

URNFIELDS ON THE MOVE: TESTING BURIAL SITE-SETTLEMENT RELATIONS IN THE EASTERN NETHERLANDS (C. 1100-500 BC)

This paper aims to make a critical analysis of general models dealing with spatial relations between settlements and urnfields during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The late prehistoric burial mounds and urnfields scattered over the sandy landscapes of the Netherlands have always attracted a lot of attention, ranging from the 18th century »urn diggers« to professional archaeologists. Until the early 1960s the great majority of excavations focused on burial sites. Around that time a major shift towards settlement archaeology occurred, as a result of technological innovations (e.g. the development of the dragline) and the introduction of the monuments act (*Monumentenwet*), which legally protected at least part of the late prehistoric barrows. Ever since, only a limited number of »new« urnfields have been discovered, mostly during large-scale settlement research. These trends are typical of large parts of the Low Countries. Research of late prehistoric burial sites and settlements has mostly taken place in different time periods, utilizing varied research methods and with various objectives. Urnfield research has generally focused on the typology of burial monuments and pottery, rather than on geophysical setting or spatial relations with settlement sites. Settlement archaeology was strongly centred on e.g. the typology of farmsteads and settlement pottery, instead of on site location and landscape organization.

This situation has come to an end since the early 1990s. Intensification of archaeological research and scaling up of excavations during the last two decades have led to more holistic approaches of the late prehistoric cultural landscape (e.g. Roymans / Fokkens 1991; Fokkens / Arnoldussen 2008). Ever since, scientific debate on the habitation history of the Pleistocene coversand landscapes has been dominated by the regions that were investigated most intensively, such as the province of Drenthe and especially the so-called Meuse-Demer-Scheldt area of the southern Netherlands and northern Belgium. The regions have also provided the building blocks used to construct most general habitation models on late prehistoric landscape organization. But even though these models have become very influential and are often implicitly assumed to be valid for far larger areas, some of them have never been formally tested outside the region they have their roots in. How widely applicable are such models actually?

As a test case, this paper analyses the spatial relations between settlements and urnfields in the eastern part of the Netherlands. This region is suitable to do so, because a detailed catalogue of urnfield sites is available (Verlinde 1987). Furthermore, two recent studies have already demonstrated that parts of the eastern Netherlands possess high-resolution data on settlements as well as burial sites, and therefore have great potential to address this topic (van Beek 2009; Louwen 2010). Assessing the validity of Dutch general models is not only interesting for a national archaeological debate. Compared to neighbouring countries, the Netherlands stand out for its large-scale settlement excavations of high scientific quality (e.g. Harding 2000, 67). Models that are reliably tested in different regions of this country provide valuable reference points for future research in other parts of the Low Countries that have been investigated less intensively.

In the first part of this paper the position of the eastern Netherlands with regard to the generally distinguished »urnfield provinces« will be briefly outlined. The most important models and hypotheses concerning spatial relations between settlements and urnfields are discussed. This section is followed by a

description of the most important physical geographical characteristics of the research area. The settlement-urnfield relations are analyzed on three different scale levels. The first, supraregional level deals with the distribution pattern of urnfields and settlements in the research area as a whole. It mainly provides a wider background which enables a better positioning and understanding of the next two levels. Then we will focus on four regional case studies, which combined cover the most important physical geographical landscape types present in the research area. These studies enable us to reconstruct settlement-urnfield relations in detail, and to trace regional differences in landscape organization. On the third scale level attention is given to the character of individual burial sites. Important new viewpoints on e. g. urnfield size, life span, site variety and general appearance are presented. Finally, the research results will be discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In many parts of Continental Europe the first appearance of urnfields marks the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (Fokkens 1997, 360). Urnfields are generally perceived as large, collective burial sites that were used for centuries and consist of large numbers of urn burials. Cremation becomes absolutely dominant. Individual burials are often positioned within ditched structures which can take various shapes and dimensions (e. g. Hessing / Kooi 2005). Urnfields replace the barrows that had been dominant from the Late Neolithic period onwards. In these older barrows only a small percentage of the population was buried (Lohof 1991, 225; Theunissen 1999, 35-36). Therefore, they reflect a more selective burial ritual. These important changes occurred almost simultaneously in large regions and are nowadays thought to have resulted from a transformation of ideology instead of from migrations or economic crises (Fokkens 1997).

