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Editorial

EMILY LYLE

In this issue, we follow the pattern set earlier in the *Cosmos* series. Volumes 1 to 10 were indexed at the end of Volume 11 and similarly Volumes 11-20 are indexed here at the end of Volume 21.

This issue (which is going to press in January 2008) also contains papers deriving from the conference on “Symbols on Stones and Stones as Symbols” which was held in Edinburgh on 15-16 June 2006. This was an extremely varied and wide-ranging conference, but one focus was the sculptures of Scotland, and it was possible (thanks to the warm hospitality of Isabel Morrison) to give our two participants from abroad, Catharina Raudvere from the University of Copenhagen and Sandis Laime from the University of Latvia, a tour of Pictish stones in Angus on the day following the conference.

The conference clearly acted as a considerable stimulus. After it, Kate Anderson took a completely fresh tack in her study of the Pictish stones and developed a statistical approach to the images she was interested in. Katherine Campbell re-visited Melrose to examine the other stones that carried images of musicians besides the gargoyle that first attracted her attention, and added further comment on them. Marnie Boyd, who performed on the concert harp at the conference reception as well as presenting a paper, went on to explore more deeply the whole topic of the development of the triangular frame-harp in which the evidence from the Pictish stones plays such an important role.

Gardner Molloy, a sculptor who gave a presentation on “Life and Death in an East Lothian Graveyard”, was much struck by the contribution of one of the discussants following the harp talk who quoted the remark that Scotland after the death of Columba was “like a harp without a tuning key” and has since used these words in a representation of “The Scribe”, and has allowed a photograph of this work-in-progress to be included here (see Figure 1; and further at www.gardnermolloy.co.uk).
Additional material from this conference with a broad cosmological scope will be included in the next issue.

Figure 1
The Hog-Bagpiper Gargoyle at Melrose Abbey

KATHERINE CAMPBELL

One of the most interesting stone carvings at Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders is that of the hog-bagpiper gargoyle. The audio presentation which one can listen to whilst walking round the site draws attention to it, and causes the visitor to look high up to the intersection of the wall and the roof where it is situated (Figs 1 and 2) on the south side of the Abbey.¹ It describes the pig, to the right of a statue of the Virgin Mary, as one of the most renowned gargoyles in Scotland, and alludes to the dragons and other depictions found elsewhere at Melrose. No further information is given on the hog-bagpiper during the tour, although tourists can buy a postcard of it in the gift-shop as they leave: the hog has aesthetic appeal as well as curiosity value.

The surprising survival of a statue of Mary (which would have been a prime target for the iconoclasts after the Reformation) has been accounted for by the superstitious awe generated by an incident in the seventeenth century:

Milne relates a tradition, how, when the person employed to destroy the statues in 1649 struck at this one [of the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus] his first blow knocked off the head of the infant, which, in its fall, struck his arm and permanently disabled him, so that neither he nor any one else cared to recommence the work of destruction. [Note.] This “miracle” is said to have been talked of at Rome, with the additional marvel that the man – known as “Stumpy Thomson” – was dragged ignominiously to his grave at a horse’s heels. This last circumstance is so far true that, the individual in question having died during a severe snowstorm, his coffin was dragged to the churchyard on a horse sledge. (Groome 1882-5: 5.26; cf. Milne 1743: 18).
The destruction of images in Scotland is mentioned by Siller and Meyler in their survey of representations of pigs in medieval Britain and, after commenting on the lack in Scotland of the choir-stalls found in England, they note with pleasure the survival of “one astonishingly well-preserved pig bagpiper in the form of a gargoyle” at Melrose (1961: 25). The pipes played by the Melrose hog include a bag which provides the reservoir of air that enables the pipes to sound continuously; in this respect they differ from the triple-pipes portrayed in earlier stone carvings in Scotland – on the Pictish stones at Lethendy and Ardchattan and on St Martin’s Cross on Iona (Cheape 1999: 25; Boyd 2007). The first two of these are illustrated in Sanger and Kinnaird (1992: 17, 21), who point out that all the crosses also show a harp being played along with pipes. Goodacre (2002) provides some context on the Melrose instrument, noting:
“The pipes depicted are similar to many pictures of pipes seen throughout England and Europe during this period and feature a conical chanter with a single drone. Pipes such as these are still played in Northern Spain and other regions of Europe.” A conical chanter is used on the modern-day Highland pipes, producing a shrill and nasal sound (Cannon 2002: 3) with the ability to carry over a distance. It is worth remarking that the instrument played by the hog is not the bellows-blown pipes which are found at a later date in Lowland Scotland and which have recently seen a revival (Stewart 2005).

The gargoyle probably belongs to the period of the rebuilding of Melrose Abbey after its destruction in 1385 by the army of Richard II of England (Cheape 1999: 42; Fawcett and Oram 2004: 43). The pig bagpiper is not unique to Scotland: surviving examples of the genre are listed by Scott (1967: 287-8), and are largely to be found in the North of England. Pigs were depicted playing a variety of instruments, as the book The Symbolic Pig by Sillar and Meyler (1961) illustrates, but the authors note that pigs were most frequently represented playing the bagpipe, and that normally a sow rather than a boar is shown (1961: 25).

Various explanations have been offered for what the depiction of the pig playing the bagpipes represents. John Graham Dalyell (1849: 66) asks: “Has this uncouth object originated from the sportive fancy of the artist? Does it disguise any mystical or allegorical allusion?” Animal bladders were traditionally used as pipe bags, so there is a direct relationship between the instrument and animals (including the pig) the sense of which is realised in the Scots proverb, “There’s baith meat and music here’, quo’ the dog when he ate the piper’s bag.” This same relationship is found in terms of the cat playing the fiddle – a common motif in medieval England (Jones 2002: 156) – since the strings of the instrument were sometimes made from cat gut. Green (2000: 57) notes that the bagpipe “possessed traditional associations with gluttony, animal lust, and the male genitals”, and Scott writes: “the piping sound was considered unpleasant in the Middle Ages, and medieval iconography took a direct means of communicating its distaste: it represented the ugly-sounding pipes in the arms of an ugly-sounding animal” (Scott, 1967: 289). Remnant notes that, in the medieval period, “minstrels often dressed up as
angels, animals, grotesques and even devils, and as such they gave pleasure to their audiences and inspiration to pictorial artists and sculptors” (Remnant 2001: 773), and so we can see that the boundary between animal and human was crossed both by humans representing themselves as animals and by visual representations of animals engaged in making music on instruments just like people. A recent discussion of medieval illustrations of pigs playing musical instruments is included in Jones (2002: 157-9).

THE REPRESENTATIONS OBTAINED AND PUBLISHED BY DALYELL

Sir John Graham Dalyell (1775-1851) was a prolific writer, whose publications include *Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (1834), and it is obvious from his *Rare and Remarkable Animals of Scotland* (1847) containing 109 plates that he appreciated the value of illustration. Material among his unpublished papers in Edinburgh University Library shows him taking a great deal of care about accuracy in the depictions of musicians intended for his *Musical Memoirs of Scotland* (1849).²

For Melrose, Dalyell was able to draw on the work of two artists, A. McAulay and J. Bower. He was concerned to find out which illustrations most closely resembled the artefacts at the Abbey, and it is evident that a local man was asked to make comparisons between the drawings of the two illustrators, since a paper with the words “Comparison of Mr Macaulay’s and Mr Bower’s drawings” containing “answers” written by a Mr Watson, Melrose, is extant. Mr Watson compared the illustrations in the four following instances,³ and found that Mr McAulay’s illustrations were truer to the objects they were aiming to portray.

*The Bagpipe Player:* “Mr McAulay’s is the more correct of the two. Mr Bower having attempted to restore the figure instead of giving it its present mutilated state, moreover, his wants the breadth of shoulder; and the position of the right arm (the light shining through) in Mr McAulay’s, is a more faithful representation of the stone figure.”
**Organ Player:** “The face in each of the drawings is longer than in the original. The instrument in Mr McAulay’s has exactly the position as that in the stone figure, the top of the instrument being on a level with the lower part of the ear. The right hand corresponds exactly with the original. The lower part of the figure is mutilated.”

**Fiddler:** “The face in Mr Bowers drawing approaches nearer to the original *in form*, the rest of the figure as represented by Mr McAulay with the mutilated violin and bow, being the more correct, I could see only two strings to the instrument.”

**Guitar:** “In this figure, the Player looks a little to the right (of himself) as in Mr McAulay’s, not to the left as in Mr Bowers. The number of strings on the instrument, as far as I could determine, was four.”

No observations by Watson on the hog-bagpiper are known, but Dalyell did have illustrations from both artists. The one by Bower was not published but can be found amongst Dalyell’s papers; it is reproduced as Figure 3. The note on it states that it was “drawn on the spot” by J. Bower, Melrose, 1824, and it is entitled “A spout on Melrose Abbey”. It is clearly an inferior image to the similar one that appears in *Musical Memoirs*.

Dalyell presents the hog bagpiper twice in his chapter devoted to “Ecclesiastical Ornaments: Animals Represented as Musicians”. In Plate XV it is “in a horizontal position, as forming part of a spout”, and in Plate XVI, “representing it as viewed from below”, Dalyell comments that “it is rendered somewhat more explicit” (1849: 66 n. 1). In Plate XV, the image has regrettably suffered a left-right reversal, making it seem that the bag is at the hog’s right side. The Dalyell Plate XV picture has been reversed in Figure 4, restoring the original appearance in conformity with the object depicted. I have been unable to find the original for this image among Dalyell’s papers but the original does exist for the second image. On the page is written “Sow playing the bagpipe”, and the illustrator’s name, A McAulay, appears, along with the date of October 1829. The words “Porcine Bagpipe” are written on the reverse of the sheet. The
Figure 2. The hog-bagpiper gargoyle (view from above). Photograph by Mike Sutherland, 21 April 2007.

Figure 3. Drawing of the gargoyle by J. Bower, 1824.
Figure 4. Drawing of the gargoyle by A. McAulay (Dalyell 1849: Plate XV, reversed).

Figure 5. Drawing by A. McAulay based on the gargoyle, depicting the pig as a quasi-human standing figure (Dalyell 1849: Plate XVI).
illustration is identical to Dalyell’s Plate XVI as reproduced in Figure 5 apart from the shading below the bagpiper in the plate which is not present in the drawing.

Regrettably, the second image (Fig. 5) has become detached from its source. Looked at in isolation, it can give a deceptive impression, suggesting that there is a corresponding object with the pig standing on its hind legs. The online resource SCRAN, for example, presents both images from Dalyell, but does not give a photograph of the hog bagpiper for comparison. This illustration totally divorces the hog from the background of Melrose Abbey and makes it look as though it is standing on the ground (when of course it is a spout joined to the roof).

