

COSTUME AND THE DISPLAY OF IDENTITY IN THE MIGRATION AND EARLY MEROVINGIAN PERIODS

1.1 INTRODUCTION: THE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The subject of this research is the use of jewellery (dress-accessories) and costume for the display of cultural and ethnic identity in the period of c. AD 400–650/700: in other words, the Migration Period and the beginning of the Merovingian Period in the Norwegian archaeological scheme. The selected ranges of jewellery which will be examined come from Scandinavia, with a predominance of finds from what is now Norway (cf. Ch. 4.1.3).¹ One of the most characteristic features of Scandinavian jewellery from this period is that the artefacts are closely related to counterparts from the same date found in other parts of Europe. Several of the same types of jewellery are found concentrated in an extensive area around the North Sea, in England and the northern Continent, while also occurring more diffusely to the south in Germany. The corpus of jewellery thus links Scandinavia to a broader European zone. The research that has been undertaken on the jewellery in Scandinavia has, however, differed in various ways from that undertaken elsewhere in Europe. While emphasis has generally been placed on the ethnic associations of the jewellery in Continental and Anglo-Saxon Archaeology, attributing the forms to specific historically attested peoples, Scandinavian scholarship and research have more usually focused on the social status of those who wore the jewellery, on cultural contacts and similar issues.

The research in this study is linked to both of these directions of research. It is closely associable with an ethnographic field of research that resides in the European tradition in terms of the relationship between jewellery, costume and cultural and/or ethnic identity. Through the conjunction of the scholarship that has been undertaken within this field and related research concerned with jewellery of the Scandinavian Migration and Merovingian Periods, I shall attempt to show how *the concept of costume* provides the potential

to introduce new perspectives on cultural and ethnic circumstances in Scandinavia in these periods.

1.2 COSTUME AND PEOPLES IN THE EUROPEAN EARLY MIDDLE AGES

1.2.1 The concept of costume in European scholarship

In English and Continental Archaeology, research into the use of jewellery and costume as expressions of ethnic and cultural affiliation has long constituted a distinct field of scholarship concerned with the European Early Middle Ages – a period of time which corresponds, to a degree, with the Migration and Merovingian Periods in Norway. This field of research became established within the paradigm of cultural history in the period of c. 1900–1960, and from the very beginning was plainly rooted in and connected with the discipline of history. The field has traditionally been characterized by a form of ‘mapping’ of population groups that are referred to in historical sources. Peoples such as Langobards in Hungary and northern Italy, Franks in the Rhineland, Belgium and France, Thuringians in Germany, Angles, Saxons and Jutes in England, and Burgundians in France are ‘identified’ archaeologically though the distribution of particular types and combinations of jewellery, and their place of origin and migratory routes are traced by following the patterns of diffusion of the jewellery in time and space across Europe (Fehr 2002:195–6, 199; Hakenbeck 2006:17; Hamerow 1998:125; Hills 1979:313–17; Hines 1984:6–14; Lucy 2000:11–13, 163; 2005:88).

The concept of costume as an ethnic marker was introduced to this field of research as early as the 1930s (Fehr 2002:187–9) and has since then been central to archaeological scholarship concerned with ethnic groupings in the European Early Middle Ages. The concept was originally linked to the phenomenon of folk costume or national costume – commonly referred

¹ For practical reasons, I will use the names of the modern Scandinavian states of Norway, Sweden and Denmark when I discuss geographical areas which comprise these states today. This does not imply that, in the period in question, these represented single political entities.

to as *bunad* in Norway. Folk costumes as distinctive regional or local modes are a construction of 19th century national romanticism (Eriksen 2002:102; Hakenbeck 2006:12; Pohl 1998a:40). The emergence of this idea can be associated with the establishment and consolidation of new national states over much of Europe. The demonstration of a distinctive cultural tradition was particularly important for the process of state-formation that took place in Europe because it could be used as an argument for the establishment of independent states. The costume tradition turned into an indicator of the nation's cultural distinctiveness through being linked with 'the farmers' costume', because the figure of the farmer was seen as the genuine and real representative of the people of the nation, with 'pure' ethnic and cultural roots that were well preserved and deeply rooted (quite literally) in the land. Research into costume can in itself be said to have contributed to the sense of a shared national identity that was an important component of archaeology as a subject in the first half of the 20th century (Eriksen 2002:100–8; Fehr 2002:179, 181–2, 188; Geary 2003:35; Jones 1997:19; Trigger 1989:149) and which also affected

the so-called 'Germanist' historical research of the same period (Halsall 2005:35–6).