In Northwestern Europe various regional »urnfield provinces« are distinguished, based on typochronological analysis of pottery and burial monuments. In the Netherlands generally a distinction is made between the »northern« Ems culture and the »southern« *Niederrheinische Grabhügelkultur (NGK)*. This division has its origins in important studies published by Kersten (1948), Desittere (1968), Kooi (1979) and Verlinde (1987). Arie D. Verlinde demonstrated that the urnfields in the province of Overijssel, situated in the eastern Netherlands, display influences from both »core« regions. Therefore, our research area is positioned in the »transitional zone« between both (fig. 1). Furthermore, he introduced the so-called Gelderland group as a third, smaller and intermediary style group which is considered part of the *NGK* (Verlinde 1987, 298). Recently, an even more detailed division of regional »urnfield groups« in the Netherlands and adjacent areas of Belgium and Germany was published (Verlinde / Hulst 2010, 100-113), a discussion of which goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Extensive catalogues of urnfield sites in the Netherlands are available for three regions, all situated in the middle and northern parts of the country (Kooi 1979; Verlinde 1987; Verlinde / Hulst 2010). These studies mainly have their merits in detailed inventories of burial sites, typochronologies of burial monuments and meticulous descriptions of pottery types. Less attention is given to site location and hardly any observations can be found on the spatial relations between settlements and burial sites. Pieter B. Kooi, for example, only briefly mentioned that the settlements in the northern Netherlands shifted location frequently whereas urnfields sometimes occupied the same territory for over 500 years. Therefore, the distance between settlement and burial place could be subject to changes in the course of time. He also argued that the site location of some urnfields was influenced by older barrows, local geology and possibly the presence of road systems (Kooi 1979, 152-166).

Especially the northern Netherlands urnfield dataset has frequently been used in attempts to reconstruct late prehistoric territorial structures in this region and their possible continuity into historic times (e. g. Kooi

