THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PICTISH SYMBOLS

By CHARLES THOMAS

The name 'Picts', Latin *Picti*, is legitimately used to describe the inhabitants of much of northern Scotland between approximately the late 3rd and the 9th centuries A.D. The much-discussed 'problem' of the Picts is a multiple one — such matters as origin, racial composition, language, and even distribution, are involved in it. Since the Picts existed in the protohistoric period, two quite separate approaches to their study are indicated. The historian may concern himself with references from late classical sources, the lives of certain early British saints, the writings of Bede, annalistic entries, the so-called 'Pictish Chronicle' (a tangle of regnal lists, difficult to use and of dubious accuracy in parts), and a variety of sources not earlier than the full medieval period. The archaeologist can examine the material culture of the Picts, provided that he can first isolate and identify it; at present it consists mainly of a scatter of small artifacts in various media, some distinctive objects which are 'proto-Pictish' rather than Pictish in the historical sense, localized variants of sites (*e.g.*, earth-houses or 'souterrains') proper to north Britain at this time, and Pictish art.

This paper is confined primarily to an analysis of Pictish art, touching where necessary or relevant upon the meagre store of Pictish history. Indeed, if the conclusions set out below be accepted, many of the glyptic monuments which constitute Pictish art may have to be regarded as quasi-historical documents, albeit devoid of any absolute dates, in the same sense that a coin is an historical document and not merely an artifact; that is, it conveys information to the beholder over and above those deductions which would naturally arise from a superficial inspection. For the contentions which will be advanced are that, in the absence of writing, the component designs of Pictish art, singly and in combination, were employed by the Picts to convey admittedly simple messages, mostly commemorative of the dead; and that during the early period of the historical Picts, the designs were not merely artistic motifs but primitive pictograms.

THE MATERIAL

Pictish art is most widely known in the form of engravings on dressed or undressed stone, though it does occur on other media, and under certain circumstances may have been expressed in paint or other pigments. It is apparently confined to those areas of north Britain known, with fair certainty, to have been the homelands of the historical Picts, and there is general agreement that the surviving instances should be dated to the Pictish era; these geographical and temporal coincidences allow us to suppose that what we call Pictish art was peculiar to the Pictish people. This much, but very little else, is common ground. In an earlier paper, which will here be cited as *AASIA*,[1]

---

[1] C. Thomas, 'Animal Art in the Scottish Iron Age', *Arch. J.*, cxviii (1961, published in 1963), 14–64.

NOTE: A list of abbreviations used in this paper appears on pp. 96–7.

the writer sought to examine the restricted zoomorphic art of north Britain in the period immediately preceding that of the historical Picts, and anticipated certain of the conclusions in the present essay; the writer is not here concerned with the development of Pictish art during the later stage when the Picts themselves had become nominally Christian, a development naturally reflected in their iconography, and an epoch when external artistic influences (from both southern Britain and the Continent) can be detected; this will be discussed in a later paper. The present paper is thus devoted to Pictish art in its 'pure' stage, to considerations of its origin and the nature of the pictographic symbols, and to the elucidation of the messages conveyed by such symbols; also, but briefly, to the correspondence of any conclusions which must follow from such analysis to the image of the Picts derived from historical sources alone.

The core of all Pictish art is a range of highly distinctive designs, some fifty separate examples having so far been noted. Despite the (later) use of low relief, Pictish art is almost all two-dimensional, with the balance on the profile or outline. Rather less than a third of the designs are naturalistic representations taken, selectively, from the animal kingdom; except for two stylized beasts, these are all recognizably within the scope of the north British fauna in the first millennium A.D. The remaining designs include some geometric shapes (circle, triangle, pentacle, etc.), and a series of object-pictures, some of which are obvious enough (mirror, hammer, comb), but most of which defy immediate identification in terms of our own material culture or of others from the past known to us through archaeology.

Variation of these *symbols*, as (without begging the question) the fifty-odd designs are generally known, takes place in two ways. It can be accomplished internally by the application of enrichment and (usually curvilinear) ornament, in the later stages of Pictish art demonstrably borrowed from contemporary British art styles; or it can be brought about externally, by minor alteration or elaboration of protruding terminals and lines, or by minor changes in proportion. The basic outlines of the symbols are already stereotyped when one encounters the putatively earliest manifestations of Pictish art, and they undergo practically no change.

The best corpus of the material is Allen and Anderson's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903), cited here as *ECMS*, a massive work of which Part III describes all occurrences of Pictish art known up to about 1902, arranged under the Scottish counties. There is a list of post-*ECMS* additions at the end of Henderson (1958), and further addenda are given below in Appendix I. In terms of *ECMS*, this essay deals largely with Pictish art as it is found on Class I monuments ('Symbols incised on more or less undressed stone slabs or boulders'), and despite the fact that many of these have now been lodged in museums or elsewhere under cover, these instances will be described as *field-monuments*. To them will be added two further but smaller classes, involving the same and additional symbols; representations incised on the walls of some Scottish coastal caves (*cave-art*), and on a miscellaneous group of artifacts or fragments in bone, pottery, metal, and stone ('*art mobilier*').

It should be remembered that the Class II field-monuments described in *ECMS* also display most, if not all, of the symbols which occur in *ECMS* Class I, cave-art, and *art mobilier*, but in conjunction with Christian motifs such as the Cross, narrative scenes involving humans, scenes which appear to be hunts and battles, and a more advanced scheme of ornament owing much to Ireland and Northumbria; also that the purely incised outline technique of Class I is now replaced by 'flat' work in low relief with the incised line retained for ornament and minor detail. This admittedly later group will, as stated earlier, be considered in a further essay; but here some consideration will be given to a transitional group in the extreme north, not defined in *ECMS*, which may be called 'Class I/II', and which appears to constitute, artistically, symbolically, and probably chronologically, a bridge between *ECMS* Classes I and II. Because of this, the following approximate chronology should be considered, offered merely as a signpost for the reader.

Class I field-monuments	Most should fall within the period from late 5th to late 7th centuries
Cave-art	Possibly starts a few centuries earlier and overlaps Class I field-monuments (see *AASIA* for discussion)
Art mobilier	Where date of individual instance is not deducible from type or context, generally period of cave-art and Class I field-monuments, with a few later
Class I/II	Probably late 7th/early 8th centuries
Class II field-monuments	From late 7th century onwards, according to area: final date (total disuse of Class I symbols) perhaps 10th century.

NUMERICAL ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLS FOUND ON CLASS I FIELD-MONUMENTS

GENERAL

Approach and Definitions

This analysis of necessity ignores cave-art and *art mobilier* and is based on Class I field-monuments known up to December, 1962. There is a partial analysis (up to 1902) in Part II of *ECMS*, but it has been ignored here, in view of some inconsistencies which are apparent in its preparation (see Henderson (1958), Appendix, for corrections). A fresh series of record-cards was prepared, to cover field-monuments published between 1903 and 1962, and to include certain unpublished but accessible instances.

The field-monuments of *ECMS* Class I — boulders, rough masses, slabs, and in two cases rock-surfaces — vary from enormous pillars to quite small stones. The symbols, whose actual size, comparatively or absolutely, appears to be irrelevant to any question of meaning or grouping, are portrayed in

techniques combining pecking, incising, and the gouging of grooves,[1] presumably with both stone and metal tools. A number of the monuments have been despoiled or broken, or subsequently incorporated in buildings, and some portrayals of symbols are thus incomplete. A few, though listed in *ECMS*, have consequently been ignored here, either because insufficient still remains to make it clear which symbol is shown, or because they do not necessarily belong to Pictish art at all (and this includes potential medieval or modern productions).

The presentation of a symbol or group of symbols on any field-monument or other surface may be called a *statement*, and in *ECMS* Class I, statements consist of from one to four symbols. Most monuments have a single statement, but a few have statements (not necessarily executed at the same time) on two faces, and one at least has three; there is also a partial palimpsest. Nearly all symbols, especially the animal symbols, clearly have a top and bottom. It is therefore possible to see which way up any field-monument, subsequently removed from its original stance, must have been; and it may further be observed that most statements comprise a line of symbols set vertically. Less commonly, the lack of suitable space or some intrinsic irregularity of a rock-surface has dictated the need for a horizontal row instead, and two symbols (Comb and Mirror), which possess some special association, are often conventionally depicted side by side.

This regularity of depiction makes it possible to use, for the sake of brevity, a notational system to classify statements. A single isolated symbol can be written in parentheses, thus (A) or (Fish). The oblique / implies vertical relationship, the equal sign = means a horizontal setting. Thus A/B, or Crescent/Fish, means 'Statement of two symbols (Crescent and Fish, or whatever they may be) set vertically', and A = B, or Crescent = Fish, the same in horizontal terms. Vertical rows of three or four are written A/B/C, A/B/C/D. Less common are statements which combine both vertical and horizontal settings; in these, we have to employ parentheses again; so A/B/C = D would mean, 'Vertical row of A over B over C, with D beside C', and (A = B = C)/D would mean 'Horizontal row of A beside B beside C, with D set vertically below this row'. All instances of A = B are to be taken as reading from the viewer's left, like our writing. Fig.1 shows some selected Class I statements, each with its correct notational formula below it.

Where symbols are mentioned individually by name, the names given (distinguished by capital initials, Crescent, Mirror, etc.) are those first publicized by *ECMS*. In the latter part of this study, some less unwieldy synonyms will replace many of them, but to introduce them at this juncture would unnecessarily confuse the many readers familiar with the *ECMS* terms. The few immediate changes (for instance, division of *ECMS* 'Bird' into its wrongly-conflated components Eagle and Goose) have already been discussed in *AASIA*.

The reason for the following analysis is that the contention has been raised that no kind of order ever ruled the selection and disposition of designs

---

[1] C. A. Gordon, 'Carving Technique on the Symbol Stones of N.E. Scotland', *PSAS*, LXXXVIII (1954–56), 40.

on a field-monument; in other words that their arrangement was a matter of pure whim or decorative fancy,[1] and that meaningful 'statements', in the sense given above, cannot exist. This may seem an extreme view — the most cursory perusal of *ECMS* reveals frequent repetition of groups, for example — but it warrants proper refutation. Furthermore, if statements do exist, then clearly rules of some kind must have governed their composition, and these rules can only be deduced from observing patterns of repetition, or the differences between statements of differing length.

Totals of groups of statements considered

One hundred and fifty-eight statements are analyzed below, taken from a slightly lower number of field-monuments (this allows for monuments displaying
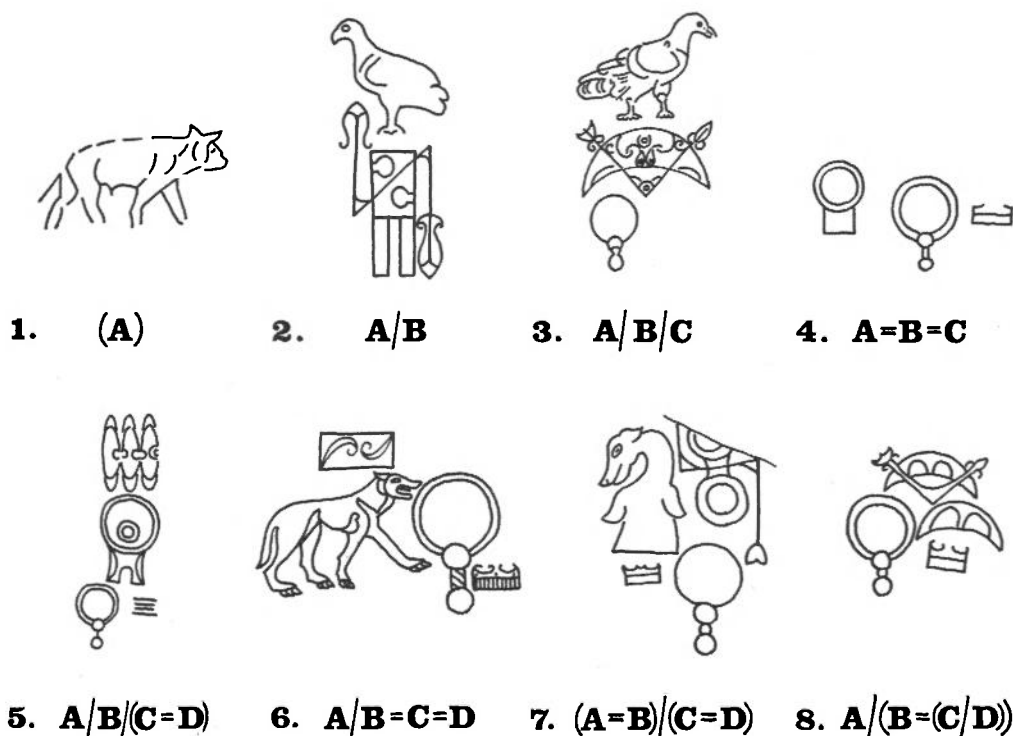

Fig. 1. GROUPS OF CLASS I SYMBOLS,
SHOWING NOTATIONAL SYSTEM USED

---

[1] Macalister (1940), 184: 'The symbols are scattered at haphazard over the surface of the stone, and are not arranged in any definite order'.

more than one statement). The categories involved are these:

Number of symbols in statement	Total	Approximate %
One ('Singles')	31	20
Two ('Pairs')	73	45.5
Three ('Triples')	30	19.5
Four ('Quadruples')	20	12.5
Three or four, but not classifiable as above	4	2.5

SINGLES

Description

Twenty-one of these are of the type (Animal). They are spread unevenly over the range of fourteen animal symbols — Horse, Boar, Bull, Reindeer, Wolf, Fish, Eagle, Goose, Seal, Dog's Head, Snake, 'Elephant', 'S-Dragon', and (?) Cat.[1] Nine of the occurrences are (Bull); ('Elephant') and (Boar) are found twice each; and a further eight animal symbols occur once each. Some are on large pillars, one (Boar, at Dunadd, Argyll) on a rock-surface, and six of the nine Bulls on medium or small slabs. Of the remaining ten Singles, six are included because they are listed in *ECMS*: but as they are found on broken or fragmentary slabs, one cannot be sure that they are not really parts of longer statements. Two others are on little slabs from the ruined fort at Stonehaven, Kincardine; another is a Step symbol on the back of a pillar at Roskeen, Ross, which has a peculiar (unfinished?) statement of A/B type on the front, and the last has now been destroyed. This was a slab at Lynchurn, Inverness: the drawing in *ECMS* shows an ornate Crescent and V-Rod symbol, and this is the only Single of non-animal type which has claims to be a complete statement.

Conclusions

With the possible exception of the Lynchurn stone, the Single statement is normally a solitary Animal symbol.

PAIRS

Description

There are 73 of these, nearly all set out as A/B; the few which read A = B apparently do so for reasons of available space. If one labels all those symbols which are not pictures of animals (birds, fishes, and snakes) as 'Object symbols',

---

[1] For this list, which differs from that in *ECMS*, see *AASIA*, figs. 11, 12 and 13, and *ibid.* 47–48, and 49 *n.* 1.

the Pairs group can be further divided thus:

4 are of the form where A/B or A = B reads Animal /or — Animal
13   do.   do.   Animal /or = Object
12   do.   do.   Object /or = Animal
44   do.   do.   Object /or = Object

— and it transpires then that, of the 146 representations involved in these 73 pairs, only 33, or about 21%, are of Animal symbols. But since by no means all the known range of Object symbols are actually found on Class I field-monuments — some of them are apparently peculiar to cave-art or *art mobilier* — the proportion of Animal symbols, which in a random make-up of the Pairs should be about 45%, is significantly low. It is also of uneven emphasis; of the thirty-three instances of Animal symbols in this group, the 'Elephant' occurs twelve times and the Fish ten. In the same way, among those Object symbols used in the Pairs, the Crescent and V-Rod symbol is found no less than twenty-four times out of 113 Object occurrences, a quite disproportionate emphasis of 21%. This factor of uneven repetition extends to the Pairs statements themselves. Eight A/B combinations are exactly repeated, most of them admittedly once only, but one of them five times.

Conclusions

Statements containing two symbols, or Pairs, do not appear to conform to any random distribution (this could almost certainly be demonstrated mathematically by a simple matrix analysis) and it may be assumed that selective rules are at work. There is a noticeable emphasis on the use of Object, rather than Animal, symbols. Repetition of complete pairs exists, and among the actual symbols used, both Animal and Object, certain symbols occur disproportionately more often than others.

TRIPLES

Description

About half (17 out of 30) Triples are in the form A/B/C, the rest being A/B = C, A = B/C, and even A = B = C. Departure from the vertical norm, as in Pairs, seems to have been due to the exigencies of the surfaces available, except that in some Triples of A/B = C type, the B = C elements are the two symbols (Mirror and Comb) so often displayed side by side.

Twenty-six of the Triples are linked, in that the last symbol C is the Mirror (21 instances), or the last two, B/C or B = C, are Mirror and Comb (5 instances). The Comb symbol never occurs except with the Mirror, and neither symbol is found in the Singles or (normally) in the Pairs; nor, in the Triples, do either Mirror or Comb ever occupy the 'A' position in a statement. Accepting then that Mirror (with or without Comb) forms a distinctive feature of the Triples class, the 26 Mirrors and 5 Combs can be subtracted from the ninety occurrences of symbols in this group. In the remaining fifty-nine, only fifteen of the known Object symbols are seen, and these again are unevenly emphasized:

Crescent and V-Rod is found fourteen times, for example. There are only sixteen occurrences of Animal symbols, slightly lower proportionately than in the Pairs class.

There is no example of a complete Triple being repeated, symbol for symbol. Nor, where the Triple takes the form of A/B/Mirror, is the 'A/B' part repeated within the class. On the other hand, six of the 'A/B/Mirror' Triples consist of recorded examples of A/B pairs with the Mirror added at the bottom.

In those four Triples which do not 'end' in (*i.e.* possess as lowest term(s)) Mirror, Mirror/Comb, or Mirror = Comb, there is in each case a suspicion of some irregularity or imperfection. For example, one such (Knockando, Moray) may be set out as 'Wheel/Crescent and V-Rod = Crescent and V-Rod', but one of the two latter is, as the *ECMS* drawing shows, incomplete, and the other, which *is* complete, represents a lateral repetition of this symbol by the artist on a part of the rock surface which offered a flatter and better field.

Conclusions

Statements containing three symbols, or Triples, appear to some degree to be an extension of the Pairs group by the addition of a Mirror symbol as /C or = C. In a variant, a single Animal or Object symbol is in the A position to Mirror/Comb or Mirror = Comb. Even in a comparatively small sample of thirty Triples, the same under-emphasis of Animal symbols, and the same selectivity among those Object symbols actually used, can be observed again.

QUADRUPLES

Description

Of the twenty Quadruples, seventeen 'end' in Mirror = Comb (or Comb = Mirror — the distinction does not appear to be important and is often due to the spacing, as the Mirror is the larger of the two), or in Mirror/Comb (one only). These two symbols always occupy the C and D positions between them. Subtracting their occurrences from the total of 80, one finds in the remaining 46 only eight Animal occurrences — the lowest proportion yet — and the same uneven stress among those Object symbols employed in the group (Crescent and V-Rod, seven times: Double Disc and Z-Rod, five times).

Twelve of the seventeen just considered are notationally set out A/B/C = D, where C and D are Mirror and Comb. The other five are more complex, and may be given as A/(B = C = D), A/B = C = D, (C = D) = (A/B), (A/B) = (C/D), and (A/C) = (B/D), using C and D to represent between them Mirror and Comb in each case. In all these last five, the layout again seems to be due to limits of space imposed by the physical background, and one cannot assume that the statement intended to be conveyed was necessarily any less intelligible than it would have been if set out in the more normal A/B/C = D style.

The last three Quadruples (A/B/C/D, (A = B = C)/D, and (A = B)/C/D) are interesting in that none contains Mirror or Comb as any element. These three will be discussed individually below later.
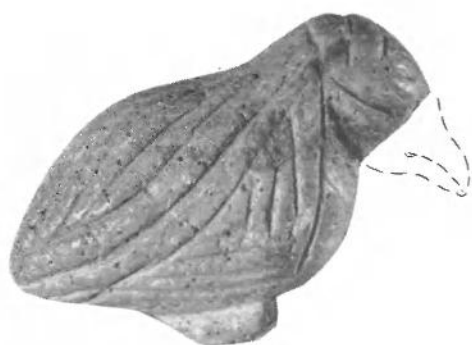
1, Steatite bird, Shetland; 2, Belt-plate, Thames; 3–5, Portsoy (Banff) stone. (Not to scale)
(1, 3, *photo. Malcolm Murray*; 2, *British Museum*; 4, 5, *after Reginald Smith*)

PLATE III

Facing page 39

Class I stone from Birsay, Orkney

Probably because of the small size of this group, there is no instance of complete or partial repetition among the twenty examples. In four cases, however, the A/B element in a Quadruple repeats an A/B which occurs in either a Triple or a Pair.

Conclusions

Statements containing four symbols, or Quadruples, must in general be seen as related to Triples, extended by the use of both Mirror and Comb where a Triple might only have a Mirror as the last element. Animal symbols are notably poorly represented and there is the usual uneven selection from the range of Object symbols.

UNCLASSIFIED

In the small Table (p. 36 above) showing Totals of Groups, four instances were listed as 'not classifiable as above'. Two of these, *ECMS* 97,[1] and Stuart (1856–67), I, pl. viii, involve depictions of human figures holding unidentifiable objects and, though they are included in *ECMS*, there must be some uncertainty as to their age, let alone the propriety of including them in *ECMS* Class I. The third, Stuart (1856–67), II, pl. xv, is a combination (monogram style) of Crescent and Triangle on a small slab from Stonehaven, and the fourth, *ECMS* 131, though undoubtedly on a Class I field-monument and apparently a Pair, may possibly not constitute a statement in the same way that the other Pairs do.[2]

CATEGORIES OF STATEMENTS

Characteristics

From the foregoing analysis, it may be inferred that statements differ not only in the number of their component symbols but in other respects as well, notably the presence or absence of Mirror and Comb symbols, or the degree to which Animal symbols are present. The following categories, which override the purely numerical classification, will be found useful in further investigation.

Type of Statement	*Characteristics*
S–1	Single symbol (A), usually an Animal
S–2	Pair, nearly always in the form A/B; can be *either* Animal/Animal, *or* Animal/Object, Object/Animal, Object/Object, where the Object symbol is neither Mirror nor Comb.
S–3	Triple or Quadruple, normally set out as A/B/C, or A/B/C = D, where A/B is never Animal/Animal, but can be any other combination of Objects and Animals, and where in Triples, –/C is Mirror or –/B/C Mirror and Comb, and in Quadruples, –C/D or C = D is Mirror and Comb.

---

[1] In this paper the monuments listed in *ECMS* are identified by the figure numbers in Part III of that book.
[2] Grantown, *ECMS* 131: Reindeer over (?) Rectangle, but *cf.* the Deer-and-Trap depiction on the Banagher (Offaly) pillar F. Henry, *Irish Art* (1940), pl. 41 b.

As, between them, these three categories of statements account for ninety per cent of all statements considered in the analysis, the small remainder can be dismissed for the moment, and further conclusions based on S–1, S–2 and S–3.

Significance of these categories

Although attempts will later be made to assign quantitative or qualitative values to individual symbols, alone or in combination, and based on identifications of the supposed prototypes, the percipient reader will at once see that such attempts are bound to involve *a priori* assumptions. Before the fairly complex discussions involved in justifying such assumptions are set out, it is permissible to make certain inferences from what has already been said; inferences which are not so much matters of history or archaeology as of common sense and common observation. The only assumption required is that statements exist; that is, that the analysis just attempted has demonstrated the existence of non-random patterns in the grouped occurrences of symbols on one hundred and fifty-eight Class I field-monuments.

S–1 Statements

As these consist of but one symbol, and make up only one-sixth of the total, it could be supposed that they possess general, rather than particular, meanings, and refer to classes of things rather than to individuals. Two geographical outliers in this group offer a clue. The Boar, carved on a rock-face at Dunadd, Argyll, one of the very few instances outside the Pictish homeland, is within a small 'nucleated' fort which, historically, was a Dalriadic citadel occupied by the *Scotti* from the 5th to the 8th centuries A.D. The most likely occasion for the carving of a Pictish symbol inside the summit of a Dalriadic stronghold would be after a (successful) Pictish assault.[1] Again, though the Fish symbol incised vertically on a pillar at Borthwick, near Hawick,[2] cannot be connected with any such martial expedition, there are certain archaeological reasons[3] for believing in the existence of Pictish enclaves in post-Roman southern Scotland.

Both instances of S–1 statements surely have a territorial import, like the six examples of the Bull symbol from Burghead, now a coastal village but formerly a vast promontory-fort. They should mean 'This marks the (Animal) territory', and there is little reason to avoid the further implication 'This marks the territory of the (Animal) people'. In modern terms, one should recall such National Park symbols as the pony for Dartmoor, the curlew for Northumbria, and the white rose for north Yorkshire, or the widely-known oak sprig of the National Trust, all of which are used, on metal plaques, in precisely this way. It follows that the Animal symbols, then, may be 'group-labels', capable of standing alone, or of being combined with other symbols which are not group-labels. To any modern Scot, this usage is wholly familiar; one can

---

[1] *Problem*, 81, fig. 8 and refs.: *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 736, has 'Oengus mac Fergusa rex Pictorum vastavit regiones Dailriatai et obtinuit Dunat . . .' (Anderson, *Sources*, I, 232–3).

[2] Feachem, *PSAS*, LXXXIV (1949–50), 206: R.C.A.M. (Scot.) Inventory, *Roxburgh*, II, no. 855 and fig. 496.

[3] *Pit-* names in Lothian, *Problem*, 146 and map 6: souterrains at Castle Law, Newstead, etc., *Problem*, 91. For an extreme (and improbable) view, *cf.* N. Tolstoy, *B.B.C.S.*, XIX 2 (1961), 130.

take the word Mackintosh (Macintosh, McIntosh) and, ignoring its technical sense of a waterproof topcoat, list the following forms:

Collective noun:	Clan Mackintosh
Single noun:	The Mackintosh (chief of the clan)
Descriptive:	Mackintosh plaid or tartan
Territorial:	Mackintosh country (Inverness area)
Commemorative:	Mackintosh Street
Surname:	Douglas Mackintosh

— realising that, in the absence of writing, much of this information could still be conveyed pictorially by the use of some appropriate clan badge (boxwood sprig).

S–2 *Statements*

The small sub-class of four which read 'Animal/Animal' should, on this basis, indicate boundary marks; for example, between 'land of the Goose people' and 'land of the Fish people'. It is hard to see, if this were so, why so few stones of this type have survived, and there is another explanation altogether, based on the particular combination of Animals involved, considered later.

