

# OGAM: ARCHAIZING, ORTHOGRAPHY AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE MANUSCRIPT KEY TO THE ALPHABET\*

## I

Inscriptions 227 and 118 in *CIIC* are transliterated as follows: **OTTINN MAQI VECR . . .; TENREN MONOI GDUQDEGGEV.\*\***

The former of these is cut not on the edge of the stone but on an imaginary vertical stemline on one of the broad faces (see Pl. Ia\*\*\*), a feature of later Ogam in general.<sup>1</sup> The reading, according to Brash (*OIMG* 196–7), is **OTTINN MAQI VECM**. A flake has broken off at the top of the inscription and Macalister, finding the lower ends of three scores of the **M**–series just before the damaged area, restores to **VECREC**,<sup>2</sup> following a suggestion apparently made by Bishop Graves. Certainly, if these scores were visible, **R** would be preferable as a restoration to the **ng** and **z** of the later **MS** tradition (on which more anon), coming as it does after a **C**. A comparison of Macalister’s sketches in *Epig.* ii 123 and *CIIC* 222, however, does little to inspire confidence. In the former, one complete **M**–score and the best part of a second are given to appear before the missing flake, and the last two scores of the restored **C** above it. In *CIIC*, on the other hand, only the lower parts of *three* **M**–scores are shown before the flake, and all four scores of the **C** are accommodated within the damaged area. In my own examination of this stone (9 August 1985) I found that the scores of Brash’s reading were perfectly clear.<sup>3</sup> Between his **M** and the damaged area

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\*\*Inscriptions in the Roman alphabet are given in capitals. Ogam is rendered throughout in bold type, capitals being used for inscriptions on stone, lower case for manuscript Ogam. A key to the abbreviations used will be found at the end of the paper.

\*\*\*All photographs reproduced here were developed and enlarged by Mr Terence Dunne, chief laboratory technician in the Geography Department, Trinity College, Dublin. Mr Dunne also photographed the Breastagh Ogam and I would like to thank him not only for his excellent work but also for the interest he showed in the task. The Kerry Ogams were photographed by my wife with the assistance of Astrid Lamm, whom I also thank.

<sup>1</sup>See Vendryes, ‘L’écriture ogamique et ses origines’, *Études Celtiques* iv (1941/8) 83–116, 100.

<sup>2</sup>The restored form **VECREC** is quoted by MacNeill (‘Notes’ 348,359), O’Rahilly (*EIHM* 464), Pokorny (*IEW* 1129) and more recently Joseph (*Ériu* xxxiii 176). I think it important to emphasize that this reading is not actually attested.

<sup>3</sup>They have in fact been enhanced with a knife by the local farmer, Mr Tom O’Donoghue, to whom I am indebted for his help. The well-intentioned clean-up, of course, has the counter-effect of distracting the reader’s attention from more faint, untouched, scores. Note, for example, that the inscription as it appears on Pl. Ia would seem to begin with the vowel **A** rather than **O**, Mr O’Donoghue having passed over the first notch. I would also like to record my thanks to Mr Dermot Twomey of Church Street, Kilgarvan, for helping me to locate this stone.

there are traces of one almost complete score of this series (as in *Epig.*, not as in *CIIC*). Macalister's sketch in *CIIC*, however, is more accurate in respect of the upper part of the flake which continues on the left-hand side almost to the top of the stone, removing all possible traces of second-series scores (such as the restored **C**). Following the spacing at the top of the surviving inscription, where the engraver would seem to have realized he was running out of room, approximately 32cm would be required to accommodate **REC**, and the distance between the **M**-score and the top of the flake on this side is approximately 33cm. Technically, therefore, the restoration presents no great difficulty; it remains questionable, however, on orthographic grounds, on which see below.

Inscription 118, now in the National Museum, is discussed in considerable detail by Macalister; his account of the vicissitudes of the stone, however, need not concern us here. What is important is that the legend makes no sense as it stands. It has been deciphered by inverting the symbols of the **b** and **h** series, whence **VEQREQ MOQOI GLUNLEGGET**. As a cryptic variety of Ogam this might be called *Ogam lethimarbach*, 'half-deceitful Ogam', 'deceitful Ogam' (*Ogam imarbach*) being described in the MS tradition as *aicme h re aicme b*, 7 *aicme ailme re aicme muine* 'series **h** for series **b** and series **a** for series **m**' (see *Aur.* lines 6017–18).

In his 'Notes' (349, 360) MacNeill equates Ogam **VECREC** (sic) and **VEQREQ** with MS *Fíachrach*, analysing the name as a compound, the second element of which is OIr. *rí* 'king' and setting up an original (Primitive Irish) *\*Vēqarīgas* (gen.sg.). His identification of the second element can hardly be doubted.<sup>4</sup> It is supported by the declension of the name as a guttural stem, by the early nom. sg. form *Fíachrai* (M. A. O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1962) 2 1.40, 8 1.25), and in particular by Gaulish **VECORIX** (nom.sg., see D. Ellis Evans, *Gaulish personal names* (Oxford 1967) 248). The latter, however, with its **C**, not **P** or **Q**, suggests an original *\*veiko-*, not *\*veikwo-*, and Pokorny (loc. cit.) is probably right in equating the first element of Ogam **VECREC** (sic), MS *Fíachrai*, *Fíachrach* with IE *\*veik-* 'energische, bes. feindselige Kraftäusserung' (cf. Latin *vinco*, OIr. *fichid*, with the zero grade *\*vik-*). *\*Veikorīgs* 'energetic' or 'hostile king' would make perfect sense as a personal name. Indeed the only support for MacNeill's /k\*/ (accepted by Jackson, *LHEB* 141 n.2) is Ogam **VEQREQ**, on which see below, and Adomnán's *Fechureg*, the *-chu-* of which is regarded by MacNeill as a spelling of aspirate *q* ('Notes' 360 and 'Archaisms' 38–9), comparing Lowland Scots *Farquhar* = *Fearchar*. I would be more inclined to regard *Fechureg* as

<sup>4</sup>In O'Brien's 'Rhys Lecture' notes (1957), edited and published by Rolf Baumgarten as 'Old Irish personal names' in *Celtica* x 211–36, *Fíachra* is included among the guttural stems (225) but not under the rubric 'compounds with *rí*'. By the latter, however, O'Brien may have meant those late compounds in which *-rí* is preserved unchanged in unstressed position in Early Irish. *Fíachrai* does not belong to this category.

representing a pre-syncope /fe:xərey/ with -u- for the obscure [ə], on which see further below.<sup>5</sup>

An original \**Veikoriġs*, \**Veikoriġos* would have passed through the following phonetic shapes.

1	2	3
A /veikori:gs/	/ve:kor:iks/	/ve:kor:i:ss/
B /veikori:gos/	/ve:kor:i:gos/	/ve:kor:i:gos/
4	5	6
A /ve:xari:h/	/fe:xəri/	/fe:xri/
B /ve:xari:yah/	/fe:xərey/	/fe:xrey/
7	8	9
A /fe:xri/	/fiəxri/	/fiəxri/
B /fe:xrex/	/fiəxrex/	/fiəxrəx/
10		
A /fiəxrə/		
B /fiəxrəx/		

Stages 1–2 are Continental Celtic, 3–4 Primitive Irish, 5 Archaic Irish, 6–8 Early Old Irish, 9 Old Irish, 10 Late Old Irish–Middle Irish (on the terminology used here see *Ériu* xxxiv 21). Stage 2A is attested in Gaulish VECORIX, 8–9A in Old Irish *Fíachrai*, 10A in Middle Irish *Fíachra*,<sup>6</sup> 5B in Adomnán's *Fechureg*, 6–7B in his *Fechreg*, *Fechrech*,<sup>7</sup> and an early example of 9B in *Fiechrach* (*Thes.* ii 271.6), later generally *Fíachrach*.

It will be clear from this sketch of the phonetic history of the name that the two velar sounds which it contains in the gen. remained distinct until a

<sup>5</sup>On pre-syncope forms in Adomnán see O'Rahilly, *EIHM* 464, *Drebene* = Old Irish *Dre(i)bne*, and *Celtica* i 396, *Colgion* = Old Irish *Colgen*. Note also his reference to Bede's *Meilochon* which he believes may derive from an early document written in Iona (see n.7). The fact that the MS tradition could preserve a form older than the clearly post-syncope *VEQREQ* need cause no alarm. We are not entitled to assume that a form must be old simply because it is attested on stone. Note, for example, that several post-apocope forms occur on the monuments in Ogam while two pre-apocope spellings are attested in the Roman alphabet, one on stone (*CIIC* no. 1 MACCI), and one in the Annals of Ulster *sub anno* 456, *Cathbhotha*, on which see O'Rahilly, *Celtica* i 396.

<sup>6</sup>The reduction of final unstressed /i/, /e/, etc., to [ə] in the open syllable belongs to the end of the Old Irish period, unlike that in closed unstressed final syllables which took place at the end of the Early Old Irish and that in interior (later syncopated) syllables which belongs to the Archaic Irish period (see Greene, 'The growth of palatalization in Irish', *Trans. Philological Soc.* (1973) 127–36, 134). After a neutral consonant the new final [ə] is generally written *a*; after a palatal, *e*. Compare \**caturigs* > *Caithre/Cathra*, \**ro-rigs* > *ruiri*, *ruire*.

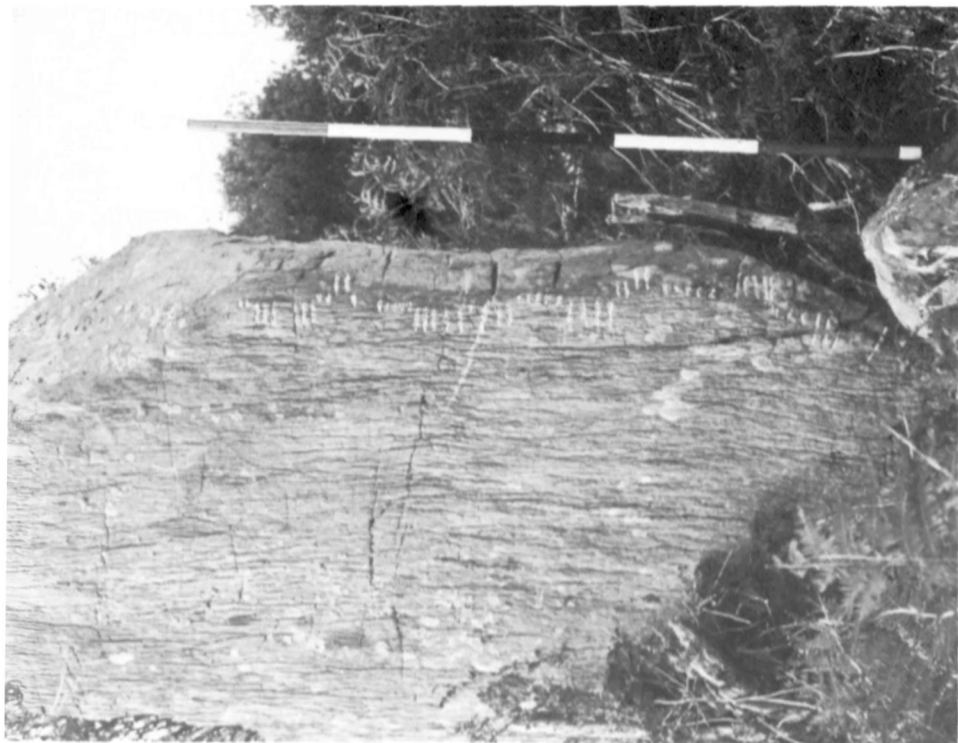
<sup>7</sup>For these spellings see *ALC* 147. The occurrence of three successive stages in Adomnán's spelling suggests that he was drawing on materials of different dates of composition. Note that the form *Fechreg*, in which devoicing of the final guttural has not yet taken place, can be compared with spellings in the *prima manus* of the Würzburg glosses such as *rigteg* (= Old Irish *rigthech*), etc., and with *aireg*, later *airech*, gen.sg. of *aire*, on which see MacNeill, 'The law of status or franchise', *PRIA* xxxvi C 265–316, 271.

comparatively late stage in its development, indeed until the dawn of Classical Old Irish. The proposed restoration to **VECREC** discussed above can thus be seen to have been suggested by spellings such as *Fechrech*, *Fíachrach* and in particular **VEQREQ**, in all of which the relevant consonants have fallen together, rather than by *Fechureg*, *Fechreg* or the etymological *\*-rīgos*. In accordance with generally held opinions regarding Ogam spelling (see below) we should expect a post-syncope form of an original *\*veikorīgos* to appear as **\*VECREG**, where **G** preserves the original form of the sound, ignoring all post-lenition developments. Only towards the end of the Ogam monument period should we expect to find **VECREC**. Indeed **VECREG** would present no more technical difficulties as a restoration than **VECREC**, since **G** requires less space than **C**. The position of the inscription on the stone, however, suggests a late rather than an early date, and might justify the **C**.

