

## JEWELLERY, VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND THE MANIFESTATION OF IDENTITY – THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1 A PRACTICE THEORY OF ETHNICITY

The theoretical basis for this project is ‘a *practice theory of ethnicity*’ as developed and presented by British archaeologist Siân Jones (1996; 1997; 1999; 2000; 2007).<sup>1</sup> The theory incorporates an understanding of ethnicity as a primordial or essential identity, which is how the phenomenon has traditionally been conceived. At the same time, however, it also includes the situational, subjective and dynamic aspects of ethnicity that were emphasized by, amongst others, Frederik Barth in 1969 and which have continued to influence the majority of works on this topic (Olsen and Kobilinski 1991:6). Jones also builds upon the *theories of practice* of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977), whose concept of *habitus* is particularly crucial for her understanding of what ethnicity is as a phenomenon (see also Hakenbeck 2006:31).<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to earlier theories, the practice theory of ethnicity bridges a rather artificial division that has emerged between, on the one hand, what is called an objective understanding of ethnicity, in which ethnicity is treated as a primordial identity that is determined biologically and is in-born, and, on the other hand, a subjective and instrumental understanding of ethnicity, whereby ethnic group-membership is treated as a process that is set in train through an individual choice taken in a specific situation in which the actor can identify him- or herself with one group of people, rather than another, for personal benefit. In connection with the concerns of the present project, this involves the perception of jewellery or costume as a direct reflex of group-affiliation, in contrast to the perception of ethnicity as a feature of social organization, with ethnic costume representing an instrument or means of achieving personal gain and possibly political power (cf. Ch. 1). The theory explains and probes the relationship between culture and ethnic identity in a fuller and deeper manner than has been

done before. Although I refer principally to Jones’s works here and use the concept of ethnicity that she presents, she is not the only scholar to have seen the value of applying Bourdieu’s theories of practice or similar practice theories to ethnic questions. Similar views are put forward or implied in a range of more recent anthropological and archaeological studies (e.g. Díaz-Andreu and Lucy 2005:6–7; Eriksen 2002; Jenkins 1994; 1997; Lucy 2005; Shennan 1991). Jones’s theory does, however, have the advantage of showing more explicitly how *archaeologists* can undertake ethnic studies. In what follows I aim to present the practice theory of ethnicity summarily before proposing an explanatory model designed to account for the evidence of dress-accessories.

The concept of ethnicity that Jones presents in the practice theory of ethnicity is dynamic, multidimensional and context-dependent. Jones (1997:95–100) argues that ethnic categories are not static, pre-existing entities but rather are created, reproduced, negotiated and transformed in opposition to specific ‘ethnic others’ through a continual and systematic communication of cultural divergence (see also Eriksen 2002:3, 12–13, for a similar view). Ethnic identity arises, or is a part of our social identity that is activated, when people of different cultural traditions come into contact. The historically specific context in which such cross-cultural encounters take place will be determinative and will influence the manifestation of ethnicity. Economic, political (power-related), social and ideological circumstances will, for instance, play a decisive role in how ethnic identity is expressed and reproduced. Ethnic identity is at the same time rooted in the *habitus* of the social agents. *Habitus* can be explained as a set of conscious and unconscious cultural dispositions which both shape and are shaped through social practice (Bourdieu 1977:72). So perceived, *habitus* reflects a process of socialization, because the cultural

1 Jones (1997:99–100) has taken the concept from Bentley (1987) but develops the theory and gives it a different meaning.

2 Since, as Jones points out (1997:88, fn. 1), the term *habitus* was developed by Bourdieu in order to break down or to build over the gap between ‘objectivism’ and ‘subjectivism’, it is particularly well suited to use with the same view in an ethnic context.

dispositions influence/structure the social practice and become part of the individual's self-perception or identity (Jones 1997:88). This may, for instance, be a matter of concepts of gender, norms, and the like. Such dispositions are often formed at an early stage in human life through collective instruction (Bourdieu 1977:81; see also Jenkins 1994:204; Lucy 2005:98).

The cultural dispositions which people bring into encounters with others, determine how ethnic identity takes shape. Ethnic symbols or markers are grounded in and reflect habitus, while at the same time the ethnic manifestation is governed by the specific social context in which this cultural encounter takes place. This happens through selected sets of the cultural practices and perceptions – in other words the cultural dispositions, which may remain unconscious or latent in an ethnic encounter – being given actual form and coming to be promoted as logically coherent in opposition to specific 'others'. The manifestation of ethnicity, therefore, does not involve random material or immaterial expressions: it is the result of the objectification or concretization of culture which – consciously or not – is based upon common or shared practices and experiences in one particular culture as opposed to another (Jones 1997:95–7; see also Bentley 1987:36; Eriksen 2002:30–5; Jenkins 1994:219; 1997:76–7).

