PEOPLES, KINGS, WARRIORS AND WOMEN: CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DISCOURSES IN THE MIGRATION PERIOD AND EARLY MEROVINGIAN PERIOD

The scholar, therefore, needs to interpret an ethnic label within a kaleidoscope of changing discourses, while, at the same time, he or she should also identify the particular discourse which is of immediate relevance (Wood 1998:300).

8.1 COSTUME AND PEOPLES IN THE EUROPEAN EARLY MIDDLE AGES: FROM JEWELLERY-TYPES TO CONFEDERATE GROUPS

Through a detailed study of selected Scandinavian jewellery-types, I have sought to demonstrate how the archaeological evidence can lay the foundation for a new understanding of ethnic and/or cultural relations in Scandinavia in the Migration Period and Merovingian Period. I have argued that the use of dress-accessories may be understood as *social practice*, and that this practice contributed to the (re)production of different forms of, and different levels of, cultural and/or ethnic group identity (Chs. 1–2). The chronological and geographical distribution patterns of the items of jewellery imply a process in which the standardization of types was a factor within a *systematic communication* of cultural and/or ethnic differences (cf. Ch. 6.2). By means of standardization, a symbolic language and a social field were created within which costume was used to manifest multidimensional identities. This systematic communication also paved the way for deliberately 'divergent' costume articulations which made it possible to express and/or present 'foreign' identities through the use of 'foreign' items or sets of jewellery. Such 'foreign' identities may have been manifested in order to emphasize important social or political connections (Ch. 6.3). The dress accessories were thus employed in a discourse through which distinct regional, social, cultural and/or ethnic groupings

were attributed with values and moved in and out of focus (Ch. 7). I have argued that the overall course of development moves from an articulation of larger, super-regional groups at the beginning of the period to the manifestation and consolidation of smaller, regionally rooted groupings in the last two phases of the Migration Period, only to swing back to the marking of common cultural and/or ethnic identities over wider areas at the beginning of the Merovingian Period (Chs. 6.2–5 and 7).

In order to crystallize what new perspectives and knowledge have been obtained by this study of dress-accessories, it is necessary, however, to situate the results more specifically against the dominant conceptions of how the phenomenon of ethnicity took shape in the period being studied. I have touched upon this issue several times above (Chs. 1.2.2, 6.7, 7.1.1), but shall now address it in greater detail.

Research into ethnic groupings in the Migration Period and the early Merovingian Period, as was explained in the Introduction (Ch. 1), has been shaped by two different positions or points of view: while early scholarship was dominated by the identification of the migrations and locations of historically recorded people, often making use of mapping of the geographical distribution of particular jewellery-types and of the concept of a *national costume*, discussion in the most recent years has been focused first and foremost upon *ethnic processes* in the formation of the warrior retinues or confederations of this period (cf. Chs. 1.2.2, 7.1.1). The dominant direction of ethnic studies in recent years is known as the *theory of ethnogenesis* or *the model of ethnogenesis* (see, e.g., Gillett ed. 2002), and this has had particularly strong influence in the study of medieval history.[29] The ethnogenesis theory has relatively rapidly also won acceptance in the field of archaeology, and become important with regard to how ethnic circumstances are perceived in

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29 This movement is associated first and foremost with what is known as the Vienna School, which was itself strongly inspired by Reinhard Wenskus's *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterliche gentes* (1961), and it is represented, amongst others, by Herwig Wolfram, Walther Pohl and Patrick Geary (Gillett 2002b:85; Hakenbeck 2006:24–5; cf. Ch. 1.2.2, above).

the Migration and Merovingian Periods – including in Scandinavia (cf. Chapters 1.2.2 and 7.1.1).[30]

It is, however, possible to see a discrepancy between how the phenomenon of ethnic groupings is understood in those works that are influenced by the theory of ethnogenesis and how it is understood in archaeological studies which focus upon the distribution of jewellery as an expression of ethnic and/or cultural, regional costume signalling. On one side we have the confederations or warrior retinues; on the other, the regionally-based ethnic and/or cultural groupings which are represented by costume manifestations (cf. Ch. 7.2). By way of conclusion, therefore, I shall discuss in more detail how the results which have come from the foregoing study concerned with ethnic and/or cultural costume signalling in this period are related to the 'ethnogenetic' ideas of ethnic relationships in the Migration and Merovingian Periods. I shall also include within this discussion more recent research from England and the Continent concerned with ethnic costume (cf. Ch. 7.1.3). In this way I shall attempt to show how recent research on ethnogenesis can be integrated with ethnic costume research, and together provide us with a more solidly based understanding of how the phenomenon of ethnicity takes form in this period. To begin with, however, it is essential to highlight the underlying premises of the theory of ethnogenesis.

