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A New Early Bronze Age House-Site under a Barrow at Hyllerup, Western Zealand

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The curving ridge separating the elevated plain around Slagelse from the wide coastal plain along Musholm Bay carries a large number of burial monuments, among which the best-known are the Slotsbjergby-mounds. However, several sites have not been registered until recently, among which 7 mounds and a dolmen recorded during field survey before constructions of gas-pipelines in the area. Among these is Byhøj just northwest of Hyllerup.

This site, which appeared as a shift of colour in the topsoil and a large, ploughed-up stone, but which did not display recognizable contours, blocked the passage of gas pipeline and was thus speedily excavated in the spring of 1985 due to the ongoing construction work.

Fig. 1. The location of the Hyllerup site.

THE MOUND

Due to its position near the edge of an east-west aligned ridge with a pronounced slope towards the west and south, the mound was heavily damaged by ploughing, and the intact fill between the fossil and the recent topsoil was nowhere thicker than 15 cm. On the steep south slope the fill was, in fact, only preserved up to 5.5 m from the centre of the central grave, whereas the escarpment to the north ensured reasonable conditions of preservation up to 10 m from this point. Thus only the northern part of the measured section was able to yield information about the various phases of the monument.

The stratigraphy observed in the section established that the mound consisted of at least two, possibly three, building phases extending respectively 7 and 11 m from the centre of the primary grave and thus with diameters of respectively 14 and 22 m, if both centred on the primary grave. The original mound had not been fenced in any way, but after the extension it was surrounded by unsupported, fairly large stones, some of which were found, although all in a secondary position, due to disturbances caused by later cultivation.

THE GRAVE(S)

A small number of fist-sized stones imbedded in the bottom of the modern topsoil and in the top of the fill of the earliest phase was found inside a few square metres approximately 5 m north of the primary grave. These stones were possibly the remains of a totally destroyed secondary grave; however, no artifacts or other conclusive evidence were found.

The primary grave (fig. 3) was an ENE-WSW aligned excavation with vertical walls, measuring 2.4 × 1.1 m and having a flat bottom some 45 cm below the fossil surface. The topsoil dug up at the construction of the grave was redeposited in a 1.1 m wide heap along the south wall of the grave, whereas the dug-up subsoil was deposited both north and south of the grave in sloping heaps reaching up to 2.5 m out from the edges of the

