Fragmenting the Chieftain : a practice-based study of Early Iron Age Hallstatt C elite burials in the Low Countries

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7 Conclusion

The Chieftain of Oss

Over 2700 years ago a tall and muscular man, some 30–40 years old, died.

As was customary, a pyre was created for him and the man's corpse was cremated, accompanied by a number of food offerings. This was a fiery spectacle of melting flesh and breaking bones. A fire so hot that anyone watching could not have come close transformed the dead Chieftain, until all that was left were cracked, white pieces of bone lying among the ashes of the burned-out pyre. Significant care was then taken to collect as much burned bone as possible, making sure every skeletal element was represented – except for his teeth, strangely enough.

A number of exceptional objects, presumably his one-time possessions, were selected to accompany him in his grave. An exotic bronze wine-mixing bucket, imported from Central Europe, was destined to be his urn. It appears to have been important that both the deceased and all his one-time possessions and soon-to-be grave goods be placed or signified in that urn. A wagon, imported from far away as well and used in life as a special, ceremonial and attention-grabbing mode of prestigious transport, and the horses that pulled it, also needed to be represented with him in death. Perhaps his ability to drive this unconventional and foreign vehicle and control the large draft horses who pulled it was strongly tied to his elite identity. The wagon itself was not interred – instead a number of metal components were selected to represent it. The remaining wooden wagon may have burned on the pyre or remained in use following the Chieftain's death, as the removal of the metal components represented in the burial would not have rendered the wagon unusable. Iron rings removed from the yoke were wrapped tightly together with a woolen cloth. This package of rings was placed on the bottom of the bronze bucket. Horse-gear designed for and used by large horses likewise was selected for burial. One of the leather bridles, incorporating a worn iron bit and bronze trappings, was placed next to the package of rings.

An extraordinary and exceptionally long imported iron sword with an elaborate hilt decorated with precious gold, lead, bone and bronze was hammered round, rendering it both useless and small enough to fit into the bronze urn. The iron blade was wrapped in yet another woolen cloth, possibly secured with an iron pin with a hollow bronze head, and placed in the bucket, hilt down, hiding the shining gold from view. Two different kinds of fine woolen cloth were folded together and deposited as grave goods in their own right, placed against the wrapped sword. In terms of craftsmanship and value, these imported textiles would have rivaled the precious sword.

An iron knife was wrapped with another woolen cloth and placed on top of the bridle together with an exceptionally well-made socketed iron axe – both likely used during (ritual) slaughtering activities or during feasting ceremonies surrounding his death and burial. It would have appeared strange to some of the mourners that this man was being buried with an axe, as this went completely against the community's customs. The second bridle was placed on top of the packet of wrapped rings in the bucket. Bronze rosettes were forcibly removed from the wooden yoke and placed in the bronze vessel together with the iron yoke toggles and perhaps leather yoke panels as well. As with the wagon, the wooden yoke may have been burned, or it may have remained in use following the burial or been otherwise disposed of. Two iron razors were added to the urn, as were a ribbed wooden drinking cup and a stone tool that was rubbed with ocher as part of the ritual. The Chieftain's cremated remains were likely the last element added.

The situla-urn and its content were then placed in a deep pit that had been dug through one of several ancient barrows located in a heath landscape. The mourners dug the Chieftain's grave pit slightly off-center in the mound, making sure not to disturb the older burial, and perhaps intentionally linking the deceased with the ancestor buried there. They then proceeded to cover the small ancient mound with one of the largest barrows most of them had ever seen and without parallel in Northwest Europe, some 53 m in diameter, stripping vast stretches of heath and investing both time and manpower in order to do so.

The burial ritual as a whole – from start to finish likely would have taken several days, if not weeks or even longer to complete – and members of the community to which he once belonged may have visited his final resting place for years to come…

Insert 7.1 The burial ritual of the Chieftain of Oss re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapter C26 and Fig. 7.1).

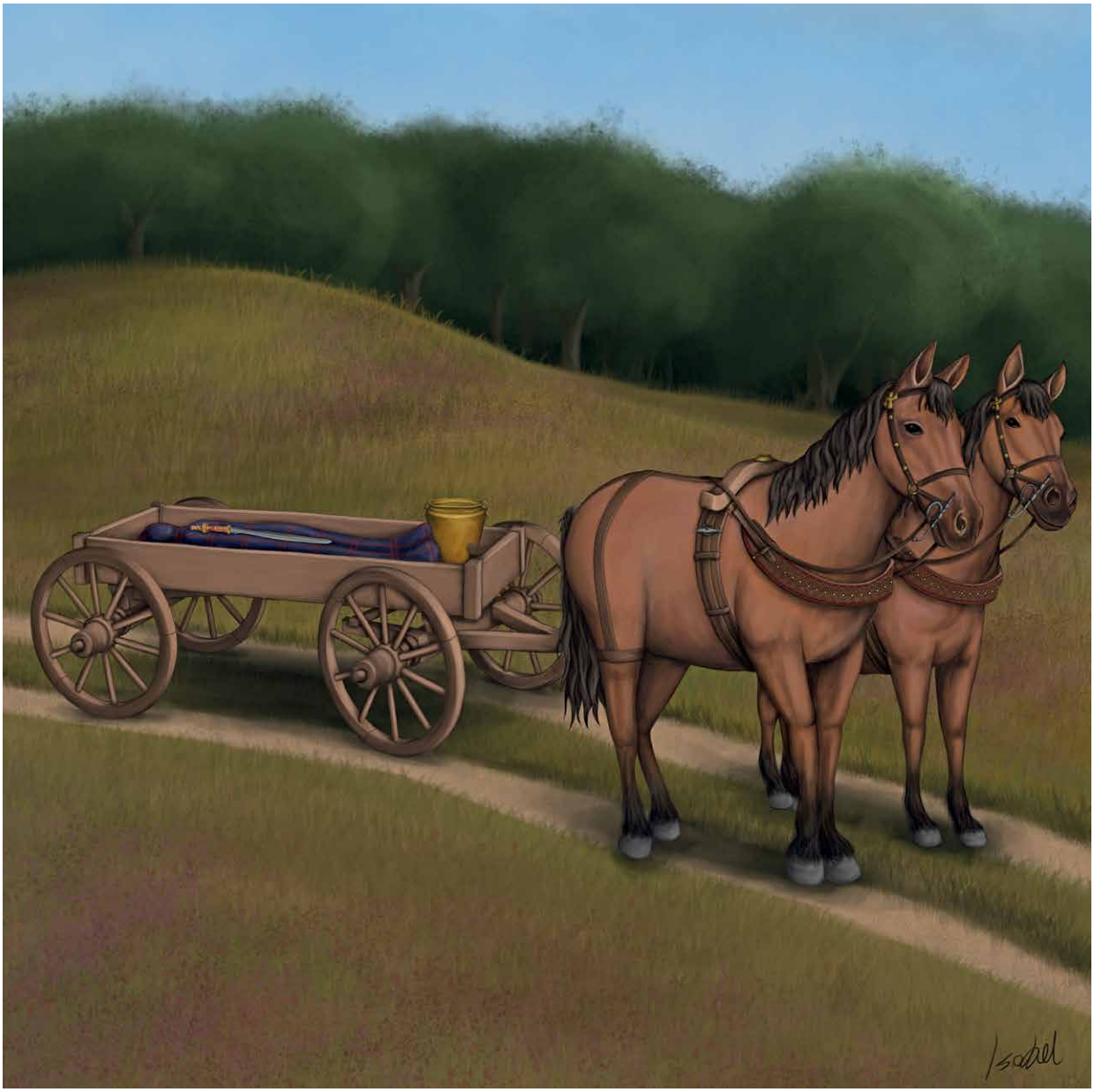

Fig. 7.1 Romantic reconstruction of the Chieftain's of Oss' burial. Note that the yoke chest straps are reconstructions of finds from Oss-Zevenbergen M.7 (see Section 7.2.1.8). Painting by I. Gelman.

7.1 Eight decades later: a 'new' Chieftain's burial of Oss

Nearly three millennia after the fiery funeral described above (Insert 7.1), the grave created would become known as the Chieftain's burial of Oss and its discovery would trigger over 80 years of archeological research (so far). This grave and the admittedly romanticized reconstruction (see the next section) given showcase the strength of the practice-based approach taken and thick-description methodology used in the current research. I am the fourth 'generation' of archeologists to study this find since it was discovered in 1933, and still new objects were recognized and new insights generated into the burial and the ritual through which it was created (Chapters C3 and C26). Both 'dry facts' such as the composition of certain metals or the weave types of textiles were established and actions such as the dismantling of a yoke were recognized. ^{14}C-dating and typochronology indicate that this burial is earlier than previously thought and study of the restoration history revealed how grave goods were placed in the situla. Use-wear showed the supposed whetstone to have been used for some other purpose than sharpening blades and to have been rubbed with ocher (as also confirmed with XRF-analysis). XRF-analysis of tiny fragments revealed that lead, a rare metal in the Early Iron Age, was incorporated into the sword hilt. Microscopic analysis of yet more fragments revealed that it also was decorated with strips of carved bone. More XRF-analysis confirmed the presence of a lead 'rod' as a structural element in the bronze bucket. Textile analysis identified eight different weaves in the bucket, and established that woolen cloth had been used both to wrap items during the burial ritual, and interred as a prestigious (imported) grave good in its own right. Dyestuff analysis could not identify colors, but micro-CT scans have been conducted in the hopes of establishing whether these were ever present. Last but not least, re-analysis of this man's cremation remains using new techniques completely changed how we view the man himself (see Section C26.2). In short, cooperation with a number of specialists (see Chapter C26) refined our image and understanding of this extraordinary grave, with most of the new insights and information coming from detailed study of small, corroded and unprepossessing fragments that initially may not have seemed worth studying.

