

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY

THE ANGLES, THE SAXONS, AND THE JUTES¹

By J. N. L. MYRES

Fellow of the Academy

Read 27 May 1970

TODAY is 27 May, and those of you who pay a proper regard to the niceties of the calendar will not need to be reminded that 27 May is the festival of the Venerable Bede. No day in the year could be better suited to a discourse on the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. For it was of course Bede who invented that familiar triad of what he terms 'the more powerful peoples of Germany',² and no account of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes can rest on any other basis than that which he supplies. None the less it must be confessed that the choice of this day for this lecture was not made, humanly speaking, for this reason at all: it was dictated rather by the commonplace consideration that the Academy's Council was due to meet today, and so, Mr. President, both you and your lecturer would be here anyway and could thus be spared the fatigue of a special journey from Oxford. I did not myself notice the real significance of the date for some weeks after it had been fixed.

All the same it is reasonable to suppose that such a happy coincidence was not wholly fortuitous. The odds against it being pure chance are, I suppose, in the region of 364 to 1. Bede himself would surely have hailed it with delight as one of those minor miracles which demonstrate the divine ordering of all human occasions. I mention it thus not to divert you with trivialities irrelevant to the serious study of our subject, but rather to attune your minds at the outset to an aspect of history more familiar perhaps to Bede and his contemporaries than it is to us. It is indeed very proper to be thus reminded that minor miracles of the sort that so fascinated Bede can still occur to delight and stimulate us.

¹ This lecture should be read as a supplement to my *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (Oxford, 1969), hereinafter referred to as Myres 1969, where the evidence underlying several aspects of the argument is set out in greater or less detail.

² *Hist. Eccles.* i. 15.

A few moments ago I said that Bede invented the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. I used the word deliberately and with no pejorative intent, no more than one does, or should do, in speaking of, say, the Invention of the Holy Cross, or the Invention of Printing by Movable Type. Bede and Helena—perhaps Gutenberg also—did something in history which had not been done before, something whose consequences for the future were profound, but unpredictable at the time, something which, if it had not been done then, or in that way, might never have been done at all.

What Bede did for the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes was to put them firmly on the map: or rather on two maps, the map of Germany and the map of Britain. So far as we know, no one had done this before, and, if Bede had not done it in that context, it might never have been done at all. Like many things that Bede did as a historian, it was a highly original thing to do. Precise statements of tribal movements in the *Völkerwanderungszeit*, especially movements involving sea voyages, are not easy to come by in the sources for fifth-century history: nor were maps of the North Sea coastlands, such as Bede must have had in mind in making his statement about the relative positions of these peoples before and after the migration, at all as commonplace in his day as they are in ours.

What then exactly did Bede say about the location of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes? The passage, recently described as 'perhaps his most important contribution to the history of the invasion' has been endlessly quoted, discussed, criticized. Here it is, in Mr. Bertram Colgrave's recent translation.¹ Bede is speaking of the secondary wave of Germanic reinforcements that joined Vortigern's original settlement of friendly barbarians *in orientali parte insulae*. He proceeds:

They [the reinforcements] came from three very powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin, and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of Wessex which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this from the country of the Angles, that is the land between the kingdoms of the Jutes and

¹ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), 51. I have suggested elsewhere (Myres 1936, 357) that the passage is probably a late insertion in his narrative by Bede himself.

the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race . . . as well as the other Anglian tribes. *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this.

There need be little doubt that Bede's continental map of these peoples would have looked something like Fig. 1 (a). The Old Saxons in his day were pretty certainly based on the lower Elbe, and extended westward at least as far as the Weser, if not to the Ems, where they marched with the Frisians. *Angulus*, the homeland of the Angles, is without any serious question still represented on modern maps by the district of Angeln in eastern Schleswig, though no doubt he rightly conceived of *Angulus* as covering a much wider region than Angeln does now. It will be noted that Bede does not specifically locate the Jutes anywhere, and much play has been made of this apparent vagueness in the endless discussions that have raged over the identity of that elusive people. But, whether or not Bede's lack of precision on their exact location was deliberate, there can really be no question that by placing *Angulus* between the Saxons and the Jutes, Bede meant to imply that the latter lay north of the Angles somewhere up the Danish peninsula, in fact roughly in modern Jutland. It is, I think, being needlessly perverse to suppose that he was consciously leaving open the possibility that they may have come from East Holstein or somewhere on the southern shore of the Baltic.¹

Bede's map of the distribution of the three peoples in Britain is much more precise than is his continental map. This is partly because the detailed geography of Britain was more familiar to him, to his informants, and to his readers, than was that of northern Europe, but mainly because his account is quite obviously related to the political nomenclature of his own time. Whatever their origin may have been, he really had no option but to derive the folk that formed the existing kingdoms of the East Saxons, the West Saxons, and the South Saxons from the Old Saxons of the Continent, and the only reason for not mentioning the Middle Saxons also in that context must be that by his day that small people and their southern district, the *Suthrige* whose name survives in the

¹ As suggested, for example, by J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Pre-feudal England: the Jutes* (Oxford, 1933), 98-9. No help is gained in locating Bede's Jutes by attempts to identify them with the Eudoses of Tacitus or the Saxones Eucii, who were claimed as subjects by the Franks in the sixth century, since we do not know where either of these peoples lived at this time.