Contexts of S–2 and S–3 statements

In following through *ECMS* the documented accounts of discoveries of field-monuments bearing statements of the S–2 and S–3 type — by far the biggest proportion of all known — one is constantly struck by the very large number which come from churchyards. They are encountered below ground in grave-digging, they are noticed lying in ancient burial-grounds, and they are even found built into the fabric of dilapidated chapelries as grounders, coigns, window-sills and door-jambs. As well as this, a few have actually been recovered in direct association with burials, many of non-Christian appearance; here the stones can serve as side-slabs or cover-stones of long or short cist-graves, often in obviously secondary positions. It is by no means certain that these are all later Norse graves, nor that, if really Pictish, the burials or cremations are those of Christian Picts. This whole problem needs a good deal more attention given to it.

The meaning of an S–2 or S–3 statement involves something which, quantitatively, is five times as common as the meaning of an S–1 'group-label' statement; it is conveyed by statements of from two to four symbols, involving repetition, and therefore possibly referring to similar events or circumstances; it employs Object symbols rather than Animal group-labels; and the associated field-monuments occur, far more often than coincidence should permit, in, under, or around known burial-grounds. The S–2 and S–3 statements must then be memorials to the dead. The writer believes this inference to be so strongly indicated by the evidence that it would need very convincing arguments indeed to refute it (bearing in mind that discoveries from Christian

burial-grounds may have been set up in a pre-Christian phase, as such continuity in burial practice is probably far more common than is generally realised).[1]

It would be tedious to rehearse in detail the many instances in Old World pre- and protohistory where memorials to the dead assume non-literate pictorial forms, or to stress that the glyptic art of early Europe is religious and funerary, rather than merely ornamental, in origin. Certain aspects of some of these art-styles will have to be examined below, but here one need only list the major examples. These include the late neolithic art of the Mediterranean, western Europe, and many British megalithic collective tombs;[2] the 'cup-and-ring' art of the British Bronze Age[3] and the rather more detailed styles of Bronze Age Scandinavia, not certainly funerary but surely magico-religious;[4] the related art of the Alpine region into the local Early Iron Age;[5] a vast range of Siberian rock-art, covering at least a millennium;[6] the early Christian art of the Catacombs, often like canting heraldry in its combinations of written names, cryptograms, puns and rebuses;[7] the various Nordic slabs from the late Roman period to the full Scandinavian era;[8] and, to return home again, the magnificent Scottish medieval and post-medieval grave-slabs of the so-called 'West Highland' range, with their limited symbolic designs and rich ornament.[9] The art-styles of the Christian era are of special interest in this connection; they show that symbols of a known range and of fixed form can be employed *to relate specifically to the subject of the memorial.*

Probable meaning of S–2 and S–3 Statements

This is the only sound explanation of the careful layout, the selectiveness, and the repetition, that have been noted in statements of this kind. The messages conveyed must be of this general significance:

Memorial of Object person of Animal group

Memorial of Object (noun) person, qualified by Object (adjective)

Memorial of Object person, set up by Object person

— and, where more than two symbols are employed, by a logical extension, it might be assumed that those at the beginning of the statement refer to the deceased and those at the end to the erector of the memorial.[10]

In the latter light should be seen the Mirror, or Mirror and Comb, which 'end' no less than 43 out of 50 statements in the S–3 category of statement, and

[1] *Cf.* references in *T.D.G.N.H.A.S.*, xxxvii (1961), 73 *n.*6: *PSAS*, lxxxix (1955–56), 268–276: K. Bohner, 'Die Frage der Kontinuitat . . .'. *Trierer Zeitschrift*, xix (1950).

[2] O. G. S. Crawford, *The Eye Goddess* (1957), chs. iii–ix: Piggott, *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (1954), 208–218 and refs.

[3] H. Breuil, *PPSEA*, vii, iii (1934), 289 (illustrated corpus).

[4] Althin, *Studien zu den bronzezeitlichen Felszeichnungen von Skåne*, 2 vols., Lund (1945).

[5] E. Anati, *Camonica Valley* (1963), illustrated corpus.

[6] Tallgren, 'Inner Asiatic and Siberian Rock-Pictures', *E.S.A.*, viii (1933), 175, with full bibliography.

[7] Northcote, *Epitaphs of the Catacombs* (1878), 155–175: Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea* (1879), ii.

[8] Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine*, 2 vols., Stockholm (1941–42): Shetelig and Falk, *Scandinavian Archaeology* (1937), 242 ff.: Arbmann, *The Vikings* (1961), pls. 61, 63.

[9] Graham, *The Carved Stones of Islay* (1895): Drummond, *Sculptured Monuments in Iona and the West Highlands* (1881).

[10] *Cf.* the 5th-century memorial stone at Whithorn, *ECMS* 538–9, translatable as 'We praise thee, O Lord: Latinus aged thirty-five and his daughter aged four; the grandson of Barrovadus made this monument'.

serve largely to differentiate these from the shorter S-2 type. Do these refer to the surviving relative responsible for the execution of the field-monument? The objection that they can hardly indicate any personal identity is resolved if one allows them to refer to a *relationship*. The intrinsic femininity of these symbols quite apart, one finds a comb and mirror directly associated with an equestrian Pictish lady on a Class II field-monument,[1] and they occur again, on a medieval grave-slab from Iona, of Prioress Anna, dated to 1543.[2] From this, it can be tentatively deduced that the symbols Mirror and Comb at the end of any S-3 statement imply 'Commemorated by a female relative', and the relationship is 'wife', 'mother', 'concubine', 'aunt' or some such. It would then appear that females cannot be the subjects of such statements, and there is a possibility that Mirror by itself, and Mirror with Comb added, conceal some distinction.

An S-3 statement could then read

> Memorial of Object person, qualified by Object or Animal adjective, set up by Mirror (and Comb) relative

and possibly

> Memorial of Object person, qualified by adjective, set up by Mirror relative and another Object person;

further, it is possible that a statement of this kind may refer to more than one male deceased, and there is an instance (Birsay, Orkney) where this is certainly so.

MATERIAL OTHER THAN FIELD-MONUMENTS

CAVE-ART

It was shown in *AASIA* (23–24, and fig. 6) that, in respect of some of the Animal symbols, simplified versions were known from graffiti on the walls of certain Scottish caves.[3]

This is also true of the Object symbols, and cave-art contains, in addition, certain Object symbols which are also found in *art mobilier*, but not as yet on Class I field-monuments. These symbols are mostly of geometric form; they appear (p. 65 below) to be of British Iron Age origin; and they offer further reason for thinking that cave-art should be dated before that of *ECMS* Class I. In Fig. 2, a selection of Object symbols from cave-art, re-drawn to approximately equal size from *ECMS* and other sources (Stuart (1856–67) and Diack (1944)), are shown. In no sense do these constitute statements. Macalister (1940, p. 185) would regard them as expressions of personality, the Pictish equivalent of 'John Smith was here'; allowing nonetheless that, if individual symbols possess specific functions ('... perhaps denoting rank or walk of life...'), they are being used in that light.

---

[1] Hilton of Cadboll, Ross (*ECMS* 59); more recently, Stevenson (1959), 41 ff. and pl. v no.1.
[2] Drummond, *op. cit.*, p. 42, *n.* 9, pl. xliv: see also *PSAS*, XVII, 342.
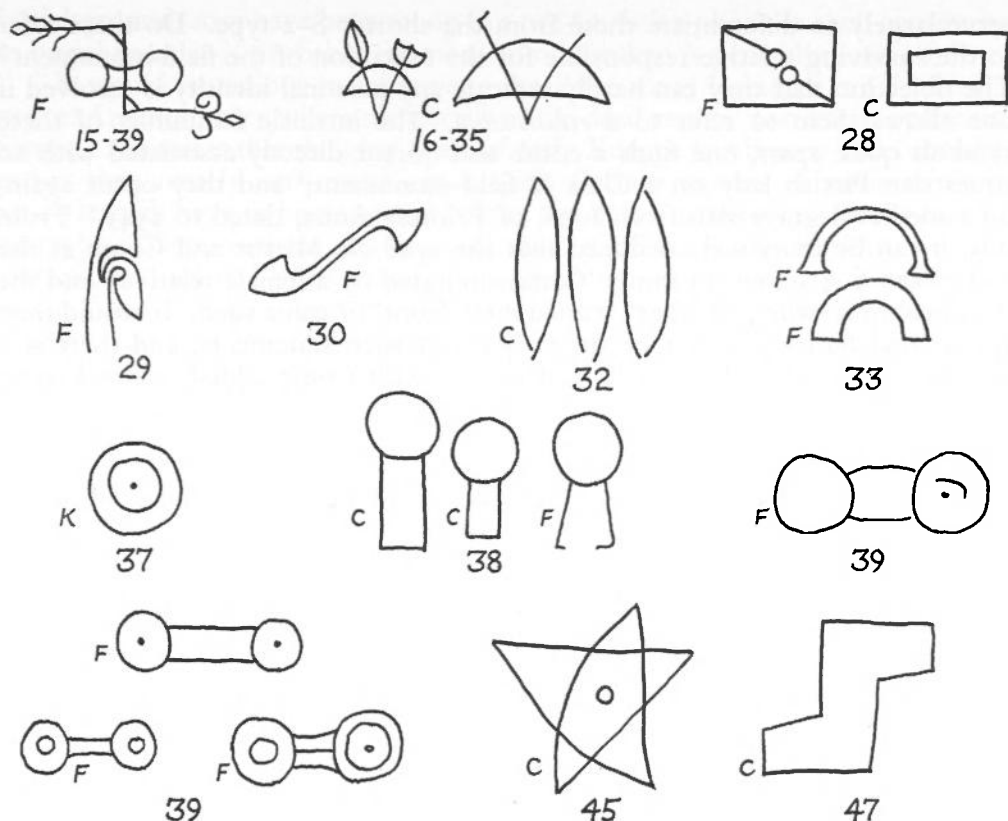[3] *AASIA*, fig. 6, and map, fig. 3, also pp. 23–4.

Fig. 2. FORMS OF SYMBOLS APPEARING IN CAVE-ART.
C, Covesea, Moray: K, King's Cave, Arran: F, Fife coast caves. All from *ECMS*.
The numbers refer to the List of Symbols, p. 51 onwards

'ART MOBILIER'

General

It has long been noted that both Animal and Object symbols occur on small and portable relics. This class is much more widespread than has generally been supposed, and it is easiest to divide it up into the different media in the usual way.

Metal: Silver

Foremost are the heavy silver neck-chains, which form an exclusively North British type[1] and to which the epithet 'princely' is aptly applied. Ten are known, not all complete, and the normal fastening (worn at the front?) is a massive penannular ring, into which both ends of the chain are hooked. Two of these rings, on the chains from Whitecleuch, Lanark,[2]

[1] *Problem*, 111: *PSAS*, LXXIII (1938–39), 326: *PSAS*, LXXXVIII (1954–56), 228.
[2] *ECMS* 503.

and Parkhill, Aberdeen,[1] show, laterally on either side of the opening, reserved symbolic ornament in a sunken field. This ornament must have been chased from the solid and was apparently high-lighted by filling the field around them with red enamel.

The symbols are disposed in a way which suggests that they may have constituted 'statements'. They read

Whitecleuch (Left)   Double Disc and Z-Rod = Vertical zig-zag
             (Right) Notched rectangle, set horizontally
Parkhill   (Left)   Curious symbol, possibly 'S-shaped Figure', between two
                       occurrences of 'Three Small Discs' (in triangle form)
             (Right) Three Small Discs/Triangle = Triangle

In the important but poorly-documented find from Norrie's Law, Fife, the two silver plaques or lappets (discussed in *AASIA*, 44) both bear symbols, again chased from the thick surface with the ornament reserved and perhaps accentuated against enamel. Both plaques read

Double Disc and Z-Rod / Seal

— set out as a normal S–2 statement of A/B type. From the same find, a silver hand-pin of fairly solid appearance shows, finely engraved on the back of the head,[2] an incomplete Double Disc and Z-Rod.

Metal: Bronze

There is a lost bronze object from the fort called the Laws of Monifieth, Angus, a flat crescentic plate 4½ in. overall (*ECMS* 298). One face shows an engraved ornate Crescent, which nearly, and symmetrically, fills the field, the superimposed V-Rod having identical ornate terminals. On the reverse is an ornate Double Disc and Z-Rod, with, in one of the horns of the crescentic field, a small Animal symbol, either Dog's Head or more probably Seal. A later Scandinavian possessor of this object scratched his name in runes on the margin of the front.

Stylistically this is a late production — perhaps 8th or even 9th century A.D. — and as there are no signs in the surviving drawings of studs or perforations it can scarcely have been worn on a garment, like the silver Norrie's Law plaques. In the Duke of Sutherland's museum at Dunrobin Castle there is a sheet of hammered bronze from the Golspie Broch, roughly crescentic, 12½ in. between points and 8 in. wide across the middle. This may be a 'rough-out' for a similar object.

Stone

SHETLAND: JARLSHOF

Hamilton's demonstration of the culture sequence here[3] shows how in his phase III (post-Broch and pre-Norse), from *c.* 200 A.D. '... new colonists arrived from the south. These people occupied large wheel-houses ... at a later stage at Jarlshof, they use underground passage houses. Their pottery, though hand-made, is clearly influenced by Romano-British traditions ...' and, as Radford has stressed, it stretches caution needlessly far to dispute that phases III and IV at Jarlshof comprise the culture of at least one group of Picts. The following occur in phase IV:

(Fig. 3, 2) Sandstone disc, 2¼ in. diam., with incised design of 'coiled serpent' (*Jarlshof*, pl. xvii, c). This seems more like 'Horse-Shoe symbol' (*cf. ECMS* 196) with a confused motif in the centre. On the reverse, a running spiral superimposed on a snake's (?) head.
(Fig. 3, 8) Similar disc; simple version of Double Disc and Z-Rod, reverse plain.
(Not shown) A third, larger disc; cast of this in *NME*. One face is wholly filled with developed S-scroll ornament.

[1] *ECMS* 216, better in Anderson (1881), 44, fig. 31.
[2] *ECMS* 387.
[3] J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (1956): *cf.* now his 'Brochs and Broch-builders', in *The Northern Isles*, ed. Wainwright (1962), chap. vi.
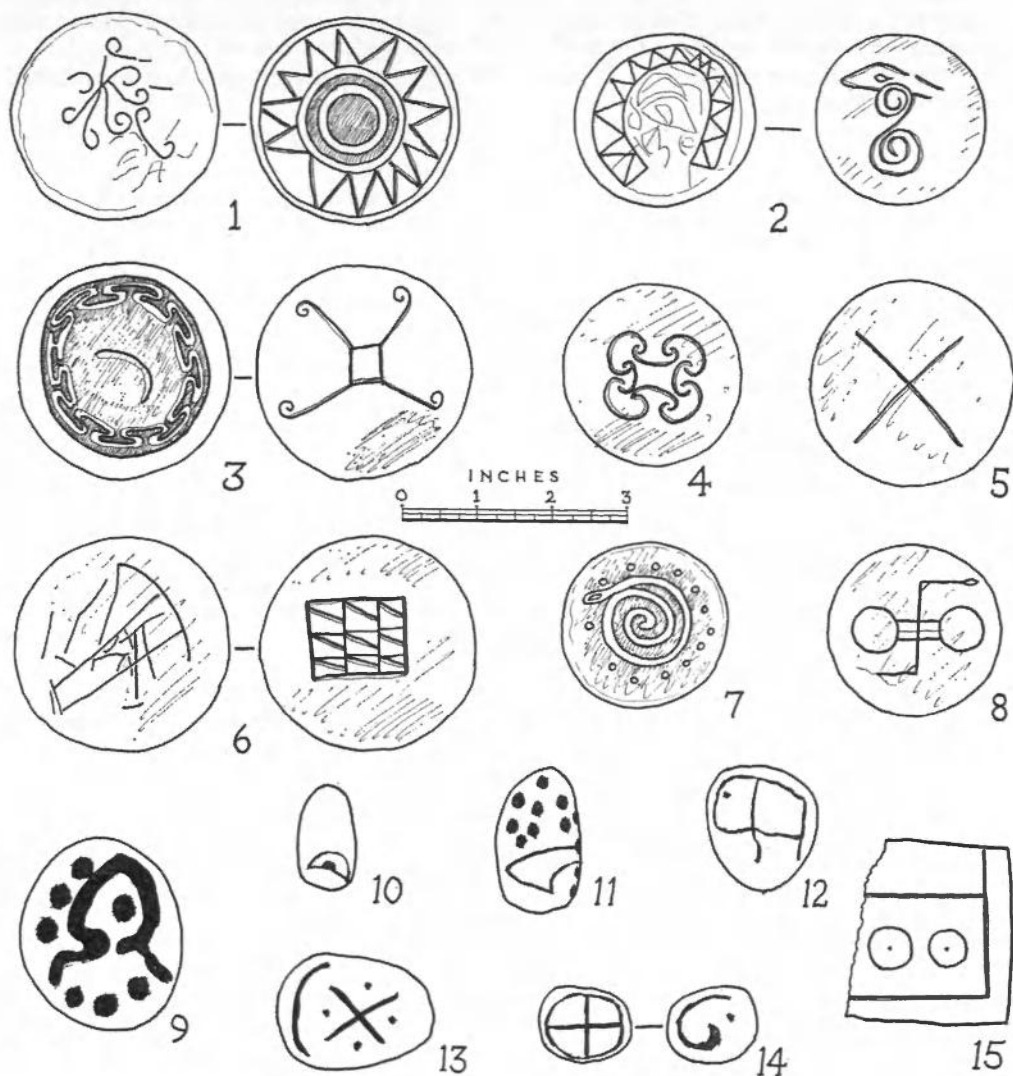
Fig. 3. ART-MOBILIER IN STONE.
9–14, painted pebbles, the rest incised or engraved

From contexts in the preceding Phase III at Jarlshof come:

(Fig. 3, 9) Painted quartz pebble, $2\frac{1}{4}$ by 2 in. One face has 7 dots and what may be a Horse-Shoe symbol, or else a form of the Circular Disc and Rectangle-with-Indentation symbol, all in dark-brown pigment. On the other face, more dots and a wavy line.

(Not shown) A smaller painted pebble with dots all over it.

(Not shown) A small handled slate disc (*Jarlshof*, fig. 39, 6); this exactly reproduces the Circular Disc and Rectangle-with-Indentation symbol in outline.

SHETLAND: NORTH MAVINE

A tiny carved steatite bird with the beak missing; see Pl. II. This is a surface find, now in *NME* (BG 206). The conventional feathering strongly resembles that of the Eagle symbol (*cf. ECMS* 57, for instance).

SHETLAND: GLETNESS, NESTING

(Fig. 3, 4) Steatite disc, 2½ in. diam., now in *NME* (BG 392). One face shows four peltas in a quadrilobate setting.

SHETLAND: NESS OF BURGIE, SCOTNESS

(Fig. 3, 3) Sandstone disc (*NME*, GA 137); around edge on one face, a continued border of neatly-incised 'Greek key' or 'T-fret' pattern (*cf.* O'Dell, *St. Ninian's Isle Treasure* (Edinburgh, 1960), p. 46, top left, ornament on flange of 'chape'), enclosing an incised arc. On the other face, four lines ending in coils radiate from corners of a square.

(Fig. 3, 6) Sandstone disc (*NME*, GA 138); on one face, a Rectangle figure, divided into nine compartments, and on the other, some indecipherable scratchings.

SHETLAND: DUNROSSNESS, LERWICK

(Fig. 3, 1) Sandstone disc (*NME*, BG 151). One face contains a pattern of incised S-scrolls. On the other, a circular central area has been sunk, an internal concentric annulus being reserved within it. Around this area is a running zig-zag between two incised rings (*cf. AASIA*, fig. 4).

SHETLAND: JARLSHOF ('OLD FINDS')

(Fig. 3, 5) Sandstone disc (*NME*, GA 422). One face is smooth and plain, the other bears a simple incised cross.

ORKNEY: BROCH OF BURRIAN

These are objects derived from excavation of the secondary levels within this broch, presumably roughly contemporary with phases III and IV at Jarlshof.

(*ECMS* figs. 23, 23a) A grit pebble, 6 in. long. One face shows an incised hexagram, the other, a Pentacle symbol; three of its five points contain Small Circular Discs, and a fourth, a bird, probably Goose. Faint traces of a crescent can be seen next to all this on the same face.

(In *NME*) Several small quartz pebbles with dots painted on them, but not in specific patterns.

CAITHNESS: KEISS BROCH

A variety of interesting small finds occurred in the 19th-century excavations of this site.
(Fig. 3, 15) Piece of a small flat grit plaque (*NME*, GA 514) showing part of a neatly-incised rectangle in which are two small compass-drawn circles.
(Fig. 3, 11) Painted pebble (*NME*, GA 502) with dots and part of a volute-shaped motif.
(Fig. 3, 14) Painted pebble (*NME*, GA 503), one face showing a circle with crossed lines in it, and the other, a curl and a dot.
(Fig. 3, 10) Painted pebble (*NME*, GA 507), very clear Crescent with semi-circular patch on its arc.
(Fig. 3, 12) Painted pebble (*NME*, GA 510), with a design that may possibly be meant for some kind of animal.
(Fig. 3, 13) Painted pebble (*NME*, GA 512), showing an arc, and a cross with four pellets between the arms.

CAITHNESS: STEMSTER, BOWER

(Fig. 3, 7) Sandstone disc, 2 in. diam. (*NME*, BG 245). One face has an incised spirally-coiled snake whose head intrudes into a border of 12 (?13) little dimples; the other face (not shown) has a confused curvilinear design.

BANFFSHIRE: INVERKEITHNEY

Stone lamp or handled cup in the form of a coiled snake (*NME*, AQ 32). See *AASIA*, Pl. 1, lower.

BANFFSHIRE: PORTSOY

(Pl. II) A remarkable pebble $5\frac{5}{8}$ in. long, with a variety of incised designs; now in the British Museum.[1] The principal face has two human heads seen frontally, one at either end, chins to centre. The first head is oval with ring ears, five brow-lines and pointed chin. Next to it is a Fish symbol, the upper part cross-hatched (*cf. ECMS* 102), between four other symbols; plain Crescent, two Horse-Shoe symbols, and another for which *cf. ECMS* 99, 99a. From the chin of the other head, a motif like an uneven Latin cross depends. Reverse, another Fish.

Bone

SHETLAND: JARLSHOF

From Phase III, a small square (1.3 in.) bone plaque with four perforations and central square (*Jarlshof*, fig. 39 no. 6: 'weaving card'). This is a model of the shield-type carried by the figures on the Birsay, Orkney, Class I field-monument.[2]

ORKNEY: BROCH OF BURRIAN

Two ox metatarsals, again from the excavation of the internal secondary levels. One has an incomprehensible design on it. The other bears —

(*ECMS* 22, 22a) On one face, Crescent and V-Rod, finely engraved; on the other, Circular Disc and Rectangle-with-Indentation symbol.

Pottery

It is just possible that the sherds with animal designs from northern contexts (*AASIA*, fig. 1 and discussion) should be included in this list, together with those 'broch and wheel-house' sherds showing geometric ornament analogous to that displayed in Fig. 3. These are all likely to be considerably earlier than the period of the Class I field-monuments, but not necessarily earlier than some of the objects (*e.g.*, the stone discs) just discussed. A good instance is seen at:

SHETLAND: JARLSHOF

Sherd of decorated Class III pottery (*Jarlshof*, fig. 40, no. 4) with what may be the end of an S-Shaped Figure.

DISCUSSION

The list as a whole is impressive, even if in many of the above examples the resemblance to a Pictish symbol, at its simplest, may be fortuitous or illusory. There is a rough geographical distinction between the metalwork objects, which have a southern distribution, and those in stone and other media, which range from the Moray Firth area to Shetland; the latter are, on contextual evidence, likely to be earlier. The principal value of an examination of cave-art and *art mobilier* resides in the demonstration that such symbols can exist independently of *ECMS* Class I (and II) field-monuments, which dispels any idea that they were developed specifically for funeral or memorial purposes. It offers support to the idea advanced in *AASIA* (45–47) that most Pictish symbols have histories of individual development prior to the period during which they were portrayed on field-monuments.

[1] B.M. *Anglo-Saxon Guide* (1923), 128. The writer is most grateful to R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, F.S.A., who very kindly supplied an excellent cast for study and has permitted the present publication.
[2] Cruden (1957), pl. 7; central and left-hand shields.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE OBJECT SYMBOLS

GENERAL

The Animal symbols have already been partially discussed in *AASIA*, where (except for the 'Elephant' and 'S-Dragon') it was shown that they were based on recognisably real creatures. The Object symbols pose different problems. In most cases, it can be suspected that stylization has proceeded to the point where recognition of the prototype is not at once possible. The attempt can nevertheless be made. The first step is to ascertain how many separate symbols exist.

There are fourteen Animal symbols (fifteen, if Horse and the single instance of Horse's Head are separated), all found on Class I field-monuments. Three more are added in *ECMS* Class II — a later form of the 'S-Dragon', described as both 'Sea-horse' and 'Fish-monster' in *ECMS*; a Centaur; and a single and dubious occurrence of Bull's Head and Serpent (*ECMS* 162a).

Twenty-eight Object symbols are found on Class I field-monuments, six of which (Hammer and Anvil, Comb, Z-Rod, V-Rod, and the decorated form of Snake) are 'dependent' symbols in the sense that, though distinct designs, they are not known to occur save in certain definite conjunctions or associations with others. A further four symbols are added by cave-art and *art mobilier*; Pentacle, Zig-zag line, Triangle, and Three Small Discs in Triangle form. From *ECMS* Class II one can draw a further five Objects, not found in Class I; one of these is already known from cave-art, a second is probably no more than a variant of a known Class I symbol, and there is real doubt as to whether the last three (Triquetra Knot, Shears, and Crozier) are Pictish symbols at all.

The full range of all symbols in cave-art, *art mobilier*, and *ECMS* classes I and II is thus, on paper, fifty-five. This essay will however ignore the dubious symbols, and concentrate on fourteen Animal symbols, the Bull's Head and Serpent, and thirty-five Object symbols, a total of fifty.

THE ALTERNATING SERIES

It was noticed by Stuart (1856–67), Anderson (1881), and most subsequent writers, that the Double Disc and the Crescent symbols are found in two guises — with, or without, the angular motifs known as the Z-Rod and V-Rod respectively. It has also been thought that these alternative presentations are systematic and perhaps meaningful. As Cruden (1957, 9) has neatly summarized it:

> '. . . the crescent may be crossed with a V-shaped floriated rod, but never with a Z-rod; the double disc may be crossed with a Z-rod, never a V-rod; the rods never occur alone and they never occur on certain symbols; they seem to have had a subsidiary or qualifying significance affecting the meaning of the associated symbol.'

