NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

GENDER, AGE AND VISIBILITY:

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN IRELAND,

700-1200 AD

by

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**THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PH.D
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND
MAYNOOTH**

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September 2008

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Summary

This thesis comprises an engendered and age-aware examination of the existing corpus of Irish archaeological material in order to facilitate a more precise interpretation of the diversity of experiences of women and children in Ireland between 700 and 1200 AD. This thesis examines different conceptualizations of age and gender in early medieval Ireland and identifies how women and children's experiences are expressed through the material culture of the different cultural groups that existed in Ireland during this period. The utilization of a thematic approach facilitates a comparison and contrast with the historical and archaeological material, enabling the drawing out of similarities and differences in the experiences of Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian women and children within chronological, regional, national and international contexts. Historical, mortuary and artefactual evidence from Irish, Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts is utilized with a view towards understanding that the cultural and social roles of women and children are much more complex than have been presented in the more 'traditional' archaeological record. Children and childhood in the past are accessed through the utilization of a number of avenues of enquiry including evidence for birth, education, socialization, play, burial treatment, domestic and commercial labour contributions and production. A number of fundamental questions are addressed, in particular whether or not it is possible to see processes of gender and age in the archaeological record, and if so, what theoretical and methodological frameworks can be employed in such a study. The application of gender and age theory to the extant body of archaeological material suggests that both gender and age were distinct social processes that were linked to – but separate from – other cultural interactions such as status, wealth and ethnicity. Other fundamental questions addressed here included how such approaches can add to our understanding of societies in the past by highlighting how these processes changed over time, space and place.

Contents

I dedicate this thesis to my daughter Gabrial (BFF).

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

AAE	Anthropology and Archaeology of Eurasia
ADS	ADS Archaeological Development Services
AF	Annals of Inisfallen
AFM	Annals of the Four Masters
AHR	American Historical Review
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJHG	American Journal of Human Genetics
AJPA	American Journal of Physical Anthropology
Anl	Anläggning
ARA	Annual Review of Anthropology
ARC	Archaeological Review from Cambridge
ASSAH	Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History
AU	Annals of Ulster
AUSGJA	Assemblage, University of Sheffield Graduate Journal of Archaeology
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research
BHM	Bergen Historisk Museum, Norway
BM	British Museum
CELT	Corpus of Electronic Texts
CIH	Corpus Iuris Hibernici
CMA	Canadian Museum of Civilization
CS	Chronicon Scotorum
CSA	Current Swedish Archaeology
CSSH	Comparative Studies in Society and History
CUMAA	Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology
DIER	Database of Irish Excavation Reports
DoEHLG	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DSS	Deutsches Spielzeugmuseum Sonneberg, Thüringen, Germany
E	Excavation
EHSNI	Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland
EJA	European Journal of Archaeology
EJHG	European Journal of Human Genetics
EMAP	Early Medieval Archaeology Project
EME	Early Medieval Europe
GNM	Germanisches National Museum, Nurnberg
HAJEMNE	The Heroic Age, A Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern Europe
HCQ	History of Childhood Quarterly
HM	Hunt Museum
HMG	Historical Museum Gotland
ICD	Icelandic Saga Database
IJHA	International Journal of Historical Archaeology
JAMT	Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory
JAS	Journal of Archaeological Science
JASO	Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford
JCHAS	Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society
JCLAS	Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society
JCWAS	Journal of the County Wicklow Archaeological Society
JDAHS	Journal of the Doncaster Archaeological and Historical Society

JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
JFH	Journal of Family History
JGAHS	Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society
JHS	Journal of the History of Sexuality
JIA	Journal of Irish Archaeology
JMAHS	Journal of the Mizen Archaeological and Historical Society
JRSAI	Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
JWAHS	Journal of the Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society
KiAiN	Kvinner i Arkeologi i Norge
KMUO	Kulturhistorisk Museum Universitetet I Oslo
LAR	Lund Archaeological Review
MCM	Monaghan County Museum
MNI	Minimum Number of Individuals
NAJWS	North American Journal of Welsh Studies
NAR	Norwegian Archaeological Review
NFNEST	Northvegr Foundation, Northern European Studies Texts
NGR	National Grid Reference
NMAJ	North Munster Antiquarian Journal
NMC	National Museum of Copenhagen
NMI	National Museum of Ireland
NMS	National Museum of
NUIM	National University of Maynooth, Ireland
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OKR	Old Kilkenny Review
OS	Ordinance Survey
P	Petrie collection
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme
PHCC	Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquim
PRIA	Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy
PSAS	Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
PTKSIAS	Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-east of Ireland Archaeological Society
RAA	Riksantikvarieämbetet, Birka
RAML	Royal Armouries Museum Leeds
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
Reg.	Register
RSAI	Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland
SCRAN	Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network
SCSSH	The Society for Comparative Study of Society and History
SHM	Statens Historisk Museet [Sweden]
SJH	Scandinavian Journal of History
SM	Shetland Museum
SMA	Shetland Museum Archives
SSCIP	Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCC	University College, Cork
UCD	University College, Dublin
UJA	Ulster Journal of Archaeology
UKDFD	United Kingdom Detector Finds Database
VHM	Viking Heritage Magazine

VM	Vitenskapsmuseet, Trondheim, Norway
W	Wilde Catalogue
Wk.	Wakeman Catalogue
ZCP	Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie

Introduction

This thesis comprises an engendered and age-aware examination of the existing body of Irish archaeological material in order to facilitate a more precise interpretation of the diversity of experiences of women and children in Ireland between 700 and 1200 AD. The central aim of this research is to identify how both women and children's experiences are expressed through the material culture of the different cultural groups that existed in Ireland during this period. While gender is of course not exclusive to woman, it is outside the remit of this research to include an examination of men and masculinity.[1] This study instead confines its analyses to exploring different constructions of gender roles amongst women and children in early and medieval Ireland. 'It was, and still is, necessary not only to make women consciously visible in research, but also to understand why women who are clearly visible in the archaeological record could be so neglected by scholars in historical generalizations'.[2] Similarly, while recent approaches to social archaeology have stressed inclusivity and cultural variability in social structure, the use of age in theoretically informed ways remains a glaring gap in archaeological approaches to the past.[3]

Historical, mortuary and artefactual evidence from Irish, Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts is utilized with a view towards understanding that the cultural and social roles of children are much more complex than have been presented in the more 'traditional' archaeological record. Despite the existence of a significant number of artefacts that can be associated with children and childhood, as well as a wide array of burial data, little has been done to synthesize the material into any kind of a comprehensive study. Children and childhood in the past is accessed through the utilization of a number of avenues of enquiry including evidence for birth, education

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[1] A recent historical study has undertaken to address this need for a focus on constructions of men and masculinity in the past. While this study is concerned with twentieth-century Ireland, it utilizes a similar theoretical approach to gender configurations in the past as used here. Damien Carberry, 'The social and cultural politics of heroic masculinity in Twentieth-century Ireland: imaging Michael Collins' (Phd thesis, NUIM, January, 2007), p. 1. For discussions concerning archaeology and masculinity see in particular Bernard Knapp, 'Boys will be boys, masculinist approaches to a gendered archaeology' in Kelly Hays-Gilpin and David Whitley (eds), *Reader in gender archaeology* (London, 1998), pp 365-73; also idem, 'Whose come a long way baby? Masculinist approaches to a gendered archaeology' in *Archaeological Dialogues*, v, no. 2 (1998), pp 91-106.

[2] Anne Stalsberg, 'Visible women made invisible: interpreting Varangian women in Old Russia' in Bettina Arnold and N. L. Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2001), p. 65 (Stalsberg, 'Visible women made invisible').

[3] Joanna Sofaer Derevenski, 'Editorial' in *ARC*, xiii, no. 2 (1996), p. 15.

and socialization, play, burial treatment, and domestic and commercial labour contributions and production.

The combination of a catalogue of artefacts relating to women and children in Ireland, as well as an engendered methodological approach is useful in investigating which gender roles were open to whom, or indeed if gender was a major organising principle in the society in question. This may also facilitate answers to such questions as whether class or age played a role. The avoidance of a polarized dichotomy of male and female roles instead articulates variation in gender roles, rather than attempting to explain gender in the past with reference to universals of biology or experience. An archaeologically based study of childhoods in the early medieval and Viking Age periods in Ireland would similarly add to understanding age and gender arrangements within these societies, as well as revealing methods of interaction and communication between natives and newcomers. 'The ability to make inferences about the roles and behaviours of children in the past may also lead to enriched interpretations of entire societies. Children are both literally and figuratively the future of every community, since its perpetuation rests on the successful training and adaptation of each new generation'.[4] Understanding how these societies functioned on a daily basis would redress a significant gap in the historical and archaeological record and add to the growing body of gender and age research in Irish history in general.

Because no such study or database exists for the Early Historic or Medieval Irish contexts, and in order to facilitate an examination of the existing material from an engendered and age-aware theoretical perspective, an archaeological database of material that can be associated with both women and children was compiled. This material has largely been drawn from archive collections including those at the National Museum of Dublin; the Hunt Museum in Limerick, the Monaghan Museum, British Museum, Ulster Museum, the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, the Database of Summary Excavations Reports, as well as a number of other archives and databases.

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[4] Jane Eva Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood, children, gender and material culture* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2005), p. 10 (Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*).

Contextual material is likewise drawn from a number of archives and databases in the UK including the National Museum of Scotland, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, ArchSearch, York Archaeological Trust, Shetland's Museum, and the British Museum. Scandinavian material from various archives and databases includes archaeological material held in the archives of the Historiska Museet in Stockholm, the Bergen Museum main inventory catalogue, the Bergen Museum topographical archives, and the Tromsø Museum main inventory catalogue. Where pertinent, evidence from either literary or non-Irish archaeological sources is also examined.

There are a number of methodological problems involved in researching groups of people who have been marginalized within the historical and archaeological record. The use of a number of different sources is necessary as women and children's voices are not generally reflected in the historical documents of this period.

In her research on Scandinavian women in Viking Age Russia, Anne Stalsberg argued that when undertaking research on women in the past, it is important to consider both the literary and archaeological sources:

> the noticeable presence of women among the Varangians and the number of women with weighing equipment further stress the difference between the evidence of the archaeological material and the written sources of this period. It is well known that chroniclers, like journalists, wrote down what they deemed important and what served either their purposes or those of their masters. Arabic sources mention women among the Varangians, but neither Norse, Russian, nor Latin sources mention them since these sources were political rather than ethnographic. It is a good example of how written and archaeological sources supplement each other, as is natural, since they are left by the same society.[5]

Such a study as this must consider the sources carefully. While the historical sources correlate in places with the archaeological record, they are not a comprehensive reflection of the actions of women and children in the past. These sources are instead reflective of the interests of a male political and ecclesiastical elite. While it is possible to understand the 'invisibility' of women in these early political sources, 'it is less understandable how women who are so visible in the archaeological record have been overlooked to a surprisingly large extent in both archaeological and historical

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[5] Stalsberg, 'Visible women made invisible', p. 77.

reconstructions over [recent] years'.[6] Archaeology, used in conjunction with the literary, ethnographic and historical evidence has the potential to reveal the active and visible nature of the lives of women and children in early Ireland. An engendered examination of domestic, occupational and personal remains inevitably leads to a better understanding of lifestyle patterns and diversity, as well as facilitating a rethinking of androcentric assumptions regarding the roles of both women and children. By removing them from their current position in the Irish archaeological record as 'markers' or 'indicators of settlement', and placing them within the larger context of the family dynamic and the society as a *whole*: a much more comprehensive understanding of the complexity and diversity of gender and age during this period is provided.

Gender and age studies facilitate new perceptions in analyses of the past, which in turn expand understandings of specific times and the cultures and peoples involved. More specifically, the highlighting of those who are traditionally archaeologically invisible initiates a questioning of androcentric assumptions, and provides a 'new lens'[7] in which to view the period in question. This new perspective casts the archaeological record in a new light, critically developing a more substantial and inclusive perception of the past. In addition, looking at gender and age archaeologically can initiate new frameworks to make other non-elite, disenfranchised, or less-powerful groups in past societies more visible as well.[8] 'Both pre-historic and historic archaeology has a major obligation and opportunity to make the pasts of these groups more visible'.[9]

The following eight chapters address a number of fundamental questions. Is it possible to identify gender and age in the archaeological record? If so, what theoretical frameworks are in place allowing for this? Is there particular archaeological material that can be associated specifically with women and children – and how do we know? Perhaps most significantly, how does the application of theory to such material remains allow for the identification of processes of gender and age in particular societies? Are gender and age distinct social processes that may be separated from other categories – such as status, ethnicity, or wealth? How does this add to our understanding of the

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[6] Stalsberg, 'Visible women made invisible', p. 77.
[7] Sandra Bem, *Lenses of gender, transforming the debate on sexual inequality* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1993), p. 2 (Bem, *Lenses of gender*).
[8] Elizabeth Scott, 'Through the lens of gender' in Elizabeth Scott (ed.), *Those of little note, gender, race, and class in historical archaeology* (London, 1994), p. 5 (Scott, 'Through the lens of gender').
[9] Ibid., p. 5.

society? Do the interpretations differ from other households or communities in the region? How do these processes change over time, space and place? Such questions are vital for developing a more complex understanding of society in the past. The development of frameworks in which to answer such questions is key because traditional interpretations of both women and children during this period have resulted in their 'invisibility' within the historical and archaeological record.

Chapter one discusses the methodological and theoretical approaches utilized in researching women in the past. It comprises a discussion of the theoretical basis for this study, rather than an analysis of the material remains. It provides a short history and explanation of key developments in theoretical archaeology and gender studies, as well as tracing the development of gender and age theory, and emphasizing the need for the application of such theories to the extant Irish archaeological record. It also discusses the historical and archaeological literature relating to the study of women in the past. Chapter two examines the sources for the study of women in the Early Medieval period in Ireland and Europe, and presents a review of the mortuary material for Ireland. Evidence for the earliest Viking activity is discussed, including the establishment of urban centres, as well as evidence from rural contexts. The burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge are examined, alongside a discussion of furnished single female burials. Where relevant, archaeological material from the British Isles and Scandinavia is extrapolated and examined against the Irish material. This includes material held in museums and collections in Wales, Scotland, England, the Isle of Man; and Scandinavian collections in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark – (Bergen, Oslo, Haithabu [Hedeby], Birka, Gotland etc). Chapter three discusses material related to the lives of Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian women. Where relevant, historical sources are compared and contrasted with the archaeological evidence. These include law texts, the mythological tales, saint's lives and other written texts. This chapter also comprises an examination of the later part of the second Scandinavian settlement at Dublin, particularly the excavations at Wood Quay, Fishamble Street, Temple Bar West and Winetavern Street; as well as the settlements at Waterford, Limerick, and other particular Scandinavian sites. Particular crannog, cave, and ringfort sites are also examined. Chapter four discusses the literary and archaeological sources for both indigenous and Scandinavian personal appearance and dress. Hiberno-Scandinavian material is also investigated in order to illustrate differences according to

ethnic or regional categories, as well as to identify if and how these differences interacted with and influenced each other. Chapter five explores the methodological and theoretical approaches utilized in a study of children and childhood in the past. This section comprises a discussion of the theoretical basis for studying children and childhood in the past. It provides an explanation of key developments within childhood and age studies and their impact on archaeological research in Ireland. It emphasises the role gender and age-oriented archaeology plays in bringing a more inclusive past to light, as well as highlighting the need for a wider use of interdisciplinary methodology and theory in the study of the Irish material record. Specific examples are provided as to how the utilization of a gender and age theoretical approach to individual material remains can reveal invaluable, and hitherto 'invisible' insights into the workings of particular societies and individuals in the past. Chapter six undertakes to discuss the literary and archaeological material for the earliest years of childhood. Age constructs, birth and infancy, infanticide and mortuary remains are explored. Chapter seven discusses evidence for the daily lives of children. It utilizes both literary and archaeological sources in order to discuss evidence for weaning, fosterage, education, apprenticeship, and training. Finally, chapter eight explores the corpus of archaeological material that may be associated with children. Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian material is discussed, including evidence for toys, weapons, and objects which might be considered to be related to enculturation and socialization.

Sources

Both Scandinavian and Native Irish literary and archaeological sources are utilized in order to provide a comprehensive survey of age and gender in the past. The historical corpus of writing which exists from Early Medieval and Medieval Ireland includes material from law texts and glosses, hagiography and translations of religious works, heroic and romantic tales, annals, histories, genealogies, topographies, as well as poetry, treatises on philosophy, medicine and science, Irish renderings of classical and medieval literature and folklore and songs.[10] Irish written history begins in the fifth

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[10] Fergal McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1979), p. 58 (McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*).

century, although it is much more reliable and extensive from the eighth century onwards.[11]

Historical sources for the Native Irish context
Law texts

The corpus of Native Irish law provides an extensive amount of information for society in Early Medieval Ireland. While most of the manuscripts containing the law texts date from between the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, linguistic evidence indicates that many of these texts were originally written down in the seventh and eighth centuries.[12] The legal tracts were considerably influenced by Roman and Canon law, as well as Early Medieval legal thinking.[13] 'The law-texts, in Latin and in the vernacular, are the work of a single class of learned men who were as well versed in scripture as in the legal lore of their ancestors and founded their laws on a conscious and sophisticated compromise between the two'.[14] Because of the long gap between the date of the composition of the laws and the date of the earliest surviving manuscripts, the texts contain a large amount of commentary, including scribal misreadings, duplications and omissions as well as modernisation of the spelling – with varying degrees of accuracy.[15] Bearing this in mind, the scribal additions are particularly helpful where the manuscripts are incomplete or missing. Some of the glossing and commentary on the laws date to the ninth century, but the majority were written down between the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries.[16] However, the commentary also presents some inherent difficulties. For example, the law text on fosterage, *Cáin Íarraith* survives only in thirty short quotations interspersed with long passages of scribal commentary. Thus, our understanding of the institution of fosterage is perhaps less secure than other topics for which complete texts

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[11] For a review of the Irish literary and historical sources see in particular Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: an introduction to the sources* (London, 1972) (Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: an introduction to the sources*).
[12] Fergus Kelly, *A guide to Early Irish law* (Dublin, 1988), p. 225 (Kelly, *Early Irish law*). For a survey of the law texts see Kelly, *Early Irish law*, pp 225-32; Liam Breatnach, 'Secular law and Canon law' in *Peritia*, iii (1984), pp 39-59; K. R. McCone, *Pagan past and Christian present in Early Irish literature* (Maynooth, 1990).
[13] Raimund Karl, 'Master and apprentice, knight and squire, education in the 'Celtic' Iron Age' in *OJA*, xxiv, no. 3 (2005), p. 256 (Karl, 'Master and apprentice).
[14] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and Aidan Breen, 'The laws of the Irish' in *Peritia*, iii (1984), p. 412.
[15] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 225.
[16] Ibid., p. 226.

survive.[17] An additional obstacle is that there are no completely reliable translations of the Irish law texts to date. This is largely down to linguistic difficulties, the huge volume of the vernacular legal material, as well as problems with textual translation and interpretation. The inherent difficulties in translation may be attributed to a number of factors. The texts were originally written down in Old Irish, a dialect which had become archaic centuries before and was entirely unintelligible to the modern Irish speaker.[18] This problem was further compounded by 'the deliberately obscure and extremely technical language'[19] of the texts, as well as the fact that the Irish literati may have had a language of their own, called the *Berla na Feini*, or *Berla na Filid* [20] ('tongue of the *Filid*'). This 'law' language or *Berla Feini*, was already archaic by the fifth century, and illustrates just how old the Brehon system was even at that time.[21]

The legal texts discussed here include the sixth-century *Crith Gabhlach* which provides a detailed description of the social ranks and organisations within Irish society. *Cáin Lánamna*, or the 'law of the couple' is another important source concerning marriage, divorce and the division of goods upon separation.[22] Other law tracts allow for glimpses into the world of children. For example, two law texts deal mainly with children, the fragmentary *Cáin Íarraith* (on fosterage) and *Maccslecta* (on inheritance). Other material which provides insights into the legal rights of children include references in texts such as *Gúbretha Caratnaid*, *Uraicecht Becc*, and *Bretha Crólige*.[23] *Bretha Étgid* is also relevant to the study of children.[24]

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[17] This is because the commentary – while based on the original texts – may reflect concerns of the time they were written rather than to the time of the original texts. Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 231.

[18] Vincent Salafia, 'Law, literature and legend, the definitional problem with Brehon Law' available at Brehon Law Project (http://ua_tuathal.tripod.com/law.html) (2 February, 2008).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Early medieval law, c. 700-1200' in Angela Bourke, et al (eds.), *The Field Day anthology of Irish writing* (Cork, 2002), pp 6-44; 22-26, available at Law of the Couple (*Cáin Lánamna*) CELT (http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T102030/index.html) (2 January, 2006).

[23] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, pp 82-3. These texts are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

[24] A. B., Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland' (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2002), p. 300 (Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland').

<u>The annals</u>

All of the extant manuscripts of the Irish annals are of a late date.[25] The earliest is the *Annals of Inisfallan*, which are contemporary from the end of the eleventh-century to 1321.[26] The *Annals of Ulster* are contained within manuscript copies which date to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the *Annals of Tigernach* within manuscripts dating to the twelfth century – however both of these collections were copied from an earlier text, related to the *Annals of Ulster*.[27] 'The annals up to the end of the tenth century do offer a valuable supplement to the wider range of sources of an earlier date, at least as regards those aspects of the subject which they illuminate'.[28]

Kathleen Hughes has argued that the Irish annals reflect contemporary events from c. 590 AD, and the later annals suggest that there was a set of annals upon which all the extant recensions drew.[29] However, other scholars have argued that they are not reliable until the seventh-century. 'It is not until the seventh century that a serviceable body of indisputably contemporary source material illustrative in any detail of the Irish ecclesiastical system becomes available'.[30]

<u>Hagiography</u>

Hagiography – or the lives of the saints – also provides an important source for the study of Early Irish society.[31] Hagiography emerged as a genre during the seventh century. 'Hagiography has a notoriously difficult relationship with history. Despite hagiographers' protestations to the contrary, the goal was not to record an objective biography of the saint, but to present an idealised form, a human being so transformed by God's grace that he or she could accomplish unheard-of feats, including bending the

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[25] A number of the Irish annals have been translated and are available online at CELT, available at (http://celt.ucc.ie/transpage.html) (2 January, 2006). The available translations include: *The Annals of Ulster*; *The Annals of Inisfallen*; *The Annals of the Four Masters*; *The Annals of Loch Cé*; *The Annals of Connacht*; *Miscellaneous Irish Annals*; *Chronicon Scotorum*; and the *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland*. The *Annals of Tigernach* are in the process of being transcribed into electronic translated format.

[26] Kathleen Hughes, 'The church in Irish society, 400-800' in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland vol. 1, prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), p. 307 (Hughes, 'The church in Irish society').

[27] Ibid., p. 307.

[28] Colmán Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland, AD 650-1000* (Maynooth, 1999), p. 7 (Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland*).

[29] Ibid., p. 307.

[30] Ibid., p. 6.

[31] For a comprehensive survey of the Irish hagiographical material see Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives, an introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1991) (Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*); Kathleen Hughes, *The church in early Irish society* (London, 1966); eadem, *Early Christian Ireland, introduction to the sources* (Ithaca, 1972).

divine to their will'.[32] These writings were composed in order to suit local circumstances and intended to prove the subject's sanctity by evidence of miracles worked. Their main purpose was to enhance the reputation and legend of a founding saint in order to attract the highest numbers of pilgrims and thus wealth.[33]

Scholars have noted that other obstacles in utilizing the saints lives as source material include the fact that the extant material dates to a much later period than the material purports to describe.[34] In addition, these have gone through various degrees of revision (glosses) 'making it extremely difficult to ascertain the extent to which the contents pertain to the lifetime of the saint, the hagiographer and/or later redactors'.[35] However, while hagiography purports to undertake a description of the seventh and earlier centuries, the majority of the tales reflect the society of the eighth and ninth centuries.[36] Its value to this research lies in the fact that they are relevant sources for information for daily life and social and economic conditions.

The earliest surviving hagiographical composition is Cogitosus's Life of St. Brigid (*Leabhar Breac*) which dates to the seventh century.[37] Adomnán's seventh century *Vita S. Columbae* (Life of St Columba) also provides relevant information for the aspects of the everyday life of early Irish religious communities during the late seventh century.[38] Other seventh century Lives include *Bethu Phátraic*,[39] the Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore,[40] and the Life of St. Fintan/Munnu of Tech Munnu (Taghmon, Co.

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[32] Maeve Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars: women and education in medieval Ireland' in *Gender and History,* xv, no. 1 (2003), p. 33 (Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars').
[33] Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland* (London, 1995), p. 210 (Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*).
[34] For a comprehensive survey of Irish hagiography see Dorothy Bray, 'The state of Irish hagiography' in *HAJEMNE*, ix (October, 2006), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/9/forum.html)#a3) (12 June, 2007).
[35] Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 33.
[36] However, Etchingham has suggested that '…nonwithstanding a healthy scepticism which has generally prevailed for three decades, it is not inconceivable that it may prove possible to discover in seventh-century hagiography material which genuinely reflects earlier developments'. Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland*, p. 6.
[37] Kim McCone, 'Brigid in the seventh century, a saint with three lives?' in *Peritia*, i (1982), pp 107-45.
[38] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, pp 208-9.
[39] Whitley Stokes, *Betha Patraic, on the Life of Saint Patrick, three Middle-Irish homilies* (1ˢᵗ ed., Calcutta, 1877), available at: CELT (http,//www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201009/index.html) (2 July, 2006) (Stokes, *Betha Patraic*).
[40] Rev., Patrick Power, (ed. and trans.), *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore with an introduction, translation and notes* (London, 1914), available at: CELT (http,//www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201020/index.html) (2 July, 2006) (Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore*).

Wexford).[41] The Life of St. Declan of Ardmore (*Betha Decclain*)[42] dates to the eighth-or ninth century and Bethu *Brigte* dates to the ninth century.[43] The Life of St. Brendan (*Nauigatio S. Brendani*) (late eighth century),[44] the Life of St. Íte (twelfth-century),[45] and the Life St. Darerca (Mo-Ninna) by Conchubranus (late eleventh century),[46] are all used here as source material. Other Saints Lives mentioned include St. Samthann;[47] St. Colmán Ela;[48] the Life of St. Berach (c. 1000-1200);[49] and the Life of St. Féchín of Fore (*Betha Féchín Fabair*) created by Nicol Óg, son of the abbot of Cong, Co. Mayo, in 1329.[50] The Lives of St. Attracta and St. Lasair survive only in seventeenth-century manuscripts, but are likely to have been based on medieval sources.[51]

Religious writings

The writings of St. Patrick also provide some information for both Native Irish women and children during the earliest years of transition from paganism to Christianity. The *Confessio* and the *Epistle* date to the fifth century, with the oldest surviving manuscript copy dating to the first decade of the ninth century.[52] These writings therefore are illustrative of a first-generation missionary church.[53] Patrick's *Confessio* specifically suggests that women and the young were the initial principal targets of the Christian message as he refers to the 'sons of the Irish and daughters of chieftains'.[54] He also describes pagan noble daughters converting to Christianity and taking the veil.[55]

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[41] W. W. Heist, (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Brussels, 1965), pp 198-209; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, pp 334-7.

[42] Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore*.

[43] Donnchadh Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte* (Dublin, 1978), available at CELT, (http.//www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201002/index.html) (12 May, 2006). Also see Richard Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigitae: the oldest texts' in *Peritia*, i (1982), pp 81–106; Kim McCone, 'Brigid in the seventh century: a saint with three lives' in *Peritia*, i (1982), pp 107–45; Mario Esposito, 'Cogitosus' in *Hermathena*, xx (1926-30), pp 251-7; Mario Esposito, 'On the earliest Latin life of St Brigid of Kildare' in *PRIA*, xxx C (1912), pp 307-27.

[44] Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol i (2 vols, Oxford, 1910), pp 98-151 (Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum*); Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 391.

[45] Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum*, vol ii, pp 116-30; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 394.

[46] Mario Esposito, 'Conchubrani Vita Sanctae Monennae' in *PRIA*, xxviii (1910), pp 202-38.

[47] Dorothy Africa, 'Life of the holy virgin Samthann' in Thomas Head (ed.), *Medieval hagiography, an anthology* (New York, 1999), pp 97-110; Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum*, vol. ii, pp 253-61.

[48] Charles Plummer, (ed.) *Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. 2 (2 vols., Oxford, 1922), pp 168-9 (Plummer, *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*).

[49] Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (2 vols., Oxford, 1910),

[50] Whitley Stokes, 'Life of St. Féchín of Fore' in *Revue Celtique*, xii (1891), pp 321-53 (Stokes, 'Life of St. Féchín of Fore').

[51] Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 33.

[52] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 24.

[53] Hughes, 'The church in Irish society', p. 308.

[54] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland*, p. 29.

[55] Ibid., p. 29.

Cáin Adomnáin (Law of Adomnáin) is also a source used here, with the origins of the law lying in historical events of the late seventh-century.[56]

The Penitentials

The early penitentials are also a source that may be used to discern women's experiences – in particular those of religious women. Some of the penitential literature dates back to the sixth century,[57] and therefore offer important sources for the early church. The Irish Penitential tradition was initiated at least from the early sixth-century, and continued to the late eighth century.[58]

Irish mythological sagas

The Irish mythological sagas comprise four branches of Irish literature written in Old and Middle Irish. Most of the corpus of material is written in prose interspersed with occasional verse preserved in manuscripts dating to between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. However, linguistic evidence proves that they can – in some cases – be dated as far back as the eighth century, with possible evidence for the seventh century.[59] The four branches are known as the Mythological Cycle, the Ulster Cycle, the Fenian Cycle and the Historical Cycle. The three main manuscript sources for these cycles are the late eleventh/early twelfth century manuscript *Lebor na hUidre*, the early twelfth century *Book of Leinster*, and the twelfth-century manuscript known as Rawlinson B 502, or the *Book of Glendalough*. Other important sources include the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century manuscripts *The Yellow Book of Lecan, The Great Book of Lecan, The Book of Uí Máine,* and the *Book of Ballymote.*[60]

The 'King Cycle' is a collection of works that date for the most part from between c. 700 and c. 1200. They appear to have been written in order to legitimise the historical context for the genealogies of the current ruling dynasties.

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[56] Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The *Lex Innocentium*: Adomnán's law for women, clerics and youths, 697 AD' in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert, (eds), *Chattel, servant, or citizen* (Belfast, 1995), pp 58-69 (Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The *Lex Innocentium*').

[57] Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland*, p. 6.

[58] Ludwig Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin, 1975) (Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*).

[59] Garret Olmsted, 'The earliest narrative version of the *Táin*, seventh-century poetic references to *Táin bó Cúailnge*' in *Emania*, x (1992), pp 5-17 (Olmsted, 'The earliest narrative version of the *Táin*').

[60] Myles Dillon, *Early Irish Literature* (Dublin, 1994); also Jeffrey Gantz, *Early Irish myths and sagas* (London, 1981).

An Banshenchas, or 'The Lore of Women' was composed by Gilla Mo-Dutu Ó Caiside in 1147 AD. It comprises 900 lines of metrical verse listing of married women in Irish history and literature.[61] *An Banshenchas* is found in the *Book of Leinster* or *Lebhar Laighneach* (c. 1150),[62] *Leabhar Uí Máine* (1396) and the *Great Book of Lecan* or *Leabhar Mór Leacain* (1418).[63] It is an interesting text in that it was written by a man specifically to glorify important women in early Ireland. While the text is mythical in nature, it is formed in a historical, christianised context – thus it begins with Adam and Eve. Interestingly for this research, the poem also mentions a number of Viking women.

Historical sources for Scandinavia

Evidence for the 'Viking Age' includes Irish and Anglo-Saxon documentary sources, as well as some Merovingian, Greek and Russian annals and chronicles. The prose narratives provide invaluable evidence for the society and culture of the Viking Age and the medieval Scandinavian colonial lands. However, although they purport to describe an earlier time, most of these sagas were written down in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and must therefore be treated with caution. The laws also provide details relevant for the current study. Iceland's earliest compilation of legal material (*Grágás*) 'provides some apparently easy-to-interpret evidence for age-related status for young people'.[64] Runic inscriptions, mainly from the island of Gotland and the Swedish mainland date to the eleventh century and provide information on some of the individuals travelling both east and west, as well as for women. Place name evidence has also been used to identify areas in which the Scandinavian peoples settled, particularly in Britain. Another reliable source comes from Viking poetry, which survived in the oral tradition and was written down in later medieval Iceland.

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[61] Margaret Dobbs (ed.), 'The *ban-shenchus*' in *Revue Celtique*, xlvii (1930), pp 282-339; idem, 'The ban-shenchus' in *Revue Celtique*, xlviii (1931), pp 163-234; idem, 'The *ban-shenchus*' in *Revue Celtique*, xlix (1932), pp 437-89. Also see Muireann ní Bhrolcháin, 'The manuscript tradition of the *Banshenchas*' in *Ériu*, xxxiii (1982), pp 109-35 and Anne Connon, 'The *Banshenchas* and the Uí Néill queens of Tara' in *Seanachas* (Dublin, 2000), pp 98-108.

[62] R. I. Best, Osborn Bergin and M. A. O'Brien (eds), *The Book of Leinster, formerly 'Lebar Na Núachongbála'*, volume 1 (5 vols., Dublin, 1954).

[63] These are the dates that the material was transcribed, however, as discussed elsewhere, the origin of these tales are much earlier.

[64] Chris Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society' in Sally Crawford and Gillian Shepard (eds), *Children, childhood and society*, BAR International Series 1696 (Oxford, 2007), p. 49 (Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society').

<u>Prose narratives</u>

These comprise three main bodies of literature, the sagas of the Icelanders (*Íslendingasǫgur*), the kings' sagas (*konungasǫgur*), and the contemporary sagas (*samtíðarsǫgur*). The date of the historical sagas has been the subject of much academic discussion. 'At different times, scholars have oscillated between faith and doubt and back to faith again over the issue of historicity concerning the evidence'.[65] However, the general scholarly consensus is that while some spurious details may have been added in order to 'increase the illusion of historical veracity', these details must have been consistent with contemporary historical traditions.[66]

The *Íslendingasǫgur*, also known as the 'family sagas', provide vital information for an examination of the daily lives of women and children. 'Unparalleled in European literature until the nineteenth century, the narratives brim with minute details of everyday life and purport to reveal the inner working of this northern society with an intimacy unmatched in other medieval sources'.[67] There are fifty or so narratives and short stories contained within the sagas. Narratives that are used as sources in this research include *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Laxdœla saga*, and *Njáls saga*. These sagas are important as they describe the origin of the Icelandic immigrants in Norway, their travels abroad during the ninth century until their settlement in Iceland.[68] Unlike the Icelandic sagas, the king's sagas or *konungasǫgur*, are primarily concerned with the subject of Norwegian kings. They first appear in the twelfth century and may be used – with care – as evidence for the epochs they describe.[69] In particular, they provide useful sources for evidence for marriage and succession amongst the elite, as well as evidence for Iceland's transition into Christianity.[70]

The *samtíðarsǫgu*, or contemporary sagas, largely comprise accounts belonging to the lay aristocracy such as *Sturlunga saga*, as well as the biographical *vitae* of churchmen. Little doubt has been voiced about the historical veracity of this material.[71] They have a

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[65] Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society* (New York, 1995), p. 171 (Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*).
[66] Thor Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 14 (Ewing, *Viking clothing*).
[67] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 171.
[68] Ibid., p. 171.
[69] Ibid., p. 174.
[70] Ibid., p. 175.
[71] Ibid., p. 175.

political focus, and (other than *Sturlunga saga*) they do not provide as much information concerning women or children.

Historical writings

The writings of Ibn Fadlan also provide important information for aspects of Viking culture. This foreign commentary is an eyewitness account of Scandinavian customs in Viking *Rus* – the Scandinavian merchants who were trading between the Black Sea and the Baltic. It must be remembered, however, that the habits of the *Rus* may not be reflective of Scandinavians as a whole.

Laws

Medieval Iceland was governed sequentially by three different types of laws: *Grágás*, *Járnsíða*, and *Jónsbók*. No extant Norwegian laws are known from the tenth century. However, these laws were originally transmitted orally, starting with the (probable) first law-speaker in 920 AD. The most important task of the law-speaker was to recite the entire legal corpus during tri-annual meetings of the *alþingi*. Thus, knowledge of the laws was kept alive through oral performance for almost two hundred years when they were ordered to be written down by the *alþingi* in 1117.[72] Such sources are helpful in particular in relation to issues such as marriage, infanticide and the establishment of paternity.

Terms: Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian

In any discussion of the Vikings or the Viking Age, it is important to clarify exactly what these terms mean. Historically the term 'Viking' was understood to mean a seasonal sea-faring male pirate from Scandinavia who engaged in raiding and trading. The term also implies the occupation of part-time farmer. In modern interpretation however, the word 'Viking' means nothing more precise than 'person of Nordic aspect and speech living in Scandinavia and the Norse colonies in the Early Middle Ages'.[73]

The term 'Viking' as it appears in the Irish historical sources has the rather narrow meaning of relating to the activities of Scandinavian seafaring pirates in the Irish Sea region beginning with the first recorded attack on Rathlin Island in 795. The Viking

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[72] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 176.
[73] Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Oxford, 2002), p. 1 (Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*).

Age in Ireland is considered to have begun with a series of isolated raids from 795 to 837. The arrival of large fleets at the mouth of the rivers Boyne and Liffey initiated a second period of intense raiding as well as the establishment of semi-permanent settlements during the period 837 and 876. The historical sources are relatively quiet concerning Viking raiding activities in the Irish Sea region between the period 876 and 916, but the years 916 to 937 brought increased raiding as the Vikings returned after being expelled in 902. Charles Doherty has argued that the close of the Viking age *per se* began between 980 and 1014 when Dublin developed into a large urban port of trade.[74] In Icelandic written sources, the word connotes a particular profession, and is not necessarily tied to a particular Scandinavian country or ethnicity. It has, however, (at least in Western Europe) become a rather all enveloping word used as a general description of all the people who came out of Scandinavia to plunder, raid, trade and settle lands occupied and unoccupied in Northern Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries. The Nordic countries on the other hand, usually differentiate between the relatively small group of professional 'pirates' and the large groups of settlers and traders. The term 'Viking' has taken on a similar meaning as the term 'Varangian' (also indicative of a profession) did for those German, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian population groups who moved south through the Baltic region, raiding, trading and settling into Russia and its environs. This 'Viking Age' has various chronologies dependent on the geographic region in question, including 793/800 until 1050/1066/1100 AD. Initially characterized by raiding into areas of the British Isles, the Baltic region and along the coast of Northern Europe, these raids soon developed into military campaigns resulting in the establishment of small longphorts or settlement sites. By 841, the Vikings were overwintering at Dublin, and had shifted their activities somewhat towards settlement and trade. By the mid-ninth century towns and settlements such as Dublin, York, and Staraja Ladoga in Russia were established, followed by Limerick, Waterford, as well as a number of smaller areas in the tenth-century. By this stage, the Scandinavian urban characteristics had adapted to a rather hybridized mix of native and Scandinavian cultures. This mix is usually referred to as Hiberno-Scandinavian, or Hiberno-Norse in Ireland, and Anglo-Scandinavian in England. Yet, Viking activities (in the meaning of the professional occupation) continued throughout this period alongside the period of urban development and trade.

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[74] Charles Doherty, 'The Vikings in Ireland, a review' in Howard Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 295.

This period also saw the development of towns within Scandinavia itself, the largest being Ribe in Denmark, Haithabu (Hedeby) in present day Germany, Birka in Sweden and Kaupang in Norway. Excavations in these towns have revealed artefacts and goods that testify to the wide-ranging trading contacts of the Scandinavians in this period. A very important type of evidence for trade is the North European and Arabic coins which have been found in the thousands in Scandinavia, not least in Gotland.

The late ninth century also saw the movement towards the colonization of previously unsettled lands in the North Atlantic region including the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland. In Scotland, they settled Shetland, the Orkneys, Caithness and the Hebrides as well as the Isle of Man.

Our best evidence for the activities of Scandinavians in the Viking Age comes from archaeology. Both rural and urban evidence, along with evidence for pagan burials of men, women, and children provides the largest amount of material for accessing Scandinavian movements. For Ireland and the British and Scottish Isles, recent archaeological excavations within the last fifty years has provided a wealth of new information, which, when used in conjunction with the historical and documentary evidence, can be compared and contrasted with Irish material evidence in order to examine the differences in culture and material interaction through space and time.

The nature of the Irish literary sources (which are clerical, elite-political and male dominated), means that in order to examine the role of women and children in Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian society, as well as developing a more comprehensive picture of Scandinavian activity within Ireland, one must turn to the archaeological evidence.

Identification of female remains is one method generally used by archaeologists and historians to determine settlement areas. However, rarely if at all have such findings formed the basis of a detailed study of female remains in their own right. While historical perceptions and interpretations of Viking activity may have changed with the scholarship of the last fifty years, this has not yielded a reinterpretation of the corpus of artefacts relating to the position of women and children in Hiberno-Scandinavian society. Similarly, the position of women and children in Native Irish society has not been examined from a perspective utilizing both literary and archaeological sources. This research hopes to address these lacunae by surveying the available evidence for women and children in Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian society.

Chapter One

Methodological and theoretical approaches to researching women and gender in the past

This chapter outlines the major theoretical developments within gender studies within the last forty years in order to contextualize the archaeological material detailed in the following three chapters. The importance of gender theory as a methodological approach in researching the lives of women in early medieval and medieval Ireland is explored by tracing the major developments within the discipline in order to place the theoretical concepts in context.

An overview of the history of archaeology and archaeological theory is provided,[1] followed by an explanation of the key developments in gender theory: from its origins in the feminist movements of the 1960s through the period of 're-claiming' women in the seventies and eighties, and finally into the more modern frameworks for conceptualizing gender in the past. The impact of gender studies on the Social Sciences in general, as well as its impact within the Irish research agenda is also discussed. Following this is a review of the literature on women during the Early Historic and Medieval period, both for Europe and for Ireland as well as the current state of historical and archaeological research on women. Finally, the importance of gender theory in relation to the Viking Age is discussed in order to highlight the need for a re-examination of our interpretations of this period in history, and in particular how this relates to the Irish context.

History of archaeology

By the 1880s many of the scientific ideas underlying modern archaeology had already been developed. Key concepts such as the antiquity of mankind, Darwin's principle of evolution, C. J. Thompsen's 'three-age-system', the development of artefact typology, Gordon Childe's assemblage theory, as well as the creation of the field of ethnography

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[1] For comprehensive discussions on the history and development of archaeological theory and practice see Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology, theories methods and practice* (2nd ed., New York, 1997); Ian Hodder, *Archaeological theory today* (Oxford, 2001); Bruce Trigger, *A history of archaeological thought* (Cambridge, 2006) (Trigger, *A history of archaeological thought*).

allowed for significant advances in the scientific recovery and analysis of material remains.[2] The late nineteenth and the early twentieth-centuries saw the beginnings of modern field techniques. Some of the most important of these are the advances made by General Pitt-Rivers and William Petrie, as well as Sir Mortimer Wheeler's military precision grid square method. These advances allowed for much more scientific and comprehensive site recording within fieldwork. Gordon Childe in particular was one of the first to 'view archaeological cultures not simply as collections of traits, but also as the means of providing an ethnographic interpretation of how specific groups had lived in prehistoric times'.[3] Childe provided a model for the study of archaeology that was applied throughout Europe into the 1950s. Its primary aim was to seek to identify archaeological cultures and trace their origin, movements and interactions, rather than interpreting the archaeological record as evidence of stages of cultural development.[4]

The period after the second World War saw a number of further developments within archaeology, including the inclusion of ecological approaches and increased field specializations. The impact of the physical and chemical sciences on archaeology – in particular the development of C-14 dating in 1949, revolutionized the archaeological sciences.[5] This period is often referred to as the Classificatory-historical period, and lasted until about 1960. It is typically described as a time when archaeology was primarily concerned with chronology.[6] The 1960s however, were a 'turning point' in the development of more advanced archaeological method and theory. Lewis Binford and his school of New Archaeology, or Processual archaeology, offered a new approach to the problems and criticisms of traditional archaeological interpretation. They argued for explanation and analysis rather than description, and felt that archaeology's role was to explain change in the past, not to simply reconstruct the past and how people had lived. This involved the use of explicit theory, the formulation of hypotheses, testing and quantitative data. This period has been characterised as 'the turning away from historical

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[2] Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology, theories methods and practice* (2nd ed., New York, 1997), pp 27-36 (Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology, theories methods and practice*).
[3] Trigger, *A history of archaeological thought*, p. 172.
[4] Ibid., p. 172.
[5] Ian Hodder, *Archaeological theory today* (Oxford, 2001), p. 36 (Hodder, *Archaeological theory today*).
[6] Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology, theories methods*, pp 34-5.

methods towards scientific ones'.[7] In contrast, the 1980s and 1990s saw the application of postmodernist thought to archaeological method and theory. The development of *postprocessualism* or interpretive archaeology as advocated by Ian Hodder and Michael Shanks rejected the objective, positivist, and 'scientistic' outlook of Processual, 'New Archaeology'. A crucial component of these ideas involved the bringing in of a variety of approaches from other disciplines.[8] From here other schools of thought were developed – which are still loosely considered as being under the umbrella of post-processualism. These include neo-Marxism, post-positivism, and the hermeneutic or 'interpretive' approach. It was at this point that feminist scholarship began to effect change within a number of academic disciplines, in particular within the intellectual environment of interpretive theory. During the 1990s developments within feminist archaeology overlapped with the relatively new growth of the field of gender studies.[9]

The development of gender studies

In order to understand the importance of gender theory within archaeology, it is necessary to ask what exactly is meant by 'gender,' as well as to examine its history and how it has impacted on the social sciences during the last twenty five years.[10]

What is now termed 'gender archaeology' had its inception with a number of developments in the social sciences, in particular cultural anthropology. Much of the framework concerning the search for gender in archaeology that has emerged in the last three decades stemmed largely from the politically influenced feminist movements of the 1960s. The 1970s saw attempts to 'recover' women in an archaeological discourse that largely presumed only males as actors. By the 1980s the conceptual framework for

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[7] Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology, theories methods*, pp 36-7.
[8] Ibid., pp 42-3.
[9] Ibid, p. 42.
[10] For comprehensive discussions of theories of gender within archaeology see Joan Gero and Margaret Conkey (eds), *Engendering archaeology, women and prehistory* (Oxford, 1991); Elizabeth Scott (ed.), *Those of little note, gender, race, and class in historical archaeology* (London, 1994); Sarah Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology, analyzing power and prestige* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1997); Kelly Hays-Gilpen and David Whitley (eds), *Reader in gender archaeology* (London, 1998); Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology, contesting the past* (London, 1999); Tracy Sweely (ed.), *Manifesting power, gender and the interpretation of power in archaeology* (London, 1999); Bettina Arnold and Nancy Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death* (Oxford, 2001); Sarah Milledge-Nelson and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender, worldwide archaeological approaches* (Oxford, 2002).

initiating a substantial dialogue into engendered archaeology was put forward in Conkey and Spector's seminal article[11] in which they argued that there was a need to 'reclaim women's experience as valid, to theorize this experience, and to use this to build a programme of political action'.[12] The feminist academic response of the 1980s and 1990s had the effect of positing frameworks for new methodologies which changed the focus of the questions traditionally asked in archaeology. These theorists challenged the androcentric 'world of important occupations and heroes, positioned firmly in the sphere of formal adult male authority'[13] and argued that this 'world' was 'precisely the world which historians and archaeologists have traditionally created for themselves in the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries'.[14]

Sandra Bem posited three main societal beliefs concerning men and women that have dominated western academic thought. She suggested these were that men and women 'have fundamentally different psychological and sexual natures, that men are inherently the dominant or superior sex, and that both male-female difference and male dominance are natural'.[15] Bem argued that at one time, people saw this way of thinking as being created by God but now it is seen as a natural evolution of humans. These ideas, according to Bem, shape our everyday lives, and feminist theory should have as its goal to:

> render those lenses visible rather than invisible, to enable us to look at the culture's gender lenses rather than through them, for it is only when Americans [sic] apprehend the more subtle and systemic ways in which the culture reproduces male power that they will finally comprehend the unfinished business of the feminists agenda.[16]

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[11] Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector, 'Archaeology and the study of gender' in Michael Schiffer (ed.), *Advances in archaeological method and theory* (New York, 1984), pp 1-38 (Conkey and Spector, 'Archaeology and the study of gender').
[12] Ibid., p. 13.
[13] Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes, writing gender and childhood into European archaeology* (London, 1997), p. 5 (Moore and Scott, *Invisible people and processes*).
[14] Ibid., p. 3.
[15] Sandra Bem, *Lenses of gender: transforming the debate on sexual inequality*, p. 1 (Connecticut, 1993) (Bem, *Lenses of gender*).
[16] Ibid., p. 1.

Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector have provided concise and useful definitions of gender role, identity, and ideology.[17]

> Gender roles describe what people do and what activities and behaviours are deemed appropriate for the gender category; gender identity is an individual's own feeling of whether they are male, female or a third or even fourth gender and gender ideology is the meaning, in given social and cultural contexts, of male, female, sex, and reproduction.[18]

There is a tendency to use the terms 'sex' and 'gender' interchangeably. However, they are not the same thing and the 'differences between these terms are real and can effect our interpretations'.[19] 'Sex' is a term which relates to being biologically male or female, and is normally thought to be fixed and unchanging throughout the life cycle.[20] 'Gender' however, is the 'social correlate of sex class… one learns to behave accordingly, to be masculine or feminine according to the norms of a particular culture'.[21] Biological sex is usually considered to be established at birth while gender is constructed.

> Certain roles, activities or behaviours are assigned to particular people grouped together as a gender. Thus, gender is related to sex, but is not the same thing. Constructed gender varies from one culture to another and must be taught. No one 'has' a gender at birth. Nothing about gender is genetically inherited.[22]

Modern understandings of gender are intrinsically linked with understandings of 'maleness' or 'femaleness' or other such identity constructions. However, it is possible that such labels or constructions never existed, or at least were fluid to those of certain classes in particular past societies, and that gender instead was contingent upon *power*.

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[17] Conkey and Spector, 'Archaeology and the study of gender', pp 1-38.

[18] Elizabeth Scott, 'Through the lens of gender, archaeology, inequality, and those of "little note"' in E. M. Scott, (ed.), *Those of little note, gender, race, and class in historical archaeology* (Tucson, 1994), p. 10 (Scott, 'Through the lens of gender').

[19] Sandra Wallman, 'The epistemologies of sex' in Lionel Tiger and Heather Fowler (eds), *Female heirarchies* (Chicago, 1978), p. 22 (Wallman, 'The epistemologies of sex').

[20] Recent arguments have however disputed this definition. For example Mike Parker Pearson gives the example of hermaphrodites, or people who are born with both biologically male and female sex organs, or indeed, those born without any at all. Mike Parker Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial* (Texas, 2000), p. 71 (Parker Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial*). Indeed, transsexuals also do not fit within this definition.

[21] Wallman, 'The epistemologies of sex', p. 22.

[22] Sarah Milledge-Nelson, *Gender in archaeology: analyzing power and prestige* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1997), p. 15 (Milledge-Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*).

Cheryl Classen has suggested that the existence of gender should not be assumed, that the number of genders is not fixed, and that gender might not be more important than other social variables in a given instance'.[23] Class, status, age and ethnicity are other variables which may or may not intersect with gender.[24]

Gender roles are contingent upon the behaviour and activities of men and women in particular social contexts. They emphasises the norm, or what society expects their behaviour to be most of the time.[25] 'Gender roles emphasize the material side of gendered lives. To understand what women and men normally do in their daily lives is important for archaeological interpretations'.[26] However, this is not to say that other kinds of difference are not important. As Sarah Milledge Nelson has argued, the term 'gender' is not a code word for 'women', and gendered archaeology allows for 'people', both as individuals as well as groups to become more visible. 'Other constructed roles, activities, and behaviours, such as ethnicity, age, and class, may also become visible in the course of researching gender in archaeology'.[27]

> Women's roles differ in different societies, and such variety can and does exist within a single culture. Age, marital status, and children are just some of the factors that lead to different kinds of roles for women within a given society. Not all women, children, or men fill the same roles and do the same things. The more variety and difference identified, the richer the understanding becomes of what are complex and fluctuating societies.[28]

Current gender theory is often represented as a progression through three basic stages. The initial phase comprised critiques of androcentric science, followed by the 'finding' or

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[23] Cheryl Claasen, *Concerns for a gendered prehistory*, paper presented at the 5th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, San José, Costa Rica, February 22-23 (1993), quoted in Milledge-Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*, p. 16.

[24] For example, Dawn Hadley's research into gender and gravegoods in later Anglo-Saxon England determined that gender was less of a factor than familial status in burial rites. Hadley suggests that the only clear indications of gender during the later Anglo-Saxon period appear to be in burials of clerics, people who had been murdered or killed, and who appear to have had a 'compromised' masculinity. Dawn Hadley, 'Engendering the grave in later Anglo-Saxon England' in *Proceedings of the Chacmool Conference 2004* (in press).

[25] Sarah Milledge Nelson and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender, worldwide archaeological approaches* (Oxford, 2002), p. 119 (Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender*).

[26] Ibid., p. 119.

[27] Milledge-Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*, p. 15.

[28] Milledge Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender,* p. 119.

'recovering' of women through remedial research, and finally by 'broader reconceptualizations of existing subject fields which produce integrative theories concerning "sex/gender systems" which document their diversity and interaction with other structuring factors, including (crucially, for archaeology) the material conditions and dimensions of cultural life.[29]

Feminist theorists argued that in archaeology, as well as history and cultural anthropology, men's interests and activities were used to stand for the group as a whole. Furthermore, women's 'tasks' were presented as similar the world over.[30] This biological essentialising was starting point for criticism of male orientated studies of the past. They contended that whereas the term 'woman' was (and still is) frequently used to imply a sense of universality, or cultural sameness, the term 'man' is often used as a defining category of the culture in question – as a category of difference. Put rather simplistically, this translates into woman equals stasis, and man equals change.

> In the 1970s when women's work was acknowledged, it was usually simply stereotyped as baby and childcare and household maintenance along with some 'crafts.' These attitudes are rooted in biological essentialism. The only absolute universal is that women give birth to the babies. However, even that is not true of all women and certainly is not true of any woman all her life. Thus, the fact that women, not men, give birth cannot explain everything about gender differences and cannot explain anything about differences among women.[31]

While it may be helpful to foreground women in order to create new perspectives, essentialist ideas of 'woman' must be put to rest. Women may differ even within a single culture by age, class, marital status, presence or absence of children, and the kinds of work they do. The activities of women in a society as well as men's must be examined;

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[29] Alison Wylie, 'Why is there no archaeology of gender?' in Joan Gero and Margaret Conkey (eds), *Engendering archaeology, women and prehistory* (Oxford, 1991), pp 31-2 (Wylie, 'Why is there no archaeology of gender?').
[30] Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender*, p. 4.
[31] Ibid,, p. 4.

understanding gender relationships between the two is critical towards the development of a truer understanding of a given society. [32]

Within the development of gender studies, research into female roles and positions in the past revealed 'that the formulations of what archaeologists study, from gathering to the origins of agriculture to the formation of the state, needed to be re-theorized. When attention is paid to what women did, pronouncements that had seemed 'obvious' before are exposed as androcentric or essentialist, requiring further exploration of the subject'.[33] While the early feminist literature is now considered to be both basic and flawed, it was a necessary step in the development of gender theory. This 'first wave' feminism theorized women in relation to and as opposed to 'man'. This dichotomous relationship saw women's roles as essentialist rather than self-exploratory. Sarah Milledge-Nelson and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon have argued that 'this was the "me too" era, when goddesses, priestesses, women warriors, queens and huntresses were discovered'.[34] They suggest that the rest of the female population, in their 'usual' roles, were interpreted as the 'heroes of the evolutionary story'.[35] As such, gathering and foraging were the foundations of culture, with mothers at the centre of society. Furthermore, the inherent 'natural' peacefulness of women was what held societies together. In other words, 'digging sticks were just as important as throwing sticks'.[36] While this was important work, and a necessary starting place, such studies invariably continued the essentialist representations that had gone before. Such theories were, however a necessary product of their time.

Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon have thus suggested that three equally essentialist although contradictory themes can be identified in the early feminist literature. The first is that women can do everything men can do, and that men and women are just alike. The second is that women are not only different – they are better. The third is that 'women's activities are as important to study as men's activities and that the relationship between them is critical towards understanding a particular society. It is this last theme that does

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[32] Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender*, p. 1.
[33] Ibid., p. 4.
[34] Ibid., p. 4.
[35] Ibid., p. 4.
[36] Ibid., p. 4.

not essentialize men or women, that has led to a far more sophisticated archaeology'.[37] This last theme – the placing of gender, rather than 'woman' or 'man' has been the departure point for far more inclusive methodologies for identifying gender – and thus people – within the archaeological record.

During the last twenty years or so a number of other disciplines have been influenced, and in many ways transformed, by the development of various analytical frameworks for gender. The transformation of the social and historical sciences because of feminist-inspired critiques and scholarship has proceeded rapidly, and encompasses a multiplicity of approaches and studies which in many regards has completely changed the focus of archaeology. Theorists such as Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott have drawn attention to the need to incorporate such studies into new research. Scott has suggested that an awareness of current interdisciplinary theoretical debates will likely 'change the face of archaeology' and, in particular, historical archaeology over the next twenty years. She suggests that the incorporation of such approaches will inevitably lead to the emergence of research into themes such as rank and race, as well as gender and age groups.[38]

The search for gender roles has gone well beyond the task of finding the women who were overlooked in archaeological interpretations for so long, cast in timeless and unchanging roles and remaining the focus of little interest, because change for them was minimal.[39] 'Finding' the women is a starting point, but merely pointing out *where the women were*, contributes little towards fuller understandings of the complexities and relationships within a particular society. However, as Alison Wylie has argued, the three developmental phases which gender theory has gone through are not mutually exclusive of one another, and the so-called 'remedial' research was very often necessary to undertake in order to expose 'the androcentrism of existing research'. Wylie argued that this research was essential to the development of the self-critical and reflexive third stage, during which questions were raised concerning assumptions within current research frameworks. Furthermore, many of those engaged in gender research today, continue to

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[37] Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender*, p. 5.
[38] Moore and Scott, *Invisible people*, p. 4.
[39] Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*, p. 11.

work in all three areas.[40] Wylie has further argued that a crucial point in the development of sound feminist critiques of history is that the researcher perceives woman as subject, or that she is prepared to bring women *into view* as subject.[41]

> The archaeological 'invisibility' of females is more the result of a false notion of objectivity and of the gender paradigms archaeologists employ than of an inherent invisibility of such data... One can claim that female-related data in the archaeological record are invisible only if one makes some clearly questionable assumptions, such as the existence of an exclusive sexual division of labour.[42]

What researchers need are conceptual frameworks that ask the relevant questions, thus directing attention to gender, and providing the impetus to examine the activities and the experiences of women in the past.[43] This research addresses the issue of bringing both women and gender 'into view' by actively perceiving them as subjects of archaeological inquiry.

As Lena Mortenson has argued, the archaeology of gender encompasses a wide range of perspectives. She argues that, in fact 'multiplicity is perhaps the defining essence of the feminist approach to gender'. [44] Recent approaches towards engendering Scandinavian archaeology has been based on critical feminist perspectives by proposing that by 're-envisioning our models of culture change and state formation through the lens of gender relations, we can learn something fundamentally new about social structure and power relations in past societies'.[45] Examination of gender constructs is key towards understanding the development of societies in the past.[46] Mortensen has argued that such examinations are particularly critical in relation to discussing the Viking period. While women and gender have been the subject of inquiry within Scandinavian and Viking period research, they have rarely been accorded the status of 'agents of change'.[47] Closer

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[40] Wylie, 'Why is there no archaeology of gender?', p. 32.
[41] Ibid., p. 32.
[42] M. W. Conkey and Janet Spector, 'Archaeology and the study of gender' in Kelley Hays-Gilpin and David Whitley (eds), *Reader in gender archaeology* (New York, 1998), pp 15-6.
[43] Wylie, 'Why is there no archaeology of gender?', p. 32.
[44] Lena Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman' in K. A. Pyburn (ed.), *Ungendering Civilization* (New York, 2004), p. 97 (Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman').
[45] Ibid., p. 97.
[46] Ibid., p. 97.
[47] Ibid., p. 97.

examination of the archaeological record, in particular in relation to aspects of trade and production, indicates that this situation is in need of revision.[48]

Women and gender in Irish archaeology

Writing in 1998, Michael Monk and John Sheehan argued that a significant problem within early medieval scholarship was the lack of a general acceptance of the value of theoretical archaeology. They suggested that a more productive research agenda would be provided by the utilization of informed theoretical frameworks which engage with the material record.[49] Similarly, Jerry O'Sullivan suggested that a research agenda that incorporated archaeological excavation and survey material, an informed theoretical perspective, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of the documentary material was the way forward for Irish archaeology.[50]

While gender studies have played a role in some historical examinations of the lives of women in early modern Europe,[51] the study of women in Europe from the prehistoric to the modern era,[52] and some research examining the medieval family,[53] such works largely focus on the historical rather than archaeological material. While research on women which utilizes *both* historical and archaeological sources has been conducted in the UK, Scandinavia and America, similar studies are absent for the early medieval Irish period.

In recent years, students of Irish history have adopted a more social approach towards history, resulting in significant engendered historical studies largely drawn on literary sources. Consequently, this has created more inclusive foci for written history. This has yet to happen within the discipline of Irish archaeology. While some work has been done

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[48] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 97.

[49] Michael Monk and John Sheehan, 'Research, agenda or vacuum?' in *Early Medieval Munster, archaeology, history and society* (Cork, 1998), p. 5.

[50] Jerry O'Sullivan, 'Nationalists, archaeologists and the myth of the Golden Age' in *Early Medieval Munster, archaeology, history and society* (Cork, 1998), p. 187.

[51] Merry Wiesner, *Women and gender in early modern Europe, new approaches to European history* (Cambridge, MA, 1993).

[52] B. S. Anderson and J. P. Zinsser, *A history of their own, women in Europe from prehistory to the present* (London, 1999).

[53] Frances and Joseph Gies, *Marriage and the family in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1987); Barbara Hanawalt, *The ties that bound, peasant families in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1986).

on the lives of early Irish women, overwhelmingly it has been the literary rather than material sources which have been utilized.[54]

Scholarship and historical interpretation in relation to Vikings and their activity in Ireland has undergone many changes during the last thirty years. Traditional associations of the Vikings as marauding and pillaging invaders who attacked and plundered Ireland, leaving a wake of destruction and a dark age of Christianity have largely been relegated to the past. Recent scholarship and interpretation of Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian activity in Ireland has led towards a much greater appreciation of established settlements, as well as a move towards examining the interrelationships between native and Hiberno-Scandinavian communities, and an overall focus on their activities and features during peace rather than war. Writing in 1995, Howard Clarke acknowledged this progression but suggested that a great deal more needed to be done:

> [New]…insights…show how far historians have progressed from the views of earlier generations. But much remains to be done and here I should like to suggest…avenues of debate and enquiry… can we say more about the role of Viking Age women in general than we have customarily done? These projects and questions [sic], it seems to me, should be among the items on the agenda of the next generation of scholars.[55]

While archaeological objects associated with women have not been entirely ignored, and some mention has been made of presence of oval brooches in burials, the level of analysis has to date been very limited.[56]

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[54] For historical studies on women in early medieval Ireland see: D. A. Binchy, 'The legal capacity of women in regard to contracts' in D. A. Binchy and Myles Dillon (eds), *Studies in early Irish law* (Dublin, 1936), pp 207-34; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Marriage in early Ireland' in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin, 1985), pp 5-24; Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Women and the law in early Ireland' in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), *Chattel, servant or citizen, women's status in church, state and society, historical Studies,* xix (Belfast, 1995), pp 45-57; Bart Jaski, 'Marriage laws in Ireland and the continent in the early middle ages' in Christine Meek and Katharine Simms (eds), *The fragility of her sex, medieval Irishwomen in their European context* (Dublin, 1996), pp 16-42; Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars', pp 32-49.
[55] Howard Clarke, 'The Vikings in Ireland, a historian's perspective' in *Archaeology Ireland,* ix, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), p. 9.
[56] Colman Etchingham, pers. Comm. Although see Stephen Harrison and Raghnall Ó Floinn, *A catalogue of Irish Viking graves and gravegoods, series B, National Museum of Ireland Dublin excavations project* (forthcoming).

> A spurt in archaeological activity in the 1970s and 1980s has contributed …
> much to a broader definition of 'Vikings'… new methods of presenting such
> archaeological discoveries are well on their way to changing the popular image
> of Vikings and to creating a new historical myth to replace the old one.[57]

Yet while historiography has changed much in a thousand years, certain images drawn in the ninth and tenth-century have been perpetuated down into much of the scholarship of our own era, invariably invoking images of marauding pagan male pirates. 'Viking society, as we think we know it, was a society of men: seafarers, robbers, warriors, traders, farmers, craftsmen, kings, and slaves. We know of course that there must have been women and children, but this fact rarely surfaces in our interpretations. Once we start thinking about this elemental flaw in our picture of Viking society, we shall also have to start reflecting on how our knowledge of the past is structured'.[58] Put simply – if the current structures of historical and archaeological analysis exclude – or make 'invisible' certain groups within society, then the structures for viewing the past must change.

The invisibility of certain societal groups has until recently been helped along by the lack of the development of coherent theoretical and socio-historical methodologies for 'seeing' particular societal organizing principles such as gender, age or status within archaeology. James William Boyle, in his research on slavery and the poor in early medieval Ireland quotes Harold Mytum in stating that 'archaeologists have ignored the possibility of identifying poverty or stated simply that "low status individuals are undetectable."'[59] Yet, like many assumptions regarding the archaeological visibility of marginalized groups, these ideas may be based more on a research bias that ignores difficult social issues than any archaeological data'.[60] Lisa Bitel initiated a somewhat similar study of the historical material in her book *Land of women, tales of sex and gender from Early Ireland* (1996).

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[57] Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age* (Woodbridge, 1991), p. 2 (Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*).
[58] Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship and the basis of power in the Norwegian Viking age' in Ross Sampson (ed.), *Social approaches to Viking studies* (Glasgow, 1991), p. 65 (Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship and the basis of power').
[59] Harold Mytum, *The origins of Early Christian Ireland* (London, 1992), p. 136, quoted in James Boyle, 'Lest the lowliest be forgotten, locating the impoverished in Early Medieval Ireland' in *IJHA*, viii, no. 2 (June 2004), p. 2.
[60] James Boyle, 'Lest the lowliest be forgotten, locating the impoverished in Early Medieval Ireland' in *IJHA*, viii, no. 2 (June 2004), p. 2 (Boyle, 'Lest the lowliest be forgotten').

Bitel commented on the difficulties of 'seeing' the poor and poverty in early medieval Ireland: 'Archaeologists are just beginning to recover human space from the landscape that has absorbed it, and the houses of the working poor have largely eluded the spade, just as their lives remained hidden from the pens of the early medieval literati'.[61] While Bitel's research addressed an important gap in Irish research by addressing the ideas and representations of gender by men and women as well telling the 'stories' of women as reflected in the historical record, she fails to mention the society or culture of the Vikings or Hiberno-Scandinavians. The impact of these incoming cultures on Irish society was substantial. To ignore a population that had such a dramatic and changing expression on the physical, social, cultural and political climate of Ireland is to fail to recognize the complexity and nuances of the different cultures and ethnicities in Ireland at the time. Similarly, Judith Jesch, in her book *Women in the Viking Age* (1991), touches only briefly on the issue of Scandinavian women in Ireland.[62] However, rather then mentioning any of the archaeological evidence, Jesch relies on the literary/historical texts such as the *Annals of Ulster* and *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh (War of the Irish with the Foreigners)*, all of which have a strong bias towards military and political events, and thereby do not give us much, if any, indication of the role and life of women.

Jenny Jochens' study details the role of women in Scandinavian society in a much more comprehensive manner.[63] However, Jochens also relies heavily on literary texts rather than incorporating any kind of a study of the archaeological remains. In addition, Jochens' study concentrates entirely on Viking women within Scandinavian, and also makes no reference to Ireland. While these works do not shed light on the study of Viking Age women in Ireland, they do provide important evidence for contextualizing the Irish material. However, for a reliable representation of the lives and roles of Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian women and children, the Irish archaeological material must also be examined on its own merits. Alfred Smyth, writing in 1979, stressed the importance of the extensive archaeological material available from the Scandinavian levels at York and

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[61] Lisa Bitel, *Land of women, tales of sex and gender from Early Ireland* (Ithaca, 1996), p. 7 (Bitel, *Land of women*).
[62] Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, pp 106-9.
[63] Jenny Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*.

Dublin. They have yielded 'an impressive body of archaeological evidence providing a representative cross-section of material for the reconstruction of life… together with information on the economy and urban environment which would be impossible to recover from historical sources alone'.[64] This material in particular has enormous potential for the interpretations of the lives and roles of women in Ireland during the Medieval period.[65]

Issues that concern women remain marginalized in most archaeological discussions. Part of the problem is that archaeological topics have been very frankly and overtly gendered male – leading to male concerns, male language, and male prejudices. For example, the adoption and retention of particular historical approaches and interpretations of the Irish archaeological record still call our attention to the more warlike aspects of the Viking period; male warrior burials, weapons, and ships, at the expense of evidence pertaining to the role of women and children, and issues of class, gender and age. Historically, emphasis has been focused on topics like leadership, power, warfare, exchange of women, rights of inheritance, and notions of property that can all be cited as issues of special interest to males in particular historic contexts and socio-political structures.[66] While of course such issues are pertinent to discussions of the past, they tend by their very nature to exclude other social processes and peoples. In contrast, the utilization of an engendered, socio-historical approach towards archaeology inevitably gives rise to such

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[64] Alfred Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin, the history and archaeology of two related Viking kingdoms*, i (2 vols., Dublin, 1979), p. 192 (Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*).
[65] A number of important publications on the Dublin excavations (1978-81) are imminent. These specialist studies are being published under the auspices of The Royal Irish Academy Dublin Excavations Project, and include a stratigraphic report of the excavations at Fishamble Street by Pat Wallace, Andrew Halpin and Adrienne Corless; an archaeological and statistical study of weights, balances and leadworking by Pat Wallace; Esther Cameron's study of the sheaths and scabbards from medieval Dublin; Paula Harvey's study of amber and amber-working in Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin; a catalogue of all known Viking Age graves in Ireland and their contents by Stephen Harrison and Raghnall Ó Floinn; a study of the corpus of weaponry in medieval Dublin by Andrew Halpin; Combs and combmaking by Ian Riddler and Nicola Trzaska-Nartowski; leather footwear from tenth and eleventh-century Dublin by Daire O'Rourke; evidence for metalworking by Justine Bayley and a publication on the stave-built wooden vessels by Martin Comey. Important environmental studies which are also imminent for publication include Barra Ó Donnabháin's examination of the Dublin burials and Vincent Butler's research on the faunal evidence from Wood Quay. Unfortunately, none of these publications were available for consultation prior to the completion of this thesis.
[66] Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector, 'Archaeology and the study of gender' in Michael Schiffer (ed.), *Advances in archaeological method and theory* (Orlando, 1984), p. 4.

issues as domesticity and the family as a unit. With this shift of focus, whole new sets of questions are raised; questions about the different and changing roles that women played in society, their economic activities, lifestyles, child-rearing practices, domestic circumstances, the particular material welfare of women and children, work and leisure activities, and so on. These issues are addressed in the following two chapters.

Seeing gender and age as structural organizing principles of different and changing societies rather than as static and unchanging categories opens up the possibilities of developing much more comprehensive ideas about how the past was structured, shifted – and changed. To date, very little work has been done on interpreting gender relations for Ireland during the early medieval and medieval periods. No detailed archaeological surveys of women exist for the period. This study hopes to go some way towards addressing this research lacunae.

Chapter Two

Women: gender, burial and trade

> It is not a matter of the spade being mute,
> but rather that we seldom ask it the right
> questions, or understand its answers.[1]

This chapter surveys female mortuary evidence for the Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts. Gravegoods as signifiers of identity are considered in order to assess their relationship to gender, status and societal roles. 'Anomalous' female burials are examined for their implications for identity and settlement. Concepts of gender, as well as the status and position of women in both the Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian worlds are discussed in order to identify the changing conceptualisations of female roles through space and time. The topic of women as settlers and colonizers is also considered, thus highlighting the role of the family during both the 'Viking' and the Hiberno-Scandinavian period.

Mortuary remains within Ireland that differ from the Irish 'norm' are discussed including Roman and Anglo-Saxon burials. They are included here in order to initiate a discussion of anomalous or unusual burials – including unusual Native Irish remains – in need of contextualization, rather than for purposes of discussing the level of Roman or Anglo-Saxon activity in Ireland. The evidence for the Native Irish context is then reviewed, including a significant number of unusual burials dated to within the transition from paganism to Christianity.

Viking and Scandinavian concepts of gender are discussed, in particular in relation to how this might impact upon interpretations of the earliest phases of settlement and colonisation within the Irish Sea region. Following this, a survey of female burials in the Irish and North Sea region is undertaken in order to identify different mortuary practices both within Scandinavia and in areas settled or colonized by those peoples. This chapter also discusses how it is necessary to consider both status and gender when looking at gravegoods. Not all men were buried with one type of artefact. Nor were all

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[1] Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and material culture, the archaeology of religious women* (London, 1994), p. 10 (Gilchrist, *Gender and material culture, the archaeology of religious women*).

women buried with another type. Important understandings of social processes can be highlighted by understanding variation in mortuary expression. Finally, evidence for the involvement of women in trade is discussed and the implications these arguments have for reinterpreting the archaeological record.

A foreign presence in Ireland – the Roman female burials

On Lambay Island, Co. Dublin, a number of graves that may represent settlers from the northeast of England were buried sometime after 50 AD. All the burials were inhumations in unprotected dug graves, with one crouched burial. As the site was excavated during the nineteenth-century, it was poorly excavated according to modern standards. However, a number of objects were recovered, including an iron mirror, five Roman bronze fibulae, a typically 'north-east English' beaded necklet of bronze, several rings, a lignite bracelet, and a substantial number of sheet bronze fragments, including two decorated discs.[2] Fragmentary remains of a long heavy iron sword, scabbard mounts and a bronze shield boss were also found. It is not however, possible to state the numbers of males and females without genetic analysis. O'Brien has suggested these burials are indicative of contact with people whose burial traditions eventually influenced a change in the rite in Ireland.[3]

Stonyford, Co. Kilkenny

The second-century female cremation from Stonyford, County Kilkenny is also suggestive of a Roman presence. The remains were recovered in the early nineteenth-century and represent a classic Roman burial. The cremation was contained within a glass cinerary urn, accompanied by a small glass bottle and a disc mirror.[4] The glass bottle or lachrymatory, has been interpreted by Edward Bourke as a phial for perfume. The type of glass urn and the phial are of a well-known type found throughout the Roman Empire during the first and second centuries AD. Similarly, the bronze disc mirror which was used a lid for the urn is well attested in the Roman archaeological

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[2] Barry Raftery, 'Iron-age Ireland' in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland vol. 1; prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), p. 175 (Raftery, 'Iron-Age Ireland').

[3] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD: continuity and change' in Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane, (eds), *The early church in Wales and the west, recent work in Early Christian archaeology, history and practice*, Oxbow monograph 16 (Oxford, 1992), pp 130-7 (O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD').

[4] Raftery, 'Iron-age Ireland', p. 175; also see S. P. Ó Ríordáin, 'Roman material in Ireland' in *PRIA*, li (1950), sect. C, pp 249-77; J. D. Bateson, 'Roman material from Ireland: a reconsideration' in *PRIA*, lxxiii (1973), sect. C, pp 72-3.

record.[5] The Stonyford burial has long been interpreted as evidence to postulate for a Roman settlement, rather than simply a trading post.[6] (The implication being that settlement is female and trading is male.) However, there is no evidence to indicate that there was any settlement. There are no male graves identified from the site, and the gravegoods are not only diagnostically female, but it is an unusual burial in itself that deserves reassessment not only for its status, but also for its gender implications for burials of foreign female travellers in Ireland. The burial is a typical Roman middle-class burial rite of the first two centuries AD. In is interesting to note that the burial was recovered from a ringfort. 'Burials in and around raths or defensive earthworks are recorded from late Iron Age contexts.'[7] (see below for further discussion). It may well be that this burial represents an example of a woman who died on some sort of trading expedition. It also is likely that she was accompanied by others (who then left), as they were familiar enough with the Roman burial rite to inter her in this way.[8]

Iron Age burial practices in Ireland

Burial practices during the Irish Iron Age are somewhat problematic in that less is known about them than for mortuary practices in other periods of Irish history. However, within the last few years there have been a number of excavations which have increased the volume of Iron Age sites. During the transition into the Early Historic period burial practices are somewhat less formal than before.[9] The dead were often cremated and inserted into pre-existing monuments or tumuli or into pits. It is also quite likely that excarnation and cremation became more common during this period.[10] Several types of burial monuments are known from this period, including ring barrows such as found at Grannagh, Co. Galway and at Haynestown II, Co. Louth; ring ditches such as those at Ballydavis, Co. Laois, and mounds and embanked enclosures.[11] At the site of Ballydavis, a small cemetery of cremated remains was identified within a

[5] Edward Bourke, 'Stoneyford, a first-century Roman burial from Ireland' in *Archaeology Ireland*, iii, no. 2 (Summer 1989), p. 56 (Bourke, 'Stoneyford').
[6] Richard Warner, 'Some observations on the context and importation of exotic material in Ireland, from the first-century BC to the second-century AD' in *PRIA*, Section C, lxxvi (1976), pp 267-92.
[7] Bourke, 'Stoneyford', p. 57.
[8] Ibid., p. 56.
[9] The Heritage Council, 'Iron Age burial practices' available at (http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/archaeology/unpublished_excavations/section9.html) (12 July, 2007) (Heritage Council, 'Iron Age burial practices').
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

series of four ring ditches.[12] Inhumation also continued throughout the Iron Age, although they were no longer marked by large mounds.[13] The settlement site at Dooey, Co. Donegal provided evidence for a large-scale inhumation cemetery during the Iron Age.[14] The increase in the practice of inhumation and the decline in cremation at this time may be attributed to both Roman and Christian influences. For example, it may well be that the inhumation cist burial without grave goods at Ballykeel South, Co. Clare, is illustrative of this Christian influence as reflected in the burial record.[15]

Suggestions of human sacrifice in the Iron Age

There is some evidence for human sacrifice during the period 200 to 400 AD. At the Curragh, Co. Kildare, two inhumations were excavated by S. P. Ó Ríordáin in the late 1940s. The first was a splayed female burial that had been placed centrally within an embanked enclosure. The strained and awkward position of the remains, as well as the unnaturally raised skull, prompted the conclusion that she had probably been buried alive.[16] A second burial representing a person who had been decapitated was also identified at the site.[17] Seen in context with the male bog body from Baronstown Bog just north of the Curragh which dates to roughly the same period, there appears to be 'a sacrificial element to the burial motif of the Curragh'.[18]

Pagan to Christian burial practices in Ireland

Sometime in the second- or third-century AD, inhumation practices began to supersede cremation, and the suggestion is that this may be reflective or influenced by a change in Roman burial traditions. With the exception of some evidence of cremation among the Picts of Northern Scotland, inhumation had become the standard burial practice throughout Ireland and England by the fourth and early fifth centuries AD.[19]

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[12] V. J. Keely, 'Ballydavis, Early Iron Age complex', Laois [1995:173, N950250, 95E111], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Laois&id=2408) (2 June, 2005).
[13] Heritage Council, 'Iron Age burial practices'.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Raftery, 'Iron-age Ireland', p. 174; also see S. P. Ó Ríordáin, 'Excavations of some earthworks on the Curragh, Co. Kildare' in *PRIA*, liii (1950), sect. C, pp 249-77.
[17] Mario Sughi, *The Curragh, Co. Kildare, the archaeology of an ancient grassland*, heritage guide no. 31 (Bray, 2005), p. 3; also see S. P. Ó Ríordáin, 'Excavation of some earthworks on the Curragh, Co. Kildare in *PRIA*, section c, liii (1950), pp 249-77.
[18] Mario Sughi, *The Curragh, Co. Kildare, the archaeology of an ancient grassland*, heritage guide no. 31 (Bray, 2005), p. 3.
[19] Charles Thomas, *The early Christian archaeology of north Britain: the Hunter Marshall lectures* (Oxford, 1971), p. 47.

Burial in Ireland during the earlier Iron Age has been discussed at some length by Barry Raftery,[20] and Elizabeth O'Brien has examined the period leading up to and into the early historic period.[21] Burial practices during this transitional stage have also been the subject of a recent seminar by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, which revealed significant findings concerning patterns in unusual mortuary treatment well into what is normally considered to be 'the Early Christian' period.[22]

Just as there is no formal date for the beginning of the Bronze Age or the Iron Age, there is no precise date for the end of the Iron Age and the beginning of what is traditionally termed 'the Early Christian' period. These terms are instead representative of rather fluid archaeological meanings based on material culture. However, sometime within the fifth-or sixth-century, La Téne influences had by and large disappeared from Ireland.[23] The archaeological record indicates slow social evolution unaccompanied by dramatic change throughout the first millennium – thus many aspects of an archaic Irish Iron-Age tradition lasted well into the medieval period.[24] It is not entirely clear exactly how and when the transition from pagan to Christian burial practices in Ireland were effected. What is known is that from the fifth-century on, there were particular places in the landscape which the local populace understood were set aside for the burial of baptised Christians. However, the date at which burial in formally consecrated Christian cemeteries became standard practice is not known,[25] although Elizabeth O'Brien has argued that it became the norm sometime during the eighth or ninth centuries.[26] Burial rites established during the Iron Age did not change with the coming of Christianity in the fifth-century and continued well into the Early Historic period. O'Brien has argued that the evidence points to 'the continued use, well into the Early Christian period, of pagan burial practices in the form of isolated burials, burial in circular enclosures, and the survival of kindred familial cemeteries'.[27] This is supported

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[20] For a detailed discussion on Iron Age burial practices in Ireland, see Barry Raftery, 'Iron Age burial practices in Ireland' in Donnchadh Ó Corráin (ed.), *Irish antiquity* (Cork, 1981), pp 173-204; and Barry Raftery, *Pagan Celtic Ireland* (London, 1994).
[21] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD', pp 130-7.
[22] RSAI, Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in light of recent archaeological excavations, Seminar held at the Helen Roe Theatre, Dublin, 14 October, 2005.
[23] Raftery, 'Iron-age Ireland', p. 180.
[24] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD', p. 130.
[25] Susan Leigh Fry, *Burial in medieval Ireland, 900- 1500; a review of the written sources* (Dublin, 1999), p. 40 (Fry, *Burial in medieval Ireland*).
[26] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD', p. 130.
[27] Ibid., p. 135.

by documentary evidence which suggests that pagan burial practices were still in use during the fifth and sixth centuries, and that they were still known into the seventh and even the eighth. O'Brien has pointed out that a number of early medieval Irish texts suggest that prehistoric burial sites were often appropriated for Christian burial. Incidents in the seventh and eighth century lives of Patrick by Tírechán and Muirchú indicate that 'burial in non-Christian, possibly family or tribal cemeteries was still commonplace'[28] during the early medieval period. The same texts refer to the burial of Christians amongst pagans, and describe the clergy's efforts to encourage Christians to only bury their dead in Christian cemeteries.[29]

The seventh and early eighth centuries and the growth of the Cult of Relics saw the decline of familial burial plots as the bones of the ancestors were replaced with the bones of the saints in consecrated ground.[30]

Isolated burials

There are a number of isolated burials from the seventh and eighth centuries that display burial practices which adhere to the Christian norm, and support the suggestion of non-pagan familial cemeteries. Burial within ecclesiastical sites was not the norm for all members of the laity – men, women and children alike – until the ninth-century when the church began to actively discourage burial outside consecrated ground.

Extended pagan burials accompanied by grave goods include the burials at the Rath of the Synods at Tara, the coins found with the probable Roman burials from Bray, and the shears found with the female burial from Site B, Carbury Hill.[31]

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[28] Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), p. 60 (Bieler, *The Patrician texts*).

[29] 'Tírechán, writing in the late seventh-century, refers to the death of two newly converted daughters of a king, and comments "the days of mourning for the king's daughters came and end, and they buried them… and they made a round ditch (*fossam rotundam*) after the manner of a *ferta,* because this is what the heathen Irish used to do, but we call it *relic*'. Bieler, *The Patrician texts*, p. 145, quoted in O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD', pp 133-4. 'In the late seventh-century the practice of placing burials within such a circular ditched enclosure was accepted by Tírechán, but the name of this type of enclosure was in the process of being changed from *ferta* to *relic* as a method of Christianizing a pagan burial practice'. O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium AD', p. 133.

[30] Ibid., p. 136.

[31] Ibid., p. 134. Shears are also commonly associated with burials of women in Scandinavia, and have been identified from a number of sites of both native Irish and Scandinavian period from the ninth-century onwards.

O'Brien, at a conference on church archaeology in Bangor, Wales in September of 2004, cited a number of further anomalous burials, many of which include women and children. A large proportion of these inhumations are found to be on boundary lines (or *ferta*), and many are slab-lined, stone-lined or linteled, and may be extended, crouched, flexed or supine inhumations.[32] Radiocarbon dates indicate that the sites span from the fourth to the ninth centuries, and a number are accompanied by various gravegoods, including small white pebbles.[33] The lower numbers of female burials along with the apparent absence of children in the ecclesiastical cemeteries of the eighth and ninth centuries begs the question of whether or not pagan burial traditions may have continued more strongly amongst women and children into the Early Historic period.[34]

Secular familial burial enclosures

Burial in secular habitation sites was a practice that the historical literature suggests was tolerated. This practice is also noted in the archaeological record. One example of this type of burial practice are the two burials which were inserted into the ringfort of Raheenamadra, Co. Limerick. O'Brien has commented that it is worth noting that these two burials were accompanied by two iron knives and a rectangular belt buckle, and therefore may represent Anglo-Saxon burials.[35]

Female cist burials

There are also a number of isolated female cist burials that date to the early medieval period. The site of Ballymacaward, Co. Donegal comprised ten extended supine inhumations which were all oriented with the heads to the west and were without

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[32] Because a burial is flexed does not necessarily indicate a different burial rite. It is important to identify any osteological or pathological abnormalities that might preclude normal burial. Laureen Buckley, 'Cemetery at Ninch, Co. Meath' paper given at Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in light of recent archaeological excavations, Helen Roe Theatre, RSAI, 14 October, 2005.

[33] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland' paper given at The archaeology of the early medieval Celtic churches conference, 9-12 September, 2004, University of Wales, Bangor (O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland').

[34] However, a few anomalous male burials have also been identified to date. Kiltullagh, County Mayo/Roscommon border [1994:201, M530740, SMR: 32-001, 94E030]. 'Excavation at the base of a standing stone uncovered the burial of a male inhumation dating to the 5th-century AD'. Finbar McCormick, G. Cribbin, M. E. Robinson and D. W. Shimwell, 'A pagan-Christian transitional burial at Kiltullagh' in *Emania*, xiii (1995), pp 89-98.

[35] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD', p. 134; also Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Introductory remarks', Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland conference in light of recent archaeological excavations, Helen Roe Theatre, RSAI, 14 Oct. 2005.

gravegoods.[36] The indications are that the burials are of five females, all in slab-lined graves, along with one probable male, and three uncertain.[37] The grave of a shroudless elderly female dating to between 420 and 550 AD was also identified.[38] Bone from one of the female burials produced a high-precision carbon-14 date in the mid fifth-century. All the remaining burials were in graves which had been dug into the sand and/or puddled surface.[39] Some of the graves were protected in the form of stones around the head, and two of the female burials produced high precision carbon-14 dates from the early and middle of the seventh-century AD.[40] O'Brien has concluded that available evidence suggests that the cairn may have been built during the Bronze Age (if the short cists can be attributed to this period), and that it was then reused for burial during the Iron Age, and again in the early medieval period.[41] The location of the cairn – which is on the northern bank of the estuary of the River Erne and was an important territorial boundary – suggests that it may have represented an ancestral *ferta*, or burial place.[42] A further seven female extended inhumations dating to the seventh-century were excavated from unprotected dug graves at Ballymacaward, Co. Donegal. O'Brien has interpreted the site as representing a Bronze Age cairn which – due to the important historical background of the area – became 'an ancestral boundary *ferta*'. Burials were then inserted into the site at crucial historic periods.[43]

Pagan burials, Native Irish or Anglo-Saxon?

There are a number of extant female burials that may represent examples of Native Irish pagan mortuary practices. For example, at Knowth, Co. Meath, four slab-lined cist burials set slightly off from the rest of the Iron-Age burials were identified with their heads to the west. The burials were unshrouded and included a seventeen-year-old female.[44] While there was no evidence of cremation at the site, gravegoods were present. These were found only with the flexed and crouched inhumations, and display

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[36] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Ballymacaward', Donegal [1997:059 and 1998:101, 1835/3627, 97E0154], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Donegal&id=1685) (5 April, 2007) (O'Brien, Ballymacaward Co. Donegal summary excavation report).
[37] Ibid.
[38] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'.
[39] O'Brien, Ballymacaward Co. Donegal summary excavation report.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'.

similar characteristics with gravegoods from other cremation burials dated to around the turn of the millennium.[45]

A burial at Pollacorragune near Tuam in Co. Galway, which was excavated in 1937 comprised one female dated to between 530-680 AD, as well as three male burials which have been dated to between the fourth and the sixth centuries.[46] A pit burial from Kildangan, Co. Kildare comprised a pit burial of a young adult female who had been buried in a wooden board-lined grave which dates to the fourth to sixth-century.[47] At Rosnaree, Co. Meath, two female burials dating to between 340 and 430 AD were excavated, one of which was a flexed burial which also contained a silver ring.[48] Ninch, Co. Meath also revealed probable non-Christian burials, one of which was an unexcavated cist burial, as well as a male burial in dug grave dating to the seventh-century.[49] Charles Thomas has also pointed out that the lack of gravegoods in extended inhumations does not necessarily indicate that they are Christian burials, but rather that they date to the fourth-century and onwards.[50]

O'Brien's research has found that female burials outnumber the male burials, and four of the burials are female only.[51] All of the sites in her research are in prominent locations and are near natural boundaries or ancient burial places, and are orientated west/east. Only the burial from Ninch had burial goods, so can be considered to be definitely pagan. None of these burials are associated with churches, cemeteries, or any known ecclesiastical structures. Because of their very specific constructions in a

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[45] 'For example, the hundreds of tiny blue glass beads at Knowth are similar to those from Oranbeg and Grannagh. Other gravegoods from Knowth can be similarly paralleled; for example, the tiny amber-coloured beads from Oranbeg; the bone beads with off-centre perforations at Grannagh and Newgrange, Co Meath; the unperforated bean shaped glass toggle bead with the greenish tint at Grannagh; the horntips, sawn off and smoothed, at Site A Carbury Hill, and the striated bronze rings are similar to fragments of a striated bronze armlet from Oranbeg'. O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD', p. 132.

[46] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'. Also see F. T. Riley, 'Excavation in the townland of Pollacorragune, Tuam, Co, Galway' in the *JGAHS*, xvii, no. i and ii (1936-7), pp 44-54; S. Shea 'Report on the skeletons found in Pollacorragune, Tuam, Co. Galway' in *JGAHS*, xvii, no. i and ii (1936-7), pp 55-64.

[47] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'.

[48] Ibid.

[49] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'. Also see Ninch, County Meath [1977-79: 0060, 0157710]. The site was excavated by David Sweetman in 1979. See P. D. Sweetman, 'Reconstruction and partial excavation of an Iron Age burial mound at Ninch, Co. Meath' in *Riocht na Midhe*, vii, no., 2 (1982-83), pp 58-68.

[50] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD', p. 132.

[51] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'.

particular time, space and place, O'Brien has argued that such burials may represent newcomers to Ireland. For example, a number of 'intrusive' male and female burials which have been roughly dated to the sixth and seventh centuries and are concentrated within the region of Brega, (Co. Meath/North Dublin) and in the general location of monasteries where the presence of Anglo-Saxon clerics is attested to historically. None of these burials conform to the Irish norm. Instead, they have features that suggest pagan or very early Christian Anglo-Saxon mortuary practice.[52] O'Brien has argued that:

> The burials were probably not of clerics for apart from the presence of grave-goods, they are all found in cemeteries which are outside of the known ecclesiastical centres. Nor do they appear to have been of nobles as the grave goods are relatively poor. Rather, they are more likely to have been retainers who accompanied early Anglo-Saxon clerics or *æthelings* who had come to Ireland.

O'Brien also points out that it is logical to assume a level of contact between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England during a time when travel by sea was probably both safer and easier than travel overland. Thus, the Irish sea was not necessarily the barrier to interaction as might be supposed.[53]

At a recent conference on death and burial in the early medieval period, a number of other non-ecclesiastical burial sites within earlier enclosed habitation sites were discussed.[54] These include excavations at Millockstown, Louth, and the cemeteries at Dooey, Co. Donegal. Other possible examples include Ninch, Johnstown, and Raystown Co. Meath. Matthew Stout has identified a further fourteen such secular burial sites. They include Balbriggan, Co. Dublin, Cabinteely Co. Dublin, Corbally, Co. Kildare, Augherskea, Co. Meath, Faughart Lower, Co. Louth, Murphystown, Co. Dublin and

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[52] The cemeteries identified by O'Brien are as follows: Colp (Co. Meath), Bettystown (Co. Meath), Westreave (Co. Dublin), Kilshane (Co. Dublin), Carbury Hill (Co. Kildare), Green Hills, Kilcullen (Co. Kildare), Levitstown (Co. Kildare), Killaree (Co. Kilkenny), Sheastown (Co. Kilkenny), Raheenamadra (Co. Limerick), Aghalahard (near Cong, Co. Mayo), and Dooey (Co. Donegal), Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh-century' in *ASSAH*, vi (1993), pp 93-102, quoted in Martin Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria' in *The heroic age; a journal of early medieval Northwestern Europe*, ix (October, 2006), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/9/toc.html) (12 June, 2007) (Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria').
[53] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Contacts between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the seventh-century' in *ASSAH*, vi (1993), pp 93-102, quoted in Martin Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria' in *HAJEMNE*, ix (October, 2006), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/9/toc.html) (12 June, 2007).
[54] Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in light of recent excavations, RSAI Conference, Helen Roe Theatre, Dublin, 14 October, 2005.

Gracedieu, Co. Dublin. Stout lists Mullanstown, Co. Louth, Townspark, Co. Meath, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Boolies Little, Co. Meath, Sarsfieldtown, Co. Meath, Mell, Co. Louth, Gallanstown, Co. Dublin, Miltonsfields, Co. Dublin, and Stephenstown, Co. Kildare as possible others. Stout argues that due to the numbers of possible sites it may be that this enclosed secular burial rite may be a 'lowland phenomena', but may also be influenced by the high number of road works leading to excavation in this part of Ireland.[55] O'Brien also lists Bettystown Co. Meath as an example of a non-ecclesiastical familial cemetery in use during this transformative period from the Iron Age into the Early Medieval period. Other possible examples she cites include the cemetery within the reused Neolithic enclosure at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, the small grouping of graves at Knowth, Co. Meath, and possibly the cemetery at Westreave in Co. Dublin. All of these sites contained burials which differed from the traditional Christian burial rite, including crouched, flexed and extended inhumations, burials in stone-lined, slab-lined and unprotected dug graves. A number of the inhumations had their heads to the West or southwest or north/south, but most of the burials were east/west orientation.[56]

Gendered differences in burial treatment during the Early Medieval period

There is some evidence of segregated burial grounds in Ireland in the early medieval period. *Reilig na mBan* near Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone which lies one kilometre from the parish church and cemetery has been suggested as a women's burial enclosure. Hamlin and Foley have suggested that segregated burial at early monastic sites are likely to be indicative of separation on the basis of social status as well as the circumstances of death.[57]

There are a number of early Irish monastic sites which may lend support to the existence of female only burial grounds. In particular, where there is 'a church dedicated to St. Mary or associated with women at some distance from the main monastery, sometimes with an attached graveyard'.[58] Examples cited by Hamlin and Foley include Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, Inishmurray, Co. Sligo and Clonmacnoise,

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[55] Geraldine Stout, 'Cemetery at Knowth, Co. Meath' paper given at Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in light of recent excavations, Helen Roe Theatre, RSAI, 14 October, 2005.
[56] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh-century Ireland'.
[57] Ann Hamlin and Claire Foley, 'A women's graveyard at Carrickmore, Co Tyrone, and the separate burial of women' in *UJA,* xlvi (1984), p. 44 (Hamlin and Foley, 'A women's graveyard at Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone').
[58] Ibid., p. 44.

Co. Offaly. The authors conclude that 'the practice of separate worship, and possibly separate burial for women, does at some Irish ecclesiastical sites go back to the pre-Norman period'.[59] Outside of Ireland, the early medieval cemetery at St. Ronan's on Iona appears to represent a women's burial ground and:

> it is possible that, in the light of parallels from early medieval Irish sites the Nunnery may originally have been granted the site of a pre-existing church and cemetery to perpetuate its established use for women's worship and burial. An early women's cemetery may have received the remains of women from a secular or monastic tenant population, or even the remains of clerics' wives. From this tenuous background evidence, it would appear that segregated burial on Iona in the Early Modern period may derive from practices established during the island's occupation by an Irish monastic community in the early medieval period. [60]

Segregated burial is also known from a number of sites in early medieval England, as well as in Sweden where a number of separate burial grounds for women are known, including the recently excavated eleventh-century site of Visby, where twelve female skeletons were buried apart from the rest of the population,[61] along with the segregated Late Viking Age cemetery at Fröjel on Gotland.[62]

Scandinavian social strata

There are several different kinds of evidence which may be used in order to shed light upon the different social strata within Scandinavia during the Viking period. Mortuary remains are perhaps the most valuable type of evidence for understanding concepts of class and status. High status, labour intensive elite graves are represented, alongside the more 'middle class' specialists such as warriors and craftspeople who generally have a much smaller amount of gravegoods.[63] The latter category of burials are much more numerous in the archaeological record. Of course, as Elisabeth Ardwill-Nordblach has

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[59] Hamlin and Foley, 'A women's graveyard at Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone', p. 359. Segregated worship is attested to in historical record such as in the case of St Brigid of Kildare. The church was divided into two segregated areas of worship, one for women and the other for men. See Mario Esposito, 'Cogitosus' in *Hermathena*, xx (1926-30), pp 251-7; idem, 'On the earliest Latin life of St Brigid of Kildare' in *PRIA*, xxx, C (1912), pp 307-27.

[60] Jerry O'Sullivan, 'Excavation of an early church and a women's cemetery at St. Ronan's medieval parish church, Iona' in *PSAS*, cxxiv (1994), p. 359 (O'Sullivan, 'Excavation of an early church and a women's cemetery at St. Ronan's medieval parish church, Iona').

[61] Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age* (Gloucestershire, 2006), p. 40 (Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*).

[62] Dan Carlsson, *Gård, hamn och kyrka, en vikingatida kyrkogård i Fröjel, CCC papers 4*, Gotland University College Reports Centre for Baltic Studies (Visby, 1999) (Carlsson, *Gård, hamn och kyrka*).

[63] Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 26.

pointed out, local variations within the burial record of this more 'ordinary' group must also be taken into account. Ardwill-Nordblach has also pointed out that when the biological sex of the individual burial can be identified, both males and females are roughly equally represented, whilst children's graves occur less frequently.[64]

The written material also provides important insights into understanding differentiation within the social classes of Viking Age Scandinavia. The sagas, runic texts, myths and laws all suggest that there were three main social groups within this time period: chiefs, freeborn farmers and thralls.[65] In Iceland, it is likely that there was a distinction between farmers who owned their own farms, and those that were tenants, however, this distinction is rarely made explicit in the sagas.[66]

Scandinavian concepts of gender

Carol Clover has argued that gender constructions in Scandinavia were not as clear cut and dichotomous as modern interpreters have assumed. Clover has argued that the inside = female and outside = male distinctions were formulated in the law texts and are likely to represent the ideal rather than the actual. While there may have been 'separate spheres' of gender, they likely represent the legal or social ideal rather than actual practice.[67] 'Woman's, [sic] symbolized by the bunch of keys at her belt, is the world of *innan stocks* (within the household), where she is in charge of childcare, cooking, serving, and tasks having to do with milk and wool. Man's [sic] is the world beyond: the world of fishing, agriculture, herding, travel, trade, politics, and law'.[68] It does, however seem that there were different understandings of 'maleness' within Scandinavian

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[64] Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 26.
[65] Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only? Gender politics in the Scandinavian Viking Age' in Sarah Milledge-Nelson, (ed.), *Ancient queens, archaeological explorations* (Oxford, 2003), pp 19-40 (Arwill-Nordbladh, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?'), p. 26.
[66] Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in Early Icelandic society', p. 46.
[67] That this indoor/outdoor gendered division of labour represents the legal ideal rather than the actual is supported by the findings of Liv Helga Dommasnes, who concluded that this was not the normative division as cooking utensils are found only slightly more often in Scandinavian female graves than in male graves, and agricultural implements such as sickles are found in more female graves than in male graves. Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship and the basis of power', pp 65-74.
[68] Carol Clover, 'Regardless of sex, men, women, and power in Early Northern Europe' in *Speculum*, lxviii, no. 2 (April 1993), p. 365 (Clover, 'Regardless of sex').

constructions of sexuality.[69] Clover's argument is essentially that the social binary in Old Norse culture was not divided between male and female *per se,* but was 'between able-bodied men (and the exceptional woman) on one hand and, on the other, a kind of rainbow coalition of all else (most women, children, slaves, and old, disabled, or otherwise disenfranchised men)'.[70] She argues that while 'woman' is a normative category, it is not a binding one. If a woman is 'exceptional', she is thought to be unusual, but not *unnatural*. In fact, when women are praised in the historical sources, they are vaulted for their 'masculine' behaviour. For example, despite the legal injunctions against transvestitism (which indicates that it was both known and practiced to some degree), women are praised in the sagas when they have *drengr* – 'that most privileged of epitaphs and defined as "a bold, valiant, worthy man". *Drengr* is conventionally held up as the very soul of masculine excellence in Norse culture… This is a world in which "masculinity" always has a plus value, even (or perhaps especially) when it is enacted by a woman'.[71] Clover argues that both 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are subject to mutation and exception.[72] Rather than being fixed biological realities, or indeed even gendered categories, Clover argues convincingly that the Scandinavian model of sexual difference was not based on a two-sex model, but rather on the one-sex model.[73]

> This is in any case not a world in which the sexes are opposite or antithetical or polar or contemporary…On the contrary, it is a world in which gender, if we can even call it that, is neither coextensive with biological sex, despite its dependence on sexual imagery, not a closed system, but a system based to an extraordinary extent on winnable and losable attributes… it is a system

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[69] Clover goes into some detail listing the historical and linguistic basis for such an argument. Succinctly it may be said that there were; *men who penetrated* (both men and women), and that this was both normal and extremely masculine, and *men who were penetrated* (this has extremely negative connotations of femininity/effeminacy). The term for the latter is *níð,* and while most scholars argue that this is a symbolic insult, Clover argues that the *níð* 'taunts figure the insultee as a female and in so doing suggest that the category 'man' is, if anything, even more susceptible to mutation than the category 'woman'. For if a woman's ascent into the masculine took some doing, the man's descent into the feminine was just one real or imagined act away'. Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 379.
[70] Ibid., p. 380.
[71] Ibid., p. 372.
[72] 'The sources point overwhelmingly to a structure in which women no less than men were held in contempt for womanishness and were admired – and mentioned – only to the extent that they showed some 'pride'. It seems likely that Norse society operated according to a one-sex model – that there was one sex and it was male. More to the point, there was finally just one "gender," one standard by which persons were judged adequate or inadequate, and it was something like masculine', Ibid p. 379.
[73] Ibid., p. 377.

in which being born female was not so damaging that it could not be offset by other factors. A woman may start with debits and a man with credits, but any number of other considerations – wealth, marital status, birth order, historical accident, popularity, a forceful personality, sheer ambition, and so on – could tip the balance in the other direction.[74]

Clover's argument is that 'gendered lines' were not drawn along sexual difference, but rather along power lines. She suggests that 'this is the binary, the one that cuts most deeply, and the one that matters: between strong and weak, powerful and powerless or disempowered, swordworthy and unswordworthy, honoured and unhonoured or dishonoured winners and losers.[75] She further argues that this model of power is inevitably related to age.[76] As men grow old and lose power, they possibly are coded as moving into the 'distaff side' into a 'woman's form'.[77] What Clover is ultimately proposing, is that the Norse did not distinguish between 'male' and 'female' and that there was no opposition between the two genders.[78] Women supported these ideals in their inciting of men and deprecation of women who failed to act according to societies 'standards'.

Jenny Jochens has also suggested that the traditional interpretation of a sexual binary division between male and female is too simple, especially during the Viking Age colonization and settlement. 'It might be argued…that during migrations, when normal activities ceased, the only clearly defined sex roles were those dictated by reproductive biology; insemination for men and gestation, birth, and lactation for women. Beyond

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[74] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 379.

[75] 'In so far as these categories, though not biological, have a sexual look to them, the one associated with the male body and the other with something like the female one, and insofar as the polarity or complementary or antithesis that modern scholarship has brought to bear on maleness and femaleness applies far more readily, and with less need for qualification, to the opposition in *hvatr/blaður* or *magi/úmagi*, they might as well be called genders. The closest English comes to the distinction may be "spear side" and "distaff side", a distinction which is clearly (now) welded to sexual difference, is nonetheless one derived from roles (rather than bodies) and hence at least gestures toward gender (insofar as men are in principal able to spin and women to do battle)', Ibid., pp 380-381.

[76] Ibid., p. 382.

[77] Ibid., p. 383.

[78] Clover argues that 'what is clear is that their system [gender model] and ours do not line up and that the mismatch is especially obvious, and especially alien, where women and the feminine are concerned… the evidence points, I think, to a one-sex, one-gender model with a vengeance-one that plays out in the rawest and most extreme terms a scheme of sexual difference that at the level of the body knows only the male and at the level of social behaviour, only the effeminate, or emasculate or impotent. The general notion, that sexual difference used to be less a wall than a permeable membrane, has a great deal of explanatory force in a world in which a physical woman could become a social man, a physical man could (and sooner or later did) become a social woman, and the original god, Óðinn himself, played both sides of the street'. Ibid., p. 387.

these tasks, men and women alike did what had to be done, foraging for food and keeping the tribe together, including children and animals'.[79]

Vikings: both male and female?

Clover has argued for a historical basis for female 'Vikings' in the raiding sense of the word. 'It may well be that even that most macho of early Scandinavian business activities, organized piracy ("Viking" in the proper sense of the term), was practiced by women. The *War of the Gaedhel with the Gaill* refers twice to a red girl who headed up a Viking band in Ireland and invaded Munster in the tenth-century'.[80] This 'red maiden' commanded a fleet against foreign enemies and her two sons fell at the battle of Clontarf in 1014.[81] It may be that this 'red girl' is a literary motif and does not have any historical basis,[82] however, there are so many legends of fierce and imperious women, legends so numerous and so consistent that, as Peter Foote and David Wilson argue, they 'must certainly have some basis in reality'.[83] However, Jochens has argued that the sagas do not support the idea of armed women in warfare.[84] The Icelandic sagas make clear gender distinctions on issues involving war and weapons. 'Whereas men carried weapons at all times, even when engaged in peaceful fieldwork, women were never armed… Naturally, women would be involved in defending their farm in emergencies'.[85] Examples of women participating in defence are known from the Icelandic sagas: 'On Skúfey (in the Faeroe islands) Þuríðr grabbed weapons together with the men when their house was attacked, earning the rare compliment, that 'she was no worse than any man'.[86] Jochens also cites the example of an attack in Iceland in 1212 where 'Kálfr and his men were on the ramparts and ready to defend themselves, both women and men'.[87] She argues however, that under normal everyday circumstances, women did not carry weapons because they were not expected to engage in warfare.

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[79] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 107.
[80] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 367.
[81] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 108.
[82] Ibid, pp 213-4.
[83] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 367; Peter Foote and David Wilson, *The Viking achievement*, pp 110-11.
[84] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, pp 107-9.
[85] Ibid., p. 107.
[86] Ibid., p. 107.
[87] Ibid., p. 107.

> This is evident from the disparaging remarks, voiced by men and women alike, against men accused of being too weak to use weapons or so wanting in aggression that they appeared to be womanly… Women occasionally dressed in male garb to make the group appear larger and thus deceive the enemy, but they did so only on men's orders. Rather than joining the fray, women at times attempted to bring the men to a halt by throwing clothing over weapons. Both stratagems continued to be used in the contemporary sagas. The vocabulary associated with warriors and warfare also suggests that biological characteristics disqualified women from successful warfare. In other words, biology was destiny in the Nordic perception of gender; men were endowed with physical qualities – which women lacked – for leadership in war and in society. It seems safe to conclude that apart from a few exceptions born of necessity, Germanic women engaged in war neither during the centuries of European migration nor during the later Viking age. Historically and globally, warfare has remained men's work.[88]

The scholarly debate concerning Viking women who participated in fighting has been ongoing for a number of years,[89] and, although isolated cases have come to light, they so far appear to be the exception rather than the norm.[90] Clover has listed a number of these 'exceptions'. Examples include a woman named Jutta who travelled with her brother to Italy, where she became the wife of Roger, the son of King Tancred of Sicily, and took part in their wars. William of Jumiège also mentioned fighting women among the Vikings in France.

