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Sign of the Times? The Transfer and Transformation of Penannular Brooches in Viking-Age Norway

Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad

The paper seeks to investigate the ramifications in Viking Age Norway of the comprehensive contact with the Insular area, based on an analysis of penannular brooches. During the 7th and 8th centuries, the penannular brooch becomes a distinctive part of the Celtic jewellery tradition, associated with the elite. The most striking parallels to the Insular brooches are found in Norway. These brooches are introduced to Norway in the beginning of the 9th century, and are found almost exclusively in female burials. At the end of the century, a marked change occurs and various copies of Insular brooches are now locally produced. In the period from around 850–950, a large number of these are found in both upper-class male burials and hoards in Norway. It is argued that the transfer and alteration of these brooches could be taken as an indication of how the westward contact, especially towards Ireland and Scotland, had far-reaching consequences in Norway and was integrated into the perception and negotiation of gender, power and authority.

Keywords: Viking Age, Norway, Insular import, brooches, gender roles, political symbols, transformation

INTRODUCTION

The Viking influence and involvement around the Irish Sea is well attested through contemporary annals and documents, as well as a vast and varied archaeological record. On the British Isles (the 'Insular area' referred to in this paper), the archaeological material includes finds of a Norse character from burials, rural and urban settlements, and the Norse influence is apparent in new ornamental styles and stone monuments which combine different cultural and artistic traditions. Investigations of the contact between the British Isles and Scandinavia have to a large degree concentrated on the processes taking place in the Insular area, assessing either the implications of the violent invasions or the positive effects of a vital trade system and urban development around the Irish Sea. This field of research has in recent years called attention to the fusion and variations of cultural and religious expression in the wake of initial contact. This has led to a growing interest and debate concerning the coexistence of Norse and local population groups, and on the development of social and cultural identities in the Norse colonies (i.e. Larsen and Stummann Hansen 2001, Hadley 2002, Mytum 2003, Barrett 2003, 2004).

Zanette Tsigaridas Glørstad, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. E-mail: a.z.t.glorstad@khm.uio.no

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The ramifications of this contact within Scandinavian societies are more difficult to assess and have been discussed to a lesser degree. The interaction with the British Isles is primarily evident in the archaeological material through considerable numbers of Insular imports. An overwhelming majority of these imports to Scandinavia are found in Norway (Wamers 1985, p. 45, see also Wamers 1998, map 2). Most of these finds (*c*. 200) were probably produced in Ireland. This strongly implies that the attacks on Ireland must be regarded as an exclusively Norwegian undertaking (Solberg 2000, p. 248). These objects are commonly interpreted as loot, handed over as trinkets and gifts from male raiders to their women as they returned to Norway. There are, however, significant variations within the corpus of imported material as well as signs of standardization regarding the type and usage of imported objects. It has been suggested that some of this material may, in fact, represent trade goods (Blindheim 1978), missionary activity (Mikkelsen 2002, Staecker 2003) or 'bridal price' due to a disproportionate ratio between males and females in the general population whereby young men were compelled to compete for future wives (Barrett 2007). Others have argued that some of the imported material is the result of close political ties between Rogaland and Dublin (Bakka 1993, Wamers 1998). Despite these suggestions, it can be claimed that insufficient emphasis has been placed on how these artefacts were incorporated into the social and political structures in Norway during this period, and on how interactions between Celtic and Norwegian regions at the time affected Norwegian society.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss aspects of this contact and to consider some of the possible consequences in Norway resulting from the comprehensive contact pattern with the British Isles. It will be argued that processes and consequences of cultural interaction, and the way material culture is transferred and adopted through such contact, should be considered in order to understand the integration of Insular material culture in Norway in the 9th and 10th centuries. The paper focuses on the introduction of the so-called penannular brooches, the most common secular Insular artefact imported to Norway, and on their subsequent transformation and copying (Wamers 1985, pp. 26, 35–37, Tsigaridas Glørstad 2010, pp. 60, 141–148). Based on the contexts and development of change of these brooches, it is suggested that the transfer and transformation of these objects demonstrate how interaction with the British Isles had implications for the perception and negotiation of gender, power and authority. It is further argued that the brooches developed into central political symbols, actively used in processes towards political centralization.

THE PENANNULAR BROOCHES IN THE INSULAR AREA

By the end of the 7th century, penannular brooches had become a distinctive part of the Celtic jewellery tradition, the exquisite Tara and Hunterston brooches representing outstanding examples. These types of brooch represent a unique and distinguished part of the archaeological record, especially from Ireland, and became symbols of power and high status (Fig. 1). The development of the impressive penannular brooches in the 7th and 8th centuries draws upon a combination of local design, on one hand, and the flamboyant jewellery of the continental royal courts, on the other (Whitfield 2001). They represented a tradition tracing back to the Late Antique and Byzantine empires which increasingly made use of specific brooches and cloaks as emblems of status. These changes probably had profound effects on the European elite and led to a fundamental change of attitudes towards the use of jewellery in male dress in the early Middle Ages (Janes 1996, Harlow 2004).

From around 850, a number of new varieties of penannular brooch developed, especially the 'bossed penannular brooch' and the

Fig. 1. *Irish brooch found at Snåsa, Nord-Trøndelag (C758–759). © Kulturhistorisk museum, University of Oslo. Photo: E. Holte.*

Fig. 2. *Bossed penannular brooch from Storr Rock, Isle of Skye, Scotland. © Trustees of the British Museum.*

'ball-type' or 'thistle' brooch of silver. They are mostly known from stray finds, or occasionally from silver hoards. These variants have been extensively discussed with a particular emphasis on their prevalence, dating and stylistic traits, as well as on their cultural affiliation and origin (i.e. Graham-Campbell 1975, 1976, 1983, 1984, 1987, Johansen 1973, Stevenson 1987, 1989, Johnson 2001, Whitfield 2001, 2004). The 'bossed penannular brooches' (Fig. 2) have received special attention in vivid discussions concerning the brooches' multi-cultural associations. Several authors have argued that the décor of the 'bossed penannular brooches' has its background in Scandinavian jewellery traditions, and developed through a fusion of Norwegian and Irish jewellery forms and techniques in Norse settlements in Ireland (Bøe 1934, Mahr 1941, p. 68, MacDermott 1955, Johansen 1973). Others have drawn attention to the fact that design, décor and technique show strong Anglo-Saxon influence (Wilson 1958, pp. 95–100, Graham-Campbell 1976, Michelli 1993) and are considerably influenced by the Pictish brooch tradition (Wilson 1973, Graham-Campbell 1975). Today, it seems to be generally accepted that the development of the 'bossed penannular' as well as the 'ball-type' brooch is the result of a revitalization of the prominent Irish artisan tradition of the 7th and 8th centuries, stimulated by the increased supply of silver through Viking trade centres along the Irish coast (Sheehan 1998, Johnson 2001).

