

Torstorp Vesterby

A cemetery from the Late Roman Iron Age

by *Eliza Fonnesbech-Sandberg* (†)

INTRODUCTION

In the years 1987-1990, and again in 1992, the Archaeological Department of Copenhagen Regional Museum's Council at Søllerød Museum carried out extensive excavation campaigns at Torstorp Vesterby, in Høje-Taastrup District, 20 km west of Copenhagen. The reason was a planned expansion of the town over an area of 140.000 m². The area lies just less than 2 km southeast of the village of Høje-Taastrup; Torstorp Vesterby is a modern name. The area is almost flat, lying around the 25 m contour, and sloping down towards the southeast. The soils comprise heavy moraine clay. A large trial excavation in the first year revealed significant traces of settlement in the area. Accordingly, the topsoil was removed and an area of c. 70.000 m² was excavated the following year. During the course of the investigations it became clear that the settlement was even more extensive than first thought. In 1989 an extra reward came with the discovery of a small cemetery¹. This cemetery from the Late Roman Iron Age will be dealt with in the following.

THE CEMETERY

The cemetery comprised eight graves (Fig. 1). Five of the graves were quite small, less than 1.2 m in length, while two graves were of medium length, up to 1.63 m. These graves contained sparse grave goods. The eighth grave was both deeper and larger than the others and was richly furnished.

Even though only one tooth was preserved in grave 3342 and only tooth enamel in grave 3330, it seems likely that the small graves were all inhumation graves. This is suggested by the grave goods and their posi-

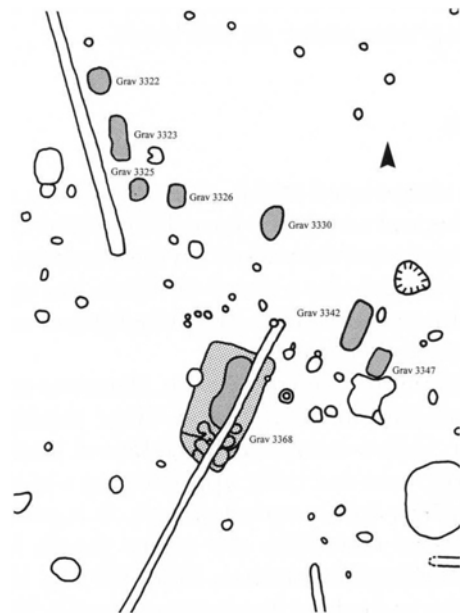


Fig. 1. Map of the cemetery. 1:200. Drawn by K.F. Paulmann.

¹Archaeological Department of Copenhagen Regional Museum's Council, j. no SØL 295. Excavated by the author with the assistance of, among others, stud.mag. (now cand.mag.) Benny Staal and museum technician Kenneth Faye Paulmann. The settlement traces were from 84 buildings, both long houses and outhouses, primarily from two Iron Age farms – a western and an eastern. There were, however, also some settlement phases from the Neolithic, the Late Bronze Age and a couple of phases from the Viking Age. The settlement was not limited to the modern Torstorp Vesterby, as during a small excavation to the west of here several phases were found of the western Iron Age farm and perhaps yet more phases lie further out.

tion along with the dark (head) patches in some of the graves. The almost consistent placing of grave goods in the northern end of the graves must be interpreted in terms of the head having been laid to the north, just as in the three graves with preserved teeth or tooth enamel.

As the eight graves respect one another they were all presumably either marked on the surface with a stone or a small mound, or were dug at the same time. The four northwesternmost graves (3322-23, 3325-26) were aligned approximately north-south, whereas the remaining graves were oriented approximately northeast-southwest. This should perhaps be interpreted in terms of the graves having been dug in two phases (more on this later).

GRAVE 3322

The grave was pointed oval in plan, 91 x 75 cm, with sloping sides and an uneven base. It extended 11 cm below the surface of the subsoil. In the southern end of the grave there was a vessel of which the upper part had been removed either by ploughing or removal of the topsoil (Fig. 2).

Vessel: Remaining height: 7.8 cm. Diameter at the belly: 11 cm, and at base: 7.1 cm. Ware thickness: 0.8-1.1 cm. Yellow-brown to black-brown surface, coarse ware. Rounded belly, approaching a bi-conical form with a lightly rounded base. It is possibly a bi-segmented vessel like one of the vessels from Fraugde (Norling-Christensen 1956, 109 Fig. 13.5), which belong to the Late Roman Iron Age C3. There is, however, also the possibility that the vessel is tri-segmented.

GRAVE 3323

The grave was rectangular in plan, 147 x 69 cm, with both a vertical and a sloping long side and a flat base. It extended 9 cm below the surface of the subsoil. In the northern end of the grave, a little to the west of the centre in a circular dark area of the fill, lay an iron pin, as well as a red and a green glass bead. The dark coloration of the soil perhaps means that the head lay here.

The pin from grave 3323 was presumably broken off from a fibula and used as a funeral offering in its own right. It is 4.45 cm long. At one end the remains

of a small piece of spiral can be seen. It cannot be dated precisely. The pin is apparently an expression of the re-use of a damaged fibula; it was probably used to fasten a dress or a shroud.

GRAVE 3325

The grave was almost rectangular in plan, 88 x 62 cm, with sloping sides and a slightly sloping base. It extended 7 cm below the surface of the subsoil. In the northeastern end of the grave stood a vessel of which the upper part had been removed by ploughing or by removal of the topsoil (Fig. 2).

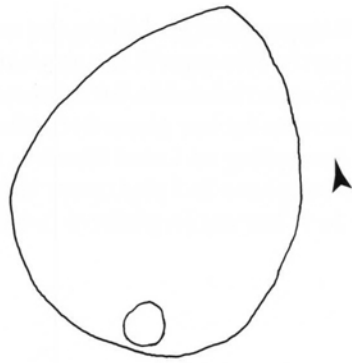
Vessel: Remaining height: 9.8 cm. Diameter at the belly: 13.3 cm, and at the base: 8.5 cm. Ware thickness: 0.9-1.05 cm. Yellow-brown surface, coarse ware. The vessel approaches a bi-conical form with a lightly rounded belly break and a slightly concave base (Fig. 2). It could be a bi-segmented vessel like one of the vessels from Fraugde (Norling-Christensen 1956, 109 Fig. 13.5), which are dated on the basis of the grave's content to C3. The fact that it could be tri-segmented cannot, however, be excluded.

GRAVE 3326

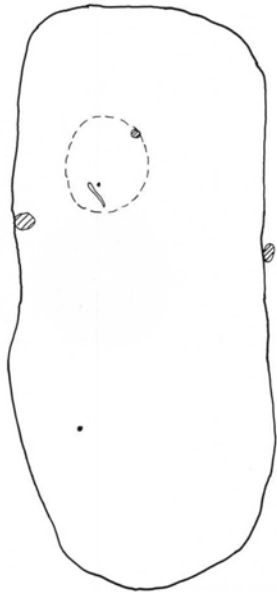
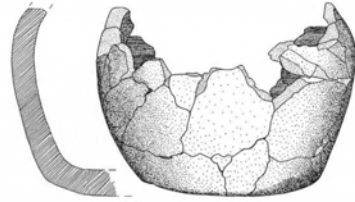
The grave was almost rectangular in plan, 99 x 58 cm, with both a vertical and a sloping long side and a slightly uneven base. It extended 10 cm below the surface of the subsoil. In the northeastern end of the grave lay potsherds from an almost complete vessel. Beside these, approximately in the middle of the northern end of the grave, was a round dark patch, which perhaps shows where the head had lain. On the other side of this patch lay an amber bead (Fig. 3).

