

An Early Neolithic Pottery Deposition at Ellerødgård I, Southern Zealand

by HENNING NIELSEN

In April 1982, motorway construction occasioned the excavation of an Early Roman Iron Age settlement, during which Sydsjællands Museum investigated a structure which furnished important new information on pottery deposition in the Early Neolithic (1). The site was located near a major watershed about 10 km NE of Vordingborg on the upper slope of a south-facing hillside, about 47 m above sea-level. The subsoil consisted of stiff boulder clay covered by a sandier, water-bearing stratum, which meant that the water table was close to the surface, despite the elevation. The Neolithic structure was found in the NW part of an excavation area measuring 65 × 23 m, just north of the settlement.

After removal of the topsoil with earth-moving machinery, features were excavated segmentally, furnishing profile sections for study. The Neolithic structure, which was by far the largest, was excavated in quadrants, leaving a cruciform profile balk in the centre (fig. 2–3). From an archaeological point of view, the excavation was far from satisfactory, due to the unusually difficult working conditions (2). These shortcomings in the investigation technique brought uncertainty to observations and thus to interpretation of the find.

THE LARGE PIT COMPLEX, FEATURE CE

The pots were found in a complex of pits, CE, the westernmost part of which lay outside the excavation area. The structure cut through the easternmost part of a slight natural hollow sloping SW, which was filled by a 5–15 cm thick humus-containing layer devoid of culture remains. This hollow had the character of a natural drain for surface water from the hill, which is pointed by the fact that an artificial drain had been cut in the 1920s with its origin in the Neolithic complex and discharge to the SW.

Fig. 2 is a plan of the structure, which appeared as an

elongate depression more than 8 m long and 5–6 m wide. It was oriented on a WNW-ESE axis and had an excrescence to the east, measuring 3 × 2.25 m, and only a few centimetres deep. A round-bottomed ditch, 4.75 m long, 0.50–0.75 m wide and about 0.50 m deep, extended SW from the SE part of the depression and gave the southern edge of the structure an irregular outline. 8 small post-holes and a 2 m long E-W oriented ditch up to 2 m further south are thought to be part of the structure, but do not permit further conclusions as to the original appearance.

Prior to excavation, the structure was manifest as a dark patch, disturbed by two post-holes along the northern edge, one post-hole between the depression and the long ditch, and a hole 0.80 × 0.65 m in area and 0.20 m deep in the centre of the eastern part. Although devoid of dating material, these features are probably coeval with the numerous features from the Early Roman Iron Age at the site.

The structure may be described as a flat-bottomed depression, only 0.40–0.50 m deep, but with at least 4 deeper, round-bottomed pits: IL, IM, IN and IP, 0.60–



Fig. 1. Map of Zealand showing the location of the site.

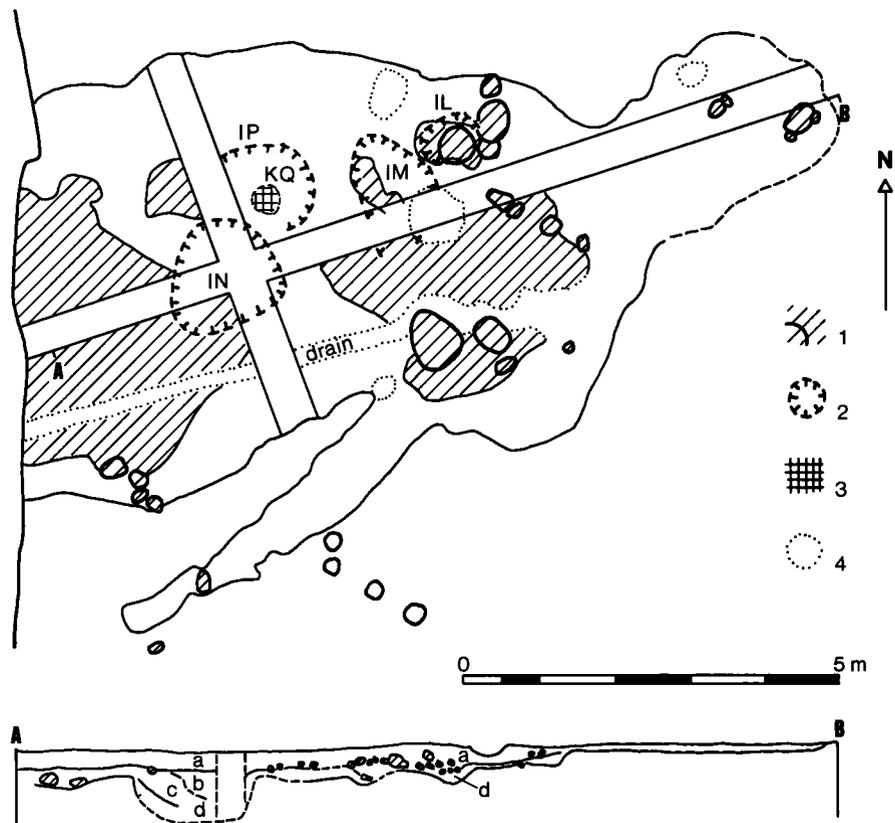


Fig. 2. Plan and profile section of Ellerødgård I, feature CE. 1: stones and groups of stones; 2: pits in the bottom of the depression; 3: potsherds; 4: secondary excavations.



Fig. 3. Feature CE during excavation, viewed from the NE.

1.20 m in diameter and 0.12–0.70 m deeper than the rest of the structure. The largest and deepest of the pits, IN, was in the centre of the depression.

Longitudinal and transverse sections revealed uniform deposition circumstances for the whole pit complex. The layers were with one exception continuous, both in the main depression and in the deeper pits.

Stratigraphy (fig. 2)

- a. Uppermost a brown argillaceous mould, 0.25–0.30 m thick.
- b. An incoherent patch of stones measuring 0.10–0.25 m, which locally formed several layers and in surface view looked like patches of irregular paving up to 4 × 4 m in size. A few rocks of about 0.50 m extended above stratum *a* and were found mainly to the SE. A rock on the south side measuring 0.70 m had been displaced when the above-mentioned drainage ditch was dug. Between the stones and under them were flint implements and swarf, animal bones and potsherds. These objects were clearly concentrated in or near some of the deeper pits. It could be established that stone stratum *b* intruded down into these pits, apparently as a result of subsidence.
- c. A layer of dark grey mould with charcoal, 0.20–0.40 m thick, was found only in pit IN between strata *b* and *d*. It was bounded below by a charcoal horizon a few mm thick.
- d. A layer of greyish-yellow arenaceous clay had a thickness of 0.10–0.20 m in the main depression, but was up to 0.30 m thick at the bottom of the pits. This layer rested on yellow clay subsoil.

The four smaller pits at the bottom of the depression will be separately described in the following. Several smaller pits of the same kind may have existed in the NW and SE parts of the structure but have escaped notice.

SMALL PITS WITHIN FEATURE CE

Pit IL. Pit measuring 1 × 0.60 × 0.12 m. Between the stones over the base were sherds of two pots (KS and KÅ, fig. 10), a disc borer and a disc scraper, 9 flint chips and a couple of pieces of fire-brittle flint.

Pit IM. Pit measuring 1 × 1 × c. 0.17 m, practically tri-

angular. No artefacts were found in association with this pit.

Pit IP. Pit c. 1.50 m in diameter, c. 0.50 m deep. Found during excavation of N-S profile section trench and cleared with a shovel. The stratigraphy of this pit accords with the description above. To the SW, the upper edge of pit IP must have been in contact with pit IN, although this went unnoticed during excavation. Under stone layer *b*, fragile pieces of a thick-walled, ribbed storage vessel (KQ, fig. 8) were found with fragments of animal bones and flint swarf.

