Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia 33/34 / 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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ANALECTA PRAEHISTORICA LEIDENSIA 33/34

ANALECTA
PRAEHISTORICA
LEIDENSIA 33/34

PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHAEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN

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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

UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN 2002

Editors: Harry Fokkens / Corrie Bakels

Copy editors of this volume: David Fontijn / Harry Fokkens

ISSN 0169-7447

ISBN 90-73368-19-7

Also appeared as doctorate thesis, Leiden, March 27, 2003.

Subscriptions to the series Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia
and single volumes can be ordered exclusively at:

Faculty of Archaeology
P.O. Box 9515
NL-2300 RA Leiden
the Netherlands

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')

contents

Part III

Understanding selective deposition

10 Selective deposition: its characteristics, development and structure

10.1 Introduction

The question central to the present study is to see whether a general practice of bronze deposition existed in the Bronze Age of the southern Netherlands, and if so, whether it was a system of selective deposition. From the evidence presented in the previous chapters, it may be clear that both questions can be answered in the affirmative. In part II of this book, the evidence from different periods was treated separately for pragmatic reasons. If we want to make more sense of the phenomenon of selective deposition, it is now necessary to treat depositional practices from a more encompassing, long-term perspective. This will be done in this last, third part of the book.

In the present chapter, I shall summarize the main patterns that can be recognized in depositional practices. It will deal with the following questions:

- what were the general characteristics of this practice of deposition?
- how was it structured? (Which objects were placed in which locations?)
- what were the main developments in the practice through time?

The findings of this chapter provide the structure for the next thematic chapters. In this chapter, the argument will be made that in order to make sense of object deposition that is selective, we should understand objects from the meanings they acquired during their life. What seems to have been the case is that particular kinds of objects followed particular life-paths, finally ending up in different types of deposition. It will be established that in making sense of these differences, we should distinguish between objects whose use-life was related to:

1 the constitution of personhood/ the construction of personal identities (weapons and body ornaments);
2 the construction of communal identities (axes and other tools).

10.2 Some general characteristics of metalwork deposition

I shall begin the discussion by briefly summarizing what seem to have been the main characteristics of metalwork deposition throughout the entire period studied. General statements can be made on the location in which deposition took place, on the characteristics of the objects deposited, their treatment before deposition, and on the rate at which depositions was practised.

Depositional location

Deliberate deposition of metalwork in the southern Netherlands that was intended to be permanent generally involved placing or throwing a bronze (or copper) object in a *watery* location in the landscape.[1] This contextual evidence is based on provenanced finds. For almost every period, there is also a large number of finds with unknown find context, however, usually ranging up to 50 %. In addition, we have seen that the majority of the unprovenanced finds also carries a wet context patina. It should be remarked that this preference for wet places existed for the entire period under study and can thus be seen as an essential characteristic of depositional practices.

This appreciation of wet locations for object deposition is very general in north-west Europe as a whole (Harding 2000, 329-30), and was probably based on shared religious ideas. The term 'wet' locations, however, conceals a wide variety of locations. Fig. 10.1 lists the types of locations recognized for the study region. They probably represent a simplified categorization of place-types, reflecting prehistoric categorizations that were much more subtle. In another chapter we shall take a closer look at what these places were (chapter 14). For the moment it suffices to mention just one general characteristic: most depositional locations are situated in uncultivated, 'natural' places in the landscape.

Although depositional locations were pre-dominantly wet places, throughout the Bronze Age, other locations were in use as well: dry places, settlements, burials, burial mounds (fig. 10.1). The number of bronzes deposited in graves is generally small (tables 10.1 and 10.2). It seems as if bronzes were preferably not deposited in burials (either cremation or inhumation). It is not until the Late Bronze Age that bronzes are known from burials in large numbers. In chapter 9 it was argued that this 'rise' in burial deposition should be placed into perspective by realizing that the Late Bronze Age is unique because it is the only period of the Bronze Age for which we have evidence of the burial grounds of entire local

Place-types

Major rivers

– Near the confluence of rivers
– Near a high hill overlooking the river plain
– At a place where one can cross the river
– In marshy riverplains/ backswamps

Streams

– Near confluences
– At a place where one can cross the stream
– Where they spring from marshy areas
– Away from settlements
– On a hillock in or near a confluence of streams

Peat bogs

– In small marshes near streams
– Near the fringes of large bogs (the Peel bog)
– In marshes near steep ridges

Dry places

– At high points, commanding a fine view of the area
– Halfway the slope of a steep ridge
– Idem, near a source
– Near a watershed
– On a high plateau with gullies seasonally discharging rain water
– In positions peripheral to cemeteries and settlements
– In uncultivated zones, near settlements

Cultivated areas

– In burials
– In burial mounds
– At farmyards in pits or on the surface
– In or on the house

Figure 10.1 Types of places where objects were deposited.

communities. For earlier periods, we only know burials of a tiny percentage of the original population (10-15 % or less). Moreover, I argued that within every urnfield only a minority of burials contained bronzes (15 % or less). Summing up, we see that burial deposition in the Late Bronze Age is just as exceptional as it was before. In section 10.6, I shall return to the theme of burial deposition since it displays one important characteristic: it is selective.

