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Monuments on the horizon : the formation of the barrow landscape throughout the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BCE

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Chapter 7

The reinterpretation of the barrow landscape: patterns of reuse in the Low Countries

7.1 Introduction

At a time when people were still building barrows, they will have increasingly encountered the many visible mortuary monuments of past generations (Ashbee 1960, 37; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, 338). The heathlands in which the new barrows were being constructed, were dotted with the past dead made visible. These monuments were meant to be seen and it was the intention of the people building a barrow that the burial location of specific people remained visible and enduring (see Chapter 6). As such, these burial locations continued to elicit a reaction from onlookers.

It may well have been the intention of the people building these monuments to evoke a specific reaction from future generations. Yet throughout the millennia following the initial construction, the reactions to past monuments varied strongly. Reuse occurred in specific periods and shaped, modified and altered the entire barrow landscape. As we saw in Chapter 5, these alterations occurred at specific times and each period has its specific way of reinterpreting and reincorporating past monuments.

In this Chapter I will try to answer how people reacted to past monuments. First general patterns of reuse in the Low Countries will be discussed, followed by a discussion of what these changes in patterns tell us about the perception of past barrow landscapes throughout prehistory. And lastly I will delve deeper into the special position of the Bronze Age and its reinterpretation of the barrow landscape.

7.2 The reinterpretation of past monuments

In Chapter 6, we established that barrows create visible places in the landscape. Whether or not they were intended to be seen from far away is not relevant here. They created a visual marker, at a specific location. The physical form of the barrow ensures it will persist through time. Even when the post-circles and all other forms of overground architecture have decayed and are overgrown, the round mound will still remain. As such the permanency of a barrow means it is resilient to forgetting (Lucas 2005, 26-27) and their enduring presence ensures that they elicit a reaction from future generations. Indeed, it can be said to be inherent in the initial conception of all monuments (Barrett 1994,124 Holtorf 1998, 24; Bradley 1998, 162; Bradley 2002, 82). As Bradley puts it: *'[Monuments] are intended to convey a message to other people, extending beyond the lives of the original authors'* (Bradley 2002, 84).

The physical and visual presence of a barrow thus transforms a locality into a meaningful place (see Chapter 2, *cf.* Tuan 1977, 163-166). Burial communities still constructing their own burial mounds (in whatever form) would immediately identify an older barrow for what it is, a 'burial site' (Fontijn 2011, 437). The

barrow then becomes a symbol of past generations, even if these communities are far removed from the original builders of the barrow (either through time or distance) and even if the meaning they give to the barrow is significantly different (Cohen 1985, 15-17).

The symbolic presence of past generations is then used as a resource (Cohen 1985, 99) by burial communities to redefine their own place in the landscape and in death (Chapman 1997, 33; Gerritsen 2003, 111-113). By linking up with these ancient monuments and incorporating them within their own community, they make a statement that those past generations are theirs and part of their community. Even if their own practices differ significantly from those of the past, they assume they are still doing the same (Cohen 1985, 91-96).

Along the same line, a rejection of the barrow is the burial community opposing past generations and what they think these stand for (*cf.* Smith 2003). The abandonment of urnfields in the Middle Iron Age (*cf.* Fontijn 1996; Gerritsen 2003, 145) is a clear statement of those communities rejecting the ways of the past, and redefining these ways as opposed to their community. The Christian rejection of 'pagan' burial practices can be understood as such (*cf.* Roymans 1995; von Uslar 1972), with barrows part of the outside world, beyond the Christian community.

The permanency and symbolic nature of a barrow means that reinterpretation is of all ages and all places (Bradley 2002) and continues even up to this moment (Holtorf 1996). The restoration events of our own age also form part of the incorporation of these past generations into our own communities. The placement of a small post next to a barrow, with a sign saying that the barrow is indeed a barrow and part of Dutch heritage, is in this sense no different from a Bronze Age restoration event.

The fact *that* a barrow is reused and reincorporated is not so revealing and is inherent in the visual permanency of the barrow. Reuse and reinterpretation is therefore of all times and all places. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in *how* past communities have interacted with past monuments. As already hinted at in Chapter 5, the Bronze Age reinterpretation of Late Neolithic barrow landscapes is fundamentally different from the Late Neolithic reinterpretation of those same landscapes. In this Chapter, I will extend these observations to all excavated (and published) Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows in the Low Countries in our database.

7.3 Patterns of reuse in the Low Countries

Two different types of reuse can be identified in the Low Countries. Firstly the restoration of ancient barrows by adding material to a mound and sometimes rebuilding a post circle or encircling the mound with a ditch. Secondly the burying of the dead in an already existing mound. In a sense the copying of the shape and the form of a barrow can be viewed as a form of reuse as well (Holtorf 1998, 32), but I will deal with the creation of new barrows and additions to the barrow landscape in Chapter 8.

7.3.1 The restoration of ancient mounds

Excavations throughout the Low Countries have revealed that many burial mounds actually consist of multiple construction events. After a burial mound was erected it was usually increased in size, in many cases even after several hundred years. Additional sod layers were added to the mound and in many of these cases new post-circles and ring ditches were constructed around it (Fig. 7.1).

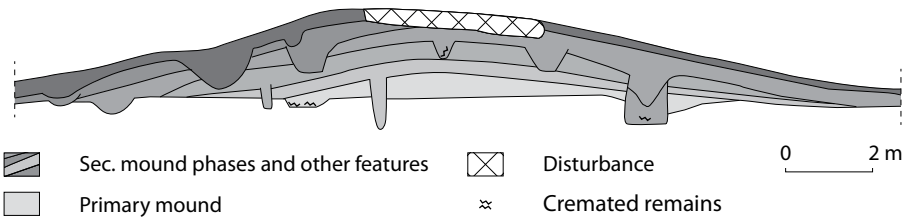

Fig. 7.1: Profile through a barrow with multiple separate mound phases (Garderen Bergsham Tumulus 5, Van Giffen 1937a, Afb. 9).

Dating these additional mound phases is very difficult as the construction event is rarely associated with a grave that can then yield a reliable date (only 50 out of 259 secondary mound phases have a secondary central grave).[40] Fortunately many secondary mound phases were accompanied by surrounding features that can be dated to specific periods.[41]

The restoration of existing mounds was a very rare practice in the Late Neolithic, contrasting sharply to the number of new mounds that were built (Fig. 7.2). As far as we know, not a single barrow was increased in size in the Late Neolithic A. In only seven cases was a barrow restored in the Late Neolithic B. Seven other restored mounds can be dated no more specifically than Late Neolithic. Although the restoration of mounds did occur in the Early Bronze Age, it remained a rare event, as was the construction of new mounds in that period (9 mound phases). During the Middle Bronze Age the restoration of mounds increased exponentially, with at least 103 secondary mound phases reliably dated to this period (almost 40%). 25 secondary mound phases cannot be dated more specifically than Bronze Age, but most of them will also date to the period between 1800 to 1400 cal BC (see Chapter 3). 37% of the secondary mound phases cannot be attributed to any chronological time period at all.

There does not appear to have been a distinction between which mounds were restored in the Middle Bronze Age. The time elapsed between the construction of the primary mound and the restoration event can be limited to within a century or up to more than a millennium (Fig. 7.3). There does not appear to be a preference as to which mound was to be restored. Almost as many primary Late Neolithic mounds were restored as primary Middle Bronze Age mounds (76 Bronze Age restoration events are placed on top of Late Neolithic primary mounds versus

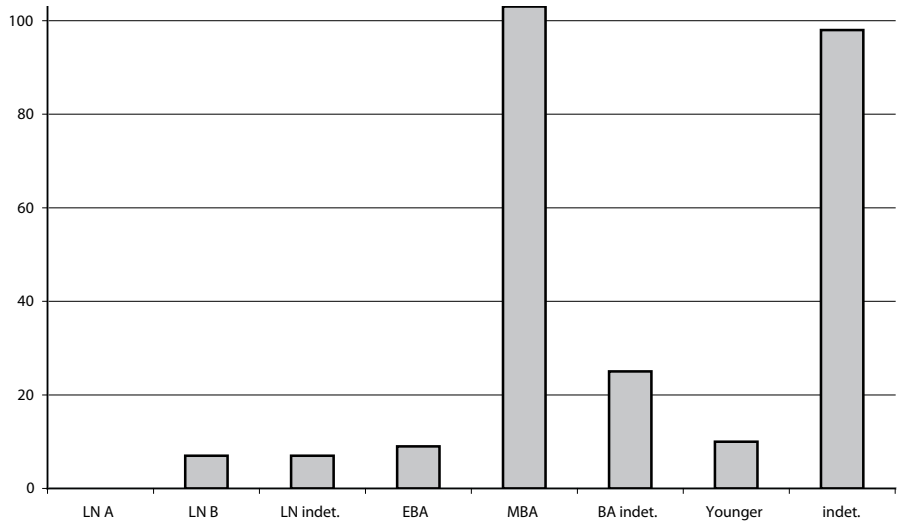

Fig. 7.2: Frequency of secondary mound phases per period.