Iconographic depictions of the brooches are important sources for interpreting the brooches' social context and symbolism. From Ireland, there are eight certain and four possible images of penannular brooches.[1] These are primarily found in panels of ornamented stone crosses and portray men of apparently high ecclesiastical or secular status (Trench-Jellicoe 1999). On the images the brooches are worn as cloak-clasps, in most

cases on the man's right shoulder. In addition to these depictions, there is one image which shows a woman with a centrally placed penannular brooch. The woman is interpreted as a representation of the Holy Virgin, Mary (Whitfield 2001). This image corresponds to the five images of penannular brooches found in Scotland with regard to both motif and suggested dating (Alcock 1993, Nieke 1993, Trench-Jellicoe 1999).[2] They most likely belong to the 8th-10th centuries (Nieke 1993, Trench-Jellicoe 1999, Whitfield 2001). The Insular penannular brooches seem thus to have been linked to men in Ireland and women in Scotland in this period. One possible explanation for the gender alteration is that the penannular brooches were traditionally associated with aristocratic women in Scotland, and that this association was maintained in the representations of Virgin Mary (Trench-Jellicoe 1999).

The iconographic illustrations seem to emphasize that the penannular brooch formed a distinctive element of the wearer's appearance. Elements of a person's dress and appearance highlight the wearer's role and identity and define his/her group affiliation and relationship to other groups. As such, dress forms a crucial element in creating and reformulating identities (Crane 2002, Malmius 2003, Harlow 2004). Hence, elements of dress or selected garments contribute to the identification, categorization and ranking of various groups. They could consequently also be associated with political and ideological structures that legitimize, modify or maintain social categorization. Dress, power and ideology are as such integrated elements in the political and cultural construction of society (Damsholt 2003). Based on the iconographic representations, it seems clear that this is a relevant and accurate description of the presentation of penannular brooches – as a sign of status and role where dress and political symbolism ran parallel.

The use of penannular brooches by men is furthermore referred to in Irish law tracts, *Senchus Mór* and *Críth Gablach*. The passages describe how these lavishly ornamented brooches in gold and silver were used as signs of men's status within the Irish aristocracy. The law tracts imply that different types of penannular brooches were assigned to different groups in a hierarchical system, from local chiefs to leaders who aspired to control larger regions (Nieke 1993). By controlling how these brooches were obtained and used, the royal dynasties made them into political symbols through which they could reinforce and legitimize the social order in the struggle for royal power in Ireland during the 7th and 8th centuries; and the brooches may even have been used as a form of regalia connected to royal offices (Nieke and Duncan 1988, Nieke 1993). On several of the Insular penannular brooches, Christian motifs and inscriptions are integrated into the décor (Stevenson 1974, Whitfield 2001). This most likely reflects the close ties between the political and religious elite in Ireland in the period, where prominent positions within the church were often assigned to members of the aristocracy. The combination of ecclesiastical and secular power strategies and symbols could have been expressed through both the practical use and ornamentation of the brooches. This indicates that the penannular brooches had multiple meanings, and were used as versatile and multifaceted symbols of influence and power by members of both the ecclesiastical and secular elite.

THE PENANNULAR BROOCHES IN NORWAY

A striking parallel to the Insular brooches is found in the vast Norwegian Viking Age material. This includes a total of 162 penannular brooches, where 22 are produced in the Insular area and the remaining 140 are locally made copies (Table 1). These can be divided into four main groups based on the shape and design of the ring terminals, following James Graham-Campbell's (1987) classification for western penannular brooches. These four main categories are: I: *plate-shaped* terminals,

Table 1. Number and context of the western penannular brooches found in Norway.

	Insular brooches				Local brooches					
	Burials				Burials					
Main groups	F	M	Unknown	Settlement + stray finds	F	M	Unknown	Hoards	Settlement + stray finds	Total
I. Plate	14	1	1	1 + 6	6	11	4	1	1+12	22 ins./ 35 loc.
II. Animal/ human mask in relief						3				3
III. Ball type						34	11	12(+4?)	4+16	81
IV: Polygonal/ cylindrical					1	7	1	11	20	
Totals	*14*	*1*	*1*	*1 + 6*	*7*	*55*	*16*	*28*	*5+28*	*162*

Note: F: female burial, M: male burial.

most commonly with a sub-triangular shape; II: ring terminals shaped like an *animal/human mask* in relief; III: *ball-shaped* terminals, often also with a ball-shaped top on the needle where the ring passes through (the type includes the so-called 'thistle brooch' where the ball is decorated with a brambled pattern; the ball-shaped terminals on the two other variants are either completely plain, or with a flattened, decorated front); IV: simple terminal endings marked only by a slightly expanded ring, where the ring takes a *polygonal or cylindrical* shape. Types I and III are by far the most common. Types II and IV are most likely variants developed in Scandinavia. A few type II brooches have been found in Denmark and Sweden, while type IV seems to have developed in eastern Sweden where a total of 100 type IV brooches have been discovered, predominantly at Birka and on Gotland (Stenberger 1958, Graham-Campbell 1984). The majority of the penannular brooches in Norway are thus characterized by their close parallels to the Insular corpus, although the presence of type IV brooches in particular shows how the brooches also developed regional characteristics.

