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VIKING AND MEDIEVAL WORLD

Edited by
JAMES H BARRETT
and
SARAH JANE GIBBON



2015

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Maggi Hambling's *Wall of water XIII, war*, 2013, oil on canvas, 198.1 × 226.1 cm, first exhibited at *Maggi Hambling: Walls of Water* at the National Gallery, London (2014–2015) and then at *Maggi Hambling: War Requiem & Aftermath* at Somerset House, London (2015)

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea behind this volume emerged from a conference of the same name, jointly organized by the Orkney Heritage Society and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, held in Kirkwall in May/June of 2008. The meeting initially aimed to set the semi-independent island polities of Viking Age and medieval Scotland (such as the Earldom of Orkney and the Lordship of the Isles) in a comparative context that went beyond the rural North Atlantic region to which they are often naturally ascribed. It was an opportunity to consider the intersections and separations of rural and urban worlds, of small islands and the coastal or riparian settlements of ‘mainlands’, around the Irish, North and Baltic Seas. We aimed to explore a pivotal time in the creation of the social, economic and political landscapes of Europe — when small-scale maritime polities had a disproportionate impact on the course of world history. The chronology of the project was set to include the Viking Age (AD c790–1050) and early Middle Ages (defined as AD c1050–1200), with a few later exceptions that were clearly relevant to earlier developments. The result was an illuminating experience, drawing attention to the complex relationship between long-range interconnections and distinct regional identities characteristic of maritime communities. The participants expressed enthusiasm for a resulting publication, and written contributions began to come in. The original line-up was then supplemented with invited papers that filled important missing niches (regarding, for example, the key Viking Age port of Dorestad and the island societies of the Baltic). To accommodate this broadened coverage within the publisher’s limits we have excluded our own contributions regarding Atlantic Scotland, but they are available elsewhere and were equally informed by the event. The book’s geographical range remains far from comprehensive. Nevertheless, we hope its audiences will find much of value as they seek to situate their own worlds of study in the context of numerous examples which were diverse and changing, yet exhibited significant resonances and often direct interconnections.

Many people and organizations have contributed to the volume’s completion. Acknowledgements for each chapter are provided in endnotes where relevant. Credits for the images used are on page iv and in the figure captions. Linda Fisher, Suzanne Needs-Howarth and Lembi Lõugas assisted with copy-editing. Funding for the initial conference was provided by the British Academy, Historic Scotland, the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Orkney Islands Council and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. It was organized by the editors, in cooperation with Anne Brundle (Orkney Museum), Julie Gibson (Orkney College, University of the Highlands and Islands) and Kate Towsey. The Orkney Heritage Society, Orkney College and the then Friends of Orkney Archaeological Trust (now Orkney Archaeology Society) provided much logistical support during the event. Christopher Gerrard, the Society for Medieval Archaeology and Maney kindly welcomed its publication in the Society’s monograph series — and maintained the right balance of pressure and patience during its completion. Steady early progress was slowed by maternity,

teaching and administrative responsibilities, before the project received additional invaluable support from the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research in 2013. This made it possible for Dora Kemp (devoted sailor and production editor) to begin to format the edited chapters into the publisher's house style. When she tragically fell ill and passed away in 2014, it was possible for us to maintain the momentum to completion (thanks to research leave supported by the Leverhulme Trust). This volume is thus in part a tribute to Dora, and to Anne Brundle who left us in 2011, while also being a contribution to an understanding of (often small-scale) communities that were brought into being by their relationships with water — and set waves in motion that altered distant shores.

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