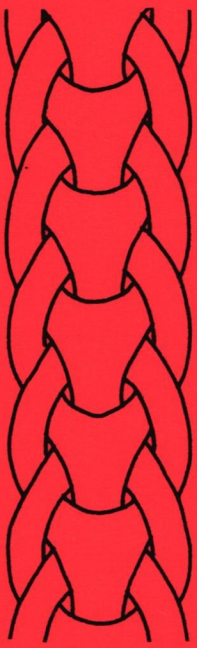
Tredie tværfaglige VIKINGESYMPOSIUM

Københavns Universitet 1984



Forlaget Hikuin og Afdeling for middelalder-arkæologi

B E R E T N I N G fra
T R E D I E T V Æ R F A G L I G E
V I K I N G E S Y M P O S I U M

Redigeret af

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Vignetten på forsiden er en
ringkæde af den type, som
findes på Gauts kors i Kirk
Michael og andre skulpturer
på Isle of Man.
Fra illustration s. 14.

INDHOLD

F O R O R D

Det tredie i rækken af tværfaglige vikingesymposier afholdtes på Københavns Universitet den 14. maj 1984. I forordet til beretningen fra "Andet tværfaglige Vikingesymposium" lægges der op til inddragelse af en bredere emnekreds, geografisk set, end relationerne mellem Danmark og England. Denne intention er ikke blot opfyldt med Else Roesdahls bidrag til forklaringen af Aggersborgs rolle, men tillige ved udvidelsen af synsfeltet til Man og Irland, og tilmed er et nyt fag denne gang kommet til orde på symposiet, nemlig kunsthistorien. Den nordengelske skulptur fra vikingetiden var rigt repræsenteret på den udstilling, der vistes på både Brede og Moesgaard i 1981, og vi fandt det meget frugtbart at få to af Englands bedste kendere af den til at delagtiggøre os i deres viden.

Vi takker de mange, der ved deres aktive deltagelse bidrog til symposiets afholdelse, og ikke mindst takker vi Statens humanistiske Forskningsråd for støtte til vore udenlandske gæsters deltagelse.

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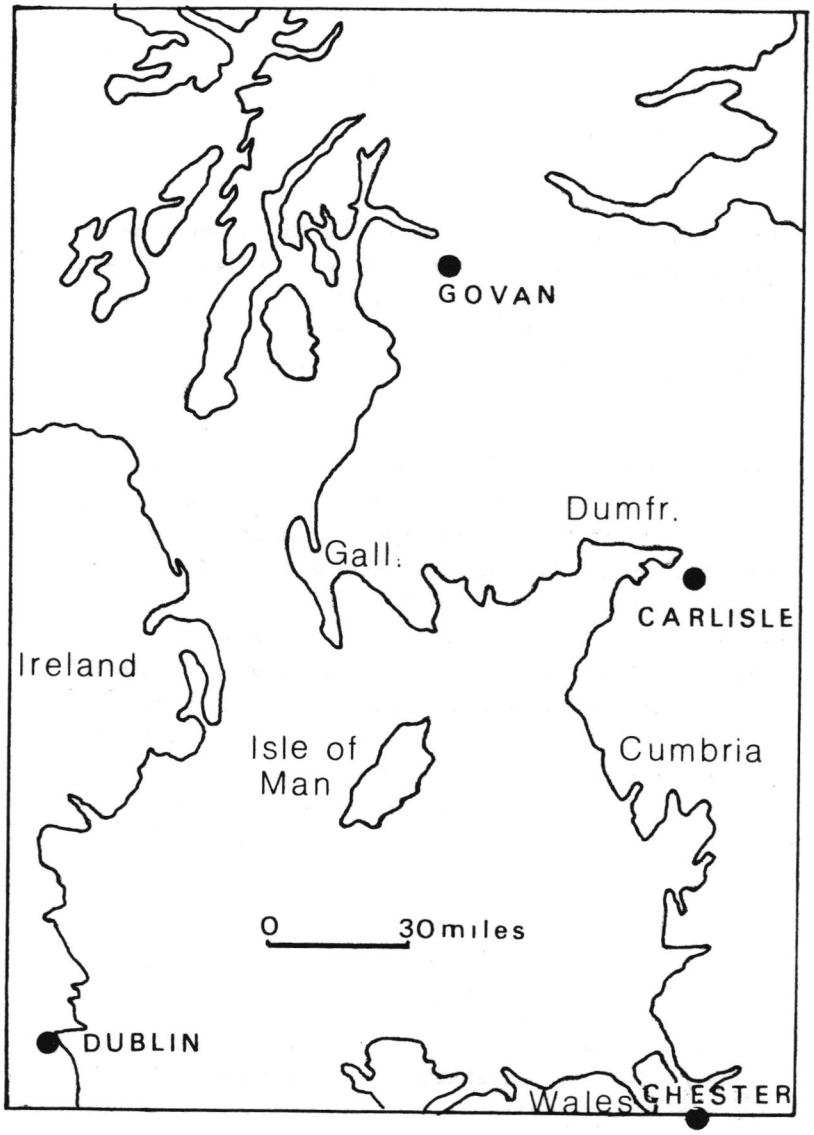
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IRISH SEA CONTACTS IN THE VIKING PERIOD - THE SCULPTURAL EVIDENCE

Richard N. Bailey

I

In a sense this paper was born as a result of a misconception. This seemingly unlikely sequence began in a London saleroom in 1981 when an early medieval stone crucifixion plaque came onto the market. The catalogue for the sale claimed that it originally came from Penrith in Cumbria and that it had once formed part of the large collection of sculptures preserved at Lowther Castle. Its emergence was so unexpected and its background of ownership so murky that I initially suspected that it was a forgery. These suspicions were strengthened by the fact that its iconography (which involves attendant angels, Stephaton, Longinus and a "sponge" of trumpet-like shape) could not easily be matched in England but had numerous parallels in Irish sculpture and metalwork, notably in a group of material apparently emanating from a Clonmacnoise workshop (Henry 1967, pl. 8; Harbison 1980). My reluctant recognition that the evidence of style, documentation and geology all pointed to its being the work of a tenth-century Cumbrian artist then forced me to think again about contacts across the Irish sea in the Viking period, not least because the plaque's discovery in 1981 seemed to undermine the case I had presented only a year earlier when denying that tenth-century English sculptors were influenced by their Irish contemporaries (Bailey 1980, 229-31). Though, ultimately, I do not

think that I have to eat my words (see Bailey 1985) the generous invitation to speak at the Copenhagen Vikinge-symposium was nevertheless a welcome opportunity to chew over a current problem.

II

The area with which I am concerned embraces the lands around the northern part of the Irish sea reaching from the Scottish Clyde to Ireland, to the north coast of Wales and back through Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria to Galloway (see map). At the centre of this circle is the Isle of Man, from which Galloway and Cumbria are both easily visible from sea level; an energetic climb up Snaefell brings Wales and Ireland into view. All of these countries were settled by the Vikings, but the relationship between the native populations and the incoming Scandinavian groups differed markedly from area to area around this region (Morris 1982, 70-1).

Thus in Ireland the linguistic, documentary, numismatic and archaeological evidence all point to activity in the coastal towns such as Dublin, Wexford, Waterford. These were the trading centres developed by the Vikings and here they concentrated, even though they were to be involved militarily and politically elsewhere in the island. Essentially the Scandinavian settlements in Ireland were urban isolates; the Vikings did not settle there as farmers (Morris 1982, 71, 73; de Paor 1976, 32; Greene 1976, 80-1; Graham-Campbell 1976, 46; Oftedal 1976, 125).

In North Wales we have the odd Viking burial but little real trace in the archaeology of any settlement. Nor does the onomastic

or documentary evidence indicate that there was any heavy infiltration of Scandinavian speakers into this Brythonic area (Richards 1962; Loyn 1976, 10). South-western Scotland presents more of a problem. Archaeology and place-names point to extensive Scandinavian settlement in Dumfriesshire but further west into Galloway the picture is more complex. Here it is the Gaelic element which dominates the place-names and this group may well have been established before the settlement of Gaelic-Norse in the Solway area. How "Norse" was Galloway remains a matter of debate (MacQueen 1956; Duncan 1975; Nicolaisen 1976, 98-136). Fortunately there is no such difficulty in either Man or north-west England for here the evidence of onomastics, archaeology and documentary history all point to a large-scale Scandinavian and Norse-Gaelic settlement (Wilson 1968; Bailey 1980, 33-44; Morris 1981; Fell 1983).

We must therefore recognise that all of these areas differ from each other in density and type of settlement in spite of the fact that they are all so closely adjacent. Moreover their pre-Viking linguistic situations were by no means identical; some were Brythonic-speaking, others used Anglo-Saxon, others some form of Gaelic. The social organisation also varied from region to region. And such differences were not obliterated by Scandinavian settlement for one of the characteristic features of Viking activity in Britain is a chameleon-like ability to adapt to the social, economic and linguistic patterns of the areas in which they settled - witness such diverse evidence as the continuity of the old estate divisions in Viking Northumbria or the use of churchyards for equipped burials in Man

and England (Morris 1981; Morris 1982, 85-6; Wilson 1967, 39). Often indeed fresh distinctions were added to those already existing. In Cumbria, for example, the disruption caused by the Scandinavian raids indirectly contributed to further linguistic and cultural complexity by weakening Anglian power so as to allow an expansion of the Strathclyde kingdom into the Carlisle plain (Jackson 1963; Bailey 1980, 36-7).

Granted this variety what can the sculpture tell us about contacts between these diverse communities? It is not unreasonable to expect some sculptural evidence for contact. We might anticipate that the importance of the Dublin-York axis in the politics and economic life of the early half of the tenth century would be reflected in the sculpture (Smyth 1975-8). We might hope to trace on the crosses and slabs some hint of other movements like those documented for Ingimund who fled from Dublin to Wales (or Man) before reaching Chester in the first decade of the tenth century (Smyth 1975-8, I, 61-6). We should, perhaps, expect to find something in the sculpture to support theories that the Goidelic names in Cumbria are the result of secondary settlement from Galloway (Smyth 1975-8, I, 81). And is there anything on the stone carvings of the area which might buttress the recent claim that Viking settlers spread westwards from Yorkshire across the Pennines to the Carlisle plain and to Man, and from Man to the Wirral (Jensen 1983a; 1983b)?

In raising these issues we ought first to be clear what the sculpture cannot, by its very nature, tell us. It is not capable of being exploited to help plot the detailed shifts in patterns of

allegiances between the communities around the Irish Sea, that kaleidoscope of ever-changing political and commercial links which the numismatists and the metalwork scholars have laid before us (Dolley 1976; 1981; Graham-Campbell 1975-6; 1976; 1983). The reason is that a fragment of sculpture is not, in most cases, closely dateable. When the potential date of a single stone carving floats across half a century in our chronological schemes, then it is apparent that sculpture provides a very crude instrument for monitoring fluctuating relationships. I have dealt with the reasons for our problems with chronology elsewhere (Bailey 1978, 173-6; 1980, 45-75); here it is sufficient to register the implications for our present inquiry.

But if it is chronologically awkward as evidence, sculpture is geographically precise. Few of these carvings were moved around, the Cuthbert Community who carried a cross from Lindisfarne to (eventually) Durham providing an eccentric and heroic exception to the rule (Bailey 1980, 22-3; Cramp 1984, 4, 33). There is nothing peripatetic about this material. We can therefore be certain that what is represented on the carvings is the taste of the immediate locality. We may argue about the precise origins of portable material like the Heskett sword-guard found in Cumberland, a Borre-style knife found in Canterbury or a gaming board found at Ballinderry in Ireland (Graham-Campbell 1978; Wilson 1976a, 503). Similarly we are not too surprised to be told that a coin-hoard found in the Isle of Man was assembled in the Orkneys (Graham-Campbell 1983, 60). But no such locational uncertainty attaches to sculpture. And in this

localised art we can discern contacts between the various Irish Sea communities - as well as some important indications of cultural barriers between some of those communities.

