

The Norse in Orkney

An archaeological and social anthropological study of the Norse settlement process and the relationship between the Norse and the Picts.

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I declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work is my own.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the nature of the Norse settlement in Orkney, concentrating on the relationship between the Picts and the Norse. To reach an understanding of the social and economic context in Viking Age Scandinavia and Orkney, which is considered crucial to the understanding of the Norse settlement, the Icelandic sagas and social anthropology are used together with archaeology. For instance, social anthropological concepts such as 'economic spheres' have been applied to the archaeological material in order to gain an understanding of the economic transactions and social relationships that resulted in a mix of Pictish and Norse artefacts on Norse settlement sites in Orkney. Further, the phenomenon of hoarding and the nature of the Viking and Pictish hoards are examined in order to gain insight into the nature of the economic climate and the different types of transactions that may have taken place between the Norse and the Picts.

Three different geographical areas of Orkney; Birsay, Deerness and Burray, are compared and contrasted, and it is argued that the Norse settlement was largely peaceful and in the early stages utilised existing Pictish institutions, such as the land administration. It is argued that to the Vikings that settled in Orkney, and to the Picts they encountered, it was more rational to be friends with their new neighbours, and profit from gift exchange, trade and farming, than to be at war.

Introduction

The Picts and the Vikings have been the focus of a wide range of theories. In the 1950s the Picts were still a 'problem', and Wainwright (1955: 87) wrote: 'It is a sad, if somewhat surprising, fact that we cannot with confidence affix the label 'Pictish' to a single dwelling or to a single burial.' Their relationship with the Norse was for a long period of time thought to be one of violence and subordination e. g. Wainwright 1962; Crawford 1974; 1981). The limited evidence concerning the Pictish-Norse transition aided this view. However, a number of scholars argued for a peaceful settlement (e. g. Brøgger 1929).

Ritchie's Buckquoy excavation (1974; 1977), interpreted as showing integration between the two peoples, became a turning point. The Norse appeared to have adopted native objects, and there was now solid evidence supporting the theory of peaceful settlement. Why the Norse farmsteads were found on top of Pictish settlements was still an enigma, however, and not everyone was convinced that the settlement continuity was indicative of a peaceful coexistence. Explanations such as enslavement of the native population were argued (Graham-Campbell 1980b: 69), and such explanations are still being put forward (e. g. Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 39).

Since the Buckquoy excavation (Ritchie 1974; 1977), a number of sites covering the Pictish-Norse transition in Orkney have been excavated and published. For instance, the Birsay Bay project (Morris 1989; 1996) has brought attention to several sites in the Birsay area, the Brough of Birsay has been excavated several times (e. g. Curle 1982, Hunter 1986), and Hedges (1983) carried out work at Saevar Howe. Outside the Birsay area, Gelling's excavations at Deerness were published and reinterpreted by Buteux (1997), and Pool on Sanday was excavated by Hunter (1990; 1997). Important discoveries have also been made outside Orkney. Recently Sharples and Parker Pearson (1999) argued that the Norse settlement in the Outer Hebrides was characterised by coexistence and settlement continuity. All these excavations showed coexistence between the Picts and the Norse, but the nature of the Norse settlement process, when the first settlers arrived, and how the Pictish-Norse coexistence really functioned is still uncertain.

This thesis looks at the relationship between the Picts and the Norse in Orkney and the Norse settlement process in this area more generally. In the course of reviewing the published sources, it became clear that the presence of Pictish artefacts in Norse settlement layers, together with settlement continuity, was one of the largest mysteries and may be the key to understanding the settlement process and the relationship between the two peoples. The objects may be the results of economic transactions, but what kind? In order to achieve an understanding of the Viking Age economy, the methodology of social anthropology has been adopted. Through the use of social anthropology, an understanding has been gained of what was important in the Viking Age, power, prestige and allies, and how the economy worked, on a basis of gift giving and economic spheres. This understanding, combined with saga studies and archaeological theories and methods has been used to interpret the hoards, the settlement pattern and the occurrence of native objects on Norse settlement sites. It was thought that using traditional archaeological theories and methods would not be enough to understand the social and economic mechanisms behind the finds. The Viking Age had values and rules that are different to those of our society, and without understanding these, we cannot understand the objects. Social anthropology specialises in understanding other cultures, and this knowledge combined with archaeology's knowledge about objects and sites can lead to new insights.

Three different geographical areas of Orkney will be compared and contrasted in order to achieve an understanding of the nature of the Norse settlement. Birsay and Deerness were chosen since both these areas have received a lot of archaeological attention and are well published. Since the thesis will mainly be a reinterpretation of literature and theories relating to the Norse settlement, this element is crucial. Burray was chosen because the opposite scenario is the case. The island has not received a great deal of archaeological attention and little is published about the discovered sites or the finds that have been made. It is thought that, since the island is favourably located, it could have been a Norse power centre, perhaps similar to Birsay and Deerness. A desk-based examination followed by fieldwork were undertaken in order to establish whether this was the case.

Chapter 1. The methodology of cultural/social anthropology

1.1. Introduction

One major source for the examination and reinterpretation of the archaeological material in this thesis will be models and thoughts taken from cultural/social anthropology¹ (mostly economic anthropology). Therefore, a brief introduction to the methods, advantages and risks of anthropology will be a useful start², as many archaeologists may be unaware of the basic concepts of this related discipline.

1.2. Ethnocentrism and comparisons between different societies

To view and judge other cultures according to the rules and values present in one's own culture, and to assume that everything works and is regarded just as in one's own society, is called *ethnocentrism*. Traditionally, the ethnocentric viewer has reached the conclusion that other societies are barbarian and populated by savages and simply not at all as perfect as his or her own society, which of course is at the peak of evolution. The 'armchair anthropologists', like Morgan (1877), of the Victorian era constructed evolutionary ladders, classifying societies as either barbarian, savage or civilised. Other cultures were thought to represent evolutionary stages that we went through ourselves, thousands of years ago, on the way to our present perfection. Primitive people were thought to have primitive minds, and they were treated accordingly by the colonial powers. According to this evolutionary thinking, archaeologists have only to look at such primitive peoples to see how the Neanderthals lived! With time, anthropologists came to focus on the peoples themselves, instead of trying to trace the origin of their own culture.

¹ These are two different names for essentially the same discipline. The difference is that the American cultural anthropology focuses on social relations and regards culture as a medium for social interaction rather than an end in itself. The British social anthropology focuses on cultural patterns and regards social relations as the product of cultural patterning and conditions (Lewis 1976: 19-20).

² For a more thorough introduction to cultural / social anthropology, see Lewis (1976), for example. Ortner (1984) has summarised the theoretical development within the discipline from the sixties.

As Århem (1994: 24) points out, a great deal of anthropology's identity as a discipline lies in the radical comparison between the modern and pre-modern. Cultures, which are separated by time and space, are put in relation to one another with the purpose of building a general knowledge of Man as a creator of culture. This search for a global knowledge of Man in the world is characteristic of cultural and social anthropology.

In spite of this, it is still risky to try to combine archaeology and anthropology, and it is not unusual to be laughed at by academics from both disciplines, even though the general public may be more enthusiastic by the conclusions and comparisons. The Swedish ethno-archaeologist Göran Burenhult (e.g. 1986), who has compared Stone Age Gotland to the Trobriand Islands, is one example and the famous Norwegian Thor Heyerdahl (e.g. 1970; 1978), who draws from many different disciplines in his research, another. Using anthropological analogies is especially risky if comparisons are made between cultures in different parts of the world and/or in different times. For instance, when it comes to the Vikings, Samson (1991a: 88) points out that parallels cannot easily be drawn between societies without highly developed exploitative, social relationships to the hierarchical world of the Vikings. Despite all the difficulties involved, it is hoped that the following chapters will show how archaeology and anthropology can be combined.

1.3. Aims and methods of cultural/social anthropology

The discipline studies culture, which can be described to be all the things a certain society takes for granted and passes on to the children. Culture is embodied in public symbols, which communicate a certain world-view.

/.../ culture is simply a convenient term to describe the sum of learned knowledge and skills including religion and language – that distinguishes one community from another and which, subject to the vagaries of innovation and change, passes on in a recognizable form from generation to generation (Lewis 1976: 17).

Anthropologists study how other peoples live and how they perceive the world around them. The aim is to see the world from the native point of view. Anthropology means 'the study of humans', and social anthropology studies human societies and cultures. As we have already seen, there are many traps, and the anthropologist may believe, consciously or unconsciously, that his or her way of living and thinking is the right way and that his or her culture is superior. Organisations like Greenpeace have recently been accused of ethnocentrism for example, since they condemned the hunting of whale and seal. The critics (e.g. Einarsson 1993) point out that just because certain animals are special and 'sacred' to us, they do not necessarily have to be the same in other cultures, in which the small-scale hunt is both traditional and crucial.

The opposite, a romantic view of 'primitive cultures'³ is also common. Thus, some people see the 'primitive cultures' as pure and unspoiled, ecologically sound and populated by altruistic people who are uninterested in money and profit making. The reality may sometimes be completely different from these views.

An open mind without prejudices or pre-assumptions thus seems to be an important prerequisite for an anthropological analysis. But, how are other cultures actually studied and how is an objective view of the culture reached, if at all possible? The characteristic method of social anthropology is *participant observation*, which means that the anthropologist lives with the people he or she studies, usually for a year. The anthropologist participates in the activities of the community and at the same time observes how things fit together, are explained by the natives, how different processes work, how the society is constructed and experienced by various groups or individuals, etc. One of the major difficulties for the anthropologist is to become a part of the foreign society but at the same time be able to see it from the outside, to observe things that the natives do not see themselves, to relate back and make comparisons with the society he or she came from. Århem (1994: 25) would rather call the method 'participating reflection' or 'participating and reflection', since both are crucial for the anthropological field study.

³ This is of course an ethnocentric term, but it is still often used in anthropology since it is a handy and established term for foreign, traditional cultures. To emphasise that it is not to be seen as an ethnocentric evaluation of the people in question, quotation marks are often used.

There are several sub-fields within anthropology, for example economic anthropology, gender anthropology, political anthropology and religious anthropology. There are also different theoretical schools, such as structuralism (Lévi-Strauss), functionalism (Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski) and interpretative anthropology (Geertz), for example. Anthropologists do not just study small, obscure African tribes, but also turn their interest to groups and phenomena within our own society. Anthropological studies nowadays cover topics such as women's experiences of the reproductive processes (Martin 1987), the creation of identities in Japan (Kondo 1990), the experiences of refugees in Sweden (Eastmond et al 1994), gender roles in modern day Spain (Thurén 1987), the belief in witch craft in rural France (Favret Saada 1989), the mechanisms behind the spread of Aids in Africa (Caldwell et al 1993) and critique of development projects (Hobart 1994), to name but a few studies. As Århem (1994: 27) points out, even though the topics of modern anthropology may seem quite different from each other, they all deal with culture.

1.4. Malinowski

The pioneer in participant observation was Malinowski (e.g. 1921; 1922), whose work among the Trobriand Islanders was revolutionary for its time. However, his diary (1967), which was published after his death, showed that he may not have participated as much as had been thought. He referred to his informants as 'savages' and some aspects of his work have been revised and expanded by other anthropologists (e.g. Weiner 1933), but he has still left a 'lasting impact on anthropology' (Weiner 1933: 4). Malinowski had a functionalist approach to culture, and saw every custom and institution as serving a present purpose: marriage regulates man's sex-drive, economic institutions provide sustenance, law and politics regulate social co-operation and interaction, myth is used to justify the existing order, etc. (Lewis 1976: 53-55).

Malinowski realised that the concepts he was used to from his own culture did not necessarily exist among the Trobrianders. An example of this is his study of land tenure: when he asked about its organisation he first got general answers, that the chief owns all the land, that each garden has its owner, or that all the villagers

own the land together. When he asked about a certain plot, he had five different owners mentioned. Malinowski realised that each answer was a part of the truth, but not correct by itself. The main difficulty was our notion of 'ownership'. For the Trobrianders, 'ownership' has a different significance, and they use one word to denote several legal and economic relationships, between which we find it necessary to distinguish (Malinowski 1921: 3). In the following chapters, it will become apparent that an approach similar to Malinowski's is necessary for the study of past societies as well.

1.5. Economic anthropology; substantivists and formalists

There are two schools within economic anthropology, formalists and substantivists. Formalists try to analyse all exchanges by reference to modern economic concepts of rational economic decisions of profit and supply and demand. Samson (1991a: 88) points out that, if this approach is to work in non-monetary societies, profit and economic goals must be taken to include social approval, spiritual well being and love. He points out that it is quite rational to give away gifts at Christmas to make one's friends happy and thus gain happiness for oneself. But, Samson (1991a: 88) asks, what is the supply and demand for love?

In *Laxdaela Saga* (ch 27), for example, the Hoskuldssons' held a feast in memory of their dead father. 1080 guests were invited and were, apart from food and drink, also given gifts. The feast enhanced the hosts' prestige and is said to have been Iceland's second greatest feast ever, second only to Hjalasons' funeral feast, held in memory of their father. How can we measure the profits or losses of this? Samson (1991a: 88) asks whether we should calculate the moral satisfaction gained from the respect shown to their father, or from the generosity showed to the local community by the gift giving, or if we should try to calculate the material returns in the form of counter gifts and invitations to feasts in the future? Economic anthropologists would stress the strengthening of social relations between the brothers and their kin, neighbours, allies and dependants. This was important since the father's death led to a rearrangement of social relations in the community. A reputation of such great generosity would intimidate enemies. For example, Samson (1991a: 88) points out

that it is impossible to know how many lawsuits against the Hoskuldssons' the feast prevented.

The substantivists argue that economics, production, exchange and consumption cannot be seen as an independent sphere in society. They see exchange as embedded in social relations. Different social relationships come with quite different transactions, which have as their purpose the creation of new or the maintenance of old relationships, as much as the acquisition of the exchanged item or service (Samson 1991a: 90).

Economic anthropology emphasises social relations as the deciding factor and driving force in gift giving, rather than the exchanged objects. Just when the social relationship between two parties changes, a disorder takes place in the gift giving, since a re-negotiation of the parties' positions is necessary. The termination of a relationship, if friendly, ends in the giving of gifts (Samson 1991a: 90). In *Njal's Saga*⁴ (ch 31) when Gunnar Hamundarson leaves the king in Hedeby, after having stayed with him for a fortnight, he gave the king a long ship and 'much treasure' and received an impressive wardrobe in return. Gifts were exchanged to cancel any outstanding social debts (Samson 1991a: 90).

1.6. Anthropology and archaeology

Some phenomena in anthropology can be seen in archaeology as well. If we assume that past societies were constructed as ours, that similar rules and values were present and that people interacted with each other in roughly the same way as today, we have fallen in the same trap as the ethnocentric anthropologist. As illustrated by Malinowski, our concepts and definitions may not match those present in other cultures. Just as there are plenty of romantic conceptions of quaint, natural and primitive peoples around, there are also romantic notions of the past. The Picts and the Vikings, the subject of this thesis, are certainly no exceptions.

Comparisons between different cultures, separated by time and/or space can provide valuable clues and information. But as pointed out by Samson (1991a: 88), it

⁴ The spelling of names of individuals and places in *Njal's saga*, and quotations from the text have been kept in accordance with the English translation by Magnusson and Pálsson (1960).

is crucial that we do not compare the social organisation of a so-called primitive people with the Vikings' hierarchical organisation. However, it may still be useful to compare specific features, for example gift giving, in a 'primitive society' with the gift giving during the Viking Age. Such comparisons can illustrate how economic considerations can be embedded in every part of society, and how such systems can be organised. Anthropological analogies do not necessarily tell us how things actually were organised in the past, but they can open our eyes to possible explanations we may not have thought of otherwise, and make us think in new directions. However, we should not assume that people during the European Stone Age did everything exactly as today's Trobrianders. Anthropology cannot offer such easy solutions to the archaeologist's problems, unfortunately.

Like a reflection of the past. There are 5000 years between the Stone Age girl in the South Sea and her excavated sister on Gotland. Yet their lives look exactly the same. And thus we can understand our own Stone Age people easier. She is a reflection of the Stone Age.

(This author's translation of text underneath a photomontage of a Trobriand girl's face and a Stone Age skull (Burenhult 1986: 2)).

Just as anthropology, archaeology deals with culture. This thesis will look at what happened when the cultures of the Picts and Vikings met in Orkney. Archaeological material, settlement remains and hoards, together with theories taken from economic anthropology and information from the Icelandic sagas will be used to shed light on the events from about AD 800 to the beginning of the 12th century in this area of Scotland. As mentioned above, there are two basic forms of economic anthropology, substantivism and formalism. Formalists use modern terms such as supply and demand, and argue that rational economic decisions are behind everything. This view will not be taken in the following chapters. Although the transactions in past times were certainly rational, the meaning of this word varied depending on the social system in which the transactions were made. For example, the Hoskuldssons knew exactly what they were doing when they held their feast (*Laxdaela Saga* ch 27), but as pointed out by Samson (1991a: 88), our concepts of supply and demand cannot be applied to transactions like these, which are deeply

embedded in the social system. The substantivist approach is much better suited to the analysis of this type of transactions, as it focuses on the social implications of a transaction. However, the objects themselves will get more attention in the following chapters than they probably would in traditional economic anthropology, as the objects are all archaeologists have left to study. It will also be argued that, at least in the Viking Age, the objects were in fact more important to the exchange partners than has been recognised.

Chapter 2. Gift giving

2.1. Introduction

According to Mauss (1954), who wrote the classic book on the ethics of gift giving economies, the exchange in 'primitive' societies is not an economic activity but a 'total social fact'. It is an activity that affects the social, political and religious aspects of society. There are three main principles of the gift: to give, to receive and to give counter gifts. Gift giving forms a bond between persons. There are no 'free' gifts. If a gift is not reciprocated, nothing positive is created. Gift giving is at the same time voluntary (if not voluntary, it would not be a gift) and a social must.

Mauss (1954) wrote about the Maori concept *hau*, which is an invisible force, the spirit of the exchanged object. To give an object away is to give away a part of oneself. For the Maori, bonds between objects are really bonds between people. The *hau* is thus the bond between the two persons involved in the gift exchange. The *hau* wishes to return to the giver, and this wish can only be pleased by a counter gift.

Exchange is social communication, and to Mauss (1954) reciprocity is the basis for society. The important thing is that an exchange, and therefore a relationship, is going on, not the objects that are being exchanged. Gifts can be given to establish alliances, to strengthen existing ones, to stress differences in status, to compete for prestige or to gain political power. If a gift is turned down or not reciprocated on the other hand, it implies that the social relationship with the giver is also turned down.

Samson (1991a: 92) argues that Mauss only gives a partial view of exchange and underestimates the importance of the exchanged objects. Samson points out that there is a desire not to reciprocate. That is why there are such strong moral obligations and social sanctions to ensure that gifts are returned. The wish to keep one's own possessions and to get hold of other people's is the reverse side of exchanging to maintain social relationships. Material greed and moral obligations create tensions in all exchange.

Bourdieu (1990) has also criticised Mauss' (1954) model. Bourdieu (1990) points out that in reality, the gift exchange is far from mechanic. A gift may remain

unreciprocated, or be rejected as an insult (Bourdieu 1990: 98). The exchange can be interrupted at any stage and any act may fall flat because of a lack of reply, and be exposed of its intentional meaning. The time aspect is important in several ways; the same act, giving, returning a gift, offering one's services, paying a visit etc, can have totally different meanings at different times (Bourdieu 1990: 105). Further, until the gift is reciprocated with a counter gift, the receiver is obliged and expected to show gratitude and regard for his benefactor. To put off revenge or a counter gift can be a way to keep the partner in the dark about one's intentions (Bourdieu 1990: 106).

The classic model Mauss constructed can be illustrated like this:



Ill. 1. The arrows represent the duties to give, receive and return gifts (Hastrup & Ovesen 1982: 200).

This is a reversible model; there is a motion both forwards and backwards. This model does not take the time aspect into account, that is the time that passes between the giving of a gift and the giving of a counter gift. During this time, the relationship lacks balance and is often used by the parties for tactical and strategic moves that affect the relationship (Hastrup & Ovesen 1982: 200). A dynamic model of the gift giving should be illustrated like a continuous line, like this:



Ill. 2. (Hastrup & Ovesen 1982: 200).

If the gift giving system is to work, the parties cannot be totally unaware of the effect their exchanges have. But at the same time, they have to deny this knowledge. Gift exchange is a system in which one has to be both giver and receiver and where it is positive to receive but not to give. Since the duties to give and receive are equally strong, the challenge is to try to gain as much as possible for oneself in the exchanges. Everyone knows this, but it cannot be recognised and has to be denied to keep the system going (Bourdieu: 1990: 105).

Sahlins (1972) has tried to define different kinds of exchanges, from positive to negative reciprocity. At one end is positive, altruistic giving, with no hope of a return gift or profit. This form of reciprocity is most common within the family. At the other is negative reciprocity, theft. In between is a straight swap or a purchase, which is socially neutral. In such a transaction, both parties consent, but try to gain at the other's expense. There is no lasting social relation between the parties, as opposed to a gift exchange or a theft. *Hávamál* (ch 42) states: 'meet lies with treachery' which clearly illustrates how both positive and negative reciprocity creates a lasting bond between the persons involved.

Hedeager (1994: 138-139) points out that it is insufficient to see the economic system of the Viking Age as simply a system of violence and gift giving. The Viking Age had two different systems, the old gift giving and prestige goods economy which was closely connected to the upper classes, and the new socially neutral exchange. Money gave exchange anonymity. During this period, the first real trading and production sites, Scandinavia's first towns, were founded. The Scandinavian sites, Birka, Hedeby, Kaupang and Ribe for instance, formed a network together with similar sites along the Baltic south coast, the North Sea coast and English Channel. She argues that the goods that reached Ribe were often objects that could not be exchanged in the gift economy; soapstone vessels, whetstones and iron for instance.

2.2. Anthropological examples of gift exchange

2.2.1. Introduction

The following anthropological examples of gift exchange will show that the socially neutral economic transactions that we are used to are not universal features taken for granted everywhere. Different economic systems are at work in different places, and in different times. But, it is not necessary to leave our own culture to encounter examples of gift giving. There is a special gift-economy also in industrial societies, with rules and customs different from the market economy. Hospitality and generosity are still highly valued in our society. Christmas is of course the most

obvious example of gift giving in our culture. If a Christmas card or present is not reciprocated, we get upset, hurt and re-evaluate our relationship with that person. Likewise, the buying of rounds of drinks in pubs and the repaying of hospitality and dinner invitations are also examples of a gift giving economy present in our culture. It is important that the counter gifts are equal or even better than the original gift. It is after all more blessed to give than to receive. Someone who tries to ignore this rule, and tries to gain at his or her friends' expense, will soon be unpopular. There are different rules for transactions between strangers though, where it is regarded as natural to try to gain as much as possible for oneself.

Lewis (1976: 198) points out a less obvious example of gift giving in our society; the aid western countries give to developing nations in other parts of the world. The donor often expects something in return, favourable trade for instance. Bribes are also a part of the gift-giving sphere, and sometimes there is a thin line between gifts and bribes, as well as between gifts and loans.

2.2.2. The *kula* and redistribution of the Trobriand Islanders

The Trobriand Islands, that Malinowski made famous through his anthropological studies, are a part of New Guinea. The Trobrianders have become famous for being matrilinear⁵ (Ill. 8) and most of all for their *kula*:

The *kula* is a ceremonial exchange that the Trobrianders are involved in together with the inhabitants of the surrounding islands. In the *kula*, two different kinds of shell ornaments are passed around the islands, creating life-long relationships between the exchange partners. Long necklaces of red shell, *soulava*, are passed around clockwise, and counter clockwise bracelets of white shell, *mwali*, are exchanged. Certain rules and conventions regulate every part of the *kula* transactions (Lewis 1976: 200).

In every village and on every island, a more or less limited number of men are involved in the *kula*. When a man receives one of the several valuables, he has to give it to one of his exchange partners, who will give him the other kind of valuable

⁵ Kinship is only recognised in the female line. The children belong to their mother's lineage. Thus, a man has a direct interest in his sisters' sons, since they belong to his lineage whereas his own sons belong to another lineage, his wife's.

in return. It is not allowed to keep any of the ornaments for any long period of time. They have to circulate. Elaborate magical rituals and public ceremonies accompany some of the exchanges (Lewis 1976: 200-201). The men involved in the *kula* all try to gain reputation as generous *kula* partners and compete for the best deals. The more important and numerous valuables they receive, the greater the prestige. Therefore, it is important to give generously and obtain strategically (Keesing 1981: 201).

The ceremonial exchange of the shell ornaments is the main part of the *kula*, but secondary activities, such as ordinary trade and canoe building, are also associated with it. The *kula* is thus a very big and complex institution, both geographically and in the variety of its components. Many tribes and activities are interconnected and playing in to one another (Lewis 1976: 201). Singh Uberoi (1962) argues that the *kula* can be seen as a political institution as well, since it provides the traders with a friendly agent and host in an otherwise hostile, foreign community.

The *kula* objects (*vaygua'a*) are prestige goods and often have their own individual histories. Each type has to be exchanged for the other, and none can be converted into anything else. They exist only for display and exchange. The *kula* valuables are intrinsically useless and only valuable because of their symbolic significance. The temporary possession of one of the ornaments brings prestige and honour. Lewis compares the valuables to the trophies, held by the winner only until the next competition, competed for in various sports in our culture (1976: 202-203).

The Trobrianders' garden produce is redistributed through a complex system, and everybody is working for someone else. A man is obliged to give most of his garden produce to his sisters. This means a great deal of extra labour in handling and transporting the produce. The whole community is involved in a network of reciprocal obligations. There is a constant economic undertow to all public and private activities. Malinowski (1921: 8) writes that economic considerations pervade the social life for the Trobriand Islanders, that economic difficulties constantly face them. Whenever a native moves, to a feast, on expedition, in warfare, he has to deal with the problems of giving and counter giving.

The chief organises all big tribal affairs and is the 'master of ceremonies'. But there are two conditions, he has to pay the leading men and the main performers (usually with objects of wealth) and he has to feed the bulk of the participants in the

ceremony. For in this society, where everything has to be accompanied by gift and counter gift, even the chief has to pay for the services he can command (Malinowski 1921: 10-11). Malinowski (1921: 11-12) describes the chief as a 'tribal banker', whose privileges allow him to collect tribal yield, store it and transfer some of it into permanent wealth, which gives him more power. The chief's economic function is to create objects of wealth and to accumulate provision for tribal use.

2.2.3. The *potlatch* of the north-west coast native Americans

Potlatch is a ceremony practised by native American tribes, such as the Kwakiutl, on the north-west coast of America and Canada. The word *potlatch* itself means 'giving' and that is just what the ceremony is about. It is a feast during which gifts were given to all the guests. It is hard to know what the *potlatch* ceremonies used to look like before the contacts with the whites, since the most detailed descriptions of the ceremonies come from the end of the 19th century. It seems that the ceremony originally was a general-purpose ritual or celebration held on important occasions as birth, naming, puberty, marriage, initiation, peace making, death etc. The *potlatch* was connected with the assumption of honorific positions and titles either by inheritance or by achievement. The chiefs of tribes or the leaders of kinship groups gave the most important *potlatches* for guests of other groups. The prestige acquired through the ceremony depended on the generosity of the hosts. The recipients were expected to repay the generosity later. The objects in the *potlatch* could be 'coppers', big copper trays or shields with the original owner's crest on, bark-cloth blankets, which were later replaced with woollen blankets, seal oil, or canoes. The largest recorded *potlatch* up to 1849 contained 320 blankets, whereas the largest *potlatch* between 1930 and 1949 contained 33 000 blankets (Lewis 1976: 205-206).

Due to the contacts with the white traders and colonialists, changes took place and the ceremonies became even more competitive and aggressive. Thus, the *potlatch* ceremony is an interesting example of how gift-exchange systems adapt to the wider environment. Mainly due to the European illnesses, the Kwakiutl population declined dramatically between 1837 and 1924. Many hereditary titles thus became vacant at the same time as the native Americans had achieved an

unprecedented level of wealth through fur-trading and seasonal employment. As an effect, native Americans of noble families became allowed to hold more than one *potlatch* title at a time. New 'Eagle' titles were also created for the *nouveaux riches*, and women were allowed to enter the lists as well. These new opportunities, combined with the abolition of traditional warfare, added zest to the aggressive and competitive nature of the *potlatch*. Wars were being fought with property instead of weapons and blood. The *potlatch* climaxed in the destruction of coppers and the burning of blankets soaked in precious oils. Even houses were destroyed for the sake of displaying wealth (Lewis 1976: 206-207).

2.3. Saga evidence of gift giving in the Viking Age

Njal's Saga was written around 1280 AD, but is mainly set around the year 1000, in Iceland, and it gives us several valuable glimpses of how the gift giving economy of the Vikings may have functioned. One of the saga's characters is Gunnar Hamundarson who lived on the Hlidarend farm. He was a wealthy farmer, a great warrior and known for being a loyal and generous friend. Even though he was not a chieftain, he was an important man and the leader of his kin group. The saga (ch 47) tells us that Gunnar in a year of starvation had given away so much of his hay that he eventually ran short himself. He, and some of his men, therefore went to Otkel Skarfsson's wealthy farm to obtain some more hay.

Otkel greeted them; Gunnar responded well to the greeting and said, 'The fact is that I have come to buy hay and food, if you have any. '

- I have both, said Otkel, but I will sell you neither.

- Will you then give me some? asked Gunnar. And trust me to be generous in repayment?

Otkel turned down this offer too. Gunnar and his men then suggested taking the hay they wanted and leave a suitable payment for it. Otkel eventually sold Gunnar a slave instead, but the hostility was still evident and larger conflicts between the two households were to follow

Today, Gunnar's attempt to obtain the hay as a gift after having been denied to buy it seems totally illogical. But to medieval readers, the story would have been

perfectly intelligible, and that is why the author does not explain the event with the hay. The whole situation was humiliating for Gunnar, since Otkel was socially inferior. When Gunnar asked for the hay as a gift, he therefore showed that he was prepared to enter into a relationship with, and be obliged to, Otkel. This would look as an excellent offer, too good to turn down. Otkel would have gained in reputation. But Gunnar's mistake was to offer Otkel this only after the attempt to simply buy the hay had failed. Gunnar had revealed that he preferred the neutral form of exchange. He wanted to minimise the social commitment and the lasting ties with the inferior Otkel that a gift would have meant (Hedeager 1994: 130–131).

Gunnar thought he might be able to get away with a neutral purchase since the choice of transaction was wider the larger the social distance between the parties involved was. The larger the social distance between parties, the more neutral or negative the forms of exchange. The socially superior party always received more than the dependant, but this could be concealed when the exchanged objects were different; chiefs were given livestock and agricultural products (raw) and in return gave feasts, transforming the gifts into food (cooked)⁶. Likewise, patrons may give clients food or other necessities in return for support or labour, tithes were paid in return for prayers and masses, military service was performed or taxes paid for protection and justice (Samson 1991a: 94). Friends and allies were maintained with gifts, whereas strangers could be plundered to obtain the necessary surplus. *Egils Saga* (c. 46) for example, describes the slaughter of everyone at a farmstead during a Viking trip with approval, and *Orkneyinga Saga* contains plenty of references to summer raiding tours (e. g. ch 8, 9, 11, 22, 100), and also a description of the violent plundering of a merchant dromond ship close to Sardinia (ch 87-88).

That gift giving was an important feature in the Viking Age can for example be seen in the Eddaic *Hávamál* (ch 145), which states that 'gifts should be reciprocated'. The necessity of a suitable compensation for a gift is also inscribed in the Norwegian *Gulaping law* that was written down around 1250 (Gurevich 1979: 81). Generosity, the basis for the gift giving and subsequently also for society as a whole, was praised. *Hávamál* states:

⁶ See Lévi-Strauss (1963; 1969) for a discussion on binary oppositions like these.

Friends should rejoice each other's heart with gifts of weapons and raiment, that is clear from one's own experience. That friendship lasts longest – if there is a chance of it being a success – in which the friends both give and receive gifts (ch 41).

A man ought to be a friend to his friend and repay gift with gift. People should meet smiles with smiles and lies with treachery (ch 42).

Know - if you have a friend in whom you have sure confidence and wish to make use of him, you ought to exchange ideas and gifts with him and go to see him often (ch 44).

Hedeager (1994: 132-133) points out that wealth⁷ in the Viking world was not a passive accumulation of gold and silver, hidden in the ground or in a chest. Wealth was not material, but high positions in society, alliances and connections. Gold and silver were the means with which to obtain this, so it was practically impossible to demonstrate one's wealth without giving much of it away, which was probably what Gunnar in *Njal's Saga*, above, had done with his hay. The kings and chieftains in the Viking 'warrior society', as Hedeager (1994: 132) labels it, were lords but above all distributors. They distributed weapons, gold, silver and feasts. They were also warlords, because the treasures they gave away had to come from somewhere, namely war, plundering and piracy together with their great landholdings. The purpose of the gift giving system was to tie the best men to the chieftain's retinue and the most powerful lords as his allies, so that his reputation was secured.

The continuous struggle to acquire as many followers as possible, and to acquire the support from as many important men as possible, is very clear in the sagas. Therefore, they contain frequent examples of great feasts and gift giving. In *Njal's Saga* (ch 31), for instance, Gunnar was offered 'wife and wealth' if he stayed with the king in Denmark. And in ch 35, the close friendship between Njal and Gunnar is illustrated by the fact that the two men used to invite each other to an autumn feast. Without this crucial support from one's friends, one's power in society disappeared, and one was left helpless in times of conflict. Gunnar's many allies turned out to be quite useful at the Althing⁸:

⁷ Wason (1994:125) defines wealth as items of value that anyone can possess if they have the means. Sumptuary goods, symbols of status, on the other hand can only be owned or used by people of a certain status.

⁸ The General Assembly in Iceland

Gunnar's kinsmen contributed enough money to pay all the compensation immediately, at the Althing /.../. Gunnar rode home from the Althing. He thanked people for their support and gave them many gifts. He gained in credit from all this; and now he stayed at home, in high esteem (*Njal's Saga* ch 56).

The way in which the aristocracy sustained the gift giving economy can be seen, perhaps somewhat exaggerated, in the *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 105)⁹, which tells us about Svein Asleifarson, who died around 1171:

This is how Svein used to live. Winter he would spend at home on Gairsay, where he entertained some eighty men at his own expense. His drinking hall was so big, there was nothing in Orkney to compare it with. In the spring he had more than enough to occupy him, with a great deal of seed to sow which he saw to carefully himself. Then when that job was done, he would go off plundering in the Hebrides and in Ireland on what he called his 'spring trip', then back home just after Midsummer, where he stayed till the cornfields had been reaped and the grain was safely in. After that he would go off raiding again, and never came back until the first month of winter was ended. This he used to call his 'autumn trip'.

The purpose of these tours was to collect the necessary valuables to secure his reputation and the continued loyalty of his retinue and allies. Hedeager (1994: 133) argues that the raiding itself was seen as an exchange; the foreigners had a choice between handing over their valuables as gifts in return for which they escaped alive, or they could refuse such a transaction and face plundering or death. According to this theory, even the raiding was in agreement with the society's rules of exchange and reciprocity.

In the *Saga of the Volsungs*, absence of exchange reveals information about the exchange system and we are shown what consequences hoarding without a social purpose can have. The transactions are not the results of voluntary gift giving, but of asocial behaviour such as theft, killing, treachery and hoarding by Fafnir. He turned into a dragon, guarding his hoard with no intention of putting it to social use. This behaviour refuses all social relationships and alliances; it is the negation of exchange.

⁹ The spelling of names of individuals and places in *Orkneyinga Saga*, and quotations from the text have been kept in accordance with the English translation by Pálsson and Edwards (1978), unless otherwise mentioned.

A chain of killings accompanies these. The killings only stopped when the hoard was lowered in to the Rhine, and everybody who knew about it was dead.

To understand the implications of gift giving in Scandinavian societies, the sagas are useful since they are morally instructive. If the rules for exchange were followed, good things would follow and society function well. If the rules were violated, it would lead to the collapse of social communication and *Ragnarök*, the end of the world, would follow. Hoarding was a must for generous gift giving, but when hoarding became a goal in itself, it was disgraceful. Just as generosity and bravery were the most praised characteristics a man could possess, stinginess and cowardice were the most ridiculed and disgraceful (Vestergaard 1991: 99- 102).

As mentioned earlier, the forms of the transactions depended on the actors' social positions and the size and power of their following. *Eyrbyggja Saga*¹⁰ (ch 58) makes this clear:

Thorir asked Ospak and his men were they had got the goods they were carrying. Ospak said that they had got them at Thambardale. When asked how he had got them, Ospak answered:

- It wasn't given or sold, said Ospak, and nothing was paid for it.

Ospak had earlier that evening raided a house and got away with the goods, and that was what he told Thorir. This was not thievery however, and that is why Ospak did not try to hide the raiding. He had acquired the goods from a *rán*, an open hostile taking, which was different from theft, a concealed act (Miller 1986: 18).

Ospak is listing the different types of transactions two people of roughly the same social ranking could chose from when dealing with one another. There were gifts, payments (presumably by way of compensation in the settlement of a claim), purchases and the asocial *rán*. *Rán* was also what Gunnar's men suggested when Otkel refused to sell them the hay they wanted, in *Njal's Saga* (above) (Miller 1986: 18-19).

Just as the social ranking of the people involved in an exchange influenced the form of transaction, the maintenance of a relationship also depended on the parties' social position. Gunnar's and Njal's habit of inviting each other to an autumn feast alternating years is an example of this (*Njal's Saga* ch 35).

Orkneyinga Saga (ch 16) contains an example of how vertical relationships (relationships between people on different social levels) functioned:

Earl Thorfinn sailed east to Norway and King Olaf gave him a cheerful welcome. Thorfinn stayed there for a good part of the summer and when he was ready to go back home King Olaf gave him a fine, big, fully equipped long ship.

A less smooth vertical relationship can be seen between Gunnar and Otkel in *Njal's Saga*, where Otkel refuses to acknowledge the social gap between him and Gunnar. Buying, a neutral transaction without social implications, normally seems to have been the way socially distant people exchanged goods. Attempts to trade with equals within the community often led to conflicts (Miller 1986: 46-47). In *Njal's Saga* (ch 149), where Flosi buys a ship, it is from a stranger and the deal also includes a favour, support in a marriage settlement, as if it was still difficult not to form a more lasting friendship tie.

2.4. Archaeological evidence of gift exchange in Scandinavia

2.4.1. Background

A prestige goods economy had connected northern Europe to the rest of the continent since the second millennium BC. During the 7th and 6th centuries BC the metal supplies in central Europe declined, and so did the prestige goods exchange. The exchange increased again during the last couple of centuries BC, however. The period around 600 BC was a turning point; political and economic activities started to accelerate in the Mediterranean area and the interaction between this area and the areas north of the Alps intensified. Raw materials as iron, copper, salt, amber, wool, hides and perhaps slaves were exported to the Mediterranean, and exotic goods as bronze objects, worked amber and other luxury items went the other way (Jensen 1982: 232-237). Prestige goods exchange dealt with few categories of objects and rarely food since the communications were too insecure to depend upon for

¹⁰ The spelling of names of individuals and places in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, and quotations from the text have been kept in accordance with the English translation by Pálson and Edwards (1973).

necessities. The Central European oppida developed in this context around the last century BC. As the trade developed even more over the centuries, parasites such as the Vikings developed too, to take advantage of all the riches being exchanged (Jensen 1982: 248-250).

This early stage of gift exchange in Europe can be seen in the graves and deposits. One example is the famous Gundestrup cauldron, which has been dated to the first century BC. This huge silver cauldron was found in Denmark, interpreted as an offering, and it probably originates from south-east Europe (Jensen 1982: 237, 260). The cauldron is made of decorated silver plates. The seven outer plates depict men and women with various attributes who have been interpreted as gods. The five inner plates depict scenes featuring warriors and human sacrifices (Hårdh 1985: 141). The Brå cauldron, also a presumed offering found in Denmark, is dated to the third century BC and originates from Central Europe. Danish graves contain wealth objects too, like central European wagons and Mediterranean drinking equipment (Jensen 1982: 237-238).

2.4.2. Westland cauldrons

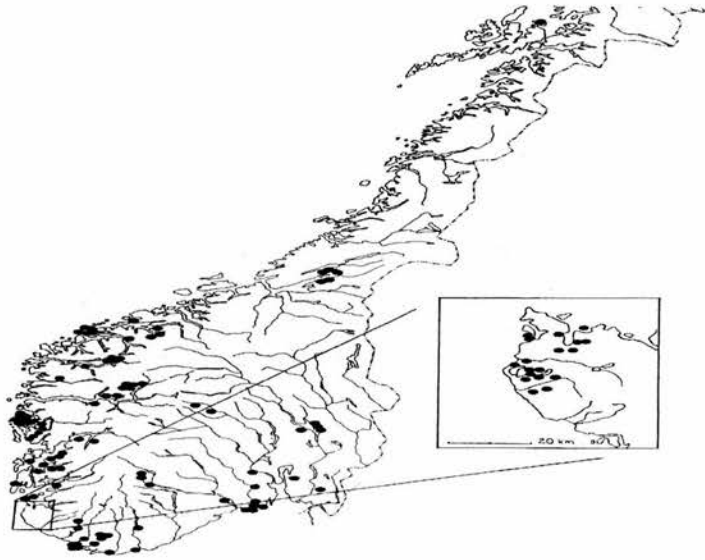
There are also later examples of gift exchange in the archaeological material: The largest group of Roman imports in Norway from the late Roman Iron Age and the Migration period (which together constitute a period roughly from 375 to 575 AD) is the so-called Westland cauldrons. These cauldrons are made of bronze, have round bottoms and the diameter of the belly is larger than the rim's. These objects are mainly found in western Norway, which has given them their name (Dahlin Hauken 1991: 105).

The majority of graves containing Westland cauldrons belonged to farms in the upper social class in their regions and was characteristically equipped with goods of high quality. Since the cauldrons were imported and are not to be considered as necessities, Dahlin Hauken (Hauken 1984 in Dahlin Hauken 1991: 105) interprets them as high status objects and prestige goods.

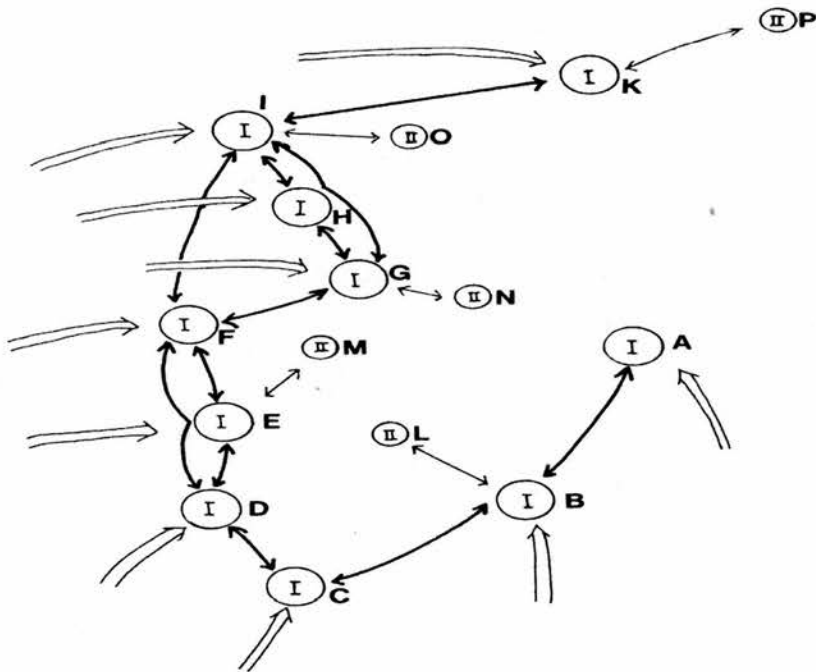
Cauldrons like these are also found in mainland Europe and in England, but in much fewer numbers than in Norway. A distribution pattern like this, in which the

quantity of an object increases with the distance from the source, is characteristic of prestige goods. Such objects were transported over long distances via chieftains and kings (Hedeager 1978: 213). Dahlin Hauken (1991: 107) puts the cauldrons in association with gift giving and vertical relationships in Norway. Since the socially inferior part in such a relationship is unable to return a gift of equal value, loyalty is provided instead. By using this technique, a leader can tie more allies to himself and expand his area of influence. A classic example of vertical relationships is the Roman patron–client system. There are 112 Westland cauldrons in Norway and a further 32 have gone missing over the years; so less than one cauldron per year survives for the course of 200 years. Even though all the cauldrons that once existed probably have not been found, it cannot be assumed that more than a few arrived in Norway each year. Such a small number does not suggest an organised, profit motivated trade. The small and apparently even supply of Westland cauldrons to Norway over a long period of time fits the gift exchange model (Hedeager 1978). This would also explain why cauldrons are found on farms and graves that clearly do not belong to the upper class (Dahlin Hauken 1991: 107-109).

The cauldrons' geographical distribution pattern is uneven (Ill. 3). The clusters are in areas situated along communication routes, which allowed the control of traffic. The areas are also good farmland and can combine resources from sea, land and mountain areas. This led to the accumulation of a surplus necessary to enter into the gift-exchanging sphere of the Westland cauldrons. But not every cauldron was buried with the person who brought it to Norway by exchanging gifts with a foreign leader. The distribution pattern shows that regional exchange followed (Ill. 4). Dahlin Hauken (1991: 109-110) sees two different distribution patterns within Norway: The areas with many cauldrons are interpreted as primary recipients. Between these areas cauldrons and other status objects were exchanged in horizontal social relationships. The relationship of primary to secondary recipient areas may have been either horizontal or vertical but most often vertical, hence the finds of cauldrons in graves and farms outside the wealthy farms and graves.



III. 3. The distribution of Westland cauldrons in Norway (Dahlin Hauken 1991: 108).



III. 4. Model of the gift exchange of cauldrons. I= the primary recipient areas. II= the secondary recipient areas. The schematic areas (A, B, C etc) correspond to regions of Norway (Dahlin Hauken 1991: 110).

2.5. Discussion

It seems quite clear, judging from the sagas, the anthropological comparisons and the archaeological material, that the Viking Age society in Scandinavia had a substantial gift giving sphere, which largely operated according to the principles pointed out by Mauss (1954), Bourdieu (1990) and Samson (1991a). Gift giving was not a simple, idyllic exchange of nice presents just for the fun of it. A lot of tactics, politics and prestige were involved. Bourdieu (1990: 105) argues that this was not openly admitted, that even though the intentions behind the transactions were understood by most, they still had to be denied. If not, the transactions did not proceed smoothly. An example of this is Gunnar's attempt to buy the hay instead of offering a gift exchange first (*Njal's Saga* ch 47). By doing this, he revealed his true intentions, and complications followed. Sometimes in the sagas, the intentions were clearly understood by the parties, but still not quite admitted. In *Njal's Saga* (ch 108) Mord gives the Njalssons great gifts after a feast. But their father Njal said that they had probably bought these gifts dearly and said '/.../ take care you do not repay him the way he wants'. Thus, it was obvious and admitted that the Njalssons were indebted to Mord, and would be asked to do something in return for the nice gifts. But Mord could not have given the Njalssons the gifts while explaining exactly what he wanted in return. That part of the system had to be denied. In the sagas, the exchanged objects do seem to be important, just as argued by Samson (1991a: 92). This seems only natural in a society where everything revolves around wealth, prestige and conspicuous consumption. Exchange just for the sake of it may be the case in less hierarchical and competitive societies. In the Viking world, however, the one who could give away the most and finest gifts got the power. *Hávamál* clearly points out the importance of gaining prestige and a good reputation:

Happy is the man who wins for himself a reputation and popularity /.../ (ch 8).

