

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF CRAFT, METALWORK

CHRISTIAN METALWORK
OF THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES

BY

CAROL BARNES

1992

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1992

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN AND
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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The craft of metalwork has been in existence in Ireland since 2000BC. It is believed that art and craftsmanship began with the advent of the Bronze Age 2000 BC - 500 BC. The metalwork produced during this period was produced mainly for the warrior chieftain: weapons for battle, jewellery to adorn his body. These pieces were very simplistic in nature. The decoration used on these pieces was in the La Tene style, a combination of curved lines both obeying and contradicting the laws of symmetry. A series of finely coiled spirals would be added to enliven the decoration. La Tene style was one of the first major styles to greatly influence Irish Art.

This thesis will deal with the Christian metalwork vessels of the eighth and ninth centuries, concentrating primarily on five pieces: The Ardagh Chalice which dates from the eighth century, the Derrynaflan strainer ladle, paten and stand which date from the eighth century and the Derrynaflan Chalice which dates from the ninth century.

I believe these pieces to be the most ornate from a period which represented the flowering of the metalwork craft, matched nowhere else to such a degree.

The pieces will be discussed under various headings: Why they were made?; the techniques and skills involved in making them; their decoration; and, how outside influences affected the above headings.

Chapter One will consider the impact Christianity had on Ireland. The spread of Christianity helps us to understand how various styles found their way into the workshops.

Chapter Two will trace the style of these vessels from their origins. It will consider how the style developed from the simple La Tene style, (using examples from a typical La Tene piece, a bronze trumpet dating from the first century AD). Until its fantastic and beautiful use on the Ardagh Chalice and pieces of the Derrynaflan hoard. I will then show, using examples from the 'Soiscel Molaise' bookshrine (it's decoration dating from the eleventh century) how the style diminished in perfection due to Viking raids in Ireland.

In Chapter Three the techniques used will be discussed. It will look at how the techniques in Ireland compared with techniques elsewhere in Europe and how they influenced each other, as their styles did.

In Chapter Four the Ardagh Chalice, the Derrynaflan Chalice, the strainer ladle, paten and stand that I have chosen will be discussed in detail. These particular pieces of work show the elaborateness of the period. They show the highest standard of technical skill. These vessels were most probably made for the love of God, for the celebration of the mass rather than for money.

CHAPTER 1

THE IMPACT CHRISTIANITY HAD ON IRELAND

Ireland was never really brought under the rule of the Roman Empire and its imperial system. The early Irish society that existed was a very independent one. It had its own language and its own law, a very confident nation of people. Ireland was made up of very small tuaths, each ruled by its own king. No coinage system existed, therefore their wealth was understood by the amount of land they owned. There were many different kingdoms dispersed over a small area of land, so, as a result, each King and his people did not really enjoy on extravagant amount of wealth.

People rarely moved outside their own tuaths, with the exception of a special class of person who had certain defined intellectual or artistic skills. This class included poets, judges, historians and craftsmen who worked in precious materials and in due course was extended to the Christian clergy. Such people were free to travel from tuath to tuath without harm. The King represented his tuath. Craftsmen worked for him and he showed his status through his personal display. Brooches, hair pieces, even his horse would have had decorated strapping. Jewelled ornaments indicated status. (5,p.26)

When Ireland eventually did come under the influence of Rome it was, 'the Rome of St Peter and Paul, not that of Caesars' (13,p.11)

Christianity was introduced in the fifth century AD. into Ireland. The largest influence from Roman Britain was the mission of St. Patrick. According to St Patrick's biographer, Tirechan in the seventh century, St Patrick brought across the Shannon 'Fifty bells, Fifty patens, Fifty Chalices, altar-stones, books of law, book of the Gospels and leaving them in new places'.
(13,p.125)

Tirechan also refers to a craftsman called Assicus a companion of St Patrick, a coppersmith who made altars, bookcovers and covers for patens. St Patrick and his companions converted the Island to Christianity and the faith remained firmly implanted in Ireland.

Christianity brought many new ideas and practises into Ireland. Christianity also placed many new demands on the craftsman. In order to celebrate the rites of the Church many new objects were required, collections of readings, copies of the scriptures; many new objects were needed that must have been quite alien to the native people. (2,pp.54-59)

Christian monasteries were the driving force behind the developments and achievements which came together beautifully in the eighth-ninth

centuries, otherwise known as the Golden Age in Irish Art. The fifth century missionaries had brought with them a church system which needed to be accommodated in Ireland. Due to the way Tuaths were organised, monks began founding communities to follow stern rules of life. The new Christian enthusiasm swept into Ireland. Monasteries began with maybe two or three monks settling in a small hut. Then as Christianity took hold, missionaries travelled through Europe and word spread about Ireland's new found religion. Pilgrims began travelling to Ireland to find the Irish schools. These small dwellings expanded. The people brought with them new ideas, techniques and materials. Ireland came into contact with a new impulse, coming from foreign monasteries.

The church was transformed. Monasteries were dominant. The conversion of Ireland introduced a change in the patronage of art. The importance of the chieftain as client and patron of artists diminished as did his place in the organisation of the country amidst the growing authority of the monasteries, which became the centre of all culture and intellectual life. All artistic endeavour was concentrated in the decoration of religious objects whereas before this period weapons and jewellery were the focus. Each different craft that was carried on in the monasteries,

workshops (metalwork, stonecarving, manuscript illumination) all influenced each other. The carved ornamentation on stone crosses could be repoussed on metal, or drawn with pen on manuscripts.

Native lay metal workers must also have been commissioned to work for the church at an early stage. With them they would have brought their knowledge of technique, solving the problems of fabricating church utensils and ornaments. These designs would have been based on imported models, brought into Ireland by missionaries and pilgrims, or models which were taken back to Ireland during early raids on England. The simplicity of church vessels was often a metaphor for sanctity. These vessels had to be of the highest standard. Costs of making a piece did not have the same meaning as they would have today. The pieces made during this period were most probably votive pieces, made for the love of God, no payment was necessary. Artistic work, especially if carried out by clerics, would have been considered a form of religious devotion. By the end of the seventh century the Irish church was dominated by vast monastic foundations. It is believed that monasteries maintained craft workshops and that most religious objects were made in monastic workshops. Apart from ecclesiastical centers there is evidence of the practice of

metal, glassworking and enamelling on secular sites. The craftsmen who produced pieces in these places were usually skilled workers who travelled from patron to patron.

(13,pp.11-17)

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STYLE OF ART,
FROM ITS ORIGINS PLACED IN THE LA TENE STYLE
THROUGH TO THE EIGHTH AND NINTH CENTURIES.

The early Bronze Age (4000 BC - 2500 BC).

The later Bronze Age (2500 BC - 1200BC)

The last stage of the Bronze Age
(1200BC - 300BC)

The Iron Age (300BC - 450AD)

Early Christian Ireland (400AD - 1000AD)

Viking Invasions (100AD - 1169AD)

The first people to settle in Ireland arrived around the year seven thousand B.C. Artistic activity did not begin until around two thousand B.C., with the beginning of the Bronze Age. The origins of Irish early Christian art and the beginning of its development is found in the art of Pagan Ireland. The artists' main preoccupation at this time was making ornaments and arms for the warrior chieftain. The chieftain was the king of the Tuath and he had all authority.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STYLE OF ART

The earliest metal work was the manufacture of small discs from thin sheet gold, with geometric designs predominating.

(illus. 1,2,3)). The Irish Bronze Age artists did not show great originality in their artwork. Their use of applied decoration remained limited. They used the same narrow range of geometric patterns throughout the period. These consisted of straight incised lines, triangles, rectangles, squares, concentric circles and dots. There was a total absence of any attempt at representational art.

The Bronze Age was followed by the Iron Age which marked the arrival of further artistic influences. The greatest of these was the Celtic La Tene culture. This culture transformed the native Bronze Age tradition.



(illus. 1) Gold-foil covered
lead bulla
(Front and back)
Example of Bronze Age Design.



(illus. 2) Two Gold Discs.
Example of Bronze Age Design.



Fig. 1. Metal objects from the site of the Iron Age (1200-600 B.C.).

Fig. 2. Metal objects from the site of the Iron Age (1200-600 B.C.).

Along with the rest of Europe underwent industrial and economic changes in this period. About 1200 B.C. onwards, a number of new objects made their appearance many of which had parallels in the Tumulus cultures of Continental Europe. Iron tools, sickles, anvils, chisels, gouges, and sockets. Irish industries were however under the immediate influence of the so-called 'south-western horizon' and both tools and personal ornaments have their closest parallels there. Earlier varieties of implement such as becketed and palstaves also continued in use.

Our knowledge of the period derives from a number of which consist of ranges of tools and give evidence of highly developed production. In the later part of the period, Irish iron broadened the scope of their work and of adaptation of imported metal objects.

The achievements of the Irish go to considerable heights particularly in the period. Some ornaments such as 'gongs' were characteristically Irish, while others analogous on mainland of Europe. Habitation has yet been uncovered. Iron kept and gold was grown. Clay pottery, probably domestic ware, is known. Occupied sites however and from a number of graves. Only a couple of burials can be dated to the period and these provide evidence of cremation was practiced.

The period is important in that it shows a high degree of emphasis and organization. Production of metal objects appears to be organized and the presence of Irish iron in England and in Europe suggests that trade was in existence. New techniques



(illus. 3) Gold Lunula. Example
of Bronze Age Design

ing industry in Ireland at the beginning of the Earlier Bronze Age are not very well known. No mine or smith's workshop of this period is known to Irish geology and so the precise procedures by which the precious metal was gathered, worked and traded remain unclear. However, it seems certain that along with the techniques which resulted in the production of copper and bronze tools and weapons, came the realisation that the application of many of the same techniques could produce objects of another class which would be made, used and exported throughout the entire Bronze Age.

1500 B.C.

One of the most striking features of Earlier Bronze Age gold-working in Ireland is the restricted nature of the types of objects which were produced. The gold workers were essentially confined to the manufacture of simple flat objects – represented overwhelmingly by annular or semi-circular sheets of gold, discs and varying sizes of pendants. This restricted repertoire is probably equally indicative of the limitations of gold-working technique, restricted availability of gold and cultural constraints which demanded simple, easily made objects and which, in some cases, may have been similar ornaments previously made from other materials.

The earliest phases of gold-working are essentially represented by the so-called 'sun-discs' associated with the patterns incorporating concentric circles and radial lines. These have been found frequently in pairs and are thought to have been stitched to an organic backing by means of central perforations and rim notches. Among other sheet-gold objects of this phase are two ear-rings and earrings of unknown provenance and another decorated object of uncertain use (but certainly a personal ornament) from Deeshanned, Co. Down which

consists of two simply decorated strips of gold with rounded ends. These also belong to this early period but as exact parallels are lacking, it is difficult to indicate their relationship to other sheet-gold objects.

The main product of earlier bronze age goldsmiths of this period of perhaps five hundred years is the lunula. Of over a hundred or so recorded examples, at least eighty have been found in Ireland, either singly or in hoards of up to four lunulae. Recent typological studies have identified three types – *Classical*, *Unaccomplished* and *Provincial*. Those which have been found on the Continent, with the exception of the *Provincial*, appear to be Irish exports. While it is certain that the lunula developed as a type in Ireland the main difficulty has been to identify a prototype from which it might have evolved. Among those suggested are amber and spacer-plate necklaces which display similar decoration and early Continental copper ornaments. The converse has however also been argued. The fact that the artifactual associations of lunulae, other than lunulae themselves, are few and unreliable has presented its own difficulties. This has led Taylor (1961) to compare the decorative motifs of the lunulae to the range and sequence of ornament on early bronze decorated pottery of British and Irish origin. The links with Irish beaker pottery seem somewhat tenuous and suggest that the *Classical* lunula, which is the refined and skilled type, is the earliest, allows for a period of experimentation and development. *Unaccomplished* lunulae are only found in Ireland suggesting that the better pieces were selected for export. As both types have been found together in hoards they may simply reflect variations in standards of technique and workmanship.

Until a satisfactory prototype and sequence of development has been established it will remain difficult to establish reliable date brackets for lunulae. However, the production of a single type of sheet-gold object over an extensive period does suggest an ultra-conservative or perhaps uninnovative group of workers whose output was restricted for a particular reason. We have no real evidence of how or on what occasions lunulae were used it may be suggested that their use was confined to certain occasions, such as funerals, or

lunula, Cat. 4, p. 78 and gold disc, Cat. c, p. 80
and gold disc, Cat. c, p. 80.

Iron replaced bronze as the main metal from five hundred B.C. The Celts dominated the country. The Celtic craft workers, while introducing their own designs which were mainly non representational and abstract, did not ignore the existing tradition and a fusion of both elements happened. A large quantity of Roman objects found their way to Ireland due to the attacks of the warring celts on the defenceless provinces of Britain. These objects gave local craft workers the opportunity to imitate and adapt the Roman designs. The Irish penannular brooch is originally a Roman design. (illus. 4). Roman artists used representational motifs; horses, hunting scenes and plant sources were used.