This starting point has, quite naturally, been determinative in how research into costume in the Migration and Merovingian Periods has conventionally proceeded. The national romantic understanding or perception of folk costume as a passive and static, almost 'timeless' cultural or ethnic expression (Pohl 1998a:40) was extrapolated back to those periods. By this means, regional and local groupings could be mapped in a simple and effective way, and in some (lucky) cases it was also possible to 'demonstrate' cultural *continuity* from the present back to this early phase of the Middle Ages. The Migration Period and the early Merovingian Period were compliant objects of research in this view, because this period is characterized more than anything else by a very extensive and varied range of jewellery. The items of jewellery were found mostly in the women's graves of the period, and show regional variation to a much greater extent than weaponry or pottery, for example, do (Hakenbeck 2006:12). In addition, it was also to the European Early Middle Ages that several of the



Figure 1.1 A national romantic portrayal of the Frankish King Chlodwig and Queen Chlothilde by Jean Antoine Gros. © Wikimedia Commons.

newly founded European nation states looked for their particular cultural origins (Geary 1983; 2003; Hakenbeck 2006:1; Halsall 2005:35; Hills 2003:18–19) (Fig. 1.1)

The national romantic, ethnic idea of costume that was introduced to scholarship fitted very nicely with key topics, concepts and explanatory models in the culture-historical paradigm. Culture-historical archaeology can be said to have been particularly strongly shaped by an ethnographic tradition, the aim of which was to trace archaeological cultures or ‘culture groups’. The ‘culture groups’ are usually understood to have been identical with ethnic groups or peoples, and migrations or cultural diffusion served as standard explanations of cultural change (Geary 2003:34–5; Myhre 1994:76; Olsen 1997:31–4; Trigger 1989:148–74). Given the fact that the range of jewellery of the Early Medieval Period stood out with such massive regional variation, dress-accessories or *costume* came to a considerable extent to replace the ‘culture groups’ in research into this period (Fehr 2002:195–6). The yoking of the concept of costume to ethnic grouping in this traditional line of research means that costume and/or the dress-accessories turn into the means for identifying Early-medieval peoples that are referred to in historical sources (Hakenbeck 2006:12). In this light, the study of costume has rather indirectly also brought archaeology to function as an instrument which confirms what the written sources claim about where various peoples were to be found in this period.

1.2.2 Costume and ethnicity

Implicit within the traditional style of costume study lies an essentialist view of ethnicity and cultural groupings. Ethnic identity is regarded as inborn, and determined by birth into a culture group. Ethnicity itself is formed and maintained through the norms and rules of the community which are passed on from generation to generation. Ethnic groups thus emerge as static, culturally unchangeable, and one-dimensional entities. Their cultural conformity is directly expressed in material culture, represented in this case by jewellery. Ethnic groups will naturally always preserve a cultural core or essence and therefore can be traced through relocations in space and back in time to a cultural ‘point of origin’. This is an understanding of the phenomenon of ethnicity that nowadays mostly represents a long-past stage in most subjects within the humanities. This is also, on the whole, the case within archaeological scholarship concerned with the topic of ethnicity, where theories from social anthropology have been very influential. In particular an ‘instrumental’ understanding of ethnicity as it has

been explicated by, amongst others, Frederik Barth in the classic collection of papers *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* of 1969 has set the tone for how this phenomenon is, on the whole, treated in archaeology.

How an instrumental conception of ethnicity alters our understanding of the relationship between costume, jewellery and ethnic groupings in relation to the traditional, essentialist perception of the phenomenon can be illustrated through Ian Hodder’s ethno-archaeological study in the Baringo district of Kenya in *Symbols in Action* (1979). In this book, Hodder showed how different tribes in certain parts of Baringo used costume and especially ear-hangers as group markers and yet in other areas there were virtually no material differences between groups. The areas with the most conspicuous differences between the tribes were characterized by the greatest competition for resources, such as pasture, leading to rivalry between the ethnic groups. The degree of ethnic marking thus proves to be situation-dependent. It is also possible to change ethnic affiliation in this region by changing costume and jewellery. Hodder argued that such ethnic shifts take place in a situation of competition involving intense social stress in order to gain access to resources, because access is regulated by ethnic identity. Ethnicity thus also emerges as a means or an instrument that is used in order to achieve personal gain, and ethnic identity is something that can more or less be freely chosen by the members of a group. An important point, however, is that the ethnic groups remain in being even if individuals change group-affiliation.

In agreement with Barth and other ‘instrumentalists’, Hodder thus saw ethnicity as an aspect of social organization of a similar type to, and partially interwoven with, economic and political circumstances, amongst other things. Ethnicity is, in this view, a phenomenon that is particularly closely linked to situations of competition between culture groups. Ethnic identity involves the active maintenance of cultural boundaries in social interaction rather than the passive reflection of cultural norms (Jones 1997:28). Even though this way of looking at ethnic groups has been criticised for representing them as nothing more than constellations of economic interests that are constituted by a collection of profit-oriented individuals and governed by a sort of peculiar, eco-functionalist logic (Jones 1997:75–9), these ethnic studies show that there is no simple, one-to-one relationship between ethnic identity and material culture. This means, for example, that a particular set of jewellery does not necessarily directly represent the ethnic identity of the person wearing it as some ‘biological’ or ‘inborn’ identity, as was formerly assumed. Traditional archaeological identifications in

which, for instance, an Alemannic dress-accessory automatically represents a historically one-dimensional entity and is inseparable from a 'biological' identity as 'Alemannic' can no longer be justified.

