A Bronze Age Burial at Moanmore, near Emly, Co. Tipperary

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In the course of mechanical excavation in a field in the townland of Moanmore, Co. Tipperary, employees of the Electricity Supply Board came upon the capstone of a cist. The mechanical excavator being used for the work turned aside the flag

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![Diagram A](image1)

![Diagram B](image2)

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**Fig. 1.** Cist-grave, Moanmore, Co. Tipperary; A. ground-plan, B. supporting slabs, C. section.

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1 Td. Moanmore; Par. Emly; Bar. Clanwilliam; Co. Tipperary; O.S. 6-inch 65 (7.7 cm. from the eastern margin, and 9.3 cm. from the southern margin).
to reveal the upturned base of a pottery cinerary urn. The work was stopped, the grave rescaled, and the find reported to the National Museum. It was investigated on the following day by the writer, accompanied by Mr. Kieran Campbell, B.A.

When the capstone was removed for the second time, the cist was found to have been filled almost to the top with spoil spilled into it at the time of discovery. The urn had been cracked and its base broken off. The contents of the cist were carefully removed and all visible features plotted, after which the structure was restored and covered with soil pending possible future re-examination.

The cist was polygonal in form, consisting of five main sidestones wedged in place with smaller stones in three corners (Fig. 1, A). On top of the sidestones, a ring of small flat slabs was laid (Fig. 1, B), thus narrowing the mouth of the structure. On these the capstone rested—it was irregular in outline and roughly rectangular in cross-section.

A single slab formed the floor of the cist.

The top of the capstone had lain about 64 cm. below the present surface (Fig. 1, C); the modern ground surface in the vicinity of the cist is, however, extremely disturbed and uneven as a result of nearby quarrying operations of recent date. The cist was 45 cm. in maximum depth and measured 82 cm. by 52 cm. internally. It did not prove possible, within the confines of the cutting made by the finders, to define the limits of the pit in which the cist had been built.

The urn had been inverted over a deposit of cremated bone in the broader part of the cist. Just west of the urn—slightly inclined as a result of the influx of spoil at the time of discovery—was a Food Vessel, which had, to all appearances, originally been stood upright.

**The Finds**

*The Encrusted Urn* (Fig. 2) is flat-bottomed with convex sides, and has a slight suggestion of a cylindrical neck. The rim is out-turned, rounded on its outer aspect and steeply bevelled internally. The bevel bears a continuous horizontal ridge. The edge of the base is accentuated by means of an applied strip. The ware is dull buff-coloured externally, with extensive patches (including carbonised deposits) internally. Breaks in the pot clearly revealed ring- or coil-building. The fabric is coarse, soft and friable, with a reddish core, and large angular grits (up to 5 mm. in length) are frequent—they are fresh and unweathered and appear to have been especially ground for the purpose.

Each side of the ridge on the rim-bevel bears a band of short, oblique lines arranged in herring-bone fashion. Each line has been formed by drawing a pointed implement obliquely upwards from the edge of the area to be decorated. The rim top is ornamented with a crude herring-bone of shorter impressions. The body is divided into four horizontal zones by means of applied, obliquely slashed, cordons which are keyed to the body of the pot by means of shallow grooves. All decorated areas and

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8 Registered in the National Museum as 1977:1218-1220. The National Museum is grateful to Mr. Joseph Dalton, Ballymorris, Bansha, for donating the finds; also to Mr. Patrick Liston, the finder, Sergeant O'Shea, Tipperary Garda Siochána, and to Mr. Thomas and Mr. Paul Quish, Monemore, Emly, for much help. Special thanks are also due to Professor C. A. Erskine, School of Anatomy, Trinity College, Dublin for his report on the human bones.

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cords are obliquely slashed. The zones may be numbered and described from the rim downwards as follows:

Zone I consists of a row of paired, applied knobs separated by a low ridge from a row of larger, single knobs.

Zone II is divided by means of an applied continuous chevron into a band of interlocking triangles. These are outlined internally by means of shallow grooves. Each triangle contains applied knobs—those with their apices upwards normally have two, while the inverted examples normally hold three. Some inconsistencies in the applied and scored decoration do, however, occur.

Zone III is very similar to Zone II except that the number of applied knobs alternates between one and two and, as with Zone II, inconsistencies occur.

Zone IV extends from Zone III to the base and is decorated by means of oblique, applied bands running from the edge of the base to the lower cordon of Zone III.

