A completely normal practice: the emergence of selective metalwork deposition in Denmark, north-west Germany, and the Netherlands between 2350-1500 BC

Visser, K.M.

8

The selection of objects: cultural biographies

Human actions lie at the heart of the practice of selective metalwork deposition, which the previous chapter studied from a bird's-eye view. People repeatedly *did* specific things over the course of time, creating the patterns that are examined in this study. What they did revolves around two key elements that are archaeologically visible: the objects and the places they selected. This concluding chapter focuses on the former: the objects. The patterns studied in the previous data-based chapters show that people did not simply deposit *any* object. People systematically made choices concerning which objects they deposited (Fontijn 2002, 2019, Needham 1988, Vandkilde 1996). As discussed in the previous chapters, these choices demonstrate that there were conventions behind the practice: apparently, metalwork deposition was supposed to be done in a certain way. This chapter focuses on the conventions behind the selection of objects.

But before moving on to examine these conventions, the objects themselves need to be considered for a moment. As explained in Chapter 2, the conventions behind depositions are examined by using a number of main object categories: daggers/swords, halberds, axes, spearheads, ornaments. Of course, these categories are products of our modern way of thinking. From our modern perspective, an axe is a different kind of object than a dagger, or a spearhead. But did people in prehistory distinguish between these objects, too? How do we know that people perceived these objects as different from each other? One could argue that it is perhaps not meaningful at all to distinguish between axes, daggers, and spearheads, since they are all made of metal, and they all had a sharp edge or point. The solution to this issue actually lies in the patterns in depositions. We have seen in the previous chapters that people consistently deposited axes in a specific way, and daggers in another, and spearheads in yet another way. These patterns show that these objects were indeed considered different objects in the distant time periods under study. This implies that they were deposited differently *because* people perceived them to be different. Although the names of these object categories are modern inventions – we use the term 'dagger', but we may just as well call it 'long, pointed object' – the categories themselves are in fact meaningful. What people *did* with these objects shows that they were perceived as different, demonstrating that it is meaningful to use these different categories. Therefore, the main object categories – and their modern names – are employed in this chapter.

So having established that an axe was in fact considered a different kind of object than, say, a dagger or a spearhead, since it was deposited differently – what *is* the difference? How can we define an axe? What does an axe have that a spearhead does not? In order to answer this question, the objects' function and how they were used need to be examined. Spearheads had a very specific function: they were used as weapons (Horn 2013:18, 21-23, and catalogue), although it is also possible that they were used in hunting (Fontijn 2002:99). In contrast, axes were from very early on of vital importance as tools in agrarian communities (Bradley 1990:43-64, Fontijn 2002:82, Wentink 2006:100). They were of crucial importance in Neolithic societies from a subsistence perspective, as tools to fell trees and thus transform the landscape, and from a social perspective, as tools to construct houses for the community. Furthermore, people engaged in supra-regional exchange networks to acquire for example Alpine jade axes (Kolář 2019:40-41). Axes thus had a great *social* significance as tools (Kolář 2019:42). Furthermore, they could also be used as weapons, and non-utilitarian axes – which were probably used as display items – also occur throughout the investigated time period (see *e.g.* Chapters 3 and 6). Axes clearly had a variety of functions and a broad significance (Bradley 1990:57, Fontijn 2002:82, Kolář 2019, Wentink 2006:100-101). So spearheads and axes had different functions and uses, and this is what distinguished them from each other; this is what caused them to be perceived as different objects. The purpose, design, and use of objects was thus of crucial importance for how they were perceived.

It is here that the concept of an object's *cultural biography* comes into play, a classic concept developed by Kopytoff (1986). According to Kopytoff, objects have biographies just like people do, starting with where the object came from and who made it, and ending with the end of the object's use (Kopytoff 1986:66-67). And people have "biographical expectations" of objects: an object should be treated and end up in a way that is 'right' for it (Kopytoff 1986:67). As an example of "biographical expectations" in our modern society, Kopytoff mentions how we would react if a painting by Renoir would be burned, or would end up in a private collection; these two 'endings' are, to us, not 'right' for such an object (Kopytoff 1986:67). This is a feeling that we would all share, without having to discuss or explain it. Apparently, the idea of how to treat an object is *culturally* influenced (cf. Kopytoff 1986:67).

A more extreme example of modern "biographical expectations" (Kopytoff 1986:67) concerning a painting is the case of the Banksy painting that shredded itself directly after it had been sold for over £1 million at an auction in 2018, leaving people shocked and making headlines all over the world. Interestingly, the piece of art probably *increased* in value after its destruction. Another recent example that comes to mind is the indignation and criticism that arose in the Netherlands when the Dutch royal family decided to auction off valuable artworks by Dutch painters to foreign countries, rather than offering them to Dutch museums first, and preserving this cultural heritage for the benefit of their own country. This was apparently not what *should be done* with these objects, and therefore people protested. The latter is an important notion: not treating objects 'in the right way' apparently has social consequences, and will stir people to react, just like when the Banksy painting was destroyed. It is thus important to treat objects in the right way in order to maintain a balance in society.

Kopytoff's concept of cultural biographies thus essentially entails an *emic* perspective (Fontijn 2013:192): it allows us to explore what people in a specific culture considered to be the right way to treat an object. An alternative approach is to study an object's individual

'itinerary' (Hahn & Weiss 2013). This entails an *etic*, perhaps more neutral, perspective, describing everything that happens to an object during its 'life' (Fontijn 2013:192). The previous data chapters examined what happened to the objects under study in this research, so we might indeed use the term 'object itineraries' here. However, in each sub period and for each object category, we have identified a number of patterns in these 'object itineraries', which demonstrate that people did similar things over and over again. People made similar choices across vast distances, testifying to the existence of shared ideas. There were thus shared conventions behind the practice of selective deposition, and by studying the patterns in depositions, we can catch a glimpse of what people in these distant time periods considered to be the right way to treat objects. Therefore, the concept of an object's cultural biography is of great relevance for this study, and is applied throughout this chapter.

The idea of what one 'should' do with an object, how it 'should' end its life, the fact that these ideas are culturally influenced, and that the 'wrong' treatment has social consequences, is of vital importance for the current study. We already know how the objects investigated in this study ended their lives: they were deliberately deposited, and never retrieved. Apparently, this was how these objects were supposed to end their lives. The alternative 'ending' for metal objects in prehistory – to be recycled rather than deposited – was probably much more common; the largest proportion of metalwork must have been recycled in prehistory, instead of deposited (Fontijn 2002:33). Yet that particular ending cannot be studied in the same way as 'our ending' *can*.

However, here it should be noted that within the ending under study – the deliberate deposition of a metal object – there is a great deal of variation: the objects were deposited in a variety of contexts. Some were used as burial gifts, while others were deposited in bogs, in rivers, or in dry landscape settings. Deposition was overall the right ending for these objects, but apparently, it also mattered *where* an object was deposited. The next two chapters focus on the places that people selected for deposition; this chapter focuses specifically on the objects themselves. But this variation in deposition locations shows that within the group of objects with deposition as the right ending, there is a differentiation. These objects were somehow distinguished between, or differentiated, by the people who deposited them. This is, again, where the objects' cultural biographies come into play.

This chapter therefore focuses on the lives of deposited metal objects. What were the cultural biographies of these deposited objects? What were the "biographical expectations" (Kopytoff 1986:67) that people had of them? We will work our way through the objects' lives, already knowing their ending (although the exact selection of deposition locations is examined in detail in the next two chapters), and focusing on a selection of crucial elements in their lives:

1. We will start our examination by zooming out and investigating the conventions behind the selection of objects from a bird's-eye view, focusing on the shifts and developments during the four sub periods under study. This will serve as an overview, after which we will focus on a number of specific elements in the deposited objects' cultural biographies.
2. Secondly, we will zoom in and focus on the origins of the deposited metal objects and whether these influenced how they were deposited. We know that all metal had to be imported from distant regions, since the research area is non-metalliferous. Yet already from an early stage on, a local production of metalwork is thought to have existed, as

we have seen in Chapter 3. The exotic material metal was thus locally recycled into local products, and in this process, people chose to apply their own style to these objects. However, not all imported metalwork was recycled, as foreign shapes also occur in the metalwork we are studying. Objects with a foreign shape, such as Anglo-Irish axes in LN II, were deposited alongside objects with a local shape. We can thus distinguish between shapes that are foreign in the research area; supra-regional shapes that occurred in the research area and beyond; and shapes that were exclusively made in the research area. Sørensen's work has shown that the 'otherness' of objects that came from afar potentially had implications for how they were considered, used, and treated in the regions they moved to (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94). How, then, were foreign and local shapes treated in depositions? This is the main question for Section 8.2, in which we will return to the example of the Anglo-Irish axes that were deposited in LN II.

3. Thirdly, we know that not all of the five main object categories existed throughout the entire time period; some objects were newly introduced over the course of the 850 years under study. A good example are bronze spearheads, which enter the archaeological record in the research area in period IA, as discussed in Chapter 5. These were thus new, unfamiliar objects to the people in the research area. In contrast, other objects existed during all four sub periods. Did this have implications for how they were deposited? This question is the main focus of Section 8.3.
4. Fourthly, we will examine the use lives of the deposited objects, and focus on the question whether how they were *used* had implications for how they were *deposited*. We have already seen above that a spearhead and an axe had a very different purpose, function, and use, which caused them to be perceived as different objects, and therefore to be deposited in different ways. How an object is used during its life is indeed an important element in its cultural biography (Kopytoff 1986:67), and therefore it may play a role in its desired 'ending'. Section 8.4 further examines how the deposited objects were used.

After examining these important elements in the objects' 'lives', Section 8.5 attempts to arrive at an understanding of why people chose exactly *these* objects to end up in depositions. In other words, we will attempt to arrive at an understanding of the desired cultural biographies of the objects that were deposited.

