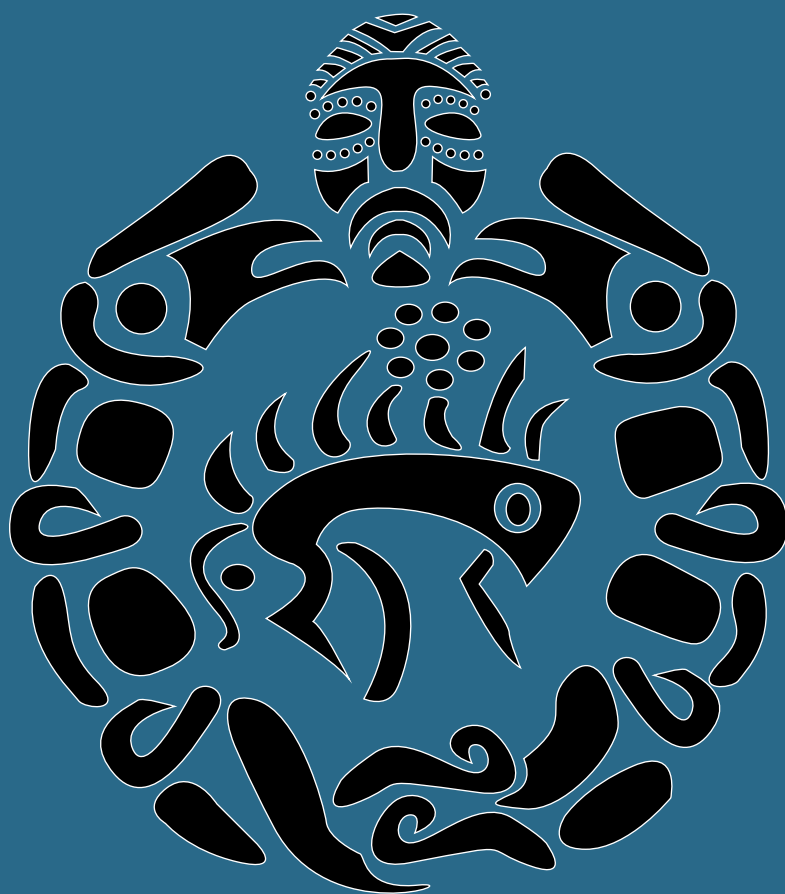


Barbaric Splendour

The use of image before and after Rome

Edited by

Toby F. Martin with Wendy Morrison



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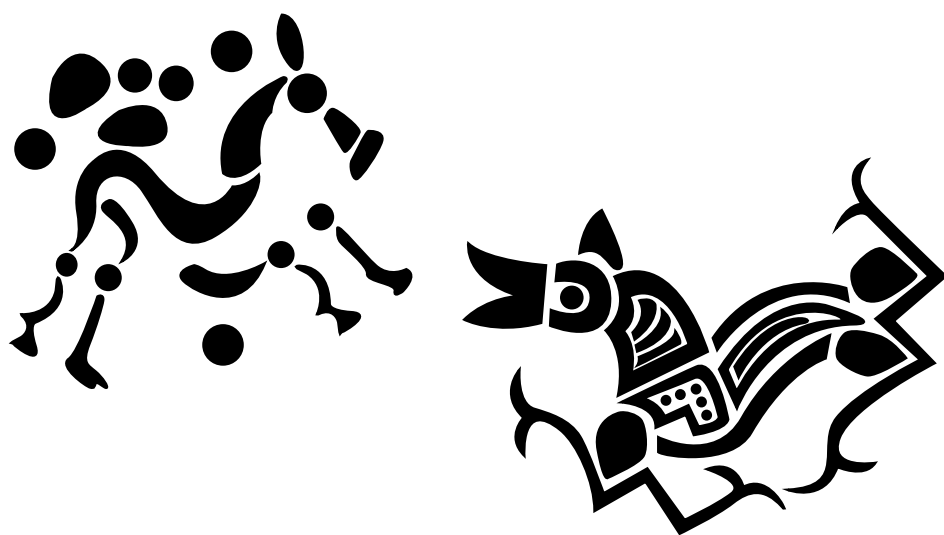
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Frontispiece: Design based on images from Iron Age coins and early medieval bracteates, drawing by Toby Martin.

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Preface

This collection of essays brings together a small group of international experts from the fields of Iron Age and early medieval archaeology to explore the use and meaning of images produced on the fringes of the Roman Empire in northwest Europe. As such, our focus is on the centuries that experienced first the expansion and then the fragmentation of Roman imperial power. Although no papers in this collection focus on the Roman period itself, one of the questions at the centre of the book concerns the various choices to appropriate, reject and transform apparitions of *romanitas* at the geographical and temporal periphery of imperial influence.

The proposition of the book is that intellectual explorations of the images created by Iron Age and early medieval societies appear to have followed similar processes and reached similar conclusions, despite following almost entirely separate trajectories for more than a century. Perhaps, therefore, communication between our period specialisms would be an interesting and illuminating enterprise. The comparability of our separate historiographies may be neither a result of coincidence nor mutual intellectual influence: Iron Age confederacies threatened by imperial growth and early medieval ones taking advantage of its diminution both appear to have had strikingly similar attitudes to the making of images. Such commonalities include similar subjects (animals, people, and hybrids), comparable compositional tendencies (abstraction, geometricization, ambiguity), the same media (jewellery and military equipment), and deposition in comparable contexts (graves and hoards). These comparisons have long been anecdotally observed but have rarely been explored in any depth, though they stand to tell us much about the transference of images across social and political frontiers. By bringing together international experts in their respective fields, this volume provides an introductory account to Iron Age and Early Medieval art for specialists and students alike. Foremost, however, the book is intended as a pioneering opportunity for cross-pollination between fields of expertise that have grown up under quite different disciplinary backgrounds.

The book originated as a conference held on 14 November 2015 at Rewley House, part of the University of Oxford's Department for Continuing Education, arranged between myself and my co-organiser Wendy Morrison. The day included presentations by those included in this volume, as well as additional talks by Melanie Giles, Chris Gosden, and Leslie Webster. On the following day, an informal workshop took place at the University of Oxford's Institute of Archaeology, where the organisers and speakers were joined by additional contributors including Catherine Hills and Susan Youngs. We spent a stimulating and enjoyable day discussing common themes across the period specialisms and left feeling rejuvenated and inspired. In the following year we collected most of the contributions included in this volume. The regrettable length of time between then and now may help to explain any glaring bibliographic absences, for which the reader should hold only the editor responsible.

The contributions of the volume variously adhere to one period or the other, or directly compare imagery from both. The order of chapters reflects this, so that the first two (Olivier and Joy) focus on the Iron Age, while the following three (Kristoffersen and Pedersen, Fern, and Speake) focus on the early medieval period. The final two chapters (Behr and Gannon) compare the depiction of particular subjects (human faces) or depictions on particular objects (coins) across the periods. The introductory chapter lays out the theoretical aims and background of the project, whilst at the same time offering a conceptual framework for comparing images from both periods that does not rely on presumptions of cultural continuity or contextual specificity, but instead explores the independent properties of the images and their contexts. It is tentatively hoped that this somewhat experimental book and the framework suggested in its introduction invites and encourages more inter-period comparison as well as more specialist work in both fields.

This book would not have been possible without the generous help, advice and intellectual input of many others. Firstly, I would like to thank Wendy Morrison without whom the conference and workshop would never have taken place, and I would also like to thank her for academic consultation on this volume and for her help with its compilation. I would like to thank the staff of Rewley House and the Institute of Archaeology for hosting our conference and workshop, as well as the delegates and contributors to the workshop for sharing their knowledge, curiosity and for their positive, adventurous spirit of open academic exploration that made the event the success that it was. I would also like to thank each and every contributor to this volume for their continued commitment to the project and their patience in the assembly of this book. The peer reviewers of these chapters deserve enormous credit for their freely and generously given time, though they must necessarily go unnamed. Finally, I would like to thank David Davison and Ben Heaney from Archaeopress for rapid and attentive publication in the innovative and commendable Access Archaeology series.

Toby F. Martin
Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford
21 May 2020

Barbaric tendencies? Iron Age and early medieval art in comparison

Toby F. Martin

Introduction

In March 2018, a lidded urn sat in Christie's auction house. The form imitated an antique Chinese vase, but the imagery that decorated its surface depicted a grey and puddled industrial street with its working class denizens and ironic billboards advertising 'dream homes'. The vase was made and painted by the artist Grayson Perry who named it *Barbaric Splendour*: a tongue-in-cheek juxtaposition of a refined form with ornamentation evoking a very different world. The urn was a commentary on class and taste in 21st-century Britain and the moral judgement we place on different aesthetic forms: the sophisticated on the one hand, the vernacular on the other. Perry borrowed the phrase 'barbaric splendour' from Ernst Gombrich, who in his book *The Sense of Order* (1984, 18-19) invokes the term to describe the classical aversion to the flourish and embellishments that characterise inferior rhetoric, in preference for the plain, accurate and honest; a prejudice also reflected in the classical visual arts. 'Barbaric splendour', or the excessive decoration, elaboration and aggrandisement of a subject was a thing to be regarded with distrust, belonging as it did to a less refined, disingenuous, lower moral and therefore inferior aesthetic order. Later that month Grayson Perry's vase sold for £224,750, which invites us to frame both the acts of making and buying as further deeds of 'barbaric splendour': the show and conceit of high art and absurd quantities of money, for a verbose and ostentatious pot that lacks a plain and honest function.

Perry's vase serves to illustrate the point that whenever we use the word 'barbarian' we tap into quite ancient questions about morality, worth and value that framed those living beyond the colonial forces of Greece and then Rome in antiquity. This book attempts an inside view of the images produced by these Iron Age and early medieval societies, largely in northwest Europe. The title of the book – 'barbaric splendour' – is therefore knowingly literal: these were and are images of splendour made and used by people recognised by others as barbarians. The term is therefore appropriated from the classical usage to be re-construed on a more sympathetic basis. To attempt to see these images on their own terms, however, we must unlearn at least some of the classicising, moralising forces that structure the way we view these cultures. Because we tend to regard images from the past through classically trained eyes, images produced outside the classical paradigm can confront us with obstinate inscrutability. The monstrous faces peering out at us from a bronze shield lost to the River Witham in Lincolnshire in the 4th century BC assume the same impenetrable stare as the ground-garnet gaze of similar creatures decorating a helm buried at Sutton Hoo on an East Anglian heath in the 7th century AD. They are both a far cry from the famous dying Gaul, foundering on a marble podium, whose pathos speaks to us with an urgent immediacy. The latter statue is a colonial construction of barbaric splendour with all its insinuations of noble savagery, nudity, muscle, moustache and swagger: a literal embodiment of the barbarian classified, caricatured and conquered. The faces on the shield and helm, however, are images of barbaric splendour from within: these were things regarded by their barbarian owners to have held power in their splendour. However, because of their unfamiliarity to us, images like this can be hard to understand; they appear more foreign because they lack the directness of classical realism. Accordingly, before we can see anything at all we have to overcome the problem of understanding how these images were experienced in their own cultural context, and we lack almost entirely any reliable literary accounts that would aid that pursuit for both periods. Accordingly, like many books about Iron

Age and early medieval art, much of this one is concerned with not just how we might understand barbaric splendour, but how we might first learn to look at it.

Challenges to comparison: periodization and linear chronologies

This book asks whether considering so-called barbaric images from the Iron Age and early medieval period side by side, despite the centuries that separate them, might guide us towards these unfamiliar ways of seeing. However, comparing images separated in most cases by 400 years or more is a difficult thing to do. The challenge at least partly stems from the obstinacy of period boundaries and the dominance of linear chronology as fundamental archaeological principles. Archaeological and art historical knowledge is primarily ordered by period, and this is embedded in the institutions that produce knowledge, such as academic university departments, but also in the mechanisms that disseminate it, such as academic journals and books. This, however, is an undisciplined book.

In terms of periodisation, the delineation of cultures in space and time led scholars to label particular images as classical and non-classical in the first place, not always with much regard to how these items may have been regarded by their makers and owners. In a contemporary critical theoretical framework, such attitudes might be viewed as a pernicious means of disciplining or colonising the past (*cf.* Bhabha 1994). It has long been recognised that the famous stone head from Mšecké Žehrovice near Prague may have been regarded in the 2nd century BC as a version of Mediterranean statuary, just as countless depictions of the human face on decorative metalwork from the 5th and 6th centuries AD in northwest Europe owed much to Roman provincial metalworking. Either way, it would be absurd to suggest that the makers of any of these things regarded them as ‘barbaric’, and they may even have seen their work as continuous with that produced within the Empire. Thanks to the scrupulousness of our art historical schooling, however, these visages look worlds away from what we would call classical art: they stare blankly ahead, eyes agape with no discernible emotion, their cheeks, chin, eyebrows, hair and moustaches more geometric pattern than flesh, bone and hair. We have come to understand classical art through its efforts to achieve realism – “the conquest of appearances” in Gombrich’s terms (1977: 123) – though the point at which we have arrived was in all likelihood not shared by Iron Age and early medieval societies, who would have had a different idea of what classical images strove to ‘do’. Perhaps these communities were also interested in mastering the appearance of a subject, but to them an ‘appearance’ meant something quite different.

This book asks the reader to look beyond period conventions and orthodox specialist interests, but it also asks them to take one step further. Challenges to period boundaries usually concern only neighbouring periods. For instance, in British conventions, precise thresholds lie at AD 43, 410 and 1066, each ringing in the end of one specialist’s field of study and the beginning of another, tolling the ends of the Iron Age, Romano-British and early medieval eras respectively. This book, however, is not only convinced of the arbitrariness of period boundaries, it also advocates leapfrogging an entire period. It should be made clear from the start that the intention is not to brush away the influences of almost half a millennium of imperial dominance as superficial in the face of an indomitable, underlying barbaric cultural continuity. To the contrary, although it is never directly addressed here, the classical world lies at the very heart of this book. Part of the case I would like to advance is a reminder that a linear conception of time need not be the guiding principle of all archaeological comparison. A focus on linearity and process is deeply embedded in archaeological thought, which is why questions about how and why human societies and cultures change have become so prominent in archaeology (Trigger 1989: 294-312). But this is not the only way of thinking about the past. Particularly with regard to the pre- and post-Roman periods in northwest Europe, there are many other fruitful grounds for more open-ended, cross-cultural or anthropological comparison. Such grounds include the economic conditions of production and exchange, scales of political organisation, the prevalence of particular environments and landscapes, levels of

productive technologies, and – perhaps most germane to the Iron Age and early medieval periods – a political situation on the brink of an expanding or fragmenting empire with a strong aesthetic ideal closely linked to the core ideology of a centralised, literate, expansionist state. None of these things depend on a linear chronological narrative, though neither are they determinative or predictive. Put simply, they offer comparative frameworks for the Iron Age and early medieval periods. Rather than considering notions of continuity and unassailable imaginary ‘Celtic’ and ‘Germanic’ cultures, this book asks the reader to assume a comparative or social anthropological mindset in order to ask what might be learnt from a comparison of the images created by societies that were not, after all, that different, and in the grand scheme of things not that far apart in space nor time.

In this introductory chapter, the terms ‘Iron Age’ and ‘early medieval’ will be used to refer loosely to the 5th to 1st centuries BC on the one hand, and the 5th to 8th centuries AD on the other, even though this terminology conventionally refers to much longer periods. The reasons for this truncation is that these are approximately the periods considered by the contributors to this volume. This pre-Roman period captures the tail end of the Hallstatt period (6th to 5th centuries BC) and the floruit of La Tène art (5th to 1st centuries BC). The post-Roman centuries considered here are best defined as including both the Migration Period (5th to later 6th centuries AD) and the Vendel Period (later 6th to 8th centuries AD), sometimes also known as the Merovingian Period, or in Britain the Middle Anglo-Saxon period. These labels elide an extraordinary panoply of region- and sub-period-specific labels, but elision is the unabashed intention of this experiment. Highly specific labels help to illuminate the sheer variety of communities and their products living in Europe during the periods in question, but they are also a symptom and cause of the lack of communication across period and regional boundaries. The pre- and post-Roman Iron Ages from Scandinavian and German scholarship would perhaps be the most suitable appellations to use here, as they can apply equally to areas within and beyond the geographical borders of the Roman Empire. Defining each of these periods as essentially the opposite ends of a single entity – Europe’s long Iron Age – also helps to justify why comparing our different approaches is a useful thing to do. They are, however, highly cumbersome in an English-language volume, so ‘Iron Age’ and ‘early medieval’ will have to suffice, which also helpfully avoids too many assumptions of coherent cultural or ethnic groups. Note that the terminology used in each chapter of this book has been left as that favoured by the individual authors, as their terminological choice is usually sensitive to the material under discussion. It was an editorial decision to maintain that nuance at the expense of standardisation.

Comparing Iron Age and early medieval imagery

Despite the obvious links, there have been few extensive comparisons of Iron Age and early medieval images. The most obvious comparisons lie between the La Tène style art of the later pre-Roman Iron Age and the strictly insular ‘Celtic’ decorative techniques of early medieval Ireland and western Britain. The connections exhibited by such images, capable of connecting a 2nd-century BC horse harness with an 8th-century AD manuscript, are astonishing and still not well comprehended. They have been largely avoided here thanks to extensive treatment elsewhere (Leeds 1933; Bruce-Mitford 2005; Hunter 2008; Youngs 2009; Farley and Hunter 2015). Beyond these images of the so-called ‘Celtic revival’, the vast majority of early medieval images have seen very little comparison with those of the Iron Age. Partly, this is because of the emphasis on period boundaries and linearity outlined above, but it is also because such comparisons do not appeal to modern archaeological approaches, which emphasise cultural relativism and the analysis of particular images in their own, much more narrowly defined contexts, rather than the drawing of connections through cross-cultural comparison. Such pursuits are perhaps seen to be more suited to art historical approaches, eschewed by archaeologists since the discipline’s coming of age in the 1960s and 70s, but perhaps worth some reconsideration now. This, of course, is also a matter of chronological and geographical scale. As mentioned above, from a *longue durée* perspective, the Iron Age and early medieval period in northwest Europe may not seem so different at all.

These two periods were not always strictly segregated. Thomas Kemble's posthumous work (edited by Augustus Franks) *Horæ Ferales* (1863) described highly decorative objects from the Iron Age and early medieval period side by side, and this was one of the very earliest treatments of either of these groups of material. Pretty soon, the respective corpora were hedged into their ethno-nationalist boxes of 'Celtic' and 'Germanic' art from which they have never quite escaped, but for Kemble these items were linked thanks to their belonging to the no less problematically defined 'northern nations'. By 1904, however, imagery from the two periods had become separated and crystallized as distinct subjects, with the coincident publication of Romilly Allen's *Celtic Art in Pagan and Pre-Christian Times* (which followed on from Arthur Evan's highly influential but unpublished Rhind Lectures on 'Celtic Art' in 1895) and Bernhard Salin's *Die Altgermanische Thierornamentik*. These volumes appeared in the same year, they set the agenda for future research, and they were hugely influential when it came to defining the respective canons, not only in the sense of what could be considered 'Celtic' or 'Germanic', but also in terms of what could be considered 'art'. Romilly Allen's themes were picked up again by Edward Thurlow Leeds' *Celtic Ornament in the British Isles* (1933), which reprised and amended his analysis with the use of a greatly improved knowledge of the dating of these insular images (Leeds 1933, xii). Leeds compared the swirls and triskeles of La Tène period images with their reinventions on the surfaces of insular early medieval bowls, but left aside the much greater corpus of what was now known as 'Germanic' material from northwest Europe, which by this point was on its own trajectory thanks to Salin's foundational volume. To Leeds, these two forms of image making were entirely separate, and this is precisely what made the 'Celtic revival' so intriguing and politically charged.

A fuller comparison of images produced before and after Rome was to arrive five years later with Thomas Kendrick's *Anglo-Saxon Art* (1938), which contained two extensive scene-setting chapters on pre-Roman Iron Age and Roman art in Britain. Kendrick raised the idea of a "barbaric aesthetic sensibility", and he is worth quoting at length of the subject:

"The early history of art in England ... is best understood if we regard it as being in the main the recital of a protracted series of conflicts between the mutually irreconcilable principles of the barbaric and the classical aesthetic systems. It is true that we have to record temporary eclipses or phases of ascendancy first of one and then of the other of them; but at no point do we lose sight of the salient fact of a sustained struggle between fundamentally opposed types of artistic expression. Put simply, the issue between them is, of course, that barbaric art ... seeks to satisfy by means of dynamic abstract patterns and by the statement of organic forms in terms of inorganic or surrealist symbols; whereas classical art gives pleasure by means of sympathetic and obvious naturalism. You were asked to decide, as it were, whether you wanted to look at the strange, glittering brilliance of the lively mosaic pattern seen through the kaleidoscope, or the familiar and friendly world in a mirror held up to reflect the visible world. There is no common ground at all; no possible harmony in method or purpose. Thus you might try to render or suggest the natural forms of the mirror-subject by an arrangement of the kaleidoscope pieces; or you might make an abstract kaleidoscope pattern out of the separate organic elements of the mirror-subject. And whether such attempts turned out to be felicitous or unfortunate, the chief effect of them was to add to the sense of aesthetic discord and restlessness that I believe to be characteristic of Anglo-Saxon art" (Kendrick 1938: 1-2).

Kendrick did not so much view early medieval art as a continuation of Iron Age art, but imagined that it was incubated within the same 'barbaric' mindset, eschewing realism, transforming classical models, and possessing qualities that lay in expressive and wild tendencies rather than an interest in mirroring the natural world (cf. Gombrich 1977). We might now be justifiably uncomfortable with Kendrick's interpretation, outdated and touched as it was by romanticised notions of noble savages, imbued with an

untameable genius untainted by civilization. Nevertheless, his technical observations remain accurate: the images produced during the pre-Roman and post-Roman periods really are linked by their subjects and compositional tendencies. Could there really be a tendency for the figural pretences of images to collapse, fragment and kaleidoscope just as the scale of political organisation diminishes at the spatial and temporal fringe of empire? What explanations might we now offer more than 80 years later?

Since Thomas Kendrick, there has been some tacit understanding that images from the later Iron Age and early medieval periods might have been similar because they were both ultimately renditions of classical models skewed by and blended with other traditions. They have, nevertheless, remained largely uncomparing, perhaps due to a (not always conscious) framing of these ‘Celtic’ and ‘Germanic’ subjects as separate and incomparable for the reasons expressed above, despite their occasionally overlapping chronological and geographical trajectories (though see Blankenfeldt 2009). Now that such essentialist notions are deconstructed on what is becoming a cyclical basis (e.g. Collis 2003; Hills 2003 and more recently in Farley and Hunter 2015: 31; Harland 2019), a new explorative comparison that takes up where earlier archaeologists and art historians left off is perhaps ripe for exploration.

Introducing images from the Iron Age and early medieval periods

No comprehensive summary will be given here of previous work on Iron Age and early medieval art. However, because this book is intended to bridge a gap in academic specialisms, some signposting may be helpful. From the beginnings of its modern scholarship with Jacobsthal’s *Early Celtic Art* (1944), studies of images from the European pre-Roman Iron Age have been international in their outlook. This is reflected in a wealth of academic monographs and museum exhibition catalogues with enormous geographical reach (Megaw 1970; Duval and Hawkes 1976; Duval and Kruta 1979; 1982; Müller 2009; Farley and Hunter 2015), most of which cover a similar range of material. The most accessible of these works of international scope is Ruth and Vincent Megaw’s *Celtic Art* (2001), which has been the standard introduction for some time, complemented by a most valuable recent volume edited by Nimura *et al.* (2020) which places European Iron Age art in its even wider global context. In addition to these wider views, there is a good range of more regional studies, among them accounts of the British Isles (Finlay 1973; Megaw and Megaw 1986; Stead 1996), France (Varagnac *et al.* 1964; Duval 1989; Stead and Rigby 1981), Italy (Santoro 1978), and central Europe (Kruta 1975; Pieta 1982). Although ‘Celtic’ art has occasionally verged on becoming a slightly isolated sub-discipline (probably to a greater extent than early medieval art), there are some more contextualised accounts that place these images firmly in their archaeological and cultural contexts (Harding 2007; Garrow *et al.* 2008; Garrow and Gosden 2012).

Early medieval art has never been tackled in the same comprehensive manner as Iron Age art, partly because it is somewhat harder to define, but arguably also because the 19th-century notion of united ‘Celts’ has been more resistant to fragmentation than that of overarching ‘Germanic’ culture, despite the regular deconstruction of both (see above). Although the term is still in regular usage, the study of so-called Germanic peoples, particularly following the Second World War, became increasingly fragmented into various Anglo-Saxon, Frankish, Langobard, Scandinavian, and myriad other factions, at least partly influenced by 19th- and 20th-century processes of nation-building. As a result, from the scholarly literature, one would think that the post-Roman period in Europe was crowded with art styles, variously dissected and defined, mostly adherent to particular regions, periods, and sometimes even specific forms of material culture. In fact, there is rather less variation than the scholarship suggests. This fragmentation has, however, led to the production of numerous excellent and detailed region- or period-specific syntheses, but unfortunately none that cover a European scale. The most recent and comprehensive account of English material is Webster’s *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New History* (2012, see Webster 2011 for a concise summary), but there are many other accounts, some considerably older, that still have much to offer (Dodwell 1982; Kendrick 1938; Speake 1980). Only rarely, however, do English-

language accounts cross the Channel or North Sea (though see the now outdated account of Verzone 1969). Discursive art-historical syntheses have been less explored in Continental and Scandinavian archaeology (though see Roth 1979), where the artefacts in question have benefitted from a tendency to be more thoroughly embedded in broader archaeological concerns rather than specifically artistic ones. Many of the fullest and most well illustrated accounts can instead be found in exhibition catalogues or regional accounts, of which there are many splendid examples. Some are European in scope (Menghin *et al.* 1987; Menghin *et al.* 2007), while others focus on particular regions, such as Scandinavia (Hougen 1967; Fabech and Näsman 2018), England (Webster and Backhouse 1991; Breay and Story 2018); Scotland (Henderson and Henderson 2004), France and southern Germany (Städtisches Reiss-Museum Mannheim 1996), and Italy and Central Europe (Bóna 1974; Arslan and Menis 1990), among many others. There are, however, several broader and archaeologically contextualised accounts in which images, their materiality and their place in particular social settings play a major role, particularly from a northern European perspective (Hedeager 2011; Kristoffersen 2000; Nicolay 2014).

Composition, subject and context: an exploratory framework for comparison

Some of the chapters that follow compare motifs or objects from both periods in question, while others focus on particular objects from just one period. Regardless of the approach taken, a surprising (and heartening) number of connecting themes have emerged through the process of compiling this book, as well as through the conference and workshop on which it was based (see Preface). A comprehensive comparison of Iron Age and early medieval art is well beyond the scope of this introduction. Nevertheless, it would only do justice to the work in the chapters that follow to at least pull on some of the threads that have been collectively woven in this collaborative exploration. The rest of this introduction therefore pursues a little further the main question posed by this volume: how comparable were the images created in Europe before and after Rome? To do this, a small number of aspects will be compared: (1) the subjects of the images, (2) their composition and dimensionality, and (3) the material contexts of the images or their materiality. At the heart of this book is a question about whether the main connection between images of the later Iron Age and early medieval periods was due to their common interface with the expansionist, colonial and literate culture of the Roman Empire. The transmission of images and ideas between these spheres entailed visual and intellectual transformation, not just because these societies had different aesthetic preferences, but also because images meant something different within and beyond the aegis of Rome and its provinces (see above). Accordingly, the focus in what follows is largely on the relationship between the subjects, compositions and materiality of images between the Iron Age and early medieval period on one hand, and Rome on the other.

Subjects and forms: classical models and their transformation

The subjects found in images from the Iron Age and early medieval periods have much in common. In many cases, these images do not contain ‘subjects’ as much as they do patterns. Sometimes anthropomorphic or zoomorphic elements can be spotted in what appears to be a geometric pattern, and sometimes the animals, people and hybrids appear to be at risk not only of being engulfed by repetitious lines, curves and shapes, but drifting away into becoming them. As such, these images blur the line between bounded subjects – be they worldly or otherworldly – and geometric or repetitive patterns. To draw some examples from the following chapters, the Iron Age chariot fittings from Roissy (Figure 2.2) and the horse disc from Cuperly (Figure 2.5) on one hand, and the early medieval brooch from Sande (Figure 4.2) and the entwined beasts from the Staffordshire Hoard cross (Figure 6.8) on the other, all show the body and its anatomical components standing on the verge of figural abstraction. They are all trapped in the moment of becoming cadences and intonations rather than bounded entities. The tension between ambiguous bodies and their deconstruction into a rhythm of lines, curves and blocks may well be where the vitality and fascination of many of these images originates. As Joy

outlines in detail in his chapter, many images from these periods can be thought of as visual formulae or vocabularies that lack specific subjects as much as they do specific meanings or messages. Often, the images we discuss in these periods were a means of enriching a surface or finessing a line or terminal, but they could still be technically complex and intellectually rich.

Where a figural element is present in images of the Iron Age and early medieval period, it is more frequently animal than it is human, and can often be traced back to the classical repertoire with more or less immediacy. Backwards-facing beasts, lions, stags, boars, doves, horses, dolphins, hippocamps and other mythical hybrids can all be broadly identified in early medieval imagery, though they are often much transformed, and frequently reduced or abbreviated to a flurry of limbs, eyes, claws, snouts, jaws, beaks and tails; movements, essences, abbreviations. While it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Iron Age zoomorphic repertoire drew on a wider Eurasian pantheon (e.g. Nimura *et al.* 2020), much was borrowed from classical art of the Mediterranean. This repertoire was transformed in a highly similar manner to those images of the early medieval period, being contorted, abbreviated, and abstracted. In both periods, animals mythical and real were readily plucked from the imperial bestiary, but their transition beyond that context was not without radical transformation in a manner that will be described in more detail below. One thing can be said for certain of the animal subjects favoured in both periods, which is that feral or untamed animals were favoured over the docile and domesticated.

This tendency toward zoomorphic images does not deny that human or anthropomorphic imagery was especially rare. The same process of translation and transformation from the classical repertoire was true for humanoid subjects, and this is detailed by Behr in her chapter that traces the variation and similarities in images of the human face in both periods, often elaborated with twirled moustaches and flowing beards in both periods, such as on the Iron Age escutcheon from Kleinaspergle (Figures 7.1) and the early medieval brooch from Galsted (Figure 7.3). In fact, human faces are more common than they might initially appear in both periods, though whole human bodies remain extremely rare. Part of the difficulty of spotting a human subject with certainty comes from the fact that they were rarely depicted unambiguously. For instance, although most human masks and profiles were depicted wearing helms between the 5th and 6th centuries AD, one can never be sure if there is something more sinister lurking within that armour, betrayed by moustaches within which nestle raptor eyes and beaks, and jaws that stretch into gaping maws (Martin 2013: figures 3, 4 and 5), such as those seen on the Sande brooch (Figure 4.2). Many depictions of human figures of masks in both periods were also accompanied by an animal on either side, among which the 5th-century Galsted brooch (Figure 7.3) forms a classic example. One can never be quite sure if the animals are companions or tormentors, and in many cases it is hard to see where the animal ends and the human face begins. One thing remains true for anthropomorphic images in both the Iron Age and the early medieval period, which is the overt dominance of specifically masculine faces, regularly endowed with particularly elaborate moustaches or beards. Feminine images are extremely rare.

In this volume, Olivier makes the important point that although people, animals and occasionally deities – or at least parts of all of them – were lifted from the classical repertoire in the Iron Age, elements of the narrative that accompanied them were probably not imported, leading to the representation of generic rather than specific people, animal and hybrids. Elsewhere, Nancy Wicker (2003) has made a detailed account of similar processes in the early medieval period, suggesting that narrative elements, over time, were variously adapted and rejected. The idea of telling stories with images was not necessarily a foreign or incomprehensible concept to Iron Age or early medieval societies, but it was at least a technology that does not seem to have been especially valued or widely used. This may have something to do with the illiterate nature of most of these communities, narrative being an oral, live or ephemeral tradition, suited to becoming materialised in neither text nor image. Behr makes a similar point in this volume when she describes the remodelling of the emperor's profile on bracteates, which are small

coin-like pendants of 5th- and 6th-centuries AD, usually gold, found widely in northwest Europe, but most commonly in Scandinavia (for examples see Figure 7.4). The re-imagined imperial profile we find on bracteates has all the features that would identify a particular emperor erased, but sometimes added to it instead are superhuman features, such as animal companions and curls of elaborate hairstyles, sometimes transforming into avian beings. Due to these features, some have been led to argue that the individual depicted on bracteates was a representation of the divinity with which Scandinavian kings may have been associated (e.g. Hauck 1970; Hedeager 2011; see Behr 2011 for a summary). The generic and widespread nature of these images should nevertheless be borne in mind, and it may be safer to suggest a more generalised rather than specific interpretation. As described above, most of the time in both Iron Age and early medieval images, the subject is a human-animal hybrid, an ambiguously human or animal being, or might perhaps be caught in the moment of transformation between a human and an animal. Perhaps therefore, these images from both periods do not so much tell stories about kings with divine powers, but represent a means of intellectualising the affinity of human and animal essences, or what it means to be a living, undomesticated animal or a human. As Kristoffersen and Pedersen as well as Olivier discuss in much more detail in their chapters, images from the Iron Age and the early medieval period could be ontological expressions that did not conceive human and animal essences as inexorably separate as they seem to us (see also Hedeager 2011). Behr describes something similar in her chapter, when she describes the strangeness of human visages in the Iron Age and early medieval periods as representing a changing relationship with divinity, or an engagement with another world.

It may not be until the early Christian period of the 7th and 8th centuries AD in parts of northwest Europe that images such as the jewel-studded cross described by Fern in this volume came to stand for narratives once again. As intimated above, this may have something to do with the re-emergence of a literate elite that were closely involved in the manufacture or patronage of such rich and ecclesiastical objects. Christian crosses represent a particularly complex and significant story that encapsulates a new and revelatory religion. The one Fern describes is made of gold, inset with garnets, and saturated in zoomorphic imagery with its roots in a pre-Christian and pre-literate era. Fern describes not just the narrative content of the cross as an object and image, but also the subsequent re-absorption of jewelled crosses just like this into a narrative poetic tradition, just as the helmets described by Speake in this volume also re-emerge centuries later in the text of the epic poem *Beowulf*. This illustrates not just the citational relationship between verbal and physical worlds, but the journeys of iconic objects between textual and material worlds and then back again, always dynamic, always transforming in the process. Elsewhere, Anna Gannon has similarly described the translation of Christian narratives onto early medieval coinage (see Gannon 2003 for a comprehensive account). In this volume, Gannon describes something similar in the cases of depictions of specific deities and borrowed mythological characters on Iron Age coinage, though it is unclear to what extent these images carried narrative to their observers unused to such literal depiction. Gannon also describes the related process of actual text being transcribed with more or less success on coinage of the Iron Age, though in this case it is hard to say whether the text really continued to be a script or whether to the Iron Age minter text was simply further imagery drawn from the classical repertoire, just as Hercules or a horse could be transcribed and transformed into this new context, or Latin script was occasionally copied, either with blunders or entirely illegibly, onto the early medieval gold bracteates described above.

Perhaps the key message when it comes to understanding the relationships between subjects drawn from a classical, literary context into an Iron Age milieu on the one hand or an early medieval one on the other, is that this was never a straightforward or mechanical process of down-the-line copying with increased loss of information or chance mutations. In their chapter, Kristoffersen and Pedersen invoke LeBianca and Witzel's (2007) model of 'big' and 'little' traditions to help explain the relationship between an empire and the communities beyond its fringes. In this framework, a 'big' tradition might

be envisioned in the universalising or canonizing forces of an expansionist empire, compared to ‘little’ traditions, which might be seen as conglomerations of local knowledge and praxis. Kristoffersen and Pedersen’s crucial insight is that early medieval visual subjects did not mirror or directly copy the classical repertoire, but were transformed through a creative process of picking, choosing and adapting into a tradition of a radically different structure. The same was probably true in the later Iron Age. We may therefore envision the intercultural contexts through which visual subjects were pushed and pulled at the spatial and temporal fringe of empire as creative, rhizomatic conduits crackling with potential for new visual and intellectual configurations (cf. Bhabha 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Classical visual subjects were not just made to fit into ageless and unchanging barbarian societies: these images and their transformation changed the way these communities thought about their worlds.

Composition and dimensionality: envisioning the subject

‘Composition and dimensionality’ are taken here to refer both to the spatial arrangement of components within an image and the way in which these arrangements created senses of imagined space. Olivier and Joy’s chapters make good illustrations of the complexity of visual compositions in both two and three dimensions during the Iron Age. Early medieval images tended to be flatter and divided up into less fluid fields of decoration (Haseloff 1981: 175, 188), but in both periods there was a tendency to deconstruct or flatten the subject into two dimensions rather than imagine it as it might be seen in real life. Dimensionality is the principal focus of both Olivier’s and Kristoffersen and Pedersen’s contributions to this volume, although several chapters in this book describe the unfolding of the human or animal subject into its frontal, lateral or even oblique visual plains to produce an image not of the world as it appears, but the world as it was known or imagined. This interaction between classical realism on one hand and the abstract contortions of Iron Age and early medieval images on the other is an important connecting theme because it also potentially links technical principals of composition to intellectual modes of envisioning the world described in the previous section. While human and animal subjects were creatively adopted from the classical repertoire, in both Iron Age and early medieval images, it seems that there was little desire to create a sense of depth or volume in the classical sense. Nowhere is this more obvious than the translation of the low relief of a classical frieze into the concentric contour lines often found amongst ornament of the 5th and 6th centuries AD, such as on the bracteate from Funen (Figure 7.4c), and the brooches from Galsted (Figure 7.3) and Sande (Figure 4.2). Behr describes a similar dimensional transformation in her explanation as to why the eyes on human profiles appear oval as if they were front-on, which was not necessarily the result of ignorance of the rules of classical perspective, but perhaps due to a sense that eyes must meet the gaze of the observer. Dimensionality and perspective were therefore simultaneously deconstructed and systematically removed from these images. Kristoffersen and Pedersen’s fascinating observation of rare attempts to render the subject at a three-quarter profile demonstrate the willingness and curiosity of craftspeople from the same period to experiment with the perspective observed in classical images, and hint at their latent ability to do so, all of which suggests this was more of a choice than it was a lack of technical ability. Something similar is observed in the ‘Chimirri-Russel effect’ mentioned by Gannon in this volume on Iron Age coinage, which describes the way a flat coin might be viewed from an oblique angle to reveal an image not through the perspective depicted on the coin, but on the perspective created by the angle of view (Chimirri-Russel 2005; Talbot 2017).

In his chapter, Olivier illustrates in some detail how this lack of interest in rendering a third dimension through a classical use of perspective lead to the aforementioned flattening out or unfolding of an animal subject, so that both sides of its flanks or head might be seen simultaneously, such as on the depiction of a chariot on the back of *kliné* from Eberdingen-Hochdorf (Figure 2.4). Something similar is seen in much of the Iron Age and early medieval coinage discussed by Gannon or the bracteates discussed by Behr, on which the human profile is fragmented into myriad components; eyes, hair, noses

and mouths drifting across the surface of a coin like leaves on a pond, but no less human for it (Figures 2.8 and 8.1). The same is true for much imagery of the 5th and 6th centuries AD, in which human and animal limbs, heads, bodies and tails could be dissembled and rearranged like puzzle pieces, leading to what Günther Haseloff (1981) described as a '*Tiersalat*' or 'animal salad'. It is this deconstruction of the anatomical body that is picked up in Kristoffersen and Pedersen's description of early medieval image as suggestive of a radically different conception of human and animal bodies, relating these ideas to Huth's similar observations of Iron Age art (2003; 2010). In this alternative ontology, the body becomes an 'additive' accumulation of separate parts quite different from the seamless machine of flesh and bone envisioned in classical realism.

The predilection to unfold a three-dimensional subject onto two plains fed a desire for symmetry in both periods, and the transformation of animals, people or vegetation into geometric, repetitive patterns. A fondness for symmetry may also explain the ubiquity of the *en face* human visage or mask discussed in detail by Behr. As Behr, Olivier and Kristoffersen and Pedersen all indicate in their chapters, the full frontal face offers greater opportunity for symmetry, and it is sometimes also produced as a playful image wherein two facing profiles become a mask (take, for instance, the complex designs on the foot of the Sande brooch in Figure 4.3). Symmetry is also emphasised by the rows of interlinked quadrupeds on the Staffordshire Hoard helmet described by Speake, as well its parades of warriors clutching their swords and shields, worlds away from the parading warriors on Trajan's column in Rome, all of whom, like the dying Gaul, clamour for our sympathy and attention as individuals. A rather more complex form of concentric or *matryoshka*-like symmetry is invoked by the fact that the warriors parading on the helmet wear similar helms, leading the viewer into a vortex of self-referencing, fractal images.

As Kendrick observed, spatial patterning was a key aspect of images from both periods, and these strong geometric principals allowed for complex compositions in which symmetry and its transgression were playfully explored. While symmetry was clearly enjoyed in both periods, such images are often only superficially symmetrical. Closer examination often rewards small revelations in intentional details that confound this symmetry, and this is true for single objects, as well between copies of objects, such as the 'same but different' Iron Age mirrors described by Joy, and the subtle differences in the creatures on the arms of the cross described by Fern. In his chapter, Olivier makes the case that mathematically-executed decoration in the Iron Age – the division of a field into regular pentagons or equilateral triangles – was not done purely to achieve an aesthetic result, but was a form of knowledge in itself, or a philosophy of abstract geometric space. Joy takes this one step further by imagining how that knowledge was learned and transferred between craftspeople, describing the copying of patterns as a form of 'procedural knowledge', suggesting that the complex geometric images of the later Iron Age were experienced as steps and geometrical processes as much as they were envisioned as finished outcomes. The same could potentially be true for the similarly geometrically complex interlace of manuscripts, metal artefacts and stone sculpture of the 7th and 8th centuries AD. In a Christian and monastic context, the process of illustration is sometimes interpreted as a meditative or contemplative act of devotion. There is no reason why something similar should be true on a more general intellectual level for the equally complex images from both the Iron Age and the pre-Christian early medieval period.