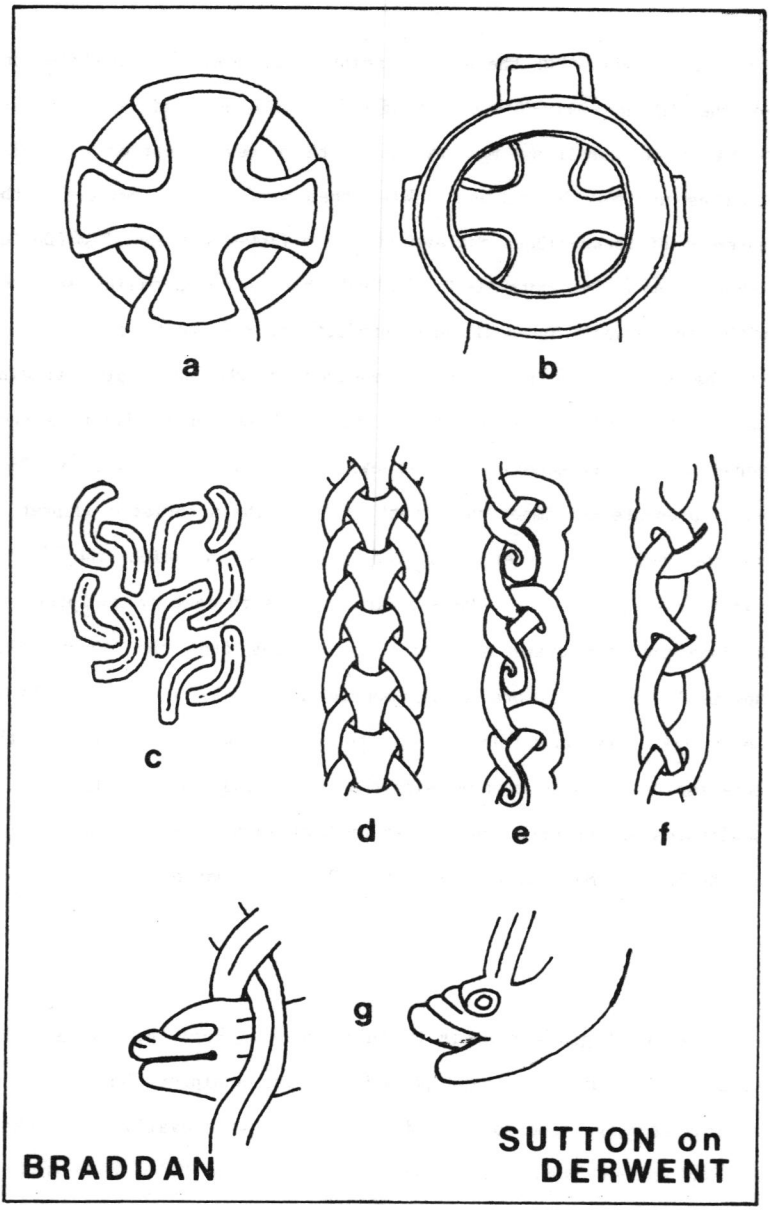
III

In the pre-Viking period all of these Irish Sea areas had a tradition of sculpture in stone which was expressed in architectural decoration, on crosses and on slabs. This was a medium of which the Scandinavian settlers in Britain (be they Norwegians or Danes) had no previous experience. Where the evidence exists then it is clear that this insular sculpture was essentially a monastic based art. This is quite clear from Henry's work in Ireland (Henry 1965; 1967). In Anglo-Saxon England (which in this pre-Viking period included south-western Scotland) all the evidence points in the same direction: the coincidence of the (relatively few) sites producing sculpture with those of known monasteries; the esoteric and monkish interests of the iconography of the monuments; the traces of literacy in their inscriptions (Bailey 1980, 81-4). On Man the position is less certain because of problems in establishing the precise status of the sites (and also because of difficulties in identifying exact find-spots (Page 1980)) but here again sculptures with any degree of artistic pretension combine literacy with monkish iconography (e.g., Cubbon 1977, 7-12). In the course of the ninth century in England admittedly this monastic stranglehold on the art may have been relaxing - it could be argued that the "two gentlemen" stone from York, with its figures in secular dress, reflects this (Collingwood

1927, fig. 147) - but the general point still holds. With the advent of the Vikings all of this changed. In England and south-western Scotland the expiring monasteries (with a few exceptions) finally died as active institutions. With them went that network for the movement of books, ideas and art which had flowed between them (Bailey 1980, 83-4). By contrast in Ireland that monastic milieu survived with its monopoly on sculptural production, resistent to the tastes of the settlers establishing themselves in the developing trading towns. But in England, south-western Scotland and in Man this once monastic art was eagerly adopted by the newcomers (see Bailey 1980) and represents one important aspect of their characteristic adaptation to the cultural patterns of the countries in which they found themselves. As is well known, this new tenth-century sculpture of England and Man draws on motifs and themes from the Scandinavian homeland, the sculptors using models in metalwork and perishable media like wood and fabric. In its most dramatic form we see the end-result of such transmission in the Scandinavian mythology of sculptures at Gosforth and Lowther in Cumbria and the Sigurd carvings of the Isle of Man (Bailey 1980, 125-32, 136-7; Margeson 1983).

IV

Let us begin our analysis in north-west England, focussing on Cumbria. In the pre-Viking period Cumbrian sculptors had been able to draw upon the same motifs and styles which were available elsewhere in England and were also heavily dependant on ideas generated in the great monastic houses of eastern Northumbria like Jarrow,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Wearmouth and Hexham. Anglian Cumbria looked to the east and to the south. With the Viking settlement of this area by Gaelic-Norse groups the whole of the Cumbrian peninsular is culturally re-orientated. It now faces west, artistically severed from the lands of the Cuthbert Community to the north of the Tees and cut off also, though to a lesser extent, from Anglo-Scandinavian Yorkshire. Thus isolated, its sculptors, catering for a new lay market, developed and then endlessly repeated a group of distinctly local motifs and styles whose distribution is largely limited to this area. So we find strictly localised tastes for setting out ornament in a series of parallel vertical strips and for placing figures beneath simple arches which are separate from the border moulding (Calverley 1899, fig. facing 127; Collingwood 1927, figs. 162, 191, 195). As I have shown elsewhere, we can also trace the existence of two prolific schools in the area, one using a series of distinctive interlace patterns including a Stafford knot, the other combining a peculiar form of scroll with plait made up from short distinct units of strand (Bailey 1980, 194-5; 196-206).

There were, of course, sculptors in Viking-age Cumbria who were not content with such limited types of ornament and who were sufficiently ambitious and well patronised to be able to draw on styles and themes which were being exploited in other parts of England and as far away as Scandinavia. Such a sculptor was of course the Gosforth master (Bailey and Lang 1975; Bailey 1980, 125-32). But he was a lonely genius and the better measure of the cultural orientation of Cumbria comes from work which is not of this first

rank. Among such carvings the break from the Anglian past is well signalled by the distribution of the characteristic Viking-period form of cross-head in Northumbria: the ring-head (fig. a). Whatever its ultimate origins it is clear that it entered the country from the west and was not developed in the old inspirational centres of eastern Northumbria (Bailey 1978, 178; Collingwood 1927, 137-45). Whether it was introduced from Man, Ireland or (as I believe) western Scotland it is important evidence for the fact that Cumbria is now to be seen as part of an Irish Sea province, and no longer the western annexe of an eastern-centred kingdom.

This highly parochial, western-looking art was clearly linked with the sculpture produced for other groups of settlements on the east side of the Irish Sea. The distribution of the circle-head form of crosses for example (fig. b) shows Cumbrian connections to the area around Chester and, beyond, to Anglesey (Bailey 1980, 177-82). And northwards we find the characteristic tall and narrow Cumbrian hogback form reappearing as an isolated example at Govan on the Clyde (Bailey 1980, 98-9; Lang 1972-4, 212-3). It is links like these which we must now pursue but, before doing so, it would be opportune to draw attention to a significant contrast within the north-west of England revealed by the sculpture: a contrast between Carlisle and Chester.

From the sculptural evidence Chester resembles York. At both Chester and York there were clearly sufficiently large (and sufficiently prosperous) populations in the tenth century to support masons' workshops which turned out mass-produced grave-markers to

a standard pattern (Lang 1978a; 1978b; Pattison 1973; Bu'lock 1958; 1972, 81-4). And the relatively sophisticated art of these centres was copied in the surrounding countryside. Chester's impact can be traced in the Wirral and along the North Wales coast to places like Whitfield in just the same manner as York's tastes are reflected northwards in the crosses and slabs of Ryedale and eastwards on the carvings of Folkton and Sutton on Derwent (Lang 1978b; Bailey 1980, figs. 41, 42; Nash-Williams 1950, pls. xxxii, xxxiii).

Carlisle's Viking-age sculpture by contrast, gives no such impression of population, wealth, innovative skills or cultural leadership. Though the city had been a monastic centre in the pre-Viking period, and had had some form of urban administration as early as the seventh century, the evidence of the sculpture suggests that it died in the Viking period. Whereas every other site in Cumbria which produced Anglian sculpture can boast three times as many carvings from the ensuing Viking period Carlisle actually has less material from the later centuries than the earlier. Nor is there any trace of any impact from Carlisle on the countryside around comparable to that exercised from York and Chester. In the thirteenth century Florence of Worcester recorded that Carlisle never recovered from its sacking in 875 before its Norman fortification. On the evidence of the sculpture he may well have been right - and its continued prosperity (and very existence) cannot have been aided by the fact that it fell under the political control of Strathclyde at some point in the tenth century.

This contrast visible in the sculpture chimes happily with other

evidence. It is Chester and not Carlisle which has a mint in the tenth century and the archaeological witness for trade between Dublin and Northumbria points to Chester, not Carlisle, as the preferred route to the markets of eastern England (Wilson 1976b, 98, 110).

V

With the Cumbrian evidence in mind let us now look across the Solway to the Viking settled area to the north of the estuary. Here in Galloway we have a distinctive form of local sculpture in the tenth and eleventh centuries which is characterised by a preference for panels of neat rows of ring-encircled crossings and for cross-heads with bosses filling the spandrels (Collingwood 1927, figs. 82-5). Such tastes are quite different from those of Cumbria, only some 25-30 miles away across the water. But there are also intriguing signs of artistic contact between the two areas.

Both regions for example have carvings on which the ornament is arranged in the same distinctive manner with a tall panel set over a narrow one (Collingwood 1927, figs. 85, 178, 182). And I have elsewhere pointed out that both areas employ, in differing ways, the so-called "stopped-plait" motif (fig. c) in which strands of interlace do not pass over and under each other but are "stopped" short of the crossing and treated as independent units (Bailey 1980, 226 figs. 58, 59, 65).

Other links are more striking. The pair of slabs from Craignarget in Galloway and Aspatria in Cumbria are so eccentric in their choice of motifs and so similar in their arrangement of

them that a direct connection must be assumed (Bailey 1980, fig. 67). So too the open knots of stones at Millom in Cumbria and Craiglemine in Galloway betray another link (Bailey 1980, fig. 66). Further north, out of Galloway into Argyll, a stone from Fardenreoch, Colmonnel repeats the parallel vertical strips favoured in Cumbria (see Calverley 1899, plate facing 127(b); Anderson 1926, 268) whilst into the Clyde valley we have a hogback which not only has the slim tall proportions of its Cumbrian cousins but also sports the stopped-plait ornament of Cumbria (Lang 1972-4, pl. 14a).

In many cases it is, of course, difficult to be certain which area was the innovator and which the recipient of motifs and styles. Colmonnel's strip arrangement is, however, a form well established in Cumbria but not attested elsewhere in that area of Argyll. Similarly the Govan hogback is an eccentric in shape within its region. Such isolated occurrences suggest that at least some of the influences flowed north from Cumbria - and this must certainly be the case also with the one example north of the Solway where stopped-plait is combined with spiral-scroll ornament in a manner quite characteristic of Cumbria but entirely alien to the taste of Galloway (Collingwood 1927, 80).

