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RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN VIKING AGE BRITAIN:

Pagan Imagery in a Colonial Context

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Abstract:

When the Vikings settled the British Isles between the 8th and 11th centuries, they left behind numerous stone monuments in their wake. These monuments, many of which are stone crosses, utilize a combination of Christian and pagan imagery, and are found heavily in Christian contexts. This thesis sought to analyze this imagery and their contexts in order to determine how they reflected the colonial religious identity of the time. The study material consisted of 19 stone monuments (crosses, slabs, and hogbacks) spread across northern England and the Isle of Man. The thesis used iconographical theory, analyzing the imagery from small to large, and finally grouping these images and scenes into larger motif groups, using literary analysis of the medieval Eddas and sagas. Also used was comparative analysis with mainland Scandinavian carvings, most notably the Gotlandic picture stones, to critically analyze the previous interpretations of these monuments. These methods were utilized together to draw conclusions about the religious identity in Viking Age Britain. It was concluded that their heritage was preserved using Scandinavian pagan imagery during their conversion to Christianity in this colonial context, pagan images being used often as an allegory to Christian themes through the concept of Interpretatio Christiana, and the two religions in effect merged together to create a hybrid colonial culture as the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon cultures themselves intermingled.

Keywords: *archaeology, colonial identity, iconography, imagery, Norse mythology, pre-Christian religions, religion, stone monuments, Viking Age Britain*

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I dedicate this thesis to my late Aunt Karen. Her unconditional support and love gave me the strength to complete this journey. I love you, Kiki.

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1. Introduction

When studying the Scandinavian pre-Christian religions, much attention is, of course, drawn to the practice and state of religion within Scandinavia. However, the Scandinavian culture also existed in the British Isles after the Vikings came to the new area. At this point in time, or generally the 9th to the 11th century, Scandinavian culture was intermingling and fusing with British Anglo-Saxon culture, and this can be reflected in the material culture left behind. In fact, the Anglo-Saxon Christian culture and the Scandinavian pagan culture that came to the British Isles in the first wave of Scandinavian settlers in the 9th century, began to fuse these separate religions together in the stone monuments, and it has often been pointed out that, for example, images of the crucifixion can be seen intermingled with images of the Norse apocalyptic event of Ragnarök (Bailey 1980, p. 127). This is just one example, of course, and this thesis will attempt to analyze this phenomenon using the presumed Scandinavian pagan imagery of the British Isles and how it relates to the religious identity of the colonial culture.

Though the stone sculptures with presumed Scandinavian imagery in the British Isles have been studied before, this thesis will attempt to compile them all in one place and explore their deeper interpretation and context in a colonial setting. The time these stone structures were erected was a time of change in the British Isles, as well as in Scandinavia, where the conversion to Christianity was beginning. Two cultural groups of people—the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons—were clashing and learning to coexist, not simply their ways of life, but their deeply held beliefs as well. The carvings they chose to adorn their sculptures with can provide a snapshot of just how they expressed those beliefs in a religious context.

Three overlying themes will direct the course of this study: the idea of visual representation of mythological stories, the comparisons of presumed pagan imagery versus presumed Christian imagery and how they coexist in this context, and the role that Norse mythological imagery played in a colonial setting. These themes will be explored through analysis of the imagery and will provide a baseline for the discussion and interpretation of these images and how they relate to the aim, stated below.

1.1 Aim of the Thesis

One primary aim is to analyze why these images, found carved on stone monuments such as crosses and hogbacks, are considered Scandinavian, as well as why they are considered a part of a pagan identity. Determining meaning behind some millennia old imagery is no easy feat, and determining the cultural difference between these stone sculptures is something that must be tackled. The imagery combined with the decorative elements, as well as possible thematic elements, will be analyzed for distinct and specific indications of a Scandinavian meaning or interpretation, as opposed to decorative or secular art that may have previously existed before the Scandinavians occupied the British Isles.

Another is to analyze how these presumed pagan images correlate and combine with the images that have been interpreted as Christian imagery, or the dominant culture of the British Isles when the Scandinavians first began to settle.

Finally, this thesis aims to use the function and presumed meaning behind the sculptures to discuss their role and the role of this presumed religious imagery in the formation and expression of colonial identity. The period of Scandinavian occupation in the British Isles was full of change, characterized by the intersection and negotiation of identity and culture as the groups of inhabitants associated and intermingled, as evidenced in the material culture found from this time. The question that will be explored in this thesis is: how did Scandinavian pagan religious imagery in the British Isles impact the colonial cultural and religious identities? Or more specifically, how did the blend of pagan and Christian imagery influence this?

The imagery found from the Scandinavian settlements in Britain is often interspersed with Christian imagery and does not seem to be presented in a way that raises one religion above the other. Instead, many images are shown to be in symphony with the Christian ones. This begs the question, was this imagery religious or cultural in nature? Was it shown to be simply added on to the existing Christian cosmology in the area, or was it a way to gently ease the Scandinavian settlers into the conversion process?

Another question aimed to be answered is the role in which this imagery played for the settlers, as well as the previous inhabitants of the Isles. If the British were not encouraged to convert to paganism, then what purpose did the Scandinavian images serve besides to the Scandinavians themselves? Was it a reminder of their heritage, or a reminder to the British of who ruled them now?

1.2 Historical Background

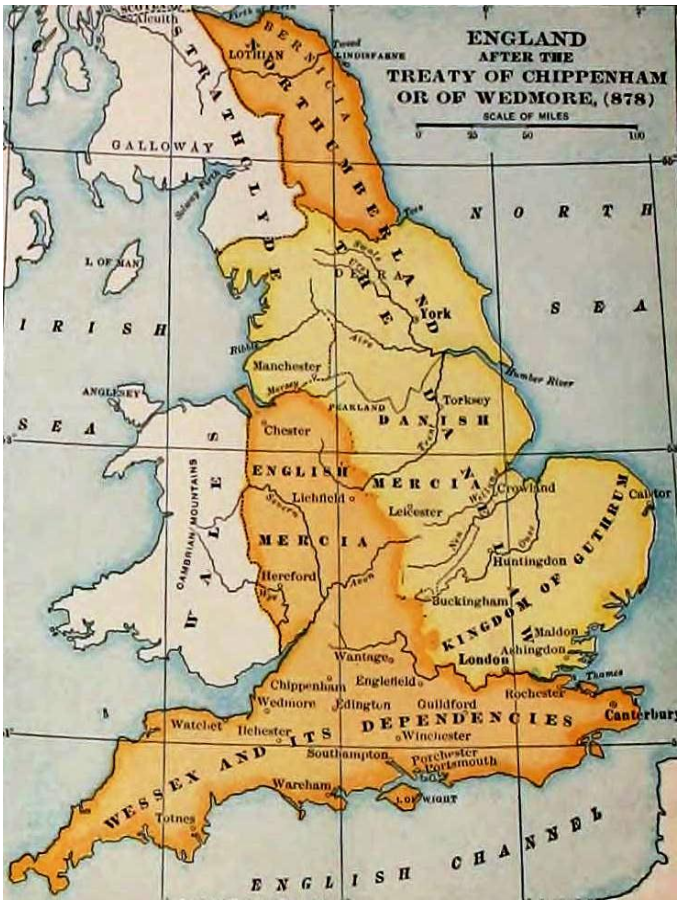

Figure 1: The Danelaw (Yellow) separating Northumbria from English Mercia (Dowe 1910)

Around the end of the 8th century is when written records first show the presence of Scandinavians in the British Isles, at this point in the form of raids on monasteries in Ireland and England (Griffiths 2015, p. 33; Richards 1991, p. 20). By the mid-9th century, the Isles became instead the target of colonization, instead of just raids, and larger armies began to arrive (Richards 1991, p. 27). From this point, many cities such as York were under the rule of Viking leaders, and the conquering of much of the land spread to what was later known as the "Danelaw" (fig. 1), an area north and east of the boundary which separated the Anglo-Saxon governed land from the area of Danish rule (Richards 1991, p. 29). From the late 9th century, the Viking armies began to build and settle in permanent fortifications to house armies of hundreds, but no larger (Richards 1991, pp. 30-31). From this point, there came a period of peace in the Danelaw, until Swedish and Norwegian Vikings set their sights on the British Isles and joined the Danish in the late 10th century. These new armies did not have interest in settling the area, but instead

continued the raids and extorted tribute from the population to stop the raids (Richards 1991, p. 34). This started a period of backlash against the Scandinavian population, and by the 11th century, another large Viking army arrived, this time with a purpose of conquest and not tribute (Richards 1991, p. 39). By the time the Danish king Knutr ruled (1016-1035), the kingdom was Christian and he and the scale of his empire resembled much more a medieval rule than that of a Viking leader (Richards 1991, p. 40), and this was the beginning of the end of the Viking Age in the British Isles, which finally concluded with the separation of Denmark and England as distinct kingdoms, and the death of the last Scandinavian leader, Harald Hardrara in 1066 (Richards 1991, p. 40).

During the Viking occupation of the British Isles, many stone crosses and other sculptures were erected, many of which were in memorial of a person or event, runic carvings on some bearing the names of the carver or the person it was raised for (DuBois 1999, p. 148), carrying on a tradition that was common in Scandinavia during the same period and before. These sculptures also carried on decorative and stylistic traditions that were common in Scandinavia concurrently, and it is these artistic traditions that can aid in identifying which sculptures can be used to explore the Scandinavian population in the British Isles and which may remain from the pre-Scandinavian population, and therefore not play a role in the cultural and religious identity of the colonial population.

1.3 Previous Research

Since the middle of the 19th century, studies have been done on the Viking culture and imagery in the British Isles (e.g. Cumming 1857; Kermode 1897; Shetelig 1954). This fascination with the seafaring Vikings and their reach in the relatively distant British Isles was likely spurred on by the popularity and idealization of archaeology in the 19th century and the beginning of the science of archaeology as a discipline (Bowden 1984). Catalogs were created and several books written, and most of the drawings of the stones from these early works and studies are still used today (and in this thesis) to analyze and interpret the meaning behind the carvings.

One rather large project that aims to tackle the stone carvings of the British Isles is the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculptures, a project dedicated to identifying, recording, and publishing English sculptures from the 7th to 11th centuries (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020). This database has collected data from all over the British Isles, much of which had never been published before, in one concise and consistent presentation. In the late 1970s, this database was compiled in the form of printed books, and recent years have brought this data to the internet to be available for all in the form of an online database.

In much research and discussion of the stone carvings, there tends to be a bias in the interpretations of the images, even from some of the newer studies. Very often, the presumed pagan images are described objectively, with several other explanations for what they could be. However, the presumed Christian images are often interpreted directly, before even a description of the image is given. For example, in the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculptures, their description of the Gosforth Cross is a mostly objective one, the scenes that they later interpret as pagan described with words such as "human figure" and "animal's head", whereas the description of what is later interpreted as a "clear Christian scene" (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01) is described as "the figure of the crucified Christ", even though they later go on to clarify that this image lacks the conventional classifications of other depictions of the crucifixion (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01). This is an opposition, whereas if any of the presumed pagan images have even a small detail omitted, the validity of the interpretation as pagan is called into question. However, this depiction of Christ has details that are rarely found in other similarly aged sculptures and omits ones that are often used to identify the image of Christ or other Christian imagery, such as the cross behind (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01) and yet is almost always labelled as an explicitly Christian scene (e.g. Bailey 1980, p. 127; Berg 1958; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01).

This study, in contrast, will attempt to challenge some of these assumptions previously made and attempt to remain objective despite the overwhelming amount of interpretations that exist in the form of fact in several of the sources.

Additionally, the idea not only of the material culture left behind in the British Isles by the Scandinavians, but their cultural identity has been analyzed and discussed in several studies and

papers (e.g. Glørstad 2014; Sidebottom 2000). In Phil Sidebottom's study (2000), he concluded that the stone monuments of the Viking Age were not just products of contemporary styles, but instead reflected the presence of distinct social groups, and he further examined the reasons why these monuments were so central in their display, arguing that the prolific amount of monuments came from a context of cultures in contact with one another (Sidebottom 2000, p. 213). In Glørstad's paper (2014), she analyzes material culture and linguistics from the Viking Age around the Irish Sea to analyze the colonial identity of the area. She finds that the hybrid traces of the Scandinavian settlements and the surrounding Anglo-Saxon culture around the Irish Sea show expressions of a colonial identity, closely related to the Norse identity in the Viking homeland (Glørstad 2014, p. 152).

1.4 Methods and Theory

To analyze religious imagery, one must understand how this can be handled. Both religious ideals and visual ideals must be analyzed, and then combined together to create a composite view of how these religious images—both Christian and pre-Christian—are melded together. The theory and methodology called hermeneutics deals often with the interpretation of religious and philosophical texts (Taliaferro 2010, p. 109), and has sometimes been said to be the understanding of understanding (Zimmerman 2015, p. 24). In the context of this thesis, however, the idea of the interpretation of religious text and, its extension, art, will be utilized. This theory often emphasizes the importance of tradition in the understanding of religious philosophy (Zimmerman 2015, p. 58), and when analyzing images of old myths on presumed Christian artifacts, this theory can definitely provide context to the question of why these stories were still important in a majorly Christian society, especially in a colonial setting.

This general theory of religious tradition will tie in with the analysis of iconography, or the study of the interpretation and meaning behind works of art (Panofsky 1939, p. 3), in order to analyze the overall scenes on the stones and find correlations between both the stones themselves as well as the written Icelandic sources and in some cases, the Bible. The iconographical method of analysis, most famously associated with art historian Erwin Panofsky (Munsterberg 2008), has been described as the qualitative method of the analysis of visual content, that is guided by the

outside research relating to the contexts from which the images are found (Müller 2011, p. 285). The method begins with what is visual in the object of interest. These observations are then related to similar or other connected images, and in many cases, texts, requiring research and analysis of other primary sources (Munsterberg 2008). This method requires a detailed analysis of the visual elements in the work being studied, and must begin with an objective approach of description, as free from bias and subjectivity as possible, so as to be able to interpret the imagery later on without immediately assuming a specific interpretation from other sources (Munsterberg 2008). In Panofsky's general method, the first step is the pre-iconographical description, the second is the iconographical analysis, and finally, iconographical interpretation (Müller 2011, p. 286). Using this method of analysis, I will be able to describe and interpret the images on the stones and use primary sources (e.g. the Eddas and the Bible) to search for meaning and correlation between them, attempting to be as objective as possible, despite the vast wealth of previous interpretations of the Viking Age stones of the British Isles.

Religious imagery is a subject that may need defining, or at least clarification. What images, for example, are considered religious versus secular, or merely decorative, and is this distinction as clear-cut as one could hope? In the same vein, the idea of cultural and religious imagery is a concept that has the potential to become complicated, and so an attempt will be made to try and interpret the images both secularly as well as religious, as it is not always clear today what the purpose of a carving was a thousand years ago.

The idea of identity can be drawn from this, as images—no matter religious or secular, in this case—communicate much about the perceived identity of the society that created them, as they are a product of culture (Sullivan 2016). Imagery is a part of material culture, and material culture is used in many disciplines to draw conclusions about the past (Sullivan 2016), which is what this thesis aims to do.

The idea of religious pluralism will be kept in mind in this thesis in the context of the period of time where both Christianity and pagan religion coincided in Scandinavian society both in Scandinavia and in the British Isles. Religious pluralism is the idea that more than one religion can coexist at once (Rowe 1999, p. 139), and likely did during this time of transition in Scandinavian society (Wicker 2003, p. 545).

In a dissertation finished in 2011 by Michaela Helmbrecht, the themes of Vendel and Viking Age anthropomorphic images and the functions and contexts behind them were explored. As she also analyzed this in the context of religious identity, in this thesis, I will build upon her theoretical and methodological approach when forming my theories and methods for the analysis of the Scandinavian stone sculptures of the British Isles. Her approach was to group the images from small to large, the images being organized into several stages of complexity, ending with the creation of the "motif group" (Helmbrecht 2011, p. 65), looking first at the individual figures and decorations in the images, and then on to the scenes: or how these figures relate to one another, and what actions or gestures this grouping of figures or objects could be looking to represent. Further on, as she found, the images depict more than one scene, and these scenes are likely related to each other in their contexts. Therefore, the final look is at how different scenes on the same stone could relate to one another, by looking at placement, any connection or similarity between them, or simply how they could relate to each other. This makes up a broader motif, characterized and possibly found in many other contexts, which allows one to view the motif across several other contexts. I will be adopting this approach from Helmbrecht's study by doing the same with the stone sculptures on the British Isles. For example, the Sigurd saga could be seen as a motif, compiled from the various figures and images on a stone, and these scenes interpreted to be depicting scenes from this story can be found on several stones, which will then be analyzed together to try and extract meaning from the correlations and create a composite idea of the role the images and motifs played in the development of colonial religious identity.

As stated above, the analysis will be structured beginning with the general discussion of the stones themselves and the images depicted on them, followed by the thoughts and interpretations both of myself and of scholars who have studied the stones. I will attempt to analyze both what I see as well as critically assess the interpretations of others, bringing to light possible biases or the tendency to find meaning where perhaps there is none. It is quite likely that often people have been quick to jump to conclusions to fit their research as well as other scholars' previous interpretations, and I seek to avoid and challenge this.

One such method that was decided upon is a comparative analysis between imagery found in the British Isles as well as in Scandinavia. Certain images have appeared in both Scandinavia and the British Isles, and so these can be used to compare the interpretations. For example, the so-called Loki stone at Kirkby can be compared to the depiction of Loki at Snaptun in Denmark (Kjærum

1990, p. 180). While some have interpreted the image at Kirkby as the "bound devil" (Bailey 1980, p. 138), using an image that is most certainly Loki from Scandinavia can aid in the interpretation by using similarities and differences in order to determine whether or not this image is of Loki or if it is the Christian Satan, or perhaps if it could represent both, as a mingling of the cultures and religious beliefs. The Gotlandic picture stones will also be a key factor in this analysis.

Literary analysis combined with material culture is also a method that I will utilize. To interpret the images, one must have an understanding of the stories they come from. Using the Poetic Edda, basic themes and motifs can be found that are reflected in the imagery found on the stone sculptures. By comparing what one sees when looking at the stones with what can be read in the *Poetic Edda*, the *Prose Edda*, and the *Volsungasaga* specifically, I will be able to determine and extract parallels and be able to determine my own interpretations of what can be seen in the imagery, and not just what others have seen.

Both methods, of course, will also be utilized contextually. The images themselves do not exist in a vacuum, and this must be kept in mind. The meaning of an image changes based on the circumstances and people around it, as well as how they interpreted the world, which may very well change over time (Helmbrecht 2011, p. 36), and therefore this must be kept in mind so as to not shallowly interpret the images, as the surrounding context is often key to discerning the meaning behind a specific visual.

1.4.1 What makes the image "Norse"?

Before delving into the stone sculptures erected in the British Isles during the Viking Age, we must first examine what makes these sculptures and images "Norse". Simply put, the styles and patterns used can be compared to the images found on stone carvings and sculptures within Scandinavia, and in addition, what actually makes these images distinct from the Anglo-Saxon art already existing in the British Isles. This will help the analysis of the material by designating an image as belonging to one of the sculptures worked and influenced by the Scandinavian colonial settlement of the Isles.

Before delving into the distinct styles of Scandinavian art found in Britain during the Scandinavian settlement, several motifs not exclusive to these styles can be found that signify the "Scandinavian-ness" of an image. One of these such motifs found extensively in Cumbria and Lancashire, is the woven circle, or ring-knot (Shetelig 1954, p. 132). It is found often in Borre style sculptures, and also on non-sculptural art during this time (Bailey 1980, p. 70). It is not, however, found in the Isle of Man (Shetelig 1954, p. 132) and this shows that these designs were not evolved from the island, and instead are found to have developed from styles common in the Scandinavian mainland. Similar decoration was found during the Merovingian period, but this distinct style is unique to this period on the British Isles (Bailey 1980, p. 71).

