# DEAD WARRIORS IN LIVING MEMORY

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*A Study of Weapon and Equestrian Burials in Viking-Age Denmark, AD 800-1000*

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# PREFACE

This book has been a long time in the making. It began as a three-year research project funded by a grant from The National Museum of Denmark and The Research Academy in Aarhus, and now finds its completion within the Jelling Series of the PNM – Publications from the National Museum, Studies in Archaeology and History. The aim of the project was to study society and religion in tenth-century Denmark, with archaeological finds – burials with weapons and/or horse furnishings and those with wagon equipment – as the principle source of evidence. The find material was extensive and very early in the process the need for a detailed analysis of the individual graves and their contents became clear, despite the fact that weapon burials and especially equestrian graves have played a significant role in numerous publications and discussions of social structure and religious change in the Viking Age since the nineteenth century, and indeed continue to do so. Thus, typological, chronological and geographical analyses formed a core element of my Ph.D. thesis, and although the subject matter has changed since then, object analysis still retains my interest.

The nature and availability of the archaeological evidence has to some extent changed in the intermediate years with the publication of extensive surveys from southern Sweden and Schleswig, and with the revaluation of old finds such as the Ladby ship-burial. Nonetheless, the original focus of the project, including the basic analyses, has been maintained in this revised version. As many old burial finds and in part the most recent discoveries are often less easy to access, I have chosen also to retain the basic survey of Viking-Age burials and burial sites in the hope that it may prove useful to both Danish and foreign readers. The catalogues provide a status as at 2006. New weapon burials have come to light since without, however, significantly altering the general trends and patterns which emerged in the course of the project and subsequent revision. The concluding chapters have been slightly modified and updated.

Many friends and colleagues have been involved on the way towards this publication. First and foremost I wish to thank all the institutions and individuals in Denmark, Schleswig and Scania who have kindly granted me access to their archaeological collections, archives and excavation reports, both in the early stages of the project and in the following years when I commenced the revision. After completion of the Ph.D. project I had the opportunity to study Norwegian and Swedish graves with riding equipment at Universitetets Oldsaksamling Oslo, Statens

Historiska Museum Stockholm, and Museum Gustavianum at Uppsala University. My travels were made possible with support from Ingeniør Svend G. Fiedler og Hustrus Legat and Letterstedska Föreningen. Grants from the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies in 2008 enabled me to dedicate some time to complete the editing of the main text, and to discuss equestrian burial finds with colleagues at Kulturhistorisk Museum Bergen, Bohusläns Museum, Göteborg Stadsmuseum and Riksantikvarieämbetet UV Väst. I would also like to thank for their financial support in the final publication process the Danish Council for Independent Research | Humanities, the Farumgaard Foundation and the Bikuben Foundation, the latter in connection with the National Museum's Jelling Project.

Among many friends I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to Anette Willemoes, Pia Michélsen and Anne Christine Sørensen, who very early in the Ph.D. project gave me access to their work on aspects of Danish burial material from the Viking Age, thus not only providing inspiration for my studies but also saving me a lot of time. Susanne Klingenberg and Susanne B. Petersen kindly checked the central database, Det kulturhistoriske Centralregister (today Fund og Fortidsminder), for new and unpublished finds, while Karen Høilund Nielsen demonstrated the potential of the multi-variable seriation method (Correspondence Analysis) and guided me around the pitfalls involved in my attempts to clarify the chronology of the Danish equestrian burials. I would also like to thank my supervisors Professor Else Roesdahl and Professor Ulf Näsman for their valuable advice and comments on my thesis. Likewise, I am very grateful for comments and suggestions from colleagues in the National Museum, among them Poul Grinder-Hansen, Ulla Kjær, Per Kristian Madsen and Michael Andersen who spared the time to read the revised manuscript. Any errors and omissions that remain are of course mine alone.