8.2 FROM RETINUES TO PEOPLES?

… organizing a large group of warriors and their following always meant setting off an ethnogenesis; only ethnic bonds, supported by traditional myths and rites, could be strong enough to hold such a group together, to give it a structure that could resist failure (Pohl 1991:44).

… the adoption of a new ethnic identity could be important in striving for authority and power against rivals… (Halsall 2005:53).

According to what is known as the *theory of ethnogenesis*, the warrior groups or confederations of the period are understood as ethnic peoples with a multicultural background. At the root of this perception lies the view of ethnicity as a social construct (see, e.g., Geary 1983; 1988; 2003; Harrison 1991; Hedeager 1992a; 1993; 2000; Hedeager and Tvarnø

2001:143–4; Pohl 1991:40–1; 1997:23; 1998b:1–4; 2004:23–4; cf. Ch. 1.2.2). A central concept in how the emergence or evolution of these confederations is understood is the *Traditionskern* (Wenskus 1961): the leading families of society curate and transmit the traditions of the people and their collective memory, including origin myths, that are decisive in the formation of a common ethnic identity (Hedeager 2000; Pohl 1991:40; Wenskus 1961), and new peoples or nations are 'born' by the remainder of the retinue or the army adopting the cultural tradition of the leader or leaders (Kolikowsky 2002:72; Pohl 1991:44; cf. the quotation above).

According to the theory of ethnogenesis, therefore, it is the ethnic affiliation of the king and/or the royal family which determines the ethnicity of the whole group (Harrison 1991:27; Geary 1983:22; 2003:74–8, 108; 2006:18–19; Halsall 2005:53; Hedeager 1992a:282; 1993:123; 2000:48; James 1989:47; Pohl 1997:23; 1998b:3–4; Wenskus 1961; Wolfram 1970:4; 1990:17). An example of this is the way in which the confederation of 'the Franks' initially identified itself first and foremost as a political grouping in encounters with, and in contrast to, other major groupings such as the Romans and the Alemanni, while the members of the group otherwise regarded themselves as members of minor 'clans' (James 1991:6–9). From the end of the 5th century, and in the course of the 6th and 7th centuries, Frankish identity came to be dominant as a result of the political confederation being governed without interruption by Frankish kings: a situation which, according to Edward James (1991:9), led to '… their subjects, of whatever origin, [beginning to] think of themselves as Franks.' Nevertheless, James insists that the Frankish identity in this period is an expression of political subjection rather than of ethnic affiliation.

Another example is how warriors with different ethnic backgrounds became Langobards, Alemanni or Franks by becoming part of the warrior retinue of various kings or warlords. One and the same person could in this way appear and indeed regard him or herself as, for instance, Gallic, Frankish or Alemannic, depending upon the social context which he (and perhaps she?) was in (Geary 1983:25; 2003:84, 104–5; Kulikowski 2002:83–4). There are historical examples of individuals, such as Odoaker, the Germanic warlord and subsequently 'Roman' king in Italy, for instance, who identified himself in relation to as many as six different ethnic groups in the course of his life and

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30 In some areas, perhaps especially on the Continent, archaeological research is still shaped by a traditional approach to the question of ethnicity (Effros 2004:171–3; Fehr 2002:199; Gillett 2002a:3–4; Halsall 1998:151; cf. Ch. 1.2.2, above).

political career (Pohl 1991:4). Pohl (1998b:4) describes the situation in the following way:

> One may debate whether, and in what cases, 'Gothicness' or 'Frankishness' was a matter of a *Traditionskern* of a few dozen, a few hundred, or of an army of some thousand men. But any schematic answer would miss the point. One was a Goth, or a Frank, in the full sense as long as one maintained direct participation in the affairs of the *gens*.

The examples he cites of relevant contexts which were determinative for the activation of ethnic attribution and ethnic self-identification are linked to political matters and acts of war (Pohl 1991:42; 1998b:4). Amongst the Langobards, for instance, accepting that one was subject to Langobardic law was synonymous with being a Langobard, and the Langobards demanded the subjection of their allies from different ethnic groups, such as Saxons (Harrison 1991:25). Such shifts in ethnicity are historically attested in the context, for instance, of the movement of the Langobards (Lombards) into northern Italy. The Langobard army consisted (as seems, indeed, to have been the norm throughout the Migration Period) of warriors of various ethnic connections and/or cultural origins such as Gepids, Suevi, Alemanni, Bulgars, Saxons, Goths and Romans (Pohl 1991:41). The image which the presentations of ethnogenesis yield of how ethnicity functioned in the Migration Period and the early Merovingian Period is thus suffused with a flexible and contextually dependent identity that was first and foremost political.

