Journal of Danish Archaeology vol. 11, 1992-93, pp 111 – 135

The Chieftains' Farms of the Over Jerstal Group

by PER ETHELBERG

During the past ten years several sites of the Early Roman Iron Age have been excavated in south Jutland. Excavations in the NE of the area near Vojens, Haderslev and Christiansfeld have yielded particularly valuable new information about settlement in this period. The objects of investigation include fenced and unfenced villages: Ndr. Ringvej in Tyrstrup (1), Galsted (2), and Ladegårdsvænget (3); there were also isolated large farmsteads: Hammelev Nørremark (4), Kærbølling (5) and Stepping Mølle (6); cemeteries: Frørup (see Christensen 1988) and Stepping Mølle (7), and an enclosure with surrounding ditch at Favrvrågård (see Madsen 1987) (8).

Of particular interest are isolated large farms of a type not earlier recorded within the area of the Over Jerstal cultural group. Only those at Hammelev Nørremark and Stepping Mølle have been excavated in full, and they are the subject of this preliminary report (Fig. 1). Stepping Mølle is particularly important because the cemetery was found and excavated as well as the settlement.

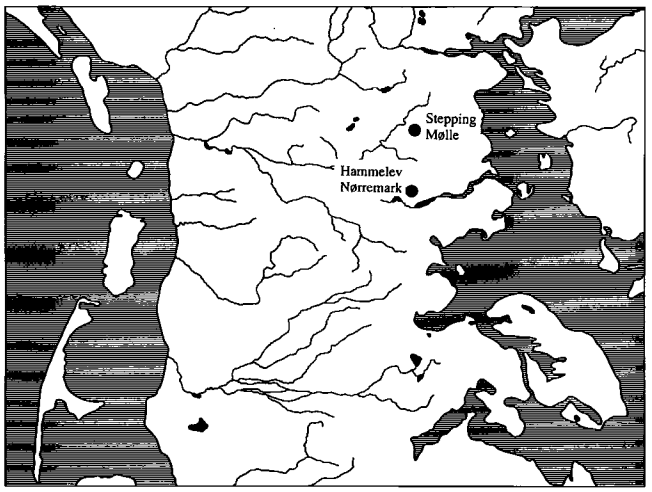


Fig. 1. Location of the settlements at Hammelev Nørremark and Stepping Mølle in southern Jutland.

HAMMELEV NØRREMARK

In 1990 three areas with settlement traces from the Early and Late Iron Ages were discovered when an area of 10 hectares west of the motorway between Vojens and Haderslev was laid out as an industrial area (Fig. 2). This is a typical dead-ice landscape characterized by elongated and round-topped hills with intervening hollows. The natural deposits are therefore very variable, and even over short distances can change from sticky clay to stony gravel or silty sand. The hollows contain peat deposits of very different thickness and composition.

"The small farm"

In the east there was excavated an area of ca. 2,300 square meters, where a small farm was found (Fig. 3). It included a ca. 11 m long and 3.5-4 m wide building (X), protected on the east by a curved palisade, which started from a low wet area close N of the building and could be followed for more than 16 m in a southerly direction. Even taking into account that the trench of the palisade grew shallower southwards, it is unlikely that it ever went all the way around the building. 25 m NE of this building were found three small granaries (XI, XII, and XIII), which certainly belonged to the farm. Trial trenches established that there were no further structures to the north or south, and on the two other sides the farm was bounded naturally by steep slopes descending to lowlying wet areas.

The farm was probably only in use for a short time, for only a single building phase could be identified. In building X a single roof-bearing post had been renewed. The farm is dated by pottery to the Early Roman Iron Age (Fig. 4).

A small number of pits were found between the buildings. The majority of them must have been con-

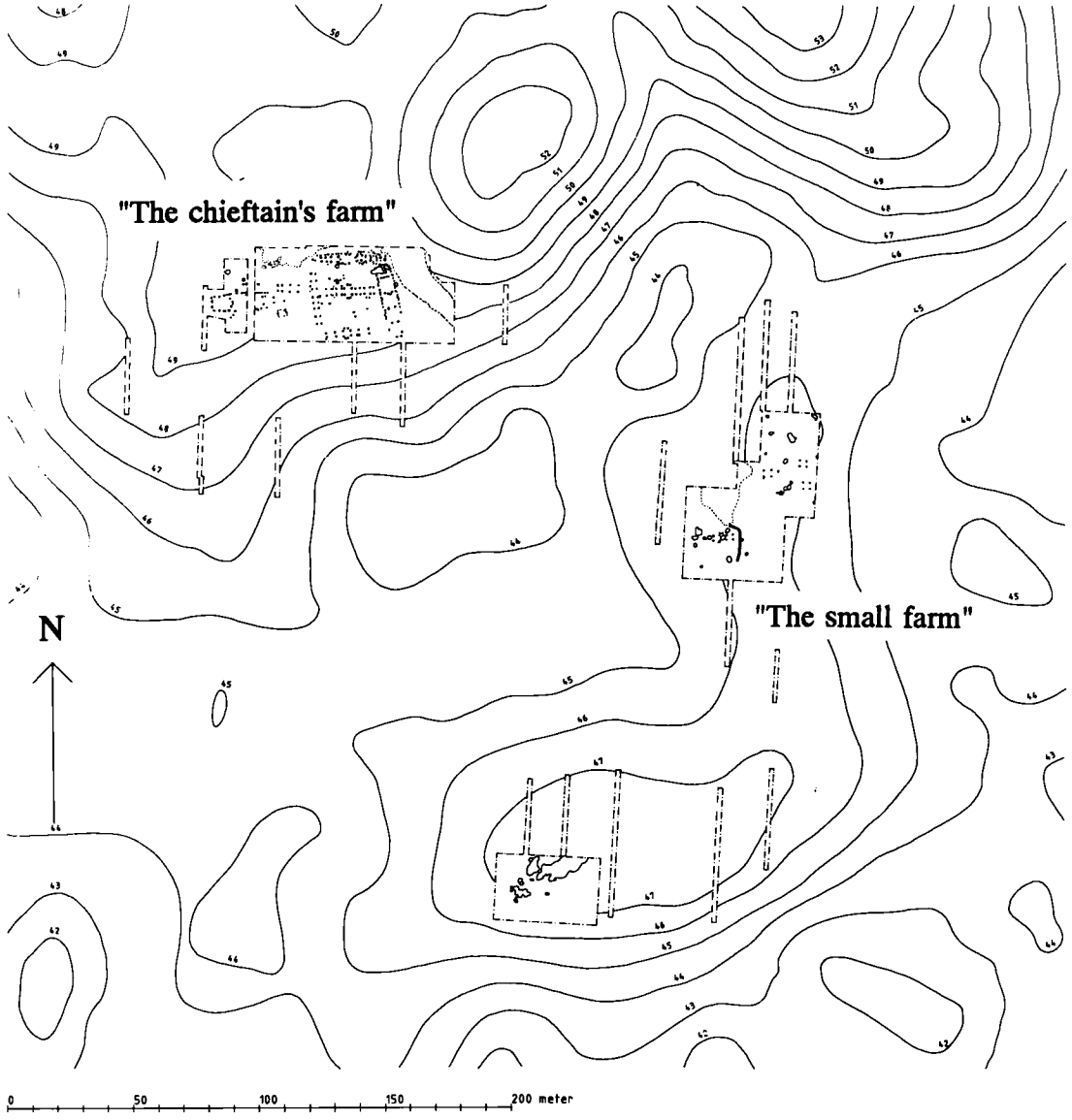


Fig. 2. General plan of the excavations at Hammelev. 1:3000.

temporary with the farm as they contained sherds of the same types as found in the main house. Several nearly complete pots could be reconstructed (Fig. 4).

Western settlement remains

To the west an area of about 3,000 square meters was opened. Here there were found a large farm from the Early Roman Iron Age, an isolated farmstead from the Early Viking period, and an activity area datable mostly to periods II and IIIa of the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

The Pre-Roman activity area

This consisted of pits and an occupation layer formed in a damp hollow north and east of the later farm. Of particular interest was a pit containing a large number of more or less reconstructible pots. All the sherds (Fig. 6) lay pressed against the sides of the pit. This seemed more likely to be a ritual than a rubbish pit. There was

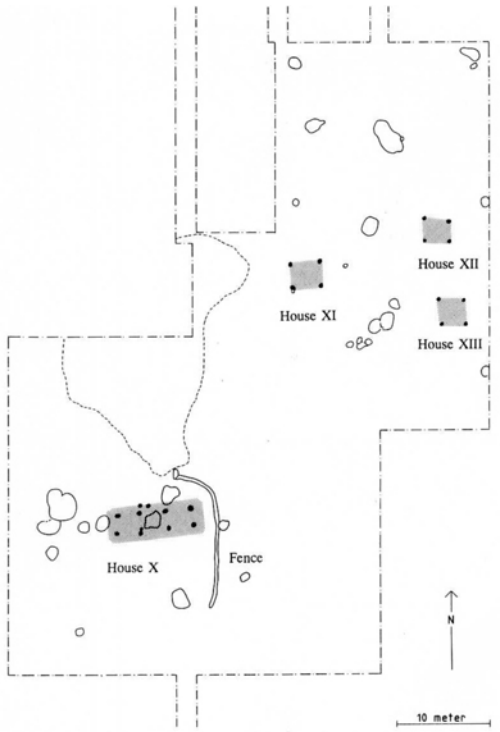
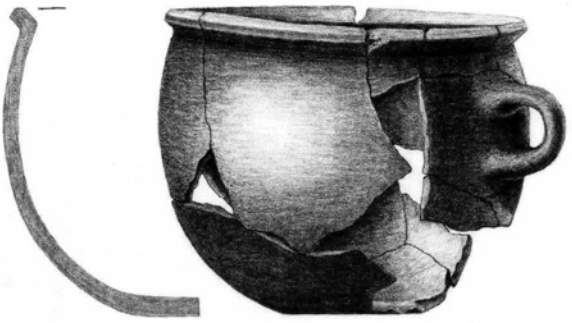
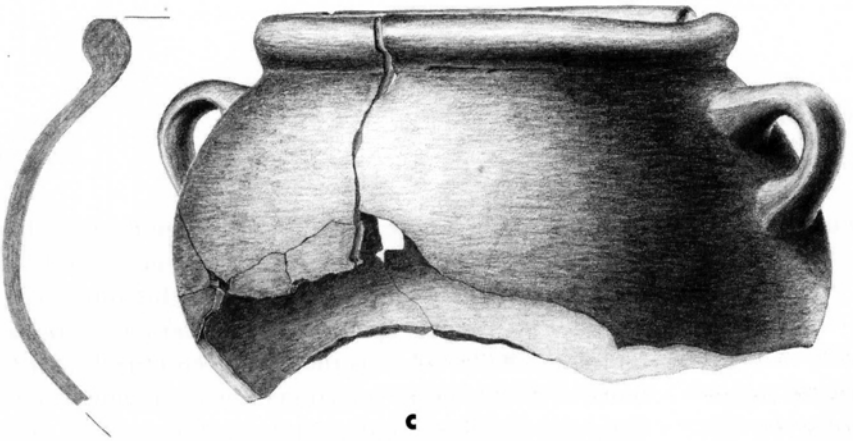
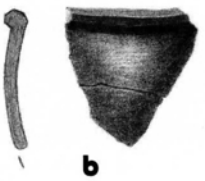


Fig. 3. Hammelev Nørremark. "The small farm". 1:800.







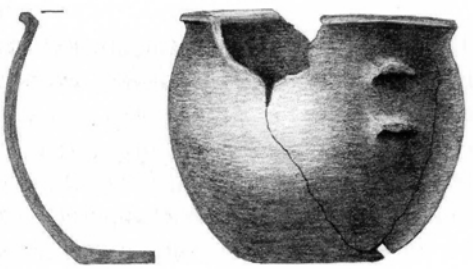


Fig. 4. Hammelev Nørremark. Pottery from "the small farm", house X, and nearby pits. 1:3.

Fig. 5. Hammelev Nørremark. The chieftain's farm phases 1 and 2. 1:800.

no evidence of houses or farms contemporary with these features.