Dalyell’s *Musical Memoirs of Scotland* has informed a number of twentieth-century writers on Scottish music, and has been important in drawing attention to the gargoyle and, I argue, has had an impact on the way that it is perceived today. This short study has shown that care must be taken when using his material as a source. It must be understood as secondary, with the gargoyle being our ultimate point of reference. However, despite the problems inherent in Dalyell’s representations of the hog-bagpiper, we are much indebted to him for the work he has done in providing a record of this and other early depictions of musical instruments in Scotland at a time when the sources were frequently in a better state of preservation than they are today.

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Notes

1 Visit to Melrose Abbey, 14 May 2006.

2 A good number of Dalyell’s original illustrations, some in colour, are included among Dalyell’s Papers in Edinburgh University Library. The illustrations take the form of loose-leaf, un-numbered pages, grouped together in an A4 size book. The Dalyell Papers contain 158 volumes of Dalyell’s notebooks, as well as letters dating from 1828 to 1847 which include correspondence connected with music with the antiquary, David Laing.

3 These correspond to plates II, XXIII, XXIX, and XXXIV in Dalyell respectively. The set is still visible on the south-east corner of the abbey, flanking two of the windows but, while three of the images can still be made out, the one of the bagpiper is almost totally worn away.

References


---- (MS). Dalyell Papers (Gen. 507-8). Special Collections, Edinburgh University Library.


The Triangular Frame-Harp on the Pictish Symbol Stones

MARNIE BOYD

The triangular shape and framed structure that the harps on the Pictish symbol stones consistently display is of paramount importance since the development of the triangular frame-harp, as opposed to more ancient “un-frame-harps”, is a significant event in the organology of the instrument. The emergence of the frame-harp presented structural changes that directly enabled the development of the modern clarsach and the orchestral harp (Rimmer 1969: 13). Pictorial and sculptural evidence suggests that the triangular frame-harp was known in ancient Greece, but only during isolated periods of time (Lawergren 2001: 883). The Pictish harps seem to announce a trend of triangular frame-harp construction that is unbroken up to the present day. This circumstance is likely a chief contributor in misleading some researchers to mistakenly claim that Pictish harps mark the first appearance of the triangular frame-harp anywhere in the world.

THE REPRESENTATIONS OF HARPS ON PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

The following is a description of the eleven stones known (or thought) to have depictions of this triangular harp. The first five examples show solo harps without players and represent the earliest examples of the frame-harp (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). Example 6 (St Andrews), once interpreted as a harp with a player, is also an early occurrence, but the presence of the harp is much less certain than in the other examples and this possible instance is included for the sake of completeness without being claimed as a definite case. Examples 7-9 have harps with players and are somewhat later than the previous examples, dating from the 9th and 10th centuries (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). Examples 10 and 11 are 10th century examples that occur in Western Scotland, which is outside of the main Pictish cultural zone (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).

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1. Nigg Stone in Easter Ross

This stone (see Fig. 1) is the oldest Pictish monument with a frame-harp, dating to the 8th century (Rensch 1993: 41). This Class II stone is a cross-slab erected in what was probably a place of worship for Picts and Christians, and eventually became the grounds of the Old Nigg Church, which was largely rebuilt in 1626 (Burt 1994: 22). In 1727, a hurricane blew down the stone, which was then moved to the East gable of the church (Burt 1994: 22). It was accidentally broken at the end of the 18th century by workmen gaining access to the vault underneath (Burt 1994: 22). It was re-erected in the mid-19th century, and moved inside the church in 1978, where it can be viewed today (Burt 1994: 22).
The back of the Nigg stone has a rectangular panel with an arched top in the middle of the stone, which is framed by a border divided into twelve panels depicting key-patterns (Allen and Anderson 1993: 80). The central panel is a figure subject, depicting a bird at the top; below it, the so-called elephant symbol; underneath, a man on foot armed with a shield, sword and spear, having two beasts in front of him; below this, a figure, perhaps David, slaying a lion, with a harp and sheep near his right shoulder; at the bottom, a man on horseback hunting a deer, which is being pursued by a hound, and followed by a man on foot holding two disc-shaped objects resembling cymbals in his hands (Allen and Anderson 1993: Fig. 81). This harp without a player has often been interpreted as a biblical “David” symbol, appearing near a figure commonly interpreted as David (Sanger and Kinnaird 1992: 15). Allen and Anderson, in connection with this image, speak of “the callings of the Psalmist and Shepherd being symbolised by a harp and a sheep” (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.81). The Nigg harp is very realistically rendered, standing in a tilted, upright position, a position commonly used while a harp is being played, as it is often placed directly on the ground and then tilted to rest on a player’s shoulder.

2. Aberlemno Stone No. 3 in Angus

At the church of Aberlemno there are three symbol stones, a Class I and two upright cross-slabs belonging to Class II (Allen and Anderson 1993: 209). Aberlemno No. 3, an upright cross-slab of Old Red Sandstone of rectangular shape, stands in a field half a mile north of the church (Allen and Anderson 1993: 209). The existence of the stone has been known as far back as 1569, and it is one of the first monuments of its kind to have a preserved historical record (Allen and Anderson 1993: 215). The back of the slab, which faces the field, is divided into three panels, the first containing Pictish symbols and a hunting scene with men on horseback (Allen and Anderson 1993: 209). The second, on the bottom left of the slab, shows a centaur with a branch of tree under his arm (Allen and Anderson 1993: 209). The third, at the lower right-hand side, shows what appears to be David rending a lion’s jaw, with a sheep and a harp placed above him (see Fig. 2) (Allen and Anderson 1993: 215). Like the Nigg stone, this
harp has no player, although in this case the harp is not upright, rather it is placed above the sheep on its fore-pillar. The harp is somewhat weathered and, although definitely a framed-instrument, it is not as realistic or as exquisitely rendered as the harp on the Nigg stone. The Aberlemno harp also seems somewhat compressed, perhaps due to the space available on the panel on which it appears. It also displays a slight tendency toward a rhomboid shape, although this tendency is seemingly not present enough to dissuade researchers from including the harp in their list of triangular, framed-instruments (Ross-Jellicoe 1997: 159).

3. Gask Stone in Perthshire

Labelled the “Bore Stone of Gask”, the Gask stone in Perthshire is a much weathered Class II, Old Red Sandstone upright cross-slab on display on the front lawn of the Moncreiffe House by the Bridge of Earn (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 165). It formerly stood in a field SW from the Gask house, and has only recently been recognised as exhibiting a triangular harp since the side with the harp is much defaced (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 165). The front of the stone contains the remains of a circular crossing panel and a cross-shaft panel, flanked by quadrant panels showing realistic animals, fantastical monsters, and figural scenes (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 165). The lower right-hand side has a figural scene, which is very similar to that depicted on the Aberlemno No. 3 stone (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 167). A figure, possibly David, is wrestling with a beast, and above him are two quadrupeds, possibly sheep, and a bear figure. Like the Aberlemno harp, the Gask harp is placed on its fore-pillar and also is slightly rhomboidal in shape (see Fig. 3) (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 167). The harp lacks the “compressed” quality of the Aberlemno harp, however, showing a more reasonable breadth of space between the sound-board and fore-pillar, implying a more realistic space for string placement.
4. Kincardine Stone in Easter Ross

Another stone recently identified as having a harp, the scene at Kincardine, is carved onto the long edge of a recumbent grave slab that overlooks the upper reaches of the Dornoch Firth (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 159). The sculptural evidence on this stone is badly weathered, and no evidence remains for the presence of Pictish symbols (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 159). The scene containing the harp appears at the middle panel, middle register of the grave slab edge, and is similar in context to the Nigg stone (see Fig. 4). A figure, perhaps David, wearing a tunic and cloak, is pulling apart the jaws of a quadruped. Above him on the left is a sheep, and above him on the right is a badly worn triangular shape on a vertical plane, with a quadruped, perhaps a lion, superimposed across it (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 168).
Fig. 5. Detail of the harp as viewed in person on the Aldbar stone.

Fig. 6. Detail of harp and player on the St Andrews Fragment (after reconstruction in Robertson 1977: 260).

5. Aldbar Stone in Angus

This type III stone is an upright cross-slab of Old Red Sandstone, now situated and on display in Brechin Cathedral (Allen and Anderson 1993: 245). The oldest part of the cathedral is the Pictish round tower, which was incorporated into the structure of the cathedral (www.brechincathedral.org.uk). There may have been a church on the grounds as early as the 8th century, the existing chapel built on the foundations of this church, and the Aldbar stone originally standing in its ancient burial-grounds (Allen and Anderson 1993: 245). The free-standing, upright harp is on the back of the stone, placed next to objects commonly interpreted as symbols of King David: the shepherd’s staff, a horned sheep, and figure rending a lion’s jaw (Allen and Anderson 1993: 247). A David figure is
present as well, seen breaking the lion’s jaw in the third register. The harp is quite realistic, and very similar in proportion to the harps at Nigg and Dupplin, although the Aldbar harp is slightly more robust (see Fig. 5) (Rensch 1993: 43).

6. St Andrews Fragment in Fife

W. Norman Robertson identified a triangular harp on a small shrine fragment from St Andrews (Robertson 1977: 259-61). Henderson had accepted Robertson’s interpretation of the harp for many years until she visited the museum to view the fragment, when her position changed, as she could not see any trace of a harp, and thought instead that the hands are perhaps receiving a present, the fingertips holding something (Henderson 1994: 92). This item has been excluded from some studies on the basis that it is too uncertain; however, with the intent of presenting all possible evidence regarding Pictish harps, it is included in the discussion here.

On display in the Cathedral Museum at St Andrews are two pieces of a fragment of stone-carving, which can be fitted together to form a larger part of the original sculpture (Robertson 1977: 259). Both pieces were found in 1893-4 in the Priory ground by Lord Bute during the excavation of the ruins of the conventual building, the stones eventually being joined when it was noticed that is was possible to fit them together (Robertson 1977: 259). Just discernible is a robed figure, now headless, with some evidence lost at the feet, sitting on a chair that is surrounded by several kinds of creatures, some fanciful and some characteristically Pictish in style (see Fig. 6) (Robertson 1977: 260). Robertson feels enough evidence is present to identify the figure as a musician, with both hands plucking the strings of a triangular, harp-like instrument that rests on his knee (see Fig. 6) (Robertson 1977: 260). The scene could depict David playing his harp, similar to the scenes on the Dupplin and Monifieth stones (Robertson 1977: 259). Enough evidence is preserved to show the presence of a tongue and groove carpentry technique, very similar to construction of the well-known St. Andrews tomb-shrine in the same museum (Robertson 1977: 259).

Of particular note is the size of the harp in relation to its player, which presents a departure from other similar scenes at Dupplin,
Monifieth, and Lethendy. The harp at St Andrews is comparatively much smaller as it appears that the player’s hand could easily span the entire compass of the strings. All other Pictish harps with players show an instrument of a size and proportion to its player that reflect some realism, and are large enough to require the player to extend his arm to reach the furthest base notes, whereas such large hands as those at St Andrews would likely have difficulty accurately playing such a miniature, closely-strung instrument.

Fig. 7. Detail of harp and player on the Dupplin Cross (after Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.322, Fig. 334B).