In the model of ethnogenesis, the dynamic of the warrior groups might, in some respects, appear to be governed by the personal advantage of the separate individuals, with ethnic identity turning into a strategy which can be almost freely exploited in order to achieve political power (Pohl 1997:23; 1998b:1–2) and/or other social privileges (Halsall 1998:151–2; 2005:53; Pohl 1991:41). An important point, however, is that '… to some extent, custom dictates which identities may be "played" in which situations; the social actor does not have a completely free choice' (Halsall 1998:142; see also Barth 1969:14–17; Eriksen 2002:56–7, 92; Olsen and Kobiliński 1991:11–12). There must then be some form of *acceptance* of this sort of ethnic shift in the Migration Period. Even though the warriors – in other words the members of the army – probably regarded one another as either more similar or less similar amongst themselves by virtue of, for instance, different languages and customs (Bowlus 2002:245;

Pohl 1991:41), this was under-communicated, at least in historical accounts and in material culture. At the same time the common 'ethno-political' identity was reinforced, inter alia, by means of myths of origin, animal style art, armament and belt-fittings (Hakenbeck 2006:160, 227; Halsall 1998:152, 154; Härke 1992; Hedeager 1992a: 282, 289–92; 1993:123–7; 2000:17–18, 46–9; 2011:41–58; Kristoffersen 2000: 171, 188; Pohl 2004; Siegmund 1998: 188–9; Steuer 1987:190, 225), and – in the context of Scandinavia – possibly also dress-accessories such as plain button clasps (Ch. 6.7). The ethnic identity of the warrior thus had a political dimension, which appears in the Migration Period to have overruled any other levels of identity associated with his (or her) social role.

The trans-regional, shared warrior identity is a cultural phenomenon which the Germani may have inherited from the Romans (Pohl 1991:42–3). The Roman army was poly-ethnic, but Roman all the same. It is known that Germani and other 'barbarians' formed part of the Roman army from as early as the time of Julius Caesar: to begin with as auxiliary or mercenary soldiers, but in time as regular 'Roman' troops. In the 4th century and at the beginning of the Migration Period in the 5th century into the beginning of the 6th, the 'barbarians' constituted a large majority (Geary 1988:20–6; Hakenbeck 2006:160; Harlow 2004:66; Hedeager and Tvarnø 2001:82–6, 98–100; James 1991:39–58). The trans-regional identity of the warrior probably therefore had a basis in generations of Germano-Roman (mercenary) soldiers, but the political 'ethnification' of the warrior identity appears to have come about quite specifically in *contrast* to Roman culture. As the Germanic warrior retinues and/or armies have been described in classical sources, they regarded themselves as a people with a common origin (Bowlus 2002:245; Gillett 2002a:17; Hakenbeck 2006:159; Hedeager 1992a: 282; 1993:122–3; Hedeager and Tvarnø 2001:153, 178; Kulikoswki 2002; Pohl 2004:23–4; Wolfram 1990:17). The Germanic warrior identity was therefore ethnic, and in this way it was fundamentally different from the Roman warrior identity (Geary 2003:63; Hedeager 1993:122; Hedeager and Tvarnø 2001:143–4).

It is debatable, all the same, what the fact that the army was regarded as a 'people' actually implies (Kulikowski 2002). The participation of men who were not warriors, and of women, the elderly and children, in the formation and maintenance of ethnic groupings is relatively 'invisible' in historical representations. An exception, albeit a minor one, is the topic of 'warrior women' (Amazons) and their role in connection with the origin myths of various groups

of people in the Migration Period, and the ethnic identity of these women (Geary 2006:26–34; Pohl 2004). In this connection, too, the case at issue is essentially the ethno-political identity of the warrior role, even when it is a matter of female warriors (Pohl 2004:24). In general, however, the focus of historical and archaeological work of recent years on the peoples of the Migration Period can be described as having been directed first and foremost on the *male* group members (Effros 2004:167; Gillett 2002a:17) and above all on the *warriors* (see, e.g., Pohl 1997:23).