Around 60% (95 of 162) of the penannular brooches found in Norway originate from burial contexts. Based on the occurrence of jewellery/textile implements and weapons as indicative of female and male burials respectively, it is apparent that the Insular brooches occur almost exclusively in female burials while an overwhelming majority of the locally produced brooches are found in male burials and hoards. In addition, 34 brooches are stray finds. These brooches, as with the large number of other artefacts from the period without context, are assumed to originate from destroyed burials. This indicates that as many as 80% of the brooches could derive from burial contexts. A total of 28 silver brooches (approximately 17%), are found in 20 hoards. Often several brooches are placed together, or in combination with largely intact arm or neck rings. In six hoards, coins, hacksilver and/or silver ingots also occur. Only a few brooches appear from settlement contexts. A fragment from an Insular brooch was found in a settlement layer at Vesle

Hjerkinn mountain lodge in Dovre and five fragments of locally produced copies come from settlement layers at Kaupang.

Dating the use and deposition of the brooches thus rests largely on burial contexts. The absolute and relative chronology of Viking Age jewellery and weapons still relies in part on Jan Petersen's extensive works (1919, 1928), although it is clear that Petersen's chronological framework needs to be revised (Jansson 1985, Ambrosiani 1998, Skibstedt Klæsøe 1999). The debate has opened about a re-analysis of several types of jewellery, with suggestions for a new absolute and relative chronology for certain types of jewellery, such as oval and trefoil brooches (Skibstedt Klæsøe 1999). Still, it is not clear to which extent this chronological revision affects the absolute chronology for weapons (Stylegar 2007). Stylistic analyses and coin datings from Danish burials indicate that Petersen's relative chronology for weapons is not completely flawed, although certain amendments have been made (Blindheim *et al.* 1981, pp. 156–157, Fuglesang 1972, Moberg 1992). Despite these concerns, Petersen's chronological framework for both weapons and jewellery forms the basis for dating the burial contexts in question, primarily because it provides the possibility of dating the two main categories of object relative to each other. The dating of 62 burials within 50 to 100 years makes it possible to distinguish the main patterns within the material (Table 2). An additional question is whether the chronological estimation refers to the burial itself or to points in the deceased's lifetime when the objects were acquired. Some objects are clearly much older than the remaining objects in the grave. The deposition of older objects is relatively common and demonstrates a recurrent need to link society with stories of the past and to mediate collective memories (Arwill-Nordbladh 2007). Such objects may also point to specific roles or identities associated with the deceased and their acquisition of the object. This could well be the case for the Insular penannular brooches which represented a foreign form of elite jewellery, produced *c*. 100–150 years before they ended up in Norse burials.

The 20 hoards are even more difficult to date as they generally lack the objects that are used to determine the dating of a closed find. Hoards which contain coins may be given a *terminus post quem* dating, but the coins may have circulated long before they were deposited. Thus coins provide no certain method for dating the deposition (Hårdh 1996, p. 65). Coins appear in four of the hoards, all pointing towards deposition taking place between *c*. 920 and 950. These four hoards contain a large proportion of fragmented coins, hack-silver and silver ingots, and the brooches are partially fragmented. In the majority of the remaining hoards the penannular brooches, as well as other jewellery, are intact. This could imply that hoards with intact objects are earlier than those with coins, and that they may represent an economic understanding and symbolic value which anticipates a hack-silver-based economy (Hårdh 1996, p. 72).

Table 2. The dating of 62 burial contexts with penannular brooches

	800–850	800–900	850–900	850–950	900–950	900–1000
Insular brooches	5	4	2			1
Local brooches, type I	2	2	2		5	4
Local brooches, type II				1	2	
Local brooches, type III		1	2	2	17	5
Local brooches, type IV		1			2	2
Totals	*7*	*8*	*6*	*3*	*26*	*12*

Despite reservations regarding a reliable dating of the burials and hoards, there are clear indications of a relative chronology between the deposition of the Insular and of the local brooches, which coincides with the gender-based pattern for the brooches. The penannular brooches in Norway can thus be grouped into two main forms and usage: the Insular brooches are introduced in the early 9th century and are used by women throughout the century. During the 9th century, perhaps most precisely in the latter half, these brooches are copied. The new varieties developed in Ireland at the time, particularly the ball-type brooch (type III), rapidly entered the repertoire of copied brooches in Norway. The large majority of these locally produced brooches are deposited during *c*. 900–950, but this time within male burials as well as in hoards. How can we explain this transformation from female to male gender association, and how is this linked with the transformation of the Insular brooches into local copies?

CULTURAL MEETINGS: IDEOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A large number of recent works have dealt with the effects of cultural contact and interaction, including the complex processes around the development and expression of cultural identities in pre-history (Jenkins 1997, Jones 1997, Olsen 2000, Roslund 2001, Van Dommelen 2002, Gosden 2004, Bergstøl 2008, Naum 2008). There has also been an increased interest in the ways cultural contact and communication contribute to the transmission of social and political structures, and how these are adapted and transformed in new cultural contexts (Hedeager 2000, 2007, Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, Andrén 2006). Kristian Kristiansen and Thomas B. Larsson have suggested that the transmission of political ideas and structures ought to be a central aspect of all studies of contact and interaction. They argue that it is of vital importance to investigate how institutions and objects spread in time and space, and how political symbols and rituals are altered and re-interpreted in new contexts. The identification of political symbols and investigation of their occurrence in specific historical and local contexts offer a method for studying maintenance and change in institutional structures in prehistoric societies (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, p. 30). These expressions are not used arbitrarily in new cultural contexts, but relate to the use and significance in the area from which they are acquired. That is, political symbols recur in ways which identify the transfer and transformation of political institutions (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, pp. 8, 14). This also underlines the ideological potential held by foreign objects and rituals and illustrates how they can constitute key instruments for ideological and political strategies. This particular point has been made frequently, most of all based on Mary Helms' (1988, 1993) comprehensive anthropological studies, which suggest that objects acquired from remote landscapes are actively used in the ideological legitimation of the group that controls their acquisition, distribution and use. The access to, and acquisition of, such objects could furthermore involve a transformation and re-interpretation of these objects within a specific symbolic and political strategy (Helms 1993, p. 4). The processes described by Helms mirror Kristiansen's and Larsson's approach regarding the spread and implementation of political symbols. Political symbols acquired and copied from a distant land are thus suitable to convert ideology into a concrete policy (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996).

