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The declining Pictish symbol – a reappraisal

The late Gordon Murray

SUMMARY

The paper is mainly concerned with the three commonest Pictish symbols, the crescent, the double disc with Z-rod and the Pictish 'elephant' or 'beast'. The ideas of Dr R B K Stevenson and Dr I Henderson are outlined, namely that for each of these symbols a stylistic 'declining sequence' can be traced that corresponds approximately to a chronological sequence, enabling the probable place of origin of the symbol to be determined. The forms and distributions of the three symbols are examined in detail and it is argued that the finer examples of each are centred in different areas. For reasons which are stated, the classification of the crescent differs here from that made by Stevenson. The different decorative forms show significantly different distributions but the origin appears to be in the far north. The most typical examples of the Z-rod accompanying the double disc are found predominantly in Aberdeenshire, where it is suggested that the symbol may have originated. Examples of the Pictish beast are here graded according to the extent that their features correspond or otherwise with a list of what appear to be the 'classical' features of the form. The distribution and general quality of existing examples suggest that the origin centre of this symbol is probably in the area of Angus and eastern Perthshire.

The paper also discusses the arrangement of the symbols in statements, with some tentative remarks on the relative chronology of the mirror appearing alone as a qualifier.

INTRODUCTION

The principle of the declining symbol is that there existed a prototype or 'correct' form for at least some of the Pictish symbols, to which all surviving instances approximate in varying degrees, but from which later examples tend to depart more than earlier ones. This idea was developed by R B K Stevenson (1955, 104–6) with reference to the decoration of the crescent and applied by Dr I B Henderson (1958) to the decoration and shape of the V- and Z-rods, the Pictish 'beast' and the notched rectangle. It seems likely that the design for each of these was originally fine and complex and underwent subsequent simplification, rather than that the most complex designs result from the deliberate combination of features used separately in earlier examples. Hence in all these cases a sequence of decline in quality can be traced that corresponds approximately to a chronological sequence. This provides a method for determining roughly the relative ages of individual examples of these symbols.

It follows that this sequence should help to suggest where the carving of these symbols on stone originated, the probable place of origin being where the best (by hypothesis the earliest) symbols are found. By consideration of the forms of several of these symbols, Henderson (1958, 50–2) has suggested that the symbolism was developed in the area around Inverness and

extending up the coast to the Golspie area, constituting the so-called origin centre of the symbolism. Many of the symbol-stones in northern Scotland are indeed of superb quality. However, when the commonest symbols are considered individually, their distributions vary markedly and it will be argued in this paper, from a detailed examination of the forms and distributions of the crescent, the double disc with its accompanying Z-rod, and the Pictish beast, that the finer examples of each appear to be centred in separate areas, suggesting that not all the symbols had their origin in the far north.

A regional origin for a particular symbol does not necessarily support the view that certain symbols have a tribal or other regional *meaning*. Such a view can only be maintained if several symbols can be shown to have regional, non-overlapping distributions. The evidence does not seem to allow this, and in this paper attempts to seek any interpretation of the meaning of the symbols have been consciously avoided.

Before considering these symbols, however, there are some cautions to be noted regarding the use of the underlying principle. The notion of the declining symbol is helpful, but there are difficulties concerning its application.

To begin with, only the commonest symbols survive in numbers sufficient for a detailed examination of their distribution or variations in design. Even in these cases, when broken down into different forms or areas, the numbers involved may be very small, so that conclusions are often tentative. Further, many of the existing symbol-bearing stones are partially damaged or defaced, so that the quality of the symbols cannot always be accurately determined.

The number of examples lost cannot be ascertained, but it is probable that the surviving Pictish monuments are only a small fraction of those that once existed. Hence it is unlikely that *the* classical or earliest form of any symbol survives. Even the best existing forms are likely to be no more than close approximations to the prototypes.

Moreover, it may be incorrect to suppose that a given symbol would devolve or become debased at the same time everywhere in the country. Too little is known about the means by which patterns were transmitted throughout Pictland (the symbolism being maintained with a remarkable degree of uniformity in the process) for us to dismiss entirely the possibility of conservatism in a centre of excellence. A design in northern Scotland close to the supposed classical form could be contemporary with a devolved design in another area, for instance Aberdeen.

The majority of symbols are found on sculptured stones belonging to J Romilly Allen's Class I, undressed boulders with incised symbols (Allen 1903, II, 3–4). The execution of these symbols appears to display a greater degree of restraint and regularity than those found on other monuments and objects. This inherent conservatism or tendency to preserve stereotyped forms may indicate that the inspiration for the symbolism is closer to the presumed exemplar on Class I monuments than elsewhere. Pictish symbols on monuments belonging to Allen's Class II (dressed slabs with symbols, cross and figure sculpture in relief), while still prominently displayed on the reverse of the slabs, appear to be less important than those of Class I because they are subordinated to the central feature of the cross and are found alongside a variety of figures and decorative patterns. Also, the decoration and form of the symbols are generally less rigid on Class II monuments, and many, though not all, examples carved in relief show designs completely different from those that are incised on stones of either class. This change in emphasis fits in with the likelihood that at least some Class I stones pre-date the earliest Class II stones. Other examples of symbols do not fit so easily into the declining sequence. Those on metal objects show some affinities with relief examples on Class II stones. Those on cave walls and pebbles show designs more crude and simplified than those on free-standing monuments.

The arrangement of symbols in what Professor A C Thomas (1963) named statements is far more regular on Class I monuments than elsewhere. The symbols are most often found in pairs, usually one above the other. Where three symbols appear to belong together, the one that is lowest or to the right of the others is usually the mirror, and where there are four symbols, the last two are usually the mirror and comb. The mirror by itself and mirror with the comb appear to act as qualifiers. As these arrangements are found with such regularity one may postulate a standard or classical form for statements and the presence of two different primary symbols, with or without a qualifier, is here referred to as a statement of standard form. In Class I there are few deviations from this form (many exceptions are single animal signs which are arguably not symbols). In Class II there are a few occasions when more than two primary symbols appear on a given face of a monument and it is not certain whether they should be considered as one non-standard statement, or as two standard statements, or as one standard and one non-standard statement. Symbols found elsewhere can rarely be assigned unambiguously to statements. There are, however, identical statements of standard form on three small metal objects. On cave walls the symbols form large and amorphous groups. The qualifiers and the presence of the symbols mentioned above in qualified and unqualified statements of standard form will be discussed further.

Certain modifications to Allen's corpus, cited here as *ECMS,* are adopted. Since this paper takes account of the symbols or statements as they are found on the monuments, rather than the monuments themselves, the Roman numerals have, for convenience, been replaced by Arabic ones and the classification of the monuments has been transferred to the symbols found on them, so that, for instance, reference is made to 'a class 1 symbol' instead of 'a symbol on a Class I stone'. Also, the scheme has arbitrarily been extended to include other contexts in which Pictish symbols are found:

class 4 – symbols on cave walls and natural rock surfaces,
class 5 – symbols on small, portable objects.

Individual monuments and statements are referred to by a code made up of specific elements, such as 'Drumbuie 2 (83 Inv 5)'. The components of the code are as follows. (a) *Drumbuie 2.* This is the popular name of the monument, indicating its place of discovery. The number following distinguishes monuments discovered at the same place. It is normally the same as the number given by Allen, but in a few cases a monument is omitted as not belonging to Class 1 or (more often) Class 2 and subsequent numbers are reduced accordingly. (b) *83.* The first number in parentheses is the sequence number of the *statement.* A range of numbers is allocated to each class, as follows: 1–500 class 1; 501–700 class 2; 701–800 class 4; 801–900 class 5. The numbers run in order of national grid reference, the sequence starting in the north and following a succession of 10 km wide strips into which the country is divided, running from west to east. The numbers were assigned to all statements or symbol groups known in February 1978. Discoveries subsequent to this date are assigned numbers from the end of the allocated sequence for each class, except that gaps in the sequence, where they exist, can also be filled. (c) *Inv.* This is the three-letter code for the county of discovery, as published by W F H Nicolaisen *et al* (1970). We use one additional code, WIs=Western Isles, because their geographical location makes them essentially a region unto themselves. (d) *5.* This number specifies the number of the monument within the country. As with (a), the numbers follow those of Allen, but again, if any number is omitted, the number sequence is closed up accordingly. The number sequence is arbitrarily extended by county for monuments discovered since the publication of *ECMS.* These elements allow each monument, symbol group and statement to be identified concisely and unambiguously.

It is important to have some indication of whether a particular symbol is overabundant or underrepresented in a particular part of the country. Allen (1903, II, 106–7) did this on the basis of the modern counties. Henderson (1958, 46) gives statistics for the total numbers of symbol-bearing monuments found in each of the seven provinces of *De situ Albanie,* a 12th-century work in which each province except *Cathanesia* (Caithness) is divided into two sub-provinces. It is generally accepted that these provinces represent early Pictish, possibly even pre-Pictish, provinces and therefore have a historical importance which the divisions into modern counties do not (see Watson 1926; Wainwright 1955; Anderson 1973). These provinces, however, are too small for meaningful analysis of the symbols individually, so for the purpose of this paper the country has been divided into three regions, separated by substantial physical barriers: (a) the area north and west of the Great Glen, including the northern and western isles, (b) the area between the Great Glen and the Mounth and (c) the area south of the Mounth. It is not suggested that the Great Glen had any political significance in Pictish times. It is merely a convenient physical barrier with which to separate the stone concentrations in Easter Ross and south-east Sutherland from those of the Moray Firth. The Mounth is the dividing line between the 'northern' and 'southern' Picts of Bede (iii, 4). The Dunnottar (or Dinnacair) stones (152–7 Kcd 1–5) are included in the region south of the Mounth. The percentages of statements in classes 1 and 2 in each of the three regions, given below, are used for comparison with those for particular symbols, to determine whether a given symbol is more or less abundant than might be expected in any of these three regions.

Total no of statements	– class 1:170	class 2:79
North and west of the Great Glen	– class 1:52=30·6%	class 2:21=26·6%
Between the Great Glen and the Mounth	– class 1:87=51·2%	class 2:10=12·7%
South of the Mounth	– class 1:31=18·2%	class 2:48=60·7%

The data are drawn from: the list of symbol stones in *ECMS*; the additions and corrections to that list published by Henderson (1958, 58–60) and by Thomas (1963, 94–5); the publication of additional stones in subsequent volumes of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (eight) or noted in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (nine).

THE SYMBOLS

CRESCENT AND V-ROD

This is the commonest symbol in class 1 and the second commonest symbol in all classes together. The crescent-shaped symbol is normally found symmetrically crossed by a V-shaped rod with arrow-like terminations; it also occurs a few times without the V-rod. In a similar manner, the double disc, notched rectangle and snake are generally, but not always, found crossed by a Z-shaped rod. It is uncertain whether the basic symbols without their respective rods should be regarded as modifications of their composite forms or as distinct symbols in their own right. For the purpose of this work, the composite forms are regarded as the standard forms of the symbols and the unmodified forms as variants of these, but in each case the two forms are kept distinct in all analytic work.

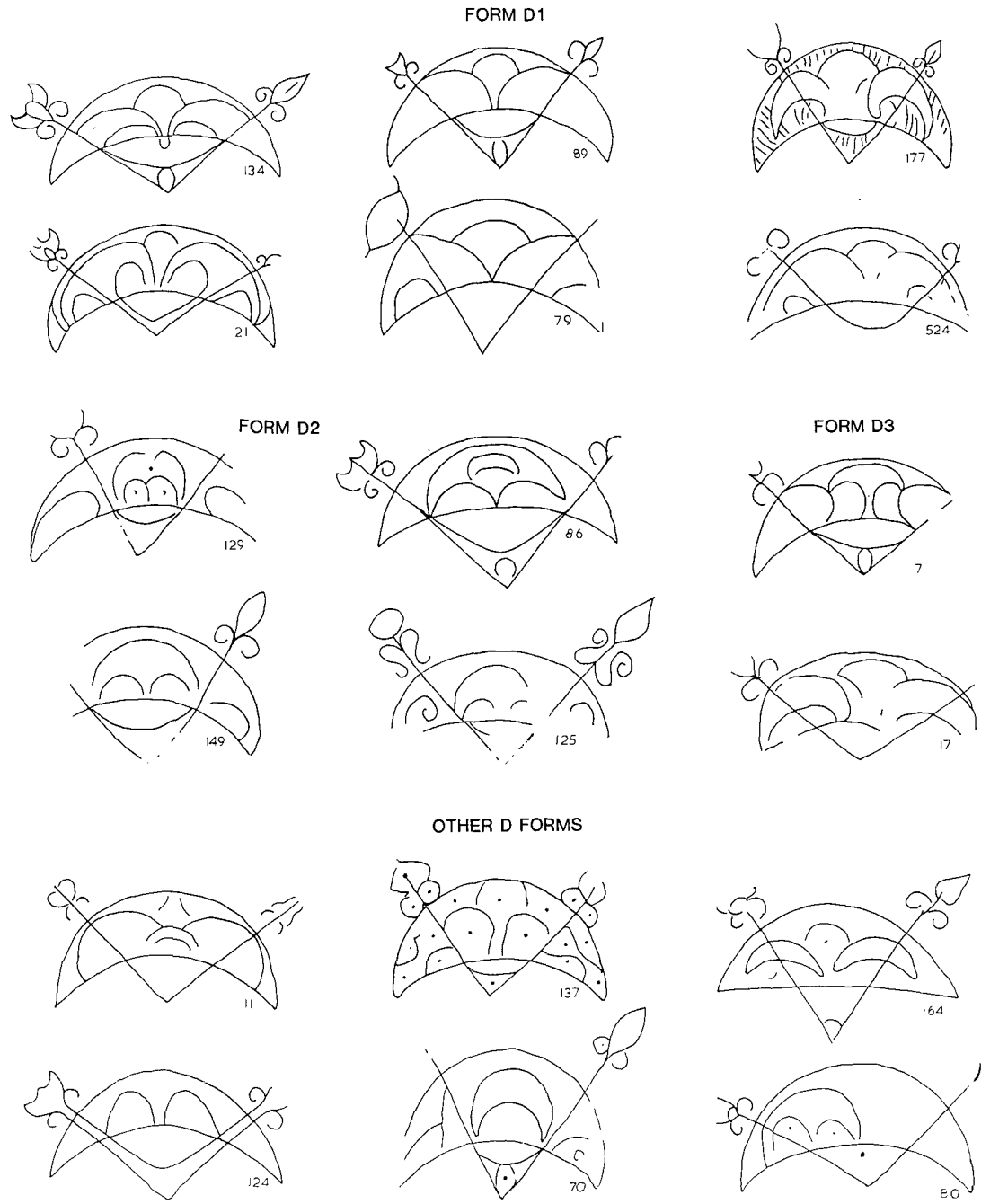
The outline of the crescent on class 1 stones varies from instances (such as Kinblethmont (164 Ang 6)) in which the lower line is almost straight and the upper line is much less than a semicircle to ones (such as Lindores (177 Fif 1)) in which the lower line approaches a half-ellipse and the upper line is much more than a semicircle or half-ellipse. Most lie within a small range of shapes between the two extremes. The shape of the crescent does not appear to be correlated

