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.

9

Burying things with the dead: creating an image

Death is an event that has a dramatic impact on people's lives. Dealing with the death of relatives and members of the community – emotionally and practically – is universally a fundamental part of life. Although we cannot know which emotional reactions people had in prehistory when a member of their family or community died (Stutz & Tarlow 2013:7), we *can* study what people *did* when someone had passed away. By studying how people buried their dead, we can acquire an understanding of the ideas they had concerning death, life, and society (Stutz & Tarlow 2013:5). People had specific ideas on how a burial was supposed to be constructed and how a deceased was supposed to be buried, and by examining burials from different regions these ideas can be reconstructed (Bourgeois & Kroon 2017). Burials were probably highly social events in which people participated in various ways, including as audience (Goldhahn 2006, Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006, Stutz & Tarlow 2013, Treherne 1995). We can take a look at funerals in our modern times as a parallel: although they are organised on the occasion of a person's death, the most important aspect is that people *attend* the funeral. Against this background of funerals as social events, this chapter focuses specifically on the role that *metal* played in the burial ritual between 2350-1500 BC.

Throughout the 850 years under investigation, people buried the dead with metal objects. Although the practice fluctuates – as we will see in Section 9.3 – people consistently made choices concerning which objects they used as burial gifts, and which objects they did not include in burials. In period IB, for example, Hajdúsámson-Apa swords were not used as burial gifts, while Sögel-Wohlde swords were frequently placed in burials (see also Chapter 8). Axes are another example: they were consistently *not* used as burial gifts through time, even though they were probably the most common and widely distributed type of metal object. Most people probably owned a bronze axe in the agrarian communities we are studying, as suggested by finds from the Late Bronze Age settlement of Must Farm. At Must Farm, the largest collection of domestic metalwork – including a large number of axes – from Late Bronze Age Britain has been found, providing a fascinating insight into the metalwork that would have been present at a Bronze Age settlement (Knight et al. 2019). Nevertheless, axes were apparently *not* supposed to be placed in burials. This pattern only changes somewhat in period IB, when people used specific types of axes as burial gifts (see Chapter 8, and Section 9.6 below).

There were thus specific ideas on what a burial equipment was supposed to look like, and which metal objects were considered appropriate as burial gifts. The concept of the objects' cultural biographies, discussed in detail in Chapter 8, is relevant here: for some objects, the right ending was to be buried with the dead, while for other objects, this was *not* the right ending. There were thus conventions behind the selection of metal objects for burials, and these changed over time, as already alluded to above. Therefore, metalwork in burials is an important piece of the puzzle of selective metalwork deposition; studying these conventions contributes to our understanding of the logic behind this practice. The following sections examine these conventions, but first, we will pause for a moment and explore what it actually *meant* in social terms to bury someone with metalwork.

9.1 Barrows and metalwork: social inequality?

It is important to note that in the periods under study, far from every person was buried with metalwork. Only a minor proportion of the dead was buried with metal items, although the frequency changed over time, which we will see below (and see Figure 9.2). In our time period, the frequency peaked in period IB, and it further increased in period II of the Nordic Bronze Age (Vandkilde 2014b:208). Of the burials with metalwork that were recorded in the database, the vast majority (83%) are in barrows. In contrast, only 5% of the burials are flat graves. For obvious reasons, barrows have attracted a great deal of attention since the early days of archaeology, and they are therefore much more frequently excavated than flat graves (cf. Bourgeois 2013:3). Nevertheless, there appears to be an association between burying the dead in barrows and equipping them with metalwork, and this applies to all four sub periods.

The relative barrow building frequency and the estimated proportion of the population that was buried in barrows in Denmark in the Early Bronze Age was calculated by Holst (2013:42-113). These calculations show that at the most, 20% of the population were buried in barrows, and the relative barrow building frequency per year was surprisingly low (Holst 2013:42-113). Also for the Netherlands, the frequency of barrow construction is estimated to have been low: on average, one barrow is thought to have been constructed every couple of years in the central and southern part of the Netherlands throughout prehistory (Bourgeois 2013:177-178). This means that constructing a barrow was a special event, and only a few people were selected to be buried in a barrow (Bourgeois 2013:198). Although the exact numbers can be debated (Holst 2013:42-113), it is thus beyond doubt that only a small proportion of the population was buried in barrows. And in their turn, only a small proportion of these barrows contained metalwork. In fact, in the Netherlands, non-perishable burial gifts were rarely placed in burials in the EBA, and many MBA barrows do not contain any burial gifts at all (Bourgeois 2013:75, 164-165). So all in all, only a very small fraction of the population was buried with metal objects.

This uneven distribution of metal in burials has been interpreted as reflecting social inequality, particularly towards the later part of the investigated time period (Kristiansen 1989, Vandkilde 1996:276). The dead that were buried with metal objects are thought to have been of higher social rank than those that were buried without (Kristiansen 1989, Vandkilde 1996:294). Since metal is scarce in the research area, it has been stated that burying every individual with metal was too "expensive" (Kristiansen 1989:21, Vandkilde 1996:267-168). Occasionally depositing metalwork singly or in hoards is argued to have been a "cheaper" option, since these depositions were not associated with only one person, and happened less frequently than burials (Kristiansen 1989:21, Vandkilde 1996:267-268).

