

Bureau

Mr Rev. Professor B. B.
with the Writer's Regard

[Reprinted from the Transactions of the International Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology, Third Session.]

ON THE MODES OF SEPULTURE OBSERVABLE IN LATE ROMANO-BRITISH AND EARLY ANGLO-SAXON TIMES IN THIS COUNTRY.

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THE author began his paper by saying that the admission of a paper on the modes of interment adopted in this country during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries of the Christian era into the list of papers to be read before a Congress of Prehistoric Archaeology, was an illustration of the truth of Mr. Goldwin Smith's remark, that place as well as time could confer a prehistoric character on events.* The positions taken up in his paper were mainly, though not exclusively, based upon investigations conducted by him in a cemetery at Frilford in Berkshire, belonging to Wm. Aldworth, Esq. Interments to the number of 123, and of five different kinds, have been taken note of in this cemetery alone. Two of the five kinds of interments were Roman or Romano-British; and the remaining three Anglo-Saxon. The first kind of interment was that of leaden coffins, rectangular in shape, covered with a lid, occupying deeper graves than any of the other interments, more or less accurately oriented, sometimes containing coins, as of the Emperor Gratian (ob. 383), and sometimes not. The presence of large nails, with woody fibre still adherent to them, which microscopic examination had shown to be oaken, in relation with these coffins, went to prove that the leaden coffins had been surrounded with wooden ones when put into the graves.†

* For the non-historic character of this period in Great Britain see Kemble, 'Saxons in England,' i. 22, 28; Gibbon, chap. xxxviii. vol. vi. ed. 1838, *ad fin.*

† For descriptions of similar interments in leaden coffins see Abbé Cochet, Normandie souterraine, p. 29; Professor Phillips, Yorkshire, p. 249; Bloxam,

The second kind of interment, also of Romans or Romanised Britons, resembled the first in being more or less perfectly oriented, the orientation varying, probably accordingly as it had taken place in summer or in winter, from E.N.E. to E.S.E. over about 45° ; * and in having had a wooden coffin, to the existence of which nails with oaken fibre and iron hoops enabled one to argue—and finally in having coins in relation with the upper parts of the skeleton. The main difference between this and the former kind of interment was the absence of the leaden coffin, which probably corresponded then, as now, to a greater command of wealth. In this second kind of interment the ‘shards, flints, and pebbles,’ of which the Priest in Hamlet (act. v. sc. i.), speaks in a now often quoted passage,† were very ordinarily found. From the

Fragmenta Sepulchralia, p. 30, 39; Thoresby, Phil. Trans. 1705, vol. xxiv. No. 296, p. 1864.

* See l'Abbé Cochet, Normandie souterraine, p. 192.

† Douglas, in the Nenia, p. 10, is, so far as I know, the first who called attention to this passage of our great poet as illustrating the very commonly to be observed presence of ‘shards, flints, and pebbles’ in graves, into which it is difficult to think they could have got by accident. At p. 10, and also at p. 34, Douglas records the presence of these matters in graves of Anglo-Saxons. Mr. Wylie has also noted the same fact (see Fairford Graves, p. 25). Now, we have Mr. Kemble's very great authority (Horæ Ferales, p. 98) for saying that all (Anglo-Saxon) burials without cremation in England are Christian. Hence we may infer, as indeed we may also from the presence of these fragments so constantly in the Romano-British oriented graves, that, though the custom was considered heathenish in the days of Shakspeare and Queen Elizabeth, it was acquiesced in as allowable by Christians in the days of Cædmon and Queen Bertha. Indeed our own custom of throwing in ‘earth to earth, ashes to ashes’ may be derived from this practice. Keller, in some valuable remarks upon this custom in the ‘Mittheilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich (iii. 1, 1845, p. 65): Allgemeine Bemerkungen über die Heidengräber in der Schweiz,’ observes that it would be well if the English antiquaries would decide whether this custom is to be referred to a Celtic or a Saxon origin. It is certainly difficult to think that the Celts of England borrowed this practice from the Saxons, but it is just possible that it may have descended to both nationalities from their common Aryan forefathers. I may remark that in the Romano-British graves, fragments of thoroughly well-baked and lathe-turned pottery were found, and not merely the imperfectly burnt fragments of which Keller speaks as exclusively found in the heathen interments. See also Weinhold, Sitzungsbericht Kais. Akad. Wiss. Wien. 1858, bd. xxix. hft. 1, p. 166. I have myself looked through a very large number of memoirs and dissertations upon funeral rites without finding anything which casts much light upon the relation which this custom holds to certain somewhat similar performances put in practice at funerals either in ancient or modern times. The following passage, however, it may be well

position these fragments occupied relating to the skeletons which, as just observed, were interred in coffins, it is evident that they must have produced a loud and harsh sound when thrown into the grave. Fragments of charcoal also were found in some of these graves.*

