

## III.

## THE ORIGIN CENTRE OF THE PICTISH SYMBOL STONES.

BY ISABEL M. HENDERSON, M.A.

In this paper I use the classification of the stones given by Romilly Allen in his descriptive list of the early monuments of Scotland:<sup>1</sup>

Class I. Undressed boulders with incised symbols.

Class II. Dressed slabs with symbols, cross and figure sculpture in relief.

Class III. Similar sculptured slabs but without symbols.

Since the publication of Romilly Allen's list in 1903 additional symbol stones have been found with more or less regularity. His statistics Table,<sup>2</sup> therefore, requires some revision. Apart from numerical correction there are other ways in which the Table can be made more useful. There is no doubt that his inclusion of monument statistics for the non-Pictish area makes the lack of symbol-bearing monuments there an impressive blank on the Table, which shows clearly the national character of the symbolism. It is unfortunate, however, that all-Scotland figures have been carried over by other writers into discussion concerning the development of the purely Pictish monuments. The presence in the statistics of numbers relating to, say, West Highland Crosses, can only be misleading.

Allen gives statistics for each modern county. The Table could perhaps be given more significance if the land units were taken from the earliest relevant land survey. This is found in the Poppleton MS.<sup>3</sup> in a treatise beginning *De Situ Albanie* . . . composed probably in the reign of William the Lion (1165-1214). The survey omits Argyll and so presumably refers to the Pictish area prior to 843; a period very relevant to the symbol stones. According to the survey the land was divided anciently into seven parts: "Enegus cum Moerne" (Angus and the Mearns); "Adtheodle et Gouerin" (Atholl and Gowrie); "Sradeern cum Meneted" (Strathearn and Menteith); "Fif cum Fothreue" (Fife and Kinross); "Marr cum Buchan" (Mar and Buchan); "Muref et Ross" (Moray and Ross); "Cathanesia" (Caithness). Most of these names are used as district names in present day Scotland, whether they still represent exactly the same territorial areas is less certain.

<sup>1</sup> *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903), II, 3. The introduction is by Joseph Anderson (Rhind Lectures, 1892). In this paper numbers after a place-name refer to Allen's enumeration of the stones at any one site.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Bib. Nat.*, Latin 4126. The treatise is translated in A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1922), I, cxv-cxix. This MS. contains several Scottish pieces including a list of the kings of the Picts and a list of the kings of the Scots.

A second survey in the same treatise defines the land divisions by natural features and this helps to determine just what is meant.<sup>1</sup> The units which seem to have departed most radically from the modern areas are those N. of the Mounth; Mar and Buchan, Moray and Ross and Caithness. For example, "Marr cum Buchan" must bear some relationship to modern Mar and Buchan but these areas as we know them are not the equivalent of the area defined by the second survey: ". . . from the Dee to the great and wonderful river that is called the Spey." However, inexact though the interpretation of the surveys must be, the impression which we get of the territorial divisions is certain enough to make them useful. Here the interpretation of "Marr cum Buchan" given in the second survey is accepted<sup>2</sup> with the exception of Strathspey itself which is treated as part of Morayshire. The second survey gives no topographical clues about the area "Muref et Ros." However we can safely assume that Moray comprises modern Nairn, Moray and Inverness-shire and that Ross means Easter Ross. Caithness is not mentioned at all in the second survey. Watson defines it as Caithness and south-east Sutherland.<sup>3</sup>

The following Table will give statistics for the land units given in the treatise, omit all non-Pictish statistics and include corrections of Allen's table and add discoveries published later.<sup>4</sup> Class III figures are omitted as they would require considerable re-working and are not relevant to the present discussion.

Statistics form the bases of arguments for both Allen and Anderson, particularly in their discussions on dating and origin. The question of origin, alone, will be treated here.

It is clear that the custom of erecting stones with incised symbols began in the N., that is to say N. of the mountain range known as The Mounth. The numerical superiority of the Class I stones in this area is such as to make this a certainty. Allen believes that it is possible to locate the origin centre even more specifically and with as much certainty. "If the frequency of the occurrence of the monuments is any criterion of their origin then the table that has been given clearly points to Aberdeenshire as the home of the stones belonging to Class I . . ."<sup>5</sup> This interpretation of the statistics is shared by Joseph Anderson in the introduction to Allen's list. Allen recognizes the

<sup>1</sup> It includes Argyll however. In the Poppleton MS. also is a list of the seven sons of Cruithne, geographical eponyms of the districts in Pictland. All but two can be equated with the units in *De situ*. For a full discussion of the surveys v. W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926), 107 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In some ways the area covered by the old bishopric of Aberdeen might be taken to represent "Marr cum Buchan," but such an equation ignoring as it does the evidence of the second survey would require further investigation.

<sup>3</sup> For the interpretation of Moray and Ross and Caithness v. Watson, *op. cit.*, 115-17.

<sup>4</sup> For Class I additions and corrections see Appendix.

<sup>5</sup> *E.C.M.S.*, II, 13. He suggests that Inverurie might be the centre from which the habit spread northwards and southwards.

