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A cross-marked quern from Dunadd and other evidence for relations between Dunadd and Iona

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SUMMARY

A cross-marked quern from Dunadd is described. This cross is shown to belong to a group of similar crosses which occur in a restricted area of Argyll, and which appear to be associated with the activities of the Columban monastery on Iona. This quern, as well as other archaeological and literary evidence, point to the existence of economic and political relations between Dunadd and Iona in the pre-Viking period.

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes a group of Early Christian incised crosses from Argyll, Scotland. These seem to provide archaeological evidence for links between the important early monastery on Iona (RCAMS 1982) and the putative royal inauguration site on the Dalriadic kings at Dunadd (Anderson 1980, 132; Lane 1985, 43). My interest in these crosses arose from a study of a group of querns found in excavations at Dunadd in 1904–5 (Christison 1905, 308, fig 29), some of which were rediscovered in recent excavations (Lane 1981, 5). One of the querns from the old excavations has an incised Latin cross with expanded triangular terminals on its upper surface (illus 1). Its rock-type differs from most of the other querns as it is not of local stone. It was the realization that this quern had been brought from some distance to Dunadd that led to a search for parallels to the decoration.

DESCRIPTION OF THE QUERN

This is the upper stone of a rotary quern (Royal Museum of Scotland Reg No GP323) with rhynd grooves on its lower surface, which is worn down through use (illus 1). The central hole is outlined by a groove on the upper surface. There is an unusual elbow-shaped hole bored through from the top and side of the quern to allow the attachment of a handle. The stone exhibits a high degree of workmanship compared to the other querns from the site. It is regular in outline and section despite the rather intractable rock-type. The incised cross is neatly shaped, with straight sharp edges and V-shaped grooves. The cross would appear to be a primary feature of the quern.

It has been suggested that querns with elbow-shaped holes are an Irish type (Duncan 1982, 119). Close parallels occur at Lagore, Cahercommaun and Carraig Aille, but are also found on three sites in eastern Scotland, at Parkburn, Camptoun and Arniston (Henshall 1958, 261–4). However, the latter have funnel-shaped central holes, and are thicker than the Dunadd quern which is closer to the Irish examples.

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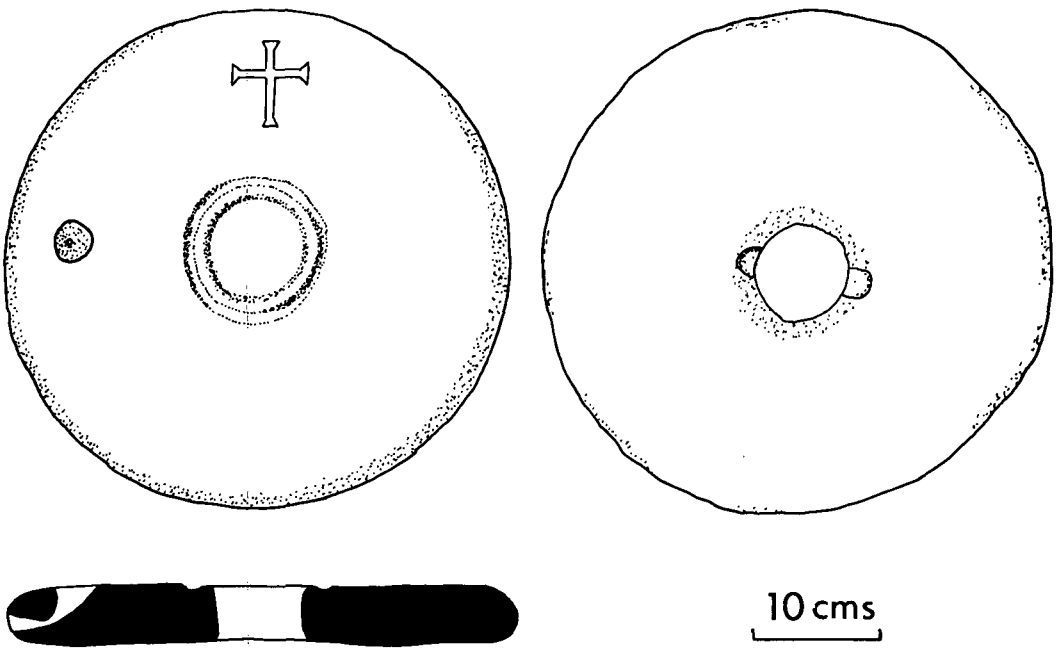


ILLUS 1 Cross-inscribed quern from Dunadd (after Duncan 1982, fig 67)

The lithology of the quern is a quartz–garnet–mica–chlorite schist. Garnet-schists outcrop in Argyll on the east side of Loch Fyne and in Knapdale north of Loch Tarbert (illus 3). This lithology is shared by one other Dunadd quern (GP324), which is also very well made. In 1905 these two querns were selected from the 50 excavated querns to be donated to the National Museum of Antiquities (Christison 1905, 310). The rest are thought to have been re-buried on the site where 18 were rediscovered in 1981 (Lane 1981, 5). In contrast, all of these 18 querns are of the epidiorite and chloritic schists which make up the crag of Dunadd itself.