40 This discrepancy can perhaps partly be explained as a negative side-effect of the quadrant-method developed by Van Giffen (Waterbolk 2011, 147).

41 Usually post-circles and ring ditches which can be dated to the Middle-Bronze Age.

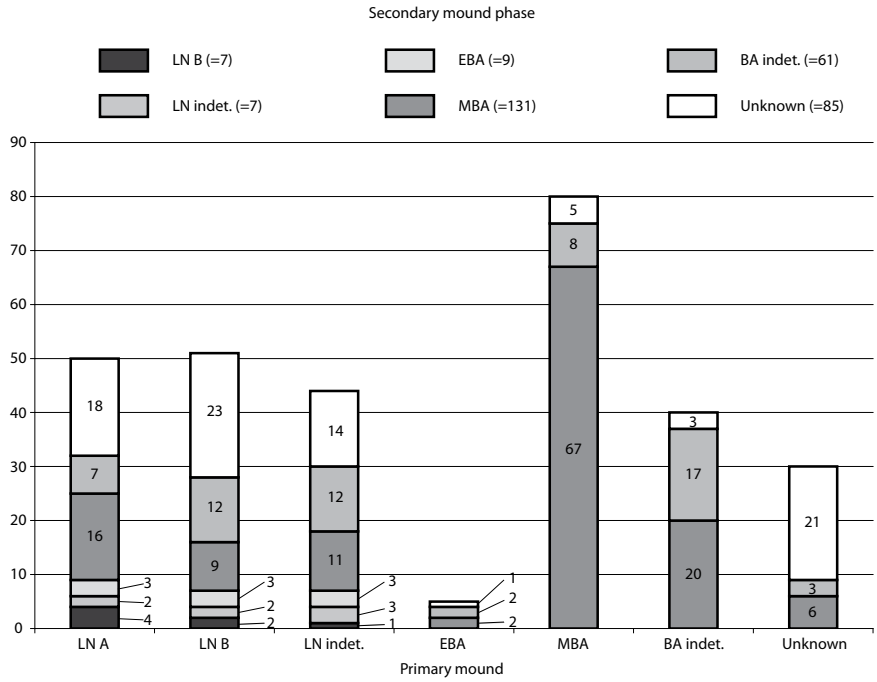

Fig. 7.3: The frequency of secondary mound phases offset against the primary barrows to which they were added.

112 on top of Middle Bronze Age mounds). Rather it seems the restoration of a burial mound was an indiscriminate event with almost every single existing burial mound being increased in size.

It should be noted, however, that earlier excavators (such as Holwerda, Bursch and Remouchamps), rarely recognised the presence of these multiple mound phases. Subsequent re-excavations have consistently proven that they systematically failed to interpret additional construction events (*e.g.* barrow nr. 344, Modderman 1954, 31; nr. 427, Lanting and Van der Waals 1972a; see Chapter 5).

7.3.2 Burial within ancient mounds

Another type of reuse associated with burial mounds is burial within already existing mounds. These so-called secondary graves were dug into the body of the barrow itself. As with the restoration of the mounds, secondary burial can occur hundreds of years after the barrow was initially constructed. Both inhumation and cremation burials were deposited within mounds although there is a regional preference for inhumation over cremation in the Northern Netherlands and vice versa for the Southern Netherlands (Drenth and Lohof 2005, 437). Nevertheless both inhumation and cremation remain common practices throughout the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age and were in use concurrently (Wentink in prep.).

Secondary burial in mounds is very rare in the Late Neolithic A (Fig. 7.4). Only three dubious examples are known from that period. The practice is a little more frequent in the Late Neolithic B (N=16), and most of the graves are dug from the top-centre of the mound. The secondary grave rarely disturbed the primary grave, usually stopping 25 - 50 cm above it. As with both barrow construction and restoration events, the re-use of mounds in the Early Bronze Age is limited, only four cases are known.

The contrast with the following period could not be greater. In total 404 graves can be positively identified as dating to the Middle Bronze Age, with a further 277 attributable to the Bronze Age in general. The increase in restoration of older mounds went hand in hand with a spectacular increase in secondary burial in barrows. Even though most secondary burials are not directly dated, a significant proportion of them fall in the period between 1800 to 1400 BC.

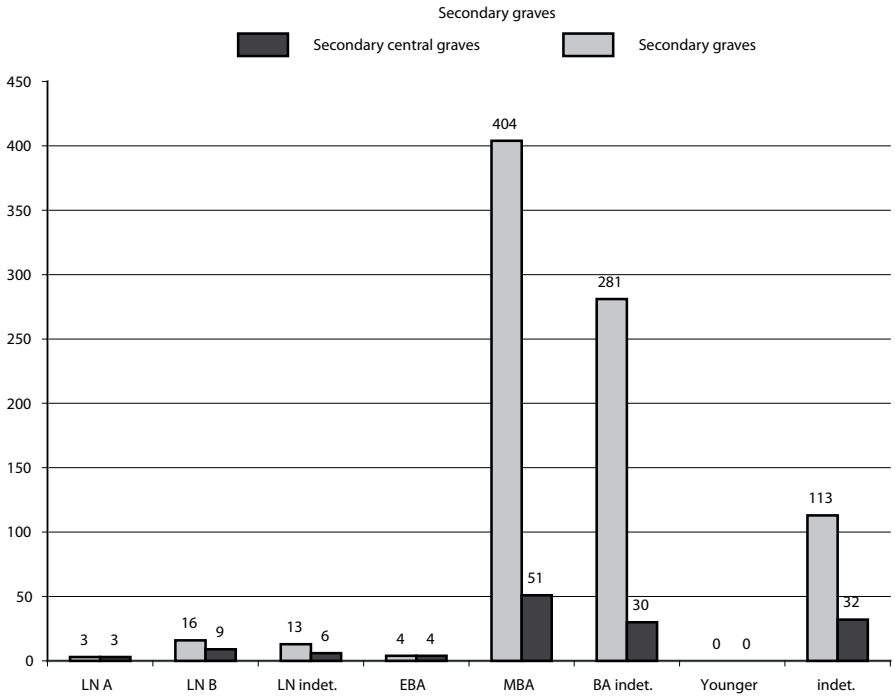

Fig. 7.4: The frequency of secondary burial per period. The dark grey bars indicate secondary central graves, the dark grey bars all secondary graves (including the central ones).

Yet at the same time, as with the restoration of ancient monuments, reburial was indiscriminate (Table 7.1). Secondary burial occurred in both Neolithic mounds as well as in Middle Bronze Age mounds.

7.4 Changing attitudes to barrows and barrow landscapes

7.4.1 Corded Ware mounds

The earliest barrows in the Low Countries are associated with Corded Ware traditions. Although rarely occurring south of the Rhine, they are numerous north of it (Bourgeois and Fontijn 2012). In the three case studies on the Veluwe they in fact form the largest group of burial monuments and are even more numerous than Bell Beaker barrows. Even though many of them are known, the construction of a single mound was still a rare event, perhaps occurring only once every four to five years (see Chapter 8).

Once a Corded Ware barrow was built however, it was considered a finished monument. As far as we know, there are no instances of pallisaded ditches having been rebuilt or any other form of restoration events, nor are there any (reliable) Corded Ware secondary graves within barrows. All subsequent activities within or on top of Corded Ware mounds were carried out centuries after the original mound

		Primary mound							
		LN A	**LN B**	**LN indet.**	**EBA**	**MBA**	**BA indet.**	**Indet.**	**Total**
Secondary grave	**LN A**	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	3
	LN B	8	7	1	.	.	.	.	16
	LN indet.	2	3	8	.	.	.	.	13
	EBA	3	0	1	0	.	.	.	4
	MBA	23	28	16	1	300	28	8	404
	BA indet.	41	16	44	15	38	126	1	281
	Indet.	40	21	17	.	3	21	11	113
	Total	120	75	87	16	341	175	20	834

Table 7.1: the frequency of secondary burial offset against the primary barrows to which they were added.

Deposition	LN A	LN B	LN indet.	EBA	MBA	BA indet.	Younger	indet.	Total
In/on top of mound	2	3	1	6	3	.	.	.	15
Underneath the mound	.	3	.	5	1	.	.	.	9
Close-by	.	3	.	1	.	.	.	.	4

Table 7.2: Depositions of artefacts in burial mounds. Both pottery (for the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age) and bronze depositions (Middle Bronze Age) have been included.

had been built. For all intents and purposes people in the Late Neolithic A regarded the burial ritual as finished once a mound was constructed (see Chapter 8).

