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SACRIFICIAL LANDSCAPES

CULTURAL BIOGRAPHIES OF PERSONS, OBJECTS AND 'NATURAL' PLACES
IN THE BRONZE AGE OF THE SOUTHERN NETHERLANDS, C. 2300-600 BC

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Non multo post in Cantabriae lacum fulmen decidit repertaeque sunt duodecim secures, haud ambiguum summae imperii signum.

(Suetonius, book VII: Galba, Otho, Vitellius)

Und dast Sterben, dieses Nichtmehrfassen
Jenes Grunds, auf dem wir täglich stehn,
Seinem ängstlichen Sich-Niederlassen -:

In die Wasser, die ihn sanft empfangen
Und die sich, wie glücklich und vergangen,
Unter ihm zurückziehn, Flut um Flut

(R.M. Rilke 'der Schwan')

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9 Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age: metalwork from burials

9.1 Introduction

The last chapter focussed on object deposition in natural places only. However, this was not the only field of practice where metalwork was deposited. Metal items figured in the burial ritual as well. This chapter will be devoted to this particular practice, thus serving as an important addition to the findings of the last chapter.

Although the urnfields from the southern Netherlands have received ample attention of old, the bronzes found in burials have generally been neglected (see Tol 2000b for an exception). The deposition of objects into a grave, however, raises significant questions on the nature of the urnfield burial ritual in our region. Some of these are fundamental to the present research. We shall focus on the following questions:

- What was this deposition of metalwork in graves? How frequently and at which stages of the burial ritual did it take place, and which objects were used?
- What did the deposition of burial gifts mean? Do graves containing metalwork contrast with other graves, and does this provide clues on gender and social roles of the individuals buried with metalwork?
- In what way does the deposition of metalwork in graves contrast with the deposition of metalwork in natural places that was described in the previous chapter?

9.2 Discussion of the available evidence

Unfortunately, there is at present no complete catalogue of all urnfields from the southern Netherlands. In a recent survey, Roymans (1991) counted 371 urnfields from the region, 85 of which date to the Late Bronze Age only (fig. 9.1). An overview of these urnfields has been published by Gerritsen (2001). From the latter publications, it becomes clear that among these 371 urnfields there are urnfields from which no more than a few urns survive and urnfields that have been excavated almost completely. Among the not or only superficially published urnfields, there are important ones like the large urnfield of Weert-Boshoverheide (Bloemers 1988), Neerharen-Rekem (De Boe 1986; Temmerman 2002; Van Impe 1980b) and several from Wijchen (unpublished). Even if urnfields have been published, the often crude excavation methods of earlier generations make it likely that not all of the often insignificant and breakable bronze items have survived. In this study, some 268 burials with metalwork/or green discolourations on bone from probably 61 urnfields all over the region were assembled, ranging from the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of the Middle Iron Age (appendices 7.3 and 7.4).[1] The discussion will focus on the developments up until the Ha C phase (until *c*. 600 BC). Some urnfields (Haps, Nijmegen-Kops Plateau, Someren) contain rich graves of the later Ha D/La Tène A phases (graves with iron spearheads). These are listed here when they are present in the urnfields studied, but excluded from further discussion (see Ball 1999; Fontijn 1996; Roymans 1991). Modern, reliable physical-anthropological analyses of cremation remains from the Netherlands are available only for the Dutch Early Iron Age urnfields. Cremation remains from Belgian urnfields were analysed in the 1960s and 1970s but are now generally considered suspect (personal comment B. Temmerman). The lists in appendix 7.3 and 7.14 include bones with green discolourations as well, but since we are at present unable to see whether these are really the result of bronze grave gifts, they are included in the discussion on bronze deposition (see the discussion 7.13.3). This survey does not pretend to present a complete overview of the entire evidence on metalwork finds, but I assume that it covers the most general find categories.

9.3 The urnfield burial ritual and the provision of artefacts

Before dealing with the metalwork finds from graves, it is necessary to pay some attention to the urnfield burial ritual as a whole.

The urnfield burial ritual has three important characteristiscs. First, cremation of the body has become the most important way of treating the body of the deceased before interment. Second, the larger part of the community was buried in a collective cemetery, the urnfield, including both sexes and all ages, with the possible exclusion of new-born babies (Fokkens 1997). Since most were interred in an individual grave, often underneath a moundlet, and cemeteries were in use for centuries on, large urnfields developed. Estimation of population sizes for both Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age urnfields suggests that the average urnfield is the burial ground of a relatively small community consisting

of 10 to 20 people, three or four farms (Fokkens 1997 and references cited therein). Third, many urnfields display a variety of burial monuments: flat graves, long barrows (Dutch: *langbedden*), and those enclosed by circular and rectangular ring-ditches. Only for the Early Iron Age, there is evidence for graves that contrast with others by their monumentality: the large long barrows of type Someren (Kortlang 1999), and the large circular mounds that cover the Ha C chieftains' graves (Roymans 1991).

After cremation, part of the cremated remains were collected from the pyre, and deposited in a shroud or urn. For all urnfields studied, far less than half of the burials in an urnfield contained artefacts. Most frequent are small pots or cups, the function of which is unclear: they may have contained food or drink, or oils that were poured out over the body before cremation. The largest number of such small pots recorded so far is in the large urnfield of Best (in 23 % of the preserved graves) and the small one from Maastricht (26 %). Bronzes clearly are the second-most deposited artefact. As table 9.1 shows, the frequencies of bronzes range from 19 % of the recovered burials to no bronze at all. This table is based on urnfields that yielded relatively large numbers of intact graves, and were almost completely excavated.[2] It is clear that metalwork items in urnfield graves are the exception rather than the rule. The single exception seems to be the (unpublished) Early Iron Age urnfield of Neerharen-Rekem, where almost any grave contains metalwork (Temmerman 2002). But as Temmerman's own survey of Belgian urnfields indicates, this cemetery is clearly exceptional, and low frequencies like those shown in table 9.1 are the norm (Temmerman 2000, 84). Much rarer than bronzes are artefacts of iron and gold, stone, glass and flint. I have not carried out an exhaustive survey of the non-metal find categories, but their frequencies can be estimated at 5 % or lower. Iron objects are only known from Early Iron Age urnfields. Figure 9.8 shows that iron objects gradually replaced bronze ones, with iron becoming dominant only in the Middle Iron Age. As can be seen in the appendix 7.3 and 7.4, the metalwork items are generally ornaments and this also applies to the majority of the stone and glass objects.