> The examples could be multiplied, but even this summary list should suffice to prompt the paradoxical question: just how useful is the category 'woman' in apprehending the status of women in early Scandinavia? To put it another way, was femaleness any more decisive in setting parameters on individual behaviour than were wealth, prestige, marital status, or just plain personality and ambition? If femaleness could be overridden by other factors, as it seems to be in the cases I have just mentioned, what does that say about the sex-gender system of early Scandinavia, and what are the implications for maleness?[91]

Jochens has examined images of women in the poetic and literary sources in order to distinguish whether or not they are reflective of society in historically or geographically recognizable contexts.[92] She suggests that if Germanic women could:

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[88] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, pp 107-9.
[89] Ibid., pp 87-112;
[90] For example, Arwill-Nordbladh, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?', pp 19-40.
[91] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 368.
[92] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*.

occasionally participate in battle during the migration age of the fourth and fifth centuries, it would be reasonable to consider that similar conditions might have prevailed during the tribes' next migration age, the Viking expansion thus justifying an expectation of fighting Viking women. If confirmed, the tradition of valkyries' and maiden warriors – known from the poetry created during this period – could have originated in contemporary Viking society. Kept alive through oral transmission and later preserved in writing, this tradition inspired further elaboration of the themes in due course.[93]

Clover cites the example of Unnr who 'fearing for her life and fortunes in Scotland after the death of her father and son, had a ship built in secret and fled, taking all her kin and retinue with her, to Orkney, then the Faroes, and finally Iceland, where, in about the year 900, she took possession of vast lands and established a dynasty... indeed, in every respect, she [Unnr] has taken over the conduct and social functions of the male householder and leader'.[94] Clover has argued that Unnr was able to act in what may be considered a male role due to the fact that the men who should have acted for her were all dead. This was in accordance with the law, which conferred authority on her in this situation.[95] While it may not have been the usual activity of women, there is more than enough evidence to argue that it may have been possible for some women to adopt a (perhaps transitory?) 'third' gender. Through an examination of Norse laws, the sagas, historical material, ethnological comparisons and archaeology, Clover suggests that while the female 'warrior' was a rare and specialized role, it was one that was theoretically viable.

> The only case in which a woman was allowed to take up arms was if (1) she was never married, (2) she had no living male relatives in the degrees listed in the law texts who would have received *weregild* for the death of a family member, and (3) a crime had been perpetrated against her family that required vengeance by the social code of the day, often the murder of her last male relative.[96]

This role was temporary, but for its duration conferred the social role on the warrior woman as 'son'.[97] There is some literary evidence to support the idea that it was possible for women to adopt a male role in society. This kind of temporary

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[93] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 108.
[94] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 366.
[95] Ibid., p. 366.
[96] Carol Clover, 'Maiden warriors and other sons' in *JEGP*, lxxxv (1986), p. 37 (Clover, 'Maiden warriors and other sons').
[97] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 29.

'transexualization' of women is supported in the literary sources. In his twelfth-century text *A history of the Danes*, Saxo Grammaticus mentions that there were once women in Denmark who dressed themselves to look like men and spent almost every minute cultivating soldiers' skills.[98]

There are a number of other examples from the Icelandic Sagas which describe young women adopting the manner and dress of a man, fighting and perhaps more significantly, adopting a male name. Clover gives the example of the girl Hervor who:

> learns to use bow, shield and sword while living in her maternal grandfather's house. In her youth, she dresses as a man and mugs people for their money. She decides to avenge her father's death, then joins a band of Vikings, calling herself 'Hervardr' and has a variety of warlike adventures before finally marrying and having children.[99]

A further example comes from *Hrolfs saga* where, Thornbjorg, the only child of King Eirikr of Sweden 'spends her girlhood pursuing the martial arts. Her father provides her with men and lands; and she adopts male dress and name (Thorbergr) and is known as king'.[100] These examples suggest that conceptualisations of Scandinavian gender identity during the medieval period may have been much more fluid than traditionally assumed. Crucially, it may be that this fluidity was much more dependent upon class and status than upon biological sex.

Archaeological evidence

While women were normally buried with objects that may be considered to be diagnostically female such as oval brooches and spindlewhorls, a number of female graves containing weapons, carpentry tools and hunting equipment have also been found. Certainly, it is enough to suggest that 'even in death some women remained marked as exceptional'.[101]

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[98] Oliver Elton (trans.,) *The nine books of the Danish history of Saxo Grammaticus* (New York, 1905), available at: Northvegr Foundation (http://www.northvegr.org/lore/saxo/007_03.php) (3 April, 2006) (Elton, *Saxo Grammaticus*).
[99] Clover, 'Maiden warriors and other sons', pp 35-49.
[100] Ibid., pp 35-49.
[101] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 368.

It may be that modern perceptions of gender – and the application of these concepts to the Irish archaeological record – have allowed us to miss nuances of identity as described by Clover. Christiansen has argued that while women most certainly accompanied the ninth-century invaders in the British Isles and on the Continent, if there were fighting factions of women among them, they did not attract the attention from foreign observers that they would have merited.[102]

Male and female graves are normally characterised by certain types of gravegoods. Since the first half of the nineteenth-century, it has been common archaeological practice to look primarily at the gravegoods when seeking to determine the sex of a buried individual whose bones may or may not have survived. Traditionally archaeologists have had a rather rigid perception of the division of labour between women and men.[103] Ascribing certain artefacts to male individuals and other artefacts to female individuals is a consequence of this. Thus the presence of certain types of jewellery, sewing needles etc. in a grave makes it a female burial whereas the presence of other types of jewellery, weapons and/or certain types of tools indicates a male burial.[104] However, the archaeological record reveals some ambiguity to this categorization, as female grave goods consisting of both weapons and trade implements have been identified at sites at Birka in Sweden and Oseberg in Norway.[105] Closer to Ireland, there is some evidence for such finds, as in the case of the female boat burial on the Isle of Man. Axes and arrowheads have also been found in women's graves at Kaupang, Norway.[106] Viking Age graves usually contain a range of gravegoods, and adult females are often accompanied by oval brooches. Female graves are also often accompanied by jewellery, kitchen articles, and artefacts used in textile production, although other types of artefacts have also been found. These more 'unusual' graves are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

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[102] Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 21.
[103] Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology, contesting the past* (London, 1999), p. 31 (Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology, contesting the past*).
[104] Tina Lauritsen and Ole Thirup Kastholm Hansen 'Transvestite Vikings' in *VHM*, i (2003), p. 14 (Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings').
[105] In her study of Viking Age burials in Western Norway, Liv Helga Dommasnes found that cooking equipment appeared in 26 percent of female graves, and 36 percent of the male graves. Agricultural equipment was found in 50 percent of the female graves and 36 percent of the male graves. However, there was an important distinction, the women had only small sickles, whereas the male burials had a much greater variety of tools. Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, pp 19-20.
[106] Ibid., p. 21.

Excavations at Barshalder on the island of Gotland indicated a clear-cut gender dichotomy in the gravegoods distribution. Male burials were associated with weaponry and female burials with textile crafts and keys – indicating responsibility for the house and or precious possessions.[107] This gendered artefact assemblage pattern fits into the overall pattern of late middle and late Viking period gravegoods distribution on the island of Gotland.

Þóra Pétursdóttir examined a corpus of 322 graves from Viking Age Iceland. All the remains had been osteologically examined, and biological sex – where possible – had been established. Her research indicated that of the graves examined, 74 were male, 35 were female and only a few juveniles and children were identified. Based on biological sex as the determining factor assigning the gravegoods a typical association, Pétursdóttir identified that knives, saddle remains, bridles, whetstones, weights, combs, strike-a-lights and cauldrons are found in both men's and women's graves. She further found that while beads are more common in female graves, they are also found in male graves. Weapons are never found in female graves in Iceland, and brooches are never found in male burials.[108] While tasks depicted in mortuary symbolism are not necessarily representative of all the tasks that person carried out in their lifetime, they may have been the most gender defining ones. At the very least the objects are likely to be symbolically important in death, possibly in connection to religious beliefs about the afterlife.[109]

Scandinavian burial traditions – anomalous burials

A number of 'anomalous' burials that do not conform to modern conceptions of either male/female or adult/child are known from the archaeological record. A large portion of these burials date to ninth- and tenth-century contexts. Female burials with weapons from the eleventh and twelfth-century have been identified from Balticum and Finland. Among them are a number of female graves from the Estonian island of Saaremaa, mainly wealthy graves, where the most common weapon is an axe, but spears and javelins also appear. In two graves from Finland – from Kalvola and Tyrväntö – swords

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[107] Martin Rundkvist, *Barshalder 2: Studies of late Iron Age Gotland* (Stockholm, 2003), p. 60, available at (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-275) (2 August, 2007) (Rundkvist, *Barshalder 2*).
[108] Þóra Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*', re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland' (MA thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø, May, 2007), p. 44 (Pétursdóttir, 'Re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland').
[109] Rundkvist, *Barshalder 2*, p. 60.

were found together with typically rich women's ornaments. In the grave-field of Luistari, grave no. 35 contained a female who had been buried with an axe. In grave 404, the skull and limb bones of a male that had been placed at the foot of the female skeleton were also identified. Two axes were placed under this burial.[110] A number of 'mixed' graves are also known from Norway, and Jan Peterson identified at least twenty extant in 1928. The majority of these graves are from the early ninth-century, and sometimes one weapon occurs, but it is not uncommon to see two or three weapons in a single burial. The most common weapon is the axe, but swords as well as spears often appear.[111] To date no male graves have been found with oval brooches in the British Isles. Yet, there are cases where weapons have been found in female graves. For example, a burial excavated in Norway in 1900 revealed a female buried with military equipment and a horse.[112]

Archaeologists confronted with the appearance of 'anomalous' objects in both male and female burials have tended not to offer adequate explanations for their presence (usually by labelling them 'anomalous'), or 'at least explain their presence in a way one would normally do other objects'.[113] For example, in 1867, a Viking Age grave containing a single skeleton with oval brooches (characteristic of a woman's grave) and a 'sword like item' (which is possibly a weaving batton) was discovered in Santon Downham in Norfolk, England.[114] Penelope Walton Rogers and Greg Speed suggested that the burial may be that of a male buried with 'keepsakes' of the man's wife in the manner of the pair of tenth-century oval brooches from Claughton Hall, Lancashire.[115]

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[110] Marika Mägi, *At the crossroads of space and time; graves, changing society and ideology on Saaremaa (Ösel), 9th – 13th centuries AD* (Tallinn, 2002), quoted in Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings?', p. 15.

[111] 'From Britain, several burials of this kind have also been identified. In Buckland, Dover, eleven burials containing grave goods not corresponding to the osteological sex determination were excavated. Seven males were buried with brooches, keys, pearls, bracelets etc. Three females were buried with spears and one with a shield boss. The same was true in Sewerby, Yorkshire, where three male graves held jewellery, and in West Heslerton where osteology determined that three weapon burials with spears were female. From Kempston in Bedfordshire and Harwell in Berkshire burials with "mixed" grave goods are known – that is weapons and female jewellery'. Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings?', p. 15.

[112] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 108.

[113] Anne Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking Age trade' in *Social approaches to Viking studies*, p. 78 (Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking Age trade').

[114] Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 21.

[115] Penelope Walton Rogers and Greg Speed, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xlviii, no. 1 (January 2005), p. 85 (Walton Rogers and Speed, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street'). The pair of oval brooches from Claughton Hall, Lancashire were found within a cremation mound containing typically male gravegoods. The brooches had been placed 'clam-like' as a container for a tooth and two beads.

However, the Claughton Hall cremation is more likely to be a double burial, as the cremation was put inside a wooden chest and inserted as a second burial into a probable Bronze Age barrow.[116] It may be the Santon Downham grave represents a double burial, and that there may have been another skeleton which was not noticed during the excavation, it is also of course possible there was only one skeleton in the grave, and that all the objects belong to a female.

Gerdrup, Denmark

Near the Danish village of Gerdrup, north of Roskilde, a double grave of ninth-century date was excavated in 1981 **(Figure 1)**. Swedish archaeologists Tina Lauritsen and Ole Thirup Kastholm have pointed out that the burial contained gravegoods that do not correspond to traditional gender/artefact associations. The grave, which was sexed via osteological analysis (a method that is 97% accurate) showed the remains to be of a female aged around 40 and a male between the ages of 35-40.[117] The male appeared to have suffered a violent death by hanging, and had his legs tied together. This suggests that he may have been a sacrificed slave, a practice that is documented by contemporary accounts. The female was buried with an iron knife, a needle box of bone, and a spear. Knives commonly appear in both male and female graves during the Viking Age, while needleboxes tend to be associated with females, and spears with males – although the Oseberg tapestry depicts women who appear to be carrying spears.[118] The Bedale burial in Yorkshire contained a pair of oval brooches and what appeared to be a spearhead which were both placed on the ribcage of the skeleton. The brooches had been placed in the usual position on the shoulders. It is also possible that this 'spear' was a weaving batton. Unfortunately the object is now lost.[119] If the object is indeed a spear, the Gerdrup burial represents an example of a female burial that diverges from the 'norm' because it comprises artefacts traditionally regarded as belonging to the female sphere alongside artefacts associated with males. It has been suggested that the deceased woman was a female warrior, or more likely, a woman with some kind of male status in the manner argued by Carol Clover. Judith Jesch has also suggested that the spear may be symbolic and not something the woman would

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[116] Haakon Shetelig, (ed.), *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, part iv* (Oslo, 1940), pp 15-9 (Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, iv*).

[117] Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings?', p. 15.

[118] However, another interpretation of the images on the Oseberg tapestry is that the represent Valkyries.

[119] The fact that this burial was excavated in the nineteenth-century leaves a definitive interpretation difficult. Walton Rogers and Speed, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street', p. 85.

have used in her own lifetime.[120] Interestingly, the female burial at Gerdrup was weighed down with boulders that had been deliberately placed over her grave. It has been suggested that this may have been done in order to prevent a 'haunting'.[121] This practice is also known from other parts of the Scandinavian diaspora. In Visby, Sweden, a Viking age cemetery revealed a number of female burials, including a middle-aged female who had been buried in a dug grave after which a large boulder was placed over her abdomen.[122] Two neonates were also present in the grave **(Figure 2a)**.[123] Another similar female burial is known from the Viking Age cemetery at Fröjel, on Gotland. Two large granite boulders were placed over the pelvis of the forty-six year old women in order to 'pin her in place to the ground'.[124] Dan Carlsson has suggested that the reason for this ritual was that the woman had died an unusual death.[125] Other similar graves are also known from Gotland **(Figures 2b, 2c, 2d)**. For the Irish context, excavations at 'the Anchorage', Bettystown, Co. Meath revealed a young adult female crouched inhumation dating to the first millennium AD.[126] This grave had also been covered with a large boulder that had been placed over the abdomen of the skeleton.[127] A number of possible 'revenant' burials are also known from Anglo-Saxon England, where they appear to represent a particular burial rite associated with some infants and children. However, as Crawford has argued, this practice was not a ritual aimed exclusively at infants and children, but rather was 'a ritual provoked by some condition of life or death that children and infants were more likely to fulfil than adults.'[128]

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[120] Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 21.
[121] Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings?', p. 15.
[122] [Anl. 21, 2000]. Malin Crona, pers comm.
[123] Monika Elmshorn, 'SPÅR, av ett förflutet, en osteologisk analys och diskussion av bevaringsgrad hos ett skelettmaterial från Fröjel på Gotland' (MA thesis, Högskolan på Gotland, 2000-2001), p. 19, available at (http://www.arkeologigotland.se/uppsatser/MonicaElmshorn-2001.pdf) (12 February, 2006).
[124] Dan Carlsson, *"Ridanäs" Vikingahamnen i Fröjel, ArkeoDoc skrifter nr. 2* (Visby, 1999), pp 135-7.
[125] The woman [grave no. 32, 1988] was also wearing an unusual bronze finger ring with ornate design on her hand. The excavating director interpreted it as being an example of contact with the east. Ibid., p. 135.
[126] However, crouched burials tend to be viewed as pre-500 AD. John Bradley, pers. comm.
[127] James Eogan, 'Further excavations at Bettystown, Co. Meath' paper given at the Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in Light of Recent Excavations Conference, 14 October, 2005. Also see James Eogan, 'Bettystown', Meath [1998:503, 015607320, SMR 21:10, 98E0072] available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Meath&id=1431) (5 September, 2006). It is also interesting to note that a crouched burial of a child was also identified at the site. It was place approximately 25 meters west of the female burial. James Eogan, 'Bettystown', Meath [1998:503, 015607320, SMR 21:10, 98E0072] available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Meath&id=1431) (5 September, 2006).
[128] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 80-1.

<u>Scandinavian culture and its adaptation to new environments in the West – mortuary practices</u>

Scandinavian culture, as it moved westwards, adapted and changed according to the differing environments it experienced. This is reflected in pagan[129] and Christian burial customs, the character of settlement and distribution patterns, as well as domestic and trade artefact types.

Maeve Sikora analyzed the horse burials in Norway, Iceland, Scotland and Ireland and found that these pagan burials reflected the differences in the establishment and continuity of Scandinavian pagan ritual. Iceland, which provided the largest number of horse burials for the longest period of time, was uninhabited before the Scandinavians arrived from Norway, Scotland and Ireland.[130] Horses are the most common grave good in Icelandic graves, and are more common there then in any other part of the Viking world.[131] Where horse burials occur as gravegoods, they usually are single burials, but some double horse burials are also known:

> How horses are deposited varies, but can overall be divided in two categories; the horse is either buried with the person or in a separate grave, the latter being less common. Instances where horse and person are buried together also vary as there is either one large grave compartment containing both or there are two connected graves separated by a small barrier or section but covered with one heap of soil and stones. Where horse and human are buried together, the horse usually rests in the foot end of the grave and most often with its back against the interred. Occasionally the horse is described as lying beside the deceased. Generally, the horse lies on one side with its back slightly curved and the feet either clenched under the belly or straight.[132]

Sikora argues that this ritual may have been rather egalitarian, unlike Norway, where horse burials are associated with wealth, prestige, and power.[133] In Iceland, horse burials are associated with both male and female burials. While these burials have largely been biologically sexed based on gravegoods rather than osteological analysis, Sikora identified that at least forty of the graves are male, but eighteen are female;

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[129] Maeve Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial, a comparative study of Norway, Iceland, Scotland and Ireland' in *JIA*, xii and xiii (2003-2004), p. 87 (Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial').

[130] It may well be that Scandinavian customs, such as horse burial, survived much longer in Iceland due to the lack of indigenous cultures which might effect changes in the burial tradition.

[131] Pétursdóttir, 'Re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland', p. 45.

[132] Ibid., p. 45.

[133] Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial', p. 95.

while in two cases, horses were found in double burials of males and females.[134] She argues that 'these figures would suggest that trends shifted somewhat in Iceland, and that women were more frequently considered eligible to have a horse included in the grave'.[135] While it was certainly possible for women to become powerful in Scandinavia, the increase in the amount of high-status horse burials in Iceland indicates that more women than usual were able to reach such high status levels. As argued above, this may be seen as a reflection of the higher numbers of native Scandinavian women who travelled as settlers to Iceland. This may have implications for the Irish context, as the harness mounts from the Athlumney burial are directly comparable to those found in the women's graves at Gausel and Soma in western Norway.[136]

Whereas cremation is associated with at least 20% of the horse burials that Sikora examined from Norway, no cremations with horse burials have yet been found in Ireland or Scotland. This may be due to Christian influence,[137] or indeed to poor recording.

The horse was extremely important to the culture of the Scandinavians in their homelands as well as in Ireland.

> The horse was arguably the most important animal in Viking Age Scandinavia, both for transport and as a means for traction in agriculture, not least in ploughing. As a possession, it was a sign of status and, perhaps because of this, the horse became a central element of Nordic – that is, Scandinavian – religion and funerary practices.[138]

In Norse mythology, the horse is linked with the Gods Odin, Freyr and Freya; and is very much associated with fertility. Horse burials are found throughout Norway, the British Isles and Ireland; and they are associated with both male and female graves. Sikora notes, however, that their distribution differs significantly between the more agrarian Iceland and the largely maritime bases of Scotland, where the boat rather than the horse was likely the primary mode of travel. 'Artefacts allow sexing of eight of the Scottish graves. Seven are male while one, a boat grave near Machrins on Colonsay,

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[134] Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial' p. 93.
[135] Ibid., p. 93.
[136] Ibid., p. 94.
[137] Ibid., p. 93.
[138] Ibid., p. 87.

contained both male and female associated artefacts. This proportion is more in line with that noted in Norway.[139] The Athlumney burial appears to have contained more than one individual, and recently Mark Clinton has suggested that the grave is that of a female, rather than a warrior.[140] Large numbers of female graves containing horses and horse equipment have also been excavated from Viking Age sites in Denmark. However, horse equipment in the female graves reflects that used in driving horses rather than riding.[141]

In Ireland, only four possible horse burials have been identified to date, suggesting that this method of burial may have been affected by the presence of Christianity, and the desire for the Scandinavians to integrate into the community. However, it is important to bear in mind that no very few Viking burials in Ireland have recorded contexts. Interestingly, the carving of a horse in the form of a child's toy from Fishamble Street in Dublin may be symbolic of the continuation of the importance of horses through the transition from paganism to Christianity amongst the material culture of Scandinavian children. Only four horse burials have been identified in Ireland, (between Newbridge and Milltown Co. Kildare, at Islandbridge, at Athlumney, Co. Meath, and at Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry). The Athlumney burials may represent a double burial similar to the ones identified in Scotland.

The importance of the horse in Scandinavian and Viking Age culture is attested to by the number of both male and female burials with horses and horse related objects, as well by a number of objects carved in the shape of horses. These include toys, a crested shaped wooden object from Fishamble Street[142] decorated with a *Tau Finial*,[143] and the harness bow (also from Fishamble Street).[144] Interestingly, this same horse motif appears on many of the whalebone plaques found in Scandinavian and the Northwest Atlantic, including the plaque from Kilmainham/Islandbridge **(Figures 3a: i and ii)**,

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[139] Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial', p. 93.

[140] Mark Clinton, 'Settlement dynamics in Co. Meath, the kingdom of Lóegaire' in *Peritia*, xiv (2000), p. 368.

[141] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, 'Barn i stan' in *Historiska Nyheter, Vikingarna varlånghåriga och välfriserade, Statenshistoriska museumoch Riksantikvarieämbetet*, lxi (1996), p. 25 (Gräslund, 'Barn i stan'). Riding horses can be identified by the presence of stirrups or spurs in the grave, such objects appear to be very much associated with male grave furniture.

[142] NMI [E148:818], James Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood, a study of its ornament and style*, p. 84 (Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*).

[143] Ibid., p. 84.

[144] NMI [E190:4776], ibid., p. 83.

and the one from Cherrywood, Co. Dublin, which dates to the second half of the ninth-century and has been compared to one from Grytøy in Norway **(Figure 3)**.[145] Other plaques are decorated with what may be either a horse or a dragon/serpent, such as the extremely well preserved plaque from the female burial at Scar on Sanday in Orkney **(Figure 4)**.[146] This horse/dragon motif appears on a number of carved wooden objects from Dublin, including a number of objects from Fishamble Street; a chair terminal,[147] and two crooks (possibly for a walking stick or a whip handle,[148] but may also be the ornate back of a chair).[149] Two other crooks with these carvings come from Christchurch Place[150] from the vicinity of Christchurch[151] and a switch or a bow from Christchurch Place.[152] The design on the 'crook' from Fishamble Street is remarkably similar to a 'post' from the Oseberg ship 'queen' burial from Vestfold in Norway, and to the Dragon heads on verge boards for a tent from the Gokstad ship male burial **(Figure 5)**.

This design must have had some symbolic meaning to the high status women who used these whalebone plaques, and may have been less a gender related symbol and more of a power related one. This interpretation is supported by finds of horse/dragon related artefacts in the graves of both men and women in high status graves as well as the diversity of types of artefacts that have this design.

Whalebone plaques are normally found as grave goods[153] in rich female graves and are likely to have been an item of high status. Forty have been identified from western Norway to date **(Figure 6a and 6b)**.[154] They are not, however, confined to this area, they are known from northern Scotland **(Figure 7)**,[155] as well as Ireland. Four were

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[145] Ruth Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin* (Dublin, 2004), p. 68 (Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*).

[146] Anna Ritchie, *Viking Scotland, historic Scotland series* (London, 2001), p. 45 (Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*).

[147] NMI [E172:10658].

[148] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Ireland, Wales, Man, and the Hebrides' in Peter Sawyer (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of the Vikings* (Oxford, 1997), p. 95.

[149] NMI [E172:5587 and E:190:4073]. John Bradley, pers. comm.

[150] NMI [E122:8539].

[151] NMI [1887:144].

[152] NMI [E122:15744], Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood,* p. 63, plate xii, p. 53; plate V; pp 63-6, plate viii, and figures 69, 70, 71, 37.

[153] However, fragments of a whalebone plaque were found in a domestic context at Saevar Howe in Orkney, and the Cherrywood plaque came from a pit on the site rather than from a grave. Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 46.

[154] Else Roesdahl and David Wilson, *From Viking to crusader, the Scandinavians and Europe 800-1200* (New York, 1992), p. 35.

[155] John Ó Néill, 'A Norse settlement in rural County Dublin' in *Archaeology Ireland,* xiii, no. 4, issue no. 50 (Winter 1999), p. 9 (Ó Néill, 'A Norse settlement in rural County Dublin').

identified from Sweden; one from a rich female grave in Birka, and three from the settlement area known as 'the Black Earth' also in Birka **(Figure 8)**. Roesdahl and Wilson have argued that the finds from England and Sweden likely represent imported Norwegian objects, because whalebone is common in Norway.[156] An unusual example of an unfinished whalebone plaque comes from Ely in Cambridgeshire, England **(Figure 9)**;[157] another unfinished board dating to the early Viking period comes from Enge, Sømna, Helgeland, in Northern Norway.[158] The exact purpose of these boards is something of a mystery. They do not display any evidence of wear that might indicate they were used as chopping boards. One suggestion is that they were used for pleating the fine linen cloth worn by wealthy or upper class women.[159] Another suggestion is that they were used as 'smoothing boards', particularly as they are associated with heavy glass objects known as linen smoothers.[160] Most of the early examples of smoothers (also known as 'slick-stones) are of dark green-blue glass, coloured by the impurities in the sand they were made from. These bun-shaped objects were generally 6.5 - 8.5 cm in diameter[161] – a size which fit comfortably in the hand. They were especially effective on linen because linen can be pleated and pressed cold as long as it is damp. However, this process may have been more useful for making the linen shiny than for making it wrinkle-free, as linen tends to wrinkle as soon as worn.[162] Glass smoothers or fragments are known from female graves throughout the Viking region, including Anglo-Scandinavian York,[163] Winchester,[164] and Birka.[165] A single dark green

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[156] Else Roesdahl and David Wilson, *From Viking to crusader, the Scandinavians and Europe 800-1200* (New York, 1992), p. 42.

[157] Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, part iv*, fig. 39, p. 71; CUMMA [22. 895 A].

[158] Thorleif Sjøvold, *The Iron Age settlement of Arctic Norway, a study of the expansion of Iron Age culture within the Arctic Circle II, Late Iron Age*, Tromsø Museums Skrifter x, 2 (Tromsø, 1974), pp 175-7; 256, pl. 23.

[159] The pleating process would have entailed winding damp material around the board and allowing it to dry. Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 46.

[160] Ibid., p. 46. Linen smoothers were still in use in both Norway and Scotland until the nineteenth-century for smoothing linen and pressing in pleats. Ibid., p. 47.

[161] Charleston, 'Slick-stones', pp 240-242.

[162] Sarah Goslee, 'Whalebone smoothing board' available at (http://www.stringpage.com/viking/board.html) (4 November, 2007).

[163] Arthur MacGregor, 'Anglo-Scandinavian finds from Lloyds Bank, Pavement, and other sites' in *The Archaeology of York: The Small Finds 17/3* (York, 1976).

[164] R. J., Charleston, 'Slick-stones' in Martin Biddle (ed.), *Object and economy in Medieval Winchester* (Oxford, 1990), pp 240-242 (Charleston, 'Slick-stones').

[165] Eva Andersson, *Tools for textile production from Birka and Hedeby, Birka Studies 8, excavations in the Black Earth 1990-1995* (Stockholm, 2003); also [SHM 34000: Bj 513] Glass linen smoother from Birka, Sweden, available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=28627) (3 May, 2007) (Andersson, *Tools for textile production from Birka and Hedeby*).

glass smoother comes from Chester.[166] More than forty are known from Norway, and eleven are extant from Scotland. Examples also exist from the Kilmainham/Islandbridge cemetery as well as from the excavations at Wood Quay, Dublin, including two glass smoothers from High Street and Fishamble Street, and an unusual example of a cloth smoother made from jet from St. John's Lane.[167]

Scandinavian women as colonisers and settlers

Both Scandinavian males and females travelled to Iceland as colonisers, from both Ireland and from Scandinavia itself, along with high percentages of Irish slaves,[168] wives and followers.[169] Recent research in genetics and isotopic analysis of the Icelandic population has indicated that while the vast majority of the male immigrants to Iceland were of Norse origin, the population was mixed Scandinavian and Gaelic, the latter probably derived mostly from women.[170] However, Clover has argued that while most of the original land claimants in Iceland were male, according to the *Landnámabók* thirteen of them were Scandinavian women.[171] Scandinavian women played active roles in the colonization, control and settlement of Viking establishments – both urban and rural. For the Icelandic context:

> the settlements in the Mosfell Valley are in many ways representative of early settlements in coastal valleys throughout Iceland. Except for a few Irish monks who are thought to have arrived earlier seeking solitude, Iceland was uninhabited when the first settlers or *landnamsmenn* arrived in the mid – to late 800s. The settlers came mostly from mainland Scandinavia,

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[166] [Grosvener Museum, A. Witham's Collection No. 100], illustrated in Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland part iv*, p. 69; 71.

[167] NMI [E71:16641]; NMI [E172:4020] and NMI [E173:3700].

[168] Barra Ó Donnabháin and Benedikt Hallgrímsson, 'Dublin: the biological identity of the Hiberno-Norse town' in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin II* (Dublin, 2001), p. 73 (Ó Donnabháin and Benedikt Hallgrímsson, 'Dublin: the biological identity of the Hiberno-Norse town').

[169] According to *Landnámabók*, male and female Irish slaves accompanied the settlers who colonised Iceland, as well as Scandinavian men and women. T. Ellwood, Rev., (trans.), *Landnámabók, the book of the settlement of Iceland, translated from the original Icelandic of Ari the Learned* (Highgate, 1898), available at: Northvegr Foundation (http.//www.northvegr.org/lore/landnamabok/003.php) (14 February, 2006) (Ellwood, *Landnámabók*).

[170] Jesse Byock, Phillip Walker, Jon Erlandson, Per Holck, Davide Zori, Magnús Gudmundsson and Mark Tveskov, 'A Viking-age valley in Iceland, The Mosfell archaeology project' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xlix (2005), p. 203 (Byock et al, 'A Viking-age valley in Iceland'). Also see A. Helgason, S. Sigurðardóttir, J. R. Gulcher, R. Ward and K. Stefánsson, 'mtDNA and the origin of the Icelanders: deciphering signals of recent population history' in *AJHG*, lxvi (2000), pp 999-1016; A. Helgason, S. Sigurðardóttir, J. Nicholson, B. Sykes, E. Hill, D. G. Bradley, V. Bosnes, J. R. Gulcher, R. Ward and K. Stefánsson, 'Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic ancestry in the male settlers of Iceland' in *AJHG,* lxvii (2000), pp 697-717.

[171] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 366.

especially the western coast of Norway, but significant numbers also came from the Viking settlements in the British Isles.[172]

Interestingly, an intact lignite arm bracelet is known from the burial of a 36-45 year old female in Iceland. It is the only one of its kind known from Iceland and likely originated in the British Isles[173] **(Figure 10)**. Another lignite arm ring was excavated from a female burial in Castletown, Caithness, along with a pair of tenth-century oval brooches and a bone bodkin.[174] An unusual cremation burial mound from Lamba Ness on Sanday also contained burnt bone along with a pair of oval brooches, a bronze ring pin, amber bead and a lignite arm-band.[175] Very similar bracelets are known from Dublin, as well as from numerous crannóg and ringfort sites throughout Ireland.

When considering the topic of women as colonisers, it is important to take into consideration the fact that earliest settlements varied in character. For example, the Isle of Man generally appears to have had a rather peaceful integration between natives and newcomers. The Vikings intermarried with local high-ranking women and this is reflected in the historical evidence as well as in place name evidence. The situation in the Scottish Isles is rather different and is the focus of considerable debate. The problem largely lies with the fact that few Pictish settlements in Scotland have been found to date, while there is considerable evidence for Scandinavian settlements. There is also the evidence of place names, which, in the Northern Isles are considerable. Whether there was 'peaceful' integration with the Picts, as seems to be the case with

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[172] Byock et al, 'A Viking-age valley in Iceland', p. 203. The newcomers were forced to adapt to a harsh northern landscape of sometimes limited resources… The society that evolved during the Viking Age on this large island (Iceland is 25% larger than Ireland and two-thirds the size of England and Scotland together) avoided the establishment of most official hierarchies without going so far as to create egalitarianism. The politically active population consisted mostly of free land-owning farmers. Jón Jóhannesson, *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth: Islendinga saga* (Winnipeg, 1974); G. Karlsson, *The History of Iceland* (Minneapolis, 2000); idem, *Goðamenning: Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi íslendinga* (Reykjavík, 2004).

[173] Pétursdóttir, 'Re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland', p. 55.

[174] James Graham-Campbell and Colleen Batey, *Vikings in Scotland, an archaeological survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 68 (Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*)

[175] Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland,* p. 57. Only a few cremation burials are known from Viking/Scandinavian Scotland and inhumation was the normal pagan burial rite. In addition, the pagan settlers appear not to have adopted the practice of burying their dead in existing native cemeteries, a practice well attested to in the Isle of Man, the North of England and in Ireland, Ibid., p. 144.

the Manx, or a slaughter and settlement remains to become clear.[176] Other areas of settlement are markedly different. The Faroes appear to have been occupied by a few Irish monks, who – according to the historical record – fled back to Ireland once the Vikings appeared. Regardless of this, the Faroes, like Iceland, were little inhabited and as the character of Viking activity in all these Islands was agricultural, they required women. The nature of the debate has always been whether Scandinavian/Viking women travelled to these areas with the men, or whether the Vikings took native Irish and British women to settle the areas.

Recent genetic research on Faroese and other populations in the North Atlantic has provided useful information for research into the place of origin of the Viking Age settlers. The Faroese population is one of the most homogeneous and isolated in the North Atlantic. Previous studies suggested a strong Scandinavian ancestry for the male settlers, while recent research has indicated an excess of Irish and British Isles ancestry for the female settlers.[177] When compared to other admixed populations in the North Atlantic region, the population of the Faroe Islands appears to have the highest level of asymmetry in Scandinavian vs. indigenous Irish and British Isles ancestry proportions among female and male settlers of the archipelago,[178] with Iceland having the most disproportionate male to female ratio of Scandinavian founding population.

Historical and archaeological evidence has suggested that Scandinavians settled the Faroes sometime between 825 and 875 AD, and that Iceland was settled somewhat later (c. 870). Genetic evidence has indicated that both the Faroes and Iceland were settled around the same time by males from Scandinavia and females from both Scandinavia and the British Isles and Ireland.[179] In contrast, the areas closer to Scandinavia were

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[176] The two main views in this debate are represented by two archaeologists in particular. For the view that there was some sort of social integration between the Picts and the Vikings during the ninth century see Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-Age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *PSAS*, cviii (1976-7), p. 192. For the argument that the Scandinavian colonization during the ninth century was one of dispossession or expulsion see Iain Crawford, 'War or Peace – Viking colonisation in the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland reviewed' in *Proceedings of the Eighth Viking Congress* (1981), p. 267.
[177] Thomas Als, Tove Jorgensen, Anders Børglum, Peter Peterson, Ole Mors, and August Wang, 'Highly discrepant proportions of female and male Scandinavian and British Isles ancestry within the isolated population of the Faroe Islands' in *EJHG*, xiv (2006), p. 497 (Als et al, 'Female and male Scandinavian and British Isles ancestry').
[178] Ibid., p. 497.
[179] Ibid., p. 503.

settled by roughly even numbers of Scandinavian males and females. Thus Goodacre *et al* concluded that:

> Scandinavian settlement of the North Atlantic region during the Viking Age was primarily family based in the closer and more secure areas of Orkney, Shetland, and the Scottish coast, whereas pronounced male-based settlement occurred at the 'frontier' (the Western Isles, Skye, Iceland). Lone Viking males, who later established families with British Isles females, were thus more prominent in the remote and less secure areas.[180]

This recent research has indicated that during the Viking Age much of the North Atlantic was colonized by Scandinavian *family groups* – Scandinavian female settlers (and children) as well as by British and Irish native women. It is clear that women travelled with the Scandinavian expeditions into the Northern Isles, settling areas of Shetland, the Orkneys and the Faroe Islands. Expeditions aimed at colonial settlement in uninhabited areas such as Iceland, Greenland, and North America included women almost immediately. It appears that the general pattern may have been that small groups of male 'Vikings' made the initial forays into the British Isles and Ireland alone with families travelling slightly afterwards once news of the new lands had been secured.[181] The saga of the Greenlanders (*Grænlendinga saga*), written down c. 1200 AD,[182] describes how one of the main Scandinavian voyages to North America was not only paid for by a female, but that she accompanied the excursion.[183]

> In the small Norse colony in the New World, the indomitable Freydís Eiríksdóttir used not only her nakedness but also a sword as defence against the natives, and – on a more ominous note – personally killed five women with an axe.[184]

There is historical evidence that a number of wealthy or upperclass women participated in voyages to all parts of the Viking world. Judith Jesch cites an account of a ninth-

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[180] Als, et al, 'Female and male Scandinavian and British Isles ancestry', p. 503; S. Goodacre, A. Helgeson, J. Nicholson, L. Southam, L. Ferguson, E. Hickey, E. Vega, K. Stefansson, R. Ward, and B. Sykes, 'Genetic evidence for a family based Scandinavian settlement of Shetland and Orkney during the Viking periods' in *Heredity*, xcv (2005), pp 129-135.

[181] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, pp 108-9. The events the saga describes take place between 970 and 1030.

[182] Helgi Porlaksson. 'The Vinland Sagas in a contemporary light' in Andrew Wawn and Porunn Sigurdardottir (eds), *Approaches to Vinland*, Rit Stofnunar Sigurdur Nordal 4 (Reykjavik, 2001), pp 63-77, quoted in E. A. Williamsen, 'Boundaries of difference in the Vinland Sagas' in *Scandinavian Studies*, lxxvii, no. 4 (2005), p. 451.

[183] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', pp 366-7.

[184] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 109.

century Christian mission to Birka, a Swedish trading centre, which relates the conversion of a rich widow Frideburg and her daughter Catla, who travelled to the Frisian port of Dorestad.[185] There is also evidence that some Scandinavian women took part in the earliest period of raiding and settlement. Jesch has argued that:

> women could and did play a part in this process of settlement. Iceland, for instance, was uninhabited, and a permanent population could only be established if women also made the journey there. In regions with an established indigenous population, Viking settlers may have married local women, while some far-roving Vikings picked up female companions en route, but there is evidence that Scandinavian women reached most parts of the Viking world, from Russia in the east to Newfoundland in the west.[186]

The literary sources also indicate that families were present during the Scandinavia invasion of northern England. According to *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonor*, King Erik Bloodaxe travelled with his wife Gunnhild to York during his exile from Norway. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also records that Hæsten, raiding up the Thames in 892 brought *a wife and two sons with him*.[187] Archaeological material supports the presence of women in even the more remote 'frontier lands' of the Faroes and Newfoundland. A Viking-Age female grave from Tjørnuvik in the Faroes turned up a ring-headed pin of tenth-century Hiberno-Scandinavian type. The rectangular grave construction also has parallels with adult male and female burials on Cnip (Kneep), Isle of Lewis.[188] The site of L'Anse aux Meadows in Northern Newfoundland, excavated in the 1950s, turned up indisputable evidence of Scandinavian occupation during the early eleventh-century. A bronze ringed-pin of a type well known from the British Isles, the Faroes and Iceland was identified, along with a spindle whorl common in the settlements in Greenland. There is no evidence that the settlement was a permanent one, and it is possible that each group of buildings were used by successive Scandinavian groups of people.[189] If this is true, then the find of the spindle whorl (which have yet to be found in male graves) suggests that women not only travelled as part of the expeditions, but also were instrumental in settling this area.

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[185] Judith Jesch, 'Viking women' available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/vikings/women_01.shtml) (3 March 2001) (Jesch, 'Viking women').
[186] Ibid.
[187] Speed and Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street', p. 87.
[188] A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, T. Neighbour, and A. R. Rees, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *PSAS*, cxxv (1995), p. 745 (Dunwell, et al, A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip).
[189] Graham-Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 84.

The Oseberg burial, Norway

Archaeological evidence supports the idea of some women being able to hold positions of freedom and power. The early date of the Oseberg burial from Vestfold in Norway supports the idea that some women at least held positions of wealth, power, and prestige during the time of the earliest Viking raids. The Oseberg mound comprised two women interred along with rich travelling items, including jewels, precious metals, food and exotic spices. The date ascribed to the boat burial has been determined by dendrochronology to be 834,[190] only 39 years after the first attack on Rathlin Island. The Oseberg burial is comparable to the rich male boat burials at Gokstad and Tuna and is an example of one of the richest burials in the Scandinavian diaspora. Botanical evidence from the site indicates that the burial was constructed over a period of three or four months, with the initial preparations beginning in the spring and the burial finally taking place in the Autumn.[191] Within the grave were two skeletons that were anthropologically determined to be female, one aged twenty-four the other an older woman who may have been her attendant. The grave also contained the remains of approximately fifteen horses, two oxen, two dogs, a large number of wooden objects including four sledges, a wagon, four or five beds, a saddle and a chair. A number of objects associated with weaving were also identified, including several weaving looms, weaving equipment, fragments of cloth and tapestries and down filled cushions. Iron kettles, barrels, ladles and buckets were also excavated from the burial, as well as parts of a sail, oars, an iron anchor and pieces of rope of different thicknesses.[192] Interestingly, the Oseberg burial also contained a number of objects of Irish origin, including a brooch made from the boss of an enamelled cross.[193]

> While the magnitude of riches in this grave is staggering, remarkably little research has focused on the discovering the identity of the woman within let alone the power she was likely to have commanded. Most sources rarely mention the attendant… most sources discuss this grave in terms of family wealth instead of individual wealth… Why does the association of the woman at Oseberg with some typically 'male' equipment lead people to account for this 'anomaly' in terms of family or a husband's wealth? [194]

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[190] Arwill-Nordblach, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?' p. 19.
[191] Ibid., p. 21.
[192] Ibid., pp 21-2.
[193] Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p. 27.
[194] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 107.

Based on evidence from the thirteenth-century Icelandic writer Snorri Sturlason's *Ynglinga saga*, some have interpreted the grave as being that of queen Åsa, the grandmother of King Harold Hairfair who united Norway in 890 AD accompanied by her maid or thrall.[195] It is possible, however that the skeletons represent two high status or royal women.[196] Christiansen has pointed out that at Valsgärde, Sweden, most of the fifty or so cremation burials were women, and that the burial contained within the highest mound, the one dominating all the others – was a female. He further points out evidence of the wall tapestries found at both Oseberg and at Överhogdal depict women as both religious leaders and as owners of herds and horses.[197] He has further suggested that the need to keep family property secure in the homelands, as well as to increase wealth by colonial expeditions, were perhaps better served by a partnership between men and women rather than by patriarchy.[198]

> The condition of women in a patriarchal, heroic and warlike world is often assumed to have been submissive, semi-servile if not actually servile; so much so that some attribute the power, wisdom and sexual freedom of certain female archetypes in ON literature to lingering reminiscences of prepatriarchal days, back in the Bronze Age: memories preserved in folk tales, traduced by Christians, and revived in the thirteenth-century by a 'miracle' of literary creativeness. This is not only unlikely, but also unnecessary. Female independence and consequence were a social fact in the Viking age at the level which inspires legend: the top. Thanks to marriage, inheritance and economics, women were valuable, if freeborn, as far down the scale as freedom and property reached.[199]

Christiansen cites numerous examples of strong and powerful female individuals in Norse history, including powerful aristocratic mothers, widows, and Queens. He argues that the tales of their power show that 'here as elsewhere in the West and East, high birth and powerful husbands gave women power and esteem, but the evidence of the graves indicates (like the fifth- and sixth-century graves of southern Britain) that this esteem was not confined to the rulers, but went deeper than that'.[200] Liv Helga

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[195] Arwill-Nordblach, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?', p. 22.
[196] The burial was looted a few hundred years after the burial and thus makes it impossible to determine with any accuracy if one of the skeletons represented a person of higher status. Ibn Fadlan's account of the sacrifice of a thrall to a high status Viking male of the Rus has effected the interpretation of sacrifice of one of the persons within the Oseberg boat burial. However, due to the very large number of objects within the grave it is possible that both persons were of high or royal status. Ibid., p. 25.
[197] Christiansen, *Norsemen of the Viking Age*, p. 19.
[198] Ibid., p. 20.
[199] Ibid., p. 17.
[200] Ibid., p. 19.

Dommanses has argued that despite every reason to accept that the women buried at Oseberg were themselves powerful:

> few authors seem willing to open the field of inquiry further and rethink the identification of 'male' equipment in the graves and other contexts. In more modest burials, Dommasnes notes that all equipment associated with female graves (agricultural tools, cooking utensils, and textile implements) are also found in many male graves. And among those tools traditionally associated with male activities (hunter, carpenter, blacksmith, boatbuilder), although primarily restricted to male graves, there are interesting exceptions associated with females.[201]

Mortensen has suggested that a research design that actually tests assumptions about gender roles, rather than applying assumptions may open up our ideas about the relationship between gender and production during the Viking Age.[202]

Gaming pieces

Gaming pieces have been found at Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian sites in Ireland as well as other parts of the Viking world. They are generally associated with high status male burials, and may indicate the necessity for a warrior to be both strong and intelligent in the art of war,[203] as well as suggesting the pursuit of leisure as an attribute of status.[204] Snorri Sturleson's version of the Sigurd legend describes how at the end of the world only two mortals will survive the destruction and 'will people earth again; some of the gods will live, sons of the dead Odin and Thor, and "they find in the grass the golden playing pieces the gods once owned" – a hopeful evocation of a new era'.[205] Graham-Campbell points out that 'it is not clear how much this sophisticated mythology had to do with the beliefs of those buried in ships or mounds or more humble graves throughout the Norse world. But at least some Vikings had playing pieces, if not golden ones, buried with them, and harvesting implements too, as well as weapons, indicating

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[201] Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Late Iron Age in Western Norway, female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *NAR*, xv, nos 1-2 (1982), pp 76-7 (Dommasnes, 'Late Iron Age in Western Norway, female roles and ranks').

[202] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 108. Mortensen gives the example of analyzing burial practices to inform our ideas about who did what rather than wondering why we do not see the associations we expect to see. Ibid., p. 108.

[203] Heléne Whittaker, 'Game boards and gaming pieces in funerary contexts in the Northern European Iron Age' in *Nordlit*, xx, p. 103, available at (http://uit.no/humfak/3518/31) (22 April, 2007). (Whittaker, 'Gameboards and gaming pieces in funerary contexts').

[204] John Bradley, pers. comm..

[205] Graham-Campbell, *The Viking World*, p. 185.

perhaps that their hope of the future life included something other than the continuous fighting and drinking of Valholl'.[206] Gaming pieces are associated (along with horses) with the war god Odin, and while they are usually found in high status male graves, a number have turned up in female graves. For example, grave 523 at Birka (an exceptionally rich female burial) was accompanied by jewellery, drinking horns, a bronze bowl, a wooden bucket and bowls, a 'rare example of a wooden animal head sculpture' as well as glass gaming pieces.[207] This burial suggests that the presence of game boards and gaming pieces in mortuary contexts could refer specifically to:

> male prestige and the values associated with military prowess and leadership, but at times could also express social status in general, both male and female. Alternatively, objects normally associated with male values may have been used to designate extraordinary female status. The prestige of powerful women may in some cases have been assimilated to male prestige which was primarily derived from warfare.[208]

Mortensen has pointed out that where scholars have employed a gendered perspective in rethinking social roles in Viking Scandinavia, a much more nuanced image of gender and economic participation has emerged.[209] Research by both Liv Helga Dommasnes and Anne Stalsberg has suggested that women were much more active in the economic sphere than traditionally understood. Dommasnes' examination of a significant number of Norwegian Viking Age graves indicated that, while the extant male to female grave ratio is 3:1, a larger percentage of female graves are found in the larger mounds – suggesting that female graves reflect a more narrow selection of rank then male graves.[210]

> In addition, considering that a family would have roughly the same number of men as women, since the ratio of mound burials to men and women is not equal, merely being part of a wealthy family would not guarantee an elaborate burial for a woman. Dommasnes suggests that an extra qualification was likely at play, and that qualification was most probably

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[206] Graham-Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 185.
[207] Sophie Gräslund, 'The position of Iron Age Scandinavian women, evidence from graves and rune stones' in Bettina Arnold and Nancy Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death* (Walnut Creek, 2001), p. 93.
[208] Whittaker, 'Game boards and gaming pieces in funerary contexts', p. 108.
[209] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 108.
[210] Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Late Iron Age in Western Norway, female roles and ranks as deduced from an analysis of burial customs' in *NAR*, xv, nos 1-2, 1982, p. 79; also eadem 'Women, kinship and the basis of power', p. 70.

associated with some kind of economic variable or other means of independent power.[211]

Women may have gained economic status and positions of rank due to the relative exodus of males, thus leaving women in positions of power within the household. Dommasnes argued that this would explain the finds of gravegoods reflecting 'male activities' in female graves as well as the high status burials of women associated with these farmsteads. While this may be true for Scandinavia, it does not necessarily correlate with the position of women in the wider Scandinavian world. Anne Stalsberg's research into ninety-nine settlement graves in Russia directly contradicts the traditional position of women's roles during the Viking Age. Over half the graves were identified as female and this indicates that 'women were indeed part of the colonizing picture during the Viking Age, debunking the myth of the lone male seafaring warrior. As burials of men and women were found in a somewhat equal ratio, it is likely that their status in life was also comparable (if not identical)'.[212] Stalsberg also uses this evidence to dispute Dommasnes' suggestion that women had access to individual power and rank only when the men were away. 'Clearly women were also away. Moreover, 22 percent of the graves containing small bronze scales were female, and 30 percent of the graves contained a male and a female together, suggesting that women were not only *accompanying* trades*men* on expeditions to far off lands; they themselves were engaging in trade.'[213] Graham-Campbell has also argued that there is evidence that families rather than lone merchant expeditions travelled the eastern trade routes from Sweden as far as Persia. High numbers of female graves have been found along the route and 'there is also no reason to rule out the possible presence of female merchants'.[214]

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[211] Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Two decades of women in prehistory and archaeology in Norway, a review' in *NAR*, xxv, no. 1 (1992), p. 5, quoted in Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 108.

[212] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 109.

[213] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking Age trade', p. 78. More recent research by Stalsberg has indicated that the number of weighing scales in female graves in Russia is even higher than she originally thought.

[214] James Graham-Campbell, Helen Clarke, R. I. Page and Neil Price (eds), *Cultural atlas of the Viking world* (Oxford, 1994), p. 197 (Graham-Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*).

Scandinavian women and their role in society

Scandinavian women could become traders and business partners as well as inherit land,[215] and a considerable percentage became landholders of significant holdings.[216] The literary sources tell us that some women acted as Skalds, and who 'prosecute their lives in general, and their sex lives in particular, with a kind of aggressive authority unexpected in a woman and unparalleled in any other European literature'.[217] The sagas also indicate that some women could also participate in government and in some exceptions serve as witnesses and even bring legal suit. Clover sites the example of at least one woman who 'was formally empowered by the disputants to act as an arbitrator in a case'.[218] In certain circumstances provided in the legal texts, a woman could also be the head of the household:

> although they were in principle subject to the authority of male guardians…women were more than mere title holders with managerial powers lodged solely with men… women could be targets of violence, although in theory they were exempt from feud violence. In Iceland, not just men but also women were subject to the penalties of outlawry and execution.[219]

The most independent category of women was that of the widow.[220] A woman who achieved this status could act with more power and control than a woman with a husband, although if she had male issue they played a role in her decision making.

Scandinavian burials in Ireland

Rathlin Island

The monastery on Church Bay, Rathlin Island is reputed to have been the site of the first Viking landfall in Ireland in 795.[221] Known as *Rechru* in the Irish annals, the attack was reported as '*Loscad Rechrainne o geinntib*' or, 'the burning of Rechru by

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[215] A woman's control over whatever property she might technically own was less a function of her sex than her marital status… her role in blood feud, 'choosing the avenger' involved them centrally in the family politics of honour and inheritance theoretically male terrain. Clover, 'Regardless of sex', p. 365.
[216] Ibid., p. 365.
[217] Ibid., p. 367.
[218] Ibid., p. 367.
[219] Ibid., p. 365.
[220] Arwill-Nordbladh, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?' p. 25.
[221] Nancy Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1990), p. 172 (Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland*).

heathens'.[222] Burials on the site have been interpreted as Viking insertions into a pre-existing Bronze Age cemetery. Bearing in mind that the site was unearthed in the eighteenth-century, judging from the discovery of a ninth-century silver brooch and a bronze ladle among the gravegoods, the Viking Age activity indicates at least one male and two female graves of probable high status.[223] A hoard of Hiberno-Scandinavian coins dating to the 1040s was also discovered.

The Kilmainham and Islandbridge cemeteries

In 1848 and 1866, two distinctive cemeteries were uncovered during railway cuttings at Kilmainham and Islandbridge in Dublin. The site turned out to be one of the largest Viking cemeteries in Western Europe.[224] Investigation of these areas has proven useful for information about the earliest phases of Viking settlement in Ireland. The Kilmainham and Islandbridge cemeteries are believed to be two of the earliest Viking Age cemeteries outside of Scandinavia. There were two distinct cemeteries, one at the early Christian monastic site of *Cell Maignenn* (Kilmainham) and the other about 800m west at the site of Islandbridge. In both cases, it appears that Viking burials were inserted into older native cemeteries where the burial rite was east-west inhumation, although there is some evidence that the older rite of cremation was also practiced.[225] The cemeteries of Islandbridge and Kilmainham comprise both male and female graves and show remarkable homogeneity. Both sites appear to date almost exclusively from the latter half of the ninth-century. All the gravegoods have been roughly ascribed to the same date as the early longphort settlement recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* as established in 841 and which continued with mixed fortunes until the Vikings were driven out in 902.[226] An number of oval brooches were identified **(Figures 11a and 11b)** and:

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[222] Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill, (eds), *The Annals of Ulster* (1st ed., Dublin, 1983), available at CELT, (http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100001A/index.html) (2 June, 2007).
[223] Raghnaill Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland' in *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, p. 133 (Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland').
[224] Patrick Wallace, *Aspects of Viking Dublin 1-6* (Dublin, 1988), p. 4 (Wallace, *Aspects of Viking Dublin*). The cemeteries were partially investigated again in the 1930s.
[225] Haakon Shetelig, 'The Viking graves in Great Britain and Northern Ireland' in *Acta Archaeologica*, xv (1945), p. 37; also see Elizabeth O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin' in Howard Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 201-18 (O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin').
[226] O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin', p. 217.

the presence of women's grave-goods accompanying female skeletons both at Kilmainham in Dublin, and at St. Mary Bishophill Junior in York, is very important for our understanding of the make-up of the early settlements in the British Isles. Clearly, these women were Scandinavian pagans rather than slaves taken from the native population, and their presence so early on at York and Dublin suggests that we are dealing with the migration of entire households from Scandinavia rather than incursions of warriors in search of trade or loot.[227]

With respect to the early Viking period (roughly 795-902), apart from the Dublin cemetery finds, only some ten or eleven single burial graves are known in Ireland as a whole. All of these are situated on the coast and of these, three have been identified as female, and bearing in mind that much more excavation needs to be undertaken, we can only speculate as to how high the number might actually be **(Figure 12)**. Based on gravegoods alone, there were at least seventeen pagan Viking burials with grave goods at Kilmainhaim, two of which were identified as those of females. At Islandbridge, there were at least nineteen pagan Viking burials, also containing two female skeletons.[228] Most of the objects from the cemetery were found during the 1830s and 1840s, and consequently, very few of the finds were properly recorded. It is not possible to estimate with a high level of accuracy what the total numbers of graves at the site may have been.[229] The grave goods included weapons, swords, spear heads, shield bosses, axe heads and knives as well as farming implements; shears and sickles, smithing tools – tongs and pincers and commerce items – weighing scales and weights.[230] Spindle whorls and needle cases were also present, indicating the craft of garment making which was almost certainly an exclusively female activity **(Figure 13).** Needlework, and in particular embroidery, was a highly acclaimed female activity in early Christian and medieval Europe. Needlecases have been found in female burials, and are occasionally found alongside other objects such as small textile shears, cosmetic sets or keys. The cases are usually pierced for suspension from a chain, and the cylinder would have 'been plugged at either end to prevent the needles from falling out, or the needles could have been inserted through a piece of cloth which was then

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[227] Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, p. 193.

[228] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A tale of two cemeteries' in *Archaeology Ireland, the Viking Issue*, ix, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), p. 14 (O'Brien, 'A tale of two cemeteries').

[229] The provenance and contexts (where they are known) are discussed in some detail in O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, Dublin', pp 203-21.

[230] O'Brien, 'A tale of two cemeteries', p. 15.

placed inside the case'.[231] Needlecases are often made from organic materials such as bone, but metal versions are also known. The wearing of needlecases suspended from chatelaines was as much a status symbol as well as for convenience.[232] Numerous examples have been found in female graves in both Norway and Sweden.[233] Wallace has argued that based on the surviving objects it appears that the cemeteries of Kilmainham and Islandbridge comprised at least forty graves of both men and women – making it the largest Viking cemetery outside of Scandinavia.[234] Many of the female graves contained bronze oval brooches in a style particular to the Vikings. Such brooches were worn in pairs on the breast and were often connected by silver chains or strings of glass and amber beads.[235] Other frequent finds include beads, needle cases such as the bronze one from Islandbridge[236] and, in one case, a whalebone plaque with glass linen smoother.[237] The Kilmainham/Islandbridge whalebone plaque bears a strong similarity to another plaque that was found with a weaving batton, from Grytøy, Trondenes, Troms in Norway.[238]

Isolated Scandinavian female burials

Phoenix Park, Co. Dublin.

A burial of a Scandinavian female was also identified in the nineteenth-century from the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Two brooches which were part of a set were found with the burial and are of a type assigned to the ninth-century.[239] This burial was accompanied by the same style of grave goods found at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, as well as other coastal burials described below. The precise date of the discovery is

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[231] Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard, *Medieval finds from excavations in London, dress accessories; c. 1150-c.1450* (London, 1991), p. 384 (Egan and Pritchard, *Medieval finds from London, dress and accessories*).

[232] Ibid., p. 384.

[233] See for example the metal needle case [SHM 28364] from high status female burials at Birka, Sweden. This *Nålhus* (literally 'needlehouse') has a silver chain attached and two silver twisted rings in a style reminiscent of the female burial from Three Mile Water, Wicklow, available at SHM, Sweden, (http://www.historiska.se/template/RelatedImagePopup.aspx?parent=18851&image=18852) (4 May, 2007).

[234] Patrick Wallace, *Dublin 1000, discovery and excavation in Dublin, 1842-1981* (Dublin, 1988), p. 10 (Wallace, *Dublin 1000*).

[235] Ibid., p. 9.

[236] NMI [Reg. 2410], Johannes Bøe, 'Norse antiquities in Ireland, part III' in Haakon Shetelig (ed.), *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1940), p. 49, fig. 30 (Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*).

[237] Wallace, *Dublin 1000,* p. 10.

[238] [BHM: B. 272]. James Graham-Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue* (London, 1980), pp 22-3 (Graham-Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*).

[239] R. A. Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Co. Dublin' in *JRSAI*, civ (1974), p. 39 (Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park').

unknown, however the British Museum registers state that the finds came from a burial in the Phoenix Park in Dublin, and that they were donated to the museum in 1848.[240] Associated with the brooches was a gilt bronze mounting which seems to have been adapted from its earlier use as an ecclesiastical 'book cover'. Analysis of the mount's decorative style suggests a date within the first half of the eighth-century, and this would support the view that it was 'removed from its original ecclesiastical repository and deposited in a female Viking grave, presumably at some time within the ninth or tenth centuries'.[241]

Discussion of Scandinavian settlement in Ireland is usually centred around the urban settlements of Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, Cork and Wexford. This is largely due to the strong body of archaeological evidence revealed from excavations within the urban areas of Ireland. However, as Colman Etchingham has argued, this may also reflect a failure to appreciate the amount of rural settlement that also occurred.[242] This has, however, been somewhat rectified within the last few years, as the development of new motorways and bypasses has led to an substantial amount of roadworks, which have revealed areas of Scandinavian activity. These include the important Hiberno-Scandinavian site at the Woodstown bypass, which may be the site of the earlier Waterford longphort.[243] The Woodstown site, along with the rural hinterland settlement site at Cherrywood, Co. Dublin,[244] the excavations at Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry,[245]

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[240] Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park', p. 39.
[241] Ibid., p. 42.
[242] Colman Etchingham, 'Evidence of Scandinavian settlement in Wicklow' in Ken Hannigan and William Nolan (eds), *Wicklow Historical Society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1994), p. 113 (Etchingham, 'Evidence of Scandinavian settlement in Wicklow').
[243] For discussions of Woodstown see Siobhán McNamara,'Woodstown 6, the finds' in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent archaeological discoveries on national road schemes 2004, proceedings of a seminar for the public Dublin, September 2004, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority no. 2* (Dublin, 2005), 125-132; Richard O'Brien and Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford' in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *National Roads Authority Recent Archaeological Discoveries on national road schemes 2004, Proceedings of a seminar for the public Dublin, September 2004* (Dublin, 2005), pp 116-122.
[244] John Ó Néill, 'Excavation of pre-Norman structures on the site of an enclosed Early Christian cemetery at Cherrywood, County Dublin' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin VII* (Dublin, 2006), pp 66-88 (Ó Néill, 'Excavation of pre-Norman structures on the site of an enclosed Early Christian cemetery at Cherrywood, County Dublin').
[245] Michael Connolly, Frank Coyne, and Linda Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry* (Bray, 2005) (Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*).

and Dunmore Cave, Co. Waterford,[246] as well as possible Scandinavian activity in the form of a D-shaped enclosure at Ninch Co. Meath[247] all point to more rural Scandinavian activity in Ireland than previously thought.

Three-mile water county Wicklow

Whether the towns of Arklow and Wicklow were strong urban centres themselves, or dependent on the city of Dublin for trade and exchange remains to be concluded, as no archaeological excavations of a county Wicklow site with Scandinavian associations has as yet taken place.[248] While the extent of settlement in Wicklow is to date inconclusive, a number of Scandinavian finds unearthed in the nineteenth-century indicate some level of Viking activity before the late tenth-century. These include two bronze oval brooches decorated with silver ornamentation and a silver wire chain attached to a silver needlecase. The objects were discovered by workmen, somewhere between Three-Mile-Water, south of Wicklow town and Arklow. The brooches indicate that the grave likely belonged to a female and have been dated stylistically to the tenth- or eleventh-century.[249] 'The only unusual object from these graves is the chain from the Arklow burial which has insular parallels' **(Figure 15)**.[250] The fact that the objects in the female burial from Three-Mile-Water are made of silver indicates that the woman buried here was of some wealth, albeit not noble, as the highest status of Scandinavian women were buried without tortoise shell brooches. Even the studs in the bronze brooches are made entirely from silver, along with the chain, the beads attached to it, and the needlecase. This is in marked contrast to the Kilmainham-Islandbridge female-associated finds, most of which appear to be made of bronze and coated with tin in order to resemble silver – a practice known from other parts of the Scandinavian world.

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[246] Marion Dowd, Linda Lynch and Margaret McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny: further questions regarding Viking activity at the site' in *Old Kilkenny Review*, lix (2007), pp 7-17; Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 42; Marion Dowd, Linda Fibiger and Linda Lynch, 'The human remains from Irish caves project' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xx, no. 3 (2006), p. 19.
[247] Cia Mc Conway, 'Ninch, Laytown', Meath [2001:1007, 31623 27195, 98E0501]', available at DIER, (http.//www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Meath&id=6962) (7 July, 2006).
[248] Etchingham, 'Evidence of Scandinavian settlement in Wicklow', p. 113.
[249] Ibid., p. 118.
[250] Raghnall Ó Floinn, 'Two Viking Burials from Co. Wicklow' in *JCWAS*, i (1998), p. 31.

Ballyholme county Down

Antiquarian activity at Ballyholme Co. Down in 1906 unearthed a pagan Scandinavian female burial. A recent re-examination of the original account has indicated that this burial may have been a boat burial.[251] The published account described the site thus:

> There was a perpendicular cutting in the sand about nine feet in depth, when the diggers came on a place where the earth was quite black and V-shaped. The black earth was sharply defined from the dark-red sand: the blackness commenced about two feet from the surface, and continued for six feet down, narrowing as it went down wedge-shaped. The two brooches were found at the bottom of the cutting, the hollow sides face to face.[252]

While no boat burials are extant from Ireland, a recent find (2003) of a boat-shaped setting of stones from Baltimore, Co. Cork has recently been suggested as a Viking period boat burial.[253]

The Ballyholme burial remains were located 2.5 m under a sandy hillock on a raised beach – reminiscent of the burials from Rathlin Island. A pair of bronze gilt tortoise brooches with zoomorphic figures (type P37) which date to the later ninth-century were found along with a small beaten bronze bowl, some bones and possible textile remains **(Figure 15)**.[254] The brooches found at Ballyholme are very similar in style to those found at Kilmainham-Islandbridge and Three-Mile Water. Near identical examples have also been identified from Birka in Sweden.[255] The bronze bowl was so small and in such a fragmentary state that neither the original size nor form could be determined

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[251] Maeve Sikora, 'Ballyholme' available at the Viking Ship Museum, www.havhingsten.dk (http://www.havhingsten.dk/index.php?id=734&L=1&no_cache=1&sword_list[]=Ballyholme) (10 August, 2007) (Sikora, 'Ballyholme').

[252] R. Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze tortoise brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, County Down' in *JRSAI*, xxxvi (1906), pp 451-2, quoted in Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', p. 147.

[253] The site comprises an oval or boat-shaped area defined by thirty-five standing and recumbent stones c. 15 metres in length by c. 4 metres across. Locals from the area noted that there were once far more stones at the site than are now present. The site has not been excavated, however. Lee Snodgrass, 'Oval or boat-shaped setting of stones, Baltimore, Co. Cork' in *JMAHS*, xii (2004), p. 110.

[254] ADS Arch Search, ADS Record ID - NISMR-DOW002:033. Available at (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/search/fr.cfm?rcn=NISMR-DOW002:033) (18 July 2006). It is interesting that the ADS summary description given about the Ballyholme burial describes it thus, 'Bangor Abbey was destroyed by Vikings in c. 821 and it is thought that this is one of the warriors, but the lack of weapons suggest it may be female'. The presence of oval brooches rather than lack of weapons makes it much more likely to be a female grave.

[255] See for example the following examples from female Viking age graves in Birka which are all Peterson's type 37, [34000: Bj 849] available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=28632) (2 May, 2007); [34000:Bj 214] available at (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=28625) (2 May, 2007); [SHM 34000: Bj 556] available at (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=29315) (2 May, 2007).

with any exactness. Bøe suggested that the bowl appears to have been constructed from the light yellowish-brown bronze characteristic of many of the imported vessels found in Norwegian graves, especially some of the comparatively small saucepans.[256] However the original find report describes the beaten bronze bowl in some detail, specifying the presence of an additional 'fine piece of chain attached to the bowl and a quantity of wool inside…which was pulled to pieces by the finders'.[257] The brooches were found at the bottom of the cutting, and were placed with the hollow sides face to face[258] in the same manner as the brooches from Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire.[259] Interestingly, the female burial at Adwick-le-Street also contained a copper bowl.

The Finglas burial

The discovery in 2004 of a largely intact ninth-century Viking female burial in Dublin has important implications for the study of women in this period **(Figure 16a)**. The burial was found close to the medieval church of St. Canice's in Finglas at the north end of the site. The grave was aligned east-west and was placed in a shallow grave-cut, with the upper body slightly raised.[260] Roughly 65% of the skeleton of a 25-35 year old female was present within the grave. The positioning of the skull suggests that the head was turned to the right, with the right hand placed over the pelvic area and the left resting on the right shoulder.[261] The skeleton was accompanied by two gold and silver gilded oval brooches similar to those found at Haithabu, and an unusually long bone (0.15m) comb of Scandinavian type as well as tiny fragments of linen and tweed **(Figure 16b)**. The brooch is 'a remarkably well preserved and elaborate oval brooch of Baltic type, with a raised decoration of bear masks and gilded with silver bands. Fragments of another brooch were found and some textile, possibly twill, was adhered to the back, which retains its colour. A copper alloy chain was deposited near the woman's left wrist, and a large single-sided bone comb of Scandinavian type was placed beside her right femur' [262] along with other copper alloy fragments. The woman

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[256] Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 74.
[257] R. Cochrane, 'Exhibit and description of bronze [tortoise] brooches and bowl found at Ballyholme, County Down' in *JRSAI*, xxxvii (1906), p. 450.
[258] Sikora, 'Ballyholme'.
[259] Walton Rogers and Speed, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street,' p. 85.
[260] John Kavanagh, '4-8 Church Street, Finglas', Dublin [2004:0599, 21335/23882, 04E0900], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=11524) (12 August 2008).
[261] Ibid.
[262] Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p. 63.

was buried in full dress and wore an outer garment of tweed. The brooches were made from copper alloy and were gilded with gold and silver and were manufactured in Scandinavia, which has led to the suggestion that the woman was Scandinavian rather than of Insular or Hiberno-Scandinavian origin.[263] Dr. Pat Wallace, has stated that 'there can be little doubt that these are the remains of a ninth-century Viking lady of relatively high status who probably came from the Baltic area to Dublin. She appears to have continued to wear her native costume with appropriate dress accessories and jewellery, with which she was buried'.[264] While Wallace and Johnson both suggest a very high status for this female burial, Christiansen has argued that double oval tortoise brooches represent women of more middling rank, whereas burials with large single brooches are indicative of the highest status or aristocracy. The gap between the 'very grand' and the 'less grand' is pronounced in Viking Age burials seen in the:

> families which left large ship-settings, mounds and tall stones, and sent ostentatious goods with their dead, as at Mammen in Jutland c. 970, and the ones content with cemetery graves or plain low tumuli; between women buried with single large brooches to hold their mantles of high rank at the throat, and women with two tortoise backed shoulder clips to fasten the straps of their rich, but less impressive dresses.[265]

The fact that this female burial contained jewellery that can be linked to the Baltic or Southern Scandinavian area highlights the possible variety in ethnicity of the Scandinavian peoples who came to Ireland in the ninth-century.

While scholars have traditionally identified the early Scandinavian settlers as originating from Norway, in particular the Vestfold region – some settlers also came from Sweden and Denmark. Recent excavations at Cloghermore Cave in Kerry support the interpretation of families of settlers originating out of Southern Scandinavia. (see below).

The Finglas female burial was found near the church at the important early medieval monastery at Finglas. Ruth Johnson has pointed out that it is possibly that the Vikings

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[263] NMI, 'News' available at (http://www.museum.ie/news/details_news.asp?sPressType=0&newsid=197) (26 September, 2004).
[264] Pat Wallace, 'A woman of importance in ninth-century Finglas' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xxviii, no., 3, Issue no. 69 (August 2004), p. 7 (Wallace, 'A woman of importance in ninth-century Finglas').
[265] Christiansen, *Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 61.

had a base here in the early Viking age similar to that of Clondalkin, Co. Dublin.[266] Wallace has stated that Irish monasteries around Dublin such as Swords and Clondalkin were controlled by the Vikings, and that they used the monasteries to for a number of activities, including the making of jewellery.[267] This female burial is the first found in Ireland this century, and has important implications for how we have traditionally interpreted this earliest phase of Viking activity in Ireland. It also coincides with a number of male warrior burials recently excavated by Linzi Simpson in Temple Bar West, South Great Georges Street and Ship Street Great.[268]

The Ballyholme burial in County Down, the Three-mile-water burial in County Wicklow, and the recent burial at Finglas in County Dublin are the only known single female Viking burials to date.[269] However, the Finglas burial is ninth-century in date, and, together with other ninth-century female burials from the cemeteries at Kilmainham and Islandbridge, as well as early burials in the Scottish Isles, rather disputes the clear cut dichotomy of Viking/male vs. settlers/female. While it is probable that the earliest raiders in Ireland comprised *more* men, contemporaneous pagan Viking burials in the Scottish Isles are of families; men, women and children, perhaps suggesting a re-evaluation of the Irish context. The female burial excavated at Adwick-le-Street, in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, as well as the recently discovered Viking burial ground at Cumwhitton in Cumbria reinforces the suggestion that Scandinavian women were travelling along with men in their westward colonial settlements **(Figure 17)**. The female burial at Adwick-le-Street, discovered in 2001, comprised fragmentary skeletal remains, a plough-damaged copper bowl,[270] a pair of non-matching tortoise brooches, fragments of an iron knife of a type widely known in Scandinavia and which may have been suspended from the brooches, along with a key or latch-lifter which had

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[266] Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p. 63.

[267] 23 August, 2004, 'Viking find "extremely significant"' available at (http://archives.tcm.ie/breakingnews/2004/08/23/story163110.asp) (12 September, 2004).

[268] Linzi Simpson, 'Viking Dublin, the ninth-century evidence begins to unfold' available at (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin.htm) (11 November, 2004); Linzi Simpson, 'The discovery of a Viking burial at Ship Street Great, Dublin', available at Margaret Gowen and Co. Ltd (http,//www.mglarc.com/projects/ship_st.htm) (3 June, 2005).

[269] 'Most of these burials have been found in or close to areas of known Scandinavian settlement…the place name Ballyholme is of probable Norse origin, as is Arklow', A. J. Hughes and R. J. Hannan, *Place-Names of Northern Ireland, The Ards peninsula, volume 2* (Belfast, 1992), p. 154.

[270] The bronze bowl was originally placed at the foot of the female burial. It was 180-190 mm in diameter and roughly a little over 50 mm deep with a simple inverted rim. It was made from a circle of sheet metal and falls into a group of seventh to tenth-century objects which were likely made in the British Isles. DAHS, 'A Viking lady at Adwick-le-Street, Doncaster, South Yorkshire' in *JDAHS*, available at (http://doncasterarchaeology.co.uk/discoveries.aspx) (1 December, 2007).

been placed at the woman's feet. The grave was orientated north-east to south-west and the remains were in an extended supine position. The woman was between 33-45 years of age, and stable isotope analysis indicated that she was originally from the Trondheim area of Norway.[271] The brooches are only the fourth pair recovered in England, and are the first to be discovered since 1867. They are of a type known as P37 and are exclusively Scandinavian. They are of an early type and date the burial towards the end of the ninth-century.

The female graves from Dublin, as well as at Aylesbury Road in Donnybrook (see below), Three-Mile-Water, Co. Wicklow and at Ballyholme, Co. Down all produced brooches, a chain, beads, pins, buckles, needlecases, keys, a spindlewhorl, part of a bone comb, and a bowl containing fragments of wool. All of these burials bear a remarkable homogeneity to the ones found at Kilmainham-Islandbridge, as well as having firm parallels at Viking burial sites in the Isle of Man, England, Scotland, and parts of the Scandinavian world. From the burial ornaments themselves it is possible to deduce that the same kind of people, at around the same time were settling over a diverse area of Ireland, from Down to Kerry.[272] The evidence indicates that they were not just male raiders and warriors, as the presence of female grave goods attests. Thus it would seem that in the middle years of the ninth-century there was a chain of strongly defended sites running the length of the east coast, some of which, like Dublin, had a small rural hinterland under their control.[273] On the west coast, and perhaps elsewhere, small-scale rural colonization (as evidenced by the burial and possible cemetery located at Eyrephort, County Galway, bone pins from a later Viking Age settlement site at Beginish, Co. Kerry, as well as the now lost rune stone also from Kerry) may have been taking place. 'The grave goods associated with this phase of activity have a strong Scandinavian character and convey the impression of a dominant military elite, at odds with its environment, but endeavouring to retain its own ethnic distinctiveness'.[274]

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[271] DAHS, 'A Viking lady at Adwick-le-Street, Doncaster, South Yorkshire' in *JDAHS*, available at (http://doncasterarchaeology.co.uk/discoveries.aspx) (1 December, 2007).
[272] John Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland' in *Archaeology Ireland,* ix, no., 3, Issue 33 (Autumn 1995), p. 11 (Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland').
[273] Ibid., p. 11.
[274] Ibid., p. 11.

Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry

Recent excavations at Cloghermore Cave Co. Kerry have provided further evidence for early Scandinavian settlement outside Dublin. Radiocarbon dating indicates that the cave was in use as a place of burial between the seventh- and the tenth-centuries.[275] Two distinct phases of activity were identified within the cave. The first represents a rather unusually late (650-750) example of pagan Irish mortuary practices. During excavation Michael Connolly identified an area within the cave (area V) that had the highest concentration of finds. This area consisted of a pit containing gaming pieces, two pairs of shears, a few ivory beads and the cremated remains of a large number of animal bones including sheep, pig, goat and cattle. Interestingly all the cremated animal bone belonged to neonate animals with some of the pig bone possibly foetal. Within this pit were the cremated remains of a number of humans including the torso of a child aged seven to eight years old, the left foot of an adult, and the right footbones of two children, one aged around three and the other around seven. In all the earlier Native Irish activity comprised twenty-one adults (men, women, children and infants) all with a number of bones missing – including skulls, hands and feet and rib bones – mainly the larger bones were present. Interestingly the finds associated with this Irish period of activity were associated with the pit cremations, an area (except for the left food of the adult) that seems to have been reserved for some sort of child centred ritual. This ritual activity seems to have continued until about 700 AD when the whole layer was covered over with soil brought in from outside the cave, and a second phase of activity ensued. The entrance to the cave system is one-third of the way along the length of a large limestone reef that is 180m OD at its highest point and affords expansive views in all directions. Over 200 individual items were recovered from the cave and the diagnostic items clearly suggest that the burials (both cremation and inhumation) of this period are pagan Viking.[276] The two small chambers at the southern end of the system, 'The Two Star Temple' and 'The Graveyard', contained large quantities of bone **(Figure 18)**. The female and child burials however, seemed to have been concentrated in the area directly around the entrance to the cave system. (Area W, U, X and T.) The area just inside the entrance of the cave produced bone combs, a bone pin, a bone spindle whorl

[275] Michael Connolly and Frank Coyne, 'Cloghermore Cave, the Lee Valhalla' in *Archaeology Ireland,* xiv, 4, no. 54 (Winter 2000), p. 19 (Connolly and Coyne, 'Cloghermore Cave, the Lee Valhalla'); also see the recently published full report, Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry.*
[276] Connolly and Coyne, 'Cloghermore Cave, the Lee Valhalla', p. 19.

and a decorated bone gaming piece; items often associated with female burials. The 'Two Star Temple' and the 'Graveyard' excavations produced a stone spindle-whorl, an iron arrowhead and some other small iron fragments, as well as small fragments of crushed bone and three amber beads.[277] Area W produced the remains of a female and a child, both with no associated gravegoods (unlike the male articulated skeleton found next to the burial). Area U produced large quantities of animal bone, the bones of an adult female, and three children. Again finds included a spindle whorl (stone), a pendant whetstone, the shaft of a bronze ringed-pin, a metal stud with textile attached, a blue glass bead with yellow paste decoration, and a decorated bone gaming piece. Area T produced the bones of a female and child. Animal bones were found with this burial and included the lower jaw of a pony. This is only the third recorded example of a horse burial from Ireland, yet such burials are a well-documented feature of pagan Viking funerary rites in Scandinavia.[278] Spindle whorls and bone combs were also recovered from the nearby cremation pyre, also within the cave. Connolly has argued that the amount of burnt and unburnt animal bone is clearly part of a pagan mortuary ritual. In addition, the presence of part of a burnt spindle whorl suggests a link between the animal cremations and the grave furniture of the deceased.[279]

Dunmore Cave, County Waterford

Recent reinterpretations of mortuary activity at Dunmore Cave, Co. Waterford, suggests that it was used as a Viking burial ground in a manner similar to Cloghermore Cave. Traditionally, Dunmore Cave was thought to be the site of a Viking massacre at *Derc Ferna* – believed to be an earlier name for the site – due to an annalistic reference in 930 AD.[280] However, as a number of recent studies have suggested, there are some problems with this interpretation.

> If the human remains represent a native Irish population massacred by
> Vikings, why should so many Viking artefacts – rather than native Irish
> material – be found deep inside the cave? Certainly Viking attackers might

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[277] Michael Connolly, 'Cloghermore Cave, Cloghermore Co. Kerry', [1999:329, Q906128/99E0431], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Kerry&id=328) (7 April, 2006).
[278] Connolly and Coyne, 'Cloghermore Cave, the Lee Valhalla', p. 18.
[279] Ibid., p. 19.
[280] *AU, AI, AFM* and *CS* all record that *Derc Ferna* was the site of a Viking massacre in 930 AD. Marion Dowd, Linda Lynch and Margaret McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny: further questions regarding Viking activity at the site' in *OKR*, lix (2007), p. 7. (Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny').

have lost some objects in the course of conflict but not the quantity that has been found. Secondly, following a violent clash, one might expect the surviving Irish community to remove the bodies of their massacred dead from the cave for interment in Christian ground. This clearly did not happen. Finally, recent osteological analysis of the 2,244 human bone fragments from older excavations in Dunmore Cave, coupled with the 351 human bones found during the 2004/5 monitoring works, has established that there is absolutely no evidence of trauma or violence on any of the skeletal remains. While violent death may leave no trace of a skeleton (i.e. fatal injuries may only penetrate soft tissue), one would expect some signs of violence to be present.[281]

A large quantity of human bone, as well as a number of objects of Viking origin were discovered at the site during excavations in 1973, including nine silver coins dating to c. 930.[282] Excavations in 1999 uncovered a second collection of Viking material dating to the tenth century, and monitoring works in 2004/5 revealed further artefacts, including ringed-pins, half of a lignite bracelet, glass beads and a bronze pin. This material was consistent in date and nature with the objects from the previous excavations.[283] The beads are of a type well known from Viking contexts in Scandinavia, and are dated to the tenth century.[284] In total 237 human bones were recovered during sieving of the spoilheaps from the 1973 excavations:

> These represented two adults, a four- and a half to five-year-old child, a one and a half- to two-year-old child, an infant under one year old and a foetus aged 28.8 weeks (*in utero*). The foetal bone may represent a miscarriage, a stillbirth, or the death of a pregnant woman. No animal bones were present, but six glass beads and a bronze pin were recovered.[285]

Due to previous investigations at Dunmore Cave in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, coupled with the disturbed nature of the stratigraphy at the site, it is not possible to determine whether the bones found in 2004/5 reflect additions to the MNI of eighteen adults and twenty-five juveniles recorded from the cave by the *Human*

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[281] Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny', p. 15; also see Marion Dowd, 'Dunmore Cave, Mohil', Kilkenny [2004:0914, 25094/16500, SMR 14:17, 04E1517], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Kilkenny&id=11839) (12 August, 2008).
[282] D. P. Drew and D. Huddart, 'Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny: a reassessment' in *PRIA*, lxxx (1980), pp 1-23.
[283] Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny', p. 9.
[284] Ibid., p. 9.
[285] Ibid., p. 14.

Remains from Irish Caves Project.[286] There were four individuals which were radiocarbon dated, two of a mid to late ninth-century date, and a further two from the mid tenth century. Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy have suggested that this may reflect the two main phases of activity at the site, and they argue that the later radio-carbon dates are consistent with the tenth century glass beads and ringed-pin, and are possibly linked with the two Viking hoards deposited circa 930 AD and 960-970 AD.[287]

It is possible that, rather than the site of a Viking massacre, Dunmore Cave is a burial ground similar to Cloghermore Cave.

> This theory would certainly support the diagnostic Viking artefactual assemblage (i.e. gravegoods) from the cave and the absence of trauma on the skeletal remains. In addition, previous osteoarchaeological analysis indicated that at least some of the individuals lay on the surface of the cave floor… which might be expected at a burial site.[288]

There are some difficulties with this reinterpretation, as Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy have pointed out. They argue that it is possible – although unlikely – that the annalistic references to a massacre at *Derc Ferna* are unrelated to Dunmore Cave. In addition, the four radiocarbon dates appear to relate to only one or two specific events, which Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy argue is unusual in that one would expect to see a greater range of dates from a burial site, even if it was only in use for a few decades.[289]

Aylesbury Road, Donnybrook county Dublin – evidence for Scandinavian sacrifice?

A find from 1879 in Donnybrook, Co. Dublin suggests that the sacrifice of females by the Viking Rus as described by Ibn Fadlan may have still been practiced by Vikings in Ireland **(Figure 19)**. Two female skeletons were identified 'at the feet' of the remains of a single male Viking burial. As no grave goods accompanied the female burials, some scholars have argued that this represents an instance of 'suttee' or ritual

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[286] Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny', p. 14. And see Marion Dowd, Linda Fibiger and Linda Lynch, 'The human remains from Irish caves project' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xx (2006), p. 1-23 (Dowd, Fibiger and Lynch, 'The human remains from Irish caves project').

[287] Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy have however, suggested that the radiocarbon dates be assessed with caution, as 'there is an overlap in the dates that may not be two phases of activity, or, if there are two phases of activity, there may not be any significant time lapse between them'. Dowd, Lynch and McCarthy, 'Recent archaeological discoveries in Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny', p. 15.

[288] Ibid., 15-6.

[289] Ibid., p. 16.

murder.[290] Scandinavian parallels exist for such practices as in the case of the Oseburg burial, a number of male and female graves from Denmark,[291] as well as several identified at Birka in Sweden, and one on the Isle of Man, where the remains of a female aged between twenty and thirty who had been killed by a blow to the head were identified.[292] Other graves that appear to contain the accompanied remains of sacrificed females include the Viking site of L'Île deGroix in Brittany and at Haithabu (Hedeby) in Schleswig.[293] Two other graves from the Isle of Man contained furnished male burials along with unaccompanied female skeletons,[294] at Ballateare and Balladoole.[295] Like the Donnybrook burial, there were no grave goods found, suggesting that the women may perhaps been slaves and were ritually sacrificed. In Scandinavia dogs and horses – which had been sacrificed – were often placed at the foot of the burial. This is also true for Iceland.[296] That sacrifice was practiced in Scandinavia is also evidenced by the existence of a picture stone from Garde Bote on Gotland, which depicts seven hanged maidens.[297]

The Donnybrook burial was undisturbed by any later burials, an indication that it had been inserted into a cemetery which had already been abandoned by the native Irish in the ninth-century. Similar insertions of Viking pagan burials have been identified in Ireland (Cloghermore Cave and Cherrywood), the Isle of Man, and the Northern Scottish Islands. While some scholars have suggested that the Donnybrook site represents a later Viking insertion into a Native Irish burial mound, Michael Connolly has argued that the original description of the levelling of the burial mound by William

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[290] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'A reassessment of the "great sepulchral mound" containing a Viking burial at Donnybrook, Dublin', p. 173 (O' Brien, 'A reassessment of the "great sepulchral mound"'); William Frazer, 'Description of a great sepulchral mound at Aylesbury Road, near Donnybrook, in the county of Dublin, containing human and animal remains, as well as some objects of antiquarian interest, referable to the tenth or eleventh centuries' in *PRIA,* xi, 16 C (1879-88), p. 32; R. A. Hall, 'A Viking-Age grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xxii (1978), pp 64-83.

[291] 'A number of Danish graves of the ninth and tenth centuries demonstrate human sacrifice. The clearest example is from the old royal centre of Lejre, where a grave contained two adult male skeletons, the lower one well-equipped, above him a man who had been decapitated and buried with hands and feet tied. At Dråby, the burial of a housewife (identified by her keys) was accompanied by a decapitated male skeleton, possibly her slave killed to serve her in the next life'. Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 25.

[292] O'Brien, 'A reassessment of the "great sepulchral mound"', p. 172.

[293] Mark Redknapp, 'Great sites, Balladoole' in *British Archaeology*, lix (June, 2001), available at (http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba59/feat4.shtml) (August, 2002) (Redknapp, 'Great sites, Balladoole').

[294] Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 25.

[295] The Balladoole grave comprised a Viking warrior and the incomplete remains of a female adult who had been placed at his feet. The graves date to the late ninth to early tenth centuries. The female was unaccompanied by any gravegoods and it has been suggested that she, like the sacrificed female from Ballateare – represents examples of sacrificial victims. Redknapp, 'Great sites, Balladoole'.

[296] Pétursdóttir, 'Re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland', p. 34.

[297] Thor Ewing, *Viking clothing*, (Gloucestershire, 2006), p. 49 (Ewing, *Viking clothing*).

Frazer suggests that the warrior and the mass burials were laid to rest at the same time. Connolly also points out that the use of the mound is suggestive of non-Christian ritual. The middle layer of the burial mound has the strongest parallels for the burial practices at Cloghermore Cave. Connolly has argued that this layer (containing both charcoal and a variety of animal bone) can be seen as part of the funerary ritual rather than as evidence for the mound being constructed from clay mixed with settlement debris.[298]

'This layer contained a similar mix of material to that recorded throughout the excavated areas of Cloghermore Cave, and the presence of a mass grave at the site is also relevant in the context of Cloghermore'.[299] Connolly also suggests that the female burials at the feet of the Scandinavian male burial at Donnybrook may be paralleled at Cloghermore Cave – thus explaining the presence of female remains near the articulated male burial in Area W. It is possible that these burials represent the 'ritual killing of these individuals to accompany the warrior in death'. [300]

While O'Brien has suggested that the Donnybrook burials represent an insertion into an existing native Irish cemetery of the Early Christian period, Hall argued that both the informal nature of the burials and the use of a mound are not suggestive of Christian mortuary practices, but rather support the interpretation of a non-native site and burial rite.[301]

Pagan Scandinavian burials and their distribution

Furnished pagan Scandinavian burials of both men and women are found throughout the British Isles. Steven Harrison has researched these burials as part of the National Museum of Ireland's *Irish Viking Graves Project*. Harrison determined that pagan graves appear to be less common within Scandinavian England:

> Instead, burials of this type are concentrated in a broad band which extends from Orkney and Caithness outwards through the western isles of Scotland to the Irish Sea region, where they are found along the east coast of Ireland, in Cumbria, and on Man.[302] Within this area, there are definite regional differences in terms of nucleation, proportions of male and female burials, and date, but the general distribution pattern loosely reflects known Scandinavian settlement patterns, and may be linked to a major trading

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[298] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave*, pp 67-8.
[299] Ibid., pp 67-8.
[300] Ibid., pp 67-8.
[301] Ibid., pp 67-8.
[302] Stephen Harrison, 'Viking graves and gravegoods in Ireland' in A. C. Larson, (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 61 (Harrison, 'Viking graves and gravegoods in Ireland').

route which ran from the west coast of Norway through the northern and western Isles of Scotland to Dublin and beyond.[303]

In Scandinavia, Viking Age graves have generally been identified and dated based on their gravegoods. This approach has also been widely utilised within Western Europe – including Ireland. For the Irish context, burials dating to the Viking Age – however modestly furnished – have always stood out in the archaeological record because the practice of furnished burial was virtually unknown during the early Christian/early historic period.[304]

Scandinavian burials outside of Ireland

Numerous furnished burials have been found in Scotland and the Islands, and importantly for this research, some of the burials date to the earliest raids. Lead weights dated to between 875 and 925 from male graves at Kiloran Bay, Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides, were constructed from ornamental metalwork for mounts. The mounts from the these graves originated in Ireland, Anglo-Saxon England or possibly Scotland.[305] Weighing scales **(Figure 20)** were also found with the Kiloran weights. These weighing scales are of an insular type and one of the characteristics of such small scales is their 'bird headed' decoration such as in the case of the fold up bronze (plated with tin) scales found on the small island of Gigha in Scotland in 1849 **(Figure 21)**.[306] The Gigha scales are remarkably similar to the scales from Kilmainham/Islandbridge in that both are bird-headed, the pans are decorated with concentric circles, and both have associated weights with mounts of decorated native Irish design **(Figure 22)**. This similarity may support Donnchadh Ó Corráin's argument that the 'main thrust of the ninth-century Viking attack on Ireland (c.825-c.850) was mounted from Scotland'.[307] The scales emphasize the links between Scotland and Ireland during the ninth-century. This is important because the archaeological evidence shows Scandinavian families were travelling to this area even during the earliest periods. Evidence for women at this

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[303] Harrison, 'Viking graves and gravegoods in Ireland', p. 61.
[304] Ibid., p. 61.
[305] NMS SCRAN image database, reference no. 000-000-099-699-C, available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-099-699-C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=5dil8pn07x&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64) (1 May, 2007).
[306] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 84.
[307] Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'The Vikings in Scotland and Ireland in the ninth-century' in *Chronicon: an electronic history journal,* 2 (1998) no. 3, pp 1-45, available at (http://www.ucc.ie/chronicon/ocorr2.htm) (23 February, 2002).

earliest stage is further backed up by the pair of oval brooches in the female burial from Oronsay in the Hebrides. 'The brooches are amongst the earliest Scandinavian finds from Scotland and confirm that raiding was quickly followed by settlement'.[308]

Peel, Isle of Man

Examples of west-east oriented, possible pagan burials, exist in the archaeological record. The tenth-century burial of the so-called 'Pagan lady of Peel' from St. Patrick's Isle is one example. This burial has often been interpreted as the native wife of a Viking. Elizabeth O'Brien has argued that a similar case may be put forward for a relatively well furnished female burial found at Kilmainham which comprised a beaded necklace containing some locally made beads, but no oval brooches. This burial also lay west-east, and is associated with a north-south aligned Viking warrior burial nearby.[309] O'Brien also suggested that the two pairs of shears may also be attributable to female burials at Kilmainham/Islandbridge.[310] A pair of shears was found with the female burial at Peel (the only furnished grave amongst six other graves). At Scar, on Sanday in Orkney the triple boat burial including a seventy-year-old female also included a set of shears as well as a sickle amongst other items.

The Peel female burial is interesting in that it has been interpreted as a native Manx burial, rather than an ethnically Scandinavian one. This is largely due to the absence of the ubiquitous oval brooches. However, the Peel burial may also represent a noble Scandinavian woman, as noble women tend not to be buried with oval brooches.[311] The lack of oval brooches in female graves does not necessarily mean the burial is either native or post Viking age. The poem *Rígsþula* details the three classes of people in Scandinavian society; slaves, free men and women, and nobility. The wearing of appears to indicate the status of a freeborn woman, as they are not described for the

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[308] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 84.
[309] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge', p. 12, online lecture available at (http://www.vikingwaterford.com/images_documents/woodstown_lecture_elizabeth_obrien.pdf) (5 May, 2006) (O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge' online lecture). Also see C. S. Briggs, M. Guido and Aidan Walsh, 'A neglected Viking burial with beads from Kilmainham, Dublin, discovered in 1847' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xxix (1985), pp 94-108.
[310] O'Brien, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge' online lecture, p. 8.
[311] Speed and Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street', p. 87.

slaves' wife or for the earl's mother.[312] Archaeological evidence from graves in Denmark supports the view that the poorest and the richest of women did not wear oval brooches.[313]

The Peel burial was accompanied by several other adult Viking burials and a child – all accompanied by burial goods. The burials were all inserted into a native Christian lintel grave cemetery with typical Christian west-east alignment. However, only the female and child burials were aligned west/east – the male adults were all north-south.[314] It may be that the differing alignments represent a particular burial ritual associated with women and children. One suggested interpretation is that the female and non-adult burials may represent Scandinavians who had already converted to Christianity. Another possibility is that these individuals may have been native Christian women and their offspring.

While the majority of east/west burials are likely to be Christian, it is not a definitive indicator. The child burial from Fishamble Street illustrates the problem with this assumption. This burial was aligned east/west, yet it was accompanied by the jawbone of a cow, a known pagan burial tradition in Scandinavia and Scandinavian settled areas.[315]

A number of mixed burials are also known from Birka which were aligned east/west alongside other burials that were south/north. One suggestion is that the east/west graves may represent a group of Christians linked to the German monk Ansgar's visit to the town in 830.[316] However, as the overwhelming population of the inhabitants in Birka in 830 were pagan, and general conversion to Christianity did not occur until c.

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[312] R. I. Page, *Chronicles of the Vikings, records, memorials and myths* (London, 1995), pp 150-5, quoted in Speed and Walton Rogers, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street', p. 87.
[313] L. H. Madsen, 'Women's dress in the Viking period in Denmark, based on the tortoise brooches and textile remains' in Penelope Walton and J. P. Wild (eds), *Textiles in northern archaeology; NESAT III textile symposium in York* (London, 1990), p. 104.
[314] O'Brian, 'The location and context of Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge', p. 12.
[315] Bøe, *Norse Antiquities in Ireland*, pp 59-60; Harrison,'Viking graves and gravegoods in Ireland', pp 73.
[316] A small church may also have been located in the area, however Ansgar's missionary work ultimately was unsuccessful. Bente Magnus, 'Ansgar – Nordens apostel' in Bente Magnus and Birgitta Wallstenius (eds), *Historiska Nyheter, Vikingarna varlånghåriga och välfriserade, Statenshistoriska museumoch Riksantikvarieämbetet*, lxi (1996), p. 19.

1050, another suggestion for the east/west graves is that they represent varying ritual practices rather than Christian graves.

Scar, Sanday, Orkney

The ninth-century boat burial at Scar in Sanday on Orkney comprised a richly buried woman in her seventies, a younger man with the gravegoods of a warrior, and a ten- or eleven year-old child of undetermined sex (erosion had removed most of the bones and any gravegoods). The female was accompanied by one of the finest surviving examples of a whalebone plaque, as well as a gilded brooch, an iron sickle, and iron cooking spit, and a small pair of iron shears and a steatite spindle whorl – both in a small wooden box.[317] A cooking spit was recorded in the Wakeman collection as being from Ireland; unfortunately, the specific location was not given.[318] A similar object is also known from Vestland in Norway.[319]

The Scar burial has been the subject of much speculation as the female was of a very advanced age (around 70 years), and was buried with high status items. The male was also buried with high status items, which precludes the interpretation that he was a slave or servant who was ritually sacrificed. Close analysis of the bone suggested that the male was likely involved with a sea activity (such as heavy rowing), where as the female habitually sat cross-legged and the condition of her finger bones shows that she probably spun flax.[320] The Scar burial also produced a decorated whalebone plaque, an item of high status, which is associated strongly with women, and the Norse fertility goddess Freyja.

Westness, Orkney

The female and infant burial from Westness on Rousay, Orkney, contained items very similar to the Ballyholme burial. The grave comprised a young woman who appeared to have died in childbirth and her newborn infant. The female was accompanied by two oval brooches, an eighth-century silver ringed pin of native Irish manufacture, a string

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[317] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 46. 'The whalebone plaque from this burial is the only complete example from Scotland and its craftsmanship and design rival the best of those found in Norway. It has a decorative border of key-pattern and, at one end, a pair of graceful horses' or dragons' heads'. Ibid., p. 46.
[318] [Wk. 70]. Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 97, fig., 66.
[319] Ibid., p. 97.
[320] Olwyn Owen and Magnar Dalland, *Scar, a Viking boat burial on Sanday* (Orkney, 2000), p. 13.

of forty beads, an iron weaving sword,[321] a belt or a strap with two strap ends as well as the remains of a bronze bowl and a pair of wool combs.[322] A pair of iron shears, an iron sickle and a whalebone plaque were also identified.[323] Many of the objects were of high quality and date to between 850 and 900 **(Figure 23a)**.[324]

> The very fact that a young Norse woman was buried in Orkney, her newborn child at her side, and the everyday nature of the implements buried with her, show another side to Viking life than the stereotypes of that turbulent age. Warriors did descend unexpectedly from their ships, plundering, burning and terrorizing ill defended Christian countries, but at the same time many Vikings went abroad as pioneers, wanting, for whatever reasons, to make new lives for themselves and their families.[325]

The Irish silver brooch that accompanied the woman was made in Ireland sometime around 750 AD, and was likely the result of either raiding or trading **(Figure 23b)**.[326] The pagan graves on Westness 'included both boat burial and oval stone lined pits, and they contained men, women and children from adults of around fifty years to a newborn infant'.[327] The cemetery contained a number of Viking burials interred within an earlier Christian native cemetery. This is similar to the situation at the Kilmainham and Islandbridge cemeteries (one monastic and one apparently secular),[328] as well as those from Cherrywood and Donnybrook in Dublin, and possibly Cloghermore Cave in Kerry. Elizabeth O'Brien has argued that pagan insertions into Christian burial grounds are a common burial tradition in the British Isles. 'Vikings almost always buried their dead in existing indigenous cemeteries'.[329] This suggests a common aspect of burial tradition between Ireland and other Viking settled areas.

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[321] Only a handful of weaving swords are known from the Northern Isles and Anna Ritchie has argued that they are much more prevalent in female graves within Scandinavia, Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 47.
[322] ADS Arch Search, ADS Record ID - RCAHMS06-2197. Available at (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/search/fr.cfm?RCN=RCAHMS06-2197 (18 July 2006.
[323] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland,* p. 50.
[324] NMS SCRAN image database, reference no. 000-000-099-748-R, available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-099-748-C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=5dil8pn07x&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64) (1 May, 2007).
[325] Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, p. 10.
[326] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 51.
[327] Ibid., p. 50.
[328] Ibid., p. 12.
[329] Ibid., 12.

Machrins, Colonsay

The idea that women accompanied even the earliest Viking raids is further supported by the possible Viking pagan burial at Machrins on Colonsay in the Western Isles. This oval cist burial was located near a Viking warrior and horse burial (similar to the burials at Athlumney outside of Navan, and another from somewhere between Milltown and Newbridge,[330] as well as a further possible horse burial from Islandbridge) and comprised a middle-aged female lying on her right side with her legs flexed.[331] She was accompanied by a small dog with its head on her knees. The link between lap dogs and women in well attested to in the Irish laws.[332] Dogs have also been associated with both male and female burials in Scandinavia and in Iceland.[333] Radiocarbon dating of the bones yielded a date centred around AD 800 and while 'none of the grave-goods is Scandinavian in origin, it is clearly a pagan burial and at this period the local Scots of Dalriada ought to have been thoroughly Christian'.[334] This burial also contained a bronze ringed-pin (possibly fastening a shroud of finely woven linen), an iron knife and a fragment of decorated bronze, the latter reused from some larger object.[335]

Burial practices within Scandinavia

Martin Rundkvist has examined the analytical, interpretative, and synthetic work on early medieval graves in Scandinavia (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) published by Scandinavian scholars from 1994 to 2003.[336] He discusses social structures including status, gender, age roles, and ethnicity based on a large data set of mortuary remains. Rundkvist has suggested that 'social structure is a field where the relationship between mortuary image and living person is important. The Scandinavian consensus seems to be that whereas a single grave may not be a good likeness of its inhabitant, it is

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[330] Harrison, 'Viking graves and gravegoods in Ireland', pp 65-66.
[331] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 85.
[332] In native Irish legal sources, pet dogs are associated with high ranking women. Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish farming, a study based mainly on the law texts of the 7th and 8th centuries AD, Early Irish law series, volume iv* (Dublin, 1998), p. 120 (Kelly, *Early Irish farming*).
[333] In Viking Age graves in Iceland, where a dog is deposited it tends to be placed at the deceased's feet or under the knees. Pétursdóttir, 'Re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland', p. 45.
[334] Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 86.
[335] Ibid., p. 86.
[336] Martin Rundkvist, *Early Medieval burial studies in Scandinavia 1994-2003,* (http://www.algonet.se/~arador/emb94-03.html) (31 May, 2006) (Rundkvist, *Early Medieval burial studies in Scandinavia*). In Scandinavian terms, 'Early Medieval' indicates the fifth through the eleventh centuries – known as the prehistoric Scandinavian Late Iron Age.

worthwhile to identify recurring roles depicted in many graves. These roles may be close to idealised versions of the roles played by living people'.[337]

Segregated female burial in Scandinavia

There is evidence for segregated burial in the Nordic countries, as well as parts of Western Europe such as at the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Raunds in Northamptonshire, and the cemetery of St. Gertrud in Kiel in Northern Germany.[338] Where segregation occurs men tend to be placed on the south side of the church, with females on the north. This has been connected to early Christian practice of separating men and women during worship. It is also indicative of social status and power and 'is more likely to mirror the secular divisions within society'.[339] Loddekopinge in Sweden is one of a number of medieval parish burial grounds where male burials were confined to the south and female burials to the north of the parish church.[340]

At a late Viking-Age church site at Fröjel on Gotland, only women and children were buried to the north of where the original wooden church appears to have stood. To the south of the site was an area that only contained male graves. The site is a very early Christian cemetery, as evidenced by the presence of animal head brooches, combs, beads and shells in some of the female graves. Out of a total of forty-six women and children, ten of the burials were furnished with some type of object, while the rest had none. Dan Carlsson has suggested this is illustrative of the transition into Christian burial practices.[341] Interestingly both women and children were accorded separate burials at the site in extremely narrow coffins fashioned from re-used ship timbers which still contained the ship nails. All the burials were aligned east/west (head in the west) with the exception of a single female who was aligned west/east (head in the east) and was not in a coffin.[342]

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[337] Rundkvist, *Early Medieval burial studies in Scandinavia*.

[338] Alexandra Sanmark, *Power and conversion, a comparative study of Christianization in Scandinavia*, Occasional Papers in Archaeology, 34 (Uppsala, 2004), p. 185 (Sanmark, *Power and conversion*).

[339] Ibid., p. 185.

[340] O'Sullivan, 'Excavation of an early church and a women's cemetery at St. Ronan's medieval parish church, Iona', p. 360.

[341] Carlsson, *Gård, hamn och kyrka*, pp 22-3.

[342] The grave [Anl. 32 A, 1998] dates to c. 1000 and was accompanied by a belt buckle, knife, glass beads and a silver coin reused as a pendant and dating to the reign of the Anglo-Saxon king Aethelred. Ibid., pp 127-9. Interestingly, a female burial [Anl. 32 B, 1998] buried in a Christian manner was excavated from underneath this west/east facing female, thereby indicating that this 'upside down' burial was not one of the earliest burials. Carlsson, *Gård, hamn och kyrka,* p. 42.

<u>Anomalous Scandinavian burials in Ireland – the Ship Street burial</u>

Recent excavations in Dublin revealed five Viking Age burials dating to the earliest recorded raids on Ireland. At Ship Street Great, a skeleton with rather unusual mixed grave goods was found during excavations in 2002 **(Figure 24a)**. Originally identified as female because of the presence of beads and finger-rings, the remains were later reinterpreted as a 'male warrior' because of the identification of a previously unrecognised fragment of an iron sword. The truncated shallow supine burial comprised the upper torso of a young male aged about twenty-five years and was orientated east-west with the head at the west.[343] Four objects of jewellery were found at the neck including a twisted silver finger ring, a further silver ring, a decorated bead and a very corroded iron disk **(Figure 24b)**. The soil around the grave also produced a solid fragment of iron that was later identified as part of the blade of a sword.[344] The collection of grave goods at Ship Street Great is relatively unusual, and originally it appeared to represent a female as it included personal jewellery.[345] It is likely that as both the bead and the twisted silver ring were found in the neck region of the skeleton that the bead was strung onto the ring in the manner of the numerous ring-strung beads excavated at Birka.[346]

A burial with similar characteristics to the Ship Street burial was excavated at Cumwhitton in Cumbria after two oval brooches were found by metal detectorists in 2004. The resulting full excavation revealed a number of late ninth- or early tenth-century Viking burials including a grave comprising three silver rings, two of which

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[343] This is reminiscent of the pagan child burial from Temple Bar West, which also was oriented east/west. This burial is discussed in more detail in chapter Six.

[344] Linzi Simpson, 'The discovery of a Viking burial at Ship Street Great, Dublin', available at Margaret Gowen and Co. Ltd (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/ship_st.htm) (3 June, 2006) (Simpson, 'The discovery of a Viking burial at Ship Street Great, Dublin').

[345] Ibid.

[346] See for example the beads attached to the small rings from Birka, Sweden [SHM 34000: Bj 983] available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=29321) (2 May, 2007).