Political symbols can be defined as materializations of ideology, with the capacity to convey the establishment and manipulation of horizontal and vertical power relations (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996). Political authority is thus conveyed largely through symbolic means. By acquiring or redefining such powerful symbols it is possible to draw upon the ideological legitimation they provide and redefine political situations and power relations (Kertzner 1988, p. 5). This materialization of ideology promotes the possibility of

controlling, manipulating and disseminating ideological notions beyond a political centre, making it possible to communicate and concretize the ideological content over greater distances. Materialized ideology expressed through specific rituals and symbols could hence have major significance in situations where groups or dynasties try to establish and maintain political control over larger areas. These processes could involve multiple groups or dynasties with diverging or even conflicting ideological justifications for their power base. Ritualized actions and use of powerful symbols seem to be particularly important when the political infrastructure is weak and is in constant danger of disintegration (Kertzner 1988, p. 25). A successful materialization of a group's ideology could then lead to appeasing and annihilating processes of fragmentation, and function as an effective move towards stable and institutionalized power relations (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996).

Cultural interaction could thus constitute a vital stimulus for re-negotiating and reorganizing ideological and political structures. The transfer and transformation of objects and rituals from one cultural setting to another would facilitate the ideological justification of potential political and social changes. As pointed out, these symbols and rituals could act as powerful moves towards stabilizing a political situation and justify a group's claim to power, and could as such play a central part in the complicated and often conflicting processes towards institutionalization of power (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, p. 8). As will be argued, these approaches could also bring new insight into the importation and transformation of penannular brooches from the British Isles, and contribute to our understanding of their context and symbolism in Norway.

THE INSULAR BROOCHES: WOMEN AND MIGRATION

Penannular brooches of Insular production were introduced to western Norway in the first half of the 9th century, and are found almost exclusively in women's burials. Many of these are strikingly similar to brooches found on the British Isles. Some brooches are practically identical to their Insular counterparts, indicating that they were produced in the same workshop (Wilson 1973, p. 93). The close association between female burials and imported brooches corresponds with the general distribution of Insular objects, where c. 80% are found in female burials (Wamers 1985, p. 42). A large part of these imports to Norway consists of ecclesiastical items, mostly mounts for books and shrines, where up to 50% consists of fragments reworked into jewellery (Wamers 1985, p. 41, table 1). Nonetheless, a number of other types of object are largely complete and unfragmented. Most of these belong to a limited set of categories: they include numerous bridle and belt fittings, scales (Jondell 1974), hanging bowls and bucket mounts (Raven 2005), and penannular brooches. These objects can be characterized as being predominantly secular, and most of them are intact and implemented in line with their original use and intention. These features imply that earlier explanations regarding them as a result of random loot should be questioned. Instead, they suggest that Insular objects were brought to Norway as a result of different processes and motivations.

There is no reason to dismiss the idea of an elite network as a continued source for travel and exchange of luxury goods. Female burials with foreign jewellery could represent an exogamous alliance (Arrhenius 1995, Cessford 1996). This should be considered in light of the historical and cultural complexity that this situation would entail. In this perspective, the penannular brooches could be regarded as visual expressions of the women's social and cultural identity. This could imply that women buried with Insular brooches may have been of Pictish/Celtic origin, and that the brooches refer to their cultural background (Bødal 1998). However, the general assembly of other objects in these graves characterizes them as typically 'Norse'. This would suggest that these women were of Norse origin, but

associated with the Norse colonies in the west. The women who were buried with Insular brooches during the 9th century could thus be interpreted either as women of Pictish/Celtic origin or as Norse women communicating their affiliation with overseas colonies through their jewellery. The brooches could as such be seen as implicit symbols of regional alliances among groups within the upper social class, either among different Norse communities on both sides of the North Sea or between Norse and Pictish/Celtic milieus in the colonies, and of the economic and political resources that could be drawn from these networks.

No penannular brooch has been recovered from a convincingly Norse context in Ireland. However, a similar situation to Norway can be detected in the Norse colonies on the northern and western isles of Scotland. On the Orkneys and the Hebrides, five Insular penannular brooches are found in Norse burial contexts. Although poorly recorded, they seem to have been placed in both female and male burials. Of these, the female burial from the Westness burial site can be dated to the 9th century whereas the others cannot be given a more precise dating than Viking Age (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, pp. 116, 134, 136). At Westness, both Pictish and Norse burials are recorded. The Norse burials have left the Pictish graves undisturbed, which indicates a mutual respect and even coexistence between the two groups (Kaland 1996). The Westness site and the penannular brooch found here suggest how the integration and transfer of these elite symbols into a Norse cultural framework initially was related to the multicultural situation following Norse settlement on the Scottish isles.

This possibility must be assessed together with recent evaluations and results concerning the dating and population composition of the Norse settlement on the British Isles. Although written, archaeological and onomastic sources testify to the strong Norse presence in Scotland, a reliable dating of the Norse migration and initial settlements in Scotland has proven problematic. Based on the earliest contemporary written records, Norse settlement has traditionally been dated to the beginning of the 9th century. This assumption has lately been questioned. A review of the Norse burials shows that the vast majority are from c. 850–950 and that only a few may be dated to the period before, from *c*. 800–850 (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, pp. 152–153). Excavations of seemingly Norse settlements have revealed that only a few settlements or settlement phases can be dated to the 9th century. Most settlements seem to belong to the 10th century and the Early Middle Ages (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, pp. 155, 179, Barrett 2003). Thus, while the written sources indicate that initial contact and small-scale migration certainly occurred in the first decades of the 9th century, it is claimed that a more permanent establishment could not have taken place before the middle of this century (Barrett 2003). Several recent studies have attempted to elucidate the character of Norse migration by examining the genetic composition and ratio in the Norse settlement areas. Studies of variants of the Y-chromosome and mitochondrial DNA within present-day populations suggest that female settlers constituted a significant part of the initial settlements on the islands north of the Scottish mainland, with almost identical proportions of Scandinavian matrilineal and patrilineal ancestry in the Orkneys (44%) and on Shetland (30%). In contrast, the estimated contribution of Scandinavian females to the Western Isles, including the Hebrides, is half that of Scandinavian males (Goodacre *et al.* 2005). This discrepancy is even higher for Iceland and the Faroe Islands where there is a disproportionally high contribution from Scandinavian males combined with a high proportion of females with a British/Irish ancestry (Helgasson *et al.* 2000, 2001, Als *et al.* 2006). This suggests that the Northern Isles already had a strong presence of Norse women from the mid-9th century if not earlier, indicating a family-based settlement of these areas while areas further away from Norway

