

SAXON

FREE to Sutton Hoo Society members/£2 to non-members

The British Library's *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* Exhibition



St Cuthbert Gospel, with its original binding, is the oldest intact European book. It dates from the early eighth century and was made at the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the north-east of England. © Sam Lane Photography

On the 14th January, there was a Sutton Hoo Society trip to the British Library to see the *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* exhibition. This was a rare opportunity to encounter an impressive selection of six centuries of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and objects; original evidence from when the English language was used and written for the first time and when the foundations of the kingdoms of England were being established. Also, much of which demonstrated the sophisticated and interconnected European world of the Anglo-Saxons.

As the largest ever exhibition of Anglo-Saxon history, art and literature, it extended its scope over six centuries, from the eclipse of Roman Britain in the 5th century to the Norman Conquest of 1066. It brought together the British Library's own collections alongside many exceptional loans. For example, the *Codex Amiatinus*, on loan from the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, returned to England for the first time in more than 1300 years. It is the earliest surviving complete Bible in Latin made at the monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the north-east of England in the early 8th century and taken to Italy in AD 716 as a gift for the Pope.

On display with the British Library's *Lindisfarne Gospels*, were the *Utrecht, Harley* and *Eadwine Psalters*. from Utrecht University Library, the British Library and Trinity College

Cambridge, respectively. There were also other exceptional illuminated and decorated manuscripts, including the *St Augustine Gospels*, from Corpus Christi College Cambridge, the *Book of Durrow*, from Trinity College Dublin and the *Echternach Gospels*, on loan from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

For the first time, the four significant manuscripts of Old English poetry were displayed all together. With the British Library's unique manuscript of Beowulf was the tenth-century *Vercelli Book*, which has been housed in the Biblioteca Capitolare in Vercelli, Northern Italy [see the following *Andreas* article]; the *Exeter Book* was on loan from Exeter Cathedral Library; and the *Junius Manuscript* from the Bodleian Library.

The Domesday Book, the most famous book in English history and the earliest surviving public record, was on display, on loan from The National Archives. It is a valuable document which evidences the administration of late Anglo-Saxon England.

A number of archaeological artefacts were also displayed with the manuscripts. Greeting visitors at the beginning of the exhibition was the Spong Man, a three-dimensional pottery figure, sitting on top of the lid of a cremation urn; a tiny, unique Anglo-Saxon presence. The urn was buried in a cemetery on Spong Hill in Norfolk. Also on loan from the Norfolk Museums Service was the

Binham Bracteate Hoard, [see issue 67 of SAXON]. Another artefact was the stone sculpture of the Lichfield Angel, probably from the shrine of St Chad, which had never been displayed outside of Lichfield since its discovery in 2003 at Lichfield Cathedral. Some objects from the Staffordshire Hoard, the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever found, discovered in 2009, were on loan from both the Birmingham Museums Trust and The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. From the British Museum were the Sutton Hoo gold buckle and the late ninth-century Fuller Brooch. From the Ashmolean Museum, there was the exquisite Alfred Jewel with its inscription: AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN – 'Alfred ordered me to be made'.

One of the most imposing sights, standing at five metres (16ft 4in) high, was a replica of the eighth- or early ninth-century Ruthwell Cross. The original sandstone monument was found in the village churchyard of Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, in south-west Scotland, and is elaborately carved with inscriptions and scenes from the life of Christ.

The Ruthwell Cross is an early example of 'insular art', an artistic tradition which flourished in Britain and Ireland after the departure of the Romans. It is inscribed in both Latin and Old English and was probably originally painted. Moreover, despite it being an overtly Christian monument there are verses inscribed, unusually, in runes. The runes present

a version of *The Dream of the Rood*. The only other text of *The Dream of the Rood* that survives is in the tenth-century Vercelli Book.

One of the exhibits was the earliest surviving English charter recording the granting land. It was issued in AD 679 by King Hlothhere of Kent (AD 673–AD 685) to the Abbot of Reculver. The earliest original letter written on parchment to survive from Western Europe was written in England and is from Wealdhere, Bishop of London to Berhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and dates from the early 8th century. The earliest surviving letter in English, the Fonthill letter, dating from the early 10th century was also on loan from Canterbury Cathedral. The St Cuthbert Gospel, pictured on the front page, was acquired by the British Library in 2012.