The garnet-schist querns could have been transported either by sea up the west coast (about 35 km), or across Loch Fyne and overland by the Crinan gap to Dunadd (15 km). They are unlikely to have been formed from glacially transported erratic boulders as the direction of ice-flow was from north-east to south-west in this area. The fact that two querns, both well-made, were formed from this garnet-schist suggests that the rock-type was deliberately sought out. The rock itself is very suitable for querns, as the hard garnets act as grinding grits set in a softer chloritic matrix.

It is clear that the production and transport of this quern involved an expenditure of time and effort far beyond what was normal in the production of querns at Dunadd. Given this differentiation in the quality of the querns, it is possible to see the cross-marked quern as the property of a household from the upper strata of society. At Dunadd this is likely to have been a princely or royal household.

THE FORM OF THE CROSS AND ITS ORIGIN

The cross on the Dunadd quern belongs to the larger group of simple incised crosses which are commonly found on recumbent slabs, upright pillars, boulders and rock faces throughout the Celtic west. Thomas (1971, 112) has described these as 'primary cross-marked stones'. These crosses have not received much attention as their simplicity of form makes accurate dating difficult. They may be amongst the earliest of the stone crosses (Lionard 1961, 100; Thomas 1971, 112) but it is possible that

the type was long-lived (Hamlin 1982, 286). Henderson (1987) has recently designated this group as Class IV Early Christian Monuments, and suggests that the examples in the Pictish areas of eastern Scotland are due to an early phase of Columban activity in the seventh century. While it is possible that the very simplest of these crosses, consisting of plain vertical and horizontal lines, are not amenable to any analysis, the slightly more complex forms may reflect changing fashions in particular regions. In the past all the forms of simple crosses have been grouped together and this may have obscured any regional patterns of use (Hamlin 1982, 290).

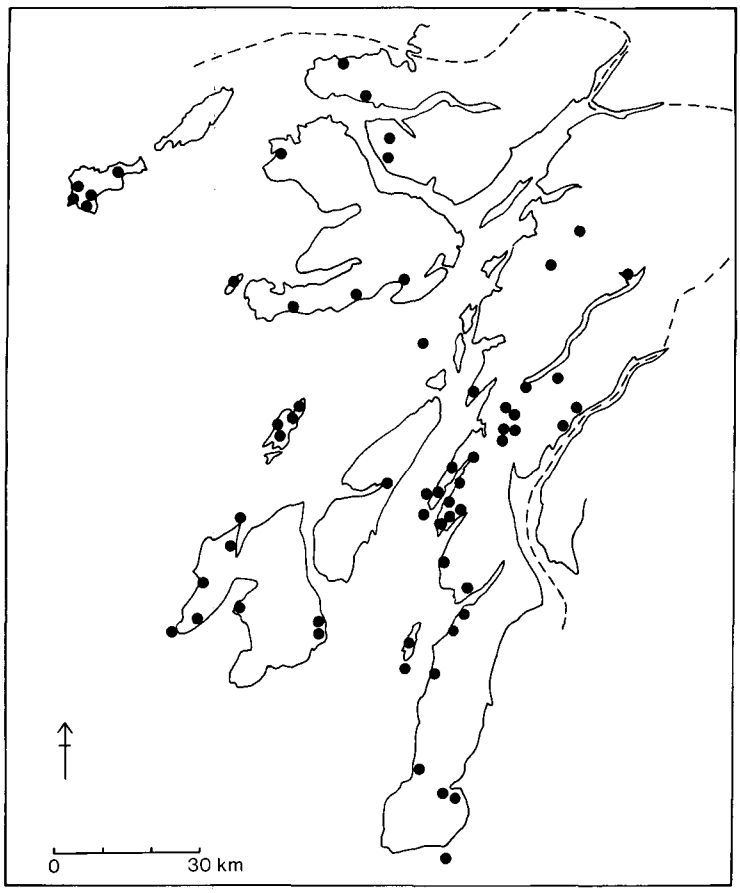
The cross with expanded terminals ultimately derives from Roman and Byzantine predecessors of the fifth and sixth centuries (Lionard 1961, 100; Thomas 1971, 116). It can be found on a variety of portable objects such as pottery, coins, seals and manuscripts (Hamlin 1982, 289); and on church decorations, such as the famous fifth- and sixth-century Ravenna mosaics, which could have been noted by pilgrims and travellers. There is no doubt that there were contacts between the Mediterranean and the Celtic west at this period. The seventh-century Gaulish bishop Arculf visited Iona on his return from the Holy Land and described holy places and monuments to Adomnán in great detail (Meehan 1958). Archaeological evidence for contact is provided by the late fifth- and sixth-century Mediterranean pottery which is found in some quantity in south-west Britain (Thomas 1982). Some of these vessels of Phocean Red Slipware and African Red Slipware have stamped Christian symbols which may have been influential on Early Christian art (Thomas 1987, 9), but none of the British finds has crosses of the form under discussion. There is a single sherd of African Red Slipware from Iona (Reece 1977, 15), but as this example lies well to the north of the major concentration of British finds it may well be a souvenir of a pilgrimage rather than an indication of direct trade with the Mediterranean.

