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THE POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF THE GOTHS TRACED THROUGH THE SYMBOLISM OF RINGS AND THROUGH PLACE-NAMES CONTAINING THE ELEMENT *RING*

SUMMARY

The following article deals with the ringfinds in the Nordic countries, ring symbolism and Nordic and Continental place names containing the element *Ring*, and the author links these phenomena with the Goths. He sees a connection between the rings and the Gothic religion both in the cult of the god Gaut and later the god Óðinn-Gaut. He regards the Ring places as former cultic and administrative centres and also ties them to odinic warrior initiations. He disputes the earlier place-name researchers interpretation that they should be named after a person of the name Ring.

KEY WORDS: ring cult, warrior, symbol, religion, Goths, Gautic, origin

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This article addresses the links between sacred rings and ring symbolism and a theoretical conception of the Goths as members of a unifying cult. There are numerous place-names incorporating the element *Ring-* throughout Scandinavia, including Denmark, which is technically not part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, for example, Ringsåsen, Ringebue, Ringkøbing. Nobody has yet succeeded in producing a convincing explanation of the occurrence of these names. I connect these names with cultic and administrative functions originating with the Goths, although many of the places will have had a much longer similar history under an earlier name. Previous writers on this topic have supplied many different individual interpretations, and the conclusion is that there is no satisfactory consensus of opinion.

My methodology is founded on historical and comparative religious criteria, and philology is only used to support these main methodological approaches. As I am not a philologist my hypotheses may possibly be regarded as purely speculative and not as offering concrete evidence. Philologists are therefore at liberty to raise objections.

Since, in my view, the background is of a religious nature I will first address the religio-ideological structure of the Nordic sacral kingdom, and aim also to

show how rulers, with the aid of certain symbols, could exercise real power over their peoples. I see a connection between the Ring place-names, the cult of Óðinn-Gaut and the ethnicity of the Goths.

In my doctoral thesis *The Well Spring of the Goths. The Goths – Religion, Organization, Structure. On the Problem of Gothic Ethnicity* (Odense University, 1998), I have shown that the names of the Gothic peoples appear to be theophoric and that originally they seem to be linked with the creator-god Gaut, later Óðinn-Gaut. Consequently I indicated the probability that Gothic “ethnicity” was founded on a common cult and that its religious origin was in southern and southwestern Scandinavia, an area also embracing Danish Jutland.

Following gradual climatic changes during the later part of the Nordic Bronze Age, and the beginning of the Pre-Roman Iron Age, in about 500 BC, tribal rulers would have found that they could no longer maintain their authority because the yield of the harvest in the traditional areas would not have fed as many persons as before. They would no longer have been able to base their control on the fertility of the land. The chieftains’ farms would previously have supported large numbers of people, and supplied employment, as well as reserves of food and shelter in times of warfare. The claim of the earlier sacral kings to personify the annual rebirth of the sun-god, and thus to be guarantors of crop fertility, could no longer be convincingly sustained.

In consequence, large numbers of people migrated from the Cambrian-Silurian areas of central Gautland – Swedish Götaland – to the clay plains, and founded one-family farms, which combined agriculture on sand-soil ridges with cattle-breeding in pasturelands which could not be cultivated at that period. They lived in close proximity with their animals, housed in stables during the winter, or in the same premises as themselves. The German name for these homesteads is *Wohnstallhäuser*.

To regain control over the people some chieftains began to claim direct genealogical descent from the shamanistic creator-god Gaut, even deriving the descent of the whole people (*gens*) from this deity. They offered, via shamanistic, secretive men’s leagues – cultic leagues – the elimination of demons from the fields. Warriors and cultic performers were sworn in to the god. In the oath-ceremonies, and in actual combat, the chieftains would personify the god himself, and by these means obtain total power over their warriors (Höfler, 1934; Nordgren, 1998).

I contend that the most important religious symbol at this time was the ring. In my thesis I focused on the *Skírnismál*, among other sources. The symbols in this ancient poem are closely connected with the later sacral kings who derived their ancestry from Óðinn-Gaut, now as the proposed forefather of Ingr-Frejr. The earlier sacral kings, who merely claimed to be the reincarnation of Ingr (Yngve) – Frejr, and who founded their power on the fertility of the soil, would have used the same symbols as described in the poem because the fertility cult did not change noticeably following the rise of the new cults of Gaut and Óðinn-Gaut, which were primarily cults for kings, chieftains and warriors. They both made use of the old cult of Frejr as a medium. Finally there seems to have been a change in religious orientation even in the Mälars valley area, the last bastion of the fertility cult, to the con-

tinental cultic variant where the new name of Óðinn was combined with the old Nordic name Gaut, and the old sacrificial cycle of 19 years was replaced by an eight-year cycle, probably influenced by the Roman calendar. This appears to have taken place towards the end of the 5th, or at the beginning of the 6th, century AD, according to what is known as the “Law of Aun” (Henriksson, 1995).

I concur with the views of, among others, Charlotte Fabech, Lotte Hedeager and Eva Weiler, who contend that ancient religion was the means whereby political and social control over the community was maintained. Hedeager considers the rise of the modern state to originate in the division between political and religious power. She regards political manipulation of religion as a very early phenomenon (Fabech, 1991: 283 ff.; Fabech, 1989: 107; Hedeager, 1990; Weiler, 1994: 147).

Thus I see the function of the cult within a relatively complex social organization as primarily a tool used to shore up the power base of the ruling group or individual. More accurately, perhaps, one might say that cults become apparent in historical and archaeological contexts only when directed to these ends, as they thereby mould social structure and organization.

An important element in the exercise of religious control was the cult-saga, and that its message should be presented to the people in a convincing manner, and convincingly tied to the chieftain’s rule. For this purpose he would also require various external, material attributes corresponding to the mythic ones. These attributes would of course have to be in frequent evidence, and included in the everyday life of the people as part of their natural routine. They would therefore preferably not be produced directly for or by the ruler. The ideal preconditions for his authority would be that a subject confronted with a certain set of circumstances or phenomena would automatically associate them with the ruler, reinforcing his divine role.

Under certain circumstances, however, it would become necessary to create such symbols deliberately.

I will start by briefly summarizing the all-embracing structure of the ideological base as particularly presented in the Nordic poem *Skirnismál*, one of the works in the poetic Edda. After that I will continue with a closer examination of an important symbol, in the highest degree linked with the external manifestation of power, a symbol representing the continuity of the cult – the ring.

The basic concept is of the god Frejr sitting in his imagined high-seat, Hlidskjálf, looking out all over the world. He catches sight of the giant’s daughter, Gerðr, and sends a suitor, Skírnir, to propose to her. In the actual version this person would seem to be Frejr himself in the guise of Skírnir. He brings gifts for Gerðr, who actually is his own sister Freja, the moon- and earth-goddess. The most important gift is the sun-god Balðr himself in the form of the ring Draupnir. Besides these he brings with him his sword, which represents his phallus. In the underworld it is transformed into Gambanteinn, a magical wooden branch that I regard as taken from the tree of life in Gerðr’s womb, which also contains her fertility, as well as his phallus.

The story deals essentially with the burial of the sun, personified by Balðr, and the necessity for Frejr to impregnate the soil, personified by his sister, Freja the earth goddess, in order to ensure the fruitfulness of the following summer. Freja

looks after the almost dead sun, Draupnir, which is a representation of Balðr, and she even keeps Frejr, also a kind of sun- and vegetation-god, in her care over the winter. At the *Disting* – sacrifice in Uppsala at the first full moon after the Holy Kings' Day it is only Freja who acts as the moon goddess. Balðr and her brother (Frejr) are officially buried by then. The sun is buried on the 4th of November and the reincarnation of the sun, represented by both Balðr and Frejr, will occur on the 5th of May, also known as the Celtic Beltain. In earlier times the couple Úllr/Ingr may have enacted this myth. Possibly this story was also performed as a cultic show where the king made love in public to a peasant woman personifying Gerðr, and he himself acted out the role of Frejr (Steinsland, 1991). By this means he asserted his power over the soil of the land, which he ruled, because Gerðr is also an earth goddess. The child resulting from this impregnation would be the child of an earthly, human father and a divine mother – a hero – but because the king also personified the god Frejr the child would also represent the newly re-born Balðr and Frejr himself – divine children. It accords quite well with the claim of the Svíakonungr's of the mythic Inglinga dynasty that every new king is also Ingr/Frejr re-born. The title *Svíakonungr* truly seems to be “the sun-king” (Nordgren, 1998: 28 ff.).

I have already mentioned two important attributes besides the phallus, Gambanteinn; namely the ring Draupnir and the presumed high-seat Hlidskjálf. From now on I intend to concentrate on the ring which I have shown in my thesis, as mentioned above, to symbolize the sun.

How ancient is the ring as a divine symbol? I would say it is as old as the first human religion of nature and that is has always been connected to the sun and the mother earth – the moon goddess.

In the rock-carvings of the Nordic Bronze Age we find what are usually called “wheel-crosses” which can be regarded as a combination of mother earth, represented by the crossing lines, and the sun, which is the circle. You could see these as an indication that in these carvings the sun could be thought to fertilize the womb of the mother goddess. In an earlier study, published 1992, in an article entitled “The Celto-Roman Heritage of Gotland”, I have demonstrated that the wheel-crosses with four spokes without exception are situated at a crossing between two “earth energy-lines”, and that the carved lines in the circle follow the same angles as these “energy-lines”. Sensitive people may therefore have been able to feel what they could have interpreted as the power of mother earth and wanted to guide the sun to a suitable place for fertilization. These crosses are found all over the world in cultures that have no contact with each other, and from different epochs. The phenomenon must therefore be universal and not local and the only possible explanation is that they must also have sensed this energy.¹

¹ Docent Nils Axel Mörner at Stockholm University's Institute of Paleogeophysics and Geodynamics has recently introduced in *Slagrutan som instrument förr och idag* = The dowser as an instrument now and before, (Stockholm, 1995) a plausible, as it seems, explanation to the phenomenon “earth-energy”. He shows that it may deal with piezoelectrical and piezomagnetical energy as a consequence of the periodic deformation of the earth through the gravity forces of the moon, the so-called Earth-Tide pulse (Nordgren, 1990: 2; Nordgren, 1992: 153 f.; Nordgren, 1998: 155).

It is also probably not accidental that one discovers ring-shaped, i.e. round, circles – stone-settings, mounds, cairns, standing stones in circles, etc. – in burial sites dating from the Roman Iron Age and Migration Period. The howes of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age are all round, i.e. ring-shaped. So far as the late Neolithic Period is concerned, when the graves were made in form of stone cists, according to the archaeologist Christer Westerdahl in his article in *Kinnekullebygden* (1976: 119), during the period 1800–1500 BC in the Kinnekulle area, there occur circle-formed gable-holes, too small to admit additional dead bodies. This applies mainly to West Sweden in the areas around Göta älv, Västergötland, Dalsland, Värmland and less frequently also to Närke and Östergötland. The diameter of the holes is roughly 40–70 cm and Westerdahl interprets them as a new religious concept – perhaps the expectation of an afterlife connected with the fertile earth. He suggests that sacrifices might have been brought to the dead (Westerdahl, 1976: 121 f). One could also interpret these holes as circles or rings and they might well have a connection with the later statuettes of goddesses with neck-rings, mentioned below, which appear during the Bronze Age, and also the wheel-crosses.

The attention devoted to grave constructions in ancient times is further demonstrated by Olaf Olsen, who in *Hørg, Hov og Kirke* remarks in connection with the excavation of the farmyard Hofstaðir on Iceland that the local population regards round, ring-formed sites with earthen walls as cult-places. He also writes that according to both of the old law codices *Grágás* and *Gulatingslov* the judges resided within what are called the *domskretsar*, that is within a circle, or in the form of a circle, and that they were sometimes “inhaslade med vébond”, meaning that they were surrounded with bands marking a cultic place, which in the Nordic tongue is called *ví*. Olsen suggests that our name *domarringar*, judge-rings, which means a circle of standing stones, must have been influenced by this. He assumes that our stone-circles would have been used, besides for burial, even for a kind of cult in connection with burial rites (Olsen, 1966: 193 ff.).

From about the Bronze Age onwards it becomes common to sacrifice household utilities and jewellery in wetland areas. Rings of different kinds are particularly frequent. Small statuettes of bronze goddesses with one or more, most often two, necklace-rings appear among the finds. These statuettes show, in my opinion, the mother/moon-goddess receiving the sun to keep it alive during the winter. Alternatively the two rings might be either the sun and the moon or, which is just as probable, the two sun/fertility gods who take part in the above-mentioned burial of the sun, namely Ingr/Úllr and Frejr/Balðr.

Individual sacrificial acts are common in wetland areas during the Iron Age until the beginning of the 5th century AD, but thereafter, according to Fabech et al., they move to dry land and evidently closer to inhabited areas. Fabech therefore thinks that the local chieftains now have become “petty kings” and have begun using the cult to enforce their power and to make themselves divine. Finds of gold bracteates now also start to become common.

She remarks that most of the finds of ringed wooden idols in Denmark can be dated to the older Iron Age, i.e. they are Pre-Roman and Roman; but the figure

from Rude Eskilstrup with a neck-ring also links these figures to the Migration Period and shows that the wetlands continued to function as sacrificial areas (Fabech, 1991).

From the 6th century onwards the finds occur on dry land and are of a partially different character. The innovations consist of gold bracteates and *guld-gubbar*, i.e. little gold men, figures stamped on tiny gold plates, found in abundance especially on the island of Bornholm. However, the ring finds continue to occur as frequently as before.

Figure 1: The Ring treasure hoard of Vittene in Västergötland



Picture credit: *Västergötlands Fornminnesförenings Tidskrift*, 1997–98, p. 127.

During the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages we find a number of exceptionally magnificent rings in the shape of golden neck-collars and neck-rings and even in the Bronze Age there are finds of remarkable neck-rings of bronze. Sites such as Dronninglund, Havor, Möre, Olbia, Smjela, Pietroassa, Tureholm, Vittene and Ålleberg supply clear evidence of the central position occupied by ring symbolism in both the Scandinavian area and the Gothic areas on the continent.

