

Key Scottish parallels for Manx sculpture.

Manx Sculptured Monuments and the Early Viking Age

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Introduction

The corpus of Manx sculptured monuments carved within a loose date bracket stretching from the fifth to the twelfth century is still little understood. Mann, by nature of its central geographical position in the Irish Sea and British Isles, stands at an insular crossroads and is open to receive influences from the landmasses which immediately surround it and on occasion from yet further afield. Dependent upon which area is dominant at any given moment, the Isle of Man lies open to fresh cultural input which is then absorbed into the local tradition and modified. Sometimes the external influence is so strong or unprecedented that the native culture seems almost overwhelmed before eventually reasserting itself.

Background: The development of Manx sculpture studies

By the 18th century only four Manx sculptures were recorded and then only for the antiquarian interest of their runic inscriptions (Gibson 1722). In the 1820s the published number had already risen to nine (Oswald 1823, 502-8), while by 1841, Kinnebrook, the first author to devote a book solely to the topic, illustrated thirty pieces. J. G. Cumming listed forty four in 1857 by which time new finds were becoming regularly reported (Cumming 1857a; 1857b; 1865a; 1865b; 1865c; 1866). The doyen of Manx sculpture studies, P.M.C. Kermode, whose interest spanned well over half a century, recorded eighty two items in his first catalogue of 1887, a number which rose to include one hundred and seventeen in his magnum opus of 1907 and increased by a further forty four to one hundred and sixty one monuments by the time of his death in 1932 (Kermode 1910-11; 1911-12; 1915-16; 1920-1; 1928-9). Today the total stands at a little over two hundred monuments and fragments.

The intellectual framework

Kermode was the first scholar seriously to attempt an overall understanding of the events that had produced the sculptured series. He divided them into two main groups the 'Celtic' and the 'Scandinavian' (Kermode 1907) and he numbered each item within a running order which he believed represented a chronological list (*ibid.*, 1907). Both these analyses were very much the product of a nineteenth-century scholarly world view and, although a useful approach in its day, may now be seen both as simplistic and inappropriate. Labels such as 'Celtic' and 'Scandinavian' are unhelpful, given that only peoples and their language may be defined as Celtic while the unsuitability of the term Scandinavian is highlighted by the fact that ninth- and tenth-century incomers did not raise Christian monuments before reaching the British Isles, becoming converted and adopting insular traditions of commemoration. If any label is appropriate it must be 'Manx', for the monuments seem all to have been carved here although it is perhaps possible that the stone on which a very few of them were carved may have reached Mann from elsewhere. Subdivisions may be seen most usefully in terms of Early and Late Manx.

Numbering monuments in a chronological list presents its own problems. Kermode did not shie away from the difficulties posed by numbering his corpus. In each new catalogue (Kermode 1887, 1892, 1907, 1924) the accommodation of fresh discoveries produced a renumbered sequence. The current sequence, his fourth attempt inherited by Manx National Heritage (Kermode 1924), is a procrustean bed, too inflexible to happily or meaningfully accommodate the fifty plus discoveries that have come to light since 1924 and is unable to adjust to changes in current perceptions of dating and connections. The present monument identification system is a mess, hallowed only in having been used for three-quarters of a century but still unknown outside Mann where Kermode's 1907 list remains the basic reference.¹

Whatever, the influences exemplified on the monuments seem to have been derived from a great variety of sources both insular and beyond, ultimately from the whole length of the Mediterranean region and across Northern Europe. This is no less than we should expect to a greater or lesser extent, given the diverse and eclectic nature of culture received by Mann over at least the last three millennia. What is also certain is that those incoming influences were moulded and finished in a native tradition, forging older and more recent influences to produce a unique blend of available motifs.

The arrival of Christianity on Mann

Fifth-century ancestors of the Manx were not naturally Christian and, like other insular cultures, were subject to the introduction of Christianity, along with its cultural baggage. The earliest evidence that I have considered, four ogham inscriptions carved

¹ In the forthcoming British Academy corpus of the sculptured monuments of the Isle of Man, it is proposed to adopt a system identifying the monuments using a neutral parish and site label which will also have the benefit of being open-ended. This new numbering system has been used here, for instance Maughold 5:96(67) indicates the British Academy corpus designation of parish church number, 5, followed by :96 - the Manx Museum numbering and finally Kermode's 1907 number (67).

