Two Early Irish Inscriptions from Co. Cavan

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Abstract: This article presents two stones with short inscriptions in Early Irish that were discovered by Brian Callaghan of the Moybologue Historical Society at Moybologue Old Graveyard and at Enniskeen Graveyard, in 2017 and 2019 respectively. Both sites are on the Cavan-Meath border and are approximately 10.5 km distant from each other.

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1. An inscription from Moybologue Old Graveyard (Co. Cavan)

A Brief History of Moybologue

Moybologue, sometimes Moybolgue, OIr. *Mag mBolcc* 'the plain of the Boilg', is an early Christian circular enclosed church and graveyard site in Relaghbeg, Co. Cavan, along the Cavan-Meath border.

The circular enclosed graveyard was restored in 1988 and contains a featureless portion of the northern nave wall and south transept of the medieval church. Gwynn and Hadcock list Moybologue among the 'Hospital' or 'Hospice' churches of the middle ages, these being ecclesiastical establishments endowed by the chieftain of the district with a portion of land known as *Termon* land, which was to be free forever.[1] Generally, these parish churches were under the stewardship of a local hereditary erenagh, who was 'usually a layman, although some were in

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[1] Aubrey O. Gwynn & Richard N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland, with an appendix to early sites* (London 1970) 354.

minor orders. One of their functions was to provide hospitality for the traveller, the sick, the pilgrim and the poor'.[2]

Gwynn and Hadcock associate the site with a St Fintan of Moybolc,[3] although strong local folklore claims a Patrician origin for the church.[4] Several early Irish martyrologies incorrectly ascribe the feast-day of the fourth-century Roman Pope Siricius on 26th November to *Maig Bolcc hi Feraib Cúl Breg.*[5] The *Litany of Irish Saints* mentions summarily *.uii nóebepscoip Maigi Bolg* 'the seven holy bishops of Mag mBolg'.[6]

The Annals of the Four Masters *anno* 56 record the death of Fiacha Finnfolaidh 'in the slaughter of Magh Bolg'.[7] An entry dated 9 July 1409 in the register of Nicholas Fleming, Archbishop of Armagh, cites 'Nicholas, bishop of Kilmore for a metropolitical visitation of his diocese [...] at St Patrick's church, Moybolg, on 18 July or the juridic day next following'.[8] The 1604-map of the barony of Clankee depicts the church as roofless, with a round tower-like structure, most likely the belfry, beside it. A well preserved, late twelfth-century Anglo-Norman motte and bailey lies approximately 100 meters to the north of the church, in the field adjoining the graveyard.

Research History

The *National Monuments Service* SMR (Sites and Monuments Record) lists fourteen monuments on-site, including the church, graveyard, ecclesiastical enclosure, cross-slab, graveslab, collection of way-side or churchyard crosses, effigial tomb, a holed-stone, a cupmarked stone, an inscribed stone and font. The stone containing the inscription in question is classified as a 'cross-slab',[9] which, according to the National Monuments Service Class List Definitions, is 'a slab of stone, either

    [2] Liam Kelly, *The diocese of Kilmore c. 1100-1800* (Dublin 2017) 36.

    [3] Cf. entry 707.410 in Pádraig Ó Riain (ed), *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1985).

    [4] Máire MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa* (Dublin 1962) 517–22.

    [5] Pádraig Ó Riain, *Four Irish martyrologies: Drummond, Turin, Cashel, York* (London 2002) 14–16; Whitley Stokes (ed & trans), *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé. The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London 1905) 26 Nov. comm.; Whitley Stokes (ed & trans), *Félire húi Gormáin. The martyrology of Gorman*, Henry Bradshaw Society Publication 9 (London 1895) 26 Nov. comm.

    [6] R. I. Best, Osborn Bergin, M. A. O'Brien & Anne O'Sullivan (eds), *The Book of Leinster. Formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, 6 vols (Dublin 1983) vi, l. 52298.

    [7] John O'Donovan (ed & trans), *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* (Dublin 1848–51; repr. Dublin 1990).

    [8] Brendan Smith (ed), *The Register of Nicholas Fleming, Archbishop of Armagh 1404–1416* (Dublin 2003) 100.