Cattle die, kinsfolk die, even to ourselves will death come. But the good fame which a man has won for himself will never die (ch 76).

The story about Gunnar and the hay (*Njal's Saga* ch 47) shows that we have to think about the Viking Age economy in different ways than we think about our own. Here, social anthropology can offer helpful assistance. If we know about other cultures' economic systems, the gift giving of the Vikings do not appear so strange and mysterious any more. Wealth in itself was not power, as it may be today. Instead, wealth had to be used to get allies, pay compensation for injuries and deaths caused to enemies, and for display. Great feasts, for example, seem to be a universal way of displaying wealth and gaining allies, and as DeMarris et al (1996: 17-18) point out also a way to integrate and define groups of allies and make them dependant. As the Trobrianders, the Vikings constantly faced economic considerations, and gift giving was a 'total social fact' (Mauss 1954) affecting the whole society. In fact, the Hoskuldssons' feast (*Laxdaela Saga* c. 27), mentioned in chapter 1, does not look very different from a *potlatch* ceremony: It was held in memory of a dead person, relationships were renegotiated and restructured, and generous gifts were given to the guests.

The saga material is very useful for our understanding of the Viking Age and often support the anthropologically influenced theories. Critics may argue that the sagas cannot be trusted as true historical accounts of the Viking Age, since they were written down in medieval times. But even if the sagas' stories would prove to be just stories, they would still be useful. The sagas were morally instructive, and show us what rules were present in the society. Maybe they can be compared to today's soap operas and novels; even if they do not always tell of real persons and actual events, they still say a great deal about our society and its values.

The story about Svein Asleifarson in *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 105) shows that to be rich in the Scandinavian Viking Age was not to have a lot of money or valuables, but to have many allies and contacts, which is acquired through generous gift giving. *Orkneyinga Saga* illustrates that it was necessary to have great incomes in order to keep one's position in society. Those who did not use their wealth, but hoarded just for the sake of it, faced trouble, like Fafnir in *The Saga of the Volsungs*. Maybe the view that hoarding was shameful explains why hoards were secretly kept in the ground until ready to be given away? There may well have been a fear of being accused of being stingy and hiding valuables away from one's friends and allies.

That one was collecting valuables for an especially promising opportunity (maybe to get a powerful new friend), instead of giving several minor gifts to already established friends and allies, would of course not look good if it was discovered, since one's true intentions and strategical plans (gaining as much as possible for oneself) had to be concealed.

According to Hedeager (1994: 133), the whole society was dominated by gift giving, and even the raiding and plundering were integrated parts of the gift giving system. During plundering, she says, the attacked people could choose between giving their valuables away and thus be given the right to live as a counter gift, or they could refuse to surrender their possessions and be killed. This sounds a bit too good and well organised to be true, and cannot be found in the either *Njal's Saga* or *Orkneyinga Saga* which are both filled with murders and plundering. Hedeager does not say where she got this explanation from, but it looks more like an excellent after-construction and a justification for the behaviour of the Vikings than a historical fact. *Egils Saga*, with its complementary description of violence and murder, indicates that violence was not always avoided and sometimes an appreciated part of raiding.

That real wealth was allies and a high position in society may have interesting implications for the Viking settlements outside Scandinavia. Did the Vikings gain power in their new settlement areas by manoeuvring the old leaders out by being more generous and thus gaining more allies than the previous native leaders? Were these allies native Picts or other Scandinavians in Orkney? The hoards of Scandinavian origin found in these areas do not necessarily mean that the objects belonged to rich and powerful Scandinavians just before they were hidden away. Actually, the Scandinavians might just as well have given these hoarded objects to the native population. They could have done this in order to get their support in return (vertical relationships). That theory assumes that the Scandinavians had become the new rulers, in need of followers. If however, this was not the case, another possibility could be that the Scandinavians gave the stronger natives the hoarded objects as tributes in return for being allowed to settle in their areas. The hoards could also be the results of trade between natives and newcomers. Questions like these will be more closely examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. Hoards and Economy

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will look at the hoards in Scandinavia and Scotland. The aim is to achieve a better understanding of the economic system and its development during the Viking Age. As we saw in the previous chapter, economic and social considerations were tangled up in the Viking Age. Thus, the hoards may shed light on more than just the economic side of Viking Age society, and the hoards in Orkney may reveal information on the relationship between the Picts and the Norse. First of all, however, we will turn our attention to the concepts of money and hoarding themselves. What was money, and how did transactions work before proper coinage was minted? Why did people hide their valuables? Were they offerings to the Gods, hidden in times of warfare or gifts being collected until the time was right to give them away? What economic functions may the hoarded objects have had? Did different types of objects have different meanings?

3.2. Money and economic spheres, introduction

Money generally has four different economic functions: as a means of payment (as in our society), a means of exchange (the possibility to swap money for an object, which is slightly different from using money as a means of payment. Fines are for example *paid*), standard of value, and value guarantor (makes it possible to swap £1 worth of chocolate for £1 of paper without any of the parties having to actually own £1). When money has all these functions, as in our society today, it is called *all-purpose money*. When it only has one or some of the functions, it is called *special purpose money* (Hastrup & Ovesen 1982: 208).

Bohannon (1963) pointed out that in societies without an all-purpose function of money, the exchange of goods and services is often organised into different spheres. Societies with a peripheral or no market principle have such *multicentric* economies. In the different spheres, different means of payment, goods and services circulate, and within the various spheres different principles of exchange and

different moral evaluations may operate. Objects that belong to one sphere cannot be exchanged with objects from another sphere. Hastrup and Ovesen (1982: 209) give a good example of this: just as we find it impossible to buy a TV-license with an insurance policy (even though both were originally bought for money), it can be impossible to buy a bag of rice with jewellery in a society with sphere economy. In practically all cases where the modern use of all-purpose money has been introduced into societies with a sphere economy, the borders between the traditional spheres have broken down as a result (see anthropological examples of sphere economies below).

There may also be differences between internal and external trade. Odner (1974: 106, 109) argues that Iceland and Norway, in medieval and Viking times, had a variety of resources to exploit, as pastures, fish, sea birds, whales, peat and drift wood. The fundamental unit in this landscape was the individual farm, but the individual farms had to organise themselves into larger units for protection, as they were vulnerable on their own. The chieftains, the *goðar*, were the leaders of this organisation. In return for protection, the farmers gave the chieftains some of their surplus produce (Odner 1974: 106-107). Odner (1974: 107) also argues that the uneven resources contributed to the organisation of the farms into larger units. Since some of the resources were only available during the summer (e. g. pastures, grass, eggs from sea birds, salmon), and some resources only occurred erratically (e. g. whales and driftwood), certain farms had to specialise in certain resources and then redistribute the produce to achieve an effective exploitation pattern. Odner (1974: 108) divides the goods produced by the farms into two different categories:

Subsistence products: These were not sold on the open market, but allocated back in to the farming community.

Marketable products: These products, e. g. cloth and furs, could be sold for money in Western Europe through middlemen. The money could then be used to obtain luxuries.

Odner (1974: 108-109, 111) argues that money had limited use in society, which was still based in traditional authority, prestige and old-fashioned exchange and gift giving. This had the consequence that internal trade was little developed. The chieftains who set the prices could expel the merchants and regulate the traders that did arrive to Iceland. The economic, social and political organisations were all against market exchange (Odner 1974: 111).

When bureaucratic administration was developed and the king was the ultimate authority in society, the economy changed, as the chieftains' powers were limited and since the king could guarantee security for the merchants. This process took place in western and northern Europe during the Viking Age and a monetary system was introduced.

Odner (1974: 112) argues that trade in Iceland can be divided into three different categories of transactions:

Market exchange: impersonal

Redistribution: organised by the chieftains

Gift exchange: traditional

These spheres correspond to the three basic economic principles established by Polanyi (1957; 1959): redistribution, reciprocity and market exchange. He saw these modes of exchange as opposites and as reflecting fundamentally different social means of distribution. He thought that all societies were characterised by one of the modes of exchange. Polanyi's followers in economic anthropology have recognised that all three modes can occur in the same society, but they still argue that one model is likely to be dominant.

According to Hårdh (1978: 162-163), Odner (1974) underestimates the importance of the money-using sphere. The insignificant local trade that he argues existed in the Viking Age may have been the case in Iceland, but not in the south of Sweden. Hårdh argues that this shows that a model based on evidence from one region cannot simply be applied to another area, where the natural resources and premises for exchanging products were different. Later in this chapter, we will investigate the situation in Orkney.

3.3. Anthropological examples of sphere economies

3.3.1. Introduction

Lewis (1976: 212) points out that we have a range of special purpose currencies in our own society; gift-tokens and luncheon vouchers for example. Benefits such as company cars are also replacements for money. But what may special purpose money look like in other cultures? How do 'primitive' sphere economies work, and can they shed any light on prehistoric economic systems? There are often three different spheres in a multicentric economy, as the following examples will show. Lewis (1976: 218) points out that these can be simplified as a dichotomy between subsistence and non-subsistence goods:

3.3.2. The Island of Tikopia

On the Polynesian Island of Tikopia, there are three different categories of exchanges (Firth 1939):

1. Food and other subsistence items are used as rewards for small services and goods of low value.
2. Bark-cloth, coils of sinnet cord and pandanus mats are used in more important transactions, to acquire specialist craft services.
3. Bonito fishing hooks of shell, cylinders of turmeric and canoes are highly priced items, which are usually controlled and held by chiefs, and therefore associated with power and prestige.

These three separate sets of goods are used in socially separate contexts. It is impossible to express the value of a bonito-hook in terms of a certain quantity of food for example. Transactions like that are never made. A canoe's value can be expressed in bonito-hooks, however, since these objects belong to the same sphere.

3.3.3. The Siane of New Guinea

The Siane also has three different and separate spheres for transactions (Salisbury 1963):

1. 'Nothing things', which include subsistence goods and help offered by kinsmen.
2. 'Luxuries', which include tobacco, palm oil, pandanus nuts, salt, stone-axe blades, palm wood for spears and certain imported European objects.
3. 'Valuables', which are used only in ceremonial, competitive exchange (*gima*) between exogamous¹¹ groups. This category of transactions includes the transfer of women as wives from one group to another, scarce cassowary feather head-dresses, ornamental stone-axes, dog's teeth necklaces, bird of paradise plumes, certain shells and pigs are also included.

That scarcity is an important feature of the more prestigious items in this scheme can be seen in the treatment of European currency. When European coins were still rare, they were treated as valuables. By the 1950's, pound notes were regarded as valuables whereas coins were treated as luxuries. This caused problems, since notes could not be converted in to coins. Further, the use of European currency in external transactions threatened the whole traditional sphere economy (Lewis 1976: 216-217).

3.3.4. The Tiv of Nigeria

The Tiv are perhaps the most famous example of a sphere economy that broke down when European all-purpose money was introduced. The Tiv also had three separate spheres (Bohannon & Bohannon 1969):

1. Subsistence and commercial trading in chickens, goats, sheep, calabashes, baskets, pots, beds, chairs and other household articles.

¹¹ Exogamy: the rule is to marry outside one's own social or kinship group (Keesing 1981: 511).

2. Prestige items such as slaves, cattle, horses, and ritual possessions as cloth, brass rods, medicines and magic.
3. People, especially rights in women and children.

According to the traditional rules, like should be traded for like, or even better; into goods of a higher ranking. Conversions upwards were approved, whereas conversions downwards were discouraged and only turned to in emergencies.

The substitution of money in many transactions, and its adoption as the only legal means of acquiring wives made conversions between consumer goods and more valuable goods easy and attractive. The Tiv sold their subsistence products for money, and used that to buy valuables and women. Since the supply of women was limited, their price increased with the demand. It became more and more expensive to marry and harder and harder to live off the land.

3.4. The phenomenon of hoarding

3.4.1. Introduction

Hoarding took place throughout prehistory and also before banks became established and trusted in historic times. The practice of hiding money in the mattress is quite well known, for example. There are a number of theories about the reasons behind the practice of hoarding. Were the hoards offerings to the gods, buried in times of danger or simply accumulated until the time was right to spend the content? This section will look at different sorts of hoards and some of the explanations that have been proposed for their occurrence.

3.4.2. Different categories of hoards

There are two main categories of hoarded objects: those that could be relatively easily recovered and the ones that could not. In general, this is at the same time a distinction between wet and dry land deposits. However, the Germanic epic *Nibelungenlied*, in which a great treasure was hidden in the Rhine with the intention

to retrieve it later, show that we should be cautious in our generalisations (Bradley 1990: 1-6).

Another distinction can be made between single and multiple finds. Bradley (1990: 6) points out that it is possible that the single finds we often assume to be losses, even if their value and fine condition sometimes makes this explanation look unlikely, can be residues of larger hoards. Similarly, objects recovered through dredging may not have been hoarded together.

Levy (1982) has tried to distinguish between ritual and non-ritual hoards in the Bronze Age by using cross-cultural generalisation and the Roman historian Tacitus' writings. According to Levy, ritual hoards are generally connected to wet places, or burials, away from settlements. They may be associated with only parts of the population and therefore contain a restricted range of objects. The ritual hoards can contain special kinds of personal ornaments, figurines, musical instruments or weapons. The objects may be buried at a great depth. Traces of slaughter and food are also indicators. The non-ritual hoards may be buried at less depth, have a marked position and contain small personal valuables and tools. Some of the metal objects can be damaged and raw material and metal working residues may also occur. These hoards are not associated with any food remains (summary in Table 1).

In Bradley's (1998) revised discussion on Bronze Age hoards, the distinction between ritual and non-ritual hoards is put into question. However, the Viking Age material is less ambiguous, and Levy's (1982) model, if somewhat unrefined, is sufficient to remind us that people had other reasons than economic ones to hoard objects in prehistory.

Ritual hoards:

Locations: Bogs, springs, wells, groves, burial mounds, deep pits.

Range of items: High proportion of weapons, ornaments and ceremonial objects. Animal bones or other food remains may be present.

Conditions of artefacts: Mainly whole objects, formal arrangement.

Non-ritual hoards:

Locations: Dry land, may have marker stones.

Range of items: High proportion of tools, simpler personal ornaments, simpler forms of weapons, multiples of one type of object.

Condition of artefacts: Often damaged and/or broken, metalworking residues, freshly made objects.

Table 1. A summary of Levy's (1982) criteria for ritual and non-ritual hoards (After Bradley 1990: 14).

3.4.3. Explanations for hoarding

There are a number of explanations for the occurrence of hoards. The two main theories involve either religious offerings or storage during violent periods:

3.4.3.1. Theories based on religion.

Hubert and Mauss (1964: 11-12) have defined the differences between sacrifices and offerings: offerings are artefacts, whose nature cannot be changed, whereas the point of sacrifices is that a change is taking place, making the sacrificed thing sacred. Because of this necessary change in nature, only living things, such as humans, animals and vegetables can be sacrificed.

The association between valuable artefacts and water appears to develop during the late Mesolithic (Koch 1998) and becomes fully developed during the Neolithic. It continued into the first millennium AD (Bradley 1990: 5). The river deposits appear to be sacrifices and offerings since they were hard to retrieve,

contain a limited range of 'male' artefacts, and since they often are connected with food remains (Bradley 1990: 23-24). In Scandinavia, ceremonial equipment has been deposited deliberately in watery locations. Examples of this are the Trundholm sun chariot, the Gundestrup cauldron and the bronze lures, which are only found in rock art and watery locations (Bradley 1990: 29).

Levy (1982) argues that offerings can increase solidarity in a community, since it stops too much wealth being gathered by a small group of people. According to her theory, the wealthy families or individuals would express their power and status by depositing their valuables in a well or bog, from which it could not be retrieved. This would give the family or individual status and reduce the social tensions in the community. However, as Bradley (1990: 37-38) points out, it is hard to see how the social tensions could be reduced at the same time as the elite gained even more status through their conspicuous consumption.

In some cultures, prestige seems to be derived through the collection of valuables, whereas in others, through their destruction. Gregory (1980; 1982) argues that both these situations are variants of gift exchange. In gift exchange systems, it is easy to build up an advantage, but hard to sustain it over time. The solution to this is, according to Gregory, gifts to the gods. He argues that offerings are ideal for competitive consumption since the valuables are taken out of circulation. In ordinary gift exchange, the same valuables move back and forward in the system until the stakes are so high that economic ruin follows for one or more of the involved parties. Through offerings, the amount of valuables present in society decreases and cannot be used by a rival in other prestige giving transactions. Giving gifts to the gods also indebted the gods, just as gifts to humans and therefore the giver could expect good fortune and help from the gods in return for the gift.

Bradley (1990: 138) points out that burials could have been used for social display as well. The grave goods may just as well have belonged to the mourners as the dead person, and the family could have taken the opportunity to display their power and secure their position in society. There is also a possibility that the river finds are funeral gifts.

3.4.3.2. Theories based on war.

If many hoards are thought to date from the same period, it is tempting to interpret these as having been hidden in times of unrest. However, this theory depends totally on the precision of dating and it is not that easy to point out 'hoarding horizons'. It is easy to end up in a circular argument where the hoarded objects and the assumed crisis are seen as evidence of each other (Bradley 1990: 19). As Bradley (1990: 20-21) points out, peaks in hoarding tell us more about the conditions that led to the objects' loss than the reason for their hiding.

Even though some hoards are most likely to have been hidden away during violent times, it is also clear that unrest is an insufficient explanation for the vast amount of hoards in some areas. There must have been other factors behind the hoards as well. Malmer (1985) points out that war and devastation are only some of many reasons for hiding precious metal in the earth, and that if devastation can be directly related to the density of finds, Viking Age Gotland must have been approximately 20 times more devastated than the neighbouring coastal province. Bradley (1982: 116) has a similar argument and says that if all deposits were made due to violence, conflicts must have been never ending, and why would people hide weapons or throw them in to rivers in times of warfare?

Malmer (1985: 190) argues that it would be unreasonable to withhold large amounts of coinage from circulation. Yes, but only in a modern capitalist society like ours, as Samson (1991b: 130) points out. The wealthy people in the Viking Age or in the medieval society often had their assets tied up in jewellery, ornaments or treasures. The freezing of capital was hardly unreasonable in the Middle Ages. Gaimster (1991: 114) also points out that the hoarding has to be understood as a part of the Viking Age society and cannot be compared to a capitalist economy. She points out that the theories that claim that hoarding was a reaction to war and unrest suggest that the silver normally was in continuous circulation. This is the case in our society, but not necessarily in the Viking world, she argues. Instead, the hoarded material may have been more personal belongings. This is supported by investigations on Gotland, where hoards were deposited within settlements and where new hoards were constantly being buried throughout the occupation

(Östergren 1983: 47). Analyses of Öland hoards indicate that the foreign coins did not circulate for very long after importation but were buried with jewellery and other silver (Malmer 1983: 252). This leads Gaimster (1991: 114) to argue that in a society without a continuous economic function for coins, they end up 'hidden in a forgotten drawer'.

3.4.4 The nature of the Viking Age hoards

The Viking Age silver hoards from Scandinavia and Scotland do not appear to be votive deposits, since they are not found in such a context (Levy 1982), and they appear to have been intended for retrieval. That leaves us with the 'storage during warfare theories'. These arguments either imply that coins and other valuable objects were only hidden in times of unrest and warfare, or that they were hidden continuously since they did not have any functions in society. As Malmer (1985) pointed out above, there appear to have been other reasons than violence for hoarding. Ritchie (1993: 19) points out that before safes and banks the best way to protect one's valuables was to bury them. And what better place than close to one's house, as on Gotland, or in another safe place close by, for example a ruin or church, places which may have been thought to offer a special kind of protection? But, were the valuables hidden there because they had no function, as Gaimster (1991: 114) argues? If that was the case, why would anyone bother to hide the objects in the first place?

If we assume that the objects were hidden because of their value, but not always in times of warfare, what explanation does that leave us with? Samson (1991b: 131) argues that the hoards were a part of the gift giving system and that they were not intended to stay in the ground forever. The hoards were just hidden in the ground while their owner was collecting wealth to give away. He suggests that the small hoards could represent the planned gifts to important farmers and large hoards could be intended for chieftains or petty kings. The small hoards could also be in an early stage of the accumulation process, perhaps they are preparations for big feasts or lawsuits. The growing hoard may have been necessary to hide because accumulation was secretive, or because the accumulation of wealth was seen



differently than other private property. It was probably important to keep the hoarding secret, since the wealth would cause a lot of gift requests. Samson (1991b: 132) points out that early hoards contain more hacksilver and jewellery than the later hoards. This might point to the types of exchange they were derived from, or to the aim they were being collected for. Either way, Samson (1991b: 132-133) says, the early hoards seem to be better suited for gifts to friends and allies. The later hoards look more suited for balanced exchange, purchase and sale. The bigger amounts of silver in the later hoards indicate greater competition and larger stakes, which led to increased violence. With the state formation taking place, bonds and relationships changed and the hoards of this time contain more coins than before, which indicates that neutral exchange was more frequent than the old gift giving. The increasingly violent competition among the ever fewer big men led to fighting with silver as well as with weapons.

Samson argues that hoarding did not end because peace finally reigned. Violence only took on a new form, sanctioned by the state as foreign wars or against 'usurpers' or 'rebels'. Hoarding ended, he says, because the main source of political power changed. Land and estates were the source of power, not territories and followers. Silver was used in buying and selling, not in competitive giving. (Samson 1991b: 133).

3.5. Hoards and economy in Scandinavia

3.5.1. The economic system in Viking Scandinavia

'Whatever the Vikings did on their expeditions they did it with sword in hand. /.../ Vikings were warriors' (Hedeager 1994: 133). Hedeager (1994: 135) claims that the aim of the Vikings' expeditions, in the west as well as in the east, was to get hold of gold and silver. The peaceful and trading Vikings, as presented in the Arab sources, were only behaving well temporarily, in the big markets. After all, Hedeager (1994: 135) says, the goods they were trading in came from plundering, slave trading or extortion from a part of the population unable to record the events.

Samson (1991b: 124-127) too argues that the Vikings were not merchants. But he has a different point of departure, namely the sagas. Merchants try to sell their goods for money, with which they buy other goods to sell for even more money, etc. But Samson (1991b: 124-127) argues that the Vikings' production and exchange was different from this, and that it was essentially goal orientated. Samson (1991b: 125) points out that the sagas often talk about trips to Norway from Iceland to buy timber: In *Laxdaela Saga*, for instance, Thorkel Eyjolfsson went to get timber for a church that he was planning to build. Also, Hoskuld Dala-Kollsson wanted a more impressive home, so he bought a ship and went to Norway to buy timber for a bigger and better house. As a third example, the sagas mention that Olaf Hoskuldsson brought along timber when he returned from Norway. Thus, Samson (1991b: 125) points out, we do not find any 'timber merchants' who bought timber to sell on the Icelandic market in order to make a profit, and be able to get more timber to sell etc. He argues that the goal-orientated system of the Vikings creates different economic phenomena than capitalist markets. For example, he points out, production often drops in third world countries as cash-crop prices rise and vice versa. The reason for this is that production stops when the goal, a certain sum of money to pay taxes and buy essentials, is met. In capitalist markets, money is the goal, so production increases as prices increase. Samson (1991b: 125) points out that similarly, in *Njal's Saga*, (c. 11) Thorvald complains when his wife's running of the household had made provisions run low, even though they had laid in no less food than usual. Thorvald dried more fish, but he was reluctant to do more since he had met his goal.

Samson (1991b: 125) argues that the Vikings who sailed to Staraja Ladoga were not looking for goods that they could buy and then sell at home in Scandinavia and make a profit. Samson (1991b: 125-126) uses characteristics of Icelandic traders, as portrayed in the sagas, to prove this point:

- 1) The goal of their expeditions was to acquire specific goods, whether utilitarian or luxury, to build a better house or a bigger church for instance, not simply to gather wealth.
- 2) They were most often men of high positions in the society, wealthy farmers or chieftains (*bondar* and *goðar*).

- 3) They travelled abroad when they were young, before settling down on a farm. Trading expeditions seem to have been aimed at improving trader's reputation and local position. Perhaps the expeditions were undertaken because their fathers still lived and they awaited their inheritance.
- 4) Their trading was filled with violence. Svein Asleifarson in Orkney, above, could hardly be called a merchant for instance.

However, Svein Asleifarson does not match the rest of Samson's (1991b: 125) list of characteristics. He was not especially young, had a well established farm, and is said to have gone on frequent raiding trips, supposedly not to acquire timber or any such specific goods.

3.5.2. The hoards

Öland, an island off the Swedish east coast, is among the richest areas in Scandinavia for Viking Age silver hoards. It is second only to Gotland, another Swedish island further off the coast (Thurborg 1988: 304). Thurborg has examined the Öland hoards and identifies different kinds of special-purpose 'domestic money', showing different systems of circulation, in Scandinavia during the Viking Age:

Primitive money: This does not have to be metal, but has a clear commercial function in society, with a narrow or peripheral market exchange. Scandinavian examples are the silver ingots and silver bars in the hoards (Thurborg 1988: 303). According to Thurborg's investigation (1988: 319), bars and ingots reflect continuous and explicit economic transactions from the early 10th century onwards. This economic sphere mainly dealt with a super-regional exchange. The primitive money also included hacksilver that, she argues, reflects casual transactions with the super-regional sphere.

Primitive valuables or status money: These are objects that are used in ceremonial exchanges and in political, social and judicial transactions, as the shells in the Trobriand *kula* (Malinowski 1921). It implies a social structure based on gifts and

debts. Thurborg (1988: 304) argues that the arm and neck rings are examples from Scandinavia, as they have a long tradition and a clear social importance. Thurborg (1988: 318-319) points out that in the sagas, the rings are used in socially motivated transactions of status and loyalty, and they were given as signs of hospitality and generosity. On Iceland the rings were also used as blood money (*Baugatal*, which is a part of the law code *Grágás*). The rings are mainly dated to the 10th and 11th centuries (Thurborg 1988: 317). Such a large-scale deposition could reflect a change in function. An increasing and more widespread use of status money could mean that more rings were made and were in circulation than previously. This would explain the accumulation of rings in some hoards, which have a low degree of complexity (Thurborg 1988: 319). Thurborg (1988: 321) argues that the primitive money was used in regional transactions.

The foreign coins reflect the long distance contacts. Thurborg (1988: 321) argues that during the 9th century there were two different economic spheres, which can be seen in the coin hoards: One sphere is reflected by coins found in burials. It can be connected to the Swedish trading centre Birka in Lake Mälaren, and the largest ports of trade. Thurborg (1988: 310) suggests that these coins can be regarded as primitive valuables. The other sphere, which mainly flourished in the 10th century, is connected to activities outside Scandinavia, above all the trade in furs and slaves. It is peripheral to the domestic economic system. During the 11th century, the hoards reflect a more complex economy, with hoards composed of several more different kinds of money, than before (Thurborg 1988: 1988: 321) and they suggest a circulation within Öland (Thurborg 1988: 313).

Early cash: This kind of money is closely connected to the growth of a state. It is a uniform and controlled medium, which functions more as a means of payment than as a means of exchange. According to Thurborg (1988: 303-304), the early Danish coinage and tributes of fur are Scandinavian examples.

Hårdh (1978) has analysed the depot finds of gold and silver from the Viking Age in southern Sweden. She has split them up into different periods and constructed

a model of how different means of payment were used in south Sweden in the Viking Age. She stresses that a model of Scandinavia's economic system during the Viking age has to be regionally and chronologically differentiated. Both the composition and the structure of the hoards suggest that the network of contacts, as well as the use of various means of payment varied in and between various parts of the areas where hoards are found. Models based on one area cannot simply be applied to another, and the Viking Age cannot be seen as an entity. The hoard material shows distinctive chronological differences. In the coming sections we will look at Orkney in Pictish and Viking times, and try to construct a model.

3.5.3 Summary: the Scandinavian Viking Age economy

First of all, the story about Svein Asleifarson has to be commented upon. It has been argued (e. g. Ritchie 1993: 30) that this entry in *Orkneyinga Saga* may be anachronistic, as it is such an odd description. Many of Svein's traits and habits were probably common among the wealthier Scandinavians, but the saga writer appears to have exaggerated these in order to provide the saga with a proper hero who could amuse and impress the listeners and readers with his extreme behaviour. In any case, the story about Svein should be used with caution.

The question whether the Vikings were plundering savages or peaceful traders has been debated for decades. Hedeager (1994: 133, 135) favours the idea of violent pirates, who only behaved well when forced to, and otherwise stole what they wanted. Samson (1991b: 125-126), on the other hand, talks about goal-orientated traders (as opposed to merchants) who went on journeys to acquire something particular, as wood for a new house. These two pictures are somewhat conflicting, and show how versatile the Vikings were when it came to economic transactions. The Vikings seem to have been interested in exactly the 'gathering of wealth' that Samson (1991b: 126) says they did not care about. Everything that could be transformed into status at home sparked their interest. In a way this can be regarded as profit seeking, but of another kind than the one Samson (1991b) has in mind. The Vikings seem to have been quite flexible; if they could get what they were after by simply taking it from a stranger they probably would. After all they had a special

word for this transaction; *rán*. But if they had to buy it or acquire it through an exchange, they did. The social ties one had with the exchange partners decided which form of transaction one turned to. Strangers could be neutral exchange partners, as in *Njal's Saga* (ch 149), where Flosi buys a ship from the stranger Eyjolf.

Using the sagas as his basis, Samson (1991b: 124-127) argues that the Vikings were not merchants. However, *Orkneyinga Saga* specifically mentions merchants. In chapter 93, Knut the Wealthy is referred to as a merchant. He is said to have had a fine ship with valuable cargo. When Svein Asleifarson stole the ship and its cargo, 14 ships set out to look for it and the saga states that most of these men were merchants as well. Thus, merchants do not appear to have been especially rare at this time, which appears to be the last part of the 12th century. However, the gift economy seems to have been thriving at this time too, as the King of Scots gave Svein a shield 'and other valuable gifts' in the same chapter. Additionally, raiding also went on at the same time. For example, the saga mentions that Earl Thorfinn went raiding in the Hebrides in the 11th century (ch 23) and that three leading men went on a Viking expedition in the 12th century (ch 100). Although these examples refer to Scandinavians abroad, it may be assumed that the situation and development were roughly the same in Scandinavia, although the development may have been somewhat faster as the native Swedish coinage was introduced in 995 whereas the Scottish coinage was introduced in 1136.

It seems likely that the Scandinavian Viking Age society had a multicentric economy. Just as social relations varied from sphere to sphere, so did the means of payment and the products exchanged. Trade was not by any means as neutral and straightforward as it is today. It was tangled up in society's social systems. Thus, there were many issues to consider before making, or suggesting, a transaction. When the market economic sphere had become secure enough, and money had taken over as a means of payment, the sphere economy fell apart and most things could be bought for money from anyone, regardless of social rank. But before then, just as in the anthropological examples, there appears to have been a distinction between subsistence and non-subsistence goods in the Viking Age. Based on the sagas, Miller (1986: 42) points out that there were restrictions on transactions involving food. If it was necessary to buy food, strangers rather than friends were turned to. This may

well have been the reason Gunnar turned to Otkel when he needed hay (*Njals Saga* ch 47).

The money-using sphere probably began to develop, in the central areas at least, when trading sites, such as Birka in Sweden were funded and protected by kings. Birka was established in the second half of the 8th century. The abandonment of the weight-based economy in favour of the monetary did not follow instantly though. Weights and scales are common in Birka. In 1991, for example, a small hoard consisting of twenty-odd Arabic coins, seven weights of different types, two pieces of amber, various beads, pieces of iron and bronze fragments was found in one of Birka's old alleys. The coins show that the hoard was buried sometime after AD 939 (Gustin 1996: 7).

Both the examinations of Swedish hoards mentioned above (Hårdh 1978; Thurborg 1988), indicate that the market economic sphere with the use of coins started to take off around the 10th and 11th centuries in Sweden. Before that, regional trade was probably little developed, since people lived on self-contained farms. Bars and ingots indicate that a super-regional trade existed however. Interestingly, the hoarding of rings increased in the 10th and 11th centuries, when the foreign trade may have become relatively well-developed (Thurborg 1988: 317). Rings can be seen as status symbols, connected to the gift-giving sphere. Therefore, it is tempting to interpret the increased occurrence of rings in the hoards from this time as gifts intended to renegotiate relations in society. As we saw in the chapter on *potlatch* ceremonies, gift giving adapts to the changes in society. Trade with foreigners creates new groups of wealthy individuals in society, and the old power relations have to be renegotiated. The giving of rings may thus have increased, since many new ties had to be formed.

3.6. Hoards and economy in the Orkney Isles

3.6.1. Introduction

We have already tried to establish how the Viking Age economy functioned in Scandinavia. But what was the situation in the Orkney Isles in Pictish and Norse

times? What can the hoards from the isles tell us about the Pictish economy and their contacts with the Vikings? Are there any significant differences and/or similarities in the hoarded material from Scandinavia and these isles? Can the hoards give us any information about the relationship between the Picts and the Norse?

3.6.2. The hoards

According to Graham-Campbell (1995b: 178), the Picts were a people 'rich in portable wealth', as indicated by their hoards. The Pictish hoard from the Broch of Burgar in Orkney (Ill. 5) is an example of this. It has now been lost, but it contained eight silver vessels, silver combs, pins, brooches, chains, and amber beads (Graham-Campbell 1995b: 178).

But it has also been suggested (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 26), that silver, as well as gold, was in limited supply to the Picts. The St Ninians Isle hoard had a low silver content for instance. Graham-Campbell (1995a: 26) points out that the Pictish hoards do not contain any coins, with the exception of the Croy hoard. Further, there are no rings, ingots or hacksilver in their hoards, as in the hoards of Scandinavian character in the area.

Two single finds of Pictish silver come from the 9th century Norse levels on the Brough of Birsay (Ill. 5) (Hunter 1986: 88, 96). Both are dress ornaments, a pin head (originally described as a 'spoon-like object' by Hunter (1986: 88)), and a brooch terminal with parallels in the 8th and 9th centuries (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 163). Graham-Campbell (1995a: 26) argues that they are likely to have been lost on the way to the melting pot, and were not intended to be used as hacksilver.

No hoards have been found from the first century of Scandinavian occupation in the north of Scotland. The hoards here cluster around the millennium instead. There is a single find of a perforated coin, dating to 866-868, from the Norse occupation levels of Saevar Howe in Orkney (Ill. 14). None of the 10th and 11th century single coins from the Isles were pierced. This may indicate that they had more monetary functions than before or were used as a means of exchange more often (Graham-Campbell 1995b: 178-179). Graham-Campbell (1995b: 178-179)

argues that the single-finds indicate that silver had an increasing circulation in the Northern Isles from the mid-10th century.

The hoard from the Bay of Skail (Ill. 5), western Orkney, is the largest Scandinavian hoard found in Scotland. It is four times heavier than any other Viking Age hoard from Scotland. Weighing over 8 kg originally, it is similar in size to the largest hoards from Scandinavia. However, it is three times larger than any 10th century Norwegian hoard. It is composed of hacksilver, complete and fragmented ring-money¹² together with prestige ornaments (Graham-Campbell 1995b: 180).

Orkney's second largest hoard was found on the island of Burray (Ill. 5) and has been dated to about 1000 AD. It weighed about 1.9 kg, which is similar to the heaviest examples from Norway (Graham-Campbell 1995b: 182). These two hoards will be more closely examined in chapter 5.

A Viking hoard, consisting of two gold arm rings, was found in the Broch of Burgar (Ill. 5). They have now been lost, not much is known about them, and they may or may not be grave goods. The rings have no Pictish parallels, no Late Norse parallels either and have consequently been dated to the 9th or 10th centuries (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 12, 30, 60, 103).

In the areas influenced by the Scandinavians, the hoards generally contain four main elements: coins, ornaments, hacksilver and ingots (Kruse 1995: 187). Since no coinage was minted in Viking Age Scotland, Kruse (1995: 187) points out that the silver is most likely to have been used in a weight-based economy. This is supported by finds of balances and weights from Scandinavian graves in the Western Isles. At Scar, Sanday, two lead weights were found in association with a boat grave dated to the mid-ninth century. The weights weighed 26.65 g each, very close to Brøgger's (1921) postulated Viking *öre* (Owen & Dalland 1994: 159, 166; 1999: 118-120). Weights have also been found in some hoards that are thought to be native, for example Talnotrie, Kirkcudbrightshire, dated to around 875. This hoard has been interpreted as belonging to a native craftsman (Kruse 1995: 195).

Kruse (1995: 188) points out that the most obvious way to store bullion in such a metal-weight economy is in ingots. These are different from the other components found in hoards since they were made without ornamentation. Their

¹² Ring-money is plain penannular rings, usually of arm-ring size.

purpose was simply to store bullion in a convenient form. The use of ingots to store silver can be found in all parts of the Scandinavian world, except for Iceland, Greenland and the east Baltic. They were very popular in Ireland and Denmark (except for the southern Swedish provinces). Ingots do appear in Scotland, but they are not common. About 1/3 of hoards of Scandinavian character with non-numismatic silver contain ingots. Kruse (1995: 188) points out that this is not as insignificant as it may seem, since many of the records are incomplete and since a lot of non-numismatic silver has been lost.

In the British Isles, ingots are most common in finds from the first three quarters of the 10th century. They appear in all Scottish hoards of Scandinavian character from this period, with a few exceptions of which not much information is known at all. In the later finds, ingots are not important (Kruse 1995: 188-189). Kruse (1995: 189) suggests that ingots may have been a common way to store silver in Scotland during a time when they were popular in Ireland and the northern Danelaw. Many of the ingots, as much of the silver, had pecks, probably made to check the silver quality. Kruse (1995: 189) argues that the nicking may suggest that the ingots were not made in Scotland but were imported and saved in this form.

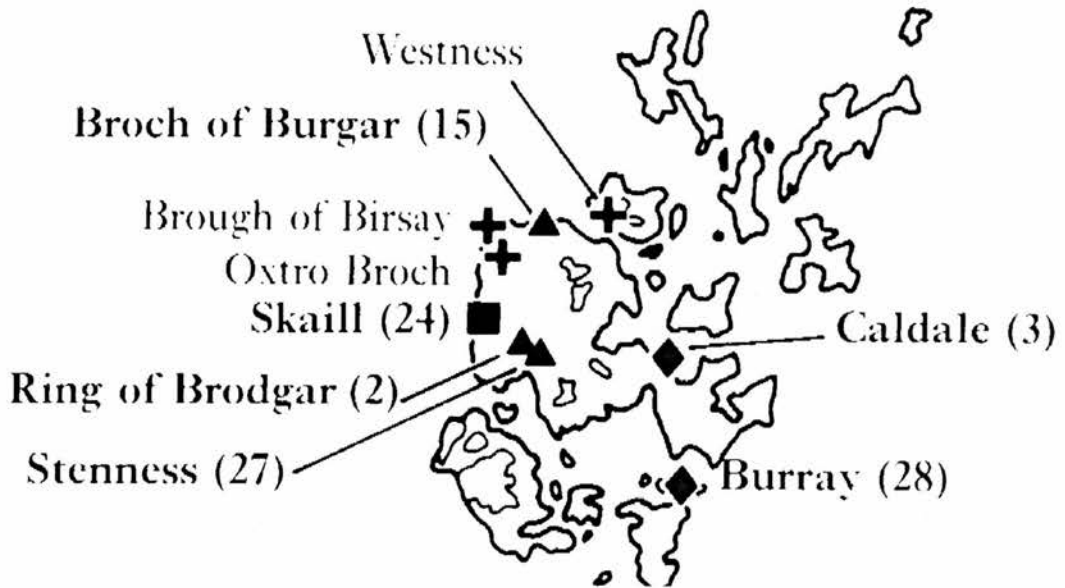
However, stone moulds for ingots have been found in Pictish layers on sites in Orkney. At Skail four such moulds were found (Buteux 1997: 107), and on the Brough of Birsay two moulds were found (Curle 1982: 46). One steatite mould was found at Lavacroon, Orphir (Batey & Freeman 1986: 292). The Orphir mould is thought to be Norse (Batey & Freeman 1986: 298). Ingots still circulated in small numbers during the later part of the 10th century, but silver in Scotland was more often stored as ring-money. Over 62 complete and 150 fragments are known, mostly dating from the period between 950 and 1050 AD (Kruse 1995: 190). Ring-money dominates both the mixed and the coinless hoards from Orkney from the late 10th and the 11th centuries. The number of finds and their distribution indicate that they were made in Scotland (Graham-Campbell 1976: 126). Ring-money made up over 14 % of the weight of the Skail hoard, and over 45% of the weight of the Burray hoard for example (Kruse 1995: 190). Kruse (1995: 190) argues that the number of finds from this period and the amounts of silver, indicate that the Scandinavians in the Northern and Western Isles were able to obtain more silver than their forebears a generation or

two earlier had been. However, another possibility is that there were simply more Scandinavians in Scotland at this later stage.

The find records for coins are very vague, but some finds can be shown to have contained a lot of coins, which shows that there was no great prejudice against storing silver in coins during the 10th and 11th centuries. The scarcity of hoards containing only coins contrasts with the Isle of Man and Ireland. No minting occurred, and not many single finds are known in Scotland. The two largest hoards, Skaill and Burray, contained very few coins (Kruse 1995: 190-191). In conclusion, Kruse (1995: 191) claims that storage and circulation of silver in artefacts appears to have been preferred to coins in Scotland.

Kruse (1995: 191) points out that many of the coins could have been melted down and turned into more accepted objects. Especially the ring-money is so common in later hoards that coins may be suspected to have been the raw material. It can be concluded (Kruse 1995: 192) that the Scottish ingots and ring-money were not made exclusively of Anglo-Saxon coins, but Kruse (1995: 191) suggests that in a few cases Arabic coins may have been a major part of the silver cast into some ingots in the Irish sea and the Northern Isles. This is in stark contrast to the 10–12th century hoards from southern Sweden, which were almost exclusively composed of objects made of Arabic silver (Hårdh 1976: 112-127).

From various analyses (e.g. White & Tate 1983; Metcalf & Northover 1986), Kruse (1995: 192) concludes that similar silver sources, coin and bullion, probably were being used for ornaments and ingots in different areas of the Irish Sea, but that no source was predominant. Similarities in the Skaill ring-money and ingots suggest at least some of these ingots may have been manufactured in Scotland, or that the craftsmen had access to the same sort of silver.



Ill. 5. Map of the Pictish and Norse hoards (■= mixed, 10th C, ◆= mixed, 11th C, ▲= coinless, 9th-11th C) and single finds (+) in Orkney. The numbers correspond to Graham-Campbell's catalogue (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 11).

3.6.3. The economy behind the Orkney hoards

Several analyses of Viking Age weights, scales and objects have been undertaken to try to establish a correspondence to the Scandinavian unit *öre* or other standard weight units. These analyses often tend to suggest values of, or around, 4 gm, 26,5 gm and 24 gm. Warner (1976a) has analysed the Scottish finds and has postulated a unit of 24.0 ± 0.8 g. He found a standard variation of 5g.

Crawford (1987: 133-134), based on Warner (1976) argues that the ring-money had a standard weight, based on the ounce, and was used as currency in a flourishing economy. Kruse (1995: 199) does not agree with this. She argues that the 5 g standard deviation is too large for objects used as currency. Kruse (1995: 199) argues that such a sophisticated economy is unlikely, and that Crawford's (1987) interpretation is 'overly elaborate'. Kruse (1995: 199) points out that if a flourishing local circulation of silver occurred, the gap in hoarding after the Viking Age is very strange. The latest Viking Age hoards are four hoards dated to the 1020's and 1030's. There is also a poorly recorded find from Shetland from about 1065.

Elsewhere in the Irish Sea, hoards with non-numismatic material also disappear during the 10th century. But in these other areas, native coinage developed. This is not the case in Scotland, nor are there any signs of new preferences in silver. There are no hoards and hardly any single coin finds until David I began minting around 1136. Even after the introduction of minting, there are few Scottish hoards, which indicate that silver in local exchange took a long time to establish. As a result, Kruse (1995: 199) suggests that silver never had a major influence on the local Viking Age economy in Scotland.

Kruse (1995: 195-196) argues that the analysis of the ring-money and ingot weights indicate that no great precision can be attributed to the objects. It is possible that balances were not sensitive enough to measure such differences, but she claims that this is unlikely. It seems as if the craftsmen were not concerned to make ring-money, ingots and other ornaments very accurate. Kruse (1995: 196) says that this could have been accepted in the economy, since hacksilver could have been used to adjust any weight differences. Some of the objects may also be imported from other areas with other systems, or they could have been intended for these markets, which could explain the different weights. Kruse (1995: 196) adds that a complimentary explanation could be that ornaments, and maybe ingots and ring-money as well, were made with other purposes in mind than simply bullion standards.

The hoard evidence is limited for the early period, which, according to Kruse (1995: 196), indicates that little silver reached Scotland. Kruse (1995: 196) writes that the ring-money appears to be Scottish and probably developed when silver became more common. How the silver reached Scotland is debated. Plunder and trade as well as gift exchange and tribute can be possible explanations (Kruse 1995: 196). In the past almost everyone supposed that the silver was used to buy goods and services (e.g. Crawford 1987). Kruse (1995: 196) points out that more recent studies using economic anthropological theories, have suggested that this view is over simplistic and have instead focused on other uses of money in 'primitive' economies, such as to indicate and preserve status.

Kruse (1995: 197) points out that the ring-money shows that silver moved to and from Scotland, both in the Northern and Western Isles, and that some of this probably can be seen as a result of trade. The hacksilver, scales and balances together

with foreign objects in graves and settlements further suggests that some trading took place. The scale of the trade is uncertain though. Graham-Campbell (1976: 127) has argued, based on the number of finds, that the overseas trade except in daily necessities was small. As mentioned above, Crawford (1997: 134-135), on the other hand interprets the silver as indicating a wealthy community and a large flourishing overseas trade.

Kruse (1995: 197) points out that the very large hoards from Skail and Burray distorts the interpretation of the wealth. These hoards are exceptional in comparison to other hoards, both due to their size and the number of complete ornaments. They appear to represent the wealth of leaders, not simple traders. These hoards do not have to indicate wealthy society as much as wealthy individuals. The silver in Scotland does not appear to have been arriving regularly or as part of one mechanism, and thus support the cautious interpretation by Graham-Campbell (1976: 127), Kruse (1995: 197) says.