Simpler, but still impressive golden neck-rings from the same period have been found in West Sweden in e.g. Bragnum, Naum, Tunhem, Hångsdala, Våring and Värmskog. In Östergötland, Småland and on Gotland there are also similar finds. If we add the widely spread Celtic habit of wearing torque-rings, we may conclude that this symbol is universal. Charlotte Fabech associates the golden collars with a royal and cultic *milieu* and sees a connection between these and the finds of gold men and bracteates (Fabech, 1991). In this respect she agrees with Hauck,

by regarding the bracteates as indications of cultic and political centres (Hauck, 1988: 197–211). Fabech regards the changes in sacrificial customs during the 5th century as a confirmation of the spread of the cult of Óðinn-Gaut (Fabech, 1991).

Verner Lindblom writes in *Kinnekullebygden* (1976: 73) that the superb gold collars and the many golden neck-rings of the Migration Period make one think of the golden neck-ring of Agni Skialfarbondi and the “ring-giver” and “jewellery-waster” of the Beowulf epic.

Thus, in the old Nordic *Ynglingasaga*, there is a hint that such rings were carried by kings. It is natural therefore to associate the Pietroassa rings with these Nordic neck-rings. Hermann Reichert argues in his article “Gutani vi hailag” (1993), that one of the Pietroassa rings would have been worn by a sacral king with a Nordic connection.

In the *Ynglingasaga* Snorre relates that king Agne went to war against king Froste in Finland. After having killed Froste he went back to Sweden taking Froste’s daughter, Skiálf, with him. She took a dreadful revenge on Agne, by causing him to be hanged in a golden necklace. He had defeated Froste, probably with the help of Óðinn, and the golden neck-ring suggests that he was initiated and promised to Óðinn. Óðinn himself arranged his hanging as a king-sacrifice to Óðinn – he claims his swordsman for Valhalla in the same way he did with Haralðr hilditǫnn, not to mention Vikarr and Haddingr. Skiálf is in this story merely a by-name for Óðinn.

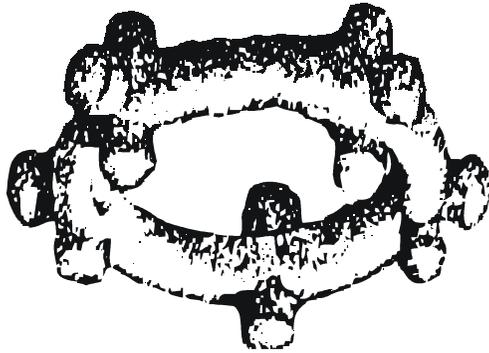
This identification is even more apparent in connection with the mention of Agne, under the name of “Skialfarbondi”, in the *Flateyarbók* and *Gautreks saga*. Noreen is of the opinion that Agne, in *Ynglingatal*, was regarded as the husband of Froste’s daughter Skiálf, even if the original meaning of the word was ‘farmer’, or ‘property-owner’ (Noreen, 1925: 225 f). In my view, however, this word *bondi* shows that Agni was sworn to and tied (in Nordic *bunden*) to Óðinn, who is Skiálf. The ring can then be appropriately understood as an oath-ring to Óðinn-Gaut. In this connection there appears to be a link with “the law of Aun”. This is normally associated with an alleged king, Aun the Old. It strikes me that the name of Óðinn in modern Swedish is spoken Oden. In rural areas the pronunciation ‘Oen’ would be quite possible. ‘Oen’ and ‘Aun’ are not so very unlike and Aun could very well be a variant of ‘Oen’. In Uppsala the law of Aun is spoken of as regulating the time for the Disting-sacrifice and from about 475 AD the sacrificial cycle seems to shift from 19 to 8 years. The first king with the epithet Skiálf is Agni who lived in the 5th century and it is very doubtful if Aun ever was a king. It could well be that Agni was the first “king” real or mythic, in this area who claimed to be related to Óðinn and would thus be the founder of the Skilfings while still claiming kinship with Ingr, i.e. Frejr. If so, his name “Skialfarbondi” would be even more significant.

The above-mentioned article by Herrmann Reichert entitled “Gutani? Wi hailag, die Sprache” (1993: 235–247) deals with the inscription of the Pietroassa ring. Against the former, more common alternative interpretations of *gutani? wi hailag, gutani? Wi hailag, gutan i? wi hailag* – he proposes – *gutane jer weih hailag*.

Torsten Capelle in Münster draws attention to a letter by Ambrosius in the year 381 AD, which was mentioned by Müllenhoff in 1874 (Capelle, 1968: 228 ff.). In the letter we are told that holy rings were characteristic for Gothic priests. In addition, Capelle underlines the fact that a neck-ring found in Szilágy was very worn near its lock, suggesting that it had often been held in the hand. I see this as an indication that it could have been an oath-ring. There is no discrepancy between an oath-ring and the neck-ring of a sacral king because the king was also the highest priest. It means that such a ring could very well have been used by vassals in swearing oaths. Consequently I find Reichert's interpretation convincing.

I would emphasize the possibility that certain rings could also have been used for decorating idols, e.g. the *Ållebergskrage* found at the mountain *Ålleberg* in the vicinity of the old sacral centre, *Gudhem*, in *Västergötland*, Sweden.

Figure 3: Knob-ring



Picture credit: M. Rundkvist 1996

Another symbolic ring artefact found in great numbers at the end of the Pre-Roman Iron Age but already common in earlier periods on the continent is the knob-ring with knobs or protrusions. The oldest Swedish examples may have been imported to Gotland and Blekinge from Celtic areas in Central Europe, according to Martin Rundkvist (1996: 13 ff.). They were used by women, who would probably have had them hanging from their belts as amulets. The Swedish customary usage of these rings, Rundkvist thinks, died with the women who carried them. They then disappeared for almost the whole of the Roman Iron Age but were used in other areas in Europe. At the end of the 4th century native Swedish types emerge. First they appear on Gotland and Öland and later during the Migration Period they spread all over Sweden.

On the continent women also carried ring amulets – knob-rings and rings with bulges, but also rings with spokes or animal-swastikas. The rings were worn in front, hanging from the belt on an extension or a chain. Swedish rings may have been worn in the same manner. Rundkvist cites H. W. Böhme of the *Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum* in Mainz, as being of the opinion that the continental knob-rings

ought to be regarded as female amulets of fertility. Rundkvist comments that there may be a connection with the fact that many of the locally produced Swedish rings have nine bulges or knobs, perhaps a link with pregnancy being nine months. The Swedish ring amulets gradually decrease in number and by the end of the Migration Period they are gone. Nevertheless Nerman has discovered discs with pierced patterns on Gotland, with separate bulges along the sides, dating from the so-called Vendel period – the 7th and 8th centuries – with a varying number of spokes, which may be a continuation of the tradition.

Figure 4: Bulge-ring with nine groups



Picture credit: M. Rundkvist 1996

I believe the rings have something very interesting in common. Regardless of the number of knobs or bulges both types are generally arranged in groups of three. The bulges clearly resemble small rings. A knob-or bulge-ring with nine protrusions grouped in threes is common, even if there are variations.

A sacrificial cycle of eight years gives a new grand sacrifice every ninth year, according to Göran Henriksson (1995: 337). Above, and in my thesis, I have shown that three ring-gods are involved every year with the funeral rites of the sun and its rebirth. These are Frejr and Balðr who are direct participants and also Óðinn, who by some means succeeds every year in retrieving the ring Draupnir from the underworld. Nine times three ring-gods could be interpreted as the new, shorter sacrificial cycle, replacing the one of nineteen years, and this could be a significant indication of the arrival of the continental cult of Óðinn. The most important god in this connection is of course Frejr – the fertility god. For completeness I would also note that there are a number of stone-settings with a roughly triangular form, the

so-called “treuddar”. These might possibly be similarly interpreted according to the ring-gods concerned, but we have no idea of their age, however. Moreover they give no indication of the duration of the sacrificial cycle.

Figure 5: Raven-ring



Picture credit: M. Rundkvist 1996

There is a type of ring consisting of six birds placed on its outer diameter. The birds give a distinct impression of representing ravens. Moreover the bird, according to e.g. Hedeager (1996), was the carrier of the shaman’s soul when visiting the divine realm while his body was in a cataleptic coma, and taking account of the approximate time when they first appear, it may be inferred that these rings could be linked with the cult of Óðinn – the shaman god. The ring form also continues to refer back to the old solar symbol from the pre-Odinistic era.

The legendary story of the alleged conquering of the North by Ívarr víðfamði, who chased the *Ynglingar* out of Uppsala, is evidently based on the need for a power justification by the Danish Skjoldungs, and indicates that Ívarr is the *protégé* of Óðinn and hence related to the sun god Balðr, implying that he claims genealogical descent from Óðinn. Perhaps it is from this time that the Svía-kings, the Skilfings, also called the younger Ynglings, start claiming to be originally descended from Óðinn, and placing Frejr (Yngve) in the third generation after Njorðr. The story could still be used as a means of claiming power, even if it is wholly mythical. Ívarr was said to be the grandfather of Haraldr hilditǫnn, who was killed by Óðinn himself, in the guise of Bruno, in battle against his vassal king, Sigurðr hringr. Here, too, we find the ring as an Odinistic symbol.

It is widely recognised that the ring-symbol occurs in the sources as a token of certain gods – Óðinn, Balðr, Frejr and Ullr.

We know that warriors were sworn and initiated to Óðinn, and that they carried a golden “armcuff” – a ring – as a sign of this. A number of rings, known in Germany as Kolbenrings, have been found, which seem to have been intended for permanent wear. We may note in the *Grímnismál* and the *Torsbjerginscription* (Noreen, Aisl. Gr 4: 389) that Úllr would probably have had sworn warriors and in those works he is called a ring-god. The Svía king carried the arm-ring *Svíá gris* in his capacity as high priest of the cult of Frejr.

The name Ingemar means ‘warrior of Ingr’ which is at least a hint Ingr may also have had dedicated warriors who would have worn rings.

In the *Völsungasaga* it is possible to adduce, via Símfjötli, cultic warriors dedicated to Balðr, in the symbolic fight between the Ylfingar and Hundingar, who may have carried rings. Símfjötli clearly appears to personify Balðr in several places. Símfjötli is even mentioned in *Beowulf* as the “wolf with yellow cuffs” (Hoops’ comment to *Beowulf* – 1932:108 ff.). In the three *Helgikviðas*, also, Balðr, under the name of Helgi or Heðinn, the last meaning ‘guise’, leads the Ylfingar against his brother, his own dualistic half, Höðr, and his Hundingar. Höðr is also sometimes called Heðinn. They enact the essential struggle between summer and winter in order to maintain the plant cycle. Balðr’s ship is called “Ringhorne” and is the ship of the sun travelling across the sky.

In the *Bidreks saga*, also, a wild man, *Vildiver*, is mentioned in bear-guise (i.e. berserk) with a heavy gold ring around his arm (Höfler, 1952: 193 ff.), and, according to Tacitus, the Chatti display their status by holy iron arm-rings (*Germania XXXI*).

Birgit Arrhenius connects oath-rings in the form of Kolbenrings with the ringsword oath of the Franks in the *Lex Salica*, which Steuer has written about, whereby they swore fidelity to the king until death, even if they were normally located far away from him. She regards the oath-rings as initially deriving from Roman influence (Arrhenius, 1990).

Finally, Stefan Brink has shown in his analysis of the Forsa ring that oath-rings were used in connection with the cult, and that they presumably played a recognised part in the common law of the people (Brink, 1996: 27–52).

In summary one can conclude that the ring symbol is very ancient and expresses cultic continuity. It is also quite clear that the old sacral kings had no great need to fabricate symbols of their own, because these symbols were mostly a natural part of the everyday life of the people. The king was the sun; this was evident to everybody.

The Odinic kings, initially acceding to power by claiming descent from the god Gaut, and later from Óðinn-Gaut, had a greater need of specific symbols. The connection between the sun and the ring was no longer as evident as earlier and needed to be completed with a more magical, shamanistic interpretation to justify ancestry from the “shaman” god. The ring could also be used to induce warriors, who would also carry personal rings, to swear fealty to the chieftain, in this instance personifying the god. Fundamental human interest was gradually changing and twisting the religious origin of the ring.

Because rings of all kinds seem to be so important for the Gauts, the Gutar and the Jutes in Scandinavia as well as among the continental Goths, I asked myself when the ring acquired this significance for the Gothic peoples. Did it start on the continent and spread up to the North or, on the contrary, did its symbolism originate in the North, and spread southwards?

In trying to find an answer to this question I noticed an interesting factor in the toponymic geography of the Scandinavian region. There are numerous place-names and incolent names, i.e. nature names, beginning with the syllable *Ring-*, e.g. *Ringsholmen*, *Ringholmen*, *Ringsbacken*, *Ringsåsen*, sometimes with a *Spjuttorp* close by. The first two names mean Ring-island, and followed by Ring-hill, Ring-ridge and Spear-thorpe. It should be noted that the spear of *Gungnir* was regarded as Óðinn's.

Sundholm, an eighteenth century vicar, writes about the name *Ringsåsen*, "Ring Ridge", in his description of the Götene Parish in the province of Västergötland:

"According to old folk-tales King *Ring* had his dwelling in the parish of Holmestad, from which circumstance the estates *Ringsåsen* (Ring-ridge) and *Ringsbacken* (Ring-hill) will have been named. There are huge stone-mounds, presumably the remains of some kind of castle. *Ringsåsen* is situated close to these, and named after king *Ring*, who died and is buried here, as is still evidenced by his tombstone" (Lindblom, 1976; author's free translation).

