

65 years later ... – a re-evaluation of the Store Valby phase (MN V) of the late Funnel Beaker North Group

Rune Iversen

Abstract

In 1955, C.J. Becker published the excavations at Store Valby, western Zealand, Denmark, in the journal "Aarbøger for nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie". Except for an Early Neolithic phase, the site showed Middle Neolithic occupation. Even if the flint inventory from the latter phase resembled that of the late Funnel Beaker Culture, the associated pottery had a simpler and coarser character compared to the known Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker pottery styles. On this basis, Becker defined a new final phase of the northern Funnel Beaker Culture named the Store Valby phase or MN V. However, new archaeological features, such as palisaded enclosures, have turned up since Becker's initial discoveries and new cultural insights into the contemporary Pitted Ware and early Single Grave Cultures have significantly increased the cultural complexity of the earliest part of the 3rd millennium BC. This paper sums up the recent developments and, on this basis, discusses whether MN V should still be considered the final Funnel Beaker phase or rather a transformative stage characterised by a mixture of different cultural features.

Introduction – The Funnel Beaker Culture and some comments on the concept of culture

The Funnel Beaker Culture (German "*Trichterbecherkultur*", TRB) represents a larger complex of early agricultural communities in northern Europe. The geographical distribution was significant and ranged from south-eastern Poland in the east to the Netherlands in the west and from Bohemia and Moravia in the south to southern Scandinavia in the north. The overall Funnel Beaker complex is divided into five major regional groups: northern, western, southern, eastern and south-eastern. Chronologically, the Funnel Beaker Culture spans the period c. 4500 – 2800/2600 BC with an early beginning in the core area, ranging from Lower Saxony to Poland, and a late ending during the early 3rd millennium BC in southern Scandinavia represented by the Store Valby (MN V) pottery phase¹. Whereas the occurrence of agricultural Funnel Beaker communities in southern Scandinavia represents a rather distinctive shift in material culture, the end of the Funnel Beaker culture is less clear.

The term 'Funnel Beaker Culture' was originally proposed by Gustaf Kossinna (1909; 1910; 1921) in the early 20th century and was later confirmed by Konrad Jażdżewski (1932). The definition of the Funnel Beaker Culture was based on three pottery forms: the characteristic and eponymous funnel-necked beakers, collared flasks and amphorae (Midgley 1992, 31–35). However, the old term 'megalithic culture' was still prevalent among Scandinavian scholars. In the introduction to his 1947 doctoral thesis on "Mosefundne Lerkar fra yngre

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¹ Bakker 1979; Midgley 1992; Müller, J. 2011; Müller, J. et al. 2012; Furholt 2014.

Stenalter. Studier over Tragtbægerkulturen i Danmark" ("Neolithic Pottery in Danish Bogs. A Study of the Funnel-Beaker Culture in Denmark"), Carl Johan Becker dismissed the old terminology in favour of the Funnel Beaker Culture (Danish "*tragtbægerkultur*") and at the same time he introduced the present subdivision: Early, Middle and Late Neolithic (Becker 1947, 9). Becker's thesis came to influence the perception of the northern European Funnel Beaker chronology for many decades (Koch 1998, 20–23) but pottery-based chronological studies of the Funnel Beaker Culture in Denmark were not a new research subject at that time as it goes back to Sophus Müller's classifications in the early 20th century (Müller, S. 1918).

As it appears from the definition referred to above, the Funnel Beaker Culture was from the very beginning defined by certain characteristic pottery forms. Thereby it constitutes a classical example of the way 'culture' is usually used in archaeology – as a classificatory device to describe similarities in the material culture (often focused on pottery forms). Because of the many archaeologically defined cultures present in the early 3rd millennium BC, the word 'culture' is widely used throughout this paper. Given the fact that the concept of culture continues to be a controversial term in archaeology, due to the early proposed direct link between archaeological cultures and peoples (e.g. Kossinna 1911; Childe 1929, v–vi), it is important in this context to specify that, by using the term culture, I do not imply such direct links. Rather, the archaeological culture should not be taken for more than it is: a concept that describes a selection of material culture elements². However, in some cases, the introduction of a series of characteristic material culture elements can actually be affiliated with new genetic ancestry, as shown by a number of recent aDNA studies³ but there is of course not *a priori* a given correlation between the two.

The periodisation of the Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker Culture and the definition of MN V

An early attempt to classify the rich Funnel Beaker pottery material from Denmark was carried out by Sophus Müller, who based his division on ornamental motifs and decorative techniques, creating a series of rather vaguely defined styles such as 'the grand style', 'the beautiful style', 'the toothed stick period', 'the first declining period', 'the last ornamentation', and the like (Müller, S. 1918, 16–57). Later, John-Elof Forssander (1936) modified Müller's typo-chronological schema and introduced a four-phase division of Funnel Beaker pottery (I–IV). According to Forssander, Style I belonged to the dolmen period (Early Neolithic) whereas Styles II–IV represented the Passage Grave period (Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker period) (Midgley 1992, 123).

