

CHAPTER FIVE

DISTRIBUTION

This work is principally concerned with the characterisation of the Upchurch and Thameside industries. Study of the distribution of their products must therefore take second place to that. Pollard's work (1982a) features a general survey of pottery distribution within Kent. Aspects of long-distance transport of BB2 has been tackled on several occasions, notably by Gillam (1981). The question of supply to specific sites has been investigated, for example in part III of the Southwark report (1978, 533). There is therefore not much latitude for constructive new work at this time.

Distribution studies of these industries are complicated by the impossibility of identifying all but the most striking forms and fabrics via published descriptions and illustrations. Quantification is rendered difficult by excavators employing different - if any - conventions to quantify their finds. It is perhaps too early to extract meaningful economic information from a distribution study of a regional industry. Insufficient characterisation studies have taken place and these are inevitably 'top-down': starting with the distinct and working towards the obscure. It is still not fully understood what a regional industry entailed: is it to be viewed as a cluster of kilns supplying a region or as a regional style made at a multitude of points over the centuries? The piecemeal nature of archaeological discoveries does not make distinction easy, especially as the true situation appear to have been an uncertain balance between the two. The marshes on the Isle of Grain, along the Swale or north of Greenhithe could at any time yield a clutch of kilns to complicate the picture already established. Many more inland sites analogous to New Ash Green will have to be investigated before the extent of small scale local or itinerant production can be assessed.

The main use of the maps in this chapter is to define the area within which Upchurch and Thameside pottery was used. If one were to add sites upon which pottery of a similar style was used, the area would increase. Compare, for example the map for Sib (Fig 103) with Pollard's distribution for 'BB2' in the southeast (1982a, 578). At this point, one loses sight of individual wares and has to consider regional styles instead. The comparison between the distribution of the various fabrics is interesting. The number of points on a map is roughly proportional to the popularity of the ware. The distance of the points away from the kilns is partly a measure of its commercial success. It should be noted that the most distant points on the maps of the southeast are largely on major sites - Dover, Richborough, London - with good waterborne communications. The discovery of isolated sherds at these points cannot be used as evidence to suggest regular 'trade' in that ware.

THE COMPETITION

Kent provided the bulk of its own coarse wares throughout the period under consideration. This was a practical necessity due to the high transportation costs of bulky, relatively cheap vessels. In the Iron Age there was little significant importation of coarse wares. Following the invasion several native potteries expanded into small industries, (fig. 5) those within the area of interest being based at Canterbury (Jenkins 1960), London (i.e. Highgate, Brown and Sheldon 1970), the Alice Holt forest (Lyne and Jeffries 1979) and Colchester (Hull 1963).

There was minimal penetration into the core area of study by the products of these industries, but their own distribution firmly restricted the potential market for Upchurch and Thameside pottery. Canterbury wares begin to take over from north Kent types past the Swale whilst Alice Holt predominates in the land beyond the Weald. North-Vest Kent had its semi-indigenous 'Patch Grove Ware' (Ward-Perkins 1944, 141) in addition to a mix of pots from surrounding areas. London was the practical Westward limit for Kentish products, being a market for goods from many sources. Away from the narrow Thameside strip, Colchester was the principal producer in Essex. There are a good number of smaller concerns scattered between Colchester and London which seem to provide a mediocre local substitute for Thameside forms, which would in total restrict the market for the real thing.

As time advanced, some competitors dropped from the scene and new ones arose, without making a great difference in the patterns observed above. Dorset BBl (Farrar 1977) was shipped in from the early second century, in Essex, Much-Hadham became important in the third (Harden and Green 1978) and the Rettendon industry (Tildesley 1971) appeared in the fourth. Foreign imports such as Mayen (Fulford and Bird 1975) never made more than a token appearance.

Iron Age 'fine ware' of the Aylesford-Swarling type (Thompson 1982, 1) was largely of local manufacture and dominated the upper end of the pottery market until the invasion. Continental fine ware, in particular Gallo-Belgic wares (Rigby 1973), made an initial impact soon after the conquest, but these were rapidly copied by competent local potters and largely replaced by the native product. Samian claimed the largest foreign share of the market with other exotic wares taking only a small part. Limited local fine ware concerns included those at Otford (Pearce 1930) and Eccles (Detsicas 1977).

The fine ware market for the whole region was dominated by Upchurch and Upchurch-style pottery from shortly after the conquest to the third century. Towards Canterbury, this fine grey ware was rivalled only by Central Gaulish samian and to a lesser extent by local imitators of the Upchurch style. Colour coated wares from Colchester, the Rhineland (Green 1978) and from the Nene Valley (Hartley 1960) and Oxford (Young 1977) appear on most sites of the region in low quantities. A heavy concentration of exotic wares within the region was strongly inhibited by the presence of indigenous fine ware industries.

The potters seem to have matched their rivals in all forms apart from mortaria: no north Kentish potter rose to the challenge presented by industries at Canterbury, Colchester and Brockley Hill (Castle 1976), so the native industries played no role in that specialised market. Although minor specialised concerns arose within North Kent for short periods, no significant industry attempted to challenge the established order. No single external rival appeared to squeeze them out of the marketplace. Only when the industries failed did widespread replacement of their products take place and then the benefit was shared amongst many.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION

S1b and S1bs, alias 'BB2', is the most widely distributed fabric the industries produced. Every site within north Kent that has contexts dated to the second or third centuries has a considerable quantity of these fabrics. They were the principal coarse wares used between the river Cray and the Swale for two centuries. Beyond these boundaries, products of other industries take an increasing share of the market. Thameside Essex produced an inferior version of S1b which served the bulk of that region's needs. London received the ware from the early second century (B. Davies pers. com.) along with a myriad of other 'BB2' fabrics, many of Essex origin.

Within Kent, there are blanks on the distribution map (fig. 103) coinciding with the Weald and the North Downs. Further barren areas are the Isles of Sheppey and Grain where there has been a dearth of accessible archaeological information. The resulting distribution is coastal: Reculver, Thanet, Richborough, Walmer, Dover, Lympne, finds decreasing in quantity as distance increases. Canterbury received considerable amounts of north Kent pottery, probably via the Swale, Wantsum and Stour waterways.

