SAXON ART AT SUTTON HOO

BY T. D. KENDRICK

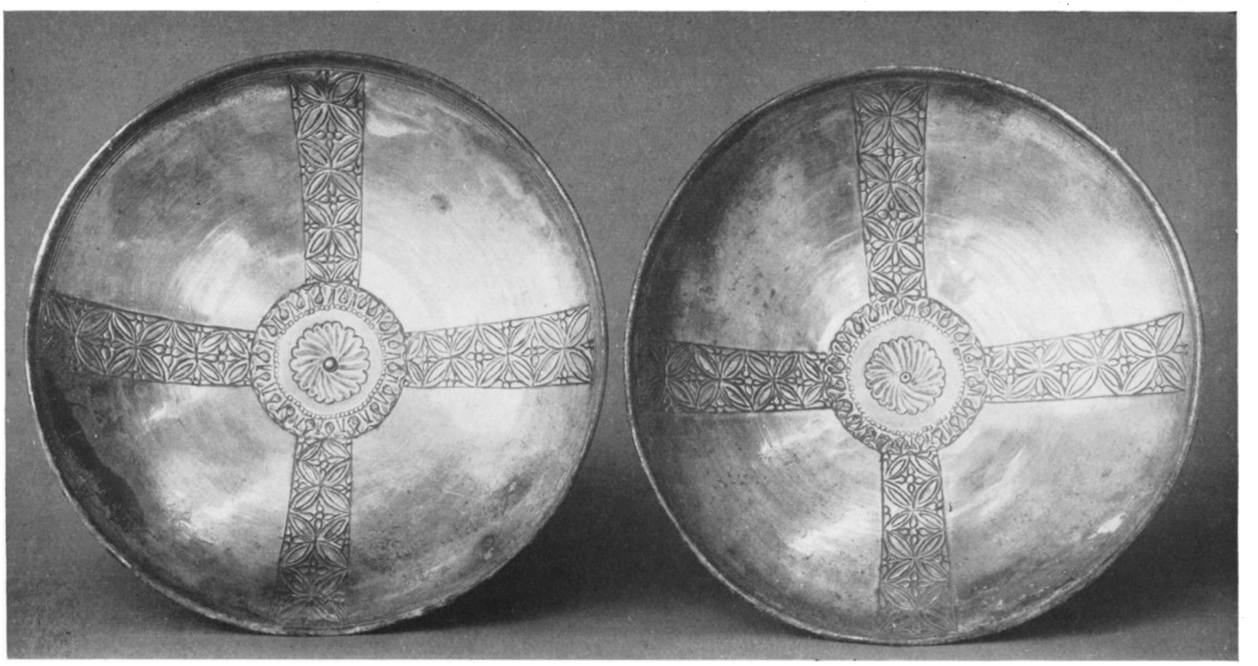
THE great Anglo-Saxon ship-burial at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk, believed to be the cenotaph of Redwald, High King of England (died about 624), was excavated in the summer of 1939,[1] and the magnificent array of jewelled gold ornaments, silver plate, and other funeral furniture found in the centre of the ship, was presented to the British Museum by Mrs. E. M. Pretty just before the outbreak of war. The necessity for immediate packing and evacuation made a thorough examination of the finds impossible, and the first thing to say about the archæology of Sutton Hoo is that two of the principal treasures of the grave, the shield and the helmet, have to be left out of the preliminary accounts because we do not yet know what they are really like. It is, however, worth recording here that the shield, or a 'tray' overlying it, was adorned with gilt mounts, some in the form of long-snouted jewelled animal-heads, and it is certain that the shield has a huge gilt central boss that is richly decorated. The iron helmet, overlaid with bronze and partly gilt, is also a notable piece, having a bronze visor in the form of moustached mask, and large ear-guards; but it is sadly broken and may never make such an imposing exhibit as it ought to do. I may add that there are several lesser objects of interest about which we still know very little; for instance a small and charmingly stylised bronze stag, possibly the crest of the helmet. The large iron 'flambeau,' over five feet long, at the head of the grave may also prove to be an object of great barbaric beauty as the iron terminals seem to have been wrought in the form of extravagantly attenuated bull's heads with long curling horns, very much in the spirit of the zoomorphic terminals of the prehistoric Celtic fire-dogs.

