowing river froze unusually early.<sup>11</sup> The obvious connection would otherwise be with ON *ístr* n. ‘fat’, but why this river would be blessed with such a name (ON *\*Istra*, Pr.-Germ. *\*Istrōn*) is uncertain. Perhaps the quality of the water was likened to the white and glossy *ister* ‘fat’. The more adventurous and daring toponymist would note that a hydronymic stem *ístr-* is found in river-names in Europe, for example in the old name of the Danube, *Istros* (Krahe 1964:71), and try to connect our Norwegian name with those. In this case I am more cautious, and prefer a local explanation.

Finally, we must comment on the name of the large bay of *Viksfjorden*. This name is secondary, probably formed from the settlement with the name of *Vik* into which the fjord led. Scholars have discussed the older name of this bay. One interpretation is that the old name of the bay was simply *\*Vik* ‘bay’ (Holm 1991:50); another, which has found several adherents, is that the first element in the name *Skíringssalr* (see below), a former name of the Tjølling settlement district during the Middle Ages, *\*Skíringr*, could have been the original name of this bay. This *\*Skíringr* would contain the ON adjective *skírr* ‘clear’, giving the name the meaning of ‘clear bay’ or ‘bay with the clear water’ (Fries 1980). This option – which I

myself once recommended (Brink 1996b: 272) – can be questioned. The older name of this bay may instead be found in the settlement-name of *Eftang*, in RB known as *Ælftangr*, an interpretation already mentioned by Oluf Rygh (1896:7; cf. NSL:96).<sup>12</sup> This bay thus had a typical name in *-angr*, meaning ‘bay’, as in *Stavanger*, *Levanger* etc. The first element is the word *alpt* ‘swan’, here in the plural, *elptr*.

After this excursus on place-names as evidence of landscape development, we can go back to the settlement-names, but turn now to the names that probably had their origin in the Late Iron Age.

#### 4.2 The Late Iron-age and Viking-age names

In all probability, settlement-names containing *-stad* (< *-staðir*) in Norway are to be placed in the Late Iron Age or the middle of the first millennium AD (Sandnes 1973:24; NSL:294–5.; cf. Brink 1983:8–9). This holds also for place-names in *-bý* with a first element – in stem-composition – containing a word relating to some topographical or vegetational feature rather than a personal name (Hellberg 1967:407–9). For example *Valby* (: *vøllr* ‘bank, pasture, levelled field’) and *Sundby* (: *sund* ‘sound, strait’).

The *-stad* names are *Skreppestad* (*i Skræippistadhom* RB), probably containing a man’s name *Skræppir*, and the much noticed and discussed *Gjerstad* (*a Gæirstoðum* in *Flateyjarbók*; *á Geirstoðum* in *Ynglingatal*; *Gerestadt* NRJ), where the identification with this *Gjerstad* and the names found in *Flateyjarbók* and *Ynglingatal* is uncertain. In *Ynglingatal*, King Olaf, called *Geirstaðaálfr* ‘Geirstad-elf’, is said to have been buried at this place. The first element seems to contain a man’s name *Geirr* or *Geiri* (Rygh 1901:85). *Vestad*, in the north of Tjølling, is a very interesting name. In RB it is written *i Vestadhum*, and the first element could be interpreted as the word *vé* ‘pagan cult site’, or, if an adjective, ‘holy, sacred’. *Hybbestad* by the river *\*Istra* is written *i Hyppistadom* in 1398, in 1422 *a Høyppestadom*, and in 1472 *a Hyppestadom*. The qualifier in this name may be a deprecatory nickname of a man, *\*Hyppir*, containing the word *hupp* ‘lump’ (cf. the name of a female slave in *Rígsþula*: *Tøtrughyppja*). *Klåstad* (*i Klastadom* 1372; *Klastadæ* 1426) has not been interpreted and the first element is uncertain. *Skjeggstad* (*i Skæggiastadum* RB) seems to contain a man’s name *Skeggi* (Rygh 1901:221), and finally *Fristad* (*i Fristadum* RB) may be a reduction of an older *\*Friðreksstaðir* or something similar.