Kruse (1995: 198) points out that the number of finds in Scotland is small, and corresponds almost exclusively to areas of Scandinavian settlement or movement. She argues that these facts are crucial for the interpretation of local exchange: if many commodities were bought with silver, a fair amount of silver must have been present and a reasonable amount of this would have survived. This is not the case in Scotland. Hoards are small and relatively few, which does not indicate an intensive circulation. Single finds, which could be interpreted as evidence of local circulation, are also few. Less than two dozen single finds are known, the majority from the Northern Isles and often from prestige sites as the Brough of Birsay. Kruse (1995: 199) concludes that silver never had a big influence on the local economy in the Viking Age.

Kruse (1995: 199-200) offers another explanation for the silver: if the silver was used more as an indicator of status than as a means of payment in local exchange, one would expect to find certain artefact forms to appear, where silver resources were converted into socially accepted forms. For such uses, exact metrological accuracy would not be important, instead a rough approximation would be sufficient. When cash was needed, these objects could be cut up. Ingots could be interpreted as one of the specific artefact forms. In Ireland, they are listed as one of

the objects given as tribute to kings. When silver became scarce, as it appears to have become in Scotland after the mid-11th century, adaptations would have been necessary. If these were more economic than social, a crisis would have been provoked. But we do not find any evidence for this; there are no hoards with heavily debased silver for instance. If the role of silver in local exchanges was slight, the silver scarcity would not have provoked an economic crisis. The local exchange could go on as usual and new commodities could have been adapted for foreign export if necessary. On the social side, a lack of silver would have necessitated some changes, with different artefacts used to indicate status.

As pointed out above, *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 93) mentions merchants in Orkney in the 12th century. There is also an earlier reference in this saga (ch 57), where Kirkwall is described as a market town with few houses in the end of the 11th century. It may be that trade had become relatively well developed in the 11th century. Barrett (1997) has pointed out the possibility that there was an organised trade in cured fish in Orkney. Places such as Robert's Haven, Caithness, produced dried fish and sold it to high status settlements such as the Earl's Bu, Orphir, and possibly also to places outside the Orkneys. The material from Robert's Haven was dated to the 13th and 14th centuries, and the Orphir material is dated to the 11th – 12th centuries, again suggesting a developed trade by the 11th century. However, it is uncertain if the evidence for specialisation in cured fish is evidence for internal trade or exchange. The present evidence from Orphir and Robert's Haven (Barrett 1997) also fits in to Odner's (1974) model of specialisation and redistribution, where the *goðar* received the surplus produce in return for protection.

3.6.4. Summary: the economy in Orkney.

The Pictish hoards from the late 8th and early 9th centuries contain objects, such as silver vessels, combs, pins, chains and brooches. This suggests that the Picts had a relatively undeveloped economy, perhaps based on gifts, debts and gift giving. As argued by Odner (1974: 11), a society based on traditional authority has little use for money and trade. It suits the chieftains better to stick to the traditional exchange. This may be the reason we do not see timber merchants (Samson 1991b: 125) or any

other types of merchants before the 11th century. However, the ingot moulds found on Pictish settlement sites (Curle 1982: 46, Buteux 1997: 107) indicate that the Picts were in fact familiar with a weight based economy. It appears most likely that the early ingots were manufactured for the import and export market, which may have been controlled by the chieftains, and not for trade within the Pictish community, as suggested for Iceland (Odner 1974). Until the 11th century, people probably lived on more or less self-sufficient farms, as on Iceland, and did not have a real need to trade in everyday goods. Kruse (1995: 189) argues that the ingots found in Orkney may have been imported, as they are nicked. This is not a very convincing argument, and at least some ingots must have been made in Orkney.

Crawford (1987: 133-134), based on Warner (1976), argues that the ring-money had a standard weight and was used as currency. Kruse (1995: 99) does not believe in this theory, since it is 'too elaborate'. But is it? Malmer (1992) has argued for a weight based economic system in Scandinavia during the Bronze Age, so in relation to this, the Viking Age does not look very early. The 5 g standard deviation speaks against the idea, but a number of things actually support it: The finds of hacksilver, scales and weights indicate that the means of payment still had to be weighed and checked during transactions. This is not very surprising, since no one controlled and guaranteed the accuracy of the means of payment. The ring-money could thus have been a rough unit of weight, which was to be complemented by hacksilver. Why bother making the rings to an exact weight if this was not necessary, and if they were likely to be cut up or used together with hacksilver anyway? It is also possible that varying silver content affected the weight of the rings. Lower silver content may have resulted in a larger ring to compensate. Also, Kruse (1995: 191) argues that coins were melted down, probably ring-money. Why would this have been done if the rings did not have any other functions in the economy than coins had? Why go through the trouble of melting the coins if it only resulted in another silver piece of completely random weight? Kruse (1995: 190) says that there do not appear to have been any prejudices against *storing* silver in coins during the 10th and 11th centuries. Maybe storing silver in coins was fine, but when it was meant to be used, either for transactions or display, ring-money was preferred?

The ring-money became common in Orkney in the late 10th and the 11th centuries. This may suggest that internal trade had developed by this time, and that a standard weight for the ring-money was decided to simplify transactions. The developing internal trade may have been an effect of the Norse immigrants. At a later stage, at least at the end of the 12th century, we get the references to merchants in the *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 93).

Kruse (1995: 199) talks about a gap in hoarding. The last hoards, before the establishment of coinage in 1136, are from 1020, 1030 and 1065. So, was there a 100-year period without any means of payment? And why did it take so long for coinage to develop? If ring-money was used as a sort of currency (which with time was used on the local level as well as in import and export), with a rough standard weight, there may not have been a real need for coinage earlier on. In a way, the lack of native coinage supports the ring money theory. That there appears to be a gap in hoarding may be due to a change in hoarding practices. The shame associated with hoarding diminished as the old system of gift giving faded away, and valuables may thus have been more casually hidden inside the houses. The silver could then have been easily recovered and re-smelted to fit the new standards. That less silver entered the archaeological record does not necessarily mean that there was a silver crisis.

A rough model of the development of the economy in the Orkney Isles may look like this (table 2):

Pictish times: Little silver available, mostly used by the aristocracy in a gift giving economy. No internal trade, but ingots used in the import and export markets.

Early phase of Norse settlement: Still undeveloped internal trade, but there is some evidence of transactions e.g. the Pictish silver fragments on the Brough of Birsay and the Burgar hoards.

Around the millennium: More Scandinavians. Hoarding peaked. Ring-money may have been used as standardised means of payment. Still few single finds, silver only used in large transactions?

Later in the 11th century: Trade more developed, merchants and eventually native coinage.

Table 2. Summary of the economic development in Orkney in Pictish and Norse times.

Can the different means of payment in the Orkney hoards be connected to Thurborg's (1988) categories, as the Scandinavian material? The objects in the early hoards, and especially fine jewellery in the later hoards, could be called *primitive valuables*, since they are likely to have been used in socially important transactions where a more commercial gift may have been taken as an insult or bribe instead of a gift. The ring-money and ingots can be seen as *primitive money*, since they seem to have been used in economic, weight-based, transactions. The first native coinage can be called *early cash*, since it is connected to the growth of a state and is uniform and controlled.

Graham-Campbell (1976: 127) and Kruse (1995: 196) claim that the silver in the hoards belonged to Scandinavians and colonial-Scandinavians rather than the native population in a clear majority of the finds and Crawford (1987: 128) writes:

'Hoards buried by the Vikings are nearly always recognisable because they include coins of many countries, ingots of a particular shape, ornaments with distinctive Viking Age art styles and above all, 'hacksilver' and ring-money /.../.

But it is actually very uncertain which hoards belonged to Scandinavian settlers and which belonged to native islanders the day they were buried. It is tempting to interpret the hoards with Pictish artefacts as buried in fear of the Vikings, and the hoards with Scandinavian ornaments as the belongings of the rich and dominant newcomers. However, transactions would have taken place between the two peoples, and Scandinavian objects would have found their ways into 'Pictish' hoards and *vice versa*. Even the simplified traditional explanation, that the Vikings became the new masters through violence, would complicate the hoards, since native tributes would have been given to the Scandinavians. The opposite scenario, that the Vikings encountered a fairly strong and well-organised native society that they had to adapt to, could mean that Scandinavian objects were given to the natives as either gifts, taxes or tribute. The Burgar hoards illustrate this. The Viking hoard found here was not necessarily buried by Vikings, and the Pictish hoard by Picts. Maybe the two hoards had the same owner? The relations between the Scandinavians and the Picts will be further investigated in the following chapters.

The two Pictish silver fragments from the Brough of Birsay (Hunter 1986: 88, 96) could suggest that silver changed hands between the Picts and the Norse relatively frequently on Orkney. How could we tell a Pictish ingot, perhaps specifically made for trade with the Norse, from a Norse ingot for instance? Hacksilver, which would be easier to ascribe to either culture, may have been routinely melted down and transformed into ingots and/or jewellery of the relative cultures' own fashion. However, if there was a lot of trade going on between the Picts and the Norse on Orkney, there would not have been any need to resmelt the hacksilver. A Pict would probably have kept the Norse silver until the next time a Norse trading partner came along, and *vice versa*. If this was the case, the hoards would probably be more culturally mixed than what they are. Pictish brooches and copies of such, which may be indications of trading contacts, have been found in Norway. But no Pictish elements have been identified in any Scottish Viking silver hoards, with one probable exception, Cuerdale, Lancashire, deposited around AD 905. So, the conclusion has to be that there was not a lot of trade going on between the two peoples on Orkney. In fact, as suggested earlier, there may not have been much internal trade going on at all.

3.7 Discussion

It clearly took a long time for all-purpose money to be established, both in Scandinavia and in Scotland. What we find in the hoards is, perhaps with a few exceptions, special purpose money. Transactions were not as neutral as today. Different means of payment and different rules were at work in different economic spheres, in which different goods were being exchanged. And as we saw in chapter two, it was also important whom one tried to negotiate with. Hay and food seem to be something one would not buy from an equal, for instance (Miller 1986: 42). A multicentric economy most often breaks down when all-purpose money is introduced. Hårdh (1978: 171) points out that strengthened royal power may have had the same effects, as the reciprocal prestige sphere can only work in a society without centralised power. When all-purpose money was generally accepted and used, and when there was a complete function of the market economy, hoarding ended. There was no longer a need to keep one's growing assets a secret. Since the multicentric economy had broken down and the gift-giving sphere had lost most of its importance, wealth, now in the form of minted coins and estates, could be displayed for status, without the fear of requests for generous gifts.

Hoarded objects were either hidden away to be recovered later, or offered to the gods. There is also the possibility that the objects were lost, and not deliberately deposited at all. This explanation is often offered for single finds, and items like complete toolboxes found in watery locations. It appears unlikely though, that such valuable objects and whole sets of equipment should have been lost so often (Bradley 1990: 6). It seems more likely that objects found in watery locations were offerings to the gods. This would be in line with the gift giving economy. Through the gifts, the gods became indebted and had to repay the person with good luck. Gregory (1980) argues that gifts to the gods were less risky than gift giving to humans. By sinking the valuables in a river or bog, the valuables could not be reused in escalating transactions and the amount of valuables in society decreased. However, the parties would probably end up competing over who could offer the most valuable gifts to the gods, and economic ruin would still follow for one or more of the parties.

Not all hoards are to be regarded as offerings though. Hoards that are easy to recover, close to settlements and perhaps with marked positions were most probably intended to be recovered. Levy's (1982) summary (Table 1) is helpful for distinguishing between ritual and non-ritual hoards. But why were the objects buried, if they were intended to be recovered? The traditional explanation is warfare. But, as Malmer (1985) points out, this explanation is insufficient and cannot explain all the hoards. So, what did the valuables have to be kept safe from, if not from warfare? Prying eyes, perhaps. If 'selfish' hoarding was shameful, as the Scandinavian sagas claim, big hoards would have to be kept secret or one risked getting a bad reputation. Even small and medium sized hoards would have had to be kept secret, since they would bring people asking for gifts if known of.

Gaimster (1991: 114) argues that in a society without a continuous economical use of coins, they will end up forgotten, tucked away somewhere. This is not likely to be true of the coins in Viking Age Scandinavia, or Scotland. Even if coins as such did not have an economical function, silver certainly had, and coins were an important source of silver. We do not find hoards because their owners forgot about them! In the sagas (e. g. *Njal's Saga*), silver is constantly needed, and craved for, either for compensation for a death or wound or to acquire followers and prestige.

It is easier to recognise different means of payment in the Scandinavian hoards than in the Scottish. But it is possible that the ingots and luxury objects can have been *primitive valuables*, used in social transaction to create bonds. The ring-money and hack silver in the hoards could be regarded as *primitive money*, with a narrow or peripheral market exchange. These objects were used as a means of exchange, and not means of payment. The first native coinage could have been *early cash*, a uniform and controlled medium and a means of payment more than a means of exchange.

So why were the hoards buried in the Orkney Isles? Was it because of constant conflicts between the natives and the Vikings? This could be true in some cases, but the rest of the archaeological material does not suggest that there were constant warfare between the two peoples (see chapter 5). Instead, it is possible that the same social rules for hoarding existed in Scotland as in Scandinavia and we

should perhaps pay more attention to the social aspects of hoarding than to the traditional theories based on warfare and conflicts. In the following chapter we will look closer at the relations between the Picts and the Vikings, and try to find out how their relations might have affected the hoards.

Chapter 4. Picts and Vikings in Orkney

4.1. The Picts

4.1.1. Background

From the 5th to the 10th centuries AD, there were five different peoples in Scotland: the Picts, the Gaels of Dál Riada, the Britons, the Angles and the Vikings. The Picts and the Dál Riada Gaels were ruled by a common king from about AD 842 when Cináed mac Alpín became king over both nations. In the beginning of the 11th century, all the peoples, with the exception of the Vikings, had become united under one monarchy.

The Picts are first mentioned in writing in AD 297, by the Romans who called them *Picti* (Eumenius), but it is uncertain from what point in time the term 'Pictish' should be used. Foster (1996: 13) suggests that it can be used from AD 79 to 842 or 900. However, the Picts can only be recognised archaeologically and historically from the 6th century AD, and Ritchie (1984: 1) claims that archaeologists should not use the term 'Pictish' before this date.

The Picts were probably made up of several different tribes. In AD 310 a Roman panegyric to Constantius speaks of 'Calidones and other Picti' (author unknown), which implies that 'Picti' was a more general name for several tribes. It is not certain that the Picts regarded themselves as one people. As Anderson (1987: 7) points out, not all people under a certain name have to be culturally alike and not all culturally alike people have a common name¹³. Ritchie (1984: 1) points out that it is important to keep the archaeological term 'Pictish' apart from the ethnic 'Picti' from written accounts.

There have been suggestions (e. g. Boyle 1977; Jackson 1984) that the Picts were matrilinear, or at least practised royal succession through the female line, so that the king's sister's son would inherit the throne, instead of the king's own son. The

¹³ Ethnos may be defined as 'a firm aggregate of people, historically established on a given territory, possessing in common relatively stable peculiarities of language and culture, and also recognizing their unity and difference from other similar formations (self-awareness) and expressing this in a self-appointed name (ethnonym)' (Dragadze 1980: 162).

support for this theory is a passage in a medieval Irish legend (Bede I 1) that claims that the Picts got their wives from the Irish on condition that they gave preference to the female royal line in the choice of kings:

The Picts then came to the island, as we have said, by sea and asked for the grant of a place to settle in. The Irish answered that the island would not hold them both; 'but', said they, 'we can give you some good advice as to what to do. We know of another island not far from our own, in an easterly direction, which we often see in the distance on clear days. If you will go there, you can make a settlement for yourselves; but if any one resists you, make use of our help.' And so the Picts went to Britain and proceeded to occupy the northern parts of the island, because the Britons had seized the southern regions. As the Picts had no wives, they asked the Irish for some; the latter consented to give them women, only on condition that, in all cases of doubt, they should elect their kings from the female royal line rather than the male; and it is well known that the custom has been observed among the Picts to this day.

Boyle (1977: 1-5) claims that many of the characteristics of the Pictish system can be observed in other matrilinear societies. Based on Anderson's (1973) hypothetical genealogical table for the Pictish kings, he points out that in many cases brothers succeeded each other before their sister's son came to the throne. He interprets this as a system where matrilinear kinship and age were the important characteristics of a ruler. For example Garnard (361-5), Bridei (635-41) and Talorc (641-53) ruled for a 22-year period before their sister's son Talorcen became king and ruled until 657. None of the brothers' fathers ever reigned himself, according to Boyle. He explains the fathers' names in the genealogies with an anthropological analogy; matrilinear societies often trace their genealogies back to a man, who may be the husband of the female ancestor. He also suggests that the common Picts may have had a system of double decent.

Foster (1996: 37) argues that Bede (I 1) states that the Picts would only use the female type of succession in exceptional cases, and that Pictish kings are referred to as 'sons of' their fathers. She takes this to indicate that the Picts were patrilinear. Boyle (1977: 7) points out that the 'cases of doubt' in Bede's story (I 1) could refer to situations when there was no brother or sister's son to succeed the king. Then a more distant relative on the female side would inherit the throne, instead of someone from

the male side. He also emphasises that Bede (I 1) based his story on hearsay and may have got it all wrong.

It is often argued (e. g. Anderson 1973; 1987: 9), by studying the copies of the king lists (that are no older than the 14th century), that no Pictish king was followed by his son until 780. Opponents, for example Foster (1996: 37), argue that it is unlikely that the Picts, no longer regarded as any more problematic or mysterious than any other people, would have had a completely different system to all their neighbours. She points out that enemies to the Picts may have spread information like this to make the Picts look strange and barbaric. Foster (1996: 37) also claims that it is strange that documentary and art-historical sources so rarely refer to women if the society was matrilinear. It is also often thought that matriliney is peculiar to very primitive people and that in matrilinear societies, fathers are too unimportant to be recorded at all (e. g. Smyth 1984). Anderson (1987: 9-10) points out that these two arguments are not in accord with modern anthropology.

4.1.2. The Pictish Symbol stones

Symbol stones can be found all over Pictland. They have been divided into three classes: Class I stones are characterised by the symbols' incision on undressed stones. Class II stones are characterised by the addition of Christian iconography carved in relief on dressed stones. Class III is thought to overlap class II and have figures of people and animals in relief but no symbols. The symbols were probably carved on a larger number of materials and objects than have survived today. Predominantly they have survived on stones, but some jewellery and other objects with symbols have also been preserved. Class I stones have traditionally (Henderson 1967: 115) been dated to about 500-700 AD, and Class II to about AD 700 (Henderson 1967: 132). Close-Brooks and Stevenson (1982: 21, 29) date the earliest symbol stones to the late 7th century, and the Class II stones as appearing in the late 7th to late 8th century and dying out around AD 843 when the Scots became the new rulers.

Driscoll (1988: 218-219) associates the development of a royal administration, a developing aristocracy, and state formation in Pictland with the invention and control of the standardised symbol system, since the symbols were

consistent throughout Pictland, an area larger than any single power entity could have ruled over. Driscoll (1988: 219, 224, 227) assumes that the political and/or religious elite would have had control over the symbol system since they had superior access to material and cultural resources, and that they used the system to promote and secure their positions in society. He argues that the display of symbols on stones and jewellery was restricted to them.

Driscoll (1988: 227-228) argues that the symbol stones were funerary monuments used by the aristocracy to display their relationship with the dead person and their control over material and cultural resources. Such display may have been necessary to reinforce some heir's rights and positions, he suggests. The stones fixed individuals and their property transactions in time. In Driscoll's theory (1988: 227-228), raising a symbol stone displayed four different sources of legitimacy at the same time:

1. The supernatural, through the ancestors.
2. Rank through descent.
3. Ideological sanction through the use of the restricted symbols.
4. Control over material resources needed to erect the monument.

Randsborg (1980: 25) has argued that a similar scenario may be behind the Danish rune stones: He argues that the runestones are connected to a new social class, royal officials who appeared in the 9th century. The stones were to sustain the position of the deceased's successor. Since a new social system had been emerging also in Pictland, Driscoll (1988: 229) suggests that the two types of stone monuments may have had the same functions.

Whereas he interprets class I symbol stones as mortuary monuments, Driscoll (1988: 229-233) claims that class II stones had different functions. He interprets them as marking the point when Christianity had been established and power disputes took place within the church. He says that the stones appear to link the aristocracy with the cosmic order, and may have been used to legitimise the social order. He links the class III stones with the dynasty of Cináed Mac Alpín and the establishment of a Scottish aristocracy.

Thomas (1984), who also sees the symbol stones as funerary monuments, argues that they originate from the imitation of practices elsewhere. He suggests the Roman painted and monumental slabs, or funerary stones used by British and Irish neighbours. He suggests that the symbols could state facts like the deceased's status and occupation (1984: 175, 179):

What, apart from a matter of degree would be the distinction between a Pictish warrior's stone announcing (let us suppose) his societal group and personal valour, and a relief-carved effigy slab of the full Middle Ages showing some noble commander in appropriate armour, with helm, sword, shield and armorial device? (Thomas 1984: 183)

Since the symbol system appears fully developed on the class I stones, there appears to be a gap between the development of the symbols and the class I symbol stones. Thomas (1984: 181) postulates that this gap corresponds to a period stretching from the 3rd and 4th centuries to the late 6th or 7th. During this period, he suggests that the symbols may have been painted on wooden planks or tattooed on the bodies (1984: 178-184). Similarly, Laing and Laing (1984) have argued that some of the Pictish symbols originated in the late 4th or early 5th centuries.

Close-Brooks (1984: 97, 102, 107) describes cases where symbol stones have been found in association with graves, and she argues that the symbol stones were gravestones. She suggests that the distribution of a certain grave type, the platform cairn, may coincide with the distribution of Pictish symbol stones. However, symbol stones have only been found in connection with some of these graves. Close-Brooks (1984: 105) explains this by suggesting that if the symbol stones began to be erected in the late 7th century, they would only have been contemporary with the later platform cairns, dated to the 4th to the 8th centuries.

The Pictish symbols are almost always combined in pairs. Jackson (1984) comes to the conclusion that his 28 'true' symbols represent Pictland's lineages, suggested by him to be 28 in total. He argues that the symbol pairs on the Pictish symbol stones represent the unification of two lineages through a matrilinear system of cross-cousin marriage prescribed by the king, in which the ideal partner for a man was his father's sister's daughter. Jackson argues that the symbol pairs showed the lineage links that all leaders through out the generations needed to have to claim their

rights. Jackson claims that the Picts, and pagan people in general, were not as interested in death as we are, and because of this the stones were not directed to the dead but to the living.

Jackson's theory (1984) has received a lot of criticism, regarded as too complicated and anthropological by many. Thomas (1984: 176), for instance, criticises it for drawing on 'analogies from very much later primitive societies in other continents'. However, as Samson (1992: 30) points out, Jackson's theory has to be evaluated on the grounds of the empirical evidence and the social and historical processes outlined by him, and nothing else.

In his review of Jackson's book (1984), Driscoll (1985) argues that if the supposed royal edict, imposed on Pictland to regulate the marriage alliances, is rejected - the whole theory falls. He also points out that if another symbol is added to Jackson's 28, the theory falls again. Driscoll (1985: 60-61) opposes the fact that Jackson's theory needs a centralising authority: 'kings make history (and erect monuments)' he summarises Jackson's ideas. Driscoll (1985: 62) also points out that Jackson is vague about just how the monuments were supposed to sanction and regulate marriages. The form and execution of the symbols also speaks against Jackson's theory that the stones were erected simultaneously. Driscoll (1985: 62-63) also questions why the Picts would have needed to be directed to their spouse, since Jackson argues that the marriage patterns were traditional and not reinvented with the erection of the stones. The stones were just there to preserve the system. Likewise, Thomas (1984: 176) wonders why the stones appeared only at a secondary stage in Pictish culture.

Samson (1992), as the majority, also sees the symbol stones as memorial stones. But he criticises Thomas' (1984) theory, since there would have been too many people with certain professions, such as kings and sub-kings, among the Picts if the symbols denoted professions. Samson suggests that the symbols stand for themes, which form personal names. According to his theory, the use of the Pictish symbols died out as the Pictish personal names did the same and became replaced by names of Dalriadan origin.

4.1.3. Land administration and state formation.

4.1.3.1. Introduction

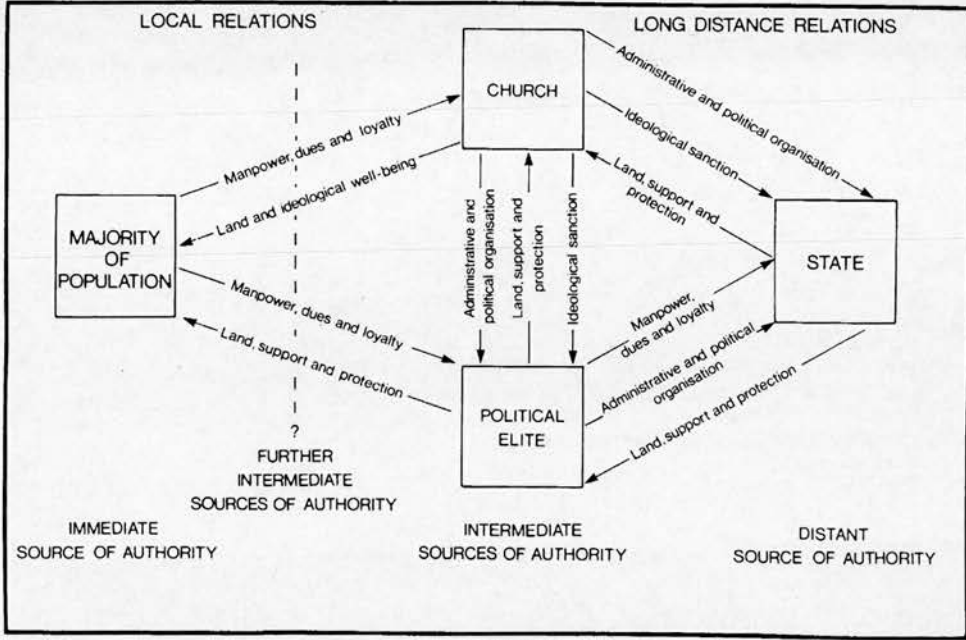
Buteux (1997: 256-257) argues that there was a transitional period between the Middle Iron Age (MIA c. 200 BC- AD 200) and the second half of the Late Iron Age (LIA II c. AD 625-800) in Orkney. The MIA is characterised by the monumental architecture of the brochs whereas the LIA II is characterised by a lack of monumentality and an architecture that is very different to the previous tradition. Further, in the MIA there is plenty of native pottery on the broch sites but not many toiletry items (combs, pins, and brooches). In LIA II there are few finds of pottery but many more toiletry items which are of a better quality and of new styles (Table 3).

Buteux (1997: 259) concludes that there are more discontinuities than continuities between the two periods, and asks what happened in the period in between, the first half of the Late Iron Age (LIA I c. AD 200-625). During this period, the Orcadian society was transformed and by the end it had become a province of the Pictish kingdom. The 6th century was an important period in the development of the Pictish kingdom. Adomnan's account of St Columba's visit to the Pictish king Bridei son of Maelchon mentions that an Orcadian *regulus* was present at the court (Anderson & Anderson 1961: 441). *Regulus* means 'subject king', but since the term '*subregulus*' is used more often, the use of *regulus* in this case may indicate a regional king of greater than usual status (Ritchie 1985: 185). This account also shows that Orkney was a province of the Pictish kingdom and had achieved a high degree of political centralisation by this time.

According to Buteux (1997: 259-260), the most remarkable innovation during the LIA was the symbol stones. The symbols, which appear in the LIA II period, must have taken a long time to develop and formalise. With the appearance of Class 1 stones, we are thus witnessing an already developed system that was widely understood by the 6th century. Buteux argues that the use of display items as symbols further reinforces their importance in the LIA II period.

Barrett and Foster (1991: 49-51) interpret the change from the MIA to the LIA as a change from a localised system of political authority to a more generalised

and extensive source of political power in an emergent state. Mann (1986) has pointed out four different sources of social power: economic, ideological, military and political sources. Ill. 6 shows how Barrett and Foster draw on these concepts to construct a social system that they argue was in use in Pictland from the 7th century AD onwards. They suggest that the changes from the MIA to the LIA could have resulted from the development of clientship, which undermined the power of the traditional local leaders.



Ill. 6. Model of social authority and resources from the 7th century onwards. The population had obligations to the leaders, who got their power from granting land, literacy, and through legitimisation by the church. The control of the leaders, who were political and religious leaders at the same time, over the population led to the control of economic and military resources (Barrett & Foster 1991: 52).

Barrett and Foster (1991: 51-53) suggest that the changes in settlement correspond to changes in the organisation of agriculture; in the MIA agriculture was connected to the local system of kinship and rank. With the introduction of clientship, grants of land and a new administrative system, maybe estates, obligations changed and the traditional kinship based system was weakened. Barrett and Foster (1991: 53) suggest that a distant authority of the Pictish kingdom may have granted land in Orkney, and recorded these transactions in stone.

The Pictish king needed representatives through out his territory. The titles of these royal officials, *thanes* and *mormaers*, have survived in manuscripts like the *Book of Deer* (Jackson 1972).

4.1.3.2. The Book of Deer

The Book of Deer is a manuscript, which contains Gaelic notes on grants of land given to the monastery of Deer in Buchan, Aberdeenshire, by the nobility (Jackson 1972: vii). The Gaelic in the manuscript has been dated to the middle of the 12th century, and it may have been written either at Deer itself, elsewhere in Scotland or in Ireland (Jackson 1972: 9, 96). The notes contain some useful information on the land administration in Scotland at this time, and also shed some light on the old Pictish system of land administration. *The Book of Deer* was probably used in a legal process in which the monks claimed to have been suffering from unfair taxes, and it was probably written with a lawsuit in mind, attempting to prove the monastery's right to the land and tax exemptions. As Jackson (1972: 88-89) points out, the notes often emphasise that the monastery is to be free from lay service and payments:

David king of Scots, to all his good men, greetings. You are to know that the clergy of Deer are to be quit and immune from all lay service and improper exaction, as is written in their book /.../ (Note VIII; Jackson 1972: 36).

The Gaelic notes mention titles such as *toísech* and *mormaer*. Jackson claims that it is clear that *mormaer* was the title for the highest rank of the Scottish nobility, under the king. It corresponds to the Latin *comes*, earl. For instance, in note III, Ruaidrí is called 'mormaer of Mar'. In the great charter of Dunfermline he is called 'Rotheri comes' and in the foundation charter of Scone he is called 'Rothri comes' (1972: 102-103). The *mormaers* had control over one large territory each, and were high royal officials who collected the royal tax of which they were entitled to a share. They held their positions through hereditary rights, and were the chiefs of the ruling families of each area. Jackson (1972: 108-109, 112) argues that *mormaer* probably was a Scottish word, rather than Irish. The first recorded *mormaers* in Scottish documents come from the old Pictish areas, and the office and its functions could

have been inherited from the Pictish system when the Gaels occupied Pictland in the middle of the 9th century.

The title *toísech* means leader. Jackson (1972: 110-111) says that it was used both in the meaning 'leader of a noble kindred', a clan, and in the meaning of an official who had taxes paid to him. The word *toísech* became associated with the word *thane*. The *thane* was an official, similar but probably inferior to the *mormaer* and with different duties, under the king or an earl. He had duties in a given territory, and was entitled to his share of the taxes. Apart from collecting these, he was responsible for the military organisation and the administration of justice. Jackson (1972: 112-113) says that it cannot be established whether the *thane* was a Pictish or Anglo-Saxon invention, but that it is striking that the known Scottish *thanages* are almost exclusively in the former Pictland.

Columba and Drostán son of Coscrach, his disciple, came from Iona, as God guided them, to Aberdour; and Bede the Pict was mormaer of buchan on their arrival, and it was he who bestowed on them that monastery, in freedom till Doomsday from mormaer and toísech (Note I; Jackson 1972: 33).

Comgell son of Cainnech, toísech of Clann Chanann, gave to Christ and to Drostán as far as the great pillar-stone at the end of the thicket nearest to Ailldín Ailenn /.../ (Note V, Jackson 1972: 35).

4.1.3.3 Pit place names

Based on the Gaelic notes in *The Book of Deer*, Jackson (1972: 114) suggests that the basic land unit in Pictland was the pet. The place name prefix *pit* is derived from the word pet, meaning 'parcel of land' or 'estate' (Driscoll 1991: 91). Jackson (1972: 114) points out that it probably also meant a unit of population, a village community. Jackson (1972: 118) mentions that one of the pets in Deer was about 100 acres in size.

In a number of cases, the *pit-* place names are interchanged with the Gaelic form in *baile-*, since the Gaelic speakers who settled in Pictland identified the pet with their own unit. In Ireland, *baile* meant 'territory of small tribal group or family' when used in place names. Jackson points out that since so many *pit* place names have survived, there must have been a small but significant difference between the

two. Many of the *pit* place names have Gaelic second elements, which indicated that the Gaels re-founded the units (1972: 114-115).

Davoch is another land unit mentioned in *The Book of Deer*. The original meaning of the word is 'a large vat', and may indicate that the unit had to do with tax payments, enough grain to fill a vat for example (Jackson 1972: 116). According to Barrow (1962: 134), a *davoch* in north-eastern Scotland was about 200 Scottish acres by the 12th century. Whittington (1973: 543) claims that a *davoch* was about 400 acres. Dodgshon (1981: 81) points out that different figures, 48, 96, 80 and 160 acres, are stated for the *davoch* unit in the highlands and islands in various records. One of the mentioned pets in *The Book of Deer*, Pet Meic-Gobraig, appears to have been half a *davoch*. In later times, *davochs* vary in size, which may indicate that their tax potential was crucial to their division (Jackson 1972: 116, 118).

Comgell son of Aed gave from Oirte as far as Púiréne to Columba and to Drostan. Muiredach son of Morgann gave Pett Meic-Garnait and the field of Toiche Teimne; and it is he who was mormaer and was toísech. Matain son of Cairell gave a mormaer's dues in Altrie and Cú Lí son of Baíthín gave a toísech's dues. /.../ (Note II; Jackson 1972: 33-34).

Garnait and the daughter of Gille-Míchéil gave Ball Domain in Pitfour to Christ and to Columba and to Drostan (Note IV; Jackson 1972: 35).

The second quotation above tells us that a certain settlement, Ball, lies within a larger unit bearing a *pit* name. *Bal* thus appears to have been a smaller unit than the *pit*. Whittington points out that the enormous number of *Bal* names in eastern Scotland is indeed indicative of a very small unit (1975: 105).

Whittington (1975: 105) suggests that the *pit* may have been a smaller unit than the *davoch*. Barrow (1962: 136) argues that the word *davoch* never appears to have been used as synonym to *baile* or *pett*. Whittington (1975: 105) suggests that another entry in *The Book of Deer* may support the idea that the *pit* unit and the *davoch* may have been the same:

Mal-Colium son of Cinaed gave a king's dues in Biffie and in Pett Meic-Gobraig, and two *davochs* of Upper Ros abard (Note II; Jackson 1972: 34).

Driscoll also points out the connection between the *pett* and the *davoch*. He argues that they were both divisions of the landscape, but that the difference was that the *davoch* was a measure of the productive capacity and the *pett* had to do with the location and organisation of the settlement (1991: 92).

The place name prefix *pit* has been used in trying to establish the settlement pattern of the Picts. Whittington and Soulsby (1968) studied the southern part of Pictland, and discovered that the *pit* place names were located on loamy soils and well-sheltered and well-drained locations. Whittington (1975: 100) suggests that there may have existed another place name in the coastal regions, as coastal locations for the *pit* place names are not common. Orkney, Shetland and the north and west coasts of Mainland lack *pit* names, supposedly due to the Norse influence. The Dalriada area is also without *pit* names.

Whittington (1975), who examined the northern area of Pictland, concluded that the *pit* place names were located on the best soils, class 1 and 2. The *pit* place name may have referred to two things, either an actual settlement, like a group of houses, or a land administration or agricultural unit. The spacing of the *pit* place names shows that they were small units, but the uneven distribution also suggests that they varied in size. Whittington (1975: 100-108) suggests that the *petts* may have been divided according to taxation based on agricultural potential rather than size.

The overall distribution of symbol stones is similar to the distribution of *pit* place names, with the exception that they also occur in the areas of Norse influence. However, the *pit* place names and the symbol stones do not lie in very close coincidence. Stones can be found in areas without *pit* names and vice versa. If the stones were placed in the middle of important settlement, other settlements than the ones bearing *pit* names must be visualised. Whittington (1975: 106-109) points out that the stones may have been placed on the boundaries of territories. Runestones were sometimes placed on boundaries and Charles-Edwards (1976) has written about a similar practice in early Irish society, where it was common to bury a person on the boundary of his land, and mark the grave with a standing stone. This meant that the land got a spiritual defence against strangers and that the bond between the kinsmen and the dead was strengthened.

Whittington suggests that the *pit* element may be earlier than the 9th or 10th centuries, and that what we see now is just a small part of a once more extensive pattern (1975: 108-109). Since the word *pett* means 'share' it is indicated that it was a part of something larger. Driscoll (1991: 92) suggests that the *pett* may have been a share of a kindred's territory, of a multiple-estate or a part of a larger administrative unit like a *thanage*.

4.1.3.4. Thanages

Driscoll (1991: 88) suggests that stable political units may have emerged as early as the mid 6th century in Orkney. The king lists have been interpreted as showing several dynastic groups from different areas of Pictland competing for royal power from the 6th century onwards (Smyth 1984). There are also mentions of *exactatores* in the *Annals of Ulster*. This is probably a corruption of *exactores*, tax collectors, which would suggest that the Pictish kings had a developed administration by the beginning of the 8th century. The most fundamental part of the Pictish administration was the *thanage*, ruled by a *thane*.

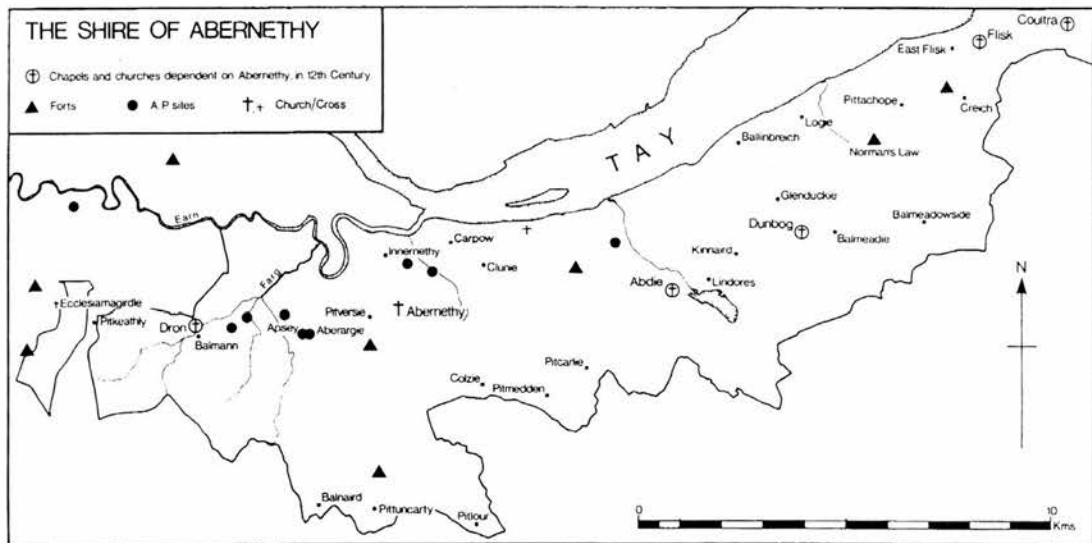
The *thanage* was a sort of multiple estate, a unit of lordship, exercised by a tribal chief or royal official, containing several townships (Dodgshon 1981: 58-59). There are no *thanages* in the west, and therefore it is unlikely that the Scots introduced them to Pictland. They must have grown out of local political circumstances in Pictland (Driscoll 1991: 93). Skene (1872) emphasises the tribal roots of the *thanages*, and argues that they are the final stages of an archaic system. Dodgshon (1981: 7172) also points out that the *thanages* can be seen as a development of the tribal chiefdoms, with their exchange systems. Over time, the gift giving and reciprocity developed into tribute payments and clientship.

Driscoll (1991: 93-94, 98-99) argues that a *thanage* consisted of a principal residence - a *caput*, a number of *pett* units, a meeting place and a ceremonial centre. The *caput*, which could be a monastery or a great residence, was sometimes fortified. Driscoll (1991: 95) suggests that the *caput* may have been an especially successful *pett* that got overlordship over the rest of the *petts* in the neighbourhood. If a *pett* was about 400 acres (Whittington 1973: 543), a large number of tenants would have been

needed to operate it, and Driscoll (1991: 92) points out that the landholder may have been a minor lord.

From crop marks, place names, still standing forts and other monuments Driscoll (1991: 95) concludes that the population of a *pett* lived in small clusters of houses scattered throughout the territory. One of Driscoll's examples is Abernethy in Strathearn (Ill. 7). Here, the *caput* may have been the monastery, or the fort of Clatchard Craig. Eight *pett* names are situated close to Abernethy and these may be settlements of free farmers, just as some of the farmsteads identified by crop marks. The insubstantial dwellings of the poorest, maybe unfree, farmers within the *petts* may not be recognisable at all today (Driscoll 1991: 100-102).

Thanages often have capital settlements with Brittonic or P-Celtic place names, which indicates a pre-ninth century origin (Barrow 1973: 58).



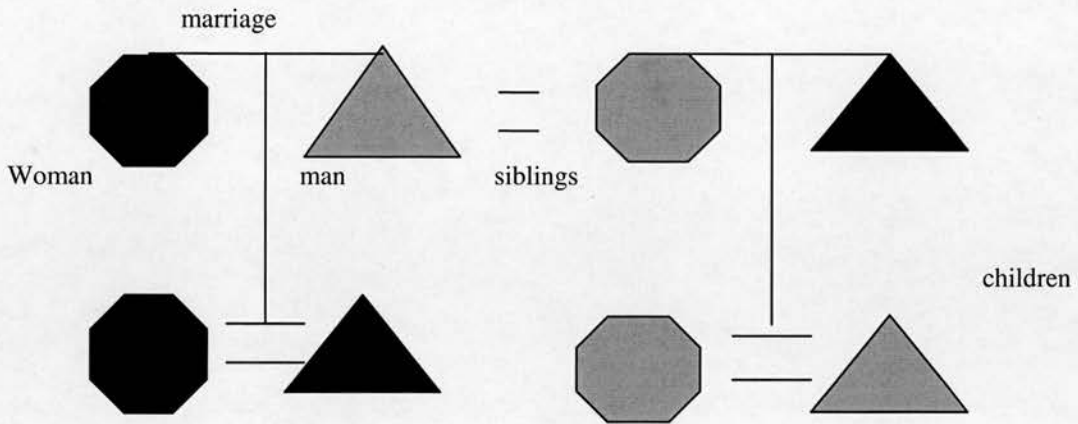
Ill. 7. The distribution of *pit* place names in the landscape in Abernethy (Driscoll 1991: 101).

(A. P. sites = sites identified by aerial photography.)

4.1.4. Discussion

There is a massive difference between 'matrilinear' and 'matriarchal'. The former means that a couple's children belong to the mother's kin and not to the father's (Ill. 8). The father's sister's children do belong to his kin group, however and succeed him if he has an inheritable position in society. The latter, matriarchal, means that women have the power in society, and it is practically unheard of in reality. It occurs in

legitimising myths, where it is frequently described how women had all the power in society in the beginning, but lost it to the men who have had the skill to keep it since.



Ill. 8. In a matrilineal system, a man's children belong to their mother's lineage (indicated by colour), whereas his sister's children do belong to his lineage.

The two concepts should not be confused; women do not rule in matrilineal societies. Maybe some confusion over these concepts might be behind the eagerness to discard the evidence for Pictish matrilinearity shown by some scholars? Further, if the royals were the only ones in society who practised matrilineal succession, and if the rest of the society was patrilineal, it is not that strange that women are rarely mentioned in art-historical sources. Even in matrilineal societies, women do not have control over the production of such sources, and are not necessarily considered any more important for them than in patrilineal societies. Foster (1996: 37) mentions that the kings are referred to as 'son of' as an argument against matrilineal succession. However, this alone is not indicative of patrilinearity among the royals. Even if matrilinearity was the practice, the kings would of course still be the sons of their fathers. Additionally, if the rest of the community, and the neighbouring societies, were used to patrilineal succession it might have been easier for them to keep track of the kings by the use of the common 'son of' epithet. Only if the father was the previous king, is patrilinearity proved. Boyle (1977: 5) also points out that there may have been a system of double descent among the common Picts, and that matrilineal societies often record male ancestors. Another possibility is that the Picts did not have a hereditary kingship at all, but elected their kings. However, if brother succeeded brother and their sister's son then succeeded them, as outlined by Boyle (1977: 1-5),

there is clearly a hereditary element in the succession - and it is not patrilinear. Boyle bases his discussion on Anderson's hypothetical genealogy (1973), and his theory really stands and falls with its accuracy, as the Irish legend and Bede's addition to it (I 1) cannot be accepted as evidence for Pictish matrilinearity, as it is based on hearsay.

Something seems to have taken place during the LIA I period, but what may have caused all these changes? The historical sources show that Orkney had become a part of the Pictish kingdom by the 6th century. This new authority would have needed representatives in Orkney, and grants of land and a clientship system would have been the most effective system to achieve control over the territory. This would have meant that the old kinship based power structures became less important, and that competition for the new positions in society increased. The new authority may have used the established power structure to introduce the new system, as the *normaer* appears to have been a hereditary post, which was given to the leader of the local kin group.

We have reason to assume that the land administration was well developed in the 8th century, due to the mentioning of tax collectors, and since land units such as *petts*, *davochs* and *thanages* have Pictish origins. Both Whittington (1975: 108-109) and Barrow (1973: 58) have pointed out that a pre-ninth century origin is possible for the pit element and the *thanage*. It may have been around this time that property began to develop into the main source of power and wealth in society. The symbol stones also appear in this period of change. They indicate that Orkney was an integrated part of the Pictish kingdom, and that the Pictish administration was developed enough to spread a standardised practice like this over the whole kingdom.

Since the tribal organisation was probably falling apart at this time, a purpose as marriage regulators, as suggested by Jackson (1984), seems less likely for the stones. If the marriage system was working, there would not have been any need to erect the stones, and if the traditional marriage patterns were falling apart, and the king wanted to restore them, erecting stones would hardly be enough. Royal officials rather than monuments would have been needed to keep an eye on the people. But why would the Pictish king want to strengthen the tribal organisation? Surely, a weak tribal organisation, that allowed a swift establishment of new power relations, would

have suited him better? Jackson (1984) also argues that death was unimportant for pagan people. As Driscoll (1985: 62-63) points out, this argument does not seem very likely when the landscape of Britain and the rest of Europe is filled with religious pagan monuments and burials. Additionally, funerary monuments are not intended just for the dead. They serve a purpose in the lives of the living as well, as they have to renegotiate their relationships. Jackson's theory (1984) is also weakened by its dependence on exactly 28 'real' symbols.