8.1 Objects: developments over time

We will start by examining the selective deposition of the main object categories from a bird's-eye view. The selective deposition of the main object categories in the four sub periods is shown in Figure 8.1. Taking a closer look at this graph, a number of patterns and developments stand out.

Three object categories were deposited in all four sub periods: daggers, axes, and ornaments. We will focus on these first. Even though they were clearly persistent elements in selective deposition, they were not necessarily deposited in the same way throughout these 850 years. Starting with metal daggers, they were predominantly used as burial gifts in LN I, when they were an important element in the Bell Beaker burial package, used to express ideas of personhood. This idea is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. But in the following LN II, they were predominantly deposited outside burials, either in hoards or singly. Later, in period IA, they started to become more frequent in burials once again, to become very abundant in

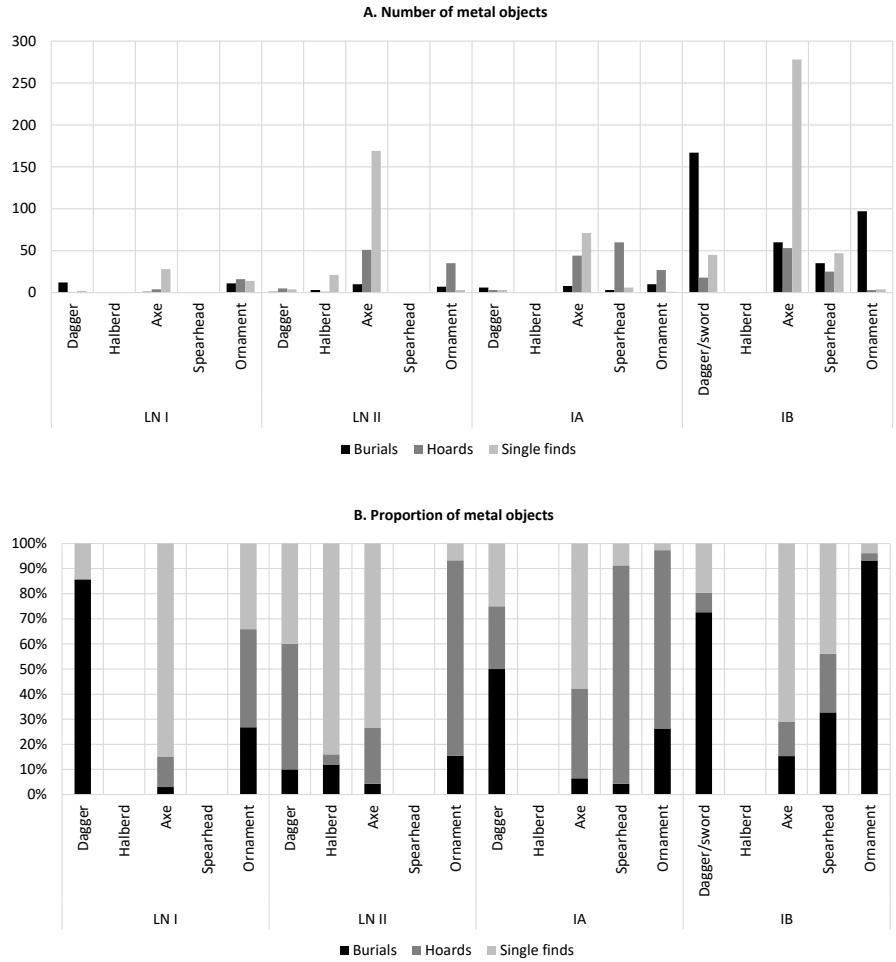

Figure 8.1. The selective deposition of the main object categories over time. A. The absolute number of metal objects from each site type in the four sub periods. B. The proportion of metal objects from each site type in the four sub periods.

burials in period IB. In the latter period, they were an important element in constructing an image of the dead in burials, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

In contrast to daggers, axes were deposited in strikingly similar ways across time and space. They were predominantly deposited singly throughout the investigated time period, and not used as burial gifts. As discussed in Chapter 3, this also applies to much earlier copper axe depositions in the Funnelbeaker Culture. Throughout a time span of 2500 years, people did similar things with metal axes. This staggering fact is discussed in more detail in Section 8.3, when we focus on persistent and new objects. Nevertheless, when we take a closer look at the graph in Figure 8.1, a few minor changes in axe depositions over time can in fact be observed. In period IA, axes were relatively often deposited in hoards, while in period IB, they were relatively often used as burial gifts compared to the earlier periods. This is a new development, in line with the overall abundance of metalwork in burials in period IB.

Lastly, ornaments occur in burials in all sub periods, although they become very abundant as burial gifts in period IB. There is a clear association between burials and metal ornaments over time; metal ornaments were consistently used in constructing an image of the dead in burials. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. However, a number of fluctuations can in fact be observed in Figure 8.1. In LN II and period IA, ornaments are relatively common in hoards. In period IA, this is primarily the case in northern Germany, while ornaments were mostly used as burial gifts in Denmark in this period, as discussed in Chapter 5. As opposed to axes, ornaments were thus deposited following regional practices. This observation recurs in the following chapters. Overall, metal ornaments were strikingly rarely deposited as single objects compared to the other object categories. When we compare depositions of axes and ornaments, which both occurred throughout the four sub periods, they were clearly deposited in different ways, testifying to the fact that they were perceived as different objects by people in these periods.

Two object categories were introduced during the investigated time period, and one of them disappeared again. Halberds emerge at the end of LN I (Butler 1990:71, Horn 2014:123, Vandkilde 1996:193-199, see Chapter 4), and disappear from the archaeological record after LN II. They were predominantly deposited singly, and rarely used as burial gifts (see Figure 8.1). Spearheads were introduced in period IA (Jacob-Friesen 1967:105-106, Lorenz 2013:245, Vandkilde 1996:212, see Chapter 5), and they continued to be abundant in period IB, particularly in Denmark (Vandkilde 1996:212-214, 229-235). They mainly occur in hoards at first in period IA, but they occur both in hoards, single deposits and burials in period IB. The conventions behind spearhead depositions thus changed over the course of time. Section 8.3 focuses specifically on the incorporation of new objects in selective deposition practices.

To sum up, there are shifts and changes in the selection of objects for depositions over the course of time. Each object category was deposited in its own way, demonstrating that the object categories used in this research are in fact meaningful. Some objects were deposited in remarkably consistent ways throughout the investigated time period: axes were mostly *not* used as burial gifts, and copper ornaments were mostly 'allowed' in burials across time and space. In contrast, the conventions behind dagger depositions fluctuated, as daggers shifted from being an important element in the construction of personhood in burials, to being deposited outside burials, to becoming important elements in burials once again. These shifts in dagger deposition and what they signify are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. Furthermore, halberds and spearheads were newly introduced to the research area in LN II and period IA, respectively, and the fact that they were new, had implications for how they were deposited. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.3. In short, there was thus a logic behind the shifts and changes we observe when we examine selective deposition between 2350-1500 BC from a bird's-eye view.

After this brief overview of the selection of objects over time, we will now focus on a number of significant themes, starting with depositions of foreign and local objects.

8.2 Foreign vs. local styles

Metal was an exotic material in the research area: all metal had to be imported, since the research area is non-metalliferous. Even though this is a well-known fact, it is sometimes easy to forget when we consider the large number of metal objects that have been found, particularly in Denmark in period IB. But it is important to keep this in mind precisely *because of* these large quantities. All this metal had to be exchanged and transported

across vast distances: it came from *outside* the local world that people lived in and were familiar with. It was in that respect the complete opposite of flint: flint was a local, abundant resource that had been part of the local, familiar world of people in Denmark for hundreds, even thousands of years. But metal came from regions that most people probably never visited in their lives. These objects entailed the only knowledge of and contact with these distant regions that people in the local communities under study had (cf. Fontijn 2019:37). How did they deal with these foreign, unfamiliar objects?

In Late Bronze Age Scandinavia, the opposition between *local* and *foreign* is thought to have had major implications for how objects were treated (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987). The 'otherness' of foreign objects had consequences for how they were considered, used, and treated in the regions they moved to (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94). Although we are studying earlier periods than the Late Bronze Age, this opposition is also highly relevant for us, since metalwork with a local shape was deposited alongside metalwork with a foreign shape, as discussed in Chapters 3-6. And these local and foreign shapes were often very different: Anglo-Irish axes were for example visually very different from axes with a local shape in LN II. Therefore, this section focuses on how objects with foreign and local shapes were deposited. But first, the metal import and the local production of metalwork in the research area are discussed. After this, the focus will be on foreign and local shapes or *styles* and what these entail. Finally, the conventions behind depositions of objects with foreign and local shapes are examined.

8.2.1 Metal import and local production

Based on metal analyses, the metal that was imported to Scandinavia in LN II and period IA is thought to have been imported in the form of finished objects, rather than as raw copper and tin (Nørgaard et al. 2019:26). Metal thus reached the research area in these periods in the form of foreign, exotic, unfamiliar objects. These foreign metal objects were broken into pieces and remelted locally (Nørgaard et al. 2019:26). In this local recycling process, people chose to manufacture objects with a local shape, which was very different from the foreign shape of imported objects. This is important. If metal had been imported in the form of raw copper and tin, it would naturally have been necessary to remelt it into usable metal objects. But there is no practical reason why people could not have used an imported axe with a foreign shape as a tool. However, people mostly chose *not* to put such a foreign axe to use, but instead to recycle it into an object with a local shape, as demonstrated by the predominance of local shapes in the metalwork under study (Vandkilde 1996, fig. 266, and see below). Clearly, it was important to 'convert' these foreign shapes into local shapes. Foreign and local shapes are examined in more detail below. But first, the local production of metalwork throughout the investigated time period is considered. Already from very early on, there are indications of a local production of metalwork in the research area.