This concept was not limited to the Low Countries, secondary burial in Danish Corded Ware barrows is equally rare in their early LN (Hübner 2005, 468).

7.4.2 Sporadic Bell Beaker reuse

Bell Beaker attitudes towards barrows changed and restoration and re-burial within existing mounds became an acceptable option. Usually both practices occurred at the same time: a grave was dug into the top of an existing mound and an additional layer of sods was stacked over the entire mound and the second grave. The evidence suggests that whereas the construction of the burial mound was the final event in the Late Neolithic A, this attitude relaxed somewhat in the Late Neolithic B. The restoration as well as the secondary burial seems to have been indiscriminate, with the practices targeting both Corded Ware as well as Bell Beaker mounds.

7.4.3 The Early Bronze Age gap?

Very few barrows can be dated to the Early Bronze Age, and the practice of building new burial mounds appears to have decreased considerably. There are some indications of reuse, continuing the trend already set out in the Late Neolithic B. Secondary graves (all centrally located) as well as restoration phases are evidenced on several occasions.

It is difficult however to equate this relative lack of evidence to an absence of the (barrow) burial ritual altogether. Two important points have to be made. Firstly, some practices specific to the end of the Late Neolithic B and the Early Bronze Age certainly indicate that a barrow still played an important role as a focus point for ritual activities. Both Potbeakers (Late Neolithic B) and Barbed Wire Beakers (Early Bronze Age) are frequently associated with burial mounds, although they are almost never found within the grave itself (Table 7.2). In some cases pots or sherds were found on the old surface beneath a mound, placed on the flanks of, in a pit within, or just outside of pre-existing mound (Bourgeois and Fontijn 2010, 45-46; Bourgeois, *et al.* 2010, 85-87).

As many of these finds represent no clear burial context, they will have been frequently missed or misinterpreted by excavators. It is nevertheless tantalizing that the precise period when we see little to no activity in the burial ritual, is also the period in which we see these ephemeral ritual practices. Clearly burial monuments had not disappeared from the collective memory of Early Bronze Age communities, and they still took up a prominent position.

Secondly, non-perishable grave gifts such as pottery, metals and stone rarely entered the grave in the Early Bronze Age (Lohof 1991, 68-70; Theunissen 1999, 57). There are several well-documented cases where fragments of Barbed Wire Beakers were found on the old surface, but not within the grave. There is also a case where a Beaker was smashed and where half of the sherds were found on the old surface, and the other half within the grave (Modderman 1957).

Sitename	Objects	Primary	Secondary	Unknown	Flatgrave
Ballooërveld Tumulus 4	3 flint arrowheads, whetstone	.	x	.	.
Bergsham Tumulus 3	Wohlde sword	.	x	.	.
Den Dolder	Triangular full-hilted dagger	.	.	x	.
Drouwen	Sögel-sword, razor, nick-flanged axe, 2 gold coils, whetstone, flint strike-a-light, 9 flint arrowheads	.	x	.	.
Eext	Dagger (unknown type), 3 flint arrowheads	.	.	x	.
Hijken Hooghalen Tumulus 9	10 bronze arrowheads, 2 needles, 2 gold spirals, strike-a-light	x	.	.	.
Monnikenbraak-Find nr. 13	Wohlde-sword, flanged axe, whetstone, small ceramic vessel (?)	.	.	x	.
Monnikenbraak	Wohlde-sword, spearhead (?)	.	.	x	.
Putten	Wohlde-sword	.	.	x	.
Sleenerzand-De Galgenberg	Palstave, bronze ring, 14 bronze arrowheads, tweezer, 2 gold spirals	.	x	.	.
Vries Tum.2	1 bronze arrowhead	.	x	.	.
Zeijen-Noordse Veld Tum.114	Sögel-dagger, whetstone	.	x	.	.
Meteren-De Bogen	Griffplattenschwert, 2 bronze arrowheads, bronze needle (?), bronze indet. Artefact	.	x	.	.
Velserbroek	Griffplattenschwert, palstave, 2 golden coils	.	.	.	x
Zwaagdijk graf 3	Griffplattenschwert, 4 amber beads, possibly also worked flint, fragm. Of sandstone, indet. Animal bone	.	.	.	x
Zwaagdijk	Alledgedly sword and 2 gold coils	.	.	x	.

Table 7.3: Weapon graves in burial mounds (table after Fontijn 2009, 168-169).

Such actions may reflect a taboo on placing grave goods within a grave. The lack of grave goods, and therefore a good chronological marker is problematic, and it may well be that many of the 'empty' graves must be dated to this period.

Both points suggest we should be wary of interpreting the lack of graves and barrows attributable to the Early Bronze Age as a prehistoric reality. Nevertheless, even if we were to randomly allocate a proportion of the non-attributable barrows to the Early Bronze Age, the difference with the preceding and following periods would remain significant. We can therefore continue to speak of a 'gap' between the two periods, without being able to quantify it.

7.4.4 The Middle Bronze Age revival

Whatever the intensity of the Early Bronze Age burial mounds and burial practices, there is no denying that activities surrounding burial mounds increased exponentially in the Middle Bronze Age.

In Chapter 3 I argued that the intensity of barrow construction between the Late Neolithic and the Middle Bronze Age remained relatively stable. The increase in restoration events and secondary burials on the other hand represents a dramatic shift in attitude towards existing burial mounds. Whereas restoration events and secondary burial were rare events in the Late Neolithic and the Early Bronze Age, in the Middle Bronze Age they are common and widespread. This focus on existing mounds in the Middle Bronze Age is characteristic for every region of the Low Countries.

This change in attitude is not only evident from the reuse of mounds and restoration events, but also in the relation of Middle Bronze Age weapon graves to pre-existing mounds (Fontijn 2009, 164). Out of 8 known weapon graves from a reliable barrow context, 7 were dug into an already existing barrow (Table 7.3). Even the paramount warrior grave of Drouwen was probably dug into a pre-existing mound (Lohof 1991, catalogue nr. 061-0).

