

Herrn Dr. B. Brøndsted

REPRINT

mit den besten Grüssen  
vom Verf.

# ACTA ARCHAEOLOGICA

*Ediderunt*

HOLGER ARBMAN, LUND · C. J. BECKER, KØBENHAVN  
AXEL BOËTHIUS, GÖTEBORG · J. BRØNDSTED, KØBENHAVN  
BJØRN HOUGEN, OSLO · K. FRIIS JOHANSEN, KØBENHAVN  
SUNE LINDQVIST, UPPSALA · C. A. NORDMAN, HELSINGFORS  
POUL NØRLUND, KØBENHAVN · H. P. L'ORANGE, OSLO  
BENGT THORDEMAN, STOCKHOLM

*Redigenda curaverunt*

C. J. BECKER · J. BRØNDSTED

Vol. XVIII.

KØBENHAVN

---

EJNAR MUNKSGAARD

1947

## ACTA ARCHAEOLOGICA

*Acta Archaeologica* are published in one annual volume.

Manuscripts for publications in *Acta Archaeologica* should be typewritten and addressed to the editors. Chief editor's address: The National Museum, Copenhagen K.

The annual subscription is: to Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, 25 crowns; to other countries (including postage), 28 crowns.

Orders may be sent to all booksellers or to the publisher, Mr. EJNAR MUNKSGAARD, Nørregade 6, Copenhagen.

---

Les *Acta Archaeologica* paraissent chaque année en un volume.

Prière d'envoyer les manuscrits dactylographiés aux rédacteurs de la revue. Adresse du rédacteur en chef: Musée National, Copenhague K.

Prix par volume: pour le Danemark, la Finlande, la Norvège et la Suède, 25 cour.; autres pays (frais de poste compris), 28 cour.

Les abonnements sont reçus chez tous les librairies et chez l'éditeur, M. EJNAR MUNKSGAARD, Nørregade 6, Copenhague K.

---

Die *Acta Archaeologica* erscheinen jährlich in einem Band.

Manuskripte sind maschinengeschrieben einzusenden an die Schriftleiter der Zeitschrift. Anschrift des Hauptschriftleiters: Nationalmuseum, Kopenhagen K.

Der Preis für den Jahrgang (Band): für Dänemark, Finland, Norwegen, Schweden, 25 Kronen; für die übrigen Länder (einschließlich Porto), 28 Kronen.

Bezugsbestellungen nehmen entgegen alle Buchhandlungen und der Verlag EJNAR MUNKSGAARD, Nørregade 6, Kopenhagen K.

---

*Acta Archaeologica* udsendes i et Bind om Aaret.

Manuskripter til *Acta Archaeologica* indsendes i maskinskreven Stand til Tidsskriftets Redaktører. Hovedredaktørens Adresse er: Nationalmuseet, København K.

Prisen pr. Aargang: for Danmark, Finland, Norge, Sverige, 25 Kr. excl. Porto; for øvrige Lande, 28 Kr. incl. Porto.

Bestilling paa Abonnement modtager enhver Boglade samt Forlagsboghandler EJNAR MUNKSGAARD, Nørregade 6, København K.

# BEFORE THE BOOK OF DURROW

BY

CARL NORDENFALK, Stockholm.

## I.

In 1934 Sir Alfred Clapham published a paper of considerable interest for the study of the beginnings of Insular illumination (1). In it he voiced the opinion that the ornamentations in the Books of Durrow, Lindisfarne and Kells have practically nothing in common with what we know of the ornamentation within the domains of stone sculpture and metal-working from Irish territory of the time before the appearance of the illuminated manuscripts. None of the four chief motives in their repertory of ornament, such as we see assembled on an ornamental page of the Book of Lindisfarne, of which a section is reproduced here in fig. 1 — the interlace, the animal ornament, the trumpet-spiral and diagonal fret — in this style can be found on Irish monuments of the period preceding the illuminated manuscripts. Instead, we find the real prototypes partly in English metal work of the 7th century, as we encounter it in the pagan grave finds, and partly in East-Christian manuscripts and fabrics, mainly from Egypt and Syria-Palestine.

That the Irish monks in the time prior to the Book of Durrow were strangers to this kind of book embellishment is confirmed, Clapham thinks, by the illuminated MSS from the monasteries at Bobbio and Luxeuil, founded by Columban and his fellow-missionaries. They have no points of contact with the later Insular illuminated gospels. But there are obvious agreements between the decoration of a Luxeuil MS like the *Missale Gothicum* (Vatican library, Reg. lat. 317) and that on Irish stone sculptures of the 7th century such as a tombstone from Clonmacnoise or a stele in Carndonagh. In both

(1) A. W. CLAPHAM, *Notes on the Origins of Hiberno-Saxon Art. Antiquity* VIII 1934, pp. 43-57.

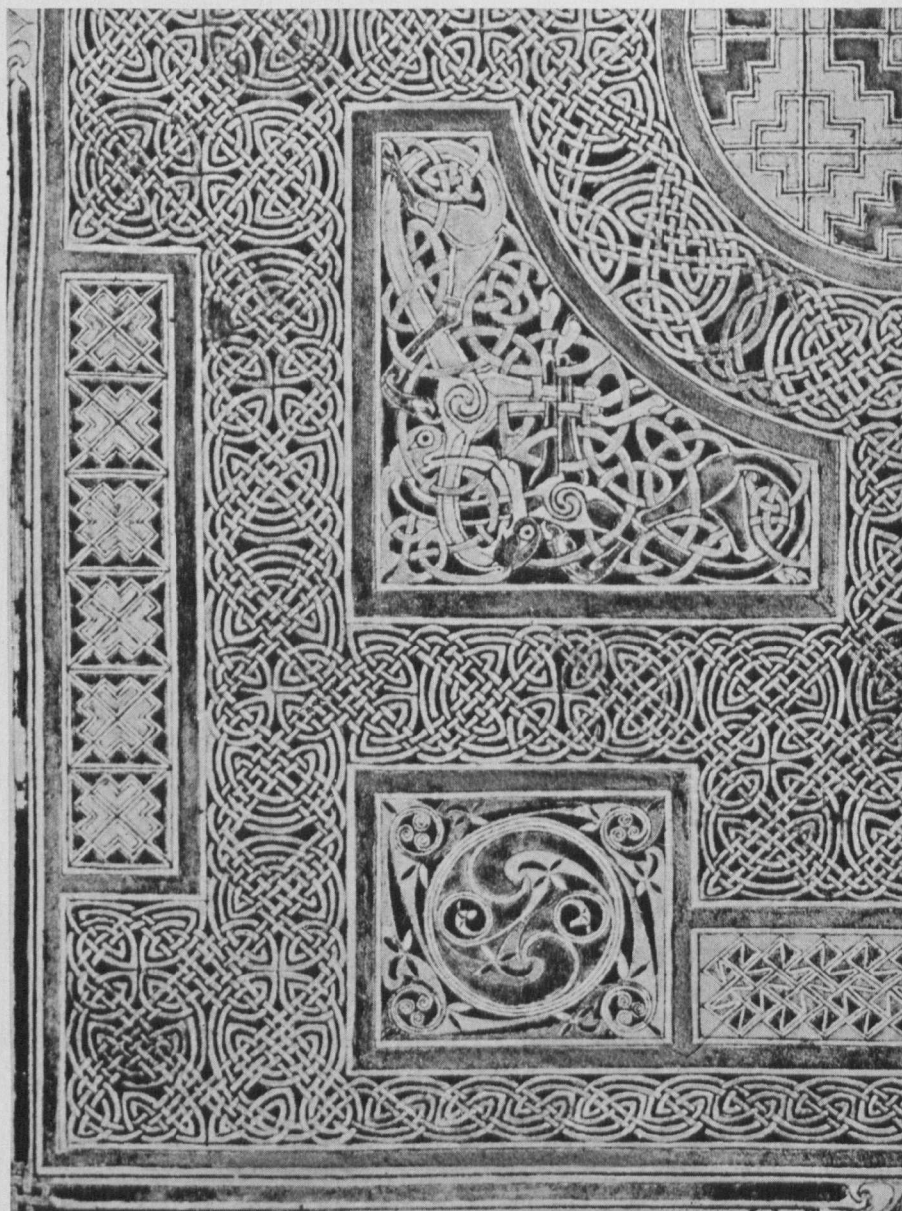


Fig. 1. Detail (enlarged) of ornamental page fol. 94 b in the Book of Lindisfarne (from E. G. Millar, *The Lindisfarne Gospels*).

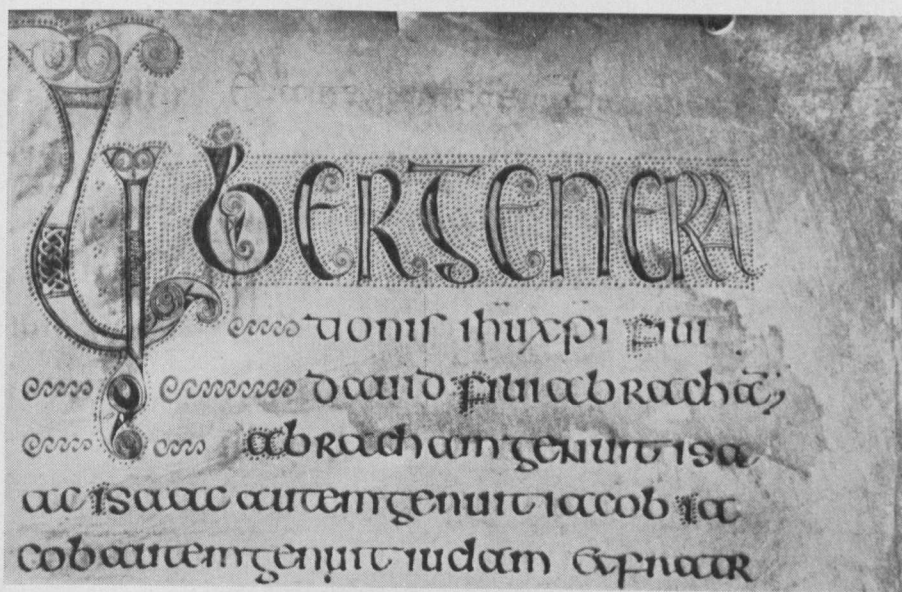


Fig. 2. Dublin, Trinity College, cod. 57, fol. 14 a. The Book of Durrow.  
Initial to St. Matthew.

cases the basic motive has a star pattern — Clapham calls it a marigold pattern — drawn with the aid of compasses.

