

# The art of the Book of Deer

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the iconography and style of the illuminations in the 10th-century Book of Deer (Cambridge Univ Lib Ii 6.32). Although in format and general appearance the book conforms to a group of Irish pocket gospels, it is possible that the book was produced in Scotland, with Deer Abbey being the most likely location. On f4v a sword of Anglo-Saxon or Viking type is depicted. The implications of this are examined in terms of surviving artefacts and other manuscript depictions.*

## INTRODUCTION

The art of the Book of Deer (Cambridge Univ Lib Ii 6.32) has received very little critical study until recently. Apart from those which appeared in Stuart's Spalding Club monograph of 1869 (Stuart 1869), reproductions have not featured widely in books about the glory of Insular art (Alexander 1978, 87). Werckmeister (1963) discussed some details of the style but the main publication on the art of the Book of Deer is by Kathleen Hughes (1980), followed by Isobel Henderson's short critique (1986). This short contribution does not attempt a full analysis of the book but examines some of the iconographic and stylistic issues raised by Hughes and Henderson, in particular with regard to the origin of the manuscript.

The book, begun in the 10th century, contains the four gospels of which only John is complete. Added shortly afterwards is an office for the visitation of the sick and the creed. A Latin charter of King David I (1124–53) to the clerics of Deer Abbey, Buchan, follows the life of St Drostan — the founder — and records of the abbey's land holdings, the latter both written in Scottish Gaelic between 1100 and 1150 (Stuart 1869).

## THE FIGURATIVE IMAGES

The book (153 mm by 110 mm, ff 86) begins with a small gathering of originally four folios, of which the last leaf is missing. The first recto is blank allowing a page of the four evangelists to face *Liber Generationis*, the genealogy of Christ at the beginning of Matthew's gospel. The first written page has a border and illuminated initial. The quire ends with a blank sheet and then the missing folio. The second gathering begins with the figure of a man with a sword and two small figures above him. The text, with a border and illuminated initial is the start of Matthew proper, *Christi autem*. Matthew's gospel is deliberately incomplete, occupying only one gathering. Mark begins on the third gathering, with the seated evangelist facing the start of the gospel, with border and illuminated initial. Luke begins with the next quire, a seated figure facing the text with border

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and initial. Luke is incomplete. John, the only complete gospel, begins with another seated figure, surrounded by six smaller figures, and the text starts with border and initial. Throughout John's gospel there are various small marginalia, sketches or doodles. The text of John's gospel ends half-way down the page and the lower part is filled with two seated figures. Opposite this is a page of the *Credo*, followed by two end pieces, four figures around a cross and lastly a basically ornamental page with four small figures.

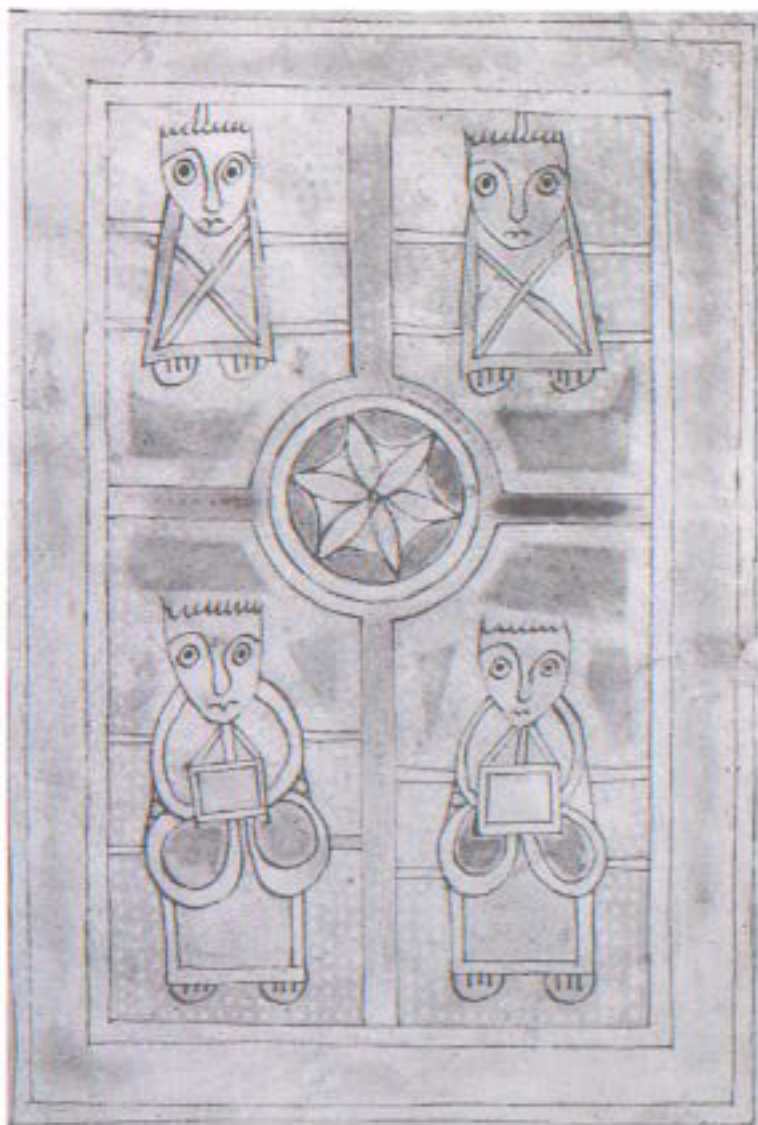
So, at least in outline, the illuminations follow a logical pattern, with apparently four evangelists at the beginning, a single evangelist at the start of each gospel, greater emphasis paid to the complete text of John, with a final picture presumably illustrating its last chapter — Christ's commission to Peter and the testimony of John the Evangelist — and then finally the evangelists again, followed by a pattern page.