9.4 Ornaments and toilet articles in urnfield graves

For the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (Ha A2 until Ha C), the most recurrent metal ornament type are pins, followed by bracelets/arm rings, some of which are twisted, and some decorated. Also known are pendants and gilded rings (particularly from Early Iron Age context), spirals in different sizes and of different shapes, among them *Brillspirale* (Early Iron Age), bronze beads, and a few razors and tweezers. From Early Iron Age burials, there is evidence for pins and small rings carried out in iron instead of bronze. The material from these burials is often damaged by the cremation fire, and this makes many artefacts difficult to recognize.

Pins

Pins are not only the most recurrent artefact; they are also the ornament type that shows most variation in form. They

Site	Date	Graves	Bronze	%	Iron	%	Pots	%	References
Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul	LBA	67	3 (3)	4	-	0	8 (8)	12	Verwers 1975
Knegsel-Knegsels Heide	LBA(EIA)	63	3(2)	3	-	0	?(>2)	-	Braat 1936
Ranst-Ranstveld	LBA	25	5(4)	16	-	0	5(4)	16	Lauwers/Van Impe 1980
Bergeijck-Witrijt	LBA/EIA	23	2(2)	9	-	0	4 (3)	13	Van Giffen 1937
Best-Aarlesche Heide	LBA/EIA	44	18(8)	18	-	0	9(9)	23	Willems 1935
Donk	LBA/EIA	142	12(10)	7	2(2)	1	26(25)	18	Van Impe 1980
Esch	LBA/EIA	26	-	0	-	0	2(2)	8	Van den Hurk 1980
Goirle	LBA/EIA	49	2 (2)	4	1	2	3	6	Verwers 1996a of b
Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	LBA/MIA	38	5 (5)	13	20 (8)	21	2 (2)	3	Fontijn 1995
St.Oedenrode-Haagakkers	LBA/EIA	41	17 (5)	12	-	0	1(1)	2	Van der Sanden 1981
Valkenswaard-Het Gegraaf	LBA/EIA	99	2	2	-	0	1	1	Brunsting/Verwers 1975
Venlo-De Hamert	EIA	94	9 (9)	10	-	0	19(19)	20	Holwerda n.d.
Beegden	EIA	19	-	0	1	5	-	0	Roymans 1999
Someren-Waterdael	EIA	72	-	0	6(3)	4	-	0	Kortlang 1999
Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut	EIA	49	1	2	2(2)	4	2(2)*	4	Tol 1999
Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden	EIA	73	5(5)	7	1	1	-	0	Hessing 1989
Roermond-Musschenberg	EIA	139	35(27)	19	7(7)	5	13(12)	9	Schabbink/Tol 2000
Sittard-Hoogveld	EIA	91	1	1	1	1	11(11)	12	Tol 2000
Maastricht-Vroendael	EIA	15	0	0	-	0	4(4)	26	Dijkman/Hulst 2000

Table 9.1 The frequency of bronze and iron objects within urnfields. Only those graves are included in which there is a possibility that grave gifts could have been preserved.

can be roll, vase, convex or biconical-headed (fig. 9.2). Pins with ribbed heads are also known, as are a few pins with decorated shaft. Although clearly meant to be seen, these pins are generally less conspicuous than most pins from the Middle Bronze Age B. They are generally interpreted as dress-fasteners as they generally seem to be too long to serve as hair pins. A pin from Neerpelt-Achelse Dijk (Belgium) is more likely to have been used as a fastener for a shroud than as an ornament (Van Impe 1995/1996, 30). It is unclear whether we are dealing with locally-made or imported objects. Most pin-types mentioned are known from more than one region (England, Belgium, northern France; O'Connor 1980, list 179, 181, 184, 185, 189). Nevertheless, these are all easy-to-make objects of a rather simple form, and it is likely that they were produced locally.

Figure 9.2 Fragments of pins from the Weert-Boshoverheide urnfield, col. M. Heijmans: unit 'E' (scale 1:1).

Bracelets and other rings

Next in line are all sorts of rings. In view of their sizes, most have been used as bracelets, or as arm rings (fig. 9.3). Rings with a much smaller diameter are also known (fig. 9.4). Small rings have occasionally been interpreted as finger rings (Weert; Felix 1945, no. 451), but often the diameter of these rings seems either too large or too small for such a purpose (Hessing 1989: Wijk bij Duurstede, grave no 26). Some small rings may be interpreted as horse-gear (for examples:

Figure 9.3 Twisted bracelet from the Weert-Boshoverheide urnfield, coll. J.H. and P.M. Houben, no. 294 (scale 1:1).

Figure 9.4 Set of smail rings from the Weert-Boshoverheide urnfield, coll. M. Heijmans: unit 'C' (scale 1:1).

fig. 9.4). With regard to the objects for which an interpretation as bracelet or arm ring seems most likely, it can be concluded that these objects are plain and very simple, without clear elements of display or decoration. They are sometimes twisted (fig. 9.3), and an occassional one has slightly everted terminals (Venlo-De Hamert no. 35).They are probably regional products. Occasionally, lavishly decorated bracelets are found, like the one from Neerharen-Rekem with its geometrical decoration (fig. 9.5, De Boe 1986). For this type of decoration, the only parallel known is a bracelet that was recently dredged up from the river Meuse near Lith (chapter 8). Exceptional are the penannular gilded rings, known from a few urnfields (O'Connor 1980, 215). These are rings of base metal covered with gold sheet. Their function is not clear: they seem to be too small to have served as bracelets. A fragment of a ring entirely made of gold comes from an Early Iron Age grave from Nijmegen-Kops Plateau (burial no. 88), and from Borsbeek where a fragment of a gold plate, a bronze bracelet fragment, and a small cup accompanied the gilded ring in grave 10 (Warmenbol 1988, 256). Gilded rings are dated to the Early Iron Age, or around the transition to this period and are seen as imports from beyond the region, probably Ireland or Britain, although north French examples are also known (O'Connor 1980, 215; Warmenbol 1988, 255). Warmenbol (1988, 255-8) has shown that these gilded rings are all from the richer graves, and are clearly exceptions among the general inconspicuous nature of most bronze rings and bracelets.

Spirals

It is hard to say something more on the variety of *spirals* recovered from burials. They are generally incomplete, and due to their fragile nature more damaged than other artefacts. The *Brillspiral* fragment from Roermond-Mussenberg grave no. 34 probably served as a brooch or belt ornament (cf. Verlaeckt 1996, 28).