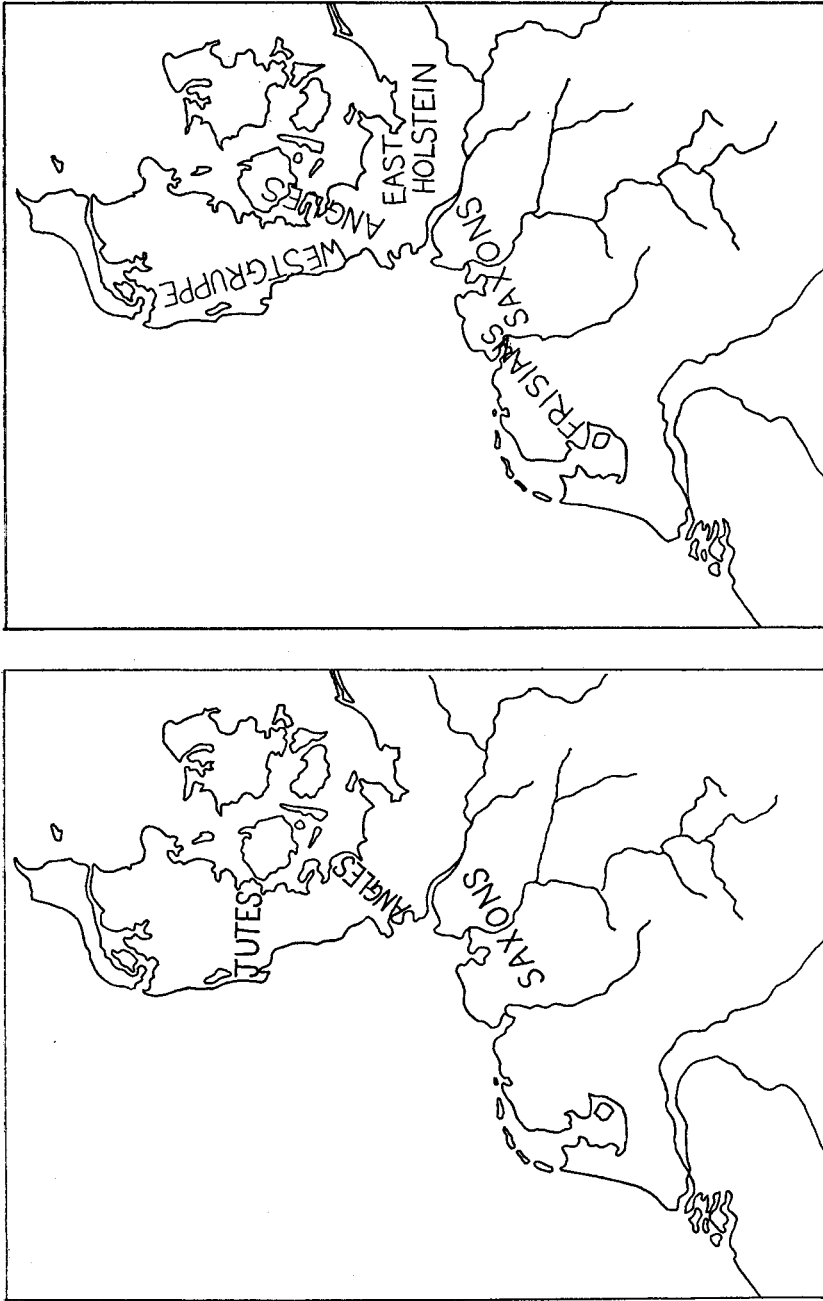


FIG. 1. The Continental Background (a) according to Bede, (b) cultural divisions

modern Surrey, had already long lost what political independence they may once have had. The same considerations must have determined his location in Britain of the folk he understood to be derived from the continental Angles. East Anglia still bore their name and was still a distinct political unit in the eighth century. So were the various Middle Anglian principalities situated around the Fens and in the eastern midlands. We know from the Tribal Hidage that they retained an individual status even after their absorption in the Mercian hegemony. Bede must have known far more about the origins of Northumbria than he had occasion to tell us. But at least the story of Gregory the Great and the Anglian boys in the Roman slave market, which was current in Northumbria in his time, for it appears both in the Whitby Life of Gregory and in the Ecclesiastical History,¹ was evidence for Anglian settlement in Deira. Bede was pretty certainly conscious of the etymological link between Lindisfarne and the Lindiswaras of Lindsey which hinted at a derivation of part at least of the Bernician people from the southern section of the Humbrenian Angles, as indeed did the name of his own monastery, Jarrow, *In Gyruum*, which echoed that of the Middle Anglian folk called the Gyrvii who were settled around Peterborough. As for the Anglian origin of Mercia, we do not know whether Bede was aware that the Mercian royal house claimed descent from the family of the famous Offa, king of the continental Angles,² but in any event the Mercians, whether south or north of the Trent, can only have reached their settlements by passing through territory already occupied in Bede's opinion by folk of Anglian origin.

So far then as the Angles and Saxons were concerned, Bede's view of their distribution in England was clearly influenced, if not determined, by the political geography and the political nomenclature of his own day. He saw no reason for probing behind this to investigate conditions in the age of settlement. The position in regard to the Jutes is rather different. In Bede's day there was no independent political unit in Britain bearing the name of the Jutes, though he rightly points to a folk in southern Hampshire still called the *natio Iutarum* in spite of their recent absorption by the West Saxons following conquest by Caedwalla in 686.³ His evidence here is borne out by

¹ *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 1.

² H. M. Chadwick, *Origin of the English Nation* (Cambridge, 1924), 121-36.

³ *Hist. Eccles.* iv. 16.

place-names including the survival as late as the twelfth century of the name *Ytene* for what afterwards became the New Forest area.¹ Similarly his statement that the people of the Isle of Wight were of Jutish origin is independently confirmed, not, it is true, by place-names, but by a chance remark let slip by Asser in his *Life of Alfred*, who tells us that Stuf and Wihtgar, the chieftains who, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, first occupied the Isle of Wight, and from whom Alfred's mother claimed descent, were Jutes.² Quite different is the case of Kent. Here Bede's statement that the people of Kent were of Jutish origin stands entirely alone. Neither the Kentish royal family nor the folk they ruled ever seem to have used the name Jute to describe themselves: the word does not apparently occur in any form among the place-name elements of Kent: and the only independent hint of a Jutish origin for any personality connected with the Kentish settlement is the reference in *Beowulf* to the tribal antecedents of Hengist.³ Pope Gregory addressed Æthelberht of Kent as King of the Angles, a fact of especial interest in this context since the letter is quoted verbatim by Bede himself.⁴

Nevertheless, Bede's claim of a Jutish origin for Kent cannot be ignored. He was exceptionally well informed on Kentish affairs, and his correspondents in Canterbury evidently had access to official records both of the archiepiscopal *familia* and of the royal household, which were undoubtedly among the earliest and fullest archives of their kind in seventh-century England.⁵ He must have had good grounds, which he did not feel the need to indicate, for believing that Jutes had played a dominant part in the settlement of Kent, even if, for reasons which may have been as obscure to him as they are to us, the tribal name had gone entirely out of use there. We have to remember that Bede was separated from the days of Hengist and Horsa by nearly three centuries, a period as long as that which

¹ The evidence is summarized in Myres 1936, 364.

² Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ed. W. H. Stevenson, ch. 2.

³ The identity of the Kentish Hengist with the Hengist of *Beowulf* was suggested by Chadwick, *op. cit.* 49–50, and there is no reason to doubt its correctness.

⁴ *Hist. Eccles.* i. 32. Chadwick, *op. cit.* 52, notes other instances of this usage in the seventh century.

⁵ In the Preface to *Hist. Eccles.* Bede lays special emphasis on the help he received from Abbot Albinus of Canterbury and from Nothelm of London who collaborated in supplying him with documents both from Kent and from the papal archives in Rome.

separates us from the reign of Charles II. For at least the first two of those centuries no contemporary written records of events were kept in Anglo-Saxon England at all. Much must have happened in those 200 years that is entirely lost to history.

With the one exception of the Jutes of Kent, therefore, we can say that Bede relied heavily on the political nomenclature of his own time in his distribution of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes across the face of Britain as he conceived of its settlement by these peoples in the fifth and sixth centuries. There is one piece of negative evidence that is worth adding in support of this conclusion. Already in the sixth century it was known in the East Roman world that Frisians had taken a substantial part in the barbarian occupation, so substantial indeed that Procopius, writing at that time, divides the population of Britain into three groups only, Britons, Angles, and Frisians.¹ Bede of course knew all about Frisians² and the part which they played in the reviving commercial importance of London in the late seventh century. Why then does he not mention their participation in the earlier settlement of Britain? The reason is simply that in no part of England within living memory in his day had there been any political unit associated with the Frisian name: he may or may not have known of minor place-names, such as now survive as Freiston, which pointed to small Frisian communities, but there was nothing in the political geography of his time that indicated anywhere a Frisian tribal settlement of any size or any lasting consequence. This being so, he could not put them on his map.

This is about as far as it is possible to go in direct analysis of Bede's statements concerning the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. There are, of course, a great many questions which one would like to ask him on the subject quite apart from these obvious points about the Frisians and the Jutes of Kent. I have often thought that if one were given the chance to interview any character in English history in the hope of increasing the sum total of our knowledge, one would be likely

¹ *Gothic War*, iv. 20.

² In *Hist. Eccles.* v. 9, Bede includes Fresones in a list of continental tribes *a quibus Angli vel Saxones qui nunc Britanniam incolunt genus et originem duxisse noscuntur*. This list, which has been strangely neglected by students of English origins, is evidence that Bede was fully conscious that the invaders included elements from many peoples other than the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes of *Hist. Eccles.* i. 15. It probably belongs to an early stage in the composition of his work, certainly earlier than the passage in i. 15, which I have suggested to be an insertion at a comparatively late point in his revision of the text.

to obtain more really significant information from an hour's talk with the Venerable Bede than with any other figure at any period. There has been recently a tendency to play down both Bede's judgement as a historian and also the extent of the information at his command.¹ It has been said that, since we still have most of the written sources which he is known to have used, there is no sense in trusting Bede's judgement rather than our own on the use to which they should be put. Nothing could be more short-sighted. Bede undoubtedly had access to sources of information, both written and oral, that were much more extensive and much nearer in date to the events than those available to us. If he sometimes drew conclusions from sources still extant which differ from those we might draw, it is wise to begin by assuming that he probably had good reasons for doing so. And where, as in the case of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, he gives us information that comes from no known source, we can be sure that it represents the conclusions of a well-informed and critical mind browsing over a quantity of first-hand historical evidence which is now lost. He could certainly have told us a great deal more about these three peoples than was relevant to his purpose in writing the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He could certainly have gone far to satisfy our curiosity on their social and political structure, their relations with one another and with the Britons, their languages, laws, religious beliefs and practices, their fashions in dress, equipment, and ornaments, and their arts and crafts. In particular, he could have helped us to understand why, of these three peoples, the distinctive qualities of the Jutes were already fading into obsolescence, along with the use of their name, in his day, and why, in spite of the fact that, on his own showing,² the first two paramount rulers, Aelle of Sussex and Ceawlin of Wessex, had both sprung from Saxon folk, it was the Angles whose name already in his time was coming to be accepted by the whole complex of invading peoples to describe themselves, so that Britain was soon to become England and not Saxony.

Unfortunately it is no longer possible to examine the Venerable Bede *viva voce* on these enthralling topics. To obtain further enlightenment on them it is necessary to follow the next best course, and to look at the material relics left behind by the folk who lived in the areas in which Bede located the Angles,

¹ As, e.g., by John Morris in his article on 'Dark Age Dates' (*Britain and Rome* (1966), 153-7).

² *Hist. Eccles.* ii. 5.

