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

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7

The related dead

7.1 Meaning through practice

7.1.1 So many practices, so many ways?

Having arrived at the close of the mortuary process concerned with the urnfields in the Lower-Rhine-Basin, we have seen a long and intricate process of decision making pass in review (Chapters 4-6). Though from a quantitative perspective urnfield graves might still indeed appear to be poor, it must also be clear by now the burnt bones and broken objects in these graves represent a true wealth of funerary practices. Before delving into the possible meanings behind the practices observed, for the sake of comprehension, it is necessary to recapitulate on some general observations.

First, it may be concluded the urnfields represent an inclusive funerary tradition as men, women and non-adults are all represented among the buried individuals in the expected ratios (Section 6.2). Also, when it comes to their mutual treatment, the mortuary process seems to have been rather indiscriminative with regards to the various age and sex categories: all could be buried centrally within funerary monuments of various shapes and sizes (Tab. 6.6); all could be buried in urns of different shapes and refinement (Section 5.2); and all could be provided with objects such as accessory pottery and personal ornaments made of metal (Section 5.4). When is zoomed in on specific object categories, dominances of specific age and sex categories over others may be observed (Tab. 5.7), but non so far as to suggest these objects were only reserved for a specific age or sex. The very few weapon graves in the present dataset might display a dominance of the male sex (Tab. 5.7), outside the present dataset examples exist of females being equipped with weapons in the grave as well (*e.g.* Bloemers 2016). And even though observations made by Roymans and Kortlang of a numerical dominance of males in graves located centrally underneath long mounds may still hold (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 47-48), the present research has also shown that these specific burial locations were certainly not only reserved for men (Section 6.3.3.2).

Another general observation concerns the destructive and transformative nature of the various funerary practices throughout the mortuary process. To begin with the decedent her/himself, in almost 99% of the cases someone died, it was decided to cremate the corpse (Section 4.2.2). As argued, the cremation rite is an intense process involving a broad spectrum of specific practices such as the preparation of the corpse (Section 3.2.3; 4.2.2), the assembling of the pyre (Section 3.2.4; 4.3.2), the lighting of the pyre, the cremation process itself (Section 3.2.4) and the collection of the cremated remains after the pyre had cooled down. Throughout this process the decedent was transformed from a decaying body to a tangible heap of calcined bones which from then on could be stored, divided up (Section 4.4.2) or merged with other cremated individuals (Sections 4.4.3; 6.2), finally to be buried in urnfields surrounded by the other dead (Section 6.5). A comparable demeanour can be observed towards the objects interred with the cremated remains. Still many objects were interred unscathed, at the same time a substantial amount of objects was subjected to either burning (Tab. 5.8) or deliberate fragmentation before interment (Tab. 5.8; Section 5.5). With regards to the practice of fragmentation, the present dataset has even yielded some clear examples of graves whereby parts of the cremated body or objects seem to have been deliberately kept out of the grave (Sections 4.4.2.5; 5.5).

What also stems from Chapters 4-6 is the apparent inherent variation in the forms and compositions of urnfield graves as for the present dataset there is not a single cemetery alike. If the present research has shown anything, it is that *the* urnfield grave clearly did not exist (Section 6.3.2). Yet at the same time, there must have been clear ideas about which elements were not part of the grave. For example, bronze axes and sickles, both objects that at the time would have been present in every single farmstead, never feature in urnfield graves but in hoards instead (Fontijn 2002; 2019). Returning to the variability observed, when graves are indeed considered to be the material precipitation of funerary practices, what follows is that variety is in some way always related to slight differences in the practices that would finally shape the grave. The interesting point being here is that despite the variation in practices, in almost 99% of the cases (see Section 4.2.2), the mortuary process would eventually result in cremated remains entering the ground forming the contexts that would millennia later consistently be recognised by archaeologists as being urnfield graves. Does this mean that the differences in practices observed are simply variations to the main tune of the mortuary process? And within that same train of thought; do the differences observed between cemeteries therefore represent different cultural adaptions of what is conceptually still the same mortuary process?

7.1.2 The relativity of time

Ever since archaeology developed as a distinct scientific discipline, it has equipped itself with various tools to look at differences in material (culture) and the practices underlying it. Obviously *time* is an important factor to take into consideration as practices may alter over time. This evolutionistic presumption was indeed vital to the development of typo-chronological schemes still shaping the current chronological frameworks of European prehistory (Sørensen/Rebay 2008). The urnfields in the Lower-Rhine-Basin are no exception in this regard. The introduction of the long mound, for example, still heralds the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in the Dutch system (Gerritsen 2003, 123). Certainly, for the present dataset many practices observed are timebound such as the construction of keyhole-shaped monuments (Fig. 6.12) or might even represent certain fashions such as the gradual replacement of dress pins by fibulae in the course of the Iron Age (Section 5.3). It would almost be irrational to argue that time does not play a role in the changes we observe in the archaeological record. The question however is *what* the role of time exactly entails.

As mentioned earlier, as archaeologists we are fortunate to see the entire picture. We can measure and map the exact outlay of cemeteries that have been in use for more than a millennium and study how (funerary) practices might have evolved through time. We must however bear in mind that this is in fact a perspective that the people buried in these cemeteries would never have had. Bourdieu refers to this "scientist-perspective" as '*totalization*' (Bourdieu 1990, 82). This in sharp contrast to the split second in which true *meaning* is (re)produced and (re)negotiated by means of either individual- or group practice (Bourdieu 1990, 58-59; also see Section 2.2). *Meaning*, as such, is therefore caught somewhere in time. From this latter perspective, the differences we observe between graves can therefore hardly be regarded as a deliberate alteration of the *chaîne opératoire* of the mortuary process through time. Even more so, at present radiocarbon dating is probably the most accurate method at our disposal of determining the exact age of specific graves and to put graves in relation to each other when time is concerned. But even for the steepest sections of the calibration curve, the probability ranges still include many decades if not centuries. In other words, the closest we can get to pinpointing a specific event in the formation of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age funerary contexts is no more precise than the timespan of an entire lifetime, a significant error margin to say the least. If we really want to understand the apparent variation in funerary practices from the perspective of the communities that once performed the actual burying, we must conclude that at present we often lack the resolution when time is concerned. This statement is not made to marginalise our attempts to understand the meaning behind the variation in (funerary) practices, but rather to put our attempts in the right perspective. Certainly practices did evolve over time, as illustrated by the present dataset, but the question is whether this was a very conscious and deliberate process from the perspective of the acting human agents central to this research.