Like the English stone crosses with vine ornaments, the “Hiberno-Saxon” illuminated manuscripts appear as the result of a sudden renaissance, with no direct pre-stages in early Irish art. “We must conclude”, ends Clapham, “that Hiberno-Saxon art was in origin in no sense Irish, but that the Irish perhaps welded its component parts into one style; that this welding probably took place in Northumbria, in the second half of the 7th century, and that it was transmitted thence to Ireland and from Ireland over half Europe” (2).

Clapham’s ideas have been recently taken up for further elaboration by a Belgian scholar, F. Masai, librarian in the Manuscripts Department of the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels, who devoted a whole book to proving that what previously was generally called Irish Christian Art was actually a creation not of the Irish themselves but of their English disciples in the Northumbrian monasteries. (3) On the whole Masai’s views agree with Clapham’s, but he

(2) Op. cit. p. 57.

(3) F. MASAI, *Essai sur les origines de la*

*miniature dite irlandaise*, (*Les publications de “Scriptorium”* vol. I) Brussels 1947.

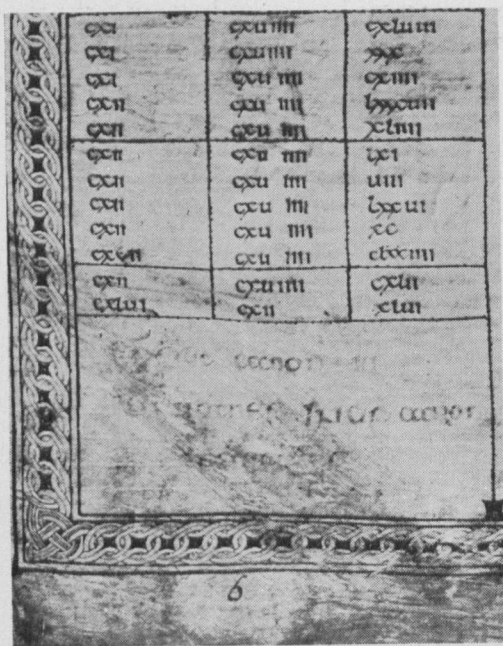


Fig. 3. Dublin, Trinity College, cod. 57, fol. 6a.  
The Book of Durrow, Canontable.

goes to work more radically. He places the genesis of the new style of the manuscripts not to the middle of the 7th century (when the Irish culture element in Northumbria was still relatively strong), but in the subsequent generation, namely about 700. He deprives Irish art of the honour of having produced what is considered to be the oldest extant illuminated gospel book, that from Durrow (fig. 2-4). He dates it about 700 and considers it to be just as genuine a North English creation as the Book of Lindisfarne. He even ventures to voice the possibility that this also applies to the last and richest of these *manuscripts de luxe*, the Book of Kells, which in Ireland ranks as the

supreme national treasure, the embodiment of the most independent and characteristic form of expression of the Celtic spirit.

Masai's book must unfortunately be regarded to some extent as a victim of the unfavourable conditions of research which the war engendered. The author was unable personally to see and examine most of the manuscripts he deals with; he bases his judgment mainly upon Zimmerman's corpus of pre-Carolingian book-paintings and on other publications of the period before 1939. His knowledge of what has been written on the subject since then is imperfect. For example, he is not aware that Clapham's thesis (and thereby his own) has been profoundly criticized by Nils Åberg, who insists on the Irish origin of the style (4). Nor has he paid attention to Françoise Henry's new book on Irish art, which comprises her earlier researches and adds

(4) *The Occident and the Orient in the Art of the Seventh Century. The British Isles* (Kungl. Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets-

*Akademiens handlingar*, del. 56:1), Stockholm 1943, especially pp. 15 ff. and 123 ff.

many new results of significant value (5). He has not observed that A. M. Friend has proved that in its canon tables and pictures of the evangelists the Book of Kells borrowed motives from a manuscript of the Ada group and consequently must be dated at the earliest to the close of the 8th century (6). Nevertheless, Masai's book provides stimulating reading, above all because of the intrepid search for the truth and the stirring, often brilliant power of description. There can be no doubt that with his book the Belgian scholar has offered the impulse for a lively and productive discussion (6a).

The main problem still is what happened in the development of Insular illumination before the Book of Durrow. According to what has been written hitherto on the subject, the material preserved has been regarded as insufficient for providing a definitive answer to this question. "The obscurity of the findless period lies like a pall over the earlier development" writes Nils Åberg, the last to tackle the questions in greater detail in a broad



Fig. 4. Dublin, Trinity College cod. 57, fol. 1 a. The Book of Durrow, Prologue.

(5) *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period*, London 1940

(6) *The Canon Tables of the Book of Kells* (*Mediaeval Studies in Memory of A. Kingsley Porter* vol. II, Harvard 1939, pp. 611-66). Cf. also H. SWARZENSKI, *Recent literature, chiefly periodical, on medieval minor arts* (*The Art Bulletin* XXIV 1942, p. 287-88.)

(6a) The following paper, however, has not been written purposely as an answer to M. Masai. In actual fact it was sent in to *Acta Archaeologica* in October 1947, a month or so before Masai's book appeared. Consequently it is only here and there that I have afterwards been able to decide my attitude to his thesis.

archaeological context (7). Françoise Henry expresses the same: "The sudden appearance of such an elaborate work as the Book of Durrow comes rather as a surprise. It is distressing that no earlier Irish illuminated manuscript has come down to us. We find ourselves faced with a fully developed scheme of decoration, and wondering how it had been evolved." (8)

It is true that the material preserved is scanty, but perhaps not quite so scanty as is generally supposed. We have, it seems, placed all too much reliance on the assumption that in his fundamental publication "*Die vorkarolingischen Miniaturen*" E. H. Zimmermann had accounted for everything preserved of the book-art of the epoch. That his corpus has several gaps, however, has been evident to all scholars since E. A. Lowe began to issue a much more sober inventory of Latin MSS prior to 800, at the same time recording their decoration (9). It would be most desirable if a supplement could be added to Zimmermann's book based upon Lowe's list, as soon as the latter comes nearer completion.

The manuscripts discussed below would deserve inclusion in such a supplement. Although we look for them in vain among the plates in Zimmermann's book, they do not represent recent finds. Indeed, one of them, the so-called Cathach of St. Columba in Dublin, is mentioned by Zimmermann himself in his introduction to the text volume, where, however, it is dated without motivation to the close of the 8th century and is dismissed as of no value to the question of the beginnings of Irish book decoration (10). On account of Lowe's dating, "saec. VI<sup>2</sup>", however, Åberg has utilized it as an archeological document (11). Another manuscript — a fragmentary gospel book in the Cathedral library in Durham — has recently been published by R. A. B.

(7) ÅBERG, *The Occident and the Orient I*, p. 128.

(8) FRANÇOISE HENRY, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period*, London 1940, p. 60.

(9) *Codices latini antiquiores (CLA)* edited by E. A. LOWE, Oxford 1934 seqq. So far, four volumes have appeared, the second, comprising libraries and collect-

ions in Great Britain and Ireland, being of particular importance to the question of Anglo-Celtic book art.

(10) *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen*, herausgegeben von E. HEINRICH ZIMMERMANN, Textband, Berlin 1916 p. 21.

(11) *The Occident and the Orient I: The British Isles* p. 88 seqq., fig. 58.



Mynors in his splendid catalogue of the early MSS in that time-honoured collection (12).

II.

Two of the manuscripts preserved in Ireland have been credited with a remarkably high age by palaeographic scholars (Lindsay, Lowe). One is the Gospel Book in Trinity College, cod. 55 (A. IV. 55), called *Codex Usserianus Primus* after its first known possessor, James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh 1624-55. The other is a psalter in the Royal Irish Academy, the already mentioned Cathach of St. Columba. Both manuscripts are fragmentary, the remaining leaves tattered at the edges, here and there leaving nothing but the middle. Both provide specimens of Irish majuscule script before it was stabilized in the definitive form familiar to us from the later illuminated manuscripts.

In their decoration, too, both these manuscripts differ from what became usual later. In *Codex Usserianus* it is restricted to a graphic ornamentation in black and red on the colophons to the Gospels. At fol. 149b, where St. Luke's Gospel ends, it covers half the page, drawn in quite an elaborate composition laid about a Latin cross in reddish-brown silhouette (fig. 5). The arms of the cross widen out elastically towards the ends, and the upper arm runs out at one side into a hook, marking the R in the Greek Christ-monogram. The area of the cross is outlined by rows of black dots, some running like a central nerve inside the silhouette, others surrounding its outer contours. Below the arms are written A and ω, above them the colophon for St. Luke's Gospel and that for St. Mark's, the order of the Gospels being that of the Old Latin version. The whole is enclosed in a triple frame of different chain patterns composed of alternating strokes and dots. The corners are marked by crescentic out-turned symbols. In shape the frame does not follow the upright rectangle of the cross, but the horizontal of the lateral space.