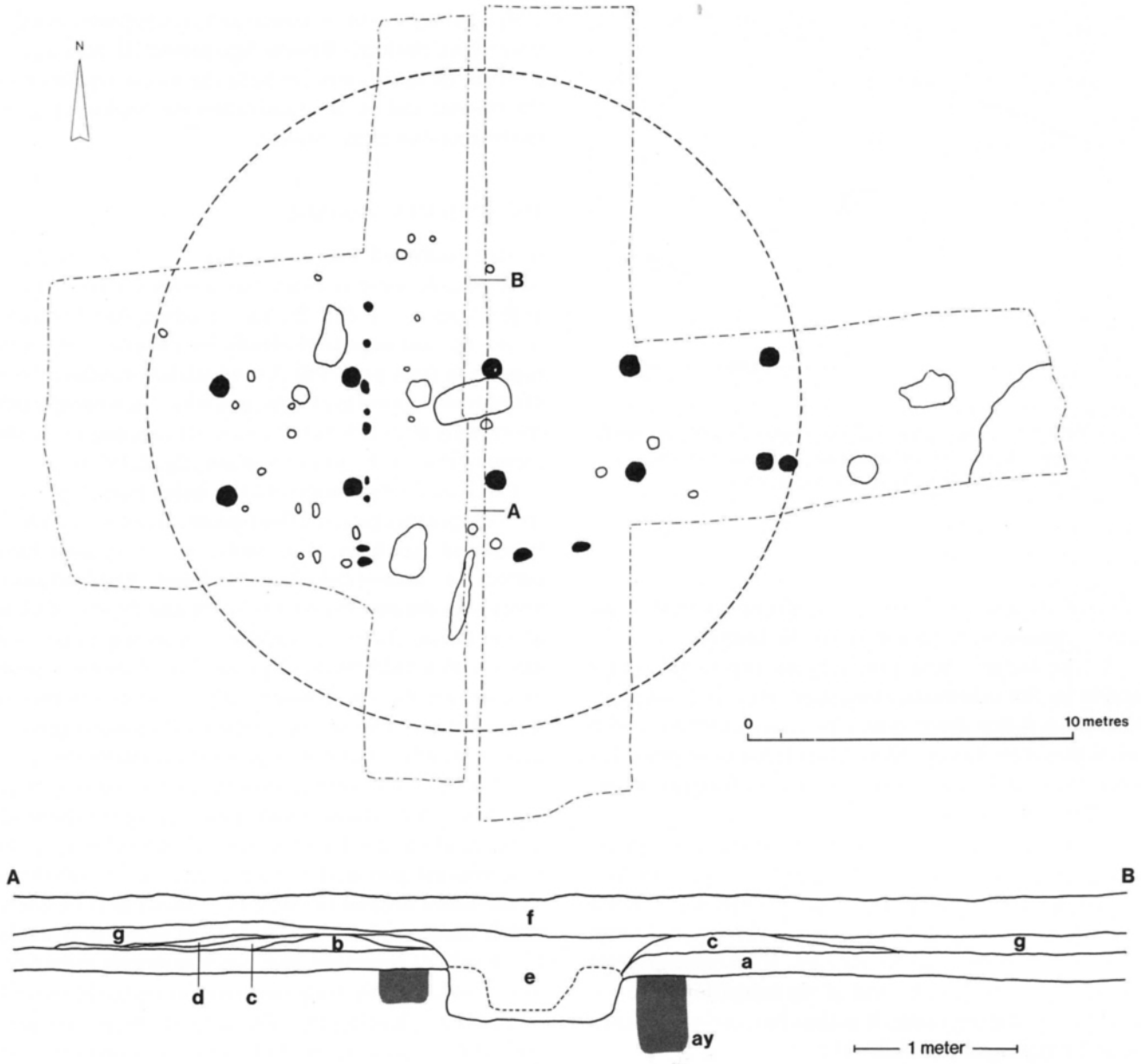

Fig. 2. Hyllerup. Above: Plan of the excavation showing the house-site and the estimated maximum perimeter of the barrow. – Below: Middle section of the barrow. a: Fossil surface. b–d: Raw clay and material from the ancient topsoil in secondary position on top of the ancient surface. e: The primary grave. f: Recent topsoil. g: Fill of the mound. Shaded: post-holes.

grave. The bottom of the grave was paved with mostly irregular stones among which were many sharp-edged flint nodules. The larger stones were placed along the edges of the grave and the smaller ones along the centre line, thus making the surface slightly trough-shaped. Stone-packings mixed with earth and inclined towards the centre line of the grave rested on the pavement along the sides, surrounding an area without stones, measuring 1.7 × 0.35 m at the surface of the pavement. The original presence of a log-coffin is thus ensured, although no traces of wood had survived.

In the area with no stones was a heap of cremated bones, measuring 0.6 × 0.3 m, on top of which four bronze objects were deposited as grave goods (fig. 4),

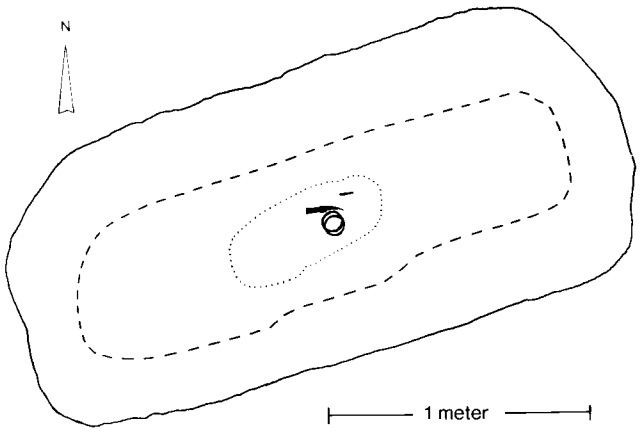

Fig. 3. Plan of the primary grave. Full line: Edge of the grave at subsoil level. Dotted line: Inner limit of stone packing at the base of the grave. Fine, dotted line: Limit of the heap of cremated bones.

covered by a fist-sized stone on whose underside organic remains were preserved by the bronze.