The question is whether the flexible, ethno-political identity that has been demonstrated in the case of the warriors of the Migration Period can also be assigned to women of the period, or to the remainder of the male population (or, to put it more precisely, to other male social roles than that of the warrior). According to representations which are based upon the ethnogenesis model, it is more probable that the identity of the broader layers of the population – except for royalty and those belonging to the highest levels of society (including the army) – is '… rooted in smaller local groups, like clans or villages,' and it is doubtful if these identified themselves at all with 'any large-scale ethnical group' (Pohl 1991:41). Ethnicity, therefore, is a phenomenon that was limited to a higher social rank, and a class-division emerges between an 'ethnic' high-status population comprising for the most part royalty and warriors and a low-status population of 'commoners' who were, in principle, 'without ethnicity'. In this way the model can be said to reduce the concept of ethnicity to something synonymous with ethno-political identity, and something which in principle is to be associated with royalty and warriors rather than anyone else. What we can infer about ethno-political identity and warrior groups as ethnic peoples appears, therefore, not to comprise the whole population, but to be limited to men alone (Gillett 2002a:17), or, more precisely, to men in the role of warrior.

8.3 WARRIORS, ETHNOGENESIS AND WOMEN: A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HISTORICAL PEOPLES

From this understanding of ethnicity, it is logical for the interpretation of jewellery – where it is discussed in works that are influenced by the theory of ethnogenesis – to be attributed with a mainly *political* meaning:

> In the new, emerging political units of the post-Roman West, dress-style and artefact-forms were important in demonstrating

one's political affinity, and this is shown archaeologically in the brooch fashions and so on (Halsall 2005:54).

In addition to this, it has been asserted that clothing in the form of garments and jewellery functions as '… a social marker rather than for ethnic distinction, that is vertically… Horizontally, it rather distinguishes small communities, for instance villages, in a neighbourhood that falls within the limited horizons of most of its members' (Pohl 1998a:40). Costume, therefore, is assigned to an ethnicity-free or non-ethnic sphere.

Female costume and its jewellery are, however, in my view, also an obvious medium for ethnic and/or cultural manifestation in this period. A number of archaeological studies, as has been shown, have demonstrated that there is a definite correspondence between the distribution of particular types of dress-accessory, where these are preserved in grave-assemblages, and the location of historically documented people on the Continent and in England in the Migration Period (cf. Chs. 1.2.1 and 7.1.3). In the foregoing analysis, it has been shown that particular costume manifestations in Scandinavia also coincide to a certain extent with historically attested 'folk areas' of the Migration Period (Ch. 7.1.1) – although we must not forget that several regions, some of them political entities, are not defined in such a way (cf. Ch. 7.1.1 and 7.1.3). To put it differently, it is striking that in many cases there is an approximate correlation, or congruence, between specific forms of costume signalling and the articulation of group identities which found its way into the historical records of the period. One might therefore anticipate that this topic would also have been taken up for discussion from the perspective of an instrumental view of ethnicity and in connection with the theory of ethnogenesis. To explain the congruence *only* as the outcome of political or hierarchical social marking is, in my view, to under-appreciate the potential of jewellery in the social practice of this period.

The role of women in the formation of ethnic and/or cultural groupings at various levels has remained a neglected field, not only within this branch of historical research but also in archaeological studies that have been dominated by the model of ethnogenesis (cf. Ch. 1.2.2). This may to some extent be an (unintended) consequence of the paradigm shift that there has been within these disciplines, involving the transition from a biological to an instrumental concept of ethnicity (Effros 2004:170; Pohl 2004:23). Ethnic costume research is, as has been noted, a field of research which is widely regarded as retrogressive, probably because

this field is so closely connected with the works rooted in a 'primal'/biological tradition (cf. Ch. 1.2.2). Another contributory factor is without doubt the fact that we have very few ethnographical observations concerning women and costume in the contemporary documentary sources. This has meant that historians concerned with the Early Middle Ages are hesitant to take the matter up (Geary 2006; Pohl 1998a:42–51; 2004; Wood 1998:299–300). Once again, this appears to have influenced archaeologists who work on comparable questions, and who discount costume as a line of approach to be used in undertaking ethnic research (cf. Ch. 1.2.2).