on pillars and boulders, found in the south of the island, show no explicit Christian evidence (Kermode 1907, nos 1- 4) although they are today believed likely to have been carved within a milieu of defined Irish, early-Christian settlement. There can however be no doubt that the sixth-century formulae of the southern, Santon inscription (incorporating horizontal terminal 'i' in each word) - *MONOMENTI AVITI*, 'of the monument of Avitus' (*ibid*, no 34) and also a bi-lingual inscription, from the site of Knock y Doonee in the northern parish of Andreas are explicitly Christian. The latter is incised in Latin and Old Irish, in Roman capitals and ogham script respectively, and may be translated in its Latin form, *AMMECAT[I] FILIVS ROCAT[I] HIC IACIT*, as 'of Ammecatus the son of Rocatus lies here' (Kermode 1910-11, 444-50). Both represent contact with South-west Wales or Cornwall and demonstrate the continuity of the influence of continental trade and Christianity on those communities (Thomas 1971). The introduction, probably also during the sixth century, of simple primary crosses, incised onto unshaped monuments and unprepared surfaces, represents the first explicit sign of Christianity. Significantly, once established, a tradition may continue over a long period and should make us wary of assigning every example of a primary cross to the Early Middle Ages. Only contextual archaeology can confirm the dating. Such monuments and examples recovered early last century were not subjected to current, more rigorous standards of excavation with the result that fewer than a dozen primary and simply decorated slabs, recently recovered from the sites of Keeill Vael, Michael (Trench-Jellicoe 1983) and St Patrick's Isle, German (Trench-Jellicoe, 2002), can be meaningfully stratified. All were recovered from what appear to be secondary and probably tenth-century re-use contexts. Otherwise only the slabs produced by the excavations at Cronk yn How, Balleigh, Lezayre (Bruce & Cubbon 1930) approach this level of scientific archaeology.

Difference between Manx and other insular sculpture traditions

The tradition of sculptural form and style seems to have developed differently and at a different pace in lands surrounding Mann. Church furniture apart, Northumbria initially produced fairly small incised and false-relief shaped slabs before creating the High Cross form at Hexham, Bewcastle and Ruthwell, by the mid-eighth century (Cramp 1984; Bailey & Cramp 1988; Allen and Anderson 1903, part 3). The Scots of Dal Riata, mainly under the auspices of the Columban *familia*, also produced small slabs before developing their quintessential monuments, the relief-carved crosses of St Oran, St John and St Martin on Iona (RCAHMS 1982) and at the related Islay sites of Kildalton and Kilnave in the middle to second half of the eighth century (RCAHMS 1984). Pictish Christian sculpture (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3), perhaps borrowing its initial forms at the beginning of the eighth century from Northumbria or more probably from the earlier Ninianic tradition of South-west Scotland (Trench-Jellicoe 1998), tended to enlarge the slab as time went on, eventually creating during the ninth century, large examples, some quite huge - the Pictish equivalent of the High Cross, encapsulating a page of manuscript in stone - before adding, sparingly, the free-standing cross to their repertoire towards the end of this period (Henderson 1999). Ireland, following Iona,



Figure 1: Maughold fragment of an altar frontal with *chi-rho* and *omega*.



Figure 2: Maughold slab with encircled hexafoil, crosses and three inscriptions.

seems to have developed the high cross form only in the ninth century before which the smaller slab was in vogue (Lionard 1961; Harbison 1992).

Early literacy at Maughold monastery

On Mann, as in Wales (Nash-Williams 1950), the small incised slab seems to have remained the traditional monument well into the ninth century, even at the Manx monastic centre of Maughold where they seem to have drawn inspiration from nearby South-west Scotland (Trench-Jellicoe 1980; 1998) and perhaps also, in a limited way, from Northumbria (Kermode 1907, nos 25, 117) as well as Ireland (*ibid*, no 28). Away from this centre, primary cross slabs and similar monuments displaying some embellishment of the simpler form – the addition of bar terminals and trifucation of the terminals – together with simple outline crosses seem to have been the order of the day (*ibid*, nos 5-14). Maughold (and Ronaldsway, Malew, if it can be shown to be pre-ninth century (Neely 1940; Laing & Laing 1980-9)) alone show sophistication. At Maughold, sculpture is distinctively monastic in style with evidence of a fragmentary altar frontal currently incised only with the remains of a double-encircled cross of arcs with an attached *chir-ho* monogram and a Greek letter W, *omega*, carved to the upper right, which, almost certainly, originally balanced with a Greek letter A, *alpha*, in a lost section to the left (Kermode 1907, no 21) (Figure 1). Also at Maughold is a multiply-inscribed small slab with a triple-encircled hexafoil, the circle containing a damaged text (*ibid*, no 27) cryptically recording (I believe) '[in the name of] Jesus Christ' that ARNEIT was not only a priest and bishop in the island but also an abbot (Trench-Jellicoe, in preparation). Beneath the main motif stand two further inscriptions flanking crosses incorporating a later form of the *chi-rho* monogram. One message asks us to be aware of the cross as the image of Christ (*CRUX XPI/IMAGENEM*) and the other is carved 'in the name of Jesus Christ' (*IN IHV XPI/ NOMINE*) (Figure 2). This level of literacy and sophistication is unlikely to be encountered elsewhere other than at a monastic site. It is possible also to imagine that most Irish monasteries of the eighth century were not much more sculpturally sophisticated than Maughold and that it is only after this date, as Mann seems to drift apart culturally under the influence of Viking pressures, that the more status-conscious free-standing monuments began, typically, to be erected on Irish monastic sites (Edwards 1990).