As the stone rested precisely on top of the grave goods in the otherwise stone-free area, it is unlikely that it has fallen down from a position above the coffin when this rotted away. More likely it has been placed as a weight on a shroud or on a container of organic material, housing the bronze objects.

The sex of the deceased and the dating of the grave appear clearly from the grave goods: a knife, an awl, and two unequal arm-rings (fig. 4). The knife has a curved, single-edged blade with a bipartite frame-handle, and is decorated with cast, transverse grooves at the end of the handle and at the transition between the handle and the blade. It is thus in close accordance with the type specimen DO III 259.

The awl is short and thick with a rounded point and a flat-hammered basis with remains of a wooden handle.

One arm-ring is made from a round, twisted bronze pole with smooth ends, corresponding to the type specimen DO III 290. The other is made of a cast bronze band with a frontal profilation consisting of a broad central rib and two narrower ribs along the edges, all decorated by oblique transverse dents or notches. At the ends the ornamental band is terminated by cast transverse grooves. The ring is thus a variant of type DO III 297.

The primary grave is consequently a typical woman's grave from the Early Bronze Age period III, which gives a terminus ante quem for both the house site beneath the mound and for the cultivation succeeding it, prior to the erection of the mound.

THE SETTLEMENT REMAINS

In the excavated area some fifty post-holes and pits were found, most notably the post-holes of a three-aisled long-house (fig. 2). The stratigraphical relation to the mound appeared clearly in a number of cases, especially from post-hole AY, which had contained one of the roof-supporting posts, and which was completely covered by the undisturbed heap of clay dug up at the construction of the primary grave (fig. 2, below).

The house-site comprised the holes from 5 pairs of roof-supporting posts, 2 door-posts, and 9 posts from a transverse partition. The roof-supporting post have rested in stone-packed, cylindrical, flat-bottomed holes with diameters around 50 cm and depths of 60 to 65 cm below the fossil surface. According to the few holes with actual traces of posts their diameters seem to have varied some, though with a tendency to cluster around 30 cm. The out-lay of the roof-supporting posts was unusually regular with a constant transverse span of 3.4 m between the centres of the posts and a constant distance of 4.3 m between the pairs, except in the western end, where the distance was only 4.0 m between the westernmost pair and the next one. The regularity is furthermore broken by the easternmost pair of posts, which does not have one deeply founded post in the south side as expected, but two less deeply imbedded posts, both slightly staggered in relation to the expected position, showing that they are not an original post and a later replacement, but two posts that have been dug down at the same time.

The door is indicated by two oval post-holes reaching 40 to 50 cm below the fossil surface and containing posts with a diameter of approximately 20 cm and with a distance of 1.8 m between their centres.

The door-posts, standing 2.2 to 2.3 m south of the centre-line through the southern row of roof-supporters, are staggered slightly towards the east, undoubtedly to give free passage by the southern post of the central pair of roof-supporters.

A total of 9 small post-holes with diameters of 20 to 30 cm and depths below the fossil surface of 35 to 45 cm

