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instead of the usual \( \frac{1}{2} \) is found in three (as far as I know) late medieval inscriptions though two of those also use the normal form of the rune. This must probably be due to influence from Latin script, the majuscule K occasionally being used as an allograph by some literate persons. The three signs could alternatively be read as Latin characters but this seems a less convincing hypothesis as there must be a connection with the signs in the upper row.

These are code runes of a cryptographic system based on the Viking-Age \textit{fubark}, which consisted of sixteen runes divided into three groups (O.N. \textit{ettir}): \textit{fubark hnis\ ts} (sometimes \textit{tbn}y) under influence from the order \textit{lm} in the Latin alphabet. Several different methods were used for such coding. The code runes of the present inscription are so-called twig runes: on one side of a vertical stem are between one and three side strokes, or twigs, which give the number of the \textit{ett}; on the opposite side the twigs give the number of the rune within the \textit{ett}. As the third rune in the present inscription has four twigs on the right side it is certain that this side gives the rune number and the left side gives the number of the \textit{ett}. But often the order of the \textit{ettir} is reversed: the third group is reckoned as the first and the first as the third. Thus the coded runes here may be read either 2/3 1/2 2/4 \textit{iua} or 2/3 3/2 2/4 \textit{iba}. Further the runes are sometimes to be read from right to left (see Brodgar I below).

Twig runes, as well as other systems of code runes, are sometimes used in conjunction with ordinary runes. Examples are found in some Norwegian inscriptions: N360 Borgund XIII in Sogn and N443 Rodven I in Romsdal.\(^1\) In Orkney the well-known metric inscription from Maes Howe, No. XVIII, starts with the words ‘\textit{pisar runar}’ (‘these runes’), in twig runes, while the rest of the text is carved in ordinary runes. Twig runes are found elsewhere in Orkney; of particular interest are those on three of the standing stones in the Ring of Brodgar. Two of the stones bear a single twig rune but the other, Brodgar I, has five runes of which four are twig runes. A reading from right to left gives the sequence \textit{niorn}, which has not been convincingly interpreted. Olsen suggested that an extra twig had been added by mistake to the first rune and that accordingly it might be read \textit{b}.\(^2\) The inscription would then give the personal name \textit{Bjorn}, not unexpected on a monolith. Strid mentions, in connection with the Brodgar inscription, a goddess \textit{Njorn} or \textit{Njoran} who is met with in old poetry.\(^3\) An interpretation on this basis seems very unlikely.

The inscription on the stone found at Skara Brae is an interesting addition to the short inscriptions with twig runes from Orkney mentioned above. No interpretation is suggested for the two groups if they are separate from one another. If, however, they can be regarded as forming one sequence they may be read consecutively \textit{iuarp} (or \textit{iuark}) and this may give a basis, though very vague, for a suggestion. As mentioned above, ordinary and coded runes are found intermingled within words and sentences. The inscription may contain the common name \textit{Ivarr} followed by two unintelligible runes which are shortening of one or two words. It must be stressed, however, that this hypothesis is put forward only for lack of a better one.

P. J. ASHMORE and I. S. JOHNSEN

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AN 11TH-CENTURY BONE TABULA SET FROM GLOUCESTER (Fig. 6; Pls. xiv and xv)

Excavations by Western Archaeological Trust\(^1\) under the direction of Ian J. Stewart and on behalf of the Gloucester City Museum Excavation Unit have recently been conducted on
the site of the early Norman castle in Commercial Road, Gloucester (at the SW. corner of the Roman Colonia). They have produced a unique find of Romanesque art.

At the bottom of a late 11th-century pit, 150 pieces of elaborately carved bone were found. The pit was dug into the latest surviving Roman levels (colonial rampart dumps?). The pit was sealed by a layer of soil and rubble containing 13th-century pottery. The fill of the pit consisted of soil rich in charcoal, bone and pottery, alternating with lenses of clay. This represents successive dumps of domestic refuse, each apparently sealed for reasons of hygiene. There is no reason to suppose the pit was open for a long period. The unworked bone included ox, sheep, pig, deer, bird, cat, frog, mouse, and rat.