Partly overlapping with these early typo-chronological studies, important new material was recovered through Jens Winther's settlement excavations at the now classic sites on Langeland: Troldebjerg, Klintebakken, Blandebjerg and Lindø (Winther 1926; 1928; 1935; 1938; 1943; Berg 1951). The rich pottery material recovered from these investigations came to define the phases of the Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker Culture. Therkel Mathiassen (1944) included the pottery from the National Museum's excavations at Trelleborg on western Zealand and Bundsø on the island of Als, southern Jutland, and made the first outline of the present chronology, having five phases. This outline was slightly revised by Axel Bagge, who reduced the number of phases to four by conjoining the Blandebjerg and Trelleborg phases (Bagge/Kaelas 1950, 34–36) (cf. Fig. 1).

2 For a detailed discussion of the concept of culture, see Iversen 2015a, 139–154.

3 Eg. Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015; Mittnik et al. 2018; Olalde et al. 2018; Brace et al. 2019; Malmström et al. 2019.

In 1955, Becker published the Neolithic material from the excavations at Store Valby on western Zealand. Except for an Early Neolithic phase, the site showed Middle Neolithic occupation in the form of two large pits (AA and DV) holding rather simple and coarse pottery in addition to flint tools, such as thick-butted flint axes, heavy discoid scrapers, blades and the like, and flint waste (Becker 1955a, 144–148). The pottery repertoire was characterised by open bucket-shaped vessels and clay discs and was described by Becker as follows:

"The pottery, on the other hand, does not seem to fall within any of the four Middle Neolithic periods. Technically it is poor, with few, crude forms and but scanty decoration. Nevertheless, their style has a common character about it which makes it recognizable elsewhere" (ibid. 196).

With the new type of pottery recognised at the Store Valby site, Becker turned to older excavations and finds stored at the National Museum. He found a similar inventory, including bucket-shaped vessels, clay discs, thick-butted flint axes and heavy discoid scrapers at a small settlement site named Svanemøllevej (in Copenhagen), in pit 30 at Kornerup (west of Roskilde) and in several megalithic tombs. These observations made Becker define a new homogeneous pottery style that stood out from the already defined styles:

"Grouped in such a manner this pottery is astonishingly homogeneous in character. Large vessels, as found in the settlements, and small ones, chiefly used for grave goods, have the same shapes and the same decoration – or the same lack of any. Compared with other TRB pottery it must be called inferior, indeed almost degenerate; and yet it must presumably be regarded as a direct development from the TRB Culture's early beakers, shouldered vessels, and bowls; tracing a similar line for the decoration is more difficult" (ibid. 197).

He summarised his findings as follows, including his chronological observations:

"To recapitulate: Middle Neolithic Store Valby pottery has a style of its own and is found in all sizes, in both settlements and graves. In the passage graves, it is later than the Lindø pottery which represents Period IV in the Middle Neolithic. The contemporary flint inventory at the settlements of Store Valby and Svanemøllevej is in complete agreement with the types of the TRB Culture but bears no resemblance to the implements of either the Single Grave cultures or the Late Neolithic groups. In consequence, it must represent a later period, hitherto unobserved, of the Middle Neolithic TRB Culture, chronologically between the Lindø phase and the Late Neolithic" (ibid.).

Thus the Store Valby, or MN V, phase was defined and added to the chronological scheme (Becker 1955b, 57–67) (Fig. 1) and has since then stood as the final phase of the Funnel Beaker North Group. In the late 1970s, some major publications came out on the late Funnel Beaker Culture. In 1975, Klaus Ebbesen published *"Die jüngere Trichterbecherkultur auf den dänischen Inseln"* (Ebbesen 1975) followed by *"Tragt-bægerkultur i Nordjylland"* ("Funnel Beaker Culture in North Jutland") a few years later (Ebbesen 1978). Both volumes were primarily based on the finds from the megalithic tombs. At the same time, Karsten Davidsen worked on the volume *"The Final TRB Culture in Denmark"* entirely focused on the MN V (Davidsen 1978). Whereas Ebbesen looked at the material from the megalithic tombs, Davidsen's contribution was a settlement study that presented all known MN V settlements and all non-megalithic finds of Store Valby pottery from Denmark.

Fig. 1. The Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker phases according to different scholars (after Becker 1955b, 66 Fig. 8).