If this basic outline was at least the artist's intention, a closer look at the iconography shows that he took a creative approach to his models. Hughes (1980, 37) concludes that the artist did not have a completed manuscript available to copy but may have used a selection of designs from a sketch book. Henderson (1986, 278) concludes that the Book of Deer is 'evidently modelled on a full-scale gospel book of some sophistication'. This is the issue I shall look at in greater detail. It appears that this artist, who is quite fluent with his pen when it comes to calligraphy and animals in the margin, draws only human-type figures for all his illuminations. He clearly finds the Insular conventions of human anatomy and drapery a puzzle and sticks to his simple, sometimes awkward designs for every illumination. Significantly he omits any representation of the evangelist symbols. He also omits the common preliminary of the canon tables, an area where evangelist symbols are prominently displayed (O'Loughlin in Forsyth, forthcoming).

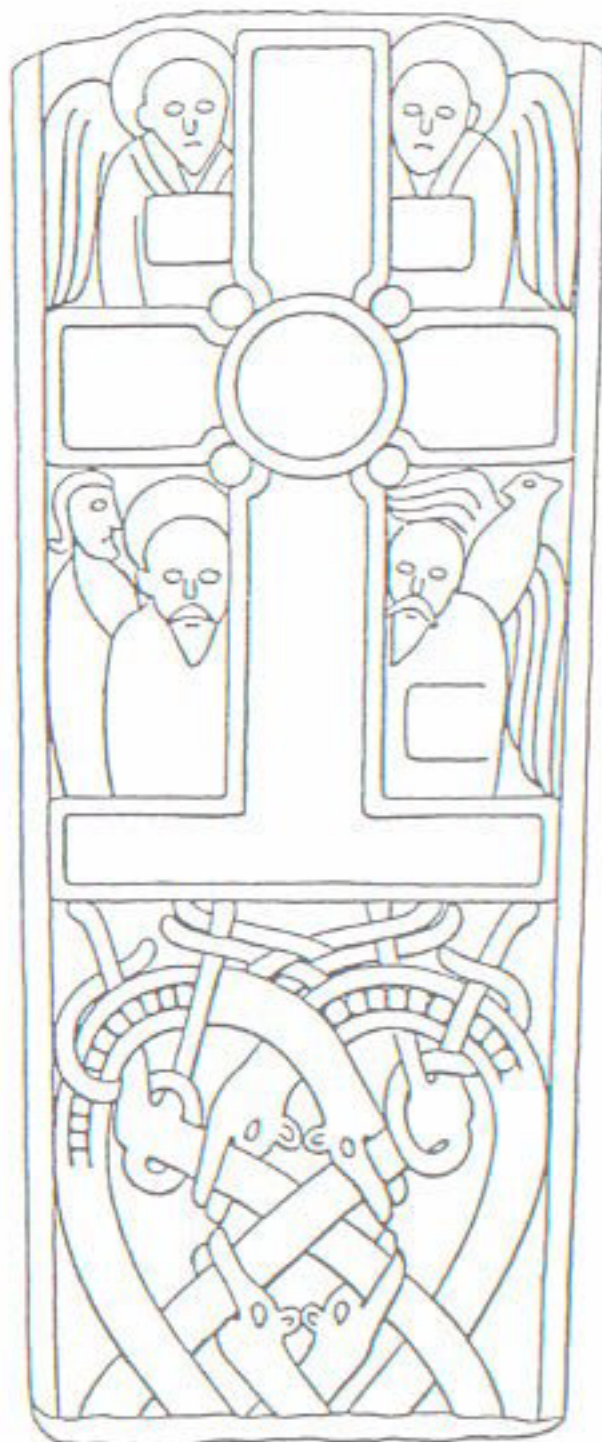
A brief survey of Alexander (1978) suggests that it is much more normal to have, if not all four tetramorphs, then at least some combination of them, at the start of the gospels. On Deer f1v (illus 1) there is a hierarchy of two figures carrying books in satchels around their necks and two minor figures above. Figures carrying books in satchels are found on the Bressay and Elgin Cathedral stones (Hughes 1980, 28) and on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise (Henry 1967, pl 92). These objects recur throughout the book. If they are not satchels, they could represent house shrines tucked under the carrier's chin. On folios 16v, 29v, 41v and 84v the fish scale could be interpreted as a triangular tegulated roof.

Hughes (1980, 28) sees an important precedent in the Pictish stone from Elgin which she describes as 'four evangelists'. On closer examination the Elgin figures are, more significantly, only two evangelists, Matthew and John with symbols, with two winged, nimbed angels carrying books above (illus 2). The Deer figures, with their clear hierarchy, cannot literally depict the four equal evangelists even if that was the intention. Like Elgin, there are two evangelists below, indicated by their books, and either two wingless angels above or two man-symbols, Matthew twice over. However, it should be noted that the same four characters appear around a cross and circle on the last page of the book, f86 (illus 8). It will be argued below that these *represent* four evangelists even if they look different.

The next illumination is f4v, facing the start of Matthew's *Christi autem*. It is discussed at the end of the article since its sources are quite different from the figures on folios 1v, 16v, 29v, 41v, 84v and 86r. These carry around their necks either books in satchels or little house shrines as mentioned above. The upper bodies are like a squashed vesica; they have two loops over their knees, a square skirt and semicircular feet projecting from a flat hem (illus 3). This figure style descends from the depiction of Matthew in the Echternach Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 9389 f18v), via the Book of Dimma St Mark (Dublin, Trinity College MS 59, p30) (illus 4). Werckmeister (1963, 175–81) derives this pattern ultimately from early Coptic



ILLUS 1 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. li. 6.32, f1v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



Illus 2 Stone at Elgin Cathedral (*from Hughes 1980*)

images of evangelists with their hands covered by robes and thence by a tortuous route via Visigothic belt buckles. These distant sources are not relevant here. The grid of lines behind Mark, including those improbably penetrating his ears, are the misunderstood remnants of the evangelist's chair. The breakdown of furniture begins to appear in the Lichfield Gospels (Lichfield Cathedral Library, Mark p 142, in Hughes 1980, 29) where the supports of the chair take on a life of their own. They lose even more meaning in the St Gall Gospels (St Gall, Stiftsbibl. Cod. 51, p 22; in Alexander 1978, illus 204). In Deer f16v the vertical elements of the chair have been subsumed by the frame of the page itself.