From the breathtaking craftsmanship of intricately illuminated, spiritually uplifting manuscripts to the worldly will of a tenth-century English woman, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War*, emphasised the major role of manuscripts in transmitting ideas, religion, literature and artistic influences around England and far beyond political and geographical boundaries.

I can mention but a few of the many manuscripts and objects that were presented; it was such a huge display. Thank you to Megan for organising the trip to see this very enlightening, vast and varied exhibition.



Codex Amiatinus on loan from Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana to Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms at the British Library © Sam Lane Photography

The British Library has made its exceptional collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and charters available online, allowing people around the world to explore them in detail, and to support future research in the field. <https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/>

Hwæt!

The Annual General Meeting of the Sutton Hoo Society was held in the Deben Suite, Ufford Park Hotel, Melton, on the 1st March 2019 at 7 pm. At the time, the Sutton Hoo site was still closed for the National Trust's major refurbishment project so the usual Café venue was unavailable.

The most notable business of the AGM

was the nomination and acceptance of Bryony Abbott as Chair. Eventually, Pauline Moore will be retiring as acting Chair once she has served for a further year, in order to establish continuity and support for the new Chair and committee.

This year's attendance was low in comparison to previous years. Details of the AGM have been minuted and those minutes are

now on file.

Following the AGM, our speaker for the evening was Dr Mike Bintley, Lecturer in Early Medieval Literature and Culture at the Department of English and Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London. Dr Bintley is joint editor and translator, with Richard North, of *Andreas: an Edition*, (Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, Liverpool University Press, 2016).

His talk, “The Material World of the Old English *Andreas*”, examined aspects of the Old English narrative poem, *Andreas*. The unknown author constructed his poem using the ideologies, concepts and landscapes which would have been clearly understood by its ninth- or tenth-century early medieval audience. As well as Biblical analogies, the author also constructed the poem with resonances in style, language, structure and tone, to Germanic heroic poetry such as *Beowulf*, with its roots in the tradition of oral poetry.

The only surviving manuscript of the *Andreas* poem, part of a book created in the second half of the tenth century, is held in the Cathedral Library of Vercelli, in Northern Italy. The Vercelli Book, which may have originated from St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury, comprises a mixture of texts written by a single scribe. Not only does it contain the longest verse, the lesser-known *Andreas*, but also a unique manuscript of *The Dream of the Rood* and other important Anglo-Saxon texts.

The *Andreas* story, possibly based upon a Latin recension of an earlier fourth-century tale, is about Andrew the Apostle (Andreas), a popular saint in Anglo-Saxon England. He is sent by God to rescue St Matthew from the ungodly, cruel and barbaric Mermedonians. Andreas makes a voyage across the sea to distant Mermedonia with a thinly-disguised Christ as the helmsman of the boat.

The Mermedonian landscape depicted is outlandish, yet would have been vaguely familiar to the poem's audience. *Eald enta geweorc*, the 'work of giants' recalls the monumental ruined stone buildings left by the Romans and a pagan barrow is used by Andreas to clear away the floodwaters. These features would have been surviving in parts of Anglo-Saxon England at the time of the poem's creation. Some other imagery within the poem was intended to reference events from the Bible such as the devastating flood brought forth by Andreas to sweep away the sinful inhabitants of Mermedonia, calling to mind the Flood from the Book of Genesis.

