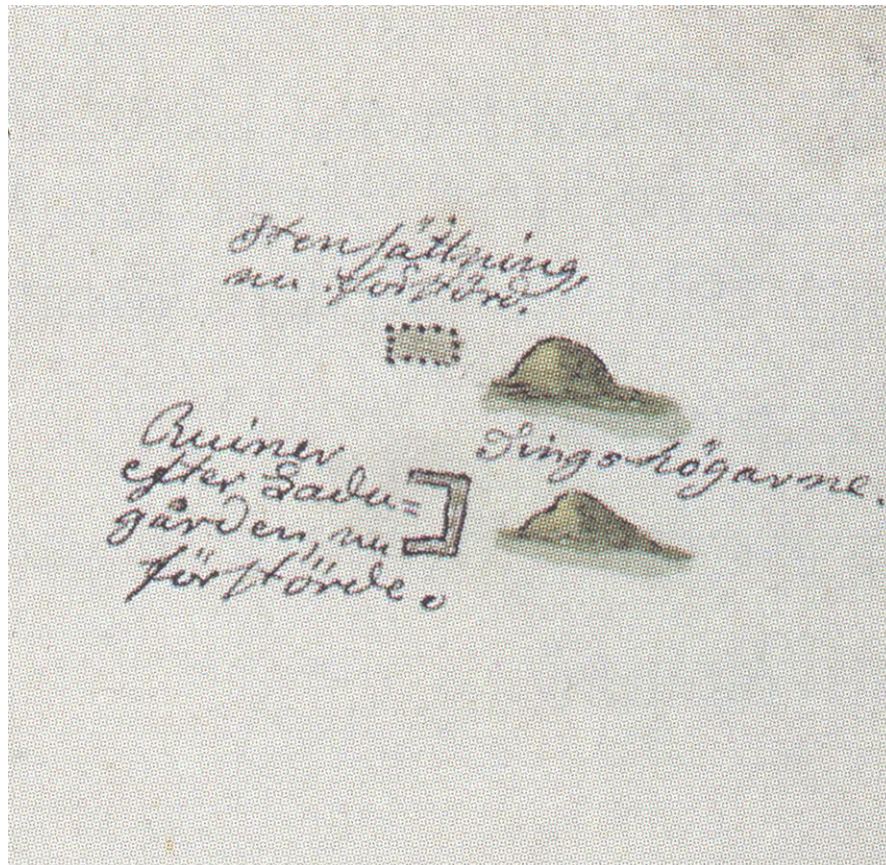


Place names and jurisdiction. Legal practice in the landscape from a linguistic perspective.



Tingshögarna north of Lund, according to N. H. Sjöborg in 1814.

My PhD project started in 2008 and will be completed in 2013. The work takes place within the frames of my position at the Institute for Language and Folklore, and by being a doctoral student at Linnéuniversitetet in Växjö. My office is at Dialekt- och ortnamnsarkivet i Lund.

The purpose is to present the names of fields, meadows, hills, villages etc. containing words relating to jurisdiction, in the district Skåne in southern Sweden, and to show what places they denominate. From this survey one can both describe and survey the actual name material – what types of names it includes, what purpose the use of names has in various records, how this

influences the passing down and preservation of the names etc. But one can also look at the denominated objects in the landscape: what kind of places do have names containing words from the field of jurisdiction? How can these be described, as physical manifestation and as societal phenomenon? It is obviously important to explore to what degree the places bearing names containing terms of jurisdiction really are old places for courts of law and execution and to what degree they only have to do with various types of local formation of myths. In studying the denominated features in the landscape I also refer to general theories of early Scandinavian jurisdiction: is there for instance continuity between the late Iron Age and later periods? Is there a spatial connection between places of legal courts and other central functions such as religious practice, markets, or the domains of certain leaders.

Fundamental to my work is the view that landscapes are largely created through human consciousness and that coining and passing down names is of highest importance when giving meaning to physical reality. Perspectives from text linguistics imbue my work; both landscape and its names can, in my opinion, be studied in similar ways as are usually done within text linguistics. This means that language use is emphasized rather than language structure and that the names in the landscape are seen as coined and passed down in certain linguistic and textual contexts. In order to understand the names and the landscape we thus need to know the historical conditions associated with different forms of intermediation – communication technology, available genres, and social conditions surrounding the language use.

In conjunction with the work on the thesis I have had one article published, one is in print and one more is planned. The former can be found in “NORNA-rapporter 82” (2007) and can be seen as a pilot-project before the theses. A detailed study of the legal conditions associated with the Dalby monastery will be published in the proceedings of the international and interdisciplinary conference about Dalby that took place 24-27 of April in 2010. I will talk about my views of place names as text at the conference “Svenskans beskrivning” 13-14 of October in 2011 in Karlstad and publish an article in the conference report.

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Vemmenhögarna near the village of Västra Vemmenhög in the hundred (härad) of Vemmenhög, Skåne.



Ola Svensson