Using maps and etymological literature, including the series *Danmarks stednavn* and Rygh's *Norske gaardsnavne*, I have endeavoured to comb Denmark, Norway and Sweden for *Ring*-names. Finland was not really a part of the Scandinavian area at this time and so I have included Finland in the Continental area. So far I have found 412 names in these three countries. Outside Scandinavia I first found another four in Brandenburg – where both Goths and Burgundians stayed. One of these is called *Ringenhain*, 'the cult-place of the ring' which is also the case in e.g. an Bohemian site. It is noteworthy that these places in Brandenburg are at the farthest eastern edge, within the Gothic area. There are *Ring*- names in other countries, however. In Poland, the starting point for the Gothic migration to the Pontic basin, there are quite a number. They indicate settlements such as farms and villages. The Slavicized names in Poland are constructed from a form *ryn-*, which appears also in the derivative *rynek*. The word *rynek* means 'ring' and in Polish it has acquired the meaning 'market-place, square'. According to Professor Salamon of Kraków it originates from certain Germanic dialects.² Brückner (1957: 472), Grimm (1893, 993 f.), Miklošič (1886: 286) and Vasmer (1950–1958, III) recount that this meaning has spread to Bohemia, Hungary, Silesia and Russia (cf. Rus. *рынок*, "market"). Cult and market in ancient times were closely interconnected, as is shown by e.g. the *Disting* in Uppsala. The Slavic names are of the

² Professor M. Salamon, Hist. inst., Jagellonian University, Kraków, Poland, pers. com. 1999.

same character as the Nordic ones. In neighbouring countries there are still more. In Lithuania, also, there is a considerable number consisting mostly of settlements and a few names of rivers and lakes. Estonia has two, Livonia one and Latvia have three names. In Belarus the village of Rynkóvka is located quite far east, near Mogilov, and there are still three names of the same character. Finally, at a tributary of the river Prut in the Ukraine, I found a village called Ryngach, in the heart of Bessarabia, and at the centre of the Gothic settlements. I also found two other “Rynek places” This gives a total of at least three places in the Ukraine. There is another Ríngaci (= Ryngach) just across the Ukrainian border in Moldova, and there are single names even in Romania, Hungary and in the Czech Republic.

There is also another Ring name area. In Germany I have located 102 place-names beginning with the element *Ring-* and a smaller distribution in neighbouring areas. There are two distinct concentrations – one along the river Rhine all the way to Switzerland and another along the upper Danube and into the Austrian borderland. I believe these concentrations may possibly be connected with the Burgundians and the Gepids and their allies- the Hasding Vandals.

A third area seems to be from Jutland along the coast of the North Sea and over to England and Scotland with 12, resp. 2 names. Ireland has indeed 26. This spread may be connected with both the Jutes in the Anglo Saxon period and with the early vikings. In all I have registered outside the Scandinavian area 265 names starting with *Ring-* or connected with *Rynek* (or *Ryn-*).

Traditional interpretations of Nordic *Ring-* names start either with the male by-name *Hringr* or from the actual or presumed presence of some kind of ring-shaped feature of the local surroundings. In my view, however, it is possible to perceive a connection between these names and earlier solar cults prevalent during the Bronze Age, and perhaps at the beginning of the Pre-Roman Iron Age, and, subsequently, with the cults of Gaut and Óðinn-Gaut.

According to established philological methods, all interpretations of such names should be made by discussing every individual name. This is just not possible in an article, bearing in mind that my survey numbers approximately 600 names. I am not primarily a philologist but an historian. Consequently I have applied the methodology of history, as well as those of religion and archaeology, and use philology to support my thesis as best I can.

The following should be regarded merely as an impetus towards developing a different interpretation, which can be more thoroughly examined by abler philologists. In the tables in the end of the article I present my sources with a complete list of names and locations.

It is important to note that *Hringr*, according to Ivar Lundahl for example, is not a proper male name but a man's by-name, a nickname if you prefer. The vast majority of place-name compilers do not differentiate between names and by-names. If you recognize that *Hringr* is a by-name, and consider names like *Ringstad* (Ring-place), *Ringhem* (Ring-home), *Ringebu* (Ring's dwelling place, home), *Ringgården* (Ring-farm), and then compare them with names like *Prästgården* (Priest's farm,

vicar's lodging), *Länsmansgården* (Sheriff's farm), *Mjölaregården* (Miller's farm) etc. you will find that these also incorporate by-names – or even more significantly – functional names. These are all names that indicate a person's occupation or function. It is therefore quite plausible, linguistically, to propose the possibility of the existence of semi-official functionaries connected with a "ring-function". The *ring-* element might be attached to the person's name as in e.g. *ringkarl*, *ringman* (ring-man), *ringbärare* (ring-bearer) *Sigurdr hringr* (i.e. Sigurd the ring-carrier), *Ring-Olle*, etc. If someone has an important function locally within the cult, e.g. in connection with oath-rings, it is not preposterous to speculate that in certain instances rings of standing stones might have been constructed, or that the cult and oath-ceremony could have centred on such a ring. This need not be a rule, of course, but more of an exception. There is a need for improved access to suitable locations. My example from Brandenburg shows that the name *Ringenhain* means "the cult-place of the ring", which fits the picture quite neatly (Schlimpert, 1984).

There is in fact, therefore, no contradiction between my argument and the traditional interpretation. Traditionally it has been assumed, on purely linguistic grounds, without proof that the names originate from a male proper name or by-name, *Hringr*, or a ring-shaped natural feature, or a standing-stone circle – often not extant, but thought to have disappeared through farming activities. There may, of course, be a few such examples, as some of the rare names in Svealand of this kind, for instance, could possibly be explained as incolent names. I do not suggest by any means that all the names I list have to be cultic and administrative, but that some could possibly have quite a different origin. However, I am confident that they cannot amount to a number of sufficient statistical significance as to invalidate my findings. The geographical distribution of the names fits excellently into a pattern showing distinct signs of organisation and purpose.

Some examples from the philological literature dealing with place-names show how uncertain is our knowledge about *Ring-* names. Ivar Lundahl comments, with regard to the estate *Ringsåsen* in district of Kinne, Holmestad Parish, Skaraölg County, Västergötland, as follows:

"The first element is possibly, as is assumed in SOH 2 p.300, the same first element as in the farm name *Ringsås* in the parish of Vinberg, Faurås district, in the province of Halland, the genitive of the word *ring*, perhaps hinting at a standing stone circle or any circular stone-setting. One might also consider it the genitive of the Old Swedish male proper name *Ring*, which is not, however, confirmed with certainty but which was probably in use, to judge from the place-names (cf. especially fem. *Ringstorp*). Cf. the equivalent *Hringr*, which seems to form part of a great number of Norwegian farm names. *Ringsåsen* in Holmestad Parish is situated on a prominent, extended gravel ridge. There is no standing stone circle or other stonemasonry, but earlier there might have been one which was later destroyed."

Lundahl does not mention the neighbouring farm *Ringsbacken*, included in the above-mentioned 18th century excerpt and still extant, lying at the base of the

Ringsbacken, which is the slope of *Ringsåsen*. These two estates mark, in my opinion, a site for solar observation and the place where one saw the sunrise. Whether there was a settlement here or not at that time is irrelevant. The situation is confirmed by the fact that this very ridge is pictured in Dahlbergs' *Suecia Antiua*. In his picture there is a huge standing stone sited on top of the *Ringsåsen*, removed in modern times by a person unknown. Local tradition says it is now part of a house in the vicinity. This stone was an excellent mark for the spot the sun rose on a certain day, when viewed from the observation post at *Ringsbacken*. With regard to *Ringagården* (Ring-farm), in Hornborga Parish, Skaraborg County, Lundahl gives as first element the *male by-name* *Ring*. Earlier the *male proper name*, here the *male by-name*. In referring to *Ringstorp* (Ring-thorpe), in the district of Skåing, Edsvära Parish, Skaraborg County, he comments on the first element: "possibly from the *family name* *Ring*". Finally, in connection with *Ringstad* (Ring-place, Ring-home) in Österbitterna Parish, Skaraborg County, he says that the first element is the *male proper name* *Ring*, corresponding to the ON *Hringr*. Standing stone circles do not come into question, for he lacks any evidence of them. All this was written by the same author. Lundahl is however by no means alone in expressing this uncertainty.

Ingemar Olsson, e.g. in *Gotländska ortnamn*, is of the opinion that *Ringume* in Alva and Mästerby may both hint at "some artefact in ring shape or maybe a circular feature in the terrain". In the same book he states that the Gotlandic farm *Ringide*, of *Ringvidhr*, is constructed from *ring* 'ring' and *vidhr* 'tree, wood'. *Ring* is understood to be a proper name and thus you get the meaning 'Ring's wood, Ring's tree'. Alternatively one might understand from Olsson's rather vague account that the name of the farm is *Ringvidhr*. Its name would then have derived from a person called 'Ringwood'. He also interprets *Ringvida*, on Fårö Island, as deriving from a proper name.

A farm named after a single tree or a whole wood seems improbable. The name 'Ringwood' could instead suggest a meeting-place of a cultic nature, and, as is the case with many *Ring*-places, it is situated on the outskirts of the general settlement. It is not possible to determine whether or not there are astronomical observation points in the area from the description.

Gerhard Schlimpert mentions a synonymous name in *Brandenburgerisches Namenbuch*, namely *Ringenwalde* in Strausberg/OB, Kreis Barnim.

"Village south of Wriezen. 1271 *Ringenwalde* (Krabbo 933 Kop.), 1300 *villam Ringenwolde* (A XII 413 Kop.), 1375 *Ringhenwalde*, *Ryngenwalde* (LB 71 127), 1480 *Ringenwolde* (Schoßreg. fol. 229), 1527 *Ringenwolde* (Ourschmann 468), 1624 *Ringenwalde* (Schoßkat. fol. 333), 1805 *Ringenalde* (Bratring 267).

Cf. Middle Low Germ. **Ringenwolde*, whose first element *Ringen-* can have several meanings. Middle Low. Germ. *ringe* can mean 'unimportant, small, poor'. Possibly also Middle Low Germ. *rink*, *ringes* 'ring, circle' in the names of circular objects, also 'ringwall' and 'semi-circular hollows' (cf. Dittmaier

247); cf. FIN 1495 ‘In den Ring acht stucken’ (in the ring eight pieces) (Stendal, A VII 217 Or.). If Middle Low Germ. *rink* forms the first element, one should assume that the weak form *Ringen-* originates by analogy with names such as Schönefeld < Schönerfeld, cf. Wollenberg nr. 398. Finally, the possibility cannot be denied that *Ringen-* comes from a proper male name *Ringo* derived of Old Sax. *hringr*, Middle Low Germ. *rink*. *Ringo* is however not very well confirmed. Schlaug and Hartig give no examples of it. The last element *-walde* represents Middle Low Germ. *wolt* ‘Wald’ (Wood).

Compare *Ringenwalde* Kr. Templin, *Ringethal* Kr. Hainichen (Walther DS 3, 113), *Ringenhain* Kr. Bischofswerda (Eichler-Walther DS 28, 254 f.)”

Templin, Hainichen and Bischofswerda all lie in Brandenburg, in the old Bohemian area near Dresden. Both Goths and Burgundians passed through this neighbourhood.

As may be noted, even German researchers are uncertain. However, the meaning of ‘ring’ from Middle Low German *Rink* is decidedly an alternative derivation and when combined with the *hain* name, and still the name of a wood, the cult-place alternative gains in credibility. The fact that all the “Kreisen”, i.e. districts, mentioned seem to have sacral names is of further interest.

Ingemar Olsson also mentions *Ringstäde* (Ring-place, Ring-home) on the island of Gotland. He states that *Ringstäde Städe* is now pastureland. He intends to suggest that the *städe* names can mean ‘place’, as they do on the mainland. He investigated *Ringstäde* in Hangvar and discovered that the church of Elinghem owned the meadow in 1696. Its area is 1,752 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres. In 1833 a registration document records that: “Ihre hemman bytit af Hangvahr Pårestebohl *Ringstäde-stycket*”, meaning that the Ihre estate made a deal with the church and traded another land-strip for the *Ringstäde* meadow. In 1696 *Ringstäde* bordered on great meadowlands, all described with the final word *-stycke*, meaning a portion of land.

On visiting the place in person he discovered stones laid in a circle. They were not standing stones, but formed a stonessetting – grave – dating from the Iron Age. He asserts that at the time the piece of land was transferred from its former owner, the church, to the new owner, Ihre farm, the place would have been named the Ring-place, with reference to the stonessetting.

It may be noted that all other strips of land are called “stycken”. There is no reason therefore why *Ringstäde* should not also be called “stycke”. The fact that it is not shows that the name is considerably more ancient and must be interpreted as ‘Ring-place, Ring home’ or similar. *Hammarstycket* (Hammer piece), adjacent to it, could also have a cultic connection with the god Þórr: cf. *Rinkaby* in Scania, situated at the *Hammarsjö* (Hammer lake). It is also of the greatest interest that it belonged to the glebe of the church. Ancient and important cult-places were often specifically conveyed to the church. A further indication of this connection is the presence of burial fields, of which the *Ringstäde* stonessetting forms a part. Unfortunately, Olsson gives no details about any artefacts in the environment.

As a final example I would mention one of the toponyms in the *Słownik geograficzny* (1889, vol. 9), now in Kaliningrad Province of Russia, but formerly within East Prussia, and once in the state of the Order of Teutonic Knights. This is *Ringlacken* – *Rangelawken* (1405), i.e. *Ringlacken* (1889), near Znamensk (formerly Wehlau, East Prussia). It is said to come from Lith. *Rangys* derived from *rangausi* ‘bow’, and Pr. *laucks* ‘cultivated field’ = Swed. *Ringåkra* (Ring-field). Its meaning is exactly equivalent to the Nordic terms, where *-åkra* is normally regarded as an indication of a cultic place.

When conducting investigations of this nature it is necessary to rely almost entirely on topographical directories, geographical maps and also publications such as postal directory issued by the Swedish postal service. It is therefore not always possible to find the earliest occurrence of the name in question *or* other early forms. In those instances where I have obtained such information it normally dates from the Middle Ages and sometimes from the 17th century. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that pre-medieval registration is quite rare and that many former uninhabited places became estates or settlements during the 17th century, and that the former unregistered incoherent name was transferred to the estate or settlement. It is also fairly insignificant because, as noted, new settlements were often named after local incoherent names retained in the rural tradition and often they have a sacral background – this was how they were remembered. It is also possible to discover certain still existing place-names in the old Nordic saga-literature.³

I have tried to eliminate obvious secondary names of type *Ringsjöholm* (Ring lake islet) indicating that this is an islet in *Ringsjön* (the Ring lake) on which a castle was built. The primary name is *Ringsjön*. Names with a first element *Rim-* quite often turn out to have had the earlier spelling *Ring-*. They *also* have a common basic meaning because *Rim* signifies the upper line of a ridge or mountain over which the sun rises, and the ring, as I have shown, is the sun. It appears in the ON *Rimfaxe*, the name of one of the two horses harnessed to the sun’s chariot driving over the sky. I have therefore treated these names as synonymous with *Ring-* names.