Since the stones appear together with all the other changes around the 6th century, they are most likely to have played a part of the state formation process. The symbols were already developed when the Class I stones appear, which indicate that even though stone monuments were new, the symbols were not. As the runes in Scandinavia, the symbols may have been carved in wood and other materials before stone was used. One possibility is that the Pictish authority used the already developed symbol system to legitimise the new order in society, just as they may have used the tribal organisation to introduce officials as *mormaers* and *thanes*.

<p><u>MIA (200 BC- 200 AD):</u> Brochs, plenty of pottery, few toiletry items. Local leaders. Old power relations, based on tribal organisation.</p> <p><u>LIA I (200-625 AD):</u> Development of symbols. Orkney part of Pictish kingdom. Centralisation of power. The old power relations begin to break down and new ones are forming. Estates introduced?</p> <p><u>LIA II (625-800 AD):</u> Lack of monumentality, little pottery but many toiletry items of new styles and better quality. Symbol stones. Estates probably in existence. New power relations, based on patron - clientship, established.</p>

Table 3. Development from MIA to LIA II, based on Barrett and Foster (1991) and Buteux (1997).

What then did the symbol stones tell people? Even if they were not gravestones, they may have been memorial stones as the runestones. The rune stones were used as boundary markers, to commemorate heroic deaths and adventures and sometimes clearly to highlight the commissioner's rights to the inheritance. For example, an inscription at Nora in Uppland, Sweden, states:

Björn, Finnvid's son, had this rock carved in memory of Olev, his brother. He was betrayed on Finnveden. God help his soul. This farm is their odal and family inheritance, the sons of Finnvid at Ängelsta (Jansson 1987: 97).

Likewise, at Ågersta village, also in Uppland, a rune stone serves as a boundary mark between two properties, and it states:

Vidhugse had this stone raised in memory of Särev, his noble father. He lived at Ågersta (Jansson 1987:97).

Just as in Pictland, it has been argued that Scandinavia experienced changing power structures and the establishment of new social classes when the stones were raised (Randsborg 1980: 25). If the Pictish symbol stones were also placed on boundaries, it may explain the slightly different distribution pattern of pet names and stones. A further parallel is the Irish practice of placing graves on the boundary of the deceased's land (Charles-Edwards 1976).

Apart from the rune stones, there is another category of Scandinavian stones that may be compared to the Pictish symbol stones, namely the picture stones from Gotland. The picture stones were probably memorial stones, and date from AD 400-1100. The earlier types were erected in cemeteries as parts of grave monuments, and the later types were set up beside roads and in open spaces where they could easily be seen by many people (Nylén & Lamm 1988: 9, 172). Excavations have shown that sometimes these stones were associated with burials (Nylén & Lamm 1988: 13).

The most common suggestion for the function of the symbol stones is as funerary monuments. Simply to see the symbol stones as gravestones (Thomas 1984) is ethnocentric. That we raise gravestones, stating the deceased's name and occupation, does not mean that the Picts did the same. Close-Brooks (1984) describes cases where symbol stones have been found in association with graves. However, the evidence for this connection is only circumstantial. It is tempting to compare the symbol stones with the Gotlandic picture stones, which are associated with burials, at least in some cases. But, just as with the picture stones, how do we know if the graves' locations were chosen because of the stones, or the other way around? There are three basic possibilities:

1. All symbol stones were placed by graves.
2. Only some symbol stones were placed by graves.
3. No symbol stones were placed by graves.

There is no evidence to suggest that possibility number one above is the case. The third possibility above is that there is absolutely no connection between graves and symbol stones. This may be the case, but as Close-Brooks (1984) has pointed out, there is enough evidence not to assume this until more conclusive excavations have been undertaken. There are two feasible scenarios for possibility number two above: Either the symbol stones had some other original meaning, and some of them were reused as grave markers when this original meaning had been lost. The other alternative is that some stones were placed by graves from the beginning, maybe a parallel to the Irish custom mentioned above (Charles-Edwards 1976). There is no conclusive evidence for either one of these two alternatives. However, Close-Brooks (1984: 107) mentions how the original meaning of at least some symbol stones were lost rather quickly. Furthermore, the fact that symbol stones were sometimes used as building material in cairns (Close-Brooks 1984: 100, 107), also suggests that they had lost their original meaning. Therefore, it seems most likely that some of the symbol stones were reused, in various ways, in burial contexts when their original meaning had been lost.

Driscoll's explanation (1988) for the Class I stones is interesting, as it fits in well with the changes in society at the time. That the wealthy elite raised the stones seems most likely, as an expert stone carver would have had to be hired. The elite would probably have got their power from the land and their contacts. When an important person in society died, both these sources of power had to be renegotiated, and the symbol stones probably belong in this context of social relations and land administration. If the supernatural, as suggested by Driscoll (1988) had anything to do with it is more uncertain. Driscoll also argues that the symbols were restricted and therefore gave the commissioner further power. However, even if stone as a medium would have been restricted, as argued above, the symbols themselves may not have been. Symbols were also carved on cave walls, an ox bone with symbols on have

been found at the Broch of Burrian, a sand stone disc at Jarlshof, Shetland, and silver ornaments at Norrie's Law, Fife, for instance (Buteux 1997: 259).

Driscoll's explanations for the Class II and III stones (1988) appear less thought through than the explanation for Class I stones. He mentions disputes within the church and the social and the cosmological order, but he does not actually explain who raised these stones and why, or why the Class I stones were not needed anymore. What had changed in society? Surely, land ownership became more, not less, important with time, and the need to record and legitimise such transactions as well? Why would the later classes have a completely different meaning? Class II stones still bear the Pictish symbols, so if they stood for land units, kinship ties or different sorts of transactions, a completely new function seems unlikely. Both the rune stones and the picture stones changed over the centuries, but they did not take on a completely different meaning.

Driscoll (1985) opposes Jackson's (1984) proposed centralising authority - 'kings make history'. But is a scenario where the Pictish people started to carve common symbols on erected stones without a centralising authority more likely? Driscoll's own theory involves the nobility who used the stones to legitimise their succession. In what way is a theory based on nobility making history better than one involving kings? And where did the symbol stones come from, who designed the symbols and managed to spread them across Pictland? Surely the king must have been involved in one way or another? Thomas (1984), also criticising Jackson (1984), asks why the stones would have appeared in a secondary stage in the Pictish culture. However, he has himself pointed out the possibility of wooden planks and other media before the stones came in to use.

There is some confusion as to how the different native land administration units related to each other (Table 4). A *thanage* was clearly a big unit, like a shire. The next unit in size may have been the *davoch*, as it appears to have been roughly twice the size of a *pett* (Jackson 1972: 118), which may have been the next unit down in size. That would put the *baille* unit last. *The Book of Deer* (note IV), which indicates that a *baille* unit was situated within a *pett*, supports this. Barrow (1973: 59) has suggested that the *pit* and the *davoch* may be the same as several plough gates and *davochs* have *pit* place names. However, there may be other explanations

for this, maybe the most powerful *pit* had given its name to the whole *davoch*? The support Whittington (1975: 105) offers for Barrow's other theory is very uncertain. If *pett* and *davoch* were the same, why would the two different names be used in the same statement (Note III, Jackson 1972: 34)? Surely this passage indicates that there *was* a difference between the two, and not that they were the same?

Driscoll argues that *petts* had to do with the location of a settlement and that the *davoch* had to do with the productivity. But since both units vary in size, they are both likely to have been related to taxation. Neither Jackson (1972) nor Whittington (1975) mentions that the *baille* units varied in size, however. Can this be the difference between the two units?

<p>THANAGE - shire.</p> <p>DAVOCH- 200/400 acres? Varied in size.</p> <p>PETT - 'Estate', 'parcel of land'. 1/2 davoch? On the best soils. Varied in size</p> <p>BAILLE - similar to <i>pit</i>, but smaller? Other soils?</p>
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Table 4. Possible land unit hierarchy.

4.2. The Vikings

4.2.1. Ouncelands and pennylands.

Orkney has a detailed record of rentals, the earliest dating from 1492 (Sinclair 1492) and 1500 (Peterkin 1820). They date back to even earlier records, *Auld Parchment Rental* (Peterkin 1820: 24), now lost. Since the taxation, *skat*, was a conservative system the records have been used for studying the Norse taxation (Thomson 1987: 116).

Land in Orkney was valued in *urislands* (*ouncelands*), which could be divided into eighteen *pennylands* or four *skattlands* that consisted of four and a half *pennylands* each (Table 5). Each *urisland* consisted of one large farm or, most commonly, a group of smaller farms (Steinnes 1959: 39). The terminology relates to the fact that a tax of one ounce of silver (18 pennies) was to be paid from each

*urisland*². Rentals dating from c. AD 1500 suggest that Orkney had just under 200 *urislands* (Steinnes 1959: 39). There were about 3670 *pennylands* in total, which suggests that the *pennyland* was a small household unit. The *urislands* and *pennylands* were not defined in terms of a standard sized area, but measured the value of land for taxation. The *urislands* usually corresponded to natural districts whereas the *pennyland*, at least in medieval times, did not exist as a recognisable unit on the ground. It was rather a measurement of shares. Thus, if someone owned one *pennyland* in a three-pennyland township, they were entitled to one third of all available resources in the community and one third of its responsibilities, for instance tax payments (Thomson 1987: 116-117).

The same system existed in Shetland until the late medieval period (Thomson 1987: 117). The Isle of Man was divided into six districts called *sheadlings*. Each *sheadling* was divided into *treens*, thought to correspond to the *ouncelands*, and each *treen* was divided into four *quaterlands* (Table 5) (Steinnes 1959: 42). The word *sheadling* is thought to be Norse and relate to the Old Norse word *settungr* which meant six-part (Marstrander 1932). Steinnes (1959: 43-44) compares this six-fold division to his theory on *Huseby* farms in Orkney and suggests that Orkney also had a six-fold division (see below). South-west Scotland had *pennylands* but there is little evidence of any *ouncelands* (Thomson 1987: 117). The Hebrides used the term *tirung* instead of *treen*, and it too was divided into *quaterlands*. *Tirung* is a Celtic translation of the Old Norse *eyrisland* (*ounceland*), and so is the Manx *treen*. The *tirung* was also known by the Celtic term *davoch* (Steinnes 1959: 42-43). This indicates that the land units already existed when the Norse came to settle.

Further, even though the land units relating to the *ounceland* correspond to the area of Norse influence in Britain, there are no close parallels in Norway or in other areas of Norse influence. This also points towards a pre-Norse origin for the system. Additionally, the Norwegian ounce consisted of 30 pennies, whereas the Orkney ounce consisted of 18 pennies. The Norwegian system was introduced about 1030, and the Orkney system thus appears to be older (Thomson 1987: 117-118).

² The Orkney penny did not exist as coinage. It was a measure of weight and a rate of exchange of silver and foreign coins. Pennies became an inbuilt feature in the taxation system where the *skat-penny* or *pennyworth* was a fixed quantity of traditional produce such as butter or malt (Thomson 1987: 118).

Thomson (1987: 117) points out that there is no correlation between brochs and *ouncelands* in Orkney, and that this speaks against an Iron Age date for the land division. However, the division does not have to be as old as the building of the brochs. In fact, it would probably have been introduced as Orkney became a part of the Pictish kingdom around the 6th century.

Crawford (1987: 88) points out that since the *pennyland* denotes the use of coinage and the *ounceland* a silver bullion standard, the two units cannot be easily related. They also have different distribution in Scotland. Further, the *ounceland* is divided into a different number of *pennylands* in the Northern Isles and in the Hebrides. This indicates that the two units may have been introduced to different areas at different times, and that the assessments may have had different criteria and purposes in different areas.

<u>ORKNEY & SHETLAND</u>	<u>ISLE OF MAN</u>	<u>THE HEBRIDES</u>
SHEADLINGS? (HUSEBYS?)	SHEADLINGS	SHEADLINGS
1 URISLAND (1 BIG ESTATE/ SEVERAL SMALL FARMS)	1 TREEN (= OUNCELAND)	1 TIRUNG (= OUNCELAND)
=		=
4 SKATTLANDS		4 QUATERLANDS
=		=
18 PENNYLANDS (4 1/2 Pennylands each) (SMALL UNITS, REALLY SHARES OF AN ESTATE'S INCOME AND COSTS)		20 PENNYLANDS (5 Pennylands each)

Table 5. Corresponding Norse land units in Orkney, Shetland, Isle of Man and the Hebrides.

4.2.2. The Huseby system

Huseby (*Húsabýr*, *Húsabær* in Old Norse) was a name for a royal administrative farm with a military character. The *Huseby* system first developed in the Swedish region Uppland before the mid 7th century. Each district, *hund* or *hundare*, in

Uppland had a *Huseby*. The system spread to other parts of Sweden as the kings extended their control. The *Huseby* system came to Norway in this way in the 8th century. About AD 900 the system reached Denmark, the Norwegian Trondheim area and the whole of northern Norway and Orkney. However, even before AD 700, the system had reached south-west Norway in another way and it spread to the east, north and north-west of the Oslo fjord. A short-lived Swedish conquest introduced the system to south-west Norway about AD 800 (Steinnes 1959: 36-37).

There are four *Huseby* names in Orkney: Houseby in Stronsay, Housebay in Shapansay, Husabae in Rousay and Housebay in Birsay. The four farms lie or lay (the Rousay farm has vanished) on a separate island (Ill. 9 & 10). The farm on Birsay lies four or five miles inland, north of Dounby where roads from four directions meet, and also near the three parishes of Birsay, Harray and Sandwick. Thus, the *Huseby* farm had a central position in the north-west part of the island (1959: 37-39).



Ill. 9. The remaining and the postulated *Husebys*, and their boundaries, according to Steinnes' (1959) theory (Thomson 1987: 44).



Ill. 10. Alternative *Huseby* boundaries (Thomson 1987: 44).

Steinnes (1959: 39) suggests that Orphir, an old seat for the earl, should be added to the four *Huseby* farms, in order to get a ring of five farms separated by similar distances. He also suggests (1959: 41-42) that another *Huseby* farm, or a similar central farm with another name, was situated between the Rousay and Stronsay farms since the district consisting of Stronsay, Eday, Sanday, North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray otherwise would have twice the amount of *urislands* as the other reconstructed districts. Additionally, the Stronsay *Huseby* farm is situated on the perimeter of this group of islands. Six roughly equal *Huseby* districts would also make it easy for two or three simultaneous leaders to divide the islands between themselves. He (1959: 41-42, 46) has suggested a site close to Braeswick on Sanday or a mound site known as Husay about one mile north-east of Braeswick. Interestingly, Hunter et al (1995: 272) suggest that Pool, roughly in the same area, may have been a similar settlement to the *Huseby* farms. At Pool, a settlement mound with over 3 m deep layers from the Neolithic through to the Viking Age have been excavated. The Scandinavian presence at Pool have been dated by radiocarbon to the time before the establishment of the earldom, the secure dates being cal. AD 681-852, 671-788 and 882-1004 (Hunter et al 1995: 273-274, 281).

How then may the *Huseby* system have come to Orkney? According to Steinnes (1959: 44), the Norse elements in the dialect in Orkney suggest that the Norse settlers predominantly came from the south-west part of Norway. Since a *Huseby* system existed in this area, a migrating chieftain might have brought the system to Orkney. However, Steinnes (1959: 44) claims that this is not likely since the first Norse settlement on the island is thought to date from AD 800 to about 860. AD 800 is the date for the introduction of the *Huseby* system into south-west Norway, due to a Swedish domination at this point. Steinnes (1959: 44) points out that it is unlikely that the emigrants would have taken the system of their antagonists with them to their new home. Steinnes (1959: 44-46) suggests that the system was introduced to Orkney through King Harald Finehair's expedition to Orkney and Shetland to try to stop the Vikings who used the island as a base for attacks on Norway, a story told in *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 4). The islands that King Harald is said to have taken possession of are the same that later had the *ounceland* (and *tirung* and *treen*) organisation. Earl Rognvald of Møre got control of Orkney from King Harald. Steinnes (1959: 44-46) suggests that Earl Rognvald was the one who introduced the *Huseby* system into southern Nordmøre and the northern parts of Romsdal. If this was the case, he or someone ruling in his place, may have introduced the system to Orkney and the system may be dated to a period after the Battle of Hafrsfjord, i. e. in the beginning of the 10th century (Steinnes 1959: 44-46). Thomson (1987: 12-23) points out that the part of the *Orkneyinga Saga* that Steinnes refers to cannot be regarded as historically accurate, and thus the *Huseby* system may have reached the Northern and Western Isles in some other way.

Dodgson (1981: 83) seems to have misunderstood Steinnes (1959), as he writes:

Steinnes has proposed a grouping of *ouncelands* /.../ into districts of 30 to 35 *ouncelands*, but it would be truer to say that there is more agreement over the fact that each *ounceland* was made up of only 18 *pennylands* in the far north.

As we have seen, Steinnes (1959) agrees with the division of an *ounceland* into 18 *pennylands*. He then argues that there were large groupings of *ouncelands* forming *Huseby* districts.

4.2.3. The earls' shares of Orkney

According to *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 13-19), Sigurd the Stout's sons divided up his realm when he had fallen in the battle of Clontarf, AD 1014. Einar, Brusi and Sumarlidi took a third each of Orkney. The fourth son, Thorfinn, was only five years old and was brought up in the Scottish court since King Malcolm was his grandfather. Malcolm installed Thorfinn in the earldom of Caithness and Sutherland, and had regents to rule for him. Sumarlidi died young and Thorfinn then claimed his part of Orkney. Einar resisted, however, and ruled two thirds of Orkney himself instead.

The *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 20) tells us that Brusi 'was in charge of the isles to the north'. Brusi's son Rognvald, who inherited the two thirds that his father had before his death, had his residence at Kirkwall (ch 30), was killed in Papa Stronsay (ch 29) and buried in Papa Westray (ch 30). Thus, Thomson (1987: 45) points out that Brusi's share probably consisted of the outer North Isles. He argues that similar evidence (ch 14, 15) suggests that Einar's share consisted of the east Mainland and the South Isles, which would leave Sumarlidi with the west Mainland, including Birsay. It was Sumarlidi's share that Thorfinn eventually inherited. As Steinnes (1959), Clouston (1919) has also tried to reconstruct these shares (Ill. 11 & 12).

Einar taxed the farmers heavily, and they elected a man named Thorkel, from Sandwick in *Hrossey* at *Hlaupandanes* (*Orkneyinga Saga* ch 14) to speak up for them in front of Jarl Einar. Eventually, Einar lost his temper with Thorkel who fled to Caithness where he fostered the still young Thorfinn. Eventually (ch 15), Thorfinn got his share of Orkney, and Brusi had to mediate between Einar and Thorfinn several times to avoid confrontation. On one such occasion (ch 16), Brusi convinced Thorkel and Einar to give a feast to each other. Einar went to Thorkel's feast first. It was held at Hlaupandanes, which is thought to be today's Skail, Deerness (Thomson 1987: 46). When they were about to go to Einar's feast, Thorkel was told that there was an ambush on the road. Thorkel then chopped the earl's head off. Since many of Einar's men sympathised with Thorkel, the murder was unavenged and the way for Thorfinn's advancement was clear. After a temporary set back with Brusi's son Rognvald claiming his inheritance of two thirds (ch 22), Thorfinn became the most

powerful of the Orkney earls (ch 30), and Thorkel his firmest supporter. Thorfinn established his seat at one main centre, *Byrgisheralði*, the district of Birsay, and built a church there (ch 31).

That the islands could be divided up so easily, supports the *Huseby* organisation. Thomson (1987: 45) points out that there never seem to have been any boundary disputes, just disputes over shares. However, he points out that Steinnes (1959) built his theory on only four remaining *Huseby* names in Orkney. Even if the Norse did use a six-fold division for administration elsewhere, for instance the Isle of Man and Gotland, Thomson (1987: 28) regards Steinnes theory (1959) as speculative, 'informed guess-work'.



Ill. 11. Clouston's (1919) reconstructed thirds of Orkney (Thomson 1987: 44).



Ill. 12. Clouston's (1919) reconstructed halves of Orkney (Thomson 1987: 44).

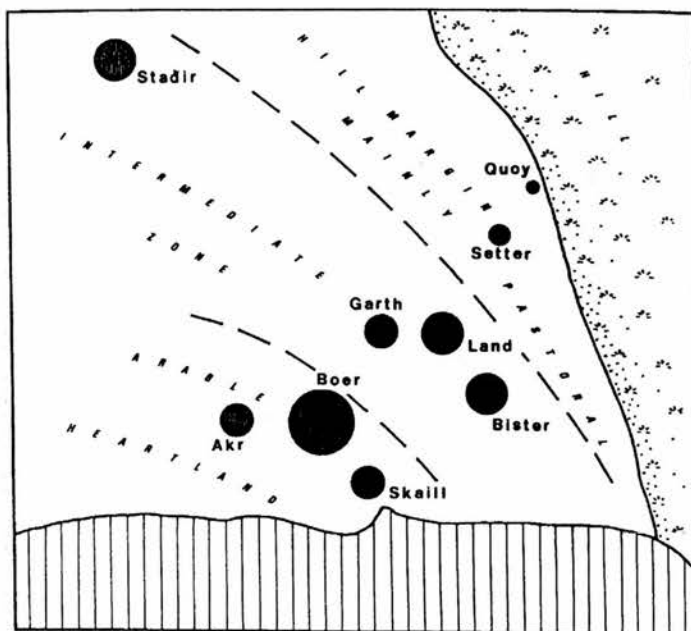
4.2.4. Norse Place names

Just as the Pictish *pit* place names, the various Norse place names can shed some light on the settlement pattern. The Norse place names came to replace many of the native ones, and this has been used as a counter argument to the peaceful integration and coexistence suggested by the archaeological material. However, Thomson (1987: 19-20) points out that it is uncertain how sudden and overwhelming a colonisation has to be to achieve this affect among the place names. As a comparison, Thomson (1987: 19-20) refers to Sawyer (1962; 1982), and says that he has argued that the large number of Danish place names in northern England was established by small groups of war bands instead of a big wave of colonists. However, more closely examined, Sawyer's statement above relates specifically to Northamptonshire. Here few settlement names, but some minor features, have Scandinavian names. Sawyer argues that the similarities between the languages spoken by the Danes and the British make it possible that a small number of newcomers could have brought about the changes (1962: 156, 158). The Northamptonshire situation cannot be compared to the situation in the Northern Isles where native place names were replaced with Scandinavian ones on a much larger scale. It is also doubtful whether there would have been any great similarities between the languages here. Sawyer himself (1982:

101) makes a distinction between the two geographical areas. He does not appear to envisage small groups of Scandinavians in Orkney, but rather the other extreme:

The change in place names of the Northern Isles suggests that relatively few natives survived, and that those who did were reduced to a very inferior status.

Marwick (1952) tried to construct a hierarchy of farm names, and argued that an outward expansion took place from areas of primary settlement. This development took place as successive generations established new farms around the original farm and took previously marginal land into cultivation. He saw *Skail* places to be original settlements, followed by names such as *land*, *garðr* and *bolstaðr*. *Quoy* names were regarded as late, and located on the fringes. This process, he argued, created a sequence of names, with the oldest names in the centre and the most recent on the margins (Ill. 13). Thomson (1987: 25) has also outlined a theory where names such as *-garth*, *akr*, *-igar* and *-skail* are new names on old land, whereas many of the *-setter* and *-quoy* names represent a change from pastoral to arable land use.



Ill. 13. Marwick's (1952) adapted model of the hierarchy of Scandinavian place names in Orkney (Thomson 1987: 25). The oldest settlements are at the centre, and the most recent are on the margins. The circles represent the median size of each place name category in pennylands (from the 1492-1500 rentals), and the name categories are shown in their relative position in relation to distance from the sea and hill.

A high status Norse place name element is *boer*, as in Trenaby, Sebay or Midbea (Thomson 1987: 27). Marwick (1952) argued that these names indicated primary Norse settlement, and Thomson (1987: 27-28) agrees that many of them were large, important and early. For example, the large 27 *pennyland* district of Howsgarth used to be called Bea, and the large farm of Backaskaill replaced a 18 *pennyland* district named Southerbie, a name which indicated a division of the original *boer* unit. Thomson (1987: 28) suggests that the boers may have been Pictish estates, taken over and renamed by the Norse. The boers appear to have been connected with the *Husebys* as large land areas owned by the earls were associated with the *Huseby* farms. The Husabae in Rousay lay in Sourin, which together with Scockness and the island of Egilsay constituted a large land area used to endow the bishopric. Previous to this it most likely belonged to the earl. *Huseby* in Stronsay is still one of Orkney's largest farms and it may have been even larger in Norse times when it may have incorporated the neighbouring farm of Holland. Holland was a

bordland, part of the property of the earls, and it contained a *boer* name - the Noust of Erraby. Large blocks of bishopric property in Kirkbister and Elwick indicate the *Huseby* in Shapinsay. It seems that when the earls settled at one permanent centre, some of their old properties were used to endow the 12th century bishopric (Thomson 1987: 28-29).

Another high status Norse place name element was *bu*, which meant 'farm' in Old Norse. Technically a *bu* was a large farm that, opposed to a multi-occupancy township, was a single unit. New *bus* were still created in the 16th century, but most are much older (Thomson 1987: 29). Sanday, for example, was dominated by large *bu* farms. The rental from 1595 shows six *bordland bus*; The Bu of Tofts, The Bu of Walls, The Bu of Lopness, The Bu of Tresness, The Bu of Brough and The Bu of Hacksness. All were 18 *pennyland* big. Multiple estates thus seem to have been very common, and on Sanday they were the norm, opposed to small family farms (Thomson 1987: 346).

Huseby, *boer* and *bu* names were all indicators of high status farms in the arable heartland and they are all associated with coastal locations. In the end of the 15th century, the boers were the largest units with a median value of 13 1/2 *pennylands*, but they had originally been much larger. Property was divided among heirs, and thus the settlement pattern changed both because of internal division and outward expansion. -Garðr (meaning enclosure) names, which often have a *-garth* termination, probably reflect both processes, as some are in the arable heartland whereas others are on the margins (Thomson 1987: 29-30).

Skaill place names are also thought to have had a high status compared with other Norse settlements in Orkney. For example, Gairsay in Langskaill was the dwelling-place of the saga hero Svein Asleifarson. The Deerness Skaill, the Sandwick Skaill (west Mainland) and Eday Skaill are all occupied by a farm of some importance at the head of a bay where there is also a parish church today. However, the importance of the *Skaill* farmsteads does not appear to have anything to do with the size of the farms. The word *Skaill* means 'shed', 'shack' or 'hut' and has a low status meaning in Norwegian (Thomson 1987: 32-33). To explain this, Gelling (1984: 36) suggested that the Vikings may have called their first improvised buildings 'our shack', and then kept this name even when the settlements grew.

Marwick (1952) argued that *Skaill* names were of a very early date, second only to the *boer* names. Thomson (1987: 32-33) has pointed out that in spite of the *Skaill*-farms' prime positions, often at the head of bays, and their association with parish churches, their tax assessments were low. He has also pointed out that there is only one *Skaill* farm in each district of Mainland and that the association with parish churches indicates that *Skaill*-sites were still important when the parishes were established. This status may not have been tied to the tax value, but to some public function within the community. In medieval Norway, *skåle* had a high status connection: *gildeskåle* or *gildehus* was a building used for public functions. Lamb (1997: 14-15) points out that Mariu *gildeskåle* in Bergen was the meeting place of the thing, for instance. In *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 66), Svein Asleifarson killed a man in a hall, a *drykkjuskáli* (*drykkja* meant a drinking bout, or banquet), during the jarl's Yuletide feast in 1135. In *Harald Harfagres Saga* in *Heimskringla*, a farmer in Värmland (in today's Sweden) had a large and ancient *veizluskáli*, and built a new one for the entertainment of two kings. It was in a *skáli* that Thorkel entertained and killed Earl Einar (*Orkneyinga Saga* ch 16).

The use of *veizla* in the sagas can mean 'guest entertainment', but often this entertainment appears to be an obligation on the vassal to his lord (Lamb 1997: 15). Crawford (1987: 198) suggests that the word means 'grants of earldom estates'. There was a tax, called *wattle* (from ON *veizla*) in the 1492 and 1500 rentals, on the rest of the community, to enable the vassal to entertain the lord and his party. Lamb (1997: 15) suggests that the *Skaills* may have had a function in this system. They could have been centres for collection of tax paid in kind, and places for entertainment of the earl. An interesting fact is that *bordhouse* was the Stewart earls' equivalent to *wattle*, home farm. In Birsay the place name *Boardhouse* appears to have replaced the place name *Langskaill* (Morris 1989: 18).

Lamb (1997: 16) points out that the connection between *Skaill* places and parish churches may have something to do with their role as tax collection and entertainment centres. The bishop, closely connected to the secular leader, may have had the right to be entertained as well, and to locate the church and his residence next to the *veizla* farm may thus have been practical. It would also have increased the

Skail farms status, and would have allowed the secular leaders to keep an eye on the religious leaders.

4.2.5. Discussion

It seems clear that the Norse, at least partly, took over the Pictish land administration system. That the Norse term *tirung* (= *ounceland*) was known under the native name *davoch* is indicative of this (Steinnes 1959: 42-43). Additionally, the fact that the system cannot be found in Scandinavia or any other areas affected by the Vikings and that the 18 penny system differs from the Norwegian 20 penny system offer further support (Thomson 1987: 117-118).

The Pictish system with *mormaers* and *thanes* appears to have had some form of equivalent also in Norse times. In *Orkneyinga Saga* Thorfinn appoints stewards to take care of his lands (ch 15, 19) and Thorkel gathers Thorfinn's tributes when he is away (ch 15). Thus, it is clear that there were established forms for tax collection and land administration, and wealth and power seem to have been derived from the land in this period. Since Thorfinn died 1064, these events must have taken place during the 11th century. In *Njal's Saga*, stewards are also mentioned (ch 85) during the last part of the 10th century.

A *davoch* seems to have consisted of *petts*, shares of this larger land unit. Thus, if the *ounceland* unit corresponds to the *davoch*, maybe the *pennyland* unit corresponds to the *pett* (Table 6)? They both varied in size, had to do with shares and were connected to taxation. The difference is that, in medieval times at least, the *pennyland* was not recognisable on the ground as the *pett*. The *thanages* resemble the Norse *Huseby* districts (Table 6). They both consist of a principal residence surrounded by dependent townships. Apart from the land units, the native taxation system may also have been taken over by the Norse. The *veizla* system for example, seem to have been developed from the tribal tribute payments, and the later tax paid to the royal Pictish officials, *thanes* and *mormaers*. Just as the Pictish king and his administration may have used the existing native organisation to introduce the Pictish culture to the Orkney Isles, the Norse used the established Pictish organisation to achieve power in Orkney.

The Norse *boer* place names also appear to be similar to the *pett* units, as they are both estates. However, the *boer* names are connected to coastal locations, which the *petts* avoid. Could the *boer* units correspond to a lost, high status Pictish coastal equivalent to the *pett* units (Table 6)?

The date for the introduction of the *Huseby* system in Orkney is uncertain. Steinnes (1959: 44-46) associated it with events in the *Orkneyinga Saga*, not considered historically accurate. Thus it is difficult to say if it was brought to Orkney with the first settlers around AD 800 or with the second wave of more organised settlement around the late 9th/early 10th century. Steinnes (1959: 44) assumes that emigrating Norwegians would not have brought the system to Orkney, because it had been brought to them by Swedish invaders. However, just because they did not like the Swedes conquering their lands, they do not necessarily have had to dislike their *Huseby* system as well. The system seems to have been popular enough to spread to many areas. South-west Norway, where the Orkney settlers are thought to have come from, had the *Huseby* system from around AD 800 (Steinnes 1959: 44), and that an immigrant took the system to Orkney appears to be a reasonable explanation

Pictish	Norse
Thanage	Huseby
Davocho	Ounceland
Pett	Pennyland
Lost coastal pett-like unit?	Boer

Table 6. Hypothetical comparison between possible corresponding Pictish and Norse land units in Orkney.

In order to get a more detailed picture of the Norse settlement process, three different areas of Orkney; Birsay, Burray and Deerness will be looked at in the following chapter. Explanations for the Norse settlement pattern and the mix of Pictish and Norse artefacts in early settlement layers will be examined, and the possibility that Burray was a Norse power centre will be considered.

Chapter 5. Archaeological sites in Orkney

In this chapter, three different areas of Orkney – Birsay, Burray and Deerness will be compared and contrasted in order to reach an understanding of the Viking settlement in Orkney. What sort of settlement location did the Norse prefer, how did they relate to the Picts, how can the mix of native and Norse artefacts on settlement sites be explained and can Burray be compared to the other high status Norse settlement centres?

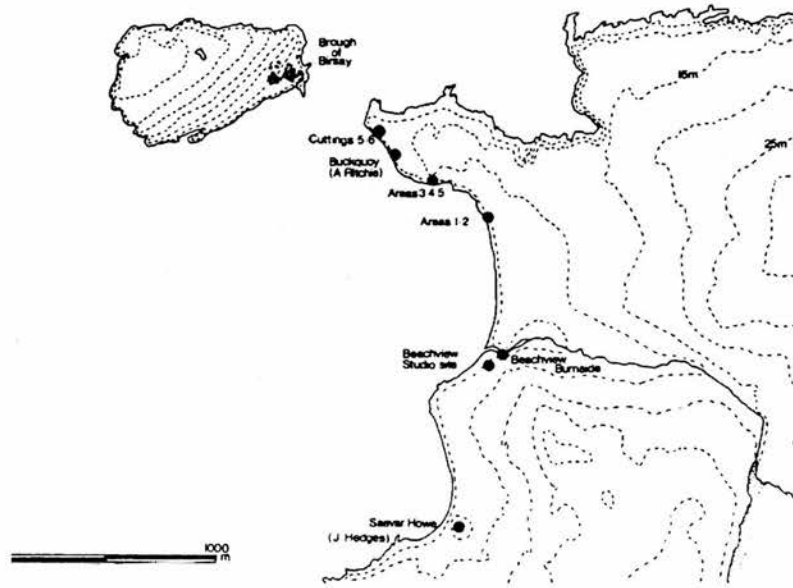
5.1 Birsay

5.1.1. Introduction

Birsay is situated on the north-west coast of Mainland Orkney (Ill. 14) and is a very fertile area due to the shell mixed sand of the Bay of Birsay (Ritchie 1977: 174). The landing places in the Bay of Birsay meant that small fishing vessels could be deployed as well (Morris 1989: 6). The area has been favoured for settlement from ancient times up to our days.

Birsay is a contraction of *Byrgisherað*, mentioned in the sagas. Ritchie (1998b: 6) interprets *Byrgisherað* as consisting of the names Bygis and Herad, the names of the present parishes Birsay and Harray. Marwick (1952: 130) says that *herað* was an administrative unit and that the first element in the place name, Byrgi, is a form of the Old Norse *borg*, fortress. This interpretation of *herað* appears more likely, as *härad* is an old Swedish area of administration and jurisdiction.

The word Brough is defined as meaning an enclosure for animals, sometimes enclosures formed by nature: small peninsulas, islets etc, connected to the shore by narrow necks of land (Jakobsen unpublished, but quoted in Morris 1989: 21).



Ill. 14. Map of the Birsay Bay area, with some of the archaeological sites mentioned in the text (Morris 1983: 123).

5.1.2. Buckquoy

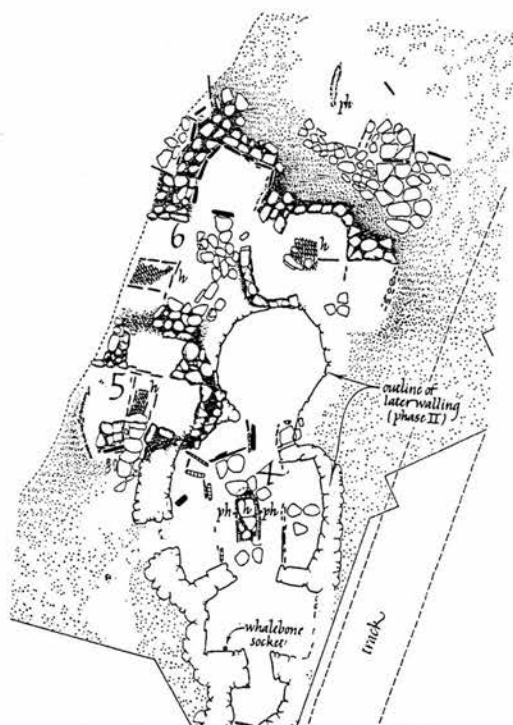
5.1.2.1. Introduction

The Point of Buckquoy is a promontory on the north side of the Bay of Birsay, one of three sheltered bays on the west coast of Mainland Orkney (Ritchie 1977: 174). The place name is probably derived from Old Norse *bygg-kvt*, meaning bere (a type of barley) quoy or enclosure (Marwick 1970: 60-61). The soils in this area are Orkney's most fertile. The site consists of a series of farmsteads spanning the 7th to 10th centuries and it is estimated that at least 50% of the site had been lost to coastal erosion by the time an excavation was undertaken in 1970 - 1971. Phases I and II are interpreted as Pictish and III - V as Norse. A Viking Age burial dated to the third quarter of the 10th century was inserted in the ruins of the last farmstead and comprises Phase VI (Ritchie 1977: 174-175).

5.1.2.2 Pictish phases

The earliest structure in Phase I (Ill. 15) was a part of a cellular house with rectilinear cells and a central chamber in which the hearth was located. The surviving internal length of the building was about 8 m. The maximum internal width might have been about 9 m. When a smaller building of the same cellular plan form, House 5, was built, the south east wall of House 6 was dismantled. House 5 had three rectilinear cells around a central hearth. The entrance was on the fourth side of the hearth. The building was 2.75 x 3.60 m internally and the cells were all about 1.30 x 1.60 m. No chronologically distinctive artefacts were found in Phase I, but stratigraphical evidence suggests a 7th century date (Ritchie 1977: 175, 178-179, 192).

In Phase II, House 4 was built (Ill. 15). House 4 was a figure-of-eight house and had four interconnecting rooms: a vestibule, a larger room, the main living room and a circular chamber. This chamber was paved at some stage in the building's occupation and its entrance was widened. Among other finds, a painted pebble and an ogham inscribed spindle whorl were found in the Phase II layers. A date in the first half of the 8th century has been suggested for this phase because of the ogham inscription, other artefacts and the house type (Ritchie 1977: 179-182, 192).



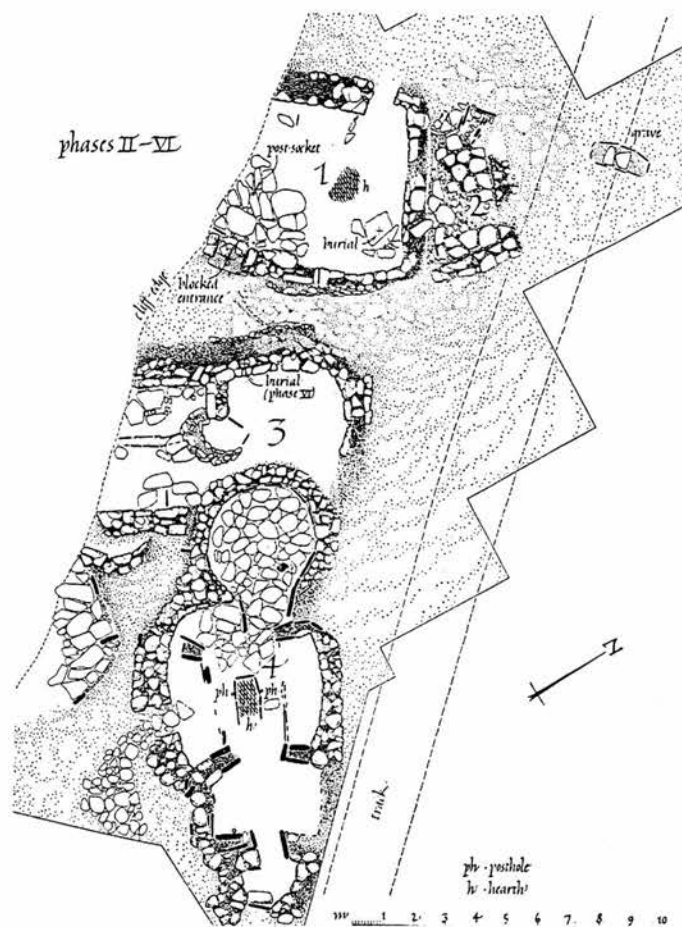
Ill. 15. The Pictish phases at Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977: 176).

5.1.2.3. Norse phases

Only a byre, House 3, remains from the earliest Norse settlement, and it partly overlapped House 4 (Ill. 16). The byre was 4 m wide and 8 m long, divided into two parts and may have been a combined byre and barn. No chronologically distinct artefacts have been found from this phase, but it is thought to date to about AD 800 (Ritchie 1977: 184-185, 192). It has been suggested that House 3 may have been a modified Pictish building (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 161), as the surviving gable end is curved and as the building may have been partially dug down into the ground. The following Norse houses on the site do not have these features.

From the Middle Norse phase, House 2 survived (Ill. 16). It was a small rectangular building, 2 m wide and at least 3.65 m long. The floor was paved but there was no hearth. Since the building is situated crosswise to the wind, it has been interpreted as a threshing barn. A function as a stable has also been suggested. A complete comb of native type, and fragments of another, have been found in this level (Ritchie 1977: 185-187, 192).

An incomplete dwelling house, House 1, survived from the Late Norse level (Ill. 16). It was about 4.5 - 5 m wide and the truncated length was 6 m. A pin of probable Pictish origin, combs and comb fragments of native types were found, among other objects, in this level. In fact, native objects dominated all the Norse levels on Buckquoy. Since a mound had formed before the burial of Phase VI was inserted, Phase V has been dated to about 900 AD (Ritchie 1977: 187-189, 192).



Ill. 16. The late Pictish and Norse phases at Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977:177).

5.1.3. The Brough of Birsay

The Brough of Birsay is a 21 ha tidal island off the north-west coast of the Mainland (Ill. 14). The Point of Buckquoy is the nearest land, some 350 m away. The word brough comes from the Old Norse *borg*, fortress or stronghold (Marwick 1952: 130). The island can only be reached at low tide, and Hunter (1986: 13) argues that this was almost certainly the case in prehistory as well. Crawford (1987: 189) however, has pointed out the possibility that there may have been a connection between the Brough and the Mainland during the Viking Age, either in the form of a land bridge, or a more or less temporary tombolo beach. Mr Peter K. I. Leith, Orkney, was told by his uncle, Mr David Kirkness, that old people had said that it used to be possible to bridge the gap to the Brough of Birsay with a plank. However, it is uncertain if this

plank would have been laid between the Point of Buckquoy and the island, or if it was used to bridge a smaller gap from the rocks exposed at low tide and the island (Anne Brundle & Peter K. I. Leith: pers. comm.). In any case, it is clear that erosion of both the Mainland and the Brough has made the islet more isolated today than it was during the Viking period. In the winter of 1999/2000, for example, the south facing cliffs of the Point of Buckquoy eroded by about a foot in two weeks due to gales (Anne Brundle: pers. comm.).

There are springs, but hardly any grazing, and no agricultural land on the island, which would have been dependent on the mainland for food supplies. This was also found to be the case during the excavations (Hunter 1983: 162). There is also a problem with drainage on the island. However, the island has natural defences since the cliffs to the north, south and west are inaccessible (Ritchie 1993: 54). *Orkneyinga Saga* mentions the Birsay area as a centre for Norse activity, and the Brough of Birsay is one of the possible seats for the Norse earldom (see ch 6 below).

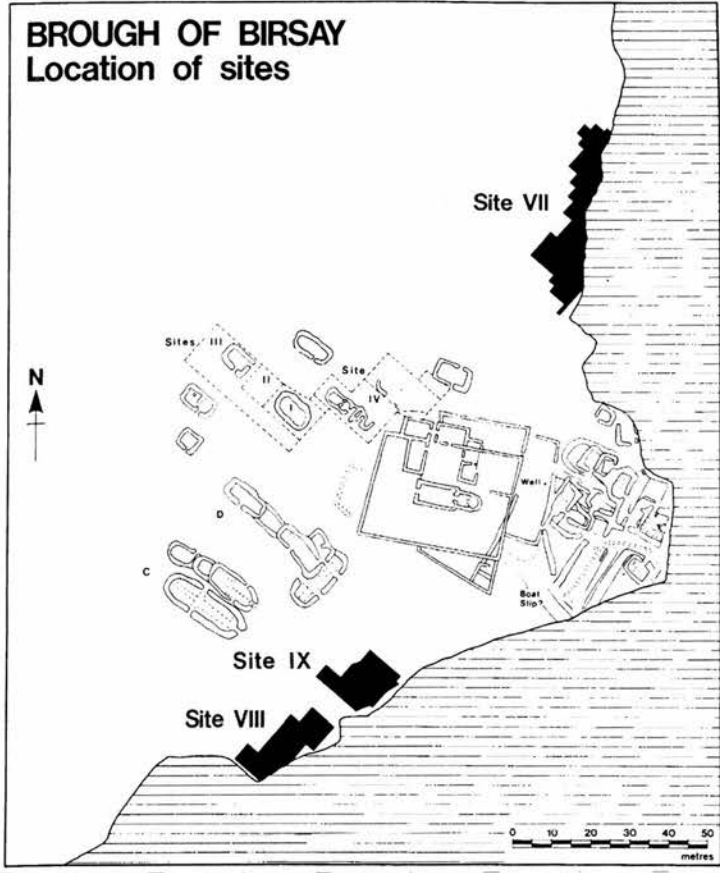
5.1.3.1 The Pictish settlement

Pictish settlement remains have been found in Area II (Ill. 17), which mainly contain finds from an important Pictish metal working industry dating to the late 8th century (Curle 1982) and on Sites VII, VIII and IX (Ill. 18). These three sites may all be contemporary and date from the 7th through to the 9th century (Hunter 1986).