Characteristics and treatment of the objects

For the finds of every single period studied here, I argued that the majority of the objects deposited had been used. Use traces were best detected on axes, spears and swords. From this we can deduce that the life-path of the object apparently mattered for its selection for deposition. They were certainly not just symbolic items whose importance lay in the exotic character of the material bronze. The few examples of unused items are the exceptions that prove this rule (the Plougrescant-Ommerschans dirk from Jutphaas or the *Vielwulstschwert* from Buggenum, chapters 6 and 8 respectively). Apart from that, we have also seen that a great number of objects must have been imported from far, even at a time when metalworking was practised at some scale in the region itself (chapters 7 and 8). Consequently, an history of circulation must have been another essential element of the life-path of many objects. Both findings are in line with the theory on the significance of the cultural biography of objects, in which objects are thought to accumulate meaning in the course of a life (chapter 3). We are dealing with objects that were made, exchanged, used and at a certain point in their life some were selected for deposition.

The most general kind of object deposition seems to have been deposition of a single object (*Einzelstückhorte*). Multiple-object hoards are relatively rare when compared with evidence from Denmark or southern Germany. With regard to the emphasis on single deposits, the Southern Netherlands are comparable to the northern Netherlands, west Belgium, and the adjacent western part of middle Germany (Essink/Hielkema 1997/1998; Verlaeckt 1996; Kibbert 1980; 1984). With the single exception of the northern Netherlands, however, all these regions are also characterized by huge numbers of bronzes deposited in major rivers (Rhine, Waal, Scheldt, Meuse). We cannot rule out that river deposits involved mass deposition of items at one occasion, comparable to multiple-object hoards in other regions.

A conspicuous characteristic of deposition in our region for the entire Bronze Age is that objects were as a rule not broken, burnt, or otherwise destroyed. There are a few indications that objects such as axes, spears, or swords were deposited with their shafts or at least a part of them. See for an example fig. 10.2. Although deposition is often seen as a way of destruction (for an example: Rowlands 1993, 142), it rather seems as if the object was deliberately preserved, comparable to the ways in which they were treated in use-life and gift exchange. In this light, another empirical observation should be added. Particularly for deposited spears and axes it is noteworthy that their edges are often sharpened. From this it follows that before deposition, many objects were prepared *as if for use*. This is in contrast to what we see in the rare cases of deposition of objects in graves. Here there is evidence that the axe shafts were removed (chapter 6: the Alphen find), or that objects were burnt or bent (the Pulle hoard: chapter 8; urnfields: chapter 9).

The rate at which deposition took place

Deposition of metalwork is relatively rare during the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. It becomes a more regular

Object type	Wet			Dry			Totals
	Major river	Stream/marsh	'Wet'	'Dry'	Burial	Settl.	
Weaponry							
Dagger/knife	-	-	-	1	10	-	11
Ornaments							
Bronze	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Gold	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
Ceremonial							
Halberd	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
Double axe	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Tools							
Axe	6	11	6	4	-	-	27
Awl	-	-	-	1	1	1	3
Unfinished							
Ring	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Ingot	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Rivet	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Sheet metal	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Rough bar	-	-	-	1			1
Totals	7	11	6	20	17	1	62

Table 10.1 Metalwork objects from the Late Neolithic B and Early Bronze Age in the southern Netherlands (single finds and from hoards). For the Late Neolithic objects, finds from the adjacent part of the central Netherlands are included as well (cf. table 5.1). Only contextualised finds are listed. 'Dry' includes the objects from the Wageningen hoard.

Object type	Wet			Dry				Totals
	Major river	Stream/marsh	'Wet'	'Dry'	Burial	Mound of barrow	settlement	
Weaponry								
Arrowhead	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	5
Dagger	5	2	2	-	-	-	2	11
Sword	50	8	8	-	14	-	-	80
Spear	38	28	10	5	6	1	2	90
Weapon axe	3	1	5	-	-	3	-	12
Ornaments	17	2	11	21	102	-	10	163
Ceremonial								
Pin	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Sword	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tools								
Awl	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Axe	70	70	53	127	9	-	-	329
Chisel	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	5
Knife	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	5
Gouge	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Mould	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Sickle	2	3	3	2	-	2	6	18
Totals	194	116	96	155	135	6	26	728

Table 10.2 Metalwork finds from the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze, up until the Early Iron Age Ha C phase (single finds and objects from hoards). Including contextualised bronze, iron and gold objects (cf. Table 6.1; 7.1; 8.1). Of the urnfield metalwork, finds from urnfields which were founded in the Early Iron Age are excluded, but swords, spears and axes from the Gündlingen phase and Ha C chieftains' graves are included. Nick-flanged and Grigny axes are considered as 'weapon axes'; objects from 'wet' or 'dry' hoards in tables 6.1, 7.1 and 8.1 are listed under respectively 'wet' and 'dry'.