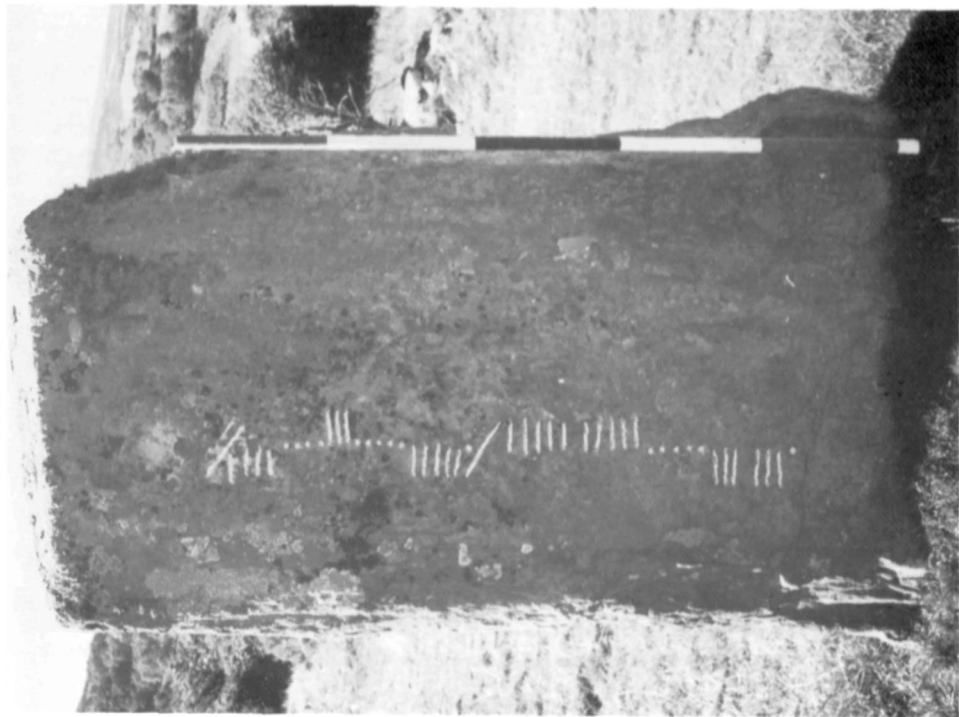
It will also be clear from what has been said that the velars in the compound *\*Veikorīgos* never passed through the stage [kʷ] (Ogam **Q**). The spelling **VEQREQ** is thus suspect in terms of Ogam orthography, a fact which has led to its being described as an example of ‘pseudo-archaising’ (MacNeill, ‘Archaisms’ 39) or of ‘confusion’ (*LHEB* 141 n.2). One thing about it seems certain, however: the Ogamist’s use of the same symbol for both velars along with his **E** in the second syllable show that he must have been writing in the Early Old Irish period, pronouncing [fe:xrex], stage 7B. This paper was originally intended as a short note putting forward an alternative explanation for the Ogamist’s use of the two **Q**s to those of MacNeill and Jackson. In researching the feasibility of my explanation, however, I found that it had already been proposed as far back as 1879 by Samuel Ferguson (*PRIA* xv 207ff) only to be ignored by all later commentators. It also became apparent that several aspects of received opinion in Ogam studies militated against the explanation but erred, in my opinion at least, in showing too little faith in the Ogamist and in ignoring the continuity of Ogam from monument to manuscript. It seems to me that the all too frequent tendency to dismiss many of the spellings we find on the monuments as mistakes is damaging in that it obscures the importance of the material in question. Before reviving Ferguson’s explanation of **VEQREQ**, therefore, I would like to take up three aspects of Ogam studies which I feel may be in need of some reappraisal. I should point out here that the layout of the remainder of this paper reflects its gestation and not the relative importance of the matters discussed. Needless to say, whether the explanation of **VEQREQ** to be proposed be accepted or not is irrelevant to the following discussion.

## II

It has become commonplace in Ogam studies to accuse the Ogamists of ‘archaising’ and it is unfortunate that in the major work on the inscriptions (*CIIC*) they are introduced to us as bungling antiquarians, blindly indifferent to



b. The Dromatouk Ogam stone.



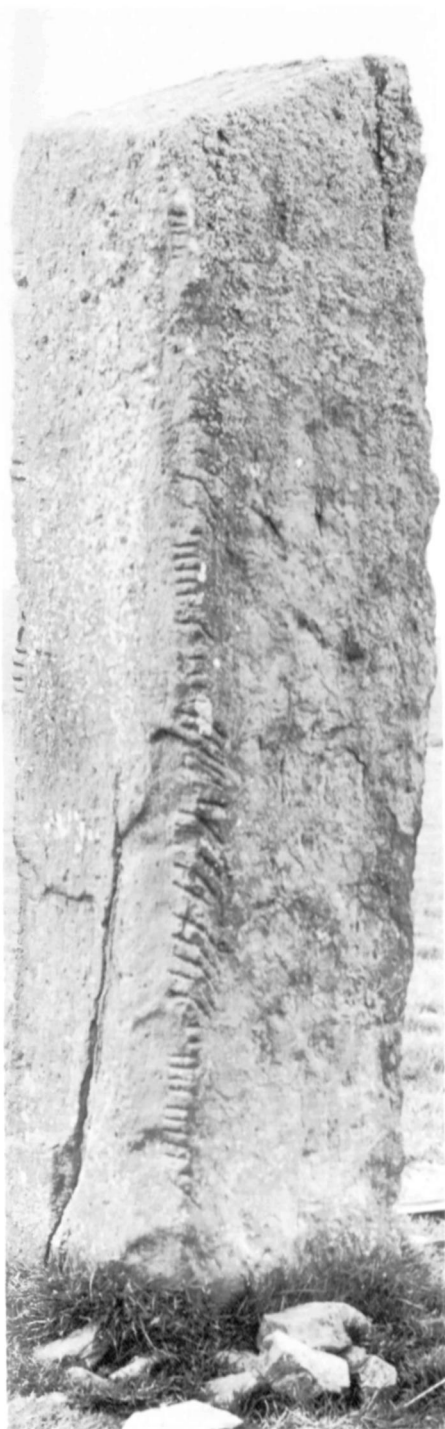
Iomanagh Ogam stone.



a. The Kinard East Ogam stone.



b. Detail of upper angle of Kinard East Ogam stone.



a. The Breastagh Ogam stone: right angle.



b. The Breastagh Ogam stone: left angle.



The fracture on the right angle of the Breastagh stone showing MAQ AMMLLO ... DT.



the niceties of grammatical inflection and willing to compromise their genitive case-endings according as the availability of space on the stone dictated. To demonstrate their arbitrary treatment of the material Macalister (*CIIC* xiv) refers to the Andreas stone (no. 500) with its two genitive forms **ROCATI** and **ROCATOS** which, he says, are obviously contemporary and are 'sufficient proof that these elaborate inflections had already lost all touch with reality'. What he does not mention here is that on the inscription in question **ROCATI** occurs on the face of the stone in Roman letters, **ROC(A)T(O)S** on the edge in Ogam. Far from reflecting an arbitrary indifference to inflection the forms demonstrate quite accurately structural resistance to borrowing, the general reluctance of languages to adopt the inflectional desinences of others (see my discussion in *Ériu* xxxv 137–62). **ROCATI** is the Latin genitive of \**Rocatus*, the Latin form of Primitive Irish \**Ro-catus*, gen. *Ro-catōs*, Old Irish *Rochad*, *Rochada*. Indeed this very stone has the same duality in the name of the person commemorated, the son of *Rocatus*, who appears in the Latin as **AMMECATI** and in the Ogam as **.B.CATOS**, convincingly restored by Jackson (*ECNE* 209) to **IMBICATOS** (or **AMBICATOS**, *LHEB* 173 n.l), Old Irish *Imchad*, *Imchada*. The same also applies to Latinized **MACVDECETI**, Ogam **MAQI-DECCEDDAS** (*CIIC* nos 440,66), which Macalister, forgetting his comments on **ROCATI**, **ROCATOS**, regards as distinct because, among other things, of the distinct desinences (*CIIC* 314).<sup>8</sup>

Since the majority of case-endings in Ogam words and names known from the historical record are precisely what we expect, the charge of indifference and incompetence cannot hold. But what of that of pseudo-archaising? This is frequently made by MacNeill, but it should be noted that his linguistic analysis of many Ogam forms was coloured (at least in 'Archaisms') by his *a priori* assumption that the epigraphists were members of an anti-Roman Druidic caste whose isolated culture was 'narrowed, perhaps decadent, certainly pedantic, retrospective, therefore archaistic' ('Archaisms' 34). Thus he argues quite rightly that the presence of inflectional desinences on an Ogam inscription may be deceptive as a criterion for dating, but goes on to explain that the 'archaic aspect' may be evidence 'only of the degree of expertness belonging to the archaising epigraphist' (ibid. 40). Here it is important that one distinguish between an archaic spelling and an archaising one. If final syllables do appear, for example, on an inscription known to be of post-apocope date, such as no.

<sup>8</sup>See Jackson's discussion in *ECNE* 211. It will be noted that Celtic names are not necessarily assigned to the cognate declension in Latin; indeed the Latin second declension is almost invariably preferred. Adomnán shows a similar preference (cf. not only *Cormac* > *Cormaccus* gen. *Cormacci* but also *Aed* > *Aidus*, *Aidi*, *ALC* 133, 145 and *Ériu* xxxiv 155 n.39). This discriminatory factor is Jackson's explanation for the -RIGI of CLVTORIGI, CATVRIGI (sic. leg.), CAMVLORIGI, etc., of the inscriptions in Britain (*LHEB* 626 ff) as compared with the correct (?) assignment to the cognate declension in VOTEPORIGIS, Ogam VOTECORIGAS. Koch goes further in adding these Latinizations to a considerable body of evidence pointing to an early pre-apocope loss of imparisyllabic declension in British ('The loss of final syllables and loss of declension in Brittonic', *Bull. Board of Celtic Studies* xxx (1983) 201–33, 210–11).

358 MEMORIA VOTEPORIGIS PROTICTORIS, VOTECORIGAS (approx. A.D. 500), one is entitled to say that the spelling is 'archaic', but only in the sense that that of Modern English *knife* is 'archaic', while also conventional. MacNeill ignores the conservative nature of writing and the fact that the endings need not have disappeared from the written word when they were lost in the spoken one, just as *k-* has not disappeared from *knife* though it has from [naif]. Needless to say, of course, the use of the written word at the time in question was not as common or as widespread as it is today, and the orthography was more fluid and changeable than is that of Modern English. We thus find many examples in monument Ogam of actual changes taking place in the language at the time in a way in which this is not found in the standard orthography of English today, but there is enough evidence to show that a conventional orthography had been established long before the loss of final syllables. Taking the modern analogy again, then, if one is to be laid open to the charge of archaising it is not sufficient to use the archaic but conventional spelling *knife*; one must write *cnif*. By the same token the Ogamist can only be accused of 'archaising' in writing the final syllables if it can be shown that at the time of writing a conventional orthography not recognizing these had been established. Ogam –RIGAS can be described as contemporary and conventional (=ri:gas/), or traditional/archaic and conventional (=rey/). Only after it has ceased to be conventional can it be described as 'archaising'. Until then it is no more 'archaising' than, for example, Modern French *chante*, *chantes*, *chantent*, all pronounced [ʃã:t]. Modern Irish *foghantaidhe* 'servant' was an archaic but conventional spelling of [fo:nti:] at the beginning of the present century. Only now, having been replaced by *fóntaí*, may it be described as 'archaising'. When an ending appears, then, in its correct form, as is the case with most names known from the historical record, we are not entitled to assume that the inscription is of pre-apocope date, but it is equally wrong to assume that the epigraphist achieved the 'correct' spelling by 'restoration', however well informed, or by accident.

With the benefit of Greene's researches (for reference see n.6) many of the examples of what MacNeill refers to as 'inaccurate archaistic restorations' can be accounted for otherwise. This has already been done by Cullen (*Ériu* xxiii 228) for Ogam –EAS < –IAS, which reflects the lowering of original /ijas/ to /ejas/ whence MS –e. A considerable number of the 'inaccurate restorations' come under the rubric 'vowels wrongly restored' in MacNeill's 'Archaisms' (37–40). These are described as faulty pre-syncope restorations on the part of post-syncope Ogamists, the inaccuracy being in the quality of the vowel restored. Among his examples are no. 172 TOGITTACC for \*TOGETTACC, the name being made up of the noun \*tonketo– (Middle Welsh *tynghed*, Early Old Irish *toceth* 'fortune, good luck') and the suffix –ācus. MacNeill points out that the vowel of the second syllable must have been /e/, since an original /togitac–/ would have yielded Old Irish \*Tuicthech, not the attested *Toicthech*. Similar arguments are made for no. 192 QENILOC[A]GNI for \*QENNA–,

no. 176 CONUNETT for \*CUNA–, etc. Greene, however, has demonstrated that syncope was preceded by a reduction of the vowels of intertonic syllables to two phonemes, /i/ (< /i,e,u/) and /ə/ (< /a,o/ as well as historical /u/ followed by /o,a/ in the next syllable). A later and somewhat similar reduction of the vowels of closed unstressed syllables at the end of the Early Old Irish period led to such non-historical spellings as *áram* with *a* for original /i:/ (< \**ad-rīmā*), *fodil* with *i* for original /a:/ (< \**fo-dāl*–), *rethit* with *i* for original /o/ (< \**retonti*), etc. Such spellings are merely indicative of the reductions in these syllables, though, of course, they are conventional in Old Irish. But since similar reductions in the intertonic syllables fell within the monument Ogam period<sup>9</sup> there is no reason why they should not be attested there, given the fluidity of the orthography. Indeed, as we shall see, even those of the Old Irish period are found on the stones. For this reason I can see no objection to regarding **TOGITACC** not as a blundering artificial restoration but as an up-to-date spelling of /togiθax'/ with Greene's [i] for original /e/. **CONUNETT**, with U for [ə], can be compared with Adomnán's *Fechureg* (cf. Old Irish *árusc/árasc*, *folud/folad* where *u* and *a* represent /ə/ and *dénom/dénum*, *atrob/atrub* where *u/o* are for /u/ (see *GOI* 66, 64.9.)). Similar explanations will hold for other examples quoted by MacNeill.<sup>10</sup> In all cases it would seem advisable to look for linguistic support for spellings before resorting to theories of faulty restoration, or assuming ulterior motives on the part of the Ogamist. Compare Jackson's remarks on attempts to spell the 'un-spellable sound ə' of the composition vowel on fifth-century inscriptions in Britain (*LHEB* 644–6).