LA TENE ART

La Tene art is almost wholly non-representational, exhibiting a vast repertoire of abstract patterns. La Tene style is a continental style. It made its way to Ireland due to the Celts immigrating to Ireland before the Bronze Age (4000BC - 300 BC). On the rare occasions when humans or animals were portrayed, very little attempt was made at the anatomical accuracy. People were represented through their clothes rather than their bodies. Animals were usually exotic and imaginary creatures. The artists' real interest was in abstract motifs, spirals,

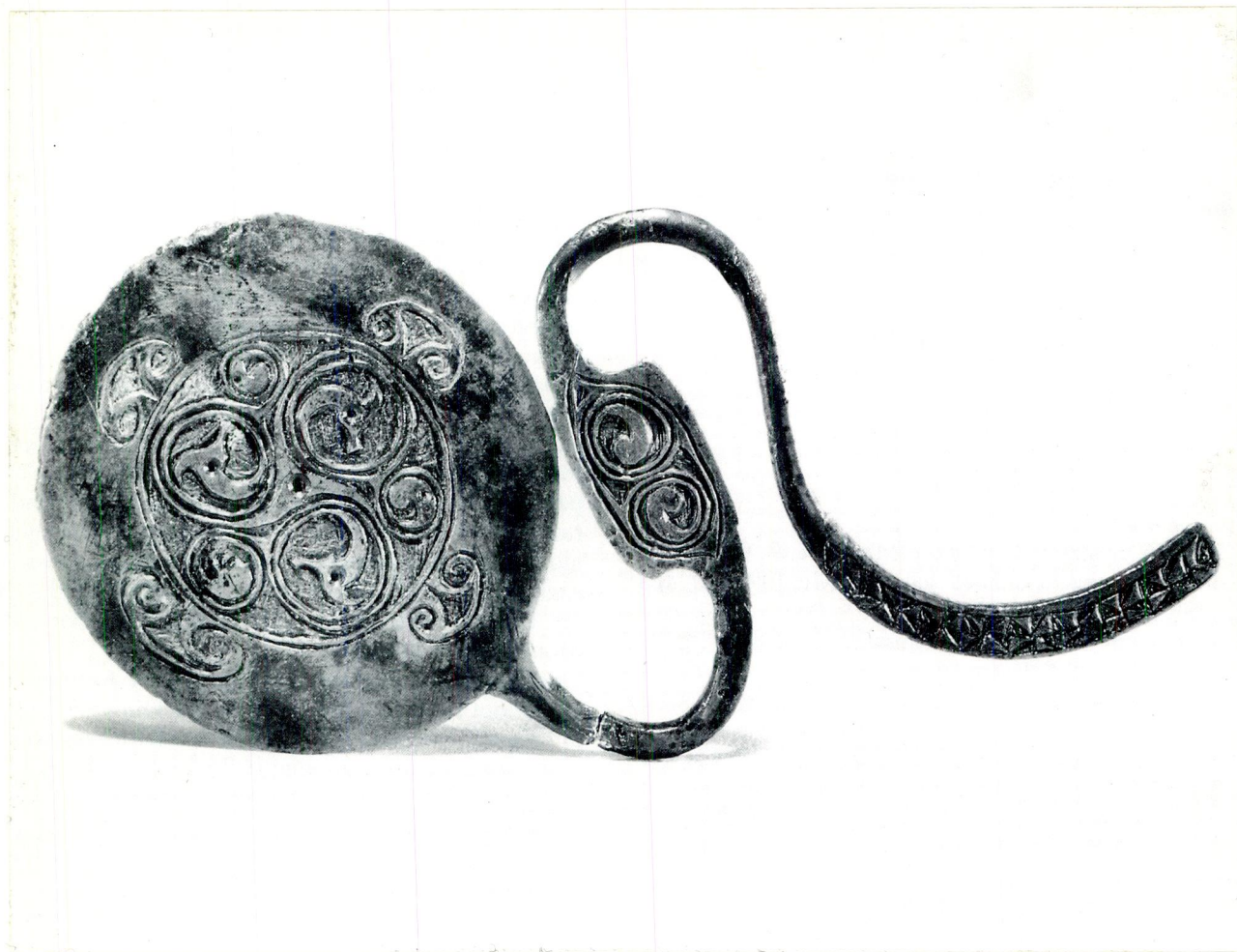


(illus. 4) Irish Penannular Brooch.

curves, briskele, trumpet patterns and interlacing of extreme variety (illus 5,6). La Tene art was an art of the slender line which covers and envelopes a surface. Francoise Henry in her book Early Christian Irish Art, refers to the La Tene art as '.... pushing to an almost fanatical degree its taste for combinations of abstract lines, its disregard for the realistic representation of the actual world' (5 pp 9-14).

Bronze Age artists used no representational motifs whereas the La Tene artists used them rarely. Bronze Age artists and La Tene artists used the same range of basic motifs, though the La Tene artist exploited these, using them in more intricate patterns. The La Tene style of decoration flowed and moved on the surface it decorated whereas Bronze Age decoration was stagnant.

The La Tene culture remained to flourish in Ireland. Pilgrims and missionaries brought new ideas and influences with them in the fifth century. The same lively forms of La Tene were brought into the following centuries where they fused with new influences and evolved rather than died. Some of these influences included, Neo-Platonism, Coptic Art, Germanic Art and Scandinavian Art.



(illus. 5) Bronze Dress Fastner

6th Century A.D.

Ultimate La Tene

The La Tene style of Art was the only style that existed up to the 6th Century. The decoration on Bronze dress fastener (illus. 5) is similar to the decoration on the Petrie Crown (illus. 6) which was made five Centuries earlier. Both are ultimate La Tene pieces.

decoration at the base of the Turso stone. With the possible exception of the animal heads, which may have a Pictish origin, all the decoration is a late form of the Laène style.

The Mullaghmore stone has an important transitional position, as it links the pre-Christian sculptural tradition with that which evolved by way of cross-inscribed pillars and decorated slabs to culminate in the great high crosses of the Christian era. F.P.K.

8 a-d Attymon hoard

^aColour pl. p.114

Co. Galway

a, b. Two bronze bridle bits. NMI: 1891. 9. 9a

c, d. Two bronze Y-shaped pieces. NMI: 1891. 10. 10a possibly 3rd century A.D.

(a) 31.8 cm (b) Central link missing (c) 14.8 cm (d) 13.0 cm; Max. Wt. (a) 8.35 cm (b) 8.35 cm (c) 17 cm (d) 18.6 cm; Wts. (a) 389.28 g (b) 292.92 g (c) 289.43 g (d) 300.82 g

Refs: Armstrong 1923, 24 pl. III - Raherty 1937, 410-411 - Lafferty 1951, fig. 229 - Henry 1965, 11 pl. 4 - Howorth 1971, 38-40, 44, 45, figs. 8-9 - Greene 1972, 39-78, fig. 18 - Duignan 1976, 207 - Mitchell 1977, 90 pl. 26 - Reilly 1980, 25.

The hoard was found in a peat bog about 1 1/2 miles from

bronze Y-shaped piece. Semi-hemispherical knobs on the shanks. These bear raised decoration consisting of three running spirals triangularly juxtaposed, centered on a triskele. The design is basically similar to that employed on a bronze disc from the River Bar, Loughan Island, Co. Derry. The latter has decoration which is closely comparable to that on the Petrie C (No. 36). The base of each is surrounded by a moulding where it joins the shank. There are grooves on the shanks 1.2 cm below this and intervening areas are decorated with lightly irregular lines. The forks flatten towards the ends and expand into roundels. These are defined in each case by a raised line which almost forms a complete circle and extends as two parallel lines for a short distance along the fork where it ends in a pelta. The roundels bear a central perforation 8 mm in diameter. They are decorated with raised off-centered ovals which have crescentic swellings along the sides nearest the extremities of the forks. Each bears a single raised pelta. The layout of the decoration on the roundels is broadly similar to that on the Monasterevin disc (No. 35).

One hundred and thirty five Early Iron Age bridle bits and about ninety Y-shaped pieces are known or recorded in Ireland. The bits are a distinctively Irish type while Y-shaped pieces are unique to Ireland. In at least some cases bits have been found with Y-shaped pieces. They occur in pairs so it seems reasonable to assume that they were used to harness horses in paired draught. References to chariots are frequent in early Irish literature and representations of chariot-like vehicles occur on Irish crosses. The function of the Y-shaped pieces



(illus. 6) Petrie Crown
1st Century A.D.
Ultimate La Tene.

origin, from Balline, Co. Limerick, was more
loot

ence of settlements is scanty in this period. It is
at this time that the ring-fort or *rath* - a circular
homestead became the most common form of
for the well-to-do. The type remained in use
out the Early Historic and into the Mediaeval
almost 30,000 of them survived in Ireland until
comprehensive mapping of the country in the
century. While many still exist, they are being
at an increasing rate as a result of modern
ment. Made commonly of earthen banks
as revetted with stone, they vary in size from
small single-banked forms about 30 m. in
to large and imposing examples with a number
and ditches and elaborate entrance features.
ern, round and rectangular houses have been
l. Most yield evidence for the practice of various
on-working is especially frequently noted - and
a variety of tools and fragments of agricultural
uts. In stoney parts of the country, especially in
the equivalent of raths are made of stone and
ed to as 'cashels' a word of Latin derivation. We
m historical sources that the size of the house
e rath and the number of enclosing banks related
tus of the occupant. The Rath of the Synods at
occupied in the 1st or 2nd century A.D. Some

of the ringforts at Cush, Co. Limerick, were
built and occupied in late pre-Christian
our information about the raths' con-
sites of later date.

It is difficult to understand artistic
period. The pennanular brooch - two
forms - of bronze seems to have been
phase, probably from contacts with
The earliest brooches are plain, and
cast so as to suggest stylised animal
often referred to as 'zoomorphic'.
bear elaborate champlevé enamel
decoration but it is by no means clear
being produced in pre-Christian Ireland
from Rathgall together with the Mull
Co. Kildare, certainly suggest the ten-
La Tène decoration in Ireland
independently dated evidence of
problem because the Ultimate La Tène
component of later Christian art as
Britain also. The problem of direct
sources versus refreshment from con-
unresolved. It is possibly a meaningful
period because intercourse between
common and some community of cul-
the Irish and their neighbours in W.

ABSTRACTION AND NEO-PLATONISM

Abstraction reached its climax in the eighth century with the creation of Irish Art which was influenced by the neo-platonic style.

Neo-platonism is described as 'The scorn of realistic observation, the elimination of positive details and the adoption of a completely abstract disposition; (7, p. 139).

The abstract decoration of La Tene renewed and transformed by this influence of neo-platonism was combined with the Christian idea of anti-materialism to produce the intricate harmonies of interlacing elements that were to fill large pages of manuscripts and decorate the surfaces of many Christian vessels. Francoise Henry states that 'Irish art stands out as the most satisfying and most perfect form of non-representational art which Europe has ever known'. (5,p.57)

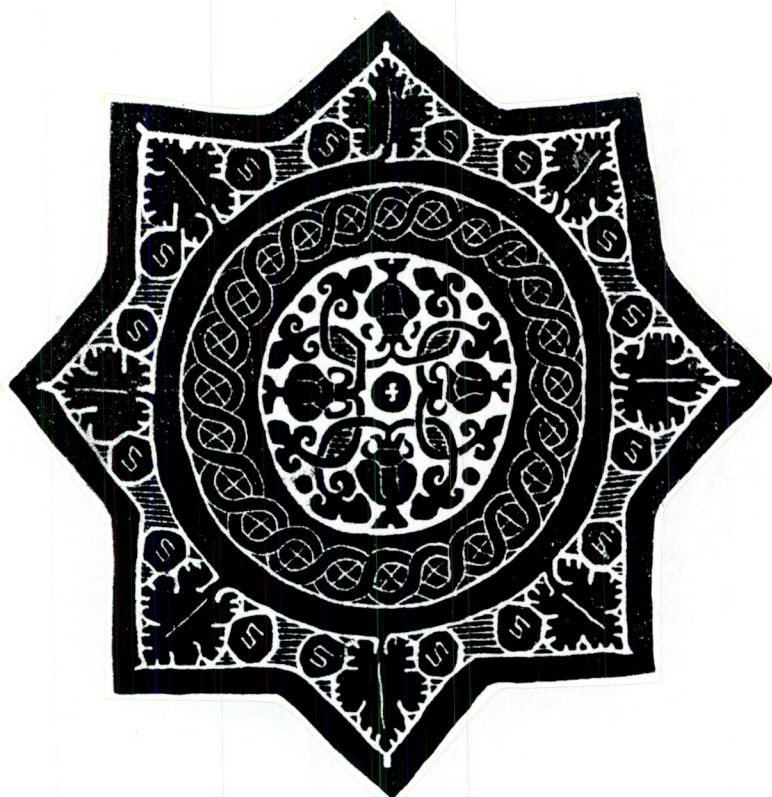
COPTIC ART

It is believed that St Patrick brought with him pieces of metalwork which were of coptic design in the fifth century. Coptic design is 'Full face representations, obsessive eyes added a new meaning to the portrayal of the human face by revealing its hidden inner life. Various forms of interlace regular, symmetrical, cruciform. Foilage was used, vines with grapes and leaves'. (illus 7,8). (7,p.140)