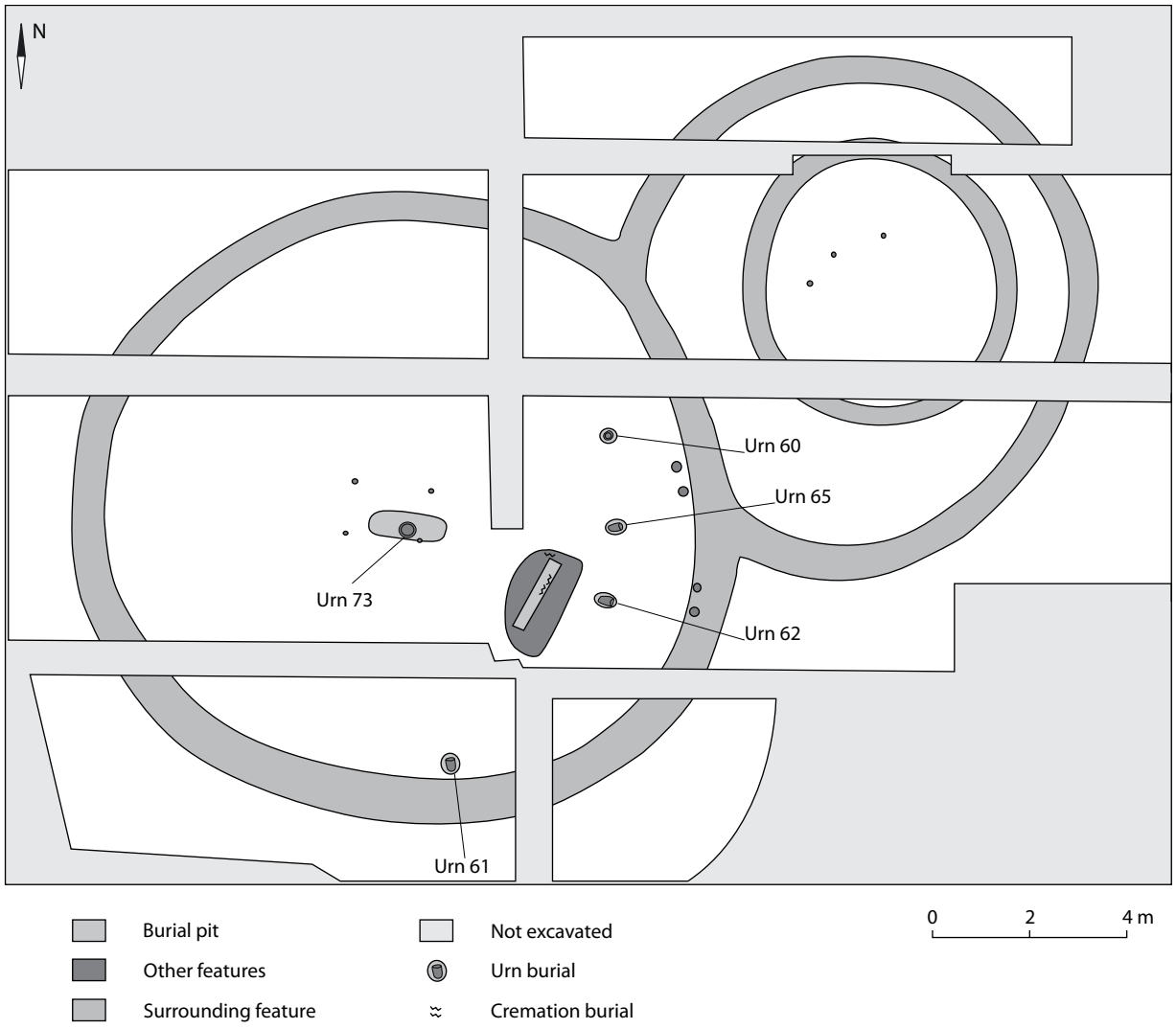

Fig. 7.5: The excavation plan of Tumulus 1B at Toterfout-Halve Mijl. Urn 61 was found lying on its side, with its mouth towards the primary grave (urn 73). Both urn 65 and 62 were also found lying on their sides, but with their mouths pointing away from the primary grave. Urn 60 was standing upright (redrawn after Glasbergen 1954a, Fig. 9).

The intensity of the restoration and reuse phase can best be illustrated through the Ermelo case study. In total a minimum of 77 secondary graves were recovered from at least 31 burial mounds (see Table 5.4).[42] Almost every single barrow was used for reburial.

In fact if we disregard the badly damaged and partly excavated barrows, all but two barrows have at least one secondary grave. Equally all but one burial monument have at least one additional mound phase. Only two of these mound phases can be unequivocally dated to the Late Neolithic or the Early Bronze Age, together with two or three secondary central graves associated with these additions (notably Tumulus II and XVI). All other restoration and burial events must be dated to the Middle Bronze Age. Comparisons with other areas in the Low Countries indicate the same intensity of reburial and restoration events.

The frequency with which these graves and restoration events occurred was equally high. Radiocarbon dating has demonstrated that the time in-between individual burials would have been extremely short, within a few generations of one-another. As an example, one of the Toterfout Halve Mijl barrows (Tumulus

42 Only the barrows excavated by Modderman have been considered, the amateur finds and the poor excavations by Remouchamps do not provide reliable information on stratigraphy, mound phases and secondary graves.

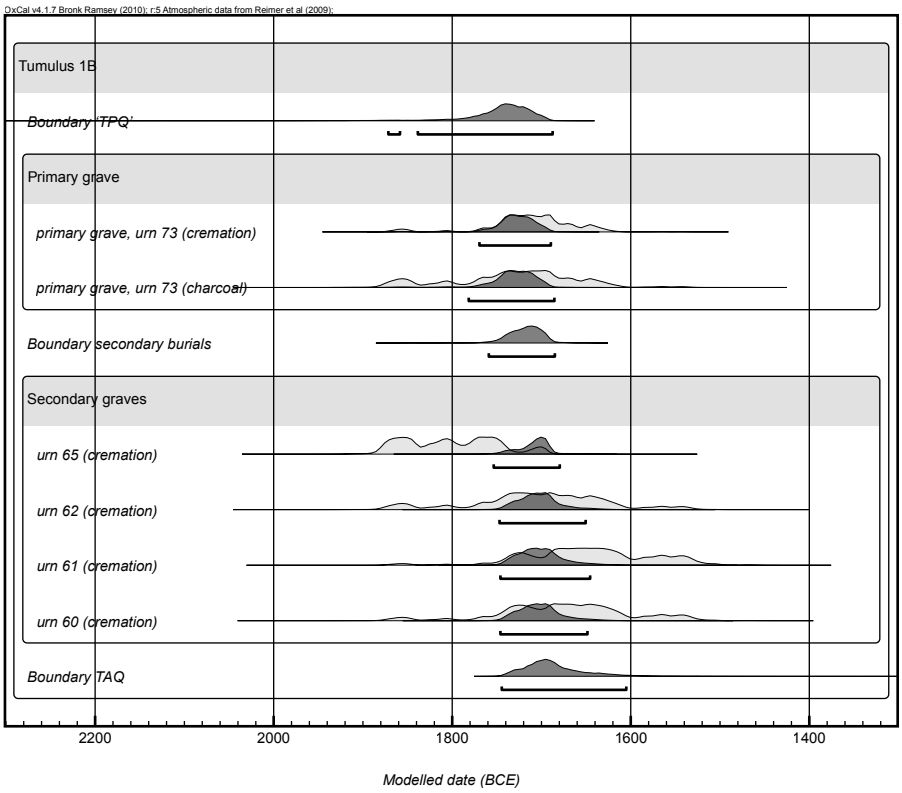

Fig. 7.6: All associated radiocarbon dates for the urned burials in mound 1B. Bayesian statistics constrain the dating range for the primary mound construction to approximately 1800 – 1700 cal BC, with the secondary burials following quickly afterwards.

1B, barrow nr. 10; Fig. 7.5) covered the primary cremation burial of a 30-40 year old man placed within a large Hilversum-style urn. Four large Drakenstein-style urns were inserted into the flank of the mound, with each containing the cremated remains of (in total at least four) adult women. Additionally a tree-trunk coffin was placed into the flank of the mound in which the remains of (possibly) a woman and a chiled aged 8-12 were found (Theunissen 1993). All of the urned cremation burials were radiocarbon dated (Lanting and Van der Plicht 2003, 181; Fig. 7.6). The barrow and the primary grave it covers it can be dated between 1775 and 1700 cal BC. The four subsequent urned cremation burials were added to the mound between 1750 and 1650 to 1600 cal BC. This suggests that the time seperating the primary burial and the secondary burials will not have exceeded more than a single century. The similarity in burial practice supports this observation and suggests that knowledge of the primary burial governed the subsequent burial practices (I will return to this barrow below; *cf.* Mizoguchi 1993; Bradley 2002; Theunissen 1999, 101-102).

Another site provides even more insight in the frequency at which secondary burials were placed within pre-existing barrows. At the Wiesselse Weg on the Crown Estates, three barrows were excavated in 2008 and 2009 (Fontijn and Louwen in prep.; Fig. 7.7). In total eighteen cremation graves were found in two quadrants of the two northernmost mounds. Radiocarbon dating of all graves revealed a very short time-span in-between the presumed primary grave and all secondary graves (Fig. 7.8). A Bayesian model of the ascertained primary and secondary graves suggests the first barrow (mound 3) was built between 1700 and 1600 cal BC, and within a short time-span of 50 to 100 years all subsequent graves were placed within the mound. After the first series of events, a second barrow (mound 2) was constructed, between 1600 and 1500 cal BC and here too all secondary graves were inserted into the barrow within a short time-span.