Figure 10.2 Spearhead from Beugen with wooden shaft preserved (l. 26 cm).

phenomenon from the Middle Bronze Age A onwards, gradually increasing throughout the later part of the Bronze Age, with a conspicuous peak in the last phase of the Late Bronze Age. It decreases dramatically in the Early Iron Age (fig. 10.3). Fluctuations within the Middle or Late Bronze Age deposition rate as known from other regions are not discernable, but this is due to the long dating ranges of most object types (cf. Verlaeckt 1996, 45; fig. 12 and 13). The trend of increasing deposition rates throughout the Bronze Age is general for north-west Europe, and is assumed to reflect the steady increase of metal supply (Huth 1997). A more appropriate observation is that what we see is basically the increase in *depositional* practices, and hence, the social significance of deposition. On the basis of the objects come down to us from the Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age period, the average rate of deposition would imply that one deposition was made somewhere in the region within a period of 10 years (burial and settlement finds excluded).[2] If we count the Wageningen hoard as one deposition, we even arrive at the estimation of one deposition within a period 14 years. For the Late Bronze Age-beginning Early Iron Age, this would be almost one deposition a year.[3] Although these figures are no more than averages based on an undoubtedly incomplete record (there are hundreds of finds without context known!), the point can be made that in the early phase it must have been a practice that took place only very rarely. For the Late Bronze Age, it must have occurred more frequently, but even then it was not a very regular practice. The following calculations may illustrate

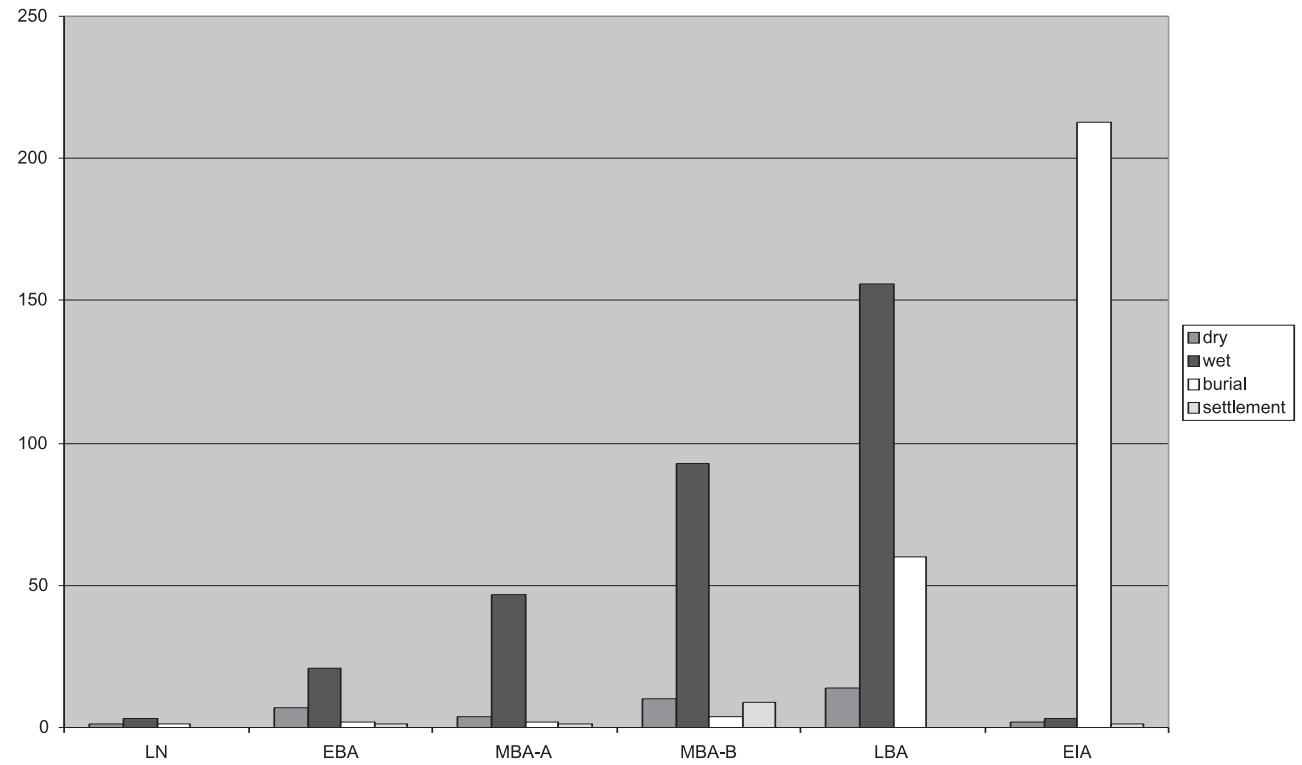

Figure 10.3 The frequency with which depositions were carried out through time. Multiple-object hoards are counted as one deposition.

