Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art

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5   Irish Monumental Sculpture: the Dating Evidence Provided by Linguistic Forms

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In 1987, Dr Isabel Henderson published a paper entitled 'Early Christian monuments of Scotland displaying crosses but no other ornament'. In this she emphasised the testimony of cross-inscribed stones as indicators of the existence of Christian faith in areas for which we often lack documentary evidence. She also stressed the major difficulties in dating these monuments. In both of these observations, as she herself makes clear, she was preceded by Dr Ann Hamlin in her 1982 article on similar stones from Ireland. Within the Irish corpus, however, is a sub-group consisting of those stones which both display crosses and are carved with inscriptions in the ogam script. About these, Hamlin wrote 'it is from language that the best hope of dating comes' (Hamlin 1982, 283). My purpose in this article is to look at the particulars of such a dating technique in the hopeful expectation that the results from such a study might be applied to monuments without inscriptions – either in Ireland or elsewhere.

For historical reasons, the class of ogam stones ornamented with cross forms, amounting to rather more than 10% of R. A. S. Macalister's 1945 corpus, has been underestimated, partly, it must be said, because of the approach of Macalister himself. In both the ogam stone corpus (1945, iv–ix) and in his book *The Archaeology of Ireland* (1949, 328–43) Macalister argued that the ogam alphabet was invented by druids who had learnt the Chalcidic version of the Greek alphabet in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, probably in northern Italy. At this stage, however, the alphabet consisted of a series of hand signals based on the five fingers. For Macalister, it was not until approximately the sixth century AD that ogam began to be inscribed on stones (1949, 334) but even at this stage, the primary purpose of such inscriptions was a magical invocation of the deceased rather than a simple commemoration. In addition, he accepted Eoin MacNeill's argument that

a number of inscriptions referred to gods rather than to human ancestors (Macalister 1949, 339; *cf.* Mac-Neill 1906).

According to Macalister's hypothesis, as Christianity began to spread, the missionaries of the new faith occasionally accommodated the pagan script. More commonly, the Christians came into conflict with the pagans and with what Macalister termed 'implacable hostility' (1949, 338) set about neutralising the pagan magic of the stones by carving the sign of a cross upon them. Macalister did acknowledge that in some cases the cross was carved contemporaneously with the inscription (a feature he saw as a later development in the ogam stone-carving tradition) and in such instances, he felt, the cross would be found at the head of the stone. In others, however, where the cross is cut about 4 ft (1.25m) from the ground, he saw this as subsequent carving on an already erect stone. In still others, he felt that the stone must have been thrown down, the cross carved on the butt-end and then re-erected with the inscription reading downwards into the ground and the cross triumphant above it (Macalister 1949, 338–39).

Several features of this model were criticised by both linguists and archaeologists of Macalister's own day, including Kenneth Jackson (1946), Daniel Binchy (1946) and M. J. O'Kelly (1945). In 1961, Eoin MacWhite suggested that some ogam letters might derive from Christian symbols and drew attention to the existence of what linguists had identified as an Irish vernacular version of the Christian *hic iacit* formula – the word ><OI or KOI (MacWhite 1960–1; Marstrander 1911; Pokorny 1915). In 1982, Hamlin argued that 'in at least ten cases' of the some 44 cross-ornamented ogam stones, there was evidence that the cross had been added later. 'In others, there is no indication or priority of ogham or cross and they may be contemporary' (Hamlin 1982, 285).

Amongst historians, Macalister's views still remain influential and have recently been endorsed by Daibhí Ó Cróinín in his 1995 book *Early Medieval Ireland*, the first general textbook on early Irish history to be written in 25 years. Ó Cróinín states (1995, 35):

> In some instances, of course, crosses appear on monuments but the evidence suggests that most, if not all, of these were added much later to monuments erected in the fifth and sixth centuries, monuments which originally only bore inscriptions... But though the evidence cannot be pushed too far, there is no escaping the fact that the ogam stones reflect a society in which the pre-Christian practice of memorial in stone has remained totally impervious to the influence of Christianity and this despite the fact that the epigraphic habit is usually believed to have derived from contact with the Roman world.

In archaeological circles, in contrast, there has been a tendency to follow Hamlin's lead: both Michael Herity and John Sheehan have published dates for certain cross forms deriving from the existence of ogam inscriptions upon the same stone. Sheehan (1990, 168) sees the presence of ogam as indicating a sixth-century date while Herity (1995, 90, 150, 156, 310) argues for the first half of the seventh century. Nancy Edwards (1990, 103–4) quotes Hamlin *in extenso* in her account of ogams in her 1990 textbook while Harold Mytum (1992, 38, 54–6, 66–9, 96), without referring explicitly to either Hamlin or Macalister, places the ogam stones within the transitional phase between paganism and Christianity and agrees that in some cases the crosses are contemporary with the inscriptions. In an important article, which adds much new data to the debate, Fionnbarr Moore endorses Hamlin's views while pointing out that 'linguistically early ogham stones are, in the main, not cross-inscribed', and, contrariwise, that the absence of explicitly Christian features on a slab 'does not necessarily indicate a monument with a pagan background' (Moore 1998, 26–7).