7.2 The elite burial practice

The insert above and those in the rest of this chapter give somewhat romanticized impressions of the burial rituals through which the Chieftain of Oss and others were interred, but ones that are based on data collected and reconstructed during the course of this research. I have chosen this mode of portraying them to show that even with a lot of unknowns (due to the poor data quality), it is still possible to reconstruct burial rituals (to various degrees). These reconstructions also form an attempt to make the sterile objects come alive again. For while we primarily see them as beautiful bronze vessels and fantastic swords, often viewed in glass cases or handled with white gloves on, the last time they were beheld prior to their re-discovery they were the remarkable belongings of exceptional individuals who had died and were being interred during what were surely emotional events – something we at times forget. Returning to the Chieftain of Oss' burial ritual, the mourners intentionally created a specific identity for the deceased and laid him to rest according to the local custom of burying, though with some exotic influences. Many of the acts that now can be reconstructed for this funerary ritual appear to be part and parcel of Early Iron Age funerary customs in the Low Countries. The use of fire, the cremation rite, the manipulation and fragmentation of human remains and grave goods are found in (almost) all elite burials, and appear reflected in the dominant (sometimes referred to as 'normal') Urnfield graves customs as well. There is a recurring pattern, a recognizable way of dealing with the elite dead – a burial practice.

7.2.1 The phases of the burial practice

Generally speaking, there are five to six phases of actions and activities recognizable in the elite funerary rituals which inform us about how the dead were treated and perceived as well as the identities that appear to have been created. Different burials emphasize different things, but they appear to follow the same basic set up, which is visualized almost as a c*haîne opératoire* in Figure 7.2. This infographic is a compilation of the similar figures found in Chapter 5 and gives all actions and choices observed in the funerary rituals reconstructed in the Catalogue, from the urnfield burials to the most elaborate chieftain's grave. Note that while the following sections refer to phases, this is more of a descriptive term than a reality for the people who performed the burials. Moreover, these phases need not have taken place in quick succession, there may have been long periods of time between them or even between the acts in a single 'phase' (Section 2.2.3.2). For some graves only a few of these phases can be reconstructed, while others are assumed to have taken place based on parallels. Note also that, as with any kind of funerary ritual, it is likely that a range of activities was performed which cannot be recognized archeologically (see also Section 2.2.3.2).

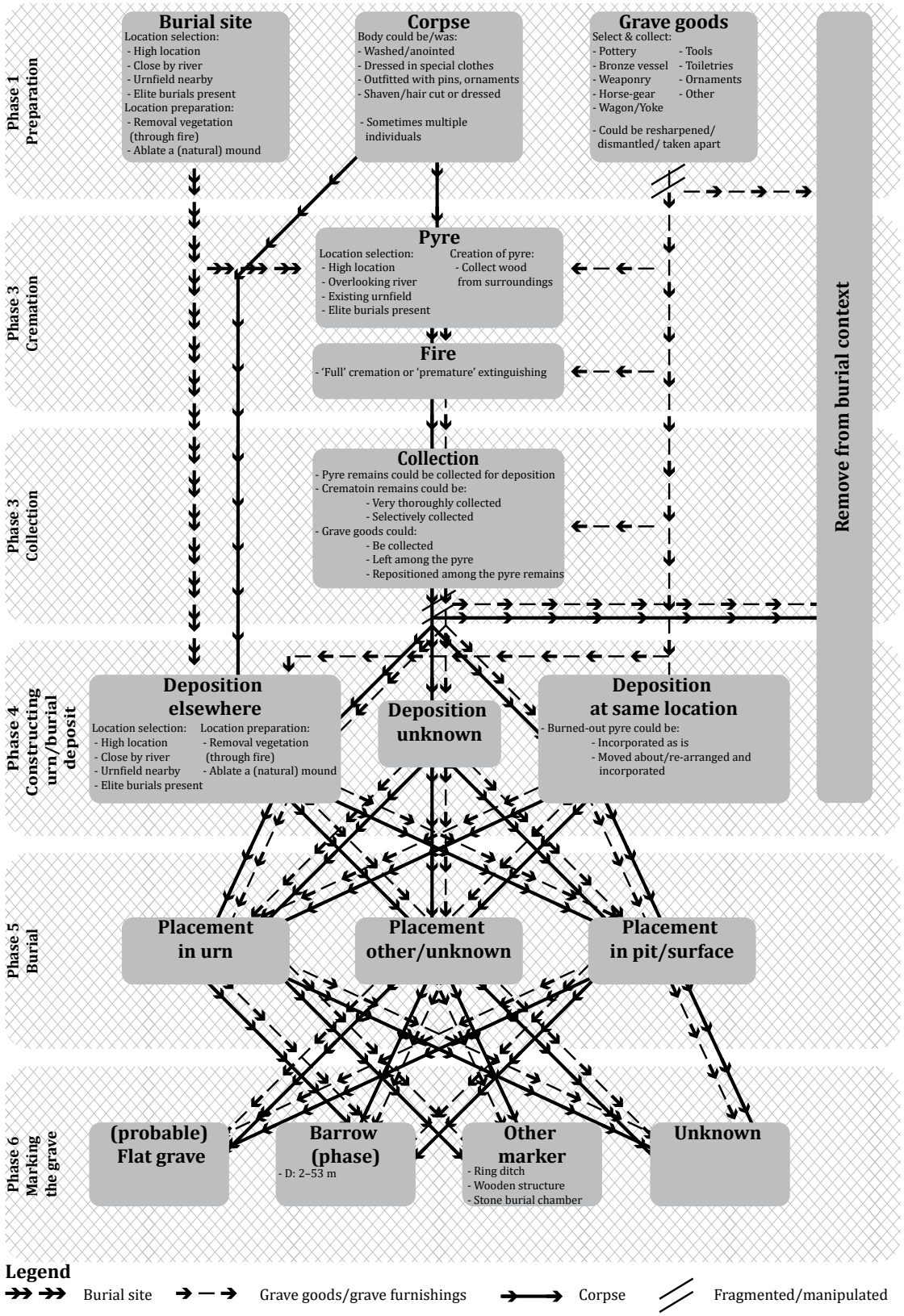

Fig. 7.2 Visualization of the range of choices made and actions taken during the elite burial practice in the form of a chaîne opératoire-style visual compilation of all actions and choices observed in the funerary rituals reconstructed in the Catalogue.

7.2.1.1 Phase 1: Preparation

The first phase identified involved the selection and preparation of the pyre, corpse, grave goods and sometimes also the burial site. This is a phase that generally little is known about, as it most likely would have comprised actions that leave no archeological correlates. A few rare exceptions and a number of parallels, however, can give some insights into what (could have) happened during this part of the burial practice (see also Section 2.2.3.2).

Preparation corpse

In general, the dead are prepared in some manner for cremation or burial. Examples from elsewhere indicate that there are numerous treatments that a corpse can undergo that would leave no archeologically recognizable traces, especially after the cremation rite. The body may have been treated with any range of substances and rituals may have been performed on or around it. The deceased's hair or beard may have been styled or shaven in a certain way, perhaps with the razors or tweezers that were interred in several of the elite burials (see Section 6.5.1.1). Nails similarly could have been cut or cleaned with the toiletry items provided, and it may be that "the use of the toilet articles by mourners and on the deceased […] played a role in fixing a certain image of the latter in death" (Treherne 1995, 120). Another common means of preparing a corpse is to dress it in certain clothes or adorn it with ornaments. Due to the cremation rite limited evidence survives of this for the elite burials, though there are exceptions. The deceased of Wijchen, for example, likely was equipped with an ornate bronze belt plate before being burned. The (possibly female) individual buried in Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.4 was cremated wearing a bronze bracelet. The woman of Leesten-Meijerink wore a range of ornaments, including a pin and hair- or earrings as well as glass beads and bronze studs that either decorated her garments or were some kind of necklace or belt. At Uden-Slabroek the deceased was buried in a dress with long sleeves, a garment that had been worn regularly enough in life for it to start to wear. Bronze bracelets and anklets that reflected the deceased's elite identity adorned the limbs and bronze spirals decorated the hair (see Catalogue).

Preparation grave goods

Preparing the grave goods that were to be buried with the deceased firstly would have involved selecting them. As noted in Chapters 2 and 6, the items interred as grave goods not only were used, they were also meaningful objects that in all likelihood were selected as grave goods for specific reasons. They doubtless reflected who the deceased was in life, but probably also were used to create a specific, perhaps powerful and elite identity for them in death. The use-life or associated symbolism of an object (see Section 2.3 and Chapter 6) may have influenced why it was selected. The recurrence of specific kinds of grave goods, especially the combination of certain types of objects, would appear to confirm that certain social guidelines or cultural customs underlay the selection process. The objects that were to accompany the deceased would not only have to be selected, they also would have to be collected and brought together. It generally is assumed that these were once the property of or at least used by the deceased and therefore likely would have been easy to access, but there are also hints that grave goods sometimes were made specifically for burial, such as the oversized and unusable horse-bits found in Meerlo (see also Olivier 1999). Again, any range of rituals may have been performed with or on them. As noted above, the razors and toiletries may have been used to shave the deceased and the mourners may have dressed the hair of the corpse in a certain way. The butchering knives and axes could have been used for (ritual) slaughtering, intended as offerings or for a funerary feast, at which the bronze vessels may have been used to hold alcoholic beverages. The wagon may have been used to transport the deceased to the pyre (Fig. 7.1).

In some cases grave goods were dismantled or manipulated during this phase, *i.e.* before ending up on the pyre. At Wijchen, for example, horse-gear had to be removed from the horses prior to burning and the wheels may have been removed from the wagon prior to it being placed on the pyre (Section C35.4). The bronze sword from Harchies-Maison Cauchies t.3 may have been broken prior to being exposed to fire (Section C12.4; Leblois 2010). Of the grave goods only those that eventually ended up in the burial survive, and there are clear indications that even at this stage of the funerary ritual parts or components of the grave goods were removed from the burial sphere. If we assume that these objects were linked to the identity of the deceased, then both their interment and their removal becomes significant (see below).