this. For the Late Bronze Age Roymans (1991) recognized 85 urnfields in the southern Netherlands. Let us assume that these represent the 85 local communities that were originally living in the southern Netherlands during the Late Bronze Age, and take this period to last 350 year. If each community deposited an object once a year (burials excluded), for the entire LBA, 29,750 objects must have been deposited. If each community did this once in a generation (25 years), then we arrive at 1190 deposits. The number of contextualised finds that must represent deliberate deposits recognized in this study for the Late Bronze Age, however, is approximately only 200 (multiple-object hoards counted as one). This is still in no proportion to the calculated 1190 deposits, implying that in the Late Bronze Age it was a rare, infrequent practice as well. For a more realistic understanding, we should take into account that the majority of deposits comes from the same stretches in major rivers and the adjacent valley, whereas much less are known from micro-region in the centre of the region. Deposition was probably not practised with the same frequency everywhere, and it is probable that the intensity with which the communities from the Meuse valley in Midden-Limburg practised it comes closer to the estimate of one deposition within a generation than the frequency of deposition in the central part of the southern Netherlands.

10.3 The long-term patterns of selective deposition

In the previous chapters, the analysis of the evidence led me to conclude that for every period studied a form of selective deposition existed. The most convincing patterns were found for the later periods (Middle Bronze Age B and Late Bronze Age). The low number of metalwork finds for the Late Neolithic B and Early Bronze Age makes the depositional patterns harder to evaluate. Fig. 10.4 summarizes the long-term developments in depositional practices.

If we compare the tables listing the contextual associations of types of objects which were made for every period (tables 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 7.1 and 8.1), there appears to be a remarkable similarity. For example: swords predominantly come from major rivers, and are conspicuously lacking in burials, even in the most monumental ones. This is true for the period of their introduction (Middle Bronze Age A) until the end of the Late Bronze Age. Such strict long-term associations between an object and a particular type of context indicate a system of selective deposition that was remarkably unchanging. Combining the evidence of the separate periods, two summarizing tables can be made: one listing the depositional evidence for the Late Neolithic B and Early Bronze Age (table 10.1), and another one combining that of the Middle Bronze Age A until the Late Bronze Age. Because of the much higher number of finds, the latter is the most convincing one. For that reason, I shall now restrict myself to the patterns of the Middle and Late Bronze Age listed in table 10.2.

One obvious conclusion is that in spite of the fact that it summarizes the evidence from a period of some 1000 years, the picture is remarkably consistent. For example: both in the Middle Bronze Age A, Middle Bronze Age B and in the Late Bronze Age, axes and spears were deposited all over the region in considerable numbers, but this was hardly ever in graves. Virtually all swords and axes from burials listed in table 10.2 date from the Early Iron Age. Therefore we can say that *with regard to the preference for placing specific objects in specific places,* selective deposition thus seems to have been an extremely conservative practice. This certainly does not imply that it did not vary in other factors, like the number of people involved, or the way in which the whole act was performed (cf. Bradley 1998, 89). The traditionality in the selection of the location is particularly clear from zones where in the course of time objects were repeatedly deposited. Zones where swords were deposited in rivers often continued to be used as such for centuries onwards. From this we can deduce that there was a generally shared understanding as to what was the proper place to deposit swords, transmitted from generation to generation. It was apparently the historicity of the place that mattered.

Following the patterns compiled in tables 6.1, 7.1, and 8.1, summarized in table 10.2, it is possible to infer some of the 'rules' that structured the selection. These are as follows:

1 Axes, sickles and weapons were not deposited in graves, but elsewhere. The large number of graves known and excavated for both the Middle and Late Bronze Age makes it quite certain that the lack of such objects in graves represents evidence of absence, rather than absence of evidence.
2 Swords seem to have been deposited predominantly in major rivers.

Other 'rules', of a more tentative nature, are:

3. Metalwork deposition on farmyards or in houses occasionally took place. It was particularly the deposition of sickles that is a recurrent practice in this context. Axes do not seem to have been deposited on farmyards (only attested for Middle Bronze Age B; table 7.2).
4. In the deposition of body ornaments and bronze dress items, a distinction is made between lavish ornaments of supra-regional styles and locally made and/or inconspicuous ones (tentatively for the Middle Bronze Age B, more outspoken for the Late Bronze Age).