    [9] SMR Ref. CV034–046002.

standing or recumbent, inscribed with a cross and generally used as a grave-marker or memorial. This term is applied only to slabs dating to pre-1200 A.D.'.[10]

The slab is almost square in appearance and is of the limestone-type rock prevalent locally. It is approximately 730 mm in height along the front right-facing side, 700 mm along the front left-facing side, and 540 mm in length along the front top, tapering to the front bottom, which is 500 mm in length. It is between 80 mm to 120 mm in thickness and has a medieval-style cross inscribed on the face. The presence of an inscription just above the cross is not described or recorded in either the SMR Database online or the paper file archive, and has not been previously published. It was first detected by Brian Callaghan of *Moybologue Historical Society* in July 2017 while preparing for a community grave-marker inscription recording survey for the Historic Graves website.[11]

The Early Irish Inscription

The inscription is invisible to the naked eye under ordinary light conditions, but when one knows that they are there, the letters can be felt with the fingers, and they come out very clearly and, for the most part, easily recognisable under oblique light in dusk and, especially well, on the photogrammetrical record. The stone appears to have been preserved in its entirety, which means that the last of the currently legible letters also marks the end of the text. Research archaeologist Martin A. Timoney visited the graveyard in September 2017 and identified the first letters of the inscription as ÓR DO but was unable to read the inscription in full at the time. Shortly after this, an attempt at enhancing the legibility of the text using chalk gave unsatisfactory results. The reading ÓR D'UILIAM, suggested at the time, would have entailed the appearance of a Norman name on an ancient-looking headstone. A photogrammetrical recording of the stone, carried out in June 2018 by Gary Dempsey from *Digital Heritage Age* as part of a Heritage Council-funded 3D photogrammetry project in the graveyard, led to much improved results which form the basis of this study.[12] An epigraphic autopsy of the inscription was undertaken on 19 August 2018.

Ten fully preserved letters, mostly in Insular half-uncial ductus, can be recognised on the stone. The two Rs show a distinctly minuscule form. The last letter is most likely a capital N, in a shape that is very close to half-uncial U, in that the middle stroke goes from the lower left position to the middle right, contrary to the usual way of writing it. Capital N is rarer than its half-uncial counterpart on

[10] http://54.76.164.72/NationalMonuments/WebServiceQuery/Lookup.aspx#GRAV

[11] https://historicgraves.com/

[12] The 3D model of the photogrammetry is available at https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/cv034–046002-cross-slab-3871ab98c7cc4a93bbeecf659e7cb647

inscribed stones, but examples of it can be found occasionally. For instance, Oka-sha and Forsyth contain several specimens,[13] including one example of an inversed middle stroke similar to the Moybologue one.[14] Another example may be contained in the inscription from Enniskeen, which will be introduced in the second part of this article. Reading H instead of an N in Moybologue is very unlikely. Capital H does not seem to occur on inscribed stones, nor would the letter make any sense in this position of an Early Irish word.

The first two letters OR̄ are an abbreviation for OIr. *oróit* 'a prayer', a very common formula word on early medieval Christian inscriptions. The *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* records 67 examples of it, 46 times followed by a construction with the preposition *do* 'for', 21 times followed by *ar* 'for'.[15] The word is predomi-nantly abbreviated in the same manner as in Moybologue, only in 7 instances is it spelt out in full. For Munster, Okasha and Forsyth have 24 additional examples of the *oróit* formula beyond the ones included in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, plus a few whose reading is uncertain.

The letters that follow are set off from the first two by a space of the width of one letter. The next two letters, DU, written together with the following word, are manifestly the variant *du* of the preposition *do* 'to, for'. *Du* is very rare on inscrip-tions: among the 67 collected in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* it is found four times, but it is entirely absent from Okasha and Forsyth's Munster corpus. *Du* is on the one hand the most archaic variant of the preposition 'to, for' before the merger of all rounded vowels in pretonic syllables by the seventh century. The vowel *u* reflects the prehistoric vocalism of the preposition, which goes back to Proto-Celtic **dū* <Proto-Indo-European **dō*, but probably no written witness of Early Old Irish actually reflects this archaism.[16] On the other hand, a new *u* was introduced as a positionally conditioned allophone of *o* in pretonic particles already during the seventh century and spread outside of its original domain throughout the eighth, until it became the default pretonic rounded vowel in the ninth century, only to be again completely replaced by *o* afterwards. One factor for the appearance of *u* instead of *o* in the seventh and eighth centuries may have been the position in hiatus immediately before a word starting with a vowel.[17] This may have been the

[13] Elisabeth Okasha & Katherine Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions of Munster. A corpus of the inscribed stones* (Cork 2001) 247, 253, 283, 292.