Fig. 8. Detail of harp and player as viewed in person on the Monifieth stone.
7. Dupplin Cross in Perthshire

A 9th-century free-standing cross of Old Red Sandstone, the Dupplin cross in Perthshire, was originally situated on a hilltop near Forteviot (Allen and Anderson 1993: 319). In 2002, it was moved to the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh for restoration, placed under the care of Historic Scotland, and moved to St Serf’s church, Dunning (www.ucl.uk/archaeology). It is a Type II stone, and has a partially legible inscription of which “Custantin Filius Fircus” can be read, which could stand for the Latin version of the early 9th century Pictish King, Caustantin, Son of Fergus (www.ucl.uk/archaeology). The left side of the cross has a harper seated on a chair with zoomorphic terminals, playing a large harp that is similar to the instrument on the Nigg slab (see Fig. 7) (Rensch 1993: 45). The figure is placed beneath a panel containing a beast with its head bent back, and above a panel showing a six-cord plait (Allen and Anderson 1993: 321). It is possible that the scene is subsumed within a Davidic context, as David the lion killer appears on another face (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 159).

8. Monifieth Stone in Angus

Four sculptured stones were discovered in the foundations of the Old Parish Church of Monifieth, and were subsequently built into the wall of the parish church in 1812 (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.228). All four stones are now in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, including a class III stone with a frame-harp (see Fig. 8) (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.265). This 9th-century stone is a free-standing cross of Old Red Sandstone, sculptured in relief on four faces (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.265). The front is divided into four panels: the top shows the lower part of the body of the crucified Saviour with saints John and Mary on each side; below this, a pair of saints or ecclesiastics; below again, two men holding horns in their hands; and the bottom panel depicting a harpist seated on a chair or throne (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.265). The harpist is playing a large instrument with eight strings, similar in shape to the harp on the Nigg stone (Rensch 1993: 44). Stylistically, the scene is similar to Dupplin in the framing of the harpist in isolation, the positions of the
harp and musician, and the presence of a chair (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 160). Monifieth has no other Davidic iconography, but the harpist has been interpreted as representing David the Psalmist (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 160).

Fig. 9. Detail of harp and player on the Lethendy stone (after Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 242).

Fig. 10. Detail of harp and player on the Archattan stone (after Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.378, Fig. 393).

9. Lethendy Stone in Perthshire

The 10th-century Lethendy stone in Perthshire was first brought to the attention of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland in 1969 by the late Mr C. Gairdner, owner of the Tower of Lethendy (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 238). The Tower of Lethendy was the home of the Heron family, the oldest part of the building being a tower-house of L-plan, probably dating from the late
16th century (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 238). Two carved stones, including the Lethendy stone, have been re-used as lintels above the first flight of the staircase, and it seems probable that the stones were used for repairs carried out during the 17th or 18th centuries. It is speculated that the Lethendy stone probably stood in a field near Lethendy until it was removed to be used in the repair of the Tower staircase (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 238).

The upper section of the slab shows an angel immediately above two clerics whom he is sheltering under his wings. The middle section of the stone is a recessed panel, which depicts two standing musicians facing each other, a dog, and a rectangular object (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 238).

One of the musicians is a harper (see Fig. 9), the other playing a triple-pipe that resembles the Sardinian Launeddas (Sanger and Kinnaird 1992: 16). The harp has a heavy sound-box and what appear to be seven strings, and is most similar in appearance to the harp on the Monifieth stone, although it is slightly smaller, perhaps depicting a smaller, lighter version of the instrument, which could be played while standing (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 239). The dog is shown in some detail, even a collar is visible, and there is also a vertical, elongated rectangular instrument between the musicians, which can be interpreted as a barrel-drum with the head turned downwards (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 239). The presence of the dog has been interpreted as a depiction of the pastoral scene of David the shepherd, who is shown accompanied by his dog in the 10th-century Byzantine Paris Psalter (Fisher and Greenhill 1971: 239).

10. Ardchattan Stone in Argyll

This stone (see Fig. 10) occurs outside the main Pictish cultural zone, as it is situated on the West Coast of Scotland. This area was part of the kingdom of Dalraida, which was founded in the 6th century by the Christianised Celts who had come over from Ireland (Jackson 1984: 11). Therefore classified as a class III monument, it is an upright cross-slab, fractured along both sides so that the harp is only partially visible (Allen and Anderson 1993: 377). The stone lies in the churchyard of the Priory behind Ardchattan House within the private burial-ground of the Campbells of Lochnell (Allen and Anderson
It has been presumed (www.rchams.gov.uk) that the stone was brought to the house from a nearby early Christian burial ground.

The front of the monument consists of six panels that background the cross (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.378). Beside the lower right portion of the cross is a panel with a vertical row of figures, starting with a beast at the top, followed by another beast, then followed by three, seated ecclesiastics with peaked hoods, playing instruments (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.387). The top musician plays a harp (see Fig. 10), followed by a piper, and a player of an unrecognisable instrument, which has also been interpreted as a crown (Allen and Anderson 1993: 387). The bottom figure is of a warrior on foot, armed with a spear and shield (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.387). Allen and Anderson speculate that the three hooded musicians may be intended to illustrate the account given of heaven in Revelations (ch. iv), and may be compared with the three cowled ecclesiastics on horseback on the stone at St Madoes, Perthshire (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.387). This scene has also been interpreted as a representation of the Davidic choir (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).

Researchers have speculated that the implied harp is slightly more rounded than the Pictish examples, perhaps influenced by the musician on St Martin’s Cross on Iona, discussed in the next section (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).

Fig. 11. Detail of harp and player on the Kilwinning stone (after Craig 1994: 77).
11. Kilwinning Stone, Ayrshire

Another slab recently discovered is from the same cultural zone as the Ar chattan Stone, located in Western Scotland at Kilwinning in Ayrshire (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). This class III monument shows a three-sided harp juxtaposed with a profiled male figure, presumably the player of the instrument (see Fig. 11) (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). The harpist is characteristically shown in a seated position, although, rather oddly, no chair is present and he is too far removed from the harp to reach the strings (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). It has been speculated that the Kilwinning sculptor used the same position for the harpist as that of the rider carved beneath him, resulting in some awkwardness in the rendering of the musician (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 171).

It is not clear whether a David scene is intended here, as the figure is surrounded by snake-like monsters, perhaps intending a mythological representation of “Ragnar in the Snake Pit”, where the figure plays the harp with his feet (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).

QUADRANGULAR INSTRUMENTS

There are two further examples of harp-like instruments on stones from the island of Iona in the west of Scotland, which are quadrangular rather than triangular in shape. The four-cornered instrument of these examples shows parallel sides, and is strikingly similar to carvings found on stones in Ireland, such as an instrument on one of a pair of pillars flanking a sandstone cross, now located near a small church south of Carndonagh (Donegal), which dates to the 7th century (see Fig. 12). The pillar shows a barefoot musician, possibly David, holding a quadrangular-shaped instrument described as a “barrel-shaped harp” (Rensch 1993: 36).

Since the Iona harps are situated in the former Kingdom of Dalraid a, a strong resemblance to similar instruments from Irish stone-masonry is understandable given the close cultural relationship with Ireland. It is possible that these two stones predate the Nigg stone by half a century (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).
Fig. 12. Detail of quadrangular chordophone and player as seen on the pillar at Carndonagh, Ireland (after Rensch 1993: 36).

Fig. 13. Detail of quadrangular chordophone and player on St Martin’s Cross (after Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 162).

Fig. 14. Detail of the quadrangular chordophone on St Oran’s Cross (after Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 162).
St Martin’s Cross, a Class III stone of red granite, is a free-standing cross still erect on its ancient base, standing a short distance from the south-west side of the cathedral of Iona (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.381). The cross shaft displays figurative scenes in a vertical row, one below the other (Allen and Anderson 1993: 382). The top shows Daniel in the Lion’s Den, followed by a group of three figures, which are in turn followed by two musicians, one of whom is playing a quadrangular chordophone and the other playing a pipe (see Fig. 13) (Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.382). The scene is similar to that of the Tower of Lethendy with two musicians facing each other and a barrel-drum inserted between them (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). There are some differences, however, as the St Martin harper sits on a low stool, the piper is kneeling, and the drum lies horizontally rather than vertically (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161). The chordophone also appears to be of a similar size to the Lethendy harp. Presumably any relationship between St Martin’s Cross and the Lethendy stone resulted from a model travelling West to East over space and time (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 161).

Fragments of the 8th century St Oran’s Cross are now in the Nunnery Museum on the island of Iona (Henderson 1986: 94). This sculpture is very worn and it is difficult to discern its figures (Henderson 1986: 94). It appears that a harpist, possibly haloed, is seated in a frontal position, playing a quadrangular chordophone (see Fig. 14) (Henderson 1986: 94). Another figure shown in profile on a high-backed chair is leaning toward the harpist (Henderson 1986: 94). Whether or not this could be a Davidic scene is uncertain (Henderson 1986: 94).

DEFINING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HARP AND ASSESSING THE EVIDENCE FROM ANCIENT TIMES

It is important to define how the Pictish harps are distinguished from more ancient forms of the instrument, and why its shape is so important in the overall development of the harp. As the previous descriptions of the Pictish harps have demonstrated, the Pictish harp is of a triangular shape, having a sound-box, string-carrying member (sometimes referred to as an “arm” or a “neck”) at an angle from the
box, and the fore-pillar (see Fig. 15) (Rimmer 1977: 13). The fore-pillar, which encloses the strings in a solid frame, travels from the neck to the end of the sound-box (Rimmer 1977:13). Until the appearance of the Pictish harp, harps rarely incorporated fore-pillars into their construction (Rensch 1993: 29). Harps with no fore-pillar are subject to a type of structural disadvantage: there exists a certain amount of flexibility in the joint between the neck and the resonator, so that tightening one string would bring the neck fractionally forward, slackening other strings enough to throw them out of tune (Latham 2002: 719). Therefore, the addition of the fore-pillar found in the Pictish carvings is crucial, as its presence greatly strengthens the instrument’s entire structure (Latham 2002: 719). The frame-harp allows more strings to be added, and enables greater string tension that in turn provides more resonance and clarity (Rensch 1993: 29). These framed Pictish harps are quite consistent in showing a slender, strong, straight string-carrier that comes directly from the top of the sound-box with no apparent joint, and a straight, slender fore-pillar (Rensch 1993: 44).

![Diagram of triangular frame-harp](image)

Fig. 15. Diagram of triangular frame-harp.

Pictorial evidence and sculptured reliefs left behind by ancient civilisations provide today’s researcher with the bulk of materials to study ancient harps, as few instruments have survived up to the present day (Rensch 1993: 3). Indeed, there is evidence of an abundance of harp-like instruments in the ancient world, which can be placed according to shape into one of four general categories:
arched (bow) harps; angled harps; triangular frame-harps; or lyres (Rensch 193: 4).