## SYMBOL-BEARING MONUMENTS IN PICTLAND.

Areas	Class I	Class II
Angus . . . . .	10	32
The Mearns . . . . .	6	1
Total . . . . .	16	33
Atholl . . . . .	1	2
Gowrie . . . . .	4	14
Total . . . . .	5	16
Strathearn . . . . .	2	3
Menteith . . . . .	..	..
Total . . . . .	2	3
Fife . . . . .	3	2
Kinross . . . . .	..	..
Total . . . . .	3	2
Mar <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	49	6
Buchan . . . . .	5	..
Total . . . . .	54	6
Moray . . . . .	34	3
Ross . . . . .	8	5
Total . . . . .	42	8
Caithness . . . . .	5	3
South-east Sutherland . . . . .	16	1
Total . . . . .	21	4
Western Isles <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	5	1
Shetland . . . . .	1	..
Orkney . . . . .	4	1

<sup>1</sup> Mar is interpreted as Aberdeenshire excluding Buchan, and all Banffshire excluding Strathspey. The province of Mar proper represents a much smaller area.

<sup>2</sup> The Western Isles, Shetland and Orkney do not appear in *De situ*.

assumption which lies behind this conclusion: area of prevalence signifies area of origin. Anderson believes that this must stand unless it can be shown that there were special reasons to prevent it. He suggests as one such reason, the sudden conquest by an alien race, which might compel the people employing the symbols to remove to another area, and there to reduplicate their symbols. But, Anderson adds, since all classes of stones, I, II and III are represented in Aberdeenshire there is no suggestion of a disturbing influence of that sort; so he believes that ". . . we are thrown back on the unavoidable conclusion that the type of Class I originated and was developed in Aberdeenshire . . ." <sup>1</sup>

The following points can be made in criticism of Anderson's argument:

1. The fact, even if it were allowed, that there is normal continuity from Class I to Class II to Class III in Aberdeenshire is not a valid proof that the centre of origin of Class I did not suffer a disturbing influence. A centre of origin other than Aberdeenshire might still be postulated which suffered during the earliest period of the use of symbol stones "a disturbing influence" sufficient to cause a transfer of settlement to Aberdeenshire and the multiplication of the symbols there.
2. Anderson is thus left with only his argument based on statistics to support his suggestion that Aberdeenshire is unavoidably the centre of origin.

Now while the numbers of Class I stones there must remain impressive, it is possible to offer a statistical argument for a more northerly origin centre. The impressiveness of Aberdeen's numerical lead depreciates considerably when we consider statistics relevant to the more ancient land divisions. Allen attributed forty-one stones to Aberdeenshire with its nearest rival Sutherland with fifteen. The new relevant figures are: Mar and Buchan fifty-four; Moray and Ross forty-two. Moreover sixteen of the twenty-one examples in "Cathanesia" are in SE. Sutherland. If then, high numbers, together with normal representation in other classes are a criterion of the origin centre, then we can look as justly to the coastal strips round the Moray and Dornoch Firths as to Aberdeenshire.

3. Anderson writes elsewhere in his discussion: "We may therefore conclude with probability that Class I had not long been introduced into Forfarshire when it was changed into Class II, by the advancement of the art, but that the advanced type took some time to spread into Aberdeenshire *where the primitive type continued to prevail . . .*" <sup>2</sup> This admission greatly reduces the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, I, cv.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, I, civ.

significance of Aberdeenshire's large numbers as evidence for the origin centre. Aberdeenshire's slightly inflated numbers may be simply the result of the failure of a backward area to accept the advanced type. Anderson's further point, that the disuse of the symbols meant virtually the disuse of the monuments in Aberdeenshire, might argue that the Aberdeenshire stone masons were solely interested in carving the symbols because these belonged especially to Aberdeenshire by right of invention; but it might also argue once again the conservatism of a backwater area.

We can in fact suggest that the abundance of Class I stones is simply a corollary to the lack of Class II and not an indication that Class I was invented in Aberdeenshire. The matter of course, could only be one of subjective interpretation of the statistics unless there were positive indications that some of the Class I stones which make up the total for Aberdeenshire showed signs of distinct lateness in the Class I series as a whole. Is there any evidence for this?

Some of the Class I symbol stones bear Ogam. It is known that the Ogam of Pictland for the most part belong, at the earliest, to the 8th century,<sup>1</sup> so that the presence of an Ogam on a Class I stone would indicate a date of that order.<sup>2</sup> Aberdeenshire has two Ogam-bearing symbol stones; Logie Elphinstone 2 and Brandsbutt; in both cases it is likely that the inscription is contemporaneous with the symbols, so that these examples can be safely considered as not belonging to the very earliest period. This, however, accounts for a very small number of the Aberdeenshire examples.

Mrs Cecil Curle writing of the Class I stones comments: ". . . there is considerable variation in the quality of the design and workmanship; the best examples are found in Orkney and the extreme north of the mainland, while many further south, particularly in Aberdeenshire are very debased."<sup>3</sup> It seems fair to suppose that a symbol which is debased is a late one. Mrs Curle however, does not attempt to describe the nature of the Aberdeenshire debasement, that is to say, what break up of top quality design has occurred.<sup>4</sup>

R. B. K. Stevenson has recently analysed the variation in the design of the interior decoration of one symbol—the crescent.<sup>5</sup> The crescent allows this kind of analysis because the decorative element is sufficiently elaborate.

<sup>1</sup> K. Jackson, *The Problem of the Picts* (1955), 139.

