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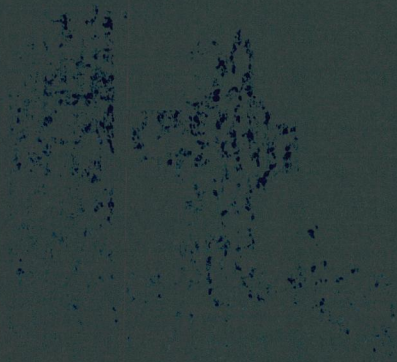
LESSONS IN STONE

Visual Communication on the Cross of the Scriptures,
Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.

by

Diarmuid Guinan

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National College of Art & Design

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*Submitted to the Faculty of
History of Art and Design and
Complementary Studies
in Candidacy for the Degree of
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CONTENTS

> Pleasure is the root of all critical appreciation of art, and there is
> nothing like a long steady project to make one discover.[1]

I set about this thesis to rediscover a much revered work of Early Christian Irish sculpture. To redefine the Cross of the Scriptures as a piece of pure visual communication.

'Lessons in Stone' is not intended as the definitive work on this particular high cross. Rather, I wish to view it from the perspective of my own profession, and display an ancient understanding of all aspects of visual communication.

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1. Hughes, Robert, *The Shock of the New, London, Thames and Hudson, 1980, p.18.*

Note: All illustrations and photographs by author unless otherwise stated

It is often difficult to be objective in the study of art and design of times long gone. Art historians will wax lyrical and marvel at the intricacy of figure carving, or the handling of colour, and extensively research influences in style. In many cases, the real purposes and effectiveness of these design pieces is forgotten and largely ignored.

The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois, is a high cross from the early tenth century. It is sited in the ruins of a once great monastery. This cross is more than just an 'important piece of medieval sculpture'. It is one of the most important works of visual communication of Early Christian times.

This thesis aims to look at the Cross of the Scriptures in terms of communication, and to show what a remarkably advanced work of design and communication it actually is.

In the first chapter, I will give a brief overview of Clonmacnois, the site of the cross. However, I will not extensively study its history or architecture, but rather, all matters of communication there, and how this cross fits into the scheme of things.

In chapter 2, I will look at the functions of the high cross, arising from a tradition in stone that pre - dates the Christian era.

Chapter 3 should give a conclusive dating to the cross, by studying the inscriptions on the shaft, and reveals a rather peculiar approach to the inscription.

In chapter 4, I intend to examine the morphology of the Cross of the Scriptures. How did the sculptor use the actual form to communicate and to aid communication? What lessons are there to be gained from the shapes alone, and where did the forms come from? These are some of the questions that I hope to answer in this chapter.

Chapter 5 is a study of the iconography. I will examine what lessons and themes were taught through the panels of figures on the cross. We find that the Cross of the Scriptures conforms with and omits some standard 'high cross themes', and also introduces some new ones.

The particular figure style found on the Cross of the Scriptures, and the composition of the figures on the cross is central to communication. In chapter 6, I will very briefly discuss some of the influences, but more importantly analyse how it succeeded in clarifying themes and ideas through style and composition.

Chapter 7 asks the question: 'how successful a communicator?' We will have seen by this time what the Cross of the Scriptures aspired to communicate and how it did so. Keeping in mind a number of important points, I will summarize its successes as a communicator under design headings.

In doing this, I hope to brush away some cobwebs. By studying an ancient subject with a fresh perspective, I hope to add to the title of the anonymous Master Sculptor - Master Designer, Master Communicator.

CLONMACNOIS: Centre of Communication

When we think of Clonmacnois, the picture that probably comes into most of our minds is of ruined stone temples, a multitude of crosses scattered around and deserted round towers without bells. This, set against the low hills that roll into the meandering Shannon. Romantic isn't it? - But deceptive. Deceptive because it is a picture that barely resembles that of a thousand years ago, when Clonmacnois was a bustling, busy and exciting centre. More than a monastery (second only to Armagh in the whole country), it was a university of learning, a city of trade, a workshop of art - a true centre of communication.

In this chapter, I aim to illustrate the backdrop for the Cross of the Scriptures, to put into perspective and place a remarkable piece of visual communication, and show how such a work could only have come from a place like Clonmacnois.

FOUNDATION

Clonmacnois or Cluain Mhic Nóis (meaning Meadow of the Sons of Nós) was founded by the son of a chariot builder, Ciarán, in the year 545AD. He arrived to this 'quiet watered land' with a number of monks, and along with a warrior named Diarmuid, who was later to become king, he planted the corner post of his first church.[1] Although Ciarán was to die only seven months later, he inspired the flourishing of this monastery and city. By the tenth century, Clonmacnois had become a renowned centre of Church and learning. Its reputation was known right across Europe.

History seems to suggest that it was the Vikings that introduced the idea of cities to this country, with Dublin founded in 988AD and Wexford, a little later. But Clonmacnois had become quite a modern centre long before this. Let us look at the elements that contributed to make Clonmacnois such an important focal point and centre of communication.

LOCATION

In terms of communication - broadly speaking - the siting of Clonmacnois was instrumental in its ascendancy to such a lofty status. This may not be very obvious now, appearing as it does on a quiet riverbank, far from any main road, in the middle of a bog. But in Early Christian times, the Shannon would have been one of the most important transport and communication links. Without cars or very much in the way of roads, for that matter, navigation was one of the principle forms of transport and

1. From (12, p.89) quoted in full on p.22.

Clonmacnois Ground Plan

- 9 T. Finghin
- Mass Shelter
- 10 T. Connor
- 12 Nun's Church ▸
- T. Kelly
- 11 O'Rourke's Tower
- 8 N. Cross
- 6 T. Kieran
- 7 Cathedral
- 1 Cross of the Scriptures
- 5 T. Meaghlin
- 3 T. Doolin
- 4 T. Hurpan
- ◂ 13 Castle
- 2 S. Cross
- Entrance ▸
- N
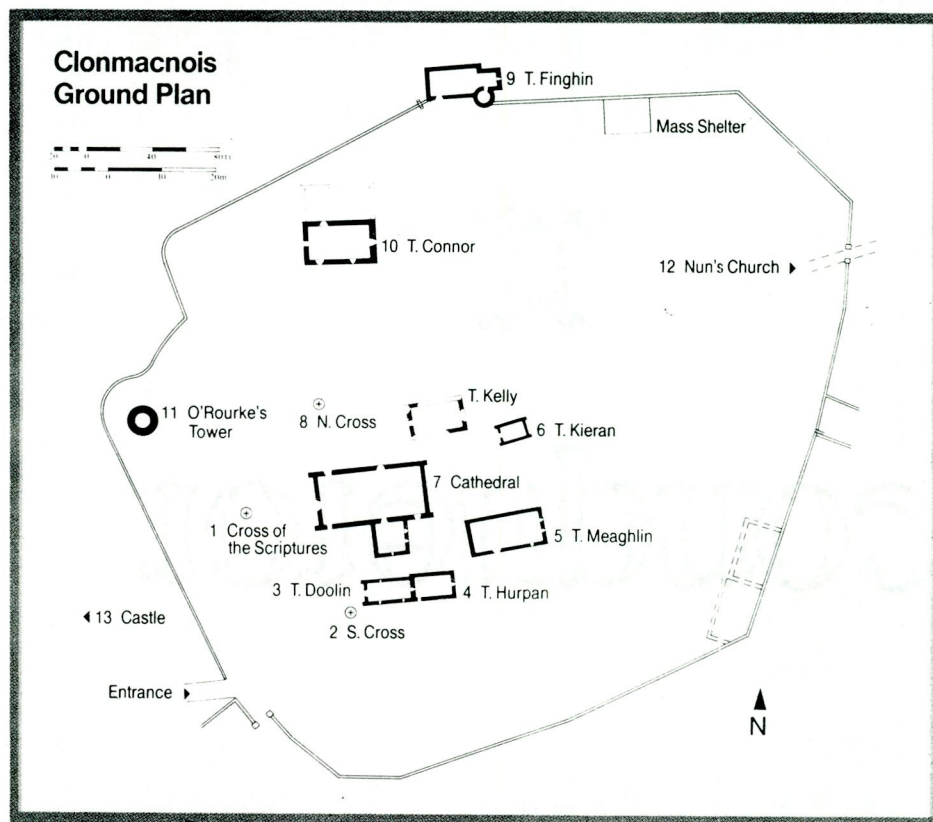
Fig. 1: <u>Clonmacnois, monastery plan</u>
(after 27, p.2).

trading. Clonmacnois was ideally sited for this purpose, and the monastery itself was high enough up on an esker ridge so that it would never flood.

One of Ireland's primary roads, the Eiscir Riada ran along the midlands, meeting the river Shannon at Clonmacnois. Here then, was one of the most important crossroads in the country, where east met west. So we are not dealing with a secluded hermitage, but a busy crossroads town with an advanced transport and communications network.

ARCHITECTURE

At Clonmacnois, we must not expect to find , a single large church, as is the case at Boyle and Jerpoint, with buildings arranged around a cloister-garth. Clonmacnois in its prime had seven small churches, each of simple plan and construction, arranged without any obvious system. The buildings would rather have 'sprung up' as the population increased (see plan Fig.1). The apparent absence of any system for the arrangement of the churches suggests a place with an atmosphere of freedom of expression, rather than oppression and rigidity, which many people would immediately associate with the monastic way of life.

But from the plan we can see that the layout wasn't completely reckless or carefree. The smaller temples revolve like satellites around the Cathedral. The Cathedral is the largest church in Clonmacnois. It is a specifically Irish pleasure, scaled to life, modest. It does not stand out like some monolith, demanding attention and respect. Rather, it is appropriately proportioned and elegantly constructed. This reflects the approach to design found on the Cross of the Scriptures, which again is sized with relevance to function rather than to impress. Somehow, I feel people knew how to 'size' things then. The buildings are designed for humans, but not only this. There was an instinctive intuition for the harmonious existence of man - made buildings with nature. Tall structures don't grab at the skyline, small buildings are not overshadowed, and an approach to the landscape was obviously attentive. A visit to the site would qualify this.

Clonmacnois boasted two round towers which would have been used as belfries and lookout posts. From here, the peeling bells would sound out the schedule for the day, calling the clerics and populace to prayers, mass, meals and classes. Both towers remain in fine condition. O' Rourke's Tower is the largest; it stands 19.3 metres high. Although it has been suggested that it is 'complete except for its conical cap' (2, p.46), it is more likely that it was parapeted.

Apart from St Ciarán's Church, all of the remaining stone buildings were
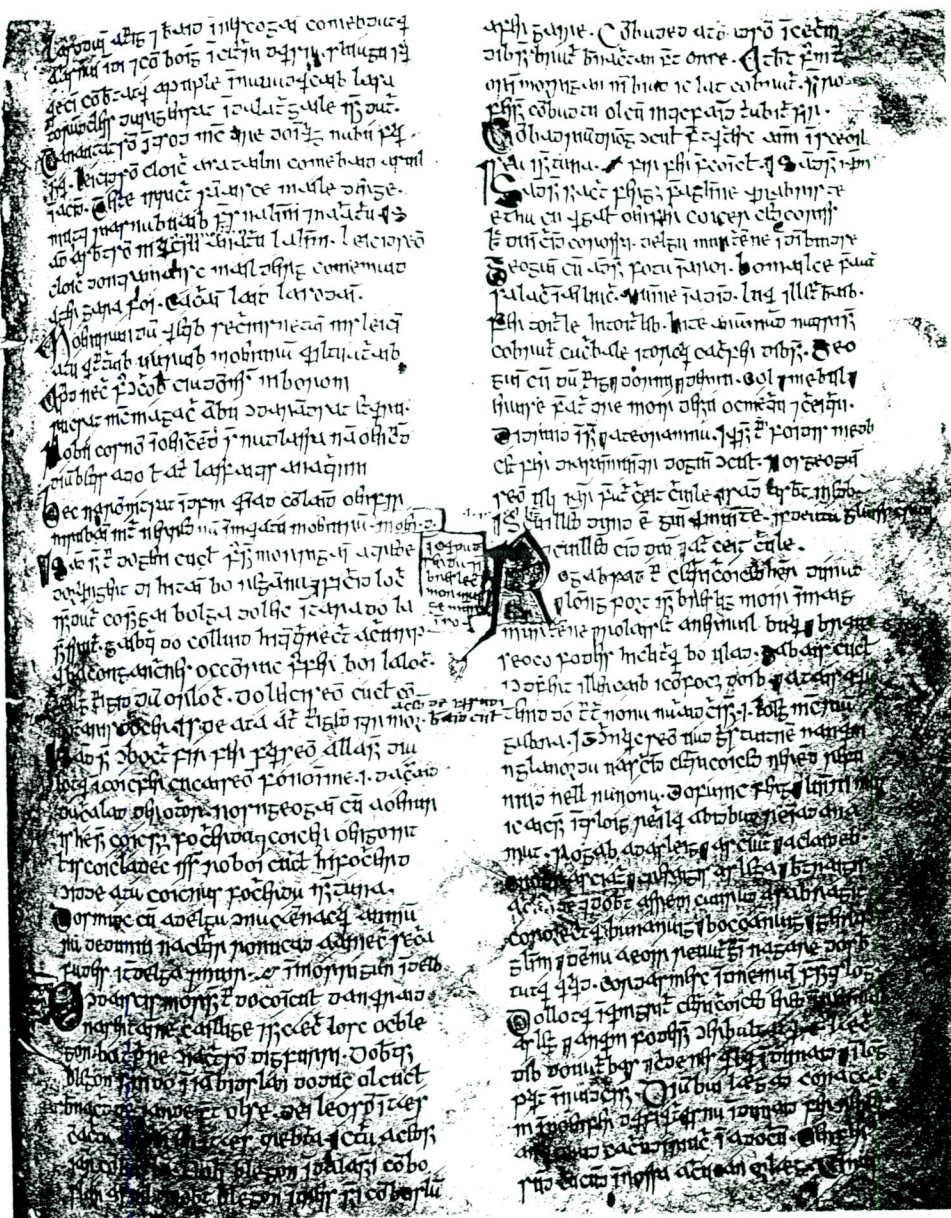
Fig. 2: Lebor na hUidhre (Book of the Dun Cow)
(after 26, p45).