Vessel: Height c. 10.5 cm. Diameter at the rim: 10.6 cm, at the belly: 13.5 cm, and at the base: 6.5 cm. Ware thickness: 0.5-1.2 cm. Yellow-brown to black-brown surface, coarse ware. The vessel is tri-segmented, has a short flared neck/rim and bi-conical upper and lower part with a sharp belly break. The base is flat. With regard to form, it belongs in the Late Roman Iron Age.

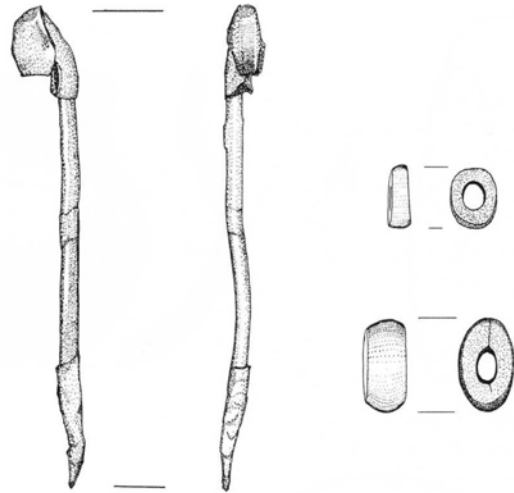
Ulla Lund Hansen's pottery typology, as presented in connection with the Harpelev cemetery, has been used on the intact vessels from Torstorp Vesterby (Hansen 1976, 106ff.). The advantage of this typology



GRAVE 3322



GRAVE 3323



GRAVE 3325

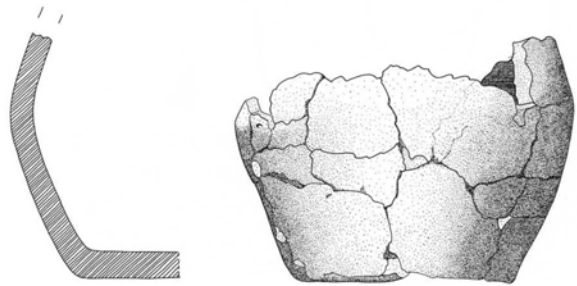


Fig. 2. Ground plan and grave inventory from graves 3322, 3323 and 3325. Graves 1:20, pottery 1:3, other artefacts 1:1. Drawn by L. Heidemann.

is that it uses the most objective criteria possible. The disadvantage is that it does not distinguish between, for example, whether a rim is straight or flared, or whether an upper part is convex or concave. Similarly, it does not include ornamentation as an important element.

There are some problems with fitting the vessel from grave 3326 into Lund Hansen's typology due to the vessel's deformation, but it is presumably a type IV 2c vessel with a normal rim and belonging to height group 1. The code means that it is a relatively slim tri-segmented vessel with normal neck height but a relatively

tall upper part, including the neck, relative to the lower part². The type is the most abundant in Lund Hansen's material and is, furthermore, one of the most characteristic for her phase 2+3, which corresponds to C1b2. According to Lund Hansen, the characteristic types from phase 2+3 also occur in phase 3 (=C2) and phase 3+4, but not in phase 4 (=C3).

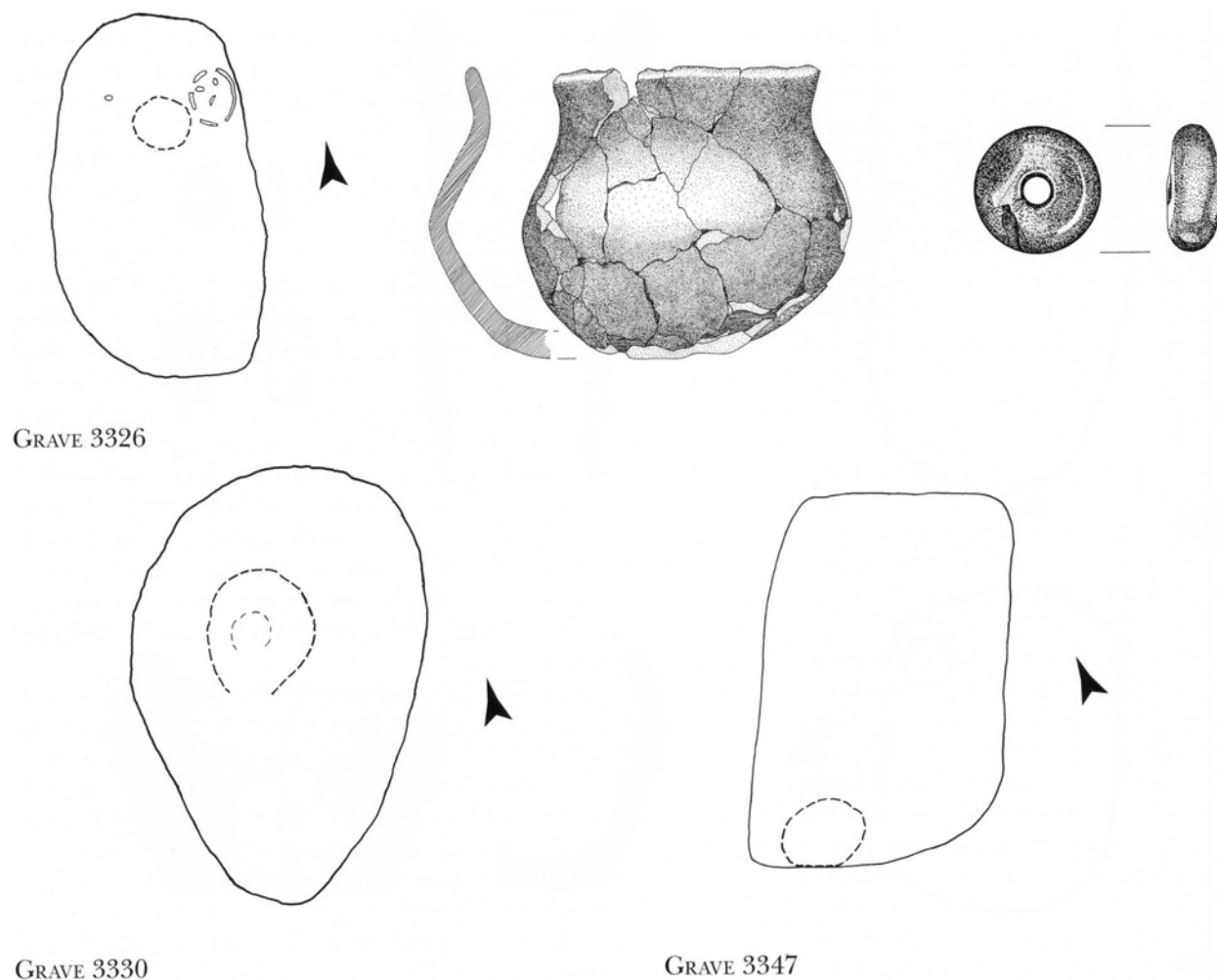


Fig. 3. Ground plan and grave inventory from graves 3326, 3330 and 3347. Graves 1:20, pottery 1:3, bead 1:1. Drawn by L. Heidemann.

GRAVE 3330

The grave was oval in plan, c. 118 x 80 cm, with sloping sides and a base, which sloped down towards the west. It extended to a maximum of 14 cm below the surface of the subsoil. There were no grave goods, but tooth enamel was found approximately in the centre of the northern end of the grave under a dark patch (Fig. 3).

