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West Stow, SuffolkHall site. 68 3? Weaving Sword

Coming not from a grave, but from a hall, it seems probable that this was an unbated blade used as a weaving tool, that is, a sword beater; the broken off fragments may include the characteristic blunted projection at the end of the blade. Lumps in certain areas, which might possibly be the remains of textile in contact with (perhaps wrapping) the blade, are too far replaced by contact with the iron to be identified.

This tool was always used for beating up the warp on the warp-weighted loom. Many iron examples have been found in the North; these vary from c.20-50 cm in length, and have a tang for the wooden handle and a projecting tongue-like tip (1). Eight Anglo-Saxon examples of this type found previous to 1958 (lengths from 24-58 cm) are listed by Sonia Chadwick (Hawkes) when discussing the pattern-welded example from Grave D.3 at Finglesham, Kent (2).

The normal position for a loom, when set up inside a house, seems to have been near the doorway, to obtain a good working light; in the Olavius drawing of the Icelandic loom the sword beater is shown leaning against one of the loom-posts (3). When not in use it seems likely that such a heavy tool would be stored, perhaps with the dismantled loom, against a wall.

- 1 M.Hoffmann, The warp-weighted loom (1964) 279ff.
- 2 S.E.Chadwick, "The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Finglesham, Kent", Med.Arch. II (1958) 30-35.
- 3 Hoffmann (1964) figs 53,54.