It is a gruesome tale of torture and torment, cannibalism and paganism. Dr Bintley himself, when addressing questions from the audience, described it as a 'gorefest'! This exaggerated distancing of the heinous, pagan Mermedonians using emotive descriptions of their brutish practices and their metaphorically dilapidated homeland, renders their ultimate

salvation, conversion to Christianity and baptism is definitely not a story to curl up with at all the more redemptive. It is a tale of saintly bedtime!
Christians triumphing over evil. Nevertheless, it

Caryl Dane

Rendlesham: Further Finds Acquired by Ipswich Museum

In the ghost story '*A Warning to the Curious*' (1925), the writer M. R. James mentions the discovery in 1687 of a crown at Rendlesham, said to be that of Rædwald, King of the East Angles, which, unfortunately, 'was melted down before it was even properly described or drawn'. This reference, albeit in a work of fiction, demonstrates the strength of the association between Rendlesham and the East

Anglian kingdom. This has its origins in the writings of the Venerable Bede who in '*A History of the English Church and People*' states in the period AD 655-664 that king Swidhelm, son of Sexbald, was baptised by Cedd in the province of the East Angles at the royal estate called Rendlesham.

Since 2008 there has been a systematic



Anglo-Saxon strap-end with Borre style decoration.

© Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service



Viking period silver ingot providing evidence of metalworking at Rendlesham.

© Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service.

metal detecting survey of several fields at Rendlesham which has yielded hundreds of objects of Anglo-Saxon date as well as those of other periods. These finds are gradually being purchased by Colchester and Ipswich Museums with funding provided by a range of national and local grant-giving bodies, including the Sutton Hoo Society. The most recent group of finds acquired in Summer 2019 include several Treasure items including five of Anglo-Saxon date: two gold jewellery settings, a strap end, a silver fragment and a silver ingot. Of these, the strap end is particularly interesting as it is decorated with a simple interlace design in the Viking Borre style. Formed of a copper alloy body and two silver rivets, it has a tongue shape and is of the late 9th to 10th century in date. The two gold jewellery settings, the silver fragment and the silver ingot provide further evidence for significant metalworking activity at the royal site at Rendlesham.

The Anglo-Saxon coinage found at Rendlesham is notable, both for the total number and the types of gold and silver coinage represented. The coins are from both the continent and England, the latter produced in the kingdoms of Kent and the East Saxons as well as East Anglia. Their significance lies partly in the evidence that is revealed for the movement of people, both between the different English kingdoms and from the near continent, also partly in the new data which is coming to light

in relation to coin production and use. In particular, there are ten *sceattas* (or silver pennies) which are identified as having been produced from the same dies as other coins, thereby providing new insights about Anglo-Saxon coin minting. The current group adds three *tremisses* (or gold shillings), forty-nine *sceattas* and five Late Saxon pennies to the total of 156 previously acquired by Ipswich Museum.



Merovingian gold tremissis minted in modern day France AD 600-700. Diameter: 13.12 mm

© Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service.

Amongst the latest finds are several pieces of Anglo-Saxon female jewellery including eight brooches and a clothing pin. These include a disc brooch of unique design and a fragment of a 'florid' brooch decorated with a human face with two birds, possibly representing the Norse god Woden and his ravens.

Male warrior gear is represented by a 7th-century plate from a multi-piece belt set of Continental-type and an ornate copper-alloy buckle pin set with a garnet and displaying traces of gilding which comes from a buckle type found in southern and eastern England dating broadly to the sixth century. There is also a rare, copper alloy prick spur dated to the period AD 750-900.



Anglo-Saxon sceatta, one of 49 in the latest group of finds acquired by Ipswich Museum. Diameter: c. 12 mm

©Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service.

As in the earlier groups of finds from Rendlesham, there are exotic objects such as an escutcheon, or hanging bowl mount, decorated with red enamel probably produced in a 'Celtic' workshop in western or northern Britain, and a vessel handle thought to be from a Frankish bowl, similar to grave finds from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Coddendam.

Much remains to be revealed about Anglo-Saxon Rendlesham and finds continue to be made at the site. In due course, it is hoped that these will be added to Ipswich Museum's nationally important Anglo-Saxon collection too.

The site and finds are being analysed for publication by the Leverhulme-funded project *Lordship & Landscape in East Anglia*, as reported in SAXON No 65 (February 2018).

Philip J. Wise

Heritage Manager

Colchester + Ipswich Museums



Anglo-Saxon penny of Coenwulf, king of Mercia (AD 796-821) minted in Canterbury by the moneyer Eaba. Diameter: c. 18 mm

©Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service.