In Denmark, metalwork was probably already locally manufactured as early as the Funnelbeaker Culture (ca. 3950-3350 BC, Klassen 2000:308). However, there are no signs of a local production in the region in the subsequent millennium, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Klassen 2000:238, cf. Nørgaard 2019:2). But from ca. 2350 BC, in the Bell Beaker period, copper and gold objects were probably locally made, or at least worked, in the Netherlands and Denmark (Vandkilde 1996:184,295, Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67:98). This early production of metalwork is still modest: in Denmark, it is in fact discussed in terms of metallurgy "experiments" (Nørgaard et al. 2019:2), and in the Netherlands, there is no evidence that copper casting was carried out (Butler 1995/96:159).

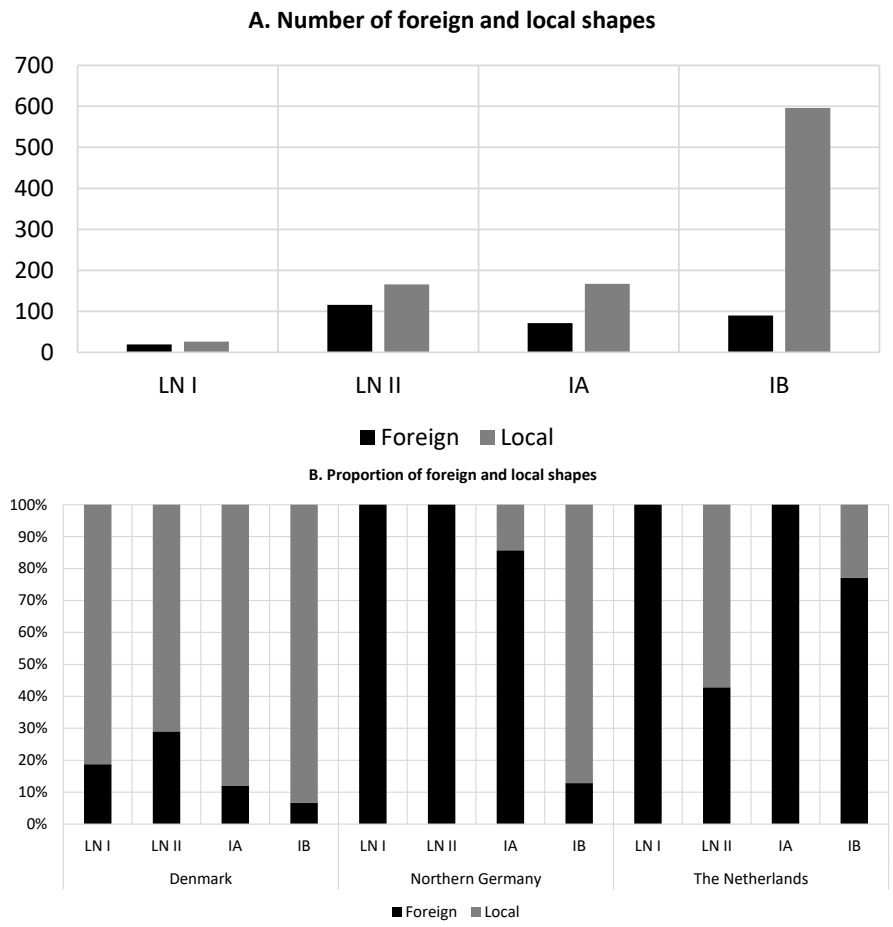

Figure 8.2. Number of foreign and local shapes in the research area. Objects of unknown or debated origin are not included. This includes for example the Bell Beaker copper daggers in the Netherlands, which might be worked locally, but they may also be imports from elsewhere (Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67:98). A. The number of foreign and local shapes in each sub period. B. The proportion of foreign and local shapes in each region in the research area over time.

Later, from ca. 2000 BC, a local production of metalwork is thought to have existed in various regions within the research area, producing large quantities of metal objects (Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67:86, Butler 1995/96:188-191, Vandkilde 1996:207, see Figure 8.2). Particularly low-flanged axes with local shapes occur in large numbers. The number of locally made objects only increased in Denmark in the following periods, until almost all of the metalwork in period IB is thought to be locally made (Vandkilde 1996, fig. 266, see Figure 8.2). However, in the Netherlands, it is difficult to identify a local production of metalwork between ca. 1800-1600 BC, as discussed in Chapter 5. But from 1600 BC, objects were most likely locally manufactured once again in this region (Butler 1995/96:220, see Figure 8.2). In period IB, the vast majority of the deposited metalwork in the entire research area is thought to be locally made.

Yet not every single imported metal object was recycled, as already noted. There is a small number of foreign shapes among the deposited metal objects. In LN II, for example, Anglo-Irish axes were deposited in small numbers in the entire research area (see Figure 8.3). The following sections return to the example of these visually different Anglo-Irish axes. Objects with foreign shapes were thus deposited alongside objects with local shapes, made of imported metal (see Figure 8.2). The proportion of foreign and local shapes in depositions changes over time (see Figure 8.2). Before we turn to the conventions behind depositions of objects with foreign and local shapes, I first focus on what foreign and local shapes of metalwork entail, and the ideas that people had on what objects were supposed to look like.

8.2.2 Foreign and local styles and what they entail

Copper/bronze casting offers the smith the possibility to give objects almost any desired shape (Appleby & M. L. S. Sørensen 2018:99-105). But despite all these possibilities that the material bronze offers, only a limited number of shapes occur in the archaeological record. Even though objects of essentially any shape could be manufactured, people chose to give them a *particular* shape. Clearly, people had specific ideas concerning what objects 'should look like', and these ideas were probably culturally determined (Fontijn 2002:30, M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94). These objects are cultural products and expressions of the societies in which they were produced (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94). And these culturally determined choices and ideas resulted in region-specific *styles*: bronze objects made in – for example – Central Europe looked different from objects made in Denmark. In the periods under study, people must have been able to recognise foreign objects immediately, based on their deviating shape and decoration. They simply *looked* different from their own, local objects, which were made in their familiar *local style*.

The shape of the objects is thus of vital importance. Some shapes are typical for foreign regions, since they were only made *there*. Other shapes were only made in the research area. And some shapes were widely shared and distributed: they were made across regions. We can thus potentially distinguish three groups of shapes: 1) shapes that were not made in the research area, and that are thus not characteristic for the research area; 2) shapes that were made in the research area, and possibly also beyond, *i.e.* in a large area; and 3) shapes that were exclusively made in the research area, or even in a specific part of the research area. In this research, objects in the first category are considered to be *foreign shapes*, and objects in the second and third category *local shapes*. Although objects in the second category were not exclusively local, they can be argued to be part of the local 'repertoire' of metalwork that people were familiar with (see also Section 8.3), and at least some of them were most probably locally made in the research area. The numbers and proportion of these two groups of objects over time are shown in Figure 8.2. It should be noted that for some objects it is not possible to determine their shape's origin. These objects are not included in this discussion.

Let us now focus for a moment on a few examples of local and foreign styles, starting with the former. The first time a local style can be argued to be observed in the research area is in LN II, when large numbers of low-flanged axes were manufactured locally. A good example are the low-flanged axes of Emmen type dating to this period (see Figure 8.3). They were most likely manufactured in Drenthe in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands (Fontijn 2002:68, Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67:86, Butler 1995/96:188-191) – the type is called after the town Emmen in this region – but they are found throughout the research

area. Since they all look very similar, it is actually impossible to determine where exactly they were manufactured. The Emmen axes in Denmark might be imported from the northern Netherlands, but they may also be locally made in Denmark (Vandkilde 1996:69). Nevertheless, they were thus most probably manufactured within the research area; they belong to the second category identified above, which consists of objects that were part of the local, familiar repertoire of metalwork. Overall, many axes in north-west Europe are similar-looking in this period. In LN II, we can indeed speak of "a common western European flanged axe tradition" (Vandkilde 1996:69, cf. Butler 1995/96:189). Despite all the possibilities that the process of metalworking affords in terms of shape and decoration (cf. Appleby & M. L. S. Sørensen 2018:99-105), people deliberately chose to make very similar-looking, almost standardised axes in this region. This was apparently what axes were 'supposed' to look like in this period and region (Fontijn 2002:30, M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94).

Prior to LN II, a local style is difficult to observe in the data. Quite the opposite: the metalwork occurring in the Bell Beaker period is in fact part of a shared, international 'Bell Beaker style', as shown by finds across Europe (cf. Fontijn 2002:67, cf. Vandkilde 1996:184). Particularly copper tanged daggers and gold ornaments carry the international 'Bell Beaker style', and they are part of the Bell Beaker burial repertoire across Europe. This 'Bell Beaker style' is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. Although a modest amount of the Bell Beaker metalwork in the research area might be locally made (Vandkilde 1996:184,295, Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67:98), it was deliberately made in shapes that were supra-regionally shared, rather than local.

Another example of a local style is observable in period IB, when high-flanged axes of Oldendorf type were probably manufactured all over the research area (Butler 1995/96:203-220, Laux 2000:72-79, Vandkilde 1996:117-121) and beyond. They might originally have emerged in northern Germany (Butler 1995/96:219-220). They look similar across the research area, although some local variations exist, for example in the northern part of the Netherlands (Butler 1995/96:204, Butler's variant Ekehaar). Again, people specifically chose to give axes *this* particular shape; apparently, this is what axes were supposed to look like in this region.

These two examples of local styles demonstrate that people particularly chose to manufacture *axes* in the research area. This is an interesting observation: although people could cast every possible bronze object when they remelted imported metal locally, they specifically chose to cast the tools they used in their daily activities, tools they must have been very familiar with and that were of great importance in these agrarian communities (Bradley 1990:43-64, Fontijn 2002:82, Wentink 2006:100). These axes were thus firmly anchored in the local communities, both by their shape, the place of production, and their use (cf. Wentink et al. 2011).