The chieftain's farm

This was situated on the east end of an elongated roughly E-W orientated plateau and was bounded on the south, east, and north by damp hollows containing occupation earth, which curiously enough was from a different period than the farm. On the north there were found sherds from the Pre-Roman Iron Age only, while on the east there were also sherds of globular Viking pots.

The farm consisted of three large, nearly parallel three-aisled longhouses – III, IV, and V. On the west the farm was sheltered by a N-S orientated structure following a fence line – VI – which united the buildings into a whole (Fig. 5). It is open to discuss whether this was a building, a fence of posts that had been renewed, or a fence of double posts. Interpretation as a building conflicts with the slight southward slope of the surface, and posts for an entrance have not been identified; also the number of roof-bearing posts would be unusually large.

In favour of interpretation as a fence of single posts, is that such fences have found at a number of other sites, e.g. at Stepping Mølle and Ndr. Ringvej in Tystrup. On the other hand the posts seem to stand too symmetrically to be a fence of single posts with two phases,

while the distance between the two rows would be excessive in a fence of double posts.

Similar fence buildings are known from a contemporary large farm at Kærbølling, where they run both E-W and N-S. The most natural explanation is therefore to regard the posts as remains of a fence building. What the feature most reminds of is the fence buildings with ridged roof from the Late Roman and Early Germanic periods. Perhaps it is precisely in the Early Roman fence building that we should look for the origin of the fence buildings with ridged roof of the Late Roman period.

Building III is recognizable in two phases. In the older it was about 26.5 m long with its greatest width of 4.5 m near the two opposing entrances, whereas the width at the ends was only about 3.5 m. There were 7 sets of roof-bearing posts – three west and four east of the entrances. The side walls were strongly curved, but the shape of the ends was indeterminable owing to the small number of postholes traced. Neither fireplaces nor stall divisions could be seen. There is some resemblance to a Viking longhouse, but it differs from these in the absence of roof-bearing posts in the end-walls and in details of the entrance section. Also the wall postholes are rounded instead of rectangular.

In the later phase the eastern end of the building was reconstructed, perhaps because it was originally more lightly built than the western, cf. the smaller dimensions of the roof postholes. The ground plan was made less boat-shaped, and the outer walls less curved. The northern row of roof-bearing posts was replaced and moved about 0.75 m northwards, which called for a corresponding replacement of the northern wall. The same may also have been done with the southern wall, but the postholes are less well preserved. The southern roof post in the pair nearest the entrances was also replaced and moved slightly northwards. The southern wall was shifted westwards, and an extra set of roof-bearing posts was inserted between the last and penultimate pairs in the western end.

Building IV was more rectangular in shape. It also had two phases. In the earlier it measured 15 x 5.5 m and had five pairs of roof-bearing posts – two west of the two opposed doorways and three east of them. In the younger phase the building was considerably lengthened, coming to measure 23 x 5.5 m with seven sets of roof-bearing posts – three west and four east of the entrances.

Building V could only be followed for a single phase

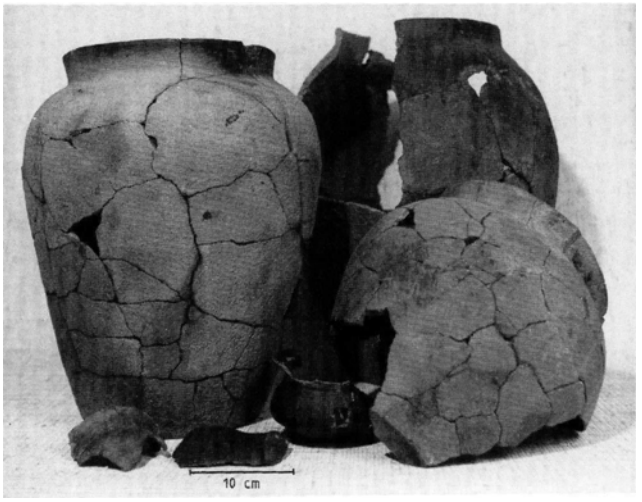


Fig. 6. Hammelev Nørremark. Pottery from the ritual pit.

Fig. 7. Hammelev Nørremark. Pottery from the chieftain's farm. 1:3.

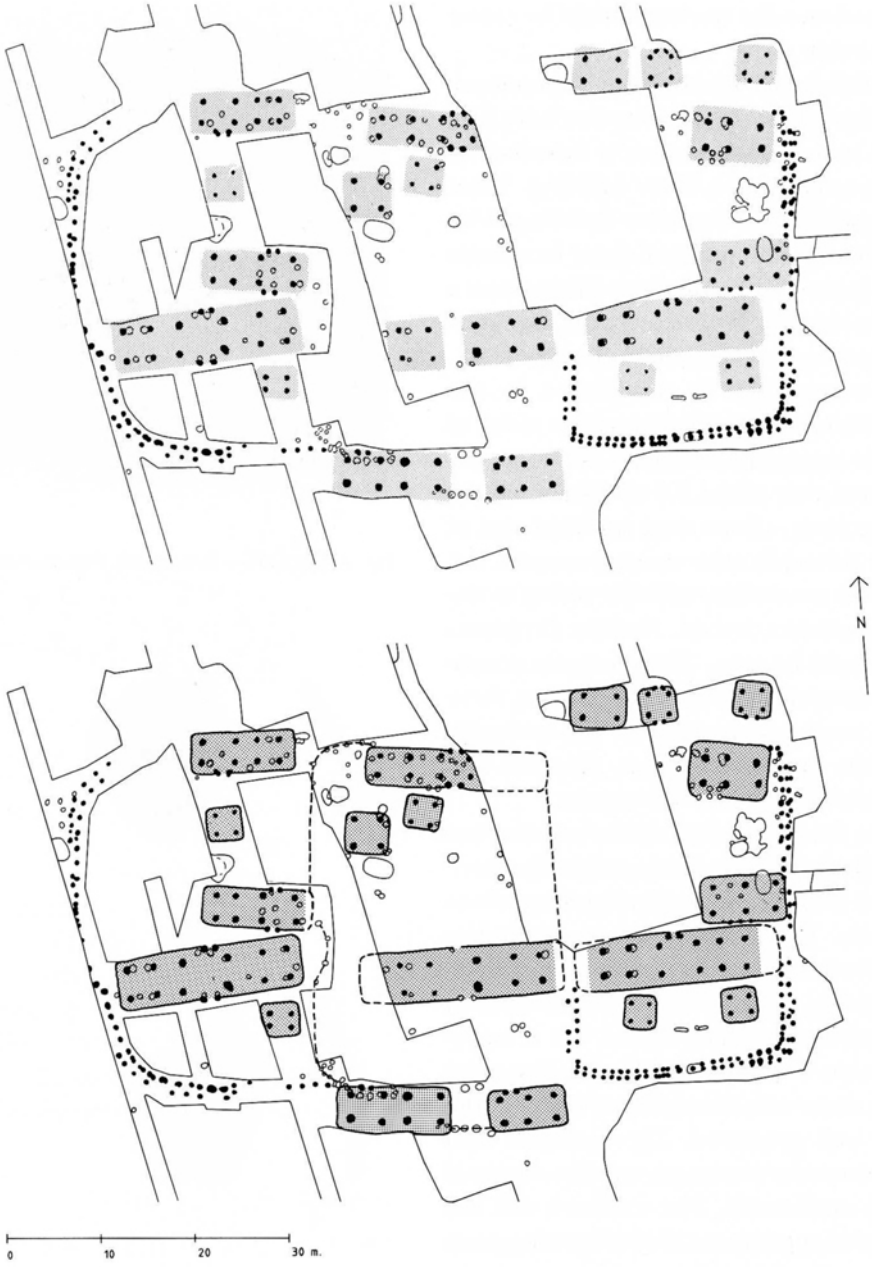


Fig. 8. Hvesager. Top: after Hvass (1988) and Mikkelsen (1991). Below: alternative interpretation. 1:800.

and was completely symmetrical around the two opposed doorways. Its dimensions were 21 x 4.5 m and it had six pairs of roof-bearing posts.

Fence building VI consisted of eight pairs of roof-bearing posts standing slightly closer together than in the long buildings III, VI, and V (1.5 – 2 m). The smallest length it could have was 22 m, and its largest possible width 4 m. Entrance posts were not observed. It is impossible to establish whether the roof-bearing posts stood in the line of the wall or inside the building, or whether there was a wall only on the side away from the farmyard.

Buildings III and IV are dated to the Early Roman period by pottery, which included comb-ornamented

wares (Fig. 7). The farmstead had four buildings, and was in use for a substantial time, for one of the buildings was completely rebuilt and another considerably altered. The entire complex measured 30 x 35 m, and may certainly be called a chief's farm. The enclosed area was twice as large as at the somewhat older chief's farm at Hodde (Hvass 1985).

However there are considerable differences from the contemporary big farm at Hvesager near Jelling (Hvass 1988: 64; Mikkelsen 1991). The Hvesager farm was more than twice as large and consisted of eight buildings enclosed by a fence of double posts.

One reason for the difference could be that the Hvesager farm belonged to a different cultural group, but an alternative explanation is that the Hvesager complex was really three similar farms of about the same size as the one at Hammelev Nørremark. At least six farms of this kind formed the youngest phase of the village at Galsted, which is pottery-dated to period B2. This reinterpretation is in no way incompatible with the published plans, for some possible fence lines starting from the main buildings in the middle could imply such a division. Unfortunately the most important part of the area could not be excavated (Fig. 8). If these thoughts are correct, the Hvesager complex could only be a village settlement of the same type as Galsted.

Phosphate analysis at Hammelev Nørremark seems to show that the three-aisled longhouses served different functions (Fig. 9). The southern building had no phosphate and must have been residential. In buildings III and IV the phosphate concentration was about equal in the eastern and western parts. Though the levels of phosphate are modest, they are substantial in the context of the phosphate map of the whole area. A possible reason is that the phosphate samples were taken after removal of the topsoil.

The phosphate could imply that both buildings served as byres. But why two byres? The lesser width of building III as compared with IV, in combination with the generally slightly smaller phosphate concentrations, could suggest that it was used for small stock like sheep, goats and pigs, while building IV perhaps was used for larger animals such as cattle and horses. Comparison with the Hodde estimates shows that building IV could have housed 45-55 head of cattle.

Fence building VI showed a marked increase northwards in phosphate content, which supports the interpretation that it was a building.

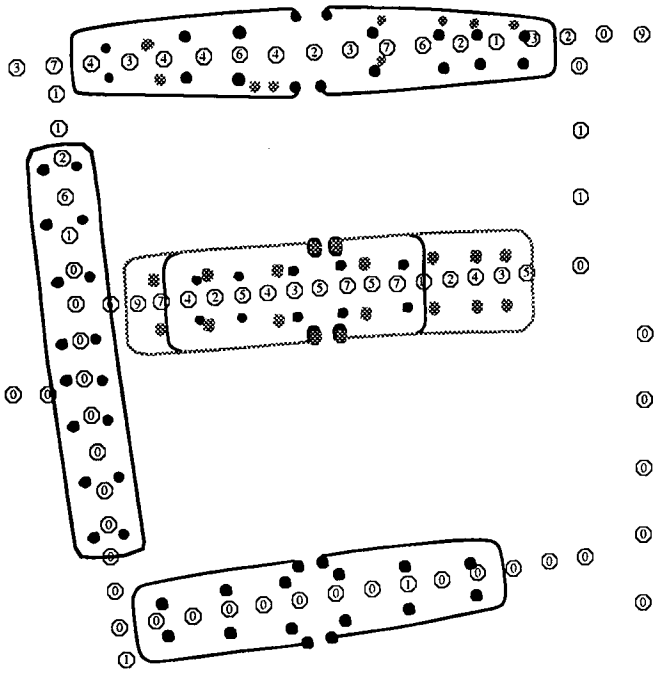


Fig. 9. Hammelev Nørremark. Phosphate map of the chieftain's farm. The relative phosphate content is shown as levels 0-10. Black, postholes from phase 1. Grey shading, postholes from phase 2.

The above is only an attempt to find explanations. The analyses do not contradict the explanations, but do not prove them correct either.

The farmstead was abandoned at some time during the Early Roman period, after which the spot was uninhabited until the beginning of the Viking period, when an isolated farm was again established.

