Breaking and making the ancestors. piecing together the urnfield mortuary process in the Lower-Rhine-Basin, ca. 1300–400 BC

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6

Assembling the ancestors

"…And when he is carried to the tombs,
And watch is kept over the funeral mound,
The clods of the torrent valley are sweet to him,
Behind him everybody follows in procession,
And before him goes a countless throng…" Book of Job[90] (sixth century BCE).

6.1 Introduction

Hours, days, weeks, perhaps even years after a decedent had been cremated the calcined bones would eventually end up in the context of the grave. The remarkable thing about cremation graves is in fact that they involve the *burial* of cremated remains. There are many different ways to dispose of the burnt bones left after cremation but in the Lower-Rhine-Basin, at least from the later Bronze Age onwards, people went through all the trouble of collecting the cremated remains and transporting them from pyre to cemetery where they were finally put in the ground covered with monuments of various forms and sizes. Clearly, for centuries in a row people deemed it important to not only anchor the last physical remains of their late beloved ones somewhere within the physical world but, perhaps even more so, to surround them by the other dead. The stage of interment must therefore conceal important clues about how the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age world was organised, both in the spatial as in the cosmologic sense.

This chapter will explore these clues and see the mortuary process to its completion. It will do so by looking into three simple questions: *Who*, *how* and *where*? The '*who*' is relevant as it is already in the composition of a cemetery's population where clues can be detected about what social roles people still attributed to their dead. Did these cemeteries mirror the entire living community or were these burial grounds only reserved for people who had acquired a certain age and/or social status in life (Section 6.2)? The '*how*' on its turn holds clues about what procedures needed to be followed to help a decedent's soul or spirit to the other world in the final stage of the mortuary process or how she or he was to be portrayed as a future ancestor (Sections 6.3 and 6.4). And finally, the '*where*' concerns the location of a grave as it may hold clues about how the dead related to each other (Section 6.5).

90 Job 21:32-33 (New English Translation, 2006).

All age categories	N	%
Infant (0-3 years old)	57	5.31
Child (4-15 years old)	135	12.58
Non-Adult unspecified (-15 years old)	87	8.11
Adult (15-40 years old)	332	30.94
Old Adult (+40 years old)	38	3.54
Adult unspecified (+15 years old)	424	39.52
TOTAL:	1073	100.00

Non-adults	N	%
Infant (0-3 years old)	57	20.43
Child (4-15 years old)	135	48.39
Non-adult unspecified (-15 years old)	87	31.18
TOTAL:	279	100.00

Adults	N	%
Adult (15-40 years old)	332	41.81
Old Adult (+40 years old)	38	4.79
Adult unspecified (+15 years old)	424	53.40
TOTAL:	794	100.00

Tab. 6.1: Age categories in numbers and percentages as observed for the present dataset. The top list [all age categories] shows the overall figures. The middle- and bottom lists show the figures for respectively the non-adults and adults.

6.2 Everybody counts: The inclusivity of urnfields

When the socio-cosmic order of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age is discussed, often the *collective* and *inclusive* character of urnfields is emphasised (*e.g.* Fokkens 1997; Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 42-43; Gerritsen 2003, 147). The notion of collectiveness derives from the sometimes hundreds of graves that can be found within the extent of the larger cemeteries, suggesting that multiple households made use of these burial grounds. The notion of inclusivity stems from the fact that men, women and non-adults are all represented among the buried individuals. Not uncommonly are both these qualities seen as contrasting with the preceding Middle Bronze Age where burial grounds in the form of barrows are believed to have been more exclusive (Lohof 1991; 1994; Fokkens 1997, 362; Theunissen 2009, 104) and to represent single families (Lohof 1994, 114; Theunissen 2009, 106; Fokkens 1997, 362). In this light, it is worth looking into *who* were eventually buried in urnfields and to find out what this inclusivity entails for the present dataset.

In total, for 1,073 individuals[91] some indication for the age at death was available (Tab. 6.1).[92] When a rough division is made between non-adults and adults, 279 individuals were under the age of 15 when they died while the other 794 managed to live beyond the age of 15. Based on the 1,073 individuals for whom age estimations were available, this

91 Cremation graves and inhumation graves combined.

92 As the fractured and shrunken state of the bones in cremation graves hampers detailed age estimations, age ranges often varied between as much as 20 to 30 years. When a certain range included multiple age categories as proposed in section 3.3.4 the individual concerned has been ranked under the category that was represented by the majority of the years of the range obtained. For instance, an individual whose age at death was estimated between 13 and 27 years old has been ranked under the 'Adult (15-40 years old) group.'

Age category	N Female	% Female	N Male	% Male
Non-adult (0-15)	1	0.60	1	0.57
Adult (15-40)	95	56.89	83	47.16
Old_Adult (>40)	10	5.99	15	8.52
Adult (>15)	61	36.53	77	43.75
Total:	167	100.00	176	100.00

Sex	N Adult (15-40)	% Adult (15-40)	N Old Adult (>40)	% Old Adult (>40)	N Adult (unspec.)	% Adult (unspec.)
Female	95	29.69	10	28.57	61	14.42
Male	83	25.94	15	42.86	77	18.20
Sex unknown	142	44.38	10	28.57	285	67.38
Total:	320	100	35	100	423	100

Tab. 6.2: Age categories in relation to sex (*above*) and sex in relation to age categories (*below*).

means that at least 26% (279/1,073) of the population did not live to see 15.[93] Also, at age 40 some 57% of the population had already passed away.[94]

Sex determinations were available for some 353 individuals. 167 of them showed indications for the female sex, the other 173 were most probably males. This almost perfect fifty-fifty ratio of males and females already shows that both sexes had equal chances of being included in urnfields. As Table 6.2 shows, males are slightly better represented among the old adults while the share of females for the 'age 15-40' group is higher. This slight difference can possibly be explained by the risks of pregnancy in premodern/preindustrial societies.

In assessing whether burial grounds were open to all members of society, often is looked at the share of non-adults in these cemeteries (*e.g.* Hessing 1989, 327; Dedet 2008, 329-331). For example, infants are often missing in Roman cemeteries or were treated differently (Heeren 2009, 232-233), perhaps since they had not acquired the social status yet that was required to be included among the ancestors. *Pliny the Elder*,[95] for instance, noted that it is not customary to cremate children whose teeth had yet to start growing (Heeren 2009, 232; *cf.* Plinius, *Naturalis Historia* 7,16,27). With regards to the urnfields, whereas some would argue that the presence of all age categories among the buried individuals is already sufficient in establishing the inclusivity of these burial grounds (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 42-43) others would claim that at least a certain percentage of a cemetery's population needs to be represented by non-adults (*e.g.* Hessing 1989, 327; Hessing/Kooi 2005, 647-648).

Reliable data on life expectancy before 1800 AD are scarce and caution is ushered (Preston 1995, 243), but for premodern/preindustrial societies it is indeed expected that child mortality was higher than it is for modern societies (Fig. 6.1; Baxter 2005, 99-100). However, the required percentages of non-adults brought to the fore in relation to

93 De Mulder has observed a similar trend for the cemeteries in the Scheldt-Basin where non-adults made up between 24%-34.61% of the age estimations available (De Mulder 2011, 320-321).

94 All non-adults (N=279) combined with individuals for whom the age at death could be determined between 15 and 40 years old (N=332): 279 + 332 = 611; 611/1,073 = 56.94%

95 23-79 AD.

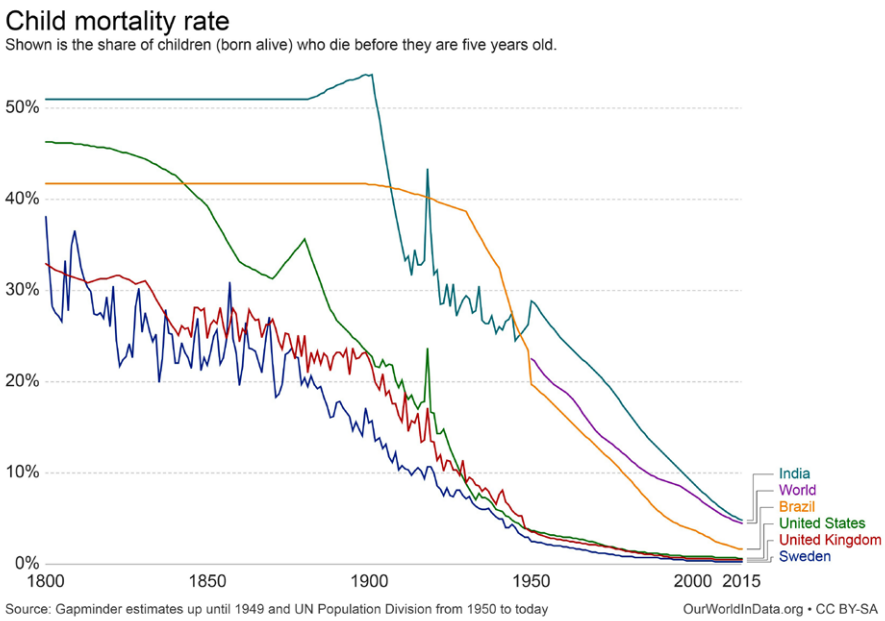


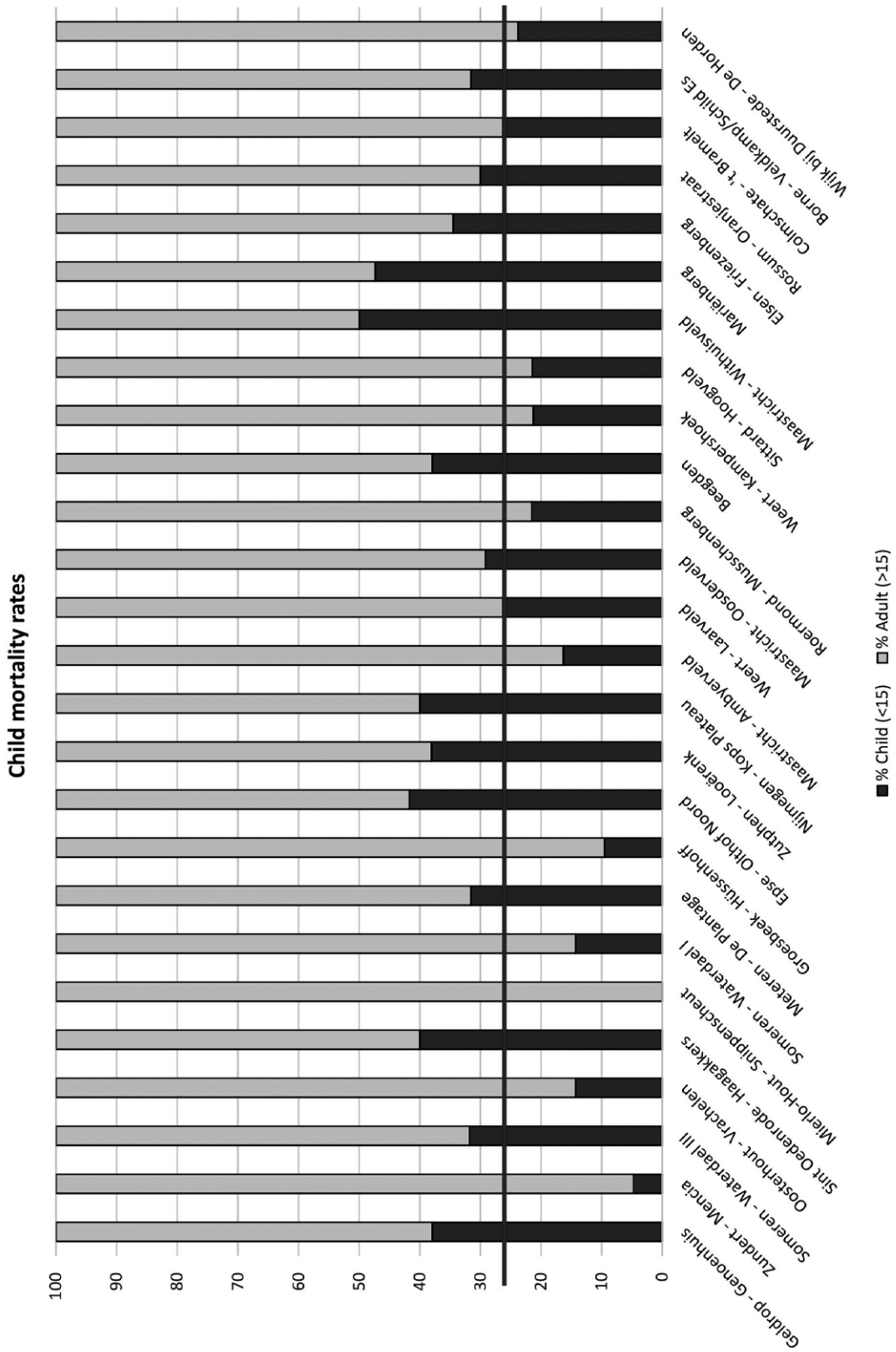
Fig. 6.1: Child mortality rate since 1800 for various countries (figure downloaded from: https://ourworldindata.org/child-mortality).

archaeological populations are often very high and also vary substantially, between 45 and 60% (*e.g.* Clark 1968; Donat/Ulrich 1971, 244; Theunissen 2009, 106; Heeren 2009, 233). According to these latter percentages, the 26% of non-adults as observed for the present dataset would in fact be too small to represent a truly inclusive cemetery.

But are these estimated percentages reliable and is the overall average of 26% non-adults for the present dataset indeed too low to speak of inclusive cemeteries? Even though modern figures show high percentages of child mortality around 1800 AD (Fig. 6.1), the question is whether Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age populations can be compared with these modern populations. Especially since many of these modern figures are mainly based on unhealthy industrialised urban environments and all the health risks attached to a lot of people living closely together. Though certainly not without its health risks and challenges, late prehistoric living conditions can hardly be compared to these modern industrialised and urban environments. As a recent and extensive cross-cultural assessment of life expectancy in extant hunter-gatherer and forager-horticulturalist communities has shown, "only" between 33% – 43% of the population dies before the age of 15 (Gurven/Kaplan 2007, 326).[96] Since

Fig. 6.2 (right): Shares of non-adults vs. adults for 26 Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cemeteries in the Netherlands for which osteological data for more than 20 individuals were available. Only the individuals for whom age estimations were available have been included in this calculation. The horizontal line indicates the overall percentage (26%) of individuals who died before their fifteenth year.

96 Comparable percentages and lower can be found in Mary Lewis's "The Bioarchaeology of Children" (2006).


Child mortality rates
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
% Child (<15)
% Adult (>15)
Geldrop - Genoenhuis
Zundert - Mencia
Someren - Waterdael III
Oosterhout - Vrachelen
Sint Oedenrode - Haagakkers
Mierlo-Hout - Snippenscheut
Someren - Waterdael I
Meteren - De plantage
Groesbeek - Hüssenhoff
Epse - Olthof Noord
Zutphen - Loolerenk
Nijmegen - Kops plateau
Maastricht - Amby veld
Weert - Laarveld
Maastricht - Oosterveld
Roermond - Mussche nberg
Beegden
Weert - Kampershoek
Sittard - Hoogveld
Maastricht - Withuisveld
Mariënberg
Elsen - Friezenberg
Rossum - Oranjestraat
Colmschate - 't Bramelt
Borne - Veldkamp/School Es
Wijk bij Duurstede - De Horden

these numbers are based on extant communities instead of the educated guesses that are usually worked with in archaeology (*e.g.* Clark 1968), there is a danger that life expectancy of prehistoric communities is generally approached too negatively. Many of the sites presented in Figure 6.2 in fact fall within the same range of percentages of non-adults as observed in the study by Gurven and Kaplan and the low percentages in this figure still not necessarily indicate an absence of non-adults.[97] Finally, factors like the incomplete state of many a cemetery and the fact that often only for a minority of the graves reliable age estimations are available should all be considered when assessing life expectancy of archaeological populations and the inclusivity of the cemeteries concerned.