Even though the relationship which exists between habitus and ethnic identity implies that ethnicity has a cultural dimension at one level, and can be said to be culturally based, the degree of cultural rootedness involved will vary according to how the interaction between the distinct groups proceeds, and according to the prevailing power relations between the cultural constellations:

*The communication of cultural difference depends upon the particular cultural practices and historical experience activated by any given context of social interaction as well as broader idioms of cultural difference, resulting in substantive differences in the cultural content of ethnicity in different situations (Jones 1997:97).*

The manifestation of cultural difference both shapes and is shaped by how power (both real and symbolic) is distributed between the separate groups in society, how the interaction between the groups involved proceeds, and how these circumstances influence further interaction and exchanges. Accordingly, the communication of cultural difference is an unceasing process during which there will constantly be shifts and fluctuations. In some cases there may be a high level of agreement between habitus and ethnic identity while in others it appears that there can be little coincidence between these elements. Ethnic categories can often also be

expressed and/or recognized through material culture. Material culture structures social behaviours at the same time as it is the product of social practice. Material culture thus plays an active role in respect of ethnicity because even the form of ethnic expression also contributes to the formation, maintenance or modification of the ethnic identity (see also Lucy 2005:102). One and the 'same' ethnic identity can therefore find different expression in different social contexts. Ethnic identity and its manifestation are thus not constant; on the contrary they are constantly changing and context-dependent. This means that there will practically never be a one-to-one relationship between ethnic manifestation and all the cultural practices and social conditions which can be associated with an ethnic group (Jones 1997:97–100, 102, 120).

Ethnic symbols are therefore in no way haphazard forms of expression, material or immaterial. They are rooted in a cultural past and so are linked to the conscious and unconscious or subliminal cultural dispositions people bring into a context of ethnic negotiation. At the same time, the actual social situation in which an ethnic encounter takes place is also determinative of the manifestation of ethnicity (Jones 1997:120, 126). What, then, is the significance of this dynamic, multidimensional and situational concept of ethnicity in more concrete terms in regard to how this phenomenon can be explored in archaeology? It is no longer possible to postulate a direct and one-dimensional, one-to-one relationship between a particular type of, or a certain assemblage of, material culture and an ethnic population or group (see also Barth 1969; Hodder 1982; Jones 1997:128; Lucy 2005:93; Odner 1983; Olsen 1984; 1985a; 1985b; Olsen and Kobilinski 1991:13; Pohl 1991:47; Shennan 1991:29–30). The practice theory of ethnicity rejects, in the same way as an instrumental concept of ethnicity does, earlier assumptions that prehistoric ethnic and social groups were monolithic, static entities which can be found directly reflected in the distribution of a given type of material culture – for instance jewellery or costume (cf. Ch. 1). How is ethnicity manifested in material terms then? Is it possible at all for us as archaeologists to discover prehistoric groupings from our evidence?

*...the construction of ethnicity is likely to be manifested as multiple overlapping boundaries constituted by representations of cultural difference, which are at once transient, but also subject to reproduction and transformation in the ongoing processes of social life (Jones 2000:452).*

What we have to search for instead, Jones declares, are patterns that are complex and overlapping, spatially and chronologically, with the boundaries between the distributions of selected material features continually shifting as individual features are gradually altered: some disappear; new ones are introduced; and others are reproduced or preserved. To discern such patterns it is necessary to take a historical perspective by investigating distributions over time (Wiessner 1989:58). By examining the distribution of material variance through a certain period it will, on the basis of changes in the distribution pattern and/or stylistic features, be possible to point out or distinguish the transformation which takes place when material characteristics are brought into play as ethnic markers (by being included in the systematic and persistent marking of cultural difference in opposition to certain others). It will also be possible to demonstrate when ethnic symbols lose their role: ‘...the transformation of habitual material variation into active self-conscious ethnic symbolism, and vice versa, on the basis of changes in the nature and distribution of the styles involved’ (Jones 1997:126). This is because ‘the systematisation and rationalisation of distinctive cultural styles in the process of the recognition, expression, and negotiation of ethnic identity are likely to result in discontinuous, non-random distribution of material culture...’ (Jones 2000:454). To grasp which changes are linked to ethnic manifestation, several different and independent categories of artefact and evidence must be examined. It is also necessary to assess the distribution of power between the different culture and/or social groups involved, and this must be considered against a general background of social organization (Jones 1997:125–7; 2000:452–5).

Jones has been criticized for presenting ethnicity as something which is constantly changing as changes of ethnic identity are taking place all the time (Bergsvik 2005:11). I understand Jones, by contrast, as not asserting that *whole* identities are transformed in one go; rather she points out that there is always a seed-bed for development or a potential for change. Even though there are continuous shifts and fluctuations in an ethnic identity, the degree of change will probably normally be low, or proceed only in small steps, because it is regulated by both habitus and social structures (see also Eriksen 2002:92 and Lucy 2005:96). It is probably more exceptional for major convulsions to take place (Pohl 1991:40; Shennan 1991:24) – such as, for instance, the apparent emergence of ethnic plurality unleashed by the fall of the Iron Curtain in

Eastern Europe (Díaz-Andreu and Lucy 2005:11; Eriksen 2002:3). Jones argues, rather, the case for a multidimensional ethnic identity, which can mean that while one level or dimension of an identity may change, another may persist. Here there is also an adjustment of Barth’s (1969) statement that individuals can cross ethnic boundaries by changing ethnic identity. Such a change of identity remains possible, but perhaps as something more complicated than has previously been suggested, where ethnic affiliation could be made to appear more or less a matter of free choice (e.g. Hodder 1982; cf. Ch. 1.2.2). On the basis of the theoretical framework I have laid out here, I shall now present an ethnic explanatory model that will form the starting point for the subsequent examination of the archaeological evidence of dress-accessories.