The position of Charles Thomas in relation to the paganism or otherwise of ogam monuments has varied over the last fifteen years although it should be said that his view that the *invention* of the ogam script was a pagan one has remained constant. (I deal with this issue below.) In 1987 Thomas wrote:

> The proposition now is that the single, marked, memorial stone by an actual burial (or not) arose in fifth-century Ireland *because* of the spread of Christianity. The overall distribution of the Ogham stones is in the broad region most affected by *romanitas* and the non-Patrician spread of Christianity in Ireland. The common formulaic epitaph with name and origin – 'Of A, of the son of B' – fulfilled a need, perhaps no more than social assertion, arising

out of the Christian and Roman contact... (Thomas 1987, 8)

He then points out that in Roman Britain, the inscribed tombstone was by no means universal and only four (and those dubious) have ever been claimed as Christian. This he sees as undermining the proposition that the appearance of Latin-inscribed memorials, which he views as making their appearance in western and northern Britain by 500, automatically come from Gaul. He continues:

> ...Reconsidering this puzzle, the writer would air a suspicion that use of Christian memorial stones in late fifth- and sixth-century Atlantic Britain may actually have been inspired from Ireland and not vice versa ... Is it just possible that the Late Roman personal memorial, tenuously conveyed as an idea to Ireland, took root there for particular reasons and was later reconveyed to the provinces where it had originated. (Thomas 1987, 8–9)

And finally:

> In those parts of Ireland where Ogham memorials are least common (that is, the north and extreme west) we encounter another and ultimately more important form: the uninscribed cross-ornamented stone. Its genesis is obscure as is the chronology ... By the sixth century we should have Ogham-inscribed stones that, like British memorials, exhibit simple crosses. (Thomas 1987, 9)

These various statements are not (to me) entirely explicit – what are the precise connotations of the word 'should' in the last sentence for example? – and they involve certain very large assumptions about a range of issues which are the subject of much scholarly debate. It does appear, however, that in this article, Thomas is following Hamlin's line in assuming that a percentage of the ogam stones had crosses which were carved contemporaneously with the inscriptions. In 1994, however, in his book *And Shall These Mute Stones Speak?*, Thomas reverts to the Macalister doctrine: Irish ogam stones are too early to be affected by Christianity and 'anything else on these stones, like incised crosses, represents later additions unconnected with the epitaphs' (1994, 69). A different formulation, found in his latest article on the subject, appears to represent a mixture of Macalister's views on the role of pagan *literati* in creating ogam monuments and Jane Stevenson's article (1989) on the evidence for pre-Christian literacy in Ireland:

> The first applications of ogham to stone, in the form of simple memorials to individual dead, saying no more than *A son of B; of A, of a son of the tribe of B; A son of B of the tribe C* (and further variations thereof) are not in themselves datable; only context may sometimes provide a clue ... If the inferred and partly recorded minor settlements of Munster Déisi in

south-west Wales began near the end of the fourth century AD, there are a few menhir-like pillars in Pembrokeshire with ogham script (alone) and demonstrably Irish names that are probably for non-Christians and should be assigned to the early fifth century ... I want to present ogham as, to all intents, a parallel to Roman writing; and the latter as an innovation already entrenched in a large part of pre-400 Ireland. Any distribution of literacy is not automatically also a distribution of contemporary Christianity (Thomas 1998, 10–11).

And in conclusion:

Our growing awareness of the impact of *romanitas* on early Ireland must reinforce the view that the very idea of the inscribed memorial, the stone proclaiming the name and filiation of the deceased for those who could read to read and appreciate, was taken from the pagan Roman empire (and various ways in which this could have happened can be left aside) ... Ogham was surely invented by *fili* [sic – presumably for O. Ir. nom. pl. *filid*], the Irish *literati*, before and beyond Christianity and originally for this precise end ... All in all, one could very well argue that Ireland's literary revolution began in Munster, within the Roman period and that only such a revolution could have enabled the surprisingly early eremitic monasticism of the fifth century to have taken root (Thomas 1998, 15).

As I understand it, this last interpretation sees the invention of ogam as being the result of (pagan) contacts between the Roman world and Ireland and that the pattern of ogam stone distribution reflects a pagan Irish world affected by *romanitas*. At some subsequent point, the 'romanisation' of this area results in its early adoption of an extreme form of Christianity. The argument seems to imply a belief that the majority of all Irish ogam stones precede and are separated chronologically from the arrival of Christianity, an event which is said to have occurred in the fifth century or before. Such a suggestion would imply an extremely early date for the creation of the vast bulk of Irish ogam stones and one which is at variance with all other recent scholarship on the subject (see, in particular McManus 1991, 40–1 where the most probable date for the vast bulk of ogam inscriptions is said to be the fifth and sixth centuries). It is tantalising, therefore, that Thomas has left the 'various ways in which this could have happened' to the reader's speculations.

I should point out here a potential source of confusion; Anthony Harvey (1987) (by implication) and Jane Stevenson (1989) have argued that the invention of the ogam alphabet might be as early as the third century AD. Whether or not this is the case (and the heavy degree of Roman influence in Ireland which both authors postulate was not substantiated by the conclusions of a recent 1997 conference on the subject of Romans in Ireland), there is a clear
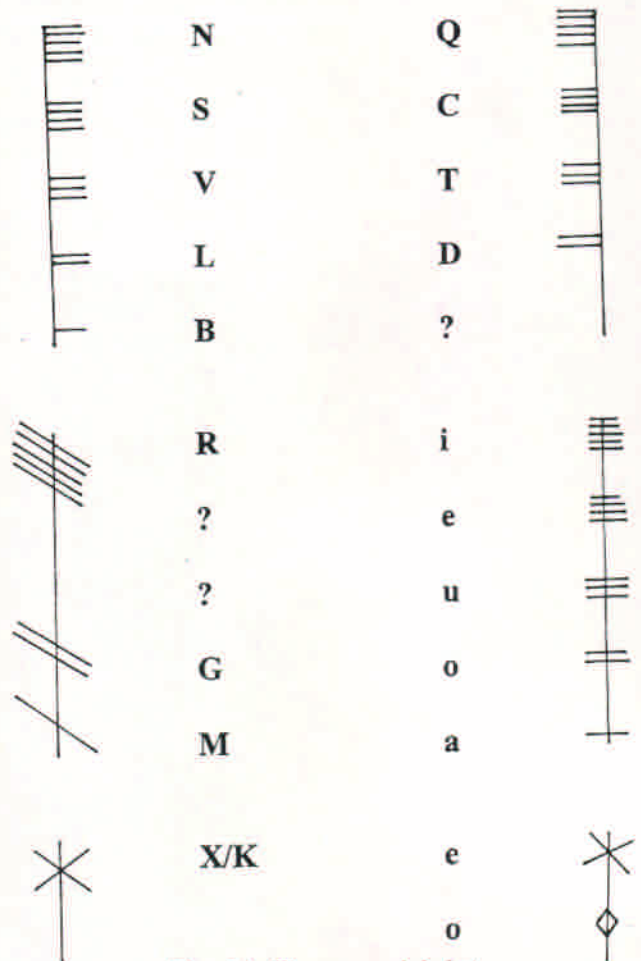