Fig. 3: Clonmacnois Crozier, detail
(after 26, p.67).
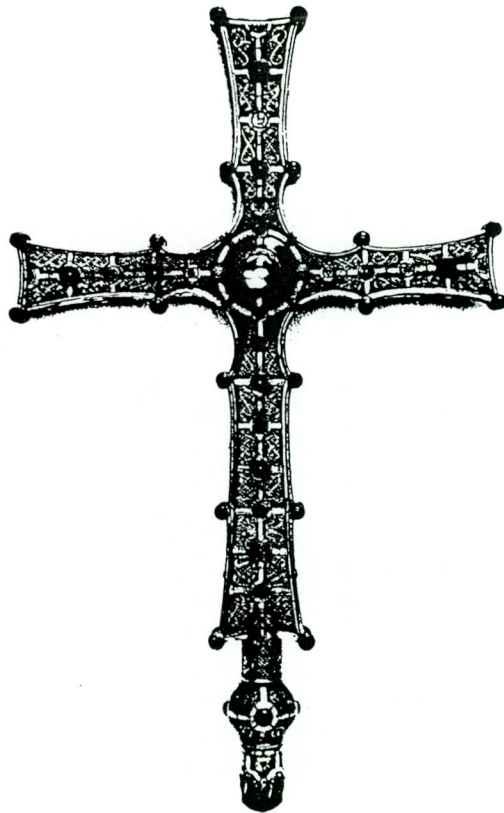
Fig. 4:   The Cross of Cong
            (after 25, p.124).
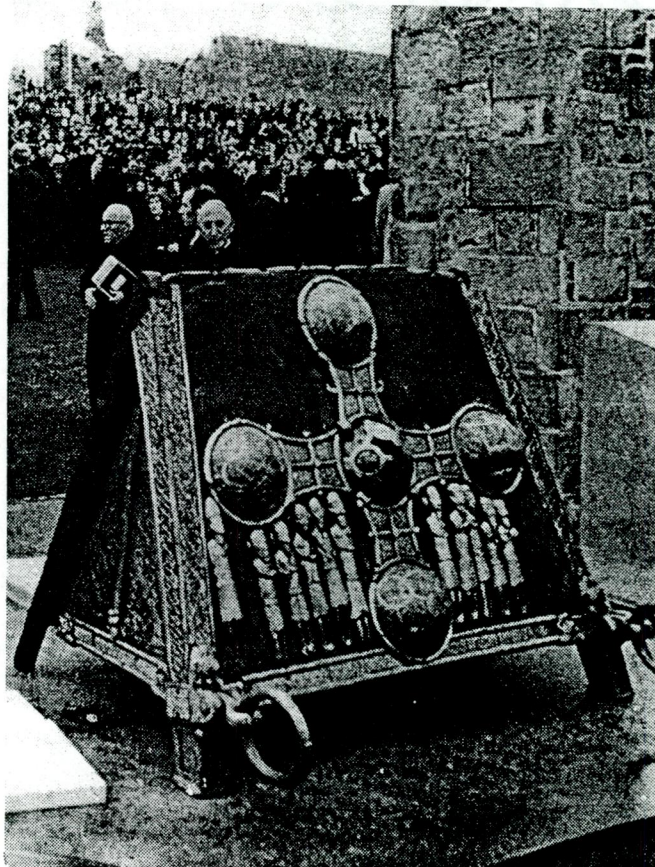
Fig 5:   St Manchan's Shrine
           (after 2, p.55).

named after patrons of the monastery. These patrons sponsored the building of the churches and towers, and possibly other works of art at the monastery[2]. The monastery relied heavily on patronage and donations of the nobility to continue. As Clonmacnois grew in stature, and its reputation became more widespread, it is apparent that patrons were plentiful. Much of the income at Clonmacnois was also generated by the burial of kings, chieftains and other people of wealth and importance in the monastery grounds. It is believed that the last High King of Ireland, Rory O'Connor, was buried in the Cathedral.

UNIVERSITY

Clonmacnois at its peak teemed with clerics, craftsmen, scholars, artists and students from all over Ireland and Europe. It was the focal point for the study of a great variety of subjects: Theology, Philosophy, Languages, The Religious Life, a wide variety of Arts and Crafts, and most likely a great deal more. Thus, Clonmacnois became a crucial headquarters for education and communication. Communication of all types - oral, aural and visual. As such a mixture of cultures and races existed there, a centrepiece of communication such as the Cross of the Scriptures would have to communicate in all languages. Rightly, the cross relies on clear imagery to convey its messages.

We know that within this 'university', a school of art was run. This art school produced some of the finest works of Early Christian Art in this country (see Figs. 2-5). We know that the Lebor na hUidhre came from here. This manuscript completed around 1100AD, was the first manuscript ever to be written wholly in Irish. Other artefacts from this workshop include the Clonmacnois crozier (late 12th c.), The Cross of Cong (c. 1130), St Manchan's Shrine (early 12th c.), and a host of high crosses and memorial slabs.

Between the high crosses and memorial slabs, there is no better place to examine the graphic design of Early Christian Irish Stonework than here in Clonmacnois. The wealth and variation of styles is exceptional. Apart from the Cross of the Scriptures, two other high crosses remain on the site. The South Cross which is of the 9th century, and probably the oldest of the three and the North Cross. The North Cross is curious in that only the upright shaft exists. We are not sure whether it was intended as a ring head cross which was broken or incomplete, or if it was meant to be like this. What we can conclude is that it was most likely intended to be set into a wall, as one face, the east face, is completely blank. The high cross at Bealin, the Banagher Cross, and the High Cross of Durrow, are all works of the

Clonmacnois workshop. Indeed, the Cross of the Scriptures was most likely used as a model for the Durrow cross.

Hundreds of memorial slabs, complete and fragmented, remain on the site. They reveal a wealth of vision and imagination in the diverse range of patterns, crosses, interlace and spirals. These date from the 8th to 12th century[1].

TRADE

Alongside the monastery, university and art workshops, it is natural that a busy trading town would flourish. The transport network which I mentioned earlier would be instrumental in this. With hundreds of students, scholars, monks and craftsmen to feed, clothe and trade with, the local populace was kept busy with agriculture, fishing, and quite likely 'service industries' such as catering, hostelry and transport.

There are many theses in the subject of this chapter alone. I can only be brief in discussing the main points. What it does show is that the Cross of the Scriptures was not created in a vacuum. It was a centrepiece of communication in a city where the exchange of thoughts, ideas and philosophies was pivotal. In many ways the Cross of the Scriptures epitomised what Clonmacnois was all about: the worship of God; the education of the masses; the creation of art; and the communication of ideas.

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1 R.A.S. MacAlister comprehensively catalogues these slabs in his book, Memorial Slabs at Clonmacnois (9).

THE HIGH CROSS: Its Tradition and Functions

Fig 6:   Funerary Slab, Clonmacnois Co. Offaly
          (after 25, p.147).

Fig 7:   Funerary Slab, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly
          (after 14, p. 16)

A TRADITION IN STONE

The use of stone as a means of marking sites or communicating a message of some form, is a tradition in Ireland that pre-dates the Christian era by hundreds if not thousands of years. Stone monuments were erected by peoples even long before the arrival of the Celts. They were rarely engraved; rather rough uncut stone, erected upright - usually to mark a grave. With the arrival of the Celts, in the late sixth century BC., came a more refined approach to stone engraving. The work of the people of the La Téne culture is especially notable for their intricate carvings on such standing stones as the Turoe Stone in Galway. They also brought with them Ogham. Ogham stones became a very important form of landmark and communication. With its own form of alphabet, through horizontal and diagonal markings, they became recognised as signs that could be read and interpreted. Therefore the appearance of a large stone or pillar in the middle of an outdoor site, was not alien to the people in Early Christian times, and would be recognised as a mark or sign of some significance.

The idea therefore of carving or engraving a cross (which had become the most popular symbol of Christianity) in stone was a perfectly natural one. The Christians, upon arriving superimposed their culture and beliefs on the pagan culture that went before, so many customs and traditions were simply adopted. The high crosses were not, however, about to just 'spring - up' wherever a number of clerics gathered. Several hundred years were to pass, from the founding of the great monasteries before the Irish came to marvel at these wondrous monuments, such as the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois.

The immediate forerunners of the high crosses were cross-bearing stones. These were slabs engraved with crosses, geometric patterns and interlacing designs of varying intricacy. Some of them such as a selection in Gallen, in Co. Offaly were standing stones of around 2 - 3ft tall. Others were recumbent slabs, placed over the grave, which carried similar designs, such as the extensive collection at Clonmacnois (see Figs. 6-7). They first appeared around the 6th century or early seventh century. They were generally funerary memorials; they continued to appear alongside the high crosses throughout the centuries.

+ Cross of Mark, South.

On the South-east. + Cross of Jeremiah.

+
Cross of the Holy
Spirit.

. . . . with gifts . . . . . +

+ . . . . . with angels from above.

Cross of Luke,
East. + +
On the
North-east,
Cross of Isaiah.

U . . . . t . . . .

+ Christ with his Apostles

. . . . . h . . . . . s

Cross of Matthew,
+ West.
+
On the South-
west,
Cross of Daniel.

+ On the North-west,
Ezekiel [. . . .]
+
Cross of John, North.
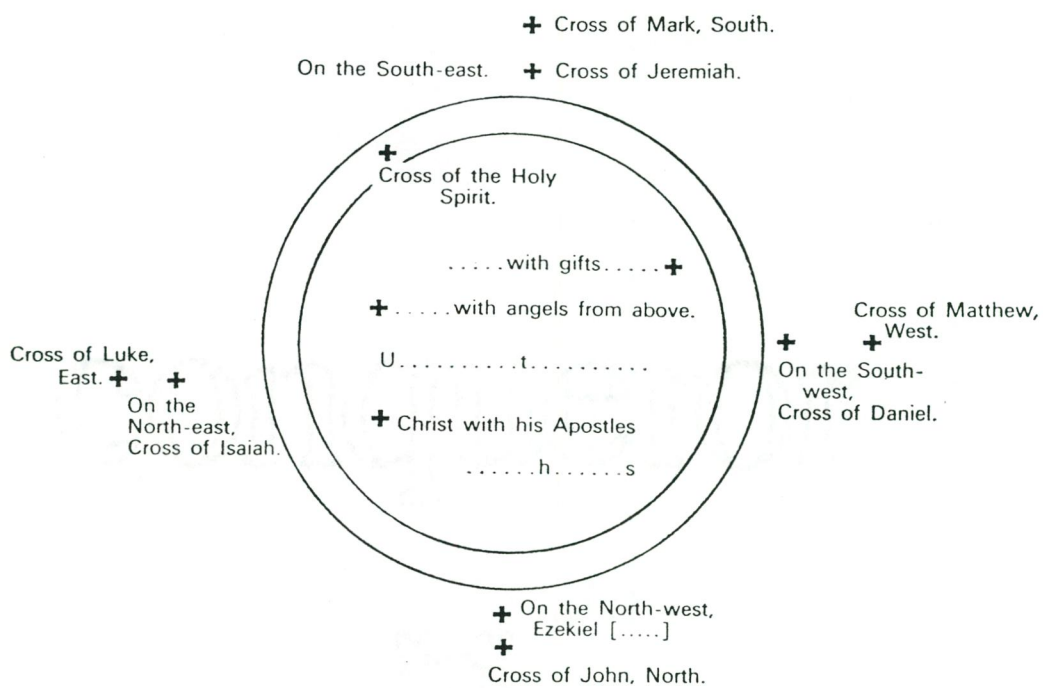
Fig 8:   Monastery plan, from Book of Mulling
              (after 7,p.135)

FUNCTIONS

i) LANDMARK

As I mentioned earlier, standing stones had been employed for centuries as landmarks in the country. Marking boundaries, places of worship, sacred ground and meeting places. The High crosses carried on this tradition and became very important landmarks in the Irish countryside.

The crosses are to be found either within or just outside the enclosure of a monastic settlement. A monastery plan, drawn on a page in the Book of Mulling, (12th c.) gives us an idea of how the crosses may have been positioned (Fig. 8). Generally, however the crosses are to be found within the enclosure. This may have been as the ones inside had greater protection from anyone wishing to steal or destroy them,as we know did happen frequently. They were always erected facing east - west.

The high cross can be seen as playing a similar role to modern day signs. The cross was a symbol of Christianity, not a representation of the crucifixion as is commonly misconceived; it boldly stated: 'Here dwells a Christian community'; so it acted as an identifier of the faith. This is not so strange an idea, as there were many pagan communities still existing in the country.

The high cross marked the land as a place of worship. These were signs that could be seen and understood. The common man would know, upon seeing this monument, that he would now be entering holy ground. This again is an ancient custom which can be traced right across the globe. It also marked the presence of God, as well as the faith founded upon Him. It reminded them that God dwelt among them and was watching over them at all times.

The height of the cross varies from about three metres to four and a half metres, to even six metres in some cases. These larger-than-life and imposing monuments would have been powerful reminders of the mortality of the local populace in the face of God.

Each cross has a name, and it could be used as a reference point in giving direction. They are referred to in the Annals by the names that we know them as now (12, p.222).

ii) THE GATHERING PLACE

The High Cross was most likely used as a point of assembly for communal prayers and religious ceremonies. Here, devotions and rituals would be carried out, without the space-restrictions of the churches, which could hold only a limited number of people. To this end there still remains the tradition of the 'Station'. It is an

ancient form of prayer, where the pilgrim follows a certain series of prayers, to be completed on a certain day. There is a route set out, around the monastery, which would revolve around the High cross *(See the 'Pilgrims Route' in the Appendix).* Individual clerics would also go about their offices on the site of the cross.

iii) PROTECTION

It was a strong belief among the people of Early Christian times that the high cross would be a protector of the land and people within its domain (12, p.348). They had the power to ward off evil, and would stand over the land, safeguarding them from trouble and strife. This is an extremely interesting feature of the crosses, regardless of how much credibility we would attach to that today. The fact that the high cross became such a powerful image for the people; became so immediately interwoven in their faith and beliefs, that they credited it with protective, spiritual powers. Many cultures across the world, had similar faith in the power of certain monuments. The Red Indian civilisation, erected totem poles, which they believed had the power to ward off evil. To the peoples of Early Christian Ireland, the high crosses were more than just stone monuments, they were a materialisation of a faith in a greater, all powerful Being.

iv) MEMORIALS

Unlike the cross - bearing slabs, such as the ones at Gallen and Clonmacnois, the high Crosses were not, as far as we know erected as funerary memorials. That is, they do not mark the site of a grave, nor were they erected as a memorial to someone who had died. Many, however, do bear inscriptions. On a number of crosses, a panel at the bottom of the shaft is left over for an inscription to be engraved. This panel is normally smaller than the figurative ones. The inscription in Gaelic, usually follows the form: OROIT DO (or ORDO) *...name of person...* DORROIND IN CROSSA which translates as *Prayer for ...X... who caused this cross.* Sometimes a patron of the monastery would be mentioned or in the case of the Cross of the Scriptures, would have had the cross dedicated to him. This case will be discussed in Chapter 5. In the case of the Cross of Muirdeach at Monasterboice, it is apparent that the inscription was an afterthought; and it was added on after the cross was finished.The lettering weaves in behind the sculptured cats on the foot of the shaft. Interpreting the inscriptions and tracing the names quoted on the crosses is crucial to their dating.

The magnificence of each high cross tells us a lot about the prosperity of the monastery. The monasteries relied heavily on patronage for their existence and for the execution of works of art. The crosses were commissioned by kings and abbots, and in the same way reflect a measure of wealth as the luxury Gospel manuscripts do of the monasteries with scriptoria.

v) THE STONE BIBLE

As the crosses became more figurative, and eventually almost wholly figurative, it seems likely then, that they took on a whole new function: that of the 'Teaching Stone' or 'Stone Bible'. As manuscripts were very rare and precious to monasteries (in many cases, monasteries would only get such books on loan), most common people did not get to see them. In any case, many would not have been able to read; and to hear the scriptures alone would not be enough to make them understand.

A visual aid was badly needed. The high cross with its panels of figures illustrating scenes from the Old and New Testament, was the perfect solution to a complex problem. In this way multitudes of people could come and *see* the Gospel - in a simplified and clearly presented way. There was no need to crowd into tiny chapels to examine the work; anyone passing could see it, and would be arrested by the monument's sheer magnificence, that it would merit closer scrutiny.

In the case of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois, the High cross was central to the city's reputation as a centre of study and learning. Not only could stories from the Bible be taught through the panels, but also theologies, ideals of the church and beliefs of the Christian faith. The panels depicted allegorical symbols of man's relationship with God, and his struggle with the forces of evil.

In the following chapters, I will discuss this role in more detail, with an analysis of the morphology and iconography of the high cross. Exactly how lessons and what lessons were taught through the cross and the representations carved upon it.