Except for the dot pattern around the cross, there is hardly anything in the whole decoration that may be regarded as the herald of later developments. This being so, the *Codex Usserianus Primus* seems to furnish evidence to show that

(12) *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Oxford 1939.

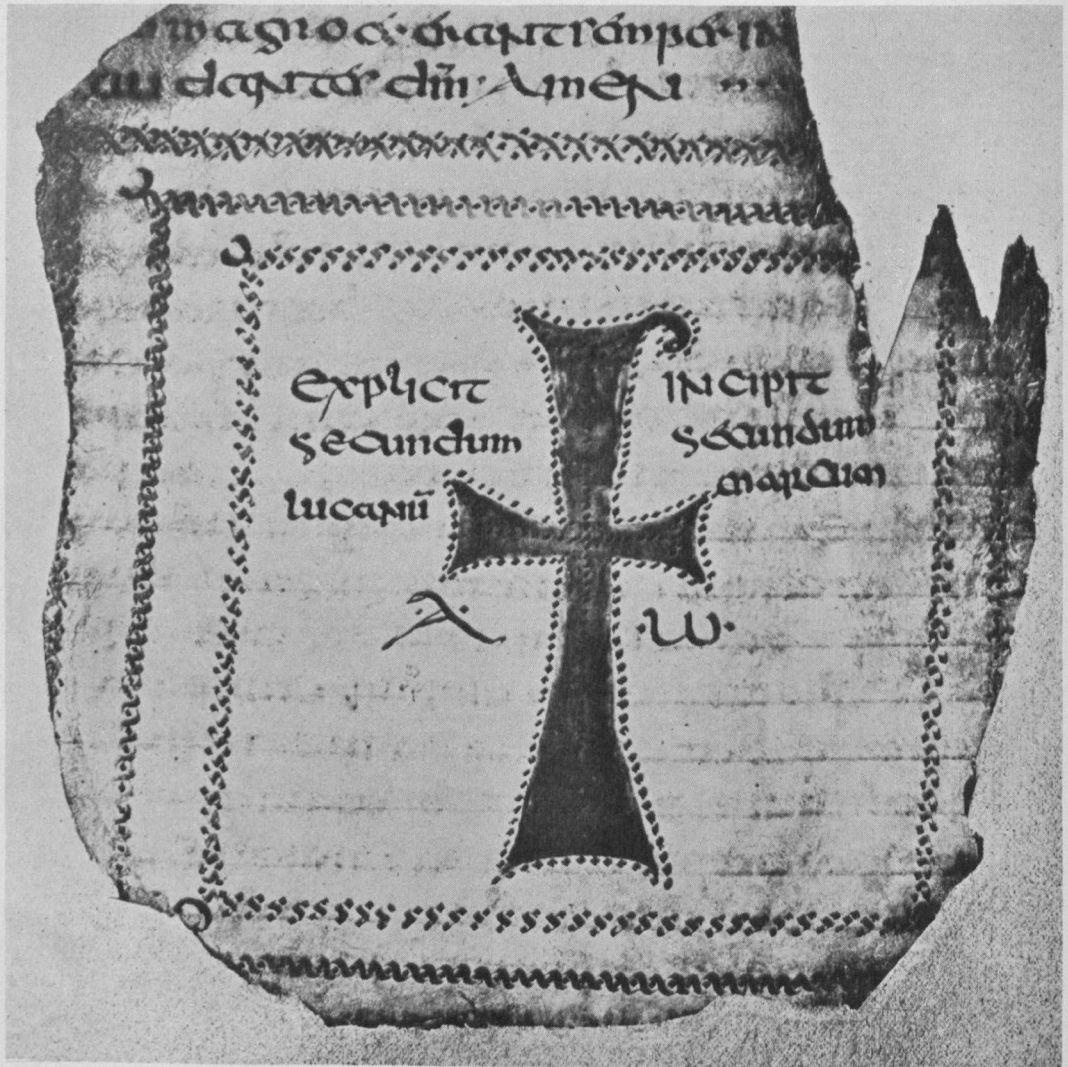


Fig. 5. Dublin, Trinity College 55 (A. N. 15), Codex Usserrianus Primus. Colophon ornament at end of Gospel of St. Luke. Bobbio(?), beginning of 7th cent.

Irish book ornamentation, when in its initial stage, was of a general, Late-Antique character, chiefly conforming to what was practised in the scriptoria of Italy, Spain and France during the 6th and first half of the 7th centuries. However, palaeographic evaluation of the manuscript has made this seemingly natural problematic; for according to Lowe, this Irish-written gospel



Fig. 6. Munich, Clm. 6224. Gospel-Book of Valerianus, North Italy, saec. VII<sup>2</sup>.

book was not written in, but imported into Ireland in the finished state! With its intrusions of Roman cursive, the script bears a strong relationship to Milan, Ambrosiana C. 26 sup. and D. 23 sup., both originating at Bobbio in North Italy. In this monastery, founded in 614 by Columban, Lowe believes that Archbishop Ussher's Gospel-book was also written by some fellow countryman of the Irish missionary. Under these circumstances it is impossible simply to assume that the scribe had brought the Late-Antique colophon decoration with him from Ireland. He may have acquired it in Italy, where indeed it has a counterpart in the so-called Valerianus Evangeliarum at Munich (fig. 6) (13). It gives support, however, to the opinion held by Clapham and Masai that the earliest Irish missionaries knew nothing about the later Insular system of decorating the Gospels.

(13) FR. HENRY, who in a note mentions Codex Usseianus Primus (*Irish Art* p. 61, n. 1) is of the same opinion. "The

decoration of the manuscript", she says, "does not give us any information about an early stage of Irish illumination."

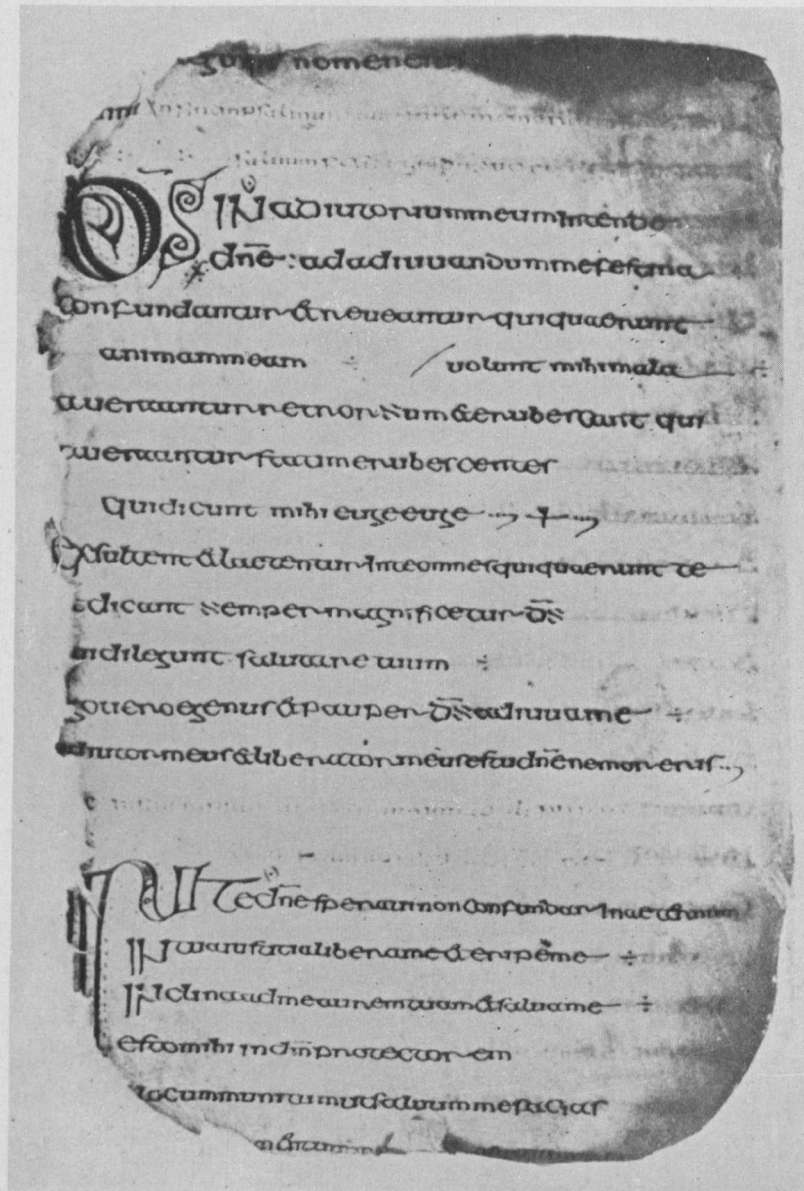
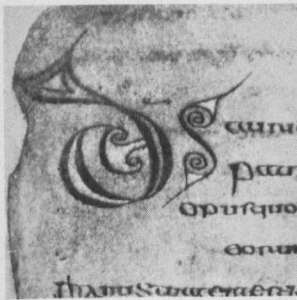
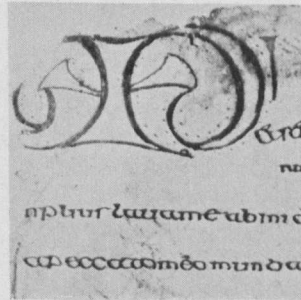


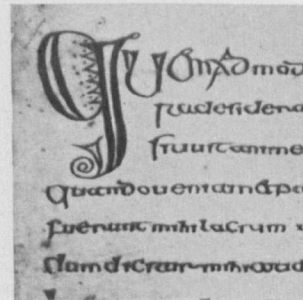
Fig. 7. Dublin, The Royal Irish Academy, The Cathach of St. Columba, Ps. LXIX and LXX, fol. 42 b.



a) Ps. XLIII, fol. 12 b.



b) Ps. L, fol. 17 b.



c) Ps. XLI, fol. 11 a.

