Stepway

Scotland in Dark Age Europe

The proceedings of a Day Conference
held on 20 February 1993.

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Dark Age
Scotland

The Day Conference on Scotland in Dark-Age Europe held in the Dept. of Geography, University of St. Andrews on 20 February 1993 was part of a new initiative to revive the study of Dark-Age Scotland at St. Andrews. In that same year an Honours Course was taught on Dark-Age Scotland for the first time since the early 1980s. But many years before that there had been a Lecturer in Dark-Age Studies (F.T. Wainwright) who held extra-curricular classes on Saturday mornings, an experience which I was fortunate enough to benefit from as a student at the University. It was high time that this period of Scotland's early history was taught again at St. Andrews and the present student response to the revival of the subject indicates the latent interest in this 'dark' and obscure period of history. This University has well-established Departments of Ancient History and Mediaeval History to which students come who are already committed to the study of the early centuries of our era, and a number of these always discover the fascination of Dark-Age studies.

The response to the Day Conference showed that there is a definite interest also in the world outside. It was rather heart-warming to find that we could fill a large lecture theatre with people from southern, central and eastern Scotland-as well as from northern England-who were prepared to travel to St. Andrews in the middle of winter to attend a Conference on such a remote period of history. The attractions of a programme of good speakers, the provision of lunch in the friendly ambience of a University Department and the evening entertainment of supper and an illustrated talk was clearly a combination of intellectual interest and social enjoyment which was irresistable to students, teachers and members of the general public alike. St. Andrews can provide facilities for an occasion of this kind which make the journey to this coastal outpost worth enduring.

The first requirement is of course the subject of the lectures and the reputation of the speakers. The theme of Scotland in Dark-Age Europe was picked in an attempt to relate the society which was developing in north Britain in the post-Roman era to the wider European world of the early Middle Ages (a theme particularly appropriate to the year in which the single European market came into existence). The first Speaker, David Breeze, was asked to set the scene in looking at the developments among the Caledonian tribes in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the Roman legions. Dauvit Broun then examined the ninth-century developments in

the Scotto-Pictish kingdom and the possible reasons for the adoption of the name 'Alba', while Stuart Airlie brought in contemporary developments in the Frankish kingdoms and the role of cults in political power. The religious theme was extended by Alfred Smyth (whose paper unfortunately is not included in the printed proceedings). He focussed on the Abbots of Iona and the Age of Saints, explaining the background to Celtic monasticism and showing how Iona explains much of what was happening in Irish monastic communities. The historical situation was illuminated by the next two speakers with sculptural and archaeological themes; most appropriately Isabel Henderson focussed on the St. Andrews sarcophagus and put it in the context of other sculptural material from the British Isles and Europe, showing how it cannot be divorced from Pictish eighth-century art and stressing its symbolic quality. Alan Lane introduced the pottery from excavations in western Scotland which gives material evidence for the trading links with Continental Europe in the fifth and sixth centuries. Finally, Peter Heather came back to the historical circumstances of the development of tribal kingdoms in those parts of eastern Europe which had not been subject to the domination of Rome, but which nonetheless were, he argued, subject to the influence of this world empire on their doorstep. These are the circumstances in which we have to try and understand the less well-documented situation in post-Roman north Britain, and the various forms of historical and archaeological evidence relating to society, trade and the Church have to be brought together for our better understanding of the formation of the early medieval Scotto-Pictish kingdom. It is hoped that the publication of the papers from the Day Conference-re-arranged in order-will help to further that understanding among a wider interested public than those who attended it.

The Conference would never have happened without the support and co-operation of the Committee for Dark-Age Studies in the University of St. Andrews or without the organisational help provided by the Early Medieval Research Group in Edinburgh (EMERGE). Thanks are due particularly to Graeme Whittington, whose position in the Dept. of Geography gave us access to that building, and whose role on the day was vital to the good success of the occasion, as to all those who manned desks, helped with the catering and chaired sessions. Ian Fisher generously laid on the evening entertainment with his unrivalled collection of slides which transported us to the world of Celtic eremitical communities in western Scotland. Finally, those who provided financial support, Dr. Marjorie Anderson, Dr. Ronald Cant, and the Russell Trust, are due special thanks for their generous response to this initiative, which launched what it is hoped will now be a permanent feature of early medieval historical studies in the University of St. Andrews.

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The Imperial Legacy - Rome and her Neighbours

David J Breeze

The framework of the Roman relationship between Rome and Scotland is well known (Breeze 1982, Maxwell 1989). An advance under Agricola led to victory at Mons Graupius, but withdrawal less than 10 years later, to the line on which Hadrian's Wall was built in the years following 122. A new advance in 140 ordered by the Emperor Antoninus Pius lasted a generation before withdrawal about 165. A further invasion in 208 was even more short-lived in its effects, being abandoned soon after the death of the Emperor Septimius Severus at York in 211. Thereafter the Hadrian's Wall complex remained the northern frontier. At other times Rome sought to control the peoples to the north by diplomacy (which included treaties and cash payments) and, when that failed, she responded forcibly to any invasion. Throughout the centuries from 80 to 410 the Romans' main enemy in the north was the Caledonians and their successors, the Picts, who we first hear of in 297. Until well into the fourth century the tribes of the Southern Uplands remained firmly under the eye of the Roman army based on Hadrian's Wall and its scouting system which appears to have continued in operation until the Barbarian Conspiracy of 367. In the aftermath of this major invasion by the Picts, Scots and Attacotti the scouting system was abandoned. During the fourth century the balance turned against the Romans. There were at least 4 and possibly 6 wars between Romans and Picts in the fourth century. Most, so far as we can see, were undertaken in the face of Pictish aggression, and 2 - probably 3 - serious enough to require the attention of the emperor personally. Yet Rome's arrangements for the protection of the northern frontier were effective in that Hadrian's Wall was never permanently overthrown while Britain was part of the empire and, so far as we can see, the Picts were never allowed to settle in the shadow of the Wall even in the fifth century.

Our view of the Romans and their relationship with the area beyond Hadrian's Wall in the fourth century is shaped by I A Richmond (1940, 96-7; 112-6). Firstly, he argued that the seventh century *Ravenna Cosmography* recorded *loca*, meeting places, north of Hadrian's Wall established about 200, and supervised by the scouting system abolished in 368. Secondly, he interpreted the genealogies of the kings of Strathclyde and Manau Gododdin as demonstrating the establishment by Rome of buffer states north of Hadrian's

Wall in the late fourth century following the abandonment of the outpost forts and the scouting system; the kings included Patern Pesrut, Patern of the Red Cloak, and this epithet was taken to imply investment by the Roman imperial authorities. The establishment of these buffer states was held to coincide with the construction of watch-towers along the Yorkshire coast to protect the British diocese against Pictish invasions. Richmond's brief outline was elaborated by others, including Peter Hunter Blair (1947) and, most extensively, by H M Chadwick (1949).

Criticism of Richmond's views has not generally been accepted in Romano-British circles. Frere's authoritative *Britannia*, for example, still holds the Richmond position and it has also been advocated by John Morris (Frere 1987, 341-2; Morris 1973, 17-19). Yet, Jackson as long ago as 1954 pointed out the fallacy of the buffer kingdoms theory, noting that it depends on the Old Welsh pedigrees and a passage in Nennius, which is itself of a genealogical tradition (Jackson 1955, 78-80; Richmond (1958, 125) dismissed Jackson's paper as "a conservative view"). The genealogies may not be reliable for the fourth century, while Latin names (and titles) if they are certainly such are not uncommon in the genealogies and on inscriptions: they only bear witness to Roman prestige, as, presumably, does the linking of so many genealogies with Magnus Maximus. Since Jackson's first indictment others have supported his position. Mann (1974), for example, argued that the (possible) Roman names may reflect Christianity rather than Roman establishment; and he has emphasised that Richmond's views were formed at a time when it was considered that Rome went into serious decline after 367 with Hadrian's Wall abandoned in 383 or shortly afterwards; Miller (1977) and Kirby (1978) have challenged the veracity of the earlier parts of the genealogies. Even H M Chadwick (1949, 143), who supported the theory of the buffer states, had to accept, for example, that we had no other record of Coel Hen - one of the fifth century kings or chiefs - than appears in the pedigrees, where he is simply a name, the common ancestor of several families. It is clear also that Patern Pesrut is not Patern of the Red Cloak, but Patern of the red shirt. Dr J P Wild has kindly pointed out to me that this is the better translation (Jackson 1953, 535) and that when barbarian kings were invested the appropriate colour was purple, cf Clovis crowned with a purple tunic after receiving an honorary consulate from Anastasius (Gregory of Tours, *Hist Franc* II, 38); indeed red seems to have been one of the commoner dyes at Vindolanda. Thus, one important element of the argument that the Romans themselves established kings in the northern buffer zone falls.

Rivet and Smith (1979, 212) have challenged the interpretation of *diversa loca*, the term interpreted by Richmond as indicating the existence of *loca*, meeting places in Britain, arguing that this heading simply refers to a group of "odd places" which could not be fitted into the lists anywhere else. Mann (1992), however, has re-stated the case for the Richmond interpretation, pointing out that the phrase is unusual in the document. Whatever the correct position, it should be noted that literary evidence unequivocally demonstrates that the Roman army controlled meeting places beyond other frontiers of the empire (eg Cassius Dio 71, 15; 16; 19; 72, 2; 3) and it might be expected that a not dissimilar arrangement pertained in Britain.

Finally, Mann (1974, 35) has also drawn attention to the lack of late fourth century pottery north of Hadrian's Wall which he suggests indicates a complete break in contact between Rome and the northern peoples after 367.

That the states of Gododdin and Strathclyde existed is certain. They rose from the ashes of Rome, but, rather than newly established by Rome, we should perhaps see them as the direct descendants of the pre-Roman Iron Age tribes listed by Ptolemy (*Geography* II, 3, 5-7). The Gododdin, of course, retained the name of the Votadini; while Strathclyde's territory seems to have closely matched that of the earlier Damnonii.

fig. 1.1
The tribes of north Britain listed in Ptolemy's *Geography*.

There were other forms of contact between Rome and her northern neighbours than warfare. Trade certainly seems to have taken

fig. 1.2
North
Britain in
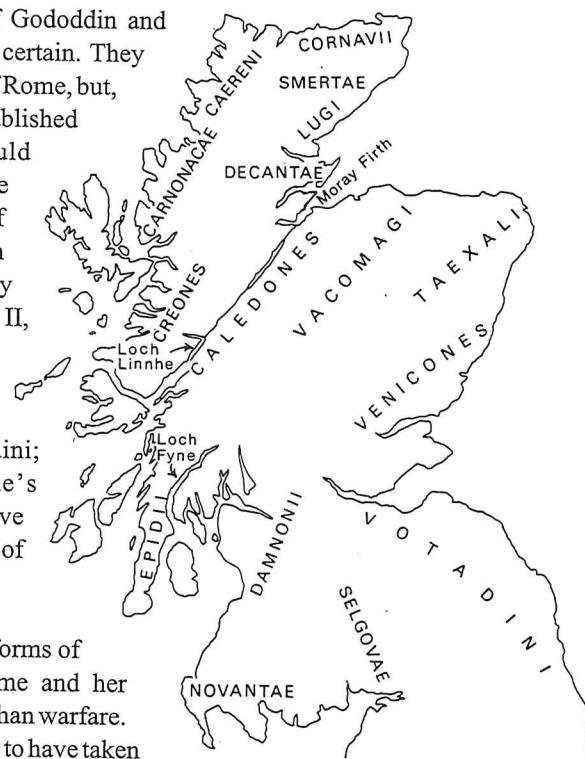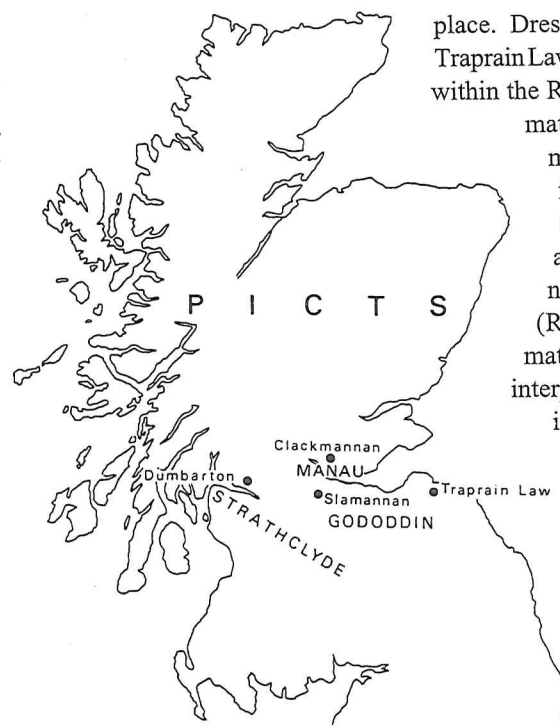the early
fifth
century.

place. Dress fasteners were made at Traprain Law, for example, and traded within the Roman province. Roman material has been found on many sites beyond the frontier, as far north as Shetland and as far west as the Western Isles though not in great numbers (Robertson 1970). This material remains difficult to interpret. Roman artefacts - including coins - could travel north in a variety of ways - by trade or gift, via refugees or other settlers, explorers, missionaries, or returning Roman soldiers. There is no direct evidence for any such travellers in north Britain, though all are attested on the continent. Nor is there evidence in north Britain for overland trade-routes, unlike in continental Europe (cf Wheeler 1954, 28, fig 2). Prestige goods are usually regarded as diplomatic gifts. Even if they are not, Macinnes (1989) has drawn attention to the occurrence of Roman artefacts mainly on high status sites *within* the province in the first century, emphasising that it was primarily the elite members of society who could obtain Roman goods: how much more difficult would it be for ordinary people living beyond the empire to acquire Roman goods. The Romans certainly made cash payments to the northern tribes, and these may account for some of the hoards in Scotland (cf Todd 1985), but there is still no consensus as to whether one of the most remarkable hoards, the early fifth century Traprain Treasure, was loot or a diplomatic gift to a friendly tribe.

Hedeager (1978) has seen differences in the distribution patterns of Roman goods beyond the frontier of mainland Europe. Within 200km of the border, the items are generally of low value - pottery and brooches are the most common. Beyond that are generally found more prestigious items, bronze and glass vessels in particular. The nearer zone Hedeager (1978, 207, 210) suggested, was "characterised by the everyday use of simple, Roman articles like brooches and pottery": here a limited monetary economy operated, perhaps with markets and a merchant class. In the further zone, she observed, Roman luxury goods are found in great quantities circulating at an elite level: here she argued there was no monetary economy. This distinction is also relevant to north Britain. Here the division probably lay on the Tay, 160km north of Hadrian's Wall, rather than the Forth (cf Macinnes 1982, 70-2). Hedeager (1978, 207) also pointed out that the Romans often acted as a de-stabilising influence in the nearer zone. Macinnes (1984, 244-5) has suggested that a similar effect can be recognised in north Britain. She has proposed that the abandonment of the lowland brochs and souterrains some time after the late second century together with the gradual decline of Traprain Law may relate to an upheaval within the social hierarchy caused by the withdrawal of Roman support.

How should we reconcile this upheaval with the apparent continuation through the Roman period of the Iron Age political units, the Votadini (now the Gododdin) and the Damnonii (now the kingdom of Strathclyde)? Perhaps we are seeing the difference between social structures and political structures: the former were affected by Rome, the latter utilised and survived.

Beyond the "buffer zone" the situation is different. There is a clear move towards larger units. Thus the 12 tribes of Ptolemy and the 2 tribes of about 200 had coalesced into the Picts by the 4th century though the amalgamation was clearly not fully complete (Mann 1974, 40-1) (see fig. 1.2). This is paralleled on the continent where there is also a general trend towards the establishment of larger groups of people beyond the empire. In Germany, the first and second century tribal names had been replaced in the fourth century by new names and larger groups, such as the Alamanni, Burgundians and Franks.

In conclusion, we may suggest that Rome had little perceived effect on the political structures of southern Scotland but her effect on the northern tribes was more traumatic, though probably indirect. The presence of the strong Roman force in the southern part of the island was the (unconscious) spur to the amalgamation of the northern tribes (Mann 1974, 41): thus we might see the legacy of Rome being the creation of the Pict state.

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The Origin of Scottish Identity in its European Context

Dauvit Broun

It is well known that the oldest term for Scotland used by Scots is the Gaelic *Alba*, rendered into Latin as *Albania* and finally *Scotia*. It is also well known that *Alba* had been the Gaelic word for Britain, and that its new restricted usage is found from about 900, when it replaced 'Pictland'. Indeed, the best sources of contemporary record for this period, which arguably derive from a *scriptorium* in eastern Perthshire, witness a wholesale switch c.900 from Pictish to *Alba*-focussed terminology. No longer were the kings based in the east midlands of Scotland referred to as 'kings of the Picts' and their people as 'Picts': they were now 'kings of *Alba*' and 'the people' or 'inhabitants of *Alba*' (see Broun, 1993, forthcoming). The significance and novelty of this new *Alba*-focussed identity is striking (even if our sources only reflect the change-over from a conservative to a modernising keeper of a conjectural set of annals). Not only was Pictish identity abandoned, but the coining of the term *Alba* as its replacement involved a dramatic, not to say outrageous, change of meaning (from 'Britain' to 'Scotland'). In my paper I will explore how this switch from Pictish to *Alba*-focussed (i.e. Scottish) identity might be explained. At the end, I hope to make some suggestions about how the origin of Scottish identity might be understood within the context of developments elsewhere in Europe.

However this remarkable change in identity is explained, there can be little doubt that it is tied in with some kind of political or social upheaval. The problem is putting the finger on the change signified by the coining of this new identity, and identifying its root causes. This is a considerable challenge not only because of the poverty of information about this period, but also because the number of upheavals and transformations in the ninth century which have been argued for with varying degrees of conviction leaves us a little spoilt for choice in deciding how they relate to each other and, in particular, to the switch from Pictish to Scottish identity. I would hope, though, that the problem's importance combined with the scarcity of material with which to resolve it guarantees that this remains one of those refreshing issues about which complete agreement is impossible.

The least controversial of the radical changes which it has been argued occurred in the ninth century is the expansion of Gaelic at the expense of the Pictish language. Presumably Pictish must have declined to insignificance when Pictish identity disappeared c.900. Yet it was still apparently a language of some status when a list of Pictish kings was up-dated to Bredei, c.843, using Pictish orthography. When the list was probably further up-dated to Cináed mac Alpín's son Constantín, king from 862 to 877, Pictish orthography had given way to Gaelic (Anderson, 1980, 77 ff). The switch to Scottish identity and the switch away from the Pictish language would seem to be closely connected: indeed, *Alba* could have been coined as a term for the greatly expanded region of Gaelic-speaking Britain. Whether or not this was the case, any explanation of the disappearance of Pictish identity would seem to need to embrace the mortal decline of the Picts' language.

The death of the Pictish language is often seen as a consequence of a political transformation in the mid-ninth century which, it is argued, saw the union of the Picts and Dál Riata to form a kingdom which came to be known as *Alba*. The creation of this united kingdom is often attributed to Cináed mac Alpín who, we are told in the late 10th century *Old Scottish Chronicle*, was king of Dál Riata (that is, Argyll) for two years before he destroyed the Picts and took over Pictland (Anderson, 1980, 249: see also Cowan, 1981, 12-16 and Miller, 1979, 58-9). While few people today would subscribe to the notion of the Picts being extirpated, it is often accepted that c.843 Cináed united the kingdoms of Dál Riata and the Picts either by conquest, dynastic marriage, or a combination of the two, and that *Alba* in fact represented this new united kingdom. There is little which actually compels us to accept this version of events, however. Marjorie Anderson has argued convincingly that Cináed was not the first king of Dál Riata to be king of the Picts: there were three, it seems, in the ninth century before him (Anderson, 1980, 192-5). If the Pictish language disappeared at least in part because the kingship was held by Gaels, then its decline must, it would seem, have originated with the Gaelic dynasty who ruled from 789 to 839. In any event, the notion of the king of Dál Riata conquering the Picts has always seemed a little improbable. Indeed, it is possible that there was not much left of Dál Riata after a couple of decades of Norse settlement in the Western Isles and Western sea-board. We should not forget that it is the kingship of Dál Riata, not the kingship of the Picts, which disappears from contemporary record after Cináed mac Alpín. What really sets Cináed apart from his predecessors and contemporaries is that he was the progenitor (and probably the eponymous ancestor: Skene, 1867, 315 n.7) of the dynasty which made the kingship of *Alba* their own in the tenth century. It should not be a surprise, therefore, that the *Old Scottish Chronicle*, which is a self-conscious history of that kingship, should make Cináed so emphatically its founding father. In short, there is room for doubt that Cináed's taking of the Pictish kingship was achieved solely with resources he mustered from Argyll, and that his success represented a Dál Riata conquest of the Picts rather than a more typical and unglamorous seizure of power supported by kin and clients.

If we move the focus away from Cináed mac Alpín and view the Pictish kingship throughout the ninth century, the likelihood remains that, apart from a couple of years c.840, the kingship was held by Gaels who, with one possible exception, belonged to the dominant kin-group of the Dál Riata, the Cenél nGabráin (see Miller, 1979, and Anderson, 1982. Duncan, 1975, 58 and Smyth, 1984, 182 are suspicious of Cináed's Cenél nGabráin descent, but there is no compelling reason to doubt his genealogy). Such a view still inclines towards seeing *Alba* as the forging together of the Picts and Dál Riata which, with the subsequent Gaelicisation of the Picts, formed the basis of a new identity by the end of the ninth century as the Gaels of Britain. We should not, I think, be entirely satisfied with the idea that the disappearance of Pictish language and identity was simply a consequence of the Gaelicisation of the kingship or the upper echelons of society. The survival of the English language in what became Danish England, and later the survival of English language and identity despite the conquest of 1066, should caution us to seek a fuller explanation for the disappearance of the Picts.

So far, the interpretation of what the switch from Pictish to Scottish identity signified, whether a united kingdom of Picts and Dál Riata or a new term for Gaelic Britain, has been deduced from what has been seen as the principal immediate causes of the disappearance of the Picts. A different approach might be offered, however, if a contemporary statement of what *Alba* signified could be identified. Such a statement would, of course, be an invaluable witness to the coining of the new identity. Instead of deducing what was meant originally by *Alba* from what can be seen as causes of the abandoning of Pictish identity, the line of enquiry could be reversed, with the contemporary understanding of what the new identity signified pointing the way to a fresh understanding of the political and social changes which underpinned the switch from Pictish to Scottish identity.