Most Egyptian harps can be described as arched or bow shaped, with a horizontal sound-box, probably of a one piece construction (see Fig. 16) (Rensch 1993: 5). Angled harps probably travelled from Asia to Egypt around 1500 BC, and these harps consist of a box and string carrier at right angles to each other, implying a two-part construction with a sound-box and a straight, pole-like string arm (see Fig. 17) (Rensch 1993: 9). Lyres were also well known in the ancient world, and some research suggests that it was the lyre (kinnor in the Bible) that King David plays in The Old Testament to soothe the troubled mind of Saul (see Fig. 18) (Rensch 1993: 17). However, lyres are considered apart from the harp, members of a different organological class from harps (Rensch 1993: 12). The lyre has four rather than three corners (a rectangular rather than triangular shape), with strings that run parallel to the sound-board, not perpendicular to and “standing free” of the sound-board as they are in harps (Latham 2002: 719) The lyre has fewer strings than the harp (most ancient lyres have seven strings), and the lyre’s strings do not vary in length (and therefore, pitch) as significantly as they do in a triangular-shaped instrument (Rensch 1993: 12) Evidence indicates that triangular frame-harps were known in ancient Greece, although they seem to have existed only during isolated periods of time and were subsequently forgotten (Lawergren 2001: 883). The Greek Cycladic islands provide the earliest sculptural evidence of the harp in the Aegean region (Rensch 1993: 18). Some nine marble statues showing a seated musician playing an arched, harp-like instrument have been found at various grave-sites on the islands, the statues dating from 2800 to 2300 BC (Rensch 1993: 18). The statues are small: the largest, fourteen inches in height, has a player holding a triangular-shaped instrument on its lap, with the sound-board placed on the right thigh (see Fig. 19) (Rensch 1993: 18). The instruments are unstrung, so it is unclear whether a horizontally-held harp or lyre is intended here (Rensch 1993: 18). It has also been suggested that the fore-pillar in this case is actually a long, curved extension to the neck, which would classify this instrument as an arched harp (Lawergren 2001: 883).
Fig. 16. Detail of an Egyptian arched harp from a wall painting from an XVIIIth dynasty tomb at Thebes. (Chicago, Oriental Institute, after Rensch 1993: 7).

Fig. 17. Angular harp found in an Egyptian tomb (reproduction). (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Crosby Brown Collection, 1889, after Rensch 1993: 10).

Fig. 18. Detail of an ancient Greek lyre from a Bell-Crater by CA Painter (after Trendall 1989, Red Figure Vases of Southern Italy, p. 168).
Fig. 19. Marble statuette of a musician, c. 2700 BC from a Cycladic island grave (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1947, after Rensch 1993: 19).

Fig. 20. Detail of an ancient Greek frame-harp from a Skyphoid Pyxis: Bridal Scene by a “Lloyd Group” painter (after Trendall 1989, Red Figure Vases of South Italy and Sicily, p. 237).
Artwork on vases from ancient Greece and Italy suggests a type of frame-harp did appear briefly between 450 and 350 BC in this region, but it seems to have disappeared with the demise of classical Greek civilisation (Lawergren 2001: 883). These frame-harps are angled harps with a slender, rod-like column, or a column in the form of a bird, and are generally played by an attractive young male or female (see Fig. 20) (Rensch 1993: 22). Ancient Greek representations of the lyre far out-number those of the harp, however, suggesting that the symmetrical lyre was preferred to the asymmetrical harp (Rensch 1993: 20). Angular harps made a comparatively late appearance in Greece, arriving around 400 BC (Lawergren 2001: 888). Why the Greeks did not adopt the angular harp and its wide compass, which had been enjoyed in Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Egypt since the 2nd millennium, but instead seemed to prefer the lyre, is not clear (Lawergren 2001: 888). This situation resulted in a separation of lyre and harp culture in ancient Greece, the harps of the 5th century BC retaining a “foreign” instrument status along with condemnation by Plato, the harp being among the instruments that Plato and Aristotle exclude from their ideal states (McKinnon 2001: 735).

**THE RE-EMERGENCE OR RE-INVENTION OF THE FRAME-HARP IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA**

Whether or not the Picts could have been influenced by knowledge of the Greek frame-harp is unknown. Yet, all archaeological evidence of the triangular frame-harp ceases after 350 BC, and it does not appear again until much later on the 8th century Nigg stone (Lawergren 2001: 883). The lyre, however, appears to have maintained its popularity during this period of time, and was an instrument commonly used by Romans and Northumbrians, peoples who had substantial contact with Pictland (Porter 1983: 259). In Ireland, there are depictions of stringed instruments resembling lyres that precede the earliest Pictish harp carvings, including the one on the pillar near Carndonagh, discussed above (Rensch 1993: 36). It is likely that St Columba and his successors would have brought the lyre (*cruit*) to Pictland with them on their missions from Ireland, as Irish clerics were accustomed to travelling with this instrument (Porter 1983:
The *cruit* of Goodly St Kevin of Glendalough, who died in 618, is described by Giraldus Cambrensis in the 12th century as a precious relic, still venerated in his time (Porter 1983: 252). A class III Pictish cross-slab fragment, Invergowrie No. 1, Forfarshire, shows an ecclesiastic holding a “remarkable object” (Allen and Anderson 1993: 256): a circular ring or disc suspended by two vertical cords from a horizontal bar or belt (see Fig. 21). The possibility has been suggested that this object is some kind of instrument, perhaps the small lyre of the travelling missionaries (Henderson 1986: 90).

This set of circumstances has led to controversy as to whether the frame-harp is a Scottish (Pictish), Irish or English invention (or re-invention due to its previous existence in Greece). This debate also concerns the provenance of the clarsach, as it would seem that the inventor of the frame-harp would likely be the author of the clarsach, which is an instrument that is very important to the musical heritage of these countries. Those who favour Ireland as the frame-harp’s country of origin refer to the greater age of the Irish chordophone carvings (albeit of lyres) and the influence of the country’s missionaries upon Pictland, as these clerics could have been carrying prototypes of triangular frame-harps into Scotland (Porter 1983: 252). It seems that implied within this view of the Irish invention of the triangular frame-harp is an understanding that the frame-harp could
have naturally developed from the lyre-shaped instrument that was seemingly popular in Irish culture. However, the substantial structural differences between the harp and lyre do not support this hypothesis, as the lyre’s parallel string placement to the sound-board and limited compass affect both the approach and technique of a player, and what kind of music one can play upon it. Lyres are inherently more suited to melody-playing, whereas the frame-harp is capable of a much more intricate kind of music (Latham 2002: 565).

It is useful when comparing the form and purpose of the harp to that of the lyre, to look at accounts of musical instruments in ancient Greece between the 4th and 5th centuries BC, as both harps (including frame-harps) and lyres were present in Greek musical culture of this period (Maas 1992: 75). Opinions relating to the performance on lyres and harps indicate that these instruments were regarded as quite distinct from each other, one capable of playing increasingly intricate music that was the fashion of the time (Mass 1992: 75). During this period, the lyre typically had seven strings, and had enjoyed an extended popularity in ancient Greece, as all kinds of harps had remained largely invisible in the Greek world (with the exception of Cycladic culture, c. 2200 BC) (Maas 1992: 76). The surge in popularity of a more complex type of music seems to coincide with sudden appearance of the harp (Maas 1992: 75). Some greeted this “foreign” instrument with suspicion, Plato calling for the banning of the “many-stringed” instruments and their makers from the city, proclaiming that the only instruments that should be allowed to remain were those that do not participate in *polychordia*. The Greek lyra and kithara (types of lyres) would have been safe under such a decree, but the many-stringed harps would surely have been banished. Criticism is also directed at the poet-musician, Timotheus, his complex music requiring performance on an instrument of many strings (Maas 1992: 75). Over three hundred years later, the Roman author Cicero remarks in *Laws* that the old Spartan laws on music were strict, “If indeed it be true,” he says, “that the severe Spartans ordered all strings above seven to be cut from Timotheus’ instrument” (Maas 1992: 79).

Greek accounts of the harp and lyre seem to imply that these instruments were not experienced simply as extensions of each other, but maintained very different musical functions and identities. To
assume that one would easily develop from the other seems dismissive of these vast differences, and assumes that the player of the lyre is desirous of an instrument that is capable of a much more complex kind of music. Forces of tradition are not easily overcome in artefact-evolution, and the musical, operational, ritual, aesthetic, and technological factors of a society can promote or inhibit change (Lawson 1981: 242). All of the evidence suggests that the instrument most widely cultivated, developed, and admired among the Picts was the frame-harp, whereas the Irish were not portraying the frame-harp in their iconography until well after the Nigg stone was erected (Porter 1983: 255).

The argument that places England as the locus for the frame-harp is largely reliant upon certain perceived trends in insular art that might have affected Pictish sculptors (Henderson 1986: 110). In her work on the David Cycle in Pictish art, Isobel Henderson concludes that Pictish sculptors were basing their models on surviving southern English art and manuscript models, which were in turn possibly reflecting East Christian art (Henderson 1986: 110). As she interprets all Pictish harps as placed within a Davidic context, her conclusion is that the Picts were continually using a southern single model for the harp (Henderson 1986: 111). This conclusion largely forsakes the Picts as a creative people interested in expressing their own vision of the David story, ultimately assigning any unique qualities to a Southern source, even if that source has not been found. This view is contrary to the position I have taken here, which seeks to defend Pictish artists as capable of their own creative design in the form of the Pictish harp. In terms of influence, the Celtic church produced, in its inimitable style, gospels and psalters, and it has been posited that the *Book of Kells* was influenced by the Pictish stones (Purser 1992: 31).

The possible occurrence of a triangular chordophone on an early 9th-century English column at Masham offers some support for Henderson’s point of view (Henderson 1986: 111). However, the surface of the Masham column is severely weathered, and all that remains discernible is a relief that suggests a figure holding a triangular shape (Lawson 1981: 232). If the shape is intended to be a chordophone, it is impossible to determine if it is framed or angular, or if it is intended to be a realistic instrument. The column does not
predate the Nigg stone, and there are no other parallels for the occurrence of this instrument in any English context at this time (Lawson 1981: 232).

It has also been surmised that Pictish interest in King David is derived from exposure to Psalters, mainly of continental origin, illustrating David with his harp, the Picts more or less copying these examples (Porter 1983: 259). Yet, this theory does not wholly make sense, as the early stones are actually older than any relevant psalters.

Fig. 22. Detail of a figure with harp on folio 83 of the Utrecht Psalter, Psalm cxlix illustration detail (after Rensch 1993: 32).