## 2.2 JEWELLERY, COSTUME, AND NEGOTIATIONS OF IDENTITY: AN ETHNIC EXPLANATORY MODEL

My approach to the exploration of cultural or ethnic groupings is to study how jewellery was used in this period. The dress-accessories can be regarded as a combination of components in the clothing which, like the garments, are part of a costume (cf. Eicher 1999:1; Sørensen 1991:125). According to the social anthropologist Joanne B. Eicher (1999:1), costume can be defined as ‘...a coded sensory system of non-verbal communication that aids human interaction in space and time’. A slightly cruder but nevertheless effective expression is the apophthegm attributed to Mark Twain ‘clothes make the man’ (Harlow 2004). Eicher defines costume or elements of clothing that mark ethnic identity as an ‘ethnic costume’. Although in many contexts costume has been referred to as an obvious potential marker of ethnicity (e.g. Barth 1969:14; Lucy 2005:95–6; Olsen and Kobilinski 1991:15), the significance of costume as an analytical instrument has conventionally been understated in research into ethnicity, and few systematic analyses of ethnic costume have been undertaken.<sup>3</sup> Recent sociological, social anthropological and archaeological studies show, however, that garments or clothing are an important feature of ethnic, cultural and social display (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1995:120–1, 135–7, 191–8; Eicher ed. 1999; Hodder 1982; Hakenbeck 2004; 2006; Sørensen 1991; 1997; 2004:128–42).

Several dress-accessory items in the period under investigation here had a practical function, being used to fasten elements of the clothing/costume (Fig. 2.1).

<sup>3</sup> Hodder (1982) is an exception.

This is probably the case for all of the brooch-types that form the principal material studied below: cruciform brooches, relief brooches, clasps and conical brooches (cf. Ch. 4). Cruciform brooches were probably used to fasten a peplos dress at the shoulders. The relief brooches are interpreted by many as having been used to fasten a shawl, cape or cloak over the breast, although another possibility is that they may have been used to fasten an over-dress (i.e. the peplos) to an under-dress so as to hold it in position. The clasps, as a rule, fastened sleeves at the wrist or by the elbow. Alternatively they could be used for fastening in front of the neck or in place of a belt buckle. In some male burials clasps are found by the knees or the ankles, which indicates that they were fasteners for knickerbockers or long trousers (Arrhenius 1999; Hines 1984; 1993a; Kristoffersen 2000:107–12; 2006:15–27; Lucy 2000:85; Munksgaard 1974:165–8).

The dress-accessories may be regarded as an integral component of the costume because of their practical functions. But not *all* types of jewellery were worn by *every* woman (or man) in this period. Many, presumably, did not have the right or the opportunity to obtain items of jewellery at all. Another point is that even though the peplos dress apparently went out of use and was superseded by a 'sleeved dress' (the *tunica*) and/or the pinafore dress at the transition from the Migration Period to the Merovingian Period (Blindheim 1947:78–89, 130–1; Jørgensen and Jørgensen 1997:55–9, fig. 46; Owen-Crocker 2004:128; Waller 1996:132–8), jewellery which no longer had any utilitarian function (Martin 1995:42–7) remained in use in many cases. Such jewellery items were in a transitional period placed 'anachronistically' as 'fasteners' for a peplos dress that no longer existed (Pohl 1998a:49–50): in other words, the way the brooches were worn no longer fulfilled a necessary function, but was rather the continuation of an old tradition.<sup>4</sup> The employment of particular types of brooch was thus not determined by practical needs alone. By perceiving the costume as a coded system of communication, a field of significance in which dress-accessories may not only have a utilitarian function but also participate actively in social practice in this period is opened up.

### 2.2.1 Habitus, visual communication and the symbolism of identity

The use of dress-accessories around the clothing, or the practice of decking oneself in jewellery, can be said to represent a social act that contributes to the formation and reproduction of a costume or clothing code (see also Eicher 1999:1; Kaiser 1983; Sørensen 1991:122; 2004:128). The social code acquires meaning through a normative pattern of behaviour: namely persistent, repeated use in the same context (Pader 1980:144). The use of jewellery can thus be understood as a shared (largely subconscious) cultural disposition that is shaped by, and concurrently shapes, social practice.

The dress and particular dress codes can form part of social practice by being used actively and consciously – for instance as a political instrument. An example of this is the way that the style of clothing during the French Revolution was changed radically, and breeches and silk stockings, together with rococo dresses with corsets and voluminous skirts, which were characteristic of the nobility, were regarded as being synonymous with an anti-revolutionary position, while clothes which were inspired by the lower social classes such as long trousers and the classically-inspired 'Empire dress' of simple cotton became a token of the 'pro-revolutionary'. Young anti-revolutionaries could adopt an exaggerated version of the old 'noble style' while radicals expressed their political position through clothing that spoke of ideological closeness to the lower social ranks. After the Revolution, under Napoleon, the new, simpler, Empire Style became the symbol of the modern new citizen, even for those who in reality belonged to the nobility (Iwagami 2005:148–9; Suoh 2005:30–1).

In some periods and certain situations, the use of clothing may also be subject to legislation. This has been the case at various times in most of Europe. Napoleon, for example, banned the use of English cottons and required that silks be worn on formal occasions at the court. Behind these regulations lay, amongst other things, the intention of supporting the French silk industry which was on the point of collapsing as a result of the new cotton fashion (Iwagami 2005:148–9). Similar 'sumptuary laws' are found in the Middle Ages, between the 13th and 16th centuries, when bans on foreign garments and fabrics were imposed in order to support domestic trade. The way in which a dress should be worn, which fabrics could

4 An 'out-dated' positioning of dress-accessories of this kind is observed on the Continent, but this seems to have been the case in Scandinavian contexts too (cf. Ch. 4.3.1). Kristoffersen (2006:20), however, argues that the pinafore dress could have been in uninterrupted use in Scandinavia from the Migration Period to the Viking Period.