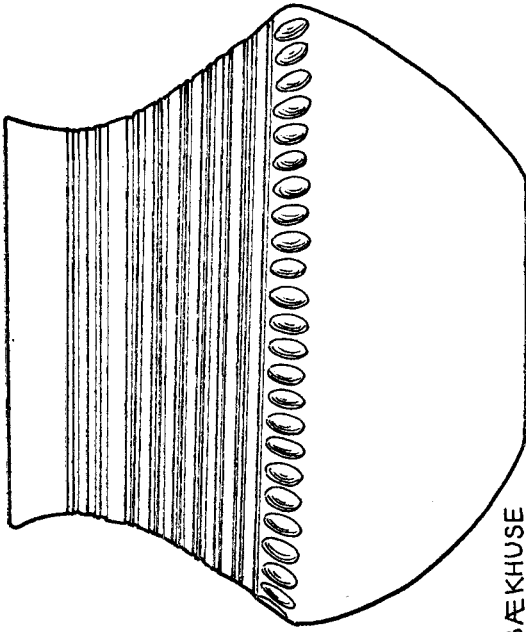
the Saxons, and the Jutes before and after the invasions. To assemble this material, to date the developing fashions in all the various types of artefacts which it displays, to relate these types and fashions as closely as possible to the movements of particular peoples on both sides of the North Sea, these are the primary concerns of the Anglo-Saxon archaeologist. In trying to summarize in the rest of this lecture the more significant conclusions now emerging from these studies, I shall try to concentrate primarily on those aspects of Anglo-Saxon archaeology which provide a direct commentary on what Bede tells us of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. Within this field I shall concentrate mainly on the evidence of their pottery, partly because this ceramic evidence, though obviously of the first importance in this context, has been somewhat neglected in the past, partly because I have personally studied it in more detail than other more familiar sections of the material, and partly because my studies have been very substantially assisted in recent years by generous research grants from the British Academy.

The archaeological counterpart to Bede's tribal map of the North Sea coastlands looks something like Fig. 1 (b). Some of the correspondences between the two maps are obvious and present little difficulty. The Anglian and the Saxon areas are, for example, much the same in both. Based on Bede's *Angulus*, the modern Angeln in East Schleswig, the Angles can be shown archaeologically to have extended further north to include the Danish island of Fünen, while in the fluid conditions that prevailed in the migration period, Anglian influences were increasingly infiltrating into eastern Holstein, the lower Elbe valley, the rest of the Danish peninsula, and even coastwise westward towards Frisia, to produce there a ceramic mixture for which I was once rash enough to use the emotive term Anglo-Frisian.¹ Characteristic of this Angle culture are on the one hand the cruciform brooches, and on the other a style in pottery decoration in which massed lines, or corrugated grooves, horizontal on the neck, vertical on the shoulder or body, are used to produce a variety of markedly rectangular effects.²

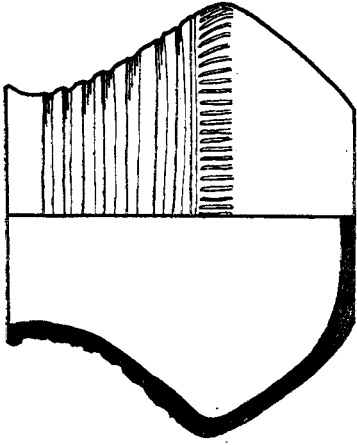
Closely related to this Anglian group, and heavily influenced

¹ Myres 1948. Its use in this context has been criticized, e.g., by A. Russchen, *New Light on Dark Age Frisia* (1967), 24-5, but I think my meaning has been misunderstood.

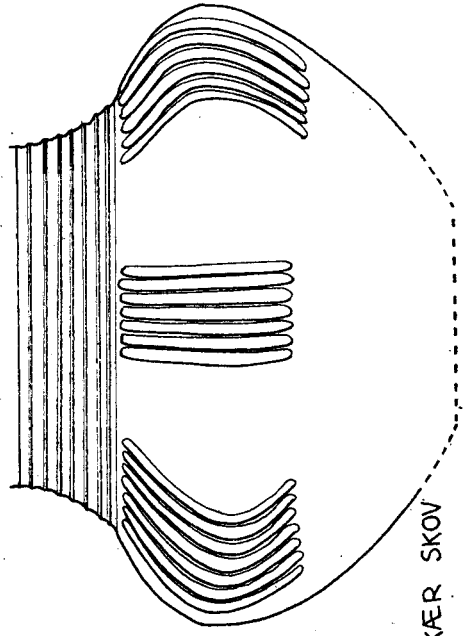
² Genrich 1954, Abb. 2 illustrates a number of typical Angle forms. See also Figs. 2 and 3.



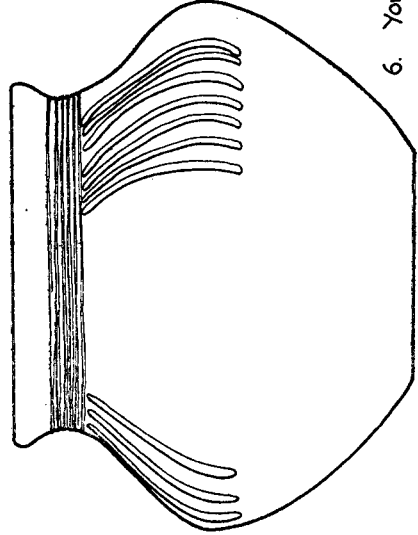
1. ALENBÆKHUSE



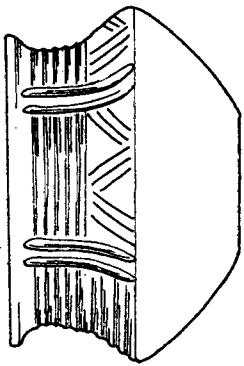
5. YorKs. SANCTON



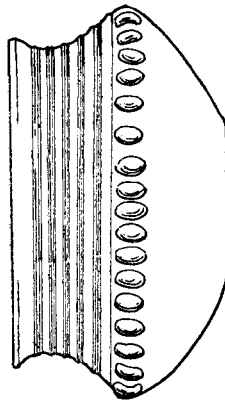
2. SIGNEKÆR SKOV



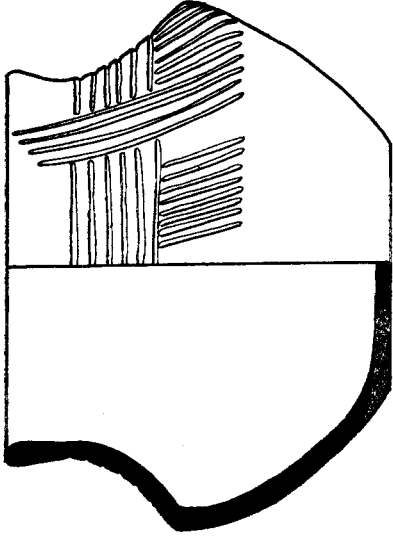
6. YorKs. SANCTON



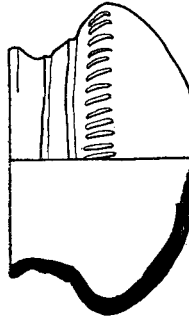
3. RINGE



4. SEDEN



7. Norfolk CAISTOR



8. YorKs. SANCTON

FIG. 2. Some English parallels to the Anglian pottery of Fünen.
(Continental examples after E. Albrechtsen, *Fynske Jernaldergrave III* (1968). Scale 1:4

by it, is what the Germans term the *Westgruppe*, or the *Nordseeküstengruppe*, bordering on the Angles in western Schleswig and the rest of the Danish peninsula, and extending to the broad estuary of the Elbe. These people had a less distinctive individuality than the Angles and it is far from certain that they formed a single unit at this time rather than a loose federation of culturally related tribes. In so far as their pottery is distinguishable from that of their Anglian neighbours, it is marked by a greater popularity of chevron and diagonal linear designs, with occasional use of curvilinear motifs, producing less strikingly rectangular or corrugated effects.¹ Shouldered jars and round-bottomed cups and bowls, often with vertical handles on the hollow necks, are characteristic, and there is also a tendency to the use of line-and-dot designs, especially of the chevron-and-dot variety. The more northerly elements in this complex, whose products are widely distributed in Jutland, occupied territories in which Bede, as we have seen, most probably located his Jutes. They are thus of some interest in relation to the Jutish problem in England and it is perhaps significant that both in culture and location, as also apparently in name, it was, and is, easy, to mix them up with the Angles. Recent students of the contemporary brooches and other decorative metal work have indeed tended to speak of an even wider Anglian *Kulturkreis* covering much of southern Scandinavia as well as Schleswig and Jutland.² In all this area the cruciform brooches, wrist clasps, buckles, and so on followed parallel, if not exactly similar, lines of development, a fact which implies, amongst other things, the prevalence of more or less common fashions in dress.

Further south in East Holstein, and to the west of it in the lower Elbe valley and beyond, lay other cultural groups which are easy to distinguish from the Anglian *Kulturkreis* in this broader sense. With East Holstein, it is true, relations were especially close and many characteristics were shared in common.³ Indeed the main significance of the East Holstein folk in this context is that, although they cannot be themselves identified

¹ See Myres 1969, Fig. 34, for some characteristic pieces. It will be seen that they can occur outside the limits of the *Westgruppe* as here defined.