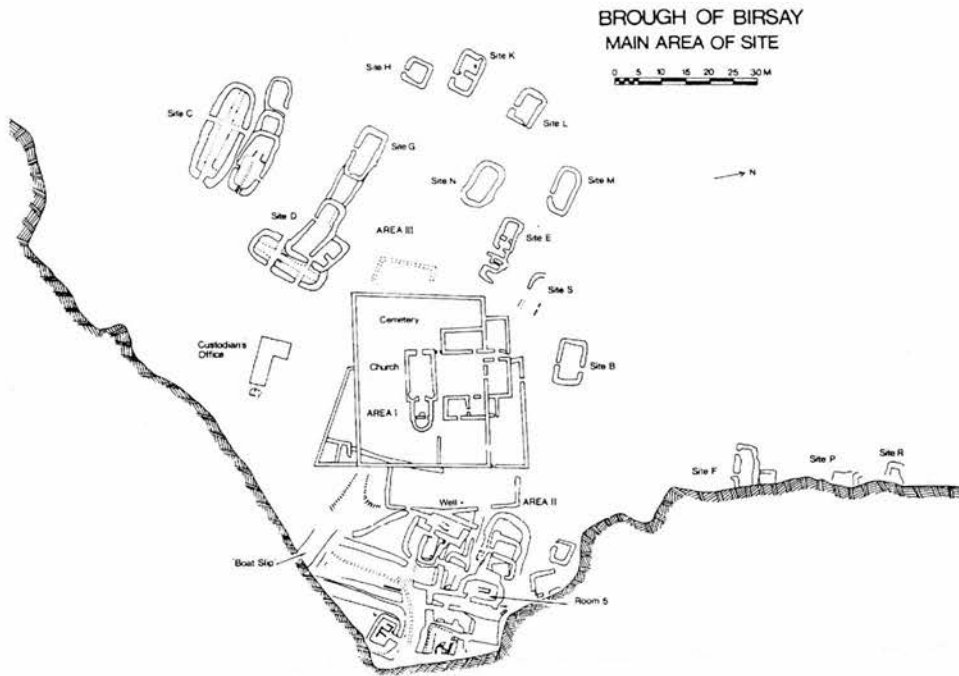
In Area II, there are also some hints of a Pictish occupation that pre-dates the bronze-working phase: a small pin was found in a layer that may pre-date the bronze working phase (Curle 1982: 19). There are two other objects, a penannular brooch and a led disc, that may also pre-date the bronze industry. The brooch has been dated to the 4-5th century and the decorated disc has been dated to the 6th to 8th centuries (Curle 1982: 48). Hunter (1986: 29) also points out that since the bronze industry appears to be developed by the 8th century, the origins of the native settlement may have been somewhat earlier. A Pictish symbol stone was also found on the Brough. It is thought to be a very early class II stone (Curle 1982: 97).

Hunter's excavated features on sites VII, VIII, IX have been interpreted to represent a maximum total of seven structures. Structures 13, 14, 15 and 22 may have been of a common type and had their own peripheral drainage systems. The c.

18 m long Structure 19 appears more sophisticated, but this may be due to the lack of transverse erosion. All structures underlay Norse features. The density of structures was relatively low, and Sites VIII and IX may have had a single structure or assemblage at any one time during the native period (Hunter 1986: 60-64).



Ill. 17. Curle's excavation areas on the Brough of Birsay (1982: 12).



III. 18. Hunter's excavation areas on the Brough of Birsay (1986: 21).

5.1.3.2. The Norse settlement

Area II also yielded Norse settlement remains. In the lower Norse horizon, a significant number of Pictish artefacts was found: 17 small Pictish pins (Curle 1982: 19), four single sided Pictish high-backed combs (Curle 1982: 22), 12 double-sided type B native combs (Curle 1982: 56-57), three Pictish pins with iron shanks and globular heads, and a Pictish bronze pin with spatulate flattened head. A Pictish penannular brooch and the fragment of a similar terminal of another were both found in the lower Norse horizon. The brooch appears to have been made on the Brough, as a mould of the same type was found (Curle 1982: 50). There are many fewer Pictish objects in the Middle Norse horizon and only two Pictish pins were found among the artefacts (Curle 1982: 50).

Curle (1982:100) argues that there are no signs of continuity between the different phases of Norse occupation in Area II on the Brough. The artefact types are different and belong to different periods, the life styles of the people appear different and the buildings as well.

The Norse on the Brough acquired goods from a variety of sources. Apart from the Pictish elements, there are Irish, Northumbrian and Anglo-Saxon (Curle 1982: 102). According to Curle (1982: 101), the Lower Norse community on the Brough appears to have relied heavily on imports. The Norse could thus have got the Pictish objects from another source than Picts on the Brough. However, Curle (1982: 101) argues that the Pictish pins in the lower Norse horizon are so different from Norse pins that it is unlikely that the Norse adapted them, and that they thus indicate a continued Pictish presence. She argues (1982: 101) that the Norse could have adopted the 4 native combs found in the same layer, though.

Seven individual structures on Sites VII, VIII and IX were identified by Hunter, excluding a possible boundary wall. They were all considered to represent the primary phases of Norse occupation on the sites. Only Site IX showed any signs of continuity between the Picts and the Norse. Here Structure 16a/b was erected on exactly the same place as the previous Pictish building, without any break in continuity. Sites VII and VIII both had a layer of clay wash distinguishing the pre-Norse and Norse layers. Stratigraphically, Structure 16 a/b appears to be the earliest Norse building, followed by Structure 17, both on Site IX. Structure 17 is interpreted as being roughly contemporary with Structures 1, 2, and 3 on Site VII and Structures 8 and 9 on Site VIII. The period of abandonment, represented by the clay wash, on Sites VII and VIII may have been contemporary with Structure 16 a/b on Site IX (Hunter 1986: 103). This early phase is called 2.1 and the subsequent settlement on all three sites is called Phase 2.2. In Phase 2.2. each site contained structures protected by a common ditch system and their ground plans were orientated in a single direction (Hunter 1986: 103-104). Hunter (1986: 114) suggests that Phase 2.2 may have seen a new incoming population. The fact that the new structures appear to have been constructed simultaneously supports this.

In conclusion, the settlement of Site IX is interpreted as continuous from Pictish times, and the Norse arrival is likely to have taken place in the early part of the 9th century. The clay-wash on the other sites has been interpreted as representing decades rather than just a few years. This and radiocarbon dates place the foundations of Phase 2.2 within the last half of the 9th century and occupation lasted until the late 10th or early 11th century (Hunter 1986: 104-105).

Table 7 shows the relatively large size of Structure 17, and of Structure 16a. The three buildings on Site VII are of similar size. Hunter (1986: 106) says that it is likely that the larger structures were combined dwelling and byres/barns, whereas the smaller buildings were not. However, Structure 9 on Site VIII is relatively large and has been interpreted as an agricultural building (Hunter 1986: 106). The typical long house consisted of a living area and a byre for the wintering of cattle. However, a dwelling that was not orientated towards farming, or which had a detached byre would have been shorter, but still of domestic function. Thus, even though several of the buildings on the Brough do not conform in character to others in the Northern Isles, they may still be domestic in function. The special character of the Brough settlement may also mean that comparisons with more traditional Norse farming communities cannot be made (Hunter 1986: 107).

Six of the buildings may have been contemporary, which means a high density of structures. Additionally, further unexcavated buildings to the west, east and south may also have been contemporary, and the Brough may have been a small village (Hunter 1986: 107).

Structure	Est. length	Est. width	Est. floor area	Form	Site
1 a/b	9m (max)	3m (max)	27 sq m	bow-sided	VII
2	6.5m	3(?) m	19.5 sq m	sub-rectangular	VII
3	9m	3m	27 sq m	sub-rectangular	VII
9	10(?) m	4(?) m	40(?) sq m	sub-rectangular	VIII
16a	13(?) m	5m	65 sq m	sub-rectangular	IX
16b	7m	5m	35 sq m	sub-rectangular	IX
17	14(?) m	6m	84 sq m	bow-sided	IX

Table 7. Internal measurements of the buildings excavated by Hunter (1986) on the Brough of Birsay (After Hunter 1986: 106).

On Site VII all Norse structures used land that had been used by the Picts before them. Even though the foundation lines differed, the floor areas had much in common. The situation was the same on Site VIII, where the last Pictish structure, 22, had been subsumed in the Norse building, Structure 9. The reuse of old building locations may be explained by the possibility to reuse building material, but this does not explain the close correlation between floor areas (Hunter 1986: 111). Hunter

(1986: 111-112) suggests that the Norse settlement on the island may have taken place under some sort of controlling authority, based on a native system. Hunter (1986: 112-113) writes that seen individually, each site could be interpreted as showing Norse dominance, but taken together the settlement pattern can clearly be seen as continuing from the native period into the Norse. Native pottery forms still occur as well. Since few of the early Norse buildings on Site VII contained any culturally diagnostic artefacts, it is possible that they were used as native quarters, set apart from the main settlement (Hunter 1986: 173).

5.1.4. Picts, Vikings and brochs

5.1.4.1. Introduction

The broch structures appear to have been in use over several centuries. Bu was occupied some time between the 8th and 5th centuries BC for example and Gurness was established in the 1st or early 2nd century AD. There are also finds from the 3rd to 4th centuries AD on this site (Hedges 1987: 31-32). In some cases, for example Burrian on North Ronaldsay, Pictish buildings were built on top of the defended villages (Hedges 1987: 41), and Hedges (1987: 47) points out that there was a continuation of settlement from the early Iron Age to the Pictish period. At least 12 of the 52 Orkney broch sites have Pictish objects.

The majority of broch sites include Norse place name elements, for example the Old Norse *borg*, meaning fortification, fortress and *haugr* (grave) mound. Out of 52 brochs, 17 incorporate *borg*, another 17 incorporate *haugr* and an additional five incorporate both (Hedges 1987: 52). The word broch itself is a corruption of the Old Norse *borg*. That the Norse used this word for the broch structures suggests that they were familiar with their function (Hedges 1987: 130). On some brochs sites, the Pictish occupation may have been followed by a Norse presence. Rectilinear buildings that resemble Norse houses have been found at Gurness and Howe (Hedges 1987: 49).

5.1.4.2 Saevar Howe

Saevar Howe, or Saverough, is a large hillock a few feet above the high water mark to the west of the village known as The Palace in Birsay (Ill. 14). The building is very ruinous but has yielded typical broch related finds (HY22NW 5). Saevar Howe is well situated to take advantage of a range of resources available in the area and beaching is also easy (Hedges 1983: 111-112).

Two main phases were found during excavation, apart from a long cist cemetery, which has been dated to the 10th century at the earliest (Hedges 1983: 120). The first, pre-Norse, phase was subdivided into Ia, b and c. Phase Ic appeared to have been totally collapsed before the site was inhabited again, in Phase IIa. The second phase consisted of three superimposed Viking hall houses and associated features (Hedges 1983: 77-78). The earliest Viking house was not excavated but evidence from Phase II b suggests that the house in Phase IIa was totally ruined and then abandoned before occupation in Phase IIb followed, after what appears to have been a complete abandonment rather than a temporary break. In Phase IIb completely new walls were built, but the alignment was the same. Eventually the Phase IIb house was abandoned as well, judging from the layer of sand that had blown into the building before the Phase IIc building was constructed (Hedges 1983: 82-83). The third hall house was similar to the previous one (Hedges 1983: 84).

The antler combs found on the site have dates ranging from the Pictish to Norse periods, and no steatite was found before Phase IIa (Hedges 1983: 107). Phase IIa, dated by driftwood, has a C14 date of Cal. AD 715± 78. Phase IIb is dated to Cal. AD 760 ±90. Phase IIc is dated to Cal. AD 600±78 but this dating is problematic since it consisted of mixed marine shell and other materials. A coin was found in a drain belonging to Phase IIc. It was minted in AD 866-868. It was turned into a pendant and may thus have been deposited much later than this. It appears that the Viking occupation at Saevar Howe was predominantly 9th century, but may have started in the 8th century and/or continued into the 10th century (Hedges 1983: 108-109). The occupation in Phase I was probably Pictish and of the 8th century (Hedges 1983: 115-116).

5.1.4.3. Oxtro / Haugster / Okstrow

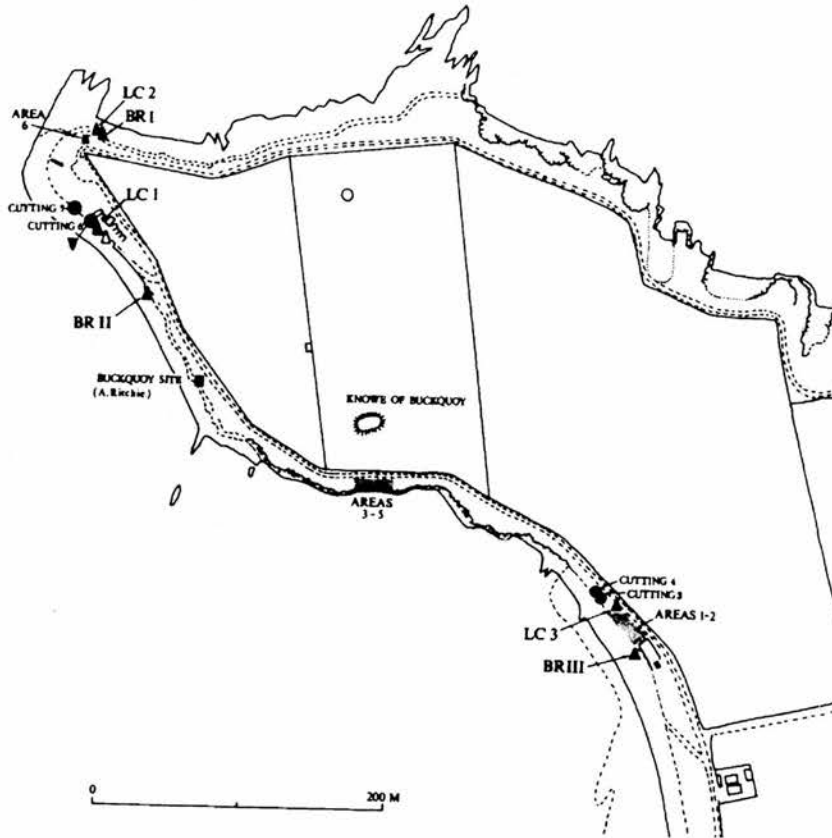
The broch, close to the Loch of Boardhouse (Ill. 14) was excavated in 1847, and many short cists were found. A figure of an eagle was carved on one of the cist covers, and it is thought to have been a class I Pictish symbol stone.

Beneath the cists were the remains of a broch, 69 ft in diameter with 12 ft thick walls (HY22NE 4). The broch yielded finds from most of the 1:st millennium AD, including a ringed pin and the upper part of a pin-shaft from a large ball-type Viking brooch (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 154). This brooch would have been similar to the ones found in the Skail hoard (c. AD 950-70) and Ballaquale (c. AD 970), and it is thus likely that the Oxtro find was deposited in the later half of the 10th century. Morris (1989: 25-26) points out that the Viking brooch may have come from a burial.

The name is hard to interpret, and Marwick (1970: 35) discards the suggested Norse name, Haugster Howe, that appears on some old maps, since *Hauster* and *Howe* means the same thing: mound. Instead, he suggests that the Ox element may come from ON *haugs* (genitive of *haugr*). The end of the name could come from ON *trodð*, Norse *trod*, *træe*, meaning a trodden place. If this is the case, the name would mean mound-fould or mound pasture.

5.1.5. Red Craig

The name comes from the Old Norse *rauða berg*, red rock or cliff, a description of the local red sandstone (Marwick 1970: 11). In Area 3 (Ill. 19), about 99 m to the south-east of Ritchie's (1977) Buckquoy site, walling similar to her Late Pictish building was found.



Ill. 19. The location of Red Craig (areas 3, 4, 5a, 5b) and the site known as 'South of Red Craig' (areas 1-2) (Morris 1989: 46).

Subsoil, clay and gravel covered a deposit of sandy yellow clay, in which a greenish glass bead covered with yellow dots was found. The yellow clay deposit in part covered the latest level of a collapsed complete building, with an internal figure-of-eight shape. The building had two rooms, the easterly c. 4.5 m in diameter and the westerly slightly smaller. A hearth, and what may be an oven, were found in the easterly room (Morris 1983: 128-131). The outer part of the walling of this structure extended in to Area 4 (Morris 1989: 177). Phases B and C represent the use and modification of the building. In Phase C some artefacts, including a stone gaming board, were found (Morris 1989: 284-285). It may belong either in a Celtic or a Norse tradition (Batey 1989: 225). In Phase E, tumble and clay had started to accumulate in the building, and in Phase F major deterioration had taken place. There is significant evidence for metal working in this phase (Morris 1989: 284-285).

To the west of Area 3 is Area 5 (Ill. 19), which also contained building remains, interpreted as the end room of a structure lost over the cliff. The surviving

building remains are similar to those at Buckquoy, and just as those it contained no datable artefacts (Morris 1989: 189). This building was at right angles to the building in Area 3 (Morris 1983: 131-132). Nothing was found in the rest of Area 5, or in the rest of Area 4 (east of the house in Area 3). Morris (1989: 189) therefore draws the conclusion that the remains in Areas 3 and 5 formed a single habitation unit.

Morris (1989: 286) prefers a Pictish date for the buildings. He admits that few characteristically Pictish artefacts have been found, but points out that there is also a lack of diagnostically Norse artefacts in the early phases. Morris (1989: 287) interprets the radiocarbon dates (Table 8) to suggest that the construction and occupation of the buildings were Pictish and early Viking, and the disuse Viking. He points out that the Brough of Birsay, Buckquoy and Red Craig probably were contemporary.

Morris (1989: 285) suggests that the glass bead, which has general parallels in Viking Age Scandinavia, may give a *terminus ante quem* for the buildings and date these to the late Pictish phase. But as he points out, the bead could have been deposited any time after its manufacture.

Phase A: 600-915 AD

Phase C: 600 - 910 AD

Phase E: 875-910 AD

Table 8. Radiocarbon dates for the different phases at Red Craig (Morris 1989: 287).

In 1976, human bone was revealed by storms 200 m to the south-east of Areas 3 and 5, a site referred to as 'south of Red Craig, Area 1' (Ill. 19). It turned out to come from a cist-grave with two bodies (Morris 1983: 132; Morris 1989: 142). Excavations behind the area of this cist-grave took place in 1977. A further cist-grave with one skeleton was then found in a thick midden deposit (Morris 1983: 134). Full-scale excavation took place in 1978, and it then became clear that there had been other structures, apart from the major building in Area 3, with associated midden deposits on the site. These middens post-dated some circular structures that turned out to be stone cairns overlying cist-graves. In total, the three excavations uncovered six burials in five graves (Morris 1983: 134). Two cist-graves are the

earliest graves. Over these, two cairns were found, and on top of these, one more cist grave and a skeleton. One of them, buried in a developing midden, had a hog-backed antler comb with a Viking Age date (mid 9th-mid 10th centuries) in Scandinavia (Morris 1983: 137-138; 1989: 289). The earliest cist graves and cairns have dates in the Roman Iron Age and Pictish period. The other cist grave and the skeleton have been dated to the late Pictish to later Norse periods (Morris 1989: 123). A steatite sherd was also found in Area 1, as well as smithing slag (Morris 1989: 290).

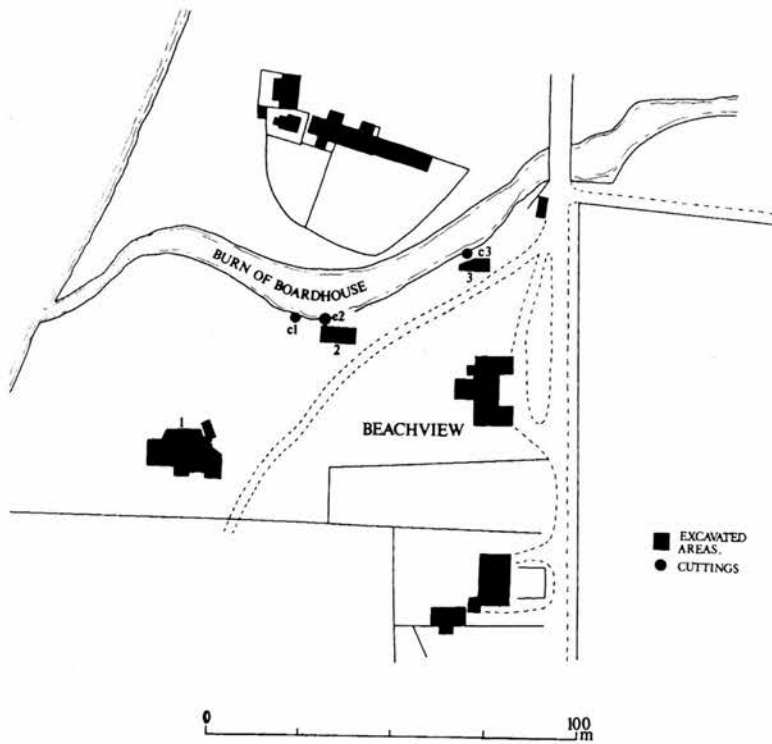
In Area 2, fragmentary building remains and midden material were found, but no buildings. In Phase A, fragments of an antler comb were found. Radiocarbon dating gave a result of Cal. AD 625-895, Late Pictish and Early Viking. Phase B contained flagging, and Phase C a midden and stone dump. The early midden layer was dated to Cal. AD 885-1245 and Cal. AD 620-890 and the later part to Cal. AD 855-1050 and Cal. AD 790-1035 (Morris 1989: 288-289). The stone assemblage from the lower midden included a large whetstone of probable Norwegian origin and comb fragments with Scandinavian parallels (Morris 1989: 289). A cist grave was also found, and dated to the later Pictish to Viking periods. The features in Area 1 and 2 seem to coincide (Table 9), and activity probably extended over both areas at times (Morris 1989: 141-142).

	AREA 1 Episode	AREA 2 Episode
Topsoil	G Turf & topsoil cover	F Turf & topsoil cover
Dirty sand & midden (Area 1)	F2 Brown sandy deposits F1 Sands & upper midden	E2 Sand cover E1 Dirty brown sand & stones
Graves	E Cist grave cut into lower midden; skeleton lying over Cairn 1	D Cist grave cut into midden
Midden	D Lower midden	C2 Upper midden & stone dumps C1 Lower midden & burnt material
? Structures (Area 2)	–	B2 Flagstones B1 Stone spread
Sand	C Sand cover	A Sandy layers
	B Stone features, probably collapse/partial destruction of cairns A Oval stone cairns with associated long cist inhumations	Sandy layers
Natural	Natural Sand	

Table 9. Correlation of phases in Areas 1 and 2, South of Red Craig (After Morris 1989: 142).

5.1.6. Beachview

Beachview is a mound site similar to Oxtro and Saevar Howe of which only the latest horizons have been investigated (Ill. 20). In Area 2, two walls were found. The space between them was filled with rubble, loam and sand with flat slabs on top. These were covered with bands of sand and loam in which the collapsed rubble of another structure was found. A midden, at least 60 cm deep, was also found. It included Late Norse artefacts, which indicates that the structures are of a Viking Age date (Morris 1983: 142). Morris (1996: 6) suggests that massive rubble in the unexamined earlier phases may come from a broch or Neolithic cairn.



Ill. 20. The Beachview site (Morris 1996: 35).

Area 3 is also a large mound, located under the present house. Artefacts with Viking or Late Norse affinities were found in a midden deposit. Earlier layers were not examined (Morris 1983: 142).

These two areas are situated in the Burnside area of Beachview. About 40 m away is the so called Studio site which is also a mound, and contains Area 1 and sub-areas D/E. In Area 1, very large structural remains with a complicated chronology were found. The main structure was an east-west rectangular building at least 12 m long. In the west end it was superimposed by a later structure, at least 7 m in length. This building encloses a drain and may have been a byre. This building was in turn superimposed in the east end by a semi-circular structure enclosing a setting of upright stones, which turned out to be a hearth. This building may be a corn-drying kiln (Morris 1983: 143). The Area 1 structures may belong to the 11th century. The midden dump, maybe the result of levelling of adjacent land, is later. The comb fragment suggests a date between the later 11th and the 13th century (Morris 1996: 145).

Sub-areas D/E contained relatively minor structural remains, including an enclosure wall and a D-shaped shed (Morris 1996: 6). The remains in this area may be earlier than in Area 1 (Morris 1996: 97).

Morris (1996: 6) points out that Areas 1, 2 and 3 probably made up a part of a much larger complex in the Late Viking and Late Norse periods. The 11th century date for Area 1 may also suggest an association with the earls of Orkney.

5.1.7. Discussion

Birsay appears to have been densely settled by both the Picts and the Norse, especially as the known sites are probably only a random selection of the true total, as pointed out by Ritchie (1983: 63). The popularity of the area probably stems from the very fertile soil that allowed the residents to accumulate wealth and thereby power and prestige. The ultimate expression of the position of the Birsay magnate may have been the settlement on the Brough, as there are no other advantages of living there than prestige. It relied on supplies from the Mainland, but not necessarily Buckquoy as other sites have now been found around the Bay of Birsay, and it could therefore not be used for defence over long periods. It was additionally uncomfortable to live on due to drainage problems. As the population on the Brough had to be supported by a farm on the Mainland the Brough settlement would thus show off the magnate's wealth just by existing. If metal working, feasting halls and maybe some sort of religious centre (see chapter 6) were located there, the effect would supposedly be even bigger.

Crawford (1987: 189) points out the possibility that the Brough could have been joined to the Mainland at some stage in prehistory. Her claim may be supported by the definition of the place name element *Byrgis* as '/.../' sometimes enclosures formed by nature, small peninsulas, holms or islets connected with the shore by narrow necks of land /.../ (Jakobsen: unpublished, but quoted in Morris 1989: 21). A connection to the Mainland would of course make the transportation of supplies much easier, and the Brough could even have been a tax collection centre. The only way an overlord could make use of the Brough was to transport supplies to it, so why not put the tax collection centre there? It may not have been a 'standard' tax

collection centre, however, as any previous centres corresponding to the *Huseby* farms would have been better for this, especially when it came to redistribution. Transporting food supplies back and forth to the Brough would seem unnecessarily complicated, but this depends on how difficult it actually was to get to and from the Brough in the Pictish and Viking periods. The Brough may rather have been a *veizla* centre, a place where food renders for guest entertainment were brought. Guests, maybe kings and subkings, invited to the spectacular Brough would not have any reasons to doubt their host's status. Structures 16a and 17, which may have been feasting halls, would fit in nicely with an official function of the site. Structure 9, with the large paved entrance and spread of animal bones, may also have been connected with feasting, since it could have been used for food preparation. Hunter (1986: 87-88) interpreted this building as having an agricultural function, because of the wide doorway. However, the spread of burned and unburned animal bones inside may point towards food preparation. Maybe meat was brought into the building on carts, hence the wide doorway and paving?

The Birsay area may have been settled by the Norse around AD 800, judging from sites such as the Point of Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977), Red Craig (Morris 1989) and the Brough of Birsay (Hunter 1986). An even earlier date may be suggested by Saevar Howe (Hedges 1983: 109). A change appears to have taken place in the last part of the 9th century. The Buckquoy farm is abandoned by the Norse around this time, and the more organised Phase 2.2. begins on the Brough. Hunter (1986: 114) has suggested that a new population may have arrived from Scandinavia, and this more organised settlement may have brought about the changes.

Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 11) claim that if Birsay was a power base in Pictish times, which it appears to have been, the Vikings must have taken it by force. However, where is the archaeological evidence for this? Instead of a violent take over, continuity appears to be the case on the Brough. Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 12) ignore the signs of continuity presented by Structure 16a/b and argue that no continuity between Picts and Vikings can be seen on the Brough of Birsay. A violent Norse take over of the Brough does not fit in with the overall pattern of Norse conformation to a native system of land use on the Brough either. Why would violent invaders care about native land units?

Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 161) have pointed out that one of the Pictish buildings at Buckquoy may have been reused by the Vikings. Let us look at Buckquoy and Red Craig more closely:

House 4 on the Buckquoy site is most likely Pictish, as an ogham inscription and a painted pebble was found associated with it. What is thought to be the first Norse house on the site, House 3, may in fact have been Pictish. It was dated to around AD 800 on stratigraphical evidence, and there are no Norse artefacts. Some may interpret this building as evidence that the Norse were hostile conquerors that took over Pictish sites with violence. However, in the following phase, dated roughly to the mid 9th century, there were no Norse artefacts either, but a native comb. In the most recent building, the late 9th century House 1, the situation was the same, i. e. no Norse objects but a Pictish pin and other native objects. As the dates for two later phases do indicate a Norse date, the lack of Norse artefacts in the earlier phase cannot be used as an argument for a Pictish occupation in this phase. In fact, that the Norse re-used Pictish structures could be seen as evidence for the peaceful co-existence of Picts and Vikings. If the Norse had been violent invaders, surely they would have flattened the Pictish building and erected an impressive hall house on the site instead, to instil fear and respect in the Picts?

How did the native objects end up in these clearly Norse phases? Let us look at some possibilities:

- If the Norse wanted to be in harmony with the Pictish society, they may have adopted native fashion and objects. But why would they have adopted such mundane things as pottery, pin and comb styles when native house types and burial practices, which presumably would have been a more efficient way of fitting in, were not adopted?
- Wealthy Scandinavians without crafting skills themselves could have settled on Buckquoy and bought what they needed from the natives. Buckquoy is not a high status site, so this possibility appears unlikely.
- The objects could be tax payments from the Picts living on the estates taken over by the Norse. But Buckquoy was not an estate centre, and the objects are of the wrong category for tax payments. Food or silver would be the most likely

categories. The leaders could make practical use of them, opposed to the hundreds of pins, vessels and combs that would accumulate with time.

- The objects could be gifts to the Norse from the Picts. This is possible, but simple commodities are not the right category of artefacts. Prestigious objects are more at home in the gift giving sphere. The only Pictish/Celtic objects found in pagan Norse graves are high status jewellery, like the Westness brooch. These objects are much more likely to be gifts, or evidence of intermarriage.
- The objects could be the produce of enslaved natives working on the Norse farm. But why would there be so many slaves on a low status farm site as Buckquoy that their artefacts completely outnumbered the Norse? The Norse must have used the same objects as the natives in order to explain the number of Pictish artefacts and the absence of Norse objects. However, it seems unlikely that the Norse masters would use the same types of objects as the slaves. Surely, in this situation, they would have wanted to display their power and status by using and displaying other objects of Norse design?
- The most likely explanation is that Picts living in the Norse community produced these items. They could represent a peaceful mix of Norse and Pictish people living on the same site. The Norse may have co-operated with the Picts to re-established the abandoned Buckquoy settlement. This co-operation may have been based on intermarriage or friendship. When the earldom was established, this settlement was abandoned. This may be due to growing Norse power and thereby difficulties in the relationship between the two peoples. The situation may have been the same at Red Craig. Here, the settlement was not abandoned, but the Norse took over the settlement at a later stage. We will come back to the Pictish artefacts on Norse sites below.

No diagnostically Norse or Pictish artefacts were found at Red Craig. The stone gaming board may belong in either a Norse or Celtic tradition, the bead cannot provide a secure *terminus ante quem*, the last phases could be Norse even with this artefact in the top layer and the fact that there are no diagnostically Norse artefacts cannot be used as evidence for Pictish settlement since the probable Norse buildings at Buckquoy were without such finds as well (Ritchie 1977). As the radiocarbon

dates cannot date the different phases closely enough, the only means of ascribing the phases either to the Norse or Pictish periods are the building types. Let us look at the buildings and see what they may tell us about the dating:

In Area 5, Phase B1 with the circular room is reminiscent of House 4 at Buckquoy, which is probably Pictish as it contained Pictish artefacts and has a circular form. In conclusion, this phase at Red Craig appears to be Pictish.

Phase B2, the use and modification of the building, could be either Pictish or Norse, as the Norse may have reused Pictish buildings. There are no finds to support either alternative. In Phase C the collapse starts, and this phase may also have been Norse. Phase D, when the building was forgotten is probably Norse.

In Area 3, Phase A is probably Pictish as the figure-of-eight house was newly built. Phase B, with use and modification, may be either Pictish or Norse. The same is the case for Phase C, in which the stone gaming board was found, and Phase D. Phase E and F appear to represent a change of some sort as there is significant evidence for metal working, and the change may be due to Norse occupation. They may have reused the building in the preceding phase and later constructed a new house which led to the old house being used as a working area. Phases G and H are probably Norse as they represent collapse and total disuse of the building.

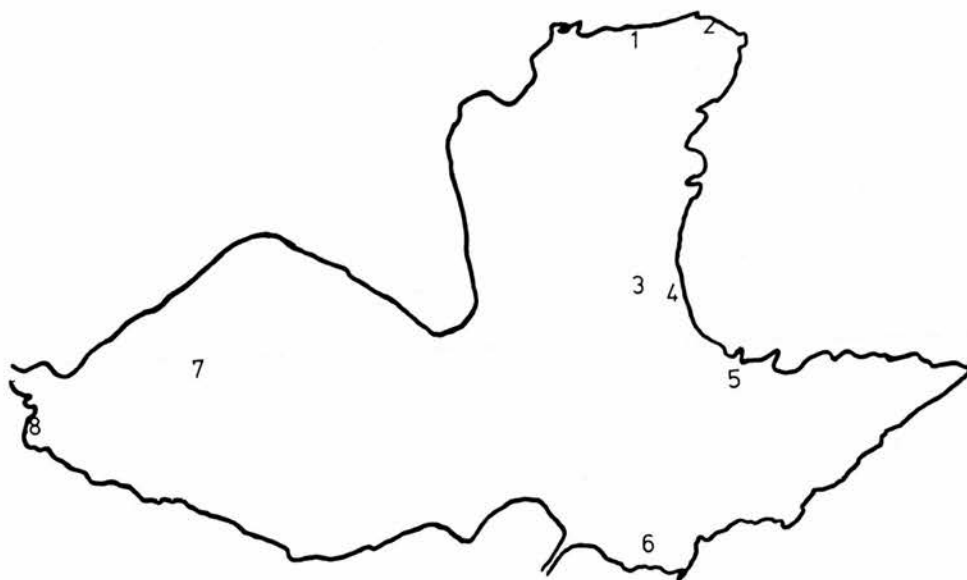
5.2. Burray

5.2.1. Introduction

Burray is a small island between the south-east Orkney Mainland and South Ronaldsay (Ill. 21). This small island has two confirmed brochs and one possible broch, and has also yielded a large Viking hoard. Was Burray the location of a high status Norse settlement site, similar to the ones discovered on the Mainland? The island is favourably located, controlling access from the east into Scapa Flow, and the high status Norse site at Orphir. It is probable that Burray and the Mainland were closer to each other in the past, as the sea level is higher today.

After a desk-based assessment of the island and its archaeology, fieldwork was carried out in 1999 in order to check the locations of the finds against the topography of the island. The fieldwork contributed to the understanding of Burray's

potential importance in the Pictish and Norse times, and it allowed the theory of Burray as a power centre to be tested. (For lists of all known Pictish and Norse sites and artefacts from Burray, please see Appendix 1 and 2).



Ill. 21. The location of the archaeological sites on Burray mentioned in the text. 1) West broch, 2) East broch, 3) The Bu of Burray, 4) Bu Sands, 5) St Lawrence's church, 6) Kyelittle broch, 7) North Town Moss, find spot of silver hoard 8), Wha Taing

5.2.2 Bu Sands, North Links

5.2.2.1 Antler mounts

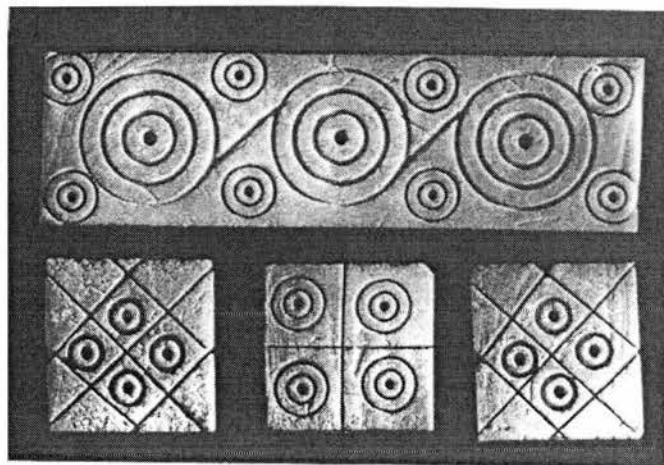
In 1990, two tourists found four decorated antler mounts in a midden on the beach at Bu Sands, also known as North Links (Ill. 21). Wall foundations were visible in the proximity (Hunter 1993: 319). The area used to be the location for a large settlement throughout the Iron Age, indicated by surface collection of finds. Animal bones, stone tools, iron, glassy slag, midden deposits and wall foundations are visible over a large area (Smith et al 1988: 29). Pictish pottery sherds have been found (Anne Brundle pers. comm.) and fragments of a double-sided composite hair comb have also been found (Smith et al 1988: 29). Composite bone combs, single or double sided are listed as a Pictish artefacts in Hedges (1987: 43), who also points out that

they are frequently also found in Norse layers. Therefore, this comb fragment may indicate either a Pictish or Norse settlement at North Links. Unfortunately, the comb fragment has not been catalogued and could not be located in the Orkney museum. The antler mounts, three square ones and one larger, rectilinear, are in good condition. All are incised with ring and dot decorations and straight lines (Ill. 22) (Hunter 1993: 320).

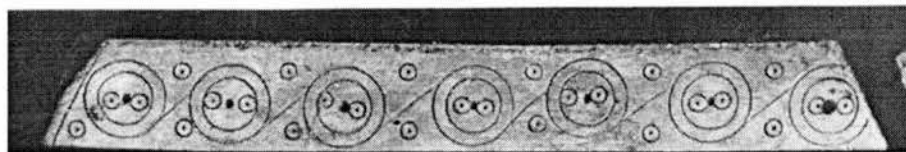
Decorated mounts, made of bone or antler, occur from the Roman period to the early 13th century in Britain and Europe (Hunter 1993: 321). They were used as box mounts, furniture inlay, maybe gaming pieces and mounts for handles or belts (Hunter 1993: 326). According to Hunter (1993: 330-331), the closest parallels to the Bu mounts come from the Late Roman or early Anglo-Saxon period. He compares the Bu mounts with finds from Richborough (Ill. 23) and Gloucester (Ill. 24), and suggests that the Bu mounts may have been imported from this area, or the Continent. He points out that it is hard to know how long the delay was between the manufacture of the mounts and their arrival in Orkney, and that they may have arrived in the Viking period. However, he suggests that the Bu mounts may have been ornaments on a prestige gift from the Late Roman period. He argues that a Roman date is more likely, as Roman material have been found on Burray and other places in the Orkney Isles. For example, Roman coins have been found at Lingro, a piece of a Roman amphora was found at Gurness and sherds of Samian and coarse pottery have been found at Mid Howe. Coarse ware was also found at Borthwick and Samian at Taft, East Burray and Oxtro. At Gurness there was an imitation of a Roman patera in steatite. Remains of a bronze patera were found at Mid Howe. Objects of resmelted Roman glass were found at Gurness and Taft (Hedges 1987: 29-30).

However, Viking objects have also been found on Burray and surrounding islands. Thus, if an argument similar to Hunter's (1993) is used, this could also suggest that the mounts were prestige gifts to or from a Viking chieftain. They could also come from a Viking settlement on the site. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bu is a high status Norse place name element, and it is thus most likely that this site was the location for a substantial Norse settlement.

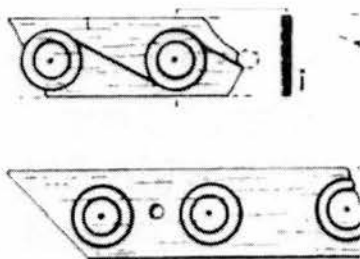
The ring and dot decoration is very common, and occurs in the Roman as well as in the Viking period. A simple comparison between the decoration on the Burray mounts and some objects dated to the Pictish or Viking periods illustrate the possibility of a post-Roman date for the mounts (Ill. 22-28):



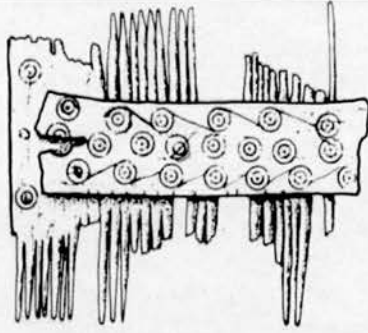
Ill. 22. The Burray antler mounts (Hunter 1993: 322).



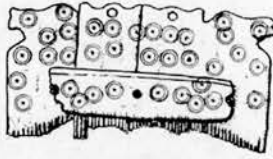
Ill. 23. Part of Late Roman bone casing of a wooden box or casket from Richborough (Bushe-Fox 1949: Ill. 152).



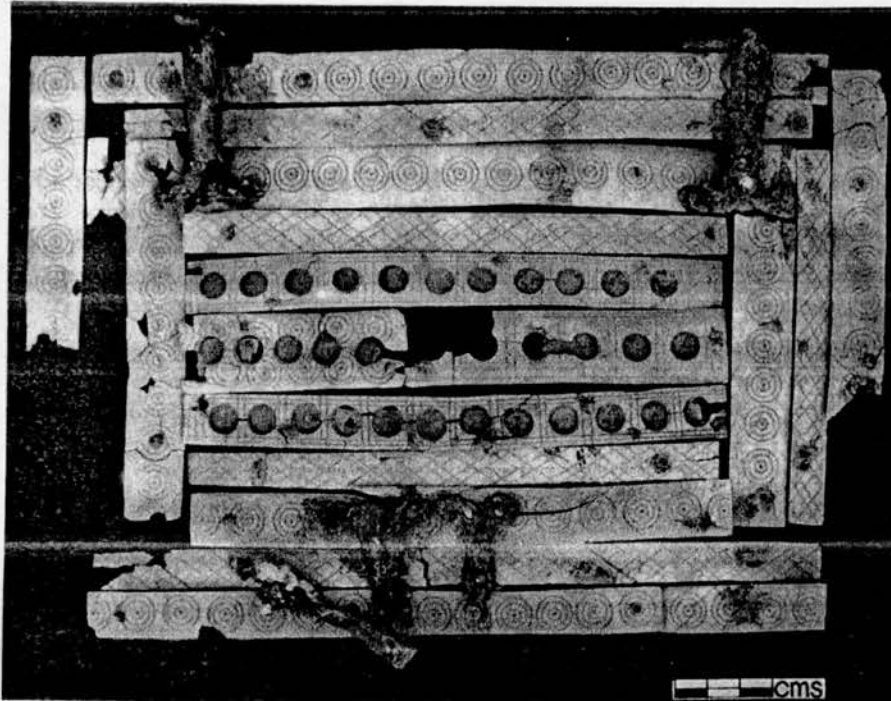
Ill. 24. Inlay pieces from Gloucester dated to the 4-5th centuries (Hassall and Rhodes 1975: Ill. 28, 36i).



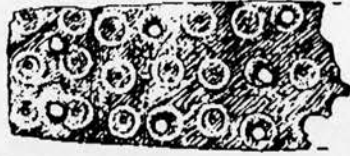
Ill. 25. Dark Age comb from Dun Cuir (MacGregor 1985: Ill. 51).



Ill. 26. High-backed Celtic comb from Lagore. Dated to the 5th -8th centuries (MacGregor 1985: Ill. 49).



Ill. 27. The Ludgershall castle bone strips, probably from the 12th century (Wilson & Hurst 1966: plate XV).



Ill. 28. Silver strip from Drimore Machair with a Viking (Maclaren 1974: 17) or pre-Viking (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 177) date (from Maclaren 1974: 17).

5.2.2.2. Stone egg

A stone egg amulet has also been found at Bu Sands. No associated finds were made with it. The egg is made of serpentinite, is 40 mm long and 24 mm in maximum diameter. Two other stone eggs have been found in Cairnhill, Aberdeenshire and two at the hillfort in Traprain Law, East Lothian. They are all made of unusual stone (Hunter 1993: 331).

The Cairnhill eggs were found in a prehistoric cairn, together with about 50 other unusual stones and a dozen objects. The associated finds included 3 fossil sea-urchins, two Neolithic flint tools; a cigar shaped 'fabricator', a small oval polished knife, water rolled pebbles, a flat disc-shaped water rolled pebble with two white veins, six pieces of rock crystal, one water rolled lump of amber, two small balls of green glass with white spirals, a part of a bracelet of vitreous paste with yellow stripes and other artefacts (see Anderson 1902 for a complete list). The surface of the last item was very water worn (Anderson 1902: 682). Both Hunter (1993: 331) and Stevenson (1967: 143) state that two egg amulets were found in Cairnhill, whereas Anderson (1902: 677) lists 'four egg shaped pebbles of jasper and serpentine'. There is no explanation why the number of eggs has been halved in later publications. Maybe two of the eggs turned out to be naturally shaped?

The Traprain Law eggs were found in the same area as a miniature strainer, a stone slab with the letters ABC and a part of D, and a polisher made of haematite. Stevenson (1967: 143) suggests that the Cairnhill find may have been an offering, and Hunter (1993: 332-333) argues that the Traprain eggs were as well, as they were found close to the other 'unusual' objects. However, Hunter (1993) cannot offer any convincing evidence for his theory. The silver strainer does not fit in to a hoard of

unusual stones. Cree and Curle (1922: 254) suggest that this silver object was used as an item of toiletry, once suspended on a ring with other such items, and this appears more likely. Further, there is nothing that suggests that these objects were deposited as a hoard. Rather, they appear to come from a settlement context, as pottery, bronze and iron objects and moulds were found in the same layers (Cree & Curle 1922: 250-257). However, both the site itself and the excavation report (Cree & Curle 1922) are somewhat difficult to interpret.

5.2.3. Thunderbolts

The content of the Cairnhill hoard, described above, suggests that the objects may have been collected because of their 'thunderbolt' characteristics:

In total 83 Stone Age axes, chisels, daggers, sickles, spearheads and arrowheads have been found and recorded in Lund, southern Sweden, over the years. The percentage of ground stone axes is much larger than in normal find assemblages in this part of Sweden. The great variation of objects is unusual and some of the artefacts also appear foreign to the Lund area (Carelli 1997: 394-395, 411). The Stone Age artefacts have been found all over the medieval town (Carelli 1997: 395-396).

Carelli (1997: 397) points out that antiquarian interest as such did not exist in medieval times, as our categories of past, present and future did not exist. Time was thought to follow the Biblical chronology, and prehistory was an unknown concept. Even if people would have had a sense of past and future, as they knew about their ancestors and their own children and grandchildren, they did not have a scientific concept of evolution and prehistory in our sense, which was introduced by Darwin much later. Thus, it seems unlikely that the Stone Age artefacts in Lund were collected out of antiquarian interest. Rather, a belief in magic seems to be behind their collection.

Stones have often been thought to have magical and healing powers. For example, about 40 Neolithic stone axes have been found in Roman contexts in England, many of them in temples (Adkins & Adkins 1985: 69), and in France at least 24 Romano-Celtic temples yielded Neolithic stone axes (Merrifield 1987: 10).

Stones were also thought to have a connection with thunder and lightning. It was thought that every time lightning struck, a stone was thrown down from heaven. The thunder that followed the lightning was seen as the consequence of this. Stone Age tools and other objects such as fossils and wedge shaped stones were thought to be thunderbolts. This tradition is found almost all over the world. The exceptions are Australia and the South Pacific, and it may not have existed in America before the arrival of the Europeans (Carelli 1997: 399-401).

It was thought that a thunderbolt protected against lightning strikes if kept in the house. It was also thought to have a range of other magical powers. For instance, Marbodœus, Bishop of Rennes wrote in his poem *Liber lapidum or Liber de gemminis*, some time between 1067 and 1081:

He who carries one [a thunderbolt] will not be struck by lightning, nor will houses if the stone is there; the passenger on a ship travelling by sea or river will not be sunk by storm or struck by lightning; it gives victory in law-suits and battles, and guarantees sweet sleep and pleasant dreams.