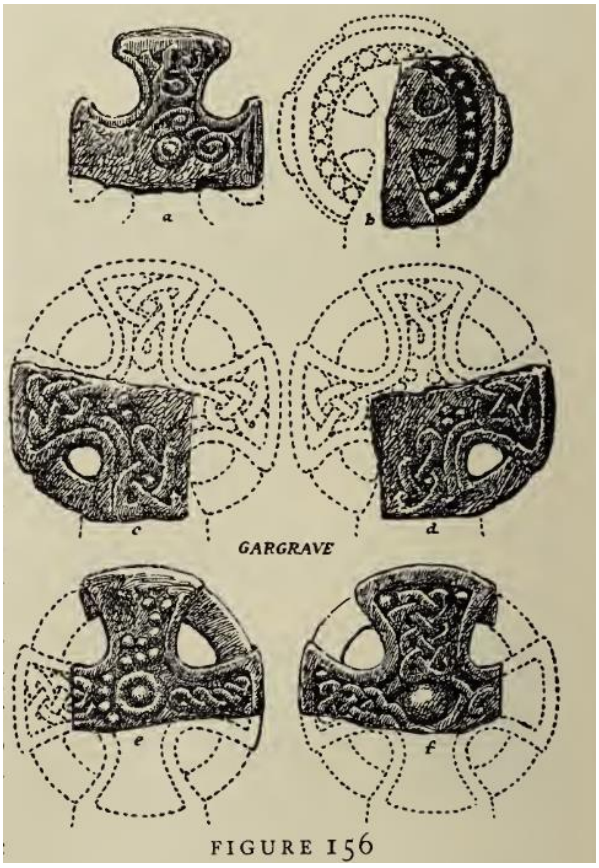

Figure 2: Examples of the Ringed Cross-heads from Yorkshire (Collingwood 1927, figure 157)

Another distinctly Scandinavian tradition is a cross-head in which the arms are connected by a ring (Bailey 1980, p. 70), also known as the "wheel head" (fig. 2) (Collingwood 1927, p. 137). A regional source for this style has been argued and debated since the mid-1800s and has still not been agreed upon (Bailey 1980, p. 71; Collingwood 1927, p. 137), but it has clearly not been seen before the Viking Age in Britain, and so this is one of the most distinguishing features of a Viking Age sculpture within the British Isles (Bailey 1980, p. 70).

Split banded patterns were a feature not found in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon art but were commonly found in Scandinavia during the Viking Age (Shetelig 1954, p. 126) and utilized famously on the Manx crosses.

One other style that finds its place in the separate periods of British/Scandinavian carvings are animal motifs, which are often characterized by the following cultural styles that originated in Scandinavia and were brought over to be used on the sculptures in their new homes.

1.4.1.1 The Borre style

One explicitly Scandinavian style of decoration that found itself in use on British sculptures is the Borre style, so named after a horde of objects found in Norway at a burial site (Bailey 1980, p. 54). This style is characterized by a patterned beast with an angular, interlacing patterned body, as well as a contoured ring chain with overlying lozenges (Bailey 1980, p. 54; Kershaw 2010a, p. 2). The Gosforth Cross is one of the most well-known of the British crosses that utilize this decoration pattern (fig. 3). This is one of the styles that was not seen at the time in Celtic art but was found commonly in Scandinavian carvings, and so has been said to have arisen in the British Isles as a result of Scandinavian activity in the area which shows their origins in Scandinavia and not the British Isles (Kershaw 2010, p. 3; Shetelig 1954, p. 126). It is unknown how this decoration pattern came to Britain, but it is clear using dating techniques (Kershaw 2010a, p. 3) and following the evolution of the carvings (Bailey 1980, p. 54) that the Borre style began in Scandinavia and was transmitted into Britain and not the other way around.

Figure 3: Borre Style Ring-Chain from the Gosforth Cross (Bailey 1980, fig. 23)

1.4.1.2 The Jellinge Style

The Jellinge style is another, more well-known type of decoration found on British sculptures. The name comes from a British misspelling of "Jelling", a place name in Denmark (Bailey 1980, p. 55) and comes from a silver cup found at a royal burial in Jutland (fig. 4), dating possibly in the mid-10th century (Shetelig 1954, p. 133). It is characterized by "ribbon animals", or stylistic animals, usually shown in profile, with the head attached to the body, which is drawn typically as a long, entangled, interlacing plait-work (Bailey 1980,

Figure 4: Jelling cup with decoration from Denmark (Nationalmuseet i København)

pp. 55-57; Shetelig 1954, p. 134) and consisting of open jaws and a round eye in profile (Kershaw 2010a, p. 5). This style is more associated with the Viking sculptures of Britain than the Borre style is (Kershaw 2010a, p. 5) and can be found in carvings at York and other areas of the north, mirrored in Scandinavia. As with the Borre style, this design pattern can be traced to its roots in Scandinavia (Kershaw 2010a, p. 6). However, it has been suggested in the past that the style as seen in Britain was inspired by Irish ornamental styles found in illuminated manuscripts from the time (Shetelig 1954, p. 134).

1.4.1.3 The Mammen Style

This style has been seen as evolved from the Jellinge style, and some historians have classified it as not a distinct style, but a subset of the Jellinge style (Bailey 1980, p. 57), both due to its hybridization of the Jellinge and later Ringerike styles and also its relatively small occurrence rate (Kershaw 2010b, p. 2). It is named after an axe-head (fig. 5) found at the Mammen site in Denmark that displays a distinct pattern that did not match with the other Jellinge style decorations found on the other objects (Bailey 1980, p, 57). The style uses the same ribbon beasts that the Jellinge style has, however, these beasts have a more weighted body, and are distinguished by a dotted filling on the inside of the ribbon bodies (Kershaw 2010b, p. 1). The Mammen style, when viewed with the styles that border it—Jellinge and Ringerike—can be seen as an intermediate style that bridged the gap between the two (Bailey 1980, p. 57).

Figure 5: Axe from Mammen, Denmark (Bailey 1980, plate 16)

1.4.1.4 The Ringerike Style

This style is named after a region of Norway where several carvings were found displaying this evolved style of beast carvings, best seen at the site Vang in Norway (Kershaw 2010b, p. 2). The

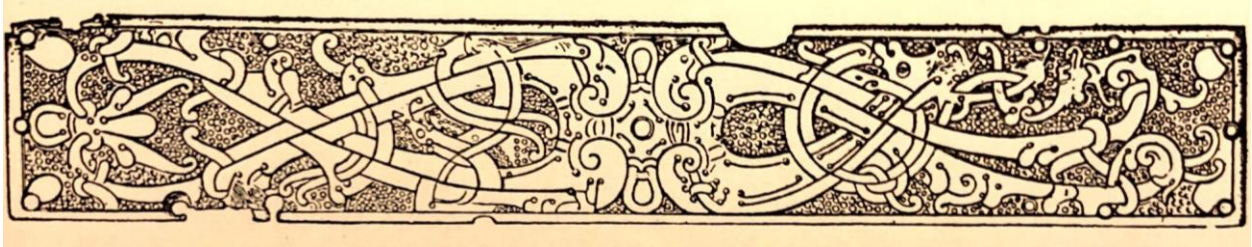

Figure 6: Bronze Slab from Winchester Cathedral (Shetelig 1954, figure 51)

distinguishing features of this style share similarities with the previous styles of animals with long contoured bodies, however, is separated by the thicker bodies and long, curling tendrils that began to be seen in the Mammen style (Bailey 1980, p. 58). In Britain, this style is found most significantly in the south, found most famously in the sarcophagus at St. Paul's cathedral in London (Bailey 1980, p. 58; Kershaw 2010b, p. 3) and a bronze panel from Winchester Cathedral in London (fig. 6) (Shetelig 1954, p. 142).

1.5 Material and Source-Critical Issues

The material chosen to focus on in this thesis are located mostly in England and on the Isle of Man and are based on previous interpretations and analyses of the motifs as representing pagan stories. There are 19 stone sculptures included in the analysis, consisting of crosses, stone slabs, and hogbacks.

In choosing what material to study, many databases and books were scrutinized to choose exactly what the study would focus on. The decision was made to use material from the entirety of the British Isles, and not be limited to one region. This was decided because it would allow for a comparison of the material and how it changed regionally, and not limited to certain

interpretations that might not be repeated elsewhere, and similarly, not miss imagery just because it was not in the target area.

This study was decided to be limited to stone structures, including but not restricted to crosses, hogbacks, and picture stones. While the obvious reason is that these are the materials that are relatively immune to deterioration, archaeological material such as ceramics, jewelry, or any remains that could be considered ritual in use could have also been included. However, sticking with one material would limit the amount of research required and allow the study to go deeper into the comparisons between the similar items collected and not worry about the issue of comparing different materials.

The crosses used were spread over the British Isles, but all carry the same themes: presumed pagan imagery infused with presumed Christian themes, or vice versa. I chose to work with materials that others have interpreted as Scandinavian pagan in the past. I elected to ignore the crosses that were singularly presumed to be Christian, or simply geometric or secular as the purpose of the study was to analyze a religious identity within the scope of a Christian, or Christian-turning society and people. These choices were made for the purpose of critically assessing others' interpretations of the stones and their images, recognizing that simply because others have interpreted the images one way does not necessarily mean there is not another option. As stated previously, this thesis seeks to critically assess some of the previous interpretations found for some of the material, where possibly not enough evidence exists to support these interpretations.

Another type of material, introduced earlier, that was chosen are the distinctive hogbacks, a type of arched stone monument that are generally regarded to have adorned tombs in the northern English and central Scottish regions (Richards 1991, p. 164; Williams 2015, p. 243). They are arched lengthwise and often had what are known as "end beasts", or carvings of animals on the two small edges. These examples are distinctive in that no similar objects have been found to exist in Scandinavia, or even in pre-Norse England. This makes them unique, and therefore a good way to view how they fit in to the religious identity of the region. However, a comparative analysis cannot be used, and so any analysis done must compare between the other hogbacks as well as similar images on different materials, but not necessarily in the context of a burial, which they are often associated with

When deciding how to limit the list of relevant materials, it became hard to decide when to stop, as many different structures could be considered "close enough" to include. I decided to collect the complete, or mostly complete stones and crosses, as well as ones that have been heavily studied in the past, electing to disregard most that only display one figure, the rest being lost to time or destruction, save for some that have been studied and previously interpreted as distinctly pagan, such as the Kirkby Stone, the Ovingham cross-piece, and the Fishing Stone from Gosforth. This limitation would hopefully help me center my analysis and provide a more direct approach without falling into the trap of conjecturing what might also have been on the stone that is now lost to time, as well as getting lost in a flood of material.

A source utilized that was mentioned earlier, the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculptures, was an excellent resource to visit to begin to collect the materials, or gather more and consistent data for the materials that had already been identified. Unfortunately, this database has not yet been fully completed, and so there are still databases that are not yet available online. This meant that it could not be used for all the research done on this thesis, and so other resources have had to be used to supplement the material collection, resources that may not necessarily be as thorough. This is just one example of how there may be stone sculptures still throughout the British Isles that have not been as famously studied or recorded in a format available to all. This means that this study could very well be omitting integral stone sculptures, however to include these in future studies, more research and data collection within the British Isles will have to be done to make the current data more complete.

The data was compiled originally in a lengthy appendix, devoting a page or more to each stone, detailing the descriptions, analysis, and other raw data. This was consolidated into a chart, shown in the Appendix, which consists of the raw data, a generalized themed interpretation to attempt to group the stones into motifs, and sources to draw back to where the information and often, figures, were taken from.

In trying to create a comprehensive analysis of pagan imagery in colonial British Isles, it must be kept in mind that much material that could have shed some light on difficult topics has been lost or destroyed. For example, the carvings on Sigurd's Cross in the Isle of Man, while not completely destroyed, have faded over time, and it can be difficult to see let alone interpret the carvings on the stone. This then begs the question, what stones are in even worse condition, have

completely faded, or maybe do not even exist in their complete state anymore? Similarly, many sculptures may have been wooden, which certainly have not survived the tests of time (DuBois 1999, p. 150). In addition, what does still exist often exists in pieces (Bailey 1980, p. 133) and it is then difficult to interpret in context, as there could have been associated images or themes that could shed light on the reasoning behind the images. An example has been given of a piece of a cross-shaft at Kirkbymoorside, all of which remains is a piece 30 centimeters long of a figure suspended by its neck (Bailey 1980, p. 134). This can be seen as either Odin, hanging from Yggdrasil as was described in Hávámal of the Poetic Edda, or as the depiction of a soul in hell hanging from a tree, as described in an Old English text, *The Vision of Hell* (Bailey 1980, p. 134). Without any other imagery to help provide context, this fragment remains uninterpreted. While using what does exist will still create a picture of the religious identity of Viking Age Britain, it is definite that this picture will not be one hundred percent accurate. However, using what is available, and what still remains interpretable, is nonetheless valuable even if the picture will not be completely accurate.

Another issue that should be kept in mind is the use of outdated or biased sources and interpretations. The study of the Scandinavian presence in the British Isles is an old one (e.g. Cumming 1857; Kermode 1892; Windele 1854), and therefore some interpretations still used today date back over a hundred years. While this does not necessarily mean they are wrong, they still should not be taken as fact. Similarly, even recent sources should not be taken at face value. The interpretations should be constantly challenged and updated as more information comes to light.

Related to this is the issue of translation, especially when it comes to literary analysis. The Poetic and Prose Eddas have been some of the most widely used literary sources to interpret Scandinavian mythology, in addition to the non-literary sources, such as the Scandinavian runestones and picture stones. However, these texts are hundreds of years old, and have been translated and interpreted countless amounts of times. To find one singular "best" translation is no easy task, and perhaps is not even possible. The first English translation of the Poetic Edda was translated by A. S. Cottle in 1797 (Cottle 1797; Larrington 2007, p. 23). In the nearly 350 years since this was published, many others have taken on this monumental task, and it is impossible to say which has been the best or the most faithful to the original Icelandic text. Many of these texts have been compared in what they contain, as some leave pieces out and elaborate

on others. Some use antiquated, traditional wording, while others attempt to “modernize” the language to be more accessible for a modern audience. Some forsake literal translation to make the text still poetic and “flowery”.

This ties in with another challenge that was encountered in the material collection. It is often difficult to find current photographs or scans of some of the stone sculptures without visiting them directly, and therefore the only images easily accessible are scholar’s drawings of the stones. While these are invaluable, as they are often more visible and interpretable, they also are an artist’s rendition and are therefore not as accurate as the stone itself. I attempted to collect a combination of images and drawings for each, however this was not always the easiest, and some of the material remains embodied only in drawings from as far back as the 19th century.

2. The Study of Myth and Materiality

In order to analyze a religious identity in a colonial context like the British Isles, one must understand the pagan religious identity and religious views of Scandinavia itself. To do this, we have to acknowledge a large inconsistency that has been studied but not solved in this field: the idea of myth versus materiality, and how the two can exist together in the study of pre-Christian Scandinavian religion. In other words, when analyzing material and stories from an oral culture such as the Scandinavians had (Davidson 1990, p. 14), it becomes difficult to find a perfectly presented description of their religious beliefs and cosmology, as they never recorded this in writing. For a study such as this, which attempts to divulge the nature of identity in relation to this unrecorded religion, the use of any sources available becomes necessary, and unfortunately, many of these sources, as will be discussed in this section, are not as devoid of cultural bias and subjectivity as is sought. It has been an unfortunate trend for religious historians to omit the archaeological material from their research, and for the archaeologists to do the same to the literary sources (Nordberg 2012, pp. 139-140), and this is something that needs to be acknowledged and perhaps changed if a comprehensive study, such as this—or any future research into this topic—is to take place.

The written works, specifically the *Prose Edda* written by Snorri Sturluson in medieval Iceland, were based on the collection of older poems found, compiled most famously in the *Poetic Edda* (Andrén 2014, p. 14; Ferguson 2009, p. 20). These texts have been used to build up the knowledge of the mythology and cosmology of the pagan religion of pre-Christian Scandinavia, going so far as to identify certain archaeological sites for excavations (Friðriksson 1994, p. 14-15). These texts, as well as the sagas, have been the main source of information on the subject. However, these sources are not without faults, and relying on them heavily—or solely—can pose many issues in the interpretation of the archaeological material culture. Very often, the written point of view is ignored in favor of wanting to take these stories as absolute facts by scholars of Old Norse cosmology (DuBois 1999, p. 174). Sturluson was born and raised in medieval Iceland, which was a Christian society by that time, and so no matter what, his bias is still reflected in his retellings, despite how carefully he structured them in order to create a new narrative (Davidson

1993, p. 145) instead of using them to push a Christian agenda, as has been seen in other sagas (DuBois 2006, p. 74). So, it must be considered when using the stories that there is a possibility that they serve an underlying agenda, and not simply what they appear to be on the surface. Of course, even while keeping the religious bias in mind, the question of distance and time plays a role in trying to objectively interpret these myths into material culture. The Eddas, for instance, were written in medieval Iceland, centuries after the religion itself was practiced and halfway across the ocean, and it is impossible to know just how much knowledge the authors had of the old customs and traditions of the people about whom they wrote (Helmbrecht 2011, p. 24).

Additionally, the Old Norse culture was comprised of oral tradition and did not record their beliefs in manuscripts or other written word, and instead, spreading their beliefs through the spoken word. This means that an effort to find complete accuracy in a retelling of an Old Norse myth is a futile one, as it is more than likely that the stories evolved and changed as they were transmitted across space and time (Bertell 2006, p. 298; Helmbrecht 2011, p. 25). If a perfectly accurate story did not exist at that time, then it is impossible to find a perfectly accurate version now. The stories likely changed more and more the more often they were told, and so by the time they were written and recorded, they had already changed and evolved greatly since they were first spread. This version, then, that was recorded, was merely a snapshot in time of a vastly changing worldview (Bertell 2006, p. 298).

More generally, we must realize that we only have the stories that existed at the time, and also those that still exist today. Any other stories that may have been written down and lost are not taken into effect when interpretations are made. This seems like a simple fact but is often overlooked when using the written works to dictate interpretation of the material, and not the other way around.

The material culture, on the other hand, can take us back to a time before the written sources can and into the time the religion was still practiced and not just a distant cultural memory (Davidson 1993, p. 35). Likely, the stories were not only transmitted orally, as stated previously, but also visually. The runestones, and especially the Gotlandic picture stones can be used to supplement the material culture as well as the written works, and oftentimes reinforce them, as a sort of middle-ground between the written and the implied word. These Scandinavian runestones (including and especially those from Gotland in this thesis) can be used in conjunction with the

written sources to compare and analyze the imagery on the stones and material culture from the British Isles to extract the most accurate and well-versed meaning as possible.

Of course, material culture also has its flaws. As will be discussed in this thesis, destroyed material evidence is an issue that must be recognized. Stated earlier, several crosses or other stone monuments in the British Isles are either damaged beyond interpretation or perhaps do not even still exist in a form that can be recognized. Likewise, when trying to find material evidence of the stories even in Scandinavia, what does not exist could still be as important as what does exist. So, as we cannot look at the written works and see a complete history and description of the religious beliefs of the pre-Christian Scandinavians, we cannot do the same when compiling the archaeological material. It is near impossible to have a complete account either way, and while this cannot stop us from making interpretations based off of what still exists, we should not presume that these stones are the only ones that existed.

In order to attempt to minimize these issues and rebuild a complete—or as complete as possible—understanding of the Old Norse spiritual beliefs, the written works should be combined with archaeological material, not placing one over the other as the "most accurate" source. This utilizes as many resources as possible, and the issues that are unique to one area will now have the other to alleviate the uncertainties. For example, using the archaeological material as an equal source will help alleviate concerns about cultural or religious bias in the written sources and either prove or at least separate the evidence from its inconsistencies (Davidson 1993, p. 36). For, the sagas and Eddas are themselves historical evidence and not just a reference used to give context to older material. They themselves are a part of history, and this can often be forgotten in favor of using them as simply references to analyze other historical or pre-historical material.

In summary, when looking at Scandinavian imagery, the written sources cannot be solely used to accurately explain the meanings and interpretations behind them, as time and distance separates the stories from the lived experience (Andrén 2014, p. 22; Steinforth 2015, p. 293). Even more so, using these stories to try and accurately explain the Scandinavian imagery in an even more remote area as the British Isles should be used cautiously (Bailey 1980, p. 103) but not completely thrown away. They are still invaluable for interpretations of the images, however, using the runestones and other material evidence from Scandinavia is vital to understanding how

and why these images were used in this setting. The practice of pagan religions and the conversion to Christianity did not occur the same in the British Isles as it did in Scandinavia, and furthermore in Iceland, just as religions today are not practiced the same worldwide. There were similarities, to be sure, but this spread in time and space must be kept in mind when attempting to divulge the interpretations from the images, especially those in a colonial setting like the British Isles.

3. Analysis

3.1 The Stones

Before analyzing the stones specifically, a comparison must be made between the building of stone crosses, rune stones, and picture stones in the British Isles and those in Scandinavia erected around the same time. The rune stones in Scandinavia were numerous, numbering more than 3000 known, most of which date to the 10th-11th centuries, as do the stones in the British Isles (Sawyer 2006, p. 7). The custom spread from north to south, most of these later stones found in Denmark and lower Sweden, and onward to the British Isles (Sawyer 2006, p. 8), where this analysis will of course focus. The inscriptions were a common trait shared among many of the rune stones, as they were often erected as memorials to the dead, and some commemorating the carver (Sawyer 2006, pp. 8-9).