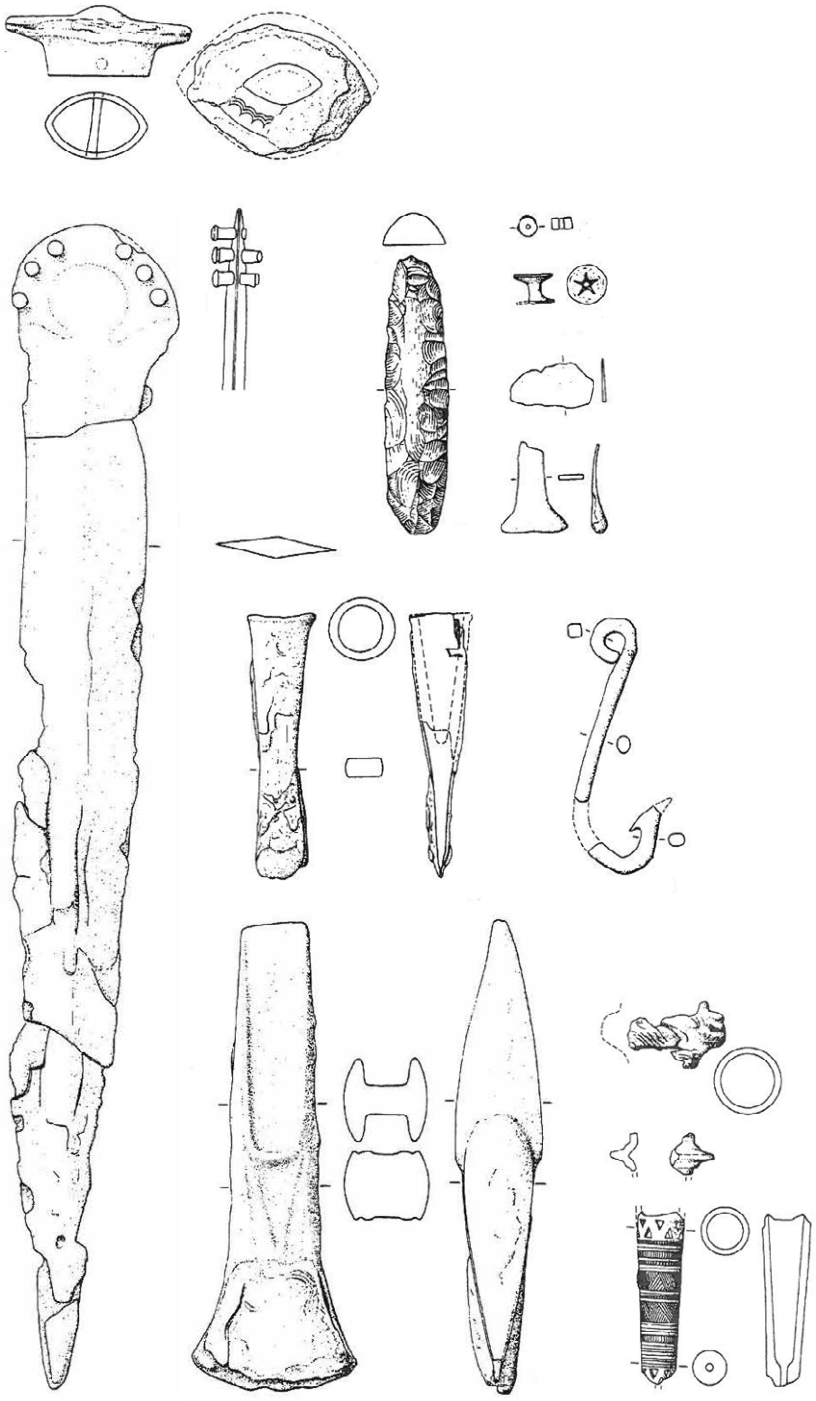

Figure 9.1. 'Rich' burial from Strandtved, Funen, dating to period IB and containing a Valsømagle sword, palstave, socketed chisel, pointed weapon, bronze double button, tweezers, razor, fish hook, strike-a-light, and spiral (after A&K 2144).

A similar interpretation is traditionally suggested for burials in barrows: they are thought to reflect a higher social status (*e.g.* Kristiansen 1999). However, research on barrows in the Netherlands has shown that almost all burials with bronze weapons from barrow contexts dating to period IB were dug into already existing barrows (Bourgeois 2013:165). In fact, from Late Neolithic B on, people increasingly started to reuse existing barrows, and this practice exploded in the MBA (Bourgeois 2013:165-176). Many Bronze Age barrows thus did not just contain one burial, but multiple burials, and many of them were actually constructed with this intention (Bourgeois 2013:170-171). If burials in barrows do in fact reflect a particular social status, they reflect the social status of multiple individuals, not just of one high-ranked 'leader'.

The selection of metal objects in burials itself has also been interpreted as an indication of social rank (Kristiansen 1984, 1989, 2002). For example, swords in burials are thought to indicate that the deceased belonged to a 'warrior elite' (Kristiansen 1984:203, 1989:177, Treherne 1995, Vandkilde 1996, 2006, 2014b, see Figure 9.1). This idea is discussed in detail in Section 9.6. And based on the presence or absence of use wear on swords from periods II and III of the Nordic Bronze Age, it is thought that these swords belonged to warriors or chiefly commanders, respectively (Kristiansen 1984:203, 2002:323-325). Similarly, metal-hilted swords are thought to indicate a higher status than organic-hilted swords in periods II and III (Kristiansen 1984:203). The number of (metal) objects in burials has also been interpreted as signifying social status. Some burials are very 'rich', such as the Danish Strandtved burial dating to period IB (see Figure 9.1), while others *e.g.* 'only' contain a bronze ornament.

However, just like the example of the barrow burials discussed above, this hierarchical focus on burials with metalwork has also been contested (*e.g.* Fokkens 1999:39, Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006). Instead of focusing on the social status of the deceased that metal objects in burials might indicate, we can also investigate the *image* of the deceased that was created by placing these particular objects in a grave. This is the focus of the following sections.

9.2 Creating an image of the dead: a case study

By burying a dead person with specific objects – in our case specific *metal* objects – a certain image of the dead was created and presented. This section investigates this image and what it signifies, using the Bell Beaker burial practice as an example and case study. This was the first time that metalwork was 'allowed' in burials, and people consistently chose specific metal objects to use as burial gifts, as discussed in Chapter 3. The Bell Beaker burial ritual is therefore used to explore and explain what people actually *did*. This analysis is also be applied to the three subsequent sub periods later on in this chapter.

It should be noted that within the research area, Bell Beaker burials with metal have primarily been found in the Netherlands (Butler & Van der Waals 1966/67); metal is rare in Bell Beaker burials in northern Germany (Lanting 2007/2008:88, Willroth 1996:18) and Bell Beaker influences in Denmark are limited to northern and central Jutland, and of a local character (Sarauw 2007b:29 and fig. 18, Vandkilde 2005a:2). However, as discussed in Chapter 3, distant parts of the research area were connected by Bell Beaker routes, and it is thought that metal reached the research area through these routes (Vandkilde 2005a:30, 1996:295). The entire research area was thus part of the pan-European Bell

Beaker region, an area that spans from the Iberian Peninsula to the British Isles and Germany (Müller 2009:77, fig. 79).

