

SOME VINE SCROLLS AND OTHER PATTERNS IN EMBOSSED METAL FROM DUMFRIESSHIRE

by LIAM DE PAOR, M.A.

IN the year 1905 Mr Norman B. Kinnear presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland what were described at the time as an 'ornamented fillet of bronze' and five bronze bosses. The objects, it was then stated, were 'found together in Dumfriesshire many years ago, the locality being now unknown'.¹ They have since been on exhibition in the National Museum of Antiquities² and do not seem to have attracted any further notice in print.

The objects consist of five more or less fragmentary shallow convex bronze bosses, all approximately 6 cm. in diameter, and upwards of fifty fragments of thin sheet metal, mostly with embossed patterns. The larger fragments are of a strip or strips of red gold foil on a now largely vanished backing of copper, about 2.8 cm. wide, with a continuous stylised vine-scroll pattern. The smaller fragments, besides being in a poor state of preservation, are in a condition which makes them difficult to examine; they had long been glued to pieces of stiff paper and there are several wads of metal fragments, yellow gold and copper, which were tightly folded together (apparently in antiquity) so that now, when the natural processes of decay and corrosion have taken their effect, it is impossible to separate them without damage.

On a visit to the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh in 1958 I noticed these fragments in the display-case and was struck with the resemblance which their ornament bore, in style and technique, to that on a distinctive group of objects in metalwork of the Late Antique and Merovingian periods on the Continent. Through the courtesy of the Keeper I was given facilities to examine the Dumfriesshire fragments and to make drawings of them. Although in the present state of the fragments it is difficult to reach a final conclusion it seems to me probable that they are from a helmet and that a publication of the evidence at this stage is desirable.

The drawing (fig. 1) shows the more important ornamental patterns which can be made out, and they are repeated in the photograph (Pl. XII). The other illustration of the group (fig. 2) is a drawing of two of the better preserved bosses.

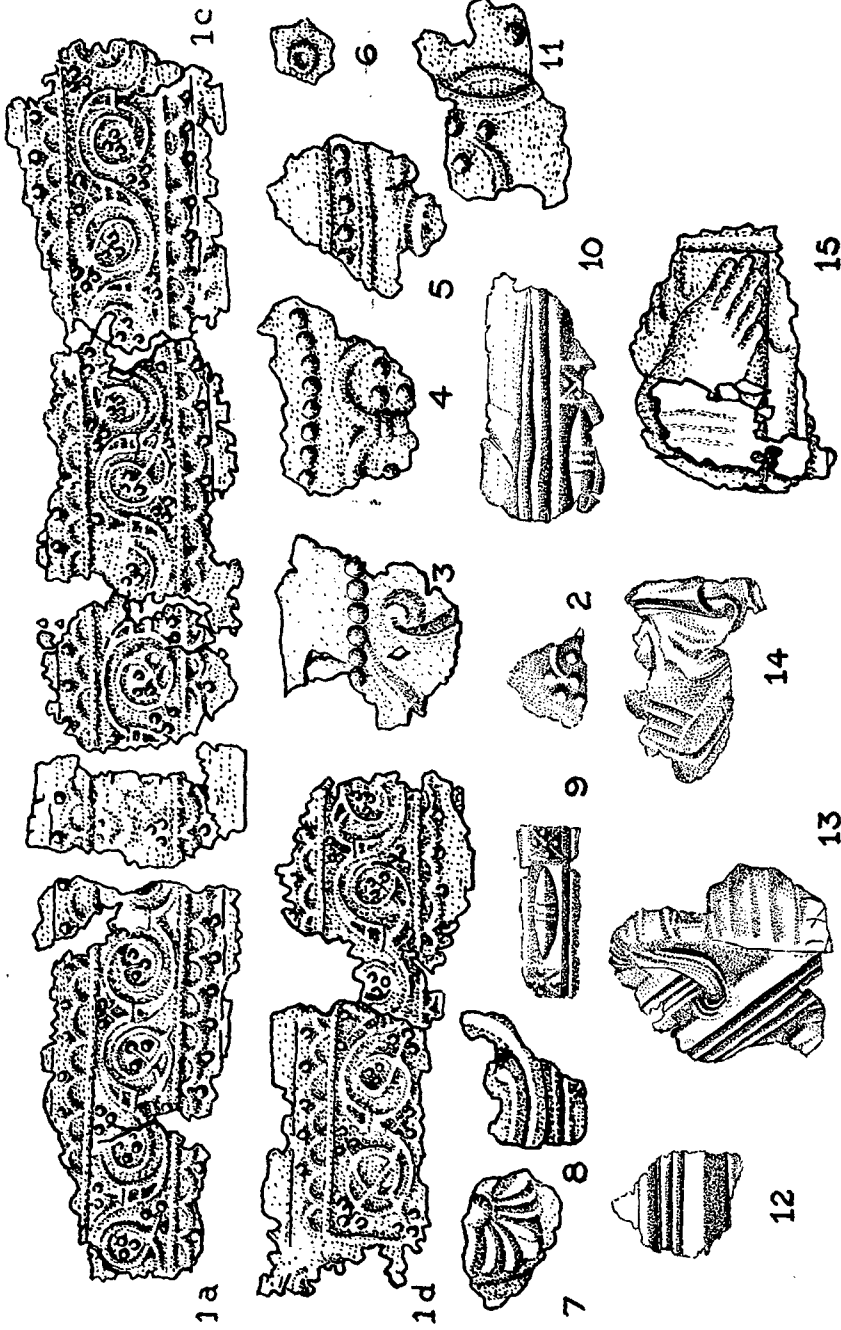
The motifs clearly represented on the Dumfriesshire fragments are:

1. A stylised and simplified running vine-scroll (fig. 1: 1a-d, 2);
2. An arcaded or ovolo border-pattern, with pellets (fig. 1: 1a-d);
3. An arcade of at least two arches, with shaft and capital and three or more pellets within each arch (fig. 1: 4);
4. Border patterns of pellets (fig. 1: 3, 4);
5. Border patterns of pellets with double contour lines (fig. 1: 5);
6. Border patterns of lens-shaped bosses alternating with groups of dots in rectangular panels (fig. 1: 8, 9, 10);

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, XL (1905-6), 342-3.

² They are on display in the main case of Dark Age ornaments. Museum reg. no.: FC 179.

FRAGMENTS OF GOLD FOIL FROM DUMFRIESSHIRE



ALL SHOWN TO FULL SIZE

J. A. LEE

FIG. 1

7. An over-all pattern incorporating curving tendrils and groups of three pellets (fig. 1: 11; cf. also the remaining small fragment of applied foil on one of the bosses shown in fig. 2);
8. A chrysanthemum or sunflower motif (fig. 1: 7);
9. A pattern which includes sweeping lobed tendrils (fig. 1: 3, 8);
10. Countersunk roundels or pellets (fig. 1: 6).

This grouping of ornamental forms shows the blending of Classical Roman and East Mediterranean motifs which finds expression in a widespread variety of media in Dark Age Europe from at least as early as the age of Constantine the Great until well into Carolingian times. The vine theme, represented in items (1), (3) and (7) of my list, is so well known in this context as to need no discussion at this stage; it is sufficient for the present to refer the reader to the works of Brøndsted¹ and Collingwood.² The border-patterns, (2), (4), (5) and (6), are debased Classical borders which persisted in different degrees of simplification or misinterpretation in Dark Age art. The ovolo, (2), is the Classical egg-and-dart border, which already appears much simplified in the minor arts of early Roman Imperial times – in pottery, for example³ – and appears further debased in late Roman pottery.⁴ The metopic border, (6), is probably derived from the Classical astragal, or bead-and-reel border, but it appears here in a common Early Medieval form which may be compared, to take but one example, with panel-margins in the sixth-century ivory bishop's chair in Ravenna.⁵

To narrow down the field of comparative material it is necessary to consider the medium of the Dumfriesshire motifs and the technique of their execution. They are all embossed in very thin sheet copper – *Pressblech* – coated with gold foil. If we now seek for a similar range of motifs in similar metal-working technique we find close parallels in a stylistically coherent group of objects, few in number but widely distributed over Central Europe and ranging in date from the mid-fifth to the mid-seventh century. These have an extensive literature in German but have not, so far as I know, been fully discussed in English.⁶ The group comprises, besides buckets, shield-umbos, belt-buckles and a few other classes of object, two important types of helmet: comb-crested helmets of Late Antique form and origin, and the so-called *Spangenhelme*, or ribbed helmets 'of the Baldenheim type'.

The early medieval *Spangenhelme* are a distinctive type. They are conoid or semi-ovoid in form and are distinguished by an arrangement of flat ribs, four or six in number, which spring from the head-band and curve up to meet at the apex. These are of bronze or copper; they are secured at the apex by a roundel with a blunt knobbed spike and at the base by a circlet or head-band of iron sheeted with embossed gilt bronze or copper. The spandrels or panels between the ribs are

¹ Brøndsted, J., *Early English Ornament* (1924).

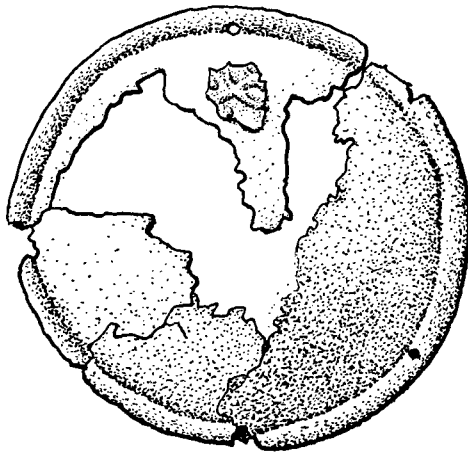
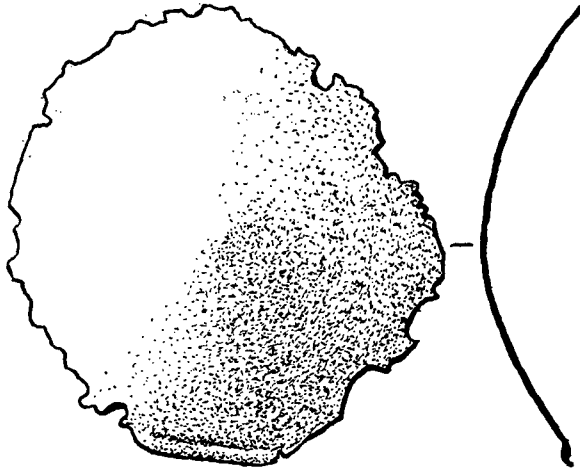
² Collingwood, W. G., *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Period* (1927).