(find no. 803 and find no. 804)[347] appear to be identical to the twisted silver ring from Ship Street. The same burial also contained seven glass beads, an iron sword, a knife, two iron objects, a possible whetstone and three flints.[348]

The Ship Street Great burial highlights the need for an investigation into further 'anomalous' burials. Instead of two binary and opposing gender categories, one assigned to 'men' and the other to 'women', it may be that there is a case for a different conceptualization of gender (other than biological sex) and that such anomalous burials are reflective of this 'third' and possibly transitory or more fluid gender identity. Certainly there is literary and historical support for women who could move 'into' the male gender in certain circumstances. 'Within funerary archaeology, the principal methodological issue concerned with unexamined assumptions has probably been the ascription of biological sex on the basis of associated grave goods and dress'.[349] Mike Parker Pearson has argued that increasingly widespread use of rigorous osteological analysis ought to have largely consigned this practice to 'archaeology's own dustbin'.[350] He argues, however, that in certain areas it is still problematic, effectively reinforcing modern gender stereotypes and 'furthering the invisibility of potential additional or transvestite gender categories'.[351]

> Archaeology is a continuous struggle to excavate our own preconceptions and unacknowledged assumptions. This is perhaps clearest in our attributions of meanings to grave goods, as Meg Conkey and Janet Spector have highlighted in their critique of Winters's double-standards in his analysis of Late Archaic burials from the American Midwest. When trade goods were found in a male grave, Winter considered that they indicated the

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[347] Barry Ager, 'Cumwhitton, Cumbria, Viking grave assemblage (2004T255)' in *Treasure annual report 2004, early medieval artefacts*, p. 71, available at Dept. for Culture, Media and Sport, (http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/456AB9CF-9630-41A0-95F2-093F579227FC/0/Treasure2004TextPart1.pdf) (12 July, 2007) (Ager, 'Cumwhitton, Cumbria, Viking grave assemblage'). 'Ring consisting of a plain wire with its ends twisted round each other. Simple knotted wire rings of this type are frequently found strung onto Viking bracelets dating to the late 9th and 10th centuries, e.g. from Gotland, Sweden. Ten such rings were suspended on a bracelet from Vålse, Denmark and a ring of narrow strip rather than wire is on another from the great hoard of Viking silver found at Cuerdale, Lancashire, which was deposited around AD 905. A small ring of the same form as no. 2. (find no. 804) (fig, 90.1). Such rings were often used to link items of jewellery, e.g. to hang strings of beads, etc, between a pair of brooches. A similar, though smaller, silver wire ring was found in grave 4 at the Viking cemetery of Fyrkat, Denmark, where it is suggested it may have served to suspend a pendant', Ager, 'Cumwhitton, Cumbria, Viking grave assemblage', p. 71.
[348] Ibid., p. 71.
[349] Parker Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial*, p. 97.
[350] Ibid, p. 97.
[351] Ibid., p. 97.

man's involvement in long-distance exchange systems, whereas in a woman's burial such items were assumed to be gifts from male relatives. Quernstones in the graves indicated, in the case of women, that their tasks included seed-grinding and, in the case of men, that they were involved in making the querns![352]

The context and content of burials are, of course, an important source for researching gender in the past.[353] 'Because burials can be sexed (with varying degrees of certainty), they can be compared to apparently gendered grave offerings, noting both conformity and nonconformity with expectations according to sex. Unusual combinations may reveal additional genders or non-gendered roles or other life circumstances that may enhance or diminish the expression of sex or gender in death'.[354] For example, Dawn Hadley's reassessment of the relationship between sex and gender in East Yorkshire Anglo-Scandinavian burials has indicated that a large proportion of the burials do not conform to the binary sex/gender gravegoods categories. Instead, a number of burials are 'neutral' or unaccompanied. This has led Lucy to argue that gender alone may not have been the primary structuring principal in pagan Anglo-Saxon society.[355] Examination of grave goods can provide important clues to the identification of gender – assuming that the skeletal remains have been sexed as accurately as possible. This is a current problem in archaeology as grave goods alone are often used as an indicator of gender without the process of osteological investigation, which requires bone to be very well preserved, or DNA analysis, which is often prohibitively expensive. Therefore, we have the situation where the goods tell us about the person rather than the person telling us about the goods. Until recently this was thought to be a rather reliable method of sexing, but recent studies in both France and Scandinavia (as well as others) have cast doubt on archaeological sex determination based only on associated gravegoods.

One well-documented example is the work by Bettina Arnold on the 'Princess of Vix' burial. This exceptional burial from Vix in Eastern France dating to 500-480 BC was initially interpreted in the 1950s as a 30 to 35 year old female. In the 1980s, the burial was reinterpreted as a male transvestite priest because it was deemed inconceivable that a woman could be honoured in such a way.

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[352] Parker Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial*, p. 97.
[353] Milledge-Nelson and Rosen-Ayalon (eds), *In pursuit of gender*, p. 6.
[354] Ibid., p. 6.
[355] Dawn Hadley, 'Engendering the grave in later Anglo-Saxon England' in *Proceedings of the Chacmool Conference 2004* (in press).

> Although no weapons were represented, three other aspects of 'masculinity' are represented: alcohol, driving/riding and bodily ornamentation... commentators have identified this and similar burials as either transvestite priests or cross-dressing warriors, fantastic interpretations that have been preferred over that of a woman wielding masculine symbols of power.[356]

Parker Pearson has pointed out that Spindler's reassessment fits well with two other elite burials of the same period from Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt in Germany – where spearheads were identified with female ornaments. However, as Pearson further points out, a third and most recent osteological analysis has determined that the Vix princess was most probably female. Further to this, Bettina Arnold has argued that the Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt burials are also female, 'as are remains from other important Hallstatt D/La Téne A burials that Spindler and other (male) archaeologists have considered to be men, indicative of male status within a male power elite'.[357]

Parker Pearson also points out that the traditional binary sex/gender assumption has been further undermined by the reappraisal of supposed female Anglo-Saxon burials from different parts of England, which has led to the identification of a 'possible third gender of men-women, akin to the North American *berdache*.[358] This complex example highlights the need for self-reflexivity in archaeological interpretation, as well as the need to understand that historians and archaeologists bring their own agendas to interpretations of the archaeological record. It also stresses the importance of recognising that one of the most challenging questions for archaeologists in interpreting funerary remains, is in determining the status, power and gender role as reflected in the burial goods, and how this relates to the person who is buried.[359] One of the central arguments discussed by scholars using mortuary goods to look for gender in the archaeological record, is determining whether the high status items belonged to a female herself, or whether or not she was buried with them because of the status of her husband. As Wicker and Arnold have pointed out 'the difficulty lies in devising strategies for distinguishing between these patterns, and that requires a solid grasp of ethnographic analogy as well as a sufficient sample size for comparison'.[360] Emily

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[356] Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology, contesting the past*, p. 70.
[357] Parker Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial*, p. 97.
[358] Ibid., p. 98.
[359] Ibid., p. 99.
[360] Bettina Arnold and Nancy Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death* (Oxford, 2001), p. xvii (Arnold and Wicker, *Gender and the archaeology of death*).

Weglian has argued that in considering gender, one need not reject biological sex as a significant and relevant factor, but limiting understanding of gender to our modern sex categories disguises any potential variation in a community.[361] In her study, she sets out to do what Wicker and Arnold suggest, in collating data pertaining to 'anomalous' burials, in order to identify variation in gender and mortuary practices.[118]

Identification of the male and female graves represented at Kilmainham and Islandbridge using gravegoods alone is problematic considering that a lack of skeletal material has meant archaeologists and historians have had to depend almost entirely on gender associations of artefacts – something that is neither a historical nor an archaeological constant. Women could and were buried with items traditionally interpreted in the scholarly record as 'male'. However, grave goods could also reflect status, rather than being exclusively determined by biological sex.

The identification of 'unusual' burials and grave goods has important implications for interpretations of who exactly participated in the westward Viking expansions. For example, Elizabeth O'Brien in her important work on the reassessment of Kilmainham-Islandbridge during the years 1845-8 states that:

> weapons recovered from the railway cuttings on Royal Hospital land contained a total of seven swords, four spearheads, twelve shield-bosses, tongs, a sickle, scales and weights – indicate a minimum number of twelve burials. The tongs accompanied warrior burials…[and] the same goes for the sickle and scales: Vikings functioned as warriors, merchants, farmers, or smiths, depending on circumstances.[362]

O'Brien concludes therefore that 'a reasonable estimate of the minimum number of Viking burials represented at this location is fourteen – twelve male and possibly two female'.[363] The conclusions drawn are that:

> the weapons recovered with the burials indicate the presence of warriors, but these men also acted in other capacities: shears and sickles were needed for

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[361] Emily Weglian, 'Gravegoods do not a gender make, a case study from Singen am Hentwiel, Germany' in Arnold and Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death,* p. 137.

[362] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge' in H. B. Clarke, Maire Ni Mhaonaigh and R. O Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 213 (O'Brien, 'Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge').

[363] Ibid., p. 213.

farming activities, tongs and pincers were smithing tools, and weighing scales and weights were needed for trading purposes. The presence of female objects, such as spindle-whorls and small metal tubes or needle cases, indicates cloth/ garment making… all of these point to a reasonably settled community.[364]

Nancy Edwards goes further in her interpretation and states that the number of artefacts definitively linked with female graves is only a small proportion of the total, this suggests that more men than women were buried at Kilmainham and Islandbridge. Edwards suggests that this may be because '…only a few women accompanied their men folk from Norway and native wives may have retained their Christian faith and been either buried elsewhere or interred without gravegoods.[365] Based on such analysis, it is largely presumed that women (and by implication, children) rarely if ever participated in the earliest periods of Viking activity in Ireland. However, shears and sickles have been identified from female graves in Scandinavia, and in Hopperstad, Norway, the majority of female graves from the ninth and tenth centuries contained grave goods traditionally considered exclusive to male graves such as blacksmith's tools and weapons. One interpretation for the presence of these objects may be that these women had high standing in the community and were perhaps the sole managers of the larger farms while their husbands were away on expeditions. However, there is also evidence for weighing scales and weights from female graves in both Scandinavia and Russia. In female graves from the trading centres of Birka, Haithabu (Hedeby) and Kaupang, there is evidence that women formed a rather significant portion of the merchant community. In one of the graves in Birka, a woman was buried with weights and scales, a clear sign that she was involved in trade of some sort. A female grave in Unst, Shetland, also provided a pair of oval brooches and a bronze bowl which originally would have formed part of a container for a set of scales, which further suggests female associations with weighing equipment.[366]

Gender-aware archaeologists have called attention to the dangers of determining sex or gender based only on associated burial goods. In Ireland, it is often taken for granted that weapons represent male burials and domestic items – such as weaving implements, or more particularly for the Viking context – oval brooches signify a female burial.

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[364] O'Brien, 'Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge', p. 221.
[365] Edwards, *The archaeology of early medieval Ireland*, p. 182.
[366] Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, p. 64.

Similarly, trade implements such as the weighing scales found at Kilmainham are interpreted as indicating male burials. While this of course may be true for many graves, enough 'anomalies' exist which necessitate a reinterpretation of the material. An excellent example of the dangers of male equals weapons and trade vs. female equals domestic and weaving – as well as further evidence for the diversity in gender roles is provided by the seminal work of Anne Stalsberg. Stalsberg has argued that the large amount of weighing scales and weights found in Scandinavia (in both Swedish and Norwegian) female graves in Russia, Sweden (Birka) and Norway indicate that women played a major role in trade.

Previous explanations for the presence of weighing equipment in female graves have been that they were farewell gifts from a woman's husband, tokens of high rank, or evidence that the woman died while her husband was away trading and she was temporarily in charge – effectively anything other than the possibility that the woman herself was involved in trade.[367]

> It is a basic principle in archaeological interpretation that the grave-goods once belonged to the buried person(s), that it is his sword or her brooch… grave goods were not a random collection of items, but things accompanying the dead according to important rituals. A valuable sword, brooch, or scale was not buried without a reason. It is by relating the gravegoods to the dead according to this reasoning, that archaeologists draw conclusions about gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, profession, status, and wealth of the dead. According to this way of thinking the weighing equipment ought to have belonged to the woman in the grave, not to her husband, and it is worthwhile discussing the immediate implications of this: that women had a position in trade.[368]

In support of this interpretation, Stalsberg's excavations determined that in Viking Age Russia, 22% of the 37 graves containing weighing equipment belong to female graves, 48% belong to men, and 30% belong to burials of couples (men and women together). In Birka in Sweden, 32% of the 132 graves with weighing equipment belong to female graves, 3% in couples, 28% in male graves, and 37% of indeterminate gender.[369] Also of immediate interest here is the fact that a number of the weighing items belonged to 'girls' rather than women. Stalsberg comments that 'girls would scarcely have been

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[367] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', p. 78.
[368] Ibid., p. 78.
[369] Ibid., p. 78.

taught a profession they could not have held as adults,'[370] indicating that this is likely a position that would have been apprenticed, possibly on the familial level – maybe even a mother teaching her daughters. In Norway, from where the majority of the Viking age raiders and settlers came to Ireland, there were 63 burials containing weighing scales. (This study did not include other objects such as weights.) Erik Jondell determined that of the 47 graves, 17% are female, 81% are male, and 2% belong to couple burials.[371]

> The logical conclusion to this discussion is that during the Viking Age some women were active in trade which included the weighing of silver, since a fifth to a third of the graves with weighing equipment were those of women. In other words, they were tradeswomen's graves. But there are only tradesmen, no tradeswomen in our notions about the Viking Age.[372]

While the historical sources do not refer to women being involved in trade, Mortensen argues that this may be because the trading took place within the home. She cites as evidence the excavations at Birka and Haithabu that revealed town plans that did not have a centralised craft district. Instead, workshops were associated with individual houses, perhaps suggestive of family-run production areas.[373]

Stalsberg's analyses of the Birka grave material identified a number of female graves from cemeteries that ring the town's outer limits that contained small bronze scales.[374]

> Following the premise that posits a relationship between grave equipment and the activities of the deceased individual in life, the presence of weighing implements in female graves strongly suggests some relationship between women and economic activity in the towns (although the exact connection is of course uncertain)… Even if all the graves for which the gender is not known were somehow shown to be male, the presence of at minimum 32 percent of the weighing equipment in female graves surely calls for rethinking the nature of gender relations within the trading sphere.[375]

Mortensen has argued that the fact that the historical sources do not suggest the involvement of women in trade may perhaps be because the historical sources likely are

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[370] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', p. 79.
[371] Ibid., p. 79.
[372] Ibid., p. 79.
[373] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 105.
[374] Stalsberg lists the percentages of a total of 132 with weighing equipment as follows: 32 percent in female graves, 3 percent in those of couples, 27 percent in male graves, and 37 percent in graves where the gender of the dead has not been identified. Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', pp 78-9.
[375] Mortensen, 'The "marauding pagan warrior" woman', p. 105.

a reflection of the 'public' rather than the 'private' spheres. Alternatively, it could be because by the time such sources were written down, Christianity, and its innate understanding of 'a woman's role' had taken hold.[376] Regardless, as Stalsberg argues, 'the silence of the contemporary documents does not have to be more reliable than the speech of the archaeological sources'.[377] Sarah Milledge Nelson, commenting on the work of Stalsberg, argues that 'the presence of women's objects from Scandinavia, found in Viking graves in Russia, suggest that families, and not just men, were part of the eastward Viking expansion of the ninth to eleventh centuries'.[378] Nelson argues that 'if other evidence substantiates the presence of Viking women, it will require rethinking of the historical narrative. There are important implications for women as settlers and colonists, and this topic could be usefully expanded with additional archaeological evidence'.[379]

Why have archaeologists been reluctant to accept the testimony of weighing equipment found in the graves of women? It is a point in need of discussion because we use other scholar's work as sources of information, not just the archaeological remains. The American anthropologist Alice Kehoe has argued that these are the 'shackles of tradition' that have filtered down from basic archaeological ideas about male and female roles that were laid down in the nineteenth-century when archaeology developed as a scholarly, systematic branch of study. Archaeology has of course changed much since then, but quite naturally some shackles of tradition have been preserved. Some blame for this must be laid on the scholarly rules of referring to other scholars on points that one has not specially studied. Thus, old ideas are preserved. The tradition of regarding traders as men, and thus deviating from ordinary interpretative principles for female graves with weighing equipment, appears to be such a 'shackle'.[380]

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[376] When considered in the light of traditional female roles in Scandinavian society this is logical. Literary sources suggest that women were generally responsibly for 'inside the threshold' jobs, while men were 'outside the threshold'. This does not, however, limit women to cooking and cleaning the house.

[377] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', p. 82.

[378] Anne Stalsberg, 'The interpretation of women's objects of Scandinavian origin from the Viking period found in Russia' in Reidar Bertelsen, Arnvid Lillehammer, and Jenny-Rita Naess, (eds), *Were they all men? An examination of sex roles in prehistoric society, acts from a workshop held at Ulstein Kloster, Rogaland, November 2-4, 1979* (Stavanger, Norway, 1997), pp 89-101, quoted in Sarah Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology* (California, 1997), p. 62.

[379] Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*, p. 62.

[380] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', p. 82.

Certainly, there is evidence that at least *some* of the burial goods found at sites such as Kilmainham-Islandbridge, which are associated with male rather than female graves, may have been female gravegoods. This has important implications for gender in early Ireland, but also for the development of trade and the establishment of towns in Ireland – one of the most common academic subjects written about in Ireland for the period.

This chapter has surveyed female mortuary evidence for the Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts. Burial practices during the transition to Christianity changed slowly over time, with formal Christian burial only becoming the norm sometime during the eighth or ninth centuries, with many aspects of pre-Christian traditions continuing well into the medieval period.

Problems inherent in using gravegoods alone to determine the gender of an individual were discussed, as well a number of anomalous burials that differ from the 'norm'. The number of such burials indicates that a variety of factors influenced mortuary practices, including class, ethnicity and gender. Burials practices also appear to have been affected by actions in life, or in the particular manner of death, as in the case of death during childbirth.

The evidence suggests that Scandinavian concepts of gender were not so much conceptualized around sexual difference, but rather were more influenced by status, power and age, as well as economic and environmental considerations. The migrations and resulting colonization and settlement during the Viking period also appear to have had an influence in the creation of more fluid concepts of gender, as well as burial practices. The Viking period also appears to have had an impact on the roles and activities of women, in particular in involvement in trade, both in their homelands and abroad. The evidence indicates that, contrary to traditional interpretations, women played active roles in the early voyages, colonization, settlement and control of Viking establishments throughout the Scandinavian diaspora.

Chapter Three

The material world of women

In this chapter, archaeological material that may be associated with the lives and experiences of women in early medieval and medieval Ireland is explored with a view towards understanding how processes of gender are manifested within material culture. Female involvement in education, marriage, divorce and the division of labour is examined, as well as aspects of rural and urban archaeological evidence for the Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts. Scandinavian literary and archaeological sources are investigated, in order to compare and contrast the roles of women during this period, revealing processes of change and adaptation through time, space and place.

<u>Native Irish women and power</u>

Fergus Kelly has suggested that the coming of Christianity to Ireland must have raised the status of women in Early Irish society.[1] He argues that the fifth-century writings of St Patrick laid great stress on the conversion of women of all classes from paganism to Christianity.[2] According to the law texts, possession of property was one way for women to hold independent legal status. In the case of a claim for illegal injury, a woman not dependent on a husband could be assessed by the judge of the *túath* in proportion to her dignity (*míad*) and possessions and awarded accordingly.[3] However, it appears that certain classes of other women could also reach this position. *Bretha Crólige* refers to various women of importance within the *túath* including the rather elusive 'woman who turns back the streams of war', the 'hostage ruler', the woman who is abundant in miracles and the woman revered by the *túath* (*airmitnech túaithe*).[4] Women with certain status or skills are also mentioned including the female wright (*bansáer*) and the woman physician of the *túath* (*banliaig túaithe*).[5] Kelly has suggested that the 'woman physician' may refer to a

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[1] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 77.
[2] Ibid., p. 77.
[3] Ibid., p. 77.
[4] Ibid., p. 77.
[5] Ibid., p. 77.

woman whose main work was midwifery. He cites a gloss of the law as interpreting the word *banliaig* as referring originally to a woman who attends a woman at childbirth.[6]

Effects of Christianity on the position of Scandinavian women

Birgit and Peter Sawyer have asked whether or not Scandinavian women's power (status and freedom of action) increased or diminished with the introduction of Christianity. They argue that the coming of Christianity brought a significant change 'in the importance of women as transmitters of tradition and knowledge' and that Christianity and the written culture that came with it undermined this power. The Sawyer's suggest that Scandinavian female power was both increased and reduced, and it is not entirely clear whether or not their situation overall improved or diminished after conversion to Christianity.[7] Although Scandinavia had long been exposed to Christian influences, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries it had begun to take root and change society in fundamental ways. However, other significant changes were taking place at the same time, and it is difficult to disentangle the effects of these changes with those which may be attributed to the Conversion.[8]

Marriage – the Irish evidence

The law texts provide much information concerning the different marriage levels available in early medieval Ireland.[9] Similarly, the sagas and other historical sources also provide information on how the institution of marriage was regulated in early medieval Ireland.[10] Fergus Kelly has detailed the types of marriage in Early Medieval Ireland in his *Guide to Early Irish law* (1988). The law text *Cáin Lánamna* is given over to the discussion of marriage. Nine different forms of legal sexual unions are distinguished in order of importance; the marriage of joint property, the union of a woman on man-property, the

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[6] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 77.
[7] Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia, from conversion to reformation circa 800-1500* (London, 1993), p. 212 (Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia, from conversion to reformation circa 800-1500*).
[8] Ibid., p. 192.
[9] See Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Women and the law in Early Ireland' in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), *Chattel, servant or citizen, women's status in church, state and society*, Historical Studies 19 (Belfast, 1995), pp 48-9; and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'Marriage in Early Ireland' in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin, 1985), pp 5-24.
[10] For further discussions on the literary sources for marriage in early medieval Ireland, see Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 39-65.

union of a man on woman property; the union of a man visiting with her kin's permission; the union of a woman who openly goes away with a man without her kin's consent; a union where a woman allows herself to be abducted without her kin's consent; a union where a woman is secretly visited without her kin's consent. The final two unions cannot be considered to be forms of 'marriage' as they are the union of a man and a woman by rape, and the union of two insane persons.[11] Most marriages are distinguished in the texts by the two top grades of a wife, the chief wife or *cétmuinter* (usually the result of one of the top three forms of union), and the 'concubine' or second wife termed *dormun* or *adaltrach*.[12] An *adaltrach* has more freedom in deciding whether to live with her husband or her kingroup, as the union is less formal than that of the *cétmuinter* who must reside under her husband's rule.[13] The more formal the type of union, the higher the expectation that those involved were of the same social class. Indeed, the more formal unions appear to have been those arranged by kin.[14]

Women and sexuality

While the prescriptions set down in the Irish Penitentials were created by ecclesiastics, and therefore present the ideal religious view – rather than actual practice – they nevertheless offer insights into the lives of women, in particular to expected social/sexual practices.

> Sexual offences constituted the largest single category of behaviour that the penitentials treated. Prominent among sexual problems were offences against marital fidelity, failure to pay the conjugal debt, and sexual activities that were believed to offend God, whether they injured anyone else or not. The penitentials sought to inculcate proper methods for channelling and controlling sexual impulses, so that the sinner might adopt a morally acceptable way of life.[15]

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[11] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 70. Marriage law in Early Medieval Ireland is further complicated by the fact that polygyny was an accepted practice. This meant that a man could have more than one wife of varying status. Any resulting progeny would be entitled to inheritance however, regardless of the status of the mother. Ibid., p. 70.

[12] Ibid., pp 70-1. *Adaltrach* literally means 'adultress' and comes from the Latin *adultrix*. Ibid., p. 71, fn 16.

[13] However, a *cétmuinter* is released from this if her husband fails to carry out his legal marriage obligations to her. Ibid., p. 71.

[14] The mythological tales and hagiography make mention numerous arranged marriages. Ibid., p. 71; fn 21.

[15] James Brundage, *Law, sex and Christian society in Medieval Europe* (London, 1987), p. 153 (Brundage, *Law, sex and Christian society*).

The Penitentials, which were a genre of Christian moral literature, were increasingly influential in shaping Christian doctrine during the early medieval period. They originated in late sixth-century Ireland, and flourished well into the early eleventh-century.[16] These 'handbooks' of penance provided guidance for confessors in dealing with the laity who 'wished to be reconciled with God and to make their peace with the Church'.[17] The penitentials comprise a very large and complex body of source material. The earliest texts originated in Ireland during the sixth-century, spread to England during the seventh-century and to the Continent by the eighth.[18] The view of marital sexual activity by the writers of the Penitentials was thus:

> since marital sex was a concession, not a right, and since pleasure was an ever present incitement to lust, penitential writers maintained that sex in marriage must be strictly scheduled and closely monitored. Without periodic abstinence form sex, according to the Penitential of St Finnian (written c. 525-550), marriage itself lacked legitimacy and degenerated into sin.[19]

The penitentials laid down specific guidelines for restricting sexual behaviour. For example, during menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and lactation a married woman was expected to remain celibate. If a woman had intercourse while she was menstruating, she was required to do penance – but it was of a relatively short duration – lasting only twenty days.[20] During pregnancy, a woman was expected to remain entirely celibate – as the necessary goal of procreation had already been achieved, there was no need for sexual intercourse. After the child was born, the church required that the couple remain celibate during the post-partum period, [21] as the birthing process apparently was ritually unclean. Couples were also expected to abstain from sexual intercourse on Sundays, Wednesdays and Saturdays,[22] as well as during the three weeks before Easter, the season of Advent, and during the Feast of the Pentecost. [23]

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[16] Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Un temps pour embrasser: aux origins de la morale sexuelle occidentale* (Paris, 1983), pp 72-3; 116-7, quoted in Brundage, *Law, sex and Christian society*, p. 152.
[17] Brundage, *Law, sex and Christian society*, p. 152.
[18] Ibid., p. 153. See also Ludwig Beiler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials, volume 5* (Dublin, 1963) (Beiler, *The Irish Penitentials*).
[19] Beiler, *The Irish Penitentials*, pp 90-3, quoted in Brundage, *Law, sex and Christian society*, p. 155.
[20] Beiler, *The Irish Penitentials*, p. 265.
[21] Ibid., p. 116.
[22] Ibid., p. 92.

Divorce

Much of the legal text *Cáin Lánamna* is concerned with the subject of divorce and the division of assets. 'The share due to each depends on the status of the marriage, the amount of property brought into it by each partner, and the proportion of the household work (*aurgnam*) borne by each'.[24] For example, the Irish *Heptads* describe how a wife could divorce her husband and retain her bride price (*coibche*) if he had: concealed the fact that he was impotent; if he was so fat that he could not perform sexual intercourse; if he did not treat his wife well or neglected her; if he took a concubine; gossiped about her sexual performance, or turned out to be a homosexual.[25] If a man repudiated his wife for another woman, she could also leave him, but she was entitled to stay on in the house.[26] Similarly, if a wife was tricked into marriage by sorcery, if the husband publicly satirized her, if he struck her so hard he left a blemish, or if he entered the priesthood she is entitled to divorce.[27] A husband was entitled to divorce if his wife betrayed him to others, if she damaged his honour, was unfaithful, if she forced an abortion upon herself, killed her children or neglected her household tasks.[28] He could also initiate divorce if she was a persistent thief or was without milk through sickness.[29]

Motherhood – the Irish evidence[30]

The legal texts also make provisions for care and maintenance of children resulting from the various legal unions. If a child is the result of a union which the woman's father has forbidden – or if she was abducted without permission – then the father alone is

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[23] Beiler, *The Irish Penitentials*, p. 92.

[24] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 73.

[25] Bart Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in the early middle ages' in Christine Meek and Katherine Simms (eds), *The fragility of her sex, medieval Irishwomen in their European context* (Dublin, 1996), p. 31 (Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in the early middle ages'). Early Irish law took a very strict view of a woman who left her husband without just cause. Under the law, such a woman was considered to be 'an absconder from the law of marriage'. She had no rights within society, and could not be harboured or protected by anyone, regardless of their rank. Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 74.

[26] Ibid., p. 74.

[27] Ibid., p. 74.

[28] Jaski, 'Marriage Laws in the early middle ages', p. 31.

[29] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 75.

[30] The subject of motherhood in relation children is discussed further in Chapter Six. For a discussion on mothering in the historical sources, see Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 84-110.

responsible for its care. Conversely, if a child is born of a union that the man's father has forbidden, the woman and her kin are the sole legal caregivers.[31]

As in most societies, the paternity of children was of extreme importance, particularly in the case of noble or royal children. Thus the chief wife was expected to be a virgin.[32] If a wife was infertile, the legal texts made provision for the husband to seek out a child from a union lower down the scale of marriages, similarly a woman could temporarily leave her infertile husband in order to become impregnated by another man. In such a case, the resulting child was treated as the husband's.[33]

An interesting insight into rituals surrounding childbirth in Early Medieval Ireland comes from a legal gloss in *Críth Gablach* which states that a lap-dog (*orca*) could be used to keep the fairies (*túaithgeinti*) away from a woman while she is giving birth.[34] The same tract also says that if the dog is killed during the birth, then the guilty party must not only pay three *séts* compensation, but also pay for a priest to recite scripture day and night throughout the duration of the woman's labour.[35] The literary tales suggest that special types of music could be sung or played during childbirth. The *Táin Bo Fraech* describes how the mother of the harpists (at the court of Medb and Aillil) has three kinds of music played for her while she is giving birth.[36]

> Gentle and melodious were the triad, and they were the Chants of Uaithne (Child-birth). The illustrious triad are three brothers, namely Gol-traiges (Sorrow-strain), and Gen-traiges (Joy-strain), and Suan-traiges (Sleep-strain). Boand from the fairies is the mother of the triad: it is from the music which Uaithne, the Dagda's harp, played that the three are named. The time the woman was at the bearing of children it had a cry of sorrow with the soreness of the pangs at first: it was smile and joy it played in the middle for the

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[31] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 71.
[32] Ibid., p. 73; fn 37.
[33] Ibid., p. 75.
[34] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 120.
[35] This is described as *in sagart i n-aithgein in mesáin,* or 'the priest in compensation for the pet dog'. Ibid., pp 120-1.
[36] A. H. Leahy, (ed.), '*Tain bo Fraech*' in *Heroic romances of Ireland, volume 2* (London, 1906), p. 23, available at (http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/hroi/hroiv2.htm) (2 May, 2006) (Leahy, '*Tain bo Fraech*'). The oldest surviving manuscript containing the '*Tain bo Fraech*' is in the Book of Leinster, written before 1150.

pleasure of bringing forth the two sons: it was a sleep of soothingness played the last son, on account of the heaviness of the birth, so that it is from him that the third of the music has been named.[37]

A number of versions of *Cáin Adomnáin* (Law of Adomnáin) exist. Only the ninth-century version purports to have introduced the concept of 'motherhood' into early medieval Ireland. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha has argued that the origins of the law lies in historical events of the late seventh-century.[38] According to this text '*Cumalach* [slave] was the name for women until Adomnáin came to emancipate them… and this was the *cumalach*: the woman for whom a pit was dug at the head of the sluice-gate so that it hid her nakedness. One end of the crossbar was supported by her until the grinding of the load was done.'[39] In the narrative, Adomnáin and his mother Rónnat came upon a battlefield strewn with the bodies of women and children, the sight moving Rónnat to beg her son to intervene with the angels in order to liberate women. Eventually Adomnáin complies and promulgates 'a divinely sanctioned decree that gave all women safety, status and power'.[40] The author of the law argues that the reason the Saint was motivated to intervene was ultimately because 'a mother is a venerable treasure, a mother is a goodly treasure, mother of saints and bishops and righteous folk, and increase of the kingdom of heaven, a creator'.[41] Earlier versions of the narrative however, differ significantly. 'The seventh-century stratum of the *cáin*, the law that the saint may actually have proclaimed, was a simple *lex innocentium*, a law against harming women, children, and clerics, with no mention of the specific importance of mothers'.[42] A further early section of the law merely listed fees and penances for those who murdered or assaulted women in general.[43] The secular legal material also mentions the concept of mothering.

> Secular jurists treated mothers as procreators who brought children into the family and secured children's place among both horizontal and vertical kin, but not as the preferred nurturers and educators of their own babies. In laws

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[37] Leahy, '*Tain bo Fraech*'.
[38] Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The *Lex Innocentium*', pp 58-69.
[39] Ibid., p. 66.
[40] Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 84-5.
[41] Ibid., p. 85.
[42] Ibid., p. 85.
[43] Ibid., p. 85.

and narrative literature alike, foster parents appeared primarily responsible for bringing up children and for loving them.[44]

Bitel has argued that the sentimental ninth-century narrative contradicts the 'severe legal paradigm of an otherwise loveless culture where mothers brought forth babies only to give them away to other women'.[45] Instead, the narrative suggests that mothers not only cared for their infants, but worked around the laws in order to ensure a place for their children among both paternal and maternal kin – and that society expected them to do so.[46]

Marriage: the Scandinavian literary evidence

Like the indigenous Irish laws, marriage in Scandinavia and its colonial outlays was more concerned with unions of proper property and status. These laws were motivated by a desire to regulate marriage and sexual activity in order to control the safeguarding of property, rather than by social considerations.[47]

> The most stringent requirement was to stay within the social class into which one was born. The original distinction was between free and unfree, and the original requirement may simply have demanded that both partners belonged to the group of free people… as the number of unfree people declined, this distinction lost its importance, particularly in Iceland, but was replaced by differences in wealth and prestige. Only individuals who were 'an equal match' (*jafnræði*) could marry. The term refers both to social prestige and wealth, although the sagas suggest that an excess of the latter could compensate for deficiency in the former.[48]

Pagan marriages were arranged in order to ensure control over the inheritance of property, and formal guidelines for this distribution were set out in the laws.[49] Poor people were forbidden to marry, and beggars could be castrated without impunity.[50] Marriage was not necessarily monogamous, and Norwegian narrative sources describe kings and high-status

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[44] Bitel, *Land of women*, p. 85.
[45] Ibid., p. 85.
[46] Ibid., p. 85.
[47] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 22.
[48] Ibid., p. 21.
[49] 'Although they emphasized the relationship between pro-creation and property, lawmakers were also conscious of the irrational power of sexuality and, accordingly, they severely curtailed the inheritance rights of children born to women who had not been acquired in legitimate marriage'. Ibid., p. 21.
[50] Ibid., pp 21-2.

males having several wives, despite the fact that bigamy was forbidden under Icelandic law.[51] Examining the institution of marriage allows for particularly clear insights into the effects of Christianity upon the lives of women during the transition into Christianity.[52] For example, it was not until c. 1200 AD that women were required to give their consent to the union, and this was only in the case where a woman wished to become a nun.[53] The intended bride was not involved in the marriage negotiations,[54] and her father had control over the acceptance of a marriage contract. However, legitimate sons over the age of sixteen years, a son in law, or a brother could also arrange the marriage. In certain cases, a mother could negotiate the betrothal of her daughter, but only if no suitable men were available.[55]

Ewing has suggested that mortuary evidence at Birka in Sweden suggests that wealthier women were less likely to remain unmarried into adulthood, whereas older unmarried women may have been less highly valued by society.[56] This is supported in the Scandinavian sagas and the law texts, which indicate that young, attractive women who were still of child-bearing age could divorce and remarry quite easily and with their kin's approval. The Icelandic laws specify that the only woman who did not need the consent of her kin to marry were divorced women, provided that the marriage had not been originally forbidden by her father.[57]

> A pagan marriage, then, took the form of a commercial contract consisting of two steps and negotiated between two males of equal standing. The guardian handed over to the groom a third human, the bride. Both families relinquished property, thus enabling the new couple to establish themselves and provide for the offspring they were expected to produce.[58]

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[51] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 20.
[52] For a comprehensive discussion of marriage in Scandinavian society see Jochens, Ibid., pp 17-64.
[53] Ibid., p. 27.
[54] 'A few cases do appear to suggest a pagan notion of consent, but it is notable that the majority of the marriages in the sagas were arranged completely without the woman's knowledge, let alone their approval'. Ibid., p. 27.
[55] Ibid., p. 25. 'Indeed, no meeting between the young couple was required. The law nowhere implies that a woman in pagan times was asked for her approval, but clearly states the father's right to force his daughter into a marriage he desired'. Ibid., p. 27.
[56] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 40.
[57] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 27.
[58] Ibid., p. 31.

While this model specified that there could be only one legal wife, this did not preclude other kinds of sexual unions. Similarly, because it allowed for the provision of divorce, it did not imply a lifelong union amongst two partners.[59]

Divorce:

Divorce was also heavily regulated within the Scandinavian and Icelandic legal texts. The historical and literary evidence suggests that it was relatively easy to dissolve a formal union. All that was required was a formal announcement in the presence of witnesses at the verbal declaration – indeed the spouse did not even need to be present.[60] The most unexpected aspect of divorce in the sagas is the latitude given to personal incompatibility between partners. Blame is 'occasionally placed on both partners, but more often the husband is at fault. The wife leaves on her own, or is sent back to her father'.[61] Sometimes the woman's honour was involved in the dissolving of a marriage, due to a physical or emotional humiliation of her husband.[62]

Motherhood – Scandinavian concepts of conception and birth: literary and linguistic evidence

Scandinavian understandings of gender are highlighted by the different linguistic terms existing for the word 'conception'. The 'inside the threshold' female image is supported by terminology used within the Icelandic sagas. For example:

> a 'bush child' (*hrísungr*) was the offspring of a free man and an unfree woman, and a 'corner child' (*hornungr*) was the product of a free woman and an unfree man. These terms suggest that the man had to indulge his secret pleasures outside, but that the woman was in control of the house and could find a private space with her lover. In a similar way, 'wolf drop' (*vargdropi*) and 'child of the stall' (*bœsingr*) designated the progeny of an outlawed man and an outlawed woman, respectively. The first term suggests a meeting in the wilderness, whereas the second indicates a meeting within the confines of the farm. All four

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[59] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 31.
[60] Ibid., p. 59.
[61] Ibid., p. 59.
[62] Ibid., p. 59.

expressions thus convey the important gender distinction of the man's greater distance from the foyer[63] [or the 'threshold' of the house].

Indeed, inside the house (at the threshold), and at the foot of the bed were spaces where women could proclaim divorce, emphasizing that these places were centres for the female voice in a way that public 'outside' places were not.

As argued above, constructions of gender and power in the Icelandic Saga tales present a more complex dynamic of 'male' and 'female' than the traditional diametrically opposed understandings offer. Russel Poole has argued that Scandinavian society as presented in the Icelandic Sagas is less one of a dominant patriarchal ideology, and more of a battle between patriarchal and maternal.[64] The power and influence of some women over their children are present in a number of the Sagas. One example illustrating the power of the mother-son bond is given in *Grettirs Saga.* Grettir is exceptional for his expressions of attachment to his mother. One particular embedded skaldic stanza sums it up:

> Hygg ek, at heiman byggi
> heldr auðigir snauðan,
> blakkþollr byrjar skikkju,
> beiðendr móins leiðar;
> enn réð orðskvið sanna
> auðnorn við mik fornan
> ern, at bezt es barni,
> benskóðs fyr gjǫf, móðir.

(Seafaring men, I think that some rich people equipped me poorly for my departure. But by presenting me with this sword, a strong woman *(au*ð*-Norn)* proved the truth of the old saying that 'the mother is best for the child').[65]

Jochens has argued the poem *Hamðismál* reinforces how far the poet believed a woman would be willing to go to support kin vengeance – even to the point of sacrificing her own children. However, 'although the poet used Guðrún's attachment to Sigurðr's child to

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[63] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 79.
[64] Russel Poole, 'Myth, psychology and society in *Grettis Saga*' in *Alvíssmál*, xi (2004), p. 8 (Poole, Myth, psychology and society in *Grettis Saga*').
[65] Ibid., p. 8.

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highlight her love for him, a feminist reading brings out the poem's obvious celebration of a mother-daughter bonding, sufficiently strong to outlast life and enabling the mother to sacrifice living sons for a daughter's posthumous glory'.[66]

Education – the Native Irish evidence

The topic of female scholarly activity in medieval Ireland has remained somewhat peripheral within research into education in the past. Recent work by Maeve Callan has highlighted this rather neglected area and gone some way towards redressing it by discussing female education as it is presented in the medieval accounts of the lives of the saints. Callan has argued that in discussions of education, some scholars have omitted any reference to women whatsoever, whereas others repeatedly assert female involvement in the medieval Irish schools, yet do not offer any evidence to substantiate this claim.[67] Neither has research into the education of women in medieval Ireland been touched on by historians who have focused on gender during this time.

> By failing to discuss the variety of evidence for female participation in education, scholars of both education and gender in medieval Ireland have neglected important aspects of their subject. Bitel, Condren and Bray[68] have emphasised the restrictions placed on women within medieval Christian Ireland, as well as the hostile, suspicious and dismissive attitude with which medieval Irish men regarded their sisters; the history of Ireland's medieval female scholars, however, points to the power, agency and authority open to medieval Irish women and the respect, affection and admiration their brothers felt for them.[69]

Both hagiography and the law texts provide important source material for the involvement of women in education in Early Medieval Ireland. For all of hagiography's admitted shortcomings, the intentional and incidental details offer a substantial amount of information for women's history in general, and an important perspective into the society

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[66] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 147.

[67] Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 33.

[68] 'Dorothy Bray proclaimed she had not yet discovered any references to the religious education of women in medieval Ireland; Lisa Bitel has pointed to the book exchange between Íte and Darerca as 'one of the very few bits of evidence that women's settlements actively engaged in literate pursuits', and discusses only a few other examples in passing; and Mary Condren has given the topic even less consideration in her study of women and religion in medieval Ireland'. Ibid., p. 33.

[69] Ibid., p. 34.

that both produced and perpetuated it.[70] Hagiography also provides the most information concerning female participation in education, although it is 'a marginal topic at best'. Callan has argued however, that this marginalisation may in fact, 'render the references more reliable that those which lay closer to hagiographers' main concerns'.[71] A wide range of female characters are described within the Lives of the Saints. They are very much defined by their relation to holy heroes – and occasionally serving as the hero themselves. While most of the women who are mentioned in the Lives are unnamed, their very presence 'provides important evident for the perception of women, their sphere of activity and their position in society'.[72]

Only four Irish female saints have their own extant *vitae*. Darerca (d. 517/9) Brigid (d. 524/6), Íte (d. 570/7), and Samthann (d. 739).[73] In addition, the Lives of St Attracta and St Lasair survive in seventeenth-century contexts, but are likely based on medieval originals.[74] These Lives provide valuable information for the history of women in the early Irish church. However, St Darerca's *vitae* provides the most comprehensive account of the educational opportunities which were available to women at the time.

> Her nickname, Moninne, may have arisen from her literary abilities, perhaps meaning something like 'my learned one', according to her Lives, men were her teachers in her youth, but she later taught both males and females and studied under at least one woman, Brigid.[75]

Sources such as the *vitae sanctarum Hiberniae* indicate that women could be both teachers and students, in both single-sex and mixed communities. This is further supported by other medieval texts describing female education[76] including private prayer-books, chronicles, and various *vitae* of both male and female saints.[77] The way in which women's involvement in education is portrayed in these *vitae*, passing remarks in medieval

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[70] Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 33.
[71] Ibid., p. 34.
[72] Ibid., p. 34.
[73] Ibid., p. 32.
[74] Ibid., p. 33.
[75] Ibid., p. 35.
[76] Ibid., p. 33.
[77] Ibid., p. 32.

documents, as well as texts which were written both for – and perhaps by – women, suggests that women were 'active, regular and respected contributors to the Irish scholarly system, which won considerable fame throughout medieval Europe'.[78]

Education and literacy: Scandinavian women

There is some evidence that women in Scandinavia could be highly literate. Barbro Söderberg and Inger Larsson have argued that evidence from *Rigsthula* in the *Edda* suggests that women were considered to be more literate then men.[79] Scholarly opinion suggests that there was widespread literacy in the Viking Age in Scandinavia. The fact that many of the Scandinavian rune-stones were erected at bridges and roadsides implies that some member of the public were able to read what was written on them. Liestøl argues that if rune-incised wood objects exist from the ninth-century then 'there must have been a group of people who could make use of such letters, people who considered it worth their while to learn runes and to apply their knowledge… and such a group must have formed a stable social element, well able to keep a literary tradition alive'.[80] Judith Jesch has suggested that the rune inscribed weaving tablet from Lund appears to represent the sentiments of a literate woman. The carving reads 'Sigvor's Ingemar shall have my weeping – *aallatti*!'[81]

Domestic labour and work

The importance of weaving as a female activity is attested by a poem of late Old Irish date contained within a twelfth-century manuscript, stating that 'without an assembled weaver's beam with craftsmanship, without a dexterous sword of weaving, without the hand-craft of a good firm woman, without a thorn which rises from its binding…'[82] Hagiographical sources also mention the craft of weaving and its link with women. For

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[78] Callan, 'St Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 35.
[79] Barbo Söderberg and Inger Larsson, *Nordisk medeltidsliteracy i ett diglossiskt och digrafiskt perspektiv,* MINS no. 39 (Stockholm, 1993), p. 90, quoted in Leila Kitzler Åhfeldt, 'Work and worship, laser scanner analysis of Viking Age rune stones' (PhD thesis, Archaeological research laboratory, Universitet Stockholms, 2002), p. 61.
[80] Liestøl, Aslak, 'The literate Vikings' in Peter Foote and D. Strömbäck (eds), *Proceedings of the Sixth Viking Congress. Uppsala 3-10 Augs St Bonäs, Dalarna 10-12 August 1969* (Uppsala, 1971), p. 74.
[81] Jesch*, Women in the Viking Age*, p. 46.
[82] The rest of the poem is, unfortunately, not known. Dr. Catherine Swift, pers comm, 21 May 2007.

example, the Life of Saint Brigid describes how:

> When she [Brigit] came to the widow Lassair on Mag Coel, and Lassair killed her cow's calf for Brigit and burnt the beam of her loom thereunder, God so wrought for Brigit that the beam was whole on the morrow and the calf was biding along with its mother.[83]

Lisa Bitel has argued that the type of loom common in Early Christian Ireland was likely a small light portable loom which would fit inside the small one or two room houses. Women were involved in manufacture within the urban centres, as well as within the rural farming activities of the hinterland. They were likely the sole labour force in the manufacture of precious goods such as wool and linen, and were responsible for the combing, spinning, weaving, and dying of cloth. These areas of production and manufacture seem to have taken place within the household, moving into out houses or workshops in the later Viking period and into the Hiberno-Scandinavian period.

Whereas Scandinavian women utilized outbuildings for weaving and cloth-making, Irish women appear to have performed these tasks within the house proper. The manufacture of textiles took place 'inside the threshold' where it would have been combed, spun, woven, cut and dyed. (Evidenced by the large amount of spindle whorls, bone tablets, weaving swords shears etc. found all over Ireland at both rural and urban, Hiberno-Scandinavian and 'native Irish' sites).

Clothmaking was vital to the household and community economies of early Irish society, and it was considered to be the *lámthorad*, or the craft of women.[84] Cathy Swift, in her research on textual and linguistic references to weaving in early Irish literature has argued that 'spinning and weaving in medieval Ireland do both seem clearly to be associated with women'.[85] She further notes that the legal texts suggest a precise social weighting given to

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[83] Whitley Stokes, *Three Middle-Irish homilies on the Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit and Columba* (1st ed., Calcutta, 1877), available at: University College Cork, Corpus of Electronic Texts (http.//www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201010/index.html) (2 July 2006) (Stokes, *Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit and Columba*) (12 July, 2004). An eleventh-century gloss adds that 'a female householder who [lived] beside the fort made her welcome and killed [a calf] for her and burned her new weaver's beam under it'. Dr. Catherine Swift, pers. comm.
[84] Bitel, *Land of women*, p. 127.
[85] Catherine Swift, personal communication, 21 May, 2007.

women's labour concerning textile production, with weaving on a Sunday incurring the heaviest legal fines, thus implying that weaving is regarded as a quasi-professional activity of women.[86] This interpretation is given support by a reference in *Cáin Domnaig* which states that working yarn for weaving on a Sunday night would result in the weaver's beam and all other material being burnt. In addition, a fine of seven ounces of silver was incurred. If the yarn working was with two hands, the fine was half an ounce of silver.[87] Swift suggests that 'there is a body of textual material which can be quarried for information about attitudes to the crafts of the spinner and the weaver and the extent to which such people might be seen as having gender-specific roles'.[88] She states that:

> by the end of the Hiberno-Scandinavian period, clear distinctions were being drawn by Irish authors between ordinary woollen cloaks produced by local subordinate groups and high-status fabrics and garments exchanged between the elite. The latter were often described by Scandinavian loan-words and imply a hybridisation of clothing fashion and style which suggest production and dissemination in a mixed cultural context. Thus the textual evidence for early medieval cloth manufacture in Ireland may have implications for our understanding of the organisation of such crafts in the Scandinavian homelands and in their north Atlantic colonies as well as in Ireland itself.[89]

Women, settlement and the division of labour: the Native Irish context

Enclosed habitation sites such as ringforts and cashels, were the most common type of Native Irish settlement site during the Early Medieval period. These structures functioned as defended farmsteads that contained dwellings and outhouses and flourished during the beginning of the seventh-century to the end of the ninth.[90] Crannógs, or lake-dwellings, are most common in areas west, north-west and north-east of the midlands and during the

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[86] Catherine Swift, personal communication, 21 May, 2007.

[87] The text further states that 'whoever uses an axe on Sunday, his clothes and his string shall be burned and his axe seized and an ounce of silver paid. (7 oz silver = equivalent to 7 milch cows = 2+ slave girls'. Ibid.

[88] Cathy Swift, 'Spinning and weaving' (abstract of paper given at the Viking Identities Network seminar 2), Gender, material culture and identity in the Viking diaspora, 30-31 March 2007, University of Nottingham, available at (http://vin.nottingham.ac.uk/english/csva/vin/seminar2/) (1 May 2007) (Swift, 'Spinning and weaving').

[89] Ibid.

[90] Mark Clinton, 'Settlement patterns in the kingdom of Leinster' in *Seanchas, studies in Early and Medieval Irish archaeology, history and literature in honour of Francis J. Byrne* (Dublin, 2004), pp 277-9 (Clinton, 'Settlement patterns in the kingdom of Leinster').

Early Historic period they were substantial fortifications.[91] Ecclesiastical foundations could also be the focus of large secular settlement sites, as in the case of Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly.[92]

Literary evidence suggests that many domestic tasks could be performed by either men or women. The law text *Cáin Lánamna*, which details how property was divided upon divorce, provides some information on the division of labour:

> even if a wife brought no property into the marriage, she is entitled to a proportion of the milk-products, young animals, corn and salted meat, if she has been a good worker. It is clear from *Cáin Lánamna* that it is normal for a wife to be involved in the major tasks of the farm, such as ploughing, reaping or harvesting, looking after livestock in enclosures and fattening pigs. Sources generally assume that it is usual for a husband and wife (and perhaps older children) to work together in the fields. In many operations the husband is associated with the early stages, whereas the wife is responsible for the finished product.[93]

Cáin Lánamna also states that in the case of a divorce in a marriage of joint property, the wife is only entitled to one-sixth of the wool in fleeces, but receives a third of any spun wool and half of any cloth. Chris Lynn has suggested that this implies that 'the husband has borne the brunt of the labour of rearing and shearing the sheep, whereas the wife has been responsible for combing the wool, spinning it into thread and weaving it into cloth.

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[91] Lake settlements were already in use during the Bronze Age, but were much more substantial during the later-centuries of the first millennium AD. Clinton, 'Settlement patterns in the kingdom of Leinster', p. 286.

[92] By the close of the seventh-century, Clonmacnoise was one of the major midland monasteries, and by the tenth-century it reached its greatest prominence, for a time effectively becoming the 'capital' of Ireland. Other important monastic centres include Armagh, Clonard, Durrow, Kells and Kildare. John Bradley, Review article, 'Clonmacnoise studies, volume 2, seminar papers 1998' available at (http://www.offalyhistory.com/authors/10/John-Bradley) (10 June, 2007). Heather King's excavations concentrated on the Old Graveyard at Clonmacnoise, where the domestic settlement associated with the monastery was uncovered. See Heather King (ed.), *Clonmacnoise studies volume 1, seminar papers 1994* (Dublin, 1998) and eadam, *Clonmacnoise studies volume 2, seminar papers 1998* (Dublin, 2003). Secular settlement continued at monastic sites into the medieval period. For example, the Irish annals mention of the burning of twenty houses at Armagh in 1116, between seventy and eighty at Duleek in 1123, eighty in Derry in 1162, and 105 at Clonmacnoise in 1179. John Bradley, 'Urbanization in Early Medieval Ireland' in Catherine Karkov, Kelley Wickham-Crowley and Bailey Young (eds), *Spaces of the living and the dead, an archaeological dialogue*, American Early Medieval Studies 3 (Oxford, OH, 1999), p. 142.

[93] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 449.

Similar ratios applied to flax and woad'.[94] References in the law texts suggest that the sowing of cereals, harvesting, threshing and drying the grain in a kiln were also jobs that were primarily associated with men, whereas grinding the grain using a quernstone was a female task.[95] The legal texts also suggest that the grinding of grain in a water mill was normally the job of men,[96] while kneading the dough in the kneading-trough (*losat*) was the job of women. The herding of livestock was often the task of children of either sex, but literary and legal references suggest that the professional herd was usually male.[97] Booleying, or the seasonal transhumance associated with 'the movement of dairy cattle to wasteland or highlands for milking during the summer months' is a practice primarily associated with women and children – and in particular – women of a lower status. Boyle has argued that there is some suggestion that the site of The Spectacles, Co. Limerick may represent the remains of booleying houses, alongside Ballyutoag, Co. Antrim, and a number of sites in Ferta Valley, Kerry.[98]

Based on the literary and legal texts, Kelly has suggested that, in general, female tasks appear to have been concentrated in or around the home to a greater degree than male

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[94] Chris Lynn, 'A preliminary review of the literary and legal context of Deer Park Farms' in C. J. Lynn and J. A. McDowell (eds), List of contents of the draft report of Deer Park Farms: excavation of an Early Christian settlement in Glenarm, Co. Antrim, available at (http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/built/monuments/Chapter26.shtml) (26 July, 2005) (Lynn, 'A preliminary review of Deer Park Farms').

[95] However, Later medieval sources indicate that women could also own grain stores, and Greg Fewer has suggested that this should be kept in mind when excavating corn-drying kilns – a common feature on Early Medieval sites. Greg Fewer, 'Women and personal possessions: 17th-century testamentary evidence from counties Waterford and Kilkenny, Ireland' in *ASGJA,* iii, (January, 1998), available at (http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/3/3fewer.htm) (24 March, 2005). One example of possible female work areas are the two corn-drying kilns that were excavated to the south of a seventh to eighth-century round house at Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly. Heather King, 'Excavations at Clonmacnoise' available at (http://www.offalyhistory.com/authors/9/Heather-King) (23 June, 2007). The argument that gendered division of labour was heavily dependent upon status rather than gender is illustrated by the example of a male servant (*feramus*), as well as the female servant (*banamus*) using the quernstone to grind grain in the Old Irish text on Sunday-observance *Epistil Ísu*. Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 450.

[96] However, there is a reference to a female miller (*banmuilleóir*) in the Middle Irish text *Accallamh na Senórach*. Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 450, fn 80.

[97] Ibid., p. 450. For example, 'the law-text on status, *Míadslechtae*, expressed a prejudice against the freeman who devoted his time to cattle-herding', Ibid., p. 450.

[98] Boyle, 'Lest the lowliest be forgotten', p. 95.

activities.[99] Brigit is described in her Lives as working in and around the house, and playing an active role in dairying, food preparation, herding of pigs and cattle, and making ale. *Bethu Brigte* refers to Brigit mashing malt in a vat and two tubs within the house in order to make ale for the Easter feasting.[100] As brewing is a task that can be associated with women, the recent interpretation of *fulachta fiadh* being used in the process of brewing beer suggests that such sites may be representative of female work areas. Further support is given to this interpretation because quern-stones (also associated with women) have been found near a number of *fulachta fiadh*.[101]

Interestingly, legal texts also indicate that pigs are frequently included in descriptions of animals kept by women. For example, *Cáin Lánamna* states that 'a pet pig (*orc peta*) is a proper pet for a woman'.[102]

Little is known from the sources about the daily life of high-status women, but where they are mentioned they are associated with the tasks of embroidery and needlework, the indication being that because of their status, they are above physical labour.[103] However, embroidery was not necessarily restricted to those of the noble class. Non-noble women

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[99] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 451. Interestingly however, Kelly cites as evidence of this a passage from *Corpus Iuris hibernici* which says *in fear gacha samaisce* 'a man for every dry heifer' or in other words, 'a days work (*manchaine*) by a man in return for a dry heifer (or equivalent) in the lord's fief'. Ibid., p. 451, fn 90. While this example suggests that the formal contractual work arrangements were male, it does not necessarily indicate that women did not work outside the house.

[100] Donnchadh Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte* (Dublin, 1978), available at: CELT, Corpus of Electronic Texts, a project of University College, Cork, (http.//www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201002/index.html) (12 May, 2006) (Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte*). While the professional brewer appears to have normally been male, both men and women could be involved in brewing itself. Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 450.

[101] While the majority of *fulachta fiadh* have been radiocarbon dated to between 1500-500 BC, a number have been excavated from Early Medieval and Medieval sites. *Fulachta fiadh* are small horseshoe shaped mounds with burnt and fire-cracked stones along with a central pit or trough. Various interpretations have been given as to what they were used for. These include cooking, washing, bathing, metalworking and dying of clothing. There is a general consensus however, that there primary function was to heat water by depositing fire heated stones into a water-filled trough. However, based on experimental archaeology archaeologist Billy Quinn of Moore Group has argued that they were in fact used for brewing beer. Moore Group, 'The great beer experiment' available at (http://www.mooregroup.ie/beer/fulacht.html) (12 December, 2007), also see Billy Quinn and Declan Moore, 'Ale, brewing and *fulachta fiadh*' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xxi, no. 3, issue 81 (Autumn, 2007), pp 8-11.

[102] A. B. Gleason, 'Entertainment in Early Ireland' (PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2002), p. 306 (Gleason, 'Entertainment in Early Ireland').

[103] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 451. Examples within the literature support this interpretation 'Physical toil is viewed as being beneath their dignity: it is clear from a reference in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* that the idea of noblewomen (*mná sáera*) working at querns is regarded with horror'. Ibid., p. 451.

who embroidered were also covered under the law of pledge interests (*Bretha im Ḟuillema Gell*).[104]

While large establishments such as monasteries and noble or royal households would normally have had male cooks, within the ordinary house food preparation was a task primarily assigned to women. A passage in *Corpus Iuris hibernici*, indicates that women were in charge of the cooking hearth,[105] and Kelly has argued that women had the major role in food preparation, citing an example in *Cáin Lánamna* that refers to women having the job of feeding (*biáthad*) the household.[106] That women were associated with this role is further supported by the existence of a Middle Irish prophecy that regarded a 'male cook in every house' as a bad omen.[107]

Literary evidence indicates that livestock was commonly part of a woman's personal possessions. Katherine Simms has cited the example of Dervorgilla, wife of Tigernán Ua Ruairc, king of Bréifne, who, when abducted in 1152 by Diarmait Mac Murchada, king of Leinster, brought 'her cattle and furniture' with her.[108] Further examples in the literature include the famous Medb and the Donn of Cooley,[109] as well as references within hagiography to Saints such as Brigid owning cattle.[110] Greg Fewer has also pointed out that:

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[104] 'The interest on the needle of an embroideress extends up to an ounce of silver because the woman who embroiders earns more profit even than queens'. Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 78.

[105] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 451. The task of splitting of firewood for the hearth appears to have been a male task, Ibid., p. 451.

[106] Ibid., p. 451.

[107] Lynn, 'A preliminary review of the context of Deer Park Farms'.

[108] Katherine Simms, 'The legal position of Irishwomen in the later Middle Ages' in *The Irish Jurist*, x (1975), p. 104, quoted in Greg Fewer, 'Women and personal possessions: 17th-century testamentary evidence from counties Waterford and Kilkenny, Ireland' in *ASGJA,* iii (January 1998), available at http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/3/3fewer.htm (24 March, 2005).

[109] For the most comprehensive collection of the Irish mythological tales see Tom Cross and Clark Harris Slover, (eds), *Ancient Irish tales* (New York, 1996) (Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish tales*). The Donn of Cooley was the most famous bull in Ireland and the ownership of the bull initiated the Cattle Raid of Cooley (*Táin Bó Cúailgne*), which is the central epic of the Ulster cycle. It exists in several versions, the oldest of which probably dates to the eighth-century. Ibid., p. 281.

[110] Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte*. The association of women and cattle, especially with milk and motherhood is very strong within hagiography. For further discussion of this see Chapter Six. Also Thomas Torma, 'Milk symbolism in the *Bethu Brigte*' in *HAJEMNE*, vii (spring, 2004), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/7/torma.html) (2 January, 2006) (Torma, 'Milk symbolism in the *Bethu Brigte*').

by the sixteenth-century, when urban merchants provided their marriage goods in the form of cash, women's widespread ownership of cattle obviously had implications for the production of dairy products such as butter and cheese. This association had early origins since, in early medieval times, Irishwomen undergoing a divorce were legally obliged to be compensated for their labour in making salted butter and cheese during the marriage.[111]

Many hagiographical texts emphasise the strong association of women with milking and dairying (*togairt*) including Cogitosus' Life of Saint Brigid, *Bethu Brigte*, and *Bethu Phátraic*.[112]

<u>Weaving – Scandinavian evidence</u>

Numerous artefacts relating to the crafts of spinning and weaving have been found throughout Ireland and the Scandinavian world. Spinning whorls, spindles, weaving tablets and weavers' swords attest to the predominance of the craft. Shears, and their 'storage' cases, are associated with female burials throughout Scandinavia and the North Atlantic. These shears are usually smaller than the shears used in the shearing of sheep.[113] In mortuary contexts, such artefacts are associated with female graves and appear to represent an activity related exclusively to women. The excavations at High street in Dublin provided a large quantity of textile fragments, sacking needles, and a wooden case for shears that would have been used in the cutting of fine cloth.[114] The finds suggest that this area may have served as an area of craft specialization during the early eleventh-century.

Spinning largely took place in domestic contexts in the medieval period, and distaffs and spindles were used until the introduction of the spinning wheel in the fourteenth-

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[111] Greg Fewer, 'Women and personal possessions: 17th-century testamentary evidence from counties Waterford and Kilkenny, Ireland' in *ASGJA*, iii (January 1998), available at http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/3/3fewer.htm (24 March, 2005).
[112] Also see Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 124-5.
[113] Shears are very common in female graves throughout the Scandinavian world, for example, the early Viking period cremation burial at Ås, Akershus in Norway. Jesch, *Women in the Viking age*, p. 20.
[114] Declan Murtagh, '1-3 High Street, Wood Quay Ward', Dublin [1989:034, O151339], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=3445) (10 April, 2005).

century.[115] The horizontal two-beam loom was introduced into Ireland sometime in the thirteenth-century, allowing for much longer pieces to be woven than was previously possible.[116] A shuttle from a horizontal loom was recovered from a twelfth- or early thirteenth-century context in Waterford, and there is a similar one in a thirteenth-century context from Cork.[117]

Recent discoveries six kilometres southwest of Waterford at Woodstown have provided the earliest evidence for activity in Viking Age Waterford. Built over a large and wealthy settlement site that was probably ecclesiastical and in 'size, setting and material culture… would have parallels with Clonmacnoise, County Offaly'.[118] Because the site was both wealthy and strategically located by a major route way and territorial boundary, it is possible that the pre-Viking activity also comprised a secular population of some significance.[119] During the mid to late ninth-century, the Vikings landed at Woodstown, perhaps drawn by this wealthy settlement, and occupied it.[120] That the site was re-used by

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[115] Maurice Hurley, Orla Scully and S. J. McCutcheon, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992* (Waterford, 1997), p. 588 (Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford excavations*).

[116] Etienne Rynne, *Technological change in Anglo-Norman Munster* (Kinsale, 1998), p. 86, quoted in Taghe O'Keefe, *Medieval Ireland, an archaeology* (Gloustershire, 2000), p. 112.

[117] Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford excavations*, p. 583.

[118] Richard O'Brien and Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford' in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent archaeological discoveries on national road schemes 2004, proceedings of a seminar for the public Dublin, September 2004*, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority No. 2, National Roads Authority (Dublin, 2005), p. 120 (O'Brien and Russel, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6'). Also see the most recent publication Richard O'Brien, P. Quinney, and Ian Russell, 'Preliminary report on the Archaeological excavation and finds retrieval strategy of the Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, Co. Waterford' in *Decies, JWAHS*, lxv (2005), pp 13-122.

[119] Richard O'Brien, P. Quinney, and Ian Russell, 'Preliminary report on the Archaeological excavation and finds retrieval strategy of the Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, Co. Waterford' in *Decies, JWAHS*, lxv (2005), p. 120.

[120] The scope and range of the Native Irish settlement is illustrated by a fragment of a silver Kufic coin representing 'the first such discovery in Munster and challenges preconceived notions concerning the distribution of these coins in Ireland. Some glass and amber beads and an ivory bead – possibly walrus from the North Atlantic – were indicative of further trade influences. They were found in the earlier phases of the enclosure ditch, securely dated from radiocarbon samples to the period AD 400-560'. Siobhán McNamara, 'Woodstown 6: the finds' in *Recent archaeological discoveries on national road schemes 2004, proceedings of a seminar for the public Dublin, September 2004*, Archaeology and the National Roads Authority No. 2, National Roads Authority (Dublin, 2005), p. 128 (McNamara, 'Woodstown 6: the finds). Also see Richard O'Brien, Patrick Quinney, and Ian Russel, 'Preliminary report on the archaeological excavation and finds retrieval strategy of the Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, County Waterford' in *Decies*, lxi (205), p. 15. For a discussion of the Kufic coin see James Eogan, 'From the Euphrates to the Suir, an eighth-century Islamic coin from Woodstown, Co. Waterford' in *Seanda, the NRA archaeology magazine*, no. 1 (2006), p. 67.

a Scandinavian population is evidenced by ditches cut into the earlier Native Irish deposits.[121] Lead pan weights, iron blades, a hone stone, fragments of bone combs, iron nails/rivets, anvil stones and two ceramics from outside of Ireland were also identified at the site.[122] Other finds include hacksilver and a possible gaming counter. The lead pan weight or gaming counter is unusual in that it appears to depict a masked or perhaps helmeted Viking warrior.[123] O'Brien and Russel have suggested that the artefacts found are suggestive of a Viking settlement which was engaged in both metalworking and trade. This is evidenced by the number of lead weights and scales, which represent 'the largest such rural collection from Ireland'.[124] Domestic material identified included hinge pivots that may have been used to hang doors and windows in houses and four thatch weights. Personal grooming objects such as copper-alloy tweezers and fragments of burnt bone – some of which were originally combs – were also found.[125] Ten spindle-whorls for use in handspinning were identified, as well as two iron shears – indicating that weaving was happening on the site.[126]

Spindle whorls

Many hundreds of spindle whorls survive from the Scandinavian Middle Ages. In both Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian Ireland, such objects were often used as burial goods in female graves along with other objects related to the spinning and weaving crafts. Many

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[121] Extant Viking archaeological material included the (probable) cairn burial of a Viking warrior of moderately high-status. Located twenty-two metres outside of the earlier Native Irish enclosure, this burial was accompanied by a broken sword, possible fragments of another, as well as shield boss, spearhead, battle axe, a copper-alloy ring pin which would have been worn on a cloak, and a perforated whetstone which would have hung suspended from a belt. O'Brien and Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6', p. 121.

[122] Ibid., p. 122.

[123] The object is 23mm by 17mm and weighs 19 grams. Helmets are likely symbols of aristocratic or even royal power and are 'found so rarely in graves or other archaeological sites that it seems unlikely that they were ever commonly worn and were probably the prerogative of the highest ranks of society'. James Graham Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 122. The only helmet which survives from the Viking age was found in a grave at Gjermundbu in Norway. The iron helmet is 'dome shaped with a central crest and a sort of visor to protect the nose and cheek-bones'. Ibid., p. 55. It is possible that other materials such as leather were used in helmet construction and therefore would not necessarily survive in the archaeological record. Similar styled helmets have been found on the Gotland picture stones. Is it possible that this is the playing piece or even talisman of a high status warrior? Certainly, the 'spectacle like' mask is reminiscent of masks found in the wider Viking world.

[124] O'Brien and Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6', p. 121.

[125] McNamara, 'Woodstown 6: the finds', p. 126.

[126] Ibid., p. 126.

spindle whorls were also lost or discarded at sites throughout Ireland, and their identification today is a helpful indicator of the presence of women.[127] The production of textiles was of major economic importance in both Irish and Scandinavian societies. 'The only kinds of tools, according to the grave goods, that were reserved for women only were textile implements. These are also found on house sites [in Scandinavia], where strikingly there seems to be an abundance especially of spindle whorls'.[128] Liv Helga Dommasnes has argued that such remains indicate that it is probable that women specialized in the production and sale of fine cloth, and thereby providing 'their own, "independent" economic basis'.[129] It is obvious that the craft was of huge importance, and the fact that a Scandinavian whorl from post-Viking Age Greenland was carved with runes serves to emphasise the importance of such objects to the owner.[130] Ola Kyhlberg has examined weaving implements from a number of sites in Sweden and Denmark and concluded that in agrarian environments, textile production varied across settlements of different economic status.

> The analysis demonstrates that both Birka and Haithabu had a varied textile production, and that the range of products was similar at both sites. The light spindle whorls indicate substantial output of high-quality thread, equivalent to the worsted yarn used for high quality textiles. At the same time, the tools reveal evidence for the production of domestic textiles on a scale which could meet the demands of large populations at these settlements. The presence of heavy spindle whorls indicates that the demand for sail cloth could also be satisfied.[131]

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[127] The surviving whorls are made of many different materials: amber, antler (elk), bone (cattle, pig), clay, coral, glass, metal (iron, lead, lead alloy), and wood (oak). Many types of local stone were also used, such as chalk, limestone, mudstone, sandstone, schist, siltstone, slate, and soapstone. Many whorls were completely undecorated, but some were ornately carved. Typical Viking Age decorations on spindle whorls included concentric bands around the whorl and vertical lines parallel to the spindle. Carolyn Priest-Dorman, 'Medieval North European spindles and whorls' available at (http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/spindles.html) (23 February, 2000).
[128] Liv Helga Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship, and the basis of power' in Kelley Hays-Gilpin and David Whitley (eds), *Reader in gender archaeology* (London, 1998), p. 342 (Dommasnes, 'Women, kinship and the basis of power').
[129] Ibid., p. 342.
[130] W. W. Fitzhugh and Elisabeth Ward, *Vikings, the North Atlantic saga* (Washington, 2000), p. 338.
[131] Eva Andersson, *The common thread, textile production during the Late Iron Age and Viking Age,* Arkeologiska institutionen Arkeologi; Arkeologi, 223, 50 (Lund, 1999), available at (http://theses.lub.lu.se/postgrad/search.tkl?field_query1=pubid&query1=hum_84&recordformat=display) (5 October, 2006).

Birgit and Peter Sawyer have argued that women's status appears to have differed between urban and rural settings and women's freedom and involvement in trade was in fact stronger in urban centres. 'Conditions were very different in towns than in the countryside, and women were generally given greater freedom to do business and to dispose of property in towns' laws [in Scandinavia] than in the rural or landlaws'.[132]

While the historical evidence is concerned with female landholders rather than women in landless families, it is still possible to extrapolate differences in the status of some women depending on their rural or urban location. A married women's status in the countryside did not follow the traditional dichotomous male/female division of labour so long thought to characterize medieval society. This divide can be read as an 'ideal' view of male and female roles, and is probably most clearly seen on the bigger – and wealthier – farms in Scandinavia. This 'more strict' labour division was probably less related to gender, and more related to status. The Sawyers argue that in Norway in the Middle Ages, unmarried women, children, and older people 'were not so limited in what they could or were expected to do'.[133] On the smaller farms, the husband/wife division of labour was characteristically different. This is important because smaller farms dominate the character of Scandinavian settlement in the North Atlantic (outside of Ireland), and within Ireland where the presence of Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian rural settlement sites are beginning to be identified in the Irish landscape.

In Scandinavia, the unmarried daughters of both small-scale landowners and tenant farmers had the choice of either working on another farm or going into the towns to earn their living.[134] 'As day workers, women had the advantage of being able to work all year, brewing, baking, spinning, and weaving indoors during the winter months; men, whose work was mostly outdoors, could not'.[135] Jochens has argued that work in Scandinavia was heavily conceptualized along gender lines. In particular in the case of women who remained as head of the household while their husbands travelled. The 'housekeeper' was

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[132] Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: from conversion to reformation*, p. 209.
[133] Ibid*.,* p. 210.
[134] Ibid*.,* p. 210.
[135] Ibid., p. 210.

a prestigious female role on Scandinavian farms in Norway and Iceland; symbolized by keys to the household, often carried as status symbols by women. Early medieval laws gave women the right to keep the keys to the homestead. These keys were functional objects guarding household power, as well as symbolic understandings of position and status. Archaeological material supports this interpretation. In Norway, keys, and parts of caskets are 3.7 times more frequent in graves of women than of men.[136] Keys have turned up in most areas of Viking settlement, including Dublin. They symbolize the world of *fyrir innan stokk*; literally 'within the threshold'. This is contrasted with *fyrir útan stokk* or 'without the threshold' world of men.[137] As already suggested these symbolic images of the divisions of labour were reinforced in the law, as well as finding literary expression in the Sagas. However, Jochens has pointed out that the idea that men were involved in outdoor work does not necessarily mean that women were restricted to tasks exclusively within the confines of the home.

> The basic distinction between male and female work was that men exploited nature directly, bringing back grain and hay, slaughtered animals, fish and eggs, whereas women's work primarily consisted of processing and converting the results of male work for short-term consumption and long term preservations. Some of these tasks were performed outdoors, others inside the house.[138]

Sawyer and Sawyer have further suggested that on smaller farms and regions where the both handicrafts and fishing were important subsidiary occupations, married women would have performed tasks which normally would have been ascribed to men. Stalsberg has argued that a woman's position in the economic unit – the farm – was considerable. She has suggested that:

> this model of the farm as an economic entity and the matron as holding a responsible position is useful for suggesting an analogy for 'weighing woman' within a trading unit. The positions of these women are comparable. Both held responsible positions, both were in command of their household's economy, both worked inside the threshold, and both could take care of their children.[139]

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[136] Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade', p. 80.
[137] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 117.
[138] Ibid., p. 120.
[139] Ibid., p. 80.

Ultimately Stalsberg has argued that the position of women buried with weighing equipment must have been considerable, as the evidence indicates that the weights and scales were used in the weighing of silver – suggesting these women were controlling this valuable commodity.[140]

Skeletal material also indicates that some women did the heaviest kinds of work.[141] From primarily Norwegian evidence, it is logical to argue for a similar division of labour in the Northwest Atlantic, including the hinterland sites in Ireland such as Cherrywood in County Dublin.

Secular Norse law indicated that wives were in charge of dairying; this took place in the barns of the farm during the winter months, and during the summer, when the cattle were put out to pasture, milking and the preservation of dairy products took place in cottages or *shielings* in the mountains and uplands.[142] Other tasks undertaken by Icelandic women included preparing the fire, the butchering of slaughtered animals, cooking, brewing beer, drying and mending clothes and picking small amounts of berries for immediate consumption.[143] While the division of labour was influenced by the biological sex of the individual, class and status were the chief variables of social organisation, rather than gender or age.

> Work was conditioned by the social status of both genders. The lower a woman's position, the harder her work, which doubtless included male tasks. It is perhaps no accident that the only recorded case of odour from perspiration due to physical work came from a female slave.[144]

There is also some indication of gendered dietary differences during the Viking period. Recent research on skeletal remains at the cemetery at Viking Age Newark Bay, Orkney, indicates that women consumed a significantly higher proportion of meat, with men

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[140] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 80.
[141] Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: from conversion to reformation*, p. 211.
[142] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 120.
[143] Ibid., p. 120.
[144] Ibid., p. 121. This is paralleled in Early Irish society where both male and female slaves used the quern stone. Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 450.

consuming more marine protein.[145] It has been suggested that these dietary differences may be due to different divisions of labour, with the men spending more time at sea. It is also possible that dietary variation indicated differential access to food resources associated with status and class.

If women were the primary players in the textile industry in rural farming areas, there is no reason to think that they did not remain responsible for this activity in the urban settlements. In fact, it is possible that the areas of Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin (such as the High Street site) that have turned up material relating to the textile industry, represent women's production areas. Sawyer and Sawyer have argued that:

> towns offered a wider range of employment for women than did the countryside, and those with some craft skill could gain a degree of economic independence that was virtually impossible in rural society. Nevertheless, their way to social advancement was the same in town and country – by inheritance or marriage. Many wives of craftsmen and merchants took part in their husbands' businesses, and if widowed could continue it.[146]

Tradeswomen could be engaged in the tasks of brewing, cleaning, baking and washing, as well as making cloth and clothing, caring for the infirm, and acting as midwives.[147] However, 'they could also work in the building trades, and some worked boats'.[148] Jochens has suggested that in Norway, the absence of men from the farmsteads for long periods due to Viking activity led to new levels of power and status for some women who would have become increasingly familiar tasks traditionally done by men. 'This is supported by the formulaic refrain found in literary texts that the wives "managed farm and children"'.[149]

Weaving areas as female spaces

Buildings that functioned as separate weaving spaces are attested to from the Scandinavian world, Europe, Britain and Ireland. They are known from late Saxon,

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[145] M. P. Richards, B. T. Fuller and T. I Molleson, 'Stable isotope palaeodietary study of humans and fauna from the multi-period (Iron Age, Viking and Late Medieval) site of Newark Bay, Orkney' in *JAS*, xxxiii, issue 1 (January, 2006), p. 6.
[146] Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: from conversion to reformation*, p. 211.
[147] Ibid., p. 211.
[148] Ibid., p. 211.
[149] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society,* p. 121.

Carolingian and Viking contexts, but appear to have largely disappeared from North-west Europe by the tenth-century, perhaps due to technological developments.[150] At Waterford, archaeological excavations revealed a number of Hiberno-Scandinavian houses that conformed to the styles laid out by Dr. Patrick Wallace after the Wood Quay excavations. Four of these buildings included sunken featured buildings, or SFBs. In England, they are known from the Anglo-Saxon period, where they are termed *grübenhauser*. While some SFBs are little more than rough sheds or shacks, a number of very well-constructed SFBs have been identified at Waterford, London, York and Dublin.[151] There has been much discussion concerning the use of these buildings. One suggestion is that they were used for storing valuables, such as slaves. Possible examples are known from Novgorod and Waterford.[152] However, it is likely that many SFBs functioned as 'weaving rooms'.

> Artefacts related to textile production, such as loom-weights and spindlewhorls, are some of the most common finds in sunken-featured buildings across central and northern Europe, including Anglo-Saxon England. This evidence, together with documentary sources, indicate that special buildings were constructed for textile production during the Roman Iron Age and early Middle Ages which were, at least sometimes, sunken-floored.[153]

Wallace, commenting on the type 2 houses of Dublin and the possibility that they reflect 'women's spaces' has suggested that:

> the literary evidence of early medieval Ireland suggests that special buildings were used for different purposes and that women often had a building of their own, although eleventh-century Dublin need not have been Hibernicised enough to have absorbed every Irish manner and custom. It is doubtful if archaeology will ever throw much light on such an interesting possibility.[154]

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[150] Helena Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements, the archaeology of rural communities in North-West Europe, 400-900* (New York, 2004), p. 32 (Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*).

[151] Claire Walsh, 'Section 6:iii: Sunken buildings' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford excavations*, p. 50 (Walsh, 'Sunken buildings' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and medieval Waterford excavations*).

[152] Ibid., p. 51.

[153] Hamerow, *Early medieval settlements*, p. 33.

[154] Patrick Wallace, *The National Museum of Ireland Medieval Dublin excavations 1962-1988: the Viking Age buildings of Dublin, volume 1, text* (2 vols., Dublin, 1992), p. 15 (Wallace, *the Viking Age buildings of Dublin*).

For the Native Irish context, Proudfoot has stated that 'occasional mention is made of more than one room in the house but far more frequently it is asserted that individual buildings were used for different purposes, the women in particular having a house of their own'.[155] The fact that separate spaces for women are attested to within both the Scandinavian and the Irish archaeological record suggests that they were a phenomenon common to both cultural groups. At Waterford, internal features in house PS9:L5 appear to have contained the base for a loom or a lathe.[156] Clare Walsh has pointed out that house OS2:L4 – also at Waterford –has a slot diagonally spanning the south-western corner of the structure which may have been the site of a vertical loom.

> The occurrence of a corroded, sword like iron object (possibly a weaver's sword?) placed along the length of the slot may also be significant to this interpretation. Iron weaving swords are rare finds and were probably adapted from swords; they are often considered to have been the prerogative of wealthy women.[157]

Walsh argues that OS2:L5 was likely used as a domestic structure and 'possibly also as a weaving shed for some of this time'.[158] She suggests that the environmental conditions of some of the sunken buildings of late eleventh-century Waterford suggests that they were suited to the activity of weaving.[159] 'The dampness that would have pervaded a sunken structure may have provided a suitable climate for some functional aspects of sunken buildings, in particular weaving'.[160] Loom-weights have been found in sunken-floored weaving huts from Denmark,[161] and similar structures have been identified at Coppergate, York (nine structures dating to the later part of the tenth-century), Christchurch Place (mid-tenth-century), Werburgh Street in Dublin (early eleventh-century), Limerick, Chester (later part of the tenth-century – although Walsh suggests an eleventh-century date) and London (seventeen structures dating from the ninth- to the end of the eleventh-

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[155] V. B. Proudfoot, 'The economy of the Irish rath' in *Medieval Archaeology*, v (1961), p. 104.
[156] Walsh, 'Sunken buildings' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and medieval Waterford excavations*, p. 59.
[157] Ibid., p. 51.
[158] Ibid., p. 51.
[159] Ibid., p. 45.
[160] Ibid., p. 46.
[161] Christianson, *The Norsemen in the Viking age*, p. 207.

centuries).[162] Walsh argues that the three similar structures from King John's Castle in Limerick date to the middle of the twelfth-century and continue into the earlier part of the thirteenth.[163] The Corke tower site A excavations at Dublin Castle also revealed Viking-Age deposits in the extreme north-west corner of the modern castle complex including 'large portions of three successive rectangular post and wattle houses of the usual Dublin type… as well as part of a timber-lined pit. The finds uncovered include a saw frame made from a curving piece of antler and the cross beam of a light, wooden loom'.[164]

Unlike the Hiberno-Scandinavian house styles, there is evidence that weaving areas were contained within separate rooms in the same house in later Viking houses in Iceland.[165] Spinning was certainly a task carried out within a separate room in the Stöng farmhouse in Iceland, and the idea of incorporating a number of rooms with different functions within a single large house seems to have been developed in Iceland. The Stöng farmhouse also had separate rooms off the main hall including one used as a lavatory, and another as the dairy. This is in contrast to the outbuildings of Kvívík, Faroes, Jarshof in Shetland, and the Hiberno-Scandinavian houses in Ireland. Perhaps this style developed out of a need for greater security in the rural areas of the Northern Isles, as opposed to the more protected and enclosed Hiberno-Scandinavian urban areas that would allow for more outbuildings.

The use of the vertical loom remained an exclusively female activity until the twelfth-century when the horizontal loom was introduced in Flanders, when men began to take over the profession. Interestingly, Jochens points out that the vertical loom was the only kind available in Iceland until the eighteenth-century, and thus assured female employment until the new loom was introduced.[166]

Although no examples of looms survive from medieval Europe, it is possible to reconstruct with some detail what they looked like based on literary information. A poem

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[162] Walsh, 'Sunken buildings' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford excavations,* p. 46.
[163] Ibid., p. 46.
[164] Ann Lynch, 'Dublin Castle, Royal Exchange Ward', Dublin [1986:25, 0154340], available at DIER, http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=3661) (accessed 1 April, 2007).
[165] Graham Campbell, *The Viking world*, pp 80-1.
[166] Ibid., p. 140.

recounted in *Njáls Saga* entitled *Darraðarljóð* and known in Iceland since c.1200 provides the most detailed description of a loom and the weaving process and its primacy of association with women. After describing the Battle of Clontarf in some detail, the author goes on to describe the character of Drǫruðr observing twelve persons (who are later described as Valkyries) arriving on horseback at Caithness in Scotland and entering the *dyngja*.[167] *Dyngja* is the Norse term for women's quarters, and is associated with the occupation of weaving. Interestingly, there is some suggestion that the Irish word *daingean* (meaning 'strong, firm') can be connected with the Old Norse *dyngja* in meaning 'women's apartment' or perhaps 'earth-house'.[168]

There is evidence that the *dyngja* may also have been used as an area for giving birth. Women in Norway had distinct birthing areas or *kvenna hús* (literally 'women's houses'), that were also separate from the main house or *skáli*.[169] These spaces were areas into which men could not enter without being utterly emasculated and shamed, except in the case of the most virile of heroes:

> Helgi Hundingsbana was able to hide disguised as a maid in the *kvenna hús*, but for any lesser man such an act would have been regarded as cowardice, and the man who braved the *dyngja* would have been labelled as *níðingr* and *ragrmann* simply because the location was so strongly associated with women's activity and central role in the society as weavers.[170]

These examples clearly illustrate gendered understandings of space, and have implications for the Irish archaeological record.

The ethnicity of Scandinavian Dublin

Barra Ó Donnabháin and Benedikt Hallgrímsson have analysed the human remains from the tenth to twelfth-century levels of the Dublin excavations in order to determine the

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[167] Graham Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 138.
[168] Alexander MacBain, *An etymological dictionary of the Gaelic language* (Glasgow, 1982) available at MacBain's dictionary section 12; http://www.ceantar.org/Dicts/MB2/mb12.html; accessed 4 June, 2003. This term also suggests the etymology of the word 'dingy' may come from the Old Norse *dyngja*.
[169] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 80.
[170] Gunnora Hallakarva, 'The Vikings and homosexuality' available at (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/gayvik.html) (12 June, 2004).

biological relationship between groups traditionally labelled as 'Irish' and 'Norse', labels that they point out are potentially problematic and simplistic. They argue that such terms 'simplify complex situations while promoting a view of homogeneous, bounded and self-identifying populations, and projects this into the past'.[171] They instead suggest that – like gender – 'ethnicity and ethnic identity are cultural rather than biological constructs… in contrast to the inert, typological characterisation of ethnicity held by the traditional archaeology, more recent theorising understands group identities as dynamic phenomena that are constantly renegotiated'.[172]

Because the Vikings came from Scandinavia does not necessarily mean that they are culturally the same as those groups that did not leave Norway (and Sweden and Denmark). In the earliest period one can assume that many cultural similarities were carried over by those who arrived in Ireland, but the process of contact with other cultures, as well as the particular context of invasion and migration, meant that social 'norms' and 'standards' would have been susceptible to change – in some cases extreme. It is clear from the material evidence that cultural and ethnic constructions during the early medieval and medieval period were both permeable and endogamic.

> In contrast to the inert, typological characterisation of ethnicity held by the traditional archaeology, more recent theorising understands group identities as dynamic phenomena that are constantly renegotiated. There are many examples of individuals and entire groups who have changed their cultural and linguistic affiliations in the space of a single generation. On the other hand, there are also many examples of groups who are characterised by endogamy, strong local continuity and a relatively high level of consanguinity.[173]

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[171] Barra Ó Donnabháin and Benedikt Hallgrímsson, 'Dublin, the biological identity of the Hiberno-Norse town' in Seán Duffy, (ed.), *Medieval Dublin II Friends of Medieval Dublin symposium 2000* (Dublin, 2001), p. 67 (Ó Donnabháin and Hallgrímsson, 'Dublin, the biological identity of the Hiberno-Norse town'). I follow Ó Donnabháin and Hallgrímsson here in understanding that the terms 'Viking', 'Irish', 'Norse' and even 'Hiberno-Norse' are discursive constructs emerging out of the historiography of the past two-centuries, and while they are constantly being reworked and defined, they are used here to identify particular cultural elements in time and space. 'Viking' indicating those groups arriving in the British Isles in the ninth-century and 'Irish' indicating the peoples already living here before the ninth-century. I differ however in that the term Scandinavian rather than 'Norse' is used here to refer to those people from Scandinavia, and Hiberno-Scandinavian (rather than 'Hiberno-Norse') is used to denote the peoples of post ninth-century settlements in Ireland. This is because recent research has suggested that the Scandinavian populations in Ireland did not stem exclusively from Norway, but also came from Denmark and Sweden.
[172] Ibid., p. 67.
[173] Ibid., pp 67-8.

Ó Donnabháin and Hallgrímsson have argued that the creation and maintenance of identity boundaries is also 'a dynamic phenomenon: in particular, historical and cultural contexts, barriers can be maintained and can encourage endogamy, while in other circumstances they can be permeable'.[174] However, the fixing or relaxing of these boundaries is not a uniform process, and examination of these cultural markers must be combined with an awareness of particular social and historical contexts.[175]

The second settlement at Dublin

The second settlement at Dublin marks the beginning of the Hiberno-Scandinavian period. It has a remarkably different expression to that of the initial phase of Viking activity which was characterized by hit and run raids, over-wintering and limited expansion of settlement. In contrast, the post-917 phase is typified by lower levels of raiding, high levels of trade, and much wider expansion and urban settlement. Five major port towns were founded during this second phase of activity: Dublin (917),[176] Wexford (c. 921), Waterford (914),[177] Cork (c. 915) and Limerick (922). 'Each lay at the hub of a Scandinavian controlled hinterland which varied in size in relation to its political power. The Dublin territory, known as *Dyflinarskiri*, was the most extensive'.[178] However, Limerick also had a considerable hinterland, perhaps ranging from 'Cratloe and Bunratty

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[174] Ó Donnabháin and Hallgrímsson, 'Dublin, the biological identity of the Hiberno-Norse town', pp 67-8.
[175] Ibid., pp 67-8.
[176] The earliest settlement at Dublin actually dates to 841, but it was re-founded in 917 after the expulsion of the Vikings in 902.
[177] A *longphort* predating the establishment of the town of Waterford and providing material dating to between 840 and 880 has since been discovered. The site is located six kilometres from the later town. The Woodstown site was abandoned in c. 1050 for reasons unknown. See Richard O'Brien and Ian Russell, 'The Hiberno-Scandinavian site of Woodstown 6, Co. Waterford' in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent archaeological discoveries on national road schemes 2004 proceedings of a seminar for the public, Dublin, September 2004, archaeology and the National Roads Authority no. 2* (Dublin, 2004), pp; also Siobhán McNamara, 'Woodstown 6, the finds' in Jerry O'Sullivan and Michael Stanley (eds), *Recent archaeological discoveries on the National Road Schemes 2004, proceedings of a seminar for the public, Dublin, September 2004, archaeology and the National Roads Authority no. 2* (Dublin, 2005), pp 135-32; also Ian Russell, *N25 Waterford Bypass archaeological investigation contract 1, archaeological excavation of Woodstown 6,* available at (http://www.nra.ie/Archaeology/N25WaterfordBypass-Woodstown/) (12 June 2005).
[178] John Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland' in *Archaeology Ireland: the Viking issue*, ix, no. 3, Issue no. 33 (Autumn 1995), p. 10 (Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland').

in the west to Plassey in the east, and from Slieve Barnagh to the north to Ballyneety south of Limerick'.[179]

There is a wide array of historical and archaeological material for interpreting aspects of the daily lives of women of different classes and ethnicities in Early Medieval and Medieval Ireland, and the Scandinavian diaspora. From a survey of the available evidence, it is clear that both Native Irish and Hiberno-Scandinavian women in Ireland played active and important roles in their respective societies.

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[179] Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland', p. 64.

Chapter Four

Dress and personal appearance

This chapter discusses a variety of archaeological and historical material from Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts in order to provide evidence for female personal appearance and dress in Early Medieval Ireland.[1] Literary sources are utilized alongside a survey of the rich archaeological material from Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin, in order to provide an account of the different clothing styles and jewellery through the period. Where relevant, this material is also contrasted with evidence from other parts of the Scandinavian world.

Clothing, personal appearance and adornment are important means of expressions of both individual and group identity. 'Garments, hairstyles, and the display of related possessions may reveal the nature of a persons' relationships to his or her contemporaries, whether with respect to religious belief, gender, age, ethnic affiliation, status, or membership in a kin group'.[2] Bonny Efros has argued that while these practices are culturally specific, they may share particular similarities with other cultures through trade, political or military contact.[3] Thus mores regarding personal appearance:

> often serve to reinforce the social order, just as their violation may challenge the status quo. As a consequence, the existence of specific sorts of dress to distinguish particular social groups may indicate important hierarchical

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[1] These come from a number of historical sources; carvings on the stone crosses such as at Clonmacnoise, Monasterboice and Kells; figures in the illuminated manuscripts such as the Book of Kells, and literary descriptions of clothing such as in 'The wooing of Becfhola'. For further discussion of Early Medieval Irish dress, see the following: Barbara Hillers, 'Topos in early Irish literature' (Mphil thesis, UCD, October, 1989), pp 21-35; Mairead Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland; a history* (Cork 1989) pp 17-22; M. A. FitzGerald, 'Insular dress in early medieval Ireland' in Gale Owen-Crocker (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon texts and contexts*, *bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 79, no. 3 (Autumn,1997), pp 251-61; Maggie McEnchroe Williams, 'Dressing the part, the depiction of noble costume in Irish high crosses' in Désirée Koslin and Janet Snyder (eds), *Encountering medieval textiles and dress, objects, texts, images* (New York, 2002), pp 45-63; and Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, 'The textiles and a leather tablet' in *Deer Park Farms; excavation of an early christian settlement in Glenarm, Co. Antrim,* available at (http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/built/monuments/Chapter15.shtml) (5 April 2005).
[2] Maria FitzGerald, 'Clothing' in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland, an encyclopedia*, Routledge Encyclopaedias of the Middle Ages (2004), p. 93 (Fitzgerald, 'Clothing' in *Medieval Ireland, an encyclopedia*).
[3] Bonnie Efros, 'Appearance and ideology; creating distinctions between clerics and lay persons in Early Medieval Gaul' in Desiree Koslin, Janet Snyder, (eds), *Encountering medieval textiles and dress: objects, texts, images* (New York, 2002), p. 3 (Efros, 'Appearance and ideology').

divisions existing within a society that are not tied solely to legal rank or social status. Keeping in mind that laws prescribing personal appearance preserve the ideals of a regulating body rather than reflect what actually occurred in that kingdom or religious community, evidence for clothing nonetheless allows scholars to understand how nuances in the expression of difference in historical and contemporary communities are valued by their leaders.[4]

Both native Irish and Scandinavian historical sources go into some detail in their descriptions of clothing and body ornamentation. These descriptions provide valuable insights into these 'expressions of difference' in Early Medieval Ireland.

The Native Irish evidence

Ireland has one of the most extensive vernacular literatures in Europe, with some of the texts dating to at least the seventh century AD. These sources provide important information for contemporary dress and equipment. There has been considerable debate amongst scholars concerning how seriously these texts can be taken in their depictions of society in pre-Christian Ireland.[5] J. P. Mallory in particular has written extensively on the subject, arguing that the while some of the artefacts mentioned in the sagas may reflect an earlier period, they do not appear to be a 'window onto the Iron Age',[6] but rather reflect aspects of early medieval Ireland.[7] Mallory concluded that 'the material culture employed to flesh out the stories was more or less contemporary with the language in which the text was composed, rather than with the period in which the drama purports to take place'.[8] Niamh Whitfield's analysis of the Native Irish *Tochmarc Becfhola* (The wooing of Becfhola), which may originate in the late ninth or early tenth centuries, found that 'the bulk of the objects mentioned fit best into the native Irish tradition of the late seventh to ninth centuries or, alternatively, into the Hiberno-Viking tradition of the mid-ninth to tenth centuries.

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[4] Efros, 'Appearance and ideology', p. 3.

[5] See for example J. P. Mallory (ed.), *Aspects of the Táin* (Belfast, 1992).

[6] Kenneth Jackson, *The oldest Irish tradition, a window on the Iron Age,* Rede Lecture (Cambridge, 1964) (Jackson, *A window on the Iron Age*).

[7] J. P. Mallory, 'The world of Cú Chulainn, the archaeology of *Táin Bó Cúailnge*' in J. P. Mallory, (ed.), *Aspects of the Táin* (Belfast, 1992), p. 151 (Mallory, 'The world of Cú Chulainn').

[8] J. P. Mallory, 'Silver in the Ulster Cycle of Tales' in D. E. Evans, John Griffith, and E. M. Jope (eds), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies held at Oxford from 10th to 15th July, 1983* (Oxford, 1986), pp 31-65, quoted in Niamh Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in the Early Irish tale "The wooing of Becfhola" in Robin Netherton, Gale Owen-Crocker (eds), *Medieval clothing and textiles 2* (New York, 2006), p. 1 (Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The wooing of Becfhola"').

There was a strong Viking presence in Ireland at this time, so some Hiberno-Viking influence on the text is not surprising'.[9]

While literary descriptions provide important information concerning the dress and appearance of high-status men and women in Early Medieval Ireland, it is of course, not possible to say with certainty that the all the objects described were actually worn.[10] This is, in part, due to the lack of gravegoods in Irish burials. Whitfield gives the example of the absence of evidence for objects such as the fragile gold brocaded head-band – known from other parts of Europe – and described as being worn by Becfhola.[11] However, a large number of objects described in the literary sources are indeed reflective of material in the extant Irish archaeological record. Some examples given by Whitfield include the neck-rings worn by Becfhola, and the arm-rings worn by Flann, both of which seem to date to the later ninth or tenth centuries, while objects such as Becfhola's brooch may represent items manufactured in the late seventh and eighth centuries. Whitfield has argued that:

> here the narrator may have been referring to heirlooms worn by his contemporaries, or alternatively may have been making use of a formulaic description inherited from earlier storytellers. In either case the descriptions of the items in 'The Wooing of Becfhola' are drawn from a repertoire of objects familiar to the narrator of this and other tales of approximately the same date as the best examples of their type.[12]

Society in Ireland throughout the medieval period was hierarchical in nature, with clearly defined social grades. In this context, clothing had a primary functional role to protect the wearer from extremes of climate, but could also act as a signal of the wearer's status or cultural origins.[13] Maggie McEnchroe Williams has argued that examples of figures wearing the *léine* and the brat at sites such as Clonmacnois, Monasterbioce, and Kells represent:

> a specific visual code for noble Irish dress. Using these particular garments, the designers and carvers of the crosses were able to promote specific costumes as markers of wealth, status, and power. Moreover, the interactions between the figures that wear such attire – as well as the

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[9] Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The wooing of Becfhola"', p. 2.
[10] Ibid., p. 34.
[11] Ibid., p. 34.
[12] Ibid., p. 34.
[13] Fitzgerald, 'Clothing' in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland, an encyclopedia*, p. 93.

encounters with men wearing the costume of another rank – help to construct a public image of the nobility's role in Irish society… ultimately, these images participated in an ongoing discourse about the outward appearance of the Irish nobility. They operated in conjunction with texts and presumably also with contemporary rituals to promote a particular notion of appropriate noble costume and behaviour in early medieval Ireland.[14]

The clothing of the elite or high status comprised a tunic (*léne* or *léine*) probably made of linen.[15] While there is no way to know for sure whether or not this type of costume was actually worn by people in the early medieval/medieval period:

> cultural products ranging from literary texts and visual images to legal tracts present it as an indispensable marker of the Irish nobility… By the ninth or tenth centuries, when the [Irish high] crosses were carved, the *léine* and *brat* had become firmly established as the 'traditional' dress of the ancient Irish warrior-kings.[16]

While perishable artefacts such as clothing are rarely retrieved in excavations, some fragments are known in the material record.[17] In addition, evidence from sagas, law-texts[18], stone sculpture and illuminated manuscripts indicated that both the *léine* and *brat* existed[19] **(Figure 25)**. The *léine* was a floor-length, sleeveless article of clothing that was worn in the manner of a shift next to the skin. It was constructed of either white or bright linen.[20] It was, however, not considered to be an 'undergarment' as it could be worn either under clothing or alone. It was held in place by a belt which allowed for the garment to be hitched up in order to allow for greater ease of movement.[21] The *léine* could also have a *culpait*, or a substantial collar, which later

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[14] Maggie McEnchroe Williams, 'Dressing the part; depictions of noble costume in Irish High crosses' in Desiree G. Koslin, Janet Snyder, (eds), *Encountering medieval textiles and dress: objects, texts, images* (New York, 2002), p. 57 (Williams, 'Dressing the part').

[15] Niamh Whitfield notes that 'this is the implication of the written sources. Flax seeds are well represented in the archaeobotanical samples from excavations. Cellulose vegetable fibres do no survive well in Ireland, but occasional pieces of vegetable fibre cloth, most probably linen, have been recovered through excavation'. Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in the "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 5. For further discussion see Kelly, *Early Irish Farming*, p. 269; Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, 'Textiles, cordage, basketry and raw fibre' in Maurice Hurley, Orla Scully and Sarah McCutcheon (eds), *Late Viking age and medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992* (Waterford, 1997), pp 753-54 (Heckett, 'Textiles, cordage, basketry and raw fibre').

[16] Desiree Koslin and Janet Snyder, (eds), *Encountering medieval textiles and dress, objects, texts, images* (New York, 2002), p. 47.

[17] L. Start, 'Textiles' in Hencken, 'Lagore crannog', p. 214.

[18] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, pp 598-89.

[19] Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 5.

[20] The Irish word is *gel* either means bright or else unbleached. Mairead Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland, a history* (Cork, 1989), p. 17 (Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*).

[21] Fitzgerald, 'Clothing' in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland, an encyclopedia*, pp 93-5.

evolved into a hood.[22] Over this garment, a rectangular woollen cloak (*brat*) would have been worn, secured by a brooch of either bronze, silver or iron – dependent on the social status and wealth of the wearer.[23] Based on evidence from the Book of Kells, it may have been that women wore the *brat* pinned near the shoulder, while men wore theirs pinned towards the centre.[24]

Literary evidence indicates that colourful, woolen cloaks with curly, fleece-like piles were often worn by both men and women in Early Medieval Ireland.[25] Cloaks of a similar type are also known from the graves of Viking warrior and farmers on the nearby Isle of Man and Isle of Eigg.[26] Such cloaks were often so large as to allow the body to be wrapped up to five times. 'The *brat* length – and presumably its colour and quality – was an indicator of status. It was also of enough importance to be accorded the same status as livestock and was included within the guidelines for inheritance law. Those worn by the wealthy could be long enough to be wrapped five times around the body or trailed on the ground if their owners stood in their chariots.'[27] A poem in *Táin* describes how the women of Emain Macha wanted Cú Chulainn to kill herons at a pool in order to retrieve their feathers.[28] This is perhaps suggestive of the fact that feathers were an accepted decoration upon clothing. The *brat* could also be brightly coloured, with ornate decorative borders.[29] The borders of the cloak could have fringed, embroidered, appliquéd or tabletwoven braids in a different shade or colour. This was achieved by using wool, linen, gold, silver or bronze threads.[30] The *léine* evolved over time into a much more fitted garment which indicates the expertise

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[22] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 17.

[23] 'The wearing of the *léine* and *brat* secured with a penannular brooch is recorded on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois, County Offaly, in a scene interpreted as the laying of the church foundation post by Abbot Colmán and King Flann around 910'. Ibid., pp 93-5.

[24] The image of Christ arrested on the Cross of Muiredach wears his centred on his chest.

[25] Frances Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin' in Lise Bender Jørgensen and Elisabeth Munksgaard (eds), *Archaeological Textiles in Northern Europe: Report from the 4th NESAT Symposium 1-5 May 1990* (Copenhagen, 1992), p. 98 (Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Dublin').

[26] Ibid., p. 98. Scraps of cloth from the tenth-century male grave at Eigg indicated that he was wearing a woollen cloak which had a shaggy pile, a tunic of wool and a linen undergarment. He may also have wearing some sort of woollen trousers. Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 39.

[27] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 18.

[28] Joseph Dunn (transl.), *The ancient Irish epic tale Táin Bó Cúalinge* (London, 1914), p. 32.

[29] 'The archaeological evidence suggests that the use of dyestuffs extracted from the red-dyeing madder plant and the blue-dyeing woad plant was important from at least the seventh and eighth centuries, while fringed, plaited, and tablet-woven braids recorded on early medieval textile fragments provide evidence as to the nature of decorative borders'. Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Dublin', pp 93-5.

[30] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 18.

of tailoring.[31] As this garment became more fitted, it appears to have become more ornate, and almost every *léine* illustrated in the Book of Kells have bands of trim on the hem, cuffs and neckline.[32]

> It would appear also that in correspondence with the increasing ornamentation of metalwork, the clothes of the wealthy became more heavily decorated so that the *léine* could be embroidered at the neck, cuffs and particularly the skirt. Other garments such as the *ionar* were introduced. It was a tunic which was worn over the *léine* but at such a length that both garments were visible.[33]

Despite the fact that there are very few women depicted in the figurative art of the Early Medieval period, literary descriptions indicate that both men and women wore such items.[34] Those of a lower class, or people engaged in physical labour, could wear a shorter *léine*, which reached to the calves.[35] Charioteers, soldiers, and manual labourers wore a distinctly different type of costume to that of the upper classes. Requiring more ease of movement, they wore clothing which comprised a small *brat* or jacket which was called an *ionar* and could be made from either wool or leather. This was worn with woollen *osáin*, or trews, and a leather belt of either wool or leather (*crois*) from which objects could be suspended.[36] Both men and women wore such belts. The word *osáin* appears to refer to tight fitting leggings or stockings, and corresponds to the modern Irish word for stockings.

Shoes were also indicative of social status. This is clearly illustrated by a passage in 'The Rule of Ailbe of Emly' directing that 'no matter how ascetic a respected person

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[31] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 21.

[32] Ibid., p. 21.

[33] Ibid., p. 21.

[34] Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Dublin', pp 93-5.

[35] The *Triads of Ireland* however, regulated how short tunics could be 'Three lawful handbreadths: a handbreath between shoes and trews, a handbreath between ear and hair, a handbreadth between the fringe and the knee'. Kuno Meyer, *The Triads of Ireland*, Irish Academy Todd Lecture series, volume xiii (Dublin, 1906), pp 28-9, no. 222, quoted in Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 18.

[36] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 21. 'There seems to have been at least three different styles of trews worn in Ireland in the first millennium AD. One style seems derived from the braccae which were used by the Celts in Europe, being well-seated, narrow at the calves and with an instep strap for each foot. These remained in use and were illustrated by Giraldus Cambrensis… as the typical Irish trews of the late twelfth century'. Ibid., p. 21. Both long and short skin-tight trews are illustrated in the Book of Kells, while the tenth century Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice and the eleventh-century Crozier of Aghadoe depicts men wearing bulbous, knee length trews. Another style is illustrated in the book of Kells, which depicts skin tight trews worn both long and short. Ibid., p. 21. The word *crois* is still used today in the Aran Islands to denote a specific type of belt.

became he should never go barefoot'.[37] Higher status people wore shoes made from a single piece of leather, and this could be highly decorated with ornate seams or interlacing.[38] Others appear to have worn strong rawhide shoes which were scored to allow for flexibility.[39]

In the *Wooing of Becfhola*, Findruine's shoes were decorated with metal strap-ends or metalwork mounts. Similar shoes are known to have been worn by elites outside of Ireland. Whitfield has suggested that, while such objects may have been purely fanciful, it is possible that high status individuals in Ireland wore such shoes.[40]

Linguistic evidence suggests that Scandinavian styles of dress influenced the Native Irish styles. For example:

> the introduction to Old Irish before 900 of a number of Old Norse loan words – such as *skyrta*, which became *scuird* (shirt, tunic, cloak), and *brok*, which became *bróg* (hose, trousers, [and later] shoes) – suggests that the Viking incursions had an impact on dress. In particular, the Vikings may have introduced the short tunic and trousers outfit, as well as the *ionar*, a form of tunic worn over the *léine*. The Scandinavians are also generally credited with the introduction of silk cloth into Ireland through their increased trading connections.[41]

Textile fragments are relatively scarce in the archaeological record, but there are a number of fragments dating to the early medieval period, such as the items from Lagore crannog.[42] Much more extensive collections have been excavated from the medieval urban areas of Dublin, Waterford, and Cork. While most of the extant

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[37] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland,* p. 20.
[38] Ibid., p. 20.
[39] A. T. Lucas, 'Footwear in Ireland' in *JCLAS*, xii, no. 4 (1956), p. 369 (Lucas, 'Footwear in Ireland'). An interesting sidenote to the wearing of shoes as indicators of social standing comes from the recent excavations at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, the site of a large Romano-British cemetery dating to the fourth and fifth centuries AD. The only burial which had been placed in a stone sarcophagus was that of a high status young woman cradling a child. This was the earliest burial at the site and dates to c. 220 AD. Due to the unique environment created by the burial chamber, the shoes that both the woman and the child were interred with survived. The woman wore laced shoes with cork insoles. The shoes were constructed of deerskin and were fur-lined. The shoes were imported from the Mediterranean. The child was wearing calf-skin shoes which are unique to Britain. Wessex Archaeology, available at (http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/wiltshire/boscombe/preserved-roman-remains/index.html) (2 January, 2007).
[40] 'Alternatively, the narrators may just have been inspired by their knowledge of the clothing of foreign dignitaries'. Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 34.
[41] Fitzgerald, 'Clothing' in Sean Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Ireland, an encyclopedia*, pp 93-5.
[42] Hugh Hencken, 'Lagore Crannóg, an Irish royal residence of the seventh to tenth century A. D.,' in *PRIA*, liii, section c (1950), pp 204-24 (Hencken, 'Lagore Crannóg).

textiles do not compose entire garments, they do provide useful supplementary information for clothing types and styles.

The Irish law tracts made some attempt to regulate dress styles by imposing guidelines for the colours worn as well as restrictions on the number of colours in garments worn by the various social classes.[43] The colours of importance appear to have been purple, crimson and green. Blue, black, yellow speckled, variegated and striped were also referred to. It appears that *dun* and grey were the 'everyday' colours that the lower classes in particular would have worn.[44]

> Yellow seems to have been a very popular colour, which the Irish may have achieved by using a local plant called *buidh mór* (great yellow) rather than imported saffron. Purple dye also seems to have been made in Ireland. Additional evidence for brightly- coloured costumes comes from the illuminated manuscripts of the period, particularly the Book of Kells, and also from the archaeological textiles found at Lagore crannog, which might have been dyed red.[45]

Status and wealth also determined the types of fabrics that could be worn. '*Lebhor na Cert* (The Book of Rights) gives an idea of such clothing when it recounts that the high-king of Ireland paid stipends for tunics, corselets, cloaks, hoods and mantles'.[46]

Hair and hairstyles

Evidence from both the literary and legal texts indicates that hair was also an important indicator of age, status and gender in Early Medieval Ireland. Body hair of all types was valued by both men and women. For example, the honour price of a woman who has her pubic hair shaved draws two-thirds of the fine for her seduction.[47] Facial hair was a signifier of class and:

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[43] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 263. The sagas also go into great detail describing the various colours of the clothing of the warrior ranks in particular. See for example the descriptions of Cú Chulainn and the other warriors in the *Táin Bó Cúailgne* in Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish tales*, pp 302-3.