In the Bell Beaker period, men were buried individually with a copper dagger (in Jutland with a flint dagger, Sarauw 2007a:66), a Bell Beaker, flint arrowheads, a wrist guard, amber beads and pendants, gold ornaments, and/or stone tools. Although there is some variation in the objects that people included in male burials, it is clear that people time and again made specific choices, selecting objects from the 'Bell Beaker burial repertoire'. This Bell Beaker burial repertoire is discussed and visualised using network analysis in Chapter 3. The objects that people selected were often placed in specific positions in the grave (*e.g.* Fokkens et al. 2008:116), and people also selected a specific position for the body: men were buried on their left side in a crouched position in this period, while women were buried on their right side (Vander Linden 2006:39, 46).

This Bell Beaker burial ritual has its roots in the new burial ritual that was introduced in the preceding Corded Ware complex. In this period, a supra-regionally shared burial ritual emerged, in which the dead were buried individually in single graves, in a specific position and with specific objects (Bourgeois & Kroon 2017). As discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, these objects included battle axes, imported flint daggers, and imported flint axes (see also Chapter 3). Objects from various regions, including daggers, were used in Single Graves in order to construct a specific image of the deceased.

Returning to the Bell Beaker period, there was thus a specific idea on what a man was supposed to look like in death: he was supposed to lie on his left side in a crouched position in a grave, and he was supposed to be accompanied by one or more (metal) objects from a specific burial repertoire, which were placed in specific positions in the grave. Comparing this to burials in our modern times, we can recognise parallels to this idea: we bury a deceased person in an extended position, lying on their back in a coffin, and in their nicest clothes, even though this is not always what the person dressed like when they were alive. The latter is an important notion: we construct an image of the deceased that does not necessarily match their appearance during their lives. This notion should also be applied to the prehistoric burials under study. Although it has been said many times before, the archaeological cliché *the dead do not bury themselves* again proves to be relevant: burials do not necessarily reflect the actual lives of the deceased. Instead, it is the people that organise the burial who decide on the image of the deceased that is constructed, and this image may or may not match reality (Härke 1994:32). Yet it is precisely this *image* that we can study in archaeology.

By dressing and adorning the dead in a specific way in Bell Beaker burials, a specific image of the dead was thus constructed and conveyed by those arranging the burial. Such a stereotyped, 'codified' equipment made the image of the deceased that was presented during the funeral ceremony instantly recognisable to the audience (Treherne 1995:120-123). Such a 'codified' burial equipment already existed in the Corded Ware complex (Bourgeois & Kroon 2017). This image is thought to have indicated a specific *social role*, *i.e.* a specific kind of *personhood* (Fontijn 2002:81). It is thought that social identities can be detected in the personal appearance that is created by placing certain items in burials (M. L. S. Sørensen 1997:110).

How should we then interpret the objects that were placed in Bell Beaker burials? Based on the presence of archery equipment such as arrowheads and wrist guards,

these burials are often interpreted as archer's burials (Sarauw 2007a:65-66). In combination with the presence of daggers, these burials are thought to express an emphasis on "martiality" (Fokkens 1999:38, Fontijn 2002:81, Fokkens & Butler 2005:392-393). The image that is created in these burials is thus that of an archer, a fighter; *i.e.* a warrior (Vander Linden 2014:53). However, this warrior image should not necessarily be interpreted in terms of prestige or competition (Vander Linden 2014:43), and should not lead us to conclude that these men were actually warriors in their lifetime, as addressed above. The copper tanged daggers of this period were for instance most likely used as 'all-purpose blades' rather than weapons (Wentink 2020:181, cf. Fontijn 2002:67, 221, see Chapter 3). This burial equipment was rather a "costume of death" (Fontijn 2002:204), a "code" that was shared and used across communities (Vander Linden 2014:43, cf. Bourgeois & Kroon 2017). As discussed in this chapter's introduction and in Chapter 3, axes were not used as burial gifts in Bell Beaker burials, although axes must have been widespread and common tools in these agrarian societies. Yet people chose to present the deceased as *fighters* rather than *farmers*, even though the latter was probably a more correct representation of these men's lives (Fontijn 2002:81). People chose to create and convey this particular image of the dead, although this image probably did not match the actual life and appearance of the deceased.

In addition, people also chose to adorn the dead with ornaments, such as amber beads and/or gold rings. These ornaments were apparently part of the image they wanted to convey. Interestingly, many of the objects people chose to place in burials in this period were imported from afar. Some of the gold and copper objects in Bell Beaker burials were probably foreign, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 8, and the materials copper and gold themselves were of course imported from afar. The same applies to the amber ornaments and flint objects in Dutch Bell Beaker burials. Using Fontijn's words, the deceased were "dressed in internationality" (Fontijn 2002:81). The same can be stated for the deceased in earlier Single Graves, which were equipped with a number of foreign objects, as discussed above.

The Bell Beaker burial ritual was shared across regions: people were buried in similar ways, although there were regional differences (Vander Linden 2014:53). Across vast distances, people had shared ideas on how to bury the dead, and constructed a similar image in burials. Actually, out of the various components of the so-called pan-European 'Bell Beaker phenomenon' – ceramics, settlements, and burial ritual – the latter is the *most* similar component across regions (Vander Linden 2014:53). In this context, it is even more interesting that the dead were "dressed in internationality" (Fontijn 2002:81). From the British Isles to Germany and the Iberian Peninsula, people buried the dead in similar ways, constructing a similar image of the deceased, and using similar, 'international' objects. Oestigaard and Goldhahn have suggested that burials should be interpreted as a representation of the alliances and networks that both the deceased and the participants in the funeral ceremony were involved in, which are expressed through the burial gifts that are used (Oestigaard & Goldhahn 2006:45). In the case of the Bell Beaker burials, they can indeed be argued to represent the 'international' Bell Beaker network, through which shared traditions and values circulated (Vander Linden 2014:54). The male warrior, equipped with internationally shared Bell Beaker items, represented and personified this Bell Beaker network.