*Figure 2.1* Reconstruction of Migration-period costume with dress-accessories such as cruciform brooches at the shoulders to fasten the peplos dress, and clasps at the cuffs and the neck of the under-dress as well as fastening the belt in the middle. Photograph: Åse Kari Hammer. © Museum of Cultural History.

be used for garments, and the number of outfits one was permitted to purchase in a single year – as well as other aspects of dress – were controlled by law in many parts of the Continent, England and Scandinavia in the Middle Ages. This also affected dress-accessories and the ornamentation of garments: for instance in the form of beads or precious stones that might be sewn on. There were laws regulating what metals the dress-fittings should be made of, and who was allowed to wear precious stones and beads. In the great majority of cases, rank and income determined what clothes and jewellery the individual was allowed to wear. There were sumptuary laws stipulating how the different classes should be dressed. People of lower social ranks risked punishment if they dressed like someone of noble birth (Campbell 2009:42; Evans 1952:15, 20–1; Newton 2002:131–2; Scott 2007:80; Sponsler 1992; Vedeler 2007:170).

In the actual period under examination here, there was the same sort of legislation concerning costume material and form, dyes and the like, in the Byzantine Empire. Under the Eastern Roman Emperors Theodosius II (AD 401–50) and Justinian (527–65) what sort of clothes and textiles different classes were allowed to wear was controlled by detailed laws. In this way a hierarchical dress code which made it easier for the different ranks of society to be distinguished was created. Purple dyes, silks and certain types of gem, for instance, were restricted to the imperial family. The status symbols of the Emperor included a round fibula or brooch ornamented with precious stones, hanging beads and gold, and purple-red boots that were often decorated with gems and beads (Ball 2005:13–16; Bondevik 2007:57–70; Kalamara 2001:77; Muthesius 2004:2–4, 67, 88; 2008:18–20, 25, 31–6; Schulze 1976:157).

A cultural ‘dress disposition’ can be active though, even if the way one dresses oneself is an unconscious ‘decision’ or act in which one only follows ‘fashion’ or some given dress code (see also Díaz-Andreu and Lucy 2005:11; Lucy 2005:96; Turner 1979:32 in Pader 1980:145). How this can operate is illustrated by a scene from the novel *Howards End* by E. M. Forster, published in 1910. The description of the situation reveals something of the dynamic in the long-standing phenomenon of ‘the hat fashion’:

*He discovered that he was going bareheaded down Regent Street. London came back with a rush. Few were about at this hour, but all whom he passed looked at him with a hostility that was the more impressive because it was unconscious. He put his hat on. It was too big: his head disappeared like a pudding into a*

*basin, the ears bending outwards at the touch of the curly brim. He wore it a little backwards, and its effect was greatly to elongate the face and to bring out the distance between the eyes and the moustache. Thus equipped, he escaped criticism. No one felt uneasy as he tittupped along the pavements, the heart of a man ticking fast in his chest (Forster 1992 [1910]:131).*

The quotation demonstrates how a dress-code disposition in habitus can structure the individual, and how nonconformity with widely recognized social practice can result in an experience of discomfort both for the person who is responsible for the ‘error’ and for those who experience the breach of the norm, in this case through encountering the hatless man. A hatless man could, as described here, thus be experienced as a threat, even if this reaction takes place at a quite unconscious level, because the man is breaching a norm or generally accepted practice. Social structuration offers scope for individual manipulation, but the reaction the actor encounters can, as in this case, generate recognition of the norm and a decision to adhere to it and so keep the custom alive. In a similar way, a form of social communication which takes place through ‘reading jewellery’ (cf. Sørensen 1997) can be integrated into social practice irrespective of whether or not it takes place at a conscious level (Sørensen 2004:136).

Such a disposition in respect of visual communication will be available for activation and to be endowed with an *ethnic* significance and function in a context of ethnic interaction:

*While rarely consciously articulated, the ways in which people dress are subject to a whole range of culturally informed ideas and expectations. Cultural differences in dress are one resource that can be seized on in the articulation of ethnic difference (Lucy 2005:96–7).*

In a context of ethnic interaction and negotiation this distinct form of social practice, which amounts, in effect, to communicating through selected types of dress-accessory, may be interpreted as a field of social discourse which is concerned with identity, and within which the categorization of different ethnic, regional and social groups is continuously reproduced, negotiated and transformed. There are, as I have mentioned, indications that costume is incorporated as such a ‘signalling field’ in the Migration Period. In connection with the expansion of the distribution of clasps from Scandinavia to England, for example, Hines (1993a:88) says:

*... it was not only the clasps’ form that was introduced into England but also their rule-bound function as*

*part of a costume. They were not, then, appropriated to variable use by a different people with a different culture but introduced as part of a demand in England for material-cultural sameness (to at least this degree) with folk 400 miles across the sea in Norway.*

That clothing had an ethnic significance in the Migration Period is also documented in contemporary historical sources, which record, for instance, how young people who belonged to the ‘Roman’ nobility in the erstwhile Western Empire were speaking Germanic, dressing according to ‘Germanic’ fashions and copying the hairstyles of the Germani (Wolfram 1970:16). Conversely there are also references to Germanic people who dress in the Roman fashion (Geary 1983:19), and Gregory of Tours tells of how the Saxons who settled in northern France were commanded to dress in the Breton manner (James 1991:101). The historian and archaeologist Edward James (1991:113) has emphasized that a breach of norm in the ethnic dress code in the Migration Period could be felt just as ‘strongly’ by a contemporary then as the breach in the hat code could appear at the beginning of the 20th century: ‘...a Frankish woman might wear one imported Thuringian brooch, but would not, so to speak, be seen dead wearing a complete Thuringian costume.’