The figure on Deer f29v (illus 5), at the start of Luke, is similar to Mark, except that it is drawn with four arms. Our artist has not understood the drapery conventions of the Echternach Matthew figure (f18v) in which the upper loops represent the shoulders, arms and hands. The Deer Luke has one pair of arms folded under his satchel and the other outstretched in an orans



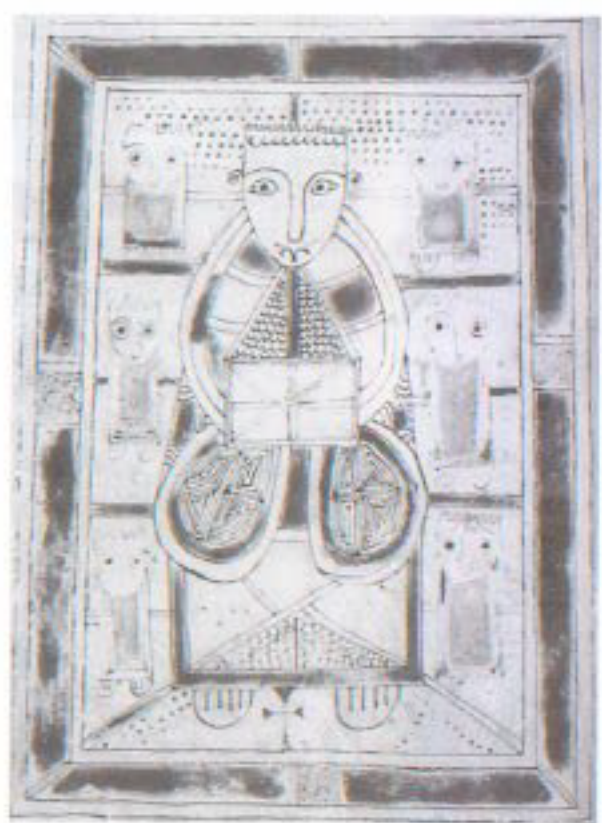
ILLUS 3 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. ii. 6.32, f16v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



ILLUS 4 Mark, The Book of Dimma, Dublin, Trinity College Library MS A.4.23(59) p 30. (*The Board of Trinity College, Dublin*)



ILLUS 5 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. ii. 6.32, f29v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



ILLUS 6 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. ii. 6.32, f41v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)

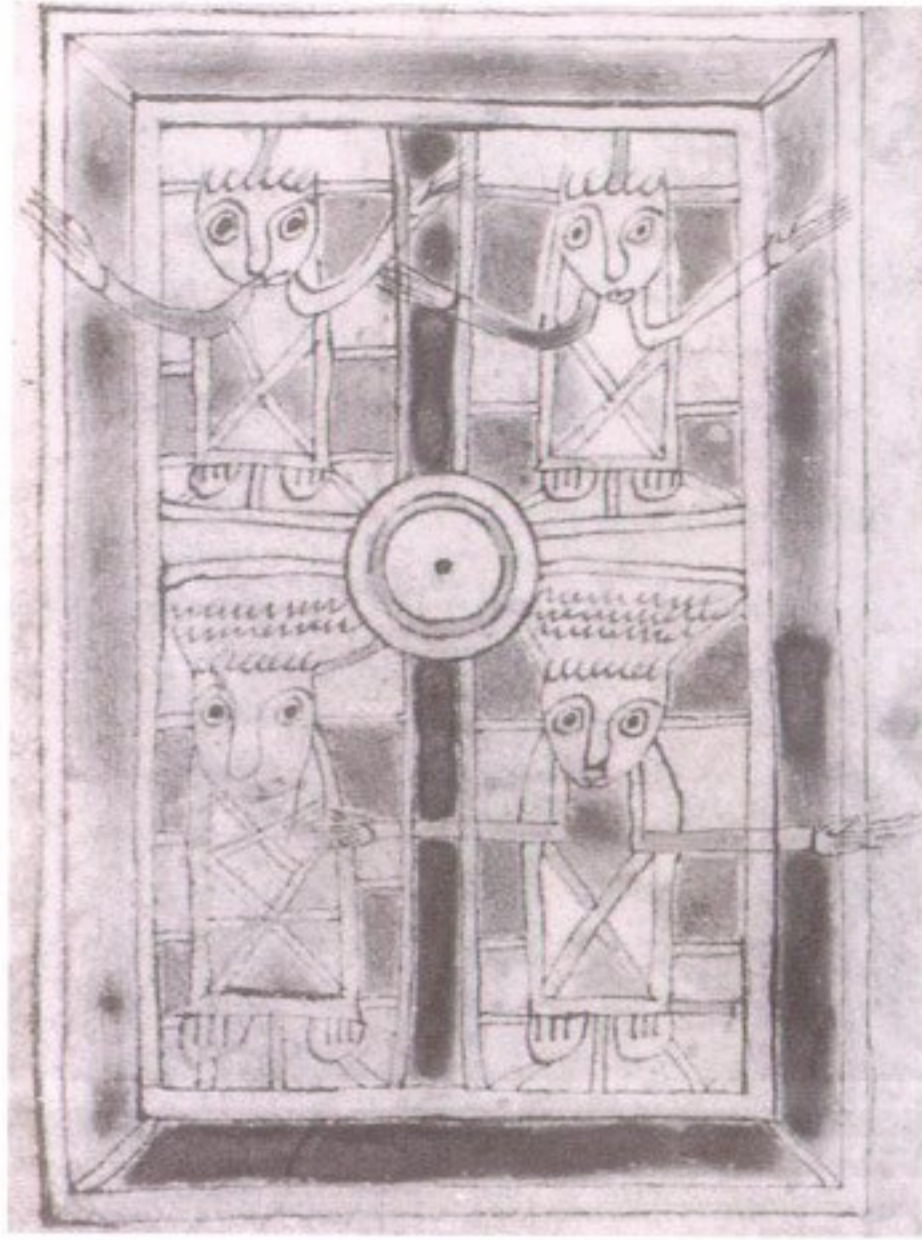
pose. If this is so, he is a highly compressed image, encompassing two different figures. Henderson (1986, 278) interprets him as Zacharias praying, relating to Luke 1, but with his folded arms and satchel he is obviously also the evangelist. In Insular art, figures with horizontal arms extending beyond the frame often depict Christ on the cross, but probably not in this instance (see below, f85v). In the Lichfield Gospels, Luke (illus 13) carries Aaron's budding rod as a symbol of Jewish priesthood which also relates to Zacharias the priest (Henderson 1987, 124). It is another example of two images compressed into one.