Finally, we might broaden the idea of 'composition' as a structuring principle that can not only be applied to single or multiple images on an object, but also between objects. Just as Joy considers aspects of symmetry between different mirrors placed side by side, perhaps the image on a brooch was part of a larger composition of a complete dress ensemble, together with textiles and a moving human body. Should the multiple images on the helmets described by Speake be considered individually, or as a complete composition? If these images had significance as a composition, does that bring further meaning to its violent disassembly and then reassembly as just one component of a hoard? Similarly, if we are considering chariot fittings, should we examine the composition within each terret, ring, mount

or harness fitting, or is the chariot the composition? In terms of its context, the chariot from Roissy described by Olivier was part of the larger composition of a chamber grave, each element deliberately laid out, and the same is true for dress items from the 5th to 7th centuries AD, the vast majority of which are only known from deliberately orchestrated burial tableaux. In her chapter, Gannon discusses Creighton's (2000) theory that collections of coins can be envisioned as spontaneous compositions as they might lie in multiples on the palm of a hand or on a flat surface. In turn, this recalls the manner in which most Iron Age coins were smaller than the die used to make them, meaning that the original die-image can only be reproduced by using multiple coins (Talbot 2017). The way we tend to publish and examine these images can tend toward treating them as monadic *objets d'art*, not the practical fittings, pins, arms and armour that most of these objects really were, always interacting with other objects, inflections of light, sound and other sensory phenomena, and the movements of human and animal bodies. Composition and dimensionality tend to be seen as static properties of an image. They can, however, be dynamically formed and just as quickly dissolved during interactions between people and objects. Perhaps it is this playful interaction or performativity that also links Iron Age and early medieval images.

Context and materiality: images in the world

Any archaeological consideration of the materiality of images from the Iron Age and early medieval period naturally depends upon those materials that have survived, so our interpretations unavoidably have some bias toward inorganic materials, which for the most part entails metal and stone. Ceramics should of course also be a part of this discussion, but they are unfortunately absent from this book. The major missing evidence, however, is wood and textile, which almost certainly would have held a wealth of imagery of which we only gain the occasional glimpse. The second major bias from both periods is that the things which tend to survive have been placed intentionally in the ground, including graves and hoards to the exclusion of most casually discarded or recycled items. Nevertheless, the fact that the vast majority of the images we know about from both periods were bodily adornments leads us to imagine an unabashed image of truly 'barbaric splendour'. It remains true that the Iron Age and early medieval societies with which we are concerned put particular importance on the exuberant and overt ornamentation of the body. This may relate very closely to the comparatively fragile, fleeting political organisations that held communities together, united some into confederacies, and also fragmented them (*cf.* Martin 2015, 185-90). In this volume Behr describes a process by which figural art quite suddenly came to dominate objects of personal adornment in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, perhaps in the same way that similar items came to be the most highly ornamented in the later Iron Age. In both these periods, at the periphery of a waxing or waning empire, image-laden objects could be fleeting rather than static and enduring things, worn and linked specifically to particular individuals and their mortal bodies.

One of the strongest threads that re-emerges at several points in this book is a concern not just with the subjects and compositions of the images, but with what they *did*. Alfred Gell's influence has been strong in the interpretation of these images and the questions he posed are still of considerable interest, all the more so because most of the objects discussed in this volume were not merely to be observed, but were objects with explicit functions: pins, brooches, swords, mirrors, shields, chariots, coins, crosses, helmets, and much more besides (*cf.* Gell 1999). These things are not the same as the material culture of classical art, which tended to leave most dress fittings, for instance, relatively plain and restrained, with the most attention lavished on larger, more monumental edifices such as statuary and architectural friezes. Of course, nothing is absolute, and perhaps the Iron Age or early medieval farmstead was also bedecked with painted walls or textile wall hangings. Nevertheless, restraint is hardly a quality easily applied to many of these objects, and nearly all of them had a much more personal nature.

In answer to the question of what these images did, Joy describes how the decoration of Iron Age mirrors was constructed to quite literally ‘entrap’ the viewer’s own reflected gaze, as well as hold their attention in the complex curves and swirls of the ornament (*cf.* Garrow and Gosden 2012). The large, shimmering brooches of the early medieval period described by Kristoffersen and Pedersen had a similar function; their flickering gilt reflections gives the impression of moving bodies among the claws, tails, eyes and beaks that inundated their surfaces. Gannon similarly describes Iron Age and early medieval coinage as intentionally designed to hold the attention of the viewer, captivating them for a sufficient amount of time to contemplate the significance of the imagery. The same could be said for elaborate early medieval manuscripts of the 7th and 8th centuries AD. Coins in particular are objects that encourage portability and play, being highly sensory objects with a full potential for human-human or human-object interaction during financial transactions, games and idle moments. Perhaps this is what leads to their perceived potential for what Gannon refers to as ‘ekphrasis’: the ability to describe an external concept or thing in persuasive detail, such as the power of a tribe or king, the trustworthiness of a mint, or the teachings of Christ.

Some images of the Iron Age and early medieval period may have had more immediate purposes, such as the gold bracteates mentioned above, seen by many as magical amulets; objects with sufficient agency to affect the fortunes of their wearers. The imagery that decorated them, as well as the occasional runic inscription, was a key part of their potency, as well as perhaps the materiality of the gold into which their designs were pressed. There is also a suggestion by Oliver that the purpose of the Iron Age objects he describes was not limited to their visual or intellectual impact. He observes among the birds and beasts that ornament the chariot fittings from Roissy smaller details that were too small to be easily if ever actually seen on the object they decorated. Their purpose, Olivier suggests, is more of an enhancing skin, with a potential for otherworldly or druidic potency. One object we can discuss with more certitude in this sense is the jewelled gold cross from the Staffordshire Hoard discussed by Fern, an object that embodied Christ and may have been carried into battle to affect the fortunes of its bearers. A fragment, possibly from a similar cross, came from the same hoard, inscribed with the biblical text, translated here from the Latin, “Rise up, Lord, and may your enemies be dispersed and those who hate you flee from your face”. These crosses, therefore, were powerful objects, rendered in gold and garnet and capable of swaying the tide of battle.

It is worth noting that it is not just images that were lifted from the classical tradition into new Iron Age or early medieval cultural contexts, but entire material forms. Fern details, for instance, how jewelled crosses emerged from the late Roman cult of the cross, perhaps initially associated with Constantine himself. Speake meanwhile discusses how the helmets of the later 6th and 7th centuries from Britain and Scandinavia were similarly borrowed from a Constantinian tradition. The same could be said for coinage in both the Iron Age and early medieval period, along with the entire concept of abstracted, portable and storable wealth. Additionally, some of the manufacturing techniques of these images also had an origin in the Roman world, not least the stone sculpture of both the Iron Age and early medieval period, which is largely absent from this particular volume, but the ‘chip-carved’ metalwork of the 5th and 6th centuries AD was lifted directly from late Roman provincial workshops (Haseloff 1981; Kristoffersen and Pedersen this volume). It was not therefore just the images that drew from the classical tradition, but also new potentials with new materials, and the purposes to which such materials could be put.

Conclusion

The similarities of images produced in northwest Europe during these periods are obvious: beasts crowd these complex and enchanting compositions, fantastical or real, but almost always more wild than they were docile. Moreover, humans and animals were rarely depicted in a realistic or figural manner, but broken up, contorted, and shown in multiple perspectives. When one looks a little closer, these beings tend to be a mixture of human and animal components. Furthermore, these images are generally

very small compared to the architectural edifices or statuary of classical art, and are most frequently decorations of *other* objects, generally jewellery, weaponry or other fittings. Images in the Iron Age and early medieval period rarely stood alone and for their own sake.

Perhaps these images are best defined by what they are not: almost none were made to be representations of the world as we envision it today. Only very rarely do any of these images approach the illusion of lifelike forms held in such esteem by Greek and Roman art, as well as in western art from the Renaissance to the present day (Gombrich 1977). Instead, most of these images skirt the precipice of the unknown, heading toward an imagined alterity, often through abstraction and compositional rules that emphasise pattern, rhythm and repetition. These images create, split and replicate dimensions, and for that reason they are deeply unfamiliar to the classically influenced modern observer.

This book is an experiment that revisits a line of enquiry of which few were aware, to correct an absence that few had noticed. Despite and perhaps because of this eccentric origin, the conference upon which this book is based was suffused with an open willingness and genuine curiosity to learn from our colleagues across the disciplinary divide. A spirit of mutual learning, experimentation and not entirely disciplined adventure remains my justification, and it has resulted in instances of juxtaposition as well as complementarity. The cases of ‘broken symmetry’ (Joy), multi-dimensionality (Olivier and Kristoffersen and Pedersen), the inhabitation of objects by the subjects that decorate them (Fern, Speake), the use of abbreviated images on coinage (Gannon) as well as the depiction of the human face (Behr), all lead to comparisons that are unexpectedly fluid and complementary. But a juxtaposition can also be a fruitful site for meaningful comparison: the jolt or shock of looking beyond a period with which one has become overly familiar can be a healthy corrective to disciplinary strands that have sometimes risked becoming too specialist, too internalised, and too self-reflective.

All of this comparison leads one to ponder how foreign the images from one of these periods may have seemed to the other. Only one account of Iron Age objects encountered by an individual from the early medieval period is given in this book, which is described by Anna Gannon (for the detail, see Sherlock and Allen 2017: 246). The objects are a pair of Corieltauvi gold staters. Whoever found them in the 6th century drilled a small hole in each, and wore them as pendants, as people from these communities were wont to do when they encountered ancient coins, though more usually it was Roman currency they found. And in a world without money, what better use to make of such pretty little coins? On one side of each was an abstract, lunate horse, its body made of loosely interlocking crescents, gracefully leaping across the surface of the coin, hemmed in by pellets and splinters of text. On the other side were two parallel rows of lozenge-shaped pellets, perhaps reminiscent of an ear of wheat, framed by rosettes, and again impinged upon by pseudo lettering. What might we give to understand the meaning of such images to their curious 6th-century discoverer? Rubbing the mud from the surface with a searching thumbnail, did they perhaps see something of their own barbaric splendour on the freshly glittering golden surface?

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In the eye of the dragon: how the ancient Celts viewed the world

Laurent Olivier

The grimacing dragons of Roissy

The barbaric splendour of the Celtic past reappears when you least expect it. In 1999, at Charles de Gaulle airport in Roissy, northeast of Paris, in a remote area being considered for new runways, the loamy soil yielded the most beautiful examples of Celtic bronze artwork ever unearthed in continental Europe: decorative pieces adorning the chariot of some unknown figure who had died at the beginning of the 3rd century BC and had been buried there along with family members (Olivier 2013). The acidity of the soil had completely dissolved the body; only faint traces of the tooth enamel remained, imprinted on the sediment. The body had been laid on a two-wheeled, ceremonial chariot and lowered into a funeral vault dug into the earth. Two channels had been carved out for the wheels to allow the chariot to rest flat on the ground, and the chamber walls had been lined with timber. Alongside the body lay evidence of a viaticum for the journey into the afterlife: two ceramic vases that probably held food and drink, and, next to them, half a piglet's head split in two.

Most of the wooden chariot has vanished; only the metal parts remain. The iron rims of the wheels were crushed when the ceiling of the burial vault caved in under the several tons of earth that probably formed the mound, or tumulus, located directly above. The bronze plates that reinforced the hubs were also smashed and flattened. Hooked iron pins that held each of the wheels to the axle were found lying on the ground, covered with decorative pieces of bronze. The tops of these pins teem with monstrous, globular-eyed faces of no known animal species but that suggest something between a cat and a frog. Looked at from another angle, the wheel pins present a different assortment of monsters: animals with large, vacant eyes peering out over a globular snout.

At the front of the tomb lay the remains of a yoke that would have rested on the necks of two horses at the end of the draught beam. It was made of wood and adorned with a series of decorative bronze fittings representing an astonishing, imaginary bestiary. At each end were large, corpulent birds with their tails in the air, seated, seemingly, on invisible eggs, with their heads thrust well down into their necks, and with large, almond-shaped eyes, and a little turned-up muzzle. They were surrounded by four 'little ones' that fall somewhere between insects and birds, with enormous eyes and folded wings (Figure 2.1). The middle part of the yoke was decorated with an array of monster faces, part human and part animal; although it is difficult to tell which part is which. They have small turned-up noses and large, almond-shaped eyes, closed on some, wide-open on others. Other faces present thick shocks of hair that disappear into an absent body. There is also a human head wearing what looks to be a pointed bonnet lightly sketched into a triskelion motif. Some of these figures are covered with finely engraved lines, barely visible to the naked eye, that provide a sort of 'ornamental skin'. They were probably not intended to be seen, but just to be there over these extraordinary, monstrous creatures. Most of these lost-wax cast pieces seem to come, if not from the hand of a single artist, at least from the same atelier. They stand as proof of a stylistic school that was operating at that time somewhere in the Paris region.

The most striking piece of all is a remarkable openwork bronze dome, eight inches in diameter, found lying on the ground in front of the chariot's left wheel (Figure 2.2). The frieze of ten monsters around the bottom alternates large creatures, jaws agape, and smaller ones with snouts shaped like trunks that end in a round ball. These imaginary beings are linked to each other like Siamese twins, the end of each



Figure 2.1. Roissy (Val-d'Oise), "La Fosse Cotheret", chariot grave 1002. Yoke fitting. Bronze. 3rd century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copyright V. Go, MAN).



Figure 2.2. Roissy (Val-d'Oise), "La Fosse Cotheret", chariot grave 1002. Dragons 'dome'. Bronze. 3rd century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copyright V. Go, MAN).

muzzle turning into the adjoining creature's body. The top of the dome is covered with three 'dragons' with small, pointed ears pinned back and a long, carefully groomed mane. Their almond-shaped eyes are wide open, their maws drawn back to show two rows of small teeth. They, too, are linked, with the end of their snouts and the base of their necks wrapped around three large spheres. Atop the piece is a large nub that seems to present a mix of dragon features, such as manes or parts of snouts or jaws.

A druid at the airport?

The body interred along with these marvellous pieces was clearly that of a member of the privileged few but, as opposed to others similarly buried on chariots, there are no accompanying weapons. The

jewellery is unassuming: just one plain bronze bracelet on the right wrist and an iron fibula at chest level to clasp together the clothing. Also found propped on the chest was a tool set wrapped in cloth that included a pair of blade shears and an iron instrument for cutting. Objects of this kind, which seem to be those used in caring for livestock, are typical of the tombs of high-ranking men from this period. They thus indicate that the body in question would have been that of a male, probably an adult.

More unusual still is the presence next to these tools of other smaller ones whose function is unclear: needles, a small file, various kinds of blades and so on. Strangest of all are the small objects in a pouch found lying next to the skull: a naturally polished stone with alternating black and white stripes and metallurgical shop waste in the form of a solidified spurt of bronze as well as a number of 'orphaned' pieces. Some of the latter come from clothing, others from harnesses or chariots. Most of them were broken or incomplete when they were found and difficult to identify.

The collection of worn and broken objects is suggestive of the panoply of seers and magicians. As Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert noted, those panoplies usually included 'rejected' pieces, "anything that had been cast aside because it served no normal purpose" (Mauss and Hubert 1903). The curious, naturally striped stone evokes the practice of lithomancy – divining the future through stones – whose widespread use in Gaul is noted in a later text from the 2nd century AD: "the Celts employed one of Pythagoras' techniques to tell the future, divining it through stones and numbers".¹ Could, then, the fellow in the Roissy tomb have been a druid? The fact that there are no weapons combined with his manifestly privileged status would seem consistent with observations made by both Caesar and Strabo about this cast of savants and philosophers. Strabo effectively notes that, along with bards and seers (*vates*), the druids were one of "the three kinds of men" whom the Gauls "honoured in exceptional fashion".² Caesar, probably drawing on works by the ancient Greek philosopher Posidonius, noted that the druids were exempt not only from bearing arms, but more generally from "any kind of official responsibility".³

Works of art and of science

The 'dome' is not extraordinary simply because of its imaginary bestiary. It also features complex geometrical patterns that are somewhat hidden among the proliferation of monstrous figures. For example, the round balls at the ends of the little monsters' trunks on the bottom band, and which are evenly spaced on a circle that forms the border of the band above the dragons, are peaks of regular pentagons, the regular pentagon being the emblematic geometric figure of the Pythagorean School. Another regular pentagon can be detected in the series of small spheres at the end of the large monsters' manes, and which are connected to the large circle at the base of the lower band. By looking more closely still, one can make out other pentagons, for example the pattern formed by the eyes of the alternately small and large monsters, or in each section of the openwork contour of the monsters' faces. In the upper band of the dome, the details in the monsters' faces form equilateral triangles, which are also repeatedly present in the design of the large nub that sits atop the piece.

We know how difficult it is to draw geometric shapes not just approximately, but perfectly. At the beginning of the 3rd century BC, the Greek mathematician Euclid demonstrated that an equilateral triangle could be obtained by superimposing two circles of equal radius, each centred on a point of the circumference of the other. The shared radius of the circles forms the base of two triangles whose tops lie at the intersections of the two circles. The area of overlap creates a perfect almond shape, known as a

1 Hyppolite, *Réfutation de toutes les hérésies*, 2.

2 Strabo, *Geography*, IV, 4, 4, 197.

3 Caesar, *Galic Wars*, VI, 14.

vesica piscis (fish bladder), which was used extensively in Celtic art. Within the almond are two mirrored equilateral triangles with their top points at opposite ends. The equilateral triangle is remarkable in that it can be completely subdivided into smaller equilateral triangles. The operation can be repeated infinitely with the number of smaller triangles growing proportionately to their size: four triangles half the size of the original, 16 one quarter of its size, and so on.

Drawing a regular pentagon, which one can construct by dividing a circle into five equal parts, was no simple geometric operation, as we know. Euclid's method relied on an isosceles triangle, known as a golden triangle, whose base angles are each twice as large as the angle at the top. Pentagons have special geometric properties: the diagonal between each of the five points is in golden ratio to each side. Similarly, if we draw a line between each of the five points, not only do we get a five-pointed star known as a pentagram, but we find another regular pentagon at the centre of that star. The pentagon is in effect a fascinating geometric shape that can endlessly reproduce golden ratio proportions that range from the infinitely large to the infinitely small. This explains why various branches of the Pythagorean School chose the pentagon as the emblem of their initiatory order.

There are other remarkable mathematical patterns in the tomb in Roissy as well. A series of large, circular, moulded bronze nubs that probably belonged to horse harnesses feature a set of seven small spheres on the perimeter. They each present a regular heptagon, which is made by dividing a circle into seven equal parts. As opposed to an equilateral triangle (three-sided) or a square (four-sided) or a pentagon (five-sided) or even a hexagon (six-sided), the regular heptagon cannot be drawn with a straightedge and a compass, a fact recognized even in Antiquity. This also holds true for nonagons (nine-sided figures) and circles divided into 11, 13, 14, 18 or 19 equal parts.

Pythagorean creations?

Celtic works of art are thus not simply representations of imaginary, divine, or supra-natural beings; they are also scientific works requiring a deep knowledge of geometry, in particular of geometric shapes based on the properties of a circle. And the smiths who created the bronze pieces found in the tomb in Roissy were not simply artisans who had mastered the technique of lost-wax casting. They were also what we would characterize today as learned men, or at least as purveyors of scientific knowledge.

Generating motifs that were decorative in appearance from geometric figures based on the properties of a circle was hardly the invention of these 3rd-century BC craftsmen. That scholarly technique can be traced to as far back as the latter half of the 5th century BC, to the very first works of Gallic art made in the Champagne region of France. One especially remarkable such piece was found in Cuperly, in northeastern France, in a tomb with a chariot dating from the 4th century BC: a bronze disk (*phalera*) about four inches in diameter that was originally attached to the leather harness of the pair of horses that drew this light military vehicle (Figure 2.3). The fitting featured a finely crafted, openwork design with four meshwork (*résille*) rosettes evenly distributed around a central ring surrounded by a radiating *résille* pattern. It had been drawn with a compass and cut out with a trepan to an accuracy of one tenth of a millimetre. But that was not what was most extraordinary about it. Making this decorative piece required drawing 193 circles and 154 associated arcs and then, the repeated motifs were systematically ordered in series of four then three then two then one (Bacault and Flouest 2002). The pattern is precisely that of a Pythagorean figure known as a tetractys: an equilateral triangle formed by arranging ten points at regular intervals, with four in the first row, three in the second, two in the third and one in the last. The resulting triangle presents the same ten-point pattern from whichever side it is approached.

Here again, as in Roissy, it is clear that we are not simply dealing with 'decoration', however elaborate, but also with a veritable scientific language that could be read and understood only by those versed



Figure 2.3. Cuperly (Marne), unknown chariot grave. Horse disc. Bronze. 4th century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copyright T. Le Mage, RMN).

in it. This deep knowledge of geometry and mathematics, manifest here a century before the bronze fittings on the chariot in Roissy were made, bears the imprint of the doctrine of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (born circa 580 BC, died circa 495 BC). But how does one explain this scientific connection?

We know from ancient Greek and Roman sources that, for the Celts and the Gauls, acquiring and transmitting knowledge was the province of the druids, whose existence seems to be attested to in texts dating at least as far back as the 4th century BC. Connections between the knowledge of the Gallic druids and Pythagoras' doctrine were noted several times in texts that have not come down to us but which were cited or commented upon by later authors. For example, according to lore recounted by the 1st-century BC Roman historian Alexander Polyhistor, Pythagoras wanted to go and "study under several teachers in Gaul" to refine his scientific and philosophical education.⁴ One finds an even more explicit reference in his *On Pythagorean Symbols*, in which he notes that, "this philosophy initially flourished among Barbarian civilizations" before spreading elsewhere, in particular, to Greece. He goes on to say that the principal purveyors of this knowledge were the Gallic or Celtic "druids" and "philosophers", along with the ancient priests of Egypt, the Persian and Chaldean mages, and the shamans of Bactria,

4 Alexandre Polyhistor, *Symboles pythagoriciens*, cited by Clément d'Alexandrie, *Stromateis*, I, XV, 70, 1

a region that today straddles Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.⁵ Alexander gleaned this information from a *Pythagorean Memoir* that has not survived and that might date from the 5th century BC, which is to say from the era of the first generations that inherited the Pythagorean doctrine.⁶

Contemporary historians of Antiquity have deemed these references implausible. They have, however, acknowledged possible links between the Celtic belief in the immortality of the soul and Pythagorean belief in reincarnation, and also between the initiatory rites of the order of druids and those of the Pythagoreans, which certain disciplines of the Pythagorean School might have passed on at the time of the Celtic invasions into the Mediterranean in the 4th century BC (Brunaux 2006: 173–4). Still, no one has seriously entertained the possibility that Gallic science – for that is, in effect, what we are talking about – might have rested on knowledge held in common with Pythagorean doctrine. Yet that is clearly what the designs of the Celtic geometricians demonstrate. They had mastered the construction of a regular pentagon and knew the esoteric shape of the tetractys well before the period of the Gallic invasions.

Moreover, Gallic scholars and Pythagoreans held in common the idea that the world is governed by numbers. Aristotle states that the Pythagoreans, having determined that “things seemed in their whole nature to be modelled on numbers”, and that “numbers seemed to be the first principles in the whole of nature”, concluded that “the elements of numbers are the elements of all things”, the universe as a whole being assimilable to “a harmony and a number”.⁷ This mathematical conception of the universe was expressed through ratios that had characteristic signatures, such as the golden ratio, Φ , 1.61803....⁸ The Gallic ‘masters’ were clearly conversant with this conception of the universe. Obviously, it would be helpful to know both where they obtained this knowledge and by what technical processes they applied it. Here again, the information archaeology brings to the discussion is somewhat disconcerting. As far back as Pythagoras’ time, the men who built the chariots that accompanied into the grave the Celtic well-to-do of the 6th century BC were capable of dividing a circle into five equal parts. They made wheels with ten wooden spokes, which was beyond the abilities of contemporaries elsewhere.⁹ Further back still, at the end of the Bronze Age, during the 9th to the 8th centuries BC, bronze smiths were able to mould extraordinary five-spoke chariot wheels in a single piece by a technique that has yet to be understood.¹⁰ It thus seems likely that Celtic mathematicians possessed considerable knowledge of the properties of geometric figures, in particular the complex shapes that can be derived from a circle, even before Pythagoras systematized them.

Seeing things as they did

We are far removed from the image of the Gallic artisan that prevailed throughout the 20th century: an excellent craftsman but a bit limited intellectually (Déchelette 1927: 1014; Reinach 1931: 84). And we are

5 Ibid. I, XV, 71, 3.

6 Diogène Laërce, *Vie et doctrines des philosophes illustres*, VIII, 25; Brunaux 2006: 109, note 1.

7 Aristotle, *Métaphysique*, I, 5, 286a.

8 This is very likely how Caesar’s comments should be taken. He notes that the druids “spoke at length about the size of the Earth and the nature of things” (Caesar, VI, XIV).

9 Similar wagons with four wheels and ten spokes have been found in Apremont (Haute-Saône, France), Eberdingen-Hochdorf (Bade-Württemberg, Germany) and Vix (Côte-d’Or, France), see Pare 1992: Cat. 2, 220–2; Cat. 59, 247–9, and Cat. 17, 231–3).

10 Known as Coulon type wagon wheels (Deux-Sèvres; France; see Pautreau, Gendron and Bourhis 1986).



Figure 2.4. Eberdingen-Hochdorf (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). The wagon on the back of the kliné. Bronze. 6th century BC (in Biel, J. *Der Keltenfürst von Hochdorf*, Theiss, 1986).

above all struck by the links between Gallic thought and Greek knowledge.¹¹ But how then do we explain the unsettling strangeness that emanates from Celtic works of art as compared with the unflinching perfection that issues from those wrought in a classic Greek style? The answer lies in the fact that Celtic artists did not view the world as we do. They completely disregarded the notion of visual depth, preferring to represent things as they conceived them intellectually rather than as we actually see them or as the Greeks did. In representing animals or humans, whether real or imagined, Celtic artists deconstructed them into frontal or lateral visual planes. Animals were drawn in perfectly symmetrical lateral planes with each side of the body shown in exactly the same position, with no attempt to portray movement, which would have destroyed the symmetry or hidden the back parts of the body behind those in the front. Similarly, human faces – or rather masks approximating human faces – were shown frontally, which allowed for symmetry between the left and right sides. Not surprisingly, when they represented hybrid creatures, half human and half animal, they showed them in both frontal and lateral planes. And when they worked with Greek palmettes, they unfolded them, as it were, into a profusion of planes they obtained by duplicating, flipping over, or transposing every detail of these decorative motifs.

It is easy enough to see that deconstructing figures into planes and creating effects of duplication and mirroring is consistent with a view of the universe based on numbers, that is, on the products of

11 The philhellenism of the Gauls was pointed out by ancient Greek writers on several occasions. In their minds, it referred not only to their strong friendship, but also to the closeness of the two cultures. As the Gallic historian Trogue Pompée noted in writings from the time of the reign of Augustus, “you had the feeling not only that Greece had made its way into Gaul, but that Gaul itself had been transported into Greece” (in Justin, *Histoire universelle*, XLIII, 4).

multiplication and division and the occurrences of even and odd. It is also easy to see why this type of representation applies especially to imaginary monsters, whose perfection is untarnished by the imperfections and irregularities of our world. We understand as well that these creatures are portrayed essentially without bodies precisely because they are not of this world. Rather they incarnate the superior, abstract forces that determine the structure of the universe and give it its form. But in spite of all that, the absence of realism, the seeming naiveté that could easily be taken for heavy-handedness or ugliness, remains unsettling.

The seminal work on visual figuration in primitive arts carried out by the French anthropologist Georges-Henri Luquet offers insight into this paradox (Luquet 1930). Luquet contrasts the ‘visual realism’ of the naturalistic representations of Antiquity with the ‘intellectual realism’ found in children’s drawings and archaic societies. In the latter, beings and things are represented not as our eyes see them, not optically, if you will, but rather as they are understood to be unto themselves, in each of their morphological components. This manner of figuration is usually obtained by ‘unfolding’ the various planes of a figure to reveal its hidden sides. For example, artists from the Bronze Age and the Celtic period of the Early Iron Age represented chariots drawn by teams of horses by ‘unfolding’ the wheels to lay them flat on the imaginary surface plane of a drawing and ‘laying out’ the horses on either side of the draught beam, an approach that allowed for the simultaneous representation of all the component parts (Figure 2.4). Luquet notes that this intellectual realism of the so-called primitive arts stands in opposition to Antiquity’s visual realism in two ways. On the one hand, “drawings include elements that are not visible but which the artist deems indispensable”; on the other, the artist “omits certain conspicuous elements that he deems devoid of interest” (Luquet 1930: 68–9).

The point was thus not realism in the sense of visual resemblance, but what we might rather call formal authenticity in that it conformed to the preconception of what was being depicted regardless of its spatial configuration (in particular its nearness or remoteness). Luquet used the French term *rabattement* to describe the process of representing things in their entirety by ‘unfolding’ them to lay them out flat (Luquet 1930: 136). It is an approach found extensively in Celtic art (Olivier 2014). In effect, Celtic artists created what appear to be beings in duplicate but which were actually single beings opened up along their lines of symmetry and then laid out flat on a unique surface plane. For example, monster-like, two-headed birds are rather two-dimensional representations of beings that unfurl in three-dimensional space (Figure 2.5). Otherwise stated, whereas classical naturalism cleverly used perspective to create the appearance of visual depth by distorting the morphology of figures, Celtic art preferred not to alter intrinsic shapes but rather to unfold them and depict them on a two-dimensional geometric plane. What was lost in visual resemblance was compensated for by an increased fidelity to the geometric identity of figures whose component elements maintained their symmetrical and proportional relations.

A dialectic of style

Celtic artists did not see the world as we do. Thus, if we wish to comprehend the images they created, it behoves us to become familiar with the way they pictured things. It is quite telling that from among all the images that Mediterranean civilizations offered, they chose those that best lent themselves to deconstruction into visual planes. They favoured secondary motifs that generally appeared as decorative friezes and ignored the countless depictions of stories drawn from mythology to which the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans were especially partial. This is not to say that these stories did not interest the Celts, but rather that the way in which Mediterranean civilizations used the visual illusion of depth was foreign to them, as might have been as well the very act of using a picture to recount a story.

The very distinctive style of Gallic art is thus not merely a decorative genre indicative of Gallic ‘culture’. It is above all, as Hubert had sensed, a manifestation of the way in which they apprehended things and



Figure 2.5. Cuperly (Marne), unknown chariot grave. Horse disc. Bronze. 4th century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copyright T. Le Mage, RMN).

the world as expressed through the manner in which they dealt with matter. As we have just seen, Gallic art is a specific manifestation of European Celtic art and is based on a veritable science of geometric shapes. The various stages it went through are part of an overall evolutionary process that constitutes the history of Celtic art. We need to understand its various stylistic periods – those established by Paul Jacobstahl (1944) – as the product of a dialectic or, as the French art historian Henri Focillon presented it in his *The Life of Forms*, of experimentation (Focillon 1942: 9).

In its initial stage, while still in a formative phase, Celtic art went through “a period of experimentation in search of a style”, much as Focillon described the earliest stage of medieval sculpture (Focillon 1942: 8). It was in the course of this initial, ‘archaic’ phase that it experimented with the techniques and figures that were to become its signature during its period of plenitude.¹² Clearly, this is when one finds for the first time the motifs that were to characterize Celtic style (palmettes, s-scrolls, triskeles) as well as new imaginary beings: dragons, sphinxes, griffons, horses with human heads, etc. But Celtic artists were above all systematically exploring new ways of creating images, in particular those that drew on the

12 This first period of Celtic art corresponds to what scholars have referred to as the ‘early’ phase.



Figure 2.6. Thuisy (Marne). Painted vessel. Pottery. 4th century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copyright T. Le Mage, RMN).

geometry of a circle or that involved laying figures out flat. The archaic period of Celtic art corresponds to what Focillon noted generally for stylistic periods of this kind, with experiments following upon each other “with disconcerting speed” (Focillon 1942: 13). And as the American art anthropologist George Kubler noted, it probably spanned several generations of artists, with new generations coming along approximately every 15 years, which is the average length of an artist’s period of full activity. Overall artistic periods would thus have lasted an average of 60 to 120 years (Kubler 1962: 105).

In the 4th century BC, Celtic art entered a period that might be characterized as classic; this was the period of the Waldalgesheim style that Jacobstahl identified. As Focillon noted, classic periods are characterized as ‘stable’ and ‘secure’ and come after periods of exploration and experimentation that correspond to an archaic phase. It was during the classic stage that Celtic motifs assumed their canonical



Figure 2.7. Paris (Seine). Yoke fitting. Bronze. 3rd century BC. Saint-Germain-en-Laye, National Museum of Archaeology (Copy -right T. Le Mage, RMN).

form, such as linked s-scrolls and triskeles, which artists began to present in relief.¹³ But the seeming standardization of this period is in no sense an indication of conformity. On the contrary, as Focillon noted, periods of classicism are the product of “one final, ultimate experiment the audacity and vitality of which it has never lost” (Focillon 1942: 13). As figures became normalized, Celtic artists seemed to push to the limit the means by which they obtained them. They modified the base materials they worked on, in particular through the use of openwork, bringing out shapes that came together to form other figures through, as it were, those they had created. They distorted the two-dimensional plane of the base surface by forming bulges that stretched or enlarged certain details and in the process created new motifs (Figure 2.6). As applied to metal or ceramics, these new experimental methods were a kind of anamorphosis in that they generated new motifs, each with its own structure, which were actually component parts of some larger theme. Here again, Celtic artists were laying out figures projected onto toric planes, simultaneously showing all their sides without the slightest regard for continuity, and exploring the geometry of the abstract, visual space in which motifs and figures unfolded.

13 This stylistic period is also referred to as the ‘continuous vegetal’ phase.



Figure 2.8. Celtic coins. Gold and silver. 2nd and 1st century BC. Paris, Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque nationale (in L. Lengyel, *L'Art gaulois dans les médailles*, Corvina, 1954).

Celtic art moves into its most spectacular and captivating period in the 3rd century BC. The visual experimentation that had generated the classic phase was taken to its most radical end with figures and motifs freed from their base matter and flowering into full-bodied pieces. This final phase, which pushed the transformation and transmission of ancient Celtic art to its conclusion, corresponds to a period Focillon characterized as *baroque*. In the wake of the work done by Jacobstahl, most scholars now speak of a plastic style. Motifs literally rose out of and covered their base materials while figures – masks, animals in profile – were turned into motifs (Figure 2.7). The various baroque phases constitute a period in which, as Focillon put it, forms “live with a passionate intensity a life that is entirely their own”; with nothing restraining them, “they proliferate like some vegetable monster” (Focillon 1942: 15).

With all possible ways of visually representing motifs and figures exhausted, these baroque artworks in the plastic style marked both the height of Celtic art and a moment of crisis. The period was followed by one of uncertainty and contraction that could be called Recent Celtic art, in which it sought again to find its stylistic identity after the experimentation of the baroque period.¹⁴ The traditional, stylistic repertoire narrowed in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, with external factors, most notably the contact with Roman civilization, manifestly altering the direction taken by Celtic art. In particular, foreign models

14 Some scholars have used ‘strict style’ (*style sévère*) to designate this final period of pre-Roman Celtic art on the European continent.

such as those introduced on coins, thoroughly subverted the distinctly Celtic approach to figuration. Celtic artists began representing the human head in profile, optically, as in classical imagery, in the form of miniature bas-reliefs on the face of round coins. In doing so, they found themselves confronted with a paradox. They did not know how to read representations in perspective with optical distortions that generated the illusion of volume. For them, volume was not to be read in a space in which figures could be seen only partially, like inert things, but rather in a way that presented them in their entirety, through an array of visual planes. The faces we see on Celtic coins have for this reason undergone vigorous transformations, with each component part standing apart like a motif of its own. Each face seems to have been disassembled (Figure 2.8).

As the American anthropologist George Kubler noted in *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, in which he effectively expanded upon Henri Focillon's reflections, because works of art are essentially "the desirable things made by men" they are indicative of what we value. As an object of desire, every thing we make "is either the replica or a variant of something made a little time ago" (Kubler 1962: 1–2). It is thus conceivable that the change in the manner of representation manifest in Celtic art in the 2nd century BC, especially with the introduction of coins, was reflective of a corresponding crisis in values and prestige. In other words, certain man-made things were probably no longer as desirable as they had been, and had very likely been replaced by other things that had come from elsewhere.

The introduction of Roman culture inevitably led to the demise of Celtic art on the European continent. Unexpectedly, replicas of pieces in the ancient Celtic style appeared in the British Isles when these peoples were confronted with Roman colonization during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. This effectively revived the continental plastic style of the baroque period, producing, in what are today England and Scotland, and at the very height of the Roman presence, large, almost sharp-edged ornaments entirely of one metal with excessively prominent motifs. In the area near Hadrian's Wall, where Romanized England and barbarian Scotland met, the long-forgotten dragons from the time of Celtic independence suddenly reappeared in great numbers on fibulae, in the form of playing card motifs: their stare, their little pointed ears, and their turned-up snouts shaped like trunks are clearly recognizable (Joy 2014; Hunter 2014). It was a nostalgic journey back in time, an attempt to reactivate the days of yore, a quest through these ancient figures for "models, and examples, and confirmations" for, as Focillon noted, "what baroque wants from history is the past life of baroque itself" (Focillon 1942: 16).

A barbaric way of thinking

The succession of Celtic 'styles' established by archaeologists and art historians has to be understood as the path naturally taken by Celtic artists as they explored the possibilities for visual representation that the materials with which they worked presented to them. It was a process of trial and error, of steps taken forward and backwards, that rested on given conceptions. If at certain times "men [thought] the same forms at the same time" (Focillon 1942: 68) at others their experiments would result in a distinct stylistic tradition. The succession of styles did not evolve in a straight line; it was always subject to the "conflict among what is precocious, actual, or merely delayed" (Focillon 1942: 65), and generated a fundamental diversity. The endless transformations were affected by complex exchanges, rivalries, and agreements that were always temporary and unstable.

Changes in style do not occur in some abstract zone, and works of art are not purely aesthetic creations. To the contrary, as Focillon keeps reminding us in *The Life of Forms in Art*, works of art fundamentally exist in the "highly concrete but highly diversified world" that is matter, and it is through matter that they come to life, as it were (Focillon 1942: 17, 39). That thought is far more profound than it might appear. It is possible to view Celtic works of art as interpretations of the material reality of the world – its underlying sequencing and functioning – but they are more than that. In fact, their works would not

have spread from place to place and generation to generation had they merely been interpretations. For Focillon, and for the German philosopher of art Ernst Cassirer as well, meaning is not the product of representations wrought by reshaping matter. Rather the two are consubstantial. In shaping matter into forms and figures, Celtic artists brought out meaning that was already there, enclosed within it, so to speak. And it is precisely because some of the truth of this world is enclosed within matter that we must continue exploring all that present-day things can potentially reveal to us. In other words, life is, as Cassirer put it, “symbolically pregnant” with meaning, which exists as a given. It is not a result.

The artwork of the Celts can thus be seen as their way of exploring the complexity of the world and presenting their findings through images and figures. It is striking to note the stylistic kinship that links these works of art to those from the Steppes or from the China of the Warring States period. They mirror each other from one end of the Eurasian continent to the other; they present the same kind of symbolic universe peopled with voracious, predatory monsters, fantastic animals, and hybrid creatures. This is not at all the world of the tangible things of the men and gods of classical Mediterranean civilizations. And it could not be depicted in the same way, for it did not involve the kind of space in which the reality of physical objects goes no further than their visual appearance. Thus, if we are to visually conceive the universe of the Celts we have to understand the techniques they and others as far away as ancient China used in ‘unfolding’ figures. The ancient Chinese approach to art reveals a particular way of apprehending the world through its materiality. More precisely stated, it offers, as the French anthropologist Philippe Descola put it, a kind of ontology (Descola 2013).

As opposed to the classical Mediterranean civilizations of their neighbours, where the separation between creations of the mind and material manifestations was rigidly maintained, the people in these continental ‘barbaric’ civilizations conceived their world in a somewhat ‘analogical’ perspective that followed the general typology of ontologies established by Philippe Descola. It was a world of correspondences, symmetries, and polarities that they represented in particular through monsters and chimeras, where opposites were fused together and animated. Identities and qualities were not self-contained; they reappeared or were re-embodied in the form of hybridizations and beings possessed. It was not at all a world of dreams and fantasies, as Georges Bataille believed. It was a system that explained the operative causes of the universe. It posited, as Descola emphasized, that ‘the qualities, movements, and certain structural modifications of certain existing beings exert an influence on the destiny of humans or are themselves influenced by the behaviour of those humans’ (Descola 2013: 201–2). Thus, beneath the host of creatures and of states in which they appeared lay a system for representing the world that “divides up the whole collection of existing beings into a multiplicity of essences, forms, and substances separated by small distinctions (...) so that it becomes possible to recompose the system of initial contrasts into a dense network of analogies that link together the intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in it” (Descola 2013: 201).

Like other ‘barbarian’ civilizations of the Eurasian continent, the Celts apprehended the world through its materiality; they conceived the world *in* and *through* images. Understood this way, Celtic works of art were already *manières de faire*, Foucault’s term in his history of ideas for the way people recast reality, except that the Celts expressed themselves through forms and not through discourse, and in material creations rather than in texts. And it is precisely because their material creations were drawn from “collective readings” of reality that they allow us to identify distinct styles (Foucault 1966; Certeau 1987: 149–50). It was a way of thinking whose verbalization was necessarily approximate and imprecise, for it was not suited to texts. As the knowledge inherited from the classical tradition gained prominence, and with its inscription in the written word, the Celtic way of apprehending the world was discredited and marginalized. And yet, even though it has been silent ever since, its cognitive formalization of “the language of the universe” remains nonetheless of far-reaching significance.

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Variations on a theme? Examining the repetition of patterns on British Iron Age art

Jody Joy

The subject of this chapter is the art of the British Iron Age, more commonly known as Celtic or early Celtic art (e.g. Megaw and Megaw 2001; Stead 1996). These objects were made from around 400 BC to AD 100, with the majority dating to the later Iron Age and the early Roman period (Garrow 2008: 30; Garrow *et al.* 2009). The art is characterised by curvilinear motifs often arranged into intricate designs. Depictions of people and animals are rare in Iron Age art but, where they do appear, they are highly stylised. Curvilinear motifs like those utilised in the Iron Age were also used to decorate some early medieval artefacts. It is difficult to assess the potential continuity of these designs because they are separated in time by the Roman period, but they were made in very different social contexts, with early medieval art distilling influences from the Germanic and classical worlds as well as Christianity (Goldberg 2015a; 2015b; Joy 2015: 43; Laing 2010). For example, items such as the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab combine curvilinear motifs with Christian imagery, demonstrating how curvilinear motifs with a possible Iron Age origin were repurposed to transmit a Christian message (Goldberg 2015b: 201).