It is interesting to compare fig. 103 for S1b with fig. 104 for S1. The unburnished sandy grey ware is less widely distributed than its burnished counterpart, particularly outside north Kent where it is commonplace. This reinforces the concept of trade in S1b: the customers were obviously discriminating between vessels rather than contents. S1 is seen to be the standard grey ware for northern Kent, with a few sherds travelling greater distances. It could easily be replaced by local coarse wares beyond the edges of this distribution.

The next most popular sandy fabric was S3, although it appears that 'trade' in this fabric was non-existent. A few vessels are known to have reached London and Canterbury. The remaining examples come from within 15 kilometres of the kilns (fig. 105). Production at Cooling was short lived and limited in quantity. At Upchurch, the fabric persisted but seems to have been solely for local use. The fabrics S2 and S4 are so rare beyond the kilns that no distribution study could be attempted.

The two remaining sandy fabrics, S5b and S6b enjoyed very limited distribution. S5b is found mainly in the north Kent marshes, comprising 2-5% of finds with a maximum of 10.5% at Slayhills (see Appendix I). It is a rare find beyond this, although sherds are known in both London and Canterbury. This suggests a thin distribution within Kent, revealed only by

large-scale recovery of finds on major excavations (fig. 106). Visual similarity between vessels in S5b and S1b would probably mean that the former could duplicate the distribution of the latter although much less in bulk. S6b is a rarity, with a maximum of 3.1% on its production site and only being found in three other locations (fig. 107). It was clearly never produced in volume, or if so, then not for any great period of time.

Tracing the distribution of fabrics N1 and N2 is complicated by their similarity when pots are complete or are described in publications. They have therefore been plotted together on fig. 108. The fine ware makes up 10-15% of all finds at Upchurch but rapidly falls off away from the production site. N2/lb may have had a slightly superior distribution that N1/lb due to its better finish. Pollard notes that together these make up 30-60% of fine ware in second century northern Kent (1982a, 131). Although less in volume than S1b, the fine fabrics enjoy a wider distribution, probably due to the absence of suitable rivals. N1/1 makes up 0.3% (sand 2674 - DUA catalogue) of all pottery on the GPO site phases VII and VIII from Hadrianic London. This is equivalent to 3.9% of all fine wares. The other fine Upchurch fabrics are not individually recognised in London. N3 has not been found beyond the Medway estuary.

The distribution of N4/l's is weighted in the direction of London, there being few examples from eastern Kent (fig. 109). The method of its transport is illuminated by the three flagons of class IE on the Blackfriars barge, assumed to be *en route* from Maidstone to London when it sank (Marsden 1967, 48, nos. 1-3). It must not be forgotten that it was as likely to have been the contents rather than the vessels themselves that were being shipped.

Of the remaining fabrics mentioned in this survey, most have no distribution to speak of: vessels tempered with grog, flint or chaff travelled little distance beyond their site of manufacture. This reinforces the conclusion that they were produced for local use and indicates a lack of demand for traded coarse wares in the pre-conquest period. Shell-tempered fabrics were more popular, but H2 was restricted to the north Kent and southern Essex marshlands.

H1/4h is a common find throughout northern Kent, particularly along both banks of the Thames, upstream as far as London (fig. 110). The distribution is mainly riverine. It is uncommon in eastern Kent and its decline pre-dates the major phases of activity in the shore-forts. The large storage jars were probably serving as containers for north Kent produce; salt, salted fish, oysters or grain.