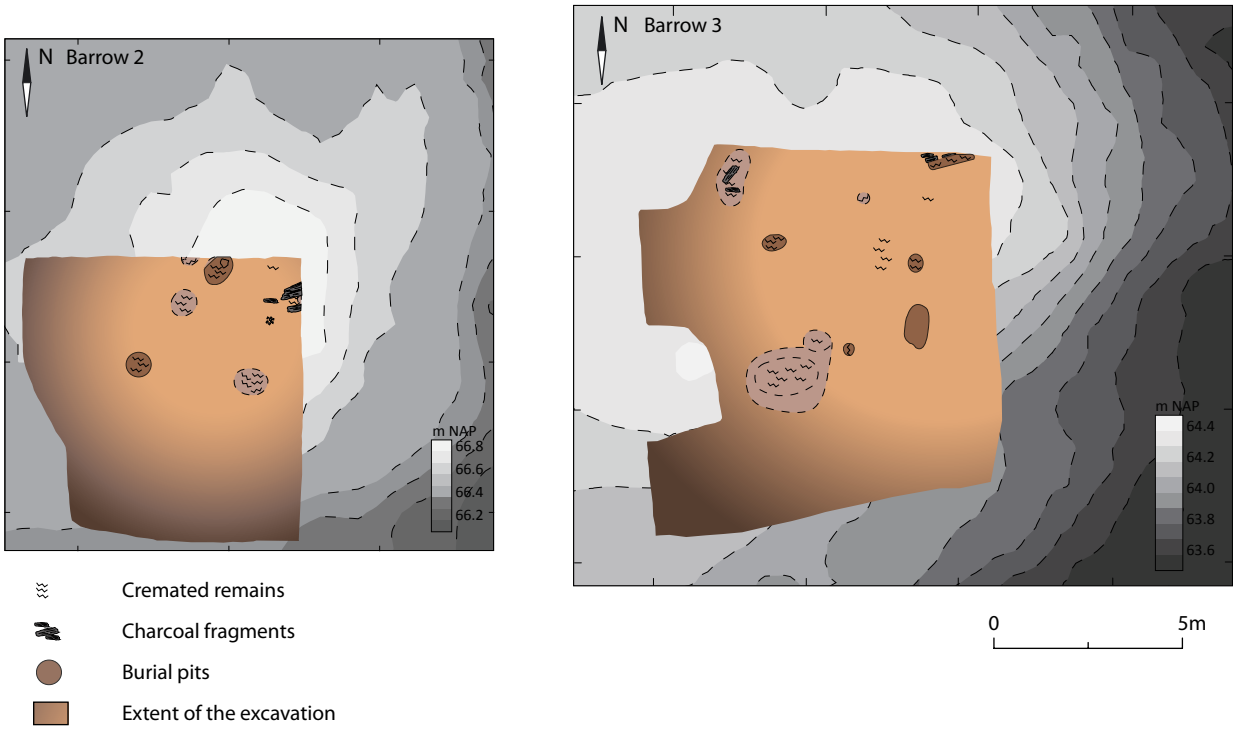

Fig. 7.7: Simplified excavation plan of barrow 2 and 3 at the Wiesselse Weg, municipality of Apeldoorn (drawing by J. Van Donkersgoed).

Both examples, and there are many more, indicate that the frequency at which secondary burials were placed within existing mounds was very high. Additionally in most cases no more than a few generations passed between the first and the last burial.

Estimating the frequency with which barrows were restored is much more difficult. Nevertheless as most seem to be associated with secondary graves from the Middle Bronze Age, the restoration phases themselves will probably also date to these time-periods. This is corroborated by the fact that many of these secondary mound phases are surrounded with typical Middle Bronze Age surrounding features, such as post-circles and ring-ditches. Of all barrows recorded in our database (N=589), 39 % of barrows has at least one additional mound phase, 49 % of barrows has at least one secondary grave, 31 % has at least one of both and 30 % has both.[43]

7.5 The reinterpretation of barrow landscapes

In the Late Neolithic A, older barrows were not reused. Once built they were considered finished. Relating and linking to past monuments was done through the position of a new burial mound within the wider barrow landscape, ultimately forming long alignments. In the second half of the 3rd Millennium BC people started to reuse the existing monuments by adding secondary graves, usually combined with restoration events. Towards the end of the Late Neolithic the deposition of Pot Beakers and Barbed Wire Beakers demonstrates that people still respected and engaged with the monuments even though burial underneath them declined. The Middle Bronze Age restoration events and secondary burials, even though on a much grander scale than before, are in a sense no different from the previous practices.

Fig. 7.8 (opposite page): Radiocarbon dates of cremation burials at the Wieselse Weg. Only those burials have been included of which the stratigraphic position in relation to the mound could be ascertained.

43 Note that these include all barrows in our database, including the partially and poorly excavated ones. Therefore the actual percentages are probably much higher.

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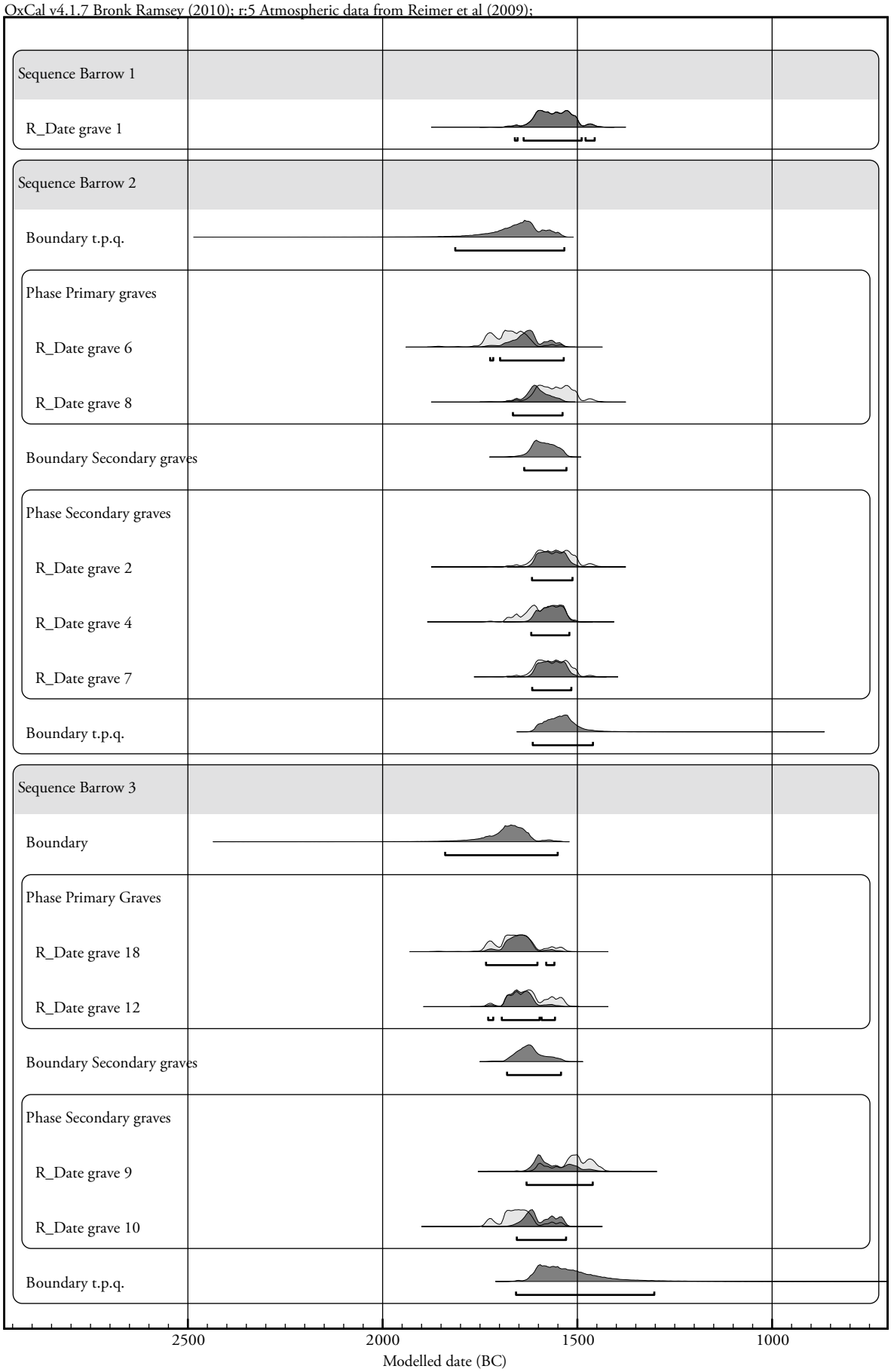

It is important to note that this reinterpretation was not necessarily in concordance with any reality. There were in fact even some cases of mistaken identity where small sand-dunes were reused for secondary burial (Mullin 2001). In the Low Countries no such cases are known, but perhaps the small natural hillocks which are frequently observed underneath barrows may equally have been the case of a mistaken identity. At the Zevenbergen barrow group, one of the mounds excavated in 2007 covered a small dune, which in form and shape looked like a burial mound (Fontijn, *et al.* in press.). Perhaps its shape fooled the people in prehistory into thinking they were building on top of an ancient barrow. It certainly fooled me until almost halfway through the excavation.

The reinterpretation of ancient monuments continues inexorably throughout the rest of prehistory and history. Many of the urnfields of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age were frequently built around or close to Late Neolithic or Middle Bronze Age mounds (Gerritsen 2003, 140-145). Even in later periods burial mounds were still recognized for what they are, and in several cases Early Mediaeval cemeteries linked up to ancient burial monuments (*e.g.* Beex 1954; Modderman 1967; Glasbergen 1955; Van Es 1964). This practice was even more widespread in Great-Britain (Williams 1998) and northern Germany (Holtorf 1998; Sopp 1999).

In later historical times, the Christian diabolization of heathen burial monuments (*tumuli paganorum*; von Uslar 1972; Roymans 1995, 13-17; Holtorf 1997) and the modification of barrows into gallows (Meurkens 2010) must still be considered as a form of reinterpretation of these by now truly ancient monuments. Even today, the restoration of barrows by national and local heritage departments is a form of reinterpretation. In some cases these restoration events have misinterpreted the original form of the burial monument (Fontijn, *et al.* 2011) and in others natural elevations were misinterpreted as burial monuments.