Two important conclusions emerge from this search for evidence of Cumbrian contacts to the north. The first is that such evidence should not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are great differences in sculptural tastes between the two regions. And secondly we should notice that such links as we have traced exclude the area around the headwaters of the Solway. If one looks at a

map showing the distribution of stopped-plait, or plot out the more particular links which have been listed above, there is a blank around the Carlisle plain (Bailey 1980, fig. 65). Northern Cumberland and Dumfriesshire are cut off from a set of identities and contacts between Galloway and southern Cumbria which must therefore have been dependant upon seaborne passage. The reasons for this north/south division in Cumbria and the east/west barrier in Scotland are debatable though there is some correlation with place-name divisions (see Nicolaisen 1976, 99-103, 134; Bailey 1980, 228-9; Jensen forthcoming). What is important however is that the sculpture re-emphasises the fact that we must not treat all of the lands around the Solway basin as though they were a single uniform area of Viking settlement.

VI

Within sight of Galloway and Cumbria lies the Isle of Man whose Viking-age sculptures have long attracted attention (Kermode 1907; Wilson 1971; 1983). Problems which have already been encountered in dealing with the English material are again present here. The marked continuity of local traditions in monument forms and motifs, which characterised Northumbrian Viking-age sculpture is a feature also of Man and provokes similar problems in dating. Recent studies, recognising this, have tended to augment the tally of Viking-age monuments by placing many of Kermode's "pre-Scandinavian" monuments into a tenth or eleventh-century context (Wilson 1971; 1983). As in England this results in the general run of Viking-period sculpture

displaying less of a "Scandinavian" taste than was earlier the case.

The first point to be made about this material is that it is very distinctive. In part, no doubt, the fact that a Manx stone could rarely be mistaken for a carving produced in Cumbria or Galloway is a function of the differing geology of the areas: Manx carvings tend to rely on a low, flat relief style which was well suited to the slates of the island. But the choice of motifs and the shape of the monuments of Man is also different and, though our concern is with contacts, we should register the fact that Manx sculpture in many ways is unlike the sculpture of its near neighbours. In this context we would do well to remember Michael Dolley's recognition, based upon the numismatic evidence, that early Manx Viking-period history was characterised by a "low profile" and non-involvement in the affairs of surrounding areas (Dolley 1976, 12-17; 1981, 178-9). The distinctive nature of the Manx sculpture tends to reflect this.

Clearly however Man does share some motifs with surrounding areas but before we plunge into the complex issues of deciding on the direction of influences, it would be well to recognise one clear fact: there are no links whatsoever between Galloway and Man. Though Galloway and Man are less than 20 miles away from each other they are exclusive zones as far as the evidence of the Viking-age sculpture is concerned. Nowhere on Man do we find knotwork patterns like, or stylistic analogues for, Galloway sculpture. Nowhere on Galloway do we find patterns and motifs used on Man.

It is evident, however, that certain motifs are shared with

areas of north-western England and, to a lesser extent, with the north Wales coast. There is, first, a set of patterns which were clearly developed within the Manx/N.W. England area but whose precise point of origin (and thus direction of influence) is now impossible to establish. Prominent in this group is the ring-chain (fig. d) which appears on Gaut's cross at Kirkmichael alongside the proud boast in runes that "Gaut made this cross and all on Man" (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, fig. 50, pl. XLIII b). In sculptural form it reappears frequently on Man, in North Wales, in Cumbria and to the east of the Pennines (Nash-Williams 1950, no. 38; Bailey 1980, pls. 2, 3, fig. 23; Bailey 1981, F7; Cramp 1984, pls. 130, 132). There is no doubt that this type of ornament represents an insular development of a Borre-style motif (Wilson 1976a) but where that original development occurred it is now impossible to establish, particularly since Cumbria and Man arrange the motif in differing ways (Bailey 1980, 217, fig. 60). All that is certain is that the derivative nature of many of the examples to the east of the Pennines suggests that it was essentially a kind of ornament popular in the eastern area of the Irish Sea and reflects a communality of taste among Viking-age colonies in Man and Cumbria (and, to a lesser extent, in Wales) - a communality of taste which noticeably excludes both Galloway and (as we will see) Ireland. Similar communality between Man and the adjacent coastlands to the east is seen in the striking parallel between the hump-shouldered figures from Kirkby Stephen and Maughold (Bailey 1980, pl. 40; Kermode 1907, no. 51). It is apparent also in the distribution of the so-called "hart and hound"

motif. This theme seems to originate in an abstraction from the hunt scenes of Celtic (probably Pictish) art (Bailey 1980, 72, 174, pl. 47) and occurs in Man, in Cumbria and Lancashire and also in Yorkshire. Where the abstraction first took place is uncertain but its use once more binds Manx art to that of its eastern neighbours. To the same category belong the so-called "free-style" animals which characterise the narrative scenes on Man and which are well paralleled at English sites like Lancaster and Dacre (Collingwood 1927, fig. 171; Bailey 1980, pl. 47). This is a widespread Viking-age style which recurs also in Yorkshire (Lang 1978a, 18) but again it links Man into an English orbit. Finally it has long been recognised that Man and England share iconographic tastes in depicting mythological scenes from the Scandinavian past (Bailey 1980, 116-25; Margeson 1983). All of these scenes ultimately rely upon Scandinavian representations which must have been in perishable media like wood or fabric but we are now hard put to say in which area (Man or England) they first found sculptural representation. Man's examples look more archaic, and nearer to what Scandinavian representations survive, but their seeming stylistic precedence over the English material may merely be the result of England's long-established tradition of well-modelled figure sculpture. Both areas could have developed independently from a similar Scandinavian source.

The more interesting set of Manx-English links are, however, those where some sense of precedence can be convincingly established. There are, I believe, three examples where Man is clearly the donor to the areas to its east. First there is a knotwork tendril motif

(fig. e). This form has its Scandinavian origins - it occurs, for example, on the Søllested horse collars (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, pl. XXXVIIb), and is found as an isolated element on trial-pieces at both Dublin and York. But it is Gaut and his fellow Manx sculptors who translate it into a full-length motif (Cubbon 1977, 19, 21; Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, pl. XLIIIb). When therefore we find an isolated English example at Lowther in Cumbria (Bailey 1980, fig. 61) then we are justified in suspecting Manx influence. And the stylistically evolved example from Spofforth in Yorkshire must fall into the same category (Collingwood 1915, 240). Similarly an encircled right-angled crossing of interlace strands on a cross-head is the standard form on Manx sculpture in the Viking period but is very rare elsewhere (Bailey 1980, fig. 62). When therefore we find a similar crossing at Stanwix, near Carlisle, combined with what looks like an imitation of the Manx arm-end motif then we are once more justified in suspecting an input from the smaller island. Further east, in the Wharfe valley of Yorkshire, a small cluster of such crossings probably has a similar explanation (Collingwood 1915, 130, 160, 205, 206). Lastly there is a device which Kermode christened "link-lock" (fig. f) which appears on Gaut's cross and many others on Man. It seems to have a Scandinavian background as one of a number of motifs dependant on split-bands (a treatment alien to pre-Viking English art) and can be seen on a brooch from Gudhjem on Bornholm (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, fig. 9). Only once does this motif figure on sculpture outside the island and that is on the worn side of a cross from Aspatria in Cumbria whose other faces

were illustrated by Collingwood (1927, fig. 178).

English sculptors were thus aware of what was being produced on the Isle of Man. Conversely some Manx carvings betray familiarity with the crosses and slabs being produced in Cumbria and, intriguingly, further away in York. One such reflex of Cumbrian tastes can be seen on the Roolwer cross (Kermode 1907, no. 72) which combines several Cumbrian characteristics: the parallel rows of vertical ornament, stopped-plait and the spiralling shapes of the Cumbrian spiral-scroll school (Bailey 1980, 196-206).

It is, however, at Braddan near Douglas, on the east coast of the island, that the English-linked sculptures are noticeably concentrated. There is, first, a stone which was published by Kermode some years after he had assembled his 1907 corpus of Manx sculptures (Bailey 1980, fig. 63). Its knotwork patterns are eccentric when viewed from Man but they are either identical to, or closely associated with, patterns employed by a small school of sculptors operating in the southern coastal plain of Cumbria. The alien nature of the carving is further emphasised by the fact that the proportions of the cross-shaft are unlike the slab-shapes favoured on Man; it has relatively broad sides analogous to English forms. What is more, as Mr. Trench-Jellicoe kindly informs me, it is carved in a sandstone which is not used elsewhere on the island and may even have been imported.

The very English/Cumbrian nature of Braddan is further attested by a second monument (Kermode 1907, no. 56). Here also the proportions of the shaft are more English than Manx. In addition, unlike most

Manx crosses, the head is shaped and stands free from the ground. And the shape of that head is clearly linked to those of the circle-heads of the Cumbrian coast, and even the knotwork pattern on the shaft is one which is frequently employed in Cumbria but is otherwise not used on the Isle of Man (see Collingwood 1927, fig. 178).

Two more Braddan shafts reinforce the impression that this site was uniquely open to English influences in the Viking age, though in this case the influences stem not from the opposing coast but from across the Pennines in Yorkshire. These are Odd's and Thorleif's crosses (Cubbon 1977, 38-9; Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, pl. XLV, figs. 52 and 55). Numerous writers have recognised that their Mammen style ornament closely resembles that on the Skaill brooches, and on this basis a Manx origin for those brooches now seems highly probable (Graham-Campbell 1975-6, 119-21; 1983, 70-1). Certainly the deposition date of the Skaill hoard in c. 950 cannot be far from the date of the crosses themselves.

The zoomorphic ornament obviously reflects Mammen tastes and it is not difficult to find parallels for the head lappets, the spiral hips, the contouring and the pelleting in art of that style. But the solid proportions and coherence of the animals are difficult to match in Scandinavia, but equally do not seem to grow out of any Manx traditon.

Yet a glance at the animal art of tenth-century York sculpture, and the associated zoomorphic decoration of areas like Ryedale, present us with many such beasts (Lang 1978a; 1978b; Pattison 1973). What is more, as Lang has demonstrated, these Yorkshire animals develop

from an earlier pre-Viking English tradition. Here we find beasts with solidity, with round rumps and a tucked-in back leg, a profile head thrown back, fanged jaws and legs which grow from the centre of the body without spiral joints. Most telling of all is the way in which the upper jaws of the Braddan animals have a triple 'wrinkle' for this is obviously linked to the York development of the triple fold on the nose (fig. g). Outside York other elements of Braddan's ornament can be traced, as Lang has noted, in the erupting scrolls of Levisham and in the pellet-bodied animals at Folkton and Sutton on Derwent (Lang 1978a, fig. 3). Braddan's beasts, in other words, are transplants from York where they belong to a menagerie with a long English ancestry. That it is to England that we should look for these fine (but, in Manx terms, eccentric) animals, is further confirmed by the fact that Thorleif's cross is a true ring-head, and not enclosed within a slab in Manx fashion whilst the proportions of the shafts also approximate closely to those of English crosses.

Where the evidence survives therefore the sculpture of Viking Man shows that Man was in firm contact with Anglo-Scandinavian England. Within England the adjacent coast of Cumbria offers the most evidence for such contacts but clearly the island did not remain immune to the seminal art of the capital at York. On present evidence however Lancashire, Cheshire and the Wirral show little sign of such links and, emphatically, Galloway is excluded from any connection. Further north a slab from Barra in the Outer Hebrides must be seen as a far-flung reflex of trade by the western sea routes, and perhaps also of Man's political allignment with the Scottish Isles in the

later years of the tenth century (Fell 1983, 90).

Given the position of Man in relation to Dublin, and its central point on the axis of east-west and north-south trade in the Irish Sea, one might have expected Irish links to be apparent in the sculpture. In the pre-Viking period there is no doubt of their existence: the Calf of Man crucifix, for example, would have occasioned no surprise had it been found in Ireland (Cubbon 1977, 16-17; Wilson 1983, 177). But I can see little trace of any sculptural impact from Ireland on Man until we reach the ultimate phase of Manx carvings represented by the Sigurd slab from Ramsey and another carving from Kirkmichael (Kermode 1907, nos. 89, 96). Wilson (1983, 181, 183) has rightly pointed to Ringerike elements in the beasts on these stones but what is more important for our immediate purposes is to recognise that the closest parallels for these balanced sweeping compositions lie in Ireland (Henry 1970, plate C, pls. 3, 15, 57). Both of these sites are in the geographical north of the island, in an area in which onomastic studies have recognised a strong Gaelic presence. It is also the area in which Dolley, on the basis of numismatic evidence, hazarded the possibility of a secondary Irish settlement in the years after 1025. These two stones from Ramsey and Michael, stylistically of eleventh-century date and apparently linked to Irish art, could be held to support that contention.