Fig. 5.1 *The ogam alphabet*

distinction between the date for the invention of the alphabet and the date of the first stones. The earliest version of the alphabet on the stones is one which has already been modified from the presumed original sequence of four groups of five strokes (Fig. 5.1). Some groups do not occur at all and already on the earliest pre-apocope stones, there are *forfeda* or letters which have been added. This would indicate a lapse of some, unquantifiable, time between the invention of the alphabet and the earliest monuments as we have them. In other words, it is perfectly plausible that Thomas's dating of the *invention* of ogam script to a pre-Christian period is correct; I do not accept, for reasons well rehearsed elsewhere, that the bulk of the surviving stones themselves belong to a pre-Christian period (Swift 1996; 1997, 27–69). This is not, of course, to say that the stones necessarily commemorate Christians; merely, that Christianity had been introduced to Ireland and had made an impact on the Irish language by the time the surviving ogam stones were created. We see this impact in the adoption of Christian Latin loan words such as *axal* 'apostle', *cásc* 'Easter' or *cruimther* 'priest' which by their form indicate that they were borrowed into Irish *before* the various linguistic

changes which occurred during the period of ogam production and which are traceable in the ogam inscriptions (McManus 1983, 48).

My own view on the subject of contemporaneity or otherwise of cross forms on ogam stones is a slightly modified version of Hamlin's thesis, expanding on some points which she dealt with only summarily and discussing evidence which has become apparent since her article was written. I would concur that a percentage of ogam stones have crosses which are contemporary or indeed earlier than the ogam inscriptions. Amongst these, the most important is probably the stone from Church Island where the ogam inscription clearly overlies the cross (O'Kelly and Kavanagh 1954). There are also a number of stones in which, though it is impossible to detect a physical relationship between the cross and the inscription, the existence of the Irish vernacular version (><OI) of the largely Christian *hic iacit* burial formula or the reference of a Latin-named individual on a stone, with both cross and inscription, increases the likelihood that the cross is contemporary (Swift 1997, 96, 107). I would also agree that there is some degree of overlap between the ogam period and that of the cross-carved pillar stones (Hamlin 1982, 285; Swift 1997, 70–83).

In parenthesis, it should, perhaps be noted here that any argument based on Macalister's corpus without examination of the stones themselves cannot be a conclusive one. It is clear from the fieldwork done to date that Macalister's identification of cross forms is not always convincing. The stone from Lecan, Co. Kilkenny, for example, is identified by Macalister as having a Latin cross at its head (1945, 38–9); examination suggests that while there is some possible pocking running in a north-south line, the transverse arm is a natural fissure.

There appear to be cases where ogam stones have been reused at a later date as cross-ornamented pillars, with no cognisance being taken of their original function. An example of this would be Kilfountan in the Dingle peninsula. A pillar on which the ogam EQO(?)DD is carved on one of its narrow sides was subsequently decorated with a cross and Latin letter inscription 'Fintan'.[1] This, to my mind, is a matter of practicality rather than ideology; many of the ogam stones are of the same size and basic shape as the cross-marked pillars and, as Hamlin points out (1982, 285), many ogams, amounting to some 34% of Macalister's corpus, are found on ecclesiastical sites and would thus be a ready resource for later stone-workers. Moore (1998, 23) has now refined these figures: a national figure of 133 stones from 65 ecclesiastical sites and a Munster figure of 108 from 54 ecclesiastical sites.

Without going into details which I have argued elsewhere (Swift 1997, 34–48), I would see the function of the cross-marked ogam stones as being frequently (though not consistently) different from that of the cross-marked pillar stones without inscriptions. The former I see as being for the most part grave markers and as such influenced by contemporary Christian burial inscriptions in north-west Europe. The latter – or at least a percentage of them – I see as Christian estate-markers, the inspiration for which stems from Old Testament references to boulders being used as estate and boundary markers.

As Hamlin pointed out, there are a large number of stones where the cross is not clearly associated with the inscription and many of these have no other indication of Christianity such as ><OI or Latin-named individuals. On such stones, distinctions between crosses which might mark the Christian faith of the deceased or landowner, and crosses which represent reuse of earlier orthostats whose original purpose had been forgotten, are not easy to draw. They can only be established through examination of the stones themselves and not always then (Hamlin 1982, 293).

The corpus of Irish cross-carved stones for which Hamlin called in 1982 has not yet materialised and is an increasingly urgent priority given at least two recent cases when early medieval stones, lying unsupervised in rural sites, were removed by thieves.[2] Giant steps, however, have been made in recent years in the systematic linguistic analysis of ogam inscriptions. Unlike Latin, the Irish language goes through a chronological series of identifiable linguistic changes during the period in which ogam inscriptions were written. The evidence for these changes has been explored in detail by Damian McManus in *A Guide to Ogam* (1991), developing and occasionally superseding Kenneth Jackson's (1953) similar work on British stones. Though written for linguists in a manner which can be somewhat opaque for those outside a highly-specialised field, McManus's work is crucial for archaeologists and art-historians. In it, he provides clear sub-divisions of the Irish ogam inscription corpus, allowing us for the first time to say, not merely that a cross form belongs to the period of the ogam stones, but that a particular cross form is attested early in that sequence, on what are probably fifth-century stones, while another cross form could appear late in the sequence, probably late sixth- or early seventh-century. In these islands, where so many of our early Christian monuments displaying crosses but no other ornament are divorced from their original context, this provides a fundamental chronological bench-mark of a kind often lacking.

