

Place names with personal name specifics in Gloppen and Breim, Western Norway

Report from a survey of the representation of personal names in place names based on an evaluation of the place names in Norske Gaardnavne in Gloppen and Breim Municipalities

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Figure 1. Map of the Gloppen and Breim Municipalities in Nordfjord, Western Norway. Map from www.GISlink.no

Purpose of the report

This report gives insight into the representation of personal names as specifics in place names from the Late Iron Age to the Medieval period in a sample area of Western Norway. The surveyed area consists of two adjoining areas, Gloppen and Breim Municipalities in the former Sogn and Fjordane Fylke. This is interesting because naming of land by using personal



names may reflect new ways of structuring land rights and new conceptions about land ownership. The report was produced as a part of the research for a scientific paper in connection with the ArcNames project based at the Department of Archaeology at the University of Bergen. ArcNames researches the significance and use of personal names in the Scandinavian Iron Age from an archaeological perspective. The ArcNames project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 797386.

For the report, the place names of each area have been surveyed using the Norwegian registry of farm names, Norske Gaardnavne (NG) and an extract has been made of names with possible personal name specifics with reviews of all interpretations. During the work, both place names with certain personal name specifics and other place name types deemed relevant for settlement history were reviewed, yet this report focuses on the occurrence of personal names. The material is presented below, alphabetically ordered.

Several of the interpretations in the NG are outdated and have been revised. In the report are included both the examples interpreted as containing personal names that have been revised and those names that have been interpreted as containing personal names, although the NG interpret them otherwise.

Further, it is briefly stated if there are archaeological evidence connected to the name locality based on registrations in Norwegian Riksantikvaren's registry of sites and monuments (Askeladden).

Gloppen Municipality

Arnestad indre og ytre, NG, no 7 and 8, bd. 12 p. 456

Oldest forms: 14th c. i *Arnastodum*, 1339, a *Arnastodum*

Specific: Male name Arni, 'eagle' (Peterson 2007:26).

Generic: -staðir

Archaeology:

- ID 64104, Burial site, Late Iron Age, area ca. 90x20 m. with concentration of mounds near Ytre Arnestad farm. One mound with a menhir. Two male graves under flat stones; B 7239: Late Iron Age male grave in coal layer with smithing equipment, B 7007: Late Iron Age male grave with spear, axe, hammer and bell. From a cairn: B10058, bronze plate brooch, Merovingian period, found with glass beads (latter are lost).
- ID 64103-1: burial mound, 12 m. diam (undated), indre Arnestad farm

Gjemmestad, NG no. 9, b.12, p. 457

Oldest forms: 1303 Gæmlastadhóm (copy 1427), 1308 ecclesia de Gæmlistadum (from later copy) (lat.). 1308 de Gemlistadum (from later copy) (lat.).

Specific: probably a male name or byname ON Gamli, 'old' (Peterson 2007:74). An original Gemlisstaðir er more likely than Gemlastaðir, as the first will explain the umlaut effect on the first syllable.

Generic: -staðir

- ID 84240: Medieval church, first mentioned 1308, rebuilt 1690.
- ID 16175-1: Large burial mound (12 m diam.) near Gjemmestad farm.
- ID 64116-1: Burial mound near Gjemmestad Old Church



Ravnestad NG no. 13, b.12, p. 457.

Oldest forms: 14th c. i Roðmesstoðum, i Roðmastodum, 14th c. Raunestadt, 1563 Rauffnestadt 1567 Ranndstad.

Specific: Most likely male name Hroðmar, 'fame+famous' also known from Viking Age Runic inscriptions (Peterson 2004: 29, 2007:120).

Generic: -staðir

Archaeology: nothing registered. Two burial sites on neighbouring farm, Sande.

Rauset, NG no. 14, b.12, p. 457-458

Oldest forms: 1514-1521 Rødesetter, 1563 Rødsetter.

Specific: IN NG interpreted as the male name Rauðr, 'red', also known from Runic inscriptions (Peterson 2007: 182). However, it can also be the adjective red in a descriptive capacity.

