BEYOND URNFIELDS

New Perspectives on Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age Funerary Practices in Northwest Europe

Edited by
Helene Agerskov Rose, Lisbeth Christensen
and Arjan Louwen

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Burial and settlement during the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age in south-central Jutland

Scott Robert Dollar, Martin Egelund Poulsen and Lars Grundvad

Keywords: Danish Early Pre-Roman Iron Age, urnfields, settlements, south-central Jutland

Abstract: The area of modern Vejen municipality, located in the interior of south-central Jutland, is situated near several of the largest known urnfield sites in southwestern Jutland, such as Aarupgaard, Aarre and Uldal. However, the period of the Danish urnfield tradition, the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (500–250/200 BC), is not well represented archaeologically, especially in comparison to the region along the west coast of Jutland. This is despite 30 years of intensive development-led archaeology, where many other prehistoric periods are well represented. This paper will survey the archaeological evidence for burial and settlement during the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age in the micro-region of Vejen. It will present the only three investigated urnfield sites, Foldingbro, Tuesbøl and Kalvmose, as well as the single circular ditch urn burial Rønnehave, which is the region's only ^{14}C-dated burial from the period. The paper will present the contemporary settlement evidence for the study area, which is dominated by refuse pits and relatively few and poorly preserved house-structures, along with the methodological problems concerning these sites and what they represent archaeologically. The low frequency of burial and settlement sites shows that the study area, while clearly a cultural part of the broader Early Pre-Roman Iron Age Urnfield tradition, was peripheral to the more intensively utilised regions along the southwest coast of Jutland.

Introduction

The area of modern Vejen municipality[1] – situated in the interior of south-central Jutland – covers a micro-region that straddles the diverse landforms of eastern and western Jutland. Most periods of Danish prehistory are well represented archaeologically, such as the Late Neolithic (Dollar 2012; Poulsen/Dollar 2019), Early Bronze Age (Dollar/Poulsen 2015; Poulsen 2020b) or the Early Roman Iron Age (Dollar/Krøtel 2016; Møller/Dollar 2022). This does however not include the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age[2] (EPRIA), the period covering the Danish urnfield tradition. The period is not absent archaeologically, but evidence for burial and settlement is less visible in comparison

1 Vejen here refers to the municipality in the Region of Southern Denmark. The municipality was established as an amalgamation of four smaller municipalities – Holsted, Brørup, Vejen, Rødding – in 2006, and is Sønderskov Museum's area of archaeological responsibility.

2 This article uses the two-period division for the Pre-Roman Iron Age devised by Jensen (2005) and Martens (1997) with the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (EPRIA) starting around 500 BC and ending between 250/200 BC.

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to many other periods in prehistory. This is despite the micro-region's relative proximity to several of the largest urnfield sites in southern and southwestern Jutland: Aarupgaard, Aarre and Uldal (Fig. 1).

After nearly 30 years of development-led archaeology within the municipality, only three urnfield sites have thus far been identified, and the total number of EPRIA burials, including those not related to urnfields, is relatively small. Only 42 burials or burial-related features are dated to this period, with more than half of the burials coming from the three urnfields. Similarly, the archaeological evidence for EPRIA settlement is limited. Settlement sites are characterised by refuse pits and limited evidence of buildings (Møller/Dollar 2022).

This paper will assess the archaeological evidence of the EPRIA in the micro-region of Vejen municipality, the methodological problems and how this relates to our broader regional understanding of burial and settlement in southwestern Jutland.

Landscape

The micro-region of Vejen is situated 13–16 km from the western coastline along the Wadden Sea and 20–25 km from the Little Belt strait between Jutland and the island of Funen. The geological landscape was shaped by the melting of the Weichselian glacial ice sheet. The central and western part of Vejen is characterised by hilly islands of older moraine deposits of mixed sandy and clay soils from the Riss-Saale glaciation. This is bounded in the east by the north-south stationary line of the Weichselian glacial ice sheet, which divides the old and young moraine landscapes of Jutland. From



Fig. 1. Map of southwestern Jutland with Vejen municipality shaded in green; EPRIA burial sites mentioned in the text in relation to several well-known urnfields (graphics Sønderskov Museum, background map by The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency).

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here, several rivers run from east to west through large outwash plains formed by glacial rivers during the last Ice Age. These rivers bisect the moraine hilly islands and flow out to the Wadden Sea. The largest of these rivers, the Kongeå River, runs through the centre of the study area.

The Kongeå River, and likely the other river systems, was part of a larger network of prehistoric transport corridors. This transport network is reflected in part by the positioning of prehistoric burial monuments, primarily round barrows. Vejen has a large concentration of barrows dating primarily to the Later Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, and their distribution shows intersecting lines, covering long distances in the landscape. These so-called barrow lines have early in Danish archaeology been interpreted as representing the location of ancient routeways (Müller 1904; Johansen et al. 2004), many of which have a long use-life continuing well into the modern period.

History of archaeological investigations in Vejen

Before looking at the evidence for the EPRIA in Vejen in more detail, a basic understanding of the history of archaeological investigations within the study area is needed. Despite the area's wealth of prehistoric burial monuments that have been a focus for antiquarian and early modern archaeological research in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century (e.g. Boye 1896, 96–100; Müller 1904; Thrane 1962; Poulsen/Grundvad 2016), the history of modern archaeological investigation is short.

Modern archaeological field methods were developed in Denmark during the 1960s and 1970s through a series of large-scale research excavations of primary Iron Age settlements in northern and western Jutland, such as Grøntoft, Hodde, and Drengsted (Becker 1971; Hvass 1975; 1980; see also Møller et al. 2011, 7). These were fundamental to the development of field methods that are still in use today in development-led archaeology. Yet, before the beginning of the 1980s, no large-scale modern archaeological investigation had ever been undertaken in Vejen. The few archaeological excavations carried out prior to 1980 were antiquarian and private excavations of varying quality as well as a few small-scale excavations undertaken by the National Museum, mostly of prehistoric burial monuments. Most archaeological sites were chance discoveries during construction, roadworks, or agricultural work. The first large-scale modern investigations took place during the early 1980s and were carried out prior to construction of a nationwide gas pipeline network (Rigsantikvarens Arkæologiske Sekretariat 1987). Multiple sites in Vejen were investigated, including three sites with refuse pits dating to the EPRIA (Gejsingvej, Gesten Skov, Bulagergård; ibid.).[3] These excavations were all undertaken by local archaeological museums placed outside the modern Vejen municipality.

