The Waning Sword
Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in Beowulf

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An obvious place to start an investigation into the possible Germanic mythical background of *Beowulf*’s giant sword and related matters is with the poem’s most likely reference to a named heathen god or demigod, a certain Ing.\(^1\) According to *Beowulf*, Ing—or at least this name—was intimately connected with the Danes, whose king, Hroðgar, received the giant sword’s hilt from the poem’s hero. This chapter examines what sources tell us about Ing, his likely Old Norse manifestation as Ingvi/Yngvi-Freyr, and his relationship to Hroðgar and the Danes of *Beowulf*.

### The Ingwine ‘Ing-Friends’ and Ing, Son of Man

Ing takes no explicit part in *Beowulf*,\(^2\) but his name appears in two of Hroðgar’s grand titles: *eodor Ingwina* ‘shelter of the Ing-friends’ (1044) and *frea Ingwina* ‘lord of the Ing-friends’ (1319).\(^3\) One modern edition of *Beowulf* observes of *Ingwine*, a term for the Danes, that it ‘bears weighty

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1 For prior discussions of Ing, see HG; Pollington, *Elder Gods*, 260–3; Dunn, *Christianization*, 60–1.


3 R. Jente, *Die mythologischen Ausdrücke im altenglischen Wortschatz: eine kulturgeschichtlich-etymologische Untersuchung* (Heidelberg, 1921), 93; HG, 61, 64–77 argues for further references to Ing(ui) in *Beowulf*, including in the Finnsburg-episode preceding Beowulf’s fight with Grendel’s mother, and, later, a mention of his sword as *incgelaf’ Ingui’s heirloom* (*incgelafe* 2577; see below). It is doubtful whether the aforementioned Ingeld, whom Alcuin considered had nothing to do with Christ, had anything to do with *Ing*; see KB, 470. The personal name Ing survives to this day, especially in Sweden, in male and female names such as Inga, Inge, Ingmar and Ingrid.
testimony to the ancient worship of Ing’.\textsuperscript{4} It adds that the word ‘has the appearance of having been changed, by folk etymology, from (the equivalent of) *Ingvaones (the worshipers of Ing), the name by which Tacitus designates the Germanic North Sea ethnic groups … If so, it may be supposed that from Jutland and Zealand, the cult of Ing spread to other Danish islands, to Skåne, and then to Sweden and perhaps A[nglo-]S[axon] England.’\textsuperscript{5}

The earliest extant information about Ing may be deduced from the Germania ‘Germany’ of Tacitus, the aforementioned first-century Roman historian.\textsuperscript{6} He tells us how Germanic people recorded in ancient songs that the earth-born god Tuisto ‘Twin’ had a son named Mannus ‘Man’, who was possibly also a god.\textsuperscript{7} Mannus, who was doubtless the progenitor of mankind, had at least three sons, after whom tribes of men were named, the first mentioned being the Ingaeuones (*Ingvaeones). If these details are a basically accurate record of early Germanic tradition, it appears that an early manifestation of Ing (suffixed *Ingwaz in Primitive Germanic) was as a ‘son of Man’.\textsuperscript{8} If this tradition passed down subsequent generations, it would encourage identification of Ing with Christ, a god-man who was similarly the ‘Son of Man’ (e.g., Matthew 8:20).\textsuperscript{9} I return to the potential Ing-Christ equation later.

Additionally, an early association between Ing (or Ingwin) and divinity might be inferred from a damaged runic inscription on a third- or fourth-century golden neck-ring from the Pietroasa hoard (Romania), though its interpretation is controversial.\textsuperscript{10}

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\textsuperscript{4} \textit{KB}, Iviii. Cognate is the Old Norse personal name Yngvin; Bjarni Áðalbjarnarson, \textit{Heimskringla}, I, 34 n. 2.

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{KB}, Iviii n. 5.

\textsuperscript{6} H. W. Benario, \textit{Tacitus: Germany; Germania} (Warminster, 1999), 14–5.

\textsuperscript{7} See Benario, \textit{Tacitus: Germany}, 65.

\textsuperscript{8} Cf. Ingi’s rule over Mannheimar ‘Man-Homes/Worlds’ in Hjámþérs saga.

\textsuperscript{9} If, as I strongly suspect, the superhuman Beowulf acts, from a Germanic perspective, on Ing’s behalf, Daniel 7 may also supply a parallel. It describes the prophet Daniel’s vision of four monsters that rise from the sea, the last a horned, iron-toothed beast of terrible strength which devoured and shattered (compare Grendel as ‘grinder(?’)). This monster is killed, we infer, by one quasi filius hominis ‘like a son of man’ (compare Ing/Beowulf), who is presented to the enthroned white-haired antiquus dierum ‘Ancient of Days’ (compare hoary Hroðgar). For an interpretation of this vision which identifies the monster-slayer as the angel Michael, see J. Day, \textit{God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament} (Cambridge, 1985), 151–77.

\textsuperscript{10} Cf. \textit{HG}, 133, 150–2, 171, 267.

*Ingwaz* itself is a name of obscure origin. However, Tacitus’ genealogy encourages the suggestion that it originally meant ‘man’, as opposed to ‘woman’: compare Tocharian A *onk* and Tocharian B *enkwe*, which both mean ‘(mortal) man’. It might also be related to Latin *inguen* ‘groin’, ‘private parts’ and Greek *énkhos* ‘spear’. An erect phallus is a likely characteristic of the Old Norse god Freyr, whom we meet next in close connection with Ing.

**Ing and Ingi-/Yngvi-Freyr**

The ‘man or god?’ question which these admittedly meagre findings pose about *Ingwaz* extends to the interpretation of other Old English instances of *Ing*, since this name is not explicitly the name of a god or other supernatural personage, either in *Beowulf* or elsewhere. It also extends to the presumably cognate *Ing(v)i/Yngvi* of Old Norse tradition.

Old Norse prose texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are thought to euhemerize this figure as a human king, explicitly or implicitly. Ari Þorgilsson’s early twelfth-century *Íslendingabók* ‘Book of Icelanders’ places *Yngvi Tyrkjakonungr* ‘Yngvi, king of Turks [i.e., Trojans]’ at the head of the line of *Ynglingar* ‘Descendants of Yng’, followed by two clearly euhemerized deities in *Njǫrðr Sviakonungr* ‘Njǫrðr, king of Swedes’ and *Freyr* ‘Lord’. The Latin *Historia Norwegie* ‘History of Norway’, composed in the second half of the twelfth century, records that *rex Ingui* ‘king Ingui’ was the first ruler of Sweden, according to the opinion of many, and, again, the father of *Neorth [Njǫrðr], father of Froy [Freyr]*; it adds that these last two were worshipped *ut deos* ‘as gods’ by their descendants. A Latin paraphrase of the lost twelfth-century *Skjöldunga saga* ‘Saga of the Skjöldungar [= the Scyldingas of *Beowulf*]’ identifies him as a brother of *Scioldus* [= ON *Skjöldr = Beowulf’s Scylld*]

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14 Jakob Benediktsson (ed.), *Íslendingabók, Landnámabók*, IF 1, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 1968), I, 27.

and a son of *Odinus* (ON Óðinn), to whom Sweden was assigned.\(^\text{16}\) The brothers Skjöldr and Yngvi also appear in the *Prologue* to Snorri’s *Prose Edda*, where Yngvi is a Swedish king of Trojan descent as a son of Óðinn, who, together with his people, *þóttu líkari goðum en mǫnnum* ‘seemed more like gods than men’.\(^\text{17}\) In Snorri’s *Ynglinga saga* ‘The Saga of the Ynglingar’, the first saga in *Heimskringla* ‘The Ring of the World’, Yngvi is an alias of Freyr (*Freyr hét Yngvi gðru nafni* ‘Freyr was called Yngvi by another name’), Freyr being *dróttinn yfir Svíum* ‘lord over Sweden’ and worshipped as a god.\(^\text{18}\)

As well as being attested as a simplex, in which form it is also the name of later Scandinavian kings, the name appears as the first element of *Ing(v)i-/Yngvi-Freyr*.\(^\text{19}\) This compound represents a name or title of the god now best known as *Freyr*, this name being an elevation of the common Old Norse noun *féyr* ‘lord’.\(^\text{20}\) It seems likely, however, that originally the title *féyr* was appended to a suffixed form of *Ing*, to honour its bearer as the ‘Ingvi-Lord’ or ‘Ingvi (the) Lord’.