The isolated Viking farm

This cannot be described as a "chieftain's farm", but is still the first Viking farm in southern Jutland that has been fully excavated (Fig. 10).

The finds from the earlier phase, represented by building I, which is N-S orientated, and building II, will be passed over briefly (Fig. 11). They all come from building I. The potsherds are unremarkable, consisting of remains of hemispherical vessels. Of greater interest is the base of a glass cone-beaker with concave base. Fragments of cone beakers occur in large numbers in the rubbish layers at Ribe (Jensen 1991:14-15). Elsewhere they are considerably less usual. There is a find

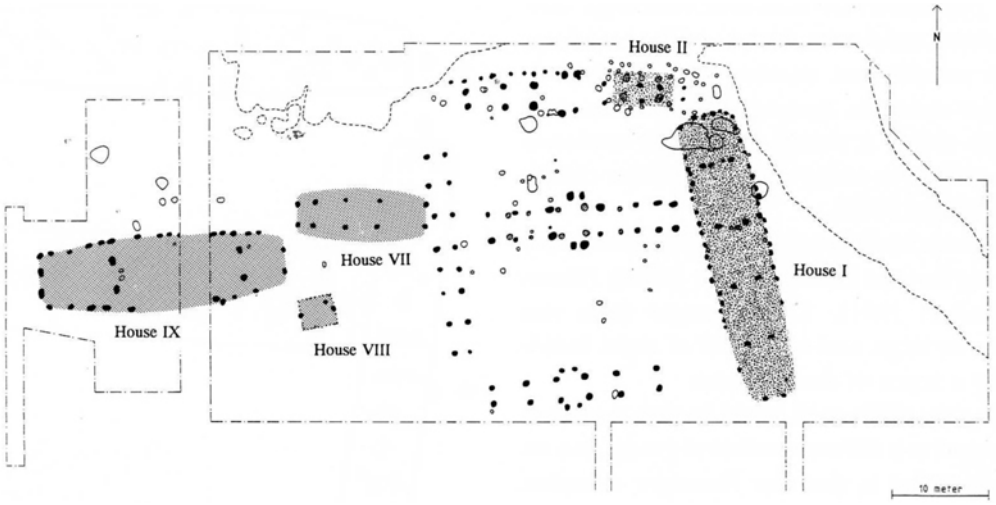


Fig. 10. Hammelev Nørremark. The Viking farm, phases 1 and 2. 1:800.

from a grave at Darum (Arbman 1937:46) and an isolated discovery from Hjerndrup (Arbman 1937:47) only 8 km north of Hammelev.

In the later phase the farm was moved westwards and the buildings reorientated E-W. There were now three buildings (VIII, IX and X), two of which were three-aisled structures. Although traces of wall posts only survive in the main building it is clear that both buildings had curved side-walls. The third building was a rectangular pit hut.

The southern activity area

To the south about 1000 m^2 were excavated of a large

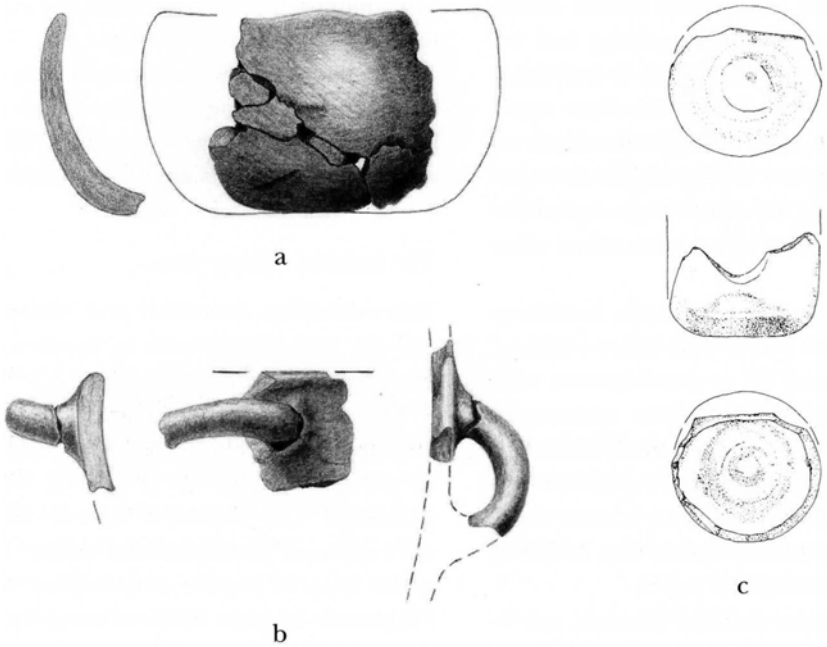


Fig. 11. Hammelev Nørremark. Pottery and glass from the Viking farm. Glass 1:1, pottery 1:3.

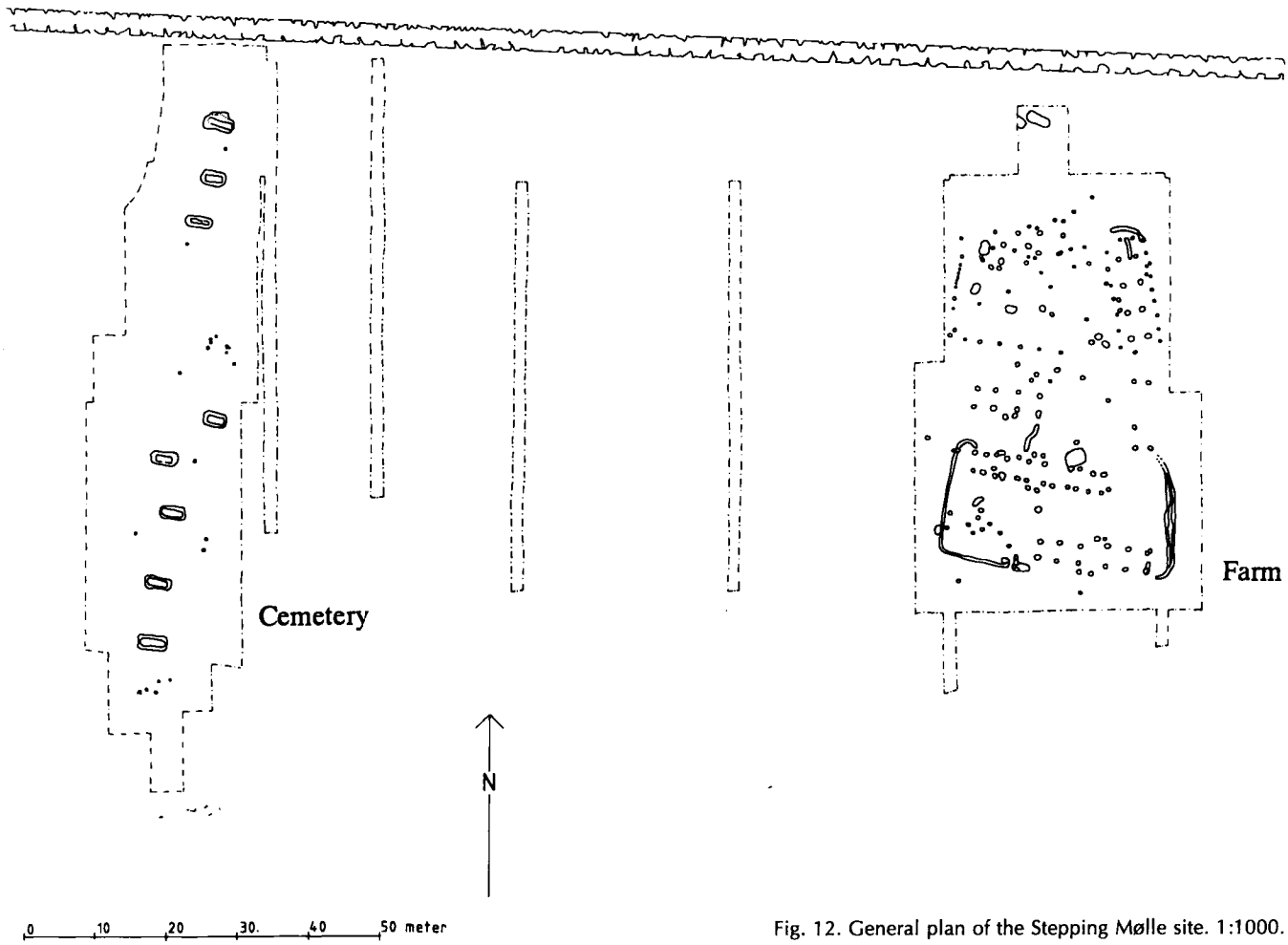


Fig. 12. General plan of the Stepping Mølle site. 1:1000.

activity area with occupation deposit and many clay pits, but no remains of settlement structures (Fig. 2). The pits, which in the main were only test-pitted, date from the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

STEPPING MØLLE

Close east of the little village of Stepping, 8 km west of Christiansfeld, an area of ca. 2,200 m^2 was excavated on account of raw materials exploitation. There were found remains of three farms. Two of them, a "chief's farm" and a smaller one, are datable to the Early Roman Iron Age, while the third can probably be dated to the Late Germanic Iron Age. If this is correct, it is the first farm from this period found in southern Jutland.

In 1984 the National Museum excavated a deep, partially stone-covered inhumation grave 60 m west of the farms. It contained a number of pots contemporary with the farms of the Early Roman Iron Age.

During autumn ploughing in 1991 the farmer encountered stones a good 60 m south of this grave. Haderslev Museum was informed and the area was excavated early in 1992. The cemetery and farmstead both stood on a distinct, elongated ridge of stratified sand and gravel running roughly E-W (Fig. 12). Northwards the surface fell via a terrace down towards Nørreå watercourse and its lush meadows. To the south lay a small wet area, probably a pond that has now dried. The chief's farm was situated at the highest point on the ridge, while the cemetery lay further west on the southern slope, at an altitude 4-5 m lower than the farms.

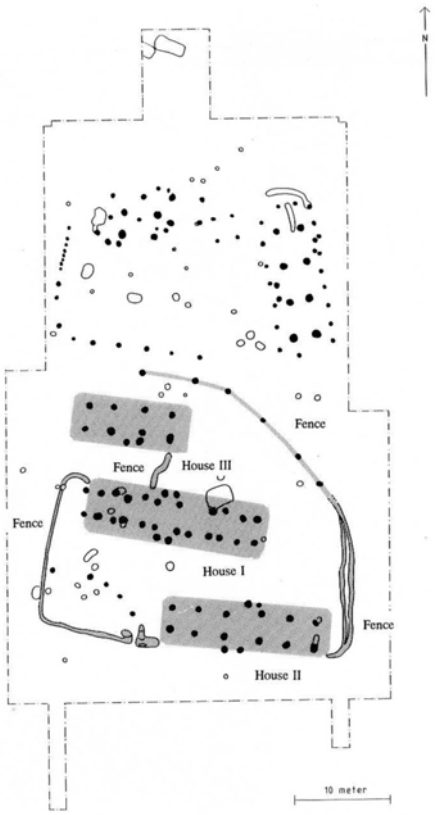


Fig. 13. Stepping Mølle. The chieftain's farm. 1:800.

The chieftain's farm

The farm consisted of longhouses I-III, joined together by palisade fences A1 and A3-5 and post fences A2 and A6 (Fig. 13). Post fence A2 starts north of building II and passes in a curve east of building I, where it joined palisade fence A1. This latter was constructed in two stages. The eastern part is probably the youngest. Palisade fence A1 continues as far as the eastern end of long building III.

Palisade fence A3 departs from the NW corner of building I and continued southwards west of the end of it and then curves over toward building II. Fence A4 starts from the west end of building II and can be followed westwards for 2-2.5 m. Fences A4 and A3 do not join, but leave a southwards facing entrance between their ends, marked by two large internal posts.

Buildings I and III are joined by palisade fence A5, which is slightly sinuous and has no entrance. There were entrances to the farmstead between the northern side of building III and fence A2, where the width was 2.5-3 m, and by the south-facing aperture between fences A3 and A4, opening towards a now dry steam bed down the slope 50-75 m south of the farmstead.