Pit IN. This pit, which contained the bulk of the pottery, was concealed by the section balks and was not investigated until the last day of the excavation. Examination was hampered by the fact that the bottom of the pit was below the water table. Presumably a small part of the base of the pit to the NE has not been excavated. Due to lack of time, the lowest layers had to be removed in large shovelfuls with a view to later extraction of artefacts.

Pit IN had a practically triangular outline with rounded corners and base. The width above was about 1.50 m in each direction and about 1 m at the base. The sides were steep, but passed smoothly into the bottom. The depth was 0.70 m. Fill layers *a* and *b* had subsided into the pit so that stone layer *b* was deepest at the centre (fig. 2). Over and between the stones were flint swarf and scattered animal bones. The lowest stones seemed to form two parallel SW-NE oriented rows across the potsherds, about 1.25 m long and 25 cm apart. Above them was an entire mandible of domestic pig, besides bones of sheep and domestic ox. Under the stones, layers *c* and *d* contained pottery in the form of 14 originally entire vessels, which were best preserved to the west, but were compressed to the east in compact layers of sherds (fig. 4). With the sherds was found a bone chisel (fig. 12).

At the bottom of the pit, layer *d* was found. At the surface it contained, especially to the south and west, patches of red-burnt clay, and it was separated above from layer *c* by a thin charcoal horizon. Some of the sherds seem to have been pressed down into layer *d*. Several of them show traces of secondary burning. In the west of the pit, pots KA, KB and KD stood half overturned towards the edge of the pit, while pot KC in the east was overturned with its mouth towards the centre of the pit (fig. 4). The uppermost pieces of pot KC lay over a flat stone, whereas at a lower level pieces of the same vessel

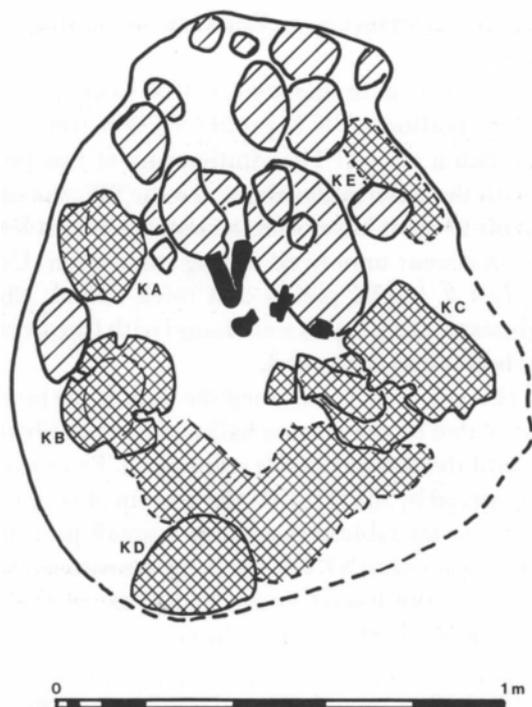


Fig. 4. Plan of pit IN, completed on the basis of excavation photographs. Oblique hatching indicates stones, cross-hatching potsherds, and black figures animal bones.

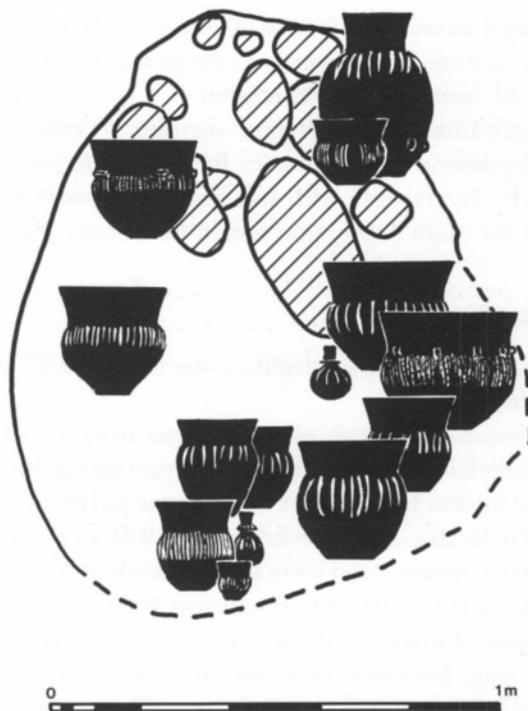


Fig. 5. Plan of pit IN with a reconstruction of the placement of the pots. Pot size slightly reduced in relation to the pit.

lay under the stone, which must thus have subsided or collapsed onto the pot. Right at the bottom, under the sherd patches, lay the collared flask KF upside down. No pot showed traces of original content.

Within feature CE, the contents of pit IN must constitute an integral find, where the pots were deposited on a single occasion prior to the placing of a cap of stones over both this and the other pits. It is unclear whether the animal bones were first introduced at the same time as this stone capping. It was first when the substrate for the stones was destroyed that they fell into the pit and damaged the pots, perhaps in connection with the fire of which traces could be observed in pit IN. To the NE, the lugged vessel KE lay in large fragmented pieces. Exactly half of this pot's belly is missing, which suggests that a small part of the NE edge of the pit was not completely excavated.

The uniform stratigraphy throughout feature CE suggests that the different pits and their content of pots must have been established at a single juncture, just as the cover of stones was presumably added on one occasion.

FINDS

Depression CE contained much pottery, flint and animal bones. The shallower part of the depression was, however, not completely investigated in the NW and SE quadrants. The same applies to pit IP, so the artefact material from these parts of the structure is incomplete. In contrast, the largest of the pits, IN, was more carefully excavated, and the material collected here must be considered almost complete. The fact that many of the pots from pit IN are nevertheless highly fragmentary is due to the wet conditions in the pit and the rude method of excavation, in conjunction with the disintegration of many of the sherds during the drying and cleaning prior to conservation.

As far as the circumstances of find for flint and animal bones are concerned, the same applies as for the pottery: the finds from pit IN are practically complete, whereas collection from the rest of the structure had a more random character.

Pottery

Excavation yielded sherds deriving from 31 pots. 14 of these pots were included in the integral find in pit IN. Sherds from 7 pots were taken up in the area west of pit IN, while east of the same pit sherds from 9 pots were found, 2 of which may be assigned to pit IL. Only 1 pot was remarked in pit IP.

The pottery comprises 4 large lugged beakers (one of which has been identified only by its ornament) and 1 small one, 20 funnel beakers, 1 cylinder-necked beaker, 2 collared flasks, 1 lugged jar and sherds from 2 unidentified pots.

Reconstruction of the poorly preserved pots is based on measurement of the preserved parts, related to the proportions of neck/belly and height/rim diameter and ornament zones in the best preserved of the vessels.

Pottery from pit IN (fig. 6–7)

KA. An ornamented lugged beaker. Height: 25 cm, rim diameter 27 cm, base 7.5 cm. Parts of the rim and a few belly sherds are missing. At the junction of neck and belly are 6 tubular, faceted lugs. Ornament: a zone at the top of the belly with groups of vertical whipcord impressions, interrupted by small smooth zones. One side of the vessel shows secondary burning marks.

KB. An ornamented funnel beaker. Height 26–28 cm, rim diameter 27 cm, base 7.6 cm. Small parts of the vessel wall are missing. Ornament: vertical sharp ridges on the upper part of the belly.

KC. 2 large pieces and 178 smaller loose sherds of a decorated lugged beaker. Reconstructed height c. 30 cm, rim diameter c. 37 cm, base missing. At the junction of neck and belly there have been 10 narrow band-like lugs, of which there are three preserved and traces of three more. Ornament: a zone in the upper part of the belly with vertical twoply cord impressions turned over at the top. The vessel has been subjected to strong secondary burning.

KD. C. 325 small sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Reconstructed height c. 21.5 cm, rim diameter c. 24 cm. Ornament: a zone on the upper part of the belly of vertical, thin, incised lines. The sherds are unstable and friable on account of secondary burning.