The earliest known drawings of the harp are found in an early 9th century Carolingian psalter, originally written and illustrated at the monastery of Hautvillers near Reims in France (Rensch 1998: 30). Designated as the Utrecht psalter, due to its location in Utrecht, Holland, it seems to reflect a composite of various influences rather than being a copy of a single earlier source (Rensch 1998: 30). Ten small figures holding harps are included in the psalter’s illustrations, eight of which seem to be derivative of Egyptian angular harps, and lack a pillar (Rensch 1998: 31). Two figures on folio 83 seem to be holding frame-harps (see Fig. 22), marking a departure on the part of the artist from imitating earlier styles to perhaps using a contemporary form (Rensch 1998: 31). If indeed a frame-harp was in existence in continental Europe at this time, it seems possible that a prototype could have travelled south out of Pictland, given the earlier
date of the Nigg stone and the abundance of frame-harps on the Pictish symbol stones.

The overall large size of the Pictish harps is a unique characteristic worthy of special consideration, as they are much larger than successive depictions of harps found on Irish and non-Pictish Scottish crosses and in Psalters, as these later depictions show instruments small enough to rest on a player’s knees or to be held while played (Sanger and Kinnaird 1992: 21). Pictish harps, sometimes reaching from the floor to the crown of a seated player’s head, are also quite large in comparison to the clarsachs that succeed them. The harps on the Aldbar, Monifieth, and Nigg stones show only seven or eight strings, but it is possible that these depictions do not accurately reflect the reality of the instrument, as carving a large number of strings into a rather small image would have been quite difficult (Porter 1983: 259).

This feature is very suggestive about how Pictish harps might have been played, as they likely would have been capable of the *polychordia* that delighted and distressed ancient Greece. This would suggest that polyphony might have been a function of these harps, as the parallel fourths, fifths, sixths and octaves found in early medieval organum would have been easily achievable on these instruments (Sanders 1964: 264). In his work on early polyphony, Ernest H. Sanders finds support for a northern influence as a strong contributor in the expansion of the organum repertoire to include previously impermissible intervals such as thirds (Sanders 1964: 264). It seems plausible that the Picts could have been playing an elaborate music on their harps, reflective of the sophisticated but not rigid symbol stones, or the subsequent Celtic love of graceful, formal patterning (Sanders 1964: 264). Perhaps the Picts pioneered the polyphonic technique of superlative harp playing in Scotland, which was noted by Giraldus Cambrensis in the 12th century, “It is wonderful how, despite the great rapidity of the fingers, musical proportion is preserved. By their faultless art, the melody is sustained through the most complicated arrangements of notes” (O’Meara 1951: 88). Giraldus Cambrensis follows this comment with a statement declaring how the Scots far exceed the Irish in musical science and skill (O’Meara 1951: 88).
THE SYMBOLISM OF KING DAVID

It is clear from the class II and III stones that the Picts were inspired by Christian concepts, and were using certain ideas selectively. The biblical king, David, appears to have arrested their imaginations, as he is often portrayed on the stones slaying a lion, and is possibly symbolised in the form of the harp. Henderson states that David iconography is an 8th-century development in insular art, when its iconographical range was starting to broaden (Henderson 1986: 101). She suggests that the harp had two primary roles in Pictish iconography: to function as a component part in Davidic scenes that show him as a musician, and to identify a Davidic context in scenes where the presence of a David figure is somewhat ambiguous since he is not acting as a musician, such as at Nigg, Aberlemno, Gask, Kincardine, and Aldbar (Trench-Jellicoe 1997: 159).

Martin van Schaik’s book, The Harp in the Middle Ages, is concerned with the interpretation of the medieval harp as a Christian symbol. Although his book does not consider Pictish harps and most of the artwork he is concerned with is later than the demise of Pictish society, it is very useful when considering possible Christian ideas concerning the harp that might have had an impact on Pictish society. Van Schaik discusses King David in depth, as this Biblical figure is pictured with the harp innumerable times in a variety of guises (van Schaik 2005: 9). He feels that the harp in a Davidic context reveals three primary motifs (van Schaik 2005: 58):

1. A means of identification as an attribute of David.

2. David playing the harp as a reference to his role as poet and composer of Psalms, a motif that has a relationship to the text of I Samuel 16:23. His harp playing before Saul can also be explained as the imposition of order on the microcosmos, a motif with affinity for the Greek idea of “harmony of the soul” as put forward by Plato and other Greek writers.

3. David seen tuning the harp, an act that symbolises the imposition of order on the macrocosmos. The Wisdom of Solomon 11:21 is perhaps the inspiration for this design, the verse announcing that God has ordered all things by size, number and weight, and therefore stimulating an interest in mensura illustration themes. Van Schaik notes that David
functioned as a prefiguration of Christ in Christian iconography since David’s ordering implications enabled him to function as the figura of the Christ-Logos who maintains the same order.

If the Picts were sufficiently aware of the symbolic implications of David and his harp, it seems reasonable to assume that the presence of the instrument in their iconography does more than substantiate a Davidic context. Its frequent use, especially in scenes where there is no player, as at Nigg or Aldbar, or where the Davidic context is not entirely clear, as at Monifieth where there are no complementary Davidic symbols, could identify a set of symbolic ideas that had significant appeal to their creative imaginations, and were best expressed by the presence of a harp. By threading these ideas back to the hypothesis that the harp was a functioning instrument in Pictish society, it leads to assumptions about the use of the instrument. Perhaps it was used ceremonially or in religious settings, where its very presence could act as a material representation of the symbolic “ordering” function of David and a prefiguration of a Christ figure.

It seems likely that the harp enjoyed a high status, a wondrous tool with the power to soothe and ease troubled spirits, fostering the Greek notion of the “harmony of the soul”, and worthy of playing before a king as David played for Saul. The fact that some of the musicians on the stones are seated on chairs or thrones is relevant, as chairs were a rare luxury at this time and their presence could indicate the high status of the player (Rensch 1993: 36).

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE TRIAD: THE DELTA HARP AND PRE-CHRISTIAN COSMOLOGY

Systems of threes are important to Christianity, present in the idea of the Holy Trinity, and practised musically in the movements and order of the Catholic Mass, which is split into three successive stages (introductory prayers, the Liturgy of the Word, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist) to represent the triune of God (Hanning 2002: 22). A consideration of delta-shaped instruments in medieval writings is useful for examining the importance of the triangular form and idea of the trinity in Christian iconography.

Christian symbolism attached to instruments in the Middle Ages invariably had roots in the biblical exegesis of the Greek and Latin
Church fathers in the first centuries AD (van Schaik 2005: 63). These church fathers had rejected musical instruments for moral reasons, but were faced with a dilemma upon finding countless references to instruments in the Old Testament (van Schaik 2005: 63). Finding a theological explanation for the making of musical instruments became an imperative, resulting in musical allegory (van Schaik 2005: 63). A large number of medieval texts from the early 9th to 11th centuries include a description of a “delta harp”, which bears a close resemblance to the form of the Greek capital letter Delta (Δ) (van Schaik 2005: 62). These texts emphasise the delta form as a characteristic morphology for various instruments, including the cithara or psalterium, and are often accompanied by allegorical commentary and exegetic interpretations of objects from Holy Scriptures (van Schaik 2005: 63). Whether or not this delta harp actually existed is unknown, as drawings of the instrument do not depict a morphology that is entirely feasible (see Fig. 23), and the reality of the instrument was not of primary importance to the Church Fathers (van Schaik 2005: 90). However, examination of the exegesis of the delta harp is very revealing: it indicates that the number 3 is especially associated with delta instruments, and that the triangular form is viewed as a symbol of the trinity (perfection) (van Schaik 2005: 90). Additionally, King David has a close association with the instrument, as he was considered in the Middle Ages to have been the discoverer of the psalterium triangulum (van Schaik 2005: 86).

It seems possible that early ecclesiastics sent into Pictland could have been in possession of this symbolic knowledge concerning instruments, imparted these ideas to the Picts, who in turn used them to their own ends. Pictish iconography that bears some resemblance to delta harp illustrations is present on two Pictish stones that have been mentioned by Henderson as “doubtful examples” of David with a harp (Henderson 1986: 90). The first, Kirriemuir in Angus, is a class II cross-slab (Allen and Anderson 1993: 227). On the back of the slab is a frontal haloed figure, seated on a throne and holding a (triangular?) object. On the right of the figure is a triangular, framed object of the same height as the zoomorphic throne. The framed object appears to be split into three sections, and has strings passing over it from top to bottom. It displays no discernible sound-board. Similarly, another type II cross-slab fragment at Kingoldrum, Angus shows a framed-object resembling that at Kirriemuir (see Fig. 25). The fragment shows the lower half of an enthroned figure seated in
Fig. 23. Page from St Blasien, *De cantu et musica sacra*, II by Martin Gerbert. Pl. 25, fig. 10, Dardanus passages with illustration. Figure as shown in van Schaik 2005: 227.

Fig. 24. Detail of seated figure and framework with strings on the Kirriemuir stone (after Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.227, fig. 239B).

Fig. 25. Detail of lower part of enthroned figure and framework with strings on Kingoldrum stone (after Allen and Anderson 1993: 2.227, fig. 238B).
profile, facing the lower part of a framed object that is in two segments. This framed object also has strings moving up from its base, and does not clearly indicate the presence of a sound-board.

Although these triangular, framed objects are labeled “doubtful” harp examples by Henderson, as stated above. Yet, when compared to the morphology of delta harps as they appear in medieval illustrations, the commonalities among the instruments could revive the idea that the Pictish examples may be representing musical instruments, but in a similar fashion to the delta harps. The triangular “delta” form of these framework objects is the most obvious similarity to the delta harps. Additionally, like delta harps, both Pictish objects have strings placed inside of the framework, but how they are attached at any of the extreme points is unclear. Neither the delta harps nor these two Pictish objects indicate the clear presence of a sound-board, underscoring the idea that it may be the symbolic rendering of a musical instrument that is paramount in all instances. The delta harps are drawn with a robust, triangular frame, and the example at Kingoldrum seems to depict this construction as well. Although framed, the outlines of the triangle at Kirriemuir do not appear as thick, as it seems instead to be placed within some kind of rectangular framework that implies heavier construction than the internal triangle. This is not entirely out of character with the delta harps, however, as even though they do not appear inside framed objects as in the Pictish case delta harps are shown alongside rectangular and square forms (with similarly robust frames) that are meant to exemplify other Old Testament instruments. Both objects at Kirriemuir and Kingoldrum are shown next to enthroned figures, which could indicate a connection with King David, who was heavily associated with the delta harp, as mentioned earlier.

These framed objects are obviously not identical to delta harps, the Pictish examples exhibiting their own unique characteristics. Perhaps the most obvious distinction is the division of the Kirriemuir object into three segments, deviating from the delta harp, which is divided into two, unequal sections. (Due to the damage to the stone, it is not clear how many sections are intended at Kingoldrum.) However, the similarities between these objects and the Delta harps are intriguing.