Among the contents of the grave there is one group of objects sharply distinguished from the general series of Anglo-Saxon antiquities, and that is the foreign silver. This consists of nine ornamental bowls [PLATE I, A], a huge dish with the stamps of Anastasius, a fluted bowl with a classical head as the central interior ornament [PLATE I, C] two silver spoons inscribed ΠAVΛOC and CAVΛOC, and a handled cup or ladle. They have been described by Dr. Kitzinger as "a haphazard collection of pieces differing in date and origin,"[2] but all of them came to England from far-off lands and are either Byzantine (Anastasius dish and the spoons) or semi-barbaric work, probably from the Byzantine provinces. They have therefore nothing to do with Anglo-Saxon art except in so far as they throw light on the foreign possessions of a seventh century English king and bear patterns that might be a source for surviving classical elements in English art. The Anastasius bowl, dated by its stamps 491-518, is twenty-seven inches in diameter; it has a central roundel containing a geometric star formed of interlocked squares embedded in a close-set mass of spiral scrolls and leaf-patterns, and, on the platter, a border of various foliate and geometric devices interrupted by medallions containing classical figures, and there is a similar border on the rim itself. It is not a piece of outstanding workmanship, such as is likely to have been an imperial present; but it does show that the rich patterns of fourth and fifth century Late Antique silver and pewter were known to the Saxons in Redwald's day, and this conspicuous exhibition of classical ornamental motives is further strengthened by the fluted bowl which has a border of three-petalled flowers and a central classical head. Similarly, the set of nine small bowls, each very prettily decorated with a cruciform pattern consisting of four equal arms springing from a big central roundel, provide another lavish assembly of stars, rosettes, and foliate details that includes a version of the egg-and-dart motive.

The rest of the finds represent native Anglo-Saxon archæology, except in so far as the enamelled hanging-bowls, to which I shall presently refer, may be said to represent a British or Celtic rather than a Teutonic craft. But even if that be so, it still remains true that everything was made in England, and the series, in sharp contrast to the foreign silver, must represent the familiar art of Redwald's day. We must, of course, consider the jewellery first, for in splendour and value it outshines everything else in the grave. In all there were some thirty pieces, each one of gold, and most of them coming from a splendid harness consisting of a sword-belt, baldrick, and slung purse [PLATE II, A]. The majority of the pieces are jewelled with garnets, and some of them are also inlaid with little morsels of blue-and-white mosaic glass. Looking at the sombre monochrome pictures of the clasps or the purse, the reader, to appreciate the splendours of Sutton Hoo, must try to picture the objects in their sumptuously rich colours, a softly lustrous honey-tinted gold, glowing wine-red stones, and sparkling chequers of bright blue and white glass. For setting the stones and pastes the technique is chiefly cloisonné, but the jeweller also used a champlevé process when the design permitted the use of a substantial gold background. The gem-cutting is magnificent. Not only were slabs of garnet cut with precision to the most complicated shapes, but ridged angle-pieces were also made of this material.[3]

[1] For descriptions of the excavations and the finds see *Antiquaries Journal* XX [1940], p. 149; *Antiquity* XIV [March 1940], p. I; *British Museum Quarterly* XIII [1939], p. iii.