[14] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 230.

[15] Whitley Stokes & John Strachan (eds & trans), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus. A collection of Old-Irish glosses scholia prose and verse*, 2 vols (Cambridge 1901–3) ii, 286–89.

[16] David Stifter, 'The history of the Old Irish preverb *to-*', in Elisa Roma & David Stifter (eds), *Linguistic and philological studies in Early Irish* (Lewiston, NY & Lampeter 2014) 203–46: 217–31.

[17] Cf. Joseph Eska, 'On the prehistory of OIr. *do-*, MW *dy-*, etc.', *International Journal of Dia-chronic Linguistics and Linguistic Reconstruction* 4 (2007) 185–206: 199; Stifter, 'The history of the preverb *to-*', 220–31.

Figure 1: Moybologue inscribed cross-slab, drawing John Flynn

trigger in the present context, given that the following name starts with the vowel *u*. However, the inscriptions collected in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* and by Okasha and Forsyth do not conform with such an idealised positional distribution. In the *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* corpus, *du* occurs before a vowel only once (DV ETICH, Clonmacnoise), but three times before a consonant, versus numerous instances of *do* before a vowel in *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* and in Okasha and Forsyth's corpus. Ultimately, the variation *do/du* gives no firm linguistic dating criterion for the inscription since the variant with *u* was a rare option in almost all periods of Old Irish.

The last six letters are ULBRUN, which occupies the slot of the personal name in the formula. The reading of the entire inscription is therefore OR̄ DUUL-BRUN, which can be expanded to the Early Irish phrase *oróit du Ulbrun*, an exhortation to speak a prayer for the salvation in the afterlife of the soul of an individual referred to as *Ulbrun*. This name, which to my knowledge has no parallel so far in this particular spelling, is the most intriguing part of the text. Taking into account orthographic variation (e.g., omission of 'fadas' [= length-marks], etc.), it permits several interpretations.

1. If it stands for *Ulbrún*, it could be a hibernicised rendering of the Anglo-Saxon female name *Wulfrūn* 'wolf rune'. The database for the *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England* records eleven instances of this name, all from the tenth/eleventh centuries.[18] OE *wulf* could be represented in Old Irish as *ulb*.[19] However, as this would most likely have inflected as a feminine *ā*-stem in Old Irish, a dative **Ulbrúin* would be expected in the inscription.

2. Alternatively, *Ulbrun* could be the dative of the otherwise unattested OIr. *o*-stem names **Ulbran* or **Aulbran*. The first could be a compound 'beard-raven' ('a bearded raven (= hero)'?) consisting of *ul* 'beard' + *bran* 'raven'; the second could be a compound 'wall-raven' ('a raven that sits on a wall, observing a battle'?) of the rare word *aul* 'wall' + *bran*. While it is uncertain whether the simple noun *bran* 'raven' and the name *Bran* underwent regular *u*-infection in the dative singular in Old Irish,[20] it is conceivable that this would be the rule when it occurs as second compound member, specifically if the vowel *a* had been reduced to ə in an unstressed syllable. Both suggestions suffer from the fact that both *aul* 'wall' and *ul* 'beard'

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[18] URL:http://pase.ac.uk/jsp/pdb?dosp=VIEW_RECORDS&st=PERSON_NAME&value=7827&level=1&lbl=Wulfrun. One of them provides the etymon for the modern town of Wolverhampton, OE *Wulfrūnehēantūn* '*Wulfrūn's* high or principal enclosure or farm'.

[19] Kuno Meyer, 'Altirisch *Erulb* n. pr. m.', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 13 (1921) 108.

[20] Cf. *don bran mor* (*Auraic.* 5598) and *do Bran mac Febail* (*Imram Brain* 1) vs. *do Braun* (*Imram Brain* 2, 62) in one manuscript each against *do Bran* elsewhere.

