

# Tårup

## *A round dolmen and its secondary burials*

by Mads Kähler Holst

### ABSTRACT

*In 1992 a well-preserved round dolmen covered by a Bronze Age burial mound was excavated at the village of Tårup between Vejle and Fredericia in East Jutland. The chamber can be classified as a dolmen without passage, but with access by a threshold construction. It contained no primary burial, but an undisturbed floor that may be the original. The mound seems to have been constructed in two stages, and the kerbstones may have been free-standing for some time before they were incorporated in the mound. The mound construction was accompanied by firings on the unfinished mound. A quantitatively modest ceramic material from MNA I and perhaps late EN was deposited in front and on top of the finished mound construction. The chamber and the mound of the dolmen were used for secondary burials in the Single Grave Culture, the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age.*

### INTRODUCTION

In July 1992, construction work on a highway between Vejle and Fredericia in East Jutland literally passed through a hitherto unrecorded prehistoric monument near the village of Tårup. The monument consisted of a dolmen in a round barrow, covered by an Early Bronze Age burial mound, surrounded by a ditch 57 m in diameter and 1.5 m deep.

The central part of the Bronze Age burial mound, probably including the primary burial, had been destroyed by the construction work before archaeological investigations were initiated. The dolmen and its secondary burials, on the other hand,

were situated on the north-western periphery of the burial mound, outside the highway construction area, and protected by the mound fill (Fig. 1). Consequently, these structures were extraordinarily well preserved. This article presents the results of the excavation of the dolmen and its secondary burials.

The investigation was conducted by Vejle Museum (Site identification: VKH 1584) under the direction of Lone Hvass, and in close cooperation with the Danish Road Directorate. First the plough layer and the covering mound fill from the Bronze Age burial mound was removed mechanically. After registration of the surface, the dolmen was excavated manually in four quadrants, leaving a cross bench and the major stone structures, i.e. the chamber, the kerbstones and associated stone pavings. Finally, the megaliths were removed. The chamber fill and a concentration of burnt flint outside the chamber were brought back to the museum for flotation. A large area around the dolmen was also uncovered in connection with the excavation of the Bronze Age burial mound.

### TOPOGRAPHY

The dolmen at Tårup was situated above the Elbo tunnel valley, in a typical undulating East Jutlandic moraine landscape 5 km north of the nearest coastline at Gudsø Vig. Until the Late Medieval period, the Elbo Valley presumably formed a navigable connection between Vejle and Kolding Fjords, blocked only by a



Fig. 1. Aerial view of the Tårup-excavation. Road construction work to the right has removed the center of the burial mound.

narrow land barrier at the southern end (Nordmann 1958).

A profile through the subsoil below the monuments at Tårup showed that the dolmen and the Bronze Age burial mound had been constructed on 1.0-1.5 m thick moraine loam atop melt-water sand (Breuning-Madsen & Holst 1995).

Several other megalithic graves have been recorded along the Elbo valley in the immediate vicinity of the Tårup dolmen. One contained a polygonal dolmen chamber, while none of the others have been subject to archaeological investigations, and are almost completely ploughed down today.

#### TRB-STRUCTURES

Below the dolmen a few possible ard marks were observed. The presumed ard marks were superimposed by a 10 cm thick, dark layer characterized by a high content of humus and charcoal, but without any artefacts. The dark layer was found everywhere beneath the dolmen, and also extended down into a 70 cm wide and 15 cm deep pit beneath the northern part of the dolmen.

#### The chamber of the dolmen

The chamber had a rectangular to slightly polygonal ground plan with inner dimensions of 2.2 m NNW-SSE by 1.3 m ESE-WNW. The chamber was symmetrically constructed, with two uprights on each long side, a slanting end stone resting on a base stone at the north end of the chamber and an entrance stone at the south end. A capstone was lacking, and had probably already been removed in the Late Neolithic, in connection with a secondary burial in the chamber, but otherwise the chamber construction must be considered completely undisturbed.

The dolmen can be classified as an *erweiterte Dolmen* according to E. Schuldt's typology based on the megalithic tombs of Mecklenburg (Schuldt 1972). Especially the Klokkehøj-dolmen on Southern Funen, and the group of dolmens defined by Thorsen as the Klokkehøj variant of the *erweiterte Dolmen* show many constructional similarities with the dolmen at Tårup (Thorsen 1981).

All the uprights, except the entrance stone, slanted inwards, and had been placed with their heavier ends upwards and the plainest surfaces inwards. The slanting end stone rested on all uprights, and in this way locked the construction. The supporting megaliths had all been secured in clay, either by being dug into the subsoil, or by the construction of a clay packing around the stones (Fig. 3b). Besides stabilising the chamber construction, the fastening of the stones in the subsoil also levelled the height of the chamber stones.

The uprights had been placed closely together, leaving only minimal gaps, except in the southern corner of the chamber, where an extra stone had been inserted, seemingly with no supporting functions and not fastened in clay. The remaining minor gaps were filled with dry-walling of flagstones and small field stones. A layer of thin flagstones was also found between the slanting end stone and the base stone (Fig. 2c; 3c).

A packing of large stones fastened in clay surrounded the northern part of the chamber, and similarly the exterior gaps between the uprights had been filled with a stone- and clay packing (Fig. 2d; 3a-b). The outer layer of the stone packing consisted of large flat stones, creating a sort of roofing, which is also known from a number of other Danish megalithic tombs; a so-called 'water nose' (Hansen 1993, 56).