A. Proportion of metal objects in burials		
Period	**Number of metal objects in burials**	**Percentage of all metalwork**
LN I	22	30%
LN II	18	8%
Period IA	25	20%
Period IB	247	38%

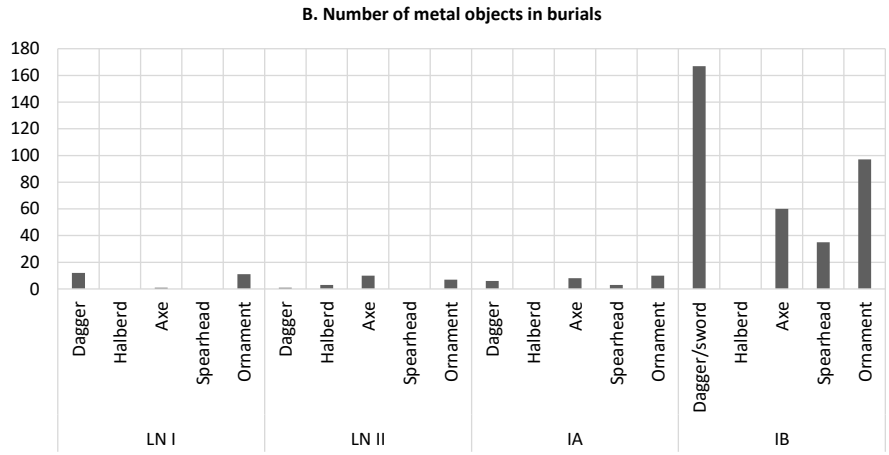

Figure 9.2. A. The proportion of all metalwork that was found in burials (excluding finds from unknown contexts). B. The number and selection of metal objects in burials in the four sub periods.

After using the Bell Beaker burial ritual as a case study to investigate the image that people constructed in burials, I now zoom out and examine the conventions behind the selection of metalwork in burials throughout the 850 years under study. After this overview, I return to the image of the deceased that people created in burials with metalwork in LN II, period IA, and period IB, following the example of the Bell Beaker case study presented in this section, and wrap up this chapter with a conclusion.

9.3 Burial gifts and conventions: an overview

The practice of burying the dead with metalwork fluctuates during the investigated time period, as already briefly mentioned in this chapter's introduction. There are fluctuations and changes over time, both in terms of the number of burials with metalwork and the conventions behind the selection of objects. Particularly in period IB, a number of important developments in the burial practice took place. These conventions and changes are examined from a bird's-eye view in this section. After this, Sections 9.4 to 9.6 zoom out and return to the image that people constructed of the deceased using metal items.

Figure 9.2 shows the number and proportion of metal objects in burials during the four sub periods, as well as the selection of metal objects used as burial gifts. A number of patterns and developments catch the eye.

When we look at the absolute numbers of metal objects in burials, it is clear that until period IB, burial gifts of metalwork are scarce. The use of metal objects as burial gifts

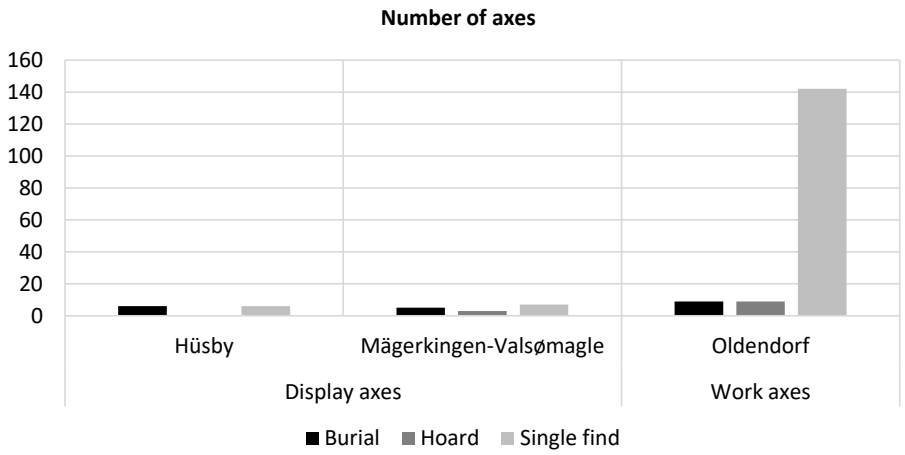

Figure 9.3. Selective deposition of display axes of types Hüsby and Mägerkingen-Valsømagle, and plain work axes of Oldendorf type. All of these date to period IB. Axes from unknown find contexts are not included.

positively exploded in period IB, when particularly daggers/swords were abundant in burials. But when we look at the proportion of metalwork that was found in burials, this is actually relatively high in LN I. As discussed in Chapter 3 and in the previous section, metal objects were relatively frequently used as burial gifts in this period, since they were used to construct a specific 'Bell Beaker image'. Primarily copper tanged daggers and gold ornaments were placed in burials across Bell Beaker Europe, although not in Denmark. But since metalwork on the whole was still scarce in this early period, the absolute numbers are low.

Moving on to LN II, the number of burial finds of metalwork is strikingly low, particularly considering the large amount of metalwork that was deposited in this period, and the significant role that metal played in burials in the preceding Bell Beaker period. These occasional LN II burial finds primarily consist of a small number of axes and ornaments. Overall, metalwork was not chosen to be placed in burials, but instead deposited in specific places in the landscape, particularly in wetland settings. The significance of these natural places is discussed in Chapter 10.

In period IA, a modest increase in burial gifts of metalwork is observable. These now include metal daggers, axes, and ornaments. This can be seen as the prelude to period IB, when bronze daggers and swords are by far the most abundant object category in burials, and ornaments were also commonly used as burial gifts. In addition, axes and spearheads also occur in burials in period IB. All main object categories were thus used as burial gifts in period IB, and this was a new development, as discussed in Chapter 6.