### III

There is a tendency in modern Ogam studies to polarize Ogam and manuscript orthography. In his 'Notes' (337) MacNeill tabulates seven 'chief distinguishing features' of the two orthographies and argues that Ogam and MS spelling are as distinct and separate as if they belonged to two unrelated languages, each system standing entirely uninfluenced by the other. This is a very misleading line of argument, especially since not a single one of MacNeill's distinguishing criteria is watertight. MacNeill in fact compared traditional and

<sup>9</sup>The **A** for **O** as composition vowel of *o*-stems and consonantal stems (e.g. **VOENACUNAS**, **COILLABBOTAS**, **CUNAGUSOS**, **CUNAMAGLI**) does not reflect this reduction but is to be explained rather as the adoption by the composition form of the vocalism of the final syllable of the simplex. On the shift of historical /o/ to /a/ in this position see *GOI* 59.4, and on the behaviour of the composition vowel in juncture see Hamp, *Études Celtiques* vi (1952) 285.

<sup>10</sup>Note that in his 'Notes' (351) MacNeill had explained the U of **CONUNETT** in this way and that Pokorny (*ZCP* xii 423) suggested that at the time of the lowering of [i,u] to [e,o] there may have been a degree of uncertainty as to the spelling of these changing sounds. Other examples he quotes are **MEDDOGENI** and **LUGGODICAS** with **O** for **U**. The latter, however, appears as **LUGUDECCAS** in *CHIC* no. 263. On the theory of 'archaising' Thurneysen had the following to say: 'Doch daß man schon auf den ältesten inschriften sich einer nicht mehr lebendigen, sondern nur etwa von den dichtern oder druiden bewahrten sprachform (flexionsformen!) bedient hätte, ist wenig wahrscheinlich' (in 'Zum Ogam', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* lxi (1937) 188–208, 198).

probably early Ogam inscriptions with late MS spelling, ignoring the later stones and the early MS orthography. Elsewhere I have tried to demonstrate that a similar treatment of the Latin loan-words in Early Irish was largely responsible for the theory that there were two distinct historical groups of these ('A chronology of the Latin loan-words in Early Irish', *Ériu* xxxiv 21–71). In that case the hybrid borrowings sharing features of both groups, and thus, to my mind, calling the dichotomy into question, were being ignored or brushed aside as anachronistic. In the same way, transitional spellings in Ogam and MS must arouse doubt as to the validity of MacNeill's argument, in particular his tendency to polarize the epigraphists and the scribes.

MacNeill's first distinguishing feature, that Ogam has special symbols for the sounds /w/ and /ŋ/ (V, NG) while MS spelling has not, cannot stand. Ogam has a symbol for a sound which we transliterate as V on the basis of our own theories as to the nature of the sound during the monument period, and in particular because it is so transliterated on the Latin/Ogam inscriptions of Britain. The medieval MS Ogamists transliterate it as *f* since the sound had become /f/ in the interim. It seems to me that we are obliged to follow the example of these medieval Ogamists in the case of any inscription which we have reason to believe post-dates the development of /w/ to /f/. Since **VEQREQ**, for example, is clearly later than Adomnán's *Fechureg* and *Fechreg* we must transliterate with F, since to retain V here would be an anachronism given that Adomnán uses *F*– not *U*–. Here, then, there is no difference between Ogam and MS apart from the obvious graphic one. The difference lies rather in the spoken language. On the supposed special Ogam symbol NG see further below.

Criteria 4 and 5 are that the doubling of consonants has no phonetic significance in Ogam but expresses distinct phonetic values in MSS, and that the strong and weak values of *l, n, r* are not distinguished in Ogam but are in MSS, the strong values being indicated by doubling. This too is suspect; MacNeill's arguments for Ogam may be valid, though it is difficult to avoid concluding that the doubling of consonants on the stones frequently indicates lenition, possibly also vowel-length. He has, however, seriously overstated consistency in the MS tradition; indeed Fergus Kelly has recently referred to 'the meaningless doubling of consonants, a practice which is very frequent in Old Irish orthography' (in Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* x (Dublin 1979) 244). I have noted the following examples of inconsistency in the Book of Armagh alone (references are to *Thes.* ii): *Feec* 259.31, *Fíacc* 241.14; *Arthicc* 261.37, *Airthic* 266.40; *maicc*, *maic* 267.37; *Aird Machæ* 271.44, elsewhere *Airdd*; *fácab* 238.15, *fáccab* 242.19; *Patric*, *Patrice* 242.9; *locc* 242.7, *luic* 242.6; *becc* 241.8, *bicæ* 241.18; *Conill* 268.47, *Conail* 261.28; *Neel* 263.33, *Neill* 263.35. Note also Adomnán's *Domnaill* 278.32, and *Domnail* 279.45, Latinized *Domnallo* 279.44.

In the Book of Armagh, as the editors note (*Thes.* ii 259 n.e), one also finds lenition indicated by the doubling of consonants, and it seems probable, as has

been suggested (see next reference), that the same device is found on the stones in, for example, no. 172 **TOGITACC** and no. 103 **CARRTTACC GACI** (read **MMACI**). Thus we find *Bregg* 259.33 beside *Breg* 263.11; *Echredd* 264.18, and the Latinized forms *Siggeus* 262.28, *Roddanus* 263.1, *Bitteum* 265.8 (= *Betheum* 265.11). For a discussion of these spellings see Carney, *Éigse* xvii 417ff, where they are described as a continuation of centuries-old usage. It will be clear that the early MS tradition is by no means consistent in this regard and is thus no different from, though probably not entirely as inconsistent as, Ogam.

Criterion 6, that Ogam does not distinguish between long and short vowels while MS does, needs little comment. The use of the length mark or the doubling of the vowel is far from consistent in the early MS tradition. Furthermore, one can argue that Ogam does have a device or two for this purpose. It is clear, for example, that **-AGNI**, traditionally representing [agni], is used for [a:n'] on at least some inscriptions (see below) just as *-ghn-* was used up to recently in Modern Irish to indicate length in a preceding vowel; and the frequency of **ANN** on later inscriptions for original **AGNI** may suggest that the doubled consonant could serve the same purpose.

Criterion 7, that palatalization of consonants is never expressed in Ogam while it is expressed regularly in MSS in the case of final consonants, otherwise casually, also needs reappraisal. Since the expression of palatalization of internal consonants is by no means developed even in the Würzburg glosses it would be out of the question to expect to find it in Ogam. As to final consonants, the comparison is not valid for Ogam inscriptions which preserve the case-endings, for obvious reasons. It is true that the MS tradition is more consistent in this regard than in the others, though not true in the case of at least one set of names on the basis of which a comparison can be made with Ogam, viz. masculine names in *-án*, Ogam **-AGNI**.

If one regards the *-i-* of, say, Old Irish *berid* (later *beirid*) or *fodil* (later *fodail*) as a mark of palatalization, then the MS tradition is consistent, and from a very early time. The representation of original /e/, /a/, /o/, etc., by *-i-* is attested in writing from an early period, not alone in Adomnán's Irish names *Cathir* (nom. *Cather*), *Libir* (nom. *Liber*) but also in his very interesting hybrid Latinizations which reproduce the Irish vowel-shift alongside the Latin case-marker: *Brendenus*, gen. *Brendini*, *Cainnechus*, gen. *Cainnichi*, *Comgellus*, gen. *Comgilli* (see *ALC* 134). Its antiquity is also demonstrated by the fact that it is attested in archaic texts which otherwise preserve the original quality of vowels in closed unstressed syllables, e.g. in the Cambray Homily (*Thes.* ii 245–7) *gorith* (subj.), *laubir*, *fochrici* (note also *forcanit* in the *prima manus* of the Würzburg glosses), as well as by the fact that exceptions to the rule that final palatal consonants after unstressed syllables are preceded by *i* are rare (examples are *fulget*, Wb. 20c5, *a prima manu*, *sóirfed*, Wb 32d13, *pridched* 33d1 and *cretfed* 1a3). It is not surprising, therefore, that such spellings are actually attested in Ogam. Examples which I have noted are no.

145 **QRIMITIR**,<sup>11</sup> no. 233 **MAQ DOMNGINN** (compare no. 73 **DOMNGEN**), and the very late no. 187 **ANM MAILE-INBIR MACI BROCCANN**.

In the above examples the palatal-marking *-i-*, if such it is, carries the full weight of the syllable. In cases where the marker is merely a glide, on the other hand, there is MS evidence for its absence, particularly after *e*.<sup>12</sup> Thus in the Book of Armagh one finds 'a filio *Fechach* filii *Nell*' (264.24–5, compare 'filium *Neill*' 263.28) and 'ad *Ferti* virorum *Feec*' (259.31, compare '*hi Ferti* virorum *Feicc*' 263.17–18). One might also refer to *as-ber* in the Cambray Homily<sup>13</sup> alongside *as-beir*, and to examples in the Milan glosses such as *leth* for *leith* (128a1), on which see *GOI* §86. In view of these, Ogam **ERC** (no. 178), if it is the gen. of a masculine name corresponding to MS *Eirc*, which can hardly be doubted since it is followed by **MAQI MAQI-ERCIA MU DOVINIA**, is not to be regarded as a strictly Ogam spelling.

The MS tradition is very consistent in writing the glide after *a* and this consistency undoubtedly points to the existence of a distinguishable articulatory movement (*GOI* §86). I suspect that this is the case which MacNeill had in mind in referring to the distinguishing features of Ogam and MS since most of the examples of failure to represent palatalization are after **A**, particularly in the word **MAQ**, **MAC** earlier **MAQI**. It should be remembered, however, that the majority of examples of this word in Ogam have **-I**, which represents the presence of a syllable in pre-apocope inscriptions and, as MacNeill himself suggests ('Notes' 354), probably indicates the palatal quality of a preceding consonant in post-apocope examples such as no. 4 **LUGADDON MAQI LUGUDEC** (earlier **-DECAS**), no. 176 **CONUNETT MAQI CONURI**, no. 187 **ANM MAILE-INBIR MACI BROCCANN**, and in particular the Inchagoill stone, no. 1 **LIE LUGUAEDON MACCI MENUEH**.<sup>14</sup> At exactly

<sup>11</sup>Cowgill points out that the third **I** of **QRIMITIR** < \**qremiteri* does not fit Pokorny's rule (*ZCP* xii 420) that there is no raising in unstressed syllables, and suggests that the spelling is not exact or the rule needs some adjustment ('The etymology of Irish *guidid* and the outcome of \**g<sup>u</sup>h* in Celtic', in *Lautgeschichte und Etymologie*, Akten der vi. Fachtagung der indogermanischen Gesellschaft, ed. M. Mayrhofer, M. Peters and O. E. Pfeiffer (Wiesbaden 1980) 49–78, 58 n.9<sup>b</sup>). The spelling, however, is not inexact if one accepts that Ogam and MS orthography do overlap. Since the inscription is clearly post-apocope and the vowel-shift therefore has taken place, we are, I think, justified in equating Ogam **-IR** with MS *-ir*, whether we ascribe the shift to what we call raising or not.

<sup>12</sup>Here, of course, we are dealing with stressed syllables since in unstressed position *ei* is replaced by *i*, as in *fochric*.

<sup>13</sup>This could also be due to confusion with other classes of verbs, on which see *GOI* §554(b). Alternatively, Hamp suggests that the verb *as-be(i)r* contains the root \**berH-*, in which case *-ber* would be regular and *-beir* due to analogy (*Celtica* xi 68–75; I owe this reference to Liam Breatnach).

<sup>14</sup>Máirtín Ó Murchú suggests that if one assumes continuity from Ogam to MS the transposition of *i* as a marker of palatalization from **C-** to **-C** would be no more than a very superficial spelling reform. Is *cetarcoti* (Wb. 17<sup>d</sup>21, *a prima manu*, glossing *quinquies quadragenas*) another example of **Ci** for **iC** (see gl. 17<sup>d</sup>2 which has *coic cethorchuit beimmen*) or an artificial rendering of the Latin distributive adjective *quadrageni* (= *cethorcho* 'forty' + the adjectival suffix *-dae*, acc. pl. *-di*) as suggested by the editors of *Thes.* i 615 n.d? Note that the orthography of the *prima manus* glosses is in a state of flux (see Thurneysen, *ZCP* iii 47–54), suggesting that major changes were taking place in the latter part of the seventh century.

what date the glide came into use after *a* is not clear,<sup>15</sup> but Ogam monuments were still being inscribed at the time since MS *maic* is actually attested on one (no. 83 **LAMADILICCI MAC MAIC BROCC**). A further point worth mentioning in this context is that –AN(N) names in Ogam (=MS –*án*) make up a substantial portion of examples of unmarked post-apocope palatal final consonants after *a* (e.g. no. 88 **BRANAN**, no. 187 **BROCANN**, no. 193 **COLMAN**, no. 145 **COMOGANN**, no. 507 **CRONAN**, no. 256 **DEGLANN**, no. 145 **RON[A]NN**, no. 256 **TEGANN**, etc.). In the MS tradition –*án*, –*áin* are permitted variants of the gen. of these names (*GOI* §280.1; *ALC* 136).<sup>16</sup>

I have left a consideration of MacNeill's second and third distinguishing features of Ogam and MS until last since these are the most instructive for the present discussion. These state (a) that the values of consonant symbols are not varied by their position in Ogam but are in the MSS, and (b) that a stop consonant and corresponding aspirate are represented by the same symbol in Ogam but are distinguished in MSS. Examples of what MacNeill has in mind are that [d] is written **D** in both intervocalic and initial position on the stones (e.g. **DECEDA**; actually the initial **D** here is also aspirate since the name is generally preceded by **MAQI**), whereas in the MSS the stop is written –*t*– in intervocalic or post-vocalic position (e.g. *Deichet*). Similarly [g] and [ɣ] are written in the same way in Ogam but are distinguished in the MS tradition (e.g. **DEGLANN** = MS *Déclán*, **LUGU**– = MS *Lug*–). Criterion 2, however, is not valid for late Ogam and 3 does not apply to the early MS tradition. Once again the transitional forms are ignored by the classification.