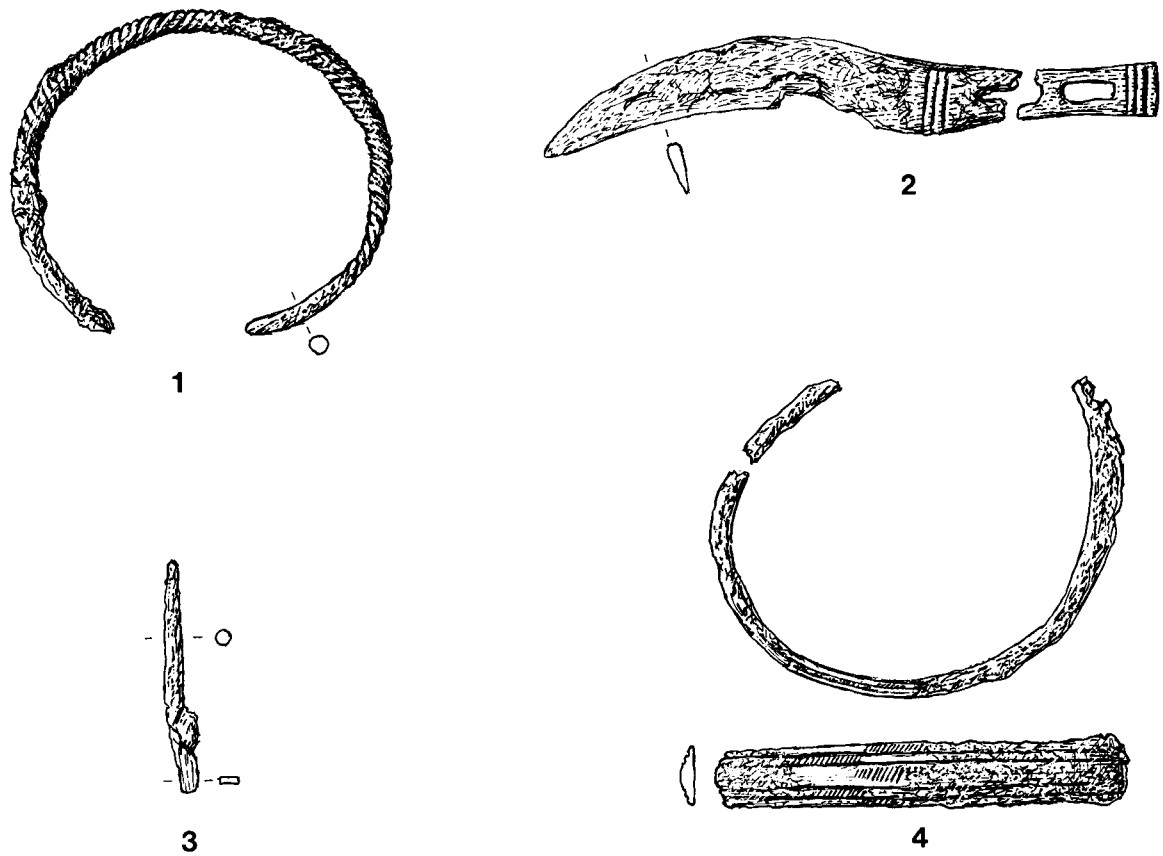

Fig. 4. Bronze objects from the primary grave. 1 and 4: Arm-rings. 2: Knife. 3: Awl. 2:3. Drawn by H. Ørsnes.

have contained more slender, often stone-packed posts of a transverse partition, 7.7 m long.

The partition wall, whose ends protrude respectively 2.2 and 2.3 beyond the nearest row of roof-supporting posts, divides the house into a smaller western room and an eastern room three times as large.

The fact that the ends of the partition wall are at almost equal distances to the nearest row of roof-supporting posts suggests that they indicate the position of the outer walls, which entails that the door has been on line with the wall and not recessed behind it.

The absence of indisputable wall-posts is not a consequence of modern agriculture. Whereas this explanation could be accepted as regards the south wall as the border-line of the intact fill roughly coincides with the course of the south wall, it cannot be accepted as regards the north wall as this was overlayered by the undisturbed fill of the mound. The absence of wall-posts is thus the result of the architectural construction of the house which has not entailed firmly imbedded wall-posts, so that every trace of the walls could be removed by ploughing prior to the construction of the mound. The use of wattle-and-daub with a smooth surface is documented by fragments mainly found at the surface of two post-holes near the south wall, probably deposited during the conflagration of the house.

As no traces of the gable walls were present it is unknown whether these have been straight or rounded, and for the same reason the length of the house is uncertain. A length of some 21–23 m seems to be qualified guess, while the breadth judged by the partition wall and the position of the door-posts was 7.7 m.

The fact that the house was burned down appears from the relatively abundant contents of charcoal in the post-holes, the relatively large amount of burnt daub fragments, and from the presence of tar-and-pitch precipitations on stones, secondarily imbedded in the pavement of the primary grave and in the packing of the

coffin. Likewise, the calcination of some flint artifacts may also be due to the conflagration.

TRACES OF CULTIVATION

An area of approximately 10 × 10 m was covered with very regular traces of ard-ploughing in two directions, N-W and E-W respectively, and with a quite regular distance of roughly 30 cm between the separate furrows. The furrows only penetrated a few cm into the subsoil, which indicates a ploughing-depth of approximately 18 cm measured from the fossil surface as found. As for the ploughing depths of the Early Bronze Age a couple of cm must probably be added, due to the compression of the topsoil, caused by the mound.