GRAVE 3342

The grave was rectangular in plan, 163 x 79 cm, with both a vertical and a sloping long side and a flat base. It extended 9 cm below the surface of the subsoil. No traces of a coffin could be seen, but the section showed that the fill consisted of grey-brown clay mixed with topsoil, which at the sides and the base was separated from the subsoil by a layer of lighter brown clay containing small bodies of topsoil. This thin lighter layer presumably represents the fill around a coffin, now represented by the darker layer with a greater content of topsoil. In the northeastern end of the grave was a vessel from which the rim and belly had been removed by ploughing or during removal of topsoil. In the vicinity of the vessel lay two amber beads, two yellow, two blue and two red-brown glass beads and an iron fibula. Two of the beads were fragmented and are therefore not included on figure 4. In addition to the artefacts there was a tooth (molar) from a 4-5 year old child³.

Fibula: The fibula is of Haraldsted type, a type that was recognised by Norling-Christensen (1957, 38ff.) and further defined by Stig Jensen (1980, 192 note 19). The fibula is so corroded that it is not possible to see whether it is ornamented. It has a crossbow construction, ribbon-shaped bow with a narrow pointed foot

² Ulla Lund Hansen considers her type IV vessels as quadri-segmented, but in this article they are called tri-segmented, as they comprise a lower part, an upper part (= shoulder, according to Ulla Lund Hansen) and a neck/rim.

³ Dentist Åse Hansen, who has determined its age and established that it is only slightly worn, examined the tooth. It is healthy, without evidence of caries.

and turned-in catch-plate (=fixed pin sheath). The spiral axis appears, according to an X-ray photo, to rest in a tube-shaped bedding formed by one end of the bow, as is usually the case with this type. Part of the pin is missing. The fibula is 4.9 cm long and 0.8 cm broad. The type clearly belongs in a Late Roman Iron Age C3 context and, accordingly, it dates grave 3342 to C3.

Vessel: Remaining height: 7.9 cm. Diameter at base: 8.5 cm. Ware thickness: 0.9-1.2 cm. Yellow-brown surface, coarse ware. The vessel is so deformed that no comments can be made on its form (Fig. 4).

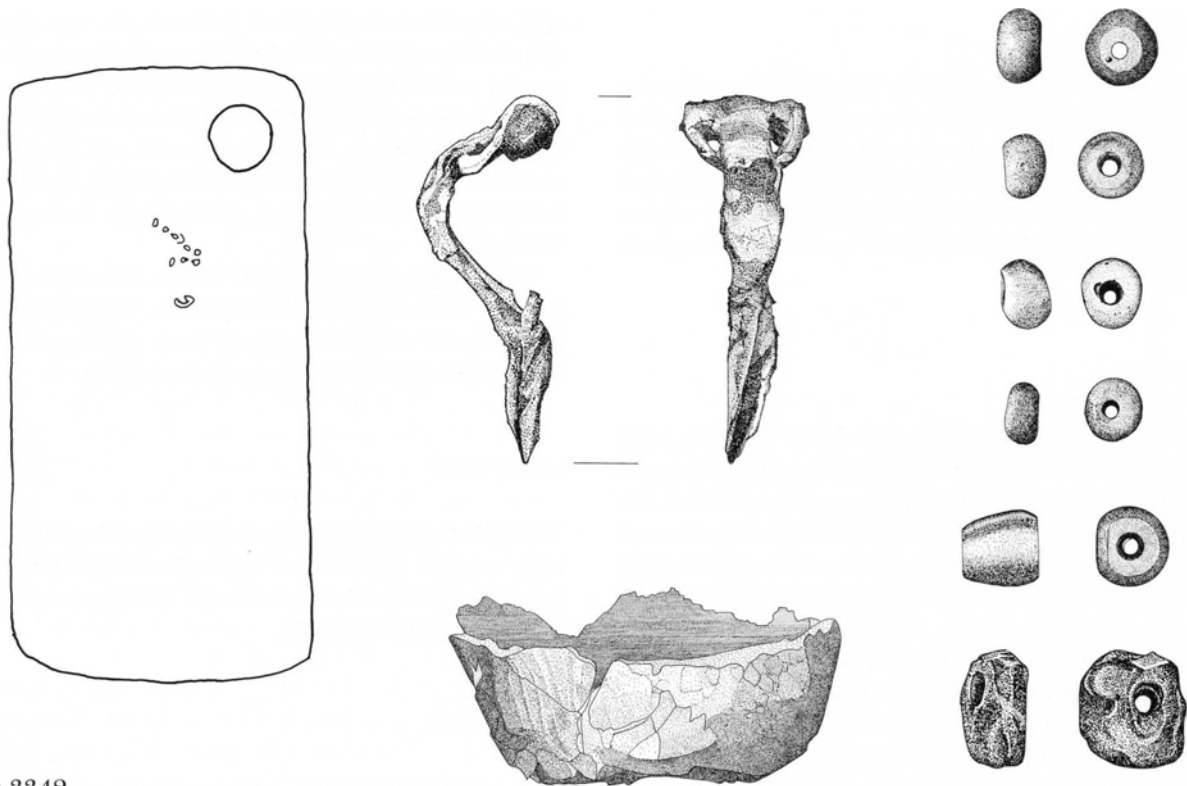
GRAVE 3347

The grave was almost rectangular in plan, 97 x 64 cm, with straight sides and a flat base. It extended 16 cm below the surface of the subsoil. The grave contained no grave goods (Fig. 3).

GRAVE 3368

The grave was almost rectangular in plan. The original burial covered an area of c. 340 x 230 cm. The outermost part was filled with light grey sandy clay slightly mixed with topsoil and flecked with ochre-coloured clay to a depth of 15-20 cm below the surface of the subsoil. Here the grave had straight sides and a flat base, which sloped down towards the centre and formed a deepened, rounded bedding, presumably for a log coffin. At the centre of the grave (over its deepest part), a darker rectangle measuring c. 250 x 84 cm could be seen (Fig. 5). At the surface of the subsoil the fill comprised dark grey, slightly ochre-flecked clay mixed with topsoil.

About 37 cm below the surface of the subsoil, within the dark rectangle, a dark brown greasy layer could be seen. This is interpreted as an organic mixture of fat from the corpse and the decomposed remains of clothes and hides. The lower boundary of this layer consisted of a black dissolved charcoal layer representing the remains of the base of the coffin. At the southwestern end of the grave, about 10 cm over the base, there were clear traces of the side of the coffin in the form of a narrow band of charcoal. The charcoal presumably originates from surface charring of the coffin during its fabrication. The base of the coffin had been 225 cm long and 60 cm broad and the grave itself



GRAVE 3342

Fig. 4. Ground plan and grave inventory from grave 3342. Grave 1:20, pottery 1:3, other artefacts 1:1. Drawn by L. Heidemann.

extended 45 cm below the surface of the subsoil.

A drain on the eastern side had disturbed the coffin. At its base, the drain had barely touched the coffin, but at the surface of the subsoil perhaps 10 cm or more of the dark fill on the eastern side had been cut away. A small piece of thin bronze was found at the surface of the drain. This could originate from grave goods, which were disturbed when the drain was dug. High up in the drain fill a fragment of an iron knife was found which presumably also originates from the grave. At the southern end of the outer part of the burial there was clear evidence of modern disturbance, which also continued beyond the limit of the grave towards the south. This is shown as patches on the plan of the grave (Fig. 1). The digging of the drain probably meant that the excavators struck an artefact with bronze on the southeastern side of the grave, perhaps a wooden bucket with bronze bands. A little to the south of the artefacts described below,

there was a modern disturbance at the southeastern side of the grave, but this did not touch the base of the coffin. The find presumably encouraged the diggers to carry out a robber excavation at the southern end of the grave. They probably did not find anything as they were outside the limits of the grave and they did not continue their plundering in the northern end of the grave, which was undisturbed and contained the artefacts described below.