Vikings on Mann: How did the arrival of the Vikings affect Mann?

It was by such a community that a Viking presence was first encountered on the Isle of Man. The process of Viking-age land-taking and pagan burial practice has been explored in general by David Wilson (1974; 1989-97) and site-specifically by David Freke (Freke, 2002) but little is known of the mechanisms by which pagan incomers were brought to Christianity. Questions demand answers and blanks need filling. Did the extent of Viking settlement overwhelm earlier Manx Christianity? Was the monastery of Maughold disabled in a similar way to that recorded in the Annals which laconically note the commencement of disruption in Britain (AU s.a. 794.3, 796.7) and amplify the

report in Ireland (AU sa. 797.2), at Lindisfarne (ASC 793) and on Iona (AI 795, AU s.a. 801.9, 806.8)? Was their effect similar to the alien pressure which caused Abbot Cellach of Iona, in the year 807 (AU s.a. 806.4), to remove most of his remaining monks to Kells and to rebuild the monastery at his new site? Was the local monastic community murdered during greedy attacks in search of accumulated loot or did monastic Maughold rather wither and die, unable to sustain itself, robbed of its supporting estates by land-hungry Vikings? How did the Manx of the Viking Age eventually come to produce such a distinctive and lavish series of large slab monuments (and eventually their own version of the high cross (Kermode 1907, nos 108, 109)) apparently out of the blue? Most sensibly we might ask why and how a fair number of high-quality sculptures were carved and how they relate to other sculptures found at various sites. There are no native written records to help us understand this period, no dedicated annals or chronicles appear for another two and a half centuries (Broderick 1979) and the Isle of Man passes virtually unnoticed from generation to generation for centuries in the written records of surrounding lands. But we do possess the monuments themselves which we can use as documents in an attempt to comprehend the religious, social and political history of this period on Mann.

A Pictish-style sub-group

Amongst the more sophisticated members of the group that Kermode designated 'Celtic' are small numbers of similar, apparently related monuments, sometimes confined to a single site, interrelated by tricks of design or repeated motifs (Trench-Jellicoe 1999a). One of the more puzzling of these sub-groups is focussed on Maughold and includes half a dozen items reminiscent of the distinctive look of Pictish sculpture and displaying traits found on slabs on the eastern side of Scotland - east of Druim Alban. Isolated far out in the Irish Sea with no necessary discernible connection manifest in between (links particularly absent amongst sculpture along the Irish Sea littoral of South-west Scotland) it is difficult to explain this phenomenon on Mann. Most of the monuments are larger than those hitherto examined at Maughold although certainly not all of them are so. Some display monastic features and the composition of the stone used suggests that a few, at least, came from the same quarries close to Maughold used by eighth-century sculptors rather than the better quality materials from further afield used by tenth-century Manx carvers.

Maughold 5:96(67)A - the Saints' Slab

The foremost sculpture amongst this small group is a fairly large, worn and damaged slab of lighter blue slate (Kermode 1907, no 67). It was recovered in the late 1850s (Oswald 1860, 206-7) from a secondary context where it had been re-used, lying face downwards, acting as a stair tread, in an external flight leading up to Maughold church gallery, a structure which is thought to have been built around 1717 (Radcliffe & Radcliffe 1979, 46). The ringed cross which fills the only carved face is plain but the lower quadrant panels each contain parallel but not identical mirrored registers of



Figure 3: Maughold 5A decorated with clerics, horsemen and beasts.

iconographic decoration (Figure 3). The upper registers contain two seated clerics facing each other across the cross shaft. In the middle register two lively riders steer towards the cross while the bottom register contains asymmetrical representations of quadrupeds, probably intended to represent hound and lion. The beast to the left stalks up the shaft, head partly lowered, with lithe body, expanding chest and a long tail trailing behind, curling at the tip. The beast to the lower right is similar in form but walks with his back to the cross shaft, head turned backwards looking along his back towards his long rising, S-curved tail which terminates in a bob. Apart from the turned head the beast is reminiscent of the lion in the Book of Durrow (Meehan 1996, 62; fol 191v). It is noticeable that the elements effect a diminuendo as they descend from the large clerics above to the small beasts beneath, evidence here of a hierarchy of size reflecting significance and in which the dominant cross symbolizes Christ and His Salvation.