² e.g. H. Vierck in his unpublished Oxford thesis on 'Some leading types of the Anglian Province of Culture'.

³ Genrich 1954, Abb. 1 gives characteristic East Holstein pottery forms and on Karte 8 the topographical relationship of their sites to those of the Angles and the *Nordseeküstengruppe*.

with either Bede's Angles or his Saxons, they did, by mingling culturally with both, provide common elements which served to link them together. German scholars have argued that for some time before the main migrations to Britain began there was already developing in the regions around the lower Elbe what they conveniently term a *Mischgruppe* of mingled Angle and Saxon elements. To this Anglo-Saxon mixture East Holstein folk pressing west and south from the Baltic coast undoubtedly made a substantial contribution.

If Bede was right in thinking that the Saxon invaders of Britain came from the lands known in his time as those of the Old Saxons, the whole region between the lower Elbe and the Weser and extending west towards the Ems is relevant to our purpose. In earlier Roman centuries this had been occupied by a group of tribes of which the Chauci were the most important, and there has been much discussion of the relation they bore to the Saxons who first appear in Roman sources on the base of the Danish peninsula, but seem to have absorbed or replaced them in these parts in late Imperial times. This *Chaukenfrage* need not concern us further here except to note that many elements in the Saxon culture of the region shortly before the invasion of Britain had developed from that of their predecessors, and these continued to evolve in a distinctive way in spite of the growing infiltration, already noted, of fashions from Anglia and East Holstein.

This Saxon culture had various subdivisions of which the most marked are the two which lay roughly east and west respectively of the river Oste which broadly bisects the country between the estuaries of the Elbe and the Weser. But all alike are distinguished by fashions both in personal ornaments, such as brooches, and in pottery, that are quite unlike those prevailing in the Anglian *Kulturkreis*. In place of the cruciform brooches there are here the equal-armed variety and the circular brooches, whether of the kind that is cast in one piece, or that in which the decoration is on a separate sheet of metal applied to a solid back plate. The distinctive forms in pottery include a wide variety of carinated bowls,¹ some with pedestal feet or faceted carination, that derive from fashions prevalent among the earlier Chauci or in East Holstein. There are also large urns of rounded contour and narrow necks that are decorated often with curvilinear motifs, of which standing arches,

¹ e.g. those from inhumation graves in K. Waller, *Der Galgenberg bei Cuxhaven* (1938), Tafeln 36, 39, 40, 47-9.

stehende Bogen, and the use of finger-tipped rosettes are characteristic features, with, as time goes on, an increasing fondness for stamped ornament.¹ The effects so produced are in general more free and varied than the somewhat rigid rectangularity of massed lines and grooves favoured by Anglian potters.

The distinction just mentioned between the Saxon folk east and west of the Oste requires further brief notice at this point because of its bearing on the origin of the main Saxon elements among the invaders of Britain. While both these groups shared a common predilection for circular and equal-armed brooches, those east of the Oste preferred their so-called saucer brooches cast in one piece and their equal-armed brooches decorated on the edges with scroll-work and animal motifs. Those to the west, on the other hand, favoured circular brooches with an applied ornamental plate and equal-armed brooches with no marginal excrescences. There are also minor differences in pottery fashions, the westerners generally using urns with a marked break in contour between the neck and the body while the easterners tended to make theirs with more flowing lines. The two groups are distinguished by German scholars with the names of two important and characteristic cemeteries, the easterners as the Perlberg people from a site near Stade on the south bank of the lower Elbe, the westerners as the Westerwanna people from a huge cemetery near Bremerhaven on the Weser estuary.² Before the middle of the nineteenth century the close similarity between objects from the Perlberg and those found in England had already been noted with remarkable perspicacity by J. M. Kemble, and, although it will not be possible to speak with complete confidence until the Perlberg material has been properly published, it seems to be true that closer links bound the Saxon settlers in England to those of the Elbe valley than to those settled in the lands around the Weser.

It is time to turn from this sketch of the cultural map of north Germany and southern Scandinavia in the invasion period to a survey of the settlement pattern in Britain during and after the breakdown of Roman rule. Before doing so one may mention one or two general pointers to the nature and the dating of these momentous changes that arise from the archaeological distinctions so far noted. Bede, it will be remembered, reported a

¹ e.g. those from cremations at the same site. *Op. cit.*, Tafeln 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 26, 29, 30, 33.

² See K. Zimmer-Linnfeld, H. Gummel, and K. Waller, *Westerwanna*, i (1960).

very interesting tradition that the homeland of the Angles was believed to have remained empty of inhabitants after the migration to Britain. It is a remarkable fact that while, archaeologically speaking, this may not be demonstrable in the case of eastern Schleswig, it is the case that the Anglian culture of Fünen comes to an abrupt stop about the beginning of the fifth century.¹ The dating of this break, which it is difficult to dissociate from Bede's evacuation story, is of particular interest in relation to other evidence which has been accumulating to suggest that the first stages of the movement to Britain took place, as elsewhere on the frontier regions of the Empire, before rather than after the political collapse of Roman authority. The evidence that this happened in Britain cannot be set forth here in detail, for it would take us too far from our immediate subject, but it is relevant to note that it is not confined to continental indications of mass movement among the Anglian peoples. Quite apart from the fact that ceramic fashions in the eastern half of Roman Britain were increasingly reflecting the influence of barbarian taste in decoration as the fourth century wore on,² there have been a number of finds in late Romano-British contexts of military belt-fittings and other metal objects of a kind that were issued late in the fourth and early in the fifth century as standard uniform equipment to barbarian troops in Roman service.³ It is significant for our purposes to note that in a number of continental burials such equipment has been found directly associated with pottery characteristic of fashions prevalent in the Saxon and *Westgruppe* areas, and that these ceramic types thus conveniently datable are also in evidence in some of our Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in Britain.⁴

To emphasize in this way what some may regard as a surprisingly early date for the beginning of Anglo-Saxon settlement in this country is not of course to reject the great weight of tradition, supported by Bede himself, that placed the main movement, what I have elsewhere called the Phase of Uncontrolled Settlement,⁵ in the years following the middle of the

¹ The matter is very fully discussed in E. Albrechtsen, *Fynske Jernaldergrave*, iii (1968).

² Myres 1956.

³ The continental evidence was first assembled by J. Werner in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, clviii (1958), 372, and its relevance to Britain first demonstrated by S. C. Hawkes and G. C. Dunning in *Med. Arch.* v (1961), 1-70. The associated pottery types are discussed in Myres 1969, 79-83.

⁴ See the fuller discussion in Myres 1969, 80-2.

⁵ Myres 1969, ch. vii.

fifth century. There is indeed plenty of archaeological evidence to suggest that this was so. I need mention only one aspect of the matter which has particularly impressed me in studying fifth-century pottery on both sides of the North Sea. During that century a fashion developed on the Continent for decorating cremation urns in an increasingly elaborate fashion with knobs and bosses to produce plastic and three-dimensional effects. In the Anglian areas this new fashion remained comparatively restrained, and the taste for linear rectangularity of design was not generally discarded. But these designs were now elaborated with various kinds of shoulder-bosses and sometimes by the use of vertical and horizontal strips overlaid on surfaces still carrying the earlier style of massed lines and corrugated grooves. One reason for believing that it was Fünen rather than Angeln that suffered an earlier and more complete depopulation as a consequence of Anglian movement to Britain is that this bossed pottery is very little in evidence in Fünen,¹ though quite common further south in Angle Schleswig.² In the Saxon areas on the other hand the vogue for bossed ornament took a more unrestrained course: it really ran riot with a profusion of curvilinear or whirling patterns leading in the more elaborate of the so-called *Buckelurnen* to some fantastic extravagances of shape and decoration.³

Now the significance of this stylistic development for our English history lies in the fact that every stage in the fifth century fashion for bossed ornament, whether Angle or Saxon, is well represented here in its purely continental form. Both the earlier and simpler manifestations and the more exuberant developments of the second half of the century occur in Britain exactly as they do in Germany.⁴ This can only mean that folk who enjoyed this peculiar vogue were pouring into Britain throughout this time and bringing this exotic taste with them. The similarities between the English and continental examples are too close to permit any other explanation.

¹ See Fig. 2 for some close parallels between unbossed Angle pots in Fünen and England. The few bossed pieces from Fünen, such as those illustrated in Albrechtsen, *op. cit.*, Tavle 112 a, b: 118 g: 126 c, e: 128 c, are all of simple early types.

² See Fig. 3 for some equally close parallels between bossed Angle pots in Schleswig and England. Those illustrated in Genrich 1954, Tafeln 12 D: 15 A, B: 16 B, etc., are mostly datable in the fifth century by associated finds.

³ See, e.g., the examples in *Ant. Journ.* xxxiv (1954), 205, Fig. 2.

⁴ See, e.g., Myres 1969. Figs. 22-4.