THE INSCRIPTIONS: A Historical Background

The Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois, is one of the finest of all the Scripture Crosses. It stands proudly over what was once, one of the most important monasteries and centres of learning in all of Europe. Perfectly formed in proportion and structure, it is one of the finest pieces of visual communication of Early Christian times. It is a sign of a once prosperous and wealthy place, for only a site of great patronage and income could play host to such a monument. It provided a model of excellence for other high crosses, such as the one at Durrow, which in many of its representations is an exact replica, and also quite possibly its only rival for sheer magnificence - Muirdeach's Cross at Monasterboice.

In this chapter I will attempt to give a conclusive dating to the cross, to put into perspective the time in which it appeared, what artworks were its contemporaries, and to conclude who the people responsible for its erection were. To do this, we must attempt to decipher the inscriptions on the foot of the shaft on the east and west faces.

As with many other high crosses this is where our greatest clue in dating the cross lies. Unfortunately, due to time, one thousand years of weather erosion, and a callous hand, much of the inscription is worn or broken away. What we are left with is just a handful of letters, and a couple of formulae to piece together the history and origin of this cross.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

Due to the fragmentary stae of the inscriptions, archaeologists and art-historians have constantly argued over their correct reading. The inscriptions appear on the east and west faces and can be seen as they appear now in Figs. 9a and 9b.

Let us consider the main arguments. The first recording is by Blaymires, an English artist, in 1738. Although what Blaymires saw and recorded would not have been prejudiced by a knowledge of names or formulae from the Annals, (as is the case later), his record is somewhat discredited by making the unusual mistake of placing the inscription from the west face on the north face (Fig. 10). His attention to detail in spacing and letterforming leaves a lot to be desired, so his analysis cannot be taken for very much.

George Petrie, a renowned English archaeologist, is far more confident, and in a book on round towers which appeared in 1845, he proclaims that the inscription at the bottom of the shaft on the west side 'should unquestionably read':

OROIT DO FLAIND MAC MAELSECHLAIND

(A prayer for Flann, son of Maelsechlann)

Fig 9a: Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly
            West Face.

Fig 9b: Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly
            East Face.
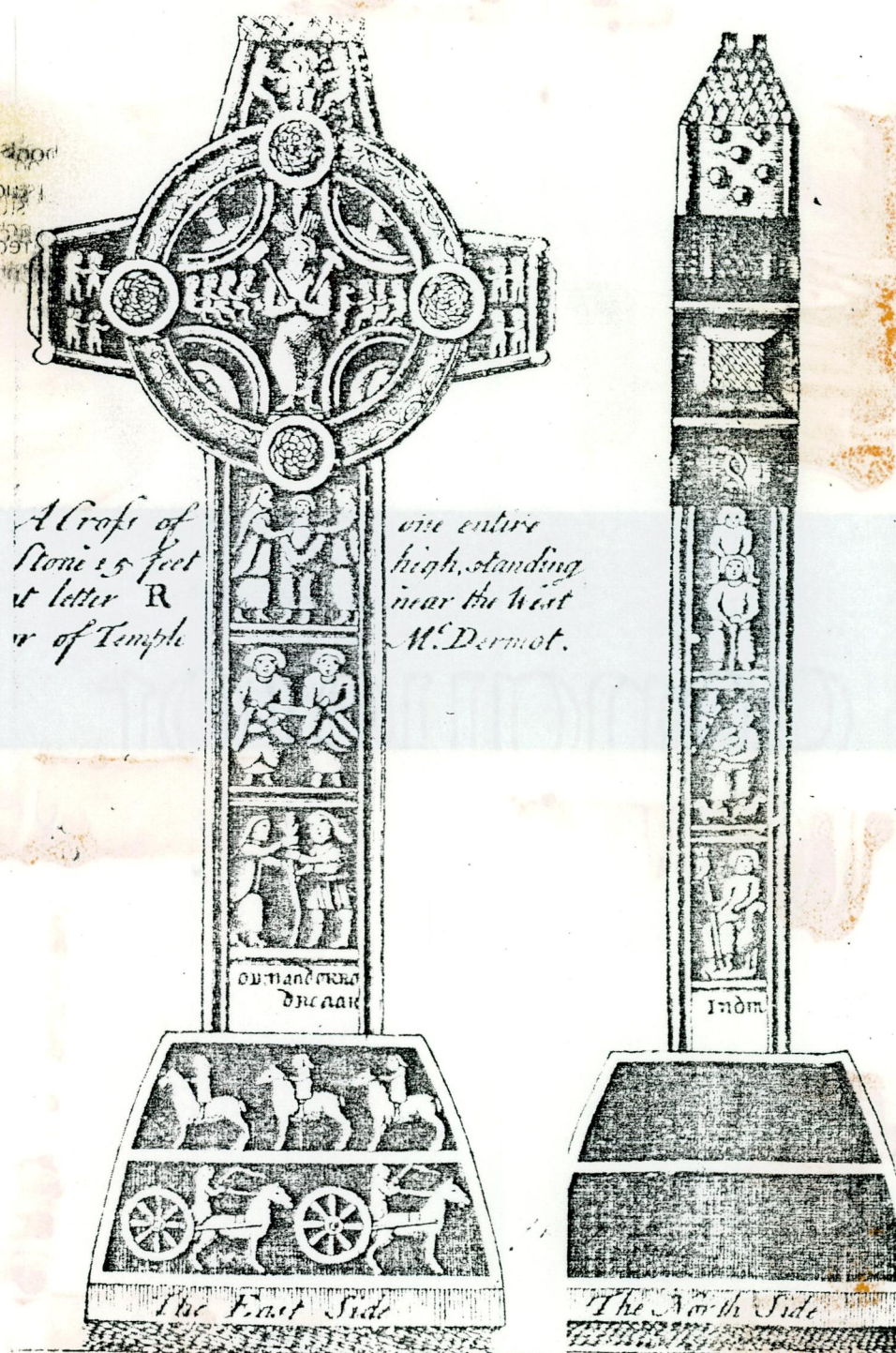
Fig. 10:   The Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, as drawn by
            Blaymires in 1738, showing inscriptions
            (after 18, p.91).

and that the east face 'very plainly reads':

OROIT DO COLMAN DORROINDI INCROSSA AR IN RI FLAIND
(A prayer for Colman, who made this cross for King Flann) [1]

This has been the generally accepted version for the pupose of guide books and tourist information up to this date. It becomes obvious though, with careful study of the available space and the remaining letters on the panels, that this is incorrect. On the east face, assuming that the letters are uniform in size (a reasonable assumption) - there would not be room for all the letters OROIT DO COL..., before the remaining N/MAN. There would not be room either, for the abbreviated version ORDO COL..., suggested by Margaret Stokes in 1872 [2]. Or the more grammatically correct OROIT DO CHOL....

The 'Colman' and 'Flaind', referred to in these interpretations relate to Colman, Abbot of Clonmacnois, and Flann Sinna, the High King who died in 915AD. It is recorded in the Annals of Clonmacnois, that an abbot Colman and a King Flann had worked together in building a stone church at Clonmacnois in 908AD (most likely the Cathedral). This dating of somewhere circa 910 - 915AD, ties in creditably with the dating of the Cross of Muirdeach at Monasterboice which is obviously contemporary. However, we are still faced with the problem of space and the obvious fact that 'OROIT DO' or even 'ORDO' would not fit before 'COLMAN' on the east panel.

Peter Harbison decides to dicredit all of these conclusions (18, pp.171 - 191). His argument basically hinges on this spacing problem, and his reading of the fragmentary 'M; as an 'N' (Fig. 11). Concluding that this is an 'N' and that the inscription follows the formula of 'ORDO....' , he offers his reading as 'OR DO RONAN......'

His full reconstruction can be seen in Fig. 12 and reads:

ORDO RONAN DORRO IGNI I CHROSSA AR CUIMNE FLAIND
(ar cuimne translates as *'in memory of'*)

There are two 'Ronans' referred to in the annals, both abbots, the first of these died in 764AD, the second died around 844AD. If, Harbison argues, it was the second of these 'Ronans' who erected the cross, it would neatly overlap with a different 'Muirdeach' at Monasterboice to the one, normally credited with Muirdeach's Cross. This 'new' Muirdeach was abbot at Monasterboice between 837 and 846AD. This would date the crosses over fifty years before the accepted dating. While Harbison's argument is impressive - he even supplies a 'Flann' to fit into the scheme of things - I cannot

1. P. Harbison quotes Petrie in (18, p.178).

2. P. Harbison quotes Stokes in (18, p. 179).

Fig 11:   Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, showing 'fragmentary "m"'.
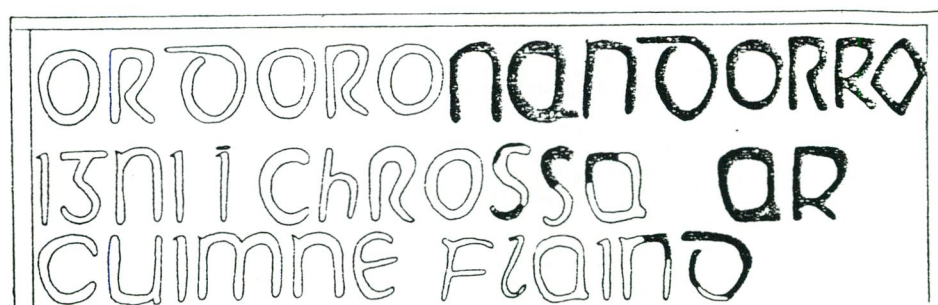
Fig. 12:   Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, as seen by Peter Harbison in 1979 (after 18, p.184)

nandorro|
an

Fig 12a: Inscription on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois Co. Offaly,
East Face, detail.

Fig. 13:   Rubbing taken of the inscriptions on the Cross of the Scriptures,
             Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly by Domhnall O'Murchadha in 1980
             (after 21, p.49).

accept his reading of the fragmentary 'M' as an 'N'. From my own drawings of the inscriptions, we can see that the first letter is quite different in shape to the 'N' after the 'A' (Fig. 12a). It is more rounded on top and narrower. Also, it has what is undoubtedly a fragment of the first curve of the 'M' attached to it.

For me, Domhnall O'Murchadha has provided the definitive evidence of what most of the inscriptions read (22, pp.47-51). O' Murchadha got over the problem of reading the inscriptions in diffused natural light, by making an exact replica of the panels. This enabled him to take the inscriptions to where he could study them in proper lighting conditions. He carefully reproduced the panel in plaster, after making a mould in modelling clay from the original. By taking hundreds of individual rubbings from the cast, he was able to piece together most of the inscription. Many of the letter carvings were not visible in natural light as they had been worn away at an angle, but traces of the incision of the letterform remained, barely visible. So individual rubbings were made at various angles to the panel, to reconstruct the letters. The results are startling (see Fig. 13).

From this O'Murchadha can confidently offer his interpretations as:

West Face 1st line: ORDO RIG FL_INDMMA
2nd line: ....N................O
3rd line: ROIT DO RIGHERENNOR

East Face 1st line : DO COLMAN DORRO
......AN CROSSA AR
........RIG...........AIND

The 'OR' at the end of the third line on the west face begins the first line on the east face - ie., you read the west face first, and follow along to the east side. O' Murchadha offers no translation for the 'HERENN' on the third line, west face, but his work represents the most credible and thorough explanation of the inscription.

What we are left with then is the Abbot Colman and King Flann of the early tenth century, whom Petrie had pointed to, but it was important to find answers to the problems of Petrie's original theory. So a date can now be confidently attributed to both the Cross of the Scriptures and the Cross of Muirdeach, of early tenth century (c.910 - 915 AD), within the lifetime of the abbot Colman.

Apart from the fact that O'Murchadha's results appear to have finally settled who the people named on the cross were, they also reveal this interesting approach to

the inscription. This idea of 'reading around' the shaft is not found on any other high cross. It leads the viewer around the cross, 'forcing him' to acknowledge all sides of the cross. It is a most contemporary approach, treating the inscription in book - form; the act of going from west to east to read the inscription, likened to the act of turning a page in a book.

MORPHOLOGY: Origins and Symbolism

In this chapter, I intend to examine the morphology of the Cross of the Scriptures. The form of this cross is central to its communicative value. Each of the elements have their own meaning and purpose. In unison, they represent one of the most identifiable structures on the Irish landscape. I will discuss the origins and possible meanings of the shapes within the Cross of the Scriptures, and show how this cross in particular is a model of excellence in terms of its morphology.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS

The Cross of the Scriptures (Fig. 14) stands 3.9 metres high, from base to cap. The cross is made up of a number of different elements: the base; the shaft; the cross arms; the ring; and the capstone. Aside from the base, it is carved from a single block of buff-coloured millstone grit, a form of sandstone. In some cases one finds that the cap-stone has been added on, even cases of the ring being later added. This is not the case here. It is obvious that the final design has been meticulously planned from the start.

HEIGHT

At over 3.9 metres in height, its proportions are majestic, and would have been even more so in the eyes of the people of a thousand years ago. But not merely majestic - but appropriately sized. If we compare this cross to the West Cross at Monasterboice, which stands an incredible 7 metres tall, one may initially assume the West Cross to be the more accomplished, due to its greater stature (Fig.15). However as a piece of visual communication, the Cross of the Scriptures is the more successful. This I attribute simply to the fact that the West Cross is too tall. The panels at the top, or near the top can barely be seen or read. Each panel on the Cross of the Scriptures, on the other hand, can easily be seen. It is elegantly shaped, majestically formed and sensibly sized.

THE BASE

The base of the Cross of the Scriptures is a separate block of stone, into which the shaft of the cross is set. The base of the cross is in the shape of a truncated pyramid, which seems to be a direct reference to the Hill of Calvary, where the crucifixion of Christ took place (4, p.163). Sometimes the base is stepped or cubic.

Fig. 14:   The Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.
            West and South Faces.
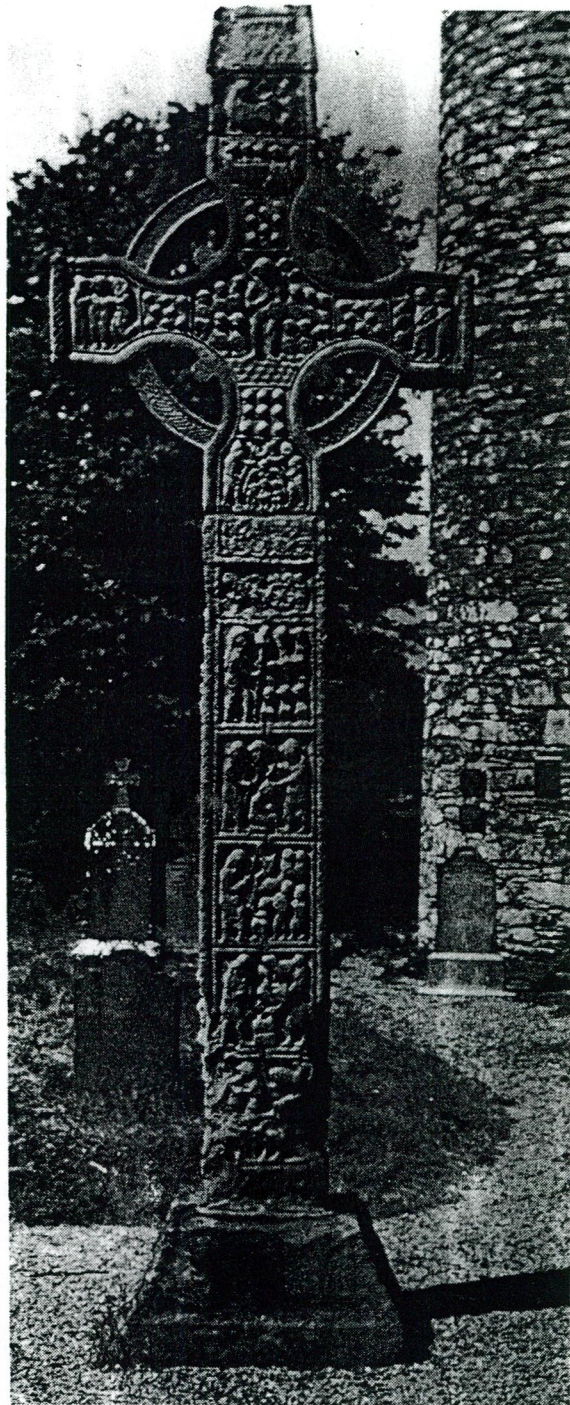
Fig. 15:   The West Cross, Monasterboice, Co. Louth.
            East Face (after 14, p.131).