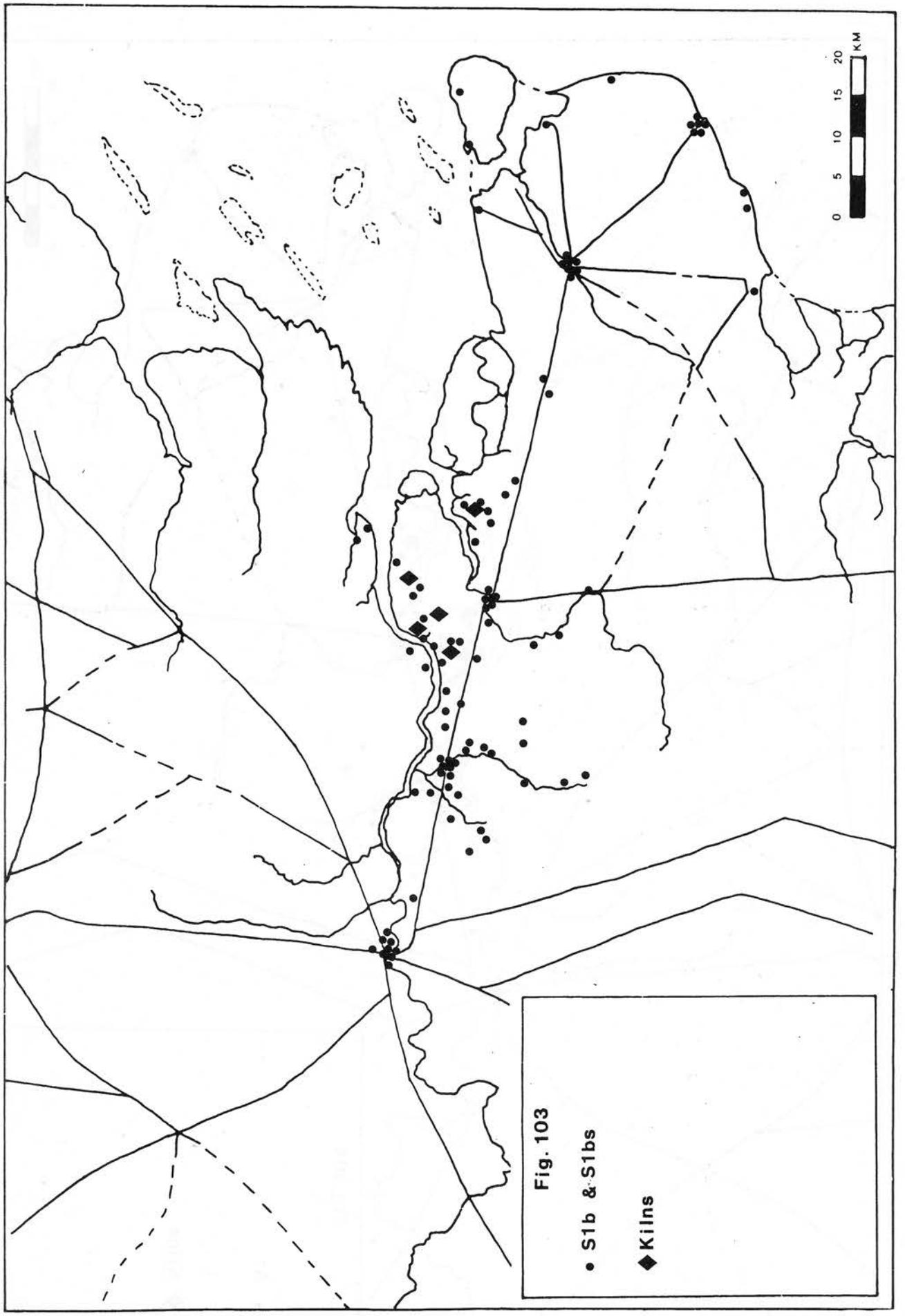
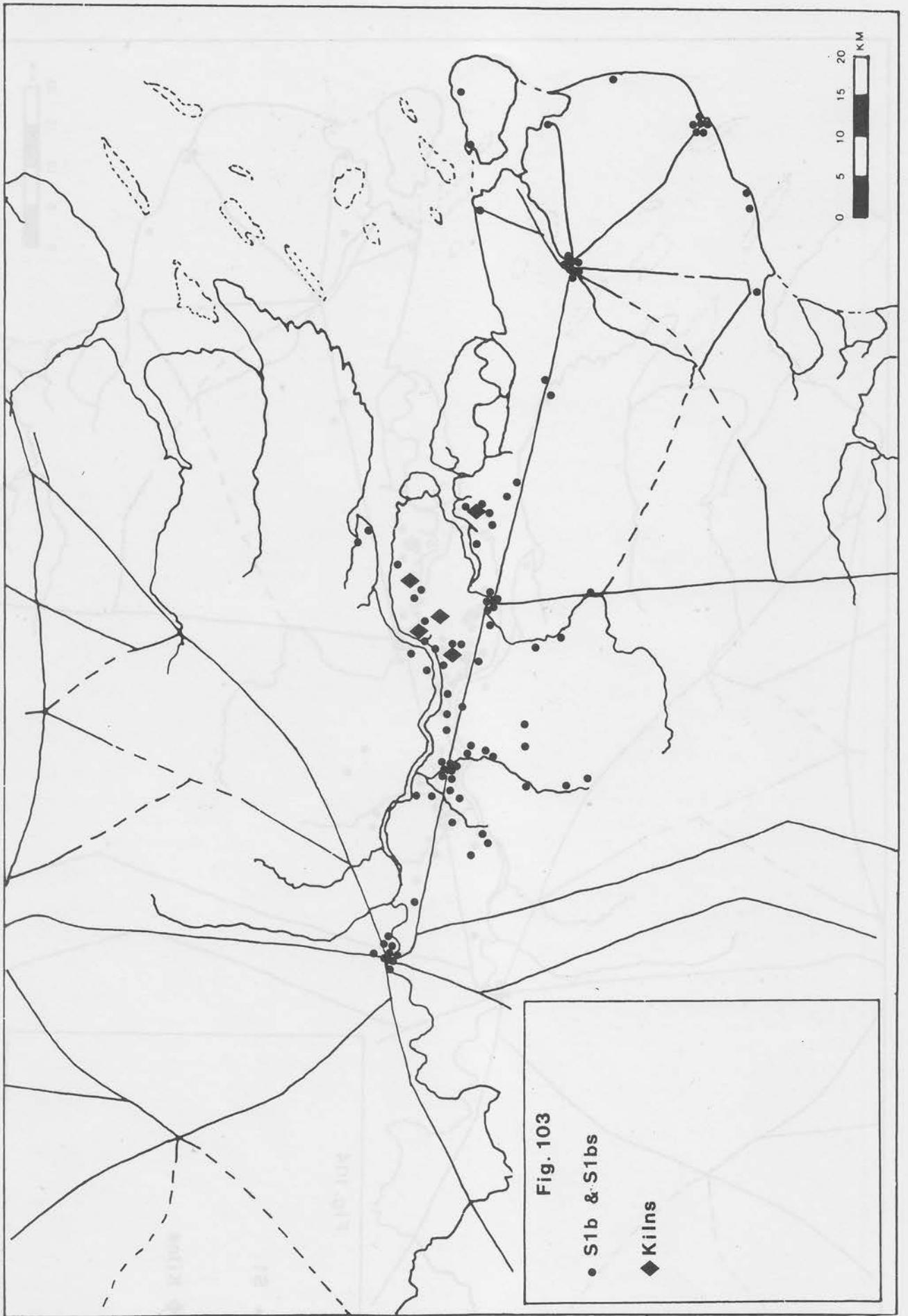