Thunderbolts were still thought to have magical powers in the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Blinkenberg (1909: 65) describes how people kept thunderbolts as protection from lightning as late as 1909. Thunderbolts were also thought to cure diseases. For use as medicine, the thunderbolts were scraped or pulverised and the finds from Lund often have edges broken off or pits hollowed out (Carelli 1997: 405-406).

Oakley (1965) also points out how various fossils, and later also ancient stone tools, have figured in folklore and magical beliefs since Palaeolithic times. He describes how fossils were thought to bring luck and to have magical powers. They were also thought to cure various diseases in humans and animals (1965: 10-13). Some fossils, like belemnites and sea urchins, were also thought to be thunderbolts. These were thought to protect against lightning and bring luck (1965: 14-117). The adder stones were usually thought to have a central perforation, which a number of fossils have. Because of this belief, ancient spindle whorls, glass beads with wavy lines were also included, and they were thought to protect against snakebites or poison (1965: 119).

5.2.4. Possible explanations for the Bu egg amulet

The Cairnhill hoard appears to be a collection of objects with magical powers. As illustrated by Carelli (1997) and Oakley (1965), objects which in some way resembled snakes, lightning (which may have been regarded as related), thunderbolts or were perforated were regarded as lucky and used for protection and for curing diseases. The Cairnhill objects may thus have belonged to a healer. The only object that does not immediately appear to fit in to this hoard is an intaglio of a dancing faun in sardonyx (Anderson 1902: 678, 680, Ill. 7). It may have come from one of the other cairns on the site, as Anderson (1902: 667) points out that some of the objects were not recovered from the cairn itself but from the earth around it the day after the discovery. It may also have been found after a strike of lightning and could thus have been included in the hoard as a divine and magical artefact. Since the hoard could have been assembled over a long period of time, dating is tricky. The dates of the individual objects may have little significance for this purpose, as they may be discoveries from much older settlement sites. The bracelet, for instance, is water worn and the flint tools obviously much older than the deposition period.

Are there any similarities between the Cairnhill and the Traprain Law finds? As mentioned before, the Traprain find does not appear to be a hoard, but it may still have been thought to be magical and used by a healer or just a common person for luck and protection. Whether the alphabetic inscription, the polisher or any other objects were ascribed similar powers is hard to say, but at least the strainer appears alien to this belief. As pointed out by Hill (1987: 85), objects from both early and late periods were found mixed together in the early excavations (i. e. Cree & Curle 1922). It has been argued (i. e. Hill 1987: 85) that Traprain Law was settled from the Neolithic until the 4th century AD (not continuously). Thus there are no obvious reasons as to why the stone axes and the flint arrow heads from this site, as opposed to the Lund finds, should not be regarded as having been manufactured and deposited during an early settlement phase on the site, and later disturbed. The egg was interpreted to come from the settlement phase stretching from the 2nd to the 5th century (Cree & Curle 1922: 189). Hill (1987: 89-90) has suggested that Traprain Law may have been a ceremonial centre, rather than a normal settlement in Roman

times. However, Close-Brooks (1987: 91) has pointed out that even a religious or ceremonial centre would have had to include substantial settlement, and that the high status objects from the site do not necessarily have to be regarded as extraordinary. It is possible that the egg amulet belongs in a ceremonial context, but as it is the only such object from the site (compare with Cairnhill), it would be more at home in a more domestic settlement.

And what about our main interest, the Burray egg? Unfortunately, not much is known about this find. But it is possible that it comes from a similar context to the other related finds, in that it could have been thought of as magical. The material is characterised by veins, and it may have been manufactured in the Roman period. It may have reached Orkney in the Pictish or Norse period. The Vikings also seem to have had a fascination for unusual stones. A Viking grave on Iceland, for instance, contained 58 shiny chalcedony pebbles and 25 beads (24 of glass and one of amber) threaded on a silver ring (Eldjárn 1966: 33-67), and as we will see in chapter 6, a fossil trinket was found in a rich Norse grave on the Isle of Man (Freke 1986: 104).

Another type of egg amulets occur in Viking contexts; glazed hollow clay eggs, each with a small ball inside. In Scandinavia they have been found in Sigtuna, Lund and Gotland. They originate from the Kiev area, where they symbolised the resurrection (Graham-Campbell 1980a: 97, Ill. 343). The Sigtuna egg is decorated with wavy lines and it may be that the eggs became popular with the Scandinavians due to their resemblance with thunderbolts. The opposite, that the 'thunderbolt egg' was collected, or otherwise acquired, by a Norseman because of its resemblance of the popular Kiev eggs, is also a possibility.

A further type of artefact that comes to mind in this context is the 'Pictish painted pebble'. More than 25 such pebbles have been found (Ritchie 1998a). One has been found at Buckquoy and the rest at broch sites where they mostly come from the post broch levels. They may have been charm stones, used to treat sick animals and people by dipping them into drinking water. Such a tradition, using naturally attractive stones, survived in Scotland until the late 19th century (Ritchie 1985: 200). Maybe the stone eggs had a similar function? The painted pebble from Howe, for example, is almost egg shaped (Ballin Smith 1994: 192, ill. 106: no 2200). Another possible parallel to the Burray egg, is the egg found in an otherwise empty cist at the

Udal (Crawford 1972: 7). There is no description of this 'single intact large egg', but it is supposedly a real bird's egg.

5.2.5 Brochs on Burray

5.2.5.1. Introduction

There are two brochs on Burray, the West and the East broch. Both are situated at the foot of a slope just above the high water mark. They overlook Holm Sound and the small islands Lamb Holm and Glims Holm. The West broch is ideally located for easy beaching. The island's name comes from the Old Norse *Borgarey*, Island of the forts. There is also another possible broch on the island, Kyelittle Broch (Ill. 21) (Hedges 1987: 51, 94).

5.2.5.2. West Broch of Burray, Ayresdale

This site is known under the two names above. According to the Royal Commission, the name Ayresdale is no longer used and the broch is referred to as 'the hillock' locally (Ill. 21). The Old Norse *eyrr*, from which the first part of Ayresdale comes, means gravelly beach, spit. *Dale*, the second part of the name, means valley or gulf (Hedges 1987: 94). This may indicate that the Norse used this site, with excellent views across Scapa Flow to the Mainland.

One half of the wall and some of the interior of the broch were excavated by Farrer. The remains were measured and planned by Petrie in 1867. The site was not published in detail. The uncovered walls of the broch were c. 3.81 m thick and the courtyard was c. 9.45 m across. The total diameter was thus c. 17.07 m, and the greatest preserved height c 3.73 m (Hedges 1987: 94).

The part excavated did not contain the entrance to the broch. At the base was an intramural gallery, c 0.14 m wide. This was reached from the courtyard by two entrances, one doorway at floor level and one about 0.5 m above floor level. Two orthostats are known from the interior (Hedges 1987: 94-95).

5.2.5.3. East Broch of Burray

Farrer and Petrie excavated the East Broch (Ill. 21) in the beginning of the 1850's. It is uncertain if the excavations began in 1851, -52 or -53, and for how long they went on. The total diameter of the broch was c. 20.2 m, the wall thickness was c 4.57 m, the courtyard was c 11.3 m across and the maximum elevation c. 4.42 m, according to Dryden's map (Hedges 1987: 96).

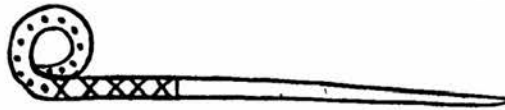
The entrance to the broch was to the east. From the courtyard there are three entrances into intramural chambers. An earth and stone embankment in the shape of a horseshoe surrounded the broch tower. The space between the broch tower and the embankment was c 7.01 m and there are indications of outbuildings. Farrer mentions a midden outside the broch. There is an underground passage, c 0.81 m wide running northwards. It probably began at the entrance, and led to a flight of nine steps that led to a rock-cut well, 3.05 m from floor to ceiling (Hedges 1987: 96- 99).

Finds from this site include numerous stone vessels, a lamp, combs, Pictish dress pins and a small fragment of Samian ware from the 2nd century. Some of the pins may be Roman (ND49NE 1). A bronze disc headed pin, (RMS GC 45), has been dated to the 7th or 8th centuries at the earliest by Stevenson (1955) and to the 8th or 9th centuries by MacGregor (1985: 119). A piece of possible Pictish pottery was found in the rubble in the cliff section north-east of the broch tower (ND49NE 1). Pictish, double-edged composite bone combs were also found in unstratified contexts (Hedges 1987: 43).

Thomas Balfour, who leased the Bu of Burray between 1778 and 1785, is said to have quarried away stones of a neighbouring broch. The east broch is the closest to the farm, but in NMRS it is specifically stated that the west broch has been heavily quarried from the north-west, so it may in fact have been this broch that was chosen to provide stone for house improvements, new stables and enclosures. Consequently, the broch may have been considerably better preserved in Norse times than what is the case today. The broch has excellent views across Holm Sound to the Mainland, and it is possible that the Vikings took over this site from the Picts.

5.2.6 A Viking bronze pin and the Burray hoard

A Viking bronze pin (Ill. 29) is reported to have been found somewhere on Burray. It is said to be similar to a pin found in a field on the farm of Quoybanks, St Ola parish, Mainland Orkney. Underground structures have been reported in this field, but these have not been found (Cursiter 1887: 343). The upper end of the pin is bent upwards in a spiral, which is decorated with stamped dots. The top part of the pin is decorated with line ornaments. On one side these are in the form of incised angular ribbons and on the other side crosses placed beside each other. The top part of the pin is quadrilateral in cross section, and the pin's thickness decreases towards the lower end, which has a circular cross section and ends in a point. The pin is 12,2 cm long and the greatest thickness 2,2 cm (Sheteling 1940: 169). Pins, very similar in decoration and form, have been found in Danish graves from the late Iron Age and have been interpreted as hair pins (Ill. 30) (Vedel 1886: 183). The sizes are also virtually identical (between 4,5 and 5 inches in length, according to records).



Ill. 29. The Burray pin (Cursiter 1887: 343).



Ill. 30. The Danish pin (Vedel 1886: 183).

In 1889, a mixed hoard was found in an alder wood vessel during peat cutting on west Burray (Ill. 21) (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 13). It has been dated to 997-1010 AD. It weighed about two kg and contained 140 pieces of bullion, including 131 pieces of certain or probable ring-money, two twisted rod neck rings and one ingot, a fragment of another ingot and two more probable ingot fragments, three rod fragments, other objects and over a dozen coins, one dated to 997. This hoard is Scotland's second heaviest, after the 8 kg Skailh hoard that was deposited some 30-60 years earlier (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 41). Graham-Campbell (1995a: 61, 139-140) says that the Burray hoard could have been easily recovered, even though it was buried in a bog, as the low mound where it was found stood out in the moss. Contrary to Graham-Campbell's (1995a: 60) statement, the site does not look remote. It lies adjacent to a now populated bay area, which would probably have been favoured by the Norse as well. Peat, a sheltered bay, and further south-west at Wha Taing, also copper deposits (Ill. 21) (Orkney Sites and Monuments Record 01786.00)³ that the Norse may have taken advantage of, would most likely have attracted Norse settlers, and this location does certainly not come across as a remote part of the island.

5.2.7 Other mixed silver hoards from Orkney and Shetland

Three mixed hoards have been found in Orkney:

Skailh (c. 950)

Burray (c. 1000)

Caldale (c. 1032-1040)

Two mixed hoards have been found in Shetland:

Quendale/Garthbanks (c. 991-1000)

Dunrossness (late 11th century)

³ This site is listed as post-medieval in the Orkney Sites and Monuments Record, but the copper is said to be easily procured and may therefore have attracted the attention of the Norse as well.

The Caldale hoard is now lost, but it is said to have contained silver penannular rings and fragments. It contained more than 300 coins and may also have contained ingots. The hoard is said to have been found 1774 in two cow horns during peat digging in a moss. The ground of the find spot was said to be dry and used for pasture for cattle (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 96-97). Graham-Campbell (1995a: 97) suggests that the weight of the hoard may have been about 1 kg.

As mentioned above, the Skaill hoard is the heaviest Viking Age hoard found in Scotland. It weighed over 8 kg and contained over 115 pieces of bullion, including Scandinavian neck-rings and arm-rings, the remains of 17 ball type brooches and 2 ringed pins (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 34, 127). Four of these brooches are so similar that they are thought to come from the same workshop. Three of these brooches are decorated in the Mammen style and the closest parallel for the decoration is on the 10th century stone sculptures on the Isle of Man. A hoard from the Isle of Man, Ballaquale, contained a pin head from a brooch that is so similar to the Skaill examples that it may also have come from the same workshop (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 239). This suggests this category of brooches was exchanged as a prestigious gift between allies. The hoard also contained 21 coins, predominantly Arabic. 27 complete ring-money were found, 8 probable loop fragments and 8 terminal fragments. Only 4 complete ingots, 3 terminal fragments and 5 other fragments were found, The hoard also contained 13 plaited and twisted rod neck rings and one complete terminal of one and the parts of two others (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 34, 36, 39-40).

The Quendale hoard is also lost, and contained six or seven penannular arm-rings, two silver penannular arm-ring fragments and other fragments (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 100-101). The hoard is said to have been found while digging in a corn land near Garthbanks. Old wall remains were found, and when digging there, a horn wrapped in cloth was found (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 101).

The Dunrossness hoard is also lost, and its size is unknown. It contained coins and hacksilver (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 103). The hoard was found in a rabbit burrow between the parish church and the mound called the Castle of Snusgar, Sandwick, Mainland Shetland. It is said to have been found in a stone cist on the east side of the mound (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 124).

In conclusion, the Orkney hoards, Burray, Skaill and Caldale, of which more is known than of the Shetland hoards, all contain what appears to be silver intended for economic transactions, like ring-money and hacksilver, and they were deposited within a century. Thus, the silver that reached Orkney in this period (presumably from raiding, trading and maybe tax collecting) seems to have been melted into these acceptable forms either because these specific forms had a higher status, or because they were the standardised objects used in economic transactions. The Caldale hoard is said to have contained more than 300 coins, which makes it different from the Skaill and the Burray hoards. Maybe it was derived from expeditions to another geographical area, where coins were used as a means of payment, than the other two hoards? Another possibility is that the owner of the Caldale hoard had not had time to melt down the coins and turn them into ring-money yet.

The silver from the Burray hoard contains more pieces of bullion and the silver is more fragmented than in the Skaill hoard. The silver had been relatively little nicked in contrast to the fragmentation. Both hoards contained a similar amount of coins: 21 are known from Skaill, and about a dozen from Burray. The Skaill coins were predominantly Arabic, whereas the Burray coins were Anglo-Saxon, plus a fragment from Köln. Further differences are that the Skaill hoard contained a larger variety of objects than the Burray hoard, and the Burray silver alloy was more base in comparison. The coins in the Burray hoard also had an extended age structure (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 51).

The high degree of fragmentation of the bullion and the low degree of nicking combined with the good condition of the original objects indicate that the Burray hoard had been cut up quite recently, and most objects had not been in circulation for long. The exceptions are a few coins (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 52). Graham-Campbell (1995a: 61) suggests that the Skaill hoard was a savings hoard whereas the Burray hoard was 'immediately current capital'.

The Burray silver does appear to be more 'economic' in composition than the Skaill hoard, as it is more fragmented and contains more bullion. That it is little nicked contrasts with this impression, however, as it does not appear to have been used in economic transactions very much. For example, of the 25 complete ring-money, nine had no nicks and the others had an average of fewer than three nicks. Of

the 42 ring-money fragments 22 had no nicks whereas the rest had an average of two nicks each. One of the rings had no nicks whereas the other one had two nicks (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 51-52). One possible explanation is that the silver was acquired from some sort of expedition, melted down to ring-money and distributed among the participants (some or all of the nicks could have been made in connection with this, and some of the ring-money may have been cut up to assure that the distribution was fair). One share was then buried on Burray, maybe the home of one of the participants or a trading place, together with some other pieces of silver derived from other transactions, for example the ingots and coins.

The Skaill hoard is different in its composition to the Burray and Caldale hoards. It contains the same element of silver intended for economic transactions, but also contains prestige ornaments like brooches. This suggests that the hoard was derived from two different economic spheres. Since the hoard comes from an area with a parish church and a Skaill place name, it may have belonged to a Norse chieftain or another Norse leader, as suggested by Graham-Campbell (1995a: 48). He would have participated in the same economic transactions as the owners of the smaller hoards, but he may also have been involved in the production of prestige ornaments. He may have controlled production of such ornaments in order to acquire followers, and he may have received some as gifts from powerful allies (see chapter on gift-giving above). The silver from the Skaill hoard is of higher quality than that from the Burray hoard. It has a higher silver content, is alloyed with pure copper whereas the Burray silver is alloyed with brass, and the Skaill silver has a higher gold content (White and Tate 1983: 248). This further supports the theory that the Skaill hoard belonged to a leader.

All the mixed hoards from Orkney and Shetland seem to contain few ingots, although sometimes the records are vague, and it seems as if ring-money and hacksilver were the main means of payment around 950-1050. None of the hoards come across as being offerings, and appear to be more at home in an economic context. The Quendale hoard was associated with wall remains, which brings the Gotlandic hoards to mind (see above) (Östergren 1983: 47). Both the Burray and the Caldale hoard were found in mosses. The Caldale moss is said to have been used as pasture and there is good farmland in the area. Thus, it seems likely that this hoard

was buried close to a farmhouse, as the Quendale hoard, rather than in a deserted place. The moss where the Burray hoard was found is also surrounded by farms and it is not unlikely that a building once stood close to, or on, this site. This may even be the reason the find spot was a mound sticking up in the moss.

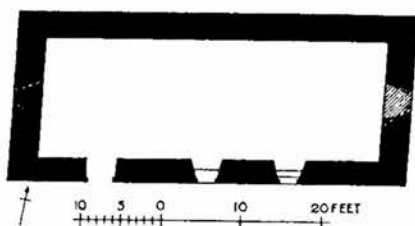
Apart from the mixed hoards, there are also some hoards with no coins, for instance from the Ring of Brodgar, Mainland. It contained nine complete ring-money. The hoard was found in one of the mounds beside the stone ring. Four nicked gold finger rings were found by the Loch of Stenness. Only one single find of ring-money has been made in Scotland. It was hidden in a drain at Jarlshof (Graham-Campbell 1995a: 53-54).

5.2.8 Estates

Burray is not mentioned in the *Orkneyinga Saga* and not much is known about the early history of the island from the rentals. It may have been a part of a larger estate, and therefore not mentioned specifically. In the 1492 and 1500 rentals the island was divided into Nethertoun, Overtoun and the Bu. The Bu (Ill. 21) was a *bordland* farm, which was the residence of the Stewarts in the 17th and 18th century and the location of one of Orkney's greatest houses (Marwick 1952: 167). In 1645 the owner of the wealthy Bu estate had a large grain store built in the harbour in Burray village (Ritchie 1996: 30). Judging from the place name, the Bu was a high status estate also in Norse times, and the Norse owner probably have had riches comparable to the 17th century residents. The Bu may have been similar to the Bu of Wyre, which was the residence of Kolbein Hruga, mentioned in *Orkneyinga Saga* (ch 84) and said to have had a fine and solid fort. This 12th century Bu is thought to have contained the fort, still standing today, enclosing defences, a traditional long house with associated outbuildings, and a chapel which is also still standing (Ritchie 1996: 93, 105).

Situated at the south end of the bay where today's Bu farm and the archaeological Bu Sands/North Links site are located, is St Lawrence's church (Ill. 21, 31, 32). Standing here, the view across the bay to the Bu area is excellent (Ill. 33). The churchyard is still used for burials, but the church is in ruins. The building measures 50 ft by 21 ft 9 in externally. The date 1621 is incised on the north-west

skew-put, but an earlier phase may be indicated by the doorway. Its ornamentation is incomplete on the lintel. This suggests that the stone is re-used or has been re-cut. It has had an inscription, which cannot be read and only the end of the two lines can be made out to read EVM and LLVM (RCAMS 1946: 292). The standing church building is given an early medieval date in the Orkney Sites and Monuments Record (OR No 01778.00), and is shown to have been in existence by about AD 1300 by Watt (1996). If this church building itself cannot be dated back to Norse times, it is possible that earlier building remains lies undiscovered underneath. If the Bu really was a high status Norse settlement, as indeed is indicated, this would be the ideal location for a chapel. Maybe the original church was replaced with a larger one when it became a parish church?



Ill. 31. Plan of St Lawrence's church, Burray (RCAHMS 1966: 292).



Ill. 32. St Lawrence's church, Burray (photo: the author).



Ill. 33. The view from St Lawrence's church to the Bu of Burray. The main building of the Bu farm is clearly visible (photo: the author).

Overtoun in Burray is a community adjacent to the Bu of Burray. It is similar to the Westray *bordlands* (see previous chapter), and according to the 1500 rental, no *skat* was to be paid (Thomson 1995: 344). A *bordland* was the land the earl got his sustenance from, to feed his family and retinue. Crawford (1987: 83) claims that the earls must have taken possession of these lands in the early days of the earldom. It was *skat* free as long as the Earl of Orkney paid *skat* to the Norwegian king. It meant that the earl did not have to pay tax on his main properties. But earls of Orkney seldom paid *skat* to Norway, and latterly the right to collect *skat* was, by implication, granted to them at their installation. So when the *bordland* was let to tenants its *skat* free status became a disadvantage to the earl instead of an advantage. Instead of benefiting from the tax free status of the land, the earl lost money because of it. Raising the rent as compensation solved this problem (Thomson 1995: 344-345). The rest of the estates, that were not *bordland*, were called 'auld earldom' and were used for endowing family members and for rewarding close allies. There were also the administrative *Huseby* farms (Crawford 1987: 83).

5.2.9 Discussion

Burray has plenty of good farmland, fresh water sources, peat, good beaching for boats, and is well situated at the entry to Scapa Flow. That this small island has two, maybe even three, brochs suggests that it had been important for a long time when the Norse settled. Pictish artefacts have been found in the east broch, and the island was probably well populated by the Picts.

From the large Viking silver hoard, it seems clear that Burray was settled by the Norse at least around AD 1000. The Burray hoard fits in well with the other Orkney hoards from this period, and thus it seems likely that the island was an integral part of the economic system established in Viking Scotland. The place name evidence and the *bordland* properties on the island also suggest a substantial Norse presence. It is difficult to say if this was the case even before the establishment of the Earldom, however.

Kruse (1995: 197) suggests that the Burray hoard belonged to a leader. But when compared and contrasted with the larger Skail hoard, it becomes clear that the two hoards are different, and that the Burray hoard probably belonged to a trader or raider, and not a leader. This appears likely as its silver content is low, and as there is a lack of prestigious ornaments.

It is possible that the Norse took over Burray the same way as outlined in chapter 4. But this is difficult to prove as long as promising sites such as North Links cannot be excavated and are in fact being destroyed. An important Norse settlement may have been located here, on top of a previous Pictish settlement as elsewhere in Orkney. Without excavation it is impossible to put the finds in context and establish whether they come from Norse or earlier occupation layers. However, a Norse date for the artefacts from this site is a clear possibility.

It appears likely that the Norse took advantage of the brochs on Burray, ready built outlook towers and defences. The place name of the West broch may be indicative of this. Some of the Pictish artefacts found at the East broch may originate from a Norse occupation on this site. Pictish dress pins were found in Norse settlement layers at Buckquoy, Saevar Howe and Birsay. The disc headed pin, with a date in the 7th to 9th centuries may also have been used by the Norse. The same

applies to the Pictish double-edged combs, which were in use in the 8th century and found in Norse occupation layers at Buckquoy, Saevar Howe and Birsay (Hedges 1987: 43). Thus, a co-existence of the two peoples on Burray, as on other sites in Orkney, is possible, but far from proved.

5.3 Deerness

5.3.1. Introduction

Deerness is a peninsula joined to the Mainland by a narrow strip of land (Ill. 34). The name is probably derived from the ON *Dýrnes* - Animal ness (Marwick 1952: 76). Morris & Emry (1986: 307) suggest that this name and the fact that deer antlers have been recovered from along the coast of Deer sound and the peat moss at Mirkady could suggest that there may have been more trees for animals to hide among on the peninsula in Norse times. Deerness was taxed as a six *urisland* area and is still one of the most fertile and cultivated areas in Orkney (Marwick 1952: 76).



Ill. 34. The location of the archaeological sites on the Deerness peninsula mentioned in the text. 1) Brough of Deerness, 2) Skail, 3) Newark, 4) Braebuster

5.3.2.Skaill

5.3.2.1. Background

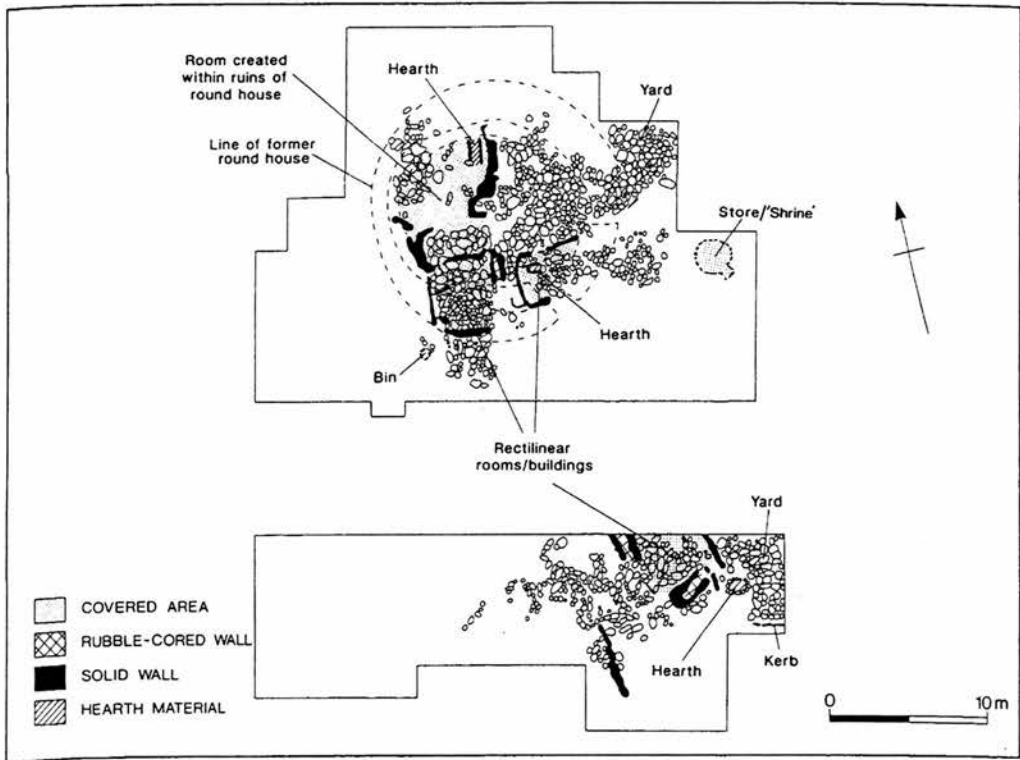
Skaill (Ill. 34), is associated with the location of Thorkel's hall in *Orkneyinga Saga*. Thorkel's residence is thought to be the one in Deerness since, in chapter 20, Thorfinn sails to Deerness where he gets help from Thorkel after being attacked (Lamb 1997: 13).

Skaill has a settlement record spanning from the late Bronze Age to the post-medieval period. The site was excavated by Gelling 1963-1981, and recently published by Buteux (1997). The Pictish period is represented by reoccupation of Site 5 and a new set of buildings erected following the levelling and paving over of a previous roundhouse on Site 6. This change is thought to have taken place in the 6th century, and continuity of occupation into the 7th and 8th centuries is indicated in the artefact assemblage. Norse occupation at Skaill dates from the 8th or 9th centuries to the 11th century and is found on site 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Buteux 1997: vii).

5.3.2.2 The Pictish settlement

As mentioned above, the roundhouse on Site 6 was paved over around the 6th century and replaced with buildings of a new architectural style (Ill. 35). At the same time, display items increase in number (Buteux 1997: 47), which is characteristic of the changes from the MIA to the LIA periods. Buteux (1997: 54) compares the developments at Skaill Site 6 with Pool, Sanday. At Pool, there was a circular house in the 5th century. An added storage chamber at Pool parallels the annexe at Skaill. In the following sequence, a rectangular courtyard-like feature, at least 20 m long was constructed. The settlement had to undergo considerable modification and reorganisation. This phase was at first dated to the 6th century by an ogham inscription and symbol stone in the paving (Hunter 1990: 179-187), but has now been dated by C 14 to the middle of this century (Hunter 1990: 175-93). Hunter (1990: 187) has argued that the symbol stone cannot have been free-standing and that it was made especially for the paving. This could stress the symbolic significance of the paving, the structural, cultural and social changes. Probably as a part of the same

phase of development, an extensive area of a former Neolithic mound was paved over. This very extensive paving marked the maximum extension of the settlement at Pool. The paving at Pool is very similar in technique and character to the one at Skail. Hunter (1990: 187) points out that this must have been a planned and well-organised event 'with appropriate sociological implication'. Pool is yet another site where a mix of Pictish and Norse artefacts has been found. The Norse kept on using the Pictish round house in its original form until the 11th century, and reused existing walls to create new structures, perhaps further indications of a peaceful coexistence.



Ill. 35. The Pictish phases at Skail (Buteux 1997: 65).

5.3.2.3 The Norse settlement

Norse remains, dating to the period before the establishment of the earldom, have been found on Skail Site 2 (Ill. 36). There are three buildings here, named House 1-3, 1 being the earliest. Associated middens are named 1-3 as well, 3 being the earliest. Edwards (1997: 77) points out that the excavated area probably only represents a small sample of the total settlement.

The earliest structural traces on this site are a number of pits dug into the sand under the first stone house, House 1. It is difficult to interpret these pits, but they may have been remains of an earlier timber structure, Pictish or Norse. A carved stone incorporated in the paving leading to House 1 also indicates earlier activities on the site. The design, tentatively identified as a cross, of the stone was face down and a part was broken off. The stone may be a Christian grave marker, thought to relate to Pictish rather than Norse Christianity. Fragments of two human skulls found on the site may also belong to an earlier phase. One set of fragments was found in a side bench of House 3 and the other set in a wall in House 1 (Edwards 1997: 71). Gelling (1984: 19-20) interpreted the grave-marker and the skulls as evidence for a Pictish cemetery close by, but no further human bones have been found to support this theory.

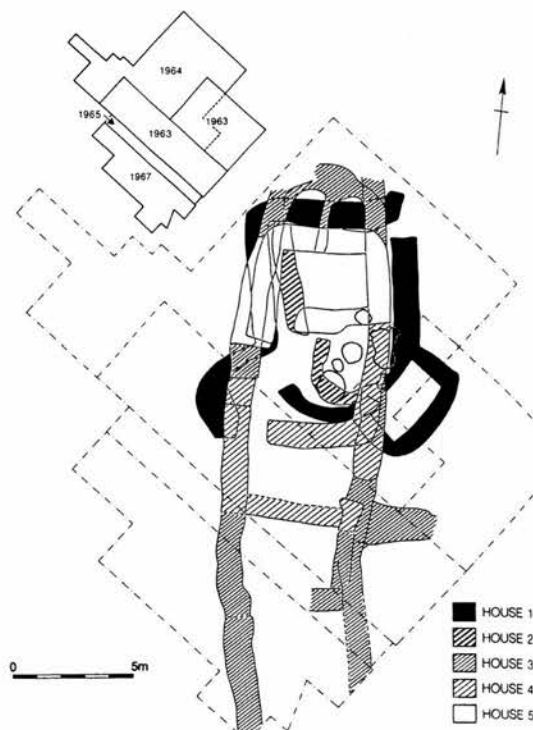
Pictish combs were found in the earliest Norse levels (Midden 3, Houses 1 and 2) whereas Norse combs were only found in the later levels, predominantly Midden 1 (Edwards 1997: 76). Gelling (1984: 36-37) therefore interpreted House 1 as Pictish and dating to the period before AD 800. Edwards (1997: 76) argues that the artefacts from House 1 and the associated Midden 3 are at least as likely to date to the 9th century as to the 8th. The dating evidence consists of six bone combs and a bone pin. One of the combs is a high backed Pictish comb, which occurs from the 7th century (Foster 1990: 161). On the Brough of Birsay such combs were found in layers dated to the 9th to 10th centuries (Curle 1982: 56). The native pin has a similar date range (Edwards 1997: 56). Out of the remaining five combs, four are definitely Curle's Type B, and one is probably so. 12 out of 13 Type B combs from the Brough of Birsay were found in layers dated to the 9th to 10th centuries. The last one was dated to the late 8th century (Curle 1982: 56). At Buckquoy, three high backed combs and at least five Type B combs were found and dated to the 9th century (Ritchie 1977: 186-188, 196). At Howe (Ballin Smith 1994: 177), at least one Type B comb was found and dated to the 7th century. At Saevar Howe a Type B comb was found in a layer dated to the late 7th or early 8th century (Hedges 1983: 86-87, 116).

House 2 was a rough remodelling of House 1 and reused some of its walls. It may date to the 9th or the early 10th century since two pins dated to this period were found in the construction of House 3. House 2 may have been abandoned for a while

before House 3 was constructed, as a 0.3 m layer of sand blow covered the tumble of stones (Edwards 1997: 73).

The cultural ambivalence of the earliest levels of Site 2 disappears when House 3, the hall-house, was built. It was built on top of House 2 and on the same alignment. The artefacts from this point have a completely Norse character. No datable artefacts come from the hall-house itself. The middens (1 and 2) are not much more helpful in this respect and can only give us a date in the 10th century or later for House 3. Edwards suggests that the occupation may have continued into the 11th and maybe even 12th centuries (Edwards 1997: 77).

All three buildings may have been dwellings. They all had hearths, and House 2 and 3 also had benches (Edwards 1997: 78).



Ill. 36. The Norse phases at Skail (Buteux 1997: 82).

5.3.3 The Brough of Deerness

The Brough of Deerness is a peninsula in the north-east of Mainland Orkney (Ill. 34). There used to be a land bridge to the mainland, but in recent decades this has collapsed. A chapel with native, as well as Norse, phases has been excavated on the site, and several other buildings have been found. A more detailed description of this site will be found in chapter 6.

5.3.4 Deerness brochs and religious sites

5.3.4.1 Ewes Howe / Braebuster

The name Eves Howe may refer to a person (Hedges 1987: 58). Braebuster comes from ON *breiði - bólstaðr* meaning broad farm. It is the largest farm on Deerness today (Marwick 1952: 76).

The broch at Braebuster, now just turf covered remains, is situated on low ground just above the high water mark. It is located between the beach and a small and shallow loch (Ill. 34). A causeway, 5 ft wide, has been constructed through this. In 1930, when the site was inspected by the RCAHMS, it was thought that it could be contemporary with the broch. But in 1946 a Mr Coulston, South Keiger, Deerness, claimed that it was built by his grandfather (HY50NW 14).

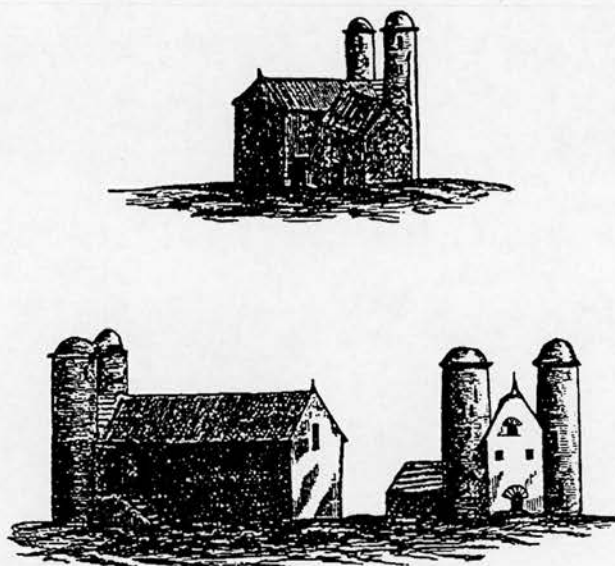
The diameter of today's mound is about 24 m in diameter and it is 3 m high. In the west it is flanked by a scar. A hammer stone and a tooled stone were noticed on the site in 1930 (HY50NW 14). Further finds are a possible lamp, a saddle quern, and a socket stone (Hedges 1987: 59).

5.3.4.2 Deerness parish church

As mentioned above (ch 4.2.4), there is a connection between Skail place names and parish churches. There used to be a medieval church close to the centre of the Norse farmstead at the Deerness Skail, about 40 ft east of the present day church, which was built in 1796 (HY50NE 18). The old parish church was dedicated to St Mary.

When the last foundations were removed, two coins of Edward I, c 1280 AD, were found. There is also a hog-backed stone in the session house (HY50NE 18).

The St Magnus church on Egilsay can help with the dating of the old Deerness church. The old Deerness church was described and drawn by Low in 1774 (Low 1879: 53-54) (Ill. 37), and the St Magnus church tower is very similar to the twin towers described by Low, and other architectural details are also similar (Lamb 1997: 14-15). The Egilsay church has traditionally been thought to date from the 12th century (Radford 1962: 182). Fernie (1988: 140-145) suggests that it may have been constructed in 1136, as Earl Magnus was killed around 1116 and *Magnus Saga* (36) states that it took 20 years for Earl Magnus' holiness to be recognised. This date also fits the form of the church and its parallels elsewhere (Fernie 1988: 140-144). However, a 10th or 11th century date has also been suggested (Cruden 1986: 10-13).



Ill. 37. Drawing of the old Deerness church (Low 1879: 53-54).

5.3.4.3 Newark

A chapel and a burial ground have been identified close to the beach at Newark (Ill. 34). The chapel has been almost completely lost to coastal erosion, but two sections of a dry stonewall still survive. Human bones are exposed along the cliff edge. The chapel has been given a date in the 10th century based on recovered coins, and thus the burials are thought to be Norse (HY50SE 3). Two souterrains underlie the

burials, and Brothwell (1977) who excavated them in the 1970's has suggested a ritual purpose.

Newark is a settlement mound, and does most likely contain Viking and Late Norse farmsteads. The souterrains indicate that there are probably also Pictish and earlier layers. Newark and Skaill are the two prime settlement locations in the parish.

5.3.5. Discussion

Changes took place at Skaill and Pool in the 6th century, around the same time as other changes took place in Orkney. It was around this time that the area became a part of the Pictish kingdom. Skaill and Pool may have been important settlements, maybe homes of Pictish leaders who in this period received estates and new duties from the Pictish king. As a result they may have had to reorganise their settlements and adopt the new architectural style, in order to reinforce and show off their power. The added storage chambers may have been necessary if Skaill and Pool were native equivalents to the later *veizla* farms and had to store food tributes.

As seen on other important Pictish sites, the Norse settled at Skaill around the beginning of the 9th century. Unlike Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977, Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 161), Pool (Hunter 1990; 1997) and Red Craig (Morris 1989), there are no suggestions of Norse reuse of Pictish buildings, unless House 1 is interpreted as Pictish, which seems unlikely. The Norse may have reused the native floor area though, as on the Brough of Birsay (Morris 1986), depending on the interpretation of the pits under House 1, (Gelling 1984: 36-37; Edwards 1997: 76). Again, there is a mix of Pictish and Norse artefacts, and this will be discussed in chapter 5.5. below.

House 1 and Midden 3 contain high backed combs, which appear to belong in a period stretching from the 7th (Foster 1990: 161) to the 9th century (Ritchie 1977: 186-188, 196). The find assemblage also includes Type B combs, which have dates stretching from the 7th to the 10th century in Orkney (Ritchie 1977: 186-188, Curle 1982: 17; Hedges 1983: 86-87, 116; 196, Ballin Smith 1994: 177). The dates seem to cluster in the 8th to 9th century range. Closer dating than that is not possible, as pointed out by Edwards (1997: 76). Both an 8th and 9th century date is thus likely for the settlement in this phase.

While the hall house, House 3, was being built, House 2 may have been abandoned, judging from an accumulation of sand blow. This could suggest that the original Norse population on the site had to move when a new incoming Norse population arrived in an equivalent to Hunter's (1986: 103-104, 114) Phase 2.2 on the Brough of Birsay. However, since only a small part of the settlement site has been excavated, the population of House 2 may simply have moved to another part of the site.

Lamb (1995: 260, 268) and Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 170-171) among others, argue that the results from the Buckquoy and Skaill excavations appear contradictory, that a quiet transition could be seen between Picts and Vikings at Buckquoy, whereas there was a sharp distinction and abandonment of the Pictish buildings before the Vikings came to settle at Skaill. A lack of 9th century Norse objects is interpreted as a very strong clean break between the two cultures at Skaill (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 170-171). However, how may 'a clean break' be defined? The most obvious definition would be that a clean break is the case when one culture is totally replaced by another, maybe with a gap between the two. What then is 'a gradual transition'? Surely it must be the opposite, when one culture is slowly replaced by another, with no gap in between? Let us look at the archaeological evidence again, with these definitions in mind:

At Buckquoy, a gap and then a Norse settlement follow the Pictish settlement. This looks more like a 'clean break' than a gradual transition. At Skaill, Edwards (1997: 76) has showed that the Type B combs can be dated to the 9th - 10th centuries. Thus, there does not appear to be a gap between the two cultures here, and 'a gradual transition' is thus indicated. However, several other settlement sites have now been discovered in the Birsay Bay area, close to Buckquoy, and regardless of how one may define the settlement here, as a clean break or gradual transition, it is important to bear in mind that the Buckquoy farm's abandonment may have less to do with the relationship between the two cultures than with Pictish land administration. In the light of the other excavated sites, covering the Pictish-Norse interface in Orkney, the Pictish artefacts associated with House 1 at Skaill appear more likely to represent the now familiar interaction between the two cultures than a clean break and late Norse settlement.

Norse reuse of brochs, as in Birsay and hinted at on Burray, may also have been the case in Deerness. Ewes Howe has a Norse place name that may refer to a person, and also incorporates the word for farm (Marwick 1952: 76). This may be a multi period farm mound with Norse settlement remains at the top, just as Beachview (Morris 1983; 1996). Norse activity is also suggested at Christian sites. Newark was probably the second most important settlement in the parish, the location of a second chapel. The connection between religious sites and Norse power centres will be further discussed in chapter 6.

5.4. Picts and Vikings in Orkney - a model

5.4.1 Background

Several excavations, for example Skaill, Pool and Buckquoy have shown that Pictish material culture survived into the earlier phases of Viking settlement. Thus, as Buteux (1997: 262) points out, the question is not if there was coexistence of Picts and Vikings and continuity of Pictish culture for a period, but the nature of this coexistence and continuity. Buteux (1997) has constructed a model (Table 10) for the process of Viking settlement in Orkney:

5.4.2. Pioneer stage

In the pioneer stage, contact, raids and trade took place, and perhaps also some settlement or establishment of winter bases, but Orkney was still Pictish. The pioneer stage is hard to detect in the archaeological material. The historical record shows that the Vikings raided the Scottish and Irish west coasts from the end of the 8th century onwards. Since the sea routes from Norway to western Scotland and Ireland went via Orkney and Shetland, there must have been intensive contact with these islands from this time and presumably earlier. In Scandinavia, the sail was in use from at least the 7th century (Buteux 1997: 262). In the spring the easterly winds made it easy to reach Orkney and Shetland in a day or two. A return to Norway in the autumn with the westerly winds would be just as fast (Crawford 1987: 13).

Buteux suggests that the earliest contacts, perhaps going back to the 7th century, could have been in the form of trade. Indications of this in the archaeological material would be steatite and reindeer antler. Both occur in the find assemblage from Skail Site 5 and 6. Steatite was imported to Orkney from Shetland and Scandinavia. It is thought that the import from Shetland stopped in the Iron Age and that steatite finds after this is indicative of Viking presence. Since there is no Viking settlement at either Skail 5 or 6, the steatite is evidence for trade either with Shetland or Scandinavia. Unfortunately it cannot be established if the Vikings were involved in this trade (Buteux 1997: 262-263).

Reindeer antler, on the other hand, can only have originated in Scandinavia. Combs from the Brough of Birsay, Saevar Howe, Buckquoy, the Brough Road, Skail and Howe have been analysed, and it turns out that many were made of reindeer antler (Weber 1993; 1994):

The Brough of Birsay: Four combs from Curle's Area II were analysed, two from the Pictish horizon and two from the lower Norse. The ones from the Pictish horizon, a single-sided high backed native comb and a double-sided Pictish comb of type A, were probably made of reindeer antler. The two from the lower Norse horizon, both double-sided native type B combs, were definitely made of reindeer antler (Weber 1993: 165).

Buckquoy: Ten comb fragments were analysed, all from the Norse phases. Of the two fragments from Phase III one is made of reindeer antler and the other could not be identified. The fragment from Phase IV is probably of reindeer antler, and of seven fragments from Phase V, three are definitely made of reindeer antler and four possibly so (Weber 1993: 167).

Saevar Howe, Birsay: Ten combs were analysed. Seven combs were definitely made of reindeer antler (one is probably a double-sided type B comb, three are single sided high backed combs and three are too fragmentary to determine). Two (one double sided type B and one unknown) are probably made of reindeer antler. One comb could not be determined (Weber 1993: 166).

Brough Road: A comb from the later Pictish/early Viking periods is probably made of reindeer antler, one Viking period comb is definitely made of reindeer antler and one comb from the Viking/late Norse periods is probably made of reindeer antler (Weber 1993: 168).

Skaill, Deerness: 34 combs were analysed. 16 were made of reindeer antler (eleven from Site 2, one long handled comb from site 6, four unprovenanced), eleven probably so (three from Site 2, one from Site 6, six unprovenanced), four long handled combs (from Site 6) were made of other materials and three could not be identified (Weber 1993: 170).

Howe, Stromness: No Norse occupation has been identified on this site. Six combs were analysed. Four were long handled combs, and one of these was made of reindeer antler. Two fragments of double-sided combs were found, and they were probably made of reindeer antler. All the combs came from a phase dated from the 4th to the 7th centuries, and maybe as late as the 9th (Weber 1993: 179-171).

These analyses strongly suggest that reindeer antler was used as raw material even in Pictish times, and contacts between Pictland and Norway thus appear very likely. The trade between Norway and Orkney seems to have continued when the Norse settled in Orkney, as antler combs have been found in late Viking/Late Norse levels. Buteux (1997: 263) argues that it is too early to accept this analysis as clear evidence for Viking trade with the Picts. This may be due to the unfortunate circumstance that the analysis cannot be double-checked by anyone else, as the technique used to distinguish between reindeer and deer antler has not been published. There is widespread disbelief that worked reindeer antler can be separated from other antler, but there are plans to reassess the material used in Weber's (1993; 1994) articles (Colleen Batey: pers. comm.).