11 For a discussion of a Pr.-Scand. hydronymic suffix *-str*, see Andersson 1975.

12 Another possibility, which cannot be ruled out, is that *Eftang* could be an older name for a narrow, small inlet, separating Eftang from Fristad during the Late Iron Age, as has been proposed by Gösta Holm (1991:50).



Together with the *-stad* names, and *Valby* and *Sundby*, there are a couple of other settlement-names that might be assigned to the Late Iron Age, such as *Stållåker*, with no reliable older written form, *Bergan* (i *Berghum* RB), an older *Bergar*, and others. *Valby* (af *Valbø* RB) is a *-bý/-bø* name containing the word *vall*/ *voll* ‘flat grassland’. The name is perhaps to be seen in conjunction with the place-name *Vollen* found at Tjølling church to the east. This name *Vollen* might be old, as old as the name *Þjóðalyng*, and the word is often found in place-names for assembly sites, as, for instance, *Vall* in central locations in the old parishes in the province of Gästrikland in Sweden and in names such as *Tingvalla*, *Pingvellir* (Brink 1990:355–7, 2003, 2004). Tom Schmidt (2000a:448) has suggested that *Valby* is a detachment from the old *Skíringssalr* (→ *Huseby*), which also seems to be the background to *Østby* ‘the (detached) farm to the east’, east of *Huseby*.

Medieval names, or more correctly, place-names that were established during a colonisation phase of the early Christian Middle Ages that may already have begun in the Viking Period, are settlement-names in *-tveit*, *-rud*, *-rød* and *-bøl*. *Ásmundrød* is an older *Ásmundarruð* (or *-rauð*), containing the man’s name *Ásmundr*; *Kolsrød* (*Koolsrud* 1398), a man’s name *Kolr*; *Ommundrød* (*Amunderød* 1320), which Rygh (1897–1936:VI:296) interprets as *Qgmundarruð*, hence a man’s name *Qgmundr*; *Svenerød*, probably an older *\*Sveinaruð* to a man’s name *Sveini*, or a *Svína-ruð*, to *svín* n. ‘pig’; *Mosserød*, probably an older *Mosaruð* to *mosi* m. ‘bog’. A couple of names indicate deserted settlements, perhaps deserted during the late medieval agrarian crisis, such as *Ødegården*, *Auby* (*Audeby* 1458) and *Tufte* (< *Tuptir*), denoting the foundations of a deserted house or farm.

Finally we come to the intricate but most interesting place-names in the centre of the Late Iron-age settlement district of Tjølling, the obvious foci of which were *Huseby* and Tjølling church. The discussion over the years has been focused on the place-name *Skíringssalr*, a name lost today, but known from medieval sources. The big question has been where to locate *Skíringssalr*, and also what kind of *denotatum* the name had. Before we refer the different opinions, let us review the occasions on which the name occurs in medieval texts and documents:

In the famous poem *Ynglingatal* (st. 30) we read in the stanza dealing with Halfdan Whiteleg (Jónsson 1912b:12; transl. Brink):

*ok Skereið  
í Skíringssal  
of brynjalfs  
beinum drúpir*

And Skereið  
in Skíringssalr  
leans [droops] over  
the bones of the mailshirt-hero

In Snorri’s *Ynglinga saga* (Jónsson 1922:ch. 44), in his *Heimskringla*, which has the poem *Ynglingatal* as its source, we read: [*Hálfðan hvítbeinn*] *varð gamall maðr; hann varð sótt dauðr á Þótni ok var síðan fluttur út á Vestfold ok heygðr þar, sem hét Skereið í Skíringssal* (“Halfdan became an old man; he died of illness at Toten and was then carried out to Vestfold and buried in a barrow in a place called Skereið in Skíringssal”).