Fig. 16:   Carndonagh Cross Pillar, Co. Donegal.
West Face (after 14, p.66).

Fig. 17:   Carndonagh Cross Slab, Co. Donegal.
West Face (after 14, p.64).

The shape of the base in this case, would seem to be a more literal translation of the Hill of Calvary.

THE CROSS SHAPE

As there are no direct parallels for the high crosses outside Britain and Ireland, it is difficult to pinpoint their origin. The importance of the cross-symbol in every aspect of Christian faith originated in the Near and Middle East in the early to mid centuries AD. when the Roman Emperor Constantine abolished the persecution of Christians and the use of crucifixion as a means of execution. The Christians were liberated and allowed to proclaim their faith freely. The cross became very popular as their symbol, across the Middle East.

> The pilgrim Arculf, who visited the Holy Land and Constantinople in the 680's AD., and was later shipwrecked on the island of Iona where he described where he had described what he had seen to Admonan, provides vital evidence of this cult, mentioning, for instance: a tall wooden cross over the place where Christ was baptised and a silver cross on the site of Christ's crucifixion at Golgotha (4, p.163).

Stories of these crosses, together with portable representations of the cross may have provided the inspiration for the production of wooden and metal crosses in Britain and Ireland.

To assume that the cross is a representation of the crucifixion is a common misinterpretation. Although many of the Scripture crosses bear a representation of the crucifixion, the cross stands, not merely as the instrument of Christ's punishment, but is actually the embodiment of Christ, a symbol of Him and the Christian faith. 'In Christian iconography, the cross is Christ in person (14, p.11).

FROM SLABS TO CROSSES

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the immediate forerunner of the high cross were cross-bearing slabs. The slab shape itself was left unaltered except for a smoothing of the surface for engraving. Cross pillars appeared, where the stone was a more regular shape - a vertical shaft with a cross engraved on it - such as the Carndonagh cross pillar (Fig. 16) The cross slab - again at Carndonagh (Fig. 17), illustrates how the cross made the transition from engraved slab to carved cross. Here, the cross dictates the shape of the stone, rather than the stone dictating the shape of the cross. This
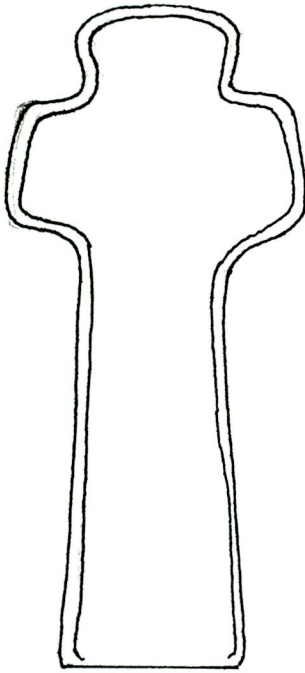
Fig. 18:   Cross Slab - outline drawing
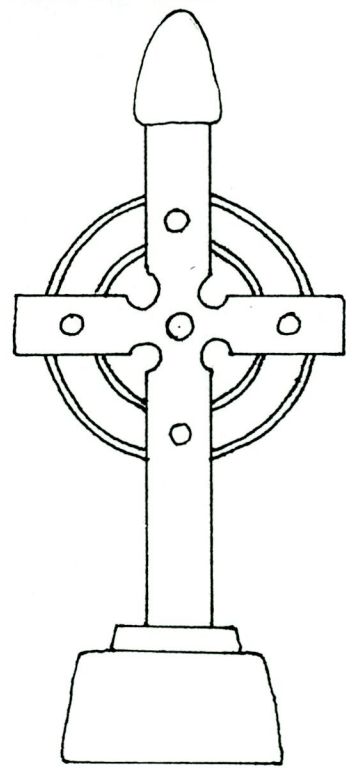
Fig. 19:   Ahenny Group - outline drawing.
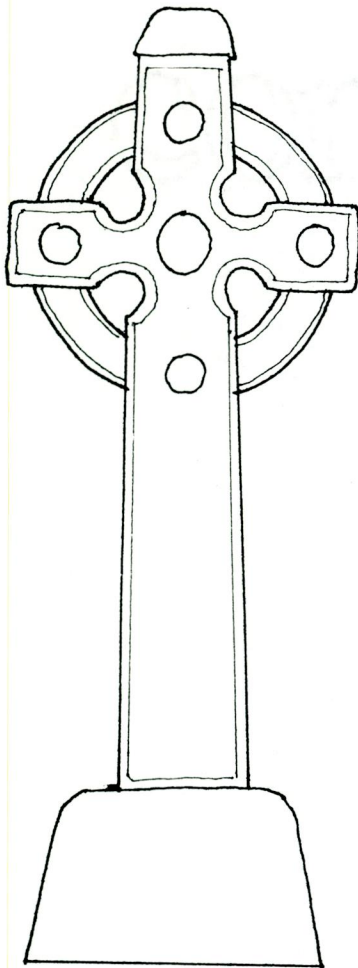
Fig. 20:   Transitional Group - outline drawing.
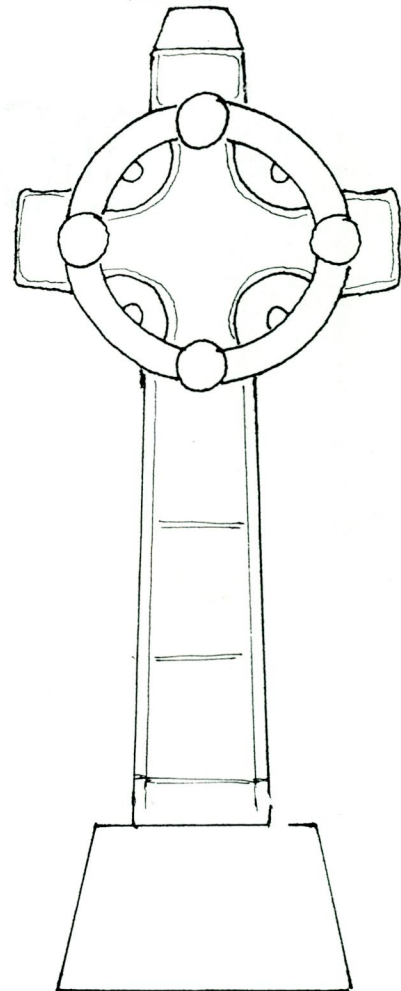
Fig. 21:   Scripture Cross - outline drawing.

evolution gives the cross symbol far greater importance and impact.

STYLES OF HIGH CROSSES

I will briefly outline the evolution of the cross from cross slab to the refined structure at Clonmacnois. Following the illustrations (Figs. 18 - 21), I will go through the transition in style.

The earliest free-standing high cross seems to be the one at Carndonagh in Co. Donegal. This has been dated to the seventh century by Francoise Henry (7, p.128). It is a slightly irregular cross-shape, cut from a thin slab of sandstone (Fig. 17). The west face is covered entirely with interlace of broad ribbons, cut in low relief. A representation of Christ appears on the East face.

The earliest ring-head crosses appeared sometime in the late eighth century. This group of crosses is known as the Ossory or Ahenny group. A fine example of this cross is the North cross at Ahenny. The dating of the cross, given as late eighth century, is generally founded on parallels with metalwork design of the time, of which a great deal is known. The Ahenny group, have no figure carving; the faces are covered exclusively with decorative elements, copied from the metalwork of the time (Fig. 19).

The next group in chronological order is the Transitional Group. Here we see an introduction of figure carving alongside the panels of decoration. The decorative elements are still predominant, as can be seen with the South cross at Clonmacnois (Fig. 20). The South cross bears a close resemblance to the Ahenny cross, although the proportions have changed and a representation of the crucifixion appears in low relief on the west face.

The Scripture Crosses which I will be concentrating on, are a group of about thirty dating from the late ninth century/ early tenth century to the eleventh century. These crosses are heavily panelled with figure carvings and represent a major watershed in Irish sculpture.
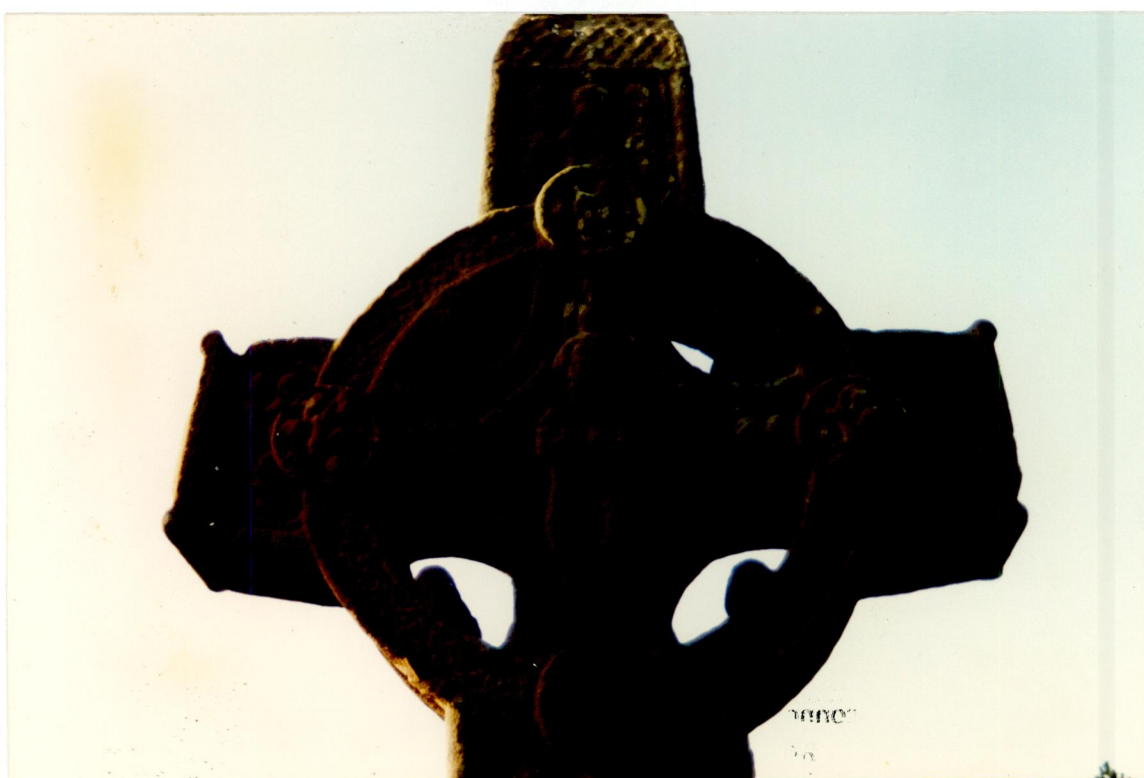
Fig. 22:   The Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.
Detail showing ring and discs.

THE NORTHUMBRIAN CONNECTION

There still remains a mysterious gap in the evolution of the morphology of the high cross. How did we get from the rather rough-cut slab at Carndonagh (-dated to the late seventh century) to the far more refined piece of stone carving at the North cross at Ahenny (dated to the early eighth century). The introduction of the ring - I will discuss later, the craftsmanship however, we will concern ourselves with for now.

It can be argued, that individual levels of craftsmanship would bear out different levels of quality and style; and a sculptor of greater skill to the one at Carndonagh, using metalwork crosses as a model, would have been able to carve out this cross. However, the actual technical knowledge for construction of the shape would remain unaccounted for. To fashion a cross in stone requires a much different skill to making one in metal or wood.

It is quite plausible then, to assume that the actual *technical knowledge* came from outside the country. The Church in Ireland had long - established links with Iona and Northumbria in Britain. Northumbria is known to have been a place of skillful stone sculpture from the mid seventh century AD. There is evidence there of several experimental crosses in stone. The actual iconography was imported but it may well have been that the sculptural form was initiated there. The knowledge of how to fashion large blocks of stone would seem, therefore, to have been imported from Northumbria, possibly through Iona.

THE RING

The ring connecting the arms and shaft (Fig. 22), is probably the most distinctive feature of the Cross of the Scriptures, indeed in the immediate identification of any Irish High Cross. In stone it is quite unique to Ireland. There is no comparable series of monuments anywhere else outside Ireland and certain parts of Britain. But the ring, as we shall see, is not merely a unique curio, but a vital symbol, loaded with meaning and interpretable messages.

The circle connotates many testimonies of the Christian faith. It symbolises unity; unity of the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It physically and symbolically unites the cross arms and shaft of the cross. It is the perfect shape; a complete shape; a harmonious form, that when employed as part of the high cross structure, reminded the people of the wholeness and all-powerfulness of God, and His harmonious relationship with mankind.