³ Oswald and Pryce, *An Introduction to the Study of Terra Sigillata* (1920), 144-56; Pl. XXX.

⁴ Unversagt, W., 'Studien zur Terra sigillata mit Rädchenverzierung', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, vol. xvi. (1925), 126; fig. 2, 8.

⁵ Natanson, J., *Early Christian Ivories* (1953), Pl. 37.

⁶ See however the discussions of the group in Leeds, E. T., *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (1936), 15-18 and Cramp, R. J., 'Beowulf and Archaeology', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol. 1 (1957), 57-77.



BRONZE BOSSES FROM DUMFRIESSHIRE

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FIG. 2

usually of iron sheeted with silver or gilt copper and are secured to the back of the ribs by domed rivets. Cheek-guards of gilt copper or bronze are secured to the head-piece by leather thongs, and both these and the helmet itself are lined with leather. Finally there is a neck-armour of iron chain-mail. All parts of the helmet may be ornamented, the most distinctive patterns and techniques being embossed vines or vine-scrolls, usually combined with other motifs, on the head-band (the main focus of ornament) and pricked decoration, often a simple scale-pattern, on the ribs or spandrels.

The *Spangenhelme* are rare and costly objects, and the evidence, especially that of grave-groups, strongly suggests that they were exclusively worn by persons of royal or princely rank. Their distribution is wide, the nineteen examples of the 'Baldenheim type' so far known¹ ranging from the middle Danube to the Rhone, and from central Italy to the Baltic. There is indirect evidence to show that this does not represent the full true range of distribution. There is evidence from representations on coins, for example, to show that helmets of this type were worn by the rulers of Visigothic Spain.² The find-places of the nineteen known *Spangenhelme* are as follows:

France:	Baldenheim (Alsace), from a grave ³ ; Vézéronce (Isère), from a marsh ⁴ ; Chalons-sur-Saone (Saone-et-Loire), from a river ⁵ ;
Germany:	Gammertingen (Hohenzollern), from a grave ⁶ ; Stössen (Saxony), from a grave ⁷ ; Gültingen (Württemberg), from a grave ⁸ ; Planig (Rheinhessen), from a grave ⁹ ; Morken (Rheinland-Pfalz), from a grave ¹⁰ ;
Italy:	Torricella Peligna (Molise), from a habitation site ¹¹ ; Monte Pagano, or Giulianova (Marche), from a hoard ¹² ; Frasassi (Marche) (cheek-guard only), from a battlefield ¹³ ;
Switzerland:	Lake of Geneva, from the lake ¹⁴ ;
Yugoslavia:	St Vid (Dalmatia), two helmets, from a habitation site ¹⁵ ; Batajnica (Serbia), from a grave ¹⁶ ;

¹ In the recent literature on the subject some confusion has arisen as to the number of the helmets extant. Vinski in publishing the Batajnica helmet describes it as the twentieth example to come to light. He is following Werner's list of seventeen examples published in *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, vol. xxxiv/v, but inflates it by adding two more, one of which, the Leningrad helmet, is already listed by Werner, the other, the New York helmet, being described by him as 'a palpable forgery' (loc. cit., 179, note 8). The Batajnica find therefore provides the eighteenth, not the twentieth, example and the subsequent Morken find provides the nineteenth. Miss Cramp (op. cit.) follows Vinski's error.

² See Reinhart, W., 'Germanische Helme in westgotischen Münzbildern', *Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*, vol. II (1950/51), 1-4.

³ Henning, R., *Der Helm von Baldenheim und die verwandten Helme des frühen Mittelalters* (1907); M. Ebert, 'Die frühmittelalterlicher Spangenhelme vom Baldenheimer Typus', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, vol. I (1909), 65 ff.

⁴ Henning, R., op. cit.

⁵ Henning, R., op. cit.

⁶ Gröbbels, J. W., *Der Reihengräberfeld von Gammertingen* (1905).

⁷ *Archäologische Kostbarkeiten in Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte, Halle, Saale* (1958), 59.

⁸ Henning, R., op. cit.

⁹ Kessler, P. T., *Mainzer Zeitschrift*, vol. 35 (1940), Pl. I.

¹⁰ Böhrner, K., 'Das Grab eines frankischen Herren aus Morken im Rheinland', *Neue Ausgrabungen in Deutschland*, 444-9, Pls. 11-13.

¹² Henning, R., op. cit.

¹³ Fuchs, S., in *Forschung und Fortschritt*, vol. 19 (1943), 236.

¹⁴ *Jahresberichte der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Urgeschichte*, vol. 35 (1944), Pl. 16.

¹⁵ Henning, R., op. cit.

¹⁶ Vinski, Z., 'Ein Spangenhelmsfund aus dem östlichen Syrmien', *Germania*, vol. 32 (1954), 176-82.