In chapter 10 in *Sögubrot af nokkrum fornkonungum í Dana ok Svía veldi* (“A fragment of the history of some ancient kings in the Dana and Svea realms”) we read: *Þá er Sigurðr Hríngur var gamall, var þat á einu hausti [...] at þá komu ímóti honum Gandálfs synir, mágar hans, ok báðu, at hann mundi veita þeim lið at riða á hendr þeim konungi, er Eysteinn hét, er því ríki réð, er þá hétu Vestmarrar, en nú heitir Vestfold. Þá voru höfð blót í Skíringssal, er til var sótt um alla vikina...* (“One autumn, when Sigurd Ring was old, the sons of Gandalf, his sons-in-law, approached him and asked if he could provide them with a force of men so they could ride to the King, who was called Eystein, and who ruled the kingdom that was called Vestmarr and which is now called Vestfold. At that time there was a major sacrifice [blót] in Skíringssal, which was visited by the whole of Vikinn...”).

In *Fagrskinna* (Ms. A, ch. 4) we can read of Halfdan the Black: *licamr hans var iarðaðr a Steini a Ringaríki enn hofuð hans var flutt í Skírns sal a Vestfold oc var þar iarðat* (“his body was buried at Steini in Ringerike, but his head was taken to Skíringssal in Vestfold and was buried there”).

In a document from 1419 (DN 1:661) a Thorald Kane pawned to Sir Markvard Buk “alt Gudrina, sæm ligger i Skirix saal”, and the same pledge was again in 1444 (DN 1:788): “... er Gudrino hether er ligger i Biedlings sokn a Vestfollene”. In an enumeration of landed estates belonging to St Stephan’s and St Georg’s Hospital in Tønsberg from 1445 (DN 9:295), we have the heading “Skirisall”, under which we have the names: “Monom, Namfnesale, Brækko, Klæpakre, Næsium”, some names lost today or difficult to identify, the rest to be located in Tjølling parish. Finally we have to take into account the name-form *Sciringes heal* found in the famous report of Ohthere’s journey from Hålogaland down to Hedeby in the late 9th century.

The lively discussion on the identification of the *locus* of Skíringssal has been very extensive, and sometimes rather polemic, especially during the 19th century. It was probable from the documents that the name denoted not a single farm but some kind of area or district, but the question was whether the name was to be identified with the parish, which is intimated by the letters of 1419 and 1444; or with a manorial estate, consisting of some farms, as could be hinted at by the register from 1445; or as alluding to a district larger than the Tjølling parish, including Sandeherred



etc. (see e.g. Munch 1850; Sørensen 1900; Kjær 1909a, 1909b; Sørensen 1909a, 1909b; Bugge 1909, 1915). Today this question seems rather academic.

What is important – an issue that was not addressed in the previous discussion in the 19th century and around 1900 – is to ask oneself what the term *salr* denoted. We also have new foundations to stand on when discussing the usage of names for parishes and settlement districts (*bygder*) during the Middle Ages (see Brink 1990).

A *salr* was originally not a district or something spatial: it was used for a building, a hall. The word *salr* was the old word for such a hall building, and we find it in some – but not many – very interesting place-names in Scandinavia, such as (*Gamla*) *Uppsala*, *Skíringssalr*, a couple of *Öðinssalr*, “*Tesal*”, several *Sala*, and some more (Brink 1996b:255–7). These names were hence originally the names of actual halls, but must early on have been transferred to the settlement that the hall related to. Such an imposing hall, owned by a king or a chieftain, inevitably made an impression and was well known, so that from an early date the area around the hall must have been identified with the hall-name, giving then the area the meaning “the area/district under the influence of N-hall”. This must be the explanation of why, during the Middle Ages, we find the name *Skíringssalr* as denoting an area or a district. The same is the case with, amongst others, “*Tesal*”, which, during the Middle Ages, denoted the west part of Råde parish in Østfold (Rygh 1897–1936:VI:1:337). We can see that *Skíringssalr* was sometimes equal to the parish of *Tjølling*, which is not surprising. The name of the parish was probably originally *Tjølling*, but the *bygd*-name *Skíringssalr* could also be used as a geographical identifier for farms in this parish, and indeed during early Christian Middle Ages the parish could have been identified as either *Tjølling* or *Skíringssalr*. This kind of instability in the early parish-names is well known (Brink 1990:130). The fact that *Skíringssalr* is sometimes used as a synonym for *Tjølling* parish is not a problem, therefore; it is to be expected, with a parish name (*Tjølling*) and a name (*Skíringssalr*) that had evolved into a settlement district name for a *bygd*. We can therefore conclude this discussion by stating that *Skíringssalr* ought originally to have denoted a hall.