This series of symbols which can appear alone, or with dependent designs, extends beyond the two just discussed. It can be set out:

Symbol	*Alternative form*
Double Disc	Double Disc and Z-Rod

Symbol	*Alternative form*
Notched Rectangle	Notched Rectangle and Z-Rod
(*missing*)	Snake (plain or decorated) and Z-Rod
Crescent	Crescent and V-Rod
Horse-Shoe	Horse-Shoe and V-Rod (Class II only)
ECMS 508 symbol	*ECMS* 'Curling-Tongs' symbol
Hammer and Anvil	Hammer, Anvil and 'Curling-Tongs' symbol

The clue to the meaning of this series lies in the nature of the two commonest dependent elements, Z-Rod and V-Rod. These will be identified shortly as a broken spear and a broken arrow respectively. Again, the design called in *ECMS* 'Curling-Tongs' looks, superficially, like something whose end is snapped or broken off, and this is confirmed by the existence of an 'unbroken' version at Anworth, Kirkcudbrightshire (*ECMS* 508), which is seen to be a stylized sword. The series thus comprises a group of symbols which can appear normally, or combined with one of three broken weapons.

In symbolic terms there is only one plausible explanation for this, and its most elegant expression is found in the Old Testament.[1] This series is a 'Live-Dead' one. If, say, the Crescent symbolized some rank or status proper to a living Pict, then Crescent and V-Rod must have meant the same in retrospective terms, after his death. It needs no great extension of the earlier conclusions reached as to the funerary purpose of most Class I field-monuments to permit the idea that, on such a stone, signs indicative of a man's rank or occupation could with this modification be made to carry the information that he was dead. If this sounds like tautology, it should be realized that there were presumably occasions when symbols were intended to refer to living persons — for example, when somehow worn or carried on the person or on clothing, and in field-monuments, when they refer, not to the deceased, but to the surviving commemorator.

One cannot say whether this reflects a real custom. The ritual spoliation of arms and their deposition in a grave cannot always be detected archaeologically. If a Z-Rod is a spear snapped in three, these fractures (the angles on the symbol) would be on the wooden shaft, the part least likely to have survived in almost any soil. With all-metal objects, however, such breaking or bending ('*brisement rituelle*') is detectable, and has been recorded. In northern Europe alone, the instances range from the Early Iron Age to Viking times, and the reader is referred to L. V. Grinsell's full discussion.[2] Whether such a burial custom was proper to the historical Picts is not known, but the very fact that it could be depicted symbolically hints that it may well have been. Even if, by the era of Class I field-monuments, the custom had been rejected, the

---

[1] *Ecclesiastes*, chap. xii, v. 6.
[2] 'Early Funerary Superstitions in Britain', *Folk-Lore*, LXIV (1953), 271; 'The Breaking of Objects as a Funerary Rite', *Folk-Lore*, LXXII (1961), 475, with bibliography. Add now: *PPS*, XXI (1955), 233–4 — bent spearhead and sword in middle La Tene grave, Obermenzing 12, Bavaria (*cf.* comments in *AASIA*, 28, on importance of this region in Pictish background) and (Viking instance), 'Das Graberfeld bei Ihre im Kirchspiel Hellvi auf Gottland', M. Stenberger, *Acta Archaeologica*, XXXII (1961), figs. 22–26 and p. 30 ff.

meaning of the alternating symbols apparently had not been forgotten; and there is some evidence (*e.g.*, *ECMS* 299) that the 'Curling-Tongs' or Broken Sword could be added to others, in this case Hammer and Anvil, to express the meaning 'dead', where it might have been artistically difficult to display both Hammer and Anvil in fractured conditions.

INDIVIDUAL IDENTIFICATIONS

In the following catalogue, the numbering commences at 15, the first fourteen numbers being reserved for the Animal symbols. It must be emphasized that, at this stage, all that is being attempted is a series of explanations of what each Object symbol may originally have portrayed; the *meanings* of the symbols, in the context of statements or funerary messages, may well to some extent be connected with such identifications, but will be examined separately afterwards.

a. Symbols identifiable as real objects

15. *ECMS* 'Z-Rod': Spear with Knob Butt

A number of instances of this symbol have been drawn extended in Fig. 4. The 'classic' form, shown as 1a and 1b, descending from an assumed realistic representation, is always found bent into a Z-shape, and associated with symbol no. 39 (the Double Disc). Behind the point or head are five curlicues facing forwards (1a), sometimes however omitted (1b). The butt is a knob or roundel. The spears shown in *ECMS* Class II scenes, carried by both horsemen and footmen, are generally shorter; this symbol spear is probably based on an earlier form that can properly be called 'Caledonian'. The little silver plaque from Bewcastle[1] shows the god *Cocidius* holding a spear about 5 ft. long with a bulbous butt, and a tablet from the Wall shows Mars in native idiom holding a similar weapon.[2]

The butt itself must be the bronze 'doorknob' variety, known from actual finds; save for two,[3] these are all north British in context[4] and moulds for casting them were found at Traprain Law[5] and Dunagoil, Bute.[6] As V. G. Childe once pointed out,[7] they are referred to in Dio Cassius's *History* (Loeb edition, bk. lxxvii, 12), where the natives opposing Severus in the early 3rd century A.D. were armed with

> '. . . a shield, and short spear with a bronze apple attached to the end of the spear shaft, so that when it is shaken it may clash (or rattle) and terrify the enemy . . .'

In Fig. 4, series II depicts the form assumed by the Z-Rod when it is associated with symbol no. 34, the (decorated or plain) Snake. Here the curlicues are absent, and the peculiar form of the head suggests a derivation from a rare La Tène form, the *flamboyant* spearhead.[8] Series III in the same figure is the variety associated with the Notched Rectangle symbol, no. 19 (see also Fig. 5), where the head or point tends merely to repeat the butt.

---

[1] *Roman and Native in North Britain*, ed. Richmond (1958), pl. 7.

[2] *C.I.L.*, VII, 1050.

[3] Fulbourn, and Rushall Down.

[4] Broch of Harray: Inverurie: Crichie: Traprain Law (3 or more): and (*Proc. S. A.*, VI (1868), 256) Lisna-croghera, Ireland.

[5] *PSAS*, LIV, 89 and fig. 20.

[6] *Trans. Bute Nat. Hist. Soc.*, (1925), 58, pl. 40.

[7] *Prehistory of Scotland* (1935), 228.

[8] *Cf.* Dechelette, *Manuel*, 2nd edn. IV, 652, fig. 479: British instances are Bidcombe Down, Wilts. (*W.A.M.*, LV (1953), 75, illus.) and Bredon Hill, Gloucs. (*Arch.J.*, XCV (1938) 75).
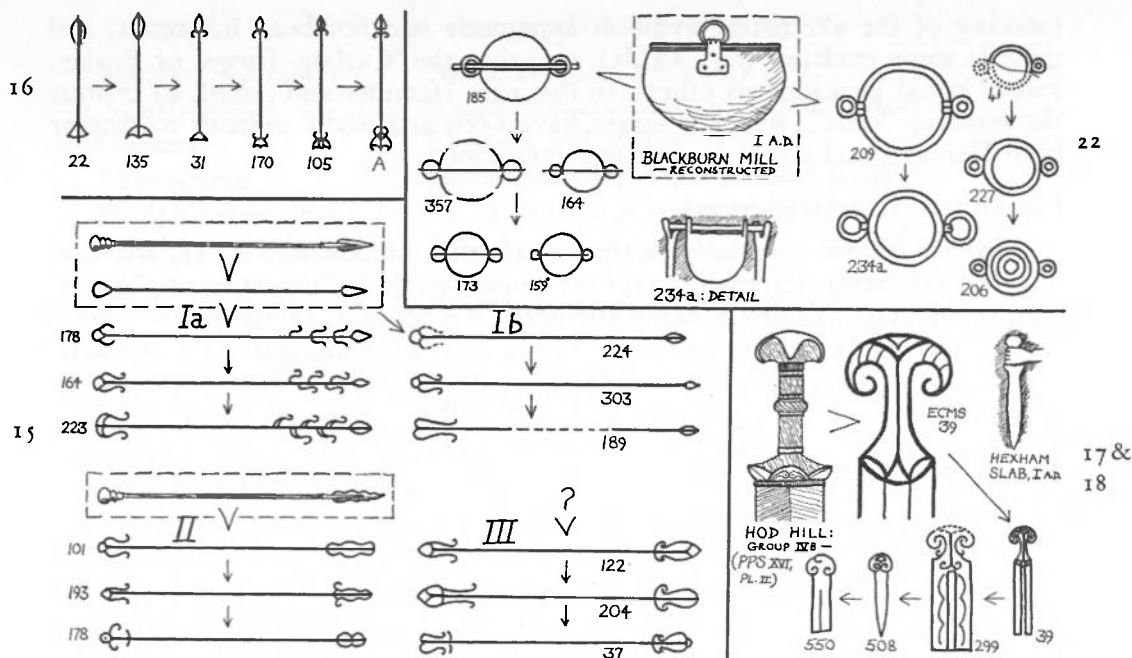
Fig. 4. ANCESTRY OF SYMBOLS Nos. 15, 16, 17, 18 & 22: SPEAR, ARROW, SWORD AND CAULDRON.

Not to scale. Hypothetical forms enclosed in broken line: the rest, *ECMS* as numbered

16.   *ECMS* 'V-Rod': Arrow

The range shown in Fig. 4, top left, illustrates this. The first, *ECMS* 22, on the bone from Burrian, Orkney, (all instances have been drawn extended) still has the triangular flight. Small bows are shown in use on some Class II field-monuments — *ECMS* 120 is a good instance — and though these are probably very much later hunting-bows, the arrowheads are still shown in much the same convention.

17.   *ECMS* 'Notched Rectangle and curved end': Broken Sword

This is not a common symbol, and the swords shown on *ECMS* Class II scenes are no guide. Such Class II depictions as *ECMS* 59 and 235b, both certainly 8th-century or later, show a sword with a cross-hilt and a 'cocked hat' pommel; like the T-axes (Tüllenaxte) borne by men and centaurs in other Class II scenes, they are more likely to be Frankish or Northumbrian (Saxon) imports than local productions.

The sword of the symbol must however have been, not a type which can scarcely have reached the Picts before the late 6th century, but one contemporary with the bulbous-butted spear of symbol no. 15. This is shown in Fig. 4, lower right. *ECMS* 39, the 'hilt' of which is drawn enlarged, should be compared with (on its left) the hilt of a (Piggott's) Group IVb sword from Hod Hill, Dorset.[1] The resemblance is too close to be mere accident; even the crown hilt of the prototype is reproduced. Such swords could, and did, enter southern Scotland in the 1st century A.D.[2] Fig. 4 also shows (inverted) a detail

[1] *PPS*, xvi (1950), pl. ii, and map, fig. 12.
[2] Dalry, Ayr: Middlebie, Dumfries: Newstead, Roxb.: and Perth (unloc.). Related IVa ('cocked hat') hilts at Fendoch, Perth, and at Newstead.
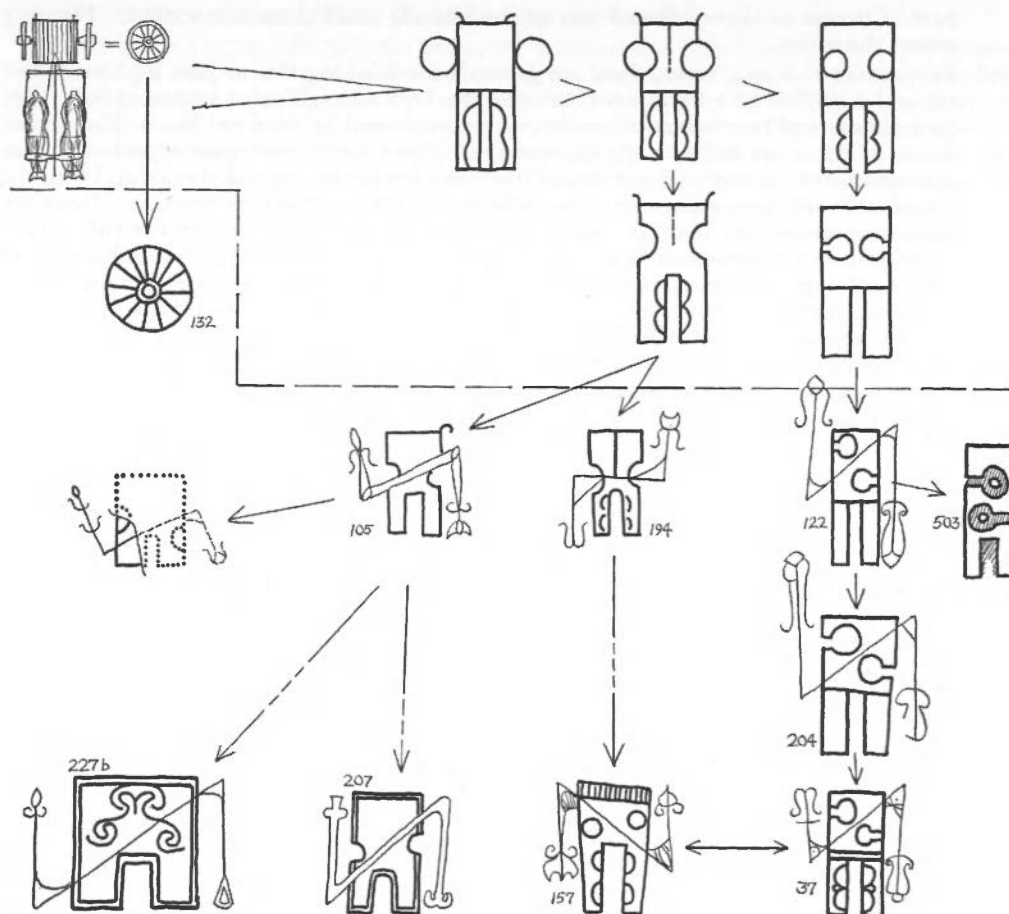
Fig. 5. SYMBOL No. 19: 'CHARIOT AND TWO PONIES'.
Hypothetical forms above broken line; the rest, *ECMS*, Classes I and (207, 227b) II

from the memorial slab of the young cavalry signifer Flavinus, now in Hexham Abbey;[1] on this, the deceased rides conventionally over a crouching naked Briton. The latter holds a shield, and with his free hand rests on the ground the pommel of his sword to hamstring the Roman's charger. Crude as the sculptured detail is, the sword-type is still generally recognizable.

18.   *ECMS* 508, not distinguished: Sword
The single instance of this symbol (Fig. 4, lower right) from Anwoth, Kirkcds., may be rather late. It appears to be the unbroken or 'live' version of the preceding symbol.

19.   *ECMS* 'Notched Rectangle': Chariot and two Ponies
This symbol is found once by itself, in *art mobilier* (Fig. 5, no. 503; fastening of White-cleuch silver chain, p. 45) but normally occurs crossed by a Z-Rod of the variety shown in Fig. 4, lower left, series III. It is a short rectangle, from which depend two rectangular

---

[1] W. T. Taylor, *Hexham Abbey* (1957), 39 illus.: not in *C.I.L.*?

bars. Circular or curved inserts can appear laterally in all three components. Figure 5 shows the series.

Far-fetched as it may seem, there are grounds for thinking this to be a highly-stylized vertical depiction of a light war-chariot of the Llyn Cerrig Bach (Anglesey) sort, with central pole and two harnessed ponies, as reconstructed by Sir Cyril Fox.[1] The crucial forms in Fig. 5 are *ECMS* 105, 194, and 122. These can be explained hypothetically as derivatives from a series (above dotted line) which take the original chariot and turn the wheels through ninety degrees, thus avoiding the difficulties of perspective. There are numerous precedents for this mode of treatment in primitive art, and it still occurs frequently in the spontaneous drawings of small children. Almgren has collected and discussed[2] instances in the Bohuslan carvings of the northern Bronze Age; it is also seen in Ligurian plough-scenes,[3] and the writer has noted, marginally, the 'flat wheel' in rock art as far afield as India.[4]

The outside vertical lines derive from traces connecting the ponies' yokes or breastbands to terminal hooks on the swingle-tree. *ECMS* 105 shows a hook (top right) that may derive from a chariot-horn. The displacement of the two wheels from a horizontal line (122, 204, 37, etc.) is of course due to the insertion of the diagonal element of the Z-Rod.

Although chariotry does not seem to have survived the Roman conquest of southern England, we have Tacitus' evidence[5] that it was in use among the Caledonii in the late 1st century. It can probably be assumed, both from general statements by Dio Cassius and from the distribution of 'Donside terrets' (see symbol no. 21), that the Picts still fought with chariots in the early 3rd century. In Ireland, the final date is quite unknown. A stone from Meigle, Perth (*ECMS* 344: Class II or even III) shows Picts or Scots in a light covered cart with yoke pole and two ponies; though this may be drawn from some artistic source rather than real life, Adamnan, writing about A.D. 688–92, mentions similar light carts in civilian Irish contexts.[6]

20. *ECMS* 132, not distinguished: Chariot Wheel

While broadly this need be no more than a special and unique version of symbol no. 37, its immediate portrayal is of a spoked wheel with stout central nave (Fig. 5, top left). In error, thirteen spokes have been drawn. Twelve-spoked wheels, proper to the chariots of Fig. 5, are discussed by Fox;[7] there is a well-known southern Scottish instance from Newstead. Linch-pins appropriate to this kind of wheel, seen in the Blackburn Mill find of the 1st century A.D.,[8] have been found as far north as the Laws of Monifieth, Angus.[9]

21. *ECMS* 358, not distinguished: 'Donside Terret'

It was suggested in *AASIA* (p. 46 and Pl. II) that this unique symbol represents a well-known variety of bronze terret (fairlead on the peak of a yoke, through which the reins of a chariot-pony are led). So-called 'Donside' terrets are a specifically north-east Scottish product, probably of the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.[10]

---

[1] C. Fox, *A Find of the Early Iron Age from Llyn Cerrig Bach* . . . (Cardiff, 1946), 25 ff., fig. 13: see also his *Pattern and Purpose* (Cardiff, 1958), fig. 40.

[2] Almgren, *Hallristningar och Kultbruk* (Stockholm, 1926–7), figs. 64–5.

[3] *Ibid.*, 243 ff.: *Arch.J.*, CIV (1947) 84, pl. v no.10.

[4] Upper Indus rock-engraving, *IPEK*, 18 (1956), 61, taf. 38.

[5] *Agricola*, xxxv–xxxvi.

[6] Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (1961), Index of Subjects s.v. 'vehicles'. *Currus* is used for the light cart; the farm wagon on Iona is, by contrast, *plaustrum*, a word perhaps borrowed from Vergil.

[7] See *n.* 1 above.

[8] Piggott, *PSAS*, LXXXVII (1952–3), 41, B.4.

[9] *Ibid.*: for the site (a fort) see *PSAS*, III (1860), 440.

[10] E. T. Leeds, *Celtic Ornament* (1933), 126, type 8: Kilbride-Jones, *PSAS*, LXIX (1935), 448. Add: Dinas Emrys, Caern., *Arch. Camb.* (1930), 352, and (1960), 16 and pl. viii, where Savory rightly calls them North British: one from Lanark in *NME*, HH 464: and London Museum (A. 29, Moorgate Street).

22. *ECMS* 'Triple Disc and Bar': Cauldron with ring handles

Like symbol no.19 (Chariot), the prototype is depicted as seen from above. It is a bronze cauldron, suspended over a fire by a stick or bar inserted through its ring handles. Figure 4, top right, displays the material. The detail from an *ECMS* Class II scene (234a) shows a cauldron suspended in precisely this manner. There are two separate lines of descent, one (left) showing the bar, with the cauldron refined to a plain circle, and the other (right) lacking the bar, but defining the rim and the handle-attachments. It is not however suggested that this brings the symbol within the alternating 'live-dead' series (p. 50 above). Joseph Anderson[1] has discussed the prototypes from north Britain. It is unsafe to lay much taxonomic weight on so simple a depiction, but clearly Hawkes' Hallstatt D class[2] form the earliest possible ancestors, and the 'Battersea' cauldrons (*e.g.* from the Blackburn Mill find) discussed by Piggott[3] are, distributionally and chronologically, the better candidates. In Scotland, they could have been current in the first few centuries A.D. The vertical viewpoint, if curious, is not unique (*cf.* symbol no.19 above), and Professor Piggott kindly draws the writer's attention to a close, if fortuitous, parallel in low relief sculpture on the wall of an Etruscan tomb.[4]

23. *ECMS* 'Hammer': 24. *ECMS* 'Anvil'

Hammer and Anvil, though always associated, are not contiguous or superimposed symbols such as the Z-Rod and V-Rod and their associated designs. The Hammer (Fig. 6) differs from both the Iron Age and Roman hammers in the Carlingwark Loch find; and the only anvils in the same find are the small field-anvils used for straightening scythe- or sickle-blades.[5] Nor can either symbol be matched from the voluminous Traprain Law material. But the little applique 'smith-god' figure from Corbridge[6] (a *Sucellus* or *Goibniu* avatar), though he holds a normal Roman hammer, stands by a stump into which a small tanged anvil of the symbol pattern is inserted. Déchelette listed a very similar anvil from the late La Tène craftsman's kit found at Szalacska, Hungary.[7] One may note survivals: for example, on a carved door-frame at Hylestad church, Setesdal, Norway,[8] and on a tall 11th–12th century cross slab from Whithorn, where the two symbols are incised by the side of the pedestalled cross.[9]

25. *ECMS* 'Pincers': Blacksmith's Tongs

Although actually recorded only for Class II in *ECMS*, this has been confused with symbol no.17, and *ECMS* Class I, 58 and 187, are both instances of this (Fig. 6). It can thus stand alone as a separate symbol. Tongs of this kind also appeared in the Szalacska find, are shown in the Corbridge smith-god scene, and are represented by a pair found at Newstead.[10]

26. *ECMS* 'Mirror': Bronze Mirror of 'insular La Tène' type

The true nature of this symbol (Fig. 6) was seen years ago by Sir Alfred Clapham.[11] More recently, Sir Cyril Fox's analysis of Celtic mirror handles in Britain drew attention[12] to the fact that twenty-four of the then-known mirrors in *ECMS* Class I '. . . possess handles sufficiently perfect for analysis'. Of these, 14 fall within Fox's Type I (bar

[1] *Scotland in Pagan Times* ('The Bronze and Stone Ages') (1886), 205 ff.
[2] *Ant. J.*, XXXVII (1957), 191 ff., illus.
[3] *PSAS*, LXXXVII (1952–3), 12 ff. map, fig. 3.
[4] Pallottino, *Necropolis of Cerveteri* (Min. della Publ. Instruz. guidebook, English edn., 1950), 37: 'Tomb of the Reliefs'.
[5] *PSAS*, LXXXVII (1952–3): hammers, 37, C. 42–50, and anvil from Eckford, 28, E. 19: also 48, B. 38 (Blackburn Mill).
[6] Leach, 'The Smith God in Roman Britain', *Arch. Aeliana*, 4 ser. XL (1962), 35 illus.: Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain* (1962).
[7] Déchelette, *Manuel*, 2nd edn. IV, 882, fig. 609.
[8] Cover of *KUML* (1959) — Jutland Archaeological Society.
[9] In site museum at Whithorn, Wigtns.: unpublished?
[10] Curle, *Newstead* (1911), pl. lxiii, no. 4.
[11] 'The Origins of Hiberno-Saxon Art', *Antiquity*, VIII (1934), 43.
[12] 'Celtic Mirror Handles in Britain', *Arch. Camb.* (1948), 39 and fig. 12.

handles); one is related to the Arras I, and thus possibly Carlingwark, variety; four belong to his Type II (shaped handles), a category represented in real life by the well-known Balmaclellan mirror;[1] and five more, Fox states, '... I cannot relate to *any* handles in the British mirror series'. These five are *ECMS* 37, 39, 158, 174 and 550; of these, 158 and 174 are possibly influenced by variant forms of Roman *paterae* handles — a rounded T-shaped handle-terminal — as seen, for example, on an altar in Chesters Museum.[2]

Fox concludes: 'The analysis, if the parallels are accepted, suggests that the Picts imported mirrors from the Celtic workshops in northern England (Brigantia) and that the Pictish symbolism was initiated before the use and knowledge of these forms died out; it is clearly in favour of the earlier, rather than the later, of the dates which students of the symbolism have suggested.' Unfortunately, most recent students (Stevenson, Curle, Henderson), unable to refute these cogent arguments of the *vieux maître*, have simply ignored them (*cf. AASIA*, 46, *n.*1).
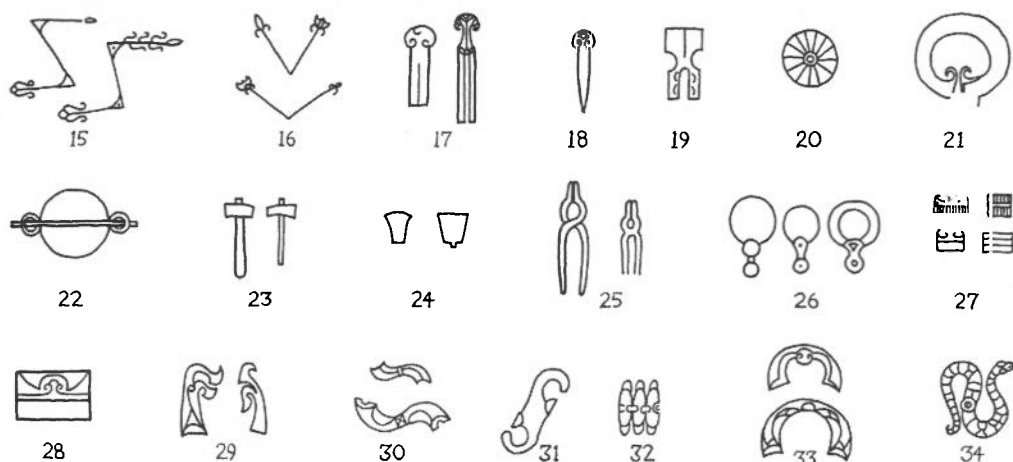

Fig. 6. OBJECT SYMBOLS Nos. 15 to 34.
Not to scale: all from *ECMS* (numbers omitted)

27. *ECMS* 'Comb'

This symbol, which can represent either a single or double-sided composite bone comb (Fig. 6), has been very fully and carefully discussed by C. T. S. Calder.[3] In temporal terms the range of the prototypes is probably wider than that of the Mirror, but would certainly also include the early centuries A.D.