The author is convinced that Keller's words (l. c. 95) apply to the two kinds of interment described: ‘Betreffend die jüngsten unter den alten Grabstätten, die sogenannten Reihengräber, ist schon früher bemerkt worden, dass die nicht nur in der östlichen und westlichen Schweiz, sondern auch in Süd-Deutschland und Frankreich häufig vorkommenden Begräbnisse dieser Art ohne allen Zweifel von den aus Celten, Römern und germanischen Stämmen entstandenen Mischvolke herrühren, und der Mehrzahl noch Zeichen des christlichen Glaubens in sich schliessen.’ The third kind of interment of which examples had been brought under the author's notice, were as assuredly or indeed more certainly heathen than the two already described were Christian, being, as they were, burials in the way of cremation, against which Christianity † had protested from its earliest

to quote; though, as it comes from a production intended to ridicule an epicure, to whom a *batterie de cuisine* was his *instrumenta artis*, and as the author may have forgotten that the Romans did not, though other nations did, bury the dead man's favourite weapons with him, its value is less than it otherwise would be. In the *Funus Parasiticum*, sive L. Biberii *Curculionis Parasiti Mortualia*. Ad ritum *prisci Funeris*, auctore Nicolao Rigaltio, Lubeccæ mdcxxxvii., I find the following incident as taking place: ‘Dum quisque certatim in rogum dona cumulat, et partim *trullas, cantharos, lances*; alii *struices patinarias, cyathos, ciboria, coquinaria omnia*, flammæ committunt.’ This is what did take place in the interments of Celts and Saxons of both Romanised and Christianised tribes, and of heathen races. But this passage, I fear, scarcely proves that the custom was practised by heathen Romans.

* Keller (l. c.) observes that he has found charcoal in graves where no signs of a fire having been lighted in the grave can be discovered, and that he is inclined to ascribe the scattering of this substance, as also that of the shards, into the graves to some unknown burial custom. There is also a passage in the *Ritual of Durandus* which throws some light upon this matter, and more, as I think, than the often quoted one, Div. Off. vii. c. 35; see *Archæologia*, xxxvi. p. 23, xxxix. p. 143; *Horæ Ferales*, 101. This passage is to be found in the *Rationale Duranti* (Vicentiae, 1480), vii. ccv.; *Rubrica*, p. 207: *Carbones in testimonium quod terra illa in communes usus amplius redigi non potest; plus enim durat carbo sub terra quam aliud.*

† Very much of the subsequent history of this country, and indeed, I am in-

days down to a period as late as the thirteenth century. Eight urns, two of which had the now well-known Anglo-Saxon patterns upon them, familiar to us from the 'Horæ Ferales' and the 'Saxon Obsequies' at Little Wilbraham, had recently come into the author's hands from the cemetery at Frilford; three of these eight urns were placed superficially in the soil to skeletons of Roman Britons in the *Reihengräber* already described. One of these three urns was a patterned urn, the other two were plain. No doubt therefore could exist as to the nationality of the tenants of the urns, nor as to the earlier date of the interments underlying them. Urns of the same character as those found at Frilford had been found now in as many as fifteen counties in England;* and inasmuch as cremation and urn burial