Similarly Danish *Riggel* appears in exactly the same combinations as, for instance, Swedish *Ringberget* (the Ring mountain) and *Ringbacken* (the Ring hill) – from *Ringbacken* you would see the sun rise above *Ringberget*. In the part of Sweden called Svealand, in the Stockholm area, and on the island of Öland, this combination often appears as *Solbacken* (the Sun hill) and *Solberget* (the Sun mountain), clearly indicating their ancestry. This terminology is likely to have been common in Gotland also but would later have been replaced with *Ring* names.

In Jutland in Denmark there are also *Ring-* place names located in connection with a *Solbjerg* (Sun mountain). There will therefore be a few debatable names included in the material but these are statistically insignificant.

³ O. Rygh (1897), *inter alia*, ties *Ringstaðir* and *Ringnes* to settlements mentioned in the saga-literature (mentioned settlements).

The name *Rinkaby* and similar names are traditionally explained as ‘the warriors’ village’, from the Icelandic word *rinker*, ‘warrior’. Interestingly, the name *Ringkarleby* (Ring-men village) occurs in Östergötland, and in shortened form this may become *Ringkarby* > *Ringkaby* > *Rinkaby*. or, starting with the form **Rinkkarlby*, to *Rinkarby* > *Rinkaby*. It is appropriate here to draw attention to what is known about warriors during the Odinistic era. It is known that they swore an oath in connection with an oath-ring and that they were consecrated to the god by a symbolic hanging, and wounding with a spear. This is described by Otto Höfler, and others (Nordgren, 1998; Höfler, 1934). A man tied to the ring, often indicated by his wearing a golden arm-ring, must of course be a “ringman”, and accordingly a warrior. Hence *rinker* and *ringkarl* could be synonymous. At the time of the settlement of Iceland *Ring-* names already seem to be out of date. Moreover, in Middle Low German and Frisian ‘ring’ is simply written *Rink*, and the Nordic tongue is close to Low German. *Rinkaby* may therefore very well be, and presumably is, a *Ring* name. This is not, of course, a proven fact and must therefore still be regarded as uncertain. Nevertheless, I have included the name type in my survey, but their small number makes them statistically insignificant.

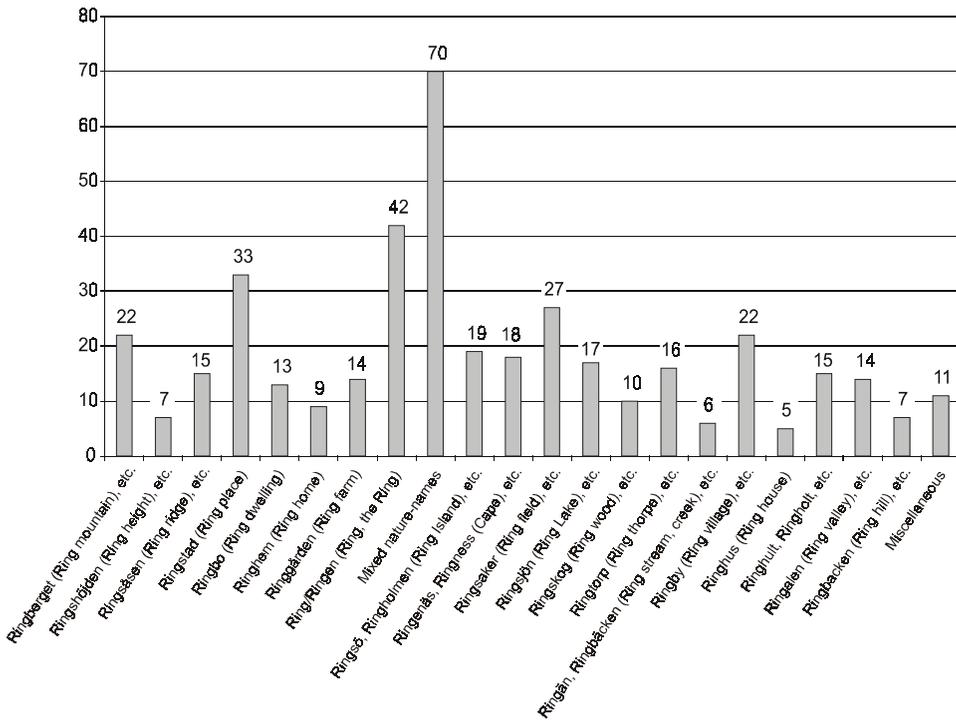
As one of several examples of South Jutland names with the form *Rink-* we can consult P. Jørgensen, who, in *Die Ortsnamen Südschleswigs*, mentions the town *Rinkshamm* in Rodenäs Parish. He traces the name to the medieval Frisian proper name *Rink*, ‘Ring’.

In short, there appears to be a clear connection between known and suspected Odinistic cult-places and *Ring-* place names. In Denmark as well as in Sweden there are ancient, major royal estates with *Ring-*names and they are sited close to known Odinistic cult-places. In Norway there is also the name *Ringerike*, meaning ‘Ring land, Ring realm’. It is now the name of a commune but formerly it was a province. In the north of the formerly Norwegian, now Swedish province of Bohuslän, which used to be called Ranrike, there was also a *Ringerike*. From this one can conclude that there are indications that they were linked with some form of secular power, which in ancient times was closely associated with religious authority. A connection to the god specifically known as Óðinn is nevertheless not straightforward. As already mentioned, there are indications of an older history for the *Ring* names. Prior to the arrival from the continent of the cult and name of Óðinn with its eight year sacrificial cycle, the cult of his predecessor Gaut, probably an early Nordic variant of the same god, but with a sacrificial meton-cycle of 19 years, would very probably have been attached to these places. It would be natural for the new cult of Óðinn to be enacted at the same locations, since it probably was essentially the same cult.

Judging by the features they exhibit, these places appear to be both cultic and regional and local centres of administration. In my opinion the local warrior-cult would have been organized at these places – involving rites of initiation, consecration, oath-swearing etc. – and secret shamanistic men’s leagues may also have operated from there to counter against “demons” stealing the crop.

The *ring* is, in essence, originally the sun, and these places – though not the name itself – probably reach back to the early cult of the sun; possibly right back to the Bronze Age. There is frequently a combination of place-names of the type *Ringstad* and *Ringsåsen*, indicating that from *Ringstad* you could observe the sun rise above *Ringsåsen* at certain times of the year, as Göran Henriksson points out in connection with the ridge at Gamla Uppsala (1995). You would then know the correct time for sacrifice, sowing seed and other important activities.

Figure 6: Ring name groups

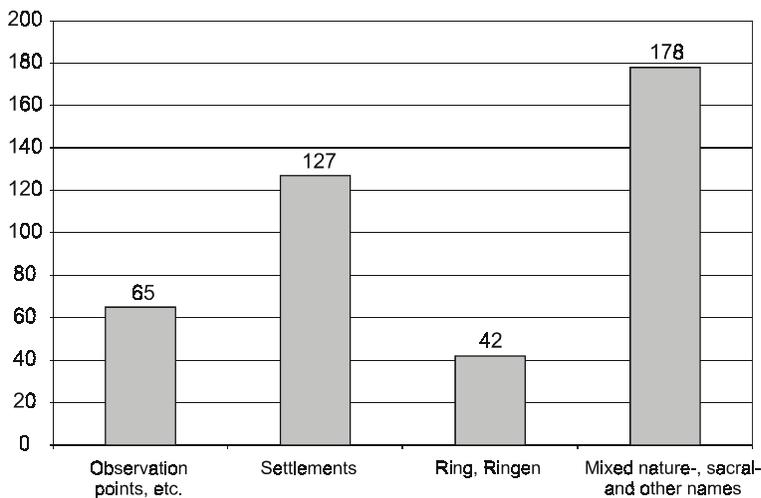


This chart demonstrates that the largest group of single Ring names is of the type *Ring*, *Ringen* (the Ring), *Ringstad*, *Ringsted* (Ring place, Ring home) and a number of related names, mostly settlements – hence an indication that these were the places where cult ceremonies were enacted. Perhaps an oath-ring also has been kept there? *Ringbacken* (Ring hill) and *Ringberget* (the Ring mountain) and other names connected with topographic features are as well frequent. The continental names, which are not included here, accord quite closely with the Nordic pattern. In percentage terms the distribution is as follows: the group of mixed nature names which include also a number of sacral places and chiefs settlements dominate with 17% and then comes *Ring/Ringen* with 10%, *Ringstad* 8% and the combination *Ring hill* with 7% and *Ring mountain* with 5%.

In order to obtain a better overview, the minor categories of names are arranged into a few functional groups indicating respectively:

1. Elevations – astronomical observation points
2. Names of habitations combined with Ring, such as *gård* (farm, settlement), *by* (village), *torp* (*thorpe*), *stad* (place, homestead) etc.,
3. Only Ring or Ringen (the Ring)
4. Other incolent names, i.e. the names of natural features, which in combination with Ring – could often be interpreted as cultic places, i.e. field, island, islet, cape etc.

Figure 7: Ring names grouped by function

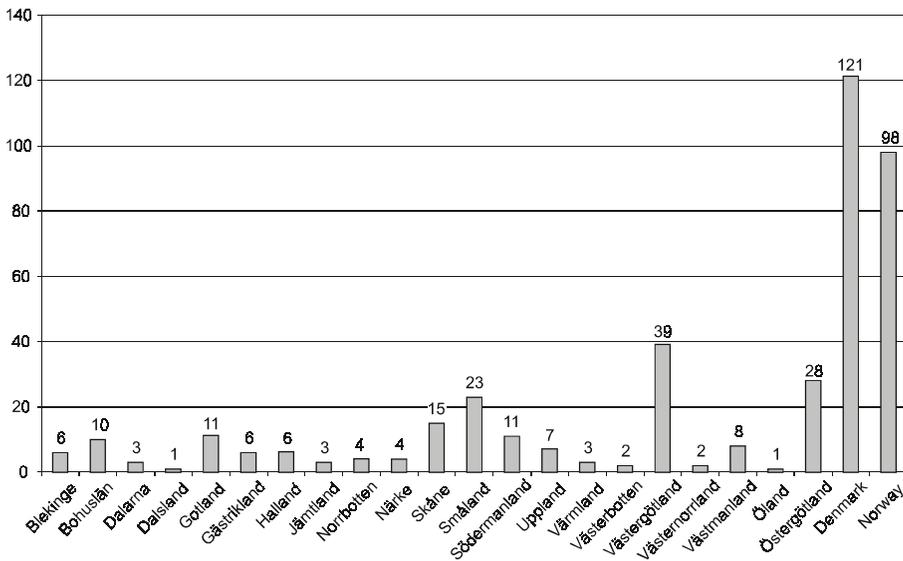


Natural features here constitute 43% inclusive of farm/settlement-names like *Ringenäs* (Ring ness or cape) a common name on chieftains' settlements, often also connected with their cultic functions; *Ringsholmen* (Ring islet), *Ringsåker* (Ring field), etc. and they can accordingly in many cases be regarded as having a cultic character, and are quite often situated close to other cultic indications such as *Helgenäs* (Holy cape), *Stavnäs* (Staff cape, which might possibly be interpreted as the staff of the goðe/king/chieftain) etc. *Gård*, *by*, *torp*, *stad*, etc. together constitute 31%, which should be added to the *Ringen* names, constituting 10%. Observation points here constitute 16% but with the aid of local maps the number would probably increase. In many cases these places are also marked with the name *Solberget* (the Sun mountain), etc. but those names are not included in my survey.

The distribution of Ring names in Sweden is in fig. 8, and for Denmark and Norway the numbers give totals regardless of regional distribution. The most notable areas in Sweden are Västergötland, Östergötland, Småland, Skåne (Scania) and Gotland. Then follow Södermanland in its southern parts, and Bohuslän with almost exactly as many. I have shown in the book developed from my thesis and

published this year, that there are a number of factors indicating that Södermanland in the Nyköping area should be counted as part of the Gautic lands (Nordgren 2000). This is also true of Värmland, in spite of its only three known *Ring* names, and the coastal area in Roslagen, and parts of Närke could also be seen as integral to this area. In her C-level thesis *Vattenvägarna mot Roxen* (The waterways towards the Roxen lake), Inger E. Johansson has convincingly demonstrated the connection between Östergötland, Närke and Södermanland at about the beginning of the Christian era (Johansson, 1993).

Figure 8: Distribution of Ring names in Sweden, and the total numbers for Denmark and Norway



Percentage distribution: 47% Swedish, 29 % Danish and 24% Norwegian. The pre-dominant Swedish provinces are Västergötland 9% (20%), Östergötland 7% (15%), Småland 6% (12%) Skåne (Scania) 4% (8%), Gotland and Södermanland 3% (6%) and close after Bohuslän 2% (5%). Taking internal Swedish distribution as 100%, the spread for the major areas is given within parentheses.

Fig. 9 shows the concentration within the Gautic areas of modern Sweden contrasted with Svealand, Denmark and Norway. In the term “Gautic lands” I have included Södermanland and Värmland, with 3 names, while the areas with a hypothetical connection, Närke and Roslagen, have been listed under Svealand. If these were to be regarded as Gautic, which is probable, there only remain a small number of mostly incolent names for Svealand. The distribution percentages show that 38% are Gautic, 29% Danish and 24% Norwegian, which leaves Svealand with a maximum of 9%.