### 2.2.2 The fashion of the living and the dead

The majority of the finds of jewellery to be considered are grave finds. An issue that has been much discussed and which must be noted here is the possible use of a ‘burial costume’. This debate concerns whether or not the deceased was interred in her or his own regular clothing and jewellery, or alternatively whether some special outfit and fittings which might have been made use of for the funerary rite itself could have been substituted (see, e.g., Bennett 1987:21, 110; Nilsen 1998; Williams 2006:46). Related to this issue is also the question of whether the deceased could have been given jewellery from, perhaps, the surviving family, friends or the like, on the occasion of the burial. I work from the premise that the items of jewellery were used ‘in life’. This is implied by the severe wear and evidence of repairs found on many dress-accessories. Some items of jewellery had also been attached more or less permanently to the clothing. This is the case with the clasps, for instance, which were mostly sewn or riveted

to the material in such a way that the latter would probably have been wrecked if the clasps were removed (Hines 1993a:12; Lamm 1983:21). This is also true of some brooches (Hines 1997:281, 293). Several pieces of jewellery have also been found at settlement sites<sup>5</sup> (e.g. Kristoffersen 1993:189–91; Strömberg 1961:92; see also Ch. 4), or in other contexts which indicate that they were objects in regular use.<sup>6</sup> A conical brooch, for instance, has been found in the foundations of a boat-house in Åkersvika in Hamar (cf. Ch. 4.3.1.4, below), and there is a bow brooch from a culture layer in a cave on Hardangervidda.<sup>7</sup> Brooch-types that are known from grave finds are also found in pictorial representations that show that these dress-fittings were used in other social contexts too. On the gold-foil figures (*gullgubber*), for example, there are portrayals of women wearing relief brooches, disc-on-bow brooches, disc brooches, etc. (Arrhenius 1962; Munksgaard 1974:168; Watt 1991:96, figs. 8a and 9c). These brooch-types occur in grave finds as well.

Grave finds must not be assumed to be direct mirror images of prehistoric reality; it has been suggested, rather, that, on the occasion of a burial, the community seeks to express how the society should be seen *in ideal terms*, and that at the funeral the community (represented by the survivors) furnishes the deceased with the identity – or those identities – which are conceived as necessary in order to maintain the social order. Alternatively, the survivors might, in some circumstances, use the burial to attempt to undermine the social order (Díaz-Andreu 2005:39; Hakenbeck 2004:41; Kristoffersen 2000:19–21; Lucy 1998:107; 2000:178; Metcalf and Huntington 1991:82–4; Parker Pearson 1993:226–7) (Fig. 2.2). This can, of course, come about through subconscious acts, or at an unconscious level. Dress-accessories from graves can potentially, therefore, offer a starting point for saying something about social circumstances. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen (1991:123–4; 1997:101) points out that funerary rites and the material expressions that are made use of in these contexts do not emerge in a cultural void. She argues that there is probably a structural similarity in relation to how costume is used in different social contexts within a society.

This does not, though, appear to be so *in every case*. Marianne Vedeler Nilsen (1998) has shown, in the context of grave finds from medieval Norway, that the same elements may be used in different ways in burial costume in contrast to ‘going-about clothes’ – in

5 See, e.g., C38683: the settlement finds from Åker, Hamar commune, Hedmark, which include a clasp, brooches and more.

6 On the subject of jewellery from hoards and central places as a category of evidence, see below, Ch. 4.1.3.

7 C34104.

other words, practical dress – and that specialized burial costume may be combined with practical garments in one and the same grave. According to Stig Welinder (1998:188) children in the Early Iron Age were buried in a distinct ‘children’s costume’ which was used in ‘ceremonies and festivities’. It is, however, rather difficult to see the basis for the definition of this form of costume, apart from what Welinder points out in respect of the particularly frequent occurrence of beads in children’s graves on Öland. Both images of jewellery and evidence of wear on examples found from the Migration Period indicate that the burial dress in this period was more or less the same as daily clothing. The question of whether or not the deceased were interred with their own or others’ jewellery is also inessential in the perspective of the current investigation. Even if the dead were furnished with others’ jewellery, the finds still provide some testimony on how constructions of costume as expressions of identity were put into practice within that society.

One question that remains a pressing one in this context is who was being addressed in the burial performance. Was the deceased furnished with an identity that was important in the lived life, i.e. for the current and extant community, or one that would be so in the next life, on the other side? It is not clear, though, if it is really productive to impose such a division between the living society and concepts of life after death. Those concepts are a product of the society in which they appear, and when the jewellery and the deposition of jewellery in graves are quite consistent, as is the case in the area and period under investigation, that fact can be seen as a reflex of the fact that the sets of dress-accessories were a phenomenon that was so important within the living community – so integral to habitus, in other words – that it was unthinkable to fail to furnish the deceased with those visible tokens for the coming life after death.