So what about the qualifier within the name? Several practically impossible interpretations have been proposed. The first sober suggestion is given by Rygh (1897–1936:VI:306), who concludes that the first element must be a masculine *skíring* in the genitive, a derivation with an *-ing* suffix on the adjective ON *skírr* ‘clear, pure, bright, light’. And Rygh continues to state that since other names in *-salr* have a theophoric denominator, *Óðinn* in *Öðinssalr* and probably *Týr* [sic] in *Tésalr*, it would seem plausible to interpret *Skíringr* as a kind of god’s name as well. Gustav Storm (1909) suggested that *Skíringr* was another name for

*Freyr*, since in *Grímnismál* this god is given the epithet *skírr* and one of his servants is named *Skírnir*. Sophus Bugge (in Rygh 1897–1936:VI:306) partly follows Storm’s interpretation, that this *Skíringr* could contain a god’s name, but doubts that a god (*Freyr*) could have been given such a name. Instead he suggests that the qualifier contains a compound \**Skír-Ing*, where *Ing* is to be identified with the “god” or hero *Ing* (Pr.-Germ. \**Ingwaz*), the *heros eponymos* of the early Germanic \**ingwianiz*, the *ingaeuones/ingvaeones* in Tacitus’ *Germania* (Lund 1988:ch. 2), and the *ynglingar*, *inglingar*: a rather clever interpretation that links *Skíringssalr* and Vestfold to the poem *Ynglingatal* and to *Uppsala* and the *Svear* in Sweden. I doubt, however, if this is a plausible argument. It seems incomprehensible that the hero *Ing* should in this case have been called “the bright or shining Ing”. No such appellative is ever recorded to my knowledge.<sup>13</sup> Sigurd Fries (1980) later argued a case that *Skíringr* be seen as an older name for Viksfjorden. This is more acceptable from a toponymic viewpoint; with this interpretation we could abandon the alternative with an unknown god’s name \**Skíringr*. The suffix *-ing* is used in many fjord- and bay-names, and the name for a bay could easily contain the word *skírr*, denoting clear water etc. However, the bay alternative is – in my view – also to be questioned; the older name for Viksfjorden is probably to be found in the settlement-name *Eftang*, which thus goes back to an ON *Elptangr*.

Andreas Nordberg (2003:268) has recently proposed an interesting interpretation of *Skíringssalr*. He argues that \**Skíring-* could be a qualifier for the *salr*, the hall itself, meaning “the bright, shining hall”, and gives several parallels of early descriptions of famous banqueting halls with similar epithets. The problem with this interpretation is rather on the linguistic side, since a word \**skíring-* or a similar construction – a kind of extension of an adjective with the suffix *-ing* and with the same or a similar meaning – is unknown.

Today, to be on the safe side, it seems most probable that *Skíringssalr* is to be interpreted as the name of a hall, situated in Huseby, whose first element is a \**Skíring* of unknown meaning and denotation. It is furthermore most likely that the name *Skíringssalr* for the hall and later on the settlement here was superseded by *Húsabýr*, a change which might have its background in the fact that in the Middle Ages *Skíringssalr* came to be used as a territorial name for the *bygd* or the parish. It is well known, when one name is “elevated” and given a new and wider denotation, for a new name to be used for the original deno-

<sup>13</sup> However, one can note that the name *Ing* is connected to *Freyr* in the compound *Ingunarfreyr* (AEW:286; see also Hellberg 1986).

tatum. This is the case when, for example, a name for a settlement with a church is used for the parish and the settlement gets the new name *Kyrkbyn* ‘the church village’.