In brief, the three basic linguistic sub-divisions of the ogam-inscription corpus are entitled: pre-apocope, pre-syncope and post-syncope and I outline the
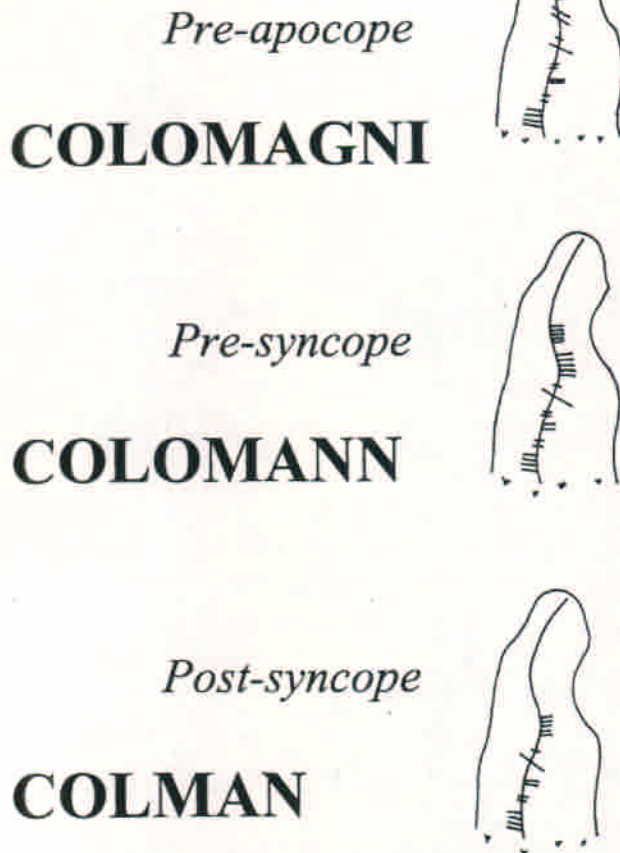
Pre-apocope

COLOMAGNI

Pre-syncope

COLOMANN

Post-syncope

COLMAN

Fig. 5.2 The three basic linguistic sub-divisions of the ogam-inscription corpus: pre-apocope, pre-syncope and post-syncope

sequence in Fig. 5.2. Apocope is the term for the loss of the final syllable of words and it is the first major linguistic development which we can detect in the inscriptions; McManus dates its onset to the beginning of the sixth century although it takes some time to be accepted by all carvers. Syncope is the loss of middle syllables in three-syllable words: something which begins around the middle of the sixth century and which spreads during the second half of that century. Inscriptions where there is no trace of the pre-syncope spelling are termed post-syncope and are dated to the end of the sixth and early seventh century and it is Irish of this post-syncope type which is revealed in the earliest manuscript evidence of later seventh-century Old Irish (such as the place-names and personal names in the Patrician lives by Tírechán and Muirchú: McManus 1991, 92–7).

There are complications, of course. The system is predicated on the accuracy of Macalister's readings which have still to be consistently rechecked; it must be a worrying consideration that M. J. O'Kelly in his

review of the *Corpus* states (1945, 152) that of the 30 readings he checked, he felt eight were incorrect and a further ten were dubious. Some carvers appear to have been conservative and kept to the old spelling while their contemporaries were moving on to new forms. Formula words such as the word for 'son' – pre-apocope MAQQI, subsequently MAQ(Q) or MAC(C) – which occurs on the vast majority of inscriptions, seem to have retained an old spelling long after personal names had evolved. Moreover, while the system is a relatively convincing method of sub-dividing the ogam stone corpus into early, middle and late, it is at its weakest when proposing specific dates for any particular stone. Furthermore, although the end of the sequence can be established from the forms extant in seventh-century texts, the beginning of the sequence is very difficult to establish. All we can say to date is that the stratum of Irish found in the earliest or pre-apocope stones is one in which a number of ecclesiastical Latin terms has already been borrowed into the Irish language. This would imply a late fourth- or fifth-century starting date; this allows time for Constantine's establishment of Christianity as a major religion in the early fourth century to percolate through to an island beyond the north-western Roman frontier.

Despite these complications, McManus's linguistic dating system provides us with the only clear subdivisions of the Irish corpus and, in the absence of any excavated Irish ogam stone in an original context, it provides our only hope for dating the cross forms with which they are sometimes associated. Elsewhere I have argued that it is probably also a better method of sub-dividing the whole ogam corpus than the rather too specific dates sometimes put forward on the basis of epigraphical analysis of Latin-alphabet inscriptions on the Welsh ogam stones by Jackson (1953) and Nash-Williams (1950) (given the large number of unprovable assumptions on which their chronology is predicated; Swift 1997, 56–62). For the rest of this paper, therefore, I would like to examine some of the archaeological conclusions which one might draw, using the linguistic dating system.