Iron Age art has frequently been studied from an art historical perspective with a focus on defining styles, identifying individual artists or workshops, and questioning its meaning (Fox 1958; Jacobsthal 1944; Jope 2000). But unlike early medieval art, where it is possible to draw upon the historical record and an understanding of Christian iconography to interpret it, without a historical record the meanings of Iron Age art are probably now lost to us. Consequently, much recent work has asked not what it meant but ‘what did it do?’ (Bradley 2009: 34; Chittock 2014: 314; Gosden and Hill 2008: 9; Joy 2011a: 206). Researchers have noted for example how the seeming complexity of designs might act to draw the viewer in, leading the eye in different directions and operating like a ‘mind trap’, holding the attention of the viewer (Giles 2008: 66; Joy 2015: 39). The virtuosity of designs has also attracted attention and, inspired by the work of Alfred Gell (1992; 1998), the art has been interpreted as a kind of ‘technology of enchantment’ where the viewer is left awed and confused by its complexity and the skill of its manufacture which may be inexplicable without the explanation that it was made with divine or magical intervention (Giles 2008: 60; Macdonald 2007: 336). The performative functions of the art and the potential ambiguity of designs have also been commented on and it is viewed as an art style made to be interpreted in different ways (Garrow and Gosden 2012; Giles 2008; Joy 2008; 2011a; 2015; Spratling 2008).

In this chapter, I take a different approach to try and answer the question of ‘what did Iron Age art do?’ The analysis is structured around the simple observation that much of the art from the later Iron Age appears to be a variation on a theme. While patterns are rarely, if ever, identically duplicated, close examination reveals that they are organised into a series of standardised forms or frameworks. For example, the reverse-S is often employed on sword scabbards and the lyre loop is seen on mirrors and sometimes on horse-gear but details of designs can vary widely (see Jope 2000). Manufacturing processes such as inscribing patterns or making wax models for casting were key skills in producing this art and influenced how it looked, how it was perceived and how it was valued by an audience (Joy 2015: 41), but this study will focus on how designs were conceived and constructed. The aim is to closely examine the operation of design frameworks and to question what variations on a theme can inform us about what art did.



Figure 3.1. The Desborough Mirror (© Trustees of the British Museum).

Examining mirror decoration: creating ‘successful’ designs

The different stages of creating patterns with superficially similar but subtly different designs will be investigated using the case study of the decoration on the backs of mirrors. Roughly 60 are known from Britain and nearly 30 are decorated (Joy 2008; 2010). Decorated examples date from the 2nd century BC to the 1st century AD and the majority have been recovered from graves (Joy 2011b). Mirrors are complicated objects and most are made from a cast bronze handle and a sheet bronze plate often encased by a bronze binding strip. Plates are highly polished on one side and decorated on the other. Decoration comprises intricate and interlocking designs. Fine lines visible on the surface of some mirror plates indicate that patterns were often carefully planned and marked out probably using compasses (Lowery *et al.* 1976). Designs were then inscribed or chased onto the plate (Lowery *et al.* 1971) with motifs frequently in-filled using a characteristic method known as basket hatching (Figure 3.1). The patterns on mirrors often appear in books on Celtic art where they are praised for their complexity and ‘beauty’ (Finlay 1973: 87), and viewed as examples of the ‘flowering’ of Celtic art in Britain (Megaw and Megaw 2001: 206). Others have sought to construct a stylistic sequence of mirror designs (Fox 1958: 84–98; Jope

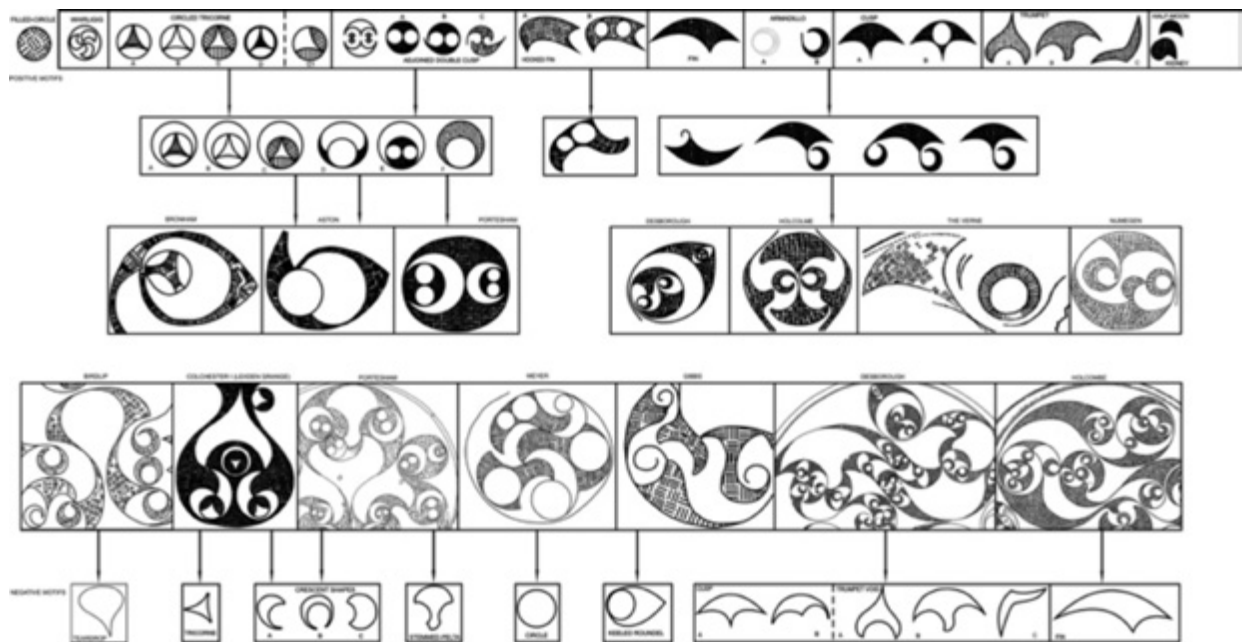


Figure 3.2. Sequence of mirror design with the positive (top) and negative (bottom) motifs found on mirror backs (drawn by J. Joy).

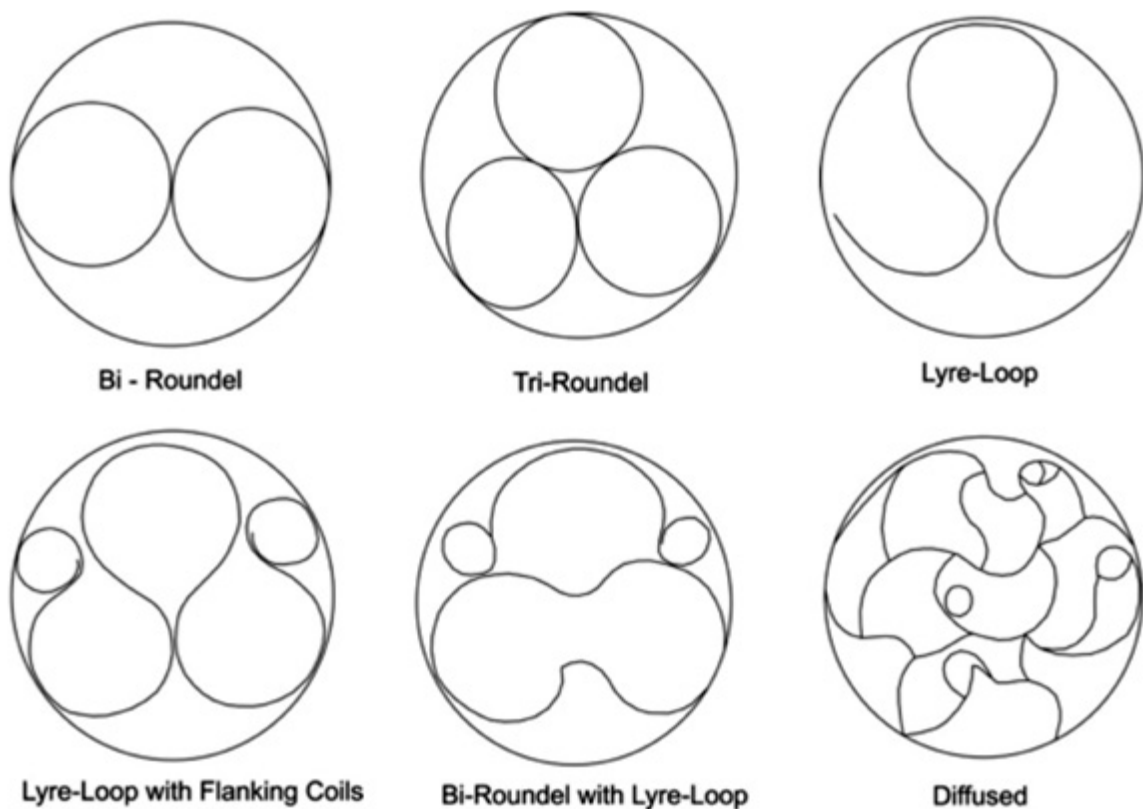


Figure 3.3. Mirror design outlines (drawn by J. Joy).

2000: 137–48; Joy 2008; 2010). The fact that many of the patterns superficially appear symmetrical but are asymmetric has also attracted comment (Finlay 1973: 87; Fox 1958, 114–15; Joy 2010: 36).

In an exhaustive examination of mirror decoration, I have previously identified the different motifs that appear on mirror backs (Figure 3.2, see Joy 2008; 2010). I argued that designs were formulated in such a way that inscribed motifs in-filled with basket hatching framed blank areas of repeated forms identical to the inscribed motifs. I termed these hatched motifs ‘positive’ and the blank areas forming identifiable motifs ‘negative’ and argued that mirror designs were arranged in such a way to create mirror images of positive motifs in the negative. I suggested a successful design achieved a balance of positive and negative motifs. Taking this a step further, and serving as an attempt to assess the relative success of designs, I coined the term ‘unused’ space on mirror backs, defined as negative spaces on the mirror back not in the form of positive motifs. Those mirrors with the least amount of unused space conformed best, I argued, to the design rules as these patterns most successfully balanced the positive and negative. Detailed examination of designs also revealed how different frameworks or patterns were employed to organise mirror decoration (Joy 2008, fig. 5.3; 2010, ch. 4). Figure 3.3 shows the different frameworks used to create mirror designs. I found that by far the most common decorative framework was the ‘lyre loop’, which is roughly in the form of a lyre, sometimes with extended or ‘flanking’ coils at both ends (Joy 2008: 84; Joy 2010: 30). Use of the lyre loop as a design scaffold is not only restricted to mirror backs, it can be seen on other contemporary British artefacts such as horse harness pieces (Figure 3.4) and, less obviously, on objects where the decoration is in three dimensions such as the terminals of neck-rings known as torcs. Some of the torcs decorated in this way date to the later 2nd century BC (Joy 2016) and pre-date many of the decorated mirrors. The lyre loop was therefore a framework employed on the decoration of various types of artefact from Britain, spanning at least two centuries.



Figure 3.4. Horse harness mount from Santon, Suffolk using lyre loop framework (© Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge).

Same but different

Before considering the implications of the repeated use of the lyre loop framework in terms of the acquisition of knowledge for the construction of designs and what this observation can potentially inform us about what decoration did, it is first important to briefly outline how similarities between designs have been evaluated in past studies of Iron Age art. The approaches adopted can be broadly divided into two groups. The first set of investigations view similarity as evidence that objects were made by the same person or in the same workshop. The second group take their interpretation a step further, assessing the decoration based on the perceived skill of the craftspeople who created it and the aesthetic worth of their products (Joy 2010: 14–15). In many instances one object is judged as superior and viewed as the product of a ‘master’, the ‘inferior’ artefact on the other hand is perceived as a copy and the work of an ‘apprentice’. This type of observation follows the art historical tradition, which as has already been highlighted, is prevalent throughout many studies of Iron Age art.

A good example of this type of approach can be seen in this quote from an article reporting on the discovery of two decorated mirrors, both from southern England, one from the parish of Pegsdon, Bedfordshire and the other from an unknown location, thought to be somewhere in Oxfordshire:

“Reduced to its essentials, the ‘Oxfordshire’ mirror design, commencing with the lay-out of positive and negative features, is so close as to suggest that it is an attempt to copy the Pegsdon mirror... they are certainly the only ‘pair’ of not quite identical twins, albeit a pair where one is to be regarded as the work of a master-craftsman and the other to have been engraved by a much lesser hand (one is tempted to suggest an apprentice) ...” (Megaw in Burleigh and Megaw 2007: 125).

Viewed side-by-side, the mirrors do look very similar (Figure 3.5). The overall pattern is arranged in the same way and they are the only two known examples to use this decorative framework (Joy 2010: 28). Megaw suggested that the Oxfordshire mirror is potentially a copy of Pegsdon based on his assessment of the skill of the engraver. He then went on to argue that Pegsdon was made by a ‘master’ and the Oxfordshire mirror by an ‘apprentice’. My view is that it is not always fruitful to draw such conclusions. The relationship between the original and its reproduction – mimesis – has long been debated. Imitation is sometimes seen as a means of learning (Sofaer 2015: 112), but often value is placed on innovation in western society, whereas repetition is perceived depreciatively and sometimes copies are regarded as mere craftwork or the product of industry (Creighton 2000: 35; Eco 1990: 83). Perhaps it is from this standpoint that Megaw has assessed the two mirrors. Both mirrors are competently made and as Budden cautions in her examination of Bronze Age pottery from Hungary (see below), “signs of haste are not the same as lack of skill” (Budden 2008: 10). Furthermore, by equating the skill of engraving with the ‘success’ of the design, Megaw potentially conflates two different processes – the construction and engraving of designs – as the two were not necessarily undertaken by the same individual (Joy 2010: 38). A further problem is that we can never be sure that any one artefact is a direct copy of another. Following Latour and Lowe (2011), if we label the original n , a direct copy of this object can be termed $n + 1$, a copy of $n + 1$ can be called $n + 2$, and so on. The Oxfordshire mirror may indeed be a direct copy of Pegsdon ($n + 1$), or it could be even further removed: a copy of a copy of Pegsdon ($n + 2$). Indeed, Pegsdon could be a copy of the Oxfordshire mirror, or even a copy of a copy and so on. Alternatively, the same individual could have made both mirrors at different points in their lifetime, reproducing previous work but with the experience of already having created such a design. The restrictions of the archaeological record mean we can never know exactly how the Pegsdon and Oxfordshire mirrors are related. Further conjecture on this point therefore seems pointless. What is important is that the designs appear to be ‘the same but different’. It is this relationship between designs, this ‘sameness but



Figure 3.5. The 'Oxfordshire' (left) and Pegsdon (right) mirrors (© Oxfordshire Museums and the Portable Antiquities Scheme).

difference', that I will now focus on specifically from the perspective of how designs were constructed. In other words, the relationship between designs will be highlighted not the hypothetical relationships between its designers.

The relationship between the original and its facsimiles

I now turn to the question of why the lyre loop pattern was repeated so often on different types of artefact. In a recent paper by Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe (2011) the subject of the original was explored through its facsimiles. They contended that the continued replication of an original artwork is dependent upon the success of its copies: "...a badly reproduced original risks disappearing while a well accounted for original may continue to enhance its originality and to trigger new copies" (Latour and Lowe 2011: 108). One of the reasons therefore why the lyre loop pattern was frequently replicated could have been that designs using this framework were more likely to prove successful. Or to put it in the terms of Latour and Lowe, the grounds for its continued reproduction is there is something about the lyre loop pattern that supports the creation of effective designs. Returning to my study of mirror decoration, I found the most successful designs made use of the lyre loop as a blueprint (Joy 2008, table 5.1). In contrast, decoration arranged with no apparent framework had a far higher percentage of unused space (Joy 2008; 2010, ch. 4). Of course, so-called success could be simply the result of random copying but in this instance, I argue there is probably sufficient weight of evidence to indicate this is not the case.

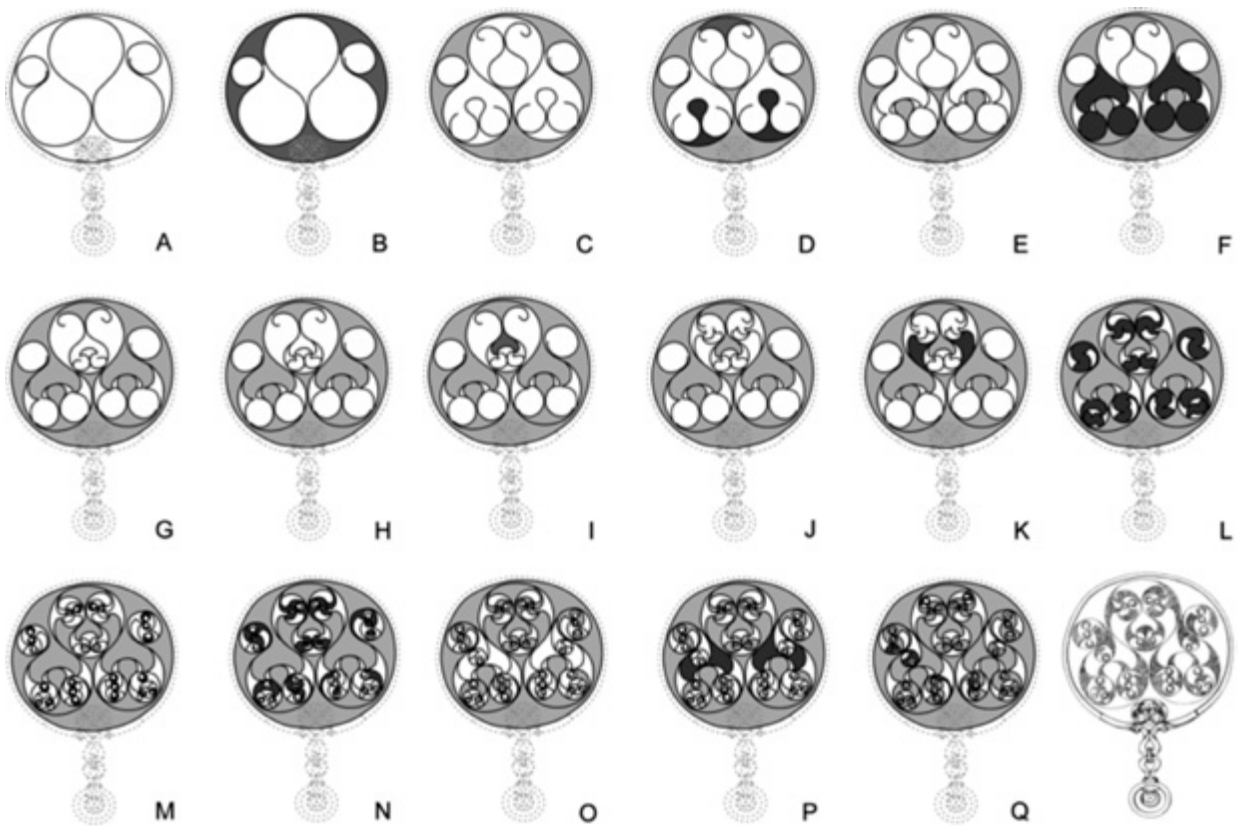


Figure 3.6. The potential stages (labelled A-L) in the construction of the design on the back of the mirror from Birdlip, Gloucestershire (drawn by J. Joy).

If we accept that using the lyre loop framework facilitated the creation of designs more likely to be judged successful, our next step must be to question what are the specific attributes of the lyre loop? What is it about this framework that facilitates the construction of effective designs? At first sight, the decoration on mirror backs such as the example from Desborough (Figure 3.1), Northamptonshire, which employs the lyre loop, appears very complex. Returning to some of the explanations for ‘what did art do?’, one explanation could be this complexity was intentional: it was made to catch or ‘trap’ the attention of the viewer. This may well be the case but someone had to invent and create the design. I argue that the creation of seemingly complicated designs was made much simpler with the use of decorative frameworks like the lyre loop as they acted as a kind of scaffold, helping to break down the design process into a series of manageable steps or stages. Figure 3.6 shows the potential stages (labelled A-L) in the construction of the design on the back of the mirror from Birdlip, Gloucestershire. It demonstrates how the lyre loop was repeated several times within the decorative scheme. The first stage in creating the design involved forming the outline of a lyre loop with flanking coils, sized to occupy the larger part of the mirror back (A). By positioning the lyre loop framework in this way, five negative motifs were delineated towards the edges. Each are highlighted in grey at stage B of Figure 3.6. Immediately, following this simple step, a large area of the mirror back or design field was filled leaving five areas left to complete including three large tear-shaped sections and two smaller circles. The design field was then further sub-divided through the placement of lyre loops within each of the tear-shaped zones (C). This created more negative motifs highlighted in grey at stage D of Figure 3.6. This example therefore, shows how, by repeatedly using the lyre loop framework, it is possible to create seemingly complicated designs with a balance of positive and negative motifs and less than half of the original design field left to be filled (Figure 3.6): a much more practicable task than filling the entire area with decoration.

Archaeological data are far better suited for assessing success rather than failure (Sofaer 2015: 162) because, as has already been argued, objects judged to be successful are more likely to be reproduced and therefore to enter the archaeological record. It is impossible to be certain with only two examples, but the design framework used on the Pegsdon and Oxfordshire mirrors was unwieldy, meaning it was harder to produce a successful design and therefore that specific design framework was much less likely to be replicated. Nevertheless, the presence of different types of blueprint shows that although designers were constrained within the rules of mirror decoration, they also had some latitude when creating designs.

Variations on a theme

So far, we have explored how repetition of certain patterns could come about. I argue that the repeated use of the lyre loop can also provide a window into the processes of learning and skills acquisition required to create complicated designs. Of specific relevance to this line of argument is the repeated use of the lyre loop framework to construct patterns in three-dimensions as well as two. This is important because the use of a lyre loop framework to organise the decoration on a three-dimensional torc terminal would not have been immediately apparent to the viewer. It is only visible when the pattern is extrapolated out into two-dimensions, but presumably whoever conceived the design was fully aware of the framework they employed. This potentially provides evidence that the lyre loop was not only important in helping to create designs conforming to a certain aesthetic, an understanding of the use of frameworks like the lyre loop as a blueprint or scaffold was also significant when learning to construct designs.

In an analysis of pottery at a Bronze Age site in Hungary, through comparison of the relative skills required to complete individual tasks, and by scoring separate processes on technical competence, Sandy Budden (2008; Budden and Sofaer 2009; see also Sofaer 2015) established patterns of skills acquisition in potting. She demonstrated how potters learnt their skills incrementally, with less skilled potters restricted to the types of vessels they could make whereas other vessel types were only made by the most highly skilled practitioners. For example, cups, the least technologically complex vessels showed the smallest investment of skill. In contrast, fine wares from settlements were very skilfully made, although interestingly fine wares from graves were not (Budden 2008: 5). Budden's analysis has the advantage that it is based on skill not aesthetics (Budden and Sofaer 2009: 5), but as we have seen with the examples of the Pegsdon and Oxfordshire mirrors, the lower frequency of Iron Age art compared to Bronze Age pottery limits the potential for this type of analysis particularly in terms of assessing the relative skills of the originators of Iron Age designs. What is clear from Budden's work is that examination of pattern is an analytical layer through which we can understand the acquisition of skills in creating art. In other words, by examining how designs are constructed we can begin to comprehend how individuals learned to create complicated designs. For example, perhaps constructing designs using the lyre loop as a framework was a part of this learning. It probably involved a great deal of copying, observation and replication of patterns until they became second nature, in addition to knowledge passed on verbally. Use of these frameworks therefore could be argued as 'procedural knowledge', a basis from which to start constructing patterns (Budden 2008; Budden and Sofaer 2009). While a two-stage understanding of design including planning and laying out could be viewed as a modern-day construction, in the words of Sofaer, "design is an inherent quality of all well-made things..." (Sofaer 2015: 56). Evidence for the laying out of mirror designs before they were inscribed onto mirror backs supports this position (Lowery *et al.* 1971; 1976). Elsewhere (Joy 2010: fig. 3.1), I have also set out clearly the planning implicit in the design and construction of mirrors. For instance, the handle and plate were made using different techniques, sometimes with different alloys suitable for casting the handle and the sheet working used to manufacture the plate.

The 'aesthetic desirability of sameness'

Budden's (2008) careful examination of Bronze Age pottery also revealed how although certain features such as form and size were relatively standardised, some processes and aspects of design left room for innovation. A further attribute of the lyre loop framework that could have led to its continued replication is its flexibility. Returning to the design of the Birdlip mirror, strategically placed lyre loops were built up, leaving blank zones which needed to be filled. This provided room for innovation within an otherwise quite structured design field. In other words, using the lyre loop blueprint facilitated the creation of designs conforming to mirror design rules of a balance of positive and negative motifs but also allowed space for innovation. Using the lyre loop as a scaffold for creating designs incorporated 'prescribed knowledge', learning appropriate design frameworks, but it also encompassed flexibility, aiding in the creation of patterns that conformed to social conventions but also featured difference.

There is evidence that 'sameness but difference' was a characteristic of late Iron Age art. For example, Duncan Garrow and Chris Gosden (2012: 17–21) drew a distinction between art manufactured in the Iron Age where no two objects are identical, with the objects immediately preceding and succeeding it, dating respectively to the Bronze Age and Roman period, many of which are very similar if not duplicates (see also Joy 2015: 40–2). Iron Age manufacturing techniques such as the dominance of lost-wax casting may in part have brought about the singular nature of objects but it was also a deliberate choice to use these methods. Even objects like chariot fittings, which are presumably meant to be the same, are subtly different on closer examination – they are not exact duplications. It is theoretically possible to create identical facsimiles using the lost wax method by forming a mould to create identical wax impressions, but this has not been observed on Iron Age art from Britain. If we were therefore to create a list of distinctive characteristics of late Iron Age art, individuality would be one attribute. Yet it also works within the constraints of a tradition. There is a right way of doing things and decoration must conform to certain design rules to be judged socially acceptable and efficacious. For instance, Melanie Giles (2008: 68) cited an example from the Irish Iron Age where a decorated sword scabbard recovered from the River Bann had been worn with the decorated side of the scabbard facing inwards. Although the design was well engraved, the pattern was symmetrical and too predictable. Giles suggested the reason the decorated side of the scabbard had been turned inwards leaving the unadorned face on view was that the pattern did not work: the symmetrical layout did not hold the attention of the observer.

The importance of sameness but difference has been observed by researchers investigating objects from other regions and periods. For example, in her study of pottery in the Hungarian Bronze Age Joanna Sofaer drew a distinction between perceptions of novelty and innovation in our society, where originality occupies a privileged position, and perspectives in the past where consistency of patterns was valued and innovation and creativity were rooted in the mimetic process (Sofaer 2015: 11). Likewise, Monica Smith (2015) recently investigated the relationship between innovation and repetition in her analysis of terracotta ornaments from India. She noted how in some circumstances repetition is accepted as a form of independent creation and in others replication and repetition can be employed as a powerful visual means of reinforcing identity. In either case, mimesis is not viewed problematically, rather Smith argued artworks were made recognisable to an audience through replication and by reference to a known repertoire of patterns, labelling this the 'aesthetic desirability of sameness'. This 'aesthetic desirability of sameness' is useful to consumers of art as well as its producers as it allows them to pick up on something that is familiar and to make it intelligible. Leslie Webster made a similar argument for Anglo-Saxon art with its use of familiar images, which she called 'formulaic vocabulary', such as vine scrolls, interlace and animal ornament, to reinforce comprehension of the art. She related the use of such 'motif formulas' to Anglo-Saxon poetry which employed repeated phrases to structure its narrative (Webster 2012: 23).

We also must be wary how we interpret ‘sameness’ as the Iron Age was a visual environment very different from our own (Wells 2008; 2015). In his study of coins dating to the Late Iron Age from Britain, John Creighton (2000: 35–7) argued that as coins were unlikely to be viewed individually, but rather *en masse*, their decoration should be understood from the standpoint of the ‘aesthetics of a series’ (Creighton 2000: 35). Variation in coins also took a different form as the dies used to strike them were bigger than the size of individual coins, meaning each one only reproduced a part of a larger image. Drawing upon the observation that because of the high degree of copying, change in Iron Age coinage took place slowly and incrementally, Creighton concluded:

“We must wonder... how Iron Age coin was perceived. What we see as slavish copying, with the occasional mistake leading to variation, viewers of the time may have seen as wonderfully subtle variations on a theme. In a world starved of the richness of constantly changing imagery that television has brought us, such subtle variations would have been far more noticeable than we perhaps imagine” (Creighton 2000: 36).

Thus, for Creighton the aesthetic of Iron Age coins was based on subtle differences. Or in other words, variation was tolerated but within strict confines. Art on other types of Iron Age object varies more than on coins but nevertheless, it is likely a critical eye would have been aware of even small variations in designs.

The art of ambiguity

As I mentioned in the introduction, Iron Age art possesses a quality of ambiguity and it seems to be an art form that was consciously designed to be read and perceived in different ways (Garrow and Gosden 2012: 317). Ambiguity can result from the finely inscribed lines seen on mirrors and sword scabbards which lead the eye in different directions, from the different plays of light and shadow seen on raised decoration on objects such as shield bosses, and can also depend on whether decorative details are scrutinised up close or viewed from a distance (Joy 2016; Spratling 2008). But here I argue the construction of designs within frameworks like the lyre loop forming designs that are familiar but details that are different, is also a means by which ambiguity is built into patterns whether intentional or otherwise. In this instance, prescribed learning strategies in terms of how to frame and construct a design in the ‘correct’ way must also allow for sufficient diversity and innovation for objects to simultaneously appear familiar yet different, to be a variation on a theme. The room for innovation or difference built into the lyre loop blueprint was therefore a desirable feature because it promoted ambiguity and could have further contributed to its replication or success.

Returning to the question of ‘what did the art do?’, decorative frameworks like the lyre loop facilitated the creation of ambiguous designs. Similarity of design frameworks fostered comprehension and understanding but differences in the design held the attention of the viewer because they were never sure what to expect. Both Alfred Gell (1998) and Chris Gosden (2005) have referred to the concept of the ‘inter-artefactual domain’ to argue that artefacts can exist in a world which can be viewed as somewhat independent from and influence human actions. As Gell stated: “art works are never just singular entities, they are members of categories of art works, and their significance is crucially affected by the relations that exist between this category and other categories within a stylistic whole – a culturally or historically specific art-production system” (Gell 1998: 153). Much like Creighton’s (2000) concept of the ‘aesthetics of a series’, copying and replication of decorative frameworks from existing artefacts already in circulation and judged to be successful could provide an example of this process in action. In effect, by acting as a scaffold or blueprint in the creation of patterns conforming to design rules but incorporating space for variation and ambiguity, objects employing design frameworks like the lyre loop influenced the choices of craftspeople, contributing further to the continued replication of ‘successful’ blueprints.

Conclusion

When I look at the decoration on objects like that on the backs of mirrors, my eye is led in different directions and it is very difficult to comprehend how such seemingly complicated designs were constructed. This was probably fully intentional and if we ask, ‘what does the decoration do?’, one answer could be: it captivates the viewer through its complexity. But someone must create and construct the designs and they need to learn how to do it. In this paper, I have argued that one of the ways they learned the processes of design construction was by starting from frameworks like the lyre loop which acted as a scaffold for the creation of designs. The blueprint does not guarantee success but it certainly makes the process easier. By creating complicated patterns from frameworks this also contributed to an ‘aesthetic of sameness’, making the art more intelligible to audiences. Patterns like the lyre loop were copied more often as designs created using this framework were more likely to be judged successful. The more successful copies there are, the more likely it is for the pattern to continue to be replicated. Finally, I argue that the most successful patterns, like the lyre loop, also incorporated room for innovation and difference meaning the aesthetic of the specific form of art examined here could be argued to be one of ‘sameness but also difference’ or to put it another way, of ‘variations on a theme’. This ‘sameness but difference’ bred familiarity but also ambiguity.

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Changing perspectives in southwest Norwegian Style I

Elna Siv Kristoffersen and Unn Pedersen

Animal Art Style I developed during the late 5th and early 6th centuries.¹ It evolved from the preceding Nydam Style,² influenced by the art of small-scale metalwork from the northern provinces of the Roman Empire. Style I is characterised by surface covering, stylised zoomorphic designs, occasionally mixed with anthropomorphic elements. The high relief and the gilded surface, shimmering and shifting in light and shadow, is essential to this art form and creates an illusion of living, crawling bodies (Kristoffersen 2000a: 267–9).³ In particular, the large, shining relief brooches would have had a striking effect, communicated through their size and shiny surface. These are visual aspects that would have had an impact and caught the attention of observers. The impact was made even more powerful through the associations that would arise from the social and ritual use of the objects, as well as through the potential for magic inherent both in the technology (Gell 1996) and in the entangled, incomprehensible masses of elusive images. The majority of the individual motifs, however, are *not* of a communicating nature. They are made to have an effect on the object, not on an observer, a point of view related to the idea of transformative thinking – that an ornament in the shape of an animal, if executed in the ‘correct’ way, could act as a force that penetrates the surface and transforms the object (Lévi-Strauss 1963). Thus, the image exceeds the material and becomes the animal – or rather a new entity with the capabilities of an animal within the form of an object. Such a crossing of boundaries actualizes the challenging dualism between material-immaterial relationships (e.g. Miller 2005: 1–50 for a synopsis), and object-ornament and object-animal relations (Kristoffersen 1995; 2000a; 2010). Importantly, Lynn Meskell underlines “that people can imbue things with humanlike qualities without mixing their categorical understandings” (Meskell 2005: 58, with reference to Gell 1998). That should be equally relevant for animal-like qualities, and the embodiment of objects might again be linked to a desire to control technologies of enchantment.

The North Sea coast of present day Norway,⁴ opening up towards the British Isles, the Continent, and beyond, stands out as a core area in terms of early specimens and concentrations of objects in Style I. In the following, we will take up questions concerning the development of animal art: why – and how – did this happen in the early fifth century, and along this coastline? To answer such questions, we must take into consideration a complex set of factors, and central among them are those that concern the kind of societies involved and their power relations, culture, and art. We agree that meetings between Scandinavian and Mediterranean cultures are an essential explanation, and we will therefore first introduce key characteristics of the 5th-century societies in Scandinavia as compared to the Roman Empire.

1 During chronological phase D2a and D2b (AD 450/460–550), see Kristoffersen 1999, 97–8, 109; Kristoffersen and Magnus 2010, 62–82, 93–4, and for an overview in relation to the relief brooches see Kristoffersen 2015; 2017.

2 AD 400–450/460.

3 See discussion on aesthetics and creativity in Maquet 1996, Morphy 1996 and Morphy and Perkins 2006: 8–23.

4 Covering an area from the county of Vestfold in the southeast to Sogn and Fjordane on the western coast (although strictly speaking the counties of Vestfold and Telemark face the Skagerrak rather than the North Sea).

We will then show that the craftspeople's handling of various angles of view, as observed in the ornaments, can provide new knowledge on the meeting of classical and Scandinavian perspectives. Experimentation with different angles of view – the relating and alternating side and full-face views – has previously been discussed on several occasions (e.g. Kristoffersen 1995; 2017; Lindstrøm and Kristoffersen 2001 with references; cf. Leigh 1984). We will briefly mention a few objects involved in this discussion so far, and then bring in the elaborate brooch from Sande (Lund 2008; Vedeler *et al.* 2018). The masterpiece and its ornaments have opened new avenues for exploring the mentality behind the production of such brooches. Of importance to our context here is its potential to bring further aspects into the discussion on perspective, through tiny details that barely can be observed with the naked eye. The brooch was found in the county of Vest-Agder, on the southern tip of Norway, within one of the largest concentrations of finds of Style I objects.⁵ The craft tradition of this area is distinguished by its high quality and creativity.

The development of Style I – why just then, why just here?

It has long been argued that decisive factors in the origin of Animal Art and Style I concern contact with Mediterranean culture and classical art (e.g. Salin 1904: 127–9, 162–82; Haseloff 1981: 1–17; 1984: 109, with references). Moreover, the changes that took place in this relationship early in the 5th century, when the Roman Empire was losing its grip on Europe, opened up possibilities for the development of local traditions. Günther Haseloff suggests that, early in the 5th century, metalworkers previously engaged in the workshops in the northern provinces of the Empire, such as in Belgium and Northern France, brought new technology and designs to Scandinavia (Haseloff 1981: 16–17).⁶ In our opinion, they may well have made – or at least been involved in the making of – the high quality Nydam Style brooches along the Norwegian North Sea coast, such as in Jæren and Lista.⁷ If this holds true, the effect of Mediterranean influence on the development of the art was in fact a direct consequence of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Gradually, local craftspeople seem to have adopted the necessary technological basis and a selection of designs.⁸ Early Style I brooches still show some remnants of classical ornaments, such as meandering spirals. However, they are no longer executed with the quality seen previously; for instance, we can observe an inconsistency in the interconnection between the single spirals (Kristoffersen 2015: 391). After a while, the classical ornaments fall out of use and the focus shifts towards zoomorphic designs. Nevertheless, as we will show, local craftspeople still included

5 Ten relief brooches of the larger type (Rygh 1885: figs. 257–62); three of the smaller type (*ibid.*: fig 256); two gold scabbard mounts; two Style I decorated swords/sword equipment; one decorated glass vessel; three unidentified objects in addition to at least six graves with relief buttons, each with different kinds of buttons. There are also 11 gold bracteates from the area.

6 In 406, the Roman legions withdrew from the frontiers along Rhine and Danube, and thereby the German tribes came in close contact with the Roman provincial workshops. Haseloff suggests that Germans went looting, taking with them both tools and craftspeople, and even whole workshops (1981: 16–17).

7 The relief brooches from Hauge, Rogaland (B2271, Sjøvold 1993, N33) and Lunde, Vest-Agder (B3543, *ibid.*: N23) are close to the provincial Roman metalwork (Haseloff 1981: 5).

8 Cf. Michael Dietler's (2010: 367; 2015: 269, 280–1) discussion on indigenous workshops adoption of Greek pottery production techniques in the lower Rhône basin for the manufacture of hybrid ceramic wares combining Greek and indigenous derived forms and decoration. Only a very limited range of Greek forms was imitated: "a complex hybrid fusion combining imported production techniques (the wheel and controlled-draft kilns) and imported decorative concepts and forms with various native forms and decorative motifs".

and developed anthropomorphic elements and showed an increasing interest in various angles of view, both probably a result of classical influence.

Other key factors behind the emergence of Style I concern various developments affecting the communities living along the Norwegian coast. Rich burials, rapidly developing arts and crafts, and settlement expansion bear witness to the general social and political change in Scandinavia, referred to as a unique process of cosmological and institutional invention (Herschend 2009; Hedeager 2011), where exclusive objects, some in Style I, were involved in social and political interaction. Toby Martin has described these centuries as a period characterized by an abundance of bright and elaborate material culture: “a northern culture of exuberant personal display” (Martin 2015: 6). He demonstrates how it represents a transition from the Roman Period with statehood, monumental architecture, and complex economies to “the material vestiges of chiefdoms, farmsteads and the gifting of precious items between important women and men” (*ibid.*). Martin sees a development towards “a world whose cosmological order was in flux, more fragmented, more fragile and more reliant upon the centripetal forces of important people, who drew towards them not only subjects, but also objects” (2015: 328). In other words, this is an environment where creative and high-quality craft activities were stimulated and encouraged, attracting people who made exquisite objects for personal display.

“Great” and “little” traditions

In a discussion of the *Situalkunst* of the Hallstatt period, Christoph Huth shows that although certain designs were taken from Mediterranean culture, the *heimischen Vorstellungswelt* was never abandoned (2003: 272, with references). He regards it as typical for *Randkulturen*, or fringe communities, that they never adopted Mediterranean culture. We propose that the fringe position of the Norwegian North Sea coast contributed to a relatively high degree of independence in relation to influences from the Empire, enhancing a deliberate and consistent adoption of elements on the premises of the local tradition, in a process encouraging creativity. The influence was probably the result of repeated encounters with craftspeople and/or objects from the south and the experience of these encounters.⁹ Craftspeople along the coast took up the technology and incorporated the new designs in an effort to develop the local tradition and their own stylistic expression. The art never became a classical one. That was not to happen until several hundred years later, when a more classically influenced expression developed alongside Christianity. We do not consider the Norwegian North Sea coast culture as a ‘receiver’ culture exclusively, rather we would highlight, and demonstrate in detail below, that the craftspeople made some highly conscious choices on what to adopt and pursue.

The situation between the Norwegian North Sea coast and the Roman Empire resembles that of “great” and “little” traditions, as defined by Øystein LaBianca and Kristen Witzel, concerning how local populations adapted to imperial projects and externally imposed traditions (2007, with references). These concepts originally referred to little traditions *within* great traditions. However, in our context they refer to interacting traditions widely separated in space. Little traditions are distinguished by: “the conglomerate of vernacular or local knowledge and practices not derived from a canonical text, but considered normative by the largely non-literate masses”, representing “knowledge and practices that have been passed on from generation to generation without being dependent on the aid of dynastic or imperial universalizing agents for their transmission” (LaBianca and Witzel 2007: 65, 68). The Roman Great Tradition represents a civilization defined as “a luminous constellation of radiant attitudes, beliefs, institutions, values, elite cultural traditions and works of art, artisanry and architecture that emanate

9 For the concept of encounter, see discussions within Human Geography (Wilson 2016) and human-animal relations (Oma 2013).

from a particular urban epicenter of centers”, “making use of the Latin language and script as a means to codify knowledge and practices essential to the maintenance of the tradition”. “A civilization’s ‘great traditions’ are normative principles and behaviors propagated by its literate elites” (*ibid.*: 65–7).

Local agency and experience in culture encounters are underlined by Michael Dietler (e.g. 2010; 2015), dismissing the idea of passive assimilation concerning Mediterranean influence. Dietler emphasizes that indigenous peoples were highly selective in their preferences, absorbing some practices and goods into their everyday life, while ignoring or rejecting others (2015: 273). Thus, the cultural entanglement is “locally contextualized and viewed from the standpoint of the social and cultural logic of indigenous societies” (*ibid.*: 264). The entanglement is an active process played out by individuals and social groups, in Dietler’s words, “a product of little decisions made by small groups of actors” (2010: 364). The craftspeople along the Norwegian North Sea coast constitute such a group of actors experiencing this history of encounters. The group consisted of individuals who made their choices a creative and transformative process, giving “new meanings to borrowed cultural elements according to their own cosmologies” (2015: 274).¹⁰

A distinctive difference between great and little traditions concerns the lack of a written language in the latter (LaBianca and Witzel 2007). The community along the Norwegian North Sea coast also shares other characteristic features of little traditions. Persistence of cultural practice seems to be one of them, holding on to practices handed down through generations, although competition and negotiation caused local variations and developments, partly due to the process of change mentioned above. Persistence of cultural practices was due to the hardness of indigenous structures maintained through a set of specific institutions. Among them is *hospitality* (LaBianca 1997: 151–5). Important aspects of hospitality include visiting strangers and the communication of information.¹¹ We will highlight that hospitality was considered a virtue in the Nordic context. It provided opportunities for personal encounters and created meeting points in socially charged spaces/arenas (*cf.* Oma 2013: 163–5), such as the hall at a magnate farm, where the virtue of hospitality was lived out. Encounters within such circumstances may well have included foreign and local craftspeople and would have had consequences for the choices that were made. Some of these choices might well have concerned solutions to the problem of transferring a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional surface.