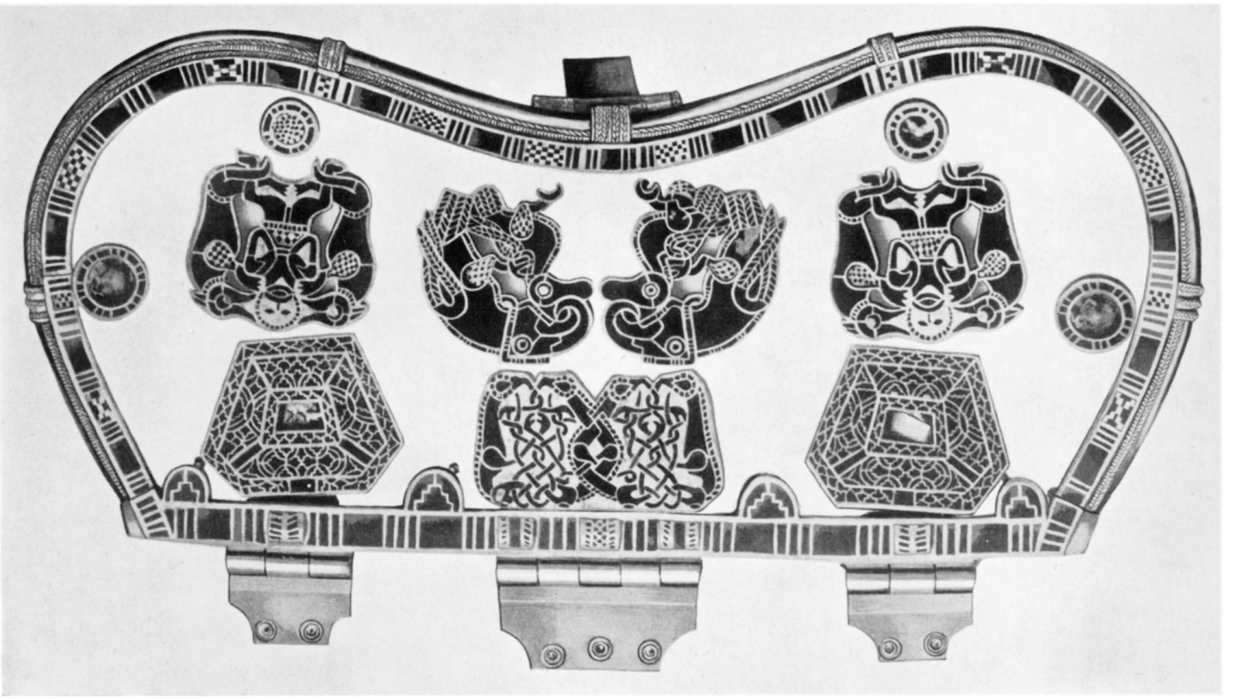
[2] *Antiquity* XIV, p. 40.



A—SILVER BOWLS, TWO OF A SET OF NINE. FROM BYZANTIUM OR THE DANUBE REGION, PROBABLY END OF THE SIXTH CENTURY. DIAMETER, ABOUT 23 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM)

B—GOLD BUCKLE WITH NIELLO INLAY. ANGLO-SAXON, SEVENTH CENTURY. LENGTH, 14 CM. ; *C*—SILVER BOWL WITH FLUTED SIDES AND CENTRAL MEDALLION IN LOW RELIEF. BYZANTINE, PROBABLY SIXTH OR EARLY SEVENTH CENTURY. DIAMETER, 38 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM)

PLATE I. SAXON ART AT SUTTON HOO



A—GOLD PURSE FRAME WITH JEWELLED MOUNTS AND STUDS. ANGLO-SAXON, SEVENTH CENTURY. LENGTH, 19 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM)

B, C, E, F—STRAP MOUNTS AND BUCKLES OF GOLD, JEWELLED WITH GARNETS; *D*—GOLD CLASP WITH JEWELS AND FILIGREE. ANGLO-SAXON, SEVENTH CENTURY. LENGTH, 12 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM)