It is questionable whether, for the *Beowulf*-poet, *Ing* was anything more than a name, part of two perhaps archaic and fossilized titles that he used purely for poetic effect or to observe time-honoured precedent. It is unsafe to assume that the poet knew any mythological traditions about *Ing* or that his poem has anything more to do with the figure behind this name. Therefore, some readers might take the view that research into this matter may start with Hroðgar’s *Ing*-titles, but should also end with them. But without a full investigation, it is also unsafe to assume the inconsequentiality of the presence of *Ing* in Hroðgar’s

\(^{16}\) KB, 304; Bruce, *Scyld and Scef*, 66–7.

\(^{17}\) *SnEGylf*, 5–6.


grand titles to the wider meaning of *Beowulf*. I choose to attempt such an investigation: to pursue the possibility that for the *Beowulf*-poet, or at least some of the poem’s sources, Ing and traditions associated with him and closely related figures were highly consequential.

From Hroðgar’s Ing-titles it seems very likely that he and his people, as imagined in *Beowulf*, honoured Ing as a god or a semi-divine or other highly significant personage. Ing was perhaps their deified male ancestor or an anthropomorphized deity.\(^2\) It also follows from the term *Ingwine* that the Danes considered Ing their friend. This was the kind of relationship that Old Norse texts say some other men had with Freyr, the god probably identifiable wholly or partly with Ing.

**Freyr, the Friendly God**

Evidence for friendship between a single human—not a whole people—and Freyr survives in two or three Old Norse texts.

Stanza 24 of the Eddic poem *Sigurðarkviða in Skamma* ‘The Short Lay of Sigurðr’ describes the blood of the dead hero Sigurðr as that of *Freys vinar* ‘Freyr’s friend’.\(^2\)

Additionally, in the thirteenth-century *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* ‘Saga of Hrafnkell, Freyr’s Priest’, an Icelander calls Freyr *vin sínum* ‘his friend’.\(^2\)

The idea that Freyr might befriend a man also seems implicit in the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Ǫgmundar þáttr dytt* ‘Tale of Ǫgmundr Dint’. In this story a man called Gunnarr is warned that he is not altogether lucky because Freyr does not look on him *vinaraugum* ‘with a friend’s eyes’.\(^2\)

**Worship of Ing in England?**

Whether the Anglo-Saxons had friendly dealings with Ing, or even whether they worshipped him at all, is uncertain. This doubt is

\(^{21}\) For thoughts on the sometimes blurred distinction between humans and deities, see T. Ewing, *Gods and Worshippers in the Viking and Germanic World* (Stroud, 2008), 91–3.

\(^{22}\) See O. Gouchet, ‘*Sigurðr freys vinr*’, in T. Pàroli (ed.), *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages* (Spoleto, 1990), 383–90. Another Eddic poem, *Reginsmál* ‘The Lay of Reginn’, identifies Sigurðr as *Yngva konr* ‘Yngvi’s [i.e., Freyr’s] offspring’ (14).

\(^{23}\) Jón Jóhannesson (ed.), *Austfirðinga sögur*, ÍF 11 (Reykjavík, 1950), 100.

\(^{24}\) Jónas Kristjánsson (ed.), *Eyþirfélagen sögur*, ÍF 9 (Reykjavík, 1956), 112.
unremarkable, though, given that we know so little about any individual heathen English god. Our sources of information are extremely scanty, but not wholly unrevealing. As we shall shortly see from a single surviving Old English stanza about Ing, at least some Anglo-Saxons, at one time or another, knew something of a remarkable personage of this name, whom they associated with Denmark in earlier days.

We also have instances of pre-Viking Age Anglo-Saxon personal names beginning in Ing(i)-, such as Ingwulf, Ingibrand and Ingithryth. These might indicate continuing knowledge of, or respect for, Ing on the part of their bearers’ parents, though this is not a safe assumption—they may just have been traditional names. In addition, an entry for the year 547 in the Parker manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle refers to a certain Ingui as ancestor of the mid-sixth-century King Ida of Bernicia.

In addition, place-names possibly supply indications of English affinity with Ing. Ingham, a toponym in Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, could be the ‘Ing-home’, the homestead of the Ing-people, devotees of Ing. Similarly, Ingworth in Norfolk could be the ‘Ing-enclosure’.

Ing in the Old English Rune Poem

Whereas in Beowulf Ing could well be the god or demigod of the Danes, in Old Norse texts, as we have seen, Yngvi(-Freyr) is linked principally with the Swedes, especially as progenitor of the Ynglingar ‘Descendants of Yng(vi)’. But an enigmatic stanza from the Old English Rune Poem, known only from a transcript by George Hickes of a tenth-century

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25 See W. G. Searle, Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum: A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to that of King John (Cambridge, 1897).
26 See HG, 42–3.
27 See V. Watts, The Cambridge Dictionary of English Place-Names (Cambridge, 2004), 331–2. For further thoughts on Ing in Anglo-Saxon England, see HG. If Ing is equatable with Ingvi/Yngvi-Freyr, this links him to the tribe of Norse deities called Vanir (possibly related to ON vinr ‘friend’ or Latin Venus); Orton, ‘Burning Bridges’, 19–26 argues for traces of a ‘cult of a god or gods of Vanir-type’ at the court of Edwin of Northumbria, based on Bede’s story of the king’s conversion in 627 and the spearing of the heathen shrine at Goodmanham by the pagan priest Coifi. But for a very different interpretation, based on Christian exegesis, see J. Barrow, ‘How Coifi Pierced Christ’s Side: A Re-Examination of Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, II, Chapter 13’, Journal of Ecclesiastical History 62 (2011), 693–706, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022046911001631
manuscript which burnt in 1731, corroborates Ing’s association with the Danes of earlier times. It also offers tantalizing clues to his nature:

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\begin{align*}
\text{$\text{ᛝ}$ [i.e., Ing] wæs ærest} & \quad \text{mid East-Denum} \\
gesewen seçgun, & \quad \text{op he siððan eft}^{28} \\
ofer wæg gewat— & \quad \text{wæn æfterran;}^{29} \\
ðus Heardingas & \quad \text{ðone hæle nemdun.}^{30} (67–70)
\end{align*}
\]

Ing was first seen by men [or ‘with swords’] among the East-Danes, until he afterwards departed again [or west ‘west’?] over wave [less likely ‘over way/road’]—he ran after a wain [or ‘a wain ran after him’]; thus the Heardingas named the hero.

Here Ing is ostensibly just a hæle ‘hero’ from the Danish past. But his initial sighting in the east—among the East-Danes

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28 Hickes’ est may have confused the similar-looking Anglo-Saxon letters ‘f’ and long ‘s’. M. Halsall, The Old English Rune Poem: A Critical Edition (Toronto, 1981), 29, 147, however, retains est ‘east’ as a possible instance of late West Saxon monophthongization, though the same word has just been spelt East in East-Denum. An alternative, more euphonic emendation might be preferable, although it seems not to have been proposed before: west ‘west(wards)’. This assumes a different transcriptional error, whether by an Anglo-Saxon scribe or George Hickes, one prompted by -est in ærest and, in the last line of the preceding stanza, brimhengest. Cf. the passage of vikings west ofer Pantan ‘west over the (River) Pante’ in The Battle of Maldon (97).

29 Or æfter ran, as published editions have it. I see a verb æfterrinnan ‘to run after’, ‘pursue’, comparable to æfterfolgian ‘to follow after’, æftergan ‘to follow after’ and æfterridan ‘to ride after’.

30 Adapted from Halsall, Old English Rune Poem, 90; cf. A. Bauer, Runengedichte: Texte, Untersuchungen und Kommentare zur gesamten Überlieferung (Vienna, 2003), 84. Rydberg, Teutonic Mythology, I, 264–8 takes wæn ‘wain’ as a personal name. See also on this verse, F. Klaeber, ‘Die Ing-Verse im angelsächsischen Runengedicht’, Archiv 142 (1921), 250–3.

31 A heathen Germanic people whose name ostensibly means ‘Descendants of the Hard One’. The name may originally have been that of the Vandalic tribe of (H) asding(o), and it is thought to reappear as Haddingjar in Old Norse texts, where it denotes two brothers. They may have originally been twin fertility gods, comparable to the Dioscuri of Greek and Roman myth. See also Pollington, Elder Gods, 261, who claims that the word’s origins ‘may lie in the word heord ‘woman’s hair’ [seen in Beowulf 3151 bunundenheorde ‘with bound hair’] and probably relate to the Vanir priests with their effeminate adornments. If so, then the term must refer to the specifics of the Vanir cult, which fits neatly with Ing(u) as a fertility god’, Tolley, ‘Beowulf’s Scyld Scyfing Episode’, 19–20, who suggests that Ing is ‘welcomed among, and perhaps served by, the Heardingas, in origin a “clan” of effeminate or transvestite priests dedicated to a fertility deity (or deities)’. For the solar associations of early Germanic fertility twins, see Andrén, Tracing.