Figure 9: Comparison between the concentrations of Ring names in different Nordic regions

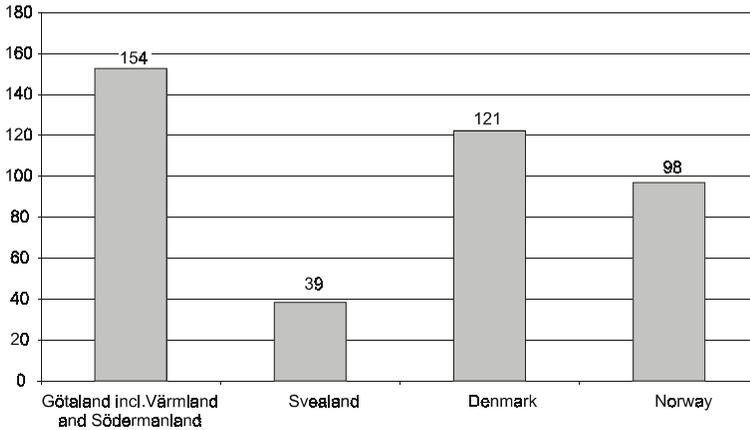
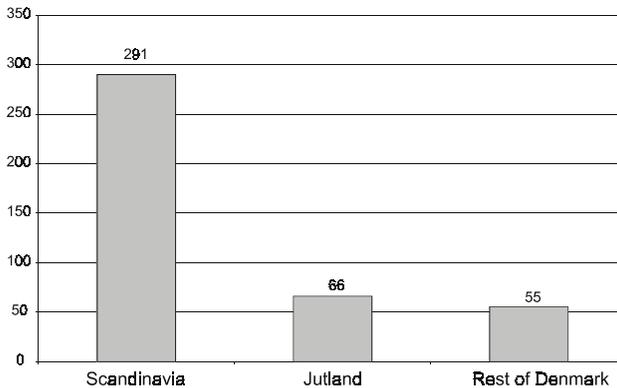


Figure 10: Ring names on the Scandinavian Peninsula compared with Denmark incorporating Jutland (Jylland) and the rest of Denmark (Rest of Denmark)



It is also interesting to compare Scandinavia in a narrow geographical sense, with Denmark, separated into Jutland and the rest of Denmark. Jutland is quite predominant, although the other areas contain a considerable number. Scandinavia has 71% (291) of the names, Jutland 16% (66) and the rest of Denmark 13% (55).

As regards internal Danish distribution we find that, besides Jutland, Fyn and the small island of Bornholm show a considerable number of names – 54% lie in Jutland (66), 16% on Fyn (19) and 15% (19) on Bornholm. The rest are minor and they include the subsequently important Sjælland (Zealand) (8). Included under Jutland (Jylland) are also the former Danish areas in what is now northern Germany, Danish South Schleswig.

Figure 11: Distribution of Ring names within Denmark

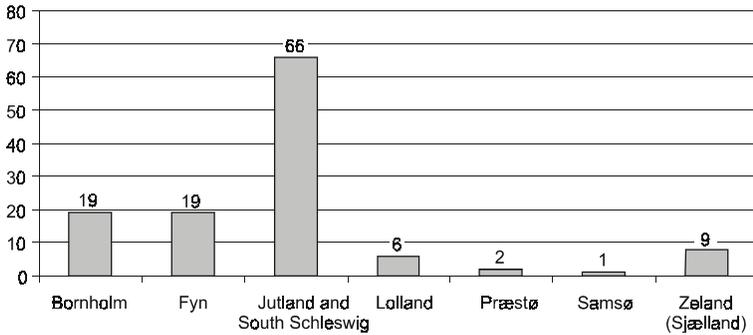
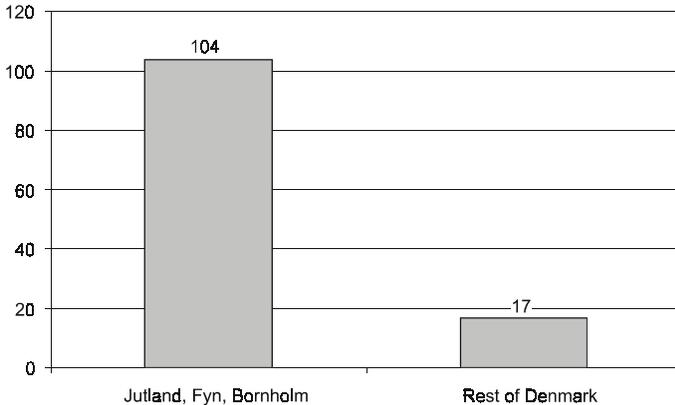


Figure 12: Concentration of Ring names within Denmark

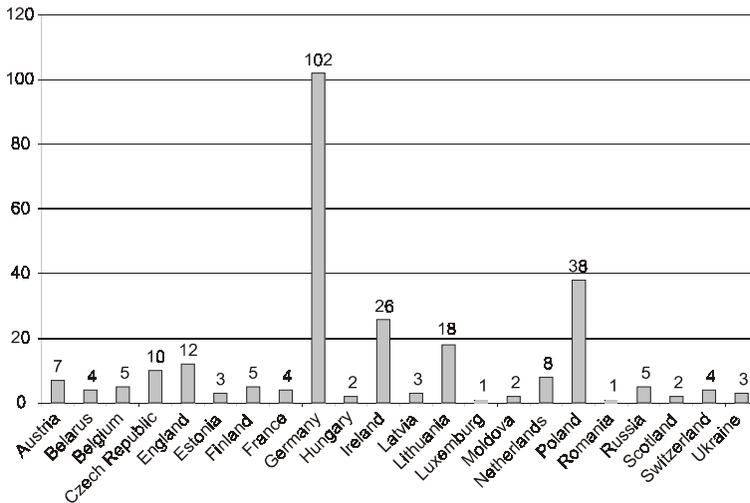


Jutland, Fyn and Bornholm contain 104 names, while in the whole of the rest of Denmark there are only 17 names. This means that 86% of the Danish names lie in Jutland, Fyn and Bornholm, and the remaining 14% are scattered. In this connection it is worth noting the very close connection between the Goths and the Burgundians, the last-named allegedly having resided on Bornholm for some period at least. Fyn is situated close to Jutland, and it is also known for an early cult of Óðinn.

The continental names are localised in three quite distinct groups. The name types are identical with the Nordic ones. The mayor group is most represented within Poland, Lithuania, the Russian province of Kaliningrad and border areas of Belarus and of the Russian province of Kaliningrad. It covers the major part of the early known Gothic settlements, but also neighbouring areas. Their extension all the way to the Ukraine and Romania along the rivers Vistula (Wisła), Dnestr and Prut down to the centre of the Gothic settlements in the Pontian area is of particular interest. I should caution that I might well have overlooked a considerable number

of names, especially in Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine.⁴ Nevertheless, a clear tendency is discernable. East Brandenburg may be seen as part of this area.

Figure 13: Ring names on the continent outside Scandinavia



The second group is concentrated along the river Rhine all the way up to Switzerland and the names follow roughly the Burgundian expansion way. A local concentration around the upper Danube and part of Austria may be connected with the Gepids and maybe even the Hasding Vandals.

Apart from these groups there is a third concentration from Jutland towards the British Isles. The most likely origin is from the Vikings and possibly also from Jutes and other Anglo-Saxons. The British Isles include Ireland.

⁴ The archaeologist Valenty V. Sedov mentions in his recent book on the ancient Russian ethnics (1999) that there is an abundance of *kolo*-names in the Dnieper basin. *Kolo* is the Slavic main root for 'ring'. It is in this area that he locates the "Ruzzi". Sedov regards these as a Slavic tribal group. The St. Petersburg archaeological school distance themselves somewhat from Sedov in respect of his theories, but they concede he is very knowledgeable regarding artefacts. It is an interesting observation that the Goths also had numerous settlements in this area. Further evidence of the Ring influence in present Russia is provided by S. K. Kuznetsov in *Русская историческая география*, I, Moscow, 1910 (Russian historical geography). He mentions metal hoops – neckrings – on the crania of the East-Finnish population in Meria. He believes them to be marks of distinction. There were also metal neck grivnas with small balls on them – i.e. torques, thin silver necklaces (p. 86), leather headstraps (around their heads) with metal rings on them, in Rostov, Suzdal', Nizhniy Novgorod, Tver', Moscow, and neck pendants of round shape, cast or coined, of Scandinavian type (p. 87). Meria's settlements were called sala or sola (p. 88) connecting them maybe with the Nordic sites named Uppsala. In 1898 N.I. Bulychov reported burial mounds in Kaluga region and in the upper part of the Dniepr, both round and oval (see Kuznetsov, p. 141). Circles laid out in stones were inside some of them with diameters of no more than 0.5 meter (around the cremated body). Over them was a cone of earth (p. 142). There were neck hoops, buckles of Baltic type imitating the Gothic ones (p. 148). An enamel buckle of Gothic type was found in Kuzminsky burial mound (p. 148). This could belong to another east Finnish population – Muroma.

The most dominant countries are: Germany 102 (38%), Poland 38 (14%), Ireland 28 (10%) and Lithuania 18 (7%). After these follow closest England 12 (4%), the Czech Republic 10 (4%) and the Netherlands 8 (3%).

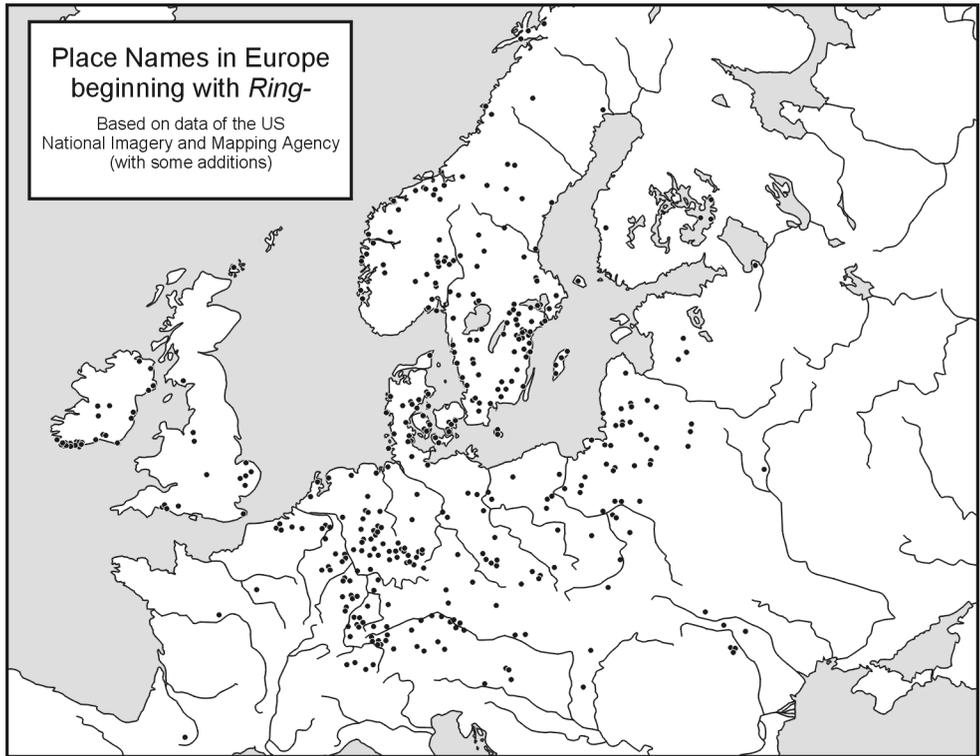
From this material I have drawn the conclusion that there is a possibility the *Ring*-names may be originally Nordic and possibly connected with the Goths and the early cult of Gaut. Later, the newer cult version of Óðinn-Gaut with the shorter sacrificial cycle would have continued the old tradition. Óðinn-Gaut is without doubt connected with Ring sites (see map below). If the names accompany the newer, external cult of Óðinn, it would be expected that, in respect of the Odinistic kings who are traditionally localized to Uppsala and the “Folklanden”, united in 1296 AD into the province of Uppland), which still claimed descent from Frejr but regarded him merely as the grandson of Óðinn, they would have had a much wider distribution over the present Svealand region. The *Ring*-names would also have been more common on Sjælland (Zealand), since this was the Danish royal centre in later times. There is, however, a royal administrative centre, or royal settlement, called Ringsted on Sjælland. Similarly, Bornholm would have been less important at that time. I consider these names with the first syllable *Ring* distinctly older than the continental German names ending with *-ring*. In Scandinavia names of that construction are few and I have not included them in this survey but it is an interesting topic later on.

As may be observed, however, *Ring*-names are exclusively concentrated within those areas traditionally associated with a possible Gothic origin and they are also common within the known early settlement-area of the Vistula Goths, and are likewise found within the Gothic Pontic area and along the Gothic expansion and trade routes: the Vistula, Dneestr and Prut rivers. *En passant*, I have also noticed that the concentration of standing stone circles, according to a survey by Västergötland’s museum, travels along a line leading from south-western Norway via Bohuslän, Västergötland and North Halland, Östergötland, Småland, Blekinge, Öland and straight over the Baltic, to the Vistula area. In Denmark these circles appear on Bornholm and continue on the continent in the area between the Elbe and the Oder. They date from the Pre-Roman and Roman Iron Ages (v. *Västergötlands Fornminnesförenings Tidskrift* 1975–76: 96–101). It does seem to suggest some kind of connection. This impression is definitely reinforced by the concentration of *Ring*-names in connection with the Burgundian expansion route along the Rhine after supposedly having stayed at Bornholm.

412 Ringnames in Scandinavia compared with 265 external names in the rest of Europe, of which at least 40 lie in an area with proven Scandinavian dominance from the Migration Period on, gives quite a good idea about the origin of the name type.

On the other hand, of course, with respect to the orthodox interpretations of the philologists, one might assume that the male proper name or by-name, *Ring* or *Hringr*, was only occasionally used in Svealand, and in Sjælland (Zealand) and the rest of Denmark, whereas it was very common on Götaland’s mainland, in Norway,

on Jutland and Fyn and the more isolated islands Bornholm and Gotland, and, of course, in Poland and Lithuania and their environment and also along the river Rhine.