10.4 Selective deposition as an indication that different objects had different meanings

How are we to understand these patterns of selective deposition? What, for example, was so specific about swords that they were preferably deposited in rivers? Why was

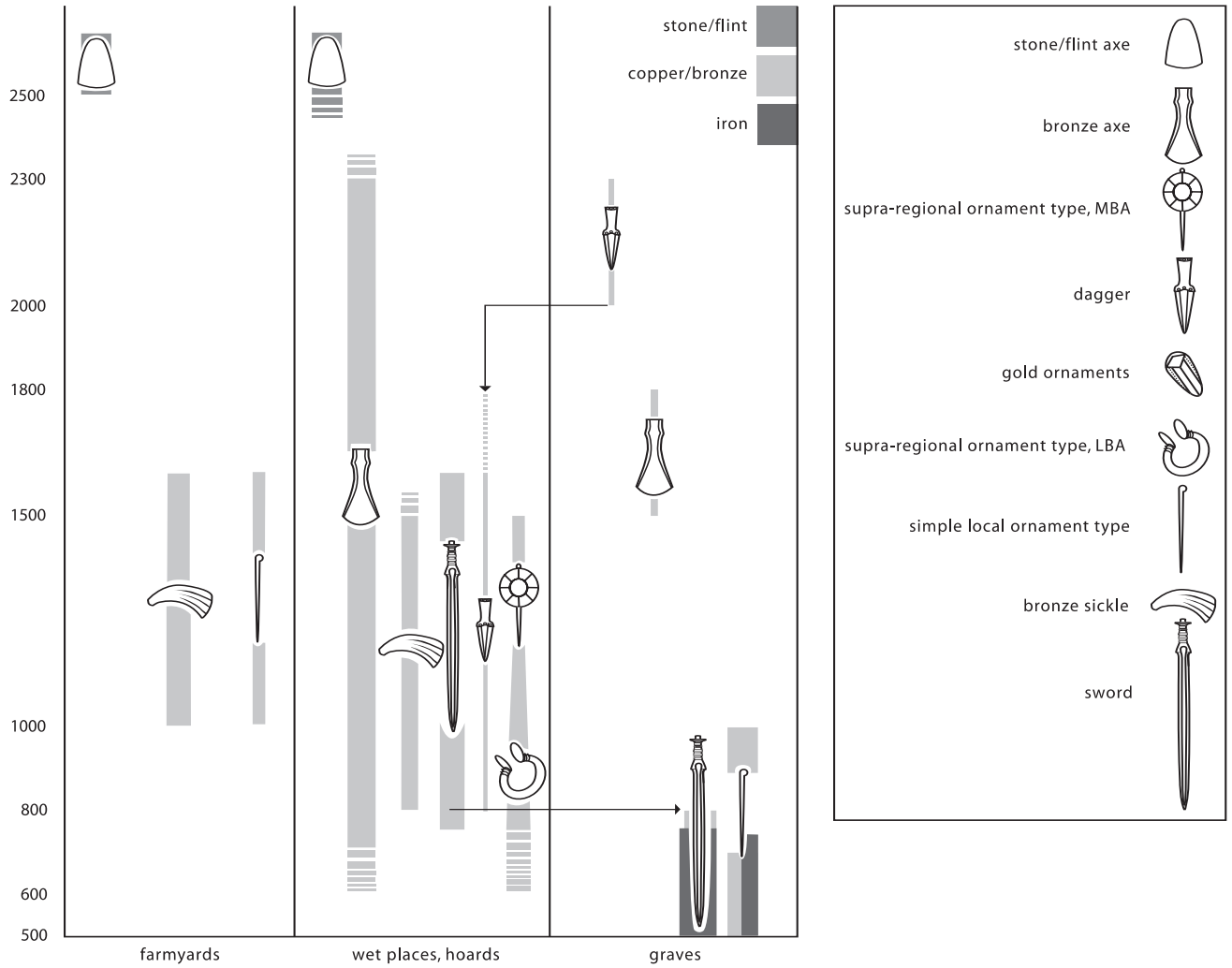

Figure 10.4 Chronological developments in the practice of deposition.

a distinction made between axes and sickles with regard to their deposition in farmyards? Why were weapons and axes so rigidly kept away from graves? The answer, I think, should not be looked for in their character as a 'thing' (a tool or a weapon), but rather in the way in which they as things had merged with and contributed to the lives of people and *became meaningful as such*.