Pottery from the pit was mainly from limestone-tempered cooking vessels dating from the late 11th century, although the general class extends into the 12th. One residual fragment of shell-tempered ware was recovered. As no early 12th-century forms were present the pit is assumed to be of the late 11th century. Other finds from the pit include an iron wall-hook and a copper-alloy spiral-twist finger-ring.

The worked bone, as will be shown, represents a nearly complete board and the full set (30) of playing pieces for the game of tabula, an early form of backgammon. The playing pieces (counters or tablemen) were scattered across the western half of the pit, although several had been displaced upward by the activities of burrowing animals at a later date.

Tabula was a game of mixed luck and skill in which each of two players sought to bear off his fifteen men first, at the same time blocking the moves of his opponent. The essential plan of a tabula board was similar to that for backgammon: 24 ‘points’ in four groups of six, on which the tablemen rested as they were moved around the board, according to the scores of three dice.

No dice were found; this may reflect the value of the dice for other games. The fragmented nature of several of the worked bone plates/panels (and as only one portion of the board survived with those plates apparently in their original relationships) leads to the belief that the board had been smashed before deposition.

The conditions of the pit made the bone damp although not waterlogged. It has however made detailed study impossible until conservation can be undertaken; most of the pieces have not (at the time of writing) been cleaned, and handling has perforce been kept to a minimum. Nonetheless, it is nonetheless possible to make several general comments about the board and its decoration.

On a modern backgammon board the points are of alternate contrasting colours. On the Gloucester board there is no evidence yet for colouration; however, the points divide into two groups of twelve, differentiated by their decoration. The (apparently) complete portion of board (Pl. XIV) indicates that the two patterns alternated.

The points are five-sided, with a shape reminiscent of an obelisk. This is perhaps evidence for the Gloucester points being an intermediate design between the rectangles of the earlier Roman versions, and the triangles used on boards from at least the 13th century onwards.

One group of points bears inscribed ornament based on the ring-and-dot motif: a central chain of interlinked motifs with double rings within a border of smaller single rings (Pl. XV, c). The remaining points have a similarly defined border containing simple dots, with a central panel of three-strand interlace terminating in snakes’ heads (Pl. XV, f).

Separating the points around the board were spacers consisting of pairs of quadrilateral plates: one long and tapered and the other a truncated triangle. At each end of a group of six points the infill was half-width as if a complete spacer pair had been split lengthways. The edges abutting the points and the centre of the board have a border of diagonal strokes imitating fringing. The evidence for this arrangement is seen in the top right of Pl. XIV where a point and its neighbouring infill are clearly visible. It is to be noted that in the ‘intact’ portion of the board none of the spacers was found, suggesting that they were missing at the time of loss.

Running longitudinally down the centre of the board was a zone of rectangular plates butted side to side and flanked by rows of bone strips. At present it appears that the entire central block was covered with knotwork of interlaced snakes. The border is of long bone
Preliminary impression of the Gloucester Tabula board. Drawing by Jackie Knapp from photographs to show the suggested lay-out of one quadrant.
strips with repetitive foliage decoration, picked out by random hatching, within borders of pecked dots. A thin beading along the edge of one of the end spacers suggests that there may have been raised edges to the playing surface to prevent the tablemen from slipping off. The beading is decorated with small ring-and-dot ornament.

A number of plates which do not appear to fit in with the main series may not be from the board, but may indicate a container for the tablemen. A small copper-alloy ring found in the midst of the worked bone is perhaps part of the fastening for such a container.

Several strips, bearing three-strand strapwork, may represent a central bar dividing the two halves of the board as in a modern backgammon board. There seems to be no reason for thinking that the Gloucester *Tabula* board was hinged. Ironwork was generally preserved, albeit in a poor condition, and there was nothing found that might have been a hinge. Evidence for the construction of the board may be obtained ultimately from the corrosion products of the many iron pins by which the bone plates had been attached to a wooden base. In addition some of the wood survived attached to the pins, and should therefore provide the lie of the grain. A ply-construction is possible, to prevent distortion and warping.