Acta Arch. 1954	Bagge 1950	Mathiassen 1944
I a Troldebjerg b Klintebakke	I (Troldebjerg)	I Troldebjerg
II a Blandeberg b Trelleborg	II (Blandeberg) II (Trelleborg)	II Blandeberg III Trelleborg
III Bundsø	III (Bundsø)	IV Bundsø
IV Lindø	IV (Lindø)	V Lindø
V Store Valby		

From the beginning, the Store Valby pottery was defined by a limited number of simple forms, dominated by bucket-shaped vessels. However, based on his extensive studies of the pottery from settlements, Davidsen was able to expand Becker's definition (Davidsen 1978, 93–107). Thus Davidsen distinguished 13 forms, including food/storage vessels with a belly ridge (A–B), bucket-shaped vessels (C–F), funnel-necked and simple bowls (G and H–I), bowls with a ledge (K), biconical vessels with a belly ridge (L), and funnel-necked beakers (M), as well as clay discs (Fig. 2). In most cases, the bases are flat, but in northern Jutland pointed-bottom storage pots constitute a local variant. The decoration is scant and consists mainly of a single horizontal row of ornamentation some distance below the rim. Finger pits are by far the most common decoration but single horizontal finger grooves, cordons, belly ridges, and ledges also occur. The rim itself can be decorated with either finger impressions or indentations. On a small proportion of vessels, hanging triangles, made up of individual pits or incisions, occur just below the rim (Davidsen 1978, 93–107; Iversen 2015a, 53–55).

One of several apparent disagreements between Ebbesen and Davidsen was how to interpret the bucket-shaped and biconical vessels (comparable to Davidsen's types A, D and L) found in north-eastern Holstein and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania. Whereas Ebbesen saw the pottery from Mecklenburg-West Pomerania as Store Valby

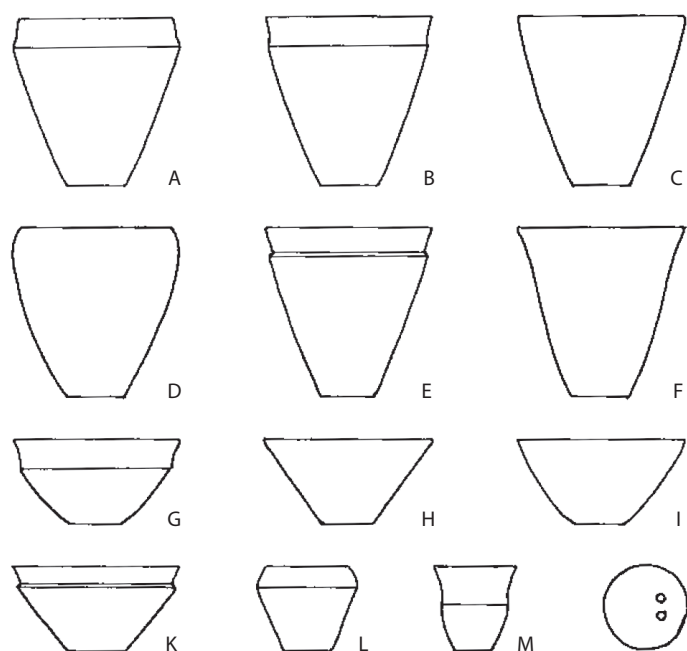


Fig. 2. Store Valby (MN V) pottery forms, Funnel Beaker culture, Denmark (after Davidsen 1978, 100 Fig. 50).

vessels (1975, 134–41, 239 note 120a Fig. 21), Davidsen argued that they belonged to the western Globular Amphora Group (1972, 174–75; 1977, 60–66; 1978). Jürgen Hoika (1987, 100) shared the view that Store Valby pottery was not present in north-eastern Holstein and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania. This picture seems more or less to persist, except for north-eastern Holstein where some rich MN V settlement sites have been recorded in recent years. Among these are Wangels LA 505, which has displayed clay discs very much like those seen in the Store Valby pottery style, and Oldenburg LA 232 holding Store Valby style potsherds (Kloß 2008, 129–130; Brozio et al. 2018, 198–199; 209). Thus it is reasonable to delimit the southern distribution of the Store Valby style to a line stretching from the island of Fehmarn in the east to the Dithmarschen district in the west (Kloß 2008, 133). Before I pursue the overall distribution of the Store Valby pottery further, it is necessary to briefly discuss the chronological position of MN V.

Dating the MN V phase

Since Becker's definition of MN V, the ending of this most recently added phase has been equivalent to the ending of the Funnel Beaker Culture in southern Scandinavia. Dating this particular moment in time is important to our understanding of the relationship with the emerging Single Grave Culture (Corded Ware Culture) and the potential chronological overlap between these two major cultural complexes. Despite long discussions involving several scholars, the ending of MN V remains a controversial topic. The major question is whether the late Funnel Beaker Culture and the early Single Grave Culture overlapped with a couple of generations or a couple of centuries.