clined to think, the fact of our speaking, not a Romance but a Teutonic language, is to be explained by the fact of the paganism of our Anglo-Saxon conquerors. The clergy were the depositaries of literature in those centuries; and, with the destruction of their influence by the influx of vast numbers of heathens, the language which they used lost its hold on the population they were forced to desert. That the influence of the clergy, and, indeed, of the Christian religion, was destroyed during the period, and over the area, of Anglo-Saxon urn-burial, is deducible from the fact that Christianity has always resolutely fought against cremation. So Tertullian, A.D. 197, cit. Grimm, Berlin. Abhand. 1849, p. 207: *Christianus cui cremare non licuit*; see also History of Esthonians, as lately as 1210, A.D.; Grimm, *ibid.* p. 247; Pusey, Minor Prophets, Amos, vi. 10, *ibique citata*; Kemble, 'Horæ Ferales,' p. 95: 'Wherever Christianity set foot, cremation was to cease.' It is well to know, from the lament of Bede (Hist. Eccl. i. p. 22), as well as from the sneer of Gibbon, that the British Christians stood aloof from their pagan conquerors. It is not always recollected that the same line of conduct was persevered in by the conquered race for generations after the conversion of their masters, with the effect, of course, of giving their language the better chance in the struggle for supremacy. Bede's words, relating to his own time, are (Hist. Eccles. vol. ii. p. 20): '*Quippe quum usque hodie moris sit Brittonum fidem religionemque Anglorum pro nihilo habere, neque in aliquo eis magis communicare quam paganis.*' Gibbon (vol. vi. ed. 1838, p. 376, chap. ix., and vol. viii. p. 156) explains the victory won in England by the Anglo-Saxon language; firstly, to the slight hold which he supposes Roman civilisation to have obtained here; and secondly, by the greater relative numbers of the Anglo-Saxons as compared with the numbers of the kindred Gothic races who lost their languages, and adopted in due time those of the Latin races they subdued. The first of these explanations is not a *vera*, the second not a *sufficiens* causa.

* Since the publication of Mr. Wylie's paper in the *Archæologia* (vol. xxxvii. 1858), in which paper examples of Saxon cremation were given from fourteen counties in England, many similar 'finds' have been put on record. By the discoveries at Frilford, Berkshire is added to the list given by Mr. Wylie. A considerable number

could have been practised by the Anglo-Saxons, on account of the opposition the Christian authorities made to it, only during the period of their heathendom, *i.e.* during the 150 years intervening between the comings of Hengist and of St. Augustine, a clear proof was furnished to us that the Anglo-Saxons came over in great numbers. Otherwise these urns would not have been so numerous. The fourth kind of interment, which was the second kind of Anglo-Saxon interments, was interment with relics, in shallow graves, without any apparent regard to the points of the compass. The relics were the well-known ones now universally recognised as Anglo-Saxon, and were represented on various diagrams. Fibulæ in pairs, beads of glass and of amber, long bronze pins, scoops and pickers, had been found with female skeletons; spears, umbones, knives, and in one case a buckle, had been found with male skeletons. All these objects were drawn: one of the spears had the corrugated blade mentioned in the Introduction to Mr. Akerman's 'Pagan Saxon-dom,' as having been noted in the similar implements used by the Hottentots; the scoops and pickers were such as may be seen figured in the work just cited, pl. xxxv. fig. 4; or in Mr. Wylie's 'Fairford Graves,' pl. ix. fig. 10; the pin similar to those figured in 'Pagan Saxondom,' p. 71, pl. xxxv. fig. 5, 'Archæology,' 35, 477. No swords, and, so far as Professor Rolleston's researches had gone, no holy water

of Anglo-Saxon urns were dug up just outside the city of York by F. W. Calvert, Esq., in 1859, and added to the museum there; and it is of importance, as showing how entirely England proper was overrun by these invaders, to say, what has not been said before, that an urn of precisely the same style of ornament may be seen in the library of Queen's College, Oxford, which in all probability came from Faversham, on the Watling Street, between Chatham and Canterbury. It is the fashion to consider Hengist a mythical person, and to disregard alike the story of his landing in Kent, and of his being executed at Conisborough in South Yorkshire. But these urns show that men such as Hengist was did spread themselves over the very area which he is said to have overrun; possibly not in so short a period as the forty years assigned for his exploits, but, what is of greater consequence, without giving up the manners and customs and creed of the country whence they came, and in which, at the present day (see *Horæ Ferales*, Pl. XXX. *et passim*), we find similar relics to those of which we have been speaking. A very large 'find,' of what I cannot but think are Anglo-Saxon urns, is put on record in the *Illustrated London News* for January 25, 1868, as having taken place at Melbourne in Derbyshire.

