

## Brandstrup III.

### Axe and Taper from two Viking Age Chamber Graves

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In 1953 P.V. Glob and J. Lavrsen excavated a richly appointed Viking Age equestrian grave (Brandstrup I) on Ejner Kjær's farm at Brandstrup near Rødkjærsbro, 10 km SE of Viborg (Lavrsen 1960, 1971). The locality, in a moraine landscape of hills and deeply eroded valleys, is in Vindum Parish, Middelsom District (fig. 1).

In 1990, Viborg Stiftsmuseum was called to the same farm in Brandstrup, because Kjær had encountered numerous stones while grubbing one of his fields. They lay on a hilltop, at a spot where in dry summers there were a couple of distinct square patches with enhanced growth. The new site lies 300 m north of the equestrian grave and is separated from it by meadowland (1).

The hill consists of pure clay and has steep sides, and

a top plateau measuring c. 20 x 25 m. The plateau was completely excavated, whereas practical and financial considerations restricted us to driving sounding-trenches down over the hillside.

In the central part of the 625 sq.m. large area, two bole coffin graves from the Late Roman Iron Age, an undated grave from the Iron Age or Viking Age, two chamber graves from the Viking Age, some undated structures, and a couple of modern disturbances, were found (fig. 2).

In the following, only the Viking Age graves will be treated; the Iron Age graves are presented in another context (Iversen & Nielsen 1996).

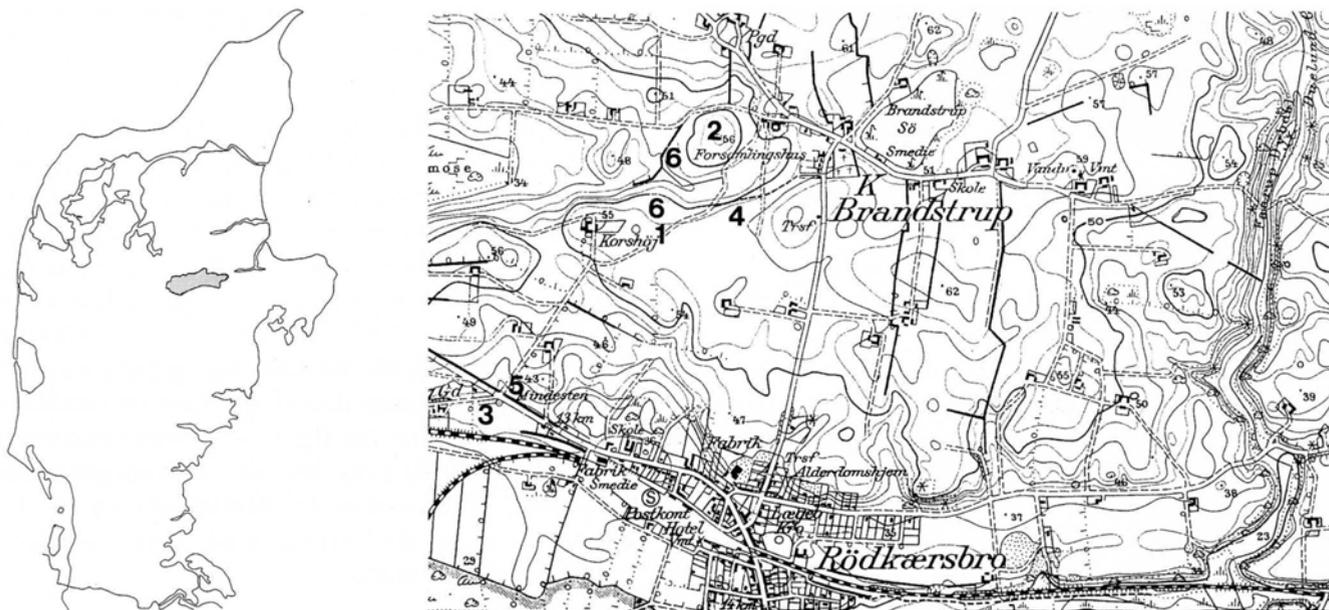


Fig. 1. Map of Denmark with Middelsom District and Brandstrup marked. Detail 1:25,000. 1, Brandstrup I; 2, Brandstrup III; 3, Faldborg Church ruin; 4, Viking Age farm; 5, Germanic Iron Age farm; 6, Early Medieval house ruin. Reproduced by permission of Kort og Matrikelstyrelsen no. A.404/85.