Happily, there is a possibility that such a contemporary statement of what was meant by *Alba* around the year 900 can be identified. The Pictish king-list written apparently using Pictish orthography as far as c.843 was subsequently expanded (sometime after 862 or even 900) by the addition of pseudo-historical material at the beginning, written using Gaelic orthography. The result is that the list begins with an account of how Cruithne father of the Picts had seven sons who each succeeded him as king of the Picts. The sons seem to represent Pictish districts (see Anderson, 1980, 139-43 and Watson, 1926, 107-17): *Fíb* can be identified with Fife, *Cat* with Caithness and Sutherland, and *Foltlaid* has been identified with Atholl, which appears to be from the medieval Gaelic for 'new *Fotla*' or 'new Ireland'. Some of these district names seem to have become obsolete in the tenth century, which suggests that this material was composed no later than the late ninth or early tenth century. It has been reckoned that it can not be much earlier either because the names are rendered in a Gaelic, rather than Pictish form. A striking feature is how the names are not (as far as we can tell) *bona fide* personal names (such as our modern Angus or Lorn) which have given rise to regional names. Cruithne himself is simply the Gaelic for 'Pict'. Altogether, it is as if the list is telling us that Mr Pict had seven sons with names like Fife, Central, Tayside, Grampian etc. The apparent object of this legend is to portray all Picts from Caithness to Fife as belonging to a single territory under a single kingship. What stands out in particular, however, is that when, later in this added pseudo-historical material, this Pictish kingdom is referred to almost in passing, the term used is not Pictland but *Alba*. Could this mean that *Alba* was simply coined as a new term for Pictland? And how might this be explained? Some answers can be suggested on further examination of the legend of Cruithne's seven sons.

A remarkable feature of the legend is that the seven district-names represented by Cruithne's sons fall into two alliterative groups, four beginning with 'F' and three beginning with 'C'. It would be remarkable if Pictland was, indeed, divided into seven co-terminous provinces bearing these names: a twelfth-century description of this seven-fold division in terms of the political geography of its day can not readily be regarded as corroborating such a division three centuries previously (Broun, 1994, forthcoming). It seems likely, rather, that the district names have been selected in order to fit into a poem, where such alliteration would be highly desirable. Such a poem exists, embedded in Irish pseudo-historical works or copies of the Pictish king-list from the eleventh-century or later. It reads (from the translation in Watson, 1926, 107):

Seven children of Cruithne
Divided Alba into seven shares;
Those of Cat, Ce, Cirech, children with hundreds of possessions,
Fib, Fidaid(?), Fotla, Fortriu;
And the name of each one of them is borne by his land.

In the king-list the names appear in the same order within each alliterative group, strengthening the suggestion that this stanza was its source for the legend. Again, *Alba* is used to describe the territory of the Picts, except that on this occasion its use is integral to its account of the legend. On this evidence, therefore, *Alba* appears to have been understood by contemporaries (or, rather, at least a couple of contemporaries!) to have signified not a new united kingdom of Dál Riata and Picts, or Gaelic Britain, but Pictland. The question is, therefore, why was Pictland redesignated as *Alba*? What was behind this abandoning of the existing Pictish terminology?

If the poem was the source of the king-list, then it would appear to be one of the earliest extant examples of the use of *Alba* in place of Pictland; furthermore, there is more than a good chance that it is also the original version of the legend of Cruithne's sons. Presumably the legend was formulated in order to express something new about Pictland; and, no doubt, this something new is revealed by its most obvious concern, namely to portray the Picts as living from the very beginning in a unified territory. Such an idea is certainly consistent with its choice of a territorial term, *Alba*, rather than the people-based Pictland (*Cruithentuath*). On this evidence, therefore, it would appear that *Alba* was understood to mean the territory of the Picts, with more emphasis on the territory than on the Picts. The question is, how can this interest in a single Pictish territory be explained?

The answer, I would suggest, lies in a key development in Pictish politics in the ninth century: the emergence of dynastic kingship. Little can be said with certainty about Pictish kingship before the ninth century, but it does appear that kings were drawn from male-defined kin-groups, and that these kin-groups were unable to retain the kingship for more than a generation: this much is suggested by the Pictish king-list and Irish annals, which identify kings as son of their father. This pattern was broken in 832 or 834 (Anderson, 1982, 110-11), when the son of a king succeeded his uncle, though in fact he only shared the kingship. In 836, however, his uncle's son became the sole king. This kindred,

descended from Fergus mac Echdach, himself king of Dál Riata from 778-81, had thus been Pictish kings over two generations. After fifty years at the top, however, they suffered a disastrous reverse when their king and his brother were killed in battle by the Vikings in 839. In the ensuing termoil a short-lived dynasty with Pictish names vied with Cináed mac Alpín for control of the kingship, consisting of four kings who reigned over two generations for no more than a decade (according to the orthographically more Gaelic of the two recensions of the Pictish king-list). Dynastic kingship had arrived on the political agenda. They were eclipsed by Cináed's dynasty, which itself only controlled the kingship for two generations until 878, but which restored its dominance with the accession of Cináed's grandson Domnall in 889 and the succession of Domnall's cousin Constantín in 900, monopolising the kingship throughout the following century and beyond.

It might be expected that this increasing tendency towards dynasticism would be reflected in the way the kingship was perceived; and I would suggest that a heightened sense of the kingship as a heritable possession would account for the emphasis in the legend of Cruithne's sons on a single Pictish territory as a fact of Pictish history from its beginning. At the same time, the coining of a new term for this territory could also be explained as an attempt to break with the past, especially if the kingship's Pictish identity was deemed to be bound up with a non-dynastic custom of royal succession (Anderson, 1982, 124). The portrayal of this dynastic kingship can be seen to have edged a stage further with the king-list's version of the legend when it makes Cruithne and his sons into a single line of succession as kings of *Alba*. The culmination of this process would be the emphatic identification of the kingship with Cináed mac Alpín and his descendants in the late tenth-century *Old Scottish Chronicle*.

Kindreds may have aspired to rule a kingdom stretching from Caithness to Fife; there is no reason, however, to believe that they ever did so. The new dynastic territorial kingdom which had emerged by the tenth century was almost certainly far less extensive in reality. Its control of Moray, never mind further north, is open to doubt. Indeed, it has long been argued on the strength of twelfth-century evidence and the incidence of place-names referring to an *Albannach* or a Scot in Argyll, Ayrshire and in the north, that the minimum definition of *Alba* was not even Pictland, but the region between the Spey, the Forth and Drumalban (Skene, 1876, 3 n.4; Watson, 1926, 12-13). The best explanation of this difficult but important phenomenon, I feel, is that this represented the original extent of the new kingdom of *Alba*, where its authority was more than nominal or spasmodic, prior to its rule being established over areas south of the Forth.

I would argue, therefore, that the switch from Pictish to Scottish identity *c.*900 represents the emergence of a new kingship, and was the culmination of a period of political transformation identifiable from the 830s onwards. No doubt the emergence of dynastic kingship was accompanied by, and in some way dependant apon a number of developments. It is well known that 'Pit' place-names, derived from a Pictish word *pett* meaning a 'piece' or 'share' of something, mostly have Gaelic second elements, and that they were presumably coined at the very end of Pictish and the first period of Gaelic-speaking in Pictland. Whether they signified the break-up of estates, or a move from a flexible kin-based relationship with the land to one that was more rigid and proprietorial, or indeed something else altogether, the spawning of these names from Sutherland to Lothian does seem to bear witness to some kind of social transformation. Perhaps it relates to the increasing concentration of wealth which is at least implied by the larger and more frequent concentrations of Class III sculptured stones compared with the earlier Class II, as identified by Cottam and Small (1974).

Whatever role may be assigned to such social change before the late 830s, a notable factor in any radical political transformation must have been the devastation wrought by repeated Scandinavian incursions in the east midlands from 839. Of all the possible upheavals which might explain the switch from Pictish to Scottish identity, this has tended to be the least discussed. Scandinavians, indeed, are often credited with playing a key role in the emergence of Scotland, but mainly in terms of pressure on the Dál Riata. Because there was no large-scale settlement, the later assaults on the east have sometimes been regarded as rather insignificant, even non-existent (Duncan, 1991, 4). This is not a view likely to have been shared by contemporaries. The *Old Scottish Chronicle*, evidently based on a lost set of Scottish annals from the mid-ninth to the mid-tenth centuries, informs us that, in the reign of Cináed mac Alpín, 'the Danes wasted Pictland to Clunie and Dunkeld'; in the reign of Cináed's son Constantín, 'the gentiles wasted Pictland and dwelt in it from January 1st to March 17th', a stay which Alfred Smyth has suggested might have lasted for three years rather than eleven weeks (Smyth, 1977, 148); the following year Constantín had some success, killing a Scandinavian leader;

later, however, Constantín fought a battle at Dollar in which the Danes drove him back to Atholl, and 'the Northmen spent a whole year in Pictland'. In the time of Constantín's son Domnall 'the Northmen wasted Pictland', but he defeated the Danes in battle. They returned and took Dunottar, and in the opening years of the tenth century they were back, 'plundering Dunkeld and all *Alba*'; but in the following year they were slain in Strathearn. The next time the chronicle mentions Scandinavians in the kingdom is during the reign of Illulb, when a fleet of Vikings was destroyed in Buchan. If this key source is supplemented by Irish annals, a picture of regular devastation soon emerges which can be grouped in three periods: 839 and into Cináed's reign; the 860s and 870s; and the 890s and early years of the tenth century. There is no reason to doubt that, as with Scandinavian raids from the late 830s elsewhere in Europe, these incursions were on a somewhat larger scale than the hit-and-run by a boat-load or two characteristic of the first phase of Viking activity from the 790s. Indeed, the reign of Cináed's son Constantín (862-876/7) seems to have been especially desperate, with references to great slaughter, all the lands of the Picts being raided, hostages taken and exactions levied, and two occasions when the invaders prolonged their stay.

It hardly needs saying that this kind of Scandinavian pressure could be highly destabilising even in areas where they invaded but did not settle. Where existing political structures were disrupted, however, opportunity beckoned for the creation of new ones. In Ireland, for example, Máel Sechnaill mac Máel Ruanaid profited from the devastation of Munster to make himself the first to be recognised as overking of Ireland throughout the country in the 850s; at the same time Cerball mac Dúnlainge, king of Osraige, was at the start of a career which soon saw him outstripping Munster and Leinster as the major force in the southern half of Ireland and, in Ireland as a whole, second only to Máel Sechnaill and his successors (see Byrne, 1973, 262-6). In West Francia Baldwin II of Flanders took advantage of Viking devastation between the Scheldt and the Somme to expand his territories in the 880s and 890s to form the basis of the later county of Flanders; while Richard, count of Autun by 880, benefitting in part from his success against Viking and Magyar invasions, acquired enough authority and territory to be styled 'duke of the Burgundians' (see Dunbabin, 1985, 63-6, 68-74).

It would not be inappropriate to see Pictland not only in the 840s, but throughout most of the second half of the ninth century as offering similar opportunities for the construction of new political structures as a result of Scandinavian disruption; and not only in the east midlands either, but no doubt further north also. More often than not the new kingdoms, duchies, counties or what-have-you were no more than personal achievements. The gains of Richard, Cerball and Máel Sechnaill were soon reduced or lost after their deaths, while the long-term survival of Baldwin's territories were, in large part, due to the even more successful career of his son Arnulf. If Cináed mac Alpín is to be regarded as a successful opportunist, then no doubt other members of his dynasty, and in particular his grandsons Domnall and Constantín, should be seen in such a light also. Indeed, the long and mainly successful career of Constantín mac Aeda (900-43) might bear comparison with Arnulf of Flanders as playing a crucial part in establishing their lordships into something which endured. Furthermore, if *Alba* was, in reality, only the area between the Spey, the Forth and Drumalban, then it compares in extent with those regional powers which emerged as the success-stories of the tenth century, such as Flanders, Normandy, and (a bit later) the Dál Cais in Munster.

In some respects, of course, *Alba* was different from these regional powers. Unlike them, it had a better chance of surviving and thriving in the following centuries. Its geographical position meant that, as long as its kings were able to harness the resources of the fertile east lowlands, they were always, in the long run, going to be in a stronger position vis-á-vis those based on the Moray Firth or in the West. With the failure of a rival power to develop in the north of England and/or the south of Scotland, they were well placed to extend their power and territory eventually over the rest of the north of Britain.

Another important difference is that the creation of *Alba* seems to have been closely linked with the fatal decline of the Pictish language. I suggest, though, that it is not enough to see this simply in terms of a sort of cultural trickle-down resulting from a Gaelicisation of the kingship. Rather, as we know from the decline of Gaelic over the last century and a half, it is social change, rather than political or cultural marginalisation, which is the real killer of a language. Now, insofar as the disorder caused by Scandinavian incursions created opportunities for some, it must, both in the short and long term, have brought hardship and loss for others. Repeated devastation and prolonged periods of political instability on the scale witnessed in Pictland from 839 to 904 were no doubt accompanied by considerable social dislocation. The difference between Pictland and elsewhere, however, is that probably all the areas with fertile land

and centres of wealth and people both in the north as well as the south may have been subjected to regular Scandinavian devastation. This, accompanied by an increasing concentration of power in the hands of Gaelic dynasts, could well be the key to understanding how Pictish declined as a language of status. If, therefore, *Alba* and Scottish identity proved to be one of the most enduring and successful products of the transformation of European societies provoked by Scandinavian invasions, then perhaps the Pictish language as well as Pictish identity should be regarded as one of its most dramatic casualties.

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The View from Maastricht

Stuart Airlie

The attempt to recreate the view of Dark Age Scotland from Dark Age Maastricht is not easy. Nor, fortunately for speaker and audience, is it the subject of my paper today. None the less, I was able to find, rather to my surprise, one piece of evidence to suggest that early medieval Maastricht did have a view of Scotland, or of the Scottish world. Einhard, the biographer of Charlemagne, held an abbacy in Maastricht. In his account of the great king, written some time in the late 820s, he describes the 'Scotti' (by which he was referring to the Irish) as being within the orbit of Frankish power: Charlemagne sent their rulers gifts and they replied with letters of subservience (Holder-Egger 1911: 19). Perhaps we can catch here a pre-echo of the European super-state, or of Euro-funding for peripheral regions.

What I do intend to offer in this paper is a view of some aspects of Dark Age Scotland in the light of the concerns of historians who work on the great European empires of the ninth and tenth centuries, the creations of Carolingian and Ottonian rulers. The European material is rich and I hope that I can suggest some fruitful points of comparison or indicate fresh ways of looking at a familiar landscape from the vantage point of the barbarian empires of c.850 to c. 1000. After all the rulers of the northern kingdoms of the British Isles shared a common cultural identity with other European rulers in that they were Christian and they had to cope with Viking attack and dynastic challenge and transformation. This was the period that saw the making of recognisable European kingdoms, whether out of the framework of the Carolingian empire or of the kingdom of the Picts (cf. Leyser 1992).

I shall discuss this general context under three broad headings: settings of royal power; the cult of saints and relics; and, placing last what should be first, source material.

i) Settings of royal power

The Dark Ages are dark because we know so little about them. The source material for early medieval Scotland does seem, compared to Continental survivals, pitifully meagre. One beneficial result of this, however, is that what

has survived has often been analysed with both rigour and imagination. A good example of this is Leslie Alcock's work on seats of power such as Clyde Rock and Forteviot (Alcock 1982, 1990). Here I intend to focus on Forteviot. Professor Alcock has recently returned (Alcock 1992) to the palace complex there which he has already discussed in a fascinating study (1982). In the light of his work it makes sense to compare Forteviot with what we know about royal palaces on the Continent, always bearing in mind that Forteviot was on a much smaller scale than the great buildings of Carolingian and Ottonian rulers. Such a comparison goes some way towards creating a credible context for Alcock's Forteviot. Let me say at once that the intellectual traffic should not be all one way; the European school of palace research (*Pfalzenforschung*) could learn much from the full integration of documentary and archaeological evidence as practised by Professor Alcock and his students. Particularly striking is his sense of the landscape as a whole; in Forteviot's case he has drawn attention to the continuing presence of prehistoric monuments which must have conditioned the view taken of the surrounding landscape by the lords of Forteviot in the eighth and ninth centuries (Alcock 1992: 218, 236-7).

A selective summary of this picture of Forteviot reveals the following features (Alcock 1982 and 1992):

1) It was a royal residence for Pictish and Scottish kings.

2) Kings held assemblies there where laws were proclaimed.

3) The palace complex must have included a hall and chapel for the use of the ruler and his entourage. In fact an elaborate stone chapel may have been built for Kenneth mac Alpin or his successor, i.e. at the time of the Scottish 'take-over' of the Pictish kingdom of Fortriu. We can catch a glimpse of the splendour of these buildings in the surviving carved stone arch now in the Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh. (See fig. 3.1) Professor Alcock argues that this archway depicts members of the royal dynasty who were the lords and patrons of the building. We can understand it as the arch of a doorway into a royal chapel and thus as a statement on the nature of the Christian kingship of the new dynasty. Such themes were visually echoed and further broadcast in the sculptural programme of the nearby Dupplin Cross which depicts Davidic kingship (Alcock 1992: 222-7, 236-41; cf. Bullough 1975: 239-40).

fig. 3.1
The Forteviot Arch (Copyright: Trustees of the Royal Museum of Scotland).

4) Building on Professor Alcock's work, Dr S. Driscoll has charted patterns of what one might call estate management and control in the neighbourhood of the palace complex (Driscoll 1991: 102).

Forteviot was therefore an elaborate royal complex that provided residence for kings, a political assembly point for them and their followers, a great visual theatre for the display of royal power as well as acting as a focus for a very real control of the landscape's resources. This is a formidable manifestation of public power, of what one might call the power of the state in early medieval Scotland.

A wider background to this picture is gained if we turn our eyes across the channel and look at the near-contemporary Carolingian palace complex of Ingelheim. Carolingian royal government was more elaborate and sophisticated than that of Scotland but through the more powerful lens of the Carolingian evidence we can see similar elements to those in Forteviot (the following is drawn mainly from Lammers 1972):

1) Ingelheim was a royal residence for Carolingian kings, particularly Louis the Pious (814-40).

2) Great assemblies and synods were held here. In the light of Professor Alcock's views on Forteviot it is relevant to note that it was at Ingelheim that the abject prince of a defeated dynasty was wheeled out to face a show trial in 788; his bitter comments have been preserved, demonstrating that dynastic change-over in this period was no smooth transition (Kurze 1895: 80).

3) The palace complex had a hall and chapel and excavation has revealed something of their substantial scale. But what makes Ingelheim special is that a record of the chapel and palace decoration has survived in a written source dating from the late 820s. The hall was covered with paintings depicting great rulers of Antiquity such as Augustus as well as Charlemagne and his father. In the church were paintings of Old and New Testament scenes, including scenes from the life of David and Solomon. As well as possessing splendid buildings Ingelheim displayed a great programmatic cycle of images exalting the Christian kingship of the Carolingians.

4) Records of the management of the royal estates survive, enabling us to chart the extent of royal power through the landscape. We also know the names of some of the administrative personnel, referred to collectively in the 830s as *exactores*, a term that recalls that used in the Annals of Ulster for the agents of eighth-century Pictish kings: *exactatores* (Airlie 1990: 197; Driscoll 1991: 88).

All this represents a form of public power on a vast scale. The term 'state power' may be anachronistic or misleading but that is the sort of power enshrined in these buildings and their landscape (Zotz 1990). Ingelheim is Forteviot seen through a magnifying-glass and the parallels are more striking than the differences (cf. Henderson forthcoming).

ii) The cult of saints and relics.

The very name Columba means 'Dove of the Church'. But his cult was not the cult of a man of peace. Alfred Smyth has brilliantly evoked something of the dread awe with which Columba was viewed as a giver of victory in battle, indeed almost as a war god (Smyth 1984: 84-5, 95-7). After his death, relics associated with him such as the Cathach, the 'Battler', and the house-shaped shrine now known as the Monymusk reliquary (see fig. 3.2) were long viewed as possessing powerful victory magic (Henderson 1987: 187-93). Early

medieval saints were not doves but sombre Batman-like figures brooding over the communities entrusted to their protection, swift to avenge an insult to themselves or their followers. It is obvious that rulers would wish to placate or harness this sort of power. How did they do so?
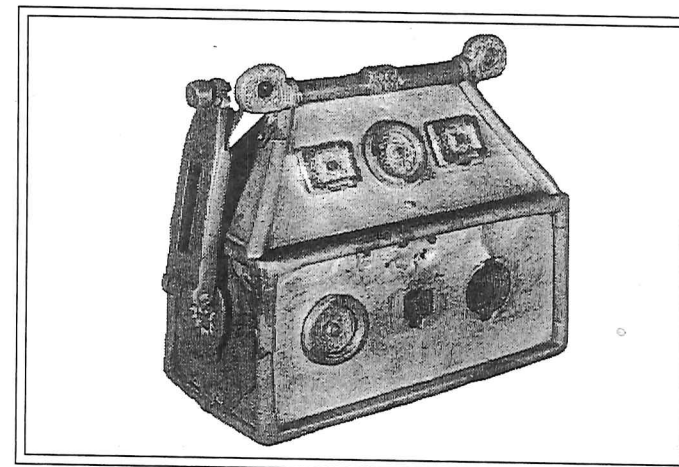
fig. 3.2

The Monymusk Reliquary (Copyright: Trustees of the Royal Museum of Scotland).

One of the most famous relics of the early Middle Ages was the cloak of St Martin which was borne by the Carolingian kings into battle and helped them overwhelm their enemies. This relic, in Latin a *cappa*, a cape, was carefully preserved by the kings in a *capella*, chapel (Haefele 1959: 5). But from the tenth century onwards the saints took an ever-increasing role in battles, adding their supernatural strength to the military force of their supporters. This supernatural strength was crystallised in tangible objects associated with the saints: a sword, a spear, a banner and a whole range of relics (Graus 1977: 336-7).