### 2.2.3 Ethnicity, gender and yet further identities?

As was noted by way of introduction (Ch. 1), it is a common assumption that it was principally women who wore jewellery in the Iron Age. It is often difficult to undertake osteological analysis of Scandinavian human skeletal remains from this period because the relevant material from cremation burials is severely fragmented and often completely lost to decay in inhumation graves. As a rule, determination of gender in graves is therefore undertaken on the basis of the grave goods. While weapon graves are defined as male, graves with several items of jewellery, spindle-whorls, keys, weaving swords etc. are normally identified as female. Similarly

furnished graves on the Continent and in England in which the conditions for the preservation of bone are more favourable show that, with few exceptions, there is a correspondence between biological sex and the range of grave goods noted (see, e.g., Halsall 1995:5–9; Hines 1984:44; Scull 1993:69; Williams 2006:50–1). In those cases in which osteological analysis of skeletal remains in Scandinavia has been possible, the result shows the same correspondence (Hjørungdal 1991:71–2 and Kristoffersen 2000:102, both with reference to Sellevold et al. 1984). Some Scandinavian graves that include weaponry can, however, contain jewellery as well; I return to this in due course (Ch. 6.7).

The use of this sort of artefact-based set of criteria for determining whether a grave is female or male is, however, open to criticism (see, e.g., Danielsson 2007:60–3) since such a strict dichotomy obscures the fact that there is a large number of graves *without* ‘indications of gender’, and graves which have a mixture of ‘male’ and ‘female’ objects. Moreover osteological studies have in a few cases identified ‘discrepancy’ between biological sex and ‘gendered’ artefacts (Bennett 1987:102; Lucy 1997 in Díaz-Andreu 2005:39). The question is, however, whether we will get very far by depending upon osteological identifications alone, since in fact the osteological criteria themselves ultimately often represent an interpretation – for instance in terms of the strength of build of the bones and muscular connections or the like (Danielsson 2007:63–9). Another and possibly even more important point is that biological sex cannot simply be equated with social sex or *gender* (Kristoffersen 2000:102; Solli 2002:94, 96–104; Sørensen 1991:121–2; 2004:42–52). ‘Gender’ can be understood as a social construction and is culturally conditioned (Pohl 2004:23). It is also possible to argue that it is precisely the ‘divergent’ finds that one should focus upon in order to carry the discussion on, past what could be called a ‘naturalization’ of a dichotomous gender framework which belongs, more than anywhere, in a post-Victorian Western world (Danielsson 2007:60–3; Hjørungdal 1991:117; Solli 2002:94). This, however, is a discussion which falls beyond the limits of the current research project. What is key to the current context is to investigate the signalling of ethnic or cultural identity through the use of jewellery. The social dichotomy that is expressed through weaponry and sets of dress-accessories is in this light significant because it is so characteristic of the period under examination. Even though it is a simplification of the circumstances to keep simply to the binary gender system that furnishing with jewellery contrasted with weaponry represents, this nevertheless does express important aspects that were linked





*Figure 2.2* The burial of the woman at Hauge in Klepp. Illustration: Eva Gjerde. © Arkeologisk Museum, University of Stavanger (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).

to gender identity in this particular period (see also Díaz-Andreu 2005:39; Kristoffersen 2000:22, 26).

A gender identity will – in the same way as other forms of social identity; cf. ethnic identity, above – be negotiated, reproduced and changed through social practice (Sørensen 1991:122). Through understanding material culture as socially constitutive, artefacts do not necessarily just *reflect* the gender categories: they can function as media through which gender identities can be *negotiated*. Sørensen (1991:121–2) claims that, if gender is a meaningful structure in prehistoric societies, it will be traceable through the means the society uses to express gender in the use of material culture. In the Migration and Merovingian Periods this comes about, then, through, for instance, burials that are furnished with sets of dress-accessories (often combined with implements for textile production) in contrast to weaponry. As this is fully embedded into the discourse of identity that is carried on through the use of jewellery, perceptions of gender consequently infiltrate ethnic identity and identities. Such an imbrication or intersection of ethnicity and gender in costume (and possibly other modes of expression) is fairly common (Eicher 1999:3; Jones 1997:85; Lucy 2005:100 with refs.). In some cases, different combinations of elements of the dress can be used to demonstrate and to transform categories such as gender and/or ethnic identity (see also Sørensen 1991:127; 1997:96, 101). This may, for instance, be a matter of different levels of identity, whereby aspects of ethnic identity and gender identity at one level or in one dimension fall together in some specific context. The archaeologist Susanne Hakenbeck (2006:229) has expressed this situation as follows, with reference to how jewellery or costume functioned in Bavaria in the Early Middle Ages (Migration Period):

*Ethnic identity did not exist in a social void. The material culture used for expressing ethnic identity also conveyed meanings about gender, kinship and other social networks and the boundaries between these different identities were fluid and cannot easily be separated.*

The presentation of the ethnic theory of practice can give the impression that it is a straightforward matter to distinguish ethnicity as a certain form of identity because it is clearly different from other forms of social identity. In practice, however, it is much more difficult if not practically impossible, since the enmeshing of identities is very much the rule rather than the exception (see also Lucy 2005:100; Vedeler 2007:37). Meanwhile one may ask whether there is any genuine point in isolating the phenomenon of ethnicity and discussing that alone. It would perhaps be more

fruitful to expand the focus so that it includes aspects of ethnicity that may pertain to different forms of commingled identity. Hakenbeck (2006:228) adopts a position similar to this when she says:

*Ethnicity has turned out to be an elusive category. When we focus on it too narrowly it slips out of our field of vision. But, when we take a step back and let our eyes relax, it does take shape.*

In what follows, I shall employ Jones's theory in order to investigate those aspects of cultural and ethnic identity which are connected with the articulation of geographical and social group-affiliation – such as, for example, local, regional and trans-regional cultural identities – through the use of jewellery/costume. These aspects will for the most part be associable with female costume, and thus probably bound up with a gender identity too, and indeed plausibly with age categories as well (cf. Ch. 6.5.1). In addition, there is some articulation of cultural or ethnic identity associated with male clothing. In this regard, it will be of interest to explore whether or not the ethnic or cultural manifestation found in male dress coincides with what is found in female dress (cf. Ch. 6.7).