32 One of the titles of Hroðgar’s people in Beowulf (392, 616, 828), though the poet also calls them North-, South- and West-Danes.
a phenomenon, together with his passage over the sea (probably), suggests rather a personified heavenly body or asterism, perhaps formerly a heathen sky-god.\textsuperscript{33}

Two such identifications have been advanced by scholars. I tentatively suggest that they may complement each other, one being Ing’s nocturnal aspect, the other his diurnal. If so, the stanza is deliberately ambiguous, like others in the poem, and alludes to a fertility god’s activities across a full twenty-four hours.

The nocturnal identification, made by Marijane Osborn, has Ing personifying the constellation Boötes,\textsuperscript{34} which, she observes, resembles the Anglo-Saxon Ing-rune (ᛝ).\textsuperscript{35} Boötes, who was classically imagined as a ploughman, herdsman or huntsman, appears to follow Ursa Major (now commonly known in England as ‘the Plough’), which is probably here the \textit{wæn} ‘wain, wagon’\textsuperscript{36}. This interpretation is attractive, but open to question for two reasons. Firstly, this reading assumes \textit{wæn afterran} to mean ‘he [Ing] ran after the wain’, whereas grammatically it could just as easily mean ‘the wain ran after [him/Ing]’. Other ambiguities in this stanza and the wider poem, however, warn against necessarily limiting interpretation to a single meaning.\textsuperscript{37} Secondly, seeing the Ing-rune in this constellation assumes omission of the star now called Beta Boötis, which classically forms the head of the ploughman/hunter as the asterism’s uppermost point and one of its brighter members.

If Ing was identified as Boötes, and as a ploughman, this would strengthen his similarity to Triptolemus, a Greek fertility figure who

\textsuperscript{33} Cf. M. Clunies Ross, ‘The Anglo-Saxon and Norse Rune Poems: A Comparative Study’, ASE 19 (1990), 23–39 at 36–7, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263675100001587: ‘the Old English Rune Poem reveals a cultural pressure to euhemerize or remove some of its non-Christian subject matter, as in its treatment of the rune-names Ing, \textit{born} (probably) and \textit{Tir}’.

\textsuperscript{34} Cf. the poem’s earlier description of the rune \textit{ᛏ} (i.e., \textit{Tir}; cf. OE \textit{Tiw}, ON \textit{Týr}, a heathen god) as a guiding star, planet (perhaps Mars) or constellation. Subjects of other stanzas include the sun and the day.


dispensed seed on the earth from a dragon-drawn chariot. As we shall see later in relation to Beowulf’s ursine attributes and sword, and to Cain’s occupation as an *agricola* ‘farmer, ploughman’, it may also be of importance that:

(a) Most people’s first sight of Boötes would be in the east in March, when his arrival heralded the return of the sun’s warmth and the start of the ploughing season. Boötes then remained visible throughout the summer, before disappearing to the west.

(b) Boötes is closely associated with *Ursa Major* ‘the Great Bear’.

(c) *Arcturus*, the Latin name of Boötes’ most prominent, golden star, or in some early sources of Ursa Major, means ‘Bear-Guardian’. Similarly, the Greek name for Boötes, *Arctophylax*, means ‘Bear-Watcher/Guardian’.

(d) Although Osborn emphasizes Ing’s ‘fiercer aspect’ in the *Old English Rune Poem*, the Anglo-Saxons may well have considered Ing a ploughman. Despite the lack of explicit evidence for the concept of Ursa Major as a plough before the Middle English period, it would make good sense of Ing’s pursuit of a wain if he were imagined as a ploughman. The *wæn* ‘wain’ would then be a wheeled plough, such as the *wægn* ‘wain’ described in Riddle 19 (*ASPR*, 21) from the *Exeter Book*. And if he were a ploughman, it would follow that Ing

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38 Parallels between Ing and Triptolemus are noted by Tolley, ‘*Beowulf*’s Scyld Scfing Episode’, 42 n. 29.
39 Other bordering constellations, whose Latin names will catch the eye of readers familiar with the final third of *Beowulf*, include *Corona Borealis* ‘the Northern Crown’ (next to Boötes’ head), *Draco* ‘the Dragon’, *Hercules* ‘Hercules’ (the classical strongman and demigod) and *Serpens* ‘Serpent’ (in modern times, at least, split into *Serpens Caput* ‘Serpent Head’ and *Serpens Cauda* ‘Serpent Tail’).
41 Cf. the personal name *Beowulf*, often interpreted as ‘Bee-Wolf’, i.e., ‘Bear’.
42 Osborn, ‘Old English Ing’, 388.
43 MED s.v. *plough* (n.), sense 5.
44 Williamson, *Old English Riddles*, 80, 200. The following riddle in the collection probably describes Ursa Major as a *wægn*; see *ibid.*, 80–1, 201–4; P. J. Murphy, ‘The Riders of the Celestial Wain in Exeter Book Riddle 22’, *N&Q* 251 (2006), 401–7; D. Bitterli, *Say What I am Called: The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book and the Anglo-Latin Riddle Tradition* (Toronto, 2009), 60–65. For ‘plough team (attached to a wheeled plough)’ as a solution to another riddle in this collection, see S. F. Cochran,
was the wielder of at least one coulter, the sword-like cutting implement, potentially with a long wooden handle, which was fixed to the plough in order to pierce the formerly frozen soil.\footnote{A recent archaeological discovery in Lyminge, Kent shows that the heavy plough with coulter was known in seventh-century England; see ‘Anglo-Saxon 7th Century Plough Coulter Found in Kent’ (7 April 2011), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-12997877 and ‘7th Century Plough Discovery Redraws Map of Rural England by 400 Years’ (7 April 2011), https://www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/releases/PR361415.aspx. For a survey of evidence for Anglo-Saxon ploughs, see D. Banham, ‘Race and Tillage: Scandinavian Influence on Anglo-Saxon Agriculture?’, in M. Kilpiö, L. Kahlas-Tarkka, J. Roberts and O. Timofeeva (ed.), Anglo-Saxons and the North: Essays Reflecting the Theme of the 10th Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists in Helsinki, August 2001 (Tempe, 2009), 165–91 at 181–7.}

The second possible identification of Ing in the \textit{Old English Rune Poem} is as a sun-god or solar emissary who arrives in the spring (summer in the Anglo-Saxon two-season year) with a chariot and who stays until autumn (winter).\footnote{See P. B. Taylor, \textit{Sharing Story: Medieval Norse-English Literary Relationships} (New York, 1998), 102. Note also Tolley, ‘\textit{Beowulf’s Scyld Seofing Episode}’, 17, according to whom ‘Ing’s journey probably represents that of the sun. … The wain is most likely the Great Bear … appearing in the darkness and moving above the earth as the sun, unseen moves beneath. The wain should thus be seen as the carriage of the sun, following after it’ (a surprising interpretation of Ursa Major, given its extreme spatial and temporal separation from the sun). We shall find that Ing’s likely Old Norse equivalent, Ingvi/Yngvi-Freyr, was a god of benign growing weather (sunshine and rain) and the harvest. Even if the sun is the subject of stanza 16 of the \textit{Old English Rune Poem}, this need not preclude a solar aspect to Ing and his wain here.} The sun is also seen first in the east, and appears to move west over land and sea before departing, as it were through a daily death, below the horizon.\footnote{For the observation that ‘the word \textit{gewat} … works in two directions, “departed” and “died”’, see F. G. Jones, Jr., ‘The Old English \textit{Rune Poem}, an Edition’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Florida, 1967), 63; also \textit{ibid.}, 66 for the suggestion that the stanza alludes to Ing’s funeral.}

The sun and sun-gods are often associated with animal-drawn vehicles, in which they cross the sky over land and sea,\footnote{MIFL, motif A724 ‘Chariot of the sun’.} although in Ing’s case he would be leading the solar wain (which might make him, like Freyr, as we shall see, the controller of the sun).\footnote{Cf. the pair leading the solar hart in \textit{Sólarljóð} (see Chapter 13).} Scandinavian and Icelandic evidence for such vehicles is quite plentiful. It includes
a Bronze Age model of a horse-drawn sun-chariot from Trundholm, Denmark (possibly c. 1400 BC), and a record of what was probably another, roughly contemporary, sun-chariot from Tågaborg, Sweden. Later, in his *Germania* (chapter 45), Tacitus describes a belief in the far north, beyond the Suiones (Swedes), that the shapes of the sun’s horses are seen at dawn, from which we might infer the presence of a horse-drawn vehicle. A solar chariot of some sort might also be inferred from the Eddic poem *Grímnismál* ‘Sayings of Grimnir’ (37), which records that two horses, Árvakr ‘Early Waker’ and Alsviðr ‘All-Swift’, *upp ... sól draga* ‘drag up the sun’. Another, probably later Eddic poem, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* ‘Incantation of Óðinn’s Ravens’ (24), refers to a sun-chariot which recalls that of Phoebus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (2.113). Additionally, a solar chariot made by the gods is mentioned in *Gylfaginning*.