There has also been some discussion over how to understand the form of the name *Skíringssalr* found in the famous report of Ohthere’s voyage, namely OE *Sciringes heal*. Was this a translation of an Old Norse name, or was it a misunderstanding or misinterpretation by the Old English writer? In my opinion the easiest way to explain OE *Sciringes heal* is to see it as a corrupt form of *Skíringssalr*, where the second element *-salr* has been wrongly identified with OE *healm*. ‘bend (perhaps also bay)’ by an Anglo-Saxon notetaker or interpreter, but several other possibilities seem plausible.<sup>14</sup>

To make a complicated case even more complicated we have probably to face another name in *-salr* in this parish, namely the aforementioned “Nafnesale” mentioned in the Tønsberg register from 1445. This name was noticed by Rygh (1897–1936:VI:292), and the following older forms were known by then: *Namfnesale* 1445; *Nummesall* 1664; *Nommesal* 1723. In the latter cases “Nafnesal” was a dependent farm under Brekke. According to Rygh (loc. cit.) this name is to be identified with the farm *Haugen* in Tjølling, and I have no reason to doubt this identification. The word *name* as a qualifier in a place-name seems a very rare bird. One scholar once made the following reflection (Rygh 1897–1936:I:358): “Nafn (Navn) findes ellers ikke som Stedsnavn og synes ikke meget skikket dertil” (“Name is otherwise never found as a place-name and does not seem very well suited as one”) – a view one can entirely concur with. A compound *Namnlösen* is, however, most common in Sweden for different kinds of topographical objects, such as small lakes, boggy land, skerries etc., and the name seems to have been bestowed upon the object by the fact that it had no name, so it was called *Namnlösen* “without name” instead. But apart from this special case, place-names in *Namn-* are extremely rare, to my knowledge. For Norway Rygh (loc. cit.) was only aware of a couple of names, which seem to go back to a rivername *\*Navn* or *\*Navná*. In these cases the element *nafn/namn* may be looked upon as a “noa”-designation, a general, “safe” word used instead of an element that was “dangerous” in some way, in the same vein as the wolf was called *Greybone/Greylegs* so as not to make some wolf attentive in the vicinity, or using an unproblematic word, such as e.g. ON *freyr* ‘Lord’, OHG *hërro* ‘Lord’ or English *Lord*, instead of a god’s name that is too holy and sacred to utter. One case, *Nantveit* in Manger (Namfnaþuæit BK), is appealingly interpreted as containing a man’s name ON *Nafni* (Rygh, loc. cit.). The only other name to be considered in Norway is a lost ON *Myklunafn* (Rygh 1897–1936:I:358, 393) with the following medieval name-forms: *af Myllenamffne* 1320

in transcript 1409; *i Myklunamfne* 1445; *i Myklæ-Namfne* RB. Such a name is – as far as I am aware – totally unique. It seems to mean “the Big Name”. Was it a name for a grand site that craved a grand name?

In our case we must rely on the medieval form of the name, which seems to represent an ON *Nafnasalr*, although Rygh (loc. cit.) has some doubts about the authenticity of this form. It does not fit with the later forms. Those may be valid, but if we check the source, the 1445 register, we find good, credible name-forms in the Late Old Norwegian. Thus the form *Namfnesale* should seem accurate and trustworthy. I exclude the possibility of the name containing the man’s name ON *Nafni*, because place-names in *-salr* seem never to contain a man’s name. To try to explain this rare name one has to speculate. A first possibility is that the first element in the name is the word *nafn* n. in the same usage as assumed in the river-names, as a “noa”-designation, perhaps for a god’s name too holy to utter. The other possible explanation is that the first element is the word *nafni*, a derivation of the word *nafn*, with the meaning ‘namesake’. In that case *Nafnasalr* should be seen linked with *Skíringssalr*, which seems possible with the occurrence of two *-salr* in the same settlement district. Where both *salir* dedicated to a god *\*Skíringr*, so that the minor *salr* had to change its name to *Nafnasalr*? I have to rest my case with presenting these suggestions. We end up with the conclusion that the Tjølling district seems to have had two place-names in *-salr*. The only other case I know of where we have two *-salr* in the same settlement district (more or less), is in Gamla Uppsala in Sweden, with *Sala* and *Uppsala*. *Nafnasalr* is something of a mystery (cf. Skre, this vol. Ch.19:439–40).