VII

I come now finally to Ireland. Here, at first sight, we have

something of a paradox. Dublin and the other coastal settlements were politically and economically involved with the rest of Viking Britain. Yet, as I believe, there is no clear sign of the sculptural art of tenth-century Ireland having any impact further east. Those claims for Irish influence on English sculpture which have been advanced in the past I have argued to be ill founded (see Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1980, 106-7; Bailey 1980, 229-31). There may be marginally more impact than I have been prepared to admit in the past but I have yet to be convinced that Irish sculptors had anything more than a marginal impact on tenth-century art elsewhere in the British Isles.

But should we expect more? Because Irish sculpture is two things which English and Manx sculpture is not: it is monastic and it is not found in towns. Irish sculpture remained a monastic art in the tenth century untouched by the tastes of the Scandinavian settlers in the coastal trading towns. Sculptor and trader belonged to exclusive groups. Irish crosses consequently show none of that tenth-century adaptation of Scandinavian motifs which is so evident in the lay art of England or Man. As a result Gaelic-Norse groups from Dublin could have played a major part in the commercial and political life of Man, England and York but, since they brought no sculptural addiction with them, their presence would not show on the crosses or slabs of those areas. Only in the eleventh century, with the development of the Irish Ringerike style do Irish and Scandinavian tastes fuse in the art of the sculptor in Ireland. And is it sheer coincidence that it is just at this time that Irish influences are

apparent on Manx carvings? But by this date Dublin's links to York and Northumbria have long been severed, as the north of England fell back reluctantly under the political and cultural domination of Wessex.

These reflections bring me back to my starting point, the crucifixion plaque from Cumbria. Because of certain stylistic links to Gosforth I have argued that it belongs to the tenth century (Bailey 1985) but equally it is clearly linked to Irish iconography. At first sight therefore we seem to have evidence for what I have denied to exist: Irish influence on Northumbrian art in the tenth century. Closer examination, however, allows me to escape with only minor damage to my position. For the model on which the Penrith sculptor depended is betrayed by the manner in which the scene is arranged on the plaque. The sculptor has blindly copied those features of his model which are proper to openwork metalwork but which have no rationale in sculpture. His inspiration came not from a piece of Irish sculpture but a metal bookcover or pax. The influence of Ireland on this English carving from Penrith is not from its sculptors but, indirectly, from Irish material in another medium brought by trade, loot or piety to England.

VIII

It will now be evident that sculpture is not really well suited to giving us the types of information which we might hope to extract from it. We have to take account of so many variant controls and so much uncertainty: the differing nature of production in various

regions; the often parochial nature of an art which closed its eyes to external impulses; the chronological uncertainties. But what has been shown is that we cannot treat even these near-adjacent areas of the Viking-settled Irish sea as in any way identical. And if there are links then there are also exclusions - and those exclusions have not always been apparent in studies dependent on other kinds of evidence.

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FINE MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS OF VIKING AGE ORNAMENT

By James Lang

The groundwork for the analysis and definition of Viking Age art styles was laid down by the pioneer Scandinavian scholars of the turn of the century. Their classifications together with their associated labels, such as Borre, Jellinge, Ringerike and Urnes, still provide a very useful framework for students in their recognition and attribution of decorative artefacts from a Viking milieu. Despite recent heart-cries (Fuglesang 1978,205), it has been the motif which has served as the principal defining factor of a style, be it a 'Jellinge half-moon nick' or a 'Ringerike voluted tendril'. Too often the style has been regarded as the determinant for the date of the object and in strictly archaeological terms such a chronological method is sufficiently subjective (and therefore unscientific) to render stylistic dating if not suspect then at least only approximate.

Only recently have the lines of the design or the totality of the composition been accorded an equally definitive role but, as Lennart Karlsson has pointed out, to make these features exclusive in the definition of a style is quite as subjective (Karlsson 1983, 101, 188-9). This paper does not seek to upset the established typologies, multitudinous as they are, laid down by Müller and his followers, though the tide seems to be gently on the turn. James Graham-Campbell, for example, in Viking Artefacts (1980, 6-7) employed the terms Early, Middle and Late Viking Period

alongside the style labels in an attempt to ease the rigid chronological restraints of the typology. Then in two recent publications Lennart Karlsson has boldly challenged the methods of art historians and, with a sharp eye turned to a much broader spectrum spanning the Migration Period and the Romanesque, demonstrated the confusion of stylistic nomenclature by listing over one hundred current terms. (Karlsson 1978, 243-51; 1983, 101, 188-9) Karlsson's recent work marks a watershed in the study of Viking Age art for in drawing attention to principles such as archaism and revivalism, taken for granted in later periods, through pointing to the recurrence of motifs in Scandinavian ornament over several centuries he has made us cautious about attributing a date to a particular stylistic detail.

Karlsson concludes his 1983 book with the following judgement:

> In a wider perspective and from the standpoint of art history the unusual, continual development of style in Scandinavia has been artificially divided into an all too large number of too strictly separated styles.

Perhaps a reason for this lies in the period during which Müller and his followers were working. The intellectual climate of European scholarship at the end of the 19th century was to a large extent coloured by the giants in the field of natural science. A century before Linnaeus had established a mode of classification which became the classic model for many other fields of study. His principles still underlie the watertight compartments implied by the style labels Borre, Jellinge, Ringerike and Urnes. Even so-called

'overlap' pieces are used to reinforce the discrete nature of each classified style and indeed reaffirm a chronological sequence based on a typological development.

This is where Darwinism prevails, as David Wilson noted (1966, 21). The evolutionary theory has been applied to typological development. Not only that : the progression has been made to proceed at an artificially regular rate, with a style change occurring obediently on the quarter century. The conjunction of chronology and typology with its consequent assumptions that style degenerates into debased forms at the end of its sequence was most strongly asserted by Brøndsted (1924) and W.G.Collingwood (1927). The evolutionary premise is perhaps quite reliable in something like a court school but when the artefact is found over a very wide area and its decoration differs not only in design but in quality then it is hazardous to schematize the random extant pieces into a dated typology. To add to the dangers, the notion of a 'mother-source' for the style has led to the view that Viking art in its purest form has to be Scandinavian and any manifestation of it in the Viking colonies, such as the Isle of Man or Northumbria, must be a reflex or a response to an 'impact'.

I have argued elsewhere for the distinctiveness of Viking colonial art (Lang, forthcoming) but here it is enough to make a plea for a method of analysing ornament which eschews the venerable principles just enumerated. The comparison of like with like, the method which underlies the traditional approach, often depends too much on the memory of the observer and indeed upon the range of

comparable material actually experienced by him. Add to this the chauvinism and working hypotheses exercised by most of us and the basis for the typology and its sources leans towards the unreliable.

To demonstrate the latent dangers lurking within the comparative method, let us explore a definition of the Jellinge style. The zoomorphic frieze which runs round the small cup from the Jelling mound is the eponymous example of a style which is widespread throughout both Scandinavia and the Viking territories of Britain and Ireland. The well worn definition of this type of animal ornament depends heavily upon diagnostic motifs : the extended tails and ears which fetter the torso with slender strands, the scrolled leg-joint, the semicircular indentation in the profile and the double outline (Wilson 1966, 97). It is also possible to add features which pertain to the form and disposition of the animals : the parallel lines of the ribbon body, the filling of the spaces with the trailing appendages (horror vacui) and the symmetrical, or at least axial, rhythmic grouping of the beasts in a chain. The animals of the Jelling cup provide nearly all of these indicators of the style.

The animals of Figure 1 also conform to the definition in precise terms : all the decorative details are there as well as the use of body appendages as trails and the undulating rhythm of the symmetrical design. Even the contoured outline and the spiral joint conspire to include the animals within the definition of the Jellinge style, yet this animal strip in reality is highly coloured

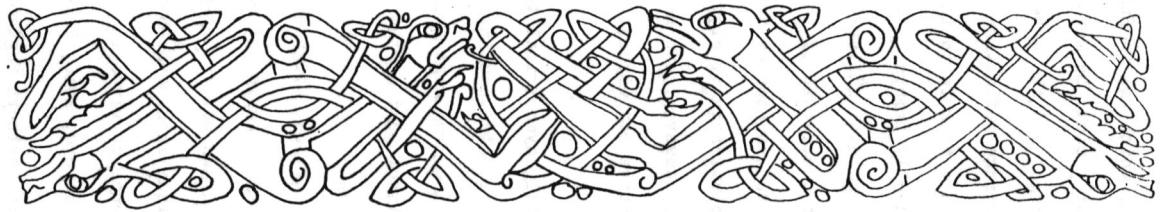

Fig.1. Detail from the Macregol Gospels.

and forms a decorative border in the Macregol Gospels, an Irish book of the end of the 8th century which was in England during the 10th (MS Auct. D.II.19). Nothing could be more Insular in its artistic tradition yet the format and the embellishments correspond so markedly to the Jellinge definition. We must ask what makes it not Jellinge if we are to keep to the labels.

Such a close resemblance naturally brings us back to the arguments of Shetelig, Brøndsted and even Müller that Insular features were the inspiration for the growth of the Jellinge style (e.g. Shetelig 1954, 134), but as soon as the hunt for stylistic sources begins then evolutionary typology immediately follows. The Macregol beast-chain, however, can be considered in a synchronic or purely descriptive way without reference to its stylistic roots.

It will be noticed how perfectly symmetrical the pattern is : its axes are both vertical and horizontal, and the diagonals are parallel and evenly spaced. Then the prominent spirals on the leg joints are seen to be paired in line, just as the crossing points of the bodies are and the snouts and rumps of the inverted beasts. When the distances between these vertical alignments are measured we find that the pattern is based on a series of equal registers controlled by an underlying grid drawn out in dry-point on the page. This is a well known technique in Hiberno-Saxon book painting and the observable evidence survives in a measurable form in many manuscripts (Bruce-Mitford, 1960, 221-31).

Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture in Northern England offers new

opportunities for analysing Viking Age colonial designs in the manner that the earlier manuscript art has been scrutinised : fine measurement is beginning to reveal the principles of laying out the design on the stone. In recent years Richard Bailey has been able to group certain carvings into recognisable workshops not because of their general resemblance but their exact correspondence in size and shape of elements of the design. He postulated on the strength of this evidence, which is measurable through his rubbings, that the sculptors were using templates (Bailey 1978, 180 ff.).

These templates, he demonstrated, were not so much stencils for particular naturalistic elements, such as helmets, limbs or heads, but basic shapes of constant size. The recognition of the particular element on a number of carvings in a given area enabled the establishment of an atelier and, important for dating, brought the group a tight internal chronological framework. Instead of a linear evolutionary development the sequence of production was probably a series of hectic bursts of activity within a single lifetime interspersed with periods when nothing was produced. Naturally it follows that these surges of production would occur at different times in different places.

The implications of Bailey's template theory for chronology are exciting and based upon recording of the artefact's details rather than an art historical convention. Nevertheless, when it comes to a study of the ornament itself and an examination of how far the template contolled style, difficulties remain. For example, in the Ryedale area of Yorkshire, a region full of 10th-century

Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture, there is evidence of an atelier which decorated its cross shafts with single profile dragons whose ornamental details are reminiscent of Jellinge style animals. The well known Middleton bound dragons are clumsy examples, the better ones being at Sinnington (Collingwood 1907, 385-6). At this site the animals are disposed in an S form with the head thrown back, and have the contoured outline, fettering and appended scrolls often associated with Jellinge. There are several examples and measurement shows them to be identical in size and shape, even in the minor details' placing. The close correspondence points towards the use of templates, yet such is the complexity of the design that one wonders at how much information was contained in the template and what strange shapes it was capable of producing (Bailey 1978, Pl. 9.5).

With this problem in mind, a re-examination of another atelier's pieces was undertaken : the Allertonshire workshop of North Yorkshire. This group specialises in figure carving, especially of warriors ; their heads, helmets and spears all conform so that Richard Bailey convincingly united shafts from three villages because they were from the same template. Fine measurement of the warrior portrait from Sockburn, however, revealed another principle in the lay-out technique of the design.

