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

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# BREAKING AND MAKING THE ANCESTORS

PIECING TOGETHER THE URNFIELD MORTUARY PROCESS  
IN THE LOWER-RHINE-BASIN, CA. 1300 - 400 BC

1. Graves from archaeological contexts should primarily be read as the material precipitation of the transition made by the decedent to whatever new role she or he was envisioned to occupy. Only in rare occasions do graves hold some clue about the former social status of the decedent.
2. The on average lesser weights of cremated remains in Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cremation graves when compared to modern cremations should not primarily be seen as the result of a typical 'pars-pro-toto' rite.
3. Creating and emphasizing links between people, objects and places were an essential part of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age funerary rites.
4. Late Bronze Age and Early Iron age cremation grave cemeteries did not serve as territorial markers. Instead, locating the dead in specific zones of the landscape more likely reflects a sense of belonging to the land rather than claiming ownership over it.
5. In essence, cremation graves are depositions of objectified human remains and should be studied as such.
6. Abandoning the traditional terminology of 'Urnfields' altogether will open up new research angles and help create new perspectives on the cremation rite gaining momentum in Europe towards the end of the Bronze Age.
7. Even though in the Netherlands there is a sheer abundance of late prehistoric cremation graves, their numbers are still hardly representative with regards to the original situation. Sooner do the known numbers of graves reflect 10-15% of the original situation rather than 75% or higher.
8. At least a sample of one-third, preferably half of the total number of graves in a given late prehistoric cremation grave cemetery should be properly dated by means of radiocarbon dating before any statements can be made about the period of use of that particular cemetery.
9. Archaeological fieldwork is the absolute and essential basis of every branch in archaeology and is therefore to be properly taught in any institute that trains future archaeologists.
10. The tendency of archaeologists of seeking overarching patterns in material culture and other forms of archaeological data ignores the very context in which true meaning is generated which is in the original act itself.
11. In the Dutch archaeological system, the custom of making the client pay for scientific analyses of excavation data is principally wrong. Instead, the client should only be held accountable for ex situ preservation of an archaeological site and a separate national research fund should be made available where archaeological companies can apply for additional funds for scientifically relevant analyses.
12. In contrast to what many academics may claim, having and raising children while working on a PhD is very well possible. In fact, having the responsibility over a young family effectuates discipline, helps to set clear targets and, above all, provides a healthy perspective on matters in Academia.