

Jels I – the First Danish Site of the Hamburgian Culture

A Preliminary Report

by JØRGEN HOLM and FLEMMING RIECK

During the last decade a boom has occurred in the study of the late glacial period in Denmark. The studies have chiefly been concerned with the Bromme Culture which has been elucidated by a series of new sites and single finds. Besides the well-known sites Bromme (Mathiasen, 1946), Engkrogen, and Smedemosen (Mathiasen, 1959) around fifty sites have been discovered all over the country. On Zealand they are chiefly located around Holmegård bog, at Stoksbjerg, and at Knudshoved (1). In Funen and surrounding islands they are represented by sites at Bro (Andersen, 1972), Ejby bog, and the strange site at Ommels Hoved, in the island of Ærø (a kill-site? Holm, 1972). There seem to be fewer in Jutland, but recently sites have been investigated at Løvenholm and Langå (Madsen, 1983), and in southern Jutland at least seven sites have been recorded on the surface.

Furthermore can be added at least two hundred individually recorded tanged arrowheads of the Bromme type.

Tools of organic material are rarer, but at intervals reindeer antler implements are found (Skaarup, 1974). It has been impossible to date these scientifically, but they are supposed to belong to the Bromme and/or Ahrensburg Cultures.

This last mentioned culture is probably also represented on one single site in Denmark (Fischer, 1982), and by a few individual tanged points (Becker, 1971) and uniserially barbed harpoon-heads with a pointed spade-shaped base (Andersen, 1974).

Finally it should be mentioned that the Federmesser group is also represented by a few but extremely characteristic finds (Petersen, 1973; Andersen, 1977).

But ever since Alfred Rust conducted his epoch-making excavations in the Hamburg area we have been

on the look-out for the Hamburgian Culture in Denmark. A reindeer antler tool dredged from *Middelgrunden* off Copenhagen (Mathiasen 1938) displays a certain similarity to a tool from Meiendorf, but the similarity is too superficial for us to assign it to that culture. However, this item has with some reservation been pollen-analytically dated to early Dryas (Degerbøl and Krog 1959), and is interesting in that it might bear witness to a continuation of the Hamburgian Culture into this period.

Then in 1969 a break-through occurred when C.J. Becker presented an indisputable shouldered point (*Kerbspitze*), a single find from Bjerlev heath between Vejle and Horsens (Becker, 1970).

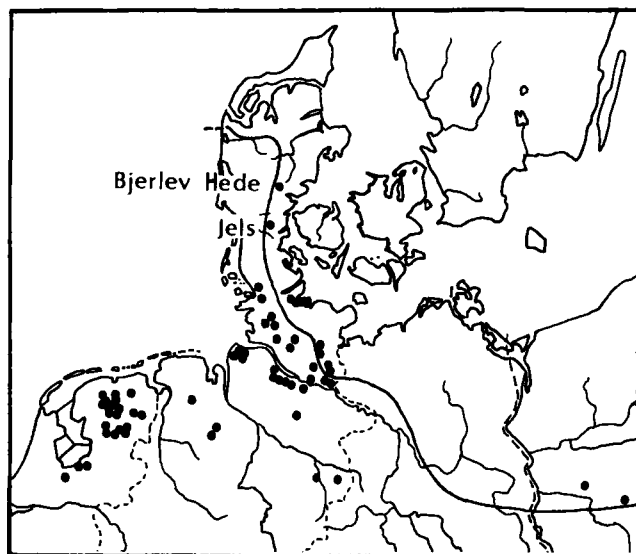


Fig. 1. Finds of the Hamburgian Culture in Northern Europe. The full line indicates the maximum extent of the ice sheet during the Weichsel glaciation.

