

# Symbols of Protection: The Significance of Animal-ornamented Shields in Early Anglo-Saxon England

By TANIA M. DICKINSON

*THE SIGNIFICANCE of shields with animal ornament on the boss and/or board in early Anglo-Saxon society is sought in the coincidence of artefactual, stylistic and iconographic symbolism. Twenty shields buried in the 6th to earliest 7th century, together with seventeen further mounts which were probably originally designed for shields, form the basis of a systematic typological review; decoration in Salin's Style I is emphasised. Analysis of dating, distribution and use in burial establishes cultural and social contexts. The meaning of the ornamental repertoire is sought through iconographic analogies, notably with Scandinavian bracteates and their putative association with a cult of Óðinn/Woden. It is proposed that the animal ornament invested the shields with a specific apotropaic quality, which emphasised, and amplified, the protective role of select adult males, and hence their authority over kin, community and even kingdom.*

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic decoration of shields can be evidenced, at least sporadically, from Roman to Viking times. While textual and pictorial information contributes to this knowledge, detailed archaeological analysis depends primarily on the survival of metal fittings. In post-Roman Europe, with its custom of burial with weapons, shields with such fittings are famously known from later 6th- and 7th-century northern Italy, parts of Germany and Vendel-period Sweden, with the most magnificent being the great shield buried in mound 1 at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk.<sup>1</sup> Standing behind these, qualitatively and partly also chronologically, there is, however, a significant group of Early Anglo-Saxon shields which have their iron bosses and/or wooden boards embellished with zoomorphic metal fittings. They have been the subject of many, albeit brief, discussions, which have dated them to

<sup>1</sup> For examples in the Roman army: M. C. Bishop and J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment from the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome* (London, 1993), esp. 81–2, 149 and 172–3; R. Grigg, 'Inconsistency and lassitude: the shield emblems of the *Notitia Dignitatum*', *J. Roman Stud.*, 73 (1983), 132–42; for 3rd- and 4th-century North European examples: C. von Carnap-Bornheim and J. Ilkjær, *Illerup Adal: Die Prachtausrüstungen* (Aarhus, 1996), vol. 5 (Textband), esp. 285–298, 400 and 433–6; for post-Roman examples: S. Fuchs, 'Figürliche Bronzebeschläge der Langobardenzeit aus Italien', *Mitteilungen deutschen archäol. Inst., römische Abteilung*, 55 (1940), 100–13; J. Werner, 'Ein langobardischer Schild von Ischl an der Alz, Gem. Secon (Oberbayern)', *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter*, 18/19 (1951/2), 45–58; R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Vol. 2: Arms, Armour and Regalia* (London, 1978), esp. 91–9; A. Nørgård Jørgensen, *Waffen und Gräber: Typologische und chronologischen Studien zu skandinavischen Waffengräbern 520/30 bis 900 n. Chr.* (Copenhagen, 1999), esp. 77–87; zoomorphic decoration of Viking shields is attested in skaldic verse but not by actual shields: R. North, *The Haustlöng of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir* (Enfield Lock, 1997), esp. xi–xxxi.

the mid-6th to early 7th century and established that they were buried mainly in eastern England in graves of men of elite status or at least of high-standing within their local community, though some were also adapted for jewellery in female burials.<sup>2</sup> Far less agreement has emerged on the role and meaning of the animal decoration itself. Suggestions for its purpose encompass military insignia, including practical means of identification in battle, ostentatious social display, and protective symbolism. Its ideological reference points have been located in Late Antique tradition (Romano-British and post-Roman North Italian), religious belief (Christianity and Scandinavian paganism), and ancestral or 'clan' (Germanic) totems.<sup>3</sup>

Current directions in Early-medieval archaeology suggest that a more comprehensive and systematic analysis could now be productive. Heinrich Härke and more recently Nick Stoodley have amply established the fundamental role of armament in Early Anglo-Saxon graves as a medium for expressing and promoting male identities, and status within family, local community and larger polities. Of the three main weaponry-types buried (sword, shield and spear), the shield stands out as the sole *defensive* piece of equipment and, with or instead of the sword, the primary means by which adult masculinity could be symbolised.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrently, Lotte Hedeager has argued that the distinctive animal-art styles of the 5th to 7th centuries were cultivated as a means of self-definition by the emergent warrior-elite of post-Roman successor kingdoms, in parallel to their myths and legends of a Nordic origin.<sup>5</sup> Karen Høilund Nielsen's work on Salin's Style II within Scandinavia and beyond, and Siv Kristoffersen's study of the Nydam Style and Salin's Style I in south-western Norway, have explored how these styles constructed social identities and inequalities.<sup>6</sup> Style I was overwhelmingly used for the regional and local production of jewellery for women of a certain standing, whereas Style II, at least initially, was used inter-regionally for the

<sup>2</sup> The list of finds first gathered by D. H. Kennett, 'Some decorative aspects of the Anglo-Saxon shield', *Bedfordshire Archaeol. J.*, 9 (1974), 55–70, has been successively repeated and amplified: C. M. Hills, 'Chamber grave from Spong Hill, North Elmham, Norfolk', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 21 (1977), 167–76; Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, esp. 92–4; J. Clark, 'A Saxon knife and shield-mount from the Thames foreshore', *Antiq. J.*, 60 (1980), 348–9; G. Speake, *Anglo-Saxon Animal Art* (Oxford, 1980), 82–3; D. Brown in D. Miles, *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, Oxon.* (CBA Res. Rep., 50, London, 1986), fiche 4B:12–13; C. Hicks, *Animals in Early Medieval Art* (Edinburgh, 1993), 29–31; L. Webster in K. Blockley et al., *The Archaeology of Canterbury Vol. V. Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas Part II: The Finds* (Canterbury, 1995), 1040–1; K. Parfitt and B. Bruggmann, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Mill Hill, Deal, Kent* (Soc. Medieval Archaeol. Mon., 14, London, 1997), 87–8. Fuller reviews were undertaken by V. I. Evison, *Dover: Buckland Anglo-Saxon Cemetery* (London, 1987), 32–4, and by H. Härke in T. M. Dickinson and H. Härke, *Early Anglo-Saxon Shields* (Archaeologia, 110, London, 1992), 29, 54, 61 and 77–8, but with omissions and inconsistencies.

<sup>3</sup> The last suggestion is made by Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 173.

<sup>4</sup> Most fully in H. Härke, *Angelsächsische Waffengräber des 5. bis 7. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne, 1992); N. Stoodley, *The Spindle and the Spear: A Critical Enquiry into the Construction and Meaning of Gender in the Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Rite* (BAR Brit. Ser., 288, Oxford, 1999); Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 67–70.

<sup>5</sup> Most recently, L. Hedeager, 'Migration Period Europe: the formation of a political mentality', 15–57 in F. Theuvs and J. L. Nelson (eds.), *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000); cf. eadem, 'Myth and art: a passport to political authority in Scandinavia during the Migration Period', 151–6 in T. Dickinson and D. Griffiths (eds.), *The Making of Kingdoms*, being *Anglo-Saxon Stud. Archaeol. Hist.*, 10 (1999).

<sup>6</sup> K. Høilund Nielsen, 'Animal art and the weapon-burial rite', 129–48 in C. K. Jensen and K. Høilund Nielsen (eds.), *Burial & Society: The Chronological and Social Analysis of Archaeological Burial Data* (Aarhus, 1997); eadem, 'Animal style — a symbol of might and myth: Salin's Style II in a European context', *Acta Archaeol.*, 69 (1998), 1–52; eadem, 'Style II and the Anglo-Saxon elite', 185–202 in Dickinson and Griffiths (eds.), op. cit. in note 5; eadem, 'The wolf-warrior — animal symbolism and weaponry of the 6th and 7th centuries', 471–81 in E. Pohl, U. Becker and C. Theune (eds.), *Archäologisches Zellwerk. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte in Europa und Asien: Festschrift für Helmut Roth zum 60. Geburtstag* (Rahden, 2001); S. Kristoffersen, *Sverd og Spenne: Dyreornamentik og Sosial Kontekst* (Kristiansand, 2000).

weaponry and horse-gear of a male elite. In England, the transition from Style I to Style II in the later 6th and early 7th centuries coincides with changing structures within families and political hierarchies observed by Stoodley. Analysis of the incidence of Style I in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries shows, however, that in England (as in south-western Norway) the dichotomy between the two styles was not as extreme as it appears to be in southern Scandinavia or on the Continent. Although the quantity of Style I material surviving in association with men is tiny compared with that associated with women, it includes a range of prestigious items, such as belt-fittings, drinking vessels, horse-harness and armament (primarily shields and swords, rarely spears), which bespeak importance — stylistically, chronologically and socially.<sup>7</sup>

To establish what ideologies sustained the use of this animal art as a social symbol on shields is admittedly the most challenging and controversial part of the problem, for this requires access to the specific iconic content, an extreme ambition for this period.<sup>8</sup> The best possibilities would seem to lie in relating images to textually-documented art in the Graeco-Roman secular world and Late Antique Christianity, but even this method results in alternatives, especially given the universality of so many animal icons and the fact that images taken from one context would always be open to reinterpretation or syncretism in another. When drawing analogies, it is obviously crucial to pay close attention to consistency of contexts and closeness of form and style.<sup>9</sup> The problems of deciphering iconography in essentially pre-literate, pagan northern Europe are necessarily even greater than in southern Europe, and nowhere more so than in respect of Salin's Style I, which is renowned for its ambiguity. The Scandinavian gold bracteates of the later 5th and earlier 6th centuries have seemed to offer the most likely prospect of advancing understanding in this area. Karl Hauck, in a lifetime's research, has endeavoured to use a hermeneutic approach to reconstruct their iconographic programme. In particular, he has extended the undisputed observation that bracteates were modelled on Imperial images from Late Roman medallions and coins to identify a wider range of Late Antique, and especially Christian, prototypes. He postulates that, transformed and integrated, these helped to constitute contemporary pagan Scandinavian beliefs. To identify the latter, however, Hauck is obliged to turn to Old Saxon and Old Norse texts of the 9th to 13th centuries, from which he

<sup>7</sup> T. M. Dickinson, Medium and message in Early Anglo-Saxon animal art: some observations on Salin's Style I in England (unpubl. paper given to a conference on 'Shaping Understanding: Form and Order in the Anglo-Saxon World, 400–1100', British Museum, March 2002); for examples, see S. Marzinzik, *Early Anglo-Saxon Belt Buckles (Late 5th–Early 8th Centuries): Their Classification and Context* (BAR Brit. Ser., 357, Oxford, 2003), 42–3; E. Morris and T. M. Dickinson, 'Early Saxon graves and grave goods', 86–96 in C. J. Young, *Excavations at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, 1921–1996* (Salisbury, 2000), 90–3 (drinking horn); T. M. Dickinson, C. Fern and M. Hall, 'An early Anglo-Saxon bridle fitting from South Leckaway, Forfar, Angus, Scotland', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 50 (forthcoming); H. R. E. Davidson and L. Webster, 'The Anglo-Saxon burial at Coombe (Woodnesborough), Kent', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 11 (1967), 1–41, at pp. 22–32 (sword). In Norway, swords, belts and vessels are the main vehicles for Style I in male graves: Kristoffersen, op. cit. in note 6. Stylised animal art also occurs in Scandinavia on clothing from late 5th- and 6th-century, richly furnished male (but not female) burials: M. Nockert, *The Högum Find and Other Migration Period Textiles and Costumes in Scandinavia* (Umeå, 1991), 94–103; L. Bender Jørgensen, 'Krigerdragten i folkevandringstiden', 53–79 in P. Rolfsen and F.-A. Stylegar (eds.), *Snartemofunnene i Nytt Lys* (Oslo, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> The problems are well rehearsed by J. Hawkes, 'Symbolic lives: the visual evidence', 311–38 in J. Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> F. Mütterich, 'Der Adler mit dem Fisch', 317–40 in H. Roth (ed.), *Zum Problem der Deutung frühmittelalterliche Bildinhalte* (Sigmaringen, 1986).

proposes that the bracteates embody an eschatological cycle centred on Woden/Óðinn and his son Baldr, which links Óðinn's roles as master of magic, war-god and supreme god with healing and redemptive powers.<sup>10</sup> For some scholars, such hypotheses have opened up explanatory possibilities for modelling post-Roman Germanic social evolution in the North in general and penetrating the meaning of Salin's Style I in particular; for others, though, they are methodologically compromised by selective readings of later and problematic texts.<sup>11</sup>

To refrain from further research because of such difficulties runs counter, however, to the spirit of current theoretical paradigms. Moreover, the corpus of animal-ornamented Anglo-Saxon shields has the potential to meet, if not quite to satisfy, modern desiderata for iconographic analysis to be based on controlled contexts.<sup>12</sup> A series of important new finds not only amplifies knowledge of burial context, but also shows, provocatively, that board-fittings in the form of figural images, on which previous studies have focused almost exclusively, although not systematically, were associated with boss-apex discs in Style I, which previous studies have overlooked altogether. Examining them together should add greatly to our understanding.

## DATA AND METHODS

I am currently aware of twenty shields that bear (or once bore) animal ornament (Tab. 1, Fig. 1). All but two come from recorded graves, though the quality of information varies. Two shields from the Sutton Hoo barrow cemetery are included, but their ornament will not be treated in the same detail as the rest: the exceptional shield from mound 1, decorated in Style II, is Scandinavian and has been exhaustively discussed, while identification of a similar shield from mound 2 rests only on a decorated foil and perhaps a zoomorphic grip-extension, not on a boss or other unequivocally diagnostic element.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> K. Hauck et al., *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* (Munich, 1985–89), vols. 1,1 and 3,1, 15–69; K. Hauck, 'Methodenfragen der Brakteatendeutung: Erprobung eines Interpretationsmuster für die Bildzeugnisse aus einer oralen Kultur (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten XXVI)', 273–96 in Roth (ed.), op. cit. in note 9; idem, 'Zwanzig Jahre Brakteatenforschung in Münster/Westfalen (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten XL)', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 22 (1988), 17–52; J.-P. Lamm et al., '"Der Brakteat des Jahrhunderts". Über den einzigartigen zehnten Brakteaten aus Söderby in der Gemeinde Danmark, Uppland (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten, LVIII)', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 34 (2000), 1–93; cf. D. Ellmers, 'Zur Ikonographie nordischer Goldbrakteaten', *Jahrb. Römisch-germanischen Zentralmus. Mainz*, 17 (1970), 201–84, for a summary of the earlier state of research and alternative arguments for the centrality of an Odin myth to bracteates.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Hedeager, op. cit. in note 5; B. Magnus, 'Monsters and birds of prey: some reflections on form and style of the Migration period', 161–72 in Dickinson and Griffiths (eds.), op. cit. in note 5; eadem, 'The enigmatic brooches', 279–96 in B. Magnus (ed.), *Roman Gold and the Development of the Early Germanic Kingdoms* (Stockholm, 2001); D. Leigh, 'Ambiguity in Anglo-Saxon Style I art', *Antiq. J.*, 44 (1984), 34–42; contra, J. Hines, 'Religion: the limits of knowledge', 375–401 in J. Hines (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1997), at pp. 392–3; Hawkes, op. cit. in note 8. K. Starkey, 'Imagining an early Odin: gold bracteates as visual evidence', *Scandinavian Stud.*, 71 (1999), 373–92, challenges the Odinnic identification mostly from the basis of the C-bracteates, yet maintains interpretations which concord with the practice of *seiðr* as analysed by N. S. Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia* (Uppsala, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Hawkes, op. cit. in note 8, 317–18 and comments in discussion by Hines and Scull at 340–1.

<sup>13</sup> For mound 1, see Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 1–128, and Høilund Nielsen (1999), op. cit. in note 6; for mound 2, see R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. Vol. 1: Excavations, Background, The Ship, Dating and Inventory* (London, 1975), 104–29; M. O. H. Carver, *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?* (London, 1998), 182.

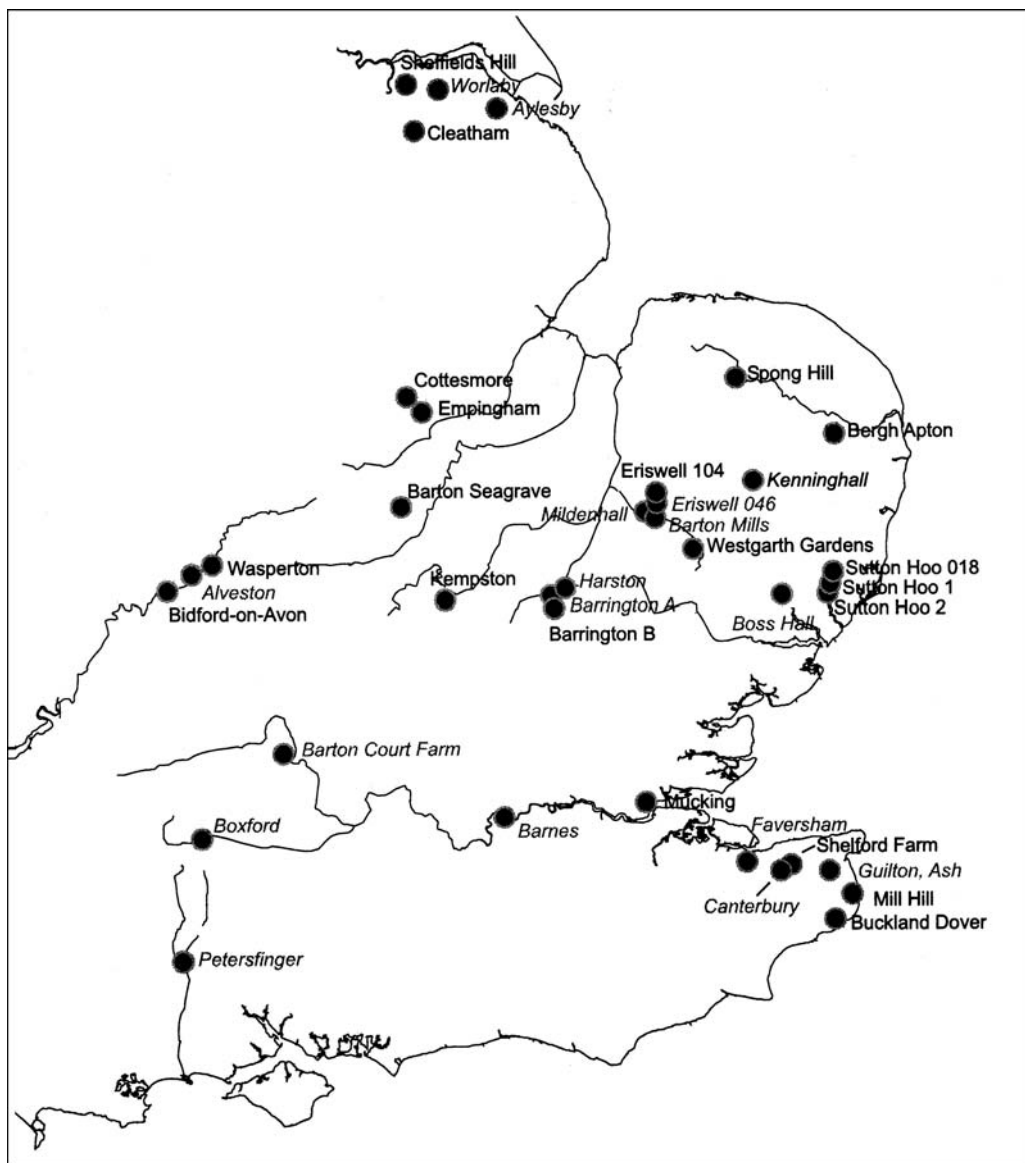


FIG. 1

Distribution of zoomorphic shield fittings. Black roman script = fittings on shields. Grey italic script = fittings not associated with a shield. *Computerised drawing by B. Gourley, devised by T. M. Dickinson.*

The animal ornament occurs in three distinct contexts on shields: on boss-apex discs; as, or on, fittings on the boss cone or flange (rarely); and as, or on, fittings on the front or (rarely) the back of the board. The shields can be divided into three groups on the basis of these contexts:

Group 1: Shields with only a boss-apex disc in Salin's Style I (five examples);

Group 2: Shields with only board mounts (nine examples);  
Group 3: Shields with a combination of two or three contexts, viz. boss-apex discs and/or fittings on boss cone or flange and/or board fittings (six examples, of which Sutton Hoo mound 1 is by far the most lavish).  
The groups will be used later in the interpretation, but Table 1 may be found useful in the course of the typological discussion as a summary of each shield's attributes. Seventeen further finds, although not found in association with a shield, have been identified as originally designed for use on a shield (distinguished by italic font in Fig. 1 and Tabs. 2-4). Although the likelihood of these identifications is variable and cannot be proven, it is based on systematic comparison with the typological attributes of fittings which are from shields. In particular, comparability in technical features, such as size, the incidence, number and length of rivets, and surface treatments, has been used to discriminate between items with superficially similar shape or decoration. Some rejected or related items are brought into the discussion in order to justify or amplify arguments about identification, but space prohibits documenting all the material which was consulted during the process of research. It is also quite possible that examples have escaped my attention.

TABLE 1  
ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED EARLY ANGLO-SAXON SHIELDS  
BM = British Museum, Department of Prehistory and Europe

<i>Find</i>	<i>apex disc</i>	<i>cone mount</i>	<i>flange mount</i>	<i>board mount (front)</i>	<i>board mount (back)</i>	<i>boss type</i>	<i>spearhead type</i>	<i>other dating evidence</i>
Group 1								
Barrington B 103, Cambs. Camb. Univ. Mus. Arch. & Anth.	a: Style I	—	—	—	—	2	nk	> Hines early Phase 2 great square-headed brooch
Barton Seagrave, Northants. BM	b: Style I	—	nk	nk	nk	1.1?	—	
Cottesmore, Rutland Rutland County Mus., Oakham	a: Style I	—	—	nk	nk	1.1	—	
Empingham II, 112, Rutland	a: Style I	—	—	—	—	1.1	nk	
Jewry Wall Mus., Leicester								
Wasperton 64, Warwks. Warwick Mus.	b: Style I	—	—	—	—	1.1	—	
Group 2								
Bergh Apton 26, Norfolk Castle Mus., Norwich	—	—	—	iv: Pair Hippogriffs	—	3	H2	
Buckland Dover 93, Kent BM	—	—	—	ib: Pair Aquatics	—	3	L	Reticella bead; Kentish Phase III/IV (c. 530-90)
Cleatham 25, Lincs. N. Lincs. Mus., Scunthorpe	—	—	—	ia: Fish iaa: Bird	—	3	H1	

<i>Find</i>	<i>apex disc</i>	<i>cone mount</i>	<i>flange mount</i>	<i>board mount (front)</i>	<i>board mount (back)</i>	<i>boss type</i>	<i>spearhead type</i>	<i>other dating evidence</i>
Kempston 52, Beds. BM	—	—	—	ib: Aquatic	—	1.1	nk	
Mill Hill 81, Kt Dover Archaeol. Group	—	—	—	iib: Birds (x 3)	—	3	E3	Buckle/shoe-shaped rivets (550–75); Kentish Phase III/IV
Shelford Farm, Kent BM	nk	nk	nk	iib: Pair Birds	—	nk	nk	
Spong Hill 31, Norfolk	—	—	—	ia: Pair Fish	—	1.1	D1?	Burial sequence: c. 'mid-6th century'?
Castle Mus., Norwich								
Sutton Hoo 2, Suffolk	nk	nk	nk	iii: Style II 'Dragon' (?)	Style II grip extension (?)	nk	nk	1st quarter 7th century chamber + ship
Ipswich Mus.					vi: Style I Cruciform			
Westgarth Gardens 41, Suffolk	—	—	—	—		2	D1?	
West Stow Village Exhibition Centre Group 3								
Bidford 182, Warwks.	b: Style I	—	Style I/— geometric	—	—	2	nk	'Gotland' cauldron
New Place Mus., Stratford-upon-Avon								
Eriswell 104, 232, Suffolk	untyped	3 aquatic	—	iib: Pair Birds with snake	—	3	E3	
Suffolk C. C. Archaeol. Section, Bury St Edmunds				vii: 3 Geometric discs				
Mucking II, 600, Essex BM	a/b: Style I	—	—	v: Pair Zoomorphised symmetric/bird elements	—	1.1	H1	Bucket with face-masks in triangular vandykes
Sheffield's Hill 115, Lincs.	b: Style I	—	—	ib: Pair Aquatics	—	1.1	L	
N.Lincs. Mus., Scunthorpe								
Sutton Hoo 018, 868, Suffolk BM	b: Style I	—	—	ib: Aquatic iib: Style II Bird with snake vii: 8 Geometric discs	—	3	D2	
Sutton Hoo 1, Suffolk BM	untyped Style II	Style II	Style II	ii: Style II Bird iii: Style II 'Dragon' vii: Bosses (also Style II strips and rim edging, and a ring-knob)	Style II grip extensions	SBA	A2, C2, D2, G2, import	Ship-burial: TPQ575 x 613 or later
Grave totals	10 (11?)	2	2	13	3	18	17	

TABLE 2

ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELD-BOSS APEX DISCS

Finds unassociated with shields are in italics. Where possible, finds without grave identification are given museum numbers. BM = British Museum, Department of Prehistory and Europe. All measurements are maximums (in mm), unless stated otherwise.