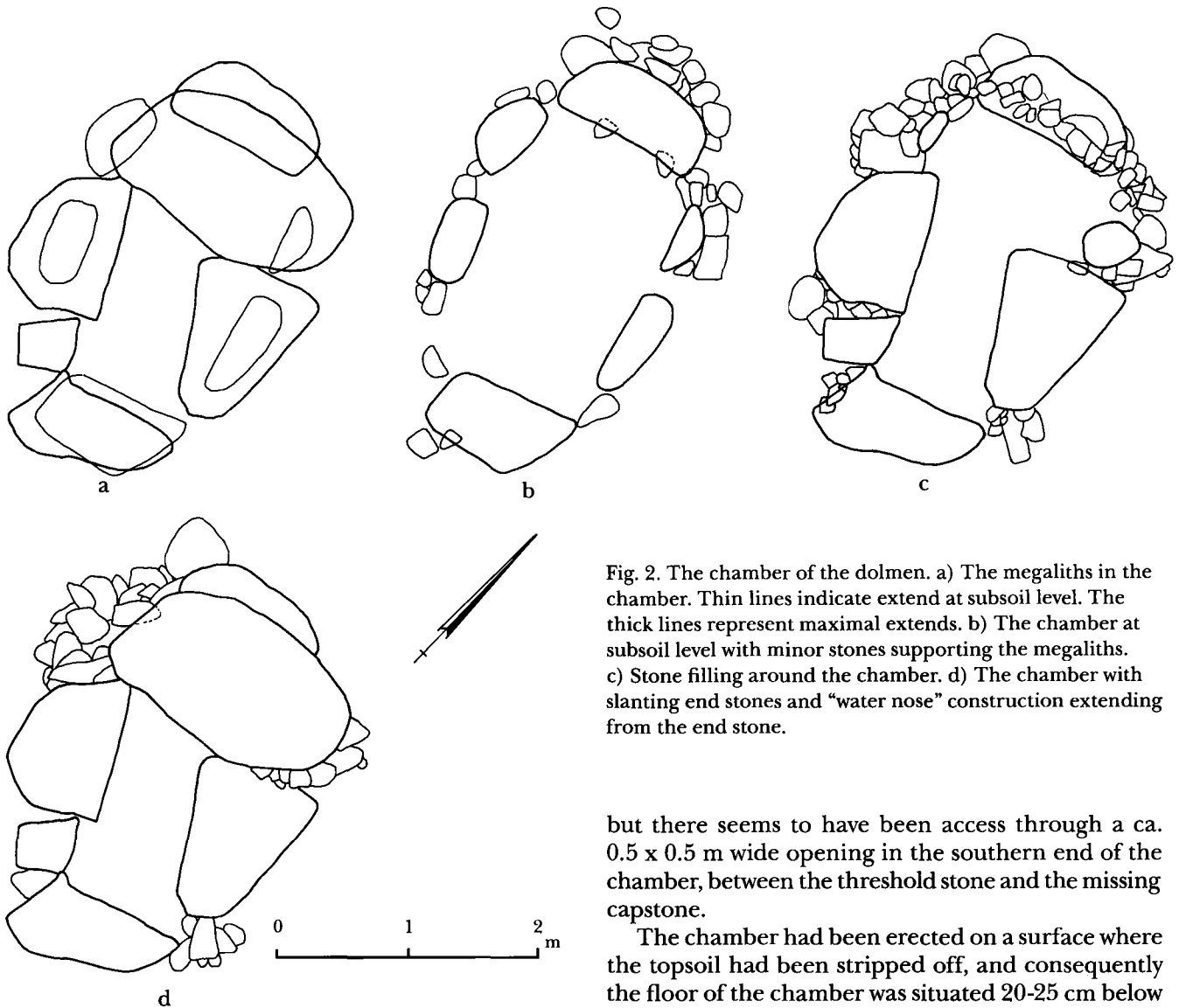


Fig. 2. The chamber of the dolmen. a) The megaliths in the chamber. Thin lines indicate extend at subsoil level. The thick lines represent maximal extends. b) The chamber at subsoil level with minor stones supporting the megaliths. c) Stone filling around the chamber. d) The chamber with slanting end stones and "water nose" construction extending from the end stone.

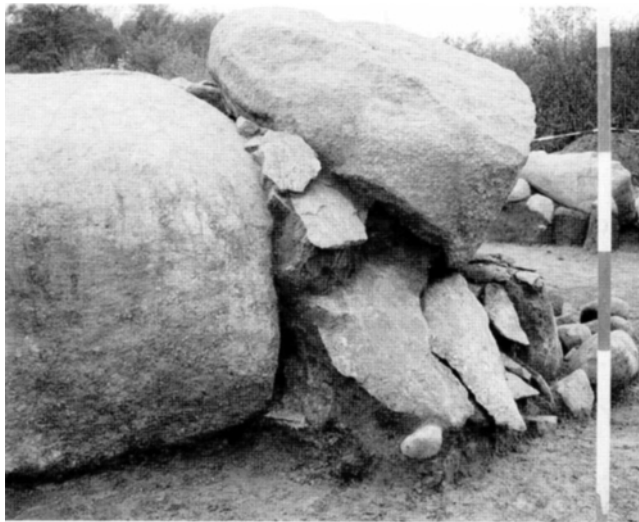
but there seems to have been access through a ca. 0.5 x 0.5 m wide opening in the southern end of the chamber, between the threshold stone and the missing capstone.

The chamber had been erected on a surface where the topsoil had been stripped off, and consequently the floor of the chamber was situated 20-25 cm below the surface of the surrounding buried soil. The floor consisted of stamped subsoil material, which was burned red in two areas, respectively 20 and 40 cm in diameter. The clay floor was covered by a 2-4 cm thick layer of charcoal and white burnt flint. The charcoal and flint had been carefully spread out in an even layer all over the chamber floor, and most probably the flint had been sorted, as it consisted only of very small, strongly burnt pieces.

There were no traces of a primary burial in the chamber, but a secondary burial from the Single Grave Culture had been placed directly on the flint layer without disturbing it. The fact that the secondary burial was placed directly on a seemingly undisturbed

The chamber formed a completely stable construction, and with the stone- and clay packing around the chamber together with the roofing construction, the dolmen chamber appeared as a well-defined completed entity, also when seen from the outside. It is thus possible that the chamber could have been free-standing in this form for some time before the construction of the mound around it; however no observations at the excavation could unambiguously confirm or deny this possibility.

There was no passage leading to the chamber,



a



b

Fig. 3. The northern end of the chamber with the slanting end stone and the stone packings around the chamber seen from a) east, b) west, and c) north.



c

TRB floor indicates that the chamber had been sealed until the secondary burial was inserted, and that there had been no dramatic and destructive clearance. Consequently, the possibility cannot be ignored that the lack of inorganic grave goods from the TRB culture simply reflects the fact that none were deposited in the chamber.

#### The mound, the kerbstones and the stone pavings

Several clearly distinct layers of fill could be observed in the cross sections through the mound (Fig. 4). Some of these layers are most probably merely stages in a continuous building sequence. However, stone pavings and kerbstones indicate that at least one of the intermediate stages represented some sort of temporary completion of the mound construction.

The first stage in the construction of the mound consisted of clayey loam with stripes of loam, indicating that the fill had been packed diagonally against the chamber (Fig. 4, fill f). This material could be identified all around the chamber, and extended 1.5 to 2.5 m outside of it, forming a circular ground plan 5.5-6.0 m in diameter. The clayey loamy material was

superimposed by a greyish brown sandy loam, which was also found all around the chamber (Fig. 4, fill g). There were no indications that the transition from fill f to g represented a break in the construction sequence, and the difference probably indicates a change in building material.

On the other hand, fill g was bordered in the southern quadrant by a wall-like construction of stones, 0.2 m across, placed in up to four layers (Fig. 5b). The wall construction may have formed a full circle, even though it was only observed in the southern quadrant. To the southeast a large pit, and to the north a Late Neolithic burial, had probably removed the stone wall. To the east and northwest, a potential stone wall could not be distinguished from the final covering cairn phase of the mound.