The next problem relates to *Huseby*. This name has been energetically discussed, and Asgaut Steinnes highlighted it in his book *Husebyar* of 1955. From the Swedish evidence, where the *husabyar* seem to have been royal farms constituting the great bulk of the *bona regalia*, Steinnes formed the hypothesis that the Norwegian *husebyar* were also old royal farms. Sometimes this hypothesis lead Steinnes to quite startling conclusions, as for *Huseby* in Tjølling, which during the Middle Ages is known to have been in seigneurial possession, owned by the nobility, and one of the biggest farms in the parish. From this evidence, Steinnes concludes: “Det kan ikkje vera stor tvil om at vi her har å gjera med ein gamal kongsgard.” (“There can be no doubt that here we have to do with an old royal farm.”) This may seem a poorly grounded and risky statement, but could actually agree with some evidence (Skre, this vol. Ch. 11:246–7).

As with the Swedish *husaby* names and those found in Østfold, it now seems clear that these settlements had an older name (Hoel 1986; Brink 1999b, 2000). *Húsabýr* started as a kind of appellative that replaced an older name – similar to *kyrkbyn* > *Kyrkbyn*, *prestgården* > *Prestgården* etc. – in our case here

in Tjølling most certainly superseding *Skíringssalr*.

We then come to *Tjølling*, the name of the actual parish. The name is well documented in the Middle Ages (*a Þiodalyngi*, *Þiodalyngs sokn* 1367; *Þiodalyngs sokn* 1403; *a Þiodalyng* 1422 etc.: see Rygh 1897–1936:VI:287–8) evidencing an ON *Þjóðalyng*. This compound is transparent, containing ON *þjóð* f. ‘people’ and *lyng* n. ‘heath’; the older forms can indicate a genitive singular first element (*þjóðar-*) as well as a genitive plural (*þjóða-*). Fritzner connected this name with, *inter alia*, the ON *þjóðstefna* ‘public, general or common meeting’, whereas Gustav Storm preferred here to see *þjóð* with a meaning ‘main’, as in a compound ON *þjóðá* ‘main river’, implying that this *thing*-moot was a main, public *thing* (see Rygh 1897–1936:VI:288). It is notable here at Tjølling that *things* were held for the inhabitants of the whole of Brunla Len as late as 1557 (DN I:820). On linguistic grounds it is difficult to decide whether the name should be interpreted as the (assembly) heath for a people (*þjóðar-*) or for several peoples (*þjóða-*), and both meanings of ‘people’ and ‘main’ are possible in our case. However, if *Tjølling* is an ancient name, the latter possibility would seem less probable, since a meaning ‘main’ (as in ON *þjóðá* ‘main river’) must be secondary. Etymologically *þjóð* had the primary meaning of ‘people’ in all Germanic languages.

Notable are the three evidently interrelated place-names *Tjølling*, *Vollen* (no early written form) and *Lunde* (*a Lunde* 1451). *Vollen* indicates a flat grassland, ON *vøllr*. The word is common in names of *thing* sites, such as *Pingvellir*, *Tingvalla* etc., and the word is also used as simplex *Vall*, *Voll* or in compounds such as *kyrkvall*. All these examples demonstrate that a *voll*, *vall* was preferred for communal meetings (cf. Brink 1990:355–7). In our case the *voll* probably was a heath, the *Þjóðalyng*. The latter name has an interesting counterpart in the *thing* and meeting place for the East Gautar in Östergötland, Sweden. They met at a place called *Lionga thing* (mentioned, for instance, in the Östgöta Law), ‘the *thing* on the heath’, a predecessor to the modern city of Linköping (Wessén 1921). The name *Lund* is more difficult to pin down semantically. The name denotes a grove, that much seems certain; but was it a cultic grove or some ordinary, profane grove? That we cannot say. The toponymic context of *Lund*, with neighbours *Guri*, *\*Skíringssalr* and *Tjølling*, makes a cultic interpretation at least an attractive possibility – perhaps even a probability.