Only a couple of ard-furrows deviated from the regular criss-cross pattern.

The dating of the criss-cross ploughing appeared clearly, as the furrows in some cases could be observed across the surface of the infill in the post-holes of the house.

Judging solely from the actual traces of ard-ploughing it could seem that only a single ploughing had taken place prior to the construction of the mound. However, the presence of the house-site clearly proves this assumption wrong. In connection with four post-holes sections as well as surfaces were carefully studied in order to establish whether the sides of the post-holes could be traced up into the fossil cultivation layer or not, and whether a difference in the composition of the topsoil directly above and around the individual post-holes could be established.

The actual state of affairs, a clear cut between the fill of the post-holes and the covering ancient topsoil, and an identical composition of the topsoil above and around the post-holes, can only have come about be repeated ploughing, especially in view of the fact that the tool in question was an ard, which only scratches the soil without turning it.

Intensive ploughing on the site is furthermore documented by the absence of such features of the house as floor layers, fireplaces, walls and debris from the roof, which must have caved in when the house was burned down. The total removal of these remains can only be due to the cultivation prior to the erection of the mound.

So the Hyllerup site unambiguously shows that the agricultural ploughing proper in the Early Bronze Age is not identical with the well-known criss-cross ploughing, found beneath practically every mound excavated in recent years. No way the single criss-cross ploughing could have caused the thorough destruction of the Hyllerup house. This must be due to a heavy ploughing of another kind, only affecting the topsoil without going deep enough to eraze the bottom of the furrows of the criss-cross ploughing.

The fact that typical criss-cross ploughing not only occurs beneath mounds but also outside such features, consealed otherwise, suggests that the traditional interpretations as either ritual ploughing in connection with burials or as traces of turf-cutting for the building of the mounds is incorrect.

In view of the observations at Hyllerup the most obvious explanation now seems to be that criss-cross ploughing was used to break up virgin soil prior to the more shallow cultivation ploughing proper.

THE ARTIFACTS

As the house site had been ploughed down before the mound was erected, the yield of artifacts was very limited, and the artifacts that were recorded were mostly found in secondary position in the fossil topsoil or imbedded in the fill of the primary grave.

The otherwise pure Bronze Age setting was slightly contaminated as a Maglemosean microlith was found in one of the post-holes, a micro-blade found in the fossil topsoil and, furthermore, a flat-bottomed pit just south-east of the house contained sherds from the neck of a funnel-beaker from the late Early Neolithic or early Middle Neolithic.

The rest of the artifacts includes 48 flakes, 5 cores, 11 tools and 4 pot-sherds, of which respectively 31, 4, 9 and 2 were found in secondary position. Unfortunately, most of the chronologically important objects were found in secondary position.

The flake-and-core material plus the simple tools, including 4 disc-scrapers, a disc-perforator, a burin, and a combined scraper and perforator made from a used-up core, display a rather rough and simple flint technique comprising rather casual flaking and no particular avoidance of cortex covered surfaces.

The remainder 4 tools are pressure-flaked and were all found in secondary position.

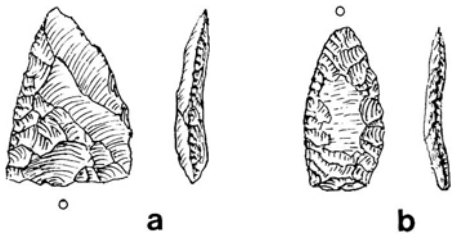

Fig. 5. Flint arrowheads found in the fossil, ploughed layer (a) and in the fill of the primary grave (b).. 2:3. Drawn by H. Ørsnes.

In the fossil topsoil under the mound a burnt edge-fragment of a pressure-flaked sickle of indeterminate shape, and likewise a partly cortex covered rough-out for a D-shaped sickle were found.

A pressure-flaked arrowhead of broad, almost isosceles, triangular shape with a straight basis, made from a flake, the percussion-bulb at the basis, was also found in the fossil, ploughed layer, and a slender arrowhead with curving sides and an almost straight basis made from a long, curving flake, the percussion-bulb at the point, was found in the fill of the central grave (fig. 5).