In chapter 3, I made a distinction between objects that are merely things and objects that are meaningful and to some extent like persons. Things or commodities are mutually exchangeable and alienable. Seeing objects as commodities is a system in which an axe can for example be considered equivalent to two spears on the basis of the mass of metal it represents. In gift exchange, things become imbued with former owners, acquire specific meanings and hence become personified and inalienable (chapter 3). Therefore an item in one sphere of gift exchange is not easily convertible to another one (chapter 3). In gift exchange, an axe can be considered as incomparable to a spear because it is considered to carry totally different meanings. A system of selective deposition, in which specific kinds of objects are deposited in specific kinds of places only, testifies to the latter situation: objects are rigidly kept apart from other kinds of objects and from specific types of contexts. This must have been in situations in which objects are not merely things, but in which they carry *specific and different meanings*. From this it follows that a scrap hoard represents the other end of the continuum. Here objects no longer possess the specialized meaning that we can infer from their role in selective deposition. Scrap hoards consist of broken pieces of any kind of object:

pieces of swords, ornaments or axes can be present in the same hoard. This is a situation in which different objects were not kept separate, but treated alike (broken up and collected in one pile of metal, see Bradley 1990, 121).

Having now established that selective deposition testifies to a situation in which different objects carried different meanings, the question forces itself upon us as to what kind of meanings those were (cf. the discussion in chapter 3)? In view of the long-term stability of this system of selective deposition in both spatial and temporal terms, such meanings must be understood as deep-rooted, and based on widely shared, cultural understandings of the life-cycles of objects. The patterns of selective deposition mentioned above are thus about widely shared understandings on the generalized cultural biographies of objects. For such biographies to have existed, they must be rooted in fundamental ideas and values of the society in question. The observation that for centuries on swords have life-cycles ending up in a specific kind of deposition, implies that swords as a category were seen as having prime value at the start of their biography, and that there were culturally-specific expectations as to what would be the appropriate further life-cycle. Here it should be emphasized that archaeologically, we only see a limited part of the cultural biographies of swords: those ending up in depositions.

10.5 How objects became meaningful: the significance of their cultural biography

The realization that selective deposition reflects a system in which different objects carried different cultural meanings, should now be related to the empirical observation that most deposited objects show signs of a use-life and/or a life of circulation. The conclusion should be that this life mattered for its selection for deposition (section 10.2). Thus, object deposition was not just a ritual act in which the meaning of the objects was established (meaning through performance, Gosden/Marshall 1999). Rather, we are dealing with deposition as the culmination of an entire *cultural biography* (chapter 3). Therefore, it is to the kinds of life-paths that we should turn. When objects become meaningful to people, what kinds of biographies are we then dealing with? I shall now repeat a distinction made in chapter 3, because it seems to be applicable to the evidence at stake. The distinction is between objects with a biography related to the construction of personal identities and those more related to communal identities.

In the first case, objects are used in marking the life stages of individuals, and hence in signalling social roles and statuses. Here, *objects are the paraphernalia of a specific kind of personhood*. These are often objects related to appearances (dress, ornaments, bodily adornment, Sørensen 2000, chapter 7). Ethnography shows that such objects are often related to the achievement of a specific stage in the personal life-cycle (e.g. marriage, Corbey 2001; Platenkamp 1988). The objects are thus inextricably linked to a stage of personhood (Bazelmans 1999). The biography of such objects is about their life, and their entanglement with the biography of individuals. With regard to the Bronze Age data we see that there are arguments to suppose that biographies of bronze body ornaments, dress fittings and weaponry should be seen as related to the construction of such personal identities.

In the second case, the life of objects is seen to be metaphorically linked *to communal, collective identities.* These can be a wide variety of items, ranging from ceremonial objects to 'down-to-earth' tools. In the present case, axes and some other tools seem to have been valued in this field.

In both cases, I already preluded to the further discussion by mentioning which kind of Bronze Age object categories would belong to which kind of life-path, but I have not yet made it clear why the deposition of axes should be primarily understood from the point of view of their links with communal rather than personal identities. This will be worked out in detail in the next chapters, which focus entirely on weaponry (chapter 11), ornaments (12) and axes (13). First, I shall make it clear why I think that a distinction between personal and communal identities matters to selective deposition in the first place.

10.6 Depositions in burials versus depositions in natural places

The most fundamental form of selective deposition is the differentiation between objects deposited in burials versus objects placed in natural places. The first indications for selective deposition date from the Late Neolithic B, when the Beaker grave tradition was adopted in the southern Netherlands (chapter 5). Quintessential is the observation that a restricted but highly specific set of objects was placed in such a grave, whereas other kinds of objects were never deposited in such graves, but in other types of locations.

The construction of personhood in graves

In chapter 5 it was argued that a Late Neolithic Beaker grave involves a more or less stereotyped representation of a male person, accompanied by a specific and widely shared set of objects. Some of these objects are body ornaments, others are related to specific activities (for example: hunting/warfare). The non-local character of these ornaments (including metal) is conspicuous. It appears that foreign items are a repetitive element in the adornment of the body. The deceased was decorated and equipped in a highly specific and traditional way, and some of the items involved must have had a special cultural biography: they were made of materials derived from distant sources. Without neglecting

the variation between the individual burials, I argued that it is the overall similarity between burials from different areas and periods that needs explanation. We must be dealing here with a deceased individual made to look like a particular kind of person: a cultural idealization rather than the true representation of this individual in life. Apparently, some ornaments and tools were important in the construction of this specific personal identity, among them metal items (gold ornaments, copper daggers). It is hard to say what these objects meant or what values or qualities they represented, but archaeologically we can at least see that *a specific kind of body decoration and equipment mattered in the shaping of the deceased into a particular kind of person*. To bring this to its logical conclusion we can say that the body ornaments and daggers served as the paraphernalia of this specific personal identity.