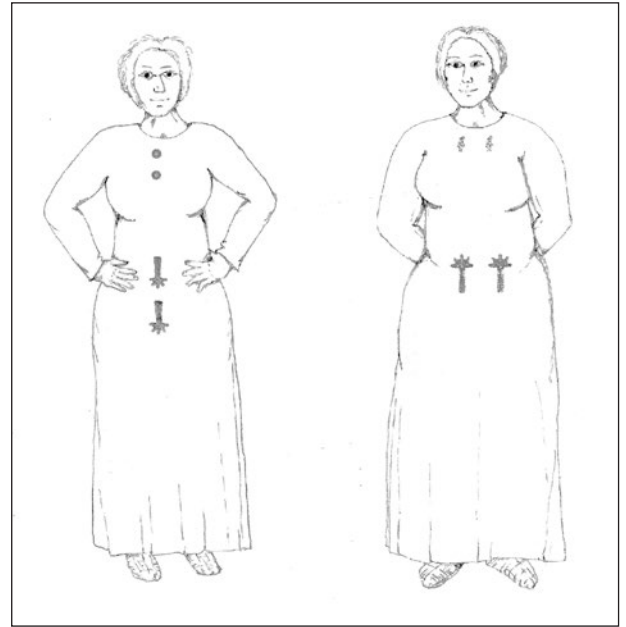
### 2.3 METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Visual aspects are essential to the recognition of articles of jewellery as markers (see also Eicher and Sumberg 1999:298). Although beauty, proverbially, is in the eye of the beholder – as indeed is frequently reflected in descriptions of pieces of Iron-age jewellery as 'simple', 'vulgar', 'exquisite' or 'uncommonly attractive' in traditional archaeological literature – it is striking how archaeologists often perceive the same details as being of significance when they undertake typological groupings or classify the corpora of finds. There will be exceptions, nonetheless. In the presentation of the evidence (Ch. 4) I attempt to show what lies at the root of the different classifications, and discuss the basis of the various groupings by type. Through this approach I wish clearly to show that typologizing is a methodological approach in which the visual is at the focus of attention. Typologizing is thus one of the methods which is employed with a view to analysing potentially meaningful distribution patterns in relation to cultural boundaries (see also Bergsvik 2005:11–12).

Extending that, I shall in part follow an analytical principle concerning how similarities and differences can be produced and articulated, and how different identities can be presented and recognized, through the use of material culture in the construction of

appearance (in this case, clothing or costume). This can come about through: 1) the artefact or the form of the object, its finish<sup>8</sup> and origin; 2) how different objects are usually put together – in other words, the combination of artefacts; and 3) the positioning or physical organization of the objects – in other words, their collective composition (Sørensen 1997:98). In this context, these three aspects correspond respectively to the item of jewellery, the set of dress-accessories, and the mode of wearing. These will be examined as far as the archaeological finds allow in light of the quality of preservation and recording.

That the mode of wearing itself may be significant is shown by previous studies of dress and its accessories in the Migration Period: for instance in Bavaria, where the same types and combinations of jewellery are persistently worn in different ways at two different cemeteries and clearly mark a regional contrast (Fig. 2.3). In one of the cemeteries two bow brooches were worn positioned vertically one above the other at the throat; in the other two different brooches were also worn at the throat/chest and by the pelvis respectively, but here the brooches were positioned alongside one another horizontally, and with the headplate upwards (Hakenbeck 2004:45, fig. 4). Similar regional differences in the mode of wearing are found in Anglo-Saxon England in the Migration Period too, where there is a tendency in Kent to position the brooches in a vertical line from the throat/chest to the pelvis, usually with the brooches lying ‘across’ with the headplate to one side, while the trend elsewhere appears to have been to wear two brooches at the shoulders, and another positioned centrally on the chest (Hines 1997:280–92; Lucy 2000:83–5; Owen-Crocker 2004:36, 91–2; Welch 1992:62–4). Previous studies have also revealed special patterns in terms of how brooches were worn in the Merovingian Period in eastern Sweden and southern Scandinavia (Arrhenius 1960a:80; Jørgensen 1994a; Jørgensen and Jørgensen 1997:55–9; Nielsen 1991; 1999; Ørsnes 1966:180). Relatively few Scandinavian grave finds are of sufficient quality, however, for it to be possible to say exactly what the positioning of the brooches in relation to the body was. The skeleton has often totally decomposed, and in many cases both the deceased and the grave goods were cremated. It is still



**Figure 2.3** Local differences in sets of jewellery in Bavaria: Altenerding (L) and Aubing (R), after Hakenbeck (2004: fig. 4).

possible to produce certain relatively general inferences concerning how the brooches were worn on the basis of the few finds that we do have in which the state of preservation is more favourable. These inferences can be supplemented, to some extent, by analysing the combinations of types of dress-accessory that are found in individual graves. The mode of wearing can in these cases be inferred from the position of the items relative to one another even when the skeleton has disappeared (Fig. 2.4).

A further component which will be important in the chosen theoretical approach is a diachronic or historical perspective, in order to grasp the development through time. Putting the types of jewellery in relation to one another within a chronological framework will be decisive in the interpretation of their distribution patterns. In the next chapter, therefore, problems concerning dating and phasing are discussed in greater detail, and a chronological framework that will be employed in the analysis of the finds is presented.