From late Anglo-Saxon England we have London, British Library MS Cotton Tiberius B V/1, a scientific miscellany which contains an illustration of *Sol*, a reddish, spiky-haloed male personification of the sun, driving a chariot drawn by four horses, above a pale female *Luna* ‘Moon’ holding twin torches and driving a chariot drawn by two horned bulls, one light, one dark. And in a homily on the passion of the apostles Simon and Jude, Ælfric mentions two Persian idols of the

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51 Gelling and Davidson, *Chariot*, 16; Andrén, *Tracing*, 126, which also mentions another possible Swedish example.


53 See also *SnEgylf*, 13–4; *SnESkáld*, I, 90; E. O. G. Turville-Petre, ‘Fertility of Beast and Soil in Old Norse Literature’, in E. C. Polomé (ed.), *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium* (Austin, 1969), 244–64 at 245–6. According to the Eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál* 12, the horse *Skinfaxi* ‘Shining Mane’ draws day over mankind. Its counterpart *Hrímfaxi* ‘Rime Mane’ draws night over the gods in *Vafþrúðnismál* 14; *SnEgylf*, 13. *SnESkáld*, I, 90 adds *Fjôrsvartr* ‘Life-Blackened’ and *Glaðr* ‘Glad’ as horses that go with night and day, respectively. A horse called *Vegþjartr* ‘Way/ Road-Bright’ might also be relevant; *PTP*, 937–8.

54 A. Lassen, (ed.), *Hrafnagaldur Óðins (Forspjallsljóð)* (London, 2011), 24, 93.

55 *SnEgylf*, 13.

sun and the moon which were accompanied by chariots: Da stod þære sunnan cræt mid feower horsum of golde agoten, on ane healfe þæs temples; on oðre healfe stod ðæs monan cræt of seolfre agoten, and da oxan ðærto ‘There stood the chariot of the sun with four horses cast in gold, on one side of the temple; on the other side stood the chariot of the moon cast in silver, and the oxen belonging to it’. 57

Scholars have also proposed a kinship between Ing and his wain—as well as a wagon-drawn idol of Freyr in Ögmundar þáttr dytts— and Tacitus’ well-known description in Germania (chapter 40) of the goddess Nerthus and her wain. 59 The name Nerthus appears cognate with Njôrðr, the name of Yngvi-Freyr’s father in Norse mythology, 60 although some imaginative work is required to reconcile a first-century earth-goddess (if Tacitus is correct) with a medieval sea-god. 61 Clive Tolley, for whom ‘Ing’s journey probably represents that of the sun’, thinks Nerthus’ visitation of her people similarly cyclic and suggests that it ‘may again reflect the annual journey of the sun through the seasons’, 62 though Tacitus’ account lacks explicit solar imagery.

Returning to the Ing-stanza in the Old English Rune Poem, the ambiguity of secgun ‘by men/with swords’ is noteworthy. 63 It finds parallel in the ambiguity of secg ‘man/sword’ in Beowulf (1569), which occurs at the moment the giant sword beheads Grendel’s mother and se leoma ‘the light’ shines. A solar interpretation is also admissible for the present poem’s secgun. Ing’s ‘swords’ may be sunbeams, piercing shafts of light with which he rises from the sea, rather as Beowulf emerges from the mere holding both Hrunting and the giant sword’s hilt. In the next chapter we shall encounter Skírnir—an Old Norse solar character, effectively an aspect of (Ingvi/Yngvi-)Freyr—who wields two swords that also appear comparable to Hrunting and the giant sword.

The case for purposeful ambiguity in secgun is strengthened by a preceding stanza in the Old English Rune Poem (15):
Ingvi-Freyr and Hroðgar

ᛉ [i.e., eolhx]-secg eard hæfþ oftust on fenne, weæð on wature; wundaþ grimme, blode breneð beorna gehwylcne ðe him ænigne onfeng gedeð.

Elk/stag(?)-sedge [or ‘-sword’, ‘-man’] most often has a home in a fen; it/he grows in water, wounds fiercely, with blood browns every warrior who seizes it/him.

The subject of this stanza, eolh(x)secg ‘elk/stag(?)-sedge’ is probably identifiable as Cladium mariscus, now often called great fen-sedge or saw-sedge. This plant, which commonly grows in English fens, where it can exceed eight feet in height, has hard, serrated leaves and an inflorescence resembling the Anglo-Saxon Eolhx-rune (ᛉ). But the ambiguity of secg, together with the stanza’s heroic imagery, enrich the poem’s description of this plant with martial connotations. As a fiercely wounding ‘elk/stag(?)-sword’, eolh(x)secg suggests an extraordinarily sharp sword (or antler) associated with a stag, one found in the waters of a fen. This is a highly specific and peculiar combination, which we may find paralleled in the giant sword of Beowulf. Furthermore, if breneð puns on berned ‘burns’, the elk/stag-sword even has a heat compatible with the giant sword’s likely solar nature and the concept of the solar stag (discussed in Chapter 10). Nor does the stanza’s suggestiveness end there, at least for an audience familiar with Beowulf. For, as ‘elk/stag-man’, eolh(x)secg also suggests a giant horned man who lives in the waters of a fen, who wounds fiercely, and who bloodies warriors with whom he comes in contact, perhaps even burns them with his blood.

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64 The meaning and etymology of eolhx are uncertain; see DOE s.v. eolhx and P. Bierbaumer, Der botanische Wortschatz des Altenglischen, 3 vols (Frankfurt, 1975–9), III, s.v. eolhsecg.


66 Note also garsecg ‘ocean’, perhaps literally ‘spear-man’, in the poem’s twenty-fifth stanza.

67 Cf. Halsall, Old English Rune Poem, 133 for comparison with Latin gladius ‘sword’ and the plant-name gladiolus, literally ‘little sword’.

68 For another potential link between this poem and a sword, see Brunning, ‘“Living” Sword’, I, 140 (also Brunning, Sword, 75–6), which relates the presence of a single asc ‘ash’-rune on an Anglo-Saxon pommel from King’s Field, Faversham, Kent to the poem’s description of an ash-tree remaining strong on its base when attacked by men.

69 Cf. the extremely sharp þ (i.e., þorn ‘thorn’) of the poem’s third stanza, which, rather similarly, is anfengys yful, ungemetun reþe ‘evil of grasping, immeasurably fierce’ to
This similarly peculiar combination is suggestive of Grendel, who in due course I show may well have been imagined as horned, and who, as a likely sun-stealing lunar being and a descendant of Cain, may even be tentatively identified with a stag.

To return to Ing, then, in both respects he appears associated in the *Old English Rune Poem* with heavenly brilliance and, directly or indirectly, with the return of the sun in springtime. It is attractive, if speculative, to imagine him ploughing his fields—and implicitly sowing his seed—as Boötes the Ploughman by night, before growing his crops as the leader of the sun by day. Broadly comparably, in Old Norse tradition Ing’s likely counterpart Freyr is both the sun’s controller and the god of the earth’s produce (see Chapter 9). It is also noteworthy that, in *Ǫgmundar þáttr dytts*, an idol of Freyr is drawn *i vagni* ‘in a wain’ in Sweden, a vehicle whose arrival coincides with the return of mild weather.

### The Inge-Peoples and the Sun-God of Psalm 112

Another, ostensibly unlikely, Old English source may upon close inspection also be found to preserve possible evidence of a traditional link between Ing and solar radiance. The first ten verses of Psalm 112 of the *Paris Psalter*, a work of uncertain date, read:

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Herigean nu cnihtas   hælynd drihten,
and naman dryhtnes   neode herigan.
Wese nama dryhtnes   neode gebletsad
of ðyssan forð   awa to worulde.
Fram upgange   æryst sunnan
øðþæt heo wende   on westrodur
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any man who rests with it. This rune’s name was probably originally *purh* ‘giant’, a term used of Grendel in *Beowulf*. He was an evil, fiercely grasping monster, especially to those he found resting.