It is possible that in Argyll the motif may not have been copied directly from imported objects. A more direct source would be the Insular manuscripts (themselves influenced by Byzantine manuscripts) which have representations of crosses with expanded terminals. Notable examples occur in the late sixth- or early seventh-century *Cathach* (Roth 1979, abb 20), traditionally associated with Colum Cille [Columba]. Adomnán mentions several times that books believed to have been written by Colum Cille were revered and miraculous powers were attributed to them (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 343–5, 451–3). This might well explain the popularity of this cross-form on Iona and the surrounding areas. As we shall see below, the area where these crosses are found corresponds to the areas where monks from Iona are known to have been active.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CROSSES IN ARGYLL

If it is possible that there are regional variations in the form of simple crosses as Hamlin (1982, 290) has suggested, it is important to look at the distribution of cross-forms in restricted regions. Argyll is a suitable area for such a study because of the comprehensive coverage of the Early Christian monuments provided by the RCAMS (1971; 1974; 1980; 1982; 1984). Additional information on Mid-Argyll is provided by a modern survey (Campbell & Sandeman 1962). These sources give a uniform coverage of Argyll (omitting Cowal) so that any distributions within this area are not the result of differential recording, but do reflect archaeological distributions.

If the expanded terminal cross-form was long-lived in this region it would be expected to be found widely on the Early Christian sites of Argyll. There are around 50 sites in the study area which have produced about 150 Early Christian crosses or cross-marked stones (illus 2). The sites are fairly evenly distributed but are clearly associated with patches of good arable land, which tend to be coastal. This distribution contrasts markedly with the distribution of the crosses with expanded terminals (illus 3). It is clear that this distribution is not merely a reflection of the overall distribution

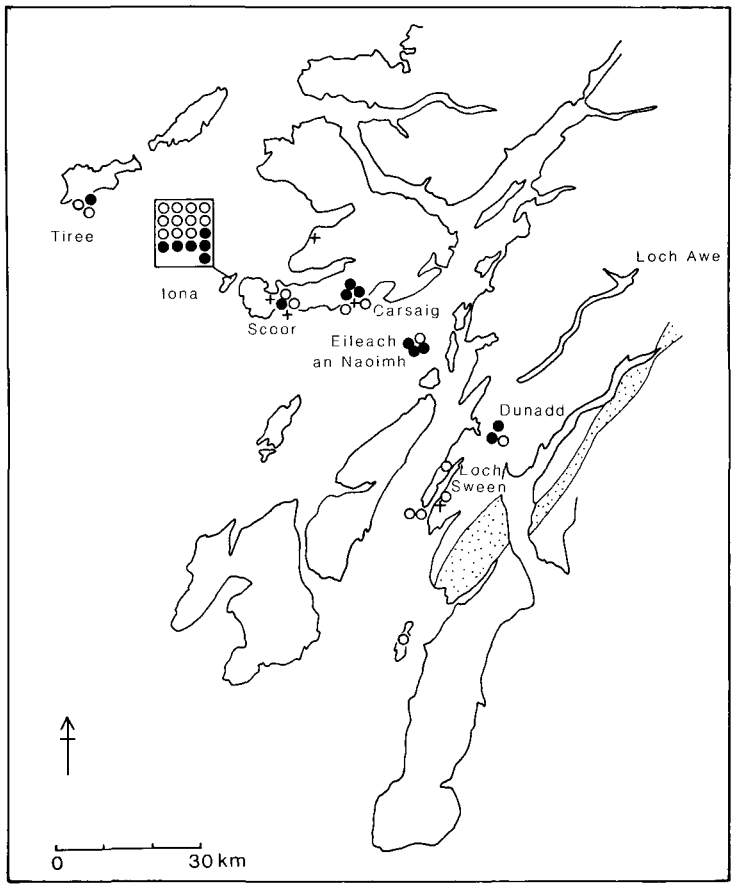


ILLUS 2 Distribution of Early Christian sites with crosses of all types. Dotted line shows the boundary of the study area within Argyll