<sup>2</sup> The Auquhollie stone is an exception v. *ibid.*, 139. Allen believed that the stone bore no symbols. Diack, *P.S.A.S.* LIX (1924-5) points out that there are small symbols. If Ogam and symbols were put on the stone at the same time then the dating of the Ogam would give valuable evidence for the date of the first appearance of the symbols.

<sup>3</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIV (1939-40), 65.

<sup>4</sup> The debasement of course in no way affects the stereotype quality of the symbols whose essential form remains the same. It is a matter of the quality of the representation of the symbol.

<sup>5</sup> *The Problem of the Picts* (1955), 104 ff.

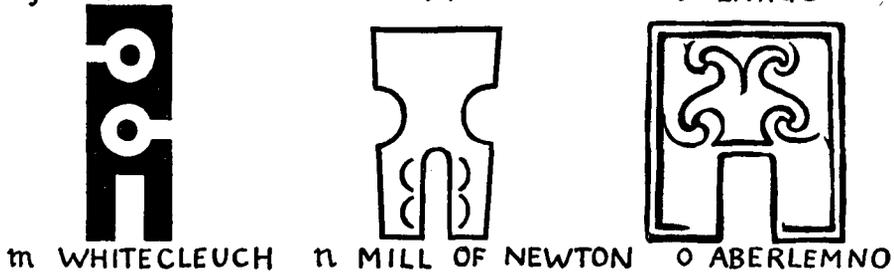
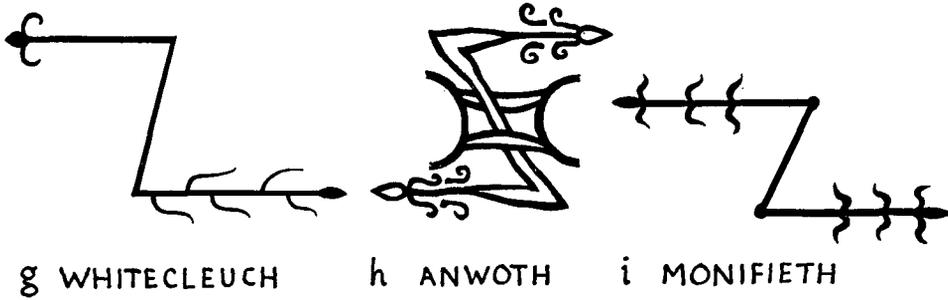
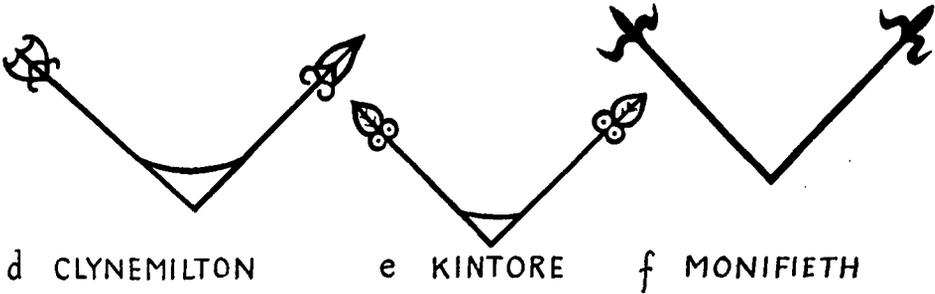
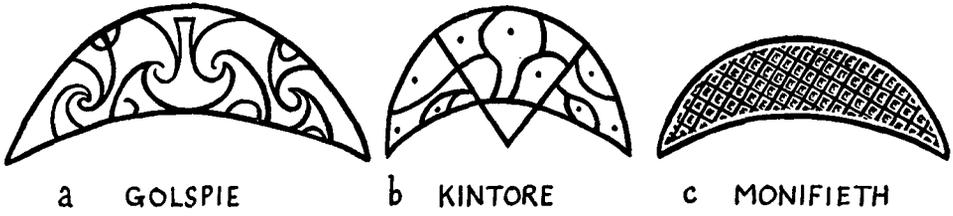


Fig. 1.

Any results which his analysis yields is particularly helpful for the crescent is one of the commonest symbols. Stevenson shows that the representations in incision of the crescent symbol can be divided into three classes according to their main features: Class A, those with a central pelta-shaped figure either way up (fig. 1*a*); Class B, those with two spirals; Class C, those with a central dome and wing shapes at the sides (fig. 1*b*). A fourth class is typical of Class II representations of the crescent; here scroll and pelta patterns are abandoned and any variety of decorative infilling is used (fig. 1*c*). The overlapping of the first three classes of design suggests a common origin and this is found most naturally in the most complex pelta—" . . . for it contains a majority of the details found in the others, details which it would be hard to combine but which could have separated during simplification." This most complex example is an example of Class A and it is found on a stone at Golspie, Sutherland. The design of the Golspie crescent is, therefore, the prototype design and in Stevenson's words—" . . . it follows that all the decorated crescents are later than a design of that type." <sup>1</sup>

The particular results of this analysis bears out well Mrs Curle's observation. Aberdeenshire has no representation of the class of crescent nearest to the prototype design. It has, however, a number of very debased crescent designs, notably at Logie Elphinstone 2 and 3—including the stone already classed as late because of its Ogam; Kinellar; Old Deer; Kintore (fig. 1*b*); Daviot. This is not to suggest that all Aberdeenshire crescent-bearing symbol stones are late, but Mr Stevenson's Table does show, that many representations of the crescent in this area show late-looking forms. If it is agreed that the origin centre of crescent-bearing symbol stones is most likely to be where there is the greatest preponderance of correctly drawn designs, then we must look to the far N., to Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney.