Especially when focussing on how the 279 non-adult individuals in the present dataset were treated throughout the mortuary process, the impression arises that the cemeteries known as urnfields were indeed open to all age categories. Starting with the very youngest of age, of the total 57 individuals that have been ranked among the infants[98] (Tab. 6.1), at least six individuals with certainty qualified as neonates. An additional two individuals concern foetuses, one of four and a half months old and the other of six months old. Another four individuals died within their first year. The remaining 45 individuals most probably died somewhere within the first three years. The foetus of four and a half months old from the urnfield of Maastricht-Ambyerveld was found associated with the cremated remains of a young woman who presumably is the mother and who died while the foetus was still in her womb (Dyselinck 2013, Appendix 7, 56). However, the other foetus, that was found at the urnfield of Oosterhout-Vrachelen/De Contreie, received its own burial (Roessingh *et al*. 2012, 103), complete with urn and monument (*ibid*., fig. 5.43).

The six individuals that with certainty qualified as neonates were all buried in the company of an adult individual. Four of these adult individuals concern females, for the other two no sex could be determined. It could very well be that the females in these graves are the mothers of these neonates and that these graves reflect the event of a pregnancy gone wrong in the very last phase- or the deaths of both mother and child in childbirth. Of the remaining 49 individuals in the infant category, 42 individuals were buried alone. Overall, this means that a share of 75.4% (43/57)[99] of all individuals in the infant category received its own grave. The overall share of non-adult individuals that received their grave is even higher: 83.5% (233/279).[100/101]

In conclusion, when all of the above is taken into consideration, it appears that Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cemeteries in the Lower-Rhine-Basin were indeed open to all categories of age, underpinning the inclusive character of these cemeteries. From the very youngest of age to the very oldest, all went through the transforming qualities of the cremation fire before finally being laid to rest in an urnfield. In addition, as was shown in Chapter 5, both sexes could be provided with the same categories of objects. Even non-adults were not denied the occasional accessory vessel or items related to personal adornment and

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97 For example, Tol, who excavated the urnfield of Mierlo-Hout-Snippenscheut himself, states about the preservation state of the urnfield: *"…The Mierlo-Hout urnfield is incomplete and heavily eroded, making it of limited use for social analysis…"*Tol 1999, 89.

98 Infants: 0-3 years of age.

99 43 individuals in the infant category of a total of 57 individuals in the infant category .

100 233 individuals under the age of 15 out of a total of 279 individuals under the age of 15.

101 It is remarkable though, that 80.4% (41/51) of all cremation graves that contained the remains of multiple individuals concern combinations of an adult and a non-adult (also see Section 4.4.3).

De Mulder 2011	Description	N	% Tot.	% Det.
Type A	Urn grave (sensu stricto)	207	6.51	30.49
Type B	Urn grave with mixed cremated remains and pyre-debris	41	1.29	6.04
Type C	Concentration of 'clean' cremated remains	288	9.05	42.42
Type D	Concentration of 'clean' cremated remains buried separately from pyre-debris	27	0.85	3.98
Type E	Mixed deposition of cremated remains and pyre-debris in small pit	63	1.98	9.28
Type F	Scatter or concentration of cremated remains in fill of surrounding feature	40	1.26	5.89
Type G	Scatter of cremated remains in large pit	12	0.38	1.77
Type H	Bustum grave with separate interment of cremated remains	1	0.03	0.15
Type I	Bustum grave (sensu stricto)	0	0.00	0.00
TOTAL:		[679]		100.00

Other	Description			
Type A/B	Urn grave unspecified	1,128	35.45	
Type A/F	Urn grave in surrounding feature	17	0.53	
Type C/D	Concentration of cremated remains unspecified	42	1.32	
Not Type A/B	Cremation grave without urn unspecified	1,023	32.15	
Secondary grave	(Cremation) grave dug into an older funerary monument	5	0.16	
Cremation unspecified	Cremation grave, but no further details available	242	7.61	
Inhumation grave	Grave containing an inhumed body	45	1.41	
Bi-ritual	Grave containing an inhumed body that is partly burnt/cremated	1	0.03	
TOTAL:		3,182	100.00	

Tab. 6.3: The different types or *compositions* of graves as observed for the present dataset. 'N' indicates the total number of graves that falls under the respective category of graves. The percentages in the column '% Tot.' have been calculated over the entire population (N=3,182) while the shares in the column '% Det.' only concerns the graves that could be classified according to De Mulder's scheme (N=679).

appearance (Section 5.4). Neither was the use of urns in some way related to either sex or age (Section 5.4). In sum, at the doorstep of interment, archaeologically still little difference can be observed in the way the different sex and age categories were treated.

6.3 Assembling the dead: Modes of interment

Having arrived at that stage in the mortuary process where the physical remains of a decedent were to enter the ground, the mourning community resurfaces in an archaeological visible way as never before. Most of the actions we see reflected in urnfield graves were in fact part of this stage of the mortuary process. The way in which the cremated remains entered the ground (in an urn, scattered or bundled), the placement of objects in relation to a decedent's (former) body and the in- or exclusion of pyre-debris are all examples of actions that were only performed at the stage of

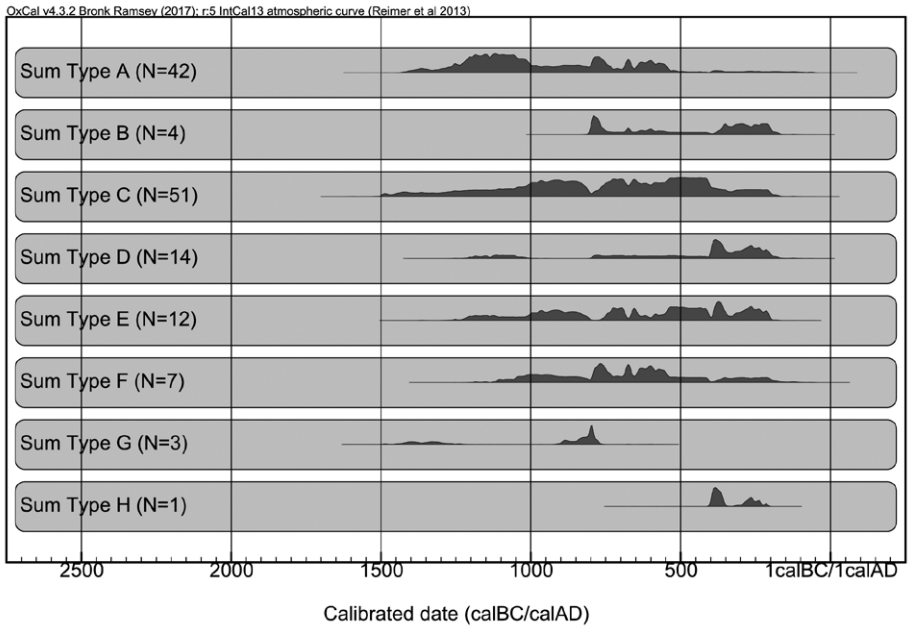

Fig. 6.3: Grave types and the sum of the associated radiocarbon dates available for the 679 graves in the present dataset that could be ranked according to De Mulder's classification (De Mulder 2011).

interment. It is in this stage of the mortuary process where we learn about the last requirements that needed to be taken into account before a decedent could make the final transition. As will however appear, *the* urnfield grave clearly did not exist and like with the rest of the mortuary process, the mode of interment seems to have been open to some interpretation and variation.

6.3.1 Shaping the grave

In order to map the different fashions in which cremated remains could enter the ground, the 3,137 cremation graves in the present dataset have all been checked with the classification system De Mulder had devised for urnfield graves in the Belgian Scheldt-Basin (De Mulder 2011, 214-235; fig. 8.4). From a theoretical standpoint this seemed initially like a useful exercise since De Mulder's scheme perfectly allows for a quick assessment of the composition of cremation graves (See Section 3.3.3). Unfortunately, for the present dataset it soon appeared that for many graves the detailed documentation required for this assessment simply lacked. Even in some of the most recent reports it proved virtually impossible to distinguish whether the pottery retrieved from a cremation grave was used as an urn or concerned accessory pottery. Only in 679 cases the documentation of the graves allowed for a division into one of De Mulder's grave types without problems. Nevertheless, since De Mulder's scheme has been set up as a decision tree it was still possible to assign 2,193 of the remaining graves a place closer to the decision tree's trunk, as it were (Tab. 6.3). As an example, for some 1,128 graves it was clear they concerned urn graves, but the presence of pyre-debris had not been documented for these particular examples. These graves have then been registered as 'Type A/B.' The other way around,

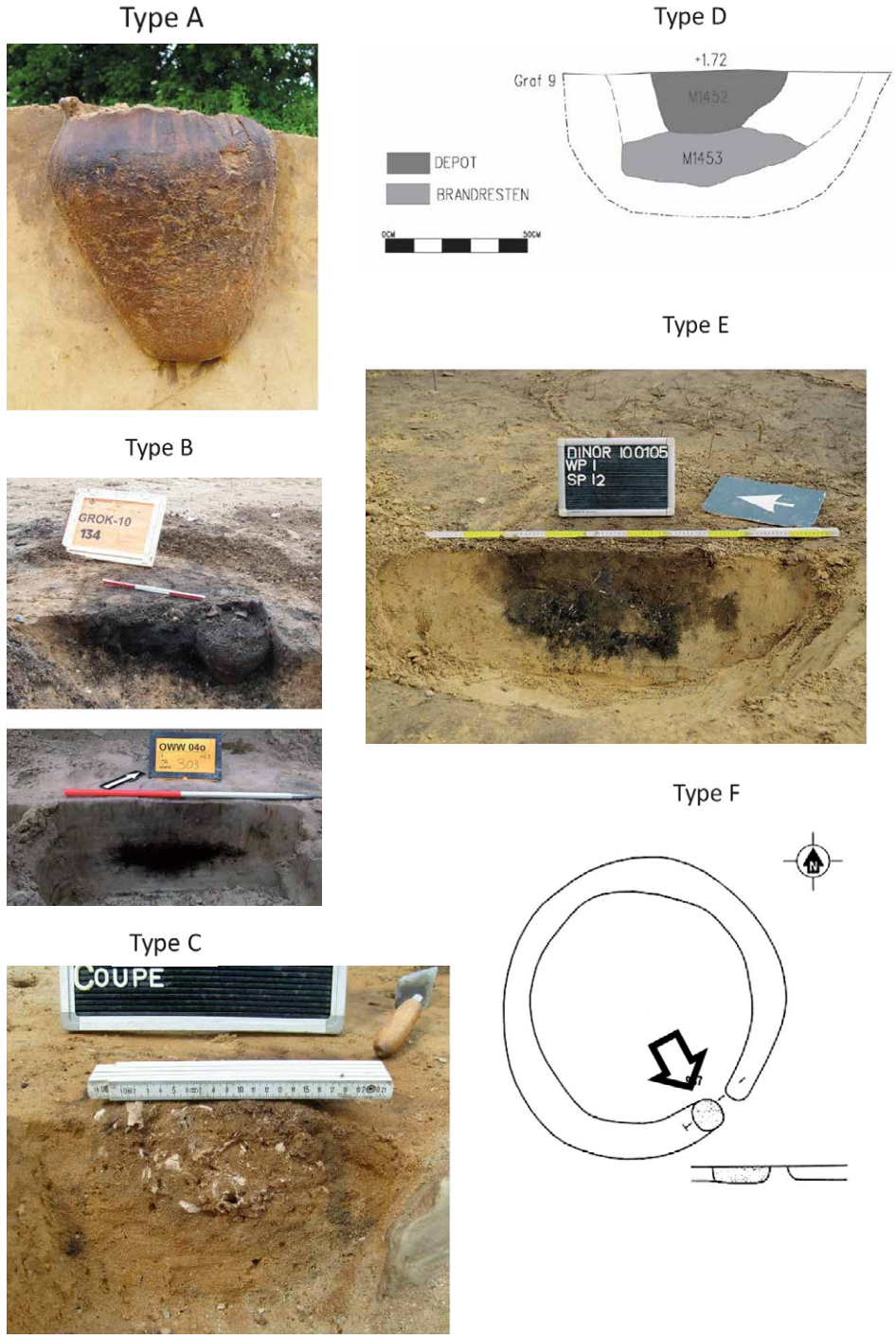

Fig. 6.4: Field impressions of grave types 'A' – 'F.' No clear field pictures were available for grave 'G' and 'F' types. The photos were shot at the following cemeteries: (type A) Geldrop-Genoenhuis (Hissel *et al.* 2007, 206); (type B) Groesbeek-Hüssenhoff (Geerts/Veldman 2012, fig. 4.6); (type C) Uden-Slabroekse Heide (Photo: Arjan Louwen); (type D) Den Haag-Hubertustunnel (Bulten *et al.* 2007, 93); (type E) Rossum-Oranjestraat (Eeltink/Smits 2007, fig. 37); (type F) Someren-Waterdael III (Hiddink/De Boer 2011, fig. 14.12).

some 1,023 graves that clearly concerned depositions of cremated remains without urn, but for which any further detail lacked, have been registered as 'Not Type A/B.'

For the 679 graves that could accurately be ranked according to De Mulder's classification system, it shows that 'clean' depositions of cremated remains, both in urns ('type A') as without urns ('type C'), are absolutely dominant (Tab. 6.c). Even though both urnless cemeteries as well as cemeteries where more than 90% of the population was buried in urns come about (see Tab. 5.1), in most cemeteries both ways of interment were practiced in unison. Both types of 'clean' cremation depositions can be observed for the entire period of study (Fig. 6.3) and do not seem to have been bound to a specific region (see Tab. 5.1). Generally, both types of graves involved the digging of a small round and shaft-like pit, just big enough to lodge the urn or bundle of cremated remains (see Fig. 6.4: types 'A' and 'C'). For some urn graves it was attested that cremated remains had been scattered in the backfill of the burial pit as well.[102] At the cemetery of Noordbarge-Hoge Loo even one case occurred whereby an urn was covered with a lid and cremated remains had subsequently been placed on top of that lid. A second lid was then placed over these cremated remains before the burial pit was finally sealed off (Kooi 1979, 52, fig. 42, no. 480). It is unclear whether in these specific cases the original graves had been reopened before the second bulk of cremated remains were placed inside these pits.

A third and alternative way of depositing clean cremated remains concerns De Mulder's 'type G' graves. This type of grave involved the scattering of clean cremated remains in a large pit and has only occasionally been observed for the present dataset (Tab. 6.3). The available radiocarbon dates for this type of grave all calibrate in the later Bronze Age (Fig. 6.3).

Grave types whereby pyre-debris play a significant role (types 'B,' 'D' and 'E') are represented in smaller shares but certainly did not concern mere exceptions (see Tab. 6.3). 'Type B' graves, urn graves that contain a mix of cremated remains and pyre-debris, often come about as shaft-like pits. They are occasionally also found as larger pits wherein the urn has been placed in one corner while the pyre-debris fill up the rest of the pit (see Fig.6.4: type B). 'Type D' graves, which are urnless graves wherein pyre-debris have been buried separately from the cremated remains, occur as small shaft-like pits but sometimes also as larger pits. It is however always clear for 'type D' graves that pyre-debris have been deposited separately from the cremated remains and that both deposits involved different actions. As a consequence, both cremated remains as pyre-debris must have been stored separately, or at least transported as such, before finally being deposited together in one grave. This is also what distinguishes 'type D' graves from 'type E' graves as in the latter case the cremated remains have been mixed with the pyre-debris before finally being deposited in the grave in one go. 'Type E' graves too, may come about as little shaft-like pits or as larger round or oval pits. Additionally, two cases have been recorded whereby pyre-debris had been buried in a separate pit next to the pit with cremated remains (Fig. 6.5). In the example from Someren-Waterdael III the pit with pyre-debris also contained 15 grams of cremated remains and has therefore been treated as a grave (Hiddink/De Boer 2011, fig. 14.11). No cremated remains have been collected from the pit with charcoal from Geldrop-Genoenhuis (Hissel *et al.* 2007, 197).