of sites, or of the differential recording of monuments. The crosses with expanded terminals appear to form a coherent geographical group. In order to find an explanation for this phenomenon, it is necessary to look at the sites in detail.

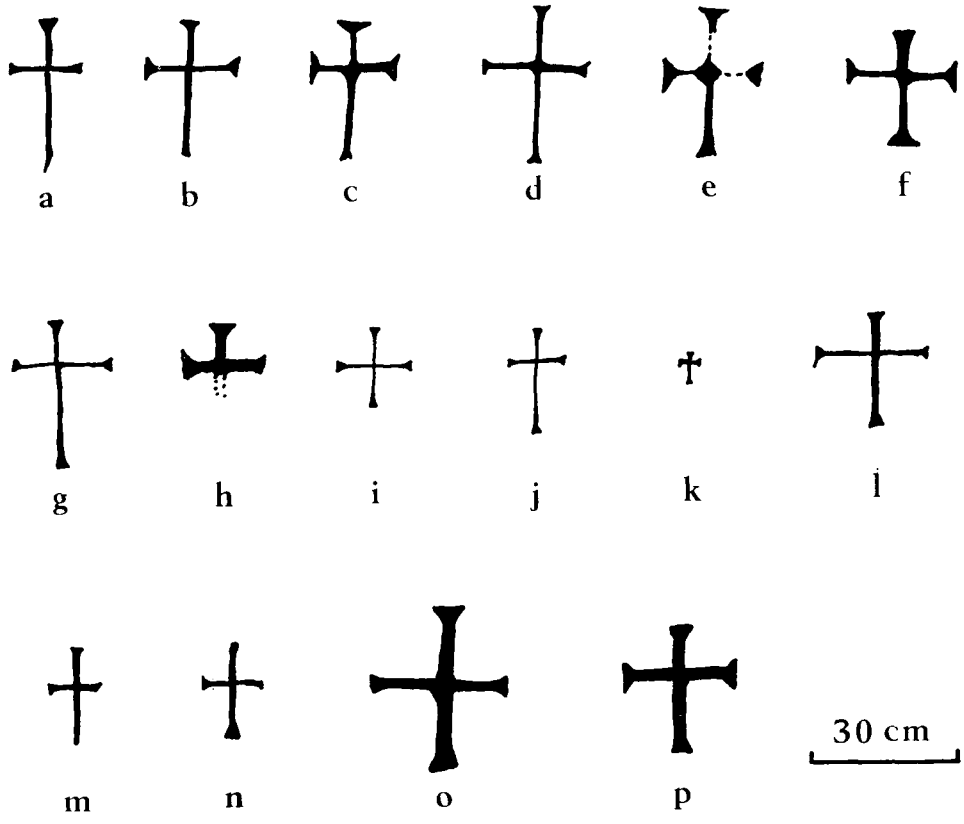
I have been able to identify 17 crosses from six sites which share the characteristics of the cross on the Dunadd quern. Drawings of these crosses illustrate the homogeneity of the group (illus 4). Other simple crosses, such as sunken, raised or outline forms are not stylistically related to this group. There is, however, a group of forms which appear to be related to the crosses with expanded terminals. These are simple incised crosses with barred, bifid, circular or spiral terminals. The distribution of this group (illus 3) coincides with the distribution of expanded terminal form except for an extension southwards to the area around Loch Sween.

Crosses with expanded terminals are found on seven sites: Hynish on Tiree (RCAMS 1980, fig 165a); Iona (RCAMS 1982, nos 6.7–11, 16); Nun's Cave, Carsaig (RCAMS 1980, figs 190d, e, h) and Scoor Cave (RCAMS 1980, fig 197a), both on the Ross of Mull; Eileach an Naoimh in the Garvellochs (RCAMS 1984, nos 354.2, 3); Barnakill near Dunadd (Okasha 1985, pl 7); and on the quern from Dunadd (illus 4). These sites lie in an east–west group running from Tiree to Dunadd. There is a concentration of the crosses on Iona which has one of the largest collections of Early Christian