Preparation pyre/burial site

As also discussed below, in some cases the pyre and burial site were the same place, while in others the pyre was created somewhere removed from the eventual burial site. In both cases little tends to be known regarding the preparation, if there even was any, of a burial/pyre site. Only in the handful of well-excavated barrows that covered pyres can anything be reconstructed regarding where the pyre was built and what it was constructed from (note that these few exceptions supply the 'characteristics' of pyre sites listed in Figure 7.2 and the similar figures in Chapter 5). Pyres have not been found or recognized in other contexts. The best studied example of a pyre incorporated into a barrow comes from Oss-Zevenbergen M.7, where the pyre appears to have been constructed from wood suited to burning a body, like oak, ash and possibly

willow that likely was gathered from the surroundings of the pyre site (Bakels *et al.* 2013). This is also one of the few examples where evidence survives that the pyre site, which later would be used as the place of burial, was prepared by ablating the top of the dune prior to erecting the pyre. Another example is Horst-Hegelsom where the vegetation appears to have been burned off prior to the construction of the barrow. This phase need not necessarily *precede* cremation in those cases where the eventual burial did not incorporate the pyre – the mourners may have cremated elsewhere and then later prepared the eventual burial site.

7.2.1.2 Phase 2: Cremation

The second phase reconstructed is the cremation itself of the deceased and possibly his or her grave goods. It seems to have mattered little whether objects were burned or not, as these are found both burned and unburned – sometimes even in the same grave. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, cremation was a fiery assault on the senses. It was a noisy, smelly spectacle lasting for hours. The fire may have needed tending, and it would have made an impact on everyone involved. This process transformed the deceased, leaving him or her unrecognizable, perhaps an important step in changing them from a person to an ancestor (see *e.g.* Fokkens 2013; Helms 1998; Huntington/Metcalfe 1979). This phase of course did not take place with inhumation burials, though even at Uden-Slabroek, the only inhumation in the dataset, a large fire was used to char the beams and planks that would be used to shore up the burial pit.

7.2.1.3 Phase 3: Collection

A range of activities took place following the burning of the body, indicating that the cremation itself was not the final stage of a burial ritual (*cf.* Rebay-Salisbury 2012, 22). The collection of the burned remains was the third phase recognized. From those graves with more detailed context information, and especially those in which the pyre was incorporated into the barrow, we know that this was an elaborate process. Sometimes the pyre would be carefully combed through, with as much cremation remains collected as possible. The Chieftain of Oss, for example, is one of the most complete prehistoric cremation deposits found in the Netherlands.

Collecting cremated bone is in itself not difficult, though it may take some time (Section 2.2.3.2; McKinley 1994b; 1997; Williams 2004). In several cases a selection of cremated bone intentionally was left among the pyre remains, or at least was not placed in the eventual burial. In Oss-Zevenbergen M.7, for example, an ulna fragment was found lying front and center in the burned-out pyre, and it would appear that it was left there intentionally. At the same burial only a partial cremation remains deposit was found in the urn, which even combined with the remains left among the pyre would not constitute a full deposit. This means that a selection of human remains was *removed* from the pyre and not incorporated into the barrow. Other examples of what appear to be partial deposits of cremation remains are Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.Z and Horst-Hegelsom.

In those cases where objects accompanied the deceased on the pyre, they sometimes would be collected completely as well as sometimes partially deposited. At Wijchen, for example, it appears that all grave goods were burned, (a selection?) collected and placed in an urn. At Oss-Zevenbergen M.7 a number of grave goods intentionally were left lying by the pyre, after having been moved to one side during the collection process. It also appears that as part of this process the grave goods (and perhaps the bones?) frequently were manipulated and fragmented. Sometimes the complete, though bent or broken, object would be interred, while in others only part of it ended up in the burial deposit. At Wijchen, for example, several wagon components were bent and broken, some appearing almost wrenched apart, with the ribbed bucket only very partially interred. Other examples are the already mentioned Mound 7 where a bronze ring was broken and only half placed back into the burial deposit, or Leesten-Meijerink where a number of pin fragments are missing from the burial deposit. The bronze swords are another example – none were recovered complete. Especially the tangs and points frequently were not selected for interment (and this is also true for burials with excellent context and excavation information). When only parts of people or objects were interred, they likely were intended as *pars pro toto* depositions, where a part of something stood for the whole thing. It is not unlikely that those objects or object fragments removed from the burial deposit were kept as precious reminders or amulets (as may be the case with a number of horse-gear decorations, see below).

7.2.1.4 Phase 4: Constructing the cinerary urn or burial deposit

The fourth phase identified involved constructing the cinerary urn or burial deposit. These appear to have been constructed in various ways, but always in a structured manner. Broadly speaking there are four ways this was done. Either an organic or inorganic container was used or a deposit was created in or on the ground (the latter two options somewhat overlap with the fifth phase discussed below). Sometimes everything appears to have been wrapped in something that has not survived, like cloth or leather or even a basket, while in others a ceramic or bronze vessel was used as an urn. At Neerharen-Rekem t.72 or Haps g.190, for example, everything was packed together so tightly that the deposits likely

were wrapped in something organic. At Gedinne-Chevaudos T.1 everything except some pottery was placed in a ceramic urn, and at Ede-Bennekom everything was interred in a bronze one. For the Chieftain of Oss we have the finest resolution of insights into the construction of the cinerary urn. As described above, the grave goods were wrapped and stacked in the bronze bucket used as an urn. But also in others we have some insights – for example burials where only some of the grave goods were placed in the urn, while others were positioned next to it. Like Leesten-Meijerink, where (something decorated with) bronze studs and glass beads, fragments of bronze ornaments and one accessory vessel and spindle whorl were placed in the urn with the cremation remains, while a second accessory vessel and spindle whorl were placed next to the urn in the burial pit. Sometimes everything was arranged on the surface, like Oss-Zevenbergen M.3, an extreme *pars pro toto* where a burned oaken plank, one piece of cremation remains and a number of object fragments were arranged on the old surface. In other cases, like M.7 from the same site they even did both, by interring a selection of cremation remains in an urn, but also incorporating the burned-out pyre and a number of objects into the burial deposit.

7.2.1.5 Phase 5: Burial

The burying of the urn or funerary deposit was the fifth phase identified. The location selected for this varied, though high places in the landscape or ones close to rivers seems to have been preferred. An association with older or other burials also appears to have been common (see Section 5.6). In general terms, burial either took place by placing the (organic) urn filled with cremation remains and grave goods in a pit dug into the ground or in an existing burial monument. The urn or deposit also could be placed on the old surface. In either case the burial then would be covered, which in some cases was done by erecting a barrow (and in this manner this phase sometimes overlap with phase 6). The cinerary urn of the Chieftain of Oss, for example, was dug into an existing Middle Bronze Age barrow, while several of the Court-St-Etienne burials appear to have been arranged on the old surface. Oss-Zevenbergen M.3 is also a striking example of a 'burial' elaborately created spread out on the ground. Sometimes the urn was placed in or near the pyre, and sometimes grave goods appear to have been 'arranged' in a certain way. Like Oss M.7 already described or Havré T.E where the urn not only was buried close to the pyre but the iron sword was stuck into the ground by the urn. Limal-Morimoine T.1 is another remarkable example where a rectangular zone of cremation remains appears to have been arranged, perhaps mimicking the shape and size of a body (an established practice), among the burned-out pyre. The urn with ashes was placed at the center of this zone and horse-gear decorations arranged on either side of the urn.

7.2.1.6 Phase 6: Marking the grave

The sixth phase recognized (which it appears did not always take place) was the construction of the burial marker or monument. This was done in a number of ways. The construction of a barrow or new mound phase was the most common (see Fig. 4.2). These could be relatively modest like Lommel-Kattenbos T.20 (8 m in diam.) or immense like the Oss mounds (30 m, 36 m and 53 m in diam.). A singular example is Oss-Zevenbergen M.3, the only barrow with by a post-circle. Sometimes the burial was marked with a ring ditch as well as a barrow like at Horst-Hegelsom. In some cases only a ring ditch was found, like at Meppen where one of the largest ring ditches of the northern Netherlands surrounded the bronze bucket, and it is not always clear whether there originally was a barrow as well. Leesten-Meijerink is one well-excavated example where a (double) ring ditch appears to have been all that marked the burial. In some cases, like Uden-Slabroek, it seems that there was some kind of marker above ground (given that later burials respected it), but it is unknown what this was. There are also graves that do not appear to have been marked above ground, at least not in a way that left archeologically recognizable correlates (see the Catalogue).

7.2.1.7 Phase 7?

It may be that funerary activities took place after the marking of the grave that cannot be recognized archeologically. The mourners may have visited the grave, or performed rituals or sacrifices (as may have been done at Horst-Hegelsom, see below). They may have returned to bury others, or the area may have been used for other activities like grazing sheep (as was done at Oss; De Kort 2007; Jansen/Fokkens 2007, 84). Barrows in particular may have served as visual markers or orientation points (see *e.g.* Bourgeois 2013).

7.2.1.8 The other side of *pars pro toto* depositions and relational identity

It appears that the partial deposition of both grave goods and human remains was a common element in Late Bronze and Early Iron Age funerary practices. In a number of the sword burials under discussion, for example, almost the complete sword is interred, with only one or two fragments 'missing', while in others only part of the sword was interred and the question remains – what happened with the rest of the sword? In Oss-Vorstengraf components of the yoke were deposited while the wagon appears to not have been interred at all and would have remained

usable (see below). In Wijchen only a small selection of bucket fragments was selected for burial, and even though all elements of the wagon are represented there were likely many more bronze decorations than those deposited. The significance of the process through which certain elements were selected for burial has been stressed, but in this section I emphasize that there is another side to the *pars pro toto* practice, one that tends to receive less attention or consideration. Namely that when only a selection of grave goods or human remains is interred, this means that the rest is deliberately kept out of the funerary deposit – and it may be that those, for us archeologists 'missing' elements were just as (or more) important. While we cannot know what happened to those elements that we do not find, it is important to consider that during the burial rituals people not only dismantled and fragmented objects (and in a way the deceased as well) but that they elected to to *not* bury certain things. In other words, *whether to inter or to keep was a deliberate choice*. So perhaps it was not always, or at least not only, about representing something in a grave, perhaps it was also about taking something away, such as a memento in the form of a fragment of horse-gear or a single wagon decoration (see also Section 7.2.3.4), or an entire yoke or wagon that still could be used. Brück (2004, 319–21) has argued that fragmentation and destruction of objects at the grave side were "powerful symbolic statements of the social impact of death" and that this allowed "mourners to express and to think through the changes wrought by death", and it may have been important that something continued on, outside of the grave.