[44] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 18.

[45] Williams, 'Dressing the part', p. 60; see also L. Start, 'Textiles' in Hencken, 'Lagore crannog', p. 214.

[46] Charles Doherty, 'Exchange and trade in Early Medieval Ireland' in *JRSAI,* x (1980), p. 74, quoted in Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 22.

[47] William Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards' in *ZCP*, xxxxiv, (1991), p. 175 (Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards').

aristocratic men were either clean-shaven or had both a beard and a moustache, while soldiers and lower-class men wore a long moustache without an accompanying beard. This antipathy on the part of the aristocracy to the moustache worn alone carried through to the medieval period.[48]

While female hairstyles are mentioned in the literature, they are not given as much attention as male styles, neither are they as indicative of status.[49] Examples of female hairstyles include the reference in *Tógail Bruidne Da Derga* (The destruction of Da Derga's hostel) where Étain unbounds her hair to wash it in her silver basin and comb it with her silver and gold comb. Her blonde hair is done up in two tresses, each containing a plait of four locks with a bead at the point of each lock.[50] Other sources indicate that high status women at the time wore their hair long, plaited or hanging loosely over outer clothes, as opposed to covered or coiffed as was the fashion for some Hiberno-Scandinavian women.[51] Feidelm, the seeress and poetess in the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* is described as having black lashes and eyebrows, along with three plaits of golden hair, two wound around her head and the third hanging down her back to her calves.[52] The contrast between the golden-blonde hair against the black of the eyebrows and lashes suggests that some type of cosmetic enhancer may have been known at the time.[53] It may be that cheeks and lips were 'blushed' with juice from the elderberry flower. In her lament in the *Táin*, Deirdru also describes how her nails are 'crimsoned', perhaps with either elderberry juices or through animal blood.[54]

Lucas has suggested that the high status Iron Age hairstyles were created using lime, and that this fashion gave way in the early medieval period into clean hair which was kept in both simple and elaborate styles.[55] An unusual annal entry in the twelfth century *Chronicon Scotorum*, records that in the year 888 AD Irish religious women cut their hair, apparently for the first time. Mary Condren has suggested that this must

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[48] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 21.
[49] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 175.
[50] Ibid., p. 169.
[51] Ibid., p. 169.
[52] Ibid., p. 169. Cosmetics are well attested to from both Roman cultures as well as a number of contemporary European cultures.
[53] Ibid., p. 169.
[54] Ibid., p. 169.
[55] A. T. Lucas, 'Washing and bathing in ancient Ireland' in *JRSAI*, xcv (1965), p. 65.

have been a rather significant event in order to have been included in the annals alongside accounts of wars and deaths of abbots and chieftains.[56]

Whitfield has argued that the gold- and silver-woven wired-balls found in Ireland, Man, Britain and Iceland dating to the ninth to late tenth centuries may have been used as hair ornaments. 'These small, bun-shaped balls are generally of silver, but in Dublin copper-alloy wire was used while gold wire was employed in an example found at Carlisle'.[57] Such objects had a variety of decorative usages, including clothing ornamentation in burials in the Isle of Man, and as jewellery attachments such as the stop on the now lost kite brooch from Clonmacnoise.[58]

Jewellery: Native Irish

Jewellery was worn by both men and women and included brooches, bracelets, neck-rings and arm-rings. One type of brooch worn in early medieval Ireland was the ringed-pin. This object was worn by both men and women, and was later much favoured by the Scandinavians.[59] This brooch usually comprised a long bronze pin with a swivelling ring set in its head that would allow for a cord or small chain to be attached. Both rings and necklaces are mentioned in the literature, and beads, bracelets and bells also receive comment. Glass was also used in the making of jewellery, and is often found in the form of blue bangles ornamented with white dots and cables. One suggestion for their use was that they were pendants or hair ornaments.[60] A large number of bangles and beads were identified from Lagore, and it has been suggested that the kingdom of Brega was a major centre for this type of production.[61]

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[56] Mary Condren, *The serpent and the goddess* (Dublin, 2002), p. 105 (Condren, *The serpent and the goddess*). Even in modern times this is a symbol of renouncing worldly values and symbolizing commitment to religious life.
[57] Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 12.
[58] Ibid., p. 12.
[59] Irish ringed-pins have turned up at archaeological sites as diverse as L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland, York, England, and Beginish, Co. Kerry.
[60] Nancy Edwards, 'The archaeology of early medieval Ireland, c.400-1169, settlement and economy' in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A new history of Ireland vol. 1, prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), p. 287 (Edwards, 'The archaeology of early medieval Ireland, c.400-1169').
[61] Ibid., p. 287.

Personal appearance and dress: the Scandinavian evidence

The evidence from Kilmainham-Islandbridge and the other known Viking sites indicates a discernable pattern in dress and ornament style unique to this earlier phase of Viking habitation. From the available artefacts, it is possible to create a reliable sketch of the appearance of wealthy or important Viking women. Pat Wallace has provided a description of how female dress during this period may have looked. He has suggested that it likely comprised a wool overdress – sometimes so long that it trailed behind the wearer. Under this, women would have worn a shirt made from either linen or wool **(Figure 26)**.[62] 'The dress was suspended from a pair of shoulder straps, each of which was adorned with a domed oval brooch and a necklace often linking the two brooches. A shawl or cloak – resembling the Irish *brat* – completed the ensemble, and was fastened at the throat by a third brooch'.[63] However, the wearing of oval brooches did not necessarily mean the woman in question was a stranger to hard physical labour. The female burial at Westness, Orkney, included paired oval brooches and jewellery including a fine Celtic cross. However, analysis of her spine indicated that she had spent her life carrying heavy loads on her back.[64] Interestingly, there is some evidence that shorter dresses could also be worn suspended from a set of oval brooches. At Pickhill in Yorkshire, an Anglo-Scandinavian carving appears to show a short dress with a set of oval brooches **(Figure 27)**.[65]

Literary sources indicate that slaves, the poor, and working class women during the Viking Age wore very different types of clothing. For example, in *Rígsþula* the slave woman is barefoot, wears no jewellery whatsoever, and her bare arms are tanned by the sun – indicating that she regularly went without sleeves. '*Þar kom at garði gengilbeina, aurr var á ilium, armr sólbrunninn, niðrbjúgt er nef, fefndiz Þir*' ('She came to the yard, gangly-legged, there was mud on her foot soles, sunburned arms, her nose is hooked, her name is Slavegirl').[66] Similarly, in *Gróttasöngr*, the female

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[62] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 13.
[63] Ibid., p. 13.
[64] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 43.
[65] Ibid., p. 43.
[66] Ibid., p. 42.

slaves complain that 'the mud eats our foot soles and the cold above'.[67] From these sources, it appears that the normal attire for a slave was a knee-length dress made from plain wool or coarse linen and nothing more. 'As well as being more practical for heavy work, a shorter dress would have been simpler to make and more economical in cloth, since the bottom of a longer dress needs fuller skirts if it is not to be too tight for walking'.[68] Higher status women may also have worn shorter dresses in daily life, and it may be that this was not the preferred costume that a woman would be buried in. Short dresses are known from the archaeological record. A carved stone from Hunnestad, Sweden depicts the troll wife Hyrroki wearing a dress reaching only to mid-thigh **(Figure 28)**.[69] Ewing has suggested that in view of this evidence, some of the Anglo-Scandinavian carvings that have previously been interpreted as men due to their short garments, may actually be representations of women. He cites as evidence the carving at Kirkbymoorside, North Yorkshire, which depicts a beltless dress with a low-cut neckline (considered to be effeminate within Viking Age Scandinavia and Iceland), as well as long hair and a possible bead neckband **(Figure 29)**.[70] Like their Native Irish counterparts, only the highest classes of Scandinavian women wore *slœðr,* a particular type of cloak. Similarly, the wearing of a dyed linen underdress and pleated sleeves also appear to have been restricted to the upperclass.[71] There is also some suggestion that young or unmarried women may have worn a shirt and a belted skirt instead of the overdress and oval brooches. An image on the Oseberg cart depicts one such woman, as does an image of a female on the Oseberg Tapestry.[72] Similarly, a picture stone from Garde Bote, Gotland illustrating the sacrifice of seven maidens, depicts all the women as wearing belted skirts and shirts.[73]

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[67] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 42. 'The image of the ill-clad slave is likely to have been typical, but is a general rather than a universal truth. Some slaves may have been very well cared for and dressed in warm and decent if simple clothes, whilst concubines might well have enjoyed the use of fine clothing and jewellery', Ibid., p. 43.

[68] Ibid., p. 42.

[69] Ibid., p. 42. Similarly, *Egils saga* describes a troll woman who wears a dress so short that her genitals are exposed. Ibid., p. 42.

[70] Ibid., p. 43. Of course, this carving, as well as the one from Pickhill, Yorkshire, may also represent some sort of gender shifting – by either males or females – this is discussed in chapter two.

[71] Ibid., p. 41.

[72] Ibid., p. 46.

[73] Ibid., p. 49.

<u>Personal appearance and dress: The Hiberno-Scandinavian evidence</u>

Archaeological finds have also provided sufficient evidence to construct an image of the clothes and accessories that Hiberno-Scandinavian women wore in early medieval Ireland. It is certain, for example, that women wore gloves and hats, silk caps and neckerchiefs (in order to keep the coarse weave from chafing the neck).[74] A sizeable number of the last two items, found at Dublin and Waterford, bear striking resemblance to those worn by women throughout the Scandinavian world.[75] It is almost certain that underwear – probably made from linen – was also worn, at least among the higher ranks of society.[76] Research indicates that clothes could often be highly coloured. This is confirmed by native accounts of raids of Viking towns like Dublin and Limerick, from which coloured clothes and leatherwork were often taken among the spoils of war.[77] *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaib* (War of the Irish with the Foreigners) describes how:

> they took their treasures and their good property and their saddle (cloths) beautiful and foreign, their gold and their silver, their renowned cloth, showing technical skill (?) of every colour and of every race (type?), their soft (?), satins their characteristic illustrious silks, scarlet and green all sorts of similar clothes.[78]

There are other literary references attesting to the presence of silk in Hiberno-Scandinavian towns. The annals and the sagas make several references to different types of imported cloth, including silk.[79] Heckett has suggested that 'perhaps one has been too ready to discount as hyperbole the description of the sack of Limerick in 967 AD: "They followed them also into the fort and slaughtered them on the streets and in the houses… their blooming silk-clad young women". Perhaps conspicuous consumption was a feature of [Hiberno-Viking towns]?'[80]

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[74] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 11.
[75] Ibid*.,* p. 9.
[76] Ibid., p. 9.
[77] Ibid, p. 14.
[78] The twelfth-century text reads '*Tucsait a seoit ocus a degmaini is a sadlaici alli allmarda, a ór is a arget, a hetaigi fetca firalli cacha datha ocus cacha ceneoil, a sicir srol sita sainemail suachnid iter scarloit is uani ocus cach hedaich archena'*. Translated by Dr. Catherine Swift. Pers comm..
[79] Wallace, *Aspects of Viking Dublin*, p. 14.
[80] James Henthorn Todd, *Cogadh Gaedhel re Galliabh: the wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill, or the invasions of Ireland by the Danes and other Norsemen* (London, 1967), pp 78-79, quoted in Heckett, 'Textiles, cordage, basketry', p. 751.

Fragments of silk were also discovered during excavations in Waterford.[81] In Dublin, some woven silk cloths were identified that had been folded and stitched to make caps; other pieces of woven silk were worn as scarves or ribbons. There were also silk tabbies and some patterned silks.[82] Wallace's excavations at Dublin revealed imported compound silks, silk tabbies, and gold braids dating to the tenth century.[83]

> Silk found in Ireland could, in theory, have originated in several places, including Baghdad, Spain, Egypt, or China. Some may have been brought into Ireland by the Vikings. Silks from the East were also traded through Rome, and Irish pilgrims to Rome may have brought silks back to Ireland, or may alternatively have acquired them in the textile trading town of Pavia in northern Italy, near the Irish monestary at Bobbio.[84]

Silk bonnets have been recovered from York, Lincoln, London and Dublin. The arrival of silk is likely a result of Scandinavian trade. It is possible that silk may have been imported into Ireland before the Viking period.[85] However, Maggie McEnchroe Williams has argued that 'frequent references to silk *léinte* suggest an early medieval inflection because silk was probably not readily available in Ireland until the ninth or tenth century'.[86] It is more likely that the scribes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries who wrote down the saga tales, clothed their warriors and heroes in silks because that was the status symbol of their own day.[87]

Legs and feet could be covered with thick wool leggings or socks,[88] over which leather shoes were worn. The typical shoe type during the Viking Age was the leather turn-shoe, which was worn by men, women and children alike.[89] Archaeology

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[81] Heckett, 'Textiles, cordage, basketry', pp 749-51.
[82] Francis Pritchard, 'Silk braids and textiles of the Viking Age from Dublin' in Lise Bender Jorgensen, Bente Magnus, and Elisabeth Munksgaard (eds), *Archaeological Textiles, Report from the Second NESAT Symposium, 1-4 May, 1994* (Copenhagen, 1988), pp 149-156; Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, *Viking age headcoverings from Dublin* (Dublin, 2003), pp 91-98; 105-6.
[83] Patrick Wallace, 'The archaeology of Viking Dublin' in Howard Clarke and Angret Simms, (eds), *The comparative history of urban origins in non-Roman Europe, Ireland, Wales, Denmark, Germany, Poland and Russia from the ninth to the thirteenth century,* B. A. R. reports International series (Oxford, 1985), p. 135.
[84] Heckett, *Viking age headcoverings*, pp 106-8; Hecket, 'Textiles, cordage, basketry', pp 749-53; Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 25.
[85] Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in "The Wooing of Becfhola"', p. 25.
[86] Williams, 'Dressing the part', p. 59 fn 10.
[87] Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland*, p. 22.
[88] Needle-bound ('naal-binding') socks were found at Viking York.
[89] 'A turn-shoe is made by a similar method to dress-making. The shoe is sewn up inside out with the help of a wooden last; then it is *turned*, so that the tougher grain or hair side is outermost and the seams are hidden inside the shoe'. Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 58.

confirms that low-cut shoes were in fashion in Ireland in the Hiberno-Scandinavian period.[90] The population of Dublin was unique in that they typically wore low shoes that were usually laced with thongs and were without heels in preference to the high bootees that were fashionable in Viking towns outside of Ireland.[91] There is some indication that the lacing in shoes was a reflection of status. The laces of the shoes accompanying one of the women[92] in the Oseberg burial were six feet long.[93] The importance of shoes as signifiers of social status is also reflected in the Scandinavian literary material. In *Laxdæla saga* the jealous wife Jórunn beats the Native Irish slave Melkorka with a sock, a symbol of the wife's social superiority. In *Guðrúnarkviða*, a slave women must dress her mistress 'then I was bound and battle-caught… I had to bedeck her and tie the shoes of the warlord's woman every morning'.[94]

Oval brooches

Oval brooches functioned as signifiers of status and wealth. At Birka, female graves containing such brooches were, in general, wealthier than those that did not contain oval brooches.[95]

> Even discounting the oval brooches themselves, they are richer on average than those including only women's jewellery of another sort; women buried with twin oval brooches were also likely to wear more beads and more other brooches than those who did not. This could be read as confirmation that the burials including oval brooches represent free women, whilst the others represent slaves, but other evidence suggests that the graves from Birka without twin brooches probably represent the unmarried populations rather than just the unfree.[96]

However, despite the perception that the majority of women during the Viking Age wore oval brooches, they were not in fact the universal accessory. Only 122 of the

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[90] R. A. Hall, (ed.), Quita Mould, Ian Carlisle, and Esther Cameron, *Craft, industry and everyday life, leather and leatherworking in Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval York* (York, 2003), pp 81-8.
[91] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 11.
[92] Both of the pairs of shoes found in the Oseberg burial were intended for the older woman. They were specially made for her clubbed feet. Because the grave had been robbed, this does not necessarily mean that the older woman was the higher-status burial. In fact, both women may have been of the same class. Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, pp 33-4.
[93] Also in *Heimskringla, Óláfs saga*, King Sigurðr Sýr wears laces long enough to bind around his legs. Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 59. Also Samuel Laing, *Heimskringla, or the chronicle of the kings of Norway* (London, 1844), available at: Northvegr Foundation (http://www.northvegr.org/lore/heim/index.php) (2 June, 2007) (Laing, *Heimskringla*).
[94] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 42.
[95] Ibid., p. 39.
[96] Ibid,, p. 39.

graves from Birka contained oval brooches out of a total of between 226 and 252 female graves. Ewing has suggested, that based on this percentage, the brooched dress was worn by only about half the population of women.[97] As stated in the previous chapters, oval brooches do not appear to have been worn by the highest class of women, instead '…the brooched dress appears to define the free woman's costume'.[98] The poem *Rígsþula* specifically mentions oval brooches (*dvergar*) as being part of Amma's – the wife of a yeoman farmer – dress. It also appears to distinguish her from the slave woman's costume mentioned in the same text. Ewing has pointed out however, that the poem *Rígsþula* presents a very simplistic portrayal of Viking society. He argues that the poet aimed to typify the three different strata he perceived in society. He suggests that 'the brooched-dress may have been typical for the free farmer's wife, but not that it was ubiquitous for this class, nor that it was never worn among other social groups. It may also be that Amma is portrayed with twin brooches because of her status as a married woman rather than her status as a free woman'.[99] It is likely, however, that oval brooches originally may have been part of the dress of the highest levels of society, but that as time wore on they were abandoned and adopted by the middle classes.[100]

Oval brooches were in decline by the tenth century, when Scandinavian women in the British Isles were seemingly adopting insular styles. This is supported by evidence from York where it seems that the Anglo-Saxon style disc-brooches were decorated with Danish Jellinge style ornament, rather than Anglo-Saxon women adopting Scandinavian costume.[101] This is paralleled at Dublin where a number of Anglo-Saxon

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[97] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 39. Areas in Scandinavia also vary in numbers of brooches in burials. In addition, far fewer numbers are known from cremation graves. Ibid., p. 39.
[98] Ibid., p. 39.
[99] Ibid., p. 39.
[100] While the high status Oseberg burial did not contain oval brooches when it was excavated, the grave had been robbed in antiquity – and perhaps they were removed. The close by high status grave at Borre, Norway (although admittedly not as rich as the Oseberg burial) contained a woman with elaborate oval brooches.
[101] Julian Richards, 'The Scandinavian presence' in Ian Ralston, (ed.), *Archaeology of Britain, introduction* (London, 1999), p. 196.

disc brooches[102] – which probably originated from London – were identified.[103] Instead, the styles were integrated into insular fashions. An unusual find of two silver toe-rings from the rich mid Viking-period female cart burial at Fyrkat, Jutland in Denmark indicates that Eastern fashions also had an impact on Scandinavian women. The burial was the richest at Fyrkat cemetery, and was accompanied by objects from Gotland and also probably from Russia.[104]

> Judging from bog finds, grave finds and depictions all throughout the [Scandinavian] Iron Age, a tubular skirt reaching to the armpits and held together at the shoulders by pins or brooches, seems to have been worn. Through the centuries the brooches grew bigger and bigger, were largest during the Viking Age, and thereafter went out of use.[105]

The shape of the brooches varied geographically, with oval ones common everywhere in the Viking world except Gotland, where 'animal head' brooches were worn, and in Northern Sweden and Finland, where round brooches were worn. All the brooches were worn in pairs on the chest, in both matching and un-matching sets. The brooches are made from cast bronze, and are often built of two layers. They could be gilded, decorated with silver plates and threads, and patterned in niello. These brooches were not only decorative adornments, but were an essential feature of the closed type of suspended dress typical of the Viking period.[106]

> The upward-pointing pin did not go through the fabric of the dress or shirt, but was attached to the dress by loops of textile; other loops might sometimes have been attached to a short overdress, a forecloth or apron, or a blackcloth or train, or sometimes might have suspended keys and other implements.[107]

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[102] These include NMI [E71:8336] and [E71:16959] from twelfth-century levels at High Street; NMI [E81:3236], [E81:4467] from eleventh-century levels at Winetavern Street; and NMI [E122:1] which is of an eleventh-century type but was found in twelfth or thirteenth century levels at Christchurch Place. This last disc-brooch is also closely paralleled with objects from the late Saxon Cheapside hoard. NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin, National Museum excavations 1962-73, catalogue of exhibition* (Dublin, 1973), pp 22-3 (NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*).
[103] Patrick Wallace, 'Irish archaeology and the recognition of ethnic different in Viking Dublin' in Junko Habu, Clare Fawcett and John Matsunga (eds), *Evaluating multiple narratives, beyond nationalist, colonialist, imperialist archaeologies* (New York, 2007), p. 174 (Wallace, 'Irish archaeology and the recognition of ethnic different in Viking Dublin').
[104] [Hobro: D 170-1966]. Graham-Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*, p. 66.
[105] Viktoria Persdotter, 'Reconstructing the female costume of the Viking Age' in *VHM*, iv (1999), p. 3 (Persdotter, 'Reconstructing the female costume of the Viking Age').
[106] Ibid, p. 3.
[107] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 59.

The brooches found in the graves are on the upper part of the body and appear to have been worn just below the shoulders. Remains from the shoulder straps of the garment are in many cases preserved around the sturdy pins.[108] Small toilet sets containing knives, keys, needlecases, tweezers and earscoops were often attached by either chains or bands to the brooches,[109] as in the case of the female burial at Three-Mile-Water, Co. Wicklow. The female burial at Reay, Caithness also contained a pair of iron tweezers which were found with human bones and other objects. The implements had rings, and were designed to be hung from a belt. Wealthy women had silver items, while others made do with bronze or iron.[110] 'In the Gotlandic costume, a separate tool-brooch was used for fastening the tools to the garment. A complete set of brooches, tools and beads is, for obvious reasons, rather heavy'.[111] This is contrasted with the Hiberno-Scandinavian evidence, which suggests that women abandoned the ethnically Scandinavian practice of wearing oval brooches in favour of the wearing of belts, cords or chatelaines around the neck from which small purses, knives, combs, keys and toilet sets could be suspended **(Figure 30)**.[112] Strung glass beads and pendants were also often worn between the brooches.

Textile production

Excavation of Hiberno-Scandinavian urban sites in Ireland has also yielded information on the production of textiles. A number of examples of cloth and spools of thread have survived, and the implements of their production have also been found.[113] Spindles of wood and metal, and whorls of bone, stone, and clay are commonly found. Weavers' swords were made in wood and in different sizes. Weaving tablets occur mostly in antler and bone, although horn and wooden

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[108] Persdotter, 'Reconstructing female costume of the Viking Age', p. 3.
[109] Ibid., pp 3-4.
[110] James Graham-Campbell and Colleen Batey, *Vikings in Scotland, an archaeological survey* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp 125-6; also see NMS image database, SCRAN ref. no. 000-000-099-740-R, available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-099-740-C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=5dil8pn07x&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64) (1 May, 2007).
[111] Ibid., p. 4.
[112] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 9. Bone comb cases were excavated from eleventh and twelfth century levels in Dublin. For example: NMI [E81: 4755] from Winetavern Street, eleventh century. This case would have been carried suspended from a belt. Also NMI [E71: 8286] from High Street, twelfth century. NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 22-3.
[113] Patrick Wallace, 'The archaeology of Ireland's Viking age towns' in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, (ed.), *A new history of Ireland vol. 1; prehistoric and early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), p. 833 (Wallace, 'The archaeology of Ireland's Viking Age towns').

specimens have also turned up. Not surprisingly, needles of all shapes and sizes, and mostly in copper alloy and bone, have been discovered in great numbers.[114]

> The wool textiles from the Viking period in Dublin bear a close similarity to contemporary textiles from many other settlements and towns throughout northern Europe. The problem of where they were made cannot be solved just yet, although there is strong supporting evidence that spinning, weaving and sewing were common activities for women in Dublin, and that the standard of output was high.[115]

Specific types of woollen cloth were woven by Hiberno-Scandinavian women in Dublin. They were either tabby or twill weave, with the latter limited to three and four shed bindings **(Figure 31)**. Different grades of cloth were required in order to provide the different types of cloth necessary for making clothing, wall hangings, curtains, bedding and covers for cushions.[116] Lightweight cloth woven from combed yarn was commonplace. Some were made into head coverings,[117] whereas others match the weight of the cushion cover from the chieftain's grave at Mammen, Denmark, recently dated by dendrochronology to 970-71.[118] Bulkier cloth with fewer threads per centimetre may have been used for making cloaks, and combed wool was generally used for patterned weaves.[119] There are also many three-shed twills, both plain and patterned, from Dublin. Most are woven from combed wool, which is very fine and wiry. The range of dyestuffs found on these fabrics include madder, woad and lichen purple;[120] yellow, red, black and green were other colours identified on the fabrics. The sewing thread was often of a contrasting colour, and wool thread was used on wool fabric, whereas linen or silk thread was used for stitching silk trimmings.[121] Pritchard has argued that all fabric was made with a specific use in mind, and that most would have been made at a local or perhaps regionally level. Much of the fabric was likely woven domestically by skilled weavers, some of which were probably

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[114] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 18.

[115] Frances Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin' in Lise Bender Jørgensen and Elisabeth Munksgaard (eds), *Archaeological Textiles in Northern Europe: Report from the 4th NESAT Symposium 1-5 May 1990* (Copenhagen, 1992), p. 103 (Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin').

[116] Ibid., p. 93.

[117] Elizabeth Heckett 'Some Hiberno-Norse head coverings from Fishamble Street and St. John's Lane, Dublin' in *Textile History*, xviii, no. 2 (1987), pp 159-60; 165-8 (Heckett, 'Some Hiberno-Norse Head coverings from Fishamble Street and St. John's Lane, Dublin').

[118] Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin', p. 94.

[119] Ibid., p. 94.

[120] Ibid., p. 98.

[121] Ibid., p. 99.

slaves. 'The use of slave labour would have aided the transmission of dyeing, spinning and weaving skills'.[122] Balls of yarn made from combed wool were found in the Dublin excavations. These balls would have been formed by rolling the wool over the thigh of the person doing the combing. Part of a wooden spindle which still had very fine wool spun around it was also found at Dublin, indicating that textiles were being made at a local level for local consumption.[123]

Head coverings

While the Scandinavian sagas suggest that married women had to cover their hair, there is no evidence of this in the legal texts or from the burial remains. In fact, most of the female graves at Birka contained no head-coverings whatsoever (this may, however, be a question of survival). The picture is different with regard to the Christianized towns of Dublin and Jorvík, where they are much more common.[124] 'Sufficient evidence exists for a plurality of headwear styles – from none at all through brocaded bands worn fillet-style to coif-like caps'.[125] Finely woven hairnets were also worn in Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin such as evidenced by the fine example from the twelfth-century levels at Fishamble Street **(Figure 32)**.[126] A number of textiles were excavated from both the Dublin and Waterford excavations, of these thirteen pieces appear to be caps or fragments of caps. Heckett also identified nine textiles that may have been used as headbands, and fourteen rectangular pieces that she describes as kerchiefs or scarves.[127] 'Examples of these exist in both wool and silk… all the cloth, both wool and silk, was made in tabby weave'.[128] The caps were constructed from a rectangular piece of material generally measuring 480mm x 170mm. The fabric was then doubled over and sewn at one side to form the back of the cap. Regardless of the type of fabric of the caps, there is a clearly defined pattern to which they conform:

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[122] Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin', p. 93.

[123] NMI [E172:12212], Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin', p. 93.

[124] Ibid., p. 103.

[125] Heckett, 'Some Hiberno-Norse headcoverings from Fishamble Street and St. John's Lane, Dublin', pp 159-174.

[126] NMI [E190:3169].

[127] Elizabeth Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin, uses and orgins – an inquiry' in *Textiles in Northern archaeology, NESAT 3* (London, 1987), p. 85 (Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin' in *Textiles in Northern archaeology*).

[128] Ibid., p. 85.

from the nine examples, of which large parts have survived, an average or type can be formulated. The front edges of the rectangle of fabric were rolled and hemmed, or a decorative cord edging was whipstitched on to a selvedge. The bottom edges were turned under twice and hemmed, the turn-up being about 5mm. Towards the top of the back of the cap a curve was stitched in with a running stitch following the line of the head and leaving a peak of material on the exterior. This stitched curve appears again and again on the caps. Ties were attached to the two front bottom edges: this can be seen from the way the cloth has pulled downwards and forwards from the strain of the ties, although no actual braids or ribbons are preserved in place.

As no evidence for folded caps (*faldr*) is extant from Scandinavia itself, the caps found at Dublin, Lincoln and York may be examples of a 'colonial' fashion or at least a regional variation on an established Scandinavian fashion.[129] Heckett has discussed the idea that such head coverings were specific to Hiberno-Scandinavian women (the fact that they were also recovered in excavations at Waterford indicates probable non-regional specific use), or whether they were an adaptation from the native Irish styles. As the caps were 'recovered from eleven house sites that were lived in by succeeding generations for about 200 years, and the excavation yielded up between nine and thirteen examples from what must be the random abandonment of items of clothing'[130] it seems safe to say that the style was both common and long lasting (perhaps a tradition) for Hiberno-Scandinavian women at the time. The fact that no oval brooches common to the Scandinavian mode of female dress were unearthed during this phase of excavation, and the available evidence for Hiberno-Scandinavian and Irish relations seems to indicate that the women of Dublin were no longer wearing the traditional dress of their Scandinavian homeland. It is also possible that women in Dublin were influenced by the styles in York at the time, as the same royal house was providing kings for both towns during the first half of the tenth century.[131] Archaeological evidence supports this theory, as similar caps were found in excavations at both York and Lincoln.[132]

Heckett has emphasized that the pictorial evidence from manuscripts and sculptures is highly, if not always biased towards the upper class. None of these images of women

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[129] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 53.
[130] Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin' in *Textiles in Northern archaeology*, p. 87.
[131] Ibid., p. 88.
[132] Heckett, 'Some Hiberno-Norse head coverings from Fishamble Street and St. John's Lane, Dublin', pp 159-174.

are portrayed wearing head coverings similar to those found in the excavations. It may well be then that the caps that were unearthed represent part of the dress of the ordinary townswomen, providing us with uniquely valuable relics of the women who are otherwise absent from the historical record.[133] Scarves and bands made from both silk and wool were also identified, and these objects could be tasselled and fringed at both ends. Heckett suggested that they may have been worn on the head or around the shoulders, and could have been draped and knotted under the chin or at the back of the head.[134] One silk piece still retained the original knot and seems to support this suggestion.[135] The figure of a woman on a picture stone from Alskog, Gotland as well as a silver figurine from Tuna in Sweden both have head clothes which have been knotted at the back of the head.[136] This may be the linen *sveigja* (knot) referred to in the Icelandic *Þtymskviða saga* and *Víglundar saga* as typically worn by free women.[137] Bands may also have been worn on their own and held in place with metal fillets or by a smaller band tied around the head in 'Arabic style' **(Figure 33)**.[138] The Icelandic Sagas suggest that women head-coverings, but they were larger than the ones worn by women in Dublin, Lincoln and York. For example, Guðrún in *Laxdœla saga* wears such a cap:

> the next day Guðrún spoke on the sly to Hrefna, and asked her to show her the headdress, and Hrefna said she would. The next day they went to the out-bower where the precious things were kept, and Hrefna opened a chest and took out the pocket of costly stuff, and took from thence the coif and showed it to Guðrún. She unfolded the coif and looked at it a while, but said no word of praise or blame. After that Hrefna put it back, and they went to their places, and after that all was joy and amusement.[139]

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[133] Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin' in *Textiles in Northern archaeology*, p. 89.

[134] Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, *Viking Age headcoverings from Dublin, National Museum of Ireland medieval Dublin excavations, 1962-81*, series B, volume 6 (Dublin, 2003), p. 4 (Heckett, *Viking Age headcoverings from Dublin*).

[135] Ibid., p. 4.

[136] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 52.

[137] Ibid., pp 52-3.

[138] Heckett, *Viking Age headcoverings from Dublin*, p. 5.

[139] *Laxdaela Saga* was written down around the year 1245 A.D. The author is anonymous, but a number of scholars have suggested that the author may have been a woman.
Murial Press, (trans.), *Laxdaela Saga* (London, 1899), available at the Online Medieval and Classical Library (http://omacl.org/Laxdaela/chapter46.html) (4 June, 2006) (Press, *Laxdaela Saga*).

These headcloths could be either linen or wool – the silk used in some of the Dublin examples would have been extravagant in the longer headdresses.[140]

Jewellery

Both men and women were interested in 'adorning their bodies with beautiful clothes and jewellery – at least on special occasions'.[141] This is indicated by grave material, contemporary images as well as from finds from early urban settlements such as Kaupang.

> It is likely that Kaupang was among the locations where new trends were first established. In that sense, Kaupang can be viewed, not only as a centre of power, but also as one of the Vikings' 'metropolis of fashion', where jewellery, metal mounts and possibly combs, textiles and shoes, were imported or manufactured for trade. The beads do not however, only illuminate people's concern about their looks; they also tell stories about local craftsmanship and the Vikings' more or less far-reaching connections.[142]

Excavations at Dublin have provided much information concerning evidence for the styles and types of jewellery worn by Hiberno-Scandinavian women. Archaeological evidence indicates that the large amounts of silver that poured into Ireland during the tenth century likely came in through the port of Dublin. It appears to have originated in the Near East, as did the silk found at Dublin. The Scandinavians wore their wealth on their person, often in the form of arm-rings. These rings acted as a form of currency – or 'ring money' – and conformed to standardized units of weight.[143] These rings were usually made of silver and often had stamped decorations, unlike the type used by the Scandinavians in Scotland who appear to have preferred unadorned arm-rings.[144] It may well be that particular styles of arm-rings varied according to geographical location, as there is both a 'Dublin type' as well as a distinctive 'Cork

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[140] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 53.
[141] Dan Carlsson, 'Viking beads from Gotland' in *VHM*, iii (2003), p. 22 (Carlsson, 'Viking beads from Gotland').
[142] Ibid., p. 22. Similar beads have been found all over the Viking world, including Ireland.
[143] John Sheehan, 'Silver and gold hoards, status, wealth and trade in the Viking-Age' in *Archaeology Ireland*, ix, no. 3 (Autumn, 1995), p. 21.
[144] John Sheehan, 'A Viking –Age silver hoard from the River Shannon, Co. Clare' in *NMAJ,* xxiv (1982), p. 102.

type'.[145] Other types of arm-rings may illustrate contact with southern Scandinavia or the Baltic region. 'The scheme of ornamentation on some examples of the "ribbon-bracelets", for instance, appears to derive from a type of arm-ring that is common on Gotland'.[146] Sheehan also suggests that the small group of arm-rings with animal-headed terminals from Gotland and southern Sweden appear to have developed from Hiberno-Scandinavian prototypes thus suggesting that contact between the Baltic area and Ireland operated in both directions.[147] Large quantities of amber were also coming in through Dublin, brought from the Baltic Sea for manufacture into rings, pendants, earrings and beads.[148] Beads were highly valued personal objects during the Viking Age. The Arabic chronicler Ibn Fadlan, writing in 920 described how 'the most valuable jewellery among them are green beads made of the same kind of green ceramic that they have on their ships.[149] They pay a lot for them; they give one dirham for a single bead. They make necklaces out of them for their women'.[150] The fact that women wore beads is confirmed by the presence of these objects in female graves. 'Glass beads are among the most common artefacts found in the Late Iron-age material from Scandinavia. Looking at the graves it is clear that beads were most common among females. However, since making beads by hand is extremely labour-intensive, beads were valuable and expensive'.[151] Beads from the late Viking Age are usually made of glass, but amber, rock crystal, metal, limestone, bone or horn beads are also known.[152] Gems and semi-precious stones are rare, but a large number of glass beads appear to have been made in patterns which may have been in imitation of such stones.[153]

Strings of beads could be worn in a short choker-style, very long, strung between brooches, or sewn directly on the garment itself.[154] They could be worn in double or triple strands between the brooches, or simply looped over one brooch. 'Some oval

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[145] John Sheehan, 'Early Viking-Age silver hoards from Ireland and their Scandinavian elements' in Howard Clarke, Máire ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 178 (Sheehan, 'Early Viking-Age silver hoards from Ireland).
[146] Ibid., p. 196.
[147] Ibid., p. 196.
[148] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 22.
[149] Most of the beads are actually made from glass rather than ceramic. Ewing has suggested that Ibn Fadlan may have interpreted these beads as ceramic due to their matt finish. Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 65.
[150] Carlsson, 'Viking beads from Gotland', p. 22.
[151] Ibid., p. 22.
[152] Ibid., p. 22.
[153] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 65.
[154] Where strings of beads are found with oval brooches, they are usually suspended from either the catch of the brooch, or from the hinge. Ibid., p. 65.

brooches and trefoil brooches were pierced by a hole, sometimes with a small ring, on which strings of beads and other objects might be hung'.[155] On Gotland, women often wore several strings of beads that were fed through thin metal plates with holes for the strings. During the tenth century these necklaces were fastened directly to animal-head brooches.[156] Beads from graves throughout Scandinavia indicate that they were worn by both wealthy and poorer women. They have also been found in male graves, but in much smaller numbers.[157]

Numerous amber beads which would have been worn strung on necklaces, as well as glass beads of varying kinds including circular, disc and in particular – segmented – beads appear to have been very popular in Dublin **(Figure 34)**. Pendants, earrings and finger-rings were also identified.[158]

> Two types of dress fasteners worn in Dublin illustrate the vagaries and complexities of contemporary taste and fashion. The Dubliners appear to have been very taken by the contemporary English disc brooch, as well as by the native Irish ringed-pin. Kite-shaped brooches made in bronze were worn in Viking Dublin. Rings and bracelets were also produced in jet, a polishable coal. Decorative objects and fine jewellery using jet, glass, and amber were made, as well as functional items such as knives, nails, and needles.[159]

Antler, extensively used for pins, combs, gaming-pieces and other items, was mainly naturally shed and then collected.[160] Bone pins were worn, both for fastening clothing as well as possibly being worn in the hair. The heads of some of these pins were highly ornate, decorated with swans' necks, rams heads' and exotic animals.[161] 'Similar pins were identified from Hiberno-Scandinavian Waterford. Antler burrs were sometimes cut into rings and polished to be worn as pendants or amulets. Specially decorated bronze and antler fittings were made for strap and belt ends'.[162]

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[155] Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 65.
[156] Carlsson, 'Viking beads from Gotland', p. 22.
[157] In male graves beads usually vary from one to five beads for each individual, ibid., p. 22.
[158] Siobhán Geraghty, *Viking Dublin, botanical evidence from Fishamble Street, the National Museum of Ireland medieval Dublin excavations 1962-1981*, Royal Irish Academy, Ser. C, ii (Dublin, 1996), p. 67 (Geraghty, *Viking Dublin, botanical evidence from Fishamble Street*).
[159] Wallace, *Aspects of Viking Dublin*, p. 22.
[160] Ibid., p. 67.
[161] Ibid., p. 22.
[162] Ibid., p. 22.

As already discussed, hairstyles and objects used in the hair are indicators of both class and status. The large number of combs identified from the Viking Age and Hiberno-Scandinavian towns of Ireland are illustrative of the importance of appearance to the inhabitants. Ibn Fadlan, writing about the Viking Rus in the tenth century, recorded the Viking practice of washing hands, face, and hair in a water filled-basin and then arranging the hair with a comb.[163] The combs were used to smooth and tidy the hair, as well as to remove dirt and lice.[164] John of Wallingford, writing in the twelfth century also commented on the habit of Scandinavians of combing their hair and beards daily.[165] Excavations at the Black Earth at Birka revealed that while comb-making could be a specialized craft, the identification of more roughly constructed combs suggests that they may also have been constructed by non-specialists. The same type of combs found at Birka are known from York and Dublin in the West, to Staraja Ladoga in the East.[166] 'Most of the combs are constructed from antler, bone and wood – although a number of metal examples exist. In Norway the most common material used is reindeer antler as it is much more elastic than bone. In central Sweden moose antler is frequently used'.[167] Combs are an extremely common grave artefact and are found in male and female graves, poor and wealthy alike. The assumption being that most people owned a comb and that it was part of everyday personal hygiene. However, the number of combs found in female graves is double the amount from male graves.[168] Very large combs with large teeth have also been found and appear to have been used for the grooming of horses. Such combs are often found in graves containing the skeleton of a horse.[169] Very small combs have also been identified, and one interpretation is that such objects may have been used as 'beard-combs' or for use by a child.[170] Some of the combs are extremely ornate, and examples from Birka decorated with stylized bear heads probably

[163] H. M. Smyser, 'Ibn Fadlan's account of the Rus with some commentary and some allustions to Beowulf' in Jess Bessinger and R. P. Creed (eds), *Franciplegius: Medieval and linguistic studies in honour of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr* (New York, 1965), pp 92-119.

[164] Arthur MacGregor, *Bone, antler, ivory and horn from Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval York* (London, 1999), p. 73 (MacGregor, *Bone, antler, ivory and horn from Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval York*).

[165] Ibid., p. 73.

[166] Michél Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar' in Bente Magnus and Birgitta Wallstenius (eds), *Historiska Nyheter, Vikingarna varlånghåriga och välfriserade, Statenshistoriska museumoch Riksantikvarieämbetet*, lxi (1996), p. 5 (Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar').

[167] Ibid., p. 5.

[168] Ibid., p. 5.

[169] Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar', p. 5. See for example the boy's grave from Íre in Birka which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

[170] Ibid., p. 5.

originated in Norway, while others came from the Saami culture.[171] There is some indication that women wore their combs suspended on a chain along with other toiletries such as earscoops and tweezers, whereas men appear to have kept their combs in a case suspended from a belt.[172] The bone comb case recovered from eleventh-century levels at Winetavern Street, Dublin appears to have been attached to such a belt and may represent an example of a male personal hygiene set.[173] However, there is some indication that women also kept their combs in a special box as evidenced by a high-status Viking Age burial from Birka. The woman was buried fully clothed with her brooches and beads in place, including a large equal-armed brooch. An iron ring with Thor's hammer pendants was found under the skull and presumably had been placed around the neck of the dead woman.[174] A whalebone plaque and a rubbing stone had been placed at her feet, and along the wall of the grave was a food and drink container, a bronze basin and a wooden box with a comb inside as well as a key.[175] The ornately carved small wooden box with perforated sliding lid from the mid-tenth century levels at Christchurch Place, Dublin may represent a similar example of such a comb-case **(Figure 35)**.[176] Because of the different styles of combs worn by men and women, it has been suggested that analysis of the types of combs found in graves may be helpful indicators in determining the gender of the individual. Combs could also have a religious meaning. At the settlement site of the Black Earth at Birka, large numbers of combs appear to have been deliberately broken, in a manner similar to the swords and other objects that were ritually sacrificed. The interpretation being that the combs were broken in order to remove their association of power with the owner.[177] Small pieces of combs were also used as amulets that were worn suspended around the neck.[178] Interestingly only the settlement evidence provides evidence for the ritual breaking of combs. This

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[171] Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar', p. 5. The wide diversification in the types and styles of combs from Birka illustrates its importance as a long distance trading centre.

[172] Ibid., p. 5.

[173] See NMI [E81: 4755], ring and dot decorated bone comb case from Winetavern Street, NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 32. Other examples of comb cases are known from Dublin including an example from the twelfth century levels at High Street NMI [E71: 8286].

[174] Graham-Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 177.

[175] Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar', p. 5.

[176] See NMI [E172: 13645] small wooden carved jewellery or comb box, excavated from Christchurch Place. Dates to the mid-tenth century. Lang, *Viking-Age decorated wood*, p. 51.

[177] Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar', p. 5.

[178] Ibid., p. 5.

emphasises the symbolic belief in the importance of hair as a living part of the individual.

> Evidence from the past concerning cultures around the world has suggested that humans have long believed that hair was the centre of strength and life power. As it is a living and growing part of the human being, if the hair or even objects associated with hair, fell into the wrong hands, the person left themselves open to being cursed. Hair and hairstyles indicated age, dignity and social status or belonging.[179]

The available archaeological material for personal adornment and dress suggests that a number of regional styles were worn in early medieval Ireland. Through trade and integration, ethnically Scandinavian modes of dress, such as the wearing of oval brooches, appear to have been abandoned in favour of more Hibernicized styles. This is clear from the lack of oval brooches so characteristic of female burials in the earlier Viking Age. In addition, the number of Irish ringed-pins found at Scandinavian settlements in the British and Northern Isles, is suggestive of further integration and adaptation of ideas of dress and adornment. Conversely, Native Irish linguistic evidence suggests that Irish modes of dress were also influenced by Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian contact.

Upon examination of the various regional finds distinct patterns emerge for the varying time periods of female habitation as regards dress, textiles, adornments and implements. Domestic and occupational evidence from within Dublin in particular, sheds light on the role women played in the community, not just as 'indicators of settlement', but as important subjects of study in their own right.

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[179] Carlsson, 'Kammar för barn… och för hästar', p. 5.

Chapter Five

Methodological and theoretical approaches to a study of children and childhood in the past

This chapter is the first of four sections examining the material culture of children during the period 700-1200 AD. Theoretical and methodological approaches for an archaeology of childhood are explored in this chapter in order to contextualize the archaeological material within the three proceeding chapters; where Irish and Scandinavian historical and archaeological sources are investigated in order to identify processes of age, gender, status and ethnicity, and to show how these are reflected in the extant material record. Methods for accessing the actions and identities of children in the archaeological record are discussed, as well as the relationship between children and their material world and how these experiences vary across time and space. This is followed by a discussion of the literature on age theory within archaeology, how this approach can be used to access the Irish archaeological child, and how such theories are linked to – but are also separate from – the study of gender.

Before any kind of analyses can be made, it is necessary to present some of the current academic explanations for the marginalization of children and childhood studies, as well as to outline the history and development of theories of age and childhood, and how they have (or have not) impacted on research into the archaeological and historical child.

Alison James and Alan Prout were the first to argue that childhood is a social construct: 'childhood, as distinct from biological immaturity, is neither a natural nor a universal feature of human groups but appears as a specific structural and cultural component of many societies'.[1] It ascribes particular roles, activities, and behaviours to individuals on the basis of their position in the human life cycle. These cultural constructions of identity often overlap. 'Thus, an archaeology of childhood is essential for understanding the process of gender, as gender is essential for understanding the nature of childhood

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[1] Alison James and Alan Prout, (eds), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood, contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (London, 1990) (James and Prout, *Constructing and reconstructing childhood*).

socialization'.[2] Challenges inherent in seeking to identify children in the past are also discussed, followed by a review of the historical and archaeological literature on children and childhood.

Challenges for archaeologies of childhood

There are three main considerations to be made in undertaking an examination of childhoods in the past. First is the recognition that children and childhood are valuable research topics, and that research into this area would contribute significantly to understandings of societies in early medieval Ireland. Secondly, that a framework for undertaking such research must be developed in order to allow us to 'see' constructions of childhood in past societies, as current frameworks have resulted in their marginalization. Finally, such frameworks must be put to the existing body of archaeological material, highlighting and emphasizing the material cultures of children and childhood, resulting in much more complex understandings of the particular societies in Ireland at the time. Talking about children in the milieu of archaeological discourse is currently as contentious as talking about gender used to be. This is predominantly because children are often deemed to be invisible, or difficult to recognize archaeologically…however it is simply not accurate to state that children cannot be seen in archaeological material.[3]

Marginalization and invisibility, childhood understood as 'a universal'

Archaeologists and anthropologists have, in recent years, posited a number of arguments as to why childhood studies have not been a topic of archaeological inquiry. Robert Park has argued that in his experience when children are mentioned in archaeological contexts, children and childhood 'were never the focus of the archaeologist's interest'.[4] There are a number of reasons why this has come about. Lawrence Hirschfeld has argued that the lack of child-focused scholarship has been the result of a cultural mindset that overestimates the role adults play in cultural learning, and underestimates the contribution of children in cultural reproduction. He also states that there has

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[2] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 3.
[3] Koji Mizoguchi, 'The child as a node of past, present, and future' in Joanna Sofaer Derevenski (ed.), *Children and material culture* (London, 2000), p. 141.
[4] Robert Park, 'Growing up North, exploring the archaeology of childhood in the Thule and Dorset cultures of Arctic Canada' in Jane Eva Baxter (ed.), *Children in action, perspectives on the archaeology of childhood, Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association,* xv (2005), p. 53. (Park, 'Growing up north').

traditionally been a lack of appreciation of 'the scope and force of children's culture, particularly in shaping adult culture'.[5] This marginalization of children and childhood has resulted in an obscuring of our understandings of how cultural forms emerged and why they are sustained.[6] One of the main reasons that childhood studies has been sidelined in archaeology is because of the persistent belief that 'we already understand what childhood is all about'.[7] Park argues that this belief is unfounded as:

> ethnographic research demonstrates that childhood can be defined differently from culture to culture, and therefore the experience of being a child undoubtedly varies as well. And if synchronic variation is possible, then so of course is variation over time. Hence there is the need for an archaeology of childhood, in which at least one goal should be to explore how and why childhood varied. [8]

Nyree Finlay has lamented the fact that 'the child as a subject is still largely a neglected category of analysis in archaeology, especially in Ireland'.[9] There has, she states, been a tendency to conflate the child into a unitary class that includes infants as well as adolescents. Yet it is apparent that the status and treatment of the child was different in the past, as it is today, depending on age, as well as other variables such as sex and class'.[10] Where children have previously been discussed, it has tended to be as individuals learning to be adults rather than as a social and cultural group in their own right.[11]

Terminology

The terms used for understanding concepts of childhood and gender are of course culturally specific – related to but distinct from – biological understandings of age and sex. As such, concepts of age and gender vary greatly in different cultures as well as over time. Therefore, 'one facet of the archaeology of childhood is the development of method and theory that will enable the investigation of how a particular stage in our

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[5] Lawrence Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?' in *American Anthropologist*, civ, no., 22 (2002), p. 612 (Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?').
[6] Ibid., p. 611.
[7] Park, 'Growing up north', p. 54.
[8] Ibid., p. 54.
[9] Nyree Finlay, 'Cradle and grave, death and the archaeology of childhood', paper given at Archaeology Ireland Conference, Answers from the grave, the Archaeology of Death, University College Dublin, 18 November, 2000.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Phillipe Ariès, *Centuries of childhood, a social history of family life* (New York, 1962) (Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*).

physical development comes to have meaning in a particular historical and cultural context'.[12] What defines a 'child' in the past? What exactly do we mean when we refer to 'childhood'? Terms such as 'gender' have different meanings in different cultures and societies and are not fixed. In order to access children and childhoods in the past, we must first define what we mean by these terms. *Age* is a broad term that may refer to biological age, chronological age, or developmental age.

> Like gender, age categories and roles are culturally defined and must be investigated, rather than assumed. It is not tenable to simply assume that specific age categories derived from modern Western models will correspond to socially significant stages for other cultures, past or present. In fact, the reverse is true. It should be expected that every society will have its own age categories and its own definitions of childhood. This means that an optimal first step in the study of prehistoric children would be a determination of significant cultural age categories and their basic characteristics.[13]

Using terms such as 'adult' and 'child', without questioning the cultural construction of these labels may have originated with the study of mortuary remains, an area long used to find evidence of children.[14] However, attention must also be paid to how children in different societies evolved into 'adults'; and what it means to be a 'child' or an 'adult'. One method of doing this is to examine the different rites of passage into adulthood, through historical evidence, mortuary material, as well as the presence or absence of material relating to domestic or even commercial labour production. Such an examination allows for the 'opportunity to consider interpretations and symbols of recognition of stages of development in past societies'.[15] Joanna Sofaer Derevenski has argued that the term 'children' is culturally loaded and is the product of western culture that marginalizes their activities and views childhood as a prolonged period of dependence on the parent. She points out that describing someone as 'childlike' suggests a level of honesty, innocence and wonder, while telling someone that their behaviour is 'childish' implies silliness and disapproval. Our understanding of the term 'child' therefore 'marginalizes the economic and social importance of children and is culturally specific in regarding children as passive and unproductive. Yet this attitude to children

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[12] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 5.

[13] Katherine Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone? The archaeology of childhood' in *JAMT*, viii, no. 1 (2001), p. 4 (Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?')

[14] The equation of subadult skeletons with children and fully mature skeletons with adults has long been a way to identify and study children archaeologically'. Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 19.

[15] Julie Wileman, *Hide and seek, the archaeology of childhood* (Woodbridge, New Jersey, 2005), p. 11 (Wileman, *Hide and seek*).

has heavily informed attitudes to the past, leading to backwards inferences about the activities of children'.[16]

Childhood studies and its relationship to gender studies

Like gender, notions of age or 'childhood' are neither static nor unchanging, and, like gender, childhood studies is an area that has rarely penetrated the Irish context. While both gender and age are universally encountered, gender is now understood to be constructed, where as childhood is perceived to be 'an invariant domain of experience'.[17] This understanding of the 'universality' of experiences of childhood has helped to contribute to a lack of interest in research relating to the archaeological child,[18] just as understandings of 'woman' were so recently regarded as universal, contributing to their marginalization and invisibility. Simply put, archaeological studies have tended to focus on 'patterning', and if patterns are not present in experiences of children and childhood, then research tends to either simply acknowledge and describe them in relation to adult experiences, or not mention them at all. As Hirschfeld has argued, adequate study of gender in different cultures involves more than merely *acknowledging* gender relations. Likewise, 'an adequate treatment of childhood and children involves more than acknowledging that adults and children stand in a particular relation'.[19] Both Hirschfeld and Kamp have pointed out that such an 'add and stir' approach is neither insightful nor particularly helpful – whether we are talking about women or children. Instead, 'a genuine change in gaze yields a reconfiguration of the field'.[20] It is not surprising that archaeologists seem unsure how to access children in the past. There are close parallels between the 'previous invisibility of women and the current invisibility of children.'[21] This is particularly true in terms of the marginalization of their activities, an uncertainty as to how to 'see' their activities, as well as the tendency towards artefact association in order to 'find' their histories.[22]

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[16] Joanna Sofaer Derevenski, 'Where are the children? Accessing children in the past' in *ARC,* xiii, no. 2 (1994), p. 9 (Derevenski, 'Where are the children?').
[17] Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?', p. 612.
[18] Ibid., p. 612.
[18] Ibid., p. 612.
[19] Ibid., p. 612.
[20] Ibid., p. 612.
[21] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', p. 10.
[22] Ibid., p. 10.

> The invisibility that has plagued women and children archaeologically has not been an ahistorical process and is related to binary categories such as those identified by Rothchild, which favour male actions and ideologies. These dichotomized constructions create fixed rather than fluid constructions of gender and childhood, thus limiting the possibilities and reducing the choices of roles and activities available to women and children in the past as defined in contrast to the assumed roles of men.[23]

During the development of gender studies, a core theoretical argument was that men were assumed to have been the 'active players' and women the 'passive' receivers. A similar set of assumptions may be seen to be in place with regard to children in the past. 'We assume adults used the material we find, and yet we must find the traces of children in the archaeological record'.[24] As one of the assumed roles for women in the past was the role of the mother, children became part of the literature on gender archaeology.[25]

How and why have children been marginalized in historical and archaeological research? Why have children and the study of childhood in the past not been subject to academic research and inquiry? One reason for such lack of research has been the association of children with women. Children have been closely associated with women and their traditional spheres of influence—the home and hearth – as distinct from 'forest and field'. As a result, some scholars have suggested that children suffered the same systematic exclusion from the anthropological gaze as their mothers.[26] Motherhood in the past has often been interpreted as being a burden to women, with the demands of childcare delineating the participation of women in the division of labour.[27]

> Authors have demonstrated that motherhood is a culturally constructed category and that child-rearing duties in different cultures are often allocated to family and community members other than mothers. Other authors have identified sources of archaeological evidence that show women in roles other than nurturer and mother to break down 'universal' constructions of motherhood. Just as assumptions about women as mothers tied women to the

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[23] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 18, also see Nan Rothschild, 'Introduction to Katherine Kamp' in Katherine Kamp (ed.), *Children in the Prehistoric Puebloan Southwest* (Salt Lake City, 2002), pp i- 13 (Rothschild, 'Introduction to Katherine Kamp').
[24] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 18.
[25] Ibid., p. 17.
[26] Virginia Caputo, 'Anthropologies silent "others", a consideration of some conceptual and methodological issues for the study of youth and children's cultures' in Vered Amit-Talia and Helena Wulff (eds), *Youth Cultures, a cross cultural perspective* (London, 1995), pp 19-42; James and Prout, *Constructing and reconstructing childhood*, quoted in Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?', p. 613.
[27] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 17.

domestic sphere and restricted potential roles and activities for women in the past, the inevitable association between women and children limited the potential to interpret children's activities in the past as well. The culturally constructed nature of childhood and the parallels between the treatment of women and children in reconstructions of the past are among the most significant issues addressed in literature on the archaeology of childhood.[28]

As Rothschild[29] has argued, both women and children 'exist at the weaker end of the dichotomized dimensions of male/female, adult/child'.[30] She has argued that children are feminized in the sense of being 'other-than-male and other-than-powerful',[31] and that they exist in a group comprising other marginalized groups such as the elderly, the enslaved and other muted, or 'invisible' groups.[32]

Literature review

Research into perceptions of 'childhood' during the Middle Ages was pioneered by the French historian Phillipe Ariès' *Centuries of childhood* (1963). Ariès argued that childhood was a modern phenomenon that developed over the centuries because of social and economic advances. He controversially argued that the concept of childhood did not exist in medieval society and only came into being during the seventeenth century.[33] Critics of Ariès focused on his heavy use of iconographic evidence and paintings, as well as on his 'present-centredness'[34] rather than on sources that more accurately depict medieval society. The book was reissued in 1973, and following the critiques of Pierre Riché, Jean-Louise Flandren and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Ariès's preface to the 1973 edition qualified his position. In an interview seven years later he confessed that he regretted 'not being better informed on the Middle Ages, of which my

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[28] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 17. 'It is possible to look to other cultures in the present and to our own history to at least call into question if not completely break down any ideas of contemporary Western childhood being a universal experience. Children labour in factories in Southeast Asia and Mexico, they takeup arms and fight guerrilla wars in Rwanda, and they participate as altar servers in Catholic and Anglican religious services; they were organized political activists in Nazi Germany. We are confronted with news stories, history, and experiences that place children in economic, political, social, and religious prominence. The third component of an archaeology of childhood is the need to be open to the possibilities of children as social actors in all aspects of life'. Ibid., p. 21.
[29] Rothschild, 'Introduction to Katherine Kamp', p. i.
[30] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 18.
[31] Ibid., p. 18.
[32] Ibid., p. 18.
[33] Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 125.
[34] By this critics meant that Ariès looked for evidence of twentieth century conceptualizations of childhood and then looked to the past to find similar evidence, failing to find this Ariès, came to the conclusion that childhood did not exist at all in the Medieval period.

book speaks so little'.[35] Ariès's views have been particularly influential among non-medieval historians. Other leading exponents of the idea that childhood during the Medieval period was 'impoverished and disregarded by modern standards'[36] include psycho-historian Lloyd de Mause's *The history of childhood* (1974) and Lawrence Stone's *The family, sex and marriage in England, 1500-1800* (1977).[37] Shulamith Shahar's *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (1990) was one of the first to seriously challenge Ariès's views on childhood. Shahar argued that during the Middle Ages there was 'a conception of childhood, and that educational theories and norms existed.'[38] A number of studies of children and childhood in the past in different cultures have since been published and whenever historians have turned their attention to a wide range of sources and materials, they could demonstrate that Ariès's arguments had to be refuted.[39] While Ariès' arguments and evidence have been highly criticized, his work was of major importance at the time in that it initiated research into the topic of children and childhood studies in the past.[40]

> As a historian one must surely acknowledge the role of Ariès in opening up the subject of childhood, profit from his many insights into the past, and move on. A more fruitful approach is to search for these [sic] different

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[35] M. Wincock, 'L'enfant á travers les siécles' in an interview with Phillipe Ariès in *L'Histoire*, ix (January, 1980), p. 86, quoted in Daniéle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages, fifth-fifteenth centuries* (Notre Dame, 1999), p. 1.

[36] Nicholas Orme, *Medieval children* (London, 2003), p. 4 (Orme, *Medieval Children*).

[37] Lloyd de Mause (ed.), *The history of childhood* (New York, 1974); Lawrence Stone, *The family, sex and marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977).

[38] Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990), p. 3 (Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages). Shahar's research includes discussions of the stages of childhood, nursing, weaning, teething, bathing, warming, swaddling as well as parent-child emotional attachments during the Middle Ages.

[39] Albrecht Classen, 'Phillippe Ariès and the consequences, history of childhood, family relations and personal emotions, where do we stand today?' in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the results of a paradigm shift in the history of mentality* (Berlin, 2005), p. 39, See for example the recent studies on childhood in Early and Medieval Poland which use archaeological, historical, literary and linguistic sources such as Dorota Żołądá-Strzelcyk, *Dziecko w dawnej Polsce* (Poznań, 2002) and Małgorzata Delimata, *Dziecko w Polsce średniowiecnej* (Poznań, 2004). Other examples of recent childhood studies include Suzanne Dixon, *Childhood, class and kin in the Roman world* (New York, 2001). However, Ariès' interpretation of childhood in the medieval period still filters into more modern studies on children. For example, a recent important archaeological study of *ceallunaigh* in Co. Kerry, argued that 'infants, and children in general, were a class of society not perceived of as important by their elders and in general they were not treated of as fully developed humans. This situation, which is long-standing in society, was not affected by, or in spite of, the teachings of the Church and it must be stressed that the coming of Christianity did not improve the lot of children. In general, it is believed that the view of children as important members of society did not develop until the seventeenth century, sixteen hundred years after the coming of Christ'. Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry, an archaeological perspective' (MA thesis, Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, 1997), p. 23 (Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry').

[40] For further criticisms of Ariès see Colin Heywood, *A history of childhood* (Cambridge, 2001), pp 12-5.

conceptions of childhood in various periods and places, and to seek to explain them in the light of prevailing material and cultural conditions.[41]

In recent years, a number of important studies on the history of children and childhood have appeared. For the most part these studies rely on historical documents, iconography and literary works rather than archaeological data. While some mention is made of archaeological artefacts the majority that are mentioned date to material relating to post 1150 AD. Shahar's *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (1990) and Pierre Riché and Danièle Alexandre-Bidon's *Children in the Middle Ages* (1999), both provide surveys of childhood in western Europe – although Ireland is not included.[42] Colin Heywood's *A history of childhood* (2001) similarly discusses a wide range of evidence for childhood in the past, although the central focus is on the High Medieval and Later Medieval periods. Similarily, Nicholas Orme's *Medieval children* (2003) is another excellent survey, but the focus is largely on post-1200 evidence.[43] Barbara Hanawalt's *The ties that bound, peasant families in Medieval England* (1986) and *Growing up in Medieval London, the experience of childhood in history* (1993) are more specialized studies focusing on medieval England in particular.[44] Hanawalt's research is remarkable for its use of court cases, censuses, parish registers, taxes and especially the use of coroners' reports that allow insights into topics as specific as accidents and murders of individual children. For the Irish context, Bronagh Ní Chonaill's recent publication on children and the law in early medieval Ireland is the first to address the subject of children in the legal material in some detail.[45]

In contrast to the historical material, studies of childhood in the past utilizing a wide range of archaeological sources have been much slower to appear. For example, writing in 2001, Helen Schwartzman pointed out that a survey of articles relating to children in *American Anthropologist* revealed:

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[41] Colin Heywood, *A history of childhood* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 15.
[42] Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*; Pierre Riché and Danièle Alexandre-Bidon's *Children in the Middle Ages, fifth-fifteenth centuries* (Notre-Dame, 1999).
[43] Orme, *Medieval children*.
[44] Barbara Hanawalt, *The ties that bound, peasant families in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1986); *eadem*, *Growing up in Medieval London, the experience of childhood in history* (New York, 1993).
[45] See Bronagh Ní Chonaill, 'Child-centred law in medieval Ireland' in Robert Davis, and Joseph Dunne, (eds), *The empty throne: childhood and the crisis of modernity* (in press), available at (http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/3812) (16 November, 2007).

only four percent of articles in the past hundred years included significant information about children,[46] and only three articles about children appeared in that journal between 1986 and 2001.[47] This perceived marginalization has led anthropologists who study children to title their work using questions such as 'Where have all the babies gone?'[48] and 'Why don't anthropologists like children?'[49]

The development of an anthropology of childhood was called for as early as 1955, with the creation of the 'culture and personality school'. Prior to the emergence of this school, there were few anthropological studies of childhood.[50] Archaeological literature prior to the 1980s included few references to children and showed little theoretical or methodological interest in considering children in archaeological analyses.[51] While some very early ethnographic accounts of children and childhood existed, the majority of these largely comprised descriptive accounts of children and related practices that were simply 'noted' or 'reported'[52] rather than being contextualized or analyzed in their own right. The first role for children within the early archaeological literature was to examine 'uninterpretable' artefact categories from sites such as toys, miniatures or items considered analogous to toys in prehistoric contexts such as figurines.[53] While these categories are of course valid lines of enquiry into childhood, these studies did not use the artefacts to infer details about children's lives or to explore their place in society. Following this, a second exploration of children in the earlier archaeological literature came from ethnoarchaeological and experimental studies. However, as Baxter points out, with the exception of Gawain Hammond and Norman Hammond,[54] these studies were not undertaken with a view towards studying children specifically.[55]

As a result, children were considered to be variables that shaped the archaeological record in unpredictable, unpatterned ways. This

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[46] Helen Schwartzman, 'Children and anthropology, a century of studies' in H. B. Schwartzman (ed.), *Children and anthropology, perspectives for the 21st Century* (Westport, 2001), pp 15–37.
[47] Hirschfield, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?', pp 611–27.
[48] Alma Gottlieb, 'Where have all the babies gone? Toward an anthropology of infants and their caretakers' in *Anthropological Quarterly*, lxxiii (2000), pp 121–32 (Gottlieb, 'Where have all the babies gone?').
[49] Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?'
[50] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood,* p. 4. 'Anthropology' is used here in the American sense of the word as an umbrella term that includes the disciplines of physical anthropology and archaeology.
[51] Ibid., p. 8.
[52] Ibid., p. 5.
[53] Ibid., p. 8.
[54] Gawain Hammond and Norman Hammond, 'Child's play, a distorting factor in archaeological distribution' in *American Antiquity*, xxxxvi, no. 3 (July, 1981), pp 634-636.
[55] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 8.

unpredictability of children's behaviour demonstrated that children could not be studied in an archaeological context and were therefore an 'unknowable' component of past social groups.[56]

For many years, children were considered peripheral to traditional interests of archaeological research and received little attention in the literature. More recent theoretical and methodological developments have placed children and childhood at the centre of many archaeological studies.[57] For example in 1989, the *Norwegian Archaeological Review* published an article by Grete Lillehammer entitled 'A child is born'. Lillehammer is generally credited with bringing the archaeology of children into the world with her article,[58] which focuses on the importance of investigating 'the child's world from an archaeological point of view'.[59] It is the first work to systematically look at methods and theories necessary in order to study children within the archaeological record.[60] Lillehammer argued that both direct and indirect methods are needed to find evidence of the child's world in the archaeological record.[61] The mortuary record provides direct proof of children, and other more indirect methods of accessing evidence of children in the past include:

> The use of analogical methods in relation to general historical, medical and ethno-cultural knowledge of children's learning and play, their health and living conditions, and position in the adult world. These methods do not differ from those used in more traditional research areas of archaeology. What differs is the approach and the questions which arise from it. The relationship between the adult world and the world of children, in which play functions as a leading factor, is here of central importance.[62]

Lillehammer's seminal article appeared at a time when gender studies were increasingly becoming a focus within archaeology.[63] The development of postprocessualist theory,

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[56] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, pp 4-6.
[57] Ibid., p. 8.
[58] Grete Lillehammer, 'A child is born, the child's world in an archaeological perspective' in *NAR,* xxi, no. 2 (1989), pp 89-105 (Lillehammer, 'A child is born').
[59] Ibid., p. 89.
[60] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 15.
[61] Lillehammer, 'A child is born', p. 103.
[62] Ibid., p. 103.
[63] The literature on gender within archaeology has emphasized the culturally constructed nature of gender roles, and how contemporary cultural constructions of men and women had profound effects on how archaeologists approached gender in the past. Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 17. For discussions of gender in archaeology see Margaret Conkey and Joan Gero (eds), *Engendering archaeology, women and prehistory* (Oxford, 1991); Sarah Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology, analyzing power and prestige* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1997); Alison Wylie, 'Gender theory and the archaeological record, why is there no archaeology of gender?' in Margaret Conkey and Joan Gero (eds), *Engendering archaeology, women and prehistory* (Oxford, 1991), pp 31-54.

combined with feminist approaches to gender archaeology, has encouraged the construction of more inclusive social archaeologies. 'Although the study of gender did not automatically lead to the study of children and childhood, it did create an important context for researchers such as Kathryn Kamp,[64] and Joanna Sofaer Derevenski'.[65] Because of this influence, a number of scholars who were involved in the development of gender theories have gone on to investigate the role of age in past societies.[66] However, despite the development of new conceptual frameworks, our constructions of the past remain exclusive in many ways. Katherine Kamp has argued in her article 'Where have all the children gone?' (2001),[67] that perceptions of childhood in the past have been and still are, portrayed primarily as a time of play and learning, and that such perceptions both deemphasize the economic contribution of children and relegate them (like women) to the 'less visible realm of the home'.[68] However, as age categories are constructs, ethnographic, historic and archaeological evidence indicates considerable 'temporal and cross-cultural variability'.[69] While play and learning are important areas to examine when looking at childhood in the past, other contributions must also be considered. Schwartzman (and others) argue that previous studies have used children, as '"tools" to be used for investigating the "really important" topics of interest, that is, adult political organization and adult material culture'.[70] She argues for a method of archaeological and anthropological inquiry that sees 'children as topics not tools' and that 'one of the first challenges for archaeologists is to recognize that children and childhood are important research topics to pursue in their own right'.[71] Joanna Derevenski has suggested that archaeological inquiry needs to focus on the 'peculiarities of child constructs' especially for their ideational and symbolic meanings in specific cultural contexts – in the same manner archaeological enquiry has begun to do with

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[64] Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?', pp 1–34.

[65] Helen Schwartzman, 'Materializing children, challenges for the archaeology of childhood' in Jane Eva Baxter (ed.), *Children in Action, Perspectives on the Archaeology of Childhood, Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, xv (2005), p. 125 (Schwartzman, 'Materializing children').

[66] A notable example is the work of Katherine Kamp who has argued 'once we have begun to look for children, it is also not unlikely that we will be driven to investigate other age categories as well. Perhaps the next question should be, 'where have all the older people gone?', Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?', p. 27.

[67] Ibid., p. 1.

[68] Ibid., p. 1.

[69] Ibid., p. 1.

[70] Schwartzman, 'Materializing children', p. 125.

[71] Ibid., p. 123.

gender constructs.[72] As Kamp has argued, like gender, age categories are cultural constructs that provide basic organizing principles within most societies. As in the case with gender categories, age constructs have posed particular interpretive difficulties in that is has been a challenge to dissociate ourselves from our own cultural stereotypes and assumptions.[73] She further argues that:

> like gender categories, age categories and their cultural meanings have provided a challenge to archaeologists working with a primarily material record of the past. Nevertheless, just as an archaeology that includes a consideration of gender provides a more accurate and interesting perspective on the past, an archaeology that includes all ages from the newborn to the oldest inhabitants will illuminate the operations of past cultures in a more complete and revealing manner. It is imperative that archaeologists find new methods for accessing children of the past. [74]

Until relatively recently, work on children in the archaeological record was sparse and with a few notable exceptions, such as Anne Sophie Gräslund, Grete Lillehammer and Elizabeth Scott,[75] has often been 'rather random and descriptive in nature'.[76] For example, where children have been studied within archaeology, it often has related to rather dramatic mortuary contexts interpreted as examples of ritual sacrifice or infanticide. The construction of the childhood and children's position within society has rarely been explored – indeed age is often treated as a variable rather than as a fundamental principle of social organisation.[77]

Since the appearance of Lillehammer's article, and the theoretical advances made by Derevenski and Kamp, a number of archaeologists have begun to utilize new theoretical frameworks for understanding and interpreting the activities of children in the past. These frameworks may be broken down into a series of common concepts. Firstly, that children are active rather than passive participants in culture and society, and that a

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[72] Joanna Sofaer Derevenski, 'Age and gender at the site of Tiszapolgár-Basatanya, Hungary' in *Antiquity*, lxxi (1997), p. 877.
[73] Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?', p. 27.
[74] Ibid., p. 27.
[75] Anne Sophie Gräslund, 'Barn i Birka' in *Tor 15* (Uppsala, 1973); Lillehammer, 'A child is born', pp 89–105; and Scott, *Those of little note*.
[76] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', pp 6-7. Notable exceptions are: Sally Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Sutton, 1999); Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes, writing gender and childhood into European archaeology* (London, 1997); Suzanne Dixon, (ed.), *Childhood, class and kin in the Roman world* (New York, 2001).
[77] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', pp 6-7.

variety of experiences and opportunities existed for children in the past that were influenced by age, gender, class, race and ethnicity. Secondly, that socialization is understood to be a process of negotiation and interaction between children and adults as well as between adults and children, as well as the understanding that children are not separate to the broader social, political and economic contexts of the adult world. In addition, Western understandings of childhood are only one among a number of understandings of what it means to be 'a child'. Finally, it is important to understand the researcher's own subjectivity in undertaking the study childhood in the past, as well as recognizing the importance of using interdisciplinary studies alongside archaeology in investigating the roles of children in both pre-historic and historic communities.[78]

Literature review: the Irish archaeological context

Two date few studies have focused on the Irish archaeological child. Exceptions include Emer Dennehy's 1997 M.A. thesis on the *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry, which explored the history of the burial grounds of unbaptized children from an archaeological perspective. While this significant work employed the use of historical and anthropological sources it did not employ an engendered or age aware theoretical perspective.[79] Linda Lynch's MA thesis on separate burial in Ireland, while also redressing the subject of infancy in Medieval Ireland from an archaeological perspective, similarly did not use an engendered perspective for the archaeological material.[80] In addition, the fact that *ceallunaigh* for the most part appear to post-date 1200 AD means that this research, while important, does not shed light on the burial traditions or positions of infants and children in early medieval Ireland.[81]

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[78] Schwartzman, 'Materializing children', p. 125.
[79] Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry'.
[80] Linda Lynch, 'Placeless souls, Bioarchaeology and separate burial in Ireland' (MA thesis, Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, 1998).
[81] However, for the post-medieval period Lynn McKerr of Queen's University Belfast is undertaking a Phd thesis entitled 'The archaeology of children and childhood in post-medieval Ireland'. There are also a number of Irish studies utilizing historical sources which make some mention of children, for example see Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The Lex innocentium: Adomnán's law for women, clerics and youths, 697 A.D' in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), *Chattel, servant or citizen, women's status in church, state and society, Historical Studies*, xix (Belfast, 1995), pp 58-69; Kathleen Mulchrone, 'The rights and duties of women in regard to the education of their children' in D. A. Binchy and Myles Dillon (eds), *Studies in early Irish law* (Dublin, 1936), pp 187-205.

<u>Current state of research into the history of children and childhoods in the past</u>

Within the last decade or so, there has been a marked improvement in the levels of research into the study of childhood for prehistoric and historic contexts at both institutional and research level. For example, the recent establishment at Oxford University of the *Centre for the History of Childhood*, provides an institutional focus for the study of the history of childhood, with the long term goal of incorporating this research into a masters and doctoral programme at the University. In addition, during 2004 and 2005, a number of important conferences took place that led to the development of *The Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past* (*SSCIP*).[82] In addition, recent literature on the archaeology of childhood in the past has developed:

> interesting theoretical insights and tantalizing glimpses of children in the material record. While the potentials and possibilities of studying children through the archaeological record have only begun to be realized, significant advances have been put forth in the literature. [83]

These advances can be broken down into three general themes: conceptualizing children through their relationships with others, examining childhood as a cultural construct, and recognizing children as social and cultural actors.[84] These advances have resulted in a number of recent publications on the subject of Icelandic childhoods including Ármann Jackobsson's and Torfi Tulinius', *Miðaldabörn* [Medieval childhood] (2005),[85] Chris Callow's articles 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland' (2006)[86]

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[82] The society is based at the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity at Birmingham University and is an international, multi-disciplinary society to promote the study of childhood and children in the past. The Society's aims are to act as an interdisciplinary forum for the discussion, dissemination and integration of ideas, information and discoveries about children and childhood in the past worldwide, from any chronological period'. Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past (SSCIP), available at (http://www.sscip.bham.ac.uk) (11 October, 2006). The formation of this society was largely influenced by two conferences: the Que(e)rying Archaeology, 15th Anniversary Gender Conference at the University of Calgary, November 11-14, 2004, and The Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood Conference which took place May 6-8, 2005 in Canterbury and was organised by Mike Lally. Another important forum to come out of the formation of the *SSCIP* is the *Research Forum for the Archaeology of Childhood*. Formed by Mike Lally of the University of Southhampton in 2005, this group focuses more specifically on archaeological research into past childhoods, and is primarily focused on postgraduate research students. Such forums have initiated an open academic space into which research into children and childhoods in the past can be explored.
[83] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 15.
[84] Ibid., p. 15.
[85] Ármann Jackobsson and Torfi Tulinius (eds), *Miðaldabörn*, (Reykjavík, 2005) (Jackobsson and Torfi Tulinius (eds), *Miðaldabörn*). Although not translated into English, a review of the contents is provided by Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', pp 47-8.
[86] Chris Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland' in *Archaeologia Islandica*, v (2006), pp 55-96 (Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland').

and his 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society' (2007).[87] In addition, Anna Hansen has added considerably to the literature on medieval Icelandic children in recent years.[88] Other recent publications on childhood in the past include Sally Crawford and Gillian Shepherd's *Children, childhood and society* (2007),[89] and Mike Lally's *(Re)thinking the little ancestor: new perspectives on the archaeology of Infancy and childhood*.[90]

So how do we proceed? Methodology

In order to find the child's world in previously collected material or in new studies specifically focused on children and childhood, Lillehammer has suggested that one of the most important shifts that must occur is to increase the number of questions asked regarding age and age distinctions.[91] She argues that it is necessary for the archaeologist to understand the 'child's world' as it is revealed in archaeological contexts. There are two essential elements necessary in undertaking such an understanding; namely that children must be viewed as subjects rather than objects of research, thus 'allowing children the possibility to express themselves'.[92] Secondly, that the child's world is understood as comprising three main components, namely: 'the cultures created when children interact with the environment, the culture transferred to children from adults, and the culture transferred among children'.[93] This framework has proved to be very helpful, and has demonstrated that the use of many different types of archaeological data (normally used to address very different types of questions about the past), can and does lead to surprising insights into the 'child's world'. As Baxter has argued, this evidence links the child's and the adult's worlds, and includes the relationships they form with each other and the world around them.[94]

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[87] Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', pp 45-56.
[88] Anna Hansen, 'Childhood in early Icelandic society, representations of children in the Icelandic Sagas' in Stefanie Würth, Tõnno Jonuks, and Axel Kristinsson (eds), *Sagas and Societies, International conference at Borgarnes, Iceland September 5-9, 2002*, available at University of Tübingen (http.//w210.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/dbt/volltexte/2004/1057/pdf/3_anna~1.pdf) (12 May, 2007); Anna Hansen, 'Börn og auður á Íslandi á 13. öld' in Ármann Jackobsson and Torfi Tulinius (eds), *Miðaldabörn*, (Reykjavík, 2005), pp 27-35.
[89] Sally Crawford and Gillian Shepard (eds), *Children, childhood and society*, BAR International Series 1696 (Oxford, 2007).
[90] Mike Lally (ed.), *(Re)thinking the little ancestor: new perspectives on the archaeology of Infancy and childhood* (Oxford), forthcoming.
[91] Lillehammer, 'A child is born', p. 96.
[92] Ibid., p. 90.
[93] Ibid., p. 90.
[94] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 17.

Identification of children in mortuary contexts

Most archaeologists argue that mortuary contexts are the most viable method for accessing children in the past. However, others argue that the identification of children in mortuary contexts is filled with difficult questions.[95]

> Equating biological categories with cultural categories (e.g., equating male/female to man/woman or subadult/adult to child/adult) reduces the chances of identifying not only the presence or absence of different categories of personhood in the past, but also the potential roles, behaviours, and meanings associated with those categories.[96]

Although it may be possible to use any archaeological data to understand gender in the past, some types of data are more easily adapted to this purpose. These include depictions of humans, documents, burials, artefacts, and spatial arrangements of home sites and so forth. Furthermore, any argument is improved by having multiple lines of evidence. The more types of evidence that can be weighed in analyses, the more convincing and secure will be the results.[97] Bioarchaeology and osteoarchaeology can also provide invaluable information for the further study of children and childhood in an archaeological context.

Children and the division of labour

Despite the available evidence, accessing children in the archaeological record somehow seems to be more problematic than accessing women.[98] Derevenski has argued that modern western society seems to 'lack the paradigms for seeing children as producers and contributors'.[99] She suggests that in our writing of new and inclusive histories it might be helpful to examine the role of children in the division of labour, in a similar manner as gendered archaeology has done in examining the activities of women in the past.[100] The division of labour has traditionally been divided in a 'binary and exclusive fashion between adult men and women'[101] even though children may well have made significant socio-economic contributions. Little has been done to date to examine the

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[95] Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?'; Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', pp 7–20; Joanna Sofaer Derevenski (ed.), *Children and material culture* (London, 2000).
[96] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 19.
[97] Sarah Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology* (Woodbridge, CA, 1997), p. 58 (Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology*).
[98] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', p. 12.
[99] Ibid., p. 12.
[100] Ibid., p. 12.
[101] Ibid., p. 12.

contexts in which children's labour might be visible'[102] and this could provide a fruitful avenue of enquiry.[103] Children are *active* players, capable of creating their own 'societies' that intersect but can also be distinct from the adult world. Such 'societies' have their own material culture. One helpful method for identifying children's material culture in the past, and how it intersects with the adult world, is to look at artefacts which represent labour production and training; 'small scale artefacts' such as miniature 'functional' versus 'non-functional' mill- and quern-stones are one such example. In contrast, an examination of toys may allow for an examination of distinct childhood societies. It is at this intersection of children's contributions to adult societies and cultures and their own separate spaces, which provides the most information about the nature of childhood in the past. Evidence of adult interaction with child 'societies' may also include 'objects specially designed or modified for the feeding, clothing, housing and care provided for children, the provision of education, socialization and entertainment, and the tragic memorials raised by loving parents to children who have died'.[104] There are also records and descriptions of ceremonies that celebrated the birth of children, and their achievement of stages of growing up and acceptance into the wider adult society of their communities.[105]

While historical sources can offer important information in accessing childhoods and children in the past, the very nature of the limitations of the historical record mean that it is of vital importance to examine the more 'invisible' material culture in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of both childhoods and of the society in question. Even from historical periods where documentation is available, the sources often idealize children, rather than to discuss their lives as they were lived.[106]

> The apparent distance between children and the material and historical records, combined with a modern tendency to marginalize the importance of children, has led most archaeologists to exclude children from the realm of archaeological inquiry. Given that children were a significant demographic component at most excavated sites, archaeologists must recognize that

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[102] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', p. 12.
[103] Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?', p. 17.
[104] Wileman, *Hide and seek*, p. 14.
[105] Ibid., p. 14.
[106] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood,* p. 1.

children contribute to the archaeological record whether or not we are competent to recognize them.[107]

Derevenski has quoted Laurie Wilkie's argument that the incorporation of the documentary and archaeological evidence in order to study the past can provide useful ways to both identify categories of age and family composition, as well as allowing for examinations of family and household dynamics. Wilkie further asks 'if we assume that children were active participants in the creation of the historical archaeological record, what new insights does that assumption engender?'[108]

The arguments that have been made for the importance of recognising the position of women in ancient societies are concerned with the investigation of cultural attitudes, gender roles and economic contributions; it is important to understand the role of women, because without that it is not possible to understand the society as a whole. No society can be comprehended if only fifty percent of it is known or considered. Equally, every society must produce children in order to survive. Every society is concerned with the upbringing of children – their care and nurture, education and training, their control and future. How these things were done, must surely tell us a great deal about each society. 'It follows, therefore, that the role of children should be an important area for archaeological research. In addition, the assumption that children are merely passive receptors of their society's attitudes must be dismissed'.[109]

The assumption that children and their spaces cannot be viewed in the historical or archaeological record is one that has been both implicit and explicit in archaeological discussions, leading to a situation of perceived invisibility. This current state of research has led one archaeologist to suggest that 'dogs have been studied with greater archaeological attention than children'.[110] However, children contribute to the archaeological record whether or not we are competent to recognize them.[111] The

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[107] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood,* p. 1.
[108] Laurie Wilkie, 'Not merely child's play, creating a historical archaeology of children and childhood' in Joanna Sofaer Derevenski (ed.), *Children and material culture* (New York, 2000), p. 101 (Wilkie, 'Not merely child's play').
[109] Wileman, *Hide and seek*, p. 8.
[110] Rothschild, 'Introduction to Katherine Kamp', p. 1.
[111] Andrew Chamberlain, 'Commentary: missing stages of life: towards the perception of children in archaeology' in Moore and Scott (eds), Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott, (eds), *Invisible people and processes*, p. 249.

challenge is to find new ways of viewing the archaeological record in order to perceive children and their activities.

Attempting to materialize children archaeologically presents a number of innate research difficulties. These include the initial recognition of children as legitimate topics of research, the methodological development of theory and the implementation of a developed theoretical framework onto the archaeological record. Once this framework is established it becomes possible not only to search for new evidence of children and childhoods in the past, but to reinterpret the extant archaeological material from this new perspective.

Lillehammer's seminal article 'A child is born', challenged the archaeological field to consider the child's world, and in so doing to perceive children as social and cultural actors in their own right, capable of making decisions in their upbringing as well as making substantial contributions to their families, communities and societies. Lillehammer focused her enquiry on questioning the child's world and identifying how archaeology can contribute to the knowledge of children in earlier times. She considered questions of living conditions, the mortality of children and their social and legal rights in past societies. She argued that her main reason for introducing the subject into archaeological discussions was not only because of its anonymity, but also because of its potential to contribute to the main field of general social history and to throw light on socialization, or the transfer of culture and knowledge between groups.[112]

In the last few years, American anthropologists have moved towards recognizing the absence of studies of children in the anthropological record.[113] Helen Schwartzman along with a number of others[114] have called for similar developments within archaeological discussions, most recently reflected in the 2005 Journal of the

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[112] Lillehammer, 'A child is born', pp 89–105.
[113] Charlotte Hardman, 'Can there be an anthropology of children?' in *JASO*, iv (1973), pp 85–99; Gottleib, 'Where have all the babies gone?, pp 121–132; Hirschfeld, 'Why don't anthropologists like children?', pp 611–627.
[114] For example see Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes, writing gender and childhood into European archaeology* (London, 1997), pp 251–257; Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*; Katherine Kamp (ed.), *Children in the Prehistoric puebloan Southwest* (Salt Lake City, 2002); Robert Park, 'Size counts, the miniature archaeology of childhood in Inuit societies' in *Antiquity*, lxxii, no., 276 (1998), pp 269-281; Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', pp 7–20; Joanna Sofaer Derevenski (ed.), *Children and material culture* (London, 2000).

Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association entitled *Children in action: perspectives on the archaeology of childhood*.[115] Schwartzman's volume of work put forward various methodologies helpful for approaching an archaeology of childhood, as well as successfully demonstrating the application of theory to the material record. These theoretical approaches developed by anthropologists and archaeologists in the United States, Great Britain and Scandinavia within the last ten years or so have created frameworks for beginning to reinterpret material within the Irish archaeological record. When such questions become the focus of inquiry within the archaeological record and archaeologists concentrate on the transmission of knowledge between *all* the cultural actors in a society, it allows for insights into not only the culture arising from children themselves, but also their engagement with the society around them. More specifically, it allows the unravelling of transmissions of culture from adult to child, as well as the identification of less visible transference of knowledge from child to child.

Concepts of childhood(s) are specific to the particular culture in question and western conceptions of stages of childhood have also invariably impacted on interpretations of childhood in the past. Western perceptions of childhood as passive or carefree are only now beginning to be recognized as inappropriate conceptualizations that have been superimposed over periods where children could represent important sources of innovation, labour and even sacred power.[116] This western 'passivisation' of children's activities has led to perceptions of sentimental notions of learning, play and indulgence, and a resulting lack of focus on evidence that suggests children were capable of production and change. Despite these perceptions, historical and archaeological evidence indicates that children were active members of society whose actions can be traced within the record. Examination of their activities has the potential to contribute to a much greater understanding of social and cultural processes in medieval Ireland.

To conclude then, literature on the archaeology of childhood to date has developed three important elements to guide future study of children in the archaeological record: looking at children though their relationships, recognizing the culturally constructed

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[115] J. E. Baxter (ed.), *Children in Action, Perspectives on the Archaeology of Childhood, Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, xv (2005) (Baxter, *Children in action*).
[116] Traci Ardren, (book review) *The archaeology of childhood: children, gender and material culture*, Jane Eva Baxter (Walnut Creek, CA, 2005) in *American Anthropologist*, cviii, no. 3 (September 2006), p. 562.

nature of childhood and its parallels to gender, and identifying children as cultural actors. Finding ways to bring these themes together to investigate children archaeologically is an important step in further developing the archaeology of childhood.[117] Children are not mere objects of study. They are active subjects both in the construction of their own understandings and in the construction of the social and physical world that surrounds them.[118] It is clear that it is not necessary to 'find' children. Like women, they have undoubtedly always been there, but as archaeologists, we need to find new, more inclusive ways of interpreting the past in order to access their activities in the archaeological record. While additional material evidence is always desired, the answer to seeing an inclusive past does not lie with discovering or excavating new material *per se*, but rather with the development of new strategies of thinking about the past. In the same way 'economic history', or 'political history' excludes much of history's participants, traditional theoretical approaches have unfortunately conspired to make both women and children invisible.

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[117] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood,* p. 23.
[118] Kamp, 'Where have all the children gone?', p. 27.

Chapter Six

Concepts of age and gender, birth and burial

> To eat the knowledge that grew in clay
> And death the germ within it! Now and then
> I can remember something of the gay
> garden that was childhood's. Again.
> -Patrick Kavanagh

One of the aims of this research is the examination of relationships between age and gender in archaeological interpretations and how these interactions are manifested within the material culture of children. This requires a closer examination of the material culture of childhood(s) across the different cultural, ethnic and regional boundaries in Ireland during the eighth to twelfth centuries, thus facilitating more comprehensive understandings of the social and cultural roles and contributions of children at a time when Irish society was undergoing dramatic changes. As a direct result of recognizing relationships between children and their material world, identifying ways to access their actions and identities in the archaeological record, and examining how their experiences vary across time and space, richer avenues of interpreting change and continuity within social organization and interaction are revealed. The identification of various processes of childhood in relation to different cultural constructs of age, and how this impacts on social organization is of primary consideration. Consequently, one of the foremost questions addressed in this section is what material remains can be associated with children and childhood in the particular contexts that are available archaeologically?

This chapter discusses the historical and archaeological evidence for the earliest years of childhood in Ireland between 700 and 1200 AD. The research methodologies necessary for initiating such a study are discussed, before moving on to an examination of the sources. Both Irish and Scandinavian historical and archaeological material is utilised in order to thematically explore and contextualise childhood. The themes examined include age constructs, birth and infancy, conceptualisations of mothering, infanticide, and mortuary remains.

Within Irish historiography, there are particular inherent challenges to undertaking a study such as this. In her work on burial practices in Ireland between 900 and 1500, Susan Fry highlighted the dearth of historians who have undertaken research on the social history of the Irish medieval period. Certainly for later medieval history, the vast majority of research has focused on areas of political and economic history. Fry quotes the historian R. R. Davies who argued that 'an alien, invading population's success in subjugating a native population depends not only on military and economic conquest, but on cultural conquest as well'.[1] While Fry is discussing the more successful Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland, the Viking incursions must be seen in a similar vein in that 'any conquest would also affect the conquered country's most important religious and social rituals'.[2] The importance of utilising both historical and archaeological material when considering cultural processes has been highlighted by the historian F. S. L. Lyons:

> When we look… to social history, cultural history, the history of ideas, the poverty of what we have to offer is deeply disturbing… Not only have historians too often disregarded the physical evidence around them, they have not even fully explored their literary evidence to give us a rounded view of our society.[3]

Examining the extant archaeological and historical evidence linking Ireland to the wider Scandinavian context thus provides an opportunity to study social institutions in order to assess changes in social and cultural practices.

Literary and historical sources

As in researching the actions of women in this period, the documentary and literary evidence provides a valuable resource for identifying children and childhood in medieval Ireland. Close readings of the texts provide useful contexts for the extant archaeological material, giving insight into aspects of children and children's lives that cannot be seen in the archaeological record. Writing in 1998, Nancy Edwards remarked that 'clearly the documentary sources also need to be studied more closely for what they

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[1] Susan Leigh Fry, *Burial in medieval Ireland, 900-1500: a review of the written sources* (Dublin, 1999) p. 17 (Fry, *Burial in medieval Ireland*).
[2] Ibid., p. 17.
[3] F. S. L. Lyons, 'The burden of our history' in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism, 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994), p. 92, quoted in Fry, *Burial in medieval Ireland*, p. 17.

might reveal about women, children and other social groupings in early medieval Irish society. The results of this approach might, in turn, throw light upon the material evidence.'[4] This material provides a rich avenue in which to start a discussion of children's experiences and contributions in the past, especially when used in conjunction with the available archaeological evidence. The documentary sources offer a wealth of information on children, including insights into understanding concepts of age and family composition, as well as household dynamics and division of labour according to gender, age and status. They also provide evidence for birth, fosterage, education, training and aspects of daily living.

Scandinavian literary sources

For the Scandinavian context, there are a number of sources that provide information on the lives of Scandinavian children and childhood. As in the case of the Irish historical material, the Icelandic saga tales offer some information on Scandinavian childhoods in the lands of the North Atlantic. Written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries but based on earlier oral sources, the sagas feature individuals as well as social groups. Like the Irish mythological tales, the sagas are primarily works of literature and this must be taken into consideration when utilising them as historical sources. The rich Scandinavian historical sources such as the thirteenth-century Icelandic Sagas (*Íslendingasögur*) and the Kings' Sagas (*Konunga sögur*), are the most reliable literary sources for historical interpretation of Viking Age Scandinavia. The Icelandic sagas in particular, are a useful source for research into the Scandinavian settled land of Iceland and the islands of the North Atlantic. Thought to have been colonized by Irish, Hiberno-Scandinavian and Norwegian settlers, these sagas describe the colonization of Iceland during the period 870-930 and are centred on descriptions of family relationships and alliances.[5] Rather than being strictly accurate records of historical events the sagas are representative of records of cultural history. Some are more obviously exploratory of beliefs and cultural attitudes than others, but all the sagas have been shaped by cultural traditions, attitudes and expectations over a period of several hundred years.[6] Recent archaeological research undertaken on Viking Age Iceland supports the use of literary

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[4] Nancy Edwards, 'Summary and prospect' in Michael Monk and John Sheehan (eds), *Early Medieval Munster, archaeology, history and society* (Cork, 1998), p. 204.
[5] Graham Campbell, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, pp 103-5.
[6] Margaret Clunies-Ross, 'From Iceland to Norway, essential rites of passage for an early Icelandic skald' in *Alvíssmál, forschungen zur mittelalterlichen kultur Skandinaviens*, xi (2004), p. 4, available at (http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~alvismal/9sigvat.pdf) (2 June, 2007).

sources for the earlier Viking period. Burial evidence agrees with particular social practices described in the sagas and other Old Icelandic writings,[7] and this corroboration attests to the importance of using the medieval written sources alongside the physical remains.[8] Anna Hansen's research on the cultural construction of childhood in the Icelandic sagas examines legal, biological and social criteria distinguishing spaces of childhood distinct from the adult sphere. Hansen uses the sagas to identify what she terms 'the world of children',[9] and argues that the sagas can be used to depict images of children and childhood in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Iceland. These sources provide useful contextual resources when used in conjunction with the archaeological material in order to extract information regarding evidence for children and childhood in both native Irish and Scandinavian-Irish contexts.

Scandinavian archaeological sources

Archaeological examinations of insular material associated with both Scandinavian raiding and trading has led to better understanding of trade and settlement patterns from parts of Scandinavia into the West. Egon Wamers has argued that the Viking Age North Sea and Atlantic region from the ninth to eleventh centuries can be considered to form an extensive, homogeneous cultural area with consistent similarities in material culture. These areas include parts of Norway, Denmark and to a lesser extent Eastern Scandinavia; as well as within the Scandinavian settled areas of Ireland, England and Iceland.[10] Thus, even if regional differences existed within the Scandinavian areas (including Norse-influenced areas within the North Atlantic) it is possible to talk about a

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[7] Jesse Byock, Phillip Walker, Jon Erlandson, Per Holck, Davide Zori, Magnús Guðmunsson and Mark Tveskov, 'A Viking Age valley in Iceland, the Mosfell archaeological project' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xlix (2005), p. 211 (Byock, et al, 'Mosfell archaeological project'). These practices include the disinterment and reburial of remains during the conversion period, as well as evidence of a talisman or amulet described in the sagas as being used in warding of illness which was found in a grave of a man in his twenties who had suffered from tuberculosis and had been mortally ill. This burial is important in that it also illustrates attitudes towards the disabled during the Viking Age in Iceland. The young man would have been very unusual looking as he had an extra incisor in the middle of his upper jaw, four extra molars on the lower jaw, and a benign tumour inside of his nose. Ibid., p. 211.
[8] Ibid., p. 218.
[9] Anna Hansen, 'Childhood in early Icelandic society; representations of children in the Icelandic Sagas' in Stefanie Würth, Tõnno Jonuks, and Axel Kristinsson (eds), *Sagas and Societies; International conference at Borgarnes, Iceland September 5-9, 2002*, University of Tübingen, p. 2, available at (http://w210.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/dbt/volltexte/2004/1057/pdf/3_anna~1.pdf) (12 May, 2007) (Hansen, 'Representations of childhood in the Icelandic sagas').
[10] Egon Wamers, 'Insular finds in Viking Age Scandinavia and the state formation of Norway' in Howard Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 37 (Wamers, 'Insular finds in Viking Age Scandinavia' in Clarke, Ní Mhaonaigh and Ó Floinn, *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*).

common Norse cultural complex.[11] However, it must be taken into consideration that 'Scandinavia' is a geographic term that includes vast areas of ethnically different peoples, therefore there are differences as well as similarities in their material culture. Traditional scholarship has always seen parts of Norway as the homeland of the raiders and settlers who came west during the ninth and tenth centuries. However, recent scholarship has suggested that Swedes also travelled west; in particular coming from an area in central Sweden known as Västergötland.[12]

Recent archaeological excavations such as those on the island of Gotland in Sweden have revealed a number of insular objects. Dan Carlsson's excavations in 1999 into an eleventh-century early Christian cemetery provided a coin minted by Æthelred of England (c. 1000) that had been adapted into a brooch and placed into a female grave.[13] Further excavations unearthed a bishop's crosier nearly identical to an eighth- or ninth-century Irish crosier from Helgö, Sweden.[14]

While Swedish expansion after the ninth century seems to have shifted attention from West to East, it must be remembered that:

> This east-west division is far from clear. Norwegian lords willingly participated in activities in Russia and Byzantium just as many warriors from central Sweden took part in the early eleventh century campaigns in England. Thus, when we study the Viking Age, we are dealing with a complicated and multi-faceted historical process. The different characteristics of these ethnic groups, distinguished by variations in fashion, living habits, burial rites and settlement organization, are perhaps most easily seen archaeologically in grave traditions.[15]

For the purposes of this research, enough similarities in the material record of the Scandinavian diaspora exist to contextualize material from Scandinavia and Scandinavian settled areas and to compare and contrast it with the Irish evidence. In order to initiate an examination of children and childhoods in the Irish material record, it

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[11] Arwill-Nordblach, 'A reigning queen or the wife of a king – only?, p. 24.

[12] Graham Campbell, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 39.

[13] Michelle Ziegler, 'Archaeology digest' in *HAJEMNE*, iii (Summer 2000), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/3/arch.html) (2 August, 2007).

[14] Dan Carlsson, *ArkeoDok*, available at (http://www.arkeodok.com/News1.html) (2 August, 2007).

[15] Björn Ambrosiani, 'Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age, an archaeological response' in Howard Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 407-8.

is necessary to undertake an examination of the various sources – both archaeological and historical – that exist for the period in question.

The child and childhood, age constructions

As discussed in the introduction, constructions of childhood vary according to the society in question. Age thresholds also differ accordingly and it is important to define the different conceptualisations of age. Chronological age refers to age in calendar years, while social age refers to norms of age-appropriate behaviour that are culturally imposed upon certain age groups within a particular society. Social age is also cross-cut by gender ideology. Physiological age is a medical construct which estimates levels of ability or impairment referring to the physical ageing process, which although related to chronological age cannot be directly inferred from it.[16]

Perceptions of children and childhood, concepts of age in Irish historical sources

The Irish law texts offer particular information on native Irish childhoods.[17] These texts discuss fosterage, the legal rights and responsibilities of children, the child's material world, as well as age thresholds for adulthood. Like the Anglo-Saxon law codes,[18] the Irish legal sources distinguished between childhood and adulthood. It is clear from these texts that children were a legally distinct and separate group meriting specific attention.[19] The law texts outline the different legal provisions for certain classes and categories of children, including offences by children, offences against children, the maintenance of sick children, the rearing of children, fosterage and so on.

Close examination of these historical sources provides insights into Native Irish age thresholds as well as rights of passage into adulthood. However, as the Irish laws are primarily concerned with negotiating questions of status, and as children could be, and *were*, persons of status, it must be remembered that the information on childhood contained within the historical sources may well have applied to only certain classes of

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[16] Jay Ginn and Sara Arber, (eds), '"Only connect", gender relations and ageing' in *Connecting gender and ageing, a sociological approach* (Buckingham, 1995), p. 5, quoted in Gilchrist, *Gender and archaeology, contesting the past*, p. 89.

[17] See Kelly, *Early Irish law.*

[18] Sally Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Gloucestershire, 1999) p. xiv (Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*).

[19] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, pp 81-91.

children. Equally, variation in age thresholds and their intersection with gender and ethnicity must also be considered.

The Irish law texts give some indication of legal conceptualizations of age grades. They indicate that there were three stages of childhood for males: birth to age seven, seven to fourteen, and fourteen to seventeen. Those aged between seventeen and twenty may be considered to be a 'young man'. This division of age into three stages is mirrored in the text *Bretha Étgid* which discusses injuries by and to participants of three age-bands.[20] This is paralleled in the Anglo-Saxon period where there is an implication that males went through three distinct phases before reaching adulthood namely a *cild*, a *cniht/cneoht* and a *geogoð*.[21] For the Anglo-Saxons' however, these categories appear to have been associated less with rigid age constraints and more with associated age bands and appropriate context.[22]

In early Ireland the lower *fer midboth* were those freemen who were aged between fourteen and seventeen, and this may be interpreted as a 'younger youth' (or indeed a 'teenager'). Males within this age range did not have full adult status or responsibility under the law, illustrated by the legal provision for the dependent child between the ages of twelve and seventeen who steals something is only required to either give it back or provide its equivalent worth and is understood to be a 'thief of restitution' (*táid aithgena*).[23] The higher *fer midboth* appears to apply to freemen aged between seventeen and twenty and may be considered as an 'older youth'. Male adulthood appears to have been reached at the age of twenty.

For the Irish context, chronological age played a large role in determining the oath status (*luge*) of a freeman. For example, a male child under the age of twenty (*fer midboth* is indicated as being between the ages of fourteen and twenty) who receives his inheritance of kin-land is immediately elevated to the property qualifications of a *bóaire* (strong farmer), yet his *luge* remains at the level of a *fer midboth*. A man over the age of

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[20] The age groups are 'seven to twelve years of age, representing the early stage of fosterage; twelve to seventeen years of age, representing the later stage of fosterage, adolescence and conceivably inclusion in the *fian*; and seventeen years and older, representing adulthood', A. B., Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland' (PhD thesis, TCD, 2002), p. 300 (Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland').
[21] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 50-1.
[22] Ibid., p. 51.
[23] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 83.

twenty, who has yet to inherit his kin land, stays at the oath status of a *fer midboth* regardless of his age.[24] Thus, age does not play a factor in determining land qualifications or land status, but is the main criteria for determining oath status. In order to reach the full status – both in land qualifications and oath – of *ócaire,* a male freeman must be over the age of twenty and in possession of the full property qualifications of land.

The law texts offer insights into the hierarchy, status and social relationships of children and devote a fair amount of attention to the intricacies in the legal status of freemen under the age of twenty. The legal texts clearly stipulate their position on the law and the family in that they 'have only a very limited concern with the internal affairs of the family… [as] how a man treated his child is mainly a matter for himself, his kin and his wife's kin'.[25] Yet they go into some detail to negotiate the legal provisions for children set against very specific cases.

Two law texts deal mainly with children: *Cáin Íarraith* (on fosterage) and *Maccslecta* (on inheritance). Both survive only in fragments and so in order to develop a picture of the legal rights of a child, it is necessary to examine references in other texts such as *Gúbretha Caratnaid, Críth Gablach, Uraicecht Becc, Bretha Crólige*,[26] as well as other historical sources such as the saints' lives and early Irish literature. Through closer examination of this material it is possible to extrapolate information regarding the birth, parenting, education, work and labour contributions of children, the material world of children, as well as information regarding their status, class and mortuary treatment.

While the historical material from medieval Ireland is extremely rich, it poses particular problems for a study of early Irish childhoods. Such sources must be interpreted with a great deal of caution and reflexivity as they often generalize and idealize children, rather than focusing on how children actually lived. They also are interpreted as describing a period much earlier than the time in which they were actually written down. For the hagiographical material there are further difficulties that are discussed in more detail in the introductory chapter.

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[24] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, pp 82-3.
[25] Ibid., p. 81.
[26] Ibid., p. 81.

Concepts of age, the Scandinavian historical sources

Scandinavian concepts of age seem to differ slightly from Irish understandings. It appears that childhood comprises birth to age seven, fosterage, which includes training or apprenticeship is initiated around the age of seven years, with adulthood being reached at the age of twelve for male children. In *Laxdæla Saga*, the young Olaf grows up:

> and became a great man and strong… so handsome that not his equal was to be found, and when he was twelve years old he rode to the Thing meeting, and men in other countrysides looked upon it as a great errand to go, and wonder at the splendid way he was made. In keeping herewith was the manner of Olaf's war-gear and raiment, and therefore he was easily distinguished from all other men.[27]

Elsewhere in the same saga, when asked his age by King Harald, Olaf replied that he was now eighteen winters. The king replied 'of exceeding worth, indeed, are such men as you are, for as yet you have left the age of child but a short way behind'.[28]

Legal definitions of age thresholds in thirteenth and fourteenth century Iceland were very much dependent on gender categories. Female legal maturity was determined by both chronological age and marital status. *Grágás Konungsbók* states that 'a girl can take an inheritance when she is sixteen winters old and also the yield from her property', signifying that sixteen years was a recognized female life stage. Hansen argues that while the age of sixteen years was a significant age threshold for women, 'adulthood' was not legally reached until the age of twenty, when a female was allowed to take responsibility for her own home, legally stand as a witness in law and arrange where she wished to live.[29] Twenty years of age appears to have been the upper limit for entry into adulthood and it may be that this was the adult threshold age for unmarried women. As in the case of Anglo-Saxon females,[30] the biggest factor in securing adult legal status for women was not age but rather marriage. 'The state of marriage was more noteworthy than age as the determinant for female maturity. Marriage gave a woman a number of adult rights. For example the married woman, regardless of her age, was able to claim an inheritance and care of other peoples property and she could act as principal in a

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[27] Press, *Laxdæla Saga.*
[28] Ibid.
[29] Hansen, 'Representations of childhood in the Icelandic sagas', p. 2.
[30] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 174.

killing case'.[31] Marriage appears to have changed female legal status at a more permanent and fundamental level. Even if her husband died, a married woman retained the rights she achieved upon her marriage. She could claim an inheritance or have care of others' property. Unlike females, the legal criteria for determining the adult threshold for males seems to have been solely contingent on age. A male reached the legal status of adult at sixteen at which time he could claim and care for his inheritance, be the principal in a killing case, arrange for his mother's betrothal and arrange his own residence.[32] Difference in the adult age threshold between males and females was dependent on gender based criteria. Marriage not only coincided with a change in social status for a woman but with a perceived change in her own personal maturity. For a woman, marriage initiated the beginning of sexual maturity and the start of her childbearing years and is thus contingent upon crossing the puberty threshold.[33] Whereas female adulthood was determined using relativistic methods, male adulthood was established through straightforward chronological age. There were however, exceptions to this practice, for example in the case of persons not of sound mental ability.

Icelandic law not only set out the legal definitions of minors and adults but also provided evidence of the perceived differences between adults and children necessitating the legal distinctions. In order for a male to act as principal in a killing case, he must not only be sixteen, freeborn and a lawful heir, but he must also be of sound mental ability. Hansen argues that within this law is the perceived understanding that at the age of sixteen comes sound judgment. Other laws state that children under the age of sixteen, as well as those considered mentally deficient, were not culpable for eating forbidden foods during times of fasting as they were not expected to possess the sense or mental ability to understand the need for the law.[34] Children under the age of twelve (and persons over the age of seventy) were also excused from fasting unless they so wished. This suggests that children, the infirm and old were perceived to be weaker than the rest of the population, and thus were not only exempt from certain legal and social expectations,

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[31] Hansen, 'Representations of children in the Icelandic sagas', p. 3.
[32] Ibid., p. 3.
[33] Ibid., p. 3.
[34] Ibid., p. 4.

but were protected under law.