28. *ECMS* 'Rectangular Figure': some kind of container

This is a common symbol, always shown (Fig. 6) with the longer axis horizontally. From its size relative to that of the Comb, it is sometimes called 'the Comb-case', just as no. 38 below is sometimes labelled 'Mirror-case'. In neither instance is there any archaeological evidence for such a view. Mirror-cases are unknown, and comb-*guards*, designed to protect the ends of the teeth, do not look like this at all. Some of the versions of this symbol show internal ornament hinting at a flap, or cover; *cf.* here *ECMS* (Class II) 7, from Papil in Shetland, where clerics are carrying rectangular book-satchels suspended around their necks. In the earlier period, a Roman writing-tablet (*tabella*), folded or closed, could have served as a model.

---

[1] Anderson, *Scotland in Pagan Times* ('The Iron Age') (1883), 127.
[2] Altar labelled '45', patera in relief on side, handle downward.
[3] *PSAS*, LXXXI (1946–7), 1 ff.

29. *ECMS* 'Flower': (?) Bronze Harness-brooch

This curious design (Fig. 6) is hardly botanical. From its recorded contexts, as will appear later, it could function either as a 'group-label', or as a 'noun/adjective'. If the former were so, then it might be the converse of Animal symbol no.10 (*AASIA*, fig.11, no.11) which is taken to be the upper part of a seal. It would then be a seal's hindquarters — not those of a porpoise or dolphin, which show a peduncle and fused hind-limbs. On the other hand a seal does not normally dive in such a way as to display its lower half very clearly. The alternative explanation is that this symbol represents yet another piece of chariotry or equestrian gear, the bronze harness-brooch elucidated by Fox,[1] which it closely resembles. This is an insular form of the 1st century A.D. based on an older dolphinesque type.

30. *ECMS* 'S-Shaped Figure'

Wholly at a guess, this symbol (Fig. 6) may represent a swathe or bundle of textile bound around the middle.

31. *ECMS* (not then known): Dragonesque Brooch

This is a wholly new symbol from a Class I field-monument at Mortlach, Banff.[2] It is best seen as a stylization, not very far advanced, of a well-known northern British brooch form, the so-called dragonesque type of the first two centuries A.D. Artistically the brooches themselves are allied to the 'S-Dragon' animal symbol no.13, shown in *AASIA*, figs. 13 and 14.

32. *ECMS* 'Triple Oval': Bronze Armlet

The prototype of this symbol (Fig. 6) seems to be a heavy bronze armlet of the so-called 'Castle Newe' type, seen laterally. Anderson[3] has amply illustrated this remarkable group of ornaments, specifically Caledonian in their origin and distribution, and proper to the first few centuries A.D.

33. *ECMS* 'Arch or Horse-Shoe': Hinged Bronze Collar

The Arch is a common symbol and the forms shown vary greatly. They do not apparently portray a ring-terminal torc of, for instance, the Cairnsmuir (Peebles) kind,[4] which would be hard to reconcile with the usually concave terminals shown in this symbol. The bronze hinged collar which, as Fox stresses,[5] seems to have replaced the expanded-terminal torc in the 1st century A.D., as a symbol of noble or divine status, is a more likely prototype. The Stichill (Roxb.) collar, opened slightly, and seen in three-quarter view from the front, would serve well as a model.[6] In many instances of this symbol (*cf*. Fig. 6) the insert or protrusion in the centre of the curve would mark the hinge of the original.

34. *ECMS* 'Serpent and Z-shaped Rod'

The Serpent or snake part of this symbol is not apparently the same as the Animal symbol no.12 (*AASIA*, fig.11, no.13). The (Animal) snake is always plain, and crawls with its head pointing upwards. The Serpent of symbol no. 34 generally wriggles horizontally, and in nine of the eleven instances in *ECMS* Classes I and II, the head is to the top and left of the design. In two cases (as shown in Fig. 6), *ECMS* 193 and 551, conventional scales are included. In a further two instances, one possibly within Class I (*ECMS* 179), one certainly from Class II (308b), the Z-Rod element, symbol no. 15, is shown as a straight line.

---

[1] *Pattern and Purpose* (1958), 130, pl. 75.
[2] *PSAS*, LX (1925–26), 275, fig. 1.
[3] Anderson *op. cit.* 141–151 illus.
[4] Feachem, *PSAS*, XCI (1957–58), 112 ff.
[5] *Cf.* Gundestrup cauldron (*Cernunnos* figure): see also Strabo, IV, iv. 5: Diodorus Siculus, V, 27: and (battle of Telamon) Polybius, II, 28 ff.
[6] Fox, *Pattern and Purpose*, pl. 62.

b. Symbols derived from earlier art-styles

35.   *ECMS* 'Crescent'

Various origins have been suggested for this symbol, the most common being the pelta-like motifs seen on Roman entablature (*e.g.* distance slabs), and a circular dished shield viewed from the side. However the first motif is not only unlike the Pictish symbol, but possesses no obvious independent status; and a dished shield seen laterally forms an arc-and-chord, not a crescent. One probably has to look further for analogies. It seems possible that the crescent, as so often, functioned as a lunar symbol in Celtic Iron Age contexts. Déchelette recorded a spearhead from La Tène with a single lunate perforation at the base of the blade; an anthropoid-hilted sword from Kastel (Mainz) with sun and
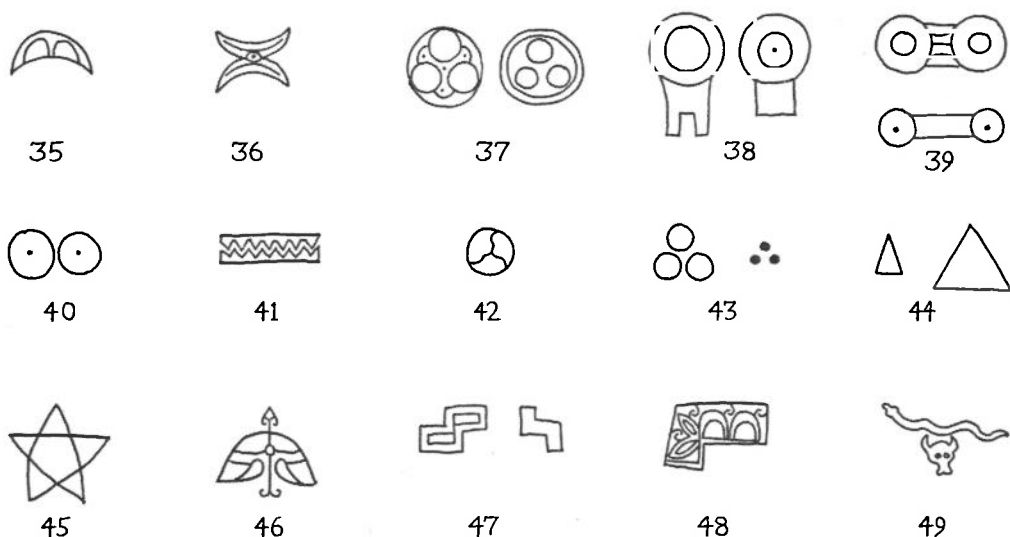

Fig. 7. OBJECT SYMBOLS Nos. 35 to 49
Not to scale: all from *ECMS* (numbers omitted)

crescent moon opposed at the top of the blade, and a similar sword-blade from Allach, Bavaria.[1] More aptly, there is a crescentic bronze plaque with all-over S-scroll ornament from Etrechy (Marne), which recalls generally the (lost) bronze crescent from the Laws of Monifieth mentioned earlier (p. 45).[2] What these really signify is uncertain, and they are very dimly reflected in recorded Celtic belief: during the metamorphosis of the early Irish hero Cù Chulainn, a strange emanation called 'the hero's moon' rose, as thick as a whetstone, from his forehead.[3]

Crescents are also known in the British Bronze Age. The forms of gold lunulae and jet crescentic necklaces, adapted to lie around the neck and chest, are obviously lunate.[4] A crescent pocked out in a shallow line is found with other designs on a rock at Blackhills, Moray: C. A. Gordon would regard these[5] as secondary to the all-over cup-marking on the same stone, but still putatively of native Bronze Age Art.

[1] *Manuel*, 2nd edn. (1927), IV; spearhead, 650, fig. 478, no. 9, the swords, 818, fig. 572, nos. 1 and 2.
[2] *Ibid.* 1027, fig. 698, no. 1.
[3] Thurneysen, *Die irische Helden- u. Konigsage* (1921).
[4] *Cf.* Piggott and Daniel, *A Picture Book of Ancient British Art* (1951), pls. 16, 17, necklace and lunula compared.
[5] *PSAS*, LXXXIX (1955–56), 446, fig. 6.

36. *ECMS* 'Double Crescent'
     This rare design (Fig. 7) is found on two Class I stones. It seems to be no more than a duplication of the previous symbol, though the instance at Rayne, Aberdeen,[1] is strangely like the older Eurasiatic 'double lotus' design (*cf. AASIA*, fig. 15, k, k').

37. *ECMS* 'Circular Disc'
     Excluding the unique 'Wheel' symbol, no. 20 above, and a mere outline of a circle at Sandside, Caithness, which may not be a symbol at all,[2] the four *ECMS* Class I 'Circular Discs' all possess internal ornament in the form of three small circles symmetrically arranged in triangle form (Fig. 7). Superficially this recalls such Celtic pieces as the Mayer mirror,[3] but the outline of the symbol, as opposed to its internal ornament, could be very much older and, by analogy with the symbol next discussed, stand for a solar disc. The Wheel, no. 20, has a well-documented significance in this role; one thinks of the *Taranis* applique figure from Corbridge,[4] where the god is accompanied by a long shield, a club, and an eight-spoked wheel.
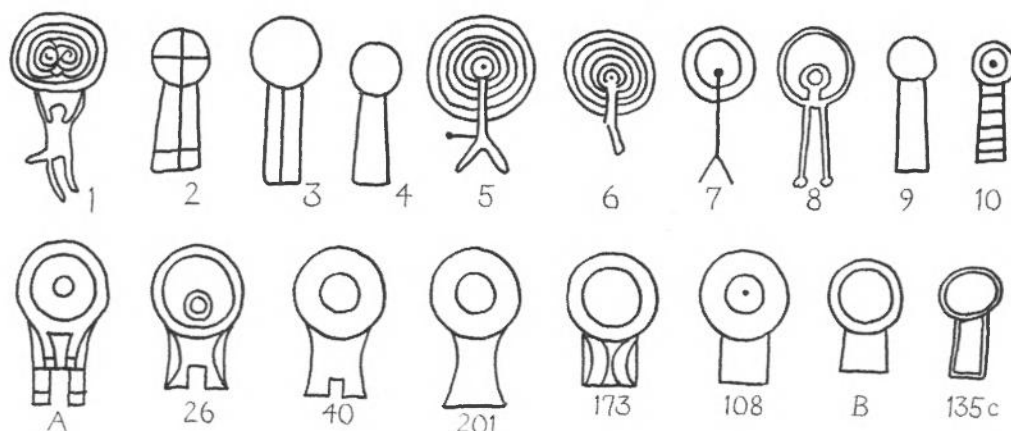

Fig. 8. THE BRONZE AGE AFFINITIES OF SYMBOL No. 38. Not to scale.

1–4, Scandinavian rock-art (after Almgren): 5–10, N. British cup-and-ring art (after Breuil). The rest, *ECMS*, except for A, Greens, Orkney: *PSAS*, LVIII, 297, and B, Nether Corskie, Abdn.: *PSAS*, XLIX, 38

38. *ECMS* 'Circular Disc and Rectangle', also 'Circular Disc and Rectangle with Square Indentation'
     The design thus (clumsily) labelled is of exceptional interest. It consists of a circle, like symbol no. 37, supported by a small squat rectangle, the base of which may have a little square notch. The upright sides of the rectangle are often slightly incurved, and both disc and rectangle may be internally decorated.
     The alternative forms, with and without the notch, are in biological terms genomorphs. The notched form is northern (Orkney, Caithness, and Sutherland), and the plain form occurs from the Moray Firth area southwards and eastwards. There is no demonstrable

---

[1] *PSAS*, L (1915–16), 283, fig. 4 (note that sword and square shield are almost certainly medieval or modern additions).
[2] R.C.A.M. Inventory, *Caithness*, no. 406, pl. xxxvi (possibly a mould on a slab subsequently set upright).
[3] *Pattern and Purpose*, pl. 57a: *cf. ibid.* figs. 25, 50, 55, 60, 75 lower and 83 no. 54: see also *Jacobsthal*, pl. 279, no. 473.
[4] Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, no. 161, pls. 164–5.

overlap[1] and it is probable that the northern form is the earlier, though this raises the whole question of the locality where Class I field-monuments were first executed.

In discussing this symbol, careful distinction must be made between the shape or outline, and the internal ornament. For the first, the 'cup-and-ring' art of the British Bronze Age, or later, provides numerous analogies. Breuil's useful corpus[2] first demonstrated how the theme of a figure holding aloft a sun-disc could degenerate into a circle atop a rectangle: a group of instances from North Britain are shown here in Fig. 8, upper row, nos. 5 to 10. Close continental analogies are those from Scandinavian rock-art (Fig. 8, nos. 1 to 4), as collected by Almgren,[3] and which include (as no. 2) the disc filled with the four spokes of the familiar 'solar wheel'. In her provocative study of Lithuanian symbolism,[4] Marija Gimbutas has placed this particular design in a wider setting, and has also shown some remarkable survivals in the Baltic area.
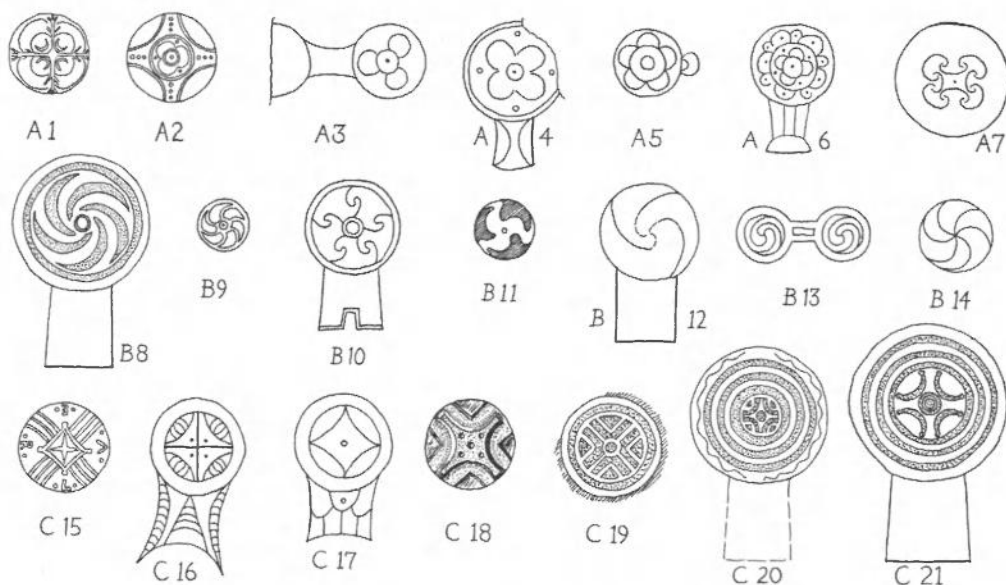

Fig. 9. SYMBOL No. 38 AND CELTIC ART

A, 'Dot and Petal' series: B, 'Triskele and whirligig': C, 'Quadrant Arcs'.
(See Appendix II for sources)

In the Pictish versions (Fig. 8, lower row), both the notch (gap between legs) and the curved internal lines of the lower rectangle (Fig. 8, 26, 173) hark back to the original human figure, the particular idiom of the stylization recalling rather that of the 'horses' in symbol no.19 above (the Chariot). The internal ornament of the disc can take the form of a concentric inner repetition, sometimes with a central dot, very much in the earlier local 'cup and ring' tradition (Fig. 8, passim). But a more especially 'Celtic' enrichment is found (Fig. 9). This can often recall parallels in other parts of Europe where somewhat similar glyptic schools hark back to regional genres of La Tene art.

---

[1] In Cruden (1957), pl. 7 and elsewhere, this symbol as reconstructed at top of the Birsay slab is shown *without* the notch (Pl. III). There is no direct evidence either way as the piece is broken here, but distributional pattern suggests that the form *with* the notch would be more likely.

[2] *PPSEA*, VII, iii, (1934), 289.

[3] *Hallristningar och Kultbruk* (Stockholm, 1926–27) *passim*.

[4] *Ancient Symbolism in Lithuanian Folk Art* (Amer. Folklore Soc., Memoir no. 49, Philadelphia 1958); *cf.* especially chap. II.

One may note parallels between *ECMS* 157 (Fig. 9, C.16) and the centres of the massive stone stelae of Valle de Buelna, Galicia. The latter, flat sandstone discs some 6 ft. in diameter, on short rectangular stems, are concrete expressions of this symbol in the north Spanish Iron Age.[1] The quartered disc of the Lombrera stone (Fig. 9, C.20) is echoed by roundels from the better-known Agassac (Haute-Garonne) slab (C.18) depicting some local version of the goddess *Epona*.[2] The 'whirligig' treatment of the discs on the Class I stones from Rayne, Aberdeen (B.12),[3] and Birsay, Orkney (B.10)[4] — three and five arms respectively — are matched, not only by the reverse of the smaller Lombrera stele (B.8), but in the earliest stages of the *bildsteine* or pictographic grave-stones from Gotland, Sweden.[5] One might note Lindqvist's figs.1 and 29 (three arms: *cf.* Rayne, B.12 in Fig.9); figs. 18 and 22 (six arms); and the much-illustrated stone from Bro (fig.11) with twelve arms, and with an upper border of a design[6] that would not look one whit out of place on a La Tène scabbard! In addition to the quadrants and whirligigs, the 'lobate' or petal and dot ornament found in certain *ECMS* Class I instances of this symbol (Fig. 9, A.3 to A.6) suggests comparison with similar ornament on early Gaulish and British coinage (A.1, A.2) and an example from *art mobilier* (A.7, repeated from Fig. 3, no. 4, above).

39. *ECMS* 'Double Disc'

The simplest forms of this symbol, as in cave-art (Fig. 2 above), involve no more than two discs joined by a line or bar. In many portrayals, there is clearly infection from the preceding symbol no. 38 (*cf.* Fig. 9, A.3, B.13). Breuil[7] provides what may be partially the background; the *oculi* motif, one of the very few apparently carried over from the (Boyne) art of the British northern and western megalithic tomb province into the 'cup-and-ring' style. It is perhaps just worth noticing that something very like this Double Disc symbol is repeated twice on one of the three famous decorated chalk cylinders from an Early Bronze Age barrow at Folkton Wold, Yorks.[8]

40. *ECMS* 'Pair of Circular Discs'

This, two circles side by side (Fig. 7), differs from the preceding in that the discs do not touch or join. It is a comparatively rare symbol, but is found in *art mobilier* (Fig. 3, no.15), possibly Class I, and certainly Class II of *ECMS*, and may thus possess some independent significance.

c. Symbols of Geometric Form

41. *ECMS* (not distinguished): Zig-zag Line

This (Fig. 7) occurs on *art mobilier*, notably on the terminal of the Whitecleuch silver chain (p. 45), where it seems to be a separate symbol rather than pure ornament.

42. *ECMS* (not distinguished): a Triskele in a circle

This is found on an *ECMS* Class I stone, Corrachree, Aberdeen (*ECMS* 166), the rest of which is too mutilated to be read. The design is familiar in La Tène art, for example on the Ixworth cap (Fig. 9, B.11), and on a sherd from Broch of Lingrow, in Orkney.[9] It is doubtful whether this is really more than a variant of symbol no. 37.

---

[1] Dr. Jesus Carvallo, 'The Giant Stelae of the Buelna valley', *Illus. London News*, 29 June 1957, 1076 ff.: 'Las estelas gigantes de Cantabría', *IPEK*, 20 (1963), 43–45.

[2] Pobe and Roubier, *The Art of Roman Gaul* (1961), pl. 179.

[3] See p. 59 *n.* 1.

[4] Cruden (1957), pl. 7 — original now in *NME*.

[5] Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine* (1941–42): *cf.* p. 90 ff. ('Dass die grossen Rondelle . . . *Sonnensymbole* sein müssen, ist eine gewöhnliche Vorstellung' — but he makes some pertinent further comments).

[6] As, *e.g.*, Wisbech or Hunsbury: *cf.* Piggott, *PPS*, xvi (1950), fig. 1 and fig. 3 (1A). Note also opposed S-Dragons below disc, Lindqvist fig. 23, and *cf.* Jacobsthal (1944) pl. 70 and *AASIA*, fig. 13. Lindqvist's earliest group ('Abschnitt A') with its *Phantasietieren* and 'Ultimate La Tène' flavour — scarcely discussed, *ibid.* p. 111 — belongs to the 5th century A.D.

[7] See p. 60, *n.* 2.

[8] Piggott and Daniel, *op. cit.* (p. 58, *n.* 4), pl. 14.

[9] Childe, *Prehistory of Scotland* (1935), pl. xvi b.

43.   *ECMS* (not distinguished): Three Small Discs set in Triangle
Heraldically, this is 'three roundels, one and two', and corresponds to the inner portion of symbol no. 37 (Fig. 7). It is found once on an *ECMS* Class I field-monument, and three times on the terminal of the Parkhill silver chain (p. 45).

44.   *ECMS* (not distinguished): Triangle
This symbol is found in *art mobilier* (twice on the terminal of the Parkhill chain), and on two small slabs from Stonehaven, Kincardines., which are probably *art mobilier* rather than Class I.

45.   *ECMS* (not distinguished): Pentacle
The pentacle or pentagram (Fig. 7), familiar to students of witchcraft, occurs in cave-art (Covesea, *ECMS* 135a) and in *art mobilier* (stone from Broch of Burrian).

d. Miscellaneous symbols

46.   *ECMS* 'Bow and Arrow'
This is found only on *ECMS* 99, 99a, a Class I field-monument at Congash, Inverness (see Fig. 7). It seems impossible to see what it can represent.

47.   *ECMS* 'Step Symbol'
This symbol, two rectangles set horizontally, one stepped out over the other, occurs in *ECMS* Classes I and II (Fig. 7).

48.   *ECMS* 'L-Shaped Rectangular Figure'
Possibly related to symbol no. 47, this is found in cave-art (Covesea) and in *ECMS* Class II (Fig. 7).

49.   *ECMS* 'Bull's Head and Serpent'
This design (Fig. 7) occurs but once, on a Class II field-monument of crude and irregular execution, *ECMS* 162a, at Mortlach, Banff. It may not be a true symbol at all.

50.   *ECMS* 'Centaur'
The Centaur is apparently confined to *ECMS* Class II. It is not merely an ancillary of larger hunting scenes, like the innumerable hounds and stags found in this class; from its contexts it seems to be employed in the same way as other known symbols. It is unlikely to have been introduced to Pictish art much before the 8th century A.D.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing survey, though obviously capable of both expansion and improvement, at once suggests that certain conclusions can be drawn. Ignoring the 'Miscellaneous' symbols, these conclusions correspond to the three previous families of symbols discussed; nos. 15 to 34, 35 to 40, and 41 to 45.

Insofar as any of the Object symbols are identifiable as pictures, however stylized, of real things, the prototypes clearly do *not* belong to the material culture of the historical Picts between the 4th and 9th centuries A.D. They are derived, and fairly consistently derived, from a background which the archaeologist at any rate will have little difficulty in recognizing. This is the culture of a period when people fought with chariots, short swords, and bulbous-butted spears; wore bronze armlets, neck-rings and dragonesque brooches; and possessed such things as La Tène mirrors and ring-handled cauldrons. The chronological setting of all this — 'East Scottish Third B/C' in the prosaic terms of culture-classification — commences in the 1st century A.D., and is not likely to have survived beyond the 3rd century; it would be hard indeed to suppose it still current when the first Class I field-monuments were erected in the 5th or early 6th centuries.

A time-lag of this nature is necessary to account for the degree of stylization apparent in nearly all the symbols as we encounter them. This stylization must have taken place several centuries before the symbols were first engraved on stone. The precise way in which the gap between naturalistic representations of an object, and repetitive depictions of something only vaguely recalling the same object, was bridged, is a problem that will be briefly examined later. At the moment it must suffice to state that personal tattooing is indicated by the slender evidence.

The small group of symbols (nos. 35 to 40) which could not be identified in terms of the (Caledonian) Late Iron Age culture of north-eastern Scotland, reflect in part what is already suspected of the component strains behind the Pictish people of history. Although, as Fig. 9 demonstrates, the *ornament* of these symbols partakes of a very much more widespread artistic legacy, germane to the inheritors of Celtic art all over Europe, the *outlines* are best matched in the far simpler rock-gravings of north-west Europe, including the British Isles. These must be designs taken over, in Pictland, by the ruling minority of Celtic-speakers of Iron Age B origin, from the very much larger and older element of Bronze Age *indigènes* (*cf. AASIA*, 37–38). There is some additional evidence in support of this view. The technique employed in the execution of symbols on Class I field-monuments may itself have been taken over from an older art-style. C. A. Gordon was able to show, from practical experiment[1] that ' . . . very nearly all the designs' (*scil.* of Class I) 'have been first executed by pocking, and many, perhaps most of them, afterwards improved by tidying the edges of the groove and smoothing out its side and curved bottom . . . ', and the late O. G. S. Crawford's study of the technique of the late neolithic Boyne carvings[2] should be re-read in the light of these comments. This is not to imply, in so many words, that 'cup-and-ring' art was still being pocked out on any scale as late as the 5th century A.D., but it is in accord with the idea that, as late as the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., cup-and-ring art was far from having been entirely forgotten. Its final date, after all, has never been determined, and few archaeologists would be prepared to commit themselves on this point. At least four Class I field-monuments were cup-marked stones before they became the repositories of Pictish symbolism; nor can one overlook the seemingly deliberate incorporation of cup-and-ring-marked slabs in such structures of the first few centuries A.D. as earth-houses or souterrains. This was the case at Letham Grange, Ruthven, and Tealing III:[3] at Airlie ('Airlie I'), one of the lintel slabs in the passage was marked with six or more pocked serpentiform figures, the heads being cup-marks and the bodies straight or sinuous gutterings.[4]

The small group of geometric symbols (nos. 41 to 45) are allied by their background to the Object symbols of La Tène type (nos. 15 to 34), rather than to the preceding set of putatively Bronze Age descent. They are found on

---

[1] *PSAS*, LXXXVIII (1954–56), 41.
[2] *PPS*, XXI (1955), 156.
[3] Wainwright, *The Souterrains of Southern Pictland* (1963), pt. 3, list, *s.n. Cf. ibid.* pls. xiii and xxxvii.
[4] *PSAS*, LXXVII (1942–43), 37 illus.

early British coinage. British numismatists now rightly enjoy a European reputation for the success of their classificatory and historical studies of our earliest insular money (both imports and native productions of Iron Age B and C):[1] but, as one of the most distinguished students in this field has recently pointed out, there is an aspect of the coinage which has been curiously neglected, by both archaeologists and Celticists. In Mr. Allen's own words:[2]
'I suspect that most Celtic coin types are a little larger than life, and incorporate subtle elements of religion, mythology, or heroism, even when there is nothing on the coin to prove it . . . I have not attempted to analyze the elements of Celtic religion, animistic, pantheistic, or druidical, reflected in British coins: there is ample scope for such a study by someone expert in that difficult and amorphous subject'.