To compare with the stones of the British Isles, much of what are called "stones" in this thesis are in fact fragments of stone crosses, and not necessarily full runestones, as are more common in Scandinavia. This thesis will analyze 19 stones, comprising of 14 crosses, 3 hogbacks, and 2 slabs. They are found throughout Northern England and the Isle of Man (fig. 7).

Figure 7: Distribution map of the stones analyzed

3.1.1 Andreas 121 (95)

Description

Andreas 121 (95) (fig. 8) is believed to be from the late 10th century, and only consists of one remaining piece. It is located in the church, called Kirk Andreas, located on the Isle of Man, and it is no longer in its original context (Isle of Man Guide 2016).

Side A shows the image of a human figure in the middle of the stone, bound amongst much interlacing pattern. The figure is shown in profile, facing the right. The arms are crossed, and there is a crossing pattern over the wrists, showing the figure is likely bound. Another tendril passes over the ankles. The figure has a pointed shape on the top of its head and the faint hint of a beard is visible. Directly to the left of the figure is a braided pattern. The rest of the stone has been worn away, so any other shapes or figures are not visible.

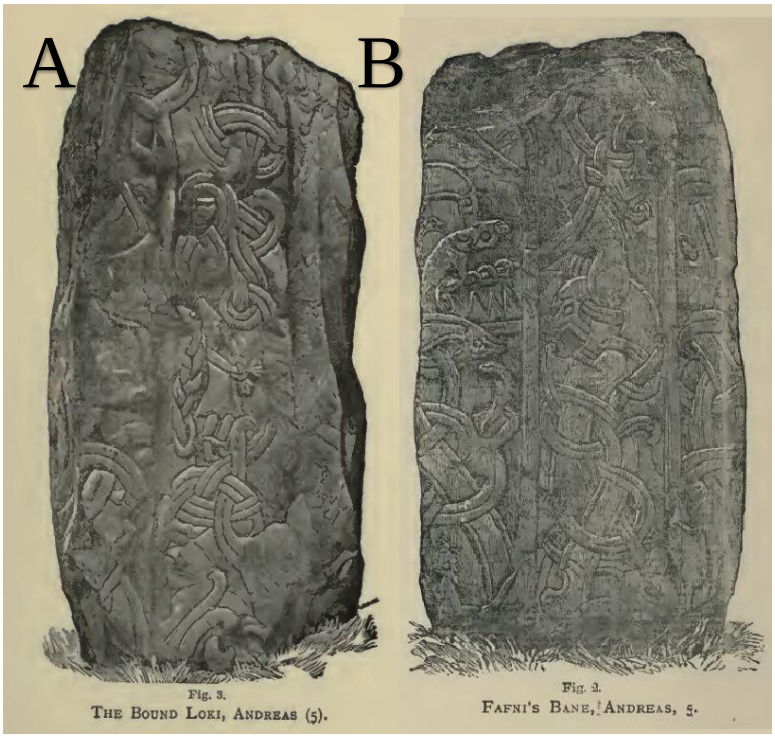

Figure 8: Andreas 121 (95) (Kermode 1892, fig 2,3)

Side B has three distinct sections. The far left is distinguished by half a figure leaning in to view, the rest cut off from destruction. The figure is holding a stick stretching out to the right, with three rings encircling it. Below this are three triangles pointing up towards the stick and the rings. Under this is a ribbon beast entwined with what is possibly another figure near the bottom.

To the right of this is a long scrolling pattern up and down the length of the stone, no visible figures or gestures besides the abstract pattern. The right of this is yet another long ribbon pattern, half worn away due to erosion.

Interpretation

The main scene of side B is the far left: the figure that can be interpreted as a human roasting something over a fire, and a human figure slaying a beast below this. It is quite likely that the triangles are the fire and the stick over them is Fafnir's heart roasting over it, as seen in the story of Sigurd in *Volsungasaga:*

> Then Sigurd cut the heart out of the serpent with the sword called Ridill. Regin drank Fafnir's blood and said: "Grant me one request, a trifle for you. Go to the fire with the heart, roast it, and give it to me to eat." Sigurd went and roasted Fafnir's heart on a spit. (*Volsungasaga 19)*

Still under this, in conjunction with the roasting scene, could be the depiction of the slaying of Fafnir the dragon, whose heart is being roasted in the above scene.

Figure 9: Ramsunda carving (Swedish National Heritage Board)

A similar grouping of scenes occurs on Malew 120 (94), which will be analyzed together later.

The interpretation for this group of scenes as scenes from the story of Sigurd is strengthened when shown alongside the Ramsunda carving from Sweden (fig. 9). This carving shows very clear (and well-preserved) scenes from the Sigurd saga, namely the roasting of the heart and the tasting of the blood with the finger, seen to the right, but also the smithing tools to Sigurd's left, the headless body of Regin in the far left, and the depiction of Óttr with the ring in his mouth above, all scenes from *Volsungasaga*.

Side A is interpreted by Kermode (1892) as the bound Loki, with tendrils around his wrists and ankles, that resemble ropes, or in the case of the story from The Poetic Edda, the entrails of his son, Nari (*Lokasenna 65*). Though there is not much of a connection between this particular version of Loki as seen in the Poetic Edda (and not as the version of him in the story of Ottr's

ransom from Volsungasaga, as will be seen later on) and the story of Sigurd, the hand and feet binds and the interlacing tendrils surrounding the figure can give strength to Kermode's interpretation even over 100 years later.

3.1.2 Andreas 128 (102)

Description

Popularly known as Thorwald's Cross due to the runic inscription on the side designating the carver, this stone (fig. 10) is arguably one of the most well-known of the Viking Age sculptures on the Isle of Man, and is also located at the church known as Kirk Andreas on the Isle of Man. The date of this stone has been debated but is generally dated to the late 10th and early 11th centuries (Pluskowski 2004, p. 158). There is not much left of the full cross, save for the two prominent scenes from separate sides of the shaft that have provided much of the debate.

Figure 10: Thorwald's Cross/Andreas 128 (102) (Wilson 2008, fig. 39)

Side A is characterized by a human figure shown in profile with a leg in the mouth of a quadruped beast, whose hips resemble those of similar beasts on Mammen and Younger Jelling style images in Scandinavia, such as the images on the Lundagårdsstenen in Lund, Sweden (fig. 11), which is dated to the late 9th to early 10th century (Wienberg 2016, p. 284). Above the figure is the image of a bird with large wings and a beak perched on the human's shoulder. In one arm is a long stick-like object, and the other passes behind the beast's mouth. Surrounding this scene is interlace patterns, both on the cross to the left and below the beast, framing the scene and terminating to the right of the human figure's head in a curve, resembling a stylized snake head, as can be seen in an early eleventh century runestone style known as Fp, or "Fågelperspektiv", characterized as a style of rune bands that terminate with a beast's head as seen from a "bird's eye view" (Gritton 2017, p. 5).

Figure 11: Mammen and Younger Jellinge animals on the Lundagårdsstenen (Wimmer 1904, fig. 132f.)

Side B shows the side of the cross again, with a less intricate pattern on the shaft. In the corner between the arm and the shaft of the cross is a human figure shown in profile, shown treading on serpents underneath the figure. Between the figure's legs and the shaft of the cross is a large fish, standing on its tail. The human figure is shown holding a cross in one hand and a rectangular object in the other.

Interpretation

It is difficult to ignore the Christian imagery on Side B, namely the fish, which has been seen as a symbol for Christ (Wilson 2008, p. 79), as well as the cross and the action of treading on serpents, as referenced in multiple verses from the Bible:

> Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. (Psalms 91:13)

> Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:19)

These symbols then can help to reach the conclusion that this side of the cross is Christian, relatively indisputably. The rectangular object in the figure's hand then could be interpreted as a book, and the symbolism leading to the conclusion that it is a gospel or Holy Bible, and therefore the figure is either a saint, or perhaps Christ himself. The lack of halo is unusual, but the other imagery cannot necessarily be ignored.

Side A does not initially have any explicitly Christian themes, save for the bit of cross that is showing to the left of the human figure. The bird perched on the shoulder is likely a raven, due to the large wings and beak. The raven is a symbol of Odin, as he is often seen with his two ravens, Hugin and Munin, and the spear is possible to be his signature spear, Gungnir, and these two symbols suggest that this figure could be Odin, strengthened by the placement of the foot in the beast's mouth, as Odin is said to have been swallowed by Fenrir at Ragnarök. However, as Snorri Sturluson writes in the *Gylfaginning*, it is stated that:

> [Fenriswolf] will swallow Odin and that will be his death. But immediately afterwards Vidar will stride forward and thrust one of his feet into the lower jaw of the wolf. (*Gylfaginning 51)*

This, then, begs the question if the figure with the raven could in fact instead be Vidar, Odin's son. This scene has been widely interpreted as Odin being swallowed by the wolf (Kermode 1907, p. 29; Wilson 2008, p. 81) due to the reasons stated above, but it should not necessarily be taken as straight fact without considering this other compelling option, due to Snorri's phrasing and Byock's translation in the Prose Edda.

Another common interpretation is that this stone shows the juxtaposition of paganism and Christianity, the depiction of Ragnarök symbolizing the end of the old gods, and the symbol of Christ (or a saint) treading on the serpents shows the triumph of Christianity over them (Wilson 2008, p. 81), stated explicitly by Kermode in his *Traces of the Norse Mythology* as "Christ has overcome the powers of Evil, and He now reigns in Odin's stead!" (Kermode 1907, p. 30). While this interpretation is clearly dated and subjective, it has been seen and suggested in a less explicitly Christian way in more recent texts (Pluskowski 2003, p. 158; Wilson 2008, p. 81), as well as in similar interpretations on sculptures such as the Gosforth Cross, which also depicts

presumed pagan scenes from Ragnarök alongside presumed Christian scenes, and it could certainly be said that this depicts a conflict between Christianity and the old stories. However, it is possible that instead of these showing Christianity triumphing over paganism, that instead it shows the intersection of the two religions. This can be seen in Nordanskog's thesis, in which he analyzes the pre-Christian traits and symbolism found on Christian entryways into the Norwegian Stave Churches of the Medieval era. He discusses the idea that these presumed pagan images are not indicative of a still-practicing pagan community, but instead as stylistic choices stemming from a new interest in the peoples' cultural pagan past (Nordanskog 2006). It is quite likely, then, that this use of imagery, though later in date than the stones being analyzed in this thesis, is similar in the use of imagery in Scandinavian England.

3.1.3 Andreas 131 (103)

Description

Andreas 131 (103) (fig. 12) is located in the churchyard at Kirk Andreas (Cumming 1857, p. 21) and dated to the mid-10th century (Rundata 2.0). It is unknown if the cross is in its original context. The inscription on the side dedicates the stone to the wife of the cross's creator (Rundata 2.0).

The main image on this cross-shaft is the image of a large, patterned cross on each side of the stone. Side A depicts two birds, one sitting on each cross arm, facing the shaft. On the left side, underneath the arm, shows five quadruped beasts, all facing the cross-shaft. The right side shows much the same, four beasts facing inwards towards the cross. Below this is a human figure riding astride another, larger quadruped beast, facing to the left. The figure is wearing a long dress. The cross on this side is patterned with a ring-knot pattern, similar to that on Gosforth 01.

Side B shows, again, two birds, each on one side of the cross, perched atop the arms. Underneath the arms on the left side shows four stand-alone beasts, this time standing on end, their feet pointed towards the cross-shaft and their heads pointed upwards. Amidst them is yet one more beast, possibly a horse, with a rider set astride it. The rider holds a long, pointed object in its hands. On the other side of the cross to the right are Five more beasts, four of which are facing upwards with feet pointed towards the cross-shaft. The fifth is facing down, slightly to the left of the others towards the middle. All the beasts on this side have a collar-shape around their necks, except for the topmost beast. The cross on this side is textured with cross-hatching, but no interlacing knot pattern. Underneath the scenes, however, is a braided interlacing pattern running across the width of the stone.

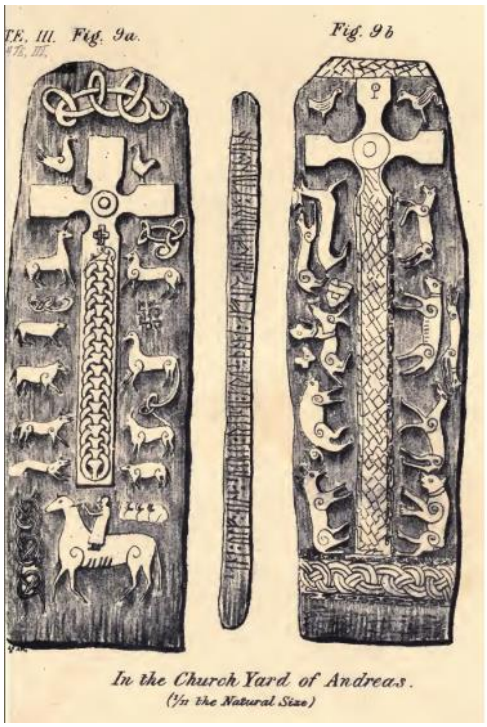

Figure 12: Andreas 131 (103) (Cumming 1857, figure 9)

Interpretation

At first glance, this stone was almost removed from the study, as it seemed to depict a secular hunting scene, surrounding the quite obviously Christian cross. However, on closer examination, the birds sitting atop the arms of the cross could be possibly identified as roosters, which could symbolize the beginning of Ragnarök, as told in *Völuspá*:

> Crowed o'er the gods Gullinkambi;
> Wakes he the heroes who with Herjan dwell;
> Another crows the earth beneath
> In the halls of Hel, of hue dark red (*Völuspá 42)*

This is, of course, a stretch, however the other cross, Br Olsen 200B analyzed below, that has been seen as Heimdall predicting Ragnarök also occurs on the arm of a cross, and it is possible that this could be a correlation, or perhaps just a coincidence, and this cross is simply a secular hunting scene.

3.1.4 BR Olsen 200B

Description

Also known as Heimdall's Cross (fig. 13), the stone fragment of a cross from Jurby in the Isle of Man is characterized with a large image of a cross on each side of this stone. This cross fragment was discovered in the garden of the vicarage at the Jurby church (Cumming 1857, p. 23), and has been heavily damaged since its discovery (Page 1999, p. 226). It has been dated to the late 10th century (Rundata 2.0).

Side A is the namesake of this stone and is the side with what is left of the runic inscription that states the dedication of the carving. The main scene on this side of the cross is the figure of a human in between the right arm and the top of the cross. The figure is holding a long object that curves over the top of the cross and appears to be blowing into it. Above this object is the image of a flying bird.

Side B shows a similarly patterned cross in the middle of the stone. Between the shaft and the arms there are two different decorative patterns that appear to be nothing more than decoration. The right top corner is worn down, but the top left shows the image of a human figure, possibly female due to the long, flowing dress and hair. She has her mouth open and reaches towards the top arm of the cross.

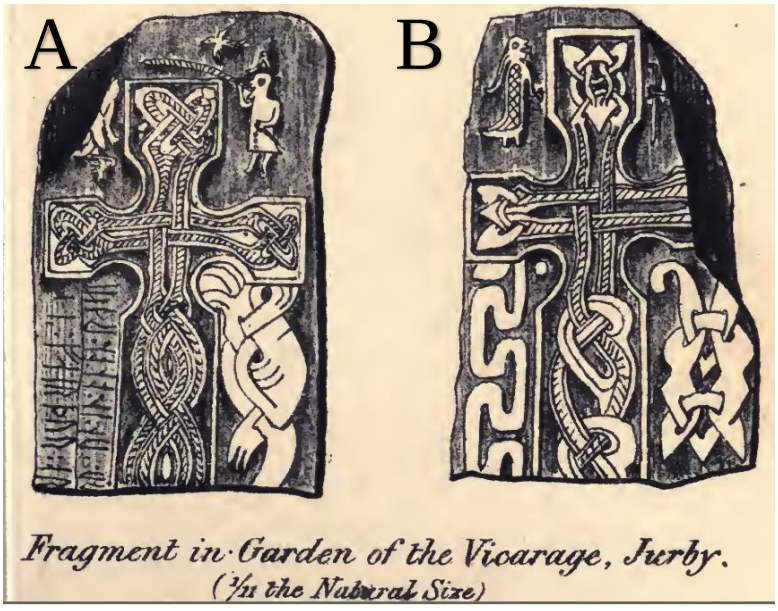

Figure 13: BR Olsen 200B (Cumming 1857, figure 11)

Interpretation

Side A is interpreted as Heimdall sounding the Gjallarhorn to signal the coming of Ragnarök, as he is predicted to in *Völuspá*:

> Mimir's sons dance; The downfall bodes
> When blares the gleaming old Gjallarhorn;
> Loud blows Heimdall, with horn aloft;
> In Hel's dark hall horror spreadeth (*Völuspá 45*)

In this image, the horn is curling up over the cross, yet not pointing to the sky, as the text states, and is pointing to a carving that is degraded too far to be able to interpret. What this figure or image was could have clued us in to why the horn—if it is indeed the Gjallarhorn—is not pointing to the sky. It is possible, though, that this is just a stylistic choice by the artist, and the direction the horn is pointing does not matter.

Side B is less explicitly a recognizable scene from Scandinavian mythology, however in conjunction with Side A as well as Heimdall signaling the coming of Ragnarök, the female figure has been interpreted as the wise woman Hyndla (Kermode 1907, p. 29), who tells of Ragnarök in a stanza in H. A. Bellows' 1936 translation of the *Hyndluljóð* (included in Hollander's translation, but his stanza attributed instead to an unnamed seeress instead of Hyndla in *Vǫluspá hin Skamma*):

> Then comes another, a greater than all,
> Though never I dare his name to speak;
> Few are they now that farther can see
> Than the moment when Othin shall meet the wolf. (*Hyndluljóð 45)*

However, any sources for why specifically this woman is Hyndla, and not the seeress, or Völva, who foretells of Ragnarök in much more detail in the poem *Völuspá* in the Poetic Edda seems to be omitted from these interpretations, instead the identification of the woman as Hyndla stated as unsubstantiated fact, with sometimes a disclaimer stating that this is open to interpretation (Manx National Heritage 2016). If this woman on the other side can be related to the presumed interpretation of Heimdall sounding the Gjallarhorn, then it is more likely to be the Völva, who mentions Heimdall and the horn by name in *Völuspá* and not Hyndla, who merely mentions Ragnarök in passing to Freyja in the poem *Hyndluljóð.*

This stone, of the ones analyzed in this thesis, is unique in that if it is symbolic of the foretelling of Ragnarök, it does not depict the action, or the events of Ragnarök, and instead focuses on its anticipation. Of course, if the woman is indeed a seeress, then this would make sense, as the cross does not depict Ragnarök itself, but instead depicts the foretelling of it.

3.1.5 Gosforth 06

Figure 14: The Gosforth "Fishing Stone" (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 06)

Description

The so-called Gosforth Fishing Stone (fig. 14) is a piece of a slab set in the wall of the church, the first known reference to it in 1882, claimed to have been there since at least 1789, but dated to the first half of the 10th century (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 06).

The top of the stone is filled with the image of a large beast, its head curved backwards over its body and nose pointed to the right. Its legs are entwined with a winding tendril, perhaps a rope or a snake.

Beneath an interlacing pattern are two human figures in a boat, separated by a long pole. The figure on the right has a shape that can be seen as an axe in hand and is gripping the pole. The other holds a hammer in one hand and a fishing line in the other. The line ends below the boat where it is embedded in a serpent's head.

Interpretation

The top motif is that of what has been presumed to be a stag or perhaps a dog. If it is indeed a stag struggling with a serpent entwined around its feet, this has been said to be a "well-recognized Christian symbol of the struggle between Christ or the Christian and the devil"

(Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 06). If this is the case, then the two images are complementary with one another, the top a Christian symbolism of the struggle of good vs. evil, and similarly at the bottom, the Norse depiction of Thor (good) vs. beast (evil). Since both stones are from Gosforth, then this is a continuation of Gosforth 01's imagery of complementary Christian and Scandinavian symbolism.

The hammer shows that the figure most likely represents Thor, known in this scene as "wielder-of-Mjolnir" (*Hymiskviða 18*) who is holding the fishing line over the edge of the boat, the ox-head bait drawing the attention of Jormungandr below. Hymir is likely the other occupant of the boat, holding an axe.