Thanks are due to James Manley for undertaking the language consulation of my English text, and Gillian Fellows-Jensen and Judith Jesch for last minute assistance with the catalogues and source details. I also wish to thank Pia Brejnholt for taking on the layout of the book and the design of the cover, Thomas Bredsdorff without whom the many plates with artefacts would never have been possible, Søren M. Sindbæk and Klaus Støttrup Jensen for their assistance with MapInfo and Cille Krause who managed to convert long tables of finds into distribution maps. Numerous others – family, friends and colleagues – have listened, commented on details and offered their support, for which I am sincerely grateful.

Copenhagen, February 2014
Anne Pedersen

CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

*"…after Dan the Proud, the Danish king, had a burial mound made for himself and decreed that he was to be carried into it when dead, in all his royal vestments and armor, together with his horse, fully saddled, and much treasure besides, and when many of his kinsmen did likewise, then began the Age of Sepulchral Mounds. However, the Age of Cremation persisted for a long time among Swedes and Norwegians."*

Snorri Sturluson (c. 1230)[1]

Historical studies of the Viking Age go far back in time beginning with the antiquarians of the seventeenth century who uncovered a wealth of information in surviving written sources and scattered rune stones, now and then exhibiting a lively imagination in their attempts to uncover the events of bygone millennia. Material evidence of life in the past and a physical setting for human activity were to come later, provided by the more recent discipline of archaeology that developed in the nineteenth century. Today the source material from the Viking Age is extensive, yet its potential far from exhausted. New archaeological finds come to light each year as a result of construction work and agricultural activity or the ever more popular use of metal detectors, and although the dominant find categories tend to be settlement sites and single artefacts, burials and cemeteries are frequently exposed. The first Viking-Age burials were documented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but such sites attract no less attention in modern times than in the past, with the remains of the dead holding an immense appeal for the imagination of layman and learned alike. Hitherto unknown types of burial are added to established patterns and unsolved questions call for answers. Who were the deceased and what determined the choices made by their relatives in the face of death? What purpose did the funeral and the associated rituals serve in a society undergoing change, and what did they mean to the onlookers?

The monumental rune stone raised around 965 in Jelling records as one of the major achievements of the Danish king Harald Bluetooth that he "made the Danes Christians". This should hardly be taken literally in the sense that each and every Dane was from then on a confirmed Christian and would have been recognized as such by the Church, but rather that Christianity had now, long after the early missionary attempts of Willibrordus, Ebo of Rheims and Ansgar, been officially accepted by the king on behalf of his subjects. The sources of the time give no indication of extensive religious conflict nor of a forced Christianization of the population, and yet we may assume that individuals and society as a whole experienced change in more ways than one and that new customs were introduced, also in relation to death.

Christians and their institutions, churches and monasteries, were doubtless known to the Danes from their travels abroad, and many were very likely baptized or had gone through the ceremony of 'prime-signing' (*prima signatio,* the first Sign of the Cross). Likewise, Christian merchants and other foreigners visiting the country had no doubt brought

with them their own values and customs, some of them to be taken over or imitated by the Danes. It was therefore no completely alien religion that confronted time-honoured beliefs. Moreover, relations with neighbouring countries, not least Germany south of the border, suggest that the official acceptance of Christianity around the middle of the tenth century was not a matter of belief alone but was politically advantageous to the Danish king. Written sources from the decades around the year 900 are silent on matters concerning the homeland of the Danes, in spite of their activities abroad. Not until 934 is it reported that Henry I the Fowler defeated the Danes in an attack on southern Denmark, a Danish king in consequence being forced to pay tribute and accept Baptism.[2] What the Danes thought of these events is not known, nor to what degree the story is true. However, the Danes appear to have been noteworthy adversaries, and the question of religion was highly significant at the time. Denmark was not yet an integral part of established Christendom.