Aspective – perspective

The way a three-dimensional object, human or animal, is transferred to a two-dimensional, flat surface was an issue in Claude Levi-Strauss’ discussion on *Primitive Art* (1963; *cf.* Kristoffersen 1995; 2000a with

10 “These are the people who encountered each other on beaches, at markets, in homes, and on borders, and who struggled to comprehend the alien values and customs of the other enough to effect exchanges of goods that were seen as potentially useful in their own social projects according to their own cultural dispositions. The consumption driving these transactions involved creative appropriation and reinterpretation of selected alien objects (wine, tableware ceramics, coinage) and techniques and practices (the potter’s wheel, mud-brick architecture, writing) – sometimes quickly, sometimes after long periods of indifference – as well as a much longer list of rejections of other goods and practices (garum, dress, weapons, religious practices, etc.)” (Dietler 2010: 364–5).

11 *Cf.* also Dietler’s (2015: 277) discussion on hospitality as a key element in establishing relations of reciprocal obligation that bind together host and guest.

references), and in Christopher Huth's treatment of the *aspective* concept with regard to the Hallstatt art tradition (2003: 7–8, 272–91; 2010: 136–40). In an aspective – or additive – mode of expression, the body is composed of independent body parts. In other words, the body has a segmented appearance, with each body part having its own boundary, and this is considered typical for prehistoric images and illiterate societies. The representations are constant despite their changing views; they are intellectual, not visual, and *objektzentrierte* in contrast to *betrachterzentrierte*. Every aspect necessary for the understanding of an image is depicted, including the ones that are not in view, while unnecessary aspects are excluded; it is a representation of what one knows, not what would actually be seen from a specific angle of view (cf. also the discussion on *Gestalt formation* and Style I in Lindstrøm and Kristoffersen 2001). Typical are *Wechselansichten*, or various and changing angles of view, and the absence of “*Echte*” *Ansichten*, or “real” perspectives (cf. Willats 1997, figure 2.1). Zoomorphic designs are frequent, and anthropomorphic designs are rare.¹² These are all features that we can recognize in animal art from the Norwegian North Sea coast, and we recognize them in the principles formulated by Levi-Strauss,¹³ principles that characterize Style I with surprising accuracy (Kristoffersen 1995: 4).

An aspective, intellectual mode of expression contrasts to the perspective and visual mode as we find it in the classical art tradition, where proportions, perspective, and optical principles were ideals (e.g. Richter 1974: 53–184; Revold 1972).¹⁴ More than in any other civilization, the human body was in focus, and moreover, the visual and correct representation of that body in every detail expressed naturalism and realism. The small-scale metal art of the Roman provinces seems closer to the Nordic art tradition. Animals were often presented in a stylistic manner, but with bodies in rounded relief and not with a segmented appearance inside raised contour lines (Haseloff 1984: 111).

Huth emphasizes that aspective and perspective representations are often mixed (2003: 8). We will argue that the animal art of the North Sea coast can be defined as an aspective expression, with elements adopted from a perspective tradition. We will demonstrate that this is indicated by the various angles of views in the designs, which also include the first representations of anthropomorphic designs.

Frontal/full-face and side views

Frontal and side views, as well as various combinations alternating between them, have been discussed on various occasions (most recently Kristoffersen 2017 with references), and there are frequent references to the anthropomorphic, full-face Hauge-mask (*ibid.*: figures 1 and 3).¹⁵ Included in the mask are five different animal bodies: two pairs of identical zoomorphic figures in side view and one sculptured animal on the extension of the nose, which can be viewed from every angle. The clasp from Melberg (*ibid.*: figure 4) provides an excellent example of alternating frontal and profile views. Since it is a clasp, opening and closing it actively changes the angles of view and the figural image. In a closed position, it appears as an anthropomorphic frontal full-face with nose, eyes, and beard. In an open position, the frontal view changes into two zoomorphic heads in profile. Other relief brooches within this tradition

12 Other features are *Simplität* and *Gleichförmigkeit*; absence of *Größenrelationen* and *Tiefenwirkung*.

13 Intense stylization; schematization or symbolism; depiction of the body in split representation; dislocation of details arbitrarily isolated from the whole; representation of one individual in front view with two profiles; highly elaborate symmetry with asymmetric details; illogical transformations of details into new elements (cf. also Boas 1955).

14 Developed in Greek and continued in Roman art.

15 For difficulties in distinguishing anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements in these motifs, cf. Kristoffersen 2010: 263–4.



Figure 4.1. (a) Head plate of relief brooch from Høyland (Farsund, Vest-Agder). Enlarged. Half frontal view (right) and side view (left). Photo: University Museum of Bergen ©; (b) Detail from the relief brooch from Sande showing the nose at an angle suggesting side or three-quarter view. Enlarged. Photo: Ellen C. Holte, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo ©.

as well as golden scabbard mounts, such as the one from Åmdal (*ibid.*: figure 3), have perspectives and images that alternate in the same way.

Half-frontal and three-quarter view?

The half-frontal view has been considered as a deliberate design in Style I (Alenstam 1949),¹⁶ and the resulting half face and hidden eye have been considered within discussions of the art tradition as referring to the one-eyed god Odin (Kristoffersen 2008). The angle of the nose is important in distinguishing a half-frontal view from that of a side view. On the small relief brooch from Høyland (Figure 4.1a), the anthropomorphic head to the left is presented in side view, where the nose is depicted as a small ribbon, whereas the nose on the head to the right has a rectangular shape and is presented in a half-frontal view. The different shape of the eyes, cheeks and mouth contributes to this impression; the craftsman has deliberately depicted the two heads in the two different views.

Although not quite as distinct, the anthropomorphic heads on decorated gold foils from a glass vessel should probably also be perceived as half-frontal views. The repeated images in the frieze on the Rimestad foil (Kristoffersen 2008: figure 2) have rectangular noses, long hair and hands with 'bracelets' and raised thumbs.¹⁷ On the gold grip of the Snartemo sword (Hougen 1935: plate II) the two entangled, more naturalistically presented, longhaired 'twins' in one of the upper panels have a rectangular nose, and their eyes and hair contribute to the impression of a deliberate half-frontal view.¹⁸

On five late brooches, we have documented anthropomorphic noses that protrude from the surface at a specific angle (Figure 4.1b),¹⁹ in order to emphasize a side view, slightly from below, or, rather perhaps a

16 The half-frontal view was first identified as a motif on a pair of clasp buttons (Alenstam 1949: 203–4, figure 8: 12–13).

17 Similar, although not quite so clear half-frontal views are found in hidden positions underneath the upper guard on the Snartemo V sword and on the headplate of one of the relief brooches from Trygslund (Cop. M. DCCCXXXIII; Sjøvold 1993: N27), both from the county of Vest-Agder.

18 Since this was written we have discovered that the left twin seems to be presented in a side view. Accordingly, the design corresponds to the combination of side view and half-frontal view on the Høyland brooch (Kristoffersen 2019, 78, figure 4).

19 Three brooches from the county of Sogn and Fjordane: Sandal, Jølster (B6656, Sjøvold 1993: N57), Hauglum, Fresvik

three-quarter view, a perspective known and used in classical art (e.g. Richter 1974: 324–5). We propose that these noses represent early attempts and an understanding of perspective closer to the classical art tradition. The more naturalistic anthropomorphic kneeling figure on the Snartemo glass vessel foil supports our suggestion.²⁰ The nose is no longer just a line, as it is in the Høyland brooch, but is depicted as viewed in profile or in three-quarter perspective, and likewise slightly from below, such as the noses on the aforementioned brooches. We are not suggesting that the craftspeople of the North Sea coast had adopted the classical approach to handling perspective, but that the Mediterranean influence may have inspired them to play with the ideas of classical visual art through their attentive and creative experimentations with various angles of view.

The Sande brooch: another view

The gilt silver brooch from Sande is a spectacular piece of jewellery (Figure 4.2), found in a well-equipped inhumation grave (Helliksen 2006; Lund 2008; Lund and Engebretsen 2009; Vedeler *et al.* 2018). Our detailed study of the relief brooch has resulted in the identification of yet another view. As it was the ornamentation that led to the recognition, it will be presented before we return to the fourth – or fifth – view. The ornaments are characterized by their high quality and the motifs on the 17cm-long brooch follow a symmetrical composition, with a few exceptions as mentioned below. The symmetry also seems to be broken in a few details, some of the animal figures are compressed due to limited space, preventing a proper execution of limbs and the beak-like mouths.

The frame of the rectangular head plate is built up of a row of 11 bearded full-face masks, with a three-dimensional animal figure in each corner. A niello bar with a zigzag pattern demarcates the frame from the second panel, and similar bars delimit panels on the brooch more generally. The ornaments in the second panel consist of five stylized human and animal figures with ribbon-like bodies and one or two legs with thighs and paws of somewhat varied shape. The figures are not symmetrically composed. The two anthropomorphic heads are both presented in side or three-quarter view (cf. above), one in the upper part of the panel and one towards the lower right corner, both with noses at angles as described above. The upper face has a curl on the head, while the other face has a beak-like extension against the frame of the inner panel. If this interpretation is correct, the image can be defined as a hybrid human-bird figure, suggesting a reference to the concept of shape shifting.

In the inner panel, there is one animal figure, stretched out to fill the available surface. A rivet connecting the head plate to a triangular extension on the bow is situated at the centre of its body. At the transition to the bow, there are two animals made in a thick layer of metal, probably in order to strengthen this weak part of the brooch.²¹ The junction is neatly made and almost invisible, the bars framing the bow are incorporated between the head and the beak-like mouths of the thick-layered animals, both resting their heads on the inside and their beak-like mouths on the outside of the bars. Their thighs are situated against the central bar of the bow, characterized by an animal head at each end. The bar, in particularly high relief, divides the bow into two panels with two animals each, with their faces towards the footplate; the composition is nearly, but not completely, symmetrical.

(B8045, *ibid.*: N54) and Sørheim, Luster (B3720, *ibid.*: N59); the large brooch from Hauge, Rogaland (B4000, *ibid.*: N34) and Sande, Vest-Agder (C55731, Figure 4.2).

²⁰ C26001, Hougen 1935: plate V.

²¹ Despite this measure taken to strengthen the brooch, it has still broken. Strengthening layers of metal in the junction between the bow and head plate is a technique also found in other brooches from Vest-Agder, such as the one from Ågedal (B3410, Sjøvold 1993: N29).



Figure 4.2. The Sande brooch (Farsund, Vest-Agder). Drawings: Hege Vatnaland. Photo: Ellen C. Holte, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo ©.

The footplate is also divided by a central bar. The large profile heads projecting from below the bow have niello in the contours of their heads as well as in a pointed and striped extension, perhaps evoking a mane. Within their long necks are tiny animal figures. The three large anthropomorphic masks in frontal view are eye-catching features. The masks have niello inlaid eyebrows or eyelids. The mask in the end lobe at the very bottom of the brooch has niello in the eyes and a nose in the extension of the bar that divides the footplate, as well as beard-like scrolls on both sides of the nose. In the downward extension of the mask, there are trapezoid panels lined with niello and niello inlaid scrolls. Directly above the mask are ornaments that might be interpreted as a single full-face mask, if one combines the figures on both side of the bar, with curled up head profile, eyes and a beard-like extensions. If this is correct, the mask has the same kind of curls as the human face on the head plate. Masks in this position are found on other brooches from Vest-Agder (such as the Ågedal brooch). Outside the lower footplate panel is a border running from

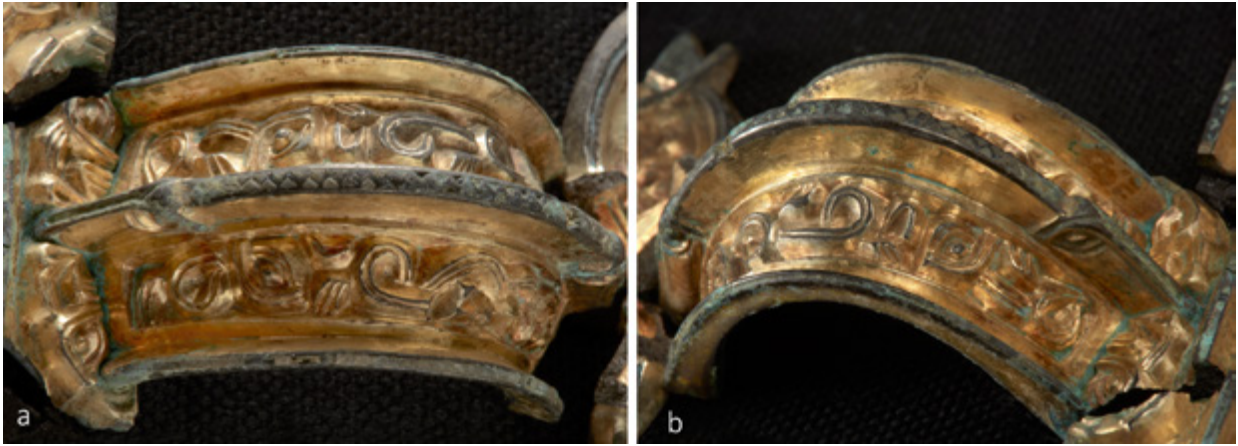


Figure 4.3. The Sande brooch. Details: animal heads in both ends of the dividing bar on the bow. From above (a) and in side view; (b). Enlarged. Photo: Ellen C. Holte, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo ©.

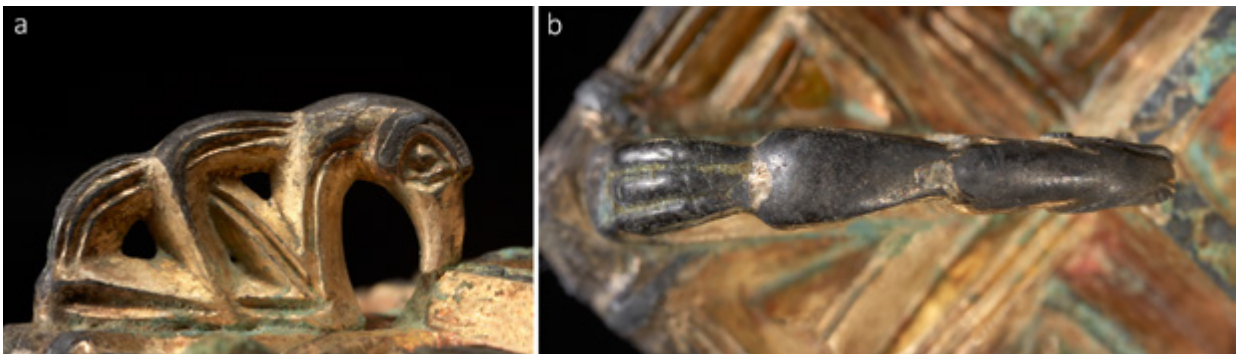


Figure 4.4. The Sande brooch. Details: three-dimensional figure in side view (a) and from above (b). Enlarged. Photo: Ellen C. Holte. Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo ©.

each side lobe mask to the end lobe mask, with an animal figure with its head against the side lobe masks and its hind leg paw against the end lobe mask. The figures are identical and symmetrically composed.

Viewed from above

All in all, there is no doubt that the elaborate Sande brooch has a range of different motifs, and as we will highlight, at least two different views. We have already detailed the side-view, and we will now demonstrate that a ‘view from above’ provides yet another perspective characterizing the brooch, although it is only expressed in certain tiny details. The first of these can be found in the animal heads terminating the central bar that divides the bow in two panels (Figure 4.3). The view of these heads from above is emphasised by the niello inserted in the bar and connected with a zigzag line (Figure 4.3a). The animal heads are also depicted in profile in the bar, which stands out in its extremely high relief (Figure 4.3b). The meticulous execution of the animal heads in the bar underscores the high quality of the Sande brooch, both in terms of the high relief as well as in the carefully chosen details in the ornaments.

The two three-dimensional figures in the upper head-plate corner contribute to the impression of meticulous execution.²² In profile, these figures cannot be defined as any specific animal (Figure 4.4a),

22 Similar three-dimensional figures are found on three other brooches from Vest-Agder and Rogaland: Hauge (B4000, Sjøvold 1993, N34) and the coarser parallel to Sande, Unprovenanced, Jæren (B3054, *ibid.*: N39), both Rogaland; Gyland (C7455), Vest-Agder.

but seen from above under a microscope, we can discern the details of a long muzzle with nostrils, pointed ears, a long neck and a body with a long tail, which are most likely meant to be horses (Figure 4.4b). The figures in the lower corners are bird heads viewed from the side. The variations in style – from stylistic to more naturalistic – in these three-dimensional figures indicate that the craftsperson has attached importance, and perhaps specific connotations, to variation in angles of view. Contemporary, naturalistic representations of animals do occur; for example, incised on the reverse of the relief brooch from Nordheim (Salin 1904: figure 511; Straume 2005: figure 11).²³ The animal figures on the gold bracteates – again obviously horses – are presented in more or less stylistic versions, often closer to their Mediterranean models. We will also add that animal heads viewed from above were present already in the brooches in the Nydam style and early Style I (Haseloff 1981: 90–4), often in the end lobes, but also terminating dividing bars in bows and footplates. This is rare in the later brooches, but on the Sande brooch, we find a developed representation of such animal heads, underlining the subtlety and complexity of the motifs in their later form.

An intellectual manner of expression

In the Sande brooch the conscious use of views becomes evident through tiny details. According to Morphy (1989: 8), it is often difficult to decide whether such figures have arisen out of a game with shapes or out of deep symbolism. We will argue that playing with shapes does not exclude deep symbolism, which rather finds subtle and effective expressions through the creativity encouraged by the concentrated complexity of these motifs (Kristoffersen 2010: 269).

The complexity and continuity of Style I indicate that it was structurally incorporated in an overarching principle reflecting social and cosmic order (Hedeager 2011). The mixed animal-human designs open up to a pre-Christian notion of interchangeability between not only animals and humans, but also objects. Both the investment of creativity and their representation in gold might add to the impression of their importance. It is against this background that the independent use and manipulation of ideas from the classical visual arts must be evaluated – these ideas were adopted and played with by people deeply involved in transformation of world views in a time of change.

The *aspective* manner of expression, clearly dominating the metalwork in Style I, has been described as an intellectual manner of expression. This is also a precise description of the creation of high-quality metalwork in Style I, as we have argued elsewhere (Pedersen and Kristoffersen 2018). A perfect integration of style and technology, arising from alternating work in positive and negative versions, demonstrates that the craftspeople had an in-depth knowledge of the visual language as well as a range of metalworking techniques. The intellectual endeavor suggests that the highly skilled and creative craftspeople belonged to environments where knowledge was maintained and created through various tangible and intangible expressions (Pedersen and Kristoffersen 2018). The identification of the view from above and the half-frontal view suggests that there was room for playing with some carefully chosen ‘foreign’ perspectives within this intellectual environment.

In conclusion

We have discussed the animal art of Southwest Norway as an aspective manner of expression, dominated by zoomorphic designs. The craftspeople working in this tradition experimented with, and possibly attached meaning to, various angles of view such as frontal and side views, often in combinations and alternating between them. Infrequently, they also employed a half-frontal view as a deliberate motif – possibly also a three-quarter view – and we have presented an example of figures changing between an

23 Nordheim, Vestfold (C19858, Sjøvold 1993: N9).

abstract and a naturalistic presentation through views in profile and from above. We have suggested that the craftspeople experimented with various views and possibly had an idea of perspective, as a consequence of their encounters with classical art. The anthropomorphic images involved in the various views are probably also attributable to these influences. Whereas the initially adopted classical designs, such as meandering spirals, gradually disappeared, the craftspeople continued to develop anthropomorphic designs alongside the dominating zoomorphic motifs.

The specific Southwest Norwegian expression of Style I came into being in an area within reach of the Mediterranean world, and where the craftspeople would have experienced encounters with people or objects from this southern tradition, but still with a distance and a fringe position contributing to their independence. Their products came into being in a changing society, where the knowledge and skill of these craftspeople were valued qualities. The craftspeople managed to integrate designs and make use of new technology on the premises of a local artistic expression – a process of further development instead of radical change. It is obvious from the way they were able to absorb and develop these influences that they approached and experienced the encounter responsively and with openness as well as resilience. The socially charged arena, where this meeting might well have taken place, probably influenced the experience of these encounters. We have suggested that the hall constituted such an arena. The use, and probably also the production, of Style I objects in our area seems to be connected to the magnate farms – the political nodes of that time (Kristoffersen 2000b: 173–207); it was in the hall on such farms that the objects decorated in animal art also would have been worn and displayed.

We have suggested that the knowledge possessed by craftspeople was of importance within the framework of the social changes of the time. They obviously had the technical skill to produce these intricately detailed objects and probably also knowledge of the meaning behind the motifs. Although a general design might be ordered from a patron or user, it is highly likely that the craftsperson made the choices when it came to the details of the ornaments. Such details, it seems, can be distinguished in high quality pieces within certain craft traditions, such as the one found along the Norwegian North Sea coast, characterized by a considerable variation of motifs, and with distinctive details. This distinctiveness, the impression of conscious choices made within a large repertoire, and the expressiveness of the motifs indicate a similarly well-developed knowledge of the mythological context of the designs.

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A catalogue on the mentioned objects is available at: <http://www.unimus.no/arkeologi/forskning/index.php>

Photos are available at: <http://www.unimus.no/foto/#/>

Helmets and headaches: thoughts on the Staffordshire Hoard helmet

George Speake

Evocations of ‘Barbaric Splendour’ are to be seen in the splendid drawing by Chris Riddell, ‘Beowulf’s Burial or The End of the Dark Ages’, which appeared in *The Observer* on the 27 April 1997 (Figure 5.1). Its subject matter, beyond its reference to the epic Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, is the predicted demise of John Major’s Tory Government, which was confirmed by the election of Tony Blair on May 2, 1997. The visual prompt that led Chris Riddell to depict a fearsome group of helmeted warriors, personifications of the sins and shortcomings of Britain under years of Tory rule, was undoubtedly an archaeological discovery that had created a lot of publicity just days earlier. This was the discovery of the grave of an Anglo-Saxon warrior that had been excavated at Wollaston, Northamptonshire (Meadows 2004). The most significant item within the grave was an Anglo-Saxon iron helmet, the crest of which was surmounted by the emblem of a free-standing boar, a symbol of protection, that occurs in several places on the regalia of probably Rædwald in Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo. The grave was certainly high status, but the claim by the archaeology correspondent of *The Independent* (on April 23rd 1997) that this was a royal burial, we can now dismiss as too fanciful. Such helmets were clearly familiar to the *Beowulf* poet for they are mentioned five times. *Beowulf*’s helmet is *besette swinlicum* (l.1453), or set around with boar images, and in another instance, *sweard.... swale fah swin ofer helme* (l.1286), which brings to mind the boar mounted on the helmet from Benty Grange, Derbyshire (Sheffield Museum).¹ In contrast, the satirical pen of Chris Riddell depicts John Major with a helmet surmounted by a short sighted lame duck, resting on a handbag, a symbol of his mentor Margaret Thatcher, the previous prime minister. He personifies ‘Little England’, a pathetic warrior, wearing a partially unraveled string vest and Y-fronted underpants, lying on a tattered St George’s flag. In his right hand he clutches, not a sword or weapon, but a traffic cone, a symbol of a failed traffic policy, promoted by John Major to alleviate disruption caused by roadworks.

Just over a decade later, in July 2009 within a field in Staffordshire, the tangible, buried riches described by the *Beowulf* poet came to life in the discovery by a metal detectorist, Mr Terry Herbert. Amongst the 4kg of gold and 1.7kg of silver, now known as the Staffordshire Hoard, were gold and garnet items, pommels and weapon fittings from almost 80 swords, and the fragments of at least one helmet, arguably that was once more magnificent than any known Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian helmet.² As well as evoking the rich warrior items described by the *Beowulf* poet, it has been stated that “the Staffordshire Hoard links us with an age of barbaric splendour that would have been recognizable to the warriors of the ancient Greek *Iliad*” (Leahy and Bland 2014: 62).

In contrast to the plain iron helmet from Wollaston, Northamptonshire, what sets the Staffordshire Hoard helmet apart from all the known Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian examples, even in its fragmentary condition, is the quality of its ornament and craftsmanship. This is evident on the cast gilt-silver cheek-

1 These extracts are taken from Seamus Heaney’s translation (Heaney 1999).

2 Given the composite nature of many of the objects it is not possible to determine absolute weights for the gold and silver. Some objects were made in both gold and silver. A number have cores of copper alloy, or are inlaid with organic materials. Initial estimates for the bullion weight were 5.1kg of gold and 1.4kg of silver.



Figure 5.1. 'Beowulf's Burial or The End of the Dark Ages' (Chris Riddell, *The Observer*, 27 April 1997).

pieces with their splendid schemes of Style II animal ornament and the differing panels of zoomorphic interlace on the side panels of the two cast gilt-silver sections of the crest. In addition multiple dies were used to create the intriguing die-impressed warrior panels and bands of figural and zoomorphic ornament, with their tantalizing iconography that once enhanced the helmet. It is not the purpose here to discuss the possible meaning and iconography of the schemes of ornament on the helmet, but only to outline its form and distinctive features in relation to other helmets.³ The difficulties that have been posed, however, in presenting a notional reconstruction of the Hoard helmet are challenging given that the impressed sheets are disassociated from any underlying structural support. The task may be likened to attempting the reconstruction of a room where all that has been salvaged are fragments of stucco and scraps of patterned wallpaper.

It is clear, nevertheless, from the surviving parts that the Hoard helmet can be classified as being a 'crested helmet' as distinct from the form and construction of continental *Spangenhelme* or *Lamellenhelme*, which have been found in graves in France, Germany, Italy and the Balkans, many of which are decorated with Christian symbols (Steuer 1987: 192).⁴ The crested helmets are only distributed in England and Scandinavia, but crested helmets were made and used in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian England

³ Justification for the proposed reconstruction and its constituent parts with the placement of the die-impressed bands and panels of ornament, together with their iconography, are discussed more fully in Fern *et al.* 2019.

⁴ Marzinzik, 2007, 42-3 has suggested that the helmets should be referred to as the 'Nordic crested group'.

up to the beginning of the 11th century as suggested by depictions of them in illuminated manuscripts, on sculpture and on coins (Tweddle 1992: 1095).

The archaeological evidence, however, would suggest that helmets were rare, exclusive, high status items. In addition to the helmet remains in the Staffordshire Hoard, five complete examples are known from Anglo-Saxon contexts, though there are both structural and decorative differences between all: apart from the iconic helmet from Sutton Hoo Mound 1 (Suffolk), none of the other helmets has decoration of die-impressed panels or bands of figural and zoomorphic ornament. On analogy with the helmet from Sutton Hoo and the helmets from Vendel and Valsgärde in Uppland, Eastern Sweden, we can state that the panels were secured to the helmet cap with 8mm wide reeded strips.

At present the earliest example of a helmet from an Anglo-Saxon context is that from Shorwell (Isle of Wight) from a high status male grave of the early to mid 6th century, but it is a simple Frankish style *Bandhelm*, not a crested helmet (Hood *et al.* 2012). The helmets from Sutton Hoo (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 138–225), Benty Grange (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 223–52) and Wollaston (Meadows 2004) belong to 7th-century grave contexts, whilst the Coppergate helmet is from the second half of the 8th century, found in a pit during excavations at Coppergate, York (Tweddle 1992). Both the Benty Grange and the Coppergate helmets belonged to warriors presumed to have been Christian. The Benty Grange helmet has a boar crest in conjunction with a Christian cross on the nasal guard. The Coppergate helmet has a protective prayer in the form of a brass-framed inscription, which crosses the iron crown.

Parts of probably further helmets only survive now in the form of several tantalizing mounts and fragments. From the barrow-burial at Caenby, Lincolnshire, a fragment of die-stamped silver foil has been identified, showing a warrior in a horned head-dress, with bird-head terminals, which may derive from a helmet panel (Bruce-Mitford 1978, figure 153).⁵ What may be a boar's head terminal to a helmet crest was found at Horncastle, Lincolnshire, echoing the boar crests on the helmets from Benty Grange and Wollaston, as do two further boar-figure mounts, from Guilden Morden, Cambridgeshire, Icklingham, Suffolk and a zoomorphic crest terminal from Rempstone Nottinghamshire (Tweddle 1992, figure 522; Underwood 1999: 102; Marzinzik 2007: 42).

Helmet: form and reconstruction

In seeking the influences for the form and decoration of the Hoard helmet recognition should be given to earlier precedents. The design and aspects of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian crested helmets appear to derive from Roman Imperial examples. The second reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo helmet certainly acknowledges features linking its form to the earlier Constantinian group of 4th- and 5th-century helmets (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 220). The case for late Roman helmets being the inspiration for the east Scandinavian helmets in the Vendel and Valsgärde boat graves has been strongly made Lindqvist (1925; see also Alföldi 1934), Almgren (1948; 1983: 11–16), and Arwidsson (1977: 29).

Mindful of the complications and assumptions made by the conservation team at the British Museum in making the first reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo helmet, and its dramatic metamorphosis in the 1970s when a second re-assemblage was made, a cautious and considered approach has been taken to the placement of the die-impressed helmet panels on the cap and the two bands around the rim (Figure 5.2).

Although the iron body of the Sutton Hoo helmet had completely oxidized and shattered into many fragments, clean fractures made possible its restoration to shape (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 138). The form and dimensions of the Hoard helmet cannot be determined with any certainty, but its link to the helmet

5 The grave was robbed and badly excavated in the 19th century. No other helmet parts have been identified.

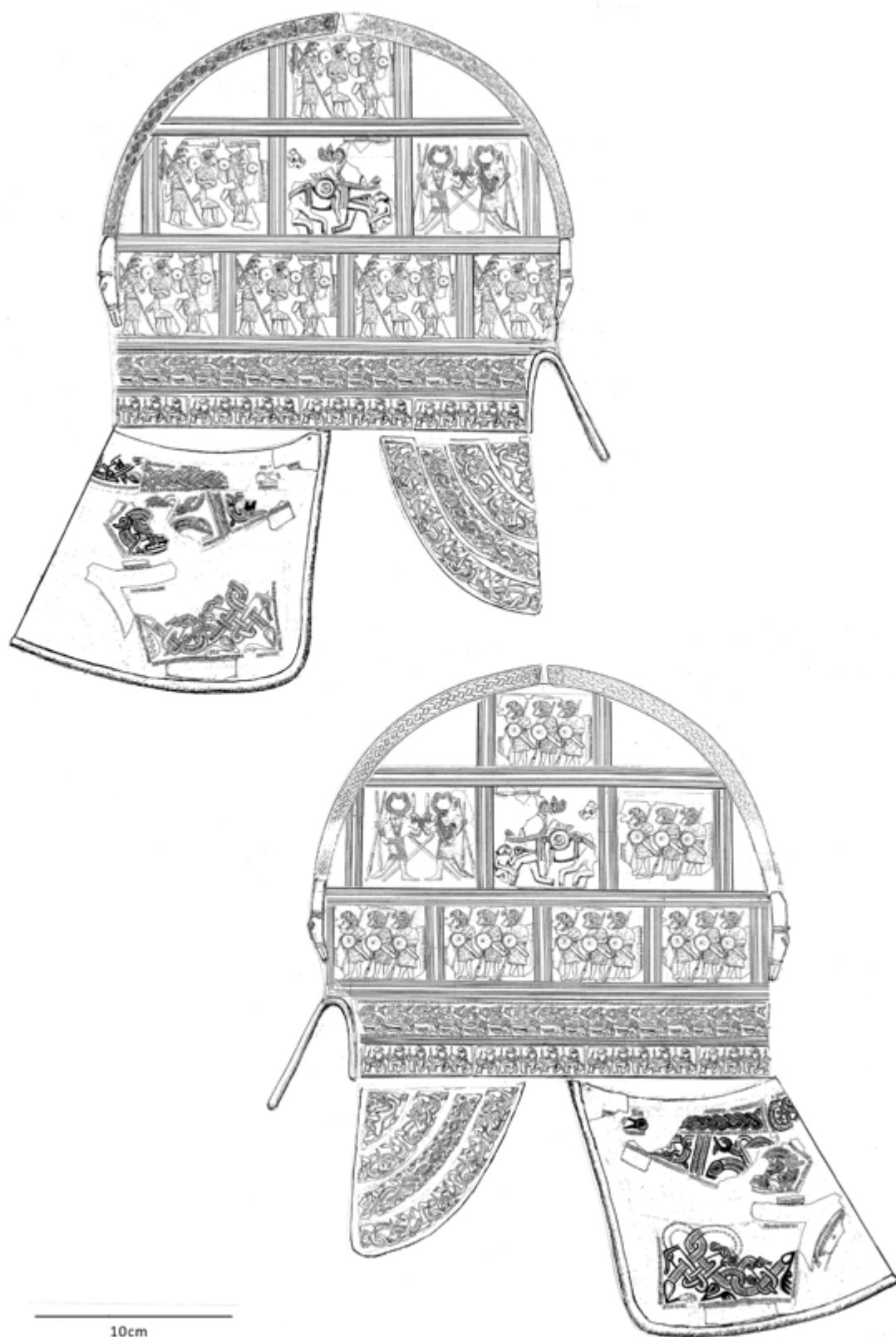


Figure 5.2. Schematic placement of bands and panels, in relation to the ornament on the crest and cheek-pieces.

from Sutton Hoo seems clear from the similarity in the iconography of some of the panels of helmet decoration.

In attempting to establish the form and dimensions of the Hoard helmet the longitudinal profile of the helmet-cap was determined by the nose-to-nape curvature of the two tapering, channeled sections of the gilded silver crest, with their animal head terminals, which provided a close correspondence with the dimensions of the eighth-century helmet cap from Coppergate, York (Tweddle 1992: figures 407 and 590). The two sections of crest did not closely butt against each other, the ends of each section being slightly angled and not vertical, leaving a narrow interval at the apex. This may be interpreted as being a deliberate design feature in the casting by the craftsman/armourer. Such a feature would allow the crest sections to be adjusted to varying curvatures of the helmet cap, to fit more than one head size.

There is no direct evidence that any lateral bands crossed the helmet, as on the Coppergate helmet. On the East Scandinavian helmets, only the singular helmet from Vendel 14 has lateral bands of die-impressed of interlace, which also form its flattened crest (Stolpe and Arne 1927: plate 41).

The longitudinal profile of the helmet cap, as indicated by the form of the crest sections and slightly inward-curved animal-head terminals, would suggest that the cap was rounded. Certainly this is at variance with the crest profile of the Coppergate helmet with its deep, straight-sided browband, where the front animal head terminal slopes forward as it overlies the nasal (Tweddle 1992: figure 502). Whilst some affinities with the Coppergate helmet must be acknowledged, earlier precedents are clearly suggested by the archaic feature of the boxed crest that once enhanced the cap of the Hoard helmet. Parallels can be found in the rounded form and rich decoration of several late Roman elite helmets (Klumbach 1973, see in particular the two helmets from Berkasovo, Yugoslavia, Taf. 1-9). Such an example is the helmet from Deurne, Holland (Klumbach 1973: 51-61; Bruce-Mitford 1978: figure 166; Tweddle 1992, figure 527a-c). This was clearly an expensive, high-status object of personal equipment and an intriguing comparison. Its deposition in a peat bog along with other items had made the iron substructure corrode away completely, leaving intact the form of the outer, gilt-silver sheathing and preserving parts of its leather lining. This helmet has embossed bands of diaper ornament enhancing the cap, brow-band, cheek-guards and neck-guard, but there is no figural or zoomorphic ornament.

Some guidance was also provided by comparison with the Sutton Hoo reconstructed helmet and the dimensions of the replica made by the Tower of London Royal Armouries. Comparisons were noted in relation to the possible size of the helmet cap with the evidence from the reconstruction of the Sutton Hoo helmet, which has a longer length at rim level of 255mm and a width of 215mm (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 152).⁶

There are no parallels for the form of crest on other helmets from Anglo-Saxon contexts, but it undoubtedly relates in function to the *wala* referred to in line 1031 of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf* (Bruce-Mitford 1974: Chapter 9; 1978: 158). The translation by Seamus Heaney (1999) describes “an embossed ridge, a band lapped with wire, arched over the helmet: head-protection to keep the keen-ground cutting edge from damaging it when danger threatened and the man was battling behind his shield”. Its form and decoration differ markedly from the flat vestigial crest of the Coppergate helmet or the iron crest with its silver wire inlay from Sutton Hoo, which more closely relates to the description of the *wala* of a helmet in the *Beowulf* poem. Similarly, nothing comparable exists on the Scandinavian helmets from Vendel and Valsgärde.

6 It was noted in the report on the reconstruction of the helmet that “the Tower of London replica was made deliberately slightly smaller in brow-level circumference and length from front to back at rim level to discount a slight inflation of dimensions in the original which was due to corrosion”.

The inspiration for its form can be traced back to crests on Roman Imperial helmets and ultimately to Attic helmets. Yet the cast, chased and punched decorative detailing on the external sides of the crest are unmistakably Anglo-Saxon. Surviving traces of wood, calcite and beeswax within the crest sections may have secured organic material such as plumes of horsehair, or feathers, a feature that would be a signifier of rank and link the helmet to Roman precedents. Roman centurions were distinguished by having different crests on their helmets, some crests being worn transversely, to aid identification by their soldiers. Sculptural reliefs also show legionaries and auxiliaries wearing tall feather crests. The depictions clearly show the low box containing the plumes as being mounted flush with the helmet-cap (Russell Robinson 1975: 142–3, figures 154, 156, and 157). Certainly such crests, of horsehair or feathers, would significantly increase the perceived height of the wearer and aid intimidation. Yet none of the depictions of helmeted warriors on the die-impressed panels of the hoard helmet are recognizable as having feathered crests or ones of horsehair.⁷ All the helmeted warriors depicted on the left and right side panels of the helmet appear to show a crest terminating with the profiled predatory beak of an eagle. It can be argued that such depictions on the Germanic helmets ultimately derive from the high-arched eagle-headed crest seen on certain Roman cavalry helmets, as on the example from Heddernheim, Germany, dated to the late second or early third century (Russell Robinson 1975: 129, figure 376).

Of the surviving fragments of die-impressed ornament that have been associated with the helmet, the illustrations propose one possible arrangement of the warrior panels on the helmet cap, positioned above two bands of ornament, which partially encircled the brow. The lower brow band, which has a total length of c. 480–500mm, was enclosed in a cast silver-tray with rounded edges. Square-shaped holes in the tray could indicate attachment points for the tabs of the cheek-pieces or fixtures to the helmet. The surviving length of the tray with its ornament would suggest that it did not fully encircle the helmet. The ornament was created with a die (c. 55mm long and 15mm wide), shows within a beaded border a sequence of kneeling warriors, heads upturned, each armed with a sword, spear and small round shield. Above the kneeling warriors is a zoomorphic sequence assembled from 118 fragments, giving an estimated length of c. 550mm. This band of Style II animal ornament was made with a die (c. 70mm long and 20mm wide), composed of five backward-turned, interlinked quadrupeds, whose open jaws nestle against the turned neck of its neighbour.

The marching warrior panels on the helmet-cap were created with two rectangular dies, with slight differences in their estimated dimensions, each showing trios of helmeted warriors, armed with a spear, shield and sword. From the many surviving fragments, a minimum of six panels of each design, some clipped and shaped, are considered to have enhanced either side of the helmet-cap, with the warriors marching left positioned on the left side and the warriors marching right on the opposite side, paralleling the placement of warrior panels on some of the East Scandinavian helmets from Vendel and Valsgärde.⁸ Care and attention has been given to the differing detailing of the warriors on each design. The warriors positioned on the right side of the helmet were created using a positive die (c. 55mm wide and 50mm high). Their profiled helmeted heads look upwards as they march, with each warrior holding in their left hand a small round shield, raised level with their shoulders and a downward pointing spear in their right hand. The helmets have eagle-headed crests with cheek-guards but no neck-guards are visible. The warriors' protective tunics are belted and extend below their knees, but their forearms are unprotected. The centrally placed warrior wears a criss-cross textured material, whilst the leading warrior and his companion wear dotted-textured tunics, which suggest mail armour. The textured tunic

7 It has been suggested that the Benty Grange boar crest had a dorsal ridge, possibly of hair, fixed along its back.

8 An alternative arrangement of the warrior panels to the illustrations shown here is proposed in the reconstruction drawing in Fern *et al.* 2019. In this drawing the marching warrior panels are placed in a sequential row above the brow bands.

of the central warrior has a clearly defined lower border, which is lacking on the lower edges of the mail tunics.

On the opposite side of the helmet, the warriors marching left appear to have bulkier bodies and larger heads. The die used was fractionally smaller (c. 51mm wide and 47mm high). Each warrior holds in the left hand, at waist level, a bossed round shield with a distinct rim. This larger shield partially conceals a diagonally slung scabbarded sword. The right hand of each warrior clutches a downward pointing spear. The central warrior wears a knee-length mail tunic, or hauberk, which is belted at the waist. The leading warrior has a tunic with a woven texture created by three short parallel lines that alternate in a repeating diagonal pattern. There is no hem or border at the lower edge. In contrast, the third warrior at the right of the panel wears a tunic with a different pattern, which does have a defined hem.

Further rectangular panels of figural ornament are proposed to have co-existed on the helmet cap with the marching warrior panels. What survives, assembled from 22 fragments is an incomplete silver-gilt panel of an equestrian warrior. At the front of the horse is a naked foe, plunging a sword or knife into the flank of the horse, whilst his right hand grips its left foreleg. Much of the body and arms of the horseman are missing, but enough survives to establish that the warrior was depicted helmeted, in a tunic with a circular shield on the left side and wielding a raised spear in his right hand. Positioned between the mane of the horse and the head of the horseman is a nine-dotted circular disc with a central boss, which on analogy with the motif on certain East Scandinavian C-bracteates, has been interpreted as a solar symbol. Not attached to the joined fragments is the depiction of a small nearly naked figure, except for a belt. In terms of parallels, the posture of this figure echoes that of the small figure perched on the rump of the horse on the helmet panel from the Valsgärde 7 boat grave in Sweden (Arwidsson 1977: Abb. 128; Bruce-Mitford 1978: figure 164a). The existence of the motif, with minor variations of the spear holding equestrian warrior, on the helmet from Sutton Hoo and on the Swedish helmets from Vendel 1, Valsgärde 7 and Valsgärde 8, suggests a shared significance that extends beyond decorative enhancement. In the reconstruction drawing of the Hoard helmet, the design is mirrored on the right side of the cap implying the use of a second die, although on the Sutton Hoo helmet only one die was used to create the mounted warrior panels.

Adjacent to the equestrian warrior are positioned the silver fragments of a solitary panel. The die size could not be determined, as only three fragments have survived. Even in its incomplete state it accords quite closely with parts of the impressed design on the Sutton Hoo helmet showing twinned warriors with 'horned' headgear, the so-called dancing warriors (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 149, figure 110). At Sutton Hoo the die with this design was used four times, although only fragments of these four impressions survive. Their placement on the Sutton Hoo helmet was at the front, either side of the crest and at the front edge of each of the two cheek-guards.