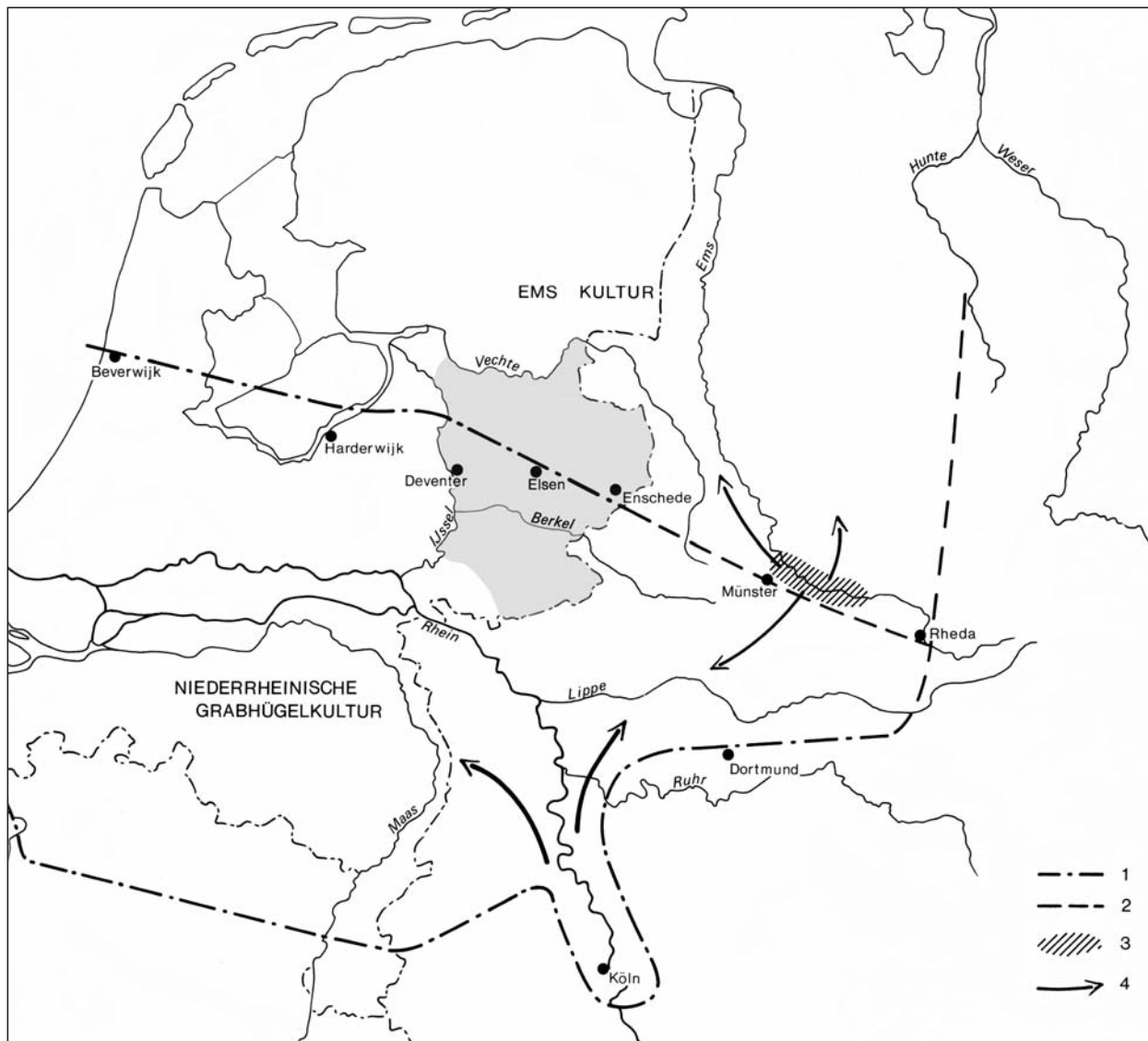


Fig. 1 Geographical position of »urnfield provinces« as reconstructed by A. D. Verlinde. – Key: 1 »border« between culture groups; 2 probable »border« between culture groups; 3 the *Oberems* group; 4 main directions of cultural influences. – (After Verlinde 1987, fig. 139; the research area discussed in this paper is marked in grey).

1979, 163-182; Harsema 1980; Waterbolk 1982; Waterbolk 1995). Other site categories are incorporated into these studies as well, such as older barrow groups, Celtic fields and – to a lesser extent – settlement sites. However, they never lead to systematic analyses of spatial relations between settlements and urnfields. The most significant spatial models with regard to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age are mainly based on research in the Meuse-Demer-Scheldt area, where such detailed urnfield catalogues are lacking. As mentioned before, this dichotomy can be explained by the fact that especially the southern Netherlands have benefitted from an intensification of archaeological research and scaling up of excavations during the last decades. Therefore, this region provided the high-resolution data needed for modelling purposes at a time when attention for the late prehistoric cultural landscape started to grow.

The first and most influential model on settlement-urnfield relations was published two decades ago by Roymans / Fokkens (1991). In this model urnfields are interpreted as important focal points which structured the movement of settlements across the landscape, and took central positions within the settlement