Generic: -setr/-sætr

Archaeology: Viking inhumation grave. Report 048997, Diinhoff 2000, Bergen University Museum

Hjortset, NG no. 26. b.12, p. 461

Oldest forms: 14th c. i Hiartsætre, 1603 Hiortesetter

Specific: In NG interpreted as the animal name hjort, 'deer' or a rivername Hjarta, derived from the animal name. This explanation seems likely, however hypothetically, it could also work as a byname.

Generic: -setr/-sætr, 'pasture'

Archaeology:

- ID 114990-1: menhir, Iron Age – Medieval Period.

Osmundnes NG no. 34, b.12, p. 462-463.

Oldest forms: 14th c. i Austmarssnesi, 14th c. i Austmannanesi, 1563 Ossmundenes.

Specific: NG reports this name as uncertain, however refers to the male name Austmaðr, found on a Rune stone in Jämtland (Peterson 2007: 38). It can also be genitive plural of the appellative austmaðr, 'man from the east'

Generic: -nes, 'peninsular'

Archaeology:

- ID 127646: Protected "Klyngetun" with datings back to the Medieval Period

Skeistranden, NG no. 37 b.12, p. 463.

Oldest forms: 14th c. i Skegisstrond, 1603 Skiestrandt, 1667 Schestrand.

Specific: Male name *Skeggir*, a derivation from ON skegg, 'beard' also known from Viking Age Runic inscriptions (Peterson 2007: 199).

Generic: -strand, 'beach'.

Archaeology: Nothing registered.



Hjelmeset, NG no. 54. b.12, p. 466

Oldest forms: 1514-1521 Halmesetter, 1514-1521 Hielmessetther, 1570 Hiellmesetter.

Specific: NG has the interpretation *hjalmr* m., ‘helmet, stack’, probably used as a topographical description. The same word is however also used as a personal name both monothematic *Hjalmr* and as first and second element in compound names (Peterson 2007: 110-111, see also 2004: 28). I consider the personal name a valid possibility although this cannot be determined with certainty.

Generic: *-setr/-sætr*, ‘pasture’

Archaeology:

- ID 105967: excavations in connection with airport construction revealed large area with cultivation from the Neolithic to Medieval Period, Bronze and Iron Age and settlement from the Early Iron Age and continued into the historical era.

Tystad, NG no. 64. b.12, p.467-468

Oldest forms: 1567 Tistad, 1603 Thøstad, 1608 Thiøstad 1667 Tyestad. 1723 Tystad.

Specific: According to NG, this name is unique and the specific cannot be explained. The written forms are admittedly quite late. It rejects the possibility of the theoforic name, of the deity Týr, on the ground that names in *-staðir* are never combined with names of gods. Since NG was published, John Kousgård Sørensen 1958, and Bente Holmberg 1986 have argued that four place names in Denmark Thisted/Tisted, be interpreted with the specific, the theoforic name Tīr, or an equivalent word tīr, meaning ‘god’. Alternatively, we could try to explain it by inventing a personal name combined with the word/name tīr/Tīr, but the no such names are known and I see sacral interpretation as the most straightforward.

Generic: *-staðir*.

Archaeology:

170085-1: In the area around Tystad, there are 5 protected heritage sites, including a menhir, a settlement area from the Iron Age and Medieval Period and burial site from the Late Iron Age.

Slagstad, NG 65. b.12, s.468

Oldest forms 1603 Slagstad 1608 Slagstad.

Specific: NG states that this specific cannot be explained, although mentioning that a name Slag/Slagi could be a possibility. This is rejected on the grounds that this is a rare name.

Another suggestion could be a personal name, Slagvi or Slagvēr, found in some Swedish Viking Age inscriptions (etymology however unexplained, Peterson 2007: 199).

Generic: *-staðir*.

Archaeology: Nothing registered. Placed between Tystad and Gloppestad.