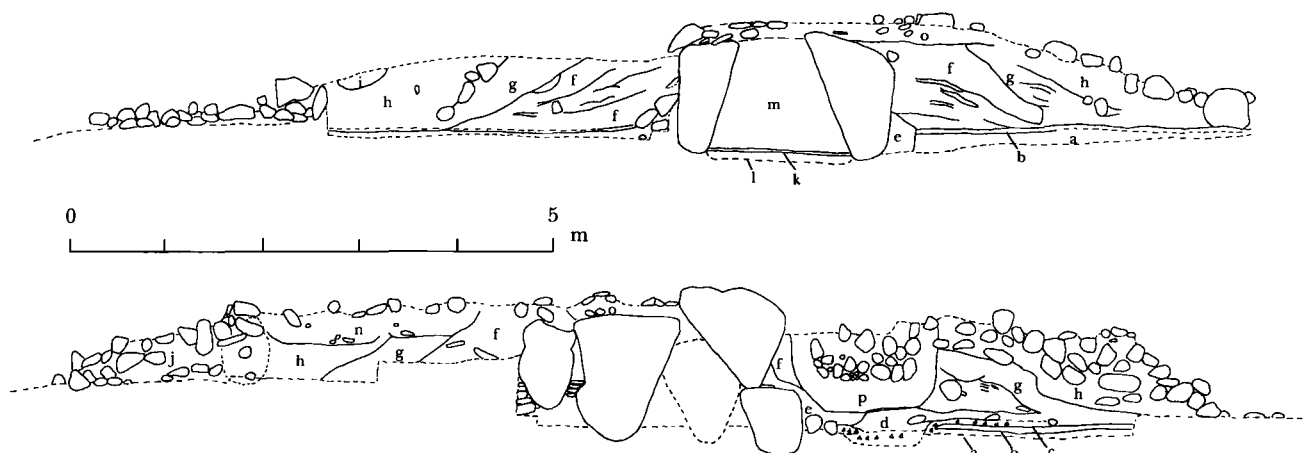


Fig. 4. Crosssection through the dolmen. a) Subsoil. Reddish to yellowish brown loam. b) Buried, decomposed vegetation layer. Gradual transition to the subsoil below. Light greyish brown loam. c) Cultural layer. Black layer with a high content of charcoal. d) Probable cultural layer marked by gleying. Greyish sandy loam with manganese coatings. e) Clay packing around the chamber. Light brown clay. f.) Mound fill. Initial stage. Yellowish clayey loam with diagonal stripes of loamy material. g) Mound fill. Initial stage. Greyish brown loamy sand. h) Mound fill. Final stage. Light brown, slightly loamy sand. i) Stone trace. Brown loamy sand. j) Eroded fill. Homogeneous greyish brown. k) Floor in chamber. White burnt flint and charcoal. l) Floor in chamber. Yellow, stamped locally red burned loam. m) Caved in fill. Very porous, dark greyish brown sandy mould. n) Fill in burial D. Greyish light brown, loamy sand with minor pieces of charcoal. o) Fill in burial F. Yellowish light brown, loamy sand. p) Fill in burial C. Greyish brown, loamy sand with minor pieces of charcoal.

The stone wall must represent at least a temporary conclusion of the mound construction, with a diameter of 6.5-7.0 m. In front of this initial stage, a fragmented stone paving of thin, flat stones was uncovered (Fig.5a). It is doubtful if there ever was a continuous paving all around the dolmen.

The stone paving was covered by a slightly loamy sand material (Fig. 4, fill h) superimposed by a cairn-like stone packing, which, especially to the north and east, was solid and preserved in up to five layers. Originally, the stone packing probably covered the entire dolmen surface, although the capstone of the chamber might have been visible above the stone packing.

The stone packing marked the second stage in the mound construction, and was delimited by a well-preserved kerbstone arrangement, forming a perfect circle, 8.0 m in diameter. Thirty four kerbstones were found in situ or slightly displaced during the decay of the dolmen, while an estimated eight stones were missing (Fig. 5).

There was no dry-walling between the kerbstones, and the stones had not been dug into the subsoil. Several kerbstones were, however, supported by

small stone settings, which clearly showed that the kerbstones had been erected before the construction of the mound. This raises the question of whether the kerbstones were erected in connection with the construction of the first stage of the mound, so that the kerbstones were standing freely for a period, leaving a small area between the kerbstones and the stone wall-delimited mound. All the kerbstones in situ were able to stand without support, and the fragmented stone paving in front of the stone wall of the initial mound stage extended precisely to the kerbstones. Furthermore, the pressure of the mound fill and cairn construction had also overturned several of the kerbstones. This might be seen as an indication that the kerbstones were not originally intended to hold back mound fill.

In front of the kerbstones, traces of another irregular stone paving were uncovered (Fig. 6). It extended up to 2.0 m from the kerbstones, and traces of a paving were found all around the dolmen, varying in character and extension. It is again difficult to assess if the paving was once uniform and continuous all the way around the dolmen, but it is worth noting that the most complete parts of the paving were found beneath