However, as also addressed in Chapter 6, not all object types were 'allowed' in burials in period IB, even though all main object categories were used as burial gifts. Certain types of swords were preferred as burial gifts, such as Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle swords, while other types were avoided in burials, such as Hajdúsámson-Apa swords (see Figure 8.10). This separation is discussed in Chapter 8. A similar separation can be observed between different types of axes: the vast majority of plain work axes like high-flanged Oldendorf axes were deposited singly (see Figure 9.3), while display axes like Mägerkingen-Valsømagle

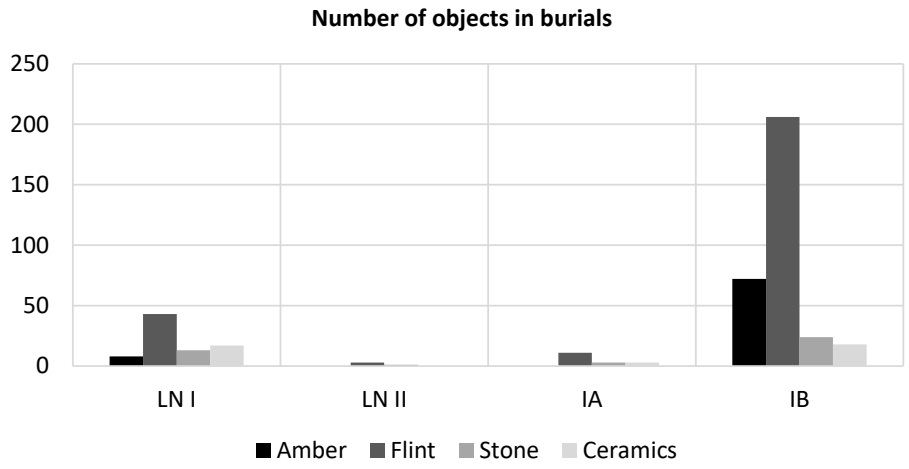

Figure 9.4. Number of objects made of other materials than metal from burials recorded in the database. Only non-metal objects occurring together with metalwork are recorded (see Chapter 2 for an explanation of the data collection methods). It should be noted that it is difficult to count the number of ceramic objects in burials, as this often concerns sherds. Therefore, the number of ceramics rather shows the presence of ceramics in a context.

and Hüsby axes do not show a predominance of single object depositions. There is thus a separation between how different types of objects 'ended their lives', to return to the concept of cultural biographies (see Chapter 8). Such a separation is not visible in the earlier periods; this is a new development in period IB. The cultural biographies of objects were thus an important element in the selection of objects for burials.

Another new development in the burial practice in period IB is the emergence of regional diversity: the research area can be divided into two zones, each of which had its own burial equipment, in which a region-specific sword was the main, characteristic, item (see map in Figure 6.1). In Zone I – covering the Danish islands and north-eastern Jutland – burials are equipped with items from the Valsømagle repertoire, while burials in Zone II – comprising south-western Jutland, northern Germany, and the north-eastern part of the Netherlands – are equipped with items from the Sögel-Wohlde repertoire. These two regional burial packages are discussed in detail and analysed using network analysis in Chapter 6.

It should be noted that while Figure 9.2 shows the occurrence of the main object categories in burials, a wider range of objects, including unusual or even unique items, occurs in burials in period IB. Razors, tweezers, awls, a saw, belt hooks, fish hooks, pointed weapons, and fibulae were now in a few rare cases used as burial gifts. This is a new development, as only the main object categories are occasionally found in burials in the earlier periods. Burials display a wider variety in object types in period IB, and these objects are shown in the network in Figure 6.14 in Chapter 6.

In addition, not only a wide range of objects, but also a wide range of materials occurs in period IB burials. Although metalwork is the main focus of this research, objects made of other materials occurring together with metalwork have also been recorded, and these are especially numerous in period IB. Amber, flint, stone, and ceramics frequently occur in burials in this period, including objects like amber beads and pendants, flint strike-

a-lights, slate pendants, and pots (see Figure 9.4). When we compare the numbers from the four sub periods in Figure 9.4, non-metal objects were also relatively common in LN I, when amber, flint, stone, and pots were part of the Bell Beaker 'burial package', as discussed above and in Chapter 3. But in LN II and period IA, non-metal objects rarely occur in burials together with metalwork.

Summing up, the practice of burying the dead with metalwork fluctuated, and the conventions behind the selection of objects changed over the course of time. In the Bell Beaker period, specific metal objects were relatively often used as burial gifts, but the absolute numbers were still low. Until period IB, only the main object categories occasionally occurred in burials. But in period IB, the use of metal objects in burials positively exploded. The burial practice went through a number of important developments in this period: regional variation emerges, and a wider range of objects and materials is placed in burials, yet at the same time, the cultural biographies of these objects played an important role; not *all* object types were considered appropriate to be buried with an individual.

9.4 LN II: from burials to wetlands…

After zooming out and examining the fluctuations and changes in the burial practice over time, we will zoom in again and examine the burial ritual in Late Neolithic II (LN II), following the example set by the Bell Beaker case study in Section 9.2. How should we interpret the objects that people chose to bury the deceased with in LN II? Which image did people want to construct in these burials and what did it signify?

As discussed in the previous section, metal objects were rarely used as burial gifts in LN II. Only 8% of the metalwork from this period was placed in burials (see Figure 9.2). This is a strikingly low number, especially considering the enormous increase in metalwork deposition in this period (see also Chapter 7). This, however, is a significant observation in itself: there was an enormous increase in metalwork deposition, but metal was rarely buried with the dead. This applies to the entire research area. Apparently, metal objects did not play an important role in the construction of personhood in burials. Instead, people preferred to deposit metalwork in wet landscape settings all over the research area, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4. There clearly was a shift between LN I and LN II in terms of the burial practice.

First, this section examines the objects that occasionally *do* occur in burials in LN II. These are low-flanged axes and ornaments. Starting with the former, only a very small fraction of the axes from this period were used as burial gifts (3.7%, ten axes). These axes were predominantly locally made, which applies to the majority of the axes in this period. The local production of metalwork in LN II consisted largely of axes, as shown in chapters 4 and 8. However, these locally made axes were thus rarely used as burial gifts.

Moving on to ornaments, a noteworthy pattern stands out: bronze/copper and gold *Noppenringe* are the only type of metal ornament used as burial gifts in this period, and these were imported from the Únětice region/Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:199, 203-205). Although the number is very low (six *Noppenringe* in three burials in Denmark), these burials do stand out. *Noppenringe* were also deposited in hoards in this period, so they were not exclusively used as burial gifts. But in these few burials, people chose to adorn the dead with foreign ornaments. Using the Bell Beaker case study in Section 9.2 as a parallel, these deceased can be stated to be "dressed in internationality" (Fontijn 2002:81).