Additionally, I find a striking resemblance between the Kirriemuir throned figure, holding what I see as a triangular object, and an illustration of King David in the 12th-century manuscript, *Hortus*
Deliciarum. On folio 59r, King David is seated on a similar zoomorphic throne, holding a delta instrument, a Psalterium dicitur decacordum, in a manner somewhat similar to the Kirriemuir figure (see Fig. 26). The Kirriemuir stone likely precedes the Hortus Deliciarum and, when considered along with the Kingoldrum cross-slab, could point to the early presence in Pictland of medieval biblical exegesis concerning Old Testament instruments. The application of this assumption to the equally-assumed Pictish invention of the frame-harp is very intriguing. It suggests the Picts, in the construction of the harp, could have been motivated by the physical shape of the delta harp as well as its close association with King David, and the Christian symbolism attached to triangular concepts. It also provides an alternative to Henderson’s theory that the Picts were largely influenced by an 8th-century development in insular art. Instead, creative influences are traced to an earlier time, perhaps as early as the 5th century, when exegesis of Old Testament instruments could have been presented by the first missionaries to the region.

Fig. 26. Folio 59r from Hortus Deliciarum of Herrod of Hohenburg, depicting King David with a psalterium decachordum (after van Schaik 2005: 227).

Triadic symbolism is emphasised in Christianity but it was also present in the older Indo-European culture that received the new religion, and the Picts might have been influenced by Indo-European triadic cosmology during the time of the introduction of the frame-harp. The Irish cruit (“lyre”, later “harp”) was said symbolically to have three strings, as expressed in “The Lay of Caoilte’s Urn” which clearly associates the three strings with three types of music, as one
string induces crying, the second, laughing, and the third, sleep, and Greek parallels imply that the three strings were related to the concept of two extremes and a mean found also in the cosmology in extra-musical contexts (Lyle 2007: 74-81). This function of the harp is reminiscent of the “ordering” symbolism of David at his harp as presented by van Schaik. According to an Irish triad, there were “three things that constitute a harper”, and here again are the three types of music: grief, joy, healing/sleep. In Celtic mythology, there are many tales of harpists using their instrument to manipulate an audience, sometimes inducing sleep in order to usurp control of a situation (Lyle 2007: 76). The harp is capable of imposing threefold response-structure on its audience, and Greek ordering concepts found in Christian and pre-Christian cosmologies, such as the “harmony of the soul” and Plato’s “just state”, manifest in its sounds.

Threefold thinking could also be present in the physical appearance and structure of the Pictish harp. In a piece that examines relationships between musical forms, instruments, and cultural systems in Africa, Klaus P. Wachsmann and Russell Kay (1971: 402) discuss how instruments can express very close ties to a cultural system of beliefs in a variety of fashions. They offer the harp-lute gingiru as a highly developed example, as it is a physical model of an African cultural belief system, with the trough-shaped wooden resonator representing an image of the world. The triangular frame-harp could be seen as an instrument reinforcing and representing the triadic cosmology, as its very structure and shape evince the core qualities of the system. The harp displays three basic parts: sound-box, string-carrier, and fore-pillar, with the sound-box and string-carrier representing the extremes that are supported and strengthened by the intermediate position of the fore-pillar. Harmony and balance are key issues for the instrument, as it depends on a controlled type of tension that distributes and equalises the stress borne from the strings pulling against the sound-board, thereby keeping the instrument from tearing itself apart while maintaining the tension necessary to produce a louder, clearer sound. Symbolically, the instrument works well as a representation of the system as a whole, as it can be seen to physically demonstrate Plato’s concept of a just state, all parts working together to create a harmonious state of tension and support.

At the period in time during which these harps were being carved in stone, Pictish native thought and expression were intermingling with Christian ideas. At this point, Christian conversion was not a
brutal, abrupt process, but a gradual event, which tolerated the co-existence of old religions and rituals during the conversion period, occasionally absorbing pagan notions into its dogma (Jackson 1984: 201). In fact, the Pictish harp could be viewed as a physical representation of complementary, fundamental concepts within Indo-European and Christian belief structures. To take this idea even further, perhaps the unique cultural position of a society undergoing conversion was particularly conducive to the invention of the frame-harp. If the Picts were able to maintain their Indo-European belief structures and religious ideas while allowing themselves to be inspired by new Christian concepts, they would be enjoying a unique period of creative permissiveness that would probably disappear once Christianity ossified within their culture and their old beliefs became inert. Maybe the Picts, who were expressively aware enough to create unique and mature symbolic ideas on their stones, were responding creatively to the danger of transition through new artistic tools, such as the frame-harp.

CONCLUSION

It seems fitting to conclude with an acknowledgment of the speculative nature of interpreting the Pictish symbol stones. My approach, which posits the harps as uniquely Pictish instruments that are reflective of their culture, is intended to broaden the scope of analysis beyond viewing these instruments as identifiers of King David, copied from another culture. Hopefully, some new research possibilities have been presented as well. Further comparative exploration of ancient Greek and Northern European attitudes towards lyre and harp cultures could be suggestive as to how regional musical ecologies affected instrument use and change. Van Schaik’s work on the symbolism of the medieval harp offers much to the researcher of Pictish harps, including his work on David symbolism and biblical exegesis of musical instruments touched upon here. The presence of Indo-European cosmology in Pictish culture and its instruments is another avenue of exploration that could be greatly expanded upon from what I have presented in this paper.

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Notes

1 Insular art is primarily abstract and decorative, defined by sets of linear motifs and patterns, and appears to have flourished between AD 600 and 900 (Henderson and Henderson 2004: 15).

2 In his article “The Harp as a Cosmic Symbol”, Dane Rudhyar discusses the unique status of the harp as one of two instruments (the other being the piano) that can play all of the major key-tones of a mode at once, and has a sound-board designed to prolong notes. Rudhyar describes this set of characteristics as resulting in “seas of sound” that express a “collective soul” rather than individual identity (Rudhyar 1923: 8). This “sea of sound” could have had significant cosmological and creative value to the Picts, perhaps best realised sonically in the sounds of the frame-harp.

3 Pictish harps are much larger than their most obvious descendant, the clarsach, which uses metal strings. Metal strings would not have been a possibility for Pictish harps, as their particular dimensions would not have been able to withstand the pull of metal strings on the sound-board (Bannerman 1991: 8), and researchers have suggested that braided or twisted horse-hair might have been used, as this material is light enough for the harp, and can give a very pleasing sounding note (Jarman 1960-1: 154-75). It is also quite likely that the sound-board was made of leather, as leather sound-boards are still commonly used on instruments throughout the world, and would have been a very suitable match for the horsehair strings (Jones 1825: 102; cf. the poem by a Welshman published by Andrew Borde in 1547 which describes a harp as being made of a mare’s skin with horsehair strings (Furnivall 1870: 126). If the materials used for the strings and sound-board were of animal origin, this would have strongly linked the instrument to the mythical or symbolic resonances that animals held for the Picts (cf. Kárpáti 1989: 9).

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Lives Set in Stone: The Preoccupations of the Elites of Early Historic Scotland

KATE ANDERSON

INTRODUCTION

The Early Historic carved stone monuments found in Scotland have long been subject to intense scrutiny, the meaning of their symbols and the function of the stones frequently the main topic of debate (Close-Brooks 1980; Jackson 1993; Shepherd and Shepherd 1977; Southwick 1981). It is rarer for their art historical value or potential function to be set aside in favour of studies focusing on those stones depicting human existence and interaction. However, when approached in this way it becomes clear that a rich source of information on the preoccupations and values of the elites of Early Historic Scotland is before our eyes. Although only found on a relatively small proportion of the total number of stones, a significant number depict human activity, frequently dominated by the themes of religion (in the form of Christian imagery), warfare and hunting. Examination of the relative proportions these stones are found in, their specific content and context, and the arrangement of different elements within them should shed light on how these themes relate to each other, and what level of importance they were accorded culturally.

METHODOLOGY

Defining the parameters of an appropriate data set is not an easy task; at present, many stones mentioned in early works (e. g. Buist 1851; Laing 1851; Stuart 1854) are kept in private hands or their whereabouts are unknown or they have become weathered to such an extent that examination and analysis are no longer possible. The catalogue compiled by Allen and Anderson in 1903 was extraordinarily comprehensive and remains a primary reference point for scholars in this area. Thanks to the enormous corpus of illustrations their volumes contain, it is possible to consider evidence from stones no longer
available for immediate study. Therefore, this paper has taken as its
data set all the monuments illustrated in Allen and Anderson (1993
[1903]), with a few exclusions. Those stones that are too weathered to
be legible have been excluded, as have those featuring only creatures
with both human and animal characteristics. While the majority of the
monuments can be attributed to Pictland, there are stones, such as that
at Barochan,\(^1\) found elsewhere in Scotland and these have been
deliberately included in order to form as comprehensive an under-
standing of these monuments as possible.

The choice of the word “elite” in the title is deliberate. The stones
forming the basis of this study would almost certainly have been
erected by, or for, the elites of Scotland at this time, rather than the
common people, and therefore we may assume that their content will
reflect the preoccupations and values of the elites. However, in this
case the elites may be separated into the secular and the religious.
Church leaders, although possibly drawn from the same groups of
people and benefiting from the same wealth, culture and connections,
would have had different needs, desires and perspectives than their
secular counterparts. There are several stones which feature exclus-
ively ecclesiastical scenes, be they Bible stories or simple depictions
of religious figures, as seen from their garments and accessories,
without involvement of secular issues. Therefore, since these are
more likely to have been erected by ecclesiasts, they have been
excluded from this study. What remains is a series of stones featuring
identifiable, secular scenes depicting human figures, although inter-
pretation of these is not necessarily easy.

Interpretation is based on two levels of understanding: icon-
ography, identifying what it is we are seeing, and iconology,
exploring the deeper, religious meaning of the icon (Alcock 2003:
362). The first level is not always a simple matter, since the condition
of the stone, an understanding of animal physiology and behaviour
and the material culture in question each need to be taken into
account. The second level may also present difficulties to modern
researchers. Of the seventy-five monuments featuring secular
humans, only one, the Dunkeld 2 stone, is a Class I; the remainder are
Class II or Class III, and roughly date to the 7th-9th centuries AD
(Alcock 2003: 372). Since the defining feature of the Class II and III
stones is their Christian imagery, Dunkeld 2 will not be included in
this analysis in order to preserve a cohesive dataset. Given the
presence of a cross or religious scenes on the remaining seventy-four
monuments, these might be expected to have been produced by a Christian society. However, 21st-century researchers may not initially be sufficiently well-versed in early Christian theology to identify many of the scenes that might have been instantly recognisable to those who experienced the stones as part of their landscape. Bailey (1996: 3) points out that an eagle on the Minnigaff stone that modern researchers might identify as a symbol of St John the Evangelist is actually, on the basis of 8th-century Augustinian texts, more likely to be a symbol of Jesus Christ, and such images should be considered with an “educated monastic eye”. It is therefore important to bear in mind that what might appear to be a simple hunting scene could have been intended as a representation of early Christian theology.