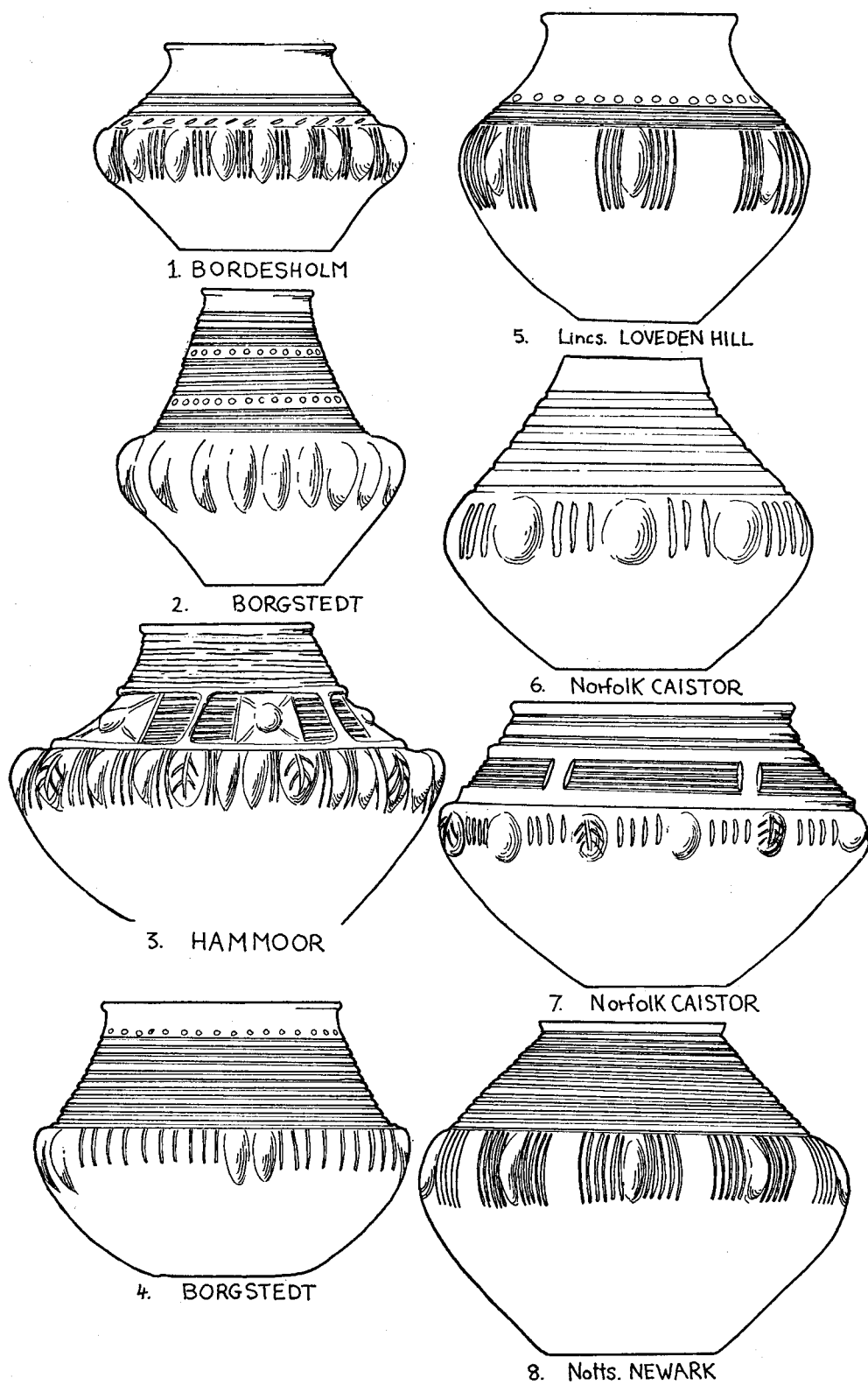


FIG. 3. Continental and English examples of Anglian shoulder-boss pottery. Scale 1:4

There are indeed one or two instances where the movement can be seen actually taking place. One of the Anglian urns from Caistor-by-Norwich, for example, is decorated with alternate plain and feathered shoulder-bosses and a special arrangement of vertical and horizontal strips overlaid on its corrugated surface which links it directly with a workshop that made similar urns for the cemeteries of Sjørup and Hammoor in the Anglian homeland.¹ More striking still is the case of two Saxon *Buckelurnen*, one from Germany and the other from Norfolk. These are the only known pieces carrying a similar complex design which includes circular bosses moulded to represent a human face in high relief. The German urn, Wehden 58, now at Hannover, is reasonably complete: of the Norfolk piece only a few fragments remain, but fortunately just enough to make it certain that the urn from which they came, though a little larger and more elaborate, was without doubt by the same hand as that from Wehden. I found these precious sherds in the dungeons of the Norwich Castle Museum, dispersed between several boxes that contain the debris of broken-up urns from the destroyed cemetery at Markshall.² Whether we regard the Markshall piece as an import from the Wehden area, or prefer to think of the Wehden potter as himself (or herself) caught up in the movement across the North Sea from the Weser to the Yare, these urns provide dramatic evidence of the close personal ties between East Anglia and the Saxon areas of North Germany when the invasion of Britain was in full swing during the second half of the fifth century.

I said 'between East Anglia and the *Saxon* areas of North Germany', and here we may seem to find ourselves at odds with the Venerable Bede who peopled East Anglia solely with Angles from *Angulus*. In doing so he was telling the truth, but archaeology shows that it was not the whole truth. The pottery evidence from East Anglia, as indeed from Lincolnshire, the East Riding of Yorkshire, and the Middle Anglian districts around the Fens, includes much of purely Anglian character that can be closely matched in the fifth, and indeed the fourth, and even the third, century cemeteries of the continental Angles in

¹ The Hammoor and Caistor urns are Fig. 3, nos. 3 and 7.

² For Wehden 58 see G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England* iv (1915), Pl. cxxxii. i. It will be illustrated side by side with Markshall lxx in the report on the Caistor and Markshall cemeteries now in preparation for the Society of Antiquaries. There is a description comparing the two pieces in Myres 1969, 131.

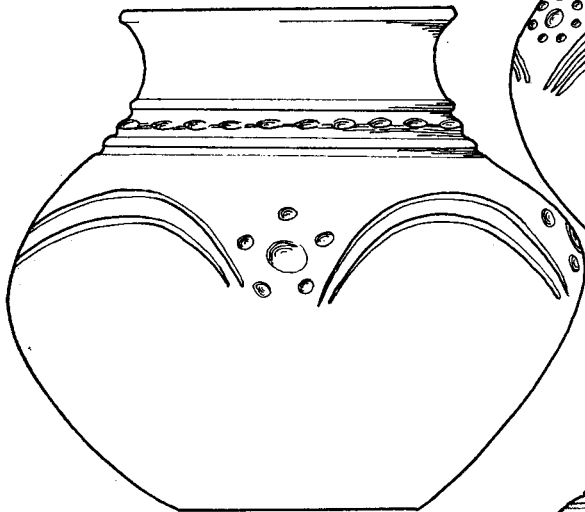
Schleswig and Fünen.¹ Bede was entirely right about this, and archaeology confirms completely the dominant role he gives to Anglian settlement in all these parts. But there were other elements as well, whose presence in these early days had been largely forgotten by Bede's time. Half a century ago E. T. Leeds rightly called attention in his study of the English saucer brooches to the evidence their distribution gave for influential Saxon elements in the mixed Anglo-Saxon culture of the southern Midlands: he even noted with surprise the presence of an early fifth-century example of this typically Saxon form in a cremation urn from Caistor-by-Norwich, then believed to lie in a purely Anglian area. Another has recently been found at Welbeck Hill in Lincolnshire, and three bits of an equal-armed brooch of the characteristic Perlberg Saxon form have lately come from a cremation urn at Empingham, Rutland. Study of the pottery has now shown how very widespread and deep rooted were these Saxon elements in the regions attributed entirely to the Angles by Bede, much more so indeed than could ever be guessed by looking solely at the distribution of Anglian and Saxon brooch types and other metal objects.²

The point can be illustrated by a glance at a map showing the occurrence in Britain of pots decorated wholly or mainly with linear arcading, what the Germans conveniently term *stehende Bogen*, standing arches.³ The continental focus of this type of ornament is in the Saxon areas between the Elbe and the Weser, though it is of course found sporadically elsewhere, especially perhaps in Frisia, which lay on the invasion route to England. Its significance is also in part chronological for it was a fashion particularly prevalent in the early decades of the fifth century, preceding the vogue for bossed ornament. In these Saxon areas it was indeed one of the main roots in the development of

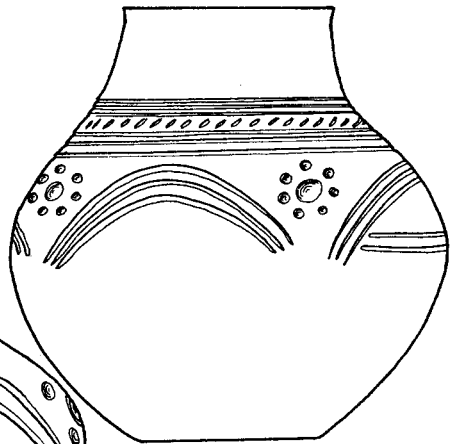
¹ The English pieces on Figs. 2 and 3 illustrate this Anglian settlement from the late fourth century onwards. Some remarkable parallels from Caistor-by-Norwich to earlier types from Fünen will be discussed in the forthcoming Caistor report.