The figure is depicted in profile holding a circular shield and wearing a domed helmet and kilt; a spear is held upright. When the diameter of the shield was measured it was found to be identical

with the distance between the top of the shield and the helmet's crest, and also with that between the base of the shield and the feet. This divided the portrait into three equal registers. It was then found that the radius of the shield provided a unit of measure which could be found elsewhere in the design. Further measurement revealed that the edges of the portrait and crucial turning points in the line, such as the point of the kilt, were contained by a grid of squares of uniform size. This grid proved to be a very fine one, each square being 2.5 cm : that is, exactly one inch. The discovery of the grid does not necessarily preclude the use of templates since the lines could have been employed as guidelines for the placing of the stencil. Figure 2 shows how the underlying constructional geometry affects the proportions of the design.

The most convincing evidence for the use of grids by this workshop is found on a related monument at Brompton where the surface of the stone still retains the drilled fix-points and aligned scratches made in the initial stages of cutting the stone. They were left because the surface would originally have been coated with gesso and painted, thereby concealing the construction lines. A minute search of the topography of the stone's surface is likely to reveal such evidence in other Viking colonies, in particular the Isle of Man where the laminated slate is hard enough to weather very slowly. Indeed, it is on Man that the grid system has a bearing on the concept of style with regard to the Viking Age cross slabs.

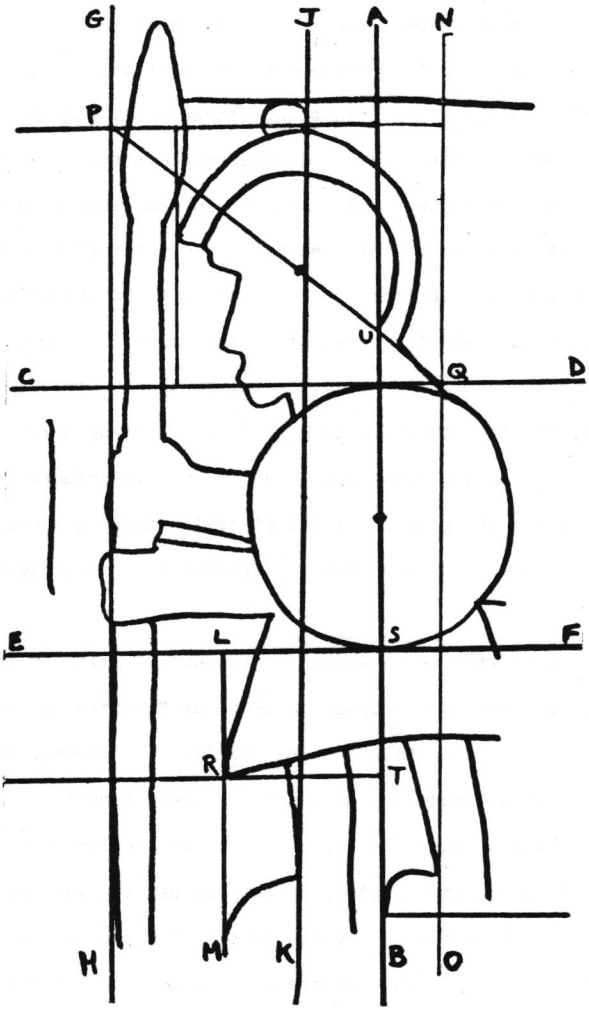

Fig.2. The Sockburn Warrior.

The Viking context of the Manx stones is asserted chiefly by their runic inscriptions and in some cases by the signature of the carver, notably Gaut Björnson. The ornamental repertoire of Gaut is entirely abstract, consisting of interlace patterns. Two of these are distinctive : the ring-chain and the tendril. Bailey has suggested that the former derives from Borre style and the latter from pre-Viking art in Scandinavia (1980, 217-18). Nevertheless, the form of the monument and its superimposed cross are native to the Insular tradition.

The loose trailing tendril with the half-moon nick in the edge is very like those of the Søllested horse collar, as David Wilson has indicated (1966,109, fig.50, Pl.37b), and might easily serve as a Scandinavian indicator. However, on Gaut's slab these semi-circular indentations are without exception placed on the outer edge of the pattern , never within the body of the design. If the distance between them is measured vertically it is found that they are equidistant : they mark out the registers of the repeating pattern. Then if horizontal lines are extended from the indentations, it becomes apparent that lateral alignments of the edges of motifs and crossing points, such as the junction of the ring-chain elements, are fixed by the nick, which is in fact no more than a fix-point for a grid embellished decoratively in order to conceal it.

If the original function of the semicircular nick was really concerned with the lay-out, its importance as a stylistic indicator must fade. Having once given the units of measure for

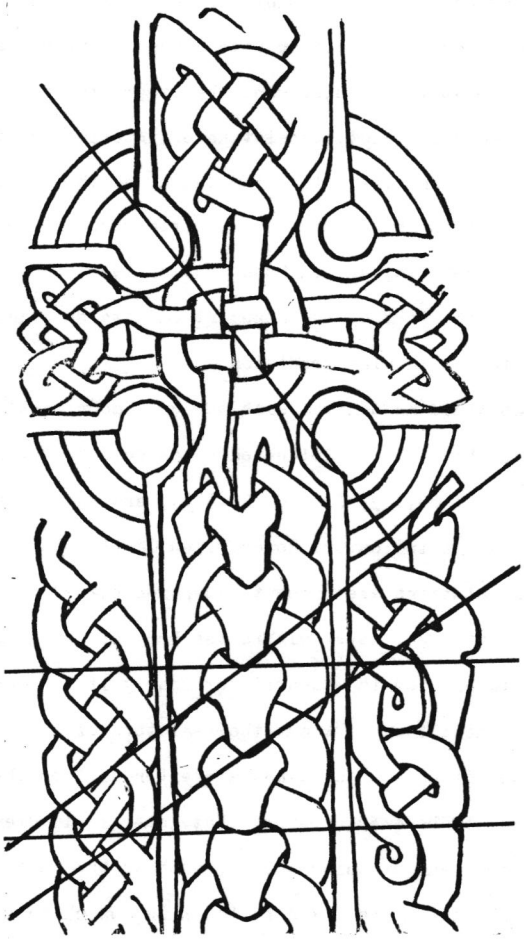

Fig.3 Sketch of Gaut's cross-slab
Kirk Michael, Isle of Man.

the vertical and horizontal control of the design, the grid then allows for diagonals to be drawn from corner to corner of various squares. The usual drawings of Gaut's slab tend to show the ring-chain consisting of circles and arcs, certainly very curvilinear, but when the stone itself is scrutinised the cutting is seen to be in straight lines, probably on account of the obdurate slate and the difficulty in modelling it. The upper arcs of the rings are in fact diagonals, as are the Y formations of the central elements ; all these diagonals conform to the underlying grid.

Minor motifs like the ring-chain and the nick, certainly in the case of Gaut's work, may well be the result of constructional techniques rather than inherited fashions from Scandinavia. It is perhaps significant too that planning designs on a grid through constructional geometry is an Insular tradition, as we see from the manuscripts, and future enquiry into the principles which govern mainstream Scandinavian art may open the way to distinguishing between homeland and colonial styles on the basis of lay-out techniques which may be quite different from each other. It is perhaps superficial to compare Gaut's slab in Figure 3 with the Mammen axe, though in terms of symmetry and axiality their differences are very telling. Moreover the method is precise when one measures the artefact and does not depend solely upon the eye and the memory.

What, then, of the semicircular nicks in the tendrils of the Søllested horse collar ? How far are they stylistic and how far functional ? On the large strip with the interlocked beast and

bird (Wilson 1966, Pl.37b), the indentations are for the most part also on the outer edges of the design. The panel is cast so the techniques appropriate for cutting stone do not apply to this form of working metal. They are unlikely to be grid fix-points too because the object is curved and tapering to accommodate to the crest of the yoke. Cast metal, however, sometimes requires sprigs for the mould and these would naturally be placed on the outer edges rather than in the middle. The nicks on the Søllested collar may simply be accommodating to the intrusive sprigs and, in Gaut's manner, disguised as decorative flourishes.

The Jellinge style is primarily an animal style. One of the purest examples adorns a stone cross shaft found under York Minster (Lang 1978, Pl.Ib, Fig.2d). In every respect the animals conform to the Jellinge definition, both in disposition and form as well as in minor decorative detail. Compared with the incised beasts of the Jelling cup there is something distinctive about them. The density of the composition is especially noticeable compared with the freedom and space of the cup's design. In any analysis of the relationship between motif and background in Viking styles the medium of the artefact must be borne in mind. Fine etching on silver and use of the hammer and punch on sandstone will not produce the same Jellinge beasts. Fine measurement of the York Minster shaft has brought out yet again the relationship between the finished decoration and the mode of its construction, and in addition the way in which the gridding system lends itself to economy of cutting.

Measurement quickly showed that the large spiral scrolls on the animals' leg joints were disposed at regular intervals. When the scrolls are aligned in sequence from the base upwards it becomes clear that the diagonal lines between them actually govern the line of the ribbon bodies of the beasts. When a horizontal line is extended across the stone through the scrolls in two cases it aligns with the animal's eye and elsewhere with the tip of the foot. The leg joint scrolls are indeed another example of the decorative disguising of fix-points. The cramped packing of the interlocked animals is brought about by their forms lying extremely close to the underlying grid and the sculptor has saved himself the problem and effort of cutting background space clear.

We are indeed left with surface details like the nose-fold and the contoured outline which do seem to be Jellinge decoration pure and simple. One could go further and point to the choice of particular decorative motif in the concealment of the fix-point: out of many devices the sculptor has chosen a scroll from the known repertoire of animal ornament. He is working in his tradition.

Fig.4 York Minster shaft.

At first it may appear that this lay-out technique is one only adopted by craftsmen working on stone or vellum. Certainly the trick is particularly suited to two-dimensional art forms and evidence of its use would be difficult to identify on, say, chip carved metal objects. There are, however, engraved silver artefacts which might lend themselves to this kind of examination.

The ball-terminals of the penannular brooches from Skaill in Orkney are decorated with single profile beasts in a very full blown version of the Jellinge style, even verging as some would have it on Mammen (Graham-Campbell 1975-76, 119-21, fig.3 ; 1980, nos. 197 & 492). They are finely engraved with embellishments which are typical of Jellinge : the scrolled leg-joints, extended ears and tails, contoured edge and half-moon nick. Unlike their cousins on the Jelling cup, they are tightly disposed in contorted positions well suited to the spherical terminal which they adorn.

Close scrutiny of the engraving has resulted in more accurate drawings (Graham-Campbell 1975-76) which show in addition to the firm decorative lines many tiny scratches, all of them uncompromisingly straight despite their very short length. When these are aligned and extended it comes as no surprise after analysing the sculpture that they pass through the centres of the spiral scrolls and bisect the half-moon nicks. Indeed the indents and scrolls are disguised fix-points for a grid acting in exactly the manner of the Manx and Yorkshire stone carvings. Figure 5 demonstrates how the shape and angles of the beasts' bodies are contolled by the grid.

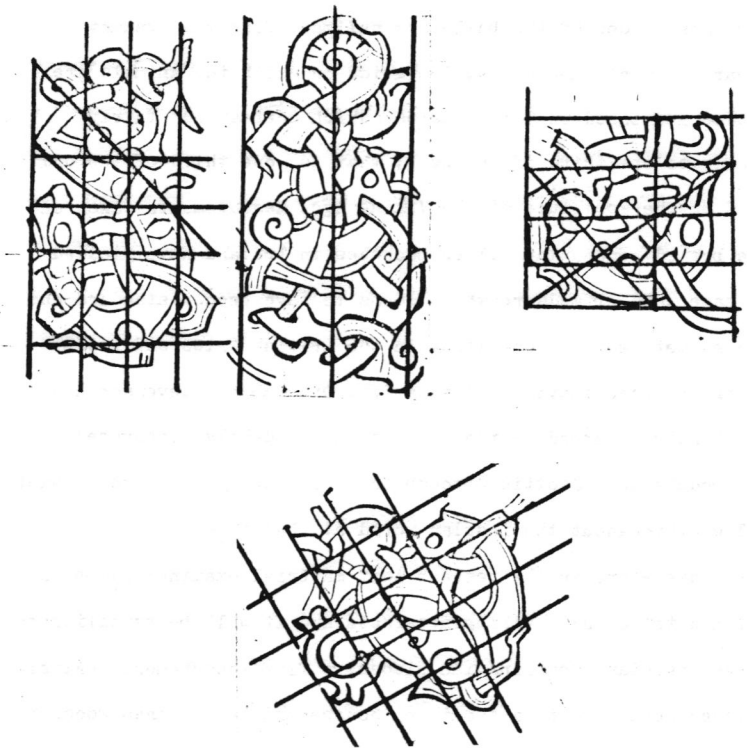

Fig.5 Beasts from the Skaill brooches (after Graham-Campbell).