The depths of the six postholes forming fence A2 vary considerably (from 10 to 52 cm), as also indicated by the base levels. If we nevertheless regard them as a single feature, it is because they form a natural continuation of post fence A1 and because there are no other features in the vicinity they could be connected with. For this reason the area was cleaned off by machine at a number of different levels. The distance between the surviving postholes varied from 3.5 to 5.5 m. This does not exclude the possibility of other posts in the fence. The surface soil was up to 50 cm thick, increasing the chance that intermediate postholes had been ploughed away.

Post fence A6 consisted of five postholes of somewhat irregular depth, but with the same fill. The interpretation as fence is not sure. The posts in question could perhaps have formed a little enclosure within the farmstead. Another possibility is that the postholes represent an activity area.

Building I is a roughly E-W orientated three-aisled longhouse constructed in two phases. In the earlier phase it consisted of six pairs of roof-bearing posts. In the middle were two opposed entrances. The length was 19-20 m and the width 5,3-5,5 m. The entrances were marked by double posts and were probably drawn a little inward. No wall posts were preserved, and no evidence could be seen of the replacement of roof-bearing posts.

In the later phase the structure was completely renewed and shifted 1.5 m westwards, but the entrance posts were superimposed on the holes of the first phase. The posts were generally inserted less deeply than before, but the length and breadth were unchanged.

Generally speaking the fill of the postholes of the late phase in the eastern half of the building is describable as burnt debris. The quantity of charcoal and burnt daub decreased westwards.

Building II is a nearly E-W orientated three-aisled longhouse with six pairs of roof-bearing posts. In the middle there are two entrances, which are not quite opposite. The entrances are unlikely to have been drawn inwards. The building was 18 m long and 5 m wide. The entrance posts are in line with the palisade trench which show the maximum possible length of the building. Replacement of roof-bearing posts was not ob-

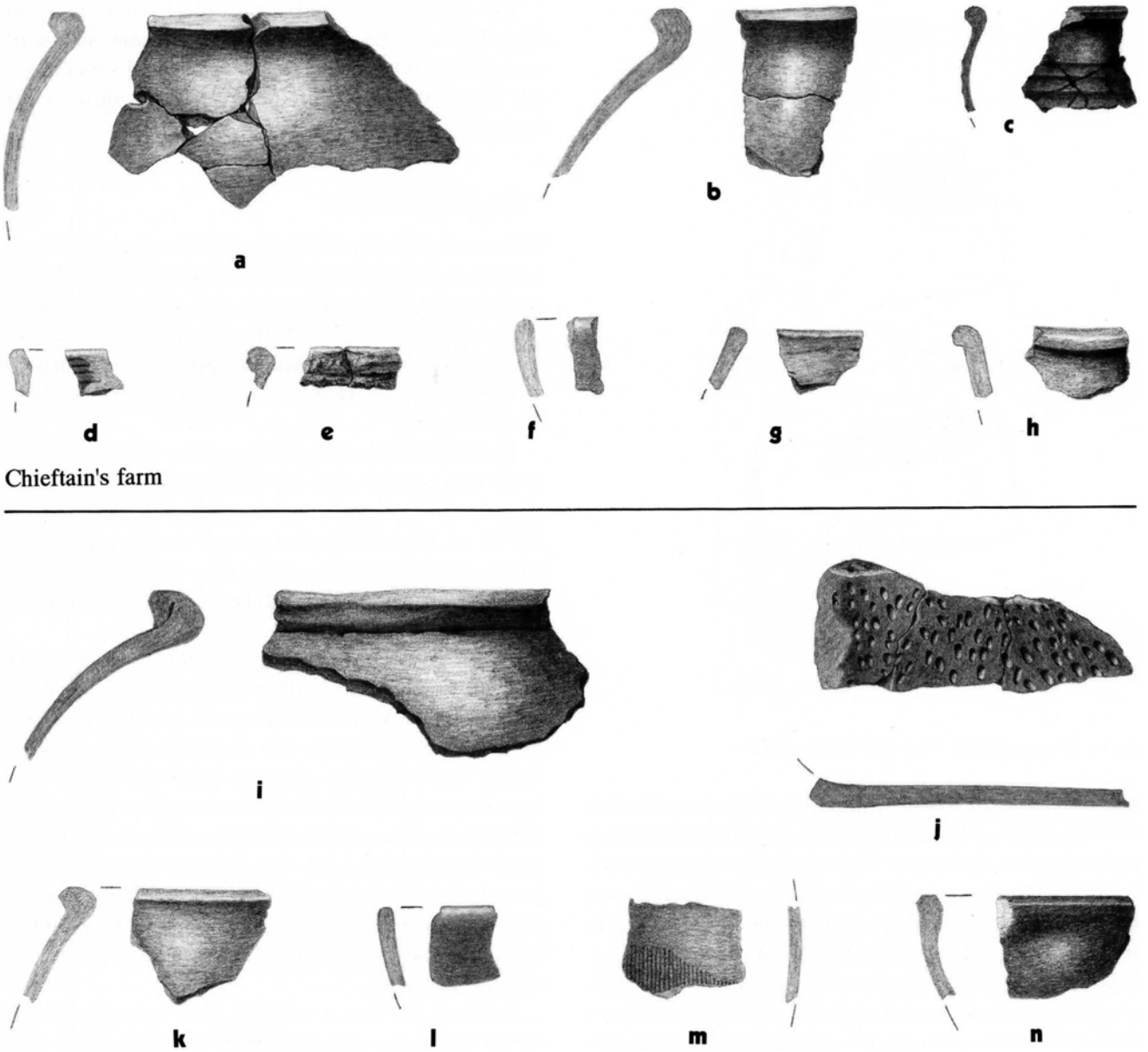


Fig. 14. Stepping Mølle. Pottery from "the chieftain's farm" and "the small farm". 1:3.

served, and wall posts could not be found.

Building III was a roughly E-W orientated three-aisled house consisting of four pairs of roof-bearing posts. In its centre there was a southward-facing entrance, which was probably drawn inward, to judge from palisade fence A5 and the short distance between the door posts and the roof-bearing posts. The building was 12-13 m long and 5 m wide. Replacement of roof-bearing or door posts was not observed.

This farmstead covered altogether 750 m^2 and can be described as a chieftain's farm.

Just as at Hammelev Nørremark there is evidence that the buildings served different purposes, but in this case this cannot be supported by phosphate analysis.

Flotation samples from buildings I and II show that seeds and cereal grain were kept in building I, while there were no such finds from building II. This suggests that building I was residential while the southern build-

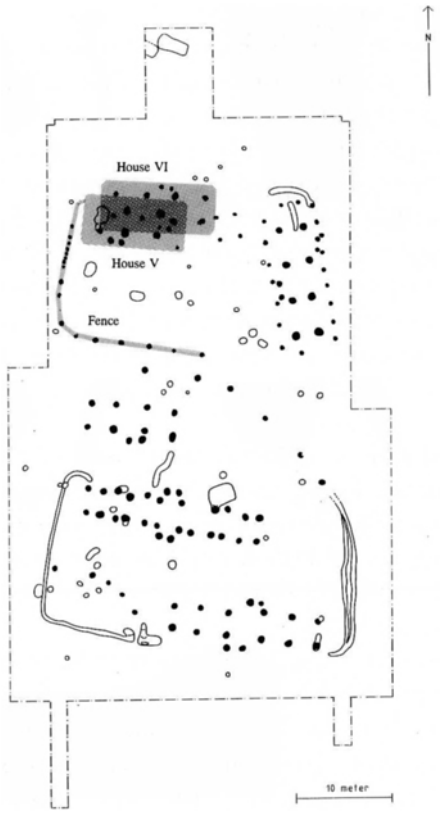


Fig. 15. Stepping Mølle. "The small farm". 1:800.

ing served as byre. There would have been room to stall 30-50 head of cattle. The function of the little building to the north is unknown. The reconstruction of building I and the renewal of the fence on the east indicate that the use of the farmstead lasted some time, which is further supported by the datings from the cemetery.

The different techniques of the northern and eastern parts of the surrounding fence, which were respectively in bulwark and palisade construction, could suggest that building III was the last constructed, indicating that the farmstead was enlarged in the latest phase.

The sherds from the farm are from bowls with facetted and sometimes thickened rims and larger jars with strongly thickened and facetted rims (Fig. 14). In one case three horizontal grooves could be distinguished. From the palisade trench connecting buildings I and III came a little rim-sherd of a black polished vessel with thickened rim with narrow facets, below which there were three relatively broad horizontal grooves. In the fill overlying sunken building VIII was found a large sherd of a footed beaker.

The pottery can be dated to the Early Roman Iron Age. The strongly thickened, facetted rims imply a first occupation relatively early in the period – perhaps in B1. The finds from the cemetery however show that the main use of the site was in period B2.

"The small farmstead"

This consisted of buildings V and VI, which were partly surrounded by post fence B1. Buildings V and VI may really be the same structure in two phases. It cannot be determined which is the older, but probably it is building V, partly because fence B1 appears to start from its western end wall (Fig. 15) and partly because it was burned down.

Post fence B1 can be followed for 16 m southwards from the western end of building V. Then it curves sharply 90^0 eastwards and continues in that direction for 16 m. Its western part was of closely spaced posts which, though not deep, were very clear in plan, while its southern part was of widely spaced posts, indicating bulwark construction.

Building V was an approximately E-W orientated three-aisled structure with at least two pairs of roof-bearing posts and two entrance posts on the south side. Probably the entrance was indrawn. West of the entrance was a further possible posthole, which could have been one of a further pair of roof-bearing posts, of which the other could not be found. Presumably it had been destroyed by a pit. The fill however was quite different from that of the other postholes, and the outline was very diffuse. In the clear postholes the fill contained burnt debris. The building was at least 9 m long and about 5.5 m wide.

Building VI was a roughly E.W orientated three-aisled longhouse with four pairs of roof-bearing posts. In the middle there were two opposite entrances, which seem to have been indrawn. The building was 12 m long and 5 m wide.

It cannot be exclude that building VI represents a later phase of building V, but except that the two buildings cannot have stood at the same time we have no stratigrapical observations.

The fence bounded a farmyard that was open on the east and measured ca. 16 x 16 m or about 250 m^2. When viewing the excavation plan one cannot exclude that building IV may really have been the farm's main building, which is to some extent supported by the pottery

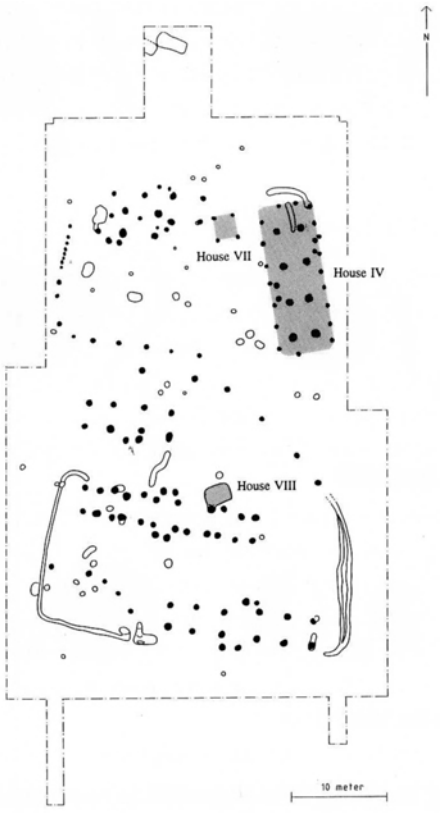


Fig. 16. Stepping Mølle. Farmstead from the Late Germanic period. 1:800.

found in the its postholes. However there are a number of important counterarguments – see below.

The sherds come partly from large vessels with strongly thickened and facetted rims, partly from bowls with thickened, facetted rims. There was also a comb-decorated body sherd (Fig. 14). It seems that this farm was built at the same time as the chief's farm, i.e. early in the Early Roman period, probably B1, and its use continued into B2, despite the fact that the sherds seem as a whole slightly older than those from the chieftain's farm.

If one chooses to regard building IV as a part of the farm, the whole complex could be seen as forerunner of the chief's farm, but that would not harmonize with the grave finds.

The farm of the Late Germanic period

This consisted of long building IV and pit hut VIII, together with the possible granary, VII. There is no unambiguous enclosure (Fig. 16).