KE. 4 large pieces and 24 smaller sherds of a decorated lugged jar. Preserved height 31.6 cm, reconstructed height c. 42 cm, base c. 14 cm. At the base of the belly there have been 6 sturdy lugs, of which there are four preserved and traces of a fifth. Ornament: sturdy, vertical, sharp ridges at the top of the belly. Part of the vessel wall has been subjected to secondary burning. The entire neck and half of the belly are missing.

KF. The upper part of a decorated collared flask. The upper part of the neck is missing. Preserved height 7 cm, reconstructed height c. 15 cm. The collar is in the form of an applied cordon. Ornament: widely set

slight ribs at the top of the belly. Slight secondary burning is seen on the belly.

KG. The upper part and 7 loose sherds of a decorated collared flask. Preserved height 10 cm, reconstructed height c. 15 cm, rim diameter 4.2 cm. The collar has been extruded from the inside in one piece with the neck. Ornament: sharp, close-set ridges at the top of the belly. At the junction of neck and collar there is an encircling row of oval stab-marks.

KH. C. 135 loose sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 15 cm, reconstructed height c. 24 cm, rim diameter c. 24 cm. Ornament: vertical but skew ribs on the upper part of the belly, sharp above, blunt below. Marked by secondary burning.

KI. A large piece and 34 smaller loose sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. The base is missing. Preserved height 17.6 cm, reconstructed height 21 cm, rim diameter 19.6 cm. Ornament: crude vertical ribs on the upper part of the belly. Marked by secondary burning.

KK. Wall and base and 60 loose sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Height 26 cm, rim diameter 22.5 cm, base 9 cm. Ornament: short crudely applied ribs on the upper part of the belly.

KL. 4 large pieces and 17 smaller loose sherds from a decorated funnel beaker. Height 30 cm, rim diameter 27.6 cm, base 8 cm. Ornament: plastic ribs, crudely executed, on the upper part of the belly.

KM. Sherds of a large, decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 14 cm, reconstructed height c. 30 cm. The rim diameter is put at c. 30 cm. The exact size and form cannot be given with certainty. Ornament: vertical sharp ridges on the upper part of the belly.

KN. 28 sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 14 cm, reconstructed height 17 cm, rim diameter 18 cm, base missing. Ornament: groups of scored vertical grooves on the upper part of the belly with 4–5 in each group, separated by 4–5 cm wide empty fields.

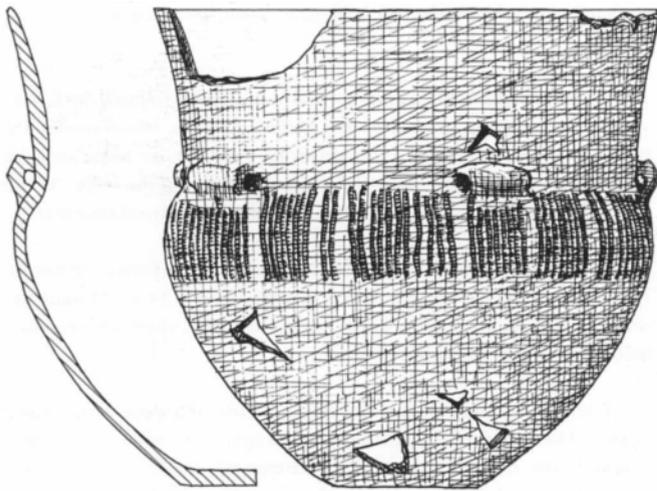
LD. A large piece of wall and base of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 4.5 cm, reconstructed height c. 9–10 cm, base 2.7 cm. Ornament: close-set, incised grooves on the upper part of the belly. The sherd was found during conservation in a highly friable state during excavation of KD and is preserved as a mount in a lump of earth.

Pottery from pit IP (fig. 8)

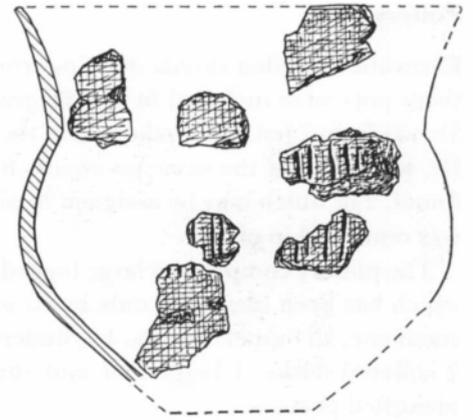
KQ. 4 large pieces and 126 smaller loose sherds from a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 23 cm, reconstructed height c. 30 cm, rim diameter 31.5 cm, base c. 13 cm. Ornament: vertical flat ribs, crudely executed and up to 1 cm wide; about 1 cm below the rim there is a row of perforations about 2 cm apart and 6–7 mm in diameter. Funnel beaker KQ must in contrast to all the other pots from the structure be characterized as a storage vessel.

Pottery from the area west of group IN (fig. 9)

The pottery from that part of feature CE that lies west of IN was recovered without precise indication of provenance, although it was



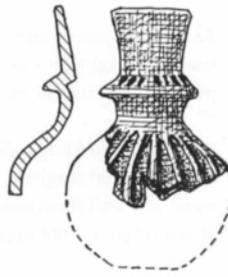
KA



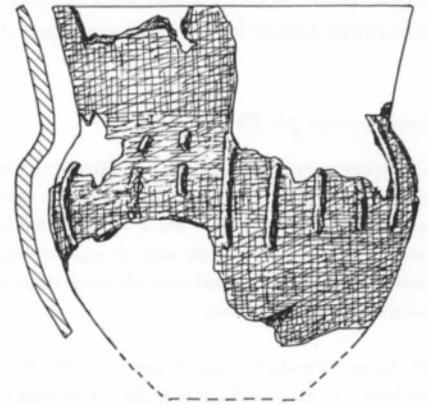
KD



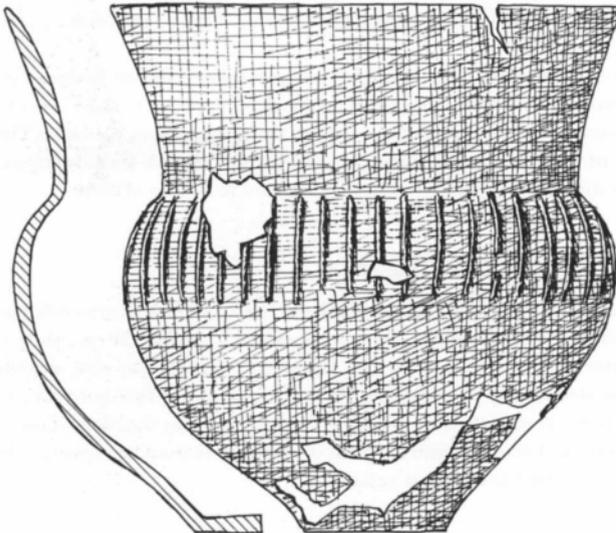
LD



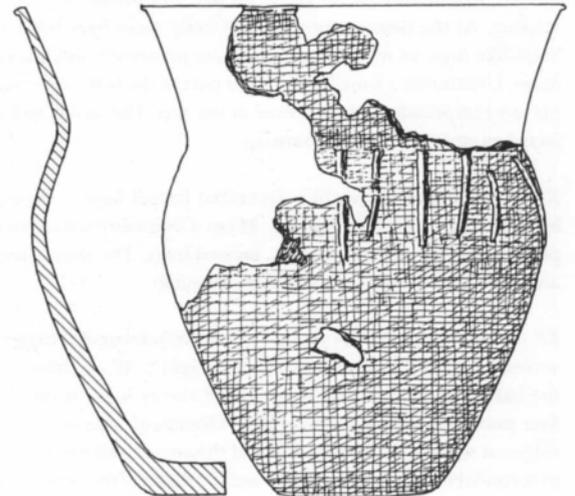
KG



KI



KB



KK

Fig. 6. Pottery from pit IN, western group. Measured by H. Nielsen and drawn by H. Ørsnes. 1:4.