5.4.3. Consolidation stage

In the consolidation stage, more permanent settlements were established, but Pictish culture and institutions were still alive. Almost all discovered Norse settlements in the Northern Isles are found overlying or neighbouring sites occupied in the Pictish period. These Pictish settlements were often large and of some importance, such as Skail, Pool, the Brough of Birsay, Buckquoy and Saevar Howe. Buteux (1997: 263) argues that these sites did not belong to the pioneer stage, but rather to the consolidation stage.

At the time of Viking settlement in Orkney, Scandinavia had no political centralisation whereas Orkney was an integral part of the Pictish kingdom. Because of the political situation in Scandinavia, the initial settlement was what Buteux calls 'a private enterprise' rather than 'state sponsored'. This uncoordinated operation would not have resulted in a fast obliteration of the native population or its culture (Buteux 1997: 263-264).

Buteux (1997: 264) points out that the consolidation stage may have been smooth if the natives and Norse were already familiar with each other through previous interaction such as trading contacts. The farms were taken over by Vikings but the native workforce could have remained in place.

5.4.4. Establishment stage

The establishment stage is associated with the establishment of the Norse earldom. Practically all Pictish culture and institutions were replaced with the ones belonging to the Norse. Political power in Orkney was transferred to the Norse, settlement on a larger scale began to take place, and the earldom of Orkney started to take shape.

The Norse take over of the native administration would have opened the door for a much larger Norse settlement, which obliterated the remaining elements of independent Pictish culture in Orkney (Buteux 1997: 264). Buteux also suggests that there might have been a period of anarchy and chaos in Orkney for about 50 years, from the time when Picts and Scots became united under one king about AD 843 to the Norwegian conquest of Orkney, Shetland and the Hebrides. The breakdown of the last Pictish political and cultural institutions was accelerated by the collapse of

the Pictish kingdom and the Earldom was not properly established yet. The islands had ideal positions for raiding Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia. The good agricultural land also offered security during the winters. Thus, the last part of the 9th century, when the Norse farm at Skail was firmly established, may have been 'something of a freebooter's paradise'.

5.4.5. War or peace?

How would we be able to tell from the archaeological and historical records if the Pictish and Viking contacts were friendly or violent? Clear cut evidence such as defensive structures, battle fields and war cemeteries, or evidence of flourishing trade between the two peoples, frequent intermarriage and a coming together of ideas and practices from both sides (such as the Bressay slab from Shetland) have not been found in Orkney. However, Richards (1991) has looked at the Viking settlement in England using evidence like pagan graves, language development and runic inscriptions, and a similar approach can be applied to Orkney.

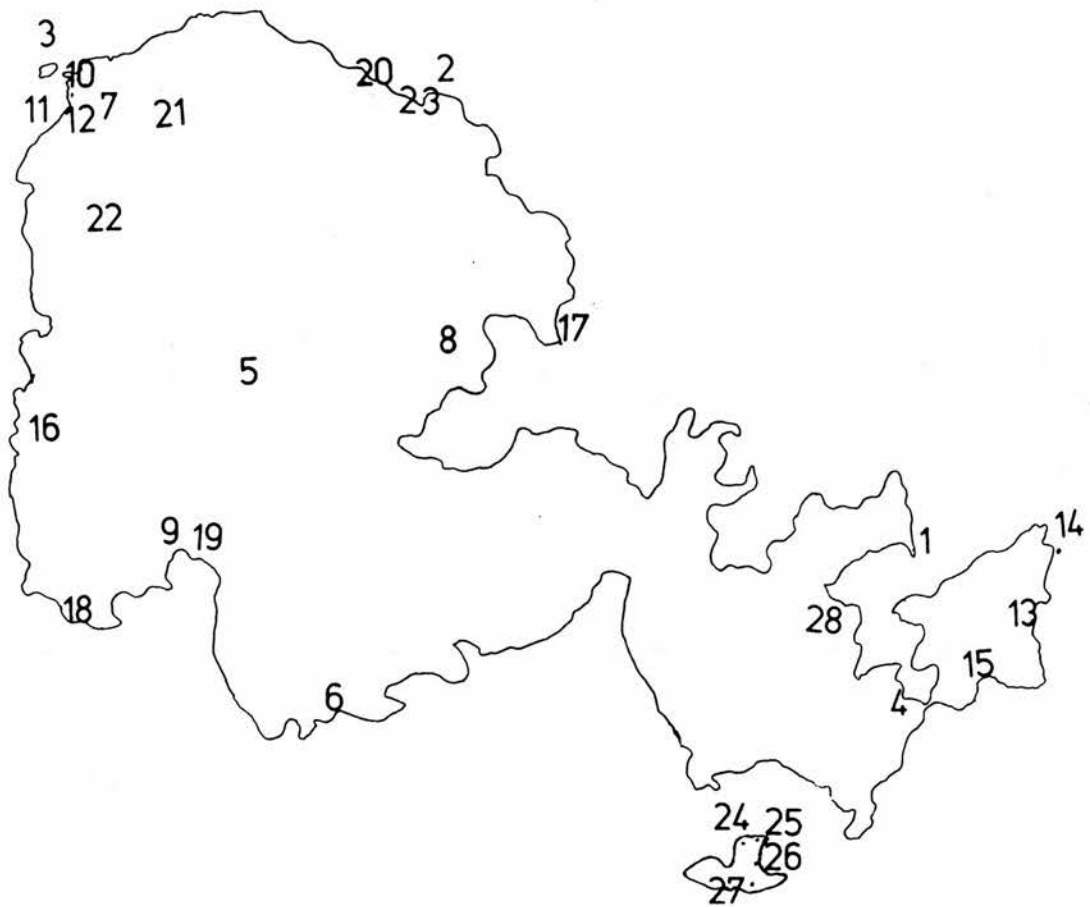
Fellows-Jensen (1984) and Richards (1991) write about the Viking colonisation of England. Here, the Vikings encountered a landscape already occupied and divided into large estates. Viking leaders seized land and then gave some of it away to their followers, Anglo-Saxons and fellow Vikings, as a reward for military service. The estates were in the hands of kings, lordly families and the church. Generally, individuals did not own land. But as the Vikings gave land away to their followers and also started buying and selling land, a fragmentation of the great estates took place, and individual landowners became more common (Fellows-Jensen 1984: 48; Richards 1991: 30). In some cases, Richards (1991: 30-31) argues, the Vikings gained control of land by simply taking over estate centres, and they then used the existing administration to gain control over the whole estate. The only change the native farmers noticed was that they paid their taxes to new persons, and little change took place in the administrative system. The take-over of estates was behind the collapse of some monastic communities, and others collapsed because the new local aristocracy did not share their forbearers' religious enthusiasm (Richards 1991: 97).

Richards (1991: 36) compares mainland England with the Isle of Man, and argues that in England the Vikings tried to blend in whereas their strategy on the Isle of Man was to dominate. He argues that in England, the Vikings did not continue to use runes or their native language for any longer period of time or to any great extent. (The durability and status of the Norse language in England and its impact on English is highly debated, however. See Barnes 1993 for a review of the main arguments). On the Isle of Man, there is a large collection of runes and the Norse appear to have had a large impact on the native language. Richards points out two possibilities:

- 1) There was a complete take-over and a massive immigration on all levels of society. Gaelic died out and the Isle of Man became fully Norse speaking.
- 2) The Norse was a relatively small group who replaced the aristocracy. The Norse language had a large impact, but most of the population was bilingual. This option is supported by suggestions that the Norse used in inscriptions from the Isle of Man has lost its formal precision. This could be due to bilingualism. Page (1993: 155) has similarly suggested that the runes on Manx crosses may represent a racially mixed society, as there is a mix of Norse and Celtic names in the inscriptions and occasional intrusions of celtisisms in the written Norse.

What was the language situation in Orkney? Fellows-Jensen (1984: 150) points out that it probably was in between such extremes as England, Ireland and Normandy, where the Scandinavian tongue died out after having contributed a few loan words, and Iceland and the Faroes where the Scandinavian language is still spoken. It may be argued that since there are so many Scandinavian place names in Orkney, the Vikings must have wiped out the native language completely, and quite fast. However, as pointed out by Richards (1991: 35), the Scandinavian place names do not necessarily have had to be coined by Viking settlers. The natives may have adopted many Scandinavian words, and may have taken up Scandinavian naming habits themselves. Additionally, a settlement is usually not named by the people who live in it, but by its neighbours who have to refer to it, or tax it. Thus, places with

Scandinavian names may not have been populated by Scandinavians and *vice versa*. Further, if, as in England, most of the land in Orkney was spoken for when the Vikings came to settle (Ill. 38 & 39), the Scandinavian place names cannot represent new settlements. Instead, they represent the re-naming of existing estates. The settlement was not extended, simply renamed. The density of Scandinavian place names may reflect the break up of the old estates, as individual ownership became more common. Richards (1991: 36) points out that the influence of one language over another depends on their relative status and the need to borrow words to describe new things. Even if the natives continued to use their own place names instead of those of the Norse aristocracy, the names used by the dominant class would be the ones that survived (Fellows-Jensen 1984: 152). It may be argued that the Norse settlers in Orkney replaced the native place names since they were incomprehensible to them, whereas the English place names would have been easier to understand since English is a Germanic language just as the Scandinavian ones. But, as pointed out by Fellows-Jensen (1984: 153), names do not have to be understood to function, and the Vikings in England did adopt some Celtic names. Thus, it does appear that the Norse settlement in Orkney caused the name changes, but for other reasons than the old names' incomprehensibility. Let us look at some other forms of evidence before we try to figure out the reasons behind this.

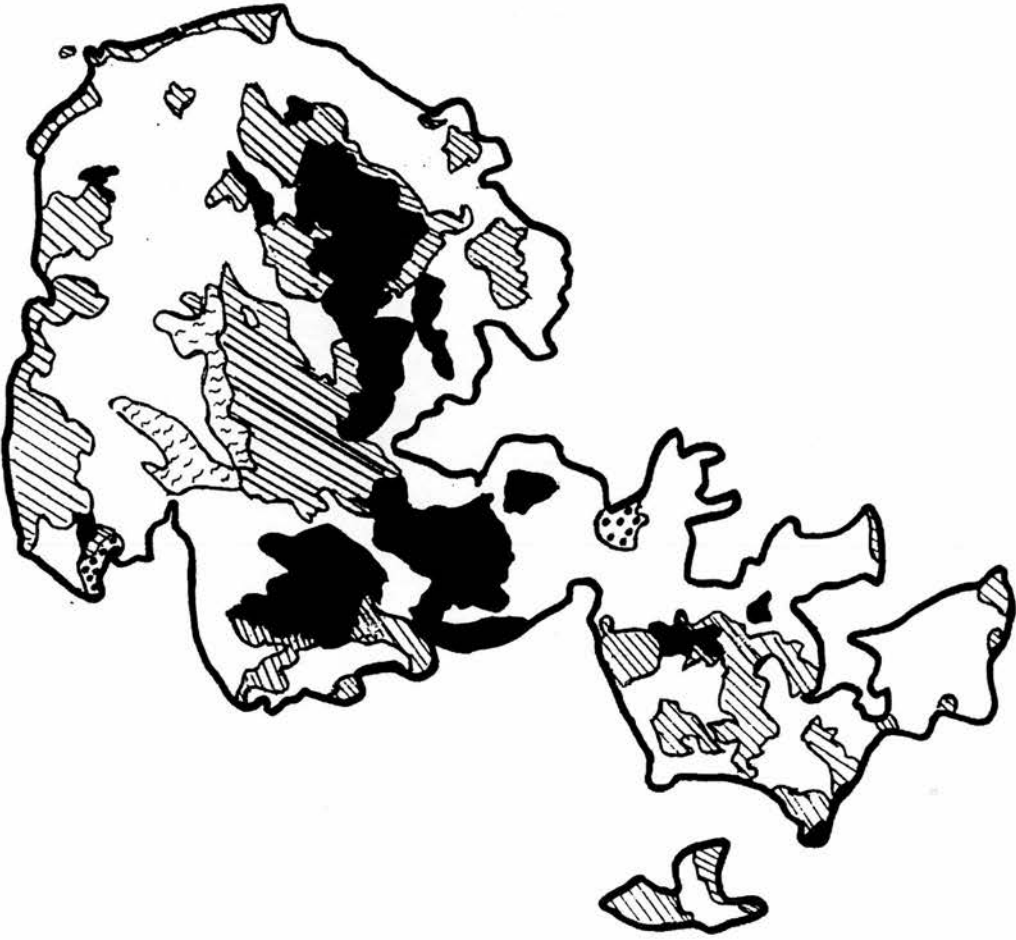


Ill. 38. Map of Pictish settlement in Mainland Orkney and Burray.

Scale 1: 250 000

1. Ness, HY 5445 0932. Symbol stone (RCAHMS vol 27: 31).
2. Broch of Gurness, HY 3818 2685. Symbol stone, reused broch (Hedges 1987, RCAHMS 1999: 36).
3. Brough of Birsay, HY 2398 2850. Symbol stone, settlement site (Hunter 1986, RCAHMS 1999: 36).
4. Greens, HY 5419 0317. Symbol stone (RCAHMS 1999: 37).
5. Knowe of Burrian, HY 3082 1680. Symbol stone (RCAHMS 1999: 37).
6. Orphir, HY 33 04. Two symbol stones (RCAHMS 1999: 37).
7. Oxtro, HY 2537 2678. Symbol stone, reused broch (Hedges 1987, RCAHMS 1999: 37).
8. Redland, HY 378 171. Symbol stone, reused broch (Hedges 1987, RCAHMS 1999: 37).
9. Howe, HY 276 109. Settlement site (Ballin Smith 1994).
10. Point of Buckquoy, HY 247 275. Settlement site (Ritchie 1977).
11. Birsay Bay, HY 239 285. Settlement sites (Morris 1983; 1989; 1996).
12. Saevar Howe, HY 246 270. Settlement site (Hedges 1983).

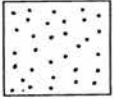
13. Skail, HY 588 065. Settlement site (Buteux 1997).
14. Brough of Deerness, HY 545 100. Religious site (Morris 1977, Morris & Emery 1986).
15. Newark, HY 574 041. Religious site (souterrains) (Brothwell 1977).
16. Borthwick, HY 2241 1678. Reused broch (Hedges 1987).
17. Chapel Knowe, HY 3881 1556. Reused broch (Hedges 1987).
18. Cemetery broch, HY 2378 0818. Reused broch (Hedges 1987).
19. Cummi Howe, HY 2824 1039. Reused broch (Hedges 1987).
20. Bargar, HY 3519 2771. Reused broch, hoard (Hedges 1987, Graham-Campbell 1995a).
21. Midhouse, HY 273 264. 'Pict's house' (CANMORE).
22. Byameadow, HY 256 224. 'Possible Pict's house' (CANMORE).
23. Sands of Evie, HY 372 264. Symbol stone (CANMORE).
24. West broch, ND 484 987. Possible reused broch site (Hedges 1987).
25. East broch, ND 489 988. Possible reused broch site (Hedges 1987).
26. Bu Sands, ND 485 975. Possible settlement site (Smith et al 1988, Hunter 1993).
27. Kyelittle broch, ND 485 953. Possible reused broch site (CANMORE).
28. Mine Howe, HY 510 060. Recently excavated mound containing stairs and three chambers. Finds of Iron Age, possibly Pictish, date. A settlement area has been discovered close to the mound, and may be Pictish in date (Card 2000, Cowley 2000).



Scale 1: 250 000



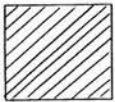
Loch.



Land of very limited agricultural value.



Land capable of use as rough grazing.



Land capable of use as improved grassland. Restricted to grass, but occasional forage crops may be grown.



Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops. Primarily grassland, but crops such as oats, barley and forage crops can be grown.

Ill. 39. Land capability map of Mainland Orkney and Burray (After Soil Survey of Scotland, sheet 1. Made and published by Ordnance Survey for the Macaulay Institute for soil research).

In England, few pagan Norse graves have been found, and this may mean that the Viking settlers were assimilated into the community relatively quickly and were given a Christian burial. On the Isle of Man, the early Viking settlers were given a pagan burial (Richards 1991: 102). Thus, Richards (1991: 118-119) draws the conclusion that on the Isle of Man there may have been less of a need to integrate whereas in England the best way of dealing with the natives was to become assimilated (Richards 1991: 118-119). None of the first generation Viking graves on the Isle of Man is female, and this may be taken to suggest that the land taking here was military in character (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 111).

What about Orkney? Let us look at a few examples of pagan burials. A pagan Norse cemetery and a Norse hall house have been excavated at Westness, Rousay. The cemetery showed continuity from Pictish times, and it is possible that the farm, just as the cemetery, was in use in Pictish times as well. Unfortunately, the lower levels were not excavated to examine this possibility (Kaland 1995). The Pictish graves were marked with headstones and had been respected by the Norse (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 56, 136). On Sanday, several pagan Norse graves have been found. Unfortunately, they are old and poorly recovered finds. But there is one exception, a boat grave with three bodies found at Scar. It has been dated to the end 9th century (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 56, 140). The Buckquoy grave mentioned above can be dated to the second part of the 10th century (Ritchie 1977: 190). At Skaill, Sandwick, a handful of poorly recorded graves have been found (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 59). At Lyking a poorly recorded cremation with grave goods was found (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 59). At the Broch of Gurness, there are badly disturbed pagan Norse male and female graves dated to the 9th and 10th centuries (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 60, 129). On the Brough of Birsay, unpublished excavations in the 1950's found two levels of graves, but they cannot be securely dated as the church was a place of pilgrimage in medieval times and some of the graves could date from this period (Ritchie 1993: 109).

None of the pagan Norse graves in Orkney appears to be earlier than the mid 9th century (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 61). The latest grave goods in the pagan graves is dated to the second half of the 10th century (Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998: 152-153). In Orkney, early graves containing women and children have

been found, as opposed to the Isle of Man. Therefore, the early Norse settlement of this area may have been characterised by family units rather than bands of warriors.

In England, the Norse settlers did not generally continue to use the runic script, and only a few inscriptions have been found. A fragment of a rune stone was found in a church in Winchester, a complete 11th century rune stone was found close to St Paul's Cathedral, and there are also examples of graffiti on animal bones from 11th century St Albans, and on a comb case from Lincoln (Richards 1991: 126-127). On the Isle of Man there are 31 rune stones, the largest collection in the British Isles (Richards 1991: 126). Richards (1991: 28) regards this as a further expression of Norse identity and power.

About 15 Scandinavian runic inscriptions have been found in Orkney, apart from the 30 odd 12th century inscriptions at Maeshowe. Barnes (1992) has listed the ones known to him at the time. The inscriptions do not give us much information about life in the Orkneys and most of them may be late. Two fragments with runes were found on the wall of the church on the Brough of Birsay and Liestøl (1984: 225-227) interprets them as saying: '(NN raised) this (stone) after (NN)', and 'NN raised (this stone after NN)'. A stone from the round church (Ill. 40) at Orphir also has a runic inscription and Liestøl (1984: 236) interprets it as saying 'Philippus wrote the runes'. The name Bjorn is scratched on one stone in the Ring of Brodgar, and a twig rune and a cross on a boulder (Barnes 1992: 40). Objects with runes have also been found, as the seal's tooth from the Brough of Birsay with the futhark, a steatite disc from Stackrue with runes which are hard to interpret, and a bone pin from Westness with three 'a' runes. A classic memorial stone was found at Tuquoy, stating that 'Thorstein Einarsson raised these runes' (Barnes 1992: 40).



Ill. 40. The round church at Orphir (photo: the author).

If we start with the language, it cannot be determined if, and for how long, there was a period of bilingualism and when Norse became dominant. But that the Norse language completely wiped out the native tongue before the end of the 9th century appears unlikely and it may not have been until the mid 10th century, when there may have been an increase in Scandinavian settlers and a Norse take-over of administration. The impact of the Norse language may have depended more on the sheer number of Norse incomers and their status than on any assertion of power. It may have become fashionable to speak Norse, just as American loan words have influenced many languages in modern times. The Norse language may also have become so widely spread because it was used by the Norse to name the properties on the islands for taxation. The old Celtic estates may have been broken up and the old names may thus have been obsolete.

The pagan burial practice seems to have spanned from the mid 9th century, presumably the time around which the majority of first generation settlers died, to the end of the 10th century when Christianity appears to have been fully established among the Norse. It may be tempting to interpret the Norse paganism and their use of native graveyards as a means of asserting dominance. But as far as we know from the evidence available, the Norse did respect the native graves, and their use of the

native graveyards may simply be another part of their take-over of the estates, general settlement pattern and administration. As opposed to the Isle of Man, there are relatively early female pagan graves in Orkney, which may indicate that the Orkney settlement was more peaceful.

There seems to be an increase in the use of runes in the later period of Norse settlement. If this was a way of asserting dominance or if it simply had to do with an increased influx of Scandinavians in the later period is hard to say. The runic inscriptions come across as rather casual, as graffiti, light hearted statements about treasure and women and what might be magical inscriptions as the futhark on the seals tooth from the Brough of Birsay and the three 'a' runes on the bone pin from Westness. Memorial stones would surely be better suited to any attempts to assert power? However, there is only one such stone in Orkney.

In sum, there are no signs of the Norse trying to assert their dominance over the Picts in the early period of settlement. In the later period, the Norse probably took over the administration in a more formal manner and made the Norse language the official language of the islands. If this was a way of asserting their dominance, or if it was a natural development is hard to say, but at least there are now reasons for not turning to the traditional interpretation automatically. The Norse were not just looking for trouble when they set out on the seas. The settlement of Iceland and Greenland was due to peaceful searching for land, and in late Norse times wealthy men went to the Holy land on pilgrimage.

5.5. Discussion

The Norse had a clear idea of where they wanted to settle, in sheltered bays surrounded by fertile land. There is no reason to assume that there was any such unoccupied land in Orkney (Ill. 38 & 39) when they arrived, and therefore we find Pictish settlements underneath the Norse ones. The Norse may have taken over the existing estate centres and their land, and thereby preserved elements of the native administration and settlement pattern. Settlements such as Red Craig, Skaill and The Bu on Burray may have been such centres. The Norse may have reused Pictish houses, as suggested by Buckquoy, Red Craig and Pool, where the Norse kept using

the Pictish round house in its original form until the 11th century (Hunter 1990: 189-190), and may also have reused some brochs, for example Saevar Howe and maybe the ones on Burray. Pictish artefacts are present in Norse settlement layers on practically all Norse sites in the early period, but later they disappear. This may mean that the Picts became culturally assimilated, either spontaneously or due to 'encouragement' from the Norse. The analysis of the mix of Pictish and Norse artefacts above (ch 5.1.7.) suggests that in general, the Picts and Norse had peaceful relations, and may even have lived together on some sites.

There is no evidence of violence in connection to the Norse settlement. This does not mean that every single Pict welcomed the Vikings as new best friends, but generally speaking the settlement appears to have been peaceful. If there had been trading contacts, and even over wintering, before settlement proper, alliances between some Pictish and Norse leaders would already have been formed. Any hostile native leaders were probably persuaded, by various means, to leave their estates to make room for the newcomers who had access to desired materials as silver, antler, steatite and maybe amber and walrus ivory. To some Picts, the Scandinavians probably constituted a threat, but to others a golden opportunity¹⁶.

If the first Norse settlement was a 'private enterprise' (Buteux 1997: 264), as it seems to have been in the beginning, the Norse would not have been powerful or numerous enough to change radically the native system of land administration. Violence was not their only way to power, the strong and well-developed native system of land ownership and clientship, combined with various political manoeuvres like alliances and marriages may have been a more useful way. Graham-Campbell's and Batey's (1998: 39) theory that the Pictish artefacts on Norse sites can be explained by an enslaved native population appears unlikely when applied to small groups of Norsemen that came to settle as a part of a private enterprise. Slavery may seem more likely for the more organised settlement in the establishment stage, but the mix of native and Norse artefacts does not occur in this phase. There are no signs of conflicts between the Picts and the Norse, rather coexistence is indicated in the archaeological material. This cultural mix of artefacts is more likely to be due to

¹⁶ For another example of the consequences of increased external trade, see Mulk 1996.

peaceful transactions and coexistence. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

In the establishment stage the Norse would have had the power to change the system. They may have developed the *ounceland* and *pennyland* system from the native system, for example. The Norse also appears to have brought the *Huseby* system to Orkney. Important settlements like Skaill and the Brough of Birsay do not appear to have been *Huseby* farms. Either they were part of a system that was in use until the *Husebys* were established, or they existed side by side with the *Husebys* and had a different function, for example as *veizla* centres. An example of an important farm, that was not a *Huseby*, is Rapness in Westray. It was a *bordland* of the earls, and sometimes the earls stayed there, for example during their tax collection rounds (Thomson 1995: 342). The holder (not the owner, which was the earl) of Rapness was the chieftain Kugi. He was one of Earl Paul's most important supporters (Thomson 1995: 242), and maybe the earls used their supporters' farms/put their important supporters in charge of large properties to back up the *Huseby* system. Places like Skaill and the Brough of Birsay may have had similar functions.

In the area between Inverness and Edinburgh there is no Norse settlement before the late 9th and 10th centuries. This contrasts sharply with Orkney, where the Norse settlement is thought to date from about AD 800. This may be seen as an indication that the Picts living in this southern area managed to fight off the Norse. There are Pictish forts in the southern area, e. g. Portknockie, Burghead, Dunottar and Clatchard Craig. There are forts on Orkney as well, but these have not been excavated and it is not known if they are Pictish. However, the Castle of Burwick, South Ronaldsay, may have been a Pictish power centre comparable to the Brough of Birsay. Ritchie (1996: 30, 125) suggests that there may be a link between this fort and the oval boulder, of unknown provenance, with a pair of carved footprints in the nearby St Mary's church. Such stones have been associated with the inauguration of Dark Age kings.

In sum, it is possible that the forts in the southern Pictish area were used as defences against the Vikings. This may also have been the case in Orkney, but without excavation it is impossible to tell if these forts were used by the Picts. Even if they were, their presence does not necessarily mean that the relationship between

the Picts and the Norse was violent. The Brough of Birsay, for instance, is characterised by coexistence and continuity rather than invasion.

The model for Viking contact and settlement outlined by Buteux (Table 10) seems reasonable and fits the finds from Skaill, Buckquoy and the Brough of Birsay well:

Pioneer stage: Viking raids are recorded from the late 8th century onwards (Iona AD 795 for instance). As Ritchie (1983: 46) points out, Orkney is an obvious stop on the way from Norway to Ireland and thus some Norse settlement is to be expected before the large raids in the end of the 8th century. Since it does appear most likely that there would have been some contacts before settlement proper, the first contacts most likely took place before the end of the 8th century. The Vikings had the ability to reach the Scottish Isles by at least the 7th century. By this time, the Picts were settled in areas such as the Brough of Birsay, Buckquoy and Skaill and the Vikings might have become aware of the potential for colonisation through trading contacts with settlements like these. However, Ritchie (1983: 46) mentions that over wintering of small groups of Viking raiders before settlement proper is unlikely because of the still strong Pictish settlements, and thus she argues (1983: 47) that it is more likely that the settlement was quickly established and involved a large number of Norsemen. Weber (1993; 1994) has shown that Pictish combs, even in the period before detectable Norse settlement, are made of reindeer antler. The two combs from the Brough of Birsay were probably made of reindeer antler, and the long handled comb (a type dated to the early/middle Iron Age) from Skaill Site 6 was definitely made of reindeer antler. Trade before the late 8th century is thus strongly indicated. Maybe the Norse access to the desirable antler made the Picts less hostile to over wintering and Norse settlers?

Consolidation stage: This appears to have begun in the late 8th or early 9th century. For instance, Structure 16a on the Brough of Birsay has been dated to the beginning of the 9th century, Site 2 at Skaill was established in the late 8th or early 9th century and Buckquoy was settled by the Norse around 800 AD as well. Thomson (1987: 20) suggests that the settlers involved in this consolidation may have been raiders that

brought their families from Norway when they got old, and settled down as farmers. However, as suggested above, they are at least as likely to have been traders, if there actually was a real difference between the two.

Establishment stage: This stage may have begun around the late 9th century. Phase 2.2. on the Brough of Birsay began then, and the hall house at Skaill Site 2 was built in the 10th. The Norse phases at Saevar Howe are also from the 9th century, and as Ritchie (1983: 51) points out, Birsay must have been densely settled by the Norse by this time.

The settlers of Iceland arrived in groups of hundreds of persons under their chieftains, who claimed large areas of land for themselves and their allies (Odner 1974: 111). Phase 2.2 in Orkney (Hunter 1986: 103-104, 114), the establishment stage in Buteux's (1997) terminology, may have been like the settlement of Iceland, large blocks of people under a chieftain may have arrived and claimed land. The present Norse inhabitants may not have much of a saying in this matter.

Buteux (1997: 266) suggests that the Picts may have invited some Norsemen to the Brough to defend it, presumably against other Norsemen. As illustrated by the sagas, the Norse were certainly not only attacking other peoples, they had at least as many conflicts and battles with other Norsemen. This may explain why there are Norse settlements on all the high status Pictish sites in Orkney, and the presence of Pictish artefacts. However, it is a bit strange that nothing is mentioned about any such power struggles in the *Orkneyinga Saga* or elsewhere. What may have happened in the later phases, where there are no Pictish artefacts on these sites? Did the Norse simply take the power centres over, or did the Picts become assimilated?

In the following chapter, we will look at high status Norse sites. Their possible continuity from Pictish times, development over time and role in the Norse community will be examined.

PIONEERING STAGE:

6th - late 8th century: Picts at Skail.

7th - early 8th century: Picts at Buckquoy

7th - 9th century: Picts on the Brough of Birsay.

Norse contacts through trade in antler, steatite, timber with these sites?

Undeveloped native economy. Maybe the Norse were allowed to settle in return? Hospitality, gift giving.

CONSOLIDATION STAGE:

8th/9th century: Norse settlement at Skail

AD 800: Norse settlement at Buckquoy

Early 9th century: Norse settlement on the Brough (Phase 2.1).

C. 850-late 10th century: Intermediate Norse phase on the Brough of Deerness.

Burray may have been settled in this stage.

More organised settlement. No Viking hoards. Either small groups of Vikings, or no need for conspicuous consumption. Trade in other materials than silver, antler, bone?

ESTABLISHMENT STAGE:

End of 9th century: Phase 2.2. on the Brough of Birsay.

AD 900: Norse occupation ends on Buckquoy.

10th century: Skail becomes fully Norse.

10th century: Norse stone chapel on the Brough of Deerness.

Burray may have been settled in this stage.

Reorganisation of settlement. The Pictish influence disappears. Influx of more Scandinavians, more competition for high positions in society - conspicuous consumption? Big hoards, e. g. Burray (c. 1000), Skail (c. 950). Increasing circulation of silver.

Table 10. Time scale, illustrated by archaeological examples, for the different stages outlined by Buteux (1997).

Chapter 6. Early monastic and high status Norse sites

6.1 Introduction

The medieval stone chapels in Orkney were often private, owned and commissioned by wealthy and important persons. There is a connection between the distribution of these chapels and the *ounceland* districts. Usually there is one chapel in each *ounceland* (Morris 1985: 235). The *ounceland* chapels represent the first spread of Christianity in the islands in the 11th and 12th centuries (Radford 1962: 181). Some of the private chapels developed into head-churches of their parishes (Morris 1985: 235). In the Isle of Man each *treen*, the unit that corresponds to the Orkney *ounceland*, has a chapel, a *keil*. These often have Celtic names and the majority go back to the Celtic period, and Radford (1962: 172) argues that the same may be true of the Orkney chapels. Crawford (1987: 180) suggests that the earl may have been responsible for the distribution of private chapels in Orkney. She also suggests that the system may rest on Celtic traditions adopted by the Norse, but she points out that it is unlikely that all the chapels have Celtic predecessors.

There may be a connection between early monastic sites and later high status Norse sites. We have already come across two such sites; the Brough of Birsay and the Brough of Deerness. This chapter will investigate the link more closely and compare the two Brouchs with other, similar sites elsewhere. Did the Norse deliberately seek out and take over important Christian sites, and in that case why? Or is the Norse settlement on these sites due to other factors than their religious meaning?

6.2. Orkney

6.2.1. The Brough of Birsay

6.2.1.1. Background

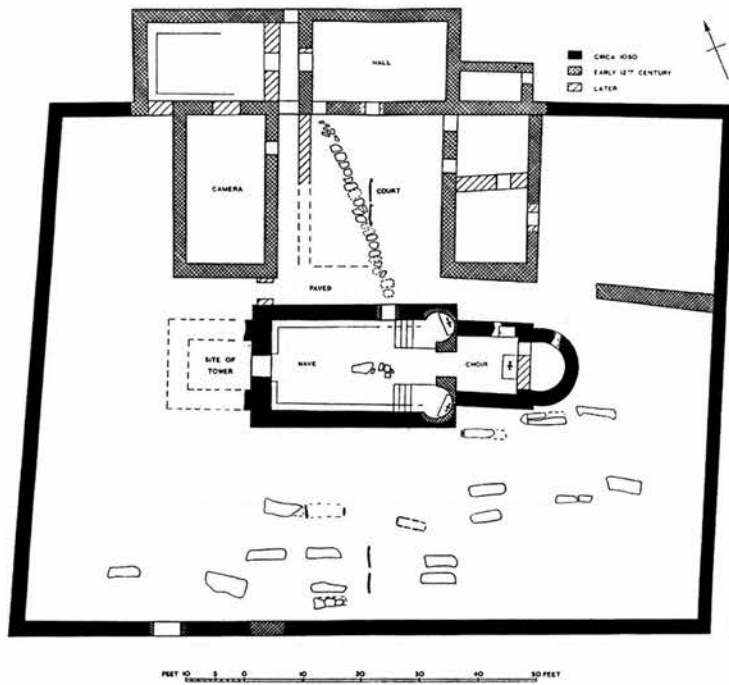
Hunter (1986: 28, 168) argues that the Brough would have been an ideal site for a monastery, since it lay close to a well-populated area, and because the island was an

area where monastic rule could be easily enforced. Additionally, he suggests that the site's later ecclesiastical history might be based on an early ecclesiastical function.

The earliest likely date for Christian activity on the Brough is in the end of the 6th century, according to the travels of Cormac recorded by Adomnan (Anderson & Anderson 1961). The most substantial form of early Christianity in the west is the establishment of monasteries, which were already common in Ireland by the middle of the 6th century. Generally, the earliest Christian archaeological material in Orkney can be dated to the 8th century.

6.2.1.2. The archaeological remains

Area 1 on the Brough of Birsay contains the chapel, the churchyard and 'monastic buildings'. It has been interpreted as a small monastic establishment from the 12th century overlying an earlier church of uncertain date and a churchyard that may date back to the Pictish period in part. The standing chapel has been dated to about AD 1100 to the mid 12th century (Morris 1996: 252). The 'monastic buildings' are four main buildings that form the northern, western and eastern ranges around an open area, with the church to the south. The buildings have been interpreted as a kitchen and frater (Ill. 41 & 42) (Morris 1996: 254).



Ill. 41. Plan of the monastic buildings and graveyard on the Brough of Birsay (Radford 1959: 12-13).



Ill. 42. Part of the church at the Brough of Birsay. In the chancel, the reconstructed altar can be seen (photo: the author).

Walling, interpreted as the remains of an earlier chapel, has also been found in Area 1. The walling, 7 m in length, is projecting from below the later Norse church (Hunter 1986: 28). The possible chapel is surrounded by lengths of aligned walling, and has been interpreted as a contemporary graveyard (Radford 1962: 167-168). But Hunter (1986: 28) argues that this interpretation is unconvincing due to the arrangement of the walling. Burials have been found, however. These were, according to Radford (1959: 17), located on two levels, and only distinguished on stratification grounds. They were interpreted as Norse and Pictish. The so-called Norse graves, in the upper layer, are marked by heavy stone covers. There is no mention of whether they were lined with slabs or not, and it is tempting to interpret this omission as meaning that they were not, but we cannot be sure. On the plan (Ill. 41) (Radford 1959: 12-13), there appear to have been only 18 such graves. The lower graves are said to have been formed of slabs on edge and often to have had head or foot stones, broken at ground level, supposedly not to stick up above ground in the later cemetery. There is no mention of how many of these graves were found, what shape they were, or if the so-called Norse graves had disturbed or respected them. It is unfortunate that the excavations have not been published in detail. Radford (1962: 168) has pointed out that the stone-lined cists were aligned with the earlier church wall, and could therefore be associated with it. The walling and the graves cannot be dated more closely than sometime before the Norse church was built (Hunter 1986: 28).

Hunter (1986: 30) points out that the sequence of inhumations is hard to define, and that sporadic burials took place throughout the period of occupation. None is culturally diagnostic. This has led to suggestions that the projecting walling belonged to a previous Norse chapel, instead of a Pictish (Radford 1983: 31). Additionally, the Brough was a place of pilgrimage in medieval times, there may be graves dating from this period in the cemetery, and it is uncertain which graves this could be, maybe the ones called 'Norse' (Ritchie 1993: 109). As the earlier walling may in fact be Norse, the lower, so called Pictish, graves may be as well.

As not much information is known about the lower or upper layers of graves on the Brough, it is hard to compare these with graves from other cemeteries. But on the Mainland site of the parish church, lintel graves, normally called long cist graves

outside the Isle of Man, and partially lined graves have been excavated and dated to the end of the 9th century (Barber 1996: 28) (Table 11). The category of lintel graves/long cist graves contains wedge or coffin shaped graves lined with slabs. Sometimes, they have floor slabs and multiple covering slabs. They contain extended inhumations oriented E-W. Lintel graves often occur in cemeteries, and often on ecclesiastical sites. The cemeteries may also contain partially lined graves and unlined graves. This category of graves occurs from the 7th to the 9th centuries AD. At Peel Castle, St Patrick's Isle, Isle of Man, the Norse adapted the native lintel grave tradition (O'Brien 1996: 20-22).

At Westness, Rousay, Orkney, a large cemetery with Pictish and Norse graves has been excavated (Table 11). The Picts were buried either in slab-lined graves with and without covering slabs, or in a shallow trench. Most, if not all, of the Pictish graves were marked. The Norse graves were either boat graves, rectangular graves or oval shaped with stem stones and some also had covering slabs (Kaland 1995: 312-315).

If we start with the so-called 'Pictish' graves on the Brough of Birsay, do we have any parallels? If in fact, most of them had foot or head stones, they are comparable to the Pictish Westness graves, which may all have had markers. However, it is possible that some of the Pictish graves were not marked and have consequently been labelled as Norse on the Brough. What about the so-called 'Norse' graves on the Brough? They are probably long cist graves, as on the parish church site on the mainland. It is possible that the Norse in Orkney, just as the Norse in the Isle of Man, adopted the native custom. If the original parish church and the Brough of Birsay chapel were roughly contemporary, but used by different groups, the same grave types may have been used. On the Brough, the 'Norse' graves seem to be the ones with covering slabs. It is possible that any Norse graves without covering slabs may have been interpreted as Pictish.

<u>Brough of Birsay:</u>	Graves formed of slabs on edge, often with head or foot stones (called Pictish). Graves with heavy stone covers (called Norse).
<u>Birsay parish church:</u>	Slab lined graves, sometimes with floor/cover slabs (end of 9 th century). Partially lined graves (end of 9 th century).
<u>Westness:</u>	Slab lined graves with/without covering slabs, marked (Pictish). Shallow trenches, marked (Pictish). Boat graves (Norse). Rectangular graves (Norse). Oval graves with stem stones, some with covering slabs (Norse).

Table 11. Grave types on a selection of cemeteries in Orkney.

In sum, it is hard to argue that all the graves on the Brough of Birsay are Norse, without further information from the early excavations. The records of the old excavations are so poor, that we almost have to assume that some Pictish graves were called Norse and that some Norse graves called Pictish. Any Medieval graves on the site will further complicate the picture. The reported head and foot stones are hard to relate to what we know of Norse burial customs in the area. It is clear, that there are some Norse graves on this site, but it should not be assumed that all the graves, and all the phases of the religious building, are Norse.

As the walling projecting from the Norse church is of stone, the previous chapel appears to have been stone built, and as such Hunter (1986: 29) points out that it is unlikely to be earlier than the 8th century, as earlier chapels were built of timber. He does however point out that the availability of stone and the lack of timber in Orkney may mean that such parallels cannot be used for dating the Brough chapel. Hunter (1986: 29) mentions that since the earliest graves are aligned with the projecting walling, it appears to be the primary phase on the site.

That no *vallum monasterii* can be identified makes it hard to argue that the Brough of Birsay was the location for a monastic settlement. Hunter (1986: 28) does however point out that the whole island may have been regarded as a monastic holding, that it may have been a gift from a king or sub king, as Iona, in which case an earthwork boundary may not have been needed. Further, if the Brough was a tidal islet, there may not have been any need for an enclosure. Hunter (1986: 28) also points out that it is hard to know what monastic remains may look like. In what way would they be different from secular buildings?

Hunter's excavations added nothing to the theory that Christianity was brought to Orkney in the late 6th or early 7th centuries. Consequently Hunter (1986: 66) argues that the voyages of Cormac should be regarded as a red herring. However, even though the existence of a monastery on the Brough could not be proved by the excavations, it could not be disproved either (Hunter 1986: 66-67).

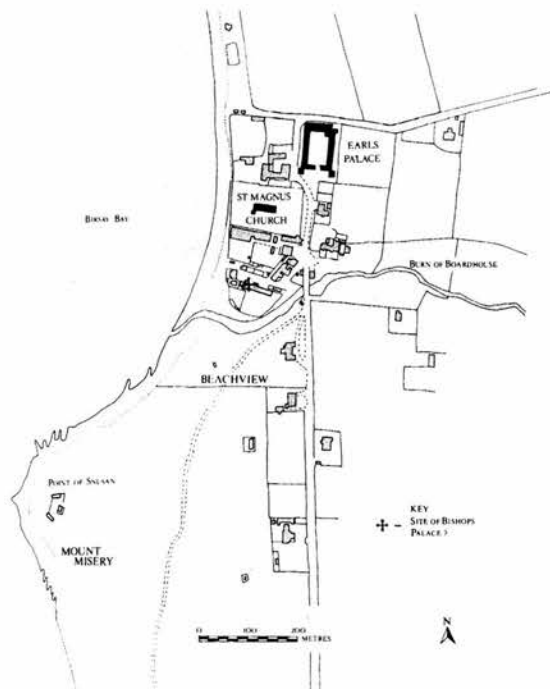
6.2.1.3 The location of Christchurch

Thorfinn is said to have built a church in *Byrgisheralði*, the district of Birsay in the 11th century (*Orkneyinga Saga* ch 31). This district is thought to have included the whole north-west corner of Mainland. Whether the church on the Brough of Birsay are the remains of Thorfinn's Christchurch from the sagas, or if it lay in Birsay village across the bay, is a matter of intense debate. If the church was situated on the Brough, the seat of the earldom would have been as well, as chapels and churches traditionally were located next to the most important settlement in the area. And if the church was situated on the Mainland, the Brough would not have been the seat of the earldom and may have been monastic instead (Hunter 1986: 115).

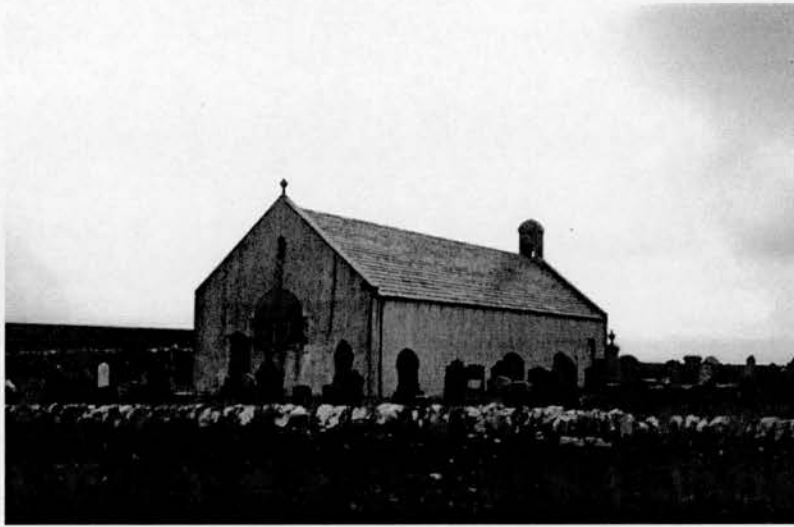
Christchurch had become a cathedral in the first decade of the 12th century, at the latest. Around 1150 a new cathedral was built at Kirkwall and the bishopric moved (Barber 1996: 12). Crawford (1987: 190) has suggested that difficulties in reaching the Brough, maybe a collapsed land bridge or other connection, may have been behind the move to Kirkwall.

Lamb (1972: 201) argues that the most likely location of Christchurch is the Mainland site occupied by today's parish church (Ill. 43 & 44), which dates from 1664. The hamlet is called 'The palace' locally. Close to this church are the ruins of a

palace used by the Stewart earls in the 16th century (Lamb 1972: 202). The bishop's palace was also situated here in the 16th century, and there are earlier deposits underneath, which may indicate that an earlier bishop's palace once stood on the site (Morris 1996: 6). Remains of an earlier church have been also found. In old records, this church is said to have been called Christ's Kirk (Lamb 1972: 202). Some of the graves beneath the present church's foundations also suggest the existence of an earlier church. These graves are lintel graves, generally dated to the 7th -9th centuries AD. They often pre-date their associated stone oratories/churches and thus it has been argued that these stone buildings did not replace their wooden predecessors until the late 9th or early 10th century (O'Brien 1996: 22). Excavations have shown that there was a church at the site from Phase 2. This phase starts off with a deposit of midden material, which may be dated to around the early 9th century (Barber 1996: 28). One of the cists has been dated to cal. AD 800-1030 (Morris 1996: 260). The lintel graves and partially-lined graves have been dated to the end of the 9th century. These graves may have been associated with an undetected wooden church. If this was the case, this was replaced with a stone oratory around AD 900. In Phase 3, the stone structure was added to. This phase has been dated to the 10th-mid 12th century, and may thus be Thorfinn's Christchurch (Barber 1996: 28).



Ill. 43. The location of Birsay parish church (Morris 1996: 3).



Ill. 44. Today's Birsay parish church (photo: the author).

Due to the connection between Thorfinn's Christchurch and the seat of the earldom, Hunter (1986: 115) argues that the interpretation of the settlement in Phase 2.2 on the Brough is a straight choice between a secular seat and an ecclesiastical centre. Hunter (1986: 171) suggests that the structures on Sites VIII and IX, with their single-celled forms, could correspond to the beehive type of buildings known from monastic settlements in the west. These buildings on the Brough were built in a new technique, not identified in the Western Isles previously. He argues that Christianity could be behind this new cultural influence. Structures 13, 14, 15, 21 and 22 are compatible in size and form with monastic examples in the west, but the wall constructions differ. Hunter (1986: 115) also points out that the control of land on the Brough, which caused the Norse to reuse previous building plots, may have been monastic.