Now it is possible to extend an analysis of the crescent to include the terminals of its characteristic modifying v-rod. As one would expect, a survey of the terminals shows that the "correct" forms are found regularly on the crescents belonging to Mr Stevenson's Class A. These are a blunt fish-tail end and a sharp arrow head end (fig. 1*d*). These terminal forms are for the most part carefully maintained throughout the corpus of Class I stones. With Class II there is a considerable breakdown. Terminals of representations of the crescent in Class II may show such anomalies as identical terminals (fig. 1*f*), or will borrow the flame terminals reserved for z-rods in Class I.<sup>2</sup> This breakdown of the terminal system is the natural complement to the abandonment of the scroll design for the infilling of the

<sup>1</sup> According to Stevenson the Golspie design itself is related to hanging-bowl patterns.

<sup>2</sup> The classic form of the z-rod seems to involve an arrow end and a flaming end (fig. 1*g*). The identical terminals on the z-rod at Anwoth (fig. 1*h*) suggests that the symbols there are not evidence for early Pictish occupation of Galloway. Identical terminals are a typical Class II perversion (fig. 1*i*). The penetration of the "spectacles" by the rod is also a late feature being an elaboration natural to relief sculpture. This is also found in the incised representation at Anwoth.

crescent itself, for example, the stone at Hilton of Cadboll and the Monifieth plaque (fig. 1c and f). Of the late crescent designs of Aberdeenshire at least one example has late terminals, namely Kintore (fig. 1e). A comment by Romilly Allen on a stone from Little Ferry Links, 2 miles west of Golspie, is relevant here: "Although a mere fragment, this stone is valuable as affording one of the most perfect and beautiful examples of the ornamental termination of the v-shaped rod yet found in Scotland. The artistic feeling exhibited in the drawing of the subtle curves is unquestionably great."<sup>1</sup> Once again a superlative example is located in the far N.

The nature of the design of the so called swimming elephant allows it to undergo an analysis similar to that which Mr Stevenson provided for the crescent. If we examine all the incised elephant symbols we see that the designs descend from one common formula of a highly complicated kind. That complicated formula appears on the stone at Golspie, that is to say the Golspie elephant (fig. 1g) contains all the features which are found dispersedly in the designs of other incised elephants. These features in the words which Stevenson employs of the prototype crescent, "would be hard to combine but . . . could have separated during simplification." Thus the Golspie elephant should be regarded as the prototype of all other incised elephants and this primacy is confirmed by the fact that it appears on the same stone as Mr Stevenson's prototype crescent. Its features are: the long flowing line of the back, running down without a break to the tip of the nose; the tucking in of the head so that it runs parallel with the limbs; an inner line articulating the body, ending in a large lobe on the inside of the hind leg, and in a scroll at the joint of the foreleg; a second inner line running parallel to the front of the foreleg from the spiral foot to end in a lobe on the chin; an extra curl on both the fore and hind leg; a double line lappet following the line of the back.

An analysis of the elephant is especially useful in an examination of the nature of Class I stones in Aberdeenshire, for the Aberdeen area is, in quantity, particularly the home of the elephant. When we look at the Aberdeen elephants we see that examples close to the prototype do exist, notably at Crichtie. There are however a number of late looking designs: for example, the elephant at Dyce with its legs dropping in different directions, its turned up snout, its clearly demarked forehead and its squint running foreleg line; the elephant at Kintore with its angled protruding forehead, its turned up snout and absence of the leg curl. Of the two examples of elephants at Rhynie one has something of the greyhound quality of the Golspie elephant, but omits entirely the articulating inner lines and scrolls, the other, a fragment has the tilted snout of Dyce entirely at odds with the tucked in smoothly flowing head of the other example. Clatt has a good flowing design, but it is simplified by the reduction of the lappet to a single

<sup>1</sup> *E.C.M.S.*, III, 47.

line and of the interior scroll to a single short open lobe. The head has no mouth and only an embryonic eye. Among these "Mar and Buchan" examples are three particularly late seeming designs: the elephant at Mortlach shows the head supported on a very thin neck, the head itself is large and has the snout separated off as a kind of beak, there are no interior spirals and the lappet is reduced to a single line; the elephant at Fyvie (fig. 1*k*) is squat and ungainly in design, with heavy projecting brow and short body, the legs drop in different directions and the line articulating the body meanders meaninglessly across the body; the elephant at Logie Elphinstone 3 has a head quite misproportionate to the body and is heavy browed. This stone at Logie Elphinstone, as we have seen, also bears a debased crescent.

If the analysis of the elephant is correct and if the assumption, deviation equals lateness *in time*, is correct, then the more any representation deviates from the prototype the more it should approximate to the representations on Class II monuments which, it is agreed are later than Class I. In the case of the infilling of the crescent this argument was impossible as Class II coincided with the abandonment of Class I patterns. We did see however that the debased terminals of Class I approximated to typical Class II representations. The same is true of debased elephants. Typical of the Class II elephant is the beak treatment of the snout; the upturning of the snout; a bulging forehead; misapplied interior lines; and above all a rigid squat quality in the whole design quite unlike the flowing grace of the best Class I examples most perfectly expressed at Golspie. Examples of Class II elephants illustrating this point are at Meigle 5, Scoonie, Brodie, Ulbster and Largo (fig. 1*l*).