The above displayed map is merely a sketch, intended to show the regions within Scandinavia where names with the first syllable *Ring-* are frequent, but it does not show all the names. The map therefore relates only slightly the actual internal distribution of at least the Nordic names. On the continent it outlines the approximate area within which I have found continental *Ring-* names, roughly covering the rivers Vistula, Dnjestr and Prut and the areas along river Rhine and upper Danube. Besides there is a presumably younger distribution in the North Sea Region and the British Isles. The map indicates the potential routes taken by the different Gothic tribes and the Burgundians as they expanded from the Scandinavian and Baltic regions towards the South–East. I also conclude that the earlier suspected relationship between Burgundians and Goths seems to be reinforced. It may be pointed out that also the Vandilian Hasdings kings claim ancestry from Gausus. They may all have a common cultic background from the beginning.

DENMARK (continued)	
<i>South Schleswig</i>	<i>Aventoft</i> : Ringswarft ^{JO} , <i>Horsbüll</i> : Ringstoft ^{JO} ; <i>Neukirchen</i> : Rinkeshörn ^{JO} ; <i>Rödendas</i> : Rinkshamm ^{JO}
<i>Zealand</i>	Rimminge ^{HALD} , Ringebæksagre ^{HALD} , Ring ^{KARTA} , Ringsbjerg ^{KARTA} , Ringstedlund ^{HALD} , Ringsted ^{POSTE} , <i>Lundby</i> : Ring Firgårde ^{KARTA} , <i>Nykøbing</i> : Ringholm ^{KARTA}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Præstø</i> : Ring ^{HALD} , Ringsbjerg ^{HALD} , <i>Samsø</i> : Ringebjerg Sand ^{KARTA}
ENGLAND	
<i>East Anglia</i>	<i>Norfolk</i> : Ring Mere ^{NIMA} , Ringland ^{NIMA} , Ringstead ^{NIMA} , <i>Suffolk</i> : Ringshall ^{NIMA} , Ringstead ^{NIMA}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Bolton</i> : Ringley ^{NIMA} , <i>Cheshire</i> : Ringway ^{NIMA} , <i>Dorset</i> : Ringstead ^{NIMA} , <i>East Sussex</i> : Ringmer ^{NIMA} , <i>Kent</i> : Ringwould ^{NIMA} , <i>Northamptonshire</i> : Ringstead ^{NIMA} , <i>Wiltshire</i> : Ringwood ^{NIMA}
ESTONIA	
“ <i>Livonia</i> ”: Ringmundshoff ^{GW} , <i>Valga</i> : Ringiste ^{NIMA} , <i>Viljandi</i> : Rongu/Ringen ^{GW/NIMA}	
FINLAND	
<i>Ahvenanmaa</i> : Ringsbole ^{NIMA} , <i>Mikkeli</i> : Rinkila ^{NIMA} , <i>Rynka</i> : Rynka ^{NIMA} ; <i>Pohjus-karjala</i> : Rinkunmaki ^{NIMA} ; <i>Turku-Pori</i> : Rynkainen ^{NIMA}	
FRANCE	
<i>Alsace</i> : Ringelsdorf ^{NIMA} , Ringendorf ^{NIMA} , <i>Centre</i> : Ringne ^{NIMA} , <i>Midi-les Pyrénées</i> : La Ringuiere ^{NIMA}	
GERMANY	
<i>Baden-Württemberg</i>	Ringelback ^{NIMA} , Ringenhausen ^{NIMA} , Ringers ^{NIMA} , Ringgenbach ^{NIMA} , Ringgenweiller ^{NIMA} , Ringingen ^{NIMA} , Ringschnait ^{NIMA} , Ringsheim ^{NIMA} , Rinken ^{NIMA} , Rinken ^{NIMA} , Rinkenbach ^{NIMA} , Rinkenbach ^{NIMA} , Rinkenbach ^{NIMA} , Rinkenbach ^{NIMA} , Rinkenburg ^{NIMA} , Rinkenkopf ^{NIMA} , Rinklingen ^{NIMA} , Rinkwasen ^{NIMA} , Rinnen ^{NIMA}
<i>Bavaria</i>	Ringang ^{NIMA} , Ringberg ^{NIMA} , Ringberg ^{NIMA} , Ringberg ^{NIMA} , Ringdobl ^{NIMA} , Ringelweise ^{NIMA} , Ringenthal ^{NIMA} , Ringham ^{NIMA} , Ringkofen ^{NIMA} , Ringsee Filz ^{NIMA} , Ringsee ^{NIMA} , Rinkam ^{NIMA} , Rinkertsham ^{NIMA}
<i>Brandenburg</i>	Ringenalde ^{NIMA} , Ringenwalde ^{NIMA} , Ringsleben ^{NIMA}
<i>Hesse</i>	Ring-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ring-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringel-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringels-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringels-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringels-Koft ^{NIMA} , Ringenkof ^{NIMA} , Ringenkuhl ^{NIMA} , Ringgau ^{NIMA} , Rink-Berg ^{NIMA} , Rinke ^{NIMA} , Rinkenbach ^{NIMA}
<i>Lower Saxony</i>	Ringelheim ^{NIMA} , Ringen-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringer-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringstedt ^{NIMA} , Rinkerei ^{NIMA}
<i>North Rheine Westphalia</i>	Ringboka ^{NIMA} , Ringe ^{NIMA} , Ringebrack ^{NIMA} , Ringel ^{NIMA} , Ringel-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringelsbruch ^{NIMA} , Ringelskopf ^{NIMA} , Ringelstein ^{NIMA} , Ringeman ^{NIMA} , Ringenberg ^{NIMA} , Ringenstellen ^{NIMA} , Ringsthof ^{NIMA} , Rinkerode ^{NIMA} , Rinkscheid ^{NIMA} , Rinnen ^{NIMA}
<i>Rhineland-Palatinate</i>	Ring-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringelback-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringelkopf ^{NIMA} , Ringels Back ^{NIMA} , Ringelsberg ^{NIMA} , Ringels-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringelscheid ^{NIMA} , Ringelstein ^{NIMA} , Ringener Wald ^{NIMA} , Ringen ^{NIMA} , Ringkof ^{NIMA} , Ringuscheid ^{NIMA} , Rinkscheid ^{NIMA}
<i>Schleswig-Holstein</i>	Ringsberg ^{NIMA} , Ringsberg ^{NIMA} , Ringsbergfeld ^{NIMA} , Ringschlot ^{NIMA} , Ringstedten-hoi ^{NIMA} , Ringswarf ^{NIMA}

GERMANY (continued)	
<i>Thuringia</i>	Ring-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringel-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringel-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringels-Berg ^{NIMA} , Ringhofen ^{NIMA} , Ringleben ^{NIMA}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Saarland</i> : Ringweillerhof ^{NIMA} ; <i>Saxony</i> : Ringenhain ^{NIMA} , Ringethal ^{NIMA} , <i>Saxony-Anhalt</i> : Ringfurth ^{NIMA}
HUNGARY	
<i>Bács-Kiskun</i> : Ringhedy ^{NIMA} ; <i>Jász-Nagyun-Szolnok</i> : Ringtanya ^{NIMA}	
IRELAND	
<i>Cork</i>	North Ring ^{NIMA} , Ring Harbour ^{NIMA} , Ring Head ^{NIMA} , Ring Mahon Point ^{NIMA} , Ringabella Point ^{NIMA} , Ringalurisky Point ^{NIMA} , Ringamean Wood ^{NIMA} , Ringarogy Island ^{NIMA} , Ringaskiddy Island ^{NIMA} , Ringaskiddy/Rinn an Scidigh ^{NIMA} , Ringlea Point ^{NIMA} South Ring ^{NIMA}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Donegal</i> : Ringsend ^{NIMA} ; <i>Dublin</i> : Bog of the Ring ^{IMA} , Ringsend ^{NIMA} , <i>Kilkenny</i> : Ringwood House ^{NIMA} ; <i>Laois</i> : Ringstown Uplands ^{NIMA} ; <i>Tipperary</i> : Ring Hill ^{NIMA} , Ringroe Cottage ^{NIMA} ; <i>Waterford</i> : Ringville ^{NIMA} ; <i>Wexton</i> : Ring ^{NIMA}
IRELAND (NORTH)	
<i>Antrim</i> : Ringfad ^{NIMA} ; <i>County Down</i> : Ringboy ^{NIMA} ; <i>Londonderry</i> : Ringsend ^{NIMA}	
LATVIA	
<i>Talsi</i> : Rinkule ^{NIMA} ; <i>Valkas</i> : Ringis ^{NIMA}	
LITHUANIA	
<i>Alytus</i> : Rinkava ^{NIMA} ; <i>Ingnalina</i> : Ringė ^{NIMA} ; <i>Kaišiadorys</i> : Ringailiai ^{NIMA} ; <i>Kaunas</i> : Ringaudai ^{IMA} , Ringove ^{NIMA} ; <i>Klaipeda</i> : Ringelis ^{NIMA} ; <i>Lazdijai</i> : Ringeliškaj ^{NIMA} ; <i>Pakruojis</i> : Rimonai ^{NIMA} ; <i>Panevezio</i> : Ringis ^{NIMA} ; <i>Raseiniai</i> : Ringė ^{NIMA} , Rinksele ^{NIMA} ; <i>Šiauliai</i> : Ringuva ^{NIMA} , Ringuvenai ^{NIMA} ; <i>Taurage</i> : Ringaliai ^{NIMA} , Ringė ^{NIMA} , Ringė ^{NIMA} ; <i>Telšiai</i> : Ringaliai ^{NIMA}	
LUXEMBOURG	
Ringel ^{NIMA}	
MOLDOVA	
Ringaci/Ryngach ^{NIMA} , Rynok Vertyuzhany/Tirgul Vertiujeni ^{NIMA}	
NETHERLANDS	
<i>Friesland</i> : Ringwiell ^{NIMA} ; <i>Groningen</i> : Ringsloot ^{NIMA} ; <i>Limburg</i> : Ringoven ^{NIMA} , Ringselven ^{NIMA} , Rinkesford ^{NIMA} ; <i>North Brabant</i> : Rinkveld ^{NIMA} ; <i>North Holland</i> : Ringpolder ^{NIMA} ; <i>South Holland</i> : Ringvaart ^{NIMA}	
NORWAY	
<i>Akershus</i>	Ringen ^{RYGH} (Hurdalen), Ring ^{GY} (V. Bærum), Ringabekk ^{GY} (Bærum), Ringstad ^{RYGH} (Høland), Ringstad ^{RYGH} (Enebakk), Ringi ^{RYGH} (Bærum), Ringnes ^{RYGH} (Skedsmo)
<i>Buskerud</i>	Ringass ^{RYGH} (Norderhov), Ring ^{RYGH} (Noderhov), Ringstad ^{RYGH} (Lier), Ringput ^{RYGH} (Nore), Ringerud ^{RYGH} (Aadalen)

NORWAY (continued)	
<i>Hedmark</i>	<i>Elverum</i> : Ringsaasen ^{RYGH} , <i>Kvikne</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} ; <i>Løten</i> : Ringnes ^{RYGH} ; <i>Mjøsa</i> : Ring ^{KARTA} , Ringsaker ^{KARTA} ; <i>Ringsaker</i> : Ringsaker lille ^{RYGH} , Ringsaker ^{RYGH} ; <i>S. Odalen</i> : Ringsengen ^{RYGH} , Ringaas ^{RYGH} ; <i>Stange</i> : Ringnes ^{RYGH}
<i>Hordaland</i>	Ringdalen ^{GY} , Ringdalsfors ^{KARTA} , Ringøy ^{KARTA} , Ullensvang: Ringøie ^{RYGH}
<i>Møre og Romsdal</i>	<i>Edøy</i> : Ringsøen ^{RYGH} , <i>Halsa</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} , <i>Leinstrand</i> : Ringuedt ^{RYGH} , Ringvol ^{RYGH} , <i>Stranden</i> : Ringset ^{RYGH} , Ringstad ^{RYGH} , Ringved ^{RYGH} , <i>Tingvoll</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Ulstein</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Vatne</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH}
<i>N. Trøndelag</i>	<i>Åsan</i> : Ringfoss ^{RYGH} , Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Indersøen</i> : Ring ^{RYGH} , <i>Verran</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH}
<i>Oppland</i>	Ringebu ^{RYGH} , Ringendalen ^{RYGH} , Ringen ^{RYGH} , Rungmoen ^{KARTA} , <i>Biri</i> : Ringsrud ^{RYGH} , <i>Fåberg</i> : Ringeness ^{RYGH} , Ringen ^{RYGH} , Ringsveen ^{RYGH} , <i>Gudbrandsdal</i> : Ringsaker ^{GY} ; <i>N. Aurdal</i> : Ringisaaker ^{RYGH} , <i>S. land</i> : Ringelien ^{RYGH} , Ringstad ^{RYGH} ; <i>Ø. Toten</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} , <i>V. Gausdal</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} , <i>V. Slidre</i> : Ringestad ^{RYGH} , Ringen ^{RYGH} , <i>V. Toten</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} , Ringvold ^{RYGH} , <i>Våge</i> : Ringneset ^{RYGH} , Ringnessæter ^{RYGH}
<i>Østfold</i>	<i>Hobøl</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Rakkestad</i> : Ringsby ^{RYGH} , <i>Råde</i> : Ringrød ^{RYGH} , <i>Trøgstad</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} , Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Tune</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH}
<i>Rogaland</i>	<i>Lindås</i> : Ringaas ^{RYGH} , <i>Nerstrand</i> : Ringe ^{RYGH} , Ringstveit ^{RYGH} , <i>Nærbø</i> : Rimestad ^{RYGH}
<i>Sogn og fjordane</i>	<i>Askvoll</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Daviken</i> : Rimstad ^{RYGH} , <i>Lavik og Brekke</i> : Ringreide ^{RYGH} ; <i>Voss</i> : Ringeim ^{RYGH}
<i>Telemark</i>	<i>Bamle</i> : Ringsjø ^{RYGH} , <i>Krødsher</i> : Ringnes ^{RYGH} , <i>Mo</i> : Ringestuen ^{RYGH} , <i>Vinje(?)</i> : Ringhus ^{RYGH}
<i>Vestfold</i>	<i>Hedrum</i> : Ringdal ^{RYGH} , Rimstad ^{KARTA} , Rimstad ^{RYGH} ; <i>Sem</i> , Ringshaug ^{RYGH}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Aust-Agder</i> : Ringdals vatn ^{KARTA} (Skjeggedal), Ringstøl ^{RYGH} (Nedenes); <i>Finnmark</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} (Alta), Ringholmen ^{RYGH} (Måsøy), Ringen ^{RYGH} (Polmak); <i>S. Trøndelag</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} (Meldalens), Ringvedaasen ^{RYGH} (Horg), Ringset ^{RYGH} (Rissen); <i>Tromsøysund Herrad</i> : Ringvassøy ^{RYGH} (Tromsøy), Ringjorden ^{RYGH} (Malangen); <i>Nordland</i> : Ringstad ^{RYGH} (Bø); <i>Vest-Agder</i> : Ringen ^{RYGH} (Vardal), Ringvold ^{RYGH} (Vardal), Ringsdalen ^{RYGH} (Landvig)
POLAND	
<i>Suwalki</i>	Ryn ^{NIMA} , Rynie/Ringen ^{NIMA} , Rynskci Jezioro ^{NIMA} ; <i>Augustów</i> : Rynkowek ^{GW} ; <i>Sejny</i> : Ryngaliszki ^{GW} , Ryngis Lake ^{GW} , Ryngla ^{GW} , Ryngowiany ^{GW} , Rynkajcie ^{GW} , Rynkowce ^{GW}
<i>Opole</i>	Rymkowice/Ringwitz ^{ROSP-NIMA} , RingelmühlRosp, Rynarcice ^{NIMA} , Rzymiany ^{NIMA} , Rzynkowice ^{NIMA}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Biała Podlaska</i> : Rzymki ^{NIMA} ; <i>Białystok</i> : Rynarzewo ^{NIMA} ; <i>Bydgoszcz</i> : Rynarzewo ^{NIMA} , Rynkowo ^{NIMA} , Rzym ^{NIMA} ; <i>Ciechanów</i> : Rzym ^{NIMA} ; <i>Gdańsk</i> : Rynkowka ^{GW} , Rynowka ^{NIMA} , <i>Konin</i> : Rzym ^{NIMA} , <i>Łomża</i> : Rynolty ^{NIMA} , <i>Lublin</i> : Rynek ^{NIMA} ; <i>Olstyn</i> : Ryngaser ^{GW} (Reszel), Ryn ^{NIMA} ; <i>Ostrołęka</i> : Rynek ^{NIMA} , Rynie ^{NIMA} ; <i>Siedlce</i> : Nowa Rynia ^{NIMA} , <i>Skierniewice</i> : Rzymiec ^{NIMA} ; <i>Szczecin</i> : Rynica ^{NIMA} , Rynowo ^{NIMA} ; <i>Tarnów</i> : Rynka ^{GW} ; <i>Toruń</i> : Rynek ^{NIMA} , Rynsk ^{NIMA} ; <i>Warsaw</i> : Rynia ^{NIMA}
ROMANIA	
<i>Botoșani</i> : Ringhilești ^{NIMA}	
RUSSIA	
<i>Kaliningrad</i> : Ringels/Iskrovo ^{NIMA} , Ringfelde ^{GW} , Ringfließ ^{GW} , Ringlacken ^{GW} , <i>St. Petersburg</i> : Ryndela ^{NIMA}	