A related way of understanding ethnicity has also had considerable impact amongst historians who work on the European Early Middle Ages, and recurs in the same context in presentations of Early-medieval peoples or tribal federations as social constructs (e.g. Geary 1983; 2003; Halsall 1998; Heather 1998; James 1991; Pohl ed. 1998; Wolfram 1970). It is in particular supporters of what can be called the *ethnogenesis model* (cf. Ch. 8), often referred to as the *Vienna School*, who have been the spokespersons for this view of ethnic groups in the Migration Period. According to this model, the tribal federations appeared through peoples with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds coming together and forming new groupings. The ethnic identity of the federations is determined by the war-leader/king and by the ethnicity of the military elite. This takes place in connection with a political and social change within the Roman Empire in the West and the post-Roman world from around the end of the 4th century onwards. In a new political climate ethnicity turned into a political factor, and 'ethnic discourse' became 'the key to political power' (Pohl 1998b:1–2). Such an understanding of ethnic relations in the Early Middle Ages was introduced in *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterliche Gentes* by Reinhard Wenskus (1961) and has dominated the historical view of the period since then.

In the *archaeology* of the Early Middle Ages, meanwhile, research concerned with ethnicity has carried on largely along the same lines as previously. This is perhaps particularly the case in the field of research dealing with costume as an ethnic marker, where a more traditional view of ethnicity has for the most part been retained (Effros 2004:167, 171–2; Fehr 2002:199; Gillett 2002a:3–4; Halsall 1998:151). The objective in many cases continues to be to identify or map ethnic categories that are mentioned in historical sources. Because of unfortunate associations and the misuse of archaeological 'ethnicity scholarship' under the Nazis, this field has also never been regarded as entirely 'clean'. Dress-accessories or costume are indeed treated primarily as expressions of Germanic culture, and terms such as Germanic people and Germanic culture have, in the wake of the Second World War, been regarded as if contaminated. Currently, then, the alternative term *barbarian* (in its original meaning as non-Greek and non-Roman) is commonly used rather than *Germanic* (Hakenbeck 2006:fn. 3; Kulikowski

2002: fn. 2; Näsman 2006:fn. 13). This has possibly been a contributory factor in the establishment of a less 'risky', or a politically neutral, approach in the study of costume: the reconstruction of dress (see, e.g., L. B. Jørgensen 1991). In this tradition the costume is, as a rule, only 'objectively' described, which leads to costume appearing static and passive. The focus is directed at reconstruction on the basis of archaeological evidence and on the classification of different styles of dress – e.g. Anglian, Anglo-Saxon or Alemannic (Christlein 1979:77–82; Owen-Crocker 2004; Vierck 1978a–c). Costume emerges from such works first and foremost as a social object, while its potential as a socially active factor is not investigated (Sørensen 2004:128, 133).

In addition to the points made above concerning unfortunate political associations, it seems, rather paradoxically, to be the availability of historical sources that is the main reason for the conservative approach to ethnicity in respect of costume history. The sources speak of different peoples, and the aim has been to rediscover these groups through material distinctiveness, such as different modes of dress. With a guidebook in hand the theoretical problems that have been grappled with in the study of ethnicity in a different archaeological context are simply by-passed, ignored or marginalized. The same appears to be the case with more recent research discoveries from sociology and social anthropology concerning the subject of costume as an ethnic or cultural marker (cf. Ch. 2.2). The close connection to the historical branch of research also appears not to have been accompanied by any high level of influence from theoretical developments within the discipline of history itself with regard to the study of Early-medieval peoples (cf. above). On the contrary, a general scepticism towards the use of costume and jewellery to identify ethnic groups can be detected amongst historians:

... those objects (notably certain types of brooches, buckles or belt-fittings) which are most often seen by archaeologists as signifying 'ethnicity' are, unfortunately, not described as such in contemporary sources – and there is, therefore, considerable danger in putting 'ethnic' labels on any object (Wood 1998:299–300).

Several British and Continental archaeologists seem also, in recent years, to have abandoned costume as a way into the pursuit of ethnic research (Effros 2004:170, 175; Fehr 2002). This position amongst archaeologists and historians who work on the European Early Middle Ages could, however, in my judgment, be seen as a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Dress-accessories and costume

do not have to be dismissed entirely as a source of information on ethnic relationships even if earlier interpretations are no longer tenable. The Austrian historian Walter Pohl is also rather more moderate in his self-distancing from the 'ethnic costume issue' in archaeology:

The question of archaeological evidence for costume and its possible ethnic connotations cannot be discussed adequately here. Historians should just be warned not to take the interpretation of grave finds as an alternative shortcut to 'hard facts', which they have become used not to expect from their texts (Pohl 1998a:42).