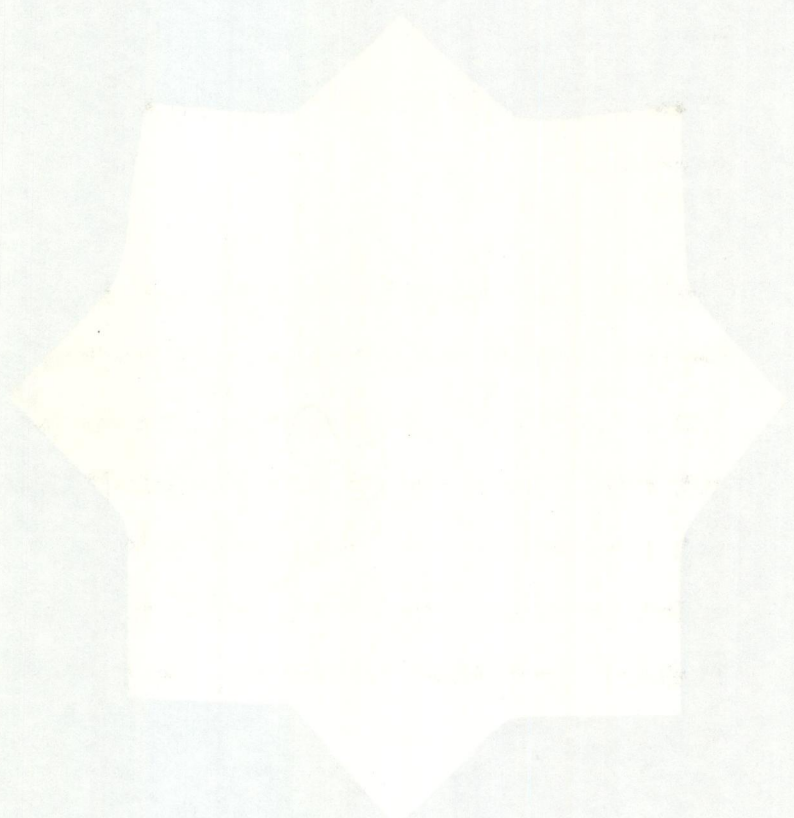


(illus. 7) Example of Coptic Art.





(illus. 8) Example of
Coptic Art.



Coptic Art influenced the craftsmen who made the Ardagh Chalice and the Derrynaflan paten. The arrangement of the glass in the enamelled studs present on the Ardagh Chalice and on the Derrynaflan paten is reminiscent of coptic art's symmetrical cruciform layout. The interlacing which encloses a coptic art motif is reminiscent of the delicate filigree patterns which are present around many of the enamelled studs present on the Christian vessels.

Ireland was never touched by the invasions happening all over Europe. Protected by the sea and by her remoteness she found herself cut off. As a result the new civilisation and art brought to her by Christianity matured uninterrupted. The style of art existing in Ireland continued to evolve, be influenced and develop.

The Irish monasteries which were set up offered Christianity and learning, with pupils from all over Europe flocking to them. Through these, Ireland was put into contact with Germanic art.

GERMANIC ART

Germanic art was a 'distant cousin' of Celtic Art. The Celtic tradition was given new life by this exciting, strong, abstract art. They both enjoyed the same patterns and designs but

to Germanic art was added an array of monsters with gaping jaws. (illus. 9).

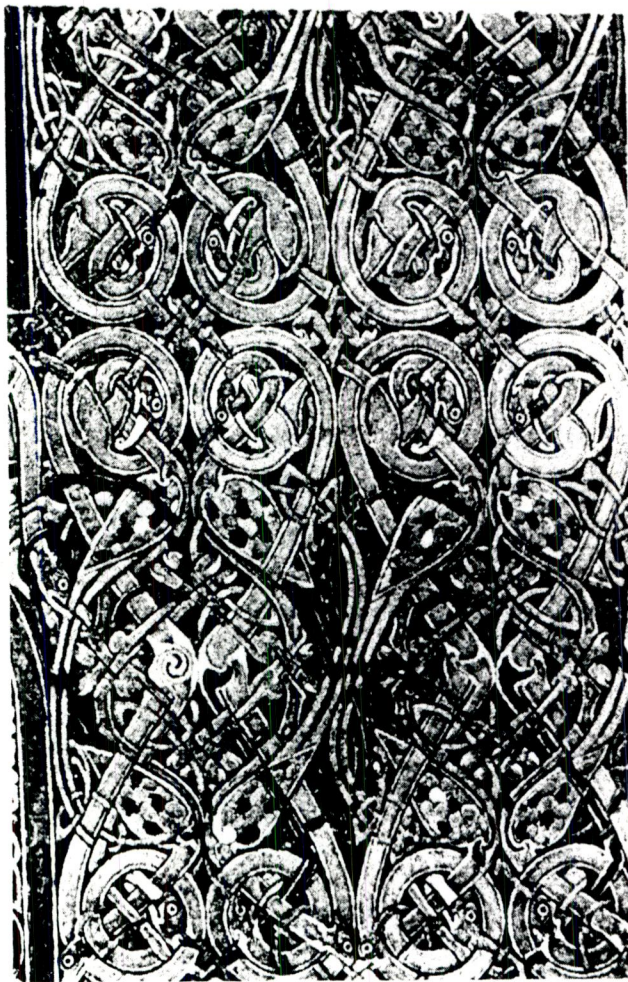
Major decorative motifs of Irish art were the spiral, every sort of curve and twist. All these forms suggest movement, the rebounding of a spring. Coptic, celtic, neo-platonic and Germanic elements became even more closely interwoven; they were thrown into a whirlpool of movement. The line tangled and untangled itself in complex mazes of interlacing, appearing then disappearing, ending suddenly with a monster grasping the head of another monster in its open mouth.

A fusion also took place between Northumbrian Art and Irish Art. The result is at its best in the Lindisfarne Gospels (illus. 10). The influence of Germanic interlaced animal forms becomes clearly manifest following a period of close contact with Scandinavian Art (illus. 11, 12). The influence of the Scandinavian art form can be seen displayed on the Tara Brooch and Ardagh Chalice enamels (6,p.142). The La Tene style was influenced by many European styles and developed into Irish Art.

VARIOUS MOTIFS PRESENT IN IRISH ART:

Spirals

The spiral as a symbol and as an ornament had a beginning at the dawn of man's intellect. It was the development of the inherited impulse that made man construct the first circular hut ... The circle may be considered as man's first step in art. As a recapitulative impulse it is every child's beginning in drawing ... The



(illus. 9) Example of Germanic Art.

1872

German



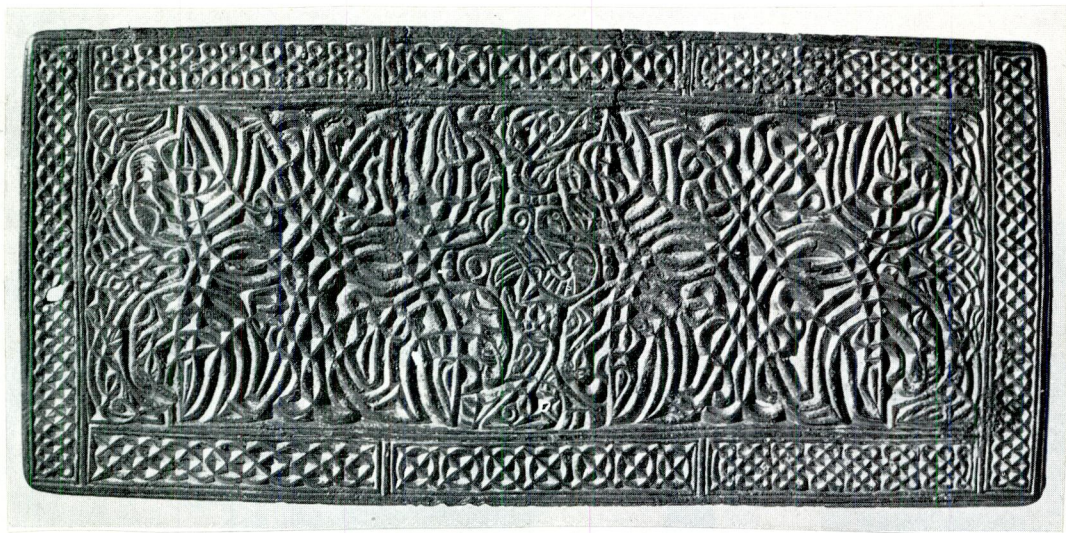
(illus. 10) Page from Lindisfarne Gospels.
Example of Celtic and Germanic Art.





(illus. 11) Example of Scandinavian Art.





(illus. 12) Example of Germanic
and Scandinavian Art.

... upon the
... Shapes. Shapes
... in beaked heads,
... heads and bird's
... antlers.

... those based upon
... forms are
... lip

spiral is an application of its constructional methods that rapidly became magical. It could be performed to the right or to the left, sunwise or anti-sunwise. The beauty of nature's spirals was probably observed by man's earliest ancestors, for the shell was also the container of his staple food ... Most of nature's spirals turn to the right with a notable exception in pairs of horns which are symmetrical. (1,p.11).

George Bain in his book Celtic Art Methods and Construction writes this about one of art's most enduring forms. The spiral is really the basis of the La Tene Art. George Bain also refers to what may have influenced the early craftsmen: nature, animals.

Zoomorphic Ornaments

Zoomorphic Ornaments are those based upon the forms of animals, birds and reptiles. Shapes which suggest horses end in beaked heads, fishtails end in horse's heads and bird's heads may wear a stag's antlers.

Anthromorphic Ornaments

Anthromorphic Ornaments are those based upon the forms of the human body. These forms are used together with spiral ornaments. Limb joints and ribs end in spiral ornament (illus 13). All celtic zoomorphic and anthromorphic designs are treated as they are in reality. No matter how crazy and interlaced the design appears, limbs, wings, tails, heads will all be in relation to their positions in nature. The animal head surfaces and disappears in a variety of styles and



(illus. 13) Example of Spiral joint.

forms. Sometimes we are left to decide if the forms which remind us of a face is the result of an accident or is the design. E.H. Gombrich in The Sense of Order describes these patterns to be 'animation which can never quite come to a standstill' (4,p. 78).

It is believed from folklore that demons dislike nothing more than being confused. Therefore knots, mazes, tangles and other form of 'indeterminability' are considered to be excellent protection against those evil influences which lurk everywhere.