There are not a great many representations of the symbol known as the notched rectangle but it may be possible to derive a correct symbol design. The most complex pattern is that of the curious design found on the terminal ring of the chain from Whiteleuch, Lanark (fig. 1*m*). In it, two notches occupy the top left hand third and the middle right hand third respectively. The third notch is taken from the foot of the rectangle, forming two legs. An exact reproduction of this highly specific formula is found at Clynmilton, Sutherland; Birnie, Elgin; Arndilly, Strathspey. On a stone at Inverallen the design has been made symmetrical by the placing of the side notches on either side of the cross bar of the modifying z-rod. In Aberdeenshire, Tyrie presents a correct form, while Mill of Newton (fig. 1*n*) simplifies the design in the obvious way by placing the side notches opposite each other, and a further simplification appears in the rectangle of the Class II Aberlemno, Churchyard, Angus (fig. 1*o*). The analysis would seem to bear out the northern prerogative for the most accurate representations in the greatest numbers but one would not wish to press this in the view of the small number of representations.

There is no doubt that the animal symbols had a correct representation in the sense that we have been using; the extraordinary duplicating of the Burghead bull in a stereotype manner alone would suggest this and a "correct" duck and eagle could probably be isolated. However in most cases the number of representations of each animal is so few that an evolutionary series such as it was possible to present for the crescents and elephants cannot be constructed. Nor can we make comparisons with Class II animals, for they are quite different animals, and indeed as far as we can tell animals in Class II lose their symbolic significance. What is clear however is that the animals in the Ross and Moray area are designed with the same masterly assurance as the Golspie elephant. Moreover, in the animals and the elephant the very same articulating interior lines and lobes are found. The same sculptor could be responsible for the Golspie elephant and the Ardross wolf.

The area centring on Inverness has long been recognised as the special home of the animal symbols. The analysis of the crescent by Mr Stevenson and the analyses here of the crescent terminals, of the elephant symbol and of the notched rectangle suggest that the system of symbolism belonged in its entirety to this region. These results bear out and support the interpretation given earlier of the statistical table.

It has been observed, and a glance at the distribution map makes it clear, that the symbol stones keep to the fertile river valleys, notably that of the Spey, and of the Don and Urie. It is a striking fact however, that the stones tend to occur at the tops of rivers. There are no stones on the rivers Findhorn, Spey, Deveron, North and South Tyrie, Ugie, Ythan and Dee, until a minimum of 10 miles upriver. Equally the centre of concentration on the Don-Urie valley does not begin until 12 miles inland from the Don mouth. This fact may tell us something about the kind of sites the Picts liked to live in, but the equating of the occurrence of symbol stones with populated areas is unjustifiable for as Stevenson has rightly remarked, ". . . the north-east corner and Kincardineshire are curiously bare;" both these desirable regions must have supported a population. It may be possible to see in this feature of the distribution map some further evidence for the origin centre and some indication of the routes along which the spread of the symbols took place.

The Class I stones in the extreme N.—Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland are almost without exception, coastal. Immediately S. of Sutherland the picture changes and the stones show a distinct preference for inland sites. The great jutting peninsula between the Dornoch and the Cromarty Firths, for example, is completely ignored. Two fine incised animals are 5 miles from the shore of the Cromarty Firth. While the majority of the Ross examples are tucked in at the foot of the firth, the especially fertile Black Isle is ignored, and examples do not occur

at all on the shores of the Moray Firth until the mouth of the Ness. With the exception of Burghead and two associated stones there are no Class I monuments along the coasts of north-east Scotland from Aberdeen to Inverness. It is, therefore, to the inland routes that we must look for the spread of the symbol stones. These inland cultural corridors are fairly evident. They are provided in the main by the valleys of the Spey and Don-Urie. We have noted that Romilly Allen suggests that Inverurie might be the origin centre from which the stones spread N. and S. Now if the stones originated as far down the valley as Inverurie, it is difficult to see why, in face of the low-lying fertile country, the stones do not continue to the coast and up along the fertile strips crossed by the Ythan and the Ugie—the area which is curiously bare. The natural extension south from Inverurie is over the Mounth passes; the Cairnamounth, from Kincardine O'Neill to Fettercairn; the Cryne Corse Mounth, from Durris to Glenbervie; the Elswick Mounth from Culter to Netherley.<sup>1</sup> That this natural drop did take place can be seen in the presence of stones on the routes to these passes: Nether Corskie and Craigmyle to Cairnamounth, and Keith's Muir, Drumoak to the Cryne Corse Mounth. The cluster of stones at Dinnacair which stands at the end of the Netherley pass are the only examples of Class I symbol stones in Kincardine.<sup>2</sup> The impulse from Inverurie does not seem to have been strong enough to carry the symbol stone habit any further into the county. An alternative centre near the Don-Urie valley would seem to be Rhynie. Rhynie itself has five very fine Class I stones covering a wide range of symbols. That it was thought to be of strategic importance at some point in the early period is indicated by the impressive fort at Tap O'North close by. That the area had a long tradition of settlement is suggested by the two stone circles at Rhynie itself and the presence of four others within a radius of 2 miles. From Rhynie we have a complete spread of stones to the E., N., S. and W.