In 1990, Sønderskov Museum was established in Vejen as a state-recognised local museum with archaeological responsibility for the geographical area north of the Kongeå River. Around the same time, plans were finalised for a new motorway scheme between Esbjerg and Kolding, of which approximately 29 km were planned to run through Vejen municipality. Almost the entire route was systematically investigated using reconnaissance, phosphate analyses and trial trenching (Knudsen/Rindel 1994). A large and diverse geographical area within Vejen was investigated. This led to the discovery of numerous important sites from the Mesolithic to the early historical period (Rindel 1995), but out of the many trial excavations and subsequent area excavations, only six sites produced

3 VKH 851 Gejsingvej, FF 190101-71; VKH 852 Gesten Skov, FF 190103-57; ESM 1018/VKM 425 Bulagergård, FF 190110-62. The numbering 'FF 000000-00' refers to a site's unique registration number in the Danish Registry of National Sites and Monuments.

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discernible datable evidence from the EPRIA.[4] No burials were found, and except for remains of one possible post-built structure, only isolated refuse pits were documented.

Since the motorway excavations, Vejen municipality, like most of Denmark, has seen an increase in development-led archaeology. This is particularly evident after implementation of the 2001 Museums Act that resulted in a significant expansion of developer-funded archaeology and thus the number of large-scale excavations (see Mikkelsen 2012 for an overview of the 2001 Museums Act in English). Despite this increase, both in the number and size of excavations, the archaeological evidence for the EPRIA in the region remains limited in comparison to other periods in prehistory.

Overview of the archaeological data for the EPRIA

The following survey of EPRIA urnfield and settlement material in Vejen is the result of a review of sites dating to the EPRIA in the Danish Ministry of Culture's database of registered archaeological remains – the Registry of National Sites and Monuments. As the main repository for archaeological sites in Denmark, the registry is a valuable research tool in Danish archaeology, although the database has several problems (see e.g. Møller 2011, 156–158). The registry is constructed over reports of monuments, finds and investigations from over a century. An archaeological site has a unique number and can cover a wide variety of archaeological features. A site can be a burial monument or an individual urn, a chance discovery of potsherds during building works or a flint axe from a ploughed field. At the other end of the scale, a site can include a cemetery with hundreds of burials or an entire excavated Iron Age village covering several hectares. Additionally, the quality of the registration of individual sites can vary greatly, often based on when the site was first documented. Some sites have detailed descriptions, as with newer archaeological investigations that can include excavation reports, whereas older sites' entries may contain limited information.

There are also issues concerning the dating of sites in the database. This is particularly the case for older excavated sites, where archaeological remains can have chronologically broad relative dates covering hundreds or even thousands of years, e.g. 'Stone Age' or 'Early Iron Age', whereas other sites can have very specific dates based on typological dating, usually of artefacts. Many newer excavations will also be dated by ^{14}C-dating. As part of the following survey of EPRIA sites in Vejen, it has been necessary to assess the dating accuracy of individual sites to determine whether they should be included in this overview. Only sites that with some certainty could be dated to the EPRIA have been included. Also included are sites that cover the transition between the Late Bronze Age Period VI and the EPRIA, reflecting the gradual transition as evidenced in material culture.

The survey evaluated 3,496 archaeological sites covering a time span from the Late Palaeolithic to the early modern period from the study area; out of these 84 sites dating to the EPRIA were included. These sites consisted of 68 settlement sites, 14 burial sites and two votive sites (Fig. 2). Archaeological remains dating to the EPRIA were only represented on 2.4 % of all registered sites in the study area. No pit zone alignments, a type of boundary formation consisting of a belt of shallow open pits, or Celtic fields have yet been documented archaeologically in Vejen.

4 HBV 284 Surhave, FF 190301-175; HBV 285 Stensvanggård, FF 190301-173; HBV586 Enghøjgård III, FF 190101-88; HBV 595 Nørregård II, 190101-82; HBV 605 Gejsinggård, FF 190101-100; HBV 610 Refsgård, FF 190101-103.

