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Rex Gulring nomine (Chronicon Thietmari 7.38)

When in the seventh book of his *Chronicle* Thietmar presents the events of year 1016, in his description of events in England he reverts to the year 1014 in order to include the death of King Sweyn Forkbeard and Æthelred the Unready II's return to the throne. The latter decided to destroy the former's earthly remains, and then friends of the Danish king, with the help of an Englishwoman, secretly sent his corpse back to his native land¹. Despite the fact that the Danish city Roskilde, where King Sweyn's body was interred, is located barely three degrees geographically to the north of Gainsborough in Lincolnshire, where the king died, Thietmar constructs this expedition as a journey towards the far north. He presents the constellations of the northern sky (7,37):

„Tamen ad patrias navigio direxerat arctos, id est septemtrionalem plagam; quae hoc nomen ab arcturis duabus, hoc est ab ursis minoribus atque maioribus sortitur, quas serpens unus, ut astrologii asserunt, circumdat et dividit².”

Next, he turns to a description of the Scythians who inhabit this land:

„Pars terrae illius tantum frigida est, quantum a solis calore aliena, et mentes incolarum caritatis geminae expertes; ibi sunt Scithe, qui domos suas secum vehentes feris et equino lacte pascuntur.”³

¹ It was Aelfgifu of Northampton (Jakub Morawiec, *Knut Wielki. Król Anglii, Danii i Norwegii (ok. 995–1035)*, Kraków 2013, p. 91). Thietmar 7,37: „That unholy man [Sveyn] lived a long time among pious people, a scourge to himself and his contemporaries, and finally, having caused the deaths of so many people, he met his own end [1014] by the judgement of God. He was buried there and his friends soon scattered. When the king of England, who had long been banished by him, found out about this he gave thanks to God and returned with joy to his native land. Next, having gathered together his warriors he decided to destroy his enemy's corpse. In order to prevent this, the dead man's confidants persuaded some woman, who though English recovered the buried body, even though it was guarded, and sent it by ship in the direction of the native constellation of the Bear, i.e. to the north of the country' (translated by Ita Hilton).

² „...and sent it by ship in the direction of the native constellation of the Bear, i.e. to the northern country. This country takes its name from the two constellations, namely Ursa Minor and Ursa Major, which, as asserted by astrologists, are surrounded and at the same time divided by the constellation called the Serpent' (translated by Ita Hilton).

³ „Part of this country is cold, as it lies very distant from the heat of the sun, and its inhabitants' hearts are immune to double love [gemina caritas; cf. n.6 below]. There live the Scythians, who carry their homesteads with them and live on game and kumiss' (translated by Ita Hilton).

This description is based closely on standard ancient presentations of nomads from the European Great Steppe, which leads us to consider whether Thietmar actually had in mind some northern people, or whether he simply had a general knowledge of the difficult conditions in those regions and refers to these customarily (viz. “I will omit further description” 7.39⁴), and without anything further to say he merely extracts details from the ancient ethnographical tradition on the Scythians, which is completely inconsistent with the realia of the Scandinavian world⁵. Some scholars, basing their observations on the more extensive description of the Scythians in the Corbeian codex, assume that the Scythians mentioned here could also have been described as a certain reflection on the inhabitants of Scandinavia and its furthest part, Lapland, who were called by Procopius of Caesarea Σκριθίφιννοι (*Wars* 6,15,16; they were known as ‘Screrfennæ’ or ‘Scretfennæ’ in Jordanes *Getica* 3,21), or possibly the Scots from the northern part of Britain:

„Pars terrae illius tantum est frigida, quantum a calore solis aliena; mentes eciam incolarum gemina caritate frigidiores sunt. Hac mundi parte Scite incertis sedibus vagantur, genus hominum ferum, moribus beluinum, qui sua habitacula de pellibus aut pilis animalium compacta secum vehunt, crudis ferarum carnibus et equino lacte pascuntur.”

‘Part of this land is as cold as it is distant from the heat of the sun; the inhabitants’ minds were also colder from double love⁶. In this part of the world the Scythians wander in uncertain locations, a wild people, warriors by nature, who carry around their homesteads made of animal skins and fur, and live on the raw meat of wild animals and horse milk’ (translated by Ita Hilton).