PLATE II. SAXON ART AT SUTTON HOO

The gold purse mount [PLATE II, A], which is really the frame of the flap, complete with hinges and an ingenious sliding clasp, quickly became the most popular object in the find. The pouch itself has disappeared; but the contents of the purse, forty gold coins, all from Merovingian mints, and two small gold ingots, lay piled on the back of the flap which was found face downwards. When it was lifted it was seen that within the jewelled frame were seven elaborate jewelled mounts and four jewelled studs that had been attached to the leather or fabric of the flap. The cover of this royal wallet was therefore one of a truly remarkable magnificence. The seven principal mounts are the gorgeous and heavily loaded nuclei of close-set ornament which the Teutonic taste loved, and their diverse forms, arranged in three pairs and a singleton, are balanced with characteristic barbaric dexterity and so avoid a too blatant symmetry; but the patterns of the mounts themselves are, according to the earlier standards of Anglo-Saxon designs, inclined to be a little weak and fussy. Thus the cloisonné of the hexagonal mounts at the end of the upper row is thin and crumpled, and the interlacings of the animals on the central mount in the same row are draggled tangles without whip or spin. It is the seventh century period-tendency that is reflected by this incoherent and rather muddled detail, lacking strength and precision, and we can observe the same weakness in contemporary Kentish jewellery; but in spite of it, the mounts of the Sutton Hoo purse possess an easily obvious charm, and both the "falcon and his prey" and the "man and monsters" motives in the bottom row are rendered with a refreshingly crisp simplicity that has been much admired. The "man and monsters" pattern was called at first sight a "Daniel in the Lions' Den" group in the belief that it was connected with the Frankish buckles, sometimes inscribed "Daniel Profeta", and, more distantly, with the Late Antique art of the Mediterranean world; but it has been observed that in the Frankish versions the lions stand on their heads, whereas there is a Scandinavian pattern of the same order, but possibly of a different and eastern origin, in which the animals, as at Sutton Hoo, are upright. This would mean that the Sutton Hoo mount is directly inspired by North European rather than West European art, and we shall see that other considerations support this view. It is significant, for instance, that the closest analogy to the "man and monsters" mount is the jewelled brooch from Reinstrup in the Copenhagen Museum; for even though this Reinstrup brooch be English work, as I think it is, the finding of it in Denmark is a proof of the importance of the north-eastern route from England to Scandinavia.

Next to the purse, the most impressive jewelled gold objects are the hinged clasps [PLATE II, D]. They are fastened by the means of a pin, attached by a chain, and the head of the pin is an animal-mask with jewelled eyes. The faces bear rectangular panels of a thin and prettily spaced step-pattern cloisonné, and the broad golden borders are inlaid with garnets cut to form an interlacing animal-pattern. This ornamental system is probably a generalised "carpet" pattern, based on Eastern textiles and the more Oriental types of the Roman mosaics, and it is very interesting to find it here in a Pagan Saxon context for hitherto we have no instances in our islands of barbaric carpet-patterns of this kind before their appearance in the Early Christian manuscripts of Ireland and northern England. Whether there is really any connection between borders of interlacing animals at Sutton Hoo and in the *Book of Durrow* or in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* is a question that will have to be debated after the war. What seems certain is that direct influence, if it existed, could only be from Saxon England into Celtic Ireland; but I myself hold, against general opinion, that we too often mistake for evidence of direct influence results due to similar causes, in this case the disintegrations and abstractions of a universal and single barbaric art shared by Celt and Saxon alike. We mistake, that is to say, the irrepressible fluidity of a style within the total sphere of its popularity for a laborious transmission of its content from district to district within that sphere. To mock a staid procession of life-like animals by melting the creatures down into an interlace of zoomorphic ribbon-like forms seems to me to be a welcome exercise that any barbaric designer of the sixth and seventh century would perform without deliberate instruction or example from a distance, because this, and numerous other translations of natural form into abstract pattern, are nothing less than manifestations of the widely diffused and general barbaric period-style which is recognisable in Celtic Britain and Celtic Ireland as plainly as in Saxon England.[4]

Another interesting point about the decoration of these clasps is that the curved ends bear jewelled patterns in the form of pairs of linked boars with curved crested backs. These creatures are new in Pagan Saxon archæology, and it is tempting to suppose that they may have some regional significance, since just the same sort of boar is carved on an eleventh century Saxon tympanum in St. Nicholas's, Ipswich, not very far from Sutton Hoo. I do not know any instances from other parts of the country.

The rest of the gold ornaments with an inlay of garnets are mostly buckles and strap-fittings, some of them very solid and handsome [PLATE II, B, C, E, F].