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102 Cremated remains in the backfill of urn graves have been attested in the following cemeteries: Sittard-Hoogveld [NL-LI-387] (Tol 2000, 104); Elsen-Friezenberg [NL-OV-025] (Verlinde 1976, 15); Huissen-Agropark [NL-GL-026] (Bergsma/Stokkel 2011, fig. 2.8); Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden [NL-UT-012] (Hessing 1989, 340); Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul [NL-BR-159] (Verwers 1975, 26).

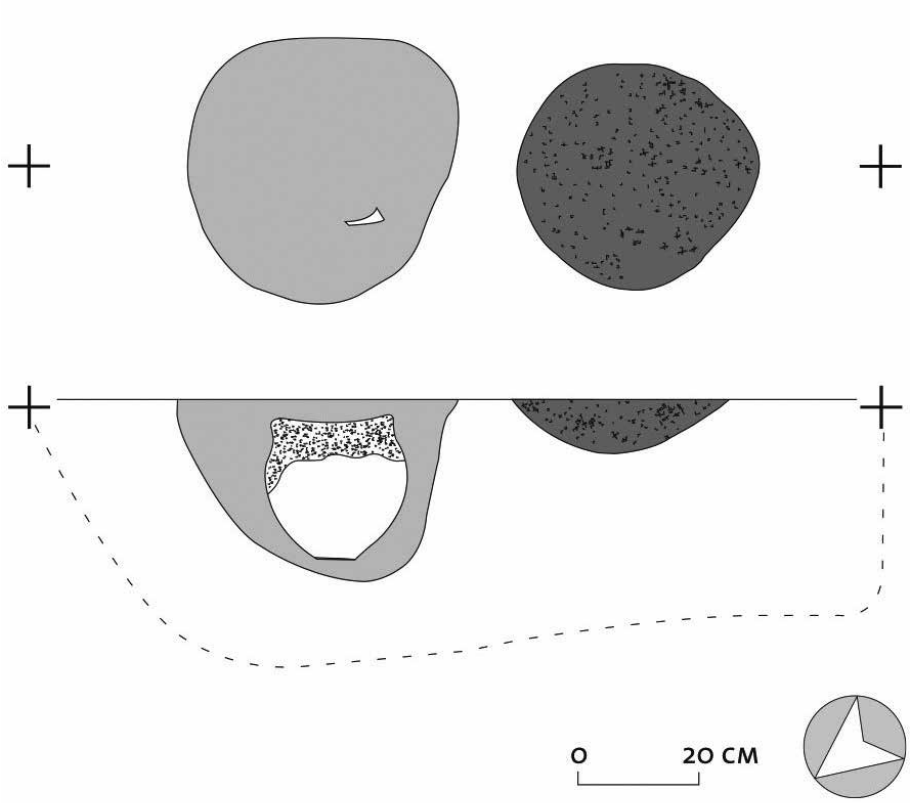

Fig. 6.5: Urn grave at Geldrop-Genoenhuis with additional pit of what presumably are the pyre-debris (After: Hissel *et al.* 2007, 197).

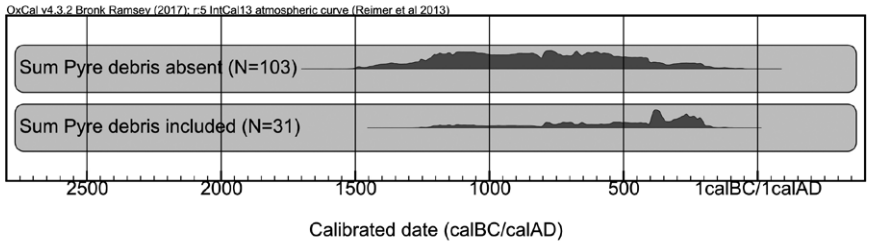

Fig. 6.6: The sum of radiocarbon dates available for grave types with- and without pyre-debris in the present dataset. Only graves that could be ranked according to De Mulder's classification (De Mulder 2011) have been included.

The deliberate act of adding pyre-debris to cremation graves has been recorded for the entire period of study. However, it seems that, especially for the type 'B' and 'D' graves, the available radiocarbon dates gravitate towards the Early Iron Age and later (Fig. 6.3 and Fig. 6.6). These dates possibly indicate that the role of pyre-debris at the stage of interment increases as the Iron Age continues. Perhaps can the cinerary barrows that occur in the Middle Iron Age be seen as the culmination of this importance of pyre-debris as in these graves the entire pyre-site was covered up with a small mound while

Cremains in/on	Pyre-debris?			Proposed (English) classification	De Mulder 2011	Hiddink 2003	German terminology
	Absent	*Apart*	*Mixed*				
Pyre	-	-	yes	Bustum (*sensu stricto*)	Type I	-	*Brandflachengrab*
	-	yes	-	Bustum; cremains apart	Type H	-	-
Urn	yes	-	-	Urn, pyre-debris absent	Type A	Type A	*Urngrab*
	-	yes	-	Urn, pyre-debris apart	Type B?	Type B	-
Nest	-	-	yes	Urn, pyre-debris mixed	Type B	Type C	*Brandschüttungsgrab*
	yes	-	-	Cremation nest, pyre-debris absent	Type C	Type A	*Knochenlager*
	-	yes	-	Cremation nest, pyre-debris apart	Type D	Type B	-
Scatter	yes	-	-	Cremation scatter (in pit)	Type G	Type A	*Leichenbrandschüttungsgrab*
Mix	-	-	yes	Mixed pyre-debris and cremains	Type E	Type C	*Brandgrubengrab*

Tab. 6.4: Proposal for a general classification system of cremation graves.

the cremated remains were just left on the pyre (Hessing/Kooi 2005, 637; Lanting/Van der Plicht 2005, 308). In the present dataset only one such grave ('type H') has possibly been found at the site of Weert-Laarveld (Tol 2009, 103) and has indeed been radiocarbon dated to a later phase of the Iron Age.[103]

The last form of interment to be discussed here concerns the placement of cremated remains in the surrounding features of already existing funerary monuments. For the present dataset 57 examples of this form of interment have been recorded. In 40 cases the cremated remains had been scattered inside the ditch or had been deposited in a compact bundle (De Mulder's 'type F'). In the remaining 17 cases the cremated remains had been put in an urn first (Tab. 6.3: 'type A/F'). This particular practice occurred throughout the entire period of study (Fig. 6.3) and has been observed for cemeteries in both the north as the south of the research area. The fact that it was regularly decided not to provide the cremated remains with their own distinct funerary monument but to bury them in a circular ditch of an already existing monument, adheres to the ritual importance of these surrounding features (also see Sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3).

When all the various ways of interment are considered, there clearly was no strict template of what the urnfield grave should look like. But how should this variation then be explained? As was already argued in Section 5.2.1, neither sex or age seem to have formed determining factors in using an urn or not. However, as was also illustrated in Section 5.2.1, some regions display a clear preference for the use of urns in containing the cremated remains during a certain period of time. For instance, in Early Iron Age cemeteries in the sandy area of East Brabant and North Limburg, urn graves make up more than 90% of the graves. This observation consequently leads to a dominance of De Mulder's 'type A' graves in this specific region during the Early Iron Age (Section 5.2.1; Tab. 5.1). Only a few centuries later, at the transition from the Early- to the Middle Iron Age the same region exhibits a clear dominance of urnless graves, consequently leading to an abundance of De Mulder's 'type C' graves. Clearly there are some timebound and

103 [NL-LI-017; Grave_ID 544]: Labcode Poz-25928: 2285 +/- 35 BP: 406-210 cal. BC (95,4 %) (Tol 2009, 103).

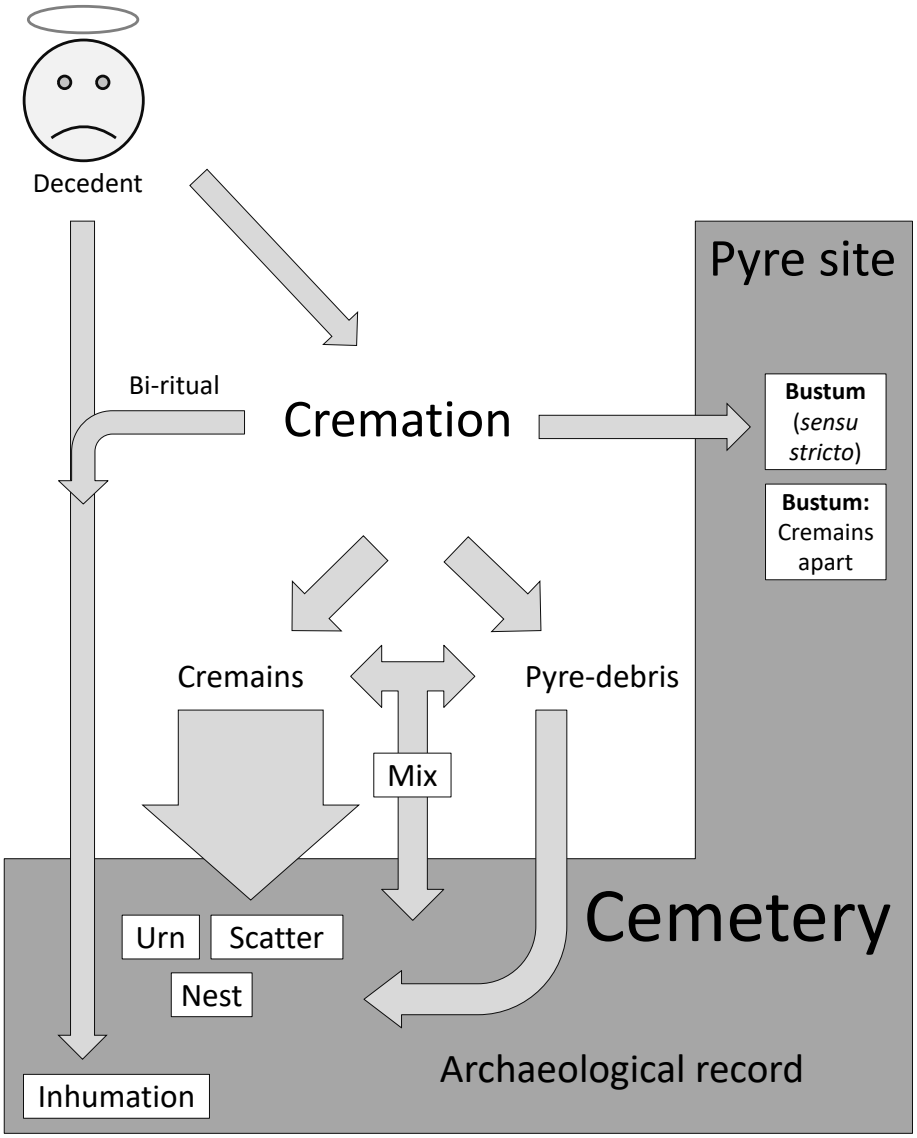

Fig. 6.7: The variety of grave forms as observed for Bronze- and Iron age cemeteries in the Lower-Rhine-Basin. The terminology applied in this flow chart may be used as building blocks in the description of graves (see Tab. 6.4).

regional trends in the occurrence of specific types of graves. The inclusion of pyre-debris has already been discussed in this regard. It should however also be noted that urn graves and urnless cremation graves often cooccur within the same cemetery (Tab. 5.1), meaning that different modes of interment could be practiced in unison within the confinements of a single cemetery.

An interesting question that follows is how different are these various modes of interment really? While to our minds the different modes of interment as we see them in our excavations may indeed look very different, this not necessarily reflects the perception

of the people who once did the actual burying. It is not argued here that the composition of graves is therefore meaningless, on the contrary, this entire dissertation builds upon the presumption that these graves are meaningful composite artefacts (Section 1.4.1). But we must bear in mind that as archaeologists we are fortunate to be able to see the entire picture of a cemetery and that what we see in our excavation plans, GIS's and catalogues only came into being after sometimes hundreds of years of burial. Where we can exactly see, measure and examine the contents of countless of graves at once (*e.g.* the present dataset), the people who once buried their beloved ones in such a cemetery perhaps only witnessed a dozen of these burials unfold. Logically, not all graves in a cemetery like Noordbarge-Hoge Loo that was in use for more than 700 years (Kooi 1979; Arnoldussen/Albers 2015) will look exactly the same. Returning to Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990; Section 2.2) time and time again people would have processed and weighed all they saw when they witnessed or took part in a funeral. Therefore, what we see in a particular grave is the residue of all the practices that in some way made sense to the mourners at that particular funeral and at that particular occasion. While this thesis means that there is in fact not a single grave alike as both actors and audience would have differed at every other funeral, it also means that the different modes of interment as we see them are still the result of practices that made sense to a lot of people in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age.

In this light, when the different modes of interment are broken down into main constituents, cremated remains are the only substance returning in all graves. Cremating a corpse and burying the burnt bones in an urnfield was something that made sense to people in 99%[104] of the cases someone had died. In addition, pyre-debris have been collected from a substantial share of graves as well. What follows is that after the event of cremation people were time and time again confronted with the decision how to finally assemble the cremated remains in the context of the grave and what to do with the pyre-debris (Fig. 6.7). Regardless of all the possible motivations behind these practices, it is basically the result of this decision what we finally see reflected in the different modes of interment. And it is at this crucial stage in the mortuary process where we must consider that to the mourners it was perhaps more important *that* cremated remains and/or pyre-debris were finally to be buried in the first place rather than *how*. To our minds the different modes of interment may seem to reflect rather different perceptions of what a grave should look like, and in a way they do. But what we again must bear in mind is that these people will only have witnessed a limited number of funerals themselves and they will have acted in a way that made sense to *them*. Surely people would have had a clear idea about *why* pyre-debris should be buried along with the cremated remains but the way this was finally accomplished may have been prone to personal interpretations or those of local groups (of practice) for that matter. The same applies to the cremated remains themselves: it is clear they needed to be buried but there are several (and at the same time only restricted) possibilities of accomplishing this as they can be put in a container, placed in a pit (either concentrated or scattered) or be mixed with the pyre-debris (Fig. 6.7; Tab. 6.4). What remains is that even though every single grave is unique as it was created by a unique group of people acting according to their mutual *habitus*, the practices we can still distil from these graves made sense to all of them. Practices that resulted in various but at the same time restricted possible modes of interment (Fig. 6.7; Tab. 6.4).

104 Considering the small share of inhumation graves in the present dataset.

6.3.2 Furnishing the grave: The placing of objects and admixtures inside the grave

With the cremated remains and pyre-debris in place, the next step is to examine which positions the various objects were assigned inside a grave. For 328 objects from cremation graves some information as to their original position could be obtained. Often this information was restricted to a position in- or outside the urn but for some 162 examples the original position of the objects had been documented in more detail. For cremation graves a major distinction can be made between graves with and without urns since the urn as container for the cremated remains is a rather defining feature with regards to the position of the objects.

To start with the urn graves, in 218 cases had the position of the objects in relation to the urn and/or the cremated remains been documented. In 191 graves the objects had been placed inside the urn while in the remaining 27 cases the objects had been deliberately kept out. When the details concerned had been provided, it is notable that by far most pieces of accessory pottery had been placed on top of the cremated remains inside the urn (Tab. 6.5). Only in two occasions had they been found amidst the cremated remains. About a bronze bracelet from the cemetery of Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden,[105] it was noted that some 20 pieces of this bracelet were also found outside the urn in the fill of the burial pit (Hessing 1989, 340). The amber beads that were found on the bottom of an urn in the cemetery of Maastricht-Ambyerveld have already been mentioned (Section 5.5). An iron razor[106] and two bronze bracelets[107] had carefully been placed on top of the cremated remains in two respective graves in the cemetery of Noordbarge-Hoge Loo. A bronze dress pin was found lying on top of the cremated remains in an urn at Gasteren where it was accompanied by a miniature version of a '*Gasteren*-urn' that had been placed on its side (Fig. 6.8:c). The two bronze bracelets from Noordbarge were also accompanied by a piece of accessory pottery which was standing upright, partly on top of the two bracelets (Fig. 6.8:d.).