vessels, had been found *in situ* at Frilford. Mr. Akerman, however, has recorded the discovery of one of the latter relics *in situ* there, and another and a very beautiful one is preserved in the British Museum. The graves of the heathen and the half heathen Anglo-Saxons were, it was well known, shallow graves, as were also those of others of the great Gothic family in a similar state of culture or absence of it.* At Long Wittenham the very numerous Anglo-Saxon interments described by Mr. Akerman in the '*Archæologia*' (vols. xxxviii. and xxxix.), were mostly directed towards the south-west. No rule could be laid down for this class of Anglo-Saxon interments at Frilford. The shallowness and other peculiarities of these graves seem to speak to a certain carelessness in the persons concerned in forming them; and the author may perhaps be permitted to say here that, in a grave of this kind examined subsequently to the reading of this paper, an Anglo-Saxon man was found with his face downwards, overlying some iron fragments of probably an umbo and also a knife. The Anglo-Saxons, like the Jews, buried without coffins, and bearers drunken from the funeral feast might readily make such a mistake as this. It is fair, however, to say, that the author has found Romano-British bodies similarly 'pronated,' perhaps from a similar cause. But perhaps the proverb, 'exceeding sorrow is exceeding dry,' applies to a good many other races beside the Celtic and the Teutonic, to whom it seems to him to be equally applicable, at least in modern times. This fourth kind of interment may perhaps belong to the period of transition from cremation and heathendom to Christianity; and to this latter period the fifth kind of interment, the third of the Anglo-Saxon varieties, may be referred. This fifth kind is seen to be Anglo-Saxon† by the relics, and to be Christian by the

* See Hon. R. C. Neville, *Saxon Obsequies*, Little Wilbraham, 1852; J. Y. Akerman, *Archæologia*, vol. xxxvii. 1856, p. 113; l'Abbé Cochet, *Normandie souterraine*.

† Christianity opposed itself, though not so uncompromisingly as to cremation, still more or less persistently to the practice of burial with weapons and gorgeous raiment. Nevertheless Weinhold tells us (*Altnordische Leben*, p. 493) that, till within a generation of the present time, the dead in Sweden were buried with their tobacco-pipes, their pocket-knives, and sometimes with their brandy-

orientation, and by the greater care and pains bestowed upon it. The Anglo-Saxons in this phase of their progress buried their dead in the graves of the Romano-British, but set on either side and at either end of the grave either large stones or Roman tiles.* They do not seem to have had any scruple as to disturbing the bodies in previous occupation, and, as this remark shows, they took more trouble than in the kind of inhumation without orientation, inasmuch as their graves were now dug deeper.†

The author ends his paper by enumerating some of the points of contrast and of coincidence between the Anglo-Saxons whom he had exhumed, and the other Teutonic tribes as described by l'Abbé Cochet and Lindenschmit and others. If Maurungania, the country of the Merovingians, is really to be found, as has been suggested (see Mascou, cit. Ecker, '*Crania Germaniæ Occidentalis*,' p. 89), in Holstein, the Frank and the Angle must at one time have been very closely affined. Dr. Rolleston suggests that Layamon and those who have followed him have called Gurmund an African

flask filled and placed by their side! Lindenschmit (*Alterthümer unserer heidnischen Vorzeit*, hft. ii. bd. ii. and taf. vi.) says that the Alemanni retained these customs long after the time of St. Boniface and St. Pirminius. Charlemagne, Probus, and Proba Falconia, had much gold buried with them, though they would have freely and fully acknowledged that they brought nothing into the world and could take nothing out. It is strange, certainly, that in a passage from the *Capitularia Regum Francorum* (vol. ii. p. 852), as to the burial with ornaments, &c., it should be said, '*Mos ille in vulgo obsoletus, in funeribus episcoporum et presbyterorum retinetur*;' see also p. 701. The gorgeously arrayed corpse of Pope Adrian I. was plundered of its decorations by the very persons who least should have so treated it. See Mabillon, *Mus. ital.* i. 41. See Bloxham (*Fragmenta Sepulchralia*, p. 67) and l'Abbé Cochet (*Normandie souterraine*, p. 194), for discontinuance and retention of the practice.

* For employment by Teutonic races of Roman tiles in burial, see Wanner, *Das Alemannische Todtenfeld bei Schleithelm*, p. 13; Lindenschmit, *Arch. für Anthropologie*, ii. 3, p. 356. For setting of stones round graves, see V. Sacken, *Leitfaden zur Kunde des heidnischen Alterthumes*, p. 154.