To take the MS tradition first, there are well-known examples in early material which fail to make the positional distinction to which MacNeill refers and which fail to mark the lenition of voiceless plosives, the only consonants besides *f* and *s* the lenition of which can be shown in conventional Old Irish spelling. Thus in the *prima manus* of the Würzburg glosses (see *Thes.* i xxiv–xxv) we find *roslogeth* and *adobragart* where intervocalic [g] and [d] are written the 'Ogam' way, as pointed out by Thurneysen (*ZCP* iii 47ff) and more recently by Carney (*Éigse* xvii 417–18). Similarly, lenition is ignored in *cómtínól, forcanit, cetarcoti, fulget, rígteg, túercomlássat, aincis, adcumbe* (for Old Irish *comthinól, forcanith/–id, cetharchoti* (? see n. 14), *fulngith/–id, rígtech, do–erchomlassat, aínchis, ad/athchumbe*), and in the Book of Armagh in *hi Cuil Tolat* 267.8 (for *Tolath*), *Findubrec* 261.27 (later *Findabrach*) and *Cairtin* (later *Cáirthin*) 264.17.

It will be clear that MS spelling did not continue as it had started. What is even more significant in the present context, however, is that the same is true of

<sup>15</sup>The fact that Adomnán does not create hybrid Latin genitives of Irish names with *ai* (*Cellachus, Cellachi*, not *Cellaichi*, cf. *Brendini, Cainnichi* above) is no evidence for late date since he uses the *ai* in the Irish forms of names, indeed even in the genitives of names in –*án*.

<sup>16</sup>Compare, for example, *rám* : *gríanán*: *nGabrán* (gen.) and *áeb nGabráin*: *ndagdán* (read –*án* gen.) in *Ériu* xvi 161, quatrain 15 and 162, quatrain 16. I am grateful to my colleague Liam Breatnach for drawing my attention to these forms. Note also that there is no palatalization in the 'fossilized' form *Dún Garbhán*, /garəvɑ:n/ (I owe this observation to Máirtín Ó Murchú).

Ogam. For just as we find ‘Ogam’ spellings in the MSS we also find ‘MS’ spellings in Ogam. Some of these have been referred to already. The classic example of the criterion presently being discussed is no. 204 **ANM MAGANN MAQI NUADAT**. The last name is the gen. of Old Irish *Núadu* which appears in Old Irish as *Núadat*. The original forms of the nom. and gen. are *\*Neudont-s*, *-os* (see Pokorny, *IEW* 768 = Welsh *Nudd*), and the latter ‘should’ appear on an Ogam inscription as either **NODODAS** or **NODOD** with an undiphthongized [o:], **D** representing [ð] and [d] respectively, and the original quality of the unstressed vowel preserved. **NUADAT** is clearly the late MS spelling, later indeed than Adomnán’s *Fechrech*, which preserves the original unstressed /e/, and later than many spellings in the Cambray Homily and the *prima manus* of the Würzburg glosses.

The demise of the traditional grammar (case-endings) and orthography left Ogam with only one characteristic feature, its alphabet, and this was later expanded and modified (see below). The new ‘scholastic’ Ogam became a mere alternative to writing in the Roman alphabet by adopting the grammar and orthography of MS Irish. This is clearly the position in the Book of Ballymote, indeed already in the Old Irish Codex Sangallensis 904, where the Ogam scholars are quite familiar with the modified alphabet but know nothing of traditional spelling and grammar. MS writing, however, had begun before these developments and while the monuments were still being erected. Indeed, the beginnings of the demise of traditional Ogam, its use for pure transcription in the earliest form, can be witnessed at first hand in the Latin/Ogam inscriptions of Britain. These have been dated by Jackson on palaeographical grounds (*ECNE*) and most fall within the post-lenition period, which is probably also true of the Ogam inscriptions in Ireland.<sup>17</sup> Inscription no. 449 is an example, reading **SAGRAGNI MAQI CUNATAMI, SAGRANI FILI CVNOTAMI** and dated by Jackson to the latter part of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth. That the inscription is post-lenition is suggested by the Latin **SAGRANI** for Ogam **SAGRAGNI**, where the engraver uses Latin *-ANI* for Ogam *-AGNI*, showing that in all probability the pronunciation at the time of writing was [sa:ra:nʲ] (Latin names in *-ānus* may have influenced him). The Ogam spelling is thus traditional or archaic, but not archaising. This does not apply, however, to the British name on the inscription, Welsh *Cyndaf*. Since the

<sup>17</sup> As Jackson points out (*ECNE* 201–2), it is virtually impossible to put a date on an inscription like no.66 **MAQI—DECCEDDAS AVI TURANIAS** which has no traces of late Ogam grammar but could well be late. However, nos 150 and 156, **GRAVICAS MAQI MUCCI DOVVINIAS** and **MAQQI-IARI KOI MAQQI MUCCI DOVVINIAS**, are also equally old in appearance and yet must be post-lenition in date. For if Ogam **DOV(V)INIAS, DOVAGNI** (**DOBAGNI** in Roman letters, no. 432) and **DOVATUCI** (Roman **DOBTUCI** no. 431 = Ogam **DOVATACIS**) are to be equated with MS *Duibne*, *Dubán* and *Dubthach* respectively, and if these contain the element *dub* ‘black’, the Ogam spelling with **V**, as opposed to Roman **B**, must reflect a post-lenition date when *b* (= [β]) fell together with historical /w/, now [β] in post-nasal and post-labial position (see Jackson, *Études Celtiques* v 108–9). This confusion of the two sounds in these positions allowed the use of **V** for **B** in intervocalic position where, of course, they had never been confused. The Ogamists’ choice of **V** is an attempt to represent the lenited sound and is found also in no.302 **VALUVI** = MS *Fáelbi* (gen.), with the suffix *-bios*.























inscription is post-lenition the intervocalic **T** represents [d] which in Latin, British and later MS Irish is regularly written *-t-*. In traditional Ogam, however, it is written **D**, even in the Latin name *Amatus* on no. 265 **AMADU** (see *LHEB* 184–5). The engraver of the Ogam has thus begun what would eventually lead to what we call MS spelling in Old Irish, the transcription of Latin symbols with their British values.<sup>18</sup> For other examples of this mechanical transcription and for an assessment of it see Jackson's masterly survey in *LHEB* 177ff, in particular 178.

We thus have residual Ogam spellings in the MSS and the birth of MS spelling in Ogam. The fluctuation in late Ogam and early MSS and their very proximity is sufficient evidence to dismiss the claim that their systems are as distinct and separate as if they belonged to two different languages. One can take fixed points in both traditions and contrast them; it can scarcely be denied that they both started out from two very different points. But one cannot ignore the evidence of overlapping and the continuity which it reflects. After all, it is highly improbable that the later monument Ogamists and the early scribes belonged to two distinct and mutually opposed cultures; surely they must have been one and the same people. This brings us closer to the hypothesis to be renewed here after one hundred years, but before returning to **VEQREQ** (better **FEQREQ**) there is one other aspect of Ogam studies which I would like to discuss.

#### IV

The key to the symbols of the Ogam alphabet is preserved in medieval manuscripts of the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, where the transliteration is as follows.

1		<b>b</b>	6		<b>h</b>	11		<b>m</b>	16		<b>a</b>
2		<b>l</b>	7		<b>d</b>	12		<b>g</b>	17		<b>o</b>
3		<b>f</b>	8		<b>t</b>	13		<b>ng</b>	18		<b>u</b>
4		<b>s</b>	9		<b>c</b>	14		<b>sr/z</b>	19		<b>e</b>
5		<b>n</b>	10		<b>q</b>	15		<b>r</b>	20		<b>i</b>

To the above may be added a full complement of symbols with a variety of designations. That these are later accretions is clear from the fact that the

<sup>18</sup>One could argue that the Ogamist is simply ignoring lenition here as he does in Irish names where **T** continues to be used for [θ]. This amounts, however, to the same thing. The MS use of *t*, *c*, *p* for intervocalic /d/, /g/ and /b/ is based on ignoring British lenition in writing.

sounds they denote are, in general, late (at least in terms of the date at which the original alphabet is believed to have been invented); the collective name given to them, viz. *forfeda*, means ‘supplementary letters’, and their shape is more reminiscent of the ink-horn than the chisel. They may originally have been inspired by the desire to accommodate the sound [p], as suggested by Jackson (*ECNE*, 213). For a discussion of these see H. Meroney, ‘Early Irish letter-names’, *Speculum* xxiv 19–43, 38ff.

Attempts to account for the origins of this alphabet begin, with the singular exception of Macalister’s (*CIIC* introduction), by discarding the *forfeda* as late accretions. For the rest the manuscript transcription is taken at its face value, despite its partial redundancy, and attempts are made to couple each symbol with a suitable counterpart in the Latin, Greek or Runic alphabets, Latin coming out best as it offers the greatest degree of harmony. In this I think the manuscript tradition is invested with too much authenticity and too little attention is paid to reconciling this version of the alphabet with what is known of the phonemic structure of Primitive Irish, that period of the language during which it is generally agreed the alphabet was originally created.

The values of some of the symbols of the alphabet in the fourteenth–fifteenth-century manuscripts have no more claim to being those of their Primitive Irish originals than has the Irish of those manuscripts to being regarded as Primitive Irish. We have seen above that Ogam had already begun to acquire the new values of MS Irish before the end of the monument period. This, while significant, merely represents the subordination of Ogam to newer orthographical conventions. More fundamental changes took place at the phonemic level. The original alphabet designed for use on wood<sup>19</sup> was created to function as a vehicle for a language with a phonemic structure significantly different from that which it served for most of its manuscript life.<sup>20</sup> As that phoneme structure changed, several of the symbols of the alphabet became redundant and would probably have been abandoned altogether eventually were it not for the fact that the outward form of Ogam would not permit such a drastic measure. The solution was to assign them purely artificial values chosen in the main from the Latin alphabet with enough discretion to reflect as accurately as possible the new shapes which the initial sounds in the names of the symbols in question had assumed in the spoken language. These names, which may have started out as standard examples, are of the utmost importance to a discussion of the values of the Ogam symbols, despite the fact that they have hitherto enjoyed a very low profile in such discussions. As testimony to their antiquity and authenticity one need only refer to the difficulties scholars in

<sup>19</sup>See Vendryes’s discussion of the word *fid* ‘wood, letter’ (op. cit. in note 1, p.107).

<sup>20</sup>The extent of its use in MS was probably always minimal, but it is worthy of note here that fifty Ogams (of the cryptic varieties?) formed part of the curriculum in each of the first three years of the poets’ training (see *Mittelirische Verslehren* ii, *IT* iii §§2, 9, 12); Murphy suggests that these texts may have been worked into a unified tract in the eleventh century (*Early Irish metrics* (Dublin 1961) v). (I owe this note to Liam Breatnach.)

the medieval period had in explaining their meaning (on which see Meroney); if they were recent one would not have expected any obscurity. As a mnemonic whole (on which concept see Carney, *Ériu* xxvi 57) these, I believe, were the vehicle whereby the original values were transmitted, and it is to them rather than to the later key, which has been abstracted from them, that we should look to establish those values when they are in doubt.

That some of the symbols in the manuscript key have values which are, in the later period, purely artificial and/or irreconcilable with an origin in Primitive Irish can hardly be disputed. Those to which I refer are, significantly, the symbols which occupy most of the Ogamists' time in these tracts, namely 6 (**h**, the *nota aspirationis*), 10, 13 and 14 (**q**, **ng**, **z**, described as *tri foilcheasta inn ogaim* 'the three composite letters (?)'<sup>21</sup> of Ogam', *Aur.* 1.429). These make up what I call the 'cosmetic' element of the later key, noting their absence from the 'functional' alphabet preserved in Bardic tradition (see Ó Cuív, *Éigse* xi 287). Of these, 10 (**q**) is the only one with an apparent claim to antiquity and I suspect that its presence has invested the later alphabet with an appearance of authenticity. This transcription, however, can scarcely be regarded as continuing in unbroken tradition the labio-velar sound /k<sup>w</sup>/ which the symbol has on the stones. Spellings such as **MACI**, **MAC** and **MAIC** for earlier **MAQQI** together with the evidence of manuscript orthography from its inception show that the phoneme had merged with /k/ at some time before the period of Old Irish. This merger of /k<sup>w</sup>/ and /k/ presented, I suggest, a problem to the Ogamists in that it produced a superfluous symbol named *cert* (formerly /k<sup>w</sup>erta:/) representing a sound phonemically identical to that written with *coll* (symbol 9). The difficulty here, as in the cases to be discussed below, would not necessarily arise in a purely Irish context since one would, presumably, continue to write in accordance with the orthographical convention. But when the original convention was abandoned to that of MS Irish, and in particular when the alphabet in toto was being transcribed with Latin symbols, the dilemma would present itself. In this particular case the problem was resolved by equating symbol 10, which since it was called *cert* clearly represented a voiceless velar, both with Latin Q and K, although the former was to prove the more popular. This identification then paved the way for the reassertion of the independence of the symbol which we find enshrined in what from the Irish point of view is of course purely an artificial rule: *In baile i mbi c ria n-u is queirt is scribtha and, ut est cuileand* 'Where **c** occurs before **u** *queirt* (i.e. **q**)

<sup>21</sup>The precise meaning of the word *foilcheas* is unclear in this context. If old, it might mean 'eclipsed letters' in the sense that their original values were no longer known. The compilers of the *Auraicept*, however, apply it to the new values, each regarded as having a 'hidden' element (and therefore 'composite'), since their answer to the question 'when is (the Ogam alphabet) six things?' is 'the three *foilcheasta* of Ogam' (*Aur.* II 428 ff). In the later Irish grammatical tracts these composite letters are regarded as something apart: 'Ceas, ciodh as aibghitear ann? Ní hannsa. A thabhairt ar aird cia do-rinne . . . 7 ga líon aicme ro cédchumhdaigheadh innte, 7 na teora foilcheasda oghuim áirmheas Uraicept innte . . .'. 'Question, what is an alphabet? Not difficult. To recognize who invented it . . . and how many classes (of letters) were first created in it, and the three *foilcheasda* of Ogam which the Uraicept enumerates in it' (*Eriu* viii, supplement 1).

should be written, as in *cuileand'* (*Aur.* II 440–1).<sup>22</sup> This in turn explains the reformation of *cert* to *que(i)rt*.