with the variations in the decoration that are assumed to indicate relative date. In class 2, the outlines of the crescents are, with one exception, consonant with the typical class 1 outline. The exception is that on the Hilton of Cadboll stone (516 Ros 1), in which case the lower line comprises two equal concave arcs that meet at the apex of the V-rod which is correspondingly shorter than usual. There are two other examples in which the outline of the crescent is peculiar, the 'arch and V' on the Migvie stone (529 Abd 4) and the lost bronze plaque from Monifieth (810 Ang 1). The rare notched crescent is considered as a separate symbol and is not included here.

The crescent symbol is sufficiently common and has sufficiently elaborate decoration for stylistic analysis to be possible. This has been carried out by R B K Stevenson (1955, 104–6, fig 15), who identifies three forms of decoration to be found primarily on class 1 monuments. His form A has a central pelta-shaped figure, which may be vertically upwards or downwards (occasionally two peltae oppose each other) usually located between spirals or wings; form B has two spirals, either facing each other or everted; and form C has a central dome with a wing-shaped device at each side. Stevenson notes that the forms are not completely distinct, and that the placing of some examples is uncertain, suggesting a common origin. He suggests that the most complex surviving example of the pelta design, which he identifies as that on the stone at Golspie Main Street (19 Sut 15) should be seen as closest to the prototype, because 'it contains a majority of details found in the others, details which it would be hard to combine, but which could have separated during simplification' (*ibid*). (Objections to the theory are stated by Thomas (1963, 58) and further discussed by Stevenson (1970, 66–7).)

While Stevenson's 'dome and wing' design (form C) can usually be distinguished from his other forms, the distinction between forms A and B is less clear-cut: many of the instances of form A exhibit normal (as opposed to everted) spirals in addition to peltae, while the pelta is frequently identified as such only by the presence of short vertical lines (forming the 'shaft' of the pelta) which represent the only difference between form A designs (such as example A5 in Stevenson's figure) and cuspate designs in his form B (such as examples B1 and B2 in his figure). The lunular part of the 'shaft-less pelta' falls below the lower bounding line of the crescent in examples B1 and B2 – as indeed it does in ex A5 of his pelta designs. In these instances, the lunular part can be completed, in principle at least, using the curve bridging the spandrel-shaped angle of the V-rod. It may be suggested that only instances where the pelta can be seen entire and distinct from the boundary lines of the crescent, as on the Golspie Main Street stone (Stevenson's ex A1) should be regarded as examples of deliberate incorporation of the pelta. Examples where the presence or absence of the pelta depends on whether or not the lines of the 'shaft' are sculpted may reflect no more than the preference of the sculptor.

Stevenson suggests (1955, 104) that the decoration of the crescent on the Golspie Main Street stone represents 'an over-all pattern of double peltas'. He envisages this example as copied from a crescent shape that had been cut through a larger overall pattern of double peltae, possibly from a sheet of embossed metal foil. This would explain how several of the outlines which are not complete pelta shapes could nevertheless be regarded as peltae truncated by the bounding line of the crescent. Also, the existence of symbol shapes executed in metal before the earliest symbol-stones is possible. (The lost bronze plaque from Monifieth could be a late example of such a tradition. Further, Henderson (1982, 82) suggests that aspects of symbol designs echo repoussé metalwork and that such figures could have been attached to metal or cloth.) However, one would expect that if the Pictish craftsmen had wished to represent an overall pattern of peltae on the crescent symbol they would have adapted the design so that more peltae would appear complete within the crescent shape, whether in metal or stone. They were certainly sufficiently accomplished to do so. Further, it may be noticed that most of the supposed peltae that lie partly



ILLUS 1 Forms of decoration of the crescent. Form D. Form D1: class 1 – 134 Abd 6 Crichie, 89 Bnf 4 Inveravon 2, 177 Fif 1 Lindores, 21 Sut 1 Clynekirkton 1, 79 Abd 8 Old Deer; class 2 (transitional) – 524 Inv 1 Raasay. Form D2: class 1 – 129 Abd 17 Inverurie 1, 86 Inv 14 Invereen, 149 Abd 32 Park House, 125 Abd 45 Brandsbutt. Form D3: class 1 7 Ork 1 Broch of Redland, 17 Cai 6 Latheron. Other D-forms: class 1 – 11 Cai 4 Lybster, 137 Abd 23 Kintore 1, 164 Ang 6 Kinblethmont, 124 Abd 7 Newton Mounie, 70 Mor 11 Knockando 1, 80 Inv 11 Fiscavaig (not to scale)

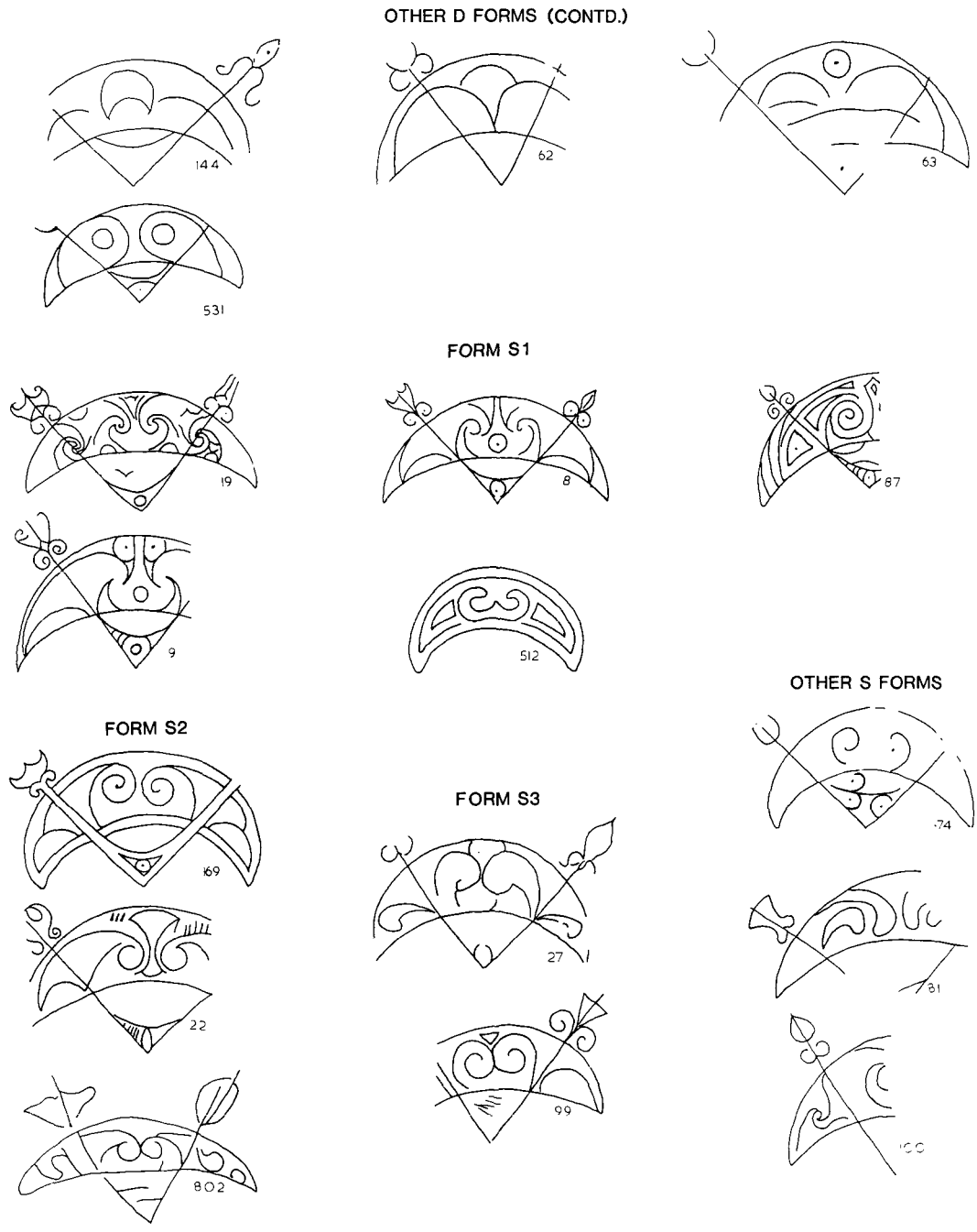
outwith the crescent on the Golspie stone exhibit smooth curves where cusps would be expected. In part II of *ECMS* Allen draws together from diverse sources numerous examples of linked spirals that produce an effect similar to overall double or opposed peltae, although all the instances he gives from Pictish sculpture are late. Thus it can be argued that the basic infilling patterns may have been spirals, scrolls and arcs and that the pelta may not have been included in the original design. This does not challenge Stevenson's basic thesis that the Golspie Main Street crescent is closest to the prototype among surviving instances but implies that the devolution of the most advanced forms may have taken place along lines somewhat different from those proposed by him.

The classification scheme presented here distinguishes three main forms of decoration in the crescent, without assuming possible development or degradation from one form into another. The first is the dome and wing form (designated here by D), of which subdivision D1 is the basic form, from which subforms D2 and the pelta-bearing D3 may be derived. The form D3 was regarded by Stevenson as belonging to form A because of the peltae. The second main form is that with spirals or scrolls (designated by S). The form S1 exhibits complex designs with peltae and spirals, a fine example being the crescent on the Golspie Main Street stone (Stevenson's ex A1). S2 is a simpler design, differing in essence from the form S1 because of the absence of supporting lines to the scrolls. Subform S3 has simple lobate scrolls. Examples of the scroll form are thus drawn from Stevenson's forms A and B. Also, his example C14 of the dome and wing decoration is here regarded as a degenerate example of the subform S3, although it does not have cusps in the lobate scrolls. The third form of decoration, showing everted spirals or scrolls (designated by E) is also divided into three subforms, in a manner analogous to that of the S-form. The distinction between E forms and those with normal spirals or scrolls is that in the E form the lunular part of the implied pelta-like device in the design is cut-off by the upper bounding line of the crescent. The members of subform E1 also exhibit peltae, so examples of the everted scroll form of decoration are also drawn from Stevenson's forms A and B.