The small size of the Skaill ornament and its position on the curving surfaces of the ball-terminal make fine measurement awkward but not impossible. The grids on which the animals are imposed are based on 9 mm squares, which correspond fairly closely to one third of an inch ; that is, one third of the unit found on the sculpture of the Viking Age. Measurements taken on some bossed penannular silver brooches in Ireland have yielded the same unit of measure which seems to have been a standard one amongst metalworkers operating in the British Isles and Ireland during the Scandinavian colonisation. Dr. Robert Stevenson has very kindly informed me that he has independently discovered a 9 mm module on a Scottish brooch so it is likely the standard applied throughout the insular world at that time.

At this stage in the reseach that material examined has been confined to colonial Viking artefacts and it will be revealing to subject homeland Scandinavian pieces to fine measurement analysis. Engraved metalwork is a promising source and later Urnes woodwork too. If the scrolled joints and indentations do not align with crucial points in the decorative pattern, and no grid is apparent, then we may have found a dispassionate method of diagnosing Viking colonial art as opposed to its Scandinavian counterpart. With the memory of manuscript painting's lay-out techniques lying behind the 10th-century designs it is tempting to suggest that the method which relies upon the grid is a purely Insular manifestation. Further work will tell.

The approach does challenge the use of minor motifs by some

art historians in their definitions of styles, and consequently the stylistic dating techniques of some archaeologists in establishing the chronology of their artefacts. Beneath the art of Viking Age antiquities, or indeed antiquities of any period, lie the technology and restraints of the medium in which the craftsman was working. Working practices when proven are likely to endure, creating the kind of conservatism of style that we can see in the relationship between Hiberno-Saxon painting and Anglo-Scandinavian sculpture. It is not necessarily a case of 'influence' or 'impact', either ethnic or stylistic. It is rather the continuity of a method which cannot be improved.

The tantalising question is how craftsmen in Viking colonies in the 10th century learned the technique, and where. As to when they learned it, it must have been directly acquired from practising carvers and smiths, suggesting a contemporaneity among Anglo-Scandinavian and Irish and Manx pieces which must be taken into account in any attempt at fixing a chronology. The racial origin of the craftsman may be something of an irrelevance in a context where Scandinavian settler of several generations' standing has integrated with Celt or Anglian neighbour.

Finally, the gridding may not necessarily be the simple basis for design but a means of scaling up the size of a pattern from a trial piece. Bone motif pieces abound from the Viking towns of York and Dublin, though not from Scandinavia. We have no idea of what a trial piece for a large stone cross looked like, but it is possible that a grid of half-unit squares could have been made on

a plank of wood and the design transferred to a doubled up grid of full unit squares on the stone itself. This would have ensured that much time and expense would not be wasted because as the pattern neared the termination of the panel it was found not to fit after all. The practicalities of manufacture of both sculpture and metalwork must be the starting point for any stylistic analysis for they were the preoccupations of the craftsmen who produced the material. They had not read Müller.

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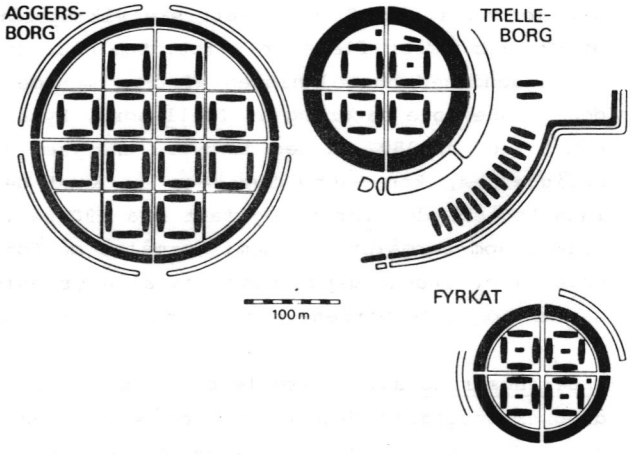

AGGERSBORGPROBLEMER

- størrelse og beliggenhed, formål og funktion

af Else Roesdahl

Indledningsvis vil jeg gerne udtrykke taknemmelighed for denne lejlighed til en diskussion om de særlige Aggersborgproblemer, før mine tanker derom kommer på tryk i den endelige Aggersborg-publikation, som er under udarbejdelse med et dusin bidragydere. Mine tolkningsforsøg vil derfor blive fremsat i en lidt provokerende form, i håbet om at få god respons.

Som titlen angiver, vil jeg forsøge at adskille formål og funktion, idet jeg opfatter formålet som hensigten med borgen; den reelle funktion behøver ikke at have været identisk hermed. Det skal straks gøres klart, at det arkæologiske materiale fra Aggersborg kun fortæller meget lidt om funktionen - i modsætning til forholdene på Fyrkat. Men formålet kan vurderes, bl.a. ud fra borgens størrelse og beliggenhed. Og både Aggersborgs størrelse og beliggenhed afviger så afgørende fra de andre trelleborges, at Aggersborgs formål må have været ialtfald delvis et andet.

Der kendes i dag fire geometriske vikingeborge i Danmark; om der har været flere er uvist. Som bekendt er der stadig nogen uenighed om tolkningen af dem, men med den efterhånden ganske gode datering af Trelleborg, Fyrkat og Nonnebakken til o. år 980, og med de nyere analyser af disse borges beliggenhed, kan Svend Tveskægs og Knud den Stores Englandstogter, der først tog fart fra 990erne, ialtfald udelukkes som formålet med dem. Formålet må først og fremmest have været indenrigspolitisk, og alle er enige om, at bygherren for alle borgene var kongen.

Dateringsgrundlaget. Trelleborgs opførelse blev i 1979 dendrokronologisk dateret til efteråret 980 eller foråret 981.[1] For nylig er Fyrkats opførelse, på et ganske vist langt mindre materiale, bestemt til tiden lige omkring 980 (en helt præcis datering var ikke mulig); dette svarer smukt til dateringen ud fra det traditionelle arkæologiske materiale, især møntdaterede smykker.[2] For Nonnebakken er dateringsgrundlaget mønter og smykker. De 33 fundne mønter har nordiske slutmønter, som iflg. Brita Malmer er præget ca. 975/80. Smykkerne passer smukt dermed, og jeg vil fastholde min gamle konklusion, at der var aktivitet på Nonnebakke-borgens område ml. ca. 975 og 990, og netop denne datering sammen med ringvoldens form gør det næsten helt sikkert, at borgen var af trelleborg-type.[3]

Aggersborg kan ikke dateres isoleret. Den store borgs alder må fortsat bedømmes ud fra det tætte arkitektoniske og konstruktive slægtskab med de øvrige borge, som repræsenterer en distinkt og isoleret type indenfor både dansk og europæisk borgbyggeri. Med Fyrkat er slægtskabet særlig nært. Borgpladsens diameter på Aggersborg er præcis

1 N. Bonde: Trelleborg dateret! Nyt fra Nationalmuseet. Dec. 1979, Jan. og Febr. 1980, nr. 5, s.11-13.

2 H. Andersen: Ringborgens alder. Skalk 1984 nr. 2, s.15; E. Roesdahl: Fyrkat II. Oldsagerne og gravpladsen. København 1977, s.168 ff.

3 E. Roesdahl: op.cit. i note 2, s.167 f. med henvisninger (om dateringen); O. Olsen og H. Schmidt: Fyrkat I. Borgen og bebyggelsen. København 1977, s.86 ff. (om borgen på Nonnebakken).

dobbelt så stor som Fyrkats: 240 m. Husene er bygget nøjagtigt som på Fyrkat, men lidt større, og den komplicerede voldkonstruktion - også de elementer, som lå skjult inden i voldlivet - var helt ens. Det ser simpelthen ud, som om samme "tegnestue" var ansvarlig for de to borge. På Trelleborg var detaljerne lidt anderledes, vel på grund af særlige sjællandske byggetraditioner, og om konstruktive detaljer på Nonnebakken ved man faktisk intet.[4]

Og da Aggersborg er så nært beslægtet med Fyrkat, som er opført o. 980, mens også Trelleborg var under opførelse (og formentlig Ravning Enge-broen), og da Nonnebakkens datering passer helt dertil, så vil jeg i det følgende gå ud fra, at også Aggersborg er påbegyndt o. 980. Hele den følgende argumentation er baseret på denne vurdering. For fuldstændighedens skyld må det nævnes, at træ til dendrokronologi næppe vil kunne findes på Aggersborg, og at et par mønter præget o. år 1000 er for uklart indlejrede i forhold til borgen til at kunne datere den.[5]

Tolkninger. Det er umuligt her at komme ind på alle forsøg på tolkning af de geometriske borges formål og funktion; en del er også mindre aktuelle, efter at der nu er nogenlunde enighed om dateringen. Men et par tolkninger skal nævnes som baggrund for min egen, for den indeholder elementer fra flere af dem.

Tage E. Christiansen foreslog i 1970, og Aksel E. Christensen året før, at ringborgene kunne være tvangsborge i rigssamlingens tjeneste. Formålet skulle have været at holde nyerobrede områder af Danmark under kontrol; ifølge Jellingstenen vandt Harald Blåtand sig jo "Danmark al" (hvad det så end betyder).[6]

Jeg har selv 1977 fremhævet de civile aspekter, som afspejles i fundene fra Fyrkat og Trelleborg, og peget på borgenes anvendelighed som regionale magtcentre, hvor-

4 O. Olsen og H. Schmidt: op.cit. i note 3, s.86 ff.

5 E. Roesdahl: op.cit. i note 2, s.167 (om datering på grundlag af oldsager og mønter).

6 T.E. Christiansen: Træningslejr eller tvangsborg. Kuml 1970, s.43-63; A.E. Christensen: Vikingetidens Danmark. København 1969, s.251 f.

fra også kongens mere normale rettigheder og pligter kunne udøves, og jeg har aflæst almindelige kongsgårdsfunktioner af Fyrkatfundene. Jeg har også set borgene som prestigebetonede projekter. I 1980 og senere, efter at Trelleborgs datering var klar, har jeg videre peget på, at de kunne være bygget som regionale magtcentre - tvangsborge om man vil - i lyset af de vanskelige politiske forhold, der endte med det af Svend Tveskæg støttede eller ledede oprør mod Harald Blåtand, traditionelt dateret til ca. 985/86/87, samt at Aggersborg kunne være bygget bl.a. med henblik på Norge og med kontrol over den vigtige vandvej Limfjorden.[7]

Olaf Olsen foretrak i 1980 fortsat at se Svend Tveskæg som borgenes reelle bygherre, idet han argumenterede for, at Harald Blåtand måtte være død i slutningen af 970erne: "... den unge Svend var først og fremmest samlingsmærket for stormandssønnerne, den unge kampivrige generation, der ville genoplive fortidens vikingetraditioner, jage tyskerne på porten og vinde guld og hæder på havene .... De vikinger, der i 980 prøvede deres friske kræfter ved den engelske kyst, og som samme efterår bistod deres konge ved rejsningen af den store militærlejr Trelleborg, var kong Svends 'drenge'. I 983 befriede de grænselandet (mod tyskerne, der havde sejret ved Danevirke 974, mit indskud). I 1013 vandt deres sønner England til kong Svend ....".[8] Formålet med borgene er således ifølge denne tolkning rent militært, vikingeborge i ordets egentligste forstand.