Those who would disagree with the above, arguing that the ‘value’ of the symbol was remembered because it was always identified with Latin Q (see for example Cowgill, op. cit. in n.11, p. 60), must recognize firstly that the values were not memorized as phonemic abstractions but as the initials of a mnemonic series of letter names which were affected by phonetic developments found elsewhere in the language, and secondly that this reasoning does not apply in the case of symbol 3, which was equated with Latin V in the earlier period but later with Latin F. Here the phonemic status of the sound was not impaired by the phonetic shift from /w/ to /f/ since there is no phonemic contrast of this kind in Irish. Latin, however, did have such a contrast and it was necessary therefore to realign with F. This shift in identification reflects the development in the spoken language and I see no reason to doubt that the same holds good for symbol 10. That the later Ogamists could have been familiar with the earlier values /k<sup>w</sup>/ and /w/ is highly unlikely, if not indeed impossible. All they had inherited were the names *cert* and *fern*.

Similar fates befell symbols 6, 13 and 14. The first of these is transliterated as **h** and the MS Ogamists’ use of this reflects that of *h* in the Roman alphabet. This can be illustrated by pointing to the Ogam transcription of the name of the symbol itself in *Aur.* 302 I.32, where MS *húath* is rendered faithfully with the appropriate symbols for **huath**.<sup>23</sup> Each *h* in the Roman spelling is reproduced in Ogam though neither of them represents an individual phoneme. The word is pronounced [uəθ], the initial *h/h* being purely graphic, as in Latin *hora* (see n. 39), the second indicating the modified pronunciation of –t– as a dental fricative, again as in contemporary Latin –th–. All of this reflects Latin grammatical teaching that *h* is a *nota aspirationis*, and simply cannot be reconciled with a pre-lenition date for the invention of the Ogam alphabet. In attempting to account for the presence of this **h** in the original alphabet Thurneysen suggests (*ZCP* xvii 296) that it probably represents the internal [h] in *\*inda–h–ōthus* (< *\*sindos ōtus*, Old Irish *int úath*), and Kurylowicz suggests that the sequence **h d t** in the alphabet can be explained by the fact that at the time it was established the combination of [d] and [h] yielded [t] as in *ind h– > int*; since **h** had one stroke and **d** two it was appropriate that **t** should have three (*Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* lvi (1961) 1–5). These explanations, however, cannot work. An obvious weakness in Thurneysen’s theory is the necessity of assuming an arbitrary disruption of the natural flow of

<sup>22</sup>This, of course, is in imitation of Latin orthography where *q* is regularly followed by *u*. Note the spelling in the inscription OR AR MAELQUIARAIN (*CIIC* ii no. 661), which corresponds to the Latinized *Quiaranus*, *Queranus* (see George Petrie, *Christian inscriptions in the Irish language* i (Dublin 1872) 38, and T. Ó Máille, *On the language of the Annals of Ulster* (Manchester 1910) 39). These correspond to Irish *Cíarán*, *\*Cérán*.

<sup>23</sup>Note that in the Priscian Ogams we find Latin *hodie* written **hodie**, and the following inscription occurs in the *Annals of Inisfallen* (ed. Sean Mac Airt (Dublin 1951)) *sub anno* 1193: **numus honoratur, sine numo nullus amatur**. I would like to thank Dr Anders Ahlqvist for furnishing me with a microfilm of the Codex Sangallensis 904 containing the Priscian glosses.

the mnemonic series by combining the definite article with the letter name to get the value of the symbol. A more serious objection, however, is that if the Ogam alphabet was established after final /s/ had become /h/ and this sound had been assigned symbol 6, we should expect the spelling **\*DOVINIAH** not **DOVINIAS**. The latter clearly shows that at the time of its invention the sound in question was given the symbol which we transliterate as **S**, and since Ogam does not generally write lenition we must assume that its invention pre-dates this development, and therefore pre-dates the shift of /s/ to /h/. Furthermore, if Kurylowicz were correct we should have the enormous difficulty of explaining why Ogam does not have a symbol for the [p] which arose from the sequence [b-h], as in Old Irish *impu* 'around them', < \**imbe sūs*, though it could be argued that this [p] is of later (post-syncope) date than [t] < [d + h]. The value [h] in the original alphabet must be an anachronism, and, moreover, is attested neither in the later tradition as reflected in **huath** nor in the monument period, as in inscription no. 187 **ANM MAILE-INBIR MACI BROCANN**, not **MAILE-HINBIR**. In investigating the origins of the alphabet, therefore, we must treat the **h** transcription with suspicion.

Symbol 14 is transcribed as **z** and is prescribed for words in which *s* is followed by *d/t* (*Aur.* ll 443–4). The examples, however, reflect the Ogamists' desperation and do not always comply with this prescription. They are: *Stru*, *Streulae*, *Strannan*, *Stmólach*, *Sréghuineacht*, *Súst* and *Srorca*. This indecision clearly betrays the artificiality of the value. Certainly, synchronically speaking, fourteenth-century Irish has no need for a special symbol for [sr-] or [st-] and this is reflected in the names given to the symbols in *Ogam tirda* (*Aur.* 292) where symbol 4 is called *strathar* and symbol 14 *súst*. The **z** of the key is comparable to the **q** of symbol 10, a cosmetic equation dictated in this instance by the contemporary transcription of Latin *Z* with *st*, *sd* (*Éigse* i 281 ff), reflecting devoicing and metathesis of [dz].

Another explanation of the presence of **h** and **z** in the Primitive Irish Ogam alphabet accords these symbols no phonetic value but regards them as superfluous borrowings of Latin *H* and *Z*. This, however, raises the problem of explaining why the Ogamists gave a purely graphic symbol, which they did not intend using, first position in the second series, one of the easiest symbols to engrave.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, if they were slavishly imitating Latin why did they ignore *P*, *X*, *Y* and *F*? They can scarcely have rejected these on the grounds that they had no need for them while adopting *H* and *Z* at the same time. Furthermore, why did they choose to distinguish between /w/ and /u/ when no such distinction was being made in written Latin? These questions have of course

<sup>24</sup>Note especially that the superfluous symbol is not used even in the Latin way in inscription no. 450 where Latin *HOGTIVIS* (assuming the initial letter is to be read as *H* and not *N*) is rendered **OGTENAS** in Ogam. I would suggest that the *-IVIS* here should probably be read as *-NIS* with an intended ligatured *IN* as in no. 391 *MULTITUDNEM*, possibly also in no. 407 *PAULNUS*. Latin *-inis* would correspond to Irish *-enas* (cp. *-RIGIS* = **RIGAS**, etc.). Note too that Macalister's *MAGLOCVVI* (no. 446) should be read as *MAGLOCVNI* with ligatured *VN* since the inscription is accompanied by an Ogam **MAGLICUNAS**.

been asked before. Nevertheless the conventional view is that the four groups of the Ogam alphabet are based on the Latin grammarians' fourfold division of the letters of the alphabet (vowels, semivowels, mutes and Greek letters) found in Donatus but, as Carney pointed out, probably of earlier date.<sup>25</sup> Carney's is the only modern dissenting voice ('The invention of the Ogom cipher', *Ériu* xxvi 53–65). He believes that the Ogam arrangement was based on the Latin alphabet and was arrived at 'in a purely mechanistic fashion', mathematical probabilities being invoked for the 'mechanism'. In the most recent contribution on the subject Ahlqvist points out that the same mathematical principles might be better applied to the Latin classification since only four of the letters in that classification need to be moved in order to bring about the Ogam groups; he agrees with Carney, however, that the rearrangement *inside* the Ogam groups suggests that the inventor was thinking on linguistic lines.

Now it is true that the Latin classification is a better starting-point for explaining the Ogam grouping than the Latin alphabet. Notwithstanding this, however, it seems to me that the choice of *relevant* Latin letters for what we might, following Carney, call the 'construct', the rearrangement of the four letters to bring about the Ogam groups, and the internal reshuffling necessary to get the Ogam order within these groups are all very arbitrary (with the exception of the phonetic pairing for which, it will be noted, there is no Latin model) and, if anything, defeat the objective of having an alphabet based on the Latin classification. The latter may have inspired the Ogam grouping but it would not seem to have defined it. And whatever the internal structure of the system, it is, I think, a mistake to assume that the Ogam symbols were created as alternatives to Latin letters; surely they were designed for writing Irish sounds. To dismiss as superfluous adoptions from Latin those of them which, on a superficial examination, would not appear to have been capable of fulfilling this role is one solution, but is hardly satisfactory. One must look a little deeper than the transcription of the later tradition of the manuscripts.

The inclusion of the remaining member of the triad of *foilcheasta in Ogaim*, viz. **ng**, in the category of doubtfuls may at first sight seem unreasonable, though Cowgill, noting that Ogam had no special symbol for his Primitive Irish \*g", suggested that it may have originally been represented by 'one of the seemingly unnecessary symbols "Z", "H" and "η" '(p.60, op. cit. in n. 11). Again, conventional theories accept the **ng** transcription as authentic, despite the prohibitive burden of evidence against this hypothesis. To begin with, it is questionable whether /ŋ/ (as opposed to [ŋg]) could have existed in Irish at the time of the creation of the alphabet, since the parallel combinations –nd– and –mb– had not yet coalesced into single segments in stressed words by the Old Irish period, and the spellings –ng–, –nc–, –ngg– along with the loss of the nasal element in clusters (e.g. *fo-loing-/fulgam*, *tairngire/tairgire*, etc.) suggest that

<sup>25</sup>See Thurneysen, 'Zum Ogom' 203; Vendryes, op.cit. in note 1, 101; Jackson, *LHEB* 156; and more recently Ahlqvist, *The early Irish linguist*, *Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 73 (1982), Societas Scientiarum Fennica 8–9).

the same will have been true of *-ng-*. Thurneysen, recognizing these difficulties but nonetheless convinced of the authenticity of the later key, was forced into a phonological corner and suggested, rather uncharacteristically, that the coalescence of nasal and guttural into a single segment may have taken place earlier than elsewhere in the dialect of the Ogamist (Thurneysen, *op. cit.* in note 10, 199). But even if the sound /ŋ/ did exist at the time, we also have the added difficulty of generating it in initial position. The later Ogamists and the Bardic grammarians acknowledge that no Irish word begins with (radical) /ŋ/, and the very name of the symbol, viz. *getal* (artificially or cosmetically *ngetal*), is evidence against /ŋ/. Surely, had he intended to accommodate the sound /ŋ/ with a single symbol in his alphabet, the Ogamist, a man of considerable linguistic ability, would, like his Greek and Germanic counterparts, have coined a name for it which of necessity sacrificed the acrophonic principle by incorporating the sound *within* it, since it could not *begin* with it (cf. Greek *agma* and Germanic *ing*).<sup>26</sup> It is time, I think, to clear him of the charge of wilfully creating the impossible *ngetal* by ascribing the latter to his successor, whose hands, of course, were tied by the mnemonic series he inherited. The generally accepted theory that the original Ogam alphabet had a special symbol for /ŋ/ has given rise to much discussion and, among other features, has led some to suppose that Ogam has its origin in the Runic alphabet,<sup>27</sup> despite the inherent chronological difficulties in this derivation. Those who believe in the Latin model account for the symbol by assuming that the early Irish linguists were familiar with the teachings of Varro whose quotation of Ion of Chios is reported in Priscian as follows: 'quinta vicesima est litera, quam vocant *agma*, cuius forma nulla est et vox communis est Graecis et Latinis, ut his verbis: *aggulus*, *aggens*, *agguilla*, *iggerunt*. in eiusmodi Graeci et Accius noster bina *g* scribunt, alii *n* et *g*, quod in hoc veritatem videre facile non est. Similiter *agceps*, *agcora*' (see Anders Ahlqvist, *The early Irish linguist* 10). Here, however, it is stated quite specifically that *agma* has no special symbol, being written *g*, as in *agma*, *aggens*, etc., or *ng*, *gc*, and it should be noted that the mere knowledge of the existence of a sound in Greek or Latin does not guarantee its incorporation into the Ogam alphabet, as is clear from P and X.

The problem, then, can be stated quite simply: there is reason to believe that the antiquity of the later MS-tradition value /ŋ/ for symbol 13 is questionable, and recourse to Latin grammatical teaching and the idea of a Latin model will scarcely account for the existence of a special symbol for this sound. An

<sup>26</sup>Thurneysen's attempt (*ZCP* xvii 296) to get around the difficulty by assuming that *getal* was originally neuter and thus incorporated the sound [ŋ] when preceded by the definite article is in line with his explanation of *húath* and is equally unconvincing. Meroney's identification of *getal* with Old Irish *cétal* is impossible, since even a nasalized version of the latter does not contain the sound [ŋ]. Note that *ngetal* has been rationalized to *niatall* by Ó hEóidhasa in his *Rudimenta grammaticae Hibernicae* (see *Graiméir Ghaeilge na mBráthar Mionúr*, ed. Parthalán Mac Aogáin O.F.M. (Dublin 1968) 7).

<sup>27</sup>See H. Arntz, 'Das Ogom', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* lix (1935) 321–413. Graves also believed that Ogam derived from the Runes (see *PRIA* iv (1849) 356–68).

examination of the evidence of the monuments themselves, therefore, is called for.