In support of the identification in the Corbeian codex of the Scythians with the Laplanders (Sámi people) we may adduce the features of their carrying around their homesteads made from animal skins and their diet rich in ‘crudis ferarum carnibus’ [the raw meat of wild animals], which corresponds to ‘carnibus ferarum’ in Jordanes. In turn, the belief that the Gaelic Scots descend from the Scythians was very widespread in that era, and is first found in the *Historia Brittonum* (15), which is ascribed to Nennius and originated c. the year 830.⁷

After this description of the Scythians Thietmar unexpectedly turns to a brief account about one of the rulers of that (which?) country (7,38):

⁴ 7,39: *Quia nemo comprehendere valet aquilonaris regionis varietatum habitudines, quas ibi natura pre ceteris mirabiles operatur, et crudeles populi huius execuciones, hec omitto.*

⁵ Robert Holtzmann (*Die Chronik des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg und ihre korveier Überarbeitung*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica scriptores rerum germanicarum, nova series, t. IX], Berlin 1935, p. 3–533) offers as potential *similia* Horace *Carm.* 3,24,9–10 (they carry their homesteads with them – *vagas ... trahunt domos*) and Virgil *Georg.* 3,463 (he drinks curdled milk with horses’ blood – *et lac concretum cum sanguine potat equino*), and so the cold, the harshness of their hearts, their diet of game and horses’ milk.

⁶ *Gemina caritas* – a concept introduced by St. Augustine (*De doctrina Christiana* 2,6,7) refers to love for both God and one’s neighbour.

⁷ Cf. John Carey, *The Ancestry of Fénis Farsaid*, *Celtica* 21 (1990), p. 104–112.

In hiis partibus est unus rex Gutring nomine, qui in monasterio Ferdensi sub episcopo eiusdem loci Erpone in clericatu educatus ad diaconatus gradum pervenit indignus. Sed postquam predictus antistes obiit, iste elapsus nomen et ordinem, alter Iulianus, abiecit et vocabulum christianitatis solum professus in multis invenitur longe alienus. Is a suis primo ut est agnitus, ilico succipitur et hereditario honore sublimatur. Quod Deo displicet, nemo laudet, nullus imitetur; presens fructus ob terrorem futurum spernatur. Et ille rex, servus peccati, filius mortis, non, ut putat, dominatur, sed cotidiano pondere aggravatur; de quo Dominus per Esaiam clamat: *Filios enutrivivi, exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me* (Is. 1,2). Pro cuius consociorumque eius conversione et digna emendacione ac perseverantia omnis christianitas oret et, ne tale quid in membris suis amplius paciatur, Deum imploret. Quamvis de illo hoc solum dicerem, sunt, pro dolor! alii, qui similem subiere sententiam, illud Pauli non attendentes, quia *melius est viam veritatis non cognoscere, quam post noticiam declinare* (2 Petr. 2,21).

,In this country there is one king, named Gutring, who having completed his ecclesiastical education in the monastery in Verden during the time of the bishop Erpon, he illegally obtained the position of deacon. However, after the death of the above-mentioned bishop [994], he made his escape from the monastery and, like a second Julian, abandoned his dignity and position and in this way, expressing his Christian faith only in words he turned out to be a misfit in every way. When his acquaintances had confirmed who he was, they accepted him immediately and elevated him to the ancestral throne. Let no one praise or imitate that which does not please God! Instead, let every man, out of fear of the future, abandon any sin! That king, a prisoner of his sin, does not rule as he thinks he does, but instead suffers the burden of everyday misery. The complaint of God, articulated by Isaeus, refers to him: ,I have brought up and exalted my sons, but they despise me'. Let the whole of Christian society pray for conversion, for the appropriate penance and virtue, and his too, as his friends, and may he ask God that something similar should not befall more members of his society. Even though I have said all this about only one man, there are also, unfortunately, other people who have the same ideas and have no thought for the words of St. Paul, that ,it is better not to know the path to right, than to know it and to distance oneself from it' (translated by Ita Hilton).

Everything would have appeared to be straightforward, except for the fact that we do not know of any Scandinavian king of that name in any kingdom, great or small, from that era. Scholars thus posit that Gutring was a Scandinavian name distorted by Thietmar and attempt to identify him as some type of character known from other sources:

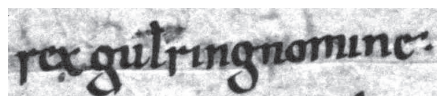
Lappenberg (1839) and following him Holtzmann (1935) – perhaps he was one of the kings of Oppland, such as Guthrun [Lappenberg], Gudriod [Holtzmann], King Gulbrandsdalen, whom King Olaf the Holy in around the year 1018 defeated, cut off his tongue and chased away⁸.