RESULTS

Once the evidently ecclesiastical figures have been eliminated, a corpus of seventy-five illustrations of stones showing secular scenes is available in Allen and Anderson. Of these, seventeen are fragments that could not be categorised with certainty. The remaining fifty-eight illustrations were classified for analysis as follows:

1) Hunting Scenes
2) War Scenes
3) Complex Scenes
4) Armed Men
5) Unarmed Men

The first three categories fall into a subgroup, as they show multiple images depicting an event or action. The hunting scenes are those featuring men (and, on the Hilton of Cadboll stone, a woman), both on foot and horseback, with a combination of hounds and wild animals, usually deer. The war scenes are those that feature armed men, on foot or horseback, carrying a range of defensive or offensive weapons – those stones where the only weapon is a spear will not be included within this category as spears were also a principal hunting weapon. There are seventy-one entire, decipherable figures on Category 2 stones that carry a weapon or ride a horse and the panoply of each individual varies widely, including swords (SW), spears (SP), shields (SH), and other weapons (OW) (Figs 1 and 2). Twenty-two
figures riding horses but carrying no weapons are included as warriors based on their hierarchical association with other figures carrying weapons.

Fig. 1. Frequency of warriors with one item in the War Scenes category.

Fig. 2. Frequency of warriors with two items in the War Scenes category.

Only two figures display the full panoply of horse, sword, spear and shield. This category always demonstrates some level of hierarchy between the figures, through their relative sizes, positioning or range of equipment carried. An example of such a hierarchy is to be found on the Dull slab, showing a horseman carrying shield and spear at the top with three figures on foot to the lower right carrying only shields.
Occasionally these figures are also actually engaged in combat, as on Aberlemno 2 and Sueno’s stone at Forres, providing an impression of the differing levels of command, skill and wealth within an armed force. Complex scenes are those that show multiple categories of activity. They may include hunting, combat and domestic scenes on the same slab. These tend to be difficult to interpret, as their arrangement gives no narrative clues as to the events depicted, or the reasons for their depiction.

The last two categories contain images without any form of context, in that they do not depict specific activities or, where they show more than one figure, do not show any obvious form of relationship. The Armed Men category depicts riders or men on foot individually or in a group, with weapons but without any indication of a hierarchical group, while the Unarmed Men category shows riders or, more occasionally, men on foot, individually or in a group, without weapons. An additional 17 stones (23%) are uncategorised fragments (see note 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>No. of Stones</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Stones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Hunting Scenes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 War Scenes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Complex Scenes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Armed Men</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Unarmed Men</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Categories of Pictish stones.

These divisions allow a basic analysis to be undertaken in order to provide an idea of proportions of themes. However, they are not unproblematic, particularly those categories found without context. Category 5 may depict ecclesiastical figures, since no weapons are found. Category 4 includes a large number of stones featuring single horsemen carrying a spear which cannot be included in Categories 1 or 2, since there are no animals or hierarchical groups present, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that the spear could be associated with hunting or conflict. It is issues such as these that highlight the need to study these stones using a more sophisticated approach.

Traditionally, various aspects of the stones have been studied in isolation. Symbol function and meaning, material culture and cross
styles are topics of previous works (Clark, forthcoming; Henderson and Henderson 2004; Jackson 1993) but rarely is a stone considered in its entirety. The components of its carving are not individual but form part of a coherent whole, if only we could grasp it. Therefore, the approach of dividing the stones into categories can only be a blunt tool, the start of a longer and more complicated process. In order to understand how the three themes of hunting, warfare and religion are connected, it is necessary to identify how many stones have references to multiple themes, or trans-themes. By their very nature, Class II and III stones depict Christian imagery in the form of a cross and so where hunting or warfare is depicted it is also automatically associated with religion. However, several stones seem to display images of all three themes. The manner in which these trans-themes are presented and their relative positioning may provide some insight into the extent to which these elitist preoccupations overlapped and whether any particular pattern can be deduced in relation to the dominance or pre-eminence given to one over the others.

The number of trans-themed stones, depicting all three themes, will vary depending on the way categories have been classified. The classification of the hunting and warfare categories in this paper allows identification of seven at least partially trans-themed monuments. Three of the hunting scenes (found on the Tullibole, Meigle 11 and Mugdrum stones) bear relation to the warfare category as the positioning and size of the hunters suggest a hierarchy – a key feature of the warfare scenes. Three of the warfare scenes (on the Barochan, Dull and Dupplin stones) contain a dog, while a fourth (the Menmuir 1 stone) shows what appears to be a beast, possibly a deer. Dogs and beasts are key components of hunting scenes, although in the case of the first three, these may not be true trans-themes as it is possible that dogs were employed as weapons during fighting.

It would be possible to raise significantly the number of monuments counting as trans-themed were the classifications to be relaxed slightly, as the demarcation between the two categories is frequently artificial. Spears are a key feature of both categories and are often carried in the same position in hunting and war scenes. Some hunting scenes show hunters carrying more of the warrior’s panoply than just a spear, as, for example, on the Inchbrayock 1 stone, and likewise, five war scenes show warriors carrying only a spear, including those on two of the most famous “warrior” stones – Dupplin and Aberlemno 2. It is not unreasonable to assume that
hunting provided vital practice in the use of weapons that could also be employed in conflict. Further, the category of “Armed Horseman” could be taken a step further; most of the weapons in this category are spears and the presence of a multi-purpose weapon without any other form of context may be deliberately ambiguous. It may be intentionally meant to evoke the pursuits of hunting and warfare at the same time, proclaiming that the figure depicted was a generally skilled, talented and elite individual – division between hunting and warfare in this context would be pointless. Although there are monuments that are clearly dominated by their reference to warfare, such as Sueno’s stone, or to hunting, such as the Hilton of Cadboll stone, it is also clear that drawing an automatic distinction between the two categories will not always be appropriate.

The relative positioning of different features within each stone is crucial to understanding the relationships between particular themes. In all but two cases, the religious imagery was dominant (where it covers more than 80% of at least one side of the monument), reflecting the monuments’ essentially religious nature. Where a cross has been carved, this is referred to as the front of the stone, and frequently the secular scenes are to be found on the reverse face. A secular figure will be described as dominant if it is the only image, if it is larger than the other images, or if it forms a scene which covers a large portion of one side of the stone. Where the figure is smaller than other images, or is one figure surrounded by multiple other images of at least the same size, it is not considered to be dominant.

![Fig. 3. The location of anthropomorphic figures and their dominance.](image-url)
The majority of stones, around 80%, separate the secular and religious aspects of carving onto different sides of the stones, suggesting that while the themes are directly linked they also represent separate spheres of conception. This holds true quite evenly across the five different categories, as does the level of dominance of anthropomorphic figures at around 50%. The secular scenes are clearly of some importance but not to the exclusion of other features, such as abstract symbols and decorative knotwork. It is worth noting that where the human element is not the main image, it is frequently pairs of symbols, such as the double disk and Z-rod, which dominate. Doubtless this has some significance, but much has already been speculated as to the meaning of the symbols (Clarke forthcoming; Jackson 1993) and there is nothing further that may be helpfully added here. The one exception to the general positioning of secular figures are those found in war scenes, where dominance rises to 100% (see Fig. 3). The majority of the secular features tend to be placed at the top, with the remainder split between those positioned in the centre and those at the bottom, although the latter is more common (see Fig. 4).

**DISCUSSION**

It could be argued that where a stone shows religious imagery on one side and secular scenes on the other, the two were carved at different times, indicating that the images had no direct and specific
association with each other. Had the abstract symbols held some crucial religious significance, it is not unfeasible to suggest that the subsequent imposition of a Christian cross, appropriating “pagan” space, would have been a key element in consolidating the conversion of the people of Early Historic Scotland. However, their very shape makes this unlikely. Two, at Barochan and Dupplin, are entirely carved into the shape of a cross with secular scenes depicted within panels. The vast majority of the others, like Aberlemno 2, seem shaped specifically to fit the cross they contain or at least to be dressed and shaped into a roughly symmetrical form in a way that Class I stones are not, indicating that the cross was the first feature carved – or was at least the dominant feature in mind when the stone was being prepared. If the two sides were contemporary and the cross was primary, the inclusion of pre-Christian symbols might indicate a desire by the Christian instigators of the monuments to include symbols with a long history of meaning to the peoples of Scotland. It may also indicate a level of practical accommodation between the pagan and Christian traditions, a theory supported by descriptions of the approach of Church leaders to warfare provided by literary sources (Bede, HE). If we accept that the two sides were created contemporaneously, it raises questions as to why particular themes were paired together and whether any patternning appears.

The combination of significant proportions of the stones displaying dominant anthropomorphic themes and the placement of these themes at the top of the stones, suggests that, in general, these may have more importance for those who made and experienced the stones than the other non-religious elements shown.

Whether the Christian nature of the monuments is a representation of deeply held beliefs, or a product of convention or political necessity, is unclear. However, it does strongly imply the dominance and involvement of religion in other aspects of elite society, at least symbolically, and inferences may be drawn regarding the central practical and political role of the church in everyday life. The dominant placing of all war scenes suggests a significant cultural importance attached to warfare, albeit on a minority of stones. There are numerous examples of cultures across the world conferring preferred status on those considered to be the most successful of warriors. If, as the nature and positioning of the war scenes suggest, elite societies in Scotland also celebrated military achievement in this way it seems likely that these images represent a shared sense of
identity and self-worth. Alternatively, it is possible that all the monuments were created with differing intentions and functions in mind. Perhaps those showing dominant scenes of warfare were intended to commemorate an event or particular aspect of an individual’s life, as opposed to making a general statement of belief, status or loyalty, although such possibilities can only remain conjecture at this point.

The representation of warriors is also somewhat revealing about the arrangement of Early Historic Scottish societies and the way in which conflicts were conducted. Firstly, the monuments illustrate a clear demarcation between the elite figures, with all the trappings of wealth and privilege – a war horse and full panoply of weapons – and the vast majority of those who might also be involved in a conflict, poorer and less well-equipped foot soldiers. Horses and cavalry did not seem to form a significant part of armies or war parties, which is perhaps to be expected in societies where the hierarchical arrangements are so steeply pyramidal. Efficient utilisation of a well-trained war horse would have involved expenses and training out of the reach of all but the wealthiest (Hughson 1991). Instead, those who could afford more than the absolute minimum of one weapon, tended to carry either a shield and sword or shield and spear. Effective use of shields, and particularly swords, requires at least some degree of experience, suggesting that military practice was sufficiently important for significant sections of the male population to undergo some level of training. Finally, although general conclusions can be tentatively drawn here, it is important to note that attitudes to, and methods of conducting, conflict might have varied significantly across Scotland during this period.

The finding that Christianity was an important and all-pervasive aspect of Early Historic Scottish society, and that warfare was a crucial activity in the life of the male elites, is borne out by literary sources of the time, which also explicitly link the two. The 5th-9th centuries AD were a time of massive upheaval, with major power struggles taking place across the territory of modern Scotland, in both the religious and secular arenas. However, the literary sources of the time (Anderson and Anderson 1991; Bede, HE; Koch 1997) make it clear that the religious and secular during this period were interdependent.