The figure at the start of John on f41v is like Mark, with a satchel (illus 6). He is accompanied by six armless little figures, only two of which have a mouth. To mark his great importance, there is a cross below him. Hughes (1980, 33) accepts him as John, but Henderson (1986, 278), probably correctly, sees a more complex image behind this. She identifies the figure of Christ surrounded by angels in the Book of Kells (Dublin, Trinity College MS A.I.6 f32v in Henderson 1987, 157) as the model, based on the Apocalypse text, Revelation 5. Christ holds the sealed book, surrounded by angels. Both the Kells and Deer Christ are distinguished from the evangelists by the small cross. This image, prefacing the most important book of the gospel, thus replaces the evangelist with Christ himself, revealed in glory. John appears more humbly at the end of his gospel, beside Peter on f84v, illustrating the words of the adjacent last chapter.

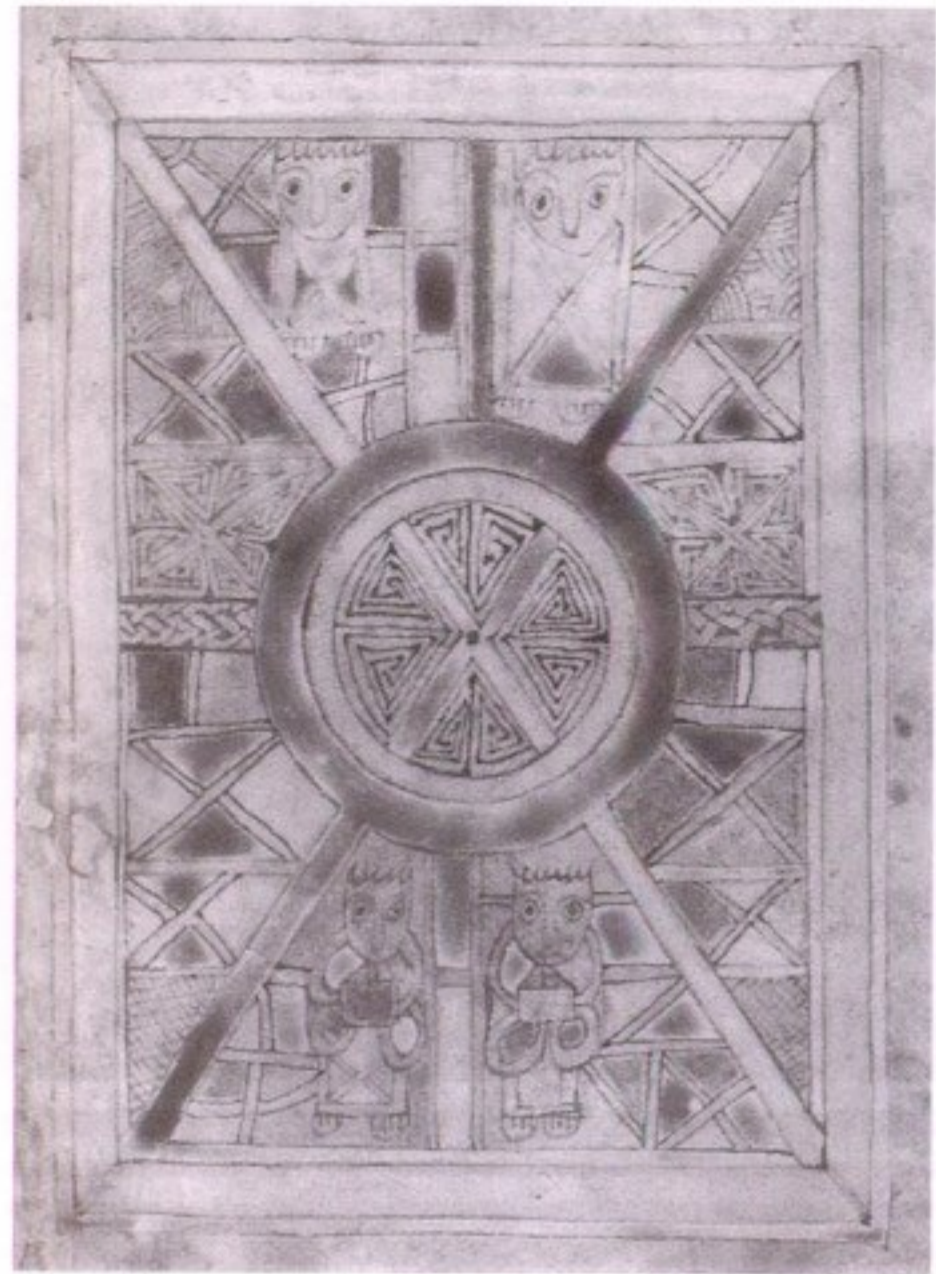
Unusually, Deer has two endpapers. F85v (illus 7) shows four despondent people around a cross. The upper two have their arms bent upwards in the orans position, while the figure on the bottom right has arms extending horizontally beyond the frame. I have already mentioned that Christ crucified frequently extends his arms beyond the frame in Insular art. This position is shown on the Gosforth cross and plaque from Penrith (Bailey & Cramp 1988, 140–2). A metal plaque of no provenance (National Museum of Ireland R.2917) (illus 8) has the upper figures in the orans position and Christ's arms extending beyond the frame (Bourke 1993, 176). On the early 11th-century Southampton Psalter (Cambridge, St John's College, C.9 (59) f38v; in Alexander 1978, illus 351) the angels beside Christ's head stick out their arms horizontally. On the eighth-century Athlone crucifixion plaque Christ's skirt ends in a straight hem with barely visible incised feet below, perhaps one prototype of all the foot problems in Deer (National Museum of Ireland R.554; in Youngs 1989, 141). F85v in Deer is undoubtedly based on a Crucifixion image with an empty cross in the centre and a crucifixion pose on the bottom right. A crucifixion terminating a gospel (in this case Matthew) is also found in Durham Library MS A2/17 (Alexander 1978, 40–1). Henderson (1986, 278) thought a crucifixion must be missing from Deer and suggested it was the missing second folio, but it clearly is present at the end of John.