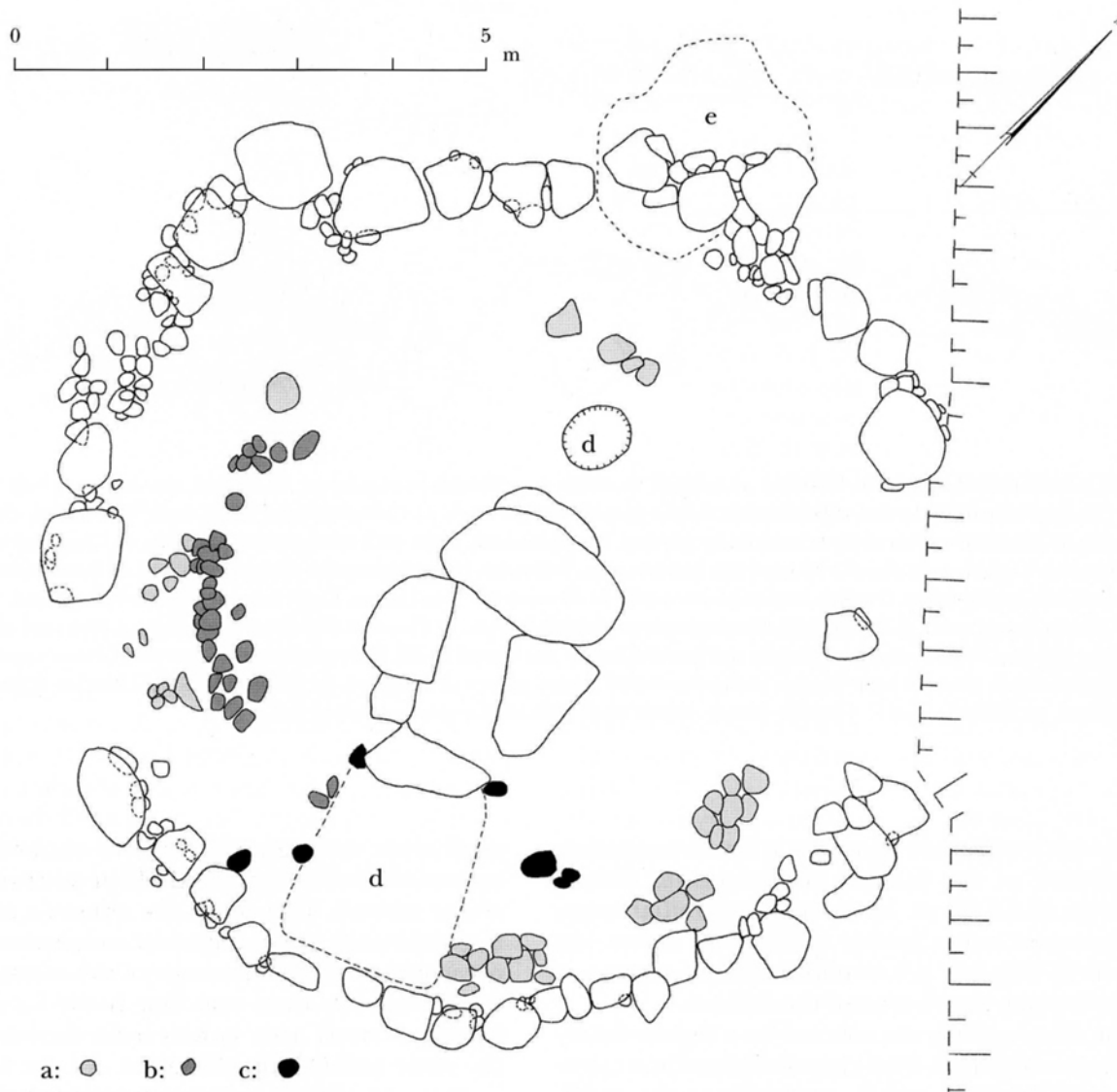


Fig. 5. Plan of the dolmen: a) Remnants of stone paving; b) Stone wall in front of mound stage 1; c) Red burnt clay; d) Pits. e) Layer of burnt flint.

regular stone paving were uncovered (Fig. 6). It extended up to 2.0 m from the kerbstones, and traces of a paving were found all around the dolmen, varying in character and extension. It is again difficult to assess if the paving was once uniform and continuous all the way around the dolmen, but it is worth noting that the most complete parts of the paving were found beneath the layers of fill eroded down from the mound. Consequently, it is probable that the parts of the paving that were lying open until the dolmen

was covered by a turf mound in the early Bronze Age have, to some extent, been destroyed.

#### Other features

Apart from the traces of burning inside the chamber, indications of activities involving fire were also documented in several other places during the

excavation of the dolmen.

Southeast of the chamber, encapsulated in the fill of the initial stage of the mound, a 30 x 60 cm large area was burned red, but there was no charcoal, which indicates that the area had been carefully cleaned. Similar traces of fire were found at the entrance to the chamber on either side of the entrance stone. On the western side of the entrance, a red-burned area was encapsulated in the clay of the initial stage of the mound (Fig. 4f, fill f.). Charcoal was found in a concentration beside the red-burned area, whereas the red-burned area itself was totally free of charcoal. On the eastern side of the chamber, another red-burned area encapsulated in fill f was uncovered, but there was no charcoal associated with this feature. The stratigraphical position indicates that all three firing incidences must have occurred while the initial stage of the mound was under construction.

There were also traces of fire in front of the initial mound stage (Fig. 5c). Here, two red-burned areas 20 cm in diameter were uncovered. They contained charcoal and thus, contrary to the fireplaces in the mound fill, had not been cleaned. Their position immediately in front of the initial mound stage, inside the kerbstones, indicates that they belong to activities taking place after the completion of the initial mound stage but before the construction of the second stage, which covered them.

The firing activities are probably related to other types of ritual activities known from megalithic tombs. They are found south of the chamber, in front of the chamber, where ritual depositions normally are focused, and the ritual importance of firing in the TRB-burial custom is well documented in connection with both megalithic and non-megalithic chambers (Hoika 1990). At causewayed enclosures too, activities involving fire are often interpreted ritually, and of special interest in connection with the dolmen at Tårup, are the indications that fireplaces in system ditches were quickly covered by soil when the ditches were refilled (Andersen 1997, 49).

North of the chamber, partly covered by the kerbstones and the outer stone paving a 2 x 2 m large irregular concentration of burnt flint and charcoal was uncovered (Fig. 5e). The greater part of the flint was burned completely white, but contrary to the flint inside the chamber, the concentration outside also contained only slightly burned flint, and the variation in size was considerably larger, with many heavier pieces. In this way the concentration of burnt flint north of the chamber does not seem to



Fig. 6. Dolmen chamber and kerbstones seen from northwest.

have been subject to the same careful selection as the flint of the chamber floor. A possible explanation could be that the concentration outside the chamber represents the production site of the white burnt flint used in the chamber. The amounts of charcoal were, however, relatively limited, and the soil had not been burned red, so it is not entirely impossible that the concentration can be seen as a sort of deposition.

Both kerbstones and outer stone paving had been put down immediately on top of the concentration of burnt flint, without any fill in between. This might indicate that only a relatively limited period of time separated the different features.

Finally, a large, 2.0 x 1.5 m large pit in the mound of the dolmen in front of the chamber should be mentioned (Fig. 5d). It had been dug through both the inner and outer phases of the mound, and was superimposed by the secondary burial D, which probably dates to the Late Neolithic or the Early Bronze Age. The pit contained no artefacts, but large amounts of charcoal were found at the bottom, indicating that some activity had taken place here before the pit was refilled. The function of the pit is uncertain, and chronologically it cannot be placed more precisely than somewhere between the finished construction of the mound of the dolmen and the horizon of secondary burials at the end of the Neolithic.

## Ceramics

A very fragmented ceramic material, consisting of 309 sherds, was found in front of the kerbstones and in the stone packing of the mound. 72 sherds were decorated. Due to the fragmentation, it was only possible to reconstruct the vessels to a limited degree.

Ca. 20 plain sherds found in different places in the mound fill constitute the stratigraphically oldest material. The sherds represent at least one funnel-necked beaker, but due to the fragmentation and lack of decoration, the material can only be dated to the first half of TRB-culture. The sherds were probably brought in with the soil used for building the mound. As the texture of the mound was very similar to the subsoil, it is possible that the sherds originate from the same settlement that had left the cultural layer and the pit under the dolmen.