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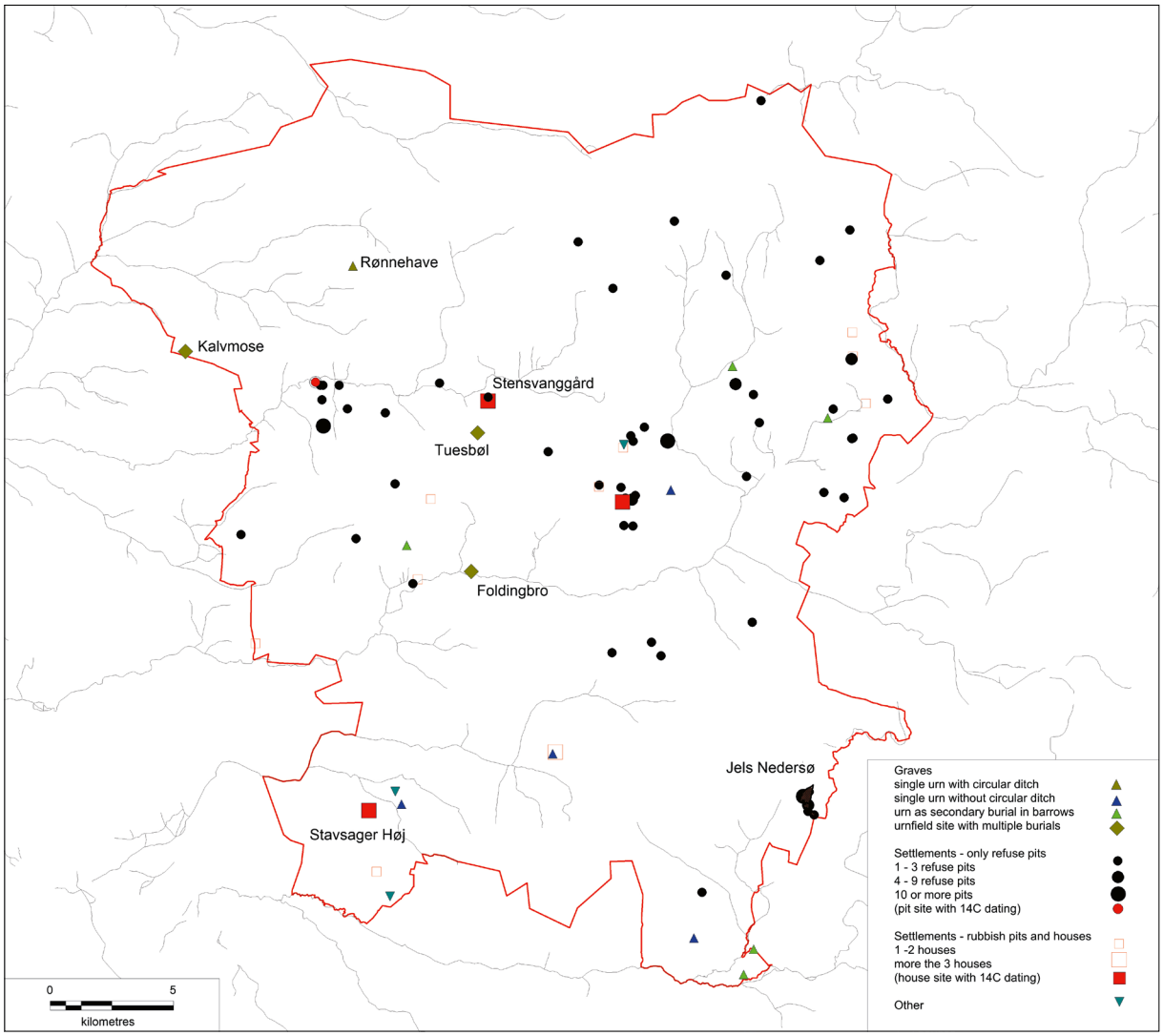


Fig. 2. Distribution of different site types dated to the EPRIA in Vejen municipality (graphics Sønderskov Museum).

Urnfields and single burials – few and far between

In Becker's survey of the Early Iron Age in central and southern Jutland (Becker 1961), he listed only two burials from two different sites in Vejen municipality, both discovered as secondary burials in older round barrows dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age. Our survey of EPRIA burials in Vejen documents 42 burials from 14 sites, including several burial features without cremations, such as circular ditches without preserved urns or vessels without cremated bone, that are often interpreted as cenotaphs (Becker 1961, 167; Møller et al. 2020, 33–36). Out of the 42 burials, 29 are from three urnfield cemeteries: Foldingbro, Tuesbøl and Kalvmose.[5]

The total number of EPRIA burial sites and burials in Vejen is small. To put it into perspective, a recent excavation of an urnfield east of Store Darum, situated 13 km from the western limits of Vejen near the coast of the Wadden Sea, contained 46 urn burials, most with circular ditches (see Qvist-

5 ESM 1255 Foldingbro, FF 190302-100; HBV 1261 Tuesbøl, FF 190301-228; HBV 1542 Kalvmose, FF 190208-146.

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GAARD 2020). This single urnfield has more documented burials than the total number of known EPRIA burials in Vejen.

While few in numbers, the urnfields at Foldingbro, Tuesbøl and Kalvmose share many common traits with other EPRIA burials and urnfields in southern and western Jutland. That is, cremation burials placed in urns, sometimes with grave goods, and interred centrally in a small burial mound that was enclosed by a circular ditch (MØLLER et al. 2020, 13). Currently, only a single urn burial from Rønnehave has been ^{14}C-dated,[6] and this lack of ^{14}C-dates is a typical problem with EPRIA burials (ibid., 18). EPRIA burials are often only relatively dated through artefact or grave form typochronologies. The remaining 13 EPRIA burials are all urn burials from eleven sites. Eight of these burials were secondary burials found in six round barrows, mostly discovered during antiquarian excavations. The remaining five burials are all single burial finds, four without any traces of mounds or circular ditches and one with a circular ditch (Rønnehave). Only Foldingbro, Tuesbøl and Kalvmose urnfields and the single urn from Rønnehave will be considered in the analysis below.

Foldingbro

The first urnfield investigated in Vejen was excavated on a sandy ridge 50 m from the northern bank of the Kongeå River, east of the village Foldingbro. Foldingbro is historically significant as an important river crossing over the Kongeå. The site was discovered by an amateur archaeologist in 1982 who notified the local museum of finds from three ploughed up urns. Esbjerg Museum, who had the archaeological responsibility at the time, organised an excavation of an area of 75 x 75 m (SIEMEN 1982). This revealed six urn burials that were in various states of destruction due to cultivation, a common problem seen at many urnfields investigated over the last 40 years (MØLLER et al. 2020, 16). There was evidence of three circular ditches surrounding three urns. Several supposed urn pits were not excavated, as they were unaffected by cultivation. It was estimated that the site contained at least ten burials at the time it was excavated, though due to the small scale of the excavation and destruction due to cultivation, this assessment is likely too low.

No further excavations have been carried out since 1982, but a review of aerial photos taken in 2010 revealed a series of three to five circular cropmarks that are the same size and character as urnfield circular ditches. While not yet confirmed through excavation, the urnfield potentially contains more burials.