Christian missionizing from Germany to Denmark appears to have been resumed in parallel with the political confrontations. Three bishops – for Schleswig, Ribe and Århus respectively – are named among the participants in a church synod held at Ingelheim in Germany in 948.[3] The record is significant. Although missionaries and priests had visited Denmark on occasion in the preceding centuries, the synod is the first mention of bishops for Denmark. Their names are not Danish and it is doubtful whether they ever truly functioned in Denmark. The appointments are probably related rather to the position of the archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen and the internal politics of the German church and empire. Nevertheless, the bishops reflect the interest and ambitions of the church, an interest which was to continue in the following decades.

On the basis of such evidence, the tenth century emerges as a time of religious transition, a politically turbulent period during which the Danish king faced external threats on several fronts, a situation that called for internal strength and cohesion. A certain measure of continuity, if not necessarily stability, was provided by the royal family. King Harald Bluetooth succeeded his father Gorm and was in turn succeeded by his son Sven Forkbeard and his grandson Cnut who saw Christianity firmly established in Denmark and the rule of the king extended far beyond the realm of King Gorm. The position of the Danes on the European scene in the late tenth century was thus vastly different from their status a century or two before.

In this period of change and consolidation the Danish burial material presents a paradox, and yet one that fits well within current theories on the relations between burial customs and conditions in society as a whole. With few exceptions the burials from the ninth century and the late Iron Age are simple inhumations or cremations without extensive equipment. In the centuries following the Viking Age, Christian practice prevails. Artefacts are rarely, if ever, deposited in the grave and the deceased is interred in a shroud or a coffin. In contrast considerable variation is seen in the burial practice of the tenth century as regards both funeral equipment and construction of the grave. A number of furnished burials share common features. Male burials contain weapons, now and then also riding equipment, while female burials are characterized by expensive dress, caskets for personal belongings and in some instances a wagon body that served as a coffin. Tableware is found in the graves of both sexes. A few graves belong to the category of princely graves or *Prachtgräber* such as the ship burial from Ladby in Funen and the royal burial in the North Mound in Jelling, from which only fragments of the original contents have survived. In comparison most other contemporary burials are simply furnished. Questions to be answered are thus *why* ostentatious burial gained such prominence in the tenth century but not earlier, *who* were the families behind such initiatives, and *what* was the purpose of the funerary investment.

Over the years the interpretation of the rich material from the tenth century has given rise to intense debate. Explanations for the importance attached to items like weapons and horses in the funeral rite have been sought in a strong focus on pagan traditions and religious beliefs, possibly in opposition to the growing influence from Christianity, but also in social and political developments that led to an increased emphasis on burial as a means of communicating and legitimizing rank and status in a society under stress. In this, external relations were probably

no less significant than internal circumstances. Although the apparently pagan burial practice appears rooted in Nordic traditions – valiant men passing on to an afterlife among the warriors of Odin in Valhalla – certain facets of the funeral can be viewed in terms of an *imitatio imperii* on the part of the Danes, if not in the burial ritual and monuments as such, at least in the way of life reflected in the grave contents and the choices made by the relatives responsible for the funeral, both of which are reminiscent of the ceremonial of the imperial court and élite milieus.

In the light of new discoveries especially in the field of settlement archaeology, the burials offer further potential for the interpretation of structural changes in Viking-Age society as a whole. Most of the richly furnished graves are distributed west of the Storebælt where greater influence from Germany might be expected. With this in mind, one may speculate whether the burials represent the core of the realm or rather a zone under pressure from the Ottonian empire on one side and the eastern part of Denmark on the other, inasmuch as the latter area is emerging from the excavations of recent decades as a region with strong economic and social differentiation, and a marked settlement continuity. Here social structures may have been so firmly established that there was no need for or acceptance of ostentatious burial whereas other regions to the west with a less rigid hierarchical organization held greater scope for social mobility. Elaborately staged funerals would have been a means for emerging élite families to communicate and strengthen their position, the focus on tradition at the same time serving to maintain a sense of order and create a link to the past.