By far the majority of the sherds were found south of the dolmen, in front of the kerbstones on and between the stones of the outer paving. Besides a large number of plain sherds, remains of a funnel-necked beaker and two vessels of unknown form with vertical incised lines on the belly were recovered (Fig. 7 a-c). Another vessel seems to have had a combination of thin vertical lines of whipped cord and vertical incised lines on the belly. Finally, a few sherds, most probably from a pedestal bowl with nail impressions flanked by zig-zag lines, were found in this area.

East of the dolmen, immediately in front of the kerbstones, within a 0.5 m<sup>2</sup> large area, parts of a small funnel-necked beaker with vertical incised lines on the belly were recovered (Fig. 7 h-i). The vessel had had a height of at approximately 5 cm, and a diameter of 10 cm. North-north-west of the dolmen, also in front of the kerbstones, lay a few sherds from a vessel with vertical incised lines on the belly.

Of the vessels in front of the kerbstones, the supposed pedestal bowl with nail impressions can be dated to MNA I, and probably to an early part of this period (Gebauer 1979). The other vessels can only be dated generally within the period from late EN to MNA I.

On the surface of the dolmen and partly between the stones of the cairn-like stone cover, several sherds from a pedestal bowl were found within a 2 m<sup>2</sup> large area north of the chamber (Fig. 7 d-g). The bowl was ornamented below the rim with fine vertical stamp-

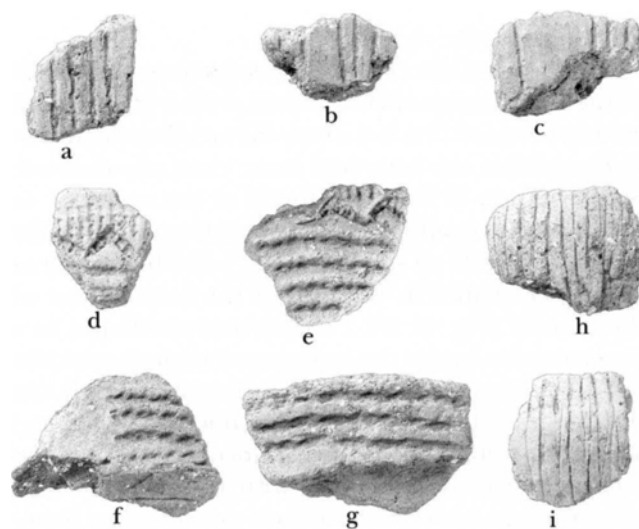


Fig. 7. A selection of the TRB pottery associated with the dolmen. a-c) Sherds from an unidentifiable vessel type found south of the dolmen in front of the kerb stones. d-g) Sherds from a pedestal bowl found on top of the cairn-like stone cover of the dolmen north of the chamber. h-i) Sherds from a funnel necked beaker found east of the chamber in front of the kerb stones. All in 1:2. Digital photo: Jørgen Holm.

lines followed by a horizontal zig-zag line made with tooth-stamp. Below that, the body of the pedestal bowl was covered by horizontal lines made with twisted cord and broken by at least one blank area. In the handle zone the vessel had vertical patterns made with tooth-stamp.

The pedestal bowl was probably deposited on the surface of the dolmen shortly after the construction of the cairn-like stone cover, as the sherds between the stones showed that the space between the stones had not been filled up with soil. The vessel can be dated to MNA I, which in this way serves as at least a terminus ante quem date of the second mound stage.

All the vessels in front of the kerbstones and the pedestal bowl on top of the dolmen must be considered deliberate depositions. There does not seem to have been any significant cleaning of the chamber, as no sherds were found immediately outside the chamber opening. Sherds belonging to the same vessel were generally lying close together, and there was no indication that parts of the same vessel had been deposited in different places. However, the fragmentation of the ceramic material was remarkably high, and despite a very thorough excavation and ideal conditions of preservation, with



a covering turf mound from the Early Bronze Age, only minor parts of the individual vessels were recovered. Consequently, parts of the vessels have been removed, either after a deliberate or accidental destruction of the vessels, or only broken parts of the vessels have been deposited.

The depositions were concentrated on the southern front of the dolmen, as is normal for ritual depositions at Scandinavian megalithic tombs, but a few concentrations of sherds broke this pattern. Most interesting is the pedestal bowl on top of the stone cover north of the dolmen. Normally, the surface of the mound construction would have been removed by natural attrition and ploughing before archaeological excavation, and depositions here would not be recognized. It has not been possible to identify chronologically different depositions; typochronologically, all the vessels might be contemporary, but of course the possibility cannot be ignored that the vessels represent several depositions.

#### Flint and other stones

In addition to the ceramic material, a few flint artefacts were also recovered in the mound fill. These artefacts include a transverse arrowhead, two angle burins, two flake scrapers, three pieces with retouches and three flakes from polished flint artefacts, of which at least two originate from axes. Among the stones in the cairn-like stone cover, fragments of three quern stones were found. These finds underline the impression that the building materials of the mound were collected near a settlement area.

#### SECONDARY BURIALS

In the chamber, dug into the mound, or added as extension to the kerbstones, six secondary burials dating to the Jutish Single Grave Culture, the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age were uncovered during the excavation.

#### Grave A

As mentioned above, artefacts from one or more Single Grave Culture burials were found at the bottom of the chamber, directly on the original floor of charcoal and burned flint (Fig. 8a). The artefacts were a flint axe, a battle-axe and two straight-sided beakers. There were no skeletal remains.

The flint axe was partially polished on the broad sides and with hollow-ground edge (Fig. 8b). The battle-axe can be classified as of Glob type K4 (Glob 1945) (Fig. 8e). The largest of the two straight-sided beakers had a height of 16 cm and a diameter of 11 cm at the bottom and 14 cm at the mouth (Fig. 8d). It was ornamented with horizontal lines and broad zig-zag bands made with tooth-stamp impressions. The smaller straight-sided beaker had a height of 10 cm and a diameter of 10 cm, and also had an ornamentation of vertical lines and broad zig-zag bands made with tooth-stamp impressions (Fig. 8c). Finally, a small 3 cm long three-sided tanged arrowhead of flint, broken at both ends, was recovered during flotation of the floor layer of the chamber. Its affiliation to the Single Grave Culture burial in the chamber is uncertain.

Both the battle-axe and the straight-sided beakers unambiguously point to a date within the upper grave period (Glob 1945, Hvass 1986), whereas the flint axe can be dated to the Single Grave Culture or Late Neolithic only.

The battle-axe was found in the middle of the eastern side of the chamber, while the two beakers and the flint axe had all originally been placed in the northern end of the chamber (Fig. 8a). The large beakers had been broken, and a few sherds from them were spread out over the northern and eastern parts of the chamber. It is difficult to say from the distribution of the finds whether the artefacts represent one or two burials, but the closely related ornamentation of the two beakers might indicate that at least these two artefacts belong to the same burial.