The process of reinterpretation is thus an ongoing process. Each individual barrow will continue to be reintegrated within society until it is fully destroyed and all memory of the former site has fallen into oblivion. All reuse and every reinterpretation can therefore be seen as an expression of how each society and each community defines itself within the landscape.

Yet the concept of reinterpretation and the reason why people reinterpret monuments does not explain the differences inherent between LN patterns of reuse versus Middle Bronze Age reuse. When seen from a chronological perspective reuse in the Bronze Age is systematic and on a grand scale. All ancient barrows were reworked in some way or another; either through restoration phases, or through secondary burials within older mounds, and usually both. The Bronze Age attitude to the barrow landscape was fundamentally different to what came before but also to what came after. There are four aspects in which reuse in the Bronze Age differs from other periods. Firstly, the concept of a burial mound implied burial of multiple individuals within a single mound. Secondly, reuse did not continue indefinitely. Thirdly, these concepts were extended to every single barrow in the wider landscape. And lastly, reuse was selective.

7.5.1 The Bronze Age barrow as a resting place for multiple individuals

The first element is the idea that every barrow necessitated more than one burial. A mound was not constructed for a single individual, rather it was built for many (*cf.* Petersen 1972; Woodward 2000, 23-25; Brück 2004; Bradley and Fraser 2010). The idea that multiple individuals were meant to be buried underneath or within a single mound was already present at the conception of a new mound.

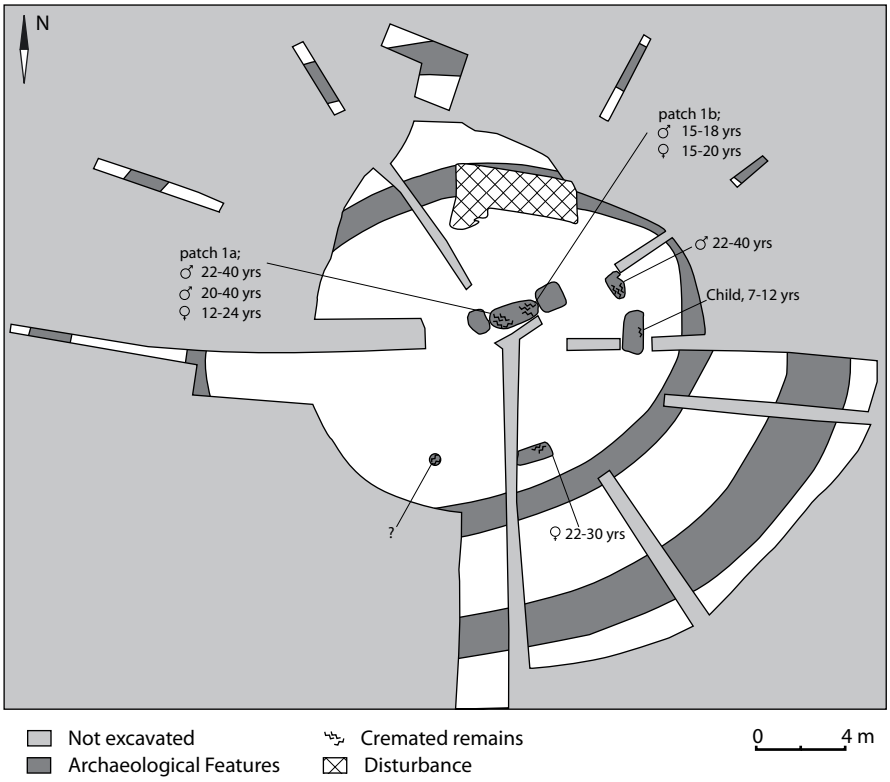

Fig. 7.9: Excavation plan of the large bank-and-ditch barrow Tumulus 1 at Toterfout-Halve Mijl (redrawn after Glasbergen 1954a, fig. 7).

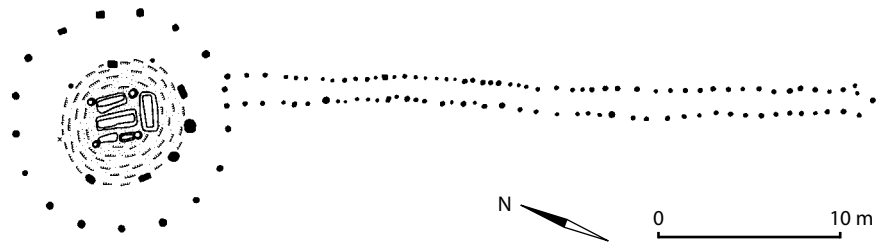

Fig. 7.10: Excavation plan of Tumulus 75 at Zeijen. A large allée of posts was excavated, extending 35 m beyond the mound. At both ends of the allée an extra post blocks the entrances (redrawn after Van Giffen 1949b).

At Toterfout, the large bank and ditch barrow Tumulus 1 (barrow nr. 645; Fig. 7.9) was erected over a single grave pit. Within that grave two distinct piles of cremation remains were recovered, each placed towards one end of the grave pit. Both piles contained the cremated remains of a minimum of respectively 2 and 3 individuals. The first of two young adults, male and female, and the second of two adult males and one young adult female (Theunissen 1993, 32; Smits 1994). In later times at least four secondary graves were added to the barrow.

The practice of multiple primary burials was also extended to include inhumation graves. A remarkable barrow at Zeijen, Tumulus 75 (Van Giffen 1949b; Fig. 7.10), covered five primary inhumation graves. The length of the graves has led the excavators to assume they were the graves of respectively three adults and two children. Four of the five inhumation graves were placed within a single small mortuary house (Dutch: *dodenhuisje*), suggesting some time had passed between the burials and the building of the barrow itself. The mound was encircled by two post circles, and a 35 m long allée is directed towards it.

Both examples indicate that little time had passed in-between the primary burials, and perhaps had even occurred simultaneously. It also strongly suggests genealogical ties between these individuals. They must have known each other in life, and it is plausible that they were members of the same communities (see Chapter 9).

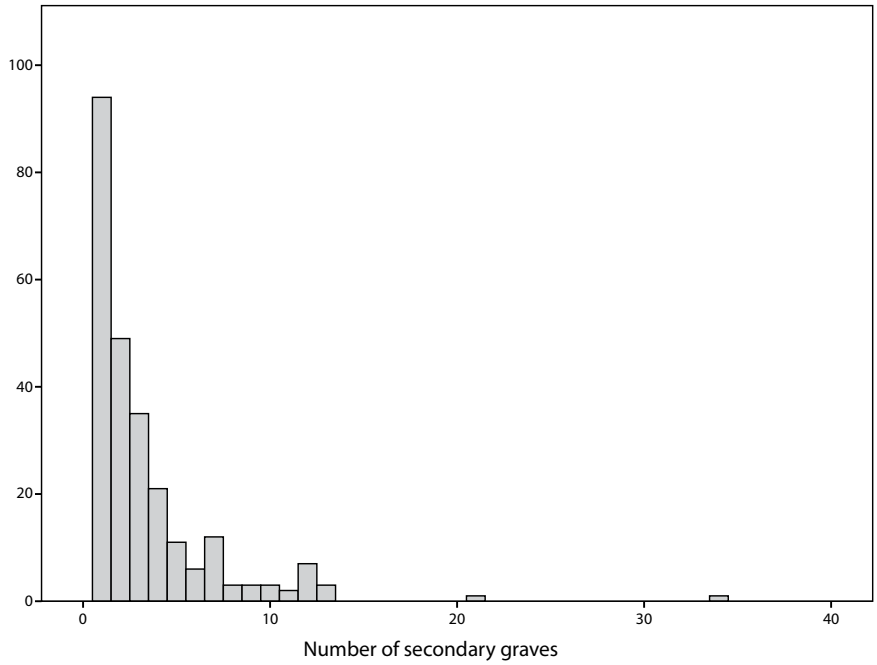

Fig. 7.11: The frequency of secondary burials within a single mound.

Multiple primary burials were not the norm however and in most cases a mound covered a single grave by and more graves were subsequently added to it. Here too, genealogical connections are suggested by the similarity in practice between the primary grave and the secondary graves.

Tumulus 1B at Toterfout is a compelling case in point (see above, Fig. 7.5; Theunissen 1993, 38; Theunissen 1999, 101-102). The specific placing of each urn in the mound suggests that knowledge on the way of burial within the primary grave governed how subsequent generations were buried within the mound. The primary urn stood upright, while two of the secondary urns were placed on their sides with the mouth of the pot facing away from the primary urn, one was placed with its opening towards the primary grave and the fourth urn stood upright.