North

1_N
2_N
3_N
4_N
5_N
6_N

East

1_E
2_E
3_E
4_E
5_E
6_E
7_E
8
9
10_E

South

1_S
2_S $2a_S$
3_S
4_S
5_S
6_S
7_S

West

1_W
2_W
3_W
4_W
5_W
6_W
7_W
$7a$
8
8
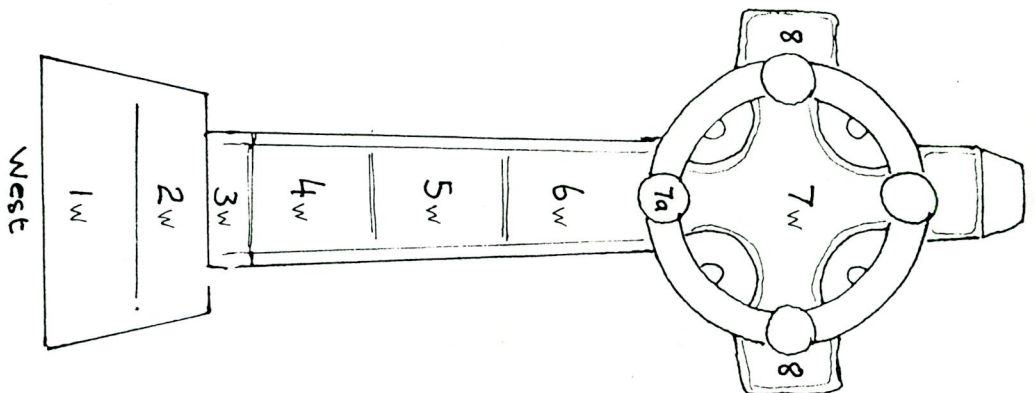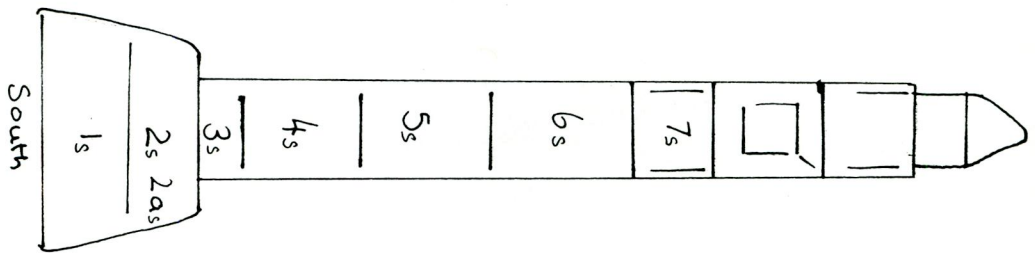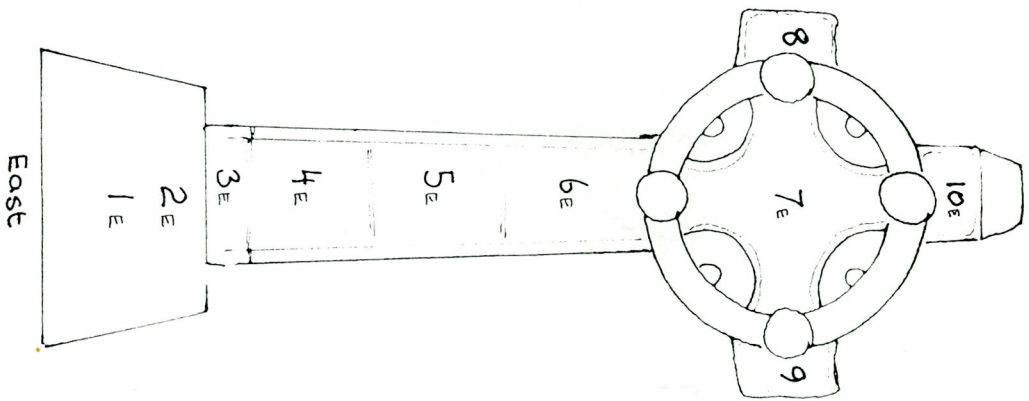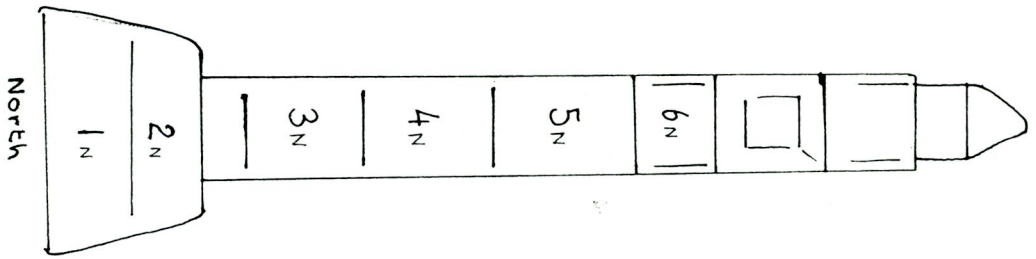
should be located there if it doesn't. Panels of decoration are normally relegated to more obscure locations on this cross. Hilary Richardson calls it a 'human interlace'(14, p.35), and while I have failed to find any 'human' in the interlace, it could explain its appearance. A human interlace could be used to illustrate man's struggle with sin, although it is a different approach to the norm on this cross.

Although it is almost impossible to make them out now, two centaurs in medallions are carved just below this panel. The centaur - half man, half beast, was used as a symbol for savage passions and excesses, 'especially the sin of adultery' (5, p.14). Again, there is a certain theme of the struggle between good and evil on this panel.

WEST FACE

As we can see from the appendix, the west face is entirely dominated by scenes from the Passion of Christ. The days from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday mark probably the most important dates on the Church calender.They mark the celebration of the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Arrest of Christ, the Mocking and Flagellation, His Crucifixion and His Resurrection on Easter Sunday. This series of events is brought to life on the Cross of the Scriptures. The series is not arranged chronologically, but is thematically linked. Panel 5W (Fig. 41) depicts the arrest of Christ, above it the flagellation is represented (Fig. 42), in the centrepiece, the crucified Christ (Fig. 43). His hands are enlarged to show the nailing to the cross. Two figures appear either side of Him. One offers the cup of vinegar, the other seems to pierce His side with a lance. At Christ's feet, the Holy Spirit is represented, as a dove, this is Christ's spirit leaving His body.

The Resurrection scene, panel 4W (Fig. 44), is discussed in Chapter 6, in terms of arrangement to clarify the theme. An interesting feature of this panel is the inclusion of a bird, breathing life into the body of Christ, a symbol of His Resurrection. The Holy Spirit is referred to as 'the giver of life' in the profession of faith. This pictorial representaion is a beautiful device to illustrate the concept of the Resurrection.

Generally this face is handled quite clearly and simply, with representation typical of contemporary high crosses, such as Muirdeach's Cross at Monasterboice.

To summarize the chapter, we have seen how the iconography of the Cross of

the Scriptures complied with certain standard themes. The dominant theme being, the struggle between Good and Evil, and Good being shown to triumph through Christ and Christianity. This theme is represented in some form on a total of 8 panels. We have seen an introduction of local interest to the cross, and these panels are interwoven into the overall theme.

Certain icons and symbols are used, - universal signs of Christian iconography, to identify: Saints; Satan; and Sin, among others. Others are created to identify figures in the 'local' scenes.

The Cross of the Scriptures undoubtedly aspires to communicate a great deal, and the connection between panels and thematic sequences has been carefully planned and executed. In the next Chapter, I will discuss how, through style and compostion, these themes were clarified.

FIGURE STYLE and COMPOSITION

The figure style and composition of the carvings on the Cross of the Scriptures merit close scrutiny in terms of visual communication. Too often, in design, the message or meaning is lost due to an over-elaborate style, or a complete lack of it. I will briefly describe the figure style, trace some of its roots, and analyse its successes and failings under design headings.

DEPARTURE FROM THE CELTIC

A major change in approach to figure carving is evident in a number of the scripture crosses, most notably, the Cross of the Scriptures. The models for figures on the preceeding high crosses had been fairly strictly celtic. A figure such as Christ in the crucifixion scene on the South Cross at Clonmacnois, is carved in very low relief, with very little modelling. The faces and figures are directly reminisent of pre - Christian Celtic sculpture (Figs. 45 - 46). The figure style of the Cross of the Scriptures is quite different. Here the figures are carved in much greater relief with far more modelling. The figures take on a greater realism than ever before. There is more attention to detail in facial expression and features, and also to the treatment of the garments. While the figure style still evokes a recognisable 'celticness', it is apparent that influences had come from abroad.

NEW INFLUENCES

We know that the monasteries in Ireland sent out missionaries all over Europe and the Middle East. While the rest of Europe was plunging into the Dark Ages, Ireland was rapidly becoming known as an 'island of saints and scholars'. The missionaries would return to their homeland with stories and artefacts from these lands, and invariably bring back images of biblical scenes and figurative work
EGYPT
Sources for these scenes would have come from catacomb paintings, mosaics, manuscripts and ivories of the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries. One cannot overlook the striking similarity in style and treatment between many of the figures on this cross and figurative work in Egyptian art. If we take as an example, the portrayal of Christ in the Last Judgement scene, we can readily draw comparisons with Egyptian work. The posture of the Christ figure is taken directly from Egypt . The manner in which he holds the staff nad the cross is exactly as the posture taken by Ossiris Judge in Egyptian funerary carvings, and in the illustrations of the Books of the Dead (8,

Fig. 45:   The Crucifixion of Christ, South Cross, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly
West Face.

Fig. 46:   Two faced stone figure, Boa Island, Co. Fermanagh,
            (after 25, p.49).

Fig. 47:   Ossiris Judge, Book of the Dead, Egypt.

Fig. 48:   Christ the Judge, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.

Fig. 49:   St Michael weighing the souls, Muirdeach's Cross, Monasterboice,
          Co. Louth, East Face (after 8, plate 108).

p.166). Although over 2000 years separate their executions, the concept is also remarkably similar, both illustrating one who had died but shall live again (Figs. 47, 48). On the bottom panel on the west face, the figure representing Christ in the tomb, wears headgear directly reminisent of Egyptian head-dress (Fig. 43). His body is wrapped in a delicately trimmed shroud, as though mummified, as was the Egyptian tradition.

EUROPE

As the Irish monasteries had strong connections with France and the continent, it is logical to assume that the work of the time in France and neighbouring countries would have a bearing on the style. If we stay with the scene of the Last Judgement, we notice that the figure of St Michael weighing the souls has been introduced on the crosses at Monasterboice and Durrow, both contemporaries of the Cross of the Scriptures. This scene was illustrated in Carolingian manuscripts such as the Stuttgart and Utrecht Psalters (Fig. 49). Carolingian art influenced many strains of Irish Early Christian art, including the Book of Kells, and figurative sculpture absorbed some of it.

Susanne McNab discusses at length the relationship between the figure carving at Clonmacnois and classical sculpture on Roman sarcophagi (21, pp. 164 - 171).In particular, the head to overall height ratio and the anatomy of the bodies are closely related.

Without wishing to dwell on this aspect, I will conclude that the Irish artist amalgamated several strains of influences from various sources on the continent, Middle East and Africa, with the celtic sources, and their own intuition to develop a unique form of imagery.

REALISM and STYLISATION

The figures which appeared on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois were, without doubt, the most realistic human representations in stone, that many of the people of the time had seen. Far more used to the earlier, much flatter engravings, these figures would have seemed incredibly lifelike. The modelling is such, that the figures stand proud of the cross. Figures that may seem to us stocky, large headed and rotund, would have come across as very persuasive representations of humans that actually lived. Although the figures survive now as pale shadows of what they once were, enough evidence remains to allow us a glimpse of the explicit detail that once existed.

TWO BEARDED MEN
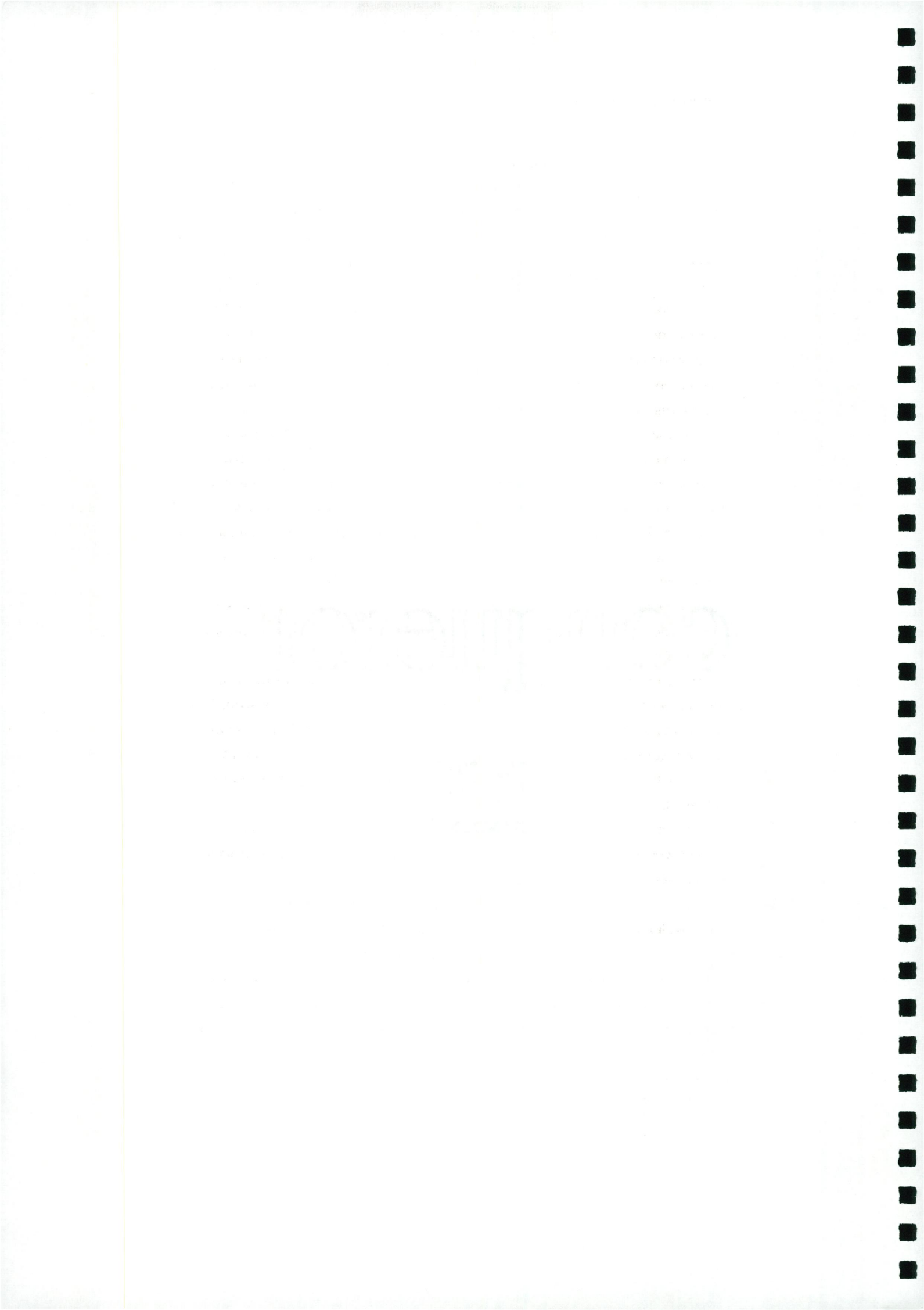
A panel on the east face illustrates this point well. Curiously, it is a secular carving, a panel which is not seen on any other high cross. It shows two bearded men standing side by side (Fig. 35). They are richly dressed in the traditional costume of Irish chieftains. Even a brooch can be picked out on their cloaks. Another clue to their secular life is that they wear swords. A very interesting detail of these figures is that their beards are plaited and perfectly shaped. It was a custom of the Irish Chieftains and nobility to have their beards plaited. Sadly, not enough clues remain for us to conclude who they represent. I feel it would be safe for me to suggest that they represent patrons or protectors of the monastery. Possibly, one represents King Flann, referred to in the inscriptions below.

The panel below this, depicting the foundation of Clonmacnois (see Fig. 33), has an example of very realistic treatment of garments. St Ciarán's tunic hangs and folds in such a way as never before had been represented in stone in Ireland. The drapes are carefully plotted and realisticly carved. All of these details combine to present to the viewer, a convincing and realistic series of visual signs. The figures can be immediately recognised as such; the more realistic, the easier for the common person of the time to interpret.

But the sculptor does not over emphasise realism. It was important to keep the figures simple. Here he has successfully walked the fine line between realism and stylisation. The figures are calmly handled, so as not to distract the viewer from the message. It must be remembered that the artists and sculptors would place the theological idea behind the illustration or carving, before composition or style. This is not to say that little thought or importance was given to these disciplines. As we have seen, they were meticulously planned and carved, but done so in a way as not to overshadow the concept or message being communicated. Pictorial thought was the key element.

Having examined the way in which the figures were carved, let us now look at how they were arranged. Arrangement, composition and clarity are vital to visual communication. How does the Cross of the Scriptures do this?