Cf. the aurochs of the poem’s second stanza, which as an *oferhyrned, felafrecne deor* ‘over-horned, very dangerous wild beast’, a *modig wuht* ‘bold creature’ and especially a *mære morstapa* ‘famous moor-stepper’, also calls to mind Grendel.

The subject of the poem’s next stanza is arguably *sigel* ‘the sun (imagined as a brooch?)’ shining above the world’s waters (the stanzas for the *S*-rune in the *Norwegian Rune Poem* and *Icelandic Rune Poem* describe the sun), though a case for *segl* ‘sail’ is made by P. Nicholson, ‘The Old English Rune for *S*’, *JEGP* 81 (1982), 313–9.

Praise now, servants/warriors, the Saviour Lord, and praise the name of the Lord zealously. Let the name of the Lord be blessed zealously from this time forth, forever and ever. From the first rising of the sun until it turns to the western sky, you must praise the Lord’s name with deeds. He is over all inge-peoples the highest of the race of heroes; his brilliance is also raised up over the heavens.

Here the Judaeo-Christian Lord’s brilliance is implicitly identified with that of the sun, which ærst ‘first’ rises (compare the Danes’ ærest ‘first’ sight of Ing in the Old English Rune Poem) and then passes into the westrodur ‘western sky’ (compare the emendation [w]est for est in the Rune Poem). In addition, the Lord is the highest of the race of hæleða ‘heroes’ (compare Ing as hæle in the Rune Poem).

It also appears significant that a poem which emphasizes the need to praise the Lord’s name should identify his peoples as ingeþeode ‘inge-peoples’. The exact meaning of this word, which probably also appears in the Old English poem Exodus (MS incapeode 444), is disputed, as here it does not seem to be a literal translation of the Latin’s omnes gentes ‘all peoples’. The text’s most recent editor interprets it as in-geþeode ‘nations of humankind’, without comment. I suggest, however, that this instance of inge- may represent or allude to Inge-/Ingi-, a suffixed form of Ing attested in Old English personal names like Ingibeald, Ingibrand and Ingimund, and cognate with ON Ingé- in Ing-Freyr. If I

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73 ASPR 5, 96.
74 Lucas, Exodus, 131 emends ingeþeode, interpreted as ‘native peoples’; cf. 142 ingefolca ‘of native peoples’, 190 ingemen ‘native warriors’. HG, 62–4, however, translates inge- as ‘Ingui’ in each case. Not all these instances of inge- need necessarily mean the same thing, or even be the same word.
75 C. Williamson (trans.), The Complete Old English Poems (Philadelphia, 2017), 798 does, however, translate it as ‘all nations’.
77 See also my discussion of OE incgelafe below. For Old English names in Ingi-, see Searle, Onomasticon, 317. For ON inge freys, genitive singular of Ingi-Freyr, in a late-ninth-century reference to all living beings as attir inge freys ‘families of Ingi-Freyr’, see Finnur Jónsson (ed.), Den norsk-islændske skjaldedigtning (Copenhagen, 1912–5, rpt. 1967), AI, 18; this form of the god’s name is generally emended without
am right, the psalm implicitly links the progenitor-lord Ing(i), through his peoples and perhaps via subordination, with the Judaeo-Christian Lord. And it does so at the very point at which the Lord’s brilliance is most sun-like.

**Hroðgar and Danish Worship of an Unnamed Devil**

Returning to *Beowulf*, we find that, if Hroðgar was an Ing-worshipper, the *Beowulf*-poet does not say so explicitly. As noted earlier, a historical Hroðgar would have been a heathen, but the poet is careful not to identify his Hroðgar as a devil-worshipper. Instead, the king of the Danes appears as a virtuous monotheist suggestive of an Old Testament patriarch.

We also saw, however, that in the face of Grendel’s attacks many of Hroðgar’s people resorted to *hæpenra hyht* ‘the hope of heathens’ by promising *æt hærgtrafum wigworþunga* ‘idol (?)-honour at heathen centres’ (175–6) and offering prayers to the *gastbona* ‘soul/demon-slayer’ (177). The *gastbona* is anonymous (Grendel? Ing?), and this passage describing Danish paganism is undoubtedly vague—Christine Fell stated that it ‘shows absolutely no knowledge of the nature of such paganism’. But if *wig- in wigworþunga* is interpreted as ‘idol’, the associated soul-slayer may have had at least something in common with Ing/Yngvi-Freyr: Swedish idols of Frikko, a priapic deity identified by modern scholars with Freyr, are mentioned by Adam of Bremen in his eleventh-century *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* ‘History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen’ (4.9, 4.26). Also, a Swedish idol of Freyr features in *Ǫgmundar þáttr dytts* (discussed below).

It is noteworthy that the *Beowulf*-poet identifies no heathen god by name in this passage. This might be due to ignorance, but his wealth of knowledge about other aspects of early Scandinavia, the multitude of personal names he mentions, and his surely deliberate omission

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79 Cf. HG, 180.
80 E.g., HG, 30.
elsewhere of the name of Christ suggest otherwise. It may rather be that he felt the need to make his Christian credentials clear early in the poem by condemning heathenism in general terms, but was sensitive to specific religious and cultural affiliations. The heathen god’s anonymity here might also have been necessary to enable subsequent use of his name in the respectful context of Hroðgar’s grand Ing-titles. The poet may have sincerely maintained both an openly condemnatory stance toward demonic Germanic paganism and a quiet sympathy for other aspects of the old ways and towards his heathen forebears, as would be natural for many converts to Christianity and their offspring. This would be a welcome and pragmatic stance for a Christian poet to adopt if he were composing for an audience that included present or former devotees of Ing, or of men who maintained allegiance to both Christ and Ing at the same time.

Hroðgar, Healfdene’s ‘Firebrand’ and the Incgelaf

The first of Hroðgar’s Ing-titles, eodor Ingwina, occurs at the climax of a significant moment in Beowulf, one suggestive for investigators into the natures of the giant sword and Hrunting. It occurs when the Danish king bestows treasures on Beowulf in Heorot as a reward for slaying Grendel. The first of these is probably the sword of Healfdene, son of Beow and father of Hroðgar. It is introduced as a brand, literally a ‘firebrand’ (1020), and its magnificence is emphasized:

Forgeaf þa Beowulfe brand Healfdenes,  
segen gyldenne sigores to leane,

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82 HG, 2, however, states that the Beowulf-poet ‘identified Ingui or Ing with the devil’.
83 According to Bede, King Rædwald, seventh-century king of East Anglia, maintained two altars in the same temple, one for Christian sacrifice, and a smaller one for sacrifices to devils (i.e., heathen gods); Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Bede’s Ecclesiastical History, 190–1.
84 The word also means ‘fire, flame’. For OE brand as a word for ‘sword’, see M. L. Keller, The Anglo-Saxon Weapon Names Treated Archaeologically and Etymologically (Heidelberg, 1906), 159–60; DOE s.v. brand (4). On this specific instance, which editors have often emended away, see KB, 177–8. There is a possibility that the present instance is a proper noun; cf. Tizón ‘Firebrand’ (from Latin titio, accusative titionem), the name of a sword in a medieval Spanish epic, El Poema de Mio Cid ‘The Poem of My Cid’. The golden pommels and crossguards of Tizón and another sword dazzled their beholders; see R. Hamilton and J. Perry (trans.), The Poem of the Cid (London, 1984), 186–7 (lines 3175–9).
hroden hildecumbor, helm ond byrnan;
mære maðþumsweord manige gesawon
beforan beorn beran. (1020–4)

He [i.e., Hroðgar] then gave to Beowulf a/the brand of Healfdene,85 (and) a golden standard, as a reward for victory, an ornamented battle-banner [i.e., the standard], a helmet and a mailcoat; many saw the glorious treasure-sword borne before the warrior [i.e., Beowulf].

