Introduction

The scope and character of the cultural meetings between the various ethnic groups around the Irish Sea and North-Atlantic has been the subject, both directly and more implicitly, of a whole branch of Viking Age research. The Viking impact in the west has been described as partly violent and suppressive, with a swift process of integration. The apparent mixture of indigenous and Scandinavian material culture in the colonized areas has, however, also led to interpretations of the migration as small-scale and non-violent, at least in some areas, and of indigenous and Norse groups co-existing on largely peaceful terms. The last three decades have seen a growing awareness of the complicated pattern of cultural contact in the west during the Viking Age. In addition to a heightened attention to the co-occurrence of both indigenous and Scandinavian material culture, recent linguistic studies have pointed to the apparent mixture and co-existence of Scandinavian and Insular languages and expressions, and DNA analysis shows that the modern populations in several of the former Viking colonies are of a mixed biological ancestry.2

James Barrett has argued that the different explanations aimed at describing the meetings between Scandinavian and insular populations have been dominated by a primordial view of ethnicity, in which ethnicity is viewed as a defined and immutable element of one's identity. The term

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1 I would like to thank Lotte Hedeager, Julie Lund and Håkon Glørstad for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this article.

is closely linked to seeing ethnic groups as distinct social and cultural entities. It is, however, also argued that the fusion of different cultural elements resulted in the construction of new self-conscious ethnic identities, which found their own material expressions. The aim of this article is to shed light upon the development of self-ascribed, regional identities during the Viking-Age, both in insular areas and the North-Atlantic communities as well as in Scandinavia, and additionally on how material culture was manipulated and redefined in that process. It is argued that the mutual relationship between Scandinavia, especially Norway, and the western settlements was expressed in concepts of ‘homeland’ and ‘new land’, and that the dynamic between those two contributed to different uses and inclusions of Norse and insular artefacts. In the first part of the article, a brief account of the relevant material is given, to demonstrate the diversity of the manipulations of Norse expressions in the Irish Sea. The second part of the article deals more specifically with insular ringed pins and penannular brooches, and their use and development in Ireland and Norway. It is argued that not only could they be seen as an expression of colonial identity, but also that the introduction and transformation of these objects in Norway contributed to an awareness of a Norse identity in the Viking homelands. It is further suggested that these objects could be seen as symbols referring to the journey as a mythical concept, embedded in social and political institutions.

**Cultural Meetings and Ethnic Identity**

In the last decade focus has been placed on seeing ethnicity as an incorporated part of personal identity. As such, a person’s ethnic identity can be displayed and played out in a number of ways. Material, behavioural, ideological and practical aspects of ethnic identity can thus be stressed or

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