The most notable examples of this can be found in the kingdom of the Ottonians. Success in warfare was the basis of Ottonian power; it gave the dynasty prestige and treasure with which to attract and retain followers. But the victories which permitted the build-up of earthly power were won with the aid of the saints. For all the secular ferocity of the battle of the Lech in 955, when Otto I and his forces defeated the pagan Hungarians, the battle was enveloped in a supernatural atmosphere. God and His saints were present in the Ottonian ranks on that hot August day. Otto had with him in the battle the Holy Lance. His father had obtained it, probably in 926; it was a spear which held within it one of the nails which had pierced Christ in the Crucifixion. It was thus a

tremendous relic. Being a spear, it was also a weapon and later came to be associated with St Maurice, one of the great soldier saints, whose cult was fostered by the Ottonians (Zufferey 1986:43 ff.). In 939, in a tight corner in a conflict with some rebels (i.e., fellow-Christians), Otto had knelt before the Lance and prayed for victory, which was instantly granted (Leyser 1979: 84). In 955, at the Lech, Otto again had the Holy Lance with him and actually carried it into battle as he charged the enemy (Leyser 1965: 19). This must have been an inspiring, indeed an awe-inspiring, sight. The Lance was therefore a relic associated with victory in warfare; it was a holy weapon. In fact, it must have been carried with the royal host as part of the king's equipment when it set off on expeditions, otherwise Otto would not have been able to lay his hands on it in 939 and 955. The parallels with Columba should be apparent. The Lance was also, however, a *Herrschaftszeichen*, part of the regalia in the royal treasury, watched over by the great bishops of the empire and a necessary object for a man who wished to be king (Schramm 1955: 492-537; Mayr-Harting 1991: 195). Perhaps the *Brecbennoch*, the Monymusk reliquary, had been kept in a royal chapel or a royal treasury and acted as a *Herrschaftszeichen*. Kings did at least keep a very close watch on it, as is shown by William the Lion's charter of 1211, granting its custody to his abbey at Arbroath which was, incidentally, dedicated to a saint, Thomas Becket, who also could grant victory or defeat in battle (Barrow 1971, no. 499).

Such relics were of course more than battle-winning objects. They were surrounded by cult and ritual, examination of which casts much light on early medieval monarchies. The Battle of the Lech happened to be fought on 10 August, which is the feast-day of St Lawrence. Otto appealed to Lawrence to intercede with Christ to grant him victory and he vowed a church for him; the victorious Otto duly fulfilled his vow (Leyser 1965: 24; Graus 1977: 335). Such a vow was not unusual. What *is* interesting here, and quite distinctive in the very precise and heightened way it was done, is how Otto went on to exploit the connection between the saint and the victory. The Ottonian *Reich* was considerably more 'primitive' than its Carolingian predecessor: there was little bureaucracy; kings travelled incessantly in order to make their presence felt (Leyser 1981). Early medieval Scotland, despite what was said above about palaces, must have resembled the Ottonian world more than it did the Carolingian. One way of holding such a world together was by deploying ceremony and ritual which invoked the power of the saints as patrons. So the establishment of a bishopric dedicated to St Lawrence in Merseburg in the north of the

kingdom was a way of reminding people that St Lawrence had helped Otto to victory at the Lech in the south of the kingdom, in 955. And Otto worked hard to make sure that people got the point. He was in Merseburg for the feast of St Lawrence in 965, i.e. on the tenth anniversary of the Battle of the Lech (Mayr-Harting 1991: 214, n.36). Further, the feast of St Lawrence was observed in the great spiritual centres of the *Reich*. Otto obtained papal permission for his archbishops to wear their ceremonial robes, their *pallia*, on the feast-day of St Lawrence (and of St Maurice, the Ottonians' special military saintly patron). The result was that in Mainz, Trier, Salzburg and Magdeburg and in centres such as the monastery of Fulda, St Lawrence, and thus Ottonian victory, was remembered and celebrated. (Leyser 1965: 24; Beumann 1962: 553-6). Of course such battles would be remembered in the songs of the warriors and their entourage —think of the *Gododdin*— but the association with the saints and the great machinery of liturgical commemoration lifted the rulers into an exalted sphere.

With this point we may return to the British Isles. Bede tells us that a battlefield in Northumbria was a site of pilgrimage: he knew it by the highly charged name of Heavenfield, where King Oswald of Northumbria had defeated Cadwallon in 634, and where Oswald had erected a cross on the eve of battle as a focus for
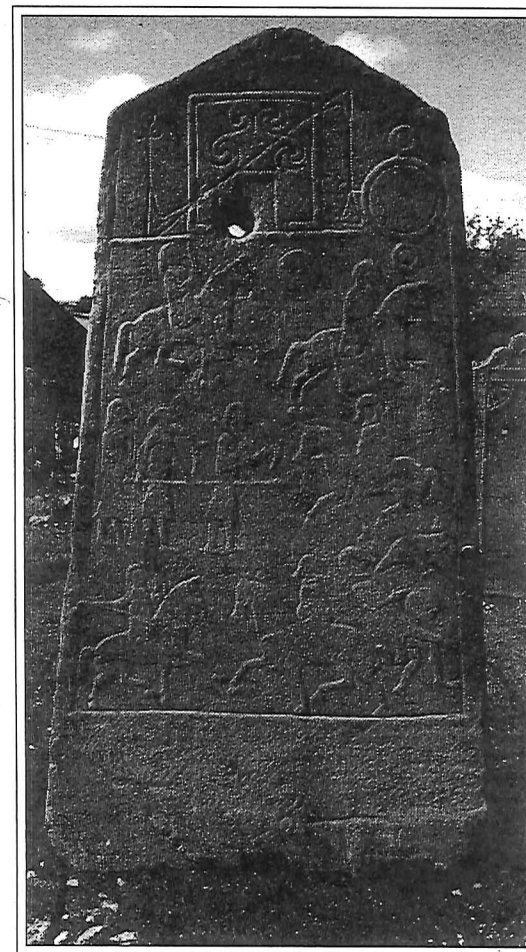

fig. 3.3
Aberlemno Churchyard Stone (Copyright Historic Scotland).

prayers for victory. Later, the monks of Hexham were to mark the anniversary of Oswald's death, i.e., his feast-day as a saint, by journeying to the site of battle and eventually building a church there; Hexham and Oswald's kin were involved in the creation of the cult of this royal saint. (Plummer 1896: 128-30; Wallace-Hadrill 1971: 83-5). The anniversary being commemorated here was not a victory, or at least not in earthly terms, but the elements are similar to what we have been examining in the Ottonian *Reich*: divine favour in battle, the cult of a warrior saint, bound up with the prestige of the royal family and the marking out of a battle site through liturgy and monument (Oswald's cross). This sort of context may be a suggestive one for one of the most famous monuments of a kingdom to the north of Northumbria: the Pictish carved stone in Aberlemno churchyard. (See fig. 3.3) One side of this has an astonishingly vivid depiction of a battle. The stone is located near the site of a heavy Northumbrian defeat at the hands of the Picts, Nechtansmere 685; the battle scene is backed with an equally powerful depiction of a cross; the date of the carving is probably eighth century. (Alcock 1988: 30). Perhaps the true parallels to the Aberlemno stone are to be found, not just in other works of visual art, but in the sort of ceremonial and liturgical materials which I have been describing. The eighth century also saw Carolingian rulers establish 'new military services aimed at procuring victory'. As a thank-offering for victory, a focus of prayer for future victories and testimony to the wealth of a powerful patron, the Aberlemno stone can be illuminated by the brilliant pages of Michael McCormick's *Eternal Victory*, which studies the origins of this type of material (McCormick 1986: 347).

Such parallel contexts are, I hope, suggestive. They could certainly be extended. Kenneth mac Alpìn's translation of relics of St Columba to Dunkeld in 849 and their being placed in a newly built church was indeed a 'powerful symbolic gesture' (MacQuarrie 1990: 12; Henderson 1987: 189-90). This gesture, intended to mobilise earthly and heavenly loyalties, is echoed by Otto I's transfer of relics of St Maurice from Burgundy via a majestic display at Regensburg to their resting-place at his favoured church of Magdeburg in 960. As Henry Mayr-Harting writes, 'St Maurice, now patron saint of Magdeburg would carry on the struggle to the East most effectively; the military resources of heaven would be harnessed to his shrine at Magdeburg' (Mayr-Harting 1991: 12). For Otto, St Maurice offered a means of focusing the loyalties of his followers on a transcendental figure who could act as patron of the whole *Reich*, a *Reich* whose weak governmental institutions could thus be

supplemented. In this light we can see something of the fundamental importance of the royal patronage of Columba's shrine and cult at Dunkeld and it is worth recalling that in 918, at the battle of Corbridge, the army from Scotland followed the crozier of St Columba to victory; this crozier was in the possession of Dunkeld (Henderson 1987: 190). In this light also, Alan MacQuarrie's suggestions concerning the backing of the cult of Constantine at Govan by kings of the Scots with ambitions in Strathclyde may acquire added force (MacQuarrie 1990: 12-14).

The transfer of relics and their deployment in order to win the patronage of victory-bringing saints form a language through which royal power and aspirations are expressed. This is a language that the historian must learn. But I would add two notes of caution here. First, we cannot interpret such cults purely as a vehicle for political claims. The primary audience for such actions was God and His saints (Keller 1985). Second, rulers could pour resources into such cults without always achieving the desired results. Even Ottonian support never quite managed to turn St Maurice into a patron for the whole *Reich*; perhaps he was too narrowly associated with Magdeburg to be a universal figure. And whatever the intentions of Columba's patrons, he was to be pipped at the post as a *Reichsheilige*, a 'national' saint, by St Andrew; St Andrews and Scone were to challenge Dunkeld (Lynch 1991: 36-8, 93-4). The world of saints' cults was a dynamic one.

iii) A neglected source?

We turn now to the final theme of this paper: source material. My concern here is with a type of text that is very characteristic of the ecclesiastical culture of early medieval Europe but which has been relatively neglected by English-language historians: the commemoration books, the *Libri Vitae* or the *Libri Memoriales* of the great monasteries (Constable 1972). These books record the names of men and women associated with the monastery concerned, either as members of it, or as patrons, or indeed as servants. They constitute a vast reservoir of information on early medieval society. They are, however, forbidding in appearance and difficult to read, consisting as they do of lists of many hundreds of names. German scholars, principally at the University of Freiburg, have been busily producing usable editions and the *Liber Vitae* of Durham has recently appeared in a 'user-friendly' edition that may offer a treasure-trove to scholars working on early medieval Scotland (Gerchow 1988).

This book originated in one of the great monasteries of Northumbria; traditionally, it has been ascribed to Lindisfarne but Dr Gerchow makes a case for Monkwearmouth/Jarrow (Gerchow 1988: 119 ff. and cf. 139)). It is of course difficult to date such a work, consisting as it does of entries made and recopied over time, but for our purposes a date some time in the ninth century before 840 is a useful peg on which to hang our material (Gerchow 1988: 130-31; but cf. 135-7).

The material that interests us is that pointing to connections between the Northumbrian monastic home of the *Liber Vitae* and the Celtic North. Such material can certainly be found in the Liber. Particularly prominent are references to the rulers of the Picto-Scottish world. In a list of 'The names of kings and leaders' (*Nomina regum vel ducum*) the following should attract our attention: (no. 43) Unust; (no. 80) Custantin; (no. 100) Uoenan (Gerchow 1988: 304). Following suggestions made by E.M. Thompson in 1884, Gerchow has identified these three kings as: (no.43) Oengus I, son of Fergus, 729-761; (no. 80)Constantine, son of Fergus, 790-820; (no. 100) Eoghenan, son of Oengus II and nephew of Constantine, died in 839 (Thompson 1884: 81; Gerchow 1988: 149-54). As a proportion of the number of rulers in the whole list, this Picto-Scottish quotient is relatively high and must testify to the importance of such kings in the political horizons of a great Northumbrian monastery and its patrons. Did these kings have particularly intense contacts with Northumbria? Do such references record royal gifts? Why were these kings marked out for spiritual favour in this way? Eoghenan's contacts may in fact have stretched south of Northumbria to Wessex as he may have met not only King Eanfred of Northumbria but also King Egbert of Wessex in a great assembly of kings (at Lindisfarne or Monkwearmouth/Jarrow?) the memory of which is preserved in the *Liber* (Gerchow 1988: 130-35). But more than political contacts are at stake here; or rather, such material reminds us how bonds of prayer and patronage could themselves be political contacts in this period. Investigating the extent and meaning of such contacts, the memory of which is preserved in the *Liber Vitae*, should be an absorbing and rewarding task. Such an investigation should also examine what contacts were not developed; might we not, for example, expect there to be more references to Iona or to the other churches of the Picto-Scottish world than there appear to be on first examination? (Gerchow 1988: 15, 125-8, 145-6.)

Even if some of the findings yielded by examination of this source are negative, negative findings are themselves important. Serious work can begin thanks to the fact that a source from the north of England containing the names of Picto-Scottish kings has now been edited by a German scholar. We must be prepared to be as 'international' in our horizons as our historical subjects were. In the list of 'The names of kings and rulers' Constantine's name is preceded by that of Charles, i.e., Charlemagne, who also had interests in Northumbria (Gerchow 1988: 139,304). The kings of early medieval North Britain were not too far away from Maastricht and Aachen after all.

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State Formation in Europe in the First Millenium A. D.

Peter Heather

This essay is concerned not with the formation of all european states of the first millenium A.D., but to highlight and then briefly explore a recurring pattern of historical development on the fringes of the great empires of the era. In the Germanic world beyond the frontiers of the Roman state in the first half of the period, and later in the Slavic world bordering the Carolingian and Ottonian states in the second, there emerged, over time, ever more substantial political entities. This paper will first compare the processes of development in each case, to establish that they were indeed parallel, and then concentrate upon causation. Why should history have repeated itself in this way?

This is of course a huge subject, which can be given no more than a very introductory treatment here. Many refinements of argument must be excluded together with much relevant evidence (I also consider that many of the points are also applicable to Viking Age Scandinavia). Despite all these caveats, I hope to have responded to the challenge to think in broad terms laid down recently especially by the Danish archaeologist Randsborg (1991; 1992), and to provide an alternative way of looking at some of the phenomena which have attracted his eye.

Part 1: The Transformation of the Germanic and Slavic Worlds

The central point I want to make in this section is that both the Germanic world of the fourth century and the Slavic of the ninth and ten centuries saw the emergence of political entities of sufficient size and solidity to be worthy, in some way, of the designation 'states'. How to define a state is of course a moot point, but I have in mind a combination of characteristics such as:
- substantial size (states exercise authority over more than just one local area).
- the ability to endure (individual leaders may come and go, even with great regularity, but the political entity nonetheless retains its basic shape).
- some concept of public authority (the political centre is capable of defining and enforcing a range of rights and duties owed to itself).

There are other characteristics which might be adduced, but this is a sufficient check-list with which to work.

Measured against such standards, entities which might reasonably be called states already existed in the Germanic world before the Migration Period saw the large-scale penetration of Roman frontiers (from the last quarter of the fourth century). Scholars tend to emphasise, for instance, that the fourth-century Alamanni of Rome's Rhine frontier had a multiplicity of 'kings', and argue on the basis of this that processes of amalgamation had advanced little beyond the situation described by Tacitus in the first century A.D. (e.g. James, 1989, 42; after Thompson, 1965, 40). What really strikes me, however, is that whenever Roman attention was turned away from the Rhine frontier by emergencies elsewhere (particularly involving Persia), Alamannic society threw up one leader with pre-eminent power, a succession of whom appear in the sources: Chnodomarius, Vadomarius, and Macrianus. Roman policy was precisely directed towards containing such leaders - kidnapping them at banquets being a preferred approach - and at the height of their powers such men were ready openly to confront the Roman state in aggressive warfare (AM 16. 12. 23- 6; 21. 4. 1-6; 27. 10. 3-4; 28. 5. 8; 29. 4. 2ff.; 30. 3. 2-6). Individuals came and went, but the Alamanni showed a marked tendency to act as one group, and that group was large enough to pose real difficulties for the Roman state. There is no need to consider other Germanic examples in the same detail. Suffice it to say that further east, on the Danube, the pattern was very similar. Fourth-century Goths attempted consistently to assert political and ideological independence in the face of periodically exercised Roman power (Heather, 1991, c. 3; Heather and Matthews, 1991, c. 2).

Similar points can be made about Slavic polities of the ninth and tenth centuries. Ninth-century Moravia quickly established sufficient size and solidity to resist East Frankish political expansion in a whole series of wars and border skirmishes. Likewise, its princes, having once decided that they ought to become Christians, sought the assistance of Constantinople and the Papacy rather than East Francia in order to avoid coming under the latter's ideological hegemony (Dvornik, 1974, c.1; Reuter, 1991a), 82-4). And as the Carolingian world started to fragment, Moravian leaders became recognised players in Carolingian politics. Disgruntled Frankish magnates cultivated Moravian rulers, and, perhaps most impressively, Regino of Prum records that, at their formal meeting in 890, Arnulf, then ruler of East Francia, conceded overlordship of Bohemia to Zwentibold of Moravia in return for Zwentibold's promise to provide political support for Arnulf's two illegitimate sons (Regino ad a 890). In the tenth century, after the Magyar destruction of Moravia, Poland played a

similar role. By the time of his death in 992, Mieszko I had established the legitimacy of his state as part of the Ottonian world via a series of diplomatic agreements, and had carefully cultivated relations with the Papacy (Dvornik, 1974, c.2; Reuter, 1991a, c.9). The course of diplomatic relations between these Slavic polities and the Carolingians and Ottonians did not run smoothly, but the legitimated position accorded them demonstrates clearly that they were substantial and reasonably solid entities, which could be neither ignored nor destroyed.

Neither the Germanic political units of the fourth century, nor the later Slavic ones sprang fully formed into the historical record; both emerged from long processes of development. There is no space here to explore the question in detail, but some essentials can be sketched in, together with the overriding point that the Germanic and Slavic processes of development were in many ways parallel.

A good place to start is the political map (Figure 4.1). The Germanic world of the time of Tacitus (first century A.D.) consisted of many small political units. He names well over fifty of them in the *Germania*. These were far from stable entities; elsewhere, for instance, Tacitus records the emergence of the Batavi from the Chatti (*Histories* 4. 12). All the evidence suggests, indeed, that the *Germania* should be seen as a snapshot of a situation subject to periodic change. By the fourth century, especially in areas close to the Roman frontier, these many units had given way to fewer, larger ones. Saxons, Franks, Alamanni, and Goths, for instance, all incorporated several of the earlier, smaller units (eg. James, 1988, c.2; Heather, 1991, c.3). This process of amalgamation is paralleled in the Slavic world of the second half of the millenium. Fourteen Bohemian *Duces*, for instance, presented themselves for baptism at the Easter court of Louis the German in 845, each presumably the ruler of his own small area (*AF* 845). By the end of the tenth century, Bohemia had emerged as an independent polity under a succession of rulers from the Przemysl dynasty (Dvornik, 1974, cc.2-3; Graus, 1983; Reuter, 1991a, 261-4). Or again, the territory of what became the Polish kingdom was dominated between the seventh and the ninth centuries by some thirty smallish tribal groups. In the ninth century, these were subsumed into a pattern of eight greater tribes: the Polonie, Goplanie, Mazovians, Pomeranians, Slezanie, Opolanie, Wieslanie, and Ledzianie. From the middle of the tenth century, the Piast dynasty (originally, it seems, rulers of the Polanie) steadily extended their

fig. 4.1
The tribes of 1st century Germania after Tacitus (after Anderson, 1938)

domination to create a united Polish kingdom (Dvornik, 1974, c.2; Bardach 1983; Reuter, 1991a, 253ff.).

The more substantial political entities of later Germanic and Slavic history all emerged, therefore, from the amalgamation of smaller units, often around a dynasty which started life as the ruler of just one of the constituent units. Indeed, on one level, inter-dynastic competition was the mechanism by which this process was carried forward. It is an important fact that the very largest of the new entities (such as ninth-century Moravia or tenth-century Poland) emerged beyond the immediate frontier areas of their imperial neighbours, whether Roman, Carolingian, or Ottonian . Since our narrative accounts all derive from these neighbours, we tend to be unable to observe the process of dynastic competition which created Moravia, Poland, or indeed the fourth-century Gothic realms in any detail. However, the kind of political competition which must have underlain it is documented for the border regions, precisely because those regions were of more immediate concern to the relevant Empire. Hence Frankish and Ottonian sources reveal much about the dynastic struggles of southern Denmark in the early Viking period (particularly thanks to the ASB; cf. e.g. Randsborg, 1980, c.2), and about those among the Elbe and Bohemian Slavs of the tenth century (Fehring, 1990; Reuter, 1991a, c.9). Roman sources similarly illuminate dynastic struggles among the Goths once the Hunnic invasions had forced them across the Roman frontier (Heather, 1991, c.1). Such inter-dynastic rivalry had almost certainly always been a constant feature of German and Slavic society, however, and I would argue that it was only because of a series of other transformations, which were taking place simultaneously, that larger polities were generated, rather than an endless series of temporary local lordships.