Building IV was a ca. N-S orientated three-aisled longhouse. It had four pairs of roof posts. The holes of the wall posts survive almost completely. The side walls were straight and the end walls slightly curved. The average distance between the wall posts was about 2 m. There were indrawn entrances on either side, which were staggered in relation to each other. From the last pair of roof posts as far as the north wall could be observed a trench-like depression, which can be interpreted as a byre drain. There were no other signs of subdivisions in the building, which was 15.5 m long and 5.5 m wide.

Immediately outside the north end of building IV was observed a deep trench following the end of the house. It may be interpreted as a reconstruction of the north end, or as a little fence. Traces of posts were not detected, but close to the building the fill contained much red-burnt clay.

The fill of the roof posts resembled burnt debris, but not so the wall postholes.

Building VII may have been a granary. It consisted of four posts standing roughly in a rectangle measuring 2 x 2.3 m. The interpretation is not sure however, as both fill and depth were irregular. This possible feature was orientated approximately E-W.

Building VIII was a pit hut consisting of a rectangular pit measuring 2.4 x 2.1 m orientated about WSW-ENE. The sides were steep and the bottom flat, but the northern half was about 10 cm deeper than the southern. In a horizontal plane this deepening showed up as a rectangular area measuring 2.41 x 0.9 m. The maximum depth of the pit was 28 cm. There were no other structural features than the pits at each end for the ridge posts. The fill was unstratified and consisted of black-brown humic sand with charcoal. Scattered through this were pottery, daub, calcined bone, and a fragment of a spindle whorl (Fig. 17). In the middle of the pit's southern side was found a beaked fibula (Fig. 18). On the floor of the western half of the pit (Fig. 17) was found a complete spindle whorl.

A certain amount of pottery of Early Roman character was found, usually secondarily burnt. There was a large side of pot with groove ornament and an arched plug handle, typically Early Roman, and large vessels with strongly thickened rims that probably were facetted (Fig. 17).

In fill over the pit hut were found sherds datable to

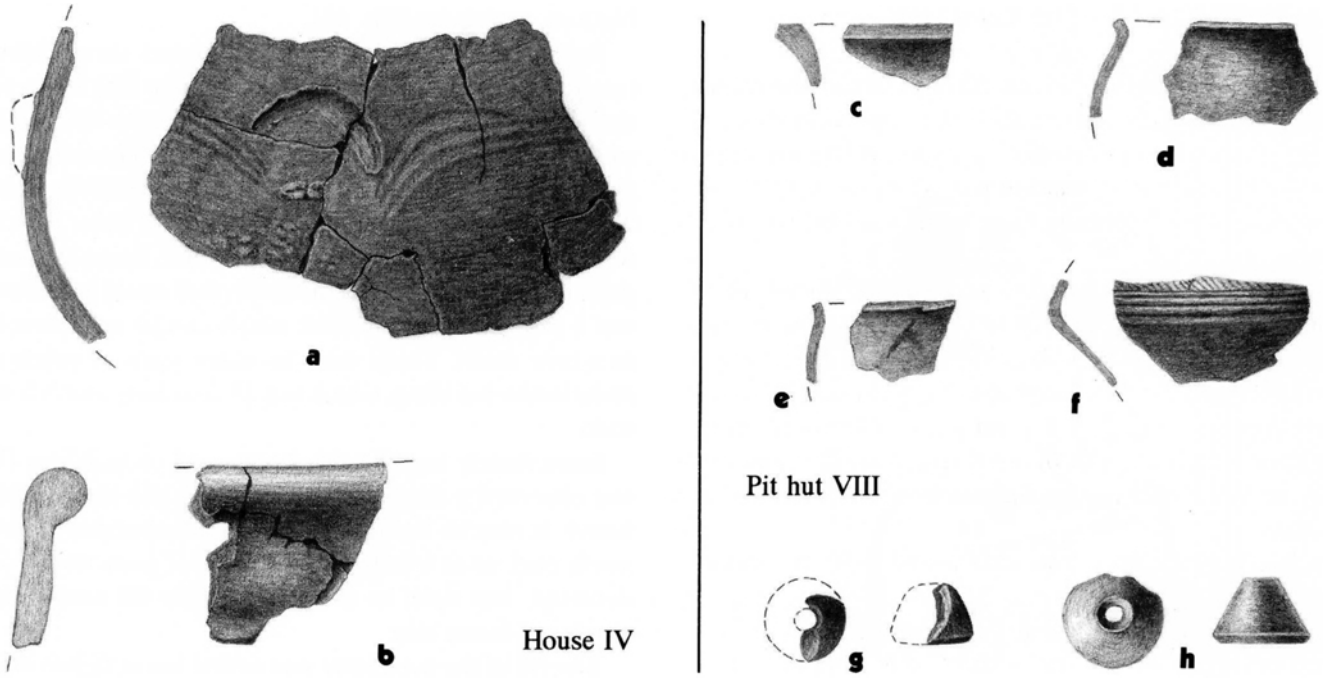


Fig. 17. Stepping Mølle. Pottery from the Late Germanic farmstead house IV and pit hut VIII. 1:3.

the Early Roman period – including a large sherd from a footed beaker, and also sherds from vessels with short outwards curved neck. The transition from neck to upper body was S-shaped with a tendency to be thickened. The sherds are definitely not Early Roman, and do not come from hemispherical vessels. Presumably they are contemporary with the beaked fibula and the two spindle whorls, and therefore date from the Late Germanic period.

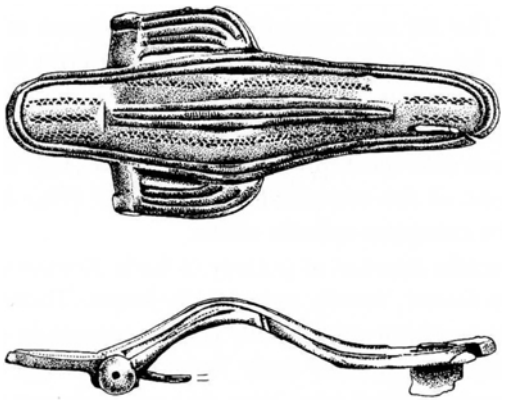


Fig. 18. Stepping Mølle. Beaked fibula from pit hut VIII. 3:4.

If long building IV is regarded as contemporary with the pit hut despite the fact that the pottery from its postholes is of Early Roman character (Fig. 17), this is because of its orientation, the indrawn entrances and their clearly different positions, and because wall posts survive. There is also a negative argument. If long building IV does not belong to the later Germanic period, the pit hut would be strangely isolated. The reason could perhaps be that it was a grave instead, but neither remains of coffin or skeleton were detected, and the fill contained habitation pottery which certainly is not from the Roman period. Another argument is that the index of the span of the roof-bearing posts in relation to the total width of the building falls within the limits set up by D. Mikkelsen for buildings from the later Germanic Iron Age (Mikkelsen, Hvass & Hansen 1991:19f). In dating the structure emphasis is laid more on the building's atypical appearance compare with buildings of the Early Roman period than on the pottery, which may be regarded as contamination. The whole farm is dated by the beaked fibula from the pit hut to the Late Germanic period – probably close of 6th or beginning of 7th century.

STEPPING MØLLE – THE CEMETERY

The cemetery lay, as said, ca. 60 m W of the settlement (Fig. 12). Its extent was ca. 20 x 90 m, and it consisted of eight large, deep inhumation graves and 19 cremations – 17 urns and two cremation pits. The cemetery is fully excavated and its limits have been established to all sides (Fig. 19).

The farm and cemetery were both placed on a distinct E-W ridge of stratified sandy deposits. Northwards the surface falls via a kind of terrace to Nørreå stream with its fertile meadows. To the south is a small wet area, probably a dried out pond. The chief's farm lay at the highest point of the ridge, while the cemetery lay on its southern slope further west and about 4-5 m lower.

The inhumation graves were found to be exceptionally large – usually around 3.60-70 x 1.70-80 m with depths of about 1 m below the plane of the excavation, indicating 1.3 – 1.4 m under original field surface. One grave was substantially deeper – 1.5 m, or 1.8-1.9 m under the field surface. A second was considerably larger. It lay furthest south and measured 4.2 x 2.1 m.

The eight inhumation graves were all orientated about E-W and lay in a N-S line. Only one grave diverged in being displaced ca. 2.5 m to the east – perhaps because of a large natural depression, that had later been filled up with small and middle-sized field stones stratified in two horizons, in the lower of which was found a small piece of a quern of Mayen basalt.

The graves lay in two groups, a northern with three and a southern with five graves. Within each group the distance between the graves was 5 – 7.5 m. Near grave 245 were found some scattered patches of stones, which when first revealed looked like graves. However further excavation showed that they were stones that had subsided into animal burrows. They are therefore likely to be what is left of a cairn with an original diameter of 10-11 m. Similar remains of cairns were not observed near the other graves, but the relatively large distance between them and their placing in a roughly straight line suggests that they may originally all have been covered in the same way, as is known i.a. at contemporary cemeteries at Hørløkke (Neumann 1978) and Hjemsted (Ethelberg 1986).

With a single exception the graves were covered by large rectangular stone packings, which continued conically down to the bottom of the coffin, sometimes

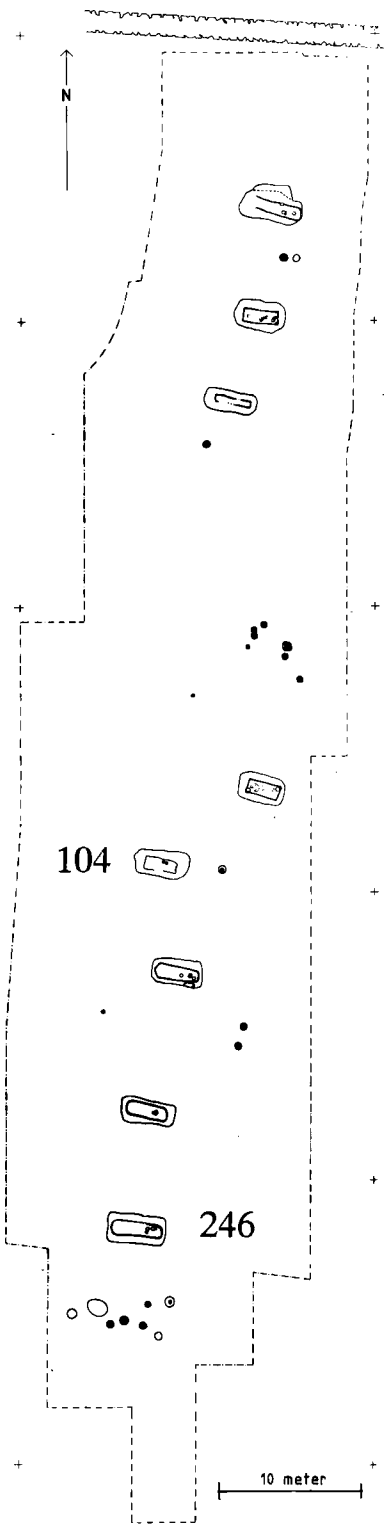


Fig. 19. Stepping Mølle, plan of the cemetery. Marked are the graves 104 and 246. 1:500.