The present writer is wholly unequipped to explain, and scarcely to expound, this feature of the coinage, but a few very preliminary remarks are required. It was argued in *AASIA* (p. 27) in respect of the Animal symbols that these were derived from a naturalistic La Tène animal art, and that the route to Scotland had lain (on distributional evidence) *via* Hawkes' 'Eastern' and 'Southern' English provinces in their Iron Age B phases. This argument may, tentatively, be extended to the coinage. The almost total absence of such coins in Iron Age Scotland forms no barrier, since the relevant source-areas in England provide adequate material, richly documented through years of patient and skilful study. One must look to the 1st century B.C. and the beginning of the next, and confine one's search to the recorded coinage of the relevant Iron Age peoples — the Brigantes, the Iceni, and the Catuvellauni (up to the time of their king *Tasciovanus*), and include the uninscribed Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern quarter-staters.

The rapid sketches in Fig. 10 offer a casual garnering from this field, which could certainly be increased were one to include consideration of the slightly earlier Gaulish coinages as well. They have been taken from the relevant issues listed in Commander Mack's handbook.[3] The symbols include the Pentacle, Three Small Discs, and Zig-Zag line (in a crescent) of the 'geometric' group; they also show both the Crescent and Double Crescent, conceivably removing these from the world of 'cup-and-ring' art, various forms of Circular Disc, and of course a variety of animals, whose magical and religious guise on early British coinage is not generally disputed.

Bearing in mind the archaeological background of the coins, Mr. Allen's remarks cited earlier, and the inherent complexity of such designs as two addorsed crescents, it would be difficult to suppose that the resemblance between aspects of this numismatic art and aspects of Pictish symbolism is a matter of coincidence and nothing more. The conclusion to be drawn is surely that the geometric devices represent a stratum of symbolism even older than such

[1] Allen, 'The Origins of Coinage in Britain . . .', in *Problems of the Iron Age in S. Britain*, ed. Frere (Inst. of Arch. Occ. Paper no. 11), n.d. (1961).
[2] 'Belgic Coins as Illustrations of Life in the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age of Britain', *PPS*, xxiv (1958), 43.
[3] R. P. Mack, *The Coinage of Ancient Britain* (Spink, London, 1953).

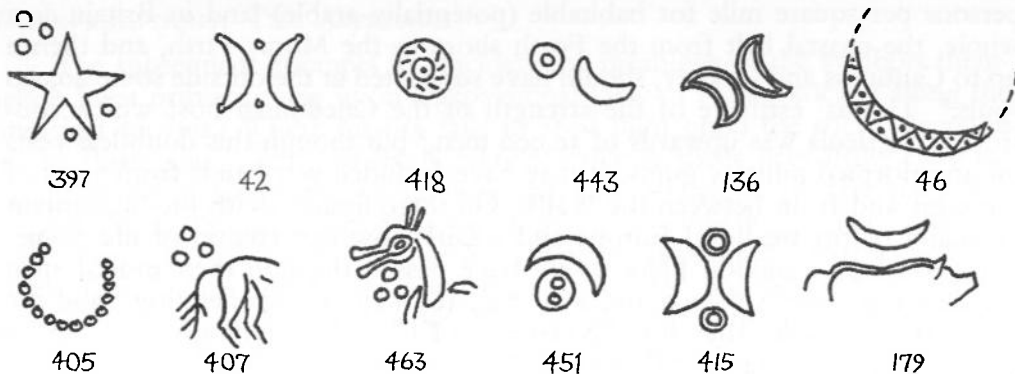| 397 | 42 | 418 | 443 | 136 | 46 |
| 405 | 407 | 463 | 451 | 415 | 179 |

Fig. 10. DESIGNS ON EARLY BRITISH COINAGE. Not to scale.
Numbers refer to the plates in Mack, *The Coinage of Ancient Britain* (1953)

designs as Boar, Horse, and the La Tène objects — one knows this to be true anyhow in such instances as symbol no. 38 — and that, at the period when they were being included on early British coinage, they had already undergone a long process of stylization. Nor does it matter that in so many coins these designs form part of 'dissolved' representations of what were originally laureate heads, horses, or chariots; for it would seem that (provided some general disposition of the field were preserved) the nature of the individual components could reflect, not eyes, ears, wheels, hooves and hindquarters, but the iconographic pool proper to the societies producing these moneys. Such portrayal, along with the whole panoply of Celtic society in its magical-warrior phase, is precisely to be expected on prestige material like gold and silver coinage, tokens of a tribe's material power and successful emulation of *romanitas*. The importance of this particular evidence will be echoed below (p. 92) when the tattooed cheeks of faces on certain Gaulish coins are examined.

INTERPRETATION OF THE SYMBOLS AND THE STATEMENTS

PRELIMINARY: THE INFREQUENCY OF CLASS I FIELD-MONUMENTS

Paradoxically, the most important clue to the overall significance of Pictish symbolism resides in the very fact that field-monuments are relatively much more rare than is sometimes supposed. One must accept first the assumption that the bulk of them are indeed funerary and constitute (nearly all) individual memorials. The population of Britain in the late Roman period is unknown, but cautious estimates suggest that between one million and one million and a half is an acceptable figure.[1] As it is not thought to have been greatly in advance of this at the time of Domesday,[2] some similar total can be assumed to have obtained during the 5th to 7th centuries A.D. Using the estimate of 9

---

[1] *Antiquity*, III (1929) 261, and IV (1930), 80, 91: argument by R. G. Collingwood, H. J. Randall, and R. E. M. Wheeler.
[2] *Cf.* Maitland, *Domesday Book and Beyond* (1897), Essay III. 2 — estimate of England only, 1,375,000 souls.

persons per square mile for habitable (potentially arable) land in Britain as a whole, the coastal belt from the Forth shore to the Moray Firth, and thence up to Caithness and Orkney, should have supported at the outside some 40,000 souls.[1] Tacitus' estimate of the strength of the Caledonian host which confronted Agricola was upwards of 30,000 men,[2] but though this doubtless rests on an informed military guess, it may have included war-bands from areas of the west and from between the Walls. On these figures, with the high infant mortality of pre-medieval Europe and a fairly low expectation of life, something like half a million Picts would have passed through their mortal span between the years A.D. 400 and A.D. 700, ten to twelve generations, and the broadest acceptable dates for the erecting of Class I field-monuments. If all adult male Picts were entitled to such memorials, then, even allowing for infant mortality at a rate of up to one in three, the *potential* total of such memorials would be about 150,000. The *actual* total of recorded field-monuments of this class is about 150, and even if it is assumed (safely) that we now possess no more than one-tenth of the available material, due to continued breakage, clearance, and use as building-stone, the number of adult male Picts so commemorated must have been something like one per cent.

Can anyone doubt that those singled out for this attention were other than the Top Picts of their age? Egalitarianism has not been shown to have been a conspicious feature of Iron Age (or earlier[3]) societies, nor did it ever commend itself to the primitive Celtic world. The concept of a Pictish 'nation' which was an uneven amalgam — archaeologically, of Iron Age newcomers and Bronze Age pastoralists; linguistically, of a Brittonic ('P-Celtic') language and one which was not necessarily Indo-European at all — has already been widely aired.[4]

The evidence as to the nature of Pictish symbolism perhaps allows the further inference that it was the Iron Age, Celtic-speaking minority in the Pictish partnership which was responsible for the development of Pictish art; and that commemoration on Class I stones was by and large the privilege of this minority, the 1st-century A.D. invaders and subsequently the ruling caste in the area. One should make the reservation that a degree of intermingling between the two elements, separated by language and custom rather than by strikingly diverse economies and technologies, must have existed. The Pictish regnal list contains many royal names *(e.g. Talorgan, Drosten)* which Jackson points out are Celtic, sometimes firmly Brittonic, but it includes others which ' . . . if they are genuine are certainly not Celtic at all' *(e.g. Usconbuts, Derelei)*.[5] It has already been suggested that the symbolism contains designs of apparently pre-Celtic type, and that the execution of the memorial slabs, even if the general idea was borrowed from late Roman or early Christian practice to the south of Pictland,[6] owes something to Bronze Age techniques.

---

1 This assumes about 4,500 square miles of suitable land.
2 *Agricola*, xxix.
3 *Cf.* the uneven social distribution of burial-mounds or barrows in the British Bronze Age.
4 *Cf. AASIA*, 37–8, 56–7.
5 Jackson, in *Problem*, 144–5.
6 *Cf. AASIA*, 47: the writer owes to Dr. C. A. R. Radford the idea that the Pictish symbols slab may imitate, in a non-literate society, the inscribed memorials then thinly current in southern Scotland.

INTERPRETATIONS: THE APPROACH

The subsequent attempts to elucidate the meanings of the symbols themselves must primarily rely upon a provisional view of Pictish society along the lines just set out. Where history fails to shed light upon the social structure of the Picts, and it must be freely admitted that it sheds very little, cautious parallels may be drawn from contemporary Celtic-speaking peoples elsewhere whose social systems have been more amply documented. The Picts of history may have been great warriors, but they were the heirs of a pastoral, rather than an agricultural economy; they inhabited homesteads rather than towns; they retained a monarchical system without noticeable change; and they preserved the main features of their most prominent graphic art virtually unaltered for centuries in an era of the most intense artistic development to their south and south-west. These are, in short, the diagnostic features of a conserving, and not of an innovating, society.[1] There is therefore more than a bare possibility that the Common Celtic social structure, if one can use such a term, seen elsewhere dimly in pre-Roman Gaul and pre-Christian Ireland and Wales, survived in Pictland at least until the formative period of the Class I field-monuments.

S–1 STATEMENTS ('GROUP-LABELS')

The Pictish 'regiones'

It was argued above (p. 40) that statements consisting of a single (Animal) symbol could most plausibly be explained as territorial markers. There are too few of such symbols (fourteen or fifteen) to refer to mere families, and if this is the correct explanation, they may relate to *tribes*, using the word for convenience rather than precision.

That the historical Picts were in some fashion sub-divided tribally is not generally questioned. The evidence for this, if confused and late, is strong. H. M. Chadwick distinguished[2] three different sets of records among the native chronicles of early Scotland. Relevant here is series I, which purports to describe the origin and early history of the Picts. It is contained in three MSS., one of the late 10th and the others of the late 11th or early 12th centuries.[3] These allege that an eponymous ancestor, Cruithne son of Cing,[4] 'father of the Picts who dwell in this island', had seven sons. One source further states that the Picts divided the country into seven portions and 'it is the name of each one of them which the territories bear'.[5] The names are given in MS. *B* as Cait, Ce, Cirig, Fib, Fidach, Fotla, and Fortrenn. In another source, the late 12th-century *De Situ Albanie*,[6] two geographical surveys are offered. The

---

[1] For a full discussion of this new conceptual model, see Piggott, *Barbarian Europe* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, forthcoming).

[2] *Early Scotland* (1949), pp. xxvii–xxix.

[3] MSS. *A*, *B* (i & ii) and *C*, *ibid.* xxvii.

[4] *Cruithne* may eventually be connected with a Celtic word synonymous with Latin *Picti*: *cf.* Jackson, 'Two Early Scottish Names', *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, XXXIII (1954) 14.

[5] Skene, *P. & S.*, 25, translates 'And the name of each man is given to their territories'.

[6] Skene, *P. & S.*, 135 ff.

first of these omits any mention of Argyll, the (Irish) Dalriadic kingdom, and Chadwick has therefore suggested that 'it seems to represent the political geography of the period, before 843, when Dalriada was still separate' (*scil.* from Pictland).[1] The *De Situ* repeats the story that the land was divided into seven parts by seven brothers, and the names of these parts are given. They occur in forms which (anglicised) are: Angus with the Mearns, Atholl and Gowrie, Strathearn with Menteith, Fife with Fothreve, Marr with Buchan, Moray and Ross, and Caithness (*citra montem* and *ultra montem*).[2] Chadwick and other writers have shown that this list generally corresponds to the other one. Angus and Mearns, the first-born's part, is *Cirig* (Circinn in MS. *A*); Atholl and Gowrie are *Fotla*, since Atholl is *Athfotla* in an annalistic entry;[3] Strathearn is *Fortrenn*; Fife is *Fib*; Marr with Buchan is probably *Ce*; Moray and Ross is *Fidach*; and Caithness is *Cait*. There is an implicit further division on purely geographical grounds, in that Cait, Ce and Fidach are northern, and the other four southern, the barrier between them being the Mounth, the high range which runs out south of the river Dee to Kincardineshire. This basic division probably held good within the Roman period;[4] in the late 4th century, Ammianus Marcellinus writes of *Dicalydones* and *Verturiones*, terms which may refer to the Northern and Southern Picts respectively, since the latter name is linguistically to be connected with *Fortrenn*.

In the prodigious volume of discussion which has centred around the heptarchic lists, there has been very little comment on the dual nature of each portion as given in the *De Situ Albanie*. Why are these provinces named in a bipartite form, even Caithness with its single place-name being divided as *citra* and *ultra montem*? The *De Situ* explains that it is because each province (*regio*) had within itself a subordinate province (*subregio*), and that the seven brothers were held to be seven kings, having seven subordinate kings (*reguli*) under them.[5] Arguments as to whether this is the origin of a later Scottish relationship in provincial government (that of *mormaer* and *toisech*, or earl and thane) have generally been conducted by medieval historians, and have therefore rather overlooked the primary importance of this curious feature. Independent and certainly earlier sources confirm the existence in Pictish society of grades that can be translated *rex* and *regulus*, and, despite the late recensions of the historical sources, the tradition of the seven bipartite regions is probably a genuine one. But the sub-division of named territories or of named tribes inhabiting those territories is far from being exclusively Pictish. The parallels lie, not in medieval Scottish history, but in the much earlier world of Iron Age Europe and the pre-Roman Celts. The comparatively late existence of this state of affairs in Pictland is yet another reason for regarding the Picts as a conserving society; conserving in this case social features which represent archaic 'Common Celtic' and conceivably 'Common Indo-European' survivals.

---

[1] *Early Scotland*, 38.
[2] *Ibid.* 39 ff., and map after 171.
[3] *Annals of Tigernach* s.a. 739.
[4] *Problem*, 1–3, 50–53.
[5] Skene, *P. & S.*, 136 ('. . . pro septem regibus habebantur, septem regulos sub se habentes').

Recently, Rivet[1] has hinted at similar bipartition in southern British tribes whose background is ultimately shared with the Celtic-speaking element in Pictland. In pre-Roman and indeed Caesar's Gaul, sub-divisions existed which cannot always now be defined, though most writers[2] have stressed that the 305 peoples of Gaul recorded at the death of Augustus must have differed fundamentally in size and rank. Many were *clientes* or sub-groups of larger tribes, and of special interest are those which, sharing a secondary name (e.g. *Bituriges Cubi*, *Bituriges Vivisci*) suggest overt relationship in pairs. These divisions may well have been of a quite different order from the social component of a tribe, the 'clan' (usually equated with Latin *pagus* and possibly Irish *tuath*); the *Vocontii* of south-east France bore a name which should mean 'the Twenty (Clans)' but which would refer to some internal grouping. In the 3rd century B.C., the Celtic Galatians who entered Asia Minor were formed into three peoples — *Tectosages*, *Tolistoagii*, and *Trocmi* — each of which was divided into four groups. This arrangement must have been, as Hubert pointed out[3] ' . . . on the ideal plan of the Gallic tribe, and we have the good fortune to know how they did it. The plan was not modified for the simple reason that the Galatians remained a closed community'. To some extent this might be said of the Picts. The division of the Galatian tribes into fours has wider meaning. The *Petrucorii* ('Four War-bands') of the Dordogne area, recall that in northern England the *Parisii* of east Yorkshire may once have been quadri-partite; the name of their centre of *Petuaria* (Brough on Humber) means 'a fourth', and three other such centres presumably await location.[4] Whichever tribe — Cornovii or Dumnonii — inhabited western Cornwall in the Roman period was probably responsible for its geographical division into four compact areas, which still survive as the (pre-Norman) western Hundreds; the name of one, Pydar, has earlier forms which suggest that it is a cognate of *Petuaria*.[5]

To an anthropologist, the temptation to explain these bipartitions and quarterings as the social and geographical expressions of earlier paired exogamous clans, or of two phratries containing two such clans apiece, is strong. It is not inconceivable that certain eccentricities of Pictish custom may one day be resolved in the light of some such hypothesis. But at the moment one need do no more than recognize that the division of Pictish society into seven bipartite *regiones* could represent an ancient tradition wholly in accord with what we know of analogous Celtic-speaking peoples.

Did the fourteen Animal symbols refer in some fashion to these *sub-regiones*? Prolonged experiment with large-scale maps has convinced the writer that, by the period in which Class I field-monuments were in use, these symbols possessed no demonstrable territorial value whatsoever. They may have done so at a much earlier stage, and the apparent connections between Celtic names of animals and the names of some of the tribes of Iron Age

[1] *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (1958), chap. 6: review of *Bagendon* report, *Antiquity*, xxxvi, (1962) 145: and personal discussion, for which the writer thanks him.
[2] *e.g.*, Hubert, Rice Holmes.
[3] *Les Celtes*: transl. *The Greatness and Decline of the Celts* (1934), 49.
[4] Rivet, *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (1958), 157–8.
[5] Thomas, 'The Antiquity of the Hundreds', *Cornish Archaeology*, 3 (1964).

Scotland, as recorded by Ptolemy, certainly hints at this (*cf. AASIA*, 40). The most that may be safely assumed is that, on a theoretical level, the Celtic-speaking Picts were socially grouped into fourteen (or more, or less, but not greatly so) divisions, each symbolized by some animal (or bird or fish or snake). The relationship between such groups, and between the fourteen *sub-regiones*, is wholly obscure, but the numerical coincidence does point to some such link. If Animal symbols can be shown to refer, as bound-marks (S–1 statements) or in any other fashion, to specific regions, sub-regions, or individual sites, then it would surely be only by virtue of the Animal label of the relevant ruler or dynasty. Thus the great coastal fortress at Burghead may have been the seat of the *rex* of Moref, and the Bull symbol found there in such profusion merely his personal or family label; and the conqueror of Dunadd who caused his Boar to be engraved on the summit of the citadel may have done so in respect of his ancestry, not his home territory.

S–2 STATEMENTS OF THE 'ANIMAL/ANIMAL' TYPE

In view of what has been said above, such field-monuments are unlikely to indicate joint boundaries or frontiers. Not only is it impossible to find any consistency within the group — that is, distributionally and geographically — but it is clear that certain Animals play an emphatic part over and above what might be expected. The four Class I instances — Goose/Fish (twice), Fish/Snake, and 'Elephant'/Fish — are never repeated as the A/B elements in any S–3 (funerary) statement. Two additional occurrences from the northerly Class I/II (transitional) field-monuments read Eagle/Fish, and 'Elephant'/Fish again. Thus the Fish occurs in all six instances, five times in the –/B position. These favoured Animal symbols — Eagle, Goose, Fish, Snake, 'Elephant' — are also prominent in other categories of Pictish art. Goose, Fish and Snake are found among the few Animals in *art mobilier*, and, with the addition of 'Elephant', in S–1 (single Animal) statements. It is therefore possible that, in addition to their rôles as group-labels, these creatures may (like the beasts on early British coinage) possess separate and older identities as *cult symbols*. The specific trend of this argument is to suggest that such a combination as Bird/Fish is not a territorial (bound-stone) statement, nor a funerary statement; in fact, not a statement at all in that sense. It is a cult scene, and the symbols are employed as cult symbols, related to some underlying pagan belief in much the way that the Lamb of God, or the Holy Ghost shown as a dove, is related to our own Bible and to patristic literature. It must suffice here to demonstrate this very briefly in respect of one scene only, that involving a Bird (Goose or Eagle) above a Fish.

This design originated in the eastern Mediterranean world and the ancient Near East, the Fish itself playing a notable part in the iconography of both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Goodenough, in his comprehensive survey, has collected much of the early material.[1] Long-billed birds are seen attacking fish

---

[1] Erwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period*, Bollingen Foundation (N.Y.), 8 vols.: all refs. here to vol. 5 (1956).

Fig. 11. ANCESTRY OF THE 'BIRD/FISH' CULT SCENE
(see pp. 70–74 for sources and explanation)
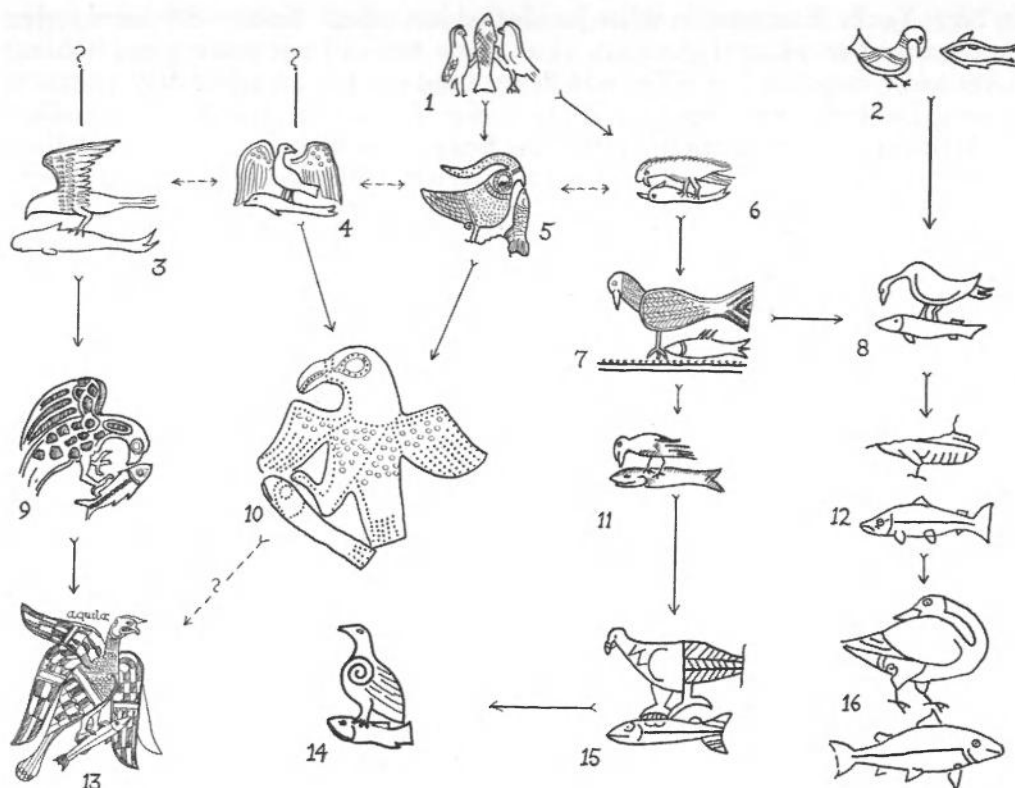
on pottery from Samarra, Mesopotamia, in the 5th millennium B.C.[1] A complex painting on a Cypro-Mycenaean jar, now in the Cesnola collection,[2] shows a stylized crane or stork spearing a fish with its bill. From Assyria in the 6th century B.C., a stamp seal found at Nippur[3] displays a vertical fish between two ospreys or sea-eagles (Fig.11, no.1). By the 4th century B.C., elements of this design are seen in Asia Minor and the Pontic region. Fig.11, no. 3 is from a silver coin struck at Sinope, an eagle *volant* above a dolphin:[4] contemporary coins from other Greek colonies include (Fig.11, no. 4) an eagle displayed above a dolphin, from Olbia,[5] and (no. 6) an eagle close and perched on the dolphin which it pecks (from Istrus).[6] Probably of the 4th century too is the famous silver beaker with repoussé ornament from the Danube region, now

---

[1] Goodenough, figs. 12, 15.
[2] Goodenough, fig. 23.
[3] Goodenough, fig. 17.
[4] B.M., *Catalogue of Greek Coins: Pontus, &c* (1889), pl. xxi, 15, 16: pl. xxii, 1–7.
[5] B.M., *Catalogue of Greek Coins: Thrace, &c* (1877), 11.
[6] *Ibid.* 25.

in New York. Executed in what Jacobsthal has called 'Thraco-Scythian' style,[1] its ornament includes (Fig.11 no. 5) an eagle with a huge staring eye holding a vertically-disposed fish. The odd fleshy head-tendril, an appendage common among La Tène creatures (*cf. AASIA*, fig. 12, nos. 2, 5 and 8) may reflect unskilled copying of something like the head-feathers in Fig.11, no.1. A little earlier, the model for Fig.11 no. 5 had passed with other 'orientalizing' art forms to the Adriatic, and had been adopted by 5th-century situla makers in the Este or Venetic schools. It can be seen (wrongly described as 'a bird with a leaf in its bill') perched smugly upon a ram's back in the middle register of the great Vače situla now at Ljubljana.[2]

The Bird-and-Fish scene *simpliciter* may have reached Britain with the Romans. Fig.11, no. 9, is an enamelled bronze disc from Wroxeter, context and date unknown.[3] In Fig.11, no. 10, the design has been abstracted from a small rectangular sheet-bronze plaque with repoussé ornament, found in the Thames and now in the British Museum;[4] it is perforated around all four edges for attachment, and may be a belt-plate (Pl. II). Despite an older attribution to the Anglo-Saxons and its regrettable lack of any informative context,[5] it could now be described — at a guess — as south Russian or Dacian work of the first few centuries A.D. Northwards still, the Bird-and-Fish may have come to the Scandinavian area during the Roman Iron Age, with so much else, from the semi-barbarian world of Pannonia and the Danube region. Fig.11, no. 7 is the eagle and one of the larger fishes from the frieze on a Thorsbjerg belt-strip;[6] like the eagle (?) and fish repeated on the long-destroyed golden horns from Gallehus, Denmark, of the late 4th or early 5th century A.D. (Fig. 11, no. 11) it harks back ultimately to no. 6, the coin from Histria (Istrus).