Structure 19 is hard to relate to monastic activities. It could pre-date the arrival of monasticism, since it is the earliest building on the excavated sites, but Hunter (1986: 171) admits that this is an unlikely explanation due to the similarity in construction. Structure 17, which appears to have been used solely for domestic purposes, also indicates that a secular nature may be the most likely alternative (Hunter 1986: 174). The large size of this building, the building technique and large

central hearth suggest wealth and high status belonging to a secular world. Large quantities of animal bone were recorded around the building, and may indicate a special function of this building, maybe a feasting hall belonging to a wealthy person of high rank.

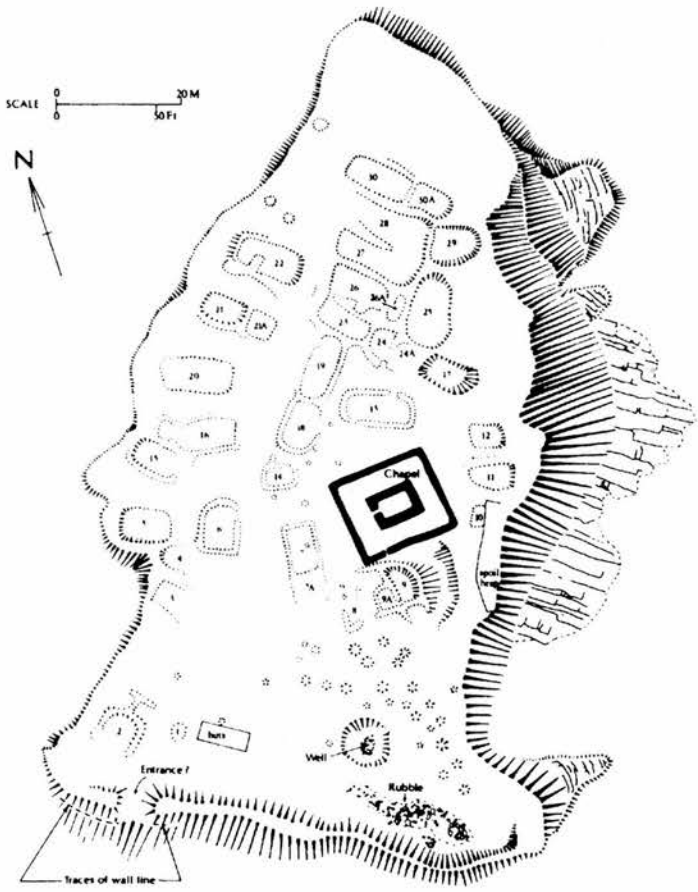
6.2.2 The Brough of Deerness

The Brough of Deerness is a peninsula in the north-east of Mainland Orkney (Ill. 34). In recent centuries, a land bridge has collapsed and thereby increased its defensive position (Morris 1977: 65). Beaching is possible at Large Burra Geo, an open bay (Morris & Emery 1986: 310). The headland is cut off by a wall, which was still 2 feet, 6 ins high in the west end when surveyed by The Royal Commission in 1896. The wall is thought to have been about 3 ft thick from the beginning. The area cut off by the wall is 142 yards north-south and an average of 80 yards east-west. In the middle is a ruined monastery surrounded by a rectangular enclosure (Ill. 45 & 46) (HY50NE 14). The site is remote and there may have been an eremitic settlement here, but an earlier defensive function is also a possibility (Morris 1977: 65).

During the 1977 clearance, a large depression, which had previously (HY50NE) been thought to be a catch pit, turned out to be a stone-lined well, several new small depressions were found, and at least three new structures were discovered in the south-west. Two circular depressions previously reported (HY50NE) to have been found in the west could not be found, but two other depressions were found in the north, together with stone walling in a further depression (Morris 1977: 68). In the northern part, five new rectangular buildings were discovered, as well as some annexes to, or internal divisions of, two further buildings. The new discoveries changed the impression of the site, and the buildings appeared to be situated on either side of a road. Thus the buildings to the north appear to have been planned. The buildings around the chapel seem less systematically laid out (Morris 1977: 69-70). This may indicate that the buildings are from different phases (Morris & Emery 1986: 343).

So, at present, at least 30 rectangular buildings are known (Ill. 45). A series of buildings is situated along the western edge of the peninsula. These buildings are orientated roughly north-west/south-east. This is also the case for the buildings in the

north part of the site. But buildings no 14, 18, 19 and 25 are roughly north-south. These different orientations are on either side of a hollow-way like space, and thus different periods are indicated on the site. A group of buildings around the chapel have an east-west orientation, which also buildings 16 and 20 in the western part of the site have. Only numbers 7/7a, 8 and 9/ 9a appear to have the same orientation as the enclosure and the chapel. There are also a group of 21 depressions in the south and a group of 7 to the north of the well. None of these have any evidence of a stone construction, opposed to the well (Morris & Emery 1986: 312-313).



Ill. 45. Plan of the Brough of Deerness (Morris 1977: 71).



Ill. 46. The ruined religious building on the Brough of Deerness (photo: the author).

Morris (1977: 70) has suggested that at least some of the depressions may be the result of target practising during the war. But later he argued, together with Emery (1986: 352), that it is hard to believe that all of the circular depressions on the site are the result of target practising. They suggest that the depressions may be remains of 'beehive cells', common on early Christian sites and especially small settlements and hermitages (1986: 364).

In 1975-7 an area in and around the chapel was excavated. The earliest activity on the excavated part of the site, Phase A, was a timber phase of the chapel. It had an enclosure marked by gullies and a possible fence-line. Some features have been interpreted as a wooden altar. The only clear finds from the use of the enclosed area are two infant graves dug into the subsurface and covered with clay. Traces of a wooden coffin with iron fittings were found in one of the graves and decayed bones were present in both (Morris & Emery 1986: 313-320).

Phase B is an intermediate phase between the wooden and a stone chapel. From the fill of a gully came an Anglo-Saxon coin of Eadgar (950-75). The coin was heavily worn, and could have been deposited a considerable period after it was minted (Morris & Emery 1986: 356). Spreads of burned and unburned material were noted on the site. This was overlain by a general deposition of hard packed charcoal-flecked sand with gravel, and two further areas of burning. This could either

represent a period of more domestic use of the site or a levelling-up layer for the construction of the stone chapel in Phase C, in which case the burned areas could be associated with its construction. Chert, iron and two sherds of steatite were found in the general layer (Morris & Emery 1986: 320). At times, the focus of activity on the Brough may have been elsewhere, outside the excavated area. Therefore Morris & Emery (1986: 356) point out that it should not be assumed that the intermediate phase, Phase B, was of short duration.

In Phase C1, a stone chapel with a stone altar was constructed, together with a stone enclosure. Four stages of use, C2 - C5, then followed. The enclosure area was used for burials. Four graves are thought to belong to Phase C2: two infant graves, with different constructions from the graves in Phase A, a child between 6 1/2 - 9 years of age and a male adult 24-29 years old (Morris & Emery 1986: 320-326).

Steatite sherds, indicative of a Norse occupation were found (Morris & Emery 1986: 325). Other objects are at home in a Norse context as well, but they may also belong to other periods (Morris & Emery 1986: 351-335). The different phases are summarised in Table 12:

<p>A) TIMBER PHASE</p> <p>A1) construction</p> <p>A2) Use of timber chapel and enclosing gullies; associated postholes; 2 infant graves in enclosure; small ditch to the east.</p> <p>B) INTERMEDIATE PHASE</p> <p>B1) Irregular features, including gully, in chapel area.</p> <p>B2) General deposition of material, some burnt, in all areas.</p> <p>C) STONE PHASE</p> <p>C1) Construction of stone chapel and enclosure wall.</p> <p>C2) Use (1). Pebble floor; gravel path; clay deposits; four graves in enclosure area; infilling of the ditch in the east.</p> <p>C3) Use (2). Flagstone floor in chapel; mixed deposits outside.</p> <p>C4) Use (3) Stone bench set against south chapel wall. General deposits elsewhere.</p> <p>C5) Use (4). Mortar over floor, steps and walls of chapel. Gravel spread and levelling up outside.</p>

Table 12. Summary of the overall sequence on the Brough of Deerness (Morris & Emery 1986: 313).

Two radiocarbon samples were analysed from the enclosure, and in summary, Morris and Emery present this time scale for the site:

Phase B1:	Silver coins deposition.	Post ad 959± 75.
Phase B1-2:	GU-1558.	ad 730±90.
Phases B1-2:	Steatite.	Probably Norse.
Phase C2:	GU-1574.	ad 1030±65.
Phase C2:	Steatite.	Probably Norse.
Phase C2:	Pottery fabric 2.	Medieval.
Phase C2:	Pottery fabric 3.	? Medieval
Phases C3-4:	Pottery fabric 4.	? Medieval
Phases C3-4:	Steatite.	Probably Norse
Phases C5:	Pottery fabric 1.	Probably Later Medieval

Table 13. Summary of dating evidence from the Brough of Deerness (Morris & Emery 1986: 357).

The Norse to medieval dating of Phase C2 is supported by a radiocarbon date from a grave. The possibility that Phase B lasted a long time is suggested by the divergence of date-bracket between the *terminus post quem* of the late 10th century for the coin from Phase B1 and the earlier radiocarbon date from Phase B outside the chapel with only a 5% chance that the date is later than AD 910. Without the radiocarbon date, the site's history could be within the Norse period. But with the date, Morris and Emery (1986: 357) point out that it seems likely that the timber phase was pre-Norse. They suggest that the disuse of the chapel could indicate a time when the Norse were pagan, and the building of the stone chapel their conversion to Christianity (1986: 358).

There were few burials in the enclosure, and Morris and Emery (1986: 358) point out that if the site was a monastery, the churchyard must have been elsewhere. Morris (1977: 70) compares the Brough of Deerness with the Brough of Birsay, and suggests that the buildings in Deerness may be Norse and secular.

Morris & Emery (1986: 366) conclude that the site may have been an Iron Age promontory fort, an early Christian monastic site or a Viking/Norse secular site with associated chapel and Norse monastic settlement, and that these possibilities are not mutually exclusive. They argue that the most likely option is either a chapel for a Norse monastery or a private chapel of a secular lord. The absence of a graveyard may speak against the former.

On Papa Stronsay there is a medieval chapel, which is currently being excavated, located on the east side of the island. (Buteux et al 1999). This chapel, St Nicholas, may also be a religious Pictish site with continuity into the Norse period. The chapel has at least two phases of construction and there are also older Iron Age structures on the site (Buteux et al 1999: 1). The pre-chapel features include a number of stone walls around the exterior of the chapel and flagged surfaces. These areas were covered with midden material. There was also a cellular structure, but this area was completely sterile, apart from a porphyry fragment. This material has religious connotations and may indicate that the circular structure had a religious function. Unfortunately, the fragment cannot be closely dated, and all that can be said is that it is older than the 11th century (Buteux et al 1999: 2-6). Buteux et al (1999: 18-20) seem eager to interpret the porphyry fragment as evidence for a Pictish phase on the site, and argue that six or seven out of eleven porphyry finds in Scotland come from either demonstrably or potentially pre-Norse context. However, looking at the table provided, (Buteux 1999: 19) a majority of the finds (eight out of eleven) come from medieval middens, graves or chapels, one fragment comes from a layer on the Brough of Birsay dated to about AD 800, and one from a presumed Norse grave on Hunday, Orkney. The remaining fragment was found in a new graveyard at Inveresk church, East Lothian. Thus, it is hard to see the why a Pictish date is preferred for this find, and more evidence is needed before the first phase of the chapel can be dated to Pictish times.

6.3. Isle of Man

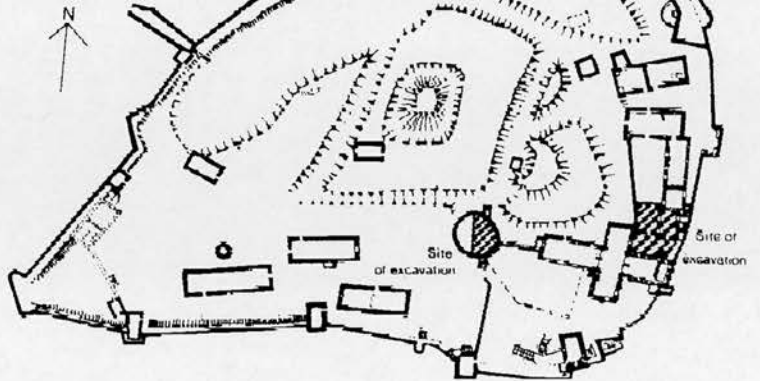
6.3.1. Peel Castle

At Peel Castle on St Patrick's Isle (Ill. 47) a 600 sq m large island connected to the Mainland by a causeway, over 40 known pagan Viking graves have been found. In 1098, king Magnus established the Kingdom of Man here, and it continued to be the location of the Royal palace and later the governor's headquarters until the 17th century. Not only was the island a major political and military centre, but it was also the ecclesiastical centre since the Cathedral of St German is situated there. The whole island is surrounded by a curtain wall (Freke 1986: 102).

PEEL CASTLE

Excavations 1982-3

0 60m



Ill. 47. Plan of Peel Castle (Freke 1986: 103).

The island is first mentioned in the records in 1098, but it is thought that it had a similar position in the earlier Viking and Celtic periods (Freke 1986: 102). On the island, a number of old buildings and ruins are located: St Germans Cathedral, the remains of the court of the medieval governors, the Earls of Derby, and a round tower associated with a previous church. The extensive ruins of the medieval apartments of the Lords House lie just to the north of the cathedral (Freke 1988: 92).

Under the Lords House, an Iron Age settlement was found. A number of roundhouses, a boiling pit, a well and a hearth area were found. The structure that has been interpreted as a grain storehouse is unique. A large 12th century Norse building was found underlying the later courtyard. The building was sophisticated with a raised timber floor, and it may have been the apartments of the Kings of Man (Freke 1986:105).

Over the Iron Age settlement, a *keil*, an early Christian chapel, was found. It was also underlying the Lords House and was adjacent to the cathedral. It may have been a predecessor to the cathedral. It consisted of a small rectangular structure, approximately aligned E-W. It was located at the focus of the early Christian cemetery (Freke 1988: 92-93). Over 300 graves have been excavated in the Christian cemetery (Richards 1991: 102). Males, females and children were all buried in this

churchyard, and a possible boundary wall for it has been found. The poorest grave types were found close to this wall (Freke 1988: 93). In one of the graves, a cross slab with an incised cross was found. It has been dated to the 8th century (Freke 1986: 104).

The *keeil* and cemetery are followed by a group of pagan Norse graves. A series of unaccompanied burials in wooden coffins have been found, but also at least seven accompanied burials of the 10th century. These graves were found through out the cemetery and they had the same grave construction and alignment as the Christian graves. Thus nothing suggests a break in continuity (Richards 1991: 103). The richest grave was a female cist grave of the same style as the Christian graves. The grave gifts included a cooking spit, three knives, scissors/shears, a comb, a box with needles and a necklace of 67 beads (Freke 1986: 102). A fossil ammonite trinket was also found among the grave gifts. No Scandinavian style oval brooches were found in the grave and thus it has been suggested that the woman may have been a local Celt that married a Norse settler and adopted the Norse burial customs (Richards 1991: 103). The beads have been dated to the late 9th/early 10th century (Freke 1986: 104).

Richards (1991: 103-104) points out that the presence of grave gifts such as weapons suggest that the Norse had not yet converted when they buried their dead in the churchyard. They may have recognised that the churchyards were important places to the natives, and buried their dead there to assert their dominance, he suggests. As an example of this Richards (1991: 104-106) mentions Chapel Hill, Balladoole, where a Viking ship burial was placed on top of native cist graves. Before the boat was placed in position, the old ground surface had been dug away to make room for it. This meant removing the cist covers and exposing of the earlier burials. Some of the bones had been replaced in a disturbed manner or spread out under the boat. Many of the small bones of the hands and feet were still articulated when spread out, and must thus have been held together by soft tissue. This indicates that the disturbed graves were recent. Richards (1991: 106) concludes that at Balladoole, in contrast to Peel, there is a symbolic and deliberate imposition of a pagan burial over a Christian cemetery.

6.4. Greenland

6.4.1. Brattahlid

Eirik the Red's Saga tells of the conversion of Greenland. Thjodhild, Eirik's wife, embraced the new faith and had a church built at Brattahlid, the principal farm on Greenland, but not close to the farm itself (Krogh 1965: 8).

This church was called Thjodhild's Church, and it was there that she offered up her prayers, together with those men who adopted Christianity (*Eirik the Red's Saga* ch 4).

The church has been located and excavated. It was located about 100 m south of the farm. It was only 2 by 3, 5 meter and had room for 20-30 standing persons (Krogh 1965). The north, east and south walls were built of turf and the west wall of timber. Apart from a large grave containing 13 individuals, 83 individuals were found on the churchyard. This building was later replaced with a larger, stone built church, but the west wall was still made of wood. The new church was located within the farm complex and was enclosed with an almost circular wall. This church was replaced with a rectangular church completely of stone set within a rectangular enclosure of stone (Radford 1983: 24).

Small chapels like Thjodhild's were the first stage in the introduction of Christianity in the Norse colonies. The second stage at Brattahlid appears to represent a more organised church with a priesthood (Radford 1983: 25).

6.4.2. Gardar

Between 1000 and 1024 several churches were built in Greenland, most of them erected near farmsteads (Gad 1970 58-59). In 1123, according to a part of the *Flatey Book*¹⁷ generally accepted by historians, the general assembly decided to try to persuade the Norwegian king to send a bishop to Greenland (Seaver 1996: 63). A clerk named Arnald was appointed bishop in 1124, and he established his Episcopal

¹⁷ A vellum codex written by two priests about 1390 (Introduction to *Orkneyinga Saga* (Palson & Edwards 1978: 19)).

centre at Gardar (Seaver 1996: 64). It is uncertain if any church existed at Gardar when the bishop arrived (Gad 1970: 67). At a later stage, a new cathedral, called Gardar II, was built (Seaver 1996: 65). The later church appears to be erected in the later 12th or early 13th century (Nörlund 1930: 41).

Nörlund (1930: 13-14) points out that it was not only the farm's size but also its location, between the two principal fjords and close to the farmers' gathering spot for the Althing, that led to the establishment of the Episcopal centre at Gardar (Nörlund 1930: 41). The buildings at Gardar fall into three categories; church, dwelling and farm (Lamb 1972: 203). The bishop's residence must have stood just south of the church in the early period, as a part of a four sided complex of buildings (Nörlund 1930: 76). This was soon abandoned. The bishop then moved to a long house, which was added to several times (Nörlund 1930: 80-85). The earliest phase of the longhouse has been dated to the end of 12th century (Nörlund 1930: 85). The long house contained a feasting hall with an interior length of 16.75 m and a breadth of 7.8 m (Nörlund 1930: 96).

An interesting parallel to The Isle of Man can be seen at the Gardar churchyard, where apparently little care was taken not to disturb previous graves. Often, some body parts of previous graves were dug away. A bishop buried in the north chapel lost his head, for instance. Another example comes from a coffin with two persons inside. The last person to be buried had been interred before the first corpse had fully decomposed, and its limbs had been parted from the trunk and pushed aside to make room for the second burial. The pulled off legs and arms were found in the upper corner of the coffin. The small bones of the hands and feet still accompanied them, and it may therefore be concluded that there was still flesh on the bones when the grave was disturbed. Head and trunk were pressed down in the foot end of the coffin, where the skull was found on top of the pelvis of the later skeleton. Heaps of bones were found buried in various places on the churchyard, and were interpreted as coming from graves that had been disturbed during new grave digging (Nörlund 1930: 63-64).

6.5.Discussion

The location of Christ Church is intensely debated. The *Orkneyinga Saga* is not very helpful with its general information about a site somewhere in the Birsay area. In chapter 52, the church is mentioned:

Soon after that Earl Magnus' body was carried to Mainland and buried at Christ Church, which Earl Thorfinn had built.

At a first glance, this would seem to imply that the church was located on Mainland. However, the Earl had been killed on Egilsay (ch 50) and it may be that the body was carried to Mainland first, and later transported to the Brough from there. If the church was located on the Brough, this second part of the transport may have been too obvious to describe in the saga. It is tempting to see the passage above as a possible clue to the location of the church though. Additionally, the Brough chapel is dedicated to St Peter, or alternatively to St Colm, and does not bear the name of Christchurch. Lamb (1972: 202) points out that the Brough chapel is also very small for a cathedral (Table 14). It may be argued that Gardar in Greenland was small as well, but Lamb (1972: 202) argues that Orkney was more prosperous than Greenland, and had a powerful central authority. Thus it should have had a larger cathedral. The Brough chapel has a floor area of about 60 sq m, whereas the early cathedral at Gardar had about 100 sq m. At the time when Christchurch got cathedral status, the floor area does not appear to have been extended to any larger degree, whereas the Gardar cathedral was rebuilt and expanded to over 200 sq m (Lamb 1972: 202) (Table 14). In the table below, it is clear that the Brough of Birsay building is not large enough to be a cathedral, but not at home in the category of small chapels either. A monastery thus appears likely.

Location	Floor area	Interpretation	Source
Brough of Birsay	ca 60 sq m	monastery?	(Lamb 1972: 202)
Brough of Deerness	ca 17 sq m	chapel?	(Morris & Emery 1986: 327)
Thjodhild's church	ca 7 sq m	chapel	(Krogh 1965: 10)
Gardar (early)	ca 100 sq m	church	(Lamb 1972: 202)
Gardar (cathedral)	ca 200 sq m	cathedral	(Lamb 1972: 202)

Table 14. Comparison of the sizes of various religious Norse buildings.

The two Broughs are similar in a number of ways; they are somewhat isolated islets reachable from the mainland, the residences of powerful families, who had extensive and friendly contacts with each other, were close by, the location had been important to the Picts before the Norse settled, and they both saw the construction of religious buildings in Norse times. It may be argued that both islets had a similar role and meaning in society, and therefore also saw a similar development as society changed (Table 15).

The Norse appear to have arrived in both Birsay and Deerness around AD 800: Phase 2.1 with the Norse use of Structure 16 on the Brough of Birsay starts around this time, and the intermediate Phase B on the Brough of Deerness seems to have lasted between ca AD 820 (the radiocarbon date) and 1050 (the coin). On the Brough of Deerness, Phase A appears to have been native, because of the radiocarbon date. It is impossible to say if the wooden chapel of this phase was abandoned before the Norse came to settle or if their presence caused the abandonment. Either way, that the chapel was abandoned and followed by the long intermediate, supposedly pagan, phase, does not speak in favour of Buteux's (1997: 226) idea that the Norse were invited to high status Pictish sites to protect them. On the Brough of Birsay, the remains of the early chapel/church building have been dated to sometime after the 8th century, which points towards a Norse origin. Hunter (1986: 29) has pointed out that the lack of timber in Orkney may mean that this sort of dating cannot be applied. But, as seen on the Brough of Deerness and on Greenland for example, timber was acquired if needed for such important buildings. There is a possibility that there used to be an even earlier, perhaps timber built, religious building on the site, on the same alignment and therefore undetected. The

following Norse buildings may thus have been a continuation (not necessarily unbroken) of a Pictish practice on the site. If this building existed, it may have survived into the first Norse settlement Phase, 2.1.

Around the beginning of the 11th century, Phase 3 started on the Brough of Birsay. It is characterised by poor building work, and the utilising of earlier structures to construct pairs of major buildings and associated outhouses on a new alignment. The previous drainage system was filled in, and a new one has not been detected. Structure 17 from the earlier Norse phase did survive into the beginning of this phase, 3, but it was modified inside and soon fell into disuse (Hunter 1986: 118-174).

The stone chapel on the Brough of Deerness was built 1030-65, and it may be that the Birsay equivalent was built around the same time. However, it does not appear likely that Phase 3 on the Brough of Birsay was the time for any such high status event as church building or even the erection of a private chapel as the whole period is characterised by degradation. Thus, it appears more likely that the first religious building, if not Pictish, was constructed in the more affluent Phase 2.2, and that the standing remains belong to a period of renewed affluence after Phase 3, maybe in the later 11th or 12th century? This line of development would mean that the first religious building would have been a private chapel, instead of a monastery, due to the presence of secular buildings connected to feasting and secular prestige present in Phase 2.2.

So, what were the later buildings on the two Broughs, were they churches, private chapels or monasteries? As pointed out by Lamb (1997: 16) the chapel on the Brough of Deerness would not have been there to serve the secular community, as that was the function of the parish church at Skail. Thus, he argues, the Brough chapel must have been monastic, and probably connected to the Skail farm by patronage. The few burials also point towards a private monastery whose graveyard was only used by the patron's family. However, this may still have been the outcome if the chapel was strictly private, and the rest of the community members were buried by the church.

Excavations on the Mainland have shown that Birsay also had a church. Phase 2 on this site began in the 9th century, maybe the end of this century, and could

be Norse. There was still a church here around the time Christchurch was built. Why would there have been two church sites so close to each other? It appears more likely that the building on the Brough had another function, either a monastery, as argued (Lamb 1997: 16) was the case on the Brough of Deerness, or a private chapel. When Christchurch was built, it inspired other wealthy people to build the so-called *ounceland* chapels, a development that perhaps was regulated by the earls (Crawford 1987: 180). It is not likely that the earl and his closest ally at Deerness would have been contented by simply building something that many other landowners could build, a chapel, and a monastery therefore appears more likely.

However, the possible monastic buildings on the Brough of Birsay do not appear to have been inhabited for very long. There are no medieval finds and the west tower of the church building may never have been finished. The buildings may in fact not have been that well built, as they are in a ruined state now whereas the church on Egilsay and the church at Orphir have survived much better (the Orphir church is partly ruined due to demolition in the 18th century) (Ritchie 1998b: 8).

The erection of religious buildings appears to have been the new status indicator in the late Norse society. The potentate who could afford to build a church and keep a bishop was obviously very wealthy, and if a monastery was added - the display of wealth would have been very impressive. Whatever secular function the Broughs may have had, as places for feasting or something else, it may no longer have been needed to display wealth. The focus for status display had shifted to the churches and the bishop's residence on the Mainland. Thus, the Broughs may have been given away to monasteries, connected to the leaders by patronage.

Peel Castle, Isle of Man, appears to be a close parallel to the two Broughs at a first glance: The isolated islet location, a native chapel and a period of Norse paganism followed by the erection of a church, and later a cathedral. However, it may be argued that this site saw the opposite development to the Broughs. Whereas the two Orkney Broughs never took on a major ecclesiastical function for the community as a whole, Peel Castle has many graves and a cathedral, and the site became the base for the secular, military and religious powers. This never happened on the Broughs, since the focus of power and prestige shifted to the Mainland.

Richards (1991: 103-106) has argued that the Norse reuse of native churchyards can be seen as their way of asserting power over the natives. He takes the Baladoole example to illustrate this argument. However, the churchyard at Gardar shows that the Norse did not just disturb other peoples' graves. They also treated only slightly earlier Norse graves in a manner that we would find disrespectful. Even such important persons as the bishop had their graves disturbed. Maybe the state of the bones in the grave was not important, as long as they were buried? At both Isle of Man and Gardar the disturbed bones were still buried, and this may have been the crucial point. On a number of occasions, Norse graves have also been found in disused and developing middens, and it is clear that we cannot think about Norse burial practices in the same way as our own. Further, the Norse may have continued to use the native churchyards, especially on small islets as St Patrick's Isle, not to waste any more valuable space. If they really wanted to assert their dominance, a large pagan feasting hall on the native churchyard might have been a better way?

In conclusion, after considering the archaeological remains and comparing the Brough of Birsay with the Brough of Deerness and Peel Castle, it has been argued that Christchurch was located on the Mainland, and that the two Brough sites fell out of use as traditional status indicators and were used as the locations for private monasteries, connected to the leading farms by patronage. Alternatively, the buildings on the Broughs may have been private chapels, but as the Brough of Birsay at least appear to have lost all its former high status, secular connotations in this period, the monastic explanation is favoured. Also, it is questionable if the Deerness and Birsay leaders would have settled for 'simple' private chapels, which were built by many wealthy persons at this time.

Apart from the archaeological considerations above, the geographical circumstances should also be taken into account. A high status settlement was populated by a lot of people, not only the leader and his family. There would also have been people hired to keep the property running, for instance household workers, agricultural workers, maybe metal workers etc. There would also be a number of horses. Additionally, due to the hospitality rules, the number of inhabitants could easily be doubled when friends, relatives and allies came to stay - sometimes for long

periods. In the sagas, people often stayed over winter at a friend's house where they were generously entertained. Examples of this are Steinunn the Old's stay in Iceland with Ingolf (*Landnámabók* ch 394) and Bishop Arnald of Greenland's stay in Iceland together with Einar in 1125-26 (Seaver 1996: 64). What do all these individuals have in common, apart from characterising a high status settlement? They all need a lot of water.

It has been argued above, that the settlement on the Brough of Birsay must have been special in some way, as the Brough is uncomfortable and dependent on the Mainland for food supplies. If the seat of the earldom was situated on the Brough, there would have been a lot of people living there, as outlined above. However, the only source of water is a small well. It is very doubtful if this would have been enough to serve the seat of the earldom. The other contender for the location of the earldom, the Mainland site of the parish church, is in totally different surroundings: it is close to the large loch of Boardhouse and the Burn of Boardhouse runs past it. This is clearly a much more suitable location for the seat of the earldom. Even if a land bridge between the Mainland and the Brough did exist, as suggested by Crawford (1997: 189), the Brough would still not have been suitable for a large, permanent high status occupation.

In sum, both the archaeological remains and the geographical circumstances imply that the seat of the earldom was situated on the Mainland and not on the Brough of Birsay.

BIRSAY**Phase 1: x-ca 800:**

Picts, maybe undetected wooden chapel.

The first stone chapel may have been

Constructed in this phase.

Phase 2.1: ca 800-880:

Initial Norse settlement.

Native wooden /stone chapel

may have survived.

Phase 2.2: ca 880-1030:

New, larger Norse settlement, re-organisation, high status buildings, feasting halls. The first stone chapel may have been built in this phase.

The first stone church on the Mainland site built?

Phase 3: ca 1030-1100:

Degeneration. No high status buildings, low quality building work. The way wealth was expressed had changed. Christchurch built on the Mainland site? This led to abandonment of the Brough, maybe because of a lack of resources to keep two high status sites and since the feasting halls were no longer needed to display status.

Ca 1150- :

As new funds became available, the Brough took on a new role as the location for a private monastery? However, there may not have been sufficient funds to assure high quality building work, finish off the western tower and keep the monastic community going for very long.

DEERNESS**Phase A: x-ca 800:**

Picts, wooden chapel.

Phase B: ca 800-1030:

Intermediate phase.

Norse settlement at some point.

A church may have been built close to the Skaill farm on the Mainland.

Phase C: ca 1030-1100:

The stone built phase.

The building may be a private chapel.

Ca 1150:

Stone church built at Skaill. Hogback monument constructed now, if not in preceding period.

Table 15. Summary of the possible development of the two high status Brough sites.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

Social anthropology and archaeology both have the same aim, to understand culture. Social anthropology can help us to understand how different other cultures may be, and how something that we regard as rather straight forward, e. g. buying and selling, can be tangled up in a complicated set of rules. It can be very risky to mix and match theories and methods from various disciplines, and occasionally the temptation to exaggerate the similarities between past and present cultures has proved too much for some authors. With the use of some borrowed methods, the most fantastic things can suddenly be proved! Unfortunately, these over enthusiastic attempts have turned others against everything to do with anthropology. However, as pointed out by Samson (1992: 30), as all publications in our field, those based on a mix of archaeological and anthropological theories have to be evaluated on the grounds of the evidence presented. As long as the arguments are backed up with correct archaeological and anthropological evidence, they should be taken seriously.

The story about Gunnar and the hay (*Njal's Saga* ch 47) shows that we have to think about the Viking Age economy in different ways than we think about our own. Here, social anthropology can offer helpful assistance. If we know about other cultures' economic systems, the gift giving of the Vikings does not appear so strange and mysterious any more, and the context of their great feasts and other transactions can be understood. Wealth in itself was not power, as it may be today. Instead, material wealth had to be used to get real wealth: allies, reputation and prestige. To gain and sustain status and allies, great feasts had to be held and gifts given away. As the Trobrianders, the Vikings constantly faced economic considerations, and gift giving was a 'total social fact' (Mauss 1954) affecting the whole society. Just because silver did not have the same meaning as today, it was not without meaning (*contra* Gaimster 1991: 114).

In this thesis, social anthropology has been used to shed light on the practice of gift giving, and its connection to status. Anthropological examples, together with stories from the sagas, have illustrated how gift giving and feasting constituted the glue that held society together. The concept of economic spheres has proved very useful for connecting certain types of objects to certain types of relationships, and has allowed us to interpret the social context behind the archaeological artefacts.

The Scandinavian Viking Age society had a multicentric economy, as indicated by literary sources (e. g. *Orkneyinga Saga*) and the archaeological material (Hårdh 1978; Thurborg 1988). The social relations varied from sphere to sphere, and so did the means of payment and the products exchanged. Trade was not as neutral and straightforward as it is today. Before the market economic sphere had become secure enough to cause the collapse of the sphere economy, all exchanges were tangled up in society's social systems. As seen in the anthropological examples, an object was not just an object. It had a whole set of social, moral and economic rules and contexts attached to it.

As part of the multicentric economy, the Viking Age society in Scandinavia had a traditional and substantial gift giving sphere, which functioned according to the principles pointed out by Mauss (1954), Bourdieu (1990) and Samson (1991a). In the Viking world, the one who could give away the most and finest gifts got the power. Sources as *Hávamál* clearly point out the importance of gaining prestige and a good reputation. This is one of the reasons that drove the Norse to venture out on the seas and then settle in foreign areas.

When the Norse sailed to Orkney, the Picts were already living on these islands, and we find their objects on Norse settlement sites. The Pictish hoards from the late 8th and early 9th centuries contain objects, such as silver vessels, combs, pins, chains and brooches. This suggests that the Picts had a relatively undeveloped economy, probably based on the sphere of gifts, debts and prestige. However, ingot moulds have been found on Pictish settlement sites in Orkney (Buteux 1997: 107; Curle 1982: 46) and indicate that the Picts were in fact familiar with a weight-based economy as well. It appears most likely that the early ingots belonged to a separate economic sphere and were manufactured for the foreign markets and not for trade within the Pictish community, as has been suggested for Iceland (Odner 1974). It is probable that the Picts thought about the silver more as a means of exchange than as a means of payment. Until the 11th century, people in Orkney probably lived on more or less self-sufficient farms, and did not have a real need to trade in everyday goods. Silver was probably not commonly used in Orkney. The fact that just a few large hoards have been found in Pictish as well as Norse times, rather than a series of smaller hoards and a wide distribution of single finds, indicates that there were a few

wealthy individuals in Orkney, rather than a wealthy population. Silver appears to have been accumulated by chieftains and other important persons, probably for prestige rather than for purely economic wealth. This may have changed when an at least somewhat standardised means of payment was developed: ring-money. Ring-money became common in Orkney in the late 10th and 11th centuries. These rings may have been used more often for economic transactions than the previous forms of silver bullion. But the almost complete lack of single finds of ring-money may indicate that silver was still only used in larger transactions.

What sort of transactions brought the Pictish objects to Norse settlement sites? The fact that different goods circulated in the different economic spheres gives us a chance to interpret the finds and reconstruct the social relations behind them. Silver brooches and pottery did not circulate in the same sphere and were used for establishing and sustaining different kinds of relationships. The pins, combs and pottery do not come across as prestigious objects given by one chieftain to another, as were the Norwegian Westland cauldrons for instance. The pins, combs and pottery appear to belong to the same sphere, simple everyday commodities. The best explanation for the occurrence of these Pictish artefacts is that they were not the result of economic transactions, but the products made by Picts living among the Norse. They may have been agricultural workers, or married into the Norse community. Curle (1982: 101) has reached a similar conclusion, as she argues that the Pictish pins in the lower Norse horizon are so different from Norse pins that it is unlikely that the Norse adopted them, and that they thus indicate a continued Pictish presence. Hunter has suggested that some of the early Norse buildings on Site VII on the Brough of Birsay were used as native quarters, set apart from the main settlement (Hunter 1986: 173).

The Pictish/Celtic jewellery found in pagan Norse graves in Orkney and maybe some hoards, e. g. the Burgar hoards, do not belong in the 'simple commodities' category. These objects are probably gifts used to form or sustain friendly relationships between Norse and Pictish leaders. The two fragments of Pictish dress ornaments found in Norse layers on the Brough of Birsay (Hunter 1986: 88, 96) could come from gifts. However, it seems unlikely that a gift would be cut up, as the relationship with the person in question would then be abused as well.

Thus, if the fragments belonged to the Norse, economic transactions such as trade, tax payments or tribute appear more likely.

But, would the Norse and the Picts have anything in common, on which to build fruitful friendships? Even if the Picts were matrilinear, as implied by the king lists (Anderson 1973; Boyle 1977), they would not have been a mysterious, backward people on the fringe of the world with whom the Vikings could not have any transactions, apart from the violent kind. The Picts had a developed administration, hierarchies, an ongoing state formation, high status settlements, kings and sub-kings, wealthy chieftains, a developing trade on the import and export level, and internal power struggles familiar to the Vikings. In fact, the northern province of the Pictish kingdom became the foundation for the Norse earldom. Orkney was located very favourably, on the trading route between Scandinavia and Ireland, and when the Vikings came sailing with valuables as antler, steatite, amber, walrus ivory and silver, the Picts would certainly have figured out ways of taking advantage of the situation. As the Pictish hoards show, the Pictish leaders were interested in silver objects to show off their status. When the Norse stopped over, and overwintered, the leading Picts might have competed over who could make friends with the wealthy foreigners and get hold of as many precious objects as possible to acquire more local followers and gain in reputation. The situation may have been the same for the Vikings. Foreign allies in an area one passed frequently would of course be very useful. It is impossible to say whether the Vikings were actually invited to settle in Orkney, for protection or more likely to support certain wealthy leaders and manoeuvre out their competitors and then take over their lands. But overall the Norse settlement appears to have been relatively peaceful, were they invited or not.

The Birsay area is a good example of how traditional theories appear to fit badly with the archaeological material. Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 11) claim that if Birsay was a power base in Pictish times, which it appears to have been, the Vikings must have taken it by force. However, there is no archaeological evidence for this. Instead of a violent take over, continuity is suggested on the Brough, as on the Mainland site of Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977). Graham-Campbell and Batey (1998: 12) ignore the signs of continuity presented by Structure 16a/b on the Brough of Birsay and argue that no continuity between Picts and Vikings can be seen

here. Further, a violent Norse takeover of the Brough does not fit with the Pictish objects present in Norse layers in the Birsay area and beyond, nor with the overall pattern of Norse conformation to a native system of land use. Why would violent invaders care about native land units? The Norse also kept using Pictish structures, as seen at Pool, for example (Hunter 1990; 1997), and graveyards (Kaland 1995) in a manner that does suggest respect rather than contempt.

If a native system of land administration, with *thanes* and *mormaers*, was already well established when the Norse arrived to settle in Orkney, it may explain why the Norse choose to build their farms practically on top of native ones, as seen at Skaill, Buckquoy and the Brough of Birsay for instance, and maybe at Westness as well. The Vikings simply used the established land divisions, administration and estates when they settled, and thereby preserved the native system. Settlements such as Red Craig, Skaill and The Bu on Burray may have been estate centres taken over by the Norse. The Norse may also have reused Pictish houses, as suggested by Buckquoy, Red Craig and Pool, and may have reused some brochs as well, maybe including the ones on Burray. That the Norse term *tirung* (= *ounceland*) was known under the native name *davoch* is indicative of the Norse taking over the existing administration (Steinnes 1959: 42-43). Additionally, the facts that the system cannot be found in Scandinavia or any other areas affected by the Vikings and that the 18 penny system differs from the Norwegian 20 penny system offer further support (Thomson 1987: 117-118). Similarities can also be seen between a number of Pictish and Norse land administration terms (Table 6).

A scenario where the most powerful Norsemen made their way to power through violence, or threat of it, competitive gift giving, feasting, political alliances, marriages and other manoeuvres is not too hard to imagine. With some of the Pictish leaders overpowered, the Norse could then take over their estates and followers, and keep on maintaining the clientship relations. As suggested by Lamb (1995: 267-268), the general population may not have noticed much of a difference, whereas the aristocracy lost their positions, but not necessarily their lives.

Neither the settlement sites, the pagan Norse graves, nor later on the runes, suggest that the Norse tried to assert their dominance over the Picts. The language evidence is more difficult to interpret, but there is no clear-cut evidence for Norse

assertion of dominance here either. Clearly, the Norse language became dominant, but whether this was due to a deliberate Norse strategy to dominate or whether it was a natural development is uncertain. Traditional theories of a violent Norse invasion or of an instant wipe out of the native culture need to be revised. Rather than envisaging over-simplified scenarios where the brutal Norse enslaved the natives and took their land, we have to try to understand the society in which these peoples lived and the mechanisms that regulated relationships and transactions. There is no evidence of violence in connection with the Norse settlement. This does not mean that every single Pict welcomed the Vikings as new best friends, but generally speaking the settlement appears to have been peaceful. If there had been trading contacts, and even over wintering, before settlement proper, alliances between some Pictish and Norse leaders would already have been formed. Any hostile native leaders were probably persuaded, by various means, to leave their estates to make room for the newcomers who had access to desired materials as silver, antler, steatite and maybe amber and walrus ivory. To some Picts, the Scandinavians probably constituted a threat, but to others a golden opportunity for advancement. To improve the chances of having a fruitful relationship with the Scandinavians, some of the Picts may have used Scandinavian-influenced place and personal names.

If the first Norse settlement was a 'private enterprise' (Buteux 1997: 264), as it seems to have been in the beginning, the Norse would not have been powerful or numerous enough to change radically the native system of land administration. In the establishment stage however, the Norse would have had the power to make changes to the system. They may have developed the *ounceland* and *pennyland* system from the native system, for example. The Norse also appear to have brought the *Huseby* system to Orkney.

There are indications that what took place between the Picts and the Norse on the mainland of Orkney also took place on Burray. Burray is a small and very favourably located island with useful natural resources which had been of importance for a long time, judging from the two, possibly even three, brochs.

The large Viking silver hoard constitutes the most substantial link between Burray and the Mainland. It indicates that Burray was integrated in the Viking economy. The high status Norse place name Bu is also indicative of Norse

settlement. Earlier Pictish and maybe also Norse settlement may have existed close to the Bu farm, at Bu Sands, North Links, and the continuity between Picts and Norse so often seen on the mainland is a clear possibility also on this site.

Such continuity is also possible on the two confirmed broch sites. The finds at the East broch and the place name of the West broch may indicate that the Norse reused these structures, as at Saevar Howe on Mainland. This appears quite natural as there was easy beaching and the location was favourable.

The development of churches and chapels as part of high status farms seen on Mainland can also be seen on Burray where the only church is situated across the bay from the Bu. The church was in existence from at least the 13th century, but there may have been an earlier structure on the site, as the Bu magnate probably would have followed the fashion of chapel or church building established on the Mainland in the 11th and 12th centuries. The site of today's St Lawrence's church is the only likely candidate for such a church or chapel.

To sum up, the presence of Pictish artefacts in Norse settlement layers was the starting point of this thesis. These objects determined the methodology, a combination of saga studies, social anthropology and archaeology, which made it possible to reconstruct the values present in Viking Age society. By using this knowledge and by also looking at evidence from place name studies and land administration, it seemed clear that the objects found in Norse layers represent a peaceful coexistence and that the whole Norse settlement in Orkney involved Pictish institutions.

Even if it can be argued that a single excavation can be misleading, unrepresentative, misinterpreted or badly conducted, the evidence from Viking Scotland is growing. A whole range of sites now show the same pattern, of settlement continuity, Pictish artefacts in Norse layers and peaceful coexistence (Ritchie 1974, 1977; Curle 1982; Hedges 1983; Hunter 1986, 1990; Morris 1989, 1996; Sharples & Parker Pearson 1999). At first, this fact may seem incomprehensible, the Vikings were raiding savages, were they not? But as we have seen, the Vikings did what was economically rational to them. If plundering had been the best option for dealing with the Picts, this would have been their strategy. But instead they turned to another common economic option, the forming of alliances

and friendships. To the Vikings that settled in Orkney, it was more rational to be friends with their new neighbours, and profit from gift exchange, trade and farming, than to be at war.

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Appendix 1. Sites on Burray.

Name	Location	Description
North Town Moss	ND 455 965	Peat moss. Find spot about 700 m from the shore. Norse settlement in the area possible.
North Links/Bu Sands	ND 485 975	Sandy bay area not far from the main building of today's Bu farm. Intense settlement throughout the Iron Age, and possibly into the Viking Age, indicated by finds. Middens and walls have also been found. The site is being quarried away.
East Broch	ND 489 988	By the shore with excellent view across Holm Sound to the Mainland. Traces of possible outbuildings.
West Broch	ND 484 987	By the shore with excellent views across Scapa Flow to the Mainland. Ruined by quarrying and army installations.
St Lawrence's Church	ND 492 964	Church now in ruins but graveyard still in use. Excellent view across the bay to the Bu. The only

		church on the island. Possibly the location of a Norse chapel.
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Appendix 2. Artefacts from Burray

Type	Material	Date	Found	References	Museum
Hoard	silver	997-1010 AD	North Town Moss, in mound.	Graham-Campbell 1976; 1995a & b; White & Tate 1983; Kruse 1995; Graham-Campbell & Batey 1998	National Museum of Scotland. Acc. No. IL 236-67, 270-1.
Mounts	antler	Late Roman – Viking?	Bu Sands/ North Links, in midden.	Hunter 1993	The Orkney Museum. Acc. No. 1993.7.1-4.
Pottery sherds		Pictish	Bu Sands/ North Links, through surface collection.	The Orkney Museum	The Orkney Museum. Acc. No. 1989.38 (the whole Bu Sands collection. Items not individually catalogued).
Double sided composite comb fragment	Bone/ antler	Pictish/ Viking?	Bu Sands/ North Links, through surface collection.	Smith et al 1988	The Orkney Museum (the whole Bu Sands collection. Items not individually catalogued).

Egg amulet	Serpentine	Roman?	Bu Sands/ North Links, through surface collection.	Hunter 1993	The Orkney Museum. Acc. No. 1989.38.1.
Disc headed pin	bronze	7 th -9 th centuries	East broch	Stevenson 1955; Hedges 1987; MacGregor 1988; RCAHMS ND49NE1	National Museum of Scotland. Acc. No. GC 45.
Dress pins	Bone	Pictish	East broch	Hedges 1987	National Museum of Scotland. Acc. No. GC 7-17.
Pottery		Pictish?	East broch	RCAHMS ND49NE1	The Orkney Museum. Acc. No. THM 1984.213.
Fragment of a double-edged composite comb	Bone	Pictish	East broch	Hedges 1997; RCAHMS ND49NE1	National Museum of Scotland. Acc. No. GC 6.
Hair pin	bronze	Viking	Unknown	Vedel 1886; Cursitter 1887; Sheteling 1940	Lost?