<i>Find</i>	<i>diameter</i>	<i>thickness</i>	<i>rim shape</i>	<i>surface finish(es)</i>	<i>punches</i>	<i>re-used as</i>
Type a						
Barrington B 103	27	2.6	narrow	Au	—	—
Cottesmore	25.5	3	narrow	Au	—	—
Empingham II, 112	22.5	5	narrow	Au	—	—
Type b						
Barton Seagrave	50	2.5	flat flat flange	Au	notching annulet triangle	—
Bidford 182	55	3.9	narrow	Au	—	—
Sheffields Hill 115	49	3.6	narrow	Au + glass/ garnet inlay	annulet	—
Sutton Hoo 018, 868	42	10.5 centre 2.7 edge	flat	Au + Ag	—	—
Wasperton 64	56	0.3 edge	narrow	Au + garnet inlay	notching	—
<i>Aylesby, Lincs.</i>	49	3.2	<i>narrow</i>	<i>nk</i>	—	<i>brooch</i>
<i>Harston, Rowleys Hill, Cambs.</i>	43	4.4	<i>narrow flat flange</i>	<i>Au + glass inlay</i>	—	—
<i>Camb. Univ. Mus. Arch. &amp; Anth., 63.298.</i>						
<i>Petersfinger 49B, Wilts.</i>	41	<i>nk</i>	<i>narrow</i>	<i>Au + glass inlay</i>	—	<i>pendant?</i>
<i>Salisbury and S. Wilts. Mus.</i>						
<i>Alveston, Warwks.</i>	42	1.8	<i>narrow</i>	<i>Au</i>	—	<i>brooch</i>
<i>New Place Mus., Stratford- upon-Avon, W263</i>						
<i>Boss Hall 97, Suffolk Ipswich Mus.</i>	39	3.5	<i>narrow</i>	<i>Au + Ag?</i>	—	<i>brooch</i>
Type a/b						
Mucking II, 600	50.6	2.5 1.8 edge	narrow flat flange	Au + Ag	annulet	—
Untyped						
Eriswell 104, 232	30	3	flat	Ag/nk	nk	—
Sutton Hoo mound 1	40	4	narrow	Au/Ag niello/ garnets	triangle	—
<i>Barrington A, us, Cambs.</i>	43	2	<i>narrow</i>	<i>Au</i>	—	—
<i>Camb. Univ. Mus. Arch. &amp; Anth.</i>						
<i>Barton Mills, Suffolk.</i>	c.45	<i>nk</i>	<i>flat</i>	<i>Au?</i>	<i>notching</i>	—

# THE TYPOLOGY OF ANGLO-SAXON ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELD FITTINGS

## BOSS-APEX DISCS (Tab. 2)

Zoomorphic apex discs are known from at least ten shield bosses; comparative analysis of unassociated finds adds another seven. All are made from cast copper alloy, have been fully or partially gilded, and are decorated in Style I (fifteen cases) or Style II (two cases). Without specialist analysis, it is not possible to assert how they had been fastened to the iron boss, but positive evidence of solder, for example on Sheffield's Hill 115, Lincs., or, where visible, rough metal flow and/or file marks and an absence of rivets, as in the case of Bidford-on-Avon 182, Warwicks. (Fig. 3d), suggests that most were simply soldered on to the boss's integral iron apex disc.<sup>14</sup> Two exceptions are Barrington B, 103, Cambs., which is cast integrally with a neck and three alternating moulded 'feet' and subrectangular lappets that clasp the boss's simple integral apex, and Sutton Hoo mound 1, which is supported by a solid rod inserted into the boss and held by an iron pin.<sup>15</sup> Disc thickness does not seem significant, ranging from 2.5 mm to c. 5 mm in the case of the plano-convex disc from Empingham II, 112, Rutland (Fig. 3a). There is, however, a correlation between diameter and decoration, which points to two primary types, with one case of overlap and a few 'outliers'.

### *Type a: Small-diameter gilded discs with single profile motifs in Salin's Style I*

Three Group 1 shields have bosses with a narrow-rimmed apex disc between 22.5 mm and 27 mm in diameter, which carries a gilded, relief-cast field. The ornament on Barrington B, 103 has been much remarked upon, for it forms a circular 'window' on to a great square-headed brooch — encapsulating part of the footplate upper border, with its characteristically downbiting animal head, and

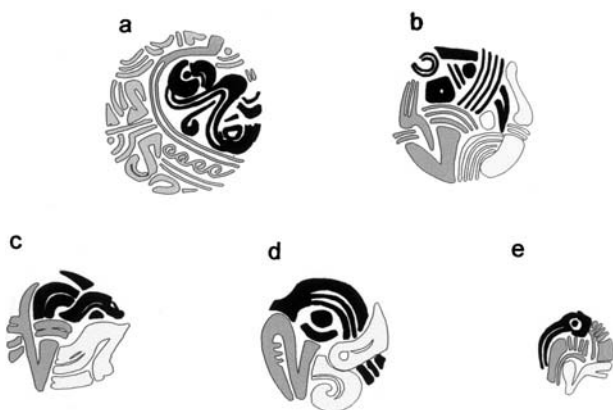


FIG. 2

Style I designs from small-diameter fields. a: Barrington B, 103 type-a apex disc; b: Empingham II, 112 type-a apex disc; c: Cottesmore type-a apex disc; d: Mucking II, 600 type-a/b apex disc; e: Westgarth Gardens 41 type-vi cruciform board fitting. Scale 1:1. Drawn by T. M. Dickinson.

<sup>14</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 32.

<sup>15</sup> J. Hines, *A New Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Great Square-headed Brooches* (Woodbridge, 1997), 206 and 311, fig. 134, pl. 124; Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 52 and fig. 19.



FIG. 3

a: Empingham II, 112, type-a apex disc; b: Mucking II, 60 type-a/b apex disc; c–d: Bidford-on-Avon 182 type-b apex disc and sample flange mount, front and back. Scale 1:1. Photographs: T. M. Dickinson.

part of the inner panel frame (Fig. 2a).<sup>16</sup> The artistic focus seems, however, to be on the animal head's mouth — its rolled tongue and the predatory-bird heads

<sup>16</sup> W. K. Foster, 'Account of the excavation of an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Barrington, Cambridgeshire', *Cambridgeshire Antig. Soc. Comm.*, 5 (1883), 6–32, at pp. 13–14 and 29; H. Vierck, 'Eine südsandinavische Relieffibel. Zum Feinguss im frühen Mittelalter', 137–209 in K. J. Narr (ed.), *Aus der Sammlung des Seminars für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Münster*, (Hildesheim, 1976), at pp. 154–5, Abb. 8,2 and 17,2; Hines, op. cit. in note 15. Compared with a real square-headed brooch, the curvature of the 'downbiting head' in relation to the 'footplate' is compressed and the relief quite flattened; whether this resulted from truly mechanical copying, as Vierck proposed, is open to question.



FIG. 4

a: Barton Seagrave type-b apex disc; b: Sheffield's Hill 115 type-b apex disc; c: Sutton Hoo 018, 868 type-b apex disc; d: Sutton Hoo 018, 868 type-iiB bird board mount; e: Sutton Hoo 018, 868 type-IB aquatic board mount. Scale 1:1. Photographs: T. M. Dickinson.

which terminate its open, coiled jaws — whereas its eye, neck and the inner panel frame, with internal, fragmentary animal elements, serve more as a border. The other two type-a discs sport single, figural motifs. Empingham II, 112 is an anthropomorph, which, depending on orientation, has its head thrown backwards and upwards (as in Fig. 2b) or facing left (as in Fig. 3a) and its leg bent round to meet the back of the head.<sup>17</sup> The apex disc from Cottesmore (Fig. 2c), a site less

<sup>17</sup> J. R. Timby, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Empingham II, Rutland* (Oxford, 1996), 68, fig. 29 and (less clearly) fig. 155, 2.1. In my figures different fonts are variously used to highlight head, neck and body elements, and front and back limbs.

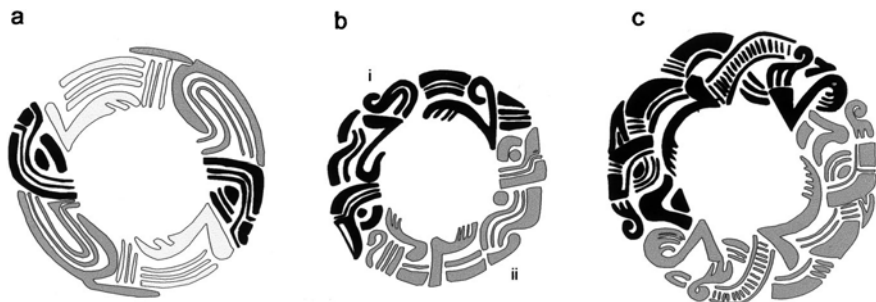


FIG. 5

Two-animal Style I designs from type-b apex discs. a. Sutton Hoo 018, 868. b. Boss Hall 97. c. Alveston. Scale 1:1. Drawn by T. M. Dickinson.

than four miles from Empingham, features a ‘prancing’ quadruped with raised front limb and head twisted backwards over its rump. Lloyd Laing has raised the possibility that a metal-detected find from Kent was an apex disc, though in the end he plumped for its identification as a ‘bracteate’ die.<sup>18</sup> Its diameter (29 mm) and traces of surface gold would be appropriate for type a, but its decoration (which I read differently from Laing) of two incomplete, back-to-back animals is less so. The definite absence of solder on the rear and its provenance outside the area typical for zoomorphic boss-apex discs (Fig. 14a) diminishes confidence further, and, as I have not seen it at first-hand, it is not considered further.

*Type b: Large gilded discs with profile ‘chasing’ animals in Salin’s Style I*

Type-b apex discs are represented on five shield bosses. They are distinguished by diameters of 42–56 mm and by Style I creatures arranged round a central boss, inlay or discoid field. Apart from Wasperton 64, Warwicks. (Fig. 6e), all have flat-topped rims. The gilded relief-decoration is further embellished by garnet and/or glass inlays (Sheffield’s Hill 115; Fig. 4b; Wasperton 64), by punching or notching (Sheffield’s Hill 115; Barton Seagrave, Northants.: Fig. 4a;<sup>19</sup> Bidford-on-Avon 182: Fig. 3c;<sup>20</sup> Wasperton 64), and by white-metal surfaces (Sheffield’s Hill 115; Sutton Hoo, site 018, grave 868: Fig. 4c<sup>21</sup>). The plain borders on Barton Seagrave and Bidford-on-Avon could have been completely gilded (gilding survives in the punchmarks on the former) or they might too have had a white finish from application of a high-tin copper alloy.<sup>22</sup> Five discs, unassociated with shields, can be added to type b on the basis of close similarities in size, form and decoration. Three — Alveston, Warwicks. (Fig. 5c); Aylesby, Lincs. (Fig. 6b); Boss Hall 97, Suffolk (Figs. 5b) — had been re-used as brooches, and Petersfinger 49B, Wilts.

<sup>18</sup> L. Laing, ‘An Anglo-Saxon disc from Kent’, *Medieval Archaeol.*, 43 (1999), 191–3.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, fig. 69b.

<sup>20</sup> J. Humphreys et al., ‘An Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire: second report on the excavations’, *Archaeologia*, 74 (1923–4), 271–88, at p. 287, pl. LVII, 2; Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, fig. 69a.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., ‘Sutton Hoo before Raedwald’, *Current Archaeol.*, 180 (2002), 498–505, at pp. 503–4: site 018 lies c. 500 m north of the mound cemetery.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. W. A. Oddy, ‘Gilding and tinning in Anglo-Saxon England’, 129–34 in W. A. Oddy (ed.), *Aspects of Early Metallurgy* (London, 1977), at p. 132; Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 102.

(Fig. 6c) had also been converted to jewellery.<sup>23</sup> A disc from Harston (Rowley's Hill), Cambs. (Fig. 6d) has no known context, but its projecting basal flange might be compared with the outer rim of Barton Seagrave, and its back bears evidence of rough metal-flow and file marks, similar to the rear of the Bidford-on-Avon 182 disc. None of these has a white-metal upper surface, while the white-metal coating on the backs of Boss Hall 97 and Petersfinger 49B might be secondary.<sup>24</sup>

The designs of these ten discs can be treated in three groups. Alveston, Boss Hall 97 and Sutton Hoo 018, 868 depict with clarity two quadrupeds chasing round a flat disc or large boss. Alveston (Fig. 5c), in particular, illustrates stylistic features of chronological and iconographic significance which are found on other discs, although often less intelligibly: for example, the combination of body-blocks in Haseloff's Style Phase B (parallel lines infilled with transverse pellets) with 'thick and thin' casting; the multiple-pronged 'y-shaped' element, used mainly for hips, but also here as a projecting snout; and the ambiguity of a 'v-shaped' ear, which might be a quadruped's ear or the headdress of an animal-man.<sup>25</sup> The design is simplified, with the bodies in a slightly moulded version of Haseloff's Style Phase D,<sup>26</sup> on Boss Hall 97 and Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Fig. 5a-b). The latter is unusual in the way each animal's neck and foreleg is integrated into an 's-curve', with the outermost ridge bifurcating into claws.

Designs involving three figures separated within panels are numerically the most common. Petersfinger grave 49B and Harston are nearly identical, differing only in the quality of the relief casting of their chasing quadrupeds and the colours of the glass inlays in their central and petal-shaped, radial cells (Fig. 6c-d). Sheffield's Hill 115 (Fig. 4b) and Aylesby form another near-pair, with their panel dividers identically shaped, although differing in terms of which components were inlaid cells and which cast solid. The execution of their chasing quadrupeds shares much with the discs already described, for example, the combination of body-blocks in Haseloff's Style Phase B (a pelleted version) and in 'thick and thin' technique, and the use of spiralliform hips; but their forms are individually more variable (Fig. 6a-b). In particular, the heads of each animal on Sheffield's Hill 115 are different, and, while its Animals (ii) and (iii) are forward-chasing, its Animal (i)

<sup>23</sup> T. M. Dickinson, 'Early Anglo-Saxon saucer brooches: a preliminary overview', *Anglo-Saxon Stud. Archaeol. Hist.*, 6 (1993), 11-44, at p. 26 and figs. 40 and 45, where Alveston was misleadingly described as a saucer brooch; Aylesby was a metal-detected find reported to North Lincolnshire Museum, Scunthorpe, 1994: Kevin Leahy, pers. comm.; E. T. Leeds and H. de S. Shortt, *An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Petersfinger, near Salisbury, Wilts.* (Salisbury, 1953), 32-3 and 52-3, fig. 13, pl. VII. Information about a further example, found recently at St Albans, Hert., was received too late for inclusion in this paper; but see now H. Geake, 'Portable Antiquities Scheme report', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 48 (2004), 232-47, at pp. 235-6.

<sup>24</sup> Two decoratively analogous Suffolk finds have been rejected: a metal-detected brooch from Great Blakenham (J. Newman, pers. comm.) and a disc re-used as a brooch from Hadleigh Road, Ipswich, 124: S. West, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk* (East Anglian Archaeol., 84, Bury St Edmunds, 1998), 55, fig. 66.1. The former, which I have not seen, appeared to have integral pin fittings, while the latter had two filed-down but integral rear rivets (which would be aberrant for either an apex or board disc); their flat, white-surfaced frames and Style I and transitional Style I/II ornament respectively would suit type-b discs, but their diameters (35 mm and 40 mm) are smaller.

<sup>25</sup> G. Haseloff, *Die germanische Tierornamentik der Völkerwanderungszeit* (Berlin, 1981), 180-96; D. Leigh, *The Square-headed Brooches of Sixth-Century Kent* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University College, Cardiff, 1980), 117-19, where 'thick and thin' is described as, at its best, a wide, shallowly sloping ridge contrasting with short steep ones, giving an impression of overlapping; Leigh, op. cit. in note 11, 34-42.

<sup>26</sup> Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, 204-15.

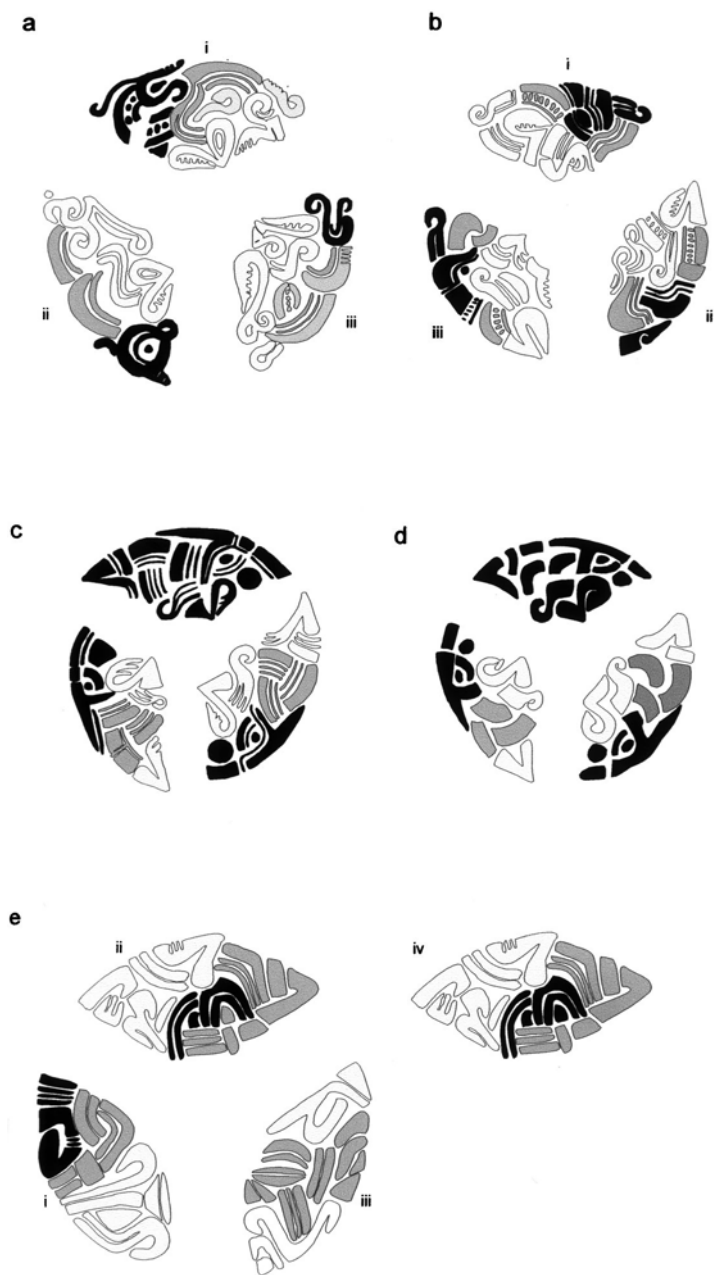


FIG. 6

Three-animal Style I designs from type-b apex discs. a: Sheffield's Hill 115; b: Aylesby; c: Petersfinger 49B; d: Harston; e: Wasperton 64. Scale 1:1. *Drawn by T. M. Dickinson.*

and all those on Aylesby have backward-turned heads with coiled 'ear' projections. Wasperton 64 also uses a threefold framework, but of plain and notched cast ridges, and its creatures are different (Fig. 6e). Animal (i) is an outward-facing, crouching or springing anthropomorph with a 'hunched-up' shoulder and two-fingered hand. Animal (ii) involves two legs (in the left of the panel) and anthropomorphic

elements (to the right), most clearly an arm with three-fingered hand, and possibly with a projecting thumb: one or both of the central double arches might represent a head, which therefore 'sucks' the thumb; alternatively, the 'thumb' is an eye (cf. Fig. 6e, iv). Animal (iii) apparently consists of body-blocks and legs alone.

The last two members of type b are more heterogeneous. The disc from Bidford-on-Avon 182, contrary to T. D. Kendrick's dismissal of it as 'dissolved and grossly stylized ... restless and crowded', clearly depicts three anticlockwise animal-men repeated almost exactly to make a frieze of six (Figs. 13c and 7b).<sup>27</sup> Animal (i) is a head alone (*Protome*), either a human with plumed headdress or a bird with coiled beak (Fig. 7bi–ib). Animals (ii) and (iii) are single-limbed: the former's leg appears to pass through its transverse body-block (unless that is merely an over-large anklet); the latter's head has a bird-like beak and a bold, transversely-ribbed neck-collar. Barton Seagrave is clearly linked to the other members of type b in quality and details, but its design is much more complicated (Figs. 4a and 7a). Arguably, there are three coherent animals (i–iii) and four incomplete animals (iv–vii). Animal (i) faces anticlockwise and is distinguished by a long, curved, 'u-shaped' head with open jaws and projecting tongue, a single body-block and a leg with multi-clawed foot. The two incomplete legs, over which it seems to crouch, belong not to it, but to Animal (v). Facing Animal (i) in a clockwise direction is Animal (ii), marked by a 'helmeted' head-surround, predatory-bird beak and two legs with clawed feet. Animal (iii) lies between Animals (i) and (ii), but with its legs to the outside. Its head is modelled with a flat round skull/eye and straight, open jaws, the upper of which is crossed by two transverse bars like teeth rising from the lower jaw; its two legs point in opposite directions, just like those of Alveston and Boss Hall 97, Animal (ii) (Fig. 5b,ii and 5c). Above Animal (iii) the clockwise-facing 'helmet' head and double 'V-shaped' element are designated Animal (iv) and the disembodied, multiple-bar body-blocks Animal (vi). The three remaining elements between Animals (i) and (ii) are assigned to incomplete Animal (vii): the notched, beak-like element emanating from the front of Animal (ii)'s head is, on analogy with the Mucking II, 600 apex disc (below; Figs. 2d and 3b), a bent foot; the coiled and 'question-mark' elements are probably hips and/or tails.

*Type a/b: Combination of traits from type a and type b*

In terms of the simple typology offered here, the apex disc on the boss from Mucking II, 600, Essex, is a 'mule' (Fig. 3b):<sup>28</sup> it has a small central field (diameter 25 mm), which contains a single, profile Style I creature, like type a, but a broad, silvered flange and hence larger overall diameter, which are more typical of type b. The creature has a head with three long strands of 'hair' extending to the nape, and a foreleg, but the other two elements are somewhat ambiguous (Fig. 2d). In the light of analogies to be mentioned below, the coiled element can be identified as the hip joint and the beak-like element across the 'hair' probably as a disarticulated or re-assembled bird's head.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> T. D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to 900 AD* (London, 1938), 80.

<sup>28</sup> V. I. Evison, 'Anglo-Saxon grave-goods from Mucking, Essex', *Antiq. J.*, 53 (1973), 269–70.

<sup>29</sup> R. Avent and V. I. Evison, 'Anglo-Saxon button brooches', *Archaeologia*, 107, 77–124, at p. 97, describe the whole motif as a profile bird's head, but this is to misread the bent foot as a beak.