7.1.3 Communities- and constellations of practice

In addition to the factor *time*, variation in (funerary) practices might also be explained by spatial dimensions in the sense that certain practices were perhaps region bound. In Chapter 5 it was for instance shown that Early Iron Age cemeteries in the east of the province of Brabant and in the north of the province of Limburg exhibit exceptionally high shares of urn burials (Section 5.2; Also see Gerritsen 2003, 128). Another example from Chapter 5 concerns the conical-shaped bronze pendants occasionally found in Early Iron Age graves in the Kempen area (Section 5.3.2.2) that might represent a local dress item the dead were adorned with (Fontijn 2002, 200). The observant reader will have noted that, paradoxically, in order to understand variety, the focus of the present section has gradually shifted toward uniformity. In archaeology, regionally reoccurring traits such as in the above mentioned examples often go hand in hand with the demarcation of certain cultural groups (see Fig. 1.4). A *modus operandi* understandable from a traditional perspective as the reoccurrence of a specific type of artefact and similarities in the way burial rites are performed in fact both concern traits of Childe's original proposition of what a(n archaeological) culture entails:

> *"…We find certain types of remains – pots, implements, ornaments, burial rites and house forms – constantly recurring together. Such a complex of associated traits we shall call a "cultural group" or just a "culture". We assume that such a complex is the material expression of what today we would call "a people"…"* Childe 1929, pp. v-vi

Though it has been argued earlier on (Section 1.3) that in urnfield research we should start looking beyond the cultural approach, Childe's proposition of "culture" includes several interesting elements indeed. First of all, Childe not only talks about material culture but also about *im*material culture when he specifically mentions "burial rites" that presuppose a series of actions or in other words *practices*. Also, in combination with specific expressions in material culture and housebuilding traditions these practices in disguise in Childe's proposition are believed to represent "a people" or group of people bounded by a shared set of practices. In essence, Childe's notion of a(n archaeological) culture already holds elements that in sociology would later become known as '*communities of practice*' (Wenger 1998). The question that follows is whether the concept of *culture* then equals the concept of a *community of practice*. There is however a vital difference between the two concepts. Whereas Childe's proposition of culture reasons backwards from the archaeological data itself in defining a (group of) people, in communities of practice a group of people is (only loosely) defined from within by the (sub)conscious sharing of a set of practices (*cf.* Cohen 1985; Wenger 1998). True *meaning* in the latter is only generated by the practices themselves and not so much by shared elements of material culture. To put it plainly, an archaeological culture does only exist in the head of the archaeologist whereas the notion of a community does not exist outside the lives of its members (Gerritsen 2003, 112; *cf.* Cohen 1985).

For the Lower-Rhine-Basin, Fokke Gerritsen was probably the first to bring this notion of community in relation to (Late) Bronze Age and (Early) Iron Age groups (Gerritsen 2003). To him the concept of a community (of practice)[133] played a central role in the reconstruction of what he calls '*local identities*' (2003). On his turn, he himself drew inspiration from the work of the social anthropologist Anthony Cohen. An excerpt from Gerritsen's dissertation on the work of Cohen (1985) perfectly catches both the potential as well as the pitfalls when trying to reconstruct social groups from an archaeological perspective:

> *"…To Cohen, the idea of community is essentially a symbolic one. The community itself is a symbol, but it is also created and marked through the use of symbols. These can take innumerable forms, from manners of speech to dress or hair-style, from shared day-to-day practices to festive occasions, from gossip to ritual – all those things, in short, that would make an outsider who is unfamiliar with 'the way things are done' stand out. A key aspect of community, therefore, is its relational character: it implies that people feel that they have something in common with each other, and that what they share is not shared with others. The symbols used to mark a community create boundaries, and thus members and non-members, insiders and outsiders. But as with all symbols, these boundaries, and in fact the meaning of community itself, contain a certain degree of vagueness and ambiguity. Not all members perceive the community and its boundaries in the same way, nor is the significance for each member the same at all times and in all contexts.* […] *…communities* […] *are not a given, natural structure, but are*

133 As can be read from the excerpt, even though Gerritsen does not explicitly mentions communities as 'communities *of practice,*' his notion of community in fact comes down to a community of practice: "… *communities* […] *are not a given, natural structure, but are constantly created and reproduced in social practices through which the group defines itself…"* Gerritsen 2003, 112.

constantly created and reproduced in social practices through which the group defines itself. Through these practices a group distinguishes itself from other groups, although the form and structure of these practices need not differ from those of neighbouring communities. Especially in the case of small, localised communities it is likely that symbols used to create and maintain boundaries […] *differ little from those of nearby communities…"* Gerritsen 2003, 111-112.

What is essential in Gerritsen's reading of the concept of *community* is the ambiguity both in the way in which the sense of community is experienced by its members as well as in the way it is expressed. Also, community is neither static nor self-evident as it needs to be (re)created, (re)lived and reproduced all the time by means of social practices. It is in this context where we must seek the real essence of the funerary practices summarised in the previous chapters. This does certainly not mean that locality, or regionality for that matter, is unimportant. On the contrary, the role of landscape and the associated sense of belonging are in fact vital elements in the creation and reproduction of community (Gerritsen 2003). These aspects of community will be returned to later on (Section 7.4), but for now it is important to acknowledge that even though certain (funerary) practices may indeed look the same from an archaeological perspective, these similarities in practices thus not necessarily reflect communities of practice. But how must we then understand the reoccurring traits we as archaeologists observe in the formation of urnfield graves that find themselves tens, if not hundreds of kilometres apart?

A valuable insight into this matter can be read from the work of yet another sociologist. Etienne Wenger's lifework in fact revolves around the concept of *communities of practice* (*e.g.* Wenger 1998; 2000; Wenger *et al.* 2002; 2015). As an important point of departure, Wenger sees communities of practice as learning environments *par excellence*. *Learning*, in this view, must be read in the broadest sense of the word as the innate human drive of knowing and apprehension by means of social participation in *communities of practice* (Wenger 1998, 4). As he puts it, the concept of practice implies doing, not just on itself, but inextricably linked to historical and social context[134] that provides both structure and *meaning* to the things we do (*ibid*., 47). Like Gerritsen (2003) in following of Cohen (1985), Wenger too emphasises the informal nature and pervasiveness of a *community of practice*: *"…Most communities of practice do not have a name and do not issue membership cards…"* (Wenger 1998, 7). *Communities of practice* are in fact analytical categories that refer to abstract kinds of social aggregates (*ibid.*, 126) that are not even necessarily experienced as such by their members. Wenger however also reasons that despite not being narrowly defined, the boundaries of a *community of practice* can only be stretched so far and that as an analytical tool a community of practice is in fact a midlevel category (*ibid.*, 124). For example, most people living in the Netherlands will also have the Dutch nationality, but the nation of the Netherlands cannot simply be regarded as a *community of practice*. Yet we see certain symbols[135] and traits reoccur throughout the nation, such as the drowning of French fries in mayonnaise, the inter-sex exchange of three kisses by way of greeting or the wearing of orange clothing when the Dutch national soccer team (one day…) makes

134 Note the correspondence with Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990; Section 2.2).

135 Symbols are an important tool in what Wenger calls '*reification*': *"…the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into "thingness"…"* Wenger 1998, 58.

it to an international final tournament. The here mentioned examples all regard a rather large configuration (*i.e.* the Dutch nation) but we can see the same things happening within much smaller configurations as well. For instance, at any given Archaeology department people are engaged in teaching, research and excavation. Yet every excavation team will have its own way of conducting fieldwork and excavation traditions that come with fieldwork. What both examples of configurations have in common is that neither of them concern single *communities of practice*, yet there is an apparent relatedness to the practices involved as they seem to revolve around the same styles and discourses.[136] These '*constellations of practices,*' as Wenger calls them (*ibid.*, 127) transcend the level of a single *community of practice*, and from an archaeological perspective, can produce a similar precipitation of material culture without necessarily referring to the same social units:

> *"…Styles and discourses are aspects of the repertoire of a practice that are exportable. Elements of style and discourse can be detached from specific enterprises. They can be imported and exported across boundaries, and reinterpreted and adapted in the process of being adopted within various practices* […] *Because styles and discourses can spread across an entire constellation, they can create forms of continuity that take on a global character. However, styles and discourses are not practices in themselves. They are available material – resources that can be used in the context of various practices. As material for the negotiation of meaning and the formation of identities, styles and discourses can be shared by multiple practices. But that does not mean that they are integrated in these various practices in the same way once they are put in the service of different local enterprises. In the course of producing their own histories, therefore, communities of practice also produce and reproduce the interconnections, styles, and discourses through which they form broader constellations…"* Wenger 1998, 129 – 130.

