

#### IV.—THE DANISH NEOLITHIC POTTERY FROM THE COAST OF DURHAM.

BY PROFESSOR V. GORDON CHILDE, B.LITT., F.S.A.,  
F.S.A.SCOT.

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The sherds which form the subject of this note were collected in 1881 or 1883 from a midden in the sand-dunes on the shore between Carr House and Cliff House, midway between West Hartlepool and Seaton Carew. The midden also yielded Roman remains, including Samian ware and *fibulæ*.<sup>1</sup> The pottery was first recognized as being of Danish origin by the Swedish archæologist, O. Almgren, and was published as such by his colleague, Knut Stjerna, in his well-known paper, "Före Hallkisttiden," in *Antikvarisk Tidskrift för Sverige*, 1911. R. A. Smith subsequently mentioned the sherds in discussing the foreign relations of Great Britain in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia*, III, p. 25, reproducing nos. 1-6 of our plate. All these authorities rightly diagnosed the pottery as distinct from any British wares and identical with that found in the megalithic tombs of the Danish islands and the coasts of Jutland, termed in English passage-graves (Danish *Jættestuer*; German, *Ganggräber*).

These tombs represent one of the cultures of Scandinavia during the second phase of the full neolithic period. They were collective ossuaries, used during a considerable time for successive interments. Researches

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Aeliana*, 2nd series, X, 1885, p. 105.

undertaken since the publication of Stjerna's and Smith's papers have rendered possible the subdivision of this long period into several phases. In his *Stenålders Kunst i Danemark* Sophus Müller, on the grounds of stylistic and typological studies, supported by the stratigraphy of deposits in or immediately outside the burial chambers,<sup>2</sup> was able in 1917 to distinguish seven successive fashions. Eckholm is content with a fourfold division in his article in Ebert's *Reallexikon*, IX. Without going into the details of these classifications we shall see that our sherds all belong to the first half of the Passage Grave period. About the middle of it two bell-beakers were imported into Denmark,<sup>3</sup> apparently from central Germany or Bohemia. Though these vessels are not directly allied to the British beakers, they are sprung from the same stem and may be regarded as roughly contemporary with the earlier group of the latter, Abercromby's class B.<sup>4</sup> We may therefore assume that our sherds are pre-beaker in Britain as they are in Denmark and accordingly were brought here during our "neolithic" period.

The sherds in the society's museum seem to belong to eight distinct vessels. All are made of relatively fine clay showing traces of micaceous particles and all are harder burnt than any pre-Iron Age wares from Britain with the possible exception of a few B beakers. The surface is often polished and seems in cases to have been covered with a slip which has sometimes scaled off.

No. 1, of yellowish buff clay, is a piece of the everted rim of a large vessel, perhaps similar in form to that figured by Sophus Müller (*op. cit.*) as no. 41. It is decorated with the impressions of a double-pointed instrument (? a bird's leg-bone), the resultant depression being bisected by a low septum. This seems identical

<sup>2</sup> *Aarbøger for nord. Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1929, pp. 212 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222; *Nordiske Fortidsminder*, II, fig. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Class B beakers, approximating more closely to the bell-beakers of the continent, and being associated with similar grave goods—West European daggers, wrist-guards, buttons with V perforation—must be regarded as earlier than those of class A, which are more highly specialized; cf. my *Bronze Age*, p. 154.

with the process exemplified on a sherd from the Danish Shell Mound of Sebbersund, Limfjord, described by Sophus Müller on p. 12. The Shell Mounds are, of course, generally pre-neolithic, but there are often layers in them contemporary with the first or even the second neolithic period. In any case Sophus Müller puts this sherd very early.

No. 2 is also early. It includes the slightly flattened rim of a vessel that had originally been well polished though the surface was now rather deteriorated. The patterns have, I believe, been produced by pressing into the wet clay a cord whipped tightly round another cord or other thin flexible core—the whipped cord technique of Abercromby. In Denmark this technique was distinctive of the earliest phase of the Passage Grave period (Sophus Müller, nos. 79-101; Eckholm, phase I, plate 81, c). A similar horizontal arrangement of the designs was also popular there. In Great Britain the technique is seen on a “neolithic” bowl from a chambered cairn on Arran<sup>5</sup> and then on Bronze Age food vessels. Our sherd, however, agrees technically and stylistically with the Danish vessels just cited.