Objects with a foreign shape were thus immediately recognisable, since they did not carry the local style. An example of immediately recognisable foreign objects are the Anglo-Irish axes that have already been mentioned several times, occurring alongside local axes in LN II. These Anglo-Irish axes have a very distinct shape and decoration, or 'style', which makes them stand out visually (see Figure 8.3). However, it is not always easy to determine whether an object is foreign. Returning to the case of the Anglo-Irish axes, a small number of axes in Denmark that look similar to the Anglo-Irish axes is actually thought to be locally made, but in the 'Anglo-Irish style', based on metal analyses (these axes are called

Figure 8.3. Two axes dating to LN II with very different shapes. A. Decorated Anglo-Irish axe from Ulstrup, Jutland, Denmark (FHM 140A, 28.8 cm). Photo: National Museum of Denmark, Jesper Weng, used under licence CC-BY-NC-ND, https://samlinger.natmus.dk/do/asset/1477. B. Emmen axe from Emmen, Drenthe, the Netherlands (Drents Museum 1855/I.54, 12 cm). Photo: Marieke Visser.

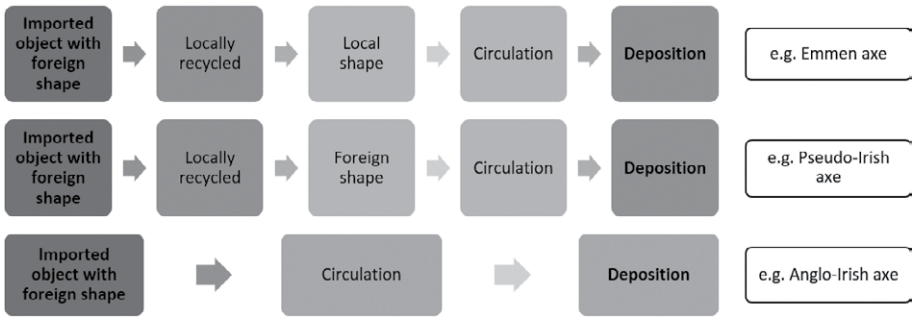

Figure 8.4. The three main cultural biographies that can be observed for the deposited objects.

"pseudo-Irish axes" by Vandkilde, Vandkilde 1996:83, Nørgaard et al. 2019:3-4). They were thus locally made, but in the fashion of the foreign Anglo-Irish axes that were known in the research area.

This example shows that foreign imports influenced the local production of metalwork. Since all metal had to come from 'outside', it is indeed easy to imagine that this influenced the local production of metalwork, *i.e.* the local style, in the research area (Fontijn 2002:30, M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94). Another example of local objects influenced by foreign styles are the Bagterp-Torsted spearheads of period IA, which were probably locally made in Denmark with influences from Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:212-213), and the majority of the Hajdúsámson-Apa swords in Denmark in period IB, which are thought to be locally made after Carpathian models based on their shape, casting technique and decoration (Vandkilde 1996:224-225, T.F. Sørensen 2012:47-48).

However, the same example of the "pseudo-Irish axes" (Vandkilde 1996:83) also places this idea of foreign influences in a different light: axes with an exotic appearance were thus known in the region, and yet people apparently only chose to use these axes as models in a few very rare cases. Instead, people deliberately chose to manufacture 'plain' axes, in the 'local style', such as Emmen axes; most of the metalwork in LN II was made in the local style (see Figure 8.2). Although foreign imports did influence the local production

of metalwork in the research area, people clearly also deliberately chose to manufacture metalwork according to their own ideas on what objects were supposed to look like. It is the interplay between the two that makes it possible to speak of a 'local style': a local style can only exist in contrast to a 'foreign style'.

All in all, three different cultural biographies can be discerned for the deposited objects under study (see Figure 8.4): objects with a foreign shape that were imported from afar, recycled locally into a *local* shape, circulated for some time, and were deposited; objects with a foreign shape that were imported from afar, recycled locally into a *foreign* shape, circulated for some time, and were deposited; and objects with a foreign shape that were imported from afar, circulated for some time, and were deposited. Did these three different biographies have implications for how these objects were deposited? This is the main question for the next section.

8.2.3 Depositions of objects with foreign vs. local shapes

Having explored the import and local production of metalwork and the ideas that people had on what metal objects were supposed to look like above, this section returns to the topic of selective deposition and examine how objects with local and foreign shapes were deposited over the course of time. These conventions are first examined chronologically, after which we will focus on two specific cases: we will return to the example of the Anglo-Irish axes and examine how they were deposited in LN II; and we will focus on hoards with foreign shapes in LN II. It is no coincidence that both of these cases date to LN II: as addressed below, foreign shapes played an important role in depositions in this particular period (see also Chapters 9 and 10).

Going first back to the Funnelbeaker Culture, foreign objects were deposited in specific places in the landscape, and not used as burial gifts. This applies to ceremonial flint axes made of imported flint, copper axes, and Alpine jade axes. In contrast, axes made of local flint were used as burial gifts, as discussed in Chapter 3. Later, in the Single Grave Culture, this situation was reversed: foreign imports, such as flint daggers, were now used as burial gifts to express new ideas of personhood in individual burials, while axes made of local flint were deposited in bogs. These patterns are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

This is the starting point for the situation in the investigated time period, which starts with the Bell Beaker period. Figure 8.5 shows the proportion of foreign and local shapes in burials, hoards, and single object deposits, as well as the proportion of the main object categories that had a foreign or local shape in the four sub periods. A number of interesting patterns stand out.

Starting with LN I, *i.e.* the Bell Beaker period, foreign objects are found in burials, hoards, and single object deposits, but they are most common in burials. These foreign objects in burials consist predominantly of ornaments. In contrast, locally made objects appear to be more common in hoards and single object deposits. Foreign objects were thus used to express ideas of personhood in burials, which is in line with the earlier Single Grave burial ritual. By using foreign objects in burials, people constructed a specific image of the deceased. This image, and what it signifies, is discussed in detail in Chapter 9, which focuses on the role of metalwork in burials. It should be kept in mind that the local production of metalwork was still modest in this early period, as discussed in Section 8.2.1.Moving on to LN II, the local production of metalwork flourished (see also Figure 8.2). Objects with local shapes were mostly deposited singly in this period; this

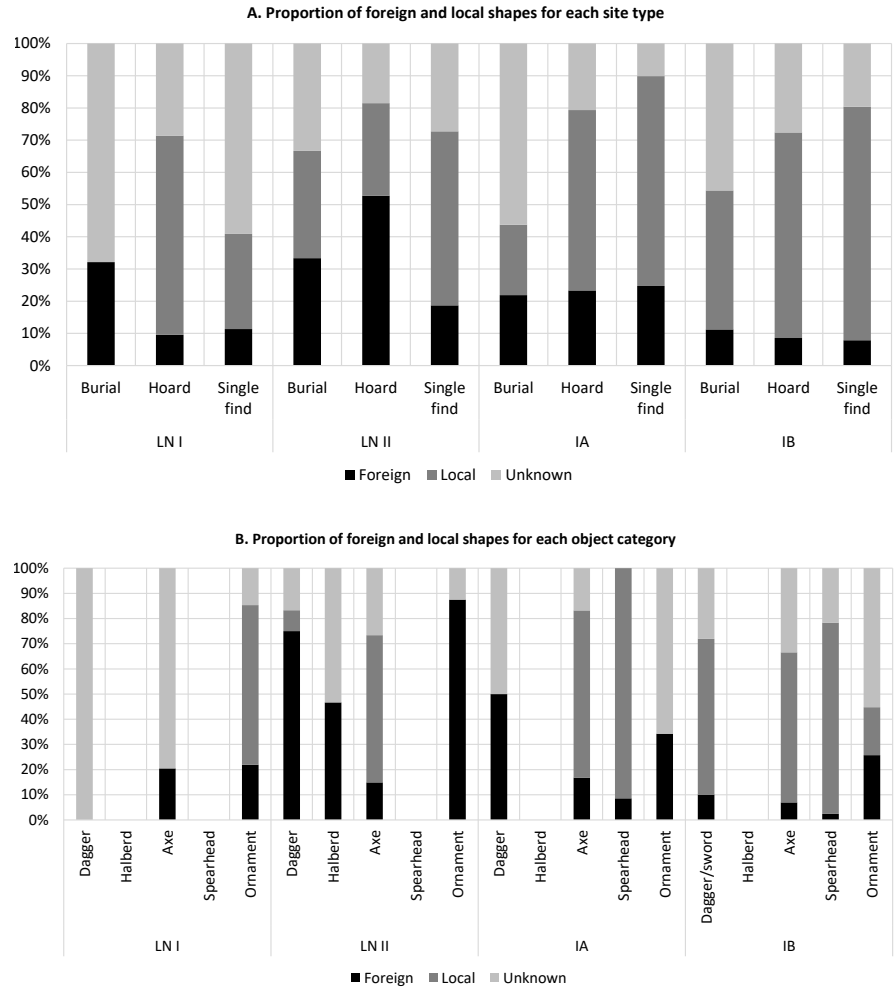

Figure 8.5. The proportion of foreign and local objects (compare with the absolute numbers in Figure 8.3A). A. The proportion of foreign and local metal objects in each site type in the four sub periods. B. The proportion of the main object categories that was foreign and local in the four sub periods.

pattern is mostly influenced by local low-flanged axes, which were mainly deposited singly (see Chapter 4 and Figure 8.1). The pattern that was identified for LN I thus changes in LN II: although foreign shapes are found in all three site types, they are now clearly most common in *hoards* instead of burials. Particularly foreign ornaments played an important role in hoards in this period, as discussed in Chapter 4. Overall, the proportion of foreign shapes is noticeably high in LN II compared to the other sub periods (see Figure 8.2). Since foreign shapes obviously played an important role in depositions in LN II, *even though* the local production flourished, these are examined in more detail after this chronological overview.