The short time in-between each individual burial as well as the strong similarity in practice suggests that it is likely that the people placed within the mound knew (of) the person buried underneath and each other (Mizoguchi 1993).

At the same time, almost as many secondary Bronze Age graves were placed within Late Neolithic mounds. The burial mounds on the Ermelo heath being a case in point. There is no distinction to be made between reuse in Bronze Age or Late Neolithic burial monuments (see Table 5.4).

This is further illustrated by Vaassen Tumulus II (barrow 274, see Chapter 5; Lanting and Van der Waals 1971b). The primary mound was built over a Bell Beaker grave at around 2400 cal BC. After nearly a millennium, the mound was restored and a layer of sods was stacked against the primary mound. In total at least 12 secondary graves were added to the now extended mound, 8 inhumation and 4 cremation burials. It is highly unlikely that the people that placed the secondary graves within the mound knew precisely who was buried underneath the mound.

The same practices and intensity of reuse were reserved for barrows both in the close and distant past. The Ermelo case study shows that reburial within a mound was not only limited to the barrows of known ancestors, it was extended to every single other barrow already present in the landscape. This concept, that every barrow needed more burials, was shared throughout the Middle Bronze Age and throughout the entire Low Countries.

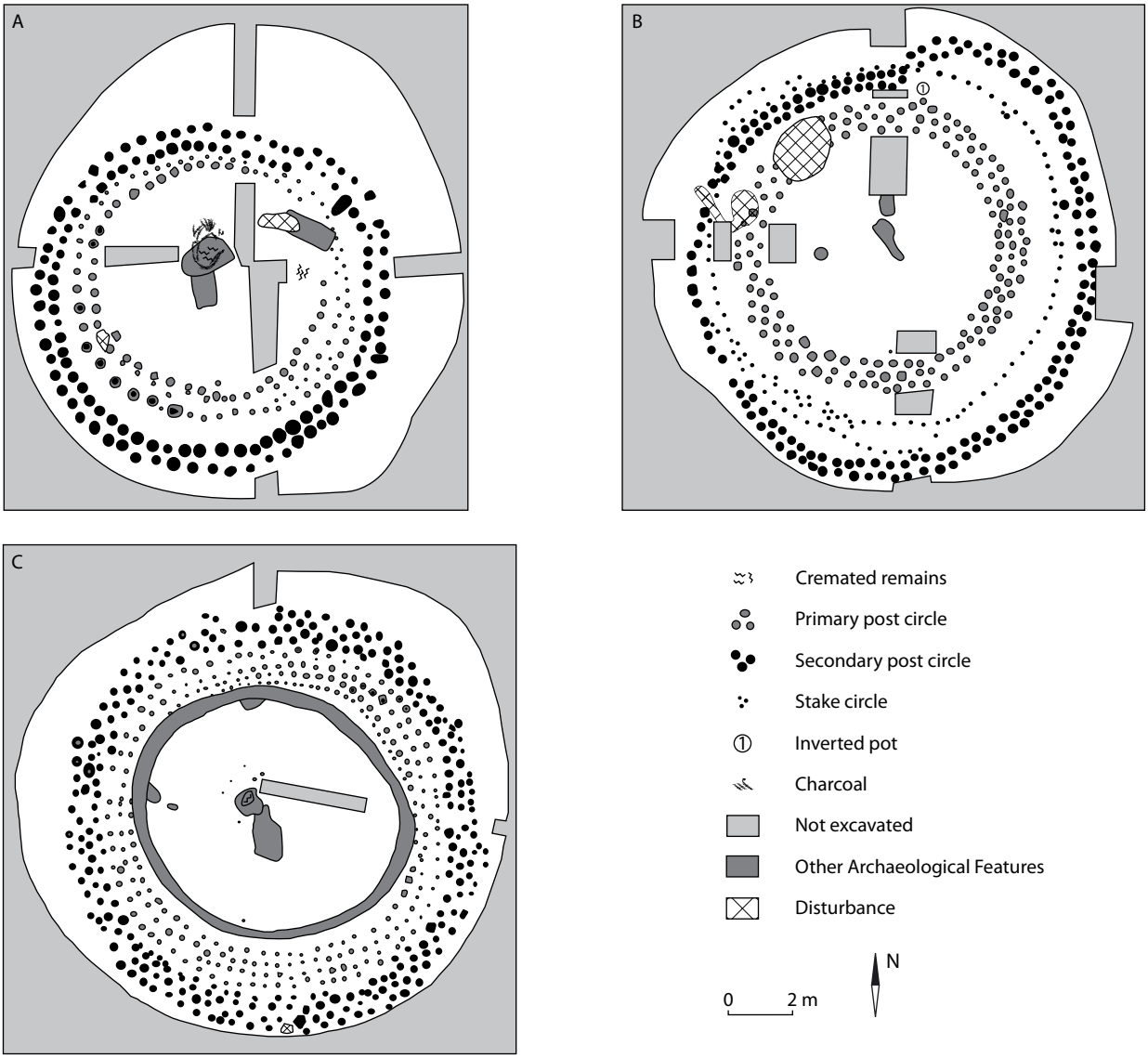

Fig. 7.12: The excavation plans of Tumulus 19 (A) and 22 (C) at Toterfout-Halve Mijl and a barrow on the Rechte Heide, near the town of Goirle (B); (redrawn after respectively Glasbergen 1954a, Fig. 28 and Fig. 31; Glasbergen 1954b, Fig. 51).

7.5.2 Reuse was pre-ordained

The examples I presented above indicate that secondary burial within a barrow was implied from the onset of construction. Reuse was pre-ordained with the creation of the mound (Fontijn 2008, 93), but there was also a limit to it. Reuse did not continue indefinitely and only in rare cases have more than 10 secondary graves been discovered within a single mound (Fig. 7.11). Mound 1B at Toterfout and the two barrows at the Wiesselse Weg I discussed above demonstrate that although reuse and activities surrounding a mound continued after the initial construction, this activity phase was also limited in time.

In a sense we can think of the burial ritual in the Bronze Age as a set of actions, which extend beyond the construction of the mound (see Chapter 9). These actions were not only limited to burial but also to the refurbishment of the mound.

This is evidenced by mound 19 at Toterfout (Fig. 7.12; barrow nr. 28; Glasbergen 1954a, 74-76). Here, around the foot of the small mound a double and in some cases even quadruple stake circle was erected. In total some 130 stakes were placed around the mound. In several cases the stakes were charred on the outside. After some time (perhaps several years), people returned to this mound, stacked an additional layer of sods on top of the primary mound and erected a

new post circle, this time with (on average) more substantial posts. Once again a similar number of posts was placed around the mound (128 to be exact). A barrow nearby (nr. 31; Glasbergen 1954a, 78-82) had ±260 stakes around the primary mound, once again small stakes. Some time afterwards 256 posts were placed around the mound. A third example (nr. 96; Glasbergen 1954b, 56, Fig.51), near the town of Goirle had an initial post circle of ±165 posts followed by a second circle of 167 posts several years later.

These three examples, of very particular barrows, indicate that for the Bronze Age, the barrow ritual was not final after the construction of the primary mound. The repetition strongly suggests people were meant to return to the same mound.

7.5.3 Reuse was totalizing

The third element characteristic of Bronze Age reuse is the concept that every barrow was eligible to be reappropriated, irrespective of the supposed mythical or genealogical distance between them. This totalizing approach of the Bronze Age can be exemplified by the difference between Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age reuse. Both display a clear and conscious choice to link up with past monuments, indeed the presence of older burial mounds is frequently attested in many urnfields (Gerritsen 2003, 140-145).

Yet the difference between both is not in the fact that they reincorporate older mounds but rather in *where* they reappropriate older mounds. During the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age people chose a (group of) barrow(s) around which the urnfield developed; it is a localized reuse (Fontijn 1996, 78-79). All other barrows beyond the urnfield were effectively ignored. The Middle Bronze Age approach to the barrow landscape was the complete opposite; reuse was indiscriminate. *Every* mound on the heathland was eligible for multiple burials and restoration events. Indeed it is very rare to have a barrow with no restoration event and/or no secondary burials.

This indiscriminate approach to barrow landscapes becomes even more interesting if it is extended to sacrificial landscapes. Fontijn has argued that where in the Iron Age depositions are localized and restricted to specific places within the landscape, Bronze Age depositions are only restricted by general 'zones' (Fontijn 2002, 262-263). The similarity between burial practices and sacrificial practices is indicative of a different perception of the landscape (*cf.* Fontijn 2011, 441-442). Both urnfields and deposition places in the Early Iron Age are restricted to specific places, by contrast the Bronze Age attitude to both is quite different. Depositions could be placed anywhere in a river or swamp, and the dead could be placed anywhere on the heath. It is on these heaths that new barrows were constructed, old barrows were reincorporated and where (some of?) the dead were buried.