In the grave, just north of the centre, a well-preserved set of teeth from a 25-year old woman was found⁴. The skeleton was not preserved, but the position of the dress jewellery relative to the teeth, indicates that the woman had lain flexed with her head to the north and looking to the east. Her position resulted in the dress jewellery lying in several overlapping layers within a belt running from the set of teeth diagonally down to the southeastern side of the coffin. The original position of the artefacts on the woman has been inter-

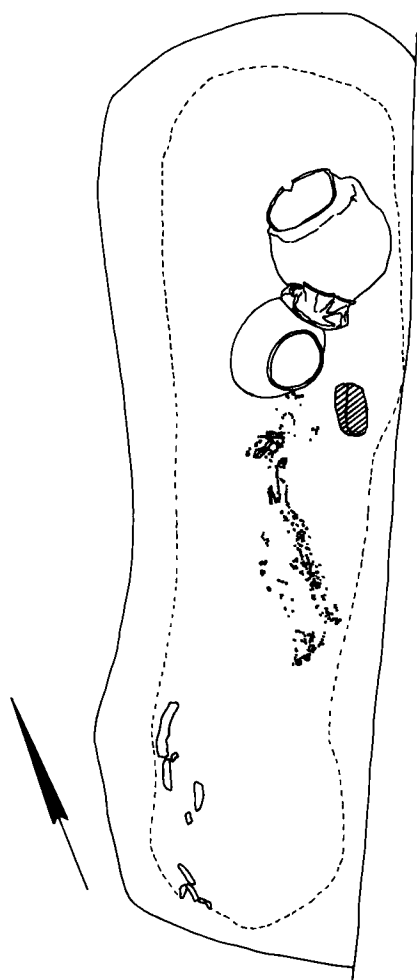


Fig. 5. Detailed plan of the female grave (grave 3368). Only the central part of the grave itself is shown, not the whole of the burial. 1:20. Drawn by K.F. Paulmann.

puted to the best of the author's abilities. Extending across the whole belt of artefacts lay several rows of beads and a very small amount of thread. These are interpreted as the remains of three strings of beads comprising a total of 482 beads. Most were of glass or amber, but there were also three silver foil beads. The smallest of the strings of beads also included a Roman silver coin, fitted with a loop, and a bi-conical pendant. Close to the teeth lay a sheet silver fibula, and about 10 cm further to the south lay a ribbon-shaped silver sheet fibula. Among the beads there were five sets of silver hooks and eyes. East of the teeth lay the

upper stone from a saddle quern; to the north stood three clay vessels. In the southernmost vessel (vessel 3) there was a small clay cup and a Roman glass. The northernmost vessel (vessel 4) contained the jawbone of a sheep or goat.

Sheet silver fibula: (Fig. 6) The fibula is made of silver with partial gilding. It comprises a rectangular headplate, a ribbon-shaped bow and a roof-shaped rhomboid footplate with slightly concave sides. At the transition from bow to footplate, a small circular disc has been mounted on either side. Along each short side of the headplate there have been four faceted knobs and along the long sides, opposite the bow, there were seven of these knobs. Out of a total of 15 knobs, 11 complete examples and a couple of fragments are preserved. Six spiral-like rods had been attached to the reverse of the headplate. These were arranged in pairs, joined by way of a small catch through a small vertical central plate with three holes. Parts of the actual spiral are present as small fragments, while the pin catch and pin are missing.

The fibula is 9.7 cm long. The headplate measures 4.5 x 2.4 cm. The bow is 1.15 cm broad. The distance between the head and footplate is 2.4 cm. The footplate is 4.6 cm long and 3.2 cm broad.

The fibula is decorated with eight different punchmarks (Fig. 7). On the headplate there are punchmarks 1-7. It is divided up into four fields by way of the punched decoration. The two triangles at the short sides are gilded. The bow is ornamented with punchmark no. 5, and is gilded. It terminates at each end with one broad and two narrow beaded wires. The footplate is ornamented with punchmarks 1-2 and 4-8. It is gilded over most of its surface, but a broad elongated V-shape delimited with the aid of the punched decoration around the "ridge" is free of gilding. The punchmarks are of types of which

⁴Dentists Åse Hansen and Verner Alexandersen have examined and determined the ages of the teeth. In all, 31 teeth were found. Accordingly, only the wisdom tooth at the left side of the upper jaw is missing. The teeth are healthy, without caries. They are worn to a degree. The size of the teeth is closer to those of women than of men, although the size is not expressly feminine. Taking into account the nature of the grave goods, this must be the grave of a woman.



Fig. 6. The sheet silver fibula from the female grave 3368. Scale 1:1. Photo by J. Weng.

some occur as early as the 3rd century AD, while others first become common in the 4th century and continue in use up into the Early Germanic Iron Age (Hansen 1970, 86ff.). Ulla Lund Hansen has shown that the sheet silver fibulae from the Early Germanic Iron Age are characterised by animal heads in profile at the transition from the bow to the footplate. Sheet silver fibulae from the Late Roman Iron Age C3 have, on the contrary, no animal heads in profile (Hansen 1970, 82ff.). According to this classification, the fibula from Torstorp Vesterby belongs to the Late Roman Iron Age C3. In Ulla Lund Hansen's summary of the punchmark types on sheet silver fibulae there are only examples of fibulae with a maximum of four different punchmarks in the group without heads in profile, while the fibulae with heads in profile are characterised by a large number of punchmarks. The Torstorp Vesterby fibula shows that at least seven different punchmark types can appear within the group lacking heads in profile⁵. Perhaps this is an indication that the fibula was produced late in C3 at the transition

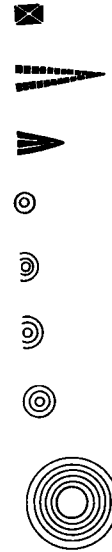


Fig. 7. Punchmarks on the sheet silver fibula from grave 3368. 4:1. Drawn by K.F. Paulmann.

to the Early Germanic Iron Age.

Ribbon-shaped fibula: Large part of a ribbon-shaped fibula (Fig. 8). This is 5.35 cm long and 1.1 cm broad. The fibula is made of bronze with a 0.35 cm broad gilded band of silver foil on the obverse. This is bordered on each side by two silver-beaded wires in between which there is a narrow, hammered silver ribbon, woven from two pairs of wires. The fibula has had a turned-in pin catch, of which only a little is preserved. None of the spiral construction or the pin is present. The terminal at the head end of the fibula is also missing. The gilt ribbon seems to have its original full length. It is ornamented with a series of dots along the central axis and a row of cross-hatched punched triangles along the sides (Fig. 9). Lowermost on the bow, just before the foot, there are two cross-hatched punched rhombes. The punched decoration is present on the foot and on the bow, whereas the short section

⁵ According to Ulla Lund Hansen's figure 14 (Hansen 1970, 81) different sizes of the same type of punchmark as punchmarks nos. 5 and 6 on the Torstorp Vesterby fibula have not been included. They are therefore only counted as one type of punchmark in comparison with her summary of the punchmarks on the sheet silver fibulae. Therefore, the basis for comparison is seven, and not eight, types of punchmark.