There are also a number of exceptions to the traditional ethnic interpretations of costume in European Early Medieval Archaeology, and the developments of recent years indicate that there is a trend which is bringing about a change of direction in the field. A number of recent archaeological studies comprise research into the dress-accessories of this period on the basis of a more up-to-date understanding of the phenomenon of ethnicity. John Hines (1993a; 1994; 1995), for example, shows how clasps were actively used in the construction of a new English Anglian group in the Migration Period. This happened through wrist-clasps becoming a component in a 'national dress of Anglian England' (Hines 1993a:92). The use of a common costume is, in Hines's view, a reflex of a conscious desire for a shared group identity. Lotte Hedeager (2000) shows how Scandinavian zoomorphic decoration on, inter alia, relief brooches, and gold bracteates with designs derived from the world of Nordic mythological ideas, were used in the formation of a distinct political, ideological and cultural identity for the elite amongst different groups or peoples on the Continent and in England in the Migration and Merovingian Periods. The focus in the more recent studies lies on the use of jewellery and/or costume in the construction or formation of ethnic and social groupings. Costume emerges from these works as an active element in social interactions or negotiations between different social and ethnic groups (e.g. Geake 1997; Hakenbeck 2004; 2006; Hedeager 2000; Hines 1993a; 1994; 1995; Martin 2015; Røstad 2001; 2003). This alternative perspective shows that the field of scholarship concerning costume and ethnicity has the potential to produce new insights into cultural and ethnic relations in the Early Middle Ages of Europe.

1.3 JEWELLERY AND GROUP IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SCANDINAVIA

1.3.1 Costume and cultural groupings in the Migration and Merovingian Periods in Scandinavia

The ethnographic tradition that has occupied so firm a place in the archaeology of the Migration Period in Europe has not played so determinative a role in scholarship concerned with the Migration and Merovingian Periods in Scandinavia. In respect of Norway, this is undoubtedly at least partly due to the fact that it has been the Viking Period, the age of the 'unification of the kingdom', which has played the role of the first cultural stage of the Norwegian nation state (Myhre 1994:76–94; Opedahl 1998:35–7). The preceding Migration and Merovingian Periods have consequently received less attention in terms of the nation's 'ethnic roots' in Norway than is the case on the Continent. Nor have these periods been 'privileged' in Danish archaeology² as a special period of history in respect of archaeology's contribution to the formation of Danish national identity. The Viking Period has been important in Denmark as well, but in fact it is more or less the *whole* of prehistory that has been characterized as 'Danish' and has acquired significance in the modern Danish self-perception (Jones 1997:6; Kristiansen 1989:187–91, 202–13). The Migration Period and early Vendel [= Merovingian] Period have, by contrast, played a more central role in the case of the evolution of the Swedish nation state. Concurrently, also other periods of prehistory and history, and arguably here again especially the Viking Period, have been important in the formation of a Swedish national identity. It is particularly the *Svear*, the Mälars region, and the burial mounds at Gamla Uppsala and the significance of this centre in the Viking Period that have been the principal objects of attention (Bennett 1987:5; Hyenstrand 1996:9–20, 89–91; Pettersson 2005; Svanberg 2003:53–9).

It has also been important in the context of Scandinavian nation-building, and perhaps particularly in the case of Norway – since Norway had to struggle to become an independent state – to emphasize a distinct but nonetheless common ethnic and cultural past. This led, to a certain extent, to an under-communication of archaeological research which indicated that there were several ethnic or cultural groups within the areas which formed the territory of the three Scandinavian nation states (Myhre 1994:76–94; Olsen 1986; Opedahl 1998:35–7). The dress-accessories of the Migration Period, with their marked regional variance and yet trans-regional distribution patterns

2 The Migration and Merovingian Periods are in Danish archaeology called the Early and Late Germanic Iron Age respectively.

across the national boundaries within Scandinavia, have probably not been regarded as an ideal object of research in this light.

Using costume as a marker and reflection of cultural group-affiliation in the Migration and Merovingian Periods has likewise not been a prominent topic in relation to Scandinavia. A supplementary reason for this is probably the fact that historical sources which could serve as a basis for traditional archaeological 'identifications' of regional costumes are conspicuous by their absence. In *Getica*, composed by the Ostrogothic author Jordanes in the mid-6th century, we do in fact encounter a variety of peoples within Scandinavia, such as the *granii*, *augandzi*, *rugi*, *eunixi*, *taetel*, *arochi*, *ranii*, *screrefinnae*, *gauthigoth*, *ostrogoth*, *suehans*, *dani* and others (Hedeager and Tvarnø 2001:267–71; Myhre 1987a:186–7; 1991:15; Solberg 2000:162–3). Some of the same peoples also find a place in the contemporary Byzantine author Procopius's (2006) *History of the Wars*, VI.xv (Hedeager and Tvarnø 2001:271). In two Old English poems, *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, which may originally have been written down as early as c. AD 600–700 and c. AD 700–800 respectively (Chambers 1912; Malone 1962:112–16; Swanton 1997:2–3; Neidorf ed. 2014; Neidorf 2018; but cf. Chase ed. 1980; Niles 1999:173, 193 for arguments for a later dating of the poems), a range of Scandinavian peoples appear: for instance the *þrowendas*, corresponding etymologically with the Old Norse *þröndr* and modern Trønder (Noréen 1920:47), Jutes, Danes, Svear, Geats and others. These Continental and Anglo-Saxon sources that refer to the area of Scandinavia are, nonetheless, too imprecise in their localization of specific population groups to have been of much help in undertaking identifications comparable with those conventionally produced on the Continent and in England (Ringtved 1991:97). Through an intensive phase of place-name research in the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th century, however, the attempt was made to locate several of the peoples or tribes that are referred to in these sources (and in a description in a rather earlier documentary source: the Greek astronomer, geographer and mathematician Claudius Ptolemaeus, of the 2nd century AD) around Scandinavia (e.g. Noréen 1920; Olsen 1905; 1915:282–5; Svennung 1964; 1965; 1967; 1972; Svensson 1918; 1919). Although the debate was lively and comprehensive, the result of the mapping remains

doubtful. Anton Brøgger (1925:186) critiqued it in the following way (translated):

For anyone who is not a philologist, the many years of scholarly discussion of the 27 tribal names [in Jordanes] will not infrequently look completely misconceived. Spellings and roots are introduced or removed in order to make the names fit with what are often very local terms.