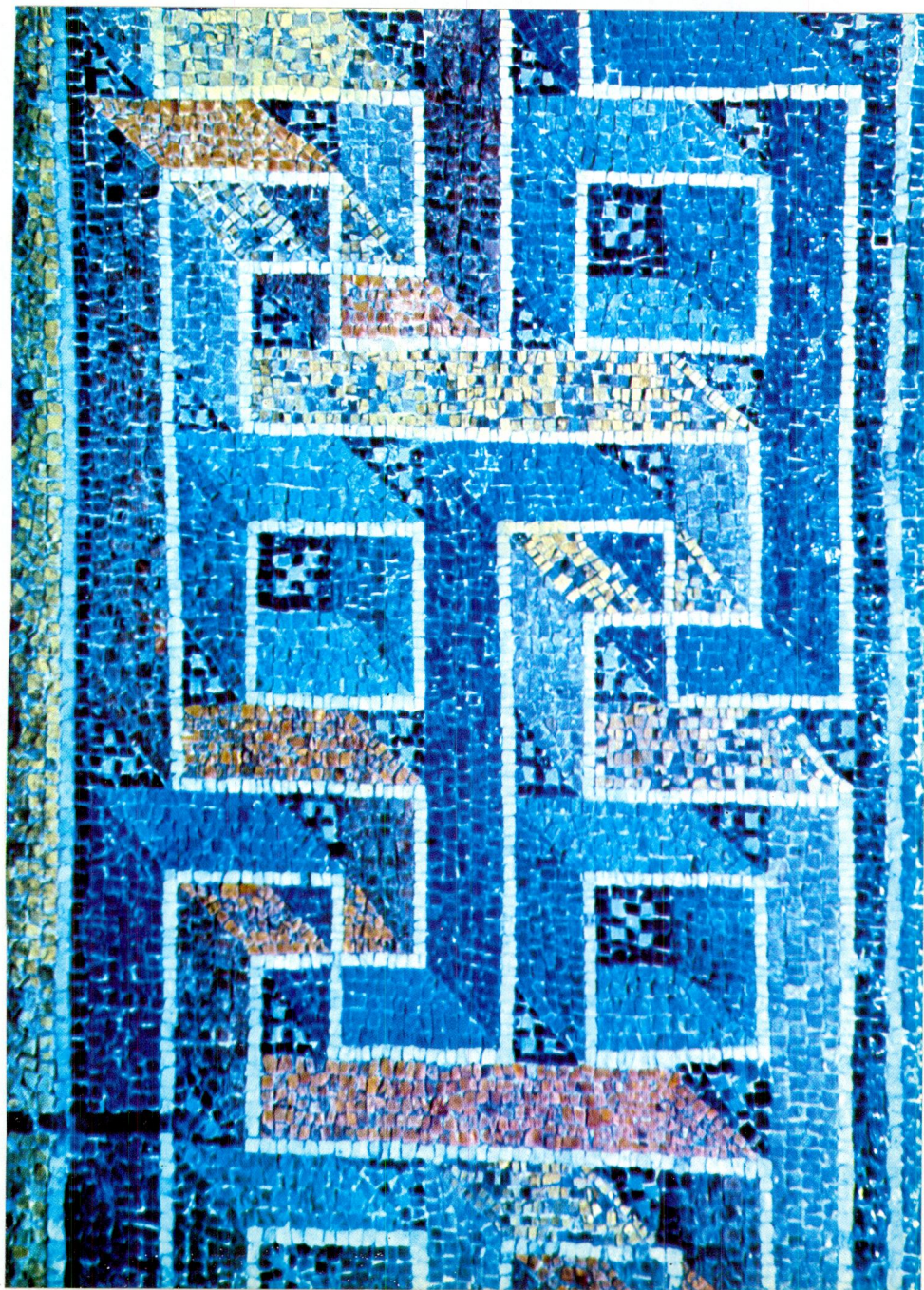
Key Pattern

A Key pattern is a border. Usually it is found edging a panel of interlace. Key patterns are really spirals in straight lines (illus 14). The craftsmen of Pagan and Christian Ireland used a diagonal line for constructing their key patterns. This was an imitation of the square key patterns of the classical Greek fret type (illus 15).

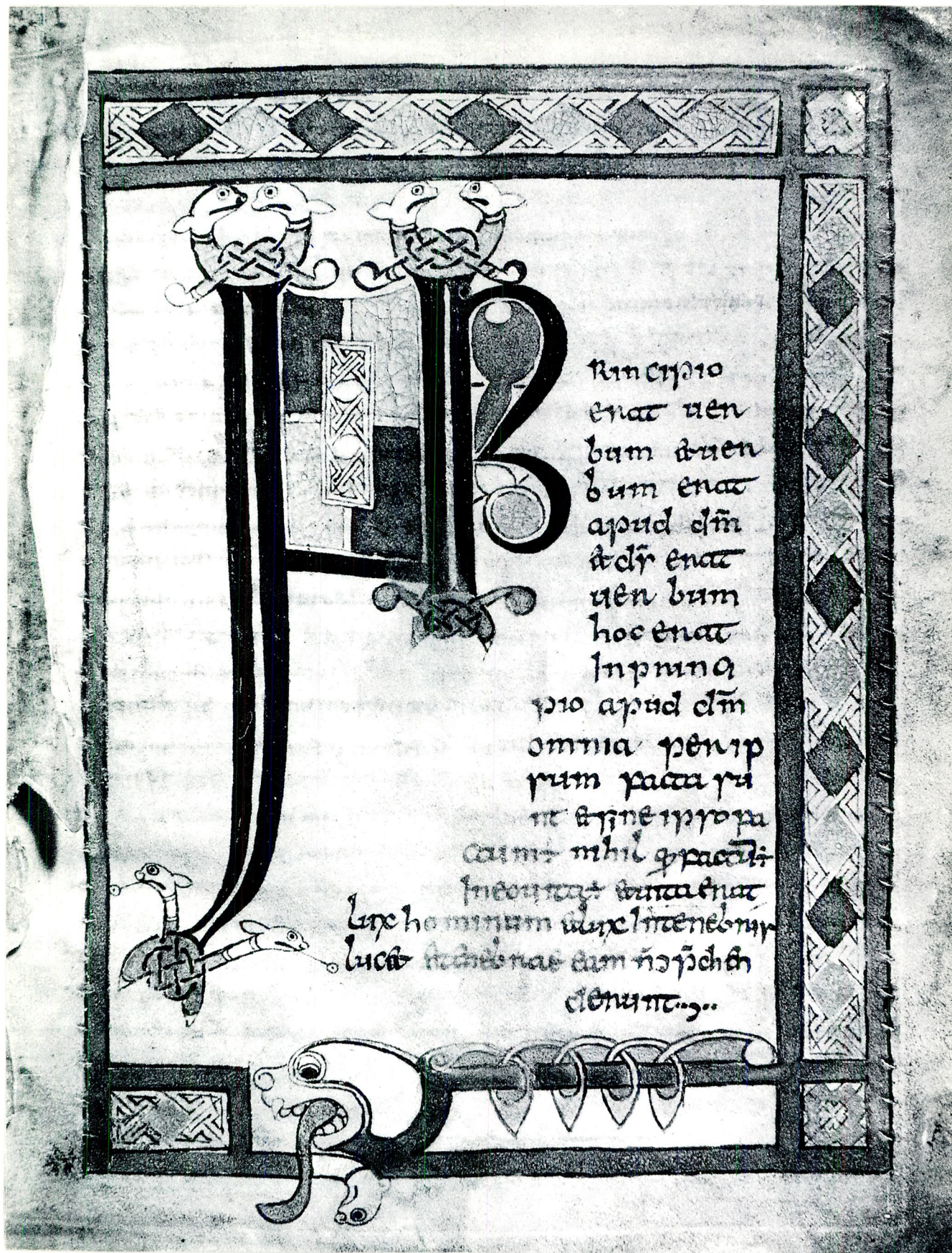
Westwood, in George Bain's book Celtic Art Methods and Construction, describes the Irish key patterns as 'a series of diagonal lines forming various kinds of Chinese like patterns. These ornaments are generally introduced into small compartments, a number of which are arranged so as to form the large initial letters and borders' (1, p. 13).



(illus. 14) Key Pattern.



(illus. 15) Greek square fret.



(illus. 15a) Key Pattern.
 Example of diagonal Irish Fret.

53 Stowe Missal

Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, MS D iv 2.
Written ca. 800, in cursive minuscule and angular
majuscule script.

15 cm x 12 cm, 67 folios.

Kells O'Connor 1818-19, 45-51; Todd 1836; Stokes 1881;
McCarthy 1885; Bernard 1891; Warner 1906, 1915;
Lindsay 1913; Gwynn 1916; O'Rahilly 1926-28; Kenny
1929, 693-699; Mulchrone and Fogarty 1943, 3431;
MacNicaill 1961; Ryan 1967; Gwynn and Gleeson
1968, 49-52, 67, 212; Henry 1969, 43, 161-162, 199, 202,
305, pl. 112; Byrne 1967-Lowe 1977, Nos. 267-268;
Nichell 1977, 139; Alexander 1978, 69-70; Ne Chathain
1980.

The Stowe Missal is a Latin Mass-book of the early Irish
Church. It may have been written by Colmácht, County
Dublin, as the abbot of the priory, St. Mael Ruair, who
died in 792 A.D., is commemorated in the Missal.
According to the first inscription on the candlestick or
casket (see No. 79), it was in Louth, County Tipperary,
ca. 1050, and it could also have been written there. The
Missal was ignored for a long time because in the 18th century it
was part of a collection of manuscripts in the library of
the Duke of Buckingham, in Stowe, Bucks, Buckinghamshire,
England. It was purchased by the
British Government and deposited in the Royal Irish
Academy, Dublin, in 1833 together with the other Irish
MSS. from the Stowe collection.

The Missal consists of two separate manuscripts which
were bound together for no evident reason other than
that leaves were of the same size. It is bound in boards of
oak covered with uncoloured vellum and around the
three outer edges are stripes of Latin 4 mm. 2 cm wide stained
with red.

The first manuscript, 11 folios, contains excerpts from
the Gospel according to St. John. It was written in a
cursive minuscule script by a scribe who signed himself in
ogham writing 'Brou' (Brou). In contrast with the Gospel
books and books of devotion of the 8th century,
the opening page of the Gospel (fol. 1v) has a large
ornamental initial and a group of initials coloured in red,
yellow and purple enclosed in an ornamental border of
geometrical pattern with a beaver's head. The miniature of
St. John the Evangelist is coloured in pink and yellow and
the figure is similar to the short draped figure of the
standing Evangelists of the St. Gall Gospels, with an
eagle hovering with expanded wings over his head.

The Missal proper (56 folios) is in the second manuscript
and it contains the Ordinary and Canon of the Mass, the

order of Baptism and the order of Visitation
of Extreme Unction and of Communion. The
antiphons and alleluias are similar to the
Communion for the Sick in the Book of Dis-
cord (ff. 65-67) there is an Irish tract on the
Irish spells against injury to the eye, thorns
of the urine, and some liturgical rubrics. The
scribes of the Missal wrote in an angular cursive.
A more cursive hand was used by a scribe of
Moel Caich (f. 37) who revised it. The in-
opening prayer, *Peccati peius Domine*, in the
the Mass is decorated and set in a border
yellow and pink and, except for playful
initial letters, the rest of the manuscript is not
decorated.

54 Book of Kells

Colour pls. pp. 10-17, 36, 38,
39-37, 141.

Trinity College Dublin MS 58

Written ca. 800, in minuscule script.

320 x 250 mm, 340 folios

Rebinding by Roger Powell in 4 volumes in
Ref. Alexander 1978, 75-78.

The Book of Kells contains the four Gospels
based on the Vulgate interlined with readings
old Latin translation; the Gospels are pre-
faced, summaries of the narrative and Euan-
gels. In the twelfth century, chapters in Irish
the monastery at Kells were copied into the
pages.

The earliest mention of the manuscript occurs
when the Annals of Ulster record its theft from
at Kells (Co. Meath) about forty miles north
Dublin and subsequent recovery under a
have disagreed on the date of the manuscript
whether Kells was its place of origin; North
Fulish eastern Scotland have been among
alternatives. There has arisen in recent years
some consensus that it was produced by the
of Iona. When Vikings attacked the island
killed sixty-eight of the community the bulk
moved to Kells and had settled there by 810.
manuscript is incomplete has been attributed
the loss of leaves in 1007 but also to the ex-
flight from Iona. Such a dramatic explanation
necessary given that its production probably

Irish Art flourished, it was the accepted style of art present during the eighth and ninth centuries. It continued to flourish through the Viking raids, but technical standards diminished. As a result the perfection of Irish Art decoration diminished also.

During the First Viking raids of the tenth century, the Vikings laid their hands on all kinds of church treasures, and brought their takings back to Norway. From their tombs in Norway come about half of the surviving Irish metal objects of the eighth and ninth centuries. As the Vikings settled and were converted to Christianity they stopped being buried with their possessions. The work of this period was more showy and gaudy. Work was coarser and not well finished. Effects were more cheaply obtained. Filigree threads were thicker; interlacing lost its accuracy. The work replaced the subtle colour tones and the technical triumphs of the earlier objects.

The Bronze trumpet 1st century B.C.(illus. 16) is of typical La Tene design. The design is beautifully controlled. Ornamentation is concentrated around the mouth of the trumpet. The design could be divided into two parts which are identical to each other. The whole design consists of four large loose spirals. These large spirals end in triangular curved



(illus. 16) Bronze Trumpet.
1st Century B.C.

forms with a higher circular point at the very tip. There are no Anthromorphic or zoomorphic forms used. The decoration is quite simple compared to that on the Ardagh Chalice - eighth century. Derrynaflan pieces - eighth & ninth centuries. These craftsmen who carried out the work on the Trumpet must have been strictly forbidden to copy plants or any form of vegetation until the Christian era. Even then it was used rarely and only symbolically until after the seventh century. An example of this would be the "tree of life" belief.

The patterns used on the Ardagh Chalice (illus. 17) are of a higher technical standard than that seen on the Bronze trumpet. Here we see the effect of all the external influences being fused together. There is the use of ultimate La Tene designs used with plain and animal interlace. There is the technique of plaiting used, weaving threads of silver or gold together. The spirals are tighter and are found amid mazes of interlace; the work is mathematically perfect. The bowl form of the chalice is copied from Chalices that were brought back from raids on the Roman Empire.

The 'Soiscel Molaise' bookshrine has had three phases in its life (illus. 18). First the inner box dates from the eighth century, then in the eleventh century a new outer box was built around that. In the Fifteenth Century



(illus. 17) Ardagh Chalice
8th Century A.D.

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POSTCARD

27/1911

11/11/11
Lion's Hill

ARDASH CHALICE 8th Century A.D.: The chalice is of silver and is decorated
below the rim by series of gold figures interlacing. Below these panels, on the body
of the chalice, are inscribed the names of seven of the twelve apostles and St. Paul.
The chalice is now in the collection of the British Museum, London.

BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON
100, GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON, W.C.2



(illus. 18) Soiscel Molaise Shrine

Cathedral and Round Tower, Ardmore, Co. Waterford, 12th century A.D.

silver plates were added. I'm concerned with the second phase of the eleventh century. A newly decorated box was made. The front is divided up into twenty-four panels with a round central one. In these panels are various panels of interlace and of anthromorphic and zoomorphic forms. The interlace is simple and not mathematically brilliant. The work has been carried out with a rough hand. The figures of the four evangelists are highly decorated panels, their symbols are used. These panels are very heavy looking. The lines used are thick and clumsy. Nothing is sharp and precise. The decoration is much less pleasing than that on other Christian vessels and other pieces of metalwork.

CHAPTER THREE

METALWORK TECHNIQUES OF THE EIGHTH
AND NINTH CENTURIES

A very wide range of techniques and materials were used by Celtic smiths on metalwork. To maintain and pass on the tradition of these skills, apprentices serving long apprenticeships were taken on in the workshops.

MATERIALS

The sources of metals varied. Tin was imported from Cornwall. Iron was smelted in Ireland and ores of other metals (copper, lead, zinc) were found in Ireland and Scotland. There was no manufacture of glass in Ireland at this time, so it came from outside Ireland and Britain. Glass was used in jewellery in the form of enamels and inlays. With the withdrawal of the Romans from Britain, craftsmen had to make do with the scrap metal that was left behind.

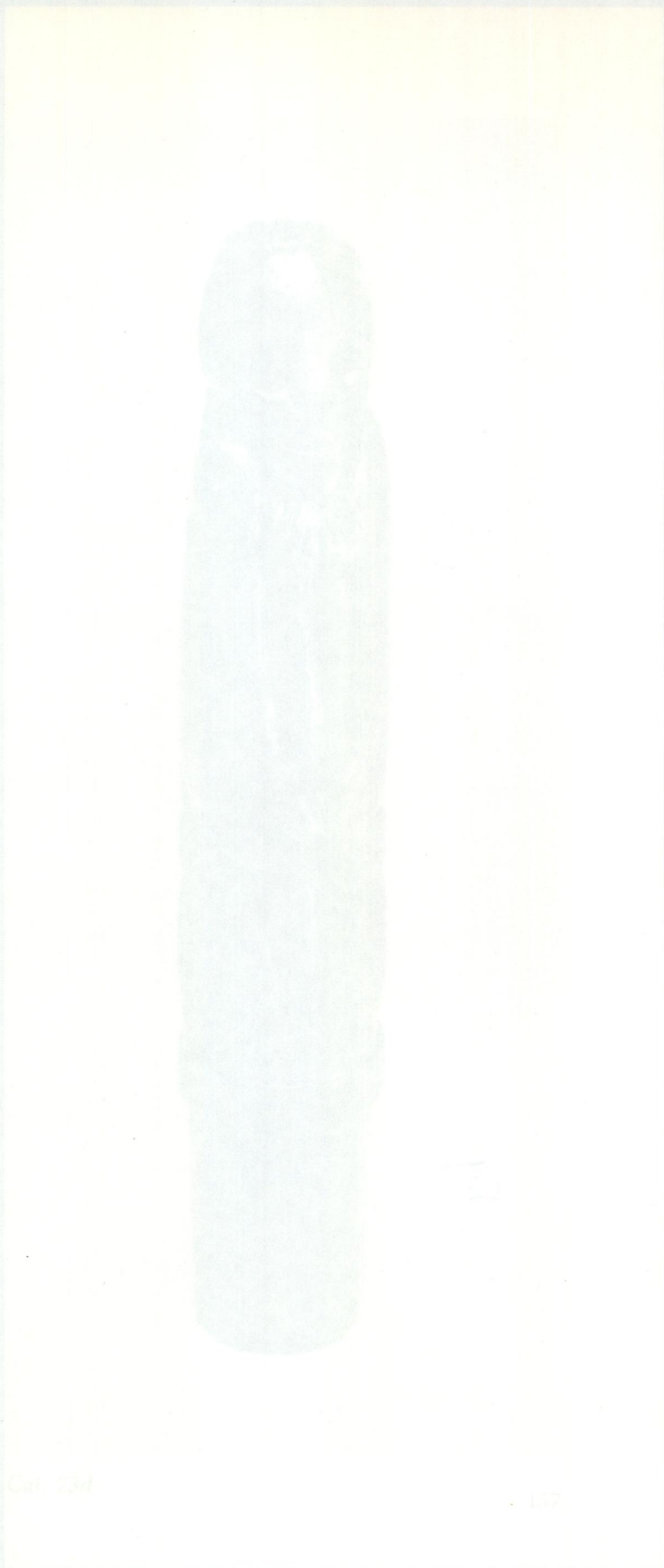
Metalworkers' designs were developed and apprentices were trained on bone rather than on metal. The grain in wood could cause technical difficulties, but the outer wall of bone from a large animal was free from grain and was firm but not too hard, ideal for cutting trial pieces.

Bone was also used for making patterns or dies into which gold or silver foils were pressed to reproduce the design directly. (Illus. 19) shows an example of one of these bone trial pieces. The upper surface is highly polished



(illus. 19)

Bone Trial piece.



Cat. 73d



(illus. 19a)



(illus. 19b)

Bone Trial pieces

and the majority of the patterns occur on this face. Some are lightly sketched and some are finished designs. The sketched designs are interlaced knotwork and animals, some in diagonally hatched frames. The animals have backward pointing eyes curled jaws and spiral hip-joints. The knotwork carved on this bone is very similar to that found on the rim of the Derrynaflan paten.

CASTING

Much of the metalwork was cast. Most castings were made in two-piece moulds using clay. The prepared clay was made into two bails and one face of each was made perfectly flat by pressing against a board. A template of the piece to be cast was made up in wax or lead. One side of the template would be pressed into the flat surface of one piece of clay. Marks for registering the mould when ready were made at this point also. A funnel shaped pattern for pouring metal was also pressed into the clay. This was then left to air dry for several hours. When the first clay was hard the second flat surface of the second piece was pressed against the template, and the impression of the other side was taken. The moulds were parted and the template removed. Both sides of the moulds were placed together exactly with the help of the register marks, fired and the metal poured in. (13, pp.170-211)

Another casting method was the lost-wax technique. The wax template would be left in the mould which was in one piece and could not come apart. The wax was melted out and then the metal poured in. The Romans showed a preference for two-piece moulds to make small metalwork castings. Today in our workshops we still use the same methods of casting.

HAMMERING

Hammering was used to shape metal. Vessels such as bowls and the bases of chalices were made by hammering the metal to shape from a disc of metal. This technique called raising is also used today.

ASSEMBLY TECHNIQUES

Most Celtic metalwork was assembled from a number of pieces. Techniques such as soldering, riveting cements and folding were used. Soldering was used for holding together smaller components such as panels of filigree. Riveting was the most popular method for large joins. In the Ardagh Chalice and the Derfynaflan Chalice a complex construction consisting of a bolt through the centre of the piece is used. These joins are well hidden with decorative heads. Rivets are used but not seen, hidden behind glass beads and decorative foils.

PLATING

Plating was done by dipping a piece of metalwork into molten tin. Mercury gilding was common. Powdered gold was mixed with mercury to produce butter of gold. This was then spread over the cleaned metal surface and heated to drive off the mercury. A very dangerous process. (13, pp. 170-211)

FILIGREE

It is not known with any certainty by what means the craftsmen acquired the technique of Filigree. It is thought that this technique was established here in Ireland. The Tara Brooch shows filigree in all its glory, which implies that the craftsmen had full knowledge about this technique. (illus. 20) This ornament was made up of wires and granules which soldered onto a gold foil. It is the way in which richness and glitter were added to metalwork that was already colourfully elaborate. This technique is thought to have been established at the beginning of the eight century. Sometimes the foil backplates were in relief, which was done by stamping the backplate from the front or by a method called respousse, which was hammering the design up from the back. The backplate was then held to the object it was decorating by pushing the metal over the edges of the plate. Another technique used for attaching the backplate to the piece was stitching where small teeth of



(illus. 20) Tara Brooch:
note it's elaborate
Filigree.

Gallarus Oratory, Dingle peninsula, Co. Kerry; between ca. 800 and 1200 A.D.

workshop, a good example of a building of this type, and a fine example of the work of the

workshop, a good example of a building of this type, and a fine example of the work of the

metal are cut from the larger object and are used like claws to hold the back plate in place. The filigree in Ireland was very perfect and crisp. The main lines of design were drawn in wire and open areas of decoration were filled with small bands of gold. This process was called granulation. (12, p. 113)

All these techniques are common everywhere in Europe. One technique absent from Irish metalwork is a technique called interasile.

INTERASILE

This is pierced openwork. The design is cut out of sheet metal. This technique was common to Germany and other countries.

HOLLOW-PLATFORM TECHNIQUE

The only use of openwork in Ireland was in a technique called the hollow-platform technique. A pierced plate was placed over a backplate either flat or in relief. This technique can be found on the Ardagh Chalice and Derrynaflan paten. (13, pp. 170-211)

WIRE

Wire was drawn down without the aid of a draw-plate. Thin square rods were twisted and then rolled evenly between the blocks. Beaded wire was also used. To achieve this, the straight wire was pressed and hammered along its length between two specially formed

blocks. Sometimes two beaded wires would be twisted together. The most commonly used effect was a beaded wire flanked on either side by two straight plain wires. Knitting wires together was an influence of France.

ENAMELLING

The greatest development was in the enamellers art. Yellow enamel and red was introduced, with the occasional small touches of other colours. The technique of enamelling came from the Roman world. Copied and perfected in Ireland. The Celtic metalworker is famed for his genius use of colours. Celtic metalwork was richly inlaid with glass, stones, amber and enamel. A substance called Niello was used. Niello is a dense black mixed, copper-silver sulphide material. It was used in inlaying silver. This technique is also Roman in origin. The usual inlay technique found in Ireland was champleve, where a depression was cast or cut into the surface. Into these depressions was put glass. The glass was not melted into these depressions, just softened and pushed into place.

CLOISONNE

Jewellers used thin hammered plates. They bent and twisted wires, these wires produced a design made up in compartments. This technique is known as Cloisonne. These compartments were filled with various colours mixed with a vitreous paste. When fired the

colours fixed the wires to the plates.

Anglo-Saxon jewellery used a lot of inlaid studs and enamelled colours, we see much of its influence on our native pieces.

Pieces of glass, either plain, coloured or millefiori were cut and set as a stone, frequently along side enamel. Millefiori is described as 'Decorative glass formed from bundles of rods of contrasting colours, these bundles being themselves often built up into more complex patterns and then sliced across'.
(13, p.214)

KERBSCHNITT

A firmly established new technique was the kind of relief casting known as Kerbschnitt or chip carving. Its uneven surface originally from work in wood or bone was developed as a bronze workers' style. It was brought to Ireland with the missionaries' travels. The technique originated in the North sea area. On the stem ring of the Ardagh Chalice we see full use of this technique.

The Irish smiths were familiar with almost all the techniques that were in use throughout Europe, most probably due to trade and missionary contacts. Ireland had mastered techniques to a standard that existed nowhere else, especially in their Filigree work. Celtic Ireland was very much to the forefront in metalworking skills.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARDAGH CHALICE AND THE DERRYNAFLAN HOARD

The Ardagh Chalice, the Derrynaflan Chalice, the strainer-ladle, paten and stand are the most sumptuous examples of altar pieces that survive the eighth and ninth centuries. These pieces were found with their respective hoards buried in the ground. Both hoards were buried without doubt during the viking invasions in the later ninth and tenth centuries.

DERRYNAFLAN HOARD

Derrynaflan was a very important monastery in the eighth and ninth centuries in Ireland. It derived its name from the 'Flanns' who were clerics and leading scholars and churchmen in the early ninth century. The monastery enjoyed the patronage of Fedlimid Mac Crimthann, King Bishop of Cashel, one of the leading rulers of the day. The Derrynaflan hoard was discovered in 1980. The hoard consisted of a great silver chalice (a cup used for the blessing and distribution of Eucharist wine in the Christian communion service), a large paten (dish used by a priest to hold the bread or wafer blessed in a communion service), its stand and a liturgical strainer (used to purify the wine). These were all placed in a pit and covered by a basin. The latest dated object in the group is the chalice, which was intact, so it is thought that the hoard was buried in the later ninth or tenth century. The pieces were made at different periods and they don't form a uniform communion set.

ARDAGH HOARD

The Ardagh Hoard was discovered around the year 1874, it consisted of two chalices and four brooches, one silver chalice and one bronze chalice. The silver chalice is the one I'm concentrating on.