The concept of relational identity (as introduced and applied to the Bronze Age by J. Brück and D. Fontijn) may offer an explanation for the destructive and selective nature of the Low Countries (elite) burial practice and why the mourners invested time and effort into fragmenting what appear to be valuable objects (*e.g.* Brück 2004; 2006ab; Brück/Fontijn 2012). Brück and Fontijn (2012, 203) argue that objects can be material manifestations of interpersonal links, and that relationships can be mapped out on to and around the corpse by the arranging of grave goods (see also Brück 2004; 2006ab). They also state that the relational nature of identity can be signified by removing objects from the funerary context, and that by fragmenting an object (or a person's remains through cremation), parts of it can be deposited in the grave and "other elements retained as tokens of the dead by the living" (Brück/Fontijn 2012, 203). The value of the objects selected as grave goods lay perhaps less in their economic worth, and rather more in the meanings ascribed to them (see also Section 2.3). They may have been inalienable, for example as a result of the manner in which they reached the Low Countries, presumably through some form of direct exchange with people living far away. Their particular cultural biographies made them meaningfull and significant and gave them value (see also below and Section 2.3.2), and it may be their their particular histories made them suitable to serve as grave goods (*cf.* Brück/Fontijn 2012, 199). This meaning and the relationships that certain objects reflect may then be not only why they were selected to serve as grave goods, but also why certain objects were dismantled and fragmented, with parts of objects interred with the dead and parts kept with the living.

A yoke and wagon re-used at Oss?

I – very tentatively – suggest that some of the above may be reflected in the Oss graves, namely the burial of parts of a wagon and the continued use of the rest of the wagon by someone else (I stress that this is primarily intended as a thought exercise; see also Fig. 7.1). The Chieftain of Oss was buried with rosettes and toggles that were removed from the yoke to be placed in the bucket. We know from newly discovered drawings that a single small stud was found in this grave (Section C26.2). This stud is of the same size as those found in Oss-Zevenbergen M.7, where it is argued that yoke panels covered in at least a thousand such studs were found. At M.7 a single hemispherical sheet-knob was recovered, a knob of the same dimension as the 15 such knobs found in the Chieftain's burial. This of course could be pure coincidence, but it is not impossible that the Chieftain had a yoke and yoke straps that were decorated with bronze studs, yoke yosettes and toggles, and that during his funeral the rosettes and toggles (and the bridles) were removed. It is possible that the rest of the yoke was kept, and that wooden knobs covered in studs were added to replace the rosettes, and that this yoke (and the wagon) then was used by the individual who later was buried in M.7. While this is pure speculation, it is offered as an example of what *could* have happened with those elements not placed in the burial.

7.2.2 The local way of burying and being 'distinguished' in death

The phases, steps and actions described above can be recognized to varying degrees in all graves in the dataset. There is a recurring pattern with variations, but all within the same spectrum (see also Chapter 5). Strikingly though, in many respects this burial practice hardly appears to deviate from the 'normal' urnfield burial practice, which is likewise characterized by the use of fire, manipulation and fragmentation and *pars pro toto* deposition (Figs. 5.9 and 5.10; *e.g.* De Laet 1982; De Mulder 2011; De Mulder/Bourgeois 2011, 303; Hessing/Kooi 2005; Kooi 1979; Louwen in prep.). This is especially true for those people buried with *only* a bucket, *only* weaponry or *only* personal items. For these people were not treated all that differently in death than others during the funerary rite.

Buried in a bucket: Ede-Bennekom

Someone died and was cremated. His/her remains were collected and placed in a small bronze bucket, which the deceased may have used to mix alcoholic beverages in during life. The mourners deliberately may have deposited skull fragments in the bronze urn last. No other grave goods were given, and the cinerary urn thus created was buried in the ground.

Buried with a sword: Horst-Hegelsom

Following the death of a man some 25–60 years old, his body was cremated and at least some of his cremated remains were collected and deposited in a Schräghals*-urn. An iron sword was bent round and its handle may have been broken off deliberately. The sword was placed on top of the cremation remains in the urn, with the handle possibly placed among the curled-up blade. A ceramic bowl served as a lid for the urn. The urn was placed in a pit, which in turn was marked by a funerary structure of some sort, which may have been burned as part of the burial ritual. This deposit was covered with a fairly large barrow (ca. 19 m in diam.) and marked by a wide ditch dug around the mound. The earth removed from the ditch was used to create the barrow, with more sods being brought in from elsewhere to complete it. Initially an opening was left in the ring ditch in the west-northwest side, where a fire burned (which could be a rare example of archeologically recognizable 'phase 7' activities taking place at the site, see above).*

Appearance emphasized: Lommel-Kattenbos T.20

Someone was cremated, after which his/her remains were collected and deposited in a ceramic Schräghals*-pot. It may be that the (facial) hair of the deceased was shaven or tweezed with the razor and tweezers that later were deposited, and his/her nails may have been trimmed with the nail cutter. The urn was placed by an area of charcoal, and a grinding stone was broken and placed close to the urn. Iron toiletry items were found among the charcoal as well, and could have been left there following being burned on the pyre or been placed there after the pyre cooled. The nail cutter may have been broken prior to deposition. The burial deposit created was covered with a small barrow (8 m in diam.).*

Insert 7.2 The burial rituals of the deceased buried in Ede-Bennekom, Horst-Hegelsom and Lommel-Kattenbos T.20 re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapters C8, C16 and C20).

They were identified as exceptional individuals through the elite objects interred with them, but other than the inclusion of those objects as grave goods, their funerary rituals conformed to the local way of burying (see also Chapter 5). Insert 7.2 offers the reconstructed funerary rituals of Ede-Bennekom (a 'simple' urnfield burial whose only distinguishing feature is that the urn is made of bronze), Horst-Hegelsom (a rare case of a 'simple' sword burial where we have a finer resolution of the funerary ritual) and Lommel-Kattenbos T.20 (where the personal appearance of the deceased was emphasized through a razor and toiletries) as examples.

As these few examples show, the burial practice described above seems to have been the standard *modus operandi* for burying the remains of people from all levels of society, whether they were to be buried in a hole in the ground, in a pot with a pin or with a sword or bronze bucket. This practice in essence appears to be the same as the urnfield burial custom (see also Section 5.4), which dominated both before and at the same time as the elite burial practice under consideration. There are variations in the choreography conducted, but all fall within proscribed social 'guidelines' and customs as with most societies. There was a culturally accepted and known way of burying people, in which it made little difference for the actions undertaken during the funerary ritual whether you had weaponry or feasting vessels in life or death. Certain, special individuals may have taken exotic objects to their graves and sometimes have had larger burial monuments, but their funerals were decidedly local, and perhaps really not all that exceptional. As has already been noted, there was a burial spectrum, rather than a strict division between 'elites' and 'non-elites', at least in terms of the way people were laid to rest (see also Bourgeois/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017). The urnfields – the predominant way of burying – both predated the elite burials and continued after the elite burial practice went out of use. The elite graves represent the exception, even though most of the people interred in them were laid to rest through funerary rituals that in most ways conformed to this predominant and 'normal' way of burying. Except, it appears, for those to be interred with wagons.

7.2.3 Wagons make the dead different

Burials with wagon components or wagon-related horse-gear seem to be the result of an exaggerated and elaborate burial practice where – within the 'normal' burial customs – dismantling, manipulation and fragmentation were emphasized (see Tab. 5.5). In this group of graves the *pars pro toto* practice is more common and exaggerated and it is in these burials (and Uden-Slabroek, see below) that textiles are used to wrap grave goods and the deceased. These graves appear to have been placed preferentially in such a

Burned with a wagon: Wijchen

The deceased was burned on the pyre with an extensive set of grave goods, including a precious wagon and yoke covered in elaborate bronze decorations. Two decorated bridles with bronze bits likely were placed on the edge of the pyre, somewhere away from the hottest part of the fire. The corpse was adorned with an intricately decorated bronze belt plate and iron pin. A bronze axe probably was placed near the body on the pyre. A number of iron objects may have burned on the pyre as well, or they may have been added to the urn later. These include an iron butchering knife that was bent to a 90° angle. An extremely long iron sword, which in form and design is unique in Europe, was hammered round, even more extremely so than was done with the Chieftain of Oss' sword. Following the cremation process the cremation remains and objects were collected. Care was taken to gather components from the bridles, yoke and wagon, while only a few fragments of the bronze bucket were selected. A number of objects were manipulated and fragmented, with fragments of a bronze yoke band and a decorative plaque being bent. A bronze band with openwork decoration was folded multiple times, as was a fragment of bronze plate that probably belonged to the belt plate. A bronze pendant appears to almost have been wrenched apart. The collected cremation remains, objects and fragments thereof were placed in a ceramic urn and buried.

Insert 7.3 The burial ritual of the deceased buried at Wijchen re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapter C35).

Fig. 7.3 Interpretation: from bronze studs to a decorated yoke to a wagon. Painting by I. Gelman; photograph by Restauratieatelier Restaura, Haelen.

way as to connect with earlier burials and tend to be marked by substantially larger barrows (see Figure 4.2 and Section 5.6), like the Chieftain's burial of Oss. It is also these Hallstatt C burials that contain *more* grave goods, sometimes the 'Hallstatt set' of horse-gear, wagon components, weaponry and bronze vessels (see Section 2.2.1.1). While harder to define, many of them also have something unique, non-standard or 'odd' to them – something done 'differently'. The Wijchen burial, for example, is the result of an extremely destructive burial ritual in which grave goods were manipulated and fragmented to an unparalleled degree. They were not just bent or broken – objects were hammered round and bronzes were folded several times or even wrenched apart (see also Section C35.4).