While a dynamic and constructivist concept of the phenomenon of ethnicity is predominant in the perception of the warrior bands, ethnic interpretations of the female costumes of this period, as I have already discussed (cf. Ch. 1.2.1–2), are consequently often suffused with an 'old-fashioned' or out-dated understanding of ethnicity as a homogeneous, unchangeable and one-dimensional identity (see also Effros 2004:167 and Hakenbeck 2006:164 for a similar view).[31] Effros (2004:174–5, 183) has, for example, pointed out that one often encounters a *conservative* representation of female ethnicity in interpretations of jewellery as ethnic markers: the ethnic identity of the woman is represented as something static, in-born, and remaining unchanged from cradle to grave. The woman retains her 'original' biological ethnicity even though she is 'transplanted' into alien surroundings by accompanying her 'warrior husband' to foreign lands, being married out in some marriage alliance, or abducted or kidnapped by rampaging armies. Through portrayals of this kind, women emerge as passive and unable to have any active influence on, or make any contribution to, ethnic manifestation, by, for example, changing dress and/or their set of jewellery (see also Hakenbeck 2006:120). The social context similarly appears to have no influence on the experience of ethnic affiliation in interpretations of this kind. Ethnic identity is biologically determined and unchangeable, and therefore, according to this view, functions independent of the historical and social context.

The foregoing investigation of Scandinavian female costumes is based upon a dynamic and multidimensional concept of ethnicity (Ch. 2). It has revealed that the costume expressions are anything but as static as the conventional studies might seem to suggest. It has been shown, for example, that there are changes in dress-accessories and sets of jewellery in cases of 'external' or 'foreign' items of jewellery being made

use of. In such cases, which have traditionally been interpreted in terms of exogamy and marriage alliances, there is often, at least partially, some assimilation to local customs, even though the items of jewellery at one level are concurrently able to represent the manifestation of alliances with people in distant areas, or places of origin (cf. Ch. 6.3). In addition to this, there is a continuous modification of costume manifestations throughout the period of study, at the same time as various dimensions of cultural and/or ethnic group membership are articulated in parallel through the sets of dress-accessories and the forms of the jewellery (cf. Ch. 6.2–5). The examination of how the costume manifestations are related to the political development of this period has shown that ethnic and/or cultural identity is, quite understandably, modified when social circumstances change, and that different levels of identity are activated in particular situations and in step with how the historical context is developing (Ch. 7.1.1–3).

The examination of the distribution of the selected types of Scandinavian jewellery also reveals that the form of ethnic identity that is persistently found with the warriors of this period, for whom ethnicity served as a factor of political power in the field of the social circle around the royal and/or uppermost social ranks, and where the ethnicity of the 'folk' is the same thing as the ethnic identity of the king or leader, expresses only one dimension of a phenomenon which was in fact very much more complex. While dress-accessories which can be linked to the warrior role, namely dress-accessories found in 'warrior graves', do to a certain extent confirm the existence of a trans-regional warrior identity (Ch. 6.7), female costume expresses the presence and the communication of many more levels of ethnic and/or cultural identity. The 'warrior peoples' and the equation of the army with the people is thus a modified truth. This applies, as noted, not only in the context of Scandinavia alone. In other parts of Europe, too, costume manifestations indicate that the female population was at this time signalling a multidimensional ethnic and/or cultural identity that was *rooted in place* and which diverges from the trans-regional ethno-political warrior identity (cf. Chs. 1.2.2 and 7.1.3). How, then, is the inter-connectedness between the flexible and mobile armies, in other words the 'warrior peoples', and the territorially rooted, historically documented 'peoples', who are reflected in the practices of female dress, to be understood?

The relationship between features of material culture – and perhaps items of jewellery in particular – which

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31 There are exceptions, as noted (cf. Chs. 1.2.2 and 7.1.3).

show clear regional variation and historical records that tell us of a mobile and dynamic 'warrior people' with a flexible ethnic affiliation has confused archaeologists and historians alike. The German archaeologist Frank Siegmund (1998:188) attempted to explain the relationship by distinguishing between, on the one hand, folk referred to as nomadic (Gepids and Avars), who were poly-ethnic, and, on the other hand, 'ordinary people of mostly stable ethnic groups', represented by the Franks and the Alemanni. He pointed out that the elite shared common features with regard to certain selected high-status items (such as gold-hilted swords, ring-swords and helmets), but that otherwise they had a material culture which was congruent with the ethnic identity of 'their own people' (Siegmund 1998:191–4). This view, however, stands in contrast to the views of many historians and archaeologists concerning the multi-ethnic warrior bands of both the Franks and the Alemanni (cf. Ch. 8.2, above).