Fig. 8. Dublin, The Royal Irish Academy, The Cathach of St. Columba.  
Psalter, Ireland, saec. VI-VII.

The palaeographical position is different with *the Cathach of St. Columba*, (14) for, according to Lowe, this MS represents “the pure milk of Irish calligraphy”, at the same time being the earliest extant specimen of the national script of Ireland (fig. 7 seqq.) (15).

The manuscript, deposited by the O'Donnell family with the Royal Irish Academy, has traditionally been considered to be in the handwriting of Columba the Elder († 597). In the mediaeval legend of his life it is narrated that he once locked himself in his church at Dromen and there copied a book belonging to St. Finian without having asked his permission and, as subsequent events showed, in defiance of his wishes. St. Finian asked for St. Columba's copy to be handed over to him, but the latter refused. A judgment in favour of St. Finian eventually led to warlike complications which terminated in the battle of Cul Dremhne in the year 561. This Columban copy is reputed to be preserved in the “Battle Book” of the O'Donnells, in which case it should be datable to the days immediately after the middle of the sixth

(14) H. J. LAWLOR & W. M. LINDSAY, *The Cathach of St. Columba* (*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* XXXIII, Sect. C No 11. Dublin 1916). Lowe, *CLA* II No. 266. D. CHRETIEN, *The Battle Book of the O'Donnells*, Berkeley University of California 1935. — Like the Books of Durrow, Mulling and others, the Cathach of St. Columba in the

Middle Ages was deposited in a (still extant) silver casket, a so-called cumdach. This casket with its sacred contents was regarded as a palladium, capable of ensuring victory to Irish arms, for which reason it was carried into battle. Hence the name Cathach, an Irish word for warrior.

(15) *CLA* II, introduction p. XII seq.



Fig. 9. Vergilius Augusteus: Initials at the beginnings of the pages. Rome, saec. IV<sup>2</sup>.



Fig. 10. Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, Plut. LXV, 1: Orosius. Initials.  
North Italy (Ravenna?), saec. VI.

century. Obviously, the legend cannot be accepted as proof of the early date of the book, but palaeographers hesitate to dismiss the tradition as being wholly unreasonable. "There is no reason to prevent the script of the Cathach from being as early as St. Columba's time", writes Lindsay (16), and Lowe agrees: "The early date for the MS is palaeographically possible" (17).

The manuscript is fragmentary. It has 56 leaves, i. e. scarcely half of what we must presume it originally comprised. It is decorated with initials drawn with the same brown and red ink as the script, i. e. probably by the scribe himself (fig. 7 seqq.). Each psalm has an initial, and now there are 64 of them, intact or in a fragmentary state. As far as it is possible to judge from what remains, the psalms were not divided into groups by means of larger initial designs at the beginning of each group, such as afterwards became the rule in the

(16) LAWLOR & LINDSAY, op. cit. p. 402.

(17) *CLA* II p. 41.

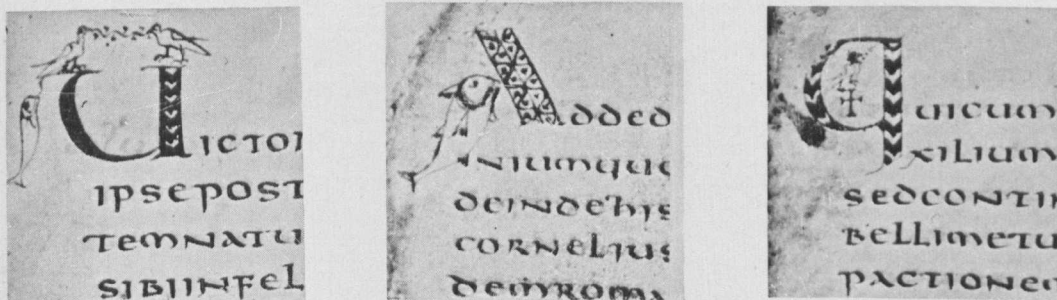
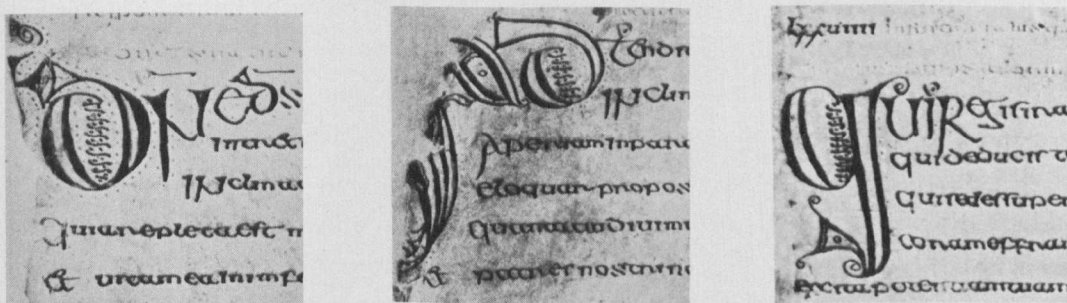


Fig. 11. Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, Plut. LXXV, 1: Orosius. Initials.



a) Ps. LXXXVII; fol. 44b.

b) Ps. LXXVII; fol. 35b.

c) Ps. LXXIX; fol. 40a.

Fig. 12. Dublin, The Royal Irish Academy, The Cathach of St. Columba. Initials.

psalters of the Middle Ages (18). In any case, there was not the “formal” tripartition that is otherwise typical of the Anglo-Celtic culture circle; the initials of psalms LI and CI are preserved and are not distinguished from the others by either size or ornament. If tripartition originated in Ireland, as Adolf Goldschmidt assumed, it was at any rate not the general rule when the Cathach of St. Columba was written. It is more likely to have been a creation of the Northumbrian monastic culture, like so many other things that are called “Irish” in book-making during the seventh century.

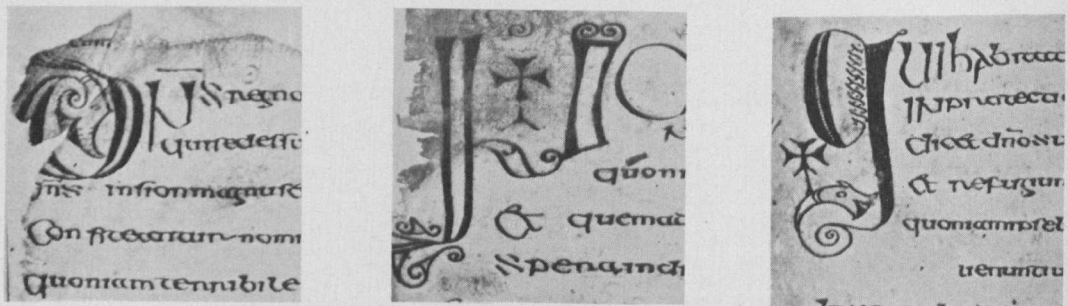
We already encounter initials in a small number of Late-Antique manuscripts, of which the most important are probably the Vergilius Augusteus, of the latter part of the fourth century (19), and an Orosius manuscript in

(18) A. GOLDSCHMIDT, *Der Albanipsalter in Hildesheim und seine Beziehung zur symbolischen Kirchenskulptur des XII. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1895, introduction.

(19) *Codicis Vergiliani qui Augusteus appellatur reliquiae*, ed. R. SABBADINI (*Codices e Vaticanis selecti XV*) Augsburg 1926.



Fig. 13. Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, Plut. LXV, 1: Orosius. Initials.



a) Ps. XCVIII; fol. 52 b.

b) Ps. XXXVI; fol. 6 a.

c) Ps. XC; fol. 48 a.

Fig. 14. Dublin, The Royal Irish Academy, The Cathach of St. Columba. Initials.

Florence from the second half of the sixth century (20) (fig. 9-11). On comparing these with the initials in the Irish psalter we notice some important differences. In Late-Antique MSS the initial as it were breaks away from the body of the text in a detached decorative motive, whereas in the Dublin psalter it is drawn into the text, by the following letter also being designed as an initial, though somewhat smaller. These are followed as a rule by one or two letters acting as intermediaries between the sizes of the initial letters and that of normal script. In other words, there is a successive transition from initial to script. The decorative effect of the large initial is not disconnected from the text, but is graduated down into it in a sort of *diminuendo* (21).

(20) C. NORDENFALK, *En senantik initial-handskrift* (*Konsthistorisk tidskrift* VI 1937 pp. 117-127 with English summary).

(21) The Dublin psalter also differs

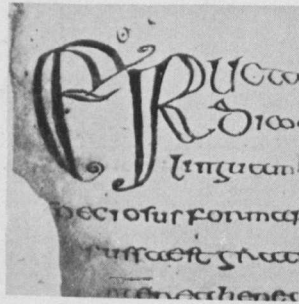
from the Late-Antique MSS with regard to the position of the initials in relation to the script lines. A Late-Antique initial is on the same level as the line which it intro-



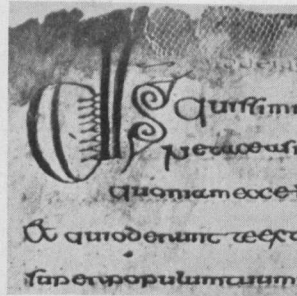
Developed to perfection we find this principle again in the Anglo-Celtic illuminated manuscripts. The system presupposes intimate collaboration between the artist and the scribe, and most certainly it functions best when both are one and the same person, as in the Cathach. The successive narrowing down of the initial line, by the way, already begins with the first initial, which leads to the N- or IN-initial so typical of the Anglo-Celtic gospel books, with the first vertical stem of the N or IN prolonged below the second — a type of initial already observable in the Dublin psalter (fig. 14b).