In period IA, the proportion of foreign shapes is similar in all three site types. People thus did not have a clear preference for a specific site type when they deposited objects with foreign shapes. Objects with a local shape are most common in single object deposits,

just like in LN II, and this is again influenced by low-flanged axes, which were mostly deposited singly (see Chapter 5 and Figure 8.1).

Lastly, in period IB, foreign shapes are relatively rare. As discussed above, the vast majority of metalwork from this period is thought to be locally made. Foreign imports appear to lose their significance in this period; instead, the *local* style is emphasised. This observation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. Objects with a local shape are most common in single object deposits. Overall, the distribution of foreign and local shapes is similar compared to period IA.

The graphs in Figure 8.5 clearly show that people made different choices in burials, hoards, and single object depositions when it came to foreign and local shapes. For example, objects with a local shape were predominantly chosen for single object depositions, and this pattern is chiefly influenced by axes. These patterns show that these three types of depositional events – burials, hoards, and single object depositions – all had their own social significance, and should be seen as independent events of equal importance. In order to make sense of the practice of selective metalwork deposition, it is thus necessary to study *all three types* of depositional events, as they are all equally important, independent elements in it.

We will now return to the example of Anglo-Irish axes in LN II, which has already been mentioned a number of times in this section. These axes are visually very different from local axes, as established in Section 8.2.2 (see Figure 8.3). How were these exotic-looking axes deposited? Figure 8.6 compares depositions of imported Anglo-Irish axes to depositions of local axes in LN II. A modest number of Anglo-Irish axes have been found in the research area, and they were equally often deposited singly and in hoards. They were thus never used as burial gifts, just like local axes. The same applies to axes that are thought to be locally made in the Anglo-Irish style ("Pseudo-Irish axes", Vandkilde 1996:83-85, see Figure 8.6). The only difference is that Anglo-Irish axes were deposited in hoards more often compared to local axes (cf. Vandkilde 1996:87, see also Chapter 4). These hoards are discussed in more detail below and in Chapter 10. All of these axes were predominantly deposited in wetland contexts. So all in all, foreign Anglo-Irish axes were treated 'as axes': just like local axes, they were not used as burial gifts to express ideas of personhood, but instead deposited in wetlands. However, they were more often deposited in hoards than local axes.

Lastly, we will focus on the role that foreign shapes play in hoards in LN II. We have already seen that foreign shapes are common in hoards in this period (see Figure 8.5). These hoards with foreign shapes constitute a small group of unconventional depositional events, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 7. These hoards – including the Danish Gallemose, Skeldal, and Vigerslev hoards, the Dutch Wageningen hoard, and the south Swedish Pile hoard – contain imports from the various regions with which the local communities were connected, thereby embodying the exchange networks that supplied the region with metal in this period (cf. Vandkilde 2017:143, see Figure 8.7). The four south Scandinavian hoards combine Únětice imports – including ornaments – with local axes, and two of them also contain an Anglo-Irish axe (Gallemose and Pile; Vandkilde 1990, 2017). In a similar way, the Dutch Wageningen hoard combines British and south German Singen elements (Butler 1990:68-71). These "*Mappa Mundi* hoards" (Fontijn 2019:37) connect the local with the foreign, representing a "map of the world" (Fontijn 2019:37, see Figure 8.7) as it was known to the people in the local communities under study.

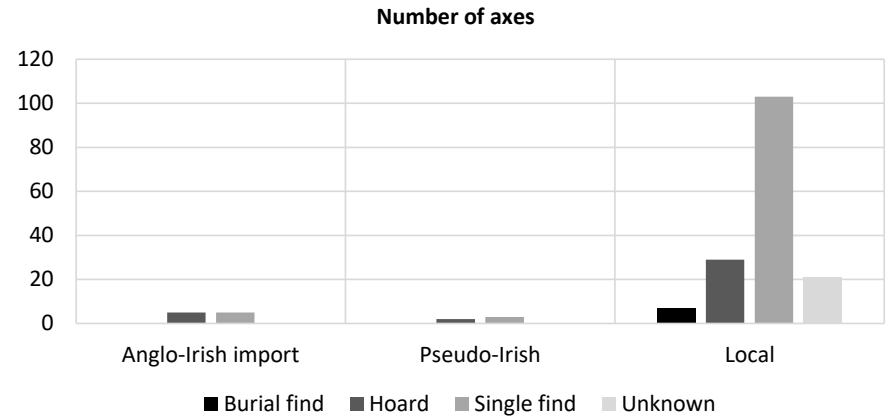

Figure 8.6. Selective deposition of Anglo-Irish axes, locally made axes in the Anglo-Irish tradition ("Pseudo-Irish axes", Vandkilde 1996:83-85), and axes with a local shape in LN II.

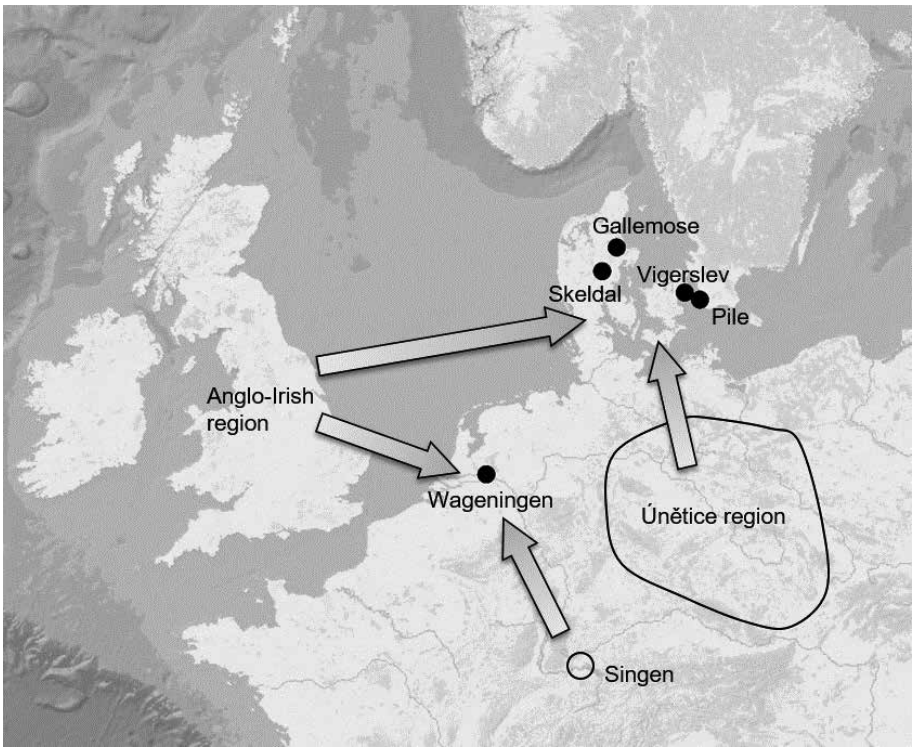

Figure 8.7. The five LN II "*Mappa Mundi* hoards" (term from Fontijn 2019:37) and the foreign influences they represent (based on data in Butler 1990:68-71 and Vandkilde 2017, fig. 103).

Furthermore, these "*Mappa Mundi* hoards" do not only embody the exchange networks that supplied the region with metal (cf. Vandkilde 2017:143); they also appear to emphasise various stages in the metalworking process. They contain (deliberately) broken objects and/or scrap metal probably meant for local recycling (Pile, Skeldal, and Wageningen), enormous amounts of metal (Gallemose), and/or tools that may have been used in metalworking activities (Wageningen). They also contain finished objects, which were probably awaiting further distribution in the region (Wageningen and Pile; Vandkilde 2017:157, Fontijn 2002:73). They embody the 'before and after' of the metalworking process, from the foreign supply of metal to the region, to the process of local recycling, to the finished products ready for further distribution in the region. The Pile hoard is even thought to be deposited at a location where metalworking activities were carried out (Vandkilde 2017:157). The locations of these hoards, which are also unconventional, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 10. These hoards thus embody the whole process of metal import from foreign regions, local recycling of metal, and distribution of finished metalwork in the region. The 'international' aspect of these hoards is also discussed in Chapter 9.

Summing up, people made specific choices to deposit objects with foreign and local shapes singly or in hoards, or use them as burial gifts, and these conventions changed over time. Foreign shapes were either placed in burials to express ideas of personhood, or deposited in unconventional hoards that embodied the international networks in which the local communities were taking part. They became of lesser significance in depositions as the local style became increasingly important over time.

8.2.4 Flint daggers and metal daggers

So far, we have only discussed how *metal* objects with a foreign shape were deposited. But there is another type of object and material that can shed light on the central question of this section: south Scandinavian flint daggers. They were locally made in Denmark and northern Germany, and imported from these regions in the Netherlands. They were deposited in all four sub periods, and the patterns in these depositions are examined in Chapters 3-6. As addressed in Chapter 3, the patterns are particularly striking in LN I. This section therefore focuses on flint daggers (*i.e.* lanceolate flint daggers) and metal daggers dating to LN I, or the Bell Beaker period.

Flint daggers were predominantly used as burial gifts in Denmark and northern Germany throughout the investigated time period (Lomborg 1973, Kühn 1979). It was a common local practice in these regions to use local flint daggers as burial gifts. They were specifically associated with burials, and rarely deposited outside burials. However, in the Netherlands, they were actually rarely used as burial gifts, but frequently deposited in bogs (Bloemers 1968, Beuker & Drenth 2006). This pattern is particularly strong in LN I. In this region, flint daggers were foreign objects, not part of the 'local repertoire', and deposited accordingly. Clearly, objects were treated differently in selective deposition practices based on where they came from. Foreign objects were deposited in specific ways, exactly *because of* their foreign origin.