As already indicated in the last citation from Becker (1955a) referred to above, Becker placed the Single Grave Culture chronologically parallel to the late Funnel Beaker Culture (MN III–V), at which point the Late Neolithic began. Peter Vilhelm Glob was of a slightly different opinion as he placed the first part of the Single Grave period (the Under and early Ground Grave periods) parallel to the Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker Culture. Thus, unlike Becker, Glob thought that the later part of the Single Grave Culture (the late Ground and Upper Grave periods) succeeded the Funnel Beaker period (Glob 1945, 208). In the 1970s, Claus Malmros and Henrik Tauber argued for a brief overlap between the two cultural groups based on some new radiocarbon dates made on samples from Jutland (Malmros/Tauber 1977). At the same time, Davidsen used a number of radiocarbon dates from settlement pits containing Store Valby pottery to argue for the existence of a considerable overlap between the late Funnel Beaker and early Single Grave periods at least corresponding to the Under Grave period. Moreover, Davidsen made it clear that there was no chronological connection between the late Funnel Beaker Culture and the Late Neolithic as previously stated by Becker (Davidsen 1975).

In recent years, there has been an increasing realisation that MN V was a rather lengthy phase, which overlapped with the early Single Grave period⁴. However, in her extensive work on the Jutland Single Grave Culture, Eva Hübner placed the late Funnel Beaker phases (MN IV/V) in the period between c. 3000 and 2800/2700 BC. According to Hübner, the potential lengthy overlap of the late Funnel Beaker Culture with the earliest single graves remains speculative due to the significant statistical uncertainty associated with the end of MN V. Instead, she argued for a chronological overlap of only a couple of

4 Midgley 1992, 217–220; Andersen 2008, 39; Skousen 2008, 222–223 Fig. 173; Larsson 2012, 119.

generations and that the Funnel Beaker and Single Grave Cultures represent two successive periods within the Neolithic (Hübner 2005, 667–668 Figs. 486 and 487).

Most recently, I have suggested that the MN V phase might have continued, at least in parts of southern Scandinavia, until c. 2600 BC (Iversen 2015a, 19–27 Figs. 3.2–4 appendix 2). In particular, the Damsbo site on south-western Funen shows late dates, 2700–2500 cal BC (Andersen 2008, 38–39). Though not an argument in itself, a longer duration of the MN V in eastern Denmark would make sense as this area almost totally lacks the early Single Grave phase (the Undergrave period, c. 2850–2600 cal BC) (Iversen 2016). Thus a prolonged MN V phase would close an apparent gap in the cultural development in eastern Denmark. However, other, or rather concurrent, scenarios such as the outbreak of epidemics must also be taken into account⁵.

Much of the disagreement regarding the end of the MN V is due to the actual radiocarbon calibration curve, which shows one of its greatest fluctuations around this presumed transition at c. 2200 radiocarbon years BC, that is, 2900–2800 cal BC, thereby complicating the production of precise dates. Wiggles on the curve lead to an increased scattering of the radiocarbon dates and result in correspondingly inaccurate calibrated values representing time intervals of several hundred years instead of more closely defined dates (Tauber 1986, 201–204). This is of course a significant source of error when attempting to establish the relationship between the late Funnel Beaker and the early Single Grave Culture and the main reason for the long discussion about the end of MN V (Iversen 2015a, 21).

As opposed to the disputed ending of MN V, the occurrence of the Single Grave Culture on the Jutland peninsula is far less controversial and there seems to be broad agreement that the first Jutland Single Grave Culture interments date from around 2900–2800 cal BC. Consequently, the beginning of the Single Grave Culture can rather unproblematically be fixed at c. 2850 cal BC (Vandkilde 1996, 166; Hübner 2005, 660–664; Ebbesen 2006, 29). The beginning of MN V can also be stated rather accurately to be around 3000 BC due to dendrochronological dates obtained from the presumed dam at Spodsbjerg on Langeland (Christensen/Rasmussen 1998). This date is supported by radiocarbon dates from more Danish MN V sites (Iversen 2015a, 22 Fig. 3.2).

A mixed picture: MN V and the early 3rd millennium BC

A lot has happened since Becker's definition of the MN V. During the 4th millennium BC, the Funnel Beaker Culture was the only archaeologically defined culture present in southern Scandinavia. However, in the early 3rd millennium BC we see more and partly overlapping cultural groups such as the late Funnel Beaker Culture (MN V), the Pitted Ware Culture and the Single Grave Culture. The two last-mentioned groups were of course also known by Becker and he had contributed significantly to the study of these (e.g. Becker 1936; 1951).