involved male colonizers to a larger degree (Goodacre *et al.* 2005). How does this outline of Norse involvement correspond with the dating of the Insular brooches found in female burials in Norway?

While previous studies of migration and the establishment of colonies largely dealt with men, the past 20 years has seen an increased emphasis on the importance of women's roles in these processes. This has provided a new understanding of the processes and consequences of colonization for the native population, as well as for the colonists themselves (Stoler 2002, p. 41). The anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler has demonstrated how the creation of household and family relations in the British colonies during the 19th and 20th centuries became vital for the development of cultural categories, strategies and power relations within the colony. This was conveyed through a complicated system of categorizations and controlled behaviour and by emphasizing social and religious rituals (Stoler 2002, for similar studies, see Callaway 1987, Levine 2004). Female settlers seem in addition to function as custodians of the extensive interregional networks of families and friends (Hammerton 2004). By holding a crucial role in the development of children's language, by passing on norms for culturally defined behaviour and morality and by upholding traditions, networks and rituals, female colonists are often cast as guarantors of the maintenance of group identity and sense of belonging (Stoler 2002, pp. 97–102, Paisley 2004, Hall 2004).

These studies may provide an insight into the processes and developments that shaped women's social role and actions in the Norse colonies in Scotland. The married, aristocratic woman in early medieval Europe could possess a complex and multifaceted role. She formed the pivot point between clans and alliances, and, by virtue of this role, she could also act as her husband's delegate, diplomat and closest advisor (Enright 1996, p. 35, Stafford 1998). The female arena may thus have had an open and transcending element, as a mediator between families, regions and networks. Through the routinization of interaction towards the British Isles and with the creation of Norse colonies, these aspects of the female role could have been imbued with new values and associations. They may have been extended to include women's cultural competence, where attempts to create political and cultural dominance in the colonies were accentuated and spread through a reinforcement of certain social and cultural structures. Dispute and negotiations over authority between local and Norse groups during the initial migration and settlement could have involved acquisition and redefinition of local elite symbols already during the first decades of the 9th century (Kertzner 1988, pp. 5, 43). This would coincide with occurrence of Insular brooches in female burials in Norway and would indicate that they, as the Norse burials in Scotland suggest, represent transcendence and renegotiations of cultural identities in the context of the 9th-century settlement phase and the subsequent formation of alliances and transactions between the Norse and Insular area.

The Insular brooches may provide an example of how material culture was integrated in the formation of gender roles and of social and cultural strategies within the colonies, as well as between Norse settlements abroad and the homeland. This means that women's positions cannot be viewed as a pure reflection of men's status nor the male sphere seen as representing the main momentum for cultural and political negotiations. Instead, it indicates that the cultural encounters on the British Isles and the establishment of Norse colonies triggered a complex interaction between gender and power. Re-negotiation of cultural and social capital moved on several levels between the male and female sphere both within the colony, between the colony and the local population, and between the colonies and their homeland.

THE LOCAL BROOCHES: TRANSFER AND TRANSFORMATION

In the second half of the 9th century a marked change occurs and *copies* of the Insular

brooches are now locally produced. While the Insular brooches are made of silver or gilt silver/copper alloy, the locally produced brooches in burials are almost entirely made of copper alloy and occasionally iron. Many show traces of tin coating, which must have made them appear 'silver-like', similar to the Insular originals as well as the 28 silver brooches found in hoards. Still, size, material and décor make the local penannular brooches clearly distinguishable from the Insular ones. This is in particular apparent in the early type I copies, where the brooches have a distinctly different type of ornamentation as they are partly decorated in rich Borre style (Fig. 3) or are completely plain. Although their origin and function are evidently similar, their appearances signal a stark contrast to the meticulously and extravagantly ornamented Insular brooches.

The silver Irish 'ball-type' brooch (type III) is also copied, and found in considerable numbers in Norway (Fig. 4). An estimated total of *c.* 165 ball-type brooches are known from Northern Europe (see Graham-Campbell 1983, although his estimation of 150 brooches must be increased according to later finds). These brooches are divided almost equally between the British Isles on one hand and Norway on the other: approximately 70 ball-type brooches of Insular origin have been found on the British Isles, while approximately 80 copies are from Norway. Graham-Campbell (1983) has argued that the large number of brooches in Norway must be explained as a result of a gradual transfer of Insular objects from Norse colonies into

Fig. 3. *Locally produced copy of insular brooch, from Dolven, Vestfold (C14759). © Kulturhistorisk museum, University of Oslo. Photo by: E. Holte.*