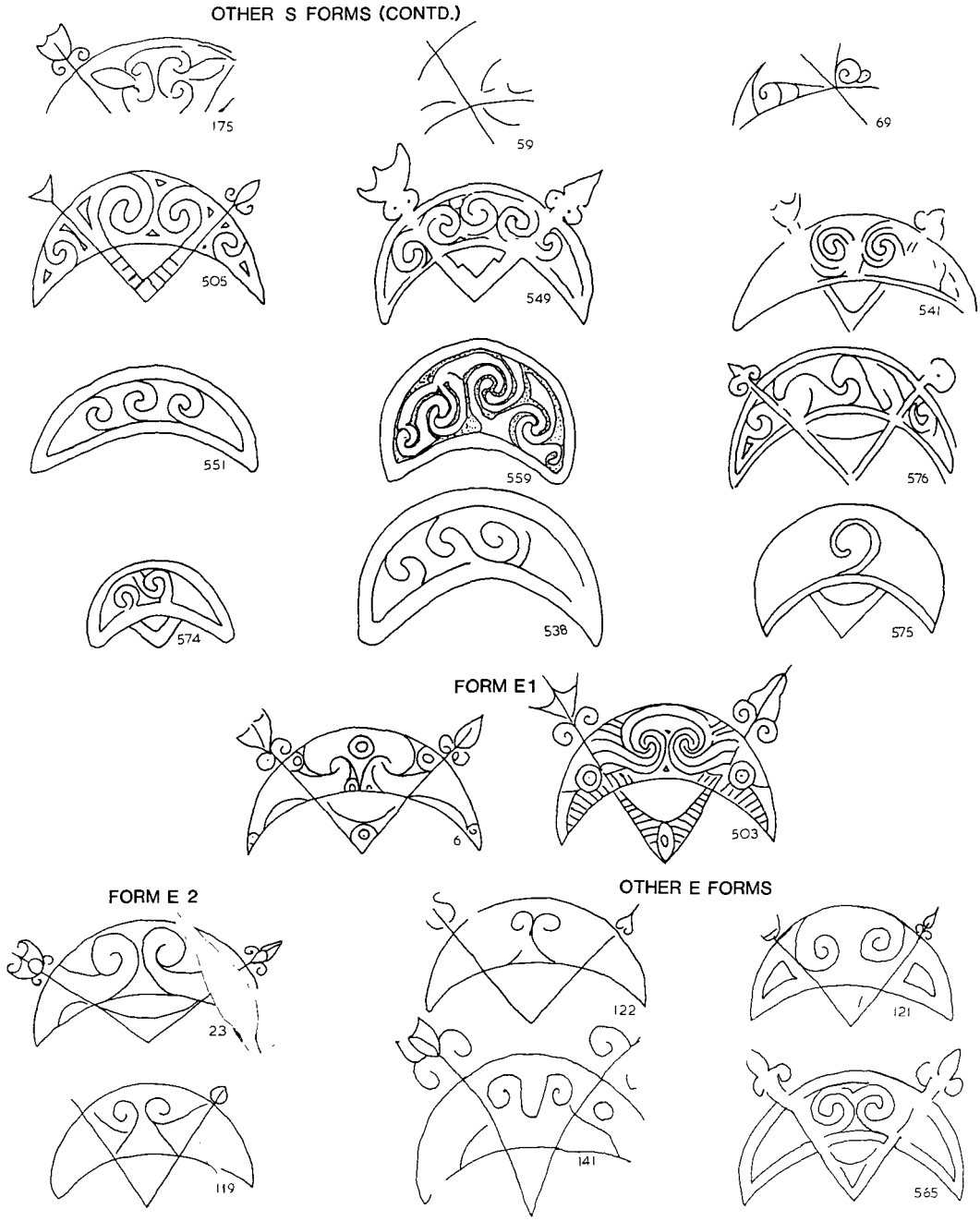
The different forms of decoration are shown in illus 1–3 and their distribution is shown in illus 4. The correlations between decoration forms, their distribution and the classes to which they belong produce some interesting results.

Now the crescent, without regard to its decoration, is relatively more common in class 2 than class 1 (57 occurrences among 185 class 1 statements; 27 occurrences among 79 class 2 statements). The symbol is relatively overabundant north of the Great Glen: 30·6% of all class 1 statements are found in that area, but a higher proportion, 39% (22) of the crescents from class 1; similarly, 26·6% of all class 2 statements, but an even more marked 37% (ten) of the crescents from class 2. The proportion of crescent symbols found between the Great Glen and the Mounth is roughly the same as that of all class 1 and class 2 statements: 51·2% of all class 1 statements come from there as do 51% (29) of the class 1 crescents; and 12% of all class 2 statements and 15% (four) of the crescents from class 2. South of the Mounth there are 18·2% of all class 1 statements but only 10% (six) of the crescents from class 1, and 60·7% of all class 2 statements but only 48% (13) of the crescents from class 2. In both cases, the symbol is relatively underrepresented in the southern area. Varying patterns emerge when the three main forms of decoration are considered separately.

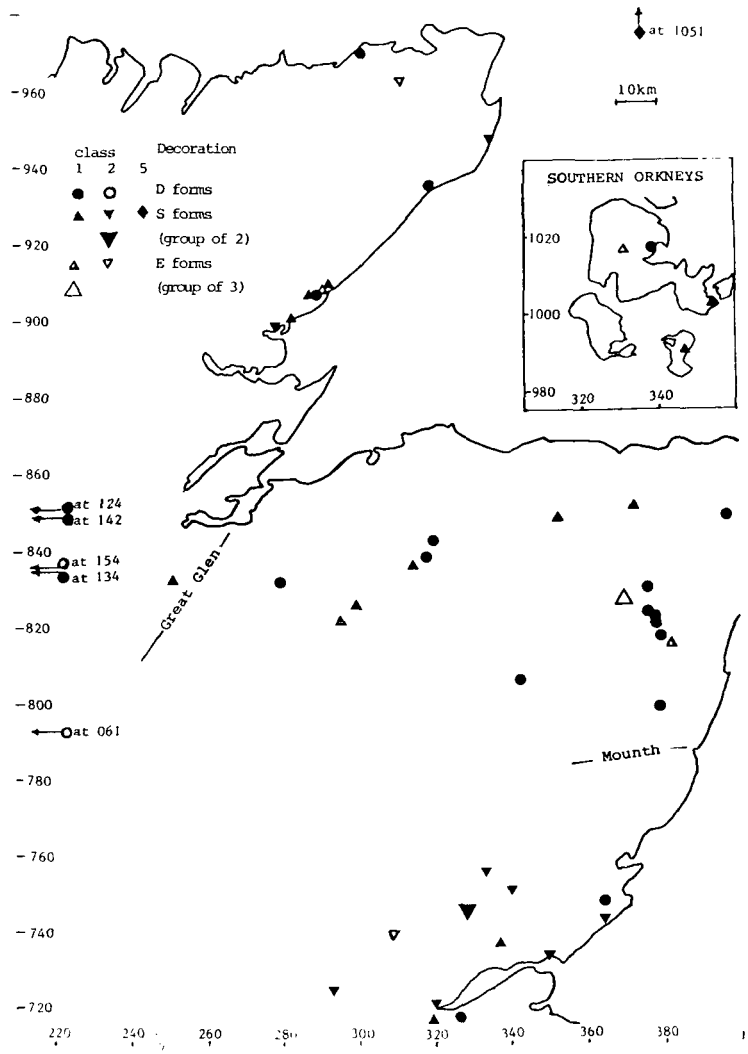
Dome and wing decoration is found almost exclusively in class 1, which has 20 D-forms, five being D1, four D2, two D3 and nine not belonging to a subdivision. There are only two class 2 examples (both transitional), one (that on Raasay (524 Inv 1)) being D1, the other (on Pabbay (531 Wis 1)) not assigned to a subdivision. D forms are widely distributed north of the Mounth and in the west, but occur only twice south of the Mounth (at Kinblethmont (164 Ang 6) and



ILLUS 2 Forms of decoration of the crescent. Form D (contd); Form S. Other D-forms (contd): class 1 – 144 Abd 31 Logie Coldstone, 62 Inv 12 Dunvegan, 63 Inv 13 Snizort; class 2 (transitional) – 531 WIs 1 Pabbay. Form S1: class 1 – 19 Sut 15 Golspie, 8 Ork 3 Greens, 87 Mor 16 Advie, 9 Ork 2 S Ronaldsay; class 2 – 512 Sut 1 Craigton. Form S2: class 1 – 169 Ang 5 Strathmartine, 22 Sut 2 Clynekirkton 2; class 5 – 802 Ork 1 Broch of Burrian (bone). Form S3: class 1 – 27 Sut 9 Kintradwell 3, 99 Inv 10 Lynchurn. Other S-forms: class 1 – 74 Abd 50 Tillytarmont 2, 81 Inv 17 Garbeg, 100 Mor 14 Finlarig (not to scale)



ILLUS 3 Forms of decoration of the crescent. Form S (contd); Form E. Other S-forms (contd): class 1 – 175 Per 1 Abernethy 1, 59 Abd 42 Turriff, 69 Inv 19 Inverness Museum; class 2 – 505 Cai 2 Ulbster, 549 Per 9 Meigle 4, 541 Ang 4 Cossins, 551 Per 11 Meigle 6, 559 Ang 18 St Vigeans 1, 576 Per 6 St Madoes, 574 Ang 12 Monifieth 2, 538 Ang 8 Kingoldrum 1, 575 Per 3 Fowlis Wester. Form E1: class 1 – 6 Ork 4 Knowe of Burrian; class 2 – 503 Cai 1 Halkirk. Form E2: class 1 – 23 Sut 3 Clynemilton 1, 119 Abd 26 Logie Elphinstone 1. Other E forms: class 1 – 122 Abd 28 Logie Elphinstone 3, 141 Abd 22 Kinellar, 121 Abd 27 Logie Elphinstone 2; class 2 – 565 Per 15 Gellyburn 2 (not to scale)



ILLUS 4 Distribution of forms of decoration of the crescent

Lindores (177 Fif 1)). Thirty-five per cent (seven) of D forms in class 1 are found north and west of the Great Glen and 55% (11) in the area between the Great Glen and the Mounth. In both cases the proportion is slightly higher than for all class 1 statements (30·6% and 51·2% respectively). The overwhelming predominance of class 1 examples suggests that this form is of early date.

The forms with normal spirals and scrolls are relatively overabundant in class 2. Class 1 has 14 examples, four being S1, two S2, two S3 and six not belonging to a subdivision, whereas class 2 has 10 examples, one being S1 and nine not belonging to a subdivision. There is also in class 5 a single S2-form, on a piece of bone from the Brough of Burrian (802 Ork 1). The S-forms in class 1 are found mainly in Orkney, Sutherland, Speyside and northern Aberdeenshire. The highest proportion is north of the Great Glen; 43% (six) S-forms contrasted with 30·6% of all class 1

statements from there. This form is slightly underrepresented between the Great Glen and the Mounth; 36% (five) S-forms from there contrasted with 51·2% of all class 1 statements. Of the 10 class 2 examples, eight are grouped in the south, in Angus and eastern Perthshire. Thus the S-forms and D-forms are seen to have significantly different distributions, partly reflecting their relative frequency in classes 1 and 2.

Examples of the E forms are relatively infrequent. There are six examples in class 1, one E1, two E2 and three not belonging to a subdivision. In class 2 there is one E1 and one not belonging to a subdivision. The proportion corresponds to the relative frequency of class 1 and class 2 stones. No E forms occur in class 1 south of the Mounth; there is a single class 2 instance in Perthshire. There is a group of three at Logie Elphinstone, Aberdeen (119 Abd 26, 121 Abd 27, 122 Abd 28).

Of crescents that cannot be assigned to D, S or E forms, seven in class 2 and the bronze plaque from Monifieth (810 Ang 1) are decorated with some form of overall key or geometric pattern. The Elgin Cathedral stone (512 Mor 2) is included here, although it is decorated overall with a design of interlocking pelta-like devices. There are 15 examples (13 in class 1 and two in class 2) with decoration that cannot be classified because the stone is defaced or broken. There are eight undecorated examples (two of class 1, three of class 2 and three of class 4). It is uncertain whether Glenferness (522 Nai 1) was ever decorated.

Stevenson plots instances of parallel hatching on all class 1 symbols and notes that they are all centred on Aberdeen, although there are many instances elsewhere. He does not point out that it is quite uncommon on crescents and is not found on any known class 1 example in Aberdeen. Parallel hatching is found in only three cases in class 1: Clynekirkton 2 (22 Sut 2), Advie (87 Mor 16) and Lindores (177 Fif 1).

The distribution of the main forms, along with the predominance of S forms on class 2 stones and the fact that the crescents held by Stevenson to be closest to the protype are S1-forms, suggest that the form with normal spirals or scrolls was both the prototype and the favoured form throughout the period of currency of the symbol; that the dome and wing form was a successful variant that achieved widespread currency during the earlier period of use of the symbol, but had largely fallen out of use when the earliest class 2 stones were being cut; and that the form with everted spirals was largely a local inovation that achieved only a limited currency outside its area of origin. Thus most of the development of decoration of the crescent was concentrated on forms with spiral and scroll decoration, and this inference is supported by the great variety of forms that may be seen, ranging from elaborate and skilful instances with peltae to highly degenerate ones. Points of comparison between this distribution and that of the double disc and Z-rod are considered at that symbol.

The V-rod

The linear modifying device used with the crescent takes the form of a V-shaped rod with terminations that frequently resemble the head and flights of an arrow. The angle of the V-rod is usually bridged by a smooth curve, convex downwards, and a lenticular device is often found between this and the apex of the V. Significant departures from this form are uncommon, and many of these exhibit influence from the typical terminations of the Z-rods modifying, in particular, the double disc (see, for instance, Rhynie 6 (11 Abd 38), and Knockando 1 (70 Mor 11)). That the V-rod functions as a modifying device but is not a symbol in its own right is further indicated by the fact that it has never been found without the crescent, although the crescent occurs in the unmodified state. This was recognized by Anderson (1903, xxxiv).

Henderson (1958, 50–1, fig 1) noted that the idea of the 'declining symbol' can also be

applied to the V-rod, and postulated evolution from a classical form with arrowhead and fish-tail terminations (which appears in most instances in class 1) towards debased forms with identical terminations or ones exhibiting influence from the Z-rod. The classical form appears to have the following four characteristics: (a) a lenticular point (referred to as the 'head'); (b) two inward-curving scrolls at the head; (c) a fish-tail device at the other end (referred to as the 'tail'); and (d) two inward-curving scrolls at the tail. The head and tail may have simple decoration. In this analysis the curved line bridging the angle of the V-rod is regarded as belonging to the overall construction of the crescent-and-V-rod symbol, rather than as a part of the V-rod itself. This form is best illustrated by the symbols (in illus 2) on Greens (8 Ork 3) and Golspie (19 Sut 15) which also exhibit two examples of the best and most complex rendering of the crescent. Mention must also be made of the superlative depiction of the tail of the V-rod (only) on the small fragment from the Little Ferry Links (432 Sut 13), which Allen (1903, 478) describes as 'affording one of the most permanent and beautiful examples of the ornamental termination of the V-rod yet found'. Substantial departures from this classical form are quite uncommon in class 1, but more common in class 2, where V-rods that exhibit influence from the terminations of the Z-rod or that have identical terminations are found quite commonly.