Unlike the Sutton Hoo helmet, with its elaborate facemask showing a 'flying bird' created by the nose, the garnet-inlaid eyebrows and the reptilian-head above the nose, there is no evidence of such a protective enhancement on the front of the Hoard helmet. Indeed the depictions of helmeted warriors on the die-impressed panels show helmets without facemasks and no obvious neck-guards. It is proposed, however, that the helmet did possess a nasal. The evidence for this is tantalizingly slight, but a tapered zoomorphic die-impressed panel provides a suggestive parallel for the nasal decoration on the Coppergate helmet. Although there is no obvious damage to the adjacent edges of the cheek-pieces the notion that the helmet was deliberately 'defaced' would be consistent with the evidence of captured armour and weapons from the Scandinavian bog deposits of the late Roman Iron Age.⁹ The iron helmet from Wollaston, Northamptonshire has been interpreted as having been purposefully

9 Whilst this remains as speculation, disfigurement is evident from an earlier period, on the gilt-silver, Germanic cavalry

damaged and made unwearable prior to burial, by having the nasal guard forced back within the helmet cap (Meadows 2004: 10–11).¹⁰

Aspects of the helmet, in terms of the iconography of the impressed figural panels clearly show some affinities with some of the designs on the Sutton Hoo helmet and on several of the helmets from Vendel and Valsgärde in Sweden, but there are significant discrepancies between actual helmets and the depictions of helmets on the die-impressed panels.¹¹ On the Vendel and Valsgärde helmet panels, helmets appear to be shown with a fixed neck-guard and cheek-pieces, whereas those found have no cheek-pieces and a neck-guard made from hinged iron bands, or chain mail. There is one exception to this, the helmet from Vendel 14, with its distinctive in-curved cheek-pieces from a boat grave dated by Arrhenius (1983, figure 6) to c. 560/570 and considered one of the oldest in the cemetery.

Other aspects of the Hoard helmet, such as the scale and dimensions of the cast silver-gilt cheek-pieces, contrast with those on other Anglo-Saxon helmets. They would have provided some protection to the cheek and jaw, but they are relatively small, being 96mm in length and 80mm wide, in comparison with the reconstructed cheek-pieces of the Sutton Hoo helmet, which are larger, being 156mm in length and 135mm wide (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 171).¹² Firmer evidence is provided by the complete iron cheek-pieces of the Coppergate helmet and the damaged left cheek-piece of the Wollaston helmet, which have lengths of 129mm and 110mm respectively. Their widths are closer in scale being 87.2mm and 86mm wide at their upper edges. There are marked constructional differences too in how the cheek-pieces were attached to the cap of each helmet (Tweddle 1992: 989).¹³ In contrast to the single iron hinges on each cheek-piece of the Coppergate and Wollaston helmets, or the implied leather hinges on the Sutton Hoo helmet, the Hoard helmet has two attachment tabs, which were cast as part of each cheek-piece. The proposed method of attachment by the use of rivets to the lower helmet-band would make the cheek-pieces rigid, in contrast to the flexibility provided by hinging.¹⁴

What also remains uncertain is the form and structure of the cap beneath the crest. The Coppergate, Wollaston, and Sutton Hoo helmet had helmet caps of iron, but all differ in their construction. The iron substrate on helmet from Sutton Hoo was apparently made from a single sheet, with no trace of riveting to show it had been made in sections or strips, but there remains some uncertainty about this (Hood *et al.* 2012: 95, note 4). It would be unique amongst its parallels and unlike the other East Scandinavian helmets, which had an underlying, openwork iron frame construction. The cap of the Coppergate helmet was made from eight separate components. The Benty Grange helmet, beneath the covering plates of horn, had a frame construction comprising a brow band c. 650mm long and 25mm

helmet face-mask, deposited sometime in the 3rd century AD, as a votive offering in the Thorsbjerg bog, Jutland, see Engelhardt 1863, plate 5,3.

10 It is possible however that this distortion to the nasal was more recent agricultural damage.

11 How reliable the die-impressed images are in providing an accurate portrayal of the warrior's armour is debatable, see Alkemade 1991: 290

12 This is solely based on internal evidence of fragments of the right cheek-piece, which preserve almost the entire outer edge, with the exception of the upper edge, which is largely provided by a substantial fragment of the left cheek-piece.

13 It is noted that the term 'cheek-piece' is something of a misnomer. They actually served to protect the areas behind the lower jaw, where the major blood vessels to the brain pass up the neck and are vulnerable to attack.

14 It is possible that any uncertainty about the attachment of the securing tabs may be resolved in the process of fabricating a reconstruction.

wide, to which was attached a nose to nape band 25mm wide, which projected downwards at the front and on to which was an applied silver cross. There was a projection at the back, which was curved to fit the nape of the neck. A lateral band 25mm wide was curved to cross the helmet cap from ear to ear, crossing the nose to nape band at the apex and extending down at each side below the brow band to provide limited ear protection. Some subsidiary iron bands are in evidence, positioned diagonally, to provide further support to the framework. The helmet did not have movable cheek-pieces as on other Anglo-Saxon helmets, nor a substantial neck-guard. Whilst there are some constructional similarities with the Coppergate and Wollaston helmets, the iron bands on these helmets are much broader and with their riveted infill plates provide the protective covering for the wearer, but without any secondary enhancement on the brow band or cap.

The horn plates of the Benty Grange helmet, which had been secured to the underlying iron framework with ornamental silver rivets (Bruce-Mitford 1974: plate 72c), indicate that not all Anglo-Saxon helmets were totally of iron sheet construction as on the Wollaston and Coppergate helmets. It is conjectured that a light-weight iron framework provided an armature for the Hoard helmet, which secured the die-impressed band of kneeling warriors, but there is no evidence to suggest that horn panels were used as a protective covering over the iron.¹⁵ Consideration should be given to the possibility that, as in the later medieval period, helmets could have been made from hardened leather, *cuir bouilli*. This technique of immersing leather in boiling water or very hot beeswax, to make it hard and stiff, has been suggested as a process to make non-metallic helmets. In addition to helmets, hardened leather could also be fabricated for body armour.¹⁶ Thick leather can be riveted to a frame and could be a light weight substitute for iron plates, capable of deflecting glancing blows, although liable to be penetrated by direct thrusts (Siddorn 2003: 129–30). The use of leather as a headgear protection may have been more widespread amongst the Germanic peoples than the limited archaeological evidence might suggest (Werner 1949: 249).¹⁷ Just as leather was used as a shield covering (Underwood 1999: 79),¹⁸ its use as a protective cushion both on the inner and outer surfaces of a helmet should not be surprising. The scientific examination of the Sutton Hoo helmet took analytical samples from the outside of the foil plaques to determine the nature of the alloy, but on the three samples taken it was not determined what lay immediately below the tinned bronze plaques. It was noted, however, that corrosion on the inside of the helmet cap was very black and different from that on the outside, but under the microscope no structure reminiscent of leather or textile was visible (Oddy *et al.* 1978: 226–31). Confirmation, however, in identifying the substrate beneath the impressed panels and bands of the Hoard helmet has not been revealed by an examination of their undersides.

In contrast, the evidence for leather lying beneath the impressed panels, as a covering for a helmet cap, has survived as mineralized traces on the helmet from Valsgärde 7 (Arwidsson 1977: 24). Further indirect

15 There remains the possibility that the iron traces are secondary.

16 It is suggested that the Sutton Hoo shoulder clasps were mounted on leather, in apparent imitation of Roman imperial armour. Bruce-Mitford 1978: fig 394 draws a comparison with the breastplate of the muscle-cuirass from the statue of the Emperor Augustus at Prima Porta (Vatican Museum)

17 In a 4th-century chieftain's grave in the cemetery at Monceau-le-Neuf, France, were found two boar tusks of exceptional size joined together with sheet silver to form a crescent shape which Werner deduced had been riveted on to a helmet of leather.

18 The archaeological evidence for covers of cow-hide is corroborated by the Laws of Aethelstan (926–30) which stipulate that sheepskin should not be used in the making of shields.

evidence for the existence of a layer of leather beneath helmet panels comes from an examination of two of the Torslunda helmet dies. Axboe in a very perceptive analysis of the four dies makes a convincing case that their differences were the result of a craftsman creating dies C and D by taking two existing foils from a helmet and making casts from them to produce the dies (Axboe 1987: 19).¹⁹ A close scrutiny of the rough, reverse surfaces of these two dies is very revealing. Axboe observed that if the casts had been made from just the impressed bronze sheets, they would be relatively thin and show the motifs in negative relief on the back of the bronze sheets. The absence of negative relief, and traces of holes and fastening strips led Axboe to deduce that the helmet panels had not been fastened directly to the iron cap of a helmet, but to an outer cap of thin leather.

It is proposed therefore that for the Hoard helmet a partial framework of iron banding may have existed and provided the support for a leather covering on to which the die-impressed panels, reeded strips, bands and crest were secured with silver nails/rivets. The surviving length of some of the securing pins might suggest that they did not penetrate an iron cap, as they were not broken when the helmet was dismantled and the crest removed. Nineteen small holes, some in pairs had been drilled through the base of the two sections of the crest to secure them to a substrate.²⁰ Technically it would be easier and simpler in the manufacture of the helmet only to have to drill holes through silver and leather for the nails/rivets to secure the crest and impressed panels and bands, without having to perforate an iron cap.

A helmet should not be close fitting, to allow for some form of cushioning or padding for comfort, held possibly by leather strapping, thus preventing the transmission of the shock of a weapon blow to the head of the wearer. Internal padding would also aid the distribution of weight. Soft leather lining for the helmet cheek-pieces may also account for the distinctive patina visible on their inner surfaces. The reconstructed Sutton Hoo helmet, with its lining, weighs 3.74kg, but it is estimated that the original would have been lighter (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 185). It has been calculated that with the die-impressed bronze sheets and additional neck-guard of mail, a helmet such as the example from Valsgärde 7 could weigh more than 4.5kg (Siddorn 2003: 129).

There has been much deliberation as to whether the helmet had a neck-guard, and if it did how might it have been attached to the helmet cap. Reappraisal of the configuration of a number of die-impressed silver zoomorphic fragments with the gilded border sections has led to the proposed neck-guard reconstruction. The varied character of the animal ornament, contained within bead-edged panels of differing size and format, initially suggested that they belonged to separate panels, but the linkage of the gilded bands to several fragments aligned to a curving edge prompted an alternative arrangement. Consideration too of lengths of U-sectioned silver tubing identified its purpose as edging, which had been crimped to material 4mm thick, paralleling the function of the brass edging on the Sutton Hoo and Coppergate helmets (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 146; Tweddle 1992: 960–5).²¹ The most likely base support for

19 In making the dies C and D the craftsman had detached two panels from a helmet with the underlying leather still attached and made two casts of them, producing two dies no thicker than 2.5mm in contrast the other pair of dies, from Torslunda A and B, which are 4.4mm and 3.5mm thick.

20 The fact that the two sections of crest did not closely butt against each other would allow for some expansion and contraction on the underlying leather.

21 On the Sutton Hoo helmet, the brass edging of the neck-guard, cheek-pieces and cap was held in place by fluted bronze clips. Tweddle identifies four different types of edge binding on the Coppergate Helmet, which had been secured with brass rivets. The neck-guard on the Coppergate helmet consists of a mail curtain.

the edging and the impressed sheet was leather.

On to this leather surface was secured a complex single sheet of die-impressed Style II animal ornament within bead-edged panels, which were framed by arcing bands of gilding c. 7mm wide. Limited sections of this sheet survive, but enough to indicate that in all probability there was symmetry to the design. The proposed layout suggests that the panels of zoomorphic ornament were mirrored, and involved the use of multiple dies. There is no conclusive evidence that the 8mm wide reeded strips, used to secure the panels and bands on the helmet cap, were employed on the neck-guard. Furthermore it is not possible to determine whether the neck-guard was hinged to the helmet cap or attached by some other method.

As noted, the helmets worn by the warriors on the die-impressed panels in the Hoard do not have neck-guards, but depictions of helmet wearing warriors on Swedish helmets do show neck-guard protection. Two warriors on one of the four Torslunda dies (die C) wear boar-crested helmets, each having a neck-guard, which appears to fold and drape over the shoulders (Bruce-Mitford 1978: figures 156–7). Care and attention has been taken by the craftsman in the detailing of the helmets on this die, particularly in defining a bordered edging to the neck-guard and cheek-pieces. It is clear from the panels of vertical and horizontal bands on the neck-guard that the intention was not to portray a guard of mail. Tweddle (1992: 1123), however, was of the opinion that the helmet panels on Vendel 14 and Valsgärde 8 show warriors with neck-protection, which appears to bend where it falls on to the shoulders and may represent mail as on the Coppergate helmet.²²

The Sutton Hoo helmet has a flared neck-guard, which is decorated with impressed panels of Style II zoomorphic interlace. On the reconstructed Sutton Hoo helmet, above the fan-tail neck-guard there is a five-panelled collar, which was attached to the cap by two flexible leather hinges, secured by rivets (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 185, figure 139).

The evidence is ambiguous, but it is possible that a neck-guard of leather was attached on the boar-crested iron helmet from Wollaston Northamptonshire (Meadows 1997: 391–5). Although the rear edge of its brow band had been badly damaged through ploughing, a short section did survive which when x-rayed appeared to have part of at least two possible perforations on its damaged edge. It was deduced that the purpose of perforations in this position could only be to fix a neck guard of some type. No traces of chain mail were associated with the helmet, but there was uncertainty as to the function of a series of short rods. Some were of hollow section, some were solid and some had flattened ends. These were suggested to have been attached to the surface of an organic neck-guard, as strengtheners, but as no contemporary parallels were known, it was considered more likely that they may also have derived from a belt (Meadows 2004: 8–9).

Origin, social significance and date

To what extent differences between the surviving Anglo-Saxon helmets, in terms of their construction, form and ornamentation reflect the status of their owners is open to question. The Hoard helmet, as already stated, was a magnificent prestige item, arguably more gilded and gleaming than the tinned

22 It is noted that while mail and cheek-pieces both occur separately among the different groups of Scandinavian helmets, they have not, so far, been found together, as on the Coppergate helmet. Tweddle suggests that this combination of mail and cheek-pieces may have been drawn directly from the Spangenhelm tradition and the Coppergate helmet is merely the first and only surviving evidence for this usage.

bronze panels of the Sutton Hoo helmet, probably owned by a king (Bruce-Mitford 1978).²³ In the hierarchy of helmets, there is every justification for considering it as an item of regalia, but to which royal person it belonged we can only guess. As Chaney (1970: 139) has noted:

“the crown is another badge of kingship, but it cannot be dissociated from the helmet which itself was the early Germanic crown... The older Germanic tradition for the king was the gold helmet, the sign of his leadership as the war-chief. Thus kennings often refer to the prince as the helmet of his people – he is the *aedelinga helm*, *heriga helm*, *lidmanna helm*, *weoruda helm*, *helm Scyldinga*, and *Wedra helm* – but I know of no kenning which makes of him the ‘crown’ of his folk”.²⁴

There are chronological uncertainties, but the implications of Chaney’s observations are that it is after the 7th century that the crown came to replace the helmet, as symbol of the Germanic warrior-king (Chaney 1970: 140, see also Alföldi 1934; Almgren 1983).

Whilst we might consider that the Hoard helmet was fit for a 7th-century king, we cannot prove that it belonged to a king. A royal association for the Coppergate helmet has been argued by Tweddle (1992: 1170), suggesting that it was fabricated between c. 750-75, for “a member of the Northumbrian royal house, or one of the greater nobles of Northumbria”. Typologically he views it as being placed between the helmets of the pagan Anglo-Saxon period and Vendel period, and those of the Viking Age (Tweddle 1992: 1191). The art historical evidence of the animal ornament and the use of Northumbrian script on the crest convinced Tweddle of its Northumbrian origin. In his appraisal, made before the discovery of the Wollaston helmet, he suggests that helmets in the earlier period of the 6th and 7th centuries were confined to kings and their immediate nobles, but by the 11th century had become more common. With regard to the comparative Swedish helmets and the occurrence of a number of helmet fragments in Gotlandic graves it is considered that these and the Vendel and Valsgärde boat graves with their crested helmets were not the graves of royals, but belonged to a secondary stratum, being the graves of magnates (Ambrosiani 1983: 21-2).

Certainly the scarcity of helmets in the archaeological record of the 6th and 7th centuries, both in England and Scandinavia, would suggest that they were exclusive items and this is supported by the literary and historical evidence. But variation in their form and ornament, or lack of ornament, undoubtedly reflects different values for the helmets, and by implication variation in status. What a helmet was worth, relative to other items, is given some indication in the Frankish *Lex Ribuaria* of the 8th century (see Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998: 223) where the prices of weapons and domesticated animals are valued in terms of gold *solidi* (1 *solidus* = 4.5g of gold):

- 1 helmet (6 *solidi*);
- 1 shield and 1 spear (2 *solidi*);
- 1 mailcoat (12 *solidi*);
- 1 two-edged sword and scabbard (7 *solidi*);
- 1 two-edged sword without a scabbard (3 *solidi*);
- 1 steed (a warhorse) (7 *solidi*).

23 The helmet from Sutton Hoo is described as being “richer and of higher quality than any other helmet yet found and closer to the late Roman prototypes that lay behind the Vendel Type”.

24 The kennings quoted by Chaney are collected in Marquardt 1938: 253

The most costly item is the mailcoat, being twice as expensive as a helmet, reflecting the labour of making the individually riveted and linked iron rings. We may assume that the helmet of 6 *solidi*, certainly not a crested helmet, would be a functional iron item of simple *Bandhelm* form and not the more elaborate *Spangenhelm* or *Lamellenhelm*.

The literary records also suggest that helmets were not exclusively royal nor only worn by the elite. In the *Beowulf* poem, possession of a helmet and coat of mail seems to be fairly widespread among the warriors described by the *Beowulf*-poet, though this does not rule them out as symbols of royal power in a society where the king was also the leader of the war-band. It is clear that the later Anglo-Saxon armies were on a rather different scale from what seems to have been happening in the 7th century. Indeed it is mentioned in the Florence of Worcester *Chronicon*, compiled in the early 12th century, that Godwine gave King Harthacnut a ship which had 80 picked soldiers on board, each of whom had a partly gilded helmet, a sword with a gilded hilt, a battle axe rimmed with gold and silver, and a shield with a gilded boss and studs (Dodwell 1982: 30). It is also recorded that Aelfric Archbishop of Canterbury in his will, dated 1003-4, left the king 60 helmets and 60 coats of mail and his best ship, the deduction being that the armour belonged to the ship's crew (Sawyer 1968: 1488).

Depictions of crested helmets from Anglo-Saxon contexts are rare. A singular example occurs on a flyleaf sketch showing David and Goliath in an Insular manuscript of Paulinus of Nola now in St Petersburg National Library (Cod.Q.v.XIV.I. fol 1, see Alexander 1978: catalogue number 42; Tweddle 1992: figure 534). Goliath's high-domed helmet has a splendid crest, a beaked, long-tailed quadruped, which David is grasping firmly as he cuts off the giant's head. The sketch whose origin is considered by Lowe to have been in Ireland or Northumbria is dated to the 8th to 9th century. The type of sword hilt that David holds with its domed pommel and curving pommel bar and lower guard, along with the helmet evoke 8th-century Anglo-Saxon examples, although the style of the figures look more Irish. Apart from the marching warriors with their eagle-crested helmets impressed on the hoard panels, there are no known depictions from the 7th century or earlier. Contemporary parallels only exist on a die from Torslunda (die C, see Bruce-Mitford 1974: plate 59b), and on the Vendel and Valsgärde helmets (Stolpe and Arne 1927: plate 41; Arwidsson 1977: Abb. 65). Crested helmets are worn by warriors, carved on the whalebone panels of the 8th-century Northumbrian Franks Casket, but they bear little semblance to the helmets of the warrior panels of the Hoard helmet, having a high cap, an enveloping neck-guard and a nasal guard (Webster 2012: figures 25 and 26). Evidence that crested helmets existed in the Pictish north, outside of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, can be seen on the sculptured stone in Aberlemno churchyard, where a battle scene is shown with warriors wearing crested helmets, which appear to have neck-guards and some form of nasal protection (Tweddle 1992: figure 533). The majority of Anglo-Saxon warriors depicted on the Bayeux embroidery are shown wearing helmets, although these are not crested helmets but helmets of a conical form.

We can conclude that the distribution of crested helmets would locate the origin of the Hoard helmet in Anglo-Saxon England or Scandinavia. In form and decoration it is so unlike the *Spangen* or *Lamellen* form of helmets that a continental origin is ruled out. An appraisal of the wealth of its cast and impressed art and ornament, strongly indicates that its fabrication was in an Anglo-Saxon workshop with royal associations. The iconographic and stylistic links of the ornament suggest close affinities with East Anglia and a probable royal workshop there, but until a workshop site is discovered with convincing evidence, such as figural dies related to the helmet panels, we can only speculate.

The questions as to when the helmet may have been made and who may have worn it, before its disassembly and deposition, are equally tantalizing. Such questions have been more confidently answered in relation to the Coppergate helmet from York, the date of manufacture determined as being between c. 750 and 775 AD (Tweddle 1992: 1170). Apart from being a century later in date, it is the only surviving Anglo-Saxon crested helmet with a mail neck-guard. The Benty Grange helmet, made not earlier than c.

650 AD (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 242), most likely belonged to a Christian Mercian. The identity of the young man of 25 years of age or more buried with the all-iron helmet from Wollaston remains unknown. He is viewed as having been an elite 7th-century Anglian warrior. Initial publicity following its discovery in 1997 stating that this was a royal grave can be discounted. A royal association, however, for the Sutton Hoo helmet from the Mound 1 ship-burial is more certain, with a strong case made for Rædwald as the most favoured of the possible East Anglian kings, but there are other alternatives and as Marzinzik (2007: 54–5) has cogently argued “we cannot be sure who was buried with the helmet in Mound 1”.

It remains conjecture but the stated view above that the Hoard helmet was ‘fit for a king’ is a reasonable claim, based on the quality of the craftsmanship and the wealth of its ornament. The close iconographic links of some of the helmet panels with designs on the Sutton Hoo helmet and Swedish examples imply a shared cultural background, signalling a possible link to the East Anglian royal house of the Wuffingas, whose dynastic origins are most plausibly with Sweden (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 258; 1978: 225). It was concluded with regard to the Sutton Hoo helmet that it was no doubt of some age when buried, particularly if it is of East Scandinavian manufacture, and so quite likely to have been brought to this country long before its burial around the early 7th century (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 224).²⁵ The fragmented state of the Hoard helmet complicates any assessment of traces of wear or pre-deposition damage. Gauging its age at deposition relies solely on stylistic considerations of its ornament. This is no easy matter given the medley of zoomorphic and figural schemes that enhanced the helmet. Certain aspects of the animal art look both backwards and forwards in stylistic development, from the 6th century and into the 7th. Minor technical elements of the decoration on the cheek-pieces, such as the zigzag niello borders, relate the cheek-pieces to high-class silver metalwork of the 6th century, as on the Taplow horn mounts. Its use on 7th century metalwork is relatively rare and infrequent.²⁶ The figural art is quite singular. Anglo-Saxon parallels for the figural motifs on the helmet are few and far between, apart from some panels on the Sutton Hoo helmet and several mounts from East Anglia. The evidence is hardly conclusive, but the helmet appears to lie within a chronological horizon shared with the Sutton Hoo helmet. If the view is accepted that the Sutton Hoo helmet “was no doubt of some age when buried” (Bruce-Mitford 1978: 224), the Hoard helmet too, or parts of it, could have been made before 600 AD.²⁷ Like the Sutton Hoo helmet its purpose would have been for parade and display of leadership, but its dismemberment and destruction would suggest that its owner’s final encounter was defeat in battle.

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25 Recent work on the Sutton Hoo coinage by Gareth Williams has questioned the precision of the dating of 624–5. “It seems unlikely that the latest coins in the hoard could date from any earlier than c. 610, or much later than c. 635. Since imported coins were still coming into East Anglia after that date, and local coins began to be produced soon after, it is likely that the burial falls between those dates’ (Williams 2011: 40–1).

26 Niello inlaid zigzag borders do not occur on any of the Sutton Hoo regalia, although triangular punch-work producing zigzag patterns without niello as an infill, are evident on the magnificent Swedish shield. Bruce-Mitford 1978, Fig 89, a, c, f, i.

27 A later view for the dating of the helmet has been suggested by Chris Fern, who has argued that a conscious archaising of aspects of its form and ornament was employed by the craftsman (Fern *et al.* 2019).

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‘Magnificent was the cross of victory’: the great gold cross from the Staffordshire Hoard

Chris Fern

The great gold cross from the Staffordshire Hoard is now one of the most iconic expressions of belief to survive from early Anglo-Saxon England. This paper provides a detailed account of the artefact that was found in 2009, considering especially its form and art. It is argued that it represents a distinctly Anglo-Saxon version of a *crux gemmata* (jewelled cross), for whilst it ultimately follows the tradition of ornate crosses developed in the late Roman period and that continued in Byzantium, and was perhaps inspired by processional crosses carried by Christian missions, it combines its message of Christ in victory with the animal art of northwest Europe that was very probably rooted in ‘pagan’ pre-Christian belief. For this reason it can truly be considered an object of ‘barbaric splendour’ – in this case a syncretic one that mixes classical and non-classical influences. In addition, the cross will be compared for its combination of gold and blood-red garnets with the poetic vision of the cross in *The Dream of the Rood*, from which the quote in the title is drawn.

The cross mount (no. 539)¹ is the largest and heaviest fitting in gold from the Staffordshire Hoard. The Hoard is an unparalleled collection of almost exclusively gold (c. 4kg) and silver (c. 1.7kg) elite metalwork of the early Anglo-Saxon period, which was discovered by a metal detectorist in July 2009, not far from the village of Hammerwich, near Lichfield (Figure 6.1). It was found in c. 4,600 fragments, with c. 80 of them added by a second phase of recovery in 2012 (Palmer 2013). From this total around 600 significant objects have been identified after conservation (Fern *et al.* 2019). Fittings from the hilts of swords and a few seaxes (fighting knives) form the majority, including pommels, collars, plates and other mounts, whilst the cross is part of a small but significant group of Christian objects. In addition, there are remains from at least one helmet. The objects appear to range in date from the mid/late 6th to the mid/late 7th centuries, although most probably come from weapons and other gear manufactured in the first half of the 7th century. Given the dominant military character of the assemblage, it has been suggested that possibly the material represents war loot, accrued perhaps from successive military ventures (Leahy and Bland 2009). In this context, the Christian items have been interpreted as coming from the spiritual armoury of a convert ruler, with the cross possibly from a processional standard (Webster 2011).

Although the treasure was found scattered by the plough over a c. 20m² area, the condition of the finds indicates they must have been buried and only recently disturbed; however, no trace of any pit was found when the site was excavated shortly after the discovery (Dean *et al.* 2010: 144; Fern *et al.* 2019). The wider landscape setting adds to the enigma of the find. It appears the collection was deliberately deposited on a ridge beside and overlooking Roman Watling Street (Figure 6.1a), which undoubtedly remained a major routeway in the period, leading into what would become by the later 7th century the royal centre of the kingdom of Mercia (Yorke 1990: 102), but which at the time of the treasure’s formation was still a hinterland. Hooke has argued (in Dean *et al.* 2010: 148) that the immediate environment of the burial site was probably remote at the time, a wooded heathland between two populated river valleys, each of which supported a petty tribal group. In the context of

1 This is the number assigned to the cross and its parts in the new catalogue of the collection (see Fern *et al.* 2019). The old K-numbers for the cross parts were K308, K655–K659 and K1314.

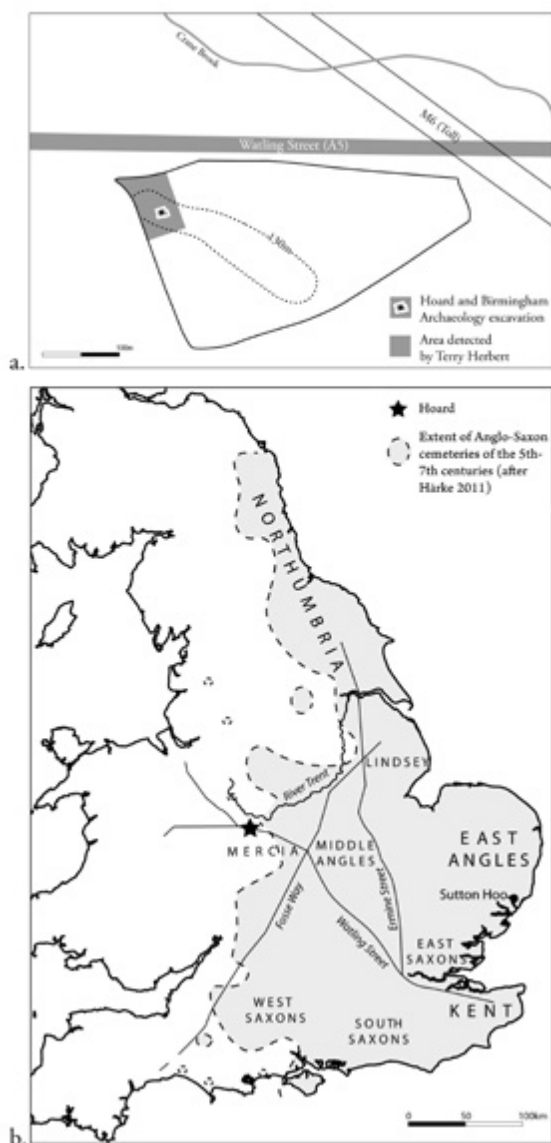


Figure 6.1. (a) Location of the Hoard in relation to Watling Street (the modern A5 road); (b) Location of the Hoard in early Anglo-Saxon England.

early-medieval Britain, this setting was at the very frontier with the British West (Fern 2017), as is shown by the extent of Anglo-Saxon burial-grounds of the 5th to 7th centuries (Figure 6.1b). Whilst the lands around were well resourced and probably well-populated (Bassett 2000), there is little evidence that Anglo-Saxon culture was dominant locally even by the mid-7th century (Fern *et al.* 2019). Beside the Hoard there is only a thin scatter of comparable elite gold and garnet metalwork from the region (Leahy 2015; Fern *et al.* 2019).

The object forms, art styles and methods of manufacture instead draw close parallels with the material culture of other parts of Anglo-Saxon England, including with the metalwork of East Anglia and Kent, as well as with the Insular art traditions of northwest Britain (Fern 2017; Fern *et al.* 2019). Only one pommel is certainly an import, probably coming from Scandinavia (Fern and Speake 2014: 14–15; Fern 2017). A cultural distance between the manufacturers and original owners of the objects, and the individual or group that ultimately deposited the Hoard might also be inferred from the damage that was done to the finds before they were buried. Cut-marks and marks possibly from smithing tongs suggest the fittings were crudely dismantled, giving the impression of a harvest of precious bullion, from which the iron blades of the weapons and other non-precious parts were deliberate excluded. Furthermore, it is possible some of the damage was iconoclastic: several crosses have broken and twisted arms, and a fish symbol was targeted, with the creature's head removed (Fern and Speake 2014: 18–19; Fern 2017).

The uncertainties surrounding the Hoard's deposition and the seemingly out-of-place character of the metalwork in its border setting leaves plenty of scope for interpretation of what Anglo-Saxon England's richest find represents. It is tempting to see it as a buried Mercian royal treasure, never recovered (Behr 2010), but it has also been suggested that it could be the stolen offerings of a pagan temple (Périn 2011). Also tantalising are two accounts of treasure taking that are relevant to Mercia and claimed to be broadly contemporary with the Hoard: Bede's history records an 'incalculable and incredible store of royal treasures and gifts' were paid by Oswiu of Northumbria to Penda of Mercia in 655 to avoid battle (HE III.24; trans. McClure and Collins 1994: 149–50); and around the same time the legend of *Marwynad Cynddylan* tells of great wealth carried off from Lichfield by raiding Welshmen (Brooks 1989: 168–9).



Figure 6.2. The remains of the great gold cross (no. 539), with three views of the mount. Photos G. Evans/C. Fern. © Barbican Research Associates.

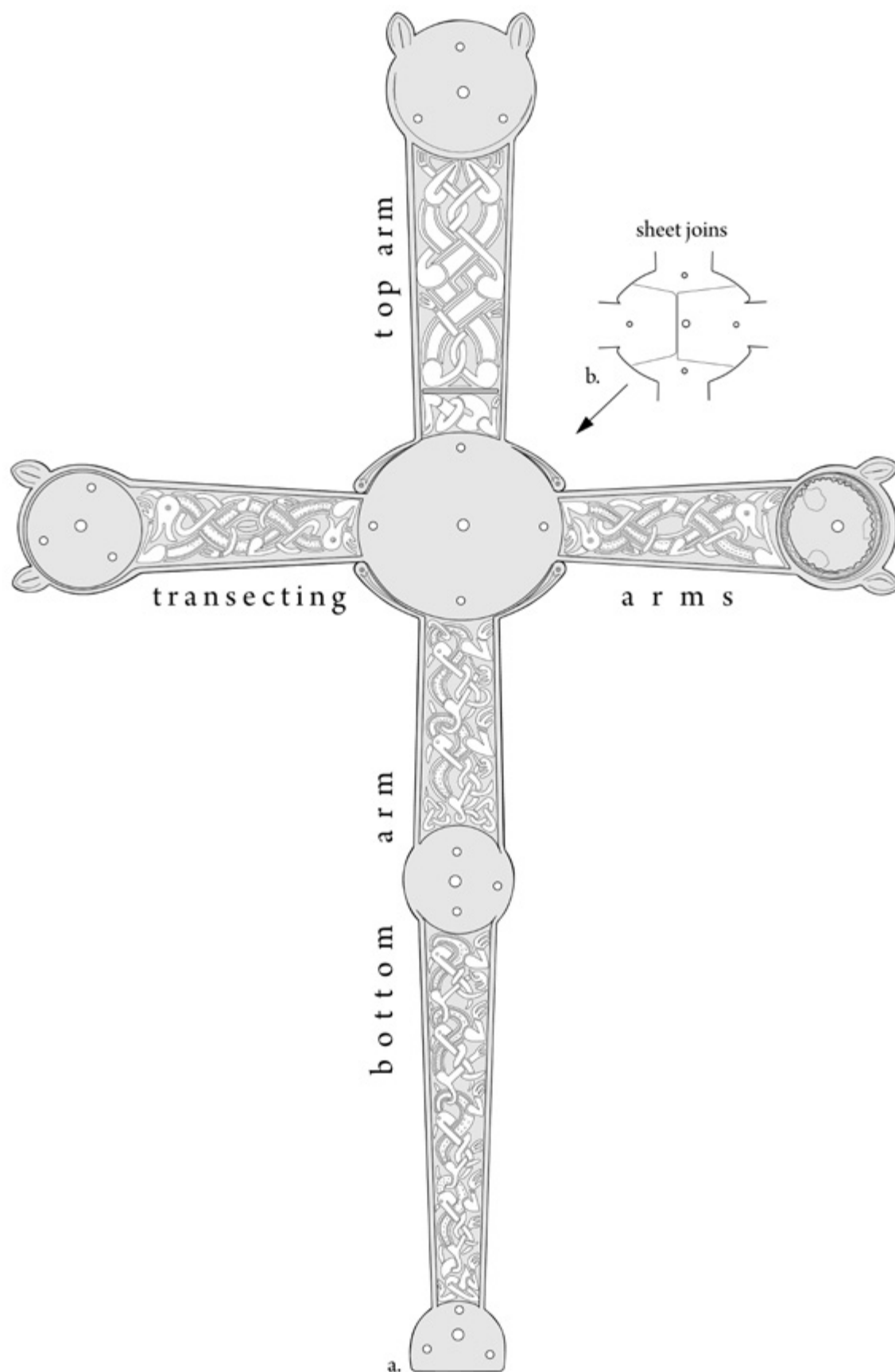


Figure 6.3. (a) The cross 'unfolded' (scale 3/4); (b) sheet joins (approximate scale 1/2). Drawings C. Fern. © Barbican Research Associates.



Figure 6.4. A colour interpretation of the great gold cross (no. 539). The central garnet (no. 692) in a rock crystal surround is conjecture. The three round garnets at the ends of the short arms are proposed from the single surviving example (scale 3/4). Drawing C. Fern.

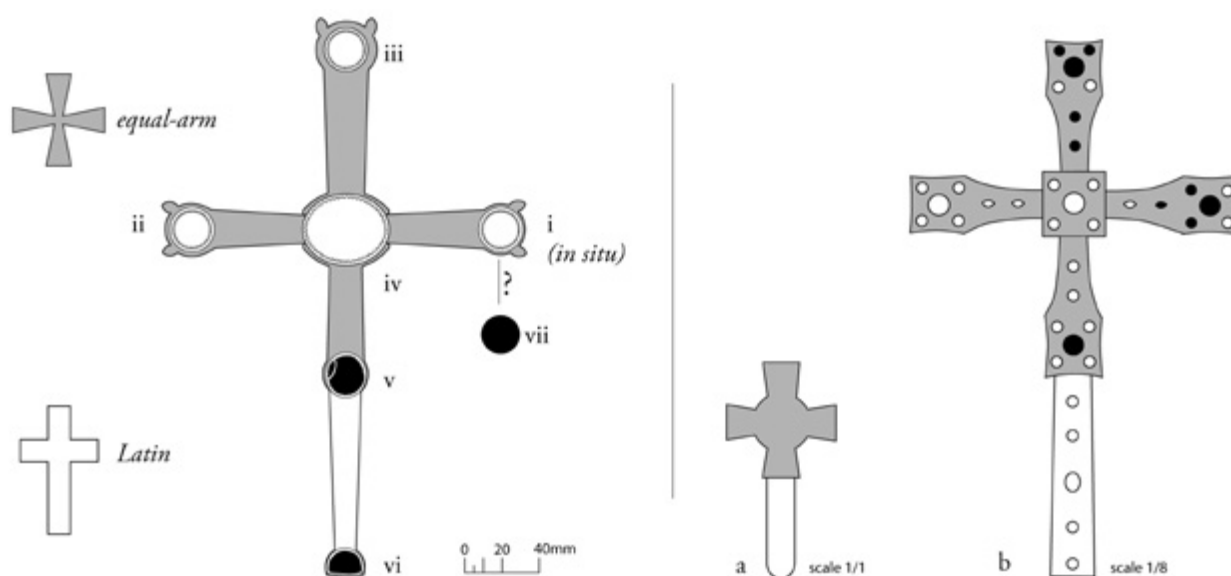


Figure 6.5. The form of the cross and the locations of its settings (scale 1/4). (a) a small silver cross from the nasal of the Benty Grange Helmet (after Bruce-Mitford 1974); (b) the Rupertus Cross. Drawings C. Fern. © Barbican Research Associates.

The cross

The finder of the Hoard, Mr Terry Herbert, recalled that he found the cross mount (length: 114mm; width: 74mm) with some of its detached gem settings within its bent arms, which suggests the parts might have been deliberately parcelled together (Figure 6.2).² The gold mount weighs c. 140g; the detached fittings weigh c. 35g. Disassembly of the object would have resulted when it was stripped from its mounting, although one empty gem-setting remains at the end of one arm (Figure 6.2i). Unfolded the cross was probably originally around 300mm tall and it would have been set on a flat or flattish surface (Figure 6.3a). Possibly the mount was fixed to a wooden processional cross, but nothing remains of it or of any other backing material, and it might alternatively have been attached to an altar cross, a book-cover or reliquary. A full colour interpretation of the cross is offered in Figure 6.4.

The cross mount was manufactured from multiple pieces of gold sheet formed into a double-thickness (c. 1mm). Sheet joins for the transecting arms are visible at the mount's centre (Figure 6.3b), but these would have been hidden by the central boss when it was attached. Once the rough shape was achieved, the final outline would have been cut. It combines two cross forms, as is also the case for other Anglo-Saxon crosses (Figure 6.5). An equal-arm cross with arms slightly expanded forms the top, with an elongated lower arm providing the cross its overall processional Latin form.

The core and surface metal of the cross has been analysed using SEM-EDX (energy dispersive x-ray analysis in a scanning electron microscope) by Dr Eleanor Blakelock, as part of a wider study of the Hoard gold (Blakelock 2014a; 2014b). All the gold alloys of the cross include silver (16.0–17.8 Wt%) and a small amount of copper (1.0–1.4 Wt%), as is normal for the period. However, the resulting gold fineness of the core alloy was different between the components. The gold sheet is in the range 80.8–83.0 Wt%, but the gem-settings have a lower fineness of 71.0–72.4 Wt%. In addition, the top gold-sheet layer of the mount had been subject to a deliberate process of 'surface enrichment', increasing the gold fineness

² Recorded in a transcript of an interview between Terry Herbert and Fulcrum Television, undertaken in January 2010, for the National Geographic.

at the surface to c. 87 Wt%. The metal of the flat sheet arms that bear the animal art would thus have appeared brighter than the settings of the precious stones.

The animal art was set in panels that fill the arms (Figure 6.3a). The ornament was deeply incised and in places cuts through the top layer of sheet, revealing the sheet layer beneath (Figure 6.6a). Eye and 'hair' detail was added to the creatures using punches, of annular and triangular form (Figure 6.6a–b). The outline of the cross was also made zoomorphic, as three of the arms terminate in proud animal ears, whilst bird heads with curlew-like beaks flank the central oval. There are few parallels for this method of incising into gold sheet. The sole instance from England outside of the Hoard is a small rectangular mount with an animal from Bamburgh (Figure 6.9c, below), a royal settlement of Northumbria (Webster and Backhouse 1991: 58–9). The creature is not unrelated in its style to those on the cross (see below). The technique is seen on other Hoard objects, however, including on a large gold mount in the shape of a fish between eagles (no. 538),³ which like the cross had its animal art detail carved into a double-sheet thickness (Fern and Speake 2014: 18–19; Fern *et al.* 2019).

Six gemmed bosses of different sizes and shape originally decorated the cross, but most of the settings are now without their stones (nos i–vi in Figures 6.2 and 6.5). The empty setting (i: Diam. 23mm) that is *in situ* and one other (iii) retain the flat heads of silver nails (Figures 6.2i, 6.2iii and 6.6d). These are the only evidence of the object's means of attachment, although they allow no real insight regarding what material the cross was fixed to, or of its thickness. The largest oval boss (iv: length 49mm) would have filled the cross's centre, whilst the two other detached and empty settings are round like that still fixed to it (ii: length 26mm, width 25mm; iii: diameter 30mm). The smaller of these was fitted to the other transecting arm and the larger was set on the top arm (Figure 6.5). The extended lower arm had two bosses that are the only examples with their large red garnet cabochons remaining: the oval boss from the mid-point has a stone (v: length 26mm) that was fractured and repaired in antiquity (Figure 6.6e); the bottom of the arm was set with a D-shaped garnet (vi: length 21mm).

