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BOOK REVIEW

**Kershaw, Jane F. 2020. *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
Original work published in 2013.**

Elizabeth J. West

Stemming from her doctoral research, this reprint of Kershaw's book brings together a collection of over 500 metal finds, comprising of brooches and pendants that are dated to the late-ninth to early-eleventh centuries. Kershaw's main aim is to challenge our understanding of Scandinavian settlement and cultural identity within England, through an examination of these metal artifacts. This is done by questioning the origins of Scandinavian-style jewellery, wearers of this jewellery and the reason for skewed distribution of these finds, as there are particularly high densities of finds in some areas. Kershaw weighs in on many key debates surrounding the Scandinavian settlement in England, including its scale and impact. Breaking from convention, this work challenges the popular notion of quick cultural assimilation in favour of a new approach, which sees the preservation of Scandinavian identity into the eleventh century. Broken down into seven chapters and three appendices, Kershaw uses recent discoveries, including many previously unpublished finds, to create a comprehensive study. Kershaw's book on *Viking Identities* is the first work of such depth across the broad corpus of Scandinavian metal finds in England. Kershaw contextualises her findings from these materials within the wider context of the period, in order to support new theories on the overarching settlement of the Scandinavians.

Chapter one begins with a short historiography of the period, in order to contextualise the uses of Scandinavian jewellery into existing scholarship on Scandinavian settlement in England. This chapter highlights the lack of archaeological evidence used in many previous

studies on the Scandinavian settlement and cultural identity in England. Kershaw addresses this gap in scholarship by exploring metal finds, which have increased in exceptional numbers since metal-detecting has grown in popularity and become more widespread in England. Kershaw outlines her project's own constraints by acknowledging that although she seeks a national approach to the finds, there is a strong bias towards the Northern and Eastern areas that covers the ninth and tenth century Danelaw. This is far from deliberate as the majority of finds have been unearthed from the Danelaw area which is shown as a focal point of Scandinavian activity. Kershaw moves on to clearly define the two key styles of jewellery that she will examine: a Scandinavian-style, which imitates the jewellery found in Scandinavia, and an Anglo-Scandinavian style, which keeps the essence of a Scandinavian style but with Old English elements creating a hybrid style. In doing so, Kershaw explains her approach to the evidence, before moving on to evaluate previous studies of Scandinavian-style jewellery. The author presents a well-rounded assessment of the existing academic work, alongside fair criticism of each of the previously used scholarly methods to explain her own choice of approach. The last section of this chapter addresses the various issues that are associated with the use of metal-detector finds, including the problems of inconsistent recording and possible lack of reporting. This is a well thought out section, addressing the issues she faced during the study and possible criticisms of her use of the unregulated practice of metal-detecting, which provides much of the material in this study.

The second chapter explains Kershaw's methodology for identifying jewellery styles and highlights the five features she uses to differentiate between Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery. These features are brooch type, pin fittings, attachment loops, artistic content, and metal composition of embellishment. The differences in these features are clearly charted between the two kinds of jewellery in Table 2.1 (p. 21). This taxonomy forms a comprehensive system for the identification of Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery, with a clear discussion and a handful of illustrations of the different styles and variations in a reader-friendly way, making the classification process largely accessible.

In chapter three, Kershaw puts her methodology into practice as she consults over 500 brooches and pendants. She describes seven main styles with their many variations, which are summarised in Table 3.1 (p. 43). Each style is considered in terms of date, shape, pin-fittings or attachments, style, and distribution. Giving individual attention to Lozenge brooches, variations of Convex disc brooches, Trefoil brooches, Oval brooches, Equal-armed brooches, Pendants, Ringerike-style and Urnes-style brooches, Kershaw creates a

comprehensive guide to the various forms of jewellery examined within the book. This is a hefty chapter, which exceeds the length of any other, because of the sheer number of examined finds that are included and the work's highly technical approach. The chapter serves as a valuable source for anyone studying Scandinavian-style or Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery, with detailed photographs and illustrations that demonstrate the range of different brooches and pendants found in England during the Viking period. These images are accompanied by clear maps, which show the distribution of finds from each category, in both England and Scandinavia. Kershaw's comparison and evaluations of these distributions finds a distinct connection between the Danelaw region and Viking-Age Denmark, and an impressive variety of Scandinavian-style jewellery that was available in England.