The eighth century was a time when emphasis moved from function to display. Surviving chalices were made to carry out a variety of functions. The larger ones could have been used to serve communion wine to the congregations. The origin of the form of the great chalices was influenced by the early Roman Empire. The shape of their cups belong to the hanging bowl tradition and their elaborate construction is matched nowhere else in medieval Europe. The design was not a new design by the eighth and ninth centuries. The altar pieces are the finest in their tradition, although the motifs used in their ornaments were also used in many less prestigious objects. La Tene patterns which had been in use in Ireland for centuries and the styles which were demonstrated external Coptic and Germanic influences, were in use for at least a century. (13, pp 127 - 128).

The Ardagh Chalice (illus. 21)

The Ardagh Chalice is a great silver vessel with elaborate ornament. Its bowl, hollow stem and foot are joined together by the means

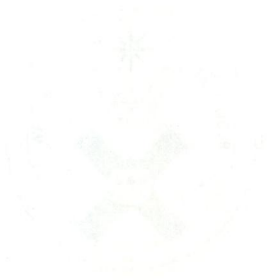


(illus. 21) Ardagh Chalice

TREASURES OF IRELAND

IRISH ART 3000 B.C. - 1500 A.D.

With 65 Colours
and 103 black and white illustrations



ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY - DUBLIN

of a bolt passing through them. It seems that this bowl wouldn't have really prevented leakage. The Chalice was probably for display rather than for a functional purpose. It was used rarely only for very important occasions. The craftsman uses masterful design and techniques of the highest standard.

A wide range of materials are used to create a work of perfection. The silver bowl provided with handles for lifting is linked by a gilded collar to a conical silver foot, this is made stable by a broad flange right around the base. Decoration is used in large areas. Where decoration is used it is elaborate. La Tene scrolls, plain interlace, animal interlace, plaits and frets move beautifully on the surface. The techniques used are enamelling, engraving, chip-carving, casting, filigree, cloisonne, riveting and some granulation.

The handles are secured to the bowl by two rivets at the top and two at the bottom, but these are hidden by small glass studs. The shape of the handles suggests that they were made from curved sheets of silver having flanges that gave them strength. The handles are attached directly opposite each other on the sides of the cup. Around the upper surface of the handles there are many square open areas. A silver lattice is shaped to hold enamelled panels and gold panels. The

decoration here was arranged into three columns, the centre column there are small panels of gold interlace. Some seem to be embossed; others which are thicker and higher in relief give the idea that the 'Kerbschnitt' technique was used.

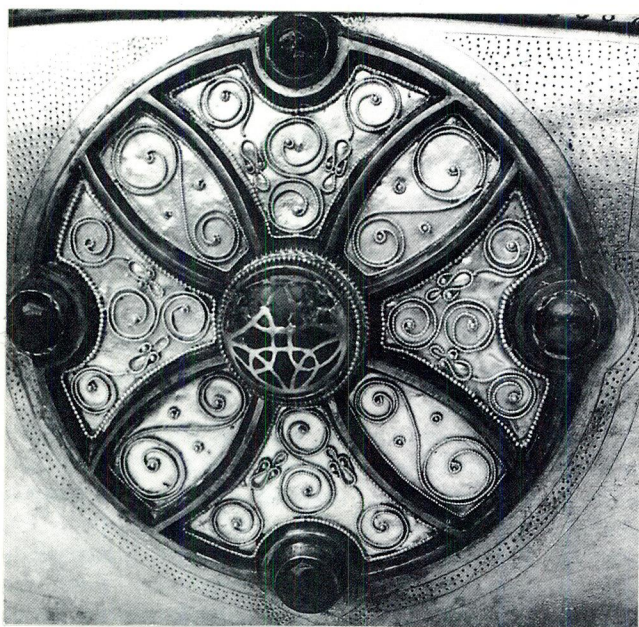
Beneath the handles are decorative panels of very elegant design. These are the handle estucheons, (illus. 22). There are three large studs, the lowest stud having a central area decorated with gold granulation. Each stud is made up of silver frame cut up into various geometric designs. Blue and red glass were packed into these areas. There is a beaded wire present around the studs.

Between the studs there are gold panels of interlaced beaded wire.

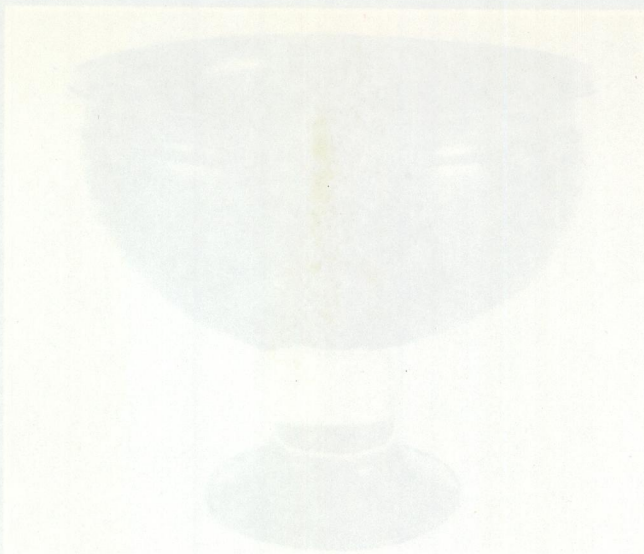
There are two roundels located between the two handles. Thick silver has been formed into an eight lobed open frame. Within each area is a gold panel (Illus. 23) decorated with beaded wire. The wire takes the form of La Tene scrolls all over the surface of each gold panel. One of the roundels has four studs around its edge placed at each quarter around. Two are of blue glass and two are red. These four studs hide the four rivets that attach the roundel to the bowl. The centre studs of the roundels are made up of silver frames where blue and red glass is packed in.



(illus. 22) Ardagh Chalice:
detail of handle
estucheon.



(illus. 23) Ardagh Chalice:
detail of roundel.



Cat. 51b

nounced groove below it. The cup originally stood on a short tubular stem with a slightly out-turned rim. This was cut through by the liner and only the mouth portion survives. It was remounted on a wooden dower during the 19th century - replaced in 1977 with perspex - so the evidence for more precise calculation of the original proportions of the chalice has been destroyed.

In most cases, this was doubtless a goldsmith's preparation for delicate soldering pressed into service for an unusual purpose. Some of the blue glass studs on the underside of the foot have 'C' scrolls of beaded wire set into them. Sheets of mica were employed as a backing for some openwork panels on the foot.

The filigree is of great interest - much of it is executed on stamped foil which has had its background cut away. Beaded and twisted wires and gold granules are used and bird, beast and plain interlace are present together with simple scroll work and stylised snakes. The grade and type of wire is skillfully varied by the goldsmith to achieve in the tiny panels an effect of depth and to give vitality to the motifs.

The kerbschnitt ornaments, both of the stem and the underside of the foot are cast and the Ultimate La Tène style is well represented together with animal pattern interlace and key motifs. Openwork gilt-copper plates with fret patterns on the upper face of the flange of the foot, and on the underside, woven wire mesh and impressed copper plates complete the inventory of the



(illus. 23a) Stem
of Ardagh Chalice.

51b Bronze Chalice

NMI: 1874-99
 Probably 8th century
 H. (present) 11.8 cm; Max. D. of rim 13.8 cm; Depth of bowl, 6.74 cm.
 Refs. Coffey 1909, 37, 39 - Hogan 1932, 18-59 - Elbert 1963, 62 - Eibner 1965 - Raftery 1941, 112 - Ryan 1913
 Ryan forthcoming.
 Damaged at the time of discovery, it is a plain beaten, lathe-polished bronze cup with a flared rim and pro-

51c Silver-gilt Pseudo-pennannular brooch

NMI: 1874-104
 8th or 9th century
 D. of ring 13.1 cm; Max. W. of terminal 7.58 cm; L. of pin 33.85 cm; WL 500.54 g
 Refs. Lennane 1867-1874, 452-454 - Coffey 1909, 37, 40-41 - Raftery 1941, 142 - Lucas 1973, 94 - Mitchell 1977, 141
 of bowl, making M.R.
 a rendering of a Byzantine style of chalice in a local idiom
 of silver, made in one Irish tradition and therefore an entirely
 of the
 to have been considered the metal of the nails of the
 is attested elsewhere in Europe at the time and is known
 of design of the
 the evidence of a strong native tradition of design of
 of the large silver chalice in shape and technique of
 manufacture and the two from Arragh, together with the
 found Lorrainian chalice, clearly demonstrate
 the form of the bowl closely matches that



(illus. 23b) Underside of Ardagh Chalice.
The central stone hides the assembly
bolt that runs right through the chalice.

Around the cup, about one inch from the lip, is a band of elaborate interlace. There are ten glass studs between ten panels of gold interlace. The glass studs have silver frames of geometric designs. The glass used is also blue and red. Some beads are just plain blue colour and others are both blue and red. There are about six different interlace patterns used on the ten panels.

Below the horizontal band of gold filigree on the bowl are the names of the apostles. The names are rendered in two different grammatical cases so it is possible that the engraver may have been illiterate and didn't understand his task. The inscription was made freehand with a point. The lettering is surrounded by a stippled background which was also done using a point. There are four animals decorating the bowl which were inscribed in the same way.

The 'kerbschnitt' technique was certainly used on the golden collar which links the bowl to the foot. The upper part of the collar is a mass of intricate interlace and geometric design. At the base of the collar various panels have been engraved and chipcarved into the metal with La Tene scrolls, interlace, dots and geometric patterns.

There are eight decorative panels around the broad flange at the base of the foot cone, four silver, two copper and two of woven wire. The silver ones are made of very thin embossed metal. The metal was probably pressed into a shaped die, probably a carved bone. All four silver plates were made in this way. The two copper plates have details of swastikas, a pattern which was produced by tracing the design with a punch. Of the two panels of woven wire, one has a herringbone design and the other a plain square pattern. One panel is silver and one panel is of bronze wire. The studs on the upper part of the flange are very ornate and were made of blue glass. In the centre is a red cross and at the corners there are yellow angles. Four studs were like this while the other four had the colours reversed, yellow in the centre and red at the corners. The various areas of colour were separated by narrow strips of silver bent to shape and set on their edge. On the under foot girdle there are eight studs. The whole weight of the chalice rested on these. They were made of pale blue transparent glass. Under the transparent glass there were panels of silver foil to make it glisten. Each foil has a different pattern. (2, p. 138) (10, pp. 31-48)

ARDAGH CHALICE

A robust silver chalice. Decoration is reserved for specific areas. Around the top is a glistening band of Filigree with studs at intervals. Just below this band, the Apostles names are engraved surrounded a stippling effect. The decoration consists of mainly filigree and glass studs. Beneath the sturdy handles on either side, there is a central stud surrounded by an area of filigree. There are two roundels, one on either side located between the handles. These roundels are circular with a central stud and again this stud is surrounded with a frame of filigree and four smaller studs. The neck of the chalice located beneath the bowl is decorated with a carved band of interlace and spiral patterns. The foot of the chalice is a silver conical structure with a rim for balance. The base rim holds eight panels of filigree and granulation, between these panels there are a further eight studs. On the underside of the chalice there is an elaborate central stone setting hiding the bolt joint which runs right through the whole chalice. The full weight of the chalice rests on eight blue glass studs attached to the underside of the rim. These studs are separated by panels of filigree and woven wire.

Derrynaflan Chalice (Illus. 24)

The Derrynaflan Ministerial Chalice is made of silver which has a highly polished finish. This chalice is larger than the Ardagh Chalice. The Derrynaflan Chalice has the same basic components of the Ardagh Chalice, a hemispherical cup, hollow stem and conical foot with a broad sturdy flange around the base. It is assembled in the same way with a bolt going through the centre. The bolt is concealed underneath by a decorative catchplate, its rivets concealed under studs. The rim on the Ardagh Chalice rolls under whereas the rim on the Derrynaflan Chalice does not.

One inch from the rim there is a girdle of filigree panels, between these panels there are square amber studs. The panels are made up of simple filigree using beaded wire soldered by a back plate. Some ribbon wire is flattened and laid down on its edge. In some instances the gold foil backing has been worked up from the back to look like gold granules. These panels are held in place by the pressure of their frame on the bowl.

There are two handles on the bowl at opposite sides to each other. They are reminiscent of the Ardagh Chalice handles. In my opinion I believe the Derrynaflan Chalice estucheons to



(illus. 24) Derrynafian
Chalice.



(illus. 24a) Derrynafian Chalice
before cleaning.

CPL 1A - Chalice as female personification.

be exceptionally ornate and more beautiful than those on the Ardagh Chalice. The handle is thick silver joined to the lip and curved until just under the girdle belt. There is a frame work of gold (Illus. 25) interlace which was embossed. This framework holds three panels of filigree in place. The estucheons consisted of a central circular motif surrounded by three amber studs. In the very centre of the circular motif is a tiny amber bead which is set into a circular panel of filigree made up of beaded wire in the design of La Tene scrolls tradition. Surrounding this circular panel are eight smaller panels, four of which are rectangular amber studs and four which are rectangular filigree panels. The three larger amber studs have centres of filigree and between these three studs are a further five panels of filigree. All the components of the estucheon seem to be set into a heavy cast frame. The three amber studs conceal the rivets that hold the handles onto the bowl.