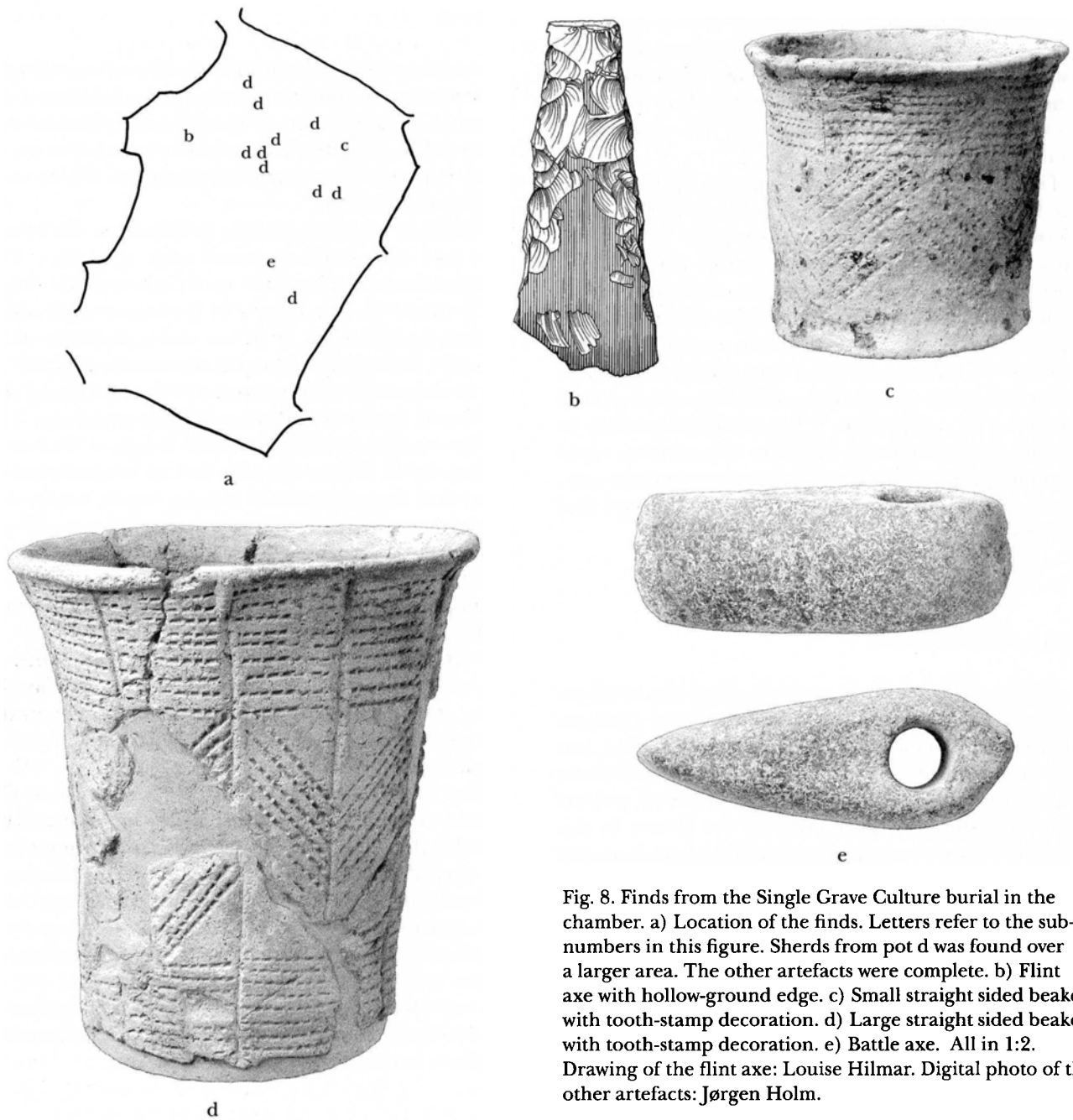


Fig. 8. Finds from the Single Grave Culture burial in the chamber. a) Location of the finds. Letters refer to the sub-numbers in this figure. Sherds from pot d was found over a larger area. The other artefacts were complete. b) Flint axe with hollow-ground edge. c) Small straight sided beaker with tooth-stamp decoration. d) Large straight sided beaker with tooth-stamp decoration. e) Battle axe. All in 1:2. Drawing of the flint axe: Louise Hilmar. Digital photo of the other artefacts: Jørgen Holm.

### Grave B

The Single Grave Culture burial broke the seal of the chamber, and it does not seem to have been re-established fully after the burial, as a thick layer of washed-in soil covered the artefacts of the Single Grave Culture. On top of this soil, a small coffin-shaped stone



Fig. 9. Plan of the location of the secondary burials in the dolmen mound and the cairn-like stone cover.

setting 1.3 m long and 0.6 m wide, made of head-sized fieldstones was uncovered.

The setting contained no artefacts. Based on the burial type, the grave can, with some uncertainty, be dated to the Late Neolithic. Stratigraphically, the burial superimposes the Upper Grave period burial in the chamber and is itself superimposed by the Early Bronze Age burial, F.

It seems likely that it was in connection with the construction of grave B that the capstone of the megalithic chamber was removed, as grave B exactly fills out the part of the chamber that was covered by the capstone. In any case, the capstone was definitely gone when grave F was constructed.

#### Grave C

North of the chamber, a rectangular pit, 3.5 x 1.2 m, and oriented WSW-ENE, was observed (Fig. 4 fill p,

Fig. 9). It lay beneath a collapsed packing of stones somewhat smaller than the stones of the surrounding cairn-like cover of the dolmen. The burial pit had vertical sides and a rounded floor. In the middle of the floor, two parallel, approximately 1 m long, thin lines of charcoal were found. They did not seem to be part of a coffin and their function is unknown. The only probable remains of a wooden covering were found immediately under the stone cover in the form of a thin humus layer.

In the eastern end of the burial pit a small 5-6 cm tall and 8 cm wide, irregularly shaped ceramic vessel (Fig. 10a) was found, together with a concentration of humus, which was interpreted as the remains of a wood vessel. The ceramic pot can most probably be dated to the Late Neolithic.

#### Grave D

South of the chamber, an oval stone packing 3.0 x 1.5 m oriented WSW-ENE was revealed as the surface of the dolmen was uncovered. The stone packing covered a low pit with no traces of either coffin, a buried person, or grave goods (Fig. 4 fill n, Fig. 9). Due to the location of the pit, in line with the grave B, E and F, the orientation of the structure, which also corresponds with the orientation of the other burials, and the stone cover, which is identical to the stone cover of burial C and F, feature D should also be considered a burial, and possibly with a dating close to the other secondary burials in the mound.