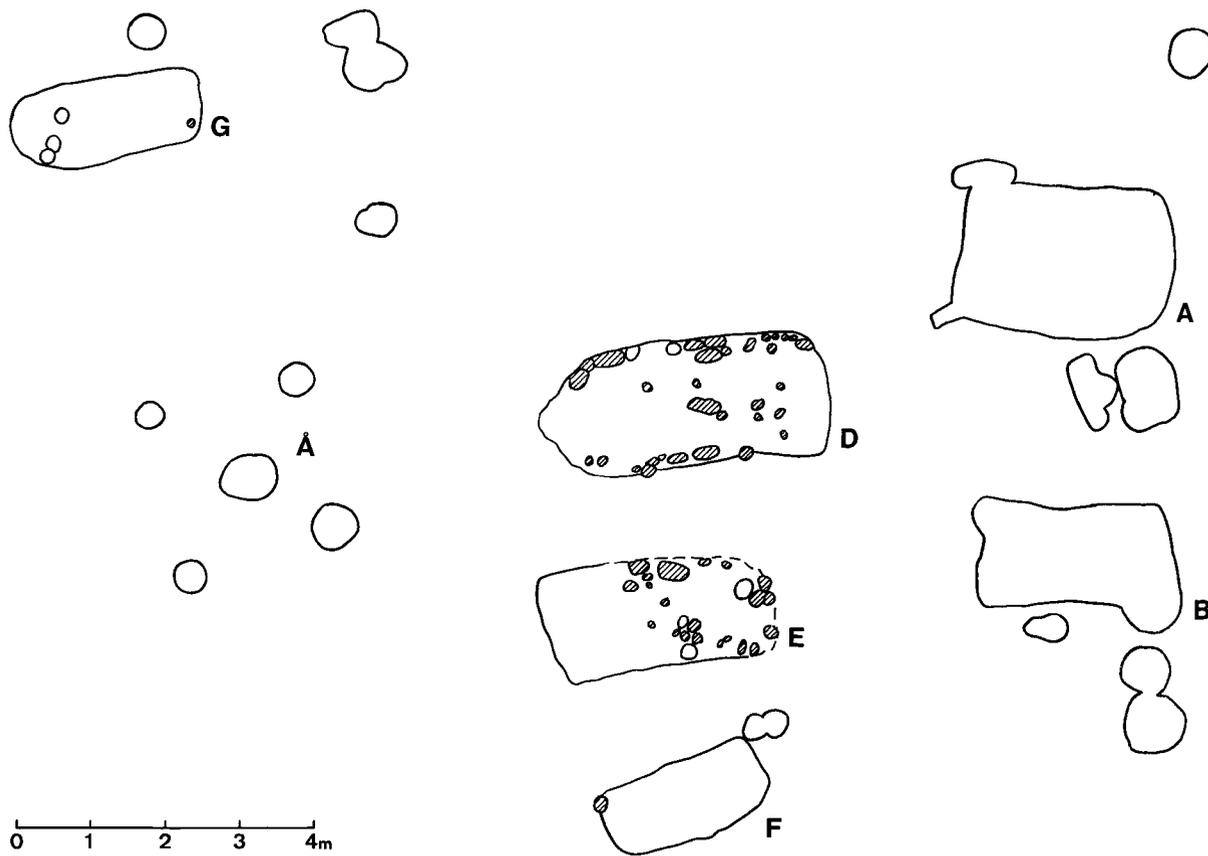


Fig. 2. Plan of the cemetery. A and B: Viking Age chamber graves; D and E: bole coffin graves from the Late Roman Iron Age; F: modern excavation (or empty grave); G: plank coffin with an undated iron knife; Å: undated structure. 1:200.

## THE GRAVES

The two chamber graves lay side by side, 2 m apart, and were oriented E-W.

In the fill of the northern grave there were occasional traces of turf construction, whereas the fill in the southern grave, which was not set so deeply in the subsoil, was quite uniform, but otherwise of the same dark colour and character. Over the first, grave A, a barrow must have been raised, which the second, grave B, was later set into. The barrow must have completely disappeared a century ago, for it is not even registered as a vestige in the National Museum's parish perambulation of the 1880s, but there is nevertheless a remembrance of it, because there is a story that the hill sometimes rose on pillars and that pixies danced under it. Ejner Kjær was also warned by his grandfather not to go near the hill, because it could be dangerous (2).

There is nothing to suggest that a barrow was raised in connection with the older burials at the site. It cannot be determined whether the chamber graves respect these burials by chance or there was a marking which lasted 600 years, the vegetation perhaps revealing the position of excavations and stone settings. There was no difference in the nature of the fill and the location of the erosion layer in the two Iron Age graves, and one must therefore assume that they either lay outside – which is not possible (cf. fig. 2) – or were completely covered by, the Viking Age barrow, which consequently had a radius of at least 8 m. The absence of stones at the west end of one of the Iron Age graves is due to a modern superficial disturbance.

### *The chamber graves*

*Grave A* was visible in the subsoil surface as a blackish

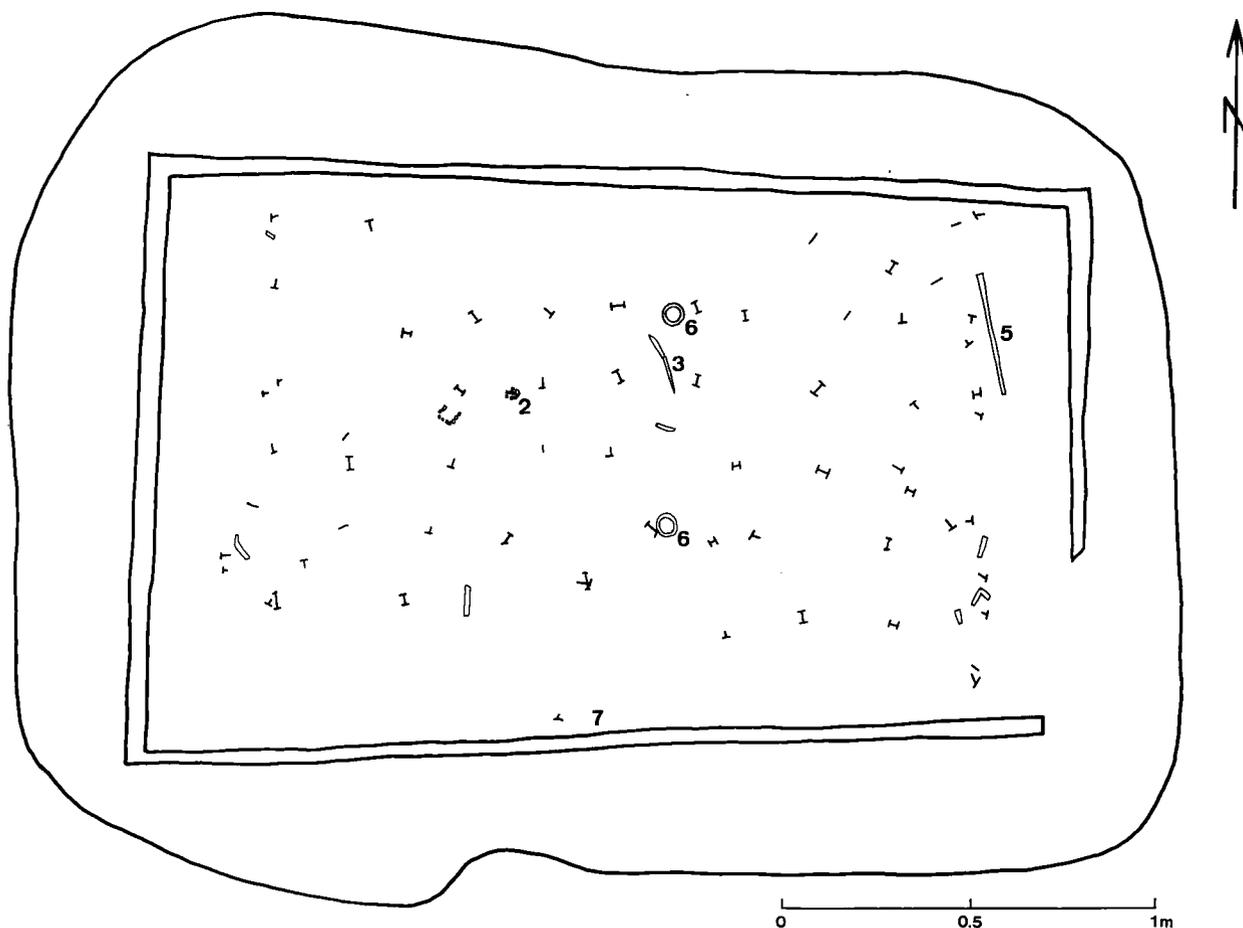


Fig. 3. Grave A. Plan of floor level with all finds marked. 1: teeth; 2: glass beads and silver object; 3: iron knife; 4: whetstone; 5: wax taper; 6: carrying rings; 7: chamber walls. The plan also shows iron fittings, rivets, nails and nail tips. 1:20.

brown rectangular patch measuring 2.80 x 1.90 m.