[3] I refer to the two pyramidal mounts of the sword-knot which, though tiny, are in some respects the most handsome jewels in the grave. *Antiquaries Journal, loc. cit.*, p. 167, Fig. 6.

[4] In this connection the reader should consult the very important paper by Mr. A. W. CLAPHAM: "Origin of Hiberno-Saxon Art," *Antiquity* VIII [1934], p. 43. Mr. Clapham does not take the view expressed in the above lines, and Sutton Hoo may be said to support his case against mine.

They do not need detailed description here, but we may note that there are two distinct styles of cloisonné; one of these makes use of bold step-pattern designs in what is at once recognisable as an old-established manner, though it is late work and employs types of cell that are known to be late; the other uses a thinner, more nervous, and more dexterous line, and attempts patterns that are most remarkable and unusual in cloisonné, such as the twist-pattern on a pair of strap-mounts [PLATE II, E] or the foliate design on one of the buckles. There is no reason, however, to suspect any difference in date or to suppose that the two kinds of cloisonné come from different workshops; indeed a single guiding hand seems to me to have been responsible for the whole magnificent harness, and I think that this Sutton Hoo master, a designer of many moods and audacious inventions, must now be numbered among the greatest of the Teutonic goldsmiths. Though his work is, as I say, late, and is not without certain faults of its period, its glittering grandeur is impressive beyond description, and I believe unequalled elsewhere, even in the Petrossa Treasure or in Childeric's grave. This goldsmith's chief strength lies in his varied repertory of patterns, his frequent changes in the rhythm and accent of the cloisonné, his striking combinations of cloisonné and champlevé, and in the sparkle that he has given to his work by the inclusion of coloured glass mosaic among the garnets. Those who have studied the development of this kind of Teutonic jewellery throughout the main period of its use in Europe from the late fourth century to the middle of the seventh will know that it flowers at Sutton Hoo with no less magnificence and startling perfection than that with which it first appeared in the Gothic world, or showed later when required to adorn the persons of the early Merovingian kings or the most sacred possessions of the Lombardic royalties.

The most amazing product of the Sutton Hoo goldsmith's skill is the enormous buckle [PLATE I, B], a weighty affair with a complicated hinged loop and a removable back-plate. In form it is a somewhat gross development of a familiar Teutonic type, but it is safe to say that no other buckle of its sort is so sumptuously decorated. The photograph suggests that the piece is ugly and stupidly ornate; but the reality is a flashing golden thing of undeniable splendour, and the admirable niello-inlay that picks out the animal-ornament gives it a rich surface-richness that stands out brilliantly against the soft background of the gold. The animal-ornament is an involved and tangled example of the Ribbon Pattern style, obviously of late date. The heads on the shoulders of the plate are the stock forms in patterns like this, and they might be found in any Germanic province where an artist worked in what the Scandinavians would call "Salin's Style II"; but though this type of head is not exclusively northern, it remains true that in general appearance the interlaced zoomorphic ornament of this Sutton Hoo buckle is less Anglo-Saxon or Frankish than definitely Swedish in character. In fact if we did not know where it came from, we might quite reasonably attribute it to one of the boat-graves in the Vendel cemetery in Uppland. We know too that the gilt snouted animal-masks on the shield or tray can be closely matched in Swedish archæology. Thus there can be little doubt that the art of Sutton Hoo reveals northern influences of a most conspicuous kind, and differs markedly from the Jutish archæology of Kent.

It is not possible to say much more about the Sutton Hoo animal-ornament until the shield and the helmet and the mounts of the drinking-horns