The clerics (Figure 4), who represent Christ in His earthly kingdom, are thus the next most important element to Christ, honouring and touching the cross to confirm the point and they clearly act in concert as a single complementary unit across the shaft register. The riders beneath come hierarchically next in the design and also represent a unitary composition, each horse, portrayed as if rising, touches the cross shaft with its leading limb and both rider and mount gaze forward towards the cross (Figure 5). Their function is less straightforwardly explained than that of the clerics above: they either represent Everyman (that is the viewer) travelling the world at large and, as such, symbolically journeying through life subservient to the clergy above who instruct and who intercede on their behalf. Alternatively, they perhaps represent the dispersal of the 'Good News' of the Christian message. Although that explanation appears less likely in this context, it may have formed part of the original model (Trench-Jellicoe 1999b, appendix 2). The viewer seems impelled to recognise that this group, like the clerical figures above, accepts and acknowledges Christ's salvational message signified by the dominant Cross. The lowest register must also, it seems, be considered as one unit in which both beasts are detached from the cross shaft and locked in a predatory interaction in which the beast to the left (Figure 6) stalks that to the right who watches over his shoulder (Figure 7). Such a scene represents the lower orders of creation – disassociated (because turned away) from Christ's saving grace but symbolically it is likely also to represent human susceptibility and the lower sensibilities of mankind. The beast to the left portrays the *modus* of sin while that to the right represents the human predicament, needing continually to be aware that s/he is under siege to ever-present sin, which awaits an opportunity to creep up unexpectedly and betray the human soul. The portrayal is fortunately not unique, similar animal scenes exist on programmed monuments elsewhere in insular sculpture.

On aggregate the message carried by the iconography of this cross can be seen to instruct the viewer how the Christian message should be perceived and its importance for the individual's salvation on several levels: through intercession, acknowledgement and care of the soul, all under the prominent symbol of Christ's saving grace. Interestingly, however, the designer did not leave its interpretation to chance and although the salient evidence is now damaged to the point of illegibility, the surface originally included three or perhaps four inscriptions, fragments of letters from two of which yet survive. Two of the inscriptions were placed symmetrically on either side of



Figure 4: Maughold 5, left cleric with damaged inscription on cross-shaft.



Figure 5: Maughold 5 – mounted rider.



Figure 6: Maughold 5 – left quadruped.



Figure 7: Maughold 5 – right quadruped.

the shaft at the top of the flanking panels above the heads of the clerics. That to the left is now completely lost although the deeply incised ruled guide lines for the lost lettering are visible. In the right panel more remains and the message bespeaks sophistication, being carved on three lines, in two different scripts (Figure 8). The upper lines contain a smaller, cursive script of which four or five fragments and almost complete letters remain. The lower line contains tall serified minuscule letterforms of which eleven vertical elements survive. Nothing of the sense of the inscription is recoverable but the presence of two different scripts indicates that not only was the monument's iconography conceived in hierarchical terms but that the written information was also structured in a hierarchy of scripts, a method of working normally only reserved for contemporary luxury manuscripts. The remaining inscription is carved onto the cross shaft in between the clerics. While it must be suspected that this was originally a multi-lined composition laid out within a frame, it is possible that what we are looking at represented just two separate lines of script each within a cartouche. Only the left part of the upper line now remains legible, where three sections of a delicate and stylish capital letter S with narrow serified terminals survive. To the right is a short central section of a vertical line and to the right again a very short vertical section of a third letter. Some curves and lines below, also perhaps sections of a couple of letters, appear on the badly damaged surface. The identified letter, S, seems to be the initial letter of a syntagma and the three letters together may guessingly represent *SCS*. If so, they may originally have had an abbreviation bar above to indicate they formed the contraction of *SANCTUS*, an appropriate designation in this context for the seated figures to left and right. The form of these letters appears most similar to the upper script above the right cleric.

The production of this cross slab at Maughold marks a sophistication of practice on several levels. For apparently the first time on Mann we have a large slab, carved in relief with a ringed cross, bearing explicit iconography and with labelling of some of that iconography, which invites the expectation that the viewer is literate. This highlights a huge jump underscoring a considerable advance in technique and understanding in the use of sculpture. But what was the source and what the stimulus for the new message?