One of the most marked of these changes was a considerable extension of social differentiation, with elites becoming that much richer and more powerful than their compatriots. The discussion of such developments among the Germans of the first few centuries AD has generated an extensive scholarly literature, concentrating in particular upon the incidence of rich graves: Eggers' *fürstengräber*. Elite graves do show a tendency to become steadily richer over time, but it has also become clear that really rich graves cluster chronologically, with, broadly speaking, one group at the end of the first century and another at the end of the second. This suggests that such graves are not a straightforward measure of wealth, but rather mark moments of intense competition, when different clans were seeking to emphasise their relative status by showing how much they could afford to bury with their dead. As such, these graves not only demonstrate increasing wealth among the elite, but also make the point that aggregations of wealth had profound implications for the societies involved, and were not built up unchallenged (Eggers, 1949/50; Gebühr, 1974; Hedeager, 1978b; 1988; Hedeager and Kristiansen, 1981; Steuer, 1982, 212 ff.; Pearson, 1989). More generally, as soon as we start to have good literary evidence for Germanic society in the late Roman period - that is, from the fourth century onwards - a well-entrenched and powerful noble class, more dominant than anything found in the first century, is a constant feature (e.g. Thompson, 1966, 43 ff.; James, 1988, 216 ff.; Heather, 1991, 318 ff.). The sources record many disputes between such men, but their general social position seems unassailable, having presumably been established in the process of competition tangentially witnessed to by the *fürstengräber*. Excavations on the Runder Berg have nicely illustrated the kind of elite centre from which this dominance was exercised (Figure 4.2; after Todd, 1992, 209-10).
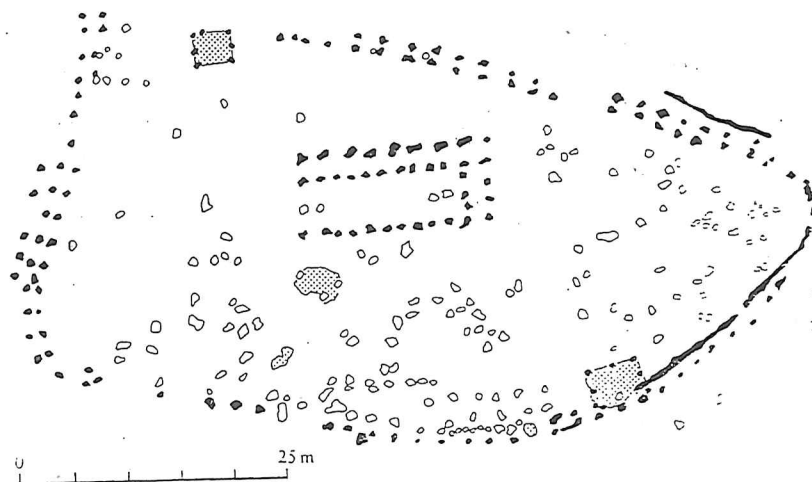
fig. 4.2
The 4th century chieftainly stronghold of the Runder Berg, near Urach, Germany.
(After Todd, 1992)

For similar developments in the later Slavic world, impressive archaeological evidence of a different kind is available in numerous hill-forts (Figure 4.3; after Herrmann, 1983, covering western Poland between the Elbe and Vistula). The classic investigation of Tornow by Herrmann charted the evolution of a fort and its nearby open settlement over time. The fort may well have started as a communally-generated place of refuge (like many others perhaps: see below), but, in later phases, came to be dominated by one large dwelling, suggesting that its control had come to be a mechanism in the exercise of social domination (Herrmann, 1973; Kobylinski, 1990,). This is supported by the fact that the leaders of later Slavic society, known in Frankish sources as *Duces*, centred their lordship upon fortified centres (called *civitates*) (see, e.g., *AF* 872; and for a Polish example of a different kind, Jażdżewski, 1975). The building and maintenance of such fortified centres by a socially-dominant class necessarily implies, of course, that this class had established its rights to draw upon substantial labour services from the rest of the population. Towards the end of the millenium, these services were used to create impressive achievements. The ninth-century Moravian capital at Mikulčiče, for instance, consisted of a fortified area of 6 hectares (including a 400m2 stone-built basilica) dominating an outer town of 200 hectares (Poulik, 1975; Huml, 1990).

The growth of social differentiation in both Germanic and Slavic societies is also marked by the rise of groups with specialist functions, in particular armed retainers. By the fourth century, Chnodomarius, the dominant Alamannic chief at the battle of Strasbourg in 357, had a personal retinue of 200 men (AM
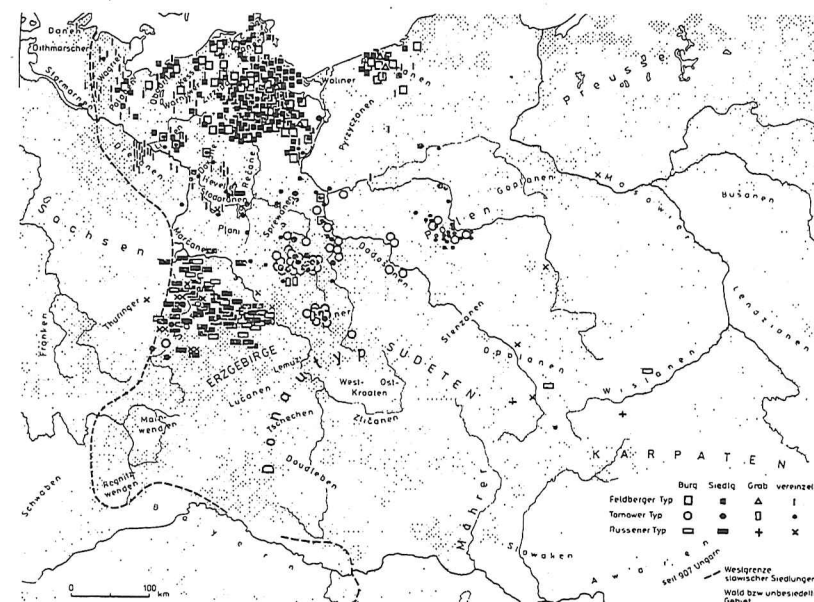
fig. 4.3
Early Medieval Slavic Hillforts in Modern Poland.
(After Herrmann 1983 table II)

16. 12. 60). Among contemporary Goths further to the east, retainers were used to enforce their decisions upon villages under their control (*St. Saba* 4. 5). In similar vein, the Bohemian *duces* who presented themselves for baptism in 845 came 'with their men' (*AF* 845; cf. Graus, 1983), and, most impressive of all, the Arab geographers report that Mieszko I of Poland kept a personal military force of 3000 men (IJ). As with fortifications, specialist warrior retinues could not have existed if the socially-dominant did not dispose of a number of well-established rights over the population: not least, a right to food renders from which to feed their men.[1]

Among both the Germans and the Slavs, therefore, the appearance of larger political entities is associated with the appearance of well-entrenched nobilities who disposed of sufficient rights to be able to support a specialist military class and, in some cases, to generate substantial building programmes. In both cases, political and social transformation was matched by a degree of economic revolution.

Between the start of the millenium and the late Roman period, agriculture underwent a fundamental change in central and northern Europe. An extensive, low-productivity agriculture, based on the so-called 'Celtic field' system, which involved short periods of cultivation and long periods of fallow, and was thus marked by dispersed, short-lived settlements, gave way to a much more intensive agricultural regime. By the fourth century, certain areas, at least, saw much larger, longer-lived settlements - Feddersen Wierde and Wijster, the two most extensively investigated Germanic villages, both existed over several centuries - whose inhabitants had clearly learned to integrate arable and pastoral agriculture to a much greater degree, and were thus able to use manure to maintain the fertility of their arable fields. These changes added up to considerable increase in agricultural productivity.[2]

A further increase marked the period of Slavic social transformation. Between 500 and 1000 A.D., pollen analyses have shown that the ratio of grass to cereal pollens in central and eastern Europe changed from something like 3:1 to more or less 1:1; in other words, the area under arable cultivation was considerably expanded at the expense of pasture. Pollen types also indicate that this period saw the increased planting of rye and other winter grains. These were planted in the autumn, in addition to grains planted in the spring, and led the way towards the evolution of three-field systems. Instead of having half the land fallow and half with spring grain, one third now tended to be fallow, one third spring grain, and one third winter grain. Ibn Jacub, interestingly, noted that tenth-century Slavs took two harvests each year, perhaps suggesting that they were already operating a three-field system. Either way, we have two different indications that arable production increased substantially (Herrmann, 1982; 18 ff.; Donat, 1983; Hildebrandt, 1988; Godja, 1990a & b).

Both Germanic and Slavic societies also saw important developments in craft production. In the later phases of Feddersen Wierde, for instance, there emerged a pallisaded centre (the so-called 'Herrenhof'), which was associated with considerable evidence for craftworks of various kinds (Haarnagel, 1979). Further east, among the fourth-century Goths, glass was produced for the first time outside the Roman Empire, along with the intricate metalwork which seems to have been a mark of high status in the Migration Period (Rau, 1972; Green, 1987). This kind of evidence does not point to an industrial revolution, but does bear witness to a significant degree of diversification and specialisation (Todd, 1991, 125 ff.). Evidence for the later Slavs is similar. The last few centuries of the millenium saw an explosion particularly in silver-working among the Slavs, and some of the excavated hill forts were centres of iron and salt production (Herrmann, 1982, 40 ff.; Poulik, 1983; Donat, 1983; Kobylinski, 1990).

In sum, the basic pattern of development of Germanic society in the Roman period, and of Slavic society in later centuries was markedly similar. Both saw the emergence of more powerful and more stable political entities, matched by a marked increase in social differentiation and a considerable expansion in the agricultural base of the economy, together with a some general growth in the economy's sophistication.

Part 2: Causation

Both Germans and Slavs can be characterised from one particular viewpoint (with no judgement on their relative merits implied) as less complex societies on the edge of more complex ones: the Germans sharing a frontier with the Roman Empire of the Mediterranean and its hinterland, the Slavs bordering not only the Carolingian and post-Carolingian world, but also, via the river routes of eastern Europe, the lands of the Islamic Caliphate. What I will argue in the second half of this paper is that this pattern of thorough-going political, social, and economic transformation taking place in less complex areas bordering more complex ones, is not historically random or accidental. Rather, the evidence suggests that such geographical proximity generated a series of relationships with a marked tendency to promote precisely these kinds of transformations.

Perhaps the most obvious type of relationship was economic. This is of importance because economic relations with a larger neighbour introduced new types of goods - that is, new potential expressions of wealth - into less complex societies, the raw materials, one might say, for the growth of social

differentiation. In recent literature, there has been a tendency to use terms such as 'prestige goods' and 'gift-giving' to indicate that imported materials circulated by means other than straightforward trading links. This was certainly the case in some circumstances, but gift-giving usually required something in return (Mauss, 1966), so that there is no fixed dividing line between it and trade. Both trade and gift-giving thus not only provide new forms of wealth, but also tend, in any case, to stimulate production in the less sophisticated economy to generate a surplus for purposes of exchange.[3]

The evidence for substantial exchanges between Germanic societies and the Roman Empire is qualitatively impressive. Those interested in prestige goods and gift exchanges point to the high quality Roman manufactures which are a marked feature of rich burials in the Germanic world beyond the immediate frontier zone. Within this zone, of approximately 200 kms, more exquisite Roman goods do not tend to be buried with the dead, but ordinary Roman products turn up in settlements, and were clearly a feature of everyday life.[4] In return, the literary evidence suggests that the Roman Empire consumed large quantities of German-produced raw materials. The Rhine frontier in the fourth century is particularly well-documented, and, in a series of treaties, the Roman Emperor Julian demanded from the Alamanni wood, foodstuffs, and manpower (in the form both of slaves and of drafts of recruits for the army: AM 17. 1. 12-13; 17. 10. 3-4, 8-9; 18. 2. 5-6, 19). These treaties were imposed at a moment when the balance of power was in Rome's favour and the materials could simply be demanded. On other occasions, the goods would have had to have been paid for (cf. Geary, 1988, 3 for an example), and the frontier garrisons must have formed a substantial centre of demand in a whole series of local economies. More generally, an important slave trade clearly operated out of the Germanic world into the Roman Empire. These types of exchange are archaeologically invisible, but that does not mean they did not take place on a large scale and a regular basis. Even when relations with the Goths were bad, for instance, designated centres were maintained for exchange (cf. Heather and Matthews, 1991, 91 ff.).

The pattern of relations between the Slavs and their neighbours was similar. In their case, apart from any local exchanges along the frontier, two particularly valuable trade goods flowed out of the north: slaves and furs. Much, of course, has been written about the fur and slave trades operated by the Rus down the Volga and Dnieper rivers to the Islamic world and Byzantium (then and now:

e.g. DAI c.9; IF; IR; Sawyer, 1982, c.8). Arab geographers make it clear, however, that the Slavs of central Europe were equally involved. Prague was a great centre for trade in both goods (IJ), and Arab coin finds are plentiful in Slavic territories between the Oder and Vistula (Figure 4.4 after Herrmann, 1982, 102-4).
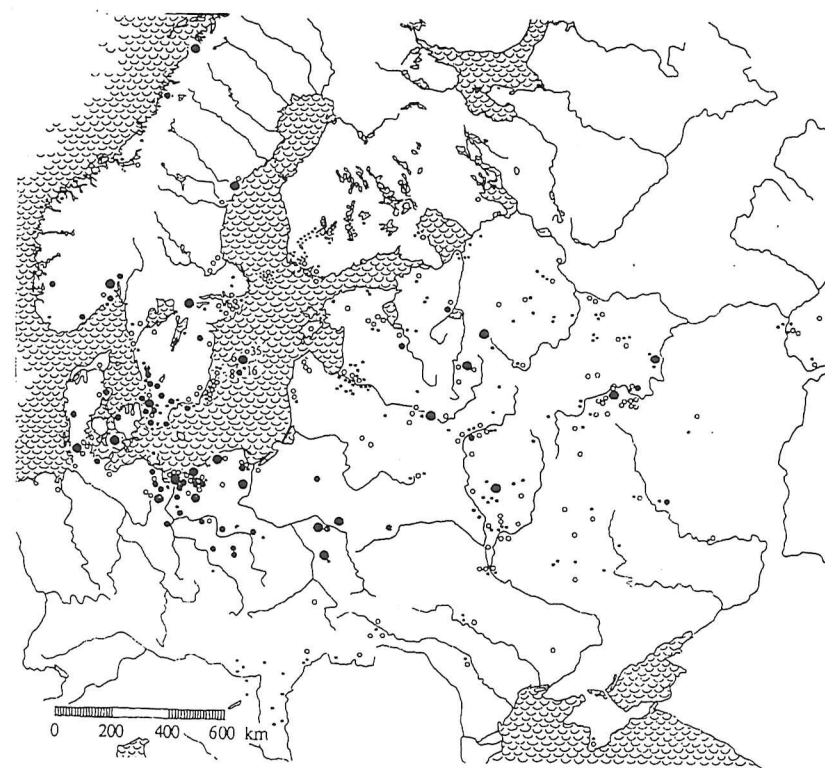
Mid 9th - mid 10th Century

	Hoards weighing under 1000g	Over 1000g	unknown
Silver hoard with 50 - 100% arabic coins	•	•	∘
Silver hoard with less than 50% arabic coins	•	•	∘
Single finds of arabic coins			•

fig. 4.4
Finds of Arab Silver Coins in Central and Eastern Europe, 10th - 11th cents.
(After Herrmann, 1982, 109)

The effect of these exchanges was two-fold. First, they brought new wealth into the German and Slavic worlds to crystalise nascent social stratification. Second, and perhaps even more important, the new exchange links generated changes in social organisation to facilitate and/or control the exploitation of these new sources of wealth. The best documented example of this is the Slavic slave trade which was up and running to the Islamic world by the mid-eighth century at the latest (Pritsak, 1983, 434-5: comments in discussion). Literary sources leave no doubt that Slavic slave traders preyed upon their neighbours. The Arab geographers report that the Rus regularly attacked Prussian tribes living by the eastern Baltic (IJ), and that the less powerful eastern Slavs lived in dread of their more powerful western Slavic neighbours (IJ). That this dread was closely related to the operations of the slave trade is suggested by the fact that Arab silver coins are found precisely among the western Slavs, west of the Vistula, and not further east. In Figure 4.4, there is a largely blank area between the Rus and the western Slavs, from where, one suspects, most of the slaves were being taken.[5] The existence and operation of the slave trade thus stimulated internal antagonism within the Slavic world. It also promoted social amalgamation: belonging to a larger group both potentially protected the individual involved and offered the possibility of preying on neighbours for profit (offering a new perspective on the purpose of all those Slavic hill forts). The same must also have been true of the German slave trade of the Roman period, but we have no equivalent of the Arab travellers to document its internal workings.

A combination of protection and profit begins to explain why agricultural producers might have been willing to generate a surplus and hand it over to an elite. This willingness, it must be stressed, was the central pillar upon which the whole structure of these new early medieval polities rested; without it, an elite would have been unable to differentiate itself from the mass of the population, support its retainers, or organise building corvées. It is thus the central phenomenon that needs to be explained if the development of these polities is to be fully understood.[6]

If we turn now to political contacts between more and less complex societies - a subject which only documentary sources can illuminate - the explanation of this willingness can be taken considerably further. The first approach of Empires to their less complex neighbours was generally hostile. The years around the birth of Christ saw the Romans attempt the full-scale conquest of *Germania* (cf. Tacitus *Annals*), and Franks and Ottonians preyed very generally upon their eastern neighbours. Reuter has recently drawn attention to the fact that the eighth and early ninth centuries saw Carolingian raiding in every year except three, although not all of these were directed to the east: (1991b; cf. too Reuter, 1985). Ninth-century sources (particularly the Annals of Fulda) record many attacks particularly on the Elbe Slavs, a tradition which was continued in the tenth century when the Slav marches became a crucial source of rewards for an Ottonian dynasty engaged in establishing its hold on east Francia (Leyser, 1979; Reuter, 1991a, 77ff., 160ff.). The point of all this effort on the part of Romans, Franks, and Saxons was exploitation; raids beyond the frontier brought in not just initial booty, but, in due course, led also to the establishment of regular tribute relations. We have already encountered the raw materials Julian extracted from the Alamanni, and similar tributes were extracted from the Slavs; ninth-century sources refer to the regular 'yearly gifts' (*dona annua*) they were expected to produce. The run of charters endowing the Archbishopric of Magdeburg and its suffragans with income derived from Slavic lands makes the point very forcefully (*DOI* 214, 231, 295, 303, 366, 406, 968, 971[7]). This predatory attitude suggests another reason why larger political units should have been generated among less complex societies on the fringes of powerful Empires. The need to defend oneself against powerful exploitative neighbours gave, I would argue, a powerful stimulus to processes of socio-political amalgamation.

The first really powerful political coalition we know about among the early Germans, for instance, was put together by Arminius precisely to fight off intrusive Roman power (Tacitus, *Annals*). Likewise, in later years, an important moment in the creation of Alaric's Visigoths came when a Roman pogrom directed against their families led allied troops to join his force (Zosimus. 5. 35. 5-6; cf. Heather, 1991, 213-4, 316). Or again, the rank and file of two previously separate Gothic groups who eventually united to create the Ostrogoths refused to fight one another, at a moment when both were occupying territory within the east Roman Empire, on the grounds that the only victors from such a struggle would be the Romans who would be able easily to mop up the survivors (the Romans having attempted to manufacture a violent confrontation between them). The rival dynasties decided the struggle by assassination, which did no harm to overall Gothic strength, and then both groups joined the surviving leader (Heather, 1991, pt.3). In all these cases (and they could easily be multiplied), the existence of an outside, hostile power was a crucial ingredient in temporary or more permanent political unification.

Frankish and Ottonian power bore down equally heavily upon the Slavs. In the 980s, for instance, the Abodrites and Wagrians, Elbe Slavic groups, put together a coalition to throw off Ottonian domination, which had been intense since the time of Otto I (most recently, Reuter, 1991a, 174 ff.). A particularly vivid illustration of the intense resentment generated amongst those who had to live next to a powerful, predatory Empire is provided by an incident of 884. In that year, Zwentibald and his Moravians avenged themselves on the sons of William and Engelschalk, recently deceased brothers who had run the Pannonian march closest to Moravian territory, by cutting off the right hand, tongue, and genitals of Werinhar, the middle of Engelschalk's three sons (CAF 884). Proximity to an Empire thus generated a need and desire for self-defence. The fact that the largest of at least the new Slavic entities were generated just behind the immediate frontier area (p. 50) merely reflects the fact that Empires were able to place strict limits upon state formation in the immediate frontier region, but had less control beyond it. It is striking that both Roman and Ottonian leaders used the tactic of inviting tribal leaders to dinner and either assassinating or hi-jacking them (see respectively Heather, 1991, 132-3; Widukind 2. 20 on the Margrave Gero's banquet which removed thirty Slavic leaders in one fell swoop). Such tactics, of course, maintained political chaos among immediate neighbours.

Not, of course, that the violence all ran in one direction. Great Empires, and this was certainly true of the Roman and Frankish worlds, tend to be wealthier than less complex neighbours. Rich prizes were available, therefore, to groups among the latter who could organise raiding on a successful basis. Once again, this provided a stimulus to political amalgamation, since, generally speaking, the larger the group doing the raiding, the greater the chance of success. Border raiding was clearly endemic to Roman-German relations; for instance, of the 24 years covered in detail by Ammianus (354-78), the Rhine frontier was disturbed by the Alamanni in no less than 14 of them. Nor, I think, is it an accident that pre-eminent Alamannic chiefs of the fourth century tended to organise predatory warfare across the Roman frontier; this was probably part and parcel of justifying and sustaining their power.[8] Ninth century sources (especially the AF), likewise, show that any political problem in east Francia was exploited by the Moravians and Bohemians as an opportunity to lay waste the frontier region. An example which nicely demonstrates the in-built tendency of raiding to generate cooperation is provided by the Elbe Slavs in 869. In that year, the Sorbs, Abodrites, and Daleminzi concocted an alliance

to lay waste the Thuringian march (AF 869). Again, examples could be multiplied.

Overall, then, the internal pressures let loose in less complex societies by a whole series of both positive and negative relationships with predatory, imperial neighbours played a critical role in stimulating the growth of new and larger polities. Economic contacts provided new forms of wealth and generated struggles for dominance; military pressure led to unification both for self-defence, and from a desire to profit, by raiding, from the wealth just over the frontier. In all these ways, proximity to a great power promoted the tendency for groups to come together under particular leaders. And once that tendency had begun to work, a whole series of other relationships with the great power carried forward the transformation.

For instance, once these more powerful political entities had begun to exist, it was natural for large Empires to seek to protect themselves from the potential threat. A tried and trusted tactic was to find an individual leader or dynasty who was willing to cooperate in keeping the peace, and then seek to promote that leader's or dynasty's hold over their own subjects. For the Romans, granting annual gifts to favoured leaders was a consistent item of policy; the leader could then use the wealth gained to strengthen himself at home and thus make it more likely that the peace would be kept (Klöse, 1934; Heather, 1991, 107 ff.). In the case of the Slavs, Franks and Ottonians exported legitimation particularly via Christianity to favoured dynasts beyond the frontier. There was always ambiguity in the relationships thus formed. The favoured kings had to respond to the demands of their own followers as well as of their imperial friends; thus, despite receiving evident marks of favour (one member had a statue raised to him behind the Senate in Constantinople), the dynasty heading the fourth-century Gothic Tervingi was nonetheless on occasion hostile towards the Roman Empire (Heather, 1991, 115 ff.). Hence too, kings beyond the imperial frontier were always objects of some suspicion, and only partly included within the constellation of acknowledged powers.