In other words, when we see certain reoccurring traits in the way funerals are performed, especially those that exceed the cemetery level, these not so much reflect well definable social units but much rather *constellations of practice*. Various *communities of practice* are tied in into these constellations and may indeed take the form of single households, kin groups or perhaps even a form of community that comprises several of these smaller social units. However, only occasionally do these smaller *communities of practice* surface in a clear archaeological way. The urns with distinct decoration from Beegden (Fig. 5.6) might for instance represent such a *community of practice*.

Wenger's concept of a *constellation of practice* not only explains why we see certain recurring traits in the mortuary process transpire over extended geographical areas, as styles and discourses are exportable elements that may take on a global character (Wenger 1998, 130), it also provides a way of looking at the apparent variation in the way funerary practices are performed. As can be read from the excerpt in the above, Wenger stresses that styles and discourses form the perfect material for the negotiation of *meaning*, but that these are not necessarily integrated in the exact same way in practices throughout a *constellation of practice*: people will have adapted these elements in a way that made

136 Having overlapping styles and discourses concerns one of the characteristics of Wenger's *constellations of practice* (Wenger 1998, 127). Whereas a '*discourse*' is hard to grasp from an archaeological perspective, '*style*' in fact concerns one of the few elements of the distant past that archaeology can detect.

sense to them at that specific point in time. We can see this idea perfectly reflected in the present dataset with the two *antenna* daggers from the respective cemeteries of Haps and Someren-Waterdael I (Section 5.5). Found some 40 kilometres apart, both daggers accompanied the cremated remains of a decedent in the grave. In this sense, they both reflect the desire of the mourners to unite the decedent with this specific object in death. However, the example from Haps was still sheathed and put in the grave unscathed while the example from Someren had already accompanied the corpse on the pyre, as a result of which its burnt relics were found mixed with the cremated remains. Eventually, what we see here is the same idea or discourse about the dead person that should be accompanied with a dagger, but the integration of the discourse is different.

The example of the antenna daggers also points at the relevance of both *time* and *relativity* in relation to practice. Here we briefly return to Bourdieu's main critique on the totalized scientist-perspective on practice since such a perspective disregards the very purpose of (social) practice itself. As *meaning* is constantly re(negotiated) and (re) produced through (social) practice, this also means that *meaning* is of a fleeting nature: as at every single funeral a different person was buried, different mourners carried out the necessary practices and a different audience would have been present to witness the spectacle, so would *meaning* have slightly differed at every single occasion someone was laid to rest, as would the integration of styles and discourses. Though every funeral would have been carried out in accordance with the mutual *habitus* of the mourners present and will therefore have showed similarities with other funerals, it however is the unique composition of the gathering itself that turned every funeral into a unique event. In this sense, it is no surprise that as archaeologists we observe slight differences in the material precipitation of these events, even within the confinements of single cemeteries.

7.2 The origin of urnfield mortuary practices in view of a practice-based approach

7.2.1 What's in a name?

But how do notions about *constellations of practice* and the fleeting nature of meaning generated through social practice tie into the current discourse about urnfields representing a distinct funerary tradition? Before this question can even be approached, another simple question needs to be addressed first: What makes an urnfield *an urnfield?* Or in other words: Which combination of funerary practices is generally believed to be unique for the urnfields? Obviously the cremation rite and use of urns as the containers for the cremated remains play an important part in what the term 'urnfield' entails (Harding 2001, 319; Gerritsen 2003, 124). Also the notion that these concern groups of graves or cemeteries in a fixed point in the landscape is a returning element in the definitions provided for the term 'urnfield' (Harding 2000, 112-113; 2001, 319; Gerritsen 2003, 124; Hessing/Kooi 2005, 631). Taken together, the characteristics of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries in the Lower-Rhine-Basin indeed show many resemblances to what is believed to be a funerary tradition that was wide spread across Europe at the time of the Late Bronze Age:

> "…*Urnfield* [Monument class or category]. *A group or cemetery of inurned cremations buried in pits dug into the ground distinctive of the European Late Bronze Age Urnfield Tradition, but also found in areas of northern Europe. The majority of cemeteries are*

open sites, in many cases constructed on or around an earlier round barrow. A few, however, are contained within a ditched enclosure. These tend to be smaller examples of up to several dozen burials…" – The concise Oxford dictionary of Archaeology – (Darvill 2002, 448)

Despite the fact that many cemeteries included in the present study tick most, if not all, boxes mentioned in definition above, the notion that in the Lower-Rhine-Basin the 'urnfield rite' gradually developed out of local traditions has been around for half a century already (Verwers 1969; Roymans/Kortlang 1999; Gerritsen 2003; Hessing/Kooi 2005). Nevertheless, Late Bronze Age (and Early Iron Age) funerary rites are still often being considered as rather distinct compared to what came before and what followed after (Roymans/Kortlang 1999; Gerritsen 2003, 124; Hessing/Kooi 2005, 631).

Gerritsen, for one, argues that the concentration of the dead in urnfields represents a phase of increasing segregation of the dead from the living (Gerritsen 2003, 147). He sees this development as opposed to Middle Bronze Age barrows that find themselves more dispersed across the landscape and the later smaller sized Middle Iron Age cemeteries. He also argues that in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age the urnfields functioned as the centres of religious practice and cult whereas in the Middle- and Late Iron Age special enclosed open-air sanctuaries come into being that take over this function of the urnfields. These latter arguments finally lead Gerritsen to distinguish between Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age '*burial communities*' and Middle- /Late Iron Age '*cult communities*' (Gerritsen 2003, 193). A comparable emphasis on the importance of the urnfields in the social organisation of the landscape can be read from the quintessential book chapter by Roymans and Kortlang (1999) who place these burial grounds at the very "*…centre of the land cultivated and inhabited by the living community…*" (Roymans/Kortlang 1999, 40; See Section 8.1 for an elaborate discussion).

Additionally, as was argued in the introduction of this dissertation (Section 1.4.4), the urnfield period is often presented as a period of minimalised social stratification as most urnfield graves lack the grave goods that have the quality to signify these differences (Childe 1950, 200; Roymans 1991, 73; Kristiansen 1998, 113). This in contrast to warriorhood idioms believed to have been prevalent in Middle Bronze Age Europe (Kristiansen/Larson 2005; Vandkilde 2014) as well as to the elites that sporadically begin to surface in the archaeological record from the Early Iron Age onwards (Schumann/Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017).

It seems hardly appropriate to argue that between the Middle Bronze Age and Middle Iron Age no changes occurred in the way in which local communities were organised and how these communities perceived the world around them. Also, the importance of burial grounds to Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age communities as emphasised by Roymans and Kortlang (1999) as well as by Gerritsen (2003) is evident. But for the Lower-Rhine-Basin, when close attention is paid to the practices underlying the mortuary process as is developed throughout this respective time-span, how contrasting is the urnfield funerary rite really when compared to the Middle Bronze Age or the later Iron Age? As demonstrated in Section 5.2, the use of an urn was only deemed a prerequisite for a minority of the cemeteries included in the present study. Though the overall share of urn graves in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cemeteries is substantially higher than for most Middle Bronze Age barrows or later Iron age cemeteries, still a majority of the graves included in the present study concern urnless cremation graves. As a consequence, an urnless cremation grave from the Late Bronze Age can hardly be distinguished from an urnless cremation grave dating to the Middle Bronze Age, the Late Iron Age, or even the Early Medieval period for that matter. In the light of the above, true meaning as the product of social practice itself would still have differed at every occasion a decedent was laid to rest. At the same time, however, as will be argued in the following, the practice of cremation and the subsequent burial of the cremated remains surrounded by the other dead in fixed places in the landscape hint at persistent ideas about how the dead related to each other and to the land. Ideas that predate the emergence of urnfields and, as will be argued in the following, probably already found their inception as early as the eighteenth century BC.