The actual chamber was slightly trapezoid and had inside dimensions of 2.40-2.45 x 1.50-1.35 m, the east end being the narrower; it was set c. 65 cm into the subsoil (fig. 3-4).

The walls could be followed as dark stripes of decomposed wood from the base and 30 cm up, and at the west end the lower 6 cm of the wood was so well preserved that it could be seen to be a plank (3). The horizontal wall planks rested directly on the floor of the grave, and in only a few places were there traces of a shallow groove in the subsoil clay. There were no nails or fittings in the wall line, and the plank marks were too indistinct to reveal how the corners of the chamber were joined. Up to a height of c. 40 cm over the floor, the interval between the chamber wall and the grave-pit wall was filled with subsoil clay (with the exception of part of

the south wall, where the innermost 10 cm were apparently grass turfs). Above this, the fill was the same inside and outside the chamber wall, namely dark grey fill with a few stripes and lenses of the nature of grass turf (barrow fill). Whether the chamber itself merely reached the top edge of the clay packing, or was higher, could not be ascertained.

Nails and rivets on the floor of the chamber showed that a wagon body was used as a coffin. This stood along the north wall, slightly askew. The east end was, however, parallel to the east end of the chamber. This wagon body was 1.90 m long, and the width was about 1 m, but cannot be given precisely, since no unambiguous edge or corner fittings were found.

There were traces neither of a lid over the wagon body, nor a roof over the chamber, but the latter at least must have been closed.

Bones and a little bone substance showed that the grave occupant lay head to the west. At the breast was a cluster of beads and a silver(?) coin in connection with a small piece of skin, probably from a purse or bag. At the waist lay an iron knife and a whetstone. Just outside the east end of the wagon body lay a wax taper. Of the wagon body, rivets, nails, fittings and two iron rings were preserved.

Two metres south of grave A was a similar blackish-brown rectangular area, which also proved to contain a chamber grave, *grave B* (fig. 5).

The chamber was rectangular with inside measurements of 2.20 x 1.15 m; it was set only 35 cm into the subsoil. As in grave A, there was between the grave pit and the chamber wall a 10-20 cm wide strip of disturbed subsoil clay.

A mere 2 cm down, the planks in the chamber wall were already sporadically visible, and in the bottom part of the chamber the stripes of decomposed wood were sharply defined against the grave fill and subsoil clay. The chamber was constructed of horizontal planks set



Fig. 4. Grave A. To the left is the wax taper on a soil pillar ready to be taken up as a mount. The plank at the west end is seen to the far right. In the foreground to the right is a strip of subsoil clay that was placed over the chamber floor, perhaps to support the wagon body. The walls of the chamber are most distinct to the right of the section. Viewed from the north.

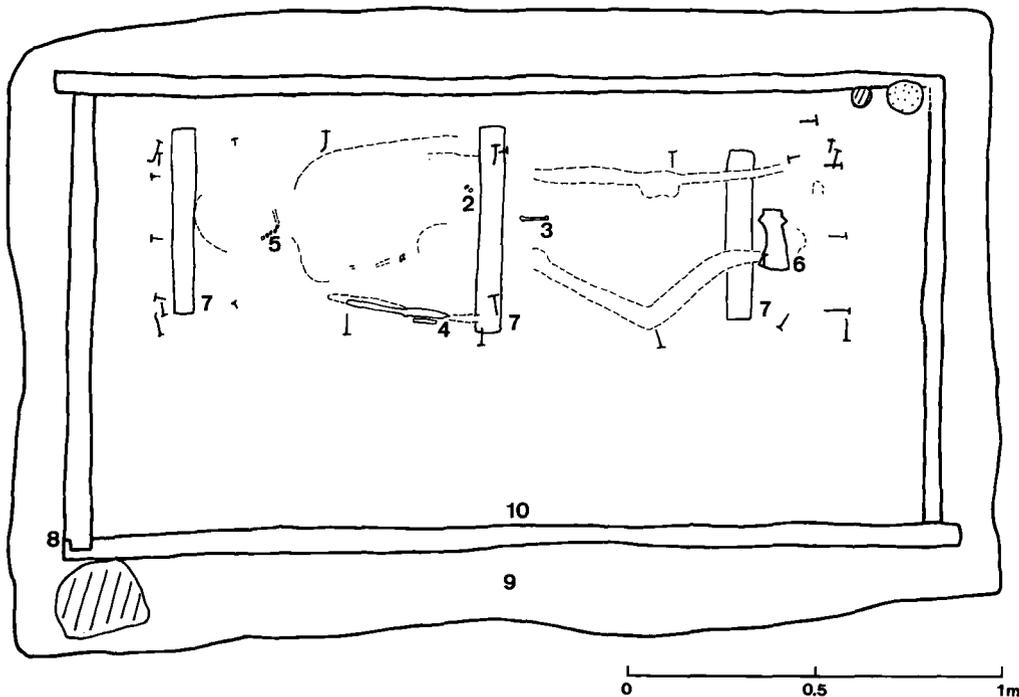


Fig. 5. Grave B. Plan of floor level with all finds marked. 1, bronze ring (for sliding fastener); 2, disintegrated bronze; 3, strap end; 4, iron knife and whetstone; 5, teeth; 6, iron axe; 7, traces of transverse planks under the coffin; 8, chamber wall joint; 9, clay packing; 10, chamber wall. The plan also shows nails, bone traces and stones. 1:20.



Fig. 6. Grave B. East end of the grave at floor level with traces of the chamber's plank walls and in the background the mount with the axe. To the left the outstretched left leg and bent right leg of the body are seen as dark stripes. Viewed from the S.

on edge, and in the NE and SE corners the side planks were seen to have continued some few centimetres beyond the end planks (fig. 6). Along the north wall, a rectangular soil mark measuring 1.85 x 0.65 m with nails at the edge revealed the position of the coffin. This had stood on 3 transverse planks measuring c. 50 x 5 cm, pressed a short way into the subsoil clay. There were no clear traces of a lid to the coffin, although some of the nails lay so that they could have belonged to one, whereas planks covering the chamber were evident in the section as a thin stripe of decomposed wood 10-20 cm over the floor.

Teeth and bone mass of the occupant were still preserved, the body lying head to the west, left leg outstretched and right leg bent; the height was at least 1.68 cm.