It is an intriguing question why the church for this parish was erected at Tjølling. Normally, in a case such as this settlement district, we would have found the church in Huseby, built by the chieftain or king residing there. Instead the church was built on what was probably the communal assembly place. Over much of northern Sweden, this was a common practice. As I showed in my doctoral dissertation, many churches in Norrland must have been built on an

assembly place, which may have been some kind of common for the district, and in these cases it seems probable that (more or less) the whole district was engaged in the building of the church (Brink 1990: 173–5). With Tjølling, with the notable occurrence of a noble, perhaps royal, presence at least at Huseby, this seems rather odd. One would assume that the church-builder would be the central figure at Huseby. Maybe this was the case here too, but for some reason the church was placed at the assembly place rather than at Huseby. One cannot, however, disregard the possibility that Tjølling church was built as a communal undertaking by the farmers and noblemen of the whole district (Skre, this vol. Ch. 17:394–6).

Finally we come to *Kaupang*. The name goes back on an appellative, ON *kaupangr* ‘market, trading place’ etc.<sup>15</sup> The *kaupangr* in this case denoted the harbour and probably the trading site at *Kaupang*, which, according to the archaeological surveys that have been carried out here, were of considerable extent. It seems very plausible that this *kaupangr* was under the control of the person in power, resident at, or in control of Huseby (Hoel 1986:132; Brink 1996b: 273). We do not know how old the word *kaupangr* is in the Nordic languages; the answer depends on how to understand the etymology of the word, and the possibility that the word is a loan from some other language (possibly West Germanic). It is clear that the word was used in the Viking Period, according to our sources, and the place-names in *kaupangr* etc. in Scandinavia seem to be prehistoric in many cases. Therefore the most probable assumption is that *Kaupang* is “organic” in our case, and was not given to the site in a later phase of history.

#### 4.3 Summary

We end up with a most interesting toponymic picture for Tjølling. During the Early Iron Age the area saw agrarian activity and several settlements, according to the archaeological finds and place-names. From the surviving Early Iron-age place-names it would appear that the settlement was grouped around a lake in the central part of Tjølling, a lake with the possible name *\*Vitrir/Vettrir*, perhaps embodying a perception of the lake as a kind of a sacred lake. During the Iron Age, the landscape of Tjølling was different from that of today. Several large or small bays and inlets existed, and also probably three islands, of which we know the name of one (*Possøy < Þórsøy*), a probable name for a second (*\*Hasla*) but for the third island,

14 Another alternative is favoured by Janet Bately (2007; cf. *Orosius*), who argues for an older, lost name for Kaupang.

15 This word ON *kaupangr*, OSw *køpunger*, ODa *køping* is actually rather tricky to understand etymologically. I hope I can come back to the problem on a later occasion. For the moment, see, *inter alia*, AEW:304.



by Eftang, the name has been lost. Settlement expanded during the Late Iron Age, with several new farms, such as *Hyggestad*, *Klåstad*, *Fristad*, *Skjeggestad*, *Skreppestad*, *Håkestad* etc., and the focus of the district moved, from the settlement around the lake *\*Vitrir/Vettrir* to the area south of the lake and towards the sea, to *Huseby–Kaupang–Guri–Østby–Tjølling*. The central settlement here must have been *\*Skíringssalr*, denoting a feasting hall, a name later

replaced by *Huseby*. It is possible to see all of these settlements as a kind of a complex (cf. Brink 1996b:238), with interdependent settlements, or rather, the main resident at *\*Skíringssal/Huseby* having been in control over the harbour and trading-place Kaupang, and perhaps also the assembly site at Tjølling. The case discussed here is, at least for Norway, a unique case in respect of the historical information provided by place-names.