Tuesbøl

The next urnfield was found 24 years later. Tuesbøl urnfield was investigated through development-led archaeology due to an expansion of a housing development in the western part of Brørup in 2006, approximately 5 km north from Foldingbro. The site has previously been published (DOLLAR/GRUNDVAD 2015), but excavation results are briefly summarised in the following.

The site was first identified as a Late Neolithic settlement site during trial excavation prior to development, but the consequent excavation also uncovered several urns and four circular ditches which were identified as belonging to an urnfield. The Danish Ministry of Culture granted extra funds for the excavation of the urnfield, as there were no resources to excavate both the urnfield and the Late Neolithic settlement without additional financial assistance. The urnfield had clearly been negatively impacted by intensive cultivation and was in a poor state of preservation. The excavation covered an area of 6,800 m^2 and revealed 16 burials and burial features (Fig. 3). Thirteen burials were typical EPRIA cremation urns in different states of preservation – four vessels were still intact, whereas the remaining nine were in various states of degradation. Only two urns were surrounded by circular ditches. Two additional circular ditches were excavated, one with a centrally placed pit

6 HBV 1784 Rønnehave, FF 190304-130.

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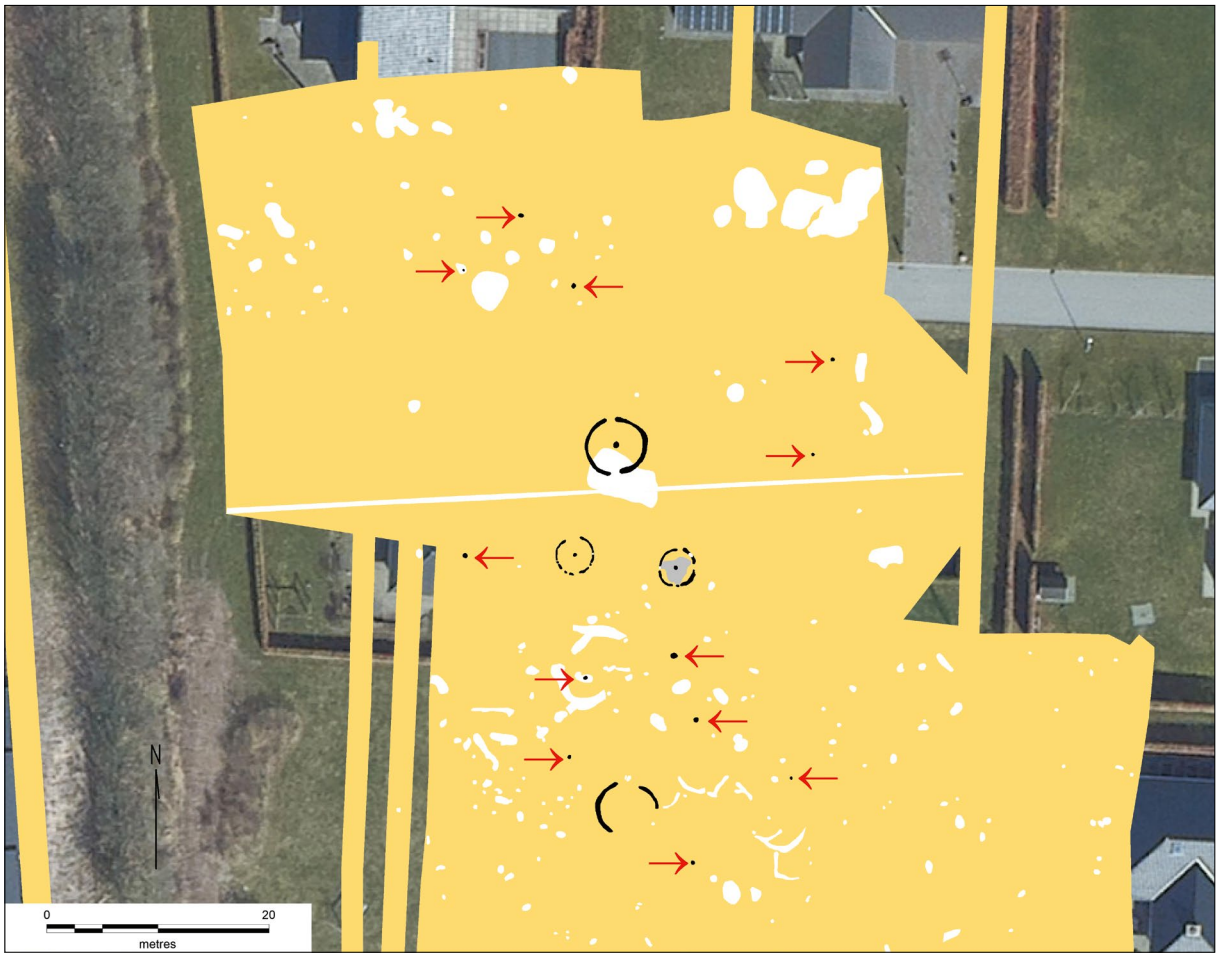


Fig. 3. Excavation plan of Tuesbøl urnfield. Arrows point to urn burials without circular ditches (graphics Sønderskov Museum).

that contained no urn, and the other with no trace of a burial. The final feature interpreted as a cenotaph burial was a vessel of a type typically used as urn which contained neither cremated remains nor grave goods. Cenotaph burials (Dollar/Grundvad 2015, 18) are a phenomenon seen at other Danish urnfields such as Jernvedlund (Becker 1961, 167), Søhale (Møller et al. 2020, 33–36) and Vedbæk (ibid., 50). Despite the poor preservation and the lack of financial resources for post-excavation analyses, the Tuesbøl urnfield shares many commensalities with other urnfield sites in southwest Jutland. No osteological analysis or ^{14}C-datings have yet been undertaken.