⁸ *Thietmari chronicon* ed. J. M. Lappenberg, in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum tomus III*, ed. G.H. Pertz, Hannoverae 1839, p. 723–871: *Guthrun. Fortasse regum Uplandiae unus, qualis Gudriodus, rex Gulbrandsdaliae, qui circa annum 1018 ab Olavo Sancto, rege Norwegiae, victus et lingua excisa exulare iussus est. V. Snorra Sturleson Saga af Olafi hinom Helga c. 34. 73. 74* (p. 848). R. Holtzmann (1935, p. 445): ,Vielleicht einer der Kge. v. Upland, wie Gudriod, Kg. v. Gulbrandsdalen, den Kg. Olaf d. Heilige v. Norwegen um 1018 biesiegt,

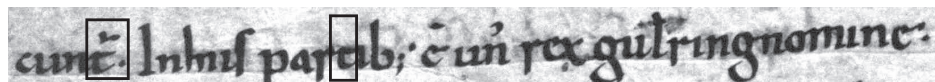
Dassent (1861) – the Viking with an unknown name from the Isle of Man, known as Brodir, i.e. Brother (his brother Ospak is known from the sources). He was a Christian and a consecrated deacon, but reverted to paganism and killed the king of Ireland Brian Boru in the Battle of Clontarf, lost by the Vikings, in 1014⁹. Dassent shares the hypothesis of Konrad Maurer that Brodir was actually Gutring (Gudormr)¹⁰.

Jørgensen (1878) – Gutring, Danish Goddrengr, long ago Gup-treg, in Ireland King Gothrin [Gofraigh, or Godfrey, 'son of Imar,'], in necrologues in a church in Lund – Goddrengr or Gothric¹¹. Gothrik. *Goddrengr suo nomine Sneoulf. 4 K. Ap. obiit Gothric suo nomine Sneoulf.*

However, none of these suggestions is completely convincing. In my view, a solution to the problem must begin with an appropriate reading of this name in manuscript. Johannes M. Lappenberg, author of an 1839 critical edition of Thietmar's works¹² proposed the reading *Gutring*, which is followed by all later editors (e.g. Holtzmann) and translators (e.g. Jedlicki, Warner¹³). In the *apparatus criticus*, however, we find the following note: *Gulring corr. Gutring linea per l transversa post erasa*. If we examine the facsimile of the Dresden codex, we find the name written down there as follows:



A comparison with other letters written down by the author of the Dresden codex unambiguously indicates that originally the name was written down as *Gulring*. Only after this did someone tentatively added a line, as if he wanted to change the name to *Gutring* (a less certain reading is the supposed ligature: *Gultring*), and who was probably not the same author of the Dresden codex, who writes the letter ,t' in a different way.



der Zunge beraubt u. Verjagt hat; Snorra Sturleson *Saga af Olafi hinom Helga* c. 34. 73. 74. L. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, hg. v. F. Jónsson (1911), 201. 233 – 235 (c. 36. 74. 75): Kg. Gudrødr'.

⁹ *The story of Burnt Njal; from the Icelandic of the Njals Saga*, by the late Sir George Webbe Dasent. With a prefatory note, and the introduction, abridged, from the original edition of 1861, London 1900, p. 242.

¹⁰ Konrad Maurer, *Bekehrung des Norwegischen Stammes zum Christenthume*, Muenchen 1855, Bd I, p. 558.

¹¹ Adolf Dietlev Jørgensen, *Den nordiske kirkes grundlaeggelse og første udvikling*, København 1878, p. 257–259. This version is adopted by the Russian translation as Гёттрик: Титмар Мерзебургский, *Хроника*, Пер. с лат. И. В. Дьяконова. Москва 2005.

¹² Lappenberg 1839, p. 848.

¹³ *Kronika Thietmara* (wersje łac. i pl.), tłum. i red. M. Z. Jedlicki, Poznań 1953; *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, translated and annotated by David A. Warner, Manchester 2001, p. 334.

However, then someone, possibly the same or maybe another corrector, recognised that this was a mistake and decided to erase the unnecessary line. Therefore, analysis of the Dresden codex clearly indicates that the name was originally written as *Gulring*, and was emended, cautiously, to *Gutring*, but then someone decided to revert to the original form *Gulring*. Because it is assumed that the Dresden codex is the work of Thietmar himself, we may posit that in writing down this name for the first time Thietmar recognised that it should be written as *Gulring*. Then someone – Thietmar himself or a corrector reading his text – had doubts and inserted the cross, only to then view this as too hasty and revert to the original version – GULRING¹⁴.