He sums up the place-name discussion by observing that 'even ... plausible conjectures are, and remain, no more than conjecture' (Brøgger 1925:188).

A number of the associations involving the names have, however, seemed so convincing that they have 'put down roots' and are, for the most part, accepted within archaeological scholarship as reasonable inferences on the location of specific groups (see, e.g., Shetelig 1925:163–4, 176–7). This is the case, for instance, with the location of the Danes in Denmark, the Svear in central Sweden, and the Geats/Gautar in Götland.³ Similarly, the location of the *alogii/háleygir* in Hålogaland, the *augandzil/egder* in the provinces of Agder, the *rugi* or *ryger* in Rogaland, the *granii/grenir* in Grenland in Telemark, and of the (*screre*) *finner* – the Saami – in northern and central areas of the Scandinavian peninsula appears sound on the basis of Norse terminology and surviving place-names. These localizations are also in many cases supported by the fact that the terms recur in administrative divisions from medieval Scandinavia (Callmer 1991; Hyenstrand 1996:134–7; Myhre 1987a:186). Several of these tribal names and place-names have, over time, also been linked to archaeologically defined centres (see, e.g., Callmer 1991; Hedeager 1992a; Myhre 1987a; Ramqvist 1991). But little attention has been paid to dress-accessories in these studies.

The information about, amongst others, Danes, Jutes, Geats and Svear has, through its ready linkage with historical groups and modern place-names, created a potential starting point for distinguishing regional groups through costume habits. In that respect, however, the archaeological evidence has largely let us down. Dress-accessories are found primarily in women's graves but the burial practice in southern Scandinavia in this period involves few such artefacts, while in central Sweden cremation is the dominant rite of the Migration Period. It has, as a result, been difficult to define special sets of dress-accessories

³ There has, however, been some debate over whether the historical Gautar should be placed in Götland or on Gotland (Gräslund 1993:196–200; Hyenstrand 1996:51–2; Svennung 1965:27–31).

or costumes for these areas.⁴ While northern, western and south-western Norway alike are characterized by rich collections of dress-accessories from the Migration Period, the inland areas of most of Østlandet (south-eastern Norway) and Trøndelag are, like north-western Sweden, almost void of finds for some of the period. Such major regional differences, within what in a national perspective is Norwegian territory, may well have also contributed to the fact that traditional archaeological identification of peoples on the basis of distributions of jewellery has not become so influential in Scandinavia as it has on the Continent. Moreover many of the finds of dress-accessories in Scandinavia are from graves that were not excavated by trained archaeologists, so that both the find-circumstances and the finds made are only partially preserved, while the large row-grave and inhumation cemeteries with well-preserved skeletons that are found on the Continent and in England are absent here. All this helps to make studies of costume in the Scandinavian context problematic.

Even though no distinct field of research into costume as an expression of cultural and/or ethnic group-affiliation in the study of the Scandinavian Migration and Merovingian Periods has been established on a similar basis to what is found on the Continent and in England, Scandinavian jewellery from this period has nevertheless been recognized as culturally and/or ethnically symbolic (e.g. Hansen and Olsen 2004:74, 106; Hougen 1936; Nielsen 1991; Åberg 1953). In *Den historiska relationen mellan folkevandringstid och vendeltid* ([*The Historical Relationship between the Migration Period and the Vendel Period*], Nils Åberg (1953:156–66) used, inter alia, equal-armed brooches of the Vendel/Merovingian Period to demonstrate the extent of the area inhabited by the Svear in central Sweden, and as evidence of their occupation of other areas, in south-eastern Finland and Åland (Arrhenius 1999:135). Karen Høilund Nielsen (1991) has interpreted the chronological and geographical distribution of selected southern Scandinavian dress-accessories as a reflex of the Danes' political expansion in the course of the Merovingian Period. Bjørn Hougen (1936:22–34) wrote under the heading '6th century: the face of the tribes' that local and regional variants of Style I on, inter alia, relief brooches of the Migration Period reflect the extent

of various 'Norwegian' tribal groups that are referred to by Jordanes, including the Ryger and the Egder. In these interpretations, however, the historical sources continue to supply the backdrop, and the relationship between jewellery/costume and ethnicity or cultural group-affiliation is not questioned.

