

Kort meddelande

A thermoluminescence date for the Rällinge hill fort, Raä 32, Helgarö parish, Södermanland. Possible evidence of Ingjald's fiery demise?

Rällinge borg is a bivallate hill fort with ramparts three to five metres high, situated on a hill top near lake Mälaren, north-west of Strängnäs. A remarkable feature is the occurrence of some five enclosures on the western hill slope adjacent to the fort, most likely for keeping livestock. The maze found inside the hill fort is a late (early 20th century) addition.

Rällinge borg has been connected to Ingjald *Illrāði*, the penultimate king of the Ynglinga dynasty. According to Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglingasaga*, Ingjald was a crook, with a career highlighted by murder and arson. He seems to have stayed true to these habits until the bitter end. Realising the approach of a superior foe, Ivar Wide-fathom, he threw a party »a *Ræningi*« (Wessén 1952, p. 44), drinking his daughter and warriors under the table. He then torched the fort, killing everyone. Ingjald's son Olaf fled to Värmland, whence the dynasty moved on to Norway. Ingjald's kingdom was taken over by Ivar Wide-fathom.

The location of the fort *Ræningi* has been a subject of debate. It has been suggested that it might be a misspelling of Rällinge (Schröder 1820; adopted by Lindqvist 1921, p. 84; Noreen 1925, p. 243; Wessén 1952, p. 73), although other alternatives are at option.

Having a keen interest in »vitrified« hill forts (Kresten & Ambrosiani 1992; Kresten, Kero & Chyssler 1993; Kresten 2000), I paid a visit to Rällinge borg early in June 2001. No apparent evidence of extensive firing, such as fire-cracked or molten rock, was found. As great heat changes the magnetic properties of rocks (Kresten, Kero & Chyssler 1993), measurements of the magnetic susceptibility were carried out at various parts of the hill fort. In addition, background measurements on gneiss and amphibolite at some distance from the hill fort were recorded. A fourfold increase in the

magnetic susceptibility was noted for the gneiss outcrop at the centre of the hill fort (the site of the maze), possibly indicating the effects of heating. Most of the inner rampart showed a slight increase in magnetic susceptibility only, except for a location about ten metres north of the entrance, where it was increased by a factor of 400. At that spot, a small cavity, most likely dug by an animal, permitted measurements closer to the core of the rampart. Also, fire-cracked pieces of gneiss were collected.

Investigation of the sample revealed that it had been heated to about 600–650°C and therefore was suitable (Kresten 2000, p. 40) for thermoluminescence (TL) dating. The measurements (fine-grain method) were carried out by Ana Manzano, Berlin, with the following results: K₂O 7.14%, α -counting 37.77 cps, α -value 0.134, dose-rate 21.05 Gy, TL date AD 590±135.

How does this date agree with available data on Ingjald *Illrāði*? The problem is that the only source is the *Ynglingasaga*, written several centuries after Ingjald's demise. In fact, we do not know whether Ingjald was a murderous villain or not, nor even whether he is actually a historic figure or just a fictional character (Norr 1995). Nerman (1917, p. 250), in his discussion of the *Ynglingasaga* from an archaeological perspective, placed the flight of Ingjald's son Olaf to Värmland »shortly after AD 650«. Accordingly, Ingjald would have died at about this date, or shortly before, which is covered by the time-span of the TL date.

Did Ingjald really meet his fate at Rällinge borg? So far that question can only be answered with »he just might have done so«. The rampart was obviously burnt. The TL date is right, but most dates from Swedish hill forts with vitrified ramparts are similar, though commonly a bit earlier. What is important is that the

TL date does not contradict the assumption that Ingjald may have died at Rällinge borg at the mid-7th century AD. By contrast, it has been demonstrated that another infamous villain (or at least one so depicted in Shakespeare's play), Macbeth, could never have fallen at Dunsinane, as the place had been burnt down some 600 years before his day (Kresten & Goedicke 1996).

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