

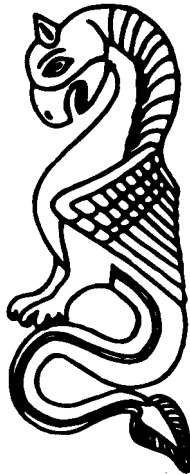
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GOLDCYTA – A HAWK FROM A HYBRID?

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The reign of Harthacnut was not, naturally enough, one of the most prolific in the history of the Anglo-Saxon coinage. It is generally recognised that the coinage of his unchallenged reign between the death of his half-brother Harold in 1040 and his own death in 1042 is represented by the Arm and Sceptre issue, so called because the king's bust is extended to show his arm with the hand holding the sceptre. Earlier, from the death of his father Cnut in 1035 until the council at Oxford in 1037 when Harold was elected as sole king, the brothers were rival claimants and it must be to this period that we are to assign the Jewel Cross type, named from the reverse device and extant in the names of Cnut, Harthacnut and Harold. This coinage in Harthacnut's name is even less numerous than Arm and Sceptre, even if we read "Cnut" as an alternative form of Harthacnut's name and not a posthumous invocation of the late king by officials unwilling to declare positively for one claimant rather than the other.¹

Nevertheless, in spite of their comparative sparsity in numbers, Jewel Cross coins in Harthacnut's name were issued widely from boroughs all over England. It is a minor West Country mint which supplies the subject of this note. There is a coin in the British Museum from the 1853 Wedmore find – so far unique – that has as its reverse legend: + GOLDCYTA ON CAX.²

This note is to be concerned mainly with the personal name, but there are good reasons for first discussing the problem posed by the mint-signature. As will appear later, it is particularly relevant to establish whether the moneyer is to be associated with Exeter, as the British Museum Catalogue attribution suggests. The coin is given there to Exeter, perhaps reading the rectilinear C as an error for E, although the form of the name *Eax-* is not found on any coin later than Cnut's reorganisation of die-cutting provision in the 1020s, *Ex-* being the normal form of mint-signature at this time. There is a small group of coins with a mint-signature *Axa* or *Axs*, with which *Cax*, by accidental transposition of letters (cf. *Coxe* for *Ocxe* = Oxford) is surely associated. In less abbreviated forms, what is undoubtedly the same mint occurs as *Acsepo*, *Axsap*, *Caxnp*. The second element may reasonably be extended to *-port*, but there is no known *Axport* which could supply a locus for this mint. The most likely place, i.e. a borough on the river Axe, was suggested in 1909 by Carlyon-Britton to be Axbridge, which is found in the Burghal Hidage and also as a borough in Domesday, unlike Axminster, Hildebrand's suggestion, which was not an Anglo-Saxon borough.³

Carlyon-Britton however accepted only the fuller *Acxepo* and *Axsap* legends and left open the possibility that *Acx*, *Axs* and *Cax* might be intended for Exeter. It was left for Elmore Jones in 1961 to assemble all the evidence for the mint at Axbridge.⁴ Opened just before 1000 and closed again before the accession of Edward the Confessor, it seems to have been operated by one or at the most two moneyers at a time. In this Jewel Cross type with which we are concerned there is another moneyer, *Leofric on Caxnp*, and also a *Golda on Axsap*, whom Occam's razor would seem to require should be regarded as the same man as *Goldcyta*. The Somerset attribution is reinforced by the fact that of nineteen specimens known for the Ax mint no fewer than five came from the Wedmore find.

The British Museum Catalogue transcribes the name correctly as *GOLDCYTA* but gives the moneyer's name in the catalogue entry and in the list of moneyers for the reign as *Goldcytel*. By this tacit adjustment the ghost of *Goldcytel* slips into anthroponymic currency. Searle⁵ takes it up as *Goldcytel mon: Harthacnut* and Björkman⁶ explains *Goldcytel Münze Exeter Harthacnut* as a name formed in England, of which the first element is English and the second Scandinavian.