There is also a fundamental difference between the Cathach of St. Columba and the Late Antique MSS in the matter of the actual structure of the initial letters. A Late-Antique initial has its body filled wholly or partly with an ornamental mass, often resembling the cloison-work of cell enamel. This ornamental mass restricts the plasticity of the body of the letter and imparts to it a certain static rigidity. In the Cathach of St. Columba the body of the letter is elastic and mobile. It expands and contracts with a pulsating rhythm which imbues the entire form with ornamental "schwing". It is this motion which as it were finds vent in the more freely decorative forms in which the stems or the curves of the letter end. The closing motive is often a spiral line, which then in its turn generates new line formations — trumpet patterns, pelta-like ornaments, spherical panels — in which the language typical of the Celtic La Tène decoration can again be heard. Here and there the spiral is replaced by a final open-mouthed animal head (fig. 14a, c). This animal type is of a zoologically indeterminate character and has little resemblance to the more abstract and powerful designs of Germanic animal ornament. Sometimes (fig. 12, 14, 15b) the letter runs out into a dot-and-line pattern evidently borrowed from the motive repertory of Late-Antique colophon decoration (cfr. fig. 5).

The difference between these initials and those of Late Antiquity is conspicuous. All idea of a derivation of the former from the latter seems unreasonable. The Irish scribe of the Cathach approached the problem of initial-formation without preconceived notions and arrived at results the independence of which is beyond question. One is almost tempted to believe that Late-antiquity, whereas the initials of the Irish MS are lowered in the text below the first line.



a) Ps. XLIV, fol. 13a.



b) Ps. LXXXII, fol. 43a.

Fig. 15. Dublin, The Cathach of St. Columba. Initials.

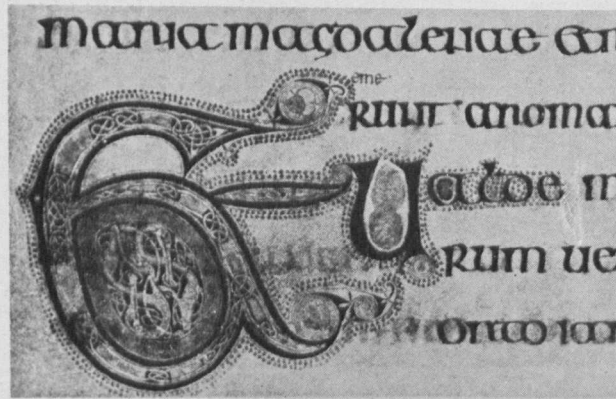
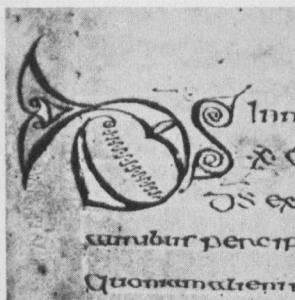


Fig. 16. Durham, Cathedral Library A. II. 17, fol. Gospels. Northumbria, saec. VII ex.

Antique initial styles were quite unknown to him, except that a single motive makes us suspect some connection. In the Orosius manuscript the two annular initials O and Q (fig. 11c, 13b) have their empty space in the middle taken up by a cross (as well as other small motives). At another initial P the cross is placed on the top (fig. 13c). It may have been initials of this type that inspired the artist of the Dublin psalter similarly to insert a cross as a filling motive in two of his initials (fig. 14b-c).

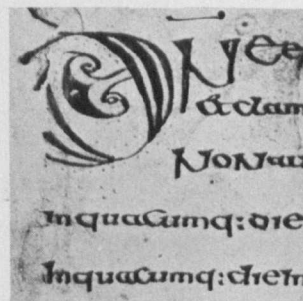
However, much more credible is the connection between the Cathach's initials and the smaller text initials in the later Anglo-Irish illuminated MSS (fig. 16). The initial design itself, with the elastic body divided by an empty space, is the same, as is the free rhythmic playing with resilient spirals and



a) Ps. LI; fol. 19a.



b) Ps. LVI, fol. 21a.



c) Ps. CI; fol. 53b.

Fig. 17. Dublin, The Cathach of St. Columba. Initials.

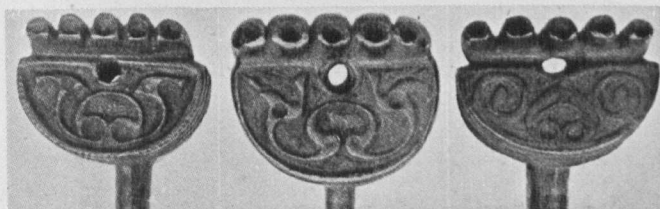


Fig. 18. Heads of bronze hand-pins from Ireland (after E. T. Leeds, *Celtic Ornament*).

curves. The fact that the initials of the Dublin psalter lack the grace and refinement which mark the later Northumbrian manuscripts, and that they do not possess their wealth of ornament does not diminish the significance of the general fundamental relationship. If the Cathach of St. Columba was written in the latter half of the 6th century, as palaeographers assume, then the fundamental principle of Anglo-Irish initial ornament is of the same high age and a creation of Irish illuminators long before the Book of Durrow.

Strangely contrasting with the novelty and variability of the initial form itself is the weak quality of the drawing in the decoration. Compared with Old Celtic art, the initial ornamentation in the Cathach seems flaccid and degenerate. The same phenomenon, however, has been observed in contemporary Irish applied art. Kendrick has drawn attention to the fact that in the centuries immediately prior to the time of the illuminated manuscripts it is possible to distinguish a separate "Ultimate La Tène" style, localizable chiefly to Ireland, Scotland and the north of England (22). We find it on

(22) T. D. KENDRICK, *British Hanging-Bowls* (*Antiquity* VI 1932 p. 173-75).



Fig. 19. Engraved pillar from Reask, Kerry, Ireland, saec. VI-VII (after Fr. Henry, *Irish Art*, pl. 14b).

early pennanular brooches, hand-pins, latchets and escutcheons (fig. 18) of the sixth and seventh centuries. "It is a style in process of decadence, entirely devoid of the power to raise itself to a stronger growth without the assistance of some invigorating influence. But for all that, it still conserves the age-long Celtic predilection for curvilinear ornament" (23). The initials in the Cathach of St. Columba are also to be included in this style. Therefore there is scarcely any reason for explaining the weak drawing of the ornaments by saying that

(23) E. T. LEEDS, *Celtic Ornament in the British Isles down to A. D. 700*, Oxford 1933 p. 141 seqq. LEEDS also points out that Ultimate la Tène has a tendency to combine

the spiral motive with zoomorphic or ornithomorphic heads. We find the same tendency in the Dublin psalter.

they are merely simple calligraphic initials with no pretensions of reflecting what Irish book-art could do in works of greater distinction.

For the rest, what we know of the level of Irish art at the time of the Columban Mission gives indications in the opposite direction. In the domain of stone sculpture, where the monuments are better preserved, we come across simple stones, primitively incised with circle and spiral motives (fig. 19). Their position in relation to the later richly embellished crosses is as the Dublin psalter to the later illuminated manuscripts. Nor was a psalter a text to be left in the hands of simple scribes. All the evidence shows that the Cathach of St. Columba gives a fairly trustworthy picture of the standard of Irish book-making in the beginning of its development.

### III.

Two principal phases can be singled out in the early development of western book-decoration.

The first, roughly comprising the time until the beginning of the seventh century, is characterized by a general reticence in the decoration of the text itself. As in the volumes of antiquity, the graphic purity and homogeneity of the script were deliberately cherished, in *manuscripts de luxe* as in less ornate library books. A special book-painter may have added miniatures in colours and title-pages with ornamental framework at the beginning of the book; in gospel books he may have enframed the Eusebian concordances with canon tables (24). But he was not to intrude upon the actual form of the script. In the manner in which this was decorated it was the scribe himself who wielded the pen, and so his contribution usually consisted of giving prominence to the colophon by means of rows of simple line and dot patterns. More occasionally he ventured upon the ornamental designing of initial letters — of paragraphs or pages. Significantly enough, such initials are almost always absent from the luxury manuscripts embellished with miniatures. Here the pure script-stem was considered more dignified.

The second phase in developments, commencing about the middle of the

(24) C. NORDENFALK, *Die spätantiken Kanontafeln (Die Bücherornamentik der Spätantike I)*. Gothenburg 1938.

seventh century, signifies the abandoning of this attitude. The script is no longer taboo to the painter. Indeed, it becomes the principal carrier of the ornamental embellishment of the book. The initial, formerly the exception, now becomes the rule. It is combined with the leading forms of current decoration, it grows in size and richness and becomes one of the most typical forms of ornament in mediaeval art, just as important to the decoration of the book as the ornamental capital is to ecclesiastical architecture.

We may call the first phase of developments the *restrained* and the second the *unrestrained* era in book ornament. In principle, Codex Usserianus Primus (fig. 5) still belongs to the former. The Cathach of St. Columba (fig. 7 seqq.), on the other hand, must be placed to the latter. If this latter manuscript really belongs to the time before 600, as palaeographic research believes, it possesses the extraordinarily great significance — from the angle of art history — of being the earliest known manuscript with unrestrained script ornament. Moreover, it appears as if this developmental phase had its origin in Ireland and from there through the Irish Mission it spread to other parts of Europe.