Hedeager (1992a: 287–9) has proposed that the migrations of the ethnic armies in Scandinavia, in Denmark at least, took place primarily *before* the archaeological Migration Period, and that the Danes, formerly a mobile ethno-political warrior people, had established themselves as a territorially defined unit in eastern Denmark from as early as the beginning of the 5th century. There may have been some process of formation of new groupings in Scandinavia in line with how this is described by the theory of ethnogenesis, namely that multi-ethnic warrior retinues may have shared an ideological and ethnic association with the leader of the group, and their group identity may have been underpinned by, amongst other things, origin legends (cf. Ch. 8.2). Concurrently, costume manifestations, which are primarily associated with women in Scandinavia in this period, indicate that at least one aspect of group-affiliation implied regional/territorial affiliation or connection from the very beginning of the Migration Period right through into the Merovingian Period (cf. Chs. 5, 6 and 7.1.1). The extent of regional manifestation is, however, overlapping, as shown. In Denmark, for instance, one can discern a connection northwards to Norway (for instance through the distribution of spiral clasps), and southwards to the Continent (through the use of common Danish-Continental types of cruciform brooch) in the same phase. Furthermore, the costume manifestations do change throughout the period, with various geographical groupings emerging at different times. There was thus a flexible and dynamic aspect with *women's* ethnic and/or cultural identity as well.

Considered from another angle, the relationship may be explained through the different forms of manifestation representing two contrastive foci in the articulations of identity in the case of women and warriors respectively. Warriors were overwhelmingly signalling a political, trans-regional ethnic identity governed by 'interest' (i.e. 'situational'). According to Olsen and Kobiliński (1991:21) 'the cultural stuff' that such interest-directed flexible ethnic groupings will have held would not have been significantly different from 'that of other such groups'. This fits well with the material manifestation of the warriors that 'amongst themselves' are relatively uniform over the whole of Europe: the warriors primarily, as has been noted, make use of elements of personal ornamentation which express membership of trans-regional units (cf. Hakenbeck 2006:227–8). Women, by contrast, overwhelmingly manifest an ethnic and/or cultural identity that is *regionally rooted*.

Once again, it must be pointed out that this is a simplification of the actual situations. To begin with, the foregoing investigation has shown that some warriors, usually associated with a higher social stratum, can be furnished with regional dress-accessory markers (cf. Ch. 6.7). It has also been pointed out that weapon-sets may vary from region to region (Siegmund 1998:183–4). In Scandinavian, English and Continental contexts alike, one also finds, as I have noted on several occasions and discussed more fully in Chapter 6.3, what are referred to as 'cross-finds': in other words, foreign items of jewellery whose origin lies in another area. These are, from a traditional perspective, often interpreted as signs of exogamous connections.

Another recurring feature is that, although there are concentrations of particular types or combinations of jewellery in specific districts, the types themselves very often have slightly different distribution patterns, which only partially overlap. This is the case on the Continent and in England as well as in Scandinavia (Hakenbeck 2006:116; Røstad 2001:2, 48; 2003:7–12; Scull 1993:71). Overlapping distribution patterns of this kind have been interpreted above (Chs. 6.3, 7.1.1 and 7.1.3) as expressions of the manifestation of multidimensional identities. However, there is a trend, in Scandinavia, England and on the Continent alike, for more marked regionally and locally delimited groupings to dominate the female-associated corpora of jewellery of the Migration Period (Hines 1995:81) and for these groupings to crystallize out from around the last quarter of the 5th century and into the early 6th century.

The regionally-based ethnic and/or cultural identity that is particularly manifested by women does not necessarily coincide with political constellations (cf.

Ch. 7.1.1). At certain dates and in particular areas there can be a degree of correspondence between politico-economic regions and the ethnic and/or regional group marking that is effected by means of dress-accessories. All the same, there is probably no one-to-one correspondence between these entities in Migration-period Scandinavia (cf. Ch. 7.1.1). Hines (1995:83) pointed out that there is likewise no correspondence between political and ethnic units in the Anglian English area at any phase within the Migration Period. The political situation was probably so unstable that political constellations changed rapidly (see also Scull 1993:75). In the contexts of Scandinavia, Anglo-Saxon England and Bavaria there is, however, an *interplay* between the political context and the costume manifestations (cf. Ch. 7.1.1 and 7.1.3; see also Hakenbeck 2006:223). This interplay does not only appear through the 'overlapping' which occurs at some date between features of material culture and the settlement areas of historically known people (i.e. tribal confederations). It also appears in other ways, for example through the ongoing centralization of power bringing ever greater areas under common political control, and through the development of the ethnic and/or cultural expression of costume which is characterized in all three cases by a trend for a uniform type of marking to spread over increasingly extensive areas in the early Merovingian Period. In connection with this, it is also interesting that both in Norway and in England (cf. Ch. 7.2; Hamerow 2005:268–9; Hines 1995:83) costume signalling expresses a common identity at a date which precedes by several centuries the unification of the two areas into single kingdoms. In Bavaria and in England we also find a manifestation of a Bavarian and a common Anglo-Saxon identity in documentary sources, from the Migration Period and the Merovingian Period, respectively (Hakenbeck 2004:40; 2006:2; Hines 1994:51; 1995:83).