Just about everything about the deceased's of Wijchen's grave goods (which may have been his/her belongings) was exotic and special, from the precious bronze ribbed drinking vessel to the unique sword and a wagon that may well have been one of the most elaborate, exotic and symbolically charged vehicles in use in this part of Europe at the time. Made somewhere in Central Europe and influenced by Etruscan art, it was used extensively and covered many miles before finally being burned with this person. The axle-pins were decorated with anthropomorphic figurines that only could be viewed by those allowed and able to come close to the wagon when it was stationary. This was a form of art almost unknown in Early Iron Age Low Countries and may have made a big impression on people living there, or perhaps would not have not been understood by them (see Section 2.3.4). Whether they recognized the Etruscan influences or merely perceived the wagon as 'foreign' is unknown. But in any case, something about this individual warranted an exaggerated burial ritual and total destruction of the extraordinary wagon, unique sword and ribbed bucket.

7.2.3.1 The common denominator: wagons and wagon-related horse-gear

The common factor connecting the burials created through exaggerated burial rituals is that they all contain wagon components or items related to wagons, such as yoke components or horse-gear suited to driving (see Section 6.3). Recognizing the 'presence' of the wagon is not always easy – the challenge is often to go from fragments to objects and then to use and behavior (Fig. 7.3). For example the tiny bronze studs from Oss-Zevenbergen that are actually the metal remains of a decorated yoke, which indicates the one-time presence of a wagon, or the small bronze found in Court-St-

The elite burials of Court-St-Etienne

Tombelle K *Someone was cremated and the remains were collected and placed in an urn. A bronze sword was heated, bent and broken. The resulting fragments were deposited in a stone coffin of some sort, either in or under a barrow. It appears that the tang and tip of the sword were not interred, and may have been kept out of the burial intentionally.*

Tombelles L and M *All we know of the rituals conducted at Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.L and T.M is that they involved fire, as evidenced by the charcoal beds found in the barrows and the deposition of an iron sword in both. Whether the charcoal beds relate to a cremation burial, or even to the same rituals in which the swords were deposited cannot be determined from the available evidence.*

In many ways the majority of the elite burials at Court-St-Etienne do not differ from the urnfield graves found nearby, at least not in terms of the funerary rituals through which they were created. Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.4, where parts of wagon-related horse-gear and a yoke were deposited, in contrast appears far more elaborate, involving many more actions, as well the use of textile, with the result also being a much larger barrow:

Tombelle 4: *The person who was to be buried in T.4, who may have been a small female, was also to be cremated. The pyre was prepared while the corpse was ornamented with a bronze bracelet, and possibly dressed or made ready in some other manner. (S)he was cremated wearing the bronze bracelet, with a number of objects, presumably her one-time possessions, placed on the pyre around her. These included a bronze vessel, perhaps a bowl but maybe a cup. An entire yoke may have been burned on the pyre, or a number of metal elements may have been removed and burned separately. These include bronze yoke rosettes and a complex iron chest ornament for a horse made of iron rings with dangling pendants that may have burned on the pyre, but also may have been removed from the yoke chest strap to be placed in the urn. A bridle either was burned as a whole or bronze* phalerae *were removed from it prior to placement on the pyre. Following cremation, the cremation remains and burned bracelet were collected from the pyre. A number of horse-gear and yoke components were selected, and some bronze vessel fragments were collected and may have been fragmented intentionally. Then either some of the metal objects, or the cremation remains, metal objects and ceramic accessory vessel together were packed together tightly in textile and placed in an urn. The urn either was buried or placed on the ground and covered with a large barrow, some 22 m in diameter.*

Limal-Morimoine T.1

Someone of unknown sex died, and a large pyre was constructed for his/her cremation. The deceased was accompanied on the pyre by at least a number of horse-gear components. As the pyre and body burned, a strong wind blew from the west, spreading charcoal speckles around the pyre. Upon completion of the cremation, the burned-out pyre was searched through and spread about. The cremation remains appear to have been collected and some spread out in a rectangular area on or by the burned-out pyre, perhaps with the intention of mimicking the size and shape of a human body. The remainder were put in an urn which in turn was positioned in the middle of the zone of cremation remains. The horse-gear ornaments appear to have been placed to either side. The iron sword ended up at the other end of the burned-out pyre, and may have lain there as the pyre burned, or else was placed there later. The horse-bit appears to have been broken, and half was left on the edge of the burned-out pyre. The half a bit and very minimal horse-gear decorations suggest that some objects either were never burned, or were removed from the burned-out pyre before it was covered, such as the other half of the bit, or the second of what was likely a pair of bits.

Insert 7.4 The burial ritual of a number of deceased at Court-St-Etienne and the deceased of Limal-Morimoine T.1 re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapters C6 and C19). More funerary rituals from Court-St-Etienne are re-imagined in Insert 7.6.

Etienne La Quenique T.A that is in fact a *Jochschnalle*, which reveals the one-time presence of a yoke and in turn a wagon. In cases such as the Oss-Zevenbergen studs, the excavation and documentation has to be of very high quality to allow for the identification of a yoke. Or the wagon, yoke or horse-gear component has to be recognizable as relating to a wagon, like a *Jochschnalle*. There are also numerous kinds of bronze wagon and yoke decorations that are not nearly so characteristic, and therefore still allow multiple interpretations (see Section 6.3). In any case, whether represented by a small bronze fragment or the entire wagon, the wagon's presence appears to correlate with exceptional treatment.

7.2.3.2 Not a matter of archeological resolution

Both the number of grave goods and the quality of the excavation of the burial influence the degree to which a funerary ritual can be reconstructed. The more grave goods there are, the greater the chance of any kind of special treatment of them during the burial ritual being recognizable. The same is true for sites that were excavated properly as they provide a higher archeological resolution of prehistoric events. Both factors make it easier to recognize actions performed during the burial ritual. Some of the best-excavated burials in the dataset are those with wagons and wagon-related horse-gear. Graves with these

Oss-Zevenbergen M.7

The Early Iron Age mourners ablated the top of a roundish natural dune that may have been viewed as an ancient barrow given its roundish appearance and location in an ancient barrow row. Oak, ash and possibly willow were collected, likely in the immediate vicinity, and used to construct a pyre on top of the ablated dune. The corpse of a man some 23–40 years old at the time of his death was placed on the pyre. A number of leather and wooden components from a yoke and horse-gear were placed at the edge of the pyre. These yoke and horse tack elements were decorated richly with over a thousand bronze studs and several bronze rings. Other objects, including something decorated with carved bone, were placed near the pyre as well, which then was fired and the man cremated. For some reason the fire went out before the wooden pyre burned completely, though the cremation was already complete. It may be that a wind picked up and extinguished the pyre located on the high, ablated dune. The cremated remains were collected from the burned-out pyre, with some pieces left (probably intentionally) among the pyre remains. Some of the cremation remains were placed in a ceramic urn, while some of the collected remains were kept out of the funerary deposit. As they searched through the burned-out pyre, mourners moved charcoal beams to one side and shoved the bronze-studded horse-gear and yoke components to the other side and left them lying there. A number of bronze rings were broken intentionally, and only a selection was placed back among the pyre remains. The burial deposit so created was covered carefully with sods and a large mound created, incorporating the natural dune that served both as pyre and burial site.

Insert 7.5 The burial ritual of Oss-Zevenbergen M.7 re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapter C27).

items represented in them in general also tend to have more grave goods (see also Chapter 4). There is therefore a link between graves with wagon and wagon-related horse-gear and the degree to which the funerary ritual can be reconstructed, and it could be thought that this is why they appear to be the results of more exaggerated and extreme rituals. However, I argue that the difference seen between the majority of elite burials and those with wagons and wagon-related horse-gear is not simply a matter of archeological resolution. 'Unusual' funerary rituals also can be recognized in burials that are relatively poor in grave goods. Limal-Morimoine T.1, for example, yielded an urn, a sword, a *phalera*, four tiny studs and only half a bit (of a type that relates functionally to driving; see Sections 6.3.5 and 6.3.6.4), yet it also appears to be the result of an exaggerated funerary ritual with unusual, possibly even unique elements. Court-St-Etienne serves as a striking example that contradicts the suggestion that it is quality of excavation that makes a number of burials with wagon-related items appear 'different'. This site yielded a dozen exceptional burials, and numerous stray finds indicating the one-time presence of even more exceptional graves. All of them were excavated in the early 20th century or even earlier and there is little to no context information available for them. Yet the burials with wagons and/or wagon-related horse-gear stand out in terms of the funerary rituals through which they were created (Insert 7.4).

The few burial rituals of Court-St-Etienne reconstructed in Insert 7.4 show that a difference in terms of the extravagance of the burial ritual between those buried with wagons and wagon-related horse-gear and others also can be observed in finds that were excavated poorly (by modern standards) and have poor context information. Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.4, where parts of wagon-related horse-gear and a yoke were deposited, appears far more elaborate, involving many more actions as well as the use of textile and resulting in a much larger barrow than the sword burials of T.K, T.L and T.M. While Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.4 may not be the most striking example of an exaggerated funerary ritual for a wagon-related burial, the difference between the funerary ritual that created it and those that resulted in the sword-graves is clear. The point is that the archeological resolution for these is roughly the same, and yet there are still differences recognizable in the burial rituals, with Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.4 appearing far more exaggerated and 'aberrant'. There are also striking similarities between the funerary ritual of Limal-Morimoine T.1 and the one at Oss-Zevenbergen M.7 described below, another burial poor in grave goods but with wagon-related ones. Both are more elaborate than most, and both have unique features to them (at least within the dataset), even though they are relatively poor in grave goods actually deposited.

So while the graves with wagons and wagon-related horse-gear often offer a surprising amount of detailed insight into the burial rituals through which they were created, the exaggerated and sometimes 'strange' nature of the funerary rituals also can be observed in burials with fewer graves goods or those that were excavated poorly. It therefore does not seem to be archeological resolution that makes the wagon and wagon-related horse-gear burials appear to stand out in terms of how they were created.

7.2.3.3 Axes: local knowledge of exotic customs?

Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.3, Oss-Vorstengraf, Rhenen-Koerheuvel and Wijchen are the graves that could be labeled 'traditional' Chieftain's burials (*cf.* definition given in Section 2.2.1.1), and those that come closest.