The ceramic material consists of a few body-sherds and a rim-sherd of a thin-walled vessel with a rounded, probably upright rim.

The limited faunal material has been analysed by Knud Rosenlund of the Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, who has identified both domestic pig and domestic ox.

DATING

Flat-retouched arrowheads (fig. 5) are known from some fifty EBA-graves, but only rarely in combinations with types that allow a closer dating. According to Lomborg it does not seem possible to separate types of chronologically limited occurrence (Lomborg 1959, p. 169). However, pronounced barbs seem to be an early feature, mainly found in the Late Neolithic, though also seen as late as EBA III (DB I, grave 1602). Bronze Age arrowheads on the other hand mostly have an only slightly inward-curving basis – from which the transition to a straight basis is gradual – often in combination with curved edges.

Typical examples of this type are known from the well-equipped Herslev-grave, by Lomborg dated to the late EBA I, the Valsømagle-horizon (Lomborg 1968), but already in the LN A the type appears at Myrhøj (Aarup Jensen 1972, fig. 23,3, 8 and 13). Only a few arrowheads with a straight basis have been published, i. a. some from the settlements of Røjle Mose and Vejlby (Jæger & Laursen 1983, fig. 13 a; Jeppesen 1984, figs. 2 c–d).

A dating of the Hyllerup sickle cannot be made on the basis of the grave material as sickles are extremely rare as grave goods. A typical D-shaped sickle has, however, been found in a stone cist at Videbæk accompanied by a palstave of the EBA II, but a simultaneous deposition of the two items cannot be ensured (Lomborg 1959, p. 165).

In settlement finds the type is known from *i. a.* Vejlby, Røjle Mose, and Egehøj (Jeppesen 1984, fig. 2 a; Jæger & Laursen 1983, fig. 13 b; Boas 1983, fig. 4, 11–12), in all cases in combination with arrowheads resembling the Hyllerup specimens, a combination further occurring in the Fornæs Klint-material (Glob 1951, figs. 11 and 13), which reaches up into the EBA according to the presence of type VI daggers.

The same group of settlements also contains close parallels to the solitary rim-sherd from Hyllerup.

The material equivalent to the Hyllerup find is clearly dominated by the copious material from the settlement site of Egehøj, which Boas dates to an early part of the EBA I due to the presence of daggers of types V and VI (Boas 1983, p. 100). As so far there are no equally rich finds from neither the LN C nor the EBA II, and as the Hyllerup material is very limited it is hardly allowed to attempt a closer dating of the find material than the Early Bronze Age in general.

However, the presence of the covering mound ensures that the settlement was abandoned prior to or early in the EBA III.

A sample of burned daub from the southern wall of the house, deposited in two post-holes just west of the door, has been submitted to TL-analysis, the result of which, 1270 ± 200 BC (R-852801), suggests a dating of the house to the EBA II.

A sample of unburned bones, collected from the upper part of the infill of a hole for one of the roof-supporting posts, must be regarded as contaminated by a recent intrusion, as the dating by the C 14-method turned out to be 810 ± 70 AD (K-4633).

OTHER EARLY BRONZE AGE HOUSES

Whereas so far three EBA settlements have displayed oval, short houses (Vadgård: Lomborg 1973, 1976 and 1980; Røjle Mose: Jæger & Laursen 1983; Brændekilde: Unpublished excavation by J. Jacobsen, Fyns Stiftsmuseum), longhouses have now been recorded from several localities. Due to the sparse material from most of them precise datings are hard to come by.

As the background for the dating of Vadgård house BL has not yet been published, Lomborg's rough dating of the site to the EBA II (Lomborg 1973, p. 10; 1976, p. 429; 1980, p. 124) must so far be accepted. The dating of the newly found settlement of Højgård to the EBA II–III (Ethelberg 1986 a; Ethelberg 1986 b) seems to a large extent based on typological considerations and on TL-measurements as finds were extremely sparse. The Norddorf house contained *i. a.* a flint sickle with a curved edge, a type occurring in Ballermosen in a grave of the EBA II (Lomborg 1959, p. 165), combined with finger-smoothed body-sherds from storage vessels very similar to those frequently appearing in graves of the EBA II–III in the North Frisian Islands (Struve 1954, p. 40). As mentioned above Boas dates the Egehøj settlement to the EBA I, but as the site is well-equipped with cordoned vessels the beginning of the occupation may reach back into the LN.