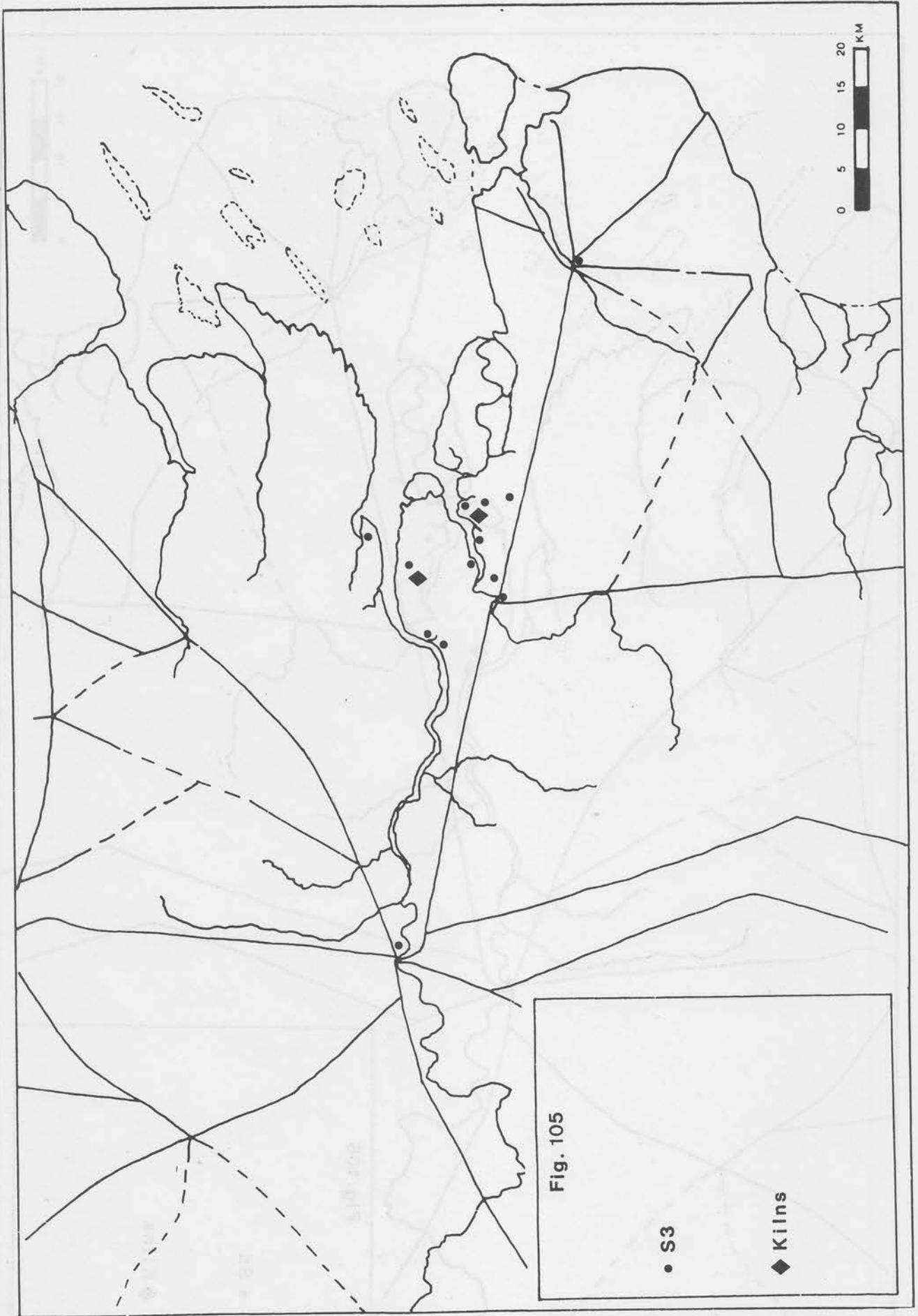