Crescents without the V-rod are relatively uncommon and they are never found on class 1 monuments. There are four examples (all S-forms) in class 2 and one (undecorated) in class 4, together comprising 5·7% of all crescents. There is a strong tendency, as may be expected, for good forms of the V-rod to occur with good examples of the three principal forms of decoration of the crescent, particularly D1, S1 and E1. Eleven of the 13 classical examples are from class 1 (five with D, two with S- and three with E-forms, and one with a crescent of uncertain form), as are examples which could be classical, but cannot be definitely so described because the stone is broken or defaced (three with D-, five with S- and one with E-forms and four with crescents of uncertain form), and also one almost classical example with a crescent of uncertain form. There are 11 examples not very far removed from the classical (one with an undecorated crescent, three with D-, four with S- and one with E-forms, one with an uncertain and one with a peculiar form of crescent). In class 2 there are only two classical examples (one found with an S-form and one with an E1-form of crescent). There is an almost classical example on Glenferness (522 Nai 1), where it is uncertain whether the crescent was ever decorated, and four reasonably close to the classical (one with an S-form and three with crescents of geometric decoration). There is one example reasonably near the classical in class 4, with an undecorated crescent, and one in class 5, with a crescent having S2 decoration. Identical terminations are found four times in class 2, with one seventh of class 2 crescents (twice with undecorated crescents, once with an S-form and once with an E-form) and once in class 5 (on the bronze plaque from Monifieth (510 Ang 1)). There are six peculiar forms of V-rod terminations in class 1 (two with undecorated crescents and four with D-forms) and seven in class 2 (one with an undecorated crescent, one with a D-form, three with geometric decoration, one with uncertain decoration and one with peculiar decoration). Other examples of the V-rod are not sufficiently complete for analysis. There are two undecorated crescents, on Wester Balbair (64 Inv 16) and Covesea cave (710 Mor 1) having shallowly curved bounding lines and simple undecorated rods which may belong to an early phase of stone-carving rather than the late phase implied by other debased designs. Straight modifying devices are not found with the crescent, unless the 'bow and arrow' symbol on Congash 2 (104 Inv 2) be regarded as a peculiar form of crescent with a straight 'V-rod'.

As with other asymmetric symbols in which 'left' and 'right' can reasonably be defined, the V-rod of the crescent displays a strong preference for a right-facing orientation, ie with the lenticular 'head' pointing to the right (36 times in class 1, 9 times in class 2). There only seven

left-facing examples (five in class 1, one in class 2, and one in class 4). Four of these are clustered in Moray and there is one each in Ross and Cromarty, Inverness-shire and Aberdeenshire.

Rotation of the entire symbol away from the horizontal is very uncommon, found only once in class 1, on Craighton (29 Sut 5) and five times in class 2. In four cases the symbol is rotated through 90° (Craighton; Kingoldrum 1 (538 Ang 8); Rossie Priory (566 Per 14); and Monifieth 2 (574 Ang 12), while the two crescents on the Dunfallandy stone (534, 535 Per 2) are at about 45° to the horizontal.

Influence of the Z-rod on the V-rod

Some instances have terminations that appear to exhibit influence from those proper to the classical form of the Z-rod, especially that combining with the double disc. (Instances of the reverse are much more common and are discussed below.) There appear to be two forms of influence. Firstly, scrolls at the head or tail facing outwards are found twice in class 1 (Craighton (29 Sut 5) and Findlarig (100 Mor 14)) and twice in class 2 (Hilton of Cadboll (516 Ros 1) and Ulbster (505 Cai 2)), all the examples being northern. This weak form of corruption may be an influence from the outward-facing floriations characteristic of the Z-rod with the double disc. Secondly, the scrolls that are proper to the head (or, less frequent, to the tail) of the V-rod are sometimes replaced by floriations characteristic of the classical forms of the Z-rod. This is found nine times overall, in the following cases: Clynekirkton 2 (22 Sut 2), Knockando 1 (70 Mor 11), Rhynie 6 (110 Abd 38), Mar Coldstone (144 Abd 31), and Brandsbutt (125 Abd 45) in class 1; Hilton of Cadboll (516 Ros 1) (the only stone to display both characteristics), Dyce 2 (527 Abd 2), and Aberlemno 3 (543 Ang 1) in class 2; the bronze plaque from Monifieth (810 Ang 1) in class 5. All the class 2 examples of this also exhibit proliferation of floriations along the arms of the V-rod, probably in consequence of a further degree of influence from the Z-rod. The examples with floriations are concentrated in Aberdeenshire (four examples) and Angus (two examples). As there are more examples of floriations in class 1, this change in distribution is not a consequence of a change from class 1 to class 2.

DOUBLE DISC AND Z-ROD

This is the second commonest primary symbol on stones of class 1, the commonest in class 2, and, when classes 4 and 5 are considered, the commonest symbol overall. It is found on all classes of monument and object. In form it usually consists of two discs side by side and joined by two or more concave arcs (referred to here as forming the 'bridge' of the symbol). The bridge is crossed symmetrically by the central section of a rod in the shape of a Z or (in the great majority of instances) by a reversed-Z, the ends of which bear terminations significantly different from those of a V-rod. The double disc and Z-rod is thus regarded as a composite symbol, and the composite form, being the commonest, is taken to be the standard form of the symbol.

It is relatively uncommon for the discs to be completely undecorated circles, whether in incision or relief (there are 16 examples, of which four are in class 1, two in class 2, one on the sandstone disc from Jarlshof (801 She 1) and the rest in caves (class 4)). Among the decorated instances, three main types of decoration may be distinguished. The great majority of class 1 stones (32 out of 39) exhibit simple decoration consisting of one or two concentric or eccentric circles within each disc, sometimes with a dot in the centre of the innermost circle (only two out of 31 class 2 examples are of this type; they are referred to here as C-forms). This basic pattern may be elaborated by devices such as making an annulus within each disc penannular (as on Dyce 2 (528 Abd 2)) or by adding a pattern of running scrolls to such an annulus (as on Dunnichen (163 Ang 2)). The form with elaborated concentric circles (designated by E) is uncommon in class

1, being found only on the Dunnichen stone and on Bourtie (133 Abd 1), but there are 10 examples in class 2. The strange disc containing within it a linked pair of discs on the Torgorm stone (56 Ros 7) may also belong to this form and is so treated here. Lastly, there is a variety of forms with complex decoration, found on 17 stones in class 2; these instances almost all have more-or-less complicated patterns of separate or linked spirals, with little or no recognition of a basically concentric pattern (these are referred to here as S-forms). There is thus a dichotomy between class 1 and class 2, the first bearing a simple design of concentric or eccentric circles while nearly all instances in class 2 exhibit more elaborate decoration. Of the other classes, nine instances in caves show no decoration at all and four show simple decoration, as also does that on Anwoth rock (733 Kcb 1). The four double discs appearing on metal objects have complicated spiral patterns, similar to those seen on class 2 stones. The decoration of one lost example from class 1 and two badly eroded ones from class 2 could not be determined.

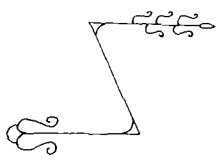
Two class 1 figures having an outline that differs slightly from the normal double disc symbol are not included here. That at Newton House (117 Abd 3) has a subrectangular notch in one of the two discs and that at Inchyra House (172 Per 6) has both discs notched.

Forms of the bridge more elaborate than a simple pattern of two or four concave arcs linking the discs are extremely uncommon in class 1 (see, for instance, Torgorm (56 Ros 7), Huntly 2 (94 Abd 15) and Inverurie 3 (131 Abd 19) for different forms of elaboration). Two undecorated double discs appear on the peculiar stone from Nonakiln (39 Ros 9). It is uncertain whether or not this is a Pictish stone. The bridges of both the signs are peculiar and unique, in one case being an incised cross with arms tangent to the discs and in the other being a single line joining the nearest points of the discs. In class 2, the bridge normally consists of two bars in relief, frequently straight and parallel, joining the discs, commonly with decoration between them, and substantial departures from this are unusual (see, for instance, Rosemarkie 1 (519 Ros 2), where the outlines of the discs and the bridge are continuous, and Monifieth 1 (573 Ang 11), where the central section of the Z-rod is flanked on each side by a triangular wedge). A development of the two-bar bridge, seen in a few cases (eg Elgin (518 Mor 2) and Anwoth rock (733 Kcb 1)), is to show the central section of the Z-rod passing alternatively over and under the bars of the bridge.

Thus, although the double disc is nearly as common as the crescent, its comparatively simple decoration is clearly not capable of supporting detailed analysis as used in the study of that symbol. Consideration of the Z-rod, however, yields some interesting results.

The Z-rod

In contradistinction to the case of the crescent without V-rod, instances of the double disc without Z-rod are not uncommon, accounting for 22·4% (17 out of 76) of all examples outside caves and 17·9% (7 out of 39) in class 1. Two of the latter are undecorated and five have decoration with concentric or eccentric circles. In class 2, the two undecorated and the two simply decorated double discs have no Z-rod, as is the case with six others showing elaborate spiral decoration. Ten of the 11 double discs in caves have no Z-rod, the example in Doo cave (717 Fif 3) being the exception.



ILLUS 5 The Z-rod

As with the V-rod, a 'declining sequence' can be postulated for the Z-rod, in which forms devolve from a classical or prototypical form with distinct and stereotyped terminations, through various and intermediate stages, to ones with debased and sometimes identical terminations, as observed by Henderson (1958, 50, fn; 1967, 114, fig 18).

It is possible to distinguish among class 1 examples a typical form of Z-rod accompanying the double disc, although there is no such degree of uniformity in class 2 (Z-rods accompanying the snake and the notched rectangle are discussed in appendix 1, below). This typical form, which is here considered as classical, differs from that illustrated by Henderson. The following four features (illustrated in illus 5) appear to be characteristic: (a) a lenticular point (referred to here as the 'head'); (b) five outward-facing 'floriations' at the head, arranged as shown in illus 5; (c) two opposed, inward-facing floriations at the other end (referred to here as the 'tail'); (d) a small dome joining the extremities of the floriations at the tail. Curved lines bridging the Z-rod are here regarded as belonging to the overall construction of the double-disc-and-Z-rod symbol. These characteristics are exhibited by four of the 10 complete class 1 instances and there are also six examples which are not complete but which almost certainly conform to this model. Kintore 2 (138 Abd 24) departs from this form only in having four instead of five floriations, with the addition of two opposed outward-facing scrolls close to the head. Thus, of the 32 Z-rods found in class 1, 11 may be considered as good forms. They are found 10 times with the C-form of the double disc and once with the E-form. There are seven less classical forms (one with an undecorated double disc, six with C-forms). Five Z-rods in class 1 are peculiar (one with an undecorated double disc, three with C-forms and one with an E-form) and nine are too incomplete for analysis.

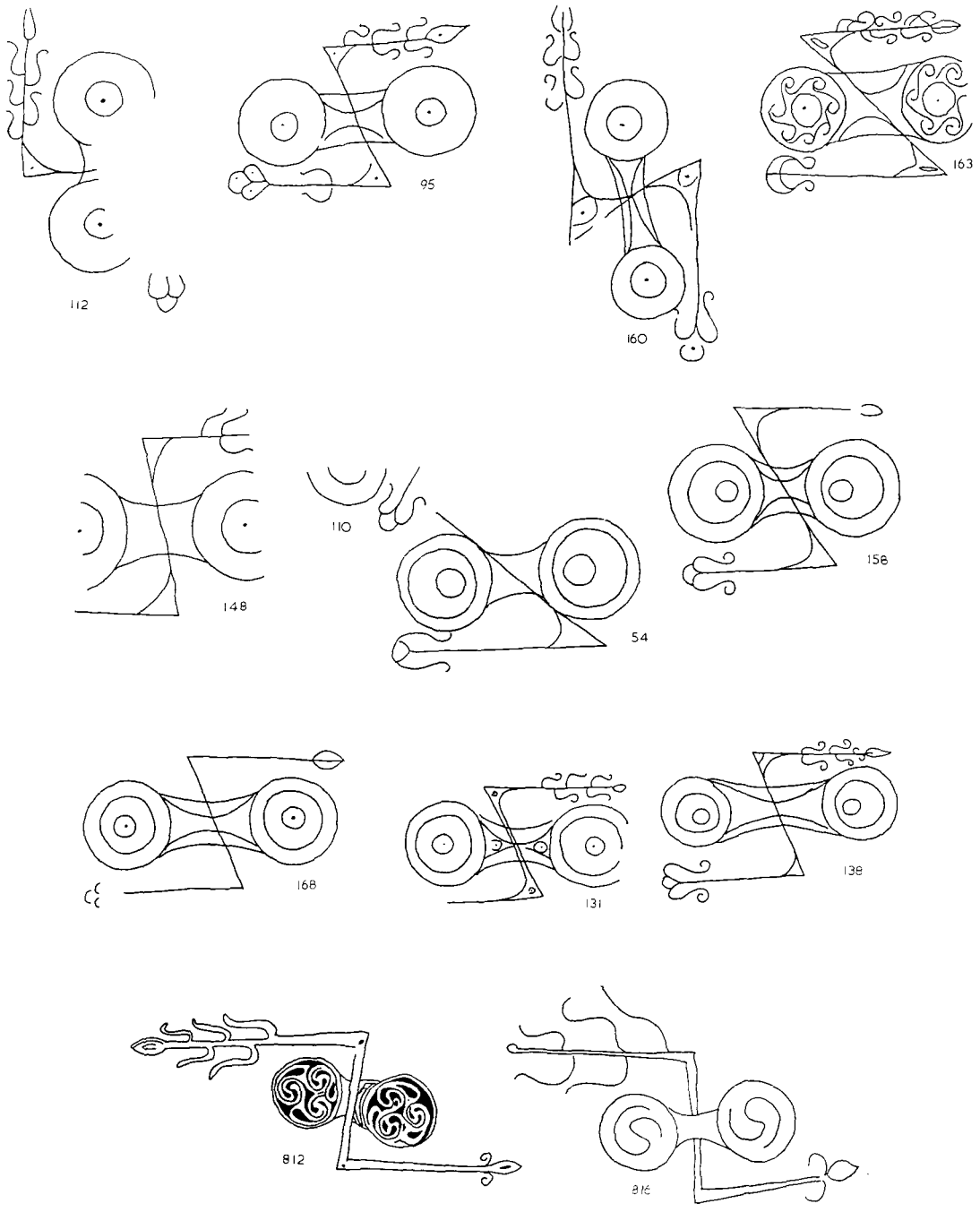
The forms of the Z-rod found on class 2 stones are far less stereotyped. Classical forms, as defined above, are not found in class 2 and so, because of the dichotomy already referred to between classes 1 and 2, only occur with C-forms of the double disc. Of the 21 class 2 examples, seven bear varying degrees of relation to the classical form and may reasonably be assumed to derive from it (three of these found with E-forms and 4 with S-forms of the double disc), one (with an S-form of the double disc) has identical terminations, eight are peculiar in form (three found with E-forms and five S-forms of the double disc) and five are too damaged for the form to be apparent.