> The fact that medieval Icelandic children were distinguished from adults in terms of their strength, skills and wisdom meant, on the one hand, that they were subject to a restriction of power, as they were not able to represent themselves in legal cases. On the other hand, it also meant that less was expected of them and, consequently, they had a reduced responsibility concerning their own actions. Children under the age of twelve winters were not, for instance, under legal penalty if they killed someone.[35]

Norse Christian law 'admonished parents – father and mother – to protect children under seven from all dangers except illness'.[36] Like Irish and Icelandic societies, this implies that the Norse had perceptions of the fragility of young children in their environment, as well as inferring that children under the age of seven – the age of dawning reason and accountability – are not able to make responsible decisions for themselves and thus require guardianship and supervision.

Birth

> The birth of a child is the beginning of every future social interaction and cultural expression. A newborn baby is both the target and trigger of the demands and expectations of a society. There is good reason to identify and acknowledge the event in archaeological discourse.[37]

Early Irish literature, in particular hagiography and epic poetry, offers some evidence concerning birth in early medieval Ireland.[38] The ninth-century *Bethu Brigte* describes how the infant Brigit was bathed in milk after she was born, a symbol of both purity and status. This was most probably a common post-childbirth practice or ritual, and it was still in existence in 1171, when Henry II at the church council at Cashel ordered that children only be baptized in churches by priests:

> For it was formerly the custom in various parts of Ireland that immediately a child was born, the father or some other person immersed it three times in water and, if it was the child of a rich man, he immersed it three times in milk and after that they threw that water and milk into drains or other unclean places.[39]

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[35] Hansen, 'Representations of children in the Icelandic sagas', p. 5.

[36] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 220, fn 48.

[37] Elisabeth Beausang, 'Childbirth in pre-history, an introduction' in *EJA*, iii, no. 1 (2000), p. 82.

[38] For further discussions of sex, conception, pregnancy and birth within Irish hagiography see Bitel, *Land of women*, pp 66-83.

[39] Anthony Lucas, *Cattle in ancient Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1989), pp 6-7.

Thomas Torma has suggested that this bathing may not necessarily have been baptism but rather a secular practice of washing and purification.[40] Some scholars have argued that there is a strong connection between maternity and milk, not only for purposes of lactation but also because dairying, a task largely performed by women, was a vital part of the economics of the household. The link between milk and maternity in early historic Ireland is emphasised within hagiography. When a woman lost a calf intended for Brigit she complained that the cow was of no use without the calf. Brigit makes the calf appear and this allows the cow to give milk, which was the ultimate economic goal. 'The connection between maternity and milk meant that it would make sense for a maternal figure to protect dairy products and no saint has as many miracles associated with dairy products as Brigit'.[41]

Irish infancy

Historical material provides some evidence for the birth and care of infants and children. For example, while a number of medieval cultures have indicated that the swaddling of newborns was widespread, it does not seem to be a practice in existence in Ireland, at least during the time of Giraldus Cambrensis. This passage gives a rare insight into Irish birthing processes and care of infants:

> This people are not tenderly nursed from their birth, as others are; for besides the rude fare they receive from their parents, which is only just sufficient for their sustenance, as to the rest, almost all is left to nature. They are not placed in cradles, or swathed, nor are their tender limbs either fomented by constant bathings, or adjusted with art. For the midwives make no use of warm water, nor raise their noses, nor depress the face, nor stretch the legs; but nature alone, with very slight aids from art, disposes and adjusts the limbs to which she has given birth, just as she pleases. As if to prove that what she is able to form she does not cease to shape also, she gives growth and proportions to these people, until they arrive at perfect vigour, tall and handsome in person, and with agreeable and ruddy countenances.[42]

This passage highlights different treatments of newborns in Ireland during the late twelfth century compared to the continent where swaddling was common practice. There are, perhaps, parallels here with Anglo-Saxon England, where the 'manuscript

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[40] Torma, 'Milk symbolism in the *Bethu Brigte*'.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Giraldus Cambrensis, *The history and topography of Ireland* (trans.), John O'Meara (London, 1982), p. 68.

illustrations do not show the tight, plaited bandaging familiar in later medieval representations of swaddling'.[43] Sally Crawford suggests that based on the current state of knowledge for swaddling in the Anglo-Saxon period, it may be better to argue for babies being 'wrapped' rather than tightly 'swaddled'. This is possibly what Giraldus Cambrensis was referring to because swaddling was thought to shape the infant whereas loose wrapping would provide freedom of movement. The mention of Irish children not being placed in cradles appears to contrast with Anglo-Saxon England[44] and with medieval Europe in general[45] as well as Icelandic saga material. Giraldus Cambrensis's passage may reflect later practices, however, because Irish legal texts dating to the eighth century refer to 'cradle clothes' provided for a child when starting its fosterage.[46] However, as infants rapidly change sizes it is unlikely that most people had available a wide stock of 'made for' baby clothing. A tympanum at Ardmore Cathedral in Co. Waterford depicts an infant wearing a short shift-like garment, which reaches to just above the knees and is wrapped 'towel-like' around the child. This carving, while generally regarded as Romanesque, may be an earlier carving that was moved from an older monument at the site[47] **(Figure 36)**.

A further hint at infant-related paraphernalia comes from a passage in the Book of Leinster (c. 900-1160) in which a woman falsely accuses St. Moling of fathering her child. The passage suggests that women may have carried their infants upon their back, possibly in some sort of sling or baby carrier. 'I do not see anybody here who would have care for the cry of the calf that is on your back. Take your son away. The clerics have no care for your son'.[48] Such slings are known from a number of contemporaneous and more ancient cultures.

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[43] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 68.
[44] Ibid., p. 45.
[45] In the Middle Ages, children remained in cradles until the age of five. Ibid., p. 94.
[46] Bronagh Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage; child-rearing in medieval Ireland' in *History Ireland*, v, no. 1 (spring 1997), p. 28 (Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage; child-rearing in medieval Ireland').
[47] Ann Buckley, 'Music in Ireland to c. 1500' in F. J. Byrne, W. E. Vaughan, Art Cosgrove, J. R. Hill and Dáibhí Ó Crónín (eds), *A new history of Ireland, prehistoric and early Ireland, volume 1* (Oxford, 2005), p. 771 (Buckley, 'Music in Ireland to c. 1500').
[48] Vernam Hull, 'Two anecdotes concerning St. Moling' in *ZCP*, xix (1930), p. 138, quoted in Mary Condren, *The serpent and the goddess: women, religion and power in Celtic Ireland* (Dublin, 2002), p. 85.

Motherhood and the impact of Christianity

The Irish law texts indicate that one of the few times when women could achieve equal status in law and were allowed to swear an oath was when they were dying in childbirth.[49] Expectant mothers were also protected under law in case of hurt or death of the mother or unborn child. However, during the years after the coming of Christianity to Ireland, the subsequent effects on the perceptions of infants and later requirements of child baptism appear to have caused changes in the way in which the expectant mother and foetus or infant were viewed. For example, the Irish Penitentials of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries laid down strict rules for parents who failed to baptise a child who later died through negligence.[50] In 1072, the Council of Rouen decreed that baptism should not be denied at anytime. By this stage, the rite of baptism was seen more as a rite of exorcism rather than an initiation into the Christian church.[51] The debate about the evilness of the unbaptised child had reached such proportions, and the church was so focused on exorcism, that in Europe at least, it resulted in the 'common practice for women to drive a stake through the body of their dead unbaptised infant. This practice was also extended to women who died in labour, for their body was defiled by the presence of the baby'.[52] This fear became so manifest within society that the church was required to lay down a penance for the practice.[53]

By the twelfth century, with the issue of original sin and the unbaptised 'resolved' by the creation of limbo, unbaptised infants and children were being buried in formalised and liminal *ceallunaigh*.[54]

Like childhood, motherhood is also a cultural variable that shifts and changes over time, space and place. Self-sacrifice and love are neither universal nor essential aspects of maternal behaviour. Instead, motherhood itself is a cultural construct that varies according to time, space and place.[55]

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[49] Mary Condren, *The serpent and the goddess: women, religion and power in Celtic Ireland* (Dublin, 2002), p. 191 (Condron, *The serpent and the goddess*).
[50] Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry', p. 19.
[51] Ibid., p. 20.
[52] Ibid., p. 21.
[53] Ibid., p. 21. This practice may possibly be reflected in the practice of burying pregnant women and young infants and children in liminal areas such as field boundaries.
[54] Ibid., p. 21.
[55] Jenny Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood' in John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (eds), *Medieval mothering* (New York, 1996), p. 203 (Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood').

Ariès' argument that children were perceived as almost non-human and that parents did not form attachments due to high mortality rates has filtered down even into modern perceptions of Irish childhood and parental attachment. Ariès argued that the growing influence of Christianity on life and manners meant that this perception of children and childhood did not change until the seventeenth century.[56] Ariès' view that children were not seen to be valued within pre-industrial societies was largely based on high infant mortality rates of the period. However, ethnographic studies of modern societies that also have high infant mortality rates does not support his hypothesis.

Understanding how the conversion to Christianity directly affected concepts of the personhood of infants and young children is problematic in light of our lack of knowledge of the religious beliefs of Ireland's pre-Christian peoples, as well as a lack research into children and childhood in general. While Christianity may have played a role in creating new concepts of motherhood and childhood, it is difficult to determine to what degree it influenced and shaped these concepts without clearer understandings of Irish 'pre-Christian culture'. Despite what some scholars have stated,[57] whether or not Christianity dramatically influenced the legal worth of children and the degree to which it impacted on society can only be accurately assessed after first considering the worth of children in pre-Christian society. In the absence of written evidence, analyses of child burials during the Late Iron Age and early medieval period would provide much needed material for discussing the relative 'worth' of the pre-Christian child, as well as determining the degree to which this was impacted by Christianity.

Infanticide: the Irish evidence

While there is some evidence for the practice of infanticide within Europe during the early medieval and medieval period, Lisa Bitel has argued that no evidence for gender specific infanticide exists for the Irish context.[58] However, the early Irish heroic tale *The destruction of Da Derga's hostel* describes an incident which at least suggests that female infanticide was a known practice. The daughter of king Eochaid Feidlech is 'put away' by her husband Cormac, king of Ulster because she 'was barren save for one

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[56] Ariès, *Centuries of childhood*, p. 41.
[57] Kelly, *Early Irish law,* p. 83.
[58] Bitel, *Land of women*, p. 123.

daughter that she had borne to Cormac'.[59] Cormac then marries Etain who demands that the infant daughter should be killed. Cormac complies by ordering that the child not be given to its mother to be nursed and orders two slaves to take the infant to a pit to be killed. However, the men take pity on the child because:

> she smiled a laughing smile at them as they were putting her into it. Then their kindly nature came to them. They carried her into the calfshed of the cowherds of Eterscel great-grandson of Iar king of Tara, and they fostered her till she became a good embroideress; and there was not in Ireland a king's daughter dearer than she.[60]

While the story is reminiscent of other literary motifs, such as the story of the infant Deirdre, the casual nature of the passage as well as the interesting detail of the pit indicates that infanticide was known or practiced to some degree. Hagiography also makes reference to infanticide. In the Life of St. Berach (c. 1000-1200) a husband leaves his pregnant wife at home to deliver, telling her to kill the child as soon as it is born. After the delivery, the attendant asks the mother what she wants to do with the child. The woman responds with *A mharbadh*, 'kill it'.[61] The Irish penitentials also indicate that both abortion and infanticide were well attested to in early Ireland.[62] There is also some evidence for the practice of abortion. For example, there is an early account of the life of saint Brigid that refers to the saint blessing a pregnant nun who did not wish to give birth. Brigid does so, and the unborn child 'miraculously' disappears.[63] The Irish Penitentials indicate precise penances for a woman who kills her unwanted child by *maleficium* (magic as in the use of abortifacients).[64] There is also evidence for the practice of abortion within the legal texts. An Old Irish heptad quoted in a gloss on *Gúbretha Caratniad* § 44 lists seven grounds in which a husband may divorce his wife,

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[59] Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish tales*, p. 95.

[60] Ibid., p. 95. Also see Alfred Nutt, 'An early Irish version of the jealous stepmother and the exposed child' in *Folklore*, ii (1891), pp 87-9.

[61] Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish tales*, p. 122.

[62] Ibid., p. 122.

[63] Cogitosus' seventh-century text did its best to edit out any references to Brigid with earlier non-Christian rituals such as her association as a 'fire goddess', or anything that might offend the readers. Richard Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigitae: the oldest texts' in *Peritia*, i (1982), p. 89; Condren, *The serpent and the goddess*, p. 104. The fact that the 'disappearance' of the foetus inside the mother's womb was included as one of the miracles of Brigid suggests that during the seventh century at least, abortion was not offensive to Cogitosus's readership. Interestingly, Condren has pointed out that this story has been successfully toned down in various editions of Brigid's Lives, 'until in the nineteenth century it vanishes altogether from the "official" version of her Life at the hands of a most prestigious Latin ecclesiastical scholar'. Condren, *The serpent and the goddess*, p. 76.

[64] Ibid., p. 219.

including 'inducing an abortion on herself'.[65] Smothering a child to death also appears to have been a method of infanticide, although it is difficult to tell for sure whether it was the result of accidentally rolling over on a child in the same bed or the purposeful killing of an infant. As Dennehy has argued, the difficulties in proving intent to murder (both the church and the legal system determined infanticide to be a female sin) meant that trials against the mother for the crime of infanticide did not take place until the fifteenth century.[66]

Scandinavian birth and infancy

Jenny Jochens' research on the Sagas has indicated that Scandinavian 'women appear to have worked up to the last minute before giving birth and their condition did not prevent travel'.[67] This too may have repercussions for the Hiberno-Scandinavian context. While those wives whose position of status and power was established on the farm might have been less likely to travel, mistresses, servants and slaves are likely to have travelled with Scandinavian men leaving their homelands. This would seem to be probable as it would be in the woman's interest to have her child recognised by its father, as the father was economically responsible for legitimate children to the age of sixteen. Legitimate children were also entitled to inherit from their fathers.

With the option of infanticide waning during the transition into the Christian period, if paternity was unestablished, the onus of responsibility was on the woman and her kin group. In Iceland, this led to the legal obligation of unmarried pregnant women to identify the impregnator on pain of torture.[68]

Jochens argues that what little is said in the Norse literary sources concerning the birth process indicates that birthing practices hardly changed over time. No men were allowed to be present. The woman would adopt the normal position, which was kneeling on the floor with female attendants at her knees and/or arms ready to provide support. As the

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[65] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 75. Another grounds for divorce includes the smothering of a child by its mother, however it is unclear whether this refers to accidental smothering or infanticide.
[66] Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry', p. 24.
[67] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 211.
[68] Ibid., pp 209-10.

birth progressed, the woman would move forward onto her elbows, still kneeling, and the child would be born from behind. [69]

Impact of Christianity

Jenny Jochens' discussions of Old Norse motherhood suggests that modern understandings of the 'mothering bond' between mother and child may have been 'restrained or deferred' by infanticide, widespread practice of fosterage and illegitimacy.[70] This does not mean, however, that parents did not have any attachments to their offspring, but they are likely to have been different to our constructions of motherhood or parenting today. For example, there is copious evidence in the literature that, like Irish mothers, Scandinavian mothers formed very strong familial bonds with their own fosterlings, effectively transplanting their affections to a different child.

Hiberno-Scandinavian archaeological evidence for birth

As Ian Hodder has suggested 'the house was always a safe haven, providing warmth and security, the focus of a child's early life, and the centre of domestic production'.[71] While he was describing the development of the house and domestication in the Neolithic period, the house or home in the early medieval and medieval period was also central to the early lives of infants and children.

The poetic Eddas (c. 1220)[72] as well as the Sagas suggest that there were defined spaces for the birthing process in Norway. Such areas were known as *kvinna hús* (women's quarters).[73] It has been suggested that the Wallace type 2 houses from Ireland may have been used as birthing spaces, nurseries or sleeping areas for children. Type 2 houses have been identified at Waterford, Limerick and Dublin and are also known from London and York. These structures may also have served as weaving areas, a craft associated with women in both occupation and religious rituals. In Dublin, type 2 houses

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[69] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 211.
[70] Ibid., p. 204.
[71] Ian Hodder, *The domestication of Europe, structure and contingency in Neolithic studies* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 37, quoted in Elizabeth Scott, *The archaeology of infancy and infant death* (Oxford, 1999), p. 101.
[72] Graham Campbell, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 106.
[73] [In Norway] 'a husband tried to dissuade his pregnant wife from accompanying him on a sea journey, but she insisted. When the birth was imminent, she wanted to go ashore. The party obtained local hospitality; the wife was taken to the woman's quarters (*kvenna hús*) while her husband waited in the main hose (*skáli*). After three days' rest, she was ready to continue'. Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 80.

have been found at five building levels. They averaged 5m x 3.1m in size, giving a total floor area of 15.6 sq. m. Pat Wallace has suggested that the structures 'may have been used to accommodate women in childbirth, for the infirm or for children'.[74] The buildings comprise almost all soft bedding with an emphasis on comfort. Unlike the other house types identified at Dublin, walking was restricted within the houses and they were snug spaces with a simple single entrance. The suggestion that they functioned as sleeping huts for children is supported by the absence of large or domestic hearths, paving or hard floors, as well as their location **(Figure 37)**. Most of the type 2 houses were located by a pathway connected to the larger type 1 houses and 'the same woven mats found in the side aisles of the larger houses, covered almost the entire floor of the type 2 houses'.[75] However, the fact that some of the type 2 houses were completely devoid of evidence of any type of hearth, may suggest that these structures served a seasonal function, because the lack of fire during the colder months would not have made for comfortable sleeping.

Similar structures are known from Waterford where twenty-one type 2 houses were identified. Hurley has pointed out that of these, only nine contained hearths, but that they were insubstantial and the plant remains indicated that these houses were not used for the preparation of foodstuffs. 'Their small size, frequently insulated walls, bedding material, and ancillary position to the larger type 1 [primary or principal residences] houses combine to create a picture of comfortable sleeping quarters, possibly affording a degree of privacy to the principal members of the household'.[76] These houses were small with rounded corners and were generally located to the rear of the type 1 houses, with only three being fronted onto the street.[77] While the Waterford type 2 houses – unlike the Dublin examples – normally had hearths, they were smaller and less elaborately defined than those in the Dublin examples. There was usually only one type 2 house associated with each type 1 house, and the smaller houses were frequently connected on one side to a pathway leading to the back door of the larger type 1 house.[78] Unlike Dublin, the Waterford examples rarely provided evidence for wattle mats,[79]

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[74] Wallace, *The Viking Age buildings of Dublin*, p. 15.
[75] Ibid., p. 36.
[76] Maurice Hurley, 'Late Viking Age settlement in Waterford city' in William Nolan, Thomas Power and Des Cowman (eds), *Waterford history and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1992), p. 65.
[77] Maurice Hurley, 'Viking Age towns' in Michael Monk and John Sheehan (eds), *Early Medieval Munster, archaeology, history and society* (Cork, 1998), pp 168-9 (Hurley, 'Viking Age towns').
[78] Hurley, 'Viking Age towns', pp 168-9.
[79] Ibid., p. 169.

however this may be due to preferential survival. Nevertheless, the privacy and protection of these houses supports the idea that they were sleeping quarters. Three other similar typed structures were identified in Dublin during the excavations conducted by Breandán Ó Ríordáin,[80] and a variant of this type of structure was also identified by John Sheehan at the Hiberno-Scandinavian rural site of Beginish, Co. Kerry.[81]

Material evidence for infant care is much less obvious and it may well be that such objects would have been constructed from organic materials that would not have survived in the archaeological record. However, there are some references to objects for infant care contained in the Icelandic Sagas. While swaddling may not have been common in Ireland when Giraldus Cambrensis wrote in the late 1180s, the Scandinavian sagas suggest that some women swaddled their babies in order to work in the fields alongside their husbands. This may be reflective of a situation of economic necessity, because the literary sources describe the woman as nursing a swaddled infant as she raked behind her scything husband.[82] This may suggest that, rather than the item of clothing being a swaddling cloth, which is generally understood to be worn by infants and very young children to keep them safe from environmental dangers, the item was in fact a cloth baby carrier similar to those traditionally worn by women in African and Eastern European countries today.

In *Laxdæla Saga,* there is a reference to the one-year-old Halldor falling out of a cradle and onto the floor of the house.[83] From the poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri* comes a further reference to the use of a cradle, 'the youngest *norn* (identified in this way as *in yngsta nornin*) becomes upset because the two oldest do not consult her. To

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[80] H. K. Murray, *Viking and Early Medieval buildings in Dublin, BAR series no. 119* (Oxford, 1983), pp 15-16.

[81] Sheehan has argued that 'sunken-floored structures existed in Hiberno-Scandinavian urban settlements from at least the tenth century onwards, and that, in the absence of any convincing evidence for similar buildings from native contexts, the Beginish house should be considered to be a variant type of such buildings. Its distinctive entranceway and its sunken floored form find strong parallels in Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts, while the stone construction and corbelled form of its walls most probably derive from the native Irish building tradition. In short, this house appears to be truly Hiberno-Scandinavian in character. John Sheehan, Steffen Stummann Hansen and Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'A Viking Age maritime haven, a reassessment of the island settlement at Beginish, Co. Kerry' in *JIA*, x (2001), p. 101 (Sheehan et al., A Viking Age maritime haven').

[82] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society,* p. 121.

[83] Press, *Laxdaela Saga*. That cradles could be dangerous is also illustrated by warnings to parents from clerics to keep the cradles upright so that they couldn't roll and to make sure that children were securely fastened in. Orme, *Medieval children*, p. 62.

gain revenge she predicts that the child will live only until the candle next to his cradle has burned out'.[84]

A 'high-chair' type chair for a child was excavated at Lund, Sweden in 1981 which dates to around 1050. While the chair was in fragments, and only the back and side were found, it was possible to reconstruct its form. The complete chair would have consisted of five pieces and was specifically designed to restrain a young child.[85]

Baby bottles were known in the Scandinavian world during the Viking period, as evidenced by the unusual grave find of a stick twined with bronze wire and a horn on Gotland. The grave has been interpreted as that of a female child and dates to the late Viking period.[86] A further 'suckle cup' or nursing cup is known from an eleventh-century settlement site at Lund[87] (**Figure 38)**. Feeding bottles are also associated with child graves in Anglo-Saxon England and at the fourth- to fifth-century site of Hjemsted in Denmark.[88]

There are references to a great gold finger-ring given by Melkorka's Irish father to her as a teething ring in *Laxdæla Saga*,[89] 'at the end of his [Olaf's] speech he said he had a ring on his hand that Melkorka had given him at parting in Iceland, saying "that you, king, gave it her as a tooth gift"'.[90] This passage highlights the valuable role the historical sources play in attempting to identify objects associated with children in the archaeological record. The finding of metal rings would not normally be associated with children, yet all infants teethe and chew. Parents would have realized that providing the child with something cold and hard to chew on eased their discomfort. An alternative explanation for this reference to 'teething ring' or 'tooth gift' is that it may be that the eruption of milk-teeth marked a particular age threshold, or a 'developmental milestone'

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[84] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 40.
[85] VAL, 'Woodworking in the Viking Age', available at
(http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/wood.shtml#Furniture) (2 May, 2008).
[86] Rundkvist, Martin, *Barshalder 2: Studies of late Iron Age Gotland* (Stockholm, 2003), p. 62, available at (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-275) (2 August, 2007) (Rundkvist, *Barshalder 2*).
[87] The suckle cup was found on a stamped earth floor at excavations at 'the Fisherman no. 14' site in the city of Lund. It is constructed from a single piece of alder wood and measures 15 by 10 cm with a heighth of 6 cm. It has a funnel like hole in one end for pouring. Marita Engberg Ekman (ed.), *Destination Viking, Western Viking route* (Västervik, 2001), p. 72 (Ekman, *Destination Viking*).
[88] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 95-6.
[89] Press, *Laxdæla Saga*.
[90] Ibid.

as it is referred to today. Parents may have recognized this by providing a gift to the child.[91] In Icelandic literature, there are other examples of the giving of gold rings – a royal status symbol – to a child by a king.[92]

For the Anglo-Saxon context, Christine Fell has interpreted a vignette in the *Harley Psalter* as appearing to depict a mother giving a gold ring to a weaning child.[93] However, as the child appears to be too big to be a toddler, Sally Crawford has suggested this is an example of a mother giving her child a toy hoop and stick.[94]

Grubenhauser and type 4 houses

Dublin has provided some of the earliest examples of *grubenhauser*, or Sunken Featured Buildings (SFB's), also known as type 4 houses. Excavations at Temple Bar West revealed much about the early development of ninth-century Dublin. The earliest levels at the western Fishamble Street site revealed three closely grouped sunken structures which were assigned to the late eighth- to ninth-century by radiocarbon dating. Linzi Simpson, who directed the excavation, associated these sunken structures with a burial of a five to six year old child[95] **(Figure 39)**. On the southern end of the site at Copper Alley, another sunken building was uncovered associated with a burial pit containing seven cow skulls, five with horns attached. The cow skulls were placed neatly along the eastern ridge of the pit. With the cow skulls were the tops of two human skulls. Simpson described the *grubenhauser* as consisting of:

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[91] 'Milk teeth', or a child's primary teeth have had long ritual associations with children in Scandinavia, in particular in Norway and Sweden. In Jämtland, in Central Sweden, milk teeth were excavated from the floors of a log-house where they had been deposited over a period of 1350-1650 AD. Stig Welinder, 'Milk-teeth as long term social history' paper given at The Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood Conference, University of Kent, 6-8 May, 2005.

[92] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (ed.), *Brennu-Njáls Saga* (Reykjavík, 1954), p. 29, quoted in Anna, 'Childhood in early Icelandic society; representations of children in the Icelandic Sagas' in Stefanie Würth, Tõnno Jonuks and Axel Kristinsson (eds), *Sagas and Societies; International conference at Borgarnes, Iceland September 5-9, 2002*, University of Tübingen, available at (http://w210.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/dbt/volltexte/2004/1057/pdf/3_anna~1.pdf) (12 May, 2007).

[93] Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England and the impact of 1066* (London, 1984), p. 77, quoted in Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 143.

[94] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England,* p. 143.

[95] Sunken featured buildings are known from Southern Scandinavia from the late Roman Iron Age until the eleventh and twelfth centuries and have been divided into three morphological types by Lise Bender-Jørgensen and P. Erikson, 'Trabjerg: En Vestjysk Landsby fra Vikingetiden' in *Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter*, xxxi, no. 1 (1995), pp 26-9, quoted in Sheehan et al., 'A Viking Age maritime haven', pp 101-2. Some scholars have argued for an Anglo-Saxon influence for the more elaborate and larger eleventh-century SFBs from Dublin and Waterford, especially considering the high levels of contact during this later period. However, John Sheehan has argued that it is possible that the earlier Dublin examples which date to the ninth and tenth centuries may be related in some more direct way to the buildings of the [Scandinavian] *grubenhus* tradition, ibid., p. 101.

three Viking sunken structures, which were uncovered at the western end of the site, grouped closely together, and dated to between the late eighth and late ninth century. They were located close to the southern bank of a small inlet on the river Liffey and appeared to be domestic in function, as there was also a cooking area and pits. The grave of a small child was close by, presumably associated with these little sunken-featured buildings or *grubenhauser*.[96]

The Temple Bar West *grubenhauser* comprised a small, rectangular, wattle-walled area, normally measuring c. 3m by c. 4m, with the roof supported by vertical posts at opposite ends. The relationship of young children and some examples of *grubenhauser* is paralleled at the fifth- or sixth- century Anglo-Saxon settlement site of West Stow, where at least four infants were found associated with similar sunken-featured-buildings or *grubenhauser*.[97] These buildings have often been characterized as the dingiest of buildings, possibly serving as a shed, or area of occupation of the lowest classes. However, later structures had planked floors and hearths, similar to the structures from Dublin and mid to late eleventh-century Waterford. The Dublin houses also did not contain hearths, and the internal layout was unlike any of the other house types from Dublin. However, the finds from the occupation levels suggest they may have been used as a workshop or dwelling, while others have suggested the structures were a sort of souterrain, or storage area.

The buildings from Waterford also date to the later period, and it may be that these buildings were associated with children during the earlier Viking period (such as those at Temple Bar), but that their significance changed over time – perhaps due to the influence of Christianity. They may also have been associated with weaving in the earliest periods, as evidenced by Scandinavian archaeological material, and perhaps this 'work-shop' use was retained into the later period. Houses of a similar type are known from tenth-century contexts in Denmark,[98] and from mid tenth- to early eleventh-

[96] Margaret Gowen and Co. Ltd, *Temple Bar West*, available at (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin/temple_bar_west.htm) (12 May, 2006).

[97] S. E. West, *West Stow, the Anglo-Saxon village*, vol., 1, text (2 vols, Suffolk, 1985), p. 42. However, Crawford has argued that there are insufficient numbers of such burials within settlements to argue for a widespread practice of settlement burial for the earlier Anglo-Saxon period. However, 'the strategy in many settlement site excavations was to reveal the outline of post-hole buildings and analyze deposits within sunken-featured buildings, rather than to look for the tiny bones of infants buried near such habitations'. Sally Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 77.

[98] However, houses of this type from the rural settlement of Trabjerg, Jutland in Denmark date to the ninth and tenth centuries, with some indication that the type began to develop during the eighth century. Lise Bender-Jørgensen and P. Erikson, 'Trabjerg: En Vestjysk Landsby fra Vikingetiden' in *Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter*, xxxi, no. 1 (1995), pp 28-9, quoted in Sheehan et al., 'A Viking Age maritime haven', p. 101.

century England when they went out of use there.[99] The later structures however, most probably had an upper floor, and have been interpreted as 'cellars' with elaborate entrances leading from the backyard to the sunken floors.[100] These structures are generally more elaborate and larger than the *grubenhauser* of the earlier periods and those of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Scandinavian types.[101]

Death and infanticide, the Scandinavian evidence

There has been much debate concerning the practice of infant exposure in Viking Age times.[102] It has been argued that infanticide – particularly the exposure of newborn baby girls – was widespread in the Nordic countries during both the pagan and Christian period. The historian Carol Clover has argued for this interpretation based on sex ratios discerned from Viking Age cemeteries. Clover suggested that the practice was so widespread that it led to a serious shortage of women in areas of Scandinavia (particularly Ostfold, Vestfold, Haithabu (Hedeby) and Horðaland).[103] Interestingly, Christiansen points out that the sex ratios upon which such arguments are construed are flawed. They apply only to the percentages of burials that can be sexed and are contradicted by evidence from other Norse areas. For example, 'in the mere 20 per cent of usable bones found at Birka, the proportions are more or less equal, while 86 percent of all Danish inhumation graves have been identified as female'.[104] Christiansen further points out that the explanation for fewer inhumation burials in specific areas is not necessarily attributable to female infant exposure at birth, but could be attributed to a number of other factors, including separate burial and/or cremation. Furthermore, he argues that 'identifications by what are taken to be characteristically male or female types of ornament are unreliable, where this can be tested, as on Gotland; and Wicker has recently reviewed the evidence to show that most of Clover's case for unusual rates of selective infanticide is insecure'.[105] There is, however, historical evidence for the

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[99] Hurley, 'Viking Age towns', pp 169-70.
[100] Ibid., p. 169.
[101] Wallace, *The Viking Age buildings of Dublin*, p. 94.
[102] Eleanor Scott, 'Killing the female? A review of archaeological narratives of infanticide' in Bettina Arnold and Nancy Wicker (eds), *Gender and the archaeology of death* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2001), pp 1-22; Eric Christiansen, *The Norsemen of the Viking Age*, p. 40; also Nancy Wicker, 'Selective female infanticide as partial explanation for the dearth of women in Viking Age Scandinavia' in Guy Halsall (ed.), *Violence and society in the early medieval west, private, public and ritual* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp 205-222.
[103] Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 40.
[104] Ibid., p. 40.
[105] Ibid., p. 40.

existence of infanticide at least in theory if not in widespread practice. For example, an instruction from a husband in *Gunnlaugs Saga* tells the wife: 'it appears… that you are with child. If the baby is a girl, it is to be exposed, but reared if it is a boy'.[106] However, a distinction between infanticide and exposure must be made. Sam Lucy has pointed out that while infanticide and exposure are commonly confused terms, during Late Antiquity exposure was seen as an alternative to infanticide, in the hope that a stranger would take the child in.[107] This is a motif also seen in the Scandinavian sagas. While this practice might leave open the saga-motif of the rescue of the infant (a motif also seen in the Bible and in the Greek tragedies), the parents effectively resign responsibility for the child to any and all who might come across the infant, as well as to the environment and wild animals. Infanticide with the intended result of death was also almost certainly practiced to some degree because the Norse sagas and the Scandinavian medieval laws specify under what circumstances a child could be exposed. Infanticide was dependent on particular economic circumstances as well as status and class. For example, all classes were permitted to expose a disabled child; the poor, servants, slaves and the unmarried could expose a child due to poverty or hunger. Freeborn women of the elite could also expose a child in the case of family honour. There is also some indication that female children could be exposed in the case of a population surplus.[108] The Arab merchant Al-Tartushi from the Caliphate of Cordova, who visited the Viking settlement of Haithabu (Hedeby) around the year 950 described how 'the people often throw a newborn child into the sea rather than maintain it'.[109] This account suggests that one of the reasons infants' bones are not found, may be because that they may have been disposed of in water.

The Norwegian laws categorically stated that 'every child should have a father'[110] and Jochens notes the practice of the formal ceremony of 'carrying' (*borinn*) the newborn child to the father for acceptance based on family resemblance. 'A child not yet

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[106] *Gunnlaugs Saga*, chap. 5; quoted in Nancy Wicker, 'Selective female infanticide as partial explanation for the dearth of women in Viking Age Scandinavia' in Guy Halsall (ed.), *Violence and society in the early medieval West: private, public and ritual* (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 205.
[107] Sam Lucy, 'The archaeology of age' in Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Sam Lucy, Staša Babić and David Edwards (eds), *The archaeology of identity, approaches to gender, age, status, ethnicity and religion* (London, 2005), pp 44-5.
[108] Grete Lillehammer, 'Five infants in a bog' paper given at The Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood Conference, University of Kent, 6-8 May, 2005 (Lillehammer, 'Five infants in a bog').
[109] Johannes Brøndsted, *The Vikings* (Harmondsworth, England, 1965), p. 42.
[110] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 204.

presented in this way was uncarried or (*úborinn*), a condition fraught with serious legal consequences... and if the man did not accept the child it was carried out (*útborinn*), that is, it was exposed out of doors and left to die in the harsh climate'.[111] Caesar recounts a somewhat similar practice of acceptance by the father within Iron Age Gaul.

> The bold Celts test their children in the jealous Rhine and no man regards himself as a true father until he sees the child washed in the holy river. For immediately when the child has come from the mother's womb and shed its tears, the father picks it up and places it on his own shield, not sympathizing, for he does not feel for the child like a true father until he sees it judged in the river's bath. And the mother, having new pains added to those of childbirth, even if she knows him to be the true father, awaits in fear what the inconsistent river will judge.[112]

For women who were mistresses or slaves, the situation was even more fraught, depending on whether or not the father in question already had legitimate heirs. Jochens points out that 'a first requisite for a mistress was to be near the putative father when her term arrived, even when he was constantly on the move'.[113] This argument has strong implications when considering the presence and position of women and children during the Scandinavian influx into Ireland, especially once the Vikings began to over-winter in Ireland (recorded in the Irish annals as 841 AD).

Regarding the question of infanticide, Jochens also points out that the clearest and most reliable historical evidence for infanticide comes from Ari Þorgilsson's account of the *althing's* peaceful acceptance of Christianity in the year 1000. Written around 1125, he states that 'it became established in law that everybody should be Christian and undergo baptism... but concerning child exposure (*barnaúburðr*) and the eating of horse meat (*hrossakjǫtsát*) the old law should remain valid. People could sacrifice (*blóta*) in secret if they wished.... but after a few years this heathenism was abolished like the rest'.[114] This too has implications for the Irish context, because Iceland was partly settled by Scandinavian males originating from Ireland, as well as Irish-born females[115] although as already discussed later settlers – male and female – also came directly from Norway. For the Icelandic context Christianity clearly had an impact on the practice of infanticide

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[111] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 204.
[112] W. R. Paton, (transl.), *Greek anthology, iii, Book 9, The Declamatory Epigrams* (Harvard, 1917). Thanks to Mike Lally for bringing this passage to my attention.
[113] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 204.
[114] Ibid., p. 205.
[115] Graham Campbell, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 170.

although, judging by the amount of prohibitions in law in Norway, the practice seems to have persisted there long beyond the conversion to Christianity.[116] Whereas before the introduction of Christianity the decision to expose a newborn child had been a paternal privilege, ecclesiastical efforts effectively made it 'a female crime'.[117] A late twelfth-century law explicitly sets out the legal punishment for such a crime:

> If the child has died when people return to her [the mother] and they can determine by marks, by hands or by bands, that the child has been strangled or suffocated, and if she is conscious, then she is the murderer of her child. She is to forfeit her property and peace in the country as well as her chattel. She must go to a pagan country and never live where Christian people are. The murder of a pagan is worse than the murder of a Christian because the soul of a person who dies a pagan is lost.[118]

Possible archaeological evidence for selective infanticide has also been suggested due to the identification of the bones of babies found in middens at several Viking sites in Scandinavia. However, this may simply reflect different burial rites and practices, since a similar lack of children's burials is present in Ireland during the same period and infanticide is rarely put forward as an explanation. Infant remains have been found in middens, under houses and outside settlement areas from Roman times into the early medieval period within Western Europe.[119] Recent research has suggested that this is not necessarily representative of infanticide or societal disregard for infants, but instead may suggest conceptualisations of infants and small children as liminal beings occupying a 'special' or even sacred space in the landscape.[120]

Recent excavations at St. Ninian's Isle, in Shetland uncovered nine burials dating to the tenth century. Six of these burials were of infants. The burials had been placed under a kerbed feature that was filled with quartz stones and pebbles and separated into five 'compartments' by upright stones. The compartments were aligned east-west and a small upright headstone was at the west end of each compartment. On the surface of two of the headstones were inscribed crosses. The infants were buried under this feature and

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[116] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 205.

[117] Ibid., p. 205.

[118] R. Keyser and P. A. Munch (eds), *Norges gamle love intil 1387*, vol. 1 (Christiania, 1846), p. 130, quoted in Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 206.

[119] Rachel Barrowman, 'Excavations at St. Ninian's Isle, Shetland' in *VHM* (2004), no. 2, p. 16 (Barrowman, 'Excavations at St. Ninian's Isle, Shetland').

[120] Mike Lally (ed.), *(Re)thinking the little ancestor: new perspectives on the archaeology of Infancy and childhood* (Oxford), forthcoming.

within a midden.[121] Infant and neonate burials placed in different locations to adult burials have been found at a number of sites throughout Northern Europe. In Britain they are often located within the domestic setting, in foundations and under houses. This has been interpreted as related to control of the environment. Scott has suggested that young infants and children were buried in settlement sites and under houses, not because they were insignificant, but because they had a special significance that expressed itself through 'the dialectic involving the domestication of death and the domestication of the processes of the living environment'.[122] Infant burials are also known from the late Iron Age/Romano-British site of Kingdown Camp, Somerset, where ten small children were buried.[123] Similar sites in Britain suggest that there may have been a particular meaning in the placement of newborn infants at the edges of settlement areas.

Mortuary evidence as a valuable resource

Where children have been discussed in medieval and post-medieval archaeology the concentration has been largely confined to mortuary studies. Examination of the physical remains of juveniles provides information on their activities and risk of infection or injury in contrasting environments. It also allows for direct and intimate evidence for children in the past.[124] The archaeology of medieval and post-medieval childhood has tended to concentrate on graves simply because it is the easiest place to identify children. 'The skeletons of dead children have produced a mass of evidence about causes of childhood deaths and about health and illness, but the life and culture of the *living* child has received much less attention'.[125] The investigation of mortuary remains is a valuable tool in childhood studies and, when used in conjunction with other disciplines, offers a wealth of knowledge concerning childhood as a process in medieval Ireland. Examination of the extant archaeological material using material from a number of disciplines casts light on the structures and long-term processes of childhood. This in

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[121] Barrowman, 'Excavations at St. Ninian's Isle, Shetland', p. 16. The ethnicity or religion of the burials is unclear, but quartz pebbles associated with child burials are a feature of a number of early Christian sites. Anna Ritchie, 'Painted pebbles in early Scotland' in *PRSAS,* civ (1971-2), p. 299.

[122] Elizabeth Scott, *The archaeology of infancy and infant death*, BAR international series, no. 819 (Oxford, 1999), p. 100.

[123] Harold St. George Gray, 'Excavations at Kingsdown Camp Mells, Somerset , 1927-9' in *Archaeologia*, lxxx (Oxford, 1930), pp 59-98; also see Alison Moore, 'Hearth and home, burial of Romano-British infants in domestic contexts' available at (http://www.wac6.org/livesite/precirculated/1670_precirculated.pdf) (July, 2008).

[124] Mary Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children, perspectives from biological and forensic anthropology*, Cambridge Studies in Biological and Evolutionary Anthropology (Cambridge, 2007), p. 10 (Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children*).

[125] Geoff Egan, 'Miniature toys of medieval childhood' in *British Archaeology*, xxxv (June 1998), p. 11.

turn provides opportunities to examine issues previously confined to the realms of anthropology and ethnography as well as the more specialised (and more perhaps somewhat more inaccessible) fields of bioarchaeology, forensics and genetics.

Problems with identifying children in mortuary contexts[126]

One of the biggest problems in researching children in early medieval societies is their under-representation in cemeteries and other funerary contexts.[127] This dearth of burials has been put down to a number of contributing factors, including different mortuary practices and rituals, as well as the failure of archaeologists to recover the bones of foetuses, infants and children.

Conceptualizations of personhood as regards age may also be a variable in the treatment of children in mortuary contexts. For example, the Latin word *infans* literally means 'one who does not speak properly'.[128] In the Roman world, there was an understanding that an infant under forty days old was not fully human. In fact, even after the naming ceremony (eight and nine days old for boys and girls respectively), infants were not considered to be pure or to be full members of the household.[129] Infants were not guaranteed full burial rites, and Roman law recommended that ritual mourning should not be provided for children during their first year and only limited mourning during the first three years.[130] Grete Lillehammer has suggested that pagan Scandinavian children were also not considered to be true 'people' or full members of society until they were named.[131] This is paralleled within the Christian baptismal ceremony, during which the child is given a name. If a child dies before it is christened and named it occupies a liminal status. This status of personhood is reflected in the practice of burying unbaptised children in *ceallúnaigh*, a tradition seen in its 'formalised' form from the twelfth century to mid 1960s Ireland. It is likely that for the medieval period *ceallúnaigh* burials represent the need to bury people who were not eligible for 'christian burial' at a site that was sacred in the past. As specific rites of passage (baptism) had not been

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[126] For a comprehensive and up to date discussion of children and bioarchaeology see Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children*.
[127] Parker-Pearson, *The archaeology of death and burial*, pp 102-3.
[128] Suzanne Dixon (ed.), *Childhood, class and kin in the Roman world* (New York, 2001), p. 93 (Dixon, *Childhood, class and kin*).
[129] Ibid., p. 93.
[130] Ibid., p. 78.
[131] Lillehammer, 'Five infants in a bog'.

attained by the infants, burial in consecrated ground could not take place. Thus *ceallunaigh* were created, reflecting both the liminality of the infants in both status and location.[132]

It has been suggested that inadequate training in the identification of juvenile remains may also be a factor in their lack of recovery within archaeology. Baker has argued that the remains of children, particularly foetuses and infants, are often misidentified as animal bone during archaeological fieldwork. Particular skeletal remains are sometimes overlooked because the archaeologists or bioarchaeologists conducting the fieldwork lack the framework necessary for identifying the remains, or are using excavation techniques 'not suited to recovery of small bones or growth centres that are just beginning to ossify'.[133] Burials of children may also have been placed in shallow graves, which may have made them more susceptible to being disturbed by wild prey and rats or by modern ploughing. In cemeteries that have been in use for long periods of time, infant burials are also likely to have been destroyed or disturbed by gravecutting.[134] Sub-adults may also have been placed in irregular grave cuts that are difficult to detect. Kathy Pearson has suggested that this is why neonates, infants and very young children's graves are often only represented by portions of the skull or perhaps a limb or two.[135] In addition, and particularly relevant for the Irish context, the absence of sub-adult remains is often explained away by the perception that subadult skeletal material is poorly preserved in comparison to that of adults.[136] There are a number of factors that play a role in influencing bone decay, including the ph balance of the soil, bone mineral density and porosity and ground water levels. In addition, the presence of bacteria, bone size and grave depth are all potential obstacles to bone preservation. Although the bones of children and infants are indeed prone to destruction in some types of burial environments, when soil conditions are favourable, they can be well preserved.[137] This is particularly relevant for Ireland, where the biggest factor that plays a role in the preservation of bone is the acidity levels of the soil. Simply put, the higher the ph

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[132] Dennehy, 'The *ceallunaigh* of County Kerry', p. v.
[133] Brenda Baker, Tosha Dupras and Mathew Tocheri, *The osteology of infants and children* (Texas, 2005), p. 2 (Baker, *Osteology of infants and children*).
[134] Jo Buckberry, 'Where have all the children gone? The preservation of infant and children's remains in the archaeological record', paper given at the Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood Conference, University of Kent, 6-8 May, 2005 (Buckberry, 'Where have all the children gone?').
[135] Kathy Pearson, 'Nutrition and the Early-Medieval diet' in *Speculum*, lxxii, no., 1 (Jan., 1997), p. 29.
[136] Baker, *Osteology of infants and children,* p. 3.
[137] Buckberry, 'Where have all the children gone?'

balance, the higher the rate of decay. Thus factors such as bone size, density and porosity, can effectively remove very young children from mortuary contexts entirely. (However, they can also remove adult bone!)

> Bone preservation is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include the chemistry, size, shape, structure and density of bone, along with pathological changes to bone structure. Extrinsic factors include ground water, soil type, temperature and air, along with the nature of local flora and fauna and human activity. Of all the intrinsic factors, bone mineral density is considered to be the most significant. Soil chemistry is believed to be the most influential extrinsic factor in bone diagenesis, once all the soft tissue has been lost.[138]

The oft-quoted statement by osteologists is relevant here – 'one must remember that absence of evidence is not synonymous with evidence of absence.'[139] However, for the Irish context, women too are also often 'missing' from cemeteries, and it may be that the absence of women and children from early Christian cemeteries represents a separate mortuary ritual for some women and children – perhaps a lingering pagan tradition? Another factor which has effected the 'invisibility' of children within mortuary studies is that children's remains were often given a lower priority than adult remains because of the perception that juvenile remains were of little worth to the osteologist.[140] This is particularly true within the excavations of the nineteenth and early to mid- twentieth century.

It was not until the 1990s that the study of juvenile remains began to concentrate on the information that could be provided for the growth and health of children themselves, rather than merely providing data for fertility levels, or for comparative information for adult environmental adaptation.[141] The understanding that children's remains do not always survive archaeologically has further contributed to lack of research into juvenile skeletons.[142] Where they do survive, children's remains have sometimes been

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[138] Jo Buckberry, 'Missing, presumed buried? Bone diagenesis and the under-representation of Anglo-Saxon children' in *AUSGSJA*, v (April, 2000), available at (http://www.assemblage.group.shef.ac.uk/5/buckberr.html) (2 June, 2007) (Buckberry, 'Missing, presumed buried?').

[139] Trevor Anderson, 'Infant burials, an osteoarchaeological approach' paper given at The Archaeology of Infancy and Childhood Conference, University of Kent, 6-8 May, 2005.

[140] Buckberry, 'Missing, presumed buried?'

[141] Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children*, p. 10.

[142] Jenny Moore, 'Conclusion, the visibility of the invisible' in Jenny Moore and Elizabeth Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes* (London, 1997), pp 251-257.

interpreted as the result of infanticide. Identification of children's remains are further complicated by difficulties in establishing the biological sex of non-adults. 'Recognisable sexually dimorphic features of the skeleton only start to develop with the onset of puberty and the rise of testosterone in male individuals'.[143] However, testosterone levels of newborn males are also relatively high, resulting in slight sex differences that should be recognisable on the skeleton.[144] Determining age-at-death is more straightforward as age-related changes are visible on the skeleton. These changes are caused by growth, development, maturation and degeneration. Age assessment is also generally more precise in individuals under the age of about twenty-five, because changes in growth patterns in teeth and bones progress in a well-documented manner.[145] Age identification of foetal remains, neonates and young infants can also be seen by examining long-bone length and the size of pelvic bones.[146] Age of older infants and juveniles is based on dental calcification, development and eruption and remains the most useful and accurate method of determining age at death. For older juveniles or where teeth are not present, observing the appearance of epiphyses and determining the extent of epiphyseal fusion can provide good indicators of age.[147] 'Until more archaeologists become interested in children, and include them in their narratives, the remains of children will continue to be put on the back-bench of archaeological analysis, even for cemetery sites where their remains are well preserved'.[148] As Buckberry has argued, theorists who currently engage in research into childhood and age in the past need to be fully aware of the implications of bone diagenesis and the under-representation of children in mortuary contexts.[149] This 'osteological invisibility' of children is further complicated by the fact that male adults were seen as the 'norm'[150] and recent increases in the recovery of juvenile remains is due in part to theoretical developments that have created an increasing awareness that

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[143] Linda Clarke, *M4 Kinnegad-Enfield-Kilcock Motorway scheme, Report on the archaeological resolution of a multi-period burial, settlement and industrial site at Johnstown 1, Enfield, Co. Meath* Licence no. [02E0462], volume 1, text (Unpublished report, 2004), p. 26 (Clarke, *Johnstown 1*).
[144] Simon Mays, *The archaeology of human bones* (London, 1998), p. 38.
[145] Clarke, *Johnstown 1*, p. 26.
[146] Ibid., p. 27.
[147] Ibid., p. 27.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Buckberry, 'Missing, presumed buried?'; Also see A. T. Chamberlain, 'Commentary, missing stages of life, towards the perception of children in archaeology' in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes* (London, 1997), pp 248-250; Joanna Sofaer Derevenski, 'Engendering children' in Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (eds), *Invisible people and processes* (London, 1997), pp 192-202.

children have been rendered archaeologically invisible.[151]

<u>Burial treatment of infants and children, the Irish evidence</u>

Where burials of children have been identified and discussed, it is often in relation to population studies. The social, cultural, or religious significance of children in mortuary contexts, especially as regards 'anomalous' burials is rarely discussed or contextualized.[152] Nor are these remains contextualised with adult remains. Child burials represent the opportunity to gain insight into the mortuary treatment of children, as well as how they were perceived within adult society. It also offers insights into class and gender and how these processes intersect with childhood. For example, it is important to recognise child burials that are treated the same as adult burials, because this may be indicative of a particular status of the child in question. Children's remains that are given different burial treatment can also be indicators of perceptions of age thresholds within society. It is however, important to remember that children are not buried by children. As Sam Lucy has pointed out, child burials represent manipulated entities within an adult world.[153] Thus, a close examination of the child's *living* world is necessary in order to contextualize the child's world as conceptualized by adults.

Gender specifications may or may not play a role in burial practices. Without gravegoods, it is extremely difficult to assess the role gender played in burial practices during the transition to Christianity. Other factors must be considered, such as the placing and orientation of the remains and the location of the burial site in the landscape. For example, a number of fifth- and sixth-century female and child burials have been identified at or near field boundaries which may suggest that some women and children (perhaps mothers or expectant mothers) were provided a different burial ritual within society. Elizabeth O'Brien has examined these burials in order to determine whether or not they represent pagan or Christian burial practices. O'Brien argues that burial traditions did not all take one form during the introduction of Christianity into Ireland. Prior to the fifth century in Ireland, burial practices were similar to those in Britain. There is some evidence of cremation, but no 'cremation cemeteries'. There are,

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[151] Buckberry, 'Missing, presumed buried?'
[152] Recent studies outside of Ireland have gone someway towards redressing this, for example see Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England.*
[153] Sam Lucy, 'Children in Early Medieval cemeteries' in *ARC*, xiii, no. 2 (1994), pp 21-34.

however, examples of later cremations inserted into Christian cemeteries. Cremation was introduced into Ireland sometime around the first or second century AD.

> The rite of crouched inhumation did not supersede the rite of cremation in Iron Age Ireland, indeed the excavation of a ring-cairn at Furness in Co. Kildare produced radiocarbon evidence that cremation was still being practiced, probably by a small minority, up to as late as the fifth century AD in some parts of the country.[154]

Burial during the fifth and sixth centuries included different types of grave treatment, including long cist burials, a practice that may have been influenced by Roman Britain. Crouched burials reflect a rather short-lived practice (c. 200 BC- 500 AD),[155] whereas cremation is a practice that lasted somewhat longer. In Ireland, extended inhumation originated sometime after the second century AD[156] although the orientation of the burials did not initially appear to be important. By the fourth century, west-east orientation had become the norm.[157] Even though Christianity was introduced into Ireland by the fifth century AD, burial in cemeteries associated with ecclesiastical centres did not become commonplace for the general population until the early eighth century. Until that time, the majority continued to be buried, usually in unprotected dug graves, in familial or ancestral burial places.[158]

Insertion of long cist burials into earlier prehistoric burial sites was also common during this time, as in the example of Knowth site M, Co. Meath.[159] Further diversions in the burial record indicate that some unprotected extended burials were inserted into earlier monuments during the seventh century.[160] Reuse of ancient burial sites is a common feature in the Irish archaeological record and the cemetery at Johnstown in County Westmeath provides just such an example. Johnstown is an extensive multi-period site that was used concurrently as a burial, settlement and industrial site.[161] Johnstown 1 comprised a large long-term use cemetery with a number of burial insertions. The site

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[154] O'Brien, 'Burial practices in Ireland', p. 65.
[155] Ibid., p. 65.
[156] Ibid., p. 65.
[157] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD', pp 131-2.
[158] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh century Ireland'; also O'Brien, 'Burial practice in Ireland', pp 62-72.
[159] Geraldine Stout, 'Cemetery at Knowth, Co. Meath' paper given at Death and burial in Early Christian Ireland in Light of Recent Excavations Conference, Helen Roe Theatre, RSAI, 14 October, 2005.
[160] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh century Ireland'.
[161] Clarke, M4 Kinnegad-Enfield- Kilcock Moterway scheme contract 2, i.

was not associated with any ecclesiastical structure or church, and was in use from the fourth century to the post-medieval period. The mound at Johnstown was constructed by a pagan population towards the end of the Iron Age/beginning of the early medieval period for the interment of a number of inhumation burials – probably for the sole purpose of burying specific people.[162] During the early medieval period this area was reused as an extensive familial non-ecclesiastic burial ground. Linda Clarke has suggested that the cemetery was possibly initially established on a boundary line in order to demarcate kingroup areas.

Non-ecclesiastical cemeteries

Anomalous burials, or burials not conforming to the Christian burial tradition, have been identified at sites throughout Ireland. A number of unusual burials are known from late Iron Age/early medieval Ireland. Some of them probably represent a foreign presence. 'As burials practices do not change casually, graves that have been dated to the seventh century containing knives or belt clasps or other non-Irish paraphernalia are likely to represent foreigners within Ireland, possibly Anglo-Saxons'.[163] While other unusual burials may be indicative of a Viking or Scandinavian presence, a significant number of 'unusual' Irish burials also exist. This suggests that Christianity and its burial practices were not adopted quickly and that pre-Christian burial rites continued well into the medieval period. It is possible that pre-Christian burial practices continued based on gender and age, as well as other factors that might indicate liminality, such as criminals or people not associated with any kingroup.

As already stated, burial within ecclesiastical sites for the general population was not the norm until the seventh/eighth centuries. Instead, the laity were often buried in 'familial' cemeteries where pagans and christians were interred together.[164] Thus, supine extended inhumation with the head at the west does not necessarily indicate a Christian burial,

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[162] Clarke, M4 Kinnegad-Enfield- Kilcock Moterway scheme contract 2, i, p. 271.
[163] Elizabeth O'Brien, 'Introductory remarks' given at the Death and Burial in Early Christian Ireland in Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations, Helen Roe Theatre, RSAI, 14 October, 2005.
[164] Ibid.

unless found in an ecclesiastical context.[165] It appears that this practice was tolerated by the early church until sometime within the seventh century, when the general population began to be buried within church-associated cemeteries.[166] The majority of these familial cemeteries went out of use by the end of the eighth century with a small number continuing to be used into the twelfth.[167] By this stage, however, most of the burials were probably Christian.

At Lehinch, Co. Offaly a cist burial dated to between 380-470[168] contained the fragments of a child's skull mixed with Bronze Age fragments placed alongside a female burial. The burial was also associated with horse bones and a set of red deer antler points which were positioned downwards. Five other burials (two female, one decapitated male, one unknown) were also identified as well as the bones of a horse. All the extended burials were oriented NW/SE with the head at the NW.[169]

Elizabeth O'Brien has identified a number of extended supine inhumations without gravegoods in parallel-sided, slab-based and lined cists. Examples include a sixth-century cist grave with a female and infant at Kilfenora, Co. Clare.[170] O'Brien has found that long cist female burials outnumber the male burials, and four of them are female only.[171] All of the sites in her research are in prominent locations and are near natural boundaries or ancient burial places. All the burials are orientated west/east. Only the burial from Lehinch had burial goods, and so was definitely pagan. These burials are not associated with churches, cemeteries, or any known ecclesiastical structures.

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[165] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first Millennium A D', pp 130-7. Matthew and Geraldine Stout identified fourteen probable dedicated 'secular cemeteries', with a further possible eleven sites. Familial, or non-ecclesiastic burial grounds are known from Millockstown, Co. Louth, Ninch, Co. Meath, Raystown, Co. Meath, Gallanstown, Co. Dublin, Johnstown, Co. Meath, Balriggan, Co. Louth, Cabinteely, Co. Dublin, Augherskea, Co. Meath, Westereave, Co. Dublin, Corbally, Co. Kildare, Gracedieu, Co. Dublin, Faughart Lower, Co. Louth and Murphystown, Co. Dublin. Possible other familial cemeteries include; Marlinstown, Co. Westmeath, Townspark, Co. Meath, Monksland, Co. Roscommon, Betaghstown, Co. Meath, Boolies Little, Co. Meath, Sarsfieldtown, Co. Meath, Mell 2, Co. Louth, Knowth, Co. Meath Miltonsfields, Co. Dublin and Stephenstown, Co. Kildare. Geraldine Stout, 'Cemetery at Knowth, Co. Meath' paper given at Death and Burial in Early Christian Ireland in Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations, Helen Roe theatre, RSAI, 14 October, 2005.
[166] O'Brien, 'Introductory remarks'.
[167] Ibid.
[168] [1977-79:0064, N263330] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh century Ireland'.
[169] Raghnaill O' Floinn, 'Lehinch', Offaly, [1977-79:0064, N263330], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Offaly&id=5732) (24 October, 2004); O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh century Ireland'.
[170] O'Brien, 'Pagan or Christian? Burial in fifth- to seventh century Ireland'.
[171] Ibid.

A number of further unusual burials comprise both women and children, some buried together, some in separate graves. The cemetery at Cabinteely, Co. Dublin revealed a very high ratio of adult to child burials, (including two female burials with full term foetus') as well as some extremely interesting variations in burial positions. The range of imported pottery from the site (sixth- and seventh- century) as well as some domestic and occupational remains, suggest that the earliest levels of this site represent an early Christian community that was interrupted as a burial ground at least twice,[172] and finally superseded by later phases of more traditional Christian burial practices. The presence of shroud pins and burial posture indicates that while the majority of the corpses were extended, supine, shrouded burials with the head positioned to the west, a number were aligned with the head to the north or east. This group also included a number of prone burials and one crouched burial. [173] Three bone pins were associated directly with three separate infant burials. Bone beads were also found with all three of the infant burials. As none of the adult burials were found with bone beads, this may be indicative of a child-centred ritual predating Christianity.[174] The early medieval burial ground at Killeany, Co. Laois also revealed a burial of an infant with a bone bead,[175] and the site of Lismore/Bushfields Co. Laois revealed two child burials that had each been buried with a bone bead.[176] Interestingly, glass beads were found associated with infant burials at a number of sites in Ireland, including the early medieval burial ground at Parknahown, Co. Laois.[177] Bone pins and beads (amber) were also found in the infant burials at the Viking Age site of Cnip on the Isle of Lewis.[178] Amber is often put forward as a material used in artefacts relating to children, and has been found in a number of children's graves from Birka.[179]

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[172] Malachy Conway, 'Mount Offaly, Cabinteely, Dublin' [1998:124, 0233242, SMR 26:119, 98E0035], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=1052) (2 May, 2003).

[173] Ibid.

[174] Ibid.

[175] Ken Wiggins, 'A tale of two cemeteries' in *Seanda, the NRA Magazine*, i (2007), p. 34.

[176] Aidan O'Sullivan and Lorcan Harney, *EMAP, Investigating the character of early medieval archaeological excavations, 1970-2002* (UCD, 2008), p. 323, available at (www.ucd.ie/t4cms/emap_report_january2008.pdf) (4 May, 2008).

[177] Tara O'Neill, 'Parknahown 5, an extensive cemetery on the River Goul' in *Seanda, the NRA Magazine*, vol. i (2007), p. 32.

[178] A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, T. Neighbour and A. R. Rees, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *PSAS*, cxxv (1995), pp 719-752.

[179] Anne-Sofie Gräslund, *Birka IV, the burial customs, a study of the graves on Björkö* (Uppsala, 1981), p. 23

Illaunloughan, a small island off the west coast of Ireland has also provided unusual evidence for child burial during the early Christian period. Below the undisturbed levels underneath the island's gable shrine were two small stone cists, each holding the bones of an adult male. Unexpectedly, the bones of a small child were also discovered in one of the cists. The infant was not a later burial because radiocarbon analysis placed all three to between AD 660 and 780.[180] At Caherlehillan, County Kerry, John Sheehan has also identified a number of burials in slab lined cist graves.[181] Children may also have been buried in separate areas. There is some evidence of segregated burial by gender in the Irish archaeological record. Susan Fry has suggested that the use of separate burial grounds may be reflective of regional rather than 'pan-Irish' customs.[182]

Recent archaeological excavations at Cloghermore Cave, County Kerry identified two distinct phases of activity within the cave. The first represents a rather unusually late (650-750) example of pagan Irish mortuary practices. The second phase centres on the ninth and tenth centuries and is Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian in character. The Irish remains comprised twenty-one adults (men, women, children and infants) all with a number of bones missing – including skulls, hands, feet and rib bones. Mainly only the larger bones were present, indicating that the bodies had been moved or had been excarnated. There was almost a total lack of artifacts, and clearly, the bodies were interred elsewhere, and then moved into the cave after decomposition. The use of a cave rather than a recognized Christian burial site, as well as the evidence for defleshing and disarticulation, suggests that the remains represent an unusually late example of Native Irish pagan practices.[183] Connolly has suggested that the cave functioned as an ossuary that was in use from the fifth to the ninth centuries.[184] Ritual activity at Cloghermore seems to have continued until about 700 when the whole layer was covered with soil brought in from outside the cave and a second, Scandinavian phase of activity ensued (see below).

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[180] 'Illaunloughan' (supplement) in *Archaeology Ireland*, viii, no. 4 (winter 1994), p. 4; also see Jenny White Marshall and Clare Walsh (eds), *Illaunloughan Island, an Early Medieval Monastery in Co. Kerry* (Bray, 2005).
[181] John Sheehan, 'A peacock's tale: excavation at Caherlehillan, Co. Kerry' paper given at The archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic churches, Joint Society for Church Archaeology/ Society for Medieval Archaeology Conference 9-12 September, 2004, Bangor, Wales.
[182] Fry, *Burial in Medieval Ireland*, p. 183.
[183] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 49.
[184] Ibid., p. 51.

A number of other cave sites in Ireland appear to represent pagan Irish burials, including Dunmore Cave, Co. Kilkenny, and Kilgreany Cave, Co. Waterford. Dunmore Cave is unusual in that it seems to represent a burial site for children and women. Over 57% of the individuals recovered from the site were children, with a number of the remains representing children over the age of seven – thus the suggestion that the site was used as a *ceallunaigh* is doubtful.[185] A further 63% of the adult bones were identified as female.

Scandinavian burial treatment of children

Clues about social organisation may be discerned in the different way in which the bodies of adults and children were treated. Traditionally within archaeology, examinations of burial remains of children have offered the only visible evidence and insights into the lives of children. Thus burials have been studied with more regularity that other aspects of children's lives. Analysis of burial remains, patterns and goods is an obvious way to gain insights into a given society's social organisation and belief patterns. Looking at this evidence from engendered and age-aware perspectives can reveal information regarding children that may be otherwise 'invisible' in current archaeological approaches. Examination of mortuary remains of children in a particular society allows for insights into the organisation of a society's social relations and beliefs. For example, elaborate children's burial rituals in Viking-Age Sweden have suggested that particular children within the communities may have been of status and importance. While many of the remains from Birka in Sweden have revealed skeletons that do not allow for osteoarchaeological analysis, there are traces of very small coffins and inhumations. In addition, of the 500 burials that have been identified from Hjalmar Stolpe's excavations, 100 child burials were identified.[186] Children in Birka were also buried in accompanied or unaccompanied adult-sized graves and this means – alongside the added complication of cremation – that a large number of child burials may have gone unnoticed in the archaeological record. In Birka, most child burials were accompanied by adult burials perhaps indicating family burial plots.[187] Christiansen argues that the years characterizing the Viking Age in Scandinavia were years in which

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[185] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 42, also see 'Recent archaeological in Dunmore caves, Co. Kilkenny' in *OKR* (2007), pp 7-17.
[186] Anne Sofie Gräslund, 'Barn i stan' in 'Kammer för barn och hästar' in Bente Magnus and Birgitta Wallstenius (eds), *Livet i Birka, Historiska Nyheter* no. 61 (Stockholm, 1996), p. 24 (Gräslund, 'Barn i stan').
[187] Ibid., p. 24.

infant burials were '…prudential, religious and sentimental, sentimental, certainly; this is the period in which childish things appear in children's graves: bronze jingle bells, little ornaments and mirrors, infant clothing'.[188] Most are located in close proximity to adult (mainly female) remains. However, at the Christian burial ground at Fröjel on Gotland, which dates to c. 1000, some of the children were buried in their own coffins while others were placed with female adults.[189] Analysis of the spatial characteristics of graves may also reveal insights into age and gender. For example, cemeteries dating to the conversion period in Scandinavia have provided examples of segregated churchyards. These include the cemeteries of Västerhus (Jämtland), Frösäter (Uppland), Karleby (Västergötland) and Garde (Gotland). Where segregated cemeteries appear there is not always consistency. The location of children's graves varies, but they are often located in the 'high status' areas of the churchyards, or even within the churches themselves, often in clusters.[190]

The earliest levels at Temple Bar West in Dublin have produced important discoveries for the study of the roles and lives of Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian children **(Figure 40)**. A number of disarticulated human remains were identified at this site including a pre-term infant (35 weeks gestation) and the jaw of a child aged between six and eight years. The Fishamble Street excavations, also in Dublin, unearthed a late ninth-century single burial of a five to six year-old girl accompanied by the skull of a cow. This is important as few single interments of children have been identified to date and those that have are often without distinguishable gravegoods. Two adult burials from Islandbridge also contained animal depositions. A cow jawbone was placed next to the skull of one individual, and an ox and horse tooth were placed at the foot of the other burial.[191] There were no other artefacts in the graves and Stephen Harrison has argued that the circumstances of the excavations of the Viking graves at Kilmainham/Islandbridge means it is likely that many more such animal depositions with human remains may have been missed. This must serve to remind us that 'the

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[188] Christiansen, *The Norsemen in the Viking Age*, p. 40.
[189] Gräslund, 'Barn i Stan', p. 23.
[190] Jörn Staecker, 'Searching for the unknown. Gotland's churchyards from a gender and missionary perspective' in *LAR*, ii (1996), pp 63-86.
[191] Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 59-60.

furnished Viking graves of Ireland, as elsewhere, may only provide evidence for a segment of the insular Scandinavian population'.[192]

Excavations within Dublin have also revealed early phases of Viking rather than Hiberno-Scandinavian occupation, thus burials of children as well as adults are often accompanied by grave goods, customary with pagan ritual and burial. Both cremation and inhumation were practiced in Scandinavia during the Viking Age, and recent excavations have revealed evidence for the practice of both burial rites in Viking-Age Iceland.[193] It may be that evidence for Scandinavian cremations in Ireland has been overlooked or remains undiscovered. This may be particularly true of sites excavated within the nineteenth century such as the burial grounds at Kilmainham and Islandbridge.

Cloghermore Cave, County Kerry

The second phase of activity at Cloghermore Cave appears to represent evidence for pagan Scandinavian activity during the ninth and tenth centuries. Both inhumation and cremation were practiced, and activity within the cave was limited to a span of only forty years. Seven individuals were identified, including two males, three females, and three children. The children were approximately ten, seven and two years of age when they died. All of the individuals appeared to have died around the same time, and this may be suggestive of a family or an extended family group. The area within the cave found to have the highest concentration of artefacts was a pit (area V). The deliberately deposited goods included an antler spindle whorl, a bone point and pin, a bone gaming piece with intact peg, a small iron shears and a fragment of red jasper.[194] Red jasper is connected to the fertility cult of Freyja, as are horses, dogs and cats.[195] The pit also contained the cremated remains of a number of humans including the torso of a child aged seven or eight, the left foot of an adult and the right foot bones of two children – one aged around three and the other seven. Interestingly, the pit also contained the cremated remains of a large number of animal bones: sheep, pig, goat and cattle. Most

[192] Stephen Harrison, 'Viking graves and grave-goods in Ireland' in A. C. Larsen (ed.), *The Vikings in Ireland* (Roskilde, 2001), p. 74.
[193] Jesse Byock, Phillip Walker, Jon Erlandson, Per Holck, Davide Zori, Magnús Guðmunsson and Mark Tveskov, 'A Viking Age valley in Iceland, the Mosfell archaeological project' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xlix (2005), p. 215.
[194] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 58.
[195] Ibid., p. 80.

of the cattle and sheep bones came from young animals, including two neonatal lambs and young pigs. Interestingly, all the cremated animal bone belonged to neonatal animals – in fact some of the pig bones were possibly foetal.[196] The remains of a juvenile dog as well as bones from a horse[197] and a cat were also identified. This pit is 'clearly associated with the ritualistic treatment of a child burial'[198] and may represent a smaller kingroup unit, one that has a child-specific cremation ritual involving neonatal animals. Numerous items were found associated with this ritual including the lower mandible and leg bone of a horse, as well as beads, bone combs, a bone plaque, gaming pieces, shears and a number of miniature items. Interestingly, the area with the closest parallels for both the burial rite and a number of the artefacts is Southern Scandinavia, rather than Norway.[199] There may also be possible links with Gotland, Sweden.[200] One of the first objects excavated from the cave was an axe that has close parallels with axes identified from Iceland and from Gotland. This represents important information on burial practices within Scandinavian-settled areas in Ireland. Because the inhumation and cremation activity appear to be relatively contemporary, it may be that cremation was a particular burial ritual associated with specific Scandinavian ethnic groups. This may also shed some light on why the accompanied remains of Scandinavian males and females are found in Ireland, but very few Scandinavian children have been identified to date.

There are a number of Irish cave sites that also appear to represent Scandinavian insertions into earlier, native Irish burial sites.

> The possible inclusion of pagan Scandinavian burials in sites that were being used by local populations during the ninth and tenth centuries may provide an explanation for the finding of artefacts of Scandinavian character in places such as caves. More importantly, however, it would provide clear

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[196] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 79.

[197] Burials in Iceland have also revealed partial horse burials. In most cases the horse's head was cut off and then were placed up against the belly or neck. For the most part, however, the ritual appears to have usually involved the burial of an entire, intact horse. Þóra Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*', re-animating mortuary remains from Viking Age Iceland' (MA thesis, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø, May, 2007), p. 45.

[198] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 171.

[199] Ibid., pp 168-9.

[200] A ring that originally formed part of a horse bit was recovered from Cloghermore Cave [99E0431: 200] and is identical to the ring from the very rich burial at Broa, Halla on Gotland. Ibid., p. 91.

evidence of Scandinavian settlement of areas of Ireland well outside the urban centres and accepted areas of Scandinavian control.[201]

Dunmore Cave, Co. Kilkenny, also produced a later insertion of probable Scandinavian character. In 1996, a quantity of animal, human foetal bones and the fragments of an adult long bone and a fragment of a rib were discovered. These finds closely parallel the remains from Area V in Cloghermore Cave.[202] It is interesting to note that insertions into both caves of probable Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian character represent children and what appears to be pagan rituals associated with children. Cave sites such as those at Dunmore, Co. Kilkenny and Cloghermore may represent burial sites chosen by pagan Scandinavian or Hiberno-Scandinavian groups because of the fact that they were already burial sites and thus well recognised and sacred spaces within the landscape.[203] Connolly suggested that based on the evidence of the burial rituals, including horse burial and animal and human cremation, that the later activity at Cloghermore Cave represents late ninth century use by a Scandinavian rather than a Hiberno-Scandinavian population.[204]

Excavations at Cloghermore Cave also provided two skulls of crushed but intact cattle placed in a ritualistic manner inside the western side of the entrance facing out from the cave proper.[205] The remains of a dismembered horse were also identified. Ibn Fadlan, writing in 921 described how a strikingly similar ritual was performed at the funeral of a Rus Viking leader:

> At last I was told of the death of one of their outstanding men. They placed him in a grave and put a roof over it for ten days while they cut and sewed garments for him… Then they brought a dog, which they cut in two and put in the ship. Then they took two horses, ran them until they sweated, then cut them to pieces with a sword and put them in a ship. They took two cows, which they likewise cut to pieces and put in the ship.[206]

A similar 'mortuary house', as described by Ibn Fadlan may also have been erected at Cloghermore Cave. Connolly has argued that:

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[201] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 46.
[202] Ibid., p. 42.
[203] Ibid., p. 46.
[204] Ibid., p. 164.
[205] Ibid., p. 69.
[206] The complete text of Ibn Fadlan's *Risala* can be found in Gwyn Jones, *A history of the Vikings* (London, 1968), pp 425-30.

the evidence uncovered on the surface at Cloghermore, immediately to the east-south-east of the entrance to the shaft, clearly suggests that a wooden building or structure was erected in this area, supported on wooden posts. The evidence also suggests that is was partially walled (the slot-trenches) and probably roofed (the internal posts). This structure was, it appears, deliberately taken down after a period of time, and the pyre on which the animals were cremated was constructed in the same place, possibly using the wood from the structure… The structure at Cloghermore may well have served a similar function to that described by Ibn Fadlan, acting as a mortuary house before the funeral.[207]

Writing in the tenth century, Ibn Rustah describes a similar (albeit much more abbreviated) account of a *Rus* mortuary house and funerary practice. 'When one of their notables dies, they make a grave like a large house and put him inside it. With him they put his clothes and the gold armlets he wore and, moreover, an abundance of food, drinking bowls, and coins. They also put his favourite wife in with him, still alive. Then the grave door is sealed and she dies there'. The closest parallels with these burial rituals occur on the Isle of Man and in Scotland,[208] as well as at Birka and at Chernigov in Russia.[209]

There is some evidence for ninth-century pagan burial rites associated with child burials. According to pagan burial customs, the dead were buried with objects that could be useful in the afterlife. These objects reflected the person's position in the community and their status in the social hierarchy.

The practice of burying animals with the dead is a recurring pagan ritual throughout the Scandinavian world and there is evidence that this may be a particular ritual associated with children in the ninth century. The jaw of the animal found in the Fishamble Street burial was found in a closed position, indicating that the flesh was intact at time of burial. The head was separated from the rest of the body in a sacrificial manner and it is plausible to suggest that such items, like swords and shields ritually sacrificed in adult male burials, and spindles, whorls and keys in female burials, were associated with certain adults and children in Viking Dublin. Although the Fishamble Street burial was oriented with the head at the west, Haakon Shetelig has argued that the normal

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[207] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry*, p. 168.
[208] Ibid., p. 168.
[209] Johannes Brøndsted, *The Vikings* (Harmondsworth, England, 1965), p. 305.

Scandinavian burial rite in Ireland placed the head at the west; therefore, it is doubtful that this was a Christian burial.

> In Norway… the general rule seems to have been that the graves were orientated approximately north-south, with the head to the north, but there are numerous exceptions, including the Christian orientation of the grave with the head approximately west, which was the prevailing custom in Denmark, Sweden and Ireland.[210]

It is worth noting here Sophie Graslund's work on weighing scales found in female graves in Russia and their implications for challenging the 'gender by grave goods' theory in Irish archaeology. This is particularly important in considering the site of Kilmainham/Islandbridge where, despite the absence of human remains, the number of males and females present has been determined by using an assumed 'grave good by gender association' in order to identify the sex of the owners. As already argued, this has invariably led to the determination that very few Scandinavian women or families took part in the earliest phases of occupation in Ireland.

Within archaeology, it is a basic assumption that gravegoods are associated with the person buried within the grave. Gravegoods are not a random collection of objects, but symbolic representations accompanying the dead according to specific rituals.[211] Yet interpretations of 'anomalous' material in graves are often ignored rather than explained in a way one would normally do other objects. Sarah Milledge Nelson, commenting on Graslund's work, argues that 'the presence of women's objects (weighing scales which are normally associated with males) from Scandinavia, found in Viking graves in Russia, suggest that families, and not just men, were part of the eastward Viking expansion of the ninth to eleventh centuries'.[212] Nelson argues that 'if other evidence substantiates the presence of Viking women, it will require rethinking of the historical narrative. There are important implications for women [and children] as settlers and colonists and this topic could be usefully expanded with additional archaeological

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[210] Shetelig, *Viking graves in Great Britain and Ireland, part I*, p. 37.
[211] Anne Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade' in Ross Sampson (ed.), *Social approaches to Viking Studies* (Glasgow, 1991), p. 78 (Stalsberg, 'Women as actors in Viking age trade').
[212] Anne Stalsberg, 'The interpretation of women's objects of Scandinavian origin from the Viking period found in Russia' in Reidar Bertelsen, Arnvid Lillehammer and Jenny-Rita Naess (eds), *Were they all men? An examination of sex roles in prehistoric society, acts from a workshop held at Ulstein Kloster, Rogaland, November 2-4, 1979* (Stavanger, Norway, 1987) pp 89-101, quoted in Sarah Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology* (Walnut Creek, CA, 1997), p. 62.

evidence'.[213] The presence of Viking men and women indicates family groups, which of course means the presence of 'Viking' children.

Child burials in Scandinavian Scotland, the example of Cnip

In 1991 at Cnip headland on the Isle of Lewis a number of ninth-century Viking Age burials were identified including men, a woman and a child.[214] Between 1992 and 1994 a further cluster of three adult burials and two infants (burials F and G) were excavated nearby.[215] The burial of the child aged about six years of age (burial B) included an amber bead and a sandstone pendant in the shape of a whetstone.[216] The placement of the objects in the grave indicated that they had been suspended around the neck.[217] Both amber beads and miniature pendant whetstones are paralleled in Norse graves. Amber beads, where they have been found in funerary contexts are Norse, and similar whetstone pendants are known from Lagore, Carraig Aille, Waterford, and from Birka.[218] A miniature pendant whetstone was also recovered from Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry.[219] One of the infants at Cnip (burial F), aged around six to nine months, was an extended supine NW/SW burial. This burial also contained a perforated amber bead located just below the jaw bone. Two further beads and an iron object were also found nearby and are thought to have been part of the same necklace.[220] Burial G was an infant who had died at or around birth. Analysis of the human remains revealed that the six-year-old child (burial B) had enjoyed a relatively healthy childhood and did not suffer any severe infections or debilitating illnesses.[221] None of the burials displayed evidence of specific metabolic deficiencies. The form of the graves and the presence/absence of gravegoods suggests differential treatment of adults and children in death, as well as social differentiation within the cemetery. All the child burials are simple in form, comprising flat burials with no demarcation above ground. In contrast, all the adult

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[213] Milledge Nelson, *Gender in archaeology, analysing power and prestige*, p. 62.

[214] T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce and N. Kerr, 'The discovery of a child burial of probable Viking Age date on Kneep Headland, Lewis 1991: interim report' in Coleen Batey, Judith Jesch and C. D. Morris (eds), *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp 165-72.

[215] A. J. Dunwell, T. G. Cowie, M. F. Bruce, T. Neighbour and A. R. Rees, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis' in *PSAS*, cxxv (1995), pp 719-752 (Dunwell et al, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis').

[216] Another burial with this combination of bead and miniature whetstone is known from mainland Shetland at Housgord, Weisdale, although there were no skeletal remains present.

[217] Dunwell et al, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis', p. 726.

[218] H. Arbman, *Birka I, die grabber* (Stockholm, 1940), p. 103, no. 3, quoted in Dunwell et al, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis', p. 726.

[219] Connolly, Coyne and Lynch, *Underworld, death and burial in Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry,* p. 126.

[220] Dunwell et al, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis', p. 737.

[221] Ibid., p. 739.

burials – male and female – appear to have had mounds erected over them.[222] Interestingly all the child burials (3) had gravegoods, whereas only two of the adults had them. The combined evidence from the site indicated that the burials were of ninth-century date and the wealth of the gravegoods suggests that an important Scandinavian settlement site may be nearby.[223]

There is evidence that infants and very young children could be provided the same mortuary treatment as their adult counterparts during the Viking age in Ireland. Catryn Power's osteological analysis of skeletal material from late Viking-Age Waterford and the medieval Irish cemetery of St. Peter's[224] revealed 'three full-term foetuses, all buried with a female (in or ex-utero). It was thought that the absence of infants aged less than one year might indicate that they had been interred elsewhere'.[225] Further evidence exists from the Temple Bar area of Dublin, as well as at the Scandinavian rural site of Cloghermore Cave, Co. Kerry. These sites represent both inhumation and cremation. This indicates that a variety of burial practices were in use in Ireland during this period.

Gotland child burials

Infant burials such as those identified by Malin Lindquist in Gotland provide interesting contextual evidence for the Scandinavian Cloghermore Cave activity. They also provide important evidence for age, gender and class as reflected in burial goods. Lindquist examined five children's graves on the island. Of the ten Viking-Age grave fields that have been excavated on Gotland, a number of children have been identified as having their own graves. Of those that did, the grave goods indicate that the children were of high status. Two of the child burials on Gotland represent particularly unusual child burials. At Fröjel, outside the outer wall of a fortress, two small graves were excavated. With the cremated remains of one infant were 'baby size' female gravegoods – including two bronze Gotlandic style box brooches,[226] two bracelets and glass beads

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[222] Dunwell et al, 'A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis', p. 745.

[223] Ian Armit, 'Archaeological field survey of the Bhaltos (Valtos) peninsula, Lewis' in *PSAS*, cxxiv (1994), p. 83.

[224] Catryn Power, 'Human skeletal remains' in M. F. Hurley and Orla Scully (eds), *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford: excavations 1986-1992* (Waterford, 1997), pp 762-816 (Power, 'Human skeletal remains').

[225] Power, 'Human skeletal remains', p. 769.

[226] Animal headed or 'box brooches' are a female style confined to the island of Gotland, whereas oval brooches are found in Scandinavia and Scandinavian settled areas, both east and west.

(Figures 41a and b). A further infant cremation with small beads was also identified.[227] Miniature box brooches are known from a number of infant burials on Gotland **(Figure 42)**.

The burial from Vallstena on Gotland is also an exceptional example of an unusual child burial. The child was between five and six-years old when she died and was buried with all the accoutrements normally found to accompany a wealthy adult female burial. This burial dates from sometime within the tenth century and according to Lindquist the child 'was buried according to tradition, in her clothes with the typical Gotlandic female jewellery: two animal-shaped brooches of bronze, a necklace of glass beads, a brooch with a key, tweezers, a comb and a knife hanging in chains'.[228] This burial differs somewhat from those of the two infant burials in that the older child was buried with adult rather than child-sized grave goods. The items could not have been used by the little girl during her life, leading to speculation that she was a member of an important family or even that she herself was someone of status and importance in her society even at such an early stage in her life. The inclusion of a key in the burial goods is significant, as such items represented a particular role in Viking-Age Scandinavia. It was a particular symbolic representation of the high status position of the carer of a house, a job made particularly important by the fact that many of the men would have been away from home leaving a female in charge of the running of the house and farm. In Birka, seven children's burials were identified with keys as gravegoods.[229] As keys are generally associated with female symbols of responsibility in life, it is likely that their inclusion in children's graves represents some sort of symbolic status, perhaps of class or rank. That children could be – and were – persons of high status is reinforced by a tenth-century grave of a nine to ten year old female from Birka, which yielded fine jewellery including a bead necklace and a gold-coated bronze clasp.[230] The burial was located close to the wall at Birka's tower and also contained a knife and a bone needlecase and needles. The burial goods and place of this child indicate that she and her family were of high status.[231] 'While adults may earn status during their lives, it is

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[227] Malin Lindquist, 'Children's graves- status symbols? Four Viking-age children from Gotland' in *VHM,* iii (2003), p. 28 (Lindquist, 'Children's graves – status symbols?)
[228] Ibid., p. 28.
[229] Malin Linquist, 'The key, a practical objects and symbol of power' in *VHM* (2005), no. 4, p. 9.
[230] [SHM 34000: Bj 463] SHM, available at (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (2 May, 2007).
[231] SHM, available at at (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (2 May, 2007).

hard to see how children could have had the opportunity to do so and therefore it may be possible to assume that elaborate children's graves represent evidence of a society in which inherited wealth and status have already become important'.[232]

Parallels to the Swedish 'child-sized' burial furniture also exist from Anglo-Saxon England, providing interesting contextual frameworks for child-sized objects. In two children's graves from the Anglo-Saxon site of Sewerby, two tiny iron brooches were found in graves 17 (age six) and 28 (age eight). Crawford has suggested that these brooches were tailor-made to fit these children and can be regarded as part of their personal equipment.[233] Grave 28 also provided miniature beads not found in any other of the graves. Further miniature jewellery was identified at Empingham II, Rutland, where a grave of a girl aged between five and six was buried with a small pot and a tiny annular brooch. At Abingdon, the grave of an eleven to twelve-year old interpreted by the excavator to be female, provided a miniature spearhead that had been ground down from one much larger.[234]

Lindquist has pointed out that while there appear to be some high-status children with their own graves, most of the child graves on Gotland are accompanied by female adults. She argues that it may well be that only those who were entitled to possessions were buried in the grave fields and that others such as children and slaves were buried somewhere else. This is purely speculative, however, as no other burial areas have yet been identified to support this theory. There is some historical evidence however, that burial grounds in Norway were segregated by sex and age.

> The Christian part of the *Eidsivating* provincial law stated that men should be buried south of the church and women north of it. Social discrimination was also prescribed, the area south and east of the chancel being presented as the best burial ground for the highest ranking persons and their families, and that closest to the perimeter wall being reserved for slaves and their families. The law also prescribed which persons should not be buried in sacred ground. These regulations regarding Christian burials are only found

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[232] A. Gopher, 'Infant burials in the Neolithic period in the Souther Levant- Israel: a social view' in M. Otte (ed.), *Nature et Culture, Colloque de Liège, 13-17 décembre 1993*, Etudes et recherches archaeologiques de l'univerite de Liege no. 68 (Liège, 1995), pp 913-918.
[233] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 47.
[234] Ibid., p. 47.

in the legislation for eastern Norway, the *Borgating* and *Eidsivating* laws, and are believed to be a result of their revision in about 1050-1150.[235]

However, the practice of north/south segregated burial dependent on age and gender is also evident at Fröjel in Gotland, where 43 females and four children were buried the north of the church, and men were exclusively buried to the south.[236]

Two further burials of older children at Íre in Hellvi parish in Northern Gotland were also buried with so called 'adult' gravegoods. One twelve-year-old child was an extended inhumation with the head at the northwest. A horse and a dog had been placed on their side and lying to the child's left. The animals were also oriented at the same direction as the boy. Gravegoods included two spearheads, a penannular ring pin, a belt buckle, horse mountings and a horse comb, as well as a bridle and bridle rings, a knife, needles and beads and the handle of a wooden bucket. To his right was a large sword, along with a picture stone (now lost).[237] A further burial of a twelve-year-old male was also buried with a horse and a dog, and the gravegoods were typical for an adult male grave. They contained some silver thread, a bridle, a large wooden horse comb and a lead, as well as two spearheads, two knives, and comb and a fibula[238] **(Figures 43a, b, c)**. Lindquist argues that both burials represent the sons of either very wealthy and high-status men, or that by twelve they were already considered to be men.

The second child burial at Íre was also that of a twelve-year-old male and was accompanied by two pairs of skates along with other 'more ordinary' objects. It may be that the Vallstena female child was linked directly to a high status family or position, and that the older male child burials were less important status wise, but important enough to be buried as 'men'. Lindquist argues that while the material from the Gotland graves is not enormous, it poses a number of questions that have yet to be approached concerning children in the Viking age.

At Barshalder, also on Gotland, over half the children were given grave furnishings of their own, but generally, sub-adults were not buried on their own. There are also indications that unfurnished inhumation may have been a ritual practiced for deceased

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[235] Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide and Steinar Gulliksen, 'First generation Christians, second generation radio-carbon dates, the cemetery at St. Clement's in Oslo' in *NAR*, xxxx, issue 1 (2007), pp 1-25.
[236] Carlsson, *Gård, hamn och kyrka*, pp 22-3.
[237] Lindquist, 'Children's graves- status symbols?', p. 29.
[238] Ibid., p. 29.

children of the elite classes. Rundkvist has suggested that deceased children at Barshalder were usually interred as secondary burials in adult graves.[239] Most of the common artefact types do not appear to have been age specific, except in the case of weapons, which are only found in adult graves.[240] Carol Clover's argument that Scandinavian understandings of gender difference were largely based on power rather than sexual difference is supported by these burials.[241] Certainly, the female burials illustrate the possibility that differences to the norm in these mortuary practices had more to do with status and power than to do with gender or age.

These burials and their artefacts have important implications for Ireland particularly for the early Viking age, where we have often relied solely on gravegoods for gender and age identification of remains. Analysis of burial remains, patterns, and goods is an obvious way to gain insights into a particular society's social organisation and belief patterns. Looking at this evidence from engendered and age-aware perspectives can reveal information regarding children that may be otherwise 'invisible' in current archaeological approaches.

To conclude then, mortuary evidence suggests that Native Irish concepts of infancy may have occupied a place of both conceptual and geographical liminality, particularly with the advent of Christianity. This appears to have been impacted on by concepts of age and gender, often resulting in burial in kin-group boundary areas or insertion into pre-existing and dominant pagan burial monuments. In contrast, both Viking-Age and Hiberno-Scandinavian burial evidence suggests that concepts of 'infant' or 'child' during the medieval period were more fluid and influenced more by status and power than considerations of age or gender – a concept perhaps influenced by migration and changing understandings of power and identity. Seeing age and gender as major organizing social principles of different and changing societies rather than static and unchanging categories opens up the possibilities towards developing much more comprehensive ideas about how the past was structured, shifted and changed. It is certainly clear that contrary to traditional academic perceptions, there is certainly

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[239] Rundkvist, *Barshalder,* p. 57.
[240] Ibid., p. 57.
[241] Clover, 'Regardless of sex', pp 380-381.

enough material evidence to initiate a substantial multi-cultural archaeological dialogue for the culture of children and childhoods in medieval Ireland.

Chapter Seven

The living child

This chapter focuses on aspects of the daily lives of children in early historic and medieval Ireland. Of necessity, the sources used in this chapter are predominantly historical and literary due to the nature of the subjects discussed. However, where possible, archaeological material is utilised in order to facilitate discussions on weaning, fosterage, education, apprenticeship and training. Clothing and appearance are also discussed, especially in relation to identity, ethnicity and class.

<u>Weaning</u>

Research into infant feeding practices in past populations is becoming an increasingly important area of study, in part due to the recent developments within gender theory. Breastfeeding and weaning patterns reveal important insights into population, fertility and reproduction. It has been suggested that lactation suppresses ovulation, thus breastfeeding plays a major role in fecundity and birth spacing in pre-contraceptive societies.[1] Breastfeeding also promotes the health of infants due to its immunological content, as well as avoiding potential infections from both food and water.[2] Crawford has suggested that breastfeeding and its resultant effect on birth spacing, may also have contributed to maternal affection:

> It has been established that breastfeeding postpones the return of ovulation after birth, so that in populations where lengthy and intensive breastfeeding is practiced, there is a substantial contraceptive effect. The number of children a woman might produce in her lifetime has a distinct effect on attitudes towards offspring: the fewer the children, the more they are likely to be cherished by their parents, or to receive their undivided attention.[3]

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[1] M. A. Katzenberg and D. A. Herring and S. R. Saunders, 'Weaning and infant mortality, evaluating the skeletal evidence' in *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology*, xxxix (1996), pp 177-99, quoted in S. A. Mays, M. P. Richards and B. T. Fuller, 'Bone stable isotope evidence for infant feeding in Medieval England' in *Antiquity*, lxxvi (2002), pp 654-6 (Katzenberg, et al, 'Weaning and infant mortality').

[2] S. A. Mays, M. P. Richards and B. T. Fuller, 'Bone stable isotope evidence for infant feeding in Mediaeval England' in *Antiquity*, lxxvi (2002), p. 654 (Mays et al, Bone stable isotope evidence for infant feeding in Mediaeval England').

[3] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 74.

In general, differentiation seems to have been made in most societies between children still being nursed and children who have been weaned, and then sometimes at an intermediate stage (often around five to seven years old) when they were regarded as more independent, able to contribute to the family's labour or able to benefit from more formal education.

Lack of understanding concerning the specific nutritional needs of infants certainly would have resulted in a higher death rate of infants and very young children. Infants were dependent upon their mothers for milk, and if the mother died in childbirth the family would have to turn to a wet nurse. An additional complication would have arisen in times of hardship and famine, as nutritional deficiencies in a nursing mother could stop the production of breast milk. Lack of proper nutrition in early childhood also would have weakened the immune system of children, causing them to be at risk of disease and death. Skeletal evidence indicates that poor early childhood nutrition was a major factor in the lives of early medieval children.

Weaning: the Irish evidence

Hagiographical details in the Life of St. Brigit (*Leabhar Breac*) reinforce the notion that very young children may have had specific dietary customs in practice as well as in law.

> Now this holy virgin, namely Brigit, was nourished with food and like to her *those of her age* besides, and she rejected the guidance of the wizard and used to give it back. The wizard meditated on the girl, and it seemed to him that it was because of the impurity and the corruption of his food. Then he entrusted a white red-eared cow to give milk to Brigit, and he enjoined a faithful woman to milk the cow. The virgin took her fill of that [my italics].[4]

This passage is likely a reference to the weaning of the young Brigit, as *Bethu Brigte* describes the same event 'when it was time to wean her the druid was anxious about her; anything he gave her [to eat] she vomited at once, but her appearance was none the worse. 'I know', said the druid, 'what ails the girl, [it is] because I am impure.' Then a white red-eared cow was assigned to sustain her and she became well as a result.'[5]

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[4] Stokes, *Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit and Columba* (12 July, 2004).
[5] Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte.*

There is also a reference to St. Colmán Ela offering to foster his aunt's sons with two paps, one made of milk and the other of honey.[6] A further reference is made to Ultán cutting off the teats of cows, pouring milk into them, and using them to feed the children 'so that the infants were playing around him'.[7]

Weaning: the Scandinavian material

Drawing upon evidence from the wider Scandinavian context it is reasonable to argue that alternatives to breast-feeding may have been available for Hiberno-Scandinavian children in Ireland in this era, though probably only resorted to when there was no alternative, as in the case of the mother dying, and no readily available wet nurse. Suggested alternative methods for nursing may have included bread soaked with milk,[8] or the use of some sort of pap as a bottle. Such cases would have resulted in very high infant mortality, especially immediately following birth, as this is when colostrum, which is extremely important for fighting off diseases is produced. Lack of sterilization methods necessary in artificial nursing would have contributed to high infant mortality especially during the first year of life. During the Viking Age, infant mortality rates may have been as high as fifty percent, with various reasons attributed to this high number, such as scarcity of food, dysentery, and numerous infections.[9] The use of wooden cooking vessels would have meant that the containers would have housed bacteria deadly to a developing immune system.[10] Horn drinking 'bottles' could also be used for feeding young children as evidenced from a passage in *Heimskringla*, 'then he drank from a horn like an infant'.[11]

While evidence is scarce, it seems clear that mothers in ancient and medieval Iceland nursed their babies.[12] However, at some point during the late Middle Ages, Icelandic women 'began to see their own milk as inferior and instead gave their infants cows milk and cream. From the third or fourth month infants were also fed pre-chewed meat

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[6] Charles Plummer, *Lives of the Irish saints, vol. 2* (2 vols, Oxford, 1922), pp 167-8.
[7] Condren, *The serpent and the goddess,* p. 85.
[8] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 74.
[9] Lindquist, 'Children's graves—status symbols?', p. 28.
[10] Pottery was virtually non-existent in Ireland during the early medieval period except for in north-east Ulster, the area of the kingdom of the Ulaid. This native type of pottery is known as souterrain ware and was regarded as relatively low-status. Edwards, 'The archaeology of early medieval Ireland', p. 288.
[11] Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (ed.), *Heimskringla*, vol. 1 (3 vols. Reykjavik, 1941-51), pp 47-9.
[12] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 211.

and fish which had been thinned with melted butter. The results were disastrous and Iceland suffered a higher than normal infant mortality rate until it was identified that malnutrition was the cause'.[13] Norwegian Christian Law included special dietary exemptions from fasting after Lent for pregnant and nursing mothers. If continuing to nurse, however, during the following Lenten periods, they were expected to fast, indicating that weaning occurred around the age of two or two- and a half-years old.[14] Stable isotope analysis at the Viking-Age site of Newark Bay, Orkney, indicates that children up to at least one and a quarter years of age were being primarily breastfed before death.[15] The same study revealed a striking lack of children above this age, which suggests high infant mortality in the first two years of life, possibly due to weaning and the introduction of solid foods resulting in susceptibility to infection and disease.[16] In Anglo-Saxon England, the age of weaning appears to have been around two to three years.[17] This fits within the norm for pre-industrial agricultural populations in the past[18] (and indeed even today). Children who were weaned at this age likely had stronger immune systems due to the immunity-boosting properties of breastmilk, which is often the best (and safest) source of food in poorer societies where unboiled water would be lethal to a child not yet immune to the local pathogens.[19]

Diet of children

Irish sources provide some information concerning the diet of children in medieval Ireland. Like clothing and education, the law texts specify that diet depended upon the rank of the child. The twelfth-century commentary on the fragmentary text on fosterage *Cáin Iarraith* details the type of food that fosterparents are expected to provide for the children in their care. As in the case of adults on sick-maintenance, foster children are

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[13] Jochens, *Women in Old Norse society*, p. 81.
[14] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 81.
[15] M. P. Richards, B. T. Fuller and T. I. Molleson, 'Stable isotope palaeodietary study of humans and fauna from the multi-period (Iron Age, Viking and Late Medieval) site of Newark Bay, Orkney' in *JAS*, xxxiii, issue 1 (January, 2006), p. 6 (Richards, 'Stable isotope palaeodietary study of humans and fauna from Newark Bay, Orkney).
[16] Ibid., p. 6.
[17] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 73. Although a recent study undertaken at Wharram Percy suggested an 'earlier than normal' weaning pattern of between one and two years of age over a period of 600 years. This is suggestive of culturally accepted patterns of weaning rather than individual choice. Mays et al, 'Bone stable isotope evidence for infant feeding in Medieval England', pp 654-656.
[18] Ibid., p. 73.
[19] Ibid., p. 73.

to be fed according to their rank.[20] This text specifies that children between the ages of seven to ten who are ill or on sick maintenance are entitled to the 'soft food of fosterage' *máethbiad altramma*, which the glossator explains as 'egg yolk, butter curds and porridge'.[21] Within the literature, there are numerous references to drinking fresh milk (*lemlacht*) sometimes diluted with water. Fresh milk was also used to make porridge (*lichtiu*), an important staple in children's diets.[22] While children of all ranks were entitled to porridge, rank determined the type of porridge provided. In law, if not in practice, children of the lowest free-class received their bare sufficiency of porridge made from oats and buttermilk or water, along with a small blob of curds (*gruiten*). Noble children received their full sufficiency of porridge made with new milk and barleymeal and royal children received wheatmeal porridge made with new milk.[23] Even the flavourings were dependent upon status in that the commoner ranks got salt, the noble grades butter, and the noble children honey.[24] Of course these laws were likely not always rigid or enforced, but their value lies in the general ideas it gives us for children's diets and their relationship with social class.[25]

Health and disease

Bioarchaeological evidence can provide information on health and disease in the past. It can indicate occupational stresses such as osteoarthritis, evidence for nutritional deficiencies through the presence of enamel hypoplasia, as well as dental problems and infections.[26]

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[20] 'It seems likely that in this passage *mac* (usually "son") refers to a child of either sex'. Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish farming: a study based mainly on the law texts of the 7ᵗʰ and 8ᵗʰ centuries AD*, Early Irish law series vol. iv, School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (Louth, 1998), p. 351 (Kelly, *Early Irish farming*).

[21] Ibid., p. 351, fn 244.

[22] Chris Lynn, 'A preliminary review of the literary and legal context of Deer Park Farms' in C. J. Lynn and J. A. McDowell (eds), List of contents of the report Deer Park Farms: excavation of an Early Christian settlement in Glenarm, Co. Antrim, electronic draft available at (http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/built/monuments/Chapter26.shtml) (26 July, 2005) (Lynn, 'A preliminary review of the literary and legal context of Deer Park Farms').

[23] Kelly*, Early Irish farming*, p. 351, fn 246

[24] Bronagh Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland' in *History Ireland*, v, no. 1 (spring, 1997), p. 29 (Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland').

[25] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 351.

[26] Byock, et al, 'Mosfell archaeological project', p. 211.

Forensic archaeology has yielded a high amount of information about children's health status and factors leading to disease and death. Examination of teeth and the eye sockets can reveal iron deficiency and poor diet.[27]

Dental enamel hypoplasia is the occurrence of lines, grooves or pits on the surface of the tooth. They are a result of nutritional stress or pathological disturbance during the formation of enamel. Because crown formation of the permanent dentition is complete by the seventh year, hypoplastic defects are useful indicators of systematic disturbance during foetal development, as well as health status during early childhood.[28] Periostitis is an indicator of chronic infection, and can indicate tuberculosis, a disease prevalent in both children and adults. However, because sugar was almost completely absent from the diet of early medieval peoples, archaeologists have been able to determine that children's teeth were on average as good as (if not better) than children of today.

The raising of children: fosterage and Ireland

Fosterage was a major societal element and a key component of Irish childrearing, especially among the social elite. The institution of fosterage as it existed in early medieval Ireland is detailed within the legal texts as well as featuring within both hagiography and mythology. The system of fosterage was not limited to the bringing-up of orphans, but rather was a much broader concept. The primary purpose of fosterage was to 'create artificial kinship alliances with otherwise unrelated persons as well as providing education while care for orphans is a secondary, less important function of the same practice'.[29] Children were not merely passive players in the fosterage system. They were active participants within a system that allowed for the strengthening of kinship bonds and the development of new allegiances. It was the duty of parents to foster their children out, and contrary to modern assumptions, did not indicate a lack of affection. Parkes has argued that unlike 'crisis fostering' of orphans, client-allegiance fosterage 'confirmed affiliations between ranked status grades by delegating infant children for nursing and raising to social subordinates'.[30] These affiliations are usually characterised within the literary sources as warm and loving, life long attachments.

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[27] Laureen Buckley, 'And the dead shall speak unto many: evidence from forensic archaeology', paper given at the Archaeology Ireland Conference, The Archaeology of Death, UCD, 18 November, 2000.
[28] Clarke, *Johnstown 1*, p. 39.
[29] Karl, 'Master and apprentice', p. 259.
[30] Peter Parkes, 'Celtic fosterage, adoptive kinship and clientage in Northwest Europe' in *CSSH*, xlviii, no. 2 (2006), p. 360 (Parkes, 'Celtic fosterage').

Kelly points out that linguistic evidence reflects this closeness as the Old Irish terms *muimme* and *aite*, which are the intimate forms of the words 'mother' and 'father' and which correspond to the modern 'mom' and 'dad', are the terms used to denote fosterparents.[31] Crawford has argued that studies of children raised by non-biological parents have indicated that the mother/child bond is as much behavioural as biological. Crawford cites a study by Derek Freeman which indicated that a child fostered from an early age would form a bond as close with his foster-parent as with a biological parent, and even where the biological parent was living in close proximity, the fostered child would regard the foster-mother as the most important in terms of bonds of love.[32] There are numerous examples of close foster-child to parent relationships in the Irish literary tradition. In addition, closeness of foster siblings is also detailed in both the law texts and in the literature. Fergus Kelly has suggested that 'providing children with companionship other than their siblings'[33] must have also been an incentive for parents to send their children away to be fostered.

Peter Parkes has argued that references to breast-feeding and nursing-clothes indicate that fosterage for some children began shortly after birth, with the *muimme* acting as wet-nurse.[34] Along with the infant's cradle clothes, the parents had to provide two articles of clothing to the wet nurse, a black tunic, and a black mantle, which was to be returned upon the completion of fosterage.[35] Once weaning had commenced, the fosterparents would then commence the training of the child dependent on his or her status and gender. However, fosterage could also begin after weaning and continued for some children until the age of seven, others until marriage. This is a common age-threshold for fosterage, and has parallels throughout much of northwest Europe. In Anglo-Saxon societies, weapons' training for boys began at fosterage at the age of seven.[36]

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[31] Kelly, *Early Irish farming,* pp 86-7.

[32] Derek Freeman, 'Kinship, attachment behaviour and the primary bond' in J. Goody (ed.), *The character of kinship* (London, 1973), pp 109-19, quoted in Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 130.

[33] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 90.

[34] Parkes, 'Celtic fosterage', p. 362.

[35] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 28.

[36] Martin Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria' in *HAJEMNE*, ix (October, 2006), available at (http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/9/toc.html) (12 June, 2007) (Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria').

The law texts and their commentaries detail the types of fosterage (*Altram*) available for fosterchildren (*dalta*). *Cáin Íarraith* describes the fosterage fee as corresponding to honour prices of the child; which itself is dependent on status. This determined what training and education the child would have during his or her fostering. According to the Irish law text, *Cáin Íarraith*, fosterage was open to children of all free ranks,[37] but there were different types of fosterage. For example, a fosterage of affection (*altramm serce*) might happen within the family by relatives, and would neither incur a fosterage fee nor would the fosterparents be 'liable for crimes committed by the child'.[38] This type of fosterage is likely to have been largely restricted to members of the same kingroup where as 'fee fosterage', which is detailed within the law-text *Cáin Íarraith*, is likely to have been a much more widespread social practice. This type of fosterage covered the education of children of noble birth, commoners, various types of professionals, craftsmen, poets, medics and druids.[39] Fee fosterage appears to have had two main aspects. The first being the exchange of children between members of the nobility or aristocracy in order to confirm social hierarchies, while at the same time 'providing the children with the skills and connections required at court, in politics and in war'.[40] The second main type of fee fosterage was the exchange of children between artists and professionals in order to educate children in the special skills and abilities necessary for their art and craft.[41] The artificial kinship connections created through the fosterage system would also have allowed for a greater freedom of movement of people outside of their biological kingroup. It would have allowed for members of the nobility, craftsmen, artists as well as other specialists to cross safely over borders between the different *túatha* reasonably easily,[42] rather than being in the dangerous position of being regarded as strangers or foreigners.[43] In the case of a crime being committed, fee fosterage would necessitate payment determined according to the child's status and gender and the age of the foster child in relation to his or her crime. This is divided into three categories, birth to seven, seven to twelve, and twelve to seventeen.[44] Bronagh Ní Chonaill has pointed out that the only specifics of a crime committed by a foster child is

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[37] W. N. Hancock, Robert Atkinson, Thaddeus O' Mahony, and A. G. Richey (eds), *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (6 vols, Dublin, 1865-1901), ii, pp 147-93. Also see Kelly, *Early Irish law,* pp 86-9.
[38] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 30.
[39] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 91, quoted in Karl, 'Master and apprentice', p. 258.
[40] Karl, 'Master and apprentice', p. 265.
[41] Ibid., p. 265.
[42] Ibid., p. 265.
[43] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, pp 5-6.
[44] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 30.

in the case of a child under the age of twelve who stole a hoop or a hurley, and had to pay restitution in kind.[45]

The higher the status of the child, the higher the fosterage fee incurred. The grading of the fosterage fee started at three cows for the son of a *bóaire* to the price of eighteen cows for the son of a king.[46] Girls incurred a slightly higher fosterage fee, presumably due to the fact that daughters would have been less able to contribute economically to the family later in life in comparison with sons. Fosterage of a female was a *sét* (fixed unit of value) that depended on the status grade of the child.[47] Ní Chonaill cites the thirteenth-century poem *Teasta eochair ghlais Ghaoidheal* that describes a female child arriving at her foster family with cattle and clothing. Ní Chonaill suggests that this is illustrative of a fosterage payment.[48] According to *Cáin Íarraith,* at the end of fosterage the foster-father gave his foster son or daughter a parting gift, or 'valuable of affection'.[49] The giving of status-associated objects was an important ritual in the crossing over into adulthood of fostered boys, as well as cementing kinship bonds. There are parallels here with the Anglo-Saxon system of fosterage, and Martin Grimmer has argued that part of the duties of the foster family was to teach fostered boys the arts of warfare until they reached the ages of fourteen or fifteen, 'when they would be given whatever arms were suitable to their status as they entered military service under their foster lord'.[50] Crawford, however, has argued that the Anglo-Saxon age threshold for boys becoming adults was between ten and twelve years.[51]

There were different terms for adult males and boys and the terms are highly linked with status. The term *cúairtulchach* meaning 'beard encircled' is the Old Irish word or term for a boy who had reached legal maturity. *Amulchacha* (or 'beardless') is the word given to young boys.[52] The word *ulcha* was a metonym for 'warrior', with *caithir* being the more general word for adult. The association with hair and adulthood was not

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[45] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 29
[46] Ibid., p. 29.
[47] Ibid., p. 29.
[48] Ibid., p. 29.
[49] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 89.
[50] Grimmer, 'The exogamous marriages of Oswiu of Northumbria'.
[51] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp 156-166.
[52] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 167.

confined to males. The term *trillsech*, or 'having tresses' is associated with an unmarried and underage girl.[53]

There seems to be some difference in the legal capacities of boys after the age of fourteen compared to girls. *Críth Gablach* indicates that boys entered into a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood when the period of fosterage ended and that this period consisted of two stages; the lower *fer midboth*, taken to mean boys between fourteen and seventeen, and the higher *fer midboth*, taken to be males aged between seventeen and the age of 'beard-encirclement', or twenty'.[54] Different honour prices apply depending on which age range (and class) the child falls into. The *fer midboth* may not have been set in stone, as glosses to other texts indicate that fostering ended at fourteen for girls and seventeen for boys.[55] *Bretha Crólige* allows for fosterage to continue up to seventeen for both boys and girls.[56] It may be that these texts reflect regional variations in ideas of higher status childhood, but may also indicate changes over time. The law texts stipulate that children under the age of fourteen have neither legal responsibility nor right to independent legal action except in the case where a child's agreement concerns the exchange of objects of equal value.[57] (Perhaps a legal method for resolving high status childhood squabbles?)