The last page (f86r) is a saltire cross centred on a circle (illus 9). Major saltire designs are used in the Book of Kells, at the end of Mark (f187v) and at the start of John (f290v) (Henderson 1987, 150 & 218). The Book of Kells' John page shows the tetramorphs, so presumably the four figures in Deer — two with satchels and two without — are evangelists, closing the book in the same way as they opened it. Four evangelists around a circle seem to represent an abbreviated form of Revelation 4, the four beasts around the throne of God encircled by a rainbow. Thus the three Deer pages — folios 1v, 41v and f86 — all contain Apocalyptic symbolism, like f28v and 32v in the Book of Kells.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the very simple ornamental designs, principally two types of key pattern (on f86), have been traced by Hughes (1980, 27) to Pictish stones at Monifieth near Dundee, Dupplin near Perth and to Lindisfarne (Allen & Anderson 1903, vol I, 359, no 1004). Subsequently, the same key pattern has been located at Fyvie Church in Aberdeenshire and on a stone from Cairn O'Mount, now in Marischal Museum, Aberdeen. No comparable data are available for Irish sources but on the existing evidence, this distinguishing



ILLUS 7 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. li. 6.32, f85v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



ILLUS 9 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. li. 6.32, f86r. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



ILLUS 8 Metal crucifixion plaque, no provenance. (*National Museum of Ireland, R2917*)

pattern is attributed to north-east Scotland. The remaining decoration is very basic cross-hatching, fish-scale and four-strand interlace.

### THE F4V FIGURE: MATTHEW OR ABRAHAM?

The figure who announces the birth of Christ at the beginning of Matthew's gospel, after the genealogy (on f4v), is the most mysterious and complex in the book, evidently coming from a completely different background to the other figures (illus 10). One would expect the figure to be Matthew at the beginning of his gospel, perhaps holding a book, but in fact he sits with a sword, with two small figures above him. Hughes and Henderson see a precedent for this in the ninth-century Garland of Howth (Dublin, Trinity College Library A.4.6(56)f1; in Alexander 1978, 80) (illus 11). Here, also opposite the chi-rho page at the start of Matthew, is a seated man holding a short Irish sword, wielding it over his shoulder. On the left is a figure with one arm raised in blessing and the other displaying a book. There is a winged angel above each figure. Henderson interprets this page in the Garland of Howth as David with the book and Abraham with the sword, with perhaps Isaac and the angel above. These illustrate the opening words of Matthew: 'The book of generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac.' Henderson sees the Deer figure as a development of this Abraham and Isaac iconography: Abraham with his sword, Isaac and the angel above. Before accepting this simple step it is worth looking at the Deer figure in more detail.

The style of the Matthew figure, even though it is reduced to a simple pattern, is the most evolved in the book, and the seemingly decorative shapes of the robe are far from arbitrary. The robe consists of four elements: striped bands around the shoulders; a triangle on his right knee; a loop on his left knee; and two little hoops over the feet. These features can be seen most clearly in Mark and John of the St Gall Gospel Book, made in Ireland in the late eighth century (St Gall Stiftsbibl. Cod. 51, pp 78 & 208; in Alexander 1978, illus 207 & 208) (illus 12). Mark has the stripes around his shoulders, the beginnings of a triangle fold falling from the sleeve over his right knee, and a loop clearly draped over his left hand. On the Deer figure, this loop is misunderstood and looks as if it forms part of the knee instead of the arm. The St Gall Mark's hands are also in the same place as in Deer, his right hand horizontal, holding an object (book/sword), and his left hand pointing down where Deer has a gap. Notice how the book held by the St Gall Mark forms a rectangle over his left knee and how the outline of that book shape is present on Deer. (The Deer artist has made an artistic slip, giving his figure five fingers and a notional thumb.) Notice also the distinguished beard sported by both figures and how the little man symbol of Matthew is boxed in the right corner above the St Gall Mark, in the same way as little men/angels loom above the Deer figure. On the St Gall John, we find the hoops over the feet. So the Deer figure, apart from his sword, appears more like an evangelist than Abraham. At least he was clearly copied from an evangelist prototype.