The settings have bezels with dog-tooth edging (Figures 6.2i–v and 6.6c–f), except for the D-shaped boss, which has a plain bezel (Figures 6.2vi and 6.6g). The dog-tooth bezel form is also relatively rare in Anglo-Saxon metalworking. Bruce-Mitford cited several examples in his discussion of the dog-tooth edging on the famous pectoral cross of St Cuthbert (Bruce-Mitford 1974: 291–2), including the bezel gripping the large garnet on a buckle from Tostock, Suffolk (West 1998: figure 128.10), and that with a garnet cabochon on a composite disc-brooch from Sarre, Kent (Avent 1975: vol. 1, 56; vol. 2, 177, plate 66). The dog-tooth bezel form is ultimately of far greater antiquity, however, its use dating back to at least the 6th century BC (Oddy 1982: 114, no. 24).

Collars of filigree wire decorate all the gem-settings, but these also vary in their detail. The same wire combination forms the collars of the three settings from the short arms (i–iii), comprising a central three-ply twisted-beaded wire, flanked by thinner spiral-beaded wires (Figure 6.6d). The use of wires made by spiral beading is unusual in the context of other Anglo-Saxon filigree, though there are a number of other examples in the Hoard (Fern and Whitfield, in Fern *et al.* 2019). The collars of the oval boss (v) and D-shaped boss (vi) are also similar, but they use a different central wire of two-ply twisted-beaded type, flanked by beaded or spiral-beaded wires (Figure 6.6f–g). Lastly, the large oval setting (iv) has a quite different filigree collar formed of a pair of three-ply twisted-beaded wires with a central plain wire and flanking beaded wires, a pattern known as herringbone-with-spine (Figure 6.6c).

The D-shaped boss (vi) from the lower arm, which stands out for its different form and plain bezel, has a significant parallel in a crushed gem-setting on another significant object from the Hoard, a folded

³ The old K-numbers for the mount were K652/K1259.



Figure 6.6. Photomicrographs (scales as indicated): (a) animal art, with punched eye and ‘hair’ detail; (b) punched ‘hair’ on an incised animal body; (c) bezel and filigree collar of gem-setting (iv); (d) bezel and filigree collar of gem-setting (iii), with head of silver nail; (e) repair to boss (v); (f) bezel and filigree collar of boss (v); (g) bezel and filigree collar of boss (vi), with the cross-hatched gold foil visible through the garnet; (h) gem-setting of gold strip 540. Photos C. Fern.

strip of gold (no. 540)⁴ with Latin inscriptions (Figure 6.6h). The setting at one end of the strip is close in size, has the same plain bezel, and the same filigree collar (cf. Figure 6.6g–h). Indeed, so similar are the settings in their manufacture that it seems feasible, if not likely, that they were made in the same workshop and probably contemporaneously. However, the strip is unlikely to be from the same object (i.e. from the reverse of the same processional cross), since it was fastened with gold nails, unlike the silver fixings of the great gold cross.

⁴ The old K-number for the strip was K550.

The oval cabochon garnet (v) has a flattened top that was drilled with a double ring motif (Figure 6.2v and 6.6e). Currently, it is thought that large cabochon garnets such as these were imported already cut from Byzantium, with those with flat tops intended for *intaglio* engraving, not an art practised in Anglo-Saxon England (Geake 1997: 39–40; Adams 2011). The double rings were probably added in an Anglo-Saxon workshop, however, and might originally have held inlays of gold, which occasionally survive on other objects (Coatsworth and Pinder 2002: 146–7). It is possible, of course, that all the empty gem-settings originally held garnets, but the dimensions of the central setting (length 45mm x width 35mm) are unfeasibly large for a single stone. There are two loose garnets in the collection that might possibly be from the cross: a round cabochon (Figure 6.2vii; diameter 20mm)⁵ is a reasonable fit for the *in situ* setting (Figure 6.5); the other is another oval cabochon with a flat top (no. 692; length 23mm).⁶ It does not fit any of the settings, but perhaps it was mounted in the large central setting in a surround of some other material (*cf.* Figure 6.4), such as rock crystal, a parallel for which is a crystal and amethyst pendant from Stretham, Cambridgeshire (Lethbridge 1953).

Each of the loose cabochons was cut with a concave base, which would have served to expand the light as it entered the stone (this might also be the case for the set stones that it is not possible to examine). The light would have been reflected back through the garnets by gold foils set behind them, but only the complete bosses still have these (v and vi). These backing foils are cross-hatched, as is usual in Anglo-Saxon jewellery practice, with a small range of patterns known from foils used in England and on the Continent (Avent and Leigh 1977; East 1985; Tulp and Meeks 2000). The foil type of boss (v) cannot be identified due to in-washed soil, but the D-shaped garnet (vi) is backed by a gold foil of ‘special boxed’ type (Avent and Leigh 1977), with boxes of 4x4 lines (16 squares) and 4x5 lines (20 squares). This 4x4/4x5 foil type was identified as a rare form in a survey by Avent and Leigh (1977: 15), being previously known on only a handful of objects from sites in Kent. They suggested all the foils might have been struck from a single, unique die. However, that more than one die with the 4x4/4x5 pattern was in existence has since been proved by the discovery of such a die from Wijnaldum, Netherlands (Tulp and Meeks 2000), which it has been shown was not used to make the Kentish foils, and nor is the Wijnaldum pattern the same as that on the Hoard foil.

The tradition of the *crux gemmata* (jewelled cross)

The form of the *crux gemmata* developed as part of the ‘cult of the cross’ during the late Roman period, which followed Empress Helena’s supposed discovery of the True Cross. The first examples of ornate processional crosses for state and military use might actually have been commissioned by her son, the Emperor Constantine, after his purported vision of a cross before his victory at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in AD 312 (Cotsonis 1994: 5). The vision was accompanied by the divine instruction: ‘by this [sign], conquer’ (Eusebius *Vita Constantini*, I.XXVIII; trans. Cameron and Hall 1999).⁷ A depiction of a jewelled cross of the late 4th century with Christ enthroned survives in the mosaic apse in the basilica of Santa Pudenziana, Rome.

One of the earliest survivals in metalwork of a *crux gemmata* is the cross of Justin II (AD 565–578) that was made to hold a fragment of the True Cross (Talbot Rice 1959: no. 71, 305; Cotsonis 1994: figures 22a–b). It is covered in silver-gilt and gem studded, with on one side a Latin inscription to the people of Rome, to whom it was a gift. The other side has five figural medallions in *repoussé*, showing the *Agnes Dei* and portraits of Christ, the Emperor Justin and Empress Sophia, which occupy the same positions as the oval

5 The old K-number for the garnet was K308.

6 The old K-number for the garnet was K695.

7 τούτῳ νικά.

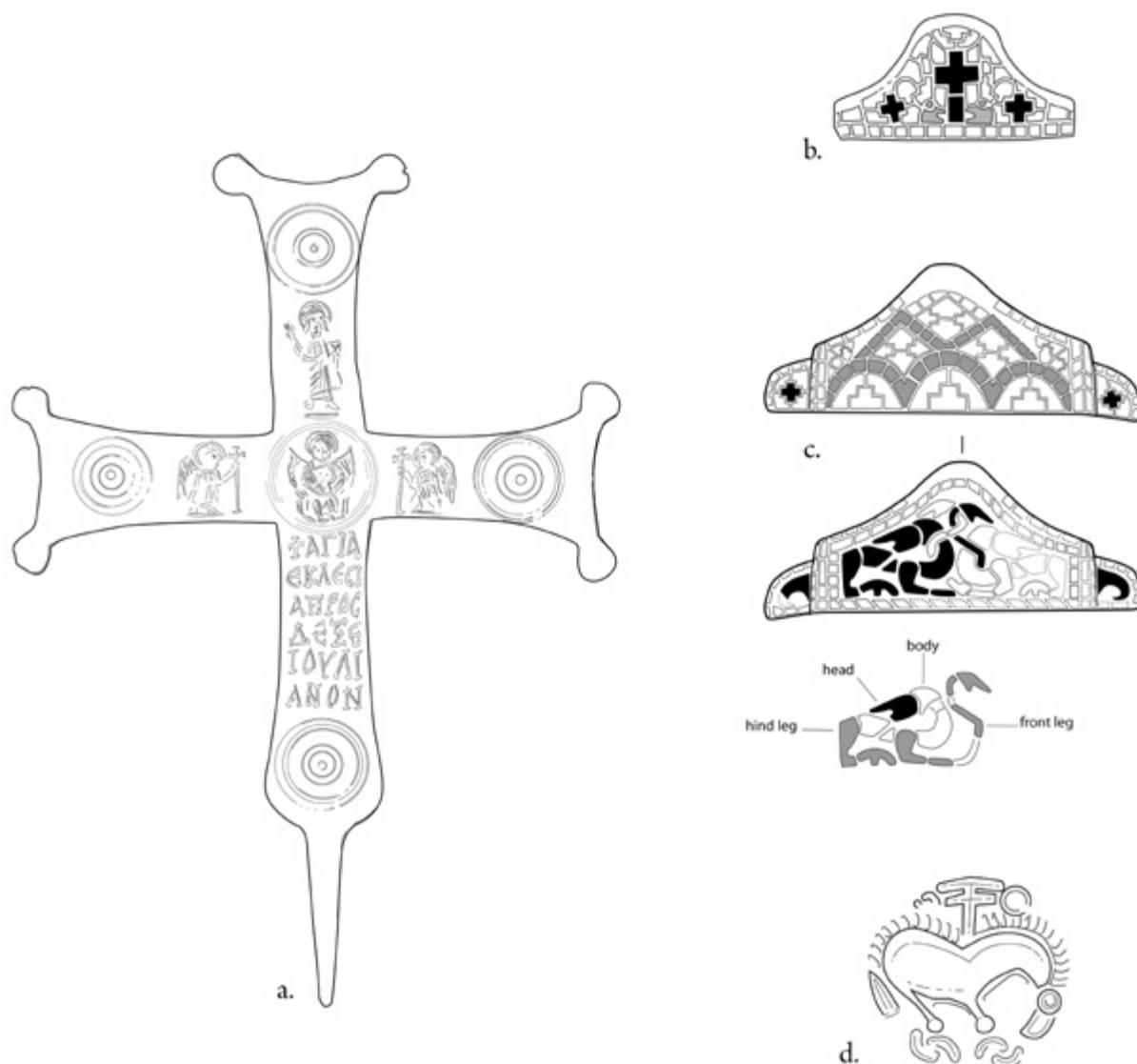


Figure 6.7. (a) Byzantine cross of bronze with incised Christian iconography and inscription, of 6th/7th century date, from Palestine/Syria. Note the round 'serifs' at the ends of the arms (scale 1/2); (b) Pommel from Dinham with crosses and beast heads (scale 1/1); (c) Pommel 52 from the Hoard with crosses and Style II (scale 1/1); (d) Horse with double cross on a seal ring from Lauchheim, Germany (scale 2/1). Drawings C. Fern. (c) only © Barbican Research Associates.

and round settings of the Hoard cross. Scrolled foliage fills the arms between the medallions, and this might also be considered similar in its arrangement, though not in its meaning, to the animal art of the great gold cross. A less lavish example of a Byzantine cross is shown in Figure 6.7a.

An account of the transmission of the jewelled cross tradition to early medieval Europe is beyond the scope of this paper, but notable examples in the Roman style include those in the Visigothic treasures of Guarrazar and Torredonjimeno, Spain (Perea 2006), and that embroidered on the tunic of the Merovingian Queen Bathilde (Walton Rogers 2007: 101–3; Bardiès-Fronty *et al.* 2016 : 80–1, no. 28). A great altar cross in gold and garnet cloisonné of the 7th century also once existed at Saint-Denis, Paris, that is attributed to the master goldsmith of the Merovingian royal court, St Eligius (Vierck 1974; Bardiès-Fronty *et al.* 2016 : figure 21, 130–1, no. 83). However, all these crosses are quite different from the Hoard cross, which

departs from Roman models in its ornament. The animal ears at the ends of the arms aptly demonstrate this, for whilst they correspond positionally with the round lobes or ‘serifs’ that typically terminate the arms of Byzantine crosses (e.g. Figure 6.7a: see also Cotsonis 1994), they are alone in being zoomorphic.

Processional crosses long remained part of Byzantine culture (Cotsonis 1994). A cross now in Great Lavra monastery, Mount Athos, Greece, bears a bellicose inscription that is relevant to the Hoard treasure, though the cross is of the 10th century. The inscription from Psalm 44:5 reads: ‘In thee will we push down our enemies, and in thy name will we bring to nought them that rise up against us’ (Grabar 1969; trans. in Cotsonis 1994: 14). This is very similar in tone to the passage from Numbers 10.35 inscribed on the Hoard’s gold strip, referred to above (no. 540; Figure 6.6h): ‘Rise up, O Lord, and may thy enemies be dispersed and those who hate thee be driven from thy face’ (trans. Brown 2010: note 1).⁸ The case for the Anglo-Saxon strip being from another cross may thus be strengthened.

Prior to the Hoard, the earliest large *crux gemmata* believed to be of Anglo-Saxon manufacture was the Rupertus cross (Figure 6.5b) of the 8th century, which was probably an altar cross, and is now in Bischofshofen, Austria (Webster and Backhouse 1991: 171–3; Webster 2012: 106, figure 71). It is of wood and covered with gilded copper-alloy, which is studded with glass stones, with in between vine-scroll decoration inhabited by birds and other animals. A broadly contemporary cross from Ireland is that from Tully Lough, Co. Roscommon (Kelly 2003). These large crosses that were intended for public display can be contrasted with the small number of personal crosses from Anglo-Saxon England that are contemporary with the great gold cross, but which were designed to be worn as pendants or otherwise were attached to clothing in the region of the pectus. The Hoard has added several more, the most significant of which in gold (no. 588)⁹ has flaring arms decorated with filigree scrollwork and centrally a large cabochon garnet. Others from Anglo-Saxon England include the examples from: Ixworth, Suffolk (Webster and Backhouse 1991: 26–7); Wilton, Norfolk (Webster and Backhouse 1991: 27–8; Archibald 2013); Holderness, East Yorkshire (MacGregor 2000); the pectoral cross from the coffin of St Cuthbert (Bruce-Mitford 1956; 1974; Webster and Backhouse 1991: 133–4); and that recently from Trumpington Meadows, Cambridgeshire (Lucy 2016). However, whilst these small crosses all make use of gold and garnet like the great gold cross, none has animal ornament.

Nevertheless, the makers of the Hoard cross were not alone in their decision to use indigenous imagery on an otherwise ‘Roman’ object. A fashion for small crosses of thin gold sheet decorated with Germanic animal art was popular on the Continent from the later 6th century amongst the Alemanni (southern Germany) and Lombards (northern Italy, see Müller and Knaut 1987; Brierbrauer 2003: 439; Giostra 2015). The crosses are found in graves and were probably stitched to clothing, funerary veils or shrouds, being typically found in the region of the head and upper chest.¹⁰

The cross of victory

Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE) recorded that the Christian mission from Rome to King Æthelbert of Kent in AD 597 arrived ‘bearing as their standard a silver cross’ (HE I.25; trans. McClure and Collins

⁸ The inscription is repeated with some textual variations on the front and back of the strip. The front reads: *Surge, Domine, disepentur inimici tui et fugent qui oderunt te a facie tua*.

⁹ The old K-number for the cross was K303.

¹⁰ The only example of the custom in England are the pair of plain crosses in the ‘princely’ burial at Prittlewell (Essex), a grave of the late 6th century (MOLAS 2004).

1994: 40).¹¹ The history also includes the famous account of the setting up of a wooden cross by King Oswald before the battle of Heavenfield in 634 (*HE* III.2). The veracity of both accounts is questionable, of course, but the latter was surely intended to promote a favourable comparison with Constantine’s pre-battle vision at the Milvian Bridge, as Ian Wood (2006) has argued. The existence of a notion of the ‘cross of victory’ in the time of Bede is further shown by the runic inscription *þis sigbecn* (‘victory-beacon’; trans. Carragáin 2005: 232) on the Bewcastle stone cross, Cumbria. However, the great gold cross is now substantive evidence that the Roman and Byzantine concept of the cross as a multivalent symbol of faith, power and victory was adopted earlier, during the actual era of conversion.

That other great crosses in gold with blood-red garnets once existed is suggested by the *crux gemmata* vividly described in *The Dream of the Rood*. The poem in its text form is likely to date from the mid-9th century (Bradley 1982: 158–63), but an earlier version appears on the Ruthwell stone cross, Dumfriesshire (Kendall 2006: 139–40). The Dream is an Anglo-Saxon version of a ‘cross vision’ that invites a living, bleeding image of the subject that is portrayed as both a tool of military power and of salvation. Its material description bears striking comparison to the Hoard cross: “The portent was all covered with gold; beautiful gems appeared at the corners of the earth and there were also five upon the cross-beam” (lines 6–9; trans. Bradley 1982: 160).¹² But it represents too the majesty and suffering of Christ:

“Magnificent was the cross of victory [*se sigebeam*] and I was stained with sin, wounded by evil deeds. I observed that the tree of glory, enriched by its coverings, decked with gold, shone delightfully. Gems had becomingly covered the rulers tree...I observed the urgent portent shift its coverings and its hues; at times it was soaked with wetness, drenched by the coursing of blood, at times adorned by treasure” (lines 13–16, 21–3; trans. Bradley 1982, 160).¹³

In certain lighting the great gold cross with its large garnets might similarly have evoked a bloody, animated treasure, as reconstructed in Figure 6.4. *Sigebeam* means literally ‘victory-tree’. This may be considered to refer to the material wooden form of the cross, but might also be viewed as further evidence that crosses as religious objects were regarded as having supernatural qualities.

Animal art, date and origin

In total, 21 stylised creatures or parts of creatures inhabit the cross: 14 beasts are contained in the panels on the arms (Figure 6.3a, 6.8a–c); four bird heads surround the centre (Figure 6.8d); and lastly there are the three pairs of ears at the ends of the three short arms (Figure 6.8e).

The creatures in the panels on the arms interlace together and are examples of the animal art known as Salin’s Style II (Salin 1904). This style was an aesthetic of the Germanic elite that spread throughout much

11 ...veniebant crucem pro vexillo ferentes argenteam...

12 Eall þæt beacen wæs begoten mid golde; gimmas stodon fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron uppe on þam eallespanne. <https://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/oecoursepack/rood/index.html>.

13 Syllic wæs se sigebeam, ic synnum fah, forwunded mid wommum. Geseah ic wuldres treow wædum geweorðod wynnum scinan, gegyred mid golde; gimmas hæfdon bewrigen weorðlice Wealdendes treow. Hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold ongytan meahthe earmra ærgewin, þæthit ærest ongan swætan on þa swiðran healfe. Eall ic wæs mid sorgum gedrefed; forht ic wæs for þære fæggran gesyhðe; geseah ic þæt fuse beacen wendan wædum and bleom; hwilumhit wæs mid wætan bestemed (lines 13–23). <https://english.nsms.ox.ac.uk/oecoursepack/rood/index.html>.

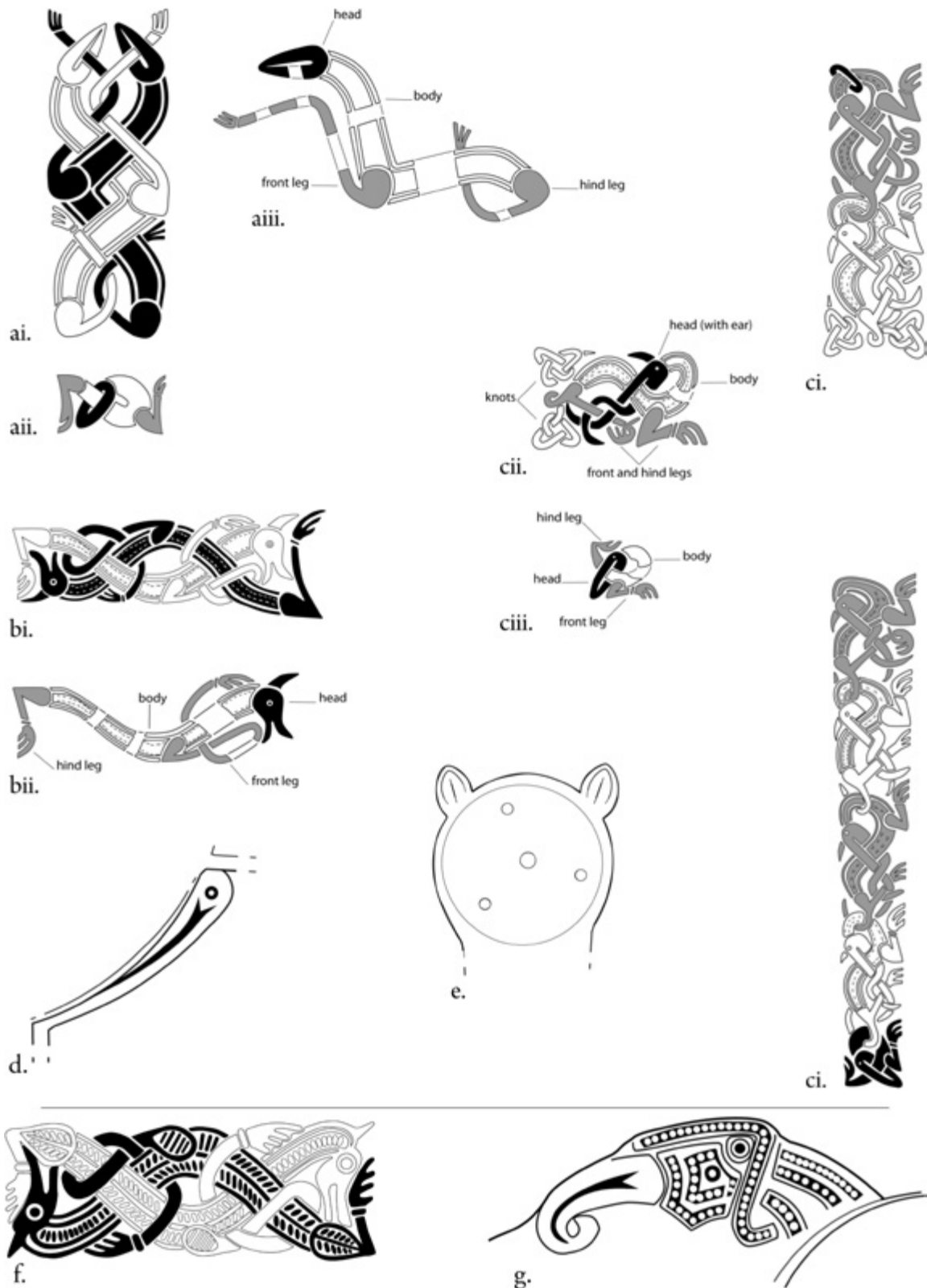


Figure 6.8. The animal art of the cross and comparanda from Sutton Hoo: (ai–aiii) top arm (scale 1/1); (bi–bii) transecting arm (scale 1/1); (ci–ciii) bottom arm (scale 1/1); (d) bird head with Y-shaped groove in beak (scale 2/1); (e) animal ears (scale 1/1); (f) Sutton Hoo, mound 1, cup motif (scale 1/1); (g) Sutton Hoo, mound 1, bird head from great gold buckle with Y-shaped groove in beak (scale 2/1). Drawings C. Fern. © Barbican Research Associates.

of Europe from the last third of the 6th century, possibly from an origin in Scandinavia (Speake 1980; Høilund Nielsen 1991; 1998; 1999). Significantly, the Hoard has added c. 140 objects to the existing Anglo-Saxon Style II corpus, approximately doubling that known previously (cf. Høilund Nielsen 1999: figure 11). Also it has changed considerably the overall regional distribution of metalwork with the ornament in England, which was previously dominated by grave finds from Kent and Suffolk. Nevertheless, as some of the Hoard's Style II has strong affinities with the ornament of these southeast regions, it is possible parts of the collection were manufactured there (Fern *et al.* 2019).

The Style II animal art of the Hoard also provides a key means for dating the collection (Fern *et al.* 2019), since its chronological development has been the subject of repeated study since Salin first characterised the ornament in 1904 (e.g. Haseloff 1981; Høilund Nielsen 1991; 1999). The Style II of the collection as a whole ranges in date from c. 570 to c. 650, with the art of the cross considered to be amongst the latest, as the following analysis will show.

However, before considering more fully the ornament parallels and their date, a full description of the cross art is necessary. The *top arm* is divided into two unequal panels (Figure 6.3a). The larger panel holds two quadruped creatures, shown in profile, with long necks and almond-shaped heads that are without eyes. The bodies and limbs of the creatures interlock, with each biting the forelimb of the other (Figures 6.8ai and 6.8aiii). The single beast in the adjoining small panel has the same eyeless almond-shaped head, but bites its own body (Figure 6.8aii).

The *transecting arms* are inhabited by similar pairs of creatures, but the motifs are not identical, since the beasts are mirrored and they interlace differently (Figures 6.3a and 6.8bi). They are again a quadruped species, in profile, but in this case are arranged top-to-tail with bodies deflected (Figures 6.8bi–6.8bii). The heads have splayed jaws, punched eyes and ears (except for one creature that is missing its ear), and the bodies have lines of punched 'hair'. It is unlikely the missing ear was a mistake, and rather should be understood as a deliberate act, which further adds to the balanced asymmetry of the overall composition.

The two panels of the *bottom arm* show a parade of quadrupeds, seven in all (Figures 6.3a and 6.8ci). Most are of one form, again with 'hairy' bodies, and they have heads like bent paperclips (Figures 6.8cii); a hairless singleton at the narrow end of the arm instead has an almond-shaped head (Figure 6.8ciii). They bite their own bodies and hindquarters, and are connected by hooked tails. The two slightly larger creatures in the shorter section show two further features: one has a neck-ring; the other is backed by two knots.

Crucial to the question of the date and origin of the cross has been the identification that the motif on the right *transecting arm* is essentially the same as that which occurs on the silver-gilt mounts of a set of maplewood cups (cf. Figures 6.8bi and 6.8f) from the famous mound 1 ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk (Bruce-Mitford 1983: vol. 1, 347–59, figure 261a; Høilund-Nielsen 2010; Fern and Speake 2014: 38–9). George Speake (1980: 76) saw the cup motif as showing 'continuity between Sutton Hoo and the [later animal art of the] Book of Durrow' and probably the cups are amongst the latest objects in the grave, which is currently dated c. 620–640 (Bayliss *et al.* 2013: 319, 502). Sutton Hoo, of course, was possibly the burial-ground of the East Anglian royal dynasty and mound 1 is frequently associated with the powerful King Rædwald (d. 624/25), though neither is certain (Carver 2005: 503; Hoggett 2010: 28–9).

That the motif on the great gold cross is the later of the two versions is suggested by its further stylistic parallels. The head-form used on the *transecting arms* (Figure 6.8bii) is rare and found late in Anglo-Saxon Style II, with its closest parallel being that used for the serpents (Figure 6.9b) on the famous buckle from Eccles, Kent (Hawkes 1973). Also rare and late are the eyeless creatures from the *top arm* (Figure 6.8ai). Beasts of the same ilk can be found: on the reverse of a composite disc-brooch from

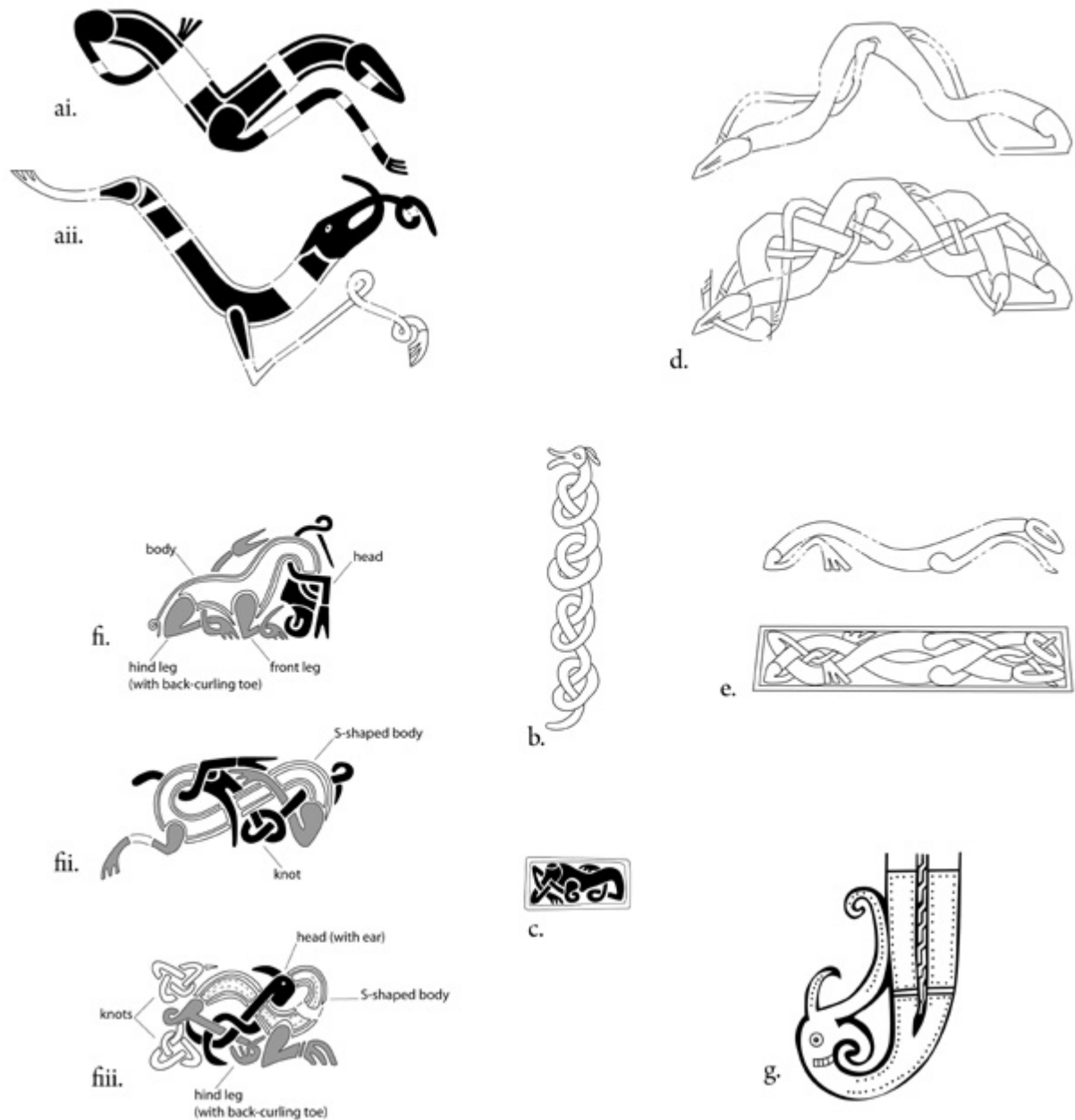


Figure 6.9. Style II comparanda: (ai) cross, top arm (scale 1/1); (a.ii) Book of Durrow, folio 192v (scale 1/1); (b) Eccles buckle (scale 1/1); (c) Bamburgh mount (scale 1/1); (d) Harford Farm brooch (scale 1/1); (e) Littlebourne buckle (scale 2/1); (f)–(f.ii) Hoard cheek-piece (scale 1/1); (f.iii) cross, bottom arm (scale 1/1); (g) Durham A.II.10, folio 2 (scale 1/2). Drawings C. Fern. © Barbican Research Associates.

Harford Farm, Norfolk (Figure 6.9d); on the back of a triangular buckle from Littlebourne, Kent (Figure 6.9e); as well as on the Bamburgh mount referred to above (Figure 6.9c, Webster and Backhouse 1991: 59, no. 45; TAR 1998/99: 35–6; Penn 2000: plate IV, figure 84.2). The Littlebourne buckle is a close relation of the well-known buckle from Crundale Down, Kent (Webster and Backhouse 1991: 24–5, no. 6), and like it has a plate of hollow triangular form with the remains of a gilt fish on its front between borders of interlace. Evans’ report for the buckle suggested a date for it in the first half of the 7th century (TAR 1998/99: 35–6), though Speake (1980: 56) believed the related Crundale Down buckle was “manufactured at earliest c. 650”. A similar date of a “decade (or two) either side of 650” has been suggested for the Harford Farm brooch (Hines in Penn 2000: 81).

The animals of the *bottom arm* (Figures 6.8cii and 6.9fiii) share several features with creatures on a pair of silver-gilt cheek-pieces in the Hoard (cf. Figure 6.9fi–iii, and Speake this volume). They demonstrate the same S-shaped body-form, a hind-foot-form with a back-curling third toe, and the addition of small knots within their arrangements. The foot-form is another otherwise unusual element in Anglo-Saxon Style II (Speake 1980: figure 8l; Høilund Nielsen 1999: foot-type C4), as is the long, U-shaped head-form of the cross beasts with its forward-facing ear (the ear also features with the *transecting arm* creatures). The best parallel for this head-form is from manuscript art, on folio 2 of Durham A.II.10 (Figure 6.9g), although the flaring jaws of the Durham creature are arguably more akin to those of the *transecting arm* beasts. A mid 7th-century date is usually proposed for the gospel book (e.g. Webster 2012: 78).

In summary, the affinities of the cross's ornament are drawn from material from several of the major kingdoms of early Anglo-Saxon England: Kent, East Anglia and Northumbria. However, the most intimate connection remains the motif link with the regalia of Sutton Hoo (cf. Figures 6.8bi and f). If the motif on the cross was copied from the original die used to make the mounts of the maplewood cups, it might even have been made in the same East Anglian workshop. Nonetheless, the range of ornament parallels altogether suggest perhaps a quarter of a century separated the manufacture of the cups and cross, since the late Style II of the cross points to a date for its production around the mid-7th century. Lastly, one more detail may support further an East Anglian connection: the Y-shaped groove on the beaks of the strange elongated bird heads that surround the cross's central oval (Figure 6.8d), which is also a feature displayed by a small number of other key objects in the Hoard (Fern 2017). In his study of Anglo-Saxon Style II, Speake (1980: 42) noted this trait as particular to artefacts from Sutton Hoo (Figure 6.8g). Since then more finds with the detail have been added from the same general region (e.g. Speake 1980: figure 60; Webster and Backhouse 1991: 56, no. 39; West 1998: 8, figure 7.70), including most recently a small number of examples from the important royal East Anglian site of Rendlesham (Scull *et al.* 2016).¹⁴ Therefore, the Y-shaped beak detail may well have originated in Style II workshops in the kingdom of the East Angles.

Meaning

The cross's six bosses can be interpreted simply enough as symbolising the crucifixion: five of the stones could have stood for the Five Wounds of Christ, whilst the sixth stone at the base of the bottom arm with its semi-circular form is suggestive of Golgotha, the hill of the crucifixion. However, whether the cross's animal art had any meaning related to pre-Christian 'pagan' belief is harder to determine.¹⁵

The animal art of the 5th and 6th centuries that preceded Style II, known as Style I, and the bracteate ornament that accompanied it in its Scandinavian region of origin, has been considered as iconography which could have encoded mytho-religious narratives (Haseloff 1981: 419–20; Leigh 1984; Hauck *et al.* 1985–1989; Magnus 1997; Dickinson 2002: 178; 2005: 146–60). That some sort of structured meaning also governed the application of Style I in England has been shown by studies of Anglo-Saxon brooches, which exhibit a repetition of motifs and rules governing their design (Hines 1997; Dickinson 2002; Martin 2013). Therefore, since many of the key motifs of Style II were drawn from Style I, it seems conceivable that a 'pagan' content to the art remained into the conversion period of the 7th century, even if interpretation of it is made highly problematic by the lack of contemporary written sources concerning pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon belief.

¹⁴ The author identified the feature on several objects examined in 2012.

¹⁵ It is recognised that the term 'pagan' is both controversial and unsatisfactory for describing the dynamic religious beliefs and customs of the Anglo-Saxons prior to conversion, but it is retained here nonetheless as it remains the label generally applied to those pre-Christian traditions (for discussion see Carver, Sanmark and Semple 2010).

Indeed, there are many examples from archaeology and history that suggest a continuity of pre-Christian belief and tradition in the period of conversion. One is the 8th-century Franks Casket, with its juxtaposed scenes from Germanic legend and Judaeo-Christian tradition on its whale-bone sides and lid (Webster 1999). From Bede's history another is the famous account of the continued worship of traditional deities after conversion by the previously mentioned King Rædwald (*HE* II.15). Sutton Hoo Mound 1, with which he is often if not certainly associated, appears also overtly non-Christian in its funerary mode of ship-burial (Carver 2005: 153–99), but in the assemblage too were a pair of silver spoons inscribed *Saulos* and *Paulos* with a Christian message,¹⁶ and it has been argued they might have been a suitable baptismal gift to a convert ruler (Bruce-Mitford 1983: vol. 1, 125–46). Ultimately, that elite power resided as much in a 'pagan' past as in a Christian future is shown by the fact that Woden (Odin) continued to be celebrated as an ancestor in the genealogies of Anglo-Saxon kings (Moisl 1981; Yorke 2015).

A fusion of pre-Christian and Christian traditions can also be seen with striking effect on two 7th-century sword pommels in gold and garnet cloisonné, one of which is from the Hoard. Pommel 52 is perhaps the best example of syncretic art in the collection (Figure 6.7c).¹⁷ On one of its sides is a *romanitas* design of classical triangular pediments, rounded arches and crosses, whilst on the other side is the Germanic motif common in Styles I and II of confronted beasts (Fern and Speake 2014: 30–1). The other pommel from Dinham, Shropshire (Figure 6.7b), has the three crosses of the crucifixion on one side, but flanking the central cross are animal heads that intrude upon the otherwise orthodox scene (Webster 2012: 31).

Identifying animal species in Style II is typically very difficult, due to the heavy stylisation of the art, but this does not mean its creatures were without explicit meaning for the early Anglo-Saxons; symbols may be so well understood in their context of use that detail and naturalism are unnecessary. Above all the form that predominates in Style II is that of a beast in profile; sometimes the creatures lack limbs, termed 'zoomorphs', but, in many cases, it is clear the animals are quadrupeds, like those on the cross (Figures 6.8aⁱⁱⁱ, bⁱⁱ and cⁱⁱ) and on pommel 52 (Figure 6.7c). The creatures of the Sutton Hoo cup motif (Figure 6.8f) with long necks and pricked ears have been described as 'horse-like' (Bruce-Mitford 1983: vol. 1, 359–60), and the same can be said of the creatures of the cross. Even the proud animal ears of the cross arms may be said to be equine; a Roman veterinary surgeon included amongst the ideal characteristics of a stallion, "ears short and pricked up" (trans. in Hyland 1990: 6). Others have also pointed to the representation of horses in Style I and Style II (e.g. Roth 1986; Martin 2013: 10), and I have argued on several occasions that the popular motif of a pair of confronted animals (cf. Figure 6.7c) was based on observation of fighting stallions (Fern 2010: 138–40, figure 7.6; Fern and Speake 2014: 30–1). We know that the horse had 'cultic' significance for Germanic peoples, including the Anglo-Saxons. Horse sacrifice in elite funerary rites was widespread (Müller-Wille 1972; Fern 2007), and in Scandinavia at least the baiting of stallions to fight may have been an important ritual (Hagberg 1967: 79–81). Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon foundation legend of Hengist (stallion) and Horsa (horse) very possibly preserves the memory of a cult based on the horse-named brothers (*HE* I.15; Turville Petre 1957). Perhaps, then, the cross's zoomorphic form given by the ears might even be considered to evoke a 'cross in beast form', similar to the animated cross of *The Dream of the Rood*. Finally, the specific combination of horse and cross imagery has a parallel, from Lauchheim, Germany (Figure 6.7d), on a gold seal ring (Müller and Knaut 1987: 15).

16 The Greek names *Saulos* and *Paulos* reference the conversion of St Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9; 13:9; Bruce-Mitford 1983: vol. 1, 136).

17 The old K-numbers for the pommel were K284/K328.

Conclusion

The great gold cross was undoubtedly made at the command of a powerful and probably royal patron. Possibly it was inspired directly by a processional jewelled cross of Byzantine form carried by a Christian mission. Its manufacture in gold and garnet, whilst in line with Anglo-Saxon jewellery generally, was well suited to convey both the majesty and bloody suffering of Christ, as is correspondingly conveyed by the remarkable cross vision in *The Dream of the Rood*.

Examination of the cross's Style II animal art has highlighted in particular a potential connection with Sutton Hoo, the East Anglian 'burial ground of kings' (Carver 1998). Perhaps most appealing as possible patrons are Bede's devout rulers, Sigebert (630/1–c. 640) and Anna (c. 640–654) (*HE* II.15; III.7, 18), and the cross's ornament could indeed fit with its manufacture during one of these periods. Of course, it can never be proved beyond doubt that we have found the cross-standard of either king, but the deaths of both in battle against Mercian armies led by the highly successful Penda (c. 626/32–655) can provide more generally a plausible historical context for the movement of the object to the border kingdom. Nor will it ever be possible to label the anonymous find 'Penda's hoard', albeit it was buried in the heartland of Mercia, and as a collection it speaks above all of the sword-play of kings. Finally, it is argued that the great gold cross is a manifestation of the religious syncretism that characterised the early conversion: its 'pagan' animal ornament, transmitted from northern Europe, was combined with the ultimate symbol of *romanitas*, the jewelled cross of victory.

Acknowledgements

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The materiality of faces

Charlotte Behr

Introduction

From different times, in different parts of Europe north of the Alps, objects decorated with anthropomorphic faces appear in the archaeological record. In the 5th century BC and in the 5th century AD faces gained a visual and material presence when they were placed in prominent positions on a wide range of objects. And they remained important pictorial elements in Celtic Latène and early medieval Germanic art (Huth 2012: 71–5; Foster 2014: 56–67; Helmbrecht 2011: 223–9).

Faces are conspicuous because they allow, even request, the immediate attention of and interaction with the viewer. They address the beholder directly. Faces play a special role in life and in art because they signify our individuality. We also communicate verbally and non-verbally with our faces, thus we engage socially with them and they are shaped by cultural norms and conditioned by social values. Faces feature frequently in art and that is why a study of artistic representations of faces from different historical periods can reveal contemporary customs and attitudes in the lived realities (Belting 2013: 10).