† It is a little remarkable that, in the face of the words of Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epist.* iii. 12 (cited by Grimm in his paper, *Ueber das Verbrennen der Leichen*, Berlin. *Abhand.* 1849, p. 269): '*Jam niger caespes ex viridi, jam supra antiquum sepulchrum glebæ recentes*,' the Abbé Cochet should have written, (*Normandie souterraine*, p. 185, prem. éd.), '*L'usage d'enterrer plusieurs fois au même endroit est éminemment moderne*.' In the second edition of this valuable book, however (see pp. 209, 432-436), the Abbé has receded from this position. See also his *Tombeau de Childéric*.

from having, stupidly enough, confounded Maurungania with Mauretania! They showed ἡθεα ὁμότροπα in both alike disliking towns and living camp-lives, so to say, in the country. 'Ipsa oppida,' says Ammianus Marcellinus (16. 2) of the Saxons, 'ut circumdata retiis busta declinant.' See Pearson, 'History of England,' i. 264; Coote's 'Neglected Fact,' p. 123; and Gibbon (chap. xxxviii. vol. vi. p. 336, ed. 1838), speaks in the same terms of the Merovingians as Tacitus had long before ('Germania,' 16) spoken of all the Germans in the words, 'Nullas Germanorum populis urbes habitari satis notum est.' See Julian, 'ad Athen.' p. 278; Thierry, 'Récits méroving.' ii. 363; Ukert, 'Gesch.' p. 204; Klemm, 'Germ. Alt.' p. 114, cited by Orelli in loc. Thirdly, the words *utilis Gothus imitatur Romanum* ('Excerpta Auctoris ignoti,' p. 61, cited by Coote, 'Neglected Fact in English History,' p. 44) apply alike to all the Teutonic races. The most characteristic Anglo-Saxon patterns have been found on Samian ware by the author. Though the material and the processes employed in working it up had been wholly different, the type was the same for both, and of course the Anglo-Saxon had been the copyist. The employment of Roman tiles, and the adoption of the Roman custom of placing coins with the corpse in burial, were smaller matters pointing in the same way, and throwing some rays of light upon the somewhat obscure subject of the continuity of Roman influence in the shaping of our present laws and our present municipalities. See Coote's 'Neglected Fact in English History,' *passim*; Pearson's 'History of England,' i. pp. 44, 103; Savigny's 'Geschichte des römischen Rechts im Mittelalter.' For authorities on the other side to that taken by these writers (with whose conclusions, however, persons who are familiar with Anglo-Saxon and French antiquities, and who think, with the author, that a certain degree of material culture is a prerequisite for the possession of civilisation, will agree), see Merivale, 'Conversion of the Northern Nations.' The early age at which the Franks died has been forcibly commented upon by l'Abbé Cochet ('Normandie souterraine,' p. 183), and the author said that the same was most strikingly the case with the Anglo-Saxons he had disinterred. Blood-thirstiness

was, according to Salvian, a characteristic of the Saxon, and deceitfulness of the Franks; and from the Capitularies of Charlemagne we were made acquainted with the drunken habits of the former of these races. Here were *veræ causæ* enough for shortlivedness. In the cemetery at Frilford, the youth of the Anglo-Saxon skeletons was brought into relief by the great age of a great number of the Romano-British bodies. Of these last it may be remarked, that the most usual deviation of their orientation was southward, a fact which may point to their having died, as the aged do, in greater numbers in the winter than in the summer. This contrast as to length of life puts Anglo-Saxon civilisation at a great disadvantage as compared with Roman, as indeed the contrast as to material comfort, as still testified to in this neighbourhood, does also in the style of pottery, &c. The great point of difference between the English and the two continental races of Teutons referred to was the retention of cremation so much longer by the former. Some minor points of difference the author had noted between the interments he had identified as Anglo-Saxon and those assigned to the Franks by Cochet and the Germans at Selzen by Lindenschmit. The urns of the English cremations were not lathe-turned; those of the Selzen inhumations were. See Lindenschmit, 'Germanische Todtenlager bei Selzen,' p. 15. But when holy water vessels had been observed at Frilford it was at the shoulder, at Fairford they were under the body, at Brighthampton at the head; the Frankish and Selzen were at the feet, and were constantly, and not as with the Anglo-Saxons only occasionally, found. Lindenschmit's remark as to the absence of the patellæ, Professor Rolleston thought must be based upon some 'fallacy of simple inspection.'