It is significant that in the second version of Thietmar's works, called the Corbeian codex, this name is written as the somewhat different *Goltrinc*. This is undeniably an attempt to correct the name known from the Dresden codex:

In hiis partibus est quidam rex Goltrinc nomine, qui in monasterio Ferdensi sub episcopo Erpone in clericali ordine educatus ad dyaconatus gradum indignus pervenit. Postquam vero predictus antistes obiit, ipse fuga lapsus nomen et ordinem ut ille demonis exemplar Iulianus apostata cesar abiecit et vocabulum solum christianitatis professus est, sed in multis huic alienus est. Hic ad suos veniens, ubi primo ab eis est agnitus, ilico suscipitur et hereditario iure sublimatur Quod Deo displicet, nemo laudet, nullus imitetur; presens fructus pro metu penarum spernatur. Rex iste, servus peccati, filius mortis, non, ut putat, dominatur, sed cottidie iniquitatis pondere gravatur; de quo Dominus per Ysaïam clamat: Filios enutrivit et exaltavit, ipsi autem contempnentes a spreverunt me. Pro cuius eiusque consodalium conversione et digna penitencia et pro bona perseverancia omnis christianitas oret et, ne tale quid amplius in membris suis paciatur, Deum imploret. Sed quamvis hec sola de illo dixerim, sunt, prochdolor! plerique, qui similem sententiam subiere, illud apostoli non attendentes, quia melius est viam veritatis non agnoscere, quam post noticiam declinare.

An account of the king called *Gulring* (by the author of the Dresden codex), *Gutring* (by a corrector and modern editors), or *Goltrinc* (by the author of the Corbeian codex) can still only be found in one work, that by the so-called Annalista Saxo¹⁵, who may have been identified as Arnold, abbot of Nienburg (died 1166). King

¹⁴ The reading *Gulring* was viewed as authentic by the author of the editio princeps, Reiner Reineck, *Chronici Ditmari Episcopi Merseburgii libri VII: nunc primum in lucem editi: Accessere de vita et familia Ditmari, tam paternae quam maternae stirpis, item de veteribus Mynsiae Marchionibus, usque ad Conradum, Timonis F. ex historia Ditmari contextae expositiones*, Frankfurt am Main 1580; and by the first translator into German of Thietmar's works, Georgius Hahn, *Historia Martisbvratica: Darinnen Chronica Ditmari, Bischoffs zu Marßburg ..., Leipzig 1606*, similarly to the next one, Johann Friedrich Ursinius (1735–1796), *Dithmars, Bischofs zu Merseburg. Chronik in Acht Büchern, nebst dessen Lebensbeschreibung, aus der lateinischen in die deutsche Sprache übersezt und mit Anmerkungen erläutert von M. Johann Friedrich Ursinus, Pfarrern in Boritz*. Dresden 1790, p. 480. This reading also appeared in all older editions, such as e.g. Johann Augustinus Wagner's from 1807 (*Dithmari episcopi Merseburgensis Chronicon*, Norimbergae).

¹⁵ G.H. Pertz (ed.), *Chronica et annales aevi Salici*. Hannover 1844, p. 542–777; Klaus Naß (hrsg.), *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo*, Hannover 2006.

Goltrin is mentioned twice in relation to the years 993 and 1014, and information on him clearly originates from Thietmar, specifically from the Corbeian codex, which here is probably his only source:

993

Mortuus quoque est Erpo Fardensis episcopus; cui Bernharius [Bernhar II bp Verden 994–1014], tunc ibi prepositus, successit. Sub hoc Erpone episcopo quidam iuvenis nomine Goltrin in monasterio Fardensi in clericali ordine educatus, ad diaconatus gradum indignus pervenit. Postquam vero predictus antistes obiit, ipse fuga lapsus, nomen et ordinem, ut ille demonis exemplar Iulianus apostata cesar, abiciens, vocabulum solum christianitatis professus, sed in multis huic alienus, ad terram arctoam, id est septentrionalem plagam, venit. Que hoc nomen sortitur ab arcturis, id est ursis duabus, maiore et minore, quas serpens circumflexus in se continet, ut astrologi asserunt. Pars terre illius tantum frigida, quantum a calore solis est aliena. Mentis etiam incolarum a gemina caritate frigidiores sunt. Hac mundi parte Seite incertis sedibus vagantur, genus hominum ferum, moribus beluinum, qui sua habitacula de pellibus aut pilis animalium secum vehunt, crudis ferarum carnibus et equino lacte pascuntur. Huc ille Goltrin ad suos veniens, ubi primo ab eis est agnitus, ilico suscipitur et in regnum hereditario honore sublimatur. Rex iste, servus peccati, filius mortis, non ut putabat dominabatur, sed cottidie iniquitatis pondere gravabatur. De talibus Dominus per Esaiam clamat: *Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me.*

1014

Quod cum Adalradus Anglorum rex, multo tempore ab eo expulsus, comperisset, gratias agens Deo, patriam revisit; collectisque militibus, corpus inimici exterminare nitebatur. Quod ne fieret, quedam matrona, per familiares suos admonita a, servatum corpus a terra elevans, navigio direxit ad terram arctoam, ubi Seite incertis sedibus vagabantur. In his partibus regnabat Goltrin, qui in monasterio Fardensi sub episcopo Erpone educatus apostataverat, atque ad suos veniens, ut supradictum est, in regnum sublimatus erat.