Kalvmose

The third and final urnfield from Vejen is Kalvmose (Poulsen 2016), which is also the most insecure in its interpretation as an urnfield site due to the lack of intact urns. Three circular ditches were discovered during trial excavation for a high-voltage electrical cable project that ran through the western part of the municipality. The urnfield is situated on a small plateau, in a landscape that less than a century earlier was predominantly heathlands and bogs. No urns were found in the centre of the circular ditches that were nearly completely destroyed by cultivation. There were no finds from the circular ditches, and the interpretation of this site as an urnfield is based solely on the size and character of the circular ditches.

Three samples of charred heather from each circular ditch were sent for ^{14}C-dating (Table 1). The calibrated ^{14}C-dates are significantly later than the EPRIA (two medieval and one post-medieval) and

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must be unrelated to the circular ditches. Instead, the samples most likely date the periodic anthropomorphic burning of heathlands and survived as secondary deposits in the once open circular ditches.

Rønnehave

The site of Rønnehave consists of a single cremation urn surrounded by a circular ditch (Poulsen 2019). It was located just 14 m east of a scheduled round barrow called Guldhøj and was discovered during excavations prior to a road expansion project. At this time, the site is classified as a single burial site rather than an urnfield cemetery, as no other burials were found during the excavations. However, the excavations covered only a limited area and it is not unlikely that there could be additional urn burials around the Guldhøj barrow.

The excavated urn from Rønnehave had been partly destroyed by cultivation and only the lower part of the circular ditch was preserved. The urn contained only cremated human remains without grave goods. Osteological analysis of the human remains shows that the deceased was likely a child or a slender adult, while it was not possible to determine the sex (Kveiborg 2019). The cremated bone has been ^{14}C-dated to between the 8th and 5th century BC (Table 1).

Settlements – an overrepresentation of refuse pits

Settlements in Vejen dating to the EPRIA have previously been covered in Becker's large regional survey of Early Iron Age sites in central and southern Jutland (Becker 1961). His catalogue includes six settlement sites within present-day Vejen, each represented by single refuse pits, but two recent studies have focused on the long-term settlement structure and dynamics during the Early Iron Age. The area south of the Kongeå was part of Rindel's regional study of settlement structure in southern Jutland (Rindel 1992), and Møller's big-data analyses of Early Iron Age settlement dynamics in western and southwestern Jutland included the area north of the River Kongeå (Møller 2011). Both studies demonstrate similar trends in the archaeological data, with the EPRIA represented by low intensity dispersed settlements that ended abruptly in the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age (Rindel 1992, 137–138; Møller 2011, 161). While quantitatively greater than the number of sites with burials, the qualitative evidence for EPRIA settlement in Vejen is comparatively not much better. Settlement sites consisted of 68 sites out of the total of 84 EPRIA dated sites. Archaeological evidence from these 68 sites includes 228 refuse pits but only remains of 23 house structures.

In Becker's survey there was an overrepresentation of settlement sites in Jutland consisting of pits without structures from his Period I (Becker 1961, 126). Many pits contained a diverse range of vessels that were interpreted as representing a household's inventory, even though houses were not documented (ibid.). At the time of his survey, only a few sites in northern and western Jutland had evidence for houses. Since Becker's survey, many sites with longhouses have been excavated in western and northern Jutland. Yet, EPRIA settlement sites in Vejen municipality are for the most part still dominated by sites with refuse pits filled with varying quantities of pottery sherds (n = 55), but without any evidence of houses. 48 of these sites had one to three refuse pits, and another seven sites had four or more pits. These 'pit sites' are often situated relatively close together and likely reflect the resource area of a wandering settlement. This is the case just south of Jels Nedersø, where 20 years of investigation have documented 22 refuse pits at five separate sites within a 25 ha area.[7]

7 HAM 1285 Barsbølmarkvej 14, FF 200204-118; HAM 4254 Barsbøl Mark, FF 200204-159; HAM 4327 Store Barsbøl, FF 200204-160; HBV 1316 Nedersøparken, FF 200204-166; HBV 333 Barsbøl Mark – Stamvej, FF 200204-174.

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Table 1. ^{14}C-dates from EPRIA features from the sites of Kalvmose, Stensvanggård, Stavsager Høj, Rønnehave. Additional ^{14}C-dates from EPRIA features from two sites not mentioned in the article, Øster Skibelund and Holsted Åmark, are also included. [i] = FF no. denotes a site's unique ID-number in the Danish Registry of National Sites and Monuments; [ii] = all samples dated by Aarhus AMS Centre, Aarhus University – Department of Physics and Astronomy; [iii] = IntCal13: calibration curves in Reimer et al. 2013, Oxcal v4.1 calibration programme (Bronk Ramsey 2009), IntCal20: calibration curves in Reimer et al. 2020, Oxcal v4.4.2 calibration programme (Bronk Ramsey 2009); [iv] = possible influence of bomb ^{14}C, i.e. post-1955.