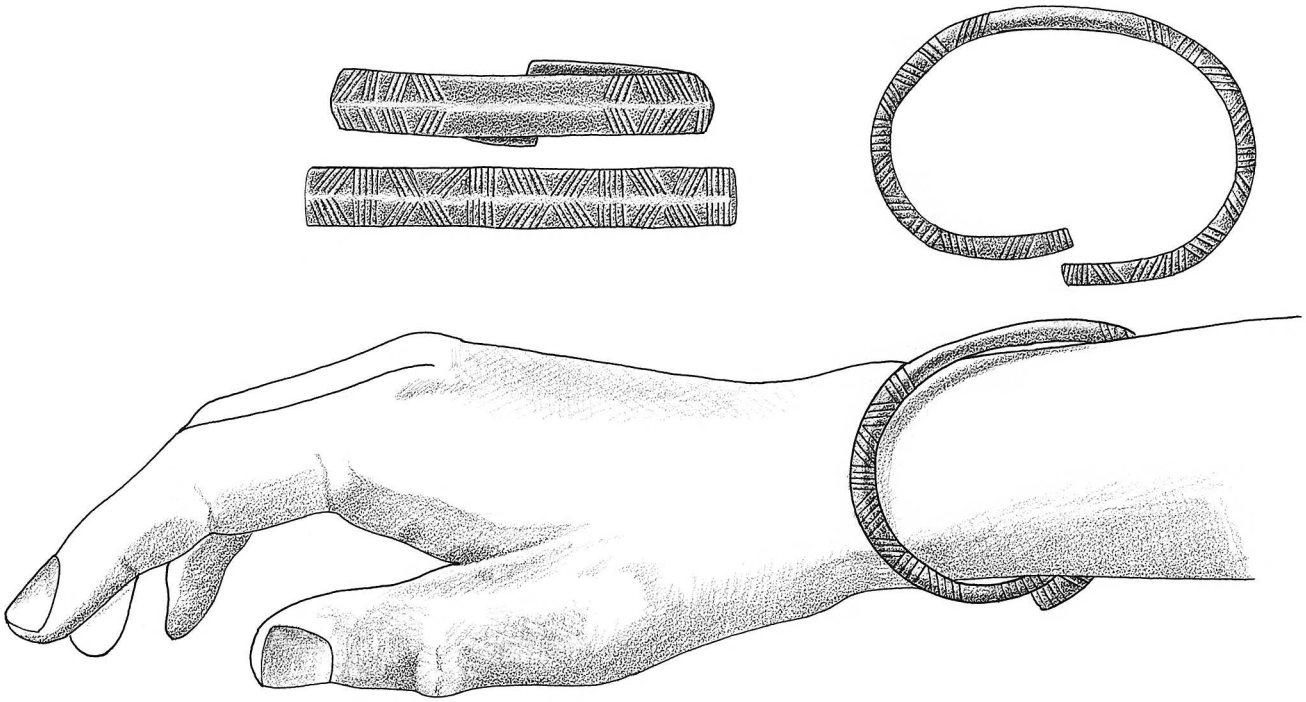

Figure 9.5 Decorated bracelet from the Neerharen-Rekem urnfield. Object drawing based on De Boe 1986.

Pendants, necklaces and head dress

A number of bronze ornaments were probably used as pendants. This is most clear for the small conical objects that have repeatedly been found in urnfields in the Kempen (both in the Dutch and in the Belgian part). A number of graves contained several of such objects, ranging up to 15 (Luijksgestel; fig. 9.6). To find the same type of object in such quantities is highly unusual for urnfield graves (cf appendix 7.3 and 7.4). It has been argued that these pendants were part of necklaces (fig. 9.7), placed on the body before cremation. Apart from a stray find (Cuijk) and one such pendant from a grave in Roermond-Mussenberg (no. 34), they are only known from urnfields situated in the Kempen (Best, Luijksgestel, Overpelt-Kruiskiezel, Achel-Pastoorbos, Neerpelt-Roosen). Associated finds date them predominantly to the Early Iron Age. A burial from the Meerhout urnfield (no. 7) also contained one comparable conical pendant. This burial may date from the Late Bronze Age as well. Such objects are unknown from other regions, and even in the southern Netherlands they are restricted to a small micro-region. We must be dealing here with locally-specific dress items. Some small socketed spirals, bronze and glass beads, and an occasional stone perforated amulet (Knegsel; Braat 1936, fig. 31) are examples of other types of pendants. This category includes some non-bronze ornaments as well. For all the pendants we are probably dealing with

Figure 9.6 Burnt conical pendants from the Luyksgestel urnfield (scale 1:2).

remains of necklaces, although some can also have been tied to garments. An observation done by Van der Sanden made clear that there were alternative ways to decorate the body: he found seven small round bronze objects in one grave, one of which was attached to what probably was a skull fragment (St.-Oedenrode, grave 13a: Van der Sanden 1981: grave 13a). We might be dealing here with bronzes being part of some sort of head dress.

Razors and tweezers

Finally, in a few burials razors and tweezers have been found. These are generally seen as implements to adorn the male body (Treherne 1995). Three razors have a V-shaped notch and two of these also have a circular perforation in the centre of the blade. O'Connor has termed such razors 'Dutch bifid razors'. Warmenbol (1988, 252-5), however, has argued that