At breast height there was an iron knife near the right arm and close by the end of the tang a whetstone, at the breast fragments of bronze fittings with a feather attached to the corrosion product, at the waist fragments of a bronze ring, in the region of the thigh a strap end, and at the feet an axe with the edge pointing south.

There was no turf structure in the fill over the chamber cover, probably due to the grave being set into the barrow raised over grave A; this also explains the shallowness of the grave.

Wagon body burials are normally womens' graves, and the cluster of beads on the breast of the deceased confirms that grave A contains a woman. Ordinary coffins can, on the other hand, not be used to establish the sex of the occupant, and in the case of grave B it is therefore the grave goods, weapons, which indicate that it is a man's grave.

#### *The finds from grave A*

*Iron knife* (978E198) (fig. 7) with silver inlaid blade and silver winding on the shaft.

The knife was taken up as a mount and is known only from radiographs, being so poorly preserved that it cannot be freed. It is c. 18 cm long, with a c. 7 cm long blade and a c. 3 cm long tang; the handle is c. 11 cm long. The tang is offset from the blade, which is angled near the point.

The blade is decorated on either side with two rows of silver dots in panels delimited by thin silver wire. The winding around the handle is in three groups: at the top three broad bands, in the middle two broad bands, and near the blade three broad bands separated by two narrow ones. The broad bands consist of 8-10 windings, the narrow of three. Along the back of the handle there is a 2-ply silver wire.

Knives with silver winding on the handle are fairly common in well-appointed men's and women's graves (Müller-Wille 1987:58 with refs.), whereas inlay in the blade is very unusual. A knife from the Bogøvej cemetery on the island of Langeland (Grøn *et al.* 1994:130, 162f. & fig. 137) and a knife from the PK Bank in Lund (Nilsson 1976 fig. 196) are the only ones otherwise known from Viking Age Denmark, and there are apparently none in the rich Norwegian and Swedish Viking Age finds (4).

The special character of this knife emphasizes that the dead woman was a person of rank, and it cannot be her social background, but other circumstances, that determine the otherwise meagre furnishings in this grave.

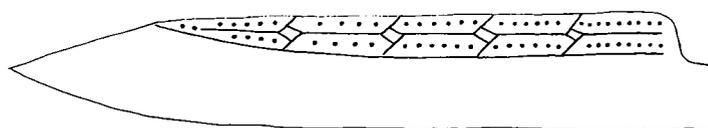
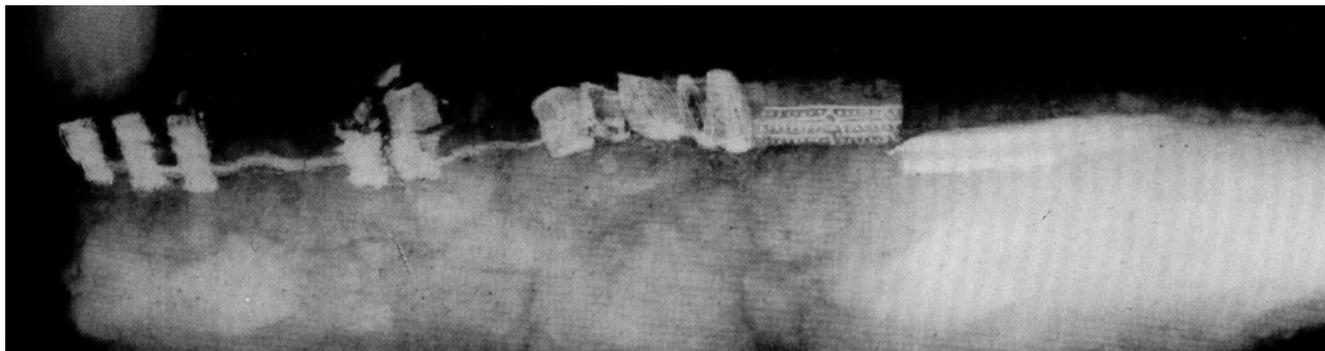


Fig. 7. Grave A. Roentgenogram and drawing of knife with silver inlay.

*Whetstone* (978E202) (fig. 8), which lay with the knife, is of so-called purple slate (5).

It is rectangular to square in section and tapers towards the end, perhaps due to heavy wear. The tip must have broken off at an early stage due to a fault in the material. At the top there is a large hourglass-shaped suspension hole. Length 63 mm, width and thickness 95 x 60 mm at the top and 60 x 70 mm in the middle.

The other finds from the wagon body lay in the breast region and were taken up as a mount (fig. 9). This proved to contain *skin*, a *circular silver object* (978E127), 8 *beads* (978E205-210 and 978E139) and *coffin beetles*.

The skin is too decomposed to decide whether it was fur or leather. It is probably the remains of a small bag or purse holding the beads and the silver object.

In the Birka graves, 57 bags and purses of skin have been found, 12 of them of a simple type without metal fittings, etc. (Gräslund 1984; Arbman 1940, 1943). Most of the bags or purses of the simple type (and also of the total material) have contained coins. Some of them contained weights, and bronze buttons, beads or mirror fragments have also been found.

Skin bags are rare in Danish graves – doubtless because they are preserved only if they have been in contact with metal, and coins and weights are not a part of the normal grave goods here.

In Stengade grave BØ were found near the female occupant's upper arm a leather bag with two spindle

whorls, a seam smoother, two lumps of amber and a bronze box that contained bullace pits, an iron rivet, two glass beads and a glass sherd (Skaarup 1976:91ff.).

In Stengade CC a snippet of cloth or skin containing 15 Arabic coins was found (one of them unstamped) under the chin of the male occupant, and in front of the woman in grave AV was an Anglo-Saxon coin wrapped in "some open-weave cloth, which was probably the remains of a small purse" (Kromann 1976).

Coin finds in graves are just as unusual as skin bags;

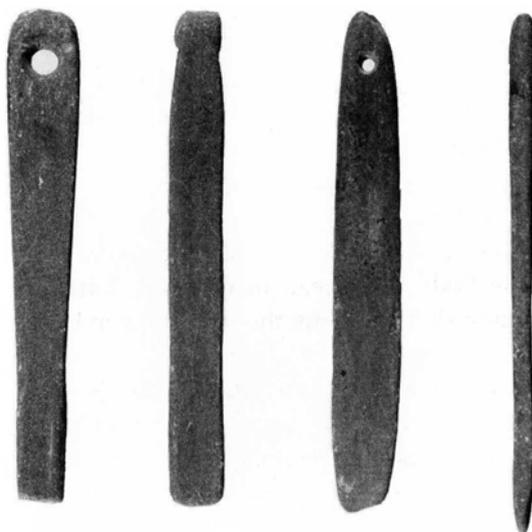


Fig. 8. Whetstones from graves A and B. 1:1.