(apart from names derived from *Ulaid* 'Ulstermen') seem to be absent from anthroponomastics.[21]

3. Finally, there could conceivably be a connection with the name *Ailbran* 'stone-raven' ('a raven (= hero) that fights with stones'?), a compound of *ail* 'stone' + *bran*.[22] In this case it has to be assumed that initial *ail-* alternated with *ul-*, just like *ailad* 'tomb, sepulchre' alternates with *aulad*, *elad*, *ilad*, *ulad*.[23] The name *Ailbran* does not appear in the genealogies, but two clerics, from Tréoit and Clúain Dolcáin, bear that name in the Annals of Ulster s.a. 774 and 781.[24] Jürgen Uhlich compares also the name *Ailbrenn*, the superior of Clúain Iraird who died in 884 (Annals of Ulster). Moybologue Old Graveyard is *c.* 50 km away both from Trevet and from Clonard, which is not a very long distance. Maybe there is therefore a connection between *Ulbrun* and abbot Ailbran of Tréoit who died 774 (Annals of Ulster), or with the superior Ailbrenn of Clúain Iraird.

Conclusion

The Moybologue inscription OR̄ DUULBRUN follows the most common formula *oróit do X* 'a prayer for X' on early Irish inscribed stones. Of the various options of how to interpret the personal name *Ulbrun*, the most likely is that it is a spelling variant of *Ailbran*. The inscription has all the appearances of Early Irish, and it is well possible to be from the Old Irish period, although no greater precision is possible at the moment. In any case, the very tenuous connection with historical persons in the late eighth or late ninth centuries would fit with such a date.

2. An inscription from Enniskeen Graveyard (Co. Cavan)

A Brief History of Enniskeen

Enniskeen Graveyard, Ir. *Inis Caoin* 'fair island', is a now derelict, rectangular graveyard, less than a kilometer to the south of Kingscourt in Co. Cavan 'on a site almost insulated by marsh'.[25] The now disused Navan-Kingscourt rail line runs along the perimeter of the eastern wall of the graveyard. As with Moybologue, Gwynn and

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[21] These words are not mentioned as parts of names in Jürgen Uhlich, *Die Morphologie der komponierten Personennamen des Altirischen* (Witterschlick/Bonn 1993).

[22] Uhlich, *Personennamen*, 148.

[23] See for this David Stifter, 'Old Irish ²*fén* "bog"?', *Die Sprache* 40/2 (2001) 226–28: 227 n. 2.

[24] Seán Mac Airt & Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds & trans), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin 1983).

[25] Oliver Davies, 'The Churches of County Cavan', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 78/2 (1948) 73-118: 95.

Hadcock also list Enniskeen among the 'Hospital' or 'Hospice' churches of the middle ages,[26] and Enniskeen, like Moybologue, paid tithes to the religious house of St Mary's Abbey in Kells.[27] There are no visible remains of a church at ground level, and Davies states that 'a tradition of doubtful value states that the church lay outside the graveyard to the west'.[28] Fifteenth-century architectural fragments have been found scattered across the graveyard and in the graveyard wall. A large effigial tomb depicting male and female figures holding hands, in a style similar to others locally at Kilmainhamwood, Nobber, Cruicetown and Robertstown, is likely datable to the late sixteenth to early seventeenth century. A vault or mausoleum containing deceased members of the Pratt family of Cabra Castle is prominent near the centre of the graveyard. The 1590 Cavan Inquisitions recorded that 'the Church of "Inneskyn" containing 2 polls or cartrons was valued at 2 shillings per annum'.[29] A well, *Tobar Áirne*, is situated near the church site. The site is associated with St Ernán; a pattern was held on the eve of the 13 July.[30] Conservation and inscription recording of the graveyard was undertaken by the local community in 2011.[31]

Research History

At the time of writing, the *National Monuments Service* SMR lists only three monuments on-site at Enniskeen. These are the church, graveyard and some architectural fragments. The stone containing the inscription is not yet listed on the SMR, but was reported to the National Monuments Service as a new find shortly after discovery. The stone was discovered by Brian Callaghan, while walking in the graveyard on the morning of the 11 July 2019. The stone was lying flat in a West-East orientation in the northern section of the graveyard near to the northern perimeter wall. A crude 3D photogrammetry image was taken using a smartphone during this visit, and a second visit was made on 26 July 2019 where a higher resolution 3D image was photographed and measurements taken. Gary Dempsey of Digital Heritage Age produced a 3D-model of the object.[32]

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[26] Gwynn & Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses*, 351.