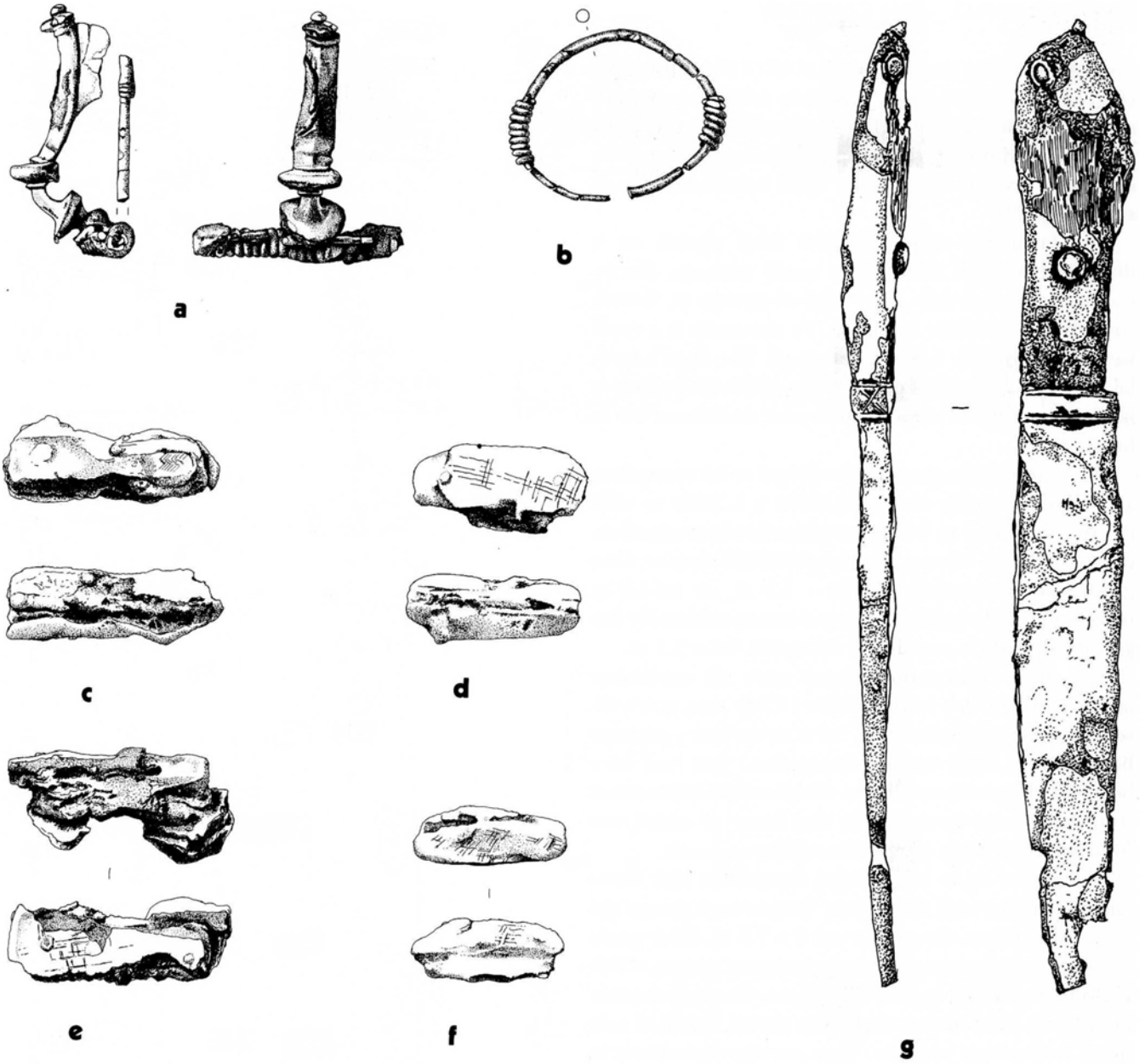


Fig. 20. Stepping Mølle. Equipment from the rich male grave 246: Fibula, knife, scabbard mount? and other mounts. 3:4.

enlarged under the place where the lid had first broken through.

The urn burials were scattered over the whole excavated area, but in two pronounced groups, one of which lay between the two groups of inhumations, while the other lay at the extreme south.

Although some general rules were followed in the layout of the inhumation graves, no two were exactly alike. All the bodies were buried with their head in the west. If there was a table set of pottery it was always at the east. Here the similarities cease. The body could lie on its side or back in a plank or log coffin. The pottery could stand on one side, in the middle, or in the corners. The number of planken and log coffins was alike; the kind of coffin seems not to have been dependent on either status or sex.

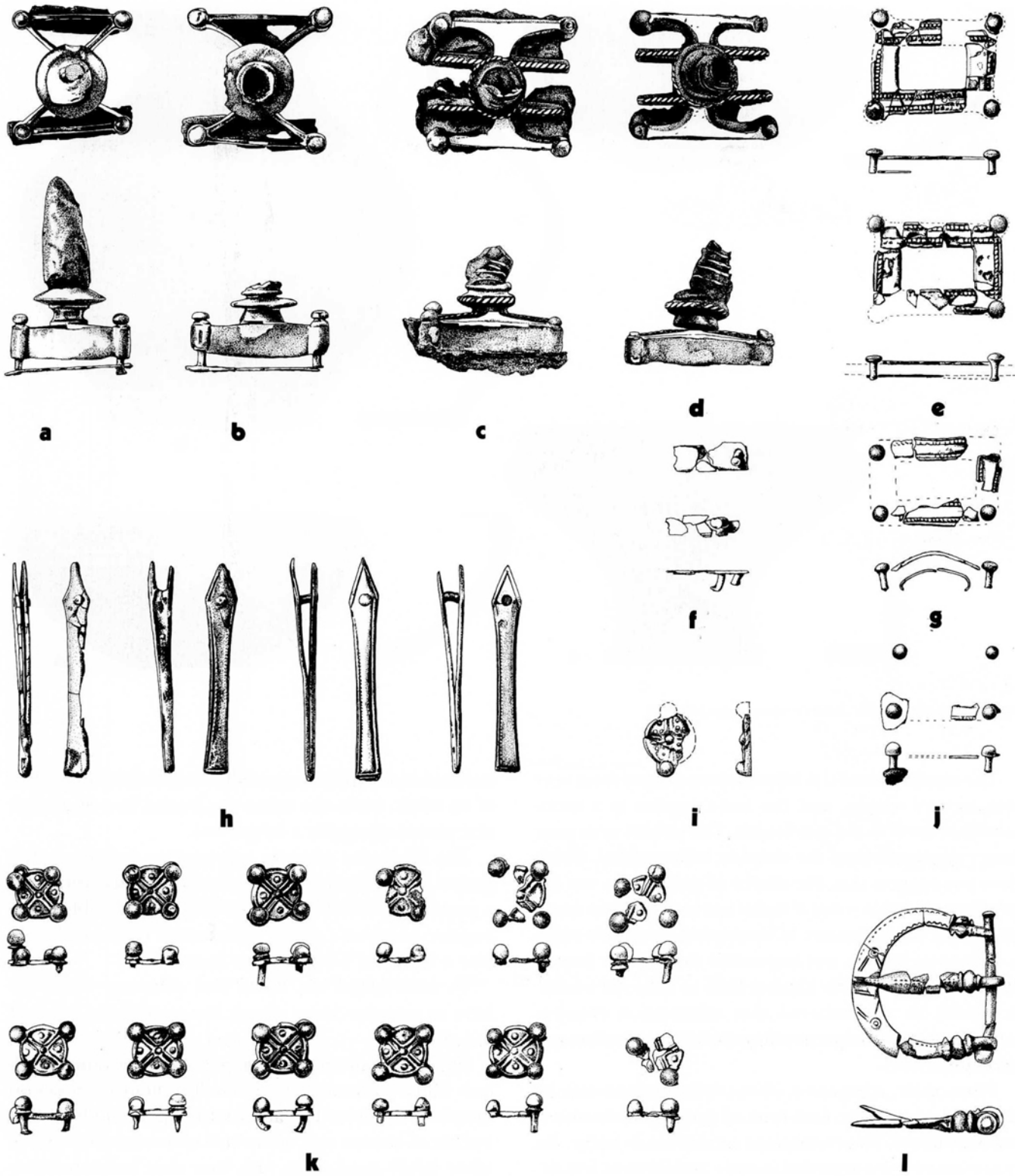


Fig. 21. Stepping Mølle. Equipment from male grave 246: Spurs, strap mounts, strap-ends and buckle. 3:4.

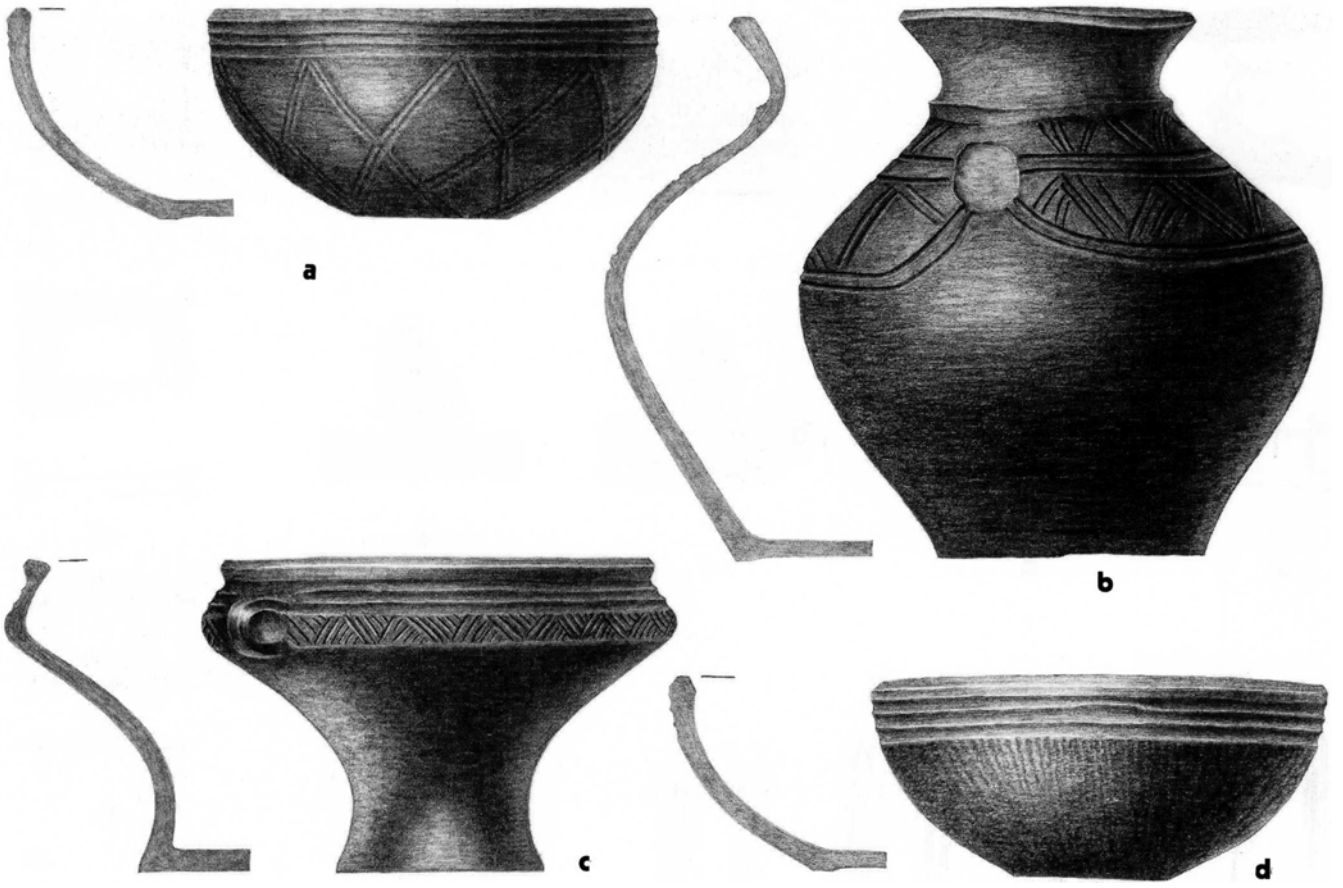


Fig. 22. Stepping Mølle. Pottery from grave 246. 1:3.

The equipment of the inhumations ranged from very rich to very simple, and the same applies at a more moderate level to the urn burials. The richest urns were better equipped than the simplest inhumations, which does not suggest that the choice of grave form was dependent on status – not if status was measured in material terms. The influence of kinship on a person's status is unknown, but it is not impossible that greater importance was attributed to kinship than to material wealth. It should be remembered that inhumation requires considerably greater expenditure of resources than urn cremation does.

From their equipment three inhumations can be determined as male and four as female. Only one is indeterminate. The cremations are harder to judge. Six may cautiously be regarded as male and three as female, while nine are indeterminate. So far it has only been possible to recognize two graves of children. One child was buried in a little log coffin placed beside the coffin of an adult, while the other was buried in a miniature urn placed alongside a larger one.