Fig. 7.4 The axes from Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.3, Oss-Vorstengraf, Rhenen-Koerheuvel and Wijchen. Photographs by P.J. Bomhof ©RMO; J. van Donkersgoed.

They all yielded bronze vessels, weaponry, horse-gear and/or wagon components, tools and items related to the personal appearance of the dead (in various configurations). They are also all the result of exaggerated, elaborate burial rituals, each with unique features. Beyond the sumptuous grave goods sets and sometimes aberrant funerary rituals, these four very richest burials in the dataset stand out for another reason. They are the *only* Late Bronze or Early Iron Age graves in the Low Countries, elite or otherwise, that have yielded axes and represent less than 0.01% of burials known from this period (see Louwen in prep.; Fig. 7.4). There seems to have been a widespread belief and practice that axes should be deposited and should never end up in burials (see Section 5.1.2). Their presence in these four elite burials is therefore completely at odds with the desirable life-path for axes that existed at the time (Section 2.3.2; Fontijn 2002, 26). Something about the deceased of Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.3, Oss-Vorstengraf, Rhenen-Koerheuvel and Wijchen made it not only appropriate to break with local customs and bury them with axes, it apparently was required.

It is striking that in the Low Countries axes were added only to the very richest burials with a (almost) 'complete Hallstatt set' (see Section 2.2.1.1), the ones that most closely resemble the Central European Hallstatt Culture *Fürstengräber* – where axes sometimes are included also (see also Section 7.3.1; *e.g.* Kraußе 1996, 299–307; Schickler 2001, 124–5). While most of the objects in the four richest burials from the Low Countries graves are very likely Hallstatt Culture imports, the axes are not. The axes in these graves are all local or regional products that do not appear to have been imported from Central Europe. This means that it was a locally made decision to bury these four people with axes and it certainly was not some kind of 'elite set' that was imported and interred. The people doing the burying *chose* to break with local customs and inter these individuals with axes, perhaps at the request of the deceased. Given how aberrant and completely against the local customs of the Low Countries it was to place an axe in a grave and the fact that they sometimes are found in the very richest *Fürstengräber* of the Hallstatt Culture, their presence in these four graves suggests that people who had knowledge of Hallstatt Culture funerary practices were involved in the creation of Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge, Oss-Vorstengraf, Rhenen-Koerheuvel and Wijchen graves, even though all the objects were recontextualized through the local burial custom. The question remains, were perhaps the decedents themselves from that area?

7.2.3.4 Horse-gear buried 'normally' not viewed as such?

It furthermore appears to have mattered whether horse-gear was viewed as relating to a wagon at the time of deposition. A number of small bronzes found in a handful of burials are listed as horse-gear in the Catalogue but it is

Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.A

An individual was cremated, accompanied on the pyre either by a bronze Jochschnalle *that had been removed from the yoke (strap) or the entire yoke. His/her cremation remains were collected and placed in a large urn with unusual protuberances together with a small accessory vessel. The urn was positioned in or near the pyre, and a selection of grave goods was placed in or near the urn. An iron sword carefully was bent double and may have been wrapped in textile, and two bronze cheek-pieces were broken. The objects and pyre were incorporated into the barrow erected.*

Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.Z

The deceased was cremated and his/her remains likely were left among the burned-out pyre. Pottery, a bronze cheek-piece from horse-gear and a number of other unidentified objects were placed by the bed of charcoal and cremation remains. The objects and pyre were incorporated into the barrow erected.

Insert 7.6 The burial ritual of the deceased buried at Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.A and T.Z re-imagined based on the available evidence (see also Chapter C6).

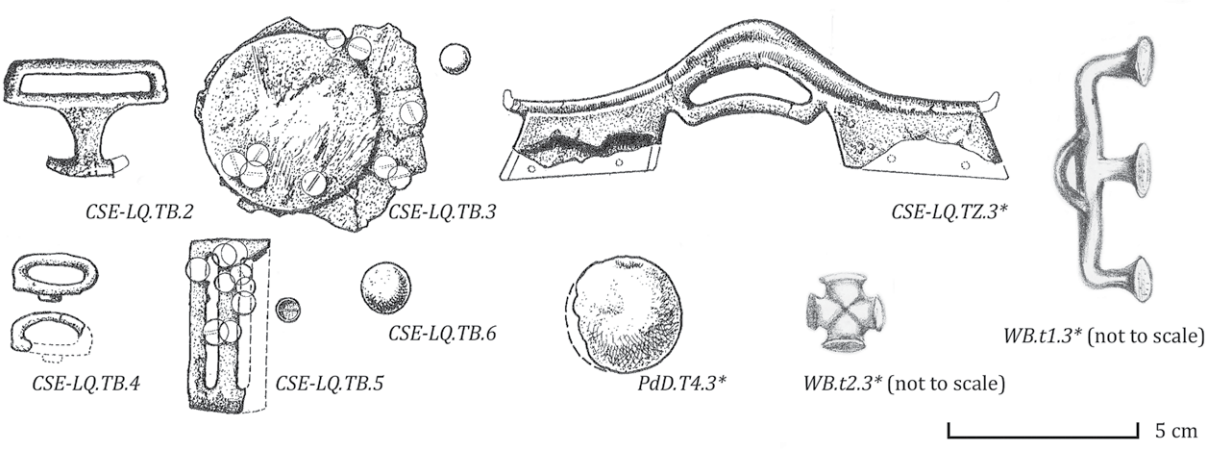

Fig. 7.5 The bronzes found in Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.B and T.Z, La Plantée des Dames T.4, Weert-Boshoverheide t.1 and t.2. Figure after Mariën 1958, figs. 4, 12 and 44; Ubaghs 1890, figs. 19 and 24.

unclear whether they were (still) used or viewed as such at the time of burial (see Fig. 7.5 and Tab. 5.5). In contrast to the (wagon-related) horse-gear discussed above which was treated in exceptional manners, these few items were interred in relatively 'normal' graves through apparently unremarkable' funerary rituals. It does not appear that these bronzes or their owners, triggered any kind of exceptional treatment in the way that they were buried, in contrast to the wagon and wagon-related horse-gear components described above. The difference, I argue, may have been that these horse-gear elements were related to riding a horse rather than driving a wagon, or that they were not viewed as (wagon-related) horse-gear at the time of death of their owner. Compare, for example Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.A and T.Z which yielded almost identical bronze cheek-pieces. In. T.A two cheek-pieces of the same type were found in association with a *Jochschnalle*, indicating an association with a wagon, while in T.Z the cheek-piece is the only piece of horse-gear interred.

Even hindered by the poor archeological resolution due to poor find circumstances a number of special, exaggerated elements to the Court-St-Etienne La Quenique T.A burial ritual can be recognized – the bending of a sword, the breaking of horse-gear cheek-pieces, the extreme *pars pro toto* deposition of yoke (and by extension wagon) and the use of textile – the latter of which appears to be specific to exceptional wagon-related burials (and Uden-Slabroek, see below). By comparison the burial ritual of T.Z seems relatively 'normal' and straightforward. The difference in treatment of what in essence are the same objects may relate to how they were used or viewed when they were selected as grave goods, presumably at the times of death of the owners. In T.A there is an association with a yoke, and therefore a wagon, and it is argued that the bronze cheek-pieces were buried as functional parts of bridles (or as *pars pro toto* depositions of bridles). In T.Z, however, there are no indications for a wagon and the single bronze cheek-piece received no special treatment during the funerary ritual. Could this be because at the time of burial the latter was not viewed as relating to a wagon?

Strikingly, the horse-gear decorations and components from graves that are the result of 'undistinguished' burial

rituals can, at most, be related to a single rider (rather than a pair of horses, a yoke or a wagon). They also may have been worn as ornaments prior to their use as grave goods, an attested practice. At the cemetery of Hallstatt, for example, a woman was buried with a necklace that incorporated a horse-bit that showed use-wear from being used on a horse (Koch 2012). The bronzes in question from the Low Countries' burials could have been heirlooms (perhaps left over from a different burial, see also Section 7.2.1.8) that were reused as ornaments of some kind, and it may be that they were incorporated into these burials in this capacity. If they were in this manner not viewed as relating to wagons, this could explain why they were treated 'normally' in death.

7.2.3.5 Why did wagons warrant different treatment in death?

Something about the deceased of Oss, Rhenen, Wijchen and the like warranted them being interred with elaborate grave goods sets through exaggerated funerary rituals that, while still conforming in most ways to the local burial practice, also show the influence Hallstatt Culture burial customs. As noted above, the common denominator between them is that wagon components or wagon-related items like yokes and horse-gear for a pair of horses were among the grave goods. The question remains – why did wagons, or even objects related to wagons, trigger exaggerated or unusual funerary rituals? Or perhaps more accurately, what about those people who were to be buried with wagons or wagon-related items, and who presumably drove them in life, made them so exceptional?

First it is important to realize that in the Low Countries there is no precursor to the elaborate wagons and large horses with decorated horse-gear. While there were local customs of drinking and feasting before the introduction of the bronze vessels, and sword fighting before the introduction of the imported Mindelheim swords, the horse-gear and wagons signal *radically different technology and behavior* (see also Chapter 6), and this may be why the individuals associated with them were treated differently in death. Perhaps it was the wagons, or again more accurately the ability to own and drive one that truly seemed exotic to the people of the Low Countries, and this is why they either warranted or required such elaborate burial rituals. Perhaps there was no established social protocol or cultural custom in place for dealing with such, perhaps exotic, people in death (see also Section 2.2 and below). Second, there is something special going on with horse-gear and wagons in the Low Countries, even beyond how they were treated during burial. Some horse-gear and wagons were extensively used, like the worn bits of Oss-Vorstengraf and Wijchen, or the worn wagon components of the latter (Figs. 4.12, 6.9, C35.5 and C35.8). Yet some horse-gear is completely unusable. The bits from Meerlo (Fig. 4.19) for example, are so large that they could never have been used on a real horse, and we can speculate whether they were made for burial or functioned as some form of symbols in life.