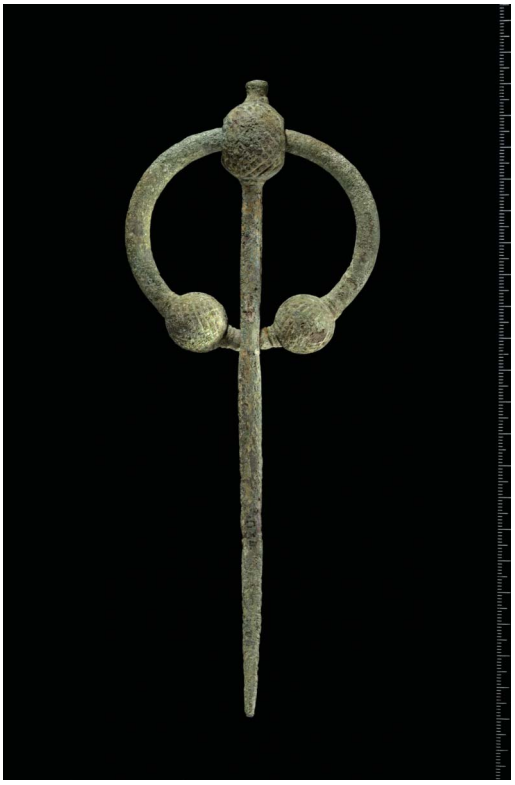

Fig. 4. *Locally produced copy of 'thistle-brooch' from Øvre Kongsteigen, Vestfold (C6034). © Kulturhistorisk museum, University of Oslo. Photo by: E. Holte.*

Norse society. The distribution of the most common type found in Norway, the ball-type brooches (type III), indicates however that this statement needs to be modified. These brooches do not occur in Norse settlement or burial contexts in either Scotland or Ireland, with the exception of a most likely Norwegian-produced brooch in bronze in a presumably Norse man's burial from Eigg in Scotland (Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, p. 84). Nor has any imported type III brooch been discovered in Norway. There is, in other words, little to suggest that the ball-type brooches were used as a dress element by the population in the Norse colonies or were brought to Norway from the British Isles.

There are several finds that shed light on the production and impact of the ball-type brooches in Norway. In the Kaupang settlement layers, the mould of a type III brooch was found as well as two lead models for the same type (Blindheim 1976, Pedersen 2010, pp. 61–65). The mould was produced from imported silt stone, possibly from Cornwall in England. Examinations show that it had probably been damaged during processing, and then discarded (Blindheim 1976, Pedersen 2010, p. 63). This could indicate that it was not part of the tool-kit of a travelling craftsman, but that the silt stone was imported as raw material for local artisans who could then form moulds of their own design. The cast and lead models show that penannular brooches were produced at Kaupang. An interesting aspect is that both lead models have a so-called 'split top'. Ball-type brooches were usually produced by casting the ball-shaped terminals separately before they were joined onto the ring. In Norway, a different, possibly more efficient method seems to have been developed, where the ball terminals were cast in one piece together with the ring. This meant that the ball on top of the needle had to be cast in two parts or with an open top, in order to be snapped around the ring and then further processed until it appeared as closed (Graham-Campbell 2011). Traces of such a 'split top' are clearly visible on two brooches from Sogn and Fjordane, western Norway. At least another 10 ball-type brooches display clear signs of the ring and ball-shaped terminal being cast together, indicating the use of 'split-top' technique for these as well (Graham-Campbell 2011, Tsigaridas Glørstad 2010, p. 102). The distribution of brooches produced with this technique indicates that there were workshops that produced ball-type brooches both at Kaupang and in West Norway, possibly Sogn and Fjordane. Two practically identical brooches from Sogn and Fjordane strengthen the indications of a production centre in this region (Tsigaridas Glørstad 2010, p. 102).

The extensive transformation and adoption of penannular brooches is an innovative and characteristic feature of the Norwegian material. Another important aspect is that these copied and transformed brooches are found almost entirely in well-equipped male burials. These burials are characterized by having a distinctly high proportion of weapons, horse gear (consisting mainly of bridles and strap ends) and tools. The combination and quantity of objects in these graves are paralleled only by the so-called *horsemen's burials*, defined through the presence of stirrups and spurs, which make up a distinct group of male graves within the Scandinavian material. The horsemen's burials are commonly interpreted as representing a group of men with important military or administrative functions. It has been suggested that they were military leaders or officials within the early organization of royal power, maybe representatives of the Danish king positioned along the border zone of his realm (Randsborg 1980, pp. 121–122, 168, Braathen 1989, Näsman 1991, Pedersen 1997, Myhre 2003). In spite of close parallels in types, combination and quantity of objects in the burials, the two groups of male graves, i.e. those with penannular brooches on one hand and those with riding equipment on the other, are almost entirely mutually exclusive. Of the approximately 120 male burials with either penannular brooches

or horseman's gear, only three burials contain a penannular brooch *and* stirrup and/or spurs. Both groups, however, stand out when compared to other male burials, with an exceptional high occurrence of swords and spears of high quality, of a full weaponry set (consisting of sword, spear and axe), a marked proportion of blacksmiths' and/or carpenters' tools, as well as weighing equipment (Table 3). This picture indicates that both horsemen's burials and the male burials with penannular brooches express basic ideas and norms of how graves for men from the elite should be furnished. The mutual exclusiveness of penannular brooches and horseman's equipment indicates however that they represent two distinct groups within the male elite, maybe two different sections of a political/military organization.

The depictions of the brooch found in Ireland and Scotland as well as the written sources, illustrate the symbolic value of penannular brooches. Their apparent standardized use as cloak clasps indicates that the brooches should be considered as a part of a wider symbolic repertoire expressed through the dress and as part of the wearer's visual appearance. The placement of brooches in burials in Norway corresponds well with the contemporary depictions, and strongly indicates that they were used in accordance with their original purpose, as cloak clasps. The archaeological record thus strongly indicates that they were used by a group of men of high social and political rank in the period, and that both brooches and cloaks became powerful social and political symbols by the end of the 9th century and in the first half of the 10th century.