At the time when Becker published the Store Valby site, the Danish Pitted Ware sites were thought to represent short-lived stays by Pitted Ware groups from the Scandinavian Peninsula with the purpose of collecting flint and hunting seal (Becker 1951, 241–244). However, the excavations of first and foremost Kainsbakke, but also Kirial Bro, on Djursland (Rasmussen, L. W. 1984) and the recent reinvestigations of these sites and their connections (Klassen 2020) have changed our understanding of the Danish Pitted Ware Culture significantly.

5 Rasmussen, S. et al. 2015; Rascovan et al. 2019; see also Aarsleff 2018, 78 for a local perspective.

Furthermore, it has been possible to define a series of Pitted Ware activity zones throughout north-eastern Denmark with significant regional differences. On Zealand, we see a widespread distribution of Pitted Ware arrowheads in the megalithic tombs but no annual sites (base camps) have been recognised and only a few sites hold Pitted Ware pottery. In Jutland, only a few megalithic tombs contain substantial Pitted Ware finds, but the larger Pitted Ware annual sites (base camps) are exclusively found here, where also the majority of sites containing Pitted Ware pottery is located. This uneven picture can be explained by differences in the relationships to the contemporary Funnel Beaker (MN V) groups. Previously, I have explained this regionally based heterogeneity as a differentiated development of a cultural ethnic self-perception within the Pitted Ware area. In north-eastern Jutland we see a stronger Pitted Ware identity whereas the situation in eastern Denmark can be described as a creolised identity joining Funnel Beaker and Pitted Ware elements (Iversen 2010, 23–27 Fig. 8).

The creolised Pitted Ware communities seen in eastern Denmark are actually part of a larger disintegration of the final Funnel Beaker Culture. Already from MN II (the Blandebjerg phase, traditionally dated between c. 3100 and 3000 BC) and continuing into MN V, we see the occurrence of the so-called ‘stone-packing graves’ in north-western Jutland as a peculiar development of the Funnel Beaker earth grave tradition (Damm 1989; Fabricius/Becker 1996; Johannsen/Laursen 2010).

Stone-packing graves usually comprise one or more pairs of oval pits in an extension of a roughly rectangular pit termed the ‘mortuary house’. The graves and the mortuary house are filled with stones and a stone pavement covers the whole feature. Unfortunately, no human traces have been found, but typical grave goods such as pottery, thick-butted flint axes and Funnel Beaker type double-edged battle axes occur in the mortuary houses. However, cattle teeth have been recovered from more of the graves. Thus the stone-packing graves likely represent the remains of wagon burials (the ‘mortuary house’) with teams of oxen buried in the pits, as originally suggested by Stuart Piggott (1969, 308; Johannsen/Laursen 2010). The Danish stone-packing graves show similarities with both the wagon burials of the Yamnaya Culture of the Pontic-Caspian steppe and the cattle burials known from the Baden and Globular Amphora Cultures, including the Złota group of south-eastern Poland (c. 3200–2800 BC)⁶.

Another peculiar regional phenomenon occurring within the late Funnel Beaker Culture is the palisaded enclosures. These represented a new feature of the early 3rd millennium BC and can be made up of several rows of wooden palisades enclosing large (up to 6 ha) fenced areas. Radiocarbon dates range from c. 3000 to 2500 cal BC. In a Scandinavian context, palisaded enclosures show a distribution restricted to the Oresund/Baltic Sea region as they are only known from Zealand, Falster, Bornholm and Scania (Svensson 2002; Brink 2009). In general, the Danish sites are associated with the final Funnel Beaker Culture, whereas the Scanian sites have been related to the vaguely defined early Battle Axe Culture (Corded Ware Culture). However, one of the Swedish sites, Vastra Klagstorp, is associated with the Middle Neolithic Funnel Beaker Culture (Brink 2009, 193). Furthermore, a large number of Pitted Ware arrowheads have been recorded at the Helgeshøj palisaded enclosure in eastern Zealand⁷, which makes the cultural affiliation of the site less clear.

It may well be that the palisaded enclosures constituted central places of gathering, representing a final, large-scale manifestation in the context of the Funnel Beaker tradition, even though the

6 Whittle 1996, 136, 211–215; Anthony 2007, 311–317; Furholt 2008; Szmyt 2008, 223–227; Johannsen/Laursen 2010, 25–28, 51.

7 Giersing 2004. – For additional information on the recent finds of tanged arrowheads at Helgeshøj, see Kroppe-
 pedal 2019.

Scanian sites indicate an initial Battle Axe cultural affiliation. In a regional southern Scandinavian context, the palisaded enclosures must be considered a continuation of the Funnel Beaker practice of building and using large communal gathering sites, previously manifested in the construction of causewayed enclosures. This practice might not have been compatible with the new settlement pattern based on dispersed individual homesteads that characterised the Single Grave areas. The early appearance of the Single Grave tradition in Jutland can, in my view, explain the lack of palisaded enclosures in western Denmark. With a fully developed Battle Axe Culture in Scania by around 2600 BC, focus was directed towards individual homesteads and single graves, and the Funnel Beaker practice of large-scale enclosure building was therefore finally abandoned (Iversen 2015a, 69).