As stated, the threshold age from childhood into adulthood for females was fourteen, by which time she had normally completed her period of fosterage, and it was now 'time for her to be betrothed to God or man' – after which her legal standing is as either a wife or a nun.[58] Unlike other comparable societies of the time, for example Anglo-Saxon societies; there is strong indication that native Irish parents of higher status 'fostered down', or had their offspring fostered by people of considerably lower background than the child's own parents.

Importantly, *Bretha Crólige* indicates that all children between baptism and seven years of age, regardless of either sex or class were accorded the *dire* or honour price of a

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[53] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 170.
[54] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 82.
[55] Ibid., p. 88.
[56] Ibid., p. 88.
[57] Ibid., p. 81.
[58] Ibid., pp 81-2.

cleric.[59] Regardless of the social class or gender of the child, any injury incurred resulted in a heavy penalty. In fact, the son of a commoner and the son of a king have the same honour price up to the age of seven,[60] and injured children of either sex under the age of seven are entitled to be maintained at the level of a cleric, in other words in all possible comfort.[61] Fergus Kelly has attributed this high worth to the influence of Christianity. However, while Christianity certainly must have had some effect on the status of the child, this does not mean that the pre-Christian child was necessarily 'less regarded'. Given the absence of studies of children in pre-Christian Ireland this may be a premature assumption. An analysis of pre-Christian grave groupings and early historic cemeteries would allow for the development of a much clearer picture of childhood during this period.[62] After the age of seven a child's honour price was half that of his or her father or guardian, and stayed on that level throughout the child's dependency, regardless of any reduction in his father's honour price.[63] Early Irish literature makes numerous references to fosterage. This illustrates not only the importance of fosterage in developing political ties, but as a way of reinforcing the bonds of friendship and kinship. For example, in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (parts of which date to the eighth century or earlier),[64] Cúchulainn is raised not by one set of fosterparents, but by a whole series of them. 'In addition to Cúchulainn's maternal uncle, King Conchobar, his maternal aunt and her husband are among his fosterparents as are several prominent warriors of Ulster, including Fergus mac Roich, and even the warrior-woman, Scáthach'.[65] Foster-daughters also feature prominently within Irish literature. For example, Eithne, wife of King Cormac in *Esnada Tige Buchet*, has a close relationship with her foster-father and was portrayed as a loyal foster-daughter.[66] Similarly, Saint Brigid in her *vitae*[67] displays a close relationship with her foster-father:[68]

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[59] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 83.
[60] Ibid., p. 83.
[61] Ibid., p. 84.
[62] O'Brien, 'Pagan and Christian burial in Ireland during the first millennium AD: continuity and change', pp 130-7; and Elizabeth O'Brien (forthcoming).
[63] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 84.
[64] Olmsted, 'The earliest narrative version of the *Táin*', pp 5-7.
[65] Peter Parkes, 'Fosterage, kinship, and legend: when milk was thicker than blood?' in *CSSH* (2004), p. 603, (Parkes, 'Fosterage, kinship and legend').
[66] Ibid., p. 603.
[67] Richard Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigitae: the oldest texts' in *Peritia*, i (1982), pp 81–106; Kim McCone, 'Brigid in the seventh century: a saint with three lives' in *Peritia*, i (1982), pp 107–45; Mario Esposito, 'Cogitosus' in *Hermathena*, xx (1926-30), pp 251-7; Mario Esposito, 'On the earliest Latin life of St Brigid of Kildare' in *PRIA*, xxx C (1912), pp 307-27.
[68] Stokes, *Betha Patraic*.

wherefore then said the wizard to Brigit: 'the butter and the kine that thou hast milked, I offer them to thee. Thou shalt not abide in bondage to me, but serve thou the Lord.' Brigit answered him and said: 'Take thou the kine and give me my mother's freedom.' Said the wizard: 'Not only shall thy mother be freed, (but) the kine shall be given to thee, and whatsoever thou shalt say (that) will I do.' Then Brigit dealt out the kine unto the poor and the needy of God. The wizard was baptized and was faithful, and accompanied Brigit from that time forth.[69]

Within hagiography, there are numerous examples of children being sent away to be fostered for educational purposes. In the life of St. Declan, Colmán, Declan's father commanded that his son should be brought up with due care, that he should be 'well trained, and be set to study at the age of seven years if there could be found in his neighbourhood a competent Christian scholar to undertake his tuition'.[70] St. Declan was then fostered with his uncle (Dobron), who had earnestly pleaded with the parents of Declan that they should give the boy to him for fosterage. On reaching the age of seven, he was given over by his parents and foster-parents to the care of the Dymna (or Dioma) in order 'to learn to read'.[71] The holy-man built a cell where he both lived and instructed Declan and another child, Cairbre Mac Colmain 'both of these were for a considerable period pursuing their studies together'.[72] Similarly, St. Brendan was fostered by St. Íte, and then passed into the care of a bishop who for another five years 'taught him his letters'.[73]

At the core of the institution of fosterage was the education and training of the foster child in order to prepare the child for his or her role in society later in life. The law texts stipulate a fine to be paid in the event that this education or training was found to be substandard, for example 'through the negligent provision of instruction in a given area'.[74]

<u>Children's early lives and the institution of fosterage in Old Norse society</u>

Jochens suggests that the Norse practice of fosterage may well have been influenced by the Irish fosterage example, prompted by a desire to promote alliances and extra

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[69] Stokes, *Betha Patraic*.
[70] Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore*.
[71] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 74.
[72] Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore*.
[73] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 74. The Life of St. Ité dates to the twelfth-century. Sharpe, *Medieval Irish Saints Lives*, p. 394.
[74] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 29.

biological social networks rather than economic reasons. In Norse society, fostering was common amongst the elite and wealthy, and, as in Ireland, children were often fostered by less well off families, and were duly remunerated by law.[75] Both boys and girls could be fostered by a *fóstra* (foster-mother) or a *fóstri* (foster-father) who came to the farm, but both sexes could be fostered away from home as well. Similar to Irish historical and literary account 'a life long bonding often developed between the foster father or mother and his or her charge'.[76] References in the Scandinavian sagas indicate that the fosterparent often had a closer relationship to the child than the birthmother, even when both were present in the home. Jochens has suggested that 'women who received foster children themselves on their farms or who were hired to care for the children of others often developed life-long affective attachments to people to whom they were not related'.[77] The very close relationship of the enslaved Irish princess Melkorka is illustrated in *Laxdæla Saga*. Upon seeing Melkorka's tokens, her ailing and bedridden foster mother not only weeps for joy, but was in good spirits all the winter and became strong and well.[78] Olaf later begs the king to let him take the foster mother back with him to his own mother, and Melkorka is bitterly disappointed when she later learns that the king felt it was not necessary.

It appears that, as in the Irish system of fosterage, foster parents in Iceland also provided their fosterlings with gifts of affection upon the completion of fosterage. Melkorka gives Olaf a knife and a belt to present to her fostermother as tokens of recognition. The inference being that they were objects that the fostermother had given Melkorka before she was enslaved at age fifteen. Both belts and knives are common finds in female graves throughout the Scandinavian diaspora.

As in the Irish context, fosterage could take place in Iceland for a number of different reasons. This could comprise an agreement between equals or friends; or it could be imposed on a less powerful household by a stronger one as a punishment for past offences; or it could be that wealthier households took children from households where they could not be fed.[79] While there are more mentions of boys being fostered in the

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[75] Jochens, 'Old Norse motherhood', p. 206.
[76] Ibid., p. 208.
[77] Ibid., pp 208-9.
[78] Press, *Laxdæla Saga*.
[79] Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', p. 47.

Sagas of the Icelanders, both sons and daughters seem to have been fostered around the age of seven years. In *Laxdæla Saga*, Melkorka, the Irish princess turned slave, allows her seven-year-old son Olaf to be fostered nearby by the elderly and childless Thord, who loved him deeply.[80] However, the saga literature suggests that there could be exceptions to this age. Holmgang Bersi fosters Olaf's son Halldor, who was only a year old at the time. A common theme throughout the sagas is the arranging for the fosterage of beloved children in order to mend or strengthen relationships between family and friends. So, Olaf says to Thorleik in relation to his beloved three-year-old son Bolli:

> So it is, kinsman, as you know, that no love has been lost between us; now I would beg for a better understanding in our brotherhood. I know you did not like when I took the heirlooms my father gave me on his dying day. Now if you think yourself wronged in this, I will do as much for gaining back your whole good-will as to give fostering to your son. For it is said that ever he is the lesser man who fosters another's child.[81]

The fosterage of Bolli repairs the relationship between the half brothers, and Bolli grows up there 'and was loved no less than their own children'.[82] Gunnar Karlsson and Ármann Jakobsson have both recently argued against the interpretation that the fostering out of children was a reflection of Icelandic parents indifference towards their children. For Karlsson, 'the real purpose of the fostering-out of elite boys was to toughen them up, as a kind of finishing school for the harsh realities of Icelandic society where fighting and death in battle were common'.[83] Similarly, Jakobsson argues that strong emotional ties existed between fosterparents and their fosterchildren, and between the fostered siblings themselves.[84]

The only modern analogy for fosterage that comes to mind is the practice of sending children off to boarding school, a common practice among wealthy Europeans for hundreds of years, and (although the age of boarding school children is rather older) still in common practice today.

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[80] Press, *Laxdæla Saga*.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Gunnar Karlsson, 'Barnfóstur á Íslandi að fornu' Jackobsson and Tulinius (eds), *Miðaldabörn*, pp 37-61, quoted in Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', p. 47.
[84] Ármann Jakobsson, 'Ástin á tímun þjóðveldisins' in Jackobsson and Tulinius (eds), *Miðaldabörn*, pp 63-85, quoted in Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', p. 47.

<u>Education</u>

If a general definition of culture is the skills and the knowledge that is passed on to the next generation through learning and socialization, than this must include the process of transmission itself, along with the objects produced by their application.[85] Raimund Karl has argued that then the fact that processes of learning are very rarely investigated within an archaeological context thus indicates that little thought has been given to the discussion of formal education during childhood, and to the extant in which this may have structured material culture. He argues that:

> In fact, children have until very recently been largely ignored in archaeology. This is especially so in 'Celtic' archaeology, which seems to be dominated by an adult male 'warrior' image: invariably, books on Iron Age 'Celtic' Europe devote much space to warriors, weapons and warfare, but only rarely is equal space devoted to any other social group, let alone children. We thus have to ask: if culture is transmitted by social learning, how is it that so little consideration is given to the very age when learning is considered to be most effective?[86]

How a society chooses to distribute or pass on skills and learning to a new generation 'reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control. From this point of view, differences within and changes in the organization, transmission and evaluation of educational knowledge should be a major area of sociological interest'.[87] Education and literacy have a major impact upon childhood, both in terms of 'prolonging the period before a child takes its place in the workforce, and being a factor in distinguishing between those societies for whom there is a concept of childhood, and those for whom such a concept has no meaning'.[88]

The sources indicate that two types of formalised professional schooling existed in Ireland in the early medieval period. These consisted of the secular native schools of higher learning that educated the professional scholars (*fili*), which were not open to the general population, and the monastic schools that admitted both oblates for the

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[85] Karl, 'Master and apprentice,' p. 255.
[86] Ibid., p. 255.
[87] B. Bernstein, 'On the classification and framing of educational knowledge' in M. F. D. Young (ed.), *Knowledge and control* (London, 1972), p. 47, quoted in Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 145.
[88] Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 145.

priesthood as well as small numbers of pupils not destined for religious life.[89] Certainly Irish schools were greatly admired by the time of Bede (d. 735).

<u>Secular education</u>

Kelly has argued that 'for professional education, children seem usually to have been sent off to a 'master' (*fithidir*), to be trained. It seems to have been the rule for a son to follow the profession of his father, so we can expect that such a son would have had some basic training at home, but be sent off at a young age to learn skills and techniques unknown to the father.[90] Kelly further suggests that there were training schools run by masters in a manner rather like modern-day boarding schools.[91] Evidence for such schools exists, and McGrath gives the example of the Flann Mainistreach, headmaster of the school at Monasterboice who died in 1056.[92] The relationship between master and pupil is similar to that of fosterfather and fosterling in that the child cannot make a contract while in the care of the master. In addition, in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, the druid Cathbad's charges are described as either pupils (*felmaicc*) or fostersons (*daltai*).[93] The relationship between *fithidir*, 'master', and *felmacc*, 'pupil, student' found in the Irish laws closely resembles the professional education of the twelfth- and thirteenth- century guilds, especially in the case of poetry, medical surgery, special craft techniques, or the learning of druidic lore.[94]

Kelly has suggested that it was very unusual for a girl to have been educated for anything other than domestic life or the church. However, he does point out that both poets and craftsmen may have sometimes had a daughter trained in his profession if he did not have any sons,[95] and a when a daughter showed aptitude for the profession.[96] Indeed the law texts make specific reference to female poets, wrights and physicians.[97] As poetry was regarded as a hereditary profession, pupils admitted to the professional schools were not normally drawn from the general population, but were expected to be

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[89] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 44.
[90] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 91.
[91] Ibid., Kelly gives the example of Cathbad the druid who is portrayed as having many pupils whom he instructs in the art of divination. Ibid., p. 91.
[92] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 44.
[93] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 91.
[94] Karl, 'Master and apprentice', p. 261.
[95] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 91.
[96] Ibid., p. 49.
[97] Ibid., p. 49.

the sons and grandsons of poets.[98] There was a specific curriculum for the students of the *filíd* and these are detailed in two sources. The first comprises material from the Brehon laws, including the *Senchus Mór*, the *Crith Gablach*, and the *Uraicecht Becc*, or 'small primer', the latter two of which deal mainly with social ranks and organisation.[99] The second source is a treatise on versification and is found in the Book of Ballymote. This source lists what are essentially the expected 'aims of the course' for each grade of *filí*. For a first-year student (aged around seven years) and a second year student the expected curriculum entailed learning:

> …fifty ogams (probably here meaning brief literary or scientific maxims); the grammatical treatise known as *Auraicept na n-Éces*… twenty Tales, of which the *Ollaire* had seven, the *Taman* ten and the *Drisac* twenty [these are the minor grades of the *filí*]. [The curriculum for the second year comprised] fifty ogams along with fifty of the *Drisac*; six easy lessons in philosophy; specified poems; thirty Tales, in addition to the twenty of the *Drisac*[100] [my brackets].

The expected course material to be learned by students continued to be laid out all the way to the highest grade (*ollamh*) and is set out over a period of twelve years of learning.[101] The seven grades of learning were universally known and accepted from the earliest recorded times, they are, for example, found in the ninth-century *Cormac's Glossary*.[102] McGrath points out that while we cannot be sure the curricula was universally adhered to for each year, 'the point of interest is that from such a remote age the principle of a graded course of learning was so clearly recognised'. [103] The status ascribed to learning in early medieval Ireland is illustrated by the fact that the *filíd* held the social status equivalent to that of the highest grades of society.[104]

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[98] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 46. The *filí*, however, were not only poets in the conventional sense of the word, but were significant contributors to the law texts.
[99] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, pp 48-9.
[100] Ibid., p. 49.
[101] See McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, pp 49-50 for a full summary of the expected curricula. Interestingly, (and very reminiscent of a modern day *viva*), in order to reach the highest level of *ollamh*, the candidate had to have not only passed through all the lower grades, but had to submit his own compositions to an *ollamh* of good standing, who then reported to the king of the *tuath* on the ability of the candidate as well as his moral character. If the candidate was accepted, the king then bestowed the degree. Ibid., p. 51.
[102] Ibid., p. 50.
[103] Ibid., p. 50.
[104] Ibid., p. 59.

The monastic schools

By the time the monastic schools were established in Ireland, education within the professional native schools was already well established. The monastic schools differed, however, in that they did not provide 'primary education' to their pupils. For those destined for the church or, indeed, monastic education:

> The normal process was this. Up to the age of about seven years, the child remained with his [or her] parents, or, more commonly, in accordance with the usual Irish custom, was given for fosterage to relations or friends of the family. Then, if he [or she] was destined for the church, he [or she] was entrusted to the care of some priest or hermit to begin his [or her] education.[105]

However, there were exceptions to the rule of monastic schools not providing primary education. This is evidenced by the mention of *oblati*, or children who were given over to the monastery before completion of fosterage.[106] It is clear from the literary and historical sources that primary education comprised reading, understanding and learning by rote the Latin scriptures.[107] There is no reference to specific monastic grades within the religious schools, and the courses of the religious degrees are outlined in a much more general manner to that of the *filid*.[108] However, the highest position within the grades is also called *ollamh*, or 'professor of written history'.[109]

Evidence for female literary activity in the sources is often incidental, which may suggest that female educational involvement was not unusual. Scattered references in the sources indicate that girls were schooled alongside their brothers throughout the Middle Ages. 'Judging from the Lives of saints of both sexes, female scholarly activities were similar to their brothers', including private tutorials, study groups and larger scholastic communities'.[110] The Life of St Ciarán of Clonmacnoise records how the daughter of the king of Tara was sent to Finnian at Clonard, to study the psalms and other texts, though not without causing some unease among the other monks'.[111] In fact,

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[105] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, pp 49-50, pp 73-4.
[106] Ibid., p. 74.
[107] Ibid., p. 75.
[108] Ibid., p. 95.
[109] Ibid., p. 96. 'The *ollamh* sits in the banqueting house [sic], because it is he that resides in his house with a king on that occasion. A great professor does not fail in any question in the four departments of knowledge'. Ibid., p. 96.
[110] Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 34.
[111] Ó Cróinín, *Ireland 400-1200* (1995), p. 181.

one of a bishop's primary obligations was to provide for the education of both boys and girls.[112] 'According to the so-called *Rule of the Céli Dé*, without such training "the whole Church will die".[113] '…for sanctifying and blessing their children after baptism, for ordering souls in every church, and training boys and girls to reading and piety… the allusion to the education of girls, in spite of its vagueness, is of special value, since for this early period so little information is available on this point'.[114]

The difference between male and female experience of education, as portrayed in the sources, is one of quantity rather than quality'.[115] Linguistic evidence supports the idea that there were both young male and female scholars. The word for a boy who was entering ecclesiastical training was a *maccléirech*, or 'young cleric' and for a female it was *maccaillech* or 'young nun'.[116]

While St. Darerca may not have been the 'champion of early childhood'[117] that St. Íte was ('The learned St. Íte "reared many of the saints of Ireland from their infancy"'),[118] there is evidence that there were children within her community. It is likely that Darerca would also have provided instruction for the children who learned alongside her nephew Luger,[119] as well as 'study sessions for adults'.[120]

However, only a select number of Irish female scholars surface in the extant sources, most of which merit mention due to their holiness rather than their learning.[121] Due to the rather vague and incidental mention of female scholars, as well as the fragmentary and elusive nature of medieval Irish women's history in general, no realistic assessment can be made of the numbers of girls involved in education within the monastic environment.[122]

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[112] Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars, p. 34.
[113] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 98.
[114] Ibid., p. 98.
[115] Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 34. Also see McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 98.
[116] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 91.
[117] Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 37.
[118] Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum*, vol., 1, p. 119.
[119] Callan points out that Darerca's hagiographer refers to multiple children within her religious community who were either children of her sisters, or they had been sent to her in the same way that children were sent to Íte for religious instruction. Callan, 'St. Darerca and her sister scholars', p. 47, fn 33.
[120] Ibid., p. 37.
[121] Ibid., p. 35.
[122] Ibid., p. 35.

Archaeological evidence for education

Archaeology provides a number of examples for the education of children. The earliest surviving text is that of the Springmount Bog Tablets[123] from Antrim which provide a rare example of 'copy books' probably belonging to a young early Christian scholar. Found in a bog in 1914, the tablets are similar to ones known from the Roman world and are made from yew. They comprise six perforated leaves of wood bound together with a leather thong and carried with a leather strap. The wooden leaves were inset with panels of wax that would have been written on with a stylus. The impressions in the wax were of Psalms 30, 31 and 32. The palaeography suggests that they were written in the early seventh century or even the late sixth.[124] The use of wax tablets was so well established that the Irish used the Latin word *caraxare* (literally, 'to carve') for writing.[125] These notes would not have been intended to be permanent,[126] and the surviving examples likely represent the practice 'homework' of a scholar. They were probably used as an *aide-mémoire* in teaching, and perhaps also for instruction in calligraphy'.[127] The early text of the *Hisperica Famina* illustrate aspects of a young scholars life.[128] The text mentions a 'book container' made of dried sheepskin with a strap for closing, as well as the 'writing tablet', which was carried in the right hand of the scholar and was made from 'choice pieces of wood, covered with rubbing wax from another region'.[129]

Students were educated in music and instruction in liturgical chant (*musica practica*) and in music theory (*musica theoretica* or *speculativa*) which undoubtedly followed the established traditions of the monastic schools and, later, university curricula.[130]

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[123] NMI [S. A. 1914:2].

[124] Martin McNamara, *The Psalms in the Early Irish church, Journal for the study of the Old Testament Supplement series 165* (Sheffield, 2000), pp. 32-33; Maurice Sheehy, 'Wax tablets from Springmount Bog', appendix 1, in op. cit, pp 116-9.

[125] Lloyd Laing, *The archaeology of Celtic Britain and Ireland: c. AD 400-1200* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 11. Also see E. C. R. Armstrong and R. A. S. Macalister, 'Wooden book with leaves indented and waxed found near Springmount Bog, Co, Antrim' in *JRSAI*, l (1920), pp. 160-6; and D. H. Wright, 'The tablets from Springmount Bog, a key to Early Irish palaeography' in *AJA,* lxvii (1963), p. 219.

[126] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 88.

[127] Ibid., p. 806. See Martin McNamara, 'Psalter text and psalter study in the early Irish church' in *P.R.I.A.*, lxxiii (1973), sect. C, pp 201-80; 206-7, 213-14, and the edition of the text by Maurice Sheehy and Martin McNamara (appendix I, pp 277-80); also T. J. Brown, 'The earliest Irish manuscripts and their late antique background' in Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter, *Ireland and Europe: the early church* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp 311-37, 312.

[128] See Michael Herren (ed.), *The Hisperica Famina, the A-text* (Toronto, 1987).

[129] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 119.

[130] Ann Buckley, 'Music in Ireland to c.1500' in F. J. Byrne, W. E. Cosgrove, J. R. Hill and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (eds), *A new history of Ireland, Prehistoric and Early Ireland*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 2005), p. 806 (Buckley, 'Music in Ireland to c.1500').

<u>Crafts and apprenticeship</u>

Children's contributions to labour within the archaeological record can sometimes be inferred by close analysis of settlement sites. The contribution to domestic labour production by children would arguably have taken place largely within the home and its immediate surroundings. It has been suggested that some of the examples of outstanding Irish metalwork could only have been done by children or perhaps older apprentices. The eyesight required for such intricate and delicate tasks is normally present in the teenage years such work would likely have been done by a young person as an apprentice.[131] It is also fair to assume that some of the 'trial pieces' in both bone and wood found at sites all over Ireland represent the work of child apprentices. It is also possible that certain 'rougher' objects may be representative of children's work.

<u>Work and training</u>

Hagiography provides insights into the work roles of both male and female children, although certain tasks seem to have been assigned to either one gender or another, as in the case of weaving, which was almost certainly associated with the female gender. Other sources indicate some work tasks may have been either non gendered or fluid, such as the herding of swine or sheep. The Middle Irish commentary on *Cáin Íarraith* provides some general information on the training that boys and girls of different social classes should receive. The texts tell us that the foster parents were required to maintain their foster child according to his or her rank. Hence, the son of a king must be supplied with a horse for riding,[132] and with clothing worth seven *séts*.[133] The foster child must also be educated in accordance with his or her rank. Royal and noble children were not trained in domestic work of the kitchen or the farm. Instead, such high-status boys were trained in preparing for a life of warfare, hunting, and leisure by being trained to play the boardgames *fidchell* and *brannuigecht*, how to ride a horse, throw a spear and how to swim.[134] Warrior training has often been deemed particularly important for a boy whose birth predestined him for leadership. The text *Cath Almaine* indicates that higher-class boys are also expected to recite amusing verse, exercise horses, fit spear

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[131] John Bradley, pers. Comm.
[132] 'The law tract *Cáin Iarraith* states that a child must be given a proper riding horse and instruction 'in the time of riding'. The subsequent commentary later qualifies that a horse should be provided for the child after he reaches seven years of age'. Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 293.
[133] A *sét* is a fixed unit of value. Three *séts* is the equivalent of one and a half milch-cows. Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 10.
[134] Ibid., p. 87.

points, and plait hair.[135] The same expectation of high-status boys is also given in the annals.[136] High-status females were trained in sewing, the cutting of cloth and embroidery.[137] Fosterparents who neglected to teach their fosterlings the appropriate skills were to be fined two-thirds of the fosterage fee.[138] For the children of the lower social ranks such as cow farmer (*bóaire*) and young farmer (*ócaire*), the training was very different. Children of the lower ranks would have begun to participate in the economy of the household as they were being trained. The literary and legal sources indicate that children were involved in herding livestock,[139] and hagiography has numerous incidents in which boys are responsible for herding pigs,[140] cows,[141] sheep,[142] and calves.[143] Kelly points out that the Irish word *búachaill* literally means 'one who tends cows', and only later took on the meaning 'boy'. Boys in the literary sources are often depicted taking orders from their mothers, as in the case when St. Féchín's mother gives him seven cows and a calf.[144] The sources indicate that the son of an *ócaire* must learn how to look after animals including lambs, calves, kids, and young pigs. He must also be taught to dry corn and other grains (*tírad*),[145] comb wool (*círad*) and chop wood for fire. In a section of legal commentary on miscellaneous topics, it is stated that an adopted son (*mac fáesma*) is put to work at fencing (*ime*) and weeding crops (*gortglanad*).[146] The daughter of an ócaire must be proficient in using a quern, the kneading-trough, and the sieve.[147] Kelly has suggested that a scribal error in the MS tradition is responsible for the existence of two versions of this law; in one version, girls of a commoner rank are also trained in looking after lambs and kids.[148] Certainly hagiographical evidence supports the interpretation that girls could also be responsible

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[135] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 168.
[136] Ibid., p. 168.
[137] Ibid., p. 452, fn 100.
[138] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 47.
[139] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 451, fn 93.
[140] Ibid., p. 451, fn 94
[141] Ibid., p. 451, fn 95.
[142] Ibid., p. 451, fn 96.
[143] Ibid., p. 451, fn 97.
[144] Ibid.,, p. 452, fn 98.
[145] Corn-drying kilns are a common feature of settlement in the early medieval period and it would be interesting to examine their spatial distribution in order to see if we can say anything more about their use by children.
[146] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 452, fn 103. '*Gortglanad* is literally "field cleaning"'.
[147] Ibid., p. 87.
[148] 'It is difficult to reconcile the evidence of the two versions on the training of young commoners, and there is probably a scribal error in the MS tradition. It is certainly strange that there is no mention in this version of a girl being trained in the care of domestic animals', Ibid., p. 452, fn 102n.

for the herding of various types of animals including sheep, swine and cattle. *Betha Patraic* mentions how:

> as Patrick and his sister Lupait were herding sheep, the lambs came, as was their wont, suddenly to their mothers. When Patrick and his sister saw that, they ran swiftly to separate the lambs, and the girl fell down, and her head struck against a stone, so that death was near her. Patrick came to her without delay, and made the sign of the cross over the wound so that it healed without any disease there from.[149]

The Saints' lives describe how both young girls and boys could be responsible for the herding swine. 'Mochuda, with other youths, herded his father's swine in his boyhood'.[150] Similarly, the life of St. Brigit describes one of her miracles:

> while she was herding Dubthach's swine, there came two robbers and carried off two boars of the herd. They fared over the plain, and Dubthach met them and bound on them the eric (*mulct*) of his swine. Said Dubthach to Brigit, 'Is herding of the swine good, my girl?' saith he. Dixit Brigit to Dubthach, 'Count thou the swine'. Dubthach counted the swine, and not one of them was wanting.[151]

The driving of cattle could also be a female task as suggested by a reference in *Bethú Brigte* to a woman and her daughter driving a cow to Brigit's enclosure.

It appears that one of the duties of a foster daughter was to help with household chores. There are references within *Leabhar Breac* and the ninth-century *Bethú Brigte* to the young Brigit cooking for her fostermother, herding pigs for her father, cooking bacon for her fathers' guests and churning butter for her mother.[152]

Children and their every day world- evidence from the Irish historical sources

Animals and children

Children in the early medieval period would have encountered dangerous situations because of their involvement in and around the workings of a farm, and the law texts cite a number of cases in which an injured or killed child's family had to be compensated. Boars and sows with their young can be particularly dangerous to adults

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[149] Stokes, *Betha Patraic.*
[150] Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore.*
[151] Stokes, *Lives of Saints Patrick, Brigit and Columba.*
[152] Ó hAodha, *Bethu Brigte.*

as well as children. *Cáin Adomnáin* speaks of women being killed by pigs,[153] and *Bretha Nemed Toísech* describes how the hunting dog belonging to the young boy Béimnech attacked a herd of pigs, and after being run off by the animals, the dog turned on his owner and 'tore him with its teeth from sole to forehead, inflicting fifty wounds',[154] which resulted in the child's parents suing for sick maintenance and compensation. A further case in the same text describes another case of an unsupervised herd of pigs killing and eating a child and a calf. Because the herd was left unattended, the owner of the pigs had to pay compensation for the boy's death, rather than forfeiting the pigs. [155] *Bethu Phátraic* also has a reference to a child being eaten by pigs[156] – presumably an infant. Patrick was approached by the parents who begged him to do something to help, resulting in the child's bones being collected and the child being restored to life. [157]

Scandinavian evidence for secular education

Graham-Campbell suggested that motif pieces might have been used in the training of apprentice artists and jewellers.[158] The Dublin excavations produced a remarkable assortment of these trial pieces. However, such 'trial pieces' or 'motif pieces' are also found on stone, bone, wood, and antler in both rural and urban, native and Hiberno-Scandinavian contexts.

Jan Ragnar Hagland and Trøite Lorentzen have argued that some of the runestones from Bergen in Norway represent the work of children. This suggests that there must have been a certain 'dissemination of runic literacy for these children to have had something to imitate'.[159]

Runes and literacy

The earlier *fuþark* (rune alphabet) comprised two distinct variants representing functional differences. The shorter rune forms appear to represent the script of everyday

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[153] Kelly, *Early Irish farming* p. 154, fn 132.
[154] Ibid., fn 134.
[155] Ibid., p. 180.
[156] Ibid., p. 154, fn 133.
[157] Ibid., p. 180, fn 156.
[158] Graham Campbell, *The Vikings*, p. 150.
[159] J. R. Hagland and R. T. Lorentzen, 'Skrift med runer i lys av forsking på tidig skriving hos barn' in S. Nyström (ed.), *Runor och ABC, elva förläsningar från ett symposium i Stockholm våren 1995* (Stockholm, 1995) quoted in Laila Kitzler Åhfeldt, 'Work and worship, laser scanner analysis of Viking Age rune stones' Archaeological research laboratory, Universitet Stockholms (2002), p. 61.

communication, whereas the longer and more elaborate marks are used more on stone monuments.[160] 'Runes were a functional tool to write down spoken language and were used for everyday messages as well as for religious incantations'.[161] In total, between five thousand and six thousand runic inscriptions are known today, and more than three thousand of these are found in Sweden, mostly on rune stones from the late Viking Age.[162] These stones can also help us speculate on the uses and knowledge of writing at that time, and perhaps earlier. Eight hundred runic inscriptions on wood are known from the harbour at Bryggen in Bergen. While most are dated to the twelfth century, they appear to represent an earlier practice. Rune-carved wood is also known from ninth-century Haithabu (Hedeby). Due to the nature of the materials, the use of runes would likely not have been confined to the wealthy. Neither parchment nor expensive books were necessary in order to learn to be literate in runes. While it has been previously thought that runic inscriptions were confined to the upper classes, this interpretation has largely come about based on the endurance of runic monuments of stone and their survival in the landscape.[163] Everyday objects however, were much more likely to be written on wood, which is much less likely to survive in the archaeological record. It has been argued that there is therefore 'no reason to doubt that they were used in daily life at an early stage'.[164]

Rune-inscribed wooden objects that may be representative of practicing the alphabet and learning to write are also known from the later site of Bryggen in Bergen.[165] These inscriptions often contain the runic alphabet or fragments of it, along with a personal name. James Knirk has suggested a number of factors that may be suggestive of archaeological evidence of learning to write:

> The presence of *fuþark* (the runic alphabet), runic syllabaries (repetitions of similar syllables with regular variations), inscriptions clearly showing the copying of text, often in two or more hands and this representing a model and a copy, inscriptions having no linguistic meaning but consisting of, for

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[160] Phillip Pulsiano et al., (eds), *Medieval Scandinavia, an encyclopedia* (New York, 1993), p. 550.
[161] William Fitzhugh and Elisabeth Ward (eds). *Vikings, the North Atlantic saga* (Washington, 2000), p. 67.
[162] Ibid., p. 67.
[163] Sawyer and Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: from conversion to Reformation,* p. 10.
[164] Ibid., p. 10.
[165] The earliest inscriptions from Bryggen date to the fourteenth century. For a digital database of all the Bryggen runes see Anne Haavaldsen and Espen Ore, *Runes in Bergen, Preliminary report from the project "Computerising the runic inscriptions at the Historical museum in Bergen"* Humanistisk datasenter, Norwegian computing centre for the humanities, (http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/ribwww/english/runeindex.html) (2 March, 2007).

example, repeated runes or rune-like signs, and thus perhaps representing practice carving and inscriptions that in their texts mention or discuss learning to write with runes.[166]

The inscriptions that comprise *fuþarks* on the same object in different hands is particularly suggestive of a teacher pupil interaction. However, it is unclear whether this was a 'schooling' exercise, or whether it represents the passing on of a skill to a family member.

Fourteen runic inscriptions are known from Ireland to date. The rune-inscribed cattle scapula from a mid-eleventh century house site at Christchurch Place, Dublin, may represent text which is suggestive of *barneregler*, or children's rhymes of a type that survived in Norwegian tradition into the present century.[167] In addition, the carvings appear to have been executed by two different people. It has also been suggested that one of the sets of runes may represent a garbled form of the personal Scandinavian name with the first element *Ingi-*. The inscription also contains repeated runes. The twenty-four runic characters upon this cattle scapula have been identified as being too clear and precise to be idle doodling, and are too untidy to be ornamental.[168] The fact that this object meets at least five out of the six criteria set out by James Knirk strongly suggests that this represents archaeological evidence of (a child?) learning to write.

Monastic education

Callow has suggested that the arrival of Christianity may have provided 'schooling for boys and girls among the elite'.[169] During the ninth and tenth centuries in particular, the Christian church made a concentrated effort both to recruit and educate young people. While the Benedictine monastic tradition did not affect Ireland until the twelfth century, it had an overwhelming impact on the continent and Scandinavia. There are monastic written sources that indicate monasteries bought Slavic and Danish boys in order to

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[166] James Knirk, 'Learning to write with runes in Medieval Norway' in I. Lindell (ed.), *Medeltida skrift- och språkkultur. Nordisk medeltidsliteracy i ett diglossiskt och digrafiskt perspektiv II. Nio föreläsningar från ett symposium i Stockholm våren 1992, Runica et mediævalia Opuscula 2* (Stockholm, 1994), pp 173-4.

[167] Michael Barnes, Jan Ragnar Hagland and R. I. Page, *The runic inscriptions of Viking Age Dublin, National Museum of Ireland Medieval Dublin excavations 1962-81*, series B, volume 5 (1997), p. 33 (Barnes, et al, *The runic inscriptions of Viking Age Dublin*).

[168] Ibid., pp 32-3.

[169] Callow, 'Transitions to adulthood in early Icelandic society', p. 47.

educate them in the Benedictine tradition.[170] Leila Kitzler Åhfeldt has suggested that rune carvers might be seen in this educative context.[171]

Dress and appearance

Social relationships in early medieval Ireland were defined by strict understandings of status and rank, which in turn were identified through clothing and dress accessories.[172] The items described in the law texts as being associated with children are very much related to rank and class; but this is hardly surprising given the nature of these texts. For example, the texts specify which colours may be worn by the children of the various classes throughout fosterage. The colours of the clothing worn as well as such ornamentations as silver and gold trimmings or brooches were outward identifiers of status and rank.[173] According to the seventh-or eighth-century law tract *Senchus Mór*, children of the lower classes wore garments that were blay-coloured, yellow, black and white. Green, brown, and red were for the noble grades, and royal children wore blue and purple.[174] Archaeological evidence supports the written evidence, with the most common shades identified being a dark brownish yellow, crimson/purple, and green. Clothing could also be grey, variegated and striped.[175] The same law tract also mentions that royal sons were to wear satin and scarlet, and to have silver on their sword scabbards and brass rings upon their hurling sticks. The noble (but not royal) sons also wore brass on their hurling sticks, but wore tin on their scabbards.[176] The lower free classes are not included in this discussion, thereby implying that swords and hurling sticks were higher status objects reserved for the noble and royal classes only. However, the Life of St. Féchín of Fore (*Betha Féchín Fabair*), which was written in 1329 AD, contains a reference to boys playing hurling near an ecclesiastical enclosure:

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[170] The life of St. Ansgar (*Vita Anskaari*) describes the purchase of thirty Danish boys for a monastery. During the ninth century Danish boys were trained at monasteries in Hamburg, Hedeby and Turholt. In England, members were recruited to monasteries partly by the taking in of oblates, i.e. children donated to a monastery by their parents. Monasteries (though not Cistercian) took care of children who could not inherit because their property could not be divided. C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval monasticism, forms of religious life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages* (London, 1984), p. 32f, p. 63, quoted in Leila Kitzler Åhfeldt, 'Work and worship, laser scanner analysis of Viking Age rune stones' (PhD thesis, Archaeological research laboratory, Universitet Stockholms, 2002), p. 70.

[171] Leila Kitzler Åhfeldt, 'Work and worship, laser scanner analysis of Viking Age rune stones' (PhD thesis, Archaeological research laboratory, Universitet Stockholms, 2002), p. 70.

[172] Boyle, 'Lest the lowliest be forgotten', p. 85.

[173] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 29.

[174] Williams, 'Dressing the part', p. 48.

[175] Ibid., p. 48.

[176] Ibid., p. 48.

One time Féchín was in his cell praying when he heard the noise of children hurling on the green beside the cell, and they disturbed him at his devotions. 'I permit you', said Féchín, 'to go and be drowned in the lake, and your souls will be free to ascend to heaven'. Then the children went into the lake and they were drowned.[177]

<u>Hair and grooming</u>

Despite rhetorical inflation, the Irish mythological tales such as the *Táin bó Cúailnge* are in general consensus with the Classical authors in their descriptions of how the early Irish wore their hair and beards.[178] The warriors' hairstyles are frequently mentioned throughout the *Táin*, but the hair of young boys does not receive any mention. William Sayers has suggested that particular hairstyles for men were associated with maturity and coming of age. It has been suggested that the style and colour of the hair were important masculine symbols, with hair colour being associated very much with the rank of the individual. In the descriptions of King Conchobar and his warriors, only the royal members of Conchobar's family are described as blond (for royalty), the rest of the warriors have brown, black or grey hair. All the hairstyles of the warrior class are described as either long and carefully arranged, or short and bristly.[179] Only the boy hero Cú Chulainn merits attention being paid to his hair, despite being the youngest member of the boy-troop. Other literary evidence indicates ritual hair cutting as a symbol of assuming the duties of fosterage.[180] The hairstyle of the seven-year-old Cú Chulainn is described as being arranged with 'three coils in the hollow in the nape of his neck, and like gold threads was each fine hair, loose-flowing, bright-golden, excellent, long-tressed, splendid and of beautiful colour, which fell back over the shoulders'.[181] This is paralleled in Merovingian Gaul where the passage from childhood to adolescence was marked by the cutting of hair and a shave at the coming of age (twelve years).[182] High-status boys wore their hair long and the cutting of hair without the consent of his parents was punishable by a fine.[183]

Hairstyles may also have been symbols of status or even tribal affiliations. The *fianna*, who were aged at least fourteen but had not yet reached the stage of 'beard

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[177] Stokes, 'Life of St. Féchín of Fore', p. 349.
[178] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 157.
[179] Ibid., p. 157.
[180] Ibid., p. 159.
[181] Ibid., p. 160.
[182] Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 45.
[183] Ibid., p. 45.

encirclement' or maturity, appear to have worn their hair in a distinctive fashion in order to appear wolf like or bear-like.[184] It seems then that upon the age of maturity, or adulthood, the hairstyle was symbolically changed to reflect a shift in status.

William Sayers has also suggested that while the term *mael* is associated with lower social status (*mael moga* or 'slave's hairstyle'), *mael* did not always refer to bald or 'wholly cropped' hair, but could refer to hairstyles where only a portion of the hair had been cut off. For the warrior class, this may have meant that other parts of the hair were given more prominence, resulting in a tuft of (perhaps) artificially stiffened hair. This practice of warriors or nobles stiffening the hair may have its origins in a much earlier time. While the Irish mythological tales appear to describe a time during the Irish Iron age, this view has largely been disproven in favour of the early medieval period when the tales were first written down.[185] However, the recent find of the 'Clonycavan man' bog body from Clonycavan, Co. Meath revealed that he had a mixture of vegetable plant oil mixed with imported resin from pine trees – a hair stiffener – or 'mousse'. The man was in his early 20s when he was killed some time between 392 B.C and 201 B.C. Clonycavan man may have been a high status political hostage who was ritually killed.[186]

Hairstyles seem to have been age dependent, with some initiatory cutting rite followed by subsequent growth and styling.[187] Rather than being forcibly imposed, some shorn styles of hair were probably assumed or socially prescribed.[188] It has also been suggested that the term *mael*, when applied to lay people rather than ecclesiastics,[189] may have been indicative of a hypocoristic name for a boy, perhaps given when the child's hair was initially cut at age seven, thus symbolically marking the period between childhood and the beginning of adolescence.[190] Virtually all societies seem to have some sort of customs to mark the onset of puberty, or the emergence of the young adult

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[184] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 161.

[185] Mallory, 'The world of Cú Chulainn', p. 151.

[186] Stephen Buckley and Joann Fletcher, 'Analysis of the hair and hairstyle of Clonycavan Man', paper given at NMI Bog Bodies Research Projects, NMI, 17 June, 2006. Also see Eamonn Kelly, 'Secrets of the bog bodies, the enigma of the Iron Age explained' in *Archaeology Ireland*, xx, no. 1, issue 75 (Spring, 2006), pp 26-30.

[187] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 165.

[188] Ibid., p. 177.

[189] There is some suggestion that clerical tonsure also symbolized a change in status within the community. The loss of hair is equated with the loss of free status and 'aggregation into a heavenly but invisible *communitas*'. Accepting Christian tonsure also seems to have meant partial or full removal of the beard. Ibid., pp 180-1.

[190] Ibid., p. 177.

from the adolescent stage. Bronagh Ní Chonaill has suggested that seven years was a transitional stage for a child, during which time he or she was generally regarded as having reached the age of learning and reason.[191]

Those not fit for warrior status, such as slaves, do not appear to have been allowed to have long hair. A tenth-century slate trial piece from Killaloe, Co. Clare depicts a type of warrior hairstyle described above. The figure has an incised braid down its back, with what appears to be a partially shaven hairstyle on either side of the head and on the crown. Large circles on either side of the face are either ears or coiled hair rings (?). The figure also appears to be wearing some type of cloak, fastened by a clasp (?)[192] **(Figure 44).**

In early Irish society, both hair and hairstyles – in much the same manner as dress and appearance – 'were organized as a series of markers of sex, age and station… [and] cutting the hair of the head marked stages in the growth of the individual, male and female… towards sexual and legal maturity'.[193] The beard was symbolic of the adult warrior and 'all boys aspire to this "collar"'[194] and its wearing was also a social marker of male age and status. The adult warriors in the *Táin* refuse to engage with Cú Chulainn because of his beardlessness and so he is forced to resort to staining his chin with berry juice, or using an incantation to create the illusion of a beard.[195] Pubic hair (*fés*), or body hair, was also a symbol of adult male status.[196]

Combs, made of horn, bone, and antler, are a common feature in the archaeological record, and the more ornate examples may be status symbols. The craft of comb making has left traces at numerous sites throughout Ireland.[197] *The Triads* give a description of the things that constitute a comb maker – 'racing a hound in contending for a bone; straightening a rams horn with his breath, without fire; chanting upon a dung-hill so that all antlers and bones and horns that are below come to the top'.[198]

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[191] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 28.
[192] [BM, 1940:10.1].
[193] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 188.
[194] Ibid., p. 166.
[195] Ibid., p. 166.
[196] Ibid., p. 167.
[197] Ibid., p. 168.
[198] Kuno Meyer (trans.) *The Triads of Ireland* (London, 1906), p. 17, available at CELT (http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T103006.html) (12 May, 2008).

Hair and hairstyles were important markers of social status and gender as well as age in early Irish society. This adult symbolism for both men and women seems to have originated out of outward signs of fertility and harvest.

The Book of Aicill stipulates offences to the hair of students and 'shorn girls', including the eyebrows and eyelashes of the latter.[199] A poem from the Finn cycle also refers to 'shorn girls' (*ingen maol*) and does so in a clearly positive sense. The poem distinguishes the shorn girls from the chattels and old women also in the house, and Sayers has suggested that 'this pairing of two groups of women, with the exclusion of adult males and women of childbearing age, suggests some special hairstyling for younger, doubtless unmarried girls'.[200]

Irish children's jewellery

Like their adult counterparts, children could and did wear jewellery. The types of materials used likely depended on available materials as well as the social status of the wearer's family.

Hencken interpreted several fragments of lignite at Lagore as objects that were likely worn by women and children, with the smallest serving as pendants. The majority of these objects had an internal diameter of between five and seven centimetres, but some of the fragments had a diameter of less then five.[201] At Cahercommaun, Co. Clare, Hencken identified fifty-two fragments of lignite rings. 85% of the rings had an inside diameter of under seven cm, and 65% had an inside diameter of 6 cm. Hencken suggested that – if these objects were bracelets – that they were likely worn by women,[202] and it is possible that the smaller ones were worn by children. Very small brooches that may have belonged to children have also been identified in the archaeological record, such as the brooch or pin from Kilfinnane, Co. Limerick.[203] The ringfort at Dunbell, Co. Kilkenny produced a boars tusk which was pierced in the centre and was interpreted as pendant which may have been worn by a child.[204]

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[199] Sayers, 'Early Irish attitudes toward hair and beards', p. 175.
[200] Ibid., p. 177.
[201] Hencken, 'Lagore Crannóg', pp 149–50.
[202] Hugh Hencken, *Cahercommaun, a stone fort in County Clare* (RSAI special volume, Dublin, 1938), p. 42 (Hencken, *Cahercommaun*).
[203] Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in the "The Wooing of Becfhola"', pp 13-4.
[204] John Prim, 'On the discovery of ogham monuments and other antiquities in the raths of Dunbel, County of Kilkenny' in *PTKSIAS*, ii (1855), p. 400 (Prim, 'On the discovery of ogham monuments and other antiquities in the raths of Dunbel, County of Kilkenny'). I am not sure however, what Prim was basing his interpretation on. In addition, the site was 'excavated' by workmen in 1854.

Scandinavian children's clothing

Albeit limited, the corpus of extant evidence suggests that Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian children wore their clothes in a manner similar to their parents. Textile finds from Dublin and Waterford indicate that children wore caps that resembled those worn by Hiberno-Scandinavian women in Dublin. Clothing, textiles and footwear, all of which can be associated with children have also been found in the Dublin and Waterford excavations – including a headscarf that was patched and reused for a child. One cap may have had a secondary use by a child:[205]

> a torn piece of the selvedge was reused as a tie, being placed high on the side of the cap in a way that does not leave enough depth for an adult's head if secured under the chin. This is not the original braid or ribbon tie that fastened the cap, but a piece taken from the fabric and carefully sewn into a strip.[206]

Elizabeth Wincott-Heckett has proposed that this item may represent the passing on of a treasured silk piece to a child[207] **(Figure 45)**. At York a number of early eleventh-century pieces of linen were identified as being part of a young child's smock[208] as well as a child's headdress.[209]

Possibly the oldest image of a Scandinavian child comes from a ninth-century picture stone from Ardre.[210] The child appears to be wearing a short skirt-like shift which is cinched in at the waist and bells out slightly at the knees[211] **(Figure 46)**. Evidence from a rune stone in Uppland, Sweden, indicates that children had special clothing or robes, at least for their christening.[212]

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[205] NMI [E172: 14370].
[206] Heckett, 'Some Hiberno-Norse head coverings', p. 86.
[207] Ibid., p. 86.
[208] Penelope Walton-Rogers, *Textiles, cordage and fibre from 16-22 Coppergate, the archaeology of York, vol. 17, the small finds*, Fascicule 5 (Dorchester, 1989), p. 348.
[209] Heckett, *Viking Age headcoverings from Dublin*, p. 51.
[210] Malin Lindquist, 'Concerning the existence of children' in *VHM*, i (2001), p. 27 (Lindquist, 'Concerning the existence of children').
[211] On it there is a carving of a swarm of figures and scenes. On the upper left hand side, there is depiction of a bearded man carrying a child in his left arm. It is unclear what the gender of the child is, but it appears the man is carrying the child up and away from the swirling mass of animals below. 'The runic text does not give a hint what it is all about. Maybe the man is protecting the child from the crawling lizards or snakes below. Ibid., p. 27.
[212] HMS, Runestone from Uppland, Sweden which was raised in the 11th century. The inscription reads 'Unna had this stone raised to his son Östen, who died in christening robes, God help his soul', available at, (http://www.historiska.se/home/exhibitions/vikings/) (2 August, 2007).

Footwear

Based on the large finds of shoes among the extensive collection of leatherwork unearthed in the Wood Quay excavations, it is possible to reach some conclusions about the style of shoes worn both by children and adults. One particularly well-preserved example of a child's shoe[213] obviously belonged to a very young child of toddler age **(Figure 47)**. Upon close examination, it is possible to identify creases and indentations in the leather that were created by the child flexing his or her foot and toes. The shoe appears to approximate to a modern size 28, the size a three- and a half year-old of average height would wear today. A number of other children's boots and shoes were recovered from the Dublin excavations, in particular from the High Street and Winetavern Street excavations. These objects help to determine children's clothing styles in Dublin during the twelfth to thirteenth centuries.[214] The finds indicate that a range of styles were available in children's footwear. Most footwear was made from calfskin or goatskin and most were laced at the ankle. Wooden shoe lasts are also known, and a child-sized one comes from Hedeby.[215]

Combs

Combs are one of the most common gravefinds in both adult and child graves in Scandinavia. This suggests that most people owned a comb and that it was part of the basic hygienic equipment. There are many different types and sizes of combs known from Viking-Age Scandinavia, from small fine ones that measure not more than 6-7 cm long, which may have belonged to children (or have been beard combs), to very large combs with teeth that were very thick and often measured up to 25 cm in length.[216] Combs are also known from Anglo-Saxon child cremation graves and the social identity of the deceased appeared to have had a bearing on the provision of these artefacts. Richards noted that combs are common in all age categories apart from infants.[217] However, Howard Williams has identified comb fragments of an unknown type at Spong Hill and other cemeteries among infant, child and adult burials, as well as

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[213] NMI [E71: 3981].

[214] See no. 192, child's leather shoe NMI [E71: 16871], 13thc excavations at High Street; and no. 193, child's leather boot NMI [E71: 2093], Late 12th century/High Street, NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin*, (Dublin, 1985), p 44.

[215] Graham Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 119.

[216] Julian Richards, *The significance of form and decoration of Anglo-Saxon cremation urns*, BAR. series no. 166 (1987), p. 127, quoted in Howard Williams, 'Material culture as memory, combs and cremation in Early Medieval Britain' in *EME*, xii, no. 2 (2003), p. 109.

[217] Ibid., p. 109.

certain comb types found only with infants in one cemetery, and the same comb type found only with adult burials at another cemetery. In addition, miniature combs are found predominantly in infant graves at Spong Hill. Williams has suggested that:

> the choice to bury the dead with a comb may therefore have been related to the social category of the dead person but that these patters are far from clear-cut, and all age and gender groups could be buried with a comb. This evidence shows that combs could be used to distinguish between different categories of the cremated dead but that the provision of combs was a common theme linking the funerals of many different social categories.[218]

It is possible the large combs from Viking Age Scandinavian represent objects used in the grooming of horses, as they are often found in graves that included the burial of a horse.[219] The excavations at Birka revealed specific types of combs that can be associated with men and women and perhaps children. Men wore their combs in a cover suspended from a belt, whereas women appear to have commonly worn their combs hanging in the same place as they carried the rest of their tools – strung between their brooches.[220] Howard Williams has suggested that:

> As objects of value when produced, exchanged and used, combs would have been intimately connected with the presentation and management of the social person in life. In this sense they were artefacts not only with a set function, but through their routine use in presenting and managing head, facial and perhaps also body hair, they were integral to the social construction of the body and selfhood.[221]

Scandinavian children's jewellery

Two objects that likely represent bracelets worn by children are known from the excavations at Wood Quay. These include a small lead alloy bracelet from Winetavern Street and a copper alloy example from St. John's Lane.[222] It is interesting to note that 'adult-sized' copper alloy bracelets are also known from the Dublin excavations.

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[218] Howard Williams, 'Material culture as memory, combs and cremation in Early Medieval Britain' in *EME*, xii, no. 2 (Oxford, 2003), p. 109.

[219] Michél Carlsson, 'Kammer för barn och hästar" in Bente Magnus and Birgitta Wallstenius (eds), *Livet i Birka, Historiska Nyheter* no. 61 (Stockholm, 1996), p. 5. Translated by Malin Crona.

[220] Ibid., p. 5.

[221] David Clarke and Andrew Heald, 'Beyond typology, combs, economics, symbolism and regional identity in Late Norse Scotland' in *NAR*, xxxv, no. 2 (2002), pp 81-93; also see Howard Williams, 'Material culture as memory, combs and cremation in Early Medieval Britain' in *EME*, xii, no. 2 (Oxford, 2003), p. 117. Also see Kristina Ambrosiani, *Viking Age combs, comb making and comb makers in the light of finds from Birka and Ribe* (Stockholm, 1981).

[222] [NMI E81:4198]; [NMI E173:3370].

Graham Campbell has also suggested that during the tenth century in particular, small round brooches that were used to fasten the opening of a chemise are generally the only type of brooch to appear in children's graves.[223] A rather enigmatic reference to what may be jewellery worn by female children comes from *Laxdœla Saga*. In emphasising the beauty and poise of Gudrun, the author describes her as being such a woman of state that whatever other women wore in the way of finery of dress was looked upon as children's 'gewgaws' (trinkets) compared to hers.[224]

It is clear from the historical and archaeological evidence that children in early medieval Ireland were active participants in society, rather than mere passive receivers of culture. The extant material certainly indicates that childhood was an important and distinct process which was influenced by status, ethnicity, age and gender.

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[223] Graham Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 116.
[224] Press, *Laxdœla Saga*.

Chapter Eight

The material world of childhood(s), evidence of socialisation and play

This chapter discusses some of the archaeological material related to infancy and childhood in medieval Ireland. Aspects of childhood as regards environment, socialization and play are discussed in order to highlight the fact that children in the past were capable of creating their own cultures which intersected – but were also distinct from – the adult world. One method for identifying children's material culture in the past and how it intersected with the adult world, is to look at artefacts that represent labour production and socialization. In contrast, examinations of toys allows for an investigation of the separate spaces of childhood thus providing insights into children's attitudes to their material and cultural world.

Examining relationships between children and material culture allows for the identification of different processes of socialization within a particular culture. Toys and children's playthings are a useful category of material culture to consider in an archaeological study of children and socialization, but are often dismissed as curiosities or oversimplified and not examined in context as cultural objects. As human beings learn through play, trial and error:

> it is conceivable that small items, or badly drawn or sculpted figures in the archaeological record, were used and created by children. Just as female engendered space is now recognised in the past, it is time to start considering the potential of identifying childhood spaces, where women and children are no longer seen as one entity and children are viewed as independent agents within their own social space.[1]

As Lewis has argued, many children's playthings would have been made out of materials that would likely be invisible in the archaeological record, such as sticks, stones and everyday household objects:

> In this way, children may influence the formation processes of a site, perhaps by the movement of artefacts from their original site of deposition (e.g. a midden), and the physical alteration of household objects. A small pile of stones or an unusual collection of pot-holes may indicate a child was

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[1] Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children,* p. 9.

at play, and this possibility should be taken into account when interpreting a site. Until recently, child activity in the archaeological record has been seen as detracting from the real issues of adult behaviour, rather than being viewed as informative of the child's interaction with its physical environment.[2]

The relationship between socialization and cultural artefacts

Toys carry meanings that relate to both the 'imperial practices of adults' and the 'native practices of children', and in most cultural settings they are used exclusively or primarily by children.[3] Utilizing toys as a method for accessing children and/or childhood in the past presents its own set of difficulties, as it can lead to the possibility of separating the child from the more 'serious' adult world.[4] However, examining objects that may be 'child centred' toys as well as objects that might be considered 'functional miniatures' in the adult sense of the word, can provide an opportunity to not only gain an insight into the child's imaginative world, but also into the processes of socialization of children. Approaching children's objects as meaningful tools within the socialization process provides an opportunity to study situated learning and the acquisition of technical competence.[5] They also provide:

> a way to identify the remains of children's behaviour with a higher degree of certainty than other types of material culture, which may have been used by other members of a household. Yet at the same times, multiple meanings associated with toys do not assume a binary opposition and separate the adult and child worlds, but they are the way in which interactions between them take place.[6]

'Toys', however, are not simply tools parent's use to enculturate children into the adult world. They are what Baxter calls 'contentious objects in dialogues of control and resistance',[7] as well as symbolic reflections of ethnicity and class.

> Toys and children-specific artefacts (such as… clothing, mugs, medicines, school paraphernalia, etc), when purchased or made for children, represent attempts, made by adults, to suggest and enforce certain norms of behaviour for children based upon their gender, age, socio-economic class and even

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[2] Lewis, *The bioarchaeology of children,* p. 9.
[3] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 41.
[4] Lillehammer, 'A child is born', pp 98-100.
[5] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 12.
[6] Derevenski, 'Where are the children?', p. 13.
[7] Baxter, *The archaeology of childhood*, p. 22.

socio-cultural ideals of beauty.[8]

Toys are mentioned in the historical sources for both Scandinavia and Ireland. There are also a number of toys that have been identified in the archaeological record. As in other European contexts, a remarkable homogeneity exists in the types of toys found in the early medieval period, regardless of the culture in question.

<u>Native Irish</u>

References to children's objects exist in the literature. The reference in the law texts to high status boys owning hurleys and scabbards (and presumably swords), is suggestive of the military play undoubtedly undertaken by this class of boys. The Irish mythological tales reflect the competitive nature of high status boys' games. The boyhood exploits of Cú Chulainn are told in the Ulster cycle, of which the oldest extant written copies date to the twelfth century but reflect an older oral tradition probably going back to the eighth century. At the age of five, Cú Chulainn travelled to Emain Macha to join the older boy corps with his 'hurley of brass, his ball of silver, his throwing javelin[9], and his toy spear'[10] along with his little shield. Similarly, the life of St. Fintan of Taghman (Wexford), describes an aristocratic son in Fintan's fostercharge as being appropriately decked out with 'royal regalia and a miniature lance, shod in ornate sandals'.[11] The law texts also refer to *essrechta maccru*, or 'early playthings', explained as 'goodly things that remove the dullness from little boys, that is, hurleys, balls, and hoops'.[12] Both hoops and balls are mentioned in a number of texts and *Lúb* a 'ring' or a 'hoop' is often associated with *liathróit*, 'ball' throughout the source material.[13] The word *essrechta* has also been interpreted as meaning 'the noble things which take the sickness away from children'[14] and commentary in the legal text *Di Cetharslicht Athgabála* describes the rightful period in which children's toys may be distrained. The *essrechta* include playing sticks (*camana*), balls (*liathroiti*) and hoops (*luboca*) as objects that may only be distrained for one day.[15]

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[8] Wilkie, 'Not merely child's play', p. 101.
[9] The *bundsach*, which is a rod or a staff, is frequently mentioned in reference to children's playthings and as such is most often translated as 'toy javelin'. Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 298.
[10] Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish tales*, p. 138.
[11] Ó Cróinín, *Early medieval Ireland, 400-1200*, p. 178.
[12] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland' , p. 29.
[13] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 287.
[14] Ibid., p. 302.
[15] Ibid., p. 302.

Undoubtedly children amused themselves with simple games, such as playing ball or hoops, racing, chasing and other activities. Lacking specific playgrounds, they would have played wherever was convenient, by or in the fields, or in the house or yard. The seventh-century Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore has a reference to a girl playing games outside, 'Mochuda espied the child playing a game with the other girls in the *faithche* (lawn or green) of the *Lios* (enclosure)'.[16] The life of St. Brendan refers to how at the age of six, St. Brendan, left alone in the bishop's chariot and reciting his psalms by himself, was startled by a young aristocratic girl who tried to jump into the chariot with Brendan in order to play with him, but was repulsed by a Brendan with a flick of the reins. The girl ran weeping to her parents and the bishop condemned Brendan to spending a night in a cave.[17] A thirteenth-century bardic poem entitled *Leacht carad ó chath Bhriain* also describes some of the games the poet played with his foster brothers during their childhood. These include playing at 'an inauguration or homage ceremony, where a child was placed on a height and the other children marching around him three times'.[18] The poem goes on to describe the piggyback games they played as rider and horse.[19]

Archaeological evidence for Native Irish toys

Sites at which toys have been found to date, include the high status site of Lagore crannóg in County Meath, crannóg sites in Ulster, the ringfort of Ballycatteen in County Cork and various early historic sites throughout Ireland.

A possible spinning top was excavated from Cahercommaun. The object is only 4.3 cm long, and is constructed from bone. Hencken interpreted it as a top.[20] A lead spinning top was also found at Ballycatteen ringfort in County Cork.[21] Excavated in the 1940s by Seán P. Ó Ríordáin, the site revealed a number of features paralleling it in size and defence with the nearby site of Garranes (14 miles). The spinning top was found in the centre of the site, near the hearth and later houses. The object is unusual in that it is made from lead, with a central bronze core and a maximum diameter of 25 mm.

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[16] Power, *Life of Saint Declan of Ardmore, Life of Saint Mochuda of Lismore.*
[17] McGrath, *Education in ancient and medieval Ireland*, p. 75.
[18] Ní Chonaill, 'Fosterage, child-rearing in medieval Ireland', p. 30.
[19] Ibid., p. 30.
[20] Hencken, *Cahercommaun*, p. 64; fig., 39, no. 66.
[21] S. P. O' Ríordáin and P. J. Hartnett, 'The excavation of Ballycatteen fort, Co. Cork' in *PRIA*, xlix, section c (1943), p. 27, fig. 8, p. 84.

Archaeological excavations in Edinburgh, Scotland, have revealed that lead was used in making toys and weapons. This practice extends as far back as the Bronze Age in Britain.[22] Another possible top made from bone was found at Togherstown, Co. Westmeath.[23] It was found alongside a bronze ring pin and a decorated bone comb. It is however, more likely to be a playing piece, such as those used in playing *hnefnatafl*. Such items have been found in a variety of contexts throughout the country.

Toggles, or more properly 'buzz bones' are known from early Christian sites as well as Scandinavian areas in Ireland. Buzzbones have ethnographic parallels as children's toys within the last fifty years in Ireland. As recently as the 1950s children gathered chestnuts and threaded them onto pieces of string in order to play a game called conkers. The game is identical to the buzz disc games referred to below.

Lagore, Co. Meath, has provided evidence of at least two parts of a miniature quernstone, similar to items found in Scotland and Norway **(Figure 48)**. Although the context of the quernstones is unstratified, they are remarkably similar to miniature quernstones from Scottish Isles. While the majority of the miniature quern- and mill-stones found in Scandinavian contexts are made from steatite, a material found locally in both Norway and the Northern Scotland, the item from Lagore is made from shale.[24] This may suggest an adaptation of the toy or child's object to the local environment, and reinforces trade links, or at a minimum, exposure to the culture of the Scandinavians in the Scottish Isles to the site of Lagore (see below).

Stone rings

Stone rings too small to be jewellery are also known from the native Irish archaeological record. A number of small stone rings are known, including one from Gortnesk, Co. Donegal, which has an internal diameter of only 47 mm. Other similar rings are known from crannog sites in Ireland and S. P. Ó Ríordáin has suggested that they may have been used in some sort of game.[25]

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[22] Ian Baldwin, 'Early lead use in Britain' in *Archaeology*, lxix, issue 2 (May/June, 1995), pp 1-6.

[23] R. A. S. Macalister and R. L Praeger, 'The excavation of an ancient structure on the townland of Togherstown, Co. Westmeath' in *PRIA*, xxxix (1929-31), pp 54-83. NMI [reg. 1929: 1379] located in C 2:26.

[24] Large unfinished quernstones were also found at Lagore and this may suggest that perhaps children at the site were imitating the adults. Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', pp 173-5.

[25] S. P. Ó Ríordáin, 'Acquisitions from Co. Donegal in the National Museum' in *PRIA*, xlii, section c (1934-5), p. 155; fn 7 (Ó Ríordáin, 'Acquisitions from Co. Donegal in the National Museum').

<u>Stone pebbles</u>

Other objects that may be considered objects associated with children include small spherical pebbles. Liam Bradley, curator of the Monaghan museum suggested that small, polished stones such as those from the D'Arcy collection found at Pottiagh crannog, Rosslea Co. Fermanagh, may have been used in some sort of game by the children who lived on that crannóg.[26] Pottiagh crannog lies eight metres off the west shore of Drumacrittan Lough and was dug by Samuel D'Arcy in 1896. A large number of finds were made: flint tools, lignite bracelets, beads, a trial piece etc.[27] The pebbles comprise seven naturally polished pebbles, which are oval-shaped and mottled in appearance and vary in size from 3.3 cms to 2 cms long.[28] A group of 36 small rounded pebbles was also excavated at Waterford. Hurley describes these objects as 'pebbles or potboilers'. Another suggestion is that they were used as weights to stretch vellum.[29] However, it may be that these objects instead represent objects relating to some sort of game. The majority the pebbles are made from sandstone, and range in diameter from 22 mm to 109.5 mm.[30] Such objects occur frequently on early historic sites in Ireland. Conleth Manning has described the stones as 'usually granite or sandstone and may be naturally rounded pebbles, either fluvial or glacial in origin, which were later used as potboilers'.[31] It has also been suggested that they are hammer stones, or polishing stones. At Garranes, Co. Cork, Ó Ríordáin identified a number 'spherical pebbles' including eight objects that were found in two distinct groups of three and five. Ó Ríordáin suggested that this arrangement indicated 'some special significance such as their use as sling stones, though they seem to have been too small for this purpose'.[32]

Other objects which have been associated with children in the past include small rounded stones which were termed 'fairy-millstones' during the nineteenth-century. At the settlement site of Dunbel, Co. Kilkenny, antiquarian activity in 1852 revealed a

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[26] Liam Bradley, personal communication, 2 May, 2007, from the D'Arcy collection, Monaghan Museum, Samuel D'Arcy was an antiquarian who surveyed many Crannógs around the Monaghan/Fermanagh border from the 1890's to the early 1900's.

[27] EHSNI [FER 247:017] Grid ref. H54803289, 'Crannog in Drumacrittan Lough', available at (http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/nismrview.htm?monid=11056) (12 May, 2007).

[28] MCM [acquisition no. 1975.293]. Liam Bradley, pers. comm., 2 May, 2007.

[29] Bradley, pers. comm.

[30] Sarah McCutcheon, 'The stone artefacts' in Hurley et al., *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford: excavations,* p. 405.

[31] Conleth Manning, 'The excavation of the early Christian enclosure of Killederdadrum in Lackenavorna, County Tipperary' in *PRIA,* lxxxiv, no. 7, series c (1984), pp 257-60.

[32] S. P. Ó Ríordáin, 'The excavation of a large earthen ring-fort at Garranes, Co. Cork' in *PRIA*, xlvii, section c (1941-2), p. 114.

number of such stones. The objects are made from thin stone (slate?) and were perforated with single, double and triple holes.[33] They were interpreted in the nineteenth-century as buttons, but it may be that they instead represent a form of buzz disc discussed below.

Board games

The Irish mythological tales together with later glosses and commentary indicate that board games were used for training young noble boys. *Cáin Iarraith* states that 'the son of a king or noble must be taught the board-games *fidchell* and *brannuigecht*'.[34] A third board game is known as *buanbach*. While some scholars have dismissed the idea of small boys playing board games usually ascribed to kings and heroes, Angie Gleason has argued that 'as fosterage in Ireland began at an early age and lasted until the child reached his mid to late teens, it is likely instruction in *fidchell* also began at an early age, and that the instruction was at least in part a type of military training'.[35] She points out that the numerous heroes and kings portrayed in the saga literature are often young men, directly out of fosterage, and that this clearly suggests that instruction in boardgames was very much a part of some childrens fosterage and preparation for their future roles in society. [36]

Games and sports

Foster fathers were also to instruct their charges in learning the arts of 'horsemanship, swimming, and marksmanship'.[37] As in the Scandinavian sagas, swimming is mentioned in the Irish saga literature as a skill many of the young warriors and heroes possess.

> A passage from the law tract *Cáin Iarraith* provides the most substantial evidence for swimming, declaring that foster-sons must be taught to swim, though only if a body of water is reasonably close to the residence: It is there the swimming is [to be taught], when there is water suitable for swimming in the territory of the father or grandfather or fosterfather… and if there is not water which is suitable for swimming, he is exempt.[38]

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[33] John Prim, 'On the discovery of ogham monuments and other antiquities in the raths of Dunbel, County of Kilkenny', p. 399.
[34] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 87.
[35] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 290.
[36] Ibid., p. 290.
[37] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 87.
[38] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 287.

The Irish law texts also tell us about some of the games that boys played, that are invisible in the archaeological record.[39] These texts specify the types of games that required sick maintenance if they resulted in the injury or death of a child. Two categories of games are given; *ruidles* games – which are not considered to be dangerous – and *fian* games, which are inherently more dangerous and appear to apply more to older participants, in to particular adolescents.[40] *Ruidles* literally translates as 'suitable' or 'proper',[41] and the term is used to apply to activities with the least amount of inherent danger and most lenient penalties. As such, 'the term is most often associated with children's games'.[42] The fragmentary text *Mellbretha* (which is often translated as 'sports judgements') indicates that there was no right to a fine or sick-maintenance if a boy was injured in most *ruidles* games including jumping, swimming, hurling, hide and seek or juggling. Instead, the child who committed the offence would be punished either by a beating, a beating plus fasting, or fasting plus restitution.[43] Wrestling is also well attested to in the literature.[44] Gleason has pointed out that in a fragment from the law tract *Do Astud Chirt 7 Dliged*, the word *immarchor* is glossed by the term *imbert* which has several meanings including 'game' or 'playing a game'. She argues that the gloss suggests that *immarchor* was a common enough element in the name of games to have developed into the meaning of 'a game' in general, or perhaps more simply play itself.[45] *Fian* games listed in *Mellbretha* include horseriding, putting the weight, climbing, leaping, swinging, and pelting.[46] An injury received by a boy while playing at *fíanchluichi* (paramilitary games) including spear-throwing and the hurling of rocks, was entitled to compensation.[47] There is a third classification of games called *col-cluiche* which Binchy has translated as 'guilty games' in that they result in a fine or sick maintenance, two examples include the throwing of a wooden javelin[48] into

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[39] For a comprehensive discussion of games and entertainment in the law texts see Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland'.
[40] Ibid., p. 292.
[41] Ibid., p. 287.
[42] Ibid., p. 287.
[43] The severity of the punishment increases each time the child commits an offence, rather than according to the severity of the crime. Ibid., p. 299.
[44] Examples of boys wrestling are found in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Also see William Sayers, 'The motif of wrestling in Early Irish and Mongolian epic' in *Mongolian Studies*, xiii (1990), pp 153-68.
[45] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 291.
[46] Ibid., p. 287.
[47] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 151.
[48] A small wooden spear from Deer Park Farms that may represent a child's object or toy is in the Ulster museum. Thanks are due to Lynne McKerr for bringing this object to my attention.

a meeting, and an uneven contest ('few against many').[49] Gleason has suggested that the translation may more properly be 'unlawful games' and argues that there is little evidence to suggest that this category refers to games in the traditional sense at all, but rather 'to address general activities in which serious injury may occur, whether or not occurring in sport or game'.[50]

Children and pets

Cats are associated with women, children, and the kitchen within the legal material. A glossator at *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* also makes mention of a kitten (*catín*) as being an example of children's toy.[51] Gleason has suggested that the kittens were considered to be the toys of children presumably until they are old enough to perform a 'more useful function' such as 'mousing'.[52] Dogs appear to be associated with the male head of the household.[53] However, the sources also refer to boys having dogs. The boy Béimnech, great grandson of Conlae, owed a hunting dog (*mílchú*).[54]

In the legal material describing the legal considerations of children's toys, small dogs and cats could only be distrained for three days and then the animals had to be returned to the child.[55]

Toys from a Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian Context

As children would have grown up in the family work environment, which was in the home, they would have learned the work skills of their parents and imitated them from a very early age. Gender roles would have been formed at an early stage in their development through imitation. This is borne out by the amount of miniature weapons found in excavations, particularly in Dublin, although their presence is certainly not confined to this area. Examples of toys were recovered from the excavations at Winetavern Street, Fishamble Street, High Street, and Christchurch place. Toy axes,

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[49] Kelly, *Early Irish law*, p. 151.

[50] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 296. Gleason also makes the point that legal commentary specifies that *col-* games are as inappropriate for children as *ruidles* games are for sensible adults. Ibid., p. 300.

[51] 'A glossator at *CIH* v1901.32 gives the kitten (*catín*) as an example of children's toys (*esrechta macraide*)', Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 122, fn 141.

[52] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 305.

[53] Kelly, *Early Irish farming*, p. 122, fn 141.

[54] Ibid., p. 122.

[55] 'The pet dog, and as likely, the pet cat, were doubtless small and indoor pets, harmless enough to warrant legal immunity. A passage from *Bretha Étgid* hints at the vulnerability of the house pet, stating that a muzzle must be placed on any dog which habitually attacks animals such as birds, lambs and 'pet animals of the house (*eisrechtaib in tighe*).' Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', pp 302-3.

swords, spears, ice-skates made of horse leg bone[56] and whistles made from the leg bones of birds have been found,[57] although they did not necessarily belong exclusively to children. Bone skates excavated from Dublin include examples from High Street and from Fishamble Street.[58] While bone skates are not exclusive to children or to play, there is twelfth-century written evidence that young people played skating games on the frozen Moorfields outside London.

> Others, more skilled at winter sports, put on their feet the shin-bones of animals, binding them firmly round their ankles, and, holding poles shod with iron in their hands, which they strike from time to time against the ice, they are propelled swift as a bird in flight or a bolt shot from an engine of war. Sometimes, by mutual consent, two of them run against each other in this way from a great distance, and, lifting their poles, each tilts against the other. Either one or both fall, not without some bodily injury, for, as they fall, they are carried along a great way beyond each other by the impetus of their run, and whenever the ice comes in contact with their heads it scrapes off the skin utterly. Often a leg or an arm is broken, if the victim falls with it underneath him; but there is an age greedy for glory, youth yearns for victory, and exercises itself in mock combats in order to carry itself more bravely in real battles.[59]

Archaeological evidence supports that some children had bone skates made for them. Child sized skates exist from Anglo-Scandinavian Chester.

Informal education and socialization- the material evidence of the household

The Hiberno-Scandinavian urban centres that existed in Ireland during this period relied much on trade both within the Irish Sea and further afield. Close political alliances were stimulated by trade and interaction and this is reflected in the extant archaeological material in both rural and urban areas. One example of this contact is the presence of steatite objects. Steatite objects were probably brought in to Ireland from either Shetland or Norway through trade. Steatite (soapstone) was used to make all kinds of bowls and other domestic vessels. Steatite vessels were so prevalent in Norway that pottery went out of use.[60] Soapstone or steatite objects were valuable commodities in the North Atlantic region during this time and their use was not restricted to high status sites.

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[56] Wallace, *Aspects of Viking Dublin,* p. 17.
[57] Ibid.*,* p. 17.
[58] [NMI E7110413]; [NMI 17211364].
[59] William FitzStephan, *Life of Thomas Becket, 1170-1183, preamble*, quoted in Richard Hall, *The Viking dig* (London, 1984), p. 114. Bone skates occur in both Anglo-Scandinavian and Norman levels in York.
[60] Graham Campbell, *The Viking world*, p. 107.

Recent research has shown that it is possible to distinguish the origin of the materials morphologically in order to identify whether the worked material originated in Norway or Shetland.[61] Shetland, settled by the Scandinavians during the ninth century, has large outcroppings of steatite. Steatite objects were very likely manufactured on Shetland and then traded to places as far afield as the settlements on the Western Isles, Northern Isles, the Faroes, and Iceland, as well as the urban centres of York, and Dublin, and more rural areas such as Beginish, off the Kerry coast.[62] A number of steatite artefacts were recovered from the excavations in Viking Dublin and include large steatite bowls and pipkins imported from the Scottish islands.[63] A number of steatite items in the National Museum in Dublin exist, including lamps and cups. One steatite lamp was found at Raphoe North in Donegal and a further lamp or cup comes from Raphoe South, Donegal.[64] In the NMI, there is a full size cup that bears striking similarities to some of the miniature Shetland cups. The cup comes from the vicinity of Ballynenagh in Co. Tipperary, and suggests that steatite items may have been traded into the indigenous Irish community from the Scandinavian ports **(Figure 49)**.[65] A steatite spindle whorl was also identified from an area of disturbed sand in the cemetery of Templedomoore, Co. Mayo.[66] Steatite moulds are a feature of a number of Viking Age urban centres. A steatite mould for casting bars of two sizes was found near Christchurch at St. Michael's Hill in the nineteenth century.[67] A similar steatite mould for five ingots was found at Kaupang, Norway,[68] alongside a lead model that bore ornamentation in a style that is common on artefacts of Irish origin, illustrating that Irish styles were being exported back to Norway.[69] A steatite mould from High Street dated to a tenth-century context illustrates possible early links with Shetland.[70] One of only a very few extant items constructed from steatite, the mould is Viking Age in nature, with a matrix for both an

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[61] Amanda Forster and Julie Bond, 'North Atlantic networks; preliminary research into the trade of steatite in the Viking and Norse periods' in R. A. Housley and G. M. Coles (eds), *Atlantic connections and adaptations: economies environments and subsistence in lands bordering the North Atlantic*, Symposia of the association for environmental archaeology no. 21 (Oxford, 2004), pp 218-229 (Forster and Bond, 'North Atlantic networks').
[62] Ibid., p. 218.
[63] Wallace, 'The archaeology of Ireland's Viking age towns', p. 833.
[64] NMI [Reg. no. 1931:207]; [Reg. no. 1929:1524].
[65] NMI [IA 3475].
[66] NMI [Reg. 1975.239].
[67] NMI [1881:75], Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, part 1*, pp 68-9.
[68] Kaupang-Undersøkelsen, Index for Kaupang, section 3.2 'the artefacts', Annual report, 2000, Universitetet I Oslo, available at (http://www.kaupang.uio.no/gamle-sider/dokumenter/aarsb_2000/kap3_III.htm) (14 May, 2007).
[69] Ibid.
[70] NMI [E43: 1584].

ingot, and on the other side, a matrix for a Thor's hammer.[71] At least fifty silver Thor's hammers (understood to represent *Mjollnir*) are known from England in the Danelaw and in the northwest, Iceland and Normandy to Scandinavia and Russia. They are found in both male and female graves and are known from both hoards and settlement sites.[72] One is known from the Cuerdale hoard (c. 905), Lancashire and is thought to have been placed in the ground by Vikings fleeing the besieged Dublin in 902.

The Dublin High Street steatite mould bears a strong similarity to the steatite mould from tenth-century Trendgarden, Jutland, Denmark that contains depressions for both a cross and a Thor's hammer.[73] A further two steatite moulds used for making ring-headed pins were also identified at Dublin.[74] From the vicinity of Ballymena in Co. Antrim, comes a number of objects including spindlewhorls, perforated stones, amber, beads and amulets of glass, stone and amber, bronze ring pins, a bronze decorated chain, small pebbles, rubbing stones, a stone button (?), a stone disk, and a steatite mould with three cup-shaped depressions.[75] A very similar object (although made of sandstone) to the Ballymena steatite mould was recovered on Shetland, and is described as a mould for 'buttons'.[76] A steatite mould with four different patterns (probably for strap ends) was excavated at Dunrossness (Old Scatness) Shetland, a broch site that was reused by the Vikings or Scandinavians. This object was found with an assemblage of Viking/Scandinavian objects bearing strong similarities to objects from Norse Jarlshof.[77] 'When trying to recreate the playthings of a people, it is helpful to consider carefully the material culture of that group'.[78] As already stated, the Shetland Islands were one of the

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[71] NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin*, p. 31.

[72] Barry Ager, 'Great Witchingham, Norfold, Viking age silver Thor's hammer pendant with gold insert [2003 T241]' in *Treasure annual report 2003, early medieval artefacts*, p. 76, available at Dept. for culture, media and sport, (http://www.finds.org.uk/documents/treports/Treasure_report1.pdf) (12 May, 2005).

[73] Graham Campbell, *Viking artifacts, a select catalogue*, p. 128, 282, pl. 429.

[74] Thomas Fanning, *Viking Age ringed pins from Dublin*, (Dublin, 1994), p. 116.

[75] NMI [reg. 1937:3250], see NMI [Reg. no. 1937: 2853-3325] for a complete listing of objects.

[76] George Black, 'Report on the antiquities found in Scotland, and preserved in the British Museum and London, and in the Museum of Science and Art Edinburgh, obtained under the Jubilee gift of His Excellency Dr. R. H. Gunning, FSA Scotland' in *PSAS*, xxvii (1892-93), p. 366.

[77] RCAHMS, Sumbergh airport NMRS no. [HU31SE 21.00], map reference no. HU 3898 1065, Dunrossness, Shetland, available at, (http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/newcanmore.newcandig_details_gis?inumlink=556) (3 May, 2007).

[78] India Ollerenshaw, *Toys for the Viking Horde*, available at (http://aelflaed.homemail.com.au/doco/vikingtoychest.html) (21 June, 2006) (Ollerenshaw, *Toys for the Viking Horde*).

sources of this useful commodity, and a miniature bowl[79] carved from steatite has been unearthed there at Jarlshof. Its small size makes it most probably a toy[80] **(Figure 50)**. 'The years of excavation at Jarlshof [in Shetland] produced a wide variety of artefacts, in both everyday and more exotic items. Objects carved from the soft local stone, steatite, included a tiny bowl and a miniature quern that were probably toys'.[81] The toy bowl is not dissimilar to the small steatite bowl associated with the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadows.[82]

> What is probably the evidence of earliest contact between the Dorset and the Norse is the small steatite bowl, carved in a characteristically Dorset form, which was associated with the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadows. The Dorset people had abandoned Newfoundland and southern Labrador several centuries before the arrival of the Norse in the region, and this lamp is most readily explained as an object that the Norse obtained from Dorset people or from an abandoned Dorset site in the eastern Arctic prior to a visit to the Newfoundland settlement. Since the Norse occupation at L'Anse aux Meadows probably occurred during the early eleventh century, relations between the two peoples may have begun by this time, and some of the accounts of Skraelings in the Vinland sagas may refer to Dorset people.[83]

The toy bowl from Jarlshof, Shetland dates from between 800 and 1000 AD and is made of steatite – a soft, easily worked stone that distributes heat well. This miniature hemispherical cooking bowl has a flattish base and a shoulder below the rim. Viking communities made toys for children in the form of miniature everyday items such as this cooking bowl. It is possible that this was a personal possession brought across from Norway.[84] A further example is known from Bergen in Norway[85] **(Figure 51)**. Joanna

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[79] Miniature (toy) steatite bowl, online id 000-100-042-639-C. [NMS X.HSA 696], dates to between 800 and 1000, material is steatite; outer edge of rim recessed; flat base; sides pared in horizontal zones; restored. Dimensions: 1.20" H; rim 2.30" D; base 1.30" D. From Scotland, Shetland, Sumburgh, Jarlshof, [HU 395 095]. NMS Scotland, available at SCRAN (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-042-639-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (5 January, 2006).
[80] Ollerenshaw, *Toys for the Viking horde.*
[81] Anna Ritchie, 'Great sites: Jarlshof' in *British Archaeology*, lxix (March, 2003), available at (http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba/ba69/feat3.shtml) (5 June, 2004).
[82] Anne Stine Ingstad, 'The discovery of a Norse settlement in America, excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland 1961-68', quoted in P. D. Sutherland, 'Strands of culture contact, Dorset-Norse interactions in the Canadian Eastern', available at (http://www.civilization.ca/academ/articles/suth_09e.html)#ingstad1977) (21 June, 2006).
[83] Patricia Sutherland, 'Strands of culture contact, Dorset-Norse interactions in the Canadian Eastern Arctic', available at (http://www.civilization.ca/academ/articles/suth_02e.html) (22 June, 2006).
[84] NMS, 'Toy bowl', available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-042-639-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (5 January, 2006).

Close-Brooks has interpreted a further small lamp or cup from Kirkhall, west of Inverness in Scotland as a toy rather than as a miniature meant for normal use, and compares the object to the toy querns from Jarlshof in Shetland.[86] The fact that the Kirkhall toy lamp does not show any signs of burning may reinforce its interpretation as a child's toy. A similar object which has been interpreted as a toy cup (*leksakskopp*) is known from Östragötland, Västra, Tollstad, in Sweden. The toy cup measures only 2.3 cm.[87]

A toy 'lamp' was excavated from Gord, Fetlar in Shetland.[88] It is 9.5 cm long, and 5.5 cm wide at its max point **(Figure 52)**. The lamp is extremely well made and dates to the medieval or possible later period. It is constructed of fine grey steatite with an extended 'lug' and thumb grip. It is of the Norse type commonly found in the area, but is unusual in its miniatureness. This toy lamp was found during excavation of an earthen floor and the National Museum of Scotland has interpreted it as 'possibly a model or a child's toy'.[89] A further example of a toy lamp comes from the Viking-Age site of Sandwick, Unst, where a number of the other objects originated. It is constructed from steatite, and is rather roughly made **(Figure 53)**.[90] It is 4.75 cm long, 2.75 cm wide and 1.625 cm in breadth. The Shetland museum describes it as 'a tiny, very rudely carved model of a handled steatite lamp with slightly chipped sides which is undoubtedly a child's toy. The lamp was uncovered by sandblow at Sandwick, Unst where a number of other

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[85] Johannes Brøndsted, Bernt Hjejle, Peter Skaverup, and Ard Steensberg (eds), 'Leketøy' in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid, x: Kyrkorätt- Ludus de Sancto Canuto Duce* (Copenhagen, 1965) p. 492 (Brøndsted, et al., 'Leketøy'). It is described as a child's steatite cup [*kleberstensgryte*] from Bergen, and is dated to 1248. The cup was found in 1963 and has a diameter of 3.7, height is 2.3- 2.6 cm.

[86] (NGR for Kirkhill, NH 554455), Joanna Close-Brooks, 'Two steatite lamps' in *PSAS*, civ (1971-2), p. 295. The toy cup-shaped lamp is 66 mm long, 50 mm wide and 20 mm deep and has a small, knob-like handle which has been decorated with a simple, incised motif. Three others located in Scottish museums and are roughly 63 mm wide, a neatly constructed squared handled lamp from Dun Telve Broch, Glenelg [GA 979]; and a much more roughly constructed lamp from Bellrannoch Quarry, Broxburn, West Lothian [AQ 111]. The final lamp is unprovenanced example in the Hawick Museum and 63 mm overall with a knob handle and a round bowl which is 50 mm in diameter and 35 mm deep, Close-Brooks, 'Two steatite lamps', p. 296.

[87] Toy cup, Föremål no. 196872, [SHM 21068:1886], SHM, Sweden, available at, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=196872) (2 June, 2007).

[88] (excavation no. HU 625 915, museum record no. ARC 79184).

[89] SM, 'Steatite lamp', no. 000-000-000321-C, available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-000-321-C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=3dk6apn07e&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64) (1 May, 2007).

[90] [HP 615 095].

Viking and Late Norse relics have been found'.[91] The technical ability in the construction of the Fetlar toy lamp suggests that this object may have been made by an adult for a child, whereas it is plausible to suggest that the much cruder Unst toy lamp may have been made by a child. A possible toy bowl or lamp is also recorded from Tober, Ballindrait, Co. Donegal. This object has a diameter of only 35 mm.[92] This item also appears to be constructed from steatite, and reinforces the homogeneity of this type of item as a child's toy.

Steffen Stummann Hansen's has argued that it is improbable that the steatite mill and quernstones from Shetland are indeed 'models'. Steatite was locally available, and these steatite 'lamps' can probably be classed with similar objects such as the quern and millstones, and other objects discussed below. Recent research on miniature quern and millstones has indicated that they are almost ubiquitous on Scandinavian farmsteads in Shetland. Miniature mill and quern stones are known from Unst, Northmavine, Whalsay, Aithsting, Cunningsburgh, Dunrossness and Bressay.[93] Shetland Museum contains the largest selection of these artefacts from a number of local Scandinavian sites.[94]

Miniature quern and millstones have yet to be found in Greenland, Iceland, Orkney, Faroe, the Western Isles or mainland Scotland. A number of miniature quern and millstones have, however been identified from around the area of Trondheim (Trøndelag) in Norway. However, an example has been noted from the royal site of Lagore which may well illustrate trade links or contact with Scandinavian Shetland.

The toy quern from Jarlshof represents the upper stone of a miniature quern that was probably also used as a toy **(Figure 54)**. The disc is 1.80 inches in diameter and dates to between 900 and 1000. The disc has a vertical slot in the side for a handle and a rind socket on its lower face for an attachment that would prevent it from slipping off the

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[91] SCRAN, Shetland Museum, 'Toy handled lamp', [ARC 65773] online id. 000-000-000-184-C, available at (www.scran.co.uk, (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-000-184C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=5dmvdpn07d&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64 (1 May, 2007).
[92] Ó Ríordáin, 'Acquisitions from Co. Donegal in the National Museum', pp 155-6.
[93] Ian Tait, 'The millstone – more than a garden ornament?' in *Hentins, the heritage newsletter for Shetland*, iv (March, 2003), p. 9.
[94] SM, available at (http://www.shetland museum.org.uk/collections/recent_acquisitions/recent_acquisitions.htm) (15 June, 2005).

lower stone. Several miniature quern and millstones were found at Jarlshof, and the use of everyday equipment as models for toys seems to be characteristic of the Viking period. However, miniature querns and millstones are rare outside Shetland.[95] The presence of miniature household artefacts (such as miniature querns and mill stones) supports the idea that children began to contribute to the process of the grinding of wheat at a young age. The miniature quern and millstone which were recovered in the Shetland Islands, and which have been discussed by Steffen Stummann Hansen and Ann Christine Larsen in their 2000 publication 'Miniature quern- and mill-stones from Shetland's Scandinavian past', are unusual in that they have been constructed from a variety of stone materials including sandstone, steatite and mica schist. It was only recently that the significance and distribution of miniatures began to be investigated for their social rather than functional context. Miniature querns and millstones are of limited distribution in the archaeological record, with only fourteen being found in Shetland and eight in north-western Norway – all around Trondheim, an area very much associated with Scandinavian activity in Ireland.[96] All but one of the artefacts were found in either Viking or late Scandinavian contexts.[97] Hansen has re-examined the miniature quern- and mill-stones from a number of sites including Unst, Jarlshof and Norway. Rather than attributing the occurrence of these objects to 'manufacturers models', Hansen was the first to examine these objects in light of their social rather functional context.[98] Hansen and Larsen's research indicated that there are fourteen objects from Shetland, which can be safely identified as miniature quern- and mill-stones:

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[95] Toy quern of sandstone from Jarlshof (piece), Online id: 000-100-043-181-C, project: 0098: NMS; reference NMS X.HSA 4101; date: between 900 and 1000; material: sandstone, yellow; vertical slot in side; rind socket on one face; dimensions: 1.80" D. From Scotland, Shetland, Sumbergh, Jarlshof, [HU 395 095], available at SCRAN (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-043-181-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (5 January 2006).

[96] Wamers, Egon, 'Insular finds in Viking Age Scandinavia' in Clarke, Ní Mhaonaigh and Ó Floinn, *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age*, p. 52.

[97] S. S. Hansen and A. C. Larsen, 'Miniature quern- and mill stones from Shetland's Scandinavian past' in *Acta Archaeologica,* lxxi (2000), pp 112-3 (Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern and mill stones').

[98] SM, available at (http://www.shetland-museum.org.uk/collections/recent_acquisitions/recent_acquisitions.htm) (4 May, 2004).

of these, four can be classified as quernstones… These all have handle holes, while only three of them have been provided with a slot for the *síle* [a small iron bar which is fixed across the underside of the upper mill-stone]…Seven items can be classified as millstones… of these, all have slots for the *síle* and two of them have been provided with a collar around the central hole which indicates that this was a feature regularly connected to the millstones. In three instances, it cannot with safety be determined whether they are quern- or millstones… However, two of these are provided with a collar which again raises suspicion that they are millstones[99] **(Figure 55)**.

The quality of the finds from the Viking-Age levels at Jarlshof indicates that the inhabitants were quite wealthy and maintained links with the Scandinavian homeland.[100]

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[99] Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern and mill stones', pp 112-3.

[100] NMS, *Toy millstones and quernstones* (record), available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-190-004-090-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (10 November, 2006). Photo from Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern and millstones', p. 109; a-d; **a) miniature quernstone of sandstone and [other], decorated on both faces,** 'Jarlshof, Dunrossness parish, Shetland. NMS HAS 4001-02. Fig 5a. In 1925 the upper (HAS 4002) stones of a miniature quern with a maximum diameter of 46 mm and a maximum thickness of 10 mm were recovered from the floor of a late wheel house. The upper stone is of yellow sandstone with central perforation and slot for the síle on one surface; handle hold set at the edge, running right through. There is no collar around the central hole. The nether stone of harder grey rock has a maximum diameter of 46 mm and a maximum height of 9 mm. It has a series of pocking arranged in radial lines on both sides. Hamilton probably saw this as a quernstone because it was found together with the upper stone and has roughly the same diameter. However, the fact that it is ornamented on both faces makes it dubious as a quernstone. Hamilton wrote "This model resembles the toys from the Viking levels."' Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones', p. 108. Also see J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland: Ministry of Works Archaeological Reports no. 1* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 71, fig. 37:3-4 and 84; S. S. Hansen and A. C. Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones and millstones: a fragment of Shetland's Scandinavian past' in *The New Shetlander*, ccix (Lerwick, 1999), pp 7-9. **b) miniature millstone of steatite,** 'Jarlshof, Dunrossness parish, Shetland [NMS HAS 761] Fig. 5b. A miniature millstone of steatite with a maximum diameter of 71 mm and a maximum height of 23 mm. The object has no collar around the central hole and no hole for a handle. A slot for the *síle* is present. Found in midden overlying the upper slope midden. Dated by Hamilton to the 10th century'. Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones' (2000), p. 108. Also see J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 149, plate XXXI, 3. 470A; Stummann Hansen and A. C. Larsen, 'Miniature quern and millstones: a fragment of Shetland's Scandinavian past' in *The New Shetlander*, ccix (Lerwick, 1999), p. 8. **c) miniature millstone of steatite,** 'Jarlshof, Dunrossness parish, Shetland [NMS HAS 762]. Fig. 5c. Miniature millstone of steatite with a maximum diameter of 41 mm and a maximum height of 10mm. No collar around central hole. On under face a slot for the *síle*. Found in midden overlying pavement. Dated by Hamilton to the 10th century'. Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones' (2000), p. 108. Also see; Alexander Curle, 'An account of the excavation of a dwelling of the Viking period at "Jarlshof" Sumbergh, Shetland, carried out on behalf of H. M.,' in *PSAS, lxix* (Edinburgh, 1934-5), pp 318-320, fig. 57; J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof Shetland* (1956), p. 150; Stummann Hansen and A. C. Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones and millstones: a fragment of Shetland's Scandinavian past' in *The New Shetlander*, ccix (Lerwick, 1999), p. 8. **d) miniature quernstone (upper stone sandstone),** 'Jarlshof, Dunrossness parish, Shetland. [NMS HAS 763], Fig. 5d. Miniature quernstone. Slightly domed upper stone of sandstone. Maximum diameter 66 mm and with a maximum height of 18 mm. No collar around central hole. Smaller perforation for a handle; a slot for the *síle* is present on the under face'. Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones', p. 109. Also see Stummann Hansen and A. C. Larsen, 'Miniature quernstones and millstones: a fragment of Shetland's Scandinavian past' in *The New Shetlander*, ccix (Lerwick, 1999), p. 8.

Some of the miniatures that have been so far identified could not have been used in actual household labour production and so appear to be 'toys', while others appear to have served the same purpose as the 'adult-size' quernstones and thus could have made a contribution to household labour. However, miniature quernstones made from steatite have also been found.[101] Steatite is a material that would not have been useful for the grinding of grain, yet at least one of the Jarlshof examples shows signs of use. This perhaps suggests that such objects were toys, or 'non-functional' items in the adult sense of the word. Miniature, or toy quernstones such as those found during excavations at Lagore Crannog in Meath, and Jarlshof and Stromfirth[102] in the Shetland Islands, as well as toy millstones such as the one identified at Bressay in Shetland are examples of children's playthings in tenth-century Scandinavian influenced areas. The Jarlshof miniature millstone was also probably used as a toy **(Figure 56)**. It was found at Jarlshof in Shetland and dates from between 900 and 1000. The miniature version of an upper millstone is made of steatite – a soft, easily worked stone that distributes heat well. It has a rind socket on its underside and a slightly domed and faceted upper surface. The underside has been worn by rotation.[103] A functional miniature mill-stone was also found at Olnesfirth in Shetland[104] within a stone wall southeast of a house site. Hansen and Larsen have suggested that other authors have been too cautious in their terminology of such 'small- scale' objects. 'Various terms were used for this group of finds for instance 'model', 'miniature', or 'toy'. This reflects the problems connected with the interpretation of miniatures'.[105] One of the problems in identifying toys or children's' objects in the archaeological record is that a small object or tool does not

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[101] J. R. C., Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof Shetland*, ministry of works archaeological reports no. 1 (Edinburgh, 1956) p. 150 (Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof Shetland*).
[102] Upper disk of steatite toy quern from Stromfirth, Tingwall in the Shetland Islands, Shetland Museum [ARC 1997.103], available at RCAHMS, (http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/newcanmore.newcandig_details_gis?inumlink=108177) (5 July, 2007).
[103] Toy millstone from Jarlshof, online id 000-100-042-667-C, NMS, project: 0098: reference [NMS X.HSA 761], dates to between 900 and 1000. The material is steatite, with the upper surface slightly domed and faceted. There is a central hold and a rind socket with no handle hole. The lower surface has been worn by rotation. The dimensions measure 2.80" D; 0.90" deep; central hole 0.50" D, available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-042-667-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (5 January, 2006).
[104] A miniature millstone of steatite was found in the Shetland Islands at Olnesfirth, Northmavine parish, Shetland. 'It has a maximum diameter of 90 mm and a maximum height of 29 mm; the under face is worn smooth and flat, with a central hole passing right through, and a rectangular depression surrounding it. The top surface bears deep peck-marks, and raises up to form a collar around the central hole. The stone fell out of stone wall southeast of the house when a modern midden was removed'. Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern- and millstones', p. 6.
[105] Ibid., p. 118.

always mean it belonged to a child. Miniature votive or religious objects are found throughout the Scandinavian diaspora and often take the form of figures or statues of Scandinavian gods (such as Freyr or Odin), or miniature hammers that symbolize Thor. Tiny weapons were often strung around the neck and could take the form of miniature swords, spearheads, and hammers. Two examples of Viking period miniature weapons that were likely ritual in nature come from Uppsala in Sweden[106] **(Figure 57)**. The miniature sword is – like the wooden toy sword from Fishamble Street – also Peterson's type H. However, the small metal sword measures only 5 cm in length, and could not therefore serve any functional use. On the other hand, all miniature objects are not necessarily ritual in nature. The striking similarity of the 'larger than votive' but 'smaller than adult' weapons found throughout Scandinavia and into Ireland and Britain and the North Atlantic Islands indicates remarkable cultural and geographical consistencies in children's material culture.

Two examples 'child-sized' tools in the form of miniature iron scythes come from Sweden and both date to the Viking Age. One of the objects comes from Gotland;[107] the second miniature scythe comes from Uppsala, Adelsö, in Björkö, Hemlanden, Sweden.[108] In light of the literary and archaeological evidence for some small size objects being associated with children it is possible that these objects were functional objects allowing for children's training and contribution to household labour. It is perhaps in this context that the very small iron sickle from Winetavern Street should be viewed.[109]

The fact that only one miniature quernstone has been found so far (at Lagore) in the Irish context highlights the need for a similar Irish study. For example, there are a large number of catalogued items in the National Museum of Ireland, which are labelled as

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[106] Miniature sword and spear from Uppsala, Järfälla, Barkaby flygfält, Ålsta gård, Sweden, Föremål no. 107868, [SHM 21965:62a], SHM, Sweden, available at, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107868) (5 August, 2007). These items were also found with an iron ring with a number of tiny Thor's hammers strung onto it.

[107] Iron miniature scythe dating to the Viking period from Gotland, När, Sweden, Föremål 107851 [SHM 17432] available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107851) (25 February, 2007).

[108] Miniature scythe from Uppsala, Adelsö, in Björkö, Hemlanden, Sweden, Föremål no. 107853, [SHM 34000:Bj 1137], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107853) (30 January, 2007).

[109] NMI [E81: 1867] 'Iron sickle. Very small specimen. Split socket with rivet for handle in position. 12th century. Winetavern Street. Length 6.7 cm'. NMI, *Viking and medieval* Dublin, p. 42, no. 177.

'loom weights', 'line sinkers' even 'small stone with perforation'. While these objects are not necessarily objects that may be associated with the material culture of children, they deserve reassessment.

If we accept the interpretation of the miniature querns and millstones from Shetland as children's objects it is interesting that two genders appear to be represented since the work with the rotary quern – like the occupation of weaving – is a task associated with women, while milling is associated with men. Some scholars have argued that the toy millstones suggest the presence of children copying their adults. '…. Even without formal toys, children tend to create playthings for themselves, often versions of adult tools and equipment'.[110] Birthe Weber, in writing about medieval miniature finds argues that in Scandinavian society has argued that:

> it was highly important to train the various working processes at an early stage in life. The result was probably of less importance. The rehearsal of a technique, or a movement, has been an important factor in the process which children went through in order to adapt to their surroundings and that it is probably in such light that we should view these miniatures.[111]

As today, many toys in the past are miniaturized versions of adult objects, and, as Wileman points out, their use by children are often imitative explorations of the adult world.[112] But 'remembering that children redesign toys through the ways that they are used, ignore toys that do not suit them, and create toys from non – toy objects[113] how does one determine toys from objects used in ritual and religious contexts,'[114] as well as toys which reflect the child's world?

Socialization

In justifying the study of children to a sometimes sceptical audience archaeologists may also feel pressured to replace the nonexistent child with what might be called the 'oversocialized child.'[115] Schwartzman states that:

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[110] Wileman, *Hide and seek*, p. 27.
[111] Birthe Weber, 'Leker eller -?' in *Viking*, xxxxv (1981), pp 81-92.
[112] Wileman, *Hide and seek*, p. 28.
[113] Wilkie, 'Not merely child's play', p. 102
[114] Wileman, *Hide and seek*, p. 28.
[115] Schwartzman, 'Materializing children', p. 128.

where on the one hand researchers present a view of children as active participants in social life and yet when interpreting specific behaviours, especially play behaviour they seem to embrace the very common but also very problematic interpretation of play as simple imitation and preparation for adult life. As I have mentioned, this tendency to oversocialize a topic is part of the history of studies of children and childhood, but it is a part of this history that archaeologists do not need to repeat… there are a number of ways to challenge this 'oversocialized' perspective, especially when it comes to interpreting children's play. It is certainly the case that imitation interpretations of children's play have been the most common explanations for this activity in the past and still are in the present to some extent. However, even in early ethnographies of socialization and education, the dominance of the play-as-imitation perspective was challenged by some researchers.[116]

As Schwartzman has pointed out, it is important for archaeologists to recognize that while children's play in the past may reproduce elements of adult roles and interactions, the intent may have been to mock, make fun of, or challenge the social order, symbolized by adults:[117]

There is a strong tradition of 'anti-authoritarian' themes in English-speaking children's games and rhymes as reported by folklorists such as Roger Abrahams and Iona and Peter Opie.[118] The anthropological literature also suggests that interest in parodying and subverting adult authority figures in play is evident in many cultures.[119] Although it is very difficult to recover intent in the archaeological record, I think that it is important to be aware of the satirizing as well as socializing possibilities of children's play.[120]

When looked at in this light, it may perhaps be useful to consider objects that are traditionally interpreted as 'rough cuts' or 'trial pieces' as possible child associated

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[116] 'Here is Meyer Fortes in 1938 describing play as "the paramount educational exercise" of Tallensi children: In his play the child rehearses his interests, skills, and obligations, and makes experiments in social living without having to pay the penalty for mistakes. Hence, there is already a phase of play in the evolution of any schema preceding its full emergence into practical life. Play, therefore, is often mimetic in content and expresses the child's identifications. *But the Tale child's play mimesis is never simple and mechanical reproduction; it is always imaginative construction based on the themes of adult life and of the life of older children.* He or she adapts natural objects and other materials, often with great ingenuity, which never occurs in the adult activities copied, and rearranges adult functions to fit the specific logical and affective configuration of play'. Meyer Fortes, 'Social and psychological aspects of education in Taleland' in J. Middleton, (ed.), *From child to adult* (New York, 1970), pp 14–74, quoted in H. B., Schwartzman, (ed.), *Play and culture, 1978 Proceedings of the Association for the Anthropological Study of Play* (N.Y., 1978), pp 124–134.
[117] Schwartzman, *Materializing children*, p. 128.
[118] Roger Abrahams, (ed.), *Jump rope rhymes* (Texas, 1969); Iona and Peter Opie, *The lore and language of schoolchildren* (Oxford, 1959).
[119] See H. B., Schwartzman, (ed.), *Play and culture, 1978 Proceedings of the Association for the Anthropological Study of Play* (N.Y., 1978), pp 124–134 for a more extensive discussion.
[120] Schwartzman, 'Materializing children', p. 125.

items. If there is evidence for material culture manufactured *for* children, and it is possible to identify such objects in the material record, than is it possible to go a step further and ask whether or not there is evidence for material culture manufactured *by* children? It may be that objects that display a rougher or more simplistic execution are representative of children's attempts at manufacture. Possible examples include the numerous bone and stone 'motif pieces' found throughout Ireland and Scandinavia.[121] Slate 'trial pieces' such as the one from Lagore are also possible examples of children's activities. Unlike the bones from the same site, the slate and shale trial pieces show a much lower level of skill. Henken described these objects as 'more like childish or thoughtless scribbles'.[122] Other possible examples include the ship graffiti from Dublin. The sketch on the piece of timber from Christchurch place is particularly interesting, because the figure of the man on the mast is quite similar to the incised drawings on the Fishamble Street horse (**Figure 58)**.[123] Both figures bear resemblance to the figure on the Löddeköpinge whetstone from Skåne, Sweden, which dates to the early Viking period and interestingly was found in a sunken-featured building at the settlement site.[124]

The miniature quern and millstones discussed above may be linked to other groups of miniatures. These include, for instance, swords and horses – things that were a very important part of daily life, and from Greenland toy cooking pots made of steatite.[125] The sea was of obvious importance during the Viking Age, and it is therefore not surprising that Scandinavian sites in Greenland and the Faroe Islands alongside such Viking towns as Dublin, Hedeby, Trondheim, Bergen, and Oslo, have all produced quite a high number of small finely carved miniature boats in wood. To date however, Dublin has provided the highest amount of archaeological evidence directly relating to the material lives and experiences of Hiberno-Scandinavian childhoods.