Symbol 13 is reported in *CIIC* to have been found on a total of six inscriptions and supposedly appears twice on two of these. The six, in order of discussion here, are nos 299, 224, 189, 439, 256A and 10.

No. 299 was (according to Macalister it is no longer to be found) the broken-off top of a pillar-stone and was incomplete when Macalister examined it. Brash's reading (*OIMG* 270) **OMONGEDIAS MAQI MUIBITI** has been restored by Macalister (*Epig.* iii 213 and *CIIC*) to **[MAQI] MONGEDIAS MAQI MUIBITI**, doubt being expressed only as to whether the vowel after the first **M** (i.e. that of **MONGEDIAS**) was **A** or **O**. It is tempting to accept the value /ŋ/ here and to take **MONGEDIAS** as an adjectival derivative (with the suffix *–\*dios*, *–\*diā*) of the word for 'hair', Old Irish *mong*. This, however, is improbable since the name is that of a male (it is followed by **MAQI**) and *–IAS* is a feminine gen. sg. ending. The original gen. of an unattested Old Irish masc. personal name *Mongdae* would be *\*MONGADI* on an Ogam inscription.

No. 224 (see Pl. Ib) has yielded a variety of readings: Brash (*OIMG* 220–2) transcribes it as **ANM OTUNILOCID MAQI ALOTT** and expresses doubt concerning the **ANM** and the second notch of the first **O**, all other letters being, according to him, perfectly legible. He does point out, however, that the angle is much weather-worn and seamed by natural fractures. Macalister has similar remarks about the difficulty of obtaining a satisfactory reading and transcribes the inscription (*Epig.* ii 121) **LUGUNI LOCID MAQI ALLOTO** (sic for **ALOTTO?**), pointing out that he could not satisfy himself as to the first two letters but that the occurrence of the name **LUGUNI** elsewhere made his reading 'probable'. **LUGUNI LOCID** appears again as Macalister's reading in *PRIA* xxxiii C 92 and was adopted by MacNeill in 'Notes' 365. By the time *CIIC* was published, however, Macalister had changed his mind. Here he points out that the scores of Brash's **T** (Macalister's **G**) are not confined to the **T**-surface, their proximal ends running below (if one can imagine the inscription in horizontal position) the vowels which flank them. He now reads three scores (as in Brash's **T**) and with some other emendations transcribes **MONGUNILOCID MAQI ALOTTO**, citing the no less clumsy **ANAVLAMATTIAS** in support of the long name **MONGUNILOCID** and abandoning, without comment, his earlier identification of **LUGUNI** as well as his explanation of **LOCID**.

I examined this stone on 10 August 1985. The lower part of the inscription is particularly difficult to read, ease of legibility increasing as one moves upwards. I could make out **UNILOCIDMAQIALOTTO**; the **M** occurs on a natural fissure, but is scarcely to be doubted; the same is true of the last score of the first **T**, but **ALODTO** is not likely. I could not satisfy myself, however, as to what was originally intended at the beginning of the inscription. The first of the scores of the relevant symbol is a natural fissure (whence Macalister's original **G**) and it was not clear whether one should count it or not, though the **T** above would



suggest that one should. The scores, however, did not seem to me to run obliquely, and though this alone would not rule out an **M**-series symbol, it was not easy to distinguish at this point of the stone between the surfaces, whence Brash's **T**. In view of the positioning of the scores of the **N**, however, I think it improbable that the relevant symbol belongs to the **M**-series.

Inscription no. 189 (Pl. II) is even more difficult to read than the one just discussed and its legend is highly problematical. The stone in question is lying half-buried in mud and long grass in the graveyard of Kinard East, about four miles east of Dingle, and, as in the last case, it has yielded a variety of readings. Brash (*OIMG* 218) transcribes **ACURCITIFUFODDU** followed by four letters which were 'faint and doubtful', while Ferguson apparently read **ACURCITIFINDDILORAS** (see *Epig.* i 90) or **(O) CURCITIFINDD (I) L [O] R [A] C** (*OIMG* 218). Macalister's reading in *Epig.* i 64–6 is **ACURCITai/iaVIVODDu/eVa?NGAC**. He regards the initial **A** as a possible abbreviation for **ANM** and supplies an unattested **A** between the **V** and the **?NG**. Gathering that Rhys had read the stone backwards he turns his reading around to **SANGATe/u LLOTITI AVI SRUSA**, forgetting to omit the **A** supplied above, but he dismisses **SANGATe/u** and **SRUSA** as unintelligible. By the publication of *CIIC*, however, he had gone over to Rhys' retrograde reading (for which see *JRSai* xxviii 235) and transcribes **SANGTI LLOTETI AVI SRUSA**, equating the first word with Latin *sancti* and citing inscriptions nos 439 and 186 in favour of this. No. 186, however, reads **SCI** in half-uncials and is scarcely support for the identification. On no. 439 see below.

My examination of this stone on 10 August 1985 left me convinced of only one thing, namely that Macalister's original description of the legend as 'highly problematical' stands. All vowels with the exception of the **U** of **SRUSA** (or **ACURCITI**) and the **A** of **?SANGTI** (or **?-NGAC**) are extremely difficult to read with certainty. The corner of the stone where Macalister and Rhys read **SANGTI** is badly damaged; two scores (on the **B**-surface in the normal reading) can be distinguished here but their alignment is such that it is difficult to tell whether, if the angle were complete, they would be of the **B** or **M** series. These are preceded (in the normal reading) by vowel notches which suggest a **U** (Macalister's **e/u** in the original reading, his **I** in **SANGTI** in the later one) and followed by what appears to be symbol 13. Both the **T** and the **I** of the proposed **SANGTI**, therefore, amount to very suspicious guesswork. As far as the identification with Lat. *sancti* is concerned, this, strictly speaking, would require a form **\*SANGCTI** and to my knowledge there is no record of a saint whose name might be reconstructed as **\*Loteti**. Moreover, it seems to me that one is only entitled to assume that the inscription was written backwards if a retrograde reading yields positive results. This would not seem to be the case in this instance. The normal reading, unintelligible though it may be, probably contains the name **CURCITI** which is attested on a stone within three miles of the one under discussion, at Ballintaggart (no. 160, **TRIA MAQA MAILAGNI CURCITTI**).

Nos 439 and 256A require little comment. The former was originally read as **EF(e)SS(a)NG(i)ASEG(ni)**, but Macalister, with a great deal of imagination and an impossible reading of the symbol in question in the word for ‘daughter’ (*ingen* does not contain the sound [ŋ]) restores to **INGEN SANGKTA SEGNI**, a reading described by both Binchy and Jackson in their reviews as ‘preposterous’ (see *JRSAI* lxxvi 56–7 and *Speculum* xxiv 60). No. 256A is transliterated **BASINGB** . . . and the scores of the **?NG** are cut the wrong way. Neither of these could be considered reliable.

We may turn finally to inscription no. 10, probably the most important in this category. This is transcribed in *CIIC* as follows:

(left) **U[E]GG[ . . . . . ]SD[... ]LENGSCAD;**

(right) **MAQ CORRBRI MAQ AMMLLONGITT.**

The equation of the last-named with *Amlongaid/Amal(n)gaid*, king of Connacht (MacNeill, ‘Notes’ 332, ‘Archaisms’ 44), suggested by the fact that the historical record gives his son’s name as *Cairpre* (= **CORRBRI**) and that the stone is in Tirawley (*Tír Amalngado*), at first sight suggests that the value /ŋ/ must be indisputable here, and this would be the case if it could be shown that the symbol used by the engraver was in fact no. 13. Macalister’s statement that the writing on this side of the stone (= sinister, not dexter) ‘presents no difficulty’, however, is dangerously misleading and, frankly, inexcusable. Brash gives Ferguson’s reading as **MAQ CORRBRI MAQA GLLunTrad** in *OIMG* 318. Ferguson, however, wrote in detail on the stone himself in *PRIA* xv 201–6. Here he admitted to being able to read no more than **MAQ CORRBRI MAQ AMMLLO** which he said was followed by imperfect digits and erosions of the surface occupying the next nine inches leading up to the terminal **T**. Only after he had established in his *mind* that the name in question was probably that of *Amlongaid*<sup>28</sup> did he *assume* that the missing pieces read **NGI**, and he frankly admitted that he could not see these symbols but could discern nothing irreconcilable with their presence. Macalister’s earlier reading was **AMMLLORATTA** (*Epig.* i 73–5) and while he described the relevant part of the inscription as ‘quite hopeless’ he argued that his **RA** was more in accordance with indications than **NGI**. Later, when he adopted Ferguson’s hypothesis, which is presented as fact in *CIIC*, he pointed out that the **NG** was concealed under thick lichens and the following **I** was fractured (*PRIA* xxxiv 402–3).<sup>29</sup> In my own examination of the stone I found that the eroded or fractured part covers a space of approximately 15cm, beginning after the **O**, and is approx. 3cm deep at its deepest point (see Pl. IIIa). At the upper end there is a single vowel notch (all that remains of an original **I**?) followed by a possible **T**,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Rhys came to a similar conclusion independently about twenty years later, see *JRSAI* xxviii (1898) 233–36.

<sup>29</sup>I examined this stone on 20-4-’85 and 14-5-’85. Ferguson does not refer to any lichens, nor do these present any difficulty to the reader. I take this opportunity to thank Professor Máirtín Ó Murchú, who arranged the finance for both trips.

<sup>30</sup>Only two strokes (**D**) can be seen clearly but there is room for a third at the beginning of the symbol.

then by a certain **T**. Marks are discernible on the fracture itself where the relevant symbol would originally have been, but these are the results of weathering, not of the engraver's chisel, as can be seen clearly in Pl. IV. It will suffice to say that while the original reading might well have been **ONGITT** this cannot be any more than a hypothesis, and **OGETT** or some such spelling is also a possibility. The stone very probably does contain the name *Amlongaid*,<sup>31</sup> but how exactly this was originally spelt in the Ogam will never be known. The left-hand side of the stone has a very clear example of symbol 13, but the name in question is unclear. Three vowel notches are discernible before the **L** of **LENGESCAD**, but there is a gap of some 17cm between these and the preceding **D**. MacNeill here read **IULENGE** ('Notes' 332), ignoring the final **SCAD**. That or **D[UN]ULENGE** (=MS *Dúnlang*) would be evidence for the value /ŋ/, but again this is pure conjecture and the **SCAD** must be ignored for both readings (see Pl. IIIb).

The above, to my knowledge, constitutes all the evidence for the use of this symbol on the stones.<sup>32</sup> It will be appreciated that this is hardly conclusive proof of the value /ŋ/. Most of the stones simply cannot be read with certainty. Furthermore, with the exception of *Amlongaid*, none of the names supposed to be written with this symbol are known from the historical record, so that even if there were no doubt as to its presence its value could not be verified. Needless to say, of course, the fact that we do not have conclusive evidence for /ŋ/ on the early monuments does not of itself prove that symbol 13 did not have this value in the *original* alphabet. It does, however, permit the hypothesis that this may have been the case, and this hypothesis is suggested not only by the artificial nature of this value in the later tradition but also by some early monument and MS material. Inscriptions 3 and 275, for example, read **CUNALEGI AVI QUNACANOS** and **CUNALEGEA MAQI C[...].SALAR CELI AVI QVECI** respectively. Is it possible that the name common to both is MS *Conlang*, with Ogam **G** for /ŋ(g)/? At least this must be the value of the **G** on the Lewannick inscription (no. 466) on which Latin **INGENVI MEMORIA** is rendered **IGENAVI MEMOR** in Ogam. If the Ogamist had a special symbol for /ŋ/ why did he not use it here? Note also that the Ogamist of the Berne manuscript consistently uses symbol 13, not 12, to transliterate Latin *g* (see R. Derolez, 'Ogam, "Egyptian", "African" and "Gothic" alphabets', *Scriptorium* v (1951) 3–20, 5, 8, and see below). These few examples, of course, do not prove

<sup>31</sup> Of course one would expect a gen. in **-(S)** since the name is an *i*-stem.

<sup>32</sup> According to Brash the symbol occurs on seven stones. Of these, two are included in the discussion above (nos 299 and 10); one (on page 361) is from Scotland and is outside the scope of this paper. Three are read otherwise by Macalister: p. 229 **DANGNGORR MAQI ELIDMES** = *CIIC* no. 206 **CEDATTOQA MAQI VEDELMET[IT]** (=MS *Cétadach*); p.266 **CATABAR MOCO FIRIQONGO** = *CIIC* no. 303 **...VIRIC-QORB** (=MS *Fir Chorb*); and p.305 **FRAICCI MAQI MENGFI** = *CIIC* no. 12 **VRAICCI MAQI MEDVVI** (=MS *Medb*). The remaining stone was no longer to be found in Brash's time and he gives a reading made by Windele as follows (p. 121): **TULULCONG MAQE STIL**.

that the Ogamists regularly used **G** (or **GG**<sup>33</sup>) for /ŋ(g)/. I hope, however, to have drawn attention to the fact that the case for the existence of a special symbol for this sound in the *original* Ogam alphabet has yet to be made.

I would suggest, therefore, that it is probable that the later values of symbols 6, 13 and 14 are artificial reassignments occasioned by, and determined in accordance with, the same factors as were operative in the case of symbol 10 (see above). If so, Lat. **h**, **z** and the unique **ng** cannot be purely arbitrary but will have been chosen with discretion to fit as accurately as possible the new shape which the primary values had assumed in the names of these symbols. Put another way, **h**, **z** and **ng**, or more precisely the names (h)úath, s(t)raiph and (n)getal, hold the key to the original values if we can establish what I will call the continuity factor, either at the phonetic or graphic level, between the new and the old. To accommodate these criteria I suggest that the earlier values may have been Primitive Irish /j/, /g<sup>w</sup>/ and either /s<sup>w</sup>/ or /ts/ respectively.