It is unlikely that the BMC compilers saw anything unusual in the emendation they were proposing. The forms of moneyers' names were then regarded as frequently corrupt, and normalisation as necessary. They had found the element *-cytel* frequently enough on the late Old English coinage to believe it to be part of the common name-stock. Nor had they any reason to find its appearance outside the Danelaw an anomaly, especially as, as has been seen, they supposed the coin to emanate from Exeter where a *Cytel* had been an Æthelred moneyer. Indeed, at Exeter and the adjacent mints, Totnes and Lydford, the number of Scandinavian moneyers' names is unusually high, in contrast with the mints in the neighbouring counties of Dorset and Somerset where they are completely lacking. Unfortunately the mint at Barnstaple, though consistently Old English in its few names, had too small a number of moneyers to provide a satisfactory sample in North Devon. John Insley's study of Scandinavian personal names in the West Country⁷ also seems to show a strong concentration of names of this kind in Exeter and its immediate vicinity, but this, as he explains, may be to some extent a consequence of the nature of his sources and we cannot be certain whether Exeter was a centre of unusually strong Scandinavian settlement, or reflects a more widespread Scandinavian influence in that area. Certainly the dedication of a church to St Olaf in Exeter would seem to suggest a Scandinavian community of some significance. The BMC compilers would also have known *Cytel* as a Canterbury moneyer of Harold I, and at that time the Danish coins from the mint of Lund by a moneyer *Arncetel* were still believed to have been struck at London. Thus, working empirically and without the philological equipment available to us today, they failed to realise, as Björkman was to recognise, that the combination of elements they were proposing would result in an English-Scandinavian hybrid.

Such hybrids are known, but they are rare. From Domesday Book, von Feilitzen⁸ notes only *Leofketil* (Lincs., Yorks.), *Leofkoll*

(Yorks.), *Uhtbrand* (Notts., Derbys., Lincs.), with *Ketilbert* and *Thorbert* combining a Scandinavian prototheme with a CG deutertheme. Gillian Fellows Jensen⁹ was able to add *Goldsteinn*, *Gunngifu* and *Thorhefed*. From coins we may perhaps add *Gunnleof* (Chester) except that *-leof* is rare as a second element and may represent a partial anglicisation of *Gunnleifr*. All the examples of hybrids we know come from the Danelaw where the elements existed side by side and might reasonably have become combined.

Since, then, *Goldcȳta* has nothing to do with a possible Scandinavian community in Exeter, and **Goldcȳtel* would be a remarkable name to find in Somerset, we may reconsider the form of the name cut on the die, and not the emendation. OE *cȳta*, the ancestor of ME and modern "kite" the bird-name, appears in two glossaries, Elfric's and a MS in the Royal Library, Brussels, where it is used to translate Latin *milvus* and *buteo*. As a name-element it is putative. Searle's instance of *Cȳta* is inferred from *cȳtan ford* where the meaning is as likely to be "the kite's ford" as "*Cȳta*'s ford", but the modern surname *Keating* may derive from an OE *Cȳting* which may in its turn be an *-ing* derivative of *Cȳta* unless again it is a direct derivative from the bird-name. There is, however, an almost exact semantic parallel to *Goldcȳta* in *Goldhavoc*, a name borne by a Colchester moneyer of William Rufus and Henry I, and by a London fishmonger fl. 1195.

What kind of a name would *Goldcȳta* be? It would not seem to belong to the traditional type of bithematic formation; even if an OE *Cȳta* existed, an element *-cȳta* does not seem to have entered the stock of elements from which this kind of name was formed. *Gold-* is found quite frequently in OE personal names, but it is difficult to be sure that it was a traditional element. All the instances given by Searle are late, but of course surviving source-material is weighted towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. *Gold-* is found in continental, mainly south German, names but it is not common and most instances are in feminine names. It does not seem to have played much part in Scandinavian namegiving. An early OE instance is the name of the Lewes moneyer *Goldstān* who struck coins at the end of Edgar's reign. *Goldsig*e also appears as a moneyer's name, and *Goldric*¹⁰ and *Goldstān*¹¹ appear in placenames. These are certainly traditional compounds; *Goldman* and *Goldwine* may belong to a later type of descriptive, nickname formation, where *-mann* and *-wine* are used in the sense of "one who is . . .", "one who has . . .". Uncompounded *Golda* and the enigmatic *Goldus* are also recorded before the conquest. *Gold-* is also found in feminine names in Domesday Book *Goldrun* and *Goldgifu*. Later *Goldhen* (c.1170) and *Goldcorn* (1271)¹² are found, probably too late to throw much light on the OE use of *Gold-* but showing the OE word in coining occasional or pet names. *Golddeep* on Tealby type coins of Henry II is not easily explicable except as an erroneous form of *Goldhafoc* which is found at the same mint, Canterbury.

It would seem more satisfactory to take *Goldcȳta* as an original byname rather than a bithematic formation. Towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period this kind of name appears particularly productive, possibly to compensate for the increasing poverty of variation in the

Leofwine type. Nickname type formations are prolific in the Scandinavian-settled areas and may have had a wider influence, but there is plenty of evidence of the usage with OE vocabulary and in areas where Scandinavian settlement had been negligible. The process by which original bynames became font-names (sometimes as unsuitable for a young infant as *Ealdbeard* or as derisive as *Broklauss*¹³) has been explained by supposing the child was named for some grandfather or uncle whose distinctive nickname had superseded his own baptismal name in common recognition.