These lanceolate flint daggers are traditionally suggested to be inspired by the copper tanged daggers that are part of the Bell Beaker 'burial package' (Vandkilde 1996:295, Sarauw 2007a:66). Copper daggers were an important element in Bell Beaker burials, as discussed above and in Chapters 3 and 7. This specific association between daggers and burials is explored in more detail in Chapter 9. More important for this chapter is how these flint

daggers were deposited: if they were indeed inspired by metal daggers, were they then also deposited in the same way as their metal models? In Denmark, copper daggers are virtually non-existent in the Bell Beaker period; in this region, flint daggers are thought to have taken over the role of metal daggers in burials (Sarauw 2007a:66, 71-72). However, it should be noted that Bell Beaker influences are of a different, local character in Denmark, being confined to parts of northern and central Jutland (Vandkilde 1996:295, Sarauw 2007b:29). And lanceolate flint daggers are frequently used as burial gifts in Denmark *outside* this limited Bell Beaker distribution, too (Lomborg 1973). It appears as if using flint daggers as burial gifts is a local practice in this region, which was not simply introduced by and associated with the Bell Beaker burial ritual. Lanceolate flint daggers are firmly anchored in a local tradition. But in the Netherlands, both metal daggers and flint daggers occur; the former were used as burial gifts, while the latter were deposited in bogs. Flint daggers were thus not seen as substitutes for copper daggers in the Netherlands, suitable as burial gifts. Instead, they were deposited in completely opposite ways. Simply interpreting lanceolate flint daggers as copies of Bell Beaker copper daggers appears thus to be a simplification of the situation. Instead, the origins of these daggers play a significant role in how they were deposited. Once again, the origin of objects -the 'otherness' of foreign objects (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94) – is crucial for how they were deposited.

8.3 Persistent vs. new objects

As already briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, and as shown in Figure 8.1, not all of the five main object categories – daggers/swords, halberds, axes, spearheads, and ornaments – were deposited in all four sub periods. Some object types were deposited throughout the investigated time period, and even beyond. Other objects were newly introduced during our time period. These objects were completely new, without predecessors, and they must have been foreign and unfamiliar to people in the research area. These new objects were not only new 'things', but they also represented new *concepts* and *ideas*. Their function, use, and the technique used to produce them was new and different. Did this have implications for how they were deposited? What did people do with these new, unfamiliar objects?

8.3.1 Persistent objects

Some object categories were deposited throughout the 850 years under investigation; they might vary in shape and size, but in essence, they are present in depositions during all four sub periods. Because they are persistent elements in depositions, they will be called *persistent objects*. The best example of such a persistent object is the axe. People deposited metal axes – irrespective of whether they were flat, low-flanged, high-flanged, nick-flanged, or had a shaft hole – in the entire research area and throughout the entire time period investigated in this research (see Figure 8.8). Going further back in time, people already deposited copper, Alpine jade, and flint axes in the Funnelbeaker Culture, and flint axes in the Single Grave Culture, as discussed in Chapter 3. And after the investigated time period, *i.e.* after 1500 BC, metal axes continued to be deposited. Over the course of thousands of years and across vast distances, people deliberately deposited axes, whether they were made of metal or another material.

When examining how axes were deposited, the patterns in axe depositions across time and space are strikingly similar. From the Funnelbeaker Culture to period IB, axes were deposited in remarkably similar ways: people preferred not to use them as burial gifts,

Figure 8.8. Five examples of axes from different sub periods A. Copper flat axe from Ølst, Jutland, Denmark, dating to LN I (ÅM 8105, 10.6 cm). B. Emmen axe from 's Heerenberg, Gelderland, the Netherlands, dating to LN II (RMO e99/6.1, 10.3 cm). C. Nick-flanged axe of Fritzlar type from Lejrskov, Jutland, Denmark, dating to period IB (ÅM 5147, 12.5 cm). D. High-flanged axe of Oldendorf type from Ruinen, Drenthe, the Netherlands, dating to period IB (Drents Museum 1888/XI.2, 8.1 cm). E. Shaft hole axe of Fårdrup type from Vorup Kær, Jutland, Denmark (ÅM 6156, 21 cm). All photos: Marieke Visser.

but they mostly deposited them singly in specific places in the landscape (see Figure 8.1). Only in period IB does this pattern change: in this period, people started to use axes more often as burial gifts, but only specific types of axes, and the majority of the axes were still deposited singly. Burials with metalwork – including axes – are discussed in more detail in Chapter 9. The exact landscape settings that people selected for single axe depositions did change somewhat over time, which is discussed in Chapter 10.

The axe clearly had a special significance from very early on. This was already briefly addressed in this chapter's introduction. This special significance has been attributed to its crucial importance as a tool in agrarian communities (Bradley 1990:43-64, Fontijn 2002:82, Wentink 2006:100). However, the importance of the axe did not only lie in its value as a tool, since axes could also be used as weapons, and finds of non-utilitarian axes occur both in and beyond the research area; axes clearly had a broader significance (Bradley 1990:57, Fontijn 2002:82, Wentink 2006:100-101). Non-utilitarian axes occur in the research area in chronologically distant periods as the Funnelbeaker Culture (see Chapter 3) and period IB (see Chapter 6). These axes probably served as prestige items or had display functions (Klassen 2000:278-283, Vandkilde 1996:114-117, 124-125). It was perhaps exactly this broader significance that made axes so 'relatable' and 'flexible' through time and space (Fontijn 2002:82), which is why they were persistent elements in selective deposition.

8.3.2 New objects

In contrast to persistent objects, some object categories were newly introduced in this period, without any predecessors. Two examples of new objects emerging between 2350-1500 BC are halberds and spearheads (see Figure 8.1, Figure 4.7, Figure 8.9). They were new in the entire research area. Halberds probably emerged at the end of LN I in the research area (Butler 1990:71, Horn 2014:123, Vandkilde 1996:193-199) but date primarily to LN II, after which they disappear from the archaeological record (Fontijn 2002:71, O'Flaherty 2002:403-405), as discussed in Chapter 4. Bronze spearheads emerged in period IA (Jacob-Friesen 1967:105-106, Lorenz 2013:245, Vandkilde 1996:212). They may have reached Central Europe, and from there southern Scandinavia, from the Carpathian Basin (Vandkilde 2014b:609), as discussed in Chapter 5. They quickly became abundant in Denmark, and continued to be abundant in period IB (see Figure 8.9), and later on in the Bronze Age. They are in comparison rare in northern Germany and the Netherlands.

Both halberds and spearheads represented new concepts, functions and techniques. A halberd is a blade mounted at a right angle on a wooden haft, as demonstrated by depictions of halberds in rock art (O'Flaherty 2002:5), for example in Scandinavia. Halberds did not have any metal predecessors, parallels, or successors in terms of this design (Fontijn 2002:71, O'Flaherty 2002:403-405). The exact function of halberds is debated, as discussed in Chapter 4: some interpret them as ceremonial objects (*e.g.* Butler 1963:11, Fontijn 2002:71), while others argue that halberds were used in combat as weapons (*e.g.* Horn 2014, Horn 2017). Bronze spearheads also represented a new concept and function: they were socketed, which required a different, new casting technique. They were in fact the first socketed metal object in the research area (Vandkilde 2014b:617). They have been called "the most important martial innovation of the seventeenth century BC" (Vandkilde 2014b:617). They indeed had a specific function: they were specifically used as weapons (Horn 2013:18, 21-23, and catalogue), although they may also have been used in hunting (Fontijn 2002:99), as was already briefly discussed in this chapter's introduction.

When examining how halberds and spearheads were deposited in the periods in which they were introduced, a striking similarity can be observed: they were not used as burial gifts, but deposited in specific places in the landscape (see Figure 8.1 and Figure 8.10). Although the exact way in which they were deposited differs – halberds were deposited singly in wet contexts in LN II, while spearheads were deposited in hoards in period IA, relatively often in dry contexts – they do have in common that they were not included in burials. These patterns suggest that new objects could *not* be buried with an individual. They could not be 'owned' by an individual in death. Instead, they had to be deposited *outside* the individual domain.

Strikingly, the same also applies to Hajdúsámson-Apa swords, which are arguably the earliest real swords in the research area, emerging at the beginning of period IB (Vandkilde 1996:224-225). "Arguably", because the distinction between swords and daggers is debated and often unclear, as discussed in Chapter 6. They are usually distinguished from each other based on their length, with 30 cm sometimes used as benchmark (*e.g.* Vandkilde 1996:239). But this definition is often not given in the literature, and the terms 'dagger' and 'sword' are often used interchangeably. This problem becomes particularly relevant in period IB, when blades with lengths between 25 and 60 cm occur (see Chapter 6). Period IB

Figure 8.9. Spearhead, probably type Bagterp, found near Skanderup, Jutland, Denmark, dating to period IB (ÅM 7063, 10 cm). Photo: Marieke Visser. Scale 1:1.

is the first period in which 'real swords' are thought to emerge, and Hajdúsámson-Apa swords are the earliest among them. However, the patterns in sword depositions support the idea that 'real' swords were new in this period: Hajdúsámson-Apa swords were not used as burial gifts (see Figure 8.10), which is in line with the observed trend for new objects, suggesting that these swords were indeed seen as new.

It does not appear to have mattered whether these new objects were foreign imports or locally made: halberds may have been locally made in Denmark, but some of them are thought to be imports (Vandkilde 1996:197-199); period IA spearheads were probably locally made in Denmark, with influences from Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:212-213); and as discussed above, the majority of the Hajdúsámson-Apa swords are thought to be locally made in Denmark after Carpathian models, but a few of them are thought to be imports from the Carpathian Basin (Vandkilde 1996:224-225, T. F. Sørensen 2012:47-48). Even though these objects may have been locally made after foreign models, they were new in the local 'metalwork repertoire' of the time. For that reason, they could not be used as burial gifts.