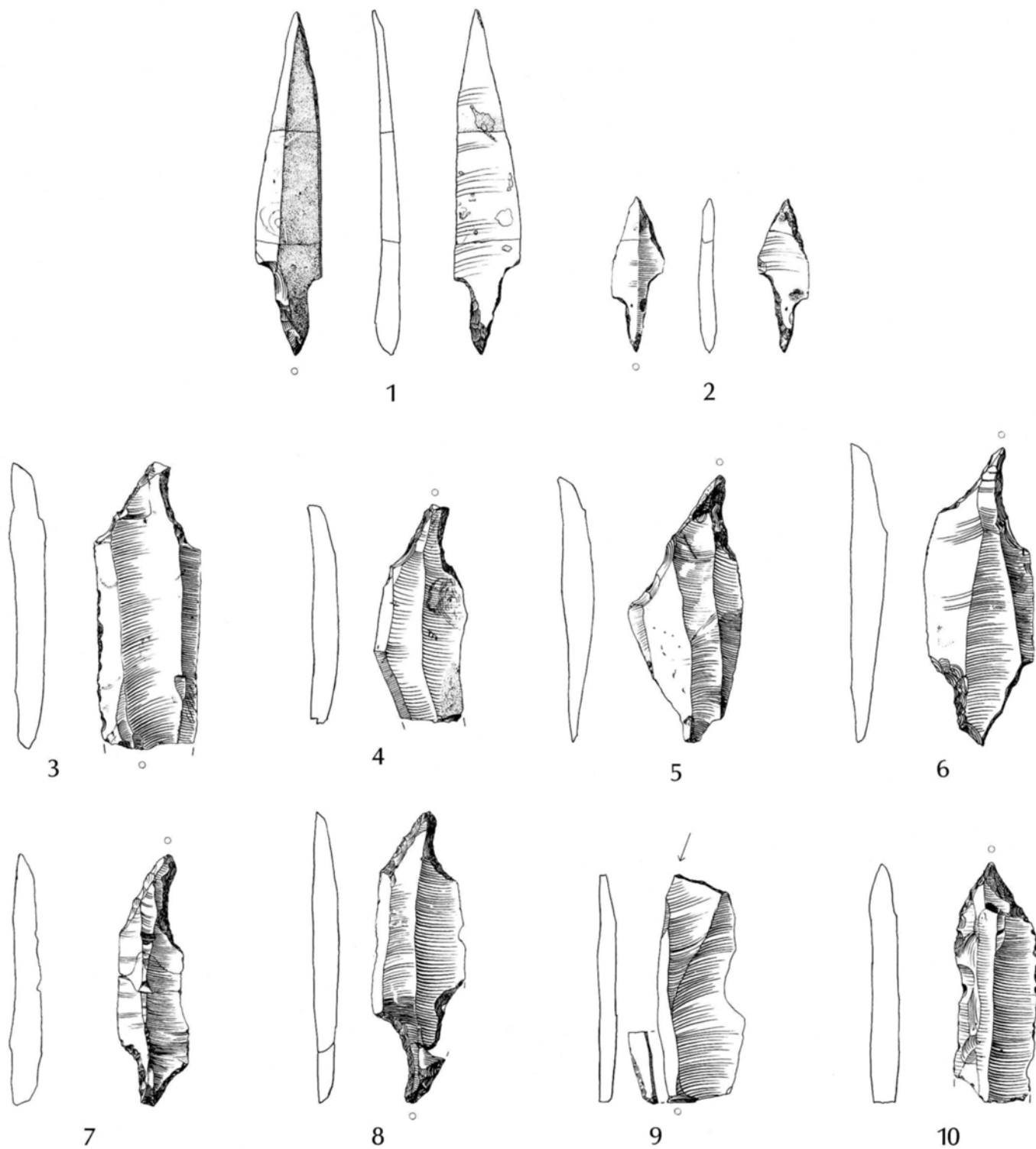


Fig. 2. Flint artefacts from Jels I. 1–2, shouldered points; 3–5, *Zinken*; 6–8, double *Zinken*; 9 angle burin; 10, *Kratzer* (Jørgen Andersen *del.*). 3:4.