About 17 of the objects that were found outside urns more details are available as to their exact location. Two spindle whorls from different cemeteries were found lying next to the respective urns.[108] An interesting detail about one of these graves, the example from Zutphen-Looërenk/Meierink, is that a second spindle whorl had been placed *inside* the urn (Van Straten/Fermin 2012, 60). Of the 14 pieces of accessory pottery in this group, four examples were placed against the walls of the urns concerned. In two occasions have miniature vessels been found lying on their sides next to- or against the urn.[109] It is not always clear whether this had been done on purpose or that is was caused by taphonomic processes. In one exceptional case the urn was found standing inside a pottery bowl[110] (Tol 2000, 144).

For cremation graves that did not involve the use of an urn, about 110 objects some information as to their original position in relation to the cremated remains had been provided. It should be mentioned though that taphonomic processes taking place in

105 [NL-UT-012; Grave_ID 1700].
106 [NL-DR-054; Grave_ID 2737].
107 [NL-DR-054; Grave_ID 2646].
108 [NL-LI-365; Grave_ID 0686]; [NL-GL-056; Grave_ID 1754].
109 [NL-LI-387; Grave_ID 0780]; [NL-DR-054; Grave_ID 2737].
110 [NL-LI-387; Grave_ID 0781].

Urn [inside]

Object group	On top CR	Mixed	Underneath CR	Inside unspecified	TOTAL
Accessory pottery	25	2	0	110	137
Cosmetics and clothing	3	4	1	41	49
Tools	0	0	0	2	2
Weapons	0	0	0	2	2
Horse gear	0	0	0	1	1

Urn [outside]

Object group	Against urn	Next to urn	Underneath urn	Outside unspecified	TOTAL
Accessory pottery	4	10	1	2	17
Cosmetics and clothing	0	0	0	8	8
Tools	0	2	0	0	2
Weapons	0	0	0	0	0
Horse gear	0	0	0	0	0

No urn

Object group	On top CR	Mixed	Underneath CR	Next to CR	TOTAL
Accessory pottery	30	30	7	7	74
Cosmetics and clothing	1	23	0	0	24
Tools	0	3	0	0	3
Weapons	0	9	0	0	9
Horse gear	0	0	0	0	0

Tab. 6.5: The main object groups and their position in relation to the cremated remains. The numbers represent the number of graves whereby a certain position of an object has been positively identified. When a grave contained multiple objects that were placed in the same position, these objects have then been counted as one observation as they seem to reflect one decision. For instance, the 9 observations whereby weapons have been found mixed with the cremated remains in urnless cremation graves together include some 23 individual objects (2 daggers and 21 arrow-/spear heads).

the ground may have caused certain objects that had originally been placed on top of cremated remains to finally end up mixed with them. Even the closing of the burial pit itself may already have caused such a distribution. Most objects were found mixed with the cremated remains (see Tab. 6.5). Only for accessory pottery it could be established that this category of objects was also often placed on top of cremated remains. Of all the objects related to personal adornment, only a bronze tweezers from Oldenzaal-De Tij[111] was found placed on top.

In addition, a substantial amount of graves contained loose pottery sherds that seem to have been put in the grave on purpose (Section 5.7.2). Only rarely has their exact location inside the grave been documented but the occasional micro-excavation

111 [NL-OV-050; Grave_ID 1238].

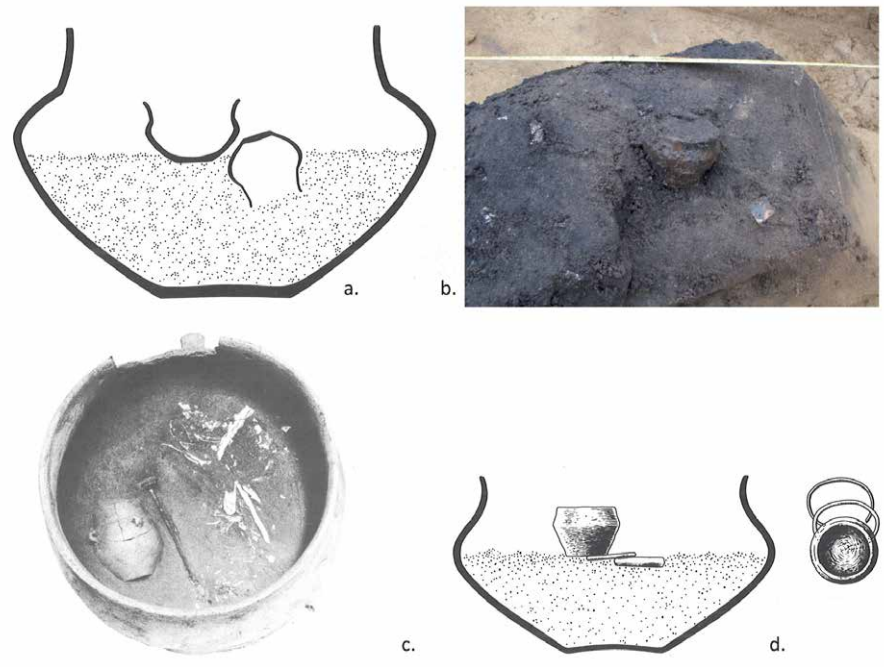

Fig. 6.8: Examples of the placement of objects inside cremation graves as observed for the present dataset: (a) Noordbarge-Hoge Loo; H (urn): 26 cm (Kooi 1979, fig. 42:157); (b) Groesbeek-Hüssenhoff (Geerts/Veldman 2012, 242); (c) Gasteren (Kooi 1982, fig. 33); (d) Noordbarge-Hoge Loo; H (urn): 16 cm; (Kooi 1979, fig. 42:252) (Figures A; C; D: © University of Groningen, Groningen Institute of Archaeology).

shows that pottery sherds were carefully and purposefully placed inside these graves (Fig. 6.9; Van den Broeke/Daniël 2011, fig. 4.20). The present dataset also yielded two examples where pottery sherds found in graves fitted pottery sherds retrieved from surrounding features.[112] In the case of St. Oedenrode-Haagakkers the fitting sherds came from different funerary monuments but at Geldrop-Genoenhuis the fitting sherds came from the very same monument. Also, at Geldrop the sherds found in the circular ditch were burnt and had been submerged in an oleaginous substance while the sherds from the grave itself were clearly unburnt (Hissel *et al.* 2007, 184) suggesting the former sherds were part of an additional practice involving fire and grease before being placed inside the circular ditch. The fact that both grave and circular ditch contained sherds of the same vessel either suggests sherds of the same vessel were deliberately kept out of the grave only to be interred in the circular ditch after the completion of the monument or that both grave and ditch laid open at the same time. Like the ample examples of cremated remains retrieved from surrounding features (Section 6.3.1), these findings again emphasise the ritual importance of these structures (also see Section 6.3.4.4).

112 Graves with sherds fitting sherds from other contexts: St.-Oedenrode-Haagakkers [NL-BR-210]: 'Grave 49' [Grave_ID 521]: six sherds from this particular grave fitted sherds from the ditch surrounding graves '40a-c' [Grave_ID's 515-517]; Geldrop-Genoenhuis [NL-BR-004]: 'Grave 8' [Grave_ID 898].

Fig. 6.9: Grave 11 [Grave_ID 1440] in the cemetery of Lent-Lentseveld [NL-GL-036] possibly showing the careful placement of pottery sherds inside the grave. (Van den Broeke/Daniël 2011: fig. 4.20).

Overall, there seems to have been no clear blueprint of where exactly an object needed to be placed inside the grave. However, when the treatment of the different objects is added, it appears that when objects were found mixed with the cremated remains, there is a bigger chance these objects have been burnt. For instance, at least 14 out of the 32 pieces of accessory pottery that were found mixed with the cremated remains are burnt while for the examples that had been placed on top of the cremated remains only four out of 55 examples showed signs of burning. The same observation probably also counts for objects related to cosmetics and clothing. Of the 27 objects that have been found mixed with cremated remains at least eight had been burnt and another seven most probably also. For most of the other examples in this category no details had been provided as to their treatment. Only four of these latter objects were definitely unburnt. None of the four objects related to cosmetics and clothing that had been placed on top of the cremated remains had been burnt and except for the heavily corroded iron razor from Noordbarge[113] were all even pretty much intact.

The same observation applies to fragmentation. 15 out of the 32 pieces of accessory pottery that had been mixed with the cremated remains have been found in a fragmented state while of the 55 examples placed on top the cremated remains only six were fragmented, five of which most probably due to taphonomic processes rather than intentional fragmentation. Of the objects related to cosmetics and clothing 14 out of 27 examples mixed with cremated remains were found in a fragmented state. The relatively high number of graves where burnt and/or fragmented objects have been found mixed with the cremated remains is probably best explained by the scenario where these objects were worn by the decedent on the pyre (cosmetics and clothing accessories) or had been added to the cremation fire (accessory pottery). After the pyre-

113 [NL-DR-054: Grave_ID 2737].

debris had cooled down these burnt and broken objects were then collected together with the cremated remains, finally to be deposited in the context of the grave in a mixed state. Objects that were placed on top of the cremated remains are often unscathed and were probably meant to enter the grave in such a capacity. As argued earlier (Section 5.5) both pyre and grave seem to have been regarded as suitable occasions in the mortuary process, or places for that matter, to provide the decedent with (the same kind of) objects.

A final remark concerns the specific placements of some pieces of accessory pottery. In no less than 23 cases the pottery concerned had deliberately been placed upside-down, whether or not on top of the cremated remains. It is clear by their positioning these cups, bowls and plates did not contain any liquid or food at the time they were placed inside the grave. Perhaps these vessels were just meant to accompany the decedent as future utensils rather than the containers of food and drink. Another explanation that should be considered though is the deliberate inversion of things in death. A clear contemporary example concerns the Early Iron Age elite burial of Hochdorf where the left shoe of the chieftain had deliberately been placed on his right foot and vice versa. Also, the arrows that were found in the Hochdorf burial chamber had deliberately been placed upside-down in their quiver (Veit 1988; Rebay-Salisbury 2017, 61).

6.3.3 Marking the grave

6.3.3.1 Making the dead visible

After cremated remains, pyre-debris and objects had been assembled in the context of the grave the mortuary process would have slowly drawn to an end. It is difficult to determine at what point the mourners would have felt the mortuary process was concluded as the dead were surely revisited until long after interment (Sections 6.3.3.4 and 6.5). Nevertheless, the next step in the mortuary process involving the closing and marking of the grave would undoubtedly have marked a conclusive station along the journey of a decedent from a former living member of the community to a future ancestor.

Originally, many of the cremation graves in the present study would have been covered with small burial mounds. However, as at present most urnfields have been levelled, for the present dataset only in 126 cases have remnants of burial mounds been observed. But since many of the original small mounds were once surrounded by circular ditches that were cut deep into the virgin soil, the original location, shape and size of these monuments is often still perfectly indicated. In addition, minerals that accumulated in the fills of these ditches penetrated even deeper in the subsoil by the process of podzolisation (Berendsen 2008, 88-89), sometimes as deep as 70 centimetres underneath the original prehistoric surface (Fig. 6.10). As a result, even cemeteries that have literally been erased from the face of the earth, can sometimes still be traced back by documenting these soil formation processes (*e.g.* Hakvoort/Van der Mei 2010; Jansen *et al.* 2020). Unfortunately, the process of podzolisation can only be used as an advantage for the cemeteries located on sandy soils. Soil formation processes in clayey sediments and loess penetrate less deep into the subsoil and the features themselves are often only vaguely visible. Erosion and homogenisation are other notorious factors of influence on the invisibility or the seemingly absence of funerary structures in clayey sediments (Dyselinck 2013, 54).

Fig. 6.10: The imprint of illuviated minerals underneath the original circular ditch of an Early Iron Age grave in the cemetery of Uden-Slabroekse Heide (Photo: Arjan Louwen).

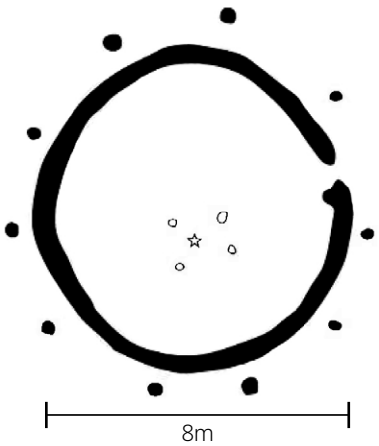

Fig. 6.11: Example of a grave surrounded by four posts in the cemetery of Steenderen-Steenderdiek (After: Hermsen/Van der Wal 2012, fig. 3.12).

It is however also clear that not for every single grave a new monument was erected or circular ditch was dug as cremation graves can also be found in the narrow spaces in between the different small mounds. In addition, one mound could host multiple graves and as illustrated in the above even the circular ditches themselves were considered suitable places to deposit the last physical remains of a decedent (see Tab. 6.1). It should also be considered that there might have been alternative ways of marking the location of a grave above ground that are now largely invisible to the archaeological eye. As an example, a handful of graves in the present dataset were

originally surrounded by four posts (Fig. 6.11)[114] that could have supported a small platform, granary-like building or shrine.

6.3.3.2 Types of monuments

Of the total 3,182 graves in the present dataset, ultimately 1,585 graves[115] coming from 55 different cemeteries could positively be linked to 1,360 individual monuments or surrounding features. It should be noted with regards to these counts that for the present dataset only the funerary structures that could positively be linked to preserved graves have been included.

As Table 6.6 shows, round mounds accompanied with a circular ditch are by far the best represented type of monument. The types of monument present in one particular cemetery may however vary substantially. Long mounds of the Goirle type, for instance, made up substantial, if not dominant shares of the total number of monuments in the cemeteries of Goirle-Hoogeind and Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul. Also, the occurrence of some specific types of monuments, like long mounds of the '*Vledder*-type' and so-called keyhole-shaped monuments (*Schlussellochgräber*), seems restricted to specific regions in the Lower-Rhine-Basin. The southernmost example of the former type of monument has recently been excavated at Epse[116] (province of Gelderland), while the cemetery of Beegden produced the only known exception of a Keyhole-shaped ditch south of the river Meuse. The occurrence of specific types of monuments may also have been restricted to specific periods of time. Long mounds of the '*Vledder*-type' seem to concern an early type of monument no longer in use at the dawn of the Iron Age while quadrangular ditches predominantly occurred from the later Early Iron Age onwards (Fig. 6.12). Round mounds accompanied with circular ditches clearly concerned a universal type of monument. In the Netherlands the youngest examples even date to the Early Medieval period (*e.g.* Holwerda 1926; Verwers/Van Tent 2015, 15). Examples with an opening in the surrounding feature however seem to concern a typical (Early) Iron Age phenomenon (Fig. 6.12; Verlinde 1987, tabel K). It is apparent that the south-eastern section of the compass was much favoured for the location of an opening in a circular ditch. Out of the 206 openings in circular ditches that could positively be identified no less than 105 were directed at the southeast. Another 85 openings were located somewhere between due east and due south. The reason for openings in circular ditches to be predominantly directed towards the southeast could be related to the angle of sunrise. Other explanations should however be considered as well. Even in today's world religions the locations of holy places play an important role in determining the direction of shrines, graves and prayers such as Jerusalem for Christianity and Mecca for Islam.