In northern Europe, west of the Hungarian plain, the commoner bird in La Tène art is not an eagle but an anserine (goose, swan, or duck). This creature had long reigned in local symbolism, originating in Hallstatt or even Urnfield times. Fig.11, no. 2 shows a Late Bronze Age anticipation of the scene, on a bronze razor from Skåne.[7] In Fig.11, no. 8, one sees the goose replacing the eagle of nos. 7 and 11, on a small gilt disc from Grave no. 5 at Haven, Mecklenburg, of the 5th century A.D.[8]

Something of this sort took place in north Britain. The fragmentary Class I stone from Gairloch, Ross, Fig.11, no. 12, contains a Goose, and not (as has been thought[9]) an Eagle; and in no.16, another Class I stone from Easterton of Roseisle (*ECMS* 130a), the Goose has become the 'backwards-looking' bird whose Eurasiatic relatives were discussed in *AASIA* (fig.15, a, a). The

[1] Jacobsthal (1944), 36, 58, pl. 226a.
[2] J. Kastelic, *The Situla of Vače* (Belgrade, 1956), pl. 31.
[3] Soc. of Ants. Research Report, *Wroxeter* (1st report, 1913), 28, and fig. 10, no. 16.
[4] Grateful thanks are due to R. L. S. Bruce Mitford, F.S.A., for supplying a photograph and permitting fresh publication.
[5] Though Roman or Saxon is generally indicated by the mere fact of discovery in the Thames.
[6] Werner, *Die beiden Zierscheiben des Thorsberger Moorfundes* (1941), suggesting Danubian origin and late 3rd-century A.D. date.
[7] Stenberger, *Sweden* (1962), pl. 35.
[8] Åberg, *Vorgeschichtliche kulturkreise in Europa (bilderatlas)* (Stockholm, 1936), pl. 34, no. 7.
[9] *PSAS*, LXXXVI (1954), 110 and pl. xxi.

style of the Thorsbjerg strip, no. 7, was however in some way recalled in the far north, since a Class I/II stone from Latheron, Fig.11, no.15, perhaps of the 7th century A.D.,[1] is of this kind. In other parts of Britain, a version of the Eagle with closed wings over a Fish was preserved. It can be seen, originally four times, among the appliqué devices on the 6th-century Lullingstone (Kent) hanging-bowl now in the British Museum,[2] and was copied several centuries later from some such source on to the back of a Class II field-monument at St. Vigean's in Angus.[3] In the 9th century, monks from Iona may have taken the design to county Meath, where an Eagle with spiral-jointed shoulder grasps a Fish on the basal panel (north side) of the so-called 'Market Cross' at Kells, Fig.11, no.14.[4] Using a version closer to that of no. 9, the Wroxeter disc, an illuminator of the Book of Armagh drew a four-winged Eagle and a tiny Fish to represent St. John on the page of evangelists' symbols (Fig.11, no.13).[5] Irish clerics returned the motif to the Continent, as the 9th-century St. Gall *Priscian* contains an initial letter P embodying a vertically-set eagle and fish.[6] Finally, in the late 11th century A.D., a well-drawn eagle grasps his fish from on top of a Canon Table arch in the *Codex Aureus* of Echternach.[7]

In the tortuous explanations of the medieval bestiaries, seeking to reconcile a variety of all-too-pagan symbols with Christian doctrine, the Eagle is the Son of God, stooping from on high to snatch at the Fish, the Soul of Man.[8] Bird/Fish is almost certainly employed in this light in the Echternach gospels, and probably so on the Kells cross (no.14) and the St. Vigean's Class II stone. In the drawing from the Book of Armagh (no.13), the Eagle's four wings come from *Revelation*, iv, 7, and the Fish is a local addition. It can be seen at once then, that even within the framework of the Church, this design may have borne more than one meaning. In prehistoric pagan belief, it must have had a whole variety of meanings, none necessarily connected; it would be grotesquely improbable that, in 6th-century Pictland, the Eagle-and-Fish icon conjured up to its beholders the same myth that it had earlier represented in the Near East.[9]

On the other hand it is just possible to make an informed guess from what has survived of early belief in north-west Europe. The goose of Fig.11, no. 8, and its most probable ancestor the 'Hallstatt' duck, are generally interpreted as solar symbols. The Thorsbjerg and Gallehus eagles over their fishes recall how in the *Kalevala*, the Finnish origin-cycle of admittedly very late recension,[10] Väinämöinen, the prime hero, offspring of the waters and of the

[1] *PSAS*, xxxviii (1903–4) 557: Macalister (1940), 206 and pl. iv.
[2] C. Praetorius' drawings for Romilly Allen, *Archaeologia*, lvi (1898), 41, fig. 2: see now also F. Henry, *L'art Irlandais*, I (Zodiaque, 1963), pl. 26.
[3] *ECMS*, 250b.
[4] Helen Roe, *The High Crosses of Kells* (1959), 40, pl. xii: H. S. Crawford, *Carved Ornament from Irish Monuments* (Dublin 1926), no. 20, pls. xxxix and xl.
[5] *Ulster Journ. Arch.*, viii (1860), pl. iv, no. 2: Zimmerman, *Vor-Karolingische Miniaturen*, III (1916), pls. 208–9.
[6] St. Gall, MS. 904: Kenney, *Sources*, 562 and refs.
[7] Fol. 12: see facsimile edn., London (Thames & Hudson), 1957, pl. 18.
[8] Philippe de Thaon, *Livre des Creatures*, quoted *ECMS*, iii, 238.
[9] In the Orient, the Fish symbolized life, phallic energy and re-birth: the dolphin in particular carried souls to the other world (Goodenough, *passim*).
[10] W. F. Kirby, 2 vols. (Everyman's Library, 1907).

daughter of the sky, becomes the lover of Aino. She is drowned, and turns into a salmon, and is fished up by Vainámoinen, from whom she escapes. He, later, is cast into the waters, and is rescued by an eagle of magic aspect.

In British contexts, the use of the Eagle instead of an anserine recalls how in *Math vab Mathonwy*, an early Welsh tale,[1] a Celtic solar deity Lleu Llaw Gyffes sits in eagle guise on the top of an oak — like the eagle on the summit of *Yggdrasil*, the Norse 'tree of life'. In *Culhwch and Olwen*, another of the group of tales called the Mabinogion,[2] the whole scene may, obliquely, be contained. The 'quest for Mabon son of Modron' episode in this story involves Gwrhyr's visit to a succession of 'oldest animals': the last two are the Eagle of Gwernabwy who, as a young bird, had pecked at the stars nightly from the top of a stone, and the Salmon of Llyn Llyw, *into whose back the Eagle had once sunk his claws and been drawn under*, before the two creatures made their peace. Bearing in mind the religious nature of this episode[3] and the distinct possibility that such archaic tales as *Culhwch* have origins contemporary with at least some of the Class I field-monuments, it is not wholly incredible that a scene such as Fig.11, no. 15, enshrines some central Pictish belief — perhaps a creation myth.

It is fairly certain that a number of the more curious scenes on *ECMS* Class II field-monuments, and especially on the small transitional group, Class I/II, scenes generally described in terms of the Old or New Testament, will have to be re-examined carefully in the light of ancestral Celtic beliefs. The growing attention which is being paid to a good deal of northern British archaeological material in this way (*cf.* especially *AASIA*, 40, *n.*1) has already indicated the most fruitful lines of approach.

SYMBOLS AS PERSONAL 'NOUNS' AND 'ADJECTIVES'

General comments

In those S–2 statements other than the small 'Animal/Animal' group, and all S–3 statements, to be considered as funerary monuments for the reasons given earlier, one leaves the sphere of group-labels and cult scenes, and enters a related one in which each symbol in a statement should bear a definite, individual meaning. As, numerically, S–2 and S–3 statements of this kind can be separated into their component symbols, so, semantically, the message conveyed must to some extent depend upon the order and the arrangement of the symbols — that is, their spatial relationship to each other. This would be suggested by the terminal position of the Mirror and Comb symbols, if by nothing more, and must be the equivalent of linguistic syntax. Meanwhile, it is a legitimate inference from what has gone before that some symbols will have the function of nouns, in that they denote the subject of the memorial; others, probably the Animal group-labels, the dependent symbols with their putative indication of the concept 'dead', and those patently suggestive of

---

[1] W. J. Gruffydd, *Math vab Mathonwy* (Cardiff, 1928).
[2] Gwyn Jones & Thomas Jones, *The Mabinogion* (Everyman's Library, 1959).
[3] 'Mabon son of Modron' is generally taken to stand for an older *Maponus* (the youthful god), son of a mother-goddess. See now also K. H. Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition* (Cardiff, 1961), 76 ff., for discussion of the 'Oldest Animals' motif.

occupation rather than status, should possess qualificatory or adjectival value; and yet others, for example the simpler geometric designs, may be merely talismanic or apotropaic and not therefore 'translatable' in more definite terms.

If it is further accepted as a working hypothesis that such funerary statements refer almost entirely to the ruling caste in Pictish society, and to men and not to women, the task of attaching meanings to the 'noun' symbols — supposing that these can be separated from the 'adjectives' — is slightly facilitated. Celtic society, both in Britain and on the Continent, was highly stratified, conventionally formal, and in some respects harked back to a wider system now generally thought to have characterized the earlier Indo-European-speaking peoples as a whole.[1] This approach contains a risk. Just as, today, a man may be a member of Parliament, heir to a peerage, and a practising barrister, so a Pictish statement may well include a group of noun symbols which are in no way mutually exclusive and may refer, simultaneously or successively, to a single person. One cannot at the start simply select certain symbols for 'king', 'noble', and so forth; the historical evidence for the nature and the structure of Pictish society must first be examined, and then, but only then, the attempt to assign 'noun' symbols to grades within that society can be made.

Literary references to Pictish society

Apart from the regnal lists, which purport to record successive rulers of parts (or all) of Pictland, there are independent references to such monarchs. Adamnán, about 688–692, refers to Brude, ruler in the previous century, as *rex*,[2] and Ceolfrid's letter concerning the dates of Easter, written about 710 and quoted by Bede,[3] addresses Nechtan by the same word: *regi Naitano*. This is not a mere quibble. By no means all the post-Roman, Brittonic-speaking rulers south of Tweed maintained this Latin title.[4] If the story of the seven bipartite *regiones* from the 12th-century *De Situ Albanie* (p. 68 above) is accepted there was another grade of ruler called, in Latin, *regulus*. Again, Adamnán distinguished between Brude, the Pictish monarch to whom Bede gave the title *rex potentissimus*,[5] and an inferior or under-king of the Orkneys (*regulus*), who was in a client position, having had to give hostages to Brude.[6]

---

[1] Subsequent discussion is based largely on: Palmer, *Achaeans and Indo-Europeans* (Oxford, 1955); Tierney, 'The Celtic Ethnography of Posidonius', *PRIA*, 60 C 5 (1960); Dillon, 'The Archaism of Irish Tradition,' *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, XXXIII (1948) (Rhys Lecture); Sjoestedt, *Gods and Heroes of the Celts*, trans. Dillon (1949); Binchy, 'The Background of Early Irish Literature', *Stud. Hibernica* I (1961); T. Rice Holmes, *Caesar's Conquest of Gaul* (2nd edn., 1911). For Ireland, in addition to the earlier writers (*e.g.* O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, etc.), *Early Irish Society*, ed. Dillon (Dublin, 1954), Binchy in *Proc. Brit. Acad.*, XXIX (1943), MacNeill's transl. of Crith Gablach in *PRIA*, 36 C 16 (1923), and *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (Dublin, 1865–1901). For Wales, the *Laws of Hywel Dda*, trans. M. Richards (Liverpool, 1954), and Sir I. Williams' *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1954). The general archaeological-linguistic background is best followed in Hencken's *Indo-European Languages and Archaeology*, *Amer. Anthrop.* 57, no. 6, pt. 3 (Dec. 1955) memoir no. 84.

[2] All refs. are to *Adomnan's Life of Columba*, A. O. & M. O. Anderson (1961), by page; this one is Adamnán II. 33, 400–1.

[3] Bede, *H.E.*, v. 21.

[4] But *cf.*, *e.g.* the early 7th-century memorial stone, CATAMANUS REX, etc., Anglesey: Nash-Williams, *Early Christian Monuments of Wales* (Cardiff, 1950), p. 55.

[5] Bede, *H.E.*, III. 4.

[6] Adamnan II. 42, 440–1.

Bede clearly pictured king Nechtan amidst his assembled aristocracy
('... *de medio optimatum suorum*')[1] but even if this were no more than Bede's
concept of a *witenagemot*, there is still Adamnán's mention of a Pict, Tarain
(**Taranis*) who was '*de nobili Pictorum genere*'.[2] There is also Adamnán's story
of Artbranan. This person, an elderly pagan but nevertheless of natural
goodness, arrived in Skye to be baptised by Columba.[3] He was presumably
Pictish, since he bears a Brittonic name, and the saint had to address him
through an interpreter; he is described further as *geonae primarius cohortis*. The
epithet attached to this elderly warrior has not really been explained; it does not
seem to be the name of any specific island or place. Can it be an adjectival
Ge–onus, –a, rather on the model of Adamnán's *Hinbinus*, from the island-name
Hinba? If so, it suggests that Artbranan was the leader of the war-band of the
regio called Ce in the later Pictish Chronicle.

The 6th-century court surrounding Brude at or near Inverness possessed
a group of magicians, wizards, sorcerers or latter-day druids — Adamnán uses
the Latin *magus*[4] — the chief of whom, Broichan, was also foster-father
(*nutricius; cf.* Irish *aite*) to king Brude himself. Subsidiary magi are not further
distinguished but are clearly inferior to Broichan. We also hear of a free
land-holder (*quidam plebeus*) who, in addition to his wife and children, possessed
servants (*familiares*);[5] and of Broichan's female Irish slave (*serva, servula, ancellula*).[6]
King Brude had messengers or envoys described as *equites*[7] who belonged to
his entourage and may thus have been more than just 'men on horseback'.
It is also worth noting here, in view of what was earlier supposed about the
composition of the upper classes in Pictish society, that all those Picts mentioned
by name in Adamnán's Life of Columba possess names which are Celtic,
usually Brittonic.

These direct references then allow one to list at least four superior grades:
rex, regulus, primarius cohortis, and a *magus* of sufficient status to be a king's
foster-father. There are Picts *de nobili genere*: the king's court has *equites* and
familiares, and by the 8th century if not before, *optimati*. Servants, slaves,
hostages, and the existence of fosterage are all recorded. Those involved may
be Picts, but they have Celtic names; and this whole milieu is unquestionably
a Celtic one.

Evidence from analogous societies

It is perhaps then permissible to turn toward other areas of Britain partly
or wholly unaffected by the Roman occupation, in particular early Ireland;
areas where a similarly conservative type of society persisted, up to the point
in time where certain features of this could be recorded in law tracts, com-
mentaries and similar compilations, rather than deduced from local *heldensage*

1 Bede, *H.E.*, v. 21.
2 Adamnan II. 23, 376–7.
3 Adamnan I. 33, 274–5.
4 Adamnan II. 33, 398–9.
5 Adamnan II. 32, 396–7.
6 Adamnan II. 33, 399–401.
7 *Ibid.*

with their inevitably archaic and anachronistic outlook. It would be stupid to pretend that early Pictish society and early Irish society were identical — the two regions possess somewhat different linguistic and archaeological backgrounds and the modes of land-division are not reconcilable, to name only the more obvious objections — but a broad similarity is at once apparent.[1]

Early Irish custom and law recognized grades of kingship, from the *ard-rí* or 'high king', the supreme ruler of all the five (earlier, four) provinces,[2] down through the provincial king of a *coiced* or 'fifth', king of a group of 'tuaths' or *mor-tuath*, king of a *tuath*, and finally an under-king, *ur-rí* or *oir-rí*, ruling a subsidiary *tuath*. The latter term, not really translatable but loosely equated with the Latin *pagus* as a sub-division of a tribe, is originally some kind of basic Indo-European population group, 'the (whole) tribe, total body of free citizens', and this is reflected semantically (*tuath* < *teuta*, cf. Latin *totus*, and the group-name *Teutones*). In terms of land, a tuath was perhaps that area used by such a group, rather than an artificially-fixed demesne of independent origin. Though it is tempting to equate the Pictish (seventh) province with the Irish *coiced*, and to see the Pictish *reguli* as fairly senior sub-kings within each seventh, it is far more probable on historical grounds that only the principles of subsidiary kingship occur in common. The Irish king was, in theory, holder of a position elective from a restricted class rather than of a hereditary rank, and normally had hostages from sub-kings residing with him. The latter element certainly appears in Pictish history, as was shown earlier.[3]

The 'classic' stratification of Irish society must be briefly summarized. First were the various grades of kings. Below them came the class of *flaith* (nobles, *de nobilis genere*), the non-royal land-holding aristocracy, graded according to the amount of property they held. Thirdly are the lower grades of *aire* or privileged persons, not noble, but free, and owning property (generally in the form of livestock) other than land. Fourth come the groups of *aithech* (*cele*, *feine*), so-called free tenants; the great mass of the more or less fixed agricultural populace; and finally there are the non-free classes — unfree members of tribes in menial positions, captives, and downright slaves like St. Patrick as a boy in 5th-century Ulster — divisible into legal categories which need not now concern us.

It has long been suspected that, allowing for the complexities beloved of juristic codifiers the world over, and for the fact that our picture of early Ireland is basically one of an ideal, not necessarily a completely real, society, that all this represents an insular, British Iron Age, version of what Caesar noted among the Gauls. The *flaith* correspond to Caesar's *equites* ('The greater their rank and resources the more dependants and clients do they possess'),[4] and the *aithech*, and possibly the *aire* class, to Caesar's *plebes*, though his description

[1] See sources, p. 75, *n*. 1. This whole topic lacks any modern comprehensive treatment available to scholars who are not (like Professor D. A. Binchy) both jurists and linguists. Pitfalls abound; for instance the Scottish *Book of Deer* is neglected here because of uncertainty whether the grades of society identifiable in its glosses can be made to refer to pre-9th-century Picts.

[2] But see now Binchy, *Stud. Hibernica I*, on the possibility that the high-kingship is a much later feature than is usually supposed.

[3] Adamnan II. 42, 440–1.   [4] Tierney, *op. cit.*, 272.

of the latter[1] apparently embraces both free and unfree. The third division of the Gauls, the *druides*, represent far more than merely a pagan priesthood; they were the whole class of those responsible for the preservation and enunciation of divine and secular learning, and for the continued practice of the more esoteric crafts. Strabo, writing after Caesar but probably drawing on the work of the 2nd-century B.C. ethnographer Posidonius,[2] sub-divides this class into the bards (singers and poets), the *vates* (interpreters of sacrifice and natural philosophers), and the druids (students of moral philosophy as well as of the science of nature), and further states that this class also formed the legislature.

In Irish society, the equivalent group — the *aes dána*, or men 'of special gifts' — were to some extent parallel to the *flaith* class, both noble and royal.[3] Dillon considers that 'probably the Irish *fili*, *bard*, *brithem* (judge), *senchaid* (historian) and *drui* (druid) all belonged originally to the same privileged caste . . .'[4] and Binchy, who is prepared to stretch the term, would include in it ' . . . the skilled wright and the jeweller'. The highest member of this category, the *ollam*, a kind of super-bard, was equal to a king before the law.

Provisional interpretations of individual symbols

In theory it should now be possible to assign tentative meanings, based on what can be inferred about the nature of Pictish society, to at least some of the symbols. In practice this cannot yet be done except in the most provisional way; there are not nearly sufficient examples from *ECMS* Class I to demonstrate statistical probabilities along these lines. On the other hand there are certain indications, both from *art mobilier*, and from *ECMS* Class II where symbols are accompanied by (and appear to refer to) human figures, which act as useful checks.

The best candidate for the grade of *rex* or provincial king is no. 39, Double Disc. This symbol appears throughout the area, though not with overwhelming frequency. It is seen as the major Object symbol on the most impressive pieces of *art mobilier*, the silver chains and lappets, and in a number of Class II scenes[5] it adjoins (normally in the 'dead' state, with Z-Rod crossing it) elderly and often equestrian men of predominant size and clear importance.

The constant association of this symbol with no. 35, the Crescent (with or without the V-Rod added to it), indicates that the latter is the symbol for *regulus*, and that it may stand for the under-king of a province (*regio*) and also perhaps some close associate — son, maternal nephew, or nominated successor, — of a full king.

One can extrapolate the known association of Z-Rod with the *rex* symbol, but not with the Crescent, to explain two more; no.19, the 'Chariot', and no. 34, the Snake crossed by a Z-Rod. The former, with its joint indication of warfare and superior rank, may be the mark of a war-leader or *primarius cohortis* such as Artbranan.[6] The Snake and Z-Rod could, by analogy, represent the position

[1] *De Bell. Gall.* VI, 13.   [2] Tierney, *op. cit.*, 269.
[3] *Cf.* Sjoestedt, *op. cit., passim*, for instances of craftsman-deities.
[4] Dillon, 'Archaism of Irish Tradition', 18.
[5] *ECMS*, 120, 217b, 228b, 231b, 240b, 305b, 306b.
[6] Adamnan I.33, 274–5.

held by someone like Broichan, the principal magus who was also king Brude's foster-father and may thus have been the broad equal of an Irish *ollam*. If this is so, the Snake is being used, as it apparently is with the Bird and Fish in the cult scenes (p. 70 above), as a symbol of magical power or wisdom, not related to its use in slightly different guise as a group-label.

In the class equivalent to the Irish *flaith*, it can be supposed that degrees of quality or importance existed, and that if this class is symbolically commemorated, more than one symbol will have been used. It is likely that no. 33, the Arch or Horse-Shoe symbol, is one such. Its symbolic form recalls the slightly later hinged collar which replaced the torc in insular fashion. The long history of the metal neck-ornament as a mark of free or noble status is based, not only on numerous depictions of Celts wearing such, but on literary evidence as well.[1] A symbol with very similar significance should be the associated personal ornament of the armlet, the 'Triple Oval' (no. 32).[2] A third potential member of this group is no. 38, the Circular Disc and Rectangle symbol, which occurs in *ECMS* Class I and *art mobilier* with almost exactly the same frequency, and in much the same contexts, as the Arch or Horse-Shoe symbol. The idea (developed in Fig. 8) that this design is derived from 'pre-Pictish' rock art does not preclude use of this symbol in a Celtic caste system, since the same origin appears to be proper to the Double Disc symbol and conceivably to the Crescent. Finally, it is just possible that no. 37, the Circular Disc (with its three smaller internal discs) belongs to this class too.

It does not seem likely that the social strata corresponding to the *aire* and the *aithech* groups, in early Ireland, were widely commemorated. The unfree are even less likely to have been so distinguished. But one can detect a few examples[3] which strongly suggest that an Animal group-label, unqualified further, could in certain undefined circumstances serve as a funerary symbol for a person below the grades of nobility.

The association between Mirror and Comb, nos. 26 and 27, and Pictish womenfolk has already been explored (p. 43 above). A proportion of the remaining Object symbols are thus likely to refer to the following: professions within a class equivalent to the Irish *aes dàna* and the Gaulish *druides*, specialist occupations, and positions of social or military importance of an *ad hominem* kind outside the normal gradation of society. Here, the previous identifications of the Object symbols as stylized pictures of earlier objects must serve as a guide. For the subordinate magi, the equivalent of Strabo's bards and *vates* and of the Irish *fili*, no. 22, the Triple Disc and Bar identified as a Cauldron is the most apt. It can hardly imply 'cauldron-maker', still less 'possessor of a cauldron', and in some *ECMS* Class II scenes it appears to be an addition (in a qualificatory sense?) to symbols of the preceding *flaith* type. The appearance of these cauldrons — *cf.* Fig. 4 — in Class I/II and Class II depictions which must be cult scenes, for example with men being forced head-first into them,

---

[1] Diodorus Siculus, *History*, v. 27: Strabo, *Geography*, IV, iv. 5: Polybius, *History*, II. 29 (battle of Telamon): *cf.* also the *Cernunnos* figure on the Gundestrup cauldron.
[2] A *flesc* or bracelet was one of the marks of the *flaith* class in Ireland.
[3] *e.g.*, *ECMS*, 134: there are others in *ECMS* Class II.

suggests most strongly that the vessel is being portrayed in its magical role. It is the cauldron of regeneration in the early Welsh tale *Branwen uerch Lyr*, or (as in the Book of Taliesin) the source of inspiration, three drops from whose boiling contents enable one to see past, present and future.[1]

It is conceivable that a calling equivalent to the Irish *brithem*, anglice 'brehon', or repository of customary law, existed. The historical Picts, if not themselves demonstrably literate at first, cannot have been unaware of the existence of literacy around them. Roman notices and tablets, 5th and 6th-century inscribed memorial stones erected by Brittonic-speaking Christians to their south, and the 7th-century service books of the Columban church, must all have been recognized for what they were. By the early 8th century a Pictish cleric in Shetland possessed inscribed silver objects, and further south, Nechtan, his interpreters and his *optimati*, were puzzling out Ceolfrid's verbose instructions about the date of Easter.[2] The existence of regnal lists which, if known only from late redactions, must in part derive from a much earlier period, to say nothing of the later Scottish obsession with genealogy, all indicate a long-standing interest in some form of history, however restricted. The Rectangle symbol, no. 28, may then stand for the Pictish historian and lawgiver, and its assumed derivation from a Roman writing-tablet may not be too far-fetched, particularly since such objects may peripherally have continued in use after the 4th century A.D.[3]

The interesting Sword symbol, no.18 (and 17) is so rare — once unbroken, only four or five times in the broken or 'dead' state — that it cannot possibly be translated as 'warrior' or 'swordsman'. Its very rarity indicates some fairly specialized meaning, and this may be that of the Irish *aire-echta* or personal champion, always of *flaith* status, who attended a king as an avenger of insults or injury. This reading would certainly fit *ECMS* 508, the rock-surface at Anwoth. The single 'Don Terret', no. 21, *ECMS* 358, may by rough analogy point to a charioteer or similar personal attendant of high status.[4]

Similarly, the symbols identified as pictures of Hammer, Anvil, and Tongs (nos. 23, 24 and 25) can scarcely imply just 'blacksmith'. This occupation cannot have been a rare one, and the symbols are among the least frequent. Some kind of master metalworker — the man who could make silver neck-chains, or the brooches seen in hoards like that from St. Ninian's Isle, Shetland[5] — seems more probable, and it was pointed out above that Binchy would include such craftsmen in the scope of the Irish *aes dána*. The 'Flower' symbol, no. 29, if really a Harness-Brooch, and no. 31, the supposed 'Dragonesque' Brooch, may stand for other kinds of bronze-worker.