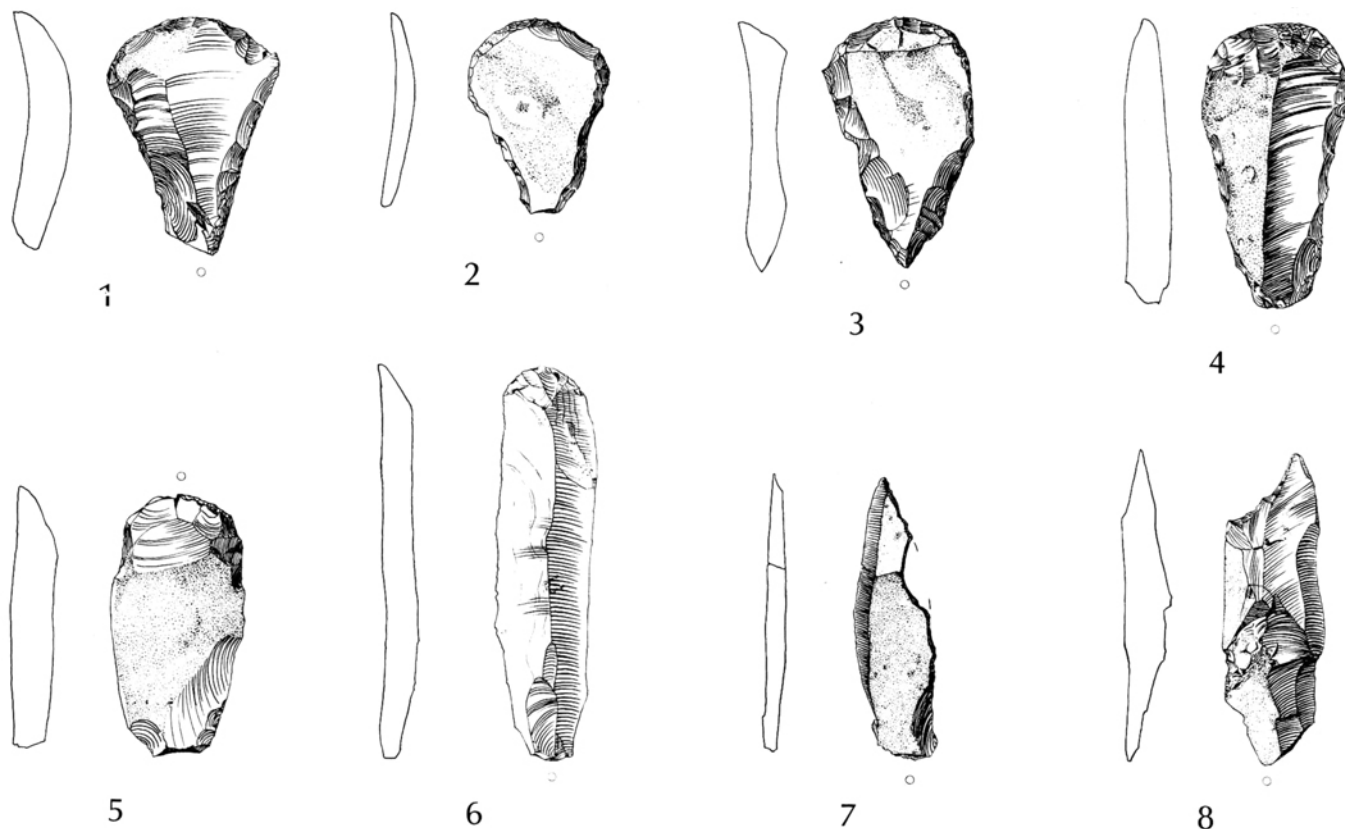


Fig. 3. Flint artefacts from Jels I. 1–4, scrapers with laterally retouched edges; 5, double scraper; 6 scraper on blade; 7, Gravette point; 8, flake with an oblique terminal retouche (Jørgen Andersen *del.*). 3:4.

THE JELS I SITE

Now the presence of the Hamburgian Culture in Denmark has been established beyond any doubt by the discovery of a site at the Jels lakes in southern Jutland. This site, optimistically called Jels I, was discovered as early as 1968 by the amateur archaeologist Jørn Fynbo, but not until 1980 did archaeologists from Haderslev Museum determine the material and assign it to the Hamburgian Culture.