FIG. 7

Style I designs from apex discs and type-vii board mounts. a: Barton Seagrave type-b apex disc; b: Bidford-on-Avon 182 type-b apex disc; c: Faversham type-vii discoid board mount; d: Barrington A unclassified apex disc. Scale 1:1. *Drawn by T. M. Dickinson.*

### Untyped

Four further discs share some features with type b, but for various reasons have not been assigned to it. The boss from the decorated shield in grave 232 in the new cemetery at Eriswell site 104 (otherwise known as RAF Lakenheath), Suffolk,

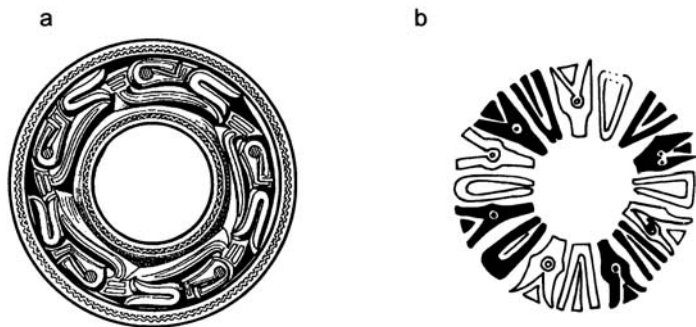


FIG. 8

Style II designs from untyped apex discs. a: Sutton Hoo mound 1; b: Barton Mills. Scale 1:1. a, after Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, fig. 41; b, drawn by T. M. Dickinson.

has yet to be conserved. At 30 mm in diameter, its apex disc is closer to type a, but a circular border of silver foil seems to have peeled back from the flat rim, evoking comparison with the apex disc from Sutton Hoo 018, 868, though on X-radiographs it appears as uniformly white as the copper-alloy, disc-headed rivets from the boss flange and shield grip.<sup>30</sup> Determining whether the central recessed field, which is currently obscured by soil and corrosion, does bear zoomorphic decoration must await its being cleaned. Two unassociated finds are further candidates. There is no reason to demur from the suggestion that a disc from Barrington A (Edix Hill), Cambs. (Fig. 7d), gilded on the front and iron-stained on its back, was an apex disc, though its all-over medley of Style I body- and leg-elements differs from the decoration on other apex discs.<sup>31</sup> More problematic is a disc from Barton Mills, Suffolk, published by E. T. Leeds as from the bow of a great square-headed brooch (Fig. 8b). When John Hines examined it, he was 'as confident as' he could be that, it was 'most probably a shield disc, from the apex of the boss'.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, at present it cannot be located in the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, so reliance must be placed on Leeds's rather inadequate photograph, and the nature of the 'pit in the middle of the back', which Leeds thought was for an attachment pin, must remain unknown. Certainly its size, plain flat rim, central boss and notched, probably gilded, relief-decoration, would not be out of place among type b, but its decoration is atypical: the open-jawed heads and 'v-shaped' tails of eight Style II-like serpents, viewed from above and as if snapped in two, alternate not quite consistently in a radial pattern. Finally, the only undoubted apex disc decorated with Style II is the medium-sized, cast copper-alloy piece atop the Sutton Hoo mound 1 boss. Although in a class of its own, it bears some comparison with type b: garnets are set centrally, albeit in cloisonné, and as eyes to the five backward-turned animal heads in the surrounding frieze, which is set between flat silvered borders, albeit stamped and nielloed (Fig. 8a).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> This might be an artifice of the chosen X-radiograph exposure, however: Hayley Bullock, pers. comm.

<sup>31</sup> T. Malim and J. Hines, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Edix Hill (Barrington A), Cambridgeshire* (CBA Res. Rep., 112, York, 1998), 221, col. Pl. g, figs. 3.29 and 3.65, 15. A very similar, metal-detected fragment from Congham, Norfolk, which lacked evidence for pin-fittings, could be another shield fitting or a damaged brooch: reported to Castle Museum, Norwich, 1997: Helen Geake, pers. comm.

<sup>32</sup> E. T. Leeds, *A Corpus of Great Square-headed Brooches* (Oxford, 1949), 77, pl. 126; J. Hines, pers. comm.

<sup>33</sup> Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, 52, fig. 41, pls. 3 and 5.

FITTINGS ON BOSS CONE OR FLANGE (Tab. 3)

Zoomorphic ornament is rare elsewhere on a boss. Sutton Hoo mound 1 provides an exceptional case, its boss flange, wall and dome being almost completely covered by a fivefold repetition of gilt- and tinned-bronze *Pressblech*, decorated with Salin’s Style II animals in permutations of two or three, and intersecting moulded animal heads.<sup>34</sup> There are two other, less spectacular, examples. Fixed equidistantly round the cone of the boss from Eriswell 104, 232 are three mounts in the shape of aquatic creatures, probably made from thin silver (Fig. 10f). Their rounded ogival heads point towards the boss apex and their two angular fins are symmetrical; a second sheet of silver, in shape like a tuning fork, is superimposed over the body. An X-radiograph reveals rivets centrally in the head (an eye?) and tail. The flange of the boss from Bidford-on-Avon 182 is decorated with five cast, gilded copper-alloy mounts (Figs. 3c–d and 9a). Each consists of animal heads set ‘back-to-back’ either side of a panel with scrolls at its basal angles and knot-loop in its centre. Two cast-in rivets, filed-down flush with the surface, are visible on the backs of three, now loose, mounts (Fig. 3d). The mounts also have rivet holes through the animal heads’ cheeks, and two, with a silvery surface finish, have a further set of rivet holes through the head surround. While the mounts were presumably made to fit this particular boss, they had evidently been refitted once or even twice. The animal heads have challenged previous commentators. Kendrick, struck by their quality, especially in contrast, in his opinion, to the associated apex disc, proclaimed them a herald of Salin’s Style II and (in his idiosyncratic chronologies for Style I and II) ‘the triumphant survival of certain elements in Anglo-Saxon art at the time of the decay of others’; Åberg labelled them ‘Irish style of the 7th and 8th centuries’, while Hills perceived them as ‘fish-like’.<sup>35</sup> In my opinion, they are in Haseloff’s Style Phase A version of Salin’s Style I: a contour line defines a coiled ear and the wide-open jaws with coiled ‘lips’, which ‘bite’ the adjacent silver-plated, disc-headed flange-rivet; plastic modelling within the contour line forms the head-surround and muzzle/cheek. The

TABLE 3  
ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED FITTINGS FROM SHIELD-BOSS CONE OR FLANGE,  
EXCLUDING SUTTON HOO MOUND 1  
All measurements are maximums (in mm). \* = cast-in rivets.

<i>Find</i>	<i>length</i>	<i>thickness</i>	<i>number of rivets</i>	<i>rivet length</i>	<i>surface finish</i>
Bidford 182 (on flange x 5)	74	1.9	2*	nk	Au
Eriswell 104, 232 (on cone x 3)	45	nk	2	nk	Ag

<sup>34</sup> Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 48–55 and 88–9 foil designs A8–A11.  
<sup>35</sup> T. D. Kendrick, ‘Style in early Anglo-Saxon ornament’, *IPEK*, 9 (1934), 66–76, at p. 71; idem, op. cit. in note 27, 80; N. Åberg, *The Anglo-Saxons in England in the Early Centuries after the Invasion* (Uppsala, 1926), 167, was probably influenced by images such as the lion of St Mark in the Book of Durrow, fol. 191v; Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 175, where she mistakenly ascribes Åberg’s description (p. 169) of a boar on the Barton Seagrave apex disc (my Animal iii) to Bidford-on-Avon.

transversely ribbed neck-collar matches that of Animal (iii) on the associated apex disc (cf. Fig. 7b).<sup>36</sup>

#### FITTINGS ON THE FRONT OR BACK OF THE BOARD (Tab. 4)

Zoomorphic fittings from the front or, rarely, the back, of the shield board have been the main focus of previous discussions. Härke separated figural mounts (group c in his typology of all shield-board fittings) from non-figural but relief-cast, gilded and/or silvered mounts, which included examples with and without zoomorphic decoration (his group d).<sup>37</sup> His typology is here amplified and rationalised. Thicknesses range from 0.5 mm to c. 4 mm, with most between 2 mm and 3 mm, very similar therefore to the apex discs. Most mounts had two or three rivets, which were usually cast-in-one on cast copper-alloy pieces, though secondary replacements are not uncommon; one rivet seems to have sufficed for discoid mounts. Where fully extant, rivets are between 6 and 13 mm in length, reflecting the standard thickness of shield boards and in some cases probably an additional mounting layer of wood or leather.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Type i: Aquatic creatures*

Fittings from six shields are identified as aquatic creatures, real or imaginary, on the basis of their tails and to a lesser extent head- and body-shapes. Eight unassociated finds can be linked to them with varying degrees of confidence. Two sub-types are suggested, though with some overlapping of attributes.

#### Type ia: Single-surface fish

Type ia is distinguished by smaller size (length 69–75 mm), a semi-naturalistic fish profile and, although the examples are in different materials, by a plane surface with a single-metal finish. The mirror-image pair of cast copper-alloy mounts from Spong Hill 31, Norfolk, is much the most naturalistic (Fig. 9c): its overall proportions, markedly longer lower jaw, eye high on head, rectilinear dorsal fin set above an anal fin, and well-forked tail suggest it represents the European pike (*Esox lucius*), though the larger (central) rectilinear dorsal fin and the pelvic fin set well forward are more consistent with pikeperch (*Stizostedion lucioperca*).<sup>39</sup> The tiny triangular dorsal ‘fin’ is inappropriate, however, to either species (unless it represented the rear-facing spine on a pikeperch’s operculum).<sup>40</sup> A pike-like lower jaw and high-set eye also characterise two East Anglian finds unassociated with shields — Eriswell site 046, 284 (Fig. 9d), re-used as a ‘third’ brooch, and

<sup>36</sup> The downbiting heads on the footplate of the brooch from Gummersmark, Sjælland, provide a good parallel for the modelling and eye, but not for the shape of the jaws, while the ribbed neck-collar is matched on the animals from the outer headplate panel of Bifrons 41, Kent: Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, 174–80, Tafn. 19 and 23.

<sup>37</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 27–30 and 77–8.

<sup>38</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 47–54.

<sup>39</sup> C. Hills, K. Penn and R. Rickett, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Spong Hill, North Elmham Part III: Catalogue of Inhumations* (East Anglian Archaeol., 21, Gressenhall, 1984), 7–8, 80–2, fig. 87 and pl. XVIII; Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 173, citing Andrew Jones.

<sup>40</sup> P. S. Maitland and R. N. Campbell, *Freshwater Fishes* (London, 1992), 167–9 and 288–90, where it is noted that pikeperch was native to Central and Eastern Europe and spread northwards; it was not introduced to England until the late 19th century.

TABLE 4

ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED FITTINGS FROM THE SHIELD BOARD

Finds unassociated with shields are in *italics*. Where possible, finds without grave identification are given museum numbers. BM = British Museum, Department of Prehistory and Europe. All measurements are maximums (in mm), unless stated otherwise. The internal length of rivets from head to a washer or hammered end is given, where measurable, in brackets. \* = cast-in rivets.

<i>Find</i>	<i>length</i>	<i>thickness</i>	<i>number of rivet length</i> <i>rivets</i>		<i>surface</i> <i>finish</i>	<i>punches</i>	<i>re-used as</i>
Type ia aquatic creatures							
Cleatham 25	min. 70	nk	3	11.3 (10)	(Fe)	—	—
Spong Hill 31 (pair)	75	1.5–1.85	2*	10.5 (9.6)	Au	pin-prick annulet	—
<i>Eriswell 046, 284, Suffolk</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>nk</i>	<i>Au</i>	<i>annulet</i>	<i>brooch</i>
<i>Suffolk C. C. Archaeol. Section, Bury St Edmunds</i>							
<i>Mildenhall (Warren Hill), Suffolk</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>5.5</i>	—	<i>annulet dot + arc</i>	—
<i>BM 1927, 12–12, 32</i>							
Type ib aquatic creatures — core group							
Sheffield's Hill 115 (pair)	123/127	2	5*	4–9	Au/Ag	notching annulet	—
Sutton Hoo 018, 868	105	5.7–2.0	2*	9 (8)	Au/Ag	annulet	—
<i>Barnes, Middlesex</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>2* + 1</i>	<i>9.2–7.3 (8.0–6.9)</i>	<i>Au/Ag</i>	<i>notching quatrefoil S-shape</i>	—
<i>Mus. of London 78.107/2</i>							
<i>Kenninghall, Norf. BM 1883, 7–2, 22</i>	<i>145</i>	<i>0.50–0.85</i>	<i>2*</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>Au/Ag</i>	<i>notching quatrefoil dot + arc</i>	—
<i>Worlaby 2, Lincs.</i>	<i>min. 97</i>	<i>c.1</i>	<i>nk</i>	<i>nk</i>	<i>Au/Ag</i>	<i>notching</i>	—
Type ib aquatic creatures — related							
Buckland 93	min. 104/112	2	2	min. 1/2	(Fe) Ag	—	—
Kempston 52	min. 104	0.70–0.85	3	min. 8	white-metal	—	—
<i>Barton Court Farm 807, Oxon.</i>	<i>min. 61</i>	<i>3.3</i>	<i>min. 1*</i>	<i>stump</i>	<i>Au</i>	<i>triangle</i>	<i>brooch</i>
<i>Oxfordshire County Mus. Service, Standlake</i>							
<i>Boxford, W. Berks. Mus. Heritage Service, Newbury, A1258</i>	<i>min. 54</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>min. 1*</i>	<i>stump</i>	<i>Au</i>	—	<i>brooch?</i>
<i>Canterbury, Kent</i>	<i>min. 24</i>	<i>c. 2</i>	<i>min. 3</i>	<i>nk</i>	<i>nk</i>	<i>incised jabs</i>	—
Type iia predatory bird							
Cleatham 25 (Fe)	min. 70	nk	3	10 (8.5)	—	—	—
Type iib predatory birds							
Eriswell 104, 232 (pair)	64	2	3*	10 (8.5)	Au/Ag	—	—
Mill Hill 81 (trio)	61–62	2–3	2*	12.5–8.5 (10.9–7.3)	Au/Ag	notching	—
Shelford Farm ( pair)	64.5	3.1	2*	(6)	Au/Ag	—	—
Sutton Hoo 018, 868	47	2	2*	c. 10	Au/Ag	notching annulet	—

<i>Find</i>	<i>length</i>	<i>thickness</i>	<i>number of rivet length rivets</i>		<i>surface finish</i>	<i>punches</i>	<i>re-used as</i>
<i>Guilton, Ash, Kent</i> <i>Royal M., Canterbury,</i> <i>2637</i> Type iic predatory bird	63	2	3*	min. 9	Au/Ag?	annulet	—
Sutton Hoo mound 1	220	nk	nk	nk	Au/Sn/ garnets	dot triangles	—
type iii 'dragons'							
Sutton Hoo mound 1	270	nk	13	nk	Au/Sn	triangles lozenge	—
Sutton Hoo mound 2	min. 43	1	min. 2	7.5	Au	—	—
Type iv quadrupeds							
Bergh Apton 26 (pair)	46	2	1* + 1	min. 6.4	Au/ white metal?	annulet	—
Type v symmetrical							
Mucking II, 600 (pair)	44	1.9	2*	13 (10.7)	Au/Ag	annulet	—
Sleaford 136 (pair — non-zoomorphic)	76	3.45–2.65	2*	9.6	Au/Ag	annulet	—
BM							
Type vi cruciform							
Westgarth Gardens 41 (pair — on back)	28/29 (disc dia. 14)	2	4	min. 2	Au/Ag	—	—
Type vii discoid, including geometric designs							
Sutton Hoo mound 1 (boss surrounds x 4)	55	foil	(1)	nk	n/a	Au	—
Eriswell 104, 232 (geometric x 3)	23–24	c. 2	1*	11.5 (min. 5)	flat	nk/Ag	—
Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (geometric x 8)	c. 20	c. 2	1*	c. 13	flat	Au/Ag	—
<i>Faversham (x 4), Kent</i> <i>BM 1222A-70</i>	37	2.4	1*	min. 7	flat	Au/Ag	—

Mildenhall (Warren Hill), Suffolk (Fig. 9e).<sup>41</sup> While the former is gilded and the latter iron-stained on its back, they are both made from thin copper alloy, punch-decorated, in the case of Mildenhall with a 'fish-scale' pattern, and have 'fins' arranged non-naturalistically in symmetrical pairs. A damaged iron fitting from the shield in Cleatham 25, Lincs. (Fig. 9b) is also assigned to type ia, though its piscine nature is suggested only by a triangular tail and smoothly curved body.

<sup>41</sup> Objections to Mildenhall being a board mount raised by Hills, *op. cit.* in note 2, 173–5, Evison, *op. cit.* in note 2, 32, and West, *op. cit.* in note 24, 83 and fig. 116.4, can be countered. The find-context, 'with half a bracelet clasp [sleeve-clasp], in what was doubtless an interment', is given only in W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Suffolk*, I (London, 1911), 342 and fig. 9, and is scarcely exact, though were it a female grave, it would be no objection, since other likely shield fittings come from female burials, notably Eriswell 046, 284. The rivets are just below the norm in length, but not necessarily too short to be functional, especially given the unusual convex-concave curvature along the long axis of the mount: perhaps it had been fastened over a moulded backing, for which the flat foils over wood on the shields from Sutton Hoo mound 1 and Vendel I provide a parallel: Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, 91–2.

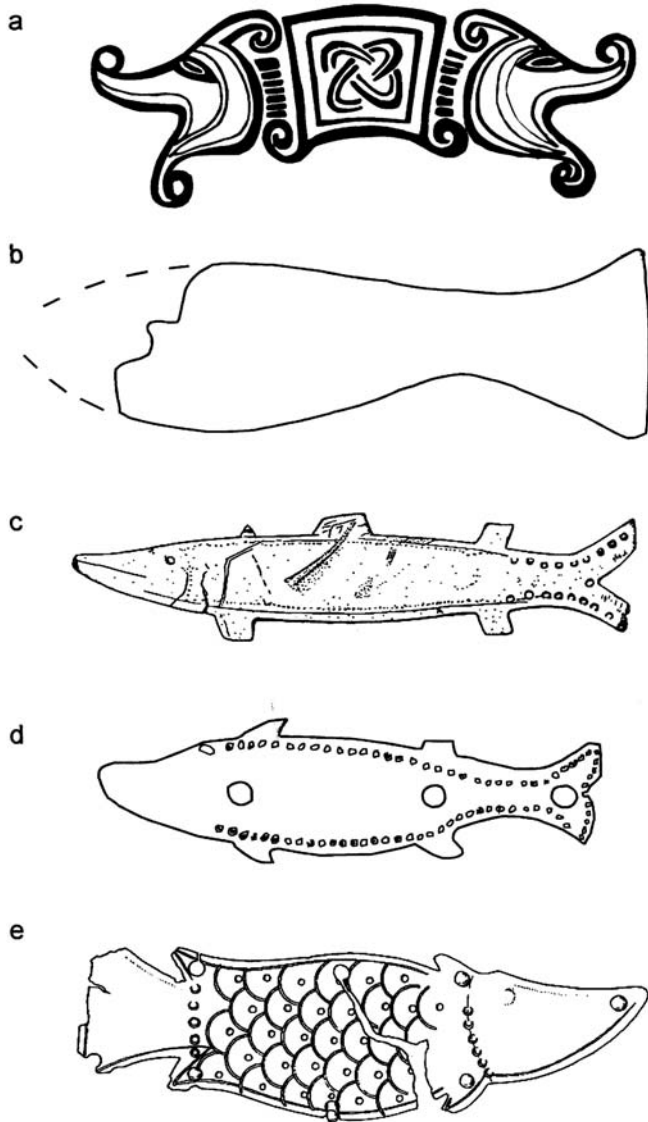


FIG. 9

a: Bidford-upon-Avon 182 flange mount; b–e: type-ia aquatic board mounts. b: Cleatham 25; c: Spong Hill 31; d: Eriswell 046, 284; e: Mildenhall. Scale 1:1. a–b and d, drawn by T. M. Dickinson; c, after Hills *et al.*, *op. cit.* in 39, fig. 87, 4–5, reproduced with permission of Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service; e, after West, *op. cit.* in note 24, fig. 116, 4, reproduced with permission of Suffolk County Council.

Type ib: Large, mostly symmetrical and/or multi-surfaced aquatic creatures

The other aquatic mounts mostly have white-metal surfaces in whole or part, are larger (lengths 104–145 mm) and far less fish-like. ‘Fins’, if present, are arranged symmetrically in one or two triangular or hooked pairs, as if viewed from above. The core members of type ib are copper-alloy: a pair from Sheffield’s Hill 115 (Fig. 10a) and a singleton from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Figs. 4e and 10e) and unassociated finds from Barnes Foreshore, Middlesex (Fig. 10d), Kenninghall,

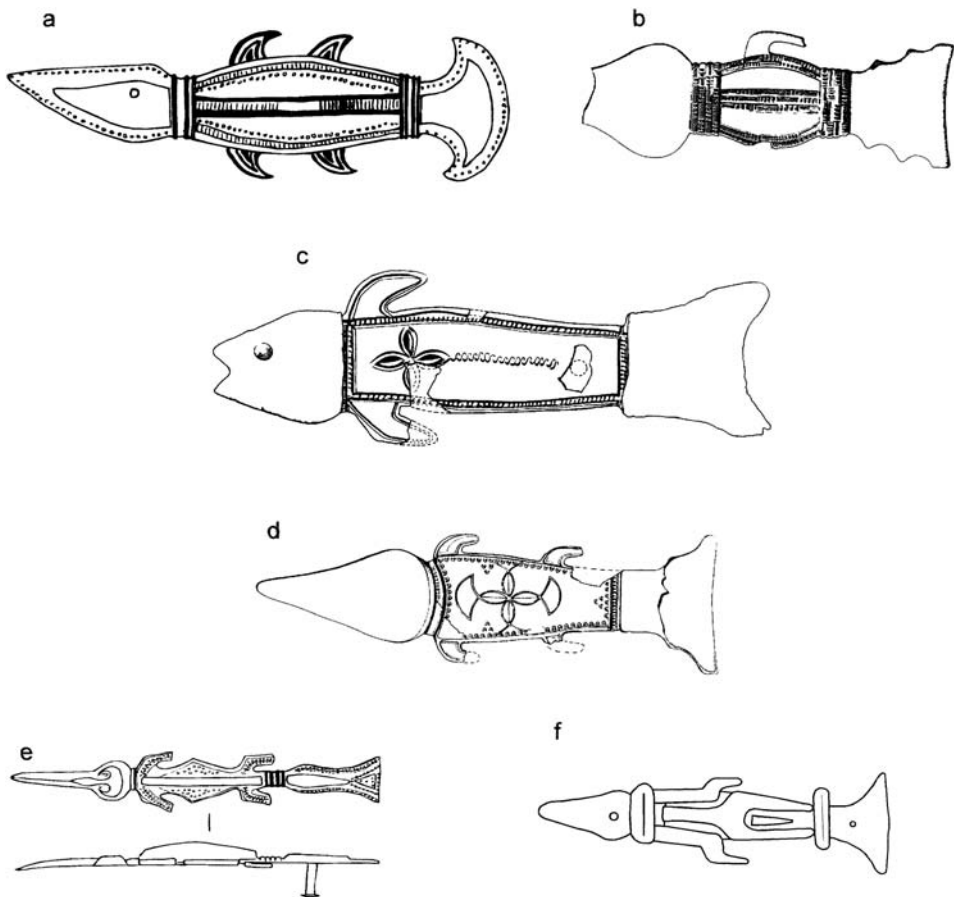


FIG. 10

Aquatic mounts. a–e: type-1b board mounts. a: Sheffield's Hill 115; b: Worlabby; c: Kenninghall; d: Barnes; e: Sutton Hoo 018, 868; f: Eriswell 104, 232 cone mount. Scale 1:2. a, e–f, drawn by T. M. Dickinson; b, after Knowles, *op. cit.* in note 42, fig. 6.2; c, after Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, fig. 69c; d, after Evison, *op. cit.* in note 2, text fig. 5c, © English Heritage.