The Sutton Hoo Society's Basil Brown Memorial Lecture was held on Saturday 13th April 2019, at The Riverside Theatre, Woodbridge and was particularly well attended. Professor Michelle P. Brown, a former curator of Medieval and Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library, presented the illustrated lecture. Here, she has kindly written a précis about the significance of Lindisfarne Gospels.

The Lindisfarne Gospels and the Origins of England



Two pages from the Lindisfarne Gospels. Left: carpet page introducing St Luke's Gospel f.138v. Right: decorated initial page which starts St Luke's Gospel f.138.

Like the rich cross-cultural, multi-period assembly of artefacts accompanying the Sutton Hoo ship burial, the great illuminated display openings in the Lindisfarne Gospels give us a visual statement of the world stage, as viewed by those responsible for them, and their perception of their place upon it. For over two and a half centuries the peoples of northern and western Europe had signified who they were, their status and their beliefs by the metalwork

and textiles they wore and, sometimes, the ink upon their skin. They were highly proficient in decoding visual symbols. The way in which motifs and styles were combined, like the words on the menu of a complex fusion-cooking restaurant, summoned up the cultural essence of whole peoples and landscapes. The visual Esperanto of art brought to perfection and intellectualised by the maker of the Lindisfarne Gospels summons up the Early Christian churches and their converts, from the Holy Land and Egypt to the western Atlantic seaboard. The assembly of objects in the Sutton Hoo burial bear witness to trading and perhaps some diplomatic relationships; the visual rhetoric of the Lindisfarne Gospels speaks of the contribution of diverse Early Christian traditions, sustained by Logos (John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."), and harmonised like the four Gospels themselves to form a unity across time and space.

This masterly statement of a theology of reconciliation and unity was probably the work of Bishop Eadfrith of Lindisfarne (AD 698-722), who is likely to have undertaken his highly accomplished work as planner, scribe and artist, alone on Cuddy's Isle - a small tidal island off of Holy Island in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria c. AD 715-722. Lindisfarne was founded by followers of St Columba, from Iona, in AD635, and their tradition dictated that only

the most senior, spiritually tested members of their community could serve as the scribe of Scripture (like the Jewish *sofer* - a priestly calling). The busy bishop (responsible for spiritual well-being, health, education, diplomacy and humanitarian aid throughout northern England and southern Scotland) was permitted to undertake his own spiritual work during Lent and Advent, on retreat on Cuddy's Isle or Inner Farne. Eadfrith was working with Bede to establish a former bishop of Lindisfarne, St Cuthbert (d. AD 687), as a heroic figure for a new age, representative of collaboration and reconciliation. The Lindisfarne Gospels are the work of one hand in the manner of the eastern desert fathers, designed to act as a focus for assembly at the shrine of the saint. Such books of the high altar served as focal points for pilgrims, as well as service books on the most important feast-days of the year, and would go on from the 9th century to have documents recording the freeing of slaves in their margins. They were symbols of social change.

Other aspects of the visual programme of the Lindisfarne Gospels indicate that it played a role in the international theological debates of its day. Each Gospel is preceded by a carpet page (they were using prayer mats in Northumbria at this time) with a different type of cross embedded in the ornament of each: Roman, Greek, Celtic ring-headed and Coptic/Ethiopic tau. Two of the evangelists' portraits (which

resemble framed eastern icons placed on the page) are bearded and ageing, two are youthful and clean-shaven. They form a neat visual statement of the stance of the newly established Church in England to the ongoing, divisive debate concerning how Christ could be both human and divine, stating its adherence to the international Orthodoxy of Chalcedon. Its text, written in beautiful Insular half-uncial script, is one of the best witnesses to the editorial work of St Jerome, undertaken in Bethlehem in the 380s, in preparing a reliable Latin (vulgar/vernacular - Vulgate) translation of the Bible. It features a palette of around 90 colours, which Raman laser testing has shown to have been made using six local mineral and vegetable materials. Eadfrith could not get hold of lapis lazuli from the Himalayas, but valued its exoticism and faked it using local woad with crystals of gum suspended in it (which was still fooling scientists in the 1960s into thinking it was lapis lazuli). He also invented the lead pencil and the lightbox in order to design and implement his ambitious designs, which are laid out in accordance with Euclidian and Pythagorean principles of geometry.