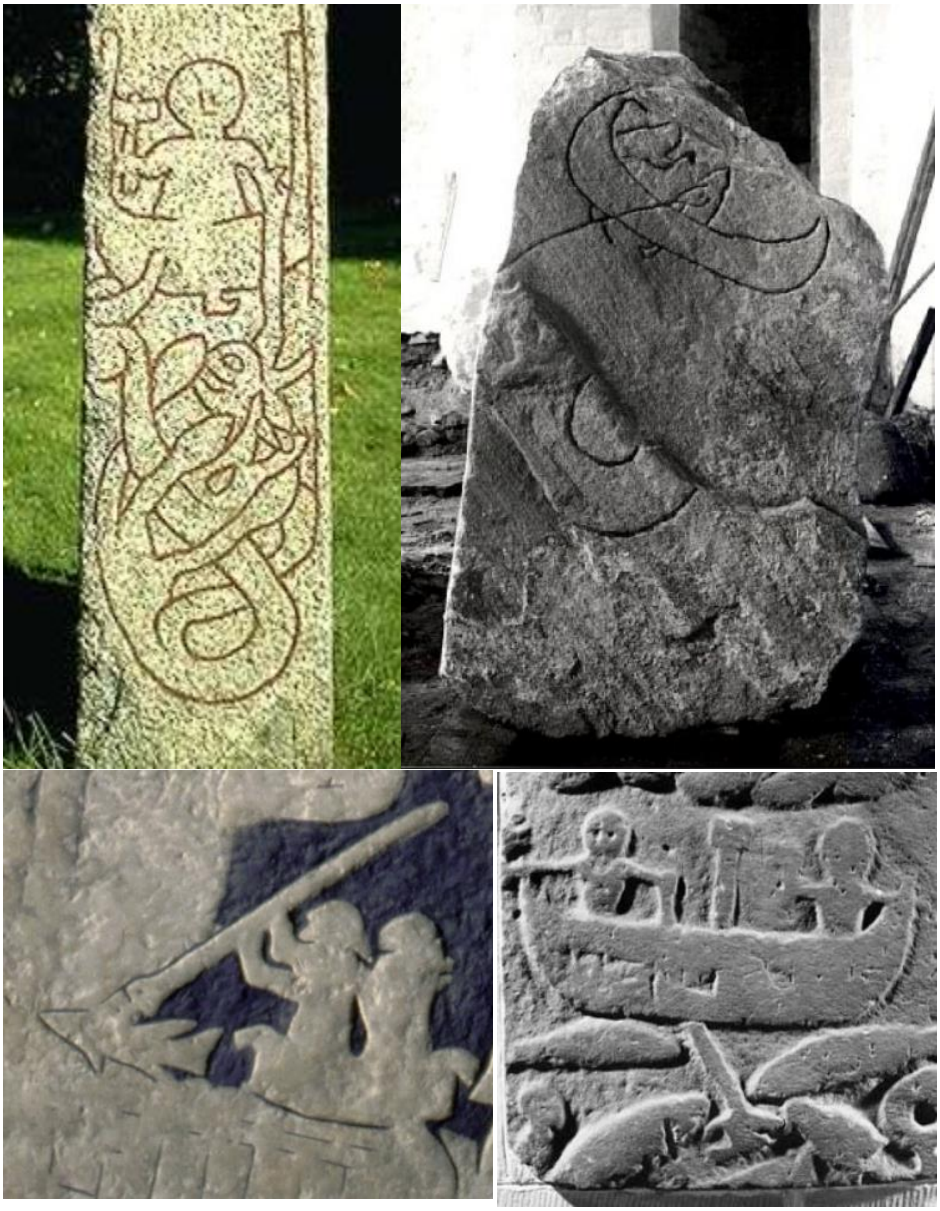

Figure 15: Althuna Stone (top left; B. A. Lundberg 1985); Hørdum Stone (top right; Nationalmuseet København); Ardre VIII (bottom left; Statens Historiska Museum); Gosforth 06 (bottom right; Corpus of Anglo Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020)

Looking at the Gosforth Fishing Stone in conjunction with the Scandinavian portrayals of the same interpreted scene (fig. 15) can give us several clues to the similarities between the story as it existed in Scandinavia and how it existed in the British Isles, as well as strengthening the interpretation of this stone greatly. To start

with the Gosforth Stone, the main motif represented is the image of a boat with curved ends and two figures seated inside. From the figure on the left trails a line from its arm, through the boat, and down to the image of a large serpent, the end of the line capped with a hooked object, presumably the bait. The right figure holds what has been interpreted as an axe while the other holds what has been interpreted as a hammer. The hammer makes this image likely to be a portrayal of him, and the presence of a boat, a line connecting to a serpent, and another figure further allows this to represent the story from the Poetic Edda:

> To the hook fastened the head of the ox
> The Serpent's slayer and savior of men:
> Gaped on the angle the all-engirding
> Mighty monster, the Mithgarth worm (*Hymiskviða 22)*

Likewise, the Hørdum stone in Denmark that has been interpreted as this same scene shows a similarly shaped boat with two human figures inside, this time the right figure holding a line extending past the boat and down to the slightly degraded image of a serpent. The figure preseumed to be Thor has punctured the bottom of the boat with his foot. On this stone, no image of the "bait" is preserved, and this could be due to erosion or other natural degradation (Sørensen 2002, p. 127). On the Althuna stone, Thor is alone in the boat, holding the hammer, and Hymir makes no appearance. One explanation is that on this stone, perhaps the myth itself was not as important to this sculpture, and instead it represented the "god vs. monster" opposition, making this the main focus, and not the story or how the giant Hymir factored into this (Sørensen 2002, pp. 127-128). On Ardre VIII, the depiction is also different. For one, the fishing scene does not in any way take up the majority of the stone's space, as it does with the other three. The relatively small scene is in the lower left part of the stone, one of many seemingly unrelated motifs on the stone. The image shows two human figures in a boat, their gestures unable to be determined, save for the left figure, who is shown holding a long, straight spear-like stick, piercing what seems to be a jagged fish, loosely determined to be a "sea monster", or in the case of the story, Jormungandr (Sørensen 2002, p. 127).

All four of these stones seem, then, to highlight something different, the Ardre VIII picture stone from Gotland placing Thor and his fishing challenge with Hymir as simply one of numerous integral narratives that needed to be portrayed, Hørdum in Denmark as a very (assumed to be)

minimalistic depiction of the challenge that seems to highlight Thor's struggle with the monster (as depicted with the foot puncturing the boat), the Althuna stone omitting Hymir's presence and instead highlighting the triumph of Thor over the "monster" and thus as a victorious hero, and Gosforth 06 with its complementary symbolism, showing both the Christian and the pre-Christian Norse versions of the struggle between good and evil.

To specify this idea perhaps even more, based on the emphasis of the image, it has been said that the sculptors and storytellers seemed to want to concentrate on the moment that the Midgard serpent bit the fishing line (Sørensen 2002, pp. 127-128), showing the moment that the serpent was caught. In this case, a Christian story can be used to compare to this (Sørensen 2002, p. 122), from the Bible:

> In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. (Isaiah 27:1)

This passage from Isaiah quite resembles the story of Thor besting the Midgard Serpent, and it is possible that this story from Scandinavian mythology was utilized as a parallel to the Christian idea of good triumphing over the powers of evil.

3.1.6 Gosforth 01

Description

Of all the Viking Age monuments in the British Isles, the early 10th century Gosforth Cross (fig. 16) is one of the most widely researched and analyzed for its early identification of the mix of Christian and pagan imagery (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01). It remains standing in the churchyard in Cumbria (Bailey 1980, p. 127) since its first recording in 1799 (Carbo 1799) and has been renowned for its beauty, size, present condition and completion, as well as its craftsmanship (Berg 1958, p. 27; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020. Gosforth 01).

The top image on side A is the head of a beast, with an eye, ear, and fangs, connected to an interlacing pattern of braided decoration. Under this is a similar beast head with comparable

decoration. This one has no teeth but is clutching a ring in its mouth. Underneath this is another quadruped animal figure. Below this is another beast, hound-like, with legs entangled in an interlacing pattern of Borre ring braids (Bailey 1980, p. 54) sideways to the shaft. A horseman is underneath this, wearing a belt and holding a bridle and spear outstretched behind him. Under this is another interlace pattern, below which is a human figure, with pointed jaws and lower body tangled with arms.

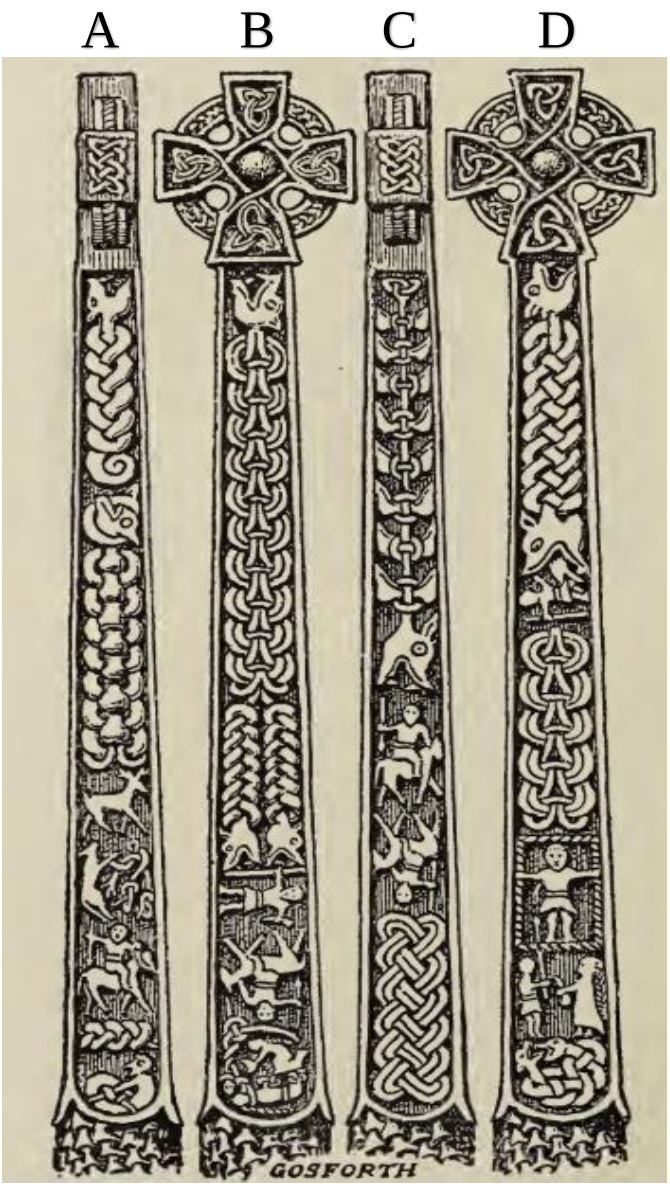

Figure 16: Gosforth Cross (Collingwood 1927, fig. 184)

On the top of side B is the image of a beast's head, open fanged jaws, and connected to an interlace pattern. Underneath this winding pattern are two nearly identical patterns, each connected to a beast's head, mirroring the other. A human figure is standing, horizontal to the cross shaft, a spear outstretched in front of the two beast's open mouths. Its other hand holds a horn. An upside-down rider is underneath him, similar to the horseman on side A, but flipped. The spear is still outstretched over the back of the horse. Under this is shown a bound figure with a cord around its neck, knotted with the body of a snake whose mouth is directly above the figure. Above the man is a kneeling pigtailed human—possibly female—holding out a curved object.

On the top of side C is the pattern of a triquetra attached to a rod that ends in a beast's head, similar to the others, this one with two fangs in its open jaws. The rod is encircled by eight rings, wing like images attached to each one. Under the beast's open mouth are two riders, one on top of the other, with the bottom rider upside down. The pattern of the figure is the same as the other

two, hand on horse and other outstretched with a spear in it. Underneath the bottom rider is another interlace knot pattern.

Side D is topped off with a beast's head, connecting to an interlace pattern that terminates in an almost identical beast's head pointed down with open mouth. The top beast has a fang in its mouth while the bottom has a forked tongue. In between the forked tongue is a human figure's leg, the figure standing on the beast's jaw. The figure is pressing with one hand against the jaw and the other holding out a spear behind him. Below this is another chain of interlace. Under this pattern is a figure of a man inside a box, posed with arms stretched out to each side. A molding runs from the right side of the figure down to the point of his belted kirtle. Under this is a spear breaking up into the rectangular box. A figure of a person in profile is holding the spear, and in front of him is the figure of a woman facing him in profile, wearing a long trailing dress and pigtails. She is carrying a horn with a bulbous base. Underneath this are two ribbon beasts, entangled together, with open mouths.

Interpretation

The Crucifixion theme on side D has been generally interpreted as the only explicitly Christian scene on the cross (Berg 1958, p. 30), the crucified Christ being pierced by the spear, as seen in the Bible:

> But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (John 19:33-34)

The snakes underneath the two figures could be seen as the defeated devil, seen in similar Carolingian art (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01). This is the only depiction where it is double-headed, however (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01). The lack of a cross is also rare in depictions of the crucifixion in this time. The female figure has been seen as a Scandinavian depiction of Mary Magdalene or Ecclesia holding the chalice to collect the blood, though there is no definite proof of this and it has been highly contested (e.g. Berg 1958, p. 29; Bailey 1980, p. 230; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01). Some see it as comparable to the figures of Valkyries seen in Scandinavia, an example of which can be the Valkyries on the Gotlandic stones pictured in fig. 26 & 36.

Whomever this image represents, it has been widely agreed that she is wearing traditional Scandinavian clothes and hairstyle (Bailey 1980, p. 230; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01)

The rest of the imagery is presumed to be non-Christian (though there has been some early debate on this, e.g. Berg 1958), most of which resemble events that are said to take place at Ragnarök. The figure fighting with the beast, half in its mouth, has been interpreted as Viðar, avenging his father Odin at Ragnarök, predicted in *Vafprúðnismál*:

> Will the Wolf swallow Valfather then;
> Will Vithar avenge him:
> He will sunder the savage jaws
> Of fearsome Fenrir (*Vafprúðnismál 53)*

Figure 17: Close-up of the Ledberg Stone, Östergötland, Sweden (Olof Ekström 2004)

This scene can be paralleled with the Ledberg Stone in Östergötland, Sweden, which also depicts the image of a man with his foot in the jaw of a beast (fig. 17). This stone has been interpreted as Odin being swallowed by Fenrir (Jansson 1987, p. 152), however, it is similarly likely to be Viðar at Ragnarök, due to the similarities between the two stories. Both of these stones, also, can be compared to Andreas 128 (102) (analyzed above) where it is interpreted that Odin is being swallowed by Fenrir.

The man with the horn and the spear holding the beasts at bay is likely Heimdall, holding the Gjallarhorn. No comparable account has him facing off specifically against two beasts (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01), but he was certainly a part of the battle at Ragnarök, according to

Snorri Sturluson in the *Prose Edda*, and it is possible that if the double headed beast does come from a specific story and not simply an artist's depiction, it is one that has not survived to this day.

The bound figure with the serpent and woman with a bowl is seen as bound Loki with Sigyn collecting the poison dripping on to his face from the serpent above him, as seen in the Poetic Edda:

> Thereupon Loki hid himself in the Fránangr waterfall in the shape of a salmon, and there the gods caught him. They bound him with the guts of his son Nari; but his son Narfi became a wolf. Skathi took a venomous serpent and hung it above Loki's face so that its poison dripped on him. Loki's wife Sigyn, sate by him and held a bowl under the poison, and she carried it out whenever it was full; but meanwhile the poison dripped on Loki. Then he writhed so fearfully that all the earth shook: men call this "earthquakes" nowadays. (*Lokasenna 65)*

Similarities between the Ragnarök scenes and the crucifixion have been noted extensively, such as Viðar, who survived after Ragnarök, as Christ survived his crucifixion. Sigyn and her curved bowl have been compared to the female figure holding the curved horn (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01), which will be discussed further later on, a comparison drawn between the woman at Christ's crucifixion and Sigyn attending to Loki during his punishment.

The wealth of imagery on this cross has alone been the subject of entire studies (e.g. Berg 1958) and, again, has been used as one of the premier examples of the mingling of the religions of the early Scandinavian settlers and the Christians.

3.1.7 Great Clifton

Figure 18: Great Clifton Cross (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Great Clifton)

Description

The 10th century Great Clifton cross was discovered in the year 1900 while the church was being restored (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Great Clifton). It is slightly worn, especially on three faces, but for the most part, the carvings on the side shown in fig. 18 remain visible.

The upper half of the cross shaft is a decorative ornament of curling ribbons. On the left is a Jellinge ribbon beast coming out of the ornament with the figure of a human riding on it. To the right is another Jellinge beast, and below that are two more, one of which is headless with a figure riding it. The profile of a human head is also shown below this. At the very bottom is a human-like figure with a round circle around the head, possibly either a halo or hair, and who is bound to one of the beasts above.

The other sides of the cross shaft consist of contextless, interlacing decorations and the faint trace of a Jellinge style ribbon animal, though since there are no visible scenes that remain, they cannot be commented on in this circumstance.

Interpretation

The bound figure near the bottom of the cross-shaft has been seen previously as Christ (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Great Clifton), though the circular shape around the head could also be hair, as no other explicitly Christian-interpreted imagery is found on the cross. The figure is bound to the beast through curling decoration, again, which is not necessarily Christian and can be compared to other presumed pagan images, such as the interpreted image of Loki bound at the bottom of Gosforth 01 and on Andreas 121 (95). Either interpretation could be strengthened if the circular aura around the head of the figure could be identified either as hair or

as a halo. For now, however, it is still open to interpretation, whether the scene depicted on Great Clifton is Christian or Scandinavian in origin (Bailey 1980, p. 140; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Great Clifton).

The figure riding the ribbon beasts at the top of this face could also tie into the idea of the bound Christ, or perhaps as a general depiction of a hero fighting a dragon, both seen in medieval Christian contexts (Bailey 1980, p. 142) and also in the story of Sigurd, in a Scandinavian hero context, seen previously in the excerpts from *Volsungasaga*. This, then, could lend to the idea that the Sigurd story—or the idea of a hero fighting a dragon representing evil, which is common in both Christian and Scandinavian lore (as will be discussed later)—is being utilized to portray a Christian ideal.

3.1.8 Halton 01

Description

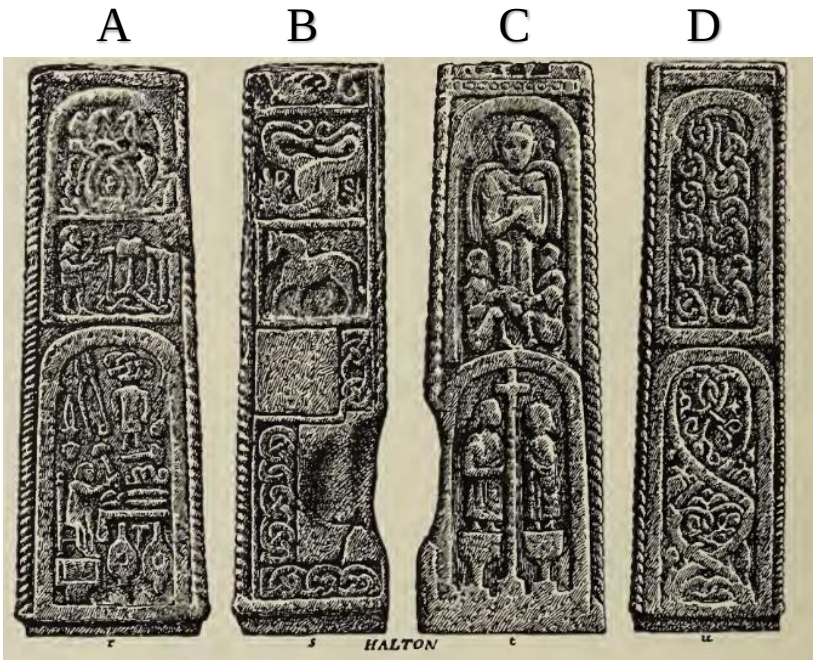

Figure 19: Halton Cross (Collingwood 1927, figure 191)

This 10th century cross (fig. 19) was dismantled in 1635, when the upper part of the cross was removed to provide a pedestal for a sundial. As it still serves this purpose today, the upper part has been reconstructed, and the carvings now a part of this composite cross (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020; Halton 01).

Side A of the Halton Cross is split into two halves, each encased within an arch. The top scene shows five curved boughs meeting at the top, where two animal figures, probably birds, sit facing each other. Between these boughs at the bottom where

they stem from is a pointed oval shape. Underneath and to the left side of this is a figure shown in profile—possibly male—one foot in front of the other and raising his right hand towards his face. His other arm reaches out toward a structure comprised of three vertical slightly curved lines, the lower ends plaited together, supporting a flat surface above with a rectangular shape placed on top.