Fig. 103
● S1b & S1bs
◆ Kilns





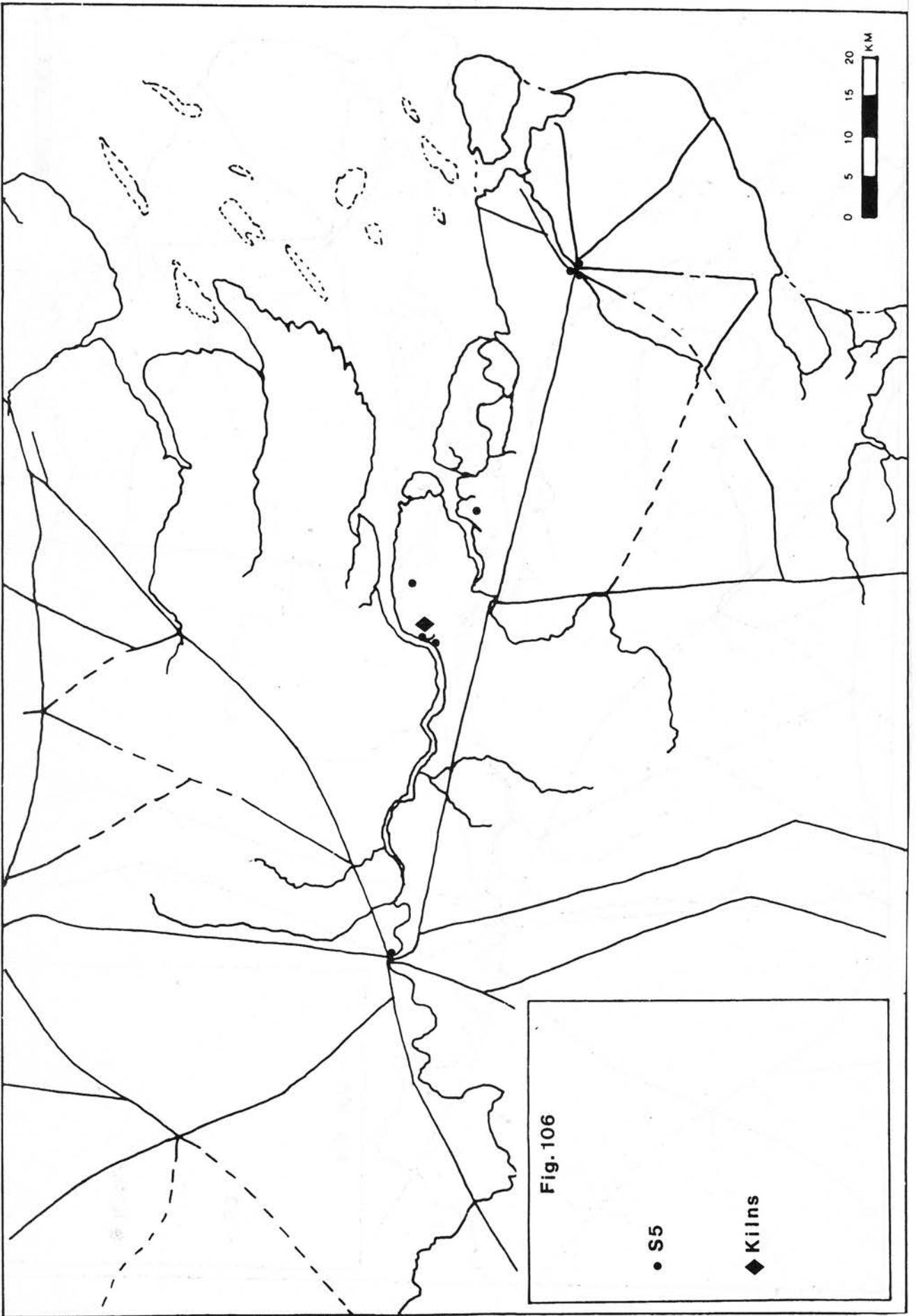
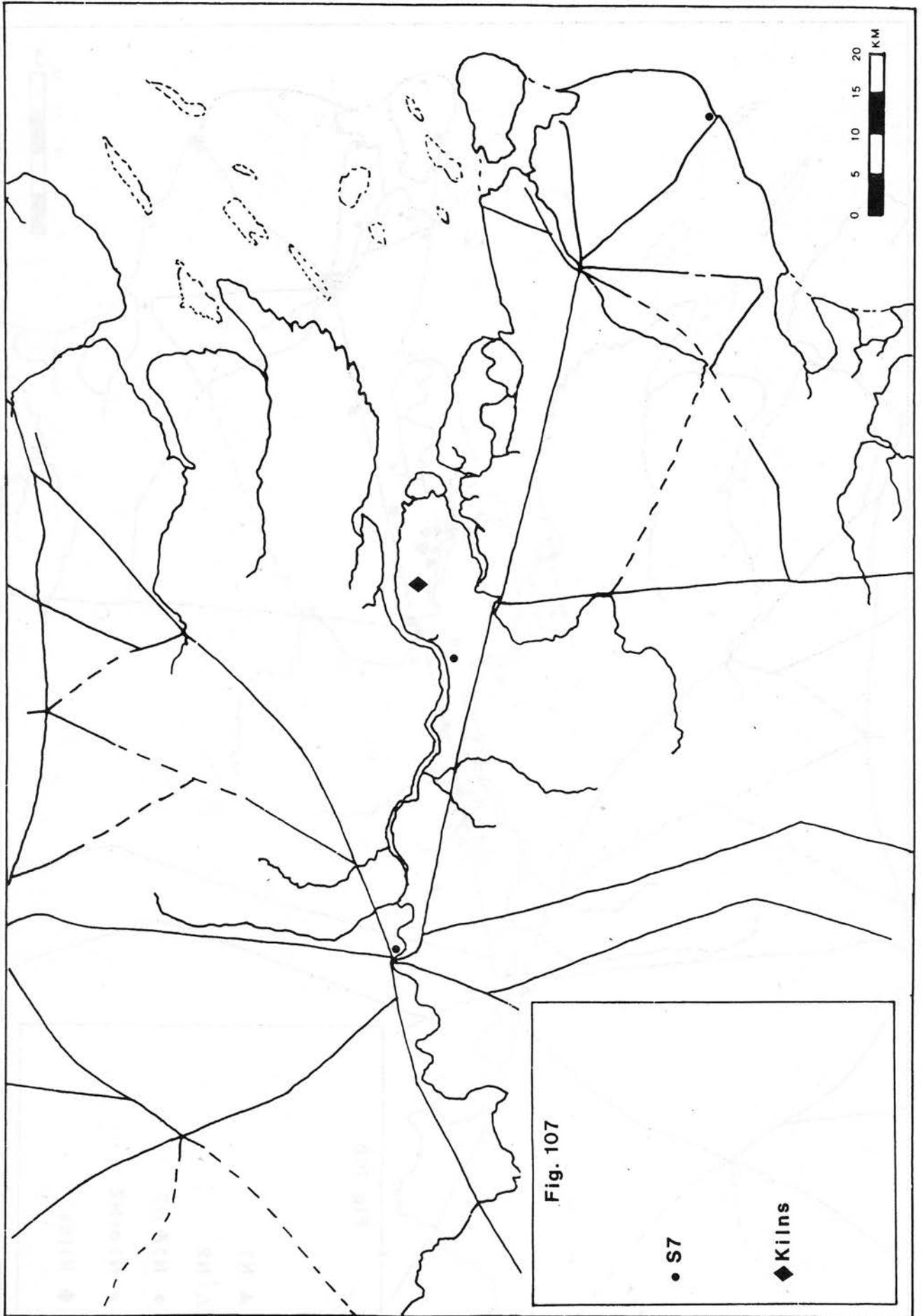