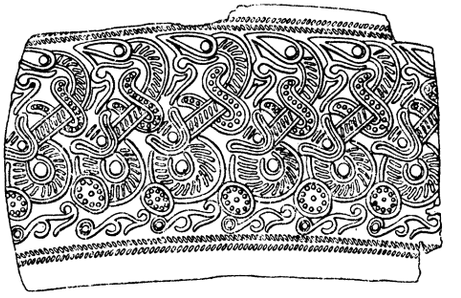


FIGURE 1. SILVER MOUNT FROM DRINKING HORN

have been examined. These horns probably nine in number, were found together in a crushed mass, and it is not very likely that they will ever make imposing exhibits like the complete horn from the Taplow Barrow in the British Museum; but it is already known that most of them had the same sort of silver-gilt mouth-pieces with pendent triangular mounts and the same sort of elaborate terminals. One or two of the fragments bearing recognisable ornament were photographed and drawn [FIGURE 1] before the whole horn-complex was hidden away, and it is obvious that the set pieces bear a very late and involved variant of the traditional Anglo-Saxon Ribbon Pattern themes. It does not follow, of course, that all the horns will show this evolved type of ornament, as some of them may turn out to be older than others; but those that I have seen so far are all decorated in a characteristic seventh century style that I have called the Anglian Development[5] of the zoomorphic Ribbon Pattern.

The Sutton Hoo burial contains examples not only of stock Anglo-Saxon ornaments, but also of delicate scroll-patterns which are better described as "Celtic" or "British." These are to be seen on the two bronze hanging-bowls (believed to be lamps) with enamelled escutcheons and mounts. Some years ago I claimed that such bowls, then called Anglo-Saxon, were really made by British craftsmen, and from the Saxon side were to be regarded as loot; for it is significant that in some

[5] *Anglo-Saxon Art*, London [1938], p. 90.

Saxon graves they are represented by single escutcheons torn off the bowls and perforated for use as pendants, and that the bowls themselves, when present, are often old and worn, sometimes showing very clumsy repairs. One of the hanging-bowls at Sutton Hoo had been damaged before it was buried, since it has lost one or more of its escutcheons and had been tied up with thongs, so that it most decidedly has the appearance of being a " foreigner " in the grave. On the other hand, the largest and the finest of the hanging-bowls was complete and must have been an object of singular magnificence at the time of the burial. It had three circular escutcheons with central discs of millefiori glass surrounded by an enamelled scroll-pattern, and between these escutcheons were square mounts, also with a centre of millefiori and a scroll-pattern surround ; underneath the bowl was a circular enamelled print, and inside it was a mount in the form of a fish (probably the Christian symbol) perched on a rod, the round foot being richly enamelled. The " Celtic " character of the scroll-work is illustrated here by a drawing [FIGURE 2] in which a detail from this Sutton Hoo bowl is compared with scroll-details from a Late Roman embossed brooch, an Irish latchet of the Early Christian

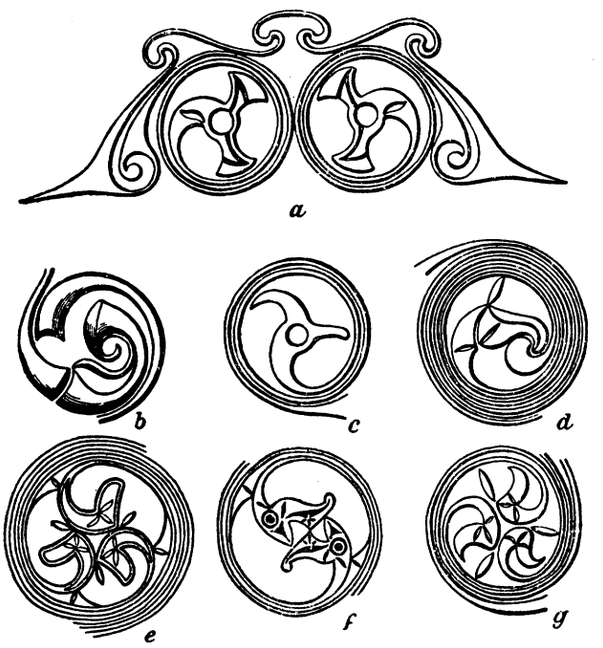


FIGURE 2. EXAMPLES OF SCROLL WORK IN (*a*) HANGING BOWL, SUTTON HOO, (*b*) LATE ROMAN EMBOSSED BROOCH, SILCHESTER, (*c*) BRONZE LATCHET, DUBLIN, (*d*) BOOK OF DURROW, (*e, f*) LINDIS FARNE GOSPELS AND (*g*) TARA BROOCH