Site	FF no.[i]	Context	Dated Sample	Lab. No.[ii]	Calibration[iii]	^{14}C-age (BP)	Calibrated age
Kalvmose, HBV 1542	190208-146	Circular ditch A1	Charred plant, heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)	AAR 26084	IntCal13	512 ± 24	1411–1432 cal AD (68.2 %) 1399-1443 cal AD (95.4 %)
Kalvmose, HBV 1542	190208-146	Circular ditch A3	Charred plant, heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)	AAR 26085	IntCal13	127 ± 23 1955[iv]	1683–1930 cal AD (68.2 %) 1678–1940 cal AD (95.4 %)
Kalvmose, HBV 1542	190208-146	Circular ditch A6	Charred plant, heather (*Calluna vulgaris*)	AAR 26086	IntCal13	576 ± 26	1320–1408 cal AD (68.2 %) 1305–1417 cal AD (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K11, posthole	Charcoal, oak (*Quercus*)	AAR 29588	IntCal13	2435 ± 27	728–419 cal BC (68.2 %) 750–407 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K11, posthole	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29589	IntCal13	2263 ± 29	392–236 cal BC (68.2 %) 398–209 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K11, posthole	Charcoal, ash (*Fraxinus*)	AAR 29590	IntCal13	3659 ± 30	2127–1976 cal BC (68.2 %) 2136–1948 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K14, posthole	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29591	IntCal13	2197 ± 31	357–202 cal BC (68.2 %) 365–182 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K14, posthole	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29592	IntCal13	2187 ± 30	356–197 cal BC (68.2 %) 361–175 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K14, posthole	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29593	IntCal13	4676 ± 33	3516–3374 cal BC (68.2 %) 3624–3367 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K17, posthole	Charcoal, hazel / alder (*Corylus/Alnus*)	AAR 29619	IntCal13	2274 ± 23	395–262 cal BC (68.2 %) 400–231 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K17, posthole	Charcoal, oak (*Quercus*)	AAR 29620	IntCal13	2254 ± 24	385–235 cal BC (68.2 %) 394–209 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K17, posthole	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29621	IntCal13	2207 ± 29	358–206 cal BC (68.2 %) 369–198 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K19, posthole	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 29637	IntCal13	2165 ± 23	350–174 cal BC (68.2 %) 357–118 cal BC (95.4 %)

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► *Cont. table 1*

Site	FF no.[i]	Context	Dated Sample	Lab. No.[ii]	Calibration[iii]	^{14}C-age (BP)	Calibrated age
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K19, posthole	Charcoal, birch (*Betula*)	AAR 29638	IntCal13	2159 ± 21	347–174 cal BC (68.2 %) 355–116 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	House K19, posthole	Charcoal, poplar / willow (*Populus / Salix*)	AAR 29639	IntCal13	2196 ± 25	356–202 cal BC (68.2 %) 361–196 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A598	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 29599	IntCal13	2433 ± 29	727–416 cal BC (68.2 %) 750–406 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A598	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29600	IntCal13	2327 ± 40	429–264 cal BC (68.2 %) 535–231 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A598	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29601	IntCal13	2305 ± 38	406–262 cal BC (68.2 %) 428–208 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A458	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 29602	IntCal13	2272 ± 39	397–235 cal BC (68.2 %) 403–207 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A451	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29603	IntCal13	2377 ± 25	479–399 cal BC (68.2 %) 535–395 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A716	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29594	IntCal13	2208 ± 26	358–206 cal BC (68.2 %) 364–201 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A749	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29595	IntCal13	2152 ± 29	350–119 cal BC (68.2 %) 357–92 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A762	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29604	IntCal13	2281 ± 39	400–236 cal BC (68.2 %) 405–208 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A921	Charcoal, deciduous (*Durae arboris*)	AAR 29618	IntCal13	2215 ± 26	359–209 cal BC (68.2 %) 367–203 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stensvanggård II, HBV 1554	190301-254	Pit A1215	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29643	IntCal13	2165 ± 23	511–410 cal BC (68.2 %) 732–402 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	House K6	Charred grain, (*Cerealia*)	AAR 32893	IntCal20	2326 ± 24	402–288 cal BC (68.2 %) 414–235 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	House K6, posthole	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 32894	IntCal20	2255 ± 23	386–231 cal BC (68.2 %) 391–350 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	House K6, posthole	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 32895	IntCal20	2313 ± 23	400–385 cal BC (68.2 %) 407–235 cal BC (95.4 %)

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► *Cont. table 1*

Site	FF no.[i]	Context	Dated Sample	Lab. No.[ii]	Calibration[iii]	^{14}C-age (BP)	Calibrated age
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A36	Charcoal, fruit tree (*Pomoideae*)	AAR 29462	IntCal13	2260 ± 24	389–236 cal BC (68.2 %) 396–210 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A36	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29463	IntCal13	2192 ± 37	357–199 cal BC (68.2 %) 374–169 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A36	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29464	IntCal13	2258 ± 24	387–236 cal BC (68.2 %) 396–210 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A37	Charcoal, maple (*Acer*)	AAR 29465	IntCal13	2205 ± 25	357–205 cal BC (68.2 %) 362–201 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A37	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 29466	IntCal13	2251 ± 26	383–234 cal BC (68.2 %) 393–209 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit A37	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 29467	IntCal13	2413 ± 33	536–409 cal BC (68.2 %) 748–400 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit 261	Charcoal, fruit tree (*Pomoideae*)	AAR 29468	IntCal13	2285 ± 23	396–365 cal BC (68.2 %) 401–235 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit 261	Charcoal, ash (*Fraxinus*)	AAR 29469	IntCal13	2220 ± 24	360–210 cal BC (68.2 %) 372–204 cal BC (95.4 %)
Stavsager Høj, HBV 1698	200107-280	Pit 261	Charcoal, fruit tree (*Pomoideae*)	AAR 29470	IntCal13	2247 ± 26	381–233 cal BC (68.2 %) 391–208 cal BC (95.4 %)
Rønnehave, HBV 1784	190304-130	Urn burial A1	Burnt human bone	AAR 31397	IntCal13	2436 ± 26	728–429 cal BC (68.2 %) 750–407 cal BC (95.4 %)
Øster Skibelund, HBV 1408	190307-203	House K36, wall ditch	Charcoal, fruit tree (*Prunus*)	AAR 33573	IntCal20	3170 ± 31	1495–1417 cal BC (68.2 %) 1504–1326 cal BC (95.4 %)
Øster Skibelund, HBV 1408	190307-203	House K36, wall ditch	Charcoal, alder (*Alnus*)	AAR 33574	IntCal20	2273 ± 30	393–232 cal BC (68.2 %) 398–207 cal BC 95.4 %)
Øster Skibelund, HBV 1408	190307-203	House K36, wall ditch	Charcoal, hazel (*Corylus*)	AAR 33575	IntCal20	2348 ± 33	462–385 cal BC (68.2 %) 540–370 cal BC (95.4 %)
Holsted Åmark II HBV 1454	190304-107	Pit A4824	Charred grain, barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)	AAR 20410	IntCal13	2391 ± 29	489–403 cal BC (68.2 %) 728–397 cal BC (95.4 %)

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Today, nearly 60 years after Becker's survey, the picture of the EPRIA has however changed with the numerous finds of settlements with predominantly single longhouses in central and western Jutland. The houses typically consisted of four to five sets of roof-bearing posts with centrally placed entrances that divide the houses into two equal parts. Wall trenches are often found at one or both ends of the houses. In some cases, a single, small four-post structure is found in association with a longhouse. In comparison to earlier and later periods, the longhouses are generally smaller, often 5–6 m wide and on average 13 m long (Webley 2007, 458; 2008, 51–53).