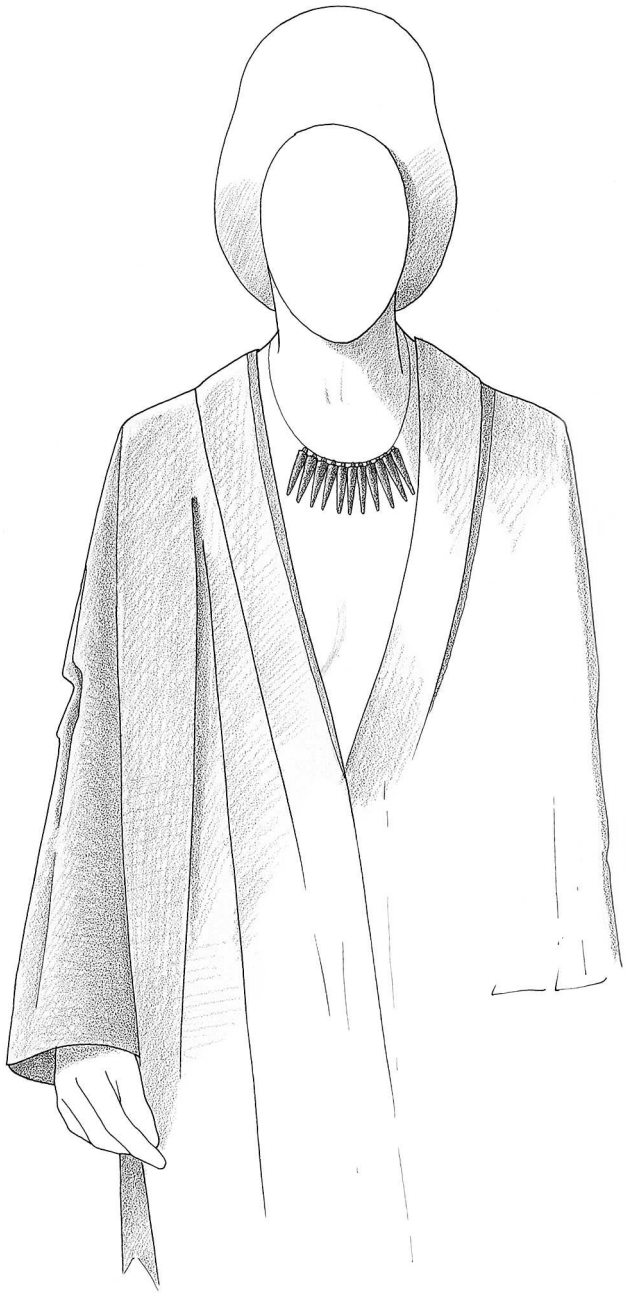

Figure 9.7 Reconstruction of the way in which the conical pendants might have been worn.

they are not so exclusively 'Dutch', but have good parallels in razors of the Havré group, mainly distributed over Britain and Belgium. The few tweezers known have an undiagnostic form. Associated finds (Goirle) date such razors to the Early Iron Age rather than the Late Bronze Age. O'Connor (1980, 219) considers the Deurne razor as an argument for an Ha B date, but the association between the pottery preserved from this urnfield and this particular find is far from certain. Like gilded rings, razors and tweezers often come from the richer graves, but unlike Bronze Age warrior graves, which often contain tweezers or razors, these are not associated with weaponry (cf. Treherne 1995).

Conclusion

Summarizing, the following conclusions can be drawn. Ornaments deposited in urnfield graves are predominantly made of bronze. Only in the category of pendants do other materials figure. Urnfields from the Early Iron Age are known in larger quantities than Late Bronze Age ones. Therefore, the observation that pendants are predominantly known from the Early Iron Age does not necessarily indicate a change in the way the dead were dressed. Apart from pendants and the presence of iron ornaments (pins), there are no fundamental differences between Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age metal ornaments. Ornaments are first and foremost pins and bracelets. As a rule, most objects are simple, plain ones, not lavishly decorated. It is therefore likely that most were made in the southern Netherlands itself. Conical pendants are the clearest examples of local products. Objects like the lavishly decorated bracelet from Neerharen-Rekem (fig. 9.5) or the gilded and golden rings may be imports, but these constitute a clear minority.

9.5 Deposition of weaponry

Other metal artefacts than ornaments and dress fittings are rarely found in burials. The most conspicuous exception are the prestigious sword graves from the Early Iron Age, which can be shown to be a burial equipment in their own right. These are the ones with Gündlingen swords (Gündlingen phase), and the later so-called Ha C ' chieftains' graves'. Other weapon graves are unknown, apart from a burnt spearhead and burnt flint arrowheads in the Donk urnfield (nos. 35 and 44 respectively; appendix 7.4), and a spearhead from Weert-Boshoverheide (no find association recorded). The finds from Donk are most likely to date from the Early Iron Age rather than from the Late Bronze Age.

Gündlingen weapon graves

Gündlingen swords have already been described in the previous chapter (section 8.5.5; fig. 8.14; appendix 5.5). These swords were carried out in bronze but there are iron of comparable form and style as well. Both were deposited in rivers as well as in burials. The southern Netherlands have yielded evidence of probably seven burial finds. It is remarkable that in two cases (Weert-Boshoverheide and Neerharen-Rekem) we are dealing with graves with a clear collective element. In Weert fragments of swords seem to have been found in three barrows, one of which was quite large (tumulus O; Gerdsen 1986, 168). Tumulus O contained six individual graves, three

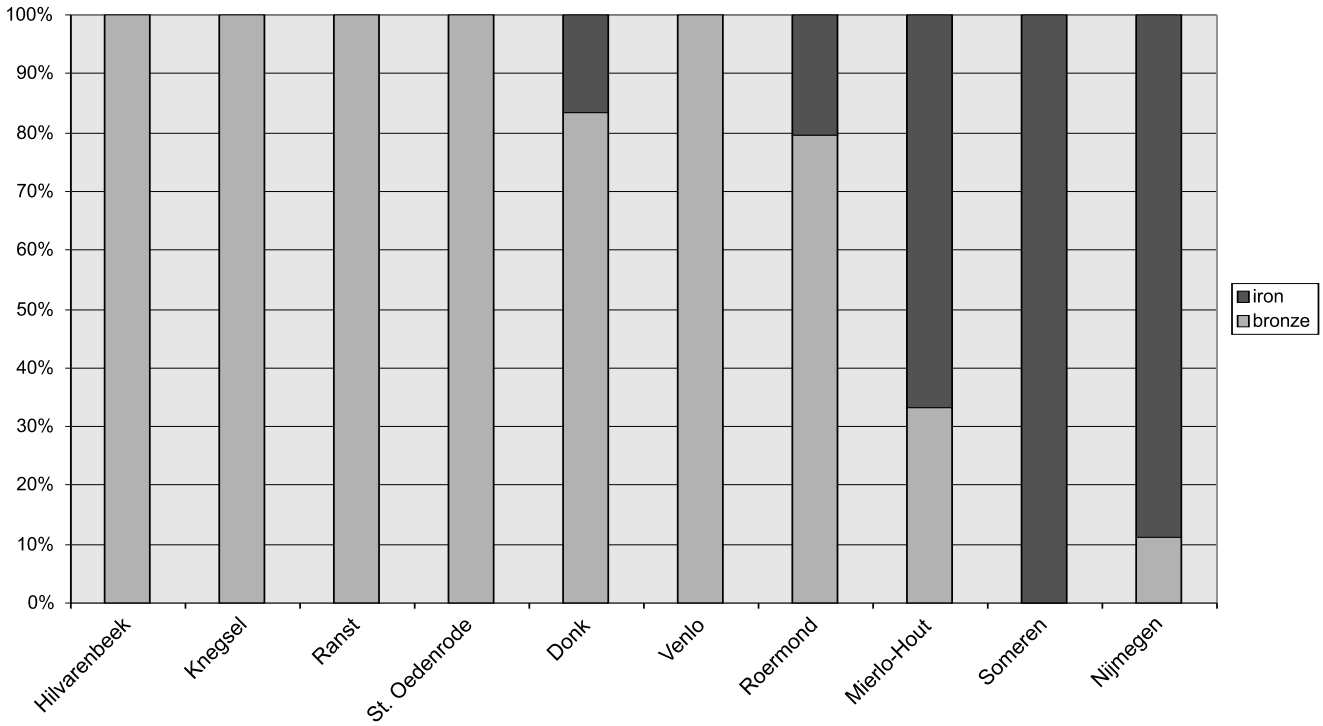

Figure 9.8 The relative frequency of bronze versus iron objects in different urnfield graves. (Venlo = Venlo-De Hamert). For the datings of the different urnfields see appendix 7.3 and 7.4.