In so far as dress-accessories are assessed as ethnic markers, it is especially the perception of the jewellery as Germanic or Norse as opposed to Saami that has dominated discussion in the north of Scandinavia (see, e.g., Hansen and Olsen 2004:74, 106; Sjøvold 1962; 1974; Zachrisson 1997). The relationship between jewellery and costume, and possible sub-divisions within the Germanic and Norse populations, conversely, have received little attention. Although several scholars have noted or shown that there is regional variation in the range of dress-accessories found in Scandinavia (e.g. Hines 1993a; Meyer 1935; Näsman 1991a; Ramqvist 1991; Reichstein 1975; Ringtved 1988a; 1988b; Waller 1996), jewellery and costume as expressions of ethnic or cultural assertion have not been selected as the specific subject of studies. While one reason for this may be the absence of a reliable and clear documentary 'mapping' to start from, another may be rooted in the fact that the distribution maps of the dress-accessories are extremely complex. There are also relatively few super-regional studies which systematize the regional variation within the jewellery beyond the distributions of individual artefact-types, and more such studies would certainly make the picture much clearer (Arrhenius 1995a:90). Usually, the range of jewellery from a limited area or region is isolated and treated on its own (e.g. Arrhenius 1960a; Bennett 1987; Gudesen 1980; Helgen 1982; Sjøvold 1962; Vinsrygg 1979; Waller 1996; Ørsnes 1966),⁵ which has led to a situation in which the cumulative distribution pattern has been difficult to access. In these circumstances, it has not been easy to pick out potentially distinctive assemblages of dress-accessories or costumes for particular regions. Ulf Näsman (1991a:324), for example, has claimed that even though the whole area of Scandinavia can be divided up into four regions in the Migration Period on the basis of dress-accessories and gold bracteates (i.e. Norway, southern Scandinavia, a region to the west of the Baltic, and one region around the Gulf of Bothnia),

4 The cemeteries of Sejlflod and Hjemsted in Jutland form an exception because they have large numbers of well-furnished inhumation graves (Ethelberg 1987; Nielsen 2000). The excavation and publication of these sites, however, has only quite recently been completed, and the finds of dress-accessories from them has, as a result, not become significant in a traditional archaeological identification of Jutes or a 'Jutish' costume.

5 Nielsen 1991 is an exception.

... [the distributions of different variants of style and types of jewellery] overlap one another to such an extent that it is impossible to use the folk costume of later periods as an explanatory template for some suggested marking of ethnic affiliation in Iron-age society...

For a range of reasons, then, the linkage of peoples, jewellery and costume in the Migration and early Merovingian Periods has not been given the same attention in the context of Scandinavia as it has in other parts of Europe. The field of archaeological research on jewellery, costume and cultural identity in Europe, moreover, has, as noted above, appeared as a conservative and fossilized 'throwback' of the culture history paradigm. The traditional research objectives and methodology which have been pursued in this field have often been regarded as more or less out-dated in the processual context of the 1960s and 70s and its post-processual successor from around 1980 onwards. Since it had not proved possible to establish a field of 'costume' in Scandinavian archaeology within the tradition of culture history while such a development was taking place in British and Continental archaeology, it was inevitable that no attempts would be made to develop this field within Scandinavia in light of those more recent theoretical paradigms either. This sort of research has, by contrast (as already noted), been critiqued and problematized by different groups of scholars on the basis of the theoretical implications that reside within the traditional interpretations. With the fading of culture-historical archaeology, the field seems, as a result, to have remained in a theoretical 'blind alley' for a long time, and the unfortunate associations with nationalist (and to some extent even fascist) trends that have been considered above have also done nothing to help this topic appear as an appealing subject of research.

1.3.2 The reconstruction of costume, and costume as a zone of social symbolism

In Scandinavian archaeology, reconstructions of the costume of the time are, despite everything, persistently recurrent in Migration and Merovingian Period scholarship (Blindheim 1947; Dedekam 1926; Hofseth 1998; Jørgensen 1992; Kristoffersen 2006; Munksgaard 1974). The focus has, as a rule, been on technical details of the dress, such as how the dress-accessories and the fabrics were combined and fastened. The costume frequently appears in this light as something 'detached' from an ethnic and cultural context. In some cases there are classifications of regional costumes (Bennett 1987; Jørgensen 1994a; Waller 1996). An example

of this is Lars Jørgensen's overview of Scandinavian costume in the Migration and Merovingian Periods under the entry for 'Fibel und Fibeltracht' ['Brooch and brooch-costume'] in the *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (1994a:528–36). This survey reveals that there are regional differences within Scandinavia, but the differences are not seen in connection with cultural groupings, and the relationship between the entities is not taken up as an issue. The objective of these works has rather been the simple description of regional costumes. Such neutral and 'objective' research goals probably also fitted better with the objectivist research ideal that was dominant in post-war archaeology.