² I am indebted to Mr. Gordon Taylor and the late Mr. M. J. Dean for knowledge of the Welbeck Hill and Empingham pieces. It is just possible that these early Saxon elements were remembered in the seventh century. Pope Vitalian addressed Oswy of Northumbria as *regi Saxonum*: *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 29. Wilfrid of York called himself *Episcopus Saxoniae*: Eddius, *Vita Wilfridi* c. 30: Hwaetberht wrote *de Saxonia* from Monkwearmouth: Bede, *Hist. Abb.* 19. There was at least some archaeological sense in this unexpected usage.

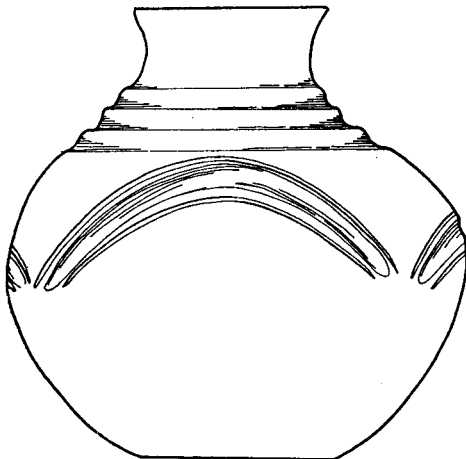
³ Myres 1969, Map 3, Figs. 20, 21, and discussion pp. 41-4, 102-3. Some very similar English and continental examples are on Fig. 4, all three English pieces being from Bede's Anglian areas.



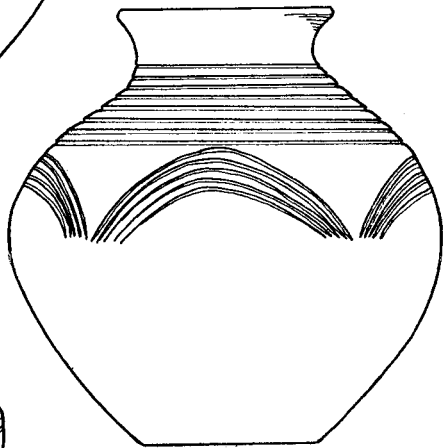
1 ZUIDLAREN



4. Norfolk CAISTOR



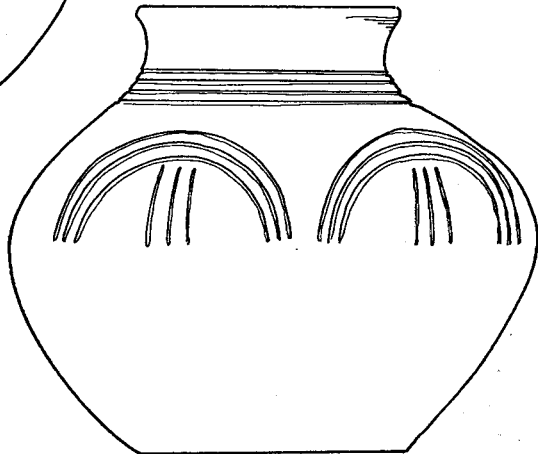
2. WESTERWANNA



5. Cambs. LITTLE WILBRAHAM



3. WESTERWANNA



6. Lincs. ELKINGTON

FIG. 4. Continental and English examples of Saxon *stehende Bogen* pottery. Scale 1:4

that exuberant style, for a great many of the later fifth-century Saxon *Buckelurnen* carry varieties of *stehende Bogen* bosses as the most prominent element in their decoration.

It may come as some surprise that the distribution of these early urns of Saxon ancestry in Britain falls mainly in Bede's areas of primary Anglian settlement, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, and the East Riding of Yorkshire, though there are a few in the Thames valley, including a notable group at Abingdon,¹ that he would have correctly given to the West Saxons. If this map is compared with that of the earlier types of Saxon *Buckelurnen*,² which, as has been seen, succeeded them in date in the second half of the fifth century, there is a marked change of emphasis. The older sites in East Anglia, Lincolnshire, and Deira still produce these Saxon forms, but there are few, if any, new ones in these traditionally Anglian areas. The weight of the distribution has shifted into the southern midlands where there are a number of new sites, notably in the upper valleys of the Nene, the Ouse, the Thames, and the Cherwell and near the head waters of the Lea, with the suggestion of a strong corridor of penetration from East Anglia, through Cambridge and Bedford on to the Berkshire reaches of the upper Thames.³ It is this secondary phase that Leeds recognized in his study of the saucer brooches and associated objects as providing evidence for powerful Saxon influences in Middle Anglia and the southern Midlands.⁴

It may be that the contrast between these two distributions provides a clue to Bede's failure to record the full complexity of fifth-century settlement. In the earliest days it would seem that folk of Angle and Saxon, and indeed other, antecedents were establishing themselves indiscriminately over the regions that were later dominated by Anglian regimes. These maps suggest that already before the end of the fifth century this confusion was beginning to sort itself out. The early Saxon elements

¹ *Med. Arch.* xii (1968), 37, Fig. 7.

² Myres 1969, Maps 3 and 4 (a).

³ Some closely comparable English and Saxon *Buckelurnen* are on Fig. 5. See also Myres 1954 for the movement from East Anglia. A much larger percentage of English than of continental *Buckelurnen* show designs directly derived from the *stehende Bogen* motif which suggests that there could also have been a southward movement of Saxon folk from the northern parts of eastern England.

⁴ *Archaeologia*, lxii (1912), 159–202: the argument is both developed and modified in his articles in *History*, x (1925), 97–109, and *Ant. Journ.* xiii (1933), 229–51.