I begin with the stone from Emlagh East, Co. Kerry, which is first recorded by Edward Lhuyd at the beginning of the eighteenth century when it stood upright in a field near the beach where it now lies (Brash 1879, 173–74). The inscription runs up the left-hand side of the stone to a point at the head where the edge of the stone is somewhat rough. Macalister argued (1945, 173; Fig. 5.3) that this was subsequent damage which eliminated part of a longer inscription; I would agree with the Dingle Archaeological Survey (Cuppage 1986, 255) and Damian McManus (1991, 66) who saw no such indication on the stone. The extant inscription reads
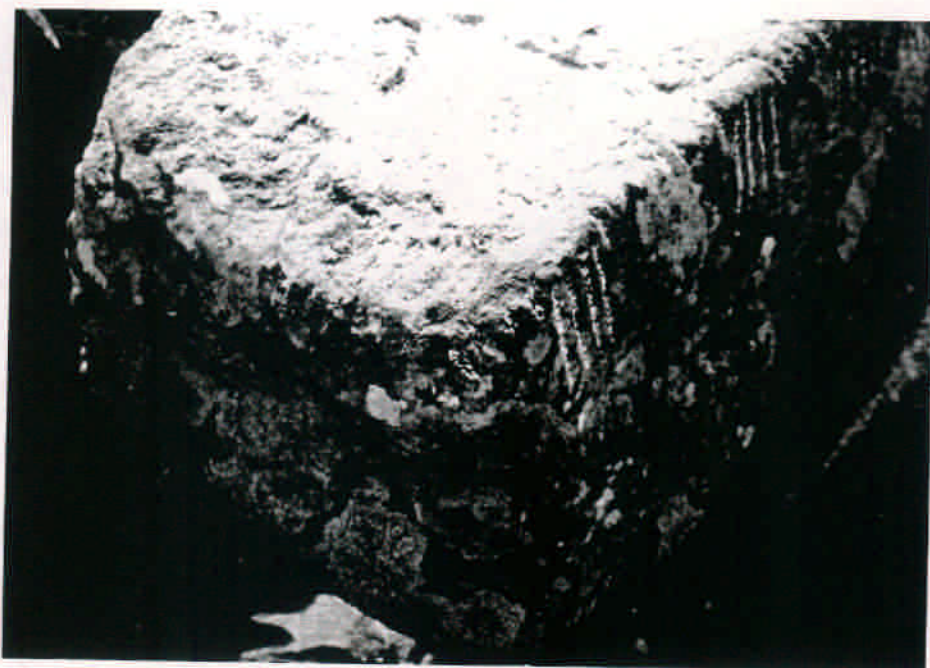
Fig. 5.3 Inscription on the stone from Emlagh East, Co. Kerry

BRUSCCOS MAQQI CALLIACI or in English 'belonging to B*, son of C*'. All three words are pre-apocope i.e. they have not lost their final syllables. Thus it belongs to the earliest sub-division of the ogam corpus, a group which probably belongs to the fifth century.

The importance of this date for the inscription lies in the relationship between the cross and the ogam scores of the letter L. It seems quite clear on examination of the stone (Macalister 1945, 173; Cuppage 1986, 255; McManus 1991, 54; Swift 1997, 108) that the second score of the letter L has been shortened in order not to run into the arm of the cross, a feature which indicates that the cross is earlier than the ogam (though how much earlier we cannot tell.) Here, then, we have a plain Latin cross which appears to be fifth century or earlier.

A similar cross is found on one of the stones from Ballintaggart, also in Co. Kerry. Macalister argued (1945, 157) that the cross was inverted with respect to the writing – in other words the upper arm is longer than the lower one. Examination of the stone indicates that Macalister was not making allowances for a natural fissure in the face of the stone which runs along its entire length (see Cuppage 1986, fig.147; Swift 1997, 109, pl.). The carver apparently used this fissure to guide him in creating the north-south line and exact dimensions of the latter are therefore extremely difficult to ascertain. The scores representing N do not run into the cross, indicating some care on the part of the carver of either the inscription or the cross given their close proximity. Most importantly, the inscription includes the Primitive Irish word ><OI – seen by McManus and his predecessors as a vernacular reflection of the Christian *hic iacit* burial formula. There is, therefore, good evidence for assuming that this cross is broadly contemporary with the inscription. Again it is a pre-apocope formulation which suggests a fifth-century date for the cross.

Another two stones from Ballintaggart have equal-armed crosses in the middle of the face. There is no physical relationship between the inscriptions and the crosses to indicate their relative date but one inscription includes ><OI (Macalister 1945, 152, 155; McManus 1991, 65). In both instances, the inscriptions are pre-apocope or probably fifth century in date.

The stones, collected together today in the recently walled enclosure at Ballintaggart, were found in and around this site and all are of the local, water-rolled boulders from Minard beach, immediately to the south. Given this, the two stones with ><OI inscriptions, the two pre-apocope stones with plain Latin or Greek crosses and a fourth stone to be discussed below, with a different cross type and also associated with a pre-apocope inscription, it seems clear that at Ballintaggart, we have evidence of a Christian community of the fifth century. The graves of this community could be marked by boulders with ogam inscriptions and plain Latin or Greek crosses. It seems likely that the fifth-century cross and inscription at Emlagh East, the next townland to the east of Ballintaggart, is another indication of the existence of fifth-century Christians on the south coast of the Dingle peninsula. This would coincide

with the evidence from Reask towards the north of the Dingle peninsula where the earliest radiocarbon date, apparently contemporaneous with the first phase of the cemetery was cal. AD 410–600 (1 sigma: UB 2167, 1565±90 BP) (Fanning 1981, 79–86, 113–15, 121, 164).

This is not to say that all plain Latin or Greek crosses found on ogam stones are necessarily of fifth-century date. An ogam stone from Whitefield, near Killarney has a pre-apocope inscription with a Greek cross which might, therefore, correspond in date to the fifth-century Ballintaggart stones, but there are also four stones from Coolineagh, Co. Cork, Curraghmore West, Killogrone and Ratass, Co. Kerry, all of which include the word ANM in their inscription. This is a post-apocope version of the Old Irish word *ainm*, 'name'; therefore these four inscriptions are at least of sixth-century date (Moore 1998, 28–9). The use of this word in ogam inscriptions has been compared by Vendryes with Christian inscriptions, particularly those from North Africa, but possibly also two examples from Wales (Vendryes 1955).

The position of the crosses on these ANM stones differ. At Killogrone, in south Kerry, the cross is at the base of the stone, reading the inscription up the right-hand side of the cross. Brash tells us that on first recording, the pillar was inverted with the cross at the top and stood as the headstone of a grave (Brash 1879, 239–41). It is not clear that Brash himself had seen the stone in this location. Here, then, there might be evidence of Macalister's theory that the crosses were added subsequent to the inscription. Having said this, however, there are examples of later Irish Latin-letter inscriptions where crosses occur below the writing (Lionard 1960–1, 102). Looking at the Killogrone monument with the cross in the middle of the broad face at its base, the inscription runs from the bottom of the right-hand side up towards the top. Normally, the inscriptions run from the viewer's left hand to the top (McManus 1991, 47) but if one reversed the pillar so that the inscription read in this fashion (with the cross now positioned at the top of the pillar) the scores of the ogam would be reversed – reading Q for N and so forth (Fig. 5.1). The resultant reading would not make sense. It cannot be stated conclusively, therefore, that the position of a cross towards the base of a pillar must automatically be seen as post-dating the accompanying inscription. The only date that can be put forward for the Killogrone stone is a date for the inscription which can simply be dated to the end of the sixth century or beginning of the seventh.