ILLUS 3 Distribution of incised crosses with expanded terminals (solid circles), and those with barred, bifid, circular and spiral terminals (open circles). The outcrop of garnet-schist is shown dotted. Possible quarry sites for the Iona stone crosses are shown as crosses

monuments in Britain and Ireland with over 100 stones recorded (RCAMS 1982, 14). The Iona collection includes six crosses with expanded terminals and 11 with the other forms of elaboration. The other five sites, except Dunadd, would also appear to be religious rather than secular in nature. The two caves on the Ross of Mull have many religious carvings and could be interpreted as retreats or *deserta* for anchorites or penitents (RCAMS 1980, 28). The stone from Hynish, Tiree was found in the make-up of a barn floor (*ibid*, no 276, 3), but could possibly have come from the daughter house of Iona, *campus Lunge*, which existed on Tiree (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 106). However, there were several other monasteries on Tiree at this time and *campus Lunge* is not securely identified (RCAMS 1980, 27). The group of crosses on the Garvellochs at Eileach an Naoimh is associated with the well-known monastic site traditionally founded by St Brendan (Watson 1926, 81). In the past this has been identified with the Iona daughter house on *Hinba* (Skene 1874, 318), but the RCAMS reject this identification (1984, 182). The cross at Barnakill (Okasha 1985, 63–5) was found only two kilometres from Dunadd. The importance of this cross is emphasized by the fact that it is the only Early Christian cross from Argyll with an inscription, except for those on Iona (Nieke 1984, vol 2, 194). The *-kil* place-name may signify the former presence of a religious site. A simple cross with



ILLUS 4 Expanded terminal crosses from Argyll. (Scale 1:15 except p at 1:4. All drawings after RCAMS except where stated.) a–f, Iona; g, Hynish; h, Scoor Cave; i–k, Nun's Cave; l–n, Eileach an Naoimh; o, Barnakill (after Okasha 1985, pl 7); p, Dunadd quern (after Duncan 1982, fig 67)

barred terminals was found on a rock outcrop nearby and was interpreted as a possible *termon* or church boundary cross (Campbell & Sandeman 1964, no 417a).

The distribution of these sites in relation to the area of influence of Iona is interesting. Although Bede claimed that Iona was the head of many monasteries throughout Dál Riata and Pictland, this interpretation has been disputed (Smyth 1984, 102–3). Only three monasteries are mentioned by Adomnán in his *Life of Columba* as being daughter houses of Iona (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 106). These were *Mag Lunge* on Tiree; *Cella Diuni* on Loch Awe; and one on *Hinba*, which may have been Jura or Colonsay (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 154). Additional evidence for this restricted area of activity is given by an analysis of places mentioned by Adomnán. Apart from places on the sea-route to Ireland, and Colum Cille's journeys to Pictland and Skye, the places mentioned are restricted to Tiree, Mull, Morven, Ardnamurchan and Lorne. The crosses with expanded terminals all fall within this restricted area of northern Argyll.

The distribution of the related group of crosses shows an additional cluster around the shores of Loch Sween. This may be significant as Doide on Loch Sween is suggested as the site of the quarry which provided the stone in the eighth century for St John's Cross on Iona (RCAMS 1982, 201). Illustration 3 shows the other possible quarry sites for stones which were taken to Iona in the Early Christian period (*ibid*, 180). These sites correspond to the areas where the two groups of simple

crosses are found. The evidence for long-distance transport of stone at this period is surprising, but not unique. In County Down granite from the Mourne Mountains was used in the construction of the early church at St John's Point about 15 km away (Jope 1966, 295–6). At Clonmacnoise sandstone was brought up the Shannon from County Clare to make grave-slabs (Lionard 1961, 145). In Scotland, at the Pictish fort of Dundurn, stone for the ramparts was brought from at least 15 km (Alcock & Driscoll 1985, 5).

There is therefore a strong suggestion that the group of crosses with expanded terminals was the result of the activity of clerics from Iona. This is shown by the coherence of the group of sites with these crosses; the concentration on Iona; the association with areas where monks from Iona are known to have been active; and the association with the inscription on the cross at Barnakill. There seems to be clear literary evidence that Irish monks did apply crosses to secular objects. Adomnán mentions that it was customary to bless common objects with the sign of the cross (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 359–61), and Riché (1981, 63) quotes a seventh-century denunciation of the practices of Irish monks at Luxeuil, who were accused of making signs of the cross on common implements.

The presence of one of these crosses on a quern at Dunadd, a major secular site, is of great interest and will be discussed below.

DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE ARGYLL

As this study is deliberately concerned only with the group of crosses in Argyll no extensive search for parallels was undertaken for areas outside Argyll. However, a few comments on the wider distribution of the form can be made. No other examples of the form are recorded for the rest of Scotland in the massive, though now out-dated survey of Scottish crosses by Romilly Allen (1903). However, there is one from North Uist (RCAMS 1928, no 165) and one on the Papil shrine from Shetland (Thomas 1973, fig 12, 27a). There is also a recent discovery of a probable example from Rhum (Fisher, *in litt*). There is a series of crosses from Galloway which have groups of three or four small incised equal-armed crosses associated with other larger crosses (Allen 1903, figs 541–2, 545–6, 548). Some of these small crosses have expanded, barred or circular terminals. These crosses obviously belong to a coherent regional group which has a scheme of decoration which differs from the Argyll group in having groups of small crosses subsidiary to a larger motif.

There is one cross with expanded terminals in the Isle of Man, though again it is subsidiary to a larger motif (Kermode 1907, 111, pl 10, 28). In Wales there are four rather crude examples (Nash-Williams 1950, nos 88, 251, 260, 301). There are also a number of inscriptions in Wales where the form is used as an initial or punctuation cross (*ibid*, fig 259). In Cornwall there are three, again on crosses of other forms (Langdon 1896, 248–53). Ireland has no comprehensive survey of crosses but the form is widely distributed (Lionard 1961, 101). Hamlin (*in litt*) suggests that the form is more common than Lionard suggests, but that the distribution is patchy.

The form appears to have been rarely used in the Celtic areas, except in Ireland and the west coast of Scotland. The size of the group in Argyll shows that there it was a popular motif.

DATING

As with all the simple cross-forms, it is difficult to date the Scottish examples with expanded terminals. Only the Barnakill stone has an inscription, which Thomas (1971, 112) ascribed to the seventh century; although Okasha (1985, 64) is more cautious. The inscription seems to have been partly recut in recent times and present readings conflict with those previously published (Nieke 1984, vol 3, 204). The Dunadd quern is presumably associated with the main period of occupation of

Dunadd, which is now thought to fall substantially in the period from the late sixth to early ninth centuries (Lane 1985). The site does not appear to have survived for long into the Viking Age. Iona was founded between AD 563 and 573 (Smyth 1984, 100) and it is probable that all the crosses in the area post-date this foundation. It is also likely that the large majority of the early crosses on Iona pre-date the Viking attacks of the early ninth century. Although there was some occupation in the ninth to 12th centuries there is little physical evidence for this (RCAMS 1984, 48) and very few of the grave-slabs can be dated to this period.

The evidence seems to suggest that the form was in use in Argyll between the late sixth and early ninth centuries, though it could have been for a restricted period within this range. Indeed, the limited geographical range of the group suggests that the form was in use in the early part of this period. A similarly early date has been suggested by Henderson (1987) for similar types of cross in Pictland. Thomas has suggested that the decoration on the Papil shrine dates to around AD 700 (Thomas 1973, 28).

Although the examples from outside of Scotland are not directly relevant to this study, it is worth noting that many of them could fall within the suggested date-range of the Argyll crosses. Lionard (1961, 100) dates two of these crosses to the early eighth century, though on rather dubious historical grounds. The four Welsh examples belong to Nash-Williams's Group 2 Early Christian monuments, dated by him to the seventh to ninth centuries (Nash-Williams 1950, 18).

THE SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE QUERN

It has already been shown that the cross-inscribed quern stands out from the other more utilitarian querns in terms of its quality of finishing, its decoration and its production source. The quern can therefore be seen as a symbol of status as it was more expensive to produce; while the cross is presumably intended to protect the corn from evil. There is some evidence that querns and mill-stones had some symbolic significance at this period. In a story in Cogitosus's seventh century *Life of Saint Brigid* miraculous powers are ascribed to a mill-stone (MacEoin 1981, 13). Adomnán states that in his day a cross set in a *molari lapidi* stood on Iona. The Andersons (1961, 115) took this to refer to a quern, in the mistaken belief that water-mills were not in use at this period. It is now known that water-mills were in use in early medieval Ireland (MacEoin 1981, 14), but Adomnán's usage could apply to a quern or a mill-stone. This use of a heavy stone for a cross-base may be purely utilitarian, but a symbolic element cannot be ruled out. A quern, which coincidentally has an expanded terminal cross incised on it, was reused as a grave-marker at Clonmacnoise (Lionard 1961, 109, fig 1, 14). In addition, the querns from Parkburn and Camptoun already mentioned as parallels to the Dunadd example were reused in the construction of burial cists (Henshall 1956, 261, 283). It may be that this association between querns and burial is a simple one. A quern is used for producing bread, one of the staples of life, and therefore a broken or disused quern is perhaps easily associated with death. However, querns were possibly more significant items at this period than their utilitarian function might suggest. They were certainly widely traded in Saxon England (Hodges 1982, 124) and apparently in Early Christian Ireland (Jope 1966, 131). Hodges (1982, 123) has even suggested that the 'black stones' referred to in the trade agreement between Offa and Charlemagne were querns. This trade is too widespread to be wholly explained by the availability of suitable rock-types.