The solution to the question of how this king's name was really pronounced also requires close examination of the forms in which it occurs in the manuscript tradition:

GULRING – Dresden codex, work of Thietmar himself (d. 1018), plus emendation GULRING.

GOLTRINC – Corbeian codex from the 12th century.

GOLTRIN – Annalista Saxo from the 12th century, using the Corbeian codex.

Can these different forms be read as typical mistakes on the part of Latin copyists, who struggled with writing down an Old Norse name which sounded exotic to them, e.g. Guðrøðr? This is the conclusion drawn by all modern editors, who believe that the original spelling of Thietmar himself, i.e. the form *Gulring*, was erroneous from the start and today requires emendation in the critical editions and enables us to seek that apostate among historical Norman rulers with rather unusual-sounding names.

However, a precise linguistic analysis of all the written versions indicates that on the contrary, both forms – from both the Dresden and Corbeian codices – are completely correct, only in two different languages. So, the form *Gulring* is a completely

accurate version of the Old Norse nominal composition *gullhringr*, ‘gold ring’, ‘gold hoop’ (*gull* gold and *hringr* ring, hoop)¹⁶. On the other hand, the form *Goltrinc* is a correction of the pronunciation of this Old Norse form as it would have corresponded phonetically to its equivalent in Middle High German *goltrinc*¹⁷, where it was devoiced in pronunciation. This form also corresponds phonetically to Middle Low German *goltrinc*¹⁸.

This discrepancy proves that the brethren from Verden¹⁹ gave Thietmar a very precise pronunciation and spelling of the apostate’s Scandinavian name, and Thietmar himself noted it down without any difficulty as *Gulring*. Later a corrector of his text, who had perhaps heard about a man with the name ‘Gold Ring’ (*Annulus Aureus*), decided to correct this name so that it would include the letter ‘t’, occurring in the vernacular German expression *gold/golt*, which is absent however in the Scandinavian *gull*. Yet this emendation was removed from the Dresden codex by someone who was more familiar with Norse names, or who simply had more confidence in the knowledge of Thietmar himself. On the other hand, in the Corbeian codex, which originated after the year 1050, when phonetic changes indicating to us the era of Middle German had been accomplished, it was decided that the name should be corrected so that it would be completely correspondent with the vernacular Middle German phonetics. Sound ‘u’ was replaced by ‘o’, ‘t’ was added; and finally there appeared instead of ‘g’ the devoiced ‘c’, which for some reason was discarded by Annalista Saxo, who besides this adopted the pronunciation from the Corbeian codex.

In relation to this there is absolutely no need to correct the name written in the Dresden codex, where it is written very precisely in relation to both phonetics and meaning – *Gulring*, i.e. Gold Ring/Gold Hoop. However, a solution to the textual problem does not resolve the issue of this leader’s identity, since among the Scandinavian rulers of that era we can find no one by the name of Gold Ring.

¹⁶ Tarrin Wills, *Runic Dictionary* (<http://skaldic.abdn.ac.uk/db.php?id=29964&if=runic&table=lemma> access 01.02.2020): *gollhrings*, *gullhringr* nom sg, *Gullhring*, *Gullhringur*, *gullhringa* m pl, *gullhringi*, *gullhringinn* acc m sg, *gullhringur* nom m sg, *gullhringurinn*, *gullhringinum*, *gvllhring*, *Gull hryng*, *gvllringr*, *gulringr*, *gullrinngr*, *gullhring* m sg, *gullring*, *gvllring*, *gvllringar*, *gvllhringom*, *gullhringum*, *gvll-ring*, *gullringum*, *gvllhringr*, *gull hringa*, *gull hring*, *gull hringa*, *gull-hring*, *Gullhrynge*, *Gullhringr*, *gollhring*, *gullhring*, *gullhringa*.

¹⁷ *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*. Mit Benutzung des Nachlasses von Georg Friedrich Benecke ausgearbeitet von Wilhelm Müller und Friedrich Zarncke. 3 Bde. Leipzig 1854–1866, Bd. II/1, col. 708a: *goltrinc stm. goldring. tara nâh legeta si ûf irô houbet magedlichen goldring* Notker im leseb. 152,30. [Notker Labeo (950–1022), W.Wackernagel, *Alideutsches Lesebuch*. 2., verm. und verb. Ausgabe mit einem Wörterbuche. Basel 1838/39]; *goltrenc aureola* fundgr. 1,374. a. [*Wörterbuch aus Texten des 12.-14. Jh.s – Fundgruben für Geschichte deutscher Sprache und Litteratur*. Hg. von [A.]H.Hoffmann [von Fallersleben]. T.1.2. Breslau 1830–1837].