Examples from other classes are few; there is that on the rock face at Anwoth (733 Kcb 1) which has identical terminations, one in Doo cave (717 Fif 3), one on the sandstone disc from Jarlshof (801 She 1) and five on metal objects, of which that on the plaque from Monifieth (811 Ang 1) has identical terminations. The other examples in metal and that in Doo cave are discussed further below. (Forms of the Z-rod with the double disc are shown in illus 6–8.)

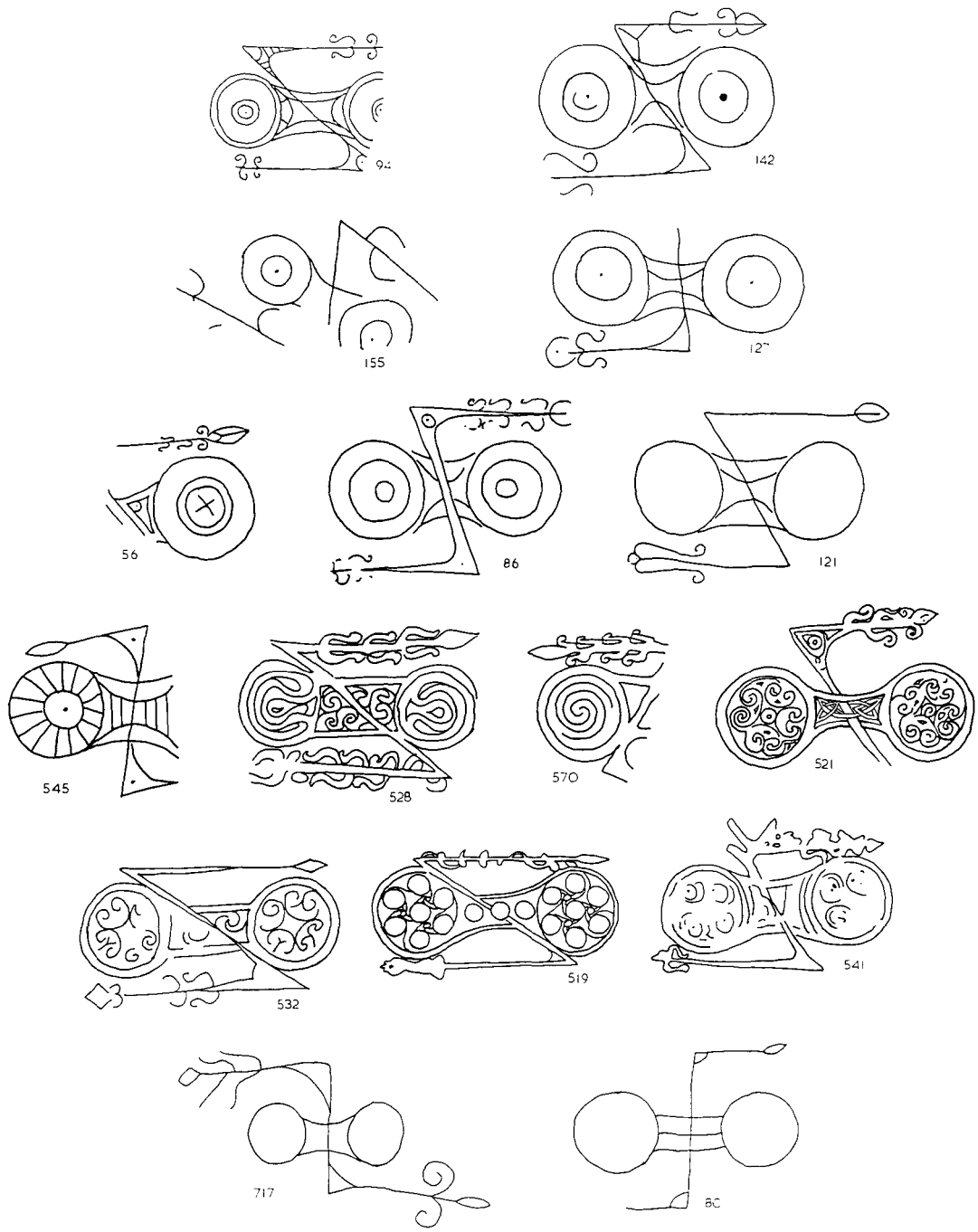
Complete classical forms are found less frequently in the case of the Z-rod than for the V-rod, accounting for 5·3% of all Z-rods but 14·9% of all V-rods. Peculiar forms are not, however, significantly more abundant among the Z-rods. Only three Z-rods have identical terminations. Common departures from the classical form are the loss of, or, particularly in class 2, excessive use of floriation. Outside class 1 the lack of instances showing a domed and floriated tail is notable. An important cause of departure from the prototype is influence from the classical termination of the V-rod, which is both common and complex.

Influence of the V-rod on the Z-rod

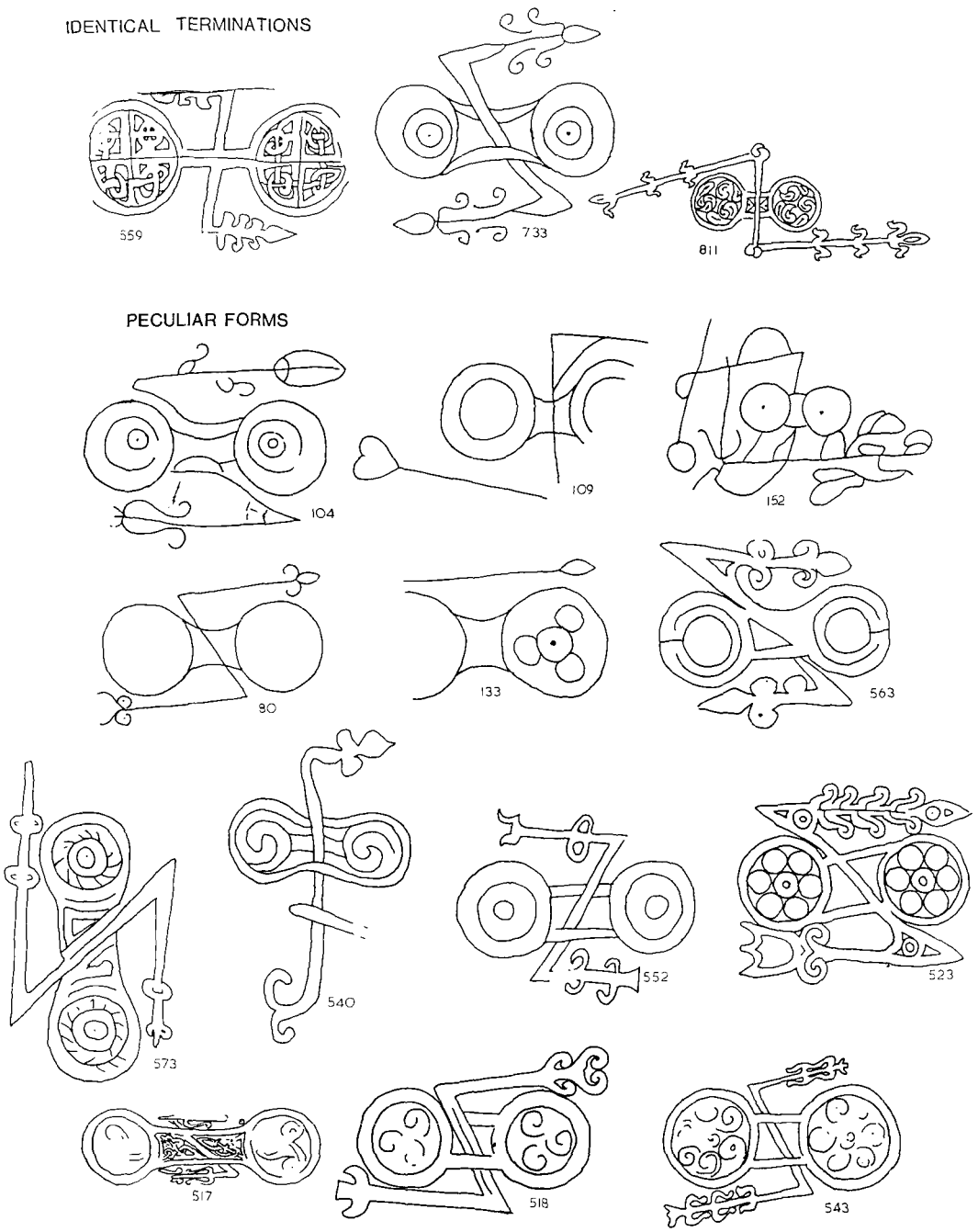
Twenty-five (40·7%) examples of the Z-rod have terminations that exhibit influence from those that are proper to the classical form of the V-rod (seven in class 1, 11 in class 2, two in class 4 and five in class 5). The reverse influence has already been discussed. For the Z-rod, influence



ILLUS 6 The Z-rod with double disc. Good forms: class 1 – 112 Abd 2 Clatt 1, 95 Abd 16 Insch, 160 Ang 1 Aberlemno 1, 163 Ang 2 Dunnichen, 148 Abd 41 Tullich, 110 Abd 38 Rhynie 6, 54 Ros 3 Dingwall, 158 Per 4 Blair Atholl, 168 Ang 3 Keillor, 131 Abd 9 Inverurie 3, 138 Abd 24 Kintore 2; class 5 – 812 Fif 1 and 813 Fif 2 (silver plaques from Norries Law; only one shown as both are similar), 816 Lan 1 (silver chain from Whitecleugh) (not to scale)



ILLUS 7 The Z-rod with double disc. Poor forms: class 1 –94 Abd 15 Huntly 2, 155 Kcd 4 Dunnottar 4, 127 Abd 21 Keith Hall, 142 Abd 10 Dyce 1, 56 Ros 7 Torgorm, 86 Inv 14 Invereen, 121 Abd 27 Logie Elphinstone 2; class 2 – 545 Per 1 Alyth, 528 Abd 2 Dyce 2, 570 Ang 15 Strathmartine 5, 521 Mor 1 Brodie, 532 Kcd 1 Fordoun, 519 Ros 2 Rosemarkie 1, 541 Ang 4 Cossins; class 4 – 717 Fif 3 Doo cave; class 5 – 801 She 1 (stone disc from Jarlshof) (not to scale)



ILLUS 8 The Z-rod with double disc. Peculiar forms: Identical terminations: class 2 – 559 Ang 18 St Vigeans 1; class 4 – 733 Kcb 1 Anwoth Rock; class 5 – 811 Ang 11 (bronze plaque from Monifieth). Peculiar forms: class 1 – 104 Inv 22 Congash 2, 109 Abd 37 Rhynie 5, 152 Kcd 1 Dunnottar 1, 80 Inv 11 Fiscavaig, 133 Abd 1 Bourtie; class 2 – 563 Ang 22 St Vigeans 5, 573 Ang 11 Monifieth 1, 540 Ang 10 Kirriemuir 2, 552 Per 12 Meigle 7, 523 Nai Glenferness, 517 Ros 1 Cadboll, 518 Mor 2 Elgin, 543 Ang 2 Aberlemno 3 (not to scale)

from the V-rod appears to take four forms, with some examples showing more than one form of influence in the same symbol.

A fish-tail termination at the tail of the Z-rod is shown on three class 1 stones and five class 2 stones. In two cases (Fiscavaig (80 Inv 11) and Glenferness (523 Nai 1)), the tail is in all respects that proper to the classical V-rod; in the others, a device like a fish-tail appears alone or is combined with varying patterns of scrolls and floriations. No instance of this is found south of Meigle.