As Table 6.6 also shows it does not seem that specific types of monuments were only reserved for specific sexes or age classes. Assuming that graves located centrally underneath monuments also concern the initial or primary graves for which a monument was erected, both males and females and both non-adults as adults could be buried

114 Cemeteries where four-post structures surrounding graves have been recorded: Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden [NL-UT-012]: 'Grab 58' (Hessing 1989, fig. 8); Noord Elsen-Friezenberg [NL-OV-025]: 'Grab 7,' '24,' '25' and '52' (Verlinde 1987, fig. 19); Steenderen-Steenderdiek [NL-GL-019]: 'Graf 1' (Van Straten 2010, fig. 21); Valkenswaard-Het Gegraaf [NL-BR-250]: 'Graf 55' (Brunsting/Verwers 1975, Appendix).

115 Inhumation graves included.

116 Unpublished.

			Buried central			
Type of monument	**Type of surrounding feature**	**N monuments**	**Male**	**Female**	**Non-adult**	**Adult**
Round mound	Circular ditch [Kreisgräber]	1136	28	30	30	127
Round mound	Double circular ditch	23	2	2	2	6
Round mound	Three double circular ditch	3	0	0	0	0
Round mound	Circular ditch and post circle	11	1	2	0	5
Round mound	Post circle	4	0	0	0	0
Round mound	Keyhole-shaped ditch [Schlussellochgräber]	22	1	0	0	1
Round mound	*Not applicable*	8	0	0	0	0
Round mound	INDET.	5	0	0	0	0
Quadrangular[?] mound	Quadrangular ditch	35	3	2	0	10
Long mound	Rectangular ditch	86	0	2	1	6
Long mound	Rectangular ditch segments	11	6	1	0	8
Long mound	Double rectangular ditch	1	0	0	0	0
Long mound	Oval shaped ditch	2	0	0	0	0
Long mound	Post circle	3	0	0	0	0
Stone cist	*Not applicable*	1	0	0	0	0
Stone platform	*Not applicable*	4	0	0	0	0
Funerary house[?]	Small rectangular ditch with a post in each corner	1	0	0	0	1
"Mound complexes"	Multiple overlying structures of different types	2	0	0	0	0
INDET.	Straight ditch segments	2	0	0	0	0
TOTAL:		1,360	41	39	33	164

Tab. 6.6: The different types of monuments/surrounding features and the associated numbers of occurrence as observed for the graves in the present dataset. The columns for the different sex and age categories only include graves that contained the remains of just one individual and that were located centrally in/underneath the monuments concerned.

centrally underneath any kind of monument. Occasionally, a local trend may be observed as for the cemetery of Geldrop-Genoenhuis it was noted that non-adults were buried underneath smaller barrows (Hissel *et al.* 2007, 97). Outside the present dataset Roymans and Kortlang have made the same observation for several other cemeteries in the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, note 23). However, the thesis they put forward that long mounds were predominantly reserved for males that possibly fulfilled the role of family heads (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 47-48) does not seem to hold as in the present dataset both males (MNI = 9) and females (MNI = 6) have been found buried underneath these monuments as were at least nine persons that did not reach age 15.[117] In the small selection of cemeteries from the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region on which they base their model (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, table 2) males indeed make up large portions of the positively identified sexes and non-adults indeed *mostly* seem to form combinations

117 In contrast to Table 6.6, these counts do include all graves retrieved from underneath long mounds, thus located both central as a-central and containing the remains of both single as multiple individuals.

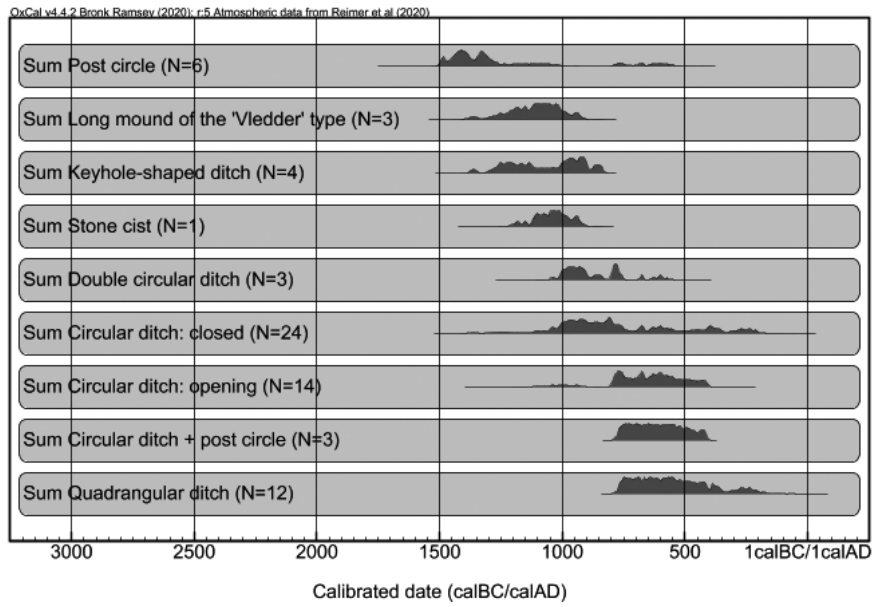

Fig. 6.12: Types of surrounding features and the associated sums of available radiocarbon dates in the present dataset. All radiocarbon dates have been obtained from either cremated remains or charcoal from primary interments within the confinements of the structures concerned.

with adults. However, even within the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt region women are buried central and individually underneath long mounds (*e.g.* Grave 1 in Tol 1999, 123; table 4).[118] In the present dataset also examples occur of non-adults buried individually underneath long mounds,[119] even within the cemeteries on which the model of Roymans and Kortlang is based upon (see Grave 6c in Hessing 1989, 335). The co-occurrence of different types of funerary monuments within the same cemeteries, especially the long mounds of sometimes extreme measurements (Kortlang 1999, 145) should thus be explained otherwise.

6.3.3.3 Circular ditches: A boundary between the dead and the living?

But why had the dead to be surrounded by ditches? In contrast to erecting a mound or surrounding a grave by a post-circle, which are both ways of consolidating the presence of a grave in the physical world, the digging of a ditch did not really increase the visibility of a grave and in fact even involves the creation of a negative (empty) space. At the time the phenomenon itself was widely spread across Northwest Europe and does not seem to have been restricted to the border of what is generally considered the be the distribution area of the so-called urnfield systems (Cunliffe 2008, fig. 8.2) as in the British Isles too ring ditch cemeteries come about (Caswell/Roberts 2018, 6). In addition, the digging of ditches around graves is not typically an urnfield phenomenon as they already appeared in the

118 [NL-BR-220; Grave_ID 0327].

119 [NL-OV-092; Grave_ID's 1386; 1390].

Middle Bronze Age (Bourgeois 2013, 37) and can still be found in Merovingian cemeteries (*e.g.* Holwerda 1926; Verwers/Van Tent 2015, 15).

The ditches themselves confined certain areas where human remains were deposited and physically set apart these areas from the surrounding world as it were. As such, these surrounding features may be considered as boundaries of sorts. Openings in the various forms of ditches suggest the areas confined by them could still be accessed, as do the forecourts of specific kinds of monuments such as keyhole-shaped ditches. All in all, not only was it deemed important to anchor the cremated remains of late beloved ones somewhere within the physical world, they were also still granted their own space by literally fencing them off. In an attempt to come up with a general processual approach to man-made linear boundaries in the first millennium BC, Mette Løvschal recently argued that *"…by materializing well-known points of orientation, such as constructed linear boundaries, visual references and physical anchors are created for social conflicts, identities, negotiations of rights, and so on…"* (Løvschal 2014, 729). Even though Lovschal's initial research did not include microcosmic fenced off spaces such as individual grave monuments, in the light of the above the digging of ditches around graves seems to adhere to the same principle.

6.3.3.4 The placing of objects and human remains in surrounding features: Acts of commemoration?

Assuming the ditches around graves were indeed dug to draw a line between the dead and the living, the material culture retrieved from these ditches might reflect upon how this liminality was perceived by the living community. Of the 55 cemeteries in the present dataset whereby specific graves could be linked to specific monuments, for 29 sites had attention been paid to materials found in these ditches or had the ditches at least been preserved in such a fashion attention could be paid to their contents. The results of a survey of the contents of these ditches have been summarised in Table 6.7. Accessory pottery is best represented and occurs in the form of complete vessels, dishes, bowls and cups but also as stray (un)burnt pottery sherds. Sometimes the vessels concerned have deliberately been placed upside down in these ditches (Kooi 1979, 189: nos. 48 and 49). Occasionally, rather specific objects such as spindle whorls and stone tools used in food preparation also occur in these ditches (see 'other' in Tab. 6.7). Since typical tableware such as bowls and cups are often represented among the repertoire of pottery (Fig. 6.13) these could indeed be related to ceremonial feasting (*e.g.* Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 45) as feasting in honour of the dead is a phenomenon encountered in both past as present cultures (Metcalf/Huntington 1991). With regards to loose pottery sherds, it could be argued that these sherds ended up in these ditches by accident. However, the two examples in the above of pottery sherds from graves fitting pottery sherds from surrounding features (Section 6.3.2) already indicate there was probably much more to these broken pots than just simple waste. Also, judging by their vast number of occurrence, it is has been argued in the above that pottery sherds were deliberately placed inside graves along with the cremated remains (Fig. 6.9; Sections 5.7.2 and 6.3.2). Following the Medieval example mentioned earlier of ashes from domestic hearths being placed in graves to prevent the spirit of the decedent from returning home (Section 3.3.3; Gilchrist 2008, 145-148), the placement of household pottery in surrounding features could have been done for comparable reasons. Even the 57 cases in the present dataset of cremated remains deliberately being placed

Site-code	Toponym	Cremated remains	Charcoal	Pottery	Other
NL-BR-004	Geldrop-Genoenhuis	x	x	x	Iron plate
NL-BR-010	Zundert-Mencia	x	-	x	-
NL-BR-011	Breda-Steenakker	x	x	x	Animal bones; La Tène bracelet (molten); (Iron?) nails; Fragments of tephrite
NL-BR-014	Someren-Waterdael III	-	-	x	-
NL-BR-159	Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul	-	x	x	-
NL-BR-196	Haps-Kamps Veld	-	-	x	-
NL-BR-210	St. Oedenrode-Haagakkers	x	x	x	Spindle whorl
NL-BR-223	Someren-Waterdael I	x	x	x	2 Spindle whorls; Pottery spoon; Amber bead
NL-BR-250	Valkenswaard-Het Gegraaf	-	-	x	-
NL-DR-038	Buinen-Hoornse Veld	-	-	x	-
NL-DR-039	Drouwen	-	-	-	Bronze hoard(!)
NL-DR-045	Wapse	x	-	x	-
NL-DR-054	Noordbarge-Hoge Loo	x	-	x	Quern; Grinding stone; One circular ditch was filled with boulders
NL-DR-094	Sleen	x	-	x	-
NL-GL-019	Steenderen-Steenderdiek	-	x	x	Burnt loam; Flint
NL-GL-029	Epse-Olthof Noord	-	-	x	-
NL-GL-056	Zutphen-Looërenk	-	-	x	-
NL-GL-068	Twello-De Schaker	x	-	x	-
NL-GL-293	Nijmegen-Kops Plateau	-	-	x	-
NL-LI-387	Sittard-Hoogveld	-	-	x	-
NL-OV-003II	Hardenberg-Mariënberg II	-	-	x	-
NL-OV-012	Colmschate-Banekaterveld(?)	x	-	x	-
NL-OV-030	Stokkum I and II	-	-	x	-
NL-OV-050	Oldenzaal-De Tij	x	-	x	-
NL-OV-059	Rossum-Oranjestraat	x	-	x	-
NL-OV-086	Vasse	-	-	x	-
NL-OV-089	Colmschate-'t Bramelt	x	-	x	-
NL-OV-092	Hengelo/Borne-Schild Es/ Veldkamp	-	-	x	-
NL-UT-012	Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden	x	-	x	-

Tab. 6.7: Cemeteries in the present dataset for which the contents of surrounding features have been documented. The 'x' marks all positive observations. Especially with regards to charcoal, only in exceptional cases had attention been paid to the presence of charcoal in the concerning reports.

in surrounding features might represent a comparable idea of soothing the spirit of a decedent buried centrally by the symbolic presence of the person represented by the cremated remains in the surrounding feature.

In the same train of thought, pottery cups, bowls and plates buried in surrounding features might still represent references to feasts, but the question is whether the

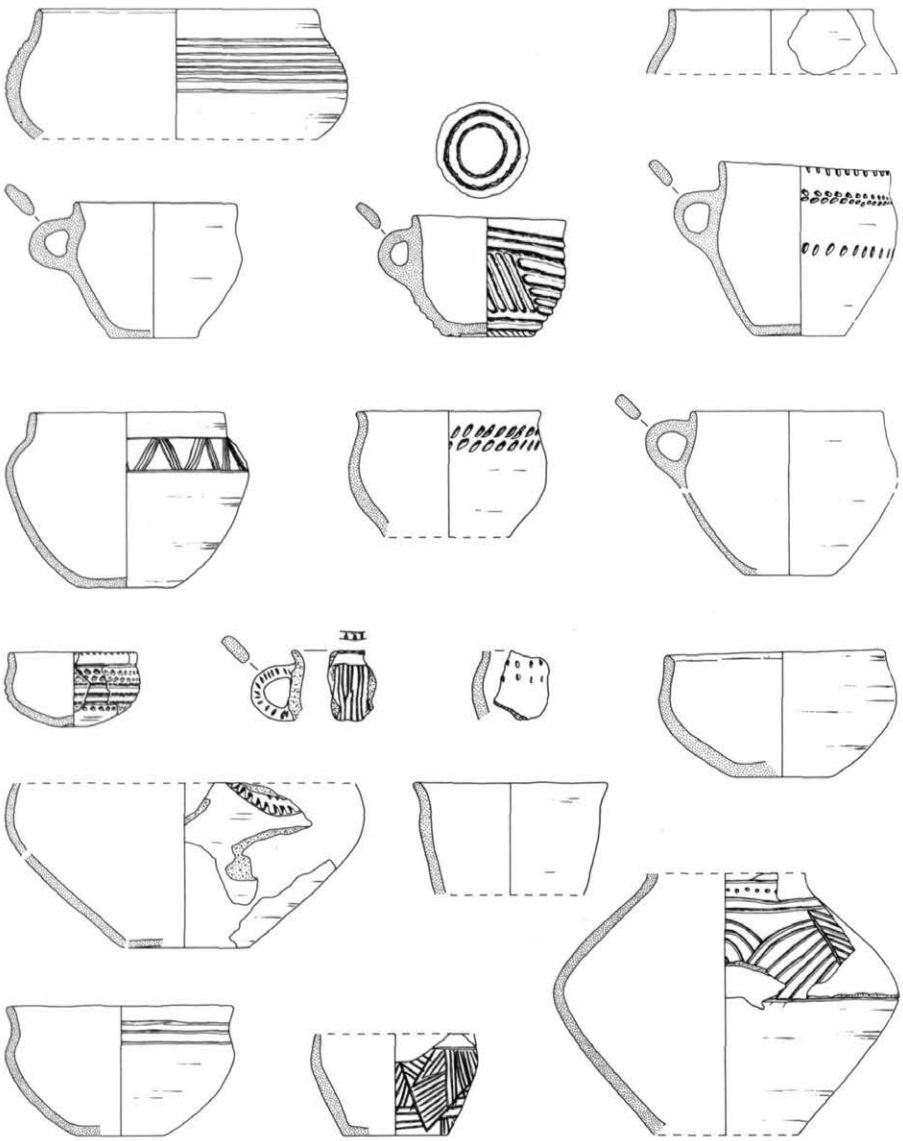

Fig. 6.13: Example of the pottery found in surrounding features: Hilvarenbeek-Laag Spul (Scale: 1:5; After: Verwers 1975, fig. 5).

feasting happened by the living community or that a feast was offered to a decedent's spirit or soul by placing it in the liminal zone between its new and former residence. The act of *libation*, the ritual pouring of drink or food, was for instance common practice in both ancient Greece and Rome (Scheid 2007, 269) as it is still today in many a culture. Drink or food were/are not only offered to deities and spirits but also to the dead. Roman tombs have for instance been found equipped with special tubes to be able to keep providing the decedent's spirit with drink and food (Roller 2006, 42). In the

present dataset one *Schräghals*-urn from the cemetery of Roermond-Mussenberg had a perforation several centimetres underneath the shoulder (Lohof 2001, fig. 9) that can possibly be explained by the ritual of libation.