Norfolk (Fig. 10c) and Worlabby 2, Lincs. (Fig. 10b).<sup>42</sup> They have gilded and punch-decorated bodies contrasted with silver-plated heads and tails, and are interlinked by other attributes, such as body-shape and decoration (Sheffield's Hill 115 and Worlabby; Barnes and Kenninghall) and scalloped-outline tails (Worlabby and Kenninghall). While the pike-like head of Sheffield's Hill 115 and the open-mouthed head of Kenninghall are in profile, the others are *en face*. Sutton Hoo 018,

<sup>42</sup> Clark, *op. cit.* in note 2; Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, 94 fn. 7, fig. 69c, where the statement that the Kenninghall mount was associated with a shield boss, grip and silver-plated disc-head rivets is a misinterpretation of the Accession Register; G. C. Knowles, 'Worlabby', *East Midlands Archaeol. Bull.*, 8 (1965), 26–8, fig. 6.2: it is possible that this grave, a male with a spear, had a shield disturbed or removed prior to archaeological observation taking place.

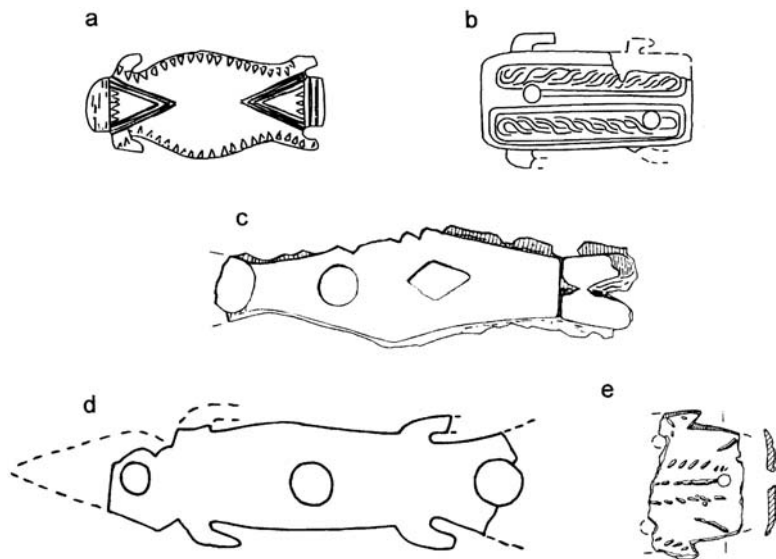


FIG. 11

Aquatic board mounts of type ib. a: Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, 807; b: Boxford; c: Buckland 93; d: Kempston 52; e: Canterbury. Scale 1:2. b and d, drawn by T. M. Dickinson; a, after Miles, *op. cit. in note 2, fig. 3*; c, after Evison 1987, *op. cit. in note 2, text fig. 5a*, © English Heritage; e, after Blockley et al. 1995, *op. cit. in note 2, fig. 443, 466*, reproduced with permission of Canterbury Archaeological Trust.

868 stands out because of the virtuosity of its multiple-plane modelling — flat-topped, ‘m-shaped’, face with elongated, triangular-sectioned snout, upright, silver-plated spine and shapely ‘mermaid’ tail.

Five further finds, all damaged, can be linked to type ib. The unassociated, gilded mounts from Barton Court Farm, Abingdon, 807, Oxon. (Fig. 11a)<sup>43</sup> and Boxford, Berks. (Fig. 11b) are assigned on the basis of their paired ‘fins’ and body shapes. The absence of a head and tail, and hence the small size, of the former can be explained by its conversion to a brooch, but its front ‘fins’, almost in the shape of out-turned animal heads, are still unusual. Boxford, probably also converted to a brooch (there are traces of solder on the back and two secondary rivets), is intact, however, apart from its damaged ‘fins’ and never had a head or tail. It is also distinguished by the relief-cast pseudo-interlace. The other pieces ascribed to type ib are simpler. Silver-plated terminals and rivet heads are the only embellishment on the fin-less, iron mounts from Buckland Dover 93, Kent (Fig. 11c).<sup>44</sup> Although the lozengiform body-shape is similar to that of Sutton Hoo 018, 868, an aquatic identification depends on assuming that the forked terminals, the only ones to survive fully, are tails and that the opposing terminals were head-shaped rather than in mirror-image. The mount from Kempston 52, Beds. (Fig. 11d), coated overall in white metal, preserves enough of its head and tail to suggest an aquatic

<sup>43</sup> Miles, *op. cit. in note 2*, 18–19, fiche 4:B5 and B7.

<sup>44</sup> Evison, *op. cit. in note 2*, 32, 238, text fig. 5a and fig. 43c–d.

nature, but little more.<sup>45</sup> Finally, there is a much truncated fragment with two extant 'fins', from the 'dark earth' at Canterbury, Kent (Fig. 11e).<sup>46</sup> Given its width (40 mm), it must originally have been another large mount, but it bears no trace of gilding or silvering and is crudely decorated with jabbed lines.

### *Type ii: Predatory birds*

Although there are only seven mounts in the form of a profile predatory bird (Fig. 12), they have been separated into three sub-types, the first two analogous to types ia and ib aquatic mounts respectively and measuring mostly 60–70 mm in length, although Sutton Hoo 018, 868 is smaller. The bird from Sutton Hoo mound 1 is substantially larger and is assigned to its own sub-type.

### *Type iia: Single-surface bird*

Cleatham 25 contained a second iron mount, of different profile to the fish assigned to type ia. It too is damaged, but appears to have a beaked head and to represent an upright bird, though admittedly there is no tail, wing or leg (Fig. 12a). There are three iron rivets, one of which is suitably positioned for an eye.

### *Type iib: Bichrome birds with Style I or II features*

Cognate with the core type-ib aquatic mounts is a group of cast, copper-alloy crouching birds-of-prey, which all have, or had, raised, silver-plated surfaces contrasted with gilded, sometimes punched or notched, relief decoration. They are represented by a singleton from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Figs. 4d and 12e), a matching pair from Eriswell 104, 232 (Fig. 12c) and a non-matched trio from Mill Hill 81, Kent (Fig. 12b), which corroborate identification of the mirror-image pair from a poorly-recorded weapon grave at Shelford Farm, Sturry/Canterbury (Fig. 12d) and a stray find from Gilton, Ash (Fig. 12f), both Kent.<sup>47</sup> The mounts bridge the stylistic divide between Salin's Style I and II and are polythetically interrelated. The Mill Hill 81 trio combines features which Birte Brugmann took as characteristically Style II ('u-shaped' tail, coiled wing, short beak, coiled claws and angular, braceleted leg) with an 's-curved' head/neck crest more typical of Style I. Even more characteristic of Style I are the three raised silver-plated bands of the neck/body in Haseloff's Style Phase D. The Gilton mount, although regularly included in studies of Anglo-Saxon Style II, lacks any really diagnostic element of that style: it has no eye or wing, and the gilded, ribbed collar separating the silver-plated head/neck from the body/tail is not unlike those on the Bidford-on-Avon 182 boss-flange mounts (cf. Figs. 9a and 12f). Moreover, with the outer tip of its beak the

<sup>45</sup> Kennett, op. cit. in note 2, 55–9.

<sup>46</sup> Webster, op. cit. in note 2.

<sup>47</sup> Parfitt and Brugmann, op. cit. in note 2, 87–8, 147, frontispiece and figs. 11 and 43; Speake, op. cit. in note 2, 82–3, fig. 17a and c; A. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), 136; B. M. Ager and D. W. Dawson, 'A Saxon cemetery site at Shelford Farm, Canterbury', *Archaeol. Cantiana*, 107 (1989), 107–15. The closeness in size and shape of the Shelford Farm mounts to those from Eriswell, the consistency of their rivet lengths with other shield fittings, and their reported discovery in a grave with a spearhead and a shield boss, now lost, should assuage Evison's doubts about their identification: op. cit. in note 2, 32.

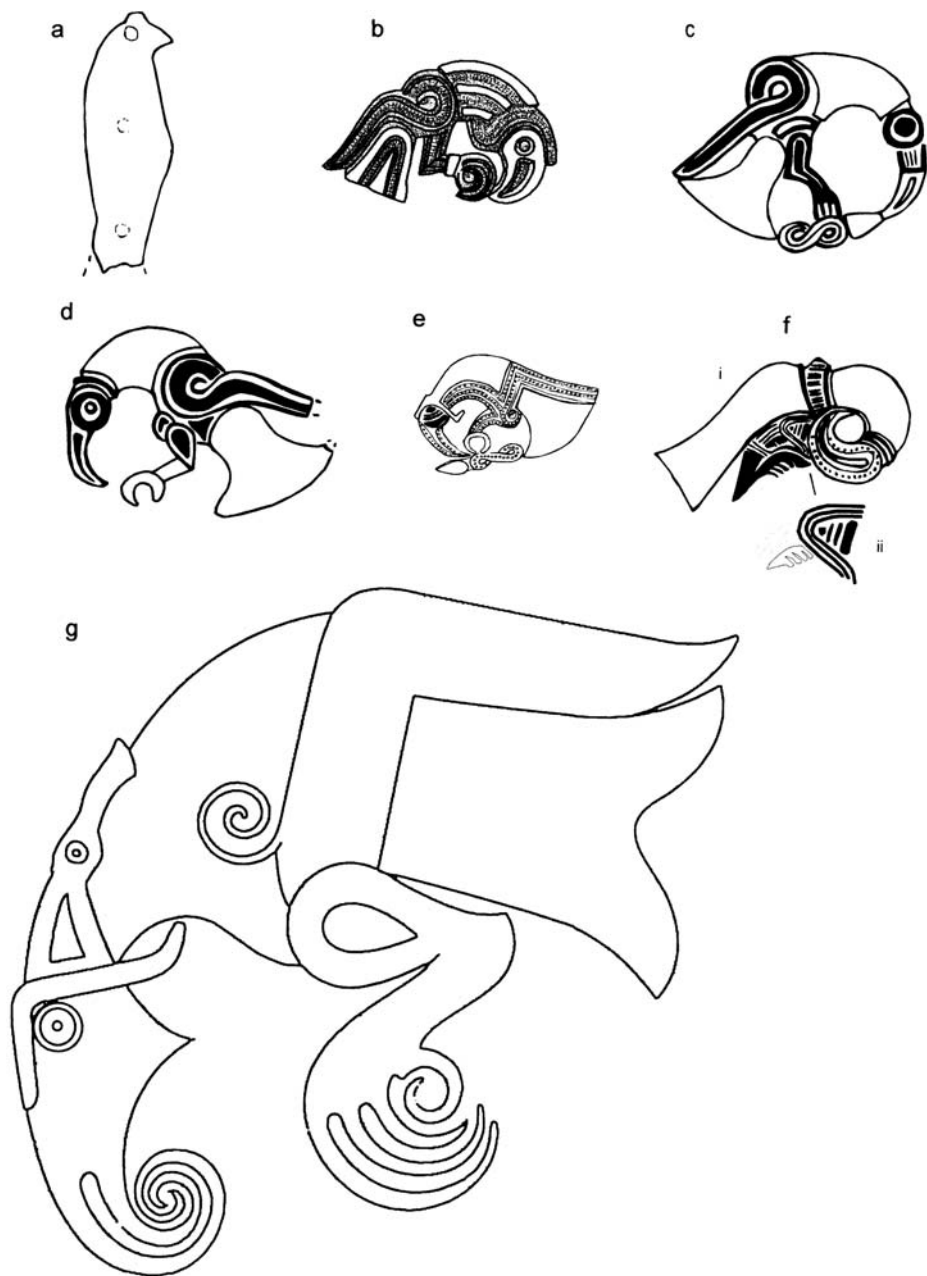


FIG. 12

Predatory-bird board mounts. a: Cleatham 25, type iia; b: Mill Hill 81 type iib; c: Eriswell 104, 232 type iib; d: Shelford type iib; e: Sutton Hoo 018, 868 type iib; f: Gilton, Ash type iib; g: Sutton Hoo mound 1 type iic. a–fi and g, Scale 1:1; fii, Scale 1:1. a, c–f drawn by T. M. Dickinson; b, after Parfitt and Brugmann, *op. cit.* in note 2, fig. 43b; g, after Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 1, fig. 48a.

bird nuzzles a little animal cradled between its body and leg, which, with its three-strand 'u-shaped' head and body-block, and four-clawed foot, is typical Style I (Fig. 12f,ii).<sup>48</sup> It also implies that, contrary to the way it is traditionally illustrated, the bird is better viewed as crouching. Such a stance is certain for the birds from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 and Eriswell 104, 232, because they hold and peck at a 'figure-of-eight' snake (Fig. 12c and e), and is also probable for Shelford Farm (Fig. 12d), given that it shares its pincer-like claw with Sutton Hoo 018, 868 and with Eriswell the shape of head, eye, tail and wing (the last also matched by Mill Hill 81). Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Fig. 12e), with its 'z-angled' head crest and triple-ridged wing angled round the tail, is actually the only piece in classic Style II apart from the Scandinavian bird-mount from Sutton Hoo mound 1.

#### Type iic: Composite bird, with Style II internal decoration

While the predatory bird from Sutton Hoo mound 1 (Fig. 12g) is linked through its contrasting metal surfaces and other attributes with type iib, its size, composite construction and decoration are *sui generis*. The head (with rear dragon- or wolf-head extension) and leg with coiled claws are cast copper-alloy, embellished by gilding, tinning, punching and cloisonné. The wing and tail, and perhaps once the body, are made from *Pressblech* gold foils, set over wood underlays, and are decorated with Style II animals.<sup>49</sup>

#### Type iii: 'Dragons'

The other figural fitting on the Sutton Hoo mound 1 shield (Fig. 13b) and, by analogy, a fragment from mound 2 (Fig. 13a) have been called dragons.<sup>50</sup> The latter, made from thin, gilded copper alloy, survives only as a profile head with part of an enigmatic, openwork body and possibly wing or fin. By contrast, the former is cast in two pieces, with central panels of cloisonné, Style II and interlace, as well as single inlaid garnets, punching and gilding, all offset by tinned framelines. Both display a vicious carnivore's teeth. The mound 1 mount is also distinguished by its long body terminating in a coiled joint from which spring a pair of crossed-over and multi-digit ('feathered') limbs with an internally coiled 'big toe'; three, identically constructed pairs of limbs, except that they lack the 'big toe', lie flat against the side of the body. Rupert Bruce-Mitford read the terminal limbs as legs, but the lateral limbs as wings.

#### Type iv: *Quadrupeds*

The nearly matched pair of fittings from the shield in Bergh Apton 26, Norfolk, is still the only instance of a quadrupedal figural mount (Fig. 13c).<sup>51</sup> Gilding survives only on the edges and in recesses such as the ear, so it is unclear

<sup>48</sup> It was included in Høilund Nielsen's 1999 stylistic analysis of Anglo-Saxon Style II (op. cit. in note 6, fig. 11), but was linked to other objects there only by the bird's leg and foot (her elements LA2 and FA2), which could be equally or rather better paralleled in a Style I corpus.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 55–63.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 63–6, fig. 50, pl. 3; idem, op. cit. in note 13, 118, figs. 60h and 71a.

<sup>51</sup> B. Green and A. Rogerson, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Bergh Apton, Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeol., 7, Gressenhall, 1978), 22, fig. 80b–c and pl. II.

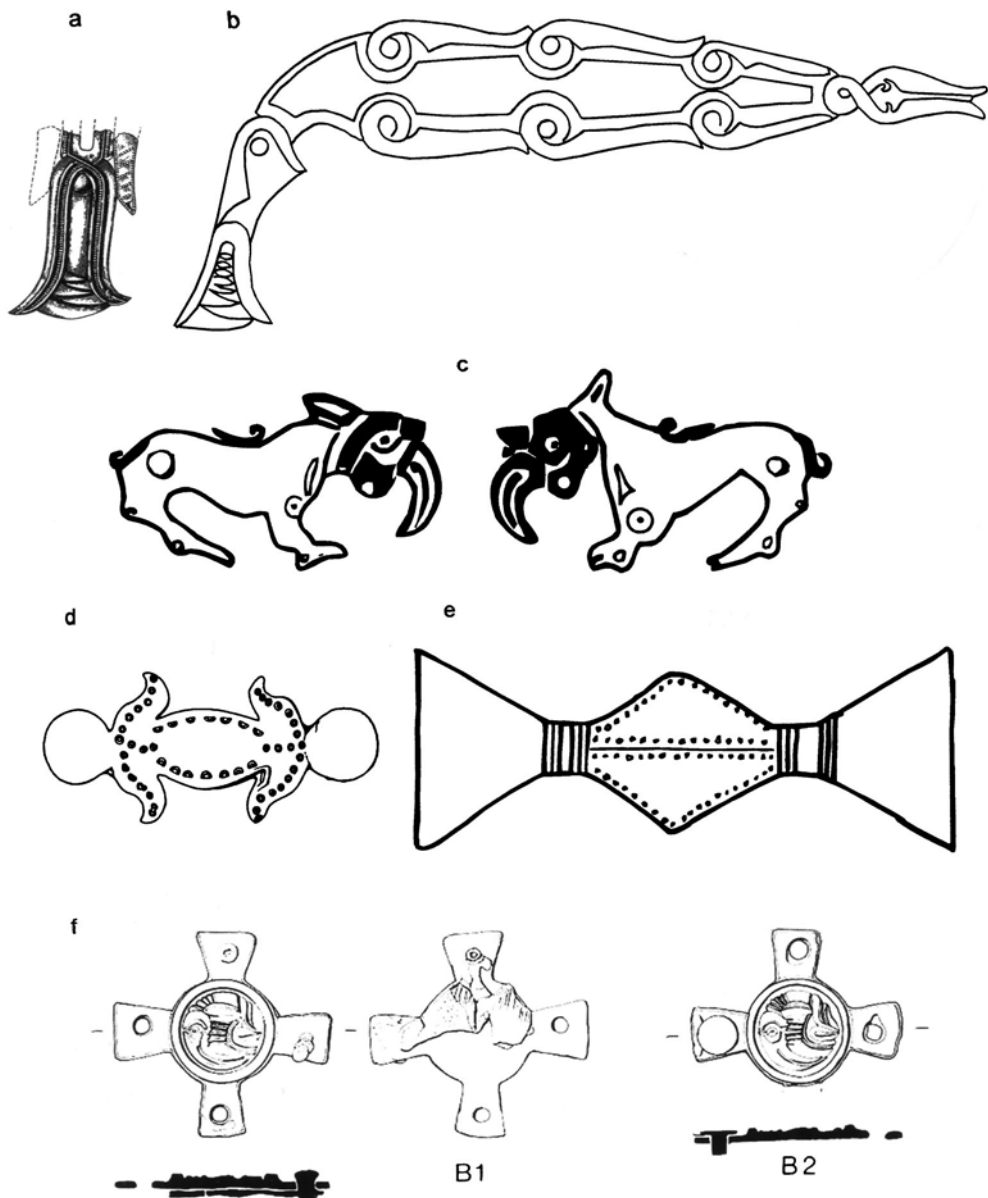


FIG. 13

Other board mounts. a: Sutton Hoo mound 2 type-iii 'dragon'; b: Sutton Hoo mound 1 type-iii 'dragon'; c: Bergh Apton 26 type-iv hippogriff; d: Mucking II, 600 type-v zoomorphised symmetrical; e: Sleaford 136 non-zoomorphised symmetrical; f: Westgarth Gardens 41 type-vi cruciform. a-b, Scale 1:2. c-f, Scale 1:1. b, c and e, drawn by T. M. Dickinson. a, after Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 13, fig. 60h. d, after Evison, *op. cit.* in note 2, text fig. 5b, © English Heritage. f, after West, *op. cit.* in note 56, fig. 71B, reproduced with permission of Suffolk County Council.

whether the whole body was originally gilded or whether its plane surface might once have had a white-metal finish. The head is modelled with a Style I-like, peaked 'helmet' surround, cheek bar and triangular ear, flat on the right-facing animal but erect on the left-facing; it also has a long curved beak with internal ridge, similar to the beaks of the type-iiB predatory birds. The hooves are 'cloven' and small 'comma-shapes' indicate tail and wing, the last confirming that this was intended as a flying quadruped, a griffin or more probably hippogriff.<sup>52</sup>

*Type v: Symmetrically-shaped fittings with lozengiform or ovoid body*

Previous commentators have compared the pair of bichrome shield-mounts from the Mucking II, 600 shield with fish-shaped mounts (Fig. 13d).<sup>53</sup> Although their ovoid bodies are similar to some type-iiB aquatic fittings, they are much smaller and their paired lappets are ogee-curved and in mirror-image to each other. Rather than being fins, they look like pairs of out-turned bird-heads, as recognised by Vera Evison, while the silver-plated discoid terminals might be skeuomorphs of disc-headed rivets.<sup>54</sup> The fittings are therefore zoomorphised, but not truly figural, let alone pisciform. Comparisons might be made with a pair of bichrome fittings from a shield in Sleaford 136 (Fig. 13e).<sup>55</sup> Their ridged, gilded and punched bodies are not unlike that of the Sutton Hoo 018, 868 aquatic mount (cf. Fig. 4e), but both their silver-plated terminals are triangular. They are therefore purely geometric and have been omitted from this study, though it is a moot point whether a zoomorphic (aquatic) appearance was intended or given.

*Type vi: Cruciform*

A pair of fittings with four silver-plated arms (for attachment) and a raised, central, relief-decorated and gilded disc was found underneath the shield boss in Westgarth Gardens 41 (Fig. 13f).<sup>56</sup> They are far smaller than mounts from the front of boards, and smaller even than cruciform mounts from horse-harness,<sup>57</sup> yet they had been attached to wood, for some adhered to the sole extant primary disc-headed rivet (on mount B2), despite its being only 2 mm in length, and to the back of mount B1 (its secondary iron rivets are even more exiguous in length). The direction of the grain on B1 implies that if the fittings were mounted as was normal for figural mounts on the front of boards, that is with the wood grain running parallel to their long axis, then the animal at the centre would have been pointing downwards (thus Fig. 13f); if the animal was to be viewed in a more 'natural' horizontal axis (thus Fig. 2e), then the fittings must have been mounted across the grain, parallel with the shield grip. The published report says that B1 possibly also

<sup>52</sup> Whereas Evison, op. cit. in note 2, 32, observed the 'griffin-type' qualities, Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 175, saw 'a curious combination of a naturalistic dog's body with a stylised beaked head', and Hicks, op. cit. in note 2, 29, a backward-leaning animal with open jaws devouring a victim's limb.

<sup>53</sup> Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 175; Evison, op. cit. in note 2, 33; Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 53–4.

<sup>54</sup> Evison, op. cit. in note 28, 270; Avent and Evison, op. cit. in note 29, 97.

<sup>55</sup> G. Thomas, 'Excavations in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Sleaford', *Archaeologia*, 50 (1887), 383–406, at p. 397, pl. XXIII, 3; they were overlooked by Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2.

<sup>56</sup> S. West, *Westgarth Gardens Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk: Catalogue* (East Anglian Archaeol., 38, Bury St Edmunds, 1988), 11–13, 30–1, fig. 71 and pl. V.

<sup>57</sup> Dickinson, Fern and Hall, op. cit. in note 7.

had textile sandwiched under the wood, and one of the mounts (the publication is imprecise on which) 'was embedded in wood with . . . probably leather'. The mounts do not seem suitable for fastening a carrying strap, because where such fittings are known they normally have a 'kink' or loop in them.<sup>58</sup> Despite their oddities, the Westgarth Gardens mounts are presumed to have been attached to the rear of a leather-covered — and perhaps here textile-covered — wooden board. The motif in the central disc is a backward-turned animal in 'thick and thin' technique Style I with long, parallel, curved jaws and one leg (Fig. 2e).

### *Type vii: Discoid*

Finally, the only discoid zoomorphic fittings certainly from a shield board come from Sutton Hoo mound 1, though in the form of gold-foil collars round the hemispherical bosses which embellish the long strip-mounts. They are decorated with Style II heads.<sup>59</sup> The shields from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 and Eriswell 104, 232 had, however, geometrically-decorated cast copper-alloy discs which help substantiate as board mounts an unassociated set of four zoomorphic discs from Faversham, Kent (Fig. 7c).<sup>60</sup> All three sets combine a silver-plated flat border with gilded relief round a central disc. The Sutton Hoo set is decorated with simple radial bars, matching the disc-headed rivets on the boss flange, while the Eriswell set bears a single-strand interlace. Superficially the decoration of the Faversham mounts in 'thick and thin' technique also looks like interlace. In fact, three squat hearts or peltas separate three anticlockwise-facing heads with 's-shaped' 'hair', eye, cheek bars and, on one animal on one disc only, a triangular ear. The 's-shaped' and 'c-shaped' elements behind each head might be further, but simplified, heads or, more likely, body-blocks, thus producing a design of three pseudo-interlaced 'whole' animals.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 29; cf. also comments on Sheffield's Hill 115 below, note 87.