On the other hand, the book ornamentation we encounter in the Cathach of St. Columba is thus far still restrained, as it is nourished solely from the poor vocabulary then available to culturally isolated Irish art. It is only when the Irish Church through the medium of its Mission gains a footing in Northumbria and there makes contact with the great culture streams, the Nordic-Germanic and the Roman-Oriental, that the possibility is created for that flowering in book art of which the Anglo-Irish illuminated manuscripts give such admirable evidence (25).

By what channels the new motives found their way into book-painting can only dimly be surmised. The Book of Lindisfarne reveals that Greco-Oriental manuscripts reached Northumbria along with men like Theodor of Tarsus (26). Another important contact was established through the

(25) Compare the introduction p. 141.

(26) C. NORDENFALK, *Eastern Style Elements in the Book of Lindisfarne* (*Acta Archaeologica* XIII 1942, pp. 157-169). In his

important paper on the Ruthwell Cross, first published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* VI 1943 pp. 1-19 and repeated in "England and the Mediter-

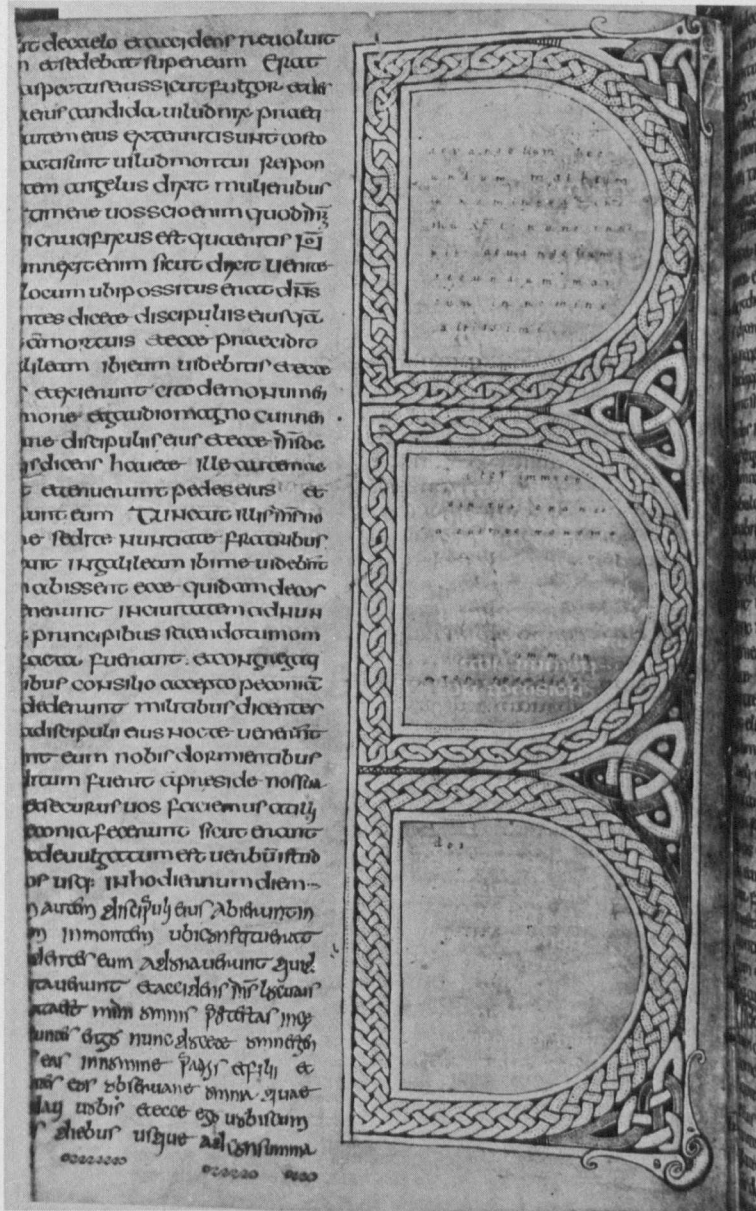


Fig. 20. Durham, Cathedral Library, A. II. 10; Gospel Book, fol. 36, colophon after St. Matthew. Northumbria, saec. VII med. (Very reduced scale).

art of the goldsmith, as is especially evident since the discovery of the treasure of Sutton Hoo (27). Craftsmen working in the service of pagan kings and rulers must have been employed on the requirements of the Church when their masters were converted to Christianity. For example, they would be called upon to make book-bindings and receptacles for the holy scriptures. From the covers the new ornamentation made its way into the manuscripts themselves and formed the spring from which ornamental pages and richer forms of initials were drawn. This process is distinctly perceptible in the Book of Durrow, where the loosely assembled framework and round discs of the free ornamental pages still preserve something of the mounting-forms of pagan metalwork.

There is, however, one manuscript whose decoration seems to represent a still earlier phase of development than the Book of Durrow. This is a gospel book — or rather a fragment of a gospel book — in the library of Durham Cathedral. Of the original manuscript there remain only twelve leaves, now divided between three different codices (28): Six are bound in with a *psalterium glossatum* of the third quarter of the 13th century and of English workmanship (29) — cod. A. II. 10; four are in cod. C. III. 13, while the

*ranean Tradition*”, Oxford 1945, pp. 1-19, F. SAXL endeavours to reduce the connection which I pointed out between the apostle pictures in Lindisfarne and a group of ivories from “St. Mark’s Throne” to the general similarity of styles which unites early mediaeval art with the work of the “subantique” tradition in general. In the Lindisfarne evangelists, according to SAXL, it is not actually a matter of influence from any gospel book related to these ivories, but a local revival of Romano-British features. To this criticism I for my part must adhere to my original opinion. The similarities between Lindisfarne and the St. Mark ivories are much too numerous and specific to be explained away by general resemblances. They not only affect

the facial types and the system of folds in the draperies, but also extend to composition and ornament motives. Trying to explain the Book of Lindisfarne by referring to Romano-British sculpture is like calling the interlace in the MSS a derivative of interlace borders on Romano-British mosaics. In neither case does the similarity attain to the really specific.

(27) *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial. A provisional Guide*, London 1947.

(28) E. A. LOWE & R. J. DEAN, *Membra disiecta* (*Revue Benedictine* XLVII (1935, p. 305).

(29) G. HASELOFF, *Die Psalterillustration im 13. Jahrhundert*, Kiel 1938 p. 61 No. VIII.





remaining two form a separate volume under the signature of C. III. 20. Together these leaves with certain lacunae contain the text of the gospels from Matt. XIV, 32 to Mark XIV, 55. The size of the leaves is quite large, about  $385 \times 250$ , which is rather more than the Book of Durrow and even a little more than the Book of Lindisfarne. The leaves in C. III. 13 and C. III. 20 are devoid of artistic embellishment, but the decorations at the close of Matthew and the beginning of Mark, fol. 3b and 2a respectively in cod. A. II. 10 (figs. 20 and 21) are of considerable art-historical interest.

On fol. 3b the left-hand column is occupied by text, the end of Matthew's gospel (fig. 20). Here the termination is marked by the scribe in the last ten lines passing from the usual majuscular script to a fancy minuscule. In the right-hand column is the colophon, written in light-red ink in a vigorous framework in the form of a great B expanded into three curves. In the uppermost curve we read: *Finitum est huius aevangelium secundum Mattheum in nomine domini nostri Christi nunc incipit aevangelium secundum Marcum in nomine Altissimi amen*. Then follows in the two lower curves the Greek text of the Lord's Prayer, written in Latin characters. The surrounding framework has a height of 334 mm and a breadth of 107.

The initial to the Gospel of St. Mark (fig. 21) is formed of the first three letters of the word *Initium*, which are combined into a monogram by uniting both I's with the straight stems of the N, a system that recurs in most insular gospel books (30). Then follow two smaller initial letters in black with hollow stems — TI — and finally three enlarged majuscles — “tiu(m)” (whereby the first two letters orthographically incorrectly repeat the foregoing in a manner calculated to arouse the suspicion that the artist who formed them did not understand Latin: we actually read “Inititium” instead of *Initium*). The whole ingress is composed according to the principle of a gradual diminuendo of the letters and stepwise ascending levels which we have already seen in the Cathach of St. Columba. Compared with the stately framing of the colophon

(30) As a rule, in the Mark initial, as in the John initial (*In principio*), only the first I forms a monogram with the N. In

the Book of Kells, however, we find the same threeletter combination — INI as in the Durham fragment.

the initial looks almost small (31). The longest shank in the monogram measures 147 mm in height.

Anybody acquainted with Insular illumination will at once realize that the Durham fragment differs essentially from what is usual in Anglo-Irish gospel books. The large colophon frame is unique, as is the peculiar design of the Mark initial. There is only one natural explanation: that the Durham fragment dates from the time when the decoration of a gospel book was not yet stabilized according to the fundamental scheme which meets us for the first time in the Book of Durrow.