of which were buried in extraordinary large urns. The urn from which the four fragments of a sword came was 45 cm high and 133 cm wide. In Neerharen-Rekem, three bronze spears and swords with two chapes were deposited in one grave (no. 72) which is said to have contained the remains of three individuals. In both Weert and Neerharen-Rekem we thus seem to be dealing with graves that are non-normative. There are examples of double burials in one grave, and in Beegden no. 22 the remains of no less than seven individuals seem to have been buried. A look at appendix 7.3, however, indicates that such multiple-burials are the exception rather than the rule. The Weert and Neerharen-Rekem graves as therefore not only exceptional for their grave gifts, but also because they are collective graves, whereas the majority of urnfield barrows are individual ones. In Maastricht-Vroenhof another Gündlingen sword was found. It is less clear whether the sword found was related to a grave of the nearby urnfield. Both the Weert and Neerharen-Rekem finds were broken/burnt and deliberately damaged. The weapon sets (sword-spearhead, or just a sword) do not basically differ from earlier ones encountered in hoards like the Overloon (Middle Bronze Age A) or Escharen (Middle Bronze Age B) hoard.[3]

Ha C 'chieftains' graves'

The designation 'chieftains' graves' is commonly used to refer to a group of graves in which iron (Mindelheim) swords were deposited, often together with prestige goods from the Hallstatt area: wagon parts (linch-pins, yokes), bronze vessels, and horse-gear (chapter 8, section 8.5.6; Roymans 1991). Besides these artefacts, it is also the size of the graves that sets them apart from others. Among these graves are the most monumental ones ever encountered in our region.

Like their bronze predecessors, the swords were also imported from far away, but this time probably from continental regions only (chapter 8). The sword from Oss, for example, wa probably produced in southern Germany (Roymans 1991, 36). Among the differentiated group of graves with iron Hallstatt swords, a few graves stand out because of their burial sets. These contain elements of a four-wheeled wagon, a yoke, horse-gear, (bronze or iron) axes, and a bronze situla imported from central Europe. In the case of the bronze vessel, the wagon and the horse-gear, we are clearly dealing with categories of objects that have no precedents in the Bronze Age material culture of the region

(see the previous chapter and Roymans 1991, 59). Wijchen and Oss in particular are rich beyond comparison, and the monumental size of the Oss grave (diam. 52 m) testifies to its elite character, hence the designation 'chieftains' graves'. The horse-gear and wagon parts should probably be seen as related: draught animals for the four-wheeled wagon. The use of such wagons, with the lavishly decorated linch-pins, is generally seen as ceremonial; they are unsuitable as true chariots (Pare 1991a: chapter 12). It has been suggested that such wagons relate to ideas about the journey of the deceased to the after-world (Roymans 1991, 202). What is important here, is that such an elite ideology is unprecedented, and firmly rooted in ideologies of the Hallstatt elites to the south from where these objects must ultimately have been imported. The local elites of the southern Netherlands thus seem to have referred explicitly to a non-local, elite warrior ideology.

The bronze vessels are also unprecedented in our region. In the Hallstatt region itself such vessels are always part of an entire drinking-service set, probably indicating the social significance of drinking bouts (Roymans 1991, 60). In the southern Netherlands, however, they were repeatedly used as urns. Although it is widely recognized that in central Europe hospitality, and hence drinking bouts, formed an integral element of the martial elite ideology (Diepenveen-Jansen 1999; Dietler 1990), this value may have been less important in the chiefly ideal that was constructed in the Dutch chieftains' graves. At least, it was contextualized in a different way. Only in the Wijchen grave, the bronze vessel seems to have been deposited in a way more in keeping with its original Hallstatt meaning. Roymans (1991, 61) has demonstrated that here fragments of a bronze ribbed bucket were originally deposited in an urn now lost. There are other indigenous traits as well: cremation instead of inhumation, the *pars pro toto* character of the burial (only parts of wagons and horse-gear were deposited), and the deliberate destruction of most swords (compare the different treatment of swords in wet deposits and burials listed in appendices 5.4 and 5.5).

Hallstatt C and the adoption of a new elite ideology

Summarizing, we can say that the Ha C chieftains' graves for a part linked up with already existing local notions and practices but their basic outline had been adopted from southern Hallstatt elite groups, and contrasted sharply with local ideas current in the burial ritual. We shall come back on this in chapter 11. Illustrating this, fig. 11.4 there shows the categories that are present in an average urnfield burial containing artefacts, in comparison with the categories present in a chieftains' grave (fig. 11.5). It is conspicuous that in chieftains' graves there is no evidence at all for the significance of body ornamentation that is so important in general urnfield graves. Even razors or tweezers, which seem to be essential in Bronze Age warrior graves throughout Europe (Treherne 1995), are no longer present in the Early Iron Age weapon graves (see also Pare 1991a: catalogue).[4] The small pots repeatedly found in average urnfield burials do not have a counterpart in the chieftains' graves either. On the other hand, the latter graves contain evidence for entirely new objects in the burial ritual: horse-gear, wagons, and large bronze vessels.

9.6 Stages in the burial ritual and the inclusion of artefacts

Above the most current metalwork finds in burials were introduced. We shall now try to make sense of their presence in burials. In order to do this, it is first necessary to find out how they got there. As the general burial ritual involves a complete destruction of the body (cremation), and a second phase in which the ultimate grave assemblage is constructed out of its scarce remains, this is not a redundant question.