7.2.2 Early beginnings?

Even though in Central Europe the emergence of urnfields seems to have gone hand in hand with the cremation rite gaining momentum (Harding 2000, 77, tab. 3.1), in the Lower-Rhine-Basin cremation as a way of dealing with the corpse had already become the dominant funerary rite in many places long before the first urnfields occurred. As early as the late third millennium BC, cremation was occasionally practiced next to the dominant inhumation rite (Drenth/Lohof 2005, 436; fig. 19.3; Theunissen 2009, 84-85; fig. 3.29) and from the eighteenth century BC onwards Middle Bronze Age barrows occur wherein most (Van Giffen 1937b; Bourgeois/Fontijn 2015) if not all (Louwen/Fontijn 2019) graves concern cremation graves. At the recently excavated barrow group of Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg, for example, no less than 17 cremation graves were unearthed that all dated between the seventeenth and sixteenth century BC (Bourgeois/Fontijn 2015) in respectively two barrows that have only been excavated for about one quarter (Louwen/Fontijn 2019). Men, women and non-adults are all represented among the interred individuals (Smits 2019). Also, there are some strong indications that for both ‘Mound 2’ and ‘3’ already several “flat” cremation graves must have been present before these respective locations were “monumentalised” with a burial mound (Louwen *et al.* 2019a, 125; Louwen *et al.* 2019b, 152). In addition, at Garderen-Bergsham, situated some 15 kilometres west of Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg, Van Giffen had already excavated a barrow group in the 1930’s that produced no less than 30 cremation graves (Van Giffen 1937b), dating between the eighteenth and fifteenth century BC (Bourgeois/Fontijn 2015, 51-53). In essence, barrow groups like that of Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg and Garderen-Bergsham can already be considered as cremation grave cemeteries on themselves.

It should however be noted that despite these early examples of barrows displaying an absolute dominance of cremation graves, for the Low Countries it would indeed take until the Late Bronze Age for the cremation rite to completely replace inhumation as a way of dealing with the dead body (Theunissen 2009, 84; Drenth/Lohof 2005, 436-437). For the present dataset, the cemetery of Gasteren is perhaps a good example where we can see the transition from inhumation to cremation (from a totalized scientist-perspective) being completed in the latest phase of the Middle Bronze Age with the placing of the last inhumation graves in the flanks of ‘Mound 37’ (Section 6.5). Nevertheless, with regards to the definition(s) of an ‘urnfield’ presented in the above, barrow groups such as Garderen-Bergsham and Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg show that grouped cremation graves in a fixed place in the landscape already occurred in the first half of the Middle Bronze Age. Urnfields therefore do not concern a totally new phenomenon in this regard. Neither does the urning of cremated remains represent a totally new practice, as in the Lower-Rhine-Basin urns as the containers for cremated remains too, already occur from the eighteenth century BC onwards (Bourgeois 2013, 36; fig. 3.7). However, before it can be argued that cemeteries known as urnfields evolve out of practices that find their origin early in the second millennium BC, there are still two important presumptions in our current discourse that need to be addressed. The first assumption is that the Middle Bronze Age mortuary process was *selective* instead of *inclusive.* The second assumption is that there is a substantial decline both in mound construction as well in interment in older barrows roughly between 1400 and 1100 BC. In the following, both presumptions will subsequently be re-evaluated in the light of new (excavation) data and a large corpus of radiocarbon dates that have become available in the last two decades.

7.2.3 Presumption 1: The selectiveness of the Middle Bronze Age mortuary process

Except for the cremation rite gradually becoming the dominant funerary rite in the course of the Middle Bronze Age, there is another important difference between the earlier Beaker Periods (Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age) when funerary practices are concerned. Whereas for the Corded Ware and Bell Beaker barrows it is evident that only a selection of the original population would finally be buried in an archaeological visible way (Lohof 1994, 113; Bourgeois 2013, 11), Middle Bronze Age barrows display substantially higher numbers of graves (Drenth/Lohof 2005, 451). Also, non-adults start to make up substantial shares of the decedents interred in barrows (*e.g.* Theunissen 2009, tab. 3.16), earning them the designation of '*family barrows*' (Drenth/Lohof 2005, 451). However, despite the apparent inclusivity Middle Bronze Age barrows might display, it is still assumed these barrows only represent a selection of the original population. In the most recent studies shares as low as 10-15% are even being mentioned (Theunissen 2009, 105; Gerritsen 2003, 121; 236). This is in stark contrast with the apparent *inclusivity* of the later urnfields (Section 6.2; 7.3.2). But where is this assumption really based on? And more importantly, is it true? Especially in the light of sites like Garderen-Bergsham (Van Giffen 1937b) and Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg (Louwen/Fontijn 2019) there seems to be no reason to assume on basis of the number of graves as well as on the sex and age of the decedents (Smits 2019) that not everyone was allowed a final resting place in a barrow. Scanning through the literature back in time in search for the origin of the mentioned 10-15%, the latest person to have addressed the issue is Gerritsen (2003, 121). Gerritsen provides no further explanation, only to have relied heavily on the then recent study on Middle Bronze Age societies by Theunissen (1999[137]). Theunissen, indeed mentions that for the entire Early- and Middle Bronze Age the share of people that would finally be buried in barrows did not exceed 15% of the original population (Theunissen 2009, 104-105). It is probably by this description that Gerritsen decided to add the lower threshold of 10% to his estimate. However, Theunissen does neither elaborate on how she came by the presumed 15% (Theunissen 2009, 104-105). For the funerary data, Theunissen on her turn relied on the work by Lohof (1991; 1994). However, when Lohof mentions 15% in relation to the representativeness of the burial record, he is solely referring to the Early Bronze Age (Lohof 1994, 112). His calculation, as he states, is highly hypothetical and even within

137 Reissued in 2009.

the same paragraph he mentions that the Middle Bronze Age (A) signifies a broadening of selection criteria (*idem.*). It seems that over the years some important nuances accidentally got lost in translation with regards to the selectiveness of the Middle Bronze Age mortuary process. Also, recent estimates about the representativeness of the current barrow record in the Low Countries suggest that only about 30% of the original amount of barrows that once dotted the landscape finally made it to our records (Bourgeois 2013, 40). One could argue that the later urnfields would have been prone to the same destructive taphonomic processes as Middle Bronze Age barrows were. However, whereas most urnfield graves were dug into the virgin soil, many Middle Bronze Age graves actually concern interments in mounds above ground (Lohof 1991; 1994; Theunissen 2009; Bourgeois 2013). This means that when a Middle Bronze Age barrow was levelled, most if not all graves would literally have been wiped of the face of the earth. In this regard, urnfield graves have a much better chance of survival as is testified by the many cemeteries unearthed since the beginning of the so-called *essen*-archaeology (Section 3.4.2; Gerritsen 2003, 22).