The poet goes on to describe the helmet’s protective crown and the entrance of eight steeds,86 one equipped with Hroðgar’s war-saddle. He concludes:

Ond ða Beowulfe bega gehwæþres
eodor Ingwina onweald geteah,
wiçga ond wæpna; het hine wel brucan. (1043–5)

And then the shelter of the Ingwine [i.e., Hroðgar] conferred on Beowulf possession of both, of horses and of weapons; he commanded him to use them well.87

Here Hroðgar’s designation as eodor Ingwina ‘shelter of the Ing-friends’ identifies him with his location, namely the hall Heorot whose name alliterates with his and which, we shall find, may encapsulate a key element of Ýngvi-Freyr’s mythology.88 In a sense, therefore, it is also Heorot, ‘the house of Ing’, that presents Beowulf with the ancestral Danish ‘firebrand’, which is thereby also associated with Ing.89

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85 Alternatively, perhaps brand Healfdenes is a kenning for Hroðgar; see KB, 177, DOE s.v. brand (4).
86 Horses are associated with Freyr in Old Norse mythology, but not exclusively so.
87 Before diving into the mere, Beowulf requests that Hroðgar send the treasures to Hygelac, should he not return (1482–7). He later presents them to Hygelac himself, with less emphasis given to the guðsweord geatolic ‘richly equipped (with a likely repeated pun on ‘Geat-ly’) battle-sword’ (2154) than to the mail-coat.
88 Note also Hroðgar’s earlier designation as eodor Scyldinga ‘shelter of the Scyldingas’ as goes ut of healle ‘out from the hall’ (663). D. Cronan, ‘Poetic Words’, 32–3 states that the use of eodor to mean ‘lord’ or ‘king’ was ‘inherited from the earlier Germanic period’ and that its presence is an ‘indication of … conservatism’. Cf. Hroðgar’s later description of Grendel, who repeatedly entered Heorot, as min ingenga ‘my in-goer/invader’ (1776).
89 A personal name Ingibrand appears, possibly as a modification of Ingui, in an Anglo-Saxon list of the kings of Bernicia; see D. N. Dumville, ‘The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists’, ASE 5 (1976), 23–50 at 30; HG, 42 n. 67, 43.
This observation is especially interesting because Hroðgar’s bestowal of Healfdene’s sword on Beowulf prefigures Beowulf’s reciprocal presentation of the giant sword—or rather its hilt—to Hroðgar. This instance of juxtaposition, like so many others in the poem, invites comparison and association. To some extent, at least, Healfdene’s ‘firebrand’ and the burning, sun-like giant sword mirror each other.

No less intriguing is the possibility that Healfdene’s ‘brand’, here unnamed, might be identifiable as Nægling, the fine old sword that later fails Beowulf when striking the dragon, and which appears to be described in the dative singular as an (or the) incgelafe (2577). The precise meaning of this unique word is much disputed—one modern edition of the poem deems it ‘a desperate case’—but it warrants examination in context here because of its potential importance.

The passage in which incgelafe occurs reads:

Hond up abræd
Geata dryhten,  gryrefahne sloh
incgelafe,  þæt sio ecg gewac
brun on bane,  bat unswiðor
þonne his ðiodcyning  þearfe hæfde,
bysigum gebæded.  Pa wæs beorges weard
Æfter heaðuswenge  on hreoum mode,
wearp wælfyre;  wide sprungon
hildeleoman.  Hreðsigora ne gealp
goldwine Geata;  guðbill geswac,
nacod æt niðe,  swa hyt no sceolde,
iren ærgod. (2575–86)

He [i.e., Beowulf] raised his hand swiftly, the lord of the Geatas, struck the terrible-coloured/shining one [i.e., the dragon] incgelafe, so that the brown edge gave way on the bone, bit less strongly than its people-king had need of, oppressed by afflictions. Then the barrow’s warder [i.e., the dragon] was, after the battle-stroke, in savage mood, cast slaughter-fire; battle-lights sprang widely. The gold-friend of the Geatas [i.e., Beowulf] did not boast of

90 KB, 251.
92 The wording admits secondary images of the dragon breathing fiery swords in response to Beowulf’s sword-stroke, and of swords ‘springing apart’. Cf. Vargeisa’s production of the radiant sword Snarvendill from her mouth (see Chapter 3).
triumphant victories; the war-bill failed, naked in the hostility, as it should not have, the formerly good iron [or ‘iron good from days of old’].

Wiglaf then came to Beowulf’s aid, wielding a *gomel swyrd* ‘old sword’ (2610), *Eammundes laf* ‘Eammund’s leaving/heirloom’ (2611), an *ealdsweord etonise* ‘giantish old-sword’ (2616):

\[
\begin{align*}
Ne & \text{ gemælt him se modsefa, } \ne \text{ his mæges laf} \\
& \text{ gewæc æt wige; } \æt \text{ se wyrm onfand,} \\
& \text{ syððan hie togædre } \text{ gegean hæfdon.} \quad (2628–30)
\end{align*}
\]

The heart did not melt in him, nor did his kinsman’s heirloom give way in battle; the worm [i.e., dragon] found that out when they had come together.

Wiglaf urged Beowulf to hold true to what he had said in his youth, namely that he would never allow his reputation to weaken (*gedreosan*, 2666) as long as he lived. The dragon then attacked again:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þa gen guðcyning } \\
& \text{ mod gemunde, } \text{ mægenstrengo sloh} \\
& \text{ hildebille, } \æt \text{ hyt on heafolan stod,} \\
& \text{ niðe genyded; } \text{ Nægling forbærst,} \\
& \text{ geswac æt sæcce } \text{ sweord Biowulfes,} \\
& \text{ gomol ond grægmæl. } \text{ Him } \æt \text{ gifeðe ne wæs} \\
& \text{ } \æt \text{ him irenna } \text{ ece mihton} \\
& \text{ helpæt æt hilde; } \text{ wæs sio hond to strong,} \\
& \text{ se } \text{ ðe meca gehwane, } \text{ mine gefræge,} \\
& \text{ swenge ofersohte, } \text{ þonne he to sæccæ bær} \\
& \text{ wæpen wundrum heard; } \text{ næs him wiht } \text{ ðe sel.} \quad (2677–87)
\end{align*}
\]

Then the war-king [i.e., Beowulf] again remembered his courage, struck with main-strength with battle-bill, so that it stood in the head, impelled by violence; Nægling burst apart, Beowulf’s sword failed in battle, old and grey-marked. It was not granted to him that the edges of irons could help him in battle; the hand was too strong, that which, as I have heard tell, overtaxed every blade in the stroke, when he bore to battle a wonderfully hard weapon; it was not at all the better for him.

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93 For a different interpretation of this passage, see below.
These passages resonate with echoes of Beowulf’s fight with Grendel’s mother. Few listeners could fail to recall, for example, the stroke of the hildebil Hrunting rebounding off her head, or Beowulf’s subsequent use of a giantish sword, a greater hildebil, whose blade was then destroyed by its monstrous foe(s) (albeit very differently). The thoughts of many would be drawn especially to the latter weapon, the giant sword, as they would identify the present reportage as factually questionable—at least one sword had been strong enough for Beowulf’s hand, even if, strictly speaking, he had not brought it to battle but rather discovered it in the nick of time in the giants’ lair. The ealdsweord etonisc ‘giantish old-sword’ (2616), fah ond fæted ‘shining and ornamented’ (2701), with which Wiglaf pierced the dragon also echoes the shining, ornamented giant sword, the ealdsweord eotenisc (1558).

Such echoes are significant for the interpretation of incgelafe because they encourage association with the preceding swords of the Danes, of the ‘friends of Ing’. Although the form incgelafe appears nowhere else, -lafe is readily identifiable as the dative singular of laf ‘leaving/heirloom’ (a word seen in Wiglaf and elsewhere as a simplex in the quoted passages). The problem is incge-. It is even undecided whether it is the first part of a compound noun incgelafe, or the first of two separate words.

Possibly the meaning of incgelafe is ‘with the native-heirloom’ or ‘with the in-heirloom’ (i.e., the heirloom treasured within, or as an integral part of, a dynasty); in either case it would presumably have been an heirloom of the Geatas. Another suggestion is ‘with the burning/shining heirloom’. Many other explanations and emendations have been offered, most of which will not be discussed here. Instead, I focus on those that concern Ing.