COMPOSITION

If I say that the composition of the figures in the panels on the Cross of the Scriptures is very simple, I mean this in a positive sense. In all cases, the figures are allowed space 'to breathe'. The sculptor has not fallen into the trap of carving multitudes to impress, as the executor of Muirdeach's cross seems to have done (Fig. 50). None of the rectangular panels contain any more than three figures. This gives
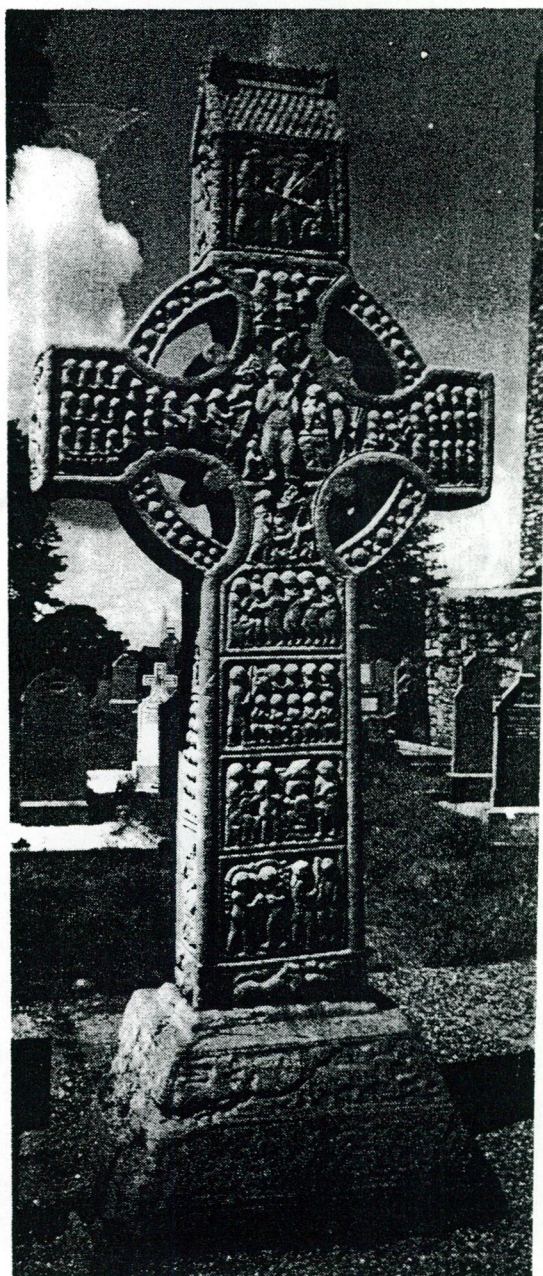
Fig. 50:   Muirdeach's Cross, Monasterboice, Co. Louth
East Face (after 14, p.129).

Fig. 51:   Muirdeach's Cross, Monasterboice, Co. Louth
           West Face (after 14, p.128).

the cross a uniformity and clarity. By contrast, I would draw attention to the imbalance between the east and west faces of Muirdeach's Cross at Monasterboice, where one side throngs with innumerable multitudes, the other face, more restrained (Fig. 5.1). On the Cross of the Scriptures, Christ is always identified as the figure in the middle. The figures face outwards, their outline clearly defined.

There is one panel however, which breaks some of the rules. The bottom panel on the shaft on the west face, shows the soldiers guarding the tomb of Christ (Fig. 44). This panel does contain more than three figures, it contains six in all, (without looking crowded). Instead of the standard straight upright posture of the figures in the other panels, the figures here are either lying down, crouched asleep, or just heads in the distance. Although its composition breaks the mould of all the other panels, it itself is a work of communicative genius. The two soldiers with their peaked helmets and spears, appear to have fallen asleep, in accordance with the Gospel. Their heads are bowed, their spears off-guard. We can see the tomb neing approached by the three Marys who arrive on Easter Sunday. Christ lies straight out, beneath the stone tomb. This stone does not, interestingly, cover the whole body. Christ's head peers out. If we study this area, what has been seen as one of the soldiers feet poking into Christ's mouth, is in fact a bird - a dove, breathing life into the body of Christ. Thus in one panel, the burial of Christ, the soldiers guarding the tomb, the women who came on the Sunday morning, and the Resurrection of Christ is clearly illustrated. Overcoming the Resurrection scene, on this panel, was without doubt the most difficult problem of communication. It has been composed both poeticly and clearly, and has not resulted in the same confusion as we see at Monasterboice where many figures are carved in a panel.

We live in a civilisation where we are constantly being bombarded with visual images and messages. We are more used to interpreting complex compositions than the people of early Christian times were. We do so, however, with preconceptions, twentieth century preconceptions. These would naturally be very different in terms of visual literacy from those people of a thousand years ago. We must not dismiss the simplicity of composition of figures, as a lack of imagination on the part of the sculptor. Rather, view it as a complete understanding of the idiom within which those people could understand images.

DIRECTION OF LIMBS, BODIES and SPEARS

Clever use of direction of limbs, bodies, heads and spears result in a definite

focussing of vision. In each panel where Christ is represented, heads turn towards Him, arms gesture towards Him, spears point, and legs step towards Him. Christ is undisputably represented as a focus of attention. Note for instance in the flagellation of Christ, the soldiers feet point and legs strain towards Him. They frame Christ with their lances (Fig. 42). In both the Crucifixion and Last Judgement scenes, Christ's figure is much larger than any of the others in the scene. All of the other figures frame Him and face him. The circle which encompasses the scene emphasises this.

To recap on the chapter, we have seen how the sculptor/ designer was influenced by external images, to create a style of figure sculpture. We have seen how this style could appeal directly through its realism, amd communicate freely through its simplicity. The composition is quiet and restrained, simple, yet thoughtfully planned. Where other sculptors became over excited with technique, this one remained a visual communicator.

HOW SUCCESSFUL A COMMUNICATOR?

We have established that the role of the Cross of the Scriptures was not just to pay homage to God, as a mark of respect for Him. It was a vital link between the Church and the people, a powerful tool of communication. To examine how successful a piece of pure visual communication it was, one must bear in mind a number of points.

1. It was designed with the people of the time in mind. Although it would have been assumed that it would stand for hundreds of years, it was directing its messages to a people of one thousand years ago. These people would have had a very different set of ideals, preconcieved notions, traditions, level of literacy and visual literacy to ourselves.

2. It was most probably designed to compliment verbal instruction. We mustn't assume that the images should in all cases 'speak for themselves', but they would explain visually a story known, or being told verbally.

3. We ourselves have preconcieved notions of what constitutes good visual communication. The Cross of the Scriptures ws not designed with the benefit of foresight!

4. The Cross of the Scriptues has suffered the ravages of almost 1100 years of weather erosion. Many details have undoubtedly been lost, many of which may have been key to their interpretation. Subtleties, as we know, have always been used as identifiers.

5. The cross we see today is a buff coloured stone. What most likely existed when it was erected was a colourful masterpiece. It is widely believed that these crosses were carefully painted, probably in much the same style as the manuscripts of the time. This would greatly enhance its communicative power. The power and subtleties of colour were, as we know from the manuscripts, clearly understood and manipulated by the artists working in these monasteries. Colour would have been used to emphasise details, ideas, mood, - indeed it could very well completely alter the perception of a particular scene.

Let us, in appraisal of the success and failings of the Cross of the Scriptures, summarise the functions and messages contained within.

FUNCTIONS

Landmark: Marking the presence of God in a Christian community, marking
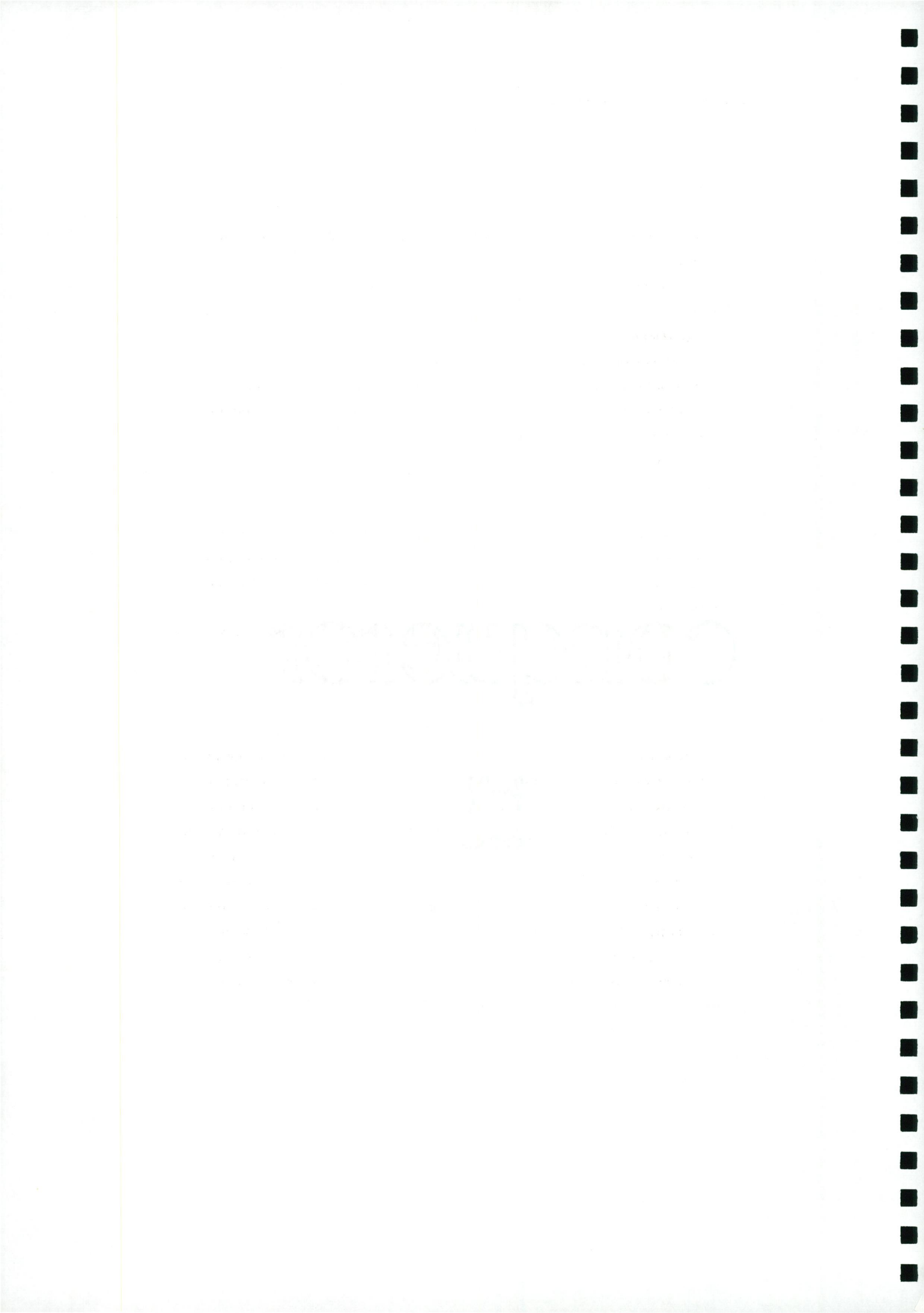
holy ground.

Protector: Symbolising the power of God, in triumph over evil.

Memorial: Remembering patrons, abbots and the foundation of Clonmacnois.

Assembly: Special place for ceremonies and prayer.

Instructor: In teaching biblical stories, theologies and histories.

THEMES

The Passion: Depicted in four stages on the west face.

An all powerful God: The Last Judgement scene, the ring, the whole form.

The Help of God: The Crucifixion, Salvation of souls, Baptism panel.

God's Triumph over Satan: St Michael piercing Satan, Last Judgement, Resurrection, Foundation of Church.

History of Origin: St Ciarán and Diarmaid, 2 bearded men?

The After Life: The Last Judgement, The Resurrection.

Having discussed in the previous chapters, the themes and ideas communicated by the cross, the question to be asked is not 'did the messages get across?', but rather 'how well did it succeed in doing so?', and 'did the Cross of the Scriptures do this job particularily well?'

Rather than re-examining the panels one by one , on their merit and demerits of communicative power, I will tackle the problem under design headings.

SCALE

When we see the Cross of the Scriptures, it seems to us 'fairly big' (3.9 m high), but not so imposing. One has to try to imagine its size, relative to what people then were used to. They lived in huts of sod or wattle and mud, the entrance of which would have been lower than the average height of an adult. They were quite low structures. Even Clonmacnois itself is a very low lying, flat land. The only structures comparable in scale to the cross, were the churches around it. This was an immense structure. Perhaps to imagine its impact in their eyes, we would have to picture it at twice the size. One couldn't have walked in the vicinity of the grounds, and be unaware of it. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, this 3.9metres of stone is sized so that although impressive in height, all of its panels are easily accessible. One does not have to strain to pick out figures, which stand far above eye level. The sculptor has allowed communicative sense to prevail over impressing through size.

COLOUR

I have mentioned the likelihood of these crosses being painted. While no traces of pigment have ever been found, archaeologists and art historians are quite confident that they were painted. It would be entirely futile of me to try to reconstruct its image in full colour, but with the evidence of use of colour in the manuscripts, we can only assume that they were stunning. George Ferguson discusses the special role of colour in liturgical art (5, pp.151-153). For instance black, employed as the colour of death, white, the colour of purity, purple of imperial power and also of sorrow and repentence. It is purely speculative to say that these colours may have been used with these connotations, but it would not be such an outrageous idea, and may have added another dimension in communication, sadly lost to us now.

Against a landscape of blue, grey and green, would stand a monument, glowing with colours that many people would never have seen before. The communicative power of such an object, over a people mesmerised by its magnificence, would have been outrageously strong. This was certainly the Churches trump card.

CONTEMPORARY

The art of the crosses, shows us a very progressively - minded Church system. These were absolutely contemporary structures, nothing like them had been seen before. The whole idea of illustrating in panels, one above the other, as if in comic book form, is a very contemporary approach in Irish sculpture. In a world without very many visual aids; without television, without books (for the common man), without posters and pictures, the Cross of the Scriptures was a monument of power and fascination. Its arrival and erection in the grounds of Clonmacnois would have been comparable to the arrival of the first television set in a town, except with more glory through its immense scale, and more ceremony, due to its ecclesistical nature. The fact that it remains a stunning piece of graphic design today, bears testimony to its greatness.

IMAGES, A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

Clonmacnois, as we discussed in Chapter 1,was a hive of study and learning, and the passing of ideas occured in many languages. People came from all over

Ireland and Europe to work and study here. Therefore the centrepiece of visual communication in the monastic city, should work in several languages. This is done simply by using an image - only scheme. These stories could be expained in any tongue.

SPATIAL RELATIONS

One of the most important contributors to the success of the Cross of the Scriptures is the fact that the figures are allowed room 'to breathe'. They seem to have plenty of room and their clarity is enhanced by the space around them. The eye does not have to struggle to pick out figures. They are presented clearly and succinctly. By comparison Muirdeach's Cross at Monasterboice is overcrowded with figures. The east face of the cross is so over loaded with figures that it has become a jungle of heads and bodies. The Cross of the Scriptures is much more restrained, quieter; it does not add in figures for the sake of carving them. This quietude is used to great effect when seen in contrast with the Last Judgement scene on the east face. This scene is so much busier, we do get the impression of the multitudes actually lined up having their fate decided (Fig. 37).

LINEAR COMMUNICATION

One problem that I do have with the Cross of the Scriptures is the sequencing of the panels. There doesn't seem to be an obvious system of linear communication, where one would seem appropriate. The Passion scene as I have outlined, does not follow a chronological order, of reading straight up or down.

We are very used to the concept of linear communication. We read in straight lines, we know where a page starts and finishes and how to get there. Comic strip animation works in linear communication. Such a system doesn't seem to exist on the Cross of the Scriptures. The panels, as we saw in Chapter 5, are arranged loosely thematically, and often grouped in faces. I believe linear sequencing would emphasise clarity if it was used, but I will suggest reasons why it mightn't:

The whole concept of reading from one point to the other and using a straight line to do so, is not an idea that we should assume as either universal or ancient. While I am sure that the sculptor and designer that worked on this cross were aware of its possibilities, it may actually have meant nothing to the people of the time. Also, it may not actually have been seen as having much benefit for the purposes of instruction. I have to confess that when I initially studied the panels, or

looked at them as a child, I never read from top to bottom, or bottom to top, expecting chronology as I did so. The panels seem more to tell their own story, the relationship with the other panels is made, but not through sequence.