Under this in the lower arch is a human figure, seated, possibly male, facing what appears to be a table shape. He is leaning forward and holds a stick with a round end at the top, possibly a hammer. Below the chair shape he is seated in is a rectangular shape, possibly an anvil, with two shapes underneath the table, seen as a pair of bellows shown from above. A shape similar to the presumed hammer the figure holds lies between them. On the table lies shapes seen as pincers, a plane in profile, and a hammer. Above this are shapes seen as a sword, another pincers, and a figure, gender unknown, with no head and a ring-knot above.

At the top of Side B is an ornamental zoomorphic pattern, the head of a beast shown to the left in profile, jaws biting the end of a strand, and a curl to the right with no apparent beast attached. This scene is split, as the top part does not remain. Under this, a horizontal line separates a different scene, two serpent forms with bodies curled around each other and heads set one in each corner. Heads have distinct ears, eyes, jaws, and nostrils. At the top of this, the bodies have tails and possible legs (one each) that meet. Below this lies another horizontal line, which separates the serpents from a quadruped figure, facing left, with ears and tail. Facing left. Below this is a blank square shape and to the right of this is a small interlacing knot pattern. Below this is a similar knot pattern in an L shape, damaged and unable to be fully seen.

The shaft of side C shows two distinct motifs, separated by two arching panels. The top panel shows a human figure, seated, facing forward, with a pellet by the left side of the head. Below the head, on each side, is a rounded line running to the shoulders and down to the elbows at nearly a right angle. Facial features are distinct, with deep eyes and nose, and a rounded hairstyle. Arms are bent up on his knees and a rectangular object is set in his left hand. At the figure's feet sit two more human figures, no visible clothing, and sitting facing one another in profile. Each has one arm outstretched towards the seated figure's legs.

Below this is the second motif on this side. There is a tall, long stemmed cross splitting this into two sides, a figure on either side of the base. The figures are facing inwards and have hair-like

shapes flowing to their shoulders. They each wear what appears to be long robes and stand on chalice shaped objects. They reach towards the stem of the cross and the left figure appears to hold it.

Side D is divided into two separate motifs separated by arching patterns. The top motif is a pair of interlacing knotwork patterns, and the lower panel shows one interlacing pattern with two tendrils stemming from the bottom of the panel and crossing twice to meet at the top. Between these tendrils is another pattern of interlacing ribbons that twist and knot into each other.

Figure 20: Close-up of side A of the Halton Cross, depicting scenes from the Sigurd cycle (Corpus of Anglo Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020)

Interpretation

Side A of the Halton cross has been widely interpreted as depicting scenes from the Sigurd cycle (fig. 20).

The top scene of side A, as outlined above, shows a man standing next to what can be interpreted as a spit, roasting a piece of meat, above which is a bush with birds sitting on top. This scene very well resembles the scene in *Volsungasaga* where Sigurd roasts and eats Fafnir's heart, and then is given advice from the birds who tell him that Reginn will betray him:

> Sigurd went and roasted Fafnir's heart on a spit. And when the juice foamed out he tested it with his finger to see whether it was done. He stuck his finger in his mouth. (*Volsungasaga 19)*

After this, *Volsungasaga* states that tasting the blood gave Sigurd the ability to understand the language of the birds, and he could then hear

their chatter in the bush nearby, where they discuss that Sigurd would be wise to kill Reginn before he could betray him (*Volsungasaga 20*).

The bottom of side A can be interpreted as Reginn the Smith forging the sword which Sigurd would later kill Fafnir with, as illustrated in this passage from the *Volsungasaga,* where Sigurd brings Reginn the pieces of the sword Gram:

> …Sigurd met now with Regin and told him to make a sword worthy of these fragments. Regin became angry and went to his forge with the pieces of the sword. He thought Sigurd demanding about the metalwork. Now Regin made a sword. And when he brought it out of the forge, it seemed to the apprentices as if flames were leaping from its edges. He told Sigurd to take the sword and said he was no swordsmith if this one broke. Sigurd hewed at the anvil and split it to its base. The blade did not shatter or break. He praised the sword highly and went to the river with a tuft of wool, which he threw in against the current. The sword cut the wool in two when the tuft ran against the blade. Sigurd went home contented. *(Volsungasaga 15)*

This scene on the Halton cross thus depicts the forging of Gram, and the headless figure above the forge could then be Reginn, decapitated by the same sword he forged, after Sigurd takes the advice of the birds (depicted top of Side A) who tell him that he will betray him:

> Then Sigurd said: "It will not be my ill fate that Regin shall be my death. Rather, both brothers should go the same way." He now drew the sword Gram and cut off Regin's head. *(Volsungasaga 20)*

If this is a depiction of the Sigurd story, it is unique in that the killing of Fafnir makes no appearance, unless it is depicted on a part of the cross that no longer survives. It has been suggested (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Great Clifton) that side B depicts a continuation of the Sigurd cycle, the quadruped beast being the horse that Sigurd is given after meeting Odin disguised as a wanderer:

> The bearded man said: "This horse is descended from Sleipnir. He must be raised carefully, because he will become better than any other horse." The man disappeared then. Sigurd called the horse Grani, and he was the best horse there ever was. It was Odin whom Sigurd had met. *(Volsungasaga 13)*

Above the supposed image of Grani is a twisting image of two serpents, which could then be decorative depictions of Fafnir. These two interpretations, however, are a slight stretch, as no other imagery on this side can attest to their identification as Grani and Fafnir, or even as any sort of continuation of the narrative of side A, but the possibility that they, too, represent this story should not be ignored, but also cannot necessarily be reinforced.

Side D appears to be decorative, and Side C appears to be explicitly Christian, providing a parallel between the secular Sigurd story on side A and possibly B, and the image of what could be a saint on the top of side C, judging from the apparent halo on top of his head. Though, as seen on Great Clifton and Leeds 1a-k, the interpretation of this as a halo can be open to debate, and the "cape" draped around the shoulders could parallel the flying machine from the story of Wayland, seen on Leeds 1a-k, analyzed below, though these two elements could also be a crown and cape respectively, perhaps representing a king, or whomever was ruling at the time of the carving.

3.1.9 Kirkby Stephen 01

Description

The Kirkby Stone (fig. 21), known also as the "Bound Devil" or as the "Loki Stone" is located in Kirkby, Westmoreland, dated to the 10th century, and was found during restoration or repairs of the church in the mid-19th century (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Kirkby Stephen 01).

This image shows the figure of a human with a pointed beard, arms bound at its side and legs shown in profile, also bound. From the side of his face protrudes two curling shapes, likely either downturned horns or curling hair. Surrounding this figure are various tendrils and shapes with no

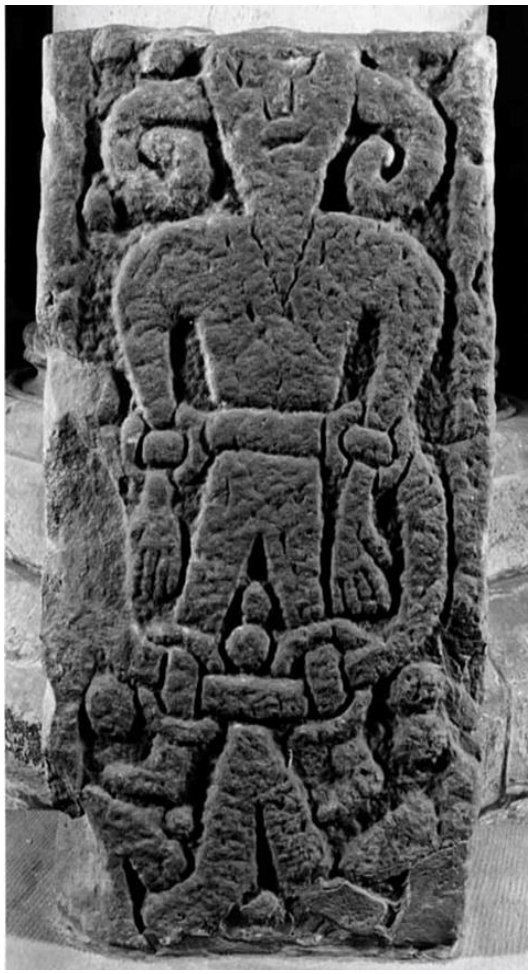

Figure 21: Kirkby Stone (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Kirkby Stephen 01)

apparent pattern. Underneath the figure protruding from between its legs is the shape of an upside down, crooked V with feet turned out from each side.

Interpretation

This stone has been widely interpreted to portray the deity Loki, bound before Ragnarök, referenced here in the Prose Edda:

> Next, the Æsir took [Narfi's] guts, and with them they bound Loki on to the top of the three stones—one under his shoulders, a second under his loins and the third under his knees. The fetters became iron. (*Gylfaginning 50)*

The stone has been compared to Scandinavian portrayals of the deity, including the Snaptun Stone found in Denmark (fig. 40). Despite the similarities to the stories of Loki and the comparable depictions of him, this figure could also be seen as the Christian devil, who has been said to be bound in hell, which also gives this stone one of its names. However, the downturned horns have not been seen in any known portrayal of Satan (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Kirkby Stephen) but have been seen in other depictions of the god Loki (e.g. Snaptun Stone).

The triangle between the figure's legs has been interpreted as a part of a scene that has not survived on the lower portion of the cross (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Kirkby Stephen 01), however, this is not the only possibility. When looking at Andreas 121 (95), a similar shaped hearth is shown on which Sigurd roasts the heart of Fafnir. It cannot be dismissed that this triangular shape could represent fire, which does lend this image a Christian tint, as Satan in the fires of Hell. Without knowing the context of this shape, however, it is impossible to determine what the meaning behind is, and we are forced to interpret with only what remains.

3.1.10 Leeds 1a-k

Description

The 10th century Leeds cross (fig. 22) is heavily dismantled, and today consists of ten fragments, placed together as best as possible along with modern reconstructions. It was discovered during the restoration of the Leeds church in the mid-19th century, when several fragments were discovered and reconstructed. The pieces missing have been reconstructed since then to the best of the artists' abilities (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Leeds 1a-k). Today, it stands in the church in full, ancient stone mixed with the modern reconstructions. For this thesis, only the original stone will be analyzed.

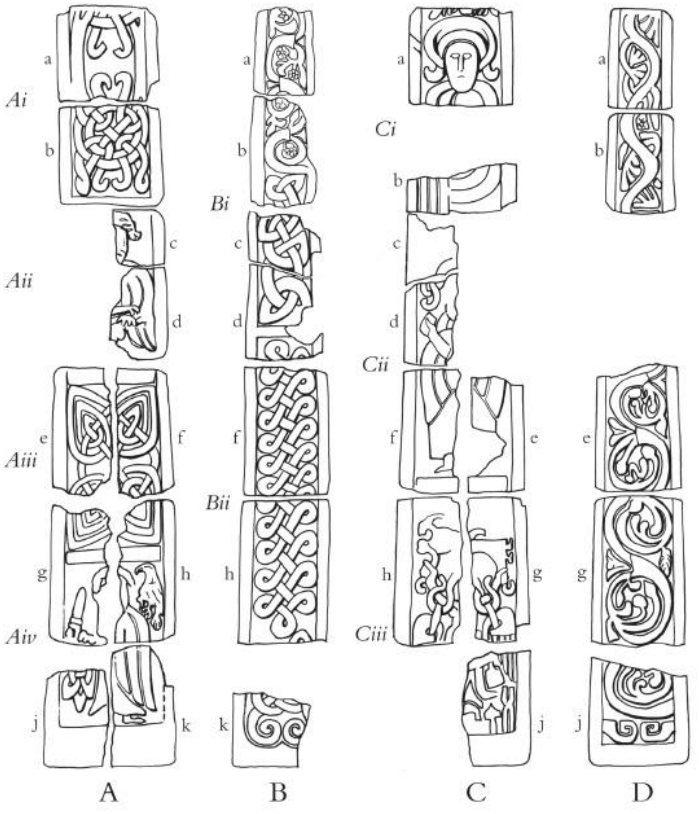

Figure 22: Leeds Cross (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculptures 2020, Leeds 1a-k)

Side A seems to depict a figure (or half of one, in this case)—possibly male—with curling hair and fabric draped over the shoulder and arm, or possibly a wing protruding from the back underneath a knot pattern, that is not of a style referenced earlier, however has been said to have clear Scandinavian influence, though the origins of this pattern are unknown (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Leeds 1a-k). Half of the figure is missing, but the restoration of the cross continues the figure to the left with mirroring attributes. Underneath this is another decorative knot, and the very bottom depicts another figure with a cloak draped over shoulders, in a wing shape, facing the left holding a sword with a bird perched on its shoulder.

Side B consists of two separate twisting, knotting patterns. The top one resembles branches or shrubbery, the tendrils of the decoration entwined with small circular shapes that could be seen as berries or perhaps flowers. It terminates in a knot, and the second twists to the bottom of the shaft, a repeating interlace pattern that continues to the bottom of the shaft.

Side C has another figure with a long face and a large circular shape over its head that can be interpreted as hair or as a halo. Another half of a figure is seen below, with curling hair as seen on side A and drapery over its shoulder again as well as a rectangular object in its hand. This figure has been heavily destroyed, and much is lost. Below this, is a figure, possibly female due to a long dress, held up by another figure entangled in a knot design, with wings and shapes that resemble pincers and hammers, which are common smithing tools.

Side D is similar to Side B in that there are no recognizable figures or scenes, but instead a scrolling pattern up and down the length of the shaft. The pattern is different than side B, however, it resembles the top pattern of side B more so than the bottom. There are more intricate decorations entwined with the ribbons that could also be berries or flowers, but whatever they are is undetermined and unsubstantiated thus far. It is likely that it is no more than decoration to complement sides A and C.

Interpretation

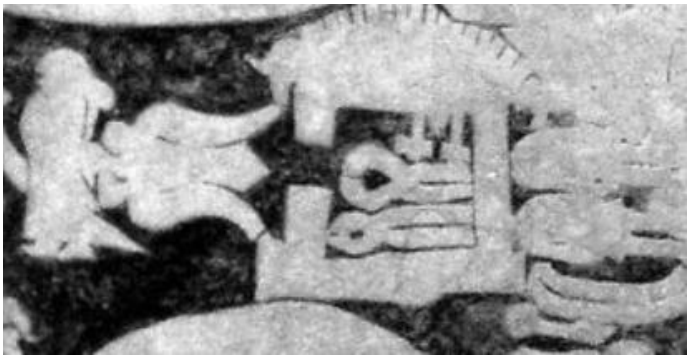

Figure 23: Smithing tools seen on Ardre VIII (Lindqvist 1941, fig. 165)

The Leeds cross is one of the first crosses in Britain that was interpreted as the escape of Wayland the Smith (Bailey 1980, p. 104), or Völundr, in the Poetic Edda (Dronke 1997, pp. 243-254) The presence of the supposed smithing tools on the lower part of Side C, alongside the contraption above it with the human figure lying on top of it and "running" or "flying" away suggests that this scene depicts the story of Wayland the Smith and his escape. Many similar in Scandinavia have been interpreted as the story of Wayland, namely the Gotlandic picture stone, Ardre VIII (fig. 23). The similarity in the supposed tools is clear in the imagery, the presence of a pincers and hammers present in both

depictions, and the shape of Wayland's wings on Ardre VIII share a clear similarity with the depiction on the Leeds Cross, though the Leeds cross is missing the bottom left of this scene, as seen above (fig. 20) from degradation, and so the full scene is not visible to compare. The presence of the tools, on this cross, as well as on Ardre VIII, can help rule out an interpretation of this scene as something other than Wayland the Smith, namely Thjazi shapeshifting into an eagle and Freyja's falcon dress (Helmbrecht 2012, p. 176). The image on Ardre VIII has been dated to pre-Christian Scandinavia (Bailey 1980, p. 105) and so can be positively identified as Wayland, due to the presence of smithing tools in the center, two headless bodies shown to the right and a large bird flying out the door, pressing its beak against the back of a woman, all motifs found in *Völundarkviða* in the Poetic Edda, first showing Wayland (here Volund) stuck in the smithy forging many items for the king Nithoth, who had kidnapped him and trapped him after injuring him so he couldn't escape by foot:

Figure 24: Scene from Leeds Cross showing smithing tools (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Leeds 1a-k)

> And so was done. They hamstrung him, and set him down on an isle which lay not far from land and was hight Sævarstath. There he wrought in metal and made the king all

manner of precious things. No one dared go to see him but only the king. (*Völundarkviða 17)*

Later when the king's sons come to visit him to see his treasure:

Full soon one brother said to the other
And lad to lad: "Let us look at the rings!"
For the keys called they to the chest when they came—
Was their ill fate sealed when in they looked.
He hewed off the heads of the hapless lads,
Their bodies buried 'neath the bellow's pit. (*Völundarkviða 23-24)*

The figure of the woman is likely Böðvildr, who was subdued and raped by Wayland (*Völundarkviða 28-30),* and then he escapes:

"Fain I would fare on my feet," quoth Volund,
"whose might from me Nithoth's men have taken." (*Völundarkviða 31)*

It is conjectured (Hollander 1963, p. 165) that after this stanza, a few lines are missing, said by Hollander to be "but lacking them, I must take to the wings I have fashioned me" (Hollander 1963, p. 165 n30), which is likely the source of the "Wayland flying motif" that is common among the depictions of this story in carvings and runestones, and are pictured in figures above (fig. 23 &24) as Wayland and his wings flying away, often with Böðvildr being pushed away, as seen especially in fig. 23.

The Leeds cross has less explicit scenes involving these thematic elements, though as seen closer in fig. 24, similar smithing tools are shown in the bottom right underneath what has been interpreted as a woman suspended by a figure with wings, tangled in an interlacing pattern (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Leeds 1a-k), seen as Wayland flying away with Böðvildr (Collingwood 1927, p. 163). The rest of the cross scenes have many figures with what appears to be cloaks, or wings, attached to their shoulders, holding what could appear to be books or swords in their hands, and some of which have halo-like shapes above their heads. These could be interpreted as winged angels or evangelists, which begs the question if Wayland could be paralleled with Christian angels and perhaps seen as one of them (Bailey 1980, p. 116).

The figure between this and the larger figure on the top half is too degraded to be able to interpret well, however the man at the top of Side C can be seen in several different ways, the

curling ring around his head seen by some as an extension of his hair, and by others as a halo (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Leeds 1a-k). Of course, this can greatly change the meaning, a halo likely showing the figure as a character from Christian lore, whereas hair could then indicate that this was an extension of the Wayland motif from below.

That is not to say that it cannot be both. It is possible that the figure can symbolize or represent both a Christian figure, such as an angel or Christ himself, as well as still representing Wayland after his escape, showing the parallel and use of pre-Christian heroes to reflect Christian ideals, as will be discussed later.

The figure at the bottom of side A brings to mind Odin's visage as wanderer, with a hat and cloak, his spear Gungnir with him, and a raven by his side, commonly seen through the various bynames of Odin throughout both the Poetic and the Prose Eddas, as exemplified in this passage, regarding his journey to the hall of Vafthrúthnir:

> Gagnráth my name; as guest I come
> To thy threshold thirsty, oh thurs!
> Needful of welcome I wandered long;
> To thy hearth hither I fared. (*Vafþrúðnismál 8*)

Several of Odin's bynames also refer to his visage as a wanderer, such as "Síðhöttr [Drooping Hood]" (Byock 2005, p. 174) and Grímnir [Masked One]" (Byock 2005, p. 163), pointing to the disguise of a long hood or hat, wandering the world, which could, then, be represented by this image.

3.1.11 Lowther 04

Description

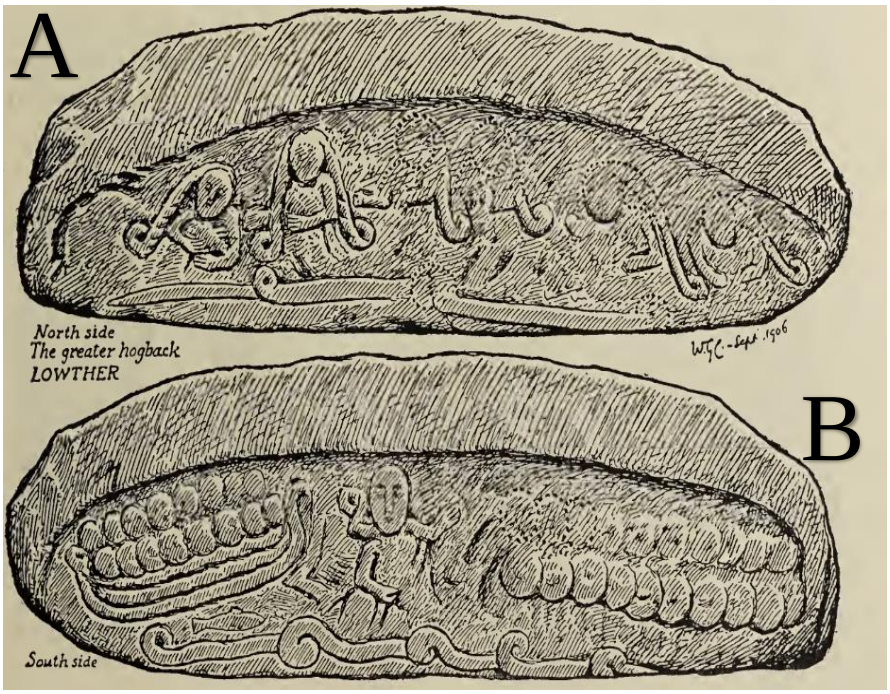

Figure 25: Lowther Hogback (Collingwood 1927, fig. 210)

The 10th century Lowther hogback (fig. 25) was first recorded when it was partly buried in a mound at a burial ground in the churchyard at Lowther. It was moved into the church in early 20th century, where it still remains, relatively well-preserved (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Lowther 04).