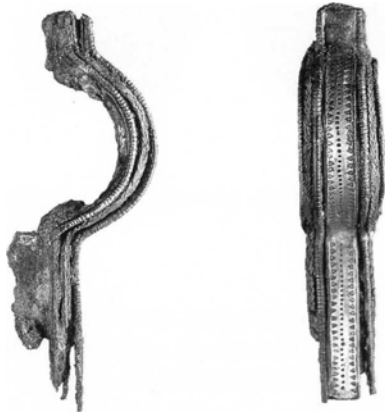


Fig. 8. The ribbon-shaped fibula from the female grave 3368 seen from above and from the side. 1:1. Photo by J. Weng.



Fig. 9. Punchmarks on the ribbon-shaped fibula from grave 3368. 4:1. Drawn by K.F. Paulmann.

just before the terminal at the head is unornamented. Two unattached beaded wires have presumably been located on each side of the bow.

The fibula has no immediate parallels. The fact that the terminal at the head end is missing does not make comparisons with other fibulae easier. Typologically it appears to be related to the Nydam fibulae, which also can have a turned-in pin catch, even though these do not have an applied decorated silver band. The punch-decorated silver foil leads one's thoughts in the direction of the sheet silver fibulae, which date from the Late Roman Iron Age C3 and the Early Germanic Iron Age. Punched triangles and rhombes with cross-hatching are known as early as the 3rd century AD and continue in use up into the Early Germanic Iron Age (Hansen 1979, 90). On the basis of its form it seems obvious to date the fibula to the Late Roman Iron Age C3.

Hooks and eyes: There are five sets of silver hooks and eyes from grave 3368. The hooks are 1.1-1.25 cm

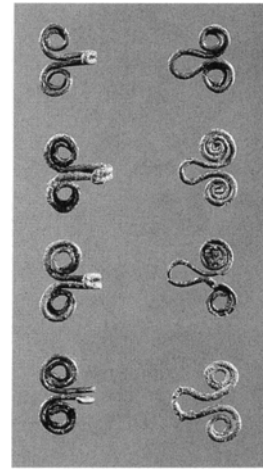


Fig. 10. Hooks and eyes from grave 3368. 1:1. Photo by J. Weng.

broad (across the spirals) and 0.9-1 cm long. The eyes are 1.05-1.2 cm broad and 0.9-1 cm long. Four sets are almost complete (Fig. 10), whilst the fifth is very fragmented.

The hooks and eyes are of a type with coiled ends. The grave's context places the five sets unequivocally in the Late Roman Iron Age C3; whereas the hooks and eyes with coiled ends at the Hjemsted cemetery belong to the Early Germanic Iron Age. The dating of the type with coiled ends is therefore extended, from belonging exclusively to the Early Germanic Iron Age, as presumed so far (Ethelberg 1986, 44ff.), to also appearing in the later part of the Late Roman Iron Age. The type has thus a longer period of overlap with hooks and eyes of the pretzel-shaped type than previously assumed, as the latter also occur in the later part of the Late Roman Iron Age and the Early Germanic Iron Age.

The hooks and eyes from Torstorp Vesterby are approximately half the size of those from Hjemsted, which perhaps reflects the chronological difference, implicating that the small hooks and eyes with coiled ends belong to the Late Roman Iron Age and the large examples belong to the Early Germanic Iron Age.

Bi-conical pendant: The presumed bi-conical pendant from grave 3368 is made of sheet silver, on which the remains of gilding can be seen. It comprises a bi-conical piece of tube with a soldered-on domed base. It has a loose lid (Figs. 11-12). The piece is 1.7 cm in



Fig. 11. Bi-conical pendant from grave 3368, seen from below. 1:1. Photo by J. Weng.

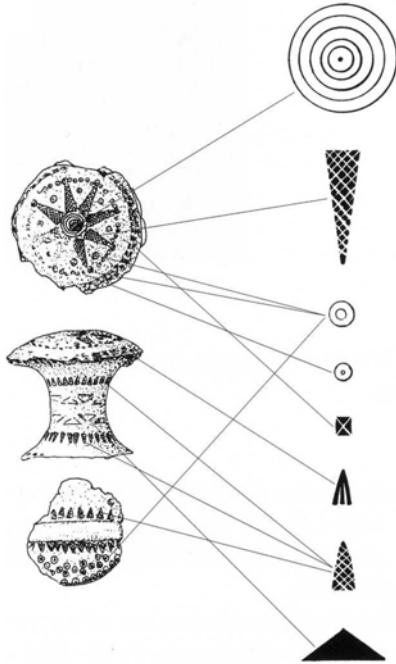


Fig. 12. The bi-conical pendant from grave 3368 with the types of punchmarks used. Pendant 1:1, punchmarks 4:1. Drawn by K.F. Paulmann.

height and 1.8 cm in diameter at its broadest point, at the transition from tube to base. It is most probably a bi-conical pendant of the type defined by Nielsen (1997, 23ff.). On the piece from Torstorp Vesterby the suspension mechanism is missing. This would comprise two loops uppermost on the tube and a tube on the lid, through which a string would be passed to hold the lid closed (Nielsen 1997, 25 Fig. 4). The piece is richly ornamented with punched decoration on all the available surfaces. Only on the lid is there an unornamented zone where the tube is presumed to have been.

The punched decoration was produced using eight different punchmarks. Three of these are of the same type as nos. 1, 3 and 4 on the sheet silver fibula. As was the case with the sheet silver fibula, some of the



Fig. 13. Roman *siliqua* from grave 3368, obverse and reverse. 1:1. Photo by J. Weng.

punchmarks on the pendant occur already from the 3rd century, while the others appear first in the 4th century. The bi-conical pendant is dated, as a type, to the Late Roman Iron Age C3 and the Early Germanic Iron Age (Nielsen 1997, 25f.). The example from Torstorp Vesterby must therefore, on account of its context, be placed in C3.

Roman siliqua: The silver coin from grave 3368 is approximately 1.9 cm in diameter (Fig. 13). It has been identified by Anne Kromann as a *siliqua* struck under Constantinus II in Nicomedia within the period 340-51 AD (Kromann 1995, 350 Fig. 13.4 no. 59). In Denmark, Roman *siliquae* from the 4th century have been found both in a hoard deposited in the Late Roman Iron Age and in hoards deposited in the Early Germanic Iron Age, i.e. the circulation period of the coins varies. The hoards from the Early Germanic Iron Age are the two hack silver hoards from Høstentorp and Simmersted. It is characteristic of the coins in these hoards that they have a later composition and are more worn than the *siliqua* hoard from Gudme III, which is thought to have been deposited in the 4th century (Kromann 1988; Fønnesbech-Sandberg 1989, 424ff.; Fønnesbech-Sandberg 1990, 77f, 83f.). There were probably two chronologically distinct streams of imports, and the coin from Torstorp Vesterby must, on account on the context of the grave, belong to the earlier of these.

The coin is very corroded over certain parts of its surface. The face of the Emperor is thus unclear, whereas the letters and decoration, particularly on the reverse, are very distinct. It seems, therefore, that the incomplete preservation of the surface is more due to corrosion than to wear.

The loop is ribbon-shaped, without decoration, and about 0.35 cm broad. The fact that the coin has been fitted with a loop shows, naturally, that it was as an ornament, as part of a set of jewellery that the coin was offered in the grave. It had lost its original

function as a method of payment and was instead used as an amulet or a status symbol. It is unlikely that *siliquae* were ever used as coins in Denmark but rather as amulets and crude metal (Fonnesbech-Sandberg 1989, 448ff.; Fonnesbech-Sandberg 1990, 83f.). The *siliqua* from Torstorp Vesterby cannot have been used for very many years before it was buried together with the woman.