EVIDENCE FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN DUNADD AND IONA

In the seventh and eighth centuries Iona was one of the major centres of learning and artistic development, not only for Scotland but for England and Ireland as well. Contacts between Dalriada,

Pictland, Northumbria and Ireland resulted in a fusion of artistic styles, as exemplified in the Book of Kells (RCAMS 1984, 47). Archaeological evidence shows that at the same period Dunadd was a site of major regional significance. The wealth of metalworking debris from the old excavations (Christison 1905; Craw 1930) has been supplemented by much new material (Lane 1980; 1981; 1985) which shows the production of high status jewellery. The large numbers of querns from the site indicate some form of centralized agricultural processing. The site has also produced the largest collection of vessels of Continental imported pottery of Thomas's Class E ware from any site in Britain and Ireland (Thomas 1981; Campbell forthcoming). These imports, and others such as glass, beads and metalwork, suggest that Dunadd may have acted as a focus for the importation and redistribution of luxury goods in the region (Nieke & Duncan forthcoming).

It has been suggested above that the cross-marked quern from Dunadd was linked in some way with Iona. It would not be surprising if there were close links between the major secular and monastic centres of the region. In Ireland, abbots of major monasteries were often related to the local ruling dynasty, just as Colum Cille and some of his successors were related to the ruling kindred of the Northern Uí Néill. Royal burial grounds were associated with major monastic centres at Armagh, Clonmacnoise and Glendalough (Hughes & Hamlin 1977, 78). Although the tradition of the royal burial site on Iona, the *Reilig Odhrain*, is not mentioned before the 12th century, there seems little reason to doubt that some kings were buried there in the early medieval period (RCAMS 1984, 48). Given this background, it is no surprise that there is other archaeological and literary evidence to support the idea of close links between Dunadd and Iona.

The small slate disc from Dunadd inscribed *inomine* (Okasha 1985, pl 18) points to the presence of a literate Christian on the site, possibly in the eighth century (Jackson 1973, 168). Another possible link between Dunadd and monastic sites is provided by the discovery of a piece of the yellow mineral orpiment from the 1981 excavations (Lane, pers comm). This rare mineral must have been imported from the Mediterranean, where the major sources in classical times were Vesuvius and Asia Minor. Orpiment was used to make the brilliant yellow pigment found in manuscript illustrations and has been detected on many Early Christian manuscripts from the sixth century onwards (Roosen-Runge & Werner 1960, 265). It is interesting that at least one of these, the Book of Kells, has been suggested to have been produced, at least partly, on Iona (Henry 1967, 69–70). As mentioned above, it seems that Dunadd was a major centre for the redistribution of imported Continental pottery. It is therefore possible that the single E ware vessel from Iona (Reece 1977, 21) could have been brought there from Dunadd. The evidence of Adomnán's story about Gallic merchants (see below) could be taken to support the view that such imports would not come directly to Iona.

The quarrying of stone at Loch Sween and at sites on Mull for use on Iona has already been mentioned. There is little doubt that the right to quarry stone must have been sanctioned by the local ruler. In other Celtic areas charters survive which record gifts of land and privileges by royalty to churches (Davies 1982), but unfortunately none has been preserved from Dalriada. We cannot therefore know on what basis these rights were granted, but Adomnán gives some indication that such rights were possessed by Iona and that they were repaid in kind (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 118).

The literary evidence for contacts between Dunadd and Iona rests on three contemporary sources: Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, written at the end of the seventh century (Anderson & Anderson 1961); the Scottish entries in the Irish Annals (Bannerman 1974, 9–26); and the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, a civil administrative document originally of the seventh century (Bannerman 1974, 27–156). In the first of these sources Adomnán relates a story about Colum Cille visiting the '*caput regionis*' where he meets Gallic merchants. This place has been taken to refer to Dunadd (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 39). The large amounts of imported material found there, including E ware