Scottish sources for the Maughold Saints' Slab

The manifestation of such an important development should make us initially look to the countries round about to seek the source. The most suitable area, providing a raft of comparable features, is Scotland. Eastern Scotland changed its name and the concepts of nationality underlying that name towards the end of the ninth century from Pictland to Alba (Broun 1999; Herbert 2000) and that change itself is probably part of the wider pattern of adjustment in the British Isles which eventually produced large relief sculpture on Mann. As I have tried to demonstrate in a recent paper (Trench-Jellicoe 1999b), the upheavals caused by Viking contact with Britain brought about significant change as a response. The Columban community on Iona is recorded moving its administrative headquarters to Kells in 807 (AU s.a. 806.8) but sculptural evidence in Scotland indicates that part of the *familia lae* also went eastwards, settling for a period in Pictland, probably on monastic sites in the regions of Fortriu, Athol and Circinn (mainly Perthshire and Angus), where they seem to have set up a mission

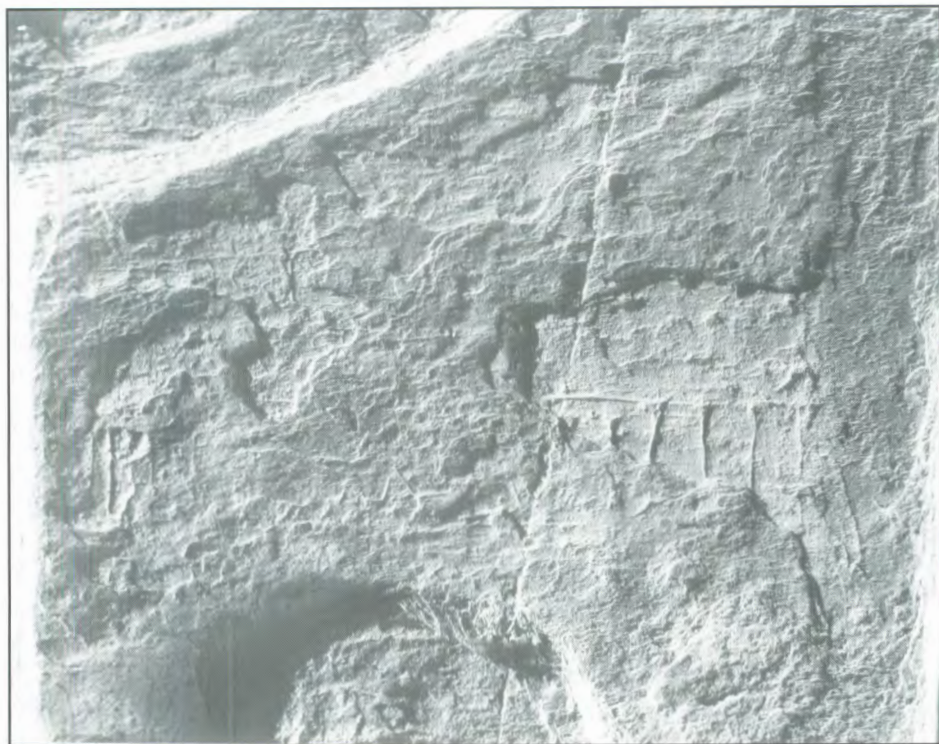


Figure 8: Maughold 5 – lower right panel inscription in two scripts.

headquarters with the express purpose of converting the pagan Viking settlers and eventually recouping their patrimony in Western Scotland (Trench-Jellicoe 1999b). Some time was to pass before this mission was able to make an appreciable impact but probably by the middle of the ninth century their main outposts were being re-established on Iona, on Canna (*ibid*, 617 - 18) and at other sites including Maughold. As the whole of the British Isles came under siege by turns during the ninth century it must have become clear to the well-organised and now mission-orientated Columban *familia*, that the challenge of reclaiming their own *paruchia* could also be widened into other areas of Viking settlement and thus be seen as a contingent opportunity. Recorded Columban exploits in Iceland are one example (Jennings 1998, 33) but the Irish Sea province was closer to home and also a logical extension of the movement in Western Scotland. Later in the century and into the following century Southern Scotland and Northern England and further afield would surely have come within their ambit.