The distribution of the defining Store Valby pottery itself also shows that various regional developments were marked within southern Scandinavia in MN V. As already noticed by Becker (1955a, 178), Store Valby type pottery does not occur on Bornholm or in Scania (Fig. 3). This early observation has generally proven to be correct. However, in both Scania and on Bornholm, elements of the Store Valby style are present in local styles representing the final Funnel Beaker pottery tradition. On Bornholm, the late Funnel Beaker pottery is represented by the Vasagård style and the subsequent Grødbygård style (Nielsen/Nielsen 1985; 1986; 1991). These local styles appear more varied than the Store Valby pottery and differences are expressed through style of ornamentation rather than vessel form. In Scania, the late Funnel Beaker tradition is represented by the so-called Karlsfält/Stävie group, which includes elements from the Bundsø/Lindø and Store Valby styles. However, the pottery from the Stävie site itself resembles the Store Valby tradition to such an extent that it could just as well be labelled as such, whereas the flint relates to the Pitted Ware Culture (Larsson 1982; 1985). This situation is not unlike what is seen at some Danish sites, such as Helgeshøj and Strandsegård II in northern Zealand where Store Valby pottery occurs with traditional Pitted Ware types, including tanged arrowheads and bipolar cylindrical cores (Giersing 2004; Aarsleff 2018).

Furthermore, Djursland shows a significant development in the early 3rd millennium BC as the Pitted Ware Culture seems to have dominated the area completely, in particular the northern part, between c. 3100 and 2700 cal BC. As a result, Djursland generally lacks Funnel Beaker pottery from MN III–V, including the characteristic Store Valby pottery (Sørensen 1995; Philippsen et al. 2020).

As regards the settlement pattern, the general impression is that MN V saw a conglomeration of settlements, which probably included larger sites and occupations of longer duration. These sites often have extensive culture layers, but features such as house remains are generally rare (Skaarup 1985, 359–367; Iversen 2015a, 65–66 with references; Nielsen 2019, 19, 43). Large MN V settlements often seem to be placed on former causewayed enclosures dated from the Early Neolithic and early Middle Neolithic, and it may well be that these could have functioned as a trigger for the development of large nucleated settlements, as has been proposed by Paul Otto Nielsen (2004). However, the settlement pattern also seems to include significant regional differences as large nucleated MN V settlements have not been detected in northern Jutland, north-western Zealand, north-eastern Zealand, and Scania to any greater extent (cf. Brink 2009, 287–293; Schülke 2009; Klassen 2014, 14; Aarsleff 2018).



Discussion – MN V and ‘the bucket-shaped vessel complex’

As it appears from the short review given above, the first three or four centuries of the 3rd millennium BC (MN V) show a very heterogeneous development with various material culture groups dominating different areas, including the occurrence of early Single Grave communities in central and western Jutland from c. 2850 cal BC.

As I have argued earlier (Iversen 2015b), the palisaded enclosures might have played an important role as social arenas and facilitators of the marked cultural transformation process that characterised the early 3rd millennium BC. The palisaded enclosures, in my opinion, can best be explained as products of the Funnel Beaker tradition of constructing large ritual gathering sites (cf. the earlier causewayed enclosures). Traces of late Funnel Beaker, early Battle Axe (Scania) and Pitted Ware material culture found in connection with the palisades show how people obtained new material elements within an overall Funnel Beaker cultural and ritual framework that materialised in the palisaded enclosures. A somewhat similar scenario is also visible in the megalithic tombs that also might have worked as transformers of culturally ‘alien objects’ like Pitted Ware tanged arrowheads, early Single Grave type beakers and battleaxes.

Fig.3. Distribution of Store Valby pottery with the most important sites mentioned in the text. Dotted lines mark the distribution (after Iversen 2015a, Fig.4.24 supplemented with data from Davidsen 1972; Kloof 2008; Rasmussen, U.L. 2016; Brozio et al. 2018; Aarsleff 2018).