Just to state matters clearly, it is not argued here that from the eighteenth century BC onwards all of a sudden everyone in the entire Lower-Rhine-Basin was buried in barrows and that selection did not take place at all. However, what is argued is that inclusive cremation grave cemeteries in a fixed point in the landscape already occur as early as the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age and that urnfields do not represent a totally new phenomenon in these regards. Even more so, when is zoomed in on the more detailed funerary practices reflected in Middle Bronze Age cremation graves, there are striking resemblances with the practices observed for the later urnfields such as the urning of cremated remains (Theunissen 2009, 81-82; Bourgeois 2013, 36; fig. 3.7) the mixing of cremated remains of multiple individuals into one grave (Theunissen 2009, 98; Smits 2019, 180) and the provision of grave goods in the form of accessory pottery and (personal) dress items (Theunissen 2009, 87). Even the placing of pottery sherds in graves is a practice regularly observed for cremation graves dating to the Middle Bronze Age (Theunissen 2009, 87; Gerritsen 2003, 121; Louwen *et al.* 2019b, 141). In sum, it seems that changes that occurred in the mortuary process of the early Middle Bronze Age echo all the way through the second millennium BC to find their culmination in cemeteries later to become known as urnfields. In other words, it could be argued that early Middle Bronze Age barrow groups like that of Apeldoorn-Wieselseweg have all the hallmarks of being an urnfield in the making. However, before such a statement can finally be made, there still is one last presumption that needs to be addressed.

7.2.4 Presumption 2: The '1400-1100 BC decline' in mound construction and burial in mounds

Traditionally, in the Low Countries the Middle Bronze Age has been divided into the two sub periods of the Middle Bronze Age A, between 1800 and 1500 BC, and the Middle Bronze Age B, between 1500 and 1100 BC (Drenth/Lohof 2005). This distinction is unique for the Low Countries and is predominantly based on developments in funerary practices (Fokkens 2001; Fontijn 2002, 9) such as the nature of surrounding features of barrows and the ratios between cremation, inhumation and secondary burials (see Drenth/Lohof 2005 for an elaborate discussion). A recent re-evaluation of this model in the light of (new) radiocarbon dates suggests that many of these elements previously regarded as distinctive for specific episodes of the Middle Bronze Age actually appear to be more or less contemporaneous (Bourgeois 2013, 37). In his encompassing study of barrow landscapes in the Low Countries, Bourgeois argues that the Middle Bronze Age as a whole marks a period of intensified mound construction, mound restoration and reuse of (older) funerary mounds (Bourgeois 2013, 165-167). What he however also notes, is that from 1400 BC onwards the intensity of mound construction and (re)use for burial not only wavers but actually decreases, only to pick up pace again in the Late Bronze Age in the form of urnfield mounds (Bourgeois 2013, 38). When urnfields gradually evolve out of Middle Bronze Age funerary practices, one would however expect to see the above mentioned early hallmarks of urnfields to come through in this period, not to decline. But how should the decline in mound construction and (re)use of these mounds then be explained?

First, it is important to note that the research by Bourgeois revolves around 589 burial mounds throughout the present day Netherlands that have been selected for their sheer quality of being (well excavated) barrows (Bourgeois 2013, 9). These are *par excellence* isolated barrows, dispersed barrow groups and barrow alignments, *not* urnfields. As he states himself, the chronology he created on basis of radiocarbon dates is restricted to the tradition of barrow construction (Bourgeois 2013, 38). Second, the chronological framework for urnfields in the Lower-Rhine-Basin is still predominantly based on typo-chronologies predating the second science revolution in archaeology with the invention of radiocarbon dating. Only sporadically has radiocarbon dating been applied in the second half of the twentieth century in urnfield research to refine these typo-chronological schemes (*e.g.* Kooi 1979; Verlinde 1987) and the very programme that was actually aimed at the purpose of finetuning the existing typo-chronologies (surprisingly) only uses uncalibrated radiocarbon dates (Lanting/Van der Plicht 2003; 2005).

Over the last two decades commercial archaeology has added substantially to the existing corpus of radiocarbon dates of urnfield graves. Spread out over dozens of excavation reports, a more or less equal amount of radiocarbon dates can be collected. The analyses concerned were not only aimed at graves containing clear typo-chronological markers, but especially at cremated remains from graves that did not produce any of these markers. For *all* 689 sites included in the present study[138] have the available radiocarbon dates been collected and put together in Appendix II. In total these concern 437 radiocarbon dates, 268 of which come from graves included in the present dataset. To sketch a reliable picture of the longevity of urnfields it was decided to include *all* available dates of late prehistoric graves found at sites that produced graves dating to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Returning to the period of supposed decline in mound construction, Figure 7.1 shows a selection of calibrated radiocarbon dates for the cemeteries included in the present study. As perfectly illustrated in this figure, from the northern Netherlands with cemeteries like Gasteren, all the way to the southern Netherlands with cemeteries like Maastricht-Ambyerveld it appears that the period between 1400 and 1100 BC is actually

"hiding" among the urnfields.[139] De Mulder has observed comparable trends for the cemeteries located in the Scheldt-Basin (De Mulder 2011, 200). In the light of these radiocarbon dates it seems that in the course of the Middle Bronze Age cremation grave cemeteries in the form of barrows are gradually replaced by more extensive clusters of

138 This list can be considered complete up to the year of publication of 2016.

139 Hessing and Kooi already note that some graves in the northern Netherlands predate 1100 BC (Hessing/Kooi 2005, 636).

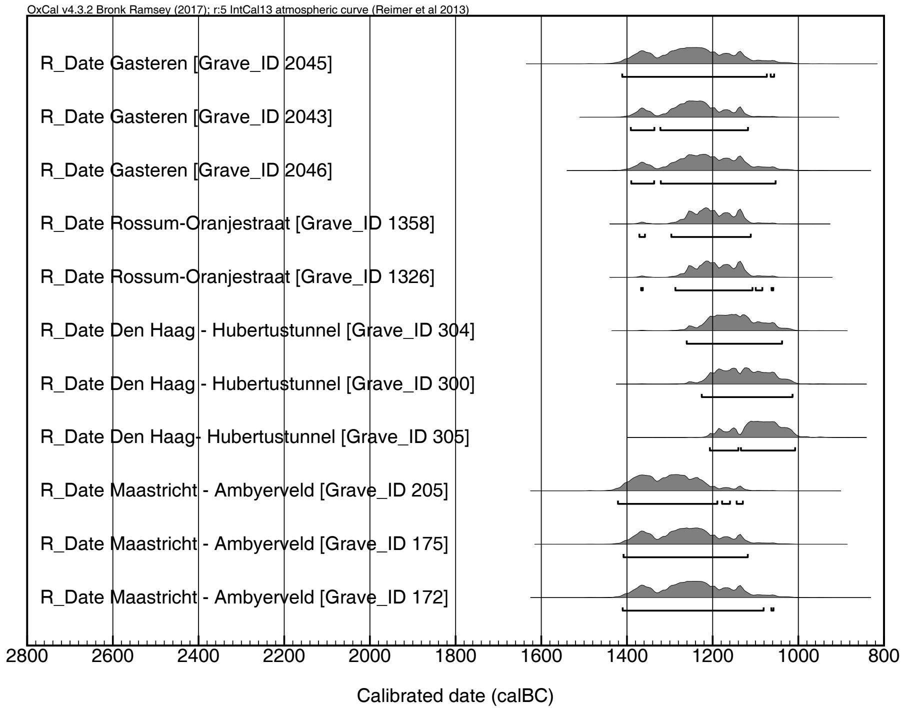

Fig. 7.1: A selection of graves in the present dataset that produced radiocarbon dates largely predating 1100 BC. The cemeteries concerned are located throughout the present day Netherlands: Gasteren (northern Netherlands); Rossum (eastern Netherlands); Den Haag (western Netherlands) and; Maastricht (southern Netherlands) indicating these early radiocarbon dates do not concern mere local exceptions. For a complete overview of radiocarbon dates of cremation grave cemeteries in the Netherlands see Appendix II.

cremation graves and that the presumed decline in mound construction and secondary burial in fact concerns a steady continuation of funerary practices. Even more so, since not uncommonly both Middle Bronze Age barrows and Late Bronze Age cremation graves are found within the same burial grounds (see for example Figs. 6.17; 8.5-6).