*Rhynie to the E. down the Don-Urie valley:* Percylieu; Clatt; Ardlair; Newbigging Leslie; Inch; Logie Elphinstone; Pitcaple; Drimmies; Brandsbutt; Keith Hall; Inverurie; Crichtie; Kintore; Kinellar; Dyce.

*Rhynie to the N. up the Deveron:* Leys of Dummuies; Huntly; Tillytarmont; North Redhill; Turriff.

*Rhynie to the S. down the Capel Mounth:* Glen Muick to Clova; Logie Coldstone; Mill of Newton; Tullich.

*Rhynie to the NW. by Balhinnny to the upper reaches of the Deveron, across Glen Fidaich to the Spey and thence up Glen Rothes to the valley of the Lossie:* Upper Manbean; Birnie; Easterton of Roseisle; Burghead. This route to Moray crosses the Spey just at the point where the symbol stones start. From there they go up the valley: Arndilly; Knockando; Inveravon;

<sup>1</sup> For a map showing the Mounth passes see W. D. Simpson, *The Province of Mar* (Aberdeen, 1943), facing p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> These stones however might be related to settlement at the nearby Dunnottar. (*Annals of Ulster* s.a. 680 *Obsessio dwin Foither.*)

Advie; Grantown; Congash; Findlarig; Inverallen; Lynchurn; Dun-nachton.

The Class I stones S. of the Mounth are interestingly placed. The northerly examples stand at the end of the mountain passes. Baggerton and Aberlemno stand close to the South Esk, the valley of which joins the Glen Muick to Clova pass. Bruceton is close to the river Isla which leads into Glen Isla up to the Spittal of Glenshee and the Cairnwell pass. Strowan stands at the beginning of Glen Garry which leads up to the pass of Drumochter and the Spey corridor.

We see then, in summary, that the Class I stones N. of the Mounth are distributed coastally in Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. The only heavy concentration is found near Golspie, on the 12 miles of coastline between Little Ferry and Kintradwell. The stones to the S. of this are placed along the inland routes from the Moray Firth down the Spey valley and down the route from the valley of the Lossie to the Don-Urie valley via Rhynie. From these routes there are extensions down the Great Glen and down the Mounth passes. The significant distribution of the northern examples S. of the Mounth confirms the already very safe assumption that the stones spread from N. to S. (see fig. 2).

The bareness of the north-east corner and the feeble impression made on Kincardine speak against Aberdeenshire as an origin centre. If Aberdeenshire is favoured, however, a site further west than Inverurie, (Allen's choice) would be preferable. Rhynie has been suggested. There is, however, nothing in the distribution map which speaks against the Golspie area as the origin centre and indeed the first class quality of examples on the Orkney mainland, where there are three Class A crescents and another at South Ronaldsay close by, suggests that they must lie close to the origin centre, that is, to an area more northerly than Aberdeenshire. Rhynie is well placed for receiving and disseminating influences from the Moray Firth area, and so its obvious importance in the distribution map might then be not that of the origin centre but rather as a gateway whereby the habit of erecting symbol stones reached the rest of Pictland from the N.

It is exceedingly difficult to imagine what sort of historical circumstances could initiate a symbolism so exact, and so rigorously observed from Pabbay in the W., to Shetland in the N. and to the Forth-Clyde line in the S. To give the symbolism the prestige of a national system requires an origin centre of first importance and a leader wielding wide authority. Aberdeenshire seems to have been an area of little interest to the Irish chroniclers so that we are at a loss to know what the political importance of this area was to the Picts. For the importance of the Moray Firth area we have the evidence of the Irish annals, Adamnan and Bede for the activities of Brude son of Maelchon (c. 555-84). According to Adamnan he had a *domus regia* somewhere near the mouth of the Ness. On stylistic grounds some writers would