However, this was only the case in a very limited number of burials. Overall, the dead were *not* buried with metalwork anymore in this period.

The reason for this shift in the burial practice between LN I and LN II is probably the breaking up of the pan-European Bell Beaker network that can be observed at the end of LN I, around 2000 BC. From around 2000 BC, regional groups emerge that grow in importance, while the supra-regional Bell Beaker network disappears. One of these European regions that became of great importance for Denmark and northern Germany in LN II is the Únětice region in Central Europe, as shown in Chapter 4. In LN II, it was thus no longer of relevance to present the supra-regional image of the 'Bell Beaker warrior' in burials.

But interestingly, people did not choose to construct *another* image in burials in LN II; people made completely different choices in this period. Instead, they chose to express ideas of 'internationality' in *hoards*. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. In hoards like Pile, Gallemose, and Wageningen, people deposited both local objects and objects from the regions they were connected with through exchange networks, including the Únětice region. These hoards embodied the exchange networks that the local communities were involved in, in the way that the international network was represented in Bell Beaker burials. It was thus still of importance for local communities in the research area to show that they were part of supra-regional networks, but in LN II, this was done by depositing 'international' *hoards* rather than creating an 'international' image in *burials*. People chose to present an assemblage of international objects, not with a body, but without a body, in specific natural places. People selected special places in the landscape to deposit these unconventional hoards in, which is examined in detail in Chapter 10.

One question remains unanswered after examining the burial practice in LN II: if people generally did not bury the dead with metalwork, which other objects did they place in burials? As discussed in Chapter 4, fishtail flint daggers were used as burial gifts in Denmark and northern Germany (Lomborg 1973, Kühn 1979). However, this happened less frequently than lanceolate flint daggers were used as burial gifts in LN I (Vandkilde 1996:283). It appears as though burial gifts on the whole were rare in Denmark in this period (Vandkilde 1996:283-287). The same applies to the Netherlands: non-perishable burial gifts are rare in EBA burials (Bourgeois 2013:164). There appears to have been an actual gap in terms of burial gifts in this period (Bourgeois 2013:164-165). Overall, people apparently did not focus on presenting a certain image of the dead in burials using non-perishable objects. Instead, the focus shifted entirely towards depositions of single objects and hoards.

Summing up, it was clearly not considered of importance in this period to construct and convey a certain image of the dead in burials, like it was in the Bell Beaker period. The dead were not dressed and adorned in a specific way, with a few exceptions, including foreign *Noppenringe*. Instead, the focus shifted towards metalwork deposition in wetlands. Hoards appear to fulfil the role that burials had in the Bell Beaker period in terms of the international connections they represent and embody. These hoards are discussed in more detail in Chapters 8 and 10.

9.5 Period IA: …and back again to burials

In period IA of the Nordic Bronze Age, the use of burial gifts of metalwork increased again after the 'dip' in LN II, as noted in Section 9.3 (see Figure 9.2). Daggers, axes, and ornaments were used as burial gifts somewhat more often than in LN II, which can be seen as the prelude to period IB, in which the use of metalwork in burials exploded. It should

be noted that a number of nick-flanged chisels from northern Germany and Denmark possibly come from period IA burials, but as this is uncertain, they are not included in this discussion (see Chapter 5). There was thus a shift between LN II and period IA, from a supra-regionally shared, almost single-minded focus on wetland depositions to a moderately increased importance of metalwork in burials. Which image of the dead did people construct in period IA and what does it signify?

When comparing burials from different parts of the research area, remarkable regional differences catch the eye. While people did similar things from the Netherlands in the west to Zealand in the east in LN II, we see the emergence of *regional practices* in period IA. The fact that different regions are for the first time combined in this research makes it possible to recognise these developments. Here we can see the first signs of the regional diversity that became highly significant in period IB. The most striking regional pattern in period IA is that metalwork is extremely rare in burials in the Netherlands, as discussed in Chapter 5. Hardly any burials with metalwork are known from this area, which is remarkable, since metalwork *was* used as burial gifts in Denmark and northern Germany in this period. But metalwork was also hardly deposited singly or in hoards in the Netherlands: there was in fact a gap in metalwork deposition overall in this region, as discussed in Chapter 5. Even though bronze axes must have been widespread in these agrarian communities, and they were deposited before and after this period, they were not deposited in *this* particular period (cf. Fontijn 2002:97).

In Denmark, most of the metal objects that people equipped the dead with are ornaments. These metal ornaments, including *Kugelkopfnadeln*, were imported from Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:216-218). With the Bell Beaker case study in the back of our minds, the fact that these Central European ornaments were used as burial gifts in Denmark rings a bell. Again, the dead were adorned with foreign ornaments; again, the dead were "dressed in internationality". However, this only happened in a very small number of burials (n=4). Most of the metalwork in Denmark in this period was probably imported from Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:220-222), which is thus reflected in these few 'international' burials.

In contrast, in northern Germany, metal ornaments were rarely used as burial gifts. Instead, they were more often deposited in hoards in this region. Although rich hoards were in fact deposited in Denmark during this period, metal ornaments were not included in these hoards, but instead used as burial gifts. There are clear regional differences in terms of deposition practices. Also in northern Germany, these metal ornaments are thought to be imports from Central Europe (Vandkilde 1996:216-218, Wegner et al. 1996:377, Laux 2015:3). But despite their shared origin, metal ornaments were thus treated differently across regions. While in the Bell Beaker period, a similar image was constructed using similar objects in burials across regions, similar objects were deposited in *different*, region-specific ways in period IA. As argued in Chapter 5, a heterogenisation of the practice of selective metalwork deposition can be observed in period IA.

Metal daggers were also somewhat more often used as burial gifts in this period, as shown in Figure 9.2. This primarily concerns blades of Virring type in Germany (see Chapter 5). In period IB, swords and daggers were abundantly used as burial gifts, and we can observe the emergence of this practice in period IA. This association between burials and swords is explored further in the next section which focuses on burials in period IB.