The visual transformations and change in gender association are striking and indicate that the brooches were assigned with new or added significance within a new social and cultural framework. There are other examples of objects that change gender association when copied in a Norse context, implying that this is not unique. However, these are artefacts originally linked with the male sphere and were transformed into women's jewellery in Scandinavia. They include the trefoil brooch, as well as hilt-shaped and strap-end-shaped brooches (Skibstedt Klæsøe 1999) This suggests that symbols and values associated with the female/male spheres of action were interconnected and could be transcended depending on social and political context. Giving the brooches a new visual expression would have signalled a removal from their earlier association with women. Still, their implicit connotation towards regional networks and social strategies towards the Insular area may have been sustained and accentuated in new ways. The high number of such locally produced brooches in

Table 3. Comparison of grave goods in male burials with penannular brooches, horsemen's burials and 119 additional Viking Age male burials from Rogaland and Etne in south-west Norway

	High quality swords	Spear (Petersen type I/K)	Burials with full weaponry set	Horse gear (other than stirrup or spurs)	Blacksmiths'/ carpenters' tools	Weighing equipment
Male burials with penannular brooches (70 burials)	20%	20%	48%	37%	21%	7%
Horsemen's burials (49 burials)	49%	28%	55%	90%	24%	4%
Male burials from Rogaland and Etne (119 burials)	4%	19%	11%	11%	5%	None

Sources: for horsemen's burials, Braathen (1989); for male burials from Rogaland and Etne Larsen (1978, pp. 185–226)

Norway, and their contexts, suggest that these associations now relate to internal political processes.

THE RITUALIZATION OF AUTHORITY

The transformation of penannular brooches and their integration into male dress takes place in the period 850–950, with particular emphasis on the period 900–950. The contexts in which these brooches are found, i.e. male elite burials and silver hoards, indicate that they became poignant political symbols in a period characterized by political change in Norway. The period marks the beginning of the gradual processes of political centralization in Norway, represented through Harald Hairfair's final victory in the battle of Hafrsfjord in the 870s and the following reign of his two sons Eirik Blood-axe (932–934) and Håkon the Good (*c*. 934–960). Although our knowledge of the scope and character of the elite's connection with and control of the Norse colonies is fragmentary at best, there is no reason to doubt that influence over the Irish Sea would provide access to the economic resources that the Norse colonies represented, with Dublin as major port of trade. This would give the elite a strategic access to the north European political scene and to the aristocratic networks of northern Europe (Bjørgo 1995, p. 27, Etchingham 2001, 2007). The networks towards the Irish Sea may have represented an essential economic and ideological presupposition for maintaining and strengthening the power base for groups within the elite. This suggests that the contact with the British Isles, as well as the inclusion of political symbols associated with the Insular world, could have formed ideological elements to enhance and promote the ongoing process of political change and centralization in Norway in the period.

The copied *silver* penannular brooches in Norway consist mainly of type III and IV brooches and originate from silver hoards. Many of the silver brooches from the British Isles are also found in hoards. Traditionally, both Scandinavian and Insular hoards have almost unanimously been seen in connection with economic development and trade. This approach has met strong criticism in recent works (Zachrisson 1998, Hedeager 1999, Ryste 2005, Spangen 2005). The hoards have instead been connected to the Viking Age institution of gift giving, with a focus on the political and symbolic values of the act. The placement of the hoards in the landscape seems to strengthen this line of interpretation. In Norway, none of the silver hoards with brooches was deposited in water/marsh or could be associated primarily to water. On the contrary, most hoards are associated with rocks, cairns and mountains. It has been suggested that hoards were placed in such locations for cosmological reasons. Rocks, cairns and mountains may have represented a transformative sphere, based on their association with the dwarves as master blacksmiths who had the capacity to make weapons and jewellery with special powers (Andrén 2002, Bukkemoen 2007, p. 231). This could imply that the objects were perceived as being stored partly in the human world and partly in the underground world, which contributed to a continuous emphasis on the object's transcendental attributes and associations (Andrén 2002).

In addition to being associated with a cosmologically saturated landscape, several of the hoards with penannular brooches relate to political nodes and centres. For instance, the two hoards from Hordaland County are both located in the outskirts of large estates known from medieval sources, such as Mel, Hatteberg, Gjerde and Støle. Based on tax rolls dating back to the early medieval period, the farms were probably some of the largest estates in western Norway during this period (Iversen 2004, p. 376). Both Gjerde and Støle appear in the Norse sagas as homesteads for prominent noblemen and royal allies in the late 10th and 11th centuries (Iversen 2004, p. 326). It is highly likely that the area had major economic and political importance in the Viking Age too. The depot from Ås,

Tønsberg in Vestfold county, has a similar type of location. Here, a magnificent silver penannular brooch with an extraordinarily long needle, about 40 cm long was found. The site is located about 2 km west of the large estate Seim, where Jarlsberg Manor stands today. The farm is most likely one the earliest royal farms, dating to the period before 1130 (Sveaas Andersen 1977, p. 295). Seim occurs in the *Yngling Saga* as the headquarters for Bjørn Farmann, who is portrayed by Snorri as Harald Fairhair's son (*Yngling Saga*, ch. 36). Although Snorri's statement should be taken with a pinch of salt, it is clear that the above-mentioned hoards all seem to be placed along the edges of central estates from the early Middle Ages. These estates probably also constituted regional political and economic centres in the Viking Age. The hoards offer a strong indication that the rituals that took place during the deposition, including the visualization and dramatization of the identity associated with the brooches, often took place on the outskirts of large estates or central farms. These may have belonged to the king, or been managed by his allies or vassals. As with the penannular brooches found in male burials, those found in hoards also seem to represent politically charged objects associated with the social and political elite.

The social and political prominence of the group of men who wore the brooches in burials, as well as the structural dominance of gift giving as a political tool expressed through standardized hoards, relates the transformed penannular brooches to the institutional and ritual exchange of gifts. These symbolic exchanges among the elite were closely connected to the establishment and formalization of hierarchical liaisons and loyalty, and represented endeavours to stabilize political patterns and regions in pre-state times. Between *c*. 850 and 950 the intentional transformation and inclusion of penannular brooches and associated dress elements indicate that both brooch and cloak were integrated as active political symbols within the elite's gift exchange. The introduction of dress symbols associated with the British Isles could be seen as a strategic attempt to integrate the economic and ideological associations related to the Insular world into internal political negotiations. Integrating these as political symbols would facilitate manipulations of rituals and symbols of allegiance, with the intention of transforming previous notions of loyalties and identities. This would suggest that the transformation and integration of penannular brooches is closely related to political changes of the period, as a means to establish new and reliable forms of allegiance. This political aspect of the brooches could be broadened by assessing the changes that occur on the locally produced brooches during the period 850–950. The Insular brooches' rich and versatile symbolism is now abandoned and replaced by the characteristic Norse Borre-style décor. Lotte Hedeager has shown how the intricate and meaningful Nordic animal art became an expression of the Scandinavian pagan symbolic universe and of a common Germanic identity (Hedeager 1998, 2005). In this perspective, the alteration of ornamental style on penannular brooches cannot be seen merely as a result of fashion and artistic individualism. Instead, the use of the Borre style can be seen as a way of associating these brooches with cosmological elements, thus incorporating their use and connotation into a Norse conceptual framework.