The classical head of the V-rod appearing at the tail of the Z-rod is a feature remarkable both for its localized distribution and for the nature of the objects on which it occurs. It is found once in class 4, among the symbols in Doo cave (717 Fif 3), and four times in class 5, on the silver plaques and handpin from the Norrie's Law hoard (812–14 Fif 1–3) and on the silver terminal ring of the massive chain from Whitecleugh (816 Lan 1) (see Henderson 1979, 20–8). In three cases the abnormal tails are combined with heads of classical form proper to the Z-rod, the Doo cave form is near to classical and only the Norrie's Law handpin shows an unclassical form. This Z-rod is unique in appearing on its own, without the double disc or other symbol.

Scrolls appear in place of or in addition to floriations in 18 examples, four in class 1 (of which one shows a fish-tail termination), nine in class 2 (of which four show fish-tail terminations) and on the five examples from other classes where the classical head of the V-rod is exhibited at the tail of the Z-rod. This is certainly attributable to influence from the V-rod.

In nine cases floriations at the head face away from the point. If genuine, this weak form of corruption may be seen as a consequence of influence from the inward-facing scrolls of the V-rod. It is found four times in class 1, twice in class 2, once in class 4 and twice in class 5.

Influence from the V-rod is exhibited by 18·2% of all Z-rods in Aberdeenshire as against 43·8% in the Moray-Dornoch area and 30·6% south of the Mounth.

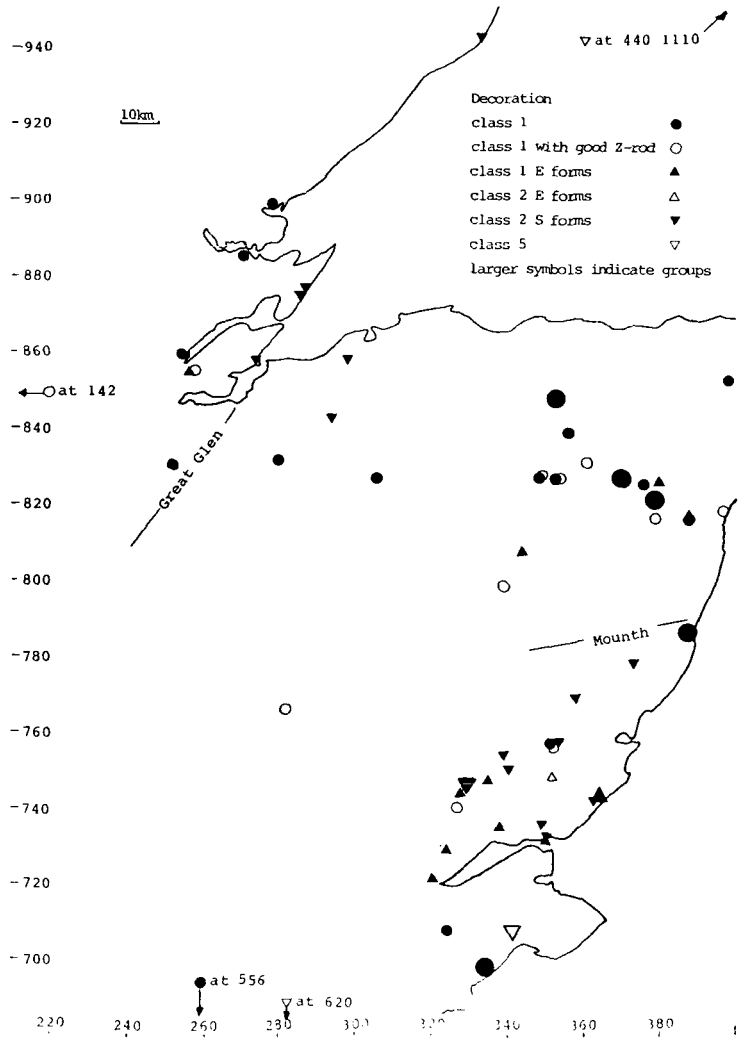
Orientation of the symbol

The orientation which is found most frequently in both classes 1 and 2 and may by its frequency be regarded as belonging to the classical form of the symbol is the arrangement of the discs side by side and joined by a horizontal bridge, the symbol crossed by a rod in the form of a reversed-Z, with the lenticular end ('head') on the upper arm and pointing to the right. This occurs 19 times in class 1, 13 times in class 2 and once in class 4. The mirror of this, with the head still on the upper arm but pointing left, is infrequent, found twice in class 1, five times in class 2 and once in class 4. Of the double discs without Z-rod, eight in class 1, six in class 2 and seven in caves are horizontal. A much higher proportion of double discs depart in their orientations from horizontality than is the case with crescents. The numbers of those rotated more than 30° are: nine class 1, four class 2 and one class 5 right-facing examples; one in class 1 and three in class 5 facing left; and four in class 2 and six in class 4 without a Z-rod. There are three instances where the terminations of the Z-rod are identical, one right-facing and two left-facing (it cannot be determined whether these are horizontal or rotated through 180°). Instances of the reversed-Z outnumber those of the Z by 28 to three in class 1 and by 48 to 14 in all classes together. Of the 14 instances of left-facing rods, only two are north of the Mounth, on Rhynie 2 (107 Abd 35) and on Logie Elphinstone 2).

Distribution of the symbol

The symbol is relatively overabundant in class 2, there being 40 examples in class 1 and 33 in class 2. In class 1, there are eight instances north and west of the Great Glen, 24 between the Great Glen and the Mounth and eight south of the Mounth. This means that, compared with all

class 1 statements, the symbol is relatively underrepresented north of the Great Glen (20% of examples, as compared with 30·6% of all class 1 stones) and over-abundant in the area between the Great Glen and the Mounth (the site of 60% of double discs as compared to 51·2% of all statements in class 1). In class 2 there are five instances north and west of the Great Glen, five between there and the Mounth and 23 south of the Mounth. Hence it is again underrepresented in the north (15% of class 2 double discs as compared with 26·6% of all class 2 statements) but this time overabundant south of the Mounth (70% of examples as compared with 60·7% of all class 2 statements). Two of the class 1 instances in the northern area are on Skye so the symbol is in fact rare on the mainland north of Inverness. The only instance of the symbol in the Golspie area is on Craigton (512 Sut 1). To some extent the distributions of the crescent and the double disc can be seen as complementary. This is likely to be, however, in some degree a consequence of their differing relative abundances in class 1 and class 2, reflecting the different distributions of monuments in these classes.



ILLUS 9 Distribution of forms of decoration of the double disc

The distribution of different forms of decoration of the double disc (illus 9) largely reflects the differing distributions of class 1 and class 2 monuments: forms with concentric or eccentric circles are mainly found in Aberdeenshire and the Moray–Dornoch area while spiral or complex forms are found over most of the area covered by class 2 monuments, chiefly Ross and Cromarty, Moray, Angus and Perthshire. Forms with elaborated concentric circles and also undecorated forms, on the other hand, are found in all areas, although the former are concentrated in Angus and eastern Perthshire.

Origin centre of the double disc and Z-rod

Many of the best forms of the symbol are to be found in Aberdeenshire. This can be made more precise by considering three factors. First, while good C-forms of the double disc are found in all areas where the symbol occurs, many of the best are in Aberdeen and the Moray–Dornoch area, and undecorated and E-forms are relatively uncommon in Aberdeenshire. Secondly, good forms of the Z-rod are found predominantly in Aberdeenshire. Thirdly, corrupting influence from the V-rod on terminations of the Z-rod is relatively less in Aberdeenshire than elsewhere.

Conservatism and stereotyping in Aberdeen, an area associated especially with degeneracy and eclecticism in other aspects of the symbolism, are in themselves remarkable, and these results suggest that the double disc and Z-rod may have originated or developed or both in Aberdeenshire. A southerly origin or 'home' for the symbol makes it easier to account for the absence of class 1 instances north of Edderton (35 Ros 4). Such a conclusion is compatible with the hypothesis that the symbolism originated in the area between the Moray Firth and south-east Sutherland if the development of the double disc and Z-rod took place later than that of the crescent and V-rod.

RELATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE DOUBLE DISC AND THE CRESCENT

Various pieces of evidence, each by itself fairly minor, can be adduced to support the tentative hypothesis that the double disc and Z-rod originated and was at its most abundant later than the crescent and V-rod.

First, if one accepts Henderson's suggestion of a northern origin centre of the symbol stones, the distribution of the double disc being more southerly than that of the crescent is significant; of particular relevance being the rarity of the double disc north of Inverness and the frequent occurrences of C-forms of the double disc (which are assumed to be basic) in Aberdeenshire as well as the Moray–Dornoch area, while no good versions of the crescent are found in Aberdeen. Secondly, there is a comparatively low representation of good forms of the Z-rod. Thirdly, there is a much higher proportion of Z-rods showing influence from the V-rod than of V-rods showing the reverse influence (21% as against 13% in class 1; 40% as against 14·6% in all classes). It is possible also that the more frequent occurrence of the double disc without the Z-rod than the crescent without the V-rod is an indication of its later date.

It was seen above that these two symbols may have originated or developed in different parts of the country. They may also have originated or developed at different dates. No estimate of absolute dates, or of the likely difference in dates, can, however, be made by this method.

PICTISH 'BEAST'

The well-known Pictish 'elephant' or 'beast' is the only imaginary animal found in class 1 symbolism, although it is joined by the rare hippocamp-like animal in class 2. It is the commonest animal symbol (if it may be so called) in both class 1, which contains 25 examples, and class 2, where it is markedly overabundant, being found 27 times. It is characterized by a long, smoothly-flowing body in a swimming or leaping posture with legs parallel, by a long, upward

curved and pointed snout, by spiral feet and a curved tail, and by a lappet extending from the head along the line of the back. The symbols are executed with a remarkable uniformity of detail so that most features are preserved in most examples, but with varying quality, and in particular, with the decorative lines within the body departing from the rigidly controlled appearance they have in the finer examples.

The distribution of the beast is markedly southern and eastern. It is seen in class 1 to be greatly underrepresented north and west of the Great Glen, only 11% (3) examples there, compared with 30·6% of all class 1 statements. In class 2 there are 20% (5) instances, the percentage being lower than, but approaching more closely to, that for all class 2 statements, 26%. In the other areas the beast is relatively overabundant. Between the Great Glen and the Mounth are 67% (18) class 1 examples compared with 51·2% of all class 1 statements and 16% (4) examples from class 2 compared with 12·7% of all class 2 statements. It is noteworthy that all class 1 instances of the symbol in first place in statements are found in this region. South of the Mounth are 22% (six) of the examples from class 1, where 18·2% of all class 1 statements are found, and 64% (16) of class 2 examples where 60·7% of all class 2 statements are found. The distribution is similar to that of the double disc, but unlike that symbol, the beast is uncommon in Inverness-shire and Ross and Cromarty. Further, in Angus and eastern Perthshire, the main concentrations of these symbols hardly overlap, the beast being found primarily south and west of the double disc.

As one of several arguments in favour of the symbolism originating in the Inverness–Golspie area, Henderson selects the beast on the Golspie, Main Street stone (19 Sut 15) as the prototype of all other incised elephants and compares it with the frequently occurring debased forms in Aberdeenshire. The Golspie beast, however, is situated far from any other 'good' forms and indeed far from any other class 1 example and this isolated instance cannot be held to be strong evidence in support of the origin of the beast in the area north of the Moray Firth. It may be significant that Stevenson finds his most complex example of the pelta design on this same stone.

While it is easy to identify examples of debased execution of the beast (eg in class 1 Fyvie 1 (97 Abd 12) and, especially, Ardlair (115 Abd 44)), the identification of particularly good examples is not straightforward. The beast does not have such complex decoration as either the crescent or the double disc, as may be seen from Henderson's list (1958, 51) of the classical features of the Golspie beast:

> '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 with 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 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'.

More complex decoration than the lines mentioned is rare, although a few examples in class 2 have overall designs in relief. The quality of any given symbol is likely to be mainfested in the retention of characteristic constructional details, such as these quoted; subjective assessment of its artistic merit is unlikely to be a reliable guide.

In an attempt to make the assessment of the quality of individual beasts as objective as possible, we have drawn up a list of 12 features of the most complex beasts, based in part on the list given by Henderson.

1 Orientation. As with the realistic animals there is a marked tendency for the beast to face towards the right. Of 54 occurrences in all classes 38 are right-facing and 16 left-facing. Its

characteristic pose appears to be that in which the back slopes upwards towards the head, thus raising the forefeet to a significantly higher level than the hind feet. Eighteen of the 25 symbols whose orientation can be determined in class 1 and four of the 27 in class 2 correspond to this. There is one left-facing mirror image of this in class 1 and four in class 2. Six right-facing beasts in class 1 and four in class 2 have the back roughly horizontal and the feet at the same level. The other common orientation is that of a left-facing beast with a horizontal back (one in class 1, eight in class 2).

2 The feet are typically spiral rather than lobed. Twenty on class 1 are spiral, only three in class 1 and three in class 2 are definitely lobed.

3 The snout is normally turned upwards toward the tip. This is seen in 20 examples of class 1 and 13 in class 2. It is not upturned in three of class 1 and four of class 2.

4 The head is tucked in, parallel to the legs, as in 18 examples of class 1 and 11 of class 2. This is not so in five of class 1 and eight of class 2.

5 The tail is looped or spiralled at the end, as in 15 examples of class 1 and 12 of class 2. It is open in one of class 1 and four of class 2.

6 There is an inner line on the lower part of the body, in 15 examples of class 1 and 12 of class 2. This is absent in nine of class 1 and five of class 2.