Despite 30 years of intensive development-funded archaeology, only 13 sites in Vejen have provided evidence for houses dating to the EPRIA. Ten of the sites had one to three houses, and the remaining three sites had evidence for three or more houses. Most of these houses have been relatively dated using house-typology or through association to nearby refuse pits containing EPRIA pottery, and in many cases the date is questionable. Only three sites have houses that have been ^{14}C-dated (Stensvanggård, Øster Skibelund, Stavsager Høj).[8] The archaeological preservation is generally poor, and out of the 24 houses only four had evidence of wall ditches (Birkely, Harreby, Tobøl, Stavsager Høj)[9] and one had evidence of walls constructed of small wooden posts (Kongehøj II).[10] The width of most houses is usually indicated by the location of entrances, centrally placed opposite each other along each the of the long walls. The narrow diameter of the postholes in the houses, which correlate with the size of the timbers used, indicate that these houses had relatively short lifespans. In the following, two selected settlement sites will be looked at in more detail.

Stensvanggård

The Stensvanggård settlement is located on a sandy sloping hill near the modern village of Brørup. It contained evidence for EPRIA occupation, with both house structures and refuse pits, as well as occupation in the Roman and Germanic Iron Age and the late Viking Age or Early Medieval Period. Another site with EPRIA pits is located just north of the Stensvanggård settlement.[11]

The EPRIA occupation phase at Stensvanggård consists of five three-aisled houses and at least 31 refuse pits containing EPRIA pottery. The five houses (K11, K14, K17, K19 and K21) were situated 25–46 m apart with similar orientations (Fig. 4). The houses were small structures with four to five sets of roof-bearing posts and remains of entrances in the central parts. No postholes or trenches in connection with the walls were preserved. The postholes of the roof-bearing and entrance posts were 20–40 cm wide and 5–25 cm deep. The original dimensions of the houses were between 10–15 m in length and around 4.5–5 m in width (Poulsen 2020a, 10). If we consider these houses from Stensvanggård as representative for EPRIA house structures in Vejen, we should expect that the small and shallow character of structural posts from houses would leave little to no archaeological traces due to modern intensive cultivation practices. No finds are datable by typo-chronology, but charred archaeobotanical samples from four houses have been ^{14}C-dated to the EPRIA (Table 1).

31 refuse pits contained potsherds dated to the EPRIA, 14 pits contained large amounts of sherds. Eight refuse pits have been ^{14}C-dated to the EPRIA (Table 1). The refuse pits were found across the excavation area, though with a higher concentration in the northern part of the settlement, in the vicinity of houses K11 and K14 (Fig. 4). The latter house also had a pit containing EPRIA pottery within its interior space, though we cannot be certain if it was contemporary with that structure.

8 HBV 1554 Stensvanggård II, FF 190301-254; HBV 1408 Øster Skibelund, FF 190307-203; HBV 1698 Stavsager Høj, FF 200107-280.

9 HBV 434 Birkely, FF 190307-175; HAM 4653 Harreby, FF 200107-259; HBV 1410 Tobøl p-plads, FF 190303-179; HBV 1698 Stavsager Høj, FF 200107-280.

10 HBV 1275 Kongehøj II, FF 190307-208.

11 HBV 285 Stensvanggård, FF 190301-173, previously mentioned under note 4.

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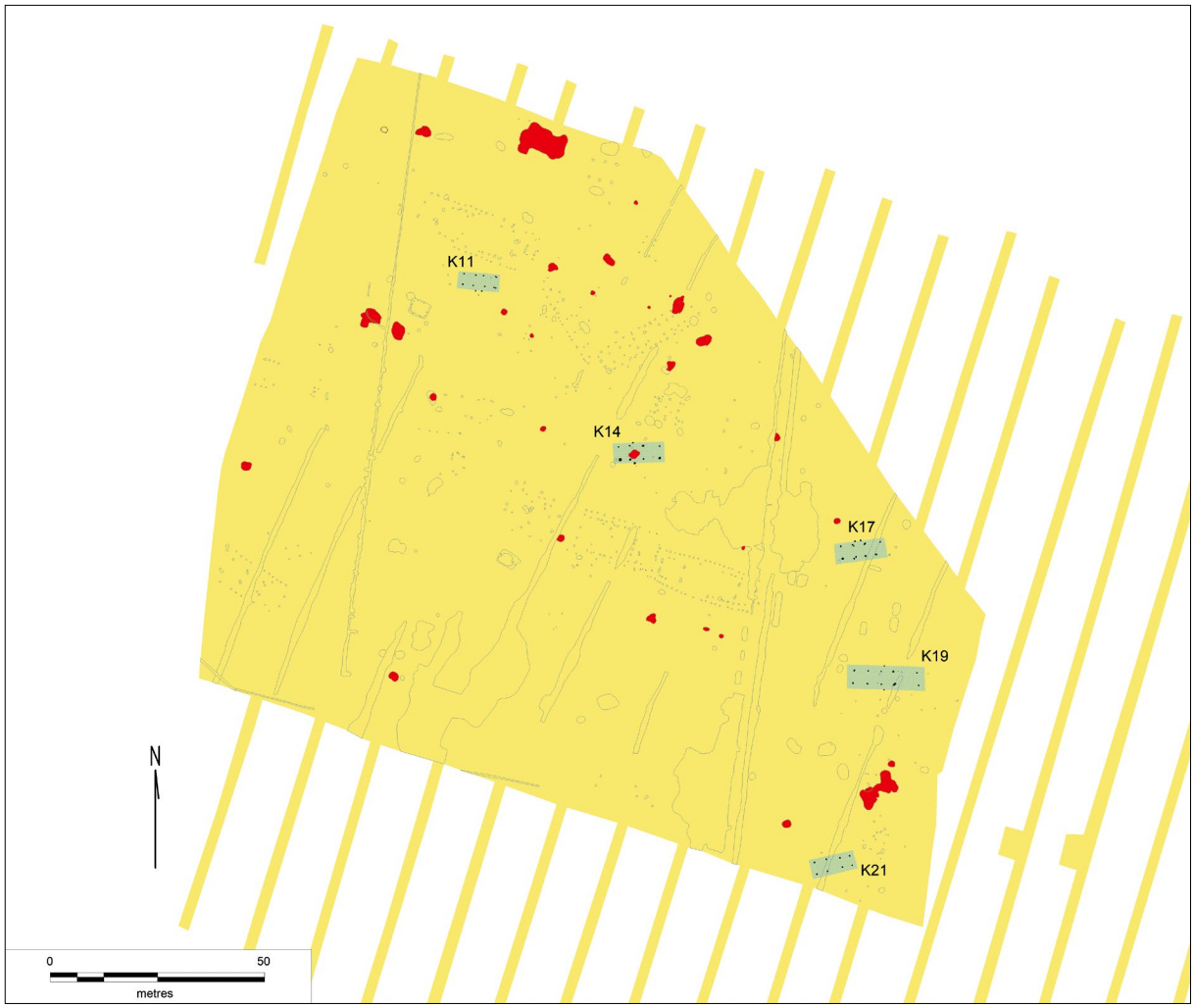