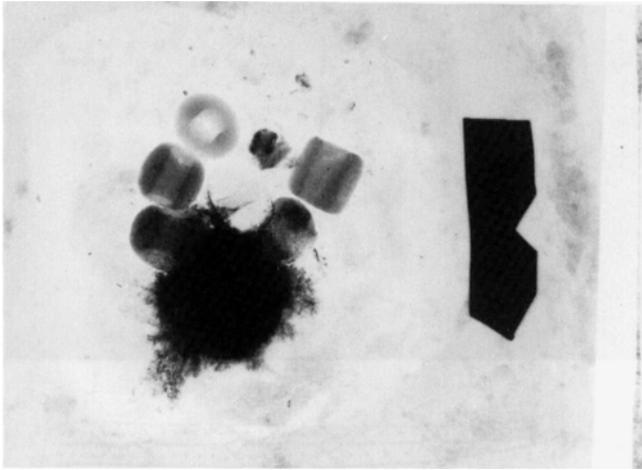


Fig. 9. Roentgenogram with beads and ?coin.

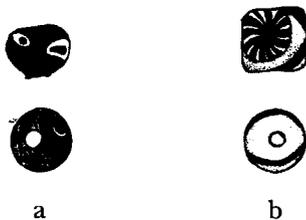


Fig. 10. Grave A. Mosaic beads. 1:1. Mohan S. Arulanandam del.



Fig. 11. Grave A. Coffin beetles (*Rhizophagus parallelocolis*).

Kromann states that apart from the Stengade graves, only five Danish graves are known that contain coins (6). One of these graves in particular is interesting in this connection: in the equestrian grave at Brandstrup, three Hedeby half-bracteates were found, so the custom of furnishing the dead with coins was well known here. The coins in Brandstrup I were likewise at breast height, but there were no traces of a bag, whereas a little iron adhered to one of them.

Many coins in a grave are usually considered to be a burial gift with the same function as other grave goods, whereas a single coin or fragment is often interpreted as a Charon's coin (despite the fact that in the Viking Age it was not placed in the mouth but usually on the breast or in front of the face) (Gräslund 1967; Kromann 1976; Müller-Wille 1976). In the Stengade cemetery, both types of deposition are represented, and the same may apply in Brandstrup (7).

The *circular silver object* has a diameter of c. 1.7 cm but is so corroded that it cannot be extracted from the mount, and the X-ray pictures unfortunately do not help us to a better identification, for there are no traces of suspension hole, eyelet, coin stamp or other decoration.

The radiographs have been shown to conservator Birthe Gottlieb of the National Museum, Copenhagen, and to Anne-Sofie Gräslund, University of Uppsala, both of whom considered the object to be a coin. Anne Kromann of The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Copenhagen, has also informed me that it is by no means unusual for the stamp on a coin to be invisible in an X-ray picture.

Based on these expert pronouncements (and the presence of an unstamped coin among the Stengade coins), and on the Nordic comparanda, the most likely interpretation of a circular, flat silver object in a skin bag on the breast of a corpse is that it is a coin.

Under the skin and silver coin lay 8 beads: A rounded bead with hourglass-shaped perforation; a ring-shaped bead of blue translucent glass; a barrel-shaped bead of semi-translucent glass; a barrel-shaped bead of orange opaque glass; a barrel-shaped bead of brownish-red opaque glass; a round bead of brownish-red opaque glass with three mosaic eyes in brownish-red, white and blue (fig. 10a); a cylindrical bead of greyish-white opaque glass with two crossing trails in brownish-red and two mosaic eyes in reddish-brown opaque glass with white trailing (fig. 10b). One small bead was particular-

ly distinct on the radiograph, but was destroyed during the excavation of the mount; it was probably of silver foil.

In the west Scandinavian area, it is very common to find even in well-appointed women's graves only a few beads; graves with more than ten pieces are rare (Müller-Wille 1987:55 with refs.; Voss 1991). The beads may lie near the wrist or waist, but usually lie in the breast region and are called bead necklaces (e.g. Skaarup 1976; Müller-Wille 1987). Else Roesdahl remarks on the beads in the Fyrkat graves that "... there were never so many in a grave that they could have made up a necklace. They have doubtless been linked with a short string and thus formed a little pendant ... In other cases the beads may in theory have been inside a now vanished container" (1977:139; translated).

Thanks to the preserving metal salts from the silver(?) coin we know that the Brandstrup woman did not have the eight beads in a string around her neck, but in a little skin bag lying on her breast. Might this not also have applied to some of the other small clusters of beads in Viking Age graves?

The corrosion layer from the silver coin contained, besides skin remains, a large number of small beetles, *Rhizophagus parallellocollis*, "coffin beetles" (fig. 11). These are found in rotten and mouldy wood, in compost, and in coffins, where they are thought to live on the fats of the body, and they have been observed in huge swarms in churchyards. A thousand years ago, some of these beetles must have got into the chamber – perhaps with the planks of which it is constructed, or they were attracted by the smell of the corpse. Here they flourished and multiplied, and the beetles that ended their days on the breast near the silver coin became impregnated and have been preserved to the present-day (Skytte 1992).

Outside the wagon body, on the floor between its east end and the east end of the chamber, lay a *wax taper* (978E80) (fig. 12). Length 29.5 cm, diameter at base (the northern end) c. 1.8 cm, at the top c. 0.9 cm.

The taper has been formed by rolling up a 2 mm thick sheet of beeswax with thin slaty structure. It is hollow, but without traces of a wick. The half that lay uppermost in the grave is missing, and the two breaks are old (not an excavation artefact!). One edge is distinctly wavy on the lower 4-5 cm, as after gnawing by a mouse. Before the chamber was filled with earth it thus

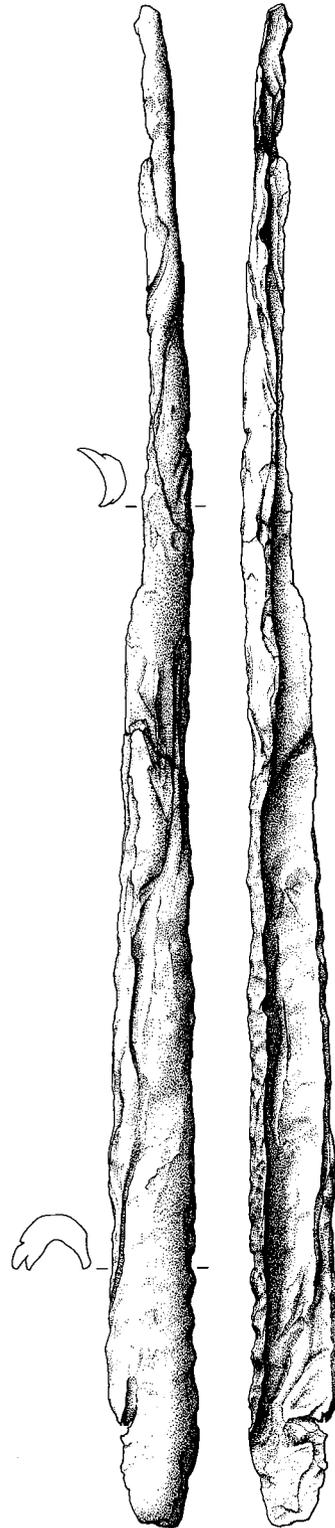


Fig. 12. Grave A. Wax taper. 2:3. Orla Svendsen del.