Period, the seventh century *Book of Durrow*, the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, and the Tara Brooch. There can, in truth, be no doubt that the apparent affinities of the decoration of the bowl lie in the Celtic and Hiberno-Saxon world, and not in that of the Pagan Saxons, and there would be good reason for saying that the bowl is as much " foreign " to the grave as is the Anastasius dish. Yet I must confess that I find it very difficult to resist the feeling that the bowl was made in or near the neighbourhood in which it was found and that the British enamellers who made it lived at peace among Redwald's Anglo-Saxons. The principal reason for saying this is that the British enamel-workers were, so far as we now know, the only people who could have supplied Redwald's goldsmiths with the mosaic glass that here, and here only, adorns the Saxon garnet-encrusted jewellery. The big Sutton Hoo bowl is liberally and splendidly enriched with mosaic glass, and we know that its use in combination with enamelled scrolls is characteristic of other British hanging-bowls from northern and eastern England ; therefore its sudden and unexpected appearance in Saxon jewellery seems to be proof that at this late date the earlier distinction between the craft of the conquered Britons and that of the conquering Saxons had in certain localities been obscured. We may indeed imagine that Redwald, who was not above treasuring an old and broken hanging-bowl, and had managed to acquire one of the finest of these bowls in mint condition, thus showing that he shared the long-felt Anglo-Saxon admiration for this British work, would welcome collaboration between his goldsmiths and the British craftsmen on an occasion when a glass shortage made this desirable. That seems to be the point ; for it is a notable fact that among all the varied riches of the grave there was no glass ; and if the goldsmiths of Redwald's court lacked the little bits of dark blue paste that ordinarily imitate lapis lazuli in Kentish garnet-encrusted jewels, an appeal to the British enamellers, who were experienced in the making of coloured glasses, is not really a matter for surprise.

The last object in the Sutton Hoo find to which I wish to call attention is one that amazed its to discoverers almost more than anything else brought light. I refer to the giant whetstone [PLATE III, A, B]. The photographs do not do justice to this formidable antiquity, and only those who have seen it know what a grim thing it is, a grey square-sectioned hone about two feet long that tapers towards the ends which are carved with bearded masks and fitted with terminal bronze mounts of an inexplicable kind. The use of stylished masks in the Anglo-Saxon world is normal enough, but we know them only on a tiny scale in metalwork, and there is no relief carving. This whetstone, in fact, is the only thing we have among the possessions of the Pagan Saxons that can be described as sculpture, and it is probably a precious representative of lost carvings on such objects as wooden posts and idols. These stone masks on the whetstone are neither beautiful nor imposing, but I agree with Mr. Phillips, the excavator, that they are most unpleasantly uncanny and give a nasty look of magic power to this singular object. A giant and ornamental

whetstone like this is unique,[6] and it was assuredly more than a mere sharpening tool. I am inclined to think of it rather as a sceptre, the ceremonial symbol of the Germanic king as the Smith.