The essential point in that scheme is that the material element of the decoration is moved from the colophon at the end of the gospels, where it appears in Late-Antique manuscripts, to the beginning of the gospel text itself, i. e. from the editorial trappings to the very words of Holy scripture. Behind this removal lies a changed idea of the relation between script and ornament. Late-Antiquity considered the decoration to be an enrichment of the book itself, an idea which could be encouraged in so far as it did not encroach upon the clarity of the text. The Middle Ages, on the other hand, regarded ornamentation as a medium for emphasizing the sacred text—clothing the word as it were in a precious garb in the same manner as a relic was encased in a casket of gold and precious stones. The Durham fragment is purely mediaeval in the initial decoration to the gospel of St. Mark, but it still retains the old Late-Antique system by devoting the principal decoration to the colophon. This, however, would scarcely have taken

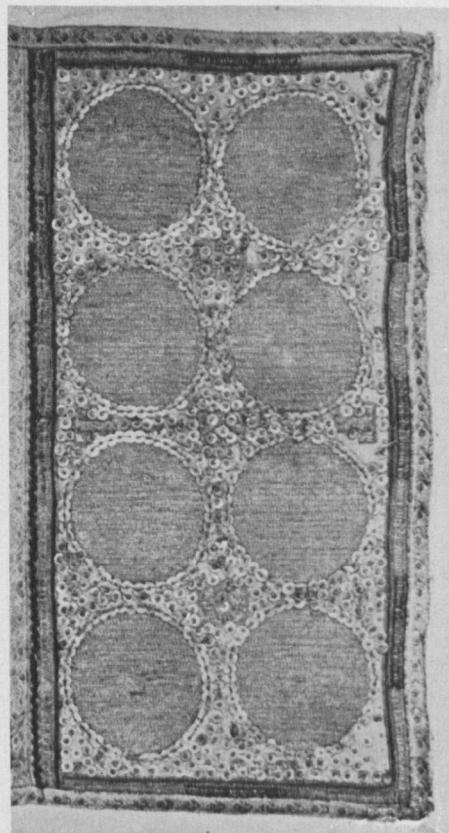


Fig. 22. Lund, Kulturhistoriska Museet, Inv. No. 36074a. Book-binding from the Far East.

(31) The illustrations fig. 11 and 14 give the wrong impression of inverted proportions.

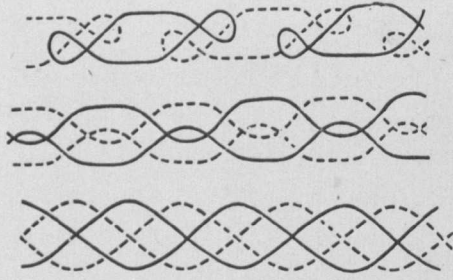


Fig. 23. Scheme of interlaced borders on fig. 10.

place if simultaneously the colophon had not been comprehensively enriched by the addition of the Lord's Prayer. Thus here also the sacred words in conformity with the mediaeval spirit occasioned an embellishment of the colophon with a rich and expressive framework. That the prayer was written in Greek is perhaps an indication of the source from which the Insular monk drew his inspiration.

At first glance this frame is somewhat surprising in shape. Mynors described it as "an arcade of three arches, arranged sideways". This description, of course, says nothing of the origin of the motive. I am not sure that the painter really imitated an arcade which he was unprejudiced enough to use sideways. I would rather believe that this curious, equivocal kind of frame derived from a composition corresponding to the one appearing on an East Asiatic embroidered book-binding in the Kulturhistoriska Museum at Lund (fig. 22), or, to take a geographically and chronologically closer example, the framing of the Easter tables in Byzantine psalters, e. g. the one in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana at Milan (F 12 sup.) of the year 961 (32). In other words, the motive was borrowed from a composition of two columns of circles framed by an upright rectangle.

If, then, the Durham fragment is more Late Antique in style than the Book of Durrow, it is, on the other hand, far more advanced than the Cathach of St. Columba. In contrast to the scribe-initials in the Cathach we find in the Durham fragment a decoration that really can be called book-painting. The framework of the colophon and the initial monogram are both painted in tempera. Apart from the black of the outlines, the colour scale comprises four different tints, two light and warm: pollen yellow and a shade between pink and orange-red, as well as two dark and cool: a mossy dark green and

(32) K. WEITZMANN, *Die byzantinische Buchmalerei des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1935. pl. XXIX, nr. 168. Another instance is afforded by the Mt. Athos manu-

script Vatopedi 761, cf. K. WEITZMANN, *The Psalter Vatopedi 761, its place in the Aristocratia Psalter recension* (*The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* X, 1947, p. 22, fig. 2).

l. d. span. Isidor  
Paris NAL 2169  
cf. Micheli, pl. 269

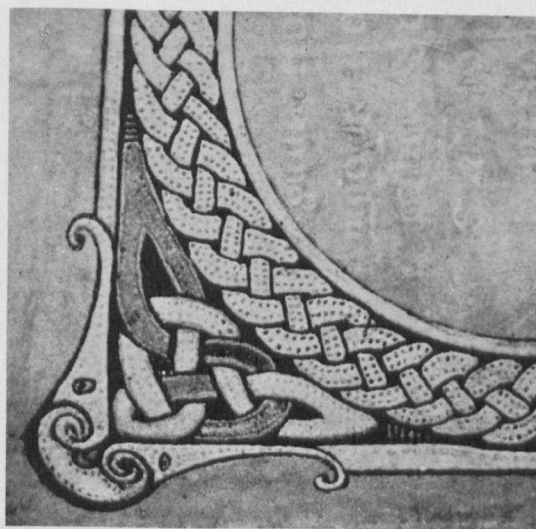


Fig. 24. Detail of fig. 10. Natural size.

steel blue. We find these colours, arranged in oblong panels side by side, almost like the colours in a box of water-colours, on both vertical stems of the INI monogram (fig. 21). In the arrangement of the colours one observes an endeavour to contrast the pollen yellow and the steel blue on the one hand and the pinky-red and the moss-green on the other. On the frame of the colophon yellow dominates; it is exclusively employed on the interlaced bands. On the heavier interlaced knots within the angles, all four colours occur in kaleidoscopic confusion.

Taking it all round, this colouring agrees with what we know of the richer illuminated manuscripts. Particularly typical is the pollen-yellow colour, which science has identified as being the so-called orpiment (arsenic tersulphide) (33). The pinky-red and the moss green are also seen in other Insular manuscripts (34). The steel-blue seems to be less usual.

Besides by its larger size and the expanded range of colour, however, the decoration of the Durham fragment is made grander than that of the Cathach

(33) J. H. TIKKANEN, *Studien über die Farbengebung in der mittelalterlichen Buchmalerei* (*Societas Scientiarum Fennica. Comm. human.*

*litt. T. V.*) Helsingfors 1933 p. 220.

(34) *ibid.* p. 220. seq.

by its richer repertoire of ornament. In the frame of the colophon there are broad interlaced bands in the borders and the angles. The interlace pattern varies from one border to the other, with increasing complexity from below up; the schema fig. 23 provides the key to the different motives. In the angles between the arches and the outer edge-band are more robust interlace patterns, of which the two in the middle form parallel three-lobed figures, characteristic features in Anglo-Irish interlacement design (35). The outer edge-band is interrupted at the right-hand corners by curvilinear patterns, their motives evolved out of a re-drawn corner-palmette with spiral-shaped lateral leaves which at the sides send out "snouts" with "noses" rolled up at the ends and an "eye", which makes them resemble an animal head gaping with two jaws around the edge-band (fig. 24).

The same rolled-up nose with a more distinct animal head appears as the termination of the long stem of the INI monogram (fig. 19). A "figure-eight" of interlace-ribbon ending in animal heads replaces the slanting line of the N. The median space between the straight stems is filled with a fine "reserved" two-ply interlace (36).

Thus we have two principal motives: spiral or curvilinear forms, combined with the animal head, and interlace. The former are clearly associated with the decorative motives in the Cathach of St. Columba. In principle it is the same "degenerate" curve and spiral patterns, which the archaeologists have called "Ultimate la Tène". The animal heads in the figure-eight of the initial bear unmistakable likeness to the head forming the tail of the Q initial to psalm XC in the Cathach (fig. 14c). The inturned spirals at the ends of the straight initial stems we have already seen on the initial to ps. XXXVI in the Dublin psalter (fig. 14b).

The interlace motive, on the other hand, is a direct novelty. Here the Durham fragment does not point backward in time to the Cathach, but for-

(35) E. CINTHIO, *Anglo-Saxon and Irish Style-Influences in Skåne during the 8th century*. (*K. Humanistiska Vetenskabsamfundet i Lund Årsberättelse* 1946-47, vol. IV, Lund 1947, p. 123-128).

(36) There is some relation between this

initial and those in two manuscripts from Bobbio (Milano, Ambrosiana, S. 45 sup, according to *Lowe* written for Atala, abbot 615-622 and St. Gallen, Stiftsbibl. 730. Without studying the two manuscripts more closely I dare not infer from it.



Fig. 25. Slab from Fahan Mura, Donegal, Ireland, saec. VII.