- Hungary: Szentes-Berekhát (Csongrád), from a grave¹;
 Czechoslovakia: Dolnie Semerovce (Slovakia), two helmets, from a habitation site²;
 Sweden: Tuna (Gotland), fragments from a votive hoard.³

To these must be added a helmet in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad⁴ which it is thought probably came from a grave in south Germany.

The most recent studies of the group as a whole have been published by Holmqvist,⁵ Werner⁶ and Post⁷ on the Continent, while Rosemary Cramp has recently discussed the helmets in relation to Anglo-Saxon archaeology and literature.⁸ Most scholars who have studied the subject agree that the helmets themselves and the ornament which they bear are ultimately eastern in origin but there has been some conflict of views on the details of this general proposition. Henning and Ebert thought that the form came from south Russia in Late Roman times; Alföldi⁹ argued for a Persian origin; Holmqvist for an origin in Coptic Egypt. The question of the origin of the actual form of the helmets may be considered settled in Alföldi's favour by the new evidence cited by Werner. Ribbed conical or semi-ovoid helmets are depicted in coins and reliefs of the Parthian emperors¹⁰ and it was this evidence which Alföldi cited. Werner by drawing attention to two actual helmets¹¹ of the Sassanian period from Mesopotamia has provided the necessary link between the early representations and the later *Spangenhelme*. The Persian prototypes, however, lack the characteristic ornament of the Baldenheim group, and Holmqvist's argument for an Egyptian origin, based mainly on an analysis of the ornament, requires further discussion.

As we shall see, it is the ornament of the Baldenheim type rather than the helmet-type itself that is relevant to our discussion of the Dumfriesshire fragments. The fragments shown in fig. 1: 1a-c – those bearing the vine-scroll – measure about 6.5, 9.5, and 7.0 cm. respectively. The other measurable fragments of the same strip, not drawn, measure approximately 10, 3, 2.5, 4, 2.5 and 2.0 cm., giving a total (which does not include small fragments) of about 45 cm. for the length of the strip. This length, allowing for small and lost fragments, is near enough to make it a reasonable hypothesis to suppose that the strip when complete may have been about the length (roughly 60 cm.) of the headband of a helmet. That the scroll was not continuous but had a beginning and an end may be seen on the drawing of fragment No. 1d in fig. 1, where the frame closes, the break not coinciding, however, with any break in the strip. A small fragment has a vine on a slightly larger scale (fig. 1: 2).

¹ Hampel, J., *Die Alterthümer des frühen Mittelalters in Ungarn*, vol. 3 (1905), Pl. 453.15.

² Eisner, J., 'Deux casques à côtes du type de Baldenheim, découverts à Dolnie Semerovce', *Historica Slovaca*, vol. 3/4 (1945-6).

³ Nerman, B., *Finska Fornminnesföreningens Tidskrift*, vol. 40 (1934), 118 ff.

⁴ Henning, R., *op. cit.*

⁵ Holmqvist, W., *Kunstprobleme der Merowingerzeit* (1939), 128-40.

⁶ Werner, J., 'Zur Herkunft der frühmittelalterlichen Spangenhelme', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, vol. 34/35 (1949/50), 178 ff.

⁷ Post, P., *Berichte der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission*, vol. 34 (1954/55).

⁸ Cramp, R. J., *op. cit.*

⁹ Alföldi, A., 'Eine spätromische Helmform und ihre Schicksale im Germanisch-Romanischen Mittelalter', *Acta Archaeologica*, vol. 5 (1934), 99 ff.

¹⁰ Alföldi, *op. cit.*, fig. 4(b). See also Ghirsmán, R., *Iran* (1954), Pls. 33(a), 37, 40(h).

¹¹ One from Nineveh in the Baghdad Museum, one from Mesopotamia in the British Museum: Werner, *op. cit.*, Pls. 4-7.

The vine was the theme of the ornament on most of the *Spangenhelm* headbands, and a running scroll appears on the band of the Leningrad helmet. More usually, however, what is depicted on the headbands is a vineyard, highly stylised, with the vine-trees each simplified to a trunk in the form of a column from which spring two