7.5.4 Reuse was selective

While the reuse of a barrow on the heath in general does not appear to have been limited by a specific location, each barrow nevertheless had its specific role within that landscape. Reuse was selective, and specific burial rituals were reserved to specific mounds.

As a first example, we can return to the three Neolithic barrows on the Ermelo heath I introduced in Chapter 5 (Tumuli I, II and III excavated by Modderman, respectively nos. 324, 325 and 326). As I argued, all three barrows started off relatively similar. They were small low barrows and each covered a grave. Yet their biographies diverge afterwards. Only barrows II and III were reused. Both were capped with additional layers of sods (III once and II at least three times) and

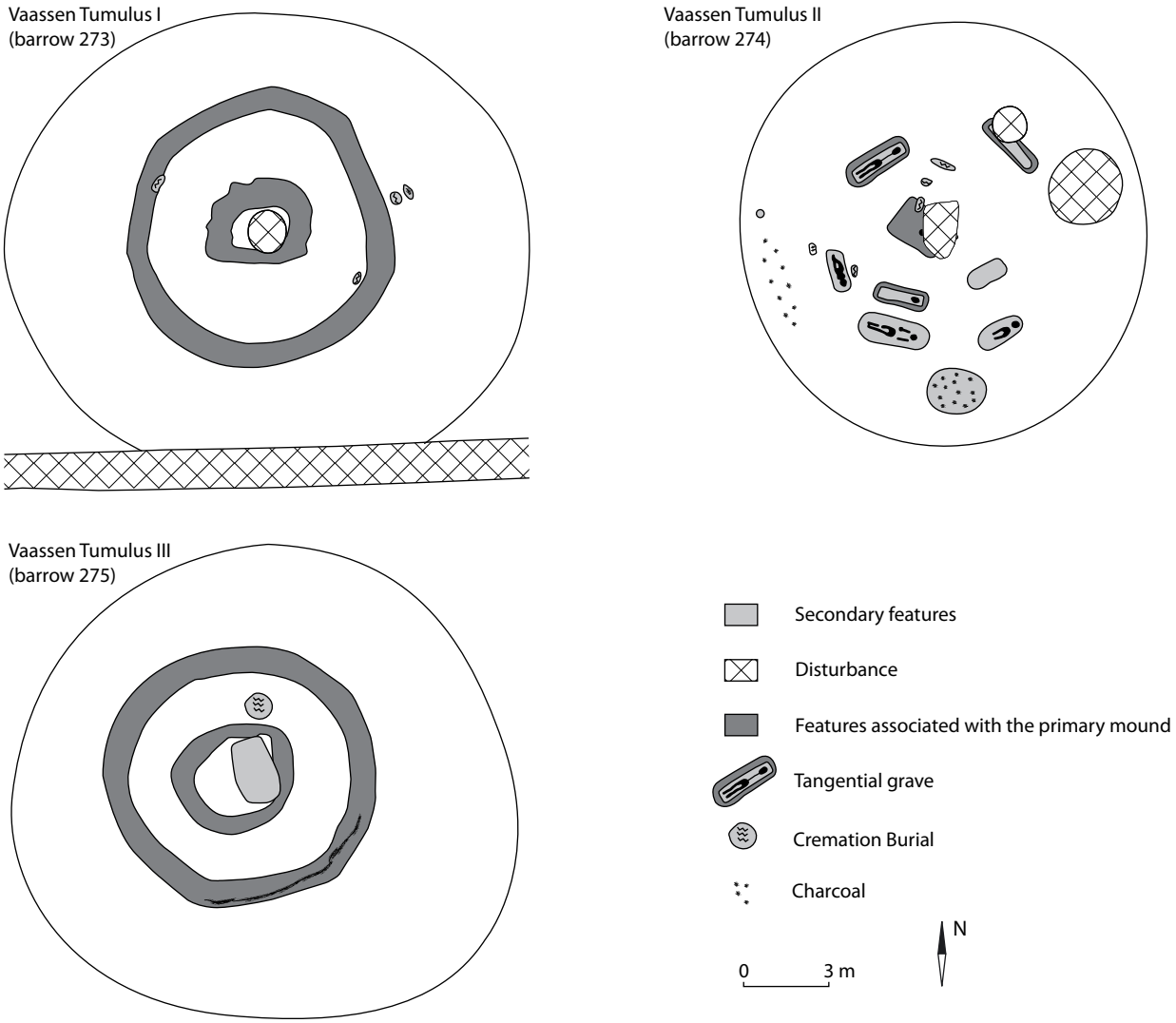

Fig. 7.13: The excavation plans of three Neolithic mounds near the town of Vaassen. The time-distance between the reuse in the Middle Bronze Age and the construction of the primary mounds extends over at least 800 years (Lanting and Van der Waals 1971b, Fig. 4, 7 and 0; courtesy of the National Museum of Antiquities (RMO)).

secondary graves were placed within their mounds (respectively five and two). Interestingly, there are no indications that Tumulus I was reused at all. For all intents and purposes it seems to have been neglected.

As a further example, Tumulus 1B of the Toterfout case study covers an urned cremation (barrow nr. 10). The secondary graves also consist of urned cremations. It is illuminating that of all burials excavated from the barrows in the entire Toterfout region, only one other cremation burial was urned (and possibly a second). All others were not. Urned burial was for some reason only reserved for this barrow and not any other, even though contemporaneous barrows can be found within the same region.

Tumulus 8A is another example from the same region (barrow 17). The barrow covered the cremated remains of a young child. In the postholes of the closely spaced post-circle encircling the mound, the cremated remains of at least six individuals were found (as far as could be determined these were all children; Theunissen 1993, 32). Cremated remains in postholes were only recovered from three other barrows (nos. 9, 97 and 113), yet many other barrows were surrounded by close-set post circles as well.

The last example, and perhaps the most telling, is the Vaassen Tumulus II already mentioned above (see p.172; barrow nr. 274; Fig. 7.13). It is part of a group of three Neolithic mounds (together with nrs. 273 and 275). All three barrows were used for secondary burial in the Bronze Age. In the other two mounds respectively three and one cremation burials were discovered. Yet only Tumulus II was restored and covered with a layer of sods in the Bronze Age. Additionally tangential inhumation graves were only added to this mound and not to the two other barrows. Similar situations can be found on the Speulderveld (*i.e.* Tumulus I versus II; Modderman 1954), and the Ermelo heath (*i.e.* Tumulus VII; Modderman 1954).

Specific types of secondary burial were thus reserved for specific barrows and knowledge of what was thought to be the 'right way to burry' within what barrow was defined by the communities burying within these mounds (Fontijn 2002, 271). Stories on each barrow will have circulated on who was buried where and how. Whether or not this was in accordance with reality does not matter, as long as they *thought* it was real. In this sense barrows were named places with each mound taking up a specific position in the cosmological landscape and burial in these mounds was then governed by knowledge (real or claimed) on how one should bury their dead in them.

7.6 Conclusion

Reuse and the reinterpretation of older mounds was almost non-existent in the Late Neolithic A. Once a mound was built, it was considered finished and we have very few traces of people returning to a mound during the Late Neolithic A. It is only in the Late Neolithic B that the practice of reburial within an older mound is seen sporadically. In these cases it is always accompanied by a secondary mound phase. This practice continues in the Early Bronze Age.

Yet the patterns of reinterpretation and reuse discussed in this Chapter revealed the exceptional position of the Middle Bronze Age. In a relative short period of 400 - 500 years the entire barrow landscape was reworked and covered with a Middle Bronze Age interpretation.

Almost every single barrow on the heathlands was sought out, either for burial, to be restored with an additional layer of sods or both. In this way, every barrow was converted into a Bronze Age barrow. And the idea of a barrow as the burial place for multiple individuals was extended not only to their own barrows, but to every single barrow already present in the landscape.

The indiscriminate nature of reuse shows that this reinterpretation was not restricted to specific monuments or specific places within the landscape. Rather the entire heathland in which the barrows were built was eligible to be reused. There are no limitations as to which barrow on the heath-field could be reused. This observation reveals a deeply seated belief during the Middle Bronze Age that specific practices are limited to specific zones within the landscape (depositions in swamps and streams, burial on heaths).

The extensive heaths of the Low Countries should then be considered as the place where the dead ought to be buried. The extensive dispersed groups of barrows were already mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2. They have always been elusive and difficult to understand. Yet the reuse patterns of the Bronze Age may well offer insight into why these mounds do not seem to conform to a pattern. This will be the topic of the next Chapter.