---

[1] G. and T. Jones, *The Mabinogion* (1949), 29, 37: P. Mac Cana, *Branwen daughter of Llŷr* (Cardiff 1958), *vide* Index s.v. 'Cauldrons': *cf.* also the inexhaustible cauldron of the Irish *Dagda* (Sjoestedt, *op. cit.*, 39-40). The Celtic **kvario-* (Ir. *coire*, Welsh *pair*) has been related to a root meaning 'to cause, form, create': O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin 1946), 147 ff.

[2] Bede, *H.E.*, v. 21: see also *Antiquity*, xxxiii (1959). pl. xxxii.

[3] *Cf.* the waxed tablets from Springmount, Co. Antrim (now re-dated to 7th century A.D.): Hillgarth, in *PRIA*, 62 C 6, 184, *nn.* 79–82, and pl. II; *cf.* also the bifoliate bone tablet, recessed for wax, from Blythburgh, Suffolk (10th century?), British Museum.

[4] *e.g.*, Lóeg, Cu Chulainn's charioteer in the 'Ulster' stories.

[5] A. C. O'Dell, *St. Ninian's Isle Treasure* (Edinburgh 1960).

The solitary Chariot-wheel (no. 20) is better seen as a version of the Circular Disc symbol rather than anything to do with actual horsemanship or chariotry, and if so, serves to introduce a class including the geometric symbols generally. In *ECMS* Class I, the 'Bow and Arrow', Three Small Discs, Triskele in Circle, Double Crescent, and perhaps the S-Shaped figure, are of this kind, with the Stepped and L-Shaped figures of Classes I/II and II, and the Zig-Zag Line, Triangle and Pentacle of cave-art and *art mobilier*. These may well be used, partly as religious signs, partly as appropriate talismans, rather than as symbols of independent meaning.

Finally the Mirror and Comb occur in contexts which allow one to attach, with some confidence, the meaning 'Female, standing in a relationship to the person commemorated'.

Interpretations: summary

These meanings can now be set out in concise tabular form:

Number	ECMS name	Identification	Interpretation
39	Double Disc	(from older art?)	King, *rex*
35	Crescent	(from coinage?)	Sub-king, *regulus*
19	Notched rectangle	Chariot & ponies	War-leader
34	Snake (& Z-Rod)	———	Head magus, *ollam*
32	Triple oval	Bronze armlet	*Flaith* or noble
33	Arch	Bronze collar	do.
37	Circular disc	(from older art?)	do. (?)
38	Disc & rectangle	(from older art)	do.
18	*ECMS* 508	Sword	Champion, *aire-echta*
21	*ECMS* 358	'Don' terret	Charioteer?
22	Triple disc, etc.	Cauldron	Magus
28	Rectangle	Writing-tablet?	Brehon or historian
23	Hammer	⎫	⎧ Some variety of
24	Anvil	⎬ The same	⎨ skilled
25	Tongs or pincers	⎭	⎩ metalworker?
29	Flower	Harness-brooch?	do. (?)
31	(post-*ECMS*)	Dragonesque brooch	do. (?)
26	Mirror	La Tène mirror	Woman
27	Comb	Bone comb	Woman (qualifying?)
20	*ECMS* 132	Chariot wheel	⎫
30	S-shaped symbol	?	
36	Double crescent	(from coinage?)	
40	Pair of discs	(from older art?)	
41	Zig-zag line	(from coinage?)	Religious or
42	Triskele in disc	(from La Tène art)	talismanic
43	3 small discs	(from coinage)	meanings only
44	Triangle	(from coinage??)	
45	Pentacle	(from coinage)	
46	Bow and arrow	?	
48	L-shaped figure	?	
47	Stepped figure	?	⎭
15	Z-Rod	Broken spear	⎫
16	V-Rod	Broken arrow	⎬ 'Dead'
17	'Curling-tongs'	Broken sword	⎭

INTERPRETATION OF THE FUNERARY STATEMENTS

General comments

Any attempt to disclose the meaning of the remaining unconsidered statements — all those of S–2 type other than 'Animal/Animal', and the S–3 group — can take into account a variety of helpful clues. Apart from the isolation of the Animal symbols as group-labels, and from the foregoing classification of Object symbols, there are the following aspects; the difference in meaning of 'live' and 'dead' in the alternating symbols, the subordinate position of women in the S–3 statements, the apparent fact that statements in vertical lines 'begin' at the top and 'end' at the bottom, and finally, with caution, the conjunction of symbols and human figures in certain Class I/II and Class II scenes.

S–2 statements (other than 'Animal/Animal') (Fig. 12)

In this class, where either A or B in an A/B (rarely, A = B) pair is an Animal and the other symbol an Object, or both are Objects, there can be comparatively little subtlety of meaning. It has already been assumed that these are funerary statements. The only real problem is, granted that A and B can usually be interpreted as an 'adjective' and a 'noun', or as two nouns, whether any detectable rule governs the relative placing of the two symbols.

In the seventy-three Pairs under consideration, one finds the four symbols — Double Disc, Crescent, 'Chariot' (no.19) and 'Sword' (nos.17 and 18) — occurring in 23 pairs in the A, or top, position, and in 26 in the B position. In all these instances, they are in the 'Dead' form — crossed with Z-Rod or V-Rod or (in the case of Sword) in the 'broken' form, no.17. The corresponding 'Live' forms are far more rare; there are only nine instances altogether, and of these, seven are Double Discs and two are Crescents. The concept that a 'Dead' form was proper to a funerary monument is thus strengthened; indeed, the two instances of 'Live' Crescents (without the V-Rod) are both to some extent dubious or possibly unfinished instances (Roskeen, Ross: Tillytarmont no. 3).

Relative position does not generally appear to be significant. Taking a wider group of symbols, the first ten on the list on p. 81, one finds that they account for the A symbol in 39 instances, and for the B symbol in 44 instances; in 24 cases, both A and B are drawn from these ten. The very common Double Disc and Z-Rod is found four times as the top symbol, and eleven times as the bottom symbol, of which three are below an Animal and five are below Crescent and V-Rod.

The possible range of meanings appears to embrace the following. Most of these statements are of the type 'To a Dead (King, *Regulus*, etc.) of (Animal group-label) Group'; 'To a Dead (King, *Regulus*, etc.) of such-and-such an occupation (e.g. *magus*, Cauldron, no. 22)'; and, particularly in such cases as Crescent and V-Rod/Double Disc and Z-Rod, 'To a Dead King who was also (or, more probably, who was formerly) a *Regulus*, or of a high social class represented by the *Regulus* symbol (Crescent — with V-Rod added for a dead person)'. The only significance of the relative A/B placing might occur in the
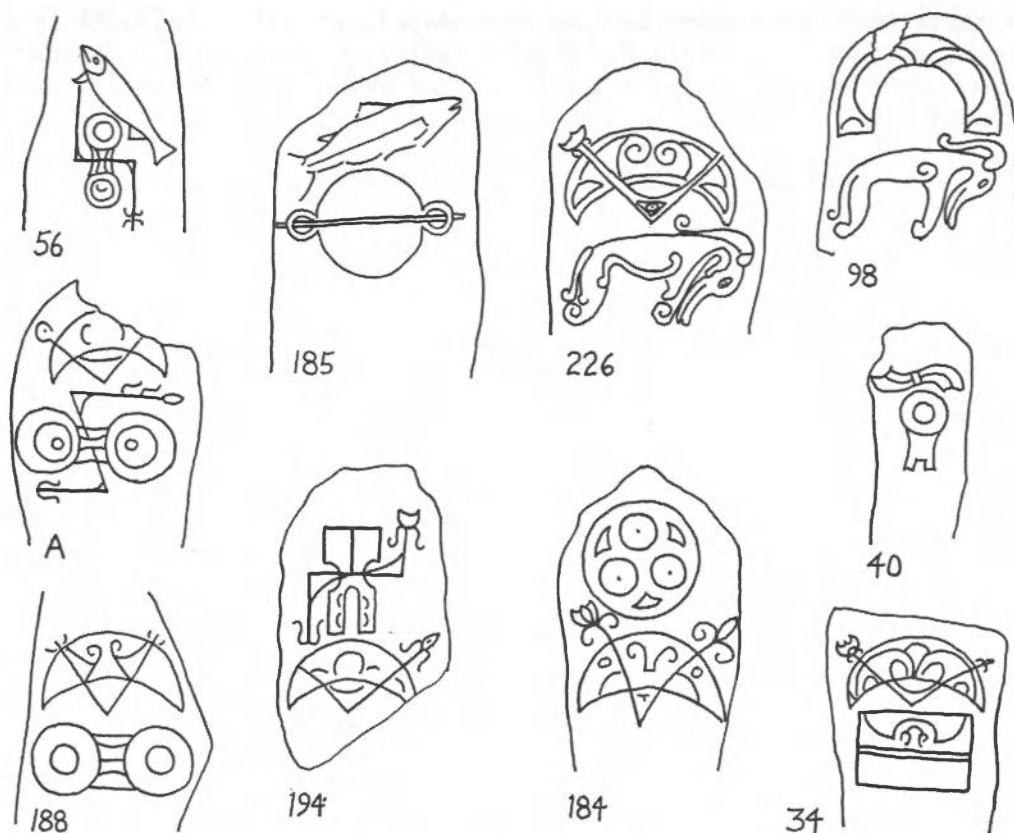
Fig. 12. 'PAIRS' STATEMENTS. Not to scale.
A, Tillytarmont, Aberdeen, *PSAS*, LXXXVIII, 223, the rest, *ECMS* as numbered

third instance, where it may tentatively be suggested that, if a man is commemorated in more than one guise, *that which he had held first, or earlier, is defined in the top (A) symbol.* The support for this view is found in the fact that the dead king symbol, Double Disc and V-Rod, is three times as common in the B position as in the A position (and one must, on this hypothesis, assume that provincial *rex*, being the highest, would be the final stage in any grandee's career); and that, except in one case, an outlier from Fiskavaig, Skye,[1] which reads 'Double Disc and Z-Rod/Crescent and V-Rod', the instances of these two symbols making up an A/B pair (six in all) read '*Regulus*/King', as one might more logically expect (Fig.12, A).

There is an obvious fourth meaning, apparent of course only when a Pair includes a symbol which is capable of being shown, and is so shown, in its 'Live' form. Accepting still that this can be funerary, it should have the value 'Memorial to X, commemorated by Y'. This could certainly be argued

[1] Not in *ECMS*: see *PSAS*, LXI, 241, fig. 1.

in the seven instances where the 'Live' form of the King symbol, the Double Disc on its own, forms one of the Pair (Fig. 12, 188); and it may well apply in other cases where a 'noun' symbol of this kind is not so distinguished into Live and Dead forms.
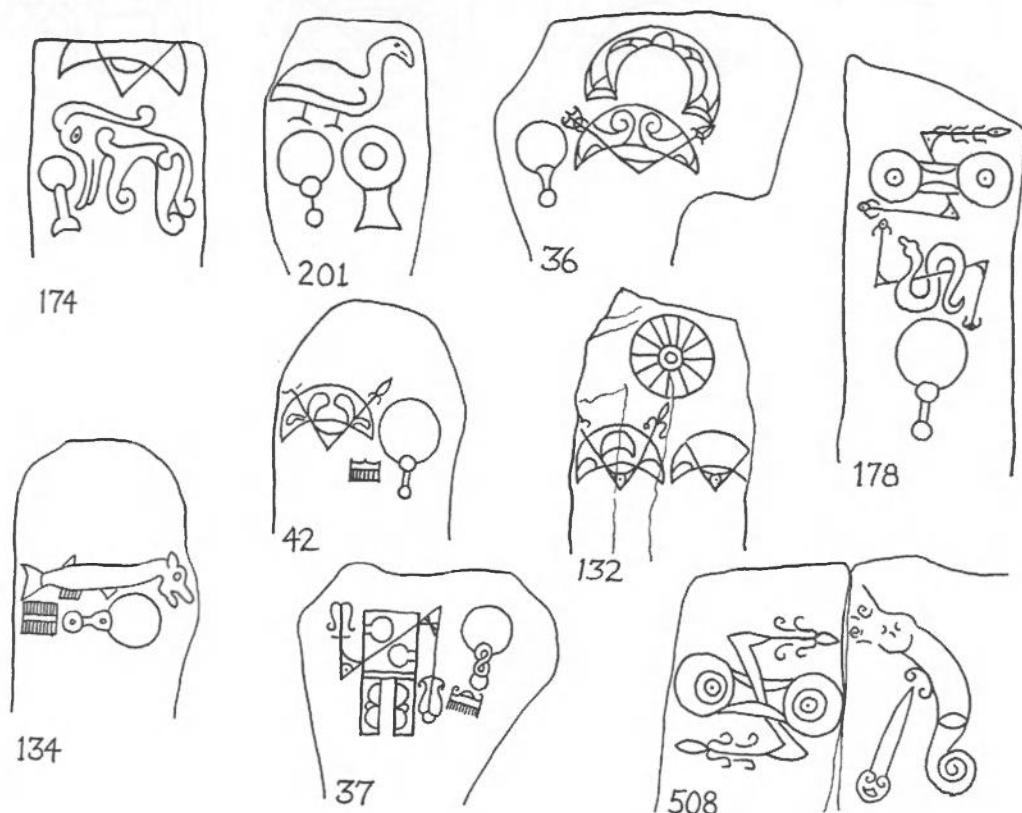

Fig. 13. 'TRIPLES' STATEMENTS. Not to scale.

ECMS as numbered

S–3 *Statements* (Figs. 13, 14)

In essence these are versions of S–2 statements, to which the symbols Mirror, or Mirror and Comb, are added as the 'bottom' terms. It would then seem unlikely that they would have the meaning of 'X, commemorated by Y, commemorated by a woman', and therefore the A and B terms in Triple and Quadruple statements are more likely to be of the simpler 'noun plus adjective' kind. This is probably the reason why there are only eight instances of an A/B pair being repeated as the first two terms in a Triple. In six of these eight, the additional C symbol is the Mirror; and in none of these six is either A or B demonstrably a symbol in its 'Live' form, where it falls within the alternating series.
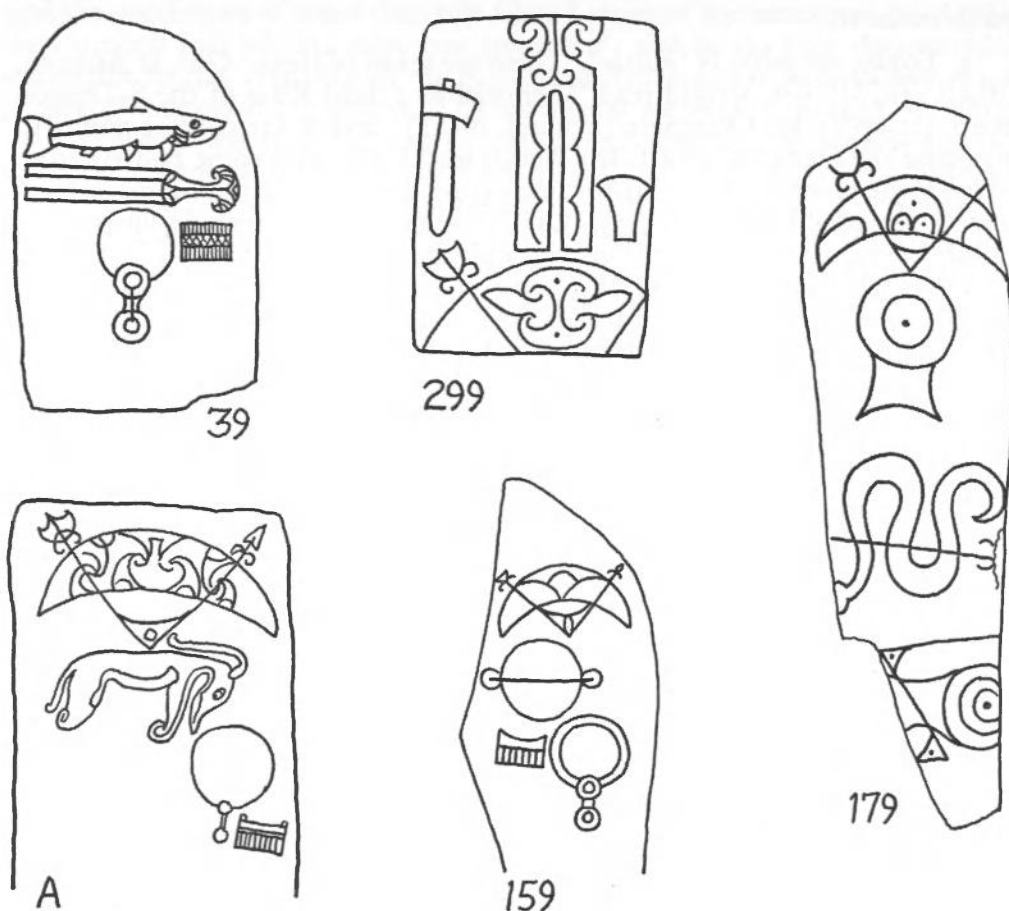
Fig. 14. 'QUADRUPLES' STATEMENTS. Not to scale.
A, Golspie, Sutherland, *PSAS*, LXXVII, 26, the rest, *ECMS* as numbered

Again, in dealing with the Quadruples, nearly all of which 'end' in Mirror and Comb as the C/D or C = D elements, the 'Live' forms never occur in the A and B elements, with one exception (see below); moreover, the A and B symbols are invariably explicable as a compound of a noun, usually King or *Regulus* in the 'Dead' form, plus some group-label or occupational symbol (cauldron, rectangle, etc., indicating intellectual rather than manual occupations, as one might expect). The exception is Daviot, Aberdeen: *ECMS* 170. It shows a Crescent and V-Rod, below which are Mirror, Comb, and another Crescent *without* V-Rod, but identical in appearance to the first; and can plausibly read 'Tomb of a *regulus*, commemorated by his wife and his son', on the assumption, made earlier, that the Crescent symbol has this broader meaning (Fig. 1, no. 8). It is worth noting again that no less than five of these Quadruple statements are found on field-monuments associated with burials or cists of some kind.

Special instances

a. *Triples,* *not ending in 'Mirror'.* There are seven of these. One, at Anwoth, Kirkcd., *ECMS* 508, should read 'Memorial to a dead King of the S–Dragon group, set up by his Champion (Symbol. no.18)', and as the context points to this being the memorial of a fallen Pictish leader killed on some raid far from Pictland, the absence of the Mirror, indicating commemoration by his wife, is scarcely remarkable (Fig. 13, 508). Of the other six, four include illegible or doubtful symbols and conclusions can only be drawn cautiously. Typical is *ECMS* 55 (Dingwall), where the King symbol occurs above two *Regulus* symbols; but the upper of the pair is fragmentary, represented by a few lines only, and the lower one may therefore be simply a more successful re-drawing. This certainly seems to explain another, *ECMS* 132 (Knockando) (Fig.13, no.132), where a Wheel (symbol no.20) is found above two *Regulus* symbols side by side; that on the right is incomplete, and indeed so cramped that there would not have been room to put in all the V-Rod element, and the instance on the left seems to be again just a better re-drawing.

b. *Quadruples,* *not ending in 'Mirror and Comb'.* There are three of these, of considerable interest. The first, Birsay (Orkney), reads 'Crescent and V-Rod/ Circular Disc and Rectangle (symbol no. 38) /"Elephant"/Eagle', with three well-drawn men in a line below, carrying spears and square shields (Pl. III). The man on the right is taller, has a richer tunic and a more elaborate shield. The slab stood by a triple grave in the burial-ground of the pre-Norse church.[1] It clearly reads 'Grave of a local *regulus,* of appropriate noble status (no. 38), also of a man of the "Elephant" group, and of a man of the Eagle group' and these are depicted below, the most important figure of the three being the *regulus.* It also shows us that, where no other symbol was appropriate, a freeman or warrior might be commemorated by his (Animal) group-label alone; a fairly certain instance of this is the Triple at Manbean, Elgin (*ECMS* 134), where a man of the S–Dragon group is commemorated by his wife (?), Mirror and Comb (Fig.13, 134).

The second instance, *ECMS* 299, at Abernethy, reads 'Hammer = Broken sword (no.17) = Anvil / Crescent and V-Rod' (Fig.14, 299). Unfortunately the stone has been trimmed square and it is possible that other symbols have been lost, but as it stands it appears to commemorate some master metalworker whose status, or family connections, entitled him to the Crescent symbol as well. Here, symbol no.17, Broken Sword, appears to have been added to Hammer and Anvil to convey the 'Dead' meaning.

The third instance is *ECMS* 179, Inverury, Aberdeen (Fig.14, 179). It reads 'Crescent and V-Rod/Circular Disc and Rectangle/Snake and Z-Rod/ Double Disc and Z-Rod', and as three of these symbols are within the alternating class and are shown in their 'Dead' forms it must be funerary. To how many persons does it refer? It must be presumed that it all refers to the same individual, since the occurrence of more than one statement on a Class I stone,

---

[1] C. A. Ralegh Radford, *The Early Christian and Norse Settlements, Birsay,* H.M.S.O. Guide (1959), 17.

and the occurrence of more than one Class I stone at the same spot, both point to a general rule of 'one man, one statement': and in the only demonstrable exception to this rule, that from Birsay just discussed, *it was necessary to add pictures of three men to explain this*. The Inverury stone might then read 'Memorial of a man who was first a *regulus*, of appropriate noble status (symbol no. 38): he became famous as an *ollam* or chief magus, and was king of the province when he died'. One cannot exclude the possibility that even so (comparatively) complex a statement as this was instantly comprehensible to those familiar with the symbolism. The importance of this particular stone is that it sheds some light on the apparent absence of any rule governing the disposition, vertically, of two or more noun symbols in Triple and Quadruple statements; namely, that symbols referring to the subject should, where possible, be arranged to read downwards in accordance with the sequence of events in his lifetime. This should account for the *regulus* symbol being *above* the King symbol five times out of six; in the Quadruple series ending in Mirror and Comb, A/B reads '*Regulus*/King' once, but the reverse is not found at all: and the only Triple to read the reverse, 'King/*Regulus*', *ECMS* 199, may actually be incomplete (only the bottom of the Double Disc and Z-Rod is seen) or even read 'King and his son (*Regulus* symbol) commemorated by Mirror (?wife and mother)'.

Summary

As emphasized earlier, these explanations are only tentative ones. They concern a stylized and detailed symbolism, in a non-literate *milieu*, which by its very nature is precluded from indicating any deceased person by his given name (as in our own, and all literate, societies) and must perforce do this in terms of his status and his group-affiliation. As these symbols were used in this manner for at least two centuries, and so employed over a very large area of northern Scotland, it is obvious that the rules governing their use and detailed disposition must have been sufficiently well-known to permit instant public recognition, clear enough to avoid ambiguity, and intimately allied to the contemporary social structure of Pictland. They cannot, in short, have been particularly complex rules, and the terseness of the majority of the statements described above makes it clear that there was no need for complexity. Accurate and certain definition of these rules, even granted the (perhaps questionable) assumption that they did not vary during the period of Class I field-monuments, would only be possible through the analysis of a very much larger corpus of material. Despite this, the interpretations set out above are sufficiently consistent with the evidence, from all sources, to make it highly likely that they are correct in principle, if not in detail. Given the surrounding circumstances, it is not easy to see how any radically different explanation could be advanced.

There remain two final problems, both intimately connected with the Picts and their symbolic art. The first is the status of Pictish women, the nature of marriages and descent in Pictland, Pictish royal succession, and the possibility of an exogamous system (in which the fourteen Animal symbols might belong to paired marriage-clans). The writer feels that further

discussion is pointless[1] unless it assumes the form of exhaustive analysis by a skilled social anthropologist, a desideratum now long overdue. The second, which will be briefly summarized, is that of the manner in which the symbol designs, so many of which seem to have originated in the first few centuries A.D., were preserved to appear at a much later stage in the period of the historical Picts.

THE PROBLEM OF PICTISH TATTOOING

We do not know for sure by what name the Picts knew themselves, either in a Celtic or a non-Indo-European tongue; indeed we do not even know whether they possessed a single intra-national name. The traditional belief, that the name *Picti* (first recorded *c*. A.D. 297[2] but quite probably current before this date) means 'the Painted Ones', and was given to them by the Roman garrisons in the north because they painted or tattooed themselves, is not necessarily wrong just because it is traditional. Its simplicity makes it preferable to another, less cogent, explanation: that *Picti* is a Latin translation of a native name like *Cruithni*[3] which involves an Irish, not a Brittonic, word and which should mean 'People of the Designs'.

An obvious objection, that according to Caesar many of the British, if not all, painted themselves with woad, but were known to the Romans as *Britanni* and not as *Picti*, is irrelevant. The southern British language in both Caesar's and Claudius' days closely resembled Gaulish, familiar to many Romans, and the British intra-national name *Pritani* or later *Brittones*[4] was simply adopted. In a similar way, Tacitus' record of the name *Caledonia* for much of Scotland, and the *Caledonii* (*Caledones*), *Maeatae*, *Dicalydones* and *Verturiones* of later classical writers — names of groups of tribes rather than of a whole people — were demonstrably native, if not necessarily all Celtic, in origin.

It is not too far-fetched to imagine that the Picts were called *Picti* by the Roman legionaries (rather in the manner in which later armies used such terms as 'Wog' and 'Dago') because at least some of the Picts tattooed themselves facially or corporeally and because such marks were always to some extent a prominent characteristic; and that this name, passing into general currency, superseded other and more correct titles such as *Verturiones*. For a number of early writers allude to this habit, some of them in detail. Few, if any, of their comments represent eye-witness accounts or first-hand information, and some writers undoubtedly drew upon their predecessors, but in view of the geographical remoteness of Pictland, beyond the northernmost *limes* of the empire, this is scarcely surprising, and all such comments are not *ipso facto* invalidated.