<sup>59</sup> Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 66.

<sup>60</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 77, where they were erroneously described as iron; their backs are merely stained with rust.

<sup>61</sup> Such multiple-ridged 'c-shapes' feature on a series of late cast saucer brooches, including examples from Faversham and Puddlehill II, grave 10, Beds.: C. L. Matthews and S. C. Hawkes, 'Early Saxon settlements and burials on Puddlehill, near Dunstable, Bedfordshire', *Anglo-Saxon Stud. Archaeol. Hist.*, 4 (1985), 59–115, at pp. 91–7; T. M. Dickinson, 'Translating animal art: Salin's Style I and Anglo-Saxon cast saucer brooches', *Hikuin*, 29 (2002), 163–86, at p. 76, where their zoomorphic character is discussed. Another reading is to see each panel as a pair of diagonally symmetrical mirror-image heads. A gilded, cast copper-alloy disc with a central rivet and decorated in Style II from Sutton Hoo mound 2 was proposed as a possible shield fitting by Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 13, 115–17 and 128–9; but H. Vierck, 'Eine angelsächsische Zierscheibe des 7. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. aus Haithabu', 94–109 in B. Arrhenius et al., *Berichte über die Ausgrabungen in Haithabu, 12: Das archäologische Fundmaterial III der Ausgrabung Haithabu* (Neumünster, 1977), at p. 103, argued that it came from a casket, while the excavation of a matching piece has now led Angela Evans to suggest a role as saddle fittings: in M. O. H. Carver and M. Hummler, *Sutton Hoo: An Early Medieval Cemetery and its Context* (London, forthcoming).

# THE CONTEXTS OF PRODUCTION AND USE OF ANGLO-SAXON ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELDS

## CHRONOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION

The problems of building a fine chronology for 6th-century England are well known and have not been circumvented here in relation to the shield ornaments.<sup>62</sup> Table 1 incorporates dating evidence from the shield-grave assemblages, together with inferences drawn from their stratigraphic position and the copying of motifs. The only recurrently associated artefact-types that might guide a seriation are shield bosses and spearheads. The end of the sequence seems to be anchored by the deposition of Sutton Hoo mound 1 probably sometime in the early 7th century, though its coin parcel cannot date the burial as closely as has sometimes been presumed. From its famous assemblage may be noted the shield boss of Nørgård Jørgensen's Scandinavian Type SBA and the spearheads of Swanton's types A2, C2, D2 and G2.<sup>63</sup> Sutton Hoo mound 2 is tied to mound 1 by shared artefact-types. Both their Scandinavian shields, however, could have been made — and imported — up to two generations earlier.<sup>64</sup>

The relative chronology of the burials that precede these two is more problematic. The Insular shield-boss typology gives some guidance, but is also affected by regional preferences. Dickinson Group 1.1 started in the later 5th century before Group 2 (popular in East Anglia) and Group 3 (especially common in Kent from about the second quarter to the end of the 6th century) but could still be in use in the later 6th century, at least in the Upper Thames region. The absence of Group 6 and yet later shield bosses must indicate, however, that the sequence as a whole barely extended, if at all, into the 7th century. Although the shift to very narrow, or non-existent, boss apexes, would have precluded continued use of ornamental apex discs, it would not have affected application of board fittings.<sup>65</sup> Of the associated spearheads, Swanton's types D1, H1, H2 and L are more characteristic of the 5th to (mid-)6th century, whilst types D2 and E3 are primarily found in (mid-)6th- to 7th-century contexts, but they cross-cut the boss-types and were clearly also long-lived.<sup>66</sup> Two of the Kentish graves can be dated within Brugmann's Kentish Phase III/IV (c. 530/40–580/90). Buckland Dover 93, with its reticella bead, belongs to the cognate Phase A2b in her bead chronology and to Phase 2b–3a in the new Buckland chronology, while the massive rectangular buckle and shoe-shaped rivets, datable to the third quarter of the 6th century, from Mill Hill 81 suggest that it should not be dated to the start of Kentish Phase III/

<sup>62</sup> J. Hines, K. Høilund Nielsen and F. Siegmund (eds.), *The Pace of Change: Studies in Early-Medieval Chronology* (Oxford, 1999); T. M. Dickinson, 'Review article: What's new in early medieval burial archaeology?', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 71–87, at pp. 79–81.

<sup>63</sup> A. M. Stahl and W. A. Oddy, 'The date of the Sutton Hoo coins', 129–47 in R. Farrell and C. Neuman de Vegvar (eds.), *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After* (Oxford OH, 1992); cf. Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 13, 578–653; Nørgård Jørgensen, op. cit. in note 1, 78; M. J. Swanton, *The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (London, 1973), 33–4, 42–5, 67–71 and 101.

<sup>64</sup> Høilund Nielsen (1999), op. cit. in note 6, 194–8.

<sup>65</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 10–17 and 20–1.

<sup>66</sup> Swanton, op. cit. in note 63, 64–71, 83–7, 103–11 and 135–8.

IV.<sup>67</sup> Boss- and spearhead-types could align Eriswell 104, 232 and Sutton Hoo 018, 868 with either these Kentish graves or between them and the Sutton Hoo mound burials. Whether the remaining, mainly Anglian-area, burials are any earlier, and by how much, is a moot point. The ring-ditched Spong Hill 31, which Catherine Hills put 'not much beyond middle of 6th century', was secondary to the probably founding inhumation at the site, ring-ditched grave 40, which contained a Group 3 shield boss as well as an antique (5th-century) sword.<sup>68</sup> The vessels in Bidford-on-Avon 182 and Mucking II, 600 should indicate a 6th-century date, but nothing more precise. Unfortunately, associated artefacts cannot fix the starting order of the chronology. A *terminus post quem* for the manufacture of the Barrington B, 103 apex disc may be derived, however, from the type of great square-headed brooch which gave it its motif (Fig. 2a). Although the elements are unmatched precisely on any known brooch, they reflect the typological linkage between Hines's Group I and early Groups II and V, and Hines assigned the putative original to his early Phase 2, perhaps the first third and certainly the first half of the 6th century.<sup>69</sup> Arguably, then, the other shields with type-a apex discs are also early in the sequence.

The limited evidence from associations of shield-fittings found in secondary use in female burials confirms the picture. The flat annular brooches in Boss Hall 97 and Eriswell 046, 282 would align these graves with Hines's East Anglian 'costume group D in the final decades of the Migration Period', a phase ending in his terms in the 560/70s.<sup>70</sup> Stylistic considerations do not contradict the dating, but might add qualifications. As noted in the typological section above, there are some characteristics of early ('Jutlandic') Style I, such as Haseloff's Style Phase A on the Bidford-on-Avon 182 flange mounts (Figs. 3c and 9a) and the use of his Style Phase B on some apex discs, but they are used alongside features such as 'thick and thin' relief-casting and motif tricks like spiralliform or coiled 'y-shaped' hips (e.g. Fig. 5), which can be readily paralleled in mature English Style I, especially as represented on southern counties, high-rectangular garnet-inlaid belt plates and the fittings of the Taplow drinking horns. The latter also provide a parallel for the trick of 'interleaving' a limb with a body-element found on Bidford-on-Avon 182 Animal (ii) (Fig. 7b) and, in variant form, on Cottesmore (Fig. 2c). These traits are coupled with casting in Haseloff's Style Phase D, widely used on Anglo-Saxon relief-decorated brooches (great square-headed and saucer). Although Leigh's placing of a 'Taplow horizon' from about the second quarter of the 6th century may still be reasonable, it could have begun yet earlier in the century, if account is taken of arguments for Style I emerging before the conventional date of c. 475 in southern Scandinavia (and so reaching England before c. 500), and given recent

<sup>67</sup> Parfitt and Brugmann, op. cit. in note 2, 60, 72 and 104–9; B. Brugmann, *Glass Beads from Anglo-Saxon Graves: A Study on the Provenance and Chronology of Glass Beads from Anglo-Saxon Graves based on Visual Examination* (Oxford, 2004); eadem, pers. comm.; Evison, op. cit. in note 2, 141, assigned Buckland grave 93 to her Phase 3 (c. 575–625) and specifically to the last quarter of the 6th century.

<sup>68</sup> Hills, op. cit. in note 2, 176; Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 12.

<sup>69</sup> Hines, op. cit. in note 15, 311.

<sup>70</sup> J. Hines, 'The sixth-century transition in Anglian England: an analysis of female graves from Cambridgeshire', 65–79 in Hines et al. (eds.), op. cit. in note 62.

research on the high-rectangular belt plates and possibilities raised by the coin-dated grave at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight.<sup>71</sup> The use of Bichrome Style suggests, however, that the *floruit* of zoomorphic shield decoration came later. Vierck defined Bichrome Style as the contrasting of flat, silver-plated or white-metal surfaces, especially frames, with panels of deeper-set gilded relief characterised by animal art which is often transitional between Style I and Style II, including intertwining animals and 'plaitwork' — features which characterise type-a/b and many type-b apex discs and types-ib, iib, v, vi and vii board mounts.<sup>72</sup> Vierck's dating of the style to the second half of the 6th century still seems broadly valid, though Hines has argued for an earlier starting point because he dates his Phase 3 great square-headed brooches, on which Bichrome Style is prevalent, from c. 525/30–560/70. Indeed some discs from the bows of brooches in Hines's Groups II, XVI and XVII can be compared with the geometric board mounts from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 and Eriswell 104, 232.<sup>73</sup> The intermixing of stylistic traits which might be thought early in the 6th century with those more characteristic of later in the century makes it difficult to determine whether the material was the outcome of a fairly narrow period of production or of a longer period during which the capacity to produce quality, coherent Style I was never lost.<sup>74</sup> Sutton Hoo 018, 868, with its fine Style I apex disc alongside a good Style II bird (Fig. 4c–d), poses the dilemma most acutely: although some of its boss-flange rivets are probably replacements, all the bichrome fittings seem to have been designed and made as a set.

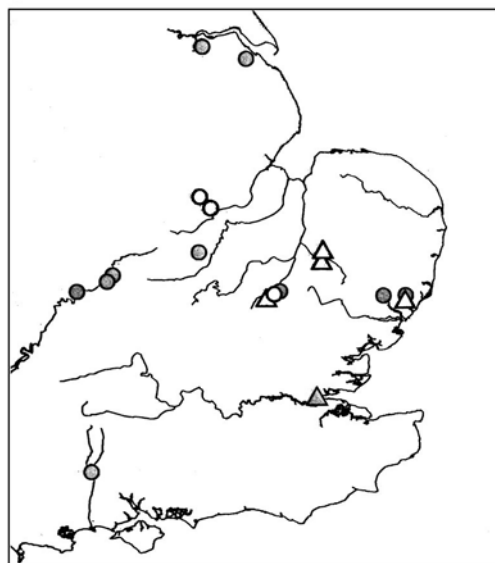
In sum, the animal-ornamented shields were probably produced mainly in the middle decades of the 6th century, but might have begun earlier and gone on in use later. Arguably, they started in the first half, perhaps in the second quarter, of the 6th century with small-diameter, type-a, apex discs, which are concentrated in the East Midlands (Fig. 14a). But fittings in Bichrome Style, such as the type-vi cruciform mounts from the back of the board and the larger, type-a/b and type-b, apex discs must have followed soon afterwards, extending the distribution throughout the Anglian cultural region, from Lincolnshire to East Anglia and the Warwickshire Avon (Fig. 14a and b). The absence of examples from Saxon cultural regions, apart from one outlier on the Thames estuary (Mucking) and a re-used piece from Wiltshire (Petersfinger), is notable, especially since two- and particularly three-chasing animal designs like those on type-b apex discs frequently occur in that area on applied and especially on cast saucer brooches. The distribution of

<sup>71</sup> Leigh, op. cit. in note 25, 117–18; cf. U. Näsman, 'Zwei Relieffibeln von der Insel Öland', *Præhist. Zeitsch.*, 59 (1984), 48–80; Dickinson, op. cit. in note 23, 25–6; Hines, op. cit. in note 15, 223–34; Morris and Dickinson, op. cit. in note 7, 91–3; Marzinzik, op. cit. in note 7.

<sup>72</sup> H. Vierck, 'Zur relativen und absoluten Chronologie der englischen Grabfunde in England', 42–52 in G. Kossack and J. Reichstein (eds.), *Archäologische Beiträge zur Chronologie der Völkerwanderungszeit* (Bonn, 1977); cf. Davidson and Webster, op. cit. in note 7, 26–32.

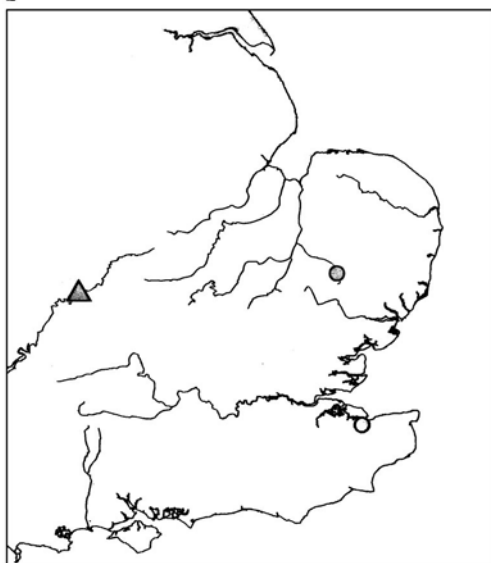
<sup>73</sup> Hines, op. cit. in note 15, esp. 130, 133, 138 and 231, pls. 13a (Tuxford, Notts.) and 58a (Ipswich); cf. M. G. Welch, 'Reflections on the archaeological connections between Scandinavia and eastern England in the Migration Period. Some comments on John Hines: The Scandinavian character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking period', *Stud. zur Sachsenforschung*, 6 (1987), 251–9, at pp. 257–9, who seeks to return dating of Hines's last phase, and by association the longevity of Style I, to a more traditional bracket.

<sup>74</sup> Ironically, one of the only examples of what might be thought typically 'degenerated' Style I — the all-over medley of leg- and body-elements on the untyped apex disc from Barrington A (Fig. 7d) — can be matched on Hines's early Phase 2, Group VII great square-headed brooches (the footplate inner panels).

**a**

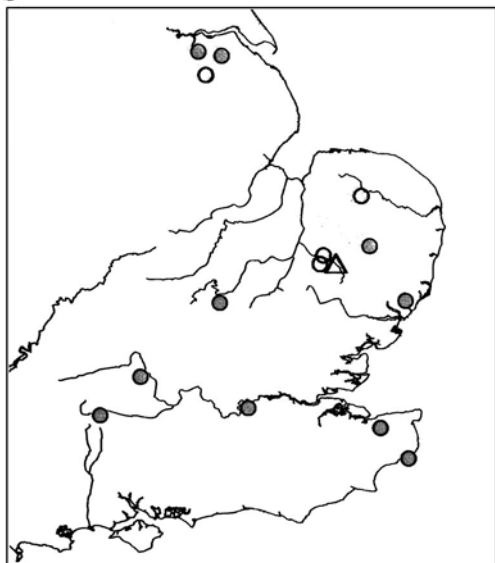
Apex Discs

- Type a
- Type b
- ▲ Type a/b
- △ Untyped

**b**

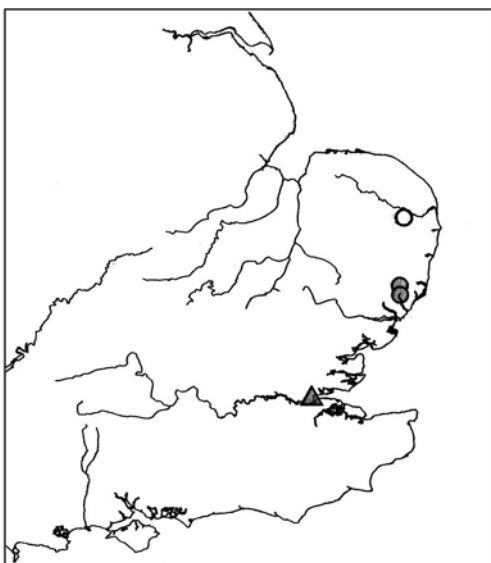
Board mounts

- Type vi cruciform
  - Type vii discoid Style I
- Boss flange mount ▲ Style I

**c**

Board Mounts

- Type ia Aquatic
  - Type ib Aquatic
- Boss cone mount △ Aquatic

**d**

Board mounts

- Type iii dragon
- Type iv quadruped
- ▲ Type v zoomorphised symmetric

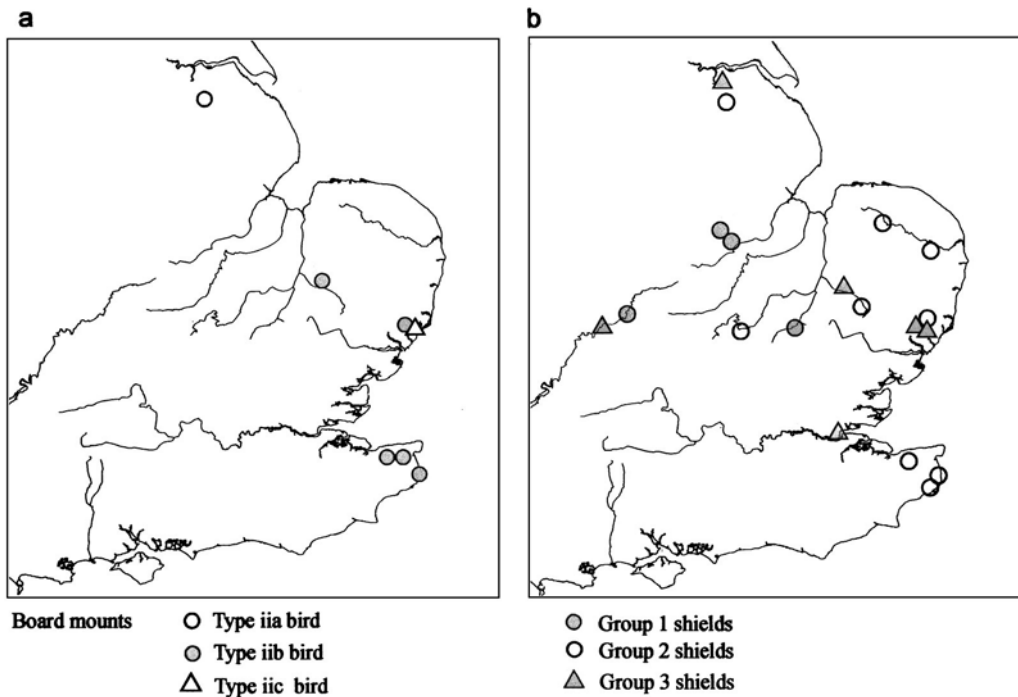


FIG. 15

Distribution maps. a: Predatory-bird board mounts; b: Shield combination groups. For site names, see Figure 1.  
*Computerised drawing by B. Gourley, devised by T. M. Dickinson.*

saucer brooches overlaps that of the shield-apex discs (especially in the Warwickshire Avon valley), but mostly complements it (being more southerly). Common (Kentish?) stylistic stimuli might lie behind both series, but the saucer brooches could also have imitated the shield ornaments.<sup>75</sup> The aquatic and zoomorphised symmetrical mounts must be contemporary with the type-a/b and type-b apex discs, and probably the quadruped mount is too (cf. Tab. 1). The most certain examples are concentrated in more easterly parts of the Anglian cultural region (Fig. 14c–d), though the distribution again extends to the Thames (Barnes and Mucking) and, if the somewhat uncertainly identified pair from Buckland Dover 93 and the fragmentary or re-used pieces in secondary contexts are admitted, beyond. Within this area, the particularly close links between the fittings from

FIG. 14 (*facing*)

Distribution maps. a: Apex discs; b: Other fittings in Style I; c: Aquatic mounts from board and boss cone; d: Miscellaneous figural board fittings. For site names, see Figure 1. *Computerised drawing by B. Gourley, devised by T. M. Dickinson*

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Dickinson, *op. cit.* in note 23, 25–6, esp. figs. 37–8 and 43–4; eadem, *op. cit.* in note 61; eadem, 'Applied and cast saucer brooches', in B. Eagles and P. Robinson, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Blacknall Field (Black Patch), Pawsey, Wilts.: Excavations by K. R. Annable* (forthcoming). It is unlikely, *contra* Avent and Evison, *op. cit.* in note 29, 97, that the apex discs were an 'offshoot of the button brooch production', since they share no decorative similarities and their distributions are discrete (the latter is essentially south-easterly).

Sheffield's Hill, 115, Aylesby and Worlaby (Figs. 6a–b and 10a–b), all in North Lincolnshire, might imply localised manufacture, but links between the Kenninghall and Barnes aquatic mounts (Fig. 10c–d), and between these two subsets, show that production traditions or distribution were geographically extensive. The discoid board mounts possibly and the predatory birds certainly look like a marginally later development within the second half of the 6th century (Figs. 7c and 12). Type-1ia and type-1ib birds are associated exclusively with Group 3 bosses and mostly with later spearhead-types (Tab. 1), and the distributions are extremely eastern, focused on Kent but extending coastwise into Suffolk and Lincolnshire (Figs. 14b and 15a).

#### THE USE OF ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELDS IN BURIAL

The social correlates of weapon burials have been well explored by Härke and Stoodley.<sup>76</sup> Shields were a perquisite of late adolescent and adult males; those with animal ornament are no different. Age-data are available for nine of the shield burials: two were young adults (Cleatham 25; Mucking II, 600), three were 30– to 45-year-olds (Buckland Dover 93; Empingham II, 112; Spong Hill 31, though this grave also included an unsexed child of about 12 years), one was 45 to 55 years old (Mill Hill 81) and three are identified only as adult or possibly adult (Westgarth Gardens 41; Barrington B, 103; Sutton Hoo 018, 868). There is no indication that the skeletons were other than male or the grave assemblages other than masculine.

Measuring the level of investment in graves with animal-ornamented shields is constrained by the smallness of the sample and the need to make allowance for the manifestly conspicuous investment in Sutton Hoo mounds 1 and 2, on the one hand, and on the other, the impact of grave robbing (as with the Spong Hill 31 chamber grave) or poor recording. A crude count can be made of fifteen burials, excluding the Sutton Hoo mounds, which gives an average number of artefacts (ANA) of 4.4, the same as Härke noted for shield burials in general.<sup>77</sup> Nor is there much difference between the shield groups (cf. Tab. 1 and Fig. 15b): while Group 1 (apex discs only) scores least (3.6 ANA), Group 2 (board-fittings only) scores more (5 ANA) than Group 3 (combined fittings: 4.2 ANA). Above-average investment may be indicated by other features. Taking twelve burials for which there are data for grave-size (including Spong Hill 31, but again excluding the Sutton Hoo mounds), the average grave length (2.70 m) and width (1.16 m) are above the male weapon-burial norm established by Stoodley (2.13 m and 0.84 m respectively).<sup>78</sup> If Spong Hill 31 is excluded, the average length is still fractionally above the norm (2.27 m), but the width falls below it (0.77 m). Härke and Stoodley also used the incidence of gilding, silver/silvering and precious stones as indices of wealth, which would automatically elevate the value of most animal-ornamented shields, substantially so in the case of those with bichrome or polychrome fittings.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Op. cit. in note 4.

<sup>77</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 30: the statement that figural shield-board mounts were linked to an average of 7.5 artefacts must reflect the sample used there, for the ten analysable graves in my sample with figural mounts barely differ from the standard.

<sup>78</sup> Stoodley, op. cit. in note 4, 67–8.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 91.