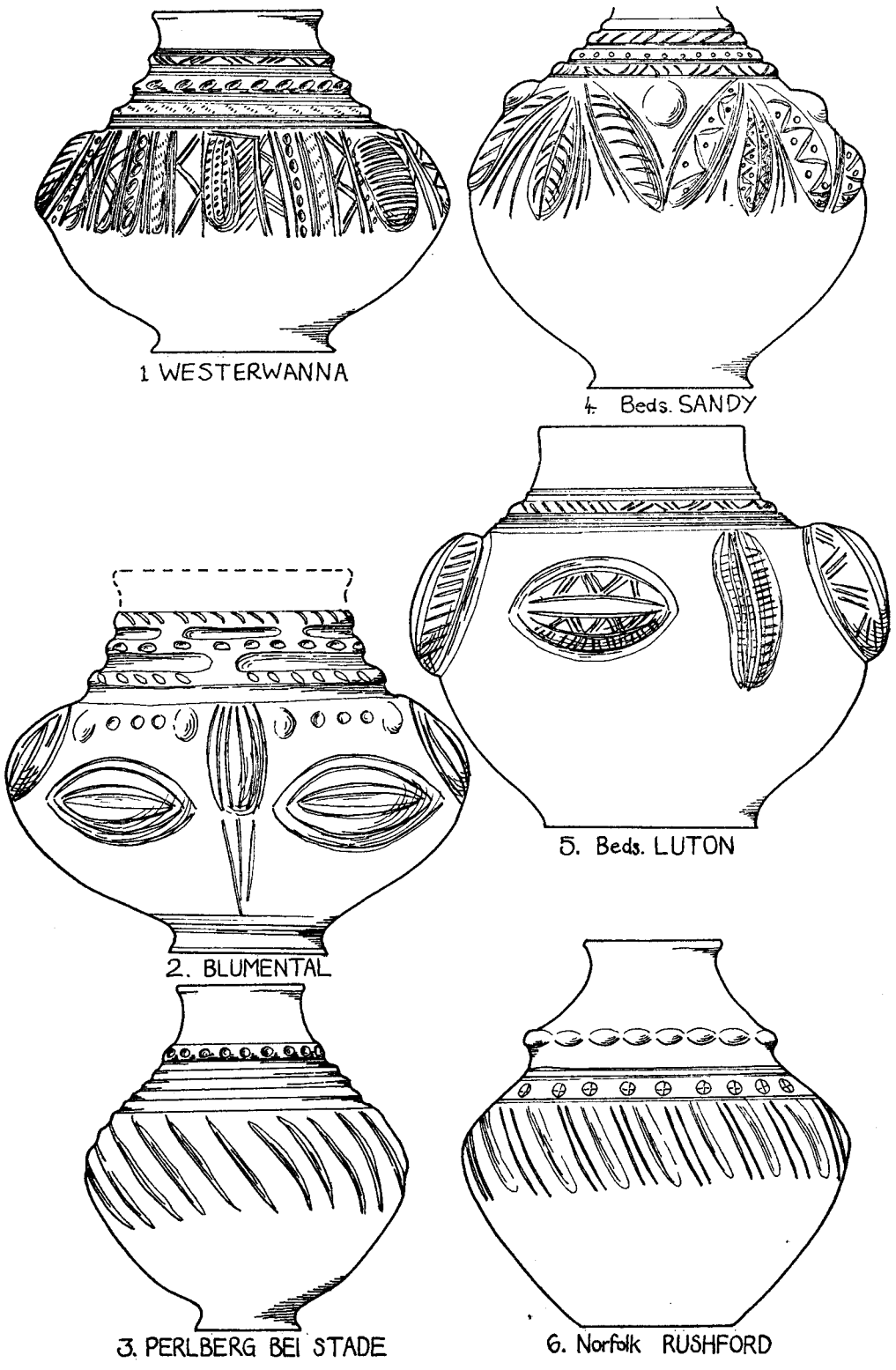


FIG. 5. Continental and English examples of Saxon *Buckelurnen*. Scale 1:4

among the Humbrenses of the north were losing ground, while further south in the midlands they were fully maintaining themselves with massive assistance from newcomers largely derived from the Perlberg Saxons of the Elbe valley. In the sixth century this sorting-out process evidently continued as the power-centres of the later kingdoms slowly emerged. In most parts the political circumstances in which these developments took place remain wholly obscure, for the sixth century is the real dark age of early English History. Only in Wessex is the darkness fitfully illumined by the survival in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of a few terse entries recording memorable events in the creation of a kingdom. These West Saxon records,¹ imperfect and confused as they are, portray a process of conquest and consolidation, that must have been paralleled over and over again, *mutatis mutandis*, wherever the later kingdoms were taking shape in the sixth century. The process produced a political pattern which enabled Bede, a century later still, to lay down broad geographical divisions between areas of Angle and Saxon power. He can hardly be blamed for not perceiving that these were far too precise and that they disguised by oversimplification the confused and chaotic conditions of the age of settlement.

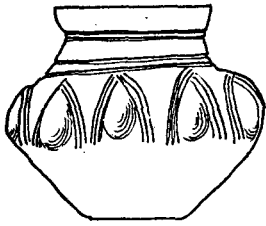
Such an interpretation leaves room for the presence in earlier times of other folk besides the dominant Angle or Saxon groups who eventually provided political leadership in the evolving kingdoms: room for Procopius' Frisians, swept into Britain along with the war bands who used their harbours as embarkation points for the sea-crossing: room for adventurers from Sweden, princes and craftsmen who left their mark among the treasures of Sutton Hoo: room for groups of Suebi still commemorated in the names of a few East Anglian villages:² and for Alemanni and other folk from central or south-western Germany some of whose names were known to Bede and whose presence at any rate in the East Riding of Yorkshire is betrayed by some tell-tale pottery and other relics.³

It is against this background that we can best approach the

¹ They are conveniently assembled in Myres 1936, App. II, 458-9.

² Such as the three Swaffhams in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge, or Swavesey (Cambs.).

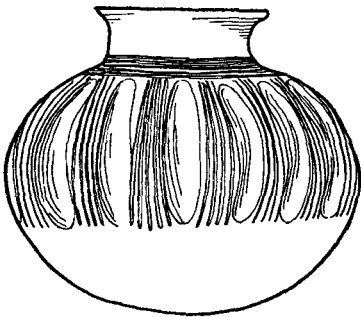
³ *Ant. Journ.* xlvii (1967), 43-50. On Fig. 6 are three urns from Sancton, E. Yorks, side by side with pots of exactly similar form from sites in central Germany far removed from the traditional homelands of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. Bede's list of tribes in *Hist. Eccles.* v. 9 is relevant here.



1. BOTTENDORF



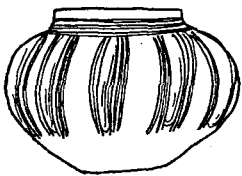
4. Yorks. SANCTON



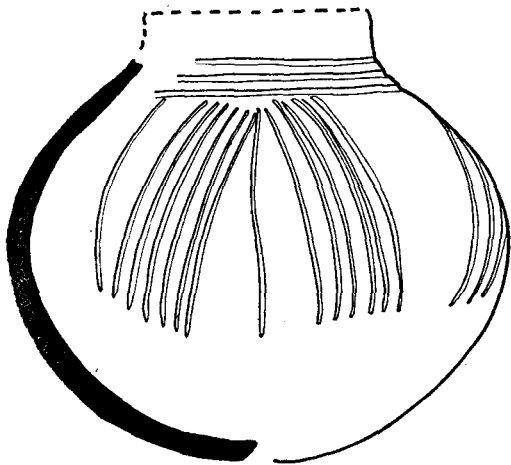
2. BRETSCH



5. Yorks. SANCTON



3. TANGELN



6. Yorks. SANCTON

FIG. 6. Some Yorkshire parallels to the pottery of Central and South Germany.
Continental examples after B. Schmidt, *Die späte Völkerwanderungszeit in Mitteleuropa* (1961.)
Scale 1:4

perplexing problem of the Jutes. For in this context they seem to fall midway between these smaller groups, who in Bede's time had left no memorial to justify a mention in his list, and the Angles and Saxons who had prospered so exceedingly that he could plausibly divide all Germanic England between them except for Kent, southern Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight. The *Jutarum natio* which he records in Hampshire, had already been absorbed in Wessex and its name was becoming nothing but an antiquarian label. Even the rulers of Kent, still politically independent, no longer called themselves Jutes, if indeed they had ever done so. As we have seen already, there was some archaeological sense in their apparent preference for being styled Kings of the Angles, for Jutland, if Bede was right in thinking that that was their homeland, was part of the wider Anglian *Kulturkreis*, embracing most of southern Scandinavia as well as Schleswig and Fünen.

But was Bede right in allowing us to believe that his Jutes came from Jutland? It might seem that this question would admit of as simple an answer as can be given on archaeological grounds in the case of his locations for the Angles and Saxons. Unfortunately this is not so, for the Jutish question has long been bedevilled by a variety of archaeological misconceptions. It was observed long ago that the distinctive culture of Kent, of which pale reflections could be dimly seen in southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, was altogether richer and far more sophisticated than that of fifth-century Jutland.¹ It was marked by a profusion of gold and garnet jewellery, by a lot of glassware, special types of weapons, and a certain amount of wheel-made pottery, all of which had their continental parallels rather in the rich and Romanized culture of the Franks than in the poorer, remoter, and less glamorous parts of the Danish peninsula. It was natural to suppose that a people who used such luxurious and distinctive equipment must have brought it rather from the Rhineland than from Jutland, and the idea was supported by the discovery of institutional similarities between Kentish custom and the corresponding arrangements of the Riparian Franks.² The dating of the rich culture of Kent was further complicated by the recognition that some elements in it echoed Late Antique fashions of the early fifth century and might even be interpreted as a final flowering of

¹ E. T. Leeds first drew attention to this in the last two chapters of his *Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1913).

² By J. E. A. Jolliffe in his *Pre-feudal England: the Jutes* (Oxford, 1933).

Romano-British art.¹ In all this concentration of learned interest and of art-historical expertise upon the more spectacular elements in Kentish jewellery it became for a while almost a heresy to think that the Jutes, who were supposed to have used it, ever had anything to do with Jutland at all.²

In the last thirty years there has been a growing reaction against the former over-emphasis on these splendid jewels as providing clues to the origin of Kentish culture.³ It has been realized that their characteristic style owes much to secondary Frankish influences which, whether they are interpreted in terms of trade or settlement, belong rather to the sixth and seventh centuries than to the original Germanic invaders in the fifth. It has been possible to disentangle many fifth-century aspects of the Kentish culture from these later developments and to subject them to the same kind of analysis as has been applied to the equipment of the early settlers in the rest of eastern England. It may remain matter for argument whether the so-called Quoit Brooch Style of the south-east has its main roots in the animal art of southern Scandinavia,⁴ in the Romano-Frankish Late Antique style of the Meuse valley,⁵ or even in Roman Britain itself. But apart from this intriguing speciality, whose origins may well be sufficiently complex to owe something to all these sources, there remains a body of more humdrum material which should help to determine the provenance of those whom Bede called Jutes.