At Ratass, in north Kerry, Thomas Fanning also argued that the cross was inverted with respect to the inscription and should therefore post-date it. In this case, however, there was evidence that the pillar was used for sharpening and polishing blades subsequent to its use as an ogam memorial, and that the cross in turn overlay some of the polished area (Fanning and Ó Corráin 1977). The inscription is post-apocope but pre-syncope, indicating a date towards the middle of the sixth century for the inscription and a somewhat later date for the cross.

In the case of the Curraghmore West inscription, in south Kerry, there is no relationship between the inscription and the cross, but the cross is located in the middle of the broad face about two thirds of the way up, with the ogam inscription running up the left edge. Moore (1998, 29) takes it that the two are contemporary. The inscription is certainly post-apocope and may possibly be post-syncope. However the last person to publish a reading (McManus 1991, 176) had considerable doubt about Macalister's reading which, if it were correct, would indicate a date well into the seventh century. Making allowances for this possibility, it seems best to argue that simple Latin and Greek crosses, as witnessed on these various stones, probably occur throughout the date range of the ogam corpus, from the fifth century to the seventh.

Other cross forms can be more distinctive and may, therefore, have had a shorter lifespan. The shape of the stone from Drumconwell, Co. Armagh, makes it fairly clear that the monument was designed to be looked at from the same side as is currently on view. Here, a simple ringed cross with stem extending below the lower line of the circle, lies in the centre of the upper face (Fig. 5.4). The inscription is unusual in layout, running in two lines from bottom to top: first on the left-hand side and then on the right. There is no physical relationship between cross and inscription. My reading agrees with that of all commentators other than Macalister in ways which are crucial for dating purposes; Macalister's reading (1945, 298) would indicate a pre-apocope or fifth-century reading; I found that like William Reeves, John Rhys, Ann Hamlin and Richard Warner, I could not see the crucial final letter in QETAI(S) (see Warner 1991, 45 for references to all of the above). The lack of such a letter indicates the onset of apocope (McManus 1991, 82, 85–7; Swift 1997, 51), implying a sixth-century date. I should add that I found no evidence in favour of Richard Warner's suggested emendation of seven scores of the inscription to produce the name of the eponymous Ulster hero Conmáel whose name is incorporated in that of the townland (Warner 1991, 45–6). As Warner himself states, the consonant scores are all clear and while wholesale spelling errors on the part of an Archaic Irish carver transcribing his native tongue are of course possible, it does not appear probable to me.

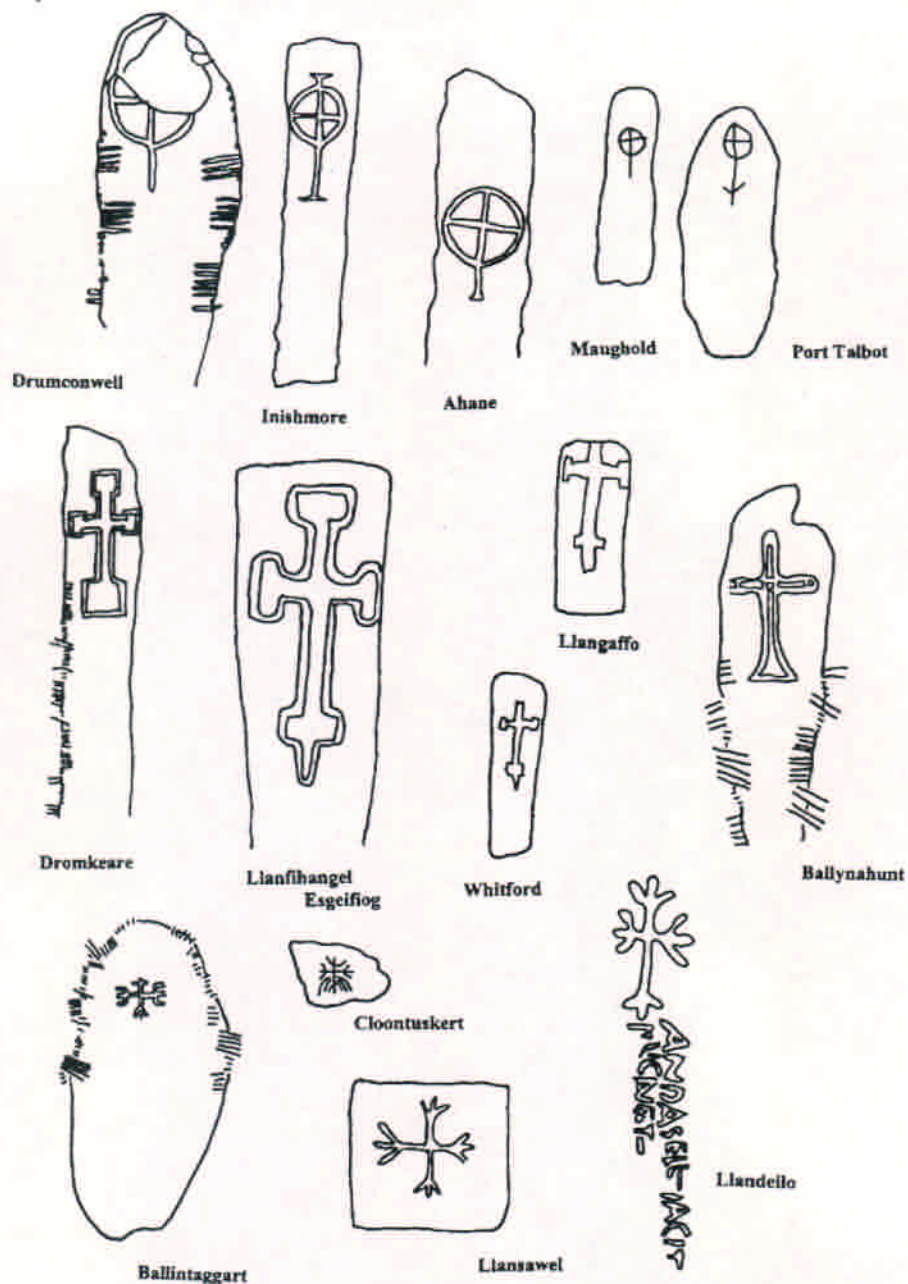The fact that this cross type is associated with