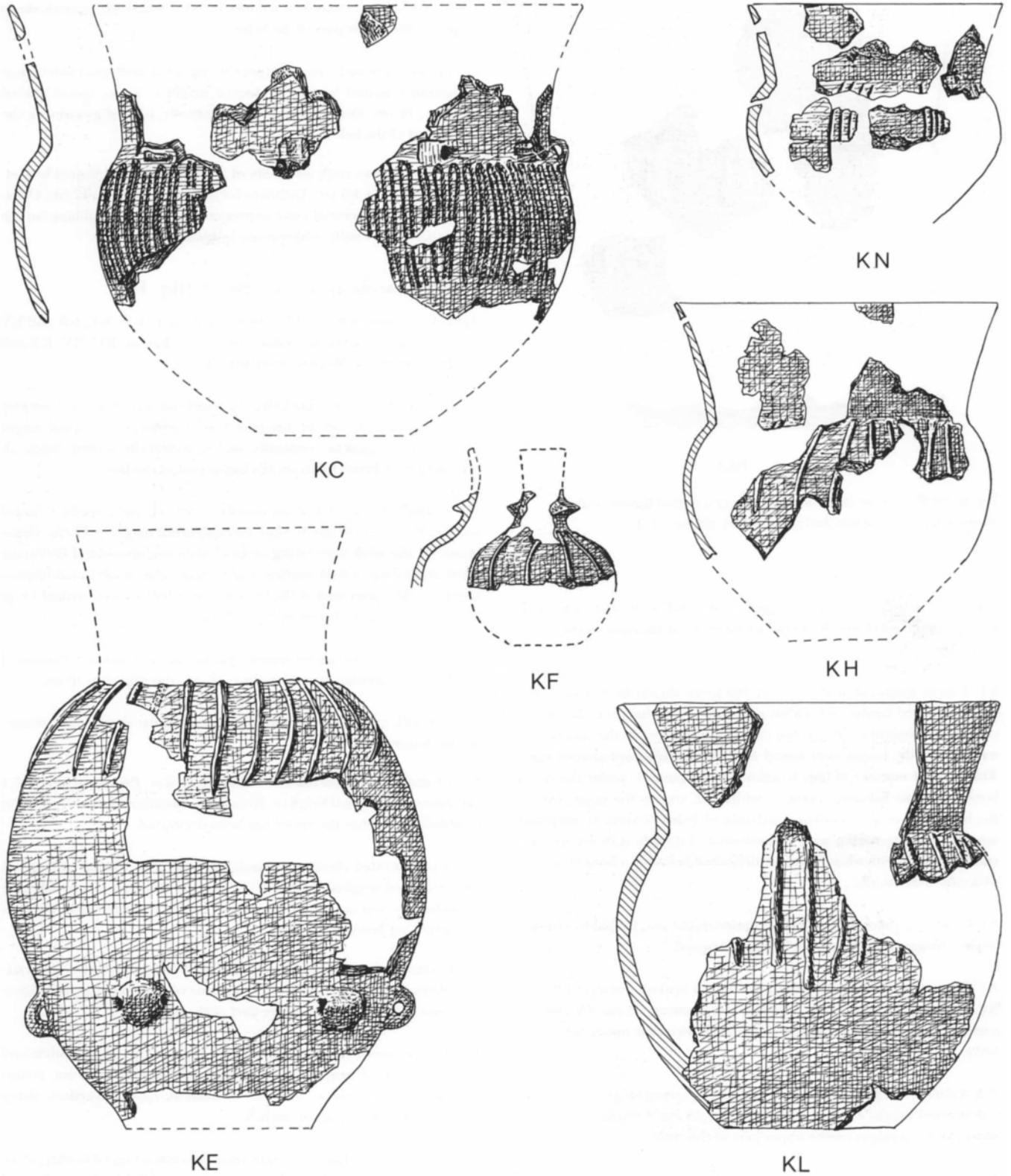


Fig. 7. Pottery from pit IN, eastern group. Measured by H. Nielsen and drawn by H. Ørsnes 1:4.

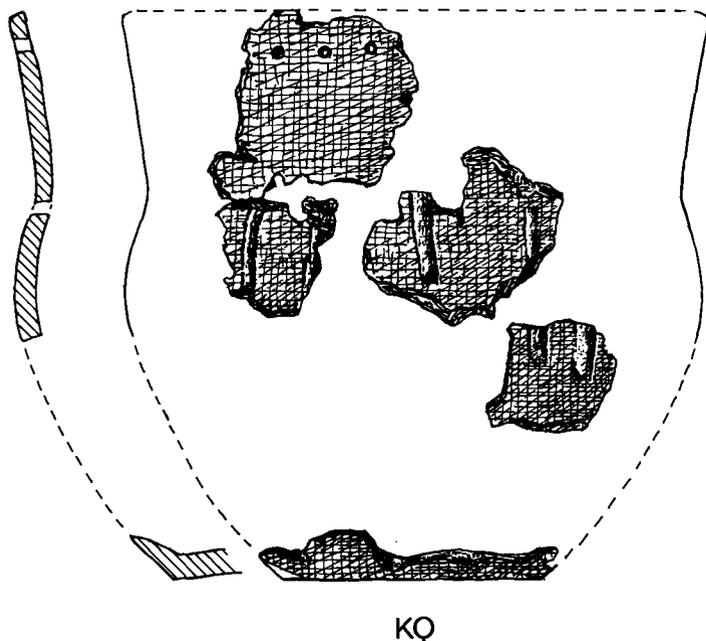


Fig. 8. Pit IP: storage vessel in the shape of a ribbed funnel beaker. Measured by H. Nielsen and drawn by H. Ørsnes. 1:4.

marked that the sherds from lugged beaker *KT* were very scattered, some of the sherds from this vessel being found at the eastern end of the structure.

KT. 3 large fragmented sherds and 160 loose sherds from a large decorated lugged beaker, somewhat skew. Preserved height c. 22 cm, reconstructed height c. 28 cm, rim diameter c. 37 cm. At the junction of neck and belly, traces were found of 2 presumably cord-shaped lugs. The original number of lugs is unknown. Ornament: under the rim a border of triple festoons, made by whipcord, and on the upper part of the belly a zone of ornament consisting of fields of vertical whipcord impressions alternating with vertical rows of double stab-marks, presumably made with a bird bone, all delimited below by a horizontal row of double stab-marks.

KY. C. 50 small sherds from a large undecorated pot, probably a funnel beaker. Shape and size cannot be reconstructed.

KZ. Large piece of a small decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 9.2 cm, reconstructed height 12.5 cm, rim diameter 13 cm. Ornament: a zone of incised, narrow, close-set vertical lines on the upper part of the belly.

KÆ. 8 sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 10.2 cm, reconstructed height c. 16 cm, rim diameter 16 cm. Ornament: narrow, sharp, vertical ridges on the upper part of the belly.

KØ. 2 large sherds and 14 small sherds from the belly of a decorated vessel, presumably a funnel beaker. Preserved height 11 cm. The shape

and size of the pot cannot be reconstructed. Ornament: vertical, sharp ridges on the upper part of the belly.

LA. 1 large sherd and 7 smaller loose sherds from underpart and base of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height c. 8 cm, reconstructed height c. 16 cm. Ornament: vertical, close-set, incised grooves on the upper part of the belly.

LC. 7 sherds from neck and belly of a small decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 4.5 cm. Estimated original height c. 11–12 cm. Ornament: groups of vertical cord impressions or rows of stabbing on the upper part of the belly, interrupted by blank fields.

Pottery from the area east of pit IN (fig. 10)

Apart from vessels *KS* and *KÅ* from pit IL, pots *KO*, *KP*, *KR* and *KV* may be assigned to the immediate vicinity of that pit. *KU*, *KV*, *KX* and *LB* derive from the SE part of feature CE.