sheltered a small rodent. The taper is earthy-brown like an old root and quite nondescript in appearance. It is not unlikely that tapers of Brandstrup type have been overlooked in other Viking graves, for since 1868 the Mammen candle, which is of an entirely different calibre, has been *the* example of a Viking Age candle which everyone knew.

The Mammen candle is 57 cm long, 8-10 cm wide, compact and made of rolled-up thick wax sheets, i.e. quite different from the Brandstrup specimen (Leth-Larsen 1991).

Two pieces of a taper of at least 7 cm in length and 2 cm in thickness, with a c. 0.6 cm thick wick hole, come from the North Barrow at Jelling, where it was found *over* the burial chamber, beside the broach in the roof. The taper is C14-dated, and there is a strong likelihood that it comes from the period 970-1015, i.e. it cannot belong to the burial, but might have been placed there by Harold Bluetooth when he had the chamber opened in order to move Gorm (Krogh 1993:233ff.) (9).

During examination of the grave goods from the chamber grave at Søllested, Anne Pedersen has recently identified a further wax taper from the Viking Age. It is 13 cm long, 2-4 cm thick and compact, with a 6 mm wide wick hole. As in the Brandstrup taper, the wax is clearly laminated (10).

Close parallels to the Brandstrup taper are thus not present in the meagre Danish material and not at all in the rest of Scandinavia, but are present in the area of the Rus'. The tapers from settlement layers from the late 10th century in Novgorod, among other places, and from contemporary graves in i.a. Gnëzdovo, closely resemble the Brandstrup taper (11). As an example, those in graves C-301 and C-306 in Gnëzdovo, which contained 11 and 12 tapers respectively, were like the Brandstrup taper as thick as a finger, hollow, made of thin rolled-up wax sheets up to 25 cm long, and placed at the east end. Both the burial custom and the grave goods in these Rus' graves are in accordance with Scandinavian graves, and the dendrodating of grave C-306 to 979 lies close to that of the Mammen grave (Avdusin & Puškina 1988; Harald Andersen 1991).

As long as tapers are so unusual in Nordic context, one is tempted to rely heavily on the few parallels that are found. Whether the Brandstrup taper was actually imported from the Rus' can hardly be decided (12), but that it like the taper (and gold spangles) from Mammen is an indication of eastern contact is a reasonable as-

sumption (Iversen & Näsman 1991).

On the Continent, wax tapers had been known for centuries, and it is not relevant to bring this extensive material into the discussion; a single parallel should be mentioned, however: at the Alemannic cemetery of Oberflacht from the 6th-7th century, 3 wax tapers and 9 wooden candlesticks that were either for wax tapers or bowls with burning oil have been found. All the candlesticks were placed like the Brandstrup taper, outside the coffin at the foot end, while the position of the tapers is not known (Paulsen 1992:130ff.).

To the wagon body itself belonged 2 *rings* of iron with an outer diameter of c. 6 cm (978E188 and 978E199); at least 6 *rectangular iron fittings*; at least 20 *rivets*, a few of which may be measured (the plate is lozenge-shaped and measures c. 3.3 x 2.6 cm, and the distance between head and plate is c. 3.1 cm); at least 50 *rivet fragments or nails* with a usual length of 2.4 cm and a usual head diameter of 1.7 cm. On some of the rivets and nails, wood is preserved. The iron parts lie in four rather neat longitudinal rows at intervals of 20 cm (fig. 3), and the wagon body must thus have been made of five planks about 20 cm wide. The rings lay in the two upper rows, slightly east of the centre; on each side of the body there was thus a ring near the junction of the upper and lower plank.

The assemblage corresponds exactly to what one sees in the other wagon body graves – a grave form that may be linked with the 10th century's wealthy women in the Danish area (Müller-Wille 1987:26ff with refs.; Voss 1991; find list in Näsman 1991a appendix 4).

Finally it should be mentioned that there was an impression of a feather on a rivet, so there must have been an eiderdown or pillow in the wagon body.

Scattered in the grave fill, a few undated sherds have been found.

#### *The finds from grave B*

*Iron knife* (978E203), highly corroded and covered by a thick layer of rust and wood, with an 11 cm long offset tang and a c. 10 cm long blade with slightly arched back.

*Whetstone* (978E204) (fig. 8) of so-called purple slate (5). The whetstone is very flat and worn thin, and tapers

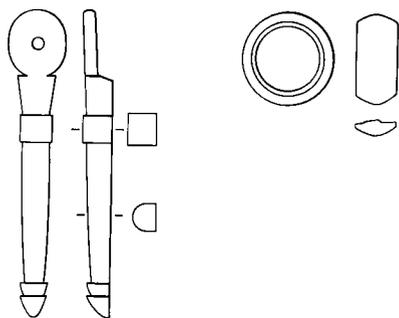


Fig. 13. Grave B. Sketch of strap end and ring from sliding fastener. 1:1. Orla Svendsen del.

towards the top where it has a small hourglass-shaped suspension hole. Length 65 mm, greatest width 9 mm, thickness 2-4 mm.

*Axe-head of iron* (978E88) with remains of wooden shaft, of Petersen type H(K). The axe is likewise highly corroded, and it cannot be discerned whether it had shaft-hole flanges. The blade is slightly splayed along the lower edge and in all 18.5 cm long with an edge length of c. 10.5 cm. The neck face is flat and measures 4 x 4 cm, and the shaft-hole rounded triangular.

Knife and whetstone are the commonest equipment in 10th century men's graves, nor is the axe rare (Näsman 1991a with refs.). The position – knife and whetstone by the arm and axe by the foot with the shaft upwards – is likewise normal, so judging by the grave goods the occupant cannot be considered a prominent person.

Small fragments of double *bronze foil* (978E66), found near the breast, are perhaps from a strap chape.