Fig. 106

• S5

◆ Kilns



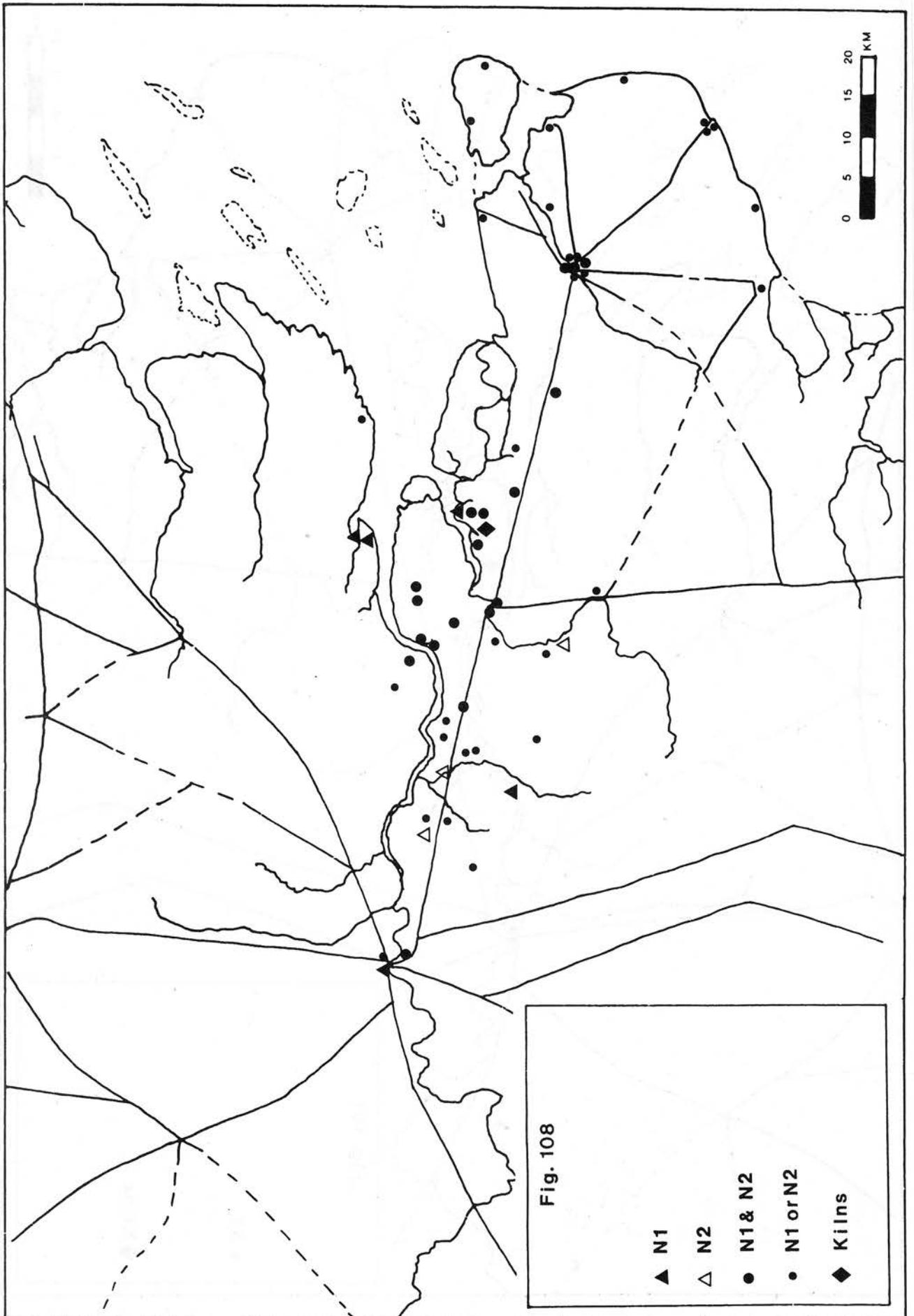
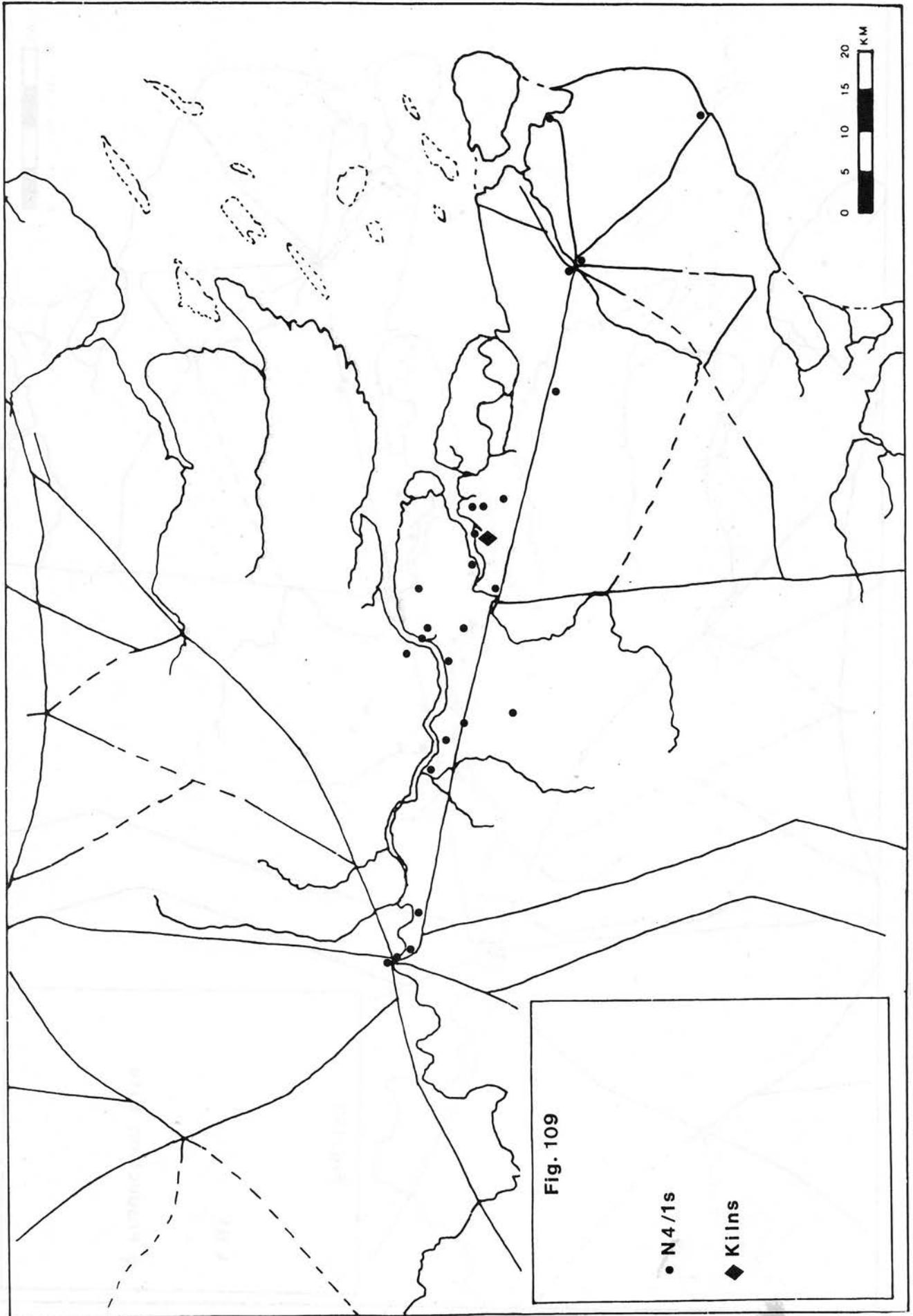