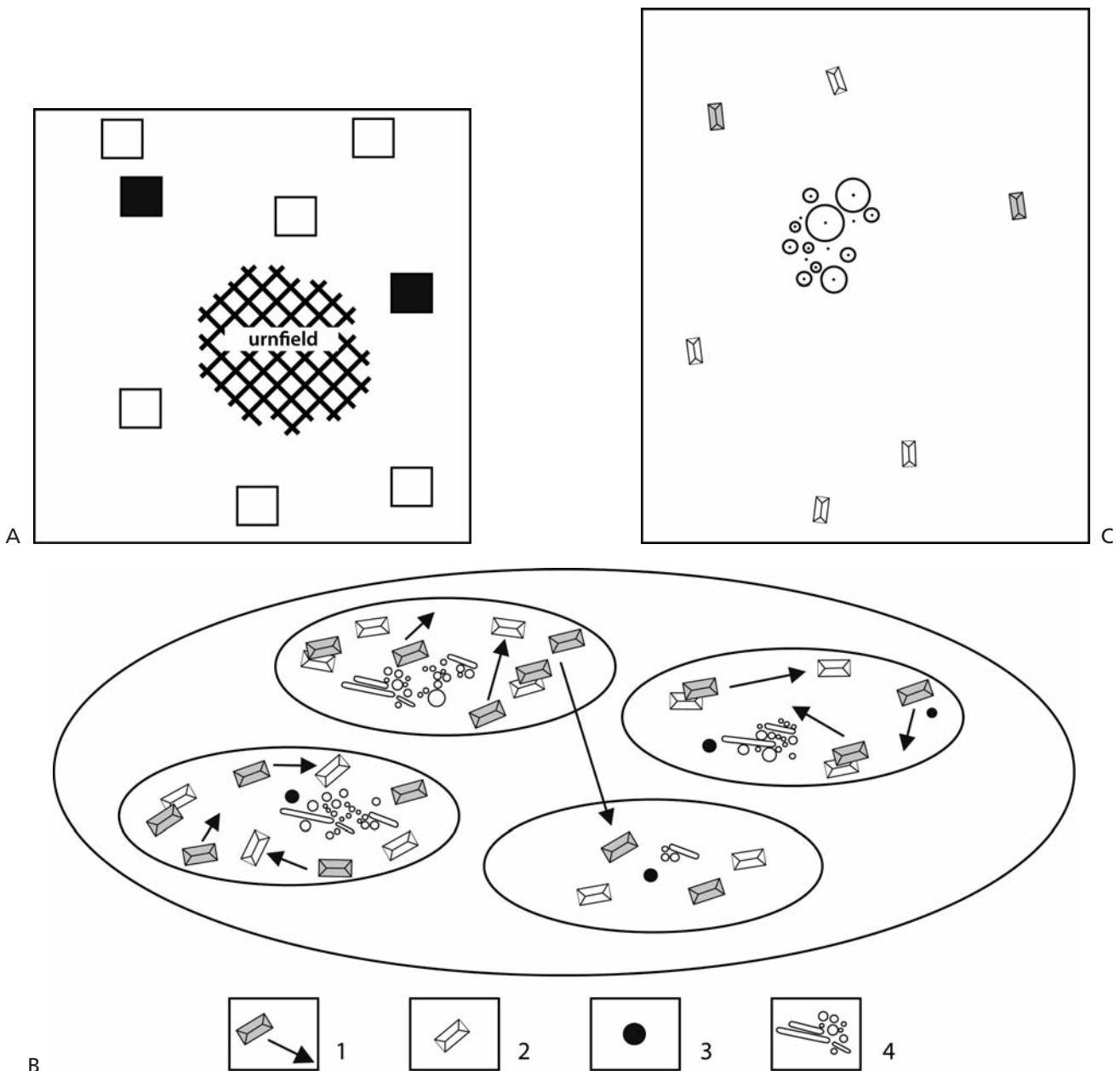


Fig. 2 Three models of spatial relations between settlements and burial sites in the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age: **A** Roymans / Fokkens 1991; ■ settlement; □ former settlement. – **B** Roymans / Kortlang 1999; 1 settlement; 2 former settlement; 3 pre-Urnfield period barrow; 4 urnfield. – **C** van den Broeke 2005; ■ settlement; □ former settlement. – (A after Roymans / Fokkens 1991, 12; B after Roymans / Kortlang 1999, 52; C after van den Broeke 2005, 684).

area (fig. 2A). Especially important is the dichotomy between »stable« burial sites and »dynamic« settlements. As Roymans / Kortlang (1999, 40) formulated the key thought to the model at a later stage, urnfields formed a »fixed reference point providing continuity and stability to the local group, and as such forming a counterbalance to the discontinuities that frequently occurred in the domestic sphere because of the practice of abandonment and small-scale displacement of farmhouses«.

This »dynamic« settlement character calls for some explanation. Late prehistoric settlements in the Netherlands generally consisted of between one and three farmsteads. Settlements were open and had dispersed layouts (e.g. Arnoldussen / Fokkens 2008). Furthermore, they frequently shifted location (Schinkel 2005). In

the northern Netherlands these shifts have sometimes been structured by Celtic field systems (Harsema 2005). These usually large, highly structured complexes of agricultural fields are assumed to have been used from the Late Bronze Age to the earliest stages of the Roman period (Brongers 1976; Spek et al. 2003; Spek 2004, 146-150). Such field systems were common in the central and northern parts of the Netherlands, but occur far less frequently elsewhere. The latter implies to our research area as well. A recent systematic analysis of high-resolution digital elevation maps could only confirm the presence of three undisputed Celtic field systems in the eastern Netherlands (Kooistra / Maas 2008). Contrary to, for example, the central and southern regions of Europe (e.g. Harding 2000, 55-72), settlement nucleation in parts of the Low Countries merely starts to appear during the final stages of the Iron Age (e.g. Gerritsen 2003, 181-189).