7.2.5 Cremation grave cemeteries in the making

To conclude, from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age onwards in the area of the Lower-Rhine-Basin barrows start to occur where most, if not all decedents have been cremated before interment. Men, women and non-adults, all are represented among the interred individuals and not uncommonly have their cremated remains been put in urns. As argued, the way in which these barrows or barrow groups are organised already show the hallmarks of cremation grave cemeteries in a fixed point in the landscape. Additionally, from the fourteenth century BC onwards new cremation graves are not only dug into already existing mounds but are gradually placed on themselves, yet still in groups, and covered by individual monuments of smaller sizes. As argued in Section 6.5 urnfields were not always founded in empty landscapes, on the contrary. Cases like Gasteren (Section 6.5; Van Giffen 1945) are good examples of urnfields that seem to have gradually “grown out” of already existing Middle Bronze Age burial grounds. Perhaps the ongoing addition of new graves in urnfields can be seen as a gradual substitution of the practices of mound restoration and mound reuse as so evidently observed for the earlier Middle Bronze Age (Lohof 1991; 1994; Theunissen 2009; Bourgeois 2013) and reflects upon comparable notions of the related dead. As will be argued in the following, this growing emphasis on the related dead not only stems from the way in which burial grounds were organised from the Middle Bronze Age onwards, but are in fact reflected in the very fabric of the funerary practices themselves.

7.3 Personhood and the social dead

7.3.1 Setting the stage

In Chapter 2 it was argued that the (or a) mortuary process revolves around the changing roles of the decedent (*cf.* Hertz 1907; Van Gennep 1909) and that throughout the mortuary process ideologically charged statements are made that are arranged within a narrative (*cf.* Fowler 2013), or discourse (*cf.* Foucault 1969; Wenger 1998), about this transformation of the decedent into her/his new role. Unlike anthropologists who are still able to witness this narrative played out in its entirety, as archaeologists we have to make do with the very end station, which is the grave. The tacit bones and objects we encounter in urnfield graves however still hold clues that hint at the meaning behind the practices, or more precise, how meaning was generated through practice. The osteological analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 6 for example tell us in what capacity (*i.e.* sex and age) the decedent left the realm of the living. Objects (Chapter 5) on their turn, though in funerals their functions might have been manifold (Fowler 2013), also possess the capacity to signify certain *personae* (Strathern 1988; Brück 2004; 2006; Brück/Fontijn 2013; Fowler 2004; 2013). Without presupposing to reconstruct exact meaning as it was once perceived by the original human actors, it might prove worthwhile to take a closer look to the array of both people as objects represented in urnfield graves, and how these two interconnect, in order to find out which statements were being made throughout the play of the metamorphosing decedent.

7.3.2 Personhood and humans

Starting with the '*who,*' in Section 6.2 it was argued that the urnfield mortuary process was rather indiscriminative when it came to the sex or age of the decedent. Not only are all age categories and both sexes represented (Section 6.2), overall they also seem to have been treated in equal fashion. For example, all could be buried centrally within funerary monuments (Tab. 6.6) and all could be provided with articles like accessory pottery or pieces of jewellery (Tab. 5.7). It is certainly not argued here that the death of a child would have made no other impact to a community as the ending of a life fully lived, only that on basis of sex and age none seem to have been denied a place among the other dead. On basis of this observation, it may be argued that even the smallest of children were regarded as having personalities of their own and for that matter were fully counted among the members of a community. This latter observation also stems from the fact that more than 75% of the infant category (0-3 years of age) received a grave of their own, even 83.5% when the entire non-adult category is concerned (Section 6.2). At the same time, it remains remarkable that of all the graves that contained the cremated remains of multiple individuals, 80.4% concern combinations of adults and non-adults (Section 4.4.3). Though children clearly already enjoyed their share of *personal* autonomy, the dominance of 'adults/non-adults combinations' in mixed graves also reflects a certain desire to merge their person(hood) with that of an adult counterpart in death. This form of fused personhood will be returned to later on when the various relations between the dead will be further explored (Section 7.4). But in order to do so, it is first necessary to learn more about the possible relations between a decedent and the objects she or he was provided with in the context of the grave.

7.3.3 Personhood and objects

With regards to objects, the present research initially seems to confirm the current image about the urnfields representing a "poor" funerary tradition in the sense that grave goods usually lack in these graves. When urns are excluded from the count, only 13.7 percent of the graves yielded one or more objects (Section 5.3). As demonstrated, accessory pottery is by far the best represented category of objects among the grave goods, only to be followed by a much smaller share of graves that produced (mostly metal) objects related to personal adornment and/or clothing (Tab. 5.5). Weapons and tools only entered the grave with the highest of exceptions, and especially the former category, seems restricted to a small group of graves dating to the Early Iron Age (Section 5.3.3). Even when the dataset would have included all Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age graves that are known today within the entire Lower-Rhine-Basin, still only a small share of Early Iron Age graves would eventually stand out for their abundance of (mostly metal) grave goods (Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017a/b). The question however is whether the lack of grave goods therefore also signifies democratic (Childe 1950, 200) or egalitarian societies (Kristiansen 1998, 113; Roymans 1991, 73). In the following it will be argued that the absence of grave goods does not necessarily indicate differences in wealth or status between decedents, but that this general lack of grave goods merely tells us that these differences not *needed* to be emphasised.

First, it is again important to state that the role(s) of objects throughout the mortuary process could have been manifold. Like with the coin in the example from classic Greece (Fig. 2.1; Section 2.3.2), objects could for instance function as vehicles in the metaphorical journey of the decedent to another world or state of being. The accessory pottery found in some 9% of the graves in the present dataset (Tab. 5.5) could very well have functioned in such a capacity when it is assumed these vessels, cups, bowls and plates once contained food and drink meant to nourish the decedent during her/his journey to the hereafter. Objects could also have functioned as gifts from the mourners to the decedent or as representations of certain soci(et)al values. Both these latter examples however already concern certain reifications of the social relations of the decedent and as such already emphasise the importance of not seeing objects as "just objects" but to appreciate them for their social qualities.

One of these social qualities is the capacity of objects to signify a certain social value, role or status. An object like a sword might for instance indicate "warriorhood" or "strength" while lavish metal jewellery could point at "wealth." This is probably exactly why urnfield graves are generally believed to signify egalitarian societies (Kristiansen 1998,) as the objects able to indicate these social qualities simply lack in these graves. However, especially in the case of funerals, the absence of evidence is certainly no evidence for absence as funerals are *par excellence* about changing roles (*cf.* Hertz 1907; Van Gennep 1909; Metcalf/Huntington 1991). Changing roles also implicates that one role is laid down and another is picked up (Van Gennep 1909). Objects, as the potential bearers of symbolic meaning (*cf.* Kopytoff 1986), form important insignias at these occasions. A *crown*, or more commonplace, a *wedding ring* are good examples. When a happy couple gets married the exchange of wedding rings and the subsequent wearing of the rings indicate both sides of the marriage are no longer considered to be single: they laid down the social status of being single and adapted the new social status of being married. Throughout the marriage the ring around the finger of the spouse is a constant reminder of the married status and the *persona* of the spouse and is recognised as such by a wide audience. However, in the case of a divorce the wedding ring leaves the finger from the spouse again as an indication she or he laid down the role of spouse, and with it, the social status of being married. Though the dissolution of the marriage is in fact arranged by signing the divorce papers, to the outside world the removal of the wedding ring from the finger is the most clear sign that both parties involved resumed their former status of being single.