ENDURANCE

Modern visual communication is generally design that works within a short time frame. As with much of the produce of todays world, it has become disposable. The posters, magazines and books that communicate today, as the Cross of the Scriptures did, become discarded in a relatively short space of time. They become dated, out of fashion, obselete, and disused. The Cross of the Scriptures as a piece of visual communication endured time remarkably well. It was designed to stand and communicate for hundred of years, not days. It is not 'styled' in such a way that it would not quickly go 'out of fashion'. Naturally, it does not do this job as well now as it did then, but it would have served as a loyal and effective communicator for the Church for a great deal longer than most of what we produce in visual communication today.

To recap on this chapter, I have pointed out a number of factors that we must bear in mind in coming to our conclusions. These basically come down to the fact that we are studying an object of over 1100 years old. I summarised a number of the points raised earlier in the thesis, and pointed out the designer's success in his handling of scale, composition, detail, and also the probable contribution of colour.

The Cross of the Scriptures is a model of excellence in the treatment of the rudimentary aspects of visual communication.

In conclusion, I will summarise the main points raised in the thesis.

The Cross of the Scriptures was a centrepiece of visual communication in a city where the exchange of thoughts and philosophies was its lifeblood. It epitomised what Clonmacnois was all about: the education of the masses, the creation of art and the communication of ideas.

As a high cross it served many purposes. It acted as a landmark, as a gathering place for religious ceremonies and prayer, as a symbol of protection, as a memorial, and most importantly as a communicator of the doctrine of the Church. Many of these functions arise from a tradition in stone sculpture in Ireland that pre - dates the Christian era.

In Domhnall O'Murchadha's work, we found a definitive conclusion on the names on the inscriptions, allowing us to date the cross to between 910 and 915 AD, around the same time that Muirdeachs Cross at Monasterboice, and the Durrow Cross were completed.

The forms that made up of the Cross of the Scriptures were loaded with meaning, especially the ring, the most characteristic attribute of the high cross. The sculptor/designer used his own imagination and intuition to carve a personal and original interpretaion of a traditional form, and in doing so, greatly enhanced its communicative power.

The Cross of the Scriptures deals with a number of issues. One of the most prominent themes is 'the struggle between Good and Evil'. This theme is driven home in eight panels, distibuted around the cross, sometimes occupying a whole face. The Passion of Christ is illustrated clearly in three panels and the west face centrepiece. We also find the introduction of local history to personalise the cross. The foundation of Clonmacnois and two Irish men of nobility are represented in two panels, and these work within the overall scheme of the cross.

The particular figure style and composition on the Cross of the Scriptures was central to its success in terms of communication. The figures are realistic, yet simple. The composition is quiet and restrained, but an excellent example of clarification. In comparison to many of the other high crosses, in particular, Muirdeach's Cross at Monasterboice, it is a far more accomplished communicative work.

The success of the Cross of the Scriptures, in carrying out its functions as a communicator is attributed to the careful consideration of all aspects of its design. Its scale and proportions, the treatment of the shapes, the clear composition and arrangement, are all factors.Colour was most likely used, which would greatly enhance its communicative power. It would have succeeded in appearing totally

contemporary at the time of its erection, far more so than we see it now.

We have inherited, in the Cross of the Scriptures, a remarkable example of the work of our graphic design predecessors. It is a most accomplished piece of sculpture and figure carving, but more importantly, it was a most successful, functional work of visual communication. Today it can teach, not only lessons of the Church, but lessons in visual communication.

Fig. 43: The Crucifixion of Christ, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, West Face.

Fig. 44:   <u>The Resurrection of Christ</u>, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois,
             Co. Offaly, West Face, Panel 4W.

Fig. 41:   The Arrest of Christ, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly,
            West Face, Panel 5W.

Fig. 42: The Flagellation of Christ, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, West Face, Panel 6W.

Fig. 40:   David playing Harp, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly,
South Face, Panel   S.

damnation, depends on their life on Earth.

If we consider the timing of the appearance of this image, it emphasises its foreboding power. The cross was erected towards the end of the first millenium. This was the time that many had predicted doomsday - the end of the world, so it may have been something preying on the minds of the people. But it was not all a portent of doom and damnation, but also of mercy and salvation.

The circle surrounding Christ in the Last Judgement emphasises the infinity of God and His Kingdom, but also tells us that this stone monument, which represents Christ, will stand long after we are gone, and will remain until Doomsday, which it prophecises.

SOUTH FACE

The south face does not appear to have a strong, underlying theme for all the panels. Under the cross arm there are two panels, on is the Right Hand of God - a traditional symbol to represent 'the presence and Will of God the Father' (1, p.43). The other one is two heads in a serpent interlace (Fig. 38). In Christian iconography, the serpent has always been used to represent Satan or Evil. The two heads may represent Adam and Eve - the temptation of evil.

On the shaft, panel 6S, appears to portray St John the Evangelist (fig 39). We come to this conclusion from the bird, which appears over his shoulder. St John's evangellical symbol is the eagle, and he is identified with it. The eagle was used as a symbol of highest aspiration. It is interesting to note that St John is said to have journeyed to Asia Monor, where he founded the Seven Churches, referred to in Revelations. Clonmacnois is sometimes referred to as the 'Seven Churches'.

Below this is David playing a harp or a lyre (fig 40). This scene is based on a passage in 1 Samuel 16 : 23, which reads:

> And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Again, this is discussing the theme of good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good. Introducing the music aspect could also introduce the notion of hymns and psalms of praise cleansing the soul.

Panel 4S appears to have no function - and is puzzling in this respect - it is simply a panel of interlace. It is unclear if it does contain any theme, and why it

Fig. 36:   Moses, Aaron and Hur, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois,
            Co. Offaly, East Face, Panel 10E

Fig. 37:   The Last Judgement, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, East Face.

for only seven months after this date, such was his inspirational character, that his memory was immortalised in stone on the cross. Not only does this panel symbolise the founding of a great monastery, it also represents the founding of the church, in broader terms, and the arrival of Christianity.

This may also be the idea behind panel 6E, Which shows Christ seated between two figures (Fig. 34). He presents one, St Paul, with a scroll, and the other, St Peter, With keys. This is a common scene in Christian iconography. St Peter and St Paul are considered to be the real founders of the Christian Church, and in this scene they are shown being handed the symbols of responsibility for the Church on earth. The symbol of the keys is still used as the Papal emblem, as head of the Church.

Between these two panels, two bearded men are shown, in panel 5E (Fig. 35). Again, this panel is only found here, at Clonmacnois. The richly dressed men would probably represent patrons of the monastery. Their inclusion, while original in the context of the iconography of the high crosses, is consistent with this theme of the Church on earth. In these three panels, the original founders of the Church, those who spread the Christian message, and those who support it, are all represented. If the three figures in the uppermost panel on this face, panel 10E (Fig. 36), represent Moses, flanked by Aaron and Hur, the theme could be extended. Moses was the one chosen by God to be presented with His Law, the Ten Commandments, possibly prefiguring Christ handing the law of the Church to St Peter and St Paul.

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

The centrepiece of this face is the Last Judgement scene (Fig. 37). Christ is shown in majesty, in heaven, and around Him the multitudes await their fate. It could be argued that this is again consistent with the rest of the east face, where Christ's triumph on Earth has been represented, this piece represents His triumph in heaven.

The Last Judgement is a very important and dominant scene in the Cross of the Scriptures, as with many other high crosses. For centuries, the approach to teaching the faith has been done, through instilling a fear of God in people. The Last Judgement would be pivotal in this philosophy. It is given one of the most prominent sites on the cross, and the prophecy is graphically represented.

A crowned Christ is shown in the middle, with staff and cross. Hovering overhead is an angel or the Holy Spirit. On His right are the saved souls, with St Michael blowing a trumpet. The blessed face God. On His left are the accursed, with the devil pushing them back, as if into hell. The damned souls have their backs turned on God. This startling image would remind people of the inevitability of Doomsday, that all souls would be judged, and their fate, be it salvation or

Fig. 38:   Hand of God and Serpent Interlace, the Cross of the Scriptures,
             Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, South Face.

Fig. 39:   St John the Evangelist, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois,
            Co. Offaly, South Face, Panel 6S.

Fig. 33:   <u>Foundation of Clonmacnois</u>, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois,
             Co. Offaly, East Face, Panel 4E.

Fig. 34:   Christ presenting scroll to St Paul and keys to St Peter, the Cross of the
            Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, East Face, Panel 6E.

Fig. 35:   2 Bearded men, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly,
East Face, Panel 5E.

which may contain a similar theme. In it a figure appears over the head of another. The figure on top presents the second with a book, while the figure below renounces shield and sword. This seems to represent a Baptismal scene or possibly an Ordination. Once again it portrays turning one's back on evil, and turning towards a life of Christianity. The base, as I mentioned, is very badly worn, but what can be made out is a group of animals, followed by a man. This may illustrate a hunting scene, which may in turn symbolise 'hunting down sinfulness'. It is, however, almost impossible to be conclusive about any point being made in the representations on the base, owing to the poor condition of the carving. A panel under the cross arm on this face depicts a cat playing pipes (Fig. 32). The cat, because of its habits was taken as a symbol of laziness and lust (5, p.14), thus extending this theme of sin and temptation.

EAST FACE

The iconography of the east face is both intriguing and peculiar. Peculiar, in that we find two panels that are obviously commemorative of local folklore or history. Panel 4E is one of the most celebrated of all the panels on the Cross of the Scriptures. It is an intriguing story-panel, which tells the story of the foundation of the great monastery at Clonmacnois (fig 33). The Annals of Clonmacnois records that in the year 547AD:

> King Twahal, having proclaimed throughout the whole kingdom
> the banishment of Dermot McKervel *(Diarmaid)* with a great
> reward to him yt would bring him his hart, the said Dermot for
> feare of his life lived in the deserts of Cluonvicknose
> *(Clonmacnois)* (then called Ardtibra) and meeting the abbot
> Kieran in the place where the church of Clonvicknose now
> standes, who was but newly come thither to live or dwell from
> Inis Aingin, and having noe house or place to reside and dwell
> in, the said Dermot gave him his assisstance to make his house
> there, and in thrusting down in the earth one of the pieces of
> timber or wattles of the house, the said Dermot took St Queran's
> hand and did put it over his one hand in sign of reverence to the
> saint, whereupon the saint humbly besought God (12, p.89).

This story is recorded on the panel. It shows St Ciarán on the left, dressed in the robes of a cleric, and a bearded Dermot/ Diarmaid who was to become king, dressed in the clothes of a warrior, thrusting down a stake in the ground. Although St Ciarán lived

Fig. 31: <u>Figure renouncing shield and sword</u>, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, North Face, Panel 5N.

Fig. 32:   <u>Cat playing pipes</u>, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly, North Face.

The Passion of Christ is a theme which appears again and again on the scripture crosses. The crucifixion normally forms the centrepiece of the cross, while the arrest and flagellation are also often represented. It would serve as a stark reminder of what man inflicted upon Christ, and the sacrifice that He made for mankind.

A number of crosses illustrate the Last Judgement. It appears on the later scripture crosses, from the 10th century onwards. The second coming of Christ was a dominant theme in Christian doctrine, where it is believed He will come again 'to judge the living and the dead'.

Often, we find passages from the New Testament such as the Miracles of Christ: The Wedding at Cana, the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, and the Walking on the Water.

Aside from human representations, the artists made use of animals, mammals, birds and other objects to symbolise various ideas. They were chosen very carefully; things that people were familiar with, such as deer; the stag; goats; the lamb; birds; hares; and cats. They are used to symboliseconcepts such as sin, the sinner, salvation and martyrdom.[1] This followed a tradition in Christian iconography to use such animals. These are explained by Ferguson in (5, pp. 11-27). However, as the sculptor had a small number of symbols to draw from, he faced a problem of clarification. Symbols often had to double up in application, making their interpretation more difficult.

With these themes in mind, let us now consider the iconography of the Cross of the Scriptures. In some cases we may find that whole faces have an underlying theme of message, unifying all the panels. Other faces may not.

NORTH FACE

One theme may be extracted as unifying some, if not all of the panels on the north face. That is: the rejection of sin, or the triumph of Good over Evil. Panel 3N (Fig. 30) shows a figure standing over another, piercing it with a long lance. This is most likely to represent either Christ [2] or St Michael [3] fighting Satan. Christ or St Michael is shown triumphing over evil. Panel 5N (Fig. 31) is an interesting panel,

1. Rev. John Corkery discusses three types of martyrdom symbolised by animals on high crosses in (2, pp.47-48)

2,3. Hilary Richardson refers to Henry (2) and Stokes (3) in (14, p35).

Fig. 30:   St Michael fighting Satan, the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnois,
           Co. Offaly, North Face, Panel 3N.

In this chapter, I will be looking at the iconography of the Cross of the Scriptures. Just what was represented on this cross? What was the norm for the scripture crosses, and how does this one differ from the rest?

The scenes chosen for portrayal are not selected in a haphazard way:

> They have not been carved merely to depict an event, but to show it as foreshadowing another event or as illustrating a theological idea (8, p.40).

There were certain formulae and standard themes that were employed in the representations on the high crosses. The Cross of the Scriptures conforms with some of them, omits some, and introduces some new ones. In examining the iconography, I will tackle it by going through the scenes face by face. Referring to the appendix at the back which contains a listing of the panels will aid the reader.

Many of the scenes are very difficult to interpret owing to the worn state of the cross. The base is very badly worn, and one can just about pick out outlines of human and animal figures. In a number of cases, this means that we cannot conclusively state what the panel represents/ symbolises.

THEMES FOR PORTRAYAL

Firstly, I will briefly look at a number of common themes on the scripture crosses.

A study of the iconography reveals that many of the scenes chosen are determined by the link between the Old and the New Testament. Many episodes of the Old Testament are interpreted as prophecising the New. For example: Isaac, about to be sacrificed by his father Abraham, predicts Christ's sacrifice by His Father. This scene is carved on high crosses at Arboe; Castledermot; Clones; Donaghmore; Galloon; Kells; Killary; Moone and Durrow.

The Help of God is a dominant theme, found in all of the Scripture crosses. It is represented in a number of forms. The tradition for this theme may stem from an old Jewish prayer adopted by the Christian Church. Henry quotes this prayer from the Martyrology of Oengus Celi Dé (8, p.143), written around 800 AD (see appendix). Each of the six verses have been repeatedly illustrated on high crosses. They are all references to the Old Testament, the prayer asking God to show the same mercy he showed those in the prayer.

The capstone (Fig. 19) is an integral part of the design of the Cross of the Scriptures. It completed the cross image as the sculptor had visualised it. It comes in the shape of a shingled church roof. This feature is another example of how the stone carvers borrowed from the designs of their metalwork contemporaries. Shrines in metal had often been fashioned in the shape of chapels, and between the evidence surviving in stone and metal, we are left with a picture of how these churches would have been constructed and roofed.

In summary, in this chapter, we have discussed each element of the Cross of the Scriptures. We have seen the cross shape evolve, and the possible meanings of the ring. We have discovered an imaginative sculptor at work, carving out a personal and highly original version of a monument that had become traditional. The subtle treatments of the various elements and the excellence in the design of the overall proportions have added much to its communicative power.