The idea of materials being deposited in surrounding features as offerings is probably best illustrated by an extraordinary find from the cemetery of Drouwen.[120] At a rescue dig in the cemetery of Drouwen a cast bronze hanging bowl was collected from what later appeared to be a circular ditch (Kooi 1979, 91; fig. 87). The hanging vessel was found associated with six bronze and non-identical omega bracelets, six double-wire bracelets, a so-called spectacle fibula (*'Plattenfibel'*), a bronze ring, looped button, a narrow rod with tiny perforations, a pair of spacers, a pair of so-called 'skate-key' spacers, a necklace with three bronze beads and spirally wound bronze ribbon beads, two glass beads and ten jet beads were found (Butler/Steegstra 2008, 386-392). It is notable that for the present dataset the largest amount of metal objects found in one context, does not come from a grave but rather from a circular ditch surrounding a (vanished) grave. Late Bronze Age hoards like the one from Drouwen are usually not found in surrounding features of graves (Fontijn 2002, fig. 14.2). It is unfortunate that the accompanying grave at the site of Drouwen has not been preserved so that a comparison could be made between the contents of the grave and the circular ditch. Even though this particular ditch concerns one of the two bigger surrounding features excavated at Drouwen, with its diameter of 5.5 metres it still only is a modest monument in size. In the Netherlands, for the Late Bronze Age no clear examples of richly furnished graves exist, but with regards to the few Early Iron Age elite graves whose original contexts are known it is notable these are often found in larger monuments (Fontijn/Fokkens 2007, 362). The size of the monument the Drouwen deposition was found in thus not necessarily suspects the central interment was particularly rich in grave goods. Also, when the sheer amount of metal in this particular hoard is compared to the modest amount of metal that was found in total in one of the largest and most extensively excavated cemeteries in the northern Netherlands, the site of Noordbarge-Hoge Loo (two bronze bracelets, an iron razor and a undeterminable piece of bronze), the contrast is striking. The hoard found at Drouwen underpins that people in the region clearly had access to these metals but it was time and time again decided not to bury these objects with their previous owner(s). Judging from its (presumed) position in one of the upper fills of the ditch (Butler/Steegstra 2008, 384) this hoard must have been deposited sometime after the initial interment, meaning people returned to this particular place to connect these objects to the decedent buried in the centre of the circular ditch.

There are other observations that not only show specific decedents needed to be cared for after the point of interment, but also the dead in general. These observations concern the various features that can be found in between graves. At the cemetery of Drouwen, for instance, have several pits been excavated that were solely dug for the purpose of depositing small series of complete pottery vessels (Kooi 1979, 94). (Miniature) vessels have also been collected from in between graves at Buinen (Kooi 1979, 192: no. 86), Sleen[121] (Kooi 1979, 189), Mariënberg (Verlinde 1975a, 12) and Hengelo-Schild Es (Scholte

120 Perhaps the fact that the find was done on Saint Nicholas' Eve (5 December 1939 at dusk) contributed to its discovery… (Butler/Steegstra 2008, 383).

121 The example from Sleen seems to have been deliberately buried in front of the entrance of a key-hole shaped ditch (Kooi 1979, 189: no. 28).

Lubberink 2010, 62). The remarkable thing about all these latter examples is that in all cases the vessels concerned had been buried upside down. In addition to pottery vessels, at Colmschate-'t Bramelt a pit was found that contained burnt pottery sherds, burnt animal bones, burnt loam and fragments of a molar or grinding stone (Cuijpers 1994, 10; Verlinde/Buisman 1988, 50; Louwen 2008, 49) and at Lent-Zuiderveld one half of a bronze horse bridle was found deposited in a small pit, several meters apart from the nearest grave (Section 5.3.2.5; Van den Broeke *et al.* 2010, 176; fig. 12.6a). Querns and molars have also been found in between graves Kooi 1979, Appendix I) as have spindle whorls (Kooi 1979, no. 45) and a sea-salt container (Hessing 1989, 313).

The remarkable thing about the objects retrieved from surrounding features and the various contexts in between graves is that these can also be found in the graves themselves. Even the way they were handled (left intact, burnt and/or broken) and deposited (occasionally deliberately inverted) corresponds to the objects retrieved from graves. This could mean that some practices involved in the initial funeral needed to be repeated occasionally after interment in relation to specific decedents (objects retrieved from surrounding features) or to the dead in general (objects retrieved from in between graves). Only the hoard from Drouwen remains exceptional in this regard. Though the objects retrieved from this hoard still relate to personal adornment and appearance, specific objects like the hanging vessel and spectacle fibula have at least in the Netherlands not been found in graves. Perhaps the fact that until now this is the only example of such a hoard to be retrieved from a funerary context also adheres to the exceptional occasion or event in relation to which this particular act once took place.

6.4 Interring bodies whole: The composition of inhumation graves

In this final stage of the mortuary process, a small group of graves has so far received only little attention. Perhaps only small in numbers, these 45 inhumation graves still form a notable part of the present dataset. In contrast to the almost 99% of cremation graves, for these few decedents there still was a body, fully recognisable as a human figure available at the point of interment (Fig. 6.7). While cremated remains enabled the mourners to mix, fuse and separate the objectified former human body, still having access to the decedent in its human form created other possibilities in composing the grave, especially when display was concerned.

For 21 of the 45 inhumed individuals in the present dataset had details about the position of the body been published and for most of these graves drawings of the burial pits themselves had also been provided. Three individuals were buried in (the same) barrow of Meteren-De Bogen (Meijlink/Kranendonk 2002). The remaining inhumation graves probably all concern flat graves, or were at least dug into the virgin soil.

It is notable that the two graves that were located on sandy soils both concern regular and rectangular pits (Fig. 6.14: a) while the majority of graves located in clayey sediments tend to have more irregular and narrower shapes (Fig. 6.14: b-c). This difference probably relates to the substantially more efforts it takes to dig a pit in the compact clays of the Dutch riverine area compared to cover-sands. Only at Lent-Schoolstraat the burial pit was too small to accommodate the body in stretched position. In this case the body was placed on its back and the knees had been bent in uphold position in front of the torso suggesting the limbs of this person were bound in this unnatural position (Van den Broeke 2002b, 29).

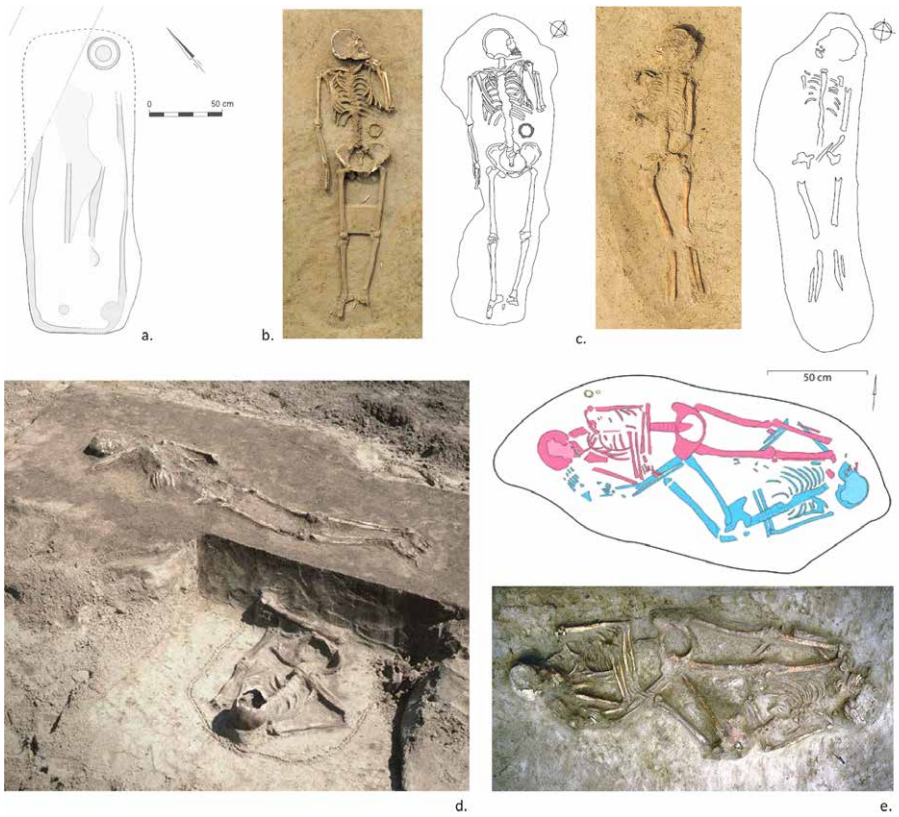

Fig. 6.14: A selection of inhumation graves from Someren and the Nijmegen-region: (a) Someren-Waterdael I (Kortlang 1999, fig. 8); (b) Lent-Lentseveld (Van den Broeke *et al.* 2011, fig. 4.5); (c) Lent-Lentseveld (Van den Broeke *et al.* 2011, fig. 4.4); (d) Lent-Laauwikstraat-Zuid (Van den Broeke 2014, fig. 113); (e) Lent-Steltsestraat (Van den Broeke 2014, figs. 107 and 109).

The child that was buried in 'grave 5' in the barrow of Meteren-De Bogen was missing the lower part of its body. It is unclear whether the lower part of the body was removed on purpose or that it was the result of (recent) disturbances (Meijlink/Kranendonk 2002, 210).

Most individuals had been buried in stretched position. Remarkably, no less than four of these individuals had been buried on their bellies instead of their backs. Additionally, two individuals were lying on their right side while another two were buried on their left. Both females and males were found in stretched position and both sexes are represented among the individuals buried on their bellies. For the individuals that were buried on their sides only in one case could the sex of the decedent (male) be determined. For most of the persons buried in stretched position the arms had also been stretched alongside the body. In one case the left hand was placed in front of the mouth and in one case had both arms been folded over the belly. At least two individuals buried on their sides were placed in the foetal position with uphold knees. Finally, the orientation of graves varies substantially and seems not related to sex. This latter observation is perhaps best illustrated by the cemetery of Lent-Lentseveld (Van den Broeke/Daniël 2011, 25-35). The four inhumation graves from this particular cemetery all belonged to women. Two graves were oriented northeast-southwest with the head in the southwest facing north while a third grave was

Position objects	*Accessory pottery*	*Cosmetics and clothing*	*Tools*	*Weapons*
Head	2	3	1	
Ear (left)		1		
Ear (right)		1		
Ears (both)		3		
Neck				
Chest		1		
Arm (left)	1			1
Arm (right)	1			
Wrist (left				
Wrist (right)				
Waist		1		
Leg (left)		1		
Leg (right				
Ankle (left)		1		
Ankle (right)				
Feet	1			
Alongside	2			

Tab. 6.8: Inhumation graves and the position of objects in relation to the body. The numbers represent the numbers of positive observations for unique graves. Four vessels found alongside a presumed inhumed body in the cemetery of Breda-Steenakker have for instance been counted as one observation.

oriented more or less north-south, head in the north and facing west. This latter example was the only individual in this cemetery to be buried on her belly. The fourth grave was oriented northwest-southeast, head in the southeast facing north.

Three inhumation graves contained more than one individual. One example has already been mentioned as it concerns the exceptional grave from the cemetery of Ewijk-Keizershoeve II where cremated remains of probably a child had been added to a badly preserved inhumation that showed some severe burn marks on the viscerocranial parts of the skull (Section 4.3.3; Lemmers *et al.*, 2012, 139-144). The latter individual also concerns the one grave that has been recorded as the only 'bi-ritual' form of interment (Tab. 6.1). At Lent-Steltsestraat a male and female, both in the age between 25 and 35 years, had been buried together in one pit. Their bodies were placed alongside each other while the head of the male was next to the feet of the female and vice versa (Fig. 6.14: e; Van den Broeke 2014, 164; fig. 109). A double inhumation grave showing more or less the same configuration, though not included in the present dataset, was found in the same region at the site of Oosterhout-Eeuwige Lente [NL-GL-066]. Here too the bodies were placed alternatingly alongside each other, only in this case both individuals were probably male (Van den Broeke 2014, 163; fig. 106). The third inhumation grave containing two individuals was found at Lent-Laauwikstraat-Zuid (Fig. 6.14: d). Again the configuration in which the bodies were placed is special. An old male in the age of 40-60 years, who was christened '*The Man van Lent,*' was laying on his back with his legs in uphold position, but turned towards his left side. A few decimetres above this old male a second person of an unknown sex was placed face down in crosswise position with the left arm on the back and slightly bent towards the neck (Van den Broeke 2014, 167; fig. 114).

The 21 inhumation graves discussed here already exhibit a broad variety in the positions the bodies were placed in. There does not seem to have been a relation between a certain body position and the sex of the decedent as both males and females were clearly placed in varying and comparable positions. Overall, there do not seem to have been strict rules about how an unburnt body should enter the ground, perhaps suggesting the placement of the body in the grave was open for variation and thus interpretation. At the same time, burying a person face down or with the knees bent in a foetal position seem like meaningful actions in themselves and suggest the topography of the dead human figure was appealed to for conveying symbolic messages to the mourners (*cf*. Sørensen 2010). Messages that perhaps told something about the way the decedent had lived (or died for that matter) or what qualities of a decedent's person needed to be emphasised in death. The position of the body could also have been important for the transition a decedent had to make to the other world. A foetal position could for instance symbolise a return to the (earthly) womb while a flexed position on the back would have allowed for a better display of the decedent as the future ancestor she or he was envisioned to become.

The objects found in inhumation graves could often easily be linked to the body's topography as in most occasions the skeleton had been preserved (Tab. 6.8). Especially the objects related to cosmetics and clothing were found in the expected locations, or the other way around, their position in relation to the body helped determining the nature of the objects concerned. Earrings were found in the ears, a bead was found on the height of the chest and an arm ring was still lodged around the decedent's arm (Fig. 6.15:c). At Lent-Zuiderveld a bronze pin was found lying alongside the decedent's left leg, some 30 centimetres apart from the body. For a dress- or cloak pin a place alongside the leg is not the most logical location to be found in. An educated guess would be that the pin was used to tighten a shroud that once covered the corpse of the male that was buried here.

Accessory pottery has been found in different locations in relation to the body. Their numbers are however too small to make any definitive statements about what exact locations would have been preferred, if there were any preferred locations at all. In two occasions pottery was found at the head of the decedent, in two other occasions had pottery been placed alongside the corpse and in one occasion at the feet. In one grave at Lent-Zuiderveld pottery, respectively a small vessel and a sieve, had been laced against or on top of both arms of an adult female (Fig. 6.15:a).

The only tool to be retrieved from an inhumation grave, a whetstone from the cemetery of Gasteren, was presumably found at the head of the decedent (Van Giffen 1945, 83). However, no silhouette has been found to confirm this thesis. The same applies to the bronze razor and tweezers that were found at the same spot, as for the vessel that was presumably found at the feet of the decedent. Finally, the only weapon from an inhumation grave, the bronze rapier from Meteren-De Bogen, was found lying next to the decedent's left arm (Meilink/Kranendonk 2002, fig. 9.3).