The whole gives an impression of having been a visually impressive board some 450 mm wide by perhaps 600 mm in length. The work is that of an artisan rather than an artist; competent but rather crude.

The 30 tablemen average 44.5 mm in diameter and 7.5 mm in thickness. They are made of bone-like material, some bearing sutures, which is thought to have come from a bovine or ungulate origin. All are wider on the upper surfaces than the lower.

A lathe appears to have been used in the process of manufacture, perhaps for finishing the edges of the discs and outlining the decorative zones on the surface. A distinctive feature of 26 of the tablemen is a centrally placed dimple which seems to be too large for a simple compass mark. No trace of the chuck mark on the underside has yet been noticed, so simple compass-drawn outlines and hand-finishing may have been used. In most cases the central dimples are unnecessary to the main motifs and indeed are often misleading.

The main decorative motifs are carved using the depth of the bone, within a circular border which gives the impression of a round window-frame. The borders carry a band of chevron decoration; most often (where visible) it is fully carved although varying in compression, but on at least three the form is reduced to two lines of triangular nicks. The border is undercut as in the St Martin’s series, and the scenes themselves are also often undercut completely or in part, although where there are holes through the bottom of the piece this appears to be damage rather than design.

The problem of differentiating between players’ pieces has not yet been solved. In a modern backgammon set the counters are contrastingly coloured, usually in black or red and white. Some counters exhibit staining which is perhaps not attributable to conditions in the pit. Purpurin from the madder root was a commonly used red dye for early boardgames, and is a possibility.

A full description of the men is inappropriate here, but a brief examination of four will give some idea of the significance of the find. A more detailed study will follow after full research.

Tableman I, *Samson and the lion* (Pl. xv, a)

A man stands astride a quadruped, apparently pulling open its jaws; both are in profile to the left. While the condition is only fair, the motif is recognizable. Three candidates are possible for the man: Samson, David, and Hercules; the beast must be intended as a lion. All three heroes are represented in medieval art struggling with lions as good triumphing over evil.

Hercules is identified on one of the St Martin’s tablemen tearing open the jaws of the Nemean Lion, but he is usually shown strangling it, or even wrestling with it. The St Martin’s Nemean Lion represents Leo, and there may be a connection here, particularly in view of the astrological significance of the centaur piece (below).
The attribution to David is unlikely, although a number of images survive in which David is seen rescuing a lamb from the mouth of a lion, by prising open the lion’s jaws. The lamb is, however, usually clearly visible, although on a Norwegian weather vane of the second half of the 11th century a similar struggle to that seen on the Gloucester tableman is shown with no discernible lamb but is interpreted as David and the lion.

Samson is the preferred hero for the Gloucester counter. He is usually seen prising open the lion’s jaws, often while straddling the creature. A particularly close parallel for the Gloucester figures is to be seen in an inhabited scroll (copper gilt) on the Shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne Cathedral. Although executed perhaps a century later than the Gloucester Tabula set the Shrine incorporates several scenes reminiscent of ones found on the tablemen, including a centaur.

b. Tableman S, Centaur with bow (Pl. xv, b)
One of the most striking designs because of its strong simple lines is the figure of a centaur with bow, usually identifiable as Sagittarius. It is one of the better preserved pieces, although the background is broken through, presumably because this is one of the thinnest at only seven millimetres.

Parallels for this subject in Romanesque art are plentiful. A similar treatment is seen on an ivory tableman in the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Cologne (no. B235), ascribed by Mann to an origin in Northern Swabia or Franconia.

The font of the Church of St Peter in Hook Norton, Oxon, bears an image of striking similarity in some details. Indeed, other decorative elements from the Hook Norton font are to be found on the board itself; ring-and-dot motifs are on the lowest border of the font while a foliate scroll similar to that described above forms the upper border. The centaur on the font is identified by an inscription as Sagittarius. The Hook Norton Sagittarius has a rudimentary face similar to the Gloucester tableman’s, although it bears prominent eyes and has short hair. The bow and arrow are treated identically to those on the tableman, but on the font are being fired over the centaur’s back. Zarnecki has ascribed a date of 1100–1150 to the Hook Norton font, and although this is later than the presumed date of the Gloucester Tabula set it is undoubtedly in the same artistic tradition.