Like a divorce, death too brings about an instant change of social roles as it has the irreversible quality of stripping the decedent from her/his former social status of being alive. In the process it also brings about a renegotiation of social roles (*cf.* Hertz 1907), not only when it comes to the social roles of the decedent, but as much to the social roles of the mourners (Metcalf/Huntington 1991; also see Section 2.3) when spouses become widow(er)s or children might become orphans. Along with the changing of social roles, objects associated with these social roles also change owners. In this regard *heirlooms* form just one capacity in which the former possessions of a decedent switch owner. Like with the removal of the wedding ring in a divorce, the separation of a decedent from her/his social insignias might indicate that the roles these insignias represented were laid down at the event of death, or at least did not needed to be emphasised in death. In the present day Netherlands, every year a few thousand people are knighted in the '*Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw*' for (voluntary) services rendered to society. Decorated people often wear their medal (lintje) with great pride (though only at occasions allowed). However, when decorated people die, their medal is to returned to the state. So in the Netherlands on a yearly basis thousands of people acquire a new social status as 'knight.' But when these people would be excavated by future archaeologists some thousand years from now, there is nothing in their graves that would help determine their former social status as 'Knight in the Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw.'

Returning to the urnfield graves, when objects that have the quality of emphasising certain social roles (*personae*) or statuses lack inside graves, this merely means that these social personae and statuses not needed to be emphasised. In the light of the above, "not needing to be emphasised" could actually mean that the decedent was deliberately stripped of these social personae in the transformation to her/his new social status of being dead. But when this was indeed the case, how should we then interpret the objects we do encounter in urnfield graves?

7.3.4 Blurring the human-object dichotomy

So far humans and objects have been discussed separately. Though ontologically humans and objects might represent two distinct categories, even today the animate and inanimate are often intertwined and boundaries between the two can get easily obscured. For instance, in our language *ships* are inextricably linked to the human body and character. *Vessel*, from the Latin '*vasculum*' (meaning *vase*), refers to the carrying quality of ships but is at the same time synonym for the conducts of body fluids (*e.g.* blood vessels). Ships are even considered to have a gender as they are ought to be referred to as a 'she.' Even their life paths are linked up with human (female) lives as they are *baptised* for their *maiden* voyage and end their lives in special ship *graveyards*. Another interesting denomination for ships concerns the word of *craft.* With this clear reference to the skill of its (human) makers it underpins the composite and relational nature of these objects. As this modern ship example shows, objects cannot only help constitute a certain *persona* as was argued in the previous section, but they can as much have been considered as having personalities of their own or to function as the metaphorical extensions of human persons.

Brück and Fontijn argue that the *inalienable* character of specific types of objects in this latter notion (*cf.* Godelier 1999), was in fact vital in the way people in the Bronze Age made sense of the world around them and, as a consequence, how they structured the mortuary process (Brück/Fontijn 2013, 206; also see Section 1.4.4). The handful of bronze razors and tweezers in the present dataset might for instance have been regarded as inalienable from their owners, inextricably linked with their character and were therefore deposited in the grave along with their owner. Objects worn on the body, like bronze bracelets (Tab 5.8) could even share the pyre with their owners. However, when the urnfield graves are concerned, other objects that are easily considered to be inalienable from their owner such as swords, almost never end up in the grave but were deposited in rivers (Fontijn 2002). This form of double exclusivity (Fontijn 2019), a specific object buried in a specific place, suggests that their treatment (*practice*) was dictated by their attributed character (*personhood*) and particular kind of life path (Fontijn 2002; Brück/Fontijn 2013, 205). In a sense it seems that in the example of the sword the *inalienable* could become *alienable*. The act of depositing an object like a sword in a river might very well have been a procedure to accomplish such an alienation (Fontijn 2019; *cf.* Bloch/Parry 1989). The other way around, when swords do occasionally start to occur in urnfield graves from the Early Iron Age onwards, we can see that these swords have been subjected to forms of extreme manipulation, even destruction, when swords are completely bent and fragmented before being interred (Van der Vaart-Verschoof 2017a). Perhaps these destructive procedures were needed to 'break' with the conventional procedures of alienation and allow the sword by way of exception in the context of the grave.

As these various examples show, there are different ways to look at the objects interred in urnfield graves. It is important to note that these different ways not necessarily exclude each other, especially when it comes to objects made of metal. In his most recent book Fontijn argues that in Bronze Age Europe the same type of objects were *valued* for both their economic as religious connotation without being mutually exclusive (Fontijn 2019). A bronze neck ring thus not only represents the rare commodity of bronze and the associated social status of its owner. In the context of the grave its inalienable character might have been as much- or perhaps even more important. In this scenario, true value depends on the practice wherein it functioned (Fontijn 2019 *after* Graeber 2005).

Also, in a world vision where objects are ascribed inalienable and human qualities, such objects were possibly used as vehicles to create links between different persons and places (Brück/Fontijn 2013, 206-207). The deliberate fragmentation and incomplete deposition of objects, as so often observed for urnfield graves (Section 5.5), can perhaps best be explained in this light. For the present dataset, the placing of pottery sherds in the grave along with the cremated remains (Sections 5.7.2) probably concerns the most outstanding practice in this regard. The two examples of fitting pottery sherds retrieved from different contexts from the cemeteries of St. Oedenrode-Haagakkers and Geldrop-Genoenhuis (Section 6.3.2) already indicate that parts of the same vessel were deliberately distributed over different localities. In the example from Geldrop-Genoenhuis, the respective pottery sherds even received different treatments (Section 6.3.2; Hissel *et al.* 2007, 184) testifying to the different trajectories these sherds were subjected to since their initial 'break up.' Contemporary evidence from the domestic sphere in the form of (burnt) pottery depositions in and around the house (De Vries 2016, 96) are another testimony to the importance of pottery (sherds) in the cosmologic arena as these depositions are believed to have functioned as metaphorical links with the lifepath of that of the House (Van den Broeke 2002a; Gerritsen 2003, 97). Within this train of thought pottery sherds in funerary contexts possibly concern reified notions about the relatedness of the decedent in the sense that by breaking a pot and distributing the sherds metaphorical links between the grave and other (social) localities related to the decedent were created. A form of passive keepsakes that even today is not uncommon in funerary rites.

As with the cremation rite the human body is in a way *objectified* to a tangible heap of calcined bones (Section 3.2.5), it is possible this notion of distributed personhood also extended to the decedent her-/himself. The representativeness of the amount-, and especially the weight of cremated remains we encounter in urnfield graves has been thoroughly discussed in Section 4.4.2 and it was argued that complete bodies are more often represented than is currently thought (*cf.* Harvig/Lynnerup 2013). It was however also demonstrated extreme low weights of less than 100 gram did occur that cannot be explained otherwise than that these concerned token deposits (*cf.* Wahl 1982, 24). Also, the various examples of double graves whereby cremated remains of multiple individuals were combined into one grave illustrates that cremated remains were indeed used as a substance to negotiate social links between (deceased) individuals. Though for the majority of urnfield graves it is impossible to prove archaeologically portions of cremated remains were deliberately kept out of the grave (see Section 4.4.2 for an elaborate discussion), token deposits did occur which means that something else was done with the remainder of the cremated remains. Whatever "something else" might have been, by dividing cremated remains the decedent her-/himself becomes automatically physically distributed over multiple places. This latter notion might as well have been the very objective of the act of splitting the cremated remains.