Having introduced the reader to the brooches and pendants, Kershaw turns her attention in the remaining chapters to deciphering the distribution patterns, wearers' identities, cultural significance, and the possible correlation between these finds and female Scandinavians. Chapter four focuses on the production of both Scandinavian and Anglo-Scandinavian styles of jewellery. Here, the author argues that most Scandinavian-style pieces were probably produced in Scandinavia before being imported into England. In contrast, the Anglo-Scandinavian styles are of English origin, and Kershaw provides distribution maps that demonstrate clusters around likely manufacturing hubs, including Norwich and York. Much of this evidence comes from examining the metals used in the jewellery's production, with brass being a clear indicator of Scandinavian origin, due to its wide availability in the region and scarcity in England. Kershaw then presents evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian style jewellery being produced in England by arguing in favour of the use of moulds in the manufacturing of Anglo-Scandinavian style reproductions made from existing jewellery. However, she is cautious when discussing purely Scandinavian-style pieces being manufactured in England, as there is a lack of evidence, which could suggest these were purely imports. Once she establishes the locations for jewellery manufacturing, Kershaw then suggests a chronology for the various styles of jewellery that challenges the previously accepted period of Scandinavia influence. Although this period has often been constrained to the years c. 865-954, when the Danelaw was in effect, Kershaw proposes a flexible timescale of use for this jewellery. This new timescale is summarised in Figure 4.2 (p. 155), with theoretical alterations to existing dating featured in almost every case. Rather than being restricted to the early Viking settlement, Kershaw suggests a much longer period of use for these jewellery styles, with changing trends in styles in Denmark, mirrored in England

following a short delay. This supports strong contact between England and Denmark and the desire to keep connections with the Scandinavian homelands among settlers in England, a desire which appears to extend beyond the end of the Danelaw into the eleventh century.

Kershaw begins chapter five with an insight into the few examples of Scandinavian jewellery with datable contexts found in England, before moving on to an examination of how the previously discussed jewellery in chapter three could have been used with known forms of female dress. Drawing details on the uses of these brooches from their size and construction, especially their pin-fittings, Kershaw seeks to expand our understanding of how these brooches could have been worn during the Viking Age. This analysis includes a divide in the clothing that these brooches were used with. Scandinavian-style brooches, especially oval brooches, had a distinctly practical purposes in both the outer and main garments of women. In contrast, Anglo-Scandinavian brooches lean towards use with outer garments only, such as shawls or mantels. These changes in the use of jewellery depending on style show a level of cultural integration, but not assimilation, that has scarcely been touched upon in previous scholarship. From the pin-fittings and, more specifically, the removal of an additional loop solely found on Scandinavian style brooches, a pattern of changes in the functionality of the jewellery emerges in the Anglo-Scandinavian style. Kershaw suggests that the probable use of these loops was either as a point to suspend strings of beads from, or the more practical role of a chatelaine-style brooch, which was used to keep small tools, such as knives, close to hand. This change in construction was a marked progression away from the design of Scandinavian examples, which have the additional attachment. Kershaw attributes this change to the development of Anglo-Scandinavian style jewellery from Scandinavian-styles with alterations made for use with Old English dress. These jewellery pieces were meant to be worn on Old English clothing, which had no need for the additional loop due to their construction. Having investigated the practical uses of the jewellery, Kershaw looks directly at the carriers of this jewellery by focusing briefly on the gendering of jewellery. She establishes that the types of finds discussed were likely to have been constructed for the exclusive use of females. This notion fits well with her next argument, which discusses the role of women as transmitters of cultural identity. Kershaw suggests that cultural identity could have been transmitted via jewellery and the differing styles that appeared. Although Kershaw acknowledges that there is some scope for men as bearers of cultural tradition in ways which do not appear as obviously in archaeological records, such as the adoption of specific styles of personal appearance as in the case of distinctive hairstyles. These physical