Side A is an image of six human figures, each with long curling hair and arms bent. Below these figures is a curling shape stretched across the length of the stone.

Side B also has a long, curling shape at the base, with five knots. Above this is a boat, with upturned ends and eight figures inside. Each has a round object below their head set over the side of the boat, highly likely to be shields. A fish is between the bottom and the curling shape, facing right. To the right of the boat is a large human figure raising an arm, and the other bent. On the far right are ten more figures, bodies covered by round objects similar to the round objects in the boat.

Interpretation

These images on side B have no known comparable counterparts on the stones on the British Isles. However, there are several stones on the island of Gotland that have a similar thematic element, that of a female figure greeting a group of warriors (fig. 26 &36). Though the image from Tjängvide is lacking the motif of warriors in a boat, the dress and hair of the woman are strikingly similar, the long, curling hair especially relating to Lowther 04. In the image from Läsbro St. Hammars, there is a similarly shaped boat with four human figures inside, holding swords aloft with circular shapes where their bodies would be. To the very right are three human figures, also holding straight objects above their heads, standing with circular objects in front of their bodies. In between the two groups is another human figure, larger than the others, wearing a long flowing dress with long hair down its back. This figure is holding an object above its head, with a large tail attached to it, almost resembling a large tree bough. Drawing from the other imagery on the same stone, it is likely that this represents a Valkyrie leading fallen warriors to Valhalla.

Figure 26: Left: Tjängvide (Universal History Archive) Right: Läsbro St. Hammars (Oehrl 2019, p. 272)

This can be reinforced when looking at the description of the Valkyries in the *Prose Edda*:

> There are still others whose duty it is to serve in Valhalla. They bring drink and see to the table and the ale cups…
>
> These women are called Valkyries. They are sent by Odin to every battle, where they choose which men are to die and they determine who has the victory. Gunn and Rota and the youngest norn, named Skuld, always ride to choose the slain and to decide the outcome of a battle. (*Gylfaginning 36)*

Comparing the two, the figure in the middle is likely a Valkyrie, and the figures holding what have been interpreted as shields are the Einherjar, being led to Valhalla by the Valkyrie. The figures on both images are seen in a boat, yet on Lowther 04, the curling shape underneath the figures on both sides are unique to it. While the drawing done by Collingwood (1927) seen above in fig. 25 does not depict the entire ribbon beast, when looking at an image of the stone itself (fig. 27), it is possible to see an extension of this, where a triangular head (seen from above) is pointing to the left. This serpent is not as stylized as some of the others analyzed in this study, such as the serpents on the Halton Cross and Gosforth 06, and so the interpretation of this as Jormungandr, the world serpent (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculptures 2020, Lowther 04), is merely speculation, and could simply de decorative, or perhaps represent waves in the water.

Figure 27: Side B of Lowther 04 (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Lowther 04)

3.1.12 Malew 120 (94)

Description

The cross at Malew (fig. 28) was found in the corner of the churchyard by J. G. Cumming, documented in his book, *The Runic and Other Monumental Remains of the Isle of Man* in 1857. He states that before he noticed it lying there, it had not been recorded or recognized before. It was then relocated to the Museum of King William's College (Cumming 1857, p. 26) and it was there that he took casts of it and traced the images out for his book.

The cross shaft at Malew shows, on side A, the figure of a human at the top of the remaining slab. The figure has one arm bent upwards near his mouth and the other is crooked, holding an object that resembles an "L".

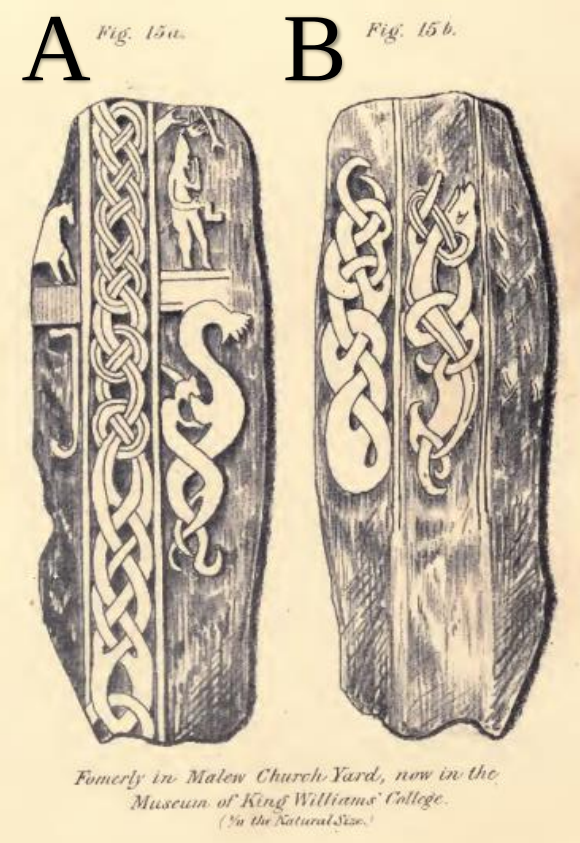

Figure 28: Malew Cross fragment (Cumming 1857)

Underneath this is a Jellinge style serpent beast entwined with the faint traces of a human figure reaching towards it from behind the middle decoration. This stone has been heavily worn, however, and the exact gesture the figure is holding is lost to time.

On Side B is the front half of a beast, with two legs in the front, the back half of which is cut off from the stone, but similar to other quadruped beasts on other stones and so likely a horse (Kermode 1892, p. 17). To the right of this, stretching the length of the remaining piece, is a vertical panel of interlacing pattern.

Interpretation

The figure with the arm bent back towards itself could be seen, when compared to other Sigurd scenes, such as the Ramsunda carving mentioned previously (fig. 9), as the explicit "sucking of the thumb" scene, as evidenced in chapter 19 of *Volsungasaga*:

> And when the juice foamed out [Sigurd] tested it with his finger to see whether it was done. He stuck his finger in his mouth. (*Volsungasaga 19)*

Interpreting the top figure as Sigurd during this scene from the saga, this scene below is quite likely the slaying of the dragon Fafnir, or the carving out of its heart, which takes place just before Sigurd tests the temperature when roasting it, as seen above. These two separate, yet likely connected Sigurd scenes can be reflected in other scenes that have also been interpreted as the story of Sigurd throughout both Scandinavia and other scenes from this story on stones from Britain.

Figure 29: Close-up of door portal at Hylestad stave church, Norway (Barndon 2005, fig. 3)

One such example is the carving on the medieval stave church of Hylestad in Norway (Barndon 2005, p. 8). This scene (fig. 29) shows a similar scene, with two men sat around a hearth, a spit roasting above it. The figure to the right is shown with his thumb in his mouth, just as the figure in Malew 120 (94) is, as shown above to be Sigurd tasting the blood with his finger.

3.1.13 Maughold 122 (96)

Description

Maughold 122 (96) (fig. 30) is also known as the "Sigurd Slab". It was found in the wall of a house in the town of Ramsey and has been dated to the mid-12th century (Isle of Man Guide 2016).

Amidst a curling pattern of interlaced tendrils and ribbons, the image of a quadruped is visible near the top, looking to be a horse. The head is cut off the side of the stone, but the long flowing tail and back end is visible.

The lower scene depicts a human figure with one leg bent up and arms outstretched. The figure has a pointed chin that could be seen as a goatee and pointed, oval eyes and large ears.

Interpretation

The lower figure standing next to the outstretched beast with the thick tail brings to mind the story of Loki and the beast Otr, the brother of Regin and Fafnir who "had the likeness of an otter during the day" (*Volsungasaga 14*) and whom Loki "took a stone and struck [him] to death", thinking him merely an otter (*Volsungasaga 14*). As this story is from the Sigurd cycle, the horse near the top could be seen as Grani the horse, as mentioned also in *Volsungasaga* as the horse given to Sigurd by Odin. This interpretation is strengthened by the presence of a bundle on the horse's back, which could represent the hoard of gold strapped by Sigurd to Grani's back as seen in this passage from *Volsungasaga*:

> He found so much gold that he expected it to be more than two or even three horses could carry. He took all the gold and put it into two large chests and then took Grani by the bridle. The horse would not budge and whipping was useless. Sigurd now discovered what the horse wanted. He leapt onto his back and put spurs to him and the horse ran as if unencumbered. (*Volsungasaga 20)*

Figure 30: Maughold 122 (96) (Isle of Man Guide 2016)

Of course, this interpretation does depend on what the continuation of the scene was before the cross was broken. It is merely one possibility, and the close proximity with the supposed scene from *Volsungasaga 14* of Loki and Otr makes it likely to still be from the Sigurd saga, yet what it is, is still open to interpretation and conjecture.

Another possibility is that the figure at the bottom could perhaps represent a devil figure, the image sharing certain resemblances with common images of the Christian devil, namely the pointed beard and ears. This is unlikely, however, as the image of the otter next to it is unique and has not ever been seen in a known image of the Christian devil.

3.1.14 Michael 126 (100)

Description

The late 11th century Michael 126 (100) cross fragment (fig. 31) is located presently in Kirk Michael (Rundata 2.0) and was found built into the top of the wall in the churchyard.

Side A of this cross is a menagerie of decorative pattern, no direct figures or gestures standing out from the interlacing and braiding patterns travelling up and down the length of the stone.

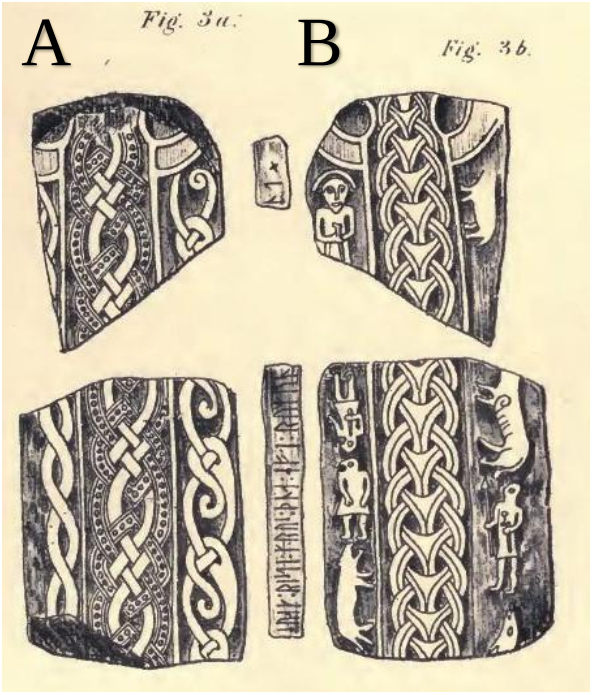

Figure 31: Michael 126 (100) (Cumming 1857, fig. 3)

Side B, however, is split into two sections, separated by the shaft of a carved cross filled in with interlacing patterns of Borre style ring braid. On the left is the figure of a human with a pointed chin, likely a beard, distinguishing this as a man. In his hands is a long stick, and his lower half is cut off. There is an arched, curving shape above his head that could either be a halo or hair.

On the lower fragment, there are two more figures, mirroring each other from the top down. The top figure is upside down and their heads are together, both facing the left side of the stone. The bottom figure's foot is hovering over the open jaws of a quadruped beast, who is shown standing on the middle, carved cross.

On the other side of the decorative patterned cross shaft is another beast, directly across from the figure at the top left. It is facing up, and its feet are pointed towards the middle carvings. Under the destruction is another beast, its head cut off where the stone ends. Under this is the figure of a human, facing the middle of the stone. It is shown with a short shirt on and an object in its hands. Under this figure is the head of something else, whether a humanoid figure or a beast, it is

difficult to tell. The presence of an eye tells that this is likely a head that would belong to some figure down below, where the cross likely continued.

Interpretation

According to Cumming (1857) the men on the fragment are wearing what appeared to him as kilts, or Highland wear, which placed the cross near the end of the 11th century, but certainly no earlier, as this was when Magnus Barefoot took charge of the Isle of Man and adopted the Highland wear (Cumming 1857, p. 18). From his interpretation of this scene, it would likely be a hunting scene, not dissimilar to Andreas 131 (103).

Additionally, this cross has been interpreted as Odin welcoming a hero into Valhalla (Isle of Man Guide 2016), however no source found has had any reason to distinguish this scene as such. In reading through the texts while looking at the figures depicted on the cross, no correlation between the two could be found. The figure of a man on the very top left is intriguing, as the interpretation could vary greatly depending on if the arched shape above his head is considered a halo or hair, as was encountered on the Leeds Cross, amongst others. If this truly is a depiction of Odin, it is likely the stick in his hands is Gungnir his spear (*Gylfaginning verse 51*), and perhaps the two figures below him are the Einherjar, who he welcomes into Valhalla, as stated in Snorri's *Gylfaginning 20*:

> …all who fall in battle are his adopted sons. With them he mans Valhalla and Vingolf, and they are known as the Einherjar. (*Gylfaginning 20*)

This could then be seen as Odin above, holding the spear, as the Einherjar below are about to enter his hall. However, the interpretation hinges on much supposition, and the presence of the beasts is puzzling.

3.1.15 Ovingham 01

Figure 32: Ovingham 01 fragment (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Ovingham 01)

Description

The late 10th to early 11th century cross fragment at Ovingham (fig. 32) was found in the mid-20th century, at the bottom of a retaining wall in the boiler house of the church. It is heavily worn, and the majority of the cross it is from is lost to time (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Ovingham 01).

This relatively small fragment of cross shaft depicts two human figures, the right-most figure holding a large curving object, comparable to the curving object found on BR Olsen 200B. However, this horn-like shape is not being blown into, as it seems to be on BR Olsen 200B, and so it cannot be explicitly labeled as a horn, though the similarities must still be noted. The left-most figure is facing the middle, and two sets of what could be arms are visible. One set of arms hangs down by the figure's side and the others are outstretched to hold back a large, serpentine beast reaching its mouth up to a disc set between the two figures' heads.

Interpretation

The large horn and disc suggest an image of Ragnarök, Heimdall with his horn on the right (as also seen on BR Olsen 200B), Loki bursting from his chains on the left, and Fenris in the center devouring the sun once he is free:

> In the east sat the old one, in the Iron-Woods,
> Bred there the bad brood of Fenrir;
> Will one of these, worse than they all,
> The sun swallow, in seeming a wolf (*Völuspá 39)*

A Christian Revelations theme has also been suggested, as well as that of Samson or David and the lion (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Ovingham 01), however using only this

one remaining piece of the shaft, it is difficult to determine what the original context is, whether it be pagan or Christian or likely both, similar to Gosforth 01.

3.1.16 Skipwith 01

Description

The Skipwith slab (fig. 33) is set into the wall of a tower at St. Helen Church in Yorkshire and is believed to be in situ, especially since it is located low to the ground (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Skipwith 01). The images on this stone utilize contiguous lines for the adjoining images, the iconography blending together almost seamlessly.

Figure 33: Skipwith Slab (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Skipwith 01)

To the left of the slab is the figure of a human facing to the right, its hands outstretched with one possibly bent in front of the body, and head tilted up. The presence of a beard and moustache indicates it is a male. There is a line carved around its waist, but otherwise no visible clothes. Underneath the right arm is a large beast facing to the right. Between this beast and the man's arm is the shape of an animal filling the gap, possibly a serpent due to the slanting eyes and pointed jaw, the head in the figure's armpit. Another figure to the right is reaching towards the jaws of the beast, head tilted up and mirroring the figure on the far left. Another figure facing to the right lies directly under this one, one hand stretched behind towards the beast and the other stretched to the end of the slab. Directly above the beast is yet another human figure, this one with a foot inside the jaws of the beast and the other leg bent over the beast's ear and set on its back.

Interpretation

It has been said that when viewing the stone slab in the correct lighting, a crucifix can be seen on the far right of the stone (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Skipwith 01). Unfortunately, as I was unable to view the stone in person and cannot find an image that displays this carving, I am unable to comment on the inclusion of this for the interpretation. If there is indeed a carving of a crucifix, that could provide a parallel comparison with other such carvings as Gosforth 01, which also has images of the crucifixion alongside presumed Scandinavian images. However, this cannot be determined with the data that is possessed.

The freestyle and chaotic organization of the imagery on this stone has lent an interpretation to it of graffiti (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Skipwith 01), and therefore presumed to be unlike any of the other stones analyzed in this thesis. It can be presumed to be depicting events at Ragnarök, namely Thor fighting Jormungandr (left) and Odin being swallowed by Fenrir (right). If this is graffiti, it possibly was not placed on this stone to serve any religious or civil purpose, or bears any relation to the church it is housed in. Of course, this cannot be known for sure, but disregarding the possible cross etching, there are not enough contextual clues to provide any more interpretation or meaning besides the probable events at Ragnarök.

3.1.17 Sockburn 03

Description

The first specific mention of this early 10th century cross-shaft fragment (fig. 34) was by J. R. Boyle in his 1892 book, *A Comprehensive Guide to the County of Durham*, when it was displayed in Sockburn Hall, but it was believed to have been moved from the church site after it was abandoned in the early 19th century. It now is displayed in Conyers Chapel in the All Saints Church in Sockburn, England (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 03).

Figure 34: Sockburn Cross-fragment (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 03)

This cross-shaft is adorned with the image of a serpentine beast forming a canopy above a mounted rider figure, with a bird perched on its hand and holding the horse's reins in his other. The rider appears to have a moustache and is wearing a cap and breeches, signifying that the figure is most likely a male. The horse is shown in movement, the far legs set ahead of the others. Below this is shown two more figures, one holding a horn to another who appears to be drinking it. This figure is supporting the horn with his hand. A round shield-like image that he presumably holds can be seen just above the bottom, the rest of which is cut off due to degradation.

Interpretation

The rider figure with the bird suggests it could be Odin, as a raven often symbolizes Odin, as mentioned with his association with the ravens Hugin and Munin, referenced in Snorri's *Gylfaginning*.

The bottom scene with the figure holding a horn out to a figure with what is presumably a shield held in its hands can be compared to such stones as Sockburn 15, on which the lower half of which is what is presumed to be a Valkyrie is visible. The human figure with the round object is likely an Einherjar being given a drinking horn by a Valkyrie, as seen in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning:*

> There are still others, whose function it is to wait in Val-hall, serve drink and look after the tableware and drinking vessels…these are called Valkyries. (*Gylfaginning 36)*

The image of the presumed Valkyrie is also paralleled on the Gotlandic picture stones, as seen above in fig. 26 and below in fig. 36.

3.1.18 Sockburn 15

Description

This hogback fragment at Sockburn (fig. 35) is relatively small and not nearly complete. It was a part of a collection of carved stones (including Sockburn 03) taken from the church when it was abandoned in 1838 and brought to Sockburn Hall, and then brought back into Conyers Chapel when it was reroofed in the early 1900s (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 15).

Figure 35: Sockburn 15 (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 15)

The bottom of the image remaining on the stone shows the lower half of the body of a human figure, thought to be female due to the long, flowing dress. Her head is cut off from the image, and she is shown in profile, her arms outstretched. Behind this figure is the figure of a bird, standing either on one leg or both legs together, faces the human figure's back and looks to the ground. The bird possesses a long, curling neck, bulging breast, and square tail.

Interpretation

It has been suggested (Lang 1972, p. 241) that this is a depiction of a Valkyrie welcoming a hero into Valhalla, and the similarities in the woman's dress and gesture are clear with the presumed Valkyrie on Sockburn 03 and the woman at the crucifixion on Gosforth 01, which has been seen as a Scandinavian-styled woman. This figure's dress and attributes

Figure 36: Detail from Stenkyrka Smiss I (left) and Klinte Hunninge I (right): Valkyries welcoming heroes into Valhalla (Oehrl 2019)

(as well as those on Gosforth 01 and Sockburn 03) can also be compared to pre-Christian carvings of women in Scandinavia (fig. 26 & 36), such as the Klinte Hunninge I picture stone (Oehrl 2019, p. 206) and Stenkyrka Smiss I (Oehrl 2019, p. 266), as well as the Lasbro St. Hammars stone and the Tjängvide stone discussed earlier, which also portray Valkyries welcoming the Einherjar into Valhalla.