A nice example of this point is provided by the Fulda annalist for the early 870s in the case of Zwentibold, who first claimed the Moravian throne with east Frankish help, was then imprisoned by them, and finally, after his release, turned on his former helpers, devastating particularly parts of Bavaria (AF 870-2). Zwentibald's imprisonment and release precisely illustrates the ambiguity of his position, and suggests that opinion was divided in east Francia as to

Dark
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60   Dark Age

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61 Scotland

whether he was a 'proper' ruler or not. On other occasions disgruntled members of the imperial nobility, especially Wichmann Billung the younger, tried to recruit Slavic support in their ventures (Reuter, 1991a, 160), just as, at a much earlier date, Goths and Alamanni had been invited, by different contenders, to participate in Roman civil wars; Licinius and Procopius sought Gothic help, Magnentius that of Franks and Alamanni (Heather, 1991, 107 ff; Julian *Or.* 1). The ambiguity could never be entirely removed, but the workings of imperial politics and the necessities of defence generally led to the promotion of particular rulers, and thus to the creation of more solid polities.

Exports of military technology could work in the same direction. It is quite unclear how the trade was carried on, but more Roman weapons have been found in Danish bogs than anywhere else in Europe (Ilkjaer and Lonstrup, 1983); the conclusion can only be that Roman hardware revolutionised conflict beyond the frontiers. How this might have worked to promote particular leaders is suggested by later Slavic evidence. Ibn Jacub reports that Mieszko I's special military force of 3000 men in fact consisted of armoured knights; this is confirmed by the agreement he made with Otto II in 983 where he promised to send 300 armoured knights to assist his lord when required. The point here, of course, is that the armoured knight was the late ninth and tenth century equivalent of the armoured division: a revolutionary type of military force which dominated battlefields, not to mention its profound long-term social consequences (see e.g. Dunbabin, 1985, 52-4). In other words, Mieszko had somehow got his hands on crucial up-to-date military hardware, and this no doubt played a crucial role in his domination of Poland. In all probability, no other individual could dispose of so many armoured men, and it is hardly surprising that Ibn Jacub also reports that Mieszko carefully looked after the interests of his men throughout their lives.

Nor should we ignore what might be termed the Frankenstein effect. Having benefitted from the effects of outside pressure to create new senses of solidarity; having gained control of new flows of wealth and organised raids; having received legitimation from nearby Empires and having taken advantage of new military technologies the emergent dynast was then in a position to extend his own realm by less than peaceful means. An Alamannic king recognised by the Romans died fighting Franks in the fourth century (AM 30. 3. 7), for instance, and Mieszko's Piast dynasty extended its power in the eleventh century north into Pomerania in a series of bloody campaigns (Bardach, 1983). Thus political enterprises which started life as responses to intrusive imperialism could themselves become predatory.

The central argument of this paper has, I hope, become clear. Klavs Randsborg has recently promoted the view in regard to the Roman Empire that its political dominance was succeeded by that of groups on and from its periphery because the Empire was founded on a level of exploitation of its internal resources (not to mention of its neighbours) which was, in the long-term, unsustainable (1991, c.8; 1992). Here, I have begun to put the case for a different line of argument. Rather than emphasising ecological factors (and it has yet to be proved that something of profound importance to the late twentieth century has any real relevance to patterns of life prevalent in say the fourth), it seems to me that the predatory approach of large Empires in the first millenium AD towards their smaller-scale neighbours led directly to the creation of polities more capable of resisting imperialistic intrusion. In other words, I would put less emphasis on internal developments within Empires when seeking to understand their political collapse, and concentrate instead on changes in their peripheries. There is precious little sign in the fourth century, for instance, that the Roman Empire was about to fall apart from within, but every sign that newly emerged peripheral Germanic powers, such as Alamanni and Goths, were demanding new types of relationship with their imperial neighbour (Heather, 1991, 115-21). And here, at least, my paper has some relevance for Dark Age Scotland. For this emphasis is very much in line with the conclusions of some recent general studies on the importance of outside pressure in understanding the historical processes by which senses of identity and political solidarity emerged (especially, but by no means solely: Smith, 1986). In the case of North Britain, one suspects, Roman predation underlay the coalescing of the Caledonii in the early centuries AD, and both Anglo-Saxon and Viking aggression played a crucial role in promoting the willingness of Picts, Scots, and Britons to work together for their own defence (cf. Brown in this volume).

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Abbreviations ~~~~~~

AF = *The Annals of Fulda*, trans. T. Reuter, Manchester Medieval Sources series, vol. II, Manchester, 1992.

AM = Ammianus Marcellinus trans. Loeb or (abridged) Penguin Classics.

ASB = *The Annals of St. Bertin,* trans. J. Nelson, Manchester Medieval Sources series, vol. I, Manchester, 1991.

CAF = *Continuation of the Annals of Fulda* trans. T. Reuter, Manchester Medieval Sources series, vol. II, Manchester, 1992.

DAI = Constantine Porphyryogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, trans. R.J.H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949..

DOI = Diplomata Ottonis I, M.G.H., Diplomata Regum et Imperatorum Germaniae, vol. I, Hanover, 1879-84.

IF = Ibn Fadlan, *Relation*, Fr. trans. M. Canard, *Miscellanea Orientalia* XI, London, 1973.

IJ = Ibn Jaqub, *Accounts of Various Lands,* Fr. trans. A. Miquel, *Annales* 22 (1966), 1048-63; *Book of Kingdoms and Roads*, ed. with Latin and Polish translation T. Kowalski, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*, n.s. I, Cracow, 1946.

IR = Ibn Rusteh, *Book of Precious Jewels*, Fr. trans. G. Wiet, *Les atours precieux*, Cairo, 1957.

Notes ~~~~~~

1. Further discussion: Steuer, 1982, 181 ff.; Hedeager, 1988; Pearson, 1989.

2. Some studies specifically devoted to agricultural evolution: Myhre, 1979; Van Es, 1967; Haarnagel, 1979. For further comment on these and other sites: Steuer, 1982, 258 ff.; Hedeager, 1988; Randsborg, 1991, 72 ff.; Todd, 1991, c.4.

3. Some attempt at model building: Frankenstein and Rowlands, 1978; Nash, 1985; Wells, 1985. These concern relations between Celtic society and the Mediterranean in the last centuries BC, but many of the thoughts are equally applicable to relations between the Germanic world and the Roman Empire. A more sceptical approach is Fulford, 1985.

4. Basic material: Eggers, 1951. Analysis: Hedeager, 1978a.

5. The predatory nature of life in the Baltic hinterland is underlined by the *Life of Anskar* c. 30 where Swedes attack the Cori who lived beside the sea.

6. Hence I quite agree with Fulford, 1985, that exchange with a great imperial neighbour does not by itself seem sufficient explanation for social transformation. Cf. what follows, I would, however, see it as one in a series of natural relationships with powerful neighbours which all had a tendency to work in the same direction.

7. I owe these references to Henry Mayr-Harting.

8. Chnodomarius: AM 16. 12. 1-6. After Macrianus made peace with the Romans, warfare continued with his other neighbours; he eventually died fighting Franks (AM 30. 3. 7). Cf. p. 48.

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The Insular and Continental Context of the St Andrews Sarcophagus

Isabel Henderson

The fragments of the carved Sarcophagus, now handsomely displayed in the cathedral museum at St Andrews were found in the early-nineteenth century when a deep grave was being dug west of the tower of St Regulus Church (Anderson 1974). When complete it would have been an eight-piece rectangular box consisting of four corner-slabs slotted vertically to receive the flanged end and side panels. It is not certain how the box was closed. The current reconstruction (fig. 5.1) gives it a shallow gabled roof but the pitch of the gable may have been higher (Radford 1955, fig 2) or it may have had a flat top (Thomas 1971, 156). The corner slabs extend well below the carving and they must have been slotted into a deep base or set directly into the ground. The surface condition of the carving suggests that the Sarcophagus was always in an indoor setting and the survival of the heads on the figurative panel makes it likely that the monument was buried, with respect, before the Reformation, when a new shrine was made for the contents.

Decoration and Imagery

Only one of the narrow end-panels is complete. An intricately carved, equal-armed cross with square terminals fills the entire panel space. Crosses of this type, but with shafts, are used on many Pictish cross-slabs (Allen 1903, Pt II, 49) including the slab at Nigg, Easter Ross (fig. 5.5). The Sarcophagus can therefore be reasonably described as a box made out of the elements of a typical Pictish cross-slab. The high-relief boss at the crossing of the arms is unusual for Pictish sculpture, although a flat decorated roundel is very common in this position. The placing of the boss on an end-panel suggests that it was a focus, and so in a sense, the front of the monument. We can perhaps imagine that the Sarcophagus was placed at right angles to the high altar with the bossed cross presenting itself to the pilgrim as he moved from west to east to venerate the relics it contained. The surviving long side-panel, with David rending the jaws of the lion, (fig. 5.2) would then have been visible from within the space in front of the altar. Such a location would rationalize David's position at the extreme right of the panel - his dominant scale and static pose terminating the scene as viewed from the west looking towards the east.
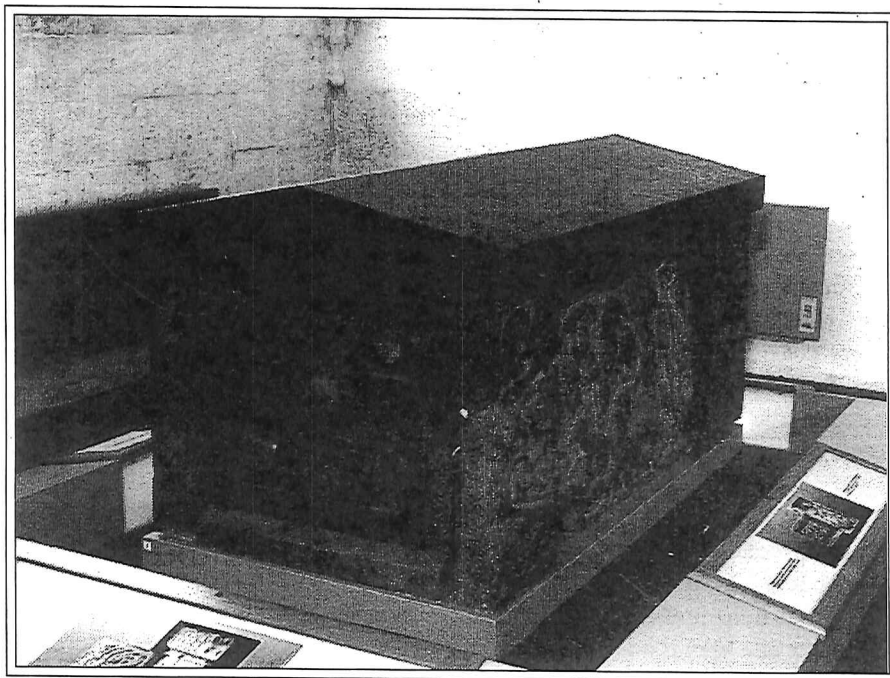
fig. 5.1
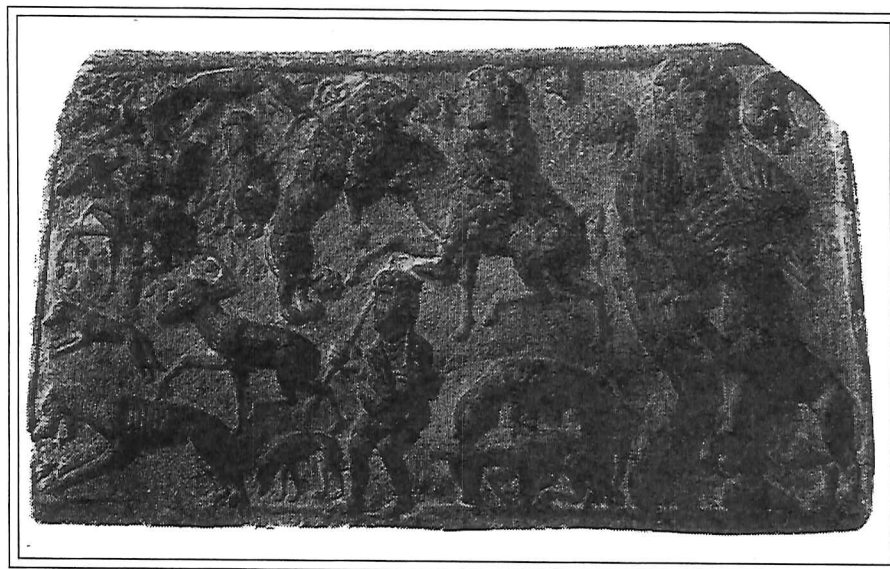The St Andrews Sarcophagus (Historic Scotland)

fig. 5.2
The David Panel (Royal Commission)

The links between the Nigg cross-slab and the Sarcophagus are well known. They share David iconography, although at Nigg the surface detail of the figures has been smashed off. The St Andrews boss, at the centre of the cross, is decorated with raised spirals, and a boss of this complex type is placed to the left of the upper arm of the cross at Nigg. The bosses covered with enmeshed snakes used to fill two of the corners of the background of the end-panel of the Sarcophagus are the dominant decorative feature of the background of the Nigg cross. The pairs of playful monkeys placed in the other corners of the end-panel of the Sarcophagus are paralleled on other Easter Ross monuments, the Tarbat cross-slab, and the recumbent gravemaker at Kincardine (Allen 1903, pt III, 74 & 85; Henderson 1983, 262, fig 112c) and more generally, in the decorative friezes at Breedon-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire, the finest surviving sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon midland kingdom of Mercia (Jewell, 1986). Such taste in Pictland demonstrates that, as in earlier periods, Pictish sculptors participated in the always enriched, always changing, Insular art style.

On the narrow end-panel a fine interlace fills the arms of the cross and continues into the border. Where the border passes the ends of the cross-arms, the interlace turns into key-pattern - an ingenuity that gives the lie to Radford's assessment of the interlace on the Sarcophagus as mechanical, and therefore probably, late (Radford 1955, 52). The blending of the ornamental repertoire - interlace with key-pattern, key-pattern with spiral work, and so on, is a trait of Insular art of the second half of the eighth century. Some of the interlace on the edges of the corner-slabs has cruciform or L-shaped breaks, carefully delineated with mouldings. This decorative device is found in identical form in a border panel of interlace on fol. 12 of the Leningrad Gospels, a Northumbrian manuscript of the late-eighth century (Alexander 1978, frontispiece). It is possible that these sinkings on the Sarcophagus were high-lighted with paint, or insets of metal or exotic stone (Thomas, in Small & others, 1, 1973, 32).

The interlace on what would be the eastern end of the Sarcophagus, if it were positioned as described above, is more uniform, confirming the view that this end was less immediately visible than was the end with the centrally placed boss. The tubular, looped animal and the pair of creatures with their legs on each other's neck, are typical of zoomorphic ornament in the Book of Kells, datable to either side of 800 (Alexander 1978, no. 52).

Only one corner-slab survives from the north side of the Sarcophagus. The ornament is flat in contrast with the rounded relief used for the slabs on either side of the David panel. A double-cruciform shape is created with interlace and the sunken space decorated with diagonal key-pattern. The analogy cited in the museum display, a panel of the cross-slab at Rosemarkie, Easter Ross, is the appropriate one (Allen, 1903, Pt III, fig 60a). The panel closely resembles cross-carpet pages in Insular illuminated manuscripts of all periods (e.g. Alexander 1978, illus 11, 36 & 277).

The slotted slabs supporting the surviving long panel are both treated as single fields of animal ornament. Characteristically for Pictish sculpture, they have different designs. Both designs divide in the middle, the upper
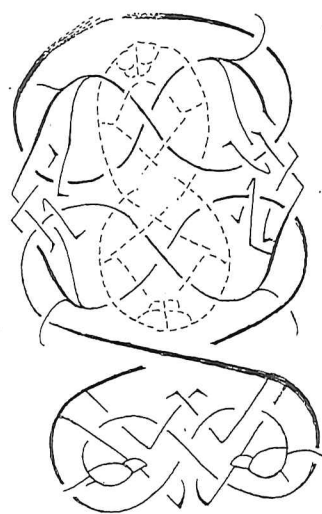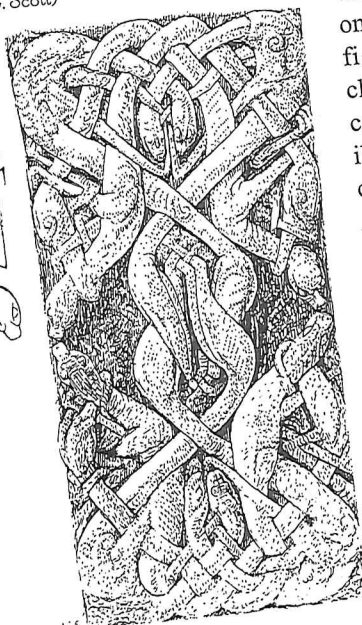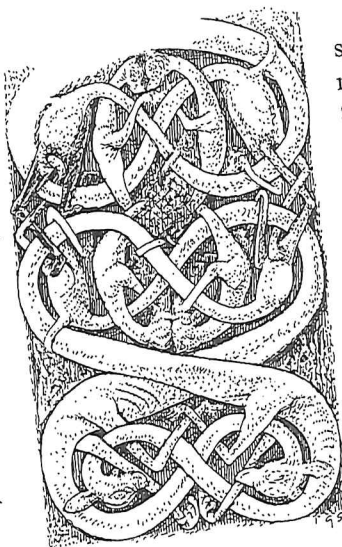

fig. 5.3
The 'deer-heads' corner-slab of the St Andrews Sarcophagus
(dr. I. G. Scott)

fig. 5.4
The 'lion manes' corner-slab of the St Andrews Sarcophagus
(dr. I. G. Scott)

half being a mirror-image of the lower half. The left panel is made up of intertwined sinuous quadrupeds with all four limbs depicted. Naturalistic, high browed, deer heads are attached to elongated bodies that form S-curves. Forelimbs hook on to the upper sections of bodies and slender hind legs nip the lower sections. Four smaller animals inhabit the S-curves of the bodies of the larger creatures. The small creatures arch towards each other to touch muzzles; their legs form a dense mat of interlace at the centre of the design. The drawing of the panel by Ian G Scott reproduced here is taken from the unrestored half of the panel (fig. 5.3). The choice of a deer head for the otherwise ornamental animal-type is a conscious quotation from the deer's head in the adjacent section of the hunting scene. The decorative side-panel is thereby bonded to the main figurative panel which it physically supports.

The right-hand panel is more difficult to draw out (fig. 5.4). The framework of the design resembles an hour-glass with heart shapes at the top and bottom. A collection of the hindquarters of four quadrupeds overlap in the centre. The heads of the quadrupeds meet within the heart shapes. Four other animals are threaded through these creatures to touch snouts at the mid-point of the sides of the panel. In Scott's drawing the manes on the creatures' backs can be seen at the corners - again a deliberate echo of the adjacent naturalistic animal, this time of the lion whose jaws are being rent by David. This loose, curvaceous, semi-naturalistic treatment of animal ornament is a trait of mature Insular art, and can be seen in sculpture on the Northumbrian Rothbury cross, dated most recently to the late eighth century (Cramp 1984, pt 1, 217; Hawkes forthcoming). This cross also uses the St Andrews device of placing smaller animal groupings within a framework created by larger ones.

The closest parallel for the panelled animal ornament is to be found, not surprisingly, on the Nigg cross-slab where animal ornament of this type is used exclusively to decorate the cross-head. Ian Scott has advanced factual knowledge of Pictish sculpture in his accomplished drawing out of the ornament (fig. 5.5). The drawing, with a full analysis of the Nigg cross-head ornament, is to be published elsewhere (Henderson forthcoming) but its construction lines demonstrate at a glance just how closely it is linked to the St Andrews panels of animal ornament. The difference, of course, is a matter of scale. Whereas the St Andrews animals are carved in rounded high relief, the Nigg animals are finely spun. In turn, the delicacy of the Nigg ornament relates closely to the animal ornament of the St Ninian's Isle treasure. For example,

the creatures on Mount 12 (one of the silver 'thimbles') are similar in kind and rhythm to the Nigg animals, a fact which helps to tie the treasure to mainstream Pictish art (Small & others 1973, 2, fig 32). What this basic analysis of the zoomorphic ornament on the Sarcophagus shows is that there can be no question of divorcing the Sarcophagus from the rest of Pictish sculpture, or from Insular art of the end of the eighth century. This is not tenth-century art (Radford 1955, 54-5). The sculptors of the Sarcophagus and the Nigg cross-slab were either one and the same, or two sculptors trained in the same school working at the same time.
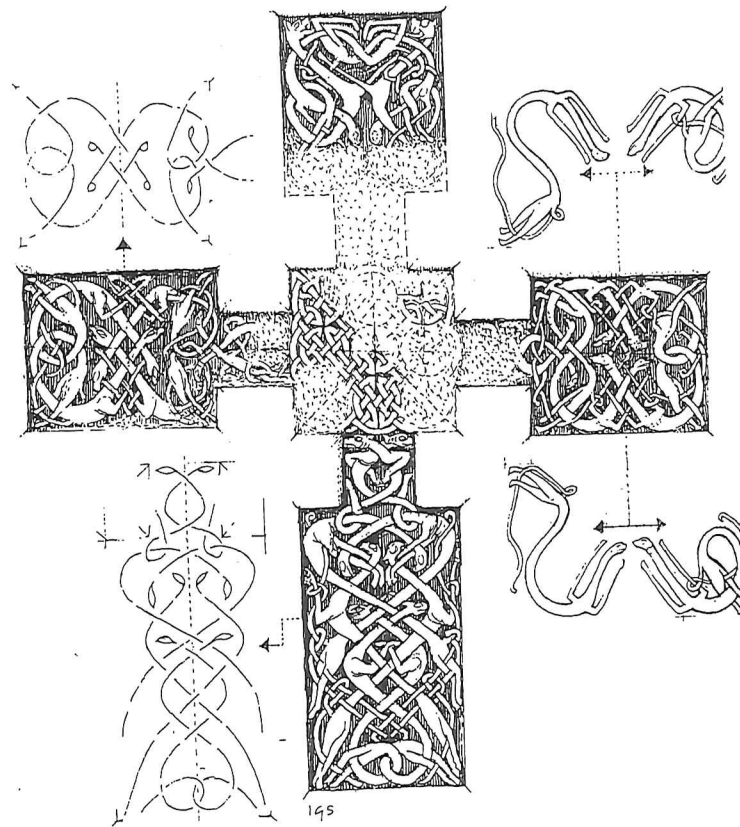

fig. 5.5
Nigg, Easter Ross, cross-slab. The cross-head (dr. I. G. Scott)

The composition of the figure panel with the large scale frontal figure to the extreme right and the smaller scale profile hunting scene to the left is frequently commented on as being an awkward arrangement. I have suggested above that the viewing point of the Sarcophagus - narrow cross-end to the front - rationalizes the positioning of the David figure as a dominant end-stop. The convention of employing a discrepancy in scale between frontal iconic figures and active profile figures in illustrations was available as a model for Insular artists as early as the time of the Gregorian mission, for among the books brought to England at that time was an Italian gospel book containing a large-scale frontal portrait of the Evangelist Luke flanked by small scenes illustrating Christ's life and ministry (Alexander 1978, fig 23). In sculpture a similar juxtaposition of frontal iconic figures with smaller profile figures in narrative illustrations is observed. In early christian sarcophagus art it was customary to divide up the long sides with large figures, often with 'orantes', figures with arms raised in prayer, or with the figure of the Good Shepherd with a lamb slung over his shoulders. Between the column-like figures, smaller scale figures illustrate biblical themes (Henderson 1982, 101, n 71; Kitzinger 1977, illus 33). There is therefore nothing clumsy or provincial about the lay-out of the figurative panel at St Andrews.

