

7. PICTISH SCULPTURE FROM REAY.

In 1947, when the south wall of Reay Parish Church, Caithness, was being stripped of old plaster, a sculptured stone was found built into it. After consultation with the Ministry of Works, the Kirk Session have added this most interesting stone to the National Museum.

It consists of a square pillar of reddish sandstone 35½ inches high, the bottom broken, however. Each side is about 9 inches wide. The decoration, as can be seen in Plate XXV, is flat relief, executed by hammering or "pocking." On the *front* there is a cross with a square expansion at the top, covered with a diagonal key-pattern. On the *right* side there are successively from top to bottom a more than hemispherical blank boss, a hound (snapping at the stag round the corner), a standing cow wearing a bell, a kneeling cow, a horse trotting in the opposite direction from the other animals, and lastly a plain surface. The cows have crudely incised joint spirals with long stems. On the *left* side is a stout running spiral that had formed four roundels, of which one has been chiselled off. The top of the pillar has also been chiselled, and there is a dowel hole sunk in the back, all no doubt done at some relatively recent time.

Though roughly executed and in rather a decadent Pictish animal style, the Reay stone is unlikely to be much later than the eighth century. The fine relief from Papil, Shetland, found in 1943,¹ also presumably datable to before the Viking occupation, shows a free-standing cross probably very early in the Iona-Scottish series. The Reay pillar might thus be part of the shaft of a cross, though one has not been found before in the north. On the other hand, a cross is prominent in part of the sculptural design, and we may have a new type of monument, a squared pillar-stone.

ROBERT B. K. STEVENSON, Keeper of the Museum.



Pictish Sculpture from Reay. (Slightly over 1.) (See Note 7.)

ROBERT B. K. STEVENSON.