Two centaurs firing bows over their backs are represented on a carved ivory box in the Victoria and Albert Museum (208–1974). They bear the same large clumsy hands and have a similar treatment of the hair to that on the Gloucester man, although the ivory is generally better sculpted. A date of c. 1130 is suggested for this piece.

c. Tableman ET: Hooded Archer (Pl. xv, c)
A figure faces left and looses an arrow from a short bow. He is wearing a hooded garment with a line of dots (?) stitching) around the edge, and breeches with vertical stripes alternating with rows of dots. The form of the nose and head-dress is reminiscent of a spangenhelm.

The bowman occurs often in art from the 8th century onwards. The most likely candidate (if one is assumed) for this archer is Ishmael.

d. Tableman Z: Seated Harpist (Pl. xv, d)
A man is shown seated facing left on a stool with two visible legs. The man’s legs are crossed, left over right, and the base of the harp rests on the shin of his left leg. Again he is wearing a hooded jacket.

The image is normally attributed in its many occurrences to David, famed for his harp-playing and from the 11th century onwards depicted as harpist in the Beatus initials of the Psalms, occasionally accompanied by other musicians. In at least one painting, from the crypt of Tavant, France, he is depicted resting the harp on his crossed knee.

The above is an indication of the many questions which the Gloucester Tabula Set has already caused to be asked. Doubtless in the future much work will be undertaken in attempts to place this find in its correct position within the tradition of Romanesque Art.
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1 Funding was provided by the Manpower Services Commission. The site was made available by the Midlands Electricity Board.


4 Ibid.

5 The lifting of the remains was undertaken by Miss Gill Juleff, D.O.E. Conservator for the South-West, who is based at Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. Miss Juleff is currently working on the conservation of the pieces. The authors wish to thank her and her colleagues in the D.O.E. Ancient Monuments Laboratory and Bristol Museums, and the South-West Area Museums Council, for their rapid response and assistance.

6 Bell, op. cit. in note 3, 91, shows a 13th-century German manuscript illumination depicting a tables board and pieces. The points are uniformly coloured, while the tablmen are black and white.


8 Judge, 14-6.

9 Mann, op. cit. in note 7, 165, no. 2, fig. 7a.


11 Ibid., 48, pl. 60, fig. 133; 64, pl. 145, fig. 323; 76, pl. 196, figs. 450, 452.

12 Ibid., 55, pl. 93, fig. 216.

13 Ibid., 48, pl. 60, fig. 134; 82, pl. 218, fig. 513; 83, pls. 236-37, figs. 554, 556.

14 Ibid., 82-83, pl. 222, fig. 525.

15 Ibid., 82-83, pl. 222, figs. 522-26.


18 M. H. Longhurst, *English Ivories* (London, 1926), 31, no. xxxii; H. Swarzenski, op. cit. in note 10,60, pl. 121, fig. 277.


20 C. M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066-1190* (London, 1975), 16, and ill. 11; Swarzenski, op. cit. in note 10, pl. 126, fig. 288.


A 15TH-CENTURY CORN-DRYING KILN FROM COLFRYN, LLANSANTFFRAID DEUDDWR, POWYS (Fig. 7; Pl. xvi)

The medieval corn-drying kiln described in this note was discovered in 1982 during the excavation of the Iron Age and Romano-British hill-slope enclosure at Collfryn, Llansantffraid Deudwr, in northern Powys (SJ 222173).¹

It was orientated N.-S. (with the stokehole towards the N.), and was sited on the line of the innermost defences of the earlier enclosure (see Fig. 7 and Pl. xvi). The stokehole was constructed in the hollow left by the partially infilled inner ditch (3829),² and although none of the inner bank had survived, the drying chamber had probably been set into the remnant of the earlier bank.

The structure remained essentially intact at the end of the excavations and was reburied.

Description

The stone-built oven and flue was about 4.5 m long, up to 2.3 m wide, and survived to a maximum height of 0.6 m. It was set into a construction pit up to 0.4 m wide dug into the