The above-mentioned sites are all open sites, whereas the following have been covered by later mounds. The material from the Handewitt house contains pottery of a rather late character, although the EBA II cannot be excluded. The primary grave of the covering mound was unfurnished, but the presence of an uncremated burial in a man-sized log-coffin ascertains that the mound was built before the end of the Early Bronze Age (Bokelmann 1977, p. 82).

Trappendal causes a problem as the chronological relationship between the house and the mound has probably been misinterpreted (Andersen & Boysen 1983). For the present writer there is no evidence to support a connection between house and mound; on the contrary certain details seem to indicate a period of cultivation sandwiched in between the house and the mound, exactly as at Hyllerup and at Lusehøj (see below). The sparse material from the house itself has not been published, and the primary grave, the so-called "central structure", was unfurnished, whereas the secondary graves 24/36 must be dated to the EBA III (Andersen & Boysen 1983, p. 124).

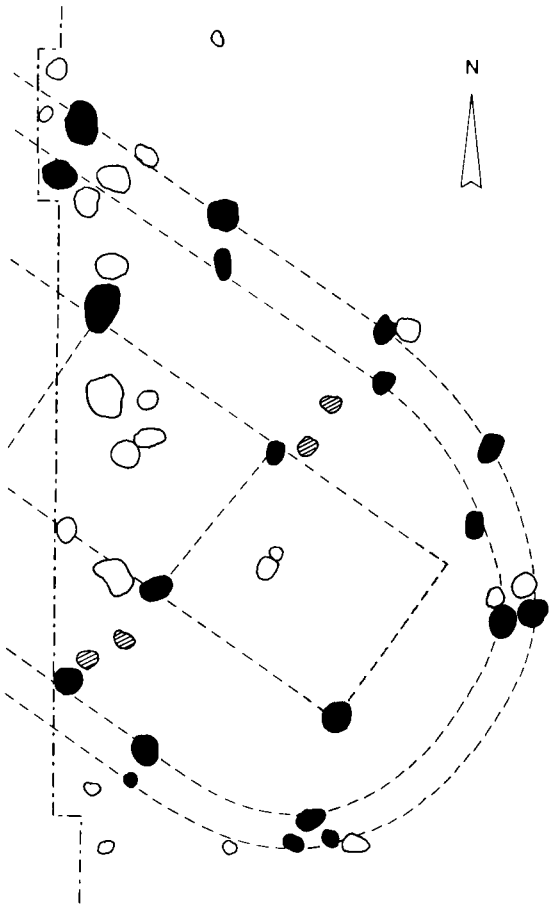

Fig. 6. The author's interpretation of a house-site below Lusehøj, Funen. Redrawn after Thrane 1984 fig. 16 and 105. Post-holes representing wall-posts and roof-supporters are shown in black, while post-holes possibly belonging to a transverse partition wall are marked with oblique haching. Shaded: pit. 1:100.

Beneath the mound of Lusehøj some settlement structures were found, among them the eastern part of a three-aisled long-house, overlooked by Thrane (Thrane 1984, p. 112) (fig. 6).

The transverse span is 2.5 m, the distance between the pairs of roof-carriers is 3.0 m, and the curved gables and the rectilinear side walls are marked by double rows of deeply founded posts, normally spaced 2.0 to 2.5 m apart in the individual rows. As only the eastern part of the house was uncovered, the length is unknown; the breadth is 6.5 to 7.0 m.

Thranes description of the individual holes (Thrane 1984, p. 30 ff) gives at hand, that the posts of the inner

wall-row with only one exception are deeper dug than the corresponding ones of the outer with a maximum difference of 45 cm and an average of 20 cm.

Although the dating of the settlement remains to the EBA III (Thrane 1984, p. 110) is not quite certain, the house cannot be much later, partly covered as it is by the small barrows GÆ and GZ, clearly of the LBA IV (Thrane 1984, p. 75).