The relationship between Christian Church leaders and kings is described explicitly by early writers and is extremely interesting.
Warfare and raiding were an integral part of society across Britain at this time and the financial incentives were crucial in maintaining a king’s power base and keeping the economy of his kingdom healthy (Aitchison 2003: 136). Church leaders needed to find a way to allow individuals to convert but continue to take part in this activity; the compromise they developed was the “Just War” (Alcock 2003: 80). This stipulated that a Bishop could provide his king with a dispensation to go to war, with no spiritual repercussions, if the war was defensive or would free a kingdom from heathen raids, would lead to the conversion of a kingdom or if the enemy were Christian but celebrated Easter on the wrong date. Interestingly, the importance of the concept of a Just War and schisms within the early church demonstrably had more influence on early writers than the “moral” divisions between pagans and Christians. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede rather gloatingly recounts how during the 7th century a heathen king, Aethelfrith, slaughtered twelve hundred monks praying for victory for the other side – the massacre of Christians by a heathen was acceptable because the monks in question celebrated Easter on the wrong date (Bede, *HE*: 140). Such a system conferred great power on the Bishops, given that kings were dependent on their Bishop’s goodwill to maintain their own status. It was also financially beneficial to the Bishops, as grateful kings gave them a proportion of the proceeds of authorised raids and wars. Specific examples of such generosity are to be found south of the border: Reculver Fort in Kent and Burgh Castle in Norfolk were both given to the early Church by kings in return for prayers for victory (Alcock 1987: 94). Over a short span of time, Church leaders began to accrue large amounts of influence, power and money.

The accumulation of political and spiritual power was also occurring in the ostensibly secular arena, as kings and war leaders began to attract reverence bordering on the religious. Military success was paramount in society at this time and this is reflected in art, poetry and law. The hierarchical arrangement of the various strata of society shown on the Dupplin cross has been interpreted as a reflection of the almost divine status of kings (Alcock 2003: 392); the *Y Goddodin* “immortalises” its warriors in song and emphasizes the virtues of heroic warriors (Koch 1997); Dal Riatan law stated that a new king was required to consolidate his position by leading a successful cattle raid to provide a feast for his coronation (Alcock 2003: 119). In all these instances, kingly leadership and military
success are explicitly linked and both are revered to a very high degree.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although secular scenes are only found on a relatively small proportion of monuments, this small group is particularly illuminating when looked at in detail. These stones, although essentially religious monuments, make some reference to the secular experience in Early Historic Scotland, and many indicate a preoccupation with hunting or warfare. In addition, several may indicate both at the same time. Examination of the frequency of combinations and arrangement of the images on the monuments reveals religion to be a dominant preoccupation of Early Historic Scotland, as was warfare, although warfare and hunting are themselves not necessarily separate activities. The overlap between the two, both in terms of the skills and weapons involved, and the possibility that both were an integral aspect of the lives and self-perceptions of the elites of this period make strict division of these activities unrealistic. Christian imagery is always represented, and the strong economic and cultural ties to be found between religion and other aspects of elite lifestyle is borne out through other sources.

The approach employed here of examining frequency and positioning of particular categories provides a starting point for examination of the anthropomorphic, secular aspects of the stones. However, it also has definite limitations and remains a rather blunt tool with which to consider the themes depicted on the stones. An alternative approach which does not rely on initial, clumsy attempts to separate the stones into categories, could incorporate a more sophisticated method of analysing relative positioning and draw on existing bodies of knowledge regarding abstract symbols, theology and art history, which might result in a far more nuanced picture of the lifestyle of the elites of Early Historic Scotland.

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Notes

1 The named stones in this article are illustrated and described in the following pages of volume 2 of Allen and Anderson (1993): Aberlemno 2 (209-13), Barochan (454-6), Dull (315), Dunkeld 2 (317-19), Dupplin (319-21), Forres (150), Hilton of Cadboll (61-3), Meigle 11 (331-3), Menmuir 1 (263-4), Minningaff (477), Mugdrum (367), Tullibole (375-6).

2 The incomplete fragments category includes those fragments that show a proportion of categories 4 and 5, but are obviously part of a larger stone, portions of which are missing, making it impossible to determine accurately what the original depicted. The lack of context in these cases makes interpretation particularly hard as these partial images could be incorporated in their present state into categories 4 and 5, with ten falling into category 4 and six into category 5. There is also a possibility that the missing segments held images that would place the fragments in one of the first three categories. This ambiguity led the fragment stones to be excluded from the analysis.

References


Reviews


The author asks five questions at the beginning of her thesis (p. 27). The first concerns an interesting issue: “What are the requirements for successful conversion?”. Sanmark refuses the old categories of conversions – traditionally mission by words, mission by acts and mission by sword – and argues that conversion was a more complex process than is generally supposed. She brings new ideas to the methods of conversion by a comparative approach, looking at the Franciscans’ mission among the Aztecs and these missionaries’ methods of transforming rites and images in the Catholic churches. The role of the Franciscans could be compared with that, found in medieval hagiographies, of the monks who made a great impression on rich and poor on their travels in the North. Still the role of the papacy dominates the conversion process together with the political process in Medieval Europe.

The answers to the second question “What strategies were pursued by secular rulers and clerics?” and to the fourth “Both forceful and more peaceful methods were used in conversion. What were the differences in the methods and their effects?” concern the reception of Christianity. Sanmark claims that the conversion process was characterised in Scandinavia by a long catechumenate, a period when people could take part in Christian life before baptism (pp. 92-3). This period of education is reflected in the inscriptions on rune stones, where sentences occur such as “Christ let Tummes soul come into light and paradise and in the best world for Christians” (p. 94). Sanmark stresses the role of women in the conversion process in connection with the phrase “Mother of God”, alluding at the Virgin Mary, that is frequently found on rune stones (p. 100), but I do not think that belief in an immaculate virgin was included, since only one rune stone mentions Maria “mey” (maiden).

This discussion leads to her third question “How did conversion affect the life of the wider population?”. This is described in Part III of the thesis, where Sanmark gives a broad introduction to the regulations of everyday life, seasonal fasting regulations and calendar rites. This is, in my opinion,
the best part of the dissertation, a useful and interesting account of the medieval passage rites and church ceremonies.

When turning to her last question “What elements of pre-Christian religious custom and Christianity led to continuity or change after conversion?” the problems begin. Sanmark tries to identify pre-Christian religions as “animistic ideas and magic”, a formulation taken from Helge Ljungberg’s work from the 1930s and 1940s, reflecting an obsolete theory with its roots in Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* from 1870. Neither “animism” nor “magic” are today regarded as degenerated religious perceptions. We have abandoned these older and problematic terms, which were used to distinguish high religion from primitive superstition, or, as Catherine Bell put it, “our ritual from theirs”. Sanmark admits at p. 149 that the difference between religion and magic is subtle, but states that religion “is signified by reverence” and magic by the control of supernatural powers, echoing another obsolete theory of Sir James Frazer. “During the Middle Ages, the distinction between religion and magic was not always made clear,” Sanmark declares. I would say that there are no clear distinctions.

It goes without saying that this perspective leads to more trouble. Sanmark argues that pre-Christian cult was abandoned first of all by the elite, who no longer hosted their sacrificial feasts (p. 177). When this link between gods and aristocracy was broken, the common people turned back to their original worship of stones and wooden pillars, Sanmark declares without providing any evidence. Moreover, Sanmark lays herself open to criticism when she argues that “the Romans took over the Greek mythology” and lost their own. If she had turned to other modern Anglo-Saxon scholars, experts on Roman religions, she would not have made that mistake. This is, however, her clue to explain why the Old Norse Religion became an easy target for Christian mission. It is another echo of an old and obsolete theory about religious evolution from dull polytheism to glorious monotheism, especially Christianity.

Still, some parts of *Power and Conversion: A Comparative Study of Christianization in Scandinavia*, are both interesting and well worth reading. Part III especially is an able piece of work. (Britt-Mari Näsström)

This is quite a landmark volume with its large, attractive format packed with over seventy papers from the Lund conference mentioned on its title page. It is the culmination of a great deal of work over a number of years by Scandinavian scholars who have aimed to make sense of their cultural history by bringing together the findings of archaeologists and literary scholars. They would all agree that many questions remain but much lively debate is taking place on the basis of a series of exchanges, the results of which appeared in earlier volumes in this series. With the Lund conference they opened themselves up internationally and this is the first of the volumes to appear in English. Rather surprisingly, in view of the high quality of the material, the book lacks indexes, and this makes it rather difficult to return to any particular point or article that caught one’s interest.

The papers are grouped under the headings: Worldview and Cosmology, Ritual and Religious Practice, Ritual Sites and Images, Myth and Memory, and Reception and Present-Day Use. There is often a note of caution (rather well caught in the paper title “Escaping the allure of meaning”, 95) for the authors often have to fight off preconceptions based on less rigorous scholarship than that current today. The gods have been divided into the “sky gods”, the Aesir, including Odin and Thor, and the “fertility gods”, the Vanir, including Njord and Freyr, but Rudolf Simek protests that “it is . . . more than high time to say goodbye to a family of gods called Vanir for the heathen period” (380) and draws attention to a 2005 article of his entitled “The Vanir – an obituary”. What is at issue is the careful reading of texts within their period and cultural context and with an awareness of authorial intention. In this process of exact reading, new and exciting interpretations may open up. One of the most striking symbols in Old Norse mythology is the world tree, which in modern accounts is often called Yggdrasill, a name that has generally been understood to mean “the horse of Odin”. Henning Kure notes, however, that the usual expression is *Ygdrasils askr* (the ash of Yggdrasill), and that a good case can be made for Yggdrasill (= “the terrifying walker”) as a name for Odin himself, so that the tree is “the ash of Odin” (70). Re-interpretation has been applied to physical objects as well as words, and one thesis that won immediate assent and caused quite a ripple of excitement at the Lund conference concerned the tiny gold foil figures called *guldgubber*. The images on them had sometimes been interpreted as gods
but, now that they have been carefully grouped and seen in comparison with manuscript illustration, it can be plausibly suggested that many of them relate to pre-Christian law rituals, such as marriage contracts, and show human beings using symbolic gestures (Ratke and Simek, 259-64). The book includes a number of detailed studies of particular excavations and surveys of archaeological discoveries. It also contains some interesting observations on myth in comparative perspective (e.g. Hultgård, Iranian, Phrygian and Greek, 58-62, Bek-Pedersen, Celtic, 331-5) and even an account of iron smelting in Africa and Nepal, where procedures are still carried out with an awareness of “metaphoric associations between furnace and women, smelting and sex” (Haaland, 82). This is a highly stimulating collection of papers which well repays close study. I will finish by mentioning the paper on “Rituals, witnesses, and sagas” (74-8) in which Thomas A. DuBois addresses the problem of interpreting accounts of pagan practices that come to us through Christian sources, and includes, in a section on “Hákon’s blot”, a clear set of distinctions that can be drawn between pagan sacrifice and Christian practice. (Emily Lyle)

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