The silver polished bowl is relatively plain with large undecorated areas. The stem that joins the bowl to the base is beautifully crafted. The top piece of the stem seems to have been a light casting or dye stamped woven pattern. Around this part of the stem beneath the woven pattern there are eight square amber studs and eight panels of filigree. The

central trunk of the stem consists of a gold background probably worked on from the back. Placed around the centre of this trunk there are eight gold panels, four are square and four are round. These panels are made up of intricate Filigree. The lower part of the stem mirrors the top part, it has the same arrangement of components. There are eight amber square studs present and every second one is arranged in a diamond position. Between these amber studs are more panels of filigree.

Like the Ardagh Chalice, there are eight decorative panels around the broad flange at the base of the foot cone. There are also eight amber studs between the panels.

(13, pp. 130 - 131) (9, pp. 3 - 27)

In all there are about fifty seven amber studs set on the Derrynaflan Chalice. No other stones are used at all, whereas on the Ardagh Chalice a wide range of coloured enamels and millefiori glass are used. The Derrynaflan Chalice lacks the use of enamels and wire mesh ornament present on the Ardagh Chalice. The Derrynaflan Chalice boasts a more lavish use of precious materials i.e. amber, silver and gold. Approximately eighty filigree panels are used. The filigree is simple, consisting of twisted round and beaded wires soldered onto gold foil backplates. Although most of

the panels are held in place by stitching, some are held in place by the pressure of their frameworks over them. Animal ornament occurs on more than half of the panels. Many of the beasts are shown in profile. Lion and dog-like beasts are the most popular and some are shown bounding at full stretch. On some plates bird heads appear, some placed behind the heads and backs of the beasts. The many beasts and bird heads used hints at old beliefs and superstitions and they were probably used for symbolic purposes.

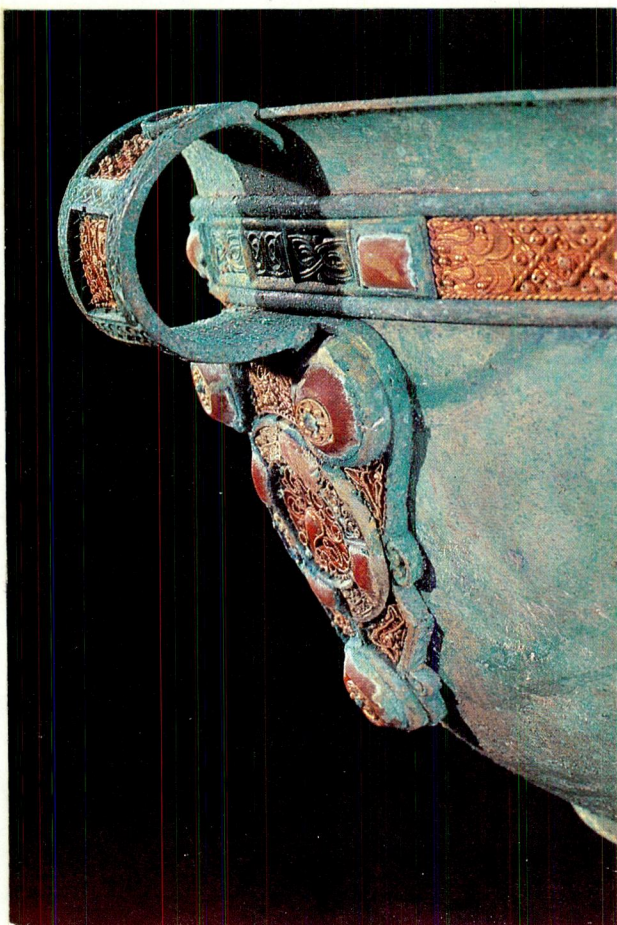
Like the Ardagh Chalice, the Derrynaflan Chalice was most likely made as a votive piece. Difficulties must have occurred trying to water proof the stem-bowl joint. This Chalice must have been used rarely, only at very important celebrations and not every day.

DERRYNAFLAN CHALICE

A large silver chalice. The Derrynaflan Chalice has an odd lobsided structure. The bowl was attached off centre to the neck. Decoration is kept to specific areas. There is large undecorated areas on the bowl and on the conical silver base. Around the top of the Chalice near the rim, there is a band of various panels of filigree with square amber studs set at intervals. Beneath the two handles on either side there is an elaborate display of amber studs amidst a surrounding

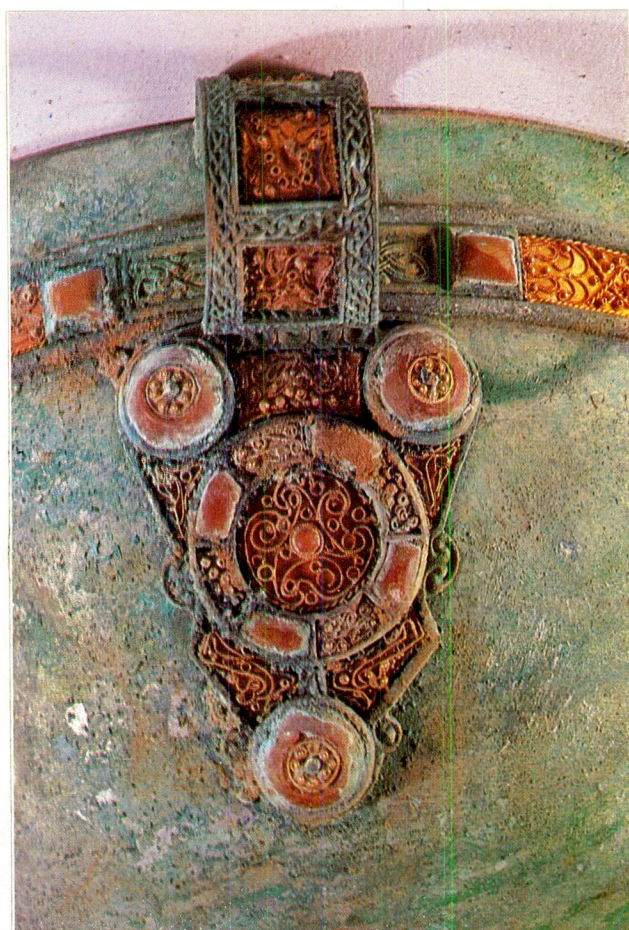


(illus. 25b) Derrynaflan Chalice
detail of stem



(illus. 25)

(illus. 25) Derrynafian chalice
Detail of handle estucheons.
(side view)



(illus. 25a)

(illus. 25a) Derrynaflan Chalice
Detail of handle estucheons.
(Frontal view)

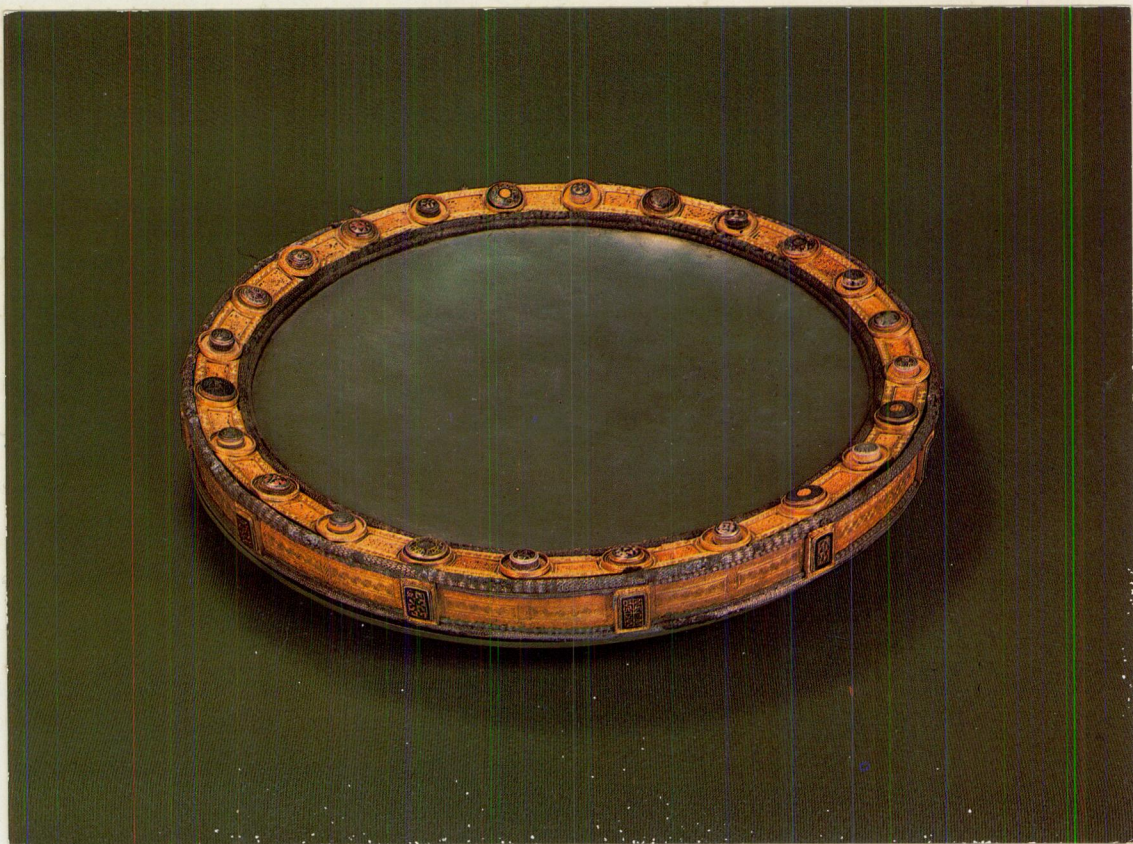
area of Filigree. The amber studs hide the rivets used to attach the handles to the bowl. The neck of the Chalice is extremely beautiful, elaborately decorated without being gaudy. Circular and lozenge shaped panels of Filigree spirals and interlace are set around the neck area. They are held in place by a band of repousse or chipcarved decoration. There are sixteen amber studs set into the neck. Around the conical base there is a rim for extra balance. There are again panels of interlace with square and round amber studs set at intervals.

THE DERRYNAFLAN PATEN AND STAND

(Illus. 26) The Derrynaflan Paten and Stand was made in two parts. The stand was once riveted to the paten but has since come apart.

PATEN

The Paten is a silver plate which was hammered to form it. It has a flattened rim and highly polished finish. The plate is attached to its main body hoop by stitching, soldering and pinning. Around the edge of the plate on the top face of the hoop there is a large band of filigree panels and set enamel studs. Between the plate and the rim there are two lengths of knotted silver wire which helps attach the plate to the hoop and also serves a decorative purpose. This knitted silver also occurs around the outer edge of the rim.



(illus. 26) Derrynaflan Paten.



(illus. 26a) Derrynaflan Paten Stand.

Patent
JLUS 26

THE DORMANTIAN PATEK (St. Cassary A.D.). Found in 1981 in a small
the Dormantian Patek is an extremely ancient piece for the Dormantian Patek. It
is quite clear that the Dormantian Patek dates to about the same period as the
Antique Chinese — indeed so close are the technical and artistic resemblances
especially in the use of the same mesh and enamel, that the two pieces may well
have come from the same workshop.

attached the patent and found that the
stand could never have been firmly secured to the
paten and this may account for the drilling of new
holes on the underside of the paten.

The Die-stamped Panels

These panels of gilt silver all appear to have been
stamped with the same dies. The ornament on each
is divided into three vertical zones, those at either
end being identical. The ornament on the latter is
laid out in the shape of a cross, reminiscent of the
carpet pages of illuminated manuscripts. The arms
of the cross and the border consist of a continuous
mesh of tightly woven triple contoured interlace.
Knots of similar interlace occupy the spaces between
the arms. The square panel of the centre of the cross
contains a device consisting of a pair of opposed
peltae (Pl. 69).

beads and the studs in such a way that green beads
surround a blue stud and vice versa and that
neighbouring sets of beads and studs are in
contrasting colours. This symmetrical arrangement
is, however, not strictly adhered to.

One of the rectangular studs is missing and the
frames are numbered in a clockwise direction
starting with that with the missing stud. The studs
measure 1.2cm. in length and 0.8cm. in width.
There are four different patterns:

- A. Three examples (RES 3, 5 and 7). Stud of
translucent green glass with a complex inlaid
step pattern based on a cruciform design (Pl. 70).
- B. Two examples (RES 2, 8). The stud is of blue
glass with an inset silver grille displaying a cross
with stepped terminals set within a rectangular
frame. In RES 2 the stepped terminals are of



(illus. 26b) Stand: Detail of inlaid
glass stud.