*Stave-shaped strap end* (978E98) (fig. 13). Length 4.0 cm, thickness 3-5 mm. It is highly corroded, but the shape can nevertheless be discerned. In section it is round on top and flat below. The tip is profiled. Below the notched top, which is circular and with a rivet-hole, there is a heavy fillet.

Small *bronze fragments from a ring-shaped object* (978E164) (fig. 13) with a diameter slightly under 2 cm and height c. 0.5 cm. The inside of the ring has had a small angular bead, and the outside was roof-shaped.

Considering that the fragments were found at waist

height, and the strap end near the pelvis, an identification as belt-ring in sliding fastener seems reasonable (cf. for example, the sets with ring-shaped strap end and rings of the same size and almost the same shape in Stengade grave DW, Dover grave 132 and Oldenburg graves 17 and 19 (Skaarup 1976:105 & 270; Petersen 1989:50f.; Gabriel 1989:224ff.; see also Iversen & Näsman 1991:52f. and Grøn *et al.* 1994:124).

Sliding fasteners may be considered the accoutrements of a fine dress, and among the not so numerous finds there are also several that derive from very rich graves. The Brandstrup piece seems very insignificant, however, like the rest of the grave goods, but the association of grave B with the neighbouring grave A, and perhaps also with the equestrian grave Brandstrup I, does make it likely that the deceased held a certain position in society – the interpretation of the belt type as a possible indication of rank is thus still open.

From the coffin itself come at least 35 *iron nails*. The length varies between 5.1 and 7.4 cm, with a usual length of 6.3 cm. The heads are between 1.5 and 2.4 cm in diameter, usually 1.8 cm. Remains of wood are seen on many of the nails.

Finally, it should be remarked that remains of feathers show that the deceased had an eiderdown or pillow.

Scattered in the grave fill a few undated sherds were found.

## DATING

Grave A falls within the group of rich graves from the last third of the 10th century, which is characterized by a pagan grave form (chamber in a barrow), but only a few grave goods, which may have a Christian character. A securely dated representative is the Mammen grave from 970/971. Many of the wagon body graves (e.g. Roesdahl 1971, 1977; Voss 1991) belong to this group.

Grave A and the Mammen grave have certain very unusual features in common, which are considered to be the result of Christian influence. The use of wax tapers is normally held to indicate Christianity (Gräslund 1991; Leth-Larsen 1991). In the late 10th century, however, when paganism was gradually replaced by Christianity,

it is naturally an open question whether the person buried with a wax taper was himself a convinced Christian, or whether it is the belief of the surviving relatives which is reflected (Iversen & Näsman 1991). It should, though, also be remarked that Peter Paulsen in his discussion of the significance of tapers lays emphasis on the link with pre-Christian folklore and does not plead the presence of tapers or candlesticks in the Oberflacht graves as an indication of Christianity (Paulsen 1992: 130ff). Also the trapezoid shape of the two chambers, the east end being the narrower, is a feature that may reflect Christian influence (Gräslund 1991:207), and the position of the taper to the east increases the strength of the symbolism.

The finds in grave B cannot be dated more closely than to the 10th century, but as the grave is stratigraphically later than grave A, it must also have been established in the last third of the 10th century. This accords with the type of grave – a chamber grave with only an axe, not a whole set of weapons (in contrast to the equestrian grave Brandstrup I), i.e. a very finely appointed grave with modest grave-goods – which first and foremost belongs to the end of the 10th century, when the influence of Christianity limited the weapon trapping (cf. Näsman 1991a).

The difference in date between grave A and grave B

cannot be determined precisely, but it is hardly very large, and it is tempting to believe that the two interred persons were of the same generation – husband and wife.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Graves A and B are later in date than the equestrian grave Brandstrup I, which is dated to the first half/middle of the 10th century. Considering that Brandstrup I and III lie in a field on the same farm, it seems likely that it is a question of two generations of the same family, i.e. the rider who lay 300 m away is the father or grandfather of one of the spouses. The next generation was presumably completely Christian, so their graves will probably never be found.

Where the magnate farm belonging to these graves was situated, we do not know (13). The graves lie 700 and 1000 m NNW of the Romanesque Faldborg Church (fig. 1), which was demolished in 1655, after the parish had been amalgamated with Vindum Parish in 1653. At this point of time there were no large farms in Faldborg Parish.

A mere 2-3 km east of the Brandstrup cemetery is

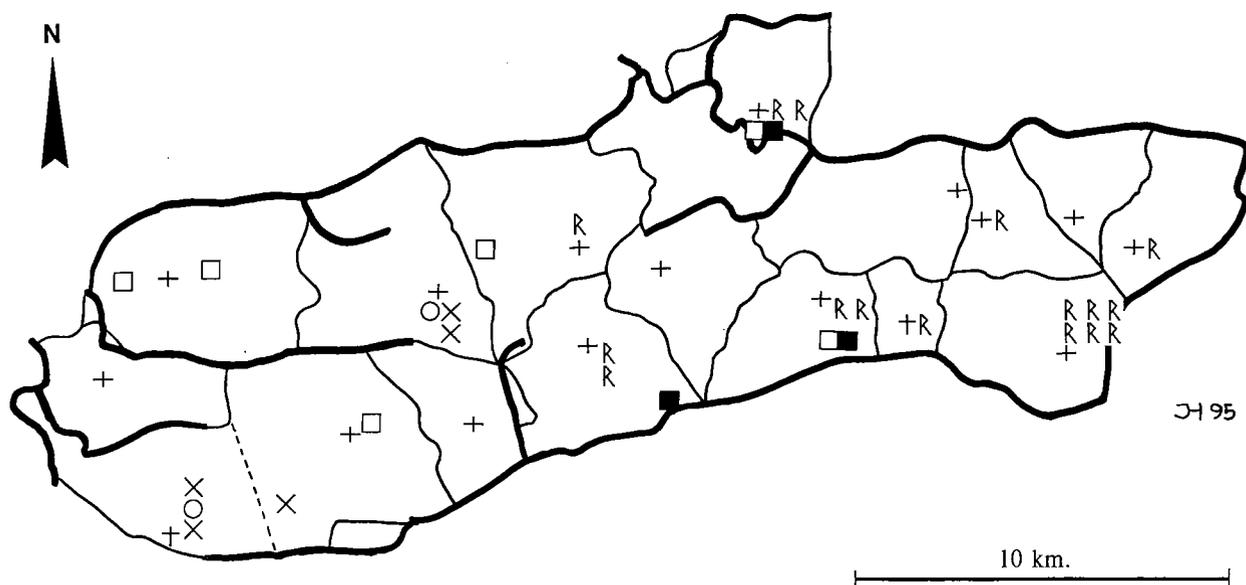


Fig. 14. Middelsom district. — parish boundary; + Romanesque church; † church ruin; X Viking Age chamber grave or hoard; R runestone; ■ Medieval castle mound; □ later home farm; ○ Viking Age settlement; — river.