Since the first burial surveys were published in the nineteenth century the available archaeological evidence has increased considerably, providing a far more extensive basis for the study of burial practices in Viking-Age Denmark today than a century ago. Despite the attention accorded furnished male graves in the past, there is good reason for a renewed investigation of this type of burial. Scholarship still relies heavily on the article *Danish inhumation graves of the Viking Age*, published by J. Brøndsted in 1936; but new finds, especially the many single-weapon burials uncovered since then, have somewhat altered the balance between individual burial types, without however altering the basic chronological pattern – weapon burial remains a dominant tenth century custom. Rather than dealing with the total burial material from Denmark,[4] the aim of the present study is therefore to present a detailed analysis of a specific group of burials, namely those that contain weapons and/or riding equipment, with the addition of the relatively few burials with wagon equipment. Female burials showing an emphasis on transport and rich furnishings along the lines of the equestrian burials are touched upon in the second part of the study.

Weapon burials and equestrian burials are often treated as more or less homogeneous groups in which there may be slight variations in wealth but which otherwise, as a rule, are believed to reflect similar circumstances and beliefs. Moreover, distribution maps often give the impression of a uniform practice within the given chronological horizon, with the risk that regional or short-term variation is obscured. The principal chapters of this study therefore turn the focus on the archaeological finds, the contents and the dates of the burials, in order to determine whether there is a chronological pattern in the deposition of weapons and horse equipment in the tenth century, and if so, whether this correlates with geographical distribution patterns that may indicate the origin of the impetus behind this practice and possibly explain why it came to flourish in the early tenth century only to die out again a few generations later.

## Time and Space

With the overall purpose and background of the study in mind, the main emphasis will be on tenth-century graves with weapons and/or horse furnishings. However, the general survey (see chapter 3, catalogue 1) includes burial sites and probable burial finds from the Viking Age as a whole, with the twofold aim of providing an overview of the available archaeological data and at the same time establishing a basis for comparison between the focal group of burials and those of the preceding century, as well as between contemporary customs and practices across the country.

The time frame is the Viking Age as it is traditionally dated – from *c.* 800 to *c.* 1000/1050. A


*Fig. 1.1.* Principal area of study, covering present-day Denmark, Schleswig in Germany and Scania in Sweden. The dashed lines mark the limits of the basic survey (catalogues 1 and 2) and the plots of burial and artefact types in distribution maps 1 to 18 and 21 to 24.

complete survey of burial finds from the eighth century (the Late Germanic Iron Age or the late Vendel Period according to Danish and Swedish terminology respectively) has not been attempted, although it could be argued on the basis of archaeological excavations of the last few decades that this period should properly be included in a study of the Viking Age.[5] However, comparatively few burials dated to the eighth and ninth centuries in Denmark contain weapons and horse furnishings (cf. chapter 5), and a study covering Late Iron-Age weapon burials in Scandinavia from the period *c.* 520/30 to 900 has been published by A. Nørgård Jørgensen (1999). Likewise, cemeteries or rather churchyards associated with remains of church buildings have not been included in detail, although some do go back to the late Viking Age. Where churchyards were established Christian customs appear to have been adopted, at least in the general form of burial, and there is no indication of continued weapon deposition (see for instance Nielsen 2004; Cinthio 2004).

Geographically the study covers present-day Denmark, Schleswig in Germany and Scania in Sweden (fig. 1.1). Apart from Scania, medieval east Denmark also included the present Swedish landscapes of Halland and Blekinge, but the finds from these areas do not warrant a detailed study in this context. To judge from the available archaeological evidence weapon burial was not practised to any significant extent in Halland or in northwestern Scania, the traditions here apparently differing from those in the neighbouring areas of Finnveden in Småland and southwestern Scania (Svanberg 2003b:25ff). Dated burial sites and excavations are few in Halland, and apart from a cremation containing two arrowheads, no burials with weaponry and/or riding equipment are known, although numerous bones of cremated horses and especially dogs have been identified. The material from Blekinge east of Scania is also too limited for any definite conclusions. Apart from a few stray finds, possibly from disturbed burial contexts, only two burials containing a spearhead and

an axe respectively, and a single burial with harness mounts, have been recorded (op. cit. 114, 120).