Glappestad, NG no. 66. b.12, s.468

Oldest forms: 1514-1521 Glopstad, 1514-1521 Glappestadt, 1563 Gloppestedt.

Specific: NG mentions the possibility for a personal by-name, but the most likely interpretation is the fjord name Gloppen, as the farm is located on the eastern side of this fjord.

Generic: *-staðir*.

Archaeology:

- ID 110632: two three-aisled houses from Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age and cooking pits from Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period.
- ID 45848-1: Burial mound, estimated Late Iron Age.



Fjolestad, NG no. 70. b.12, s.469

Oldest forms: i Fialastadum BK. 31 b. Fielstedh NRJ. II 127. Fieldestadt 1563. Fillestad 1567. Fielestad 1603. Fiellestad 1608. 1667. 1723.

Specific: The name is assumed in NG to contain a river name Fjøl, probably a name for the stream passing the farm. NG does not mention the possibility of a name ON Fiallar, derived from ON fjall, 'mountain' (Peterson 2004: 24).

Generic: *-staðir*

Archaeology:

ID 64107-1: there are cairns registered on the farm, estimated Viking Age.

Breim Municipality**Steinsaaker**, NG no. b.12, p. 475

Oldest forms: Stensagher NRJ. II 132. Stenssager 1563. Stienzager 1603. Stensager 1608. Steensagger 1667. Steensager 1723

Specific: The specific can be the appellative stein, 'stone', but since it is in the genitive it can also be the male name Steinn or it can refer to a particularly prominent stone in the locality.

Generic: *-åker*, 'arable field'

Archaeology:

- ID 55571-1. Mound, estimated Late Iron Age
- ID 45856-1 Mound, estimated Late Iron Age
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Moldestad, NG no. 13. p.12, p. 477

Oldest forms: 1520-1570 Molestedh, 1555 (copy 1599) Mollestadt, 1563

Specific: Most likely a well-known personal byname, Muli, 'muzzle' found in runic inscriptions (Peterson 2007:165).

Generic: *-staðir*

Archaeology:

- ID 222280-1. Cultivation layers, C14-dated, Roman Period between AD 75-235.
- ID 221453 Cooking pit and post holes. Charcoal sample C14 dating 65-220 AD (cal.).
- ID 221454 Postholes and three hearths C14 gave datings to pre-Roman Iron Age.
- ID 63958-1 Burial mound, estimated Early Iron Age
- ID 222282-1 Cultivation layers, pre-reformation
- ID 222511-1 Cairn, Iron Age
- ID 222283-1 Cultivation layers, pre-reformation
- ID 222284-1 Cultivation layers, pre-reformation

Kapestad, NG no. 20. b.12, p.478

Oldest forms: 1603 Kabpestad, 1608 Copperstad, 1667 Kopperstad

Specific: NG leaves this name somewhat unexplained. A suggestion can be a byname or personal name or byname known from Old Danish Personal names (DGP2, 525) *Kabbi* and the runes **kabi** on the stone U792 (Peterson 2007:144). This name is formed of an appellative equal to SW. dialects *kabbe* 'wooden club, woodbrick' and the specific here could also be used in the appellative capacity.

Generic: *-staðir*

Archaeology: Nothing registered.



Frøistad, NG no. 39, b.12, s.482

Oldest forms: 1469 Frøygdestade, 1603 Frøstad, 1608Frøstادت, 1667 Frøystad.

Specific: Based on the form from 1469 a likely explanation is the female name Frøygerd also known from two Swedish Viking Age rune stones (Peterson 2007:70). NG states that the name is unexplained, but suggests an original compound male name with the name of the deity Frøy as first element. NG does mention the possibility of the female name, but considers it unlikely because the name is not otherwise recorded in Norway and female name specifics are rare.

Generic: *-staðir*

Archaeology: Nothing registered. The farm is situated close to the neighbouring farm Bogstad.

Bogstad, NG no. 40, b.12, s.482

Oldest forms: Buchestad 1567. Bogstaff, 1603. Bogstauff 1608. Bogstad 1667. 1723.