distinctions are recorded in literary sources of the time., including a tenth or eleventh century letter where an Old English man is berated for dressing like a Dane with cropped hair and a long fringe (p. 177). The evidence from this study favours women as the main cultural communicators when using ornamental metalwork as a point of reference. Kershaw argues that Scandinavian-style jewellery would have been used to connect Scandinavian migrants to their homelands and would therefore reflect strong connections and interchanges with Scandinavia. On the other hand, Kershaw suggests that Anglo-Scandinavian pieces would have been used to show the blending of cultures during a period of cultural change and transmission. Wearing these Anglo-Scandinavian pieces meant that an individual could still recognise their past heritage or connection to Scandinavia, whilst also demonstrating their new Old English connections. This would be particularly prevalent for second and third-generation settlers, who were distanced from, but still felt connected to Scandinavia.

With her penultimate chapter, Kershaw addresses one of her main, overarching aims: to use this new information on Scandinavian-style jewellery and its distribution across England to change our understanding of the Scandinavian settlement in England. She starts this section with an outline of the main issues associated with mapping metalwork, which include the portability of jewellery, the nature of the finds (which are largely considered as accidental losses), and the obvious modern constraints (many of which were discussed in chapter one regarding metal-detecting). Next Kershaw moves on to look at the site contexts surrounding Scandinavian-style jewellery finds, with burials being in the stark minority, in comparison with both urban and rural finds. The urban finds are less common, and Kershaw explains this discrepancy by including an acknowledgement of the increased likelihood of lost jewellery being found in a metropolitan centre in comparison to the rural settings, where there is a much higher proportion of finds. Kershaw then looks at the distribution of Scandinavian-style finds on both a national and regional level, focusing in on the areas with a high concentration of artefacts. Her national study supports the Danelaw as a boundary of culture, although Kershaw notes there is little evidence in this study from Yorkshire, north of the Humber, despite the fact this is an area commonly known as a centre of Viking activity with particular focus in existing scholarship devoted to the region. On the other hand, her regional study supports different pockets of impact in Norfolk and Lincolnshire, which have not been previously known for their Scandinavian influence. Kershaw examines place-name evidence in comparison her jewellery distribution findings to draw out key anomalies. Firstly, both Yorkshire and the East Midlands have substantial Scandinavian place-name evidence

but limited Scandinavian jewellery. In comparison, the opposite issue can be seen in Lincolnshire and East-Anglia; in previous scholarship, these regions were not considered to have significant Scandinavian impact in terms of place-names, but these regions have a significant number of Scandinavian-style finds. There is a sustained connection between East Anglia and Scandinavia, according to the archaeological evidence, which has not received much attention prior to Kershaw's investigation. Kershaw believes this connection between East Anglia and Scandinavia could be the source of many of the finds, while other discrepancies, such as the lack of finds in Yorkshire are given the possible explanations due to various modern and contemporary limitations, such as the amount of land currently being farmed affecting the availability of metal detectorist. Although Kershaw goes on to suggest that future discoveries could alter this picture further, which is a key reason why an updated addition would be most welcome.