Lastly, a modest number of axes have been found in burials in Denmark and northern Germany. This is only a fraction of all the axes from this period (5.4%), just like

in LN II. Overall, axes were thus *not* used as burial gifts, even though axes must have been widespread, everyday tools. In Denmark, the axes found in burials are primarily locally made, which applies to the majority of the axes in this period (see Chapter 5). The origin of the north German burial finds of axes is mostly unknown. No conclusions can be drawn based on such a limited number of finds, other than that axes were preferably *not* given to the dead.

Since metal was somewhat more often, but still infrequently buried with the dead, we can ask ourselves the same question as for LN II: which other objects did people place in burials? As shown seen in Chapter 5, flint daggers of type VI were used as burial gifts in Denmark and northern Germany (Lomborg 1973, Kühn 1979), but not as often as lanceolate flint daggers in LN I. Overall, burial gifts are "generally indistinct and anonymous" in Denmark in this period (Vandkilde 1996:288). The situation in the Netherlands is similar: many MBA barrows do not contain any burial gifts at all (Bourgeois 2013:75).

In the previous sections, we observed that both in LN I and LN II, it was important to express being part of supra-regional networks, although in LN I this was done in burials, and in LN II in hoards. What we can we say about expressions of 'internationality' in period IA? These cannot be found in burials, as discussed above. When we look at hoards, we can again observe regional differences. In Denmark, locally made metal objects became increasingly important, and hoards mainly consisted of locally made axes and spearheads in period IA. Apparently, it was no longer important to emphasise international contacts and supra-regional networks in depositions in this region. Instead, the focus shifted to local practices. In that sense, we can recognise the first signs of the Nordic Bronze Age, which truly took flight in period IB (Vandkilde 2014ab, and see the next section), in which southern Scandinavia had its own character. But in northern Germany, hoards were deposited following Únětice practices in period IA, containing axes, ornaments, and *Ösenringe*, including Únětice objects. Expressions of 'internationality' can thus be found in hoards in this region.

Summing up, people chose to use metal objects as burial gifts more often in period IA than before in LN II, but it is difficult to observe the construction of a specific image like in the Bell Beaker case study above. Instead of a supra-regional, shared idea on how to equip the dead in burials, we see the emergence of regional practices in period IA: in Denmark, the dead were occasionally adorned with Central European ornaments such as *Kugelkopfnadeln*, while these were deposited in hoards in northern Germany. In the Netherlands, the dead were not buried with metalwork; metalwork was in fact barely deposited at all in this region. Daggers and axes were occasionally placed in burials, which can be seen as the start of the burial practice in period IB. We can also observe the first signs of the emergence of the Nordic Bronze Age (Vandkilde 2014ab).

9.6 Period IB: warrior burials and regional practices

Finally, we arrive in period IB of the Nordic Bronze Age, the last part of the investigated time period, in which we see a peak in the practice of burying the dead with metalwork, as shown in Figure 9.2. A number of important developments in the burial practice that happened in this period were already discussed in our overview in Section 9.3. To repeat these very briefly: metalwork was used as burial gifts on a much larger scale now; all object *categories* could be placed in burials, but at the same type only specific object *types* were chosen, such as specific swords; in addition, a range of other object types occurs in burials, such as belt hooks and fish hooks; a wide range of materials

Figure 9.5. Period IB burial assemblage from Lejrskov parish, Jutland, Denmark (ÅM 5147), consisting of a Sögel-Wohlde sword (ca. 24 cm), a Fritzlar axe (12.5 cm), a dagger-shaped flint strike-a-light (9 cm), and a bronze dagger fragment. Photo: Marieke Visser. Scale 1:2.

other than metal also frequently occurs together with metalwork in burials; and there is regional diversity in terms of burial practices, particularly between the Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle groups.

When we look at Figure 9.2, the first thing that catches the eye is the abundance of bronze swords and daggers in burials. 67% (n=167) of all bronze daggers and swords from period IB are in fact grave finds. It is clear that they played an important role in equipping burials in this period (see Figure 9.5). Therefore, we will focus specifically on the image that was constructed in burials using bronze swords and daggers and compare this to the Bell Beaker period, in which daggers were also an important element in the burial package, as we have seen in our case study in Section 9.2.

Period IB is the first period in which 'real swords' emerge: blades of up to 60 cm occur in this period. The distinction between swords and daggers is not always clear, as discussed in Chapter 6. But, as argued in Chapter 8, the first swords, *i.e.* Hajdúsámson-Apa swords, were treated as new objects at the beginning of period IB: they were not used as burial gifts, but deposited outside burials. Somewhat later period IB swords, such as Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle swords, were often used to equip the deceased. This suggests that

swords were in fact considered new in period IB. This section therefore focuses specifically on Sögel-Wohlde and Valsømagle swords.

As discussed in Chapter 6 and already addressed in Section 9.1, Bronze Age swords are traditionally interpreted as warrior equipment (Kristiansen 1984, 1989, 2002, Treherne 1995, Vandkilde 2014b). Indeed, in period IB, a 'warrior ideal' is thought to have emerged which continued to exist throughout the Bronze Age, revolving around the warrior and his personal equipment; this did not only include a sword, but also objects associated with personal appearance such as ornaments, razors and tweezers (Treherne 1995). It should be noted that razors and tweezers are rare in period IB; they become more common later on in the Bronze Age. The Dutch Drouwen burial is one of the few exceptions, containing a razor as well as a Sögel-Wohlde sword, a Fritzlar axe, gold rings, flint arrowheads, a strike-a-light, and a whetstone (Butler 1990:73). This 'warrior package' was used in burials, and is thought to reflect the importance of fighting as well as the human body and how it was presented (Treherne 1995). These warrior burials are traditionally always interpreted as male burials (*e.g.* Hachmann 1957:30, Kristiansen 1987, Treherne 1995, Vandkilde 1996:17). There are a number of parallels with the Bell Beaker burials discussed in the case study: individual men were presented in death as warriors, equipped with weapons, and adorned with ornaments. Treherne already stated that the Bronze Age 'warrior ideal' has its roots in earlier developments in the Neolithic (Treherne 1995:113), and this diachronic development is observable in the data.