(illus. 26c) Stand: Detail of inlaid
glass stud with 'S' scroll.

to die

Y-wolf

to be

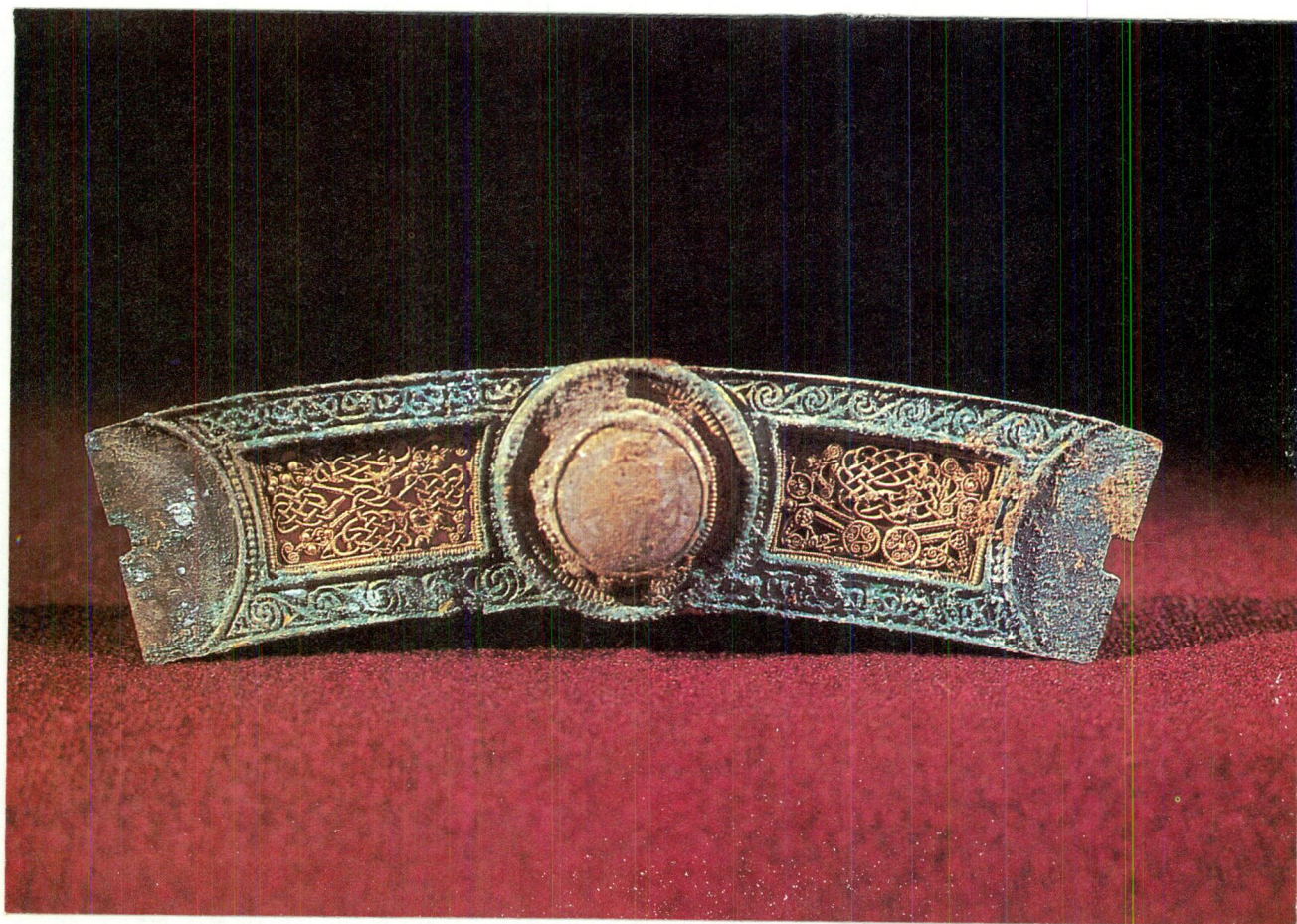
Around the rim there are twenty four enamel stud settings. All the studs have different geometric layouts. Some are accompanied by tiny panels of filigree and granulation. They have elaborate settings consisting of both plain and beaded wires. Some have inset small metal plates imitating cloisonne work while some have tiny cast relief interlace panels. Between the studs there are twenty four panels of gold filigree around the rim. These are especially fine. Fantastic effects have been achieved by using various combinations of beaded gold wires, gold ribbon wire on edge topped by complex wires. In the majority of cases the patterns were carried out on stamped foil with the background cut away so that the filigree could be shown in relief against a gold or silver backing. This is the hollow-platform technique. Granules of gold are often used to emphasise detail. Many motifs are used on these twenty four panels. Human figures are used on four panels, men kneeling back to back. Some panels show fanged beasts, eagles, interlaced snakes, stags and a couple of panels have plain interlacing and spiral compositions.

(illus. 27)

On one panel there is an eagle with elongated beak. The eagle is seen in profile with a forward looking pose. It is surrounded by a sea of interlace. Another panel depicts a



(illus. 27) Paten: Detail of decorative
panel from outside
wall of paten.



(illus. 27a) Paten: Panels of Filigree
and set stud from rim of
paten.

stag walking with a snake rearing up in front of it and another serpent behind it. The symbolism here is that the stag represents the lay people being attacked on all sides by sin (the snake and the serpent) the people are confused and lost (the interlace), while Christianity is a saving for them. (4, p 132)

The stag and eagle motifs are defined from early Christian iconography. The studs and panels are all set into a cast or die-stamped framework. The studs hide the pins which were used for the assembly of the piece. The wire mesh rims would not have been hygienic, particles of sacred bread would have gotten caught in the mesh and decayed.

On the outer face of the hoop are twelve settings for rectangular inlaid red, yellow and blue enamels. These settings help hold in place twelve panels of interlace and simple scrollwork. All of these panels have the same patterns so obviously they were all die-stamped using the same stamp. Knitted silver rope is present around the top and bottom of this rim, this again for decorative and assembly purposes.

(9, p.p. 13-31) (13, p. 127).

The Ardagh Chalice and Derrynaflan Paten share many traits of technique and style. The discreet filigree panels of animal and

abstract patterns are similar; their castings and inlaid studs are also similar, as is their use of knitted silver and copper wire mesh and stamped ornaments. 'All of these traits mark them as masterpieces from the same workshop traditions' (13, p 128). They were both manufactured in the eighth century.

'Derrynaflan Paten surpasses the Ardagh Chalice in its range of ornaments. Among its tiny filigree panels are to be found remarkably naturalistic animals (13, p 128).

The Derrynaflan Paten had an assembly system. It was put together with the help of a code of letters so this implies that a literate person helped in its design. On the Ardagh Chalice the Apostles names were incised, however, there is a grammatical error implying that the craftsperson was probably illiterate and didn't really understand his job. The Derrynaflan paten must have been a votive piece by the virtue of the care that was taken in its assembly, the system of letters that was worked out. It was made for the love of God.

THE PATEN

The paten is a circular shallow silver dish mounted on a low decorated foot. Around the top rim of the paten there are twenty four small panels of filigree with anthromorphic, zoomorphic, La Tene designs and interlace.

Situated between these panels there are twenty-four set studs. These studs are made from various coloured enamels set into silver grilles. Around the wall of the paten there are twelve square studs, between these studs there are twelve panels of embossed decoration. Two lengths of woven wire are present, one around the top rim and one around the base rim. The Paten has a complex assembly system. It is assembled in accordance with a code of letters.

THE PATEN STAND (illus. 28) and (illus. 26a)

The paten stand or footring is a flanged hoop decorated with eight long silver panels. These panels all consist of the same surface decoration they were all die-stamped. The pattern consists of a central area with an elaborate spiral and trumpet design in a field of tightly woven interlace. This area is flanked by two panels of interlace.

Between these silver panels there are eight smaller bronze sheets which are the settings for rectangular inlaid enamels. These bronze sheets are held in place by copper bars riveted in place around the enamel settings. The four rivets are concealed by four enamelled studs. The ornament for the settings for the enamels consist of very fine scrolls with spiral endings. The enamels are blue, green, red, yellow and white. These



(illus. 28) Derrynaflan Hoard.

enamels are arranged in angular motifs, and although one has an elaborate s-spiral scroll with suggestions of trumpet patterns. I don't think the paten and its stand are quite suited to each other. The paten is so elaborately decorated and the stand is relatively simple. The stand was most probably made at a later date and then attached.

THE DERRYNAFLAN STRAINER - LADLE

(illus. 29)

The strainer ladle consists of a long handled ladle to which a pierced plate has been added for use as a strainer. The bowl is hemispherical with a flattened base and a broad horizontal flanged rim. The handle is a long rectangular bar with a small disc shaped ending. The inside of the bowl is inscribed with two pairs of concentric circles. The upper side of the handle is also decorated with incised lines.

On the rim of the bowl there are eight silver foil panels stamped with a herringbone pattern. These are held in place by openwork frames. This Framework is secured to the rim by six dome headed rivets. Across the centre of the bowl is a decorative bar, silverfoil panels are again present on the bar.



(illus. 29) Detail of Derrynaflan
Strainer-ladle.

A pierced strainer plate is attached to this crossbar and secured to the rim with rivets at either end. These rivets are covered by rectangular red enamel studs, with inset silver grilles, arranged in a cruciform manner. At the centre of each stud is a star pattern of red enamel surrounded by blue glass. At the centre of the crossbar there is a round stud made of blue glass with tiny areas of red enamel separated by a silver grille.

The strainer plate is attached by rivets to the underside of the cross-bar. The plate is cut to fit the curvature of the bowl. The plate is decorated on both sides with incised patterns and neatly drilled holes. The pattern consists of three compass drawn concentric circles, joined at the top by triangles. The edges are outlined by incised lines.

There is a polished rock crystal set at the end of the handle; under the crystal is silver foil to make it shine. The sides of the setting contain blue and red glass settings. Around the setting the mount is decorated with a cable pattern.

The strainer ladle contains millefiori settings that are not found on the paten and stand, this suggests that they are not a set.

The arrangement of decoration around the rim of the ladle is reminiscent of the decoration around the base of the Ardagh Chalice. The herringbone stamped pattern on the silver foils may have been an imitation of the panels of knitted silver wire present on the Ardagh Chalice. In my opinion the Derrynaflan hoard does not fit together as a set. The paten and stand and the strainer-ladle would be more suited along side the Ardagh Chalice. (9,pp 31 - 35).

C O N C L U S I O N

During the eighth and ninth centuries Irish art reached a technical perfection allied to skill and decoration which would be astonishing at any period, but which is particularly striking at this stage of the early Middle Ages. (5, p. 57)

With the coming of the tenth century and the Viking Invasions the creative period of Irish Art nears its end. As the craftsmen fled from Ireland to Europe during the raids they brought their techniques and ideas with them. These were in turn fused with the trends which existed in Europe and a style was created that can be described as

' "in the manner of" to the point of caricature'. (5, p. 42).

One is forced to the conclusion that during the period of the eighth and ninth centuries, Irish metalwork held the highest standard matched nowhere else in the Christian world. The Irish artist pulled all outside influences together, perfected them, joined them with his own style and created the most beautiful masterpieces such as the Ardagh Chalice and the pieces of the Derrynaflan hoard.

The style of the Irish artist was an abstract art based 'on a refusal of reality' (5, P.57). The artists of Ireland were above all preoccupied with combinations of lines and colours whose rhythms pleased them.

The Flowing lines' of interlacings, combinations of curves, satisfy them with their harmonious tracery. It is acrobatics on the border of reality. A repertoire appears of strange forms which suggest plants, animals, human beings, a whole world parallel to ours and which nevertheless has its own rules - a world of singular creations which the artist bends spins out and interweaves at will; where in a moment by a mysterious insinuation a form passes to another form and unobtrusively becomes different.
(5, pp. 57 - 58)

The artists' layout of detailed decoration was simple and well balanced, confined to specified areas. Everything fits together beautifully. Much attention was given to hiding fixtures. Decoration on Viking period pieces was all over, unbalanced gaudy and showy. Little attention was given to hiding rivets.

Among the many techniques used by the Irish craftsmen for decoration, their techniques of Filigree and their use of enamels were the upmost in brilliance. These techniques can be seen sumptuously used in the Christian vessels, the Ardagh Chalice and those of the Derrynaflan hoard.

St Patrick introduced Christianity to Ireland. Ireland accepted Christianity. In order to celebrate the rites of Christianity many new things were required such as vessels and books. The craftsman became a very important

person. Many influences found their way to Ireland from Europe due to missionary work. Irish artists accepted these influences and in due time an Irish art was created. The flowering of this Irish art came about in the eighth and ninth centuries with the creation of the elaborately ornate Christian vessels, the Ardagh Chalice and the pieces of the Derrynaflan hoard.

If you take the trouble to look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of the artistry, you will notice such intricacies, so delicate and subtle, so close together, and so fresh still in their colourings that you will not hesitate to declare that all these things must have been the result of the work, not of men, but of angels.
(trans. O'Meara 1982).

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