#### Grave E

South of the dolmen, an approximately 2.2 x 1.0 m pit had been dug through the eroded fill in front of the mound (Fig. 9). A coffin-shaped stone setting without capstones had been constructed at the bottom of the pit, using the kerbstones of the dolmen for its northern long side. The inner dimensions of the coffin were 1.8 x 0.6 m with a WSW-ENE orientation.

The coffin contained a ceramic vessel (Fig. 10b) and the vague traces of a body placed in extended position with the head towards the west. The beaker should most probably be dated to the Late Neolithic

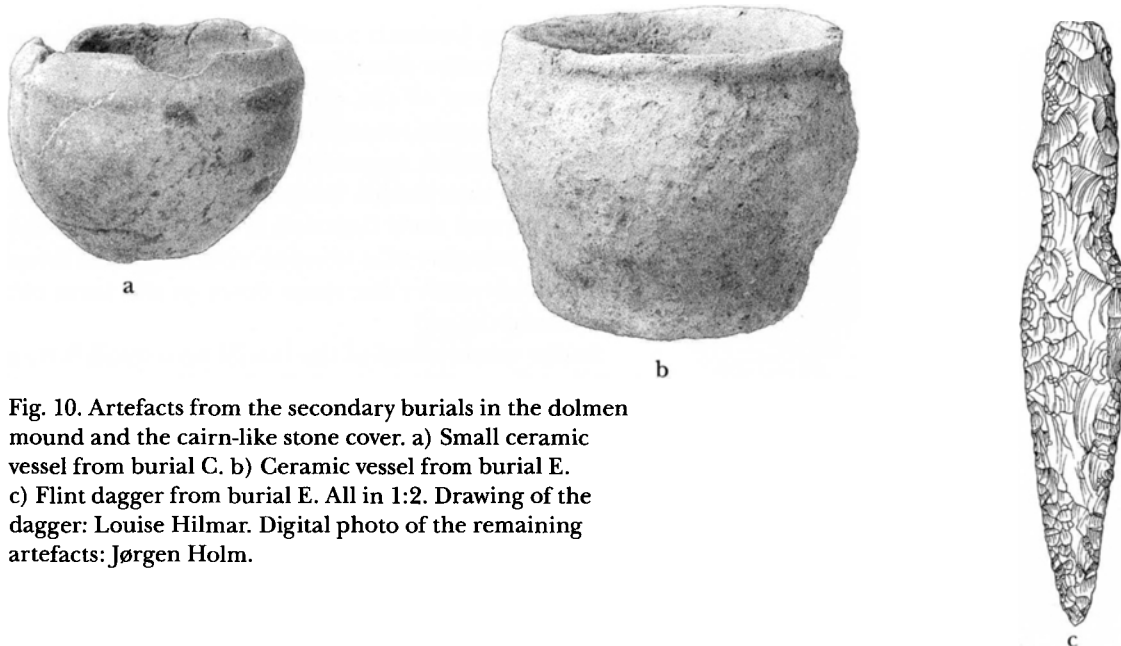


Fig. 10. Artefacts from the secondary burials in the dolmen mound and the cairn-like stone cover. a) Small ceramic vessel from burial C. b) Ceramic vessel from burial E. c) Flint dagger from burial E. All in 1:2. Drawing of the dagger: Louise Hilmar. Digital photo of the remaining artefacts: Jørgen Holm.

(See also Simonsen, this volume Fig. 21 ).

#### Grave F

Above the chamber where the capstone had once been, a WSW-ENE-oriented burial was excavated. The burial was covered by a stone packing measuring 2.5 x 1.5 m. The pit underneath the stone packing was only 15-20 cm deep (Fig. 4 fill o, Fig. 9).

In the middle of the burial a 16 cm long, combined flint dagger and strike-a-light was found. The dagger had traces of resharpening and must be classified as a type VI dagger, which dates the burial to Early Bronze Age period I or II (Lomborg 1973) (Fig. 10c).

#### THE COVERING BURIAL MOUND

Probably in connection with one of the secondary burials, a burial mound, 15 m in diameter and constructed of sods was erected over the dolmen. The burial mound was preserved to a height of 1.4 m, but nevertheless, over the central parts of the dolmen, ploughing had reached the dolmen surface, so that stratigraphical relations between the secondary burials in the dolmen and the covering burial mound

could no longer be determined. Still, the fact that all the secondary burials outside of the chamber were in line, that they had identical orientation, and that they respected each other indicate that the mound can only have been erected after all the secondary burials had been constructed.

The burial mound covering the dolmen was itself incorporated in a later monument. That took place when the 57 m-wide burial mound with the surrounding 1.5 m deep ditch was constructed. The primary burial had been removed by construction work before the archaeological excavation was initiated, but ceramic material found in the surrounding ditch dated the mound to period I or II of the Early Bronze Age (according to Rasmussen 1993). This also means that in relative chronological terms, the construction of the large burial mound is close to the last secondary burial in the dolmen, which was also dated to period I or II of the Bronze Age. Notwithstanding that in this way there is a temporal continuity in the use of the Tårup site as a burial ground, the dramatic change in the character of the monument still seems to indicate some sort of break in tradition.