95 Note, too, the comparable sword Beowulf used in the Breca-episode, though it may well be a ‘double’ of the giant sword. Cf. Horowitz, ‘Sword Imagery’, 178–80.
96 As presented in KB. I discount *inc-gelafe ‘(with the) Inc [= Ing?] heirloom’, as there is no otherwise attested OE gelaf ‘leaving, heirloom’.
99 See KB, 88, 251; DOE s.v. ? icge; ? incge-laf.
The emendations In(c)ges, Ingwina and Ingwines for incge- in incgelafe identify Beowulf’s sword as, respectively, that of Ing, the Ing-Friends and the Ing-Friend (Hroðgar or one of his ancestors), but the last two at least are too far removed from the manuscript reading to persuade. Thinking along the same lines, Richard North asserts that incge lafe means ‘Ingui’s sword’, and that this is ‘evidence that the poet knew of Ingui’s sword, comparable to the sword which Freyr gives to his servant Skírnir’.\footnote{HG, 75.} He makes no more of the point than that, however.\footnote{Nor does he explain how the male personage Ing(ui) could be denoted by a genitive singular form ending in -e (grammatically feminine).}

Despite their shortcomings, these suggestions may well be thinking along the right lines. For incgelafe is, in my view, interpretable without emendation as Incgelafe ‘with the In(c)ge-leaving/heirloom’;\footnote{As also in Kiernan, Electronic Beowulf. Cf. the Old English male personal names Fraelaf ‘Frea-Leaving’ and Oslaf ‘God-Leaving’. A sword dredged from the River Lark has three boars stamped or punched into its blade, two on one side and one on the other; if these are not just maker’s marks, it might be suggested that they associate this sword with the power of the boar and of Ing. However, whereas this weapon was formerly dated to the seventh century, it is now thought to be pre-Anglo-Saxon; see T. C. Lethbridge and M. M. O’Reilly, ‘Archaeological Notes’, \textit{Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society} 32 (1932), 59–66 at 64–5 and pl. VI, VII; \textit{SASE}, 49–50, fig. 21; \textit{SASE}5-7, 324–5. Whether the obscure maker’s name(?) Ingelrii found on some Viking Age swords has any connection with Ing is unknown; for instances, see Peirce, \textit{Swords}, index under ‘inscriptions, Ingelrii’; Lang and Ager, ‘Radiographic Study’, 101–4.} or perhaps, if the original meaning of Incge- had faded and been generalized, as incgelafe ‘with the divine leaving/heirloom’ or ‘with the supernaturally immense/mysterious/sublime leaving/heirloom’.\footnote{See C. Ball, ‘Incge Beow. 2577’, \textit{Anglia} 78 (1960), 403–10, https://doi.org/10.1515/angl.1960.1960.78.403; Jack, \textit{Beowulf}, 93–4 (n. to 1107), 177 (n. to 2577). For a very different interpretation of incgelafe, see J. F. Vickrey, \textit{Beowulf and the Illusion of History} (Cranbury, 2009), chapters 10 to 12, who interprets it as ‘(with) the in-leaving/in-sword’, the sword Nægling having, he argues, been kept \textit{in} the cave of the supposed monster Dæghrefn, from whose nail or talon it was supposedly made. I think this implausible, as does J. R. Hall in his review of Vickrey’s book in \textit{JEGP} 111 (2012), 401–3.} Incge- would then be a variant spelling of Inge- (the latter seen in the proposed ingebeode of Psalm 112 in the Paris Psalter).\footnote{For Incgs- as a spelling variant of Ing-, see Searle, \textit{Onomasticon}, 315. Cf. i[n]cgegold ‘Ingi-/immense(?)-gold’ (\textit{Beowulf} 1107). Note that \textit{Beowulf}’s Ingwina and incgelafe were written by different scribes.} In this light, the obscure history of Nægling merits investigation.
It is uncertain whether Beowulf acquired Nægling before or after Hygelac’s death, which apparently occurred at the hands of a Frankish warrior called Dæghrefn ‘Day Raven’, whom Beowulf later crushed to death (2497–508). If Beowulf acquired Nægling before Hygelac’s death, it might have been the weapon of Hygelac’s father, Hreðel, which Hygelac gave to Beowulf upon the hero’s return from Denmark, and which was the finest sword in Geatland at that time (2190–4).105 On the other hand, if Beowulf acquired Nægling after avenging Hygelac, it might have been Dæghrefn’s sword, which Beowulf took from the corpse; then again, it may have been another sword belonging to Hygelac that came into Beowulf’s possession after he had avenged his lord.106

Several modern editions of Beowulf encourage belief that Nægling was either Dæghrefn’s or a posthumous gift from Hygelac by attributing the word syððan in line 2501 the conjunctive meaning ‘since’, rather than the adverbial sense ‘then’/‘afterward’ (which would mark the start of a new sentence and potentially a separate topic), in a passage in which Beowulf reflects on how he had repaid Hygelac for his gifts:107

\begin{quote}
‘Ic him þa maðmas þe he me sealde,
geald at guðe, swa me gifeðe wæs,
leohant sweorde; he me lond forgeaf,
eard eðelwyn. Næs him ænig þearf
þæt he to Gifðum oððe to Gar-Denum
oððe in Swiorice secean þurfe
wyrsan wigfrecan, weorðe gecypan:
symle ic him on feðan beforean wolde,
ana on orde, ond swa to aldre sceall
sæcce fremman, þenden þis sword þolað
þæt mec ær ond sið oft gelaeste,
syððan ic for dugeðum Dæghrefne wearð
to handbonan, Huga cempan …’ (2490–502)
\end{quote}

105 See KB, 248 (n. to 2501 ff.).
106 See, again, KB, 248 (n. to 2501 ff.). For the latter possibility, see SASE, 142–4.
107 See KB, 434; Wrenn and Bolton, Beowulf, 191; Swanton, Beowulf, 153–5; Mitchell and Robinson, Beowulf, 136; Kiernan, Electronic Beowulf. See also, however, ASPR 4, 77, 246 n., and KB, 254 (n. to 2680b).
[i.e., Hreðel’s sword?]; he gave me land, the joy of a hereditary estate. There was not any necessity for him, that he should need to look to the Gifðas or to the Spear-Danes or in Sweden to buy a worse warrior for a price: I would always be before him in the foot-troop, alone at point, and so shall I always do battle, as long as this sword endures, which early and late has often served me, since I, before the mature warriors, became hand-slayer of Dæghrefn, champion of the Hugas [i.e., Franks] …’

One reason for thinking that Nægling was formerly Hygelac’s sword, rather than Dæghrefn’s, lies in its failure to kill the dragon. Here it fulfils a role identifiable from many Old Norse sagas, namely that of the ‘useless weapon’, whose failure has to be remedied by another weapon or, in this case, two: Wiglaf’s sword and Beowulf’s seax.¹⁰⁸ Weapons that perform the ‘useless’ role are normally gifts from ‘a king or other host of the hero’,¹⁰⁹ who in this case could be the deceased Hygelac or his representative.

If Nægling were Hygelac’s sword, earlier it could have been Healfdene’s ‘firebrand’, which the eodor Ingwina ‘shelter of the Ing-friends’ had given to Beowulf, and which Beowulf had then given to Hygelac (2152–4).¹¹⁰ And if Hygelac had possessed a sword of the Ing-Friends, this would encourage interpretation of incgelafe (better Incgelafe) as ‘with the In(c)ge-leaving’.

Whether or not Nægling and Healfdene’s ‘firebrand’ are the same weapon, ‘(with the) In(c)ge-leaving’ seems to me the likeliest explanation of incgelafe. If this is correct, it raises the possibility that the other chief swords wielded by Beowulf (Hrunting and the giant sword) were similarly ‘Ing-leavings’, especially as they were held by, respectively, the next lord of the Ing-Friends (Hroðgar) and his close associate (Unferð).

**Ingunar-Freyr and Freyr’s Sword**

Another grand title, this time not of Hroðgar but Freyr, merits attention in the context of traditions about Ing and sword-giving: ON *Ingunar-Freyr*.

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¹⁰⁸ On this topic, see Jorgensen, ‘Gift’, which does not mention Nægling, however.
¹⁰⁹ Jorgensen, ‘Gift’, 87. Jorgensen considers Hroðgar’s gift of Healfdene’s sword a ‘blind motif’ (87–8). It would not be if this sword were identifiable as Nægling.
¹¹⁰ See also SASE, 143.
¹¹¹ The presence of suffixed incge- in incgelafe can be explained by the demands of metre. If the reading were *incglafe* (cf. Ingwina), the a-verse would be one metrical position short.
Whoever Ingun(n) (?) (Ing’s wife?) or Inguni (?) may have been, this title presumably incorporates the name Ing- and therefore appears likely to be related to Yngvi-Freyr. Possibly it derives from *Ing-vinar-freyr ‘Ing-friend’s lord’, a term that, despite the difference in the number of friends, would be comparable to OE frea Ingwina.

Ingunar-Freyr appears in stanza 43 of the Eddic poem Lokasenna ‘Loki’s Flying’. It is uttered by Byggvir, Freyr’s aggressive barley-spirit servant, in response to an accusation by Loki that Freyr had given away his golden sword in exchange for the daughter of the giant Gymir—a story I examine in the next chapter.