<u>Miniatures as toys</u>

One particular problem that exists when looking for toys in the archaeological record is

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[121] For a comprehensive discussion of motif pieces from Ireland, see Uaininn O'Meadhra, *Motif pieces from Ireland, Early Christian, Viking and Romanesque art,* Thesis and papers in North European archaeology 17 (Stockholm, 1987).
[122] Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', p. 173; fig. 89: 240.
[123] NMI [E162:16078].
[124] Graham Campbell, *Viking artefacts: a select catalogue*, p. 79.
[125] Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern- and mill-stones', p. 114

the fact that numerous objects remain unidentified as toys because the excavator or researcher often fails to recognise the possibilities of what they are seeing.

The question of child associated miniature objects versus ritual objects is one which presents some difficulty for childhood research in the past. For example, in Inuit culture, miniature items are also known to have been placed in the graves of shamans. 'A dead man's property usually descends to his relatives, if it is worth anything. Instead of his own possessions, they put into the grave small copies of the things they have inherited, these miniatures being carved in wood'.[126]

In Scandinavia, miniature knives, hammers, swords and even chairs have been found in graves. However, these objects uniformly conform to a certain size suggesting that the very small objects found in graves represent religious or ritual artefacts, whereas the objects between 'ritual size' and 'adult size' map perhaps have served some other purpose such as being related to the material culture of children.

Toy boats and ships

Children also played with wooden weapons and toy ships as evidenced by the discovery of a number of toy wooden ships or boats which are carved in various levels of detail – often so accurate different types can be distinguished. A toy ship and two toy boats were excavated at Winetavern Street, and a further toy ship was identified at Fishamble Street. The wooden toy ship or boat from Winetavern Street is of clear Norse type and dates to the twelfth century **(Figure 59)**. It is missing its stern but the keel and stepping indicates there was once a mast present. Circular holes along the side for fastening a pair of shrouds indicate that there was originally a mast and rigging.[127] The length of the partial toy boat is 11.1 cm[128] **(Figure 60).** A wooden toy ship was also excavated from Winetavern Street and is 36 cm in length. This ship is well made and dates to the thirteenth century and is carved from a solid piece of wood, and has a damaged raised prow, intact stern, and shallow keel. The hole in the side of the ship for the attachment of a steering oar can be clearly seen, and the stepping for the mast in the bottom of the

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[126] Knud Rasmussen, *The Netsilik Eskimos: social life and spiritual culture, report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24*, viii, nos 1-2 (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 507, (quoted in Wileman, *Hide and seek: the archaeology of childhood*, p. 31).
[127] Arne-Emil Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models' in *Miscellanea 1, Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81*, Series B, ii (1988), p. 20 (Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models').
[128] NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, no. 206, NMI [E81:4228].

ship is slightly off centre.[129] While the ship does not in general resemble other toy ships, it does have a number of shared characteristics with Northern Norwegian boats of more recent date.[130] In addition, the rudder fastening is paralleled to a toy ship from Norway.[131]

> Both Dublin models are probably toys, sailing models of real vessels. When in use they were most likely rigged and furnished with a sail, to be raced on some pond or river by their proud (young?) owners… ship models have been found in various archaeological contexts but they are most numerous from towns and market-places. It could be argued that their frequency in such sites is merely in proportion to the large numbers of wooden objects yielded by excavations in places of this nature but I think it more likely that it reflects the presence of large numbers of children in these settlements. In other words, I am inclined to think that the model boats should be seen as toys.[132]

This toy ship is very similar to the one in the 'graffiti' drawing of a ship also from Winetavern Street that dates to the early twelfth century. The drawing is 25 cm long **(Figure 61)**.[133] A wooden toy ship was also excavated from Fishamble Street **(Figure 62)**.[134] Its length is 30.9 cm, width is 8.5 cm and height is 4.0 cm. The object is identified as a toy by Lang and is described as having incised faint scrolls that he suggests might be serpents. The ship was excavated from the south internal partition of building FS 10.[135] The fact that this object was found within the bedding area of a house site reinforces its interpretation as a toy. The fourth toy wooden boat or ship was excavated from Winetavern Street. It is a Viking style tenth-century toy boat that was found in a pit and had been wrapped in a pillow or *palisse* for protection **(Figure 63)**.[136] Three wooden toy boats are also known from Oslo. The first dates to around 1100 and comes from Gamlebyen in Oslo and is 19 cm long **(Figure 64)**,[137] a second Oslo toy

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[129] NMI [E81: 432] Ibid., p. 44.
[130] Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 20.
[131] Ibid., p. 20.
[132] Ibid., p. 24.
[133] NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin,* p. 48. NMI [E81: 2839b].
[134] NMI [E172: 15183].
[135] Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood,* p. 79.
[136] [NMI E81:432], G. F. Mitchell, *Archaeology and environment in early Dublin, the National Museum of Ireland Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-1981*, Series c. volume 1 (Dublin, 1987), pp 30-1.
[137] Brøndsted, et al., 'Leketøy', p. 492.

boat is 37 cm long.[138] A toy boat dating to post 1050 is also known from the Vestfold region in Norway,[139] and three further small stem-tops and masts are known from the Bryggen excavations in Bergen, Norway.[140] The toy ships from Dublin are perhaps some of the best known examples of wooden toys in Western Europe, and bear remarkable similarities to toy boats and ships found in Norse Greenland, Danzig, Oslo, Bergen, Birka, Hedeby, and the Faeroes[141] **(Figures 65 a and b)**. Three model boats are known from the Norse settlements in Greenland,[142] and there are numerous examples from Danzig (Gdansk).[143] Two fragmentary wooden toy boats are also known from Hedeby, Schleswig Holstein. The first one is carved from a single piece of wood, and is 30 cm long with a squared stem that closely resembles the prow of the ship on the Loddekopinge whetstone. The second boat has a more conventional prow.[144] A number of further toy boats are known from the post 1050 period in Sweden, where they are often constructed from bark. One example, from Södermanland, Nyköping even has a hole for a mast[145] **(Figure 66)**. Two bronze miniature weather vanes have been identified in the archaeological record, and are likely fittings for some of the toy boats discussed here. One miniature vane is a bronze zoomorphic single find acquired in 1903 in Rangsby, Saltvik, Åland, Finland.[146] The second dragon headed miniature vane comes from the Black Earth at Birka and dates to the middle Viking period. Graham Campbell has pointed out that both objects relate in form to the full size Hennen and

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[138] [KM C23771], KMUO, *lekebåt av tre* (toy wooden boat) [C23771], available at (http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi?restablename=OAB_TMP_82760136913&restabpos=0&restabnum=20&tabid=2076&oid=0&vobj=-1&tabpos=0&appid=132&dosearch=++++Search++++&listid=&oppsettid=-1&ResultatID=-1&ResRowsNum=100) (12 August 2007).

[139] [KM C37153], KMUO, *lekebåt av tre* (toy wooden boat) [C37153], available at (http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi?restablename=OAB_TMP_82760136913&restabpos=0&restabnum=20&tabid=2076&oid=0&vobj=-1&tabpos=0&appid=132&dosearch=++++Search++++&listid=&oppsettid=-1&ResultatID=-1&ResRowsNum=100) (12 August, 2007). The length of the toy boat is 65 cm.

[140] Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 24.

[141] The toy boat comes from excavations at the Viking Age settlement of Argisbrekka on Eysturoy in the Faeroes. Graham Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 168. This object bears some similarity to another toy boat which is in the HM, Limerick. 'Wooden boat or canoe (toy) constructed from wood [MG 139/104], L 9.7 x H 1.7, It is a hollowed piece of wood with one pointed end. This may be a toy', available at HM, Limerick, (http://test.huntmuseum.com/search_briefdesc.asp) (5 April, 2006).

[142] Aage Roussell, 'Sandness and the neighbouring farms' in *Meddelelser om Grønland*, lxxxviii, no. 2 (Copenhagen, 1936), quoted in Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 26.

[143] L. Kunicka-Okuliczowa, *Wezesnosrednioweczne zabawki I gry z Gdańska* (Gdańska, 1959), quoted in Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 25.

[144] Graham Campbell, *Select Viking artefacts*, p. 25.

[145] Bark boat, Föremål no. 122998, [SHM :27], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=122998) (12 June, 2006).

[146] [Helsinki, KM 2484:13], .

Söderala vanes.[147] Miniature vanes have been found in both graves and settlement sites. While no examples of toy boats are known from the middle ages in Britain, Geoff Egan has suggested that a number of tiny metal anchors found in the river Thames may represent the remains of toy wooden boats that were lost in the river.[148]

Small wooden paddles have also been identified in the archaeological record. All of these toy paddles roughly conform to the size of 200 mm. They include an intact toy paddle from the sixth- to eighth-century site of Loch Glashan Crannog in Scotland,[149] **(Figure 67)** and an unprovenanced toy paddle in the Hunt Museum in Limerick.[150] **(Figure 68)** An object very similar in style and size was found at Ballinderry Crannog 2, Co. Westmeath.[151] At Lagore crannog, Co. Meath, a similarly shaped paddle was identified.[152]

A rare mention of a child's ship in the Icelandic literature is given in the fourteenth-century Icelandic *Króka- Refs Saga*; in which it states that *Austmanns son hafði sér at leiku skip þat* [the Norwegian's son had for a playing a ship].[153]

Some of the extant objects that may be interpreted as toys are roughly or crudely fashioned, and perhaps were made by children themselves, while others are finely carved and appear to be the work of experienced artisans. For example, dice are commonly found in both early medieval and medieval contexts, and the homemade

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[147] Graham Campbell, *Select Viking artefacts,* pp 80-1.

[148] Geoff Egan, 'Miniature toys of medieval childhood' in *British Archaeology*, xxxv (June 1998), p. 11 (Egan, 'Miniature toys of medieval childhood').

[149] Miniature paddle, 'found at a depth of 1'9' (0.5m) in the brushwood layer, and is in store under accession number GAGM A6046bb. It has been worked from close-grained wood and measures 8 3/16" (208 mm) in length over all. The blade is of an elongated-tongue shape with a rounded end, and measures up to 60 mm in width by about 3/16" (4.8 mm) in thickness; it is almost flat on one side, has a slight 'keel' on the other, and passes gradually into the handle, which is oval in section with a distinct thickened terminal. The finds list classifies it as a weaver's (or sword) beater, but it more probably had a domestic function or was, just possibly, a toy or model paddle, possibly with a similar ceremonial or ritual function to that of the numerous model religious objects found in Romano-British contexts. Earwood identifies it as a probable spatula (considering it too short for a weaver's beater) and catalogues several other objects of similar type from Loch Glashan besides citing parallels from the excavated Irish crannogs of Ballinderry 2 and Lagore. Wild confirms that the small size and apparent light weight of this object would render it of no use except in the weaving of tapestry, a craft not normally associated with crannogs', available at RCAHMS, (http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/newcanmore.newcandig_details_gis?inumlink=40047) (2 May, 2007).

[150] [MG 139/103], HM Limerick artefact database, available at (http://test.huntmuseum.com/search_briefdesc.asp) (12 February, 2006).

[151] [NMI E6: 1203], Hugh Hencken, 'Ballinderry Crannóg no. 2' in *PRIA*, xlvii (1942), fig 26, W500.

[152] Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', fig 87, W47. Also see Caroline Earwood, 'The wooden artefacts from Loch Glashan crannog, Mid Argyll' in *PSAS*, cxx (1990), p. 86.

[153] Hansen, 'Representations of children in the Icelandic sagas', p. 6.

crudity of some suggests that they may have been made and used by young people. While the more carefully crafted objects may have been worth trading, there is no record of toy making as an industry in Europe until the late fifteenth century.[154] However, Geoff Egan has argued that finds of toys from London from the medieval to the post-medieval period indicate that at least in England, toys were widely available as mass produced commodities from roughly 1300, with an international trade from at least the fifteenth century.[155]

The York excavations, the Wood Quay and subsequent excavations during the last thirty years in Dublin have yielded a number of child – associated goods, including 'small size' ice-skates made of horse leg bone[156] and whistles made from the leg bones of birds.[157]

An unusually small padlock was identified from a disturbed context at Bride Street in Dublin.

> The remarkable feature of this padlock is its small size. The barb-springs on the bolt must have been extremely delicate, a mere *c*. 10 mm by 2 mm by 0.5mm, making its use very limited if it was a lock and not a toy. The only smaller example from Britain or Ireland is a gold barrel padlock brooch, 15mm long, found in a medieval gold jewellery hoard at Fishpool in Nottinghamshire which had a decorative function only and was incapable of locking. A use for the Bride Street example could have been to lock a very small box, or more likely a leather or wooden book cover **(Figure 69)**.[158]

However, padlocks have also been found in children's burials in Birka, and they appear to have held some sort of ritual or symbolic meaning.[159]

Toggles

An object often referred to in the as a 'toggle', has recently been interpreted as a child's toy by the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust. They are variously referred to as 'buzz

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[154] Ollerenshaw, *Toys for the Viking horde.*
[155] Egan, 'Miniature toys of medieval childhood', p. 11.
[156] Wallace, *Dublin 1000*, p. 17.
[157] Ibid., p. 17.
[158] Mary McMahon, 'Early medieval settlement and burial outside the enclosed town, evidence from archaeological excavations at Bride Street, Dublin' in *PRIA*, ci, section c (2002), p. 101.
[159] Gräslund, 'Barn i Stan', p. 23.

bones', 'whirlygigs', 'schnurrers', and 'snorie banes/bones' **(Figure 70)**. These objects have been found at medieval and Viking sites in northern Europe, as well as in Germany,[160] Spain and throughout Scandinavia.[161] There are also a number of wooden versions known from Greenland with the sinew still strung through.[162] In Sweden a cursory search of the word '*vinare*' (Swedish for 'whirlygig'), turns up five objects, all dated to the Scandinavian Viking period (700-1050)[163] **(Figures 71 a and b)**. These items are often highly polished and show evidence of friction with strings, hair or fibre[164] as in the case of one of the items found from the twelfth century levels at Washington Street in Cork.[165] They sometimes turn up in sets and while a variety of interpretations have been given for these objects (beads, loom weights) a much more probable interpretation is that they relate to the material culture of children. Similar objects were identified in the Inuit cultures of Canada and Greenland[166] and parts of Europe and Scandinavia.[167] Ethnographic evidence indicates that 'snorrie banes' were still being used by children in Shetland and Orkney at the start of the twentieth century. The interpretation of buzzbones as musical instruments has also been suggested by Megaw and Buckley.[168] Ethnographic parallels also exist for their use as musical instruments in Scandinavia.[169]

It was only in 2001 when a British researcher found a piece of string amongst a 4000

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[160] Doris Fischer, 'Spielzug in mittelalter' available at (http://www.ausgraeberei.de/spielzeug/Spielkno.htm) (2 January, 2005). The toggle comes from an 11th century context in Schleswig-Holstein.

[161] Auslan Cramb, 'Toys that make a noise go back to the Bronze Age' available at (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml)?xml=/news/2001/12/24/ntoy24.xml&site=5&page=0) (1 June 2002).

[162] CUMMA Cambridge record no. [1934.546]'Buzz' or 'buzzer' of wood, with two holes at the centre, with sinew thread, found in East Greenland, available at (http://museum.archanth.cam.ac.uk/home/catalogue/objects/index.php?idno=&name=toy&keyword=&material=&source=&place=&culture_group=+&period=&page=1) (1 October, 2007).

[163] SHM Sweden, available at (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/resultat_bild.asp) (4 May, 2007).

[164] Sheehan, et al, 'A Viking maritime haven', p. 106.

[165] Maurice Hurley, 'Artefacts of skeletal material' in *Excavations in Cork city, 1984-2000* (Cork, 2003), p. 342.

[166] Robert Park, 'Size counts: the miniature archaeology of childhood in Inuit societies' in *Antiquity*, lxxii, no. 276 (1998), pp 269-81.

[167] Gus Van Beek, 'The buzz: a simple toy from antiquity' in *BASOR*, cclxxv (1989), pp 53–58 (Van Beek, 'The buzz').

[168] J. V. S. Megaw, 'Bone musical instruments from medieval Exeter' in J. P. Altan (ed.), *Medieval and post-medieval finds from Exeter, 1971-1983* (Exeter, 1981), p. 349; Anne Buckley, 'Musical instruments from medieval Dublin, a preliminary survey' in E. Hickmann and D. W. Hughes (eds), *The archaeology of early music cultures* (Bonn, 1988), p. 155.

[169] Cajsa Lund, 'The archaeomusicology of Scandinavia' in *World Archaeology,* xii (February, 1981), pp 256-7.

year old clump of bones that it they realised they were actually 'snorrie banes'.[170] The metatarsals of pigs were perforated and then threaded onto cord or animal sinew and then spun. It may be that these bones have their origin in some sort of ritual or religious practice. Professor Alexander Fenton, of the National Museum of Scotland, has suggested that the 'buzz-bone' might have been developed originally by prehistoric man as a way to scare birds or wild animals before evolving into a toy.[171] There has been much discussion within the last century or so concerning the origin and purpose of the artefact often termed a 'bullroarer' also known as 'free aerophones' in archeomusicology. Examples are known from the Palaeolithic to modern day. They are described as an 'instrument [which] consists of a flat perforated piece of wood or bone on the end of a cord, which creates a whirring sound when spun in a circular motion, and is, or has been, used in a great diversity of global cultures'[172] ranging from North America, to Scandinavia to New Zealand and New Guinea. Evidence that these toggles, or more properly, buzz bones are associated with children comes from excavations in Birka in Sweden, where they have been found in the graves of both male and female children.[173] Buzz bones are found with both single and double perforations, and examples survive with the string still corded through the perforations.[174] Toggles made from the axial metapodials of pig are often interpreted as dress fasteners or bobbins, but this identification has been called into doubt because the objects do not show wear or polish from such a use. A more recent suggestion is that 'they were toys, threaded on a twisted cord and made to spin and hum by pulling the cord'.[175] Toggles have also been identified from the Dublin excavations including five examples from Fishamble Street,

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[170] SMA, available at (http://photos.shetlandmuseum.org.uk/shetlands/app;jsessionid=9q2556tkbrlq?service=external/SearchResults&sp=IAt+Play&sp=121543&sp=SItem) (2 November, 2006).

[171] Auslan Cramb, 'Toys that make a noise go back to the Bronze Age' available at (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml)?xml=/news/2001/12/24/ntoy24.xml&site=5&page=0) (1 June 2002); *British Archaeology*, lxiv, (April 2002), available at (http://www.britarch.ac.uk/BA/ba64/news.shtml) (5 April 2002).

[172] Ian Morley, *The evolutionary origins and archaeology of music*, Darwin College research report DCRR-002 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 45, available at (http://www.dar.cam.ac.uk/dcrr/dcrr002) (10 February, 2007).

[173] Two examples of buzzbones from Viking period childrens graves in Birka are [SHM 5208:1578] available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107533) (2 May, 2007); [SHM 5208:1577] available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107532) (2 May, 2007). Fifteen other examples are in the SHM database, all dating to Viking Age Birka, available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/resultat_foremal.asp) (2 May, 2007).

[174] [SHM 5208:1578].

[175] Richard Hall, *Viking Age York* (Manchester, 1994), p. 104; also Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 675.

as well as from the Waterford excavations **(Figure 72)**.[176]

Bone cylinders

These rather enigmatic objects are often constructed from bone or antler and are cylindrical in shape. They are often referred to as loom weights. This however, is unlikely as they are internally polished and uneven in form. Similarly, they could not have been used as gaming pieces as they would not stand upright when placed on a flat surface **(Figure 73)**.

The largest number of bone artefacts recovered from the Waterford excavations were what Hurley referred to as 'cut bone and antler hollow cylinders'. Of the 292 hollow bone artefacts recovered from Waterford, 38 were constructed from antler bone, the rest from the long bones of large animals.[177] The cylinders were found at almost every level of the excavations, with the largest number dating to the eleventh- and twelfth-century levels. These objects have been found in pairs as well as singly. Hurley identified a set of eight found within a late eleventh- to early twelfth-century house on Peter Street.[178] In Dublin, a similar group of c. a dozen cylinders were used in sets. Hollow cylinders are amongst the most enigmatic finds from medieval excavations in Ireland.[179] In Britain, only relatively small numbers have been found. They have been variously described as by-products of bone working, as a piece of long-bone shaft forming a

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[176] NMI [E172: 6641], Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 676.

[177] Ibid., p. 685.

[178] Ibid., p. 685. One cylinder recovered from a layer of extra mural dumping (mid-twelfth century) had a piece of rope strung through the central perforation. The rope indicates that the objects were strung or hung and that the high polish on the interior surface was acquired from contact with fibre. The majority of the cylinders have an internal polish. Some also have high external polishes and rounded ends and frequently one end is more rounded that the other. Highly polished cylinders, however, only represent a small proportion of the total.

[179] Various interpretations have been suggested for the Irish cylinders, but these are not very plausible as most are individual finds from a variety of contexts. There is very little contextual evidence to relate them to particular trades of domestic functions. Where not regarded as by-products of bone working, it has frequently been suggested that they were loom weights or large beads.[179] The use of the cylinders as loom weights is one of the more plausible suggestions, because these were used in sets. The difficulty with the interpretation is the absence of specific evidence for small warp-weighted looms from this period. The date at which the horizontal loom was introduced is uncertain, but it appears to have taken place gradually during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The absence of loom weights and other objects associated with the warp-weighted loom from Winchester leads Keene to suggest that a two-beam loom (which would not require weights) was in use there even at an earlier stage, i.e. early Middle Ages. The variation in weight seen in the bone cylinders – even in the group found together, casts further doubt on the interpretation since all the weights in use in one loom set would need to be relatively standard. Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 685.

cylinder or as a possible slider or a cylinder.[180]

> The type of wear and polish seen on the cylinders could certainly have been produced by friction with wool, hair or fibre, leading to suggestions ranging from use as hair curlers, standard spacing devices used in the manufacture of netting, or devices used in the twisting or rolling of string. Less likely interpretations are charms and amulets against witchcraft or gaming pieces. The former seems unlikely in view of the large numbers found in Irish port towns, and the latter is inconsistent with the wear and polish. The known gaming pieces are very different and the cylinders are rarely cut evenly at the ends and there for could not stand vertically on a board.[181]

In the absence of a convincingly demonstrated function, Hurley et al. terms the finds, 'cut bone, and antler cylinders'.[182] One possibility is that the objects are 'idiophones' or a type of sound producing device also known as a 'strung rattle'.[183] Cajsa Lund has argued that while such objects often have their origin in much older, ritual use, they are often found as toys in later cultures.[184]

Buzz disks

Objects similar in function to that of the 'buzz bones' discussed earlier include 'buzz disks' **(Figure 74)**. These objects can be described as being roughly round in nature, with two centrally spaced holes. Van Beek has discussed this artefact at some length.

> While some were made of chalk and other stones, most were fashioned from potsherds of large diameter vessels, e.g., storage jars and deep bowls, that yield flatter, less concave disks. The edges of the sherd were roughly rounded by chipping with a hammerstone, and then rubbed against a rough rock to produce a relatively smooth edge and a disk shape. The two holes probably were drilled with a pointed waste flake of chert or with a sharp piece of bronze or iron. Such objects are generally called 'buttons' or 'perforated disks' in the literature, but those names are simply convenient labels to convey the general characteristics of the object: they do not describe the disk's function.[185]

Double pierced 'buttons' or 'perforated disks' exist from numerous sites and in all settlement contexts in Ireland. A number of single perforated slate disks were identified

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[180] Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 685.
[181] Ibid., p. 685.
[182] Ibid., p. 685.
[183] Cajsa Lund, 'The archaeomusicology of Scandinavia' in *World Archaeology*, xii (1980-81), p. 249.
[184] Ibid., p. 249.
[185] Gus Van Beek, 'The buzz', p. 54.

during the excavations in Waterford between 1982 and 1996.[186] And others are known from early historic settlement sites such as Gransha, Co. Down, monastic enclosures such as Reask, Co. Kerry and ringfort sites such as Lisnacaheragh, Garranes Co. Cork.[187] Buzz discs are known from a number of cultures including Scandinavia. They are often constructed from light stone such as slate, or from pottery. One such object constructed from stone exists from Sweden.[188] Buzz discs are also a common find in Viking-Age Dublin, where they are usually constructed from either antler or bone.[189] The thin perforated disc from an early thirteenth-century context in Waterford may also represent an example of a buzz disc. This object shows internal contact with fibre, and is decorated on the upper surface. While objects such as this are often interpreted as buttons, button manufacture is not known from medieval contexts in Britain or Ireland.[190] A triple perforated shale disc from Lagore may also be a buzz disc.[191]

Spinning tops

The Old Icelandic word for 'top' is *hreyti-speldi*, and bone and wooden spinning tops are common on Scandinavian sites as well as sites in the British Isles. Spinning tops were also found at the Fishamble street (eleventh-century) excavations in Dublin. Two lathe turned bone spinning tops were also recovered from Winetavern Street. Both have transverse ornamental grooves produced by their turning. One is from an eleventh-century context and is 6.3 cm long, and the other is of thirteenth-century date and is 5.2 cm long.[192] A third top, made of wood (and may be a gaming piece), dates from the thirteenth century, and is also from Winetavern Street.[193] Eight of what Hurley and McCutcheon term 'whipping tops' were excavated from Waterford. The items were found in contexts dating from the twelfth- to the eighteenth-century. The items are of various shapes including 'pear shaped' and 'torpedo shaped'. The excavators suggests

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[186] Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992,* pp 406-9.
[187] All sites available in summary form at DIER, www.excavations.ie. Interestingly, the perforated slate disks which were excavated from the Early Historic Native Irish settlement site of Gransha, Co. Down were found in the vicinity of over thirty very roughly made slate trial pieces – perhaps suggesting this was an area of representing the activities of children or youths. See Chris Lynn, 'Gransha Early Christian settlement', Down [1972:0012, J531769], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Down&id=5489) (2 May, 2005).
[188] *Leksak, vinare* (toy whirlygig) made from stone and dates to post 1050 [SHM 46139], available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=46139) (10 April, 2004).
[189] Wallace, 'The archaeology of Ireland's Viking age towns', p. 832.
[190] Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 685; fig. 17:10, no. 1, p. 697.
[191] Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', pp 176-7.
[192] NMI [E81: 4171]; [E81: 2132], NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 34.
[193] NMI [E71:6363], Ibid., p. 34.

that some of the objects might be tops constructed from modified cores (as in the case of one of the post-medieval objects) but argues that 'others may have been specifically made for a particular purpose, e.g. as whipping tops.[194] Two of the tops from a twelfth-century context are very similar to a mid-eleventh century top from Winchester, which was also pointed at both ends, and had a central groove to secure the lash of the whip. Hurley and McCutcheon also point out that four hundred and fifty of these tops were excavated in Novgorod.[195] The Novgorod tops were widespread from the tenth century, peaking in popularity in the fourteenth.[196]

> The surviving toys from Viking settlements were probably produced for local use. Many would be the work of family members, although it is always possible that some toys were traded between settlements. The fairly standard shape of toy horses from across the area may indicate commercial and social links between communities - or may have been chosen independently by different artisans. On the whole, it is impossible to document any standard tradition of toy design among Scandinavian communities, although there are similarities among finds from different areas.[197]

For example, 'most of the figurines of animals and people are cut in silhouette from flat pieces of wood, and a strong characteristic of both types is a great simplicity of line. Playthings have simplistic outlines and the even the facial areas often lack detail'.[198] However, 'the intricate styles of carved decoration on Viking artefacts, from carts to comb cases, are not repeated on the extant toys. Perhaps children's belongings were not considered worth the effort of extensive carving'.[199] Or perhaps children themselves made the carvings.

Child-sized axes?

A diminutive bronze axe which may possibly be a child's object was found at the Viking Age site of Islandbridge, in Dublin **(Figure 75)**. The blade is covered with a white metal which may be tin. The handle, which is cast in one piece with the blade, is circular in section at the blade, rectangular at the lower end, where a portion is missing.

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[194] Hurley, et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 579.
[195] Ibid., p. 579.
[196] Mark Brisbane, (ed.), *The archaeology of Novgorod, Russia: recent results from the town and its hinterland*, *The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series*, xiii (Lincoln, 1992), p.176 (Brisbane, *The Archaeology of Novgorod*).
[197] Ollerenshaw, *Toys for the Viking horde.*
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.

The lines adorning the handle near the blade cannot now be seen. The length of the handle is 14.4 cm and the blade is 4.4 cm.[200] James Graham Campbell has argued that bronze objects were often coated in a white metal – generally tin – in order to provide cheap imitations of the silver ornaments worn by wealthy Vikings.[201] The Islandbridge axe is quite similar in form and style the more ornate inlaid iron axe head from Mammen in Jutland, Denmark.[202] Elizabeth O'Brien has suggested that the object could be a 'stick pin' due to its very small size. [203] However, nearly identical small axes have been found in children's graves in Iceland, indicating that these axes are likely objects associated with children. A Viking-Age grave in Hemla, Iceland of a 13-17 year old (probable male) contained a number of gravegoods including a spearhead and a small axe. The axe measures 13.5 cm in length and the cutting edge is 6 cm.[204] At Straumur in North-Múlasýsla, East Iceland, a grave containing an intact skeleton of a seven to twelve year old child of undetermined sex was excavated in 1952. The remains had been placed on its right side, slightly flexed, with head to the south and the feet crossed. At the feet was a small knife and unusually small axe measuring only 11.3 cm long with the cutting edge only 5 cm had been placed by the skull. A lead weight and two small round stones were also recovered from the grave.[205] On the island of Kaldárhöfði, Iceland, a farm dating to the first phase of Icelandic settlement was excavated. It comprised a double grave containing an adult extended supine inhumation with the head placed at the west. Next to this skeleton, but within the same grave, were two teeth from a child aged seven to eight years of age. The adult burial was accompanied by an elaborate Peterson type O sword, an unusually large spearhead, six arrowheads, a broken axe which had been placed by the adults waist, along with a bronze buckle, a small strap end (possibly of Frankish origin) and a wad of silver wire. The child burial was

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[200] Bøe, 'Norse antiquities in Ireland', p. 53.

[201] Graham Campbell and Kidd, *The Vikings*, p. 146. Other tin coated bronze objects are known from the archaeological record including the small fold up scales from Gigha in Scotland (see Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 84) as well as a ringed pin from Carraig Aille (see Seán Ó Ríordáin, 'Lough Gur excavations: Carraig Aille and the "Spectacles" in *PRIA*, lii, Section C, no. 3 (September, 1949), p. 68).

[202] [Copenhagen NM:C. 133], Graham Campbell, *Viking artefacts,* p. 146.

[203] O'Brien, 'Viking burials at Kilmainham and Islandbridge', p. 211.

[204] Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*', p. 36. The skeleton lay on its right side with the head to the south and the feet slightly flexed. Gravegoods included a knife that had been placed by the waist and a shield boss which lay over the skull. A small pendant whetstone, a rounded lead weight, a broken glass bead, bone comb and four pieces of red jasper were recovered from the areas around the waistline, and likely had been contained within a pouch suspended from a belt. The grave also contained an unidentified piece of wood. Roughly one meter north of the grave was a horse burial, which has been interpreted as being part of the male grave, with a further horse burial located two to three meters SE of the male burial. Ibid., p. 37.

[205] Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*', p. 63.

accompanied by a small spearhead and a small axe. Other objects recovered included two small knives, two pieces of red jasper, a fish hook, a boat hook, a lead sinker and some unidentified iron fragments and textile. Both burials had been laid in a small boat burial (w.8 m long and 0.8 m wide) and it appears that two shields had been placed at the east and west end of the boat.[206] Chris Callow has suggested that the first settlers in Iceland appear to have generally continued Scandinavian practices within their new lands. He has argued that:

> Grave good deposition is often related to age, gender, as well as the more indefinable notion of 'status' and the Icelandic child burials show the influence of all three but not consistently. The two youngest children have no gravegoods associated with them which suggests that they were not seen as socially significant. At seven to twelve years the better preserved burials all had grave furnishings but their quantity varies considerably. They ranged from a single knife in a cemetery where otherwise the adult burials were furnished reasonably well; to a single (small) spear which accompanied the isolated burial of a child and an unsexed adult together; to a possible boat burial accompanied by a small axe, a knife, lead weight and two pebbles. Unlike in some ninth to eleventh-century Swedish graves, Icelandic children's graves do not appear to have been marked out by any particular form of amulet.[207]

Dáibhí Ó Cróinín interpreted the Islandbridge axe as a child's toy,[208] and the possibility must be considered. Further support to the objects identification as a child's object is leant by the existence of a 'viking toy axe' found in gravel workings north of Ermin Street at Hucclecote, Gloucester in 1917.[209] Another miniature axe was found in the river Thames at Whitehall and is on display in the Viking section in the British Museum. The object bears a similarity to the axe from Islandbridge but the handle is missing. The axe dates to the ninth century AD, and is displayed as a 'small tool or a weapon'.[210] An unusual 'miniature' iron axehead was found in the vicinity of Strokestown Crannog, Co. Roscommon,[211] along with bone needles and scoops, bone

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[206] Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frœndr*', p. 41. Also see K. Eldjárn, *Gengið á reka. Tólf fornleifaþættir* (Akureyri, 1948), pp 25-44 and K. Eldjárn, *Kuml og haugfé úr heiðnum sið á Íslandi*, 2nd ed., in A. Friðriksson (ed.), *Fornleifastofnun Íslands, Mál og menning and Þjóðminjasafn Íslands* (Reykjavík, 2000), pp 87-91; 324-325.

[207] Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland', p. 63. Callow cites Fylgerfeldt's in associating amber amulets with shaman, children, pregnant women and old women. Ibid., p. 63.

[208] Ó Cróinín, *Early Medieval Ireland, 400-1200*, p. 243.

[209] 'Viking toy axe' ADS records database id, NMR_NATINV-901849, available at (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/search/fr.cfm?rcn=NMR_NATINV-901849) (2 May, 2006).

[210] Small viking axe head which dates to the ninth century BM[MME 7.1.1452].

[211] [NMI Reg. no. 1939:399].

combs, an iron sickle or reaping hook, a bronze ring-headed pin, a penannular brooch and pin.[212] The axe measures 10.1 cm in length and the width of the blade at the cutting edge is 4.4 cm. A 'small axe' found in the nineteenth-century is recorded from Bawtry, South Yorkshire,[213] and a lead alloy cast axe was found by metal detectorists near Gringley, On The Hill, Nottinghamshire.[214] The literary evidence supports the idea that small axes could be associated with some children and youths. In *Grettis Saga* Þorbjorn and his son are harvesting hay in a meadow, the father places his shield and sword momentarily by a bundle of hay, but the boy keeps hold of his small axe.[215]

While it is unusual to find children's toys constructed from metal in an Irish context, it is not unknown in a European one. Axes are a common Viking Age burial find across the Scandinavian diaspora. In his study of Viking-Age Danish axes from graves, Ulf Näsmun argues that 'the axe itself probably does not indicate an exclusive social position' but that 'only a silver decorated axe informs us that the buried man could have had a more significant social position'.[216] Näsmun further argues that 'low rank warriors were throughout the Viking-Age buried in relatively poor graves, and the axe was the commonest symbol used to announce their status as warriors. Men belonging to the powerful and wealthy were from the end of the ninth century until the third quarter of the tenth century buried with a rich equipment of weapons and horse furniture. Some of these graves contained a silver decorated axe'.[217] In such a stratified society it is not improbable that male children had appropriately sized weapons that befit their status and the status of their kin. If the silver coated axes found in adult male graves in other parts of Scandinavia denote warriors, then perhaps the 'white metalled' axe from Islandbridge suggests the burial of a male Scandinavian child.

Toy swords

Like the toy boats and ships, the wooden toy sword from Fishamble Street strengthens

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[212] [NMI, Reg. no. 1939:397-405].

[213] Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, *Proceedings*, 3rd Ser., i (1905), p. 273, quoted in Walton Rogers and Speed, 'A burial of a Viking woman at Adwick-le-Street', p. 55.

[214] Lead toy axe head, date recorded August 17, 2006, available at UKDFD (http://www.ukdfd.co.uk/ukdfddata/showrecords.php?product=4060&cat=9&date=1155845081) (12 August, 2007).

[215] Jochens, *Old Norse images of women*, p. 109.

[216] Ulf Näsmun, 'Grav og økse; Mammen og den danske vikingetids våbengrave' in *Mammen, Grav, kunst og samfund i vikingetid* (Århus, 1991), p. 179 (Näsmun, 'Grav og økse').

[217] Ibid., p. 179.

the argument that children imitated what they saw was important to the adult community **(Figure 76)**. The form of the sword reflects known Viking Age sword types and the pommel is Peterson's type H. Over a quarter of Viking-Age swords in Ireland are of this type and it is the most common type found Norway.[218] The sword is unadorned and is constructed from wood. It was excavated from dark, highly organic soil near a possible pathway to a house at Fishamble Street. The length of the sword is 23.7 cm, the width is 6.0 and the thickness is 1.5 cm.[219] Another toy wooden sword was excavated from Christchurch Place and is on display in the National Museum of Ireland.[220] A rather enigmatic object listed in the National Museum acquisitions record as a 'sword model' was excavated in the nineteenth century from Leabeg in County Offaly. The object is constructed from wood and there are two large oval holes in the middle of the blade. The length of the blade is only twelve inches and the extreme breadth two inches.[221] An iron 'Viking sword' in the British Museum dated to the tenth-century, is known from the site of Lough Gur, Co. Limerick. Barry Ager, curator in the Dept. of Prehistory and Europe in the British Museum has suggested that because of the swords shortness and the very narrow hand grip that the sword is thought to have been made for a child.[222] The length of the sword is 54 cm and the width of the blade is 4 cms. The sword shows evidence of damascening on both sides up to the lower crossbar.[223] It is worth noting that a base was established by the Vikings at Lough Gur in 926 AD. 'The fleet of Port Láirge [came] over land, and they settled on Loch Gair'.[224] An iron toy sword is known from Östergötland, Sweden and is 11.6 cm in length and dates to the later time period of 1300-1470.[225] A further wooden toy sword comes from Söderköping, in South-Eastern Sweden **(Figure 77)**.[226] A sword with a small hilt was also identified at Vendel in Sweden, and was found alongside a small helmet in a grave which dates to the eighth

[218] Aidan Walsh, 'A summary classification of Viking-Age swords in Ireland' in Howard Clarke, Máire ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), p. 229.
[219] [NMI E141: 3260], Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood,* p. 79.
[220] [NMI E122: 16317].
[221] 'Academy minutes' in *PRIA*, v (1850), p. 376.
[222] [BM Reg. no. 1864,1-27, 3], Barry Ager, pers. Comm.
[223] Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, part 1, p. 86.
[224] Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *Annals of Inisfallen (MS. Rawlinson, B. 503)* (1st ed., Dublin, 1951), p. 149.
[225] Flat iron toy sword dating to 1300-1470, from Ostergotland, Sweden [SHM 14767:81]. Found in 1912 in Östergötland Östra Eneby in the settlement site of Ringstaholm, Föremål no. 116594, available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fyndlokal.asp?lokalid=29197) (14 May, 2006).
[226] SHM, Wooden sword from Söderköping, in South-Eastern Sweden dating to post 1050, [SHM 34711], Föremål 122997, Available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=122997) (2 May, 2006).

century.[227] The collection of the Royal Armouries in Leeds contain a number of children's swords including a very early one.[228] Robert Woosnam-Savage, curator of European edged weapons at the Royal Armouries has suggested that the sword was made for a child. The sword was found in the river Seine, near Rouen in France and is either German or French and dates to the mid-tenth to the mid-twelfth century.

> Although identifying the weapon of a child is not an exact science and it could conceivably be a 'miniature', the sword under discussion is not only constructed in an identical manner to its full-size counterparts, it has a grip that is plainly too short for an adult of normal proportions, then or now, and therefore is at least indicative of it having been made for the use of a juvenile. It is not possible to know whether or not this sword was made for ceremony or display but given that it is constructed in the same way as other surviving medieval war swords there is no justification to think of it not having been made for the more practical reasons of training or even actual combat.[229]

Other swords[230] dating to the period c. 1300-1500 exist which are undoubtedly children's weapons because the proportions are identical to the adult-sized swords, but the hilts are far to small for the average adult hand.[231] The Fishamble Street toy sword is a type that is very similar to the type II semi-circular terminalled swords from Novgorod. The swords from Novgorod date from the tenth- to the fourteenth-centuries, with most dating to the tenth- to twelfth- centuries.[232] A similar sword is known from Staraja Ladoga and dates to the eighth- or ninth-century **(Figure 78)**. Similar finds from Novgorod are perhaps suggestive of a geographic cultural consistency within childrens's playthings throughout the Scandinavian world **(Figure 79)**. Over 116 child sized swords are known from the excavations at Novgorod, as well as five toy daggers, fourteen toy

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[227] Peter Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings, Scandinavia and Europe, AD 700-1100* (London, 1989), p. 50.
[228] RAML [IX.5610].
[229] Robert Woosnam-Savage, pers. Comm.
[230] In the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds 'a short sword of about 1350 (IX.1115), which has an overall length of 55.9 cm, and a grip of 83 mm in length, is currently displayed and described as a quillon dagger although it was originally acquired as a boys' sword in 1966 and has been published as such, "probably a boys' sword, rather than a dagger.... It was designed for a child aged about eight."' Arthur Richard Dufty, *European swords and daggers in the Tower of London* (London, 1974), p. 15, quoted in Robert Woosnam-Savage, forthcoming. 'An earlier Royal Armouries catalogue entry, probably correctly, described the sword as having been 'made for a child of about 8 years of age'. Robert Woosnam-Savage, forthcoming.
[231] Ewart Oakeshott, 'A river-find of 15th century swords,' in Karl Stuber and Hans Wetter (eds), *Blankwaffen, armes blanches, armibianche, edged weapons: festschrift Hugo Schneider zu seinem*, 65 (Zürich, 1982), pp 17-32. I am grateful to Robert Savage for providing me with this reference contained within his forthcoming article in *Arms and Armour: Journal of the Royal Armouries*.
[232] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 175.

bows and a number of arrows.[233] Brisbane argues that the children's toy weapons are constructed with such accuracy, that they can be used as sources for their adult counterparts.[234] He does not, however, utilize them as a source for the activities and lives of children in Novgorod. However, Morozova has determined in her analysis of the Novgorod toys that a wide range of toys remained available to the children until sometime in the mid-twelfth century and the middle of the thirteenth, a drop off which she explains was likely caused by widespread death of children due to famines which are recorded in the chronicles of Novgorod.[235]

There are also seventeen examples of 'whirligigs' or propellers known from Novgorod,[236] as well as 'dolls, figures of animals attached to a stick or with legs for standing upright on a table, rattles, whistles, toy crockery (the last three made of clay)… More than fifty hobby-horses were found. A game something like hockey was played with a wooden ball and wooden sticks'.[237]

Toy horses

The drawings on the carved wooden toy horse from Dublin made from Scots Pine[238] may offer a very rare and striking example of an artistic expression by a child. Even if the horse was constructed by an adult, the rough nature of the drawings on the toy suggest they were made by a child **(Figure 80 a and b)**.[239] The horse was excavated from Fishamble Street and measures twelve centimetres in length. On either side of the horse are incised human faces. There are spirals on the belly and joints, and the horse has faint traces of an eye. The toy was dated on the basis of coins to between 1000 and

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[233] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 173.
[234] Ibid., p. 175.
[235] Ibid., p. 175.
[236] Ibid., p. 175.
[237] M. W. Thompson, *Novgorod the great, excavations at the Medieval city, 1951-62, directed by A. V. Artsikhovsky and B. A. Kolchin* (London, 1967), p. 101.
[238] [NMI E172:9420] Lang, *Viking-age decorated wood,* p. 100.
[239] Other examples of children's art exist in the archaeological record. 'The Birch bark letters' from Novgorod, Russia contain a series of late 12th century letters by a seven-year-old boy named Onfim. The drawings include practicing of the alphabet as well as a number of pictures representing what appears to be his father, friends and even scenes of Onfim 'going to war'. For discussion of the Birchbark Letters see V. L. Ianin, 'Novgorod Birchbark Letters' in *AAE*, xxxv, no. 4, pp 14-41; Valentin Yanine, 'The dig at Novgorod' in Thomas Riha, (ed.), *Readings in Russian Civilization*, i (Chicago, 1964), pp 47-59. A further example of a child's drawing comes from the back of an ecclesiastical manuscript housed at Oxford and dates to around 900 A. D. Based on the evidence of his drawings he too was also learning his alphabet, as well as learning how to sing. See Bodleian Library at Oxford (MS Auct. T. 2. 28, folio 43 recto); and Paul Wickenden, 'Medieval children's art' in *Tournaments Illuminated,* cxvi (Fall, 1995), pp 45- 51.

1025. The drawings of the male human figures on each side of the toy horse bear a remarkable resemblance to other Norse figures such as the man carved on the Middleton Cross in St. Andrew's Church, Middleton, North Yorkshire. Similar representations appear on the Gotlandic picture stones as well as rune stones from the Viking period. Eyes, ears, and beard are very defined in the drawing of the toy horse, and what may be a cone shaped hat is depicted on both the drawings on the horse as well as the Middleton Cross. A hat bearing a remarkable similarity was found in the grave of a man from Birka, Sweden, which had been attached to a cap that was made at least partly from silk.[240] Alternatively, the 'hat' might represent a conical helmet, making the rather prominent triangular shapes on the toy horse indicative of a splayed nose guard. The carved male figure on the 'antler mount' from Sigtuna, Uppland in Sweden also bears resemblance to the drawing on the toy horse **(Figure 81)**.[241] The drawing is reminiscent of depictions of Freyr, the god of fertility. Interestingly, the figures on each side of the toy horse also bear a similarity to objects which have been associated with Norse contact on the Dorset culture from Baffin Island. The representations have been interpreted as Dorset depictions of Norse men and close examination of the figures acknowledges this similarity **(Figure 82)**.

The Vikings settled in Greenland in the tenth century, and there is some evidence that there was some level of interaction at the level of either trade or material cultural influence. The Thule culture of Arctic Canada emigrated from Alaska into Arctic Canada and Greenland around 1000 AD. The location of the small sized objects within the context of the house sites is suggestive of everyday use rather than the result of ritual deposition. Objects recovered from a number of sites include ninety-nine dolls, twenty-three tiny lamps, thirteen miniature cooking pots, seventeen small sleds, twenty nine small sleds, twelve child sized kayaks, twenty nine children's bows, sixteen harpoon heads as well as numerous other objects.[242] 'Beyond demonstrating the presence of children at these sites, the assemblage offers confirmation of some of their activities, and their learning, though play, of vital adult skills'.[243] In Inuit society, ethnographic evidence indicate that both boys and girls built houses out of snow in the winter. The 'pebble plans' of these structures have been identified in the archaeological record.

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[240] Graham Campbell, et al., *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 184.
[241] [SHM 22044], Graham Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue,* p. 294, plates 482 (a) and 482 (b).
[242] Park, 'Size counts, the miniature archaeology of childhood in Inuit societies', p. 276.
[243] Ibid., p. 276.

Miniature containers, pots, lamps, beds and knives have also been identified. Such objects appear most frequently in the corners of the house site, suggesting that this was an area of concentrated child activity. Robert Park has suggested that the dressed wooden dolls that have been found represent a method of teaching young girls how to cut skins and to sew. Miniature harpoons, spears, bows and arrows have also been identified. Bows were certainly a part of everyday adult life during this period, and there is evidence that child-sized bows were used in some levels of Viking society. A fragment of toy bow was identified from the tenth century levels at Novgorod, and others were identified from the twelfth and thirteenth century levels. 'Three children's bows were found, non-composite and made of a single piece of juniper, from the tenth, twelfth and thirteenth century levels. A number of bone fittings for quivers were also encountered'.[244]

The culture of the Inuit Greenlanders was impacted on by the movements of Norse settlers into the country. Writing in 1916, William Thalbitzer suggested that peaked caps, iron compound saws, mortised work in kiaks and tubs, red and white glass beads, along with 'the use of the cross-bow as a toy and for shooting small birds must be a survival from the medieval Norse colonists in the south of Greenland, and the rectangular form of house was perhaps derived from the same source'.[245] More recent research into Inuit culture following European contact, has revealed that the indigenous Inuit material culture does indeed reflect influences from incoming settlers. For example, some scholars have suggested that clothed dolls were traded into Inuit society after contact the outsiders, eventually becoming common objects for girls in all tribes.[246] Patricia Sutherland has suggested that contact between the Dorset peoples and the Norse was much more extensive than is traditionally understood. New finds of textiles and wooden objects suggest direct contact between Baffin Island and Norse settlers.[247] The carved wooden doll from Baffin Island that has been dated to pre-1300 has been suggested as reflective of Norse contact. The figure is depicted as wearing a long robe, split in the middle with a faint cross scratched into the chest **(Figure 83)**. Scholars at the Canadian Museum where the object is held have suggested that the figure represents a

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[244] Thompson, *Novgorod the great, excavations at the medieval city 1951-62*, p. 81.
[245] William Thalbitzer (ed.), *The Ammassalik Eskimo, contributions to the ethnology of the east Greenland natives*, part 1 (2 vols., Copenhagen, 1914), p. 192.
[246] Park, 'Size counts, the miniature archaeology of childhood in Inuit societies', p. 274.
[247] Sutherland, 'Strands of culture contact'.

priest or a knight rather than an indigenous artic person.[248]

The striking similarity of the wooden horses that have been found (most are all roughly 12.5 cm long) indicates the far-reaching continuity of this aspect of the material culture of Scandinavian children. 'Material culture cannot automatically be equated with biological heritage, of course, though they can be correlated. Indeed, material culture may also be correlated with a sense of self-identity…'.[249] The horse was of extreme importance in Scandinavian society, and this is attested to by finds pertaining to the Scandinavian adult culture. Burials of both men and women with horses and horse related paraphernalia have been found in the Scandinavian diaspora, including Ireland. The importance of the horse has also been attested to in Iceland, and Erin Lee Halstatt has suggested a possible link between women and children and a cult of horses. Both Frig and Freja are associated with childhood.[250] Certainly the Icelandic Sagas reflect that children did play with toy horses. *Viga Glum's Saga*, written in the tenth century (957), describes how:

> Saldis invited both her grandsons to stay with her. Arngrim was two winters older than Steinólfr; there was not in the whole of the Eyjafirth any boys of a better disposition or greater promise, and they were very fond of each other. When one was four years old and the other six, they were one day playing together, and Steinólfr asked Arngrim to lend him the little brass horse which he had. Arngrim answered, 'I will give it you, for looking to my age, it is more fit for your plaything than mine'. Steinólf went and told his foster-mother what a fair gift he had got, and she said it was quite right that they should be on such good terms with one another.[251]

This passage suggests the possibility that children played with small metal objects that might traditionally be interpreted in the archaeological record as being ritual items.

A number of small bronze horses are known in the archaeological record. One such example is the small bronze horse from Eshaness, Shetland, and is thought to date to

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[248] CMC, Canada, available at (http://www.civilization.ca/media/docs/fsvik04e.html) (12 June, 2007).
[249] Sheehan, et al, 'A Viking maritime haven', p. 93.
[250] Lillehammer, 'Five infants in a bog'.
[251] Edmund Head, (trans.), *The story of Vigaglum, translated from the Icelandic, with notes and an introduction* (London, 1866), available at: NFNEST (http,//www.northvegr.org/lore/vigaglum/012.php) (3 March, 2005) (Head, *Vigaglum*).

around 1100 **(Figure 84)**.[252] The Eshaness horse is very similar in style and form to the larger wooden toy horses. The miniature is roughly 6 cm long and has a cast mane and tail. Another bronze example dated to between 1050 and 1200 comes from Bergen and is 5.3 cm long and 4.8 cm high. The object has been interpreted in Bergen's archaeological database as a possible child's plaything.[253] A *Messingahestr*, or bronze horse was excavated at Þingvellir, a major medieval Icelandic site, but has since been lost.[254] A small brass horse is also known from Kosvig, Kristiansand, in Norway **(Figure 85)**.[255] A similar small horse made from bronze is known from Kaupang, Norway, although as it has a mount it is more likely a brooch.[256] Although not constructed from metal, a very small, plain wooden horse was recently excavated at Hólar in Skagafjörður in Iceland.[257] A further wooden example comes from Östergötland Vreta Vreta kloster in Sweden **(Figure 86)**.[258] A ceramic miniature horse is also known from Bergen **(Figure 87)**,[259] and Asbjørn Herteig has argued that this horse is part of a group of toys that include pots, horses, rattles and jugs. All the objects have been dated between 1050 and 1250 and may have originated in England or Hanover, Germany.[260] Excavations near the Carmelite Friary[261] (est. 1231) in Esslingen am Neckar in Baden-Württemberg, Germany revealed a collection of toys dating to the later medieval period, including a miniature horse almost identical to the example from

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[252] Small bronze horse from Eshaness, Shetland. Photo no. NE04987, available at SMA, (http://photos.shetlandmuseum.org.uk/index.php?a=wordsearch&s=item&key=WczoxNDoiZXNoYW5lc 3MgaG9yc2UiOw==&pg=2) (5 March 2007); also Richmond Paton, 'An unpublished Scottish gold coin' in *PSAS,* lxxi (1936-7), p. 93.

[253] BM, Norway, *hest av bronse* (bronze horse), BNM [B6764], available at (http://www.edd.uio.no/perl/search/search.cgi?restablename=OAB_TMP_1137274855&restabpos=0&rest abnum=20&tabid=2076&oid=0&vobj=0&tabpos=0&appid=132&dosearch=++++Search++++&listid=& oppsettid=-1&ResultatID=-1&ResRowsNum=33) (12August 2007).

[254] Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland', pp 66-7.

[255] Small bronze horse from Kosvig, Kristiansand, in Norway, available at (http://picasaweb.google.com/stylegar/Oldsaker/photo#5026159615606136386) (13 February, 2007).

[256] Kaupang-Undersøkelsen, Index for Kaupang, lead horse, fig. 4.16, section 4, 'The finds', Annual report, 2001, Universitetet I Oslo, available at (http://www.kaupang.uio.no/gamle-sider/dokumenter/aarsb_2001/kapittel4.htm#_Toc64564) (14 March, 2007).

[257] Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland', p. 67.

[258] SHM, Sweden. Toy horse, from Sweden [SHM 18011], dates to the Scandinavian middle ages, from Östergötland Vreta Vreta kloster, Föremål no. 442538, Fotografi Dokumentationsbild 30137, available at SHM, Stockholm (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=442538) (13 May, 2006).

[259] Asbjørn Herteig, *Bryggen I Bergen* (Bergen, 1961), pp 28-9, 31 (Herteig, *Bryggen I Bergen*).

[260] Ibid., pp 28-9.

[261] Hartmut Schäfer, *Esslingen im mittelalter, ausstellungen zur stadtgeschichte*; *excavations at the Carmelite friary*, available at (http://home.bawue.de/~wmwerner/essling/english/karmel08.html) (12 May, 2006).

Bergen **(Figure 88)**.[262]

Excavations in London have also turned up a variety of very similar objects in the form of small pots, pans and cauldrons. Although these objects date to the later medieval period, it is possible to suggest that the pottery objects represent later toys that have their origin in a much earlier period. In addition, the remarkable similarity of the miniature horses in particular, illustrates a strong continuity through both space and time for these types of playthings. If the objects can be considered as toys or children's playthings, than it seems that these smaller objects could be constructed from a variety of different kinds of materials, including bronze, wood and pottery. The larger toy horses, however, (discussed below) are all constructed from wood.

There are a number of toy wooden horses known which date to this period. They include a 12.7 cm long anatomically correct wooden toy stallion,[263] with tail and mane from Trondheim which has been dated to 1075-1125 **(Figure 89)**, a ninth-century 13 cm long wooden toy horse from Staraja Ladoga (St. Petersburg) **(Figure 90)**,[264] and a 13.2 long wooden toy horse carved from driftwood from Kvivik, Faroes **(Figure 91)**.[265] A further example from the Faroes exists in the Smithsonian **(Figure 92)**. There is also a 'toy horse' (*leksakshäst*) made from wood recorded in the museum archives of the Historiska Museet in Sweden, but information on its size or form was not obtainable.[266] A wooden horse dating to c. 1000 AD was also excavated from the island of Wollin in the Baltic region of Poland.[267]

Nadezhda Morozova studied children's games from Novgorod, Russia and identified

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[262] There are a number of miniature toy horses in the GNM in Nurnberg which date to the slightly later period of c. 1300. For example [GNM, HG 9254]. These horses are described by the museum as *spielzeugpferde* (toy horses) and most appear to be made from clay or ceramic. In the DSS in Thüringen, Germany, there is a further toy horse made from clay which dates the 1300's. The similarity of these objects as well as their continued appearance into the later medieval period illustrates how popular they were as toys across regional, ethnic and chronological boundaries.

[263] Roesdahl and Wilson, *From Viking to crusader*, p. 231, co. no. 14. Constructed from wood, L. 12.7 cm, comes from Trondheim, Norway, c. 1075 – 1125, VM, Trondheim, Norway [N97259/FU450].

[264] Ibid., p. 301, cat. no. 279. Constructed from wood, L. 13.0 cm, and comes from Staraja Ladoga (horizon D) St. Petersburg, Russia, 8th - 9th c., Gosudarstremyj Ermitaz, St. Petersburg, [LD-244].

[265] Roesdahl and Wilson, *From Viking to crusader*, p. 310, cat. no. 315. Made from fir, L. 13.2 cm, and comes from Kvivik, Streymoy, Faroes, dates to the Viking Age.

[266] Toy horse dating to the Swedish Middle ages, from Vadstena, in Östergötland, Sweden, Föremål no. 122999 [SHM :B9:9 VL SR], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=122999) (12 August, 2007).

[267] Wollin is described in the Icelandic sagas as being an area of Scandinavian settlement in Poland. The wooden horse is on display in the DSS in Thüringen, Germany. Interestingly, there is a toy wooden sword and a toy wooden boat in the same collection from Wollin.

over 1,400 different kinds of toys including 'both specifically children's toys and those for competitive games'.[268] By far the most common material for children's toys from Novgorod is wood (80%), the remainder being of clay, leather, bone, and birch bark. Morozova identified over seventy stylized horses in a number of types including horses with and without saddles **(Figure 93 a and b)**.[269]

A favourite pastime among adults was horse fighting, which may go some way towards explaining the sheer number of miniature horses found. Lesser domestic animals were also modelled as playthings, if rarely. Toys representing other animals such as birds (eighteen examples), as well as figures of a dog, a seal, and a beaver have also been found.[270] A toy duck from the Black Earth at Birka is carved from elk or moose antler and has been dated to between the eighth and the tenth century **(Figure 94)**. The length of the body is 13.2 cm and the thickness is 2.1 cm. Graham Campbell describes it as profile of a duck carved from elk-antler with a vertical perforation through its back at the shoulders. Graham Campbell has interpreted the objects as being a toy or a mascot, and suggests that it may have been attached to a stick in a manner similar to the wooden toy horses from Kvívik in the Faroes.[271] Interestingly there is a toy from Inuit Greenland which comprises two movable birds on a stick in the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. The museum records suggest that this object is probably of European influence.[272]

Also from the Black Earth at Birka in Sweden is what Graham Campbell describes as a 'model cat'. He describes it as a carved profile of a cat made from amber that is 3.0 cm in length and only 1.0 cm in thickness.[273] The fact that it is made from amber as well as the association of cats with Freya suggests however that this object may be a ritual or religious amulet rather than a toy.

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[268] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 173.
[269] Ibid., p. 173.
[270] Ibid., p. 173.
[271] [SHM 5208:1604], Graham Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*, p. 26.
[272] CUMMA, University of Cambridge, ref. no. [1927.1735], available at (http://museum.archanth.cam.ac.uk/home/catalogue/objects/index.php?idno=&name=toy&keyword=&material=&source=&place=&culture_group=+&period=&page=1) (1 October, 2007). The object comes from East Greenland, where a number of other toys have been identified.
[273] [SHM 5208:8252], Graham Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*, p. 26.

Grave furniture from children's burials in Birka include glass, pearls and toys.[274] Small bronze bells were also identified in a number of children's graves at Birka, and there is some indication that they may have served as higher status children's objects[275] **(Figure 95)**. A similar small bronze bell is in the Hunt museum in Limerick[276] **(Figure 96)**. While the object appears to be unprovenanced, its striking similarity in shape and form to numerous small bells or rattles known from Scandinavia suggests that it may date to the Viking Age. A small hexagonical bell with stamped, ring dot decoration, was also found by George Eogan at the early Christian burial site at Knowth, Co. Meath.[277] Both round and hexagonal bells have been found in children's graves, although the latter type appears to have been a colonial adaptation. Four bells were excavated at Peel Castle on the Isle of Man, and of these, a hexagonal shaped copper-alloy bell was recovered from a ninth- to tenth- century pagan child's grave.[278] The bell was located around the neck of the child along with a number of beads and a small copper-alloy ring.[279] Colleen Batey has suggested that the original context of another example, also from the Isle of Man, was from disturbed inhumations from St. Patrick's Chapel (the site of an early Christian chapel) near West Nappin, in Jurby.[280] Two similar shaped examples include the irregular hexagonal shaped bell dating to 850-950 and a copper alloy bell dating to c.500-c.1066 – both from the parish of Snape with Thorpe in North Yorkshire. Further examples are known from Acton in Cheshire, and at Outwell and Tuxford in the East Midlands.[281] All of these bells closely resemble the hexagonal bell from late tenth-

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[274] RAA, Birka,'History of Birka', available at (http://www.raa.se/cms/extern/en/places_to_visit/birka/history_of_birka.html) (2 June, 2005).

[275] SSM, Sweden, [my translation] available at (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (2 May, 2007). Examples of small bronze bells from Viking Age child graves in Birka include; [34000:Bj 721] and [34000:Bj 735], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (2 May, 2007). There are numerous other examples also from Birka in the SHM, Sweden.

[276] Small bronze bell [HM/ARCH/A1/00795/HCA 626]. The bell is sub-spherical and has a square loop and four holes in the body. The object is only 3.65 inches in height, available at HM, Limerick, (http://test.huntmuseum.com/search_hmtitle.asp) (12 July, 2007).

[277] John Bradley pers comm.

[278] James Graham Campbell, 'The early Viking Age in the Irish Sea area' in Howard Clarke, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Raghnall Ó Floinn (eds), *Ireland and Scandinavia in the Early Viking Age* (Dublin, 1998), pp 123-4; also Colleen Batey, 'A Viking-Age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness' in *Medieval Archaeology*, xxxii (1988), p. 214 (Batey, 'A Viking-Age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness').

[279] David Freke, (ed.), *Excavations on St. Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man, 1982-88, prehistoric, Viking, medieval and later* (Liverpool, 2002), pp 94-5.

[280] Batey, 'A Viking-Age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness', p. 214.

[281] The bells from Snape with Thorpe, North Yorkshire are labelled as [YORYM-7EA6F8] and [YORYM-D84VF5]. The bell from Acton, Cheshire is labelled as [LVPL-7DDBC3], the bell from Outwell is [NMS-868446], and the bell from Tuxford is [DENO-632866]. All the bells are available at PAS (www.findsdatabase.org.uk) (2 February, 2008). As of February, 2008 at least twenty others of a similar type were recorded by the PAS.

century deposits at 16-22 Coppergate, York,[282] and the bell from Freswick Links, Caithness which was found in a potential settlement context,[283] and is nearly identical to the example from the child's grave at Peel. A bell nearly identical to the Freswick example was recovered from the eleventh-century Anglo-Scandinavian levels at Lincoln.[284] Batey has argued that some of the closest parallels for these bells come from Viking-Age pagan graves in Iceland. She suggests that while such bells are known from Ireland, they are of a different type, and that if an Irish origin for the bells were to be proven, than parallels should be found in Ireland itself.

> There is, however, little evidence for a close link between the forms of bells recovered from Ireland and those discussed above. Examples have recently been recovered from Christchurch Place, Dublin but they are not of the same form, and in the case of the former, its function had been changed by modification to a weight. [285] Other Irish examples are likewise poor parallels, for example, Abbeyleix. This lack of precise Irish parallel would seem to suggest an alternative origin for the Freswick type of bell. Since this is not immediately obvious, one suggestion may be that the type is a Norse hybrid type, possibly with an Irish inspiration.[286]

The interpretation of these bells as rattles or playthings of high status children, is supported by a reference in the thirteenth century *Volsungs Saga*. The text refers to two royal children playing with a gold ball-like object with a golden ring attached to it which appears to resemble some of the bells from Birka:

> Signy and the king had two young children. They played together in the hall with golden toys, rolling the toys along the floor and running after them. One gold ring was flung farther out, into the room where Sigmund and Sinfjotli were, and the boy ran after the ring to look for it.[287]

Bells or rattles found in children's graves in Birka have also been interpreted as 'amulets'. Only one rattle was identified from an adult female burial at Barshalder in

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[282] A. J. Mainman and N. S. Rogers, *Craft, industry and everyday life, finds from Anglo-Scandinavian York* (York, 2000), p. 2599, fig. 1294.
[283] Batey, 'A Viking-Age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness', p. 214, fig., 3.
[284] Ibid., pp 214-5; Letty Ten Harkel, pers comm.
[285] Batey, 'A Viking-Age bell from Freswick Links, Caithness', p. 215. The Christchurch bells are NMI [E122:12955] and NMI [E122:15938].
[286] Ibid., p. 215.
[287] Jesse Byock (transl.), *The saga of the Volsungs, the Norse epic of Sigurd the dragon slayer* (CA, 1990), p. 45.

Sweden, but it may have been intended for use by a child.[288] The rattle, along with a knife and two keys was attached by a chain to a utensil brooch on the right hand side of the abdomen of the adult female. The other rattle from Balshalder was found in the grave of a little boy and was also placed on the right hand side of his abdomen. 'The rattle, thus, was a body-related artefact whose position was probably determined by where it would be handy for the deceased'.[289] A further example comes from a child burial at the eleventh century Christian cemetery at Grødby on Bornholm. This child had worn the rattle on a string around its neck[290] a practice recorded from adult male and female burials as well as a number of child burials throughout Scandinavian and the British Isles. The preponderance of rattles in child burials indicates their association with certain children, and are likely indicators of status or class.

The example of the so-called 'Birka girl' illustrates that some female children, at least, were buried with goods identical to adult women **(Figure 97)**. 'Birka girl's' clasp, beads and needlecase were very similar to other objects recovered from adult female graves in Birka. The same pattern is revealed in boys graves from Birka, where objects resemble male adult graves at the same site. This suggests that gender roles were established at an early stage, and may represent a social bench mark.[291]

Dolls

It is likely that Viking children also played with items such as dolls, however, archaeological evidence for such playthings remains slim. Dolls may have been constructed from organic materials such as fabric or straw which would be unlikely to survive in the archaeological record. However, a porcelain arm of a doll dating to post 1050 is known from Vreta in Östergötland, Sweden,[292] and an intact early medieval porcelain doll also comes from Björkby in Uppsala, Sweden.[293] Small cast heads and limbs have also been found on some sites, but there is debate amongst the experts as to

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[288] Sophie Gräslund, *Barn i Birka,* Tor 15 (Uppsala, 1973).
[289] Rundkvist, *Barshalder 2: Studies of late Iron Age Gotland* (Stockholm, 2003), p. 70, available at (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-275) (2 August, 2007).
[290] Ibid.
[291] SHM, Sweden, '*Barn och familie*' exhibition on children and family, available at (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (5 August 2007).
[292] Arm of a porcelain doll, from Uppsala, Östra Ryd, Björkby, Sweden, Föremål no. [22438. SHM 31685 (F70)], available at SHM, Sweden (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=22438) (2 August, 2007).
[293] Porcelain doll dating to the early medieval period from Östra Ryd, Björkby, Uppsala, Sweden, Föremål no. 22438 [SHM 31685 (F70)], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=22438) (2 August, 2007).

whether these are votive offerings or parts of children's dolls which would have had a textile body and therefore would not have survived in the archaeological record. However, a carved wooden anthropomorphic figure that may be a doll was excavated from Hólar in Skagafjörður in Iceland, [294] and a number of 'crudely carved' wooden objects that may be dolls have been identified from Bergen, Norway, mostly dating to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, although there are earlier examples. Two of these rather enigmatic objects miniature wooden objects have been interpreted as 'spare-time carvings' of the inhabitants of Bergen,[295] although the possibility must also be considered that they are children's playthings. One object is carved in the style of a monk while the other has been interpreted as St. Olafr or Christ. Six examples of dolls have also been identified from Novgorod **(Figures 98 a and b)**.[296] Linguistic evidence supports the idea that ninth- and tenth-century Icelandic children had dolls. The Old Icelandic word *leika* in its feminine form was used to denote a young girl or maiden living in the same home as the person using the expression. Sisters who live together are called *leikur* (play-sisters), and parents could call their fosterdaughter their '*leika*'. In its neuter gender, the word *leika* meant a plaything, a doll or a toy.[297] Similarly the old Norse term for doll was '*dokka*' and referred to either a 'bundle' or a doll. This is interesting in that it suggests that dolls were perhaps made from bundles of some sort of yarn or fabric. The evidence of care given to special objects such as the toy wooden boat from Winetavern Street and the large number of toys modelled on grownup pastimes (swords, axes and the like) suggests that girls (and even boys) may have modelled their toys on the activities of the mother as well. As a large part of the female domestic experience, both then and today, is raising children, it seems safe to assume Viking Age children played with dolls.

Recent excavations at Waterford by Maurice Hurley identified what may be a toy wooden knife **(Figure 99)**. Made from yew, it has a distinct handle and a blade of triangular section, resembling the standard form of medieval knife.[298] Hurley has

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[294] Callow, 'First steps towards an archaeology of children in Iceland', p. 67.
[295] Herteig, *Bryggen I Bergen*, p. 39.
[296] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 173.
[297] *Zoëga's, A concise dictionary of Old Icelandic*, available at *Northvegr Foundation,* (http://www.northvegr.org/zoega/h266.php) (14 June, 2007). The ON word *leika* relates closely to the modern Norwegian word for toy *leketøy*, as well as the modern Swedish word for toy *leksak*. It is possible that the etymology of the English word 'lark' comes from *leika*.
[298] Hurley, et al., *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, pp 579-80.

pointed out that a similar example is known from Cork.[299]

<u>Gaming boards and gaming pieces</u>

Just as there is literary evidence from the historical tales and Early Irish Law that wealthy or high-status children played board games, there is also literary evidence from the Scandinavian sagas. In *Volsunga saga* the young Sigurd is trained in the skills as befitting a royal son:

> So Sigurd waxed in King Hjalprek's house, and there was no child but loved him…Now Sigurd's foster-father was Regin, the son of Hreidmar; he taught him all manner of arts, the chess play, and the lore of runes, and the talking of many tongues, even as the wont was with kings' sons in those days.[300]

Before the introduction of chess (O.N. *skak-tafl*) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Scandinavians sharpened their wits by playing a game known as *tafl*.[301] By the end of the period, the term referred to a variety of board games, such as '(*skak-tafl* or "check-table"), backgammon (*kvatru-tafl*, introduced from the French as *quatre*), and fox-and-geese (*ref-skak*, "fox chess"). However, the term *tafl* was most commonly used to refer to a game known as *hnefa-tafl* or "King's Table"'.[302] *Hnefatafl* was known in Scandinavia before 400 A.D. and was carried by the Vikings to their colonies in Iceland, Greenland, Britain, Ireland, and Wales. Fragments of actual game boards have been excavated as well.[303] One of the most spectacular artefacts from this period is the gaming board found at the rural Irish royal crannog in Ballinderry, Westmeath **(Figure 100)**. Excavated by Hugh Hencken in 1932, the Ballinderry board is of a type described in the Scandinavian saga's as being played by men, women, and children of a certain class. Unlike the public demonstrations of physical prowess of swimming and ball

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[299] Maurice Hurley, 'Wooden artefacts from the excavation of the medieval city of Cork' in Sean McGrail, (ed.), *Woodworking Techniques before A.D. 1500: Papers presented to a Symposium at Greenwich in September, 1980, together with edited discussion*, BAR Series (Oxford, 1982), p. 305, fig. 16. 5, [E146:27180].

[300] *Völsunga Saga*, available at *NFNEST* (http://www.northvegr.org/lore/volsunga/009.php) (14 May, 2006).

[301] Richard Eales, *Chess, the history of a game* (New York, 1985), p. 50.

[302] Mark Harris, 'Norse-games-art' in 'Stefan's Florilegium', available at (http://www.florilegium.org) (2 April 2001) (Harris, 'Norse-games-art' in 'Stefan's Florilegium').

[303] For a further discussion of Scandinavian gaming pieces and gaming boards see A. R. Goddard, 'Nine Men's Morris, an old Viking game' in *Saga Book of the Viking Club*, ii (1898-1901), pp 376-85; Einar Odd Haugen, *Bretspel i Nordisk Mellomalder, Eigenproduksjon* nos., 13-4 (Bergen, 1982); also C. J. Lees, 'Games people played, a typological and contextual analysis of late Viking and medieval gaming pieces, gaming boards and dice from the archaeological excavations at the Library site, Trondheim, Norway' (MA thesis, Queens University Belfast, 1989).

playing, table games afforded a level of privacy that may have leant itself to being played by women and men of all ages. Although scholars have argued whether the Ballinderry board is an example of an Irish *fidchell*, or a *brandubh* board (both of which are mentioned in the Irish texts), they generally agree it is related to the *Hnefntafl* games played by Scandinavian cultures and which seems to have been the primary strategy games in Northern Europe until the introduction of chess. The game boards themselves are often of a cruder construction that the more elaborate *tafl* boards such as the Ballinderry board. A number of examples exist from Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin, including a stone example from Christchurch Place. A an early thirteenth-century wooden example comes from St. John's Lane, Dublin[304] and is similar to a Viking period board from Uppsala, Sweden.[305] The example from Buckquoy, Orkney may represent a type of board used in the game of *hnefatafl*, whereas the Ballinderry Board appears to have been used for the Irish game of *brandubh*. The similarity between the Ballinderry and Buckquoy boards illustrates the common tradition between these board games.[306] Interestingly, a miniature example of a stone gaming board is known from excavations at Jarlshof. It comprises a rectangular square plate with a length of only five inches and a width of only 3.25 inches and has two variants of the game on either side.[307] A description of a hnefatafl board resembling the Ballinderry board is given in *Grettis saga*:

> One time, Þorbjorn Ongull sat playing chess. Then his stepmother came and saw that he was playing a board game. It was a big board of the kind used for pieces with points on their bases. That he was doing this seemed sluggardly to her, so she hurled certain words at him, and he answered badly. She then picked up a game piece and struck him against the cheek with it, but it slipped and broke off in his eye, so that his eye popped out onto his cheek. He jumped up and grabbed her so very forcefully that she lay bedridden because of it and later died from it. People said that she had been pregnant. After this he became the most unforbearing of men, and he took his movable property and settled first in Vidvik.[308]

[304] [NMI E173: 3086].

[305] Wooden gaming board dating to the Viking period from Uppsala, Rasbokil, Årby [SHM 21062], available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107477) (12 August, 2007).

[306] Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *PSAS*, cviii, p. 187.

[307] J. R. C. Hamilton, *Excavations at Jarlshof, Shetland*, Ministry of Works Archaeological Reports no. 1 (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 145, plate xxxi, 1; also see Anna Ritchie, 'Excavation of Pictish and Viking-age farmsteads at Buckquoy, Orkney' in *PSAS*, cviii, p. 187.

[308] John Martin, '*Sva Lykr Her Hverju Hestadingi*, sports and games in Icelandic saga literature' in *Scandinavian Studies*, lxxv, no., 1 (2003), p. 1.

Hnefntafl was a popular Scandinavian board game that seems to have been used continuously until the seventeenth century. Over the centuries, the game developed and different versions of the board have been found by archaeologists in sites from Ireland to the Ukraine. 'There are many references to hnefatafl in Old Norse literature… most frequently these references are to the game pieces, hence we know that the gamesmen included a hnefi or 'king' and hunns, meaning literally 'knobs' and referring to the pawn-like men'.[309] Gaming pieces could be carved from wood or ivory, glass, ceramics, gemstones, or even small rocks.[310] We know that some women also played hnefatafl from *Gunnlaugs saga* where it states that 'Helga and Gunnlaug, who were of an age, were always playing chess together'.[311]

Archaeology also provides some additional clues, including numerous grave finds of game pieces. 'The dice are different from modern dice only in the arrangement of the numbers: one is opposite two, three is opposite four, and five is opposite six. Two basic types of gaming piece are attested on many sites: one is a flat disc with dot-and-circle motifs, and the other a small dome shaped object with a spike projecting from its underside'.[312] The dome shaped pieces would have been used as playing pieces on *Hnefatafl* gaming boards such as the Ballinderry board and the Waterford gaming boards **(Figure 101)**. Examples of this type of board have also been found in Norway and Sweden. One 'three footed' iron and wood example comes from Uppland, Adelsö, Björkö, Norr om Borg in Sweden and dates to the Viking Age.[313] These 'feet', as in the case of the Ballinderry board and the board from Waterford, were probably used as handles for ease of use on board ship.

The other type of playing piece would have been used in a game termed 'nine men's morris'. These playing pieces could be small stones, disks, or counters and are found in large numbers on Viking, Hiberno-Scandinavian, and native Irish sites. Gaming pieces are well attested to in the Scandinavian world. In Norse myth, they were thought to

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[309] Harris, 'Norse-games-art' in 'Stefan's Florilegium'.
[310] Ibid.
[311] M. H. Scargill and Margaret Schlauch (transl.), *Three Icelandic Sagas: Gunnlaugs Saga Ormstungu, Bandamanna Saga [And] Droplaugarsona Saga* (Princeton, NJ, 1950), p. 15.
[312] Tadhg O'Keefe, *Medieval Ireland, an archaeology* (Gloustershire, 2000), p. 112.
[313] A 'three footed' iron and wood example comes from Uppland, Adelsö, Björkö, Norr om Borg [SHM 34000], Föremål no. 556069, available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=556069) (2 May, 2007).

signify the rebirth of the new world after Ragnarok.

Small pebbles

Of particular relevance to this research, Hurley identified that fifty percent (eighteen) of the small pebbles from Waterford 'came from features within houses, either from the accumulated occupation debris, or the floors or hearths'.[314] The suggestion that the objects are 'pot-boilers' (or cooking stones) used in cooking, seems rather unlikely due to their small size as well as the fact that they are unbroken or cracked from heating and then being immersed in cold water. There is no mention in the literature as to whether or not the Waterford examples were unburnt. Similar objects are known from the Pictish levels at the Brochs of Burrian on North Ronaldsay in Orkney, at Keiss in Caithness and at Jarlshof, Shetland. The objects date from 200-800 AD.[315] While the Pictish examples are painted, suggestions of function include playing pieces or sling bolts. Anna Ritchie has suggested that such items might be more convincingly interpreted as charm stones, and cites ethnographic and literary evidence for both Scotland and Iceland for this use.[316]

Wooden and leather balls

One item resembling a ball was recovered from the excavations at Waterford **(Figure 102)**, and a possible ball was also recovered from Lough Glashan crannog. Brisbane also discusses a number of wooden balls from Novgorod, dating to the tenth to the twelfth (peaking popularity in the eleventh and then declining). In Novgorod, these items have been interpreted as being used in a game that used wooden balls to 'propel the ball into the opponent's hole or pit using a special stick with a curved end'.[317] Leather balls have also been identified, but date to the eleventh to thirteenth century. Unlike the wooden balls, leather balls varied in weight and size, thus being adaptable to a variety of games – leading them to eventually replace wooden balls.[318] Leather balls are also known from the mid-tenth century levels at both York and Winchester. Another

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[314] Sarah McCutcheon, 'The stone artefacts' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford: excavations 1986-1992*, p. 405.
[315] Painted pebbles [NMS X.HSA 4107], online id 000-190-000-988-C, NMS, Scotland, available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-190-000-988-C&PHPSESSID=959qj140f617e6n0pdu7g15qn7&scache=419yhg69tr&searchdb=scran) (1 April, 2007.
[316] Anna Ritchie, 'Painted pebbles in early Scotland' in *PSAS,* civ (1971-2), pp 297-301.
[317] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod,* p.176.
[318] Ibid., p.176.

example from Winchester dates to the early to mid-eleventh century;[319] and Geoff Egan notes another from London dating to the later period of 1330-1380.[320] There are also a number of references to children playing with balls in the Icelandic sagas. In *Egils saga* we are told that 'when they arrived at the play-meeting, the players were divided into teams; many small boys had also come there, and they were divided, too, for their own game'.[321]

Knucklebones

Brisbane suggests that in Novgorod, gambling with knucklebones was a widespread activity of both adults and children, and numerous finds of such objects have been excavated in Novgorod.[322] Similar items are known from Germany, and throughout most of Western Europe.

The Icelandic sagas give descriptions of games and sports which have been identified within the archaeological record. These include the balls used in the ball game of *Knattleikr* to tafl boards of varying types. 'the sagas, in general, present an accurate picture of the types of games played and the importance of sports and games in medieval Scandinavia… as far as the available evidence is concerned, the sagas seem to offer an accurate picture of the kinds of sports and games played in the Middle Ages telling modern readers and scholars what was played and how'.[323]

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[319] Martin Biddle, *Object and economy in Medieval Winchester* (Oxford, 1990), pp 707-8.

[320] Geoff Egan, *The Medieval household, daily living c. 1150 - 1450, medieval finds from excavations in London series*, vi (London, 1998), p. 269.

[321] Hansen, 'Representations of children in the Icelandic sagas', p. 5.

[322] Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod,* p.176.

[323] Martin, '*Sva Lykr Her Hverju Hestadingi*, sports and games in Icelandic saga literature', p. 1. Formalized games also offered opportunities for Scandinavian women in Iceland to mingle with members of the opposite sex with propriety. 'In addition to providing context or impetus for hostilities between opposing parties, sporting events serve in the sagas as *loci amoriti*: places where young men and women court one another. As with violent conflict, the courting activity that begins at the ball game or horsefight can have long-lasting effects on families and political alliances'. Ibid., p. 1; 'In Grimstungr an autumnal feast and a ball game were arranged. Ingolfr came to the game and many men from down in the valley came with him. The weather was good and the women sat and watched the game. Valgerdr Ottarsdottir sat up on the hillside a short distance away and other women beside her. Ingolfr was in the game just then, and the ball flew up there. Valgerdr took the ball and hid it under her cloak and said that the one who threw it should come look for it. Ingolfr had thrown it. He told them to keep playing but he sat down beside Valgerdr and conversed with her all day long'. Ibid., p. 1. Similarly, There is literary evidence from the Book of Leinster (c. 1150) as well as *Lebor na hUidre* that native Irish women and men played the board game *fidchell* together, a past-time which carried connotations of sexual play and status change. 'It was bad form, for instance, for a wife to beat her husband, but a woman could assert her aggressive sexuality by challenging a stranger to a game and winning'. Lisa Bitel, 'Sex, sin, and celibacy in Early Medieval Ireland' in *PHCC* (1986-7), p. 69. The Irish sagas indicate that opportunities for mingling with members of the opposite sex outside the household were socially restricted, and that each sex spent most of their time with those of their own gender. There is some evidence that the communities brought their marriageable young to formalized gatherings such as festivals and markets of *óenaige*. Ibid., pp 68-9.

<u>Scandinavian children and the material world; evidence from historical sources</u>

Anna Hansen, in her discussion of play in the Icelandic Sagas points out that while games are not necessarily confined to children, children in *Íslendingasögur* are often described as playing games. Hansen cites an example from *Bolla þáttr Bollasonar*: 'Óláfr, his son, was then seven or eight winters old. He went from the farm to play and build himself a house, as it is customary for children to do'.[324] In *Njal's Saga*, there are references to children playing on a rainy day on the floor inside the house; 'Hauskuld had a daughter named Hallgerda, who was playing on the floor with some other girls'.[325] A further incident in the same saga refers to two boys, of whom Thiostolf had the rearing, were playing on the floor, and a girl was playing with them. 'They were great chatterboxes, for they were too young to know better'.[326] The children were engaged in a role-playing game where they were playing at being particular adults and the household laughs, resulting in one of the men striking the child with a switch. Children also undertake role-play games in *Finnboga saga*: 'Now time passed, until Finnbogi had lived at Borg so long that one of his sons was five winters and the other three winters. They were both promising. Álfr was very loud and Gunnbjorn very calm. They had a regular game. They went to Garðshorn and taunted Þorvaldr and they played many tricks on him'.[327] The Icelandic Saga of Bishop Guðmundr the Good, composed shortly after his death in 1237, mentions aspects of children's play that are invisible in the archaeological record and Marlene Ciklamini has argued that these games date to the 1170s.[328] The young Guðmundr, at play with his cousin Ogmundr, played the role of a bishop officiating at a make believe church and altar. The saga mentions his child-sized mitre, staff, and gown. His cousin, who was later renowned for his skill and bravery as a warrior, wielded battle-axe, shield and other weapons.[329]

<u>Sports</u>

Organized public sports provided an opportunity for men, young and old to prove not

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[324] Hansen, 'Representations of childhood in the Icelandic sagas', p. 6.
[325] George Webbe Dasent, (transl), *The story of burnt Njal* (London, 1861, reprint 2005), p. 1 (Dasent, *The story of burnt Njal*). *Njal's Saga* was written down sometime in the 13th century.
[326] Dasent, (transl), *The story of burnt Njal*, p. 16.
[327] Hansen, 'Representations of childhood in the Icelandic sagas', p. 5.
[328] Marlene Ciklamini, 'Sainthood in the making: the arduous path of Guðmundr the Good, Iceland's uncanonized saint' in *alvíssmál: Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Kultur Skandinaviens*, xi, p. 60, available at (http://userpage.fuberlin.de/~alvismal/11gudmun.pdf) (30 June, 2007) (Ciklamini, 'Sainthood in the making: the arduous path of Guðmundr the Good').
[329] Ibid., p. 60.

only their physical prowess, but also their high status. John Martin has argued that public sporting contests provided the wealthy and the politically influential the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to rule, effectively reinforcing class boundaries and social status.[330] One game in particular, *Knattleikr* (which translates into English as 'ballgame'), was very popular amongst the Vikings. It was played by children and adults and could be played on both ice and grass. The Icelandic sagas contain numerous references to the playing of ball games. The descriptions of the game within *Egil's saga* indicate that while both men and boys could play the game, the boys had their own area spatially defined from the men's games. There is also an indication that some of the ball games were 'formalized' events (in the sense of hurling matches today), in that the 'whole countryside' attended. Both the rather elderly Skallagrim and his seven-year-old foster son Egil are described as taking part in ballgames:

> Skallagrim took much pleasure in trials of strength and games; he liked to talk about such. Ball-play was then a common game. Plenty of strong men there were at that time in the neighbourhood, but not one of strength to match with Skallagrim. He was now somewhat stricken in years. There was a man named Thord, son of Grani, at Granastead, who was of great promise; he was then young; very fond he was of Egil, Skallagrim's son. Egil often engaged in wrestling; he was headstrong and hot-tempered, but all had the sense to teach their sons to give way to Egil. A game of ball was held at White-river-dale in the early winter, to which was a great gathering of people from all the country-side. Thither went many of Skallagrim's household to the game. Chief among them was Thord, Grani's son. Egil asked Thord to let him go with him to the game; he was then in his seventh winter. Thord let him do so, and Egil mounted behind him. But when they came to the play-meeting, then the men made up sides for the play. Many small boys had come there too, and they made up a game for themselves. For this also sides were chosen.[331]

Wrestling (*glíma*) was the most widespread of sports during the Viking era. It was practiced in all classes of society, and is the national sport of Iceland today. Archery,

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[330] Martin, '*Sva Lykr Her Hverju Hestadingi*, sports and games in Icelandic Saga literature', p. 1.

[331] Gwyn Jones, (trans.,) *Egil's saga* (New York, 1960) available at: *NFNEST* (http,//www.northvegr.org/lore/egils_saga/index.php) (1 July, 2006) (Jones, *Egil's saga*). The rest of the passage reads: Egil was matched to play against a boy named Grim, son of Hegg, of Hegg-stead. Grim was ten or eleven years old, and strong for his age. But when they played together Egil got the worst of it. And Grim made all he could of his advantage. Then Egil got angry and lifted up the bat and struck Grim, whereupon Grim seized him and threw him down with a heavy fall, and handled him rather roughly, and said he would thrash him if he did not behave. But when Egil got to his feet, he went out of the game, and the boys hooted at him. Egil went to Thord and told him what had been done. Thord said: 'I will go with you, and we will be avenged on them.' He gave into his hands a halberd that he had been carrying. Such weapons were then customary. They went where the boys' game was. Grim had now got the ball and was running away with it, and the other boys after him. Then Egil bounded upon Grim, and drove the axe into his head, so that it at once pierced his brain.

javelin throwing and skiing were other popular sports played by both Scandinavian adults and children.

Swimming is featured in the literature as a competitive sport played by both men and boys of all ages. *Laxdæla's saga* describes how 'Olaf rode away with Gest to the Salmon-river. The foster-brothers had been swimming there during the day, and at this sport the sons of Olaf mostly took the lead. There were many other young men from the other houses swimming too'.[332] Interestingly a passage in the Middle Irish *Lebor na Cert* the 'foreigners' of Dublin are praised for their supremacy in swimming (*buaid snáma*).[333] Young children also entertained themselves at play in the natural environment. In *Heimskringla*, the saga of *Olaf Haraldson* describes how:

> the king was walking with his mother about the farm, and they came to a playground, where Asta's sons, Guthorm and Halfdan, were amusing themselves. They were building great houses and barns in their play, and were supposing them full of cattle and sheep; and close beside them, in a clay pool, [the three-year-old] Harald was busy with chips of wood, sailing them, in his sport along the edge. The king asked him what these were; and he answered, these were his ships of war. The king laughed, and said, 'The time may come, friend, when thou wilt command ships'.[334]

The reference to the young Harald playing with ships supports the interpretation that the small boats and ships from the Viking Age and later (discussed above) were used by children. Gerald of Wales, describing his childhood at Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire in the 1150s, recalled how he and his brothers played with sand and dust on the beach building towns and palaces, and he made churches and monasteries.[335] Interestingly one of the games listed in the *Mellbretha* (sports-judgements) text also give a possible example of children in early medieval Ireland making sandcastles. D. A. Binchy's translation of the text was 'excavating small dwellings', however Angie Gleason's recent research has suggested that the translation is more likely to be 'digging

[332] Press, *Laxdæla's saga*.
[333] Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 289.
[334] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla, or the chronicle of the kings of Norway, saga of Olaf Haraldson*, p. 15, part 75-8, available at *NFNEST*, (http://www.northvegr.org/lore/heim/index.php) (2 June, 2007). The *Heimskringla* were originally written in ON by the poet and author Snorri Sturluson c. 1225.
[335] Orme, *Medieval children*, p. 175.

little streams'.[336]

What does studying the material culture of infants and children provide to our understandings of interpretations of Viking-Age culture and the transmission of knowledge? By identifying particular objects that can be associated with the material culture of childhood, and studying their distribution in the archaeological record, it becomes possible to trace the activities of children through time and space. The evidence indicates that not only were children active participants in the environment, but that they had a 'society' of their own which – as it moved throughout the Viking diaspora, maintained specific cultural material expressions such as the toy horses, boats and swords. This material culture impacted on and was transmitted to other ethnicities and cultures, evidenced by material found in Norse and Inuit Greenland.

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[336] 'In context this seems more likely than building sand castles and is conceivably a reference to the threat to both child and land when interfering with water courses. The activity is perhaps alluded to in the eighth-century Old Irish *Gospel of Saint Thomas* when a young Jesus is described as building walls of clay around twelve small pools. A local boy halts Jesus' progress by allowing several small streams to pour out the sides of the walls, destroying the enclosures. Far from forgiving, Jesus curses the boy for destroying his plaything (*cáine*) upon which the boy collapses and dies'. Gleason, 'Entertainment in early Ireland', p. 288.

Conclusion

This thesis has identified different conceptualizations of age and gender in early medieval and medieval Ireland. The utilization of a thematic approach has facilitated comparison and contrast with the historical and archaeological material, enabling the drawing out of similarities and differences in the experiences of Native Irish, Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian women and children within chronological, regional, national and international contexts. A number of fundamental questions were addressed, in particular whether or not it is possible to see processes of gender and age in the archaeological record, and if so, what theoretical and methodological frameworks can be employed in such a study. The application of gender and age theory to the extant body of archaeological material suggests that both gender and age were distinct social processes that were linked to – but separate from – other cultural interactions such as status, wealth and ethnicity. Other fundamental questions addressed here included how such approaches can add to our understanding of societies in the past by highlighting how these processes changed over time, space and place.

The utilization of an engendered, socio-historical approach towards archaeology inevitably gives rise to such issues as domesticity and the family as a unit. With this shift of focus, whole new sets of questions are raised; questions about the different and changing roles that women played in society, their economic activities, lifestyles, child-rearing practices, domestic circumstances, the particular material welfare of women and children, work and leisure activities, and so on.

Methodological and theoretical approaches to 'seeing' women in the past was initially explored, followed by a survey of the mortuary evidence for Native Irish and Hiberno-Scandinavian women. Where relevant, other contemporary female burials were discussed, in order to provide contextual evidence for the Irish and Hiberno-Scandinavian material. One of the primary aims of this discussion was to collate so-called 'anomalous' burials, in order to identify how prevalent they actually are in the archaeological record. Literary evidence that may possibly relate to such burials was also considered, adding support to the idea that gender categories were not necessarily fixed, but rather varied according to class, as well as particular life circumstances.

An examination of the material culture associated with the lives of women was also undertaken in order to identify if certain objects may be attributed to specific groups, whether or this material culture was impacted by contact with other cultural and ethnic groups, and how such associations may or may not changed over time. Scandinavian literary and archaeological sources were investigated to compare and contrast the roles of women during this period. This revealed processes of change and adaptation through time, space and place.

The above questions were addressed by firstly exploring the subject of gender and women, followed by a discussion of age and children. Research was originally undertaken with the assumption that exploring the topic of women in the past provides insights into children in early medieval Ireland. By separating the discussions of women and children, this thesis has argued that while woman and children are linked, they are in fact, subjects deserving of individual archaeological and historical examination.

The mortuary evidence for the Native Irish context was reviewed, including a significant number of unusual burials. Burial practices during the transition to Christianity changed slowly over time, with formal Christian burial only becoming the norm sometime during the eighth or ninth centuries. Many aspects of pre-Christian traditions continuing well into the medieval period, evidenced by the number of burials differing from the 'norm'. A variety of factors influenced mortuary practices, including class, ethnicity and gender. Burials practices also appear to have been affected by actions in life, or in the particular manner of death, as in the case of death during childbirth. A survey of Scandinavian female burials in the Irish and North Sea region identified different mortuary practices both within Scandinavia and in areas settled or colonized by those peoples. Gravegoods as signifiers of identity were considered in order to assess their relationship to gender, status and societal roles. Not all men were buried with one type of artefact, nor were all women buried with another type. Awareness of social processes can be highlighted by understanding variation in mortuary expression. Problems inherent in using gravegoods alone in determining the gender of an individual was discussed, as well a number of burials that that contain unusual grave furniture.

Discussions of concepts of gender, as well as the status and position of women in both the Scandinavian and Hiberno-Scandinavian society identified changing conceptualisations of female roles through space and time. This has important implications for interpretations of the earliest phases of settlement and colonisation within the Irish Sea region. The evidence suggests that Scandinavian concepts of gender were not so much conceptualized around sexual difference, but rather were influenced by status, power and age, as well as economic and environmental considerations. The migrations, resulting colonization and settlement during the Viking period also influenced the creation of more fluid concepts of gender and burial practices. The Viking period had an impact on the roles and activities of women, in particular in their involvement in trade, both in their homelands and abroad. The evidence indicates that – contrary to traditional interpretations – women were present throughout the early voyages to the Viking settlements throughout the Scandinavian diaspora. Domestic and occupational evidence from within Dublin in particular, sheds light on the role women played in the community, not just as 'indicators of settlement', but as important subjects of study in their own right.

Literary and archaeological evidence for education, marriage, divorce and the division of labour, as well as how women's economic contributions varied within rural and urban environments was also explored. There is a wide array of historical and archaeological material for interpreting aspects of the daily lives of women of different classes and ethnicities in early medieval Ireland and Scandinavian settled areas. Literary sources were utilized alongside a survey of the rich archaeological material from Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin, providing an account of the different clothing styles and jewellery through the period. Where relevant, this material was contrasted with evidence from other parts of the Scandinavian world. Examinations of the various regional finds revealed distinct patterns for female dress as regards style, textiles, adornments and implements. An investigation of the personal appearance and dress styles of the different cultural groups in early medieval Ireland not only illustrated ethnic and regional differences, but allowed for identification of how these differences interacted with and influenced each other. The available archaeological material suggests that a number of regional styles were worn. Through trade and integration, ethnically Scandinavian modes of dress, such as the wearing of oval brooches, appear to have been abandoned in favour of more Hibernicized styles. This is clear from the lack

of oval brooches so characteristic of female burials in the earlier Viking Age. In addition, the number of Irish ringed-pins found at Scandinavian settlements in the British and Northern Isles, is suggestive of further integration through adaptation of ideas of dress and adornment. Conversely, Native Irish linguistic evidence indicates that Irish modes of dress were also influenced by Viking and Hiberno-Scandinavian contact.

Just as developments within the field of gender studies have allowed for the creation of frameworks for 'seeing' gender in the past, these methodological approaches have stimulated interest in examining other social categories in the past. Literature on the archaeology of childhood to date has developed three important elements to guide future study of children in the archaeological record: looking at children though their relationships, recognizing the culturally constructed nature of childhood and its parallels to gender, and identifying children as cultural actors. These methodological approaches have allowed for the development of a framework in which to set the extant archaeological evidence.

A discussion of the earliest years of childhood identified age constructs, evidence for birth and infancy, conceptualisations of mothering, infanticide and different burial practices in the archaeological record. Mortuary evidence suggests that Native Irish concepts of infancy may have occupied a place of both conceptual and geographical liminality, particularly with the advent of Christianity. This appears to have been impacted by concepts of age and gender, often resulting in burial in kin-group boundary areas or insertion into pre-existing and dominant pagan burial monuments. In contrast, both Viking-Age and Hiberno-Scandinavian burial evidence suggests that concepts of 'infant' or 'child' during the medieval period were more fluid and influenced more by status and power than considerations of age or gender – a concept perhaps influenced by migration and changing understandings of power and identity. The evidence suggests that pregnant women, infants, and children were sometimes accorded special, or in some cases, perhaps sacred spaces within the environment. These areas were often liminal in the landscape, separated conceptually and geographically from the burial areas of the 'main' population. Other categories of persons who were considered to be deserving of differential burial treatment were also sometimes found in such areas. Class, gender, and age also appear to have been important variables on mortuary practices of infants and

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children, with significant regional and ethnic variations.

Archaeological and literary sources were also discussed in relation to the daily life of children in order to facilitate evidence for weaning, fosterage, education, apprenticeship and training. For the Native Irish context, an infant was considered to be the life stage lasting from birth to weaning, followed by a stage usually lasting from weaning until fosterage, which typically happened around the age of seven. The age bands of children in early medieval Ireland comprised three main conceptual ages; birth to the age of seven, seven to twelve, and twelve to seventeen. Females entered adulthood at the age of fourteen, by which time they had completed fosterage and were either betrothed to either God or man. For the Scandinavian context, the material remains indicate that there were specific rites of passage through the various age bands, suggesting evolutions of identity and personhood which may have been contingent upon changing roles within the community due to migration.

Aspects of childhood as regards the environment, socialization and play were discussed in order to highlight the fact that children could create their own cultural worlds which intersected with – but were also distinct from – the adult world. One method for identifying children's material culture in the past and how it intersected with the adult world, involved examining artefacts that represented labour production and socialization. In contrast, examinations of toys allowed for an investigation of the separate spaces of childhood, thus providing insights into children's attitudes to their material and cultural world. By identifying particular objects that can be associated with the material culture of childhood, and studying their distribution in the archaeological record, it was possible to trace the activities of children through time and space. The evidence indicated that children are indeed visible in the material record. Objects associated with certain children from particular cultural groups share similar characteristics regardless of geographical location – as evidenced by the remarkable number of toy ships and boats, miniature quern and mill stones, as well as other artefacts such as toy pots and bowls, swords, balls, spinning tops and toy horses. This material culture impacted on and was transmitted to other ethnicities and cultures, evidenced by material found in Norse and Inuit Greenland. It is clear that contrary to traditional

academic perceptions, there is enough material evidence for a substantial multi-cultural archaeological dialogue for the culture of children and childhood in medieval Ireland.

The use of an interdisciplinary, comparative, multi-cultural approach has allowed for a more diverse view of the lives of the different ethnic groups in the North Atlantic region. Using a multiplicity of sources, including documentary, art-historical, literary, ethnographic and archaeological/osteological facilitated a much greater contextual interpretation of the corpus of evidence. The Irish historical sources, in particular, are an invaluable resource for researching the activities of women and children in the past. However, problems with the documentary sources in relation to the reliability of the translations needs to be addressed. There is also a need for archaeologists to employ an engendered and age aware perspective in both excavation and analyses of archaeological sites. It is necessary to look at gender as a category of analysis in both the methodological approach and in analysis of the material evidence – such as in the organization of space and activities, cemeteries and mortuary remains. However, it must also be remembered that gender should not be assumed to always be present as a defining social factor, and that other factors such as class may have been more important in the structure of a particular society. It is also vital to consider age as a category of analysis, and more work could be done – for example examining the experiences of older people in the past. Mortuary remains are one of the most important sources for the study of age in the past. Ongoing research within osteoarchaeology regarding determining age-at-death in sub-adult remains would offer much greater insights into the diet, health and experiences of children.

Seeing age and gender as organizing social principles of different and changing societies rather than static and unchanging categories, opens up the possibilities of developing much more comprehensive ideas about how social and cultural processes in the past were structured, shifted and changed.

Illustrations for Chapter Two: Women, gender, burial and trade

Figure 1

The double grave from Gerdrup, north of Roskilde in Denmark. 'The hanged and tied man (left) and the spear bearing woman'. The latter is weighed down with boulders perhaps to avoid a 'haunting'. Image and text from Lauritsen and Hansen, 'Transvestite Vikings?', p. 15.

Figure 2a:

Ninth-century female burial from Visby, Sweden [Anl. 21, 2000]. Large boulders had been placed over the chest, hips and legs possibly to prevent revivification. The grave

was oriented in a SW-NE direction, and the remains were supine with the head at the SW and the feet tightly together. The woman was between the ages of 25-39 when she died, and was 164-165 cm tall. Pathological changes suggested that she may have had Paget's disease. Two neonates accompanied the adult burial. The first infant appears to have been part of the primary inhumation, but the second infant was probably a secondary burial. Osteological analysis indicated that the two neonates were very similar, although the second infant was slightly larger, and may have survived longer. The neonates may have been twins, although no Dna analysis was made.

It appears the first infant was placed on or under the right leg and pelvis of the woman while the second infant was placed at the feet. Finds included a box brooch (Dosformigt spänne) located under the jaw of the female adult, with two pins; a bronze pin and a pin with a bronze head and an iron body. Both were placed just below the shoulders of the adult female. An iron knife had been placed close to the upper part of the females spine, and a simple bone comb was found just below the knife. A small glass bead was recovered next to the knife. Monica Elmshorn, 'SPÅR, av ett förflutet, en osteologisk analys och diskussion av bevaringsgrad hos ett skelettmaterial från Fröjel på Gotland' (MA thesis, Högskolan på Gotland, 2000-2001), p. 19, available at (http://www.arkeologigotland.se/uppsatser/MonicaElmshorn-2001.pdf) (12 February, 2006). Photo courtesy of Professor Dan Carlsson.

Figure 2b

Female burial from Fröjel, Gotland which was covered by boulders to 'prevent a haunting'. Photo courtesy of Professor Dan Carlsson. Pers. comm.

Figure 2c

[Anl. 47, 1998] Female grave from Fröjel, Gotland which was covered by boulders. Photo courtesy of Professor Dan Carlsson. Pers. comm.

Figure 2d

[Anl 1, 1998], grave of a woman in Fröjel, Gotland who had been covered with boulders in order to prevent 'a haunting'. Photo courtesy of Professor Dan Carlsson.

Figure 3a: i
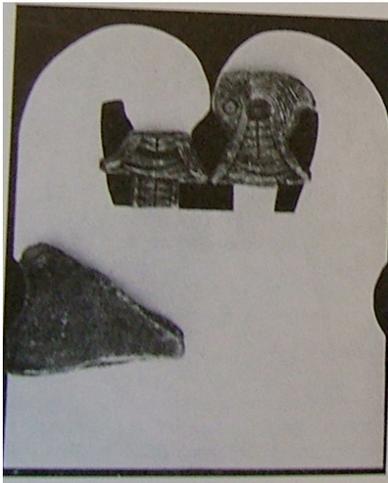
Figure 3a: ii
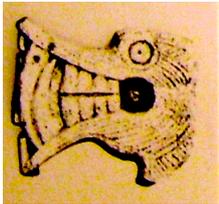
Detail of part of the Kilmainham/Islandbridge whalebone plaque.

Three pieces of a whalebone plaque from Kilmainham/Islandbridge NMI [Wk. 70/71/72]. This plaque is closely related in form and style to a number of plaques from Northern Norway. Images from Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 98, fig., 67.

Figure 3b

Fragment from a whalebone plaque found at Cherrywood, Co. Dublin. Image from Ó Néill, 'A Norse settlement in rural County Dublin', p. 10.

Figure 3c

Whalebone plaque that was found with a whalebone weaving batton, various other textile equipment and a pair of oval brooches. Graham Campbell has noted its similarity to a fragment of a whalebone plaque from Kilmainham/Islandbridge in Dublin. See 3:a i and ii above. (Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 98, fig. 67)
From Grytøy, Trondenes, Troms in Norway [BHM: B. 272]. Graham Campbell, *Select Viking artefacts*, pp 22- 3.

Figure 4
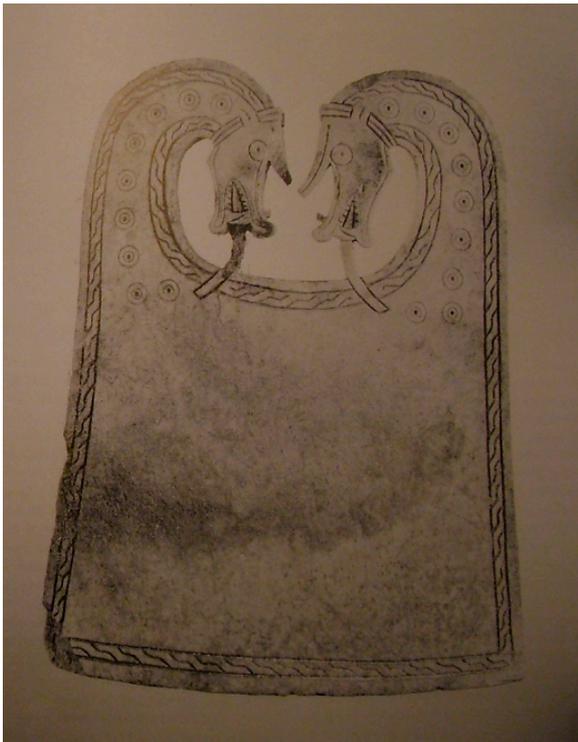
Whalebone plaque from female grave on Scar, Sanday in the Orkneys. Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 45.

Figure 5
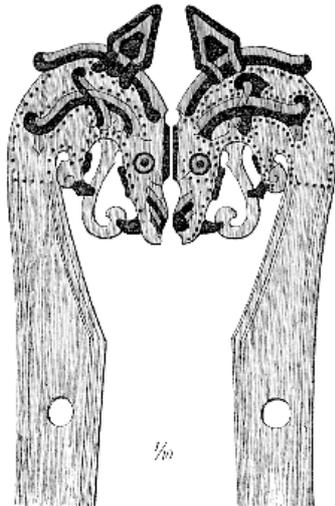
Dragon [or horse?] heads on part of verge boards for a tent from the Gokstad burial
(c. 900 AD). Image from Nicolay Nicolaysen, *Langskibet fra Gokstad ved Sandefjord*
(Kristiana, 1882), plate ix.

Figure 6a

BM [1891, 10-21, 67] Whalebone plaque from a ninth-century barrow burial at
Lilleberge, Namdalen, Norway. Picture from The British Museum Online, available at
(http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass/ixbin/hixclient.exe?_IXDB_=compass&
IXFIRST=1&_IXMAXHITS_=1&_IXSPFX_=graphical/gt/sel/&$+with+all_uniqu
e_id_index+is+$=OBJ3633&_IXtour=ENC9344&submit-button=summary) (2
January, 2007).