Finally, Kershaw concludes the study with an analysis of her overall findings to explore what these developments mean in the context of Scandinavian influence in England and more specifically the Danelaw. Beginning with an analysis of the frequency and variation of brooch use, with a comparison between Scandinavia as a whole, the sub-region of modern Denmark and England, through which Kershaw demonstrates that a wide range of brooches were transferred to England. The similarities in jewellery usage between the Danelaw in England and Scandinavia, most specifically Viking Age Denmark, is marked. Some types of jewellery did not transfer to England with much success, such as the Jellinge-style disk brooches, although it is relatively rare even in Scandinavia so its appearance in England at all is significant. Even so many other styles found great popularity in England, such as Trefoil brooches, which are more prominent among the English finds. Kershaw argues that jewellery and brooches specifically are significant in showing how cultural markers can be transposed particularly by women, even though the preferences of the time remain inconsistent between countries. Kershaw also addresses the issues surrounding oval brooches, which were uncommon in England, but are of great significance as distinct markers of Scandinavian dress. She explains that their absence could be due to their size and worth, as their value made them much less likely to be lost than the smaller and cheaper brooches, which make up much of the sample. Kershaw continues by addressing the cultural integration of Anglo-Scandinavian jewellery and the limitations of cultural assimilations. Kershaw argues in favour of the transmission of cultural identity rather than assimilation, which has previously been argued for. Kershaw maintains that there is a trend of upholding Scandinavian connections through

jewellery, without the Scandinavian identity being absorbed into a true hybrid with Old English styles and motifs. The last discussion in this chapter focuses on the presence of Scandinavian influence in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and Suffolk, which throws doubt onto the evidence from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, regarding the areas of Viking settlement. This is a significant point from Kershaw's research that could change scholars' understanding of where, and to what extent, the Scandinavians settled in England. Kershaw ends this chapter and the overall project by drawing together her conclusions from each chapter, and then emphasises the changes that need to be made in the existing geographical and chronological understanding of Scandinavian settlement in England.

There are many merits to Kershaw's work, not least of all is the clear way in which the author tackles such an intricate body of material. Her illustrations and charts are insightful choices as visual aids, which makes understanding the complexities of variations in style and find distribution more comprehensible for those less versed in the subject. A significant point brought forward by Kershaw is her new interpretation of the Scandinavian settlement in England, which highlights areas like Norfolk and Lincolnshire. The other, more controversial point to be taken from this work is the involvement of women during and following the Viking settlement, particularly as cultural communicators. Although Kershaw does not suggest that every woman who wore a Scandinavian-style brooch or pendant would have been of Scandinavian origin, there is a clear argument in favour of widespread migration of Scandinavian women. This argument has previously been refuted in favour of the quick assimilation between male settlers with Old English women, with limited numbers of Scandinavian women journeying to England. There is still much work to be done on this topic, but Kershaw's publication reignites debates over previously accepted interpretations that need to be re-examined.

The positioning and depth of Kershaw's examination of the gendering Viking Age jewellery can be criticised, given her suggestion that the jewellery in focus was worn by females is not addressed until chapter five. This work reads very much as a study of the identity of women, their role as cultural ambassadors, and their involvement in the Scandinavian settlement of England. As such, Kershaw's argument that the jewellery was worn by primarily, if not exclusively females is a pivotal issue. Although Kershaw is likely correct that most, if not all, of these brooches and pendants were worn by women, this theory should have been established earlier in the study and given more attention than is included (p.170-3). It is difficult to find other issues with this work. There are, of course, the limitations

surrounding metal-detector finds, which are a difficult source to exploit given the lack of context, but this issue is addressed to the best of the authors abilities, with controls and cross examination employed to confirm the finds' validity.

Overall, this is a text that can stand the test of time. Despite the ever-evolving evidence resulting from metal-detecting, this reprint in paperback that comes seven years after the original publication will be welcomed by the academic community, as the work gains greater accessibility. Kershaw's techniques to differentiate Scandinavian-style and Anglo-Scandinavian-style jewellery from one another, as well as non-Scandinavian finds, still proves valuable. Similarly, her catalogue of finds from chapter three is a significant resource when researching the Scandinavian jewellery found in England, whilst many of her insights still prove vital in the continued investigation into Scandinavian settlement in England. At the time of the study's original publication, Kershaw was well-aware of the possibility that new finds could alter her own new model of the Scandinavian settlement. An updated version including the latest finds would be most welcome in future, yet this academic study as it stands, still proves invaluable to anyone studying Scandinavian or Anglo-Scandinavian material culture.