Like Halland and Blekinge, the island of Bornholm is excluded. According to the Anglo-Saxon merchant Wulfstan, travelling along the southern Baltic coast in the late ninth century, Bornholm had its own king, and in general burial finds from Bornholm show greater cultural affinity with east Scandinavia than with Denmark. A small number of certain or probable weapon burials have been dated to around AD 800, but no later examples are recorded, and weapon deposition in a funeral context appears to have been a Late Iron-Age custom which did not continue into the Viking Age (Jørgensen 1999:120ff; Svanberg 2003b:128f).

Denmark, Schleswig and Scania constitute a relatively homogeneous area, although not so uniform or limited in size that topographical variation does not occur. On the contrary, significant differences can be found, as indicated by the environmental conditions of eastern versus western Jutland or southwestern versus northeastern Scania. In the Viking Age, borders between regions were mainly defined by natural barriers such as forests and steep terrain, or rivers and wetlands that were difficult to pass. Such natural border zones are found to the south as well as to the east and north east.

In southern Jutland, wetlands between the rivers Eider and Treene to the west and extensive forests reaching from the Trave to the Schlei in the east combined to form an often impassable barrier towards the Continent. Between these areas the connection between north and south was limited to a passage only a few kilometres wide (Jankuhn 1986:55ff), a passage through which access was further hindered by the monumental Danevirke ramparts. Although it is uncertain whether the East Rampart barring access to the Schwansen peninsula between Windeby Noor and the Schlei is part of the Danevirke, and if so to which phase it belongs (op. cit. 62), the peninsula is geographically and archaeologically a natural part of the old Danish area.

Written as well as archaeological sources attest to the existence of a border defined by natural features and physically manifested in the Danevirke. The Royal Frankish Annals record the decision of the Danish king Godfred in 808 to fortify the border of his kingdom against Saxony with a rampart stretching from east to west north of the river Eider.[6] Although King Godfred was long credited with this major achievement, archaeological excavations in modern times have revealed that the fortification line between the river Treene to the west and the Schlei to the east goes back at least to the early eighth century. Archaeological remains from the Iron Age recorded in the landscapes of Angeln and Schwansen indicate a gradual change through time in settlement density north and south of the Danevirke and the East Rampart across Schwansen (Harck 1998:131ff). Thus, the even distribution evident in the Bronze and Pre-Roman Iron-Age finds contrasts greatly with that of the Late Roman Iron Age, where there is little evidence of settlement south of the border, creating an impression of a settlement void between the Danevirke and the River Eider, a situation paralleled in the Viking Age. The burial customs in Schleswig correspond to those farther to the north in southern Jutland, and the contrast between archaeological finds recovered south and north of the Eider supports the existence of cultural differences between the two areas (Eisenschmidt 2004:16).

With a few intermissions, Scania to the east was part of Denmark until 1658 when Scania, Halland and Blekinge were ceded to Sweden. Topographically Scania is related to Denmark and no doubt the sea route to Zealand was easier to cross than the land route through the extensive forests to the north east, as hinted by Adam of Bremen around 1070 when, after mentioning the many crossings between Zealand and Scania, he questioned which would be easier when proceeding from Scania to Götaland – to avoid the dangers over land by taking the risk at sea, or vice versa (Adam of Bremen IV.7). The northern part of Scania belongs to the south Swedish highlands and formed a more obvious natural barrier in the Viking Age than the present political border through the Sound.

## Primary source material

The study and its implications presented in the final chapters are based on a detailed analysis of archaeological finds, first and foremost burials containing

weapons and/or horse furnishings, subsequently female burials that are related via their contents and burial type to the richly furnished equestrian burials (cf. chapter 6). Other burials and contemporary finds provide a basic background for the interpretation of the principal group and for an overall evaluation of the geographical representativity of the source material. The quality and potential of any given find depend in part on the questions asked, and although secure grave finds are to be preferred, it is deemed relevant here also to include artefacts from possible burial contexts and artefact combinations indicative of burial according to the criteria described in chapter 3.