Last but not least, the interplay between the political situation and costume articulations also appears in the war leaders'/army-kings'/chieftains' use of components of costume which are also found in female dress in certain areas. In Scandinavia, as noted (Ch. 6.7), we find distinct regional clasp-types in some of the richest warrior graves of the Migration Period. In addition, the use of clasps by the war leaders coincides with the most intensive period in the use of regional variants of jewellery (phases D2a and D2b; cf. Ch. 6.7): namely in a period when regional marking was very much required (cf. Chs. 6.2 and 7.1.1). The use of this form of cultural and/or ethnic symbolism by the leading sections of society fits in well, as has been observed, with the ethnogenesis model's attribution of

ethnic dominance to the kings/leaders of the Migration Period. Above, I have interpreted this as reflecting that membership of, or affiliation to, a regional ethnic and/or cultural grouping is a dimension of the war leaders' ethnicity (Ch. 6.7). In this context, however, I would highlight the fact that the war leaders chose to make use of a medium of communication that was very much dominated by *women*: ethnic/cultural costume. The role of leader appears in this light not to have been independent of the contemporary, regionally-based, cultural and/or ethnic groupings which were manifested through female costume. The use of clasps, by contrast, could indicate a *two-way influence* between those different ethnic entities represented by 'war leaders' and 'the womenfolk of the group'.

To carry this point further, it is significant in relation to the two contrasted foci in the discourse of identity – associated, respectively, with the female component of the population and the warriors – that the emergence of the institution of the retinue represents in itself a dimension which brought about changes in ethnic discourse in other areas too (Halsall 1998:143). The formation of a trans-regional warrior identity influenced, to put it another way, how ethnic and/or cultural identities were manifested in other contexts. Those identities that have been identified in connection with the use of female costume must in consequence be perceived in connection with the ethno-political warrior identity and *vice versa*. I have commented on this already (cf. Ch. 7.1.1 and 7.2), for instance in relation to Hines's (1993a: 91–5) discussion of the link between the emergence of the retinue and the flourishing in the range of jewellery in phase D2a. As noted earlier (Ch. 7.1.1), he perceived a connection between a more individualistically oriented society, social stress, and an intensification of costume manifestation. It is, however, not the individual that is most conspicuous in the articulation of identity effectuated through female costume at this date, but rather collective regional and local group identities. There is, furthermore, a striking contrast between a growing degree of regional marking in the Migration Period and the establishment and consolidation of a supra-regional warrior-retinue institution. This may imply that the social mobility and the deeply influential social changes – for which the introduction of the warrior retinue acted as a catalyst – set off a sort of social 'regulation mechanism' through the stronger marking of more stable cultural regional groupings. These groupings may have been based upon earlier 'clan'-like relationships of belonging (cf. Ch. 7.1.1). It could have been a means of isolating the flexible ethnic membership of the warrior retinue from other

classes within the population where cultural and/or ethnic group membership continued – apparently at least – both geographically and socially to be more fixed and stable. From this perspective, the establishment of the institution of the warrior retinue may have had an impact as a 'catalyst' for the extensive regional costume articulation that can be found over large areas of Europe in the Migration Period.

The flexible ethno-political identity of the warriors may thus have operated in isolation from the remainder of the population. In a similar way to what has been demonstrated with regard to costume manifestations, which in the overwhelming majority of cases are associable with women, *men* may also, however, have held several identities. Farmer and warrior, for instance, need not have been irreconcilable roles which were assigned to different individuals; quite the reverse: it is a known fact that soldiers in the Roman army practised agriculture at their border forts and in occupied areas in the fourth and fifth centuries, a circumstance that is indeed also known from several other historically recorded war situations (Geary 1988: 15–16; Kulikowksi 2002:78; MacMullen 1967:1–22). In a similar way, Scandinavian men could have had alternating roles as farmers and warriors in different contexts: farmers may have sought out activity as warriors for periods of time, only to return eventually to agriculture.[32] Some will presumably have participated in wars on the Continent as Roman soldiers, later returning home to their areas of origin, as, for instance, the man interred at Evebø in western Norway in the fifth century seems to have done (Solberg 1996:30). While some men, probably a minority, were permanent members of the warrior aristocracy, with a special lifestyle as warriors (Evans 1997:2, 56, 66–8), the major part of the army might have comprised men who were warriors only for periods, in which they joined up in 'warrior bands' and went off on expeditions, or participated in conflicts between neighbouring areas in Scandinavia (cf. Hedeager 1990:140–1, 203–6; Näsman 2006:218–20). If it was only a person's role as a warrior which made ethnic shift acceptable, it is probable that the majority of returned warriors re-activated a local and regional group identity as members of one (or more) geographical, cultural and/ or ethnic groupings such as Ryger, Egder, Trønder, Geats, Jutes and Danes.