In the light of these observations, slabs with similar iconography to that discussed at Maughold occur on sites in Perthshire and Angus. Although the overall programme may differ, the upper section of the back of a slab from Dunfallandy, south of Pitlochry (Allan & Anderson 1903, part 3, 286 - 9), carries a representation of facing, seated clerics, similar to those in the Manx scene. Here they flank a small cross mounted between them in a low socket which also frames sufficient space to incorporate the rider's head in the panelled scene below (Figure 9). A slab recovered in the 1920s at Fowlis Wester (Waddell 1932), the second of four monuments from the site, also has a pair of seated clerics flanking the cross shaft, portrayed as at Maughold. This scene is complex in that it has an angel suspended above one seat while the other figure is flanked, unusually in insular art at this date, by stylised desert trees (Figure 10). This monument, like Maughold's, is carved on one face only. Other examples, such as the seated, facing figures on the front of St Vigeans no 7, and those standing on Kirriemuir 1C, Angus (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, 268 - 9, 227), and framed in the upper pediment of a slab at Nigg, Easter Ross (*ibid*, 75 - 83; Henderson 2001, 120 - 6), show the clerics receiving a loaf of bread from the beak of a bird or breaking it in the *cofractio* manner mentioned by Adamnán in his *Life of St Columba*. Such scenes may be paralleled in copies of early icons still preserved at the monastery of St Anthony in the Egyptian desert (Dalrymple 1997, 420 - 3, illus) and are readily recognised as portraying the meeting of Saints Paul and Anthony, a vignette illustrating a passage from St Jerome's *Life of St Paul, the Hermit* (Waddell 1936, 48 - 9) in which a half loaf is the gift of God, delivered each day by a raven, to feed St Paul and becomes doubled so that he may also feed his guest. The central loaf also symbolises the body of Christ in the Eucharist and the dominant cross that replaces it in the scenes at Maughold, Dunfallandy and Fowlis Wester is yet another symbol for Christ's salvation. Maughold may therefore be seen as an outlier of this specifically Pictish, ninth-century iconography. Moreover Saints Paul and Anthony were regarded in the early church as the founders of monasticism and this is also particularly relevant for their presence at Maughold in the early Viking Age.

The representation at Maughold of the lively rider, with the horse portrayed as if rising, is also derived from a specifically Pictish model of a high-stepping horse, found



Figure 9: Dunfallandy, Perthshire – reverse, saints flanking a cross.



Figure 10: Fowlis wester 2 – saints flanking a cross.

ubiquitously throughout eastern Scotland (Allen & Anderson, part 3) and, as we have seen, juxtaposed at Dunfallandy with Saints Paul and Anthony. The lowermost scene with two quadrupeds on the Maughold slab is a version of a scene otherwise found in the lowermost cross arm panel, immediately above the three shaft panels on the east face of the a'Chill Cross, Canna (Trench-Jellicoe 1999, appendix 2) where a graceful predatory quadruped stalks a thick-set lion with bobbed tail who, similarly to the Maughold beast, looks over its shoulder (Figure 11). I have elsewhere dated the a'Chill Cross to the middle of the ninth century (*ibid*, 617) and considered it specifically in the context of Viking conversion iconography in the Western Isles (*ibid*, appendix 2). Although both lie within a similar milieu, it is stylistically certain that the Canna monument predates by a generation, the production of the Maughold Saints Slab. This Manx slab should be viewed as a multi-valent monument, bearing layers of meaning in its iconographic programme which underscore the importance of belief in the Christian message and warning the viewer of the consequences of rejecting it.

Perhaps the most significant parallel in Scotland for the Maughold slab is the monument at Fowlis Wester but connections with other Strathearn sculpture also exists. The Market Cross at Creiff, a few kilometres to the west of Fowlis, is believed originally to have come from the nearby valley site of Strowan (Hall *et al.* 2000). Here, the form of the ringed cross is closely similar to that carved on the Maughold slab and in the middle of the cross shaft is preserved a badly damaged panel containing the remnants of a rare inscription (Forsyth & Trench-Jellicoe 2000, 166-8) (Figure 12). This is paralleled only in the Perth region by a panel on the nearby and important Dupplin Cross (Forsyth 1995) which is almost certainly a product of royal patronage. It is likely that all these monuments date to the second half of the ninth century. Further it is inconceivable that two cross monuments such as Fowlis Wester 2 and Strowan/Crieff, standing a few kilometres apart should not themselves be related in some cogent way and both be understood to have influenced complementary elements of iconography and literacy present on the Maughold slab. It seems most probable, therefore, that Maughold was in receipt of conversion iconography, displaying links with other Columban programmes derived from a monastic source in the Strathearn area and such evidence should link Viking evangelization on the Isle of Man with a Columban mission based primarily in Pictland. Maughold became, in all probability, an outreach mission base for the conversion of Mann in the mid to later ninth century.

Other Pictish-style monuments at Maughold

The Saints' Slab does not stand alone at Maughold in demonstrating Pictish links although it is undoubtedly the most convincing example. Amongst other monuments, Maughold 14:53(29)A (Kermode 1907, no 29, P1 XI), also carved in distinctively coloured orange stone won from pre-Viking quarries, shares a feature only encountered in Pictland, a cross form known as the quadrilobate cross,² found otherwise in the British Isles only on a restricted group of ninth-century monuments in Perthshire, Angus and Kincardine.³ Another particularly Scottish cross type, executed using a

²The quadrilobate form of cross-ring was first formally identified by RBK Stevenson (1958, 42). Unlike a standard ring which encircles the crossing, quadrilobate types have a narrow, individual circle completing each arm pit.