The artistic representations of the Celtic and Germanic faces differ in some respects but they also share stylistic and contextual features. In both periods the faces were highly stylised and characterised by large eyes that appear to ‘stare’ at their counterparts. This leads to questions about possible relationships between them. Did Latène art impact directly or indirectly on early medieval art despite the chronological hiatus between the abandonment of Latène art in the 2nd/1st century BC and the emergence of Germanic art in the 5th century AD (Müller 2014: 36)? Were there any artistic continuities across time and space? With the end of Latène culture in Continental Europe following the Roman expansion north of the Alps, Latène art ceased to be made with the exception of separate developments on the British Islands (Hoppe and Schorer 2012a: 460–3; Hunter 2012: 474–84). That is why it is usually argued that there is no “evidence for direct stylistic continuity through the intervening centuries” (Wells 2008: 9).

Still, the observed conformity between motifs and styles of Latène and early medieval art were the starting point for Wells’ discussion in his book *Image and Response in Early Europe*. He aims to demonstrate that by gaining a deeper understanding of the visuality of the past, or the ways people in antiquity viewed the world, it may be possible to explain these similarities disregarding any religious or mythical meanings or political connotations of the images. He used in his analysis recent insights in neuroscience and cognitive psychology (Wells 2008).

A different approach was chosen by Pesch when she recently presented a detailed analysis of the Swedish gold collars from Älleberg, Färjestaden and Möne that can be dated to the 5th and 6th century. In her discussion of the typology and iconography of the countless animals and anthropomorphic figures that were attached to these collars she concluded that there were numerous commonalities and continuities between the art of the Scythians, Greeks, Romans, Celtic and Germanic peoples (Pesch 2015: 527).

By concentrating on faces I aim to argue in this paper that there is some, if tenuous, evidence for stylistic and iconographical continuities from Latène to early medieval faces but also and probably

more importantly for conceptual continuities reflecting the idea of the anthropomorphic face in art. By creating the faces, giving them a visual and material reality, they affected actively the beholders.

When discussing faces in these two periods the aim cannot be to give a complete overview of representations of faces in both periods but to explore a selection of faces to find out about some characteristic features. When referring to 'Celtic' and 'Germanic' art I am using these modern terms as convenient short-hand codes for art forms on the one hand from central Europe during the pre-Roman Iron Age and, on the other hand from northern Europe in the late and post-Roman periods. That Celtic and Germanic peoples were not distinct ethnic entities or cultural groupings has long been discussed. These terms that are commonly used in archaeology were ultimately derived and adopted in 18th and 19th century scholarship from the Greek and Roman world-view and their literary descriptions of their barbarian neighbours (Cunliffe 2011: 190-210).

The perceived differences between Celtic and Germanic peoples originated with Caesar's ethnographical descriptions in his *De bello Gallico* where he made a clear distinction between the more advanced and civilised Celts living in Gaul and the more barbarian Germans on the other side of the Rhine. The archaeology on either side of the Rhine however shows no differences and it is now well understood that Caesar's descriptions were not reports based on actual observations but a fabrication to serve his political aims (Schadee 2008: 162).

Faces in Latène art

In Latène culture a new unique art style arose around the middle of the 5th century BC stimulated by the exchanges with the Mediterranean world and the arrival of decorated Greek and Etruscan objects north of the Alps (Hoppe and Schorer 2012b). Typical for this style were anthropomorphic faces and heads, often described as masks or face-masks, also fabulous zoomorphic creatures, beings that were composed of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements and highly stylised plant designs (Frey 2002a; Hoppe and Schorer 2012b). The anthropomorphic faces were not masks in the sense of theatrical or funeral masks, objects that covered the face, but they are described as masks in the scholarly literature because of their exaggerated, at times grotesque mask-like features.

Only a limited number of motifs on the imported objects stimulated the development of images in the Latène style and only with some time lag after the likely arrival of the Greek and Etruscan items in central Europe (Müller 2014: 30). It is debated whether the style originated in the new centres of early Latène culture in the Rhineland where large numbers of Mediterranean imports and some of the most splendid examples of this new art style have been found, or, alternatively, whether it was already developing in the earlier elite residences of the previous Hallstatt culture which in turn was also already influenced by contacts with southern Europe (Hoppe and Schorer 2012b: 230ff; Egg 2012: 171-7).

The area where objects decorated with early Latène art have been found comprises Austria, Bohemia, southern Germany, the Rhineland and eastern France. Most of these objects were worn on the body, including rings – arm rings, neck rings, finger rings – brooches and belt buckles, and also bronze jugs. The earliest examples of the new style were found in exceptionally richly equipped burials. Most, but not all of them, were male warrior graves. Some of these graves can be linked to fortified hilltop settlements with central functions and control over trade routes (Krausse and Beilharz 2012: 99-105).

An obvious example for the link between a Mediterranean and a Celtic face is the handle escutcheon of a bronze flagon from an opulent grave in Kleinaspergle, Kr. Ludwigsburg, dated to the second half of the 5th century BC, that shows a grotesque face with large bulging eyes, a bulbous nose, chubby cheeks, a long curved moustache, pointed animal ears, long hair in thick plaited strands and a long ornamental



Figure 7.1. Escutcheon of the bronze flagon from Kleinaspergle, Kr. Ludwigsburg, second half 5th century BC, height 7cm. © Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart.

beard in curved strands (Figure 7.1) It was undoubtedly modeled on a bearded and mustached face, variously described as mask of a satyr (Hoppe 2012: 246) or of the wine-god Silenos (Laing 1992: 38), that was depicted with large eyes, hair in vertical strands, goat's ears and a subtle smile. This face was attached to an Etruscan stamnos that was found in the same grave (Hoppe 2012, 246–7). Not only the iconography was transformed but also the style changed from the low relief Etruscan face to a high relief Celtic one allowing the play of light and shade (Wells 2008: 46–48; 2012: 48–51).

Another example where the Mediterranean inspiration for the Latène design has been found close by are the finds from Weiskirchen, Lkr. Merzig-Wadern. In burial mound 2, dated to the second half of the 5th century, a Greek gold foil decoration of a drinking horn that was stamped with a row of sphinxes was found. In the nearby burial mound 1, dated about a generation later, a bronze belt plaque with coral inlay was discovered that was adorned with a central anthropomorphic face between two flanking pairs of sphinxes. The face has large lentoid eyes framed with curled eyebrows, a broad stippled moustache, round chin, vertical hair strands and an elaborate leaf crown. One pair of the backward looking sphinxes gazes at the face (Nortmann 2002: 37–39, 44–5).

The depiction of an anthropomorphic face flanked by two animals is derived from the very old motif of the mistress of the animals. Adopted from the Near East she has been linked to several Greek goddesses. It is a matter of debate whether this oriental influence reached Latène art mediated by Greek images or through Scythian art (Laing 1992: 50). With the Greek bronze hydria from Grächwil, dated to around 600 BC, that was richly decorated with a winged mistress flanked by lions and snakes the motif had reached north of the Alps already in the Hallstatt period (Müller 2014: 30). Guggisberg has pointed out that in the Celtic context in the 5th century a master of animals became more common and the anthropomorphic figure was reduced to a head or face. He argued that the shift from



Figure 7.2. Gold armring from Rodenbach, Lkr. Kaiserslautern, second half 5th century BC, diameter 9.4cm. © Historisches Museum der Pfalz, Speyer.

a mistress to a master of the animals was linked to the new warrior elite of the early Latène period that was buried in the graves in which the objects with this motif have been discovered (Guggisberg 2010: 231–2).

A second object with faces was found in the same burial mound at Weiskirchen. Four faces were arranged symmetrically around a central roundel on a gilded bronze and iron plaque. The plaque itself was devised in a sophisticated geometrical design. The faces were depicted with large almond-shaped eyes, twirled eyebrows, vertical hair strains, triangular noses and small, round, may be open, mouths. They were framed with palmettes that could also be large head gear (Laing 1992: 49; Nortmann 2002: 37; Hoppe and Schorer 2012b: 234).

The same motif of the master of the animals decorated also the gold armring from the wealthy male grave at Rodenbach, Lkr. Kaiserslautern, dated to the second half of the 5th century (Figure 7.2). A frontal face is shown, triangular in shape, with large round bulging eyes, a bulbous nose linked to twirled eyebrows, a long curved moustache and pointed chin. The face is crowned by five balusters and flanked by two reclining backwards-looking stylised rams. Two further but smaller faces with similar features but less elaborate headdresses of only one baluster are placed between two pairs of rams (Laing 1992: 52; Hoppe and Schorer 2012b: 240). The same warrior also wore a gold finger ring that was decorated with two identical bearded and moustached heads with leaf crowns arranged back-to-back (Frey 2002b: 174).

Leaf crowns also graced a young looking beardless face on a gold foil fragment from the grave of a rich woman who was interred in the late 5th or early 4th century BC in Bad Dürkheim. A surprising feature is its ambiguity because if one turns this face upside down, it becomes the face of an old bearded man (Laing 1992: 16).

The belt-hook in the shape of a face from the burial mound D1 in Rascheid, Kr. Trier-Saarburg too is depicted with a leaf crown. The face is elongated, the eyes are lentoid, the mouth is small and straight and the nose is triangular. Eyebrows, eyelids, mouth, beard and hair style are drawn with beaded lines (Cordie-Hackenberg and Born 1992: 137, 157).

In an intricate design bird heads, rams' masks with anthropomorphic faces and the scaled bodies of fish were combined to create a composite animal-human being on the fibula from the grave in Rosenstein, Heubach, Ostalbk., dated also to the second half of the 5th century (Hoppe and Schorer 2012b: 238; Joy 2015: 63–4). In the splendid burial of a woman, dated around 380 BC, at Reinheim, Saarpfalzkr., a gilded bronze flagon was found. Its lid was decorated with a horse-like animal that had a human bearded face wearing a leaf crown (Green 1996: 122; see also Frey 2002: 201).

These few examples of early Latène period faces demonstrate a variety of styles and themes. The faces were modelled on images from imported Mediterranean objects but devised in fundamentally new ways. The representations of the faces varied between highly stylised and disproportional even grotesque features but they always have oversized staring eyes. Nearly all the faces are male, many with beards and moustaches. They are sometimes shown with sumptuous headdresses. Müller approached these differences by explaining that in Greek and Etruscan art the artists depicted what the eye saw, whereas in Celtic art intellectual or spiritual ideas and concepts were expressed (Müller 2014: 29). Similarly, Huth defined Celtic images as 'mental constructs' and not merely 'optical projections' (Huth 2012: 68). They reveal a high level of abstraction.

Faces were depicted on their own, as double faces, in series of several faces, as ambiguous picture puzzles and within composite creatures combining anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements. They were abridged versions of the traditional motif of the master of the animals. Different types of mythical creatures accompanied them. The meaning of these faces is debated. Still, there is some agreement that they represented 'another' numinous world when they are described as demonic beings, as magical, as adding potency to the objects they decorate, making them powerful or mysterious (Frey 2002a: 205; Menghin 1980: 110; Fraser 2015: 105). According to Huth representations in Celtic art were identical with the represented, whom they evoked effectively. He argues that because of the contexts of Celtic images they were probably all of some religious nature (Huth 2012: 68).

Faces remained a common element in the later phases of Latène art, often with such highly ornate features that it becomes difficult to even detect the faces, like on the early 3rd century BC neck ring that was found in Villeseneux, Dép. Marne with its grotesque faces with bulging eyes. Other faces were shown as idealised representations on dagger handles and on studs of wagons (Harding 2007: 54; Megaw 2012: 304–7; Huth 2012: 75). The head at the end of a bronze dagger handle from Châtillon-sur-Indre, Dép. Indre is dated to the mid 1st century BC. It is depicted with curly hair, round, large eyes, a small mouth that seems almost to smile. Apart from its oversized eyes it has not got the wildly disproportionate features that characterised so many of the Latène period faces (Guichard 2012: 400–9).

Faces in early medieval art

When we now turn to images of faces in 5th-century AD Germanic art, we find a number of parallels. Like early Latène art that appeared rather suddenly in 5th century BC on numerous decorated objects in richly equipped graves over a wide area in central Europe, the material culture in northern Europe in the early 5th century AD too indicated an abrupt turning point in artistic representations. Again, the stimulus for the creation of figurative art and the models came from outside, this time from Roman objects. When previously few objects were decorated with figurative art, now numerous brooches and other dress accessories, jewellery and military equipment were adorned with a new pictorial language

that comprised geometrical patterns and zoomorphic and anthropomorphic features in the so-called Nydam Style and Animal Style I (Pesch 2012). They too were first found on precious high-status objects that were decorated with these remarkably uniform styles. They were found initially in northern, and then also central and western Europe, in graves and in sacrificial hoards.

The locations of the hoards in which the decorated objects have been found show a significant shift that has been interpreted as a reflection of fundamental changes in ritual behaviour (Fabech 1991: 298–300). The earliest finds are still from the large sacrificial bog hoards, like the one at Nydam, that had been used for repeated depositions over long periods during the Roman Iron Age (for summaries see Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 2003: 258–85). During the 5th century the hoards were increasingly laid down in or close to newly emerging central places. These places are characterised in the archaeological record by their finds that distinguished them from other settlement sites. The evidence points towards large hall buildings, access to prestige goods, regional and supra-regional trade, craft activities including metal and precious-metal work and a concentration of religious rituals. Several central places are known, the most extensively researched ones are Gudme on Funen, Uppåkra in Skåne and Sorte Muld on Bornholm and they are interpreted as settlements where members of a new military elite exerted political control over trade, crafts and religious rituals (Jørgensen 2009; Steuer 2007). The finds also suggest that the objects decorated in the new art styles were designed and manufactured in these places. The rapid spread of the art forms is explained by close contacts between members of the local elites crossing ethnic and political boundaries (Pesch 2011: 269–77).

The new art works were executed in chip-carving relief, creating the illusion of movement in different angles of lightning (Wells 2008: 46–8). The Nydam style was named after the second find in the Nydam bog (the first one was the large boat) that consisted nearly exclusively of military equipment that may have been deposited together in one event (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 2003: 274–6). Among them is a chape of gilded silver with niello inlay that was made in cast openwork. At the upper end above several paired fantastic animals are two identical anthropomorphic faces in profile placed chin to chin. The faces are stylised, eyes, noses, mouths and chins are clearly depicted. A row of stamped triangles surrounds the faces and may indicate beards. There is no hairstyle but a cap with a twisted band surrounding it (Haseloff 1981: 11).

Nydam style decoration has also been found on other object types. On the brooch fragment from Galsted, Jutland, an anthropomorphic face shown *en face* fills the central roundel on the bow of the fibula (Figure 7.3). It has large round eyes, a straight nose, long moustache, a small round, possibly open, mouth and chubby cheeks. The forehead is covered either by hair or with a cap or a helmet. The roundel with the face is surrounded by a field filled with spirals (Haseloff 1986: 101). A second face, not identical with the first one, but also shown *en face* is placed on the edge of the head plate. It too has large eyes that are framed with upper and lower eyelids, a straight nose, curved mouth, dimple in the chin and round cheeks that also appear blown up. The hair style has a braided central parting. On the left and the right side the face is accompanied by two fantastic quadruped animals with wide-open mouths (Haseloff 1981: 29). The field of the head plate too was filled with various spirals.

Design and style of these artefacts were derived from late Roman military objects, like belt sets, chape mounts and other mounts as they were made in Roman provincial workshops along the Rhine and Danube borders. The surfaces of these objects were filled in chip carving technique with geometrical and vegetal designs, including spirals, meander, palmettes and astragal (Haseloff 1981: 5f). Along the edges of these objects were frequently crouching animals, many of them can be described as sea animals, like dolphins or sea lions but occasionally also quadrupeds. These animals were not formed in chip carving technique but in low relief (Haseloff 1981: 15).



Figure 7.3. Fragment of gilded silver brooch from Galsted, South Jutland, late 5th/early 6th century AD. © Nationalmuseet København.

A frequent motif is that two antithetical animals flanking a human face mask, a roundel or a tree. An example is the late Roman belt set from Abbeville, Dép. Somme. Here the motif is repeated four times. On the buckle and one of the mounts, pairs of sea lions accompany the face, on a second mount and the strap end the sea lions are arranged around round discs, one of them with a whirl design (Haseloff 1986: 97–100). The frontal faces are depicted in a highly stylised simplistic manner. The lentoid eyes are overarched by stripy eyebrows that are connected to the nose and the stripy moustache above the mouth. The hairstyle ends in curls on either side. The animals are shown with wide-open mouths.

Haseloff argued that the anthropomorphic masks and the discs had a similar meaning. As discs and the whirl motif were symbols of the sun god in Roman art, he suggested that the masks too symbolised the sun god, Sol Invictus. He interpreted the animals, despite their open jaws not as beasts threatening the god but as his companions (Haseloff 1986: 97f). The depiction of this traditional motif on Roman military equipment has been interpreted as apotropaic, providing protection (Pesch 2012: 683–4).

The Nydam chape and the Galsted brooch demonstrate how the motifs and patterns from the Roman objects were adopted on high-status objects in northern Germany but also transformed in the process when, for example, the Roman sea animals became quadrupeds on the brooch. On the fibula from

Lunde, Lista, Norway, the face is accompanied by two dolphins. The face is depicted with lentoid eyes, a moustache and a long curved beard. He appears to be wearing a cap. Because of the dolphins the face has been interpreted as a representation of the Roman god Oceanus. Another significant change that can be observed on this brooch is the position of the motif on the plate, it is no longer placed on its edge. Face and animals were now created in chip-carving technique, no longer as rounded reliefs (Haseloff 1986: 78–81.). The motif remained a common feature in Animal Style I when it was depicted for example, on the headplates of the square-headed brooches from Donzdorf, Kr. Göppingen, grave 78 or Bifrons, Kent, grave 41 (Haseloff 1981: 131–2).

Individual faces, both *en face* and in profile, too were frequent features on the large square-headed relief brooches of the so-called Jutlandic group that were decorated in Animal Style I. They appear in roundels on the bow like the *en face* representation on the fibula from Bifrons, grave 41 or in profile on the pair of fibulas from Basel-Kleinhünigen, grave 74. Some were on the headplate, an example is the frontal face on Pompey, Nancy, Lorraine, others were in terminals on the footplate, examples are Tveitane, Vestfold, Norway, or Donzdorf, grave 78, or in roundels attached left and right to the footplate like the profile heads on Grönby, Skåne (Alenstam 1949: 202–12).

The anthropomorphic face, both *en face* and occasionally in profile, was the central decorative feature of the Anglo-Saxon button brooches, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries. Suzuki has argued that these faces “emerged as reconstitutions of the full-face masks” from the brooches of the Jutlandic group (Suzuki 2008: 261).

Anthropomorphic faces appear on the square-headed brooches also as part of beings that combined anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements. An example for such creatures are the two animal men on the head plate of the brooch from Hardenberg, Lolland. The large heads are seen in profile with lentoid eye, mouth, nose and pointed animal ears, the body has one short front leg that is turned towards the head and a hind leg (Haseloff 1981: 121–2). Such composite creatures appear on several objects in Nydam and Animal Style I.¹

Not only the late Roman military objects impacted on the artistic developments in northern Europe but also late Roman coins and medallions with their portraits of the emperors stimulated the creation of new objects and images in the 5th century. As finds of framed and looped Roman coins and medallions show that have been found in numerous places outside the Roman borders, like the examples in the 5th century hoard find of Szilágysomlyó, now Șimleu Silvaniei, Romania, they were worn as pendants, and probably believed to have protective powers because of the supranatural status of the Roman emperor (Bursche 2001: 89–94).

Prompted by this altered use of the Roman coins, round pendants were made from gold foil and stamped with matrices on one side with a limited number of motifs. They were made in northern Europe, probably first in southern Scandinavia (Axboe 2004: 274). These gold bracteates were looped and along the edge of the foil a gold wire was attached. On the larger pendants the central image was surrounded by one or more concentric zones that were stamped with individual dies, mostly with some signs. According to their iconography the migration period bracteates are classified into five types (Montelius 1869: before plate 2). The A-bracteates are defined by a male head in profile. B-bracteates show one or more complete anthropomorphic figures. On the C-bracteates, which form the largest group, is a male head

1 Haseloff (1986: 89–95) compared these creatures among other parallels with Latène period examples, like the horse with human face on the jug from Reinheim, see above. However, he also points out that it is unlikely that there were any connections between the different animal-men in Egyptian, Greek, Sassanian, Celtic or Germanic contexts.



Figure 7.4. Bracteates, second half of the 5th century AD. (a) Gold bracteate from Torpsgård/Senoren, Blekinge, diameter 7.18cm. © Historiska museet, Stockholm; (b) Gold bracteate from Broholm/Oure, Funen, diameter 3cm. © Nationalmuseet København; (c) Gold bracteate from unknown findspot on Funen, diameter 3.7cm. © Nationalmuseet København.

placed above a quadruped animal. F-bracteates have only a quadruped animal. Each of these motifs could be accompanied by additional animals, signs or inscriptions. D-bracteates are characterised by one or more interlaced animals in profile.

The A-bracteates were the earliest bracteates in the typological timeline, and they can be dated to the middle or the third quarter of the 5th century (Axboe 2004: 260). They were modeled on the imperial heads of the Roman coins and medallions, but not from the 5th century as might be expected, but from those of the Constantinian dynasty that were some 100 years older (Axboe 2004: 214–16). On the A-bracteate from Torpsgård/Senoren, Blekinge (IK 354) the male bust has a number of features that characterized the Roman imperial representation on the coins and medallions (Figure 7.4a). It is shown in profile with the imperial diadem, its central jewel above the forehead and ribbons behind the head, and the military coat with the brooch on the left shoulder.

Despite being closely modeled on the Roman image, the face has been transformed in profound ways. Whilst on the Roman coins and medallions the faces of the Roman emperors were always depicted as portraits with their characteristic physiognomy that made it possible to recognise the individual emperor even without reading the coin inscription that named him, on the bracteates, the faces were stylised and depicted without any individual traits. Another marked change was made to the eye. On the Roman imperial profile faces the eye was a ‘correct’ eye in profile, if rather too large on these late Roman imperial images, on the bracteate images the eye was designed like the eye on a frontal face and it too was too large. The gaze of the profile faces on bracteates was not directed to the left or right but towards the viewer.

On the A-bracteate from Broholm/Oure, Fünen (IK 47,2) too the imperial insignia, diadem and coat with brooch were repeated (Figure 7.4b). The image was obviously derived from a coin or medallion of emperor Constans (337–350) as the coin inscription was imitated. Whilst the letters on the left side cannot be deciphered anymore, the letters on the right side can be read as TANSFPAUG, and transcribed as ... [Cons]tans P[ius] F[elix] Aug[ustus] which is a typical coin inscription. Again, the coin image was transformed in several ways. Not only lost the imperial face all its individuality and the eye became a frontal eye, the face was also doubled up. A triskele, a sign never used on a Roman coin, was added between the two faces.

Not only was the iconography of the faces transformed but also the method in which it was depicted. The Roman coin images had been made in rounded low relief, on the bracteates some relief was used, but the



Figure 7.5. Detail of border zone, loop and triangular field of the gold bracteate from Gerete, Gotland, late 5th/early 6th century AD. © Historiska Museet, Stockholm.

shapes were now emphasised with contour lines (Axboe 2007, 16). The image on the C-bracteate from an unknown find spot in Funen (IK 58) displays further alterations of the face (Figure 7.4c). The short hair of the imperial image is now replaced with long plaited hair, but still with the imperial diadem (Axboe 2007: 100–3). The bust is accompanied by a large antithetical bird and a quadruped that was placed underneath. The animals were added without any concern for spatial relationships or proportions. The Latin coin inscription is replaced by runic magical formulas. The faces on the Roman coins evoked the presence of a real person, the emperor, the bracteates showed a face as an abstract concept not as a depiction of a naturalistic head. It was the idea of the imperial face that mattered.

In early bracteate research these changes to the Roman model were seen as a lack of ability by the northern craftsmen (Behr 2011: 180–2). However, the subtleties of the iconography and the inscriptions and the technical sophistication of the manufacture suggest that the bracteate masters were skilful and knowledgeable and made the changes deliberately.

The interpretation of the iconography of the gold bracteates is the focus of intense and controversial debates. It is disputed whether the images of the bracteates depict the god Woden/Odin and some of his mythical deeds, as especially Hauck has argued in numerous publications with detailed iconographical examinations (Hauck 2011), or whether it is not possible to identify the scenic representations by using the much later literary accounts of the Germanic myths (see, for example, Wicker and Williams 2012: 156–159, and for a summary of various controversial discussion Behr 2011: 220–1). Still, there is agreement that bracteates were used as powerful amulets and the faces represented divine beings.

On several bracteates the central image was not the only representation of a face but additional faces were stamped in the border zone. On the C-bracteates from Lyngby, Jutland (IK 116) and Gerete, Gotland (IK 62,1, see Figure 7.5) and the A-bracteate from Meckenheim, Bad Dürkheim (IK 302) series of very simplified profile faces were stamped and on the B-bracteate from Vedby, Fünen there were frontal faces with moustache and stripy hair in square frames. Series of faces did not signify ‘many’ but were used to heighten the importance of the face. Further frontal faces were also added to a triangular field that was applied on some bracteates underneath the loop (Figure 7.5, see Pesch 2015: 62). They have close similarities with the faces that were attached on the above-mentioned gold collar from Ålleberg. Lately Pesch has reviewed objects in early medieval art that carry the motif of the head. She argues



Figure 7.6. (a) Detail of the frieze of a silver beaker from Himlingøje, Zealand, 3rd century AD, height of the frieze 1.3cm. (b) Gilded silver and bronze shield rivet from Illerup Ådal, East Jutland, 3rd century AD, width 2.5cm. © Nationalmuseet København.

that several repeated details of their iconography like the “marks of breathing and blowing” (Pesch 2017: 60) and the traditional motif of the flanking animals supports the thesis that a Germanic deity is represented, and she suggests that they may be considered as pictures of the god Woden/Odin in his role as a healing god (Haseloff 1981: 85; Pesch 2017: 61–2).

The late Roman objects with chip-carving decoration and the coins and medallions were not the first figurative representations that reached northern Europe. Since the Augustan period decorated Roman prestige items ended up beyond the Roman *limes*, like already in the 1st century AD the two silver cups that were buried in a princely grave in Hoby, Lolland, and that were adorned with scenes from the Trojan War (Grane 2007: 33), or in the 3rd century Roman glass beakers with scenes from the circus that have been found in graves in Himlingøje and Varpelev on Zealand (Grane 2007: 161). These earlier decorated objects led already to some attempts of artistic creations but these remained sporadic and did not stimulate yet the development of new forms of artistic representations that became so ubiquitous in the 5th century. It is probable that only the new elites that appear to establish themselves in the central places in the 5th century required or desired figurative art and that is why they commissioned, used, exchanged and eventually deposited it in large numbers (Pesch 2012: 659–61; Shepherd 1998: 80–6).

Dated to the first half of the 3rd century is grave 1828 in the cemetery of Himlingøje, Zealand that was richly equipped with gold arm and finger rings, Roman tableware and also two locally produced silver beakers that were adorned with friezes on stamped gilt foils (Figure 7.6a, see Grane 2007: 176). On these are two frontal identical faces set chin to chin above each other placed among small squatting figures holding ring swords, various quadruped animals like horses and deer, some larger and some smaller birds and dots and rosettes. They are designed with hair in stands and drooping moustaches. These cups shows both the adoption of a Roman type of object – the beaker – and also of Roman type of decoration as known from objects, like the Hemmoor buckets (Grane 2007: 146–7; Blankenfeldt 2015a: 12). But the cups also demonstrate the reshaping of scenes in Roman friezes according to very different stylistic and intellectual ideas (Blankenfeldt 2015a: 14–16).

In a contemporary grave of a horseman who was buried in Kirkebakkegård, Uggeløse in north Zealand with numerous Roman military items and Roman drinking glass was a unusually grand bronze buckle

with a gilded front in the shape of a stylised anthropomorphic face. It was depicted without hair or beard (Thrane 1967).

Frontal faces were also attached to a number of other objects that too are dated to the 3rd century and belonged to military contexts. They have been found among the sacrificial depositions in several bogs. From the Thorsberg bog came two splendid decorative bronze discs that were covered in the outer zone with gilded silver foil stamped with complex and detailed images. Around the inner circles were nine round discs, each depicting a human face *en face*. They were first interpreted as heads of Medusa, however, because of the leaves on their foreheads they are now discussed as belonging to a Dionysian context (Blankenfeldt 2015b: 272). These heads differ starkly from the other examples because of their close relationship with Roman faces. They are expressive, quite naturalistic and not particularly stylised (Blankenfeldt 2015b: 272). Still, Blankenfeldt has argued that these were locally made Germanic objects because of their intricate iconography and some technical details but probably by an artist who had close links to Roman smiths (Blankenfeldt 2015b: 275–6). Far more stylised were the frontal faces on the chape and shield mounts from the bogs of Illerup Ådal and Vimose (Figure 7.6b). A single face was attached to a gilded silver chape from Vimose. The face was elongated, a beaded band along the forehead may indicate the rim of a cap. The face is framed by two beaded wires (Pauli Jensen 2003: 231–2; Blankenfeldt 2015a: 32). Another elongated face was found on a shield mount in the same bog. It differs because it is shown with a stripy moustache and hair style, the eyes are framed with eyebrows. Twenty-two identical decorative mounts belonged to a shield from the bog of Illerup Ådal. The faces were depicted with a moustache and elaborate hair style that was adorned with a twisted wire on the forehead. They were surrounded by dots that may indicate beards (Blankenfeldt 2015a: 34).

When Blankenfeldt recently discussed this evidence for Germanic art during the Roman imperial period she concluded that on these early decorated pieces many of the themes that became common in the 5th century were present, and representations of faces played already a significant role as these examples have shown (Blankenfeldt 2015a: 33–8). They have been interpreted as apotropaic but also as divine representations (Blankenfeldt 2015a: 34). Like the later ones from the 5th century, the faces were depicted without individual traits, they were not naturalistic but reduced to a few recurrent features. In this respect they are comparable to the Latène period faces that too were depicted as abstractions showing the idea of a face but not a ‘real’ one. Exceptional are only the faces on the Thorsberg discs that appear quite out of tune if indeed they were local products. They may have been a ‘failed’ experiment that was not repeated because they were too ‘realistic’ and could thus not represent the idea of a face.

This conceptual parallel between the Germanic and Celtic faces may be explained either as an independent process that occurred in northern Europe under the influence of Roman art in a particular situation that was characterised by profound political, social, and religious changes, and was similar to processes that occurred centuries earlier in the 5th century BC when Latène faces were created under the influence of Greek and Etruscan models again in a situation of major transformations (Wells 2008: 137).

Alternatively, the Germanic conceptualisation of art could have been derived from Celtic ideas and Celtic objects as Pesch and Blankenfeldt have recently again considered (Blankenfeldt 2015b: 273; Pesch 2017: 54–7). Celtic imports and Celtic influences in northern Europe have been discussed since Klindt-Jensen first compiled the evidence in 1952 (Klindt-Jensen 1952, see also Görmann and Henriksson 2006; Flemming 2009; Nikulka 2009).

Anthropomorphic faces decorated four studs on the Celtic wagon dated to the 1st century BC from Dejbjerg, Jutland that was probably made in southern Germany or eastern France (Figure 7.7a). The wagon was deposited together with a locally built one, after being dismantled, in the bog at Præstegaardsmose



Figure 7.7. (a) Bronze mount of the Celtic wagon from Dejbjerg, West Jutland, 1st century BC, height 7.6cm, width 6.5cm. © Nationalmuseet København.; (b) Gold bust of emperor Marcus Aurelius from Avenches, Kt. Vaud, late 2nd century AD, height 33.54cm, width 29.54cm. © Site and Musée Romains Avenches.

(Schönfelder 2010). The faces that are not identical but very similar are depicted with large lentoid eyes, nose and eyebrows linked together, long drooping moustache, straight mouth and a hairstyle in wavy strands (Schönfelder 2010: 258–9).

In the exceptionally rich cremation grave of Brokær, Jutland, dated to the middle or second half of the 2nd century, the fragments of two silver cups were found (Grane 2007: 171–3). They were decorated with several frontal faces that again were highly stylised and reduced to few features, including large round eyes, straight nose and mouth and a hairstyle in vertical strands. Some of the faces were surrounded by dots like the faces on the shield from the Illerup Ådal bog (Blankenfeldt 2015: 272–3). The silver beakers are variously interpreted as Germanic (Grane 2007: 269–70), or as Romano-Celtic work (Rasmussen 1995: 70).

These alternative interpretations demonstrate the difficulty to locate some of the faces in the Roman imperial period that are characterised by very stylised features. Latène art forms had disappeared with the Roman conquests (apart from in the British isles) and Rome's cultural imposition in the provinces. In Roman art that was far more naturalistic and realistic, faces were depicted as portraits or as 'real' faces that were characterised by individuality and the expression of emotions. However, despite the transformative force of Roman art forms, the Celtic concept of abstraction may have continued in provincial art. An example provides the 2nd-century gold head of emperor Marcus Aurelius from Avenches, Kt. Vaud (Figure 7.7b, see Willburger 2012: 452–3). Compared with the many other depictions of the emperor, it has little likeness to them. Unlike the usual curls, the hair is clinging to the head. The eyes are large and slightly bulging, the forehead low and the expression rather rigid. The face had lost its individuality. Still, it cannot be described as the result of poor workmanship, because technically it is piece of very high quality (Willburger 2012: 453). The iconographic details show traditional Celtic characteristics and the artist may not have aimed to achieve likeness but to create a face that signified emperorship or imperial power as a concept.

This observation leads back to the late Roman military items with chip-carved decoration. They were produced in Roman provincial workshops and their zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations were stylised and did not show 'real' faces or animals. By adopting their themes, motifs and styles in 5th-century northern European art, underlying concepts of their representations may have been embraced too.

Conclusion

The relationships between Celtic and Germanic faces are complex. The evidence, if rather limited, suggests that they were linked stylistically and conceptually. Faces mattered. They adorned a range of objects, including personal artefacts that were worn on the body, military items and vessels for drinking on which they were put in eye-catching positions. They appeared as single or double faces and in series, faces were placed between animals and anthropomorphic faces were part of fantastic zoomorphic creatures. They do not depict real faces despite being stimulated from artworks that were characterised by their far more naturalistic representations. They have large eyes with an intense gaze that is directed at the beholder.

The precise meaning of the Celtic and Germanic faces is debated but they are not interpreted as mere decoration or as representing humans. They belong to a numinous sphere. We know little about Celtic and Germanic religious ideas but the evidence of sacred sites, rituals and burials suggests intense engagement with the other world (Müller 1993; Davidson 1993: 127–43). By giving these divine forces literally a face they remained no longer in an invisible world, with which any interaction was through rituals, performances and the spoken word. They acquired a material and visual presence. And the representations on so many objects made their presence ubiquitous. Through faces the numinous powers gained individuality and with the faces they interacted with the beholder. That is why the eyes may have been so prominent. The faces are not naturalistic because they do not represent some real beings, they visualised divine forces. When Belting argued that representations of faces can tell us something about the lived reality, we may see in the Celtic and Germanic faces that conceptualised ideas a changing relationship with the divine sphere.

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Insular numismatics: the relationship between ancient British and early Anglo-Saxon coins

Anna Gannon

Coins are perfect attention-grabbing devices (Wells 2012: 178), and beyond any considerations of monetary value or function, they are certainly affecting and ‘enchanted’ objects (Gell 1992). Undoubtedly their appeal is universal. Much has already been written regarding the apotropaic and special virtues ascribed to coins, and their allure across peoples and places (Meaney 1981; Maguire 1997; Perassi 2011). In this study, which can be by no means comprehensive, but rather a first exploration, and which deals with coins visually, rather than in a strictly numismatic context, I will explore ancient British coins, concentrating particularly on the Iron Age production of early silver and struck bronze coins, which started from c. 150 BC, and early Anglo-Saxon coinage, from its inception at the end of the 6th century, but focusing on the silver coins of the 8th century.

Whilst a few apparent formal correspondences between British and early Anglo-Saxon coins have already been noted en passant (Sellwood and Metcalf 1986; Dhénin 1987; Gannon 2003), and some possible relations postulated (Nash 1987), the problematic question of how such similarities should be accounted for, given the temporal distance between the two coinages, has yet to be put forward formally. This paper intends to revisit and compare the artistic approaches of British Iron Age and early Anglo-Saxon coinage. The aim is not simply to highlight points of contact in design or style, but to explore shared aesthetic attitudes and conceptual similarities in the way messages were manipulated, displayed and transmitted on coins. I will probe the coins from my vantage point as an early medieval art historian, and my enquiry will be led by a set of methodological questions that are well-established amongst prehistoric studies, and that are of great relevance for the early Middle Ages too. These will serve to interrogate the art of the numismatic responses and interactions of both to the classical world – a quest which will provide, as we shall see, rich veins of comparison.

Background

First, some brief historical stage setting. The earliest manufacturing of British coins is currently tentatively dated to c. 150 BC from the recently found coin die from Bredgar, Kent (Leins and Farley 2005: 110). The indigenous minting of coins (though not their circulation: Haselgrove 1987) came to a halt at various rates in various territories from about the mid 1st century AD, as the Romans imposed their own imported and minted coinage. This official supply ceased with the withdrawal of the Roman Army in 410; the complex phase that followed is exemplified by the Patching and Oxborough Hoards (AD c. 470 and 475), which, with their coins, scrapped silver, coin pendants and gold rings, witness to the transition from a coin-using Roman Britain to a society dealing with coins as bullion (Abdy 2013): in fact, they can even be considered as the first early medieval hoards from England (Abdy 2009). For their part, although very familiar with foreign coins, which were clearly used extensively and in a variety of manners (Abdy and Williams 2006), the Anglo-Saxons only started their own production *ab ovo* towards the end of the 6th century.

The very considerable hiatus between the two coin productions is challenging and must of course be taken into account when comparing the two. However, whilst the exposure of the Anglo-Saxons to a great variety of disparate and wide-ranging coins is well documented, with evidence derived from single finds, hoards, burials and even jewellery (Abdy and Williams 2006), the Anglo-Saxons would

undoubtedly also have been familiar with British coins through chance discoveries of casual finds, hoards or depositions, heirlooms, though admittedly much can only be postulated as so little survives in a historical context.

The evidence from coins in burials is particularly baffling. When compared to that of hundreds of Roman coins recovered and documented as grave-finds in an Anglo-Saxon context (White 1988; Blackburn 2011, 592), the occurrence of British coins in Anglo-Saxon burials is to date extremely scant. Amongst these few finds, the two coins retrieved from a grave at Street House Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, Loftus, North Yorkshire, of c. 700, are of special interest (Sherlock 2012). These are two pierced Corieltavi gold staters (types: ABC 1971 and ABC 1980, first half of the 1st century AD) used as pendants on a necklace, together with eight early Anglo-Saxon multicoloured glass beads. The piercings indicate that the privileged side for viewing was the neater wreath pattern (displayed horizontally), rather than the abstract ‘lunate horse’ (see below for discussion of this motif). The fine condition of the coins, with no sign of wear, suggests that they had only recently been found, and adapted as pendants for use as ornaments in a necklace, to date a unique instance of British coins modified to be used in this way. Interestingly, amongst the small number of single finds of pierced Iron Age British coins recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database is another Corieltavi gold stater from ‘North Yorkshire’ of the same type as one of the Loftus coins (type: ABC 1971; Record ID: DUR-B59A00). The wear on the interior of the hole matches that of the surface of the coin, indicating that it was pierced relatively soon after its production, and before it was buried or lost. The position of the piercing shows that it was the horse design on the reverse that was intended for display.

It has been argued that the practice of placing coins (pierced or not) in burials was a fashion that some elite echelons of the British populations had derived from contacts with Romanised customs, particularly from the 4th century (Philpott 1991: 211-16; Moorhead 2006: 107). The practice, which is considered from an early medieval perspective to be conventional for Anglo-Saxon female and child costume, is of course even older, and harks to ancient Mediterranean traditions (Stevens 1991), but might serve as a good example of early interaction and assimilation between the two cultures.

In a pre-monetised society, and perhaps particularly so, on account of their relative scarcity, British coins, alongside Roman or imported specimens, would have partaken of the special aura ascribed to coins and coin-like objects, such as bracteates, whether we may theorise these qualities to have been appreciated as ornamental or talismanic (Meaney 1981: 213-21), symbolic of power (Hedeager 1992) or defining social memories (Eckhardt and Williams 2003). None of these theories is mutually exclusive. While Talbot argues for a linkage between ‘functional objects and belief systems’ (Talbot 2017: 147), recent discussions of evolving attitudes to Roman pay-offs in Scotland are particularly illuminating, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of coins on pre-monetised societies and responses to changes and crises (Blackwell *et al.* 2017).

It can be argued that both Iron Age and Anglo-Saxon coins were very much tied to the complex economic, social, and political circumstances of the time, and that there were gradual adjustments in their perception and reception, as well as in their use and production over time. They ebbed and flowed according to political pressures and allegiances. However, the sheer volume of finds points to a proper and established commercial function for the coins, but their high values imply a specialised use, not every day transactions.

A further point of intersection between the two coinages regards the uncertainty as to who was behind their issuing. Most of the coins in question do not bear inscriptions – those that appear on some of the coins have been interpreted as belonging to moneyers, the guarantors of the quality of the issues. Whilst some scholars propose regal involvement (Creighton 2000; Metcalf 1993-4), others see minting

as a less centrally-regulated activity, commercially-driven and specialised (Talbot 2017; Blackburn 2001; Gannon 2003, arguing for the trading role played by monasteries). Of course all such scenarios may have been relevant at different times: this and many questions remain open to debate – but it is interesting to note how much similarity exists in the problematic raised and the models postulated in both British and Anglo-Saxon fields of numismatic enquiry. Perhaps such overlap is an indicator of our bias and set expectations regarding what coinage should be about.

Art and coinage

There is every justification for claiming artistic status for coins. As well as being ‘eye catching’ and ‘enchanted’, through the constraints and possibilities of deploying a distinctive design on a round field, coins also offer a unique testimony to the breadth of the visual culture and aspirations of the time. In addition to being necessarily bearers of commercial credibility for trading purposes, coins were also responsible for ‘large-scale dissemination of images’ (Wells 2012: 179), their iconography providing a wide-reaching platform for statements of power and prestige and at-a-glance expression of distinctiveness (Gannon 2018).

As well as addressing specific numismatic questions, scholars of Celtic coinage have actually tended to demonstrate a much greater interest in their art and iconography than has been the case for Anglo-Saxon coinage (Talbot 2017), and conversely, studies explicitly dedicated to the art of the Celts (e.g. Megaw and Megaw 1991) have also included some discussions and illustrations of coins (*pace* Leins 2015: 112). Unquestionably both continental Celtic and British coinages are of far more direct visual appeal than the great majority of Anglo-Saxon coins, which require time and dedication to ‘decipher’ them, let alone to cultivate an artistic appreciation. Although motifs on Celtic and British coins too can appear baffling and sometimes ostensibly abstract, their designs tend to flow in a pleasing and well-balanced manner, masterly in their economy of line and elegance.