What is already evident from the 21 inhumation graves presented here, is that there is almost not a single grave alike. Regardless of sex and age decedents could be buried in various positions and there does not seem to have been a standardised set of objects that was to accompany a decedent in the grave. Even though the treatment of the corpse in inhumation graves may be rather different from the majority of cremation graves, the apparent liberty people seem to have experienced in creating the final composition of

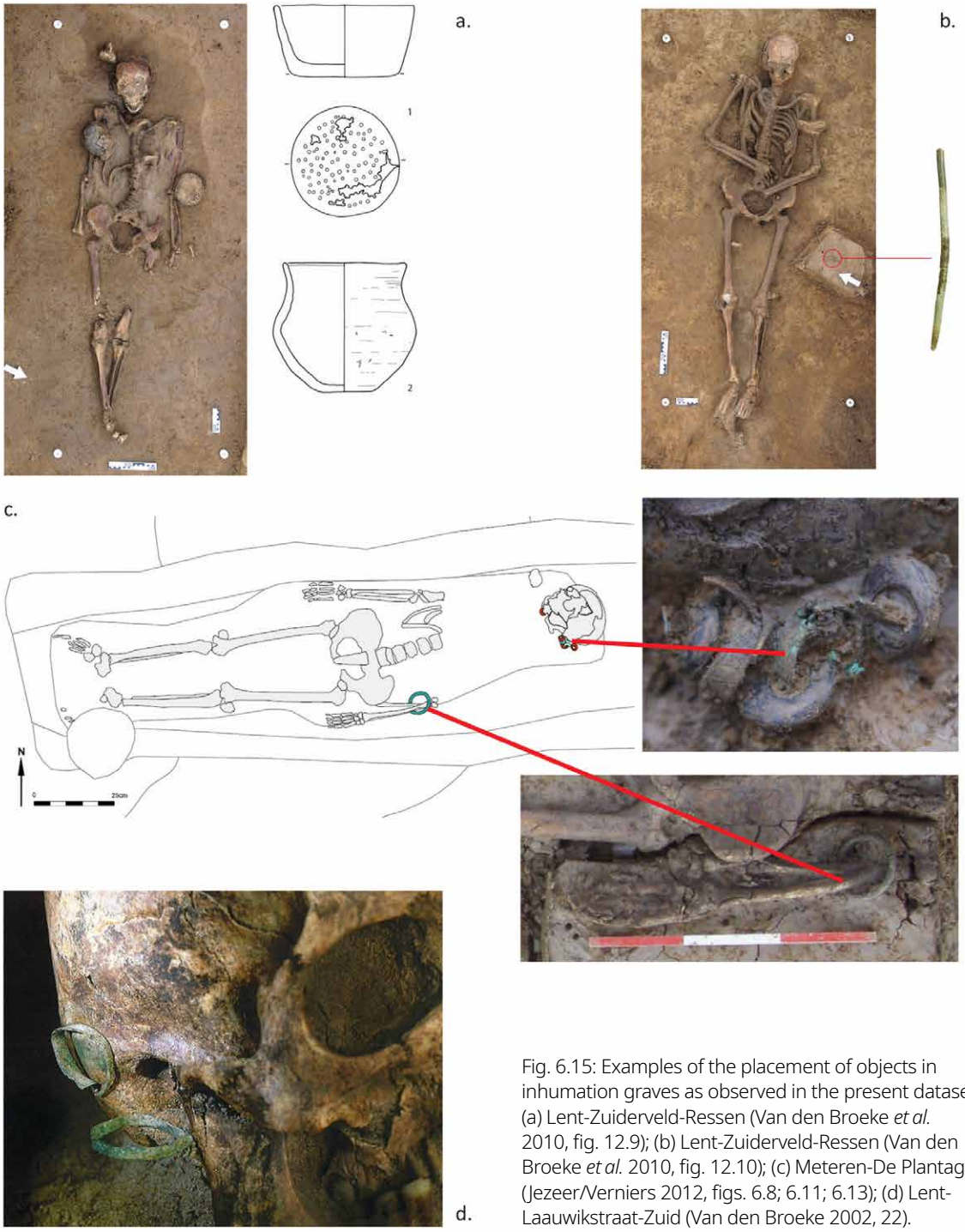

Fig. 6.15: Examples of the placement of objects in inhumation graves as observed in the present dataset: (a) Lent-Zuiderveld-Ressen (Van den Broeke *et al.* 2010, fig. 12.9); (b) Lent-Zuiderveld-Ressen (Van den Broeke *et al.* 2010, fig. 12.10); (c) Meteren-De Plantage (Jezeer/Verniers 2012, figs. 6.8; 6.11; 6.13); (d) Lent-Laauwikstraat-Zuid (Van den Broeke 2002, 22).

the grave very much corresponds with what was observed for the majority of cremation graves. Even the categories of objects present among the inhumation graves largely correspond with the majority of cremation graves as accessory pottery and objects related to personal appearance make up the largest share of objects (Tab. 6.8).

6.5 Locating the grave

In the right order of things the choice for a location of a grave logically comes before the actual interment. It was however decided to discuss the different modes of interment first as these illustrate the various possibilities people would have had at their disposal in selecting the right location for a new grave. Also, the selection procedures for the location of a grave concern issues that cannot longer be tackled from the perspective of individual decedents. This section will focus on where someone was to be buried and whether there are any clues available as to the *why* someone was to be buried in a specific location.

As in every cemetery an individual decedent is always surrounded by the other dead, the location of a new grave is automatically directed by the presence of already existing graves. Even for two graves that may find themselves hundreds of metres apart the location of the younger grave is still related to the location of the older grave as it was decided *not* to bury the decedents concerned in close proximity to each other. As such, the outlay of a cemetery too can be read as a narrative that with the addition of every new grave evolves and reflects upon how the dead might have related to each other. The above statement builds upon the assumption that both *time* and *space* form determining constituents in this cemeterial narrative: "Time" in the sense that different forms of ancestry (*cf.* De Coppet 1985; Helms 1998) may play a role in the location of graves (*e.g.* Fokkens 2012) and "space" in the sense that relations between the dead can be emphasised by specific distances between graves, or perhaps better, the lack thereof.

For Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cemeteries in the Low Countries it is in fact evident by various practices people tried to emphasise certain relations between the dead. One of these practices has already been discussed as the present dataset yielded at least 51 examples of graves that contained the cremated remains of multiple individuals (Section 4.4.3). In these cases the dead were already merged into one new entity *before* the point of interment. As illustrated by Table 4.7, often these combinations consisted of an adult individual with a non-adult. Also combinations of adult males and females have been observed, as have combinations of males and females with additional non-adults. These various combinations of sex and age categories could suggest these graves were meant to emphasise family ties between decedents.

Another form of emphasising a certain relation between the dead, was to bury them within the confinements of a single funerary monument. Of the total 1,360 monuments that have been included in the present dataset, at least 135 examples, which is roughly 10%, produced more than one grave. This number would originally have been much higher as most of the included urnfields had been severely damaged by recent disturbances. In most cases the monuments concerned housed two graves (N=90), a smaller group contained three graves (N=25) and a minority lodged four graves or more (N=20). Exceptionally high numbers of graves do occur among the latter category. A mound at the cemetery of Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden for instance contained no less than 14 Early Iron Age graves. Additionally, among these 135 monuments containing multiple graves, at least four examples also hosted graves that contained the remains of multiple individuals. Among them is the long mound of Beegden that produced two urn graves that contained the remains of respectively four and seven individuals (see Section 4.4.3;

Roymans/Hoogland 1999). Round mounds are still best represented among this selection of monuments, but compared to their general and mutual occurrence long mounds are likelier to produce more than one grave than the little round mounds.[122]

Assuming the persons buried within the confinements of a single monument were purposefully placed in relation to each other, what factor(s) then constituted this relationship? The available number of age and sex determinations for the monuments hosting more than one grave are restricted, but can still be used to provide some insight. In total, for 21 monuments determinations of sex and age were available for more than one grave. This count only includes graves that hosted the remains of just one individual. In 14 cases only adult individuals were represented, while in five cases both adults as non-adults were found buried within the same monument. Only in one occasion has a combination of only non-adults been observed. Combinations of adult males and females have been observed four times, but this low number is mainly caused by the restricted number of available sex determinations. Though the resolution required often lacks, the available radiocarbon dates and typo-chronological markers do not exclude the possibility that individuals buried in one monument also knew each other in life.[123] Combinations of adult males and females, as well as combinations of adult and non-adults could therefore indicate these individuals were connected by family ties, perhaps representing single households.

In contrast, at least three monuments yielded graves that indicate substantially more time was involved between the different interments.[124] The practice of interring graves into burial mounds already centuries old definitely was a practice that regularly occurred in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age but is in the present dataset clearly underrepresented as almost all included cemeteries were already levelled when excavated. The overall inventory of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age burial sites performed for the present study (Appendix I) yielded at least 58 sites where this practice was positively observed. The cemetery of Oss-Zevenbergen from the introduction (Section 1.4.2) and the nearby site of Oss-Vorstengrafdonk (Jansen/Fokkens 2007) are another two clear examples of mounds dating to the Middle Bronze Age that were reused for burial in the Early Iron Age. In these cases family ties can hardly be used as an argument in labelling the relation between the decedents concerned as the time period in between the interments simply extends the boundaries of a conscious memory of the persons buried in the oldest graves. The observation that a new grave could be placed in relation to contemporary graves as well as in relation to graves already centuries old already indicates different notions about the relatedness between the dead existed.

Yet another way of emphasising relations between the dead was to build the funerary mounds adjacent to each other or to even let them overlap. An in depth analysis of the spatial development of specific cemeteries over time falls beyond the scope of this

122 Round mounds: N graves >1 = 103/1212 = 8.5%; Long mounds: N graves >1 = 20/103 = 19.41%.

123 For example, one monument in the cemetery of Zutphen-Looërenk [NL-GL-056; Monument_ID 597] yielded three graves for which the following dates are available: 'Graf 4' [Grave_ID 1757]: Labcode GrN-49734: 2495 +/- 40 BP: 792-434 cal. BC (95,4%) (Van Straten/Fermin 2012, 91); 'Graf 5' [Grave_ID 1758]: Labcode GrN-50127: 2410 +/- 45 BP: 751-397 cal. BC (95,4%)(Van Straten/Fermin 2012, 91); 'Graf 6' [Grave_ID 1759]: 800-400 BC on basis of *Harpstedt*-pottery (see Fig. 5.2)

124 Weert-Laarveld [NL-LI-017; Monument_ID 196]; Gasteren [NL-DR-026; Monument_ID 672]; Haps-Kamps Veld [NL-BR-196; Monument_ID 1259].

research, but would definitely be worthwhile in this regard. Modest attempts have already been performed in the past (*e.g.* Kooi 1979, 53-54; Kortlang 1999, 168-171; Arnoldussen/Albers 2015) and the clustering of potential kin groups has been suggested for some of these cemeteries (Kortlang 1999, 170).

Even without going into too much detail about the exact spatial development of the cemeteries concerned, just by glancing at the outlay of specific cemeteries one can already detect dense clusters of monuments or an almost organic growth of funerary monuments around specific eye-catching monuments. Good examples in the present dataset are Colmschate-'t Bramelt (Fig. 6.16) and Gasteren (Fig. 6.17). In the Early Iron Age cemetery of Colmschate-'t Bramelt a large mound surrounded by a double ditch was excavated in the northwest section of the cemetery. The mound itself had already been levelled and unfortunately no grave was found preserved within the confinements of the double ditch. Large(r) monuments surrounded by double or even three double ditches have been found in the same region at Zutphen-Looërenk/Meierink and Rossum-Oranjestraat where the graves they surrounded date both to the Late Bronze Age[125] as to the Early Iron Age.[126] Even though an exact date for the example from 't Bramelt remains problematic, the outlay of the cemetery as a whole at least shows that the other smaller monuments take into account the position of this larger monument. Even more so, while respecting the larger monument by not building over it, the smaller monuments seem to cluster and even overlap around this particular monument while more to the south the space in between the smaller monuments slowly increases (Fig. 6.16). The distribution of the various smaller monuments as a whole therefore suspects that in locating the position of a new grave the position of the larger monument in some way must have played a defining role. While absolute dates lack for the cemetery of 't Bramelt, the typo-chronological markers of the urns found in this cemetery suspect the cemetery was only in use during the Early Iron Age (Hermsen/Van der Wal 2012, 110). While caution is still ushered, in the case of 't Bramelt it is possible that the person buried within the larger monument was known by the people buried in the surrounding graves or that stories about this person were still vivid in the collective memory of the group of people who made use of this cemetery.

The cemetery of Gasteren, on its turns, has a remarkable outlay of funerary monuments and covers at least a full millennium of funerary practices. The cemetery has been thoroughly published (Van Giffen 1941; 1945), including pollen analysis and a study of the cremated remains,[127] features still rather exceptional for that time. The overall distribution of funerary monuments in this particular cemetery displays a slight crescent shape,[128] orientated more or less north-south (Fig. 6.17). When studying the excavation plan of the cemetery, the position of 'Mound 37' immediately catches the eye as is finds itself outside the crescent of funerary monuments. It even seems that the other monuments

125 [NL-OV-059; Grave_ID 1320]: Labcode GrA-40002: 2810 +/- 30 BP; 1050-895 cal. BC (95,4%) (De Wit/Bergsma 2008, 20).

126 [NL-GL-056; Grave_ID 1754]: Labcode GrN-49737: 2570 +/- 35 BP: 811-551 cal. BC (95,4%) (Van Straten/Fermin 2012, 91).

127 Since the study of cremated remains has developed extensively since 1945, the results of the Gasteren cemetery have not been incorporated in the present study.

128 It must be noted here that the excavation of this cemetery was aimed at the some 44 mounds still visible in the heathland (Van Giffen 1945, 70) and was completely done by hand. It can therefore not be excluded that other, undiscovered graves laid hidden beyond the extents of the excavation.