³A non-exhaustive list of quadrilobate crosses would include Fordoun, Aberlemno 2, Eassie, Meikle 1, Meikle 5, Rossie Priory, (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, figs 217, 227, 231, 310, 314, 322).



Figure 11: Canna, E face – stalking beasts.



Figure 12: Crieff, Perthshire – main face with damaged inscription panel on the shaft.
Courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth-& Kinross Council, Scotland.

compass and with a broad ring, all framed within a rectangular double-outlined panel, is found both on Maughold 26:51(23)A (Kermode 1907, no 23, Pl IX) and at an outlying keeill site at Ballavarkish in the most northerly Manx parish of Bride. Both monuments were carved in a similar slate probably at a slightly later date than those stones previously examined. From their form it appears they served as altar frontals. The Ballavarkish slab fragment (Bride.Ballavarkish 1:52(-); Kermode 1911 - 12, 69-74) is particularly interesting for two reasons. Firstly it seems likely that Ballavarkish keeill stood on the way leading to a point of embarkation from the northern tip of the island for the short sea crossing to Isle of Whithorn and beyond (Trench-Jellicoe 1980, 202-3) and secondly, the carved front of the monument is embellished with a series of graffiti inscriptions which in all probability represent a record of personal prayer asking for safe passage whose carving was perhaps executed over a period of time. Six incised names including Lugni, Diprui, Condilici, Mailorei and perhaps Bred or Bren, seem to represent Old Irish forms. Most significantly, one of them, Mailorei, records himself as 'SCRIBA', 'scribe', an office sufficiently significant in the monastic hierarchy at other sites to warrant recording amongst obits appearing in the Irish Annals (Figure 13). All but one of the names is preceded by a cross (Kermode, *op cit*), each of a different design which almost certainly represents an individual signature. This is of great interest as the scribe possesses the most elaborate and imposing cross. Further, apparently also associated with a cross, is a lightly-cut ogham graffito, carved in the left cross arm. This is a significant feature which holds implications for dating in a late Manx/Picto-Albanach context. We cannot divine how soon after the altar frontal was erected the graffiti were added but it almost certainly lies within a later ninth- to tenth-century bracket and this evidence may serve to confirm that Maughold continued to function as a monastery into the tenth century.

Conclusions

What is highlighted by the evidence explored here is the existence of a period of approximately a hundred years which lies within the earlier phase of the Viking Age, between the Early Manx phase and those later monuments showing evidence of Viking influence in motif or design. It spans a time of conversion when it is difficult to detect any overt Viking influence and motifs and methods are drawn from pre-existing insular iconographic programmes and abstract design which were modified and developed to suit current requirements.

Little is known of how the site first developed at Maughold or of its early connections although some relationship with Ireland may be suspected to form the background of Armagh's transparent attempt during the late seventh- and early eighth-century to frame a claim to suzerainty over the religious life of the island. This may be hypothesised from the lengthy Chapter 23 of Muirchú's *Life of Patrick* (Hood 1978, 9, 21, 72-4, 93-4) which sketches a tale of confrontation between Maccuil, an Ulster brigand, and St Patrick, his conversion and a penitential journey in which, manacled, he is carried in a skin boat without oars, thus at the mercy of the elements, to "the land assigned to him by God" (*ibid*, 94), to Evonia which here equates with Mann (*ibid*, 94).

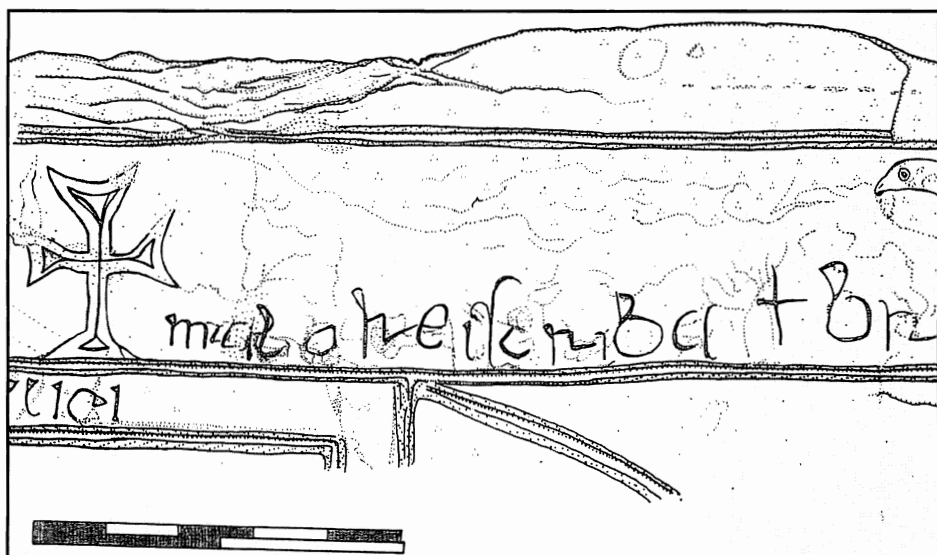


Figure 13: Ballavarkish, Bride – graffito inscription “MAILLOREI SCRIBA.”