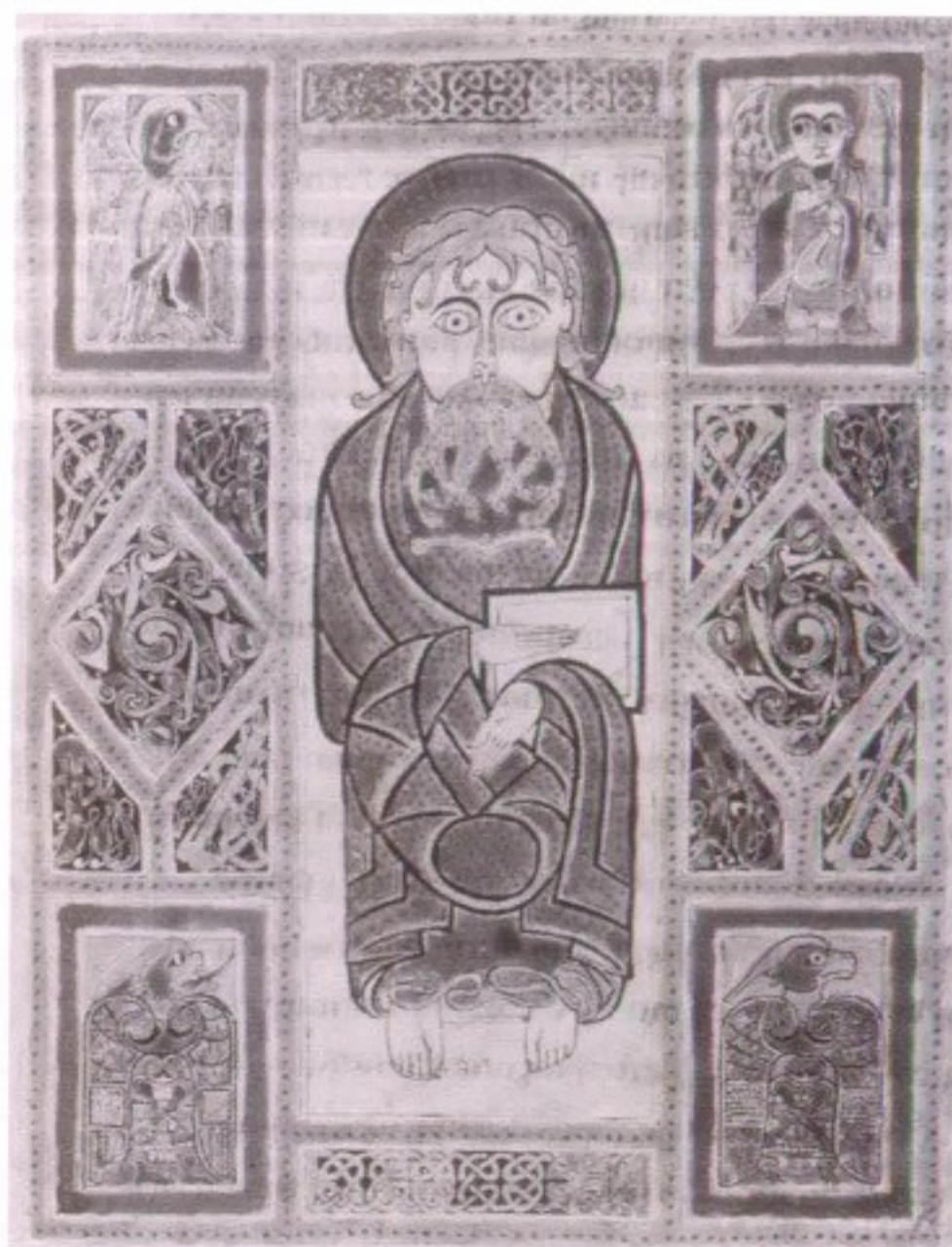
Matthew the Evangelist holding a sword (symbol of his martyrdom) instead of a book is unusual but not unique. In the Trier Gospel Book (Domschatz Cod. 61, f5v; in Alexander 1978, illus 110) made in the second quarter of the eighth century, possibly in Echternach, the man symbol holds a knife and flabellum. Matthew holds a sword on the Shrine of the Three Kings at Cologne Cathedral (c 1170s) and on the Shrine of St Mary at Aachen Palace Chapel (1215–37). The question considered below is whether the artist was copying an exceptionally rare model of Matthew with a sword, or whether he misunderstood a common model of Matthew holding a book, with straight folds of drapery between his legs.



ILLUS 10 The Book of Deer, Cambridge Univ. Lib. ii. 6.32, f4v. (*Syndics of Cambridge University Library*)



ILLUS 11 Garland of Howth, Dublin, Trinity College Library A.4.6.(56), f1. (*Board of Trinity College, Dublin*)



ILLUS 12 Mark, St Gall Gospel Book, St Gall Stiftsbibl. Cod. 51, p 78.



ILLUS 13 Luke, Lichfield Gospels, Lichfield Cathedral, p 218. (*Dean and Chapter, Lichfield Cathedral*)



Seated figures with vertical objects held between the legs are not usual. Hughes (1980, 32) cites the cleric or evangelist carrying a book around his neck and holding a crosier on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, an image which could easily be misinterpreted as a sword if badly copied. The bishops of the Lewis chess men show how this could happen (though they could not have provided the prototype since chess was introduced into Northern Europe only in the late 10th century): if the Deer model was a figurine, the shaft of the crosier could simply have been broken (Stratford 1977, 31, fig 18). In the Macdurnan Gospels (London, Lambeth Palace MS 1370, f115v & 170v; in Alexander 1978, illus 327 & 328), Luke and John hold a vertical crosier just to one side of their feet. The drapery pattern on Luke in the Lichfield Gospels (in Alexander 1978, illus 82) (illus 13) provides another explanation: perhaps the Deer model was a damaged manuscript which had shown some sort of central fold down the lap of an evangelist holding a gospel book; this is just the sort of damage which has occurred to the face of Matthew, in Deer.