SCOTLAND	
<i>Dumfries and Galloway</i> : Ringford ^{NIMA} , <i>Hebrides</i> : Ring of Brodar ^{NIMA}	
SWEDEN	
<i>Bohuslän</i>	Ringem ^{POSTEN} , Rinkenäs ^{WA} , Ringvattnet ^{POSTEN} , <i>Göteborg</i> : Ringön ^{POS} , <i>Kareby</i> : Ringby ^{TE} , <i>Marstrand</i> : Ringön ^{POSTEN} , <i>Naverstad</i> : Rimseröd ^{DR} , <i>Skackestad</i> : Ringebackarna ^{DR} , <i>Strömstad</i> : Ringdalen; <i>Stala</i> : Ringeröd ^{TE}
<i>Blekinge</i>	<i>Hoby (Vieredsåm)</i> : Ringsbro ^{HA} , <i>Karlshamn</i> : Ringamåla ^{KARTA} , <i>Karlskrona</i> : Ringö ^{HA} , <i>Ringamåla</i> : Ringe ^{HA} , <i>Röaby</i> : Rinåkra ^{OH-HA}
<i>Dalarna</i>	<i>Älvdalen</i> : Ringnäs ^{POSTEN} , <i>Avesta</i> : Ringänge ^{POSTEN} , <i>Malung</i> : Ringsån ^{KARTA}
<i>Gotland</i>	I. Ringome ^{KARTA} , St. Ringome ^{KARTA} , <i>Alva</i> : Ringome ^{POSTEN} , <i>Fårö</i> : Ringvide ^{POSTEN} , <i>Folc</i> : Ringvide ^{POSTEN} , <i>Hangvar</i> : Ringstäde ^{OL} , <i>Hejnum</i> : Rings ^{POSTEN} , <i>Lärbro</i> : Ringvide ^{POSTEN} , <i>Mästerby</i> : Ringome ^{POSTEN} , <i>Stenkyrka</i> : Ringvide ^{POSTEN} , <i>Väskinda</i> : Ringvide ^{POSTEN}
<i>Gästrik.</i>	<i>Gävle</i> : Ringnäs ^{POSTEN} , <i>Söderhamn</i> : Ring ^{KARTA} , Ringe ^{POSTEN} , Ringnäs ^{POSTEN}
<i>Halland</i>	<i>Falkenberg</i> : Ringsås ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsegård</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Halmstad</i> : Ringastugan ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringenäs</i> ^{KARTA} , <i>S. Ummaryd</i> : Ringhult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Varberg</i> : Ringhals ^{KARTA}
<i>Norrbottn</i>	<i>Arheplog</i> : Ringasavon ^{KARTA} , <i>Ringsele</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Arvidsjaur</i> : Ringeltjärn ^{KARTA} , <i>Kalix</i> : Ringlaträsket ^{KARTA}
<i>Närke</i>	<i>Askersund</i> : Ringhem ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringeberg</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Örebro</i> : Ringaby ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rinkaby</i> ^{POSTEN}
<i>Skåne</i>	<i>Bosarp</i> : Ringult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Bosjöklöster</i> : Ringsjögard ^{POSTEN} , <i>Hällestad</i> : Ringvall ^{IS} , <i>Hammarsjön</i> : Rinkaby ^{KARTA} , <i>Höör</i> : Ringaborg ^{POSTEN} , <i>Kristianstad</i> : Ringelikors ^{POSTEN} , Ringelikas ^{PA} , <i>Örkelljunga</i> : Ringarpegården ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringarp</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rönne</i> : Ringsjön ^{PA} , <i>Sjöbo</i> : Ringahus ^{POSTEN} , <i>Torrlösa</i> : Ringhult ^{IS} , <i>Ringhultsbacke</i> ^{IS} , <i>Vid Ringsjön</i> : Rinsjöholm ^{IS} , <i>Vinslöv</i> : Ringleslätt ^{POSTEN}
<i>Småland</i>	<i>Alvesta</i> : Ringshult ^{POSTEN} , Ringshult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Burseryd</i> : Ringebo ^{POSTEN} , <i>Gislaved</i> : Ringsåsen ^{POSTEN} , <i>Högsby</i> : Ringhult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Jönköping</i> : Ringeberg ^{POSTEN} , <i>Kalmar</i> : Rinkaby ^{POSTEN} , <i>Markaryd</i> : Ringshult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Mjölby</i> : Rimstorp ^{POSTEN} , <i>Mönsterås</i> : Ringhult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsryd</i> : Ringshult ^{POSTEN} , <i>S. Kalmar</i> : Rinkabyholm ^{KARTA} , <i>Tingsryd</i> : Ringshult ^{POSTEN} , <i>Värnamo</i> : Ringås ^{POSTEN} , <i>Västervik</i> : Ringsbo ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsbo</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsfall</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringstaholme</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringstorp</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Växjö</i> : Ringagård ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringstaholme</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rinkaby</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Vimmerby</i> : Ringhult ^{POSTEN}
<i>Södermanland</i>	<i>Ekerö</i> : Ringnäs ^{POSTEN} , <i>Eskilstuna</i> : Ringmarsgård ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsdal</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rinkesta</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Flen</i> : Ringdalen ^{POSTEN} , <i>Norrköping</i> : Rinkeby ^{POSTEN} , <i>Nyköping</i> : Ringsö ^{POSTEN} , <i>Södertälje</i> : Ringsjöborg ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rinkeby</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Strängnäs</i> : Ringsö ^{POSTEN} , <i>Vingåker</i> : Ringeråd ^{POSTEN}
<i>Uppland</i>	<i>Danderyd</i> : Rinkeby ^{POSTEN} , <i>Norrtälje</i> : Rimsjö ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringhäll</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Östhammar</i> : Ringboda ^{POSTEN} , <i>Rimbo</i> : Rimbo ^{CA} , <i>Spånga</i> : Rinkeby ^{POSTEN} , <i>Tierp</i> : Ringelbo ^{POSTEN}
<i>Västergötland</i>	<i>Bergshem</i> : Ringeslätt ^{LU} , <i>Björketorp</i> : Ringla ^{LU} , <i>Edsvära</i> : Ringstorp ^{LU} , <i>Fägre</i> : Rimsåsen ^{LU} , <i>Färgelanda</i> : Ringlelanda ^{POSTEN} , <i>Fristad</i> : Ringabo ^{LU} , <i>Gåsene</i> : Ringholm ^{LU} , <i>Gesäters</i> : Ringstad ^{LU} , <i>Härryda</i> : Ringlabacken ^{POSTEN} , <i>Holmestad</i> : Riksberget ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringkung</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringsåsen</i> ^{LU} , <i>Ringsbacken</i> ^{LU} , <i>Ringsåsen</i> ^{POSTEN} , <i>Hornborga</i> : Ringagården ^{LU} , <i>Hyssna</i> : Ringbacke ^{LU} , <i>Ringsdal</i> ^{LU} , <i>Ringsdal</i> ^{LU} , <i>Långhem</i> : Rings mosse, <i>Ringsnäs</i> ^{LU} , <i>Lerum</i> : Ringvase ^{LU} , <i>Lidköping</i> : Ringbo ^{POSTEN} , <i>Mariestad</i> : Rinshagen ^{POSTEN} , <i>Medelplana</i> : Ringxholmen ^{LU} , <i>N. Fågelås</i> : Ringaberget ^{LU} , <i>Naum</i> : Ringsholm ^{LU} , <i>Österbitterna</i> : Ringstad ^{LU} , <i>Otterstad</i> : Ringeberg ^{FR} , <i>S. Fågelås</i> : Rinkabäcken ^{LU} , <i>Sexdrega</i> : Ringslyckan ^{LU} , <i>Svenljunga</i> : Ringsås ^{POSTEN} , <i>Ringesten</i> ^{LU-LI} , <i>Töftedal</i> : Ringsmon; <i>Töreboda</i> : Ringåsen ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Ullasjö</i> : Ringhestra ^{LU-LI} , <i>Ullene</i> : Ringsåsen ^{LU} , <i>Vadsbo</i> : Rinxholmen ^{LU} , <i>Valbo</i> : Ringelanda ^{LU} , <i>Vartofta</i> : Ringborg ^{LU}

<i>Västmanland</i>	<i>Lindesberg</i> : Ringkärret ^{POSTEN} , Ringgården ^{POSTEN} , Rinkaby ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Nora</i> : Ringholm ^{POSTEN} , Ringshyttan ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Rinkaby</i> : Ringkarleby ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Sala</i> : Ringstorp ^{POSTEN} , Ringvalla ^{POSTEN}
<i>Östergötland</i>	<i>Finspång</i> : Ringstorp ^{POSTEN} , Ringtorp ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Kinda</i> : Ringsjön ^{KARTA} ; <i>Linghem</i> : Ring ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Linköping</i> : Ringkulla ^{POSTEN} , Ringstorp ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Mjölby</i> : Rimstad ^{POSTEN} , Rimstavallen ^{POSTEN} , Ringstorp ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Motala</i> : Ringarhult ^{POSTEN} , Ringarhultså ^{KARTA} , Ringstholm ^{KARTA} ; <i>Norrköping</i> : Ring ^{POSTEN} , Ringby ^{POSTEN} , Ringstadmo ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Ö. Linköping</i> : Ringås ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Rök</i> : Ringstorp ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Skälv</i> : Ringstad ^{EL} , Ringstadholm ^{EL} ; <i>Söderköping</i> : Ringaborg ^{POSTEN} , Ringbosäter ^{POSTEN} , Ringby ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Valdemarsvik</i> : Ringarum ^{KARTA} ; <i>Vårdsberg</i> : Ringatorp ^{POSTEN} ; <i>Vid sjön Järnlunden</i> : Rimforsa ^{KARTA} ; <i>Vist</i> : Ringetorp ^{POSTEN} , Ringsnäs ^{POSTEN}
<i>Other</i>	<i>Jämtland</i> : Ringvattnet ^{POSTEN} (Alanäs), Ringsvattnet ^{KARTA} , Ringsta ^{POSTEN} (Östersund); <i>Värmland</i> : Ringetorp ^{POSTEN} (Ekshärad), Ringsåker ^{POSTEN} (Alster), Ringstad ^{POSTEN} (Kil); <i>Västerbotten</i> : Ringabord ^{POSTEN} (Lycksele), Ringdalen ^{POSTEN} (Ånge); <i>Västernorrland</i> : Ringkallen ^{KARTA} (Kramfors), Ringråberget ^{POSTEN} (Kramfors); <i>Öland</i> : Runghall ^{HA} (Segeberstad); <i>Dalsland</i> : Ringstad ^{RO} (Sundals)
SWITZERLAND	
<i>Bern</i> : Ringgenber ^{NIMA} , Ringoldingen ^{NIMA} ; <i>Graubünden</i> : Ringgenber ^{NIMA} ; <i>St. Gallen</i> : Ringelspitz ^{NIMA}	
UKRAINE	
<i>Chernovtsy</i> : Ryngach ^{NIMA} , <i>Lviv</i> : Rynok ^{GW} (near Rava Ruskaya); <i>Ternopil</i> : Rindau ^{NIMA}	