3.1.19 Sockburn 21

Description

This Sockburn hogback (fig. 37) is very worn, and currently resides at Conyers Chapel. It was first referenced in the second half of the 19th century as one of several stones lying in one place. It is dated to the very end of the 9th century to first quarter of the 10th century (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 21), making it one of the oldest studied in this thesis.

Side A of this hogback shows the figure of a human, presumed to be a man due to presence of facial hair, with arms outstretched, the left arm inside the jaws of a large beast. No clothing details. The far left shows an animal with one foot raised and pointed jaws. Chain-like decorations continue around the other beasts, seen to be either long tails or chains.

Side B depicts again the figure of a human, arms outstretched, but head not visible. His arms are not in the jaws of any of the beasts, and in fact, they are further away from him than on side B. He is holding either a dagger or a chain that winds around the beasts across the length of the stone.

Figure 37: Sockburn 21 (Bailey 1980, figure 26)

Interpretation

Side A can be interpreted as Tyr losing his hand to the bound wolf Fenrir described here in the *Prose Edda*:

> No one was willing to hold out his hand until Tyr raised his right hand and laid it in the wolf's mouth. But when the wolf strained against the fetter, the band only hardened, and the more he struggled, the stronger the band became. They all laughed, except Tyr; he lost his hand. (*Gylfaginning 34)*

Side B then can be said to be the hound Garm who was eventually to kill Tyr at Ragnarök:

> By now the hound Garm, who was bound in front of Gnipahellir, will also have broken free. He, the worst of monsters, will fight against Tyr. They will be each other's death. (*Gylfaginning 51)*

The other beasts are then the beasts who "join with the wolf" (Lang 1972, pp. 238-40). Side B could be depicted as a continuation of Side A, as Tyr fighting Garm at Ragnarök, but there are then issues with this interpretation, such as the superfluous beasts around him. Instead, another interpretation is that of Daniel in the Lion's Den (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 21), giving this hogback a possible Christian context as well as pagan. It has also been seen as Adam naming the beasts in the Garden of Eden (Bailey 1980, p. 135).

If these Christian interpretations can be substantiated, it is quite likely that the arms outstretched as in the crucifixion could be interpreted as showing a Scandinavian story in Christian terms (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 21), though the evidence for either of these stories (Daniel or Adam vs. Tyr against Fenrir and Garm) is conjectural at best.

3.2 The Motifs

Through looking at the stones collected, several motifs stand out as common across the British Isles, making these motifs able to be compared together to create a generalized look of how these stories may have existed in the British Isles in a colonial context. The motifs that will be analyzed generally are the Sigurd cycle, Loki bound in punishment, and Ragnarök.

3.2.1 Sigurd

The theme of Sigurd and his battle with Fafnir is relatively common amongst the Scandinavian images on the crosses and other stone monuments of the British Isles, as it is in Scandinavia (Byock 1993, p. 5). In Viking Age art in general, some of the most common motifs are the reforging of the sword by Regin, the slaying of Fafnir the dragon, Sigurd roasting Fafnir's heart, and the birds providing Sigurd with advice (Byock 1993, p. 5), as especially seen and illustrated above in the Ramsunda carving in Sweden (fig. 9). These themes, most often, are found on Christian monuments, such as crosses, Christian runestones, church portals, and even baptismal fonts, though there is a great time span between the occurrence of such imagery (Byock 1993, p. 7). Viking Age art in Britain is no different, as seen previously, numerous crosses and hogbacks having been identified with scenes from this story, most often the slaying of the dragon, the forging of the sword, and the roasting of the heart.

As mentioned earlier, Andreas 121 (95) shares certain similarities with Malew 120 (94), on which it is interpreted that Sigurd roasts the heart of Fafnir and tests the blood, under which is a scrolling, ribbon entanglement of a human figure and a serpentine beast, or Sigurd slaying Fafnir. Similarly, on this cross, the heart roasting scene appears above a similarly scrolling, tangled entwinement of human and beast (fig. 38).

Save for the Halton Cross, the killing of the dragon Fafnir nearly always makes an appearance on these stones. This is not surprising when looking at how the trope of dragon slaying was popularized and revered in Christian culture, perhaps starting with the story of St. Michael and the Dragon, seen here in Revelations:

> And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
> And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

> And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev 12:7)

Figure 38: Detail: Sigurd slaying Fafnir on Andreas121 (95) (left) and Malew 120 (94) (right)

It has been noted (Plukowski 2003, p. 160) that the Christian dragon slayers, such as St. Michael, referenced above, as well as St. George, who often are identifiable with Christ, as a hero or savior figure, can be associated with the Germanic or Norse stories of such heroes as Sigurd, and likely provided a context to use these familiar stories to represent a new, Christian ideal, both in Britain as well as in mainland Scandinavia, where much the same religious transition was occurring.

Another possible parallel that has been mentioned is that of Sigurd as a parallel to Old Testament heroes such as David and Samson, who, themselves, have been said to be parallels to Christ (Larsen 1968, p. 43), much in the same way as Hercules was used during conversion in Southern Europe (Düwel 1988, p. 145). A 12th century carving in Lunde Church in Telemark, Norway show images of Sigurd slaying Fafnir directly across from Samson defeating the lion (Ødeby 2013, p. 10). This shows, for example, if Samson killing a lion (Judges 14:5-6) and David defeating Goliath (Samuel 17:37-51) in the Old Testament is a parallel to Christ later on defeating the devil in the New Testament, then the slaying of Fafnir adds Sigurd to the list of such Christ parallels as Samson and David, embodying still the heroic qualities which made him beloved as a hero from pagan times and no less common in Christian times.

This illustrates the idea of Interpretatio Christiana, which is the use of non-Christian cultural or religious ideals and adapting them to the worldview of Christianity (Eberlein 2006). This idea was sanctioned by Pope Gregory I in a letter in which he stated that it was easier to convert non-Christians if they were allowed to keep certain aspects of their traditions, yet changing to honoring the Christian God (Jane 1910, p. 53).

It is likely that the story of Sigurd, then, was utilized as a part of this idea of Interpretatio Christiana, to ease the transition to Christianity by using familiar and culturally significant stories to bridge the gap between the old customs and the new. Sigurd, a hero from the pre-Christian, pagan culture of the Scandinavians, became common in Christian contexts, as the story likely was adapted to this new Christian culture: Sigurd now a Christianized hero comparable to other figures such as St. Michael or Samson, gently easing the Scandinavians into the worship of a new deity while still keeping a piece of their old culture and heritage.

Of course, the story of Sigurd was not unique to the Scandinavians, and in fact was found all across Western Europe, in regional variations of the story, such as the 13th century Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, composed by an anonymous author and based off of old, Germanic oral tradition (Edwards 2010, p. xi). These old heroic epics seemed to strike a chord with people, even after Christianity became the norm, and other heroic stories, such as the stories of the archangels and saints, were added into the repertoire, as studied in Nordanskog's thesis in relation to the medieval stave churches mentioned earlier (2006).

3.2.2 Loki, or the "Bound Devil"

Kirkby Stephen 01, as mentioned above, has been often interpreted as Loki, bound before Ragnarök, though some have related this image to the scene in Revelations, where Satan was bound with a chain in hell:

> And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. (Revelation 20:1-3)

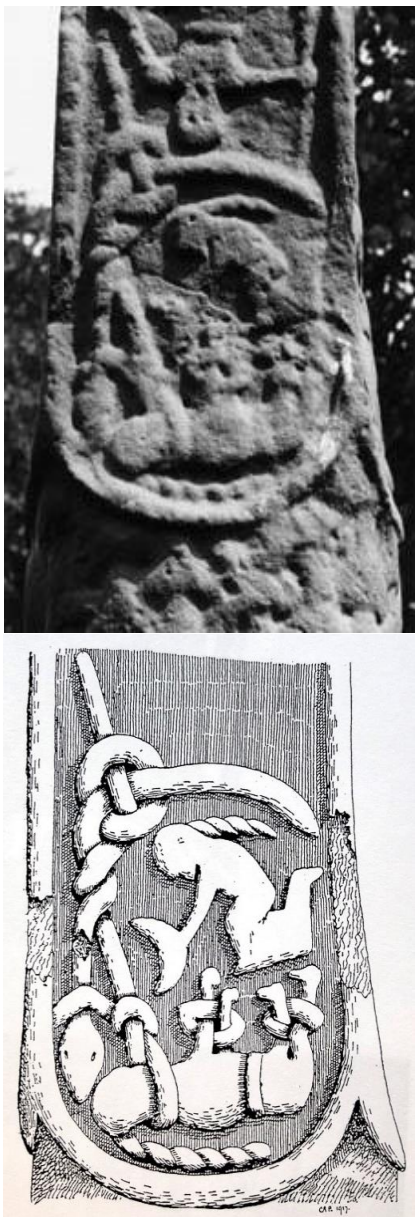

Figure 39:

Top: Loki scene on Gosforth Cross (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01)

Bottom: Same scene, drawing (Oehrl 2019, p. 229)

However, comparing Kirkby Stephen 01 (fig. 21) to the Snaptun stone from Denmark (fig. 40) which also is famously said to be an early image of Loki (Kjærum 1990, p. 180), one can see many similarities. The curling appendages on the sides of the head are present on both, though more visible on the Kirkby stone as horns, as opposed to attached to what can also be seen as hair on the Snaptun stone. While the devil is often portrayed with curling horns, there are no known explicit depictions of the Christian devil with downturned horns. The Snaptun stone, also, has more visible stitching around the figure's (or head's) lips, which can be seen as his mouth sewn shut as a punishment after he talked his way out of a deal with the dwarves in *Skaldskaparmal* in the Prose Edda:

> The dwarf wanted to cut off Loki's head, but Loki said that the dwarf has a right to his head but not to the neck. The dwarf then took a narrow strip of leather and a knife. He intended to cut holes in Loki's lips and to sew his mouth shut, but the knife would not cut. The dwarf said that it would be better if his brother Awl were there, and it punched holes through the lips. He then stitched the lips together before ripping away the outer edges. (*Skaldskaparmal 5)*

Figure 40: Snaptun Stone from Denmark (National Museum of Denmark)

This Danish depiction is not shown bound, as Loki is on Andreas 121 (95), Gosforth 01, and Kirkby Stephen 01, but the presence of the stitching implies that this is still a depiction of him being punished, whether it is his mouth sewn shut for getting out of his deal with the dwarves for fashioning Sif's golden hair (*Skaldskaparmal 5)* or bound in Nari's entrails for killing Baldr (*Gylfaginning 50*).

The interpreted image of Loki on the Gosforth Cross (fig. 39) is unique in the depictions of the deity throughout the crosses and stone sculptures of the British Isles. The other depictions, including Andreas 121 (95), omit Sigyn from Loki's punishment, instead focusing on him being bound, and not the act of the poison dripping onto his face, and subsequently collected by Sigyn in a bowl to spare him the pain. Perhaps the inclusion of Sigyn on Gosforth 01 is a parallel to the other scene on the same cross, of the crucifixion and the Scandinavian-styled woman underneath Christ with the horn (fig. 41). This could show the correlation between Sigyn and the woman under Christ, both with similar hair, and both holding vessels with which to catch liquid, whether it be poison, in Sigyn's case, and blood, in the woman at the crucifixion's case. This significance could show Sigyn in a role as faithful follower to her husband, Loki, in his time of need, while the woman underneath Christ (as said earlier possible to

Figure 41: Close up of Gosforth 01, the crucifixion (left) and Loki and Sigyn (right) (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01)

be Mary Magdalene) is his loyal follower, also with him at his end.

Additionally, a stone that will be discussed later on from Denmark, the Jelling Stone (fig. 42) shows the image of what has been presumed to be Christ crucified. This stone, as will be discussed later, also shares similarities with the story of Odin hanging on Yggdrasil in *Hávámal 138.* However, an additional possibility arises when analyzing the iconography of bound Loki, as seen on Kirkby Stephen 01 and Gosforth 01: the Christ figure crucified again paralleled with Loki, this time not in the presence of Sigyn or Mary Magdalene, but in the tendrils tangled around Christ: not a wooden cross as was said to be present at the crucifixion, but tendrils that could resemble the entrails that Loki was bound with as punishment at the end of *Lokasenna*.

3.2.3 Ragnarök and the End of Times

Perhaps even more so than the other motifs, the motif with the greatest instances in the British Isles are the scenes depicting Ragnarök. Possibly most famous for this is Gosforth 01, which shows a great many of the stories from this Norse end-of-times story, several of which are shown alongside explicitly Christian scenes in a non-antagonistic way; that is to say, neither religion is necessarily shown "triumphing" over another, though some older sources (e.g. Kermode 1907, mentioned earlier) may have taken this view. Upon analysis of the scenes depicting both Norse and Christian themes (e.g. Andreas 128 (102), Gosforth 01), there is no explicit iconography that sets one of the beliefs against the other. Instead, many of the scenes can be seen as direct parallels to one another, such as the sacrifice of Odin on Yggdrasil to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and Baldr returning from Hel (*Völuspá 61*) to Jesus being resurrected.

In fact, it can be interesting to analyze how the "end of times" symbolism relates, not only in the images on the stone sculptures, but in the Norse and Christian texts themselves. This type of analysis can show perhaps how and why the parallels correlate so strongly in the images analyzed. One such explicit similarity is seen in these texts, the first from the *Prose Edda*, and the second from the book of Revelations:

> The wolf will swallow the sun, and mankind will think it has suffered a terrible disaster. Then the other wolf will catch the moon, and he too will cause much ruin. The stars will

> disappear from the heavens. So, also, there is this to be told: the whole earth, together with the mountains, will start to shake so that the trees will loosen from the ground, the mountains will fall, and all fetters and bonds will sever and break. (*Gylfaginning 51)*
>
> And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (*Revelation 6:12-14*)

The disappearance of the sun and the moon, and the falling of the stars to the ground, as well as the earthquakes that rattled the earth are common in both stories of the end of times, both at Ragnarök as well as seen in Revelations.

Certainly, it is worth noting that the scene above from *Gylfaginning* is from the *Prose Edda,* written by Snorri Sturluson in Christian Iceland, which more than likely lends to the explicit similarities in the stories, as Snorri could very well have made the stories much more analogous than they were originally. However, the similarities are still there in the *Poetic Edda*, where Fenrir swallows the sun (*Völuspá 39)* as well as later on in the same poem:

> Neath sea the land sinketh, the sun dimmeth,
> From the heavens fall the fair bright stars;
> Gusheth forth steam and gutting fire,
> To very heaven soar the hurtling flames (*Völuspá 56*)

The earthquakes, still, as stated in *Lokasenna 65*, are said to be caused by Loki as he writhes against his bonds, underneath the serpent where he is bound until he breaks free, starting the events of Ragnarök, and therefore can be seen as still a part of the Ragnarök story.

On Gosforth 01, the Ragnarök iconography is surrounding the Christian motif of the crucifixion, which in the story was stated to be accompanied by a darkness over the land and a quake in the earth:

> And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. (Luke 23:44-45)

This also correlates to the imagery seen in the stories of Ragnarök as well as in Revelations, and so if similar imagery exists in the story, it could make sense that this one (presumed) Christian scene on Gosforth 01 is accompanied by scenes from the Norse end of times.

Of course, Gosforth 01 is not the only stone on which these parallels can be found. On Andreas 128 (102), one side of the cross depicts Odin (or Vidar, as discussed earlier) with his raven and spear being swallowed by Fenrir during Ragnarök, while the other side depicts a Christian figure holding a cross, stepping on a serpent. If this figure is Vidar stepping on the jaw of Fenrir, that especially would provide an excellent parallel to the "treading on the serpent" motif on the other side, showing, again, the triumph of good (Vidar or Christ) over evil (Satan or Fenrir). If this is Odin, however, being swallowed by Fenrir, it is possible that this could depict a "rebirth" of sorts, or perhaps a parallel to the crucifixion, with Odin dying, and then Christ being reborn and crushing the serpent, whether it be Satan or Jormungandr.

Though the similarities at first seem striking, some have argued that these similarities between the Ragnarök story and the Christian story in Revelations are not accidental (e.g. Hultgård 1990; McKinnel 2008). Hultgård (1990) argues that many of the themes from Ragnarök either originate from Christianity or are so prominent perhaps because of the Christian tradition (Hultgård 1990, p. 354). McKinnell analyzes the theory that the author of Völuspá was directly influenced by the attendance of an Easter Vigil service, and assesses how this theory could be true, since Völuspá was written at a time that Christianity was already influential in northern Europe (McKinnell 2008, p. 3).

In 1969, Wulfgang Butt published a paper that argued that the Völuspá, which holds the literary description of the battle of Ragnarök, had two specific direct sources: the homilies of Wulfstan and the Old English poem Judgement Day II, both Christian writings (McKinnel 2008, p. 3), however his literary and linguistic proof of this has been critically analyzed (Lindow 1987, pp. 313-322).

Additionally, since the pagan Scandinavian culture was an oral one and Christianity shared its stories and doctrine through written text, it is possible that, upon hearing the Christian version of the end-of-days, the imagery stuck with the storytellers and indirectly wove its way into the pagan myths of Ragnarök, spreading and adapting and evolving with each new recitation of the

story, resulting in the parallels we see today in both the imagery and the later, medieval written sources.

4. Discussion

The Sigurd Epic in a Colonial Perspective

The inclusion of Sigurd on so many of the British Christian sculptures is intriguing, but maybe not so unbelievable when thought of as an allegory to the Christian themes prevalent, as well as its continued popularity throughout much of both Scandinavia and the rest of Europe in its other regional forms, as mentioned above. Many Christian themes of dragon slaying do exist, as in the story of St. Michael defeating the dragon, representing evil, in the book of Revelations, also discussed above. This then would provide a good opening for the Christian population to accept the story of the hero Sigurd who also defeated a dragon, relating the familiar heroic tale to the new legends in Christianity, and these heroic Christian themes (Richards 1991, p. 162) relating strongly to the heroic pagan themes in the stories, utilizing again this idea of Interpretatio Christiana as referenced earlier. Using this story from a pagan culture, in which such figures from the mythology (such as Odin and Loki) play a part, in a Christian context and perhaps as a parallel to a Christian dragon slayer is a way to ease the early pagan Scandinavian settlers into a new belief system, and in fact could also show that this story, which was possibly still being transmitted orally in the population anyway, developed into the story we know today as a product of the cultural interaction between the Vikings and the other cultures with whom they interacted in the early medieval times.

Additionally, it is likely that the story of Sigurd, though intertwined with figures from the pagan mythology and rooted from a pagan culture (Byock 1999, p. 1), resonated strongly with the Christian population both in the British Isles and greater Europe in general because of the above reasons, and also perhaps opened this gateway for such non-deified heroes as Wayland and Sigurd to become Christian heroes using the idea again of Interpretatio Christiana, even going so far as to become angels—Sigurd perhaps as St. Michael, or even Christ, defeating the dragon, or the "devil" and Wayland perhaps as an angel, the flying machine and wings on his imagery a strong parallel with the angels of Christian lore.

Of course, it is possible that these stories were prevalent not only because of religion, but likely despite religion. These stories could have been so popular in Viking Age Britain simply as a reminder of where they came from, and that no matter where they lived, their ideals and cultural values of bravery and honor (as seen in the fighting of Fafnir especially) would still live on despite this new merged, colonial culture that started to develop between the Scandinavians and the peoples of the British Isles, perhaps despite any religious significance the stories may have once had. These now secular stories would have been a way to preserve their cultural identity as Scandinavians and continue to teach their children about where they came from and what they believed in, whether it was religious or otherwise, to create this colonial identity, much as was the case in colonial America (Bonomi 2003, p. 10).

Christian and Pagan Parallels

In order to discuss fully the connection between the old, pagan religion and the new, Christian one during the time of conversion, the comparisons and idiosyncrasies between the interpretations must be reiterated.

As stated earlier, the crucifixion scene on the Gosforth Cross is almost always labeled as the only explicitly Christian image on the cross (e.g. Berg 1958, p. 30), intermingled with the other "pagan" scenes of Ragnarök, discussed heavily above. However, when analyzing this image, most of the ingredients that label a "Christian" scene Christian are, in fact, missing. There is no trace of a cross, besides the outstretched gesture the figure is holding, and there is no halo or crown of thorns around the figure being "crucified". So why is this image labeled as Christian so often, despite the several similarities to the story of Odin from *Hávámal* in the Poetic Edda? The similarities were analyzed and discussed above, but this notion has larger and bigger picture implications than simply a point of interest.