Fig. 108



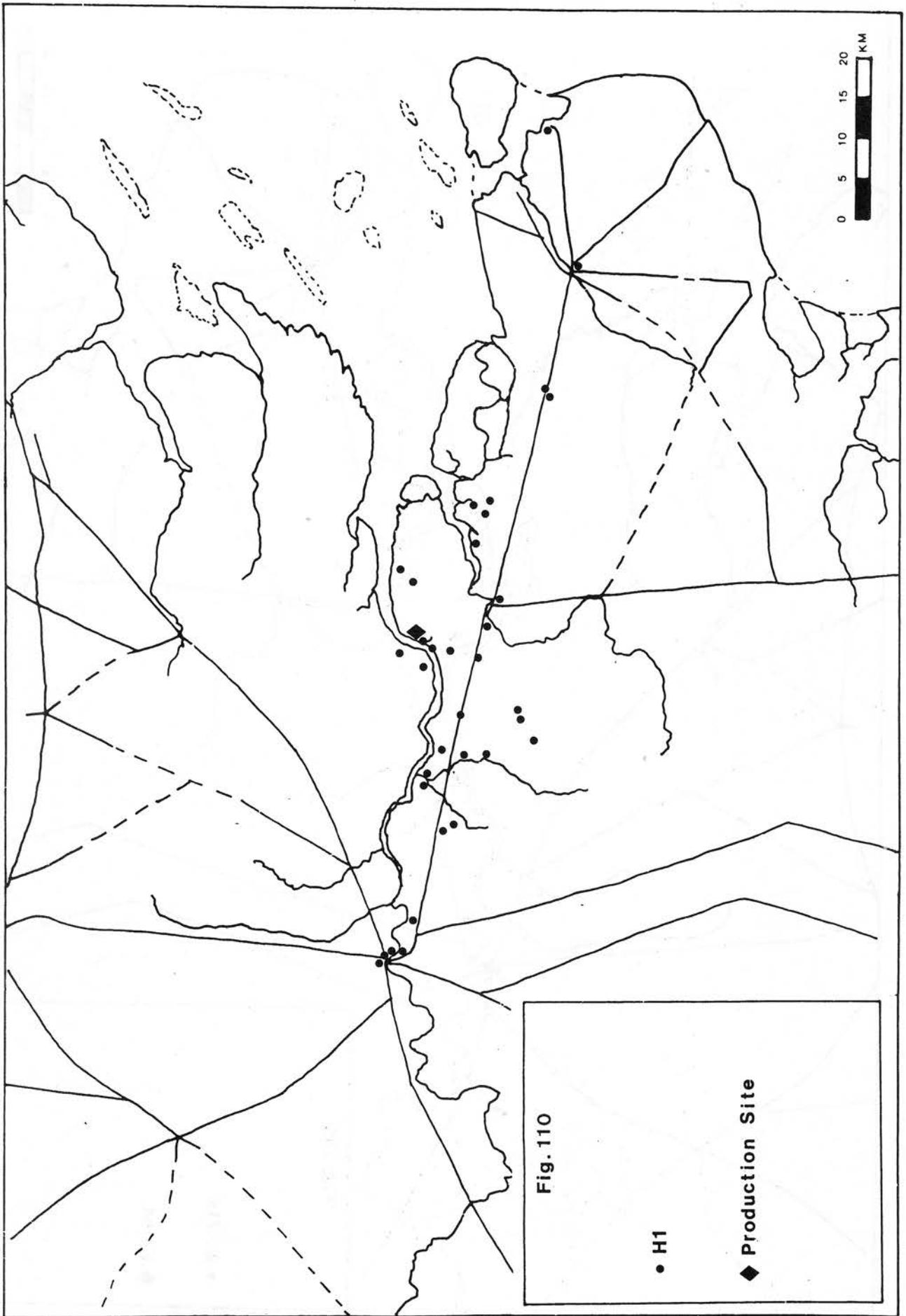


Fig. 110

• H1

◆ Production Site

THE TRADE WITH THE NORTHERN FRONTIERS

The question of the large scale trade of pottery from the Thames and Medway to the northern frontiers cannot be answered without a thorough essay on characterisation preceding any distribution study. This study, with its stated emphases could not adequately fulfil its objectives and also perform a detailed study of the frontier sites. Some clarification was however required of the general assumptions made by Gillam (1981, 10) that Upchurch and the Thameside kilns (Williams 1977, 208) were major suppliers to the north. A limited qualitative examination was therefore made of assemblages from thirteen frontier sites, including five mentioned by Gillam as having significant quantities of 'BB2' (Gillam 1981, 14).

In addition to noting the presence or absence of the Kentish fabrics,

Site	Fabric								
	S1	S1b	S3	S5	S7	N1	N2	N4	•BB2
Birrens		*							
Camelon	*	*					*		
Cappuck		*							
Carpow		*							
Castlecary		*			*				1
Corbridge		*	*	*				*	1
Housteads	*	*	*					*	2
Inveresk		*							
Mumrills		*				*	*	*	1
Newstead		*				*			1
Rough Castle		*				*			1
Traprain Law		*				*			
WallSEND	*	*				*	*	*	2

the occurrence of other, non-Kentish 'BB2' fabrics was recorded. The last column in the above table records the number of these fabrics observed on each site. A total of six distinct fabrics were observed across seven sites (see Appendix IV).