Based on the material diversification that took place during the early 3rd millennium BC, I see the MN V as an expression of an ‘incipient creolisation process’ or what we can term ‘*cultural pidginisation*’. Creolisation is a linguistic term describing the blending of two or more languages into a new language. Creole languages often emerge from some kind of *pidgin*, which is the initial blend of two or more parent languages. Whereas creoles are defined by being natural languages having their own native speakers, a rich vocabulary and developed grammar, pidgin is a rudimentary language that is often limited to certain functions or domains. Creole languages are diversified and shaped through non-homogeneous processes involving a range of complex mechanisms that are dependent on factors such as the identity of the interacting agents. Similarly, cultural pidginisation should not be seen as a unified process resulting in a single creolised blend, a new normative culture, but rather in a series of interacting subcultures (Iversen 2015b, 61 with references). This process, I think, describes the development seen in MN V with an increasing disintegration of the Funnel Beaker tradition primarily evident in the emergence of what Becker refers to as the ‘inferior, indeed almost degenerate’ (ref. above) Store Valby pottery and associated late Funnel Beaker styles (Bornholm and Scania) and Pitted Ware material culture elements. Old Funnel Beaker forms such as funnel-necked beakers and funnel-necked bowls are still part of the repertoire (cf. Figs. 2G and M) but are quite rare (Davidsen 1978, 98–100), whereas large, coarsely tempered, bucket-shaped vessels now dominate.

This obvious downgrading of the visual and stylistic aspects of pottery that characterise the Store Valby style was not unique to the final Funnel Beaker North Group but can also be found in many other later Neolithic styles during the early 3rd millennium BC (Whittle 1996, 283; Müller, J. 2009, 76 Fig. 78). Bucket/barrel-shaped vessels with a straight or slightly curved profile are widespread within a huge area of central and northern Europe (Fig. 4). These vessels are largely undecorated, but when decoration occurs it is often very

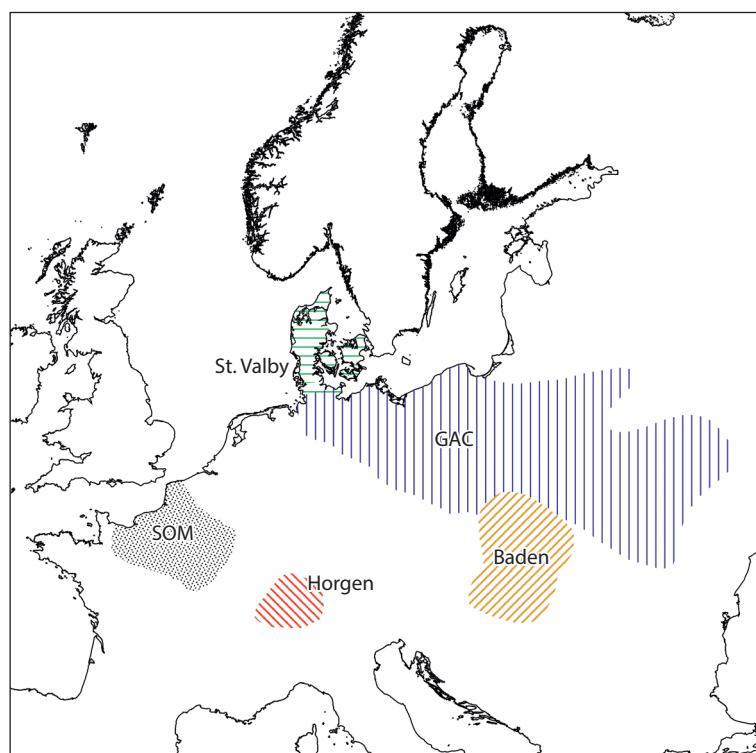


Fig. 4. Early 3rd millennium BC groups using bucket/barrel-shaped vessels forming the ‘bucket-shaped vessel complex’ (cultural groups redrawn and modified from Szmyt 2008, 217 Fig. 1; Müller, J. 2009, 74 Fig. 76).



Fig.5. Globular Amphora pottery, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany (after Schuldt 1972, 68).

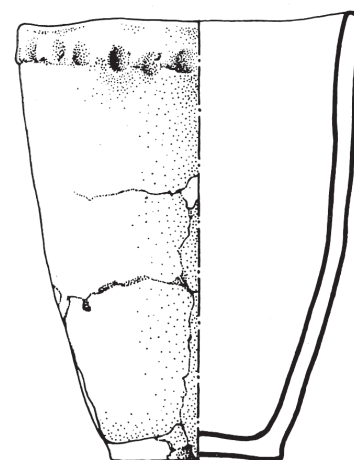
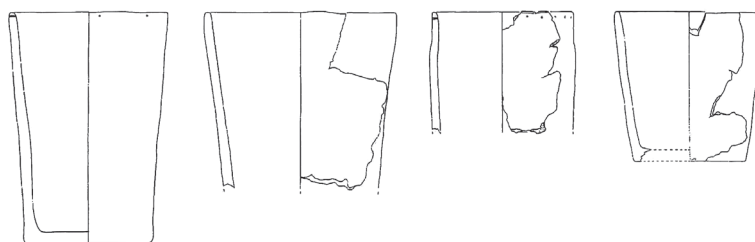


Fig.6. Bucket-shaped vessel, late Classical Baden culture, Kraków, Nowa Huta-Mogiła, Poland (after Godłowska 1973, 69 Fig. 1–12).