As discussed in Section 6.3, it is thought that in their area of origin these elaborate wagons held some kind of cosmological or religious significance, and this certainly appears to fit with how they were treated in death in the Low Countries. Both horses and wagons feature in cult art and iconography during the Early Iron Age (*e.g.* Egg 1996; Koch 2006, 144; Lucke/Frey 1962; Metzner-Nebelsick 2002, 454–5, 462–8; 2007; Reichenberger 2000), with the horse being the most frequently depicted animal during this period (Kmeťova 2013a, 249; see also Section 6.3.6.2). Taken together, it appears that individuals associated with the introduction of these profoundly new wagons, horses and horse-gear imbued with (perhaps new) religious or cosmological significance and ideas triggered a different treatment in death. It seems that within the Early Iron Age societies of the Low Countries there was no established cultural practice for burying these objects and the people who owned or used them. This shows particularly in some of the 'strange' elements that were found in a number of burial rituals. These people were special, and so were their funerals. This is not to say that a wagon is the only thing that could make a person exceptional in death.

7.2.4 Different, but similar: Uden-Slabroek

The grave of Uden-Slabroek is unique within the dataset for several reasons. It is the only inhumation burial, and the only grave with such an elaborate set of anklets, bracelets and hair rings. As such, it has been referred to or presented as unusual on several occasions (Jansen 2011; Jansen *et al.* 2011; Roymans 2011). However, as I argue elsewhere with Q. Bourgeois, in terms of the burial ritual through which this grave was created, it conforms in most regards with the practice described above (Bourgeois/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017). Like most elite burials, this grave was located in an urnfield. A big difference, of course, is that the deceased was not cremated – but a large fire did in fact play a role in the funerary ritual and was used to intentionally char the oak beams and planks that would be used to construct a small burial chamber. The deceased was buried wearing a woolen dress, three bronze bracelets (two on the left wrist, one on the right) and a bronze anklet on each ankle. The deceased's hair was decorated with bronze spirals.

While this may not be the 'standard' set of objects found in the traditional chieftains' burials (*cf.* Section 2.2.1.1), (exceptional) objects emphasizing personal appearance are common in Late Bronze and Early Iron Age elite graves. Ornaments and pins are common grave goods, and it is within this custom that the Uden-Slabroek ornaments

should be seen. The special appearance of the Early Iron Age (elite) dead frequently is emphasized also by the interment of toiletry sets or razors, and Uden-Slabroek is no different. A toiletry set was placed on the deceased's left shoulder, likely in a leather pouch with an amber bead closing (see also Section 6.5.1.2). Another common and characteristic feature of the elite burials is the deliberate manipulation and fragmentation of grave goods – yet another feature found at Uden-Slabroek as well. A bronze pin was broken deliberately prior to placement in the grave. A last feature common to the rich burials and Uden-Slabroek already referred to is the use of textile, in the form of a shroud used to cover the deceased. So while this inhumation initially may appear to deviate from the burial norm for exceptional people, it in fact shares many features and again appears to be a slightly deviating burial practiced within established local customs. It was an elite funerary ritual similar to the reigning burial practice, only without the cremation of the body and unique in its own way (see also Jansen/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017).

7.3 The Hallstatt Culture connection

One last aspect worth considering is whether and how the people of the Low Countries were truly aware of the Hallstatt Culture communities with which they were in contact. Did they have a specific conceptualization of the communities they were obtaining objects from? For this I argue that globalization theory, the latest approach to "interregional interaction and culture change" in archeology (Jennings 2016, 12), offers valuable insights and a feasible way of coming to grips with this issue as the perception of the non-local, other people as connected to the local community is argued to be a key aspect of globalization (*cf.* Steger 2003, 13). Elsewhere D. Fontijn and I discuss in more detail whether Low Countries elite burials can be seen as reflecting a prehistoric form of globalization (Fontijn/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2016), and for this research it suffices to stress that if we can recognize the shared codes of conduct that Jennings (2016) identifies as a characteristic of globalized behavior we will get a better idea of whether and how the Low Countries (elite) inhabitants conceived of the Hallstatt Culture communities with which they were in contact. It is 'networks of practices' that are important, rather than 'networks of objects' (Brown/Duguid 2000). In short, if similar practices can be observed in the Low Countries and Hallstatt Culture burials of Central Europe this would be one archeologically feasible way of recognizing Iron Age globalization and would indicate that the local communities of the Low Countries indeed had a "particular conceptualization of the non-local other[s]" (Fontijn/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2016, 525). While this is a debate that cannot be resolved within the current research (see also Section 8.2), a first attempt is made in this section by discussing a number of defining features of the elite burial practice of the Low Countries and how they compare to the (primarily Hallstatt C) elite graves of the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe.

7.3.1 The grave goods 'set'

As already noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the elite burials of the Early Iron Age, both in the Low Countries and in the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe contain – among other things and in differing combinations – (parts of) decorated four-wheeled wagons and elaborate horse-gear, metal drinking vessels, weaponry, tools, toilet articles and body ornaments (*e.g.* Kossack 1970; 1974; Diepeveen-Jansen 2001, Ch. 2; Kraußе 2006; Pare 1992; Wells 2008a.). It has been argued that these objects were meaningfully related and they generally are interpreted as reflecting and/or representing a shared 'elite ideology' (which is thought to have its roots in northern and Mediterranean Europe; *e.g.* Diepeveen-Jansen 2001, Ch. 2; Huth 2003a, 51–5; 2003b; Jung 2007). In the Low Countries, however, there are only very few burials that actually contain the 'full set' (see Section 2.2.1.1), and it is unclear whether interring only a bronze vessel or only a sword was intended to refer to the ideology that the set is thought to reflect. However, I argue that in a number of cases the selection of the grave goods set was guided by an understanding of that grave goods set and the symbolism it referred to as evidenced by the mourners electing to include axes in those few burials that do contain a full set (or those that come closest). As also argued above, this went completely against the established local practice, and likely reflects the involvement of individuals familiar with Hallstatt Culture elite funerary customs in the burial rituals. In some cases therefore, interring the 'set', including the axes, certainly seems to reflect familiarity with and understanding of this complex and what it represents, as well as the practice of placing this configuration of objects in certain burials. While this does not mean necessarily that the deceased or (any of) those burying him or her from the Hallstatt Culture area, it certainly is plausible (see also Section 8.2.3).

7.3.2 Pars pro toto *deposition*

Pars pro toto deposition appears to be an important feature of Hallstatt Culture elite burials, as they are in the Low Countries. As with the Dutch and Belgian graves, there seems to have been considerable variability as to how a wagon could be expressed in a burial. Not only were complete wagons sometimes interred in inhumation burials in the Hallstatt Culture, there are also graves where the wagon is represented by only certain components. These are interpreted as *pars pro toto* wagon-graves (*e.g.* Pare 1992), such as for example

Großeibstadt (Kossack 1970), Hradenín (Dvořak 1938) or Gilgenberg-Gansfuß (Stöllner 1994) to name a few. As noted in Section 6.3.5.4, horse-gear for a pair of (draft) horses also may have been intended to represent a wagon (Koch 2010, 141; 2012; Kossack 1959; Metzner-Nebelsick/Nebelsick 1999; Pare 1992, 195), or it may have been intended as representing the horses who pulled the wagon. Mindelheim H.11 (Kossack 1959), for example, yielded a pair of horse-bits (and bridle ornaments) similar to those found in Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.3 or Oss-Vorstengraf (which this research argues functionally relate to driving rather than riding a horse, see Sections 6.3.5.2 and 6.3.6.4), and similarly are interpreted as relating to a wagon. Another example is the *Fürstengrab* of Frankfurt-Stadtwald where a richly decorated yoke and horse-gear for a pair of (draft) horses were found, but no wagon (Fischer 1979; Willms 2002), or Mitterkirchen g.X/1 where a wagon-box and yoke were found but no horse-gear (Metzner-Nebelsick 2009; Pertlwieser 1987, 89–103). As with a number of Dutch and Belgian burials, it appears that also in the Hallstatt Culture burials cremation remains were deposited incomplete (*e.g.* Augstein 2017).

7.3.3 Manipulation and fragmentation

While burial practices in the Hallstatt Culture appear in no way as destructive as the funerary practices in the Low Countries, there does appear to have been a custom of fragmentation or manipulation. While not something traditionally looked for, M. Augstein (2017, 141), for example, found numerous cases of bent and broken items in Early Iron Age burials in Bavaria, and even went as far as stating that fragmentation "seems to be the connecting element of all of these in detail different graves". As another example, more than half the swords found in early Hallstatt Culture burials were bent or broken prior to being placed in the grave (Trachsel 2005, 68). The chape found in the previously mentioned Frankfurt-Stadtwald burial, for example, appears to have been broken deliberately (Fischer 1979; Willms 2002). Wagons it seems sometimes also were interred in a non-functional state, like the wagon of Wehringen (Hennig 2001; Pare 1991). At Großeibstadt wagons appear to have been deposited incomplete and in non-functional states or the wagon is represented only by *pars pro toto* items or references to the draft horses, and some horse-gear even appears broken deliberately (Augstein 2017; Kossack 1970). So even though bending does not seem to be a common element of Hallstatt Culture burial practices, it appears that various forms of destruction were practiced during the course of the funerary ritual – ranging from damaging and fragmenting a sword to making a wagon unusable.

7.3.4 Wrapping in textile

The wrapping of grave goods (and the deceased) in textile is a common and striking element in Hallstatt Culture elite burial practices. The best-known examples date to the later Hallstatt period, like Eberdingen-Hochdorf where both grave goods and the burial as a whole appear to have been wrapped in textile (Banck-Burgess 1999; 2012), or even the La Tène period, such as the Glauberg burials and in particular the wrapped *Schnabelkanne* found there (Bartel *et al.* 2002; Balzer *et al.* 2014). Yet there are also examples of this practice during Hallstatt C in Central Europe, in particular instances of swords being wrapped. Recently excavated examples are two iron swords found in two burials at Nidderau (Hesse, Germany) that were wrapped in textile (Ney 2017; in prep.). Another example is a broken sword found at Mitterkirchen that likewise was wrapped (Leskovar 1998). So it appears that in Central Europe there was also an existing practice of wrapping grave goods during Hallstatt C, even though it may not always be recognized.