Catalogue 1 presents a general survey of Viking-Age burials and burial sites in present-day Denmark, Schleswig and Scania.[7] The geographical distribution pattern (map 1) is coloured by numerous factors, past and present, often described and summarized under the general term 'archaeological formation processes' (cf. Kristiansen 1985). Local funeral practice and regional variation in the need for ceremonial expression in relation to death are no doubt reflected in the nature and number of burials, whereas the intensity of burial as such is in part determined by population size and settlement density, which again depends on *inter alia* the local topographical and environmental conditions that contributed to the economic potential of an area. Different types of burial show different survival rates. Moreover, the preservation of each individual grave is affected by the specific type of soil surrounding it and, for instance, the intensity of agriculture over the centuries. Significant in modern times are the circumstances leading to the discovery of the burial. A large proportion of the finds were thus uncovered in the nineteenth century when archaeological science was less developed than today, often by non-experts – which in itself has consequences for the nature and extent of the available information (cf. chapter 3).

Certain and possible burials containing weapons and/or horse furnishings are listed and described separately in catalogue 2. An intensive survey of local topographical publications and museum collections might reveal further burials. However, a random check at Forhistorisk Museum Moesgård in Jutland indicates that although the old collections here include stray artefacts which in all probability come from disturbed burial contexts, these are unprovenanced and are consequently not included in the study. Weapons and equestrian burials have attracted much attention since the early nineteenth century, and many finds, even those with only a minimum of information, have been recorded in the parish survey of the National Museum and by local museums.

Norwegian and Swedish finds, especially the artefact types described by J. Petersen in the first half of the twentieth century (1919, 1928 and 1951) and the extensive material from Birka and the Mälaren area (Arbman 1940-43; Arwidsson ed. 1984, 1986, 1989), have traditionally played a prominent role in the identification and dating of Danish finds from the Viking Age and continue to do so. Apart from single artefacts mentioned along with finds from other areas in the discussion of individual artefact categories, equestrian burials from Norway and Sweden are included as a specific group, comparable but not identical to the Danish finds. These burials, listed in catalogues 3 and 4, are defined according to the same criteria as the Danish equestrian burials, i.e. by the presence of stirrups and spurs (but not bridle alone).[8]

## A brief outline

Irrespective of the thematic approach to burials, a source-critical evaluation of the archaeological remains is essential, including an attempt to determine the geographical and chronological representativity of the finds. Are the known distribution patterns in any way biased or can they be seen as an approximate, although never complete representation of past burial activity? As a precondition for the use of the burial evidence, various factors contributing to the present overall distribution pattern and the quality of the archaeological evidence are discussed in chapter 3. On the basis of the rate of accession over the past 200 years, the main focus is on the circumstances leading to the initial discovery of the sites and the manner of recovery, whether by non-experts or trained archaeologists. The focal group of finds, in all 296 burials and probable burial finds, is treated along the same lines, followed by a gene-

ral description of the nature of the finds and the range of burial types which serves as an introduction to chapter 4, which centres on individual artefact categories.

As a whole the graves with weapons and riding equipment contain a limited range of objects. Special emphasis is placed on weapons and horse furnishings in order to identify specific types and determine whether there are any characteristic groups (geographical or chronological) in spite of the immediate similarity of the equipment. In 1936, J. Brøndsted described the contents of each burial, but it is difficult to gain a general overview of weapon types and horse furnishings. Individual artefacts are mainly compared with finds from Norway, where the large number of finds provided a sound basis for a weapon typology at an early date (Rygh 1885; Petersen 1919). By contrast riding equipment was far less common, as also in Sweden, and the typology is often less definite. Consequently, the study has motivated an independent analysis of the Danish finds in which several distinct types that have not previously been discussed in detail are identified.