As at Hyllerup and Trappendal a period of heavy cultivation is sandwiched in between the conflagration of the house and the erection of the small barrows (Thrane 1984, p. 113).

To sum up the chronological discussion: The artifact material from Egehøj ensures the existence of the two-aisled long-house in the EBA I, whereas the barrows at Handewitt, Trappendal and Hyllerup make sure that the three-aisled long-house was introduced prior to or early in the EBA III. The TL-dating of the Hyllerup site suggests that the conflagration took place in the EBA II.

TYPOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The very regular construction of the three-aisled Hyllerup house diverges clearly from the houses of Vadgård, Trappendal, Handewitt and from some of the Højgård houses, but resembles the Norddorf house. Here the distance between the rows of roof-supporting posts were, however, only 1 m.

The wall-construction without deeply imbedded posts distinguishes the Hyllerup house from most of or all the other houses, as the lack of wall-posts can only be mentioned from a few of the Højgård houses, where, however, this feature need not be seen as an original characteristic, but may simply be due to recent cultivation, an open site as it is.

The door of the Hyllerup house seems to have been placed in the wall line in accordance with the houses from Norddorf, Vadgård and Højgård, but in contrast to the recessed doors at Trappendal and Handewitt and numerous houses of the Late Bronze Age.

The partition wall in the western end of the Hyllerup house is parallelled in Trappendal, Handewitt, and Højgård house I. Unlike Hyllerup and Højgård I the two other houses have an additional partition wall in the eastern ends, but in both cases these eastern partitions are of considerably slighter construction than the western ones in the same houses.

In view of the considerable damage to the Hyllerup house caused by cultivation prior to the erection of the barrow the original presence of a similar eastern partition wall cannot be excluded, although no traces were preserved.

The still very few EBA houses display an important development in the construction of long-houses. The two-aisled houses at Egehøj are closely related to the Late Neolithic ones from Limensgård (Nielsen & Nielsen 1985) and Fosie IV (Björnhem & Säfvestad 1983) and share with these the stoutly founded walls carrying most of the weight of the roofs.

The two rows of roof-supporting posts in the Norddorf house are too close together to relieve the walls to any great extent, which is affirmed by the fact, that the holes for the wall-posts are deeper dug than those for the roof-supports.

Although with a good distance between the two rows the houses of Trappendal and Handewitt possess such an irregular, almost casual framework that the walls still have an important function as carriers for the roof, corresponding to the fact that the foundations for the walls are still deep, although the roof-supports go even deeper down.

Whereas the holes for the wall-posts and for the roof-supports are equally deep in the houses I, II, VI and X at Højgård, which all possess a rather regular framework, the roof-supporting posts are the deeper ones in the cases of Højgård III and IV.

Alone in the series the Hyllerup house has a roof-supporting framework of such a regularity that it alone must have been able to carry the entire weight of the roof, thus allowing such a light wall-construction that every trace of it could be, and has been, destroyed by the Early Bronze Age cultivation.

However, this typological development does not reflect a chronological one, as several of the Højgård houses with relatively stable framework retain deeply imbedded wall-posts, a feature commonly met with during the Late Bronze Age in Jutland.

The possibility that Bronze Age houses in Zealand continue to have a slighter wall-construction than the contemporary ones in Jutland must not be overlooked, but a present only a few indisputable houses of the LBA have been investigated in Zealand, mostly so badly worn by cultivation that every trace of the wall-constructions are absent (note 1).

Thus the Hyllerup house raises questions, which can

only be answered on the basis of future material. This is easy to come by, as the settlement site of Hyllerup according to the scatter of worked flint in the topsoil seems rather large.

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NOTE

1. Traces of wall-constructions in connection with more or less certain houses of the LBA are claimed from Skamlebæk (Lomborg 1977), Søgård, Gerlev par. (unpublished investigation by P.O. Nielsen and F. Kaul) and Pugbjerg, Tårnborg par. (unpublished investigation by the present writer).

   The neatly preserved houses from Jersie, published as of the LBA, must according to the TL-analysis be redated to the Early Migration Period (Tornbjerg 1982 b, p. 92).

   LBA houses with posted walls, similar to the Jutish ones, are recorded in increasing numbers in southern Sweden (Strömberg 1982, p. 154 with further ref.).

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