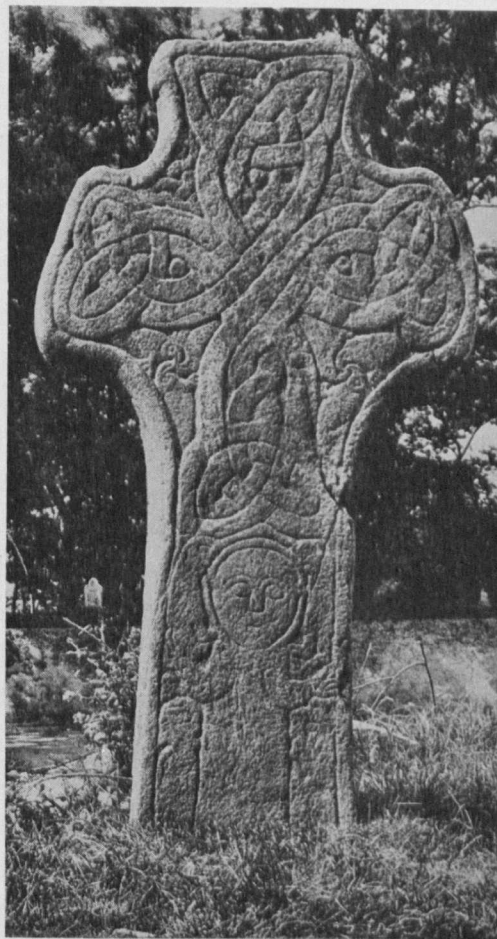


Fig. 26. Cross from Carndonagh, Donegal, Ireland, saec. VII.

ward to the Book of Durrow. The most striking feature is the vigorous ribbon-shaped motives of an interlace type which is also to be found in the Durrow gospel, whereas in the Book of Lindisfarne and the other decorated gospels its place is taken by a finer, more supple interlace. The coarse, interlaced bands in Durrow have always been regarded as evidence of the relatively early date of this manuscript. So much the more does this argument apply in the question of the Durham fragment, whose interlace pattern has not yet attained to the same degree of complication as those in Durrow. We notice for

instance that real knots, i. e. interlace loops formed of a ribbon which crosses its own path at three adjacent points of intersection, do not appear in the patterns within the framework. In the border of the middle we even see the simple "Constantinian" interlace. But the fact that the principle of knotting was not unknown to the artist is proved by the three-lobed ribbon interlaces in both the middle angles.

If we look beyond the sphere of the illuminated manuscript we find extraordinarily striking parallels to the interlace of the Durham fragment in the decoration of the two stone crosses at Fahan Mura (fig. 25) and Cardonagh (fig. 26), with which Irish sculpture takes the important step from a merely incised line decoration to really plastic forms of relief. The conformity is much too obvious to need demonstration in detail. Note in both cases the filling of the empty spaces between the windings with round knobs. Perhaps the earlier of the two cross-stones shows the greater resemblance in style — the one at Fahan Mura. On one of its short sides this slab has an inscription in Greek: Δόξα καὶ τίμη πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ καὶ πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ ("Glory and Honour to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost"), which brings to mind the like wise Greek text of the Lord's Prayer in the colophon of the Durham fragment.

R. A. S. Macalister, who discovered the Greek inscription on the Fahan Mura cross, has pointed out that it is an expression of a Trinitarian orthodoxy which was sanctioned in exactly the same wording at the Concilium at Toledo in the year 633 (37). This surprising connection, which gives a hint of a communication between the Spanish and the Irish churches, for the slab at Fahan Mura sets up a terminus a quo, but at the same time a terminus prope quo. Françoise Henry has dated both these early crosses, at Fahan Mura and Cardonagh, to the second half of the seventh century (38). It would seem as if the earlier one, the Fahan Mura slab, might even be placed rather nearer the middle than the end of that century. This would accord with the date to which, on the basis of other factors, we would place the Durham fragment,

(37) R. A. S. MACALISTER, *The Inscription on the Slab at Fahan Mura, Co. Donegal* (*The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries*

*of Ireland* LIX 1929 pp. 89-98).

(38) *Irish Art* p. 59.



whose decoration belongs to a developmental phase prior to that of the Book of Durrow. (39)

Against this dating it should be mentioned that E. A. Lowe is unwilling to credit the manuscript with a date earlier than the eighth century (40), but it would seem as if Lowe's dating is not definitely binding. Mynors, who drew his conclusions as to the age of the fragment some years after Lowe, places it within the wider period of "VII<sup>th</sup> or VIII<sup>th</sup> century" (41). Another excellent script expert, Lowe's collaborator in the publication "*Corpus latini antiquiores*", Bernhard Bischoff, in a letter to the author of this article states that he has nothing to object to a dating of the fragment so early as the one here suggested. It would seem as if in this as in so many other cases where art-historical and palaeographic researches arrive at different results, the former may lay claim to greater reliability. For the ornamental embellishment of the manuscripts, as W. Koehler has shown in his methodically clarifying review of a standard palaeographic work (42), is generally a more sensitive barometer of style development than the forms of the letters.

#### IV.

We find, then, that Irish book-art developed along almost the same lines as Irish sculpture.

We have a first stage, represented in book-art by the Cathach of St. Col-

(39) This brings us to the question of the datation of the Book of Durrow. In a previous article "On the Age of the earliest Echternach Manuscripts" (*Acta Arch.* III 1932, pp. 57-62) I expressed an opinion, formed on the basis of the chronology of the so-called Echternach group, in favour of the period round about 650. FR. HENRY, *Irish Art* p. 60, having regard to the fact that the book is best explained as a work of the monks on Iona, would date it to the time immediately after the Whitby synod 664. MASAI places it to about 700 and E. A. LOWE to the 8th century. At the

present juncture it seems to me that the last third of the 7th century is most credible.

(40) *CLA* II, No. 147. LOWE characterizes its script as "a late example of Insular majuscule verging on minuscule with a distinct Irish flavour".

(41) R. A. B. MYNORS. *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Oxford 1939 p. 17.

(42) Review of E. K. RAND. *A Survey of the Manuscripts of Tours* (*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, Jahrg. 193 1931, pp. 321-336).

umba, when the scribe was content with hand-drawn initial ornament in a traditional, but weak Celtic style with few motives, just as in sculpture the stoneworker was content with incised crosses and curve patterns on the stones. It is a period of relative cultural isolation, though in it the foundations were laid for the coming development. For now the Insular national script is being formed, and now for the first time ornament is being employed to emphasize the sacredness of the scriptures by marking the beginning of every important new section of the text by means of an initial. In sculpture, figure representation now appears in primitive contour drawing, and there is no reason why even the earliest Irish manuscripts should not have had a simple figural decoration, for instance in the form of drawings of the evangelist symbols at the beginning of the gospels (43).

This style gives way to a richer book decoration of the type now known to us through the Durham fragment. This manuscript represents the second stage in the development. What is decisively new is the transition from contour drawing to real painting and, in conjunction with it, the adoption of the interlace as the principal ornamental motive. These novelties are connected with the rupture of the former cultural isolation. The frontiers have been opened — by the Irish Mission — to impulses from the outside. “It is obvious”, says Françoise Henry, “that the Irish learnt from abroad the technique of illumination and to a certain extent the handling of painted ornament” (44). Judging from all the signs, the inspiration emanated from the Coptic-Syrian culture region, where we also find manuscripts with an ornamentation based chiefly on interlace filling. The Durham fragment strengthens this hypothesis. With its loops the interlace “figure-eight”, which replaces the slanting stroke of the N in the Mark initial (fig. 21), recalls the interlace pattern on Coptic textiles

(43) FR. HENRY’S appropriate reminder (*Irish Art* pp. 66-68) that the evangelist symbols in the Book of Durrow are not arranged according to the order in the Vulgate, but follow the succession that is characteristic of the Old Latin version, Matthew, John, Luke, Mark (cf. the above

mentioned Codex Usserianus Primus!), suggests that these types date back to the time before the introduction of the text of the Vulgate into Northumbria through Benedict Biscop and the delegates of the Church of Rome.

(44) *Irish Art* p. 61.

(45). And in the large colophon frame the interlace ribbon is patterned with rows of small pink dots in the same manner as the interlace filling in the framework on a page of the Rabula gospel of the year 586 in Florence (46). But this oriental impulse was not received through the medium of slavish copyists. On the contrary, the ability of the Insular style to recreate and to create is clearly asserted. For instance, the large coloured initial must be regarded as a bold creation of that period. In the Durham fragment we find it in an interesting experimental stage.

There is reason for asking where this development took place: in Ireland itself or in the monasteries founded by the Irish Mission in Northumbria? The circumstance that the Durham fragment belongs to a Northern English cathedral library speaks for the latter alternative. Perhaps this gospel book is a work of the scriptorium at Lindisfarne under St. Finan or St. Colman? On the other hand, the cross-stones at Fahan Mura and Carndonagh, which represent the direct parallel to this stage of developments in sculpture, show that indigenous Irish art was also familiar with this very style. The problem can be drawn to a head by the question which is the older one: the Durham fragment or the cross at Fahan Mura? I doubt whether we shall ever get an answer.

What is important to stress, however, is that Insular Christian ornament at this stage of development had not yet entered into any connection with the Teutonic art of the pagan goldsmiths. The Irish cross-stones and the Durham manuscript agree in that neither yet knows the developed trumpet pattern, geometric goldsmith fretworks or Nordic animal ornament.

These new motives make their first appearance in the third stage of developments. The earliest rendering is the Book of Durrow. It is scarcely to be doubted that the new forms of ornament were passed on to book-art through contact with pagan applied art as we meet it in the large grave-find from Sutton Hoo. Where should this contact have been made first if not in Northumbria? It cannot be accidental that all the finest illuminated manu-

(45) Cf. e. g. W. HOLMQVIST. *Kunstprobleme der Merowingerzeit*. Stockholm 1939, pls. XII-XV. Here too are round knobs

filling the empty space between the interlace.

(46) FR. HENRY, *Irish Art* p. 65, pl. 26a-b.

scripts of the close of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century must, for palaeographic and other reasons, be referred to the Irish mission houses in the north of England, not to Ireland itself.

By this time the Northumbrian monasteries had outshone their mother institutions in Ireland — just as in Arabic culture Syria, Palestine and Egypt became far more important than Arabia proper. Here I fully agree with Sir Alfred Clapham and M. Masaï. The great epoch in Insular book-decoration started by the Book of Durrow and followed by those of Echternach, Lindisfarne etc. was essentially an Anglo-Irish, Northumbrian creation.