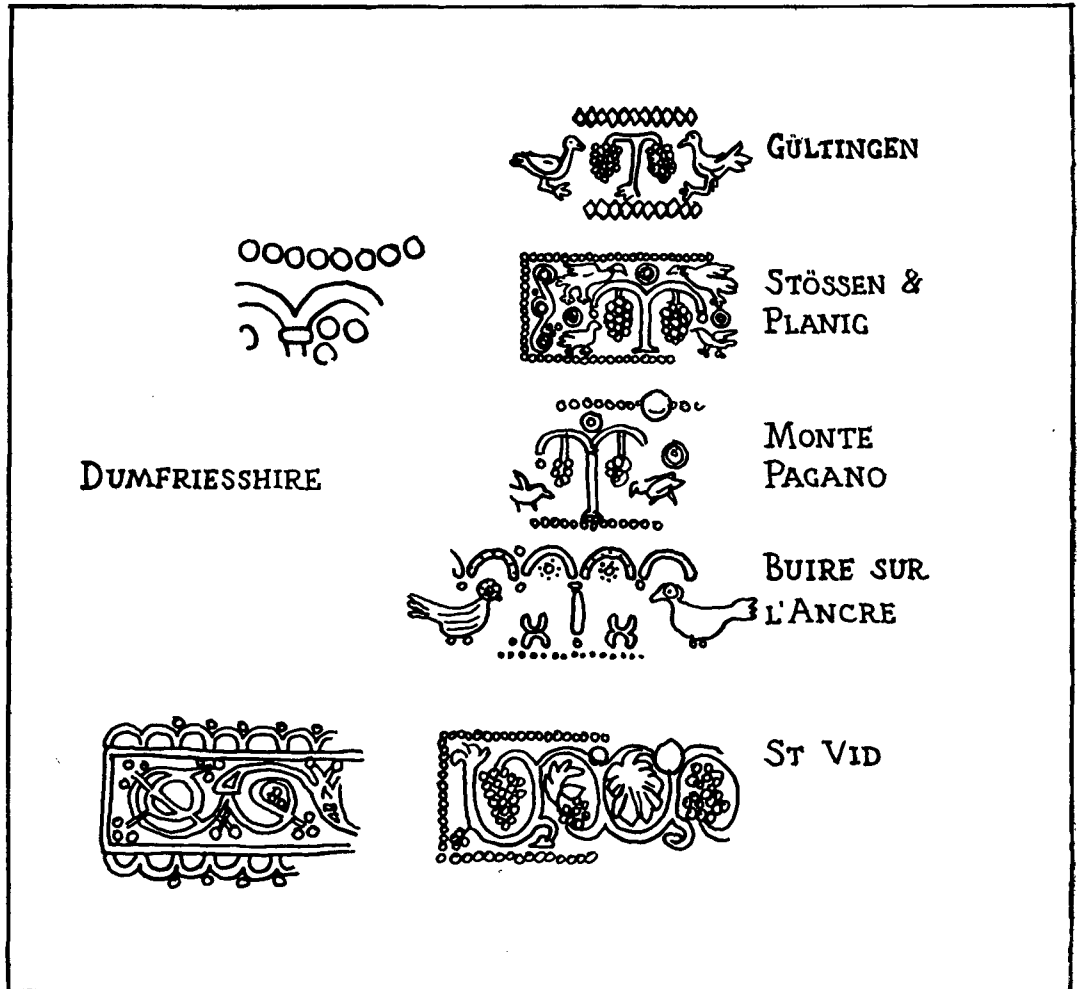


FIG. 3. Patterns employing the vine-scroll and vineyard themes compared. Not to scale

arcs, each supporting a bunch of grapes, and with affronted birds. The variations of this pattern are shown in fig. 3. This particular stylisation seems to be peculiar to the *Spangenhelm* headbands, although it also occurs on a bucket from Buire-sur-l'Ancre, Aisne, France.¹ It supplies at once an explanation of our motif (3) (fig. 1:4). The vineyard with birds is a simplification in debased form of the theme of the vineyard with *putti* or cupids gathering the grapes and birds pecking at the vines

¹ Gröbbels, *op. cit.*, 31 ff.

which is widespread in the Roman world in various media, including pottery,¹ mosaics² and carvings.³ This theme in itself appears to be of oriental origin.⁴

The sunflower motif (fig. 1: 7) is also found in *Spangenhelm* ornament, as well as in other repoussé metalwork of the period. It appears in triangular panels in pricked technique on the ribs of the Morken helmet,⁵ for example, where the treatment may be compared with roundels on a silver dish from Augst, in Switzerland,⁶ which bears a stylised vine-scroll, or with the centre-piece of a bronze bowl from Güttingen⁷ which bears a hunting scene comparable with that on the spandrels of the Giulianova helmet.⁸

The range of motifs on the Dumfriesshire fragments, as well as the technique of their execution, may most readily be paralleled in the *Spangenhelme* and related metalwork. The treatment of the motifs, however, lacks precise parallels in the *Spangenhelm* group. The Dumfriesshire vine-scroll, for example, falls about midway between the comparative naturalism of the Leningrad and St Vid head-bands (see fig. 3) and the comparatively advanced stylisation of the other head-bands. Here we must consider a second group of helmets, the group which has been studied by Alföldi and which, as he has shown, is a development of Late Roman times. The helmets from Budapest,⁹ Concesti,¹⁰ and Deurne in Holland¹¹ are of a different form from the *Spangenhelme* but are prototypes for another group of Dark Age helmets which includes the Vendel,¹² Valsgärde,¹³ and Sutton Hoo¹⁴ examples and is related to such Late Roman display helmets as that from Thorsberg.¹⁵ With this group we are again in the presence of elaborate embossed ornament, but it is only the earlier examples, studied by Alföldi, that need directly concern us. The Budapest helmet especially shares the ornamental themes of the *Spangenhelme*. Although the vine-scroll as such does not occur, the helmet bears a grouping of affronted lions on either side of an urn which is associated with the vine-scroll on the Leningrad, St Vid and Gammertingen helmets, on grave-stones and other reliefs in the Eastern Empire, on the ivory throne at Ravenna, and on a pottery lamp, with the sunflower motif, illustrated by Alföldi.¹⁶ Of special interest to us in the Budapest, Deurne, Concesti and Pfersee helmets are the arcade patterns with groupings of three dots, the rows of countersunk roundels, and the applied bosses, with *cabochon* inlays, of the Budapest helmet. The examples of this group are dated, by associated coins¹⁷ and other evidence, to the age of Constantine; in other words the group as a whole is considerably earlier than the *Spangenhelm* group. To the same period belong the Herpály shield-umbo,¹⁸ the embossed Sackrau mountings,¹⁹ and embossed gold buckles from south Russia.²⁰

¹ Oswald and Pryce, op. cit., Pls. XVII, XXXV.