Niels Peter Stilling har i sin oversigt over trelleborgforskningen 1981 sluttet sig til Tage E. Christiansens tvangsborgsteori, og har videre peget på, at borgene må anskues ikke alene i lyset af tidens politiske forhold og tidens øvrige monumenter, men også på baggrund af de

7 E. Roesdahl: op.cit. i note 2, s.172 ff.; samme: Danmarks Vikingetid. København 1980, s.166 ff.; samme: Aggersborg in the Viking Age. Proceedings of the Eighth Viking Congress, Århus 1977 (H. Bekker-Nielsen, P. Foote & O. Olsen eds.). Odense 1981, s.107-122.

8 O. Olsen: Tanker i tusindåret. Skalk 1980 nr. 3, s.18-26.

økonomiske forhold i almindelighed. Han betegner Trelleborg-tiden som en økonomisk blomstringstid.[9]

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I det følgende vil jeg kort gennemgå Aggersborgs størrelse i forhold til de øvrige borges, diskutere beliggenheden og redegøre for et par andre vigtige forhold omkring denne borg, og derefter søge at tolke den - og de andre borge - i lyset af også tidens økonomiske forhold, der modsat Stillings lige nævnte opfattelse må have været meget mørke omkring 980.

Aggersborg blev udgravet i årene mellem 1945 og 1952 af C.G. Schultz fra Nationalmuseet. Ca. halvdelen af borgområdet foruden forskellige områder både øst og vest for borgen og andetsteds er undersøgt. Udgravningen blev kompliceret, og det foreliggende dokumentationsmateriale er meget kompliceret, især fordi ringborgen dækkede over en ældre civil vikingetidsbebyggelse, der tydeligvis var blevet nedlagt for at give plads til borgen, og fordi C.G. Schultz efter de første sæsoner kun sjældent var til stede på udgravningen, der blev ledet af skiftende folk. Desuden var borgen så kolossalt stor![10]

Størrelse

Borgpladsens diameter er på Aggersborg 240 meter mod Trelleborgs 136 og Fyrkats og Nonnebakkens 120 meter. Aggersborgs vold bliver dermed ca. trekvart km lang og var som nævnt fyldt med indre, komplicerede trækonstruktioner. Borgpladsen bliver af størrelsesorden som vikingernes voldomkransede Århus.

Husenes antal på Aggersborg var 48 mod Trelleborgs 16 inden for ringvolden og 15 udenfor, ialt 31. Fyrkat havde 16 og Nonnebakken sandsynligvis det samme. Husenes længde på Aggersborg var 32 meter mod Trelleborgs 29,4 og Fyrkats 28,4 meter.

9 N.P. Stilling: Trelleborg-hypoteser. Om de danske vikingeborges funktion og historiske betydning. Scandia 47 hft. 1, 1981, s.29-65.

10 C.G. Schultz: Aggersborg. Vikingelejren ved Limfjorden. Fra Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark 1949, s.91-108. O. Olsen og H. Schmidt: op.cit. i note 3, passim; E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1981) i note 7.

Voldens og gravens bredde på Aggersborg var til gengæld mindre end både på Trelleborg og Fyrkat, og også Nonnebakken, så vidt man da kan bedømme målene på denne borg. Aggersborgs vold var 11 meter bred mod Trelleborgs 19, Fyrkats 12 og Nonnebakkens ?17 meter. Aggersborgs voldgrav var kun fire meter bred mod Trelleborgs 18, Fyrkats 7 og Nonnebakkens ?7 meter. Dette må videre ses i lyset af, at Aggersborg ikke var naturligt beskyttet som både Trelleborg og Fyrkat, der lå på næs omgivet af vand til to sider.

Konkluderende kan siges, at Aggersborg er betragteligt større end nogen af de andre borge, men svagere befæstet. Der er lige så mange huse her - og større - end de tre andre borge havde tilsammen inden for deres respektive ringvolde. Og der er flere huse på Aggersborg end på hele Trelleborg inklusive forborg og Fyrkat tilsammen.

Hvad selve husene angår kan også bemærkes, at det Fyrkathus, som nu er under rekonstruktion i fuld størrelse på Fyrkat,[11] har hensat arbejdsformanden dér i forundring over det vældige materiale- og tidsforbrug til blot et enkelt hus, og en deraf følgende beundring af vikingetidens formåen. Han har brugt det billede, at hvis det bearbejdede tømmer til ét Fyrkathus lægges op ved siden af hinanden, så vil det dække en halv fodboldbane. Sammenligningsvis vil Aggersborgs 48 huse kræve over 24 fodboldbaner fulde af bearbejdet tømmer! Der må have været specielle formål med en borg af så voldsomme og fra de andre borge så afvigende dimensioner.

Beliggenhed

Også Aggersborgs beliggenhed afviger klart fra det mønster, som er fælles for de øvrige borge. Det må efterhånden stå klart, at hverken Fyrkat, Nonnebakken eller Trelleborg lå centralt for søtrafikken; de var uegnede som baser for krigsflåder. Fyrkat lå ved Onsild å i bunden af den lange og stedvis meget smalle Mariager fjord, der tilmed er karakteriseret af skiftende strømretninger. Man har skullet

11 H. Schmidt: Trelleborghuset og Fyrkathuset. Nationalmuseets arbejdsmark 1981, s.132-143.

ro meget for at komme ind og ud af fjorden, og om Onsild å var sejlbar op til Fyrkat, er uvist. Nonnebakken lå ved Odense å i bunden af den dybt indskårne Odense fjord, der også besejles ad smalle sejlløb. Til Trelleborg kunne man åbenbart slet ikke sejle. Men alle tre borge lå ved eller ganske nær ved vigtige vejlinier og havde et stort opland. De lå godt til kontrol af landevejstrafik og af vigtige landområder.[12]

Aggersborg lå også ved en vigtig vejlinie: et af de vigtige overfartssteder over Limfjorden; et andet lå nær Lindholm Høje. Aggersborg lå lige som Lindholm Høje yderligere på bredden af vel Danmarks vigtigste sejlled på den tid, Limfjorden, som må have været den søgående trafiks bindeled mellem Østdanmark og Østersøområdet på den ene side og Vestdanmark, Vestnorge og Vesteuropa på den anden side. Og fra netop bakken, hvor Aggersborg ligger, er der mileviät udsyn og, som det skal gøres nærmere rede for lige neden for, helt særlige kontrolmuligheder over fjorden.

Naturforholdene har mange steder i Danmark ændret sig radikalt siden vikingetiden, og det gælder i særlig grad Aggersborg-området med sandflugt, landhævning, haverosion og havets omlejring af materialer m.m. Netop her har der imidlertid været grundige undersøgelser af de fortidige naturforhold, helt uafhængig af, at borgen lå her. Men resultaterne, fremlagt af Kaj Strand Petersen og Jens Tyge Møller,[13] er afgørende for en forståelse af Aggersborg.

Det er nemlig påvist, at der engang efter Kristi fødsel, men uvist hvornår, har været fri passage mellem Limfjorden lige vest for Aggersborg (Løgstør Bredning) ad Bygholm

12 T.E. Christiansen: Archaeology and History - the Viking fortress of Trelleborg. Danish Medieval History. New Currents (N. Skyum-Nielsen & N. Lund eds.). København 1981, s.221-22; O. Olsen og H. Schmidt: op.cit. i note 3, s.32 ff.; E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1980) i note 7, s. 171 f. med henvisninger.

13 K. Strand Petersen: Om Limfjordens postglaciale marine udvikling og niveauforhold, belyst ved mollusk-faunaen og C-14 dateringer. Danmarks Geologiske Undersøgelser. Årbog 1975, s.75-98; J.T. Møller: Shoreline variations on a Danish North Sea coast. Geoskrifter nr. 17 (udg. af Geologisk Institut, Aarhus Universitet), 1982.

Fig. 1. Udsnit af Videnskabernes Selskabs kort 1795. Passagen til havet fulgte muligvis det lange smalle bugtede vandløb, der på kortet ender omtrent mellem Fjerrislev og Klim.

Vejle, der nu er udtørret, og ud til Vesterhavet, sandsynligvis i Jammerbugten. Passagen forløb muligvis omtrent som angivet ved kortet fig. 1. Fra bl.a. skjaldekvad vides, at Limfjorden var åben mod vest i begyndelsen af 1000årene; Knud den Store sejlede hjem til Danmark den vej. Her sigtes der vel til Limfjordens udløb omkring Thyborøn, og ialtfald må placeringen af bispesædet i Vestervig o. 1060 være udtryk for, at fjorden ved den tid var åben vestpå i dette område. Senere sandede den til her, hvilket vel er årsagen til, at bispesædet blev forlagt til Børglum.[14]

På borgenes tid, omkring 980, har der altså været to og formentlig tre udløb på Limfjorden: et mod øst ved Hals som i dag, et mod vest omkring Thyborøn også som i dag, hvor det holdes kunstigt åbent, og et mod nord ved Jammerbugten. At det sidste var tilfældet omkring 980, er Aggersborgs placering et stærkt indicium for. Hvorfor skulle man ellers lægge den kolossale borg her, præcis midt i fjorden? Den ligger nemlig lige netop på det ene sted, hvor alle sejlleder mødtes, og hvor der var milevidt udsyn over dem, og hvor der var et overfartssted. Hele trafikken kunne kontrolleres herfra. Og de topografiske forhold tyder på, at der lige over for Aggersborg, i netop det Ørbæk, hvor man mener Knud den Store og Hardeknud lod slå deres Ørbækmønter,[15] har været en naturhavn. Her har i så fald handelsskibe, der ikke så let som krigsskibe kunne trækkes på land, kunnet ligge sikkert i uroligt vejr.[16] Med Aggersborgs centrale placering midt i Limfjorden, har krigsskibe herfra også selv kunnet nå ud til åbent farvand mod både øst og vest på højest et døgns tid.

14 Om Aggersborgs beliggenhed se også E. Roesdahl: op.cit. i note 7 (1981) med henv.; L.B. Jensen: Limfjorden og egnene omkring den i vikingetiden. Hovedfagsspeciale i historie ved Aarhus Universitet 1982 (m.bl.a. gennemgang af skriftlige kilder fra vikingetid og ældre middelalder med oplysninger om Limfjorden).

15 P. Hauberg: Myntforhold og Udmyntninger i Danmark indtil 1146. København 1900. - C.J. Becker har venligst meddelt, at også han anser denne lokalisering af møntslagningsstedet for sandsynlig.

16 Tak til Jens Tyge Møller, der har gjort mig opmærksom på Ørbæks særlige naturforhold.

Aggersborgs størrelse og særegne søbetingede beliggenhed betyder, at man bør operere med delvis andre anvendelsesmuligheder end for de øvrige borge. Som tvangsborg i rigssamlingens tjeneste, regionalt magtcenter, kongsgård eller sørøverrede for Limfjorden er og bliver Aggersborg en anakronisme. Ellers må den magtfulde bygherre ialtfald have mistet enhver realitetssans, hvilket naturligvis er en mulighed.

Formål

Før jeg prøver at indkredse et rationelt formål med Aggersborg, skal borgens kontekst kort gennemgås: dels tidens andre storanlæg og dels de politiske og økonomiske forhold op til år 980.

Hvis man følger den traditionelle datering af Harald Blåtands kongetid (ca. 950-985/86/87),[17] er netop den regeringsperiode karakteriseret af en enorm og ganske veldateret kongelig byggeaktivitet.[18] Her skal nævnes de to Jellinghøje, landets største oldtidshøje (et stykke tømmer fra sydhøjen er for nylig dendrokronologisk dateret til lige omkring år 960); Jellings usædvanligt store, første kirke og den store Jellingsten, utvivlsomt fra Kristendommens allertidligste tid: 960erne; de ældste bybefæstninger i landet: voldene omkring Hedeby og Århus (kan ikke dateres præcist); den store udvidelse af Danevirke (iflg. dendrokronologi sandsynligvis fra o. 968 og i så fald utvivlsomt bygget under indtryk af trusler fra det tyske kejserrige); den store bro over Ravning Enge (dendrokronologisk dateret til lige omkring 980); de fire ringborge (dateringsgrundlag gennemgået ovenfor). Både broen og borgene kom kun til at fungere i meget kort tid.