KS. 2 small sherds from the belly of a small decorated pot, presumably a funnel beaker. Preserved height 2.5 cm, presumptive original height 10–12 cm. Ornament: vertically and transversally scored fields alternating with blank fields on the upper part of the belly.

KÅ. 7 small sherds of a small decorated vessel, presumably a funnel beaker. Preserved height 6.5 cm, reconstructed height c. 10 cm. Ornament: on the neck alternating vertical plain and decorated fields, the latter consisting of both vertical and oblique rows of whipcord impressions; on the upper part of the belly are broader fields of vertical whipcord, alternating with narrow blank fields.

KO. 9 sherds of an undecorated cylinder-necked beaker. Preserved height 10 cm, reconstructed height c. 18 cm, rim diameter 10 cm.

KP. 26 small, undecorated sherds of a vessel whose shape and size cannot be determined.

KR. 15 undecorated sherds from a funnel beaker. Preserved height 7.4 cm, estimated original height c. 20 cm, rim diameter 23 cm. It cannot be established whether the vessel has been decorated.

KU. 4 undecorated sherds of a small lugged beaker. Preserved height 3 cm, estimated original height 16–20 cm, rim diameter 12 cm. About 1 cm below the rim are traces of a lug. It cannot be established whether the vessel has been decorated.

KV. 12 sherds of a decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 7 cm, estimated original height c. 12 cm. Ornament: vertical striping with close-set incised grooves on the upper part of the belly.

KX. 2 large pieces and 194 smaller sherds of a large decorated funnel beaker. Preserved height 16 cm, reconstructed height c. 26 cm, reconstructed rim diameter c. 36.5 cm. Ornament: narrow, vertical, sharp ridges on the upper part of the belly.

LB. 2 sherds from a large decorated pot, possibly a lugged beaker, of indeterminate shape and size. Ornament: vertical fields of two-ply cord impressions, alternating with plain fields, on the upper part of the belly.

Size variation

Technically, the pots are generally of good quality. The tempering of the fabric is in most cases quite fine, and two-thirds of the vessels have a smooth and even surface.

The reconstructible beakers could be divided naturally according to size into four groups:

- Group I: large beakers more than 25 cm tall; comprises 4 lugged beakers and 10 funnel beakers.
- Group II: medium-sized beakers 20–25 cm tall; comprises 4 funnel beakers.
- Group III: smaller beakers, 15–20 cm tall; comprises 2 funnel beakers and 2 cylinder-necked beakers.
- Group IV: small beakers, less than 13 cm tall; comprises 5 funnel beakers and 1 cylinder-necked beaker.

We must assume that the varying size of the pots reflected practical daily functions, although naturally nothing precise can be said. Only the large funnel beaker KQ can reasonably be designated a storage vessel. The other large vessels have perhaps rather been used for the transport or serving of food. The small beakers in group IV can hardly be thought of as other than drinking vessels, which agrees well with their more varied appearance and decoration. If we accept this view, the function of the vessels seems, as mentioned below, to a certain degree to be reflected in the decoration.

Decoration

Of the 31 pots found, only one, the cylinder-necked beaker KO, cannot have been decorated. A further two vessels, KP and KY, are represented by so few sherds that the question of decoration cannot be decided.

All decorated vessels have vertical patterning of the upper part of the belly. Four vessels have additionally ornament on or near the neck, including collared flask KG, which has radial elongate stab impressions on the collar.

In the coarse storage vessel KQ, there is a row of perforations under the rim. It is uncertain whether these have had a decorative or a practical function, for in-

stance for fastening a lid or winding of the rim. The large lugged beaker, KT, has triple festoons under the rim, executed in whipcord. A small, poorly preserved beaker, KÅ, has on the neck vertical fields of oblique whipcord impressions, vertical cord impressions and blank fields.

The belly ornament covers between two-fifths and one half of the belly in each case. Vertical plastic moulding or ribs is found in 13 of the decorated vessels or 42% of the entire vessel material from the find, disposed in 9 funnel beakers, 1 cylinder-necked beaker, 1 lugged jar and 2 collared flasks. These mouldings take the form of narrow sharp ridges to flat poorly defined ribs. Vertical striping, either as thin incised lines or narrow grooves, is found in 6 funnel beakers, or in 19% of the entire material. In a single small beaker there are vertical fields of crossing vertical or horizontal incised lines, alternating with blank fields.

Cord pattern occurs in three large lugged beakers and a little cylinder-necked beaker. It is difficult to relinquish the impression that this form of decoration, time-consuming as it must have been, was reserved for vessels with a particular function. It must therefore be permissible to assign the sherds of the large vessel LB, which is cord-decorated, to the group of lugged beakers, although the number of sherds is too small to allow its shape to be determined. Both two-ply cord (KC, LB) and whipcord (KA, KT) have been used. In lugged beaker KT, zones of whipcord are combined with zones of vertical rows of double stab-marks. In the little cylinder-necked beaker KÅ, vertical rows of whipcord occur in groups alternating with narrow blank fields, as in lugged beaker KA.

At the base of the neck of vessel LC are impressions which may derive from either cord or stabbing. When this vessel is excluded, the group of pots with cord impressions makes up 16% of the total number of vessels.

Dating

Both the shape repertory and the decoration with cord impressions link the Ellerødgård I find to the Early Neolithic C phase Virum style, as this has been described by Ebbesen and Mahler (1979: 152). It is, however, remarkable that the pots of the Ellerødgård I find mainly have plastic ribs and vertical striping, stylistic features which the authors accord only little attention in connection with the Virum style.