The phonetic connection between /g<sup>w</sup>/ (the existence of which has been established beyond doubt by Cowgill) and /ŋ/ will be obvious. The collocation in series 3 of **G** and **GW** is also reminiscent of that in series 2 where **Q** (= /k<sup>w</sup>/) follows **C**. Moreover, this theory will provide a satisfactory explanation for the name of the symbol, viz. *getal/ngetal*. We need only assume that this derives from an original in \*g<sup>w</sup>h, Primitive Irish /g<sup>w</sup>/. During the Primitive Irish period this sound fell together with /g/, the result being that its special symbol became redundant, as did that for Primitive Irish /k<sup>w</sup>/. **Q**. The latter was later equated with Latin **Q/K** since its name, *ce(i)rt*, subsequently remodelled to *queirt*, demanded a voiceless guttural value. But Latin had no corresponding symbol for the voiced variety. Symbol 13 functioned, therefore, for some time with the value /g/, whence its use by the Ogamist of the Berne manuscript for Latin **G**, but this situation could not continue since symbol 12 already had this value. Accordingly *getal*, the initial of which was of vital importance for the new value, since this name was all the later Ogamist had inherited, came to be used for /ŋ/ (originally written **G** or **GG**?), the only other velar in the language which could be accommodated without difficulty.<sup>34</sup> Following the principle that the initial sound of the symbol name corresponded to the value of the symbol, *getal* was subsequently modified to the artificial *ngetal* (just as *ce(i)rt* yielded *queirt*).

<sup>33</sup>See **IGENAVI**, etc., above. Both Rhys and Stokes suggest (*PRIA* xv 210, 353) that the **GG** of **GLUNLEGGET** might be interpreted as /ŋ/, as in Greek, the former pointing to **EVOLENG-**, **EVOLENG-** (nos 431, 436) and **CORBALENGI** (no. 354), the latter to the use of **-gg-** in Old Irish *do-sreggat* (= *do-srengat*) in the *Liber Hymnorum* fol. 21b top margin, as well as to the use of **-gg-** in Old and Mid. Welsh for the same sound. The letter *g* alone is used for [ŋ(g)] in *o-gera* and *logath* (*Thes.* ii 246.4–5 and 251. 18) but such spellings are exceptional in Irish, to my knowledge. It is tempting to see the same element in the names **GLUNLEGGET**, **CUNALEGI**, **CORBALENGI**, etc., but the **-ET** of the former is unclear. Macalister's **TURLEGETTI** (no. 19) is a very doubtful reading of **IVVEAEDRVVIDES** written out in Ogam and inverted.

<sup>34</sup>By this I mean that had symbol 13 been pressed into use for /ŋ/ this would have set a dangerous precedent, the consequence of which would have been the necessity to provide symbols for other lenited sounds. As we shall see, an alternative method of writing these developed naturally out of symbol 6.

According to this interpretation, then, the highly incongruous and unnecessary value /ŋ/ is not to be considered original but an expedient reassignment governed by factors similar to those which determined the later values of symbols 6, 10 and 14. I leave open the question as to whether the *agma* of Latin grammarians may be, or need be, invoked to account for the choice of /ŋ/.

Unfortunately, as has been pointed out above, the monuments are not a reliable source for establishing the value of this symbol in the early period. One is tempted to read the **MONGEDIAS** of inscription no. 299 as **MO–GWEDIAS**, gen. of a hypocoristic formation \**Mo–g<sup>w</sup>ediā* which in Old Irish would be \**Mo–Guide*. This would account for the feminine gen. ending, but I admit that one would have expected **ME–**; I cannot say of what name this could be a hypocorism, and of course it is by no means certain that the name on the inscription did in fact begin with **M**.

No authenticated examples of symbols 6 and 14 have yet been found on the monuments.<sup>35</sup> Given the name *s(t)raiph*, however, the hypothesis of continuity would demand a sibilant or a sibilant-yielding sound for symbol 14 and the choice, I would suggest, lies between /s<sup>w</sup>/ and /ts/. The existence of the former as a distinct phoneme in Primitive Irish cannot be doubted; it stood in precisely the same relationship to /s/ as did /g<sup>w</sup>/ and /k<sup>w</sup>/ to /g/ and /k/ respectively and was probably lost around the same time as these phonemes.<sup>36</sup> The phoneme /ts/ is a different matter. This is the hypothetical Gaulish, and presumably Primitive Irish, intermediate stage between IE *st–*, *–st–* and Old Irish *s–*, *–s(s)–* (where it has fallen together with historical *s–*, *s<sup>w</sup>–* and *–ns–*, *–ks–* etc.) which Pedersen (*VGKS* i 78) sees in Gaulish *Ð* (e.g. *ÐIRONA/SIRONA*, Welsh *seren* ‘star’ etc.) and ‘vermutlich’ in Ogam *z*. Certainly, independent phonemic status (as a dental affricate, a dental fricative or a sibilant with no exact equivalent in Latin or Greek) would seem to be supported by the Gaulish symbol *Ð* and its numerous variants (on which see Evans’s excellent summary in *Gaulish personal names* 410 ff). How long this distinctive sound survived into insular Celtic, however, is unclear. Jackson gives it marginal status as a by-form in a restricted number of words (*LHEB* 708f.). The only evidence for its survival into Irish is the

<sup>35</sup>Brash has five examples of symbol 6 and four of symbol 14, but these are not trustworthy. They are: p. 122 **CARRTTAC GAQI MOHACAGG** = *CIIC* no. 103 **CARRTTACC GAQI MU CAGG[I]**; p. 130 **MAQI LASEG OTMAQ(I)HE** = *CIIC* no. 127 **MAQI LASPOG B TTMACDE**; p. 280 **FAUAHG** = *CIIC* no. 35 **VIR ...**; p. 306ff **DOFTANO SAFEI SAHATTOS** = *CIIC* no. 19 **OVANOS AVI IVACATTOS**; and p. 347 **MAQIMA HUMELEDONAS** = *CIIC* no. 368 **MAQIM DUMELEDONAS**. Page 198 **STICUNAS** = *CIIC* no. 191 **GAMICUNAS**; p. 218 **ANM FEDLLOISTOI MACUIEDDOINI** = *CIIC* no. 137 **ANM VEDLLOIGGOI MACI SEDDOINI**; p. 277 **DEAGOST MAQI MUCO(I)** = *CIIC* no. 281 **DEAGOS MAQI MUCO[I ] NAI**; and p. 121 **TULULCONG MAQE STIL**, on which see n. 32 above.

<sup>36</sup>If Ogam **SVAQQUCI MAQI QICI** (no. 489) is to be read as **SVANNUCI MAQI RINI**, corresponding to the Latin **FANONI MAQVI RINI** (see MacNeill, *Ériu* xi 133–5), and is a derivative of British \**swanta*, this would be evidence against symbol 14 having had the value /s<sup>w</sup>/. Macalister, however, says that there is a gap between the **S** and the **V** and the identification with *Fanoni* is questionable, though Thurneysen may be right in regarding them as variants of the one name (*ZCP* xii 412).

suggested identification with the Ogam symbol under discussion here, and if this is to be allowed to stand, Ogam **–GUSOS**, **–GUSSOS** and **–GOSO** (with symbol 4 not 14) for *\*–gustōs* (nos 70, 107, 121) will have to be regarded as non-traditional spellings post-dating the merger of *–st–* and *–ns–*, *–ks–* etc., assuming that the hypothetical */ts/* is to be posited for all cases of historical *st*. But whether we choose */sʷ/* or *ʔ/ts/* it will be obvious that both satisfy the criteria required; the eventual merger with */s/* adequately explains the later value of the symbol. Having lost its distinctiveness and merged with symbol 4, our symbol had to be reassigned a new value incorporating a sibilant element. Theoretically any cluster with an initial sibilant would have sufficed for what would inevitably be an artificiality. The occasional choice of *sr–*, which in Old Irish may also be written *str–* (on the basis of equations such as *srathar* = *stratura*, *sráit* = *strata*?), will undoubtedly have been dictated by the name *s(t)raiph* (< an original in */sʷ/* or *ʔ/ts/*) but the implied use of the symbol in words such as *smólach* and *súst* shows that the important factor was the presence of the sibilant. The subsequent equation with Latin Z was inevitable since symbol 4 had been identified with Latin S.

The assignment of the value */j/* to symbol 6 is of course speculative and I am aware of the difficulties it presents (see n. 41). Notwithstanding these, however, I feel that it is not without some support. Since the spelling *húath* is clearly due to Latin influence we can discard the initial *h* and begin with what will have been the inherited unadulterated form of the name, viz. *úath*. Given that the initial sound in the letter name carries the value of the symbol we should be obliged to assume that symbol 6 carried the value */uə/*, or a forerunner of this, viz. */o:/* or */eu/*, etc. Such values, however, are difficult to reconcile with the inner structure of the Ogam alphabet, its separation of vowels from consonants, and the absence of special symbols for diphthongs. Symbol 6 is the first in a consonantal series and requires a consonantal value. We must, therefore, turn to obsolete consonants and the only two possibilities are */p/* and */j/*. Since the former would push the creation of the alphabet further back in time than is consistent with the evidence available, the latter must be regarded as the more probable of the two.<sup>37</sup> If *úath* is authentic, then, I suggest that it originally began with a */j/* which, like all other examples of initial */j/*, later disappeared,<sup>38</sup> presenting a problem similar to those encountered with symbols 10, 13 and 14. In favour of */j/*, moreover, we have the parallel distinction of vocalic and semivocalic */u/* and */w/* referred to above. The problem then is to accommodate the value */j/* in the constraints of the all-important ‘continuity’ factor, and to account for the shift of identity from functional */j/* to cosmetic *h*.

<sup>37</sup>*/p/* of course has the attraction of giving phonetic structure to the initial letters of the first three groups, viz. */b/*, */p/*, */m/*. The distribution of Ogam monuments, however, is somewhat difficult to reconcile with the existence of the system before the loss of */p/*, unless of course one wishes to assume that these stones represent a very late off-shoot in the use of Ogam.

<sup>38</sup>The loss of */j/* belongs to the Primitive Irish period since it is retained in British. For a suggestion that it might be relatively recent see Pierre-Yves Lambert, ‘Gaulois IEVRV: irlandais (ro)-ir “dicauit”’, *ZCP* xxxvi 207–13.

On the phonetic level one could attempt this by postulating a shift of /j/ through /hj/ before its total disappearance and an identification of this intermediate /hj/ with Latin *h*. The development of the IE /j/ to Greek /h/ would be an obvious parallel (see Helmut Rix, *Historische Grammatik des Griechischen* (Darmstadt 1976) §68). There is, moreover, an analogous development of the other semivowel, /w/, through an aspirated stage /hw/ before moving on to /f/.<sup>39</sup> This, however, is very improbable. We have already seen that the value [h] is nowhere attested for this symbol (its *h* is cosmetic, not phonetic) and spellings such as Old Irish *Hísu* (< Latin *Jesus*) or *Hierusalem* (< *Jerusalem*) could hardly be cited in favour of /hj/. The name *Cirine* (< *Hieronymus*), moreover, is evidence against a radical initial /hj/ at the time of its adoption into Irish.<sup>40</sup>

Alternatively, on the graphic level one could point, as does Meroney (loc. cit.), to the superficial similarity between the shape of the *h* symbol and the Greek *spiritus asper*, but one would have to point out that it is in fact identical to the mark of non-aspiration in Greek. There is, however, another possibility. A parallel development is available for examination from the Greek alphabet. In this case the Semitic forerunner had a glottal fricative sound denoted by the name *ḥēt*, in which *h*- represented [h]. This was borrowed into Greek as *Heta*, where *H* represented [h] and *e* [ɛ]. In Ionic, however, the initial sound [h] was lost, the consequence being that the letter name now came to be pronounced

<sup>39</sup>The sequences [w-, -s w- and -V s<sup>w</sup>-] all yield the same Old Irish sound, [f], as in *fer*, *a fer* 'her man' and *a fiur* 'his sister' (< \**wiros*, *esiās wiros*, *esio swesūr*). This suggests that all passed through the same stage [hw].

<sup>40</sup>According to W. Sidney Allen (*Vox Latina, The pronunciation of Classical Latin* (Cambridge 1965) 43 ff) a knowledge of where to pronounce *h* had become a privilege of the educated classes by the classical period, and hypercorrections were ridiculed in the literature. In Augustine's time it was still pronounced in polite society as is clear from his complaint on the subject (see *Vox Latina* 45). Spellings like *nichil* and *michi* for *nihil*, *mihi* lead Sidney Allen and F. Sommer (*Handbuch der lateinischen Laut- und Formenlehre* (Heidelberg 1914) 192 ff) to suppose that the sound being pronounced had the value of the German *ich*-Laut, i.e. velar [x] and palatal [ç] (compare Mod. English *huge* pronounced both [hju:dʒ] and [çu:dʒ] and see Daniel Jones's remarks on the substitution of [x] for [h] by Spaniards when speaking English, *An outline of English phonetics*, ninth ed. (Cambridge 1976) §782). *Cirine* provides phonetic evidence for this in Irish. The initial *C*- (= [k]) here is a natural morphophonological delentation of [ç], a sound which does not occur in radical initial position in Irish but is the lenited form of /k/ before a front vowel. Had the name been pronounced with an initial [h] the same procedure would have yielded an Irish \**Sirine* (cf. *sebac* 'hawk' < Old English *heafoc*). In the adoption of the name final *-mus* was ignored just as *-ma* was ignored in *baithes* < \**batisma* < *baptisma* and *Hierony-* yielded *Cirine* (in its lenited form = [çirənel], probably a *loan-blend* formation influenced by the native diminutive suffix *-ine* (see *Ériu* xxxv 142-3 on *loan-blends*). The letter *h* would appear to have precisely the same value in *menmnihi* for *menmnichi* in the *prima manus* of the Würzburg glosses and in *nipo hetóir* (for *chétóir*) Wb. 4<sup>o</sup>35 on which see *VGKS* i 412. The corresponding neutral equivalent [x] is probably attested in the spelling *H* in *CIIC* no. 1 *MENUEH*, derived by MacNeill from \**Minavicas* ('Notes' 333) but taken by Thurneysen (*Handbuch des Alt-Irischen* (Heidelberg 1909) 107) as gen. of *Menb* with *-EH* from \**-ēs*. (This seems less likely in view of what has been said above about *h* and Thurneysen omitted it from *GOI*. The interpretation, however, has been adopted by Francis John Byrne in his introduction to the recently published *The Irish hand* by Timothy O'Neill (Dolmen Press 1984) xii.) Compare *CIIC* no. 349 *BROHO* ( ) and no. 401 *BROHOMAGLI* (Welsh *Brochfael*) and see *LHEB* 566, 568. Note also the forms *Coréb* < *Horeb* and *Cebrón/Ebrón* < *Hebron* in *Saltair na Rann* (*Ériu* xvi 107). Elsewhere Latin *h* has no phonetic reflex in Irish (e.g. [o:r] < *hora*, etc.). (Máirtín Ó Briain has also drawn my attention to *cabóg* < Eng. *havoc*.)