But what particularly distinguishes these graves is their level of armament. Of the eighteen graves for which some record exists, seventeen contained a spear or spears, a much higher rate than that observed for shield burials in general, especially given that in East Anglia, from where many of the animal-ornamented shields come, shield-alone burial was not uncommon.<sup>80</sup> At least seven (39%), all with shields in Group 2 or 3, also had a sword, again a very high proportion compared with the average for weapon burials (10.7%) and for shield burials in particular (17.6%), though this may partly reflect local customs in Kent, Essex and Suffolk (Fig. 15b), and chronological factors.<sup>81</sup> Rich burials did not necessarily contain an animal-ornamented shield, nor were such shields necessarily associated with great grave wealth. There are nonetheless good grounds for believing that male burials with animal-ornamented shields would have stood out within their local community. Some, most obviously Sutton Hoo mounds 1 and 2, were exceptional on a very much wider scale.<sup>82</sup>

#### THE POSITION OF ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELDS IN GRAVES

Table 5 shows the position of the shield in the sixteen burials for which there is evidence. While this reflects the tendency for horizontal shields to occupy the central axis of a grave and local preferences for position within this — the head/upper body end in Anglian regions and the lower body/legs in Saxon regions — the proportion to the side of the body, including vertically against a chamber wall, is higher than might be expected.<sup>83</sup> Those focused on the upper centre line include the most lavishly ornamented shields and all those with Bichrome-Style predatory birds for which data are available. While a shield, as one of the largest items placed in a grave, can be expected to have been clearly visible, a shield with animal ornament would particularly have drawn attention to the dead man whom it ‘protected’ or whose grave chamber, more emblematically, it ‘stood guard’ over.

#### RE-USE IN FEMALE GRAVES

Zoomorphic shield-ornaments were not confined to the male realm, however. Four of the seven probable or possible apex discs and three of the ten probable figural board-mounts were found in female or feminine graves, having been converted for use as a brooch or pendant. It might be thought that this re-use was simply dictated by suitable size and shape, especially in the case of apex discs which are so like contemporary saucer brooches, and given that comparably decorated mounts from horse-harness were also adapted in this way.<sup>84</sup> There is no evidence

<sup>80</sup> Dickinson and Härke, *op. cit.* in note 2, 67 and tab. 18.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*; Härke, *op. cit.* in note 4, 100–13.

<sup>82</sup> These functionalist observations are made, of course, as part of the process of assessing the ideological value of the shields not as a substitution for it: cf. F. Theuvs and M. Alkermade, ‘A kind of mirror for men: sword depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul’, 401–76 in Theuvs and Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.* in note 5.

<sup>83</sup> Dickinson and Härke, *op. cit.* in note 2, 64–7: two-thirds of the national sample of shields were along the middle axis and 9% vertically along the sides compared with half and 18% respectively in this, admittedly very small, sample; it is also argued there, *contra* Hills et al., *op. cit.* in note 39, 7 and 89, fig. 40, that the Spong Hill 31 shield was originally leaning against the inside of the chamber’s timber W. wall, and that its collapse led to the boss and aquatic mounts being found between the external base of the chamber wall and the stone packing.

<sup>84</sup> Dickinson, Fern and Hall, *op. cit.* in note 7.

TABLE 5  
POSITION IN THE GRAVE OF SHIELDS WITH ANIMAL ORNAMENT

	<i>right</i>	<i>centre</i>	<i>left</i>
head-end	Spong Hill 31	Sutton Hoo 1	
wall	(vertical)	(vertical)	
head/	Empingham II, 112	Eriswell 104, 232	Bergh Apton 26
chest		Mill Hill 81	Sutton Hoo 2
		Sutton Hoo 018, 868	(vertical)
		Wasperton 64	
trunk	Westgarth Gardens 41	Sheffield's Hill 115	Barrington B
			103
			Bidford 182
legs		Buckland Dover 93	Cleatham 25
		Mucking II, 600	

(so far), however, that the largest, most lavish, aquatic mounts or the predatory-bird mounts were so re-used, which suggests that ideological factors also governed what could be transferred from the male sphere to the female.<sup>85</sup>

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF ANGLO-SAXON ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELDS

INTERNAL REGULARITIES: THE ANIMAL-ORNAMENT REPERTOIRE AND ITS PRESENTATION

The typological analysis above has revealed a remarkable degree of regularity in the animal ornament: this is dominated by coherent and whole creatures. While that is axiomatic for figural mounts, it is more surprising for Salin's Style I, with its tendency to atomise form. Further, although typically all the Style I motifs are in profile and most are in processional friezes (type-b boss apex discs and the type-vii discoid board mounts: Figs. 5–7), four are complete single figures in small-diameter fields (two type-a and the type-a/b apex discs, and the type-vi cruciform board mounts: Fig. 2b–e). Images in Style II, by contrast, are rare. The figural mounts are dominated by two types: aquatic creatures are by far the most common (fourteen type-i board-mounts and the boss-cone mounts from Eriswell 104, 232: Figs. 9–11), but predatory birds are also significant (seven examples: Fig. 12). Other types are represented by only one or two specimens each, and in one way or another are either comparable with or composites of aquatics or birds (Fig. 13). This distinctive menagerie provides the primary clue in the search for iconographic meaning, although other regularities are worth noting.

Table 1 indicates some trends in how different types of fitting occur on shields. Small (type-a) boss-apex discs were used on their own (Group 1), although since

<sup>85</sup> The re-use of swords as weaving battens in Norway and occasionally in England — but not in Kent — is another example of weaponry migrating from the male to female sphere: Kristoffersen, *op. cit.* in note 6, 124; S. K. Harrington, *Aspects of gender and craft production in early Anglo-Saxon England*, with reference to the kingdom of Kent (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University College, London, 2002), 190–2.

Cottesmore lacks any recorded context it is possible that other fittings were present but not salvaged. Larger (type-a/b and type-b) apex discs are more typically used with additional shield ornament (Group 3), though Wasperton grave 64 shows that they were sometimes used alone, while lack of excavation record makes it uncertain whether other fittings from Barton Seagrave were overlooked. Group 3 crucially demonstrates the combination of Style I mounts and figural images, and three of the four cases of the combination of two different figural types: a 'dragon' and predatory bird are associated on Sutton Hoo mound 1, and aquatics and predatory birds on Eriswell 104, 232 and Sutton Hoo 018, 868, an association which is found otherwise only on Cleatham 25 in Group 2.

The animal motifs are also consistently organised. Although Style I motifs can occur singly, most are organised in processional friezes in twos, threes or multiples thereof. The same numerical preferences are shown for the figural mounts, though here twos are much more common, whether as a matching pair (Buckland 93; Eriswell 104, 232; Mucking II, 600), a mirror-image pair (Bergh Apton 26; Sheffield's Hill 115; Shelford Farm; Spong Hill 31) or a combination of two different types of animal (Cleatham 25; Sutton Hoo 018, 868; Sutton Hoo mound 1). Threes occur only twice: matched on the boss cone of Eriswell 104, 232 and as board mounts on Mill Hill 81, where two are matched and the third is a mirror-image. Single instances of figural mounts either lack an associated shield or come from poorly recorded graves: lost partners, though not necessarily of the same type, are to be suspected. By contrast, designs in Style II show no equivalent numerical consistency, with motifs in twos, threes, fives and eights or multiples thereof.

Finally, the 'pairing' of board mounts led to a predominantly symmetrical arrangement on the shield, as far as this can be deduced from available excavation records and allowing for some post-depositional slippage.<sup>86</sup> Most were fitted diametrically on either side of the boss and about midway between the boss and board edge (Fig. 16a), except for Sheffield's Hill 115 where the bellies of the aquatic figures abutted the boss flange (Fig. 16c).<sup>87</sup> A minority arrangement is represented by three shields with predatory birds. On Mill Hill 81 the two matched birds of the trio were diametrically opposed, but the mirror-image bird was spaced evenly between them, bisecting one hemisphere of the board and leaving the other blank (Fig. 16d). On Eriswell 014, 232 the three geometric discs — probably originally in one row — bisected the board face between the two opposed, matched birds (without any correspondence to the equidistantly-spaced aquatic mounts on the shield boss). On Sutton Hoo 018, 868 the geometric discs were disposed in two, diametrically opposed rows of four with the two figural mounts together bisecting

<sup>86</sup> The reconstructions in Figure 16 are based on published data or information generously provided by the excavators, though none is without problem and all might be altered when post-excavation and conservation analyses are completed or reconsidered. Board diameters, estimated from the maximum containable by the grave width or minimum implied by board studs, range from 0.4 m (Cleatham 25, maximum) to 0.92 m (Sutton Hoo mound 1), with most belonging to Härke's medium size-group, 0.5–0.6 m diameter: Dickinson and Härke, *op. cit.* in note 2, 45–6.

<sup>87</sup> Affixed to the central, longer rivets of the 'left-facing' mount, which is convex-concave profiled, was an iron strip with central kink and leather on its inner side, while lying under the board below the 'right-facing' mount was an iron buckle, which indicates that these mounts also fixed a carrying or suspension strap on the back of the board: J. Jones, conservation records.

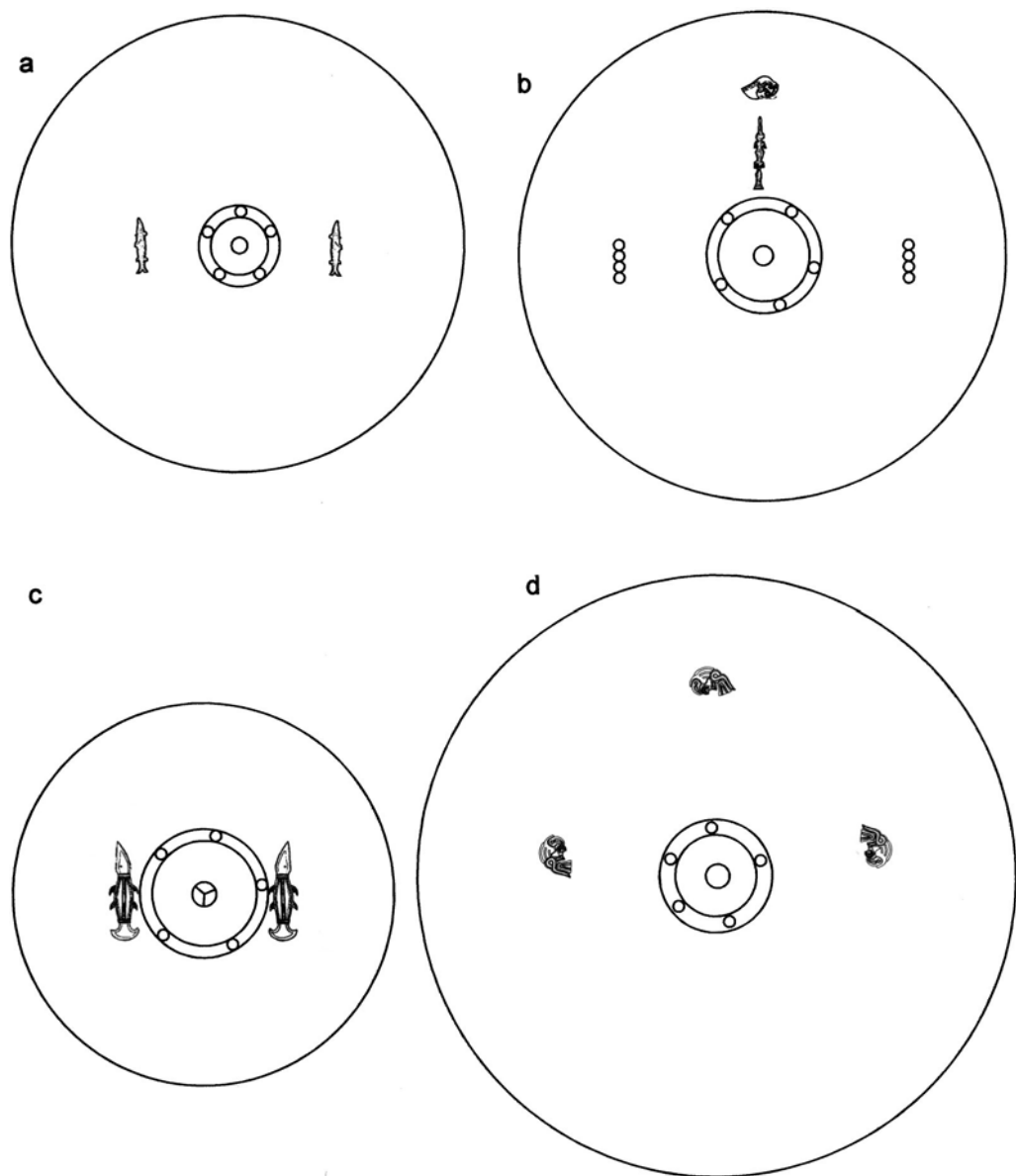


FIG. 16

Reconstructions of shield boards. a: Spong Hill 31; b: Sutton Hoo 018, 868; c: Sheffield's Hill 115; d: Mill Hill 81. Scale 1:10. Computerised drawing by B. Gourley, devised by T. M. Dickinson.

one hemisphere and the aquatic's head pointing outwards towards the underside of the crouching bird (Fig. 16b). These arrangements prompt the unknowable, but highly plausible, possibility that additional ornament was painted or appliquéd on to the board between the metal fittings. The comparability between the predatory-bird mounts from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 and Eriswell 104,232, which hold a snake

in their claws (Fig. 12c and e), and Mill Hill 81 and especially Shelford Farm (Fig. 12b and d) might imply that the latter too had held a snake or other creature made from perishable material.<sup>88</sup>

#### EXTERNAL ANALOGIES: TOWARDS AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ANIMAL MOTIFS

##### *Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images in Style I*

The arch-backed, anthropomorphic figure in the type-a boss-apex disc from Empingham II, 112 appears to be tumbling, flying or even in a state of trance or ecstasy (Figs. 2b and 3a). Figures in exactly the same pose, with the same distinctive, raised arm, and hand with three or four fingers and large, backward-projecting thumb, characterise a closely-related series (or 'formula family') of B-bracteates.<sup>89</sup> IK 245,1 Freilaubersheim, Rheinland-Pfalz and IK 245,2 Vester Nebel, Jutland, provide the closest parallel, in that they contain only a simplified, segmented profile figure, but IK 61 Galsted, Jutland (Fig. 17a) and IK 394 Slipshavn, Fyn, which show a man with one arm and two legs alongside an animal, give a clearer idea of the motif. Probably related to these is a slightly later East Swedish group: IK 176 Söderby (Fig. 17b) and IK 195 Ulvsunda, Uppland, and IK 104 Lau-Backar, Gotland, which show the man in semi-profile with two arms raised up in an *orans* gesture and surmounted by two predatory birds.<sup>90</sup> It would be surprising if a B-bracteate were the direct model for Empingham, for only one is known from England — IK 23 Bifrons 29, Kent — though it too bears a 'flying' figure, albeit with the upraised arms and legs all seen from the front.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the Empingham figure has the distinctive triangular 'ear' or headdress of the animal-men which are so common in Style I: examples contorted into exactly the same posture as Empingham, albeit within differently-shaped frames, occur on the 'Jutlandic' square-headed brooches from Donzdorf 78, Württemberg, and Pompey, Lorraine, and on the rim-vandykes of the large drinking horns from Taplow, Bucks.<sup>92</sup> That the 'tumbling man' icon could have reached the makers of shield-ornament through more generalised knowledge is supported by Animal (i) on the type-b apex disc from Wasperton 64 (Fig. 6e).<sup>93</sup> His posture differs slightly from

<sup>88</sup> Shields with painted geometric decoration are documented from the early 4th century in Denmark: E. Jørgensen and P. Vang Petersen, 'Nydam Bog — new finds and observations', 246–85 in L. Jørgensen, B. Storgaard and L. Gebauer Thomsen (eds.), *The Spoils of Victory — The North in the Shadow of the Roman Empire* (Copenhagen, 2003), fig. 10; a white coating is preserved on the leather cover under the fittings from the Sutton Hoo 018, 868 shield.

<sup>89</sup> In the following discussion bracteates are cited with their IK number, which refers to the catalogue text and illustrations in Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10.

<sup>90</sup> Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10, vol. 1, 1, 95–8, and esp. Hauck and Pesch in Lamm et al., op. cit. in note 10, 24–34 and 76–80; cf. Leigh, op. cit. in note 28, 385–93; IK 61 Galsted was found with the well-known, fragmentary, early 'Jutlandic' equal-armed brooch: Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, Abb. 9.

<sup>91</sup> S. C. Hawkes and M. Pollard, 'The gold bracteates from sixth-century Anglo-Saxon graves in Kent, in the light of a new find from Finglesham', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 15 (1981), 316–70, at pp. 343–7, 352–3 and Taf. VIII; S. C. Hawkes, 'The Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Bifrons, in the parish of Patricxbourne, East Kent', *Anglo-Saxon Stud. Archaeol. Hist.*, 11 (2000) 1–94, at pp. 22–3 and fig. 13.

<sup>92</sup> Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, Abb. 71, 1–2; Leigh, op. cit. in note 11; Speake, op. cit. in note 2, pl. 1.

<sup>93</sup> On processes of motif transmission and active re-use, cf. Hines, op. cit. in note 15, 140; N. L. H. Wicker, 'Swedish-Anglian contacts antedating Sutton Hoo: the testimony of the Scandinavian gold bracteates', 149–71 in Farrell and Neuman de Vegvar (eds.), op. cit. in note 63; Pesch in Lamm et al., op. cit. in note 10, 80.

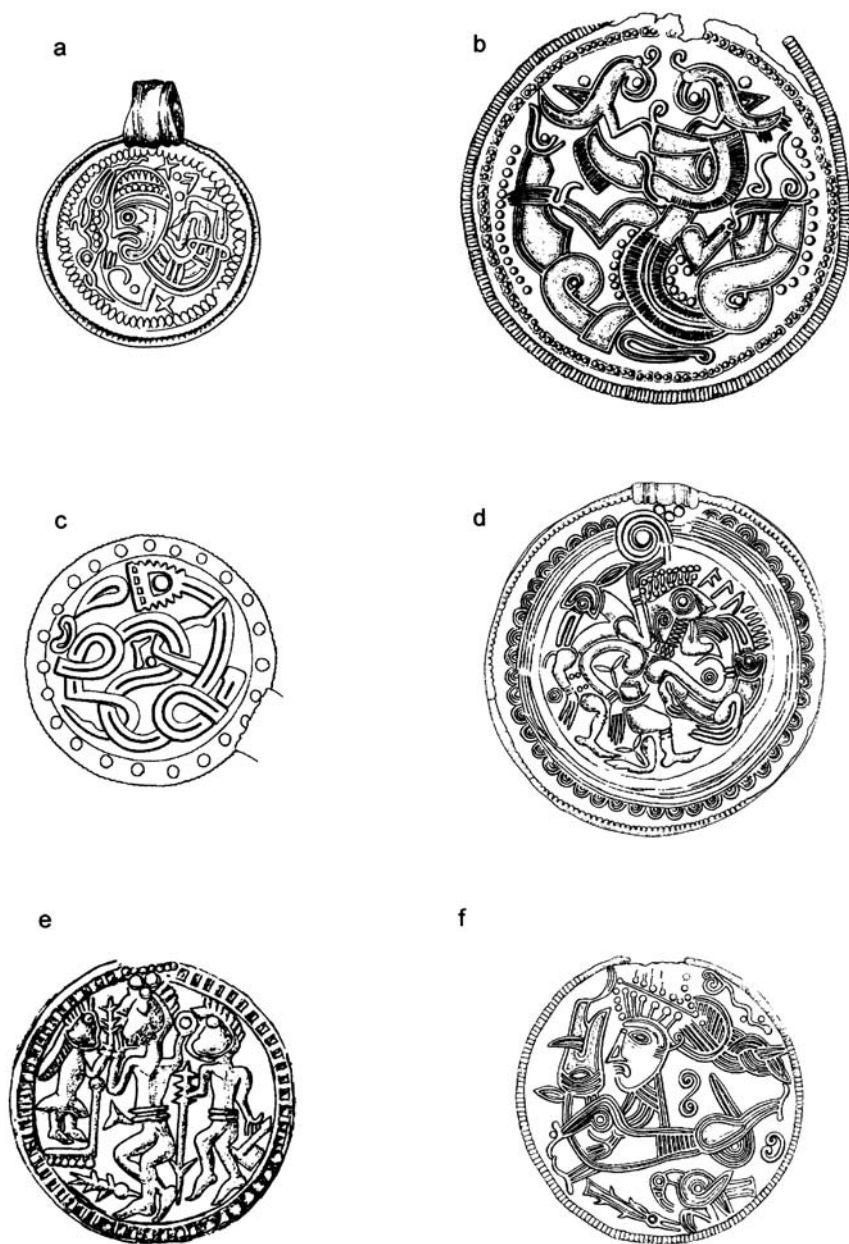


FIG. 17

Motif comparanda on bracteates. a: IK 61 Galsted-B; b: IK 176 Söderby-B; c: IK 426,2 Finglesham 203-D; d: IK 74 Heide-B; e: IK 20 Zagórzyn-B; f: IK 33 British Museum-C. Scale 3:2. a-b and c-f, after Hauck et al., *op. cit.* in note 10, reproduced with permission of Professor Dr Karl Hauck.

Empingham II, 112, especially in the disposition of the leg or legs (the small leaf-shape beside the coiled hip might represent a second foot), but can be compared with anthropomorphs and animal-men on a group of Style I objects with Scandinavian parallels from Kent and the Low Countries, particularly the buckle plate from Namur, La Plante.<sup>94</sup>

Animal-men — and bird-men — occur with varying degrees of ambiguity on many other shield fittings (i.e. type-b apex discs from Alveston; Boss Hall 97; Sutton Hoo 018, 868; Petersfinger 49B; Harston; Sheffield's Hill Animal (ii); Aylesby; Barton Seagrave Animals (ii) and (v); and especially Bidford-on-Avon 182: Figs. 5, 6a–d and 7a–b), as well as on the discoid board fittings from Faversham (Fig. 7c). An anthropomorphic tendency is also evident in the the apex disc from Mucking II, 600 (Fig. 2c), which is typologically allied through its small-diameter, single motif to Empingham II, 112. The flowing 'hair' on the Mucking disc recalls the way the Imperial bust with diadem and fillet was re-presented on A-to C-bracteates: the 'bird-beak' across its 'hair' might thus be a misplaced remnant of the bird-head which can terminate the hair on the bracteates or of the bird(s) which can appear above the head.<sup>95</sup>

Anthropomorphism might even be detected on the related apex disc from Cottesmore (Fig. 2d) in the sinuous, thickened head surround and triangular 'ear' or 'headdress'. The creature is backward-turned, however, which links it to the fourth, small-diameter, single motif, the long-beaked creature on the Westgarth Gardens 41 type-vi cruciform board-mounts (Fig. 2e). Although backward-turned animals are common in Late Roman and post-Roman art,<sup>96</sup> they seem relatively rare in early Style I: in England they occur primarily on the inner headplates of some Kentish square-headed brooches and of Hines's Phase 3, Group XVII great square-headed brooches, on the Taplow drinking-horns, and on a few applied, but not cast, saucer brooches.<sup>97</sup> A backward-turned animal with open jaws or curved predatory-bird beak is, however, the hallmark of the D-bracteates. New research argues not only that their origin lies in the period of Nydam Style and early Style I in mid-5th-century south-western Scandinavia, but also that the classic formats, self-intertwined and with disarticulated human body-parts (Fig. 17c), were later than simpler versions, with which Cottesmore and Westgarth Gardens 41 have more in common.<sup>98</sup> This need not alter Hauck's case for an iconographic equivalence between the D-bracteate animals and quadrupeds with open jaws or long, slightly apart, bird-beak, which occur in pairs, variously backward- and

<sup>94</sup> Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, 265–80, esp. Abb. 183.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. M. Axboe and A. Kromann 'DN ODIN PF AUC? Germanic "imperial portraits" on Scandinavian gold bracteates', *Acta Hyperborea*, 4 (1992), 271–305; M. Axboe, 'The chronology of the gold bracteates', 126–47 in Hines et al. (eds.), op. cit. in note 62; very similar disarticulated birds' heads also appear on a D-bracteate, IK 549 No Provenance.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. in 5th-century England: S. Suzuki, *The Quoit Brooch Style and Anglo-Saxon Settlement* (Woodbridge, 2000); in Style II: Speake, op. cit. in note 2, fig. 1m–p; in later 6th- to 7th-century Aquitania and Neustria (buckles, finger rings, scax-sheath buttons and *Pressblech* brooches): M. Aufleger, *Tierdarstellungen in der Kleinkunst der Merowingerzeit in westlichen Frankenreich* (Mainz, 1997), 17–60, Tafn. 54–61; on early 8th-century 'sceattas': A. Gannon, *The Iconography of the Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage* (Oxford, 2003), 148–51.