David is shown rending the jaws of a lion (as in 1 Samuel, Chapter 17), so saving a lamb in his flock, represented here by a horned sheep at his right shoulder. His sheepdog sits by his left shoulder. In spite of the authentically pastoral touch of the sheep and the dog, David himself is not portrayed as a shepherd boy. His classical dress and senatorial bearing show unambiguously that it was the sculptor's intention to portray David, the King of Israel, and precursor of Christ the Saviour of mankind.

To the left of the panel a single tree creates a tangled thicket. Two deer, in identical pose, move to the left - a typically Pictish mode of progression. The uppermost deer has become entangled in the branches and has been pounced on by a monkey-like creature. A similar creature perches on a nearby branch. Above the deer, at the top left of the panel, a small dog dashes through the branches pursued by a lion that bites at its hindquarters. A similar dog runs in front of the freely stepping deer. In the bottom left a lion springs forward with bared teeth. The lion is pursued by a hunter on foot accompanied by a dog that is picking up the lion's scent. The hunter wears a short toga. He has a spear in his right hand and on his left arm, prominently displayed a rectangular shield with notches cut out of the narrow ends, a rolled edging and a central boss. A heavily maned lion emerges from the tree. Branches lie over its curly pelt. The

lion leaps up at a rider who has drawn his sword from its scabbard to defend himself. He carries a falcon on his left wrist.

To the right of the foot-hunter a griffin has brought down a foal and bites its neck. In general this scene of conflict betwen man and beast, and beast and beast, reflects exactly the repertoire of the Meigle monuments (Henderson 1982, 94). The pose of both the horse and the deer are typically Pictish. The spring of the dogs and other pursuing beasts is found repeatedly on Pictish cross-slabs. The exotic animals are the griffin, the monkey- like creatures in the tree and the lions. In many ways the most remarkable feature of the design is the single tree with its clearly depicted trunk and widespread branches through which animals move. The closest parallel to this scene is the foot-hunter in the fragment of a frieze at Jarrow who thrusts his sword at a taloned animal perched on a branch (Cramp 1984, pt 2, pl 98, 525). The undergrowth here, however, is strongly reminiscent of purely decorative foliate ornament and while the treatment of the topmost branches of the St Andrews tree betrays knowledge of forms found in decorative foliage, the well - defined three-lobed leaves and the tree structure itself are strikingly naturalistic. The placing of a single tree at the edge of a composition in order to establish an outdoor setting is a standard convention of late antique art (Kitzinger 1977, illus 63) and the carver of the St Andrews tree must have had access to a model that employed this device. Within Pictish art, comparable trees frame the Paul and Anthony scene on the pediment of the Nigg cross-slab where the branches spread in naturalistic fashion over the top edge of the stone.

The hunting scene is a standard feature of Pictish sculpture but typically the quarry is the native deer, or occasionally boar. Although, as has been mentioned above, the rider's horse has recognizably Pictish traits the lion quarry belongs to a different conceptual world. Lions appear on another shrine panel, at Burghead, Moray, where two lions bite at an antlered stag, one on its back and the other from below (Allen 1903, Pt III, fig 138). The lower lion has the heavily tufted tail of the St Andrews lions, as does the lion on the carved fragment from Drainie, near Elgin (Henderson 1967, fig 37b).

The motif of a wild or mythical animal attacking a domesticated animal or stag, such as we see at Burghead, is a common one in the art of the early middle ages in both the east and west, and has been the subject of an interesting study by Tamara Talbot Rice (1975). The Sarcophagus has two versions of this

iconography, the deer with the monkey on its back and the griffin pinning down the foal which will be discussed later.

In general this particular animal combat motif must have been copied from imported models. It cannot be a native invention. Any portable object could have supplied the design. For example, it is commonly found on textiles. Textiles could have arrived in Pictland either as diplomatic gifts, or because of their association with relics. It was customary in this period to wrap relics in fine textiles. There is plenty of historical evidence for the movement of relics from the continent to the British Isles in the seventh and eighth centuries. The hunter on foot, firmly grasping his spear in a downwards position, indicating readiness for the kill, is likely to have been inspired by a textile such as the well-known example, datable to the eighth century, and now in the Vatican museum, showing foot-hunters attacking lions and leopards with spears (Volbach 1969, pl 59).

The central motif on the Sarcophagus is a copy of the image of the Imperial Lion Hunter. Such an image is not associated with David and must have a significance in its own right. Mrs Curle's analogy of the mounted hunter confronting leaping lions engraved on a fifth-century silver dish, now in the British Museum, is well known, and surely incontrovertible (Mowbray 1936). We have to conclude that an art object bearing this image was in a Pictish king's treasury in the eighth century (Curle & Henry 1943, 268). The picture plates of late antiquity, from AD 300-700, were de-luxe objects, status possessions made for display. As Jocelyn Toynbee puts it in her catalogue 'they were gifts from emperors... or occasionally from other notables to their friends and other magnates'(Toynbee & Painter 1986, 15). The lion hunter on the Sarcophagus has a fiercely-taloned falcon on his wrist, another status symbol, in this case perhaps a local and contemporary one. The royal sport of falconry was well - established in Europe by the eighth century. For example we know that King Aethelbald of Mercia received a gift of a hawk and a pair of falcons from the continent (Hicks 1987).

In an important and closely argued paper the Biddles have suggested that the figure on a fragment of a free-standing cross excavated by them from the immediate vicinity of the Mercian royal mausoleum at Repton in Derbyshire could be a portrait of this same King Aethelbald, who died in 757 (Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 1986). They see the form of the portrait as being based on

another imperial image, that of the Triumphant Emperor, parading in front of his army, still in field dress, after a victory. This image is also found on a silver dish, one from Kertsch in the Crimea (Toynbee & Painter 1986, no.14). Aethelbald was a highly successful, if personally somewhat reprobate, military leader so the model would be an appropriate one (Biddle & Kjølbye-Biddle 1986, pl X).

Our Pictish 'emperor', on the Sarcophagus, may also be an idealised memorial portrait of a successful king, possibly, but by no means certainly, Aethelbald's ally, Oengus son of Fergus who died in 761 and whose repute as a bloody wielder of the sword had reached the ears of a Northumbrian chronicler (Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 577).

That the existence of a *de luxe* model did not constrain the native artist is evident from the preference for depicting the Pictish high-stepping horse rather than reproducing the more naturalistic bracing of the horse's forelegs found on the fifth-century dish. It has also been suggested above that the hawk reflected a native sport. Could there be other native touches on the Sarcophagus? The Biddles have demonstrated how the Mediterranean model for the Repton warrior was modified by the substitution of contemporary native weaponry. This particular type of modification of models is well attested in Insular and Carolingian art, a notable example being the appearance of an Anglo-Saxon lyre in the hands of David in the miniature of David harping on fol. 30 verso of the eighth-century Vespasian Psalter (Alexander 1978, no 29, illus 146). If one were looking for such native substitutions on the Sarcophagus there are possible candidates. The notched shield of the foot-hunter features on other Pictish sculpture and it has been suggested that it could be a distinctive native type (Ritchie 1969). The form of the rider's sword scabbard is certainly very different from scabbards shown on silver dishes (Toynbee & Painter 1986, pl XXV) and its chape has been compared both to the chapes which are part of the Pictish St Ninian's Isle treasure and to the chaped scabbard on slab no 3 from Meigle (Small & others 1973, pll XXIX, La & LIII). More significantly, David's hunting knife sits oddly on his classical attire and requires explanation. It is prominently displayed, and its fittings and decoration are carefully delineated (Henderson 1986, pl 5.3a). The knobbed handle appears to be carved, perhaps with an animal or even a human figure. It is inserted in a sheath decorated with a framed panel of interlace and ending in a hook-shaped chape. Knives with decorated sheaths are known from the eighth century onwards

(Okasha 1992). A well-known eighth-century example is the ivory sheath of the so-called knife of St Peter, now in the cathedral treasury at Bamberg. It has a very similar sheath decorated with interlace edged with a panel ending in a bird head (Gaborit-Chopin 1978, illus 41; Haseloff 1952). It is possible, therefore, that David's knife is based on a contemporary local piece of regalia. If so, then David is a composite figure, based on a model but modified by the sculptor, the knife explicitly uniting David the King of Israel, with the contemporary kingship, a familiar conjunction in Frankish circles (Bullough 1975, 238-40).

In spite of its plasticity and surface detail I do not think that we necessarily need a relief model, such as ivories or repoussé metalwork, to account for the figure style of David. By the time the St Andrews Sarcophagus was carved Pictish sculptors were technically past masters. In sculpture it is still possible to defend the relevance of the Breedon tower angel to the style of the St Andrews David. If the dating of the angel, and of the Repton warrior, also in rounded relief, is disputed, there is still a Mercian context for the David figure in the repertoire of full-length and bust-length figures at Peterborough, Castor and Fletton in the eastern Midlands as Radford accepted (1955, 54; Cramp 1977). Insular manuscripts showing figures in classical or sub-classical dress display many of the features which are rendered plastically by the St Andrews sculptor. By the end of the eighth century the various media were no longer copying each other in the order, metalwork, manuscript and eventually, sculpture, but were simultaneously interacting. Comparison between the arrangement of the dress of David and that of the major miniatures of the figures in the Book of Kells can be made for they have the same fitted sleeves, wavy front hemlines, and clinging skirts. Physically, they share elaborate hairstyles and almond-shaped eyes, sometimes as in the case of the St Andrews foot-hunter's left eye, drawn frontally, on heads which are in profile or three-quarter view (Nordenfalk 1977, pl 47). The portrait of Matthew in the eighth- to ninth-century St Gall Gospel Book (Alexander 1978, illus 281), depicts a head with a particularly heavy hairstyle, like David's, lying over one shoulder. The St Gall Matthew also has footgear of identical cut to that worn by all the figures on the Sarcophagus. To note such similarities is not to imply any direct connection. They show, however, the Insular context within which the Sarcophagus sculptor operated.

Figures for comparison with David within the corpus of Pictish sculpture are not easy to find because of the general loss of surface detail. Fortunately one of the heads of the Saints Paul and Anthony on the Nigg pediment, the one facing left, has survived exposure (Mac Lean 1993, pl 66). Carved in three-quarter view, but with a frontal eye, the figure style shares many of the features of David. The head is disproportionately large, the hair-style, curled and elaborate. The figures stand *contrapposto*, with their weight carried on one leg. The garments are long, with fitted sleeves, clinging skirts and a wavy hem. Of course these Nigg figures are narrative figures on a small scale, but the head with surviving facial features, when looked at closely from below has all the nobility of the David of the Sarcophagus. We can suppose that the rounded but very worn heads of the mourning angels on either side of the cross-shaft on the Aberlemno Roadside slab had the same quality (Henderson 1967, pl 58).

In connection with figure style I want to consider briefly the slab in the grounds of Elgin Cathedral. This symbol-bearing cross-slab is carved in knotted contorted gneiss. Allen published a drawing of the slab only and indeed to produce a drawing from his rubbings of both sides was quite an achievement (Allen 1903, Pt III, 134). Most modern writers have been content to rely on Allen's drawings but two excellent photographs of the front and the reverse have now been published (Ritchie 1989, 33; Jackson 1984, 116). The reverse depicts a lively hunting scene. The leading rider has a falcon on his wrist and another is positioned in front of his mount's head. On the front, a short-shafted cross with a base is surrounded, unusually for Insular sculpture, by bust length portraits of the Evangelists and their symbols. The top of the slab is missing and Allen mistakenly attached the wings of the upper symbols to the Evangelists themselves in the upper angles of the cross. The Evangelist Matthew occupies the lower left angle. He has his man/angel symbol beside him. The Man has a little ovoid head with neatly rolled hair, comparable to the Man symbol that accompanies Matthew in the St Gall manuscript referred to above. Matthew himself has a very much larger head. Like David on the Sarcophagus he is shown in three-quarter view and like David, he has large almond-shaped eyes, a moustache, elaborate curls and a high brow (Ritchie 1989, 33 & 40). Because the Elgin figure is bust-length no hands are depicted. The hands of David rending the lion's jaws are large broad hands, strong, like the hands of all the figures on the panel. Knuckles and thumbs are well articulated.
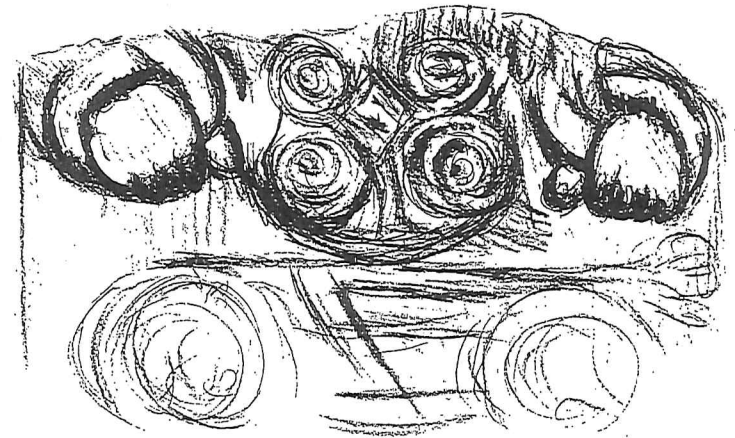

fig. 5.6
Elgin Cathedral, Moray, Cross-slab. Interpretation of the sculpture at the top of the reverse.
(dr. G. Henderson)

fig. 5.7
Speculative reconstruction of sculpture missing from the top of the reverse of the Elgin cross-slab.
(dr. G. Henderson)

A considerable portion of the Elgin slab has been broken off at the top, enough, as has been remarked, to contain the two winged symbols of the Evangelists above the arms of the cross. Allen wrote of the carving above the double disc symbol that it was 'difficult to ascertain the meaning'. However, in good light it can be seen quite clearly that the two rounded lumps to the right and left (not apparent in a line drawing) are fists, the backs of hands, fleshy hands, like David's, but here grasping coils (Jackson 1984, 116; see fig. 5.6). The coils may be horns, as on the Meigle frieze, where a figure with a double fish-tail grasps its horns with palms forward (Ritchie 1989, 61), or they could be serpents (fig. 5.7). The Meigle hold is similar to the one used by Christ where he grasps the elongated tongues of fierce beasts on top of the arch over Canon Table II on folio 2 verso of the Book of Kells. The Christ figure in the manuscript is placed over Evangelist symbols ranged below (Alexander 1978, illus 236). The placing of a head between creatures on the uppermost margin of a miniature or on the top edge of a piece of metalwork is common in this period and has been the subject of a recent study (Bourke & others, 1988).

The head between the tongues of fierce beasts on the reverse of the Dunfallandy cross-slab is a Pictish example of the motif1. That the hands on the Elgin slab belong to Christ is made virtually certain by the feature of the spiral breast-plate, best known as an attribute of Christ on the Irish crucifixion plaque said to be from St John's (Rinnagan), near Athlone (Henry 1965, pl 46).

Our Elgin figure may then be grasping serpents in the manner of the naked figure whose head and arms occupy the cross-head at Brigham in Cumbria. Bailey speculates that this figure could represent Christ triumphant, serving to balance a symbolic Christ crucified on the other face (Bailey & Cramp 1988, 76-7 and illus 144-7). Whether the Elgin head represented the pagan 'master of the animals' motif, or Christ identified as triumphant between two creatures, it is not hard to understand why the top of the slab was felt to be offensive at the time of the Reformation and smashed off. Its destruction has deprived us not only of a complete suite of Evangelists and their symbols but of a head whose features will have resembled those of the surviving sculpture of Matthew on the slab, and may possibly through its theme, have rivalled the gravely impressive head of David on the Sarcophagus.

Returning to the animal ornament, the sculpture at Meigle again helps to tie the Sarcophagus to the rest of Pictish sculpture. Seemingly isolated from the rest of the subject matter the motif of the griffin pinning down a foal and biting its neck is nonetheless a poignant study, well preserved. In Mediterranean funeral art the griffin was a royal and funerary symbol and this may be why it appears on the Sarcophagus. There are two fine griffins carved on monuments at Meigle. On Meigle 26, a gravemaker, there is a little foal, asleep or dead, whose legs are tucked up under it in exactly the same fashion as the legs of the St Andrews foal (Allen 1903, Pt III, fig 318b). We have then a small, but firm artistic link between the sculptor of the St Andrews Sarcophagus and the sculptors of the gravemarkers and cross-slabs of Meigle. The foal makes a further appearance on the Ulbster cross-slab (Allen 1903, pt III, fig 31).

It is frequently asserted that the St Andrews Sarcophagus is one of the finest examples of Dark Age art in Europe. What is the basis for this statement? If true, then it must be a matter of regret that it is not reproduced in two of the best known compendiums of the art of this period (Hubert & others 1967; Roth 1979).

It is a fact that monumental sculpture in stone, after the period of the great Christian sarcophagi of the fourth century, is not one of the burgeoning arts in Europe, with the notable exception of the British Isles. The Merovingian Franks did produce decorated slabs and sarcophagi, but on the whole, these are limited in technique and iconography. Their undecorated stone coffins could be either tapering in shape, somewhat reminiscent of the wooden coffin of St Cuthbert, and also of our Pictish solid gravemakers, or house-shaped in the classical manner as in the well known sarcophagus of St Calentius at Bourges, datable to the early part of the seventh century (Talbot Rice 1965, 207; Hubert & others 1969, pll 24-5). It shows Daniel with arms raised in the praying 'orans' position, expressing gratitude for his salvation from the lions, another Old Testament Salvation image comparable to David and the Lion on the St Andrews Sarcophagus.

The Continental Context

Looking for a continental context for the free-standing crosses of Northumbria scholars invariably turn to the uniquely richly decorated Merovingian sarcophagi in the crypt of the Abbey of St Paul at Jouarre near Paris. The first abbess, Théodechilde, died in 662. Her remains are covered by a handsomely inscribed house-shaped sarcophagus carved with scallop shells.

Another sarcophagus at Jouarre is the native tapering shape and is higher at the head end. It is uninscribed but is generally considered to be the stone coffin of Agilbert, Bishop of Paris who died in 685 (Hubert and others 1969, 64-83). Jouarre was one of the foundations associated with the Irish saint Columbanus. Agilbert himself studied in Ireland, and later was a Bishop in southern England. He attended the Synod of Whitby in 664 where Wilfrid acted as his interpreter - so he was known in Northumbria. All these connections mean that the cultural worlds of Agilbert of Paris and Wilfrid of Hexham overlapped. Agilbert's sarcophagus has two decorative panels. At the narrow head end Christ, enclosed in an oval wreath, is surrounded by the Evangelist symbols (Hubert & others 1967, pl 89). Along the length of the sarcophagus is a vivid depiction of the Last Judgment (Hubert & others 1969, pl 84). Christ enthroned, attended by the recording Angel, sits in the middle of the redeemed who raise their arms in the 'orans' position. The iconography then, also concerns salvation, but here salvation is depicted explicitly as coming through Christ, and not simply implied by the use of an Old Testament salvation type. The unusual roundness of the relief on Agilbert's tomb does provide a technical parallel for Insular sculpture, but stylistically there is little in common.