The extreme example from the cemetery of Beegden where the remains of no less than seven individuals were found in one single urn could very well be a case in point (Section 4.4.3). The total amount of individuals in this particular case was based on dental records and the number of (nine) petrosal bones belonging to individuals of different sexes and ages; one adult male, three adult females and three non-adults (Roymans/Hoogland 1999, 77). It hardly seems possible these seven individuals all died at the same time and were cremated together. A more logical explanation would be that (some) of the cremated remains of each individual were kept after cremation, finally to be combined into the grave that was excavated at Beegden. As Roymans and Hoogland already argue, this grave could concern an example of an occasion whereby people that split off from another community took (some) of the remains of their late beloved ones to their new home, finally to be interred in what is thought to represent the oldest grave of the Beegden cemetery (Roymans/Hoogland 1999, 82). Based on the total number of petrosal bones from this well preserved grave (*ibid.*, 76), nine out of 14 that should be present in the case of seven individuals, it could be argued that not all seven individuals are represented completely and some remains were indeed buried elsewhere.

In conclusion, the manipulation of both bodies and objects in urnfield graves by acts of burning and deliberate fragmentation strongly suggests that both entities were not just appreciated for being bodies and objects but that these were considered substances that could be used to (re)negotiate relations between people, objects and places. In this view both the human body as the associated objects were not only valued for their intrinsic value but perhaps even more for their power to represent certain social relations. But if this was indeed the case what then constituted the nature of the relations aspired?

7.4 Land, ancestors and the related dead

7.4.1 The dead related to each other

One of the most remarkable elements of the mortuary process involved with the urnfields still is the fact that the cremated dead also needed to be buried. Despite the consuming, transforming and transcending qualities of the cremation fire, the cremation rite itself was clearly deemed as "just" another station along the metaphorical journey of the decedent rather than the termination point. Time and time again it was decided to anchor the last physical remains of a decedent somewhere within the physical world. The fact that this was consistently done in places were a decedent would be surrounded by the other dead again testifies to the notion that the relatedness of the dead was deemed important. In Section 6.5 it was argued that locating a new grave in an urnfield was in fact a very conscious affair and that different notions about the relatedness of the dead were at play simultaneously every time a new grave was added.

First, decedents could already be "merged" before interment by combining the cremated remains into one grave. Second, decedents could be buried within the confinements of the same funerary monument. Third, new monuments and/or graves could be connected to already existing monument by making them overlap or to build them adjacent to one another. And fourth, new graves could be dug into monuments already centuries old. It seems reasonable to assume that these various ways of putting the dead in relation to each other also reflect on different kinds of relationships. What stems from the first way of connecting the dead is that the relation between the various decedents must already have been evident in life. The same would in most occasions have applied to decedents buried within the confinements of single one-phased monuments. As argued, the relationships emphasised in these first two ways of connecting the dead could concern family ties, perhaps mirroring former households (Section 6.5). When the clustering and overlapping of graves is concerned, the contemporaneity of the lives lived becomes however less evident and it is exactly the non-contemporaneity of the graves in the fourth way of connecting the dead that is most apparent.

7.4.2 The dead as ancestors

Even though determining the exact nature of the relationships emphasised in urnfields is problematic from an archaeological perspective, it is evident that very different periods of time between deaths were bridged by the various ways of connecting the dead. The first two "modes of connection" seem to concern relationships that must already have been evident in life, and would therefore still be present as such in the collective memory of the mourners. With regards to monuments already centuries old when reused for burial, there clearly would have been no vivid recollection of the persons initially buried in these monuments. These differences in time past between deaths could hint at different notions about ancestry that were at play simultaneously (Fokkens 2012). Anthropology has provided ample examples of extant communities where ancestors are believed to be omnipresent, and more importantly with regards to the urnfields, where different sorts of ancestors are associated with different episodes of the past and with different origins. Based on a broad scope of anthropological studies on extant horticulturalists/hunter-gatherers around the globe, Mary Helms for example distinguishes between *'emergent ancestors'* and *'first-principle ancestors'* (Helms 1998). *Emergent ancestors* are associated with lineage (a House with capital 'H') while *first-principle ancestors* are associated with creation, primordial source and originations (Helms 1998, 137-138). Comparable notions can be read from Daniel de Coppet's essay on the *'Are'are'* from the island of Malaita where a distinction exists between *'intermediary ancestors'* and *'apical ancestors'* (De Coppet 1985). *Apical ancestors* could be seen as a form of *first-principle* ancestors as they "*…are the origin of the society…"* (De Coppet 1985, 82). *Intermediary ancestors,* though also associated with lineage (*ibid.*, 81) are however not entirely the same as *emergent ancestors*. An important difference between the two exists in the fact that *intermediary ancestors* are dead and properly buried while emergent ancestors can also find themselves among the living: they literally emerge out of the House, extending the lineage beyond the temporal (Helms 1998, 137). These various notions about ancestry from current anthropology cannot simply be projected one-on-one on the funerary practices observed for the urnfields. For instance, saying that the initial graves in monuments already centuries old were considered by Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age people as *apical ancestors* would simply be incorrect as *apical ancestors* were never buried (De Coppet 1985, 82). However, these examples do show how notions about descent and origin can be closely affiliated with different but co-existing notions about ancestry. Also, examples like that of the *'Are'are'* testify to the importance of funerary sites as *intermediary ancestors* are believed to be located in funeral sites where they still have the power to intervene in everyday life to both benefit as well as harm the living, (De Coppet 1985, 81).

Returning to the mortuary practices observed for the present dataset, the efforts people put in creating links between (dead) people, objects and places strongly suggests that the dead were still attributed active and social roles. This latter observation indicates a strong sense of ancestral presence was experienced by people inhabiting the Lower-Rhine-Basin at the time of the urnfields. As derives from the argument in the above concerning Middle Bronze Age funerary practices, this sense of an ancestral presence was no novelty at the brink of the Late Bronze Age but originated much earlier in the Middle Bronze Age (also see Lohof 1991; 1994). It is already from this period onwards that notions about the related dead are not only expressed by the mortuary practices themselves but also in the way in which these notions about relatedness become firmly rooted in the land.

7.4.3 The ancestors and the land

But why then was this latter emphasis on ancestors and land deemed so important? In the current discourse about the social organisation of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age landscape urnfields feature as territorial markers and the authority of the ancestors was wielded to lay claims on land (Roymans/Kortlang 1999; Gerritsen 2003). Even though De

Coppet's essay also played an important source of inspiration for the construction of the current discourse, it is argued here that the application of De Coppet's observations was used the other way around. The '*Are'are*' perception of the land(scape) is in fact striking as it is believed that people do not own land but land actually owns people (De Coppet 1985, 81). As De Coppet writes: *"…land is clearly not simply soil, but rather an entity always fused with the ancestors, under whose joint authority the living are placed…"* (De Coppet 1985, 81). Each piece of land is considered to have been passed down all the way from the *apical ancestors* to the *intermediary ancestors* to their living descendants and the latter have a constant obligation to take care of the land (*ibid.*). Land they are in fact related to- and owned by descent. In this view, the interplay between the living, the ancestors and the land is quite the opposite of current ideas wherein urnfields functioned as territorial markers (Roymans/Kortlang 1999; Gerritsen 2003) as in such an interpretation the *owning of* land supersedes the sense of *belonging to* the land. Though projecting twentieth century AD Melanesian perceptions of land and ancestors on late prehistoric communities in the Lower-Rhine-Basin is not without its risks, De Coppet's essay still challenges the current view on the role of urnfields in the social organisation of the landscape and a re-evaluation of the evidence at hand is necessary. Therefore, in Chapter 8 will be explored how cemeteries, as the dwelling places of the ancestors, related to the land and to the people living in the land.