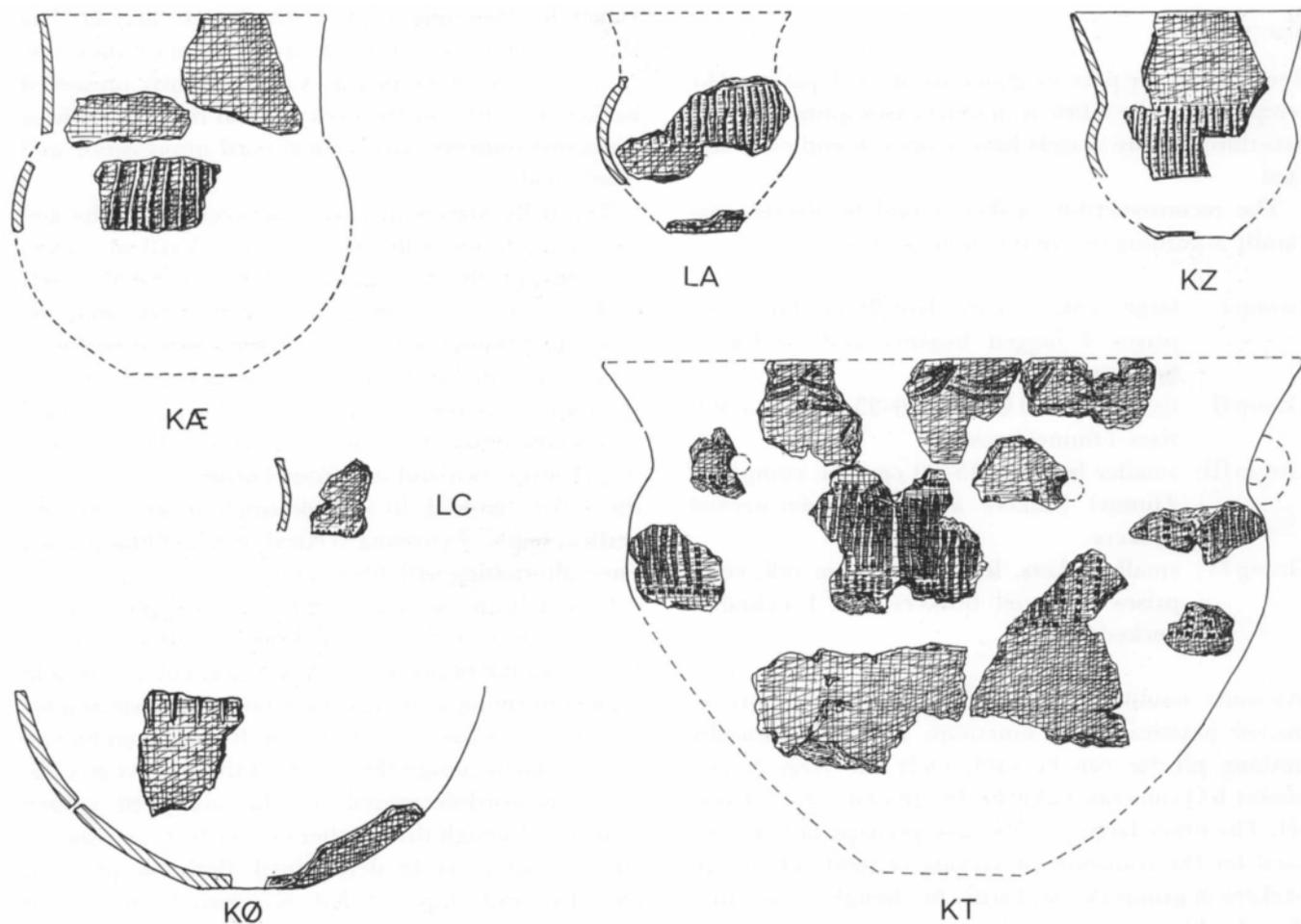


Fig. 9. Pottery from the area to the west of pit IN. Measured by H. Nielsen and drawn by H. Ørsnes. 1:4.

If the ornamental elements be correlated with the size classification, it is seen that vertical ribs appear in all funnel beakers of group I, in 2 funnel beakers of group II and in 1 cylinder-necked beaker of group III, but not in the small funnel beakers of group IV. Since there is room for them on the small collared flasks, this lack of ribs cannot be due to the small size of these vessels.

Vertical striping of the belly does not occur in group I, but twice in group II, once in group III and thrice in group IV.

Decoration with cord impressions occurs either in group I, where it occurs only in lugged beakers, or in a very fine execution on the beakers of group IV.

Examination of the pots of the Virum style, as they occur in the Ellerødgård I find, leaves the impression

that the commonest types of vessels were large funnel beakers with ribs and smaller funnel beakers with striped belly. Next in order of frequency are large, fine lugged beakers with cord ornament and small, fine beakers, likewise with cord ornament, or with incised ornament zones. The group is supplemented by a smaller number of lugged jars and collared flasks whose ornament links them to that of the large funnel beakers.

An investigation of whether this tendency to functionally determined utilization of decoration elements seen in the Ellerødgård I material is general within the Early Neolithic pottery falls outside the scope of this article. The tendency to use cord ornament on lugged beakers and jars was established by Becker (1947: 152). Other examples may be seen in Ebbesen and Mahler's work (1979, i.a. fig. 23:3). Examples of the utilization of

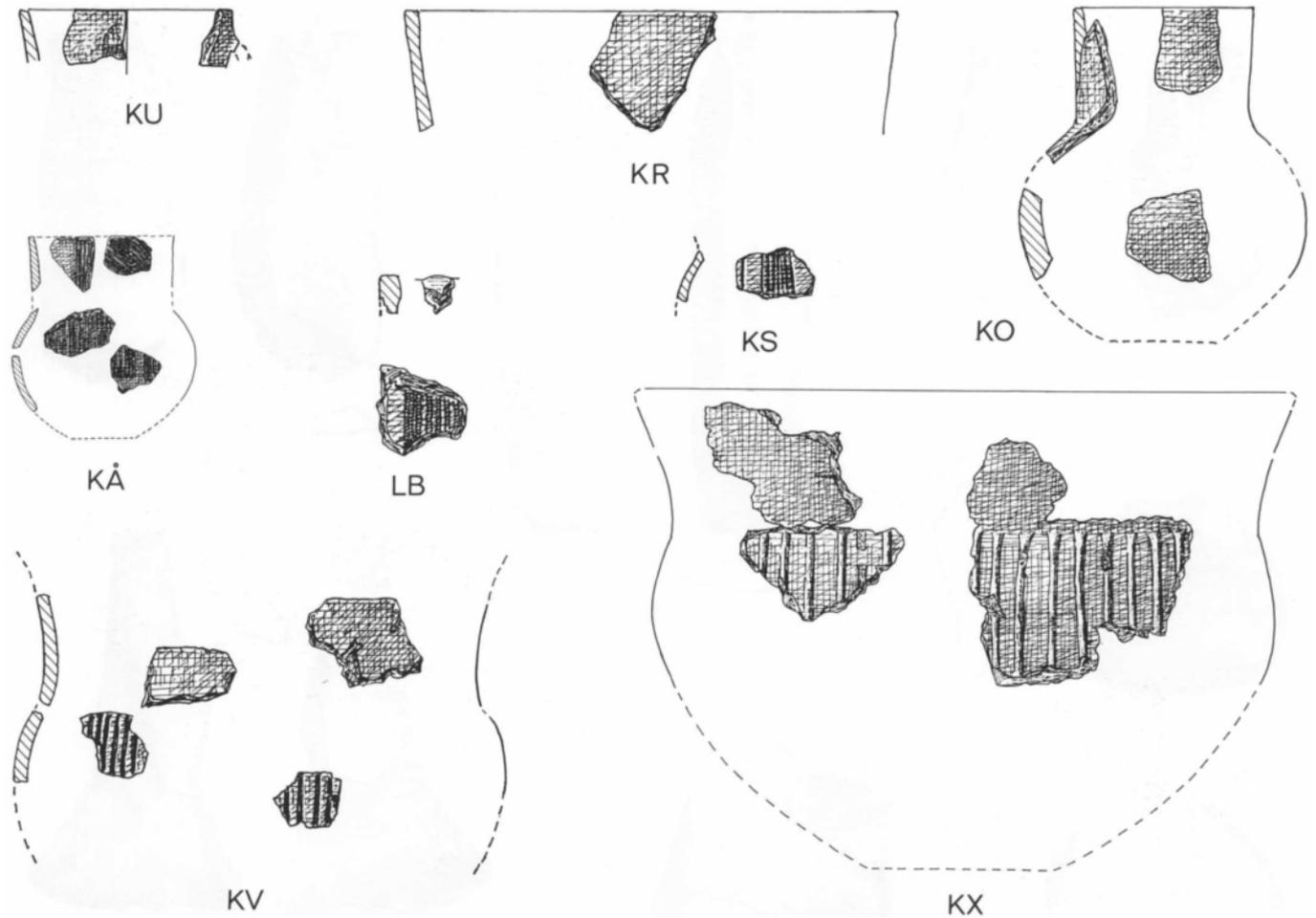


Fig. 10. Pottery from the area to the east of pit IN. Measured by H. Nielsen and drawn by H. Ørsnes. 1:4.

cord ornament on bossed funnel beakers (*idem*, figs. 21, 24, 25) suggest that these pots were functionally related to the lugged beakers.

Placement of pots in pit IN

Based on the observations made during the excavation, the placement of the 14 vessels found as sherds at the bottom of the pit may be reconstructed with considerable certainty (fig. 5).

The exact position of pots KA, KB, KC, KD, KE and KF was recorded on excavation (fig. 4). The other vessels may be placed in accordance with the frequency with which the sherds are found together. The pots had been placed in two groups along the western and

eastern sides of the pit, respectively, with most of them to the south.

The western group comprises KA, KB, KD, KG, KI, KK and LD.

The eastern group comprises KC, KE, KF, KH, KL, KM and KN.

With two exceptions, each group comprises uniform vessel types, viz. 1 large lugged beaker with cord decoration, 2 large ribbed funnel beakers, 1 medium-sized ribbed funnel beaker, a striped funnel beaker and a lugged flask. These are augmented by a large ribbed lugged jar in the eastern group and a little striped funnel beaker in the western group.