The 27 graves seem to represent a period of altogether 100-125 years, which corresponds statistically to a population of 8-10 adults as it was not possible to recognize children's graves sufficiently. This would indicate a family of 4-5 adults per farm.

To understand the farms and cemetery better we have to examine more closely the contents of some of the graves.

The richest of the men's grave contained a moulded-bow fibula of bronze with embellishments of precious metal on the bow disc and foot knop; a moulded belt buckle of bronze and other belt mounts; and a pair of silver inlaid stool spurs with four rivet holes and precious metal in the "stools". By the table set, which consisted of four pots, were found the remains of a pair of

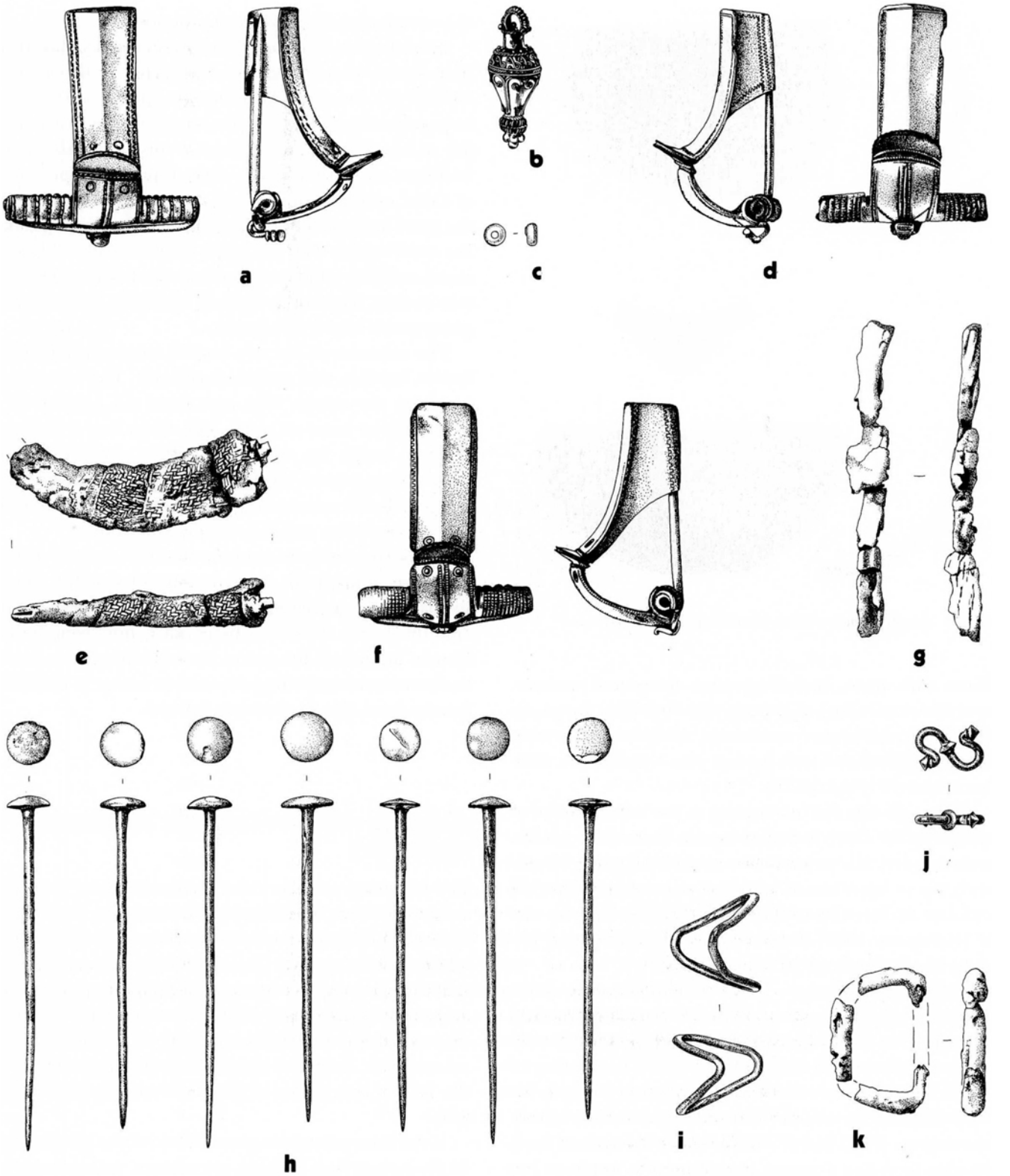


Fig. 23. Stepping Mølle. Equipment from the rich woman's grave 104: Silver fibulae, gold breloque, glass bead, silver pins, iron pin, silver S-clasp, knife, silver finger ring and a buckle. 3:4.

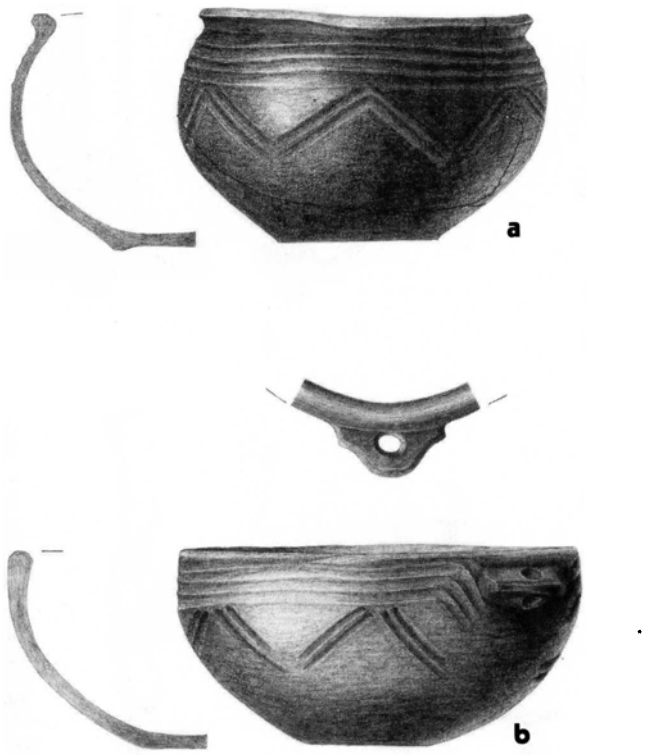


Fig. 24. Stepping Mølle. Pottery from female grave 104. 1:3.

shoes with spurs, including some decorated mounts, and also stool spurs of bronze with four rivet holes, an iron knife with bronze mountings, and parts of a bronze ring wound around with bronze wire – probably a scabbard mound (Figs. 20-22).

Although this did not belong to the richest series of graves in the Over Jerstal group, as there were no Roman imports, it is nevertheless an unusual grave. Graves with two or more sets of spurs are exceedingly rare. We can cite Brokær (Lund Hansen 1987:408), Kastrup urn 2 (Neumann 1957; Lund Hansen 1987:408) and Bodum Mark (Norling-Christensen 1960).

The richest woman's grave contained seven silver hairpins, a gold filigree breloque, four glass beads (two transparent, a dark blue, and two with goldfoil), an S-clasp of silver, three silver fibulae, and a finger ring of silver. The table set consisted of two pottery vessels, beside which lay an iron pin and an iron knife with bronze mountings (Figs. 23-24). This is so far the richest Early Roman Iron Age woman's grave found in southern Jutland. In closed south Jutland women's graves there have not earlier occurred S-clasps or gold breloques, which thus emphasize the grave's special position.

According to Hedeager and Kristiansen's classification of rich women's graves (Hedeager & Kristiansen 1982:114ff) the grave falls into group B as there is no large amber bead and the pin is not of silver or bronze, but of iron. On the other hand it contains both a gold breloque and a remarkable silver finger ring, probably of Celtic origin – an unusual combination which puts the grave at a level immediately under the A group. Like the man's grave this is a grave from the next highest social context, which will be described below as chieftain society. There is a kind of similarity between the grave goods in the two graves.

The contents of the urn burials were normally iron knives, buckles, and sometimes fibulae. Two urns stand out from the others. One contained the remains of a little filigree bead of gold. The other was a weapon grave in which the weapons – shield, spearhead and knife – were placed respectively under and outside the urn. Inside the urn was found a single stool spur of iron with 2 rivet holes and letter-I shaped "stool."

From a preliminary examination the cemetery seems to include finds both from periods B1 and B2. There seems to be good agreement between the grave goods and the farms. However there have not been found Roman imports in the graves. Perhaps this gives a key to the better understanding of social structure in the Early Roman Iron Age in southern Jutland.

CHIEFTAIN FARMS IN CULTURAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The following remarks refer primarily to the Over Jerstal group's area, as defined by H. Neumann (Neumann 1982:68ff), which is basically the present South Jutland administrative county. Recent studies have suggested that the area ought to be expanded slightly to the north and south (Christensen 1993). We should have reservations about the full representativity of the archaeological material. Attention should be called in particular to the lack of rich graves in the south-western part of the area.

If the interpretations given below of the distribution of the richest find contexts are correct, we have now localized 5 out of 12 possible localities, indicating a representativity level of a good 40%, whereas the same figure

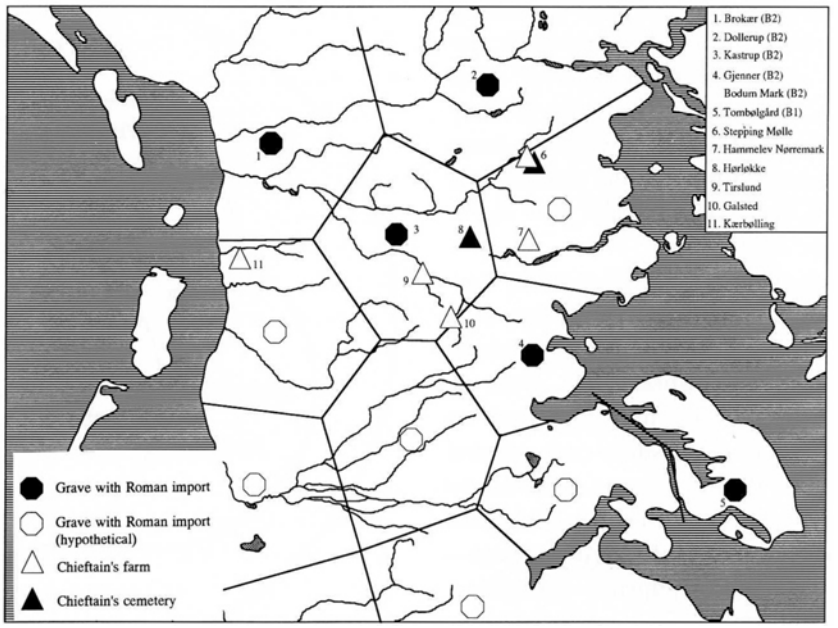


Fig. 25. Distribution of princely and chiefly sites in the Over Jerstal group.

for the big farms lies close below 5%. This may be because the latter features have only recently been recognized (Fig. 25).

On the basis of the graves there can be discerned an outline of the stratification of society into at least four groups. At the top is the prince. By "prince" is meant a person with greater regional power than a chieftain, but less than a king. The medieval connotation of the term should not be allowed to cause confusion.

Characteristic of princely graves are their Roman imports in the form of vessels of bronze or glass. In addition they often also contain gold fingerings, spurs, and sometimes weapons. They are almost exclusively men's graves. Princely graves from the central area of the Over Jerstal group are the following: Dollerup (Ørsnes & Voss 1948), Brokær (Lund Hansen 1987:407, 429), Kastrup (Neumann 1957 and Jacobsen 1975), Gjenner and Bodummark (9) (Norling-Christensen 1960) and Tombølgård (Norling Christensen 1960). These sites all have in common that they contain 1-3 burials. It cannot be determined whether these lay alone or formed part of a larger cemetery of unknown size. The graves are either urn burials or inhumations. The distance between sites is 30-40 km, and, with the exception of the two graves from Tombølgård on Als, they are datable to B2. We do not know how the residence of a prince looked.