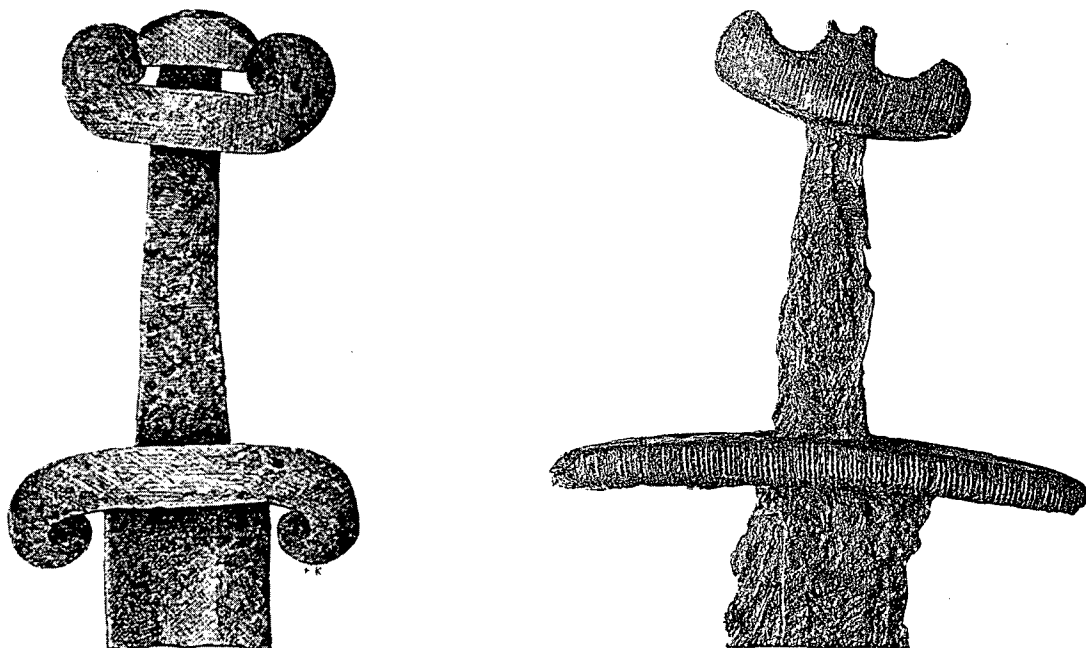
It seems that f4v is quite clearly intended to be Matthew, copied from an evangelist model like those in the St Gall Gospel. Evidently the Deer artist had somehow misunderstood the meaning of the book and the lower drapery folds (or worked from a model where this misunderstanding was already incorporated) with the result that his Matthew now holds a sword. Alternatively, he may have intended a sword to be the evangelist's attribute.

#### CONTEMPORARY MODELS FOR THE F4V SWORD

In contrast to the vagaries of his human figures and draperies, with the sword our artist is on surer ground. This appears to be drawn from life rather than a pattern book. It is a long sword whose lower guard turns down and ends in short spirals. The upper guard ends in upturned spirals with a semicircular pommel between them.

The Deer sword is of a fairly common ninth/10th-century Anglo-Saxon type which was admired and extensively copied by the Vikings (Evison 1967, 160–88). It is a cross between Petersen's types G and L (Petersen 1919, figs 71 & 95). Petersen's classification of Viking sword types dwells on the significance of a straight or downturned lower guard. Type G is the earlier straight type but shares the spiral terminals with Deer (illus 14). Type L has the curved guard like Deer, but no emphasized terminals. Type L begins to appear in the late ninth century. Petersen (*ibid.*, 84–5) lists only four examples of type G, all from eastern Norway. He speculates that the design originated outside Norway. The more generic form of type L has a wider distribution. It originated in England and spread to Scandinavia and Scotland. Of those listed by Evison (1967, 189), 19 swords come from England, predominantly from the Thames and the south; 15 come from Scandinavia, predominantly from Norway. Two related examples were found in Ireland, from Wheelam and Lough Gur (Evison 1967, 188, pl XII). Additional spectacular Anglo-Saxon examples come from Fiskerton in Lincolnshire and Gilling Beck in North Yorkshire (Webster & Backhouse 1991, 276–7). Two in Scotland are recorded by Shetelig (1940–5, vol II, 16, 158), from Torbeckhill in Kirkcudbrightshire and from Gorton, by Marypark (near Dufftown), in Banffshire (National Museum of Scotland, LA 1) (illus 14).

The surviving distribution of these swords is reflected by their depiction in art. Irish swords tended to be short until after the Viking settlements and quite naturally Irish artists tend to depict their own type of sword. Typically short Irish examples are shown in manuscript by the Garland of Howth (eighth/ninth century), sculpturally on the Cross of Muirdach at Monasterboice (10th century) and the White Island stone (?11th century) (Henry 1967, pls 79, I); and in metal on the Athlone plaque (eighth century) (Youngs 1989, 141).



ILLUS 14 Petersen's sword type G, from Dale, Ø. Sildre (from Petersen 1919, 85) (left) and (right) sword from Gorton, Banffshire (from Shetelig, 1940–5, 158)

On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon artists depict the long, 'cocked hat' sword with downturned guard. Evison cites a number of examples: BL Harley MS 2506 f41, late 10th century, curved guards, trilobe pommel (in Wormald 1952, 13b); BL Cotton MS Cleopatra. C.VIII, fols 8v–9, late 10th century, curved guards, elliptical pommel (in Millar 1926); Oxford Bodley MS Junius XI, f57, 11th century, curved guards, trilobe pommels (in Temple 1976, illus 192); BL Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fols 8v, 9, 10v & 12v, 11th century, curved guards, elliptical pommel (in Evison 1967, 184). Wormald (1952, 76; 1960–2,7) suggests that the two latest examples may be accurate copies of earlier models. The extraordinary trilobed object offered to Christ in his temptation in Cotton Tiberius C VI, f10v may be a spare pommel to go with the adjacent sword. However, other late examples also occur: BL Stowe 944, f6, AD–1031?, King Cnut holding a sword with straight guards, trilobed pommel (in Temple 1976, illus 244); BL Cotton Claud. BIV f38, second quarter of the 11th century, straight guard, trilobed pommel (Temple 1976, illus 270); BL Cotton Tiberius BV, f85v, second quarter of the 11th century, curved guard, trilobed pommel (Temple 1976, illus 275).

Two manuscripts of uncertain Irish or British provenance depict this type of sword: the Book of Deer and the eighth/ninth-century Carmina (Leningrad Public Library, Cod. Q.v.XVII.I, f1; in Alexander 1978, illus 179). The Leningrad sword has a single lobe at the end of the pommel, making it more like the ellipse shown in the other Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Although two swords of this type have been found in Ireland, the evidence suggests that it was more familiar to artists in Britain, through contact either with Anglo-Saxons or Vikings. The Deer artist probably saw a Viking sword of Petersen's type G from eastern Norway, or perhaps even the one found at Gorton, only 32 km or so from Old Deer. Alternatively, he might only have seen a depiction of type L in an Anglo-Saxon manuscript. Whatever the case, he clearly did not use an Irish model for the sword.