A closer investigation of the pots has revealed that the large beakers have slightly larger dimensions in the eastern than in the western group, where there is a com-

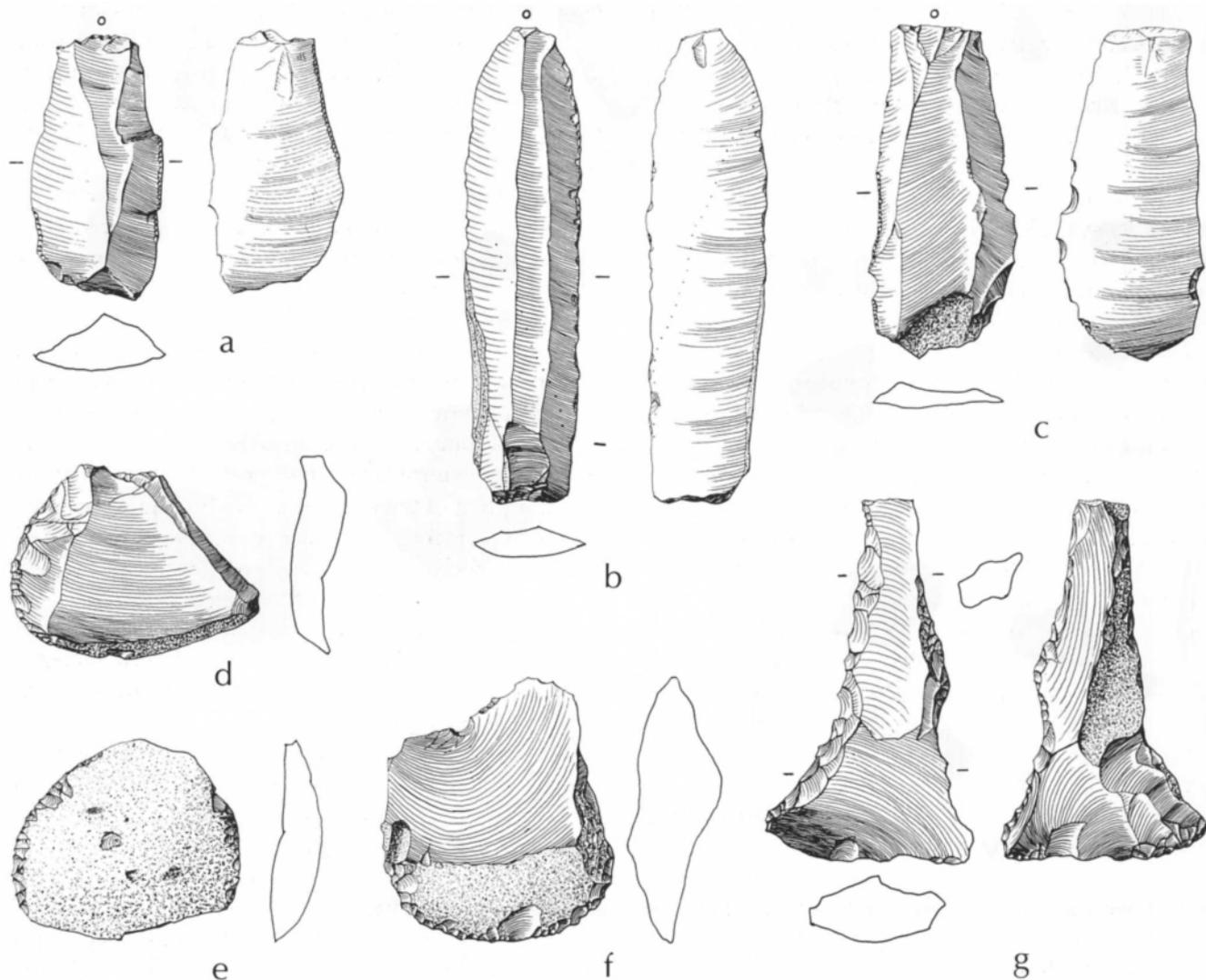


Fig. 11. Flint implements. a: blade knife; b: blade sickle; c: retouched B-blade; d–f: flake scrapers; g: flake axe. Drawn by Lars Holten. 2:3.

pensatory more carefully executed decoration. The colored flasks in the two groups are differently made.

It is tempting to perceive the two groups of vessels as two sets of crockery placed in pit IN on one occasion, and the differences in crafting mean that these represent two different households.

Unfortunately the circumstances of find do not permit equally certain conclusions about the pots found in the other parts of feature CE, but the accumulation of sherds in the smaller pits suggests, in conjunction with the variation in vessel types and ornament, that these represent corresponding, but not identical sets.

Flint

The excavation yielded 184 pieces of flint. 77 were recovered from pit IN and 66 from the area to the east of IN, while only 6 pieces have been recorded to the west of IN. In addition 35 pieces found outside IN lack information on provenance.

Since a thorough investigation of the flint material has yet to be carried out, i.a. an analysis of wear marks, only a survey of this material will be given (fig. 11), with mention of special features (3).

The material includes 22 *unworked flint pieces*, 7 of

which are *fire-brittle*. That part of the unworked flint that has not been affected by fire comprises fragments, some of which derive from frost-shattering.

2 cores and 1 core *flake* derive from the eastern part of feature CE. The cores are crude, with remains of cortex present.

The most numerous group of flint objects consists of *unretouched flakes*, 105 of which were found: 48 in pit IN, 2 in pit IP, 4 in the area west of pit IN and 38 to the east of it. Precise information is lacking for 20 other pieces. In 21 pieces, traces of use in the form of wear marks or damage to the edges has been recorded. An examination of the wear marks shows that some specimens have been used for working in wood, while others have been used for work in siliceous plant material.

27 *retouched flakes* cannot be assigned to particular types of implements. 7 derive from pit IN and 13 from the area east of this, while information is lacking for a further 7 pieces. 5 flakes show wear marks on the edges, and one of them also exhibits hafting wear. To this group is also assigned a retouched flint flake with lustre and a retouched piece derived from frost-shattering.

Blades and *blade implements* were represented by 18 pieces. Among these there was only 1 A-blade, the rest being B-blades.

In the area east of pit IN a *blade sickle* was found between the stones of layer *b*, made from an A-blade (fig. 11b). The length is 10 cm and the width 2.6 cm. The distal end has been retouched. The edge is highly lustrous with a border diagonally across the blade. A wear trace analysis showed many scratches perpendicular to the edge but also to a lesser degree parallel and oblique to it. The wear and lustre indicate that the piece was in use for a long time, presumably for several years.

From pit IN derive 2 *blade knives*, 5.5–6.7 cm long (fig. 11a). Judging by the wear marks they had been used for work in both wood and plant material, including siliceous plants. Several of the 14 *unretouched B-blades*, which were 5.4–6.8 cm long and 2.8–3.3 cm wide, may have served the same purpose as the blade knives (fig. 11c). 10 of them were found in pit IN, 2 more were found to the west and east of feature CE, respectively, and information is lacking for two others. One of the B-blades from pit IN exhibits wear marks. 2 broken proximal ends presumably derive from B-blades.

Only 1 *retouched B-blade* was found. It has wear marks on the edge and was perhaps used as a knife (fig. 11c).

There are 9 *flake implements* in the find. Among these

flake scrapers predominate with 7 pieces. 1 was found in pit IN and 3 east of IN, while information is lacking for 3 others. The majority have evenly retouched, rounded distal ends. In one piece, most of the scraping edge is broken. The scrapers are 3.8–5 cm long and 3.7–5.7 cm wide (fig. 11 d–f).

At the east end of feature CE, 1 strongly refurbished *flake borer* on a large retouched disc was recovered.