Dressing and burning the deceased

The first phase involves placing the dead body on the pyre and leaving it there before the mourners set fire to the pyre. It is very well possible that the deceased was not lying there in his or her everyday clothes, but in a specific dress, with his or her body ornamented for the occasion. Shaving or hair-dressing may have been among the acts carried out (Treherne 1995, 121). There may have been funeral meals on the occasion of the cremation, and objects may have been placed next to the deceased on the pyre, as gifts, as part of a burial equipment. These acts all contribute to the specificity of the event, and to a specific ultimate portrayal of the deceased before he or she disappears from sight. Some of these acts have potential archaeological correlates: clothes will burn completely, but bronze parts of clothing will remain identifiable, although in melted condition, as will parts the meal (animal bones, ceramic vessels thrown into the fire or placed on the pyre). Bronze, stone or flint objects will –although burnt- survive the fire. These burnt objects are termed *cremation artefacts* (Roymans 1990, 219). To what extent bronze objects melt depends on their specific alloy, which is unknown for the material under investigation.

Collecting the burnt remains

The next step involves the collection of objects from the burnt-out pyre, in order to take it to a grave. In most cases, the pyre seems to have been in a different location than the grave where the remains were interred. Picking out human remains from the pyre heap may lead to incomplete retrieval. Interestingly, cremation analysis shows that for the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age only a part of the bones that remain after cremation was collected. Clearly, there was no intention to recover as much as possible, to the extent that

a completely recovered urns only contained one gram of bone (Fontijn/Cuijpers 1998/1999, table 2: grave no. 66). Apparently, it was the representative character of the collected remains that counted. The assembled pieces may have been considered as a *pars pro toto*, rather than a full rendering of the individual. The counter-argument, that the incomplete bone assemblages in graves are simply due to the fact that most bones become too small to be retrieved, can be refuted: only in special kilns built for the occasion, where temperatures of 1000 °C (Fontijn/Cuijpers 1998/1999, 53) can be reached, do human bones become no more than dust. There is no evidence that such large kilns could be and were constructed in prehistory. In an open pyre, temperatures hardly exceed 800 °C, and the characteristics of analysed bone are well in keeping with such temperatures (Fontijn/Cuijpers 1998/1999, 53). At such temperatures, cremated bone is deformed and cracked, but still of easily recognizable size. Incomplete collection of remains is therefore the most likely explanation for the underrepresentation of bones in graves, all the more so, as it is also in keeping with a recurrent observation concerning cremation artefacts: objects that can crack and break during heating, like bracelets or large rings, tend to be incomplete as well. Most burnt bracelets I have seen are incomplete. I therefore assume that the same *pars pro toto* attitude prevailed for cremation artefacts.

Adding artefacts to the cremated remains: the final representation of the deceased

The final stage where artefacts were added to the interment is when the collected remains were put in a container or a shroud. In view of their unburnt condition the small pots that are often found among the remains are such post-cremation artefacts, and so are the ceramic and glass beads, stone pendants, and many bronzes. For the latter, however, this is not always clear, since cremation can take place at temperatures that are so low (*c.* 600 °C) that bronzes do not melt. There are some examples of such low-degree cremations, but these seem to be exceptional. The general white colour of the bones indicates that temperatures were higher as a rule (Fontijn/Cuijpers 1998/1999, 53). At any rate, many bronzes must have been added to the grave contents after cremation had taken place. It is interesting to see that these are sometimes the same objects as presented on the pyre, like pins. This is an argument for the theory that the absence of bronze objects among cremation remains is not simply the result of incomplete recovery from the pyre heap (suggesting that it is well possible that every deceased wore bronze bracelets and so on, but that these were only occasionally recovered from the pyre remains). That objects were added *post*-cremation is an argument in favour of the view that is was apparently significant that the deceased was associated with this bronze object after cremation as well. Nowhere is this more clear than in the case of tweezers and razors. As can be seen in appendices 7.3 and 7.4, some graves contain such toilet articles. As far as can be judged from the publications, these were never burnt, and therefore probably added to the grave after cremation. In the dressing and decoration of the deceased's body, a razor or tweezer makes some sense. As was remarked earlier, for some well-preserved Middle Bronze Age graves from Denmark it could be shown that the dead were indeed shaven before interment, and that the razor put next to the body still contained beard hairs (Treherne 1995, 121). We might expect the same for our Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age razor graves. However, adding a razor when the deceased was already transformed into a small heap of bones makes less sense in terms of body treatment, and is more an argument for the theory that the act of shaving or picking out beard hairs (tweezer) had important cultural significance, emphasized in the incorporation of the razor in the final grave. This, of course, might well go together with the actual use of this razor to shave the deceased before his cremation.[5]

Conclusion

Considering the role of artefacts in relation to the stages in the ritual itself, their presence among cremated remains is generally more than the logical result of the fact that the body was decorated and dressed; ornaments and toilet articles were added to the cremated remains as well, implying that they were meaningful to the final representation of the deceased, and indicative of a specific social identity.

9.7 The decorated dead

The items that were deposited in burials can all be interpreted in the sphere of the decoration and adornment of the body, and for that reason the objects are prone to be used in the construction and communication of social identities and differences (Sørensen 2000, 124). As set out in chapter 3, we must be dealing with people made to look like *particular kinds of persons*. It is important to realize that the image of personhood thus constructed relates to a highly specific occasion: the moment when the deceased, decorated and dressed, was placed on the pyre, just before the final transformation of his or her body. The deceased's appearance is a costume of death rather than anything else. With regard to post-cremation artefacts, we are again dealing with a special event: the bringing together of the final remains of what was once a living individual before these are hidden from view forever. The addition of body ornaments and toilet articles to a heap of cremated bones is an even better illustration of the symbolic significance of ornaments and personal appearances, for the ornaments were added to the body at a stage when there was no longer any physical appearance left.

If we accept this conclusion, the following question should be asked: since graves with ornaments and dress items are a clear minority, are we perhaps dealing here with a specific selection of people? It may be obvious that we are in a bad position to study such questions: after all, the metalwork fragments are the only surviving elements of what must have been an entire appearance (hair, tattoos, garments and so on). Also, information on the position of the ornaments on the body can be meaningful (Sørensen 2000, 135), but again such information does not survive the cremation process. Actually, only a few aspects of dress and body decoration can be studied archaeologically. Apart from the relative frequency of metal and other objects in urnfields, the presence or absence of ornaments may be related to age and sex. Given the variety of burial monuments, it can also be investigated whether metalwork was related to specific kinds of graves only (like long barrows, flat graves etc.).