Fig. 5.4 Cross forms occurring on stones from Ireland and Wales

what is probably a sixth-century inscription is particularly interesting, in that it is a form which is widespread on cross-marked pillars from both Ireland and western Britain. From Ireland there are examples from Aghacarrible (from a souterrain site which also contained two ogam stones), Ahane, Ballydarrig, Ballymorereagh (a church site with ogam stones), Beginish, Illauntannig, Skellig and Glin North, all in Co. Kerry (Cuppage 1986, 103–4, 268–69, 290–92, 295–96; O'Sullivan and Sheehan 1996, 251, 259, 261–63, 281) as well as a closely related type from Inishmore, Co. Galway (Higgins 1987, ii, 125). From Wales there are examples of

similar stones from Llantrisant and Port Talbot in Glamorgan, Llawhaden, Morvil and St David's in Pembrokeshire amongst others (Nash-Williams 1950, nos 219, 262, 342, 350, 372).[3] There is also an example from Maughold on the Isle of Man (Kermode 1994, pl. VII:10) and another from Iona (RCAHMS 1982, 180–81).

In one example, from Trallwng in Brecknockshire the cross is accompanied by both ogam and Latin-letter inscriptions; Nash-Williams suggested that the cross post-dates the Latin letters (Nash-Williams, 1950, no. 70). Looking at the stone with the circle in the middle of a broad face, at the top of the shaft, the

ogam inscription runs along the right-hand side from top to bottom while the Latin-letter inscription, apparently referring to the same person, runs 'upward facing right', i.e. with the bottoms of the letters to the right-hand side of the viewer. (The terminology is that of Okasha 1993, 28.) The arrangement of both the ogam-scores and the Latin-letter inscription is not the norm and for the ogam scores to parallel the Latin letters in their present position one must reverse the scores, reading C for S, N for Q etc. (Such a reading would not make sense.) If one assumed, however, that the stone was inverted and the cross added later, the arrangement of both the ogam and the Latin-letter inscription would be both normal and consistent with each other. In other words, as Nash-Williams pointed out, the ogam inscription lies on the original left-hand edge, reading upwards with the Latin inscription in two vertical lines reading downwards, facing left. Subsequently, the stone was inverted and reused, with the upper part being incised with a ring-cross (*ibid.*; Lewis and Redknap, in prep.).

If the father's name refers to an Irishman, it is a pre-apocope form of fifth-century date; if it is British, Jackson (1953, 185) suggested the early sixth century (McManus 1991, 98, 113). A dating range later than the early sixth century is congruent with that suggested for Drumconwell (before end of the sixth century). A third example of this cross form, from Llanllŷr in Cardiganshire, is on an opposing face to an inscription which includes post-apocope and probably post-syncope forms of Irish names (Nash-Williams 1950, no.124). If this inscription is to be associated with the cross, on the other side of the stone, it would extend the dating range of this cross form into the seventh century and beyond.

A cross on the Ballynahunt stone, Co. Kerry, is carved in double lines with square terminals and what appears to be a triangular base (Macalister 1945, 164–65; Cuppage 1986, 253–54). It seems to be a case where the cross is not contemporary with the inscription, for if it is right to read the triangle as base, the inscription is inverted, running from the top downwards along the right-hand side and continuing around what is the bottom of the stone in this position. This is not a case where a small cross may lie either above or below the inscription as argued above for Killogrone, Co. Kerry; rather, the inscription is unreadable when viewed with the cross apparently upright and the reader must reverse all scores in order to make the two compatible (reading D for L, N for Q etc.). Such a 'reversed' reading does not make sense. Thus Macalister is probably right (1945, 164) when he states that the cross is later than the inscription. The words still have final endings and the inscription is, therefore, of pre-apocope or probable fifth-century type. This

would mean the accompanying cross could be dated to some period after that date – a rather open-ended dating.

A cross potent with rectangular terminal at Dromkeare, Co. Kerry, is associated with a cross of similar form. Here the inscription runs from bottom left to top as normal and is of post-syncope form, i.e. late sixth or early seventh century. As with Drumconwell and Curraghmore West, the cross is positioned in the middle of a broad face, about two-thirds of the way up the shaft and – without being associated physically with the inscription – there is nothing problematical about seeing the two as contemporaneous. This single example, with the ambiguous parallel at Ballynahunt, may mean that we should see the cross-potent on this Irish stone as being a late sixth or early seventh century phenomenon.

Another example from the collection of stones at Ballintaggart, Co. Kerry, has a more complex cross, with trident-shaped trifid terminals (Fig. 5.4) than the plain Greek or Latin crosses from that site discussed previously. This is a stone with two inscriptions. Looking at the face with the cross in the centre of a broad face in the upper third of the shaft, one of the inscriptions runs from bottom left to middle of head according to the normal convention and is a unique memorial to the three sons of *Mailagnas*; the form of the name suggests a pre-apocope date in the fifth century. The other runs from bottom right to middle of head and, as with Ballynahunt, demands that the reader reverses scores, reading C for apparent S and so forth, if it is to be made compatible with an upright cross facing the onlooker. It is a single name inscription but the name form *Curcitti* is not clearly diagnostic and could be of any period within the ogam-inscription range. The two inscriptions do not appear to be related to each other. On the whole, it appears more likely that the cross is to be associated with the pre-apocope *Mailagnas* inscription which would suggest a fifth-century date; if it is to be associated with *Curcitti*, one must either reverse the scores as already mentioned or assume the cross is carved on the back of the monument.