However, after some time had passed since the introduction of these new objects, they *could* be buried with the dead. Spearheads were relatively often used as burial gifts in period IB, while this never happened in period IA (see Figure 8.10). Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle swords, which date to the later period IB and are thus somewhat later than Hajdúsámson-Apa swords, were predominantly used as burial gifts (see Figure 8.10). Apparently, after new objects had become incorporated into the local repertoire, they could be used as burial gifts. After some time, these new objects apparently became 'neutralised', or 'localised', and then it was acceptable to bury them with an individual. Unfamiliar, new objects could *not* be placed in burials, but local, familiar objects *could*. Perhaps this 'neutralisation' or 'localisation' was accomplished by depositing new, unfamiliar objects in specific places in the landscape. Before they could be used as burial gifts and be associated with an individual, they had to be 'localised'. They had to go through a transition from new, unfamiliar object to local, familiar object in order to be allowed in burials where they were used to construct an image of the dead (see Chapter 9). It should be noted that for halberds, this transition can unfortunately not be observed: they were never used as burial gifts on a structural basis in the research area. Instead, they disappear from the archaeological record after LN II.

In short, when new objects, such as spearheads, reached the research area, they were new and unfamiliar; they deviated from the local repertoire of metalwork that people were familiar with. But after some time had passed, they were not unfamiliar

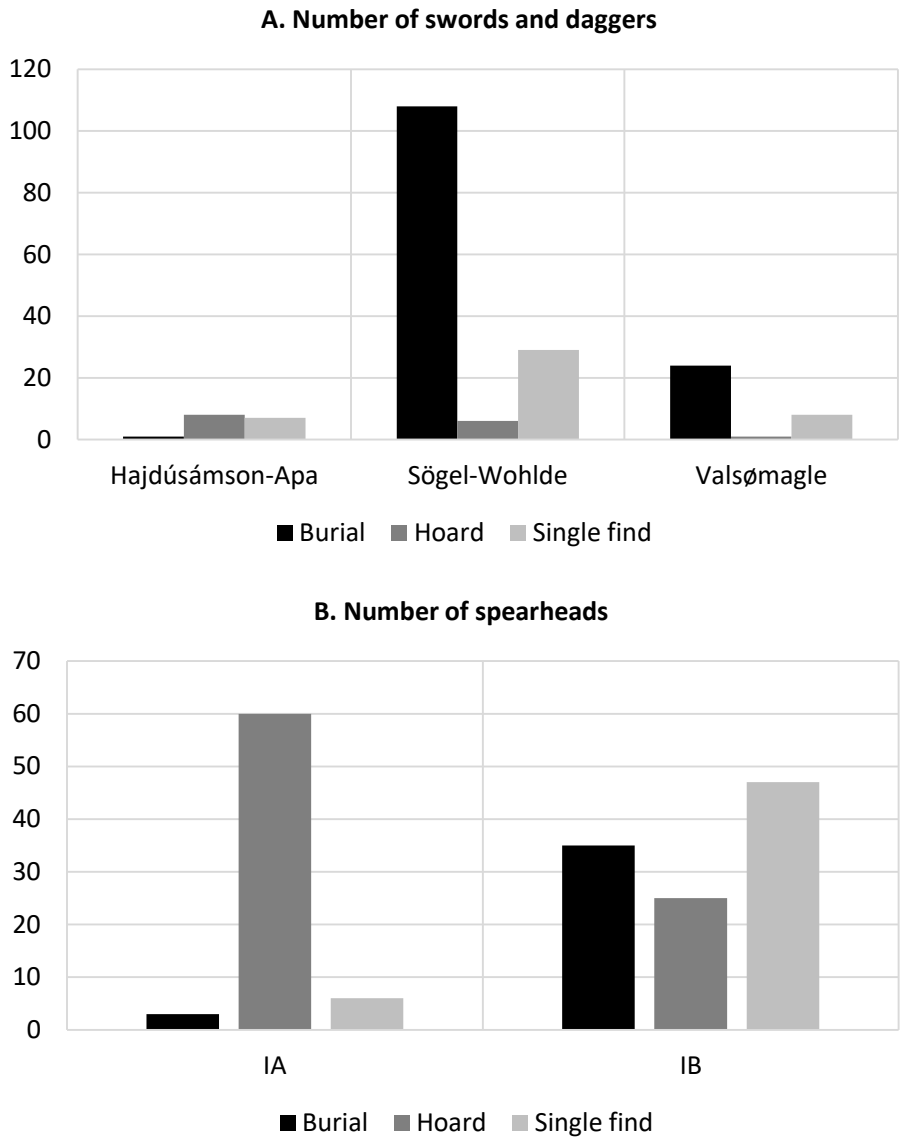

Figure 8.10. A. The number of Hajdúsámson-Apa, Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle swords and daggers in each site type in period IB. B. The number of spearheads in each site type in period IA and IB.

anymore; they became familiar and part of the local repertoire. In both situations, people deposited them in the 'right' way. In other words, it was the 'otherness' of new objects that caused them to be treated in specific ways, different from how familiar objects were treated. Since Sørensen's work has shown that the 'otherness' of foreign objects had implications for how they were used and treated (M. L. S. Sørensen 1987:94), as discussed in Section 8.2, we may also apply this concept to the 'otherness' of *new* objects, which were in fact also introduced from elsewhere. Because these new objects were so unfamiliar and different from what people were used to in their daily lives, they had to be treated in special ways.

Summing up, people did specific things with new, unfamiliar objects, including halberds, spearheads, and the earliest swords. These objects were new in the local repertoire, and they represented new ideas, concepts, and functions. Therefore, they had to be treated in special ways. Only after some time had passed did they become familiar and part of the local repertoire, and then they could be used as burial gifts.

8.4 The use lives of objects

This section focuses on one last crucial element in the deposited objects' cultural biographies: how they were used. The use of an object is an important element in its cultural biography (Kopytoff 1986:66-67). This is not necessarily a static element; how an object is used can change during its life (Kopytoff 1986:67). In this context, the term *use life* is also used. At some point, an object may reach the end of its usefulness, upon which its life might be 'ended' in some way (Kopytoff 1986:67). As already discussed previously, the majority of the metalwork in prehistory was probably recycled (Fontijn 2002:33, 215, Wiseman 2017). When a bronze object became useless – for example an axe that was damaged beyond repair, or that could not be resharpened anymore – it was most probably remelted into a new, useful object; this is one of the main advantages of the material metal, an advantage that distinguishes it from for example flint. However, the objects we are studying were not recycled, but they were *deposited*.

As we have seen in this chapter's introduction, the function of an object had important implications for how it was deposited. An axe and a spearhead had very different functions, and that is why they were perceived as different objects in prehistory, and consequently deposited in different ways. It has been noted that many deposited metal objects show signs of having been used (Fontijn 2002:20). Indeed, we have already seen that the majority of the deposited objects we are studying are axes, which were first and foremost of crucial importance as *tools*, as discussed above. It thus appears as if objects that ended up in depositions frequently had a use life prior to deposition. However, this does not apply to all deposited objects: as we saw in the introduction, Worsaae already observed in the 19th century that deposited bronze objects frequently had not been used (Worsaae 1866). Did *how* objects were used have implications for how they were *deposited*? This is the main question for this section.

It should be noted that a detailed use wear analysis has not been carried out in this research, as explained in Chapter 2. However, based on results of use wear analyses published by various authors, a number of general statements can be made for swords and spearheads. The presence or absence of use wear on swords from burials dating to periods II and III of the Nordic Bronze Age has been claimed to reflect the social rank of the deceased (Kristiansen 1984:203, 2002:323-325). Period IB swords mostly appear to have been functional weapons (Boas & Rasmussen 2006, Horn 2013, Melheim & Horn 2014), and the majority of them have been found in burials, as we have seen in Chapter 6. Burials with swords and what they signify is discussed in detail in Chapter 9. Spearheads are also thought to have been functional weapons, used in hand-to-hand combat in a fencing-like type of fighting (Horn 2013:18, 21-23). Depositions of spearheads in periods IA and IB were examined in detail in chapters 5 and 6.

However, the axes from Denmark have been subject of a thorough and detailed use wear analysis carried out by Vandkilde (1996). Based on the results of this analysis, a number of highly interesting conclusions can be drawn as to the connection between the

axes' use and deposition. These conclusions can to some extent be compared to the finds from the rest of the research area. Use wear has in some cases been recorded for the Dutch axes (Butler 1995/96), although not systematically. The axes from northern Germany have not been analysed (see also Chapter 2). The next section focuses on the axes' use lives and their implications for how the axes were deposited.

8.4.1 Axes: use and deposition

Prior to LN I, in the Funnelbeaker Culture, metal axes were probably not used as functional tools, but rather as display items (Klassen 2000:278-283), as discussed in Chapter 3. Klassen actually argues that they perhaps should not be called 'axes', as they were not axes in the modern sense of the word, but rather copper images *representing* axes (Klassen 2000:281). But from LN I, metal axes were intended and used as functional tools. Although they may not necessarily have been very effective as tools, many of the Danish axes do appear to have been used in LN I (Vandkilde 1996:268). From LN II on, metal axes were cold worked on the cutting edge, which increased their hardness, and thus their effectiveness as tools (Vandkilde 1996:268, cf. Kuijpers 2018:118). The majority of these Danish LN II axes is thought to have been used (Vandkilde 1996, figs. 42-43), as discussed in Chapter 4. The same applies to the Danish period IA axes: they are cold worked on the cutting edge, and the majority of them are used (Vandkilde 1996:269, and figs. 42-43, see Chapter 5). In these three sub periods – LN I, LN II, and period IA – all axes are thus thought to have been used in similar degrees, and they were also deposited similarly: they were mostly deposited singly outside burials. This persistent pattern is discussed in more detail in Section 8.3.