ICONOGRAPHY: Themes and Ideas
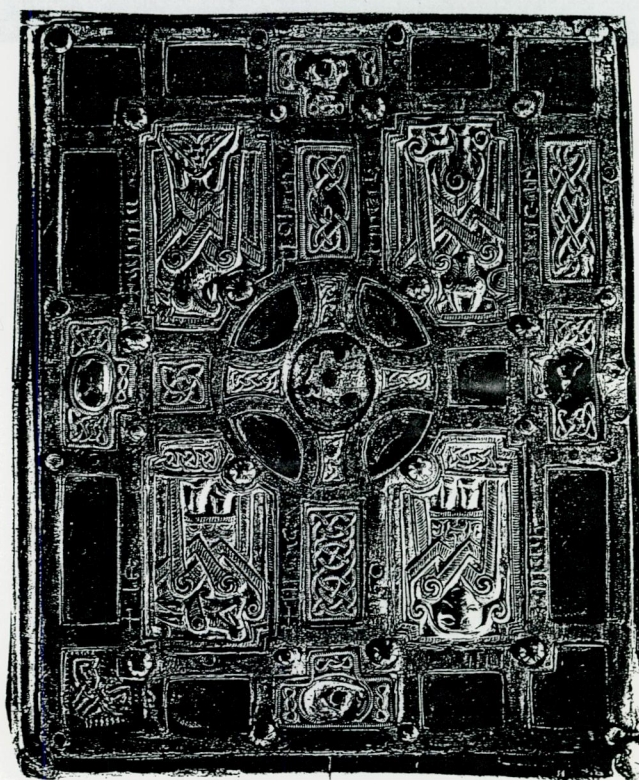
Fig. 28: Bronze and silver Shrine, Devinish, Co. Fermanagh
          (after 26, p.135).

Fig. 29:   <u>Capstone of the Cross of the Scriptures</u>, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly.

over the cross, and held there by the four discs superimposed on it (Fig. 22). This feature is exclusive to the Cross of the Scriptures. It seems a more realistic interpretation of the wreath hung over the standard, and a better communicator of the idea. It also gives more importance to the meaning of the circle.

What I have presented here are some of the possible interpretations of the ring, each with varying degrees of probability. But none are contradictory to the standards of Christian symbolism. Every aspect of the high cross was meticulously planned for maximum effect in communicative symbolism. All of the concepts presented here are consistent with the thinking of Early Christian people. It would be an inconsistency to suggest that the ring was added for mere graphic effect or individuality. The whole scheme of the iconography as we shall see, was placing the theological idea before composition. Why would the development of form be any different?

CAPSTONE AND DISCS

Having discussed the origins and meaning of the base, cross shape and ring, there remains two other elements of the shape of the Cross of the Scriptures that we must look at.

First of all, the discs. These are four circular, flat plates or discs which appear on the ring on the east and west face. They appear to hold the ring in place on the cross, but actually have no apparent "raison d'etre", apart from a decorative one. As with the position of the ring, these flat discs are unique, not appearing on any other high crosses. They can, however be traced directly to the rounded bosses which appear on the earlier high crosses, such as Ahenny and the South Cross at Clonmacnois (Fig. 27). These in turn, are directly related to metalwork design. It is apparent, through evidence of surviving metalwork of the time, that it had considerable influence on the design of the high crosses. The latter crosses were lavishly adorned with panels of intricate spirals and interlace, similar to the gold filigree work found on metal crosses and other metalwork objects. Where we find shrines or crosses *encased* in metal, the panels of filigree work were pinned to the wood underneath, with round headed studs of glass or enamel (Fig. 28). In stone they appeared as carved bosses in relief. It is a characteristic progression in design history, that when using a new material, features from a previous form are used as decoration, but with a loss of their function. The bosses in stone lost any function they had in metalwork, and became purely ornamental. However, in the case of the Cross of the Scriptures, the sculptor has given us the illusion that the discs are in fact functional, holding the ring in place.

FIG. 2B

Fig. 27:   The South Cross, Clonmacnois, Co. Offaly
            West Face.

The circle is an infinite form. It has no beginning and no end. Its amalgamation with the symbol for Christ (the cross) could be used to illustrate to the people the complex concept of the infinity of Christ. In this way, this simple shape could be an invaluable aid, providing an example of an abstract doctrine far better than any figurative panel could do.

The circle also emphasises the returning of being, that all things will come 'full circle', and this reiterates the prominent depiction of the Last Judgement, the the return of Christ on earth, and again shows a consistency of thinking.

The circle form has, for thousands of years been representative of the sun. It is a symbol that goes way back into pagan times. A connection here again can be made with Christians adopting pagan symbolism. In lines of early Irish poetry, Christ is sometimes addressed as the sun:

> A rigdorais rogaidhe triasar chin i cri
> Grien taithnemach togaide, Isu mac De bii.
>
> *which translates as:*
>
> O royal door select, through which came into being,
> The shining choice Sun, Jesus< Son of the living God. [1]

The origin of the ring is not exclusively related to abstract theologies. It has strong connections with the signs used by the Roman army. As a sign of victory at the end of a battle, a circular laurel wreath would be placed over the general's standard (Fig. 23). It would be placed outside the general's tent or carried before him in the triumphant procession.

The Emperor Constantine, who abolished Christian persecution is believed to have introduced the Chi-Rho monogram symbolising the Christian faith (Fig. 24). The Chi-Rho monogram comes from the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek - Ch and R (Fig. 25). The monogram is formed by a combination in a number of ways of the two letters. In The Life of Constantine, it tells how Constantine ordered that this monogram be placed within a circular laurel wreath, on top of his standard. By doing so he proclaimed the triumph of Christ (Fig. 26). Thus the Chi-Rho monogram was often illustrated inside the laurel wreath. The connection between this symbol, which became widely used in Christendom, and the High crosses of Ireland is unmissable. As more and more high crosses appeared around the country, each one symbolically recorded a victory, a triumph of Christ and Christianity in that particular place.

The behaviour of the ring on the Cross of the Scriptures is quite unique. In all other cases the ring connecting the arms and shaft appears to run behind. In this case, however, it appears in front, giving the illusion of having been placed or hung

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1 *H. Richardson quotes from 'Metrical Litany of the Virgin Mary: Irish Litanies' in (14, p23).*
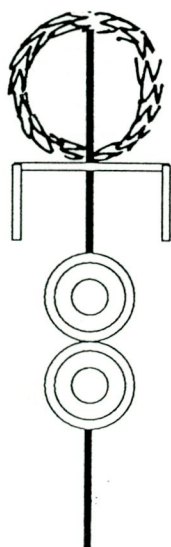
Fig: 23:   Roman Standard, showing wreath hung over it.

Fig. 24:   Chi - Rho monogram.

Fig 25:   Chi & Rho, the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek.
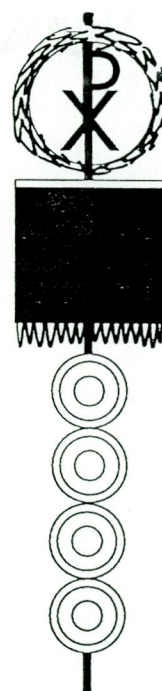
Fig. 26:   Emperor Constantine's standard, reconstruction.

Key to panels on Cross of the Scriptures

NORTH FACE

1   Animals - possibly a hunting scene (?)

2   Griffins and a centaur (?)

3   St Michael fighting the devil / Christ piercing Satan

4   Figure playing the flute - with cats

5   Figure renouncing shield and sword - Baptism (?)

6   Heads within serpent interlace

EAST FACE

1   Two chariots with horses

2   Three horsemen - Three wise men (?)

3   Inscription

4   The foundation of Clonmacnois

5   Two bearded men, in rich Irish period costume

6   Christ presenting St Paul with scroll and St Peter with keys

7   The Last Judgement

8   Blessed souls

9   Damned souls

10   The Trinity / Moses, Aaron and Hur / St Colmcille between two angels

SOUTH FACE

1   Hunting scene with deer

2   Four figures, appear to be carrying spears

2a   Jacob and the angel?

3   Two centaurs in medallions

4   Human Interlace

5   Harpist with lion - probably David

6   St John / Figure holding staff with angel above

7   Heads within serpent interlace

WEST FACE

1   Uncertain

2   Uncertain - 7 figures

3   Inscription

4   Soldiers guarding the tomb of Christ

5   The Arrest of Christ

6   The Flagellation of Christ

7   Crucifixion

7a   Dove

8   Figure kneeling

Appendix 2
Prayer from the Martyrology of Oengus Ceili Dé

Hear thou O Jesus,
... ...,
The soul of every life,
Through thou has been sacrificed
Adam's seed that is highest,
By thou has been freed.

Free me, O Jesus,
From every ill on earth,
As thou savedst Noah
Son of Lamech from the flood.

Free me, O Jesus,
Noble wondrous King,
As thou savedst Jonah
From the belly ceti magni (of the great whale).

...As thou savedst Isaac
From his fathers hand.

....As thou savedst Daniel
Of the Den of Lions.

...As thou freedst the Children
De camine ignis (from the fiery furnace).[1]

PILGRIMAGE
OF
CLONMACNOISE.

ORDER

*To be followed by pilgrims in accordance
with ancient custom, at the Annual
Pilgrimage in connection with the Feast
of St. Ciaran, September 9th, and on the
preceding Sunday.*

THE SHORT STATION.

For the Short Station the pilgrim first proceeds to St. Ciaran's Well, and there, kneeling at the Cross, says seven times the Pater, Ave and Gloria, and once the Credo.

Then he makes a circuit of the Well and, crossing the stream, kneels at the Celtic Cross to say five times the Pater, Ave and Gloria.

Proceeding to the image of St. Ciaran, he kneels there and says again five times the Pater, Ave and Gloria.

Coming back to the Cross at the Well, he repeats the whole exercise a second and then a third time, finishing at the Cross with seven Paters, Aves, and Glorias and one Credo.

This completes the Short Station.   77

THE LONG STATION.

I. The pilgrim first completes the Short Station as detailed above.

II. Then he goes to the cemetery, and there, kneeling at the Cross of the Scriptures, he recites seven times the Pater, Ave and Gloria and once the Credo.

Then he goes to Temple Connor, and there, kneeling at the west corner of that Church, he recites five times the Pater, Ave and Gloria.

Then he goes to the mound beside Temple Finian, and there, kneeling, repeats the five Paters, Aves and Glorias.

After this he makes a circuit of the cemetery, keeping along the inside of the boundary wall till he comes again to the Cross of the Scriptures, repeating the Pater, Ave and Gloria seven times during the circuit.

Arrived at the Cross of the Scriptures, he repeats the whole exercise a second and then a third time, finishing with seven Paters, Aves, and Glorias at the Western Cross.

III. Inside Circuits. The pilgrim begins at the Western Cross, as above, with seven Paters, Aves, and Glorias.

He then makes a circuit of Temple Kelly, Temple Ciaran, Temple Riogh, Temple Hurpain and Temple Dowling, successively, reciting three Paters, Aves and Glorias while making the circuit of each, and five Paters, Aves, and Glorias kneeling at the entrance of each.

This exercise is repeated a second and then a third time, and is completed by seven Paters, Aves, and Glorias at the Cross of the Scriptures, and by any additional approved prayers, according to the discretion of each pilgrim, at the site of the High Altar of the Cathedral.

IV. The Nuns' Cemetery. Leaving the Cathedral, the pilgrim proceeds by the Pilgrims' Road to the Nuns' Cemetery, where he will find the foundations of two Churches and the walls of a third, named Dervorgilla's Chapel.

Kneeling at the ruins of the first little Church, within the gate, the pilgrim recites five Paters, Aves and Glorias.

Going to the second Church, he recites, kneeling there, the same prayers.

Then going to Dervorgilla's Chapel, he recites, kneeling at the entrance, seven Paters, Aves and Glorias.

After repeating this exercise a second and then a third time, the pilgrim finishes by the recital of seven Paters, Aves and Glorias at the side of the altar in Dervorgilla's Chapel.

The Station is concluded by the usual prayers for the intentions of Our Holy Father the Pope at the site of the High Altar of the Cathedral.

Approved.

+ JAMES JOSEPH,
Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.

6th August, 1928.

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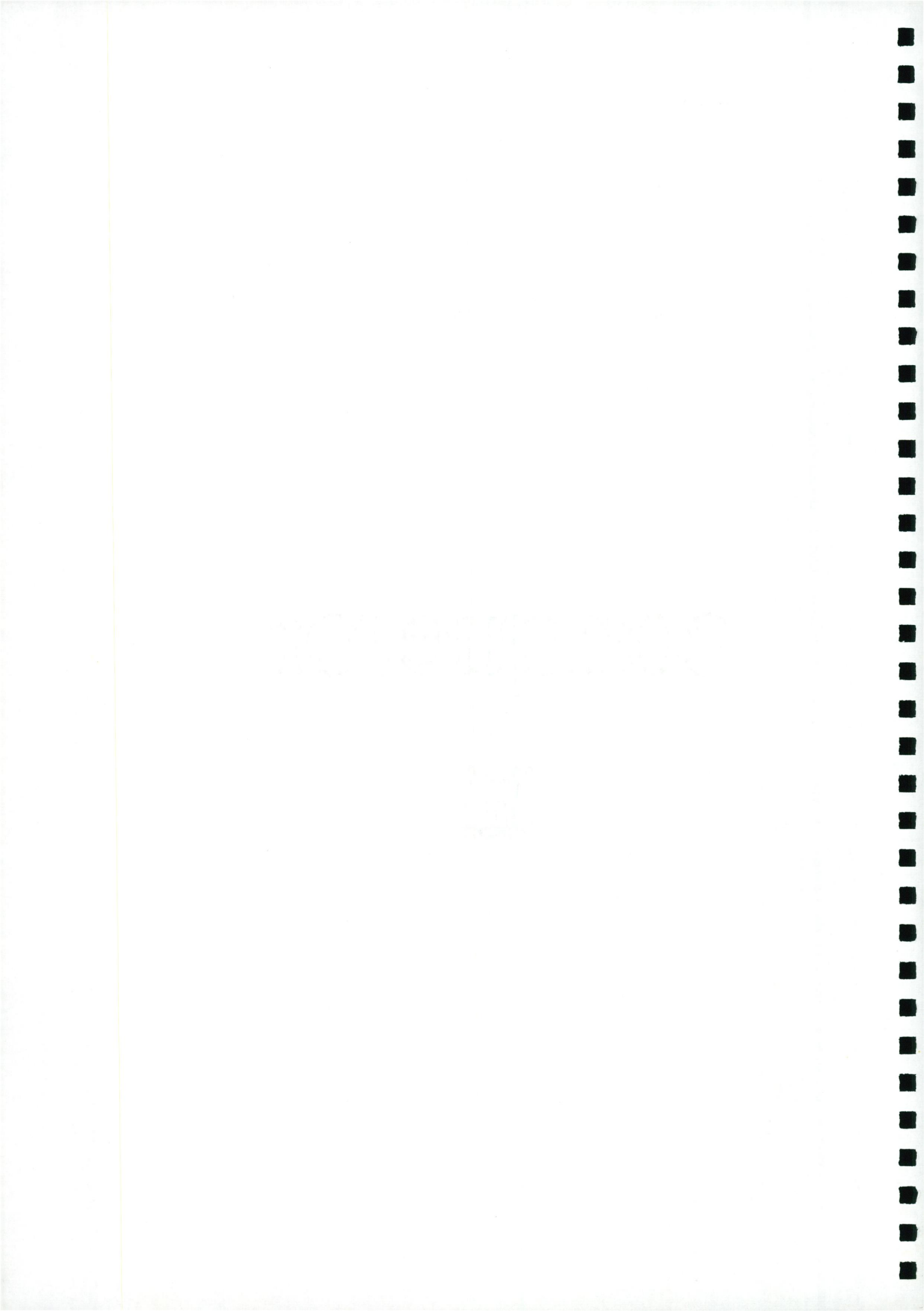
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