Frequency of graves with metalwork

The relative frequency of graves containing metalwork varies considerably, as we saw earlier (table 9.1). Compare, for example, the Early Iron Age cemeteries of Mierlo-Hout and Roermond. From the 49 surviving interments in Mierlo-Hout, only one contained bronze, and two iron contained objects. Here, the urnfield was used for centuries, but bronze metal objects hardly seem to have played a role in the burial ritual. In the contemporary urnfield of Roermond, however, 19 % of the graves contained bronze objects. Although still a minority, this is more in line with a situation in which at least one deceased in every generation was burnt with metal body ornaments. On the other hand, even in the most metal-rich urnfields, such graves are a minority. It was already argued that this cannot be explained entirely by careless selection after the cremation alone; it was also a minority of the deceased that carried such ornaments.

The relation between type of burial monument and provision of metalwork in the grave

In urnfields where a variation of grave types exists, it appears that bronze-equipped graves are known from all sorts of graves. Only in the case of the Early Iron Age equipment with clear Ha C links, it is clear that these objects tend to come from large, monumental, round barrows (Oss, Horst, Baarlo).

The relation between the presence of metalwork and the age and sex of the deceased

The collected evidence does not show a straightforward pattern between the presence of metal in graves and certain sex/age categories (appendices 7.4 and 7.5). Both adults and children, and males and females alike were buried with bronze and iron goods. In general, however, adult graves predominate, and this indicates that in general adults carried metal ornaments. This implies that such objects were at least related to individuals who had reached a certain, culturally meaningful, stage of life. But the pattern is far from clear. If we focus on the data from individual urnfields only, then it can be seen that in some urnfields both children and adults carry metal (Roermond for example), but that in others it seems to have been reserved for adults only (e.g. Weert-Raak).

With regard to sex we see the same. In general, more females had metal objects than males, but again the pattern is not unequivocal[6] (table 7.4). If we go down to the level of the individual urnfield, there are patterns, however. In Roermond, when sex is known, the (adult) deceased almost all appear to be females. In other cemeteries, however, we find both male and female graves containing metal objects. As suggested for age, the impression is again that the use of metal objects in graves differs between the individual urnfields (and consequently between the local groups these represent).

Conclusion: the meanings of body decoration as a local, idiosyncratic phenomenon

The available evidence does not suggest that pins, bracelets and rings in general had a fixed sex/age-specific meaning, in the sense of meanings shared by the different local groups in the southern Netherlands. The conclusion should be *that metal ornaments were used to express different ideas from group to group, and time to time*. This is not a negative conclusion! Rather, it seems to say something about the relative autonomous expression of ideas at the level of the local urnfield group itself.

Focussing on the level of the individual urnfield, what can be said about the meanings of ornaments in graves? Take for example the relatively metal-rich urnfield of Roermond. It is clear that most graves with bronze objects belong to females. Only one male grave has a fragment of a bronze bracelet, and this is quite an extraordinary grave in the entire urnfield because of its large ring-ditch (diameter 16). Among the female bronze-equipped graves, there are differences, however. No. 1, for example, contains spiral ornaments (pendants?) and a ring. The female from no. 39, however, was probably burnt wearing a bracelet and an earring. What may have happened here is that the attempt was not so much to differentiate women from men, but rather *to treat women in terms of differences among themselves*. After all, most women lack body ornaments, and among those with ornaments, the objects themselves are different. Sørensen (2000, 139-40) has observed a similar phenomenon from much better data for Middle Bronze Age graves from southern Germany. We can only speculate as to what motivated people to make such a differentiation between women. With the theory on the significance of personhood in mind, it might be ventured that it related to the achievement of particular life stages.

Sørensen (2000, 139) argues that such creations of different types of women was probably based on gender identities such as 'distinctions made due to physical or 'moral' development, reproduction or 'marriage'-like contracts'. In theory, similar differentiations might be brought out elsewhere by other means that are elusive to us (by garments alone for example). In other urnfields graves containing bronzes are from males only (appendix 7.4: Someren-Waterdael; Weert-Raak; Sittard-Hoogveld), or from both adults and young individuals (appendix 7.4: St.- Oedenrode; Wijk bij Duurstede).

9.8 Local and supra-local personal identities

The use of objects in the construction of personal identities in graves was not entirely shaped in an idiosyncratic, local fashion. There are examples of conventions shared between different local groups as well. Evidence was found for shared ideas on two levels. The first is the use of a common, female dress, specific to a micro-region within the southern Netherlands. The second concerns a specific male warrior identity, that has clear and deliberate references to elite ideologies that were shared between entire regions.

Female identities that were shared among adjacent local groups

The above findings have so far pointed to the ambiguous and non-fixed meanings of pins, bracelets and rings in terms of sex and age. If the cremation analyses can be trusted, this seems less valid in the case of the conical pendants: the investigators argued that these are all from the graves of females (fig. 9.6 and 9.7). Three of the analysed specimens are from the same urnfield (Neerpelt-Roosen), one is from another, situated nearby. These objects stand out for other reasons as well: they are of a form typical for one area in the southern Netherlands only. Moreover, the conical pendants are in most cases not single goods; burials generally contain several of them. Clearly, the deceased had an entire necklace of such pendants. In this sense they are unique, and such bronze-ornamented necklaces can without any problem be termed 'lavish' among the general finds of urnfield graves in general, and, more specifically, with regard to finds of bronze pendants in a grave. There are more finds of such necklaces with several conical pendants; these are all from each other's vicinity, situated in the Kempen around the present Dutch-Belgian border: Best, Luijksgestel, Overpelt-Kruiskiezel, Achel-Pastoorbos, Neerpelt-Roosen. Outside that region I found two examples, one a stray find (Cuijk), the other a single pendant from the Roermond urnfield.

We are dealing here with necklaces that are typical for a small area. On the basis of the existing cremation analyses it seems to have been part of a specific female costume, that had a shared meaning in this area. That the bronze-rich necklaces were part of the dress of a deceased in more than one urnfield is intriguing. Again, we are in no position to arrive at a real answer, but what these finds make clear is the attempt of the mourners to adorn the body of a specific deceased woman with local products in a way only attested for a small number of neighbouring communities. Such a local, but shared, dress may reflect strong inter-communal ties and a feeling of identity. In practice, it may have come down to existing ties in the field of exchange of marriage partners for example, and the pivotal role of some women therein (in terms of their role of negotiators and/or object of exchange). In contrast with the highly idiosyncratic use of other ornaments, we seem to be dealing here with an example in which the use of ornaments in graves built on a shared understanding of a particular kind of personhood and female identity. Undoubtedly, there are similar examples for other object types with similar roles. In particular we could think of another rich grave set in which the gilded rings are the most conspicuous element. Like conical pendants, these are also repeatedly found in a number of adjacent urnfields, but further data on sex and age of the cremation remains associated with these objects is lacking so far.