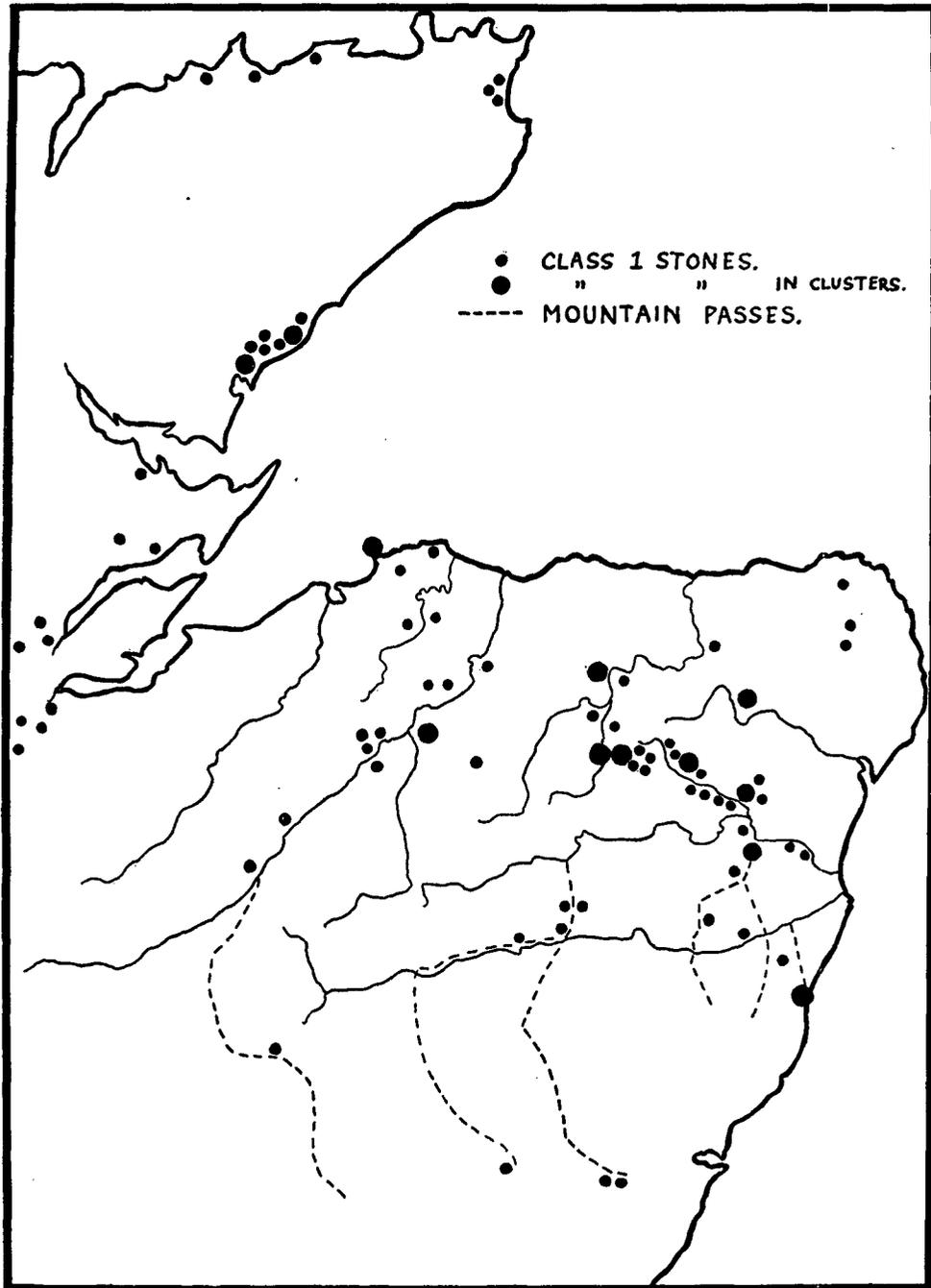


Fig. 2.

consider a 6th-century date too early for the stones but the difficulties are not insurmountable.<sup>1</sup> In many ways Brude fills the role of initiator of the symbolism well. He was a "rex potentissimus" whose check of the Irish must have given him immense prestige.<sup>2</sup> He reigned at a time when we know that the Picts controlled the Western Isles. He had considerable authority in Orkney. Of course if we believe with A. O. Anderson that Brude was king of Fortrin,<sup>3</sup> then he can have no especial significance for a symbolism which started in the N. However Adamnan and Bede write of him in a northern context and there is some evidence that he was killed in a battle against the southern Picts.<sup>4</sup>

It seems then that on the counts of statistical distribution, geographical distribution, quality of representation and perhaps of historical circumstances much can be said for the shores of the Moray and Dornoch Firths as the origin centre of the Pictish symbol stones: so we are justified perhaps in questioning Joseph Anderson's "unavoidable conclusion" that Class I originated in Aberdeenshire.

#### APPENDIX.

Romilly Allen gives a list of the monuments in Part II of the *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* at pp. 5 ff. A statistical summary, used by both Joseph Anderson and Allen as the bases of arguments, is given on p. 10. These lists do not always tally with the descriptive list which makes up Part III. Here corrections are made for Class I examples and stones known by me to have been found since the publication of Allen's book are listed under the modern land divisions.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs Curle, and for other and better defined reasons R. B. K. Stevenson, think that the elephant symbol cannot be dated earlier than c. 700. Mr Stevenson believes that the elephant symbol was suggested to the Picts by the fantastic animals on Hiberno-Saxon metal work such as the Hunterston Brooch. In general it seems peculiar that from a series of Hiberno-Saxon beasts, no two of which are identical, the Picts should have derived their elephant, which self evidently from the moment of invention becomes frozen in a single unvariable form. As it happens, the animals such as those of the Hunterston Brooch, with their bulging foreheads and separated beaks, are more satisfactory analogies for the debased elephants than for the prototype design found at Golspie. In all its essential stylistic features the Golspie elephant has close analogies in the bottom left and top right lacertines in the vertical sections on f. 174 vo. of the Book of Durrow (c. 650) and in the outer animals in the ornamented plaque beneath the central hinge of the Sutton Hoo purse (buried c. 650). None of these animals is lappeted but the eagles on the Sutton Hoo purse and throughout the hoard have fully fledged lappets. Given these Sutton Hoo animals the Pictish elephant could have been invented. Alternatively and more probably, the Sutton Hoo animals and the elephant share some common ancestor, either Romano-British or British.

