



Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England (Medieval History and Archaeology)

Jane F. Kershaw

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Viking Identities is the first detailed archaeological study of Viking-Age Scandinavian-style female dress items from England. Based on primary archival and archaeological research, including the analysis of hundreds of recent metal-detector finds, it presents evidence for over 500 brooches and pendants worn by women in the late ninth and tenth centuries. Jane F. Kershaw argues that these finds add an entirely new dimension to the limited existing archaeological evidence for Scandinavian activity in the British Isles and make possible a substantial reassessment of the Viking settlements.

Kershaw offers an interpretation of the significance of the jewellery in a broader, historical context. The jewellery highlights locations of settlement not commonly associated with the Vikings. In contrast to claims of high levels of cultural assimilation, the jewellery suggests that incoming groups maintained a distinct Scandinavian identity which was sometimes appropriated by the indigenous population. Kershaw also addresses one of the great unanswered questions in the study of Viking-Age settlements: what about the women? The interpretation of the jewellery challenges traditional perceptions of Viking conquest as an all-male affair and brings into focus a population group which has, until now, been almost invisible.

Kershaw describes the objects and explores a number of themes related to their contemporary use, including their date, distribution, and function in costume. This body of material - unknown 30 years ago - is introduced to a public audience for the first time. Including many object images and maps, the study provides a practical guide to the identification of Scandinavian metalwork.

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