At what stage of assimilation the name *Goldcyta* would stand when the Axbridge moneyer had it cut on his coin-die we cannot be certain. Nor can we be sure of the lexical force of the epithet when it was first bestowed. The connotations of *gold* are of course wealth and prosperity, even though gold had no part in coined money in England from the seventh to the thirteenth century. The compound *goldwine* had associations of nobility and generosity; it was a heroic poetic term for the lord as rewarder of his battle-companions. We ought also to consider the use of *gold* as the colour, perhaps to identify the species of bird as in OE *goldfinc* "goldfinch", but none of the native hawks is an obvious candidate, unless perhaps the bird now known as the Red Kite which was once common in England. I do not know of any mythological connection between a bird of prey and gold that could give this compound and *Goldhavoc* an allusive significance.

Although the formation of *Goldcyta* and *Goldhafoc* appears so similar, if we examine the connotations of the two bird-names there are notable divergences. The hawk, both in its wild and tamed state, was regarded in the Middle Ages as noble and warlike; the reputation of the kite was much less exalted. By the sixteenth century at least, the term "kite" was abusive, for a grasping, avaricious fellow. The earliest references with a significant context come from the fourteenth century, and these are undignified and pejorative. OED cites the following couplet from *King Alisaundre*:

Nultow never late ne skete
A goshawk maken of a kete,¹⁴

where the comparison is clearly to the kite's disadvantage. In a second citation, from Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, a little animal fable is incorporated as a metaphor for the useless wrangling of Palamon and Arcite; two dogs fought each other all day for the possession of a bone, but

Ther cam a kyte, whil they weren so wrothe,
And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.¹⁵

Here the kite is an impudent thief, a scavenger of other animals' meat rather than a killer of its own prey.

There is of course no evidence which could carry such an ambience back into the Anglo-Saxon period, since the glossary references are necessarily neutral. Nevertheless it is tempting to

Goldcyta

play with the juxtaposition of the greedy kite with gold and the office of moneyer - perhaps as money-changer and financier - and to wonder if *Goldcyta* could have been a nickname bestowed in adult life, possibly even a play on the baptismal name *Golda*, rather than *Golda* being a short form of it.

Such speculations are unprovable and perhaps therefore unprofitable. The main purpose of this note is to show that there is no evidence for a hybrid **Goldcytel* and to propose that the actual name stamped on the coin, *Goldcyta*, should be accepted as containing OE *cȳta* "kite".

NOTES

- ¹ P. Seaby, "The Sequence of Anglo-Saxon Coin Types 1030-50", *British Numismatic Journal* 28 (1955) pp.111-46.
- ² H.A. Grueber and C.F. Keary, *A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum, Anglo-Saxon series II* (London, 1887; repr. 1970) p.325.
- ³ P.W.P. Carlyon-Britton, "Uncertain Anglo-Saxon Mints and some New Attributions", *British Numismatic Journal* 6 (1909) pp.13-47.
- ⁴ F. Elmore Jones, "The Mint of Axbridge", *British Numismatic Journal* 30 (1961) pp.61-9.
- ⁵ W.G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum* (Cambridge, 1897), s.v..
- ⁶ E. Björkman, *Nordische Personennamen in England in alt- und frühmittel-englischer Zeit* (Halle, 1910) p.49.
- ⁷ John Insley, "Some Scandinavian Personal Names from South West England", *Namn och Bygd* 70 (1982) pp.77-93.
- ⁸ Olof von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937).
- ⁹ *Scandinavian Personal Names in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire* (Copenhagen, 1968).
- ¹⁰ Field-name: see K. Cameron, *The Place-Names of Derbyshire*, III, *English Place-Name Society* 29 (Cambridge, 1959) p.761.
- ¹¹ Goldstone, Kent: see E. Ekwall, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* (4th ed., Oxford, 1960) s.v..
- ¹² E. Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names* (Lund, 1947) pp.44-5.
- ¹³ Moneyer of Cnut at Exeter c.1020-30: Fellows Jensen, *Scandinavian Personal Names*, p.65.
- ¹⁴ Cf. *Kyng Alisaunder*, ed. G.V. Smithers, EETS 227, 237 (London, 1952, 1957) 11.3043-4.
- ¹⁵ Cf. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson (2nd ed., Cambridge [Mass.], 1957) I (A) 79-80.