who, having recovered a key from the belly of a fish to release him from his gyves, train him in the faith so that he may eventually succeed them to become both prelate and bishop (*ibid*, 94). The story appears to be a blatant attempt to legitimise a direct hierarchical connection between Mann and the Coarbs of Patrick and, although it must be viewed in terms of the politics of power in eighth-century Armagh, some early link may underlie the claim however tenuous, contrived and miraculous the tale. Even if we lacked early, sculptural evidence (Trench-Jellicoe 1998), from this story we may extrapolate that Maughold not only existed and functioned as a monastery but had already become an important, and presumably the focal, site on Mann by the mid seventh century although no direct evidence for a specific Irish connection is indicated by the sculpture on the Maughold site. Armagh's pretensions had certainly been overtaken by events by the second half of the ninth century when, within a radically changed insular polity, Mann and particularly Maughold appears to become a cog within another major, international organisation.

Although it is still difficult to draw together all the relevant evidence for influences on the Isle of Man and particularly Maughold in the mid to second half of the ninth and early tenth century it is significant that the island was in receipt of purposive and directed influence from a centre in Pictland, probably in Strathearn, which encapsulated what appears to be a deliberate iconography of conversion developed, in this case by the Columban mission. But it is also worth recognising that this was likely to be only one of several foci in Scotland responsible for implementing the planning of a central mission control of a highly organised Columban *familia* perhaps masterminded from Dunkeld (Bannerman 1999, 73-5, 91-4; Broun 1999) although the surviving sculptural remains from that site are neither plentiful nor notable (Allen & Anderson, 1903, part 3, 317-19). Sculptural evidence indicates that another centre, responsible to the mission for a section of the Western Isles was present in Angus (Trench-Jellicoe 1999b, 618-25) and sculptural links should also make us suspect that yet another mission station existed for Northern Scotland and the Northern Isles, possibly established at Rosemarkie but more probably at one or more centres along the coastal ridge of Easter Ross between Nigg and Tarbat. Thus, working in concert with other centres, Maughold was in receipt of a range of shared iconography and presumably also susceptible to an accompanying programme of conversion as part of an overall drive to christianise pagan incomers.

This early phase of the Viking Age seems to have lasted until a time when the laity had absorbed at least the fundamentals of the faith, permitting time for accompanying relevant social adjustments in the status of the religion amongst the incomers, and allowing sufficient concurrent time to elapse for the synthesis of alien artistic influence with the native product to create the production of a confident and appropriate new decorative style to emerge in sculpture on Mann. The new vibrant, full-blown Late Manx style, blending a limited iconography and a restricted range of abstract ornament from disparate external sources with elements we can now see were already present in a native tradition originally brought into Mann from Scotland. This development paralleled a layered process similar to that encountered in areas of Scandinavian settlement in Northern England which produced a parallel series of Anglo-Scandinavian monuments during the tenth century.

Nevertheless on Mann, the first century of Scandinavian presence, spanning the ninth and early tenth century, witnessed a steady sculptural development in its own right before the advent of the tenth-century synthesis which probably took place in a secular milieu of socially-aware local chieftainly commissions rather than in an ecclesiastical environment (Trench-Jellicoe 1999a). This manifestation may be traced amongst small groups of sophisticated, decorated monuments that Kermodé (1907, 1 - 37) included in his 'Celtic' dustbin but which can today be seen to belong within the earlier phases of the Viking Age. Such observations allow us to sub-divide the Late Manx group into an initial and a later phase, the latter sculptures substantially encapsulating those Manx monuments which Kermodé (1907, 38-70) designated 'Scandinavian'.

Postscript

Continuing work in both Mann, Western and Northern Scotland on this intervening group, carved within the Viking Age but apparently showing only insular traits, offers an exciting prospect for understanding a wide range of political, social and religious developments in the Irish Sea province at a time of few written records.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mark Hall, Andrew Johnson, Douglas MacLean, Basil Megaw and David Wilson for their help and comments.

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Abbreviations

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 ASC *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, Plummer C, (ed, on an edition by J Earle) 1892:
Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel (Oxford).
 AU *Annals of Ulster*, MacAirt S and MacNiocaill G, (eds) 1983, (Dublin).

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