Although costume in this line of research is frequently presented as a social object in so far as it reflects the social status of the wearer, it is still, on the whole, left looking rather as if it is ethnically and culturally 'neutral'. Questions that are explored in connection with the reconstructions of costume beyond matters of technical detail and methods of production are concerned principally with the issues of to what extent the textiles and the dress-accessories were locally produced or imported, the quality of the fabrics and the fasteners, and the extent to which fabrics and jewellery represent traded goods etc. There is, as a rule, little attention paid to symbolic aspects of the costume, except insofar as it might represent the social status of the wearer. Jutta Waller (1996) went a little further in an examination of regional or local costume traditions in the eastern Mälaren area in connection with her analysis of the distribution of various types of dress-pin. She argued that there were two distinct 'culture zones or traditions' in respect of combinations of dress-accessories in this area, respectively Migration-period and Merovingian-period traditions. Waller (1996:140), however, regards the two costume traditions as partly contemporary. She argues that in the Migration Period different social classes are reflected in the costume-assemblages, and she demonstrates that certain types of dress-pin are characteristic of specific age and gender categories (Waller 1996:123–7, 140).

Ulla Mannering (2006) has investigated the relationship between costume textile finds and contemporary pictorial representations of Migration-, Merovingian- and Viking-period dress. In this context she has studied chronological, regional and social differences in dress from iconographic images on, amongst other things, bracteates, jewellery, pressed foils and gold foil figures (*gullgubber*). She shows that there is a degree of regional variation within Scandinavia in the Merovingian Period in that there are different

preferences in respect of specific garments or the composition of the costume in Norway, Sweden and Denmark respectively (Mannering 2006:111–12). She also argues that throughout the period there is greater variance within male costume than female, and believes that this is linked to a more differentiated approach to men's dress than to women's (Mannering 2006:223). The potential of the costume as a socially active element, however, does not usually emerge from these and other comparable studies, as they are concerned primarily with dress as a *reflex* of social structure.

With the introduction of contextual archaeology in the 1990s, meanwhile, the mutual interconnectedness of material culture and social practice came into focus (Olsen 1997:207–18).⁶ The range of research concerned with costume in the Migration and Merovingian Periods consequently took on a new dimension, and opened up as a relevant and exciting field for Scandinavian archaeology. Siv Kristoffersen (2000:107–12), for instance, has investigated the composition of sets of jewellery in southern and western Norway by looking at how relief brooches were worn, and which other types of jewellery they were combined with. She believes that different combinations probably represent different regional costumes. Kristoffersen (2000:209–12) also argues that the development of a distinctly Germanic animal art, Style I, which is found on both relief brooches and weaponry, amongst other things, is interpretable in terms of a need to express new identities that stand apart from the Roman. She notes that there are clear common Germanic elements in Style I, but that this zoomorphic style changes in the course of the Migration Period to take on a more local character. Through this development, she suggests, the style functions to make manifest affiliation, alliances and ties of commitment. Kristoffersen (2000:130–45) also shows how elements of costume and style participate in the formation of different social hierarchical identities, including that of the 'lady of the house'. The female costume involving jewellery signalled political marriage connections by expressing the woman's (foreign) origins. She interprets the use of Style I decoration on weaponry as an expression of the fact that this style variant also contributed to the construction of a super-regional 'warrior identity'. Lise Bender Jørgensen (2003) has examined male dress in the Migration Period in a similar way as socially meaningful, and demonstrates the likelihood that a particular costume can be linked to a multifaceted role

as war-leader and shaman, or as Óðinn's bear-warrior, the berserkr.

It is first and foremost different social roles and social identity that have been considered in more recent studies, while costume as an expression of regional, cultural and/or ethnic identity has not been discussed so much in connection with Scandinavia. A partial exception is Hines's (1993a) previously cited study of clasps. In his studies of dress-accessories from the Migration Period, Hines (1984; 1986; 1993a; 1993b; 1997) has generally concentrated upon the distribution and use of various 'Scandinavian' types in England. In the case of clasps, an artefact-type that occurs widely in both Scandinavia and England, he has argued that in addition to participating in the formation of an Anglian identity in England they also function as a cultural marker of a common identity which cuts across political divisions in the Migration Period (Hines 1993a:93). Not only clasps but also several other forms of dress-accessory, such as cruciform brooches and relief brooches, are found not only across Scandinavia but also in England and on the Continent. All of these artefact-types serve as ethnic markers on the Continent and in England (Hawkes 1982:70; Hedeager 2000; Hines 1984; 1993a; 1994; 1997; Martin 2015; Røstad 2001; 2003). In light of this fact, it appears quite logical to ask whether the jewellery could also have been used to communicate cultural and/or ethnic identity in the regions of present-day Norway and Scandinavia in this period.

1.4 JEWELLERY, COSTUME AND THE MANIFESTATION OF CULTURAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SCANDINAVIA: THE KEY QUESTIONS

Recent theoretical currents influenced by anthropology and sociology (amongst other disciplines) have concurrently contributed to the creation and growth of new perspectives concerning the phenomenon of ethnicity and the relationship between ethnicity and costume in the European Early Middle Ages (Ch. 1.2.2). These fresh perspectives have, however, been applied primarily to the evidence of Continental or English dress-accessories (Hakenbeck 2004; 2006; Hedeager 2000; Hines 1993a; Lucy 2005; Martin 2015; Røstad 2001; 2003) while Scandinavian finds have not been the subject of similar investigation. The application of new theories to the evidence from the

⁶ The term 'contextual' can be debated, as this term is regularly associated with Hodder's (1986) Contextual Archaeology. The term is used here in the wider sense of interpretations that particularly stress the relationship between material culture/social structure and social practice in a given context.