Both British and Anglo-Saxon coinages derived their original impulse from a response to classical prototypes, but they soon developed on their own idiosyncratic and independent lines, only to revisit and re-invent Roman types. Both coinages are characterised by a great variety of innovative imagery. It is particularly with the Anglo-Saxon silver coins of the first half of the 8th century, commonly known as *sceattas*, that we observe a detachment from strictly numismatic precedents and a lively creativity in design which, even at first glance, suggest a certain affinity in approach, variety and vigour comparable to their earlier British counterparts. Research in the sources of their iconography has highlighted the extent of their eclectic and wide-ranging sources, which find close correspondence with the artistic production of the time (Gannon 2003). Indeed, the heydays of the *sceattas* coincided with one of the golden ages of Anglo-Saxon art, and arguably with the flourishing of the first of what we might venture to call a ‘proto-Celtic revival’ in many art forms.

Such vibrant developments as seen in the visual culture of both periods may be ascribed to their ‘interconnectedness’, a term invoked by Wells when discussing prehistoric Europe links (Wells 2012: 212-3), and intimated by Michelle Brown’s contemplation of the world of the Lindisfarne Gospels c. 700 (Brown 2003: 40). For Wells, the expansion of the Roman world and of trading in the 2nd century BC, which brought about the dissemination of much material and visual culture, together with the transmission of writing and coinage in Europe, must also be considered alongside the contribution derived from far older global commercial networks, as also discussed by Sidebotham (2011). The picture painted is in fact not too dissimilar from what could be said of early Anglo-Saxon England: here too evidence is incomplete, but similarly tantalising, with a rich visual culture equally responsive to far-flung artefacts, styles and ideologies (Henderson 1999). Coinage is just one telling example of this (Gannon 2013).

When addressing issues of ethnicity and material culture, modern scholarship tends to argue for local continuity via nuanced interactions and exchanges among British, Irish, Roman and Anglo-Saxon, the multiple and competing identities in the early Middle Ages (Campbell 2013: 173). Indeed current understanding argues that peoples appear to have shared far more and for longer than previously considered. Particularly in the field of metalwork, where more evidence has survived, careful reconsideration of the material suggests reciprocal influences at work, and artefacts are read to signify social movement and exchange rather than ethnicity and identity (Youngs 2009). Whether because of patronage demands or out of inspiration, professional curiosity, and competitiveness, craftsmen brought up in these diverse traditions seem to have been experimental in their practice, so much so that the art that eventually emerges in the second half of the 1st millennium AD is a fusion, and as new and distinctive as it is rich. Art historians label this production ‘Insular art’, a useful term that encompasses continuity, development and change while smudging over issues of identity or ‘ownership’. Approximately applied to the period between the 7th and the 10th centuries AD, the term is used to account for the expressive juxtapositions and fruitful interactions of the distinct artistic traditions of the islands (Irish, Pictish, Gaelic, British, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon), and their lively response and creative appropriation and elaborations of themes and motifs derived from disparate corners of the known world. Conversion to Christianity and Irish missionary activities functioned as additional catalysts in the process. Because their use and influence span the North Sea, ‘Insular’ is not a label which is ever applied to coins in this period, in spite of the fact that artistically they are very much an expression of what the term ‘Insular’ is understood to signify: the dynamic fusion of various artistic cultures creating a lively common visual vocabulary. Hence, it is precisely consideration of this shared language which will afford a useful platform for the central question that this paper will explore: whether common artistic approaches and distinctive ways of seeing might explain points of underlying continuity between British and Anglo-Saxon coins.

In addition to the illustrations provided, as it would be impractical to illustrate all the coins mentioned, I shall also refer readers to *Ancient British Coins* (ABC) for British coins, as it is a very generously-illustrated and accessible catalogue. For the early Anglo-Saxon coinage I will mainly make reference to Gannon 2013, and the recent Sylloge volume of British Museum Coins (SCBI 63), which may also be consulted for a historical (and numismatic) overview of the early Anglo-Saxon coinage.

Heads

It is widely accepted that the gold staters of Philip II of Macedon (359–336 BC), featuring a head and a horse for their obverse and reverse, served as the authoritative prototypes for many continental Celtic coins over a very long span of time (ABC 4), and that these were in their turn influential in Britain. On the obverse, it is in particular the opportunities for pattern-making presented by the profile head’s curly hair and leafy wreath that seems to have captured the imagination of die cutters, so that the display of the hairstyle becomes the prominent feature in the overall design. Not only is the wreath a pleasing motif in itself (ABC 752 in Figure 8.1a and also ABC 1728; also ‘doubled and crossed’ such as ABC 2240 in Figure 8.1b and ABC 2807, or built into a spiral: ABC 2517), but the hair can be wavy (ABC 2873), corded (ABC 2541 in Figure 8.1d), flame-like (ABC 318 in Figure 8.1c), crescent-shaped (ABC 2012), braided (ABC 2532) or indeed short and workmanlike (ABC 1163). As common denominator to all, the hair is elaborately dressed, and displayed prominently upright, matching the 1st century BC description of Diodorus Siculus, where the hair of the Celts is said to resemble the thick mane of a horse (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, V, 28–50). It is this spiky, upright, swept-back look (in ABC labelled as ‘corded’ (ABC 1013 in Figure 8.1e and ABC 2544 and 995) which is also the style found most commonly on Anglo-Saxon profile heads (e.g. Figure 8.1f), together with comparable linear profiles made up by joining eyebrow and nose (e.g. ABC 2541 in Figure 8.1d and ABC 2542–4). Such spiky hairstyles, often rising from pellets forming a diadem, are understood to be the inspiration behind the devolved design

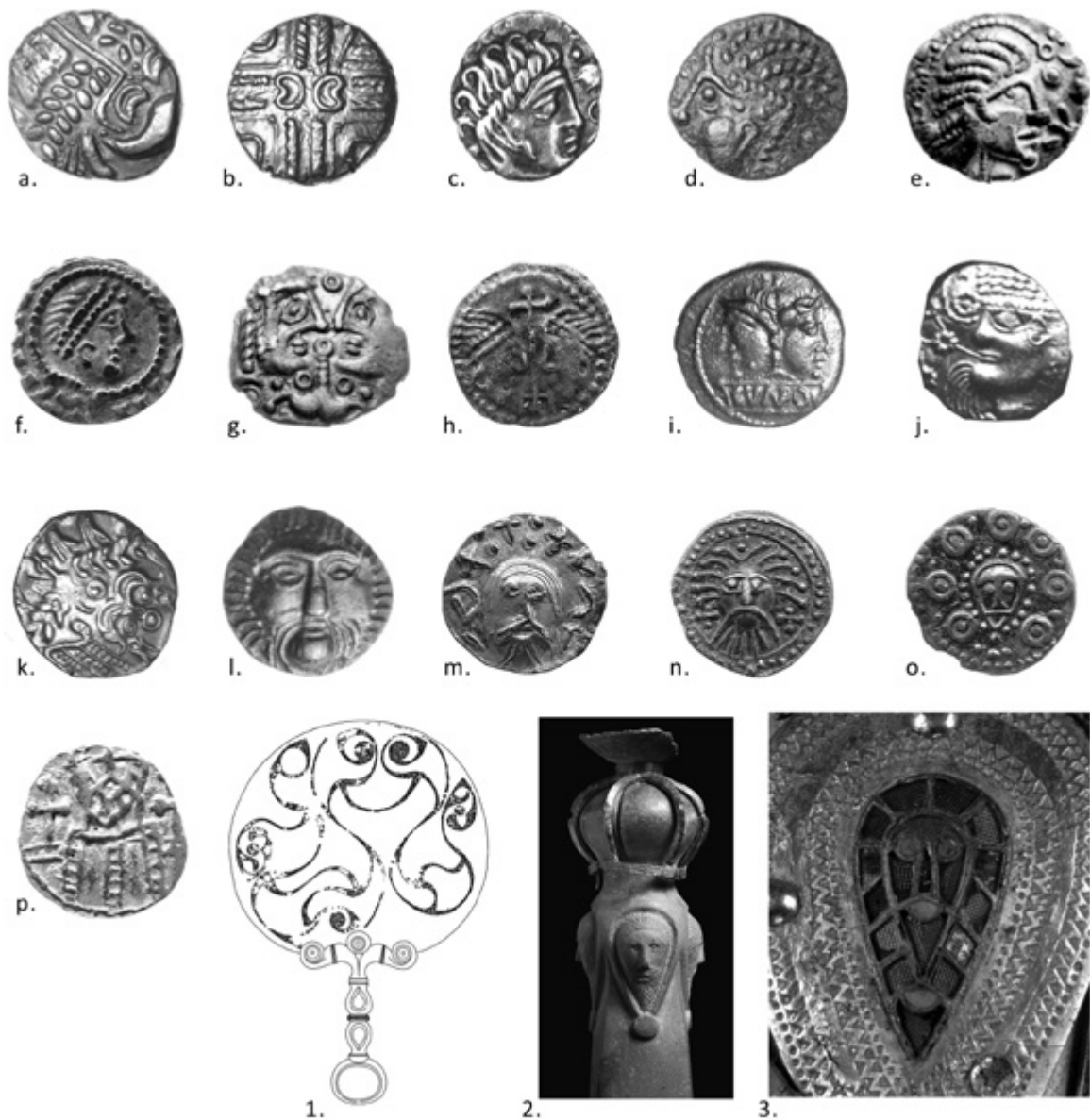


Figure 8.1. Heads (a-p) and comparanda (1-3), not to scale. (a) Belgae: Chute/Cheriton transitional gold stater (ABC 752 obv.); (b) Eastern: Middle Whaddon Chase gold stater (ABC 2240 obv.); (c) Cantiaci: Dubnovellaunos Rochestr Pegasus, silver unit (ABC 318 obv.); (d) Catuvellauni: Addedomarus Solar Flower, bronze unit (ABC 2541 obv.); (e) Berkshire: Crested Head, silver unit (ABC 1013 obv.); (f) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series BIB (SCBI 63, 72 obv.); (g) Cantiaci: Facing Heads, silver unit (ABC 216 obv.); (h) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series J, Type 37 (SCBI 63, 482 obv.); (i) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Janus, bronze unit (ABC 2981 obv.); (j) Iceni: Flower Face, silver unit, (ABC 1513 obv.); (k) Regini and Atreabates: Selsey Dahlia, gold quarter stater (ABC 503 obv.); (l) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Belenus, bronze unit (ABC 2912 obv.); (m) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series BZ, Type 29a (SCBI 63, 165 obv.); (n) Silver sceatt: Anglo-Saxon rendering of Series X (SCBI 63, 454 obv.); (o) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series H, Type 49 (SCBI 63, 465 obv.); (p) Anglo-Saxon gold shilling: York Type (SCBI 63, 17 obv.); (1) Bronze mirror with decorated plate from Great Chesterford, Cambridge. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge (©Jody Joy); (2) Sutton Hoo whetstone (©British Museum, 1939,1010.160); (3) Sutton Hoo Shield: reconstructed detail from mount (©British Museum 1939,1010.94).

on the so-called ‘porcupines’, the very plentiful and highly successful interregional coinage used across the North Sea over the 8th century. Here too, then, just as on British coins, hair is the all-important attribute: it is made to stand *pro toto* for a traditional ‘bust’, and is chosen, perhaps an embodiment of power, to signify authority.

Spiky hair and corded ‘dreadlocks’ feature on a comparatively rare silver type (ABC 216 in Figure 8.1g), known from about a dozen specimens, from Kent and East Sussex, and dated to the late 1st century BC, showing two symmetrical profile heads, confronting each other. Between them is an object commonly described as a bucranium (Sellwood and Metcalf 1986), or sometime understood as an inverted third head, full-face. However, I would like to propose a very different reading. I suggest that the ‘object’ is actually a mirror (Figure 8.6.1). It is a known fact that on British coins designs are often larger than the flan, so, unsurprisingly, it is only the handle of the mirror that is visible, represented by a hoop and a line of globules attached via a bulbous mount to the plate of the mirror itself, with its border just discernible either side of the mount. It must be noted that the hoop of a second handle is also represented, at forehead level, upside down to the first, with the rest of the object quite off-flan.

The hoop at the base of the handles suggests that these are specifically openwork handles, a type best exemplified by the mirror from Holcombe (British Museum 1971: 0401.1), dated 50 BC – AD 70, and also by the finds from Great Chesterford, Dorton, Buckinghamshire (dated to the late 1st century BC), and Compiègne in France (Jody Joy, pers. comm., and see Joy 2010). This reinterpretation allows us to see the image on the coin anew, and to consider the representation not as showing us two confronting heads, but as a head contemplating its own reflection in a mirror. The fact that the ‘object’ can also be interpreted as a facing head may actually strengthen the new reading. If we envisage the very process of striking coins as producing a mirror image of an original die-engraving, images take on further overtones to do with reflections, and complex ways of seeing. The special status and associations ascribed to mirrors and their uncanny reflections (Joy 2010: 40) would suggest a new reading of the image on ABC 216 in Figure 8.1g, describing the particularly powerful and intense moment of self-viewing, and the ambiguity of seeing.

Sellwood and Metcalf (1986) proposed type ABC 216 as the prototype behind Anglo-Saxon Series J, Types 37 (Figure 8.1h) and 72, with similar confronting heads and spiky hairdos, but now replacing the ‘sacred object’ with a long cross mounted on a trident between them (Gannon 2003: 37–9, figures 2.19 and 2.20). The interpretation appears very plausible stylistically, though of course we cannot be sure how the Anglo-Saxons actually read the original image and its components; however, both visually and conceptually, we should regard ABC 216 not simply as copied, but as translated to a contemporary relevant hallowed context, with the cross imbued of comparable potent associations.

Suggesting a further ‘way of seeing’, in an auction note to a coin of type ABC 216, Chris Rudd stated that as the two symmetrical confronting heads were shown nose-to-nose, they could be seen as two profiles becoming a single face confronting the viewer. Such metamorphosis is particularly interesting when comparing the many ambiguous representations of confronting heads in profile readable as a single frontal head that we encounter in Anglo-Saxon metalwork, as explored and illustrated by Leigh (1984). The Stanwick Horse Mask mount (British Museum 1847,0208.82, see Figure 8.3.2, below) offers an example of back-to-back profile faces morphing from a horse mask. It may also be suggested that the profile heads become a single face as the result of ‘playing games’ with a mirror, which, rotated, will eventually even bring into being a classical Janus-like image (Figure 8.1i, ABC 2981). The fascination with multiple views of a single head is apparent when considering for instance the Corleck Hill heads (1st to 2nd century AD, NMI 1998-72) or the masks on the Sutton Hoo whetstone (BM 1939,1010.160, see Figure 8.1.2).

The idea of three-dimensionality is also interesting in the context of coins as it invokes a variation on the so-called ‘Chimirri-Russell effect’ (Chimirri-Russell 2005; Talbot 2017: 90–2), and proposes a different way of seeing the coin image in three dimensions. In a seminal paper, Chimirri-Russell argued that our traditional interpretation of images on Celtic coins limits the comprehension of their artistic expression. She demonstrated how some Iron Age Continental coins were actually intended to be seen tilted at an angle so that, once the coin was rotated and looked at obliquely, what seemed to be space filler (such as floating annulets) actually fitted in the design and became intelligible part of a three-dimensional representation (Chimirri-Russell 2005: 441). This phenomenon is equally observable on British coins (Talbot 2017: 91–2, and see e.g. ABC 1537, for the mouth, and ABC 1513 in Figure 8.1j for the eye), and chimes with observation on the shape-shifting character of Celtic, as well as Anglo-Saxon art (Megaw 1970; Leigh 1984). It implies that coins relied on the active participation of the beholder, and that they were dependent on altering perspective and light directions for their designs to become fully meaningful, and to be appreciated as taking life. Bissera Pentcheva’s experiments with icons in repoussé metalwork examined in shifting light confirms this unsettling sensory experience (Pentcheva 2010: 131–37), and equally challenges ideas of the possibility of objective photographic record for such art (Chimirri-Russell 2005: 443).

That coins were captivating objects, meant to be handled and to be positively engaged with, also holds true for the Anglo-Saxon examples. Whilst arguably the imagery on Anglo-Saxon coinage fits more readily with our contemporary, straightforward ways of seeing, meaning is often complex and demanding, to be sought by the ‘mind’s eye’ (*‘modes eagan’*). In order to fully appreciate their iconography, coins must be flipped over, as cohesive messages are presented across both obverse and reverse, often carrying dense implied text (Gannon 2016b: 109–10; Gannon 2017). As an example, coins of Series X (e.g. SCBI 36, 457) show on the obverse a facing head (Figure 8.1n) and on the reverse a crouched animal (Figure 8.3g). I have argued that the iconography is to be understood as juxtaposing the human portrait of Christ with his symbolic representation as a lamb at a time of deep religious controversies, affirming the commingling of his human and divine nature literally as ‘two faces of the same coin’ (Gannon 2014: 169–71; Gannon 2017: 135–7).

Whilst some viable interpretation can be put forward for coin iconography set in a relatively well-documented historical context, like that of the Anglo-Saxons, for preliterate societies we can just observe, and must reserve judgment. The importance of the representation of the human head is a case in point. For instance, ‘little faces’, which are ubiquitous in Celtic art (Megaw 1970; Foster 2014), are also part of an ancient shared pan-European artistic heritage (Salin 1949–59; Gannon 2003: 25–30). Several ‘hidden faces’ have been identified on British coins as well (ABC 503 in Figure 8.1k), but their meaning remains uncertain. On both Celtic and Anglo-Saxon coinages frontal representations appear to be reserved for supernatural beings: amongst the British coins, there are classically derived representations of Medusa (ABC 1076, gold quarter stater by Tincomarus; Creighton 2000: 129–34) and other local gods, such as Belenus (ABC 2912 in Figure 8.1l, bronze unit of Cunobelinus). Belenus in particular, with spiky hair, moustache and beard, and very much resembling apotropaic representations on Roman phalerae and other art, finds counterpart amongst a number of Anglo-Saxon coin issues (such as in series BZ, Type 29a in Figure 8.1m, see also Gannon 2003: 28–30, figure 2.8a–b), which I have proposed are representations of Christ (Gannon 2016a: 72–4; see also Webster 2005: 23–7). Such images were probably perceived as suitable prototypes on account of the perception of Belenus as a benign character and of his association with the sun.

Anglo-Saxon coins of Series H (Figure 8.1o, see also Gannon 2003: figure 2.6) feature diminutive, high relief heads with droopy moustache, framed by a number of roundels/bosses. These heads are actually very similar to many characteristic of ‘Celtic’ art: for instance we find striking counterparts on the phalerae from Manerbio, Italy dating to c. 50 BC, where a number of such small heads frame a

triskele, as well as commonly decorating a vast number of other Celtic artefacts (e.g. Megaw and Megaw 1991: figures 265–8). In Anglo-Saxon contexts, we find a representation of a similar head with droopy moustache rendered flat, in cloisonné inlaid garnets, such as on the haunch of the appliqué bird mount on the Sutton Hoo shield (Figure 8.1.3, as well as in the punched decoration on the tail and wing). It is interesting to note the integration of this motif and how it is translated into a distinctively Anglo-Saxon style: this flat rendering was also chosen for the busts on the ‘York group’ pale gold coinage (Figure 8.1p), with their ‘halo’ suggestive of cellwork perhaps underlining their otherworldliness (Gannon 2003: figures 2.3 and 2.4).

Classical prototypes

Creighton makes a forceful case for considering the innovative uptake of classical imagery on British coins (c. end of the 1st century BC– first half of the 1st century AD) not simply as ‘copying images’ of an exotic and exclusive kind, but as a sign of changing aspirations and of lofty ideologies of power (Creighton 2000: 81–125). The evidence he assembles is abundant and compelling, and whether or not one chooses to agree with all the arguments he presents, it is clear that we witness dramatic iconographical changes in the traditional repertoire, with the notable exception of the coinage of the Iceni (Talbot 2017: 98). Creighton also observes that the prototypes chosen for the coin designs seemed to be connected to Augustan symbols, and to display obscure allegorical allusions, remote from British visual traditions, hinting at a certain first-hand familiarity with this exotic imagery on the part of British ruling elites brought up in Rome as *obsides*, and keen to establish their power ‘à la mode’ once back home (Creighton 2000: 101). Unlike the precise information that could be communicated via written texts, as experienced via early contacts with the Roman world, images could not convey unequivocal meaning (Wells 2012: 225) – yet this new iconography is claimed to have worked precisely because it was different from what people knew: it was prestigious and intriguing, arresting and ‘enchanted’. As noted by a number of scholars (Henig 1972), several of these innovative motifs were not taken from numismatic sources, but were actually derived from engraved gems depicting various gods and goddesses, as well as animals, many of whom mythological hybrids. The finest intaglios were most probably gifted or imported (or even perhaps known from impressions on sealed documents), but some of the gems were also engraved in Britain (Henig 1983: 157): their imagery would certainly have stimulated curiosity – and attempts at constructing meaning and some intellectual appropriation of *romanitas*.

Also amongst the *sceattas* there are examples of Roman gems used as prototypes. Perhaps the most elegant example is one that combines on one coin two gems connected to the cult of Bacchus, taking the representation of the god with his *thyrsus* as the obverse, and his backward-looking panther leaping in front of a *thyrsus* as its reverse (Figure 8.2a, Series K, Type 42: *SCBI* 63: 509–14 and Gannon 2003: 68 and 133, figs 2.63–4 and 4.37a–b). On the obverse the classical effigy of Bacchus is translated into an imposing bust, with richly ornamented crossover drapery. The two locks of hair that descend onto the god’s bare shoulder on the intaglio are turned into diadem ties, playfully tied, and the collar rendered as a torc, whilst the *thyrsus* becomes an elegant hand-held plant. The reverse is a more straightforward rendering of the panther on the gem, retaining the pose, the collar, and the *thyrsus* behind it as a generic vegetation motif (Figure 8.2a). The animal can be compared to the leaping lion on *ABC* 354 (Figure 8.3b).

A unique specimen in the Ashmolean Museum collection (*T&S* 361) offers a further example of a Roman gem serving as prototype (Figure 8.3c). The obverse shows a full-length figure apparently bashing a fruiting bush, and with long twigs growing from his left hand. I have shown that this is a misunderstood rendering of a gem-type featuring Hercules carrying a lion skin and fighting the Lernaean Hydra with a club (Gannon 2003: 93 and Fig. 3.18 a–b). A silver coin of Cunobelinus also features Hercules, as a muscular heroic nude, standing in *contrapposto*, with club and lion skin; on its reverse, Ariadne is riding a



Figure 8.2. Classical prototypes. (a) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series K, Type 42 (SCBI 63, 509); (b) Cantiaci: Dubnovellaunos Lion/ Horseman, bronze unit (ABC 354 obv.); (c) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series L-related eclectic group (T&S 361; ©Ashmolean Museum HCR 20720 obv.); (d) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Hercules, silver unit (ABC 2864); (e) Cantiaci: Solidus, silver unit (ABC 474 rev.); (f) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Victory/Horseman, bronze unit (ABC 2927 rev.); (g) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: 'Victory' eclectic Group (SCBI 63, 562 obv.); (h) Regini and Atrebatas: Epaticus Eagle silver unit (ABC 1346 obv.); (i) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series K, Type 33 (SCBI 63, 500 obv.); (j) Regini and Atrebatas: Caratacus Eagle, silver unit (ABC 1376); (k) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: 'Carip' eclectic group (SCBI 63, 548 obv.); (l) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: 'Carip' eclectic group (T&S 336; ©Ashmolean Museum HCR 20693 obv.); (m) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Victory/Horseman, bronze unit (ABC 2927 rev.); (n) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series M (SCBI 63, 566 obv.); (o) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Man/Horse, silver unit (ABC 2828 rev.); (p) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series S (SCBI 63, 729).

panther side-saddle and teasingly proffering a bunch of grapes (Figure 8.2d, ABC 2864). Here two discrete myths are combined, their iconography probably derived from gems, but also known in other media: the figures are closely-copied from their classical prototypes, showing good first-hand understanding of their models and attributes. The same relish in well-developed bodies is seen in the representation of a burly Neptune on a first-century silver coin of Solidus (AD 40-43), derived from a bronze of Caligula (Figure 8.2e, ABC 474, and see also ABC 2879). All this is in sharp contrast with the Anglo-Saxon 'Hercules' coin, where not only do the attributes go unrecognised, but the skinny personage is demurely attired in a long tunic, matching representations of human figures on other issues.

For the Anglo-Saxons, Roman gems would have represented sophisticated and exclusive models, a link to *romanitas*, but their treatments, as exemplified here, shows a bold makeover of the prototype, which is altered to better fit in a common vocabulary, rather than an outright adoption of an exotic iconography. Amongst British issues there seems to have been only one classical image necessitating ‘translation’: the Victory is often morphed into a male figure (Figure 8.2f, Creighton 2000: 111 and ABC 2927 and 2930). On Anglo-Saxon coins the Victory becomes an angel, wearing the same long garb as ‘Hercules’ (Figure 8.2g, see Gannon 2003: 79–82; 2017: 135, SCBI 63: 562).

Under the heading of classical prototypes, mention also ought to be made of coins of Epaticcus and Caratacus (1st century AD) with busts wearing lion’s skin headdresses, in imitation of similar representations of Hercules (Figure 8.2h and 8.2j, ABC 1346 and 1376 and Creighton 2000: 179). I would like to suggest that these British coins furnished important prototypes for many Anglo-Saxon profile busts. To people unfamiliar with the original classical prototype, the stylised British rendering would have been difficult to read: hence on the *sceattas* the lion’s head was transformed into a close-fitting bonnet, and the row of teeth reduced to a pearl diadem, whilst the floppy lion’s ear was understood as wreath ties. It is particularly looking at busts with ‘sugar-loaf shaped’ necks (perhaps a rendering of the lion’s lower jaw?), such as those of Series K, Types 32a and 33 (Figure 8.2i, Gannon 2003: figs 2.48a and b) and of the CARIP group (Figure 8.2k, SCBI 63, 548) that a connection becomes apparent. At the head of the latter group is a coin that displays the full inscription CARIP in beautiful lettering (Figure 8.2l, T&S 336), as well as the large oblong eye and strong nose of coins of Caratacus’ Eagle type (Figure 8.2j). These have in front of the bust the legend CARA which may well be the base for the inscription CARIP. The reverse of the Caratacus coins show an eagle with wings spread out, holding a snake (Figure 8.2j, ABC 1376); whereas some CARIP coins have schematic profile birds in a vine scroll (Figure 8.2l), a ubiquitous motif – though arguably some of the vegetation branches could have been intended to represent snakes.

The adoption on British coinage of symbolic and mythological animals derived from the classical world has also been commented on by Creighton, who identifies a number of propaganda themes which were expressed via an imported classical menagerie comprising the winged horse Pegasus, marine creatures such as hippocampi, centaurs, griffins, sphinxes and other hybrids applied to the coins (Figures 8.2m and 8.2o, Creighton 2000: 105–17). Amongst the *sceattas*, the adoption of the leaping panther of Bacchus has already been discussed, undoubtedly not understood for what it was, but readable as a familiar quadruped. In addition, a number of fantastic hybrids, such as female centaurs and winged quadrupeds are also part of the repertoire, and finds established counterpart in contemporary art (Figures 8.2n and 8.2p, Moreheart 1985; Gannon 2003: 151–6).

Animal representations

The reverse of the gold staters of Philip II of Macedon, with a charioteer and horses design, was as influential amongst the Celts as the curly head on the obverse mentioned above. Famously it is just one emblematic, free, galloping horse that is represented on Celtic coins (Figure 8.3a–c), capturing the joy of speed and movement: we may wonder if the original representations of two horses pulling a *biga* may have been read as capturing the fast motion of one single horse, showing eight rather than four legs (Figure 8.3a, ABC 1896). There are many regional variations depicting horses in motion, often with a full array of other symbols in the field. Typical of the gold staters of the Corieltavi from the North East is the so-called ‘lunate horse’ (Figure 8.3c, e.g. ABC 1854: 1971, 1995), to our way of seeing, an abstract image of the animal, economically expressing the modelled volume of its anatomy (pelt, sinew, muscle, bone) as perceived through patterns of light and shade. One is reminded of the ‘Pictish Scrolls’ deployed in animal representations in early medieval Scotland (e.g. Figure 8.3.1, Henderson and Henderson 2004: 31–5), as an artistic convention similarly used to articulate the three-dimensional mass of the body. For both approaches, we can make a case for a keen, first-hand observation of animals in different light



Figure 8.3. Animal representations, coins (a-l) and comparanda (1-3). (a) Corieltavi: Vepo Ring, silver half unit (ABC 1896 rev.); (b) Regini and Atrebatas: Tincomarus Tincom / Commi gold quarter stater (ABC 1073 rev.); (c) Corieltavi: Vepo Triadic, gold stater (ABC 1854 rev.); (d) Icenii: Norfolk Wolf, gold stater (ABC 1393 rev.); (e) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series Z, Type 66 (SCBI 63, 166 rev.); (f) Eastern: Five Horses, silver unit (ABC 2273 obv.); (g) Silver sceatt: Anglo-Saxon rendering of Series X (SCBI 63, 457 rev.); (h) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series K, Type 33 (SCBI 63, 501 rev.); (i) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Serpent / Pegasus, silver unit (ABC 2834 obv.); (j) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series K, Type 32a (SCBI 63, 495 rev.); (k) Icenii: Norfolk Boar, silver unit (ABC 1582 obv.); (l) Catuvellauni and Trinovantes: Cunobelinus Belenus bronze unit (ABC 2912 rev.); (m) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series E, VICO variety (SCBI 63, 330 obv.); (n) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: eclectic group Type 9 var. (SCBI 63, 559 rev.); 1. The Burghead Bull (©British Museum, 1861,1024.1); 2. The Stanwick Horse Mask mount (©British Museum, 1847,0208.82); 3. Aylesford bucket (©British Museum, 1886,1112.5).

and weather conditions (something akin to the discussion in Pentcheva 2010, mentioned above), and a shared interest in expressive patterns.

Yet, all is not what it seems, and what we might accept as zoomorphic representations which are different, yet ultimately strive to be naturalistic, may actually lead to more charged interpretations. We have already discussed a common taste in complex ways of seeing when thinking about on one hand the Stanwick horse mask mount (Figure 8.3.2), which might also be read as two back-to-back head profiles, and Anglo-Saxon Style I depictions of quadrupeds which, when seen from a different perspective, become anthropomorphic motifs (Leigh 1984). This shared sense for visual ambiguity may have a variety of explanations (Leigh 1984: 40–1; Fern 2010: 136–8) but ultimately points to active engagement, both visual and narrative, as a possibility for ‘affordance’ (Gibson 1977). For both British and Anglo-Saxon visual cultures, the invitation is to ‘look again’, and consider different possibilities of cognitive associations. In this context, Gestalt theory offers interesting insights in the psychology of visual perception (Gombrich 1979), issues to which I shall return below.

Interestingly and probably on account of the switch in religion, in spite of a strong pagan horse culture amongst the Anglo-Saxons, and stylised representations of horses occurring regularly in Anglo-Saxon metalwork (Fern 2010), none appear on early coins: as argued above, with a few exceptions, the inspiration for the designs on the coinage is mainly derived from the classical world, or from more exotic sources. Various prancing quadrupeds fit in with classical representations of lions, whereas some issues from Norfolk (Figure 8.3e, Series Z, Gannon 2013: figs 4.32 and 4.33) seem to derive their inspiration from coins of the Icenii featuring a wolf, including the various pellets and space fillers in the field around it (Figure 8.3d, ABC 1393; Gannon 2003: 125–35). Other animal representations, such as the dancing pair, more properly described as stags, seen on the decorated copper-alloy bands of the 1st-century BC Aylesford bucket (Figure 8.3.3, Leins and Farley 2005: fig. 107), also feature on a unique Eastern British silver coin from Hertfordshire (Figure 8.3f, ABC 2273 and cf. ABC 2303 and 2312). They share detail such as the ‘loop’ heads and the open muzzles with the backward-looking creatures of coins of Series X (Figure 8.3g), and their deer-like round haunches with the ‘female centaurs’ of Series S (Figure 8.2p, Gannon 2013: fig. 4.58 and 4.62, cf. also fig. 4.63).

There are further intriguing connections. Dhénin noted a number of similarities between the iconography of animals on continental Celtic and Anglo-Saxon coins, which he famously described as ‘homotypies anachroniques’ (Dhénin 1987). Whilst Metcalf believed these to be types chosen because they represented ‘wolves’ (Metcalf 1993–4: 384–5), searching for sources shows that their inspiration goes back to common ancient exotic prototypes. The head of a fierce roaring beast on a 1st-century BC bronze coin of the Bituriges Cubi and on *sceattas* of Series K, Type 33 (Figure 8.3h) appear to be connected (Metcalf: *ibid.*, Gannon 2013: 131–2 and figs. 4.35 and 4.36), as do the so-called ‘rolled-up monsters’ on continental Celtic coins (Figure 8.3i, ABC 2834) and coins of Series K, Type 32 (Figure 8.3j, Gannon 2003: 138–40, figs 4.45 and 4.46). These ‘monsters’ have been described as dragons: their mythology and general appearances are shared with the Greek and Scythian worlds (Karwowski 2014), and even as far away as with China (Gannon 2013: fig 4.45a). Their heads also resemble the terminal bells of carnices – such as on the recent find from Tintignac (Hunter 2015: 90, fig. 75). As Hunter’s subtitle ‘sound and fury’ suggests (*ibid.*), we might perhaps postulate that for both Celts and Anglo-Saxons this was the effect purposefully evoked by such strong and resonant iconographic choices.

Carnices also often featured boars’ heads as terminals (Hunter 2015: 90, Fig. 76), and indeed boars also figure very commonly on Celtic and British art and coins (Figures 8.3k–l, e.g. ABC 1103; 1570–1585; 1630; 1779–1800; 1821–1827). Miranda Green describes boars as symbols of strength and warfare, and points out how the iconographic emphasis is on the ‘solar’ dorsal ridge of bristles, rather than on the tusks (Green 2002: 217–18 and Green 1989: 201, 140–1), which in contrast feature prominently on Anglo-Saxon

metalwork. As was the case with horses, no boar is represented amongst the *sceattas* – but reference must be made to the so-called ‘porcupines’ (Figures 8.3m–n). As mentioned above, their obverse is understood to have originally been derived from busts with spiky hairstyles – but the design was so degenerated that it was in fact re-invented in various zoomorphic guises (Gannon 2003: 176–81). The ‘porcupines’ of the VICO varieties (Figure 8.3m) were given four ‘legs’ and a muzzle: arguably, their design could be said to resemble a very bristly boar. Whether this permutation was a tongue-in-cheek transformation of something that by then had become a meaningless model, or whether its metamorphosis was inspired by the find of a British coin with a boar is mere speculation. Be as it may, building on visual ambiguity was a creative force affecting the transformation of the design.

Inscriptions and patterns

First-century BC coin legends provide the first and most extensive evidence for the introduction of writing in Britain (Williams 2001: 1). The impact of writing cannot be overrated: it would have been perceived as a prestigious signifier of power, but also as one mysterious, alien to the non-literate members of the community (Creighton 2000: 165–9).

Whilst Commius of the Atrebates (c. 50–25 BC) was the first to introduce legends with his name on the reverse of his gold staters (ABC 1019–25), his successor Tincomarus (c. 25 BC–AD 10) adopted a completely innovative style, setting out the inscription with his name across the flan of the coin, in very large letters, often in an incuse cartouche (Figure 8.4a, ABC 1055–67; 1088). This has no numismatic precedent, but, as Williams has argued, it bears a resemblance to epigraphic inscriptions on Roman monuments, as well as on bricks and pottery stamps (Williams 2001: 10). On fine ware such as *terra sigillata*, the mould signature is in a cartouche displayed across a small circle – indeed it should be noted how some of the motifs used on Commius’ coins, such as running bulls, boars and lions, spread eagles, etc. (ABC 1103–24), are also familiar menagerie found on samian pottery. As argued above with reference to gems serving as prototypes, this is symptomatic of both British and Anglo-Saxon coinage preference for iconography derived from a range of prestigious, elite items, not primarily numismatic.

Tincomarus’ innovative positioning of the lettering horizontally, often in a cartouche, rather than round the rim of the coin, was to prove extremely influential (e.g. ABC 2771–2825; 2858–61). This was the case not only amongst British coins, but also amongst Anglo-Saxon coinage, from the early 7th-century cartouches on coins of Pado (Figure 8.4b), to the ‘standards’ of Series A, C, E and R (Figures 8.4d–f, Gannon 2003: figs. 5.18–20), to inscriptions disposed over two or three lines, which were in use from the 8th up to the 10th centuries (cf. ABC 1980–98; 2577; 2918).

There are further epigraphic innovations, equally long-lived. Tincomarus experimented with disposing the letters TINC around a central pellet, and also dividing the coin flan with a cross thereby creating four spaces for the letters (ABC 1121–24 and cf. coins of Crab (AD 10–40) Figure 8.4i, ABC 1385, and of Caratacus (AD 40–43): ABC 1379). Geometric shapes, such as interlocking squares, also frame letters (e.g. ABC 1133–39 and 1367, while Verica (AD 10–40) had his inscriptions on the periphery of two large circles around a central pellet sometimes with a cross (ABC 1229–32).

The elaborately embellished quartering of the flan on coins of Verica (Figure 8.4k, ABC 1301–4 and 1334) seems to have been the inspiration behind the design of Anglo-Saxon coins of Series H, Type 48 (Figure 8.4n) and the so-called ‘Celtic cross with rosettes’ types (Gannon 2013: 160–3 and figs 5.5h and 5.7c). These present elaborate geometrical patterns of multiple crosses. Such complex patterns of crosses, of lines and affordances, find counterpart in contemporary sacred art, as on the so-called ‘carpet pages’ introducing Gospel Books, described by Pirotte as ‘visual incantations’, and to be uncovered, according to the laws of Gestalt theory, through deep optical and intellectual engagement (Pirotte 2001). Although



Figure 8.4. Inscriptions and patterns. (a) Regini and Atrebatas: Tincomarus Warrior Tinco/CF, gold stater (ABC 1055 obv.); (b) Anglo-Saxon transitional shilling Pada Series, (SCBI 63, 31 rev.); (c) Regini and Atrebatas: Tincomarus Tincom / Commi gold quarter stater (ABC 1073 obv.); (d) Anglo-Saxon transitional shilling Pada Series, (SCBI 63, 33 rev.); (e) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: (SCBI 63, 421); (f) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series A (SCBI 63, 56); (g) Cantiaci: Solidus, silver unit (ABC 474 obv.); (h) Anglo-Saxon gold solidus 'Helena' (SCBI 63, 1 rev.); (i) Vectuarii, Crab / Eagle, silver unit (ABC 1385 obv.); (j) Anglo-Saxon early shilling (SCBI 63, 4); (k) Regini and Atrebatas: Verica Running dog, silver minim (ABC 1304 obv.); (l) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: eclectic group, Type 34b (SCBI 63, 550 rev.); (m) Regini and Atrebatas: Verica Finney Bull, silver minim (ABC 1334 obv.); (n) Anglo-Saxon silver sceatt: Series H, Type 48 (SCBI 63, 471 rev.).

quartering had been the traditional and obvious way of arranging patterns (such as on brooches), by the time the Anglo-Saxons came to choose such designs for their coins, crosses only had one obvious meaning which, as with many of the designs on the *sceattas*, lead us to interpret them in light of the adoption of Christianity (Gannon 2003; 2017; see also the Ludlow sword pommel, Webster 2005: 32, fig. 7a). Although we may fairly confidently attempt an interpretation of the iconography of (some) Anglo-Saxon *sceattas* and of the art of the period because we are familiar with some of the narrative behind them, their 'implied text' (Gannon 2016b: 109–10), in the case of British coins and their art, this is not possible. Even in those cases where the designs appear to be shared across time, we must allow for their significance to have evolved and diverged drastically (Webster 2005: 23–9; Gannon 2016a). Were we to ask ourselves how the Anglo-Saxons may have understood these ancient British coins and their art, the retrieval of such 'meaning' would pose a totally impossible challenge.

Conclusions

As I hope to have demonstrated in this brief survey, in spite of temporal differences and lack of archaeological evidence, there is much that links Iron Age and early Anglo-Saxon coins, though of course there were also differences.

Both coinages looked at classical prototypes for their most ambitious models and propaganda value, and to Rome in particular. Whilst in the Iron Age the lure was the expanding Rome of the Republic and early Empire time, with imported luxuries from these initial contacts furnishing ideas and prototypes for their coinage and power games, the Anglo-Saxons in the seventh and eighth centuries looked at Rome as the seat of Christianity, a made-up ideal of *romanitas* that provided equally exotic and far-flung models and notions to adopt and adapt to.

Whatever the prototypes chosen, there are no misgivings in either tradition about reworking and re-elaborating them to fit in with local taste: this is evident for instance in the complex treatment of hair, but also more generally in the physiognomy of the faces. Classical gods are also morphed according to requirements, so that Victories become male deities for the inhabitants of late Iron Age Britain, and angels for the Anglo-Saxons – but exotic animals such as lions, or mythological hybrids such as centaurs, were taken up by both cultures without difficulty. Many of course were already known from representations on mosaics or imported goods, and possibly they were familiar from tales and fables already circulating, such as those eventually collected in the *Physiologus* (Curley 1979).

Both artistic responses reveal a great delight in the animal world, with carefully observed, modelled animals rendered in vernacular artistic conventions as well as closely following more naturalistic renderings, with poses well adapted to the shape of the flan. On British coins, horses are often surrounded by a plethora of shapes, perhaps telling a story, in the way that lettering and inscriptions will do, and sometimes bizarrely humorous, like on ABC 1480, where, looming above a horse, two pelleted rings above a crescent suggest a smiley face. Anglo-Saxon coins often use analogous space-fillers around beasts: maybe this is not surprising for a visual culture that abhorred vacuum, but suggestive of a shared language.

If one were to look for some common denominators for the two visual cultures, this would have to be a shared ways of seeing and interacting with coins (Wells 2012: 22). As portable objects, coins could be handled at close quarters and made to come alive when tilted to orchestrate changes in light and shade, so to animate the images (and even the inscriptions: see the use of ligatures on Icenean coins of Antedios: ABC 1633-39) and transform them into something different altogether. The effect would have encouraged a rich ekphrasis, something which we can also postulate in an Anglo-Saxon context for images carrying ‘implied text’ and closely-related iconographies on the two sides of the same coins.

If decoration is a component of social technology (Gell 1992), it certainly engendered much and sustained human interaction. Indeed, in addition to being ‘attention grabbing’ and offering good potential for far-reaching propaganda, let alone for all practical commercial and fiscal uses, both Celtic and Anglo-Saxon coins kept people talking and wondering then as they still do today.

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ABC: See Cottam, E. *et al.* 2010

T&S: see Metcalf, D.M. 1993–4

SCBI 63: see Gannon, A. 2013

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