Fårup, Vindum Parish, where in a barrow a woman's grave with gold-worked costume bands, a silver-wound knife and down pillows was found in the last century. Brøndsted's dating of the grave to the latter half of the 10th century is still valid (1936 no. 36), and the deceased has thus lived at the same time as the Brandstrup clan.

8 km to the NE lies Mammen, Mammen Parish, with both the hoard with gilt bronze fittings for a set of collars, caskets, etc., in Jelling style (Näsman 1991b), and the chieftain's grave from 970/971 with the silver-inlaid axe in Mammen style, the fine costume, wax candle, etc. (Iversen *et al.* (eds.) 1991).

In three contiguous parishes there is thus evidence of the presence of magnates in the latter half of the 10th century, and in Brandstrup the clan may be followed back to the first half of the 10th century.

The parishes of Faldborg, Vindum and Mammen are all in Middelsom District, which comprises 17 parishes, 15 of which are bordered by the large navigable rivers Nørreå, Gudenå and Tangeå. Only the two most westerly parishes, Sdr. Rind and Faldborg, lie on small tributaries. With respect to communication, Middelsom District is ideally situated in the centre of Jutland and adjoining Viborg where a thing had presumably already been established in the 10th century and at least from the 11th century (Nielsen 1973).

The three sites with distinguished finds in the westernmost part of Middelsom District correspond to 16 Viking Age (Jelling and post-Jelling) and one Romano-British runestone from 8 parishes in the central and eastern part of the district (fig. 14) (Moltke 1985; Stoklund 1991; Iversen *et al.* (eds.) 1991:9 fig. 3).

In most of the parishes in the district there are thus finds (graves or runestones), which point directly to the presence of magnate clans in the latter half of the 10th century, and a patent future research objective is to trace the contemporaneous magnate farms.

A well from c. 963 (Iversen 1993), a house site from the late 10th century, and the presumably coeval hoard, all in the immediate vicinity of Mammen Church (Iversen 1991:27, figs. 3-5) hint that it is perhaps in the vicinity of the churches that we should be looking (see for example, the magnate farm at Lisbjerg, Jeppesen & Madsen 1991, and at Tamdrup, Schiørring 1991; Hvass *et al.* 1991), and the same indication is perhaps given by many of the runestones found in or near churches (Skjern 1, V. Velling, Ø. Velling, Grensten, Langå 4-5-6,

Torup, Sdr. Vinge 2 and Lee) (14).

The three Medieval castle mounds, Skjern in the valley of Nørreå, and Kellinghøl and Ulstrup on the Gudenå, should not be overlooked either; for example the Skjern 2 stone was found during the demolition of Skjern Castle and the Sdr. Vinge 1 stone comes from Ulstrup.

Finally, an investigation around the Late Medieval and subsequent home farms can perhaps also yield pertinent information (*cf.* Riddersporre 1989). The future will presumably show whether the wealthy Middelsom District can support the assumption that the magnate clans of the Viking Age made a mark lasting well into the following centuries, not merely in the form of graves and runestones, but also with a tradition-bound site continuity from magnate farm to church (a possibility already aired by Olsen 1966 *passim*). And if the clear pattern with rich grave finds or runestones in practically all the parishes of Middelsom District can also be demonstrated elsewhere in Denmark, it also reveals something of the social structure in Viking Age Denmark.

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## NOTES

This article was submitted in June, 1993, with a few additions in January 1995.

- 1 Brandstrup I is registered at Forhistorisk Museum, Moesgård, under file no. FHM 336, Brandstrup III at Viborg Stiftsmuseum under file no. 978E. The Brandstrup III excavation was financed by the State Antiquary and carried out by Inge Kjær Kristensen and the present authors.
- 2 Farmer Ejner Kjær heard these two stories in his childhood in the 1920s. They are not recorded in Dansk Folkemindesamling.

- 3 The plank was so fragmented that a dendrochronological analysis can give only a *terminus post quem* dating. The specimen contained 70 annual rings and was felled after 919. The analysis was performed by Carsten Sønderby, Wormianum.
- 4 Knives with silver inlay have been discussed with Ingmar Jansson, University of Stockholm; Henriette Lyngstrøm, University of Copenhagen; and Bjarne Lønborg, Odense Bys Museer, Bevaringsafdelingen.
- 5 The material was identified by Head of Department Søren Floris, Geological Museum: "Both 978E202 and 978E204 consist of purplish-brown metasiltstone (slightly metamorphosed very fine-grained quartz sandstone) with a considerable content of muscovite mica, linear structure, very small black grains and very thin quartz veins. The stones may be referred to a group of Viking Age whetstones of so-called purple slate of uncertain provenance (perhaps from West Norway). *Såvel 978E202 som 978E204 består af violetbrun metasiltsten (let omdannet meget finkornet kvartssandsten) med betydeligt indhold af muskovitglimmer, stænglet (lineær) struktur, meget små sorte korn og meget tynde kvartsgange. Stenene kan henføres til en gruppe vikingetids hvæssesten af såkaldt violet skifer af uvis proveniens (måske fra Vestnorge).* (Hald 1991; Myrvoll 1991)." (Letter of 9.6.1993).
- 6 Two new finds from Langeland have been published in Grøn *et al.* 1994:134f.
- 7 The material from Brandstrup is too meagre to contribute to a discussion as to whether there are two kinds of deposition or just one.
- 8 The wax has been identified microscopically and by gas chromatography by Jens Glastrup, Preservation Department of the National Museum.
- 9 A diverging opinion is presented by Harald Andersen (1995).
- 10 The information on the taper has been placed at my disposal by Anne Pedersen and will be published by her in: "Søllested – nye oplysninger om et velkendt fund", Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie 1994 (in prep.).
- 11 When Tamara Puškina, University of Moscow, during a visit to Viborg in August 1991 was shown the Brandstrup taper, she said that it completely resembled those she herself has excavated in among other places Gnëzdovo.
- 12 A sample from the Mammen taper has been unsuccessfully subjected to pollen analysis with a view to establishing the provenance (Iversen & Näsman 1991:61).
- 13 Occasioned by road-building, excavations were undertaken in 1994 between the equestrian grave and the meadows. Remains were found of at least two enclosed Viking Age farms, but apart from some pit-houses, traces of building were very poorly preserved; there is, however, nothing to suggest that one of them was a magnate farm.
- 14 During excavations in 1994 just north and east of Faldborg Church, traces of Bronze Age structures and a single house from the Early Middle Ages were found.

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