John Sheehan (1994, 28) has drawn attention to the Merovingian parallels for this particular cross form, citing the evidence of the fifth- to seventh-century sarcophagi from Poitou, discussed by Edward James (1977, 71). It is also a style which occurs on a variety of cross-inscribed boulders both from Co. Kerry and Co. Galway (Sheehan 1994, 29), from Cloontuskert, Co. Longford (Fanning and Ó hÉailidhe 1980, 15) and from elsewhere in the British Isles (see, for example, Nash-Williams 1950, no. 118 from Llanddewi-brefi, Cardiganshire). A Welsh example, from Llandeilo in Pembrokeshire is ac-

companied by both an ogam and a Latin-letter inscription (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 313). If the cross is viewed in the middle of the broad face, at the upper end of the shaft, the ogam inscription runs up the left-hand side from bottom to top. The Latin-letter inscription is also vertical but reads 'downwards facing left'. Both of these positions represent the norm for ogam and Latin-letter inscriptions respectively. It is inscribed in Roman capitals for which Nash-Williams suggested a fifth- or early sixth-century date; the names – (A)NDAGELLI MACU CAV(ETI) – include one, ANDAGELLI, which is pre-syncope and possibly pre-apocope. Another stone from the same churchyard is dedicated to another son of *Cavetus*, called *Coimagnas* but inscribed only in Latin letters. The name on this second stone is a pre-apocope form of the Old Irish name, *Coéman* and is probably fifth century.

In short, the names associated with this particular cross form indicate that this type of cross was apparently being produced in these islands by the end of the fifth century. Furthermore, there is no clear distinction in age between the Welsh example and that from Co. Kerry, indicating the probability of contemporary contact between the two areas. The manuscript spelling system of the Old Irish vernacular, as found in late seventh- and eighth-century texts, differs from that used in ogam and instead derives from the spelling conventions of Vulgar Latin as spoken by British speakers. It has been a long-standing dictum of early Irish ecclesiastical history that the manuscript spelling system which had replaced ogam orthography by the classical Old Irish period in the eighth century was brought to Ireland by Welsh missionaries, during the later fifth and sixth centuries (MacNeill 1931; O'Rahilly 1957, 40–6; Stevenson 1989, 144–47). Archaeologically, however, we have not, as yet, investigated in any detail the possibility of links between the two islands in the cross forms on the memorial stones.

This brings me my last category of cross forms associated with ogam stones and that is the cross type known as the Maltese cross or cross-of-arcs. In 1991, Peter Harbison suggested that the Irish version of this cross type was associated with pilgrimage and possibly belonged to an eighth- or ninth-century date. The pilgrimage associations were based in the first instance on the Maumanorig inscription from Dingle which Macalister read as ANM COLMAN AILITHER or 'the name of COLMAN the pilgrim' (Harbison 1991, 75, 84; Macalister 1945, 191). Unfortunately this is one of Macalister's odder transcriptions; subsequent commentators, such as the Dingle Archaeological Survey (Cuppage 1986, 333–34) and Damian McManus (1991, 67) are agreed that there is no evidence for recognisable letters beyond ANM COL... The evidence for an eighth- or ninth-

century date range is also based on what is now outdated linguistic analysis by Donnchadh Corráin of the Ratass stone in 1977 (Fanning an Corráin 1977, 18; see now McManus 1991, Finally, it is worth noting that Harbison's map this cross type (1991, 193) includes the simple cr of-arcs together with a number of highly develo and ornate forms whose chronological relations to the plainer forms is not clear.

In a recent study (1997, 70–83) I argued that wh the simple cross-of-arcs is found associated w ogam inscriptions, they are all associated with la inscriptions of later sixth- or seventh-century d. the classic example being that of the pre-synco stone at Arraglen, Co. Kerry, which is a rare exam of an ogam memorial where the role of the co memorand is recorded: 'of the priest, *Ronann* son *Comogann*'. I suggested that the origin of su designs might be sought in the Christian memor stone tradition as represented in Iberia, Meroving France and as far away as Egypt. Since this sugg tion was made, Derek Craig's publication of Whithorn stones has indicated that not only is th a collection of these stones from Whithorn, bu fragment of one such was found in a mid- to l seventh-century grave (Craig 1997, 439), dat through stratigraphical analysis. The excavat suggested this may have been debris from t adjacent shrine of an earlier seventh-century dat a date which is arrived at totally independently the linguistic analysis of the ogam associations, b one which has produced a remarkably similar resu

Craig's work also draws attention to the collecti of similar cross-of-arc stones from Man and the tv stones from Wales while other examples of this cro type are found in St Boniface's Church, Pa Westray, Orkney (see current exhibition in tl Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh). In Ireland, tl traditional picture of the distribution of these cross has been one which has focussed very strongly (the west coast, although Lionard pointed out th there was a collection of the type from Gallen (196 1, 110–12) and other stones have been identifie from both the north and east midlands. To this or might add that the current *Dúchas* inventory of son 700 graveslabs from Clonmacnoise includes at lea seven examples of the cross-of-arcs as well as oth examples of the associated marigold type. On one these, an uncial inscription in horizontal line beneath a cross-of-arcs, calls for a prayer for som body called Muirethach; the medial TH indicate that this is likely to be of late seventh- or earl eighth-century date preceding the later spelling wit medial D (Lionard 1960–1, 111). Two of thes Clonmacnoise monuments, including the Muire thach stone, are pillar-shaped; possibly indicating continuity of form from the ogam period into a phas

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