The Book of Kells

Iconography
The ‘vocabulary’ of the illustrations
Iconographic Elements

- Lozenge
- Lion
- Peacock
- Snake
- Flabellum
- Fish
‘Lozenge’

- One of the most important elements of iconography in the Book of Kells
‘Lozenge’

- A multi-valent symbol
Lozenge/Diamond

• A cosmic symbol
• Four corners of the world
• A flat earth image
Moone High Cross

Loyola Institute, TCD 16.2.2017
Lozenge

• Represented Christ
• A visual Image that personifies the Word
Lion with breath emphasised

- Folio 72v
- A lion drawn with life giving breath emerging from its mouth
Lions: Symbolic Meaning
Isidore of Seville
Peacock
Symbol of Immortality
St. Augustine, The City of God

• “For who but God the Creator of all things has given to the flesh of the peacock its antiseptic property? ... And after it had been laid by for thirty days and more, it was still in the same state; and a year after, the same still, except that it was a little more shrivelled, and drier.” (Book 21, chapter 4):
Peacocks
Snakes

- Symbol of evil
- Genesis 3
Snakes

• Symbol of life renewed
• Skin

• Multivalent symbol
Flabellum
Flabellum

• A liturgical instrument

• Waved before the iconostasis during the Eucharist in the divine liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church
Flabellum

- A liturgical instrument
- Waved before the iconostasis during the Eucharist in the divine liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church
Fish
These are the first letters of the Greek words *Iesous* (Iota), *Christos* (Chi), *Theou* (Theta), *Uios* (Upsilon), and *Sotor* (Sigma).

- *Ichthys*
- Christogram
Ichthus

- *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Sotor*

- The five Greek words stand for the English words meaning, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" or "Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour".
Fish

Folio: 112r, initial letter T with fish

Page (Folio): 120v
Thank You