<sup>97</sup> Haseloff, op. cit. in note 25, 106, 119–20, 166, 213–15 and Abb. 120–1; Leigh, op. cit. in note 25, 385–92; Leigh, op. cit. in note 11, 34–9; Hines, op. cit. in note 15, 135 and 138–40; Kendrick, op. cit. in note 35, fig. 7b.

<sup>98</sup> E. B. Carlsen, 'Fabeldyr i udvikling: en analyse af D-brakteaterne', *Hikuin*, 29 (2002), 119–42.

forward-turned, beside a central human figure on three B-bracteates — IK 71 'Hamburg', Lower Saxony, IK 74 Heide, Schleswig-Holstein (Fig. 17d), and IK 353 Raum Tønder, Jutland — and their linkage to the reptilian beast on IK 61 Galsted and the serpentine animal on IK 176 Söderby (Fig. 17a–b). In Hauck's view, these were transformations of classical and Late Antique sea monsters: the Mediterranean *ketos* or Old Testament Jonah's Whale or Leviathan.<sup>99</sup> The type with a bird-like beak compares not only with Westgarth Gardens 41 but also with Barton Seagrave Animal (i) (Fig. 7a), while the open-jawed type is comparable with backward-turned Animal (i) and forward-facing Animal (iii), both with 'u-shaped' head and curled lower 'lip', on the Sheffield's Hill 115 apex disc (Fig. 6a). Further the tooth-like bars on the jaw of Barton Seagrave Animal (iii) could as well be teeth of a predatory fish as the tusks of a boar, as Åberg suggested, though the resemblance to a crocodile must be fortuitous (Fig. 7 a)!<sup>100</sup> Whether the parallel between the coil behind the leg on Mucking II, 600 (Fig. 2d) and 'trumpet-shaped' or scrolliform shoulder- and hip-joints on a D-bracteate, IK 535 Raum Tegneby, Bohuslän, indicates an aquatic aspect to the former is more debatable (Hauck dubbed the latter his 'Sea Horse' type, again assuming derivation from a sea-serpent); but it does support identification of the element as a shoulder.<sup>101</sup>

The similarities between motifs on bracteates and shields with Style I are striking. Although Hauck's very specific interpretation of bracteate iconology is problematic, and the shield repertoire cannot support the type of compositional analyses which he uses, so that there is no guarantee that in different contexts motifs had identical meanings, the possibility of a shared iconography is raised as an initial hypothesis. At the least, the A-, B- and C-bracteates seem to be dominated by mythical figures, and particularly by a single figure of human and imperial form — presumptively a leading god. Given the close parallel between his appearance on the Galsted/Söderby series of B-bracteates and the figure on Empingham II, 112, and the related figure of Wasperton 64 Animal (i), I suggest that the latter two also portray this god. Likewise, the parallels with sea-beast-derived monsters on the bracteates, whether apparently attacking a god or fettered (i.e. intertwined) or defeated (i.e. backward-turned) by him, suggest that comparable monsters are also portrayed on the shield ornaments. Hauck's detailed exegesis — that the god is the Óðinn of Norse myth, in his epiphany at the dawn of the New Age on the Söderby B-bracteate series, and that the monsters are underworld opponents of the gods such as the wolf Fenrir and the Midgard-serpent and/or tormentors and consumers of the dead — may be contested, but it illustrates how single images could stand mnemonically for a larger cycle of

<sup>99</sup> K. Hauck, 'Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten XIII. Schlüsselstücke zur Entzifferung der Ikonographie der D-Brakteaten: Die Nordversion des Jonasmotivs und ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung', *Stud. zur Sachsenforschung*, 1 (1977), 161–96; Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10, vol. 1, 1, 91–8, and 3, 1, 15–69; Lamm et al., op. cit. in note 10, 21–35.

<sup>100</sup> Åberg, op. cit. in note 36, 169, fig. 305, 2b; Kendrick, op. cit. in note 35, 71 and fig. 4, xvii, however, read the head, mistakenly I think, the other way up and these bars as a drooping tongue. Similar transverse grooves occur on a fish brooch from Westbere, Kent, which can be recognised as a pike from its overall shape and fin positions (the anal fin is broken away): R. Jessup, 'The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Westbere', *Antiq. J.*, 26 (1946), 11–21, at pp. 15–16, pl. II, 6; for boars, cf. Høiland Nielsen (2001), op. cit. in note 6, 474–5.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10, vol. 3, 1, 28–9 and 36–7.

defeated or defeatable enemies and the agency of their defeat.<sup>102</sup> It also chimes with the ubiquity of animal-men in the shield-ornament repertoire: while their psychological impact might have had profane purposes, the possibility that they represent either beneficent or malevolent shape-changers — as practised by shamans and in Norse mythology, especially by Óðinn — has often been entertained.<sup>103</sup>

From this perspective, other features of the Style I on shields become more intelligible. For example, Hills's perception of the open-jawed animal heads on the boss-flange mounts from Bidford-on-Avon 182 as 'fish-like' would accord with an interpretation of them as representations of consuming, underworld monsters (Fig. 9a). Comparable open-mouthed, monstrous heads appear in the wide borders of two C-bracteates from Skåne: on IK 11 Åsum, two pairs with 's-shaped' ear or hair-plume 'attack' a human head; on IK 203 Vå, the heads, with toothed jaws, form each end of an encircling serpent, a motif more frequent in Style II and with which the open-jawed serpents of the Barton Mills apex disc might be compared (Fig. 8b).<sup>104</sup> The three apex discs with non-identical, rather than single or repeated, animal images might even represent narrative scenes. Barton Seagrave in particular conveys a sense of confrontation absent from the processional friezes (Figs. 4a and 7a), and bears some comparison with an East Scandinavian equal-armed brooch from Ekeby, Uppland, which Magnus interprets as a representation of the destruction myth of Ragnarök.<sup>105</sup> Although Barton Seagrave lacks Ekeby's most graphic elements — a human 'swallowed' by a monster-head and disarticulated human body parts — it does feature a sort of man-between-beasts motif, in which two creatures, Animals (i) and (iii), analogous to the sea-monsters of bracteates, attack from either side a bird-headed animal-man, Animal (ii), as well as disembodied animal and animal-man parts, Animals (iv)–(vii). Sheffield's Hill 115 (Figs. 4b and 6a) depicts a possible animal-man between two open-jawed beasts, which both face away from (have been defeated by?) him. The complete 'human' figure (i) on Wasperton 64 might be viewed as the victor of the partial Animal-man (ii) and Animal (iii) (Fig. 5e); alternatively, the three together represent — cartoon-like — the progressive transformation and disintegration of one individual. All three discs could represent the actions of or engagements with supernatural, shape-changing beings.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Hauck, *op. cit.* in note 99; Hauck (1988) *op. cit.* in note 10, and esp. Lamm et al., *op. cit.* in note 10.

<sup>103</sup> T. C. Lindström and S. Kristoffersen, "'Figure it out!'" Psychological perspectives on perception of Migration Period animal art', *Norwegian Archaeol. Rev.*, 34 (2001), 65–84; Leigh, *op. cit.* in note 25, 310–430; *idem*, *op. cit.* in note 11, 40; H. Roth, 'Einführung in die Problematik, Rückblick und Ausblick', 9–24 in Roth (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 9, at pp. 20–4; the range of shape-shifting and animal spirit-helpers in the Viking Period and their roles in military and domestic sorcery are discussed in detail by Price, *op. cit.* in note 11.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Speake, *op. cit.* in note 2, fig. 11a–b and k–q, and especially, as a stylistic analogy to Barton Mills, two openwork mounts from Bidford-on-Avon 81, fig. 12a–b and pl. 16a–b. Whether the focus on tongue and jaws on the Barrington B, 103 apex disc (Fig. 2a) is also part of this interest in consuming creatures and whether it should be read malevolently or benevolently is debatable, but might be worth consideration.

<sup>105</sup> Magnus (2001), *op. cit.* in note 11, 283–92.

<sup>106</sup> G. Haseloff, 'Bild und Motif im Nydam-Stil und Stil I', 67–10 in Roth (ed.), *op. cit.* in note 9, at p. 102, takes a more sceptical view of distinguishing fighting scenes from symbolic friezes.

*Figural mounts: fish, fantastic monsters and predatory birds*

In the 1980s John Clark and Vera Evison likened the Insular aquatic shield mounts to the 'dragon' mount from Sutton Hoo mound 1 and to the slightly later and less lavish mounts from Vendel I and Valsgärde 7 (shield III). Seeing the Insular mounts as fish, Evison proposed that they had assumed a Christian meaning. Concurrently, Hauck was arguing, however, that the 'dragons', together with their eagle partners, were monumentalised versions of the mythic struggle which he detected on bracteates.<sup>107</sup> In light of the typological and developing iconographic analysis and of the combination of aquatic mounts with Style I (Tab. 1), these observations merit further consideration.

Where a fish species is identifiable from a mount — specifically Spong Hill 31, but on the basis of head-shape possibly also Eriswell 046, 284, Mildenhall and Sheffield's Hill 115 (Figs. 9c–e, 10a) — it is a large, freshwater predatory fish, most probably pike, which would have been widely known throughout northern Europe from lakes, slow-moving rivers and even the Baltic. Other aquatic mounts from shield boards and from the Eriswell 104, 232 boss cone have a longish triangular head and long body, which might imply that pike was also the intended species here, or at least the underlying model (Figs. 10b–f and 11d). Except for Spong Hill and the anonymous 'fish' image from Cleatham 25 (Fig. 9b), however, all the aquatic mounts are depicted symmetrically: their fins or flippers, if present, appropriate not to a fish but to a land-based vertebrate viewed from above. With Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Figs. 4e and 10e) the stylisation is taken to extremes: the snout is extended like a sword, while the rounded 'm-shaped' face reflects conventions of Salin's Style I and to a lesser extent Style II.<sup>108</sup>

Strikingly close parallels to these symmetrical aquatics, and especially the form represented by Sutton Hoo 018, 868, occur on a mainly Danish series of B-bracteates, the so-called 'Three-Gods' type. Below the central human figures on IK 51,1 Fakse, Sjælland, there are two opposed aquatics, while one alone occurs on IK 40 Denmark and, in attenuated form, on IK 51,3 Gudme II, Fyn. In a variant of the last, IK 39 Denmark (X), the place of the aquatic is taken by a monster's head. Similarly, on IK 20 Zagórzyn (formerly Beresina-Raum), Poland (Fig. 17e), an aquatic 'bites' the front of the ankle of the central figure, while on the variant, IK 165 Skovsborg, Jutland, a snake fulfils the same role by biting at the figure's heel. Comparable aquatic creatures with open-jawed heads in profile appear on two C-bracteates: on IK 37 Büstorf, Schleswig-Holstein, one faces a subsidiary horse above the main human head-and-horse motif, whilst on IK 33 British Museum (Fig. 17f) one is under the main motif, facing a bird-of-prey in almost exactly the same relationship as that assumed by the aquatic and predatory bird mounts on the shield from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Fig. 16b). Interpretation of

<sup>107</sup> Clark, op. cit. in note 2; Evison, op. cit. in note 2, 34; cf. also brief discussions by Hills, op. cit. in note 2, and Hicks, op. cit. in note 2, 29–30; K. Hauck, 'Gemeinschaftstiftende Kulte der Segermanen (Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten XIX)', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 14 (1980), 463–617, at p. 486; idem, 'Zum zweiten Band der Sutton Hoo-Edition', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 16 (1982), 319–62, at p. 324; G. Arwidsson, *Die Gräberfunde von Valsgärde III: Valsgärde 7* (Uppsala, 1977), 36–8, Abb. 43 and 49.

<sup>108</sup> Rounded 'm-shaped' faces often occur on great square-headed and saucer brooches, but can be observed in Style II, for example, the animal-head terminals to the grips of shield 1 and especially shield 2 from Valsgärde 8: G. Arwidsson, *Die Gräberfunde von Valsgärde II: Valsgärde 8* (Uppsala, 1954), Tafn. 16, 408 and 17, 289–290.

these complex scenes is controversial. Gunilla Åkerström-Hougen argues forcibly that the 'Three-Gods' bracteates are modelled on the Roman Imperial *adventus* ceremony, yet the spear penetrating the central figure of IK 51,1 Fakse and the foot-biting beasts surely imply crucial iconographic transformations and the depiction of a more mythic confrontation. Whether or not Hauck's alternative interpretation is correct — that the central figure is Baldr flanked by Loki (alias Victory) and a weapon-bearing and supportive Óðinn — perhaps matters less here than that aquatic creatures substitute for snakes or reptilian monsters as opponents of gods.<sup>109</sup>

Long-bodied aquatics or fish with predator/pike-like heads appear occasionally in Early Anglo-Saxon contexts other than shields. From the 6th century may be cited the catch-plates on two great square-headed brooches and a florid cruciform brooch, and the cast silver 'pike-like' brooch from Westbere. In the later 6th and 7th centuries, mounts for straps and for buckles provide examples.<sup>110</sup> There is also a remarkable, and hitherto unnoticed, metal repair patch on a bead-rimmed bowl from Gilton, Kent, which was sadly lost in the wartime blitz of Liverpool Museum. It showed a central, partially looped 'cord', towards which five, open-mouthed animals move in an upward-facing direction: three quadrupeds and two aquatics with two symmetrical pairs of fins, one sinuous with a long linear tail, the other stiff like the shield mounts and with a triangular tail. The author of the Victoria County History suggested that it was a 'sacred tree motif'; alternatively the cord might represent a stream of water. It was associated with two other patches depicting a 'dancing' figure carrying a lyre and an animal-headed object (plectrum?), who has more recently been explained as a *scop* or supernatural musician, even Woden.<sup>111</sup>

By contrast, in Late Roman and post-Roman Europe most acceptably recognisable images of *fish*, which occur widely both on their own and in association with a predatory bird, have rounded or ovoid bodies, often with an indication of fish-scales or fish-skeleton. Even if sometimes shown with symmetrically paired fins, they are viewed in profile, on their back (especially where associated with a single predatory bird) or bilaterally as if gutted and splayed out (especially where

<sup>109</sup> G. Åkerström-Hougen, 'Adventus travels North. A note on the iconography of some Scandinavian gold bracteates', *Institutum Romanum Norvegiae: Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia*, 15 (2001), 229–40; Hauck in Lamm et al., op. cit. in note 10, 41–9.

<sup>110</sup> Hines, op. cit. in note 15, 97, pl. 38, fig. 49 (Alveston 5 and Ragley Park, Warwicks); Timby, op. cit. in note 17, 41–2, fig. 151 (Empingham II, 100); D. Quast, 'Merowingerzeitliche Fischfibeln', *Die Kunde*, N.F. 41/2 (1990/1), 493–510; the Westbere brooch is closely paralleled by a brooch from Herpes, Charente, and, given evidence for Kentish-made bird brooches, both might be Kentish: B. Brugmann, 'The role of Continental artefact-types in sixth-century Kentish chronology', 37–64 in Hines et al. (eds.), op. cit. in note 62, at p. 45; a fish-brooch from Tuddenham, Suffolk, is not species-specific: West, op. cit. in note 24, 99, fig. 129,9; for the mounts from Eastry I, Kent: G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* (London, 1915), pl. XXIV, 2–3; for mounts on buckles from Crundale and Eccles, Kent, and Foxton, Cambs.: A. P. Detsicas and S. C. Hawkes, 'Finds from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Eccles, Kent', *Antiq. J.*, 53 (1973) 281–6; Speake, op. cit. in note 2, pls. 7d and 9e; L. Webster and J. Backhouse, *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600–900* (London, 1991), 24–5; Malim and Hines, op. cit. in note 31, 323–4, fig. 9,2; Hawkes, op. cit. in note 8, 323–4: she is mistaken in saying that all 6th-century instances of fish are on the backs of artefacts.

<sup>111</sup> C. Roach Smith, 'An account of some antiquities found in the neighbourhood of Sandwich, in the county of Kent', *Archaeologia*, 30 (1843), 132–6; W. Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Kent I* (London, 1908), 354–5, fig. 9; R. L. S. and M. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Sutton Hoo lyre, *Beowulf*, and the origins of the frame harp', *Antiquity*, 44 (1970), 7–13, at p. 12 and fig. 3; K. Wickham-Crowley, 'The birds on the Sutton Hoo instrument', 43–61 in Farrell and Neuman de Vegvar (eds.), op. cit. in note 63.

between two predatory birds).<sup>112</sup> Among the Insular shield mounts, only the plain, iron and fragmentary piece from Cleatham 25 is comparable. These are not, therefore, good guides to the piscine identity of the aquatic mounts on Anglo-Saxon shields. Nor is a Christian exegesis with its sacrificial connotations, so often associated with these fish images, appropriate to the aggressive and fantastic nature of the shield aquatics.<sup>113</sup> Further, unlike the instances from the post-Roman Continent, the lack of any other incontrovertibly Christian symbolism on the shields undermines a direct or even syncretic Christian reading. *Pace* Evison, the punched quatrefoil motifs on Kenninghall and Barnes (Fig. 10c–d, the latter admittedly accentuated with incised arcs) are too imprecise to be taken as signs of the Cross.<sup>114</sup> Finally, aquatic mounts are primarily found in areas which are relatively unlikely to have had surviving or early contacts with Christianity (Fig. 14c).

Rather, I propose, aquatic mounts, the most popular animal figures on Anglo-Saxon shields, reflect and reinforce ideas detected in the Style I motifs: they represent underwater monsters. The makers of the shield fittings transformed conceptions of mythical sea beasts into something familiar and local by objectifying them either directly in the form of pike — probably the most sinister and aggressive fish habitually encountered by Anglo-Saxons, southern Scandinavians and Continental Germans and, at least later, conceived of as ‘wolf-like’ — or by imagining

<sup>112</sup> E.g. from the 3rd century onwards, north of the Imperial Limes: C. von Carnap-Bornheim, ‘Der “Helmbschlag” aus Domagnano — Überlegungen zur Herkunft des “Vogel-Fisch” Motivs’, 223–38 in M. Meyer (ed.), ‘... *Trans Albin Fluvium*’. Forschungen zur vorrömischen, kaiserzeitlichen und mittelalterlichen Archäologie: Festschrift für Achim Leube zum 65. Geburtstag (Rahden, 2001), esp. Abb. 6–8; M. Axboe, H. F. Nielsen and W. Heizmann, ‘Gallehus’, in H. Beck, H. Steuer and D. Timpe (eds.), *Hoops Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 2nd ed., Bd. 10, Lieferung 3/4 (Berlin, 1996), 330–44; from the Merovingian world: 6th-century fish-shaped brooches: Quast, op. cit. in note 110; fish which seem to ‘inhabit’ the bodies of Merovingian bird brooches: U. Haimel, ‘Bemerkungen zur Ikonographie des Raubvogels am Beispiel der Merowingerzeitlichen Vogelfibeln’, *Archaeol. Austriaca*, 82/3 (1998/9), 343–6; five *Spangenhelme*: K. Böhner, ‘Die frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme und die nordischen Helme der Vendelzeit’, *J. Römisch-germanischen Zentralmus. Mainz*, 41 (for 1994), 471–549, esp. 518–20, Abb. 1, 7, 13, 29 and 30; 7th-century Aquitanian buckles: Aufleger, op. cit. in note 96, Taf. 82 and Karte 39; from 7th-century England, mounts, buckle-plates or pendants with a fish between two Style II predatory birds: Webster in Blockley et al., op. cit. in note 2, 1039–40, figs. 443 and 463 (Canterbury); Speake, op. cit. in note 2, fig. 6n (Faversham); E. Martin et al., ‘Archaeology in Suffolk 1999’, *Proc. Suffolk Inst. Archaeol. Hist.*, 29 (2000), 495–531, at p. 500, fig. 154c (Coddenham, Suffolk); and even on the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps: S. Ciglenečki, ‘Bemerkungen zu den Schulterschliessen aus dem Königsgrab von Sutton Hoo’, *Germania*, 72 (1994), 314–23; cf. also Mütterich, op. cit. in note 9; the bilateral ‘fish’ on the Hardingstone disc are problematic, since they seem to have animal legs: Speake, op. cit. in note 2, fig. 10c, pl. 16d; for the naturalistic portrayal of fish, probably salmon, on 6th- to 8th-century Pictish symbol stones: C. Thomas, ‘The interpretation of the Pictish symbols’, *Archaeol. J.*, 120 (1963), 31–97, esp. 70, fig. 11; C. Hicks, ‘The Pictish Class I animals’, 196–202 in R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.), *The Age of Migrating Ideas* (Edinburgh/Stroud, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> Quast, op. cit. in note 111, 493; K. Hauck, ‘Von einer spätantiken Randkultur zum karologischen Europa’, *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 1 (1967), 3–93, at pp. 16–19.

<sup>114</sup> Evison, op. cit. in note 2, 33–4. Stamped quatrefoils were used widely, especially in the Bichrome Style: e.g. great square-headed brooches: Hines, op. cit. in note 15, pls. 57–9; sleeve clasps: J. Hines, *Clasps Hektespinner Grafsen* (Stockholm, 1993), 21 and Frontispiece (Class B14), 47–9 (B12 Sleaford-West Stow Type), 59 (B18b); cast saucer brooches: M. G. Welch, *Early Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, BAR, Brit. Ser., 112 (Oxford, 1983), fig. 39d; A. Down and M. G. Welch, *Chichester Excavations 7: Apple Down and the Mardens* (Chichester, 1990), pl. 43A. In view of these arguments, a Christian exegesis for the predatory fish mounted on the Crundale, Eccles and Foxton buckles should perhaps be reconsidered.

them on the basis of pike-like characteristics.<sup>115</sup> An iconographic link between these mounts and the 'dragon mounts' is thus strengthened. The wolf-like teeth of the Sutton Hoo 'dragons' and the two (hind-)legs of the mound 1 'dragon' (Fig. 13a–b) suggest that both might be related to one classical conception of a dragon — a wolf-headed, reptile-bodied and fish-tailed sea monster.<sup>116</sup> The three pairs of wings on the mound 1 'dragon' are extraordinary, however: a 'griffin', for example, would normally have only a single pair. Given the parallelism between the combination of 'dragon' and 'eagle' on the Scandinavian shields and of aquatic and predatory bird on three Anglo-Saxon shields, and between the elongated Sutton Hoo mound 1 'dragon' and the elongated aquatics, especially that from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (cf. Figs. 10e and 13b), the mound 1 'dragon' may not have wings but fins, implying its 'underwater' nature. By contrast, the Bergh Apton hippogriffs (Fig. 13c) are indeed flying creatures within this repertoire of composite, mythical beasts.<sup>117</sup>

The second most frequent type of figural shield mount is a predatory bird (Fig. 12). Bird heads or beaks also feature on the Mucking II, 600 apex disc and board mounts (Figs. 2d and 13d) and on the Barrington B, 103 apex disc (Fig. 2a), and are an aspect of the animal-men on the Bidford-on-Avon 182 and Barton Seagrave apex discs (Fig. 7a–b). The most frequently cited parallels for the predatory-bird mounts, and the most apt for the Sutton Hoo 018, 868 mount in particular, are Style II mounts from Vendel-period shields (hence the type-iic mount in Sutton Hoo mound 1) or saddles and the more numerous, slightly later Vendel-period brooches and necklace-spacers. Their tails are mostly bifid and/or feathered; many have a peg between claw and beak, and some, especially on the later jewellery, a snake. Comparable objects, though usually less accomplished, occur almost contemporaneously in the Rhineland, Alamannia, Bavaria and North Italy, mostly for caskets, belts and chatelaines, and can be explained by the selective uptake of Style II there.<sup>118</sup> The Sutton Hoo 018, 868 bird could have been inspired by generally acquired knowledge of the new animal style or directly by the already-imported Scandinavian shield, buried later in mound 1.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> The scientific name for pike, *Esox lucius*, reflects early medieval usage of classical words for 'wolf': for example, Aelfric gave *lucius* (from Greek λυκος) for Old English *hacod* (cognate with Modern German *Hecht*); sometimes Latin *lupus* was used, which was also applied to voracious Mediterranean fish: J. Bernström, 'Gädda', 666 in *Kulturhistorisk Leksikon för Nordisk Middelalder från Vikingetid till Reformations-tid* (Copenhagen, 1981); J. Bosworth and T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1954 repr.); J. André (ed. and trans.), *Isidore de Seville. Etymologies Livre XII: Des Animaux* (Paris, 1986), 180–97.