¹⁸ *Goltrinc – Goldring, goldener Ring* (Gerhard Köbler <https://koeblergerhard.de/wikiling/?query=goltrinc&f=mnd&mod=0> access 01.02.2020). In Middle Dutch this expression would be *goutrinc*.

¹⁹ Theoretically the informer might even have been Thietmar’s brother Bruno, who first entered a monastery in Corbeia and was then abbot in Nienburg, and finally, after Thietmar’s death, bishop of Verden (1025–1034).

Perhaps, therefore, we need to posit that Gulring, according to Thietmar, was not an actual name of a Norman, but rather a sobriquet. Scandinavians were due to the frequency with which some names were used were identified by sobriquets that were used during their lives. There are many such names which include references to gold, such as Björn gullberi ‚gold bearer‘, Þorkell gullkár (‚golden-haired‘) Þórisson, Haraldr gullskeggr (‚gold beard‘, ‚gold bearded‘).

Although the noun *gullhringr* is often found in Scandinavian literature (also in the kenning *gullringr Godr*, ‚friend of a gold hoop‘, i.e. a woman), the present writer has been unable to find a personage with the name or sobriquet Gold Ring. Among English surnames in later times (19th century) we do encounter Goldring, but cannot establish any continuation between Norman from the 10th/11th centuries and people of that surname, which, although it is reminiscent of typical central European Jewish surnames, invented by the German Romantic poet Ernst Theodor Hoffman, does not appear beyond the Anglo-Saxon world.

At this point we could refrain from further enquiry and accept that *ignoramus et ignorabimus* as to why one of the successors to the throne of a Norman kingdom was in his youth given the sobriquet of Gold Hoop, by which he was known in the monastery Verden, whose priesthood was not concerned with giving this Norman his proper name, or else did not know it. However, another option is possible. Among the kings of Scotland at that time there was a certain Cuilen mac Illuilb, whose name in one of the codices is written as *Culenrīg*. Of course, Thietmar’s *Gulring* could not have been king Cuilen, as the latter died in 971. However, it could have been his son, Causantín mac Cuiléin, who ruled Scotland in the years 995–997, after the death of the leader of the other competing clan from the Alpinid dynasty. The chronology could have suggested an identification with Constantine III (the bishop Erpo from Verden died in 993 or 994); as could the assumption that the Scythians mentioned by Thietmar could be a name relating to the Scots. This would imply that the detail *in his regionibus* refers not to Scandinavia, where the body of Sweyn Forkbeard was taken, but rather to Britain, which is where the English battled with the Danes, as related in this part of the *Chronicon*, and whence the body was taken.

However, there is a stronger argument against an identification with the Scottish leader by the name of Causantín mac Cuiléin. We would have to assume that the Scottish successor to the throne even got as far as Verden and was remembered there by his patronymic mac Cuiléin, and not by the universally known Christian name Constantine; and that, what is more, that patronymic was *Culenrīg*, which form occurs only in one source and is probably a combination of the Gaelic word for king ‚rīg‘ and the name Cuilen. The name of the Scottish king only in this rare form *Culenrīg* recalls the sound of what is written in Thietmar, *Gulring*. Of course, the sound of this name in such a form implies a correspondence of the Gaelic form to the phonetically similar Old Norse nominal composition. Besides, King Constantine III was killed in 997, at the time when it seems that Thietmar was writing about Gulring as if about a living person. We know that this extract refers to the events of the year 1014, but was written no earlier than 1016. In addition, Thietmar includes

this anecdote about the leader of the North not so much on account of his apostasy (he even writes here that he became a deacon illegally), but on account of his rebellion as a young person after returning to his native land. Meanwhile the apostasy of a Gaelic leader at the turn of the 11th century is completely impossible, so we need instead to search for a candidate for Thietmar's Gulring among the Norman leaders, where Christianity at that time was far from strong, rather than among the Scots, who had by then already been Christianised for several centuries.

Perhaps, therefore, we can seek a different identification method. While I have been unable to find a Norman with the sobriquet Gulring, we can easily locate in the prosopography of the Viking era individuals by the sobriquet Hring, 'ring', e.g. Sigurd Hring, legendary king of Denmark, father of Ragnar Lodbrok. Moreover, the noun Hring, 'ring' or 'hoop', appears not only as a sobriquet but also as an actual name, e.g. Hring, famous King of Östergötland in *Bósa saga ok Herrauds*; or Hring, King of Sweden in 935 or 936, according to Adam of Bremen.