In order to be able to give an account of dress-accessories and costume as a form of cultural expression and statement of identity, my work is based upon around 1,800 items of jewellery. These are made up of four different main object-types which in turn can be subdivided into a multiplicity of sub-groups and more precisely defined types. The dress-accessories are, as has been noted, primarily from grave finds, although there are some from hoards; a few settlement finds and stray finds are also included. In order to capture potentially divergent costume manifestations, each of the main types is examined by itself in the analysis.

<sup>8</sup> Several of the artefact-types in question are decorated in animal style. It falls beyond the limits of this project to investigate the capacity of animal style for the communication of iconographic and symbolic contents (see, e.g., Kristoffersen 1995; 2000; 2004, and Martin 2013) as the focus here is on the exploration of the communicative qualities of the costume in situations of ethnic and/or cultural communication.

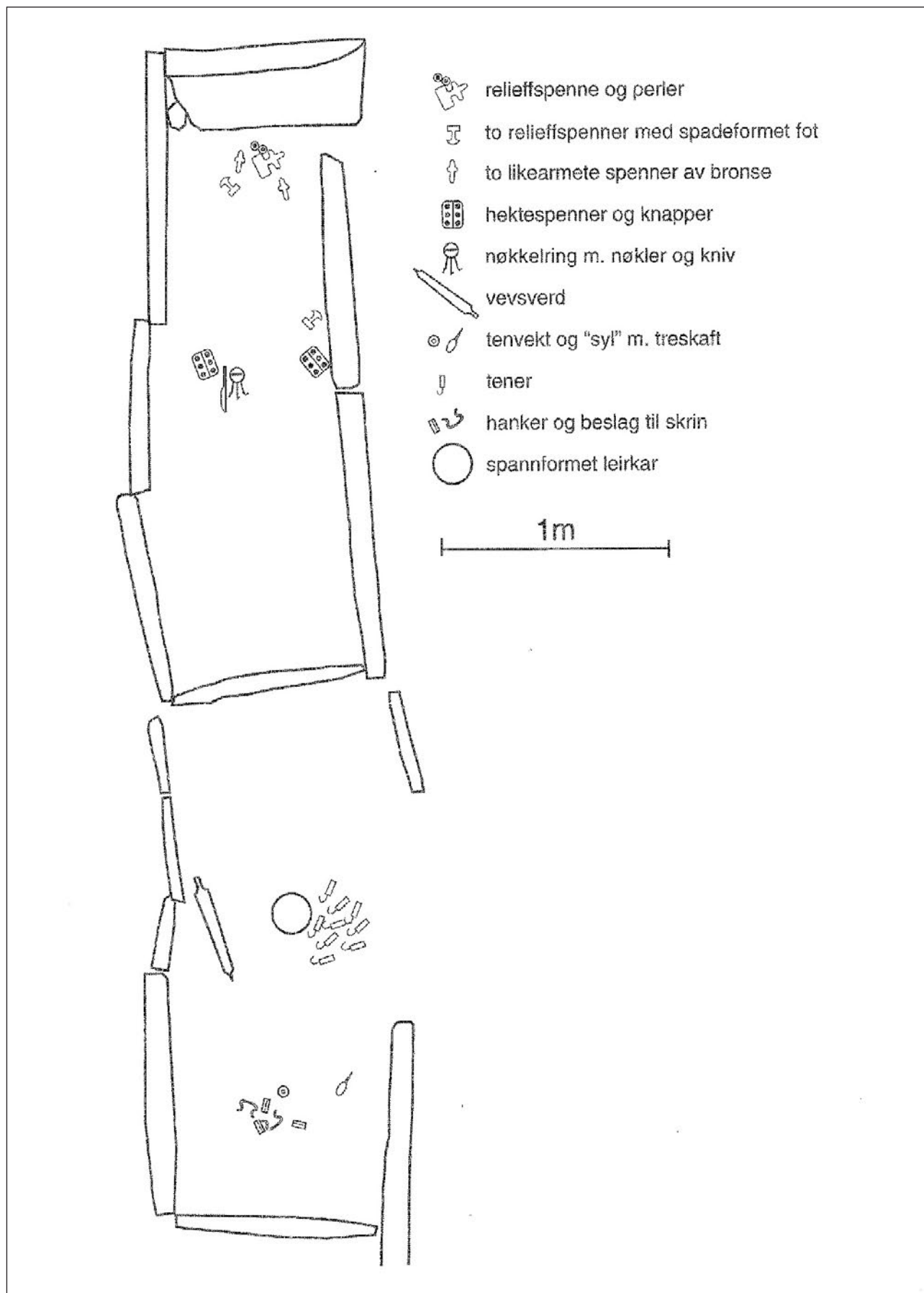


Figure 2.4 Drawing of the grave from Kvåle in Sogndal (B6516), after Kristoffersen (2000:385).

That is also the case with the distinct source categories of graves, hoards, finds from settlement sites and stray finds. These are kept apart in the analysis in order to examine whether the same form of costume manifestations recur in the different source categories (cf. the theory of structural similarity, above), or if there are any differences between these categories (cf. Jones

1997:125–6). The research places particular emphasis on graves and hoards, which represent deliberate deposition, while the settlement and stray finds presumably, for the most part, represent jewellery which people in the prehistoric past mislaid. I return to this in the context of the account of the source material below (Ch. 4.1.3).