As far as possible all weapons, horse equipment and other selected artefact groups have been classified,[9] and artefact types, measurements and position in the grave are recorded in separate find lists (nos. 1 to 12). Because of the poor state of preservation many features of much of the iron cannot be determined with certainty. Furthermore, a large number of finds came to light at a time when methods of conservation and analysis were less advanced than today. Reconservation and technical analyses of all old finds were not feasible options within the limits of the investigation, but random tests indicate that more information may be gained on, for instance, the decoration of stirrups and harness mounts.

The burial contents and type definitions form the basis of the chronological analysis in chapter 5. Most of the graves with weapons and/or riding equipment appear to belong to the tenth century, possibly with a dating in the first or second half of the century, in effect a relative sequence rather than absolute datings. However, as will be seen, a more precise division is possible at least for the equestrian burials on the basis of the identified artefact types – cf. the chronological analysis of the Danish and corresponding Norwegian finds described in the appendix.

On the assumption that distribution patterns in the funeral equipment may reflect established norms behind the selection of artefacts for deposition, combinations of artefacts, primarily those found in the graves of the tenth century, are examined in chapter 6. The comparison covers both burials with an extensive range of weapons and horse/wagon furnishings and those that contain only a single weapon. Here the chronological dimension proves significant in that the choice of funeral equipment appears not to have remained constant over time even within the span of a century. In a wider Scandinavian context and in what can be regarded as a case study, the equestrian burials are compared with their Norwegian and Swedish counterparts. Despite the immediate similarity at artefact level there is a significant difference in the deposition of individual artefact categories, a contrast which in all probability is a reflection of differences in the ideological and symbolic meanings attached to specific artefacts in the funeral context.

The patterns and tendencies evident in the analysis of the Danish weapon burials and the corresponding wealthy female burials form the basis of the observations and interpretations put forward in chapter 7, in which individual artefact categories and the choice of burial type as such are examined with a view not least to identifying possible influence from the material culture and customs of neighbouring countries and élite milieus. However, before proceeding along these lines, the following chapter as a starting point presents an overview of the research history and the diversity of opinions and theories that have appeared over the years, beginning with the first attempts to identify late prehistoric burial practices in the early nineteenth century.

## Notes

1. Snorri Sturluson, Prologue to *Heimskringla*; translation according to Lee M. Hollander (1964).

2. A short note under 934 in the *Annals of Corvey* records the defeat of the Danes; *The Saxon Chronicle* of Widukind of Corvey presents a slightly more extended version including the background for the attack and its results (Widukind Book I, 40).

3. The names are given in the *Gesta Synodalia*, the bishop from Ribe further mentioned in the *Annals of Flodoard*, both sources cited in Skovgaard-Petersen 1981.

4. Cf. the studies published by F. Svanberg (2003b) for southern Sweden and S. Eisenschmidt (2004) for southern Jutland.

5. Several surveys set the chronological divide at *c.* 700 (see for instance Kleiminger 1993; Eisenschmidt 2004) whereas others have maintained the traditional date of *c.* 800 (Svanberg 2003b). For a survey of the discussion on the beginning of the Viking Age see for instance Roesdahl 1994:111ff with references.

6. *Annales Regni Francorum* DCCCVIII, see Rau 1966a:89.

7. References to previous surveys and databases are included in the introduction to the catalogue and specific references are given under each entry.

8. The two catalogues are primarily based on published finds, a comprehensive analysis of the total available material falling beyond the scope of this study. However, Uppsala Universitets Museum för nordiska fornsaker, Statens historiska Museum Stockholm and Universitetets Oldsaksamling Oslo kindly granted me permission to examine significant artefacts (mainly weapons and horse equipment) in their collections in 1994 and 1996/97.

9. In some instances, especially in relation to the material from Schleswig, published data (see references in catalogue 2) have been used.