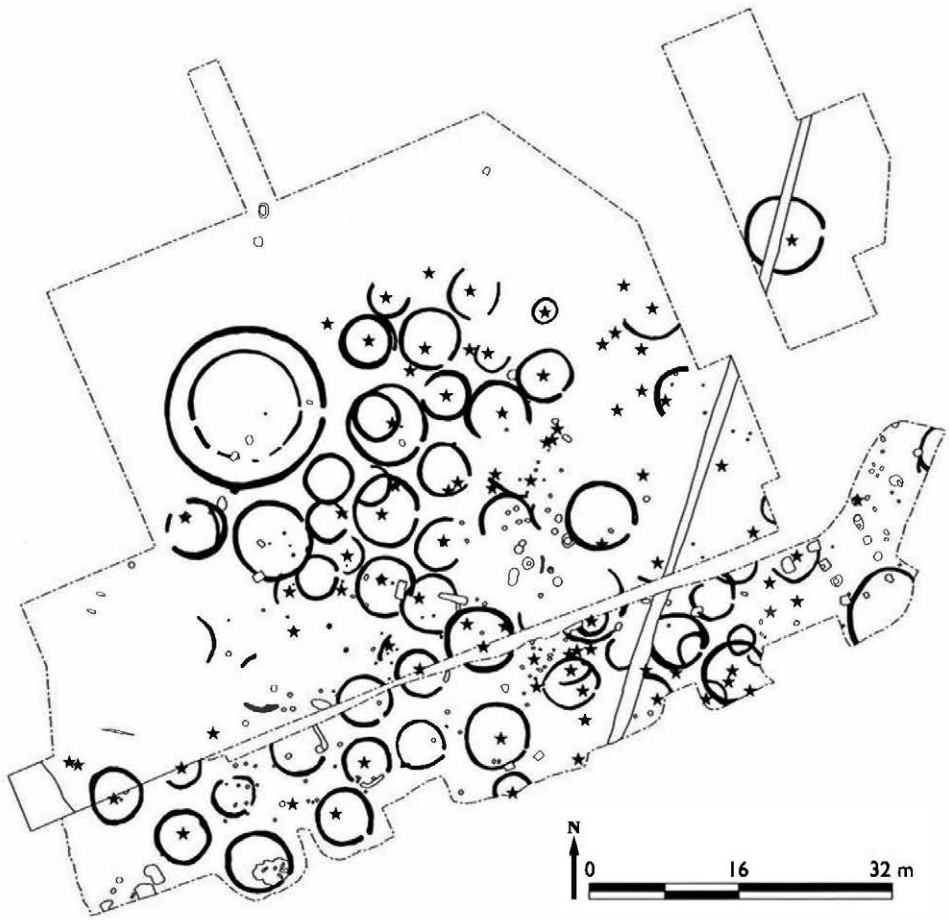

Fig. 6.16: The cemetery of Colmschate-'t Bramelt. The stars mark the graves. (After: Hermsen/ Van der Wal 2012, fig. 6.12).

were placed in such a position that they ultimately surrounded 'Mound 37.' 'Mound 37' also happens to contain the oldest grave of the cemetery. The primary grave finds itself slightly west of the mound's centre and concerns a so-called coffin grave. The remarkable thing about this (oak) coffin is that the trunk itself had been deliberately charred and it was found not to contain an inhumed individual but cremated remains instead, which had been scattered inside the coffin (Van Giffen 1945, 73-74). In Dutch these graves are called '*brandskeletgraven*'[129] as the way in which the cremated remains are scattered seems to have been aimed at resembling a human figure. A study of the cremated remains revealed that a young teenager had been buried here (*ibid.*, 73) and a radiocarbon date that was later obtained from the cremated remains places the grave in the period between the fifteenth and thirteenth century BC.[130] After the interment of the youngster, the grave was covered with a mound and surrounded by nine large posts (Van Giffen 1945, 77). Only

129 English translation by author: 'burnt-skeleton-graves'; In German: *Brandskelettgräber*

130 'Graf 105' [Grave_ID 2093]: Labcode GrA-16017: 3100 +/- 45 BP: 1453-1257 (92.8 %) (Lanting/vd Plicht 2003, 192).

later would four additional graves be placed in the flanks of the mound, tangentially to the primary grave. Again, all four graves concern charred coffin graves but only this time all four graves appeared to have been inhumation graves. In only one of these four graves could some modest traces of a body silhouette be documented, as a consequence the age and sex of these four decedents remain unknown. Pottery found in one of these graves (Van Giffen 1945, fig. 12c: 59) was decorated with a so-called *cordon*, a form of decoration occurring between the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age (Butler/Fokkens 2005, 376). The combination of this typical decoration and the bucket shape of the vessel itself make a date at the end of the Middle Bronze Age the most plausible option. The four tangential graves also form the latest interments in 'mound 37.'

Probably within the time scope of a few generations, a new phase of the cemetery of Gasteren commences when to the north and east of 'mound 37' long mounds of the '*Vledder*-type' are erected (Fig. 6.17). Urns of the so-called '*Gasteren*-type' (Fig. 5.1) were found within the confinements of these monuments. Both the type of urn as well as the type of monument are associated with the earliest radiocarbon dates available for cemeteries known as urnfields in the Netherlands (see Figs. 5.2 and 6.12). In the case of Gasteren, no less than six radiocarbon dates have been obtained from cremated remains associated with either *Gasteren*-urns[131] or '*Vledder*-long mounds.'[132] The sturdy posts that are found within the confinements of '*Vledder*-long mounds' are believed to have belonged to roofed mortuary houses (Hessing/Kooi 2005, 636). If this was indeed the case, when visiting the cemetery of Gasteren somewhere between the thirteenth and eleventh century BC, one would have encountered quite a monumental sight with 'Mound 37' surrounded with some seven mortuary houses of various sizes.

No radiocarbon dates are available for the younger phases of the Gasteren cemetery. However, the presence of both conical pottery as well as '*Harpstedter Rauhtöpfen*' among the urns excavated at Gasteren suspect the cemetery remained in use from the Late Bronze Age onwards and throughout the Early Iron Age (Figs. 5.1 and 5.2). In this timespan the cemetery itself is extended to the south. Here the youngest structures can be found in the form of cinerary barrows (Van Giffen 1945, 93-95). At this stage the cremated remains are no longer put in urns but instead left on the burnt-out pyre and subsequently covered with a small mound (see Section 3.2.4). Radiocarbon dates for cinerary barrows in the northern Netherlands fall within the timespan between the sixth and fourth century BC (Hessing/Kooi 2005, 636). So far, the cinerary barrows seem to represent the youngest additions to the Gasteren cemetery.

Overall, the Gasteren cemetery not only exhibits a remarkable spatial development in a "horizontal" sense. There are some locations within this cemetery where we can see comparable substantial amounts of time represented within the confinements of a single monument. One of these locations concerns 'mound 36' (Fig. 6.18). The mound still visible at the start of the excavation only represents the very latest phase of this funerary complex and is probably connected to the quadrangular ditch in its centre (Fig. 6.18). Quadrangular

131 'Graf 56' [Grave_ID 2045]: Labcode GrA-17795: 3010 +/- 60 BP: 1412-1074 cal. BC (95,4%); 'Graf 57' [Grave_ID 2046]: Labcode GrA-17796: 2990 +/- 50 BP: 1391-1054 cal. BC (95,4%); 'Graf 54' [Grave_ID 2043]: Labcode GrA-16282: 3005 +/- 40 BP: 1392-1118 cal. BC (95,4%) (Lanting/Van der Plicht 2003, 162; 213).

132 'Graf 52' [Grave_ID 2041]: Labcode GrA-17793: 2980 +/- 60 BP: 1392-1024 cal. BC (95,4%); 'Graf 53' [Grave_ID 2042]: Labcode GrA-16022: 2860 +/- 50 BP: 1207-906 cal. BC (95,4%); 'Graf 100' [Grave_ID 2088]: Labcode GrA-10877/80: 2900 +/- 40 BP: 1216-976 cal. BC (95,4%) (Lanting/Van der Plicht 2003, 162; 214).

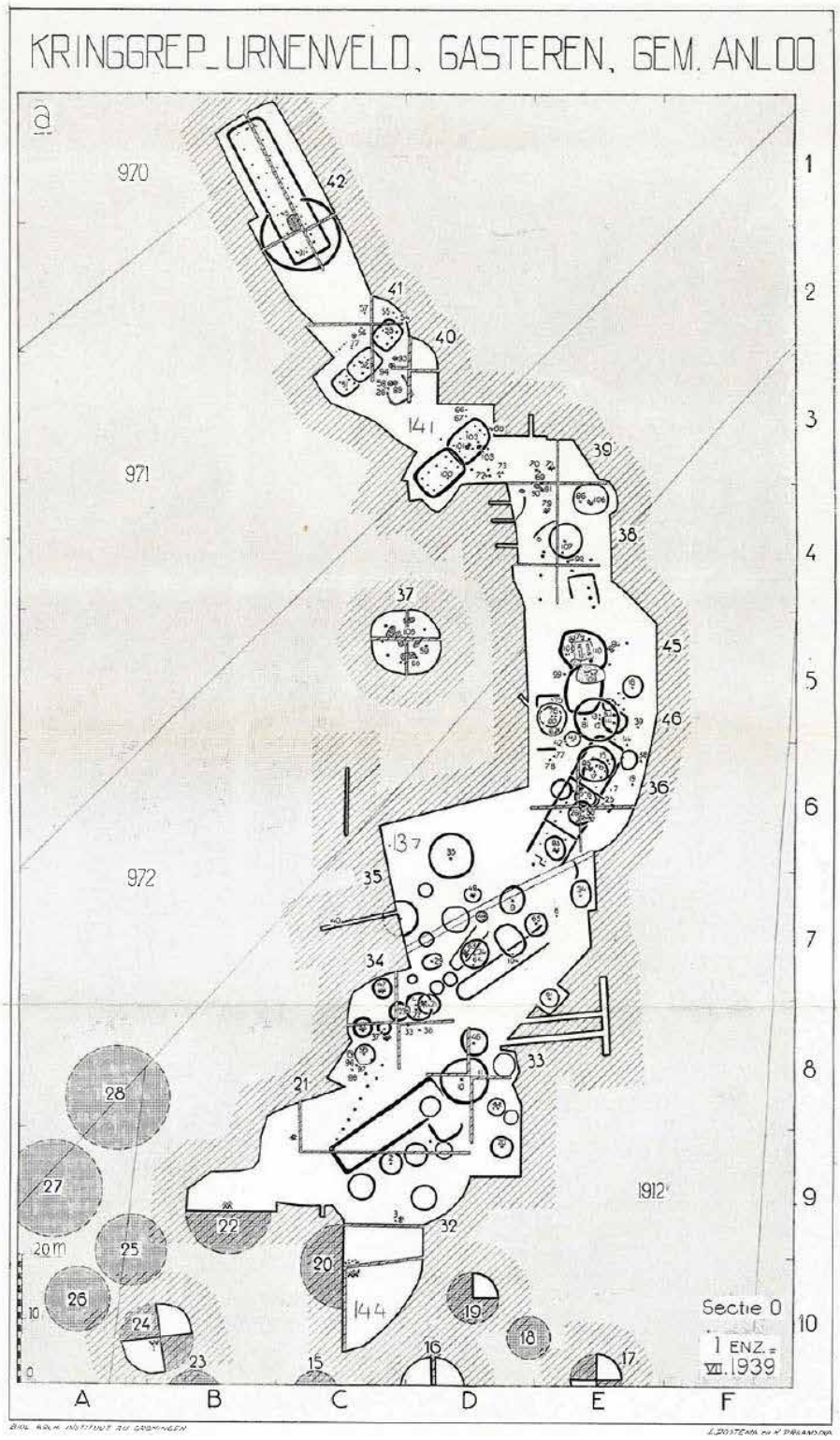

Fig. 6.17: Plan showing the cemetery of Gasteren (Van Giffen 1945, fig. 13; © University of Groningen, Groningen Institute of Archaeology).

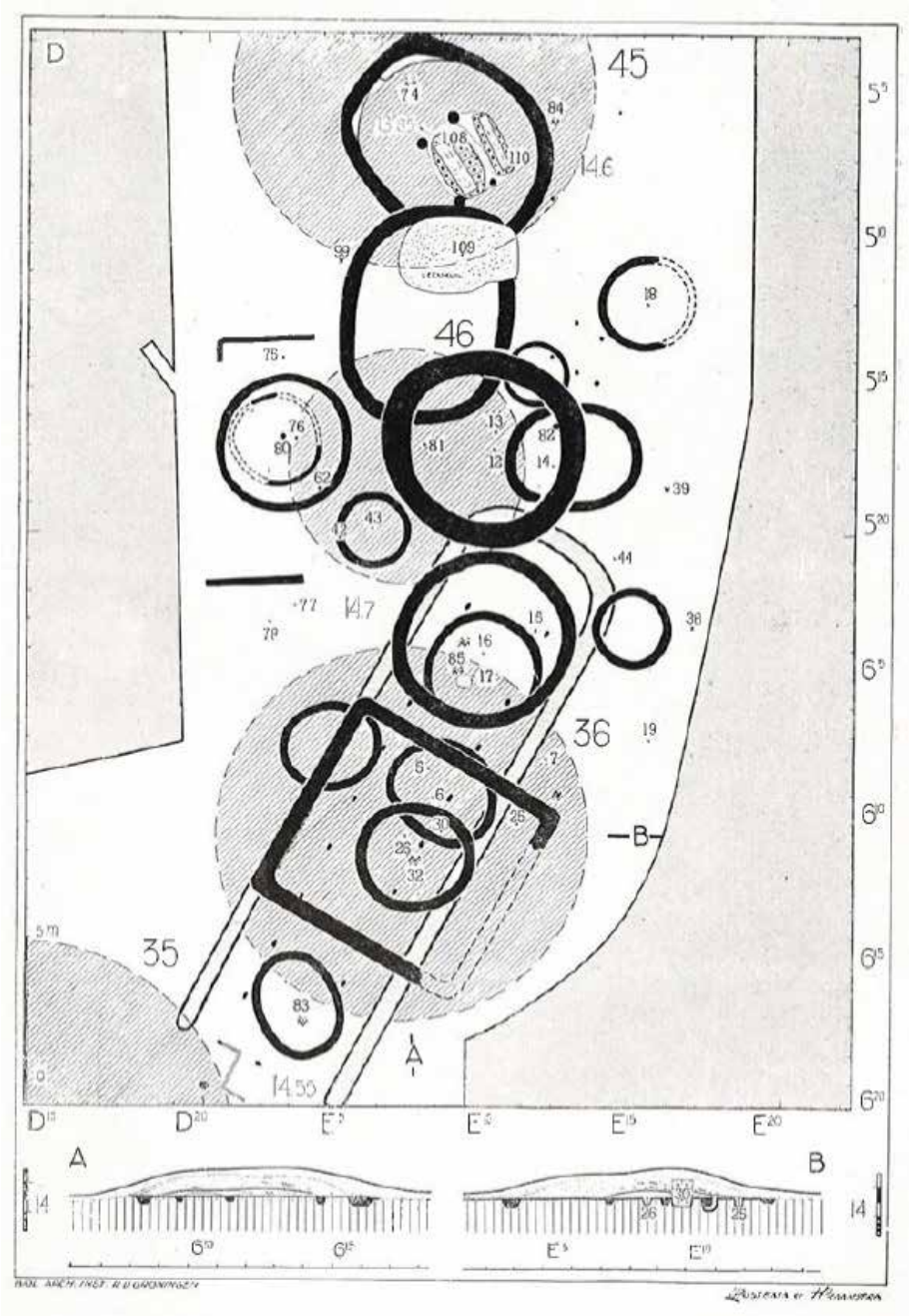

Fig. 6.18: Segment of the Gasteren cemetery displaying all funerary structures associated with respective mounds 45, 45 and 36 (Van Giffen 1945, fig. 20; © University of Groningen, Groningen Institute of Archaeology).

ditches first emerge in cremation grave cemeteries at the end of the Early Iron Age and beginning of the Middle Iron Age (Fig. 6.12). At that time, the '*Vledder*-long mound' located on the very base of 'mound 36' must already have been between 500 and 800 years old. As the two circular ditches underneath the quadrangular ditch, but on top of the '*Vledder*-long mound overlap, just by the principle of superposition already four subsequent phases of monument construction are represented at the location of 'mound 36.' Directly north of this mound comparable dense and overlapping clusters of funerary monuments can be observed (Fig. 6.18). Clearly there was sufficient space outside the already existing monuments, but in the course of time people deliberately returned to specific monuments to bury their late beloved ones. At the same time, for almost a thousand years people abstained from creating new graves in 'mound 37' and respectfully kept their distance to this monument. It is highly unlikely Early Iron Age people at Gasteren would have known about the teenager that laid buried underneath 'mound 37' for 800 years already. Yet still they must have had clear ideas about why this particular mound was different from the rest.

While at Gasteren, and possibly at Colmschate-'t Bramelt too, the oldest elements in the cemetery remain untouched there are ample examples where this is clearly not the case. For example, in cemeteries of Oss-Zevenbergen and Oss-Vorstengrafdonk older elements of the funerary landscape are deliberately incorporated in new graves or new graves are added to these older monuments. It derives from these different attitudes towards centuries old monuments that even with regards to the more distant past different notions existed about how the ancient dead should be treated and how to relate to them.

All in all, it is evident that different notions about the relatedness of the dead were at play simultaneously every time a new dead person was to join the realm of the other dead. Notions that must have been rooted both in the present, reflecting on the group's social fabric (*cf.* Hertz 1907; Van Gennep 1909; Fowler 2013), as well as in the past, possibly reflecting on different notions about ancestry. So far, the role of ancestors has only slightly been touched upon. This will change in the next chapters when the focus will gradually shift to the *meaning* behind the *practice*.