It may appear as something of an anti-climax to find that several features of this material should after all have close links with the wider Anglian *Kulturkreis* of southern Scandinavia and that much of it could well have come from Jutland itself. The group of early cruciform brooches in Kent belong in this milieu, so, only a little later, do the first of the square-headed brooches and of the gold bracteates. Most remarkable are the similarities between the fifth-century hand-made pottery found occasionally in the cemeteries and settlements of east

¹ As was claimed by T. D. Kendrick in *Antiquity*, vii (1933), 429-52.

² See, e.g., my own summary of the evidence, written in 1934, in Myres 1936, 345-7.

³ The stages in the growth of this reaction are well illustrated by the developing thought of E. T. Leeds himself, which has been summarized by C. F. C. Hawkes in *Dark Age Britain*, ed. D. B. Harden 1956, 91-111: its final form received expression in Leeds's unfinished paper edited by S. Chadwick for *Med. Arch.* i (1957), 5-26.

⁴ As argued by S. C. Hawkes in *Archaeologia*, xcvi (1961), 29-74.

⁵ As argued by V. I. Evison, *Fifth Century Invasions* (London, 1965).

Kent, including huts within the walls of Roman Canterbury, and the corresponding material from all over Jutland, especially that from recent excavations in the settlement site at Drenghsted, near the northern border of Schleswig.¹ This pottery, comprising mainly small bowls and jars often of rather squat profile and with rounded bases, concave necks, and well-moulded rims is decorated with simple grooved designs, including chevrons and some curvilinear motifs, occasionally diversified with dots, dimples, and raised slashed collars. The absence of shoulder-bosses is consistent with a date for much of it in the first half of the fifth century, and, in continental terms, it suggests a fusion of Anglian and *Nordseeküstengruppe* features, that might well be termed Anglo-Jutish.

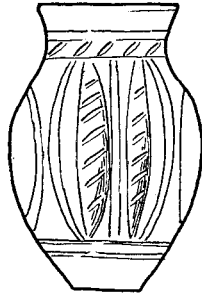
The distribution of its simpler forms is of course by no means limited to Jutland and Kent. It occurs sporadically in other parts of eastern England and more particularly in Frisia, which lay, after all, exactly in the path of coastal shipping between Jutland and Kent. In both areas it merges into the Anglo-Frisian forms to which I drew attention more than twenty years ago,² and it is easy to see how in this way confusion could arise, not only archaeologically but also in historical terms, in the use of the names Angle, Frisian, and Jute. But the important point to grasp is its genuine concentration at both ends of this natural invasion route: in Jutland, especially around Esbjerg, then, as now, the natural point of departure for England, and in Kent, the natural landfall for coasting traffic. Nor are the ceramic connections limited to pottery of these simple forms whose distribution, it could be argued, was in the last resort too wide to support the case here stated. To those who feel such doubts I would point to more specialized forms where the parallels are much closer. On Fig. 7, for example, are four tall pottery beakers, two from Jutland and two from Kent.³ The larger two are the only two on record anywhere that carry this highly idiosyncratic decorative design. The more elaborate is from Drenghsted in Jutland, and the simpler from Bifrons in

¹ Myres 1969, 95-9, Map 7 and Fig. 40. I am greatly indebted to Dr. O. Voss for information on his finds from Drenghsted, and for permission to illustrate the Drenghsted vessel on Fig. 7.

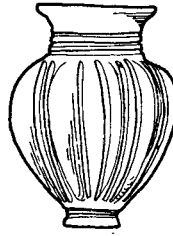
² Myres 1948.

³ The type is rare and in England limited to Kent: see Myres 1969, 49 for related forms, of which the closest parallels to those here illustrated are two from Westbere and one from the Wingham Roman villa. In addition to the two further continental examples from Fünen and Frisia, there noted, Westerwanna 671 seems to be a simplified relation.

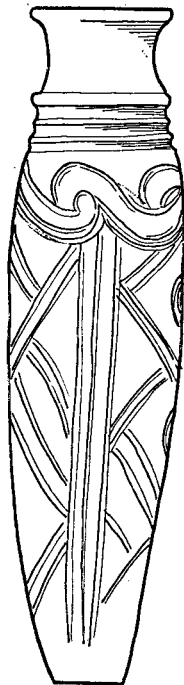
Kent. Can there be any question that the Kentish potter was consciously imitating both in form and decoration something seen quite recently in Jutland?



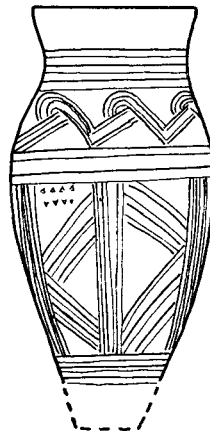
1. VELLING



3. Kent EASTRY



2. DRENGSTED



4. Kent BIFRONS

FIG. 7. Some Kentish parallels to the pottery of Jutland
(2 by permission of Dr. O. Voss). Scale 1:4

The conclusion of the whole matter would thus seem to be that in attributing the settlement of England to the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes Bede was indeed making a uniquely

important contribution to the early history of this country. We have seen that archaeology fully supports him in deriving the great bulk of these invaders from the parts of north Germany and Denmark which he tells us were their homes. By the time he was writing, some three centuries later, a process of political consolidation, whose detailed course is almost wholly lost, had hammered out the pattern of the historic kingdoms from the tumbled mass of early settlers whose local distribution was at first far more complex and varied than was afterwards apparent. But Bede was basically right in believing that the folk of the Thames valley and the south coast as far west as the borders of Hampshire were predominantly Saxons, and he was even more penetratingly right in perceiving, beneath the glittering façade of Frankish sophistication, the solid Jutish background of the Kentish people and the links that bound them to southern Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.¹ In the east and north of Britain he certainly oversimplified the tribal complexities that underlay the Anglian regimes of his own day, but he was right to insist on the major role played by Anglian folk in the settlement of all these parts. If he exaggerated that role it was no doubt partly because he had been told of the mass migration to Britain that had left the Anglian homeland deserted, partly because the continental Angles had been the aristocrats of northern Barbary, so that, as we have seen, Jutish princes preferred to be called Kings of the Angles and Mercian rulers were keen to claim descent from their royal house, and partly because he was himself a Northumbrian of Angle stock. Moreover, as the title of his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* shows, the word Angle was coming in his time, and perhaps under his influence, to acquire the wider sense of English which it has since retained. Here too, as on the Continent, folk of various tribal origins were content to be covered by a broad Anglian umbrella.

The evidence of archaeology and the evidence of Bede can thus be seen as independent but complementary sections of a

¹ Scholars can still be tempted into attributing a major part in the settlement of southern England to the Franks: see V. I. Evison, *Fifth Century Invasions* (London, 1965), and my review of this book in *E.H.R.* lxxxi (1966), 340–5. Mistaken identifications have played their part in promoting confusion. Thus the little pot from Lyminge Grave 24, published as wheel-turned and Frankish, is actually a fine hand-made example of a well-known north German type and could as easily have come from Jutland as from Frisia: *Arch. Cant.* lxxix (1955), 18, 31, 37 and Fig. 12. 1. There is nothing Frankish about it at all.

single story. The attempt made in this lecture to show how they cohere may fitly end with a tribute of gratitude and admiration to the greatest of all English historians, who died in his cell at Jarrow just twelve hundred and thirty-five years ago this week.¹

¹ Bede died on the eve of the Ascension which in 735 fell on 26 May: since this was also the festival of Augustine of Canterbury, the commemoration of Bede was later transferred to 27 May.

Abbreviated References

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>Ant. Journ.</i> | <i>Antiquaries Journal.</i> |
| <i>Arch. Cant.</i> | <i>Archaeologia Cantiana.</i> |
| Genrich 1954 | A. Genrich, <i>Formenkreise und Stammesgruppen in Schleswig-Holstein</i> (Neumünster, 1954). |
| <i>Med. Arch.</i> | <i>Medieval Archaeology.</i> |
| Myres 1936 | R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, <i>Roman Britain and the English Settlements</i> (Oxford, 1936). |
| Myres 1948 | J. N. L. Myres, 'Some English Parallels to the Anglo-Saxon Pottery of Holland and Belgium' in <i>L'Antiquité classique</i> xvii (1948), 453-72. |
| Myres 1954 | J. N. L. Myres, 'Two Saxon Urns from . . . Beds., and the Saxon penetration of the eastern Midlands' in <i>Ant. Journ.</i> xxxiv (1954), 201-8. |
| Myres 1956 | J. N. L. Myres, 'Romano-Saxon Pottery' in <i>Dark Age Britain</i> , ed. D. B. Harden (London, 1956), 16-39. |
| Myres 1969 | J. N. L. Myres, <i>Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England</i> (Oxford, 1969). |

Acknowledgement is due to the authorities of the following Museums for the use of material in the illustrations to this lecture: British Museum; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge; Lincoln Museum; Newark Museum; Castle Museum, Norwich.