Tattooing or painting the face and body was widespread at an earlier era, and (despite the fact that our knowledge of it must of necessity be largely from history, not archaeology) it cannot be regarded as exclusively a Pictish or

---

[1] Most recently, N. K. Chadwick, 'Pictish and Celtic Marriage in Early Literary Tradition', *Scot. Gael. Studies*, VIII (1955–58), 56: H. M. Chadwick, *Early Scotland* (Cambridge 1949) *passim*.
[2] In a panegyric, attributed to Eumenius, probably addressed to Constantius Chlorus (M.H.B. lxvii).
[3] Jackson, *Problem*, 158–9.
[4] *Ibid.*: *Brittones* may be a new formation from *Britanni* (Jackson).

even British habit. Tattooing was known among barbarian peoples located to the north and north-east of the Graeco-Roman world, and may have been a northerly Eurasiatic custom of great age; the sharp little copper or bronze awls found with Early Bronze Age burials in Britain have been explained from time to time as tattoo-needles rather than as leather-borers. The present meaningless facial tattooing found among Eskimoid peoples[1] conceivably originates in earlier contacts with non-Eskimoid peoples in Siberia or eastern Asia. It is perfectly likely that the Celtic peoples first learnt the custom, in late Hallstatt or early La Tène times, from the Eurasiatic world to their immediate east, a contact from which so much of Celtic zoomorphic art and material culture seems to have been borrowed.[2] Facial tattooing may have lapsed in Gaul in Caesar's time, though there is only negative evidence for this, but a century or so before it was apparently still remembered in many north-western areas of what is now France. The peculiarity of the Picts lies only in their retention of this practice, in an advanced form, centuries after it had lapsed elsewhere; though, as the whole of this paper has sought to stress, much of what is known or suspected of the Picts and Pictland exhibits just this isolated conservatism.

The historical evidence is straightforward enough. It consists of statements by a variety of early writers, some direct, others couched in simile; the difficulties lie in estimating the degree of accuracy or authenticity, not in the inherent improbability of the existence of tattooing. The archaeological evidence is bound to be incomplete. Ideally, it might embrace the discovery, in wholly unequivocal contexts, of tattoo-instruments and pigments (as far as the writer knows, this has never happened); good dated artistic representations of tattooed faces and bodies; and preserved human bodies showing actual tattoo-markings. The last two forms of evidence *are* known, though not in Pictland, and will be discussed below.

The historical evidence is set out in some detail in Mrs. Chadwick's recent study,[3] and before her, by F. C. Diack,[4] whose views on the connection between tattooing and symbolism — carefully set out and undeservedly ignored by all subsequent students of the Picts — to some extent anticipate the present writer's conclusions. The earliest reference may well be from Tacitus, who described how the Caledonian host facing Agricola was made up, not only of the youth of the nation, but of many tried veterans who repaired to the army, *'clari bello et sua quisque decora gestantes...'*[5] Rhetorical as the entire passage describing the battle of Mons Graupius may be, the translation of *decora* in the sense of personal tattoo marks is by no means excluded. It is supported by the well-known statement of Herodian (*c.* A.D. 180–238), describing the Severan

---

[1] K. Birket-Smith, *in litt.* 25.3.1960 ('The designs are definitely not tribal marks ... There may be some very vague magical ideas connected with tattooing, but it is in the main only ornamental') and *cf.* S. I. Rudenko, 'Tatuerovka aziatskii eskimosov', *Sovetskaya Etnografia* I, where a number of these designs are shown.

[2] T. G. E. Powell, *The Celts* (1958), ch. II: *cf. AASIA*, 33, 56.

[3] Chadwick, 'The Name Pict', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, VIII (1955–58), 146. Her tentative conclusion, that it is not *Picti*, 'painted', has no connection with the symbolism (*ibid.* 173), and must be linked with *pictae, picatae,* pitch– or tar-daubed boats, is difficult to accept.

[4] *The Inscriptions of Pictland* (Aberdeen, Third Spalding Club, 1944) ed. W. Alexander and J. MacDonald, 24–28.

[5] *Agricola*, xxix: first pointed out by Diack, *op. cit.,* 27.

G

campaigns in the north of A.D. 208 and thus presumably the northern British. Commenting on the native predilection for nudity, and their use of iron for personal ornaments, he continues '. . . they tattoo their bodies with elaborate (or variegated) designs, and the figures of all sorts of animals. Thus they do not cover themselves, so as not to conceal the drawings on their bodies'.[1] Solinus, possibly writing in the same century, refers to the northern Britons '. . . on whose bodies, from their childhood upwards, various forms of living creatures are represented by means of cunningly wrought marks . . . '[2] and in the late 4th century, the poet Claudian, who mentions the *Picti* on a number of occasions, represents Britain as being clad in the skin of some Caledonian beast (a bear is perhaps meant), *ferro picta genas* ('her cheeks marked with iron')[3] and again describes how a victorious legion, whilst in furthest Britain, *truciferro . . . notatas perlegit exanimes Picto moriente figuras*[4] ('scanned, on the dying Pict, the now-lifeless designs marked out with savage iron'). Finally one should note the early 7th-century encyclopaedist, Isidore of Seville, who, dependent as he was on earlier writers,[5] and in this instance perhaps drawing as much ultimately on Pomponius Mela's remarks about the Agathyrsi (see below) as on any independent source, wrote that the name of the Picts '. . . is taken from the human body, on which a needle working with tiny punctures, together with the squeezed-out juice of a native herb, is wrought, so that each bears designs proper to him' (*ut has ad sui specimen cicatrices ferat*), 'and high birth (is shown) by the many punctures on the decorated limbs' (*pictis artubus maculosa nobilitas*).

These comments resemble in part a much earlier series of references from the Mediterranean world, stressing particularly the connection between tattooing and personal status that is perhaps implicit in Tacitus' remark and certainly in Isidore's, though the latter may itself derive from some source irrelevant to the British Isles. Herodotus, for instance, describes certain Thracians who extol idleness, war and plunder, and despise 'sedentary' agriculture — that is, a warrior-pastoralist element, somewhere in or about the Black Sea region — among whom 'tattooing marks noble birth, and the want of it low birth'.[6] In the subsequent century, Xenophon described how fat fair-skinned boys, sons of the richer classes, among the Mossynoeci, also on the Black Sea coast, were tattooed all over their fronts with certain designs.[7] Pliny the Elder, in the 1st century A.D.,[8] noted that the Dacians and Sarmatians *corpora sua inscribunt*: Tacitus, in his *Germania* (xliii), referred to the *tincta corpora* of the Harians or Arians, a warlike tribe somewhere in north central Europe: and Pomponius Mela attempted an explanation of this custom[9] among the Agathyrsi (a tribe earlier described by Herodotus as being like the Thracians

---

[1] Mrs. Chadwick (*op. cit.*,) seems to miss the force of ζώων παντοδαπῶν εἰκόσιν in her translation as '. . . with figures of all kinds'; the passage is Herodian, III, xiv, 7.

[2] Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 160.

[3] Claudian, poem on Stilicho's consulship, l. 247.

[4] *De Bello Gothico*, ll. 416–418.

[5] Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 153–4.

[6] *History*, v. 6; *cf.* here Cicero, *De Officiis*, II. vii. 25, '*Barbarus compunctus notis Thraciis . . .*'.

[7] *Anabasis*, v. 4.

[8] *Natural History*, xxii, 2.

[9] *De Situ Orbis*, II. 2.

and dwelling near the Scythians), who, he said 'paint their faces and limbs to a greater or lesser degree, according to how certain of them rank over the majority; the others all recognize these signs, which are executed so that they cannot be washed away'.[1]

The incidence of tattooing among these various peoples, the settled and semi-settled pastoralists of eastern Europe and what is now southern Russia, with whom the Greeks were in continuous contact through the Pontic colonies, cannot be divorced from the discovery of an actual tattooed cadaver — the better-preserved of two, found under frozen conditions in kurgans, or chambered burial-mounds in the Pazirik valley, in the Altai region of southern Siberia.[2] These rich burials, about the time of Herodotus and Xenophon, must be attributed to people who, if not strictly Scythian, shared the Scythian art style and much of the Scythian material culture, and the spread of tattooing between the Pontic Steppes and what is virtually Outer Mongolia may be shown by its later incidence among the Khirgiz[3] and in the Punjab.[4] The tattooed 'chieftain', as he appears to be, in kurgan no. 2, was decorated in his youth, as physical evidence showed, by means of needle puncture and probably with soot. The designs, copied and restored with great skill by N. M. Rudenko and V. M. Suntsevoi, include continuous animal ornament of Scythian type on both arms. On the right shin, special prominence was given to a large fish (*wels* or catfish?), and an equally prominent carnivore commences on the left breast, passes under the arm, and has its hindquarters on the left scapular region. Two partial vertical rows of tiny circles on the lumbar region form the only non-zoomorphic ornament. The woman buried with him — both bodies, though found decapitated and otherwise mutilated by early tomb-robbers, were preserved frozen — was not tattooed at all.

The transmission of the customs of body painting and tattooing to the British Isles would seem, in the light of the foregoing, to fall within the context of the transmission of the animal-style art discussed in *AASIA* — that is, to have entered Britain during the Early Iron Age, probably with the B (La Tène) group of cultural traits from the 3rd century B.C. onward. Under these circumstances, it is significant that depictions of human faces with tattooed cheeks and necks are found in early Gaulish coinage; it is not easy to date all the examples, but they fall generally within the later 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., and the various tribes to which the coins are attributed lie, with the exception of the Carnutes in eastern France (near the Jura) in a broad area from the Paris basin to Normandy and Brittany.[5] The existence of these portrayals of *tatouages* has long been known, though not described in any detail. The writer is most grateful to Mr. Derek Allen for confirming that, though some examples may simply be cases where known 'semi-religious' symbols have been added

[1] This possibly implies tattooing, though the actual phrase above is ' . . . *ora artusque pingunt*'.
[2] S. I. Rudenko, *Kultura naseleniya gornoga Altaya v skifskoe vremya* (Moscow-Leningrad 1953), chs. v (fig. 80) and ix: Dagny Carter, *The Symbol of the Beast* (New York 1957) ch. 7.
[3] Rudenko, *op. cit.*, 138–142 and refs.
[4] J. G. Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul* (Golden Bough, III) 30. For general survey, see Ebert, *Reallexikon*, XIII (Berlin 1929), 189–199 ('Tatowierung').
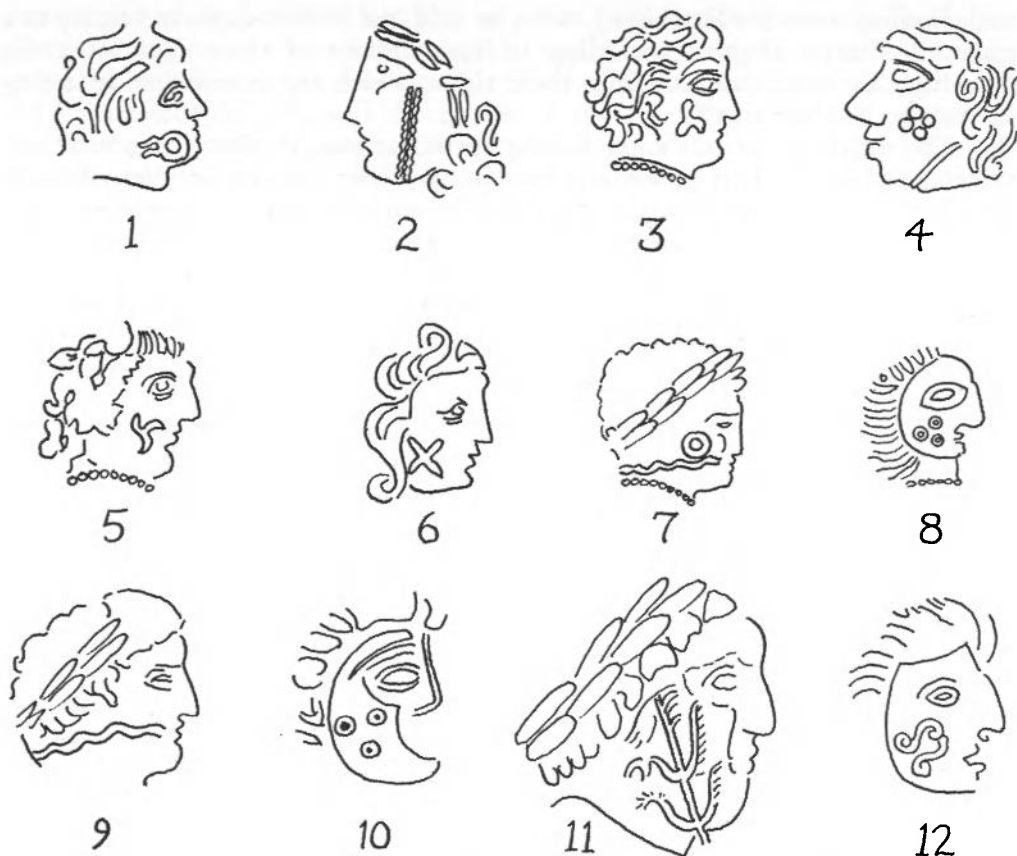[5] See Appendix II for details of Fig. 15.

Fig. 15. TATTOOED FACES FROM GAULISH COINAGE.   Not to scale.
(See Appendix II for sources)

in a blank space, collectively there are enough examples to leave little doubt that a cheek mark of some kind on a Celt was nothing very odd, at least in north-west Gaul.[1]

These marks are shown in Fig. 15. They call for little comment, since it can at once be seen that they fall generally into line with the geometric and other symbols employed on early British coinage, and with many of the actual Pictish symbols, notably the 'geometric' kind.   That facial, and probably corporeal, tattoo-designs of this nature were employed in southern Britain in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. — well before the period of any detailed descriptions of the British and their customs by Roman writers — is not only possible, but likely; and it may further be assumed that not dissimilar designs, perhaps including animal ornament as well, were executed on the cheeks and bodies of the British warriors sketchily described by Caesar.[2]

[1] In litt. 31.5.1960; there are apparently no certain instances in early British coinage.
[2] De Bello Gallico, v. xiv.

In summary, then, it can be supposed that at least the Celtic-speaking ruling classes in Pictish society maintained this Iron Age custom, and did so moreover in the form of tattooing themselves with bronze or iron needles. The designs were intentionally displayed on the face, or on the body so that they would be visible in battle, an event which many Celts long chose to approach in a state of ritual nudity.[1] These designs were based partly on insular animal art, partly on traditional or religious geometric figures, and partly on representations of the appropriate material of warfare and craft skills (this last category seems likely to represent a purely Pictish addition). Their selection and employment on a person, on his clothing and accoutrements, or on his possessions, would be governed by his position in a stratified Celtic tribal society and his affiliation in whatever system the Animal symbols may represent. When, in the late 5th or the 6th century A.D., pictographic stone memorials were introduced into Pictland, the tattoo designs, now stylized and sanctified by centuries of public use and display, were taken over into the new medium, and used to convey much the same kind of information. Pictish symbols are, in short, the tattoo designs of the *Picti*, no doubt slightly modified by time[2] and subject to internal enrichment according to the changing tastes of local art-styles. This hypothesis, and this only, explains at once the stylization, the wide public currency, and the necessary simplicity, of the symbols; the existence of the alternating 'Live-Dead' forms, the 'Live' versions being the original tattoo-designs; the discovery of the symbols in *art mobilier* and cave art, where originally they must have had possessive or locative meaning; the archaism of the Animal designs, discussed in *AASIA*; and the otherwise wholly perplexing feature that the Object symbols identifiable as 'pictures of real things' relate, not to the material culture of the historical *Picti*, but to the equipage of their Caledonian forbears in the Scottish Iron Age.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[1] *Cf.* Powell, *op. cit.*, 108.
[2] Some Class I symbols were abandoned in *ECMS* Class II, perhaps as irrelevant in a changing society.

Limitations of space unfortunately precluded an intended survey of previous work and writings on the interpretation of the Pictish symbols. Whilst obliged to diverge profoundly from views advanced by recent scholars (Mrs. Curle, Mr. Stevenson and Mrs. Henderson), the writer is conscious of having merely extended an alternative line of thought initiated by that great antiquary, Joseph Anderson, and to some extent taken up by the late Sir Alfred Clapham and the late F. C. Diack. His debt to these last three will be apparent to anyone familiar with their work: Diack, in particular, had arrived at very similar conclusions concerning the symbols themselves and was only prevented from advancing interpretations by an unfamiliarity with the archaeological background.

APPENDIX I

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS, *ECMS* CLASS I AND CAVE-ART

A list of corrections and additions to *ECMS* appeared in Henderson (1958), 57–60. The following further corrections and additions should now be noted, to be read in conjunction with that list.

ABERDEENSHIRE

East Balhaggardy: This should read: 'Circular Disc', and traces of another, indecipherable, symbol.

Newton of Lewesk: 'Circular Disc and Rectangle' over 'Double Crescent'. The 'rectangle and rod' are almost certainly much later additions, when the stone was inverted.

BANFFSHIRE

Mortlach: 'Elephant' over Symbol no. 31 (= 'Dragonesque brooch'?).

INVERNESS-SHIRE

Dunvegan: 'Crescent and V-Rod' over 'Circular Disc': *PSAS*, xcii (1958–59), 41.

Invereen: The circle crossed by a perpendicular line is not a symbol and may be a later addition.

SUTHERLAND

Langdale (additional): fragment with part of 'Arch' symbol, *PSAS*, xl (1905–6), 128.

ROSS

Gairloch: the bird over the fish is almost certainly a Goose, not an Eagle.

CAITHNESS

Sandside (additional): dubious, but possibly 'Circular Disc and Rectangle' over 'Circular Disc'. R.C.A.M. Inventory, *Caithness*, no. 406, 109 and pl. xxxvi.

Latheron (additional): Crescent and V-Rod. *PSAS*, xcii (1958–9), 40, pl. v. 3.

ORKNEY

Ockstrow Broch (additional): alleged instance of Eagle, R.C.A.M. Inventory, *Orkney and Shetland*, no.11, p.11.

ANGUS

Aberlemno (additional): 'Arch' over 'Elephant'. *Discovery and Excavation (Scotland)* (1962), 1.

PERTHSHIRE

Peterhead Farm: 'Goose' over 'Rectangle', not 'mirror-case'.

Inchyra (additional): Three statements — on one face (i) 'Double Disc' over 'Fish'; (ii) 'Sword' (symbol no.17) ? over 'Mirror and Comb': on the other (iii) 'Fish' over 'Snake'. *PSAS*, xcii (1958–9), 33, illus.

Fairygreen Collace (additional): 'Broken Sword' (no.17) over 'Elephant' over 'Mirror and Comb'. *Discovery and Excavation (Scotland)* (1962), 36.

FIFE

> *East Cave, Caiplie* (additional): Rock-cut symbols, 'Arch', and 'Z-Rod' (with destroyed Double Disc?). *PSAS*, xciv (1960–1), 324.

ARGYLL

> *Dunadd* (additional): Rock-cut 'Boar'; *PSAS*, lxiv (1929–30), 112, fig. 1.

ROXBURGH

> *Borthwick* (additional): 'Fish' on upright pillar. R.C.A.M. Inventory, *Roxburgh* no. 855 and fig. 496: *PSAS*, lxxxiv (1949–50), 206, pl. xxiv.

APPENDIX II
SOURCE OF SOME ILLUSTRATIONS, AND SOME
TENTATIVE 'TRANSLATIONS'

Fig. 9

A	1	*Lengyel* (see Fig.15, below), pl. III, no.11.
A	2	Mack, *Coinage of Ancient Britain*, no. 401 obv.
A	3	*ECMS*, 163: Bourtie, Abdn., symbol no. 39.
A	4	*ECMS*, 102: Drumbuie, Inv., symbol no. 38.
A	5	*ECMS*, 24: Keiss, Caithness, symbol no. 26 (??).
A	6	*ECMS*, 158: Inveravon, Banff, symbol no. 38.
A	7	*Cf.* Fig. 3, no. 4, steatite disc.
B	8	*Cf.* p. 61, *n.* 1 above: Lombrera stele.
B	9	Sheet bronze boss, Aylesford bucket: Fox, *Pattern and Purpose*, pl. 33a, Leeds, *Celtic Art*, fig. 16.
B	10	Birsay, symbol no. 38 (reconstructed): *Cruden* (1957), pl. 7.
B	11	Bronze boss, Ixworth: Fox, *op. cit.*, fig. 83, 60.
B	12	Rayne, Abdn., symbol no. 38: *PSAS*, l, 283 and fig. 4.
B	13	*ECMS*, 31a: Class I/II, Ulbster, Caithness, symbol no. 39.
B	14	Lindqvist, *Gotlands Bildsteine*, detail from fig. xxx.
C	15	Mack, *op. cit.* A 2 above, no.164 obv. (coin of *Tasciovanus*).
C	16	*ECMS*, 157: Arndilly, Banff, symbol no. 38.
C	17	Advie, Banff, symbol no. 38: *PSAS*, xl, 346.
C	18	Detail from Agassac stele, *cf.* p. 61, *n.* 2 above.
C	19	Centre of Barros stele, p. 61., *n.* 1.
C	20	Lombrera stele: p. 61., *n.* 1, and *cf.* fig. 3, nos. 1 and 7, for zig-zag and snake borders to discs.
C	21	Zurita stele, 'reverse': p. 61, *n.* 1.

Fig. 13

> Tentative 'translations', based on foregoing text:

174	'To a *regulus* of the "Elephant" group, by a woman'
201	'To a noble of the Goose group, by a woman'
36	'To a *regulus* of noble ('Arch') status, by a woman'
178	'To a king who was also a chief *magus*, by a woman'
42	'To a *regulus*, by his wife (?)'
134	'To a freeman of the S-Dragon group, by his wife' (*cf. AASIA*, fig.13, no.15)
37	'To a war-leader, by his wife'
132	'To a *regulus*, of noble ('Circular Disc' as wheel) status', the right-hand *regulus* symbol being a discarded attempt (?)
508	'To a dead king of the S-Dragon group, by his personal champion'

Fig. 14

   39   'To a personal champion of the Fish group, by his wife'
  299   'To a (dead = Broken Sword, symbol no.17) craftsman of noble (= *regulus*) status (?)'
   A   'To a *regulus* of the "Elephant" group, by his wife'
  159   'To a *regulus* who was also a magus (= Cauldron) by his wife'
  179   'To a *regulus* of noble (no. 38) status, who later became both king and chief *magus*'(?)

Fig. 15

AG   *L'Art Gaulois ou les Gaulois d'apres leurs medailles*, 2 pts., Paris, 1868–74.
Lengyel   L. Lengyel, *L'Art Gaulois dans les Medailles*: Corvina, Montrouge-Seine, 1954.
Moreau   J. Moreau, *Die Welt der Kelten*, Stuttgart, 1958.
Varagnac A. Varagnac, *L'Art Gaulois*, Zodiaque series, 1956.

   1   *Moreau*, pl. 90, no. 5: *Lengyel*, pl. V, no. 42 (Sequani).
   2   *AG* pt. 2, no.12: *Lengyel* pl. XXVII, no. 276 (Aulerci Eburovici).
   3   *AG* pt. 2, no. 26 (uncertain).
   4   *Lengyel*, pl. XII, no. 127 (Carnutes).
   5   *AG* pt. 2, no. 27 (uncertain).
   6   *AG* pt. 2, no. 79, cf. *Varagnac* pl. IX, no.4 (Parisii) and *AG* pt.1, 71, 1 and 2 (Parisii, Carnutes).
   7   *Lengyel*, pl. XVIII, no. 205: *AG* pt. 2, 143 (Armorican).
   8   *Lengyel*, pl. XIV, no. 173 (Baiocasses): cf. *Varagnac*, pl. X, no. 25 (Abrincuati) no.10 below.
   9   *AG* pt. 2, no.145.
  10   *Lengyel*, pl. XIV, no.170 (Baiocasses).
  11   *AG* pt. 1, pl. 96, no. 3 (Armorican): *cf.* 'streamers' on Z-Rod symbol, no.15.
  12   *AG* pt. 1, pl. 41, no. 2 (*cf.* 'opposed S-Dragons', *AASIA*, fig.13 *passim*).

See also (not shown here): *Lengyel* V. 41 (Unelli — doubtful instance), V. 43 (Ambiani), and XXVII. 277 (Aulerci Eburovici): contrast XVII. 192 (Redones), not a tattoo but a contre-marque. *Varagnac* IV. 25 (here, no.1: '. . . une lyre', but *cf.* symbol no. 38): also De La Tour, *Atlas des Monnaies Gauloises* nos. 7016, 7017, 7019, 7020, J.6, J.12–15, 4439 (I owe these references to the kindness of Mr. Derek Allen), and see also E. W. B. Nicholson, *Keltic Researches*, etc. (1904), 150–151, for an earlier discussion of this topic.

APPENDIX III

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

AASIA   Charles Thomas, 'Animal Art in the Scottish Iron Age', *Arch. J.* cxviii (1961, published 1963), 14–64.
B.B.C.S.   *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* (Cardiff).
C.I.L.   *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, vii.
E.S.A.   *Europa Septentrionalis Antiqua*.
IPEK   *Jahrbuch für Prähistorische und Ethnographische Kunst* (Berlin).
ECMS   J. Anderson and J. R. Allen, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, in 3 parts: Edinburgh, for the Soc. of Ant. of Scotland, 1903.
NME   National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh.
PPS   *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* (Cambridge).
PPSEA   *Proc. of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia*.
PRIA   *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin).
PSAS   *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (Edinburgh).

T.D.G.N.H.A.S. *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* (Dumfries).

W.A.M. *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* (Devizes).

Anderson (1881) J. Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, Second Series (Edinburgh 1881).

Bede, *H.E.* Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* ed. Plummer (*Baedae Opera Historica*, Oxford 1896).

Cruden (1957) S. E. Cruden, *The Early Christian and Pictish Monuments of Scotland* (H.M.S.O., 1957).

Manuel J. Dechelette, *Manuel d'archeologie . . . IV, second age du fer ou époque de La Tène* (Paris 1927).

Diack (1944) F. C. Diack, *The Inscriptions of Pictland* (Aberdeen 1944).

Henderson (1958) I. Henderson, 'The Origin Centre of the Pictish Symbol Stones', *PSAS*, XCI (1957-58), 44-50.

Jarlshof J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (H.M.S.O., 1956).

Macalister (1940) R. A. S. Macalister, 'The Inscriptions and Languages of the Picts', *Feil-Sgribhinn Eoin mhic Neill* (Dublin 1940), 184-226.

Problem F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (Edinburgh 1955).

Skene, *P. & S.* W. F. Skene (ed.), *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots* (Edinburgh 1867).

Stevenson (1959) 'The Inchyra Stone, etc.', *PSAS*, XCII (1959, published 1961), 33-35.

Stuart (1856-67) J. Stuart, *The Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, I (Aberdeen 1856), II (Edinburgh 1867).