The model published by Nico Roymans and Harry Fokkens and the basic assumptions underlying it have frequently reappeared in publications on late prehistoric settlement and landscape organization (e.g. Roymans / Kortlang 1999; Fokkens 2005; van den Broeke 2005; Fokkens / Arnoldussen 2008; **fig. 2B-C**). One of the most important new insights that has been gained since 1991 is the notion that the site location of urnfields was frequently influenced by the pre-existing funerary landscape (Fontijn 1996). Therefore, Roymans / Kortlang (1999, 51-53) added older barrows to their spatial model (**fig. 2B**). Both authors also stressed that settlement territories became smaller and more fixed than during preceding phases, mainly as a result of increasing population density. Finally, Stijn Arnoldussen has argued that the life spans of late prehistoric farmhouses have often been longer than the 20-40 years that usually are suggested (Arnoldussen 2008, 88-92). This implies that location shifts of settlements might have been somewhat less frequent than is generally assumed.

Apart from these relatively minor adjustments to the model its essence is still standing. It has become the generally accepted model on settlement-urnfield relations in the sandy Pleistocene parts of the Netherlands. Researchers so far have mainly focused on analysis of the separate building blocks underneath the model, instead of on formally testing the spatial relations between settlements and urnfields in their physical geographical setting. In the next sections this will be done for the first time, with the eastern Netherlands as a case study.

RESEARCH AREA

The research area consists of the largest part of the Dutch province of Overijssel and the eastern parts of the province of Gelderland (**fig. 3**). It is delimited by the German border in the east and by three large rivers: the Overijsselse Vecht, the IJssel and the Oude IJssel. Three regions can be distinguished within this area. The province of Overijssel is divided into Salland (west) and Twente (east), while the eastern part of the province of Gelderland is known as the Achterhoek.

Physical geographical research demonstrated that the landscape of the eastern Netherlands is far from uniform (Maas / Makaske 2007; van Beek 2009). The results of an analysis of landscape genesis in combination with the character of the present-day landscape allow for a division into nine main physical geographical landscapes (**fig. 4**). The so-called eastern Dutch plateau is situated in the eastern part of the Achterhoek (E). It was formed mainly during the Tertiary period. Within the Netherlands similar landscapes only occur in small areas of the province of Limburg. Most of Twente and some adjacent smaller sections of the Achterhoek are part of two distinct ice-pushed ridge landscapes (D1 and D2). The ice-pushed ridges and glaciofluvial sediments in these areas are the result of geological and geomorphological processes that took place during and after the final stages of the Saalian ice age. Two small parts of the Twente region are classified as coversand landscapes. The first of these, situated near the city of Hengelo, is characterized