[ɛ:ta]. Greek at the time did not distinguish graphically between long and short vowels but the redundancy of *H* now paved the way for its use with the value [ɛ:]. This value would appear not to have been chosen arbitrarily; it was, arguably, governed by the acrophonic principle whereby the initial sound in the name (now /ɛ:/) represented its value. In the West Greek alphabet, on the other hand, [h] survived, whence Latin *H*.

On the analogy of the Greek example one might have expected symbol 6 of the Ogam alphabet to have adopted the vocalic value /o:/ or /eu/, etc., once /j/ had been lost. Once again, however, the inner structure would not permit this. Symbol 6, now a redundant symbol, could not be given the value of the initial sound in its name since it was in a consonantal series. In the Roman alphabet, however, this name could be written not alone as *úath* but also as *húath*, following the Latin example. Here I suggest lies the solution to the problem. The redundant Ogam symbol had an exact counterpart in Latin orthography with which it could easily be identified, thereby providing not alone the perfect solution to this particular problem but also a means of writing the lenited variants of *t* and *c*.<sup>41</sup>

By positing these values, then, we produce an alphabet perfectly designed for the Primitive Irish phonemic inventory.<sup>42</sup> In the absence of support for the reconstruction it might justifiably be dismissed as an exaggerated claim on behalf of the early Ogamists. But it is supported by the fact that an explanation of the later artificial values flows naturally, and economically (since it employs

<sup>41</sup>The major difficulty with this theory, of course, is the failure of symbol 6 to appear on the stones. In the case of initial position this may simply be due to the fact that, to my knowledge, none of the Ogam names and nouns known from the historical record can be shown to have originally had initial /j/. A singular problem is presented by the case-endings *-IAS*, *-I* (representing historical *-\*jās* and *-\*ji*, gen. sg. of *ā-* and *jo-* stems). However, when these developed to *[-ija:s]* and *[-iji]* respectively (see Cullen, *Ériu* xxiii 227–9) /j/ lost its phonemic status and became a non-phonemic glide (see Greene, *Ériu* xxvii 27) which not alone failed to prevent metaphonic lowering, as reflected in Ogam *-EAS*, but later disappeared. If Ogam *-IAS* represents the stage *[ija:s]* the absence of the symbol might be explained in this way. As for the failure of Ogam orthography to distinguish between the gen. sg. of *o-* and *jo-* stems, both being written *-I* and representing *[-i]* and *[-iji]*, this remains a problem whether one gives the value /j/ to an Ogam symbol or not. In this connection the use of FILI for FILII on the Latin inscriptions of Britain is worthy of note.

<sup>42</sup>We reconstruct this as follows: vowels /i, e, u, o, a; i:, e: (including [ɛ:] and [ɛ:]), u:, o:, a:/; semivowels /w, j/; diphthongs /ai, oi, au, eu, ou/; consonants /k, k<sup>w</sup>, t, g, g<sup>w</sup>, d, b, m, n, l, r, s, s<sup>w</sup>, ts (?) + geminate or long varieties/. Vocalic and consonantal length were of course phonemic but there would have been no absolute necessity to develop special symbols for the long varieties. Since Ogam *-S* presupposes the existence of intervocalic *s* at the time of the creation of the alphabet we must assume that the *u*-diphthongs had not been levelled under /o:/ at that time (see Greene, *Ériu* xxvii 27). There are no examples of these, however, GOSSUCTTIAS (no. 190, where GO~ = [go:-], <\*geu-, later gúa-) showing the reduction of /eu/ to /o:/. They could have been accommodated, of course, by the appropriate vowel + U just as the diphthongs /ai/ and /oi/ were easily accommodated by the spellings AI and OI (cf. MAILAGNI, COIMAGNI, etc.); since palatalization was generally indicated by Ci rather than iC there could be no confusion here. However, one does find these diphthongs written without the I (e.g. VALUVI, BATTIGNI, LOBACONA, VROCI, COLLABOTA, etc. (Old Irish *Fáelbi*, *Baíthín*, *Loibhchón*, *Froích*, *Cóelbath*). MacNeill supposes that these represent non-diphthongal dialectal varieties ('Notes' 350), citing Modern Irish *caorthann*, *cárthann*, etc., but this need not be the case. Note that in Old Irish orthography the diphthongs are not always distinguishable from long or short *a* and *o* followed by a palatalized consonant.



the same determining factor throughout), from it. The argument, in summary, is simple and straightforward: the original values of the Ogam alphabet were transmitted orally to the later Ogamists as the first constituent elements in a mnemonic series of letter names. These names, like letter names in other alphabetic systems, were not immune from changes taking place at the phonetic and phonemic levels elsewhere in the spoken language. They were handed down not as archaisms frozen in time but in a phonetic shape consistent with the periods in which they are attested. This fact is reliably illustrated by symbol 3, the early and late values of which (viz. /w/ and /f/) are confirmed by transcription with Latin V and F respectively, the shift of identity from V to F indicating the phonetic development of the sound within the name (\*wernā / > /fern/). When the independent phonemic status of the original initial of the name was not undermined its later value may be regarded as the phonemic equivalent of its earlier one. Thus the /b/ of PI \*/betwj-/ may be equated with that of later *beithe*, the first symbol of the system. When it merged into obscurity with other phonemes (as did PI /k<sup>w</sup>/, /g<sup>w</sup>/ and /s<sup>w</sup>/, /ts/) or disappeared altogether (as did PI /j/), however, the original value could not be recovered (except by chance as in the case of symbol 10 being equated with Latin Q), and symbols so affected would become and continue to remain redundant. The failure of the formerly absent but now increasingly popular sound /p/ to find accommodation in the old core of the alphabet, despite its inherited redundancies, is testimony to the immutability of the mnemonic series of names which was the mainstay of the tradition. To accommodate it would have demanded a serious adulteration of that series (such as changing *cert* to \**pert*, or *úath* to \**púath*) which could not be tolerated. (It is its absence, of course, which provided later grammarians of the medieval period with the information that Irish at one time did not have a /p/.) To assert the independent status of redundant symbols with what inevitably would be cosmetic values, the later Ogamist had one eye on the Latin alphabet and the other on the all-important names of the relevant symbols (viz. *úath* < \**jeutos* (?), *cert* < \**k<sup>w</sup>ertā* (?), *getal* < \**g<sup>w</sup>hedd(o) los* (?), *s(t)raiph* < \**s<sup>w</sup>ras<sup>w</sup>ī* / \**stras<sup>w</sup>ī* (?); I cannot at present offer etymologies based on IE cognates). Latin H, Q/K and Z were the *only* possible cosmetic values which could be given to *úath*, *cert* and *s(t)raiph* respectively; in the case of *getal* the Ogamist either fell back on his own resources or took note of the *agma* of Latin grammarians. The spelling of the names was then modified to accommodate the new status of these symbols, whence the artificial *húath*, *que(i)rt*, *ngetal* and *zraiph*.

Finally, I would like to draw attention in somewhat more detail to evidence already referred to (see p. 23), namely the Ogam of the ninth-century Codex Bernensis 207, which represents an intermediate stage between the original values and the later ones. In this symbol 3 is used for Latin *f*, 13 for Latin *g* (six times), 6 for Latin *h*, 10 for *k*, a special symbol for *p*, 10 (again) for *q*, 18 for Latin consonantal *v*, and a variant of *emancholl* (?) for Latin *x* or *z* (but not symbol 14 for *z*). This evidence can be appreciated in the light of the arguments

outlined above, but is irreconcilable with a theory which invests the later key with an authentic pedigree.

## V

We can now return to the spelling **VEQREQ** (better **FEQREQ**) which, as we have seen, must represent a pronunciation [fe:xrex]. This has been dismissed as an example of pseudo–archaising or of confusion. I myself do not subscribe to the former theory; as to the latter, if the name contains the Indo–European root *\*weik-* there was never a /k<sup>w</sup>/ in it, so that the ‘confusion’ could not have come about within the word itself. When Ferguson published the inscription in 1879 (*PRIA* xv 207–10) he remarked on the two **Qs** and asked whether they could be interpreted as **C** + **H** (i.e. 4 + 1 strokes of the second series rather than 5), but rejected his own suggestion on the grounds that the collocation of the symbols did not support it. By this he meant that the final stroke, which he regarded as the **h** symbol, was not separated from the preceding 4 (**C**) as is done in manuscript Ogam and on inscription no. 27 **CNAEMSECH CELLACH**, etc. (a ninth-century silver penannular brooch), in both of which **h/H** is used as the equivalent of MS *h*. One can argue, however, that since MS *h* does not represent a separate sound, there is no reason why it should be written separately. Furthermore, MS Ogam, being written horizontally, naturally imitate the *h* of the manuscripts. But when written vertically, as on stone, one can accommodate not MS *h* but the suprascript *spiritus asper* by writing the symbol above, but not necessarily separate from, the aspirated sound. So placed above a **C** on an Ogam inscription this would take on the appearance of a **Q**.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, since the symbol was obviously redundant by the time this inscription was made, there may have been a conscious decision to give it the value [x], which later, owing to the difficulties which this would impose on the system (see n. 34), was replaced by Latin Q. Whichever way one looks at it it seems clear that the Ogamist responsible for **VEQREQ**, which MacNeill describes as the latest form he had noted in the inscriptions, dating it to the late seventh century (‘Archaisms’ 42), must have been familiar with MS writing. I

<sup>43</sup>Ferguson’s suggestion was endorsed by both Rhys and Graves (*PRIA* xv 210–11), the latter pointing out that **Q** appears on the Ballyquin inscription **CATABAR MOCO VIRIQORB** with the value [x] (Old Irish *Fir-chorb*). In *CIIC* (no. 303) Macalister reads **VIRICORB** and says that while there appear to be five scores on the stone ‘**C** is etymologically preferable’. In the index, however, the **Q** reappears. As for the leaden ink-bottle to which Graves refers, I have been unable to examine this personally as it cannot at present be traced. (I would like to thank Mary Cahill of the National Museum for her help in the search for it.) A sketch of this appears in Brash (*OIMG* pl. xli) and the inscription is transliterated on p. 327 as **NIG LASMEICH CILLMOCHOLMOG**. Graves maintained that the *-ch-* of *Cholmog* was in fact written **Q** but there seems to be a larger gap between the last two strokes than those between the first four, on the sketch at least. This is described as a unique example of Ogam in relief, but is very probably much too late to be of any significance for the present discussion.

would suggest, therefore, that it is at least possible that **VEQREQ** should be regarded as a deliberate attempt at a quasi-phonetic spelling.<sup>44</sup>

DAMIAN McMANUS

*Trinity College, Dublin*

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

- ALC*: *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, A.O. and M.O. Anderson (London, Edinburgh 1961).  
 'Archaisms': 'Archaisms in the Ogham inscriptions', E. MacNeill, in *PRIA* xxxix C 33–53.  
*Aur.*: *Auraicept na nÉces*, G. Calder (Edinburgh 1917).  
*CIIC*: *Corpus inscriptionum insularum Celticarum*, R.A.S. Macalister, 2 vols (Dublin 1945, 1949); all references are to vol. i except where stated otherwise.  
*ECNE*: 'Notes on the Ogam inscriptions of southern Britain', K. H. Jackson, in *The early cultures of north-west Europe*, H. M. Chadwick memorial studies, ed. C. Fox and B. Dicking (Cambridge 1950) 197–213.  
*EIHM*: *Early Irish history and mythology*, T. F. O'Rahilly (Dublin 1946).  
*Epig.*: *Studies in Irish epigraphy*, R. A. S. Macalister, 3 vols (London 1897, 1902, 1907).  
*GOI*: *A grammar of Old Irish*, R. Thurneysen (Dublin 1946).  
*IEW*: *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, J. Pokorny (Bern, München 1959).  
*JRSAI*: *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*.  
*LHEB*: *Language and history in early Britain*, K. H. Jackson (Edinburgh 1953).  
 'Notes': 'Notes on the distribution, history, grammar, and import of the Irish Ogham inscriptions', E. MacNeill, in *PRIA* xxvii C 329–70.  
*OIMG*: *The Ogam inscribed monuments of the Gaedhil in the British Islands*, R. B. Brash (London 1879).  
*PRIA*: *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*.  
*Thes.*: *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, ed. W. Stokes and J. Strachan, 2 vols (Cambridge 1901, 1903).  
*VGKS*: *Vergleichende Grammatik der keltischen Sprachen*, H. Pedersen, 2 vols (Göttingen 1909).

<sup>44</sup>I recognize that one can scarcely read **CH** in **MOQOI** if the latter is to be equated with the more usual **MUCOI**. The MS spelling *moccu* shows that the velar sound is /k/ not /x/.