Beads: The beads from grave 3368 give a very homo-



Fig. 14. The strings of beads from grave 3368. No scale.
Photo by J. Weng.

geneous impression (Fig. 14). The strings of beads are kept predominantly in red-brown and yellow. The glass beads are very uniform in size. Apart from a small number of exceptions, they all lie within Ethelberg's medium-sized category, i.e. between 0.55 and 1.0 cm in diameter (Ethelberg 2000, 77ff.). The few that are smaller comprise two light blue beads and a dark blue faceted bead as well as all the gold foil beads. All in

all, there are seven beads, which are smaller than the majority, while a white bi-conical and a white disc-shaped bead are a little larger. The amber beads vary a little more in size, but not so that this is noticeable in the strings, apart from the long string of amber beads in which the large beads have been gathered at the centre⁶.

The largest string of beads comprises exclusively glass beads. With a single exception, the beads are red-brown and yellow (including gold). The exception is the black glass bead, which was placed at the centre. The beads are arranged in a coloured linear pattern, but they are not placed quite symmetrically.

The large amber string of beads is built up around the heavy central beads. This gives a very uniform and symmetrical impression regardless of whether the sequence is broken at the back of the neck by two pairs of blue beads or not.

The small string of beads is the most diverse as, in addition to amber beads, it contains glass beads distributed along its length, as well as the silver coin and the bi-conical pendant. The silver foil beads also belong to this string, but they can no longer be inserted in it due to their fragmentation and poor state of preservation.

During the excavation it could not be determined whether the strings of beads were joined at the back of the neck or whether they had hung from a fibula

⁶ The strings of beads from the female grave have been reconstructed as correctly as possible. There is no doubt that there are three strings. Similarly, it is beyond question that the longest example comprised purely glass beads and that the next longest comprises amber beads with the largest beads at the centre. On the other hand, there is some doubt as to whether the glass beads in this string perhaps belonged instead to the small string. Furthermore, there is some doubt with regard to the pattern sequence and the exact location of the beads, particularly at the neck, as the beads here, due to the woman's position and the collapse of the grave in the course of time, lie over one another. Some of the beads have not been positioned in the strings, either because they are fragmented or because it could not, on the basis of their location, be determined into which of the three strings of beads they should be fitted in. This applies, for example, to the six yellow beads, which must be presumed to belong with the glass beads, as it is only here that yellow beads are found, but their position cannot be determined.

on each shoulder⁷.

The beads from the small graves are of the same type and colour as those in the female grave. The glass beads all fall within the medium range, just like the majority of those in the latter. The only example is a green glass bead, which was not found in the female grave, but in grave 3323. Its size and form are, however, the same as the other glass beads.

As Per Ethelberg has pointed out, it is difficult to use beads in chronological studies, especially with regard to high-resolution chronologies (Ethelberg 2000, 77ff.). The beads from the female grave are dated by their context to the Late Roman Iron Age C3, and the same applies to the beads from grave 3342.

In 1976 Ulla Lund Hansen produced a summary of beads in grave finds from the Late Roman Iron Age on Zealand (Hansen 1976, 150f.). From this it is apparent that the number of beads in individual graves increases in the course of the period, from an average of four beads per grave in the early part of the Late Roman Iron Age to an average of 390 in C3 (Hansen 1976, 151 Fig. 66). The female grave from Torstorp Vesterby fits in well with this picture with its 482 beads. Ulla Lund Hansen's summary shows, furthermore, that there are almost equal numbers of glass and amber beads in the graves and very few metal beads. This also corresponds well with the female grave, in which there are 238 amber beads, 241 glass beads and three sheet silver fibulae. Grave 3342 with its eight beads is not at all comparable with the other graves from C3, but this is of course a child's grave.

The glass beads found in Denmark from the Late Roman Iron Age have previously been seen as imports from the Roman Empire. However, the latest evidence concerning glass bead production at Lundeberg as early as the Late Roman Iron Age⁸ opens up the possibility that the beads could have been produced in Lundeberg or even locally in Høje-Taastrup. So far, there is no firm evidence for the latter.

Knife: The fragment of the iron knife from grave 3368 is 4.8 cm long, 1.5 cm broad and 0.5 cm thick at the back of the blade. The knife is single-edged and

it is the outermost part of the blade, which has been found. The outermost tip is missing. Taking into consideration the thickness relative to the breadth, the knife had probably been sharpened many times.

Iron knives appear rarely as grave goods in graves from the Late Roman Iron Age on Zealand. They have only been found in 3-4% of the graves, in contrast to the Iron Age graves from Funen and Jutland where knives are among the most common grave goods (Ethelberg 2000, 113ff.).

Roman glass: The glass from grave 3368 lies in a plaster cast in its original form, but it is in very poor condition. The glass is flattened and the rim appears to be missing. The diameter of the top and base cannot be measured. The present height is about 13 cm. It is possible, despite its state of preservation, to see that it is a Late Roman conical glass beaker of the same type as the two from Högom (Hansen 1987, 119 Fig. 68; Ramquist 1992, 127f, 138f, plate 88-89). It is not possible to determine whether it is oval-cut or faceted.