Thus, art, faith and science combine, as in the writings of Bede, to create a new image for Anglo-Saxon England - one which reflects an increasingly stable and sophisticated Christian state and which acknowledges the contributions of the many peoples who inhabited

these islands before *c.* AD 700 and their ancestors, and their ongoing relations with other parts of Europe and the Middle East.

Michelle P. Brown FSA

Professor Emerita, School of Advanced Study,
University of London
Visiting Professor, University College London

Slow News Day: 26th March 1940

Jonathan Abson has discovered a newspaper clipping from the Rector of Thorndon's miscellaneous papers stored at Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, ref: HD78: 570/10/30. The original is from the *News Chronicle* for 26th March 1940. The extract reads:

Burial Ship Expert Seeks New Treasure

Mr Basil Brown, middle aged [*sic*] farmer, of Rickingham, Suffolk was making plans yesterday for the recovery of treasure lying only a few feet below ground level at a score of sites in Suffolk.

He inspected ten huge burial mounds each of which may contain a fortune.



An excavation shot, from the ship burial, of the silver dish being planned and excavated. © Basil Brown Collection, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

Mr Brown discovered the secret of the burial ship at Sutton Hoo, near Ipswich, the 100ft grave of Redwald [*sic*], Anglo Saxon King of East Anglia.

From it were [*sic*] taken gold, silver and ornaments, which later were presented to the nation by wealthy Mrs EM Pretty, owner of the land.

His discoveries are described by the British Museum as the greatest archaeological finds ever made in this country.

Redwald's Queen

Mr Brown is hoping to get Office of Works permission to make new excavations.

To the News Chronicle last night he said "We shall probably open the mound nearest to Redwald's next. There are still nine at Sutton Hoo waiting to be excavated. But the one I have in mind now may be the grave of Redwald's Queen and in that case may contain great riches."

He is at present filling in the site of his excavations at Stanton, Suffolk, where he has unearthed a Roman Villa'

"I used to be a farmer," he said, "but my interest has always been in archaeology. There are many burial mounds in Suffolk waiting to be excavated."

Wessex Ho!

21 - 25 June 2020



Stonehenge © garethwiscombe



Avebury stones © Rosie Andersen

In June 2020, the Sutton Hoo Society will enjoy a trip to the West Country, exploring some of the region's most important and iconic sites. The trip has been specially arranged for the Society by *Just Go! Holidays* and will take in a wide sweep of the history of this beautiful and romantic region, from prehistoric Avebury to the Palladian splendour of Wilton House.

21 - 25 June 2020, 4 nights/5 days

Accommodation: Best Western Red Lion Hotel, Salisbury

Located in the heart of historic Salisbury, just five minutes from the Cathedral, the Best Western Red Lion Hotel retains many of its original thirteenth-century architectural features. Rooms include a TV, free wifi, complimentary tea- and coffee-making facilities and mineral water, a hair dryer and an iron and ironing board, and the hotel features a bar, restaurant, lounge and secluded courtyard for *al fresco* dining in the shade of a centuries-old Virginia Creeper.

Itinerary:

21 June - The coach will pick us up in Woodbridge or Ipswich (location to be determined) and drive to Stonehenge, where we will enjoy a picnic and a guided tour of the stone circle, dating to 2500BC, and visit the world-class visitor centre, before continuing on to the hotel.

22 June - The morning will begin in the pretty village of Avebury, with its own famous stone circle, after which we will visit the Alexander Keiller Museum, which houses one of the most important prehistoric archaeological collections in Britain. We will then have the opportunity to marvel at Britain's best collection of Bronze-Age gold, and other exhibits, at the Devizes Wiltshire Museum.