Migration Period in Scandinavia should therefore be able to yield hitherto unrecognized aspects of the use of jewellery as an expression of cultural and/or ethnic group identity in this area. The meeting point between the up-to-date approaches to costume on the Continent and in England, together with scholarship on costume as social practice in the social sciences, where dress is viewed as actively participating in social interaction (cf. Ch. 2.2), will, in my view, produce a fruitful basis for the study of ethnic and/or cultural identity in the context of Scandinavia. Through the understanding of jewellery and clothing as a field for communication within society that both shapes, and is shaped/influenced by, human interaction, dress-accessories can be investigated as a medium used to articulate and negotiate identities at several levels.

The starting point for the study of potential cultural and ethnic groups in Scandinavia through the distribution of jewellery is two-fold. In the first place, there are, as noted, several types of dress-accessory which function as 'ethnic' markers in Continental and English contexts and which are also found in Scandinavia. It is logical, therefore, to posit that these may have had a similar function here. In the second place, there are indications that there were different ethnic and/or cultural groupings in the Migration and Merovingian Periods in the North just as was the case elsewhere in Europe. As I have discussed above, Scandinavia is referred to in some contemporary Continental and Anglo-Saxon documentary sources, where, amongst other things, several different 'Scandinavian' peoples are named. Although these sources come from areas far from the regions of Scandinavia they purport to talk about, making it difficult to prove their historical credibility, they do reflect a contemporary Scandinavia that was characterized by regional and social constellations. This implies that the circumstances in Scandinavia were similar to those elsewhere in Europe at this date (see also Hyenstrand 1996:73; Ringtved 1988a:97).

On the basis of this juxtaposition or 'merger' of Scandinavian, Continental and English situations as they can be perceived through historical and archaeological evidence, the distributions of selected Scandinavian dress-accessories of the Migration Period and the early Merovingian Period will be examined under the hypothesis that they represent manifestations of different ethnic and/or cultural groups articulated through the use of a costume that was principally worn by women. The costume is viewed, in this context, as actively participating in the (re)production of different forms and levels of cultural and/or ethnic group identity. In other words, the dress or the jewellery was playing an active role in ethnic and cultural

discourse of the time. Changes in the distribution of costume evidence during the Migration Period and at the transition to the Merovingian Period reflect, in this perspective, changes in the manifestation of cultural and/or ethnic group identity. Spatial overlaps in the distribution of types (cf. the quotation from Näsman, Ch. 1.3.1) can be viewed through a multidimensional concept of ethnicity as potentially divergent statements of cultural belonging. In the study of the jewellery, therefore, particular importance is attached to revealing chronological changes and synchronous overlaps in costume display over time.

The objective of the study can be summarized as follows:

- To examine how selected types of dress-accessory are used to (re)produce, disseminate and negotiate cultural and/or ethnic identities at a range of levels, by studying the geographical, chronological and contextual distribution of the artefacts.
- To examine the role of jewellery in social interaction by studying what changes take place in respect of the use of dress-accessories during the Migration Period and at the start of the Merovingian Period, and how the jewellery participates in or contributes to, and simultaneously is influenced by, social change in the period in question.

1.5 THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In Chapter 2, I introduce the theoretical framework that forms the premises of my treatment and interpretation of selected types of jewellery from the Migration and the early Merovingian Periods. This chapter includes a more detailed account of the relationship between *costume* and *cultural or ethnic identity* as entities. Guidance is also provided in this chapter for the subsequent presentation of the jewellery evidence and how this will be handled. Since a relative dating of the individual types of dress-accessory and their sub-types is important for the study of the chronological distribution pattern, a chronological framework for the period under examination is introduced in Chapter 3. The artefactual evidence is presented in Chapter 4, and the geographical and contextual distribution of the dress-accessories is analysed. Particular importance is attached to the examination of changes in the occurrence of specific jewellery-types within the period in question. A summary overview of the distribution patterns revealed follows in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the mechanisms surrounding the use of jewellery as ethnic and/or cultural markers are studied in greater detail, accompanied by an interpretation

of the geographical and contextual distribution of the material as specific articulations of costume. The relationship between materialized gender roles and ethnic/cultural identities in the costume evidence is also explored. In Chapter 7, changes in the style of dress are placed into their social and historical context. The use of the selected types of dress-accessory is explained here on the basis of ongoing social, cultural and political discourse both internal to the Scandinavian peninsula, in a more extensive Scandinavian perspective, and in relation to cultural connections across the North Sea. In Chapter 8,

I attempt to give a more thorough account of the implications of my study of the dress-accessories as ethnic and/or cultural expression for an understanding of the historical processes of the period under study. Here I go more deeply into how ethnic groupings have been interpreted in recent years on the basis of written sources, and in particular investigate the relationship between the different theories concerned with the emergence of war-bands and the ethnic and/or cultural processes that can be traced in costume's modes of expression in the Migration Period and the beginning of the Merovingian Period.