² Holmqvist, op. cit., Pl. XLVII.3.

³ Böhner, op. cit., fig. 12.

⁴ Holmqvist, op. cit., Pl. XIX.1.

⁵ Alföldi, op. cit.

⁶ Brøndsted, op. cit., fig. 2, 18.

⁷ Oswald and Pryce, op. cit., 239.

⁸ Holmqvist, op. cit., Pl. LVI.

⁹ Holmqvist, op. cit., Pl. XXVIII.1.

¹⁰ Matzulewitsch, L., *Byzantinische Antike* (1929), 125 ff.

¹¹ Evelein, M. A., 'Ein römischer Helm des Leidener Museums', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift*, vol. 3 (1911), 144 ff.

¹² Lindqvist, S., 'Vendelhjälmarnas ursprung', *Fornvännen* (1925), 181-207.

¹³ Lindqvist, S., 'Vendel-time finds from Valsgärde in the neighbourhood of Old Uppsala', *Acta Archaeologica*, vol. 3 (1932), pp. 21-46; Arwidsson, G., *Valsgärde*, 6 (1942), 26-35.

¹⁴ Bruce-Mitford, R. L. S., *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial* (1947), 24-26.

¹⁵ Engelhardt, C., *Thorsbjerg Mosefund* (1863).

¹⁶ Alföldi, op. cit., fig. 17.

¹⁷ Evelein, M. A., op. cit.

¹⁸ Alföldi, op. cit., fig. 11.c.

¹⁹ Alföldi, op. cit., figs. 7(b); 9.

Yet another group of objects in embossed bronze in a style related to that of the Dumfriesshire fragments has been studied by Chenet.¹ These consist of wooden vessels sheeted in bronze, being embossed with Christian iconographic scenes, with borders of pellets, with arcades and vine-scrolls and with the Christian Monogram. The group has a restricted distribution in the area between Rhine and Seine, and the objects for which a provenance is available come from graves of the late fifth or sixth century. Chenet, however, concludes, on what seem to be insufficient grounds, although there is not space to discuss them here, that the date of manufacture was as early as sometime in the late fourth century. The evidence of context apart, the group is closely related to the Buire-sur-l'Ancre bucket which in turn is undoubtedly closely related to the *Spangenhelm* group. In fact the bronze sheeted wooden vessels are found in similar graves to those which provide *Spangenhelme*. The principal object studied by Chenet is a ewer from the cemetery of Lavoye (Grave 319): this has arcaded motifs similar in style and technique to those on the Dumfriesshire fragments. On the whole, however, the comparison of the Dumfriesshire fragments with the bronze-sheeted vessels is not so close as with the helmets, but it is worth noting perhaps that two objects of Chenet's group are found in graves in Great Britain: the bronze-sheeted beaker from Long Wittenham in Berkshire (British Museum)² and the bronze casket from Strood in Kent.³

Other examples of embossed or repoussé work with similar themes from Britain have been discussed by Leeds,⁴ and he regards them as representing 'a classical substratum . . . among Anglo-Saxon finds', antedating the invasions. He cites the buckle from Grave 11 and the openwork plate from Grave 41 at Gilton, silver-plated iron belt-mounts from graves 20 and 24 at Alfriston, the Strood casket, the bands of buckets from Faversham and Howletts, and a silver inlaid buckle in the Bifrons collection. But the most interesting example for comparison with the Dumfriesshire fragments is provided by the two embossed plates from Bidford-on-Avon, also discussed and illustrated by Leeds.⁵ These, which are in the form of animals biting their own tails, have a debased vine-scroll and ornamental borders and roundels of pellets which seem closely akin both to the fragments under discussion and to the helmet patterns. Leeds would date them to the early fifth century, but the closest Continental parallels would suggest a date half a century or more later – after the beginning of the invasions.

To sum up this discussion of the comparisons of technique and motifs for the Dumfriesshire fragments, we need not pursue our investigations of the technique back to remote antecedents in Hallstatt Europe, or even to Syrian workshops of the earliest centuries of Christianity, but can safely take as our starting point the impetus provided for Christian art and crafts by the Edict of Milan. The vine-scroll and the other motifs, originating in the Near East, diffused through the provinces of south-eastern Europe in Imperial times, were established in the west by the fourth century, and already appear in embossed metalwork at this date: both technique and motifs,

¹ Chenet, G., 'La tombe 319 et la buire chrétienne du cimetière mérovingien de Lavoye (Meuse)', *Préhistoire*, vol. iv (1935), 34-118.

² British Museum *Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities* (1923), 68-71.

³ *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. 2 (1852), 158.

⁴ Leeds, E. T., *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, 14-19.