Hroðgar as Frea

Hroðgar’s second Ing-title, frea Ingwina, used immediately before Beowulf learns of the attack by Grendel’s mother, brings the Danish king into direct connection not just with Ing but with OE frea ‘lord’. This noun is cognate with the Old Norse theonym Freyr, a word we have seen combined with a likely cognate of OE Ing in ON Ingvi/Yngvi-Freyr. The title may encapsulate an identification of Hroðgar, as ‘lord of Ing-Friends’, with the god himself. If so, Hroðgar would be tantamount to Ing incarnate.

We may compare how, in Ógmundar þáttr dytts, Gunnarr dons the clothes of Freyr’s idol and, aided by mild weather and the agreement of Freyr’s wife, succeeds in passing himself off as Freyr, god of the Swedes. As such,

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112 For ON Ynguni, see Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Heimskringla, I, 34.
113 HG, 27–8.
114 For another instance, see P. A. Munch and C. R. Unger (ed.), Saga Olafs konungs ens helga (Christiania, 1853), 2.
115 Cf. the ancestral Danish figure of Beow ‘Barley’ in Beowulf (18); also Beowulf himself, if his name is analyzed as Beow-wulf ‘Barley-Wolf’.
116 Note too Beowulf’s description as freadrihten ‘frea-lord’ (freadrihtnes 796) when defending Heorot against Grendel in Hroðgar’s stead. An Anglian collection of royal genealogies refers to Uoden Frealafing ‘Woden, offspring of Frealaf [literally ‘Frea-leaving’], from which an Anglo-Saxon incarnate god (?) Frea might be tentatively inferred; for the texts, see Dumville, ‘Anglian Collection’.
117 Cf. D. Panchenko, ‘Solar Light and the Symbolism of the Number Seven’, Hyperboreus: Studia Classica 12 (2006), 21–36 at 34 (amid a discussion of Apollo): ‘Sun-gods are revered mostly by mighty rulers or theologians, rather than by common people. Typically, … only those sun-gods acquired prominence who were not just sun-gods, but who managed to combine their connection with the most conspicuous object in the sky with powers and qualities characteristic of a human individual. And when this happens, the features that originally marked his divine character tend to retreat into the shadows.’
it is potentially significant that, of the three titles the Beowulf-poet gives Hroðgar when the king receives the giant sword’s hilt, the second, central one is frea ‘lord’: hit on æht gehwearf … Denigea frean ‘it [i.e., the hilt] passed [or ‘returned’?] into the possession … of the Danes’ lord’ (1679–80).

Noteworthy, too, is the fact that only five lines before Hroðgar’s designation as frea Ingwina, he is described waiting to see whether the alfwalda ‘elf-ruler’ (1314) would grant him a change of fortune after the death of his councillor, Æschere. If alfwalda is not a scribal error for alwalda ‘all-ruling (one)’ (i.e., God),118 it could be a term for an English counterpart of Freyr, as Grimmismál 5 identifies Freyr as the owner—and therefore presumably ruler—of Álfheimr ‘Elf-World’.119

Wealhþeo’s Brosinga Mene and Freyja’s Brísingamen

Hroðgar seems not to be alone in standing in close relationship to Ing/Ingvi-Freyr. Before Beowulf’s descent into the mere we find a likely implicit point of connection between Hroðgar’s wife and Freyr’s wife in relation to the gift of another ancestral treasure. Hroðgar’s spouse, Wealhþeo(w), presents Beowulf with a marvellous neckring which the poet likens to the Brosinga mene. The treasure to which the neckring is compared doubtless equates to the Brísingamen ‘torc of the Brísingar [dwarves?]’ of Old Norse mythology, despite the difference in the words’ first vowels.

According to Þrymskviða and the fourteenth-century Icelandic Sörla þáttr ‘Tale of Sórlí’, the Brisingamen was owned by the goddess Freyja. She was Freyr’s sister and, judging from their complementary names—Freyr ‘Lord’ and Freyja ‘Lady’—and from the incestuousness of the divine Vanir-tribe to which they belonged, probably also his wife or consort.120 Additionally, Lokasenna 20 reports that the god Heimdallr gave an item of jewellery, most likely the Brisingamen or a close equivalent, to the goddess Gefjon, who, in origin, may be one and the same as Freyja.121

118 As assumed in KB, 198 n. to line 1314.
120 On Freyja, see B.-M. Näström, Freyja—the Great Goddess of the North (Lund, 1995).
121 Näström, Freyja, 22, 51, 100–1, 148, 186; U. Dronke (ed.), The Poetic Edda: Volume II, Mythological Poems (Oxford, 1997), 360. For a study arguing that Wealhþeo has
6. Ing, Ingei-Freyr and Hrödgar

Freawaru

Hrödgar’s daughter is also linked to Freyr in Beowulf. She is called Freawaru, which has frea as its first element. Her name might be interpreted as ‘Lord-Merchandise’, in view of kings’ use of their daughters as gifts with which to forge alliances. Alternatively, it might simply identify her as the possession of the divine lord.\textsuperscript{122}

The Danes and the ‘Life-Lord’

One last potential connection between the Danish monarch and Ing/Freyr to consider in this chapter may be intimated near the start of Beowulf, together with a foreshadowing of the Geatish Beowulf as divinely sanctioned saviour of the Danes. We hear how, in view of their formerly aldorlease ‘lord/life-less’ (15) plight, the Danes received a divine blessing in the form of a figure with a name unmistakably similar to that of the titular hero, namely Beow ‘Barley’:\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{verbatim}
Him þæs Liffrea,  
wuldres wealdend, woroldare forgeaf:  
Beow\textsuperscript{124} waes breme— blæd wide sprang—  
Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in. (16–9)
\end{verbatim}

For that (plight), the Life-Lord, ruler of brilliance, granted them worldly honour: Beow was renowned—his glory/leaf sprang widely—Scyl’d’s heir in Skåne-lands [i.e., the Danish realm].

\begin{itemize}
  \item valkyrie-like traits, see Damico, Beowulf’s Wealththeow; if this is the case, it potentially associates her with Freyja, since, according to Grímnismál 14, Freyja chooses hall-seats for half the warriors who are slain in battle each day—like a valkyrie. However, rather than meaning ‘Slaughter-Servant’ or ‘Servant of the (Chosen) Slain’, as Damico proposes, Wealththeo may well have originally been *Wælþeo ‘Chosen/Beloved Servant’, in which case the name did nothing to meaningfully characterize its bearer; see L. Neidorf, ‘Wealhtheow and her Name: Etymology, Characterization, and Textual Criticism’, Neophilologus 102 (2018), 75–89.
  \item It is curious that her name does not accord with the Danish dynasty’s principle of giving their children names beginning with H-. Saxo Grammaticus knew a corresponding woman as Ruta, a feminized latinization of ON Hrútr ‘Ram’, a word from the same linguistic base as Heorot ‘Hart’; see K. Malone, ‘Freawaru’, ELH 7 (1940), 39–44.
  \item Beow is suggestive of Freyr’s barley-servant Byggvir. The name is corrupted to Beowulf in the manuscript.
  \item An emendation of the manuscript reading Beowulf.
Here frea makes its first appearance in the poem in the term Liffrea ‘Life-Lord’, evidently a deity who wields wuldor ‘brilliance, glory’. The life this god granted was a royal son (implicitly an aldor ‘prince/life’) called Beow who flourished like a plant, in keeping with the meaning of his name, and as if it were springtime when the sun’s wuldor ‘brilliance’ returned.¹²⁵ This deity may be identified with the Judaeo-Christian God, but the details, albeit not altogether distinctive, also accord with what we learn about Freyr from Old Norse sources.¹²⁶ For, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, Freyr was a deity who controlled the sun and the seasons, and who was especially associated with good weather. He was also the veraldargoð ‘world’s god’, a dynastic progenitor, and a bestower of peace and ár ‘fruitfulness’.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Cf. the analogy of the vernal thaw following Beowulf’s liberation of the Danes from Grendel and his mother (1605–11).
¹²⁶ Cf. Tolley, ‘Beowulf’s Scyld Sceing Episode’, 16 on Scyld’s departure shortly afterwards on frean were ‘into the Lord’s keeping’ (27): ‘Frea is the (Christian) “Lord”, but also the god Freyr in English form—the god with whom Yngvi (Ing) is identified in Norse.’
¹²⁷ Bjarni Ælðbjarnarson, Heimskringla, I, 25; also SnEGylf, 24 (quoted in Chapter 9 below). Cf. the Life-Lord’s gift of woldare (17) to the Danes, and see HG, 194–5.