Fabric S1b and S1bs

On a cursory examination of pottery from the above forts, it was clear that Gillam's 'BB2' embraces several fabrics from an uncertain number of sources. The variety in the fabrics was not reflected in the forms as only a narrow range was observed, with a great deal of standardisation in detail. Whilst some vessels' fabrics matched reference samples under x20 magnification, most showed slight, regular, variation. On some sites this would be colour: at Castlecary, the sand is larger and denser than the Thameside equivalents. These observed differences were not sufficient to destroy the idea of trade between Kent and the frontier. First one must consider ground conditions and pre-deposition use as changing the colour and finish of a vessel. Then the selective nature of long-distance trade will alter the perception of a 'typical' vessel between a kiln site and the far end of a distribution network (Monaghan 1985). One further consideration is that comparing a small sample of the pottery used on the

frontier with that from a small sample of the active Kentish kilns, one could not expect a large number of positive matches.

With the above reservations to the fore, it was estimated that perhaps 50% of the 'BB2' examined was Kentish Slb. In particular, Sl/6b, Sl/4b and Sl/5b. None of the Greenhithe fabric was noted whilst Sl/1b and Sl/3b were not common. This suggests that Upchurch was not a major supplier of frontier coarse ware. Around half the Slb examined could not be assigned to any particular kiln group.

Gillam records that only 6% of the black burnished ware at Birrens was his BB2 (1981, 14). A 5D2 dish in Sl/5b was the only Thameside sherd noted there. At the Antonine fort at Camelon, roughly 40% of all pottery was BB2 with 20% being BB1 (Andrew King pers. com.). The BB2 is highly standardised and the whole Antonine assemblage was markedly restricted in variety compared to its Flavian predecessor. Half the sherds were certainly Thameside produce, most of the remaining ones differing by only a small degree. The most common fabrics were Sl/6b and Sl/5b.

Vessels from the 1948 excavations at Cappuck (JRS XL, 1950, 95) were found to include several examples of form 3J3 in Slb plus one in Slbs. The dishes were predominantly 5D3 and 5D4 decorated with parallel diagonal lines. The pottery from Carpow was similar to Sl/6b, down to weathering in an identical manner. This was one of few sites where the undecorated pie dishes 5C1 and 5C3 occurred. A small amount of material from Castlecary (Christison 1902) was examined. Forms 3J1 and 5D1 were noted in one of the coarser fabrics, either Sl/1b or Sl/4b. A 5D2 in a fabric akin to Sl/6b was also found.

The fort at Corbridge yielded convincing examples of Thameside Slb. Several variants of 5D were found in the slightly coarser 'early' Sl/4b plus dish bases in both Sl/5b and Sl/6b. A distinctive find was a 3A5 with typical sine-wave decoration in Sl/6bs. Jar rims of form 3J were in Sl/4b. Contexts of the mid- and late-third century at Housesteads were found to contain no Slb, those dated to the late second and early third century contained several Kentish sherds including 3J2, 3J3, 5C1, 5C4, 5C3, 5C5, IB, 5E3.

The pottery from the 1865 excavation at Inveresk unearthed 5D dishes in Sl/5b plus 5D and 3J1 vessels in the earlier version of Sl/4b. Much of that from Mumrills appears to have been of non-Kentish origin. The vessels which probably came from the Thames were an unusual selection, namely a decorated 5E2 and a 5F3 in Sl/6b plus 5F6 and 5F5 in Sl/3b. The fort at Newstead also yielded an interesting range of forms although many were in alien fabrics. Forms 5D1, 5D2, 5D4 in Sl/4b included an unusually high number decorated with a sine wave. A 5C2 was found in Sl/5b plus 3J1, 3J3, 5D1, 5D2 in either Sl/1b or Sl/4b. In addition there was a sine-wave decorated 5F6 and a nascent 5A1 in Slb.

Black burnished vessels from the 1920 excavations at Rough Castle were mainly of form 5D2 in fabric Sl/5b. In addition a few 3J1 and 5D1 were present in the same fabric. Dish 5D2 in Slb was the only Kentish vessel noted in the assemblage from Traprain Law. At the Wallsend fort,

S1b was found in forms 5C4, 5E1, and 3J. A few pieces of 4A2 in S1/lb with typical 'Upchurch' vertical hatching between the cordons were an unusual discovery. Cooling fabrics were well represented in 3J9 and 1B7. Vessels of forms 3J, 5E and 5F were observed with less reliable fabric matches.

Other fabrics

No other fabric matched S1b in either bulk or frequency of finds in the north. None of the crude first century fabrics were seen, nor was H1/4h, which could conceivably have travelled with its contents. Occurrences of fineware fabrics were rare. N3 was not found at all, S6 in perhaps only one vessel.

At Camelon, at least half the fine grey ware was in a harsh, non-Kentish fabric similar to Highgate. Standing out from this were vessels in N1/lb, mainly of form 21. N2/lb, both black and pink, was found in form 2A. Many of the grey storage jars of form 3A were similar to SI fabrics, in particular S1/4 when streaked ash grey and orange on the Black Shore at Cliffe. At Castlecary a folded beaker variant 2D1 in SI/6b was found, marked by two horizontal bands (as 2D1.2).

The 1980 Corbridge excavations unearthed a small number of the finer Kentish sherds: body sherds of N4/lb flagons and a square-rimmed 5C8 in S5/4b. Sherds of an anonymous beaker were in either S6b or N2b. The levels at Housteads which were devoid of S1b also lacked other Kentish fabrics. Other layers contained several 3L1 sherds in SI as well as 3H4 and 3H6. Fabric S3 was represented by a jar of variant 3F1. Fragments of N4/lb were found, along with those of form 5C in S5/4b.

Poppyhead beaker sherds from Mumrills were in both N1/lb and an alien fabric akin to the most popular alien BB2 fabric there: all were discoloured brown. A rim of form 1E1 was found in N4/lb plus a body sherd of class 2G in N1/lb. A base of class 2A in N1/lb came from Newstead, plus another in HI/lb. A further N1/1 poppyhead was found at Traprain Law. The Wallsend fort contained several examples of 3H jars in grey SI, principally 3H4, 3H5 and 3H7. Form 2A was represented in fabric N2/lb.