7 This inner line ends in a lobe on the hind leg, as in nine of class 1 but only one of class 2. The lobe is absent in 10 examples of class 1 and 14 of class 2. In five class 2 cases the lobe is replaced by a scroll.

8 The other end of this inner line forms a scroll articulating the joint of the foreleg in 14 of class 1 and nine of class 2. Eight in class 1 and 10 in class 2 do not have this scroll. A common perversion is to replace the scroll by a lobe or simple loop.

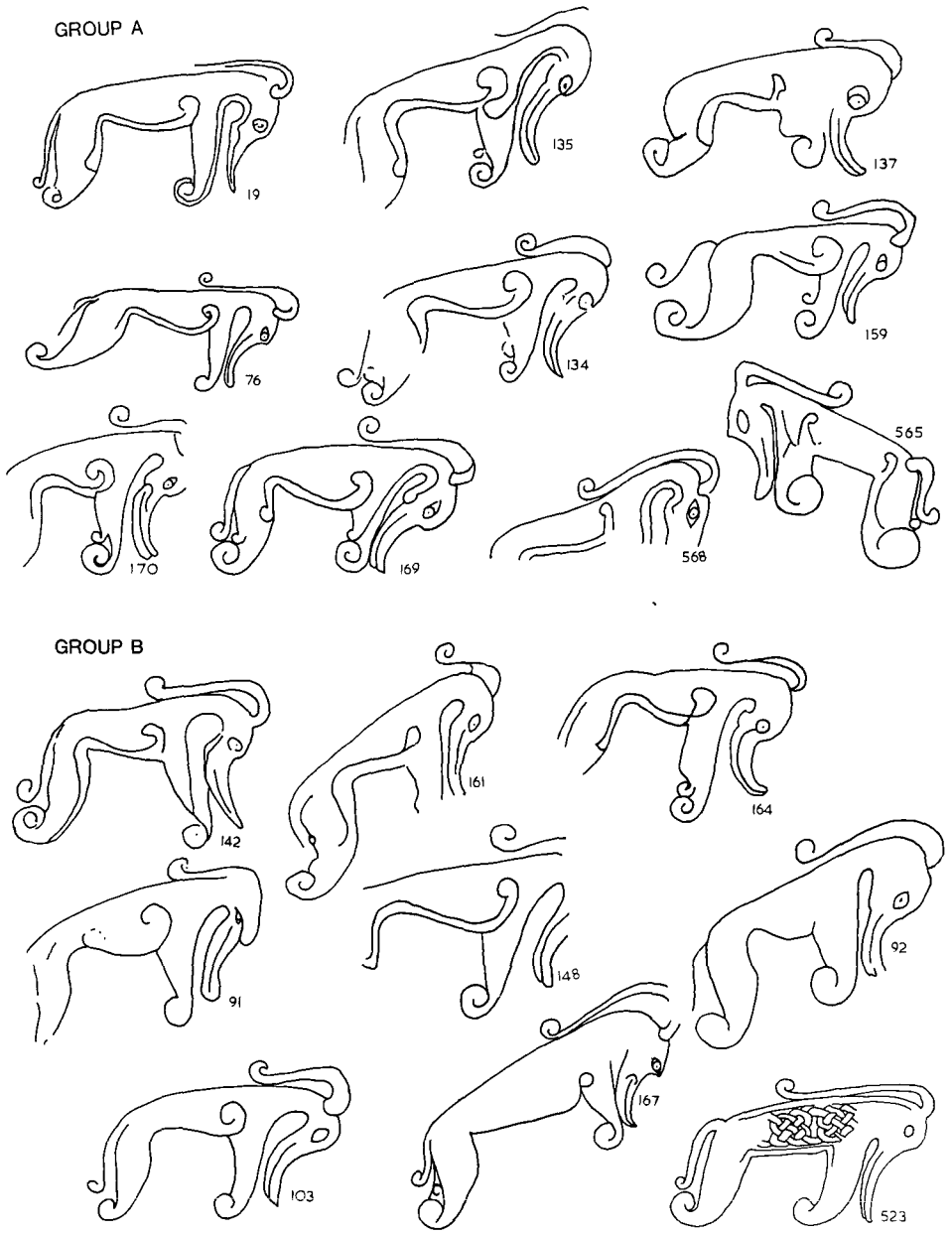
9 The legs are roughly parallel in 14 examples of class 1 and seven in class 2. Eight in class 1 and 11 in class 2 have diverging legs.

10 The line of the back is unbroken at the lappet in 13 cases in class 1 and eight in class 2. It is broken in nine examples of class 1 and five of class 2.

11 The lappet is formed of two separate lines in eight of class 1 cases and four of class 2. In 15 examples of class 1 the lappet is formed wholly or partly from a single incised line. In class 2, because a number of examples are in relief and hence the criterion is not applicable, only six symbols are available for consideration, of which only two have a lappet formed of two separate lines.

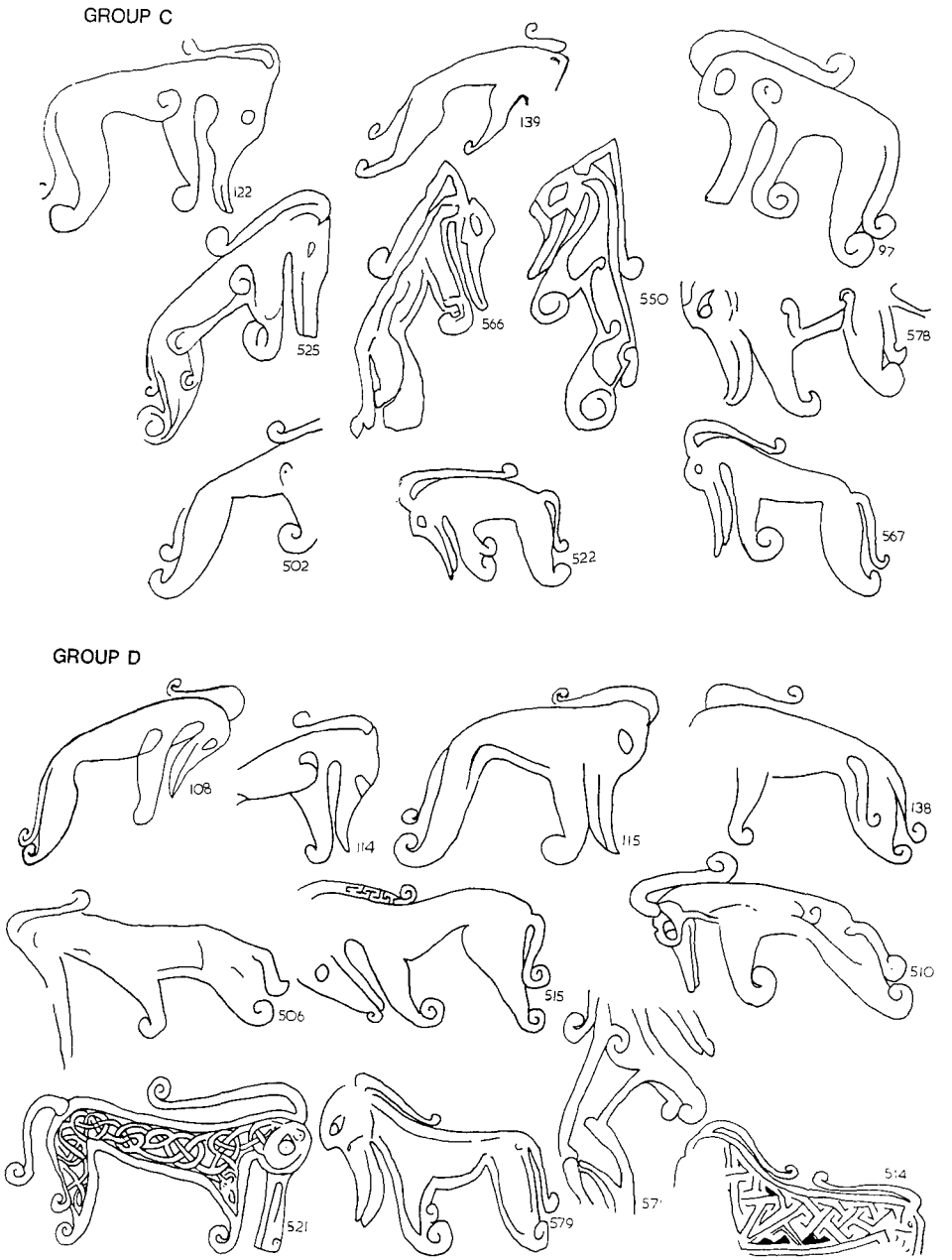
12 A second inner line, running from foreleg to chin, is present in eight examples of class 1 and three of class 2. It is absent in 16 of class 1 and 14 of class 2.

A numerical assessment of the quality of individual beasts can be made by assigning a point to each individual symbol for each of the characteristics 2–12 it possesses. In feature 1, two points are allowed for the classical orientation, one for its left-facing mirror image or for the right-facing horizontal orientation and none for any other position. Each symbol can thus score a theoretical maximum of 13 points but in many cases this is reduced because some features cannot be determined as a result of defacement or loss of part of the stone. To form a number independent of this variable, the number of points scored by any one symbol is divided by the number of its features that can be reasonably be determined (the orientation counting as two). The resulting number between 0 (worst case) and 1 (best case) provides a measure of the extent to which classical features have been retained in any given symbol. If, however, fewer than eight features can be determined, the symbol is excluded. This reduces the number of symbols considered to 23 in class 1 and 17 in class 2.



ILLUS 10 Forms of the Pictish beast: groups A & B

In order to reduce the rather artificial degree of precision present in such numbers, the symbols are then assigned to four groups in such a way that the total of symbols from classes 1 and 2 together is roughly the same in each group. Group A ranges from 0·76 to 1, group B from 0·61 to 0·75, group C from 0·46 to 0·60 and group D from 0 to 0·45. The statements in which the



ILLUS 11 Forms of the Pictish beast: groups C & D

symbols in the various groups are found are listed in table 1 and their forms are shown in illus 10 and 11. Their distribution is shown in illus 12.

It may be seen that, in class 1, A-forms are found at Kintore, Aberdeenshire (three times) and in Angus and eastern Perthshire, along with two outliers, while B-forms are found in a broad

TABLE 1
Order of Pictish Beasts according to quality (perfect quality 13/13=1)

GROUP A 0·76–1		
class 1		
19 Sut 15	Golspie, Main St	12/13=0·92
135 Abd 54	Kintore 4	12/13=0·92
137 Abd 23	Kintore 1	12/13=0·92
76 Abd 52	Tillytarmont 4	11/13=0·85
134 Abd 6	Kintore, Crichie	11/13=0·85
159 Per 2	Bruceton	10/12=0·83
170 Ang 4	Linlathen	9/11=0·82
169 Ang 5	Strathmartine 1	10/13=0·77
class 2		
568 Ang 13	Strathmartine 3	7/8=0·88
565 Per 15	Gellyburn 2	10/12=0·83
GROUP B 0·61–0·75		
class 1		
142 Abd 10	Dyce 1	9/13=0·69
161 Ang 7	Aberlemno 4	9/13=0·69
164 Ang 6	Kinblethmont	8/12=0·67
91 Bnf 8	Inveravon 4	7/11=0·64
148 Abd 41	Tullich	7/11=0·64
92 Bnf 7	Mortlach	8/13=0·62
103 Inv 1	Congash 1	8/13=0·62
167 Per 7	Collace	8/13=0·62
class 2		
523 Nai 1	Glenferness	8/12=0·67
GROUP C 0·46–0·60		
class 1		
122 Abd 28	Logie Elphinstone 3	7/13=0·54
139 Abd 24	Kintore 2	6/12=0·50
97 Abd 12	Fyvie 1	6/13=0·46
class 2		
525 Abd 3	Maiden Stone	7/12=0·58
566 Per 14	Rossie Priory	6/11=0·55
550 Per 10	Meigle 5	7/13=0·54
578 Fif 2	Scoonie	7/13=0·54
502 Ork 1	Birsay	5/10=0·50
522 Nai 1	Glenferness	6/12=0·50
567 Ang 3	Balluderon	6/12=0·50
GROUP D 0–0·45		
class 1		
108 Abd 34	Rhynie 1	5/12=0·42
114 Abd 46	Clatt 3	4/10=0·40
115 Abd 44	Ardlair	4/11=0·36
138 Abd 24	Kintore 2	3/11=0·27
class 2		
506 Cai 2	Ulbster	5/12=0·42
515 Ros 3	Shandwick	5/12=0·42
510 Sut 1	Craighton	5/13=0·38
521 Mor 1	Brodie	4/12=0·33
579 Fif 1	Largo	3/11=0·27
571 Ang 16	Strathmartine 6	2/10=0·20
514 Ros 5	Nigg	1/9=0·11