We can find leaders who correspond chronologically to the lifetime of Gulring as described by Thietmar among the kings of Oppland, who ruled over Ringerike (*Hringariki*). The legendary rulers of this country, from the Dagling or Dögling clan, are mentioned in *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna* and *Hversu Noregr Byggðist*. The first of these was Dag the Great, whose son was Óli, who in turn fathered another Dag, father to Óleif, whose son was Hring the Elder, known from the saga *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna*. His son was Olaf, father of Helgi, who had a son called Sigurd Hjort. His daughter was Ragnhildur Sigurðardóttir, who married Halfdan the Black and had a son called Harald Fairhair (*Haraldr hárfagri*), the first king of a united Norway. Lineages in sagas sometimes contradict each other, and among the kings of Ringerike there appear in turn Ring Dagsson, father of Åshild, who was the wife of Harald Fairhair. Åshild gave her two sons names that were typical for her clan, and not her husband's – Ring Haraldsson and Dag Haraldsson. A third was called Gudrød Skirja Haraldsson, a name which would have corresponded to Thietmar's Gutring if this form had any grounds for being real. Ring Haraldsson was the earl of Hedmark and Gudbrandsdal. His son Dag Ringsson was the King of Hedmark, and had two sons, the elder Rørek Dagsson (962–1021), and the younger Ring Dagsson Gabarin (964–post 1018). They ruled together in a diarchy over their kingdom Hedmark from 998 and were among five kings who resisted Olaf the Holy. In the year 1018 they joined the side of Ketil Kalva but were defeated, and Guthred, King of Gudbrandsdal had his tongue ripped out, Rørek Dagsson had his eyes gouged out and Ring Dagsson was exiled to Sweden. He probably died there and his son Dag Ringsson, initially in the service of the Swedish king Anund Jacob, in 1029 joined the service of Olaf the Holy, who had been cast out from Norway, and fought in the battle lost by the latter at Stiklestad in 1030. Although he survived, he disappeared from history, so the Gulring mentioned by Thietmar is in all likelihood Ring Dagsson Gabarin.

This whole argument has been necessary only because of the fact that in 1839 Lappenberg spoiled Thietmar's text by changing the correct spelling of the Norse leader Gulring to Gutring, which led to constant erroneous attempts at identification.

After all, the identity of the apostate described by Thietmar was already established in the 18th century, when Ludewig Albrecht Gebhardi (1735–1802), Professor der Ritterakademie zu Lüneburg, writes in his *Geschichte der Königreiche Dännemark und Norwegen*: „Nach ihm [Roerek] nahm sein Bruder Ring oder Gulring das Wort, welcher ehemdem dem geytlichen Stande gewidmet gewesen war, und wirklich schon die Moenchsgeluebde als Domherr des teutschen Stifts Verden abgeleget hatte, nachher aber bey des Bischofs Erpo zu Verden Tode 1006 jenes Geluebde gebrochen, un von seinem vaeterlichen Reiche Besitz genommen hatte (T)“²⁰. Today this identification (Hring, King of Oppland in *Hsk. Olaf-Saga*) has been accepted only by Eric Christiansen,²¹ who used the English translation of Warner. However, neither decided on the restoration of the correct spelling and pronunciation of the name *Gulring*, adhering to the form *Gutring* as introduced by Lappenberg. The findings of Warner, not to mention Gebhardi, were completely ignored by Dominik Waßenhoven, who writes: „B 112: Gudrød (*Gutring*) Kleinkönig aus Norwegen oder Schweden (?) G. war vor 994 in Deutschland und wurde im Kloster Verden zum Diakon. Er ist möglicherweise identisch mit dem in der *Heimskringla* (*Ólafs saga helga*) genannten *Gudröður*, einem Kleinkönig in Gudbrandsdalen“²². He offers as a source: *Thietmar* 7,38, but in the case of literature on the subject it is as if for him it does not even exist, which is absolutely incomprehensible.

So, there remains only to consider why this name, typical of Norman prosopography and known from sagas simply as (*H*)ring, ‘hoop’,²³ was written in Thietmar as *Gulring* ‘Gold Hoop’. Certainly, this is not a mistake; that is how the apostate was remembered by the clergy in Verden. It was probably not a common sobriquet, since in this type of situation the defining adjective would appear after the name rather than forming a compound; cf. Halfdanr Svarti or Halfdan the Black. It is possible that (H) ring, the deacon in Verden was called *Gulring* to distinguish him from other (H)rings in his clan or milieu²⁴. It is also possible that the term ‘Gold Hoop’ was some type of

²⁰ L. A. Gebhardi, *Fortsetzung der Allgemeinen Welthistorie durch eine Gesellschaft von von Gelehrten in Teutschland und Engeland ausgefertigt*. Zwey und dreysigste Theil, Halle 1768, p. 109–110.

²¹ E. Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*, Oxford 2002, p. 156.