Specific: NG suggests the male byname derived from bukkr, a 'buck'. I suggest to also consider the name Buggi, known from rune stones and from ODan and OSw. It is built from an appellative close to new Norwegian *bugge*, 'big, powerful man' (Peterson 2007:52)

Generic: *-staðir*

Archaeology: Nothing registered. The farm is situated close to the neighbouring farm Frøistad.

Remarks about the material

The surveyed sample area serves to illustrate the types of generics with personal name specifics occurring in Western Norway. It is clear, that although some other elements are represented, the generic *-staðir* completely dominates this group. The names in *-staðir* in Gloppen are placed like pearls on strings along the fjord, both on the southern and northern side. They interchange with nature names which are often connected with clusters of archaeological sites, suggesting that the nature names were established before the names with personal name specifics. It is difficult to relate archaeological structures to any of the personal name specific place names with any certainty. Often, an archaeological registration is administratively related to a particular historically known farm, but in reality the archaeological sites that are placed on the outer rims of a farm's historical boundaries may as well have been related to a neighbour farm as in the case of Fjøllestad and neighbour Berge. (I know this may seem controversial in a Norwegian context).

The farm Hjelmeset, located in an area with traces of settlement and cultivation dating back to the Neolithic serves to illustrate that even places with long continuity could acquire new names at some point in time. Closer scrutiny of the material may reveal phases of change where a renaming could have occurred.

Dating of the personal name custom in place names

In the survey, I have compared the occurring personal names in Gloppen and Breim with personal names from runic inscriptions in the Elder Futhark inscriptions (Iron Age runes) and in Younger Futhark inscriptions (Viking Age runes) respectively. Generally, the names represented as specifics in the area are types of names that are characteristic for the Viking Age runic inscriptions. Only the possible names Hrodmar (Ravnstad), Hjalmr (Hjelmeset) and Fjallar in Fjøllestad are of a typologically older character. In the Younger Futhark names,



contractions and nickname forms like Kappi, Muli and Gamli are more common, whereas Iron Age names are often longer compound names.

This estimate is based on general trends in naming in runic inscriptions across Scandinavia and therefore it of course also depends on the representativity of this material. Runic inscriptions are generally sparse in the Merovingian Period, the period just before the Viking Age, but the inscriptions we do have suggest that some of the known Viking Age trends already begin here. This estimate can therefore not be seen as an absolute statement regarding dating of the names, but it may be suggested based on the specifics that the use of personal names in place names in Gloppen and Breim may have started in the Merovingian Period, but generally belong in the Late Merovingian and Viking Period.

It may be remarked that the personal names that were of a slightly older character are all found in Gloppen, so the trend may have started a little earlier here or they may have had more conservative naming customs. In Breim we find one of the rare examples of a female name specific, Frøygerd, in Frøistad, located close to the farm Bogstad. When we are dealing with very closely located farms, it might reflect that an original domain has been split and a renaming could have happened in such a context. The name Frøistad serves as an illustration of female land ownership and inheritance.

Based on the survey, I believe the material indicates that that formation of place names with personal name specifics in the Gloppen and Breim area do not seem as signs of completely new establishments of settlement or cultivation on hereto virgin soil, rather, they can be either reestablishment of farms on land that had been abandoned for a while or they can reflect splitting of territories in smaller bits (for inheritance purposes?).

Peterson, Lena. 2004. *Lexikon över urnordiska personnamn* [Registry of Proto-Norse personal names]. Institutet för språk och folkminnen. Uppsala.

Peterson, Lena. 2007. *Nordiskt runnamnslexikon* [Registry of runic personal names]. Femte, reviderade utgåvan. Institutet för språk och folkminnen. Uppsala

NG Norske Gaardnavn, band 12, Nordre Bergenhus Amt. Oplysninger samlede til brug ved matriklens revision af O. Rygh, efter offentlig foranstaltning. Udgivne med tilføjne forklaringer af A. Kjær. W.C. Fabritius & sønner, Kristiania 1919.