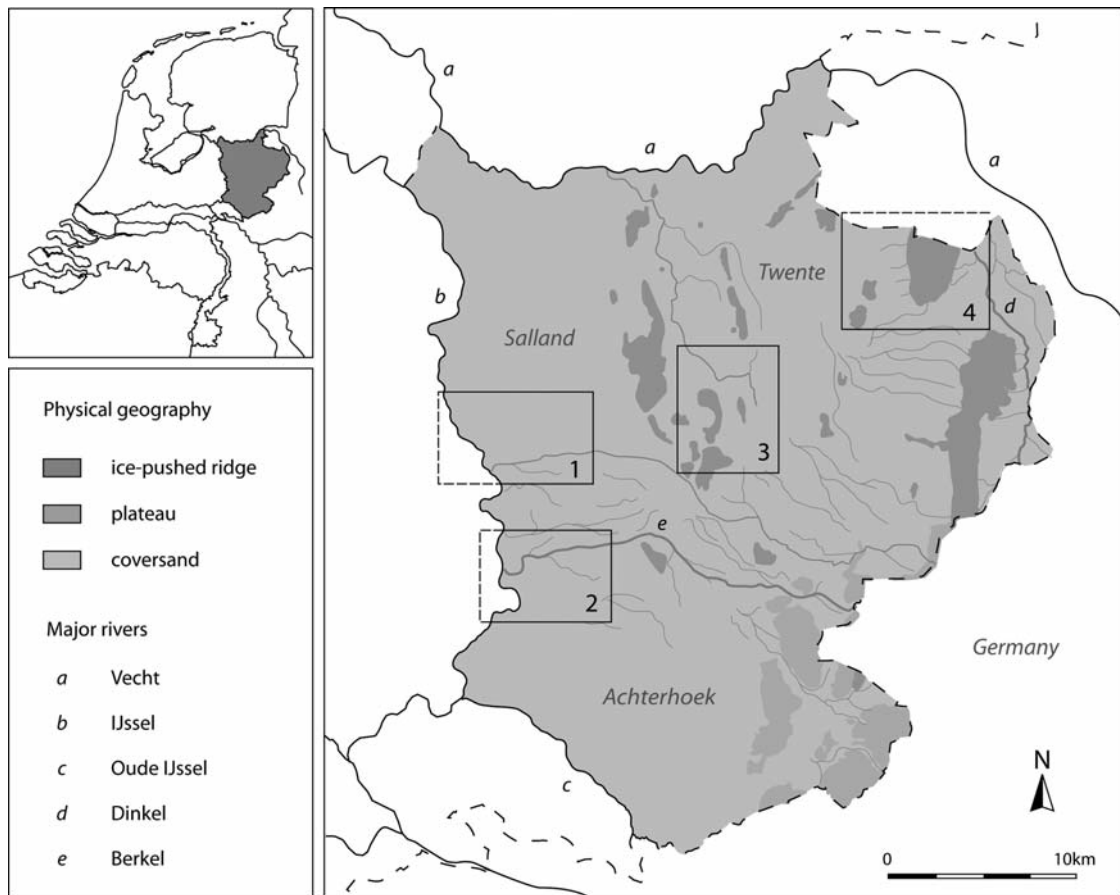


Fig. 3 Geographical location of the eastern Netherlands and the most important regions and rivers mentioned in the text. The test areas that are discussed are indicated by rectangles: **1** southwestern Salland. – **2** northwestern Achterhoek. – **3** southwestern Twente. – **4** northeastern Twente. – (All maps R. van Beek / A. Louwen).

by east-west oriented coversand ridges separated by stream valleys and depressions (C3). The second coversand landscape in Twente is dominated by the north-south oriented Dinkel valley and the large coversand ridges running parallel to it (C4). Large parts of Salland and the central part of the Achterhoek are classified as coversand landscapes as well. Together they form a broad zone running roughly parallel to the river IJssel (C1 and C2). Finally, two fluvial landscapes can be distinguished. The old river landscape of the IJssel and Vecht was formed during the Weichselian. Pleistocene river sediments are especially well represented in the southwestern part of the Achterhoek (B). The Holocene landscape of the IJssel and Vecht rivers largely follows the modern course of these rivers (A).

From a physical geographical point, the eastern Netherlands present a diverse view. »Diverse« is indeed the most appropriate way to characterize the research area (van Beek 2011). This is true at all levels, since the nine main physical geographical units are each a mosaic of different landscape types (e. g. stream valley, peat) which in turn are each a mosaic of various terrain forms (e. g. raised bogs, coversand ridges). Several rivers and stream valleys intersect the research area, and many former peat bogs and wet depressions are scattered over the landscape. These low areas alternate with ice-pushed ridges, riverdunes and coversand ridges. This distinctive, fragmented structure has been described as a »sandy archipelago« (Verlinde 1987). It is fundamentally different than other Pleistocene landscapes in the Netherlands, such as those in the province of Drenthe, the Veluwe region (province of Gelderland) and the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg. These landscapes are mostly more large-scale and homogeneous.