Ha C warrior graves and their references to non-local, 'imagined' communities

In the case of the conical pendants, we might be dealing with the female identities that were shared among local groups. They were typical products for the micro-region of De Kempen and were not current in the entire region, let alone beyond. This does not apply to the male warrior burial sets we find in the Early Iron Age Ha C chieftains' graves. The categories in the burial set are similar among different regions ranging from central Europe to the Netherlands (Pare 1991a). They refer to a highly specific elite ideology non-native in our region, on the deposition of parts of ceremonial wagons with draught animals and bronze vessels (drinking bouts) (Roymans 1991). Elements characteristic for European Bronze Age warrior appearances no longer play a role in the new warrior graves at all (sword-spear combinations, toilet articles and body ornaments), which underscores this deliberate otherness. The large dimensions of some of the burial monuments underline that these non-local, supra-regional identities are equivalent to elite identities (Roymans 1991, table 4). Throughout this book, we have seen different examples of the construction of identities that were clearly similar to those of other regions, starting off with the Bell Beaker burial set (chapter 5). It was argued that persons were conceptualised with references to non-local, imagined elite communities, and the Ha C graves involved here would perfectly fit in such a view. In most cases, these identities were male warrior identities. The Ha C graves seem to be the most outspoken argument that such identities were primarily chiefly ones, as these are the only examples

where such warrior identities were constructed on more than one occasion in an individual grave of true monumental size.

9.9 Conclusions

With regard to the questions posed in the introduction to this chapter, the following conclusions can now be drawn.

The low frequency of object deposition in burials

Although artefacts from burials are known from the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in much larger quantities than before, still only a small number of graves was provided with them. They are predominantly small pots, followed by bronze items and, in the Early Iron Age, by iron ones. The majority of the bronzes are plain, simple items that were probably made locally. Golden, glass and stone objects are also known, but in much lower frequencies.

Ornaments and dress fittings: costumes of the dead before and after cremation

The metalwork and glass, gold and stone objects are in the first place body ornaments (bracelets, rings, pendants for necklaces), dress fittings (pins) and toilet articles. In the Early Iron Age, bronze and iron swords were also deposited in graves, the latter sometimes in association with elements of wagons, horse-gear and bonze vessels (the Ha C 'chieftains' graves'). Metalwork was both part of the death costume of the deceased on the pyre, as well as added to the remains after the cremation had taken place.

Burial goods and the construction of personhood in graves

It was argued that the metal ornaments, pins and toilet articles were instrumental in the construction of personhood. The precise meaning of these appearances escape us, but there are indications that they sometimes served to make differentiations between particular kinds of females. In general, the meanings of the 'decorated dead' seem to have been idiosyncratic to the local group only, since their age and sex associations differ from place to place. Shared conventions on the representations of specific female identities have only been recognized at the level of a micro-region (the conical pendants as a typical dress for the Kempen), but not for the entire region, let alone the supra-regional level. The contrary is true for the male identities that were constructed in the Early Iron Age warrior graves. Particularly in the case of the 'chieftains' graves', deliberate references are made to a non-local, central European ideology.

Selections: ornaments placed in burials versus those placed in natural places

In the Late Bronze Age, bronze ornaments and dress fittings were also deposited outside burials: in rivers and multiple-object hoards. Although there are types that figure both in graves and in rivers/hoards, like some ornaments, pins and Gündlingen swords, there are differences as well. Among the deposits from natural places there are finds that are clearly absent in urnfield burials: high quality, non-local ornaments, sometimes even of a ceremonial nature (chapter 8: female ornaments in Plainseau hoards, *Bombenkopfnadel* and male warrior identities). For the Late Bronze Age, selective deposition thus seems to have been practised to the effect that items associated with non-local appearances, related to both male and female social roles, were kept out of urnfields. This situation changes entirely in the urnfields of the Early Iron Age, with the new, non-local elite ideology displayed in the 'chieftains' graves'. Here, there seems to be no longer a female counterpart, however.

notes

1 For badly documented urnfields like Deurne St. Josephs parochie or Weert Boshoverheide, individual find numbers are counted as belonging to one individual grave. Whether this reflects a prehistoric reality can no longer be inferred.

2 Van Ginkel (1982) and Tol (2000) published more or less similar tables, based on a smaller but overlapping number of urnfields. There are slight differences between the percentages published there and mine. Reason for this is that I only counted those graves where metal objects could potentially have been preserved. Ring-ditches where the central interment is missing are excluded. In Mierlo-Hout, for example, 165 grave monuments were observed, but only 49 contained remains of the interment. Furthermore, there is uncertainty about the data of old excavations: was every pot published as 'urn' really a container of cremated remains? In Best we are dealing with excavated remains, and therefore I assume that pots described as 'urns' were indeed used as such. In Valkenswaard and Goirle, I also included 'urns' from older and low-quality excavations. There is a risk that small bronze finds from these urns have not generally been recorded. The problems with the older excavations are, however, counterbalanced by the better data of the recent ones, which do not show basically different frequencies of metalwork.

3 Only in the case of Neerharen-Rekem have the cremation remains been analysed. These are interpreted as those of two males and one female (Van Impe 1980b: no. 72). Three individuals in combination with three swords would suggest that we have an argument to suppose that sword-bearers were not just males, as is generally assumed, but include females as well. However, the reliability of the physical-anthropological analyses carried out here has recently been questioned, so we had better not use them in the discussion.

4 It should be remarked, however, that a badly preserved iron blade from the chieftain's grave of Oss, traditionally interpreted as a knife, may also be interpreted as a razor blade.

5 Some metal objects may then also relate to the fastening of a (hypothetical) shroud into which remains were collected. Van Impe claims that the position of a bronze pin in the urnfield of Neerpelt-Achelse Dijk (grave no. 20) indicates that it was used as some sort of shroud fastening (Van Impe 1995/96, 30). The fact that

many pins were found in urns can taken as an argument that most pins were something else than shroud fasteneners. When an urn is used, a shroud seems unnecessary, unless cremation remains were always first collected in shrouds and later put into an urn. Even then, the presence of many burnt pins implies that pins as a category were as a rule used for other purposes.

6 There are too few data on iron finds to investigate whether iron was a sex-specific metal. I treat iron and bronze together here.