Fig. 4. Excavation plan of the settlement at Stensvanggård. The five EPRIA houses (K11, K14, K17, K19, K21) are shown in green; pits containing ERPIA potsherds are marked in red (graphics Sønderskov Museum).

The refuse pits at Stensvanggård were typically 20–80 cm deep, and had the site been more intensely cultivated, likely only the pits would still have been archaeologically visible. Preservation conditions represent a general problem for the small EPRIA houses, and they are likely at least part of the explanation of the overrepresentation of sites with pits contra the number of documented house structures in Vejen.

Stavsager Høj

Stavsager Høj is the most atypical EPRIA site in Vejen. It is situated next to a large Bronze Age round barrow and has several activity phases from the Bronze Age to the 6th century AD. Its later phases include multiple sacred dryland depositions, cult houses and two large culture layers containing artefacts (Grundvad 2021). The EPRIA phase site includes at least two houses and at least 23 atypically large cooking pits filled with EPRIA potsherds situated just south of the houses. Nine samples of charred archaeobotanical remains, three samples from each of the three of the pits, have been ^{14}C-dated to the EPRIA (Table 1). House K6 is ^{14}C-dated (Table 1) and House K11 is dated typologically. The presence of wall ditches in the eastern end of house K11 and centrally placed entrances in house K6 make both houses typical for the EPRIA, with the exception of their deep

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postholes for roof-bearing posts that were up to 60 cm in depth. The excavations at Stavsager Høj are still ongoing and further analyses are yet to come.

Conclusion

Based on our survey of Vejen, it is clear that the study area had a peripheral character during the EPRIA in comparison to the regions along the southwest coast of Jutland. The tendency toward fewer and architecturally smaller houses likely began already in the Late Bronze Age. The lack of burial and settlement evidence might be real, but it might also reflect the period's methodological problems concerning poor site preservation, or more likely, a combination of both aspects. In comparison to the heathland regions of western Jutland this micro-region in south-central Jutland may have been more intensely cultivated in later prehistory and the historical periods, which could explain the fragmentary character of the urnfields in Vejen.

The issue of preservation conditions is relevant in relation to EPRIA settlement material where pits are clearly overrepresented. Since large refuse pits can measure up to 1 m in depth, they have a better chance of surviving modern cultivation. This is in contrasts to the few documented house structures, which have comparatively more shallow features and thus a more ephemeral character. It is possible that most house remains have been destroyed by modern cultivation on many sites where otherwise only refuse pits have been documented.

The few small EPRIA houses in Vejen represent ephemeral structures with short lifespans that perhaps survived for only a few decades before they had to be replaced. This is in contrast to house remains found along the west coast, which in some instances have deep postholes for roof-bearing posts and wall-trenches (e.g. Qvistgaard 2019, 28–29), but where, more importantly, also settlement sites with house remains occur more frequently. In this respect, it is interesting that Stavsager Høj, the EPRIA settlement situated furthest to the west within Vejen, is also the only site with deep postholes. Perhaps some sites consisting of only refuse pits, without evidence for house remains, could represent short-term, occasional or seasonal settlement, where permanent house structures were unnecessary (Møller/Dollar 2022, 150).

The inland micro-region of Vejen, situated on either side of the River Kongeå, is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern with small short-lived houses during the EPRIA. Although clearly a cultural part of the broader 'Urnfield tradition', we interpret the area as being peripheral to the more intensively utilised regions along the southwest coast of Jutland. This is supported by the low frequency of burials and urnfields in the micro-region.

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This volume presents the results of an international network project on Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfields from northwest Europe.
Individual chapters present the archaeological material and its research history within a local, regional, or supra-regional context, demonstrating the wide range of nuances contained by the funerary phenomenon. The volume provides the first comprehensive overview of the urnfield funerary phenomenon in northwest Europe and forms the foundation for future research across national and disciplinary boundaries.
This volume successfully demonstrates that the inconspicuous urnfields of northwest Europe are not as anonymous as previously assumed but hold valuable information about life and death in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age.

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