The political and cosmological aspects of the brooches are emphasized in the only iconographic representation of penannular brooches in Scandinavia (Fig. 5). A number of gold foils from Hauge in Klepp, Rogaland in south-western Norway, depict a couple turned towards each other, possibly representing the Norse god Frey and his beloved, the giantess Gerd, the mythical predecessors of the successful Hairfair dynasty (Steinsland 2005, p. 406). The male figure is wearing a long cloak, held together by a circular accessory on his right shoulder, apparently a penannular brooch. Their original context is

Fig. 5. *Gold foil from Hauge, Rogaland. Printed with permission. Bergen University Museum.*

uncertain, and this prevents a reliable dating (Gustafson 1900). Gold foils date mainly to the 7th and 8th centuries although there are indications of older and younger findings (Lidén 1969, Watt 2004). A closer look at the cloak worn by the man on the gold foils from Hauge may hint at their dating. The characteristic lobed cloak appears on male figures on gold foils from Denmark, as well as on two picture stones: one from the same area as the gold foils, Tu in Rogaland, and the other from Gotland, Sweden. The same type of cloak is worn by a male figure on a textile fragment from Rolvsøy in Østfold (Watt 2003). The Tu stone most likely dates to the 9th century, while for the Gotland stone and the Rolvsøy fragment only a general dating to the Viking Age can be given. This type of cloak is also depicted on two male figures in an Irish psalter, dated to the latter half of the 10th century (Blindheim 1947, pp. 91–93, Hougen 2006, p. 73). Thus, this specific type of cloak appears to have been used over large parts of northern Europe, and may have been introduced in Norway during the late 8th century (Blindheim 1947, p. 128). Considering the proposed dating for gold foils in general, the Hauge foils may represent one of the earliest Scandinavian depictions of lobed cloaks and a dating to the late 8th century or early 9th century might be suggested.

The gold foils are normally related to rituals of inauguration, symbolizing a leader's mystical origin and superior standing and thus legitimizing their political power (Steinsland 2005, pp. 399–401). The Hauge farm, as well as the neighbouring farm Tu, has a large number of burials with outstanding finds as well as a court site from the late Roman Iron Age and Migration period. Most likely, the economic centre of the area was located here at the end of the early Iron Age (Magnus 1975, pp. 140–141). Finds of rune stones and a stone cross in addition to gold foils, underline the central position of this area in the late Iron Age as well. Two medieval/post-medieval assembly sites, *things*, were also located here. All in all, the Hauge-Tu area seems to stand out as a centre of political, economic and religious power extending from the 5th century and well into post-medieval times (Magnus 1975, p. 155). The inclusion of penannular brooches in ideologically significant depictions demonstrates how visual appearance associated with power was closely related to cosmological and political legitimation expressed in ritual acts. The proposed dating of the Hauge gold foils coincides with or even anticipates the introduction of penannular brooches in female burials, and demonstrate that the brooches' political and ideological value was known at an early stage. As Insular penannular brooches became associated with both men and women in political, cultural and social negotiations both abroad and at home, the Hauge foils indicate that the political symbols associated with the Insular world transcended gender associations and shifted with social, political and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

Insular objects found in Norway were in all probability acquired through various processes and patterns of interaction, and Norse society had many ways of interpreting and including these artefacts. The continuous contact between Norse and Insular communities would certainly have contributed to altered experiences of belonging and identity, to changing notions and categorizations of landscapes (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), and to changes in the ideological legitimization of power within the social and political elite. There is a broad understanding within social research that material culture constitutes active elements of social interaction and institutional legitimation and redefinition. The vast number of copied penannular brooches in Norway demonstrates the strong connection to the British Isles, from which this type of brooch originated. The implementation of these brooches within a Norse context and the comprehensive transformation and copying of these brooches from the late 9th century indicate that there is a need to assess more thoroughly how Insular objects could in fact be seen as active elements in the cultural, social and political changes of the period. The context and meaning surrounding these brooches indicate that they must be perceived as political symbols, as described by Kristiansen and Larsson (2005). Within a new context, such symbols are not given an arbitrary meaning, detached from their function and symbolism in the country of origin (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, p. 14). Instead these symbols relate to the institutions and structures they were primarily associated with, although they may be re-interpreted in line with their new social and ideological context. As in Ireland and Scotland, the penannular brooches in Norway became a multifaceted symbol, merging social, cultural, political and cosmological features and strategies for the legitimation and execution of power.

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NOTES

[1]1 and 2) Cross of Scriptures, Clonmacnoise, County Offaly (two images); 3 and 4) Broken Cross, Kells, County Meath (two images); 5) Market Cross, Kells, County Meath; 6) Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice; 7) White Island, Lough Erne; 8) Durrow, County Offaly. In addition there are possible depictions of penannular brooches at St Patric's Cross, Cashel, Tipperary and Roscrea Cross, Tipperary, as well as images on the already mentioned Cross of Scriptures and Market Cross (Trench-Jellicoe 1999 with references, Whitfield 2001).

[2]1) a'Chill Cross, Isle of Canna; 2) Monifieth, Angus; 3) Kirriemuir, Angus; 4) Hilton, Cadboll; 5) Western Denoon (Alcock 1993, Nieke 1993, Trench-Jellicoe 1999).

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