[27] Philip O'Connell, *The diocese of Kilmore: its history and antiquities* (Dublin 1937) 155.

[28] Davies, 'Churches of Cavan', 95.

[29] O'Connell, *Diocese of Kilmore*, 155.

[30] Pádraig Ó Riain, *A dictionary of Irish saints* (Dublin 2011) 287. See also Ailbhe Mac Shamhráin, Nora White & Aidan Breen, *Monasticon Hibernicum. Early Christian ecclesiastical settlement in Ireland 5th to 12th centuries* (Maynooth 2009). URL: https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/index.php, s.v. *Inis Chaín*.

[31] The results of this work can be found at https://kingscourtparish.ie/2011/05/conservation-of-enniskeen-graveyard/

[32] The 3D model is available at https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/enniskeen-cross-slab-inscribed-stone-fb4e2a4f90d04f4ba40a03445a090a7e

The slab is roughly shield-shaped. It is approximately 660 mm in height along the front right facing side, and 390 mm in length along the front top, tapering to the front bottom. It is between 80 mm to 90 mm in thickness.

The Early Irish Inscription

An epigraphic autopsy of the inscription was carried out on 7 September 2019. Unlike the Moybologue stone, most of the engraving on the Enniskeen stone, namely the cross and the first line of the inscription, are readily visible to the naked eye. However, while it is manifest that something has been engraved in the second line, this is not easily readable. The central object is a Latin cross with expanded terminals, squared terminals on the side arms, round terminals at the top and bottom. The cross-section is styled as a circle, like a Celtic cross. Other crosses with expanded terminals and elaborated cross-sections (though differing in the details) are, for example, stones 3 and 4 of Inishcealtra.[33] It is likely that the width of the object corresponds to the original shape of the slab, with the cross being almost perfectly centred on the face of the stone. There is no reason to assume that much or any text has been lost after the letters that are still visible.

The cross and the first line are executed with considerable care, the letters go deep into the stone, up to a depth of 4 mm. The letters in the first line are *c.* 50 mm high. The second line and an encircled cross in the bottom right section are much fainter. This is not only due to damage, but it seems that the second line and the encircled cross were executed in a different style. The letters are smaller, around 40 mm, and they are shallower than those in the first line, going only 1 mm into the stone. What cannot be easily appreciated on the images and the scan is the fact that the section after the first letter of the second half of line 2 lies on a slightly deeper level than the rest of the surface, most likely due to the loss of part of the stone. That the original surface is more recent than the creation of the inscription emerges also from the different colour of the stone in this area, i.e. it has not aged and weathered as much as elsewhere. For the reading of this section this means that the original letters have been lost and what can be seen now has probably been added later.

Since the first line contains the formulaic section of the inscription, it is conceivable that it was written first, while the section for the individual name was left empty, only to be filled at a later date when the name of the deceased was known. As a consequence of the brittle material, sandstone, part of the engravings, including part of the name, have suffered from effacement. The person who executed the second line may have been different from and perhaps less skilled than the one of the first line. This would explain the difference in style between the two lines. If

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[33] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 56-61.

correct, this hypothesis implies the existence of a sort of 'ready-made cross-slabs' on which a name could be filled in individually when the sad occasion arose.

The text is arranged around the upper part of the cross, apparently with an equal number of letters on each side, a clearly stylistic, artistic decision. Dividing the lines across crosses was a popular artistic practice. The Munster corpus assembled by Okasha and Forsyth contains several examples of names that are split asunder by lines of crosses between them, namely the stones Tullylease 1,[34] Inishcealtra 9,[35] Inishcealtra 19 (a very different style of cross),[36] Roscrea 1,[37] Toureen Peacaun 39,[38] and Lismore 3.[39] In line 1, two letters are written on each side of the cross. Because of the uncertainty about its original extent, the precise number is more difficult to determine for line 2. As the stone presents itself today, traces of up to eight characters are visible. In order not to be prejudgmental in the case of difficult letters, all letters will receive an index which consists of the line number and the position inside the line, separated by a dot, e.g. 1.3 for the third letter in the first line.