No. 3 is a fragment of hard-burnt ware and comes from the shoulder of one of the carinated bowls or mugs with short cylindrical necks characteristic of Eckholm's phases II and III in Denmark. It has been broken off along the line of a deep horizontal furrow running round the base of the neck. The notching of the furrow (not visible in our photograph) may have been made with the serrated edge of a *Cardium* shell. Parallels are seen in Sophus Müller's fig. 108 (Grand Style) and 126-7 (Pretty (Skjønne) Style), both belonging to Eckholm's phase II. The vertical lines hanging down over the shoulder have been made by a pointed implement held obliquely and jabbed into the clay, partly withdrawn and then jabbed in again—what Callander in describing Scottish neolithic pottery has called the “stab-and-drag” process. The

<sup>5</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, LXIII, p. 47.

horizontal chevrons lower down are executed in the same manner. The technique was popular in Denmark during phases II and III, and the whole design can be paralleled in Sophus Müller, no. 126, or 151, or Eckholm, *Reallexikon*, pl. 82, B and C, or 83, A. In view of the early affinities of our other sherds, the earlier parallels are the most relevant, though the lack of sharpness at the keel of our vase would be a late feature in Denmark.

Nos. 4 and 5 are typical examples of Sophus Müller's *skjønne Stil*. The oblique hatchings of the ribbons have been executed with a short-toothed, comb-like stamp of wood or bone, Sophus Müller's *Tandstok*.<sup>6</sup> Between the comb-hatched ribbons on no. 5 are ribbons shaded with the edge of a large *Cardium* shell, a favourite device in the period in Denmark; cf. Sophus Müller, nos. 126, 127 and 130, and plate x here.

No. 6 comes from the rim of an open dish, possibly one standing on a high hollow foot like Sophus Müller, no. 120. It is decorated, on the inside only, with deep jabbed chevrons. The inverted triangles round the rim and the radial ribbon visible on the left of our fragment are filled with the crescentic imprints left by the serrated edge of a *Cardium* shell. The vessel would be at home in Denmark in the same groups as nos. 4 and 5.

No. 7 is another rim sherd showing a slight shoulder. The design may again have been made with the articulation of some animal or bird bone. A rather similar device is seen on a Danish vase, no. 152, assigned by Sophus Müller to his "first period of decadence."

No. 8 shows transverse jabs across a shallow linear incision. The pattern would be appropriate to the early Passage Grave period.

These sherds from a point on the North Sea coasts favoured in recent times by smugglers have indubitably been transported across the North Sea by voyagers from Denmark who landed deliberately or through mischance

<sup>6</sup> Sophus Müller has illustrated what is probably the actual implement used; see *Proc. Preh. Soc. E. Anglia*, III, p. 27.

in the vicinity. Though more than one style is represented in the collection, the changes of fashion in Denmark may well have been so rapid that all the vases could have been in use concurrently. On the other hand it is conceivable that they denote successive voyages separated by short intervals. In any case they foreshadow that intercourse between Scandinavia and this country which is attested during our Early Bronze Age—itself partly contemporary with the later phase of the Passage Grave period—by thick-butted flint celts,<sup>7</sup> flint daggers, stone battle-axes and amber necklaces of Scandinavian forms. The only possible objects of British origin found in Scandinavia which might be cited as a counterpart to our sherds are some flat celts of copper found with a vase of late Dolmen or early Passage Grave style at Bygholm near Horsens in Jutland.<sup>8</sup> The wide splayed edges of these implements look British or Irish rather than Iberian, though a dagger found with them was of specifically south Spanish form.

<sup>7</sup> *Archæologia*, 72, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Johansen, etc., *De forhistoriska Tider i Europa*, ii, p. 120.



FIG. 1.