In the stone layer, but without certain provenance, a narrow *flake axe* with trimmed sides and splayed edge was found (fig. 11 g). The length was 7.3 cm and the width 1.1–4.6 cm. The neck extremity seems to have been broken off. The axe was irregularly trimmed from the ventral side of the flake. The edge is damaged by desquamation. Part of the dorsal face is covered by cortex. On the ventral face, grinding-marks are seen at the thickest point of the axe and along the edge splay.

The implements are made mainly of greyish, spotted flint. Relatively many pieces have remnants of cortex on the surface, which, in conjunction with the rather small blocks and the occurrence of retouche on pieces derived by frost shatter, indicates that raw material must have been present in limited quantities and in none too good a quality.

The distribution of flint material in feature CE does not form any clear picture. The many flint flakes seem to be evenly spread over the entire structure, although the western part, where flint was not taken up, escapes evaluation. Most noticeable is the distribution of blades and *flake* implements in relation to pit IN, 10 unretouched blades out of a total of 14 lying in this pit with the two sole blade knives of the find, whereas only one of the finds's 7 *flake* scrapers was found in the pit.

Bone implements

Only 1 object of worked bone was found, a well-preserved *bone chisel* from pit IN (fig. 12). The chisel was fashioned from the proximal end of a long bone, presumably of domestic ox. The bone was split and scraped smooth, especially on the inner surface, and slightly pointed, with a slightly rounded edge. It was 10 cm long, 3.7 cm wide above and 1.2 cm wide at the edge.

Bone chisels are common within the Funnel Beaker Culture, where they are usually between 11 and 16 cm long (Becker 1962). The chisel from Ellerødgård I is thus below average size.

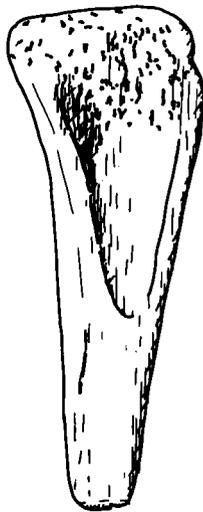


Fig. 12. Bone chisel from pit IN. 2:3.

Animal bones

Owing to the high water-table in the area, bone was well preserved, but the individual pieces suffered from excavation, so an exact figure cannot be given. Within feature CE, animal bones were found mainly over and between the stones, although a few were found between or under the large pieces of pottery, e.g. under pot KQ in pit IP. Domestic ox (*Bos taurus*), domestic pig (*Sus domesticus*), sheep (*Ovis aries*) and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) have been identified (4).

In pit IN, fragmented bones of ox, sheep and pig were found: teeth, limb-bones, vertebrae and skull fragments. In particular an almost entire lower jaw of an old pig found in the centre of the pit should be remarked.

Pit IP contained fragments of limb-bones of roe deer and possibly also of sheep.

The area to the west of pit IN yielded limb-bone fragments and a rib of ox.

The area to the east of pit IN yielded limb-bone and molar tooth fragments of ox. The provenance of other limb-bone fragments is not known.

Proper observations on the bone material were made only in pit IN, where it could be seen that the fragmentation derived from marrow-splitting.

The teeth and jaw parts of pig show that at least 3 individuals are represented, viz. two old ones in pit IN and the eastern part of feature CE and one young one in pit IP.

Botanical material

Soil samples for pollen analysis were taken in pit IN from the neck of collared flask KF, which was placed deepest in the pit, and from the soil under the flask. Both samples contained very little pollen. The first yielded pollen of saltwort and of alder and birch, but none from forest trees, indicating that feature CE was located in an area open to the light. The other sample contained a little black, heat-affected birch pollen, which agrees with the fact that the soil around it contained charcoal (5).

A sample of charcoal from the soil around lugged jar KE was identified as alder (6).

INTERPRETATION

It is not possible to reconstruct the original appearance of the structure on the basis of the limited information the excavation yielded. What could be seen was that groups of entire pots had been placed in or near pits in the floor of the depression and under or inside stone constructions that during the later decay of the structure subsided or collapsed and compressed the pots. It is not known whether there is any connection between the latter phenomenon and the fire which has affected some of the pots.

On or near these stone constructions were placed bones of consumed animals, with scrapers and cutting tools of flint, some of which seem to have been produced on the spot, perhaps for working wood and other plant material used in building the structure. Unfortunately it cannot be decided whether any of the flint implements have been employed in butchering.

Most important is the demonstration of two or more sets of clay pots, which must represent an equal number of households, a circumstance supported by the occurrence of bones of at least three domesticated pigs in different parts of the structure.

Feature CE must consequently be regarded as a place where several families or groups were gathered for a meal. That this meal may have been of a ritual nature is suggested by the utensils used being left behind and arranged in sets, with cutlery and food remains. The arrangement was associated with a wood and stone structure of uncertain appearance and function.

The Ellerødgård find brings to mind several of the

bog-offering sites in eastern Denmark, mentioned by Becker (1947: 270–284), but while these, as Becker has established, are characterized as individual depositions – sometimes repeated – of a single pot, the Ellerødgård find pertains to a single *group* ritual. The find is more akin to the early Middle Neolithic finds from Nr. Onsild and Kvong in Jutland (Ebbesen 1979: 35 ff.).

Pottery depositions with meal remains, consisting of both animals and human bones, are a widely found phenomenon within the early Funnel Beaker Culture (Becker 1947: 270–84; Rech 1979: 45–53). They reflect special patterns of religious and social behaviour. There is much to suggest that the Neolithic population lived in tribal societies consisting of clans. This type of society was particularly prone to internal conflict and petty feuding (Jensen 1982: 115). It was of great importance for the continued existence of a group that stable relations were maintained, both within the group and with neighbouring clans. An important means could be the exchange of gifts, marriage and feasts.

The deposition of food, implements and crockery may be understood in this light. In societies of this kind, feasts are employed to mark the community of the participating families, clans or age groups, just as the giving of or contribution to a feast is for the donor a means of obtaining prestige and social status.

Status marking reaches a peak in Early Neolithic C with the building of the dolmens. At about the same time, the first causewayed enclosures appear, which are thought by many to have been ritual assembly sites (e.g. Sarup: Andersen 1981; Toftum: Madsen 1978, *et al.*).

In connection with these structures depositions of whole pots, in pits and moats, occur in a manner comparable to that of Ellerødgård I. The excavation at Ellerødgård could, however, not confirm the presence of a fortified structure of this kind, just as the location of the site cannot be said to be typical of this kind of place.

The Ellerødgård find is thus one of the few known examples of pottery depositions on dry land. It has afforded the opportunity of a very precise description of such a deposition, while also giving the hitherto most detailed and varied picture of the east Danish pottery of Early Neolithic period C.

Translated by Peter Crabb

NOTES

1. Sydsjællands Museum, Vordingborg. SMV case no. 5/82. Ørslev Parish, Bårse District, Præstø County. The investigation was carried out by the author under the auspices of the museum, funded by *Fredningsstyrelsen* in accordance with the Conservation of Nature Act §49. An interim description of the find has been published in *Skalk* 1984: 1 p. 26 ff.
2. The excavation, which covered 1500 sq.m. and took 15 working days, was hard-pressed by the motorway construction, which occurred in the immediate vicinity. From the Iron Age settlement, for example, which was the primary object of excavation, a maximum 25% of the existing artefact material was recovered. Pit IN in feature CE was excavated in the afternoon and evening of the very last day of the campaign.
3. The author wishes to thank Peter Rasmussen, of the Department of the Natural Environment of the National Museum, who has kindly examined the flint material and investigated parts of it for wear marks.
4. Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, ZMK no. 52 1983. Information in letters of 21.11.1983 and 31.8.1983 from Tove Hatting, whom the author thanks for identification of the bone material.
5. Verbal report from Ingrid Sørensen, Universitetets Zoologiske Museum. The author wishes to thank Ingrid Sørensen, who was so kind as to carry out the analysis.
6. Kindly identified by Kjeld Christensen of the National Museum, Department of Natural Science.

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