Italy also, of course, continued to produce sculpture after the collapse of the Roman Empire. For our period, the eighth century, notably within the barbaric courts of the duchies of the Lombards, in the districts around Milan and west and north of Venice, with centres at Pavia, Brescia and Cividale (Wickham 1981, 28-47). The Lombards decorated their churches and grave slabs with a rich array of carving much of it made of stucco. The artistic repertoire is dominated by interlace crosses, plant scrolls, paired griffins and peacocks, but there are more ambitious monuments also. One of these is the famous altar of king Ratchis of Friuli, erected in the 740s by him in memory of his father Duke Pemmo, and now in the Cathedral at Cividale (Hubert & others 1967, pll 277, 279-81; Menis 1988, 82-84). The front panel, like the end panel of Agilbert's tomb, shows Christ, seated within an oval wreath, but here he is surrounded not as at Jouarre by the Evangelist symbols, but by angels. (A fine set of Evangelist symbols appears on a closely related monument in Cividale, the baptistery of the patriarch Callistus, also datable to the mid eighth century.) On one of the narrow ends of the Ratchis altar, the three Magi (favourite iconography for sarcophagi) approach Mary and the Christ Child. On the other end-panel, an intense rendering of the meeting of Elisabeth and Mary located within an architectural setting, is reminiscent of the treatment of the scene on the eighth-

century Genoels-Elderen ivory book-cover now in Brussels (Wilson 1984, illus 166). The back of the altar has no figurative art. Two crosses flank a rectangular aperture which has a decorated disc below it. The Ratchis altar and Agilbert's tomb have stylistic links, as well as iconographic ones, the loop-like drapery folds being the most obvious (Grabar 1974). The period of Lombard supremacy in northern Italy came to an end in 774 when the Franks, led by Charlemagne, swept into their territories. Curiously, stone sculpture does not seem to have been part of the Carolingian artistic renaissance. Fresco and stucco sculpture may have taken its place for the decoration of buildings, and when Carolingian kings wanted sarcophagi they chose from the existing stock of heavily carved, antique or early christian monuments. This said, it may be that Carolingian figurative sculpture has yet to be identified. Christian Beutler's work (1964) to this end has not won general acceptance but his efforts have been rightly applauded at least by some scholars. Peter Harbison's views about lost stucco sculpture must be taken seriously (Harbison 1992, vol 1, 328-9; Hubert & others 1969, 83) and more fieldwork on the lines laid down by Marilyn Schmitt may help to provide a more intelligible context for Insular sculpture (1980). Certainly the little-discussed panels of low relief sculpture depicting the ministry of Christ in the Museo Paleochristiana in Aquileia recall the narrative scenes on the Ruthwell Cross. The date and local context of such sculpture merits closer investigation.

The sculpture of northern Italy may well have played a part in the development of sculpture in England. Rosemary Cramp has pointed to Brescia (Cramp 1986, 137), and Richard Jewell in his analysis of the decorative friezes at Breedon frequently refers to parallels in northern Italy (Jewell 1986). This part of Italy was, of course, on the route from England to Rome. For example, we know that when Wilfred was on his way to Rome in 679 he stayed with the Lombard king Perctarit. Quite apart from any claim for direct art-historical connections, a general impression of how sculpture functioned could have been taken from Lombardic Italy, or indeed from Merovingian France, to northern England, and thence to Pictland, even if nothing that looks at all like Agilbert's tomb or the Ratchis altar survives in Northumbria or our area.

The iconography and shape of St Cuthbert's coffin can certainly be related to aspects of funerary monuments in Merovingian Gaul and the art of northern Italy (Kitzinger 1956). The origins of the shrine type represented by the fragments at Jedburgh are less obvious, but they may well be Mediterranean

(Radford 1955). Like the Ratchis altar the Jedburgh shrine was box-shaped when complete. The sides of the box were slotted directly into each other, so discounting the lid, it was a four-piece monument, not an eight-piece one like the St Andrews Sarcophagus. The Jedburgh plant ornament, inhabited with birds and animals, is so close to the decoration on the sides of the Ruthwell cross that we might boldly speculate that the missing side panels at Jedburgh had figurative carving also similar in nature to Ruthwell. This would entail the juxtaposition of large frontal iconic figures with floating narrative scenes composed of profile figures smaller in scale - an arrangement which we have seen is an artistic convention of early christian sarcophagi reproduced at St Andrews.

Another early christian sarcophagus lay-out is to use two registers with scenes from the Old and New Testaments disposed above and below (Kitzinger 1977, illus 41-2). This is the lay-out favoured by the Mercian sculptor of the shrine panel at Wirksworth in Derbyshire (Wilson 1984, illus 95; Harbison 1987). The narrative iconography here, much of it concerning the Virgin, is divided up, not by large iconic figures, but by two iconic images. Above is the Lamb of God, crucified, and below, Christ enclosed in an oval mandorla supported by angels. We have seen related imagery of Christ set in a wreath, at Jouarre and Cividale.

A very beautiful panel of another northern shrine has survived at Hovingham in North Yorkshire. It is slotted at the back and so was presumably part of a shrine of the Jedburgh type. Its subject matter, only recently elucidated by Jane Hawkes (1993) is again a Virgin cycle, this time in an elegant architectural setting. Incarnation iconography is therefore represented on a number of Anglo-Saxon shrines, and may be a development derived ultimately, from the pervasive Magi theme on Italian funerary monuments.

Form and Function

Charles Thomas in his general account of what he terms the composite corner-post shrine maintains that this particular form has nothing to do with indigenous carpentry techniques, as has been claimed, but originates rather in the classically-derived pre-fabricated walling constructions made of slotted posts and flanged panels used to define spaces within buildings or to enclose gardens. Certainly, this kind of barrier is used all over Europe in our period, sometimes employing metal grilles instead of stone panels (Thomas 1971, 149-163).

There are a remarkable number of corner-post shrines surviving in Shetland. The flanged panel of such a shrine, from Papil, has carved on it, not salvation imagery, but a unique 'snapshot', as it were, of a pilgrimage to a free-standing cross (Moar, 1944). Thomas's views are based on his detailed examination of the three shrines on St Ninian's Isle, Shetland (Small & others 1973, 14-28). One of these was a double shrine, for a third set of posts, slotted to support panels on either side, are also slotted to hold an internal dividing panel. The little knobs on top of the posts exactly reproduce a continental convention (Thomas 1971, fig 73). The shrine panel at Burghead, mentioned above, takes us on to the North British mainland for an example of the type and there is evidence for a corner-post shrine further south again, at Monifieth, where a symbol-bearing cross-slab was used in its construction (Thomas 1971, fig 69).

Thomas argues that in spite of its predominantly northern distribution, the corner-post shrine type in Pictland came from Northumbria. He writes 'a trail of clues (here the odd post, there a panel) leads south to Northumbria around 700' (Thomas 1983, 286). The locations of these directional clues are not specified, but they certainly do not lead one into Northumbria, for so far no trace of corner-post shrines has turned up there. Arguments from absence are, of course, dangerous in this period. Artistic losses at Jarrow and Lindisfarne were massive, and one must remember the fragments of monumental stone furniture that have survived at Monkwearmouth - the bench end with well-modelled lion supports, and the very beautiful beast head that may have been a finial from the back of a stone throne (Cramp 1984, pt 2, pll 123-4). Such pieces might well have kept company with handsome stone shrines. Even if we agree to derive the Pictish corner-post shrines from hypothetical Northumbrian shrines, there seems no justification for putting the St Andrews Sarcophagus, as Thomas does, at the end of a chain of development in Pictland, starting from simple in the north (and more hypothetically in the south) to complex in Fife. The reverse is much more likely, the de luxe version, closely related to the art of the cross-slabs, inspiring less ambitious forms.

The 'building blocks' of slab and slotted post were used on the continent not only for enclosures but for tombs and altars also. The altar at Ferentillo near Terni in Central Italy, appears very similar in proportion and construction to our Sarcophagus (Hubert and others 1969, illus 278; Pani Ermini 1983, pl XXIII). Knowledge of narrow posts slotted to hold panels would, simultaneously, bring with it knowledge of the broader corner-slab form, with its opportunities for more elaborate decoration on either side of a panel[2].

There are examples of slotted shrine posts on Iona (RCAMS 1982, no 6, 104-5). There is no satisfactory way of dating these, but if they were to be ascribed to the eighth century then the type could have been introduced to Iona from Pictland or have been a development based on Irish monuments of a similar type (Herity 1993, 191-93). To my knowledge, no Irish example of a corner slab shrine of the St Andrews type has yet been identified.

There is another, but no less speculative way of looking at the Pictish phenomenon of the corner-post shrine which is to see it as an indigenous development. This possibility is raised, judiciously, by Patrick Ashmore (1980). Writing of the rectangular low kerb cairns at Ackergill, near Wick in Caithness, he notes that the corners of four of the mounds were accentuated by upright slabs and that three of the total of seven cairns there had stone pillars central to the sides. One was internally sub-divided by vertical slab walls separating inhumations. The resemblance to the single and double corner-post shrines is apparent and Ashmore concludes that although 'there is no evidence that they [the low cairns] are as late as even the earliest corner-post shrines... The possibility of a link between corner post shrines and cairns remains' (Ashmore 1980, 353). All but one of these seven cairns had low kerbs and both Ashmore and Close-Brooks (1980) point to the association of such burial cairns with Pictish symbol stones. This view certainly brings together monuments potentially widely separated in date, but funerary habits are conservative and such an origin might help to explain the present northern distribution of those monuments. An umbrella hypothesis, so to speak, would be that an aspect of Northern Iron-Age burial tradition assimilated easily to newly introduced continental forms in the eighth century. Ashmore agrees that timber post and panel prototypes, as Thomas has suggested for the corner-post shrines, may be one missing link in a complex set of relationships. The point being made in this connection is that the form of the St Andrews Sarcophagus, like its iconography, may not be altogether exotic.

The Picts, of course, had another composite elite funerary monument - the solid gravemarker slotted at one end of the upper surface to contain a vertical feature. This type of monument is also unique to Pictland. Its solidity has been related to solid house- shaped shrines represented by the Mercian 'Hedda' stone at Peterborough (Wilson 1984, illus 93) and the St Leonard's School shrine at St Andrews (Cruden 1955, 59-60), and also to the later hogback monuments. But the Pictish solid monuments lack the essential characteristics of both these types for they are not in any respect skeuomorphic architectural forms. The closest analogy that I have been able to find for the Pictish recumbent gravemarkers are the thinner slotted recumbent grave-slabs at Glendalough in Ireland (Lionard 1961, 150). Some Picts presumably employed recumbent cross-bearing slabs to mark graves after the Columban conversion. Prior to that, we have a little evidence that one type of Pictish grave was the low kerb cairn, mentioned above, sometimes, it seems, marked with a vertically positioned symbol-stone (Ashmore 1980; Close-Brooks 1980).

The slotted, solid Pictish gravemarkers could then be explained as an Irish recumbent slab developed into a larger coffin-like gravemarker under the influence perhaps of Northumbrian tapering coffin-shapes and Northumbrian sculptured friezes. Certainly the surviving fragment of a frieze at Monkwearmouth, now very worn, provides a parallel in scale, themes and lay-out to the Pictish recumbents, if not, of course, in function (Cramp 1984, pt 2, pl 117). The vertical element in the slot could have been retained from an indigenous custom. Thus both corner-post shrine and slotted recumbent could be seen as developed forms of native practice.

Did the slots on the gravemarkers necessarily contain small crosses or symbol-bearing cross-slabs? The slot on Meigle 26 is carefully guarded between the jaws of two wild beasts (Allen 1903, pt II, fig 318A; see fig. 5.8). Such a recess would have been a very suitable container for a relic. The 'Hedda' stone provides a precedent, for it has deeply penetrating holes strategically placed (Wilson 1984, illus 93). For example, there is a particularly deep hole under the key held by the figure of St Peter. We know that on Rogation days - the three days before the Ascension - the monks in Bede's monasteries processed with venerable relics (Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 584). On such occasions, and on other festal days, relics could well have been placed in recesses within monuments. With this in mind Stewart Cruden's observation on the recess cut in the end of the largest of the recumbents at Meigle is suggestive (fig. 5.9). He writes: 'The square recess in the rear end is of uncertain date and purpose. It seems to be modern yet the tooling is not, and the surface is quite unlike the mutilated upper surface of the stone' (Cruden 1964, 20). Did Meigle 11 then, in addition to the slot at the head end have at the rear end a recess for an enriched metal attachment, along the lines of the attachment suggested for the crossing of one face of the St John's Cross on Iona (RCAHMS 1982, 203)? Such an attachment, for use on special days must surely have secured or contained a relic rather than being merely decorative.

This suggestion gains interest from the nature of the fragments of a second shrine of panel construction at St Andrews published in 1977 by Norman Robertson (fig. 5.10). In the past I have accepted his interpretation of the carving on the battered fragments but looking again, I cannot see any sign of the harp which he draws in his reconstruction. The large hands do not seem to be in the upright position portrayed in his drawing. The hands are flatter, cupped, as though to receive or present something precious, and the finger tips do in fact appear to be holding something (fig. 5.11). The recess (attributed by Robertson to later re-use) respects the sculpture. I wonder if here also, we are looking at a recession which held a venerated object, perhaps the very object being held in the hands?[3]

The secular, royal, connotations of the St Andrew Sarcophagus have been stressed, rightly in my view, but it is interesting that as we move into the ninth and later centuries, the king, in works of art associated with the church or with his own private spirituality is not only depicted as an enthroned king or mounted emperor, but also takes on the roles of suppliant and donor, as in for example, the bowed figure of Charles the

Bald in the prefatory picture for his Prayer Book of the late ninth century (Deshman 1980), or the eleventh-century drawing of Cnut and his Queen presenting an altar-cross to Christ, in the Liber Vitae of the New Minster at Winchester (Temple 1976, ill 244). So, our fragment of a second, and later, sarcophagus may, in its particular iconography, show this change of emphasis and add to the royal connotations of St Andrews.

After even a short study, such as this, what does the twentieth-century viewer make of the St Andrews Sarcophagus? One of the finest stone monuments in Dark Age Europe, certainly, but if we are familiar, in close detail, with other Pictish relief sculpture, we must also respond to it as a heightened version of other Pictish monuments. We respond, above all, to the skill of the carver, to the intricacy of his interlace, key-pattern, and decorative animal ornament. We admire his single tree and the way in which he has enmeshed animals in it. The David figure is perhaps more alien. We are used to neat, agile, profile figures in Pictish sculpture, not to static, heavily coiffured symbolic types. I hope I have shown that these more iconic figures were also part of the Pictish figurative repertoire. But for us, of course, the shrine is empty, a museum piece, at most, a poignant reminder of the great Catholic tradition of Scotland.
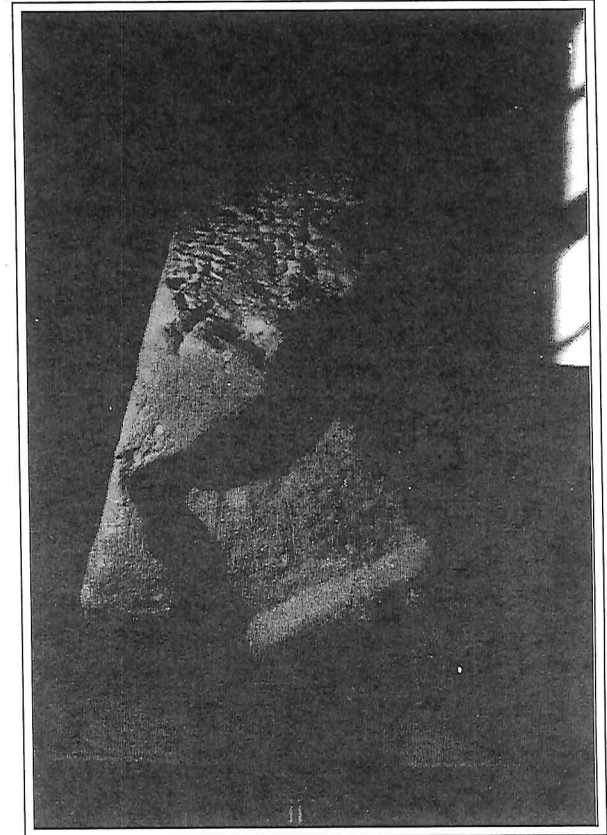

fig. 5.9
Meigle, Perthshire, no.11, recumbent gravemarker. Detail showing recess at the rear end. (G. Henderson)
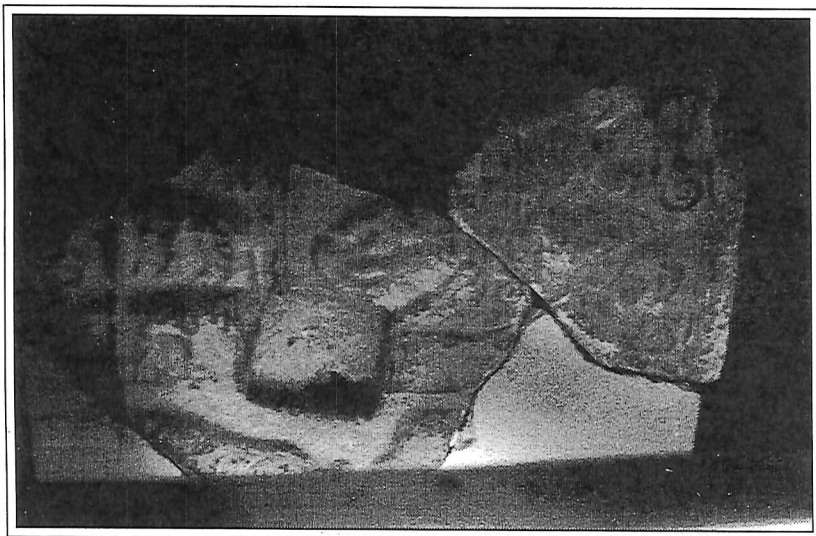
fig. 5.10
St Andrews Cathedral Museum. Two fragments of a composite shrine. (G. Henderson)

fig. 5.11
Reconstruction of the carving on the fragments illustrated
in fig. 5.10. (dr. G. Henderson)

We can only dimly guess how the ninth-century pilgrim viewed the sarcophagus. Perhaps he too saw it as a heightened version of his people's carved monuments and burial practices. Contemplation of the complexities of the decoration may have helped him to move his thoughts away from the needs of his everyday life to the need for the salvation of his soul, which was the point of his journey. The grandeur of the monument will also have given him a strong impression of the power of the church, and of the closely interconnected power of the state, on which his security on earth depended.

The other viewers were the patrons, the monastic community, or a royal dynasty. The technical intricacies and juxtaposition of themes speak eloquently of the enjoyment of creative ingenuity. The sculptor had not only skills but ideas and the patrons will have appreciated both and will have contributed to the selection and content of the iconography. There can be no doubt that the status of the patrons was enhanced by the end product of their commission, not only in the sight of contemporary society, but also in the sight of God, and of ages to come.

Notes ~~~~~~

1. A man, or head of a man, between beasts occurs at the top of the following cross-slabs: Dunfallandy, fig 305B; Glamis 2, fig 234A; the 'Maiden Stone' at Chapel of Garioch, p.191. The last example can be compared to the proposed Elgin arrangement for it depicts a man with his arms stretched out towards a fish monster with a coiled tail on each side of him. Fish monsters with spiral tails are carved at the top of the Brodie cross-slab, fig 136A. Their scale is consonant with the scale of the Elgin motif. The man between lions on Meigle 2 is certainly Daniel in the Den of the Lions, fig 311B; the man between fierce beasts at St Vigeans 14, fig 285A, less certainly so. A man grasping a bird in either hand is placed above a cross-arm on the Rossie Priory cross-slab, fig 322B. A feature of indeterminate nature, possibly a head, is carved above the top arm of the cross at Fowlis Wester, fig 306A. Marginal creatures with snouts meeting at the top of the slab appear on the following slabs: Aberlemno 2, fig 227A; Meigle 4, fig 313A; Farnell, fig 232B; Cossins, fig 230B. All references are to Allen 1903, Pt III.

2.   The sculpture associated with the early eighth-century foundation of S. Pietro in Valle, Ferentillo, Terni, includes third-century sarcophagi with high-relief hunting scenes carved and designed with great verve. These were brought to my attention by William Dalrymple.

3.   Miss J Rickers, of King's College Cambridge, first suggested to me that the hands on the museum fragments were not playing a harp. Cavities have been noted on many Insular monuments and the subject needs further study. An interesting example on a Pictish cross-slab is at Cossins (Allen 1903, pt III, 230B) where a neatly cut recess (roughly rider-shaped) has a decorative border on three sides. Dr Derek Craig (1993) has brought together a range of examples in the sculpture of south-west Scotland. After the lecture, through the good offices of Dr Hawkes, Professor Richard Bailey drew my attention to a class of Merovingian slabs with such cavities (Sirat 1984). Professor Bailey is looking at these slabs in connection with his work on York monuments. M. Sirat is not prepared to commit himself to an explanation for the cavities, but refers to similar cavities in Coptic stäles which provide access to relics directly or indirectly via another object. Such cavities provide evidence for stone monuments functioning actively. There must have been many other such functions.

In support of the traditional view that the slots on the recumbents held crosses one can point to the reference in the Anonymous Life of St Kentigern to the fitting 'by mason's craft' of a cross into a great stone that marked the place where a king was killed (Forbes 1874, 249; Anderson 1922, vol 1, 128-9). One can imagine the slots on the Pictish recumbents holding different objects on different occasions. A relic could, of course, have been laid under an inserted cross.

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Trade, Gifts, and Cultural Exchange in Dark-Age Western Scotland

Alan Lane

In adopting my title, Trade, Gifts, and Cultural Exchange in Dark-Age western Scotland I am implicitly acknowledging the difficulties involved in distinguishing different kinds of exchanges of material goods in the archaeological record. Archaeology has a long tradition of examining exotic or imported items and there have been extensive debates about how such material should be explained. It can be comparatively straightforward to recognise things that are imported but distinguishing formal trade from gift giving or seizure is not always so easy. I intend to focus on Dark-Age western Scotland and its wider contacts but at various points refer to western Britain and Ireland as a whole[1].

Recent studies of Dark-Age trade have tended to focus on developments in Mid-Saxon England with only passing and sometimes ill-informed comment on western sites and imported ceramics (eg Hodges 1982). Although this imbalance has to some extent been redressed by recent papers by Charles Thomas (1988; 1990), Mike Fulford (1989) and Leslie Alcock (eg 1987; 1992) the attraction of the Anglo-Saxon evidence is obvious. Historical sources came together with growing archaeological evidence for major trading sites at places such as Hamwic, York, London and Ipswich and show major European and English emporia emerging in the late seventh to eighth centuries (Hodges 1989, 80-104; Clarke and Ambrosiani 1991). Imported goods indicate that part of the function of these English and continental sites is international trade. Coinage also indicates the growth of an increasingly commercial economy in England in the later seventh to later ninth centuries while industrialised ceramic production appears slightly later (Hodges 1989).