<sup>116</sup> Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10, vol. 3, 1, 16–18; cf. Høilund Nielsen (2001), op. cit. in note 6; the Vendel I and Valsgärde 7 (shield III) 'dragons' are more boar- than wolf-headed, however: Arwidsson, op. cit. in note 107, Abb. 45 and 49, Taf. 5; Hauck, op. cit. in note 107, interestingly called them 'dragon-fish', while retaining 'flying dragon' for Sutton Hoo mound 1.

<sup>117</sup> I cannot see the basis for Hicks's interpretation of them as devouring beasts, op. cit. in note 52: their prominent beaks with contour line and internal ridge (representing a tongue?) are similar to the beaks of the predatory-bird mounts. Hippogriffs, and more rarely griffins proper, make occasional appearances on East Frankish Burgundian buckles and as Merovingian animal brooches: Aufleger, op. cit. in note 96, 73–5, 161–2 and 169–72, Taf. 63, 14–15, 17–18 and Taf. 94.

<sup>118</sup> I. Attermann, 'Fågelformade spännen och beslag från folkvandringstid', 169–86 in H. Larsen, R. Odencrants and P. Olsen (eds.), *Studier tillägnade Gunnar Ekholm* (Göteborg, 1934); Werner, op. cit. in note 1; Arwidsson, op. cit. in note 96, 38, Abb. 46, 49 and 92; Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 1, 91–9; Høilund Nielsen (1997), op. cit. in note 6 and pers. comm.; Nørgård Jørgensen, op. cit. in note 1, 78 and 141–8.

<sup>119</sup> Høilund Nielsen (1999), op. cit. in note 6, argues for East Anglia as the initial point of reception in England for Style II from Scandinavia, whereas Kent received its Style II indirectly via the Continent.

The crestless head, large round eye, coiled wing and bell-shaped tails of the other type-iib predatory birds are less satisfactorily paralleled in this way, however (Fig. 12b–d and f). Rather, they find closer analogies in birds, albeit with trapezoidal or triangular tails, on some dozen A-, B- and particularly C-bracteates (for example, IK 33 British Museum, Fig. 17f), dated in Morten Axboe's chronology from early Phase H2 to Phase H4 (c. 450/75–530/40). To these can be added an upright 'Merovingian' bird brooch from Marchélepot, France.<sup>120</sup> The bell-shaped tail is seemingly matched only on later 6th- or early 7th-century bird-shaped, bichrome strap-mounts from England, such as those from Eastry I, where it is associated with crestless heads and sometimes a coiled wing or object in the claws.<sup>121</sup> The concentration of this form in Kent suggests a local development, possibly with Scandinavian inspiration, but it extended to Suffolk, where Eriswell 104, 232 with a snake between its claws provides a point of close overlap with the Style II piece from Sutton Hoo 018, 868 (Fig. 15a).

The consistently and clearly hooked beaks identify all these birds as raptors *not* scavengers like ravens (which have a thickened, flat-topped beak). Some have argued that they are hawks or falcons,<sup>122</sup> but an eagle is more plausible, given its pre-eminence in nature and role as *the* symbol of Roman power, which undoubtedly influenced post-Roman iconography, within and without the Empire, as a metaphor for celestially-derived qualities and earthly power.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, the range of possible iconographic meanings is wide.

The stylistic analogies of the bird mounts with Scandinavian material direct attention to well-known examples of predatory birds in later Norse mythology, such as the eagle as an omen of the New Age in *Völuspá*, st. 59 (where its role as 'hunter of fish' is singled out), the eagle and hawk which help sustain cosmic order in the World Tree, and the stories of giants, sorcerers and gods, including Óðinn,

<sup>120</sup> Axboe, op. cit. in note 96; M. Axboe, pers. comm.; G. Thiry, *Die Vogelfibeln der germanischen Völkerwanderungszeit* (Bonn, 1939), 51–2, 109 and Taf. 18,428, where the brooch is surmised to be Anglo-Saxon.

<sup>121</sup> Baldwin Brown, op. cit. in note 110, pl. XXIV, 2, figures Maidstone Museum AS 144 (with coiled wing), AS 123 and the pair AS 142–3 (which holds something between claw and beak); cf. Speake, op. cit. in note 2, fig. 17e–f (the C-bracteates) and j–k (Eastry); K. Parfitt, 'A bird mount and other early Anglo-Saxon finds from Ripple/Ringwould', *Archaeol. Cantiana*, 119 (1999), 394–8; another recent find, from near Tythrop House, Kingsey, Bucks, has a rectangular block between beak and claw: Buckinghamshire County Museum, 1977.216.1. Merovingian bird brooches rarely have anything in the claws: Thiry, op. cit. in note 120, 49, Taf. 17,409 (Envermeu, France with a peg between beak and claws) and 58, Taf. 21,498 (Jouy-le-Comte, but given on p. 115 as Fôret de Compiègne, and now labelled 'Chelles' in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St Germain-en-Laye, which perhaps holds a smaller bird).

<sup>122</sup> Attermann, op. cit. in note 118; C. Hicks, 'The birds on the Sutton Hoo purse', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 (1986), 153–65, favoured falconry in the context of a bird preying on another bird; von Carnap-Bornheim, op. cit. in note 112, 230, n. 41, notes that hunting fish with predatory birds is unlikely.

<sup>123</sup> B. Ambrosiani, 'Regalia and symbols in the boat-graves', 23–30 in J.-P. Lamm and H.-Å. Nordström (eds.), *Vendel Period Studies* (Stockholm, 1983), at pp. 26–7; predatory birds first appeared in Scandinavian art in the 5th century: B. Magnus, 'Ducks, doves and birds of prey: birds as symbols in the late Iron Age of Scandinavia', paper given to the 54th Sachsensymposium, St Germain-en-Laye, September 2003; for the transfer of the eagle to late 4th-/early 5th-century East European barbarian military gear and thence to female brooches as a 'Gothic' ethnic identifier: K. Greene, 'Gothic material culture', 117–31 in I. Hodder (ed.), *Archaeology as Long-term History* (Cambridge, 1987).

who change shape into an eagle or hawk.<sup>124</sup> The eagle, alongside or interchangeably with the raven (and with the wolf), was also an archetypal animal of the battle field. In Old Norse poetry these corpse-eaters generally signalled heroic victory, while in Old English poetry they were more often a portent of defeat.<sup>125</sup> Displayed on a shield, the image could have been somewhat ambiguous, depending on whether the reader was attacker or defender, but the concurrent depiction of wolf-like, underwater and consuming monsters on the shields might support an interpretation as supernatural harbingers of death.

In the case of Eriswell 104, 232 and Sutton Hoo 018, 868, where the eagle both pecks at a snake and occurs with aquatic figures, a meaning as victory-bearer was perhaps intensified and compounded (Fig. 12c and e). The motif of the eagle with a snake (an age-old embodiment of evil) came to symbolise Christ's battle against Satan, but it was also used in pre-Christian Scandinavian art.<sup>126</sup> In the absence of anything else distinctively Christian in the context of these two shields, a non-Christian interpretation is probably preferable. In the case of the mount from Gultun, Ash (Fig. 12f), however, the eagle does not grasp or peck at but seemingly cradles a small animal. This might seem to have more in common with a patristic idea, clearly portrayed in Carolingian and later manuscripts, of Christ ascending to heaven as an eagle carrying the souls of deceased believers (variously represented as fish, snakes or small mammals), and behind which might lie the notion of an eagle bearing a deified emperor's soul.<sup>127</sup> Although such Christian ideas might have been accessible in Kent, the use of Style I to express them is perhaps surprising, and the lack of good contemporary parallels unhelpful. Could the mount rather show a pagan bearer of souls, a notion suggested by some translations and interpretations of the 7th-century runic inscription — the longest in the elder futhark — on the grave stone from Eggja, Sogndal, Norway? As Magnus observes, the Eggja stone has attracted about as many interpretations as it has runes. Suffice to say that all readings recognise a 'fish swimming', which is a supernatural countenance and soul-bearer, but are not agreed on whether an eagle (alias another shaman or Óðinn) is also specified in the runes. All also agree that a link is being made between the role of the animal(s) and the fate/passage of dead

<sup>124</sup> C. Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, trans. with an introduction and notes (Oxford, 1996), 12; A. Faulkes (trans. and ed.), *Snorri Sturluson, Edda* (London, 1995), 18–19 (Gylfaginning) and 62–4 (Skaldskaparmál), where Óðinn secondarily adopts the form of an eagle to steal the mead of poetry; cf. Ellmers, op. cit. in note 10, 264–71 and 275–7, especially for the motif of a predatory bird and fish as an aspect of the Odinic myth; Hauck et al., op. cit. in note 10, vol. 1, 1, 101; Hauck (1988), op. cit. in note 10, 34–6; Wickham-Crowley, op. cit. in note 111.

<sup>125</sup> J. Jesch, 'Eagles, ravens and wolves: beasts of battle, symbols of victory and death', 251–71 in J. Jesch (ed.), *The Scandinavians from the Vendel Period to the Tenth Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 2003).

<sup>126</sup> R. Wittkower, 'Eagle and serpent: a study in the migration of symbols', *J. Warburg Courtald Inst.*, 2 (1938), 293–325, at p. 317; Mutherich, op. cit. in note 9, 325; besides the examples of Style II eagle brooches and mounts mentioned above, note 118, there is a cloisonné bird engaging filigree snakes on the footplate of the 6th-century bow brooch from Skodborghus, Jutland; Lamm et al., op. cit. in note 10, fig. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Mutherich, op. cit. in note 9; Wittkower, op. cit. in note 126, 311.

men/the deceased, but not on the narrative context of this.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, this could be a provocative parallel to the shield mounts' focus of interest. The last case of a predatory bird combined with a fish to be raised is Cleatham 25 (Fig. 12a). The bird's upright and legless stance most closely resembles some later 5th- to 6th-century Merovingian bird brooches, which possibly evoke Imperial insignia; the associated fish is also in a form more frequently encountered on the Continent, often in the vignette of the bird with a fish. As indicated above, where the two occur in contexts which could have embraced Christian beliefs, and especially in association with explicitly Christian motifs, such as on the *Spangenhelme*, a Christian exegesis might be proposed, or at least a syncretic understanding appropriate to the warrior-aristocracies of post-Roman successor kingdoms.<sup>129</sup> But whether a possibly Continental inspiration for the forms of the Cleatham mounts is sufficient to sustain such an interpretation in 6th-century North Lincolnshire is more doubtful, especially in light of the other possibilities.

In sum, as several previous commentators have noted, the animal ornament of Anglo-Saxon shields privileges predators and stresses aggressive power. These alone might be deemed sufficient as symbols for (or even of) warriors, but the interrelationship between the motifs in Style I and the figural mounts, and between both these and especially the Scandinavian bracteates, opens the possibility of a more revealing argument. Repeatedly the shields seem to involve references to monstrous, underworld embodiments of evil or death and to gods or sorcerers who can defeat or offer salvation from them. If Hauck's exegesis of the bracteates is accepted, then it is the protective capacity of Óðinn, or rather of his pre-Viking personifications, which lies at the centre of the iconographic web. Although the bird, fish and snake also occur in Christian art, and in Jane Hawkes's terms were thus the most malleable of animal icons, passing happily between pagan and Christian usages, only by treating their manifestations on the shields in very generic terms, and ignoring their specific characteristics, could they be explained in Christian or syncretic terms or, worse, dismissed as too obscure for interpretation.<sup>130</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANGLO-SAXON ANIMAL-ORNAMENTED SHIELDS

Anglo-Saxon animal-decorated shields were apparently used for real fighting, as witnessed by the spear-point damage inflicted on the apex disc from Sheffield's

<sup>128</sup> W. Krause, *Die Runeninschriften im älteren Futhark* (Göttingen, 1966), 227–35; O. Grønvik, *Runene på Eggjasteinen: En Hedensk Gravminskrift fra Slutten av 600–Tallet* (Oslo, 1985), 7–10 and 76–91, esp. pp. 87–89; B. Magnus, 'Eggjasteinen — et dokument om sjamanisme i jernalderen?', 342–56 in S. Indrelid, S. Kaland and B. Solberg (eds.), *Festskrift til Anders Hagen* (Bergen, 1988); eadem, 'A matter of literacy or magic?', 133–42 in E. Straume and E. Skar (eds.), *Peregrinatio Gothica III: Fredrikstad, Norway, 1991* (Oslo, 1992); B. Solli, 'Odin — the queer? Om det skeive i norrøn mytologi', 393–427 in I. Fuglestad, T. Gansum and A. Opedal (eds.), *Et Hus med Mange Rom: Vennebok til Bjørn Myhre på 60-Årsdagen* (Stavanger, 1999).

<sup>129</sup> Thiry, op. cit. in note 120, esp. Tafn. 6 and 15; Greene, op. cit. in note 124; Mutherich, op. cit. in note 9; Quast, op. cit. in note 110; Böhner, op. cit. in note 113; Haimel, op. cit. in note 113; von Carnap-Bornheim, op. cit. in note 113.

<sup>130</sup> Hawkes, op. cit. in note 8, 328. The shield iconography might also incorporate binary concepts, e.g. bird aquatic; sky water; above below; resurrection death, with the shield itself perhaps as the here and now, earthly existence in life and in the grave.

Hill 115 (Fig. 4b) and gashes across one of its aquatic mounts. A gash on one of the Spong Hill 31 fish mounts might also have been a result of fighting (Fig. 9c), although if so, it was covered by new gilding. Most of the metal fittings seem too small, however, to have effectively signalled identity in battle, except at very close range, and had they been intended to designate fighting units greater uniformity in type, presentation and geographical distribution might be expected.<sup>131</sup> Of course, painted and/or carved shields, which could have been effective for this role, might have been widespread, but there is at present no evidence for that.

Rather, it is proposed, the purpose of animal-ornamented metal fittings was fundamentally to increase the symbolic value of a shield, the ownership, or at least burial, of which was seemingly reserved for a relatively select few. The ornament magnified, apotropaically, the protective quality of the shield, and thereby compounded its social meaning. The shield was 'the Anglo-Saxon defensive weapon'. It was also the principal means by which a notion of adult masculinity, rooted in martial behaviour and in the construction of socially elevated, arguably even ethnicised, identities, was expressed in death.<sup>132</sup> If the thrust of the iconographic argument is correct, the majority of animal ornament on Anglo-Saxon shields evoked, and perhaps invoked, a divine capacity (perhaps specifically Woden's) to protect against defeat and death. It added a supernatural protective layer to the shield itself, and hence to its bearer. Such a shield would have both enhanced and advertised the protective capability and responsibilities of his adult masculinity, and through this the exercise of power over kindred, household, community and even kingdom. The visibility of such a shield in the burial tableau, protecting the dead man or standing guard over him and his tomb, would have articulated the message for the future benefit of the heirs.

The message reached a peak of expressiveness in Sutton Hoo mound 1, where the great shield stood upright against the chamber wall, probably centrally in line with the presumed body — like an armorial headstone — flanked on either side by the 'institutional' symbols of power, the sceptre/whetstone and the iron standard.<sup>133</sup> The Style II-decorated shield typifies the luxury weaponry and horse-gear with which contemporary supra-regional elite constituted their retinues, forged alliances and built kingdoms.<sup>134</sup> It also strikes a chord with alliterative word-associations in *Beowulf*: *rond* or *rand*, meaning 'edge', but signifying 'shield', is one of two words

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Grigg, op. cit. in note 1: the Alamanni before the Battle of Argentoratum in 357 were said to have recognised Roman units by their shield blazons: J. C. Rolfe (ed. and trans.), *Ammianus Marcellinus* (London, 1971), XVI.12.6.

<sup>132</sup> See note 4; H. Härke, 'Material culture as myth: weapons in Anglo-Saxon graves', 119–27 in Jensen and Høiland Nielsen (eds.), op. cit. in note 6.

<sup>133</sup> Thus the burial chamber has been stunningly reconstructed at the new Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre, although as excavated the shield fittings lay slightly off-centre: cf. Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 13, fig. 111; Carver, op. cit. in note 13, 127, figs. 78–9 versus fig. 81.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Høiland Nielsen (1997), op. cit. in note 6, and Nørgård-Jørgensen, op. cit. in note 1, 156–75. There has been extensive comment on the role of gifting luxury equipment, especially swords and horse-gear, in the construction of a post-Roman European aristocratic warrior-class: e.g. H. Steuer, 'Helm und Ringschwert. Prunkbewaffnung und Rangabzeichen germanischer Krieger: eine Übersicht', *Stud. zur Sachsenforschung*, 6 (1987), 189–236; Theuvs and Alkemade, op. cit. in note 82; R. Le Jan, 'Frankish giving of arms and rituals of power: continuity and change in the Carolingian period', 281–309 in Theuvs and Nelson (eds.), op. cit. in note 5; B. Arrhenius, 'Regalia in Svealand in early medieval times', *Tor*, 27 (1995), 313–35, at pp. 313–16; von Carnap-Bornheim, op. cit. in note 112, 176, discusses how the bird-fish motif explicitly contributed to late 5th-/early 6th-century Ostrogothic warrior patronage by constructing an exclusive 'cultural memory' of Nordic ancestry.

most frequently linked with, to quote Robert Creed, ‘ric-, from *rice*, meaning “authority”, area in which authority is exercised, “kingdom” or, as an adjective, “powerful”’. Shield (*rond*) and authority (*rice*) — defence and kingdom — are thus linked symbolically and, arguably, are archaic ‘Ideal Structures’ in the poem.<sup>135</sup> But perhaps the best insight into how the gifting of prestige shields decorated with anthropomorphic or zoomorphic images was part of the construction of social obligation and of the oral cultivation of a shared, Scandinavian mythology are two apparently late 9th-century skaldic poems. Bragi Boddason’s *Ragnarsdrápa* and Þjóðólfr of Hvin’s *Haustlång* were allegedly composed as reciprocal gestures to patrons who had given shields, the decorative scenes on which in turn inspired the verses: the former, for example, featured Hamðir and Sörli’s fight with King Jörmunrekkr (the Gothic King Eormannaric), the latter included the giant Þjazi’s abduction (in the shape of an eagle) of the goddess Iðunn. The skaldic construction of ‘word-pictures’ gave voice to the visual images; presumably their latent narrative was rehearsed when the shields were made, perhaps again when they were gifted, as well as at the poem-performance itself — a chain of orality which constituted the transmission of ideas, social and mythic.<sup>136</sup>

In conclusion, in 6th-century England shields decorated with Salin’s Style I (but rarely Style II) and a distinctively select set of figural images encapsulated a bundle of connected ideas: a martial adult masculinity; subscription to a pagan cult, probably of Woden/Óðinn; a responsibility and capacity to exercise protection; and hence an authority to exercise power. This Insular tradition retained its artistic and iconographic integrity over some 50 years or more. The patterns of distribution and association suggest that such shields were made for personal use by leaders and as donatives to allies or members of retinues. Either way they supported local and regional social formations within and probably between Anglian and Kentish cultural areas, but never really in Saxon. The shields did not designate precise ranks, however, or serve as badges of specific war bands or as tribal totems.<sup>137</sup> The re-use by women of some fittings, though not the most prestigious animal figures, suggests that the protective nuances and social status which animal-ornamented shields conferred on males could be partly transferred to selected females, just as occasionally shield ornament (Barrington B, 103) could borrow from feminine jewellery. That this was an established tradition is suggested

<sup>135</sup> R. P. Creed, ‘Sutton Hoo and the recording of *Beowulf*’, 65–75 in C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells, *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo* (Minneapolis, 1992), esp. 68–70; there is no suggestion that shields in *Beowulf* carried animal decoration.

<sup>136</sup> For the poems, North, op. cit. in note 1, xi–xxxiii, and P. Pulsiano (ed.), *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1993), 55–6 and 665–6. Since zoomorphic shield fittings are not known from the Viking Period, it is assumed the images were painted. The proposed mechanism could apply equally well to bracteates: because they use synoptic or mnemonic images, not sequential narrative scenes, does not mean that they lacked the capacity to convey myth, *contra* N. L. Wicker, ‘The Scandinavian animal styles in response to Mediterranean and Christian narrative art’, 531–50 in M. O. H. Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300* (Woodbridge, 2003); cf. P. Meulengracht Sørensen, ‘Thor’s fishing trip’, 257–78 in G. Steinsland (ed.), *Words and Objects: Towards a Dialogue between Archaeology and History of Religion* (Oslo, 1986), at pp. 260–1.

<sup>137</sup> Dickinson and Härke, op. cit. in note 2, 61, suggest that the Insular animal-decorated shields represent a more or less undifferentiated second tier below that of Sutton Hoo mound 1, but above two lower tiers of shield-bearers; cf. von Carnap-Bornheim and Illkjær, op. cit. in note 1, 483–6, for a threefold military hierarchy around the year 200 at Illerup on the basis of the use of silver, copper alloy or iron for the equipment, with the first confined essentially to commanding *principes*.

by the way designs of Late Roman army shields, at least as represented by the *Notitia Dignitatum*, seem to have inspired the patterns of Saxon applied disc and saucer brooches.<sup>138</sup> That custom might have continued in England with the popular cast saucer brooches with Style I chasing animals copying the cognate Anglo-Saxon shield apex discs. Likewise, in Scandinavia and in Anglian England, scutiform pendants were indeed miniature, amuletic shields for women: on the D-bracteate, IK 428 Finnekumla, Västergötland, a central scutiform motif is even surrounded by a pair of degenerate 'sea-griffins', thus comprising a shield ornamented with a pair of aquatic figural mounts!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research could not have been completed without considerable help. The Department of Archaeology, University of York, gave moral, practical and financial support. Staff of the field units and museums, which I visited during 2002, willingly facilitated access to the primary data. In particular, I thank the following for permission to utilise material ahead of their publications: Sue Anderson and Jo Caruth (Eriswell), John Newman and Angela Care Evans (Sutton Hoo site 018), Kevin Leahy and Julie Jones (Cleatham and Sheffield's Hill), Chris Scull (Boss Hall), Sue Hirst (Mucking) and Martin Carver and Jonathan Scheschkewitz (Wasperton). Helen Geake and Paul Cannon have kept me abreast of metal-detector finds in East Anglia and Berkshire respectively. Peter Inker generously gave permission to cite from his recently completed doctoral thesis. Ben Gourley performed computer wizardry on my drawings. Claus von Bornheim-Carnap, Bjarne Gaut, Dieter Quast, Nancy Wicker, Karen Høilund Nielsen and Bente Magnus have filled gaps in my bibliographic resources. The last two, together with Charlotte Behr, Birte Brugmann and John Hines read earlier drafts of this paper and made many important suggestions for its improvement, for which I am deeply indebted; any remaining faults are entirely my own doing.

<sup>138</sup> P. Inker, 'The Saxon Relief Style' (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Cardiff University, 2003), 117–19. There is also a close formal and technical similarity between the earliest tutulus brooches and conical, gilded silver *Pressblech* mounts on 3rd-century prestige shields, and between the more developed tutulus brooches and the hour-glass-shaped apices of some shield bosses (*Stangenschildbuckeln*), though in the former case this might simply reflect widespread contemporary manufacture: von Carnap-Bornheim and Ilkjær, op. cit. in note 1, esp. 430–2, Abb. 276 and vol. 7 (Tafelband), Tafn. 57–62 and 130–4; cf. H. W. Böhme, *Germanische Grabfunde des 4. bis 5. Jahrhunderts zwischen unterer Elbe und Loire* (Munich, 1974), 19–21.

Copyright of *Medieval Archaeology* is the property of Maney Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Copyright of *Medieval Archaeology* is the property of Maney Publishing and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.