

Despite the awkwardness of presentation and the jerky style caused by the 'card index syndrome' this book does give us some perspectives of Man during an obscure part of its history. The bibliography is reasonable but it occasionally lacks dates and publishers.

Summing up, this book is a *useful* contribution to our knowledge of Man. The qualification is important because what Young has done is to present us with the basic information that *could* be used in a definitive history of Man – something that we sadly lack. This work is well illustrated and indexed: a necessary thing for a reference book.

Anthony Jackson

Robert B.K. Stevenson, *Christian Sculpture in Norse Shetland*, in *Fróðskaparrit* 28/29. Tórshavn. 1981.

It is difficult for many readers to consult this Faroese journal on any regular basis. When articles appear of direct relevance to the interests of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies, we would hope to print the synopsis which usually accompanies the article.

In this short paper Robert Stevenson deals with Pictish, Celtic and Anglo-Scandinavian Northumbria influences in Shetland during the later 9th – 11th centuries. Both synopsis and illustrations are reprinted from *Fróðskaparrit*.

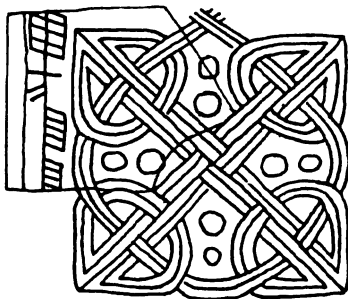


Fig. 1. *Reconstruction of design on carved fragment from White Ness, Shetland.*

SYNOPSIS

This paper suggests that there is acceptable evidence for the continuation of Christian sculpture and Pictish writing in Shetland in the period 800–1050, which Professor Thomas did not consider in his discussion of the finds from St. Ninian's Island and Papil. Following her more recent excavations in Orkney Dr. A. Ritchie has reopened the question of cultural and physical survival of the pre-Norse population in the northern isles of Britain, and of assimilation. A tenth-century date has long been proposed for the Bressay cross-slab with its Pictish inscription in ogam letters, which includes two Gaelic words, and one Norse, and has uniquely : between the words as in runes. A fragment from Papil which clearly resembles tombstones at Iona should also belong to that century. So does the knot-design reconstructed in Fig. 1, for it is only known otherwise from a group of monuments in Scandinavian northern England. Its use of little bosses is a link with the same area. Some ogam letters also survive on this stone.

Features of the sculpture from St. Ninian's Isle are reconsidered, and arguments put for a date no earlier than mid-ninth century rather than before 800, by comparison with Pictish sculpture in east-central Scotland and in Caithness. Although the fine processional scene from Papil is older, it may also belong to the ninth century. The writer agrees with Professor Thomas that, despite the representation of a monumental cross, it too is in the east-coast tradition rather than influenced direct from Iona.

John R. Baldwin

Magnus Magnusson, *Hakon the Old – Hakon Who?*. 28 pp., 8 illus. Largs & District Historical Society, Kirkgate House, Manse Court, Largs, Ayrshire. £1.15 (incl. postage).

Hakon IV of Norway died in Orkney after the indecisive 'Battle' of Largs in 1263. He is not one of the better-known of the post-Viking Norwegian kings and whether he was 'great' or happened just to be king during a period of national 'greatness' is one of the questions which this essay seeks to answer.

In discussing *Hakon the Old – Hakon Who?* Magnus Magnusson examines the documentary sources, especially *Hákonarsaga*; he examines the political situation within Norway and those relationships between Scotland and Norway which led to the confrontation between Hakon the Old and Alexander the Young; and he speculates on the aftermath of Largs and the Treaty of Perth.