A trial excavation in 1981 confirmed this supposition, and its correctness was firmly established by further investigations in 1982.

On the edge of an elevated sand terrace south of Oversø, the northernmost of the three small lakes at the bottom of the Jels tunnel valley, an area of 239 square metres has so far been excavated and has yielded a material including several of the types characteristic of the Hamburgian Culture.

The site is located in a late moraine formation east of the main stationary line of the Weichsel glacial period.

The artefacts were found partly in the ploughed topsoil and partly in the underlying sand. Periglacial soil movements might have been expected but have only been recorded on the slope north of the site. However, the stratigraphy of the site, and thus also the position of the artefacts, is characterized by secondary recent disturbance caused by trees felled by high winds, and animal activity.

THE MATERIAL

The material recorded so far consists of flint only and seems rather homogeneous. However, the ploughed topsoil also contained a few tools of a later date (a. o. tools of the Maglemosian Culture).

All the earth was passed through a sieve to ensure that even very small flakes were not overlooked.

The following list of finds is based on a preliminary classification of the material as of 1 Jan. 1983:

Cores:	44
Flakes:	8902
Shouldered points, intact:	2
Shoulder points, fragments:	5
Zinken, single:	17
Zinken, double:	6
Zinken, single, retouched on one side only:	2
Perforators:	3
Zinken/perforators (combination tools)	3
Scrapers with laterally retouched edges:	10
Scrapers without lateral retouch:	6
Double scrapers without lateral retouch:	1
Gravette points:	1
Kratzer:	3
Flakes with an oblique terminal retouch (<i>Schrägendklingen</i>):	8
Angle burins:	6
Dihedral burins:	1
Retouched and notched pieces:	171
Total flint material:	9191

Clearly identifiable tools:

74 = 0.8% of the entire material.

CULTURAL RELATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As appears from the above the majority of the lithic tool-kit of the Hamburgian Culture is represented in the find. In our opinion especially the presence of the double zinken – a type that appears neither earlier nor later – determines the cultural relations of the site. The two intact shouldered points are not of the common type, but in spite of the large difference in size they are quite identical as regards production technique (double-sided with alternating retouch along the edge).

Gernot Tromnau has suggested a subdivision of the Hamburgian Culture into four chronologically or regionally determined groups (Tromnau, 1981): 1) Meien-dorf, 2) Poggenwisch, 3) Havelte, 4) Teltwisch. If we accept this subdivision for the time being, though it seems to be based on intuition rather than scientific dating, and compare the Jels material with the tool-kits and the technical characteristics of the four groups, there is little doubt that the Jels site should be assigned to the Havelte group (references in Tromnau, 1975: 84–93). Especially the shouldered points point in this direction, but the total absence of microlithic types that are represented in some measure in the other groups, should

also be taken into consideration. However, the presence of at least one gravette point – a type that is only known from the neighbouring Teltwisch group – is also interesting.

On the Jels I site the tools were found closely together in the centre of the site immediately under the tilled topsoil. In accordance with the general research tradition one is tempted to regard this area (measuring 6 × 6 m) as the »shadow« of a hut or tent. As might be expected the flint waste is much more widely distributed (in an area measuring 15 × 15 m).

The southern, western, and eastern parts of the site have been thoroughly excavated (2), but the northern part near the banks of the lake and the steep slope and the depression below the site have not yet been excavated. In 1981 in this area trial excavations have already established the presence of a refuse zone with a high flint frequency.

Further trial excavations have been planned with a survey of the total late glacial settlement of the Jelsø basin in mind. Four sites of the Bromme Culture have already been recorded by surface reconnaissance.

Latest news: In the autumn of 1983 another settlement site of the Hamburgian Culture (Jels 2) was located just 30 m. from Jels 1.

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NOTES

¹ Mostly unpublished or only briefly mentioned in literature. Excavations by E. Brinch Petersen and A. Fischer. Cf. also Bo Madsen 1983, with distribution map.

² The excavation was supported by grants from the Danish Research Council for the Humanities.

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