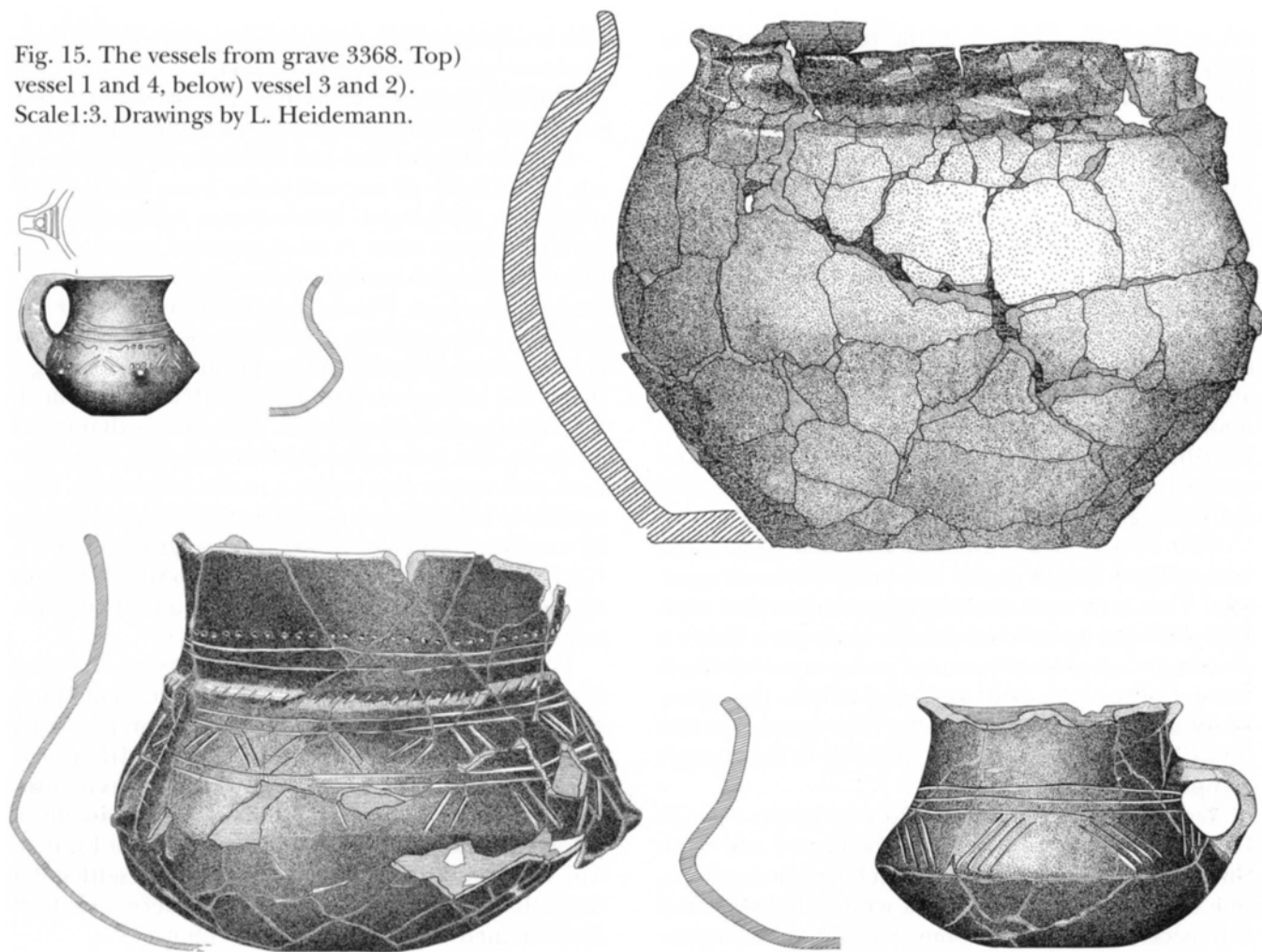
Per Ramquist mentions that the type is thought to have been produced through the 4th and into the 5th centuries AD. The chambered tomb in mound 2 at Högom is dated to the Early Germanic Iron Age, c. 500 AD, but the glasses could have been deposited perhaps 100 years after they had been produced, like many other artefacts in this grave (Ramquist 1992, 138f.). Fragments of the same type of glass are known from Eketorp from the later part of the Late Roman Iron Age (Näsman 1984, 57f.). The glass from Torstorp Vesterby gives us yet another piece of evidence for the existence of this type in the Late Roman Iron Age, as the sheet silver fibula dates the grave to C3. Glass of this type was produced in the Cernajchov culture in Southeastern Europe close to the Black Sea and represents a Syrian-Egyptian tradition (Näsman 1984, 29; Straume 1987, 62).

Vessel 1: Height: 5.7 cm. Diameter at the rim: 4.9 cm, at the belly: 6.2 cm, and at the base: 2.5 cm. Ware thickness: 0.25-3 cm. Black-brown burnished surface, fine ware. A tri-segmented little cup with a handle (Fig. 15). The rim is flared and continues into a curved neck. This continues into a conical upper part, which via a sharp belly break continues into a lightly curved lower part. Very slightly curved base. The faceted handle runs out from the rim and is attached at the lower part. The handle is decorated uppermost with three horizontal lines. At the transition from neck to belly the cup is decorated with three narrow encircling grooves, which are broken by the handle. On the

⁷ An illustration of the reconstructed dress can be found in Fønnesbech-Sandberg *et al.* 1999, 41.

⁸ Personal comm. museum curator P.O. Thomsen, Svendborg Museum.

Fig. 15. The vessels from grave 3368. Top) vessel 1 and 4, below) vessel 3 and 2). Scale 1:3. Drawings by L. Heidemann.



belly break there are five evenly spaced small bosses. Between these, on the upper part, there are two pairs of narrow grooves angled obliquely. Over the tip of each angle, at each side, there is a groove in the form of a crescent. Immediately over each boss there are three small circular dots, and higher up, on level with the crescents, and over the three bosses furthest away from the handle there are two small circular dots. On both sides of the handle, on the upper part of the cup, two narrow vertical grooves have been engraved, and above these three small circular dots.

According to Lund Hansen's typology this is a type IV 1d vessel with a high neck belonging to height group 1. The code shows that it is a very slim vessel with a high upper part and neck relative to the lower

part. The type cannot, due to the lack of dated find combinations, be placed chronologically by Lund Hansen (Hansen 1976, 115).

By way of a comparison with Southern Jutish material, which should not really be carried out before there is an independent typology for the vessel types on Zealand from C3 and Early Germanic Iron Age, it can, however, be seen that the cup belongs to Ethelberg's composition group III, which is found in the Late Roman Iron Age C3, and continues into the Early Germanic Iron Age (Ethelberg 1990, 67ff.). The group comprises vessels with neck decoration and continuous decoration on the upper part. This dating must be said to be consistent with the grave's position in C3.

Vessel 2: Height: 10.4 cm. Diameter at the rim: 10

cm, at the belly: 13.3 cm, at the base c. 5 cm. Ware thickness: 0.4-0.5 cm. Black-brown burnished surface, fine ware. A tri-segmented handled vessel with flared rim and conical neck, which, by way of a small break, runs over in the conical/slightly, curved upper part. The transition from the upper to the lower part is strongly curved and tends towards a proper belly break. The lower part is slightly curved and continues over into a flat base. The broad ribbon-shaped handle is attached to the neck and to the belly break respectively (Fig. 15). The vessel is ornamented lowermost on the neck with three narrow encircling grooves, which are broken under the handle. Below these, on the upper part, there are bundles of lines angled obliquely. Each bundle comprises four narrow grooves, with the exception of the one closest to the handle, which only has three grooves.

This is a type IV 2d vessel with a high neck belonging to height group 1 in Lund Hansen's typology. That is to say a relatively slim vessel with a high neck and upper part relative to the lower part. This is a vessel type, which is not present in the material which Lund Hansen has dealt with and which, therefore, is not assigned chronologically. This vessel, just like vessel 1 from the same grave, belongs to Ethelberg's composition group III.

Vessel 3: Height: 17.7 cm. Diameter at the rim: 16 cm, at the belly: 22.5 cm, and at the base: 7 cm. Ware thickness: 0.2-0.5 cm. Black-brown burnished surface, fine ware. A tri-segmented pot with a slightly flared rim/neck, which continues into a slightly curved upper part. *Via* a sharp belly break the slightly curved lower part is led towards the slightly curved base (Fig. 15). The vessel is decorated on the neck with an encircling row of small circular impressions. Below this there are two encircling narrow grooves. A horizontal encircling bead with oblique impressions is placed at the transition to the upper part. From this there is in three places a vertical bead with oblique impressions, which run down over the upper part and terminate at the belly break. Here there is a small boss located on each side of the vertical beads. Between the vertical beads there is a patterned border comprising, uppermost, two horizontal narrow grooves and, below this, an angled pattern comprising two opposing pairs of oblique grooves. The patterned border is repeated at the belly break.

The vessel is a type IV 1c vessel with a high neck, and as it is taller than 12 cm it belongs to Lund Hansen's height group 2. According to the code it is a slim vessel

with a relatively high neck and upper part relative to the lower part. The type has not been assigned chronologically into Lund Hansen's type series. This vessel belongs to Ethelberg's composition group III.

Vessel 4: Height: 21.6 cm. Diameter at the rim: 22 cm, at the belly: 27 cm, and at the base: 14 cm. Ware thickness: 0.6-1.2 cm. Yellow-brown to black-brown surface, coarse ware. A tri-segmented vessel with a slightly flared rim, conical neck and marked transition to the upper part. This is rounded and runs over the rounded belly and into an almost conical lower part and a flat base (Fig. 15). In Lund Hansen's chronology, the vessel belongs to type IV 2a with a normal neck belonging to height group 2. This means that it is a relatively slim vessel of normal neck height and a low neck and upper part relative to the lower part. The vessel is in Lund Hansen's combination diagram figure 34 combined with characteristic types from phase 2 = C1b1 (Hansen 1976, 118). The Torstorp Vesterby grave shows, however, that it must have been a resilient type, as it is also present in C3.