In contrast the evidence of 'commerce' from western and northern Britain and from Ireland is sparser and there is little sign of any economic take-off in the eighth to ninth centuries after what may be precocious activity in the later fifth, sixth and seventh centuries.
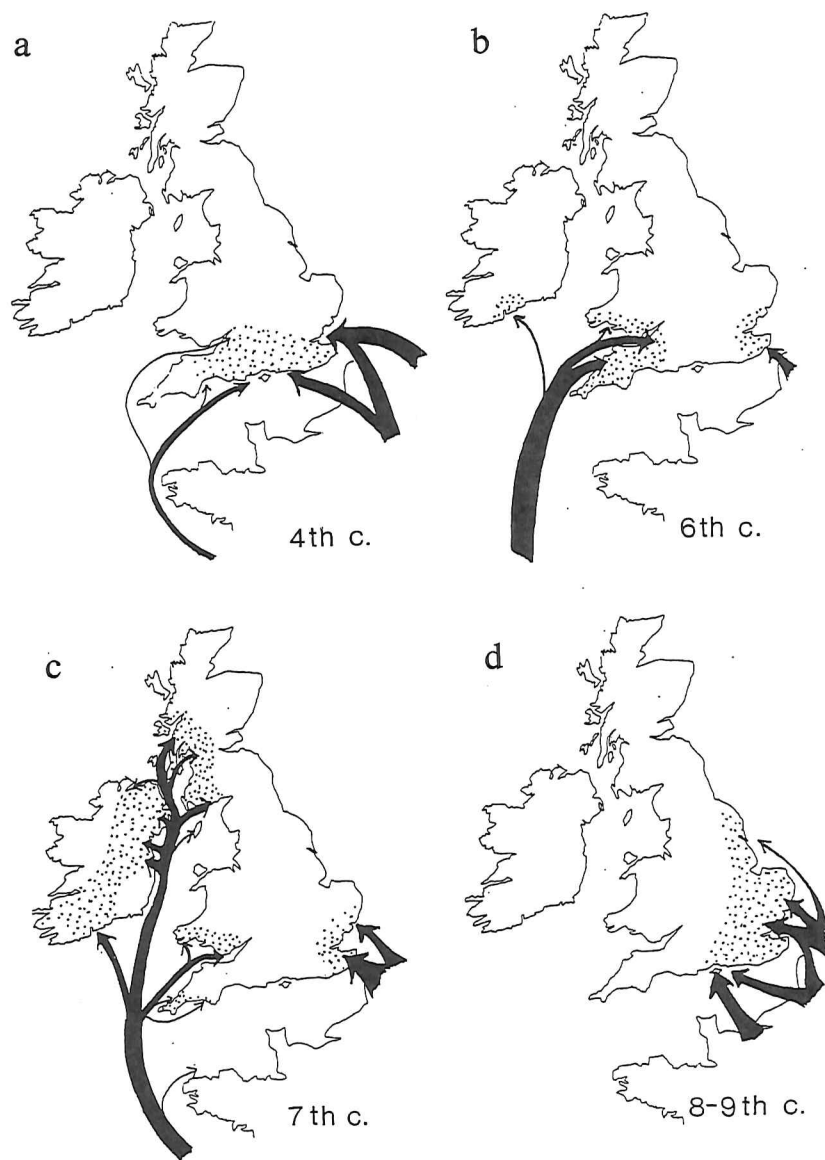
a

b

4th c.

6th c.

c

d

7th c.

8-9th c.

fig. 6.1

Main areas of imported pottery in Britain between the late fourth and ninth centuries
(Campbell 1991, ill.198)

Fifth to Seventh-Century Trading Systems in western Britain and Ireland

The late Roman trade in continental tablewares and Mediterranean amphora is concentrated in south-eastern England (Fig. 6.1a) and it seems that the west and north of Britain generally was not integrated into this late fourth century trading network, though a distributional shift towards the Severn and the west of England is noticeable in comparison with earlier Roman patterns (Campbell 1991, 182-4, fig.198).

The post-Roman import wares, and in particular the later fifth and sixth century imported Mediterranean ceramics found in western Britain and Ireland are now comparatively well known (Thomas 1988). Red colour-coated tablewares and amphora from the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa are found on a substantial number of post-Roman sites in the Celtic West. They do not occur on Anglo-Saxon sites nor do they occur on the major western English late Roman urban centres such as Exeter, Gloucester and Cirencester. This absence from town sites which are often claimed as having a significant fifth- to seventh-century role must imply either a significant cultural boundary between the Severn estuary zone and the western towns or a major loss of status and/or activity in the latter. The chronology of the pottery is not absolutely clear but the fine wares suggest that a restricted late fifth to mid-sixth century date is most likely (Campbell 1991, 184-9).

This Mediterranean material is central to our chronology for the post-Roman West. It is concentrated in south-west England and south Wales (Fig. 6.1b) with only limited amounts finding its way further north to Ireland, north Wales and southern Scotland (Thomas 1988). Two groups of material are identifiable: an Aegean assemblage including Phocaean Red Slip ware, Bi, Bii and Biv amphora; and a North African assemblage including African Red Slip ware and B5 amphora. Given the restricted nature of these import assemblages a narrow late fifth to mid-sixth century date has been argued and a direct trade postulated between the Mediterranean and south-west Britain aimed at the acquisition of tin from Cornwall and the lead/silver of south-west England and south Wales (Fulford 1989; Thomas 1988; Campbell 1991). Only small quantities of this early Mediterranean material occur further north with finds at Whithorn, Dumbarton and Iona.

The scale of the importation represented by these sherd distributions is a matter of debate. Charles Thomas has in the past talked as if one ship could explain the total distribution (1988). While theoretically possible the general pattern of recovery and the fine ware variations make this unlikely (Campbell 1991). The pottery is however probably a small part of the cargoes which would be made up largely with perishable goods (ibid, 185) - though of course since these have conveniently perished what they were is uncertain.

If the south-west of England is the focus of the trade what do the more northern distributions mean. Clogher and Garranes are probably major Irish royal sites (Campbell 1991, 150-2). Dalkey Island may be a neutral trading place (ibid, 150). Whithorn is a problem, and we must await fuller publication to allow serious evaluation of the site (ibid, 171-3). Whether it is primarily a trading site, ecclesiastical, or secular, or a combination of all three is yet to be demonstrated for its fifth- to seventh-century phase. Dumbarton is a royal citadel (Alcock and Alcock 1990). One question of importance in consideration of these northerly sites is whether our putative Mediterranean traders sailed up the Irish Sea or whether some more localised British exchange, or gift giving, explains the more northerly distribution.

From the point of view of my current paper the absence of the Mediterranean wares from Dunadd, and Argyll generally, may be significant. Iona is the only Mediterranean find from the area with its single sherd of African Red Slip ware (Campbell 1991, 166-7). Since the radiocarbon dating evidence for Dunadd would permit fifth- and sixth-century occupation the absence of Mediterranean finds from Dalriada may be genuine (Campbell and Lane forthcoming).

The second ceramic group to need consideration is D-ware, a black colour-coated grey ware from western France (Campbell 1991, 29-30) which is thought to be sixth century in date (ibid, 189-90). The D-ware assemblage in Britain is tiny but it is found at Mote of Mark, Whithorn and Dunadd and it may indicate that we are in a new phase of importation with the loss of the Mediterranean trade. D-ware may span the gap between the earlier Mediterranean trade and the beginning of the new continental trade since it is also found on southern British sites which are thought to be abandoned by the seventh century. However, it is represented by so few vessels and its French sources are not precisely located or dated so there is a limit to any inferences which can be drawn from it (ibid). Again its presence may be ancillary to

perishable cargoes such as wine in barrels, though its limited incidence and the peculiarly high occurrence of mortaria in the British assemblages may imply a more specific and unknowable historical explanation.

It is only with the importation of E-ware that the west of Scotland is fully drawn into the main Irish Sea trading network (Fig. 6.1c). E-ware is a hard white ceramic in a range of small jars, beakers, bowls and pitchers or jugs. It is often referred to as a kitchen ware as if it was used in cooking. However both the forms and fabric suggest that the bulk of E-ware was for storage or containers while the rare bowls and jugs may be associated with drinking (ibid, 191-6). The source of E-ware remains uncertain though western France with a preference for the Loire around Nantes now seems quite possible (ibid, 40-1). The E-ware chronology depends primarily on Insular evidence and can now be dated fairly confidently to the late sixth and seventh century but possibly predominantly the first half of the seventh century (ibid, 33-40).

One other major group of material needs to be considered and that is glass. Vessel glass is known from some 40 sites in the Celtic West. Although a few sites have Anglo-Saxon glass - at Cadbury Congresbury, Dinas Powys and Whithorn - the overwhelming bulk of the glass appears to be continental (ibid, 41-9). Rather than a trade in broken Anglo-Saxon glass as was once thought we have a major importation of fine glass vessels from the continent to western British and Irish sites. In particular fine cone beakers and white trailed decoration seem to belong to a distinctive continental source. Again chronology is uncertain but a close association with E-ware suggests a predominantly late sixth and seventh century focus though Whithorn apparently has rather earlier evidence (per comm. E Campbell).

So we can recognise two major phases of imports in the archaeological record. The first from the Mediterranean does not reach western Scotland beyond Dumbarton. The second with continental pottery and glass, which is substantially an Irish Sea trade, does reach Argyll and indeed Dunadd has the largest known assemblage of E-ware (Campbell 1991, 162). What does the pottery and glass imply? It is generally agreed that neither is likely to represent complete cargoes. The bulk is likely to be perishable goods, perhaps wine in barrels though there is little positive evidence of this (ibid, 199-200) or perhaps the salt mentioned in Irish texts (ibid, 201). E-ware may have contained dyestuff such as madder or other luxury items such as nuts, or honey or spices (Campbell 1991, 195-6).
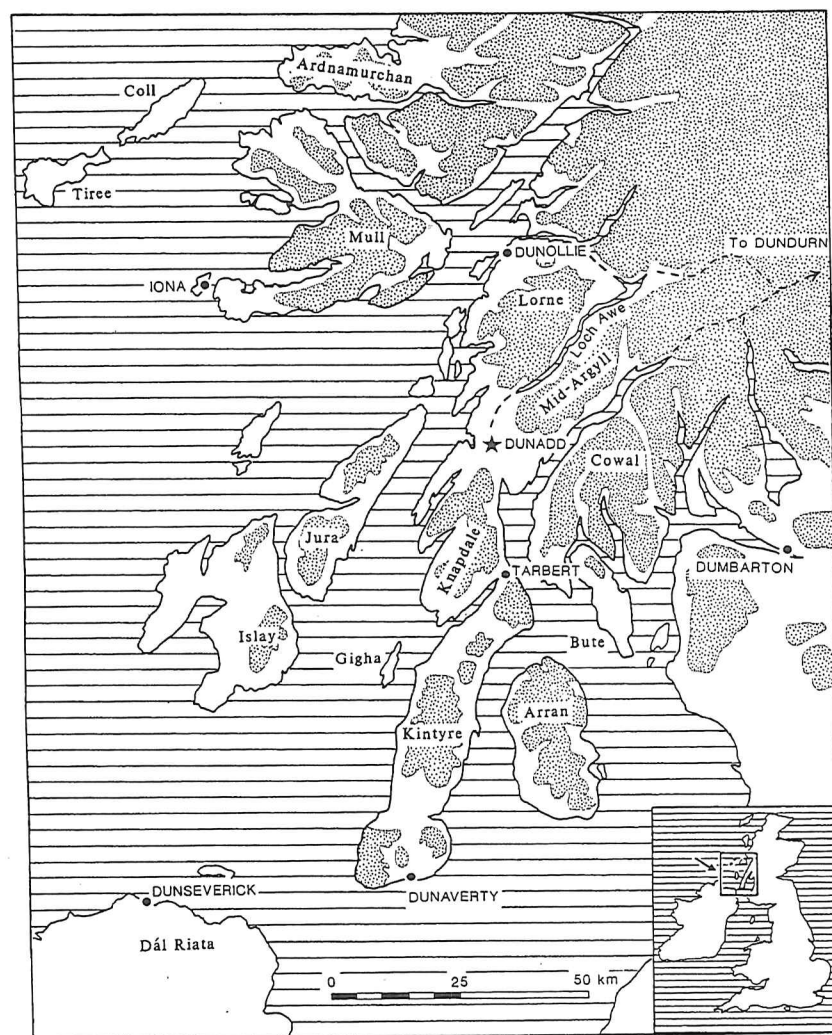
fig. 6.2

Dunadd and its environs

What is striking about the E-ware trade is how monopolistic it appears. As with the earlier Mediterranean trade the homogeneous E-ware assemblages seem to indicate traders from France sailing to the Irish Sea and dealing directly with royal or aristocratic centres of power. What is more, since the E-ware may represent one or two kilns in a limited area this trade seems to have excluded other competitors. Had western British merchants sailed to Gaul we might expect more ceramic variety to have reached western Britain.

Another distinctive feature of western Britain and Ireland is the suggestion that most of this trade was carried direct to royal sites with little use of neutral trading places and no evidence of the proto-towns of the English Hamwic type. As noted already Dalkey Island by Dublin might be a neutral location and Bantham in Devon could be a beach market or the site of a seasonal fair. Campbell has also suggested Caldey in south Wales as another neutral location. But by and large the sites with major import assemblages are coastal, defended and with other features which mark them out as native high status sites (Thomas 1988; Campbell 1991) and the use of more neutral locations may have been undermined by the coastal nature of much western royal power.

Exchange in Dark-Age Argyll

If we turn to Argyll Dunadd (Fig. 6.2) seems likely to be a major local focus for much of this trade since as noted already it has the largest E-ware assemblage in Britain. A small island near Crinan harbour could provide a neutral location to allow the exchange of goods but it may be doubted that any adjacent coastal site could really be regarded as neutral in such a maritime and island kingdom as seventh-century Dalriada. If Adomnan's statement about the Gaulish sailors who could be found at the *caput regionis* can be applied to Dunadd as reflecting the realities of Adomnan's time rather than Columba's we may even have a direct reference to the E-ware trade (Campbell 1987).

If a trade was carried on direct to royal sites, what then happened? Campbell's study of the E-ware assemblages suggests that there was a differential redistribution of E-ware types after the pottery reached the major import sites and generally only the containers and not the jugs and bowls went out from the major sites (1991, 234-7). So we might suggest that the potentates who controlled these sites (eg the Dalriadic king at Dunadd) used the luxuries which
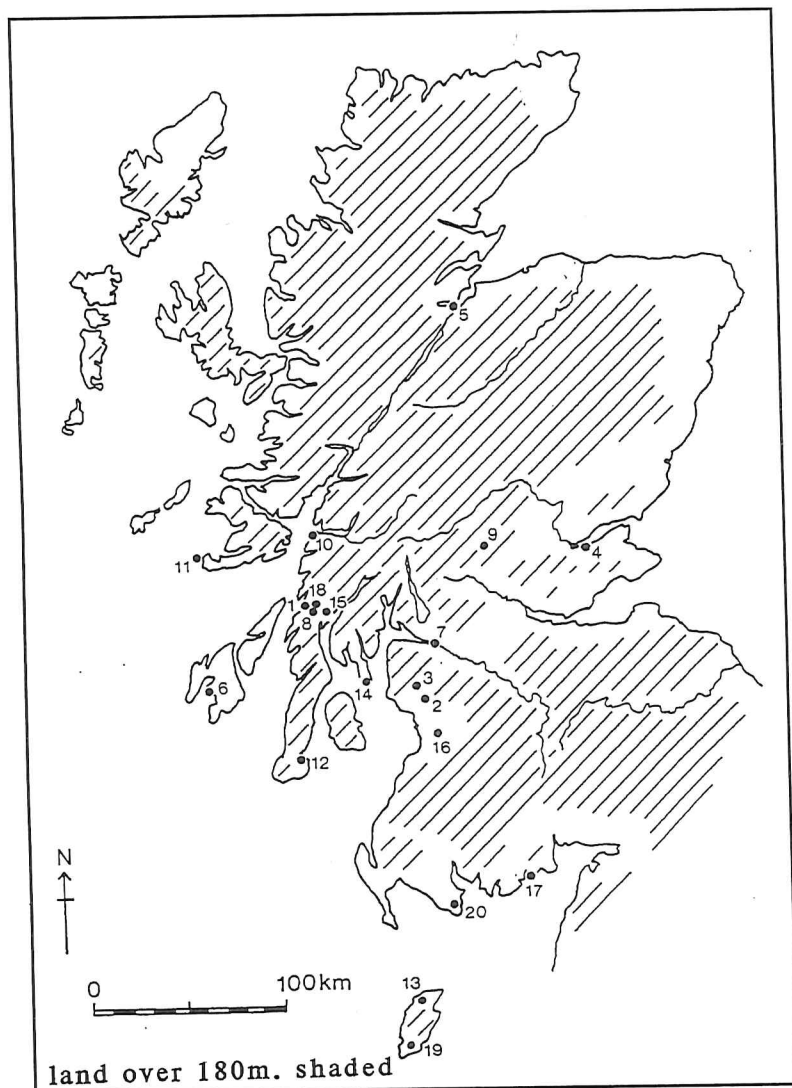
fig. 6.3
Location of sites with imported pottery and glass in Scotland and the Isle of Man
(Campbell 1991, illu. 4)

1. Ardifuir 2. Buston crannog 3. Castle Hill, Dalry 4.Clatchard Craig 5. Craig Phadrig 6. Cruach Mhor 7. Dumbarton Rock 8. Dunadd 9. Dundurn 10. Dunollie 11. Iona 12. Kildalloig Dun 13. Kiondroghad 14. Little Dunagoil 15. Loch Glashan 16. Lochlee 17. Mote of Mark 18. Poltalloch 19. Port-y-Candas 20. Whithorn

came in with the pottery, probably wine and fine glass drinking vessels, directly in the royal households, perhaps in feasting with clients and the royal kindreds, but that they then redistributed small quantities of some goods by gift to lesser aristocrats at sites such as the duns of Ardifuir and Kildalloig (Fig. 6.3, no. 1 & 12) (ibid, 164-6). Loch Glashan crannog (Fig. 6.3, no. 15), which is only eight kilometres from Dunadd, may however have been another royal site functioning in a complementary fashion, as has been suggested for some Irish sites where a crannog and a fort both function as royal residences.

Small quantities of E-ware went out beyond Dalriada into Pictish hands at Craig Phadrig, Dundurn and Clatchard Craig (Fig. 6.3, no. 5, 9 & 4) but it is difficult to see this limited movement as other than a secondary gift-giving beyond the primary centre of importation. The absence of E-ware from the west coast and islands to the north of Ardnamurchan may confirm historical estimates of the seventh-century extent of Dalriada (Lane 1990, 126-7).

The evidence of quantities of continental imports and the long distance contact which they imply allows us to postulate that these artefacts indicate trade, not gift-giving as the primary process of importation to Dunadd. But what of other exotic artefacts at Dunadd?

The handpin found in the 1904-05 excavations is an Irish type, but it could be a traded import, a gift, a loss from a traveller, or an item of local manufacture indicating the Irish cultural connections of the site (Christison and Anderson 1905, 316, fig 50). Huggett's recent study of imported goods in Anglo-Saxon graves admitted the severe difficulties in distiguishing different modes of trade even when faced with many examples of individual types (1988, 89). The interpretation of individual items is obviously even more difficult though the general character of assemblages and the expected social characteristics of a society may allow us some reasonable inferences. The many class G penannular brooch moulds from the site indicate clear local production of a general type which has a wider British and Irish distribution, perhaps with southern Britain as the chronologically earlier location (Campbell and Lane 1993, 54). Again the process by which this type spread through Britain is uncertain and as yet we have no explanation for the popularity and multiple production sites of this widespread brooch type.

The gold and garnet stud from Dunadd may indicate a gift of a very fine piece of Anglo-Saxon jewellery of Sutton Hoo status (ibid, 56-7) but other mechanisms such as barter, marriage, warfare, alliance or tribute all are arguable. Within the seventh-century metalworking deposits at Dunadd the occurrence of several Anglo-Saxon buckles and brooches indicates very clear cultural exchange (ibid, 60-2). But again the precise process is uncertain. Given the presence of Northumbrian exiles in Dalriada from as early as 600 and certainly in the first quarter of the seventh century there are obvious mechanisms for the introduction of Anglo-Saxon items into western Scotland.

What is interesting about these seventh-century deposits is that we may be seeing something of the process of cultural exchange that gave rise to the Hiberno-Saxon art style. For here we have moulds for big penannular brooches coupled with Anglo-Saxon motifs as displayed on the Hunterston brooch (ibid, 57-8). Other items such as the trumpet spiral disc, zoomorphic vandyke, and interlace disc all provide a model for key elements in the Book of Durrow (ibid, 61-2).

In introducing reference to the gospel books the role of Iona (Fig. 6.3, no.11) must be considered since the presence of Irish, English, and continental scholars can all be documented at the monastery in the course of the sixth and seventh centuries and presumably they would have brought or worn a whole range of exotic artefacts. In spite of a number of excavations at the monastery the quantity of imported goods from the site is very limited and we may be able to suggest that in the sixth and seventh centuries Iona was not trading directly with the continent but rather receiving goods through the medium of the royal residences. The contrast between the range of exotic items so far discovered at Dunadd, which includes manuscript colourant (Campbell and Lane 1993, 62), and those from fairly extensive explorations at Iona does seem to allow us to postulate such royal control (Campbell 1991, 166-7).

After the seventh century our evidence fades. Perhaps perishable goods continued to reach Dalriada but by and large we lose the artefactual evidence. This cessation of evidence about the year 700 coincides with the rise of the major English trading ports and perhaps represents the redirection of continental trade away from the west (Fig. 6.3d). With the focus of trade being direct to royal residences and then its apparent cessation we may be able to see some explanation for the failure of proto-towns to emerge in the west. The absence of coinage and urban development seems to suggest that following the period of fifth- and sixth-century trading activity in south-west Britain and the seventh-century activity in the Irish Sea the west of Britain declined to a more marginal trading zone as Anglo-Saxon England took off. The economic sophistication of later Anglo-Saxon England is in marked contrast to that of Ireland, Wales and Scotland and some social explanation for the disappearance of our early phase trade must be sought. When permanent trading sites do emerge in the West they are clearly in a Viking milieu: it may be that the trade centred on royal sites and monasteries was too controlled and not entrepreneur-friendly enough to permit significant economic growth.

1 This paper is presented for publication largely as given at the conference bar the addition of referencing and minor emendations. The first half of the paper is based on the work of various other specialists including Leslie Alcock and Charles Thomas. However, I must particularly thank my former Cardiff PhD student Dr Ewan Campbell, now of the University of Glasgow, for allowing me to quote extensively from his as yet unpublished PhD.

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