Efter denne massive indsats var det, så vidt man ved, for en lang tid slut med store byggeprogrammer, og kongelige byggeprogrammer af en størrelsesorden som i disse 30-

17 F.ex. A.E. Christensen: op.cit. i note 6, s.226, 240 f.; N. P. Stilling: op.cit. i note 9, s.39 f.

18 De nævnte monumenter er ofte sammenstillet, se f.ex. E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1980) i note 7, s.174 f. og passim med henvisninger. Om Jelling se K.J. Krogh: The Royal Viking-Age Monuments at Jelling in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavation. A preliminary Report. Acta Archaeologica 53, 1982, s.183-216.

40 år af 900-tallet skal man vel helt op til Valdemarstiden for at finde mage til, ialtfald op til kirkebyggeriet i 2. halvdel af 1000årene.

Politisk og økonomisk må situationen op til og omkring 980 have været yderst vanskelig for den danske konge. Trods et muligt symbolsk knæfald for den tyske kejser i form af omvendelse til kristendommen omkring år 960, og trods den store udbygning af Danevirke, sandsynligvis o. 968, blev Danevirke og dermed vel også grænselandet med Hedeby jo erobret 974, og der byggedes en tysk borg i grænseegnene. Hermed mistede den danske konge formentlig også indtægter fra både selve Hedebyhandelen og fra den øst-vestlige transithandel over Jyllands rod. Dertil kom kort efter tabet af overhøjheden over Norge, som utvivlsomt betød, at også store skatteindtægter og hærfølge derfra gik tabt.[19] Og for konger spillede militær prestige, hærfølge og gavegivning, hvis forudsætning var letomsættelige indtægter, en afgørende rolle.

Yderligere må de store, ovenfor nævnte byggeprogrammer have lagt kolossale byrder på befolkningen - heriblandt Danevirke, som ikke havde virket i 974, og de dynastiske og delvis kristne Jellingmonumenter. Det kan let have forårsaget uro. Og selv om omvendelsen til kristendommen tilsyneladende foregik lempeligt, kan den vil ikke have vakt udelt begejstring i alle kredse. Men måske var det største problem, at arabersølvet brat var holdt op at tilflyde Norden o. 965 - ifølge Peter Sawyer var det især erhvervet ved sørøveri, skatteopkrævning og plyndring østpå - og de vesteuropæiske sølvforsyninger var endnu ikke organiserede o. 980.[20] Danmark må lige som det øvrige Østersøområde have haft voldsomme økonomiske problemer med stærke abstinenssymptomer. Kongen og mange andre må have haft et stort finansieringsbehov.

Dette finansieringsbehov blev senere løst i England,

19 Om de polistiske forhold, se A.E. Christensen: op.cit. i note 6; P.S. Andersen: Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet. Oslo 1977; I. Skovgaard-Petersen: Oldtid og Vikingetid. Gyldendals Danmarks Historie I. København 1977; N.P. Stilling: op.cit. i note 9.

20 P. Sawyer: Kings and Vikings. London og New York 1982, s.117 ff.

men det var først en halv snes år efter, at borgene var bygget. De blev planlagt og påbegyndt, da krisen var erkendt som noget langvarigt, og mens den var på sit højeste, og de kan meget vel være del af et forsøg på at løse denne krise, naturligvis ud fra den aktuelle situation ca. 978/79/80. Problemerne var i korthed 1. politisk uro, der skulle holdes i ave; 2. militær prestige, der skulle genoprettes efter Danevirkenederlaget og tabet af Norge; 3. et finansieringsbehov efter bortfaldet af arabersølvet o. 970, tabet af Hedebyindtægterne 974 og Norgesindtægterne kort tid derefter. Borgene synes tilsammen velegnede til løsning af disse problemer:

Trelleborg, Nonnebakken og Fyrkat blev bygget fortrinsvis som tvangsborge, kongelige regionale magtcentre, der skulle kunne holde befolkningen i ave - ikke nødvendigvis på grund af ny regional udvidelse af kongemagten fra Jellingområdet (en sådan udvidelse er iøvrigt et postulat), men på grund af almindelig uro, der bl.a. kan have haft de ovenfor foreslåede årsager. Til daglig ville man fra de tre borge kunne udøve kongens normale funktioner og kongsgårdes normale funktioner. De samme elementer må have været en del af Aggersborgs formål.

Borgenes ejendommelige, regelrette udseende, deres størrelse, deres militærbesætninger, deres kontrolfunktioner må have forlenet dem og kongen med prestige af bl.a. militært tilsnit. Borgene var større, flottere og anderledes, end hvad før var set i Danmark. Det gælder i særlig grad Aggersborg, der havde så eminente kontrolmuligheder. Den lå som nøglen til riget, kunne se alle og ses af alle. Til den militære prestige hører også, at borgenes besætninger hurtigt ville kunne rykke ud til løsning af militære opgaver.

Det er vel umuligt at have en fast mening om, hvorvidt Trelleborg, Nonnebakken og Fyrkat også var tiltænkt en rolle til løsning af kongens finansieringsbehov. Men nær Trelleborg og Nonnebakken, i henholdsvis Slagelse og Odense, voksede der ialtfald stabile kirkelige og vel også merkantile centre op i løbet af 1000årene, og der blev slået mønt her. Måske har kongen - i lighed med udenlandske kolleger - kunnet trække indtægter af markedshandel

i disse områder allerede på borgenes tid. Ialtfald menes Odense at have haft religiøse centerfunktioner allerede i hedensk tid med et Odins vi, og der oprettedes bispesæde her allerede i 988. Om Fyrkat-området skal bemærkes, at sognenavnet Onsild betyder Odins helligdom, samt at Odin-dyrkelsen menes at have været den eneste officielle gudekult i Danmark i hedensk tid, med nær tilknytning til kongen.[21]

For Aggersborg synes sagen imidlertid oplagt.[22] Kontrolmulighederne over for den gennemsejlende trafik, både handelsskibe og vikingeskibe i egentligste forstand, har gjort kongelig opkrævning af afgifter herfra mulig og - set på europæisk baggrund - sandsynlig. Dertil kunne komme afgifter af den langsgående landevejstrafik gennem Jylland: fra dem, der skulle over Limfjorden og eventuelt videre til Norge. Man kan efter min mening meget vel have kalkuleret med endog meget store indtægter, som en delvis erstatning for de indtægter fra Hedebyhandelen og Øst-vest-trafikken over Hedeby iøvrigt, der formentlig var gået tabt til ottonerne i 974.

Den ældre civile bebyggelse på Aggersborg, som blev nedlagt for at give plads til borgen netop på bakken med det vide udsyn, var formentlig en handelsplads.[23] Hvor den flyttede hen vides ikke. Måske var det til Ørbæk stik over for Aggersborg, hvor der som ovenfor nævnt synes at have været en naturhavn, og hvor der i begyndelsen af 1000årene efter alt at dømme foregik en meget stor udmøntning. Der

21 Generelt, se f.ex. E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1980) i note 7, s.90 ff. og passim med henvisninger. Desuden P. Hauberg: op.cit. i note 15; K. Hald: The cult of Odin in Danish Place-names. Early English and Norse Studies presented to Hugh Smith (A. Brown & P.G. Foote eds.). London 1963; O. Olsen og H. Schmidt: op.cit. i note 3, s.35 ff.; C.J. Becker: Odense som møntsted i den sene vikingetid. Fynske Minder 1982, s.43-60.

22 Samtidens kilder har mange spredte oplysninger om kongemagtens interesser i byer og handel, se f.ex. I. Skovgaard-Petersen: op.cit. i note 19; E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1980) i note 7. Jfr. om udenlandske forhold f.ex. P. Sawyer: Fairs and markets in early Medieval England. Danish Medieval History. New Currents. (N. Skyum-Nielsen & N. Lund eds.). København 1981, s.153-168.

23 E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1981) i note 7.

Fig. 2.

er aldrig foretaget udgravninger i Ørbæk, men hvis her var en hendelsplads på ringborgens tid, så kan der også være regnet med kongelige afgifter herfra.

Måske var Aggersborg desuden tænkt som en rigtig vikingelejr, base for kongens private "lid", der skulle skaffe kontrollen over Norge tilbage samt indtægter ved kapervirksomhed på havene, som der var let adgang til, og ved udenlands plyndringer iøvrigt. Man kan tænke sig en art systematiseret vikingevirksomhed: en art afløser for lidt

ældre baltisk-russiske togter og en art forløber for de lidt senere Englandstogter; en planlagt - måske overplanlagt - foregribelse af den metode konger, kongsemner og andre anvendte fra ialtfald 990erne til løsning af finansieringsproblemer.[24] Da skete det ved plyndring og pengeafpresning i England. Svend Tveskæg benyttede sig af metoden i 994, Olaf Tryggvason både 991 og 994, og der var mange andre. Man kan i denne forbindelse også betænke, at sjællænderne i Svend Estridsens tid ifølge Adam af Bremen drev sørøveri på kongelig licens.[25]

Mit forslag er altså i korthed, at Aggersborg er planlagt dels som Harald Blåtands tvangsborg for Limfjordsområdet i en tid med oprørstendenser, dels også med henblik på magten i Norge, videre som prestige betonet pragtborg ved indgangen til riget, og endelig for at løse et akut kongeligt finansieringsbehov: ved afgifter for almindelig passage og for handel i området, og som kongelig privat vikingebase.

Funktion

Om funktionen kom til at svare til formålet er en anden sag. Faktisk vides ikke engang med sikkerhed, om Aggersborg nogensinde blev bygget færdig. Det må desuden være en forudsætning for realisering af de foreslåede formål, at Limfjorden var konstant åben mod nord og helst også mod vest. Men ialtfald i historisk tid har naturforholdene omkring fjordens vestlige udløb været konstant ustabile.

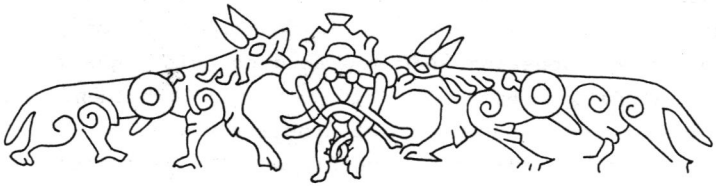
Og allerede 983 var de udenrigspolitiske forhold totalt ændrede.[26] Kejser Otto II havde 982 lidt et stort nederlag til muslimerne i Syditalien og var død 983. Hans efterfølger Otto III var da kun 3 år gammel. Samme år udbrød en stor slavisk opstand, og danskerne tilbageerobrede det danske grænseområde. Såfremt nogen af de geometriske ringborge var færdige i 983, har besætningerne sikkert deltaget i disse kampe. Retableringen af indtægterne fra Hedeby-området må i nogen grad have afhjulpet kongens økonomiske

24 Se f.ex. P. Sawyer: op.cit. i note 20, s.144 ff.
25 Adam af Bremen IV:6.
26 Op.cit. i note 19.

problemer og vel også reduceret mulighederne for store handelsafgifter i Limfjordsområdet.

Den indre politiske uro forsvandt heller ikke med de bedrede udenrigspolitiske forhold (hvis man følger den traditionelle kronologi). Kort tid efter sejren i 983 kom det til åbent oprør mod kong Harald, måske bl.a. på grund af de byrder hans uendelige byggerier lagde på befolkningen - der synes at være efterklange heraf hos både Svend Aggesen og Saxo.[27] Men borgene kunne ikke holde befolkningen i ave. De arkæologiske iagttagelser fortæller entydigt, at de kun levede i kort tid, og sporene af kamp på Trelleborg kan meget vel stamme fra dette oprør.

Efter ovenstående tolkning kom ringborgene altså næppe til at fungere efter deres formål - ialtfald ikke ret længe. De hører til i en tid med mange og store problemer, og de er udtryk for forsøg på at løse disse problemer. De er vel også vidnesbyrd om det første forsøg på storstilet landsplanlægning. Men som så megen anden planlægning blev de overhalet af udviklingen. De blev hurtigt forladt og snart til ruiner og totalt glemt.



fra runestenen Lund 1, Skåne, efter Moltke.

27 E. Roesdahl: op.cit. (1981) i note 7, s.119; N.P. Stilling: op.cit. i note 9, s.50.

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