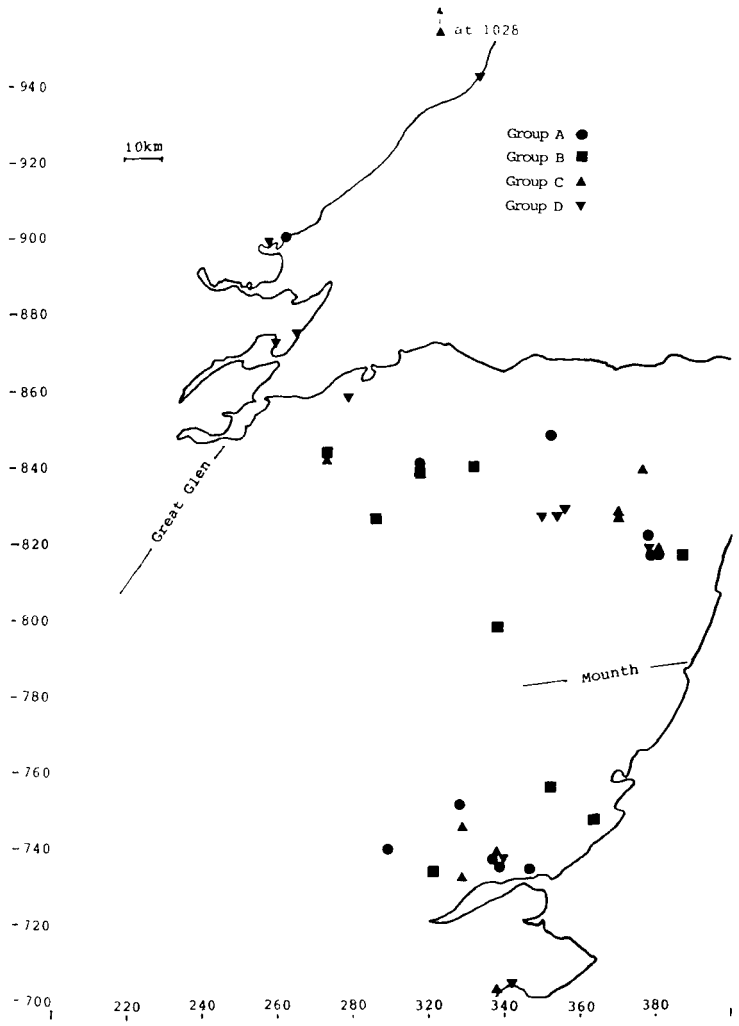
These groups are shown in illus 10 and 11 (not to scale)

scatter, in Banffshire, Inverness-shire and Aberdeenshire as well as in Angus and eastern Perthshire. C- and D-forms, on the other hand, are found only in Aberdeenshire. There is notably an isolated group of three in the Rhynie-Clatt area.

In class 2 both A-forms are in the south, in Angus and eastern Perthshire, while C- and D-forms are widely distributed. D-forms are chiefly found north of the Moray Firth, and constitute the only form represented on the class 2 monuments in Caithness, Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty.

If the classical form of the beast has been adequately described by the characteristics assigned to it, these results indicate that it was understood and used in both of the main concentrations of class 1 stones – Aberdeenshire and Angus/eastern Perthshire – and that it was retained with greater fidelity in the latter area, where the best class 2 examples and no poor class 1 examples are found, than in Aberdeen, where many more-or-less debased class 1 instances occur. The consistently poor quality of northern class 2 examples suggests, in most cases, relatively late introduction of a poorly understood design.

The results suggest local development of the beast symbol in either Aberdeenshire or Angus and Perthshire, with its initial cutting on stone probably being in one of these areas. The available



ILLUS 12 Distribution of the Pictish beast

information does not offer firm evidence in either area, but the general high standard of both class 1 and class 2 examples in Angus and eastern Perthshire suggest that that area may have been the home of the beast.

STATEMENTS AND QUALIFIERS

The regularity of the statements seen on class 1 stones allows one to postulate a standard or classical form for statements, from which only a small number in class 1 deviate. It comprises most of the S2 and S3 statements described by Thomas (1963, 39). Typically, two different primary symbols are found on a given face of a class 1 stone, one above the other, with the symbols near the top of the stone. In this arrangement it is reasonable to regard the upper symbol

as being in first place and the lower symbol in second place. Occasionally, two primary symbols are placed side by side, when it is assumed that they are to be read from left to right. Where there are more than two symbols it often happens that the added symbols are the mirror, or mirror and comb together, below or to the right of a pair of symbols as described above. These appear to have the function of qualifying the association formed by the primary symbols and so are described as secondary symbols or qualifiers. Because the comb never appears without the mirror, we do not regard it as being a symbol in its own right. In some cases, eg where the stone has been broken or cut just below the primary symbols, it is uncertain whether the statement was qualified. A statement consisting of two different primary symbols, with or without the addition of the mirror, or mirror and comb, is regarded as being of standard form.

The mirror by itself is found 16 times in class 1 and three times in class 2; the mirror-and-comb symbol is found 28 times in class 1 and seven times in class 2. Thus, both are relatively under-represented in class 2. The qualifiers have never been found in classes 4 or 6.

THE QUALIFIERS IN STATEMENTS WITH THE CRESCENT, THE DOUBLE DISC AND THE BEAST

While bearing in mind that the total number of crescents of any one form is small, some interesting trends can be seen if the numbers are broken down into the definitive types of statement in which the crescent appears, whether qualified by the mirror alone, or by the mirror and comb together, or by neither. The numbers are restricted to those examples where the presence or absence of qualifiers is not in doubt.

None of the undecorated crescents is found in a qualified statement, although this is absolutely certain in only four of the six cases in classes 1 and 2. Eleven of the 20 D-forms of the crescent are found in statements that are unqualified. There are four examples found in statements qualified by the mirror and comb, all of class 1. These are fairly localized (in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, along with the southern outlier). It is interesting to note that this probably early form is not found in statements qualified by the mirror alone.

Nine S-forms are found in unqualified statements (four in class 1, five in class 2), three in statements qualified by the mirror (all in class 1) and three in statements qualified by the mirror and comb (one in class 1, two in class 2). This is roughly in line with the relative frequency of statement types. Three of the qualified instances are in Orkney and Sutherland, where all the statement groups are represented. The others are Lindores (177 Fif 1), where the statement is qualified by the mirror, and Kingoldrum (538 Ang 8) and St Vigeans 1 (559 Ang 18), which both have statements qualified by the mirror and comb. St Madoes (576 Per 6) has an irregular statement with three primary symbols.

Two of the E-forms are found in statements with qualifiers, both with the mirror alone, both in class 1 and both in the north (in Orkney and Sutherland). Three of the four belonging to unqualified statements are at Logie Elphinstone.

While conclusions concerning statement types should be drawn with caution, the possibly primitive nature of the dome and wing form suggests that statements without qualifiers predominated in the early period and that the use of the mirror alone as a qualifier may be a comparatively late feature of class 1.

Unlike the case of the crescent, instances of the double disc in statements qualified with the mirror, or mirror and comb, are compatible with relative numbers of statement types. Most statements including the double disc are unqualified; in these statements three of the double discs (two of class 1 and one of class 2) are undecorated; 12 are C-forms (11 of class 1 one of class 2); two examples, both of class 2, are E-forms; and there are seven spiral-decorated examples from class 2. There are only three examples of the double disc in statements qualified by the mirror

alone, all C-forms from class 1. In statements qualified by the mirror and comb are found five C-forms of the double disc in class 1, three E-forms (two of class 1, one of class 2) and two decorated examples from class 2. The presence of C-forms of the double disc in statements with the mirror may be a further indication that the development of the double disc is possibly later than that of the crescent.

The beast is found in unqualified statements 17 times in class 1 and 17 times in class 2. It is found three times in statements qualified by the mirror alone, in class 1 only, and four times in statements qualified by the mirror with the comb (three times in class 1, once in class 2). Again, the presence of examples qualified by the mirror alone in class 1 may be tentative evidence for the relatively later development of the beast than the crescent.

CONCLUSION

A refinement of Henderson's origin-centre model may be suggested in which the various symbols are seen as having originated and developed in different areas of Pictland, but with the practice of cutting them on stone probably having a unique origin centre. The practice of erecting symbol stones can be envisaged as having spread from this centre; in other areas, symbols that were preferred locally (for unknown reasons) may have predominated on the earliest stones. Expressed in other words, the earliest, and so most classical, symbols may be found in fairly localized areas, perhaps ascribable to slightly different dates.

APPENDIX 1

THE Z-ROD

A linear modifying device in the form of a Z-shaped rod is found with three symbols, the double disc, the notched rectangle and the snake. The appearance of its terminations is quite different in each case, while maintaining a high degree of uniformity when used in conjunction with any given symbol. It is difficult to decide whether the three rods should be treated as distinct devices or as variant forms of the same device. Thomas (1963, 51–2), as a consequence of his interpretation of all three devices as representations of broken spears, treats them as variants of a single device. In the present study, we prefer the less tendentious course of dealing with them separately, without assuming that their functions or ultimate inspirations are necessarily the same.

The Z-rod modifying the notched rectangle is simpler than that modifying the double disc, typically having a floriated dome or lyre-shaped terminal at each end, similar to that found at the 'tail' of the latter. Only one termination typically has a link between the floriations. It is usually found as a reversed-N. Influence from the V-rod and from the Z-rod proper to the double disc are found on four of the eight examples from class 1. In class 2 one of the two instances is basically classical and one is peculiar.

The terminations of the Z-rod modifying the snake show great variation and the classical form can only be advanced tentatively as that with the three class 1 symbols of highest quality of execution (Golspie, Dairy Park (34 Sut 17); Drumbuie (82 Inv 4) and Newton House (117 Abd 30)). This form has a floriated dome similar to that seen with the Z-rod proper to the notched rectangle at one terminal, but the other terminal is bulbous, apparently with flared and scrolled ends. The other three examples from class 1 and the six from class 2 differ widely from the classical, with a variety of influences proper to the V-rod and the other forms of the Z-rod, as well as two straight 'Z-rods', on Inverurie 1 (128 Abd 17) and Logierait (537 Per 5). The many peculiarities of this modifying device are probably attributable to its being associated with a symbol that seems to be late in the class 1 sequence, as the snake is overabundant in class 2 (11 snakes in class 1, nine in class 2).

APPENDIX 2

ORIGIN OF THE PICTISH BEAST

Despite a number of attempts to trace the ancestry of the Pictish beast, much is still uncertain. Stevenson (1955, 108–10) holds that it was derived from a long-muzzled animal established in the repertoire of manuscript art in the *Book of Durrow* and later illuminated books and transmitted in metalwork forms, as in the filigree animals on the Hunterston brooch and those drawn on the Monymusk reliquary. This scheme places the origin of the symbol at about the beginning of the eighth century. The fact that the forms of the beast and the crescent separately held by Henderson and Stevenson to be closest to their classical forms are found on the same stone is likely to lead to difficulties with the chronology of the crescent if this late date for the development of the beast is adhered to. The arguments for this later date are countered by Henderson (1958, 51), who compares the beast with lappeted animals on the rather earlier purse and other objects found at Sutton Hoo, and suggests that the beast and the Sutton Hoo animals should be seen as having a common ancestor. This would admit an early seventh-century date for the origin of the beast, which is perhaps more in keeping with the likely date of the crescent. Thomas (1961, 50–3) offers a variety of proposed ancestors for the beast, mostly drawn from Etruscan, La Tène and Gallo-Belgic art, few of which appear to carry conviction as possible antecedent forms, and suggests that the Pictish beast represents the red deer or stag. Laing (1974, 189–99) points, without tracing a detailed ancestry, to Romano-British and post-Roman animals as more likely antecedents of the beast than those cited by Thomas.

APPENDIX 3

FEATURES INCLUDED IN THE TABLE OF PICTISH BEASTS

As a test of the validity of the numerical method of measuring the quality of individual symbols, outlined above, the hypothesis was adopted that those features listed above that are shown by fewer than half those in class 1 in which their presence or absence can be determined are not characteristic of of the symbol. Those features, 7, 11 and 12, were then excluded and the numerical assessment recalculated, based on the remaining nine features. The symbols were then reassigned to form groups as above. In order to make the four groups roughly equal in size, the ranges were adjusted. As the average effect of deleting relatively uncommon features is to increase the values scored by the symbols, the ranges corresponding to each of the symbols A, B and C were decreased and that for D increased. The result shows much movement in the detailed positioning of symbols in groups A and B but little change in C and D. Only four symbols change group and they all move between the foot of group A and the top of group B. The only major changes within any one group are shown by Mortlach (92 Bnf 7) and Dyce 1 (142 Abd 10), both in group B. It is concluded that repetition of the analysis with a restricted set of features yields no significant change in the results obtained.

The author had intended to make a revision of the table given here to include a 13th feature, the scroll found above the feet in some of the 'best' instances, in the calculations. If a point is added for the presence of a scroll, whether on the fore or the hind leg or both, the following changes occur. In group A, Kintore, Crichie (134 Abd 6) moves down to the bottom of the group. In group B, Dyce 1 (142 Abd 10) moves down to third place and Rossie Priory (566 Per 14) moves up to this group from group C. In group C, Glenferness (522 Nai 1) moves up to the same position as the Maiden Stone (525 Abd 3), and Balluderon (567 Ang 3) moves above Birsay (502 Ork 1). In group D, Brodie (521 Mor 1) moves up to the same position as Ulbster (506 Cai 2) and Shandwick (515 Ros 3). Again, the alterations to the table are slight and do not affect the observations in the text.

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Of drawings of the crescent, no 164 is from *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 85 (1940–1), 19; no 74 is from *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 88, (1943–4), 223, pl 42, no 4; no 6 is from *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 74 (1939–40), 60, pl 13; no 81 is from Friell, J G P & Watson, W G (eds), 1984, *Pictish Studies.* (=*Brit Archaeol Rep,* 125), fig 10.7. Of drawings of the Pictish beast, no 161 is from *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 95 (1961–2), 219; no 164 from the same as above; no 114 is from *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 44 (1909–10), 203.

*Jane Murray**

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