²² D. Waßenhoven, *Skandinavien unterwegs in Europa (1000–1250): Untersuchungen zu Mobilität und Kulturtransfer auf prosopographischer Grundlage*, Berlin 2006, p. 334.

²³ That this name should be understood as ‘hoop’ rather than ‘ring’ is indicated by the existence of a separate expression in Old Norse for a gold ring, *fingrgull* ‘finger-ring of gold.’ Zoega’s *Concise Old Icelandic dictionary* (1910).

²⁴ The fact that *Gulring* could be used as an actual name might be shown by the appearance in the *Annales Ryenses*, an anonymous paraphrase of history by Saxo Grammaticus, of the name of the legendary Danish king *Goldrie*. This is supposed to be a corrupt form of the name *Gotric* (sometimes taken as a possible identification of Thietmar’s apostate by scholars who accept the Lappenberg’s emendation – *Gutring*). Other traditions indicate the form *Goddric* or *Lodric*, which might show that *Goldrie* might have been a primitive form of *Goldric* close to the one known from the Corbeian manuscript, *Goltrinc*. Such a German form of the name in the Danish annals might be explained as demonstrating the strong influence of German culture at the end of the 13th century in Denmark, when the *Annales Ryenses* originated.

allusion to his being a pretender to the throne of Hedmark²⁵. However, without firm evidence this remains only a possibility.

However, independently of the explanation of this name/sobriquet of the Norman who spent time in Verden, there is no reason to undermine the accuracy of this name's spelling, as well of the sobriquet as written by the chronicler from Merseburg²⁶. There is also no point in seeking in his reference to the Scythians any realia regarding the life of the Laplanders, who did not venture as far south as Oppland, nor any scholarly etymological reference to the Scots. Thietmar here mentions the Scythians with the clear designation that they were a northern people probably only in order to draw attention to the fact that the harsh climate and primitive conditions of everyday life mean that it was not easy in the north to embrace the Christian concept of 'double love', which explains the ease with which Gulring decided on apostasy, despite the fact that he was ordained deacon.

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²⁵ The donning of a hoop, an epaulet, probably made from gold, was part of royal ceremony; this was how the abbot Eadred of Carlisle in around 883 crowned the Danish Guthred son of Halfdan, Viking King of York, as King of Northumbria (Symeon of Durham, *History of the Church of Durham*, Chapter XXVIII).

²⁶ This was obvious to scholars in early modern times, before the emendation of the name in the critical edition of Lappenberg in 1839, and did not render the situation obscure. Even in 1842 Ferdinand Wechter (*Allgemeine encyclopädie der wissenschaften und künste in alphabetischer Folge* s.v. Erp) writes: ‚Gulring (Goldring) war aber wol nicht sein eigentlicher, sondern sein Bezeichnungs- (d.h. ausgelegter) Name‘.

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Słowa kluczowe

Thietmar, Norwegia, Oppland, Ringerike, Ring Dagsson Gabarin, Norsemen, Old Norse, Erp von Verden, Verden (Aller), apostazja, krytyka tekstu, literatura Średniowiecza, historiografia Średniowiecza, dynastia ottońska

Abstract

When in the seventh book of his *Chronicle* Thietmar presents the events of year 1016, in his description of events in England he reverts to the year 1014, when Æthelred the Unready II decided to destroy the earthly remains of Sweyn Forkbeard, buried in Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. However, the corpse of Sweyn was sent back to Denmark by his fiends and Thietmar constructs this expedition as a journey towards the far north. He presents the constellations of the northern sky and then turns to a description of the Scythians who inhabit northern land. After this description Thietmar unexpectedly turns to a brief account about one of the rulers of that country, named Gutring. However, we do not know of any Scandinavian king of that name in any kingdom. The reading *Gutring*, which is followed by all later editors and translators was proposed by Lappenberg in his 1839 critical edition of Thietmar's works. But the analysis of the Dresden codex clearly indicates that the name was originally written as *Gulring*, which is an Old Norse name or sobriquet *gullhringr*, 'gold ring', 'gold hoop'. The Gulring mentioned by Thietmar is in all likelihood Ring Dagsson Gabarin (964-post 1018), the King of Hedmark. The identity of the King Gulring described by Thietmar was already established in the 18th century, but because of the fact that in 1839 Lappenberg spoiled Thietmar's text by changing the correct spelling of the Norse leader Gulring to Gutring, this identification was neglected and then forgotten by modern scholars.

Keywords

Thietmar, Norway, Oppland, Ringerike, Ring Dagsson Gabarin, Norsemen, Old Norse, Erp von Verden, Verden (Aller), apostasy, textual criticism, medieval literature, medieval historiography, Ottonian dynasty