In this context, it is once again a matter of interest to draw attention to the 'cross-border' finds of jewellery. Although such finds of 'external' items of jewellery and

components of costume do not necessarily represent either imported dress-accessories or 'foreign' women (cf. Ch. 6.3), these finds do indicate that a regional and/or cultural 'displacement' of individuals did not automatically bring about a shift of ethnic and/or cultural identity in the form of 'assimilation'. In other words, there was not perhaps the same acceptance of shifts of ethnic identity *outside of* the warrior role. Changes of ethnic costume for women clearly were accepted, and happened in certain cases: consider the 'eastern' ('Hunnic'?) women from Bavaria who were buried clothed in local Bavarian outfits (cf. Ch. 6.3.1). In other contexts, however, it appears that 'foreign' signalling was sought after; in other words, it was actively maintained. This appears, for instance, through obvious imitations of items of jewellery from different geographical areas. Another point is that, since the warrior aristocracy's male members for the most part made use of common and trans-regional markers, it is conceivable that the need to express different political alliances at a regional level was met by means of women's accoutrements (Arrhenius 1995a:85; Hjørungdal 1991:128).

Studies of costume manifestations and especially of the development of female costumes through this period may, as I have argued here, contribute to a more detailed and nuanced view of ethnic groupings than the one created through the focus on warrior retinues, where such groupings are seen as being synonymous with political entities in this period (cf. Ch. 7.1.1). By including costume and jewellery as ethnic markers, I believe one obtains a more firmly rooted understanding of how the phenomenon of ethnicity took shape in the Migration Period and the early Merovingian Period. In a holistic view, the model of ethnogenesis and ethnic costume research provide insight into a complex, 'kaleidoscopic' field in which continuous ethnic discourses were being performed, and in which different levels of identity were relevant in different situations and at different points of time. Together, the two interpretative perspectives yield a new understanding of the society these discourses set their mark upon.

What emerges is a system which had, on the one hand, an ethno-political dimension that involved warriors, and which functioned in a social context in which changes of identity were permissible. This ethno-political identity became active when a warrior became a member of an ethnic army or retinue. On the other hand, there was at the same time a locally and

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32 According to saga literature, for instance, it appears to have been common practice in the Viking Age to be a farmer for some of the year and to adapt Viking expeditions to seasons in which there was no sowing, harvesting or the like to be done.

regionally rooted dimension, operative in the context of a more or less permanently settled population. This level also included individuals who in different phases of life entered into warrior retinues and the ethnic armies. I have argued that it is in the context of this level, i.e. of locally and regionally rooted identities, that female costume becomes part of the formation and reconstruction of ethnic groupings.

8.4 CONCLUSION

The study of jewellery from the period c. AD 400–650/700 clears the way for a new understanding of society in the Migration and early Merovingian Periods by informing us how people perceived one another as members of different groupings, and how they categorized one another as culturally similar or different, around 1,500 years ago. The items of jewellery show how cultural and ethnic lines of division gradually changed throughout this period and also testify to discourses which were ongoing at various levels. Regional and local conditions affected material manifestation, for instance in the north and in the interior of the main Scandinavian peninsula, where a cultural encounter between Saami and Germanic/Norse populations left its mark on the discourse. Other

discourses reached as far away as England and central Europe – and possibly even further. In the political arena, the possibility for advantageous ethnic change of identity became available to men of the age of 'military service' since they could enrol in army service with various 'warrior peoples' or confederations (*Stammeverbände*). The material symbols which the warriors made use of were common over wide areas and indicate that their ethnic identity had a 'trans-regional' aspect. In other contexts, it was more important to mark regional differences. Dress-accessories and female costume reinforced regional and local cultural and/or ethnic groupings, while at the same time external connections were expressed through the deliberate maintenance of a 'foreign' identity by divergence from local dress-customs, and by the maintenance or adoption of foreign types of jewellery. Communication between 'the others' and 'ourselves' appears to have been a process in which the gradual political conglomeration of large geographical areas at the transition to the Merovingian Period contributed to ethnic affiliation being generated within larger groupings. However, the formation of these ethnic groupings had a dynamic of its own, and in several cases preceded the construction of a common political system of government.