produced in France, would seem to be very strong circumstantial evidence to support this claim The other suggested site, Dunollie, has also produced a little E ware (Alcock 1979, 4), but not in the same quantity or variety as Dunadd. However, there are problems with this identification. Watson claimed (1926, 92) that *caput regionis*, the 'chief place of the region', was merely Adomnán's translation of *cenn tíre*, literally 'head-land', the Irish name for Kintyre. This explanation was rejected on linguistic grounds by the Andersons (1961, 264 n1), but unfortunately they did not explain in detail their objections to Watson's view, and so Bannerman (1974, 108) appears unconvinced. It is worth looking at this point in detail. It is true that elsewhere Adomnán translates Irish place-names directly into the Latin equivalent, for example, *campus lunge* for *Mag Lunge*. However, he does not do this consistently, as he sometimes quotes local place-names in their Irish form. The crux of the matter is whether the Latin *regio* and the Irish *tír* are cognate. Adomnán consistently uses *regio* in its modern sense of a region, for example *regionem Samariae* (Meehan 1958, 90) and *Eorpae regionibus* (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 458). The Irish *tír* would surely have been translated as the Latin *terra*, as is explicitly stated in the tenth century *Glossary of Cormac* (O'Donovan & Stokes 1868, 162). Further confirmation is given by Adomnán's use of *caput* in the sense of a chief place when he describes Rome as *caput est omnium civitatum* (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 542). The name is surprisingly imprecise if it does refer to Dunadd, given Adomnán often mentions the names of places, even when referring to small bays and other natural features. His failure to name a site which must have been known to him suggests that the story could be a hagiographic convention. Less cynically, it could be argued that Adomnán assumed his readers would know where the 'chief place of the region' was. Whichever interpretation is adopted, the story is principally useful in throwing light on Adomnán's perception of trade contacts in his own time. It is clear that he considered that foreign merchants would not come to Iona itself, but to a site on the mainland. This supports the theory put forward above that trade was controlled by the king through a secular site.

Two other stories of Adomnán show that Iona was deeply involved in the secular politics of the time. The first is the account of the 'ordination' of Aedán as king of the Dál Riata by Colum Cille (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 473–5), an event which is supposed to have taken place on Iona. The whole point of this story is an obvious attempt to give Iona influence over the choice of king in return for spiritual legitimization of the succession. The second story implies that Colum Cille visited Aedán in an unnamed royal place of residence (*ibid*, 229). Again Colum Cille is shown as being involved in the choice of the future king. Whatever the truth of these stories, they show that in the late seventh century Iona had a strong interest in the secular politics of Dál Riata, and that travel between Iona and secular sites was a normal activity.

More direct historical evidence is provided by the Scottish entries in the Irish Annals. These entries have been shown to be derived from an 'Iona Chronicle' kept as a contemporary record at Iona in the late seventh and eighth centuries (Bannerman 1974, 25). Apart from ecclesiastical events, these Scottish annalistic entries describe many secular events, including battles and deaths of kings, which are associated with Dalriada. Dunadd itself is mentioned as being beseiged in AD 683 and taken in AD 736 (Lane 1985, 43). It is clear that clerics on Iona had an intimate and immediate knowledge of secular events on the mainland of Argyll.

The third contemporary source, the *Senchus Fer nAlban*, gives lists of households in some parts of Dalriada, and was possibly written in Latin (Bannerman 1974, 39). Higget (1987, 125–6) has restated the view that literacy was confined to clerics at this period, and it has been suggested that the Scottish annals and the regnal lists were compiled by monks (Anderson 1980, 202). Nieke (forthcoming) has further suggested that the *Senchus* was also produced in monastic centres. Both Nieke (*ibid*) and Driscoll (forthcoming) have recently stressed the symbolically powerful nature of written documents and inscribed stones in non-literate Early Medieval Scotland. If clerics were involved in

such administrative matters it might explain the presence of the Christian graffiti and symbols at Dunadd.

In conclusion, the cross-marked quern from Dunadd has been shown to belong to a group of crosses which is closely associated with Iona, and the quern itself seems likely to have been carved by a cleric from the monastery. The presence, on the one hand, of the cross-marked quern, the Christian graffiti and the exotic manuscript colourant at Dunadd, as well as the inscribed cross at Barnakill; and on the other hand, the presence of stone brought from the mainland and imported continental pottery at Iona, suggest the possibility of some form of economic exchange between the two power-centres of the region. This exchange may have taken the form of the king bestowing goods and privileges on Iona in return for spritual favours such as the right to burial on the sacred soil of Iona and church approval of the king's authority. The contemporary literary evidence shows that regular contacts were maintained between the royal households of Argyll and Iona, and there is a suggestion that some clerics may have been involved in secular administrative duties. All the evidence reinforces the view that Dunadd was the major secular site of the region in the Early Historic period.

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