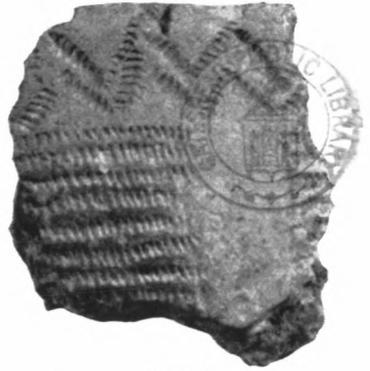


FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

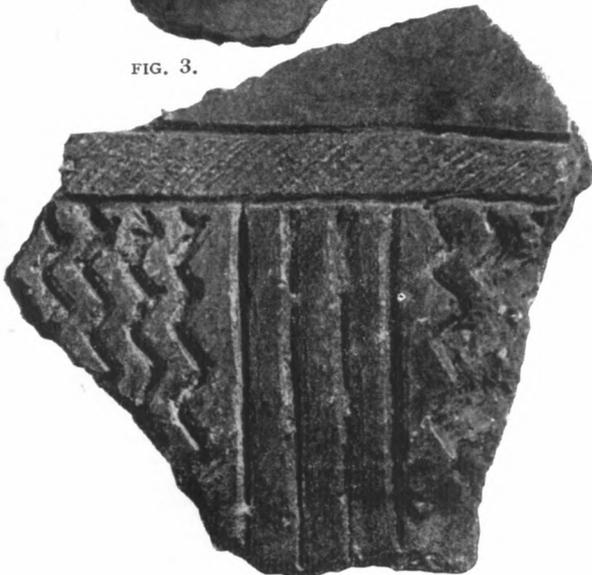


FIG. 4.



FIG. 5.



FIG. 6.



FIG. 7.

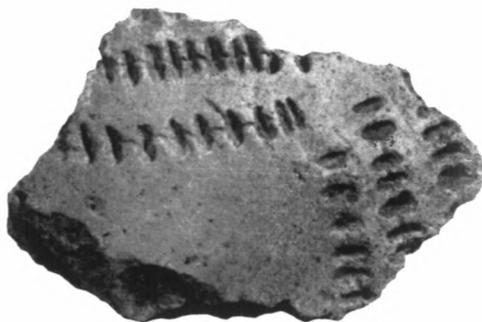


FIG. 8.



FIG. 1.

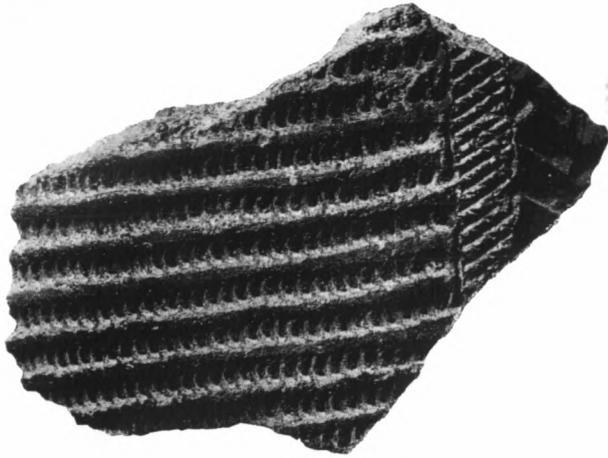


FIG. 2.

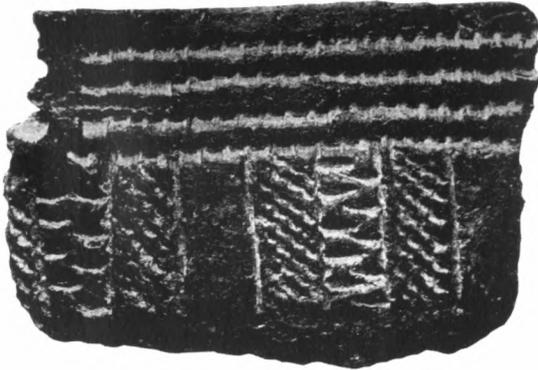


FIG. 3.



SHERDS FROM PASSAGE GRAVES IN DENMARK, ILLUSTRATING CARDIUM TECHNIQUE. NAT. SIZE. BY PERMISSION OF NATIONAL MUSEUM, COPENHAGEN.