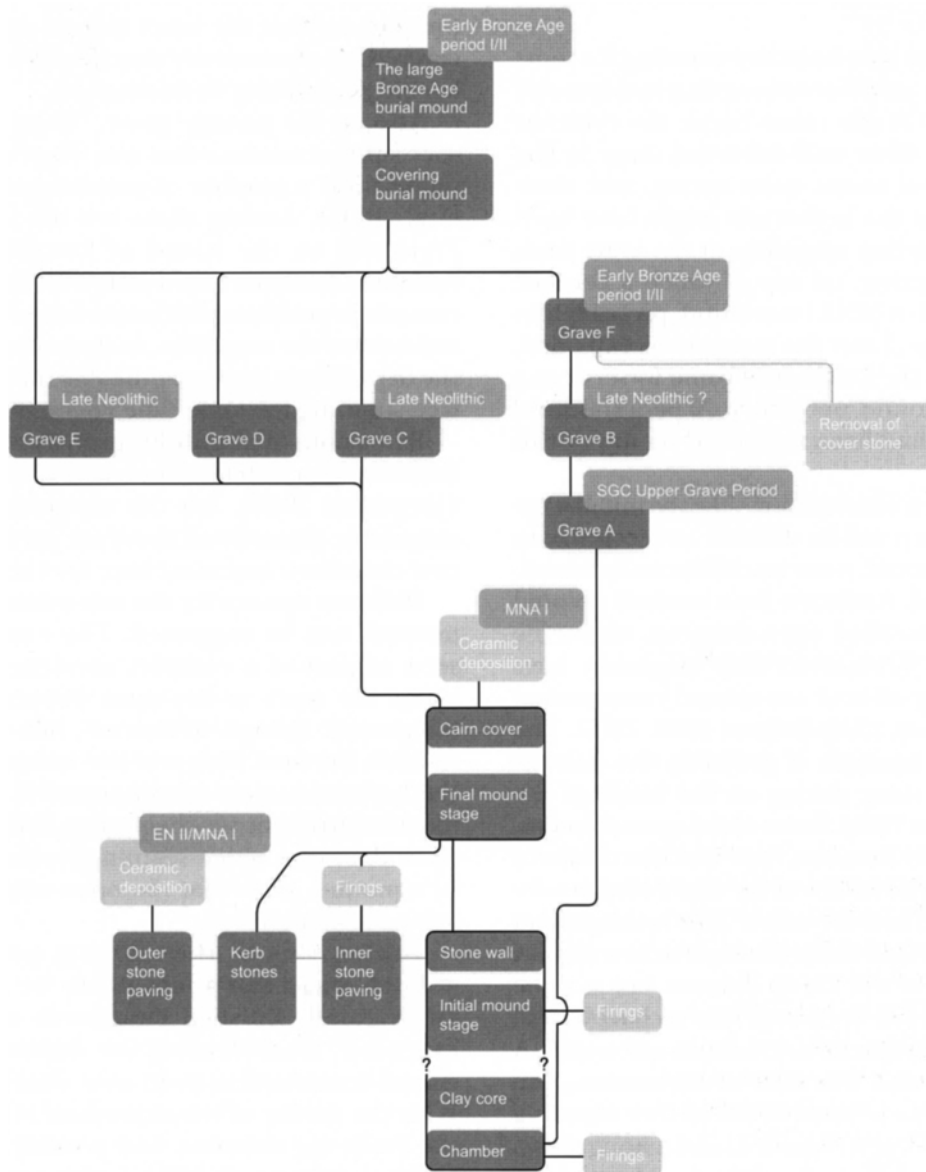


Fig. 11. Schematic representation of the interpretation of the history of the Tårup dolmen. Thick lines indicate stratigraphic relations, while thin lines indicate other observations with relative chronological significance. Also included in the graph are the stratigraphic position of the datable artefacts.

## DISCUSSION

The find material of the Tårup dolmen is relatively modest, and there were no traces of the primary burial in the chamber. The most interesting aspect is consequently the construction sequence of the dolmen and the traces of its secondary use, which, due to

fortunate preservation conditions, can be described in unusual detail.

The interpretation of the history of the Tårup dolmen is summarized schematically in Figure 11. The illustration shows a relatively complex construction sequence, with two mound stages, each delimited by stone structures, and with ritual activities involving

firings accompanying the construction of the mound.

The chamber may have been free-standing for some time, but there are no observations that indisputably demonstrate this. On the other hand, the evidence of a small, initial, stone wall-delimited stage in the mound construction seems quite strong, and there are indications that the kerbstones might have been erected as free-standing megaliths at the same time. The outer stone paving, on top of which a ceramic material from EN II or MNA I was found, probably also belongs to this stage. Later the mound was extended, and only then did the kerbstones come to serve as a marking of the mound periphery. A pedestal bowl datable to MNA I had been deposited on top of this stage.

Even though open constructions like the initial stage of the Tårup dolmen will be difficult to recognize in archaeological material, some parallels can be found. P. Eriksen and N. H. Andersen have recently pointed out a number of so-called open dolmens, where the chamber and the kerbstones may originally have been free-standing without any mound construction (Andersen & Eriksen 1996; Eriksen 1996, 72ff.). The best documented example is probably the dolmen at Tustrup, with a stone paving on the inside of the kerbstones (Kjærum 1955). Some of the open dolmens, among them Poskær Stenhus, have had two circles of kerbstones, where the stones of the inner circles were somewhat smaller than the outer. This arrangement of the kerbstones might reflect a construction similar to the initial stage of the Tårup dolmen, but as none of these structures have been subject to archaeological excavations, the interpretation remains uncertain. A few long barrows with two rows of kerbstones, and where the outer row is interpreted as free standing megaliths have also been recorded, and among these, the Tryggelev-dolmen on the island of Langeland and the Bygholm Nørremark long barrow have been subject to archaeological excavation (Eriksen 1999, 22ff; Raben 1944, 210f.; Ager 1963, 32ff., Skaarup 1980; Rønne 1979).

An archaeologically-examined, seemingly close parallel to the Tårup dolmen is the dolmen at Vester Vedsted (Ebbesen 1979). The dolmen consisted of a 7-8 m wide core with a stone cover and a footing of somewhat larger stones. The core was covered by a 17-18 m wide mound delimited by kerbstones. The chamber had a covered stone passage which continued into the kerbstone construction. This means that the

extension of the mound was either planned from the start, so that the inner mound stage was quickly covered, or alternatively that the kerbstones had also been free-standing in this mound.

Also, at the passage grave, "Kong Svends Høj", a very similar construction was observed, and in the publication a number of parallels are listed (Dehn et al. 1995). Among these are the long dolmen at Frellesvig on the island of Langeland. Here the extension has been dated within MNA I, based on the ceramic depositions which were found both in front of and behind the megaliths. As the kerbstones separated the depositions, it seems probable that they have been free-standing for some time (Berg 1974).

Extensions of megalithic graves are quite common in connection with the construction of a new chamber (Jørgensen 1988), but the extensions of the open megalithic graves listed above are not accompanied by new chambers, and must have another explanation.

Different reasons for the extensions of the dolmen mounds can be suggested. The extensions can be seen as part of a complex construction sequence, where the more or less open dolmen only marks a temporary, though deliberate, halt in progression towards the final design of the monument, in which the kerbstones were incorporated in the mound, as intended from the very beginning. Still, the numerous open dolmens, which seemingly were never covered by a mound, show that the open construction often was a finished design.

Taking this as the starting point, the open dolmen stage can alternatively be interpreted as an originally finished monument which was later extended, transforming the dolmen into a more closed construction to fit new ritual prescriptions. With the dating of the extensions of the Tårup and the Frellesvig dolmens, and possibly also the Vester Vedsted dolmen, to MNA I, this would correspond well chronologically with the general development towards the more closed megalithic constructions of the passage graves, but it is to some degree opposed by the extensions also being recorded at the passage grave, "Kong Svends Høj".

Regardless of what explanation is preferred, the extensions of the dolmen mounds underline that the mound construction served as an integrated part of ritual activities, which is also supported by the traces of the firings encapsulated in the mound fill. The construction of the mound and its finished design seem to have had a meaning. In this way the mound

construction can also be seen as a little-noticed source of information on the ritual activities of the TRB-culture, and instead of the impression of continuity and tradition which might arise from study of the repeated depositions in front of the megalithic burials and the repeated burials within the chambers, the mound construction invites the study of change.

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