Fig.7. Cylinder-shaped Horgen vessels, Sipplingen-Osthafen, Bodensee, Germany (after Hafner 2002, 518 Fig. 1).



simple, consisting of a single horizontal row of ornamentation, including pits, finger grooves or ledges placed some distance below the rim (Klassen et al. 2020).

As already touched upon above, there has been a discussion whether the bucket-shaped vessels found in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania belonged to the Store Valby style or to the western Globular Amphora Culture (GAC). It is now rather obvious that the bucket-shaped, and biconical, vessel forms can be ascribed to both groups (Schuldt 1972, 68; Beier 1988, 20–22 and tables) (Fig. 5d; cf. Fig. 2D) and that these vessel types form part of a far larger cross-cultural trend predating or slightly overlapping with the emergence of Corded Ware societies. Thus similar vessel forms are known from the late Classical Baden Culture in Lesser Poland, c. 3050–2900 cal BC (Godłowska 1973; Zastawny 2008) (Fig. 6), from the late Horgen Culture (29th and early 28th century BC) in the north-western Alpine foreland of Switzerland and south-western Germany⁸ (Fig. 7) and from the Seine-Oise-Marne (SOM) Culture of the Paris Basin, c. 3400/3300–2800/2700 BC (Patton 1993, 130 Figs. 6.3a–b; Augereau et al. 2007) (Fig. 8).

The obvious question that follows from this brief review of what we can refer to as ‘the bucket-shaped vessel complex’ is of course whether the MN V should be considered part of the Funnel Beaker Culture or not. I have already argued that the MN V represents some

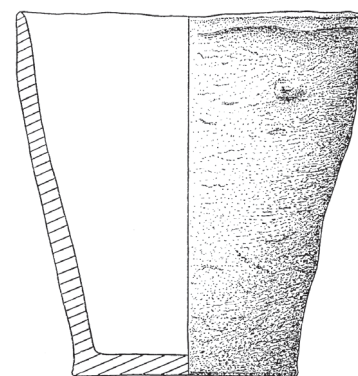


Fig.8. Seine-Oise-Marne ‘barrel-shaped’ vessel, Armorica, France (after L’Helgouach 1965, 244 Fig. 93–4).

8 Itten 1970, 11–22; Winiger 1981, 156–159; Hafner 2002; Matuschik/Schlichtherle 2016, 75 Fig. 81.

kind of conglomeration of different cultural features, a process of cultural pidginisation, by which characteristic Funnel Beaker elements such as the funnel-necked beakers and bowls almost disappear and features from other material culture groups are obtained. MN V is a period of transformation, it is surely based on the Funnel Beaker tradition, but the tradition was falling apart and new cultural influences seem to come from various areas. These include the Scandinavian Peninsula (the Pitted Ware Culture), eastern Europe (the stone heap graves) and a larger central and northern European area covered by the 'bucket-shaped vessel complex'. Cultural contacts were presumably widespread and some of them might actually have facilitated the rapid spread of early Corded Ware societies (Iversen 2019).

Compared to the original pottery-based definition of the Funnel Beaker Culture, the defining element of MN V (the Store Valby pottery style) clearly constitutes a break and should thus be separated from the 'classical' Funnel Beaker Culture. Furthermore, MN V is a period of dissolution and regional differences affecting burial customs, subsistence economy, settlement organisation, and material culture. This cultural heterogeneity seems partly to be replaced by a new cultural concept influenced by the Pontic-Caspian steppe, the Corded Ware, which had its origin in the meeting of Neolithic farmers and Yamnaya pastoralists⁹. However, not all parts of southern Scandinavia were influenced equally by the new concept (e.g. Iversen 2016; Iversen/Kroonen 2017), and not until the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, the early 2nd millennium BC, did a renewed homogeneous cultural expression appear across southern Scandinavia.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the final Funnel Beaker phase, MN V, as defined by C. J. Becker in 1955. There is no doubt that the phase as such is real and that it occupies the first three or so centuries of the 3rd millennium BC even though the ending of the period is hard to accurately date. However, the big question is whether this phase should be seen as the final Funnel Beaker phase as stated by Becker or rather as something else. It is obvious that MN V represents a break with the 'classical' Funnel Beaker pottery tradition and that it constituted a period of disintegration, cultural heterogeneity, transformation, and outreach. Cultural contacts and networks seem widespread. MN V does not represent the classical Funnel Beaker tradition but it definitely developed from it. Whether MN V should be labelled 'Funnel Beaker Culture' or not depends on how one defines the Funnel Beaker Culture. The question is whether defining MN V as Funnel Beaker Culture or not is important at all as long as we recognise the transformative nature of this multifarious and fascinating period.

⁹ Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015; Kristiansen et al. 2017; Malmström et al. 2019.

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