The Gorton sword was made for a Viking and one must assume that it reached its destination either as a prized item of trade or in warlike circumstances. There is only patchy and circumstantial evidence for Viking raids on the south of the Moray Firth although their activities to the north are better documented (Crawford 1995). It is possible that the mighty Pictish fortress of Burghead, and another smaller one at Green Castle, Portknockie, helped to block the Viking expansion into Moray and Buchan, at least for a while. Archaeologists are unable to confirm that the final destruction of these two forts was carried out by Viking raiders but the circumstantial evidence is strong. Both were destroyed by fire around the ninth to 10th century (Edwards & Ralston 1998, 207; Shepherd 1993, 79). Documentary information on this is patchy. The Orkneyinga Saga records in the late ninth century that Earl Sigurd I of Orkney and Thorstein the Red from the Hebrides ‘conquered the whole of Caithness and much more of Scotland, Moray and Ross. [Sigurd] had a castle built there in the south of Moray’. (Anderson 1922, vol I, 371). The Chronicle of the Kings of Scotland (954–62) record that ‘a fleet of Vikings were slain in Buchan’. The Scots King Indulf was slain by the Vikings at Cullen in 962. Hrólfr’s Saga tells of a ferocious Viking, Tryggvi son of Ulfkel, who had clearly settled in Buchan: ‘He belonged to a family in Buchan-side . . . the greatest champion and berserk; he remained at sea with many ships both winter and summer.’ His Buchan family were also violent. Tryggvi’s main mission in life was to wreak revenge for his father’s death, ‘killed when he was on piracy’ (Anderson 1922, 468–70). Place-name evidence for Viking activity, so marked north of the Moray Firth, is scant in Buchan. However Simon Taylor has isolated a cluster of names based on the Norse word *skáli* in the immediate vicinity of Deer. In Old Icelandic this means hut-dweller or robber. Scottish Gaelic takes this up as a loan-word, producing names such as Skilmafilly, Skelmonay, Skellmuir, mentioned in the Gaelic part of the Book of Deer (Taylor, forthcoming). These names may indicate traces of temporary Viking settlement, either for trading or raiding, near to Deer.

## CONCLUSIONS

What can be made from this evidence? Hughes (1980, 37) felt the artist came from a provincial scriptorium, quite possibly in Scotland; he could write and sketch fluently and understood the basic structure of a gospel book, but did not understand what he was copying, perhaps using unconnected sketches. Henderson (1986), by contrast, felt he was using a full-scale gospel book of some sophistication.

The artist was dextrous and could produce an expressive calligraphic line in his illuminations. He doodled easily but was relatively untrained in both the techniques and meaning of illumination, and so he made mistakes. His scriptorium could provide quite decent parchment for writing but only two colours for painting. He clearly had a selection of models to copy, possibly in a rather ragged and damaged state. He probably lacked images of the tetramorphs so his gospel model must have been incomplete. His major image, Matthew, probably came from an Irish manuscript like the St Gall Gospels. Perhaps it was damaged in the centre so he could not see what the evangelist was holding, thus leaving a space for the book and the hand below it, and perhaps inserting a sword where there were originally some vertical drapery folds. The remaining figures probably derive from some debased version of the Echternach Gospels, somewhere beyond the Book of Dimma and approaching the Cotton Vitellius Psalter (BL Cotton Vitellius F. XI, f1; in Alexander 1978, 88, no 73). The two objects which are convincing are the book satchels and the sword, suggesting he knew these from life. He may have seen other pieces of broken metalwork or ivory: his interpretation of the crucifixion on f85v might be the result of looking at a broken metal book cover with the Christ missing. The 12th-century shrine of the

Book of Dimma originally had an empty cross in the centre (Ryan 1983, 173–4). The strange or non-existent feet could also arise from using three-dimensional objects. A classic example of this is Matthew in the Book of Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College, MS A.4.5, 21v) where the artist is clearly looking at a metal bell. Sturdy figurines such as the Lewis chess men and their Irish counterpart found in County Meath also need a steady base to stand on (Ryan 1983, 189). However, the artist also had to hand part of a book whose iconography approached the subtlety of Kells, providing him with the Apocalyptic images in a gospel context.

The artwork seems to provide a great deal of evidence about where the book was made. Its format, a tiny pocket gospel, ties it in with the Irish tradition (McGurk 1956, 249–70). Its illustrations show a distant connection with some of the great Insular books such as the Book of Kells, the Lichfield Gospels and perhaps more closely with the St Gall Gospels. Its simple style can be compared with the Southampton Psalter and the Cotton Vitellius psalter, all books attributed to Ireland (Alexander 1978, 71, 48, 66 & 88). However, the ‘key’ patterns are predominantly found on north-east Scottish stones (although the Irish material has not been similarly analysed). The vividly depicted sword is definitely not an Irish type but is found in England, Norway and Scotland, including Strath Spey. This is perhaps the strongest visual clue that the illuminations, although within the Irish orbit, were not made in Ireland; a location in Scotland, and perhaps Deer itself, is the most likely alternative. The scribe was working with a reasonably wide range of models, possibly both manuscripts and metalwork, all of which were damaged and incomplete, typical perhaps of a library salvaged from a Viking incursion where the monks were trying to create new books from whatever they had left. His cursory illuminations would be quite appropriate if the book was intended for use primarily as an amulet or sacred talisman rather than a text for lengthy personal devotion.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article developed from a paper delivered by the author in 1997 to the conference *After Columba, after Calvin*, at the Elphinstone Institute, King’s College, University of Aberdeen. One day’s proceedings were dedicated to the Book of Deer and most of the other papers delivered then were already commissioned for a forthcoming collection of *Studies in the Book of Deer*, edited by Katherine Forsyth.

The author would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of James Graham-Campbell of University College London, and Susan Youngs of the British Museum in identifying the sword. John Higgitt, of Edinburgh University, also contributed useful discussions. Simon Taylor kindly allowed me to see the text of a lecture he gave on the Book of Deer to the conference at the Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University, in 1997.

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