However, from period IB, this rather uniform pattern changes, as discussed in Chapter 6. In this period, a division emerges among the high-flanged axes in Denmark between utilitarian and display axes (Figure 8.11). On the one hand, we have Hüsby and Mägerkingen-Valsømagle axes, which were probably mostly *not* used practically, but instead functioned as display items (Vandkilde 1996:114-117, 124-125). These were long and slender axes, sometimes with an extremely rounded cutting edge, and many of them are decorated (see Figure 8.11). These axes were primarily used as burial gifts. On the other hand, we have Oldendorf axes which were heavily used (Vandkilde 1996:119-120). This actually also applies to the Dutch Oldendorf axes: many of them show signs of heavy use and resharpening (Butler 1995/96:204). These signs of heavy resharpening ('straight grinding' and 'pouches' in Butler's terms) demonstrate that these axes were heavy duty work axes (Butler 1995/96:204). When examining the tables in Laux's *Die Äxte und Beile in Niedersachsen I* (2000), these signs are also clearly recognisable on many of the north German Oldendorf axes. Oldendorf axes were small and plain compared to display axes (see Figure 8.11). They were preferably deposited outside burials, mostly singly, but sometimes in hoards, and this again applies to the entire research area (see Chapter 6). In fact, no Oldendorf axes have been found in burials in the Netherlands at all. Here we can thus clearly discern two different cultural biographies of axes, which ended in different ways of deposition. How these axes were used (or *not* used) did thus have important implications for how they were deposited.

In addition to high-flanged axes, nick-flanged axes and shaft hole axes were also deposited in period IB, as examined in detail in Chapter 6. Nick-flanged axes in

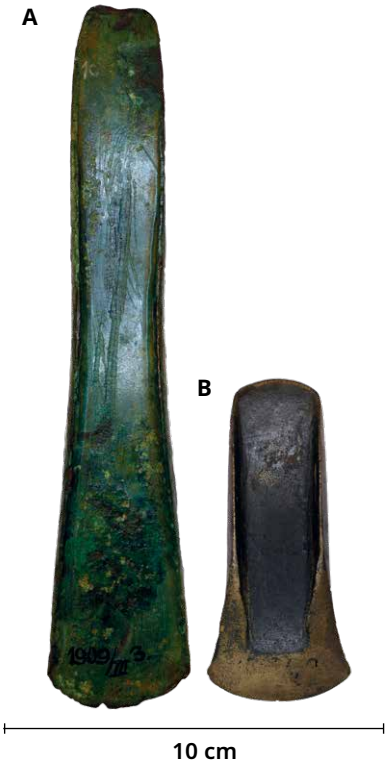

Figure 8.11. Display and work axe from period IB. A. Display axe of Mägerkingen-Valsømagle type (Odoorn/Exloo, Drenthe, the Netherlands, Drents Museum 1909/III.3, 18.2 cm). B. Heavily resharpened work axe of Oldendorf type (Ruinen, Drenthe, the Netherlands, Drents Museum 1888/XI.2, 8.1 cm). Photos: Marieke Visser. Scale 1:2.

Denmark do not appear to have been heavily used; instead they may have had a display function (Vandkilde 1996:131). These axes were primarily used as burial gifts, not only in Denmark, but also in northern Germany; they are a typical object in Sögel-Wohlde burials. These burials are discussed in detail in Chapter 9. Shaft hole axes of Fårdrup type, which are primarily a south Scandinavian phenomenon, are thought to have been unsuitable for practical use since they are extremely heavy (Malmer 1989:22). Instead, they are thought to represent a specific value in metal: it was likely their weight that was of importance, not their function as axes (Malmer 1989:22). These heavy axes were not used as burial gifts, but deposited singly or in hoards (see Chapter 6). A small number of these axes has also been found in northern Germany, where they were also deposited singly (see Chapter 6).

Summing up, prior to period IB, all axes apparently had similar uses, and they were also deposited similarly. However, this changes in period IB, when we see a separation among the axes: display axes (high-flanged and nick-flanged axes) were used as burial gifts, utilitarian work axes were deposited outside burials, and heavy, non-utilitarian shaft hole axes were also deposited outside burials (see Figure 8.12). These patterns are in fact similar across the research area: these "biographical expectations" (Kopytoff 1986:67) were thus shared across regions. In period IB, the use lives of axes were of vital importance for how they ended their lives in depositions.

8.5 Conclusion

After examining the conventions behind selective metalwork deposition – what people *did* with metal objects – this conclusion returns to the topic of the objects' cultural biographies. We know how the objects we study ended their lives: they were deliberately

Figure 8.12. Separation between display axes in burials, and utilitarian axes as well as shaft hole axes in single deposits or hoards in period IB (axes not depicted to scale). Photos: Marieke Visser.

deposited. But some were used as burial gifts, while others were deposited in hoards, and other objects were deposited singly. Within the group of objects for which the right ending was to be deposited, there are thus various specific biographies. In the previous sections, we have seen that a crucial factor determining how objects were deposited were the objects themselves, and their functions: daggers were deposited in specific ways, while spearheads were deposited in another, and axes in yet another way. It is clear that daggers, axes, and spearheads were perceived differently by the people in the distant time periods we are studying, and consequently also deposited differently, in ways that were deemed appropriate for them at that point in time; here we see Kopytoff's idea of "biographical expectations" at work (Kopytoff 1986:67). However, these conventions did change over time, at least for some objects. This is for example the case with metal daggers, which 'switched' between contexts: from burials, to deposits, and back to burials again. We have seen that there is a logic behind these shifts and changes.

The origins of the metal objects that people deposited played an important role. When objects were locally recycled, people manufactured objects in their 'local style', which was visually different from the imported objects with their foreign style. Although the import of foreign objects did influence the local production, it is also evident that for the most part, people deliberately chose to manufacture objects in their own style, based on their culturally influenced ideas on what objects were supposed to look like. As a result, foreign imports and local objects can be recognised based on their shape and decoration, with the visually distinctive Anglo-Irish axes deposited in LN II as a good example.

When people deposited these visually different foreign and local objects, they selected specific contexts for them. The conventions behind these choices changed over time, but one pattern is strikingly constant: locally made axes were consistently deposited singly outside burials. The role of foreign objects in burials and hoards changed over time: in LN I, foreign objects were used as burial gifts in the construction of personhood; but in LN II, they were deposited in special, unconventional hoards embodying the exchange networks that connected the research area with the rest of Europe and that supplied the region with metal. Overall, there is a trend towards a predominance of locally made

metalwork: in period IB, the vast majority of the deposited metal objects was locally made in the research area. Imports became of lesser significance towards the end of our investigated time period.

Another reason for shifts in the conventions behind selective deposition are the emergence and subsequent incorporation of new objects. When objects were newly introduced to the regions we are studying, they represented new concepts, functions, and techniques. They were foreign and unfamiliar to people, and therefore they had to be deposited in specific ways that were appropriate for their 'differentness'. When these new objects, such as spearheads and halberds, had been introduced, they could not be buried with an individual, but they had to be deposited outside burials, either in hoards or singly. Only after some time had passed, did they become familiar and part of the local repertoire, after which they *could* be used as burial gifts, as shown by spearheads and swords in burials in period IB. In contrast, persistent objects such as axes were deposited in largely similar ways throughout the investigated time period.

Lastly, the objects' use lives are another important element in their cultural biographies, influencing how they were deposited. Axes illustrate this connection between use and deposition most clearly. Prior to period IB, all axes were essentially used in similar ways, and also deposited similarly. But in period IB, we see a separation between display axes that were used as burial gifts, work axes that were deposited outside burials, and heavy shaft hole axes probably representing a certain value in metal that were also deposited outside burials. Depending on how an object was used, it was thus deposited in a specific way, and this particularly applies to axes. However, this connection between use and deposition is not clear for all object categories.

Summing up, over the course of the 850 years investigated in this study, people deposited metal objects in ways that were 'appropriate' for these objects. Based on an object's function and use, its origins, and its (un)familiarity, it was supposed to be deposited in a specific way, following people's "biographical expectations" of such an object (Kopytoff 1986:67). As an illustration, let us take a look at the cultural biographies of two objects, and follow their 'lives' until they were deposited.

Firstly, let us examine a spearhead in Denmark in period IA. In this period, it was a new object, an innovation, representing new functions and concepts. It was probably locally made in Denmark with Central European influences, and its socket represented a new, different casting technique. It was designed for a specific purpose: it was probably used in fighting. This spearhead was supposed to end its life in this region by being deposited in a hoard; this was the 'right ending' for it. It could not be used as a burial gift; this did not follow the "biographical expectations" (Kopytoff 1986:67) that people had of this particular object.

As another example, let us take a look at a low-flanged axe in LN II. This was a familiar object that people were used to work with in their daily lives. They used it as a tool in their daily activities, and it was most likely locally made in the local style. It was indeed a familiar, every-day object, deeply anchored in the local community. And it was supposed to end its life by being deposited singly in a wetland, in the same way as many other similar-looking axes ended their lives.

Summing up, by studying the cultural biographies of objects, it is thus possible to acquire an understanding of *what* people did when they deposited objects, and *why* they deposited *these* objects in *this* particular way. Although every depositional act may have

had its own, individual narrative, there clearly was an overarching idea on how objects were supposed to be treated, and on how people were supposed to act. This idea was culturally and supra-regionally shared, and we are now beginning to catch a glimpse of it. We have identified a number of elements that played an important role in this idea, such as whether objects had a local or foreign shape. People expressed their ideas on their place in the world by depositing objects in a particular way, which was not necessarily communicated between regions, but rather self-evident across regions (Fontijn 2019:29-33). By studying the cultural biographies of objects, we can indeed come a little bit closer to the people in the distant periods we are studying.

The next chapter focuses on another aspect of the human actions we are studying: on the metal objects that people selected to bury with the dead, and what these burials with metalwork signify.