Deposition of objects in other contexts

For the Late Neolithic, we thus seem to be able to identify valuables which are related to personal identities, including metal ones: body ornaments and weapons/tools. It is important to take this one step further. The restricted number of items in such a grave implies that a selection was made. Axes, in particular, are remarkably lacking from the graves of the Late Neolithic B. We have seen that copper axes were introduced during this period. Unlike copper daggers or golden ornaments, they were not deposited in Beaker burials but in watery places. This is not only true for the southern Netherlands, but for other regions as well (west Germany, northern Netherlands, Denmark, see chapter 5). Copper daggers and axes thus seem to have been kept separate in deposition. From this, we can conclude that copper axes were apparently not considered as a valuable related to the specific personal identity that was constructed in graves. In her study of the Danish situation, Vandkilde (1996, 267-8) observes this same pattern of selective deposition and argues that the fact that axes were not placed in the graves of individuals must mean that their meanings were in the communal rather than in the individual domain. With the theory on valuables relating to personal identities versus those relating to communal ones in mind (chapter 3), this is an interesting point. We should not take this to mean that axes were communal possessions, but rather that they apparently did not matter in the construction of the specific type of personal identity in Beaker graves. They were *not* paraphernalia of specific personal statuses in the way that copper daggers or some ornaments were. Alternatively, the sort of life axes led (reclamation, house-building) might rather be in line with that of valuables relating more to *communal* identities. At any rate: the dissociation between regular work axes and weapons/ornaments would remain a crucial element in the structure of selective deposition in the centuries to come, even though from the Early Bronze Age on the deposition of 'personal' valuables was transferred from the sphere of burials to that of watery places.

10.7 Long-term history of selective deposition

Having established the basic differentiation between weapons and ornaments on the one hand, and axes on the other, a general outline of the long-term history of selective deposition of metalwork can now be drawn on the basis of the conclusions from chapters 5 to 9 (see fig. 10.4). Separate spheres of deposition emerge during the Late Neolithic B. The difference is between deposition of objects related to personal identity in graves and axes in watery places. The deposition of single, used metal axes in all sorts of wet places would remain the most recurrent type of deposit for the entire Bronze Age. They replace stone/flint axes that figured in wet context depositions earlier on, but there might have been a significant decrease in the frequency with which axes were deposited during this transition.

During the Early Bronze Age deposition in graves ceased almost entirely. Objects that were formerly deposited in burials were from now on deposited in watery places as well. New objects, like halberds, were not deposited in graves but in a hoard and in a river. In the Middle Bronze Age A, specialized weapons like dirks, rapiers and bronze spears were introduced. They illustrate a new, pronounced accent on martial ideologies. Most weapons are known from depositions in watery places; not one seems to have been placed in a grave, not even in the monumental barrows with bank and ditch (*ringwalheuvels)*. Among the deposits are weapon hoards that clearly reflect personal sets (the Overloon hoard, chapter 6 or the Escharen hoard, chapter 7). Weapon deposition remains almost exclusively river-bound during the Middle Bronze Age B and Late Bronze Age.

New objects like sickles and supra-regional styled ornaments were incorporated in the depositional tradition during the Middle Bronze Age B. The deposition of sickles generally follows the depositional patterns of axes, but sickle deposition seems to have been less strictly bound to watery places than in the case of axes or weapons. They were also repeatedly deposited in farmyards or in houses. With regard to ornaments and dress fittings, there seems to have been a difference between simple, plain and probably locally produced ones, versus the more lavish, internationally styled ornaments. In the Middle Bronze Age B and Late Bronze Age objects of the latter category were deposited in major rivers and in a special hoard (Lutlommel, Late Bronze Age). They are generally absent from burials. Bronze ornaments are virtually unknown from Middle Bronze Age B burials. In the Late Bronze Age, a small part of the graves carried such items. It is remarkable though, that these are generally plain

and simple dress fittings, but not the more special items we know from rivers (like the ceremonial pins of type Ockstadt). Similar simple ornaments are also known from Middle Bronze Age B settlements, where they might have been deposited deliberately.