Table abbreviations and references:

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- PA Pamp, Bengt. *Ortnamn i Skåne*. Stockholm, 1983.
- IS Isaksson, Stig. *Skånes ortnamn, Onsjö härad*. Lund, 1980.
- CA Calissendorf, Karin. *Ortnamn i Uppland*. Stockholm, 1986.
- RO Rosell, Erland. *Ortnamn i Dalsland*. Stockholm, 1983.
- OH/HA Ohlsson, Bengt/Hallberg, Göran. *Blekingeskusten mellan Mörrums-o. Ronnebyån /Ortnamn i Blekinge*. Uppsala, 1939.
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- DR Drougge, Gunnar. *Ortnamnen i Gbg.-o. Bohus län XVIII, Ortnamn i Bullarens härad*. Göteborg, 1938.
- POSTEN The Royal Mail. *Ortnamnsförteckning*. Stockholm, 1980–
- HA Hallberg, Göran. *Ortnamn i Blekinge*. Stockholm, 1990.
- OL Olsson, Ingemar. *Gotländska ortnamn*. Uppsala, 1994.
- HALD Hald, Kristian. *Danske stednavn*. København, 1922–
- HA Hallberg, Göran. *Ortnamn på Öland*. Stockholm, 1985.
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- VE Verdenhalven, Fritz. *Namensänderungen ehemals preußischer Gemeinden von 1850 bis 1942*. Neustadt an der Aisch: Degener & Co, 1971.
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Ingemar Nordgren

MOGUĆE PODRIJETLO GOTA PRAĆENO KROZ SIMBOLIKU PRSTENA I IMENA MJESTA KOJA SADRŽAVAJU RIJEČ *RING*

SAŽETAK

Članak raspravlja o vezama između svetih prstenova i simbolike prstena kao i teoretskoj koncepciji Gota kao pripadnika ujedinjenog kulta. U svojoj doktorskoj disertaciji autor je povezo uobičajeni gotski kult s kultom boga Gauta i kasnije Óðinn-Gauta. Autor ističe činjenicu da postoji nekoliko gotskih naroda, a ne samo jedno pleme ili *gentes*. Našao je vezu između gotske religije, mnogobrojnih nalaza prstenova iz tog doba te nordijskih i kontinentalnih imena mjesta koja počinju s riječju *ring*, »prsten«. Analizu započinje *Skirnismálom*, prikazuje identitet prstena Draupnir kao Sunca, vezano s bogom sunca Balðrom te dokazuje da simbol prstena potječe iz daleke prošlosti, najmanje iz brončanog doba. Riječ je o godišnjem pogrebu Sunca koje je, u obliku Draupnira, ostavljeno božici Mjeseca da ga održi živim tijekom zime. Postupno se prsten razvio i u simbol kulta i svjetovne moći s magičnim značenjem. U željezno doba povezan je s obredima uvođenja i proglašavanja ratnika. U nordijskim zemljama postoje 412 imena mjesta koja počinju s riječju *ring*. Autor pobija ranije interpretacije i pokazuje posvemašnje neslaganje različitih tumačenja. Mjesta imaju karakter kulturnih mjesta, kao i administrativnih, regionalnih i lokalnih središta. Moguće ih je povezati s lokalnim obredima uvođenja ratnika sa zakletvom prstena i s aktivnostima šamanskih muških saveza koji su branili polja od demona. »Prsten« je izvorno Sunce, a mjesta, ali ne i ime, vjerojatno potječu iz neke starije tradicije. Izvan nordijskih zemalja autor je pronašao četiri imena koja sadrže riječ »prsten« u istočnom Brandenburgu gdje su živjeli i Goti i Burgundi. Jedno od tih mjesta zove se *Ringenhain* – kultno mjesto prstena. Također je našao četrdesetak imena mjesta sa značenjem »prsten« u Poljskoj, ranijem području naseljavanja Gota. Slavska imena vezana su s riječju *rynek*, što znači i »prsten«. Također postoji znatan broj imena s početkom *Ring-* u Litvi, a autor je pronašao 3 u Estoniji, 3 u Latviji, 4 u Bjelorusiji, 5 u Rusiji i 3 u Ukrajini. U Njemačkoj ima ih stotinjak, a drugi primjeri nalaze se u susjednim zemljama. Postoje barem dvije koncentracije u Njemačkoj – jedna uz Rajnu do Švicarske, koja je možda povezana s ekspanzijom Burgunda, i jedna na gornjem Dunavu do austrijske granice. Potonja bi se mogla povezati s Gepidima i njihovim saveznicima – Vandalima-Hazdinzima. Sveukupno izvan Skandinavije postoje 265 imena, uključujući 14 u Velikoj Britaniji i 26 Irskoj. Distribucija kontinentalnih imena koja počinju s riječju *Ring-* slijedi migracijski pravac Gota cijelim putem sve do Ukrajine uz rijeke Vislu, Dnjestar i Prut. Autor dopušta da je možda previdio mnoga imena, osobito u Rusiji i Ukrajini. Autor zaključuje da imena s riječju *ring* mogu izvorno biti nordijska te da se mogu povezati s Gotima i ranijim kultom Gauta, kasnije Óðinn-Gautom. Ako su imena vanjska, onda bi ih trebalo biti u velikom broju u području Svealanda gdje je poznat kult Óðinna, te još više na Zealandu, dok bi ih u Bornholmu trebalo biti manje. Umjesto toga, gotovo sva imena nalazimo u Gautskim predjelima u Švedskoj, na Jutlandu, Fynu i Bornholmu te u jugozapadnom dijelu Norveške. Također ih se može naći u kontinentalnim područjima naseljavanja Gota, uz moguću put ekspanzije Burgunda, u područjima u kojima su boravili Gepidi/Vandali, kao i u dijelovima Britanskog otočja koja su bila dominacijom Skandinavaca i u doba seoba naroda i poslije, u vremenu Vikinga.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: kult prstena, ratnici, simbol, religija, Goti, gautsko podrijetlo

Ингемар Нордгрэн

ВОЗМОЖНОЕ ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЕ ГОТОВ, НАБЛЮДАЕМОЕ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ СИМВОЛИКИ КОЛЬЦА И НАЗВАНИЯ МЕСТ, СОДЕРЖАЩИХ СЛОВО *RING*

РЕЗЮМЕ

В статье рассматривается вопрос связей между священными кольцами и символикой кольца, а также теоретической концепции готов как приверженцев объединенного культа. В своей докторской диссертации автор связывает устоявшийся готский культ с культом бога Гаута, а позднее Один-Гаута. Автор подчеркивает факт существования нескольких готских народов, а не только одного племени или *gens*-а. Он устанавливает связь между готской религией, многочисленными находками колец той эпохи, а также северными и континентальными названиями мест, начинающихся словом *ring*, «кольцо». Анализ автор начинает со *Skírnismál*-а, затем показывает идентичность кольца Дропнир как Солнца в связи с богом солнца Бальдром и доказывает, что символ кольца ведет свое происхождение из далекого прошлого, по крайней мере из бронзового века. Речь идет о ежегодном погребении Солнца, которое в облике Дропнира оставляют у богини Луны, чтобы сохранить его живым в течение зимы. Со временем кольцо становится и символом культа, и светского могущества с магическим значением. В железную эпоху оно связывалось с обрядами посвящения в воины и провозглашения воином. В нордических странах существует 412 названий мест, начинающихся словом *ring*. Автор оспаривает предыдущие интерпретации и показывает абсолютные разногласия различных толкований. Места имеют характер мест отправления культа, а также административных, региональных и локальных центров. Их можно связать с местными обрядами посвящения в воины, включающими клятву кольцом, и с деятельностью шаманских мужских союзов, оберегавших поля от демонов. «Кольцо» исконно значит Солнце, а места – но отнюдь не названия – вероятно ведут свое происхождение от какой-нибудь древней традиции. За пределами нордических стран автор разыскал четыре названия, содержащих слово *ring* – в восточном Бранденбурге, где жили и готы, и бургунды. Одно из этих мест называется *Ringenhain* – культовое место кольца. Кроме того автор отыскал почти 40 названия мест со значением «кольцо» в Польше – ранней области расселения готов. Названия 18-и населенных пунктов начинается с *Ring-*. Славянские названия – связанные со словом *rynek*, также означают «кольцо». Также существует много названий, начинающихся словом *ring*, в Литве, а автор нашел 3 в Эстонии, 3 в Латвии, 4 в Белоруссии, 5 в России и 3 в Украине. В Германии их имеется 100. Кроме того имеется по крайней мере два крупных скопления в Германии – одно вдоль Рейна и далее до Швейцарии, причем, возможно, это связано с экспансией бургундцев, а второе по верхнему течению Дуная до австрийской границы. Последнее, возможно, связано с гепидами или их союзниками вандалами-хаздингами. В общей сложности, на территории за пределами Скандинавии, автору удалось отыскать 265 названий, включая 14 в Британии и 26 в Ирландии. Распределение континентальных названий, начинающихся словом *Ring-*, следует миграционному направлению готов на протяжении всего пути вплоть до Украины по рекам Висла, Днестр и Прут. Автор допускает, что им, возможно, были упущены многие названия, особенно в России и Украине. Автор приходит к выводу, что названия со словом *ring* могут быть исконно северными, и могут быть связаны с готами и ранним культом Гота, впоследствии Один-Гота. Если же названия привнесены извне, тогда они должны быть в большом числе в области Свеаланда, где существовал культ Одина и тем более на Зеаланде, в то время как в Борнхольме их должно быть меньше. Однако почти все названия мы находим в Готской области в Швеции, на Ютланде, Фине и Борнхольме, а также в юго-западной части Норвегии. Кроме того их можно встретить в континентальных областях расселения готов вдоль возможного пути проникновения бургундцев и в областях, в которых пребывали гепиды/ вандалы, а также в этих области Великобритания и Ирландии над которыми доминировали скандинавы в времени переселения народов и в эпоху викингов.

КЛЮЧЕВИЕ СЛОВА: культ кольца, воины, символ, религия, готы, гутское происхождение

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GOTERNAS TÄNKBARA ETNISKA URSPRUNG SPÅRAT GENOM RINGSYMBOLISM OCH ORTNAMN SOM INNEHÅLLER FÖRLEDET RING

SAMMANFATTNING

Denna artikel behandlar frågan om goternas etniska ursprung, vilket författaren i sin doktorsavhandling lyckats knyta till den gemensamma kulturen av guden Gaut, senare Óðinn-gaut. Han har funnit ett samband mellan goternas religion, de talrika ringfynden från denna tid och de nordiska och kontinentalta Ringnamnen. Han påpekar att det finns ett flertal gotiska folk. Analysen utgår bl.a. från *Skirnismál* där han påvisar ringen Draupnirs identitet som solen, i detta fall i förbindelse med solguden Baldr, och visar på att denna symbol, ringen, är uråldrig och har rötter åtminstone i bronsåldern. Berättelsen handlar om solens årliga begravning då den överlämnas till månggudinnan Freja för att hållas vid liv över vintern. Senare utvecklas ringen till en makt- och kultsymbol med även magisk innebörd och knyts till krigarinvigningar under järnåldern. När fick ringen denna stora betydelse just för goterna? Var det först sedan de kommit till kontinenten så att det är yttre influenser, eller var det gammal tradition? Det finns 412 orter och platser i Norden som heter något som börjar på Ring. Författaren argumenterar mot tidigare tolkningsförsök och påvisar den totala avsaknaden av enighet bland tidigare ortnamnsforskare. De har karaktär av såväl kultplatser som regionala och lokala organisatoriska centra. Han kan tänka sig att knyta dem till den lokala krigarkulturen bl.a. i samband med vigningar till guden i anknytning till en edsring, och jämväl till schamanistisk verksamhet. Ring betecknar av allt att döma ursprungligen solen, och platserna, men inte namnet, synes i många fall gå tillbaka på en äldre tradition. Författaren har utanför Norden funnit 4 stycken i Brandenburg, där såväl goter som burgunder huserat. Ett av dessa ställen heter *Ringenhain*. Han har även funnit ett antal ortnamn med betydelsen Ring i källor från tyska Ostpreussen – alltså i goternas tidigare bosättningsområde – men de är nu delvis i Polen och delvis i andra länder. 18 stycken har i dessa källor skrivning med Ring medan resten bygger på ordet *rynek*, som betyder 'ring', och i polskan fått betydelsen marknadsplats och torg. Kult och marknad i svunnen tid hörde intimt samman som visas av Distinget i Uppsala. Därutöver finns ett stort antal Ringnamn i Litauen och ett antal i Estland, Lettland, Ryssland, Tjeckien, Ukraina och Vitryssland. I Tyskland finns ett drygt ett hundratal och ett fåtal även i Schweiz, Österrike och i det nu franska Alsac. Totalt finns utanför Skandinavien, om man tar med England och Irland, 267 namn. I Sverige fördelar sig Ringnamnen så gott som uteslutande över Götaland och de mest framträdande landskapen är Västergötland, Östergötland, Småland, Skåne och Gotland i nämnd ordning. 47 % av de nordiska Ringnamnen ligger i nuvarande Sverige, 29% i Danmark och 24% i Norge. I Danmark ligger 86 % av namnen på Jylland, Fyn och Bornholm. Författaren reserverar sig för att det kan förekomma fler namn i synnerhet Ryssland och Ukraina. Det finns en stor mängd *kolo*-namn längs med Dnjepr. *Kolo* är den slaviska roten för 'ring'. Ansamlingar av Ringnamn längs Rhen och övre Donau kan ev. knytas till Burgunder och Gepider. Författaren har dragit slutsatsen att Ringnamnen kan vara ursprungligt nordiska och att de kan ha en knytning till goterna och den tidiga kulturen av Gaut. Hade namnen kommit utifrån skulle de i Svealand och på Själland varit fler än på t.ex. Bornholm. De är nu koncentrerade till Götaländerna, sydvästra Norge, Jylland, Fyn och Bornholm samt de gotiska, burgundiska och gepidiska områdena på kontinenten samt områden som senare hamnar under nordiska vikingar.

NYCKELORD: ring, kult, krigare, symbol, goter, gotisk, ursprung