Figure 6b
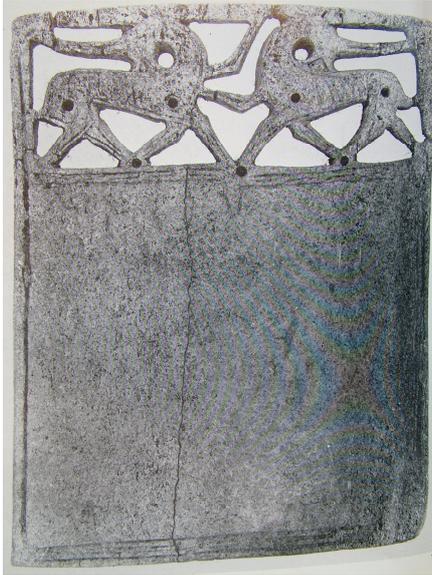
Whalebone plaque from female burial at Loppasanden, Loppa, Finnmark, Norway. Tromsø [Ts. 6360h]. The plaque is unusual in that it has backward looking quadrupeds rather than a pair of animal heads. Although Graham-Campbell notes this is paralleled by an unfinished example from Enge, Sømna, Helgeland, Norway. Graham-Campbell, *Select Viking artefacts*, p. 23; fig. 91.

Figure 7

Glass linen smoother of black glass together with a fragment of a whalebone plaque from King's Cross Point, Isle of Arran, NMS [X.IL 364]. Image available at NMS http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-043-838-C&PHPSESSID=e2306nc69ai49ea8usgqqudvu4&scache=39hpe3ftu5&searchdb=scran) (12 May, 2005).

Figure 8

Whalebone plaque and green glass smoother from female grave in Birka, [SHM 340:Bj854] available at (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=28363) (3 May, 2007).

Figure 9
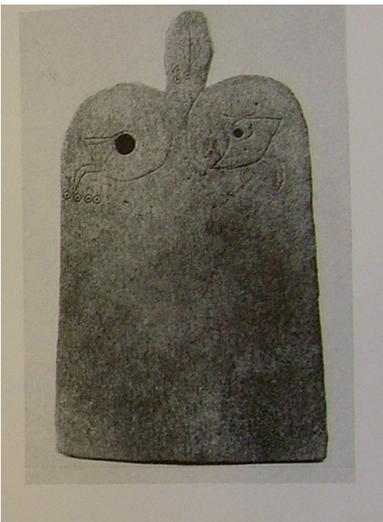
Unfinished whalebone plaque found near Ely, Cambridgeshire, currently housed in the University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge [22. 895 A], The plaque has confronted animals heads carved at the top, of the type Gustafson, *Norges Oldtid* (Kristiania, 1906), fig. 477 or R. 449. Measures 33 to 19.4 cm. The specimen differs from the ordinary type in having a kind of projecting handle between the

animals heads, which are slightly indicated by incised lines. Apparently the piece is not quite finished', Shetelig, *Viking antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland, part iv*, fig. 39, p. 71.

Figure 10

Fig.14: Arm ring from Álaugarey (Kt-151) (Eldjárn 2000: 390).

Image from Pétursdóttir, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*', p. 55.

Figure 11a
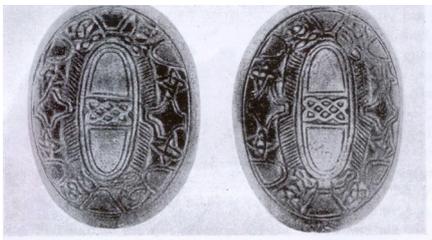
Oval brooches from Kilmainham NMI [1881:253]. Picture from Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 41, fig. 18.

Figure 11b
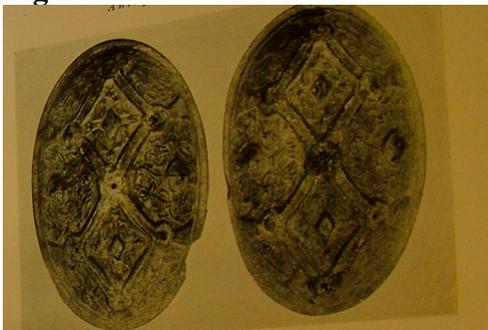
Pair of bronze tortoise brooches from Islandbridge, NMI [Reg. 2403]. Image from Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 38, fig. 17.

Figure 12
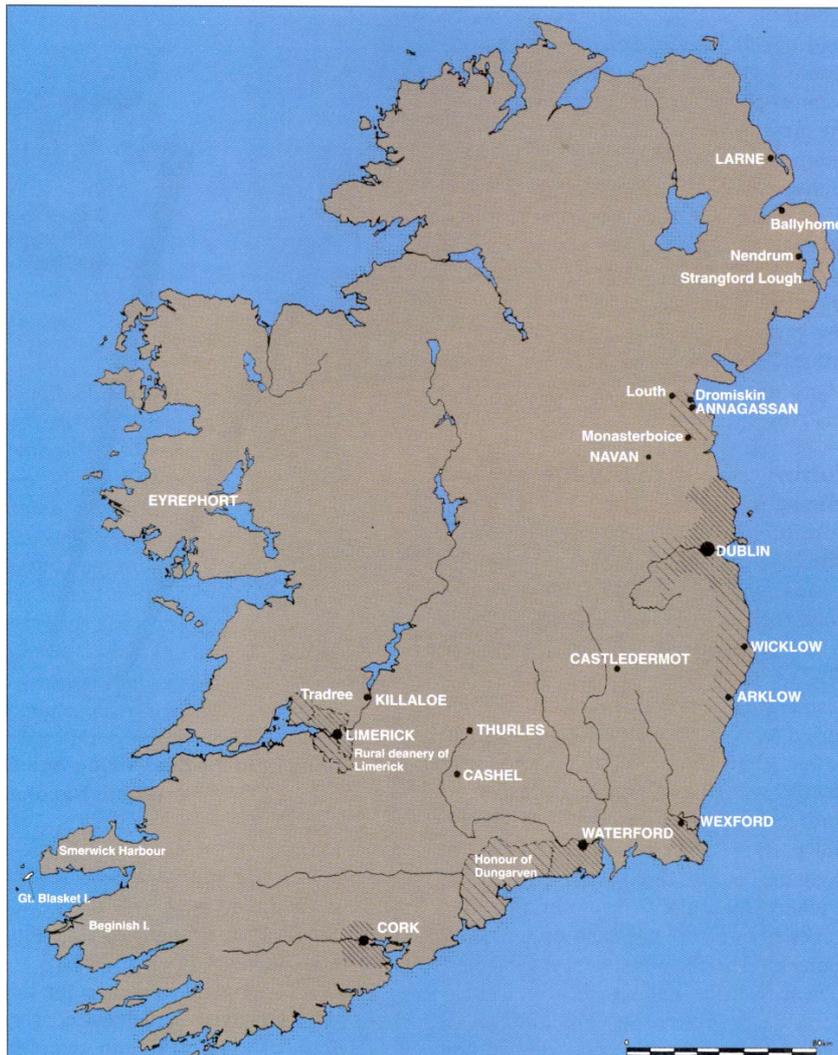
'Hiberno-Scandinavian settlement in Ireland. The dense shading indicates those areas, which were under Hiberno-Scandinavian control in the twelfth century. The light shading indicates areas which may have been settled but for which evidence is not clear cut'. Bradley, 'Scandinavian rural settlement in Ireland', p. 11.

Figure 13
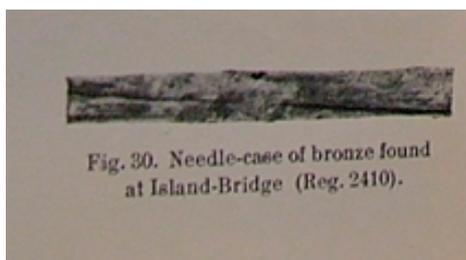
Bronze needlecase from Islandbridge, Dublin [NMI reg. 2410], Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49, fig. 30.

Figure 14
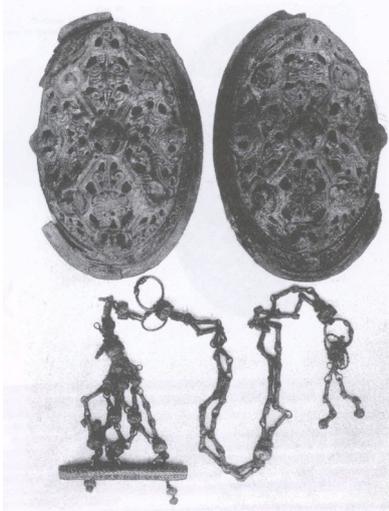
Tortoise brooches and silver chain found in a grave at Three-Mile Water, Co. Wicklow, Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 74.

Figure 15

One of the bronze tortoise brooches found at Ballyholme, Co. Down. Length 10,4 cms. Image from Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 75.

Figure 16a
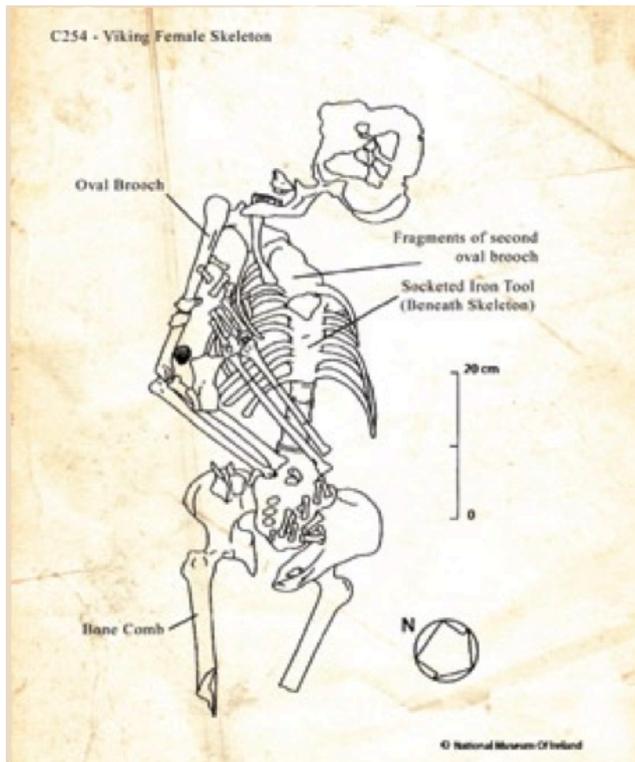
Finglas Viking female burial. Image from Icon Archaeology, available at (www.iconarchaeology.ie/pdf/brochure.pdf) (12 November, 2007).

Figure 16b
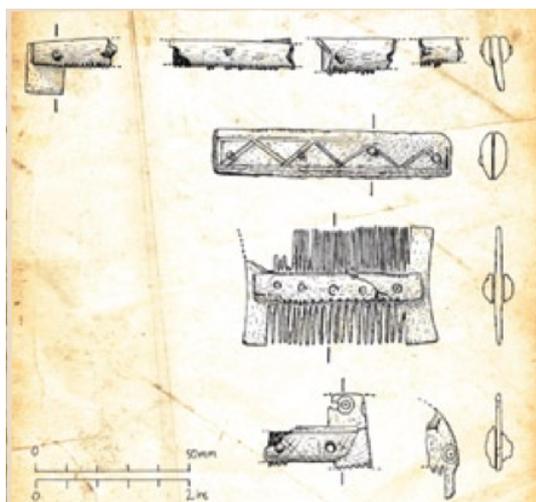
Combs from the Finglas Viking female burial. Image from Icon Archaeology, available at (www.iconarchaeology.ie/pdf/brochure.pdf) (12 November, 2007).

Figure 17

Early tenth-century copper brooch found in Viking cemetery at Cumwhitton. Image from PAS, available at (http://www.finds.org.uk/database/index.php) (12 May, 2007).
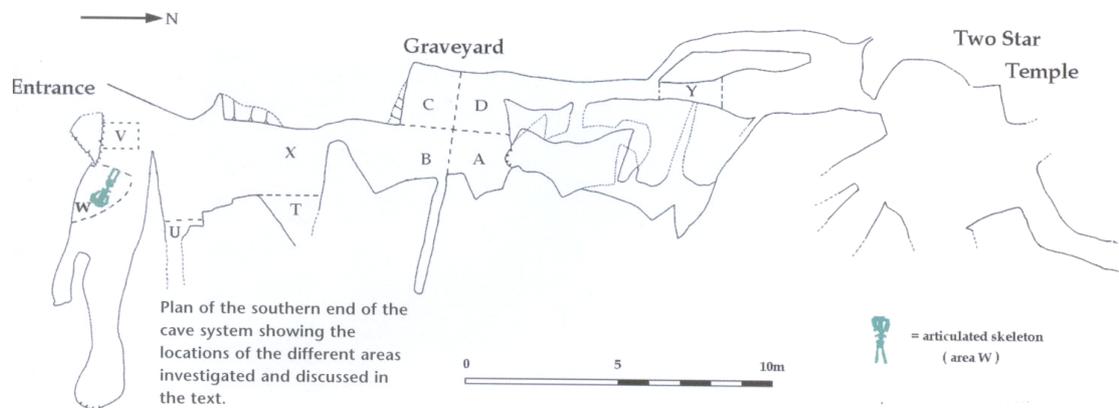
Figure 18

Map of Cloghermore Cave, near Tralee, Co. Kerry, picture from Connolly and Coyne, 'Cloghermore Cave, the Lee Valhalla', p. 19.

Figure 19
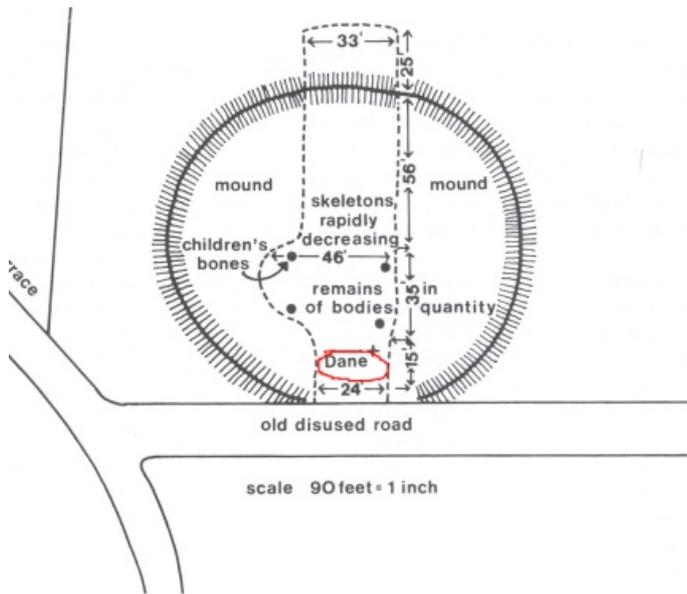
FIG. 2

MOUNT ERROLL, DONNYBROOK, CO. DUBLIN

Frazer's plan of 1879 excavation (after Frazer 1879, p. 32)

Viking burial from Donnybrook. Hall, 'A Viking-age Grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin', p. 66.

Figure 20

Weighing scales and weights from Kiloran Bay, picture from Ritchie, *Viking Scotland*, p. 82.

Figure 21

'Bird-headed' weighing scales and weights from Gigha, Scotland. Picture from the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, available at (http://www.hunterian.gla.ac.uk/education/vikings/gigha_scales.shtml) (12 May, 2006).

Figure 22

Ninth-century bird-headed bronze balance scales from Kilmainham/Islandbridge. The inside of these scales NMI [Reg. 2395] are decorated with concentric circles reminiscent of the Gigha scales. Four ninth century bronze balance scales and nine lead alloy weights are known from the Viking Age burial ground at Kilmainham/Islandbridge. Some of the weights have mounts that are of Irish design. Image from Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49, fig. 32.

Figure 23a

Gravegoods from the high status female grave at Westness, Rousay, Orkney, NMS [X.IL 740]. The woman appears to have died in childbirth and was buried with jewellery and a range of tools between 850 and 900 AD. The oval brooches and necklace originated in Scandinavia, while the brooch (pictured below) which was constructed from a Gospel book plate as well as the strap ends – is of Insular origin. Image from NMS image database, available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-099-732-C&PHPSESSID=jah0lpln2u5otodred8cl1hkf7&scache=35tzh1qf0e&searchdb=scran) (12 June, 2006).

Figure 23b

The 'Westness brooch'. Found in a female grave at Westness, Orkney. The brooch was probably made in Ireland c. 750. Image from NMS, available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-099-732-C&PHPSESSID=jah0lpln2u5otodred8cl1hkf7&scache=35tzh1qf0e&searchdb=scran) (12 June, 2006).

Figure 24a

Detail of Burial F12   01E0772

Glass Bead

Finger ring, ring & metal disc

Mandible

Cellar truncation

Scale 1:10

0   m   0.5
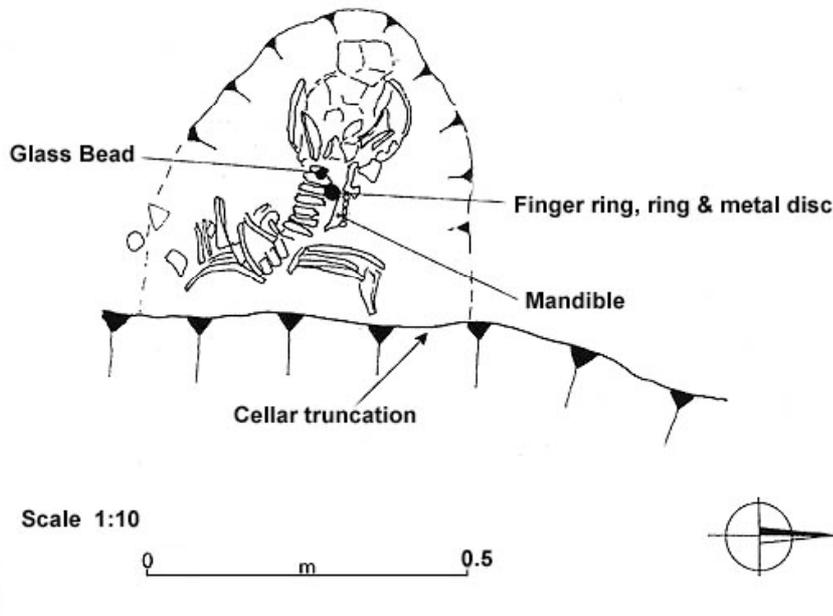
Plan of the Ship Street Great burial. The burial has a 95% probability of dating to between AD 665 and AD 865. Simpson, 'The Ship Street Great burial', available at (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin/fig6.htm) (9 March, 2005).

Figure 24b

01E 772-12-1

0   cm   2

Objects of personal jewellery found around the neck of the Ship Street Great burial including a silver finger ring, a twisted finger ring and a very corroded iron disk. Simpson, 'The Ship Street Great burial', available at (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/viking_dublin/ship_street_great.htm) (9 March, 2005).

Illustrations for Chapter Four: dress and personal appearance

Figure 25
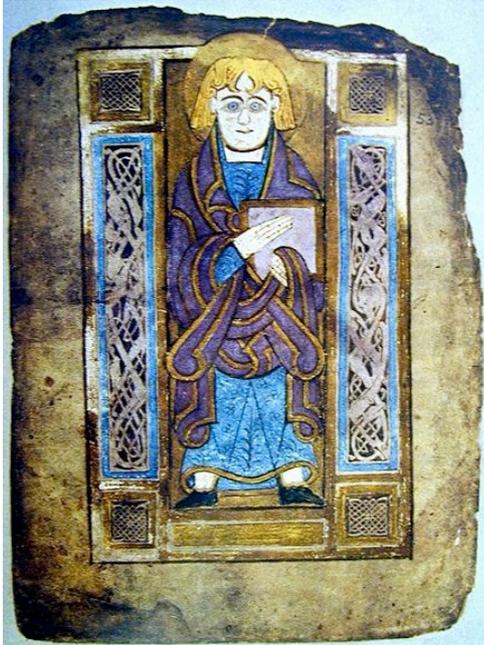
A portrait of an evangelist from the early eighth-century Book of Mulling (MS A.I.15, folio 193, Trinity College Library, Dublin). He is shown wearing a full *brat* over a *léine* that has a square neckline, fitted cuffs and appears to be embroidered. He is also wearing ornate finger rings and shoes. Dunlevy, *Dress in Ireland, a history*, p. 18.

Figure 26
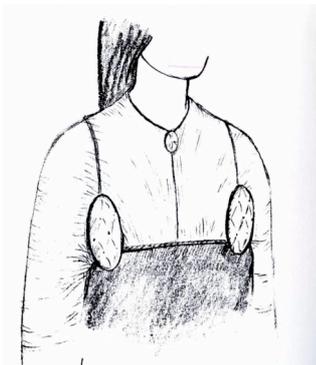
Reconstruction of female dress based on archaeological finds, Picture from Hägg, 'Viking women's dress at Birka, a reconstruction by archaeological methods' in Harte and Ponting (eds), *Cloth and clothing in Medieval Europe*, p. 349.

Figure 27

Figure from an Anglo-Scandinavian carving from Pickhill, England, which appears to represent a woman (possibly Eve) wearing a short dress suspended from a pair of oval brooches. Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 43.

Figure 28

Carving from Hunnestad, Sweden depicting a troll-wife riding a wolf. She is wearing a simple short dress or shift that has a long slit neck. The dress comes to no lower than her knees. Image from Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 44.

Figure 29

Carved figure from Kirkbymoorside, England. The carving appears to represent a female wearing a bead necklace and a short simple dress or *serkr*. Image from Ewing, *Viking clothing*, p. 45.

Figure 30

A beautiful silver toilet set consisting of tweezers, nail file and ear-scoop.

Silver toilet set that probably belonged to a woman. Consists of a tweezers, a nail file and an ear scoop. Simpson, *Director's findings, Temple Bar West*, p. 26.

Figure 31
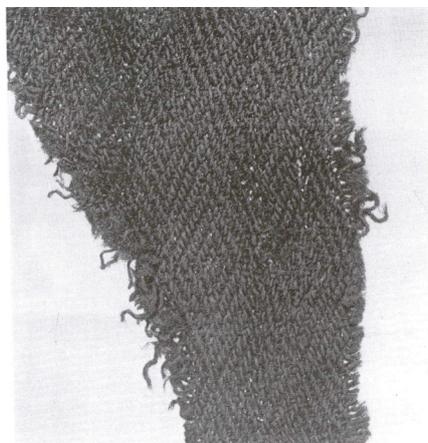
Fragment of wool from Dublin excavations. Picture from Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin', p. 95.

Figure 32
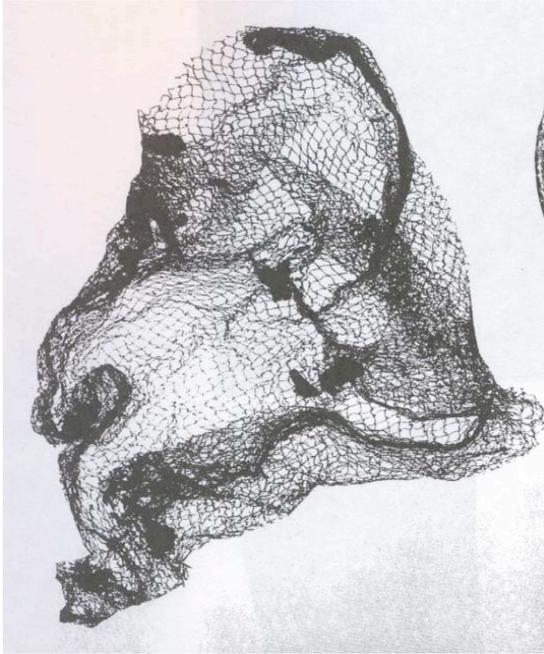
Hairnet NMI [E190:3169] excavated from Fishamble Street. Twelfth century. Graham-Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 6.

Figure 33

Series of ways in which the headcoverings may have been worn by females in Viking Age Dublin. Wincott-Heckett, *Viking Age headcoverings from Dublin*, p. 5.

Figure 34

Amber beads from Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin. Simpson, *Director's findings, Temple Bar West*, p. 27.

Figure 35

NMI [E172: 13645] Small wooden carved jewellery or comb box, excavated from Christchurch Place. Dates to the mid-tenth century. The box is 15.8 cm in length, 4.2 cm wide and 3.7 cm in height. It is carved from a single piece of wood and has a sliding lid. Lang, *Viking-Age decorated wood, a study of its ornament and style*, p. 51.

Figure 36

Women presenting the disputed child before Solomon, with 'King David' the harpist in the background. Detail of tympanum at Ardmore Cathedral. The carving is thought to date to the 12th century, but may be earlier as the carving was thought to have been moved from a different monument on the site. Image available at The Heritage Council (http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/publications/stone/site82.html) (1 November, 2007).

Figure 37
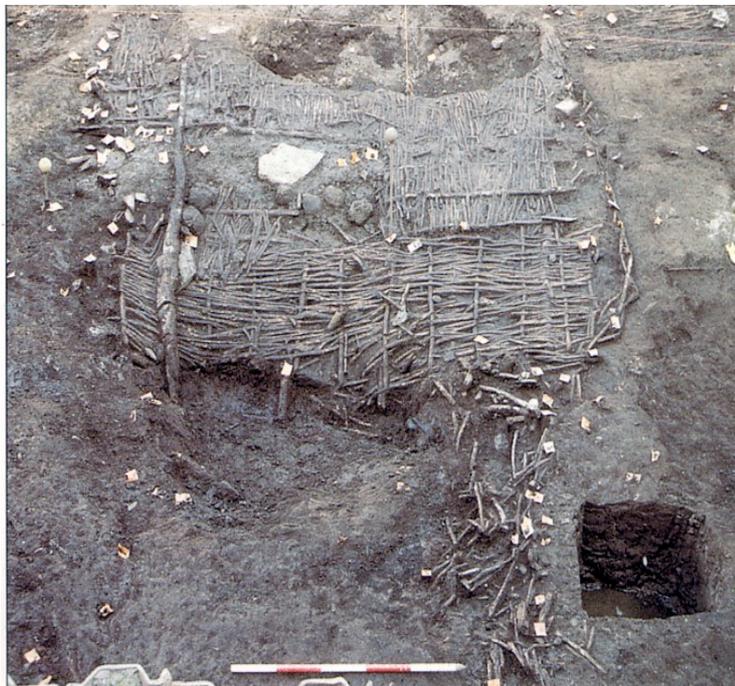
One of Dr. Pat Wallace's type 2 houses from Dublin, photo from Simpson, *Director's findings from Temple Bar West*, p. 17.

Figure 38

Suckle cup or nurse cup from the eleventh century levels at Lund, after Ekman, *Destination Viking*, p. 72.

Figure 39

Single inhumation of a 5-6 year old girl(?), Fishamble Street, Dublin, late ninth century, photo from Simpson, *Director's findings from Temple Bar West*, p. 19.

Figure 40
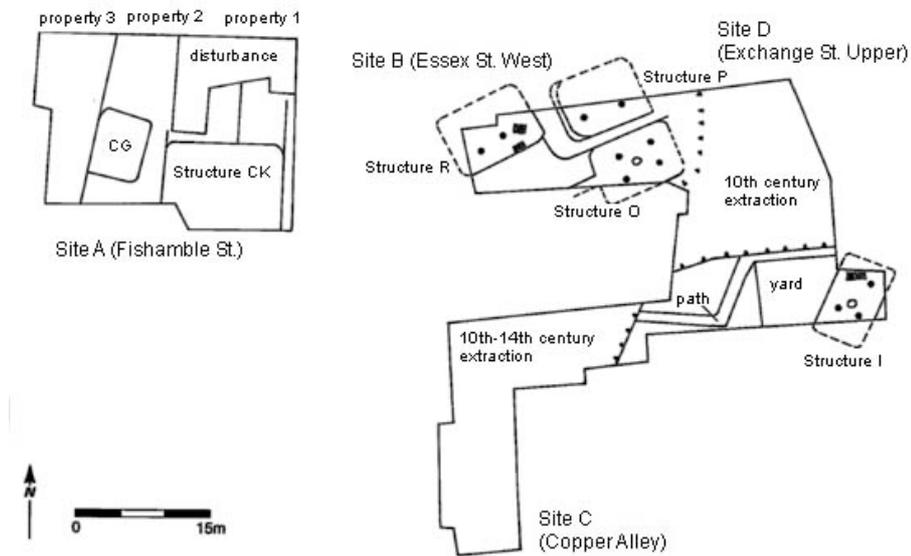
Temple Bar excavations, picture from Margaret Gowen and Co. Ltd,*Temple Bar Excavations*, available at, (http://www.mglarc.com/projects/tb/phasetext2.htm) (12 March 2003).

Figure 41a

Reconstruction of jewellery from infants grave in Gotland, Sweden. Lindquist, 'Children's graves- status symbols?' in *VHM*, p. 28.

Figure 41b

Close up of the miniature-sized jewellery from probable female infant grave in Fröjel, Gotland, HMG. Photo courtesy of Malin Crona.

Figure 42

Miniature brooches from infant graves on Gotland, HMG. Image courtesy of Malin Crona.

Figure 43a

Figure 43b

Figure 43c

Gravegoods from the burial of a twelve-year-old male on Gotland. The child's grave also included a horse and a dog, and the gravegoods were typical for an adult male grave. They contained some silver thread, a bridle, a large wooden horse comb and a lead, as well as two spearheads, two knives, and comb and a fibula. HMG. Photos courtesy of Malin Crona.

Figure 44

Slate trial piece with carving from Killaloe, Co. Clare 10th century, [BM 58. 1-20.1].

Figure 45
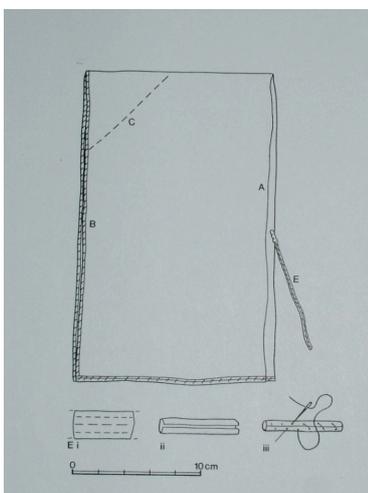
Silk cap NMI [E172:14370] which has been patched and re-used for a child. Photo from Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin, p. 86.

Figure 46

Possibly the oldest picture of a Viking Age child comes from one of the picture stones from Ardre, Gotland and dates to the ninth century. The child appears to be wearing a short skirt-like shift which is cinched in at the waist and bells out slightly at the knees. Picture from Lindquist, 'Concerning the existence of children', p. 27.

Figure 47

Child sized boot, found in excavations at High Street, Dublin. The boot dates from the twelfth century. Picture from NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin*, pl. 11.

Figure 48

Part of a toy quernstone from Lagore Crannóg, Co. Meath, illustration from Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', p. 177.

Figure 49

Steatite cup [NMI IA 3475] from the vicinity of Ballynenagh in Co. Tipperary.

Figure 50

Miniature (toy) steatite bowl, online id 000-100-042-639-C. NMS [X.HSA 696]. Dates to between 800 and 1000. 1.20" h, rim 2.30" d, base 1.30" d. From Scotland, Shetland, Sumburgh, Jarlshof, HU 395 095. Photo from the NMS, available at

(http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-042-639-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (5 January, 2006).

Figure 51

Child's steatite cup [kleberstensgryte] from Bergen, dated to 1248. The cup was found in 1963 and has a diameter of 3.7 cm with a height of between 2.3 and 2.6 cm. Brøndsted, et al., 'Leketøy', p. 492.

Figure 52

'Lamp of fine grey steatite with extended 'lug' and thumbgrip. Of Norse type but unusually small. Well finished. Possibly a model or child's toy. Found during excavation of old earthen floor at Gord, Fetlar. A very well made piece'. Scran ID: 000-000-000-321, SM, ARC 79184. Length is 9.5 cm and breath is 5.5. available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-000-321-C&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64&scache=3dk6apn07e&searchdb=scran&PHPSESSID=cfe928f64) (2 June, 2006).

Figure 53

Toy handled lamp from Sandwick, Unst. NMS SCRAN ID: 000-000-000-184-C, available at (http://www.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-000-000-184-C&PHPSESSID=23lnvrnlj08305goqug1brvn86&scache=659njupxn9&searchdb=scran) (2 June, 2006).

Figure 54

Toy quern of sandstone from Jarlshof (piece) [NMS X.HSA 4101], dates from between 900 and 1000, available at (http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-043-181-C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scran) (1 May, 2006).

Figure 55
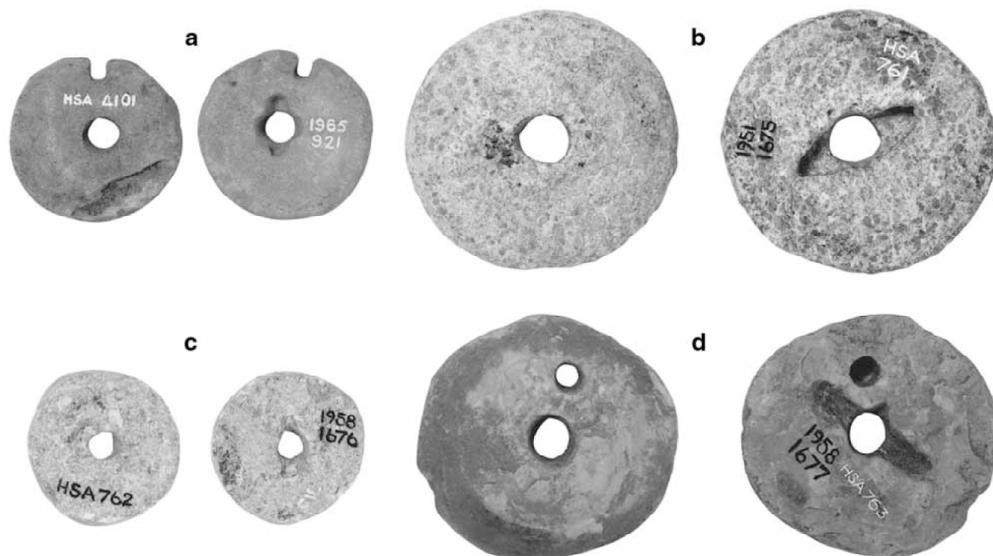
Fig. 5. Miniature quern- and millstones from *Jarlshof*, Shetland, a–d=catalogue nos. 1–4. Scale 2:3. Photo, National Museums of Scotland.

Toy quern and millstones from Jarlshof, Shetland: a) quernstone, b) millstone, c) millstone, d) quernstone. Picture from Hansen and Larsen, 'Miniature quern- and mill stones from Shetland's Scandinavian past', p. 109.

Figure 56

Toy millstone from Jarlshof, [NMS X.HSA 761] available at
(http://nms.scran.ac.uk/database/record.php?usi=000-100-042-667-
C&PHPSESSID=umqjjma7mrm2fie5tnqdvq8o45&scache=47j4a95vg5&searchdb=scra
n) (7 January 2006).
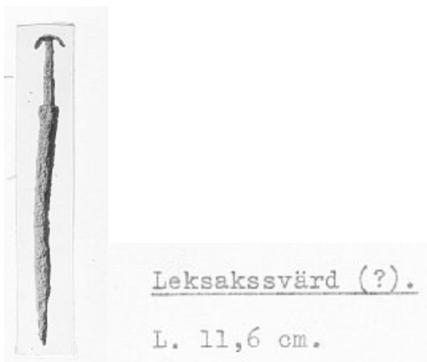
Figure 57

'Flat iron toy (?) sword from Ostergotland, Sweden'. [SHM 14767:81]. Found in 1912
in Östergötland in the settlement site of Östra Eneby Ringstaholm Föremål 116594.
The sword dates to 1300-1470. Available at HMS,
(http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fyndlokal.asp?lokalid=29197) (14 May, 2006).

Figure 58

Sketch of Viking ship on timber from Christchurch Place, NMI [E162:16078], picture
from the National Museum photographic files [reg. no. KA. 3758].

Figure 59
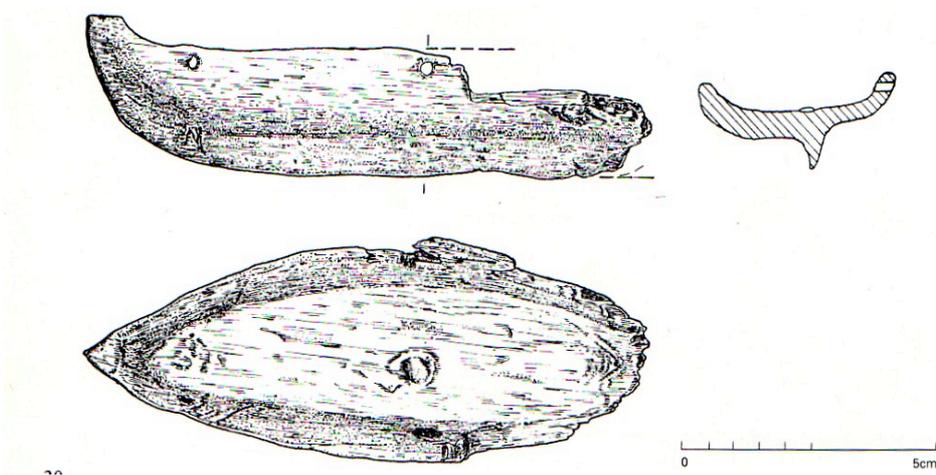
Twelfth century toy boat from Winetavern Street [E81:4228]. Length is 11 cm. NMI,
Viking and medieval Dublin, no. 206, p. 206. Illustration from Christensen, 'Ship
graffiti and models', p. 20.

Figure 60
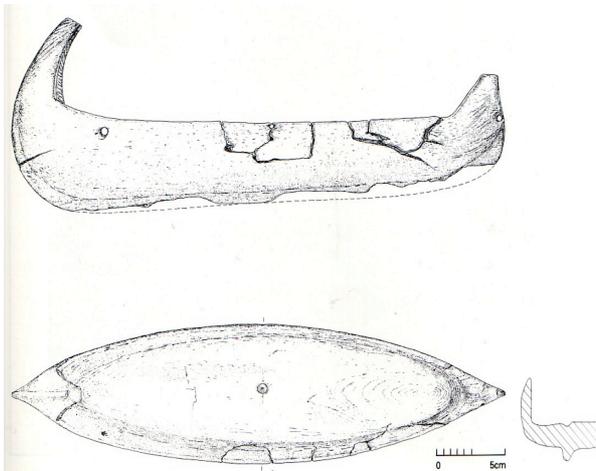
Fig. 9. *Boat model from the excavations at Winetavern Street.*

Pl. IV. *Boat model from the excavations at Winetavern Street. (Photo: National Museum of Ireland.)*

Toy ship from Winetavern Street NMI [E81:432], Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 21.

Figure 61

NMI [E81: 2839b] Ship carved on wooden plank, Winetavern Street, Dublin, NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 48.

Figure 62

Fig. 94. *DW91 Toy ship.*
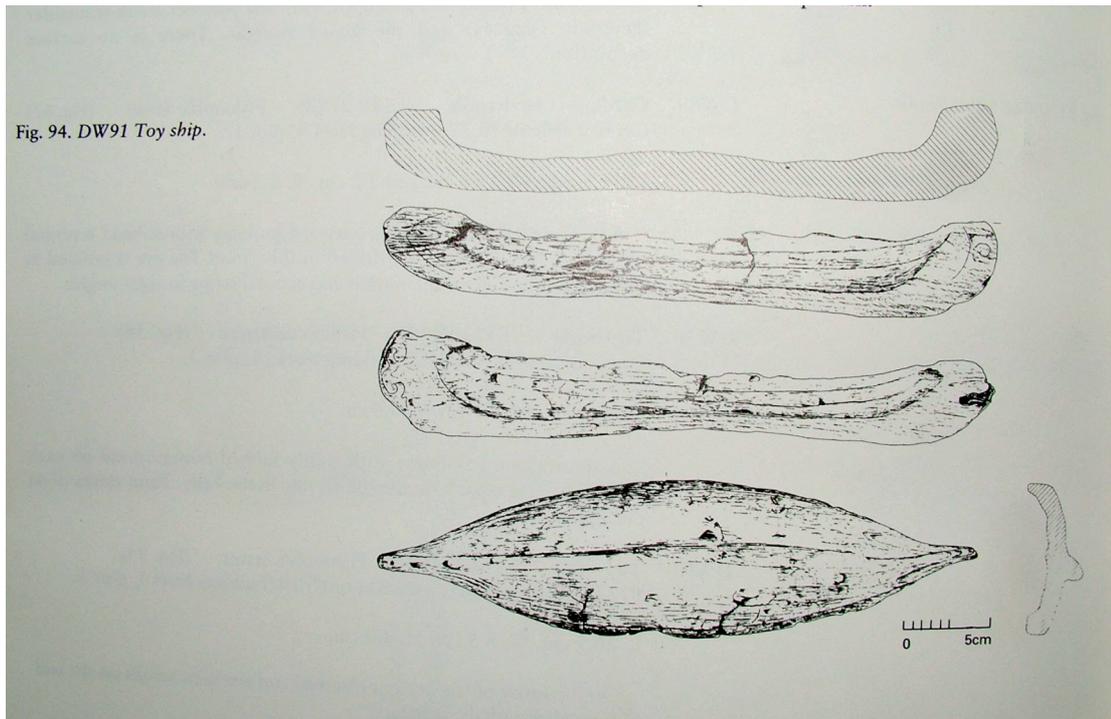
Toy ship from Fishamble Street NMI [E172:15183], picture from Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 79.

Figure 63
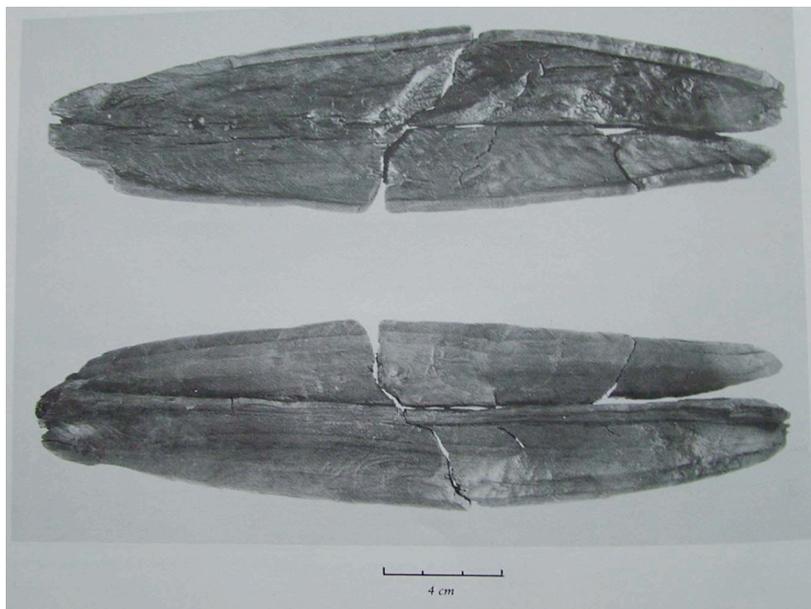
Toy wooden boat from Winetavern Street, dates to the 10th century, [NMI E81:432]. Photograph from Mitchell, *Archaeology and environment in early Dublin*, p. 30.

Figure 64

19cm long wooden boat found in Gamlebyen in Oslo in 1892. Dates to around 1100.
Brøndsted, et al., 'Leketøy', p. 492.

Figure 65a

Viking Age toy boat from the Faroes in the Smithsonian museum, picture from *Vikings,
the North Atlantic Saga, objects with stories to tell, the Smithsonian curators' choice*,
available at (http://www.civilization.ca/media/docs/fsvik04e.html) (2 May, 2005).
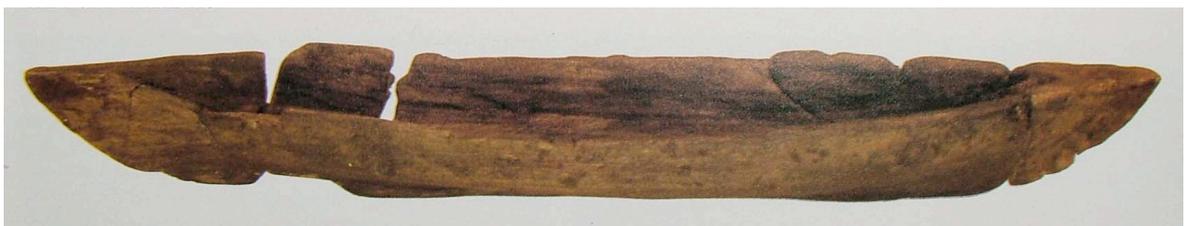
Figure 65b

Toy boat of willow from the Viking Age settlement site of Argisbrekka on Eysturoy in
the Faeroes. Photograph from Graham-Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking
world*, p. 168.

Figure 66

Bark boat, Föremål no. 122998, [SHM :27], available at SHM, Sweden, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=122998) (12 June, 2006).

Figure 67

Fig. 38   LOCH GLASHAN, crannog, possible model paddle (no. A34)
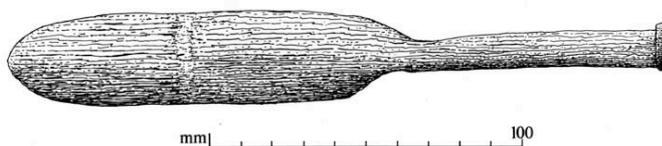
Possible model paddle SCRAN [SC 352864] from Loch Glashan, crannog. It has been worked from close-grained wood and measures 8 3/16" (208 mm) in length over all. 'The finds list classifies it as a weaver's (or sword) beater, but it more probably had a domestic function or was, just possibly, a toy or model paddle, possibly with a similar ceremonial or ritual function to that of the numerous model religious objects found in Romano-British contexts. Earwood identifies it as a probable spatula (considering it too short for a weaver's beater) and catalogues several other objects of similar type from Loch Glashan besides citing parallels from the excavated Irish crannogs of Ballinderry 2 and Lagore. Wilde confirms that the small size and apparent light weight of this object would render it of no use except in the weaving of tapestry, a craft not normally associated with crannogs'. Available at http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pls/portal/newcanmore.details_gis?inumlink=40047. Image available at (RCAHMS http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/scotland_screenres_800/352864.jpg) (4 June, 2006).

Figure 68

Toy wooden paddle constructed from wood L. 7.9 [MG 139/103], available at Hunt Museum, Limerick (http://test.huntmuseum.com/search_briefdesc.asp) (5 June, 2006).

Figure 69

436(7)
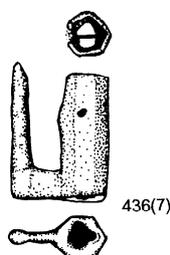
Miniature/ toy? padlock. Mary McMahon, 'Early medieval settlement and burial outside the enclosed town, evidence from archaeological excavations at Bride Street, Dublin' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, ci, section c (2002) p. 101.

Figure 70

Snorrie Bane ('Snoring Bone'), photo no: 01076, Photo from SM photographic archive, available at
(http://photos.shetlandmuseum.org.uk/shetlands/app;jsessionid=9q2556tkbrlq?service=external/SearchResults&sp=IAt+Play&sp=121543&sp=SItem) (2 November 2006).

Figure 71a

Double perforated buzz bone from Viking period child's grave in Birka [SHM 34000: Bj 983] available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/bild.asp?uid=29321) (2 May, 2007).

Figure 71b

Vinare, (whirlygig) SHM 18011, from Östergötland Vreta Kloster Vreta klosterkyrka, Föremål 428142,
available at (www.historiska.se/data/?bild=301866
http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/include_image_exp.asp?uid=301866) (2 July, 2006).

Figure 72
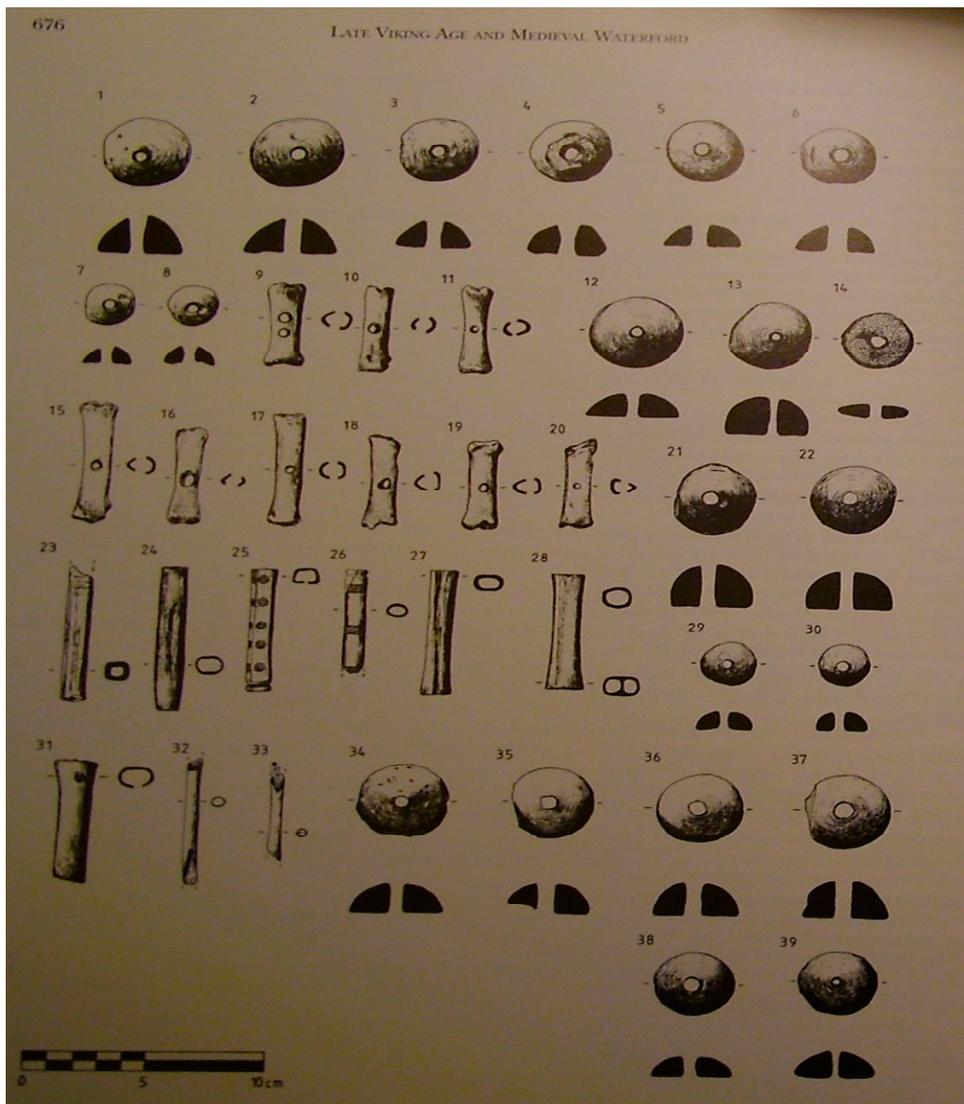
Bone toggles (buzzbones) from Waterford, picture from Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 676.

Figure 73
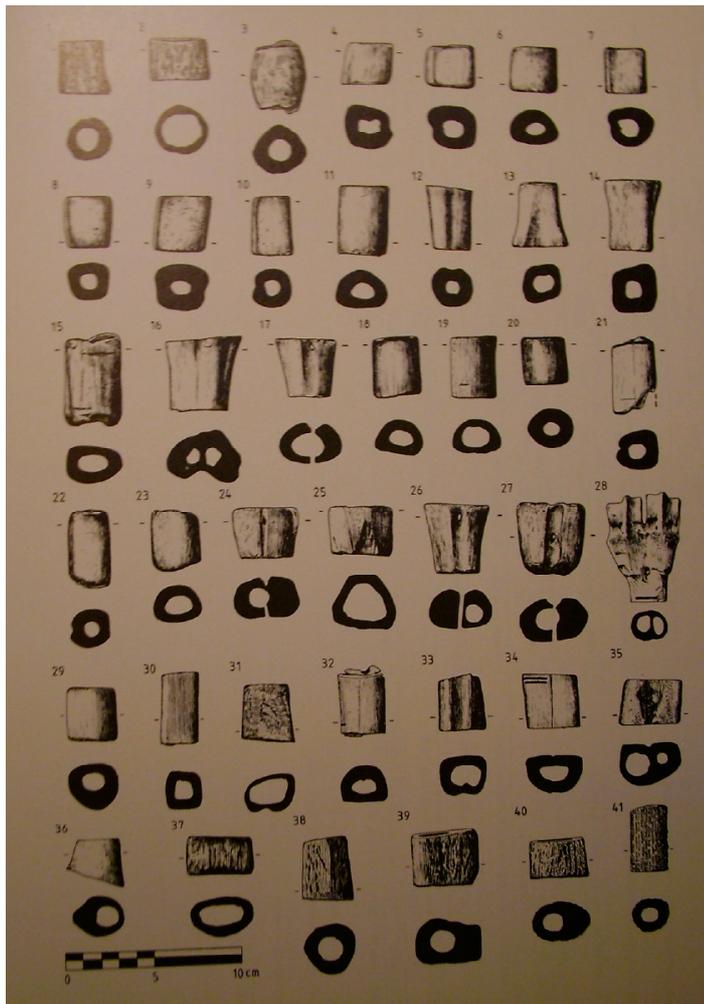
'Bone cylinders' from the Waterford excavations, picture from Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford, excavations 1986-1992*, p. 687.

Figure 74
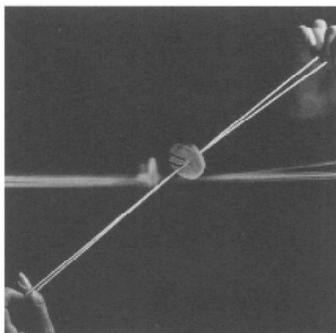
Picture of 'buzz in action' from Gus W. Van Beek, 'The buzz: a simple toy from antiquity' in *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research*, cclxxv (1989), p. 54.

Lead-alloy disc with 'saw-tooth' edge and two central piercings, from Lincolnshire, UK; 16th-18th century. 'Lead-alloy disc with 'saw-tooth' edge and two central piercings. These discs are a crude musical instrument and toy. When attached to a cord which is twisted and then pulled taut between two hands the spinning of the disc (amplified by the toothed edges) produces a rhythmic humming which rises and falls with each pull of the cord. Such toys have variously been home-made from buttons and more recently for safety from cardboard these being given as a free gift in comics as late as the 1950s-60s. With coloured panels printed on the cardboard the spinning produced a visual as well as audible toy.

These musical toys have their origin in more ancient times when pig metacarpals and metatarsals were drilled and threaded to serve the same purpose. They have been found in Saxon to early post-medieval deposits in Britain. Lead 'saw-tooth' medieval/post-medieval discs such as these have been found during surveys of Thames foreshore deposits in the City of London'. Available at UKDFD (http://www.ukdfd.co.uk/ukdfddata/showrecords.php?product=134&sort=2&cat=all&page=247,(1 March, 2007.

Figure 75
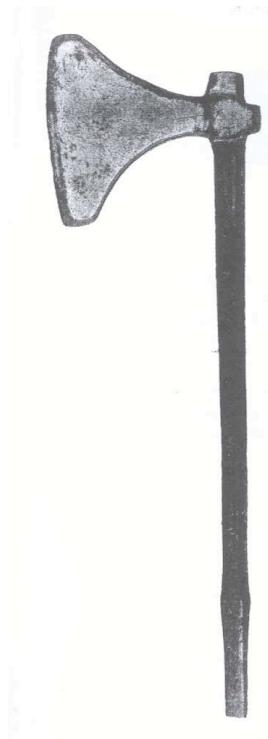
Diminutive bronze axe (toy?) found at Islandbridge, the Blade is covered with white metal. The handle, which is cast in one piece with the blade, is circular in section at the blade, rectangular at the lower end, where a portion is missing. The lines adorning the handle near the blade cannot now be seen. The Length of the handle is 14.4 cms. the blade is 4.4 cm. Diminutive bronze axe (toy) found at Islandbridge, the Blade is covered with white metal. [lead?] The handle, which is cast in one piece with the blade, is

circular in section at the blade, rectangular at the lower end, where a portion is missing. The lines adorning the handle near the blade cannot now be seen. The Length of the handle is 14.4 cms., the blade is 4.4 cms. Picture and text from Boe, *Antiquities of Ireland and Britain*, pg. 53.

Figure 76

DW88 Toy sword.
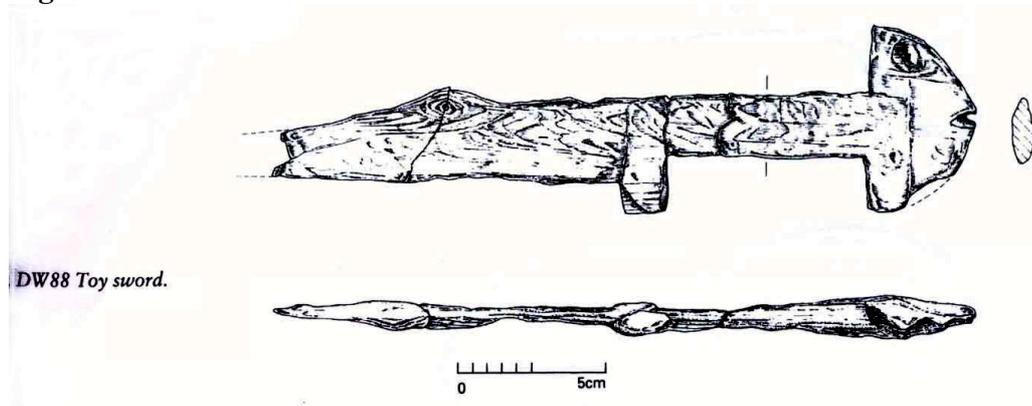
Toy sword from Fishamble Street, NMI [E141: 3260]. The sword was excavated from dark, highly organic soil near a possible pathway to a house. The length of the sword is 23.7 cm, the width is 6.0 and the thickness is 1.5 cm. The blade and the guard are now lost. The pommel is sub-triangular (Peterson type H) and the guard is straight. There is no surface decoration. Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 79. Picture from ibid, p. 33.

Figure 77

Wooden sword from Söderköping, in South-Eastern Sweden. From post 1050. [SHM 34711], Föremål 122997, available at SHM (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=122997) (2 May, 2006).
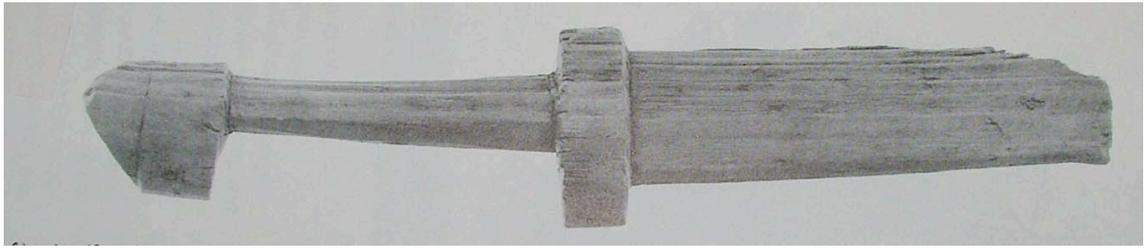
Figure 78

Toy wooden sword from Staraja Ladoga. Dates to the eighth or ninth century and is 14 cm in length. The object is a close copy of contemporary swords of Frankish type. Image from Sawyer, *The Oxford illustrated history of the Vikings*, p. 153.

Figure 79

Wooden toys from Novgorod, picture from Brisbane (ed.), The archaeology of Novgorod, Russia: recent results from the town and its hinterland, p. 174.

Figure 80a
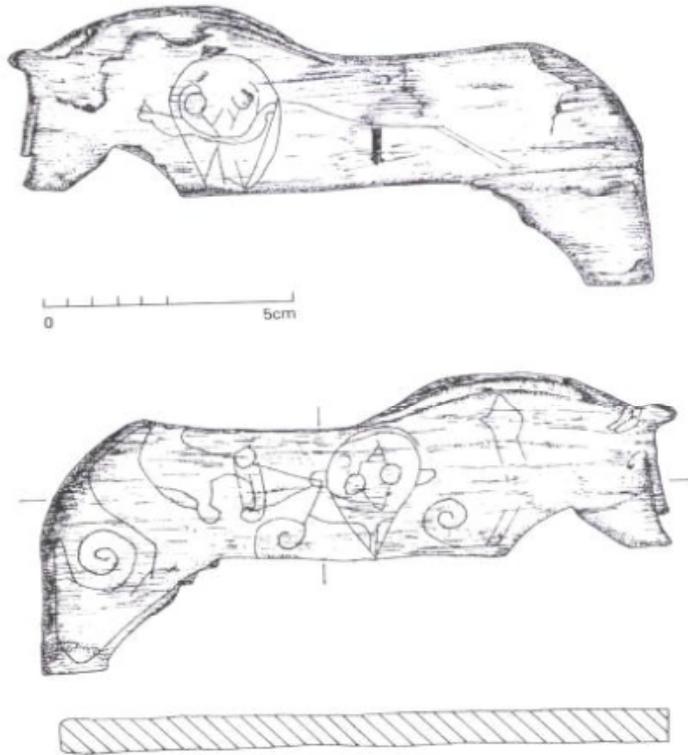
Wooden toy horse [NMI E172: 9420] from Fishamble Street. Picture from Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 22.

Figure 80b Detail of carvings on either side of toy horse
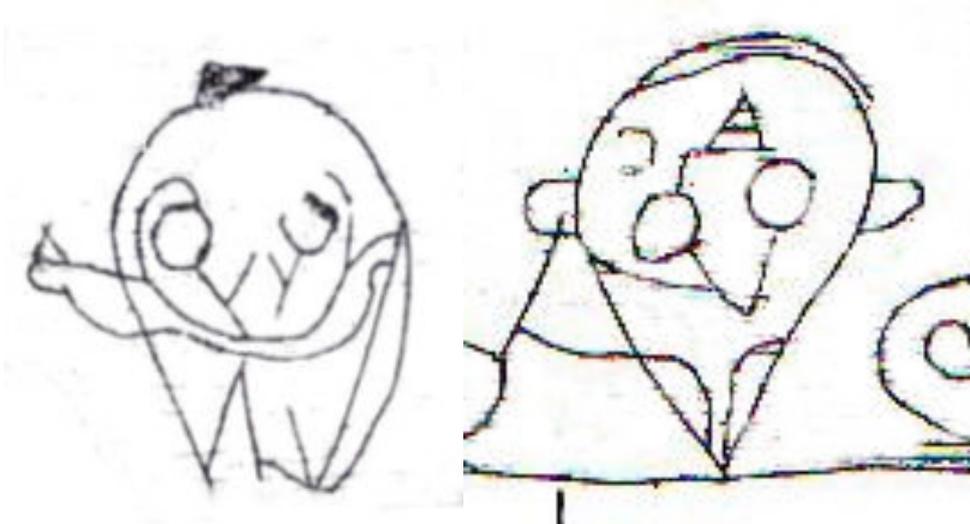
Figure 81

The carved antler male figure from Sigtuna in central Sweden bears a striking resemblance to the drawing on the wooden toy horse from Dublin. Picture from Graham-Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue,* p. 294, plates 482 (a) and 482 (b).

Figure 82
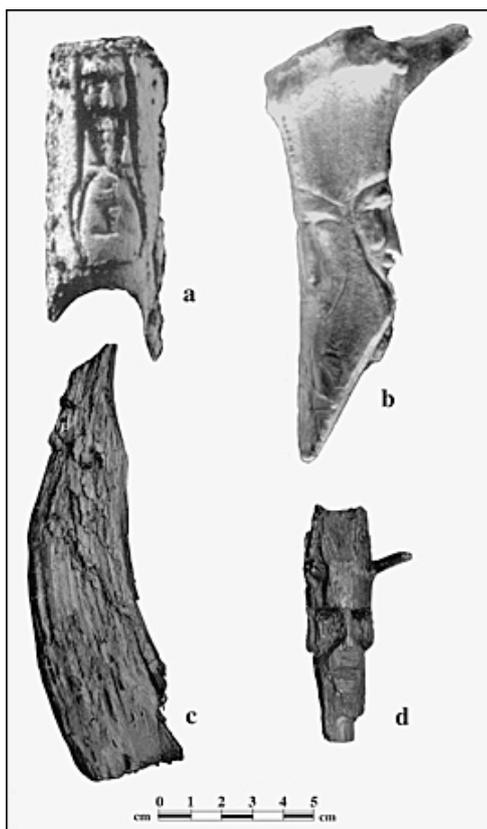
Sutherland, 'Strands of Culture Contact', available at (http://www.civilization.ca/academ/articles/suth_05e.html) (12 January, 2006)

Figure 83

Carved Inuit wooden figure from Baffin Island. 'Carved human figurines are common in Arctic cultures, especially among the Inuit. Faces are often featureless, but clothing and other anatomical details are often depicted. This particular wooden figurine, found in a Thule Inuit site in southwest Baffin Island, however, is unique. The human depicted here wears a long robe, split up the front, and appears to have a faint cross scratched in the chest. This would suggest the garb of a medieval priest or knight, not an indigenous arctic person. Dated to before 1300, this figurine is proof that the ancestors of the Inuit came face to face with Norseman two hundred years before Columbus reached the Caribbean'. Photo from Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, available at (http://www.civilization.ca/media/docs/fsvik04e.html) (2 June, 2006).

Figure 84

Bronze horse figure from Eshaness, Shetland, in *The Shetland News*, available (http://www.shetland-news.co.uk/archives/pages/news%20stories/2007/04_2007/news_04_2007/Long%20lost%20artefacts%20coming%20home.htm) (12 July, 2007)

Figure 85

Messinghest (brass horse) (vektlodd) from Kosvig, Kristiansand, in Norway, photo from (http://picasaweb.google.com/stylegar/Oldsaker/photo#5026159615606136386) (2 August, 2007).

Figure 86

Toy horse from Sweden [SHM 18011], post 1050, from Östergötland, Vreta kloster Föremål 442538, Fotografi | Dokumentationsbild 301378, photo available at Historiska Museet, Stockholm (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=442538) (2 August, 2007).

Figure 87

Ceramic toy horse from Bergen. Image from Herteig, *Bryggen I Bergen*, p. 29.

Figure 88

Toys from excavations at the Carmelite Friary in the Obertorvorstadt, Esslingen am Neckar, Germany. Note the small horse in the middle. This object is strikingly similar to both the ceramic miniature from Bergen, as well as the bronze miniature from Shetland. Illustration from Hartmut Schäfer, *Esslingen im mittelalter, ausstellungen zur stadtgeschichte*; *excavations at the Carmelite friary*, available at, (http://home.bawue.de/~wmwerner/essling/english/karmel08.html) (12 May, 2006).

Figure 89

Wooden horse from Trondheim in Norway. c. 1075-1175, 12.7 cm L, Cat. no. 14. L. 12.7 cm. VM   N97259/FU450. Image from Graham Campbell, *From Viking to crusader*, p. 231.

Figure 90
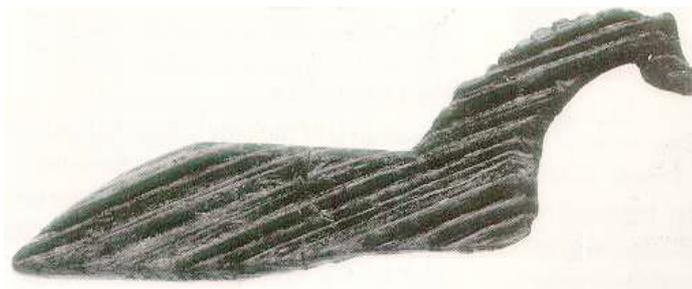
Wooden horse from Staraja Ladoga Russia, 8th/9th c, 13 cm L. Cat. no. 279. Staraja Ladoga (horizon D)   Gosudarstremyj Ermitaz, St. Petersburg, LD-244. Image from Roesdahl and Wilson, *From Viking to crusader*, p. 301.

Figure 91

Ninth century wooden horse from the Viking-Age settlement site of Kvíkík on Streymoy in the Faeroes, 13.2 cm L. Picture from Graham Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 168.

Figure 92

Toy horse from the Faeroes in the Smithsonian Museum, picture from *Vikings, the North Atlantic Saga, objects with stories to tell, the Smithsonian curators' choice,* available at (http://www.civilization.ca/media/docs/fsvik04e.html) (2 May, 2005).

Figure 93a

Figure 93b

Two 13th century horses from Novgorod, in the National Museum in Novgorod, photographs taken by Anya Quinn.

Figure 94

Toy duck carved from elk antler from Uppsala, Adelsø Bjørkø, Svarta Jorden, Sweden, [SHM 5208:1604] Duck in silhouette which has a vertical perforation through its body at the shoulders, possibly, it was once mounted on a rod. The length of this piece is 13.2 cm, and it is 2.1 cm thick. Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts, a select catalogue*, p. 26. available at SHM, (http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=107535) (3 May, 2007).

Figure 95

Bells from Viking period child graves in Gotland. SHM, available at (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/) (2 May, 2007).

Figure 96

Copper alloy bronze bell. HM/ARCH/A1/00795/HCA 626, available at
(http://test.huntmuseum.com/architem.asp?RegNo=HCA%20626) (2 August, 2007).

Figure 97

The 'Birka girl' from Viking Age Birka, Sweden, [SHM 34000:Bj 463]. The girl was
around 9 or 10 years old when she died and was buried with fine jewellery, including a
bead necklace and a clasped brooch of gilded bronze. The burial dates to the 10th
century. available at SHM (http://www.historiska.se/historia/jarnaldern/vikingar/barn/)
(2 May, 2007).

Figure 98a

12th century doll from Novgorod, h11.8 x w4 cm. Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 173.

Figure 98b

11th century doll from Novgorod, h13 x w 3 cm. Brisbane, *The archaeology of Novgorod*, p. 173.

Figure 99
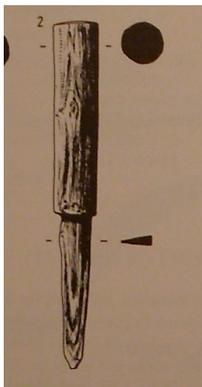
Wooden (toy?) knife [E527:1339:34], found in the backyard of one of the houses in Waterford. Dates to the late 12th or early 13th centuries and is constructed from yew. The maximum length is 172 mm, with the handle 94 mm long and the wooden blade 78 mm long. Picture from Hurley et al, *Late Viking age and medieval Waterford*, p. 580.

Figure 100

Gaming board of yew from Ballinderry Crannog I, Co. Westmeath. Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 80.

Figure 101

Wooden gaming board from Waterford, [E527:1429:2], Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, pl 53.

Figure 102
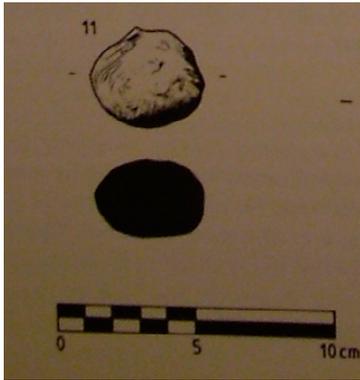
Possible ball (wooden) from 12th century levels at Waterford. Picture from Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, p. 580.

Select catalogue of artefacts discussed in the text

Notes on the catalogue
Catalogue entries are arranged alphabetically by County and then by Townland.
Where possible I have endeavoured to list the Parish and NGR numbers.

County Antrim:

Townland: Deerpark Farms
Parish: Grange of Muckamore
OS sheet: 50
NGR: J1370/8343
Collection: Excavated artefact to be placed in the Ulster Museum.
Description: Small wooden spear from Deer Park Farms.
Comments: May represent a child's object or toy.
References: Lynn, 'A preliminary review of the literary and legal context of Deer Park Farms' (in press).

Townland: Rathlin Island, Church Bay
Parish: Rathlin
OS sheet: 5
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: Ninth century Hiberno-Norse cast silver brooch. Found with beads from possible Scandinavian burial. Discovered with a skeleton in 1784.
Comment:
References: Richard Warner, 'The re-provenancing of two important penannular brooches of the Viking period' in *UJA*, xxxvi-xxxvii (1973-4), pp 61-2.

Townland: Rathlin Island, Church Bay
Parish: Rathlin
OS sheet: 5
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: Bronze ladle discovered with a skeleton c. 1850.
Comment: An iron cauldron (?) and bronze rings were also found and Ó Floinn has suggested that the finds indicate the presence of at least one male and two female graves, the latter of high status. Ladles are relatively common finds in Norway (as Western imports) where they have been found in rich female graves such as the example from Birka, Uppland, Sweden, SHM [Bj. 632], Graham Campbell, *Select catalogue of Viking artefacts*, p. 92, no. 319. They have also been found in female graves in Scotland, Sigurd Grieg, *Viking antiquities in Scotland*, p. 40, fig. 19.
References: Richard Warner, 'The re-provenancing of two important penannular brooches of the Viking period' in *UJA*, xxxvi-xxxvii (1973-4), p. 62; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Viking period in Ireland', p. 144-5.

Townland: Unknown location along the River Bann, Ulster
Parish:
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1886:31]
Description: Bronze tortoise brooch of type P51. The brooch is damaged, but a loose silver stud has been preserved. The length of the brooch is 10.7 cm. The brooch was found in the River Bann, north of Belfast. Raghnaill Ó Floinn has suggested that this brooch may represent a casual loss, or it may have come from a grave sited on the river bank.
Comment:
References: Bøe, 'Norse antiquities in Ireland, part III', p. 91; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', p. 149; fn 103.

Co. Clare

Townland: Tullycomman
Parish: Killinaboy
OS Sheet: 51
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E4: 207]
Description: Bone spinning top which is 4.3cm long.
Comment: Hencken interpreted it as a top. It was found in Souterrain A.
References: Hencken, *Cahercommaun, a stone fort in County Clare*, p. 64; fig., 39, no. 66.

Co. Cork

Townland: Ballycatteen
Parish: Rathclarin
OS sheet: 123
NGR: 157381/46455
Collection: Department of Archaeology, University College Cork
Description: Lead spinning top from Ballycatteen ringfort in County Cork.
Comment:
References: Ó Ríordáin and Hartnett, 'The excavation of Ballycatteen fort, Co. Cork', fig. 8, p. 84.

Parish: Cork City
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: buzz-bones from twelfth-century levels in Cork.
Comment:
References: Maurice Hurley, 'Artefacts of skeletal material' in Rose Cleary and Maurice Hurley (eds), *Excavations in Cork city, 1984-2000* (Cork, 2003), p. 342.

Townland: Cork City
Parish: Cork City
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E146:27180]
Description: wooden (toy?) knife from Cork
Comment:
References: Maurice Hurley, 'Wooden artefacts from the excavation of the medieval city of Cork' in Sean McGrail, (ed.), *Woodworking techniques before A.D. 1500: Papers presented to a Symposium at Greenwich in September, 1980, together with edited discussion*, BAR series (Oxford, 1982), p. 305, fig. 16. 5.

Townland: Garranes
Parish: Templemartin
OS Sheet: 84, 96.
NGR:
Collection: Department of Archaeology, University College Cork
Description: spherical pebbles including eight objects that were found in two distinct groups of three and five. Ó Ríordáin suggested that this arrangement indicated 'some special significance such as their use as sling stones.
Comment:
References: Ó Ríordáin, 'The excavation of a large earthen ring-fort at Garranes, Co. Cork', p. 114.

Co. Donegal

Townland: Ballindrait
Parish: Clonleigh
OS Sheet: 70
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: Possible toy bowl or lamp. This object has a diameter of only 35 mm appears to be constructed from steatite, reinforcing the homogeneity of this type of item as a child's toy.
Comment:
References: Ó Ríordáin, 'Acquisitions from Co. Donegal in the National Museum', p. 155; fn 7.

Co. Down: Townland: Ballyholme
Parish: Bangor
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 1907:113-4]
Description: two bronze tortoise brooches found in a female grave. The brooches are of the type P 37 and it appears that only the spaces between the zoomorphs are gilt. Bøe states that the animal pattern is skilfully done, but that one of the brooches is badly damaged, the other only along the edge. The length of the brooches is 10,4 cms.

Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 75, fig. 48; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', pp 146-7.

Townland: Ballyholme
Parish: Bangor
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1907:115]
Description: small beaten bronze bowl from female grave. The fragments of the bowl were so small that neither the original form or size could be determined with any certainty, but report states that the diameter may have been roughly 21.5cm. Bøe states that the bowl must have been made from light yellowish-brown bronze characteristic of a number of vessels found in Norwegian graves, especially some relatively small handled saucepans. The upper edge of the bowl is bent inwards roughly one centimetre. On the outside and below the rim there were originally deep, narrow grooves similar to several of the bronze bowls found in Norwegian graves. The bowl originally had a fine piece of chain attached to it, and had a quantity of white wool inside which was subsequently pulled to pieces by the finders.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 73-4; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', pp 146-7.

Co. Dublin:
Site:
Townland: Aylesbury Road, Donnybrook
Parish: Donnybrook
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [S. A. 1900:30].
Description: spindle-whorl of bone from grave. This object is flat and is decorated with concentric circles and Bøe states that they are connected so as to form a pattern similar to that of a running dog. The diameter is 3.5 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 66. Also see Hall, 'A Viking-Age grave at Donnybrook, Co. Dublin', pp 64-83.

Townland: Finglas
Parish: Ballygall
OS Sheet:
NGR: 21335/23882
Collection: Excavated artefact to be place in the NMI.
Description: Two ninth-century copper alloy gold and silver gilded oval brooches from Viking female burial.
Comment: The brooches were found with a female burial at excavations at 4-8 Church Street, Finglas. They are of a Baltic type with a raised decoration of bear masks and gilded with silver bands. One of the brooches is in remarkably good condition. The other is in fragments. Small fragments of linen and tweed were also recovered from the back of one of the brooches, and a copper alloy chain was deposited near the left wrist of the skeleton.

References: Wallace, 'A woman of importance in ninth-century Finglas', p. 7; Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p. 63; John Kavanagh, '4-8 Church Street, Finglas', Dublin [2004:0599, 21335/23882, 04E0900], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=11524) (12 August 2008); 23 August, 2004, 'Viking find "extremely significant"' available at (http://archives.tcm.ie/breakingnews/2004/08/23/story163110.asp) (12 September, 2004).

Townland: Finglas.
Parish: Ballygall
OS Sheet:
NGR: 21335 23882
Collection: Excavated artefact to be placed in the NMI.
Description: Ninth-century large single-sided bone comb of Scandinavian type from female grave.
Comment: The comb is unusually long (0.15m) and was placed beside the skeletons right femur, along with copper alloy fragments.
References: Wallace, 'A woman of importance in ninth-century Finglas', p. 7; Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p. 63; John Kavanagh, '4-8 Church Street, Finglas', Dublin [2004:0599, 21335/23882, 04E0900], available at DIER (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=11524) (12 August 2008); 23 August, 2004, 'Viking find "extremely significant"' available at (http://archives.tcm.ie/breakingnews/2004/08/23/story163110.asp) (12 September, 2004).

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish: St James
OS Sheet: 11, 18.
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2410].
Description: Needlecase. Bøe records the find as a needlecase, presumably made from bronze, with a white metal outer coating. [This is probably tin.] The loop of the needlecase is missing. The length of the object is 5.5 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49, fig. 30.

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish: St James.
OS Sheet: 11, 18.
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2404].
Description: Two bronze tortoise brooches. These brooches are very well preserved. They both have loops for the hinge of a pin that is now missing. Both brooches have fragments of textile preserved on the back. The length of the brooches is 10.8 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 38.

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish: St James
OS Sheet: 11, 18
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2405]
Description: Two oval brooches. These brooches are so thin that the ribs, bosses, and animal patterns have corresponding cavities on the underside. The brooches have loops for the hinge of a pin that is now missing. One of the brooches has slight damage to the side, otherwise they are in remarkably good condition. The length of the brooches is 10.6 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 38, fig. 17.

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish: St James
OS Sheet: 11, 18
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1906: 477]
Description: Bronze gilt brooch
This object was originally part of an Irish ornament and was adapted into a brooch. It is nearly semi-circular hollow mount and a comparatively thick bronze strip has been attached to hold the pin. Bøe states that this arrangement is the same as the iron rib on the thin-shelled oval brooches. The cast for the pin comprises a cast bronze appliance of suitable form that was not made for this purpose. The bow and catch are both fixed to the brooch by bronze rivets that project through the pattern on the upper side. The object is covered with strong, bright gilding and has a large piece of amber inserted into the top of the mount and is decorated with an incised pattern. There is a pair of loops for the pin hinge, and the loop at the pin-head is coiled to act as a spring. The length of the mount is 6 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 40-1, fig. 19.

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2376].
Description: Flat spindle-whorl made from light grey stone, and is somewhat weathered. It is 3.5 cm in diameter and the height is 1 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49, fig. 31.

Townland: Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2403].

Description: Diminutive bronze axe found at Islandbridge The blade is covered with white metal. [lead?] The handle, which is cast in one piece with the blade, is circular in section at the blade, rectangular at the lower end, where a portion is missing. The lines adorning the handle near the blade cannot now be seen. The length of the handle is 14.4 cm, the blade is 4.4 cms.
Comment: This object appear to be similar in type to a number of small axes known from children's graves in Iceland. Þóra, '*Deyr fé, deyja frændr*' pp 36-7; 49.
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 52-3, fig. 34.

Townland: Kilmainham
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Wk. 32, R. 384].
Description: Iron sickle with a rivet-hole. The object is badly rusted and the point is slightly damaged. Bøe states that the present length of chord 24 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 47, fig. 29.

Townland: Kilmainham
Parish: St James.
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. x.1636]
Description: Equal-armed bronze brooch from Kilmainham. The object is damaged at both ends, but the double pin-fastening and the catch are preserved, as are some of the rivets for the studs. The iron pin is now missing. Fragments of textile remains are preserved and are stuck to the iron rust on the underside of the brooch. Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 95, fig. 64. Also see Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', pp 141-2, fn 50.

Townland: Kilmainham.
Parish: St James.
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMD, Copenhagen [Reg. no. 10512].
Description: Equal-armed bronze brooch probably from Kilmainham in the National Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen.
Comment: This object is very like the one from Kilmainham NMI [Reg. no. x.1636]. According to the registers of the National Museum of Denmark, the brooch was acquired along with other objects from Kilmainham by J. J. A. Worsaae in 1848 during his travels in Ireland.
References: Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', pp 141-2, fn 50.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2421].

Description: Two bronze tortoise brooches. One of the brooches is very thin and has been slightly modified in having no studs. Instead it has a plain face with no holes. The zoomorphic decoration shows very poor workmanship. Bøe has suggested that this may be because it was cast upon another specimen and was chased without skill. A pair of loops is present for the hinge of a pin which is now missing. The length of the brooch is 10 cm.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 39-40; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', p. 140.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [RSAI. no. 17].

Description: Bronze tortoise brooch. There are traces of white metal coating and all the studs are missing, otherwise the brooch is complete and well preserved. The length of the brooch is 10.4 cm.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 38.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [reg. no. 2420].

Description: Two bronze tortoise brooches. They are constructed from thin metal, and are somewhat damaged. One brooch is complete, and the other is slightly damaged. Bøe states that the patterns on the brooches have been executed with only moderate skill, but that otherwise the workmanship is good. There are traces of a white metal coating and an engraved pattern on the panels. A pair of loops for the hinge of the pin are present, but the pin itself is now missing. Fragments of textile remains have been preserved inside the brooches. The length of both objects is 10.4 cm.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 39.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [reg. nos 1881:253 and P. 433]. Description: Two tortoise brooches. These brooches are single-shelled and they are cast from thick brass rather than bronze. The rims are expanded so as to form sharp edges on the inner side. Both

original pins are now missing. The length of the brooches is 9.3 cm and the width is 6.1 cm.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 41, fig. 18. Also see Graham-Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*, no. 113, pp 33-4.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1906: 478, 180].

Description: Bronze mount adapted as a brooch. Comprises a round plate with a jutting neck terminating in an animal's head. The animals eyes are blue glass paste, and in the centre of the plate there is an empty setting which may have contained a piece of glass or amber. The colour of the object is very dark, and the lower side is hollow and covered with iron rust. The rust appears to be the remainder of an iron pin. Bøe states that the mount is 'Celtic' in character, but was presumably adapted as a brooch 'and if so, for a Scandinavian woman'. The length of the mount is 7.9 cm, and the width across the plate is 3.6 cm.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 97, fig. 65.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI (Wk. 70, 71, 72).

Description: Whalebone plaque. This board is very similar to known whalebone plaques from Northern Norway. The board survives in three fragments comprising one of the animal's heads which is almost complete, a half of another, and a portion of the plate itself with the beginning of the animal's neck on the left side. Bøe states that 'the heads are carved with vigour, and the plaque must evidently have belonged to the best of its kind'.

Comment:

References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 98, fig., 67.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge

Parish:

OS Sheet:

NGR:

Collection: NMI [reg. no. W. 104-14].

Description: Eleven glass beads. One is bright green, ring-shaped, with yellow dots; one is blue; another is blue and ring-shaped; one is bright green with white stripes; one is plain and is bright green; one is white; two are what Bøe calls 'of porcellainous white colour' and one is ring-shaped while the other is cylindrical. One is yellow and is a dull-coloured glass bead; another is blue with inlaid black

squares and triangles; one is ornamented with crosses and scrolls on a black bottom.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 44.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2419]. Description: Glass beads of which there were originally 38. Bøe states that these beads comprise one of yellowish-red dull-coloured; one of quadruple blue; two of triple blue; one of double blue; one of simple blue; two quadruple beads with gold film in the glass; four triple beads with gold film in the glass; ten beads with double gold film in the glass; and one quadruple with silver film in the glass.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 45.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1881:486-494].
Description: Nine beads comprising one large bead of amber measuring 3.5 cm in diameter; a smaller ring-shaped amber bead measuring between 1.9 and 2.1 cm in diameter; a green glass bead with white inlays measuring 1.9 cm in height; a grey glass bead with blue bars measuring 2 cm in height; a blue bead with red and white inlays; a bright blue small bead; an opaque green bead and finally a grooved, bright green bead.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 45.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Wk. 22, Reg. no. 2387 A].
Description: Iron key. Bøe states that this key is imperfect and very rusty and that the present length is 12 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Description: Linen-smoother made from black glass. It is complete and well preserved. The diameter of the object is 7.6 cm.

Comment:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. W.122, R. 446].
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2377].
Description: Spindle-whorl of light grey stone. The object is flat and has a diameter of 2.9 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49.

Townland: Kilmainham/Islandbridge
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [Reg. no. 2378].
Description: Spindle-whorl of light grey stone. The object is flat and has a diameter of 2.5 cm.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 49.

Townland: Phoenix Park
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:

Collection: NMC [10515]; BM [54.3-7.1]; BM [1854:3-7:3]. Description: Two oval brooches and a mount re-used as a 'third brooch'. The brooches are of a ninth-century type. One of the brooches is in the National Museum Copenhagen [10515]. The other brooch and the mount are in the British Museum [54.3-7.1] and [1854:3-7:3]. The date of the discovery of the brooches is unknown, but the National Museum of Ireland registers states that the Copenhagen brooch came from a grave in the Phoenix Park
Comment:
References: Hall, 'A Viking grave in the Phoenix Park, Co. Dublin', pp 39-40.

Townland: Cherrywood
Parish: Killiney
OS Sheet:
NGR: 32425/22322
Collection: Excavated artefact, to be deposited in the NMI
Description: Fragment from a whalebone plaque.

Comment: The plaque was found in a house of Dublin type 1 in pit F535, and dates to the late ninth century or slightly later. It is similar in form to the plaque from Grytøy in Norway.

References: Ó Néill, 'A Norse settlement in rural County Dublin', p. 10; idem 'Excavation of pre-Norman structures at Cherrywood', p. 83. Also see Johnson, *Viking Age Dublin*, p. 68.

Townland: Dublin, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E190:3169].
Description: Hairnet made from silk. Dates to the twelfth-century.
Comment: At least nine knotted silk mesh filets were found in the Viking Age Dublin excavations including NMI [E71:11124; E122:13272; E122:13448; E172:10679; E172:14373; E173:158; and E190:1194], while two are known from Waterford NMI [E527:1648:2 (eleventh to twelfth century); E527:1667:2 (early twelfth century]. A thirteenth century example is known from Cork NMI [1973:48].
References: Graham-Campbell et al, *Cultural atlas of the Viking world*, p. 6; Pritchard, 'Silk braids and textiles of the Viking Age from Dublin', pp 155-156; Heckett, 'Medieval textiles from Waterford City', pp 149-156; Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, p. 751.

Townland: Christchurch Place
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E172: 17155].
Description: Small wooden carved jewellery (?) box. Dates to the mid-tenth century. The box is 15.8 cm in length, 4.2 cm wide and 3.7 cm in height. It is carved from a single piece of wood and has a sliding lid. It is a long rectangular box and the sliding lid is T-shaped. All of the surfaces are decorated.
Comment: Two other boxes are known from Viking Dublin, Wallace and Ó Floinn, *Discovery and excavation in Dublin 1842-1981* (Dublin, 1988), nos. 287-9, and a somewhat similar (albeit larger) box is known from Birsay, Orkney. It was recovered from a bog and dates to between the eighth and the tenth centuries AD, Earwood, *Domestic wooden artefacts*, p. 105.
References: Campbell, *Viking artefacts, a select catalogue*, p. 15, no. 34, pl. 34, 194; Lang, *Viking-Age decorated wood*, pp 51-2, plate III.

Townland: Dublin, High Street, Wood Quay.
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: Eleventh century wooden case for shears which would have been used in the cutting of fine cloth.
Comment: This object was found with a large quantity of textile fragments and a number of other objects relating to the textile industry, including 'sacking needles'. This suggests that it was an area of textile production.

References: Declan Murtagh, '1-3 High Street, Wood Quay Ward', Dublin [1989:034, O151339], available at DIER, (http://www.excavations.ie/Pages/Details.php?Year=&County=Dublin&id=3445) (10 April, 2005).

Townland: Dublin, High Street, Wood Quay.
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23300
Collection: NMI
Description: Eleventh-century decorated bronze needle-case from the earliest levels of occupation at High Street. The needle case has a small ring attached to it for suspension. It would have been closed by a plug at one or both ends.
Comment:
References: Ó Ríordáin, 'Excavations at High Street and Winetavern Street, Dublin', p. 73, fig. 21b. Also see Mary Beaudry, *Findings, the material culture of needlework and sewing* (Newhaven, 2008), p. 71.

Townland: Dublin City, High Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23380
Collection: NMI [E71:16959].
Description: Lead alloy disk brooch from eleventh-century levels.
Comment: Similar brooches were found at York.
References: Ó Ríordáin, 'Excavations at High Street and Winetavern Street, Dublin', p. 76, fig. 23a; NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 23; Ó Ríordáin, 'The High Street excavations', pp 135-40. Wallace, 'Irish archaeology and the recognition of ethnic difference in Viking Dublin', p. 174

Townland: Christchurch Place
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23390
Collection: NMI [E122:6936].
Description: Lead alloy disk brooch.
Comment:
References: Breandán Ó Ríordáin, 'Dublin City, Christchurch Place' in T. G. Delaney (ed.), *Excavations 1974: summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland* (Dublin, 1975), pp 14-5 and idem, 'Aspects of Viking Dublin' in *Proceedings of the eighth Viking Congress 1977* (Arhus, 1981).

Townland: Dublin City, Christchurch Place
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23390
Collection: NMI [E122:6426].
Description: Lead alloy disk brooch.
Comment:

References: NMI, available at (http://www.museum.ie/en/collection/list/collection-detailsviking.aspx) (2 June, 2008).

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:3236].
Description: Lead alloy disk brooch eleventh-century levels.
Comment:
References: NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 22.

Townland: Temple Bar West
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: Silver toilet set which probably belonged to a woman. Consists of tweezers, a nail file, and an ear scoop.
Comment:
References: Simpson*, Directors findings, Temple Bar West*, p. 26.

Townland: Fishamble Street, Dublin City
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400
Collection: NMI [E172:12212].
Description: Part of a wooden spindle which still had very fine wool spun around it.
Comment:
References: Pritchard, 'Aspects of the wool textiles from Viking Age Dublin', p. 94.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E172:11233].
Description: Weaver's sword. L. 19.6 cm, W. 5.3 cm, T. 1.7 cm. Lang notes that 'the lozenge shaped blade has a cylindrical stump for a handle. The base is convex. The upper surface is chip-carved and deeply grooved. A double border round the blade contains a double arrowhead motif bound by a bar. Incised carving at the head of the blade consists of a bungled attenuated ring knot with four-fold return loops.'
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood,* p. 58, fig. 13.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E172:11232].

Description: Handle of a weaver's sword with disc bosses at each end. Made of wood. L. 20 cm, W. 3.0cm, T 2.8 cm and 1.9 cm, D. of bosses 4.5 cm and 5.4 cm.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood,* pp 57-8; figs. 12a and b.

Townland: Dublin City, Christchurch Place
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E122:16822].
Description: Weaver's sword from within house 305/1. The sword was burnt and probably dates to the early eleventh century. L. 30.5 cm, W. 9.0 cm. Lang notes that it is charred and bent and in many fragments. The handle has an oval disc pommel which has a concentric border and step fret. The central panel is divided asymmetrically. On the end is a three dimensional animal head.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 57, fig. 68.

Townland: Fishamble Street, Dublin City
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E190:908].
Description: Weaver's sword. L. 18.4 cm, W. 3.2 cm, T. 1.4 cm and 1.0 cm. Lang notes that it is a complete sword with three-dimensional pellets, roughly cut, on the pommel between the cylindrical handle and the flat blade.
Comment:
Reference: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 77, fig. 88.

Townland: Fishamble Street, Dublin City
Parish: Dublin City
OS sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E172:13929].
Description: Weaver's sword made from wood. The blade is L. 38.3 cm, W. 5.8 cm and 4.9 cm. The handle is L. 13.8 cm, W. 2.9 cm, T. 1.2 cm. The sword is broken in two pieces, and Lang notes that 'the blade carries on one face rudimentary chevrons and random diagonal scratches. One feature resembles a human eye with lashes. The other face fo the blade has a spiral scroll, isolated with a small box, and an oblong panel containing debased interlace in angular elements. Rough arcs are incised nearer the tip.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 70, fig. 79.

Townland: Near Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin City
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [reg. no. 1887:143]

Description: Weaver's sword from unknown context. L. 26.7 cm, D. 5.8 cm, T. 1.3 cm. Lang notes that 'the *bombé* handle has a terminal pommel. By the blade is a flat disc with plain perimeter moulding containing a cross motif formed by a series of chevrons. The top of the handle has crude dot and triangle-incised ornament. The blade is nicked near the top.
Comment:
Reference: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 77, fig. 89.

Townland: Fishamble Street, Dublin City
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400
Collection: NMI [E172:14370].
Description: Silk cap that was patched and re-used for a child. A torn piece of the selvedge was reused as a tie, being placed high on the side of the cap in a way that does not leave enough depth for an adult's head if secured under the chin. This is not the original braid or ribbon tie that fastened the cap, but a piece taken from the fabric and carefully sewn into a strip.
Comment:
References: Heckett, 'Some silk and wool headcoverings from Viking Dublin', p. 86.

Townland: Dublin City, High Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23380
Collection: NMI [E71:13204].
Description: Boot of a very young child. The boot dates to the twelfth century.
Comment:
References: NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin,* plate 11.

Townland: Dublin City, High Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23380
Collection: NMI [E71:15581].
Description: Child's boot from twelfth-century levels. The sole has been sewn on as a separate piece.
Comment:
References: NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin*, p. 43.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:4228].
Description: Toy boat dates to the twelfth century levels. It is missing its stern but the keel and stepping indicates there was once a mast present. Circular holes along

the side indicate for fastening a pair of shrouds indicate that there was originally a mast and rigging. The length of the partial toy boat is 11.1 cm.
Comment:
References: NMI, *Viking and Medieval Dublin,* no. 206; Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 20.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:432].
Description: Toy ship dating to the twelfth/thirteenth centuries. This ship is well made and is carved from a solid piece of wood, has a damaged raised prow, intact stern, and shallow keel. The hole in the side of the ship for the attachment of a steering oar can be clearly seen, and the stepping for the mast in the bottom of the ship is slightly off centre. While the ship does not in general resemble other toy ships, it does have a number of shared characteristics with Northern Norwegian boats of more recent date. In addition, the rudder fastening on is paralleled to a toy ship from Norway.
Comment:
References: Christensen, 'Ship graffiti and models', p. 21.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400
Collection: NMI [E172:15183].
Description: Toy ship Its length is 30.9 cm, width is 8.5 cm and height is 4.0 cm. The object is identified as a toy by Lang and is described as having incised faint scrolls which Lang suggests might be serpents. The ship was excavated from the south internal partition of building FS 10. The fact that this object was found within the bedding area of a house site reinforces its interpretation as a toy.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 79.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:2463].
Description: Spindle excavated from an east-west path in association with a kite-shaped brooch. Lang suggests that it may date to the mid-eleventh century. The length of the spindle is 19.4cm, the width is 0.6cm, and the width of the head is 1.1cm.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 55, pl. VII.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:432].
Description: Toy wooden boat. It is a Viking style tenth-century toy boat which was found in a pit and had been wrapped in a pillow or palisse for protection.
Comment:
References: Mitchell, *Archaeology and environment in early Dublin*, pp 30-1.

Townland: Dublin City, Bride Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31531/23371
Collection: NMI [93E153: 436:7]
Description: Miniature/ toy (?) copper alloy padlock of the type 1d. Found in disturbed context at Bride Street in Dublin. It is a very small and delicate object and is 27mm long, the smallest extant example from Ireland. The remarkable feature of this padlock is its small size. The barb-springs on the bolt must have been extremely delicate, a mere *c.* 10mm by 2mm by 0.5mm, making its use very limited if it was a lock and not a toy.
Comment: The only smaller example from Britain or Ireland is a gold barrel padlock brooch, 15mm long, found in a medieval gold jewellery hoard at Fishpool in Nottinghamshire, which had a decorative function only and was incapable of locking. Mary McMahon has suggested it may have been to lock a very small box, or a leather or wooden book cover.
References: McMahon, 'Early medieval settlement and burial outside the enclosed town', p. 101, fig. 18.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E141: 3260].
Description: Toy sword was excavated from dark, highly organic soil near a possible pathway to a house. The length of the sword is 23.7 cm, the width is 6.0 and the thickness is 1.5 cm. The blade and the guard are now lost. The pommel is sub-triangular (Peterson type H) and the guard is straight. There is no surface decoration. The sword was found in dark, highly organic soil near a possible pathway. Lang has commented that the toy is 'functional' rather than decorative, as it has no adornment.
Comment:
References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 33, fig. 51.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400

Collection: NMI [E172:6641].

Description: Five bone toggles made from the axial metapodials of a pig. These objects are often interpreted as dress fasteners or bobbins, but this identification has been called into doubt because the objects do not show wear or polish from such a use. A more recent suggestion is that they were toys, threaded on a twisted cord and made to spin and hum by pulling the cord.

Comment:

References: Hall, *Viking Age York*, p. 104; also Hurley, Scully and McCutcheon (eds), *Late Viking Age and medieval Waterford*, p. 675.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400
Collection: NMI [E172: 9420].

Description: Wooden toy horse measuring twelve centimetres in length. On either side of the horse are incised human faces. There are spirals on the belly and joints, and the horse has faint traces of an eye. The toy was dated on the basis of coins to between 1000 and 1025. The object was excavated from an open area west of FS 92, building level 11, plot 3.

Comment:

References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 22, fig. 54.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81: 1867].

Description: Very small iron sickle from twelfth-century levels. Split socket with rivet for handle in position. Length 6.7 cm.

Comment:

References: NMI, *Viking and medieval* Dublin, no. 177, p. 42.

Townland: Dublin City, Fishamble Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 3150/23400
Collection: NMI [E172:6109].

Description: Handle for a sickle. The length of the handle is 9.2 cm, the width is 1.2 cm and the thickness is .08 cm. The sickle is complete and the handle has chip-carved chevrons formed by rows of triangles. The handle was excavated from FS 104, building level 12, plot 4.

Comment:

References: Lang, *Viking Age decorated wood*, p. 79, fig. 93.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street

Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:4171].
Description: Bone lathe-turned spinning top from eleventh-century levels. Length is 6.3 cm and it has transverse ornamental grooves produced by its turning.
Comment:
Reference: NMI, *Viking and medieval* Dublin, no. 177, p. 34.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31500/23400
Collection: NMI [E81:2132].
Description: Bone lathe-turned spinning top from thirteenth-century levels. Length is 5.2 cm and it has transverse ornamental grooves produced by its turning.
Comment:
References: NMI, *Viking and medieval*, Dublin, no. 177, p. 34.

Townland: Dublin City, Winetavern Street
Parish: Dublin City
OS Sheet:
NGR: 31510/23380
Collection: NMI [E71:6363].
Description: A top, made of wood. It dates from the thirteenth-century.
Comment: This object may also possibly be a gaming piece.
References: NMI, *Viking and medieval Dublin*, p. 34.

Co. Fermanagh

Townland: Pottiagh Crannóg, Rosslea
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: MM [reg. no. 1975.293]. Description: Small, polished stones such from the D'Arcy collection. They may have been used in some sort of game by the children who lived on that Crannóg.
Comment:
References: Liam Bradley, personal communication, 2 May, 2007.

Co. Limerick:

Townland: Lough Gur.
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: BM [1864, 1, 27, 3].

Description: Iron 'Viking sword'. The length of the sword is 54 cm and the width of the blade is 4 cms. It is uncommonly short, and has straight crossbars and a sledder, short blade. No pommel is preserved. The sword shows evidence of damascening on both sides up to the lower crossbar.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 86.

Co. Meath:

Townland: Athlumney
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: Finds include a round mounting of bronze on an iron substratum. The middle of the mount has engraved ornamentation and an animal head. Bøe states that this animal head holds a ring with a bronze chain attached to it. Seven other mounts of gilt bronze were also present, and were decorated with interlacings and animal ornaments in 'Celtic' style. A bridle-bit of bronze with a jointed bit and two strap mountings were also identified. The strap mountings were attached to either ring. Four bronze-plated iron rings and a further ring with strap mounting were identified.
Comment: The closest parallels for the Athlumney mounts come from the ninth century graves of two women at Gausel and Soma in Rogaland, western Norway.
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 76. Also see Kavanagh, 'The horse in Viking Ireland', pp 98-103, fig. 5.2; Sikora, 'Diversity in Viking Age horse burial', p. 94.

Townland: Lagore Crannóg
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: Part of a toy quernstone.
Comment: This object was found in unstratified levels, however it is stylistically very similar to other extant miniature querns.
References: Henken, 'Lagore Crannóg', p. 177.

Townland: Lagore Crannóg
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [W. 47].
Description: Possible toy paddle.
Comment:
References: Hencken, 'Lagore crannóg', fig. 87.

Townland: Ballinderry Crannog 2.
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [W. 500].
Description: Possible toy paddle.
Comment:
References: Hencken, 'Ballinderry Crannóg no. 2', fig. 26.

Co. Waterford:

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: The fragmentary remains of two decorated weavers swords from Hiberno-Scandinavian Waterford. One of the swords was excavated from house site OS2:L5, which may have been used as a weaving shed.
Comment:
References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, p. 51; p. 583, fig. 16:11.18 and 19.

Townland: Waterford City, Peters Street
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E527:1339:34].
Description: Wooden toy (?) knife constructed from yew. The maximum length is 172 mm, with the handle 94 mm long and the wooden blade 78 mm long. This object was excavated from the backyard of the sil-beam houses PS2/3. These houses date to the late eleventh-century and to the late twelfth to early thirteenth-century.
Comment:
References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking age and medieval Waterford*, p. 580, fig. 16.10.2.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E527:1429:2].
Description: Wooden gaming board from a twelfth-century context.
Comment: This gaming board is plain with a wedge shaped handle which is perforated, possibly for suspension. It is undecorated and the playing surface – although only half the size – is similar to the Ballinderry board and to the record of a wooden gaming board from Knockanboy, Co. Antrim. It is likely that this board was used for the same type of game as the Ballinderry board, which also had seven rows of seven perforations.

References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, pp 592-3; 594; pl. 53.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI
Description: 64 spindle whorls, 19 made from stone, and the rest constructed from bone. Most of the objects were conoid in shape, with only four discoid, four hemispherical and the remainder bun-shaped. The stone spindle whorls came from a wide range of contexts, but were found most frequently in the twelfth to thirteenth-century contexts – representing evidence of trade in oolithic limestone during this time. The bone spindle whorls were found at all levels. The stone whorls range in diameter from 25mm to 40 mm with the average being 32mm. McCutcheon notes that the diameter and the size of the central perforation are similar to other groups of spindlewhorls from Ireland and Britain.
Comment:
References: McCutcheon, 'The stone artefacts' in Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, pp 404-5, fig. 14:4:1-18.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: Thirty-six small rounded pebbles were excavated from Waterford. Hurley describes these objects as 'pebbles or potboilers'. However, it may be that these objects instead represent objects relating to some sort of game. The majority the pebbles are made from sandstone, and range in diameter from 22 mm to 109.5 mm.
Comment:
References: McCutcheon, 'The stone artefacts' Hurley et al, *Late Viking age and medieval Waterford*, p. 405; 408-9; fig. 14:4:22-6.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E435:1163:283; E527:1346].
Description: Possible whipping tops of wood from the mid twelfth-century levels. Hurley suggests that these objects may be either cores or whipping tops. The first object has a maximum length of 70mm, and a maximum diameter of 23mm, and is elliptical in shape. The second object is made from yew and has a maximum length of 88mm and a maximum diameter of 38mm and is also elliptical in shape.
Comment: Eight 'whipping tops' were excavated from Waterford. The items were found in contexts dating from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. The items are of various shapes including 'pear shaped' and 'torpedo shaped'. It has been suggested that some of the objects might be tops constructed from modified cores (as in one of the post medieval-objects) but argues that the other four may have been specifically

made for a particular purpose, e.g. as whipping tops. One of these objects is post-medieval in date, the other three all date to the mid twelfth-century, one is of hardwood, the other two of yew. Similar tops are known from Winchester and from Novgorod.

References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, pp 580-1; p. 579, fig. 16:10:13-14.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E527:1346:4]
Description: possible wooden ball.
Comment: Hurley suggests that this object is either a ball or a wooden core. This object dates to mid twelfth century and is made from hardwood.
References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, p. 581, fig. 16:10.12.

Townland: Waterford City
Parish: Waterford City
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [E527:908:2; E520:96:8; E527:908:1; E527:1216:55; E527:658:12; E527:1614:40; E527:1630:2].
Description: At least ten perforated slate discs were recovered from late eleventh- to twelfth-century contexts. The slates are sub-circular, some having irregular or abraded edges and are generally thin.
Comment: Hurley states that the perforated examples appear to be too light to have functioned as spindle-whorls and suggests that they may have instead functioned as crude gaming counters. He suggests that the perforations may have facilitated the stringing of the objects together for storage. However, these objects were likely to have been buzz-discs that would have been strung onto sinew for the sound they would have produced.
References: Hurley et al, *Late Viking Age and Medieval Waterford*, p. 406; pp 409-10, Table 14:2, fig. 14:4.32-8.

Co. Westmeath

Townland: Ballinderry Crannog 1.
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection:
Description: Two glass linen-smoothers of a Viking rather than Hiberno-Scandinavian type.
Comment:
References: Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', p. 152, fig. 5.6. Also see Johnson, 'Ballinderry Crannóg no. 1, a reinterpretation', p. 68.

Townland: Ballinderry Crannog I
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [1932:6533].
Description: Gaming board of yew from tenth century level. The board is square shaped and has carved interlacings along the border. Two intricately carved heads protrude from each end forming the handles. One of the heads is that of an animal, the other is human.
Comment: It was originally thought that the board was of Manx origin, but excavations in Dublin have provided a number of objects of similar decoration, leading to the suggestion that the board was manufactured in Dublin. However, based on other decorated wooden objects from Ballinderry, Uaninn O'Meadhra has suggested that the board may have been made at Ballinderry itself.
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 78-9. Also see Hencken, 'A gaming board of the Viking Age', p. 85; Hencken, 'Ballinderry Crannog I', p. 103, figs 5, 37, 38 and pl. xxv; Uaninn O'Meadhra, *Motif pieces from Ireland 2: a discussion* (Stockholm, 1987), pp 27-8; Emer Purcell, 'A reconsideration of the Ballinderry game-board' (M.Phil. thesis, National University of Ireland, Dublin, 1995), pp 52-112.

Co. Wicklow:

Townland: near Three-Mile-Water
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [S. A. 1901: 50, 51].
Description: Two identical bronze tortoise brooches of type P 51 from grave at Three-Mile Water, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. The brooch is of good craftsmanship but is damaged along one edge. One of the loose studs is missing, but the remaining studs are preserved and are complete. These studs are all made from silver. The silver wires within the framework and in the groove around the brooch between the outer and inner shells are also still preserved. Bøe reported that these wires are two-stranded and pass in and out below the studs, through two minute holes in the inner shell. A pair of loops for the hinge of the pin are present, but the pin is now missing.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 73, fig. 47. The brooches date to the tenth-century. Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age', p. 147.

Townland: near Three-Mile-Water
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: NMI [S. A. 1901: 52].
Description: Silver chain from grave at Three-Mile Water, Arklow, Co. Wicklow. The chain is made from links shaped like the figure 8, interspersed with silver beads. A silver needlecase is suspended by the chain. The silver chain and needlecase are dated to the tenth-century.

Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, p. 73, fig. 47; Ó Floinn, 'The archaeology of the Early Viking Age in Ireland', p. 147.

Unknown provenance

Townland:
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection NMI [Wk. 70].
Description: Iron roasting-spit. Only the ball in front of the handle, a portion of the handle itself, and a fragment of the spit are preserved. The remains of the spit are 38.5 cm in length.
Comment:
References: Bøe, *Norse antiquities in Ireland*, pp 97-8, fig. 66.

Townland:
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: HM [MG 139/103] Limerick
Description: Toy wooden paddle, length is 7.9 inches.
Comment: This objects is of an unknown date and provenance.
References: HM archival record, available at (http://test.huntmuseum.com/search_briefdesc.asp) (5 June, 2006).

Townland:
Parish:
OS Sheet:
NGR:
Collection: HM Limerick [HCA 626].
Description: Miniature copper alloy bronze bell similar to objects known from both male and female children's graves in Scandinavia.
Comment: This object is of an unknown date and provenance.
References: HM archival records, available at (http://test.huntmuseum.com/architem.asp?RegNo=HCA%20626) (2 August, 2007).

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