⁵ Leeds, op. cit., 7; Pl. III(b).

with their roots firmly in Late Antique Christian tradition, survive into Merovingian times. The comparisons cited, if Chenet's early dating of the Lavoye ewer group be rejected, give a range of date approximately from the mid-fifth century to the mid-seventh century. The closest comparisons, being provided by the ornament of the later *Spangenhelme*, suggest a date late rather than early in this period for the Dumfriesshire fragments.

The fragments, however, are not of a *Spangenhelm*. The measurements I have been able to make suggest that they are fragments of about the size and shape of a helmet. The pieces have slightly convex surfaces, such as would fit the curved surface of a helmet. The strip or border patterns are not straight but curved, and the different patterns have different radii. The fragments 1a-c for example, are of the correct size and shape for a head-band, fragment no. 4 would occupy a position near the crown of the helmet, and fragments 3 and 5 would occupy intermediate positions. That the object was not a bowl is strongly suggested by the arcade-pattern (6), which would be upside down if the fragments are reconstructed to give a vessel with the mouth upwards. However, there is no trace of anything which would correspond to the ribs of a *Spangenhelm*. Instead there are the five shallow bosses, which invite comparison with the boss-like settings of the Budapest helmet. Such large cabochon settings seem to have continued in later Byzantine usage, judging from representations of the Diadem in portraits of the Byzantine emperors. Examples may be seen in the mosaic in the narthex of St Sophia, Constantinople, showing Leo VII receiving the investiture of Holy Wisdom (ninth century),¹ in the mosaic portrait of the Emperor John II Comnenus in the south gallery of St Sophia (twelfth century),² and in the portrait of John VI Cantacuzenos in MS. *Grec. 1242* (Bib. Nat., Paris) (fourteenth century).³

I do not, however, know of any extant Byzantine helmet or representation of a helmet other than the Diadem, which would serve for comparison. The ordinary soldiers shown in the Joshua Roll,⁴ and also in a Byzantine psalter preserved in Paris,⁵ wear much less elaborate, presumably iron, helmets, and I have not been able to trace any examples of princely helmets which would serve to show the later developments in Eastern Europe of late Antique helmets of the Budapest type. The northern European comb-crested helmets have already been referred to.

The Dumfriesshire fragments then seem to be parts, probably of the outer bronze sheeting, of a helmet which shares the ornamental motifs of the *Spangenhelm* group but is of a different type, being most likely a semi-ovoid helmet with a vine-ornamented head-band and with five or more vine-ornamented bosses. This conclusion can be no more than tentative until a more extensive examination of the fragments is possible under laboratory conditions, but it seems to me best to fit the facts at present available. The style of the ornament is Mediterranean and the object must be an import from the Continent. How such a helmet came to Dumfriesshire is a question which admits of several possible answers, but an elaborate helmet of this

¹ Graber, A., *Byzantine Paintings* (1953), 92.

² Graber, A., *op. cit.*, 99.

³ Graber, A., *op. cit.*, 184.

⁴ Vatican Library, *Palat. Gr. 431*. See Diringer, D., *The Illuminated Book* (1958), Pls. I.15 and I.16a.

⁵ Bib. Nat. MS. *Grec. 139*. Graber, *op. cit.*, 169.

sort is just such a gift as might have been brought from Italy in the late sixth or early seventh century by a missionary bishop to offer to a pagan or new converted king or chieftain. There was a practice of making such gifts. We know, for example, from Bede¹ that Pope Gregory sent gifts to King Ethelbert in Kent in A.D. 601, and it would agree well with the probable dating and nature of the find to picture it being taken to the north, say by Paulinus when he went to the court of King Edwin in A.D. 625.

Unfortunately the circumstances of the finding of the fragment are not known, but the helmet, if such it was, seems to have been wrenched apart and treated as scrap metal in antiquity, much as the Scots and Picts had treated looted Roman silver in earlier centuries. The troubles which afflicted Northumbria in A.D. 633 might here be invoked, but this could be no more than speculation.

Finally it is perhaps worthwhile drawing attention to one or two details which link the Dumfriesshire fragments to later treatments of the vine theme in the north. The most important detail is the treatment of the vine-scroll (fragments 1a-c) at the point where the stem branches out into the grape-bearing tendrils. In the purer Mediterranean representation of the vine-scroll this point is treated naturalistically, as a leafy swelling. More stylised versions usually show some form of binding of the stem at this point, but the treatment on the fragments is unusual in having a clearly defined vase- or trumpet-shaped terminal to the stem at the point where the tendrils branch out. This very distinctive treatment can be paralleled on a great many of the carved crosses of Northumbria, including the Ruthwell cross, also in Dumfriesshire. The most striking comparisons are provided by the crosses and fragments of the group connected with Hexham, where St Wilfrid's church was completed in A.D. 678. I would draw attention especially to the fragments showing sunflower and other motifs illustrated by Collingwood,² to the cross-shaft at the Spital, near Hexham³ and to the cross-shaft No. IV in Durham Cathedral Library.⁴ In metal-work too, in the north and west, apart from such pure treatments of the vine-scroll as the Ormside bowl, there are many examples of the same theme modified and zoomorphised, and I would single out for comparison with the Dumfriesshire fragments the fragment of a bronze mounting found at Stromness in Orkney.⁵

I should like to thank Mr R. B. K. Stevenson, Keeper of the National Museum, for his kindness and help, and Mr J. A. Brown for his skilful work on the fragments, drawings and photographs, and to express the hope that in due course it may be possible to have the Dumfriesshire fragments further disentangled and examined by laboratory methods so that their true nature may be more certainly ascertained. Some fragments have been separated from the mass since this paper was written (fig. 1: 12-15), and three of them add considerably to the range of designs, representing a foot, some drapery and perhaps a lock of hair.