7.3.5 (Reuse of ancient) burial mounds

Beyond the similarities in grave goods sets and treatment of grave goods in elite burials from the Low Countries and the Central European Hallstatt Culture, there are also similarities in terms of the burial monuments themselves. In contrast to the earlier Urnfield period, the practice of erecting a barrow is a key feature of the Hallstatt Culture, as is noted regularly in discussions of the definition and the start of the Hallstatt Culture (Pare 2003). The elite graves of the Low Countries also frequently are found in and under (large) barrows – in contrast to the regular urnfield burials that still were created in the Low Countries during the Early Iron Age. But even more strikingly, old burial mounds, primarily of the Middle Bronze Age, were reused in the Hallstatt Culture in a manner similar to for example the Chieftain's burial of Oss. The best-known example is the already mentioned Frankfurt-Stadtwald *Fürstengrab*, where three phases of the burial mound were identified. In both the Oss and Frankfurt burials a Middle Bronze Age barrow was enormously enlarged during the course of the creation of the Early Iron Age burial (Fischer 1979; Fokkens/Jansen 2004, 133–5; Jansen/Fokkens 2007; Willms 2002).

7.3.6 Shared practices – globalized perception?

Above a number of defining features of the elite burial practice of the Low Countries were discussed and it was established that these are found also, in various forms, in the (primarily Hallstatt C) elite graves of the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe. There are similarities in grave goods, the fragmentation of grave goods (to a certain degree), *pars pro toto* deposition of human remains and grave goods and

the use of textile as wrappings. Another shared trait is the barrow practice, with in particular the reuse of ancient mounds being strikingly similar in some cases. These elements were considered here as similarities in practice, *i.e.* more than just similarities in grave goods, could reveal something more of the kind of relationship that existed between these two areas, beyond the fact that they were engaged in material exchanges (see also Sections 2.2.2 and 2.4; *cf.* Fontijn/Van der Vaart 2016; Schumann/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017). While this connection certainly warrants further study (see also Section 8.2.3), this preliminary comparison already indicates that more was exchanged and shared between the Low Countries and the Central European Hallstatt Culture than just objects. The Early Iron Age communities in the Low Countries were not passive receivers of exotica – they "actively engaged with such items in ways that correspond to how they interpreted these non-local items" (Fontijn/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2016, 526). In some respects the Early Iron Age communities of the Low Countries and the Central European Hallstatt Culture seem to have had intimate knowledge of each other's burial customs and even shared them.

It appears that the elite burials of the Low Countries and the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe reflect more than 'networks of objects', and in fact reflect the 'networks of practices' (*cf.* Brown/Duguid 2000) that are important in discussions of globalization. Not only do there appear to have been extensive connectivities between the Low Countries and the Central European Hallstatt Culture, but there also appears to have been an "awareness" among the Dutch and Belgian communities of the deep connections that existed between the local and the distant, which is yet another feature of globalization (*cf.* Steger 2003, 13). We therefore should not disregard the possibility that the Low Countries communities not only were identifying a number of their dead as special, elite individuals, they also intentionally may have been burying them in a supra-regional, globalized way, intended to show their connection with (members of) the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe.

7.4 Conclusion

This research considered one of the characterizing elements of the Early Iron Age in the Low Countries: the elaborate Hallstatt C elite burials, some of which are known as chieftains' or princely graves (Chapter 1; though see Section 2.2.1.1). Even though many of these burials repeatedly have been the focus of research over the last century, this is the first comprehensive overview of such graves. As the majority are old discoveries with poor context information and publications of them are frequently difficult to access, the accompanying Catalogue serves as a first step towards understanding the role the elite burials of the Low Countries played in Early Iron Age Europe by making this dataset available to other scholars. In addition to presenting the first comprehensive overview, this research is also the first practice-based analysis of these graves and argues that examining the *burial practice* (in the long-run) will afford us a better understanding of the elite graves and the society that created them (Section 2.2.2). The detailed analyses conducted indicate that they are the result of a dynamic funerary practice with links to both local burial habits and funerary customs practiced in the Central European Hallstatt Culture.

It turns out that the very earliest elite burials predate any material evidence of contact with Central Europe. The later interaction and incorporation of Hallstatt Culture ideas, ideals, customs and objects (see also Chapter 5), however, never could have happened with the speed that it did if there was not already a compatible social structure in place – which I argue the early burials with Atlantic Gündlingen swords reflect (see also Sections 5.2 and C2.3.1.3). (Some of) the people living in the Low Countries were used to interacting with people from France and Britain during the Late Bronze Age (and into the Early Iron Age), as shown not only by the Gündlingen swords but also by less 'prestigious' or exclusive metalwork like razors that were obtained from those regions (Section C2.6.1). They were accustomed to interacting in this manner and had social practices in place for such encounters, and perhaps were used to traveling to other regions themselves.

In terms of the reconstructed burial practice, this research established that the majority of the burials traditionally identified as 'exceptional' by archeologists based on the grave goods they contain, in fact appear to be the result of the 'normal' way of burying and seem to conform in almost all respects to the dominant urnfield burial practice (which is the topic of by A.J. Louwen's (in prep.) ongoing PhD-research). While traditionally the elite graves and urnfield burials are considered separate (as also shown also by the topics of Louwen's and my PhD-researches), in reality there appears to have been a burial spectrum that flows from the very 'poorest' and 'simplest' urnfield burials to the very 'richest' chieftain's burial (*cf.* Bourgeois/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017). Similar to the dominant urnfield burial practice in the Low Countries, the reconstructed elite funerary rituals involved (primarily) cremation rites that incorporated the manipulation and fragmentation of grave goods as well as the *pars pro toto* deposition of both human remains and grave goods (Fig. 7.2; see also Chapter 5). In fact, it appears that in the majority of graves considered only the presence of a bronze vessel or piece of weaponry differentiates them from the numerous urnfield burials (which frequently are found in the immediate surroundings).

Instead, in terms of the manner of burial, it appears that from the perspective of the Early Iron Age mourners it were people who were to be buried with wagons and wagon-related horse-gear that warranted exceptional treatment in death. Such elites were interred through unusual funerary rituals in which the destructive nature of the reigning burial practice was emphasized and exaggerated. It seems that their association with wagons made them exceptional individuals who's passing needed to be marked in a special manner. This research argues that perhaps it was these radically new and cosmologically charged vehicles (Section 6.3), and the ability to drive them and keep and control the (large) horses who pulled them that truly set one apart as an individual of the very highest rank, either in a social or perhaps even in a shamanistic sense. The Early Iron Age communities of the Low Countries may have been in the process of *appropriating* these decidedly new and foreign elite modes of transportation and what they represented (see Section 2.4; *cf.* Hahn 2004, 220; Stockhammer 2012a, 14). For when we look at the individual burial rituals through which apparent wagon-owners were interred, it appears that there was no established funerary practice for such individuals. In some cases it almost seems as though the mourners were innovating, though always in a manner that showed the status of the deceased, beyond the exceptional elite gear they were buried with – for example through elaborate burial rituals involving precious textiles and (exceptionally) large barrows.

This is not to say that the other kinds of objects found in the elite burials did not mark their owners as special – like the elaborately decorated horse-gear and wagon components, the bronze drinking vessels and majority of iron weaponry found in the elite graves originate from the Hallstatt Culture of Central Europe and somehow made their way hundreds of kilometers northwest to end up in the (possession and) graves of exceptional Dutch and Belgian individuals. Not only were these exotic imports, the sociology of elite distinction (see Section 2.1) indicates that the kinds of objects interred as grave goods – exceptional modes of transport, drinking equipment and items that emphasize personal appearance – in life reflected and enacted an individual's role as a member of the elite stratum who engaged in certain activities. Swords required practicing with, horses and drivers needed to learn to work together and (a specific) personal appearance had to be maintained (see Chapter 6). These objects are also about communal practices and identities, for example in the form of ritual butchering and feasting activities. It therefore would appear that the selection of these specific objects for interment with these specific dead was about more than just their 'richness', they were exceptional objects emblematic of a specific elite life-style imported from afar and the significance of them being selected as grave goods should not be underestimated (see Chapters 2 and 6).

Furthermore, while still incorporated within the local burial practice, some graves also appear to reflect the involvement of individuals familiar with Hallstatt Culture funerary customs. This would explain why people deviated from established social and cultural practices and elected to include axes with the grave goods when burying the Chieftains of Oss, Rhenen, Wijchen and Court-St-Etienne La Ferme Rouge T.3 (Section 7.2.3.3). The inclusion of axes is but one of the indications that the Low Countries (elite) were interacting with the Hallstatt world on a deeper level than just simple material exchange. The composition of the grave goods set in the most elaborate burials, the use of (high quality) textiles to wrap grave goods during the burial ritual as well as the reuse of funerary monuments in several Dutch and Belgian graves all point towards a shared understanding of how such objects should be used and what they represent, both in life and in death. There may be differences, but I argue that a statement was being made regarding the connectedness of Early Iron Age elites. These regions not only exchanged objects, they seem to have had shared codes of conduct and perhaps a shared elite lifestyle (*cf.* Treherne 1995). While we cannot (yet) establish whether there were people from the Hallstatt Culture settling in the Low Countries or whether individuals were only visiting (and vice versa), it certainly appears that the people living in these far-flung reaches interacted frequently enough and in such a manner that they, at least to some extent, developed a shared understanding of these exceptional objects.

In conclusion, there were elites living and dying in the Early Iron Age Low Countries who appear to have shared a certain ideology or cosmology, which was associated in particular with ceremonial wagons and associated horses. When they died their one-time ownership and use of the elaborately decorated wagons, their association with these symbolically and cosmologically charged vehicles appears to have marked them out in death. While this research acknowledges that an understanding of how the apparently stratified society functioned and interacted across Northwest Europe cannot be achieved solely by examining these elite graves, this study will hopefully contribute to future research into this worthwhile topic (see also Chapter 8).