The letters in line 1 are straightforwardly legible as ŌR | AR, conforming with the usual abbreviation of the second-most-common formula on early Irish inscriptions, *oróit ar* 'a prayer on behalf of'. Letter 1.3 A is semi-uncially shaped and resembles roughly that of a small letter *c* onto which a crescent, only faintly visible, has been attached to the right.

The reading of the second line is much more challenging and requires a separate discussion of each individual letter. An examination with the fingers in September 2019 did not reveal anything in addition to what is visible on the photogrammetrical record.

Letter 2.1 seems to be either N or M. Two hastae of a capital nasal letter are visible, the oblique stroke connecting them is ascending. There is another such oblique stroke after the second hasta, which, however, is not followed by a straight vertical line, as would be expected for an M. Parallels are found, for example, in Toureen Peacaun 16[40] or on the Moybologue stone in the first part of this article.

2.2: Could be a small E or perhaps the same kind of small A like in the first line.

2.3: Looks very much like C or perhaps E, although no middle stroke is discernible; there does not seem to be enough space for an A of the type seen in line 1. Alternatively it is conceivable that 2.3 together with 2.2 forms a semi-uncial A with a very prominent second crescent.

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[34] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 119-23.

[35] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 71-73; lower part.

[36] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 93-95.

[37] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 214-16; lower part.

[38] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 286-89.

[39] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 339-41.

[40] Okasha & Forsyth, *Early Christian inscriptions*, 253-55.

Figure 2: Enniskeen inscribed cross-slab, drawing John Flynn

2.4: This letter looks decidedly like a D; its ascender can be seen quite clearly on some of the stills. Rather unusually, the ascender rises upward almost vertically, while more commonly it runs parallel to be baseline.

2.5: Clearly an O with a stroke over it. Since this seems to be neither a sacred name nor a function word, the possibility of an abbreviation stroke has been ruled out. Nasal strokes are very rare in Early Irish lapidary inscriptions. Among the 96 inscriptions collected in *Thes. Pal.*, there is only one example each for an *n*-stroke and an *m*-swirl. In the *c.* 138 texts in Okasha and Forsyth's corpus, three nasal strokes are found. Fadas are mildly more common: *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* records seven instances of fadas, Okasha and Forsyth two.

2.6: This looks like a semi-uncial N, in contrast to the capital N/M at the beginning. However, this is already on the portion of the stone where the original surface has fallen off or has been chipped away. Also, this letter goes considerably below the baseline of the letters before it. Accordingly I believe that whatever the reading of this letter is, it need not necessarily be connected with what has gone before.

2.7: Could be another C or the left half of a semi-uncial A. What comes out on the images as a stroke or swirl above the letter, is rather the edge of the broken-off section of the stone.

2.8: Of the last letter, if indeed it is one, only a single vertical stroke is recognisable, which could point to an I or L.

All of this leaves us in an unsatisfactory situation when it comes to interpreting the name in the second line. Only its left half and the first letter of the second half are original, and even some of these letters are doutbful in their reading. Whether the final letters of the line reproduce an earlier, lost text or are independent of it, cannot be ascertained, but for determining the name they should be disregarded.

None of the collections of medieval Irish names (esp. *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* and *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae*)[41] contains a name beginning with *Necd-*, *Nacd-* or *Naed-* that could be reconciled with what remains of the inscription. If, albeit hesitatingly, we read the first letter as an M, a number of possibilities arise. The first three letters could stand for *Mac*, in which case the clerical names *Mac Dochae*, *Mac Dommáin* or *Mac Donnáin*, all otherwise attested, would be a possibility, as would be *Mac Doborchon* if it is assumed that the last bit of the name was abbreviated. Alternatively, the name could be completed as *Máedóc*, in which case the number of letters on the right section of the cross would

⁴¹ Michael A. O'Brien (ed) with introduction by John V. Kelleher, *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* i (Dublin 1962); Pádraig Ó Riain (ed), *Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1985).

not match that on the left section. In this connection it is worth pointing out that St Máedóc (St Mogue) of Ferns is the patron of two parishes in Cavan, namely Drumlane and Templeport, appr. 20 km and 60 km respectively from Enniskeen.

Conclusion

The inscription may well originate in the Old Irish period, but this impression rests primarily on its formulaic section and on stylistic considerations. The reading of the name is too unsure to provide any useful information for dating.

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