If the vessel is compared to Albrechtsen's material from Funen it can be seen that it has almost an intermediary position between his forms 42 and 43 from the Late Roman Iron Age periods I and III respectively. It has, however, a marked neck break as in form 40 (Albrechtsen 1968, 249) and is also reminiscent of an ornamented vessel from Præstestien, near Esbjerg, which belongs to the oldest phase of the settlement from the 4th century and the Early Germanic Iron Age (Siemen 1989, 88ff and cover photo).

THE POTTERY FROM THE GRAVES

As is apparent from the use of Lund Hansen's typology on the intact vessels from Torstorp Vesterby, three of the vessels from grave 3368 belong to types, which are not assigned to her chronological phases. These phases are defined by different characteristic types, and in contrast to the early phases of the Late Roman Iron Age, no pottery types are included in her phase 4 = C3. This is due to a lack of suitable find assemblages from this period in the material used, which in particular appears to contain pottery from the early phases. Accordingly, it is an obvious thought that the types IV 1c high neck, height 2, IV 1d high neck, height 1, and IV 2d high neck, height 1, which are vessels with a high neck and upper part relative to the lower part, are those which characterise C3 and

perhaps the Early Germanic Iron Age. They have, at least, been found together with a sheet silver fibula lacking heads in profile.

According to Lund Hansen's chronology, the vessel from grave 3326 cannot be later than phase 3+4, i.e. a transitional phase from C2 to C3. This would normally be interpreted such that this grave was constructed significantly earlier than grave 3368. It is also possible that the vessel was old when it was placed in the grave; otherwise this grave is the exception that proves the rule that the type is not found in C3. Accordingly, vessel 4 type IV 2a normal neck, height 2, is apparently found in C1 b1, but also in C3.

Out of a total of eight vessels from the cemetery, four were found singly – each in its own small grave, while the remaining four lay in the female grave. The vessels from the small graves are clearly different from the set in the female grave. The former are unornamented, relatively thick-walled and of a coarse ware, whereas the three small vessels from the female grave are ornamented, thin-walled, burnished and of a fine ware. Only the fourth vessel in the female grave is comparable with the vessels from the small graves in terms of thickness and the nature of the ware. It is also unornamented but is, however, much larger. It is obvious to perceive the three fine vessels from the female grave as belonging together as a definite set, whereas the unornamented domestic vessel from the same grave seems to be a chance inclusion on that particular occasion. Finer vessels were clearly offered in the large grave than in the small graves.

CONCLUSION

Only two of the graves can be dated precisely, i.e. the female grave and grave 3342, which both belong to the Late Roman Iron Age C3. The sheet silver fibula in the female grave suggests, due to the many different types of punchmarks, that the grave should be dated late in C3. Despite the vessel in grave 3326, it is very likely that this is a cemetery, which was in use for a short time, such that the six other graves also belong to C3.

The site's longest, deepest and richest grave contained, as already mentioned, a 25-year-old woman. It is obvious to perceive all the seven lesser graves as child graves.

The five small graves were even more sparsely equipped than the two graves of medium length. They were either without finds (two examples) or

contained a single vessel (two examples) or a vessel and an amber bead. The two medium-sized graves, in contrast, contained three and 10 artefacts respectively. As the longest of these graves (grave 3342: 163 cm in length) was also the most richly equipped, there is probably a relationship between age and the length of the grave and the content of grave goods. That is to say, status is achieved with age. As the longest of the graves of medium length contained a 4-5 year old child, the next longest grave (grave 3323: 147 cm in length) could have contained a smaller child, perhaps 3-4 years old, and the five smaller graves yet younger children and babies.

The fact that the relationship between the length of the grave, age and grave goods is not total within the child group is shown by grave 3330. This is the third longest of the children's graves, but contains no grave goods. The tooth enamel shows that this was not a newborn baby. This suggests that it was of no great consequence if a grave was 30 cm shorter or longer within the child group, where the graves ranged from 88 to 118 cm in length.

In the light of the fact that there probably are seven child graves and only one adult grave, it is very unlikely that the cemetery was in use for a long period of time. Why should several children be buried alone at a special cemetery, and then suddenly be accompanied by the burial of an adult female if not because the woman was their mother and they presumably all died within a short period. It is, therefore, obvious to perceive the eight graves as a family cemetery comprising a mother and her seven children.

The question is, however, whether they all died at the same time. Theoretically it is possible, if we presume that the woman was almost constantly pregnant. If we presume, furthermore, that age and amount of grave goods are linked and that the oldest child was 5 years old and the youngest a new-born, then the graves could on the basis of their contents be allocated by age as follows:

Grave 3347: no grave goods, 97 cm long = newborn baby?

Grave 3330: no grave goods, tooth enamel, 118 cm long = 9-month old baby?

Grave 3325: one article of grave goods, 88 cm long = 18-month old child?

Grave 3322: one article of grave goods, 91 cm long = 27-months old child?

Grave 3326: two articles of grave goods, 99 cm long = 3-year old child?

Grave 3323: three articles of grave goods, 147 cm long = 4-year old child?

Grave 3342: 10 articles of grave goods, one tooth, 163 cm long = 5-year old child

Grave 3368: at least 498 articles of grave goods, 31 teeth, 225-250 cm long = 25-year old adult female.

This is naturally a hypothesis. Another possibility is that the graves, due to their alignment, as mentioned, belong to two separate phases. The woman could still be the mother of all the children who, with regard to time of birth, need not be fitted into quite such a limited period of time as five years. It is, of course, also possible that the children had different mothers. The fact that there were no other adult graves at the site does, however, suggest that it was a one-off event or perhaps two episodes within a relatively short period of time. This was not an ancestral cemetery, which was used repeatedly over a long period of time. Perhaps it was an epidemic, which claimed its victims?

The female grave furnishings suggests a high class family with such a high position in society that it was natural to mark the deceased's (or the surviving husband's) status with a combination of Roman imports and domestic artefacts of a special quality. In addition to the metals, silver, bronze and gold, the glass and the coin were certainly imported. This is less certain with regard to the glass beads. They may have been imported from the Roman Empire – but perhaps more likely from Funen.

On the other hand, it is not unthinkable that the fibulae and the bi-conical pendant were produced locally. In any case, they were worn together as a set and they are all either made completely of sheet silver or have had silver foil applied, and also make use of punched ornamentation. 250 metres east of the cemetery a pit house has been excavated which contained the remains of a goldsmith's workshop (Fonnesbech-Sandberg 1999, 32f.). Pottery from the fill of the pit house has been TL-dated to 560 ±100 AD. The pottery could be contemporary with or later than the pit house. The latter presumably belonged to a farm, which is dated typologically to the 4th-5th centuries. The goldsmith's workshop belonged to the neighbouring farm to that which had the land on which the cemetery lay. The latter farm comprised at that time a well-built 30 m long main house and a 12.5 m long outhouse with perhaps a further outhouse all situated 150 m north of the cemetery. It was without doubt the fertile soil, which was the basis for the family's wealth.

Translation: David Earle Robinson & Anne Bloch Jørgensen

Eliza Fonnesbech-Sandberg (†)
Københavns Amtsmuseumsråd
Vridsløsestræde 8
2620 Albertslund

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