Let us first focus on this 'warrior burial package', consisting of swords and appearance-associated items (Treherne 1995). This term implies a standardised burial equipment, which was analysed in Chapter 6 by applying network analysis to the recorded burials with swords. This analysis showed that these burials actually show a high degree of variation. On average, around 50% of the burials with swords *only* contain a sword (see Chapter 6). The remaining ca. 50% of the burials contain varying object combinations, as discussed in Chapter 6. It is indeed difficult to recognise one standardised 'burial package' like the package observable in the Bell Beaker period. Not only are there differences *between* regions – the Valsømagle vs. the Sögel-Wohlde regions – but also *within* regions: Sögel-Wohlde burials in Denmark, northern Germany, and the Netherlands differ in terms of the selection and combination of objects. In fact, the sword itself is the only constant factor in these warrior burials. This makes it doubtful whether we can really speak of a 'warrior package' in this period. Nevertheless, the importance of the bronze sword is indeed evident.

Most of these bronze swords and daggers are thought to have been locally made. Metal-hilted Valsømagle swords were manufactured in the Valsømagle region in eastern Denmark, while Sögel-Wohlde swords/daggers were manufactured in the Sögel-Wohlde region, probably mainly in northern Germany and southern Jutland (Sprockhoff 1927:137, Vandkilde 1996:225, 236-237, 240-243). People thus used locally made swords that were made in the local style as burial gifts in their local communities.

There is thus a major difference with Bell Beaker burials: Bell Beaker 'warrior' burials were standardised, 'codified'; they reflected a shared ideology; and they served the purpose of representing the supra-regional Bell Beaker network in which the deceased and the community were involved. The 'warrior ideal' in period IB appears to entail something else. When zooming out completely, we might observe that they emphasise the same idea: swords are the main items in these burials. But when we zoom in, these 'warrior burials'

show a great deal of variation. They express regional versions of this 'warrior ideal', not only through region-specific swords (Valsømagle or Sögel-Wohlde swords), but also through region-specific or even local object combinations. These burials were not intended to be an expression of taking part in a shared, supra-regional network. Instead, they were intended to be an expression of belonging to a regional, or even local, group – the Valsømagle or Sögel-Wohlde group, or even a local community within the Sögel-Wohlde region.

As we have seen in our case study, the image of the deceased that is created in burials does not necessarily correspond to the actual life of the person. One can thus wonder if the emphasis on fighting and bodily appearance in Bronze Age warrior burials should be interpreted as a representation of reality, or as an ideal representation. However, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, many of the bronze swords and daggers from period IB that were analysed for use wear are actually thought to have been functional weapons that were in fact used in combat (Horn 2013:21-23 and table 1). This suggests that this 'warrior image' was not just an *ideal* identity, but may in fact have been reality, suggesting that fighting, or warfare, was in fact an integrated part of life in the Bronze Age, as has been frequently discussed (*e.g.* Horn & Kristiansen 2018). This is, again, in contrast to the idea of the 'Bell Beaker warrior'.

So far, we have only discussed burials with bronze swords and daggers. But as we have seen in Chapter 6, there is also a group of *hoards* in this period that contains bronze swords. These hoards are discussed in Chapter 10, with the current discussion on the 'warrior ideal' in the back of our minds.

Lastly, we should not forget to discuss period IB burials *without* bronze swords or daggers. This section has so far focused on bronze swords in burials, since they are an important development and a typical characteristic for period IB: 66% of the period IB burials with metalwork recorded in the database contain a (or in some cases more than one) bronze sword or dagger (including swords and daggers of unknown type). But this means that a not insignificant proportion of the period IB burials do *not* contain a bronze sword or dagger. 'Warrior burials' are particularly rare in the northern part of the Netherlands, but also in Denmark and northern Germany, a considerable proportion of the burials does not contain a 'warrior package'. As discussed in Section 9.1, warrior burials are thought to have been elite burials, belonging to a warrior aristocracy that emerged in this period (Kristiansen 1987, Treherne 1995, Vandkilde 1996:294). However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the approach preferred here is not one of trying to identify elites or social status, but rather one of exploring the image of the deceased that people chose to construct, and the ideas of personhood they expressed by doing so.

Summing up, in period IB a number of important developments in the burial practice took place. The use of metalwork as burial gifts exploded: many more people were buried with metalwork. New conventions emerged: for example, display axes were more often selected for burials than work axes. Furthermore, clear regional burial practices can be recognised. Bronze swords and daggers were the most abundant metal object category in burials, and these are interpreted in terms of a warrior ideal that emerged in this period. However, in contrast to the Bell Beaker warrior, people first and foremost used this warrior image to express being part of a regional group rather than a supra-regional network. The vast majority of the metalwork in this period is thought to be locally made, and we see local traditions, notably the Valsømagle and Sögel-Wohlde groups. Although swords were used as burial gifts across regions – yet most frequently in northern Germany and Denmark – people expressed this shared warrior ideal by using their local 'vocabulary'.

9.7 Conclusion

After examining the burial ritual in the four sub periods under study and the role that metal plays in it, it has become clear that people carefully selected specific objects to bury with the dead. They presented specific images of the dead in burials, through which they aimed to express specific ideas. They used burials to show that the deceased and they themselves were part of an international, supra-regional network (the Bell Beaker network), or they used burials to emphasise the opposite: to express that they were part of a local group (period IB burials). This carefully constructed image of the dead did not necessarily match reality. But this was not the point; the point was to convey a specific message to the people that were present at the funeral. After all, funerals were first and foremost social events.

Alternatively, burials were *not* used to express such ideas; instead, the focus shifted to hoards, which embodied the international exchange networks in which the local community was involved (LN II). Zooming out, in some periods people expressed their ideas concerning their place in the world in burials, through a carefully composed image of the dead, while in other periods, they expressed these ideas by depositing specific objects in natural places in the landscape, without this association with an individual. These shifts are not only observable in the time period under study, but in the entire Bronze Age. What they have in common is that these events had a great *social* significance (see also Chapter 10).

The next and last chapter focuses on metalwork depositions *outside* burials, in natural places like bogs, rivers, or dry land settings. Which landscape settings did people choose for depositions and which role do these places play in the practice under study?