A disappointing conclusion to any war-time account of the Sutton Hoo finds must be that we cannot yet do justice to a great discovery by an appreciation of its full significance in the art and archæology of early England. It is clear, however, that the principal Anglo-Saxon antiquities are barbaric ornaments that take their proper place at the end of our long series of Pagan Period finds and that this end is one of totally unexpected magnificance. In general character, particularly as regards the use of abundant garnets in elaborate gold cloisonné settings, the parent stock of this East Anglian jewellery is at first sight Kentish, for it is in the Jutish cemeteries on the Watling Street and in the eastern parts of the eastern parts of the county that this cloisonné technique has its English origin and principal flowering. But though from the broad view-point of generic style, and even in the use of certain highly mannered cloisons, there is common ground between the work of Kent and that of East Anglia, it remains true that Redwald's jewels are not of Kentish manufacture and, indeed, differ in some notable respects from Kentish jewels.[7] They represent, in fact the fusion of Kentish, Scandinavian, Frankish, and local Anglian influences that had not previously been so combined, and thus give to our archæology an important new regional style of their own. It is not possible here to pass judgment on this style after a careful comparison between it and others of the same order, such as the Gothic, Frankish, and early Kentish work; but at least it can be said that no other cloisonné surpasses it in total splendour, even though we admit that it has certain weaknesses of its period. The chief interest, then, seems to be that in this fine late work we see not merely the final phases of stock Teutonic patterns but, for the first time in barbaric art, the combinations of geometric centres with interlacing animal-pattern surrounds that I call "carpet" designs; for this, as I have said, gives us a hitherto unsuspected contact between Pagan Saxon art and the later Christian art of the British Isles. The second point of interest is the sudden revelation of East Anglia as the rival of Kent, for up to the time of the Sutton Hoo discovery we believed that the Jutes had almost a monopoly of the manufacture of cloisonné jewellery; and a third point, a corollary to the second, is that in this East Anglian work we can detect the existence of a remarkably close connection between England and Scandinavia in pre-Viking times. Finally, we have from Sutton Hoo very interesting new material concerning the vexed question of the surviving Celtic art in England, as exemplified by the hanging-bowls, and, thanks to the foreign silver, entirely unexpected information concerning the full range of the wealth and possessions of a seventh century English king. Unfortunately, so much depends on the full report, which can only be made after all the finds are accessible and have had laboratory treatment, that further speculation is useless under the present conditions. We can safely predict, however, that Peace, in addition to her more important and obvious blessings, has some very pleasurable excitements in store for the students of early art in England.

[6] It is interesting to note that at a later date small whetstones carved with masks were used in the Celtic world, examples coming from Scotland, *British Museum, Anglo-Saxon Guide*, Fig. 163, Ireland, *Antiquaries Journal* VII, p. 324, and North Wales, *British Museum recent acquisition*. I do not believe there is any very important connection between the Sutton Hoo whetstone and these Celtic pieces, which range in date from the eight or ninth to the twelfth or thirteenth century.

[7] *British Museum Quarterly* XIII [1939], p. 132.

THE MAIOLICA-PAINTER GUIDO DURANTINO

BY BERNARD RACKHAM, C.B.

AMONGST the painters of Italian maiolica none has been the subject of more extensive research and criticism than Nicola Pellipario of Castel Durante, and the body of extant work that can fairly be attributed to his hand is large. His son Guido Durantino has received less attention, and not unreasonably, for Guido seems to have been an artist altogether inferior in power to Nicola. It may be questioned however whether full justice has been done to the younger painter; there has perhaps been a tendency to attribute to Nicola more than his fair share of achievement, and a careful reconsideration of the material is owing in favour of his son. It is true that we have no clear evidence that Guido was not only a master potter but also himself a maiolica-painter. What little is known from contemporary written records of both father and son was discovered and published by Giuseppe Raffaelli in 1846 and by Luigi Pungileoni in 1857[1]. The chief facts emerging may be briefly recapitulated here.

Under the date August 15, 1520, Pungileoni found, amongst witnesses to a certain testament, the name of Nicola's son, *Guido Nicolai Peliparii figulo de Durante*. In 1546 we have record of *Magister Guido Niccolai figulus de Durante civis Urbini, Prior Fraternitatis Sancti Johannis Baptistae de Urbino*. In 1547 *Magister Guido Nicolai de Durante figulus Urbinas* incurred a debt for bars of tin, lead and pewter supplied by a certain Isaac. Raffaelli published a document dated 1565 relating to a dispute between Guido, son of Nicola of Durante, *habitatorem Urbini*,

[1] *Memorie delle majoliche lavorate in Castel Durante, etc.* Fermo [1846]; *Notizie delle pitture in majolica fatte in Urbino.* Rome [1857].

A—CEREMONIAL WHETSTONE CARVED WITH BEARDED MASKS AND FITTED WITH BRONZE MOUNTS. ANGLO-SAXON, SEVENTH CENTURY. LENGTH, ABOUT 60 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM) ; *B*—DETAIL OF *A*

PLATE III. SAXON ART AT SUTTON HOO