I hope to discuss on another occasion the whole problem of the relationship of the Pictish animals and the elephant to Sutton Hoo and to Hiberno-Saxon metal work and MSS. notably to the Echternach Gospels, Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS. 197 and the Book of Durrow. See also for early dating: A. W. Clapham, *Antiquity*, VIII (1934), 43-57 and C. A. R. Radford, *Antiquity*, XVI (1942), 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> v. *Annals of Tigernach*, c. 560 and probably c. 574.

<sup>3</sup> *Scottish Historical Review* (1948), 25-47.

<sup>4</sup> T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1946), 508.

## ABERDEENSHIRE.

*Corrections:*

Add *Brandsbutt* and *Ardlair*. These stones appear in the Appendix (III, 505) but are not included in the statistics given in II.

Add *Craigmyle*. This stone is described in III, 158 it is omitted in the statistics given in II.

Add *Clatt 2*. This stone is described in III, 158 it is omitted from the statistics in II.

Add *Logie Elphinstone 4*. This stone is described as having been destroyed (III, 175). It seems fairly certain however that it did exist and so should appear in the statistics given in II.

Add *Turriff*. This stone is described in III, 187 it is omitted from the statistics in II.

Omit *Rhynie 3*. There is no symbol on this stone. It is included in all the statistics in II. It is described in III, 182.

*Additions:*

*Clatt 3*. Horseshoe and elephant, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIV (1909-10).

*East Balhaggardy*. Part of spectacles and z-rod, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15).

*Nether Corskie*. Mirror, mirror case and comb, *P.S.A.S.*, XLIX (1914-15).

*Newton of Lewesk*. Double crescent, rectangle and rod, mirror case, *P.S.A.S.*, I (1915-16).

*Tillytarmont 3*. Crescent and v-rod, spectacles and z-rod.

*Tillytarmont 4*. Crescent and spectacles(?).

Both in *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVIII (1954-6).

Total: 52.

## BANFFSHIRE.

*Additions:*

*Advie*. Crescent and v-rod and mirror case, *P.S.A.S.*, XL (1905-6).

*Mortlach*. Elephant, *P.S.A.S.*, LX (1925-6).

Total: 8.

## ELGIN.

*Corrections:*

Add *Easterton of Roseisle*. This stone is described in III, 124. It is omitted from the statistics given in II.

Total: 13.

## INVERNESS-SHIRE.

*Corrections:*

Omit *Balblair*. There is no symbol on this stone. It is included in the statistics in II. It is described in III, 95 and illustrated in III, 517.

*Additions:*

*Fiscavaig.* Spectacles and z-rod, crescent and z-rod.

*Dunvegan.* Crescent and spectacles(?).

*Tote.* Crescent spectacle and mirror and comb symbols.

All given in *P.S.A.S.*, LXI (1926-7).

*Invereen.* Spectacles and z-rod, crescent and v-rod fragment of a circle crossed by a perpendicular line, *P.S.A.S.*, LXVIII (1933-4).

*Inverness Museum.* Recent acquisition, mirror and comb, fragment of notched rectangle with z-rod and top of horseshoe.

Total: 20.

SUTHERLAND.

*Corrections:*

*Chlynemilton* 2 which is described in III, 40 is given mistakenly as *Craigton* 2 in II, 5 and 80.

*Additions:*

*Golspie.* Crescent and v-rod, elephant, mirror and comb, *P.S.A.S.*, LXXVII (1942-3).

Total: 16.

ROSS.

*Additions:*

*Gairloch.* Salmon and eagle, *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXVI (1951-2).

*Nonikiln.* Poor example. Cast only survives, two primitive spectacles with two triangles set apex to apex, *P.S.A.S.*, LXV (1930-1).

Total: 8.

CAITHNESS.

*Corrections:*

Add *Links of Keiss Bay.* This stone is described in III, 28. It is omitted in the statistics given in II.

*Additions:*

*Ackergill.* Rectangle, *P.S.A.S.*, LX (1925-6).

Total: 5.

ORKNEY.

*Additions:*

*Greens.* Crescent mirror and mirror case, *P.S.A.S.*, LVIII (1923-4).

*Knowe of Burrian, Birsay,* *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIV (1939-40). Pl. XIII d.

Total: 4.

## KINCARDINE.

*Corrections :*

Omit *Stonehaven* 6. It is doubtful whether there is a symbol on this stone.

Add *Auquollie* spectacles(?) unnoticed by Allen, *P.S.A.S.*, LIX (1924-5).

Total: 7.

## ANGUS.

*Corrections :*

Add *Glamis* 1 and 2. These stones were originally Class I and were re-used in the Class II period. They should therefore appear in the Class I statistics. They are described in III, 221.

*Additions :*

*Kinblethmont*. Crescent and v-rod, elephant and top of a mirror and comb, *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXV (1950-1).

Total: 10.

## PERTSHIRE.

*Corrections :*

Omit *Dunkeld*. There is no symbol on this stone. It is described in III, 284.

*Additions :*

*Peterhead Farm, Gleneagles*. Goose and mirror case, *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXI (1945-7).

*Inchyra*. Salmon spectacles and Ogam. Perth museum.

Total: 6.

## FIFE.

*Corrections :*

Add *Walton*. This stone is described in III, 345. It does not appear in the statistics given in II.

*Additions :*

*East Lomond*. Bull, *P.S.A.S.*, LX (1925-6).

Total: 3.