The next step down the social ladder was the chieftain. This stratum is indicated by men's graves with silver inlaid spurs, but never weapons, and women's graves with silver hairpins, filigree beads of gold, gold breloques, fibulae of silver or bronze (sometimes with precious metal embellishments). Graves of this type occur at normal cemeteries and seem mainly to be inhumations, though one of the urns from Stepping Mølle contained a squashed filigree bead of gold. Examples of cemeteries of chiefly type are Stepping Mølle and Hørløkke (Neumann 1978).

The Stepping Mølle excavations showed that the chieftains lived in large isolated farms outside the villages. Other examples of this are the chiefly farms at Hammelev Nørremark and Kærbølling, and a large isolated farm was found outside the latest of the Galsted villages. A fifth chiefly farm was located near Tirslund during air reconnaissance in the summer of 1992, and the Hørløkke cemetery must indicate a sixth, cf. above. Judged from the present distance between the closest chiefly contexts it looks as if the chieftains" farms lay at intervals of 8-12 km (10).

There is nothing in the central area of the Over Jerstal group to indicate that graves with silver decorated spurs represent old warriors who were buried without their weapons, as has been suggested (Hedeager & Kristiansen 1982:125). Considering that spurs first appear

in graves from the end of the Pre-Roman and beginning of the Early Roman period, they ought (especially the luxurious ones) to be regarded as insignia of rank rather than as weapons, as seems for instance to have been the case with the incredibly rich royal grave from Musov in southern Moravia, whose many furnishings included 8 pairs of spurs, two pairs of which were decorated with silver (Böhme 1991).

The next step down the ladder is represented by warrior graves and graves with gold rings. These can with caution be interpreted as the graves of village leaders. Warrior graves, with certain exceptions (11), were always urn cremations. Spurs are not regarded as weapons, and therefore graves with spurs only are not regarded as weapon graves. Weapon graves seem not to occur at cemeteries where there are burials with gold rings. Gold rings are found both in inhumation graves – Ottesbøl (Neergård 1931) and Hjemsted (Ethelberg 1986) – and in urn cremations – Frørup (Christensen 1988) and Galsted (Grøn 1987). In inhumation graves with gold ring(s), black-polished, thin-walled pottery occurs as an integral part of the grave goods. This agrees with the observation that at Hodde this type of pottery was concentrated around the largest farms (Hvass 1985:178). Black-polished pottery however is also regularly found in inhumation graves without gold rings.

Until the end of 1994 it was not possible to excavate any Early Roman period village of the Over Jerstal group in full, including its graves or cemeteries. Nevertheless known discoveries already gave a partial indication of the relationship, warriors *contra* village leaders.

At Hjemsted probably all the urn cemeteries belonging to a village have been found. During excavations in 1977-86 seven sure cemeteries with 4 to 45 urns were recorded; an eighth was found in 1916 during the construction of "Sicherungs-Stellung Nord" (Ethelberg 1988:123). Four of the cemeteries included weapon graves.

The cemeteries were in use for periods of varying duration. At least four however were used simultaneously. Close by there was also excavated a cemetery of the same age consisting mostly of inhumation graves in a row along the course of a road and perhaps covered with mounds. One of these graves contained a gold ring (Ethelberg 1986; 1990).

It can hardly be doubted that these relatively small cemeteries must be interpreted as family graveyards

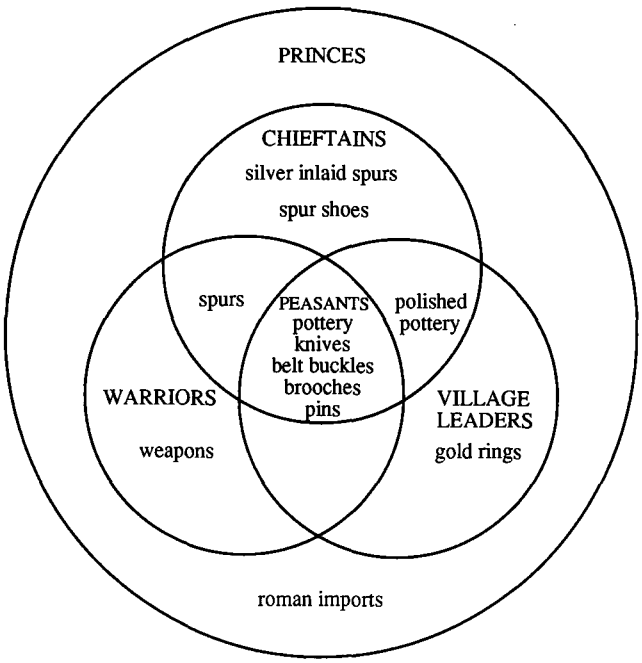


Fig. 26. Model for the social stratification during the Early Roman Iron Age in the Over Jerstal group.

from villages in which there lived both warriors and persons entitled to wear gold rings.

The discoveries at Galsted tell the same story (12). Near the village settlement (Grøn 1987), which was partially excavated in 1980 and at which a small number of urn cremations were found, a larger number of urn cremations and cremations pits were excavated by Neumann in 1941 (Neumann 1982:80f), and by Ethelberg in 1993. They lay in a number of different family graveyards. The urn cremations included weapon graves and a grave with a plain gold ring (not in same family).

The weapon grave from Stepping Mølle shows that warriors could be found not only in the villages, but also at the big chieftains' farms. We still do not know whether warriors lived in the isolated farms. Similarly it is not possible to say whether persons with gold rings lived exclusively in the villages, but on present evidence it seems that the functions of warrior and village leader were distinct, i.e. the military and political leadership of a village were separated. It looks as though warrior graves were most often attached to the villages. It is therefore possible that the distribution of warrior graves agrees with that of the villages, which in that case would have been evenly spread and close together over

most of the area of the Over Jerstal group without clear differences between the east and west.

The bottom stratum, the farmers, is represented by family graveyards with only pottery, fibulae, pins, knives, and belt buckles. These cemeteries can either be urn cemeteries, e.g. Hjemsted (Muurholm 1989; Ethelberg 1990) or inhumation cemeteries, e.g. Højgård (13). Also this stratum seems to belong to the villages.

In the Over Jerstal group it is unlikely that large common cemeteries will be found like those of northern Germany and Fyn. One of the largest cemeteries in the area is Drengsted, where nearly 90 graves were recorded (Hansen 1992). It may be pointed out that the isolated chiefly farms do not seem to have been founded with a view to developing into villages.

An attempt has been made at a graphical representation of the suggested social stratification in the Early Roman Iron Age of the Over Jerstal group (Fig. 26).

FORTIFICATIONS

The last type of feature to mention are enclosures with surrounding ditch. At least two are known from the area of the Over Jerstal group – Trælbanken between Tønder and Skærbæk (Harck 1979) and Favrvrågård near Christiansfeld. They have in common that no structural traces have been found within the enclosure. The role these features played can only be guessed. O. Harck proposes that they were "communal meeting places" rather than defensive works (Harck 1979:40), while H. Andersen suggests they were refuges (Andersen 1992:24). The one thing that is certain is that they formed an integral part of settlement structure in the Early Roman Iron Age.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion it can be said that the portrayal given here of social structure in the Over Jerstal group agrees well with the wider picture drawn by L. Hedeager of the development in the Early Roman Iron Age (Hedeager 1990), and that it also corresponds well with the situation in the area immediately to the north (Mikkelsen 1991). However there seems not to be a level above the graves with Roman imports, which presumably represent society's highest elite, the princes. Whether these lived in villages or in isolated farms is unknown. However we do know that the chieftains lived in large farms outside the villages at intervals of 8-12 km. To each of these large farms was attached a smaller one. There can be little doubt that the inhabitants of the small farm lived in a position of dependency on the chieftain. In the light of the relatively poorly equipped urn burials from Stepping Mølle and Hørløkke it seems likely that their status was lower than that of the ordinary inhabitants of the villages.

The relationship between the chiefs and the villages is unknown, but it is not impossible that the villages were subordinated to them. The chiefs may have exercised their power through the warriors and the persons buried with gold rings.

At the top were the princes. The distribution as known today suggests that a prince ruled over an area 30-40 km across. It can hardly be doubted that the princes were connected through alliances, perhaps in tribal federations. The Over Jerstal group itself may have been an example of a tribal alliance with a uniform political and religious structure.

If we take a short look at settlement pattern in the same area at the beginning of the Late Roman Iron Age, there can be no doubt that a further centralization of power has taken place (Ethelberg 1992). East of the end moraines the country is almost entirely deserted, but in the west population has increased. The number of weapon graves falls drastically. Large fortifications are built, and weapon depositions culminate in the peat bogs. Inhumation burial becomes almost completely dominant, and there is no continuity in the use of the cemeteries from the Early to the Late Roman period. A similar discontinuity can be observed in the location of the richest graves. This must mean that the social system that evolved during the Early Roman Iron Age was upturned at the transition to the Late Roman period (9).

Translated by David Liversage

Per Ethelberg, Haderslev Museum, Dalgade 7, DK-6100 Haderslev

NOTES

Drawings: Steen Hendriksen and Jørgen Andersen.

1 Ndr. Ringvej, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 2159, Tystrup parish. Excavated by A.B. Sørensen, I. Bodilsen and P. Ethelberg.

2 Galsted, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 2908, Agerskov parish sb. 157. Excavated by O. Grøn nd P. Ethelberg. See also note 12.

3 Ladegårdsvænget, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 2182, Åstrup parish. Excavated by I. Bodilsen.

4 Hammelev Nørremark, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 2529, Hammelev parish sb.7. Excavated by P. Ethelberg.

5 Kærbølling, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1622, Rejsby parish sb.22. Excavated by F. Rieck and P. Ethelberg.

6 Stepping Mølle, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1666, Stepping parish sb.35. Excavated by P. Ethelberg.

7 Stepping Mølle, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1865, Stepping parish sb.23. Excavated by P. Ethelberg (in 1984 F. Kaul, National Museum, excavated a grave belonging to the cemetery).

8 Favrvrågård, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1796, Tystrup parish sb.23. Excavated by A.B. Sørensen and L.S. Madsen.

9 In south Jutland the graves from the Late Roman period are no earlier than the beginning of C1b (Ethelberg 1990:111), which means that the Early Roman period must have continued here until the beginning of the 3rd century. This is in agreement with L. Hedeager's dating of the period boundaries (Hedeager 1990:24). Another consequence is that the Bodum mark find, which is normally dated to B2/C1a, has to be regarded as a princely grave from the Early Roman period belonging to the princely horizon of the Over Jerstal group. There is thus no contradiction when imports were found in the grave which, had they had been found in Zealand, would have been assigned to the Later Roman period. This reflects that the development was not synchronous in all parts of the country.

10 The distance to Kastrup and Hørløkke is ca. 8 km. At Byens Mark in the western part of the town of Haderslev there was found an inhumation grave whose contents included a spur (Neumann 1982). At the present moment it cannot be determined whether it is silver inlaid. The grave is dated to the beginning of the 1st century. The site lies slightly less than 6 km from Hammelev Nørremark. If this grave is correctly classified as a chiefly one, it would seem that the distance was sometimes less than the generalization given above of 8-12 km.

11 So far only one cemetery in the territory of the Over Jerstal group is known to have inhumations from the Early Roman Iron Age with weapons, – the cemetery in Gaede's mark in Dover (sb.1, Lintrup parish) (Petersen 1989:36). The explanation may be the site's geographical position in the northern part of the area.

12 The excavation of the Galsted site was resumed in the spring of 1993 owing to deep stone clearing for potato cultivation. It continued in the autumn of 1993 and was completed at the end of 1994. It is the first totally excavated village with its cemetery excavated in the Over Jerstal group.

13 Højgård, Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1706, Gram parish sb.170. Excavated by P. Ethelberg.

14 In the Early Roman period cemeteries are known from the Over Jerstal group with isolated inhumation graves, e.g. Tirslund and Tornumskov (Petersen 1990). There are also localities where cemeteries from both the Early and the Late Roman Iron Age are present, eg. Enderupskov (Haderslev Museum j.nr. 1053, Gram parish sb.107, unpublished, excavated by H. Neumann, H. Lausen, E. Jørgensen, F. Rieck, and S. Wiell) and Rødding Nord (Haderslev Museum j.nr. 2422, Rødding parish sb. 24, unpublished, excavated by Ethelberg). These, however, do not reflect continuity but rather the re-use of the sites in question.

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