¹ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 32.

² Collingwood, *op. cit.*, p. 29; fig. 37.

³ Collingwood, *op. cit.*, 32; fig. 40.

² Collingwood, *op. cit.*, p. 28; fig. 35.

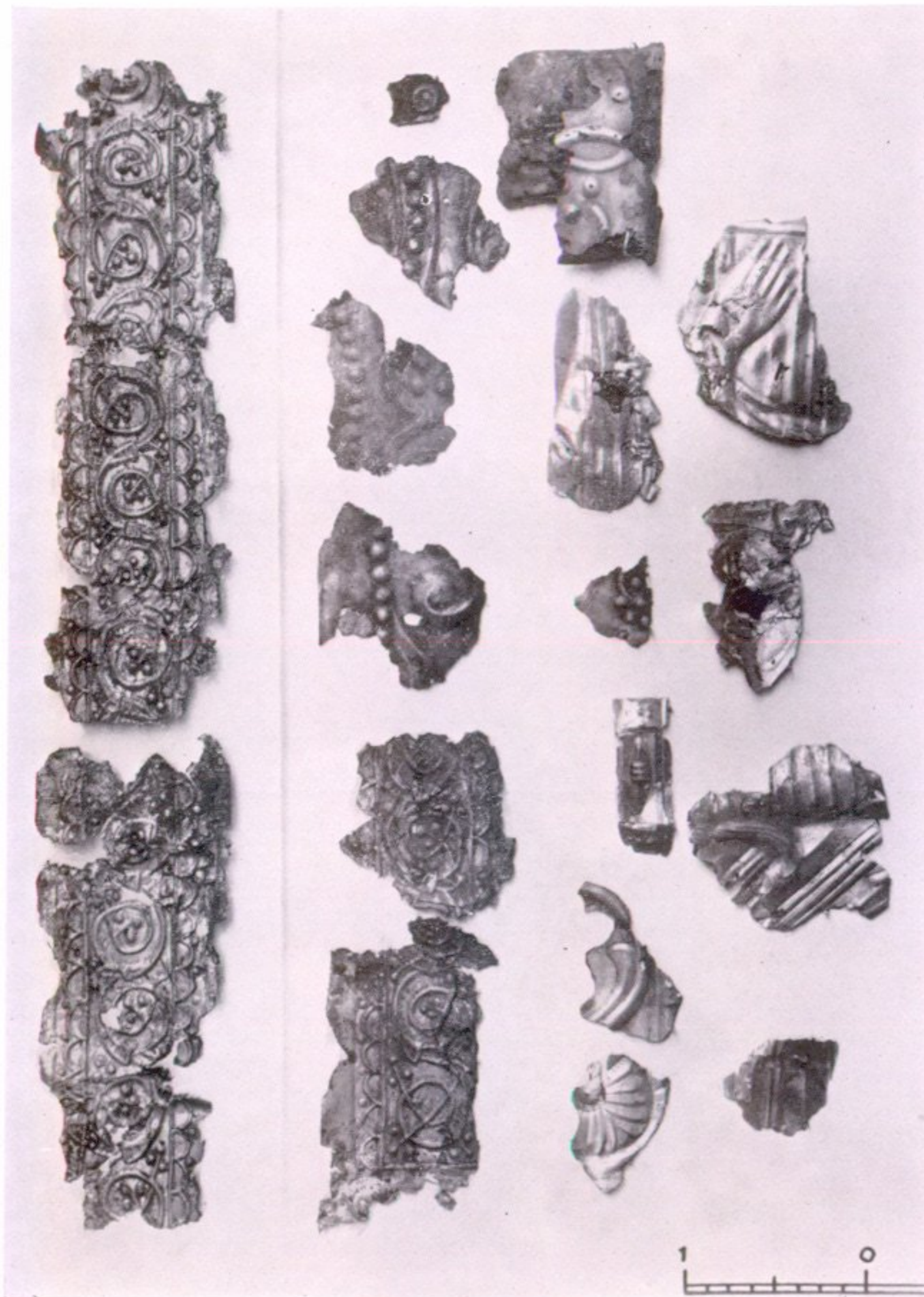
⁵ Brøndsted, *op. cit.*, 88; fig. 74.

APPENDIX

Note on the red foil

Through the kindness of Dr E. T. Hall, fragments of this foil and its backing have been analysed by the Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology, with the following results: Foil – about 65–70% gold, about 5% silver, and the rest, about 30%, copper; Backing – 98·8% copper with only 0·08% tin, 0·10% lead, 0·5% iron and 0·7% silver.

The considerable proportion of copper explains the reddish colour of this gold foil. Its contrast with the yellow foil of the other designs is presumably intentional.



(Scale of one inch)

DE PAOR: EMBOSSED METAL FROM DUMFRIESSHIRE.