23 June - In the morning we will explore the legendary Glastonbury Abbey, said to have been founded by Joseph of Arimathea and to be the burial place of King Arthur; while the afternoon will be spent in the lovely market town of Sherborne, with its medieval buildings, art and antique dealers and glorious fan-vaulted Abbey, founded by St Aldhelm.

24 June - On the fourth day we will visit Salisbury Cathedral, boasting the tallest spire in Britain and the best-preserved original *Magna Carta*; the remains of the castle and cathedral at Old Sarum, originally an Iron-Age hill fort; and the four-hundred-year-old Wilton House, built on a priory founded by King Egbert and, latterly, film location for *The Madness of King George*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mrs Brown* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Day 5 - We will make our way back to Woodbridge, stopping on the way in picturesque Bradford on Avon for some free time and a visit to St Laurence's Church, one of the most complete Saxon buildings in existence.

Price: £699 per person based on 2 people sharing. A single supplement is £100 (maximum 6).

The price includes

- Return coach travel
- 4 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast at Best Western Red Lion Hotel in Salisbury
- Coach transfers to and from the excursions
- Services of a tour guide
- Entrances to Avebury, the Alexander Keiller Museum, Salisbury Cathedral, Old Sarum, Devizes Wiltshire Museum, Wilton House, Glastonbury Abbey and Stonehenge.

Further information on the pick-up point and time will be given nearer the date. Please remember to provide an email address and telephone number on your booking form so that we can contact you with this information.

Please note that the trip is dependent on a minimum take-up of 30 people.

To book, please complete the attached form and return it with an SAE and a deposit of **£75 per person** to:

Steve Cant, Oak Tree Cottage, Shop Road, Clopton IP13 6QP

The deposit will be refundable until 30 August 2019. Full payment will be due by 1 April 2020. After 1 April 2020, payment - minus the deposit - is refundable up to 10 May 2020.



Wessex Ho!

THE SUTTON HOO SOCIETY

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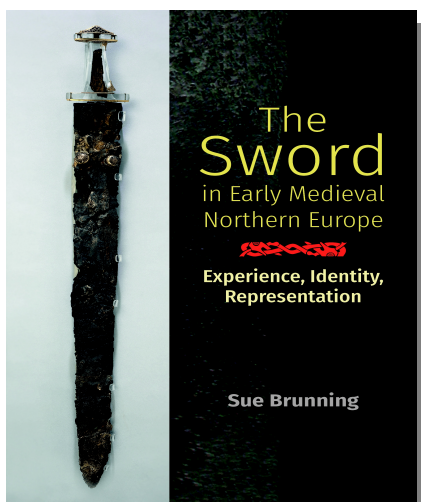
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lycraviking@gmail.com**The Sword in Early Medieval Northern Europe: Experience, Identity, Representation**

By Sue Brunning

A wide-ranging study of the significance of swords throughout the whole Anglo-Saxon period, offering valuable insights into the meaning of and attitude towards swords.

Swords were special in Anglo-Saxon England. Their names, deeds and pedigrees were enshrined in writing. Many were curated for generations, revealed by their worn and mended condition. Few ended their lives as casual discards, placed instead in graves, hoards and watercourses as part of ritualised acts. Contemporary sources leave no doubt that complex social meanings surrounded these weapons, transcending their use on the battlefield; but they have yet to transcend the traditional view that their primary social function was as status symbols. Even now, half a century after the first major study of Anglo-Saxon swords, their wider significance within their world has yet to be fully articulated.

This book sets out to meet the challenge. Eschewing modern value judgements, it focuses instead on contemporary perceptions - exploring how those who made, used and experienced swords really felt about them. It takes a multidisciplinary and holistic approach, bringing together insights from art, archaeology and literature. Comparison with Scandinavia adds further nuance, revealing what was (and was not) distinctive of Anglo-Saxon views of these weapons. Far from elite baubles, swords are revealed to have been dynamic "living" artefacts with their own identities, histories and places in social networks - ideas fuelled by their adaptability, durability and unique role in bloodshed. Sue Brunning is Curator of Early Medieval European Insular Collections at The British Museum.

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