Changes in the system of selective deposition during the Early Iron Age

During the Early Iron Age, there are two major changes in the system of deposition. The first is a drastic decrease in the numbers of bronze objects deposited. The second is a marked shift in the depositional context of prestigious weaponry. Since the Gündlingen phase swords, some made of iron, were not only deposited in rivers, but for the first time repeatedly placed in graves as well. By the Ha C phase, the shift from rivers to graves is complete: swords (now entirely made of iron), were now deposited in graves in urnfields which are often of a monumental nature. In such graves is an entirely new set of objects: elements of wagons, horse-gear and bronze vessels, all with central European affinities. We seem to be dealing with a new martial elite ideology here (chapter 9). As part of such grave sets, for the first time since centuries, large bronze items (but now iron ones as well) were deposited in graves. There are no longer objects reminding us of bodily adornment and decoration like we know them from Bronze Age warriors' graves (like razors, tweezers, hair rings), suggesting that the ideas on warriorhood had changed.

Apart from this, for the Early Iron Age and later, there is a remarkable increase in the evidence on deliberate deposition of objects in farmyards. According to Gerritsen (2001), this probably coincided with a new appreciation of the house itself as a ritual focus. As a rule, these depositions are not metal objects, however (table 10.3).

It would be wrong to suppose that the Bronze Age system disappeared entirely. For the Early Iron Age there is evidence of both bronze and iron axes that were deposited in ways comparable to what was common in the Bronze Age. The lower frequency of iron axes can also be explained for an important part by the fact that it is much more vulnerable to decay in wet milieus than bronze (Van den Broeke 2001). Furthermore, an occasional find of an iron sickle among settlement debris of an Early Iron Age house place in Huissen, may remind us of the frequent presence of such objects in Bronze Age farmyards. Particularly with regard to ornament deposition, there are strong indications that the practice did not disappear at all (Van den Broeke 2001). Bronze ornaments even seem to become an important element in deposition, coming to the fore in the presence of large neck rings, which in their exaggerated form remind us of the giant ornaments of the Late Bronze Age (ceremonial pins of type Ockstadt).

10.8 Development of the argument in the next chapters

Now that the general characteristics and the structure of selective deposition, as well as its long-term development has been sketched, it is time to treat the different practices in a more detailed manner. I shall base myself on the meaningful distinction made here between objects relating to personal identities (weapons/ornaments) and those relating to communal ones (axes). In the following chapters, I shall try to find out for all categories how their cultural biographies culminating in deposition were constituted; the central question will be to find out what it was in their biography that made axe deposition different from ornament deposition, but also what constitutes the difference between tools like axes and sickles. The arguments will be presented as follows:

	MBA	LBA	EIA/earlyMIA	MIA/LIA	Late LIA/ERP
Related to the house itself					
Foundation deposits: metal tools	+	?	-	-	+
Foundation deposits: other	-	-	-	+	++
Abandonment deposit granary	-	-	++	-	-
Abandonment deposit house	-	-	++	+	-
Abandonment deposits metal tools	(+)	?	?	?	?
Farmstead-related or unclear					
Ceramic groups	(+)	?	++	-	-
Single vessels	(+)	+	++	++	+
Grain deposits	+	+	++	++	+
Human burials	-	-	+	++	++
Single human bones	+	?	?	?	?
Metal tools in pit fill or stray	++	?	+	+	+
Metal ornament in pit fill or stray	+	(+)	-	-	-

Table 10.3 relative frequency of deposits related to house and farmstead. (?: unknown; - : absent; (+): probably present; + present; ++ fairly present). Based on Gerritsen 2001, chapter 3, spec. table 3.13 with additions).

– chapter 11: weaponry
– chapter 12: ornaments (those that are not associated with weapons)
– chapter 13: axes and sickles

Central will be the idea that their selective deposition illustrates how people structured them as meaningful, yet different items. But in deposition, the landscape is in its turn structured by selective deposition. Therefore, in chapter 14, deposition will be studied the other way around: what can be learnt from depositional practices on the way in which people perceived their relations to the landscape? Having studied the evidence in this way, we shall return to the main question in the final chapter 15: what is object deposition?

notes

1 Deposition of objects made from other materials (gold, tin, ceramics, amber, stone or flint, food, animals, humans) is poorly known, but I have not surveyed the non-metal finds to such an extent that it is possible to state that it was practically non-existent. The relatively high number of finds from dry contexts in table 10.2 can be explained by a few dry Late Bronze Age hoards that contained extraordinary large numbers of items (Heppeneert, Geistingen, Hoogstraten and Lutlommel; chapter 8). Nevertheless, in chapters 12 and 13 it was argued that Heppeneert, Geistingen and Lutlommel may have been locations that were seasonally wet; they were not simply 'dry' places.

2 Based on the contextualised finds from table 10.1, for the period from 2300-1800 BC.

3 Based on table 8.1. Finds without context, burial and settlement finds and spearheads and arrowheads with dating ranges covering both Middle and Late Bronze Age are all excluded. The period is considered to span 1050 until 700 BC.