As the populations, both in Scandinavia and the British Isles—and very likely in the rest of Europe as well—converted to Christianity, the older, heathen religions lost their cultural hold as a religious phenomenon, and very often were met with resistance (Crossley-Holland 1999, p. viii; Davidson 1990, p. 15) It is likely then that once the conversion took hold and the mutual acceptance of the intermingled religions ended, it was easier to interpret and view things as Christian, and not heathen, in order to avoid possible accusations of heresy.

Just as it is thought that Harald Bluetooth embraced Christianity in Denmark for political reasons (Ferguson 2010, p. 208), it is likely that to keep an even more fragile culture intact, Christianity would be the religion of, especially, the ruling class, who would then lead the rest of the population to convert. For instance, the Scandinavian king of the Danelaw, Guthrum, was baptized in 878 after the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred required his baptism as a condition of the peace treaty, Guthrum becoming Æthelstan (Ferguson 2010, p. 139). This, then, was not necessarily a religious choice to convert to Christianity, but instead a choice made in order to keep his power over the Danelaw. With a now-Christian ruler, the rest of the population was set to follow, and this is where the need to meld new traditions with the old, creating this hybrid religious cultural identity, arose.

Another theory posits that, following the narrative of Ragnarök on the cross, the finale of the crucifixion could parallel the promise of Baldr returning to life in the new world after the events of Ragnarök, and the Christian theme a metaphor for this (Berg 1958, p. 29). This is just one more example of the similarities between the Christian and the pagan stories of the end of times, and can show how and why this blending of the mythical stories of both the Scandinavians and the Christians was possible, and seems (from looking at the imagery) so seamless. As the Norse pagans were a polytheistic people, it would have likely been quite easy for them to accept the Christian figures, such as Christ and quite possibly the saints, as just a new sect of their deities, alongside the Æsir and the Vanir.

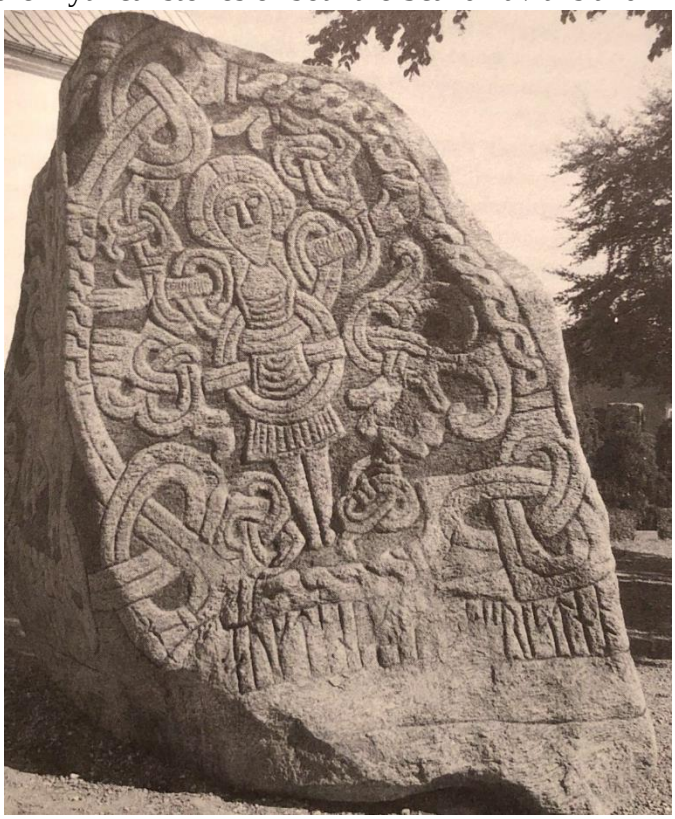

Figure 42: Jelling Stone, Denmark, depicting the crucified Christ amidst the branches of a tree (Nationalmuseet i København)

This can also be seen, as discussed earlier, that the Jelling Stone in Denmark (fig. 42), while famously being recognized as the point of conversion for the peoples of Denmark, might not be as explicitly Christian as first thought. Though there is still a runic inscription on the base of the stone that reads "…and made the Danes

Christian" (Kjærum et al 1990, p. 194), this does not necessarily mean that the stone is only Christian, as the stones in the British Isles are not, based on the above analysis. There could still be a mingling of stories, Christ as Odin, sacrificing himself in the tree, making these new religious stories more familiar and suitable for the Scandinavians, as it is not a completely new religion. This could show the continued mingling of Christian and Pagan religious beliefs, framing Odin as a savior figure who sacrificed himself, much as Christ sacrificed himself, and as seen on the Jelling Stone, with the Christ figure crucified amidst branching tendrils that seem to resemble the branches of a tree. It is possible, then, that the crucifixion scenes on these Viking stones do not portray all the classic styles of crucifixion images, as they are not only depicting Jesus Christ on the cross, but also as Odin on Yggdrasil. These crucifixion images could possibly represent the "crucifixion" of Odin, and the further blending of the two religions into one that can appeal to the majority of the population, the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons alike.

Additionally, when looking at the Gosforth Cross, the woman underneath the crucifixion scene, presented in such a way that is comparable to Valkyries (as seen in the comparison with the Valkyrie figures on the Gotlandic picture stones above) is shown holding a horn up, instead of a chalice, which commonly is believed to have been present at the crucifixion (Berg 1958, p. 31; Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Gosforth 01; Lyons 2014, pp. 75-76), and despite the lack of supporting evidence for this, the images often became linked, as in the story of the Grail present at the crucifixion and taken to Britain (Lyons 2014, p. 77). This depiction of a Scandinavian woman with a drinking horn present at Christ's death shows the integration of the Scandinavians into Christianity, and also into their new, hybrid culture in Britain.

Relating to this, the figure underneath the "crucifixion" and to the side of the female figure, is holding up a spear, piercing the side of "Christ", as he did in the story of the crucifixion (John 19:34). However, in the rune-poem of *Hávámal*, Odin is also shown as being pierced with a spear, albeit his own, in the stanza:

> I wot that I hung on the wind-tossed tree
> All of nights nine
> Wounded by spear, bespoken to Othin,
> bespoken myself to myself (*Hávámal 138)*

This image, however, does portray the figure as having a circular halo above its head, however, as with the Gosforth Cross, there is no "cross" behind the figure. Instead, he is bound with what appear to be branches of a tree or a bush, much as Odin was "hung on the wind-tossed tree" as mentioned above. With all these similarities that could present this image as either Christian *or* pagan, why then is it almost always seen as explicitly Christian? It is possible that, as the stone became more widely known and entered into the public knowledge, it was easier to present this stone as explicitly Christian, as Christianity was gaining popularity, with the pagan subtext being just that: subtext. Though there is less evidence that the continued practice of the pre-Christian religions was considered heretical in Scandinavia as it was in other parts of the world, it is true that it still became a fringe religion, and in some circumstances, the practice of paganism was met with severe resistance (Davidson 1990, p. 15). In order to convert the masses to Christianity, the Christianization of these myths needed to become the norm.

In addition, the context on which the images, both pagan and Christian, are found is an overwhelmingly Christian one, as stated earlier. 14 of the 19 stone monuments analyzed in this thesis are on crosses—an exceptionally Christian symbol—and found in churchyards. Three of these other monuments are hogbacks, commonly thought to be associated with burial sites, and again, found at Christian churchyards. The two slabs analyzed here were also found at churches. This vastly Christian context even more so shows how these stories, even while explicitly pagan in content, have been adapted to fit into a Christian culture, even one being influenced from both sides.

It has been discussed in other studies that the erection of runestones in Scandinavia to honor the dead was a part of a practice used to comfort the loved ones of those who died during the Christianization of Scandinavia, using a more familiar method alongside the new burial customs and churchyards to honor their past in a traditional way (Sawyer 2006, pp. 17-18). Though there is not much evidence that most of the stone crosses and slabs of the British Isles were utilized as specific burial monuments (save for the hogbacks, perhaps), it is certainly not a stretch to say that erecting stones and commemorating the carver—as they would have on the stones of Scandinavia—may have served this same purpose: responding to the emotional need to feel connected to one's culture in a new and unfamiliar place.

The Development of a new religion and the idea of "Cultural Paganism"

As stated expertly by Leslie Abrams, "Expatriation probably did affect the Scandinavian's cult, but whatever change it caused need not have meant a weakening of their identity as pagans" (Abrams 2000, p. 139). This idea, that even through times of great change and assimilation into a new culture, one can still maintain one's heritage and previous identity, is one that deserves to be discussed, especially in this colonial and religious context.

In order to try and create a definition for what was possibly happening during this time of great religious and cultural change in both Scandinavia and the British Isles, perhaps the term "cultural paganism" can be used. Cultural paganism as defined today is the idea that a person can be still connected to their pagan, cultural, and/or historical background, and yet not be considered a practitioner of the religion. Many people today who still want to feel connected to their past and their ancestors will still recognize the symbolism, myths, and sometimes practices of their ancestors, but not necessarily believe in the spiritual and divine aspects of these beliefs (Dizerega 2011). While this is, of course, a modern concept, something similar was likely occurring at this time, as the Scandinavians in, especially, the British Isles, would likely want (or need) to change with society, and yet still remain connected to their homeland and their ancestors.

To feel at home in a new land, the settlers and colonizers would need to feel represented by the imagery they were surrounded by. They likely wanted to feel represented in this new culture they were assimilating into, and so to relate to the stories, they had to adapt and try and find a way to feel represented by them, much as people do today in religions and even in the media. One such example of this was seen in the Gosforth 01 crucifixion scene. As stated earlier, the woman standing underneath Christ has two braids and a dress in the Scandinavian style, very similar in style to Sockburn 15, which has been interpreted as a Valkyrie welcoming a hero into Valhalla (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2020, Sockburn 15). The interpretation of this female figure as a Valkyrie, or even as a woman from the Christian stories (i.e. Mary Magdalene or Ecclesia) would still benefit the Scandinavians by representing them in appearance, and so seeing a woman on this cross in a Christian context (no matter the imagery that surrounds it) that resembled the Valkyries of lore, would be a source of comfort, or even a welcoming sign in the new culture into which they were assimilating. In addition, the symbol of a Valkyrie might not have been a pagan religious symbol in this context, much as the story of Sigurd likely was not.

Valkyries have also been interpreted as, later on in the Scandinavian tradition, being more of a symbol of the role of women in early medieval court culture and nobility, as seen by the character Wealhþeow in *Beowulf*, who fulfilled the role of host in the royal halls that a Valkyrie would in Valhalla (Damico 1984, pp. 16-18). The Valkyrie symbol could still be a source of comfort, but in this way, a secular one rather than religious.

During the Viking settlement of Britain, as referenced earlier, the two societies—the Scandinavians and the people of the British Isles—were not mutually exclusive, and there is much evidence for their mingling and intermarriage (Steinforth 2015, p. 296), and so there was likely a creation of a (not necessarily distinct) new culture: the hybrid Scandinavian/British culture. The intermarriage of the two groups would have resulted in children who would grow up in a family consisting of both Scandinavian and British parents, and therefore would grow up as a part of both cultures, learning both the history and mythology of Britain and of the Vikings. In this time of change in Britain, all the opposing beliefs did not necessarily contradict one another, and instead mingled together to create a sort of "new" religion, one that took the old Norse myths and stories and comingled them with the new (to them) Christian stories.

Additionally, it was common practice in the Christian Church at the time to try and convert people by making the new religion comfortable and acceptable to the new practitioners (in this case, the Scandinavians), and to not create such a large divide between the two belief systems (Berg 1958, p. 32). This fact brought to life another theory, that perhaps the Vikings were somehow persuaded that Ragnarök really took place when Christ was crucified, due to the similarities between the symbolism in both stories (Berg 1958, p. 33). Of course, this is unlikely to have truly been believed at the time (though we cannot know for sure), however the symbolism could have been utilized not to persuade them of this, but instead to encourage the Scandinavians to softly transition, keeping their old beliefs and not discounting them immediately. The symbolism then would, in that case, have shown the downfall of the old gods and rise of the new "gods", in Christ.

The idea of softly transitioning from the old cult to the new could explain the wealth of combined imagery, stories from both faiths being used to highlight the greater values and morals of the new society existing in Viking Age Britain, and the creation of a sort of distinct new religion to bridge the gap between one group and the other, closing the distance likely created by

the “us vs. them” mentality that may have been present during the contact between two distinct cultures.

5. Conclusion

One of the first aims of this thesis was to analyze why the images on the stone sculptures were considered Scandinavian, and furthermore pagan in intent, despite the contexts being overwhelmingly Christian. This was accomplished by finding parallels in the imagery in Scandinavia with those of the British Isles, both contemporaneously and in years prior to the settlement of the Isles. The parallels were found, as seen in the analysis, in the similar runestones and picture stones of Scandinavia, both in style and in content.

The next aim was to analyze how these image correlate and combine with the Christian imagery, often found in the same context and often on the same sculpture. This correlation was determined to be intermingled and non-antagonistic, leading to the conclusion that the climate between the Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons regarding their cultural differences was similarly cordial, to a certain extent.

Additionally, the role of imagery in the formation and expression of colonial identity was analyzed and discussed. As seen above, it is likely that this hybridization of pagan and Christian imagery found on these stone monuments is indicative of the presence of a hybrid population and culture between the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons during the settlement of the British Isles. The Scandinavians, even in their homeland, were in the process of converting to Christianity as discussed earlier, and the new stories and the new home in the British Isles likely created the need for a rich culture of heritage, reflected in the religious imagery of Scandinavian stories, essentially adding on their own stories and worldviews to the new, Christian cosmology with which they were becoming familiar. This likely played a role in easing the Scandinavians into conversion through the idea of Interpretatio Christiana, adding the old worldviews to the new, and reminding the Scandinavians of where they came from, as well as creating this intermingled culture of the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons.

Taking everything into account, the religious identity of the colonial inhabitants of the British Isles was likely an ever-changing, fluid one. The Scandinavians were not opposed to adopting the new customs and cultural stories of the Anglo-Saxons, and the Anglo-Saxons did not try to immediately convert the Scandinavian settlers to Christianity, instead the change coming gradually and likely carrying with it a sense of “cultural paganism”, where the overall religious

beliefs may have changed, but the cultural stories and legends they and their ancestors grew up with were not forgotten. Heritage and culture are important in a society, especially one far removed from their homeland and that of their ancestors, and it likely was important to their identity to hold on to a piece of home, even during this tumultuous period of change.

As seen on the Scandinavian carvings and the wealth of imagery available, Christianity was not necessarily seen as "triumphing" over the pagan religion that the early Scandinavian settlers brought with them. Instead, the two religions mixed and mingled, very often, symbolism able to be utilized despite religion, different stories used to portray the same message. This intermingling of the religions and cultures likely created a hybrid colonial culture of the British Isles as the two peoples themselves—not just their stories and religions—interspersed through contact and intermarriage.

This colonial religious identity created a new need for the cultural heritage of the Scandinavians to live on, even in this new setting. This is most evidenced by the continued usage of the old Norse myths and stories, even later on in the settlement of the British Isles when Christianity was adopted and the Scandinavians had for the most part converted, both in Scandinavia as well as the British Isles.

5.1 Future Research

The issue of cultural and religious identity in a colonial concept is one that is not limited to the Viking occupation of the British Isles, nor is it limited to stone sculptures and erected monuments. For future research on this topic, certainly more materials than just stone sculptures and crosses can be analyzed. Ceramics and jewelry, as well as other such "ritual" objects would be of much use to determine every day religious practices, as stone sculptures might not be considered in the realm of everyday worship.

While the stone images are ideal to determine a greater religious identity, they do not do much to help determine what the actual practices of the time were. Other such artifacts would do well to try and find a greater identity or correlation between religion and the people in a more everyday

light, as the stone monuments do not necessarily reflect the day to day religious practices of the common folk.

Aside from this, the Vikings settled in other locations than just the British Isles, such as Greenland and even the Americas, albeit later on when Scandinavia had become officially Christian. However, the change from paganism to Christianity did not happen overnight (e.g. Carver 2003; Ferguson 2009), and so as stated above, throughout all the regions the Scandinavians had reached, during this time there was an intermingling of paganism and the newly converted Christians, oftentimes being one and the same. It would be interesting to analyze how similar cultural assimilation and mingling was handled in other regions, whether there was any interaction between other cultures or not.

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* Unless stated otherwise, Hollander's translation of the Poetic Edda was used for excerpts in the text

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7. Appendix

Name	Figure Number	Location	Type	Size	Date	General Interpretation/ Motif	Source
Andreas 121 (95)	**8**	Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man	Cross-shaft	Unknown	Late 10th century	Sigurd Loki	Kermode 1892, fig. 2,3; Wilson 2008, fig. 4
Andreas 128 (102)	**10**	Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man	Cross-Shaft	35 cm	Late 10th – Early 11th century	Ragnarök	Kermode 1907; Wilson 2008, fig. 39
Andreas 131 (103)	**12**	Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man	Cross-shaft	Unknown	Mid-10th century	Ragnarök Undetermined	Cumming 1857, fig. 9
Br Olsen 200B	**13**	Jurby Parish, Isle of Man	Cross-Shaft	Unknown	Late 10th century	Ragnarök	Cumming 1857, fig. 11; Kermode 1907, p. 29; Manx National Heritage 2016
Gosforth 01	**16**	Gosforth, Cumberland, St. Mary's Church	Cross-shaft	Height: 4.42 m	Early 10th century	Ragnarök	Bailey 1980, fig. 23; Corpus: Vol 2 p. 100-104 (x)
Gosforth 06	**14**	Gosforth, Cumberland, St. Mary's Church	Slab	H: 69.9 cm	Early 10th century	Thor fishing	Bailey 1980, plate 36; Corpus: Vol 2 p. 108-109 (x)
Great Clifton	**18**	Great Clifton, Cumberland	Cross-shaft	H: 144 cm W: 36.5-31cm	10th century	Sigurd Loki Undetermined	Corpus: Vol 2 p. 110-111 (x)

				D: 15-14.5 cm			
Halton (St Wilfrid) 01	**19, 20**	Halton, Lancaster	Cross-shaft	Height: 1.17 m	10th Century	Sigurd	Bailey 1980, fig. 15; Corpus: Vol 9 p. 177-83 (x)
Kirkby Stephen 01	**21**	Kirkby, Westmorland	Cross-shaft	Height: 65 cm	10th Century	Loki	Corpus: Vol 2 p. 120-121 (x)
Leeds 1a-k	**22, 24**	Leeds, West Riding of Yorkshire, St. Peter Church	Cross-shaft	Height: 359 cm (inc. recon)	10th Century	Wayland	Corpus: Vol 8 p. 198-202 (x)
Lowther 04	**25, 27**	Lowther, Westmoreland, St. Michael Church	Hogback	Length: 1.59 m	10th century	Valkyrie and Einherjar	Collingwood 1927, fig. 210; Corpus: Vol 2 p. 130 (x)
Malew 120 (94)	**28**	Malew, Isle of Man	Cross-Shaft	Unknown	Unknown	Sigurd	Cumming 1857, fig. 15
Maughold 122 (96)	**30**	Ramsey, Maughold, Isle of Man	Cross-shaft	Unknown	Mid 12th century	Sigurd	Isle of Man Guide 2016
Michael 126 (100)	**31**	Kirk Michael, Isle of Man	Cross-shaft	Unknown	Late 11th century	Odin and Einherjar	Cumming 1857, fig. 3; Kermode 1892
Ovingham 01	**32**	Ovingham, Northumberland, St. Mary the Virgin Church	Cross-shaft	H: 39.4 W: 29.8-27.9cm D: 20.3-19.1 cm	Late 10th-Early 11th century	Ragnarök	Bailey 1980, fig. 24; Corpus: Vol 1 p. 215-216 (x)
Skipwith 01	**33**	Skipwith, Eastern Yorkshire, St. Helen Church	Slab	H: 35.7 cm W: 62.5 cm	9-11th century	Ragnarök	Bailey 1980, plate 38; Corpus: Vol 3 p. 214-215 (x)
Sockburn 03	**34**	Sockburn, Durham, Conyers Chapel	Cross-shaft	H: 81.25 cm W: 33 cm	Early 10th century	Valkyrie and Einherjar	Corpus: Vol 1 p. 136-137 (x)

				D: 25.4 cm			
Sockburn 15	**35**	Sockburn Durham, Conyers Chapel	Hogback	L: 43 cm W: 26.5 cm	Early 10th Century	Valkyrie and Einherjar	Corpus: Vol 1 p. 141 (x)
Sockburn 21	**37**	Sockburn, Durham, Conyers Chapel	Hogback	L: 112.2 cm	End 9th-Early 10th century	Ragnarök	Bailey 1980, fig. 26; Corpus: Vol 1 p. 143-144 (x)