The vessel measures 37.5 cm. in height, 39.5 cm. in diameter at the rim and 10.5 cm. at the base; the average thickness of the rim is 9.5 mm.
The Food Vessel (Fig. 3) is of "Vase" type with everted rim, convex wall and narrow base with the edge slightly accentuated. The slipped outer surface of the pottery is dull buff-coloured; the interior shows patches of orange; the core is dark. The ware is coarse, with frequent, large, angular grits. Decoration occurs on the outer surface of the body and the interior of the rim. The rim interior bears a crude chevron of single "maggot" impressions of whipped cord, and the rim edge bears irregular traces of similar type. The body is divided into five zones by means of three horizontal lines of "maggots" and a crudely incised line. The zones may be numbered and described from the rim downwards as follows:

**Zone 1** is a continuous band of chevrons composed of single "maggot" patterns.

**Zones II-IV** consist of three broader bands of chevrons similarly produced.

**Zone V** is a broad zone, continuous to the base, consisting of oblique lines of "maggot" impressions—some forming crude pendant triangles, others in parallel rows, and some curved. The Zone is not well disciplined and it is difficult to detect the underlying pattern, if any.

The vessel measures 13.7 cm. in height, 15.8 cm. by 14.8 cm. at the rim and 7.1. cm. in diameter at the base; the average thickness of the rim is 6 mm.
The Cremated Remains

Professor C. A. Erskine of Trinity College, Dublin, kindly examined the bones and reported as follows:

Collection comprises a large number of fragments of cremated bones of at least 2 adults, one young. 3 pieces of maxilla of which 2 belong to the left side and 2 right petrous temporal bones were identified, 4 fragments of mandible, 9 of metatarsal bones and one navicular present with 4 metacarpals and 1 right scaphoid. Also present: proximal 5 cm. of left ulna and distal 5 cm. of left radius which has some indication of a recently fused epiphysis. Fragments of vertebrae, including one of ends of axis, and several fragments of teeth also present.

Commentary

The Encrusted Urn is of a form recently isolated by Waddell (1976, p. 291) and termed by him Type 3b. Such vessels are characterised by having a slack rounded profile, an internally bevelled rim—normally with at least one horizontal rib—and applied and incised ornament decorating most of the exterior. The Vase Food Vessel belongs to a class of pottery for which the simple designation "Vase" is increasingly prefered—the Moanmore example belonging to Waddell's Type 3 (1976, p. 288), the commonest form in Ireland. The slack profile and decorative motifs of the pot under discussion fit it comfortably within the group.

Encrusted Urns (Kavanagh 1973, pp. 514-516; Waddell 1976, p. 291) are normally found inverted over cremated remains in pit-graves or in cists. Of occurrences recorded in cists, the polygonal form of cist seems commonest (Waddell 1976, p. 291). Vases, too, are most commonly associated with cremations in cists, a smaller number being known from pit-graves. The interrelationship between the Vases and the Encrusted Urns in form, decoration, and associated burial rite, is re-emphasised by the occurrence together of the two types at Moanmore, an association which can now be added to the twelve such recorded by Kavanagh (1973, p. 515).

The cremated remains—those of two adults, one of them young—are of some interest. Information on the numbers of individuals in urn-burials and on their ages and sex is surprisingly rare, despite the large numbers of such burials known. The process of cremation, failure to preserve the bones, and other factors, have all tended to limit the amount of knowledge available. For instance, of 66 Cordoned Urns, Kavanagh specifies in her catalogue that fifteen contained the remains of single adults, two of single children, and one of three or more individuals, and also (Kavanagh 1976, p. 332) suggests that the number of vessels containing multiple burials may have been as high as six. The figures are even less satisfactory for Collared Urns: from a total of fifty-one urns, five single adults, one single child, one adolescent, and two individuals of unspecified age and sex are recorded by Kavanagh (1976, p. 302)—to this can be added the child's remains from Killeenaghmountain, Co. Waterford (Ryan, p. 148). Of her list of Encrusted Urns, the majority have no detailed informa-
tion recorded (Kavanagh 1973); a recently excavated Encrusted Urn from Nevinstown, Co. Meath, however, contained the cremated remains of two adults and a child (I am grateful to my colleague, Miss Mary Cahill, for permitting reference to this discovery in advance of publication). It is difficult to say what precise weight can be placed on the above figures when so much information has clearly been lost, but nonetheless it seems that there is a consistent element, however small, of burial of more than one individual in urns.

REFERENCES