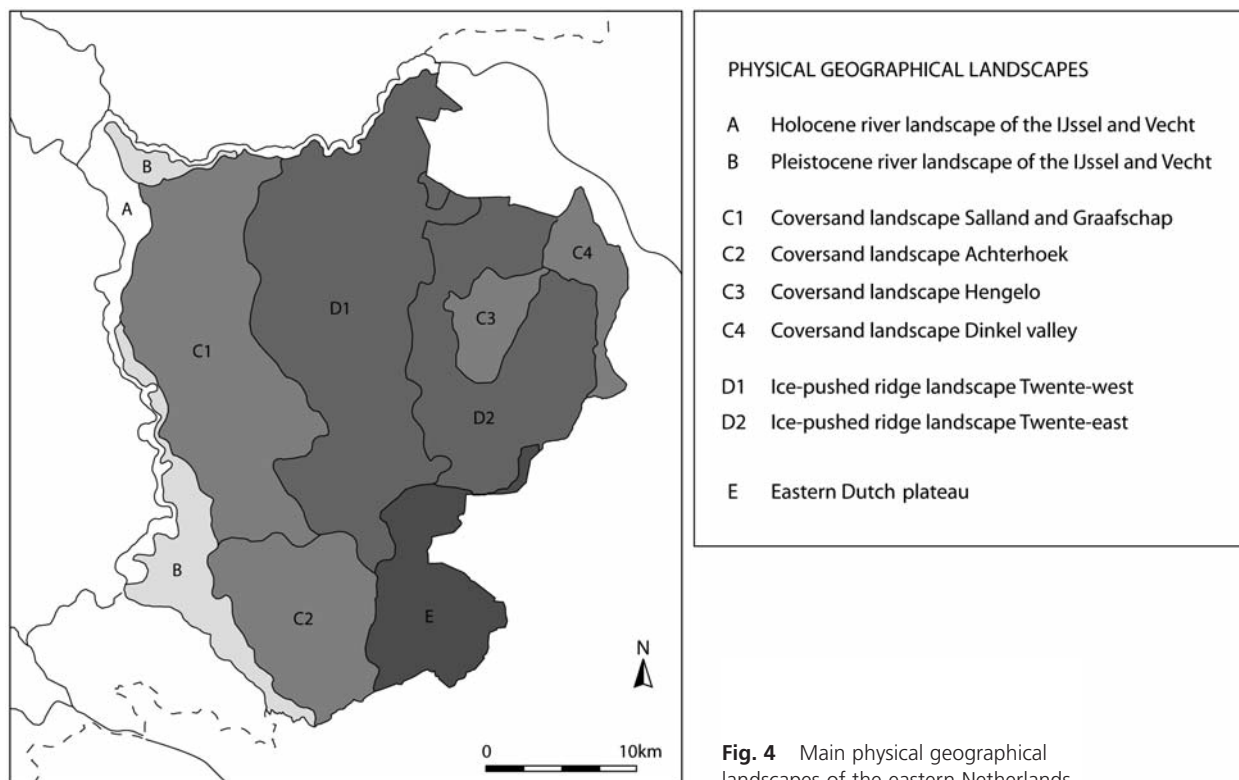


Fig. 4 Main physical geographical landscapes of the eastern Netherlands.

URNFIELDS OF THE EASTERN NETHERLANDS

We will start our analysis by reconstructing the supraregional distribution pattern of urnfields. The Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial sites in the province of Overijssel have been mapped by Verlinde (1987). His catalogue can be supplemented with a small number of sites that were discovered after 1987. This brings the final tally to just over 90 sites. With regard to the Achterhoek less detailed information is available. Therefore, a thorough survey of literature has been made, in combination with an analysis of archaeological databases kept by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. The result is a catalogue consisting of approximately 50 certain and probable urnfield locations. Even though the image is possibly influenced by postdepositional factors, it is safe to assume that the combination of both catalogues provides at least a first impression of the distribution pattern of urnfields on a supraregional level (**fig. 5A**).

In the province of Overijssel some clear clusters of urnfield sites can be discerned (see also Verlinde 1987, 308-317). This, for example, applies to the coversand ridges along the eastern part of the Vecht valley. A second zone with a high density of sites more or less follows the river IJssel in a southerly direction, into the western part of the Achterhoek. However, by far the highest densities of sites are encountered in the ice-pushed ridge landscapes of Twente, especially in the southwestern and northeastern parts of that region (e. g. Hijzeler 1961). On the other hand, some areas are remarkably »empty«. Parts of these areas, such as the vast former peat bog of Vriezenveen (Twente), actually appear to have been uninhabited in late prehistory. In other regions where urnfields are lacking, such as the central part of the coversand landscape of Salland, settlement sites dating from the Urnfield period are known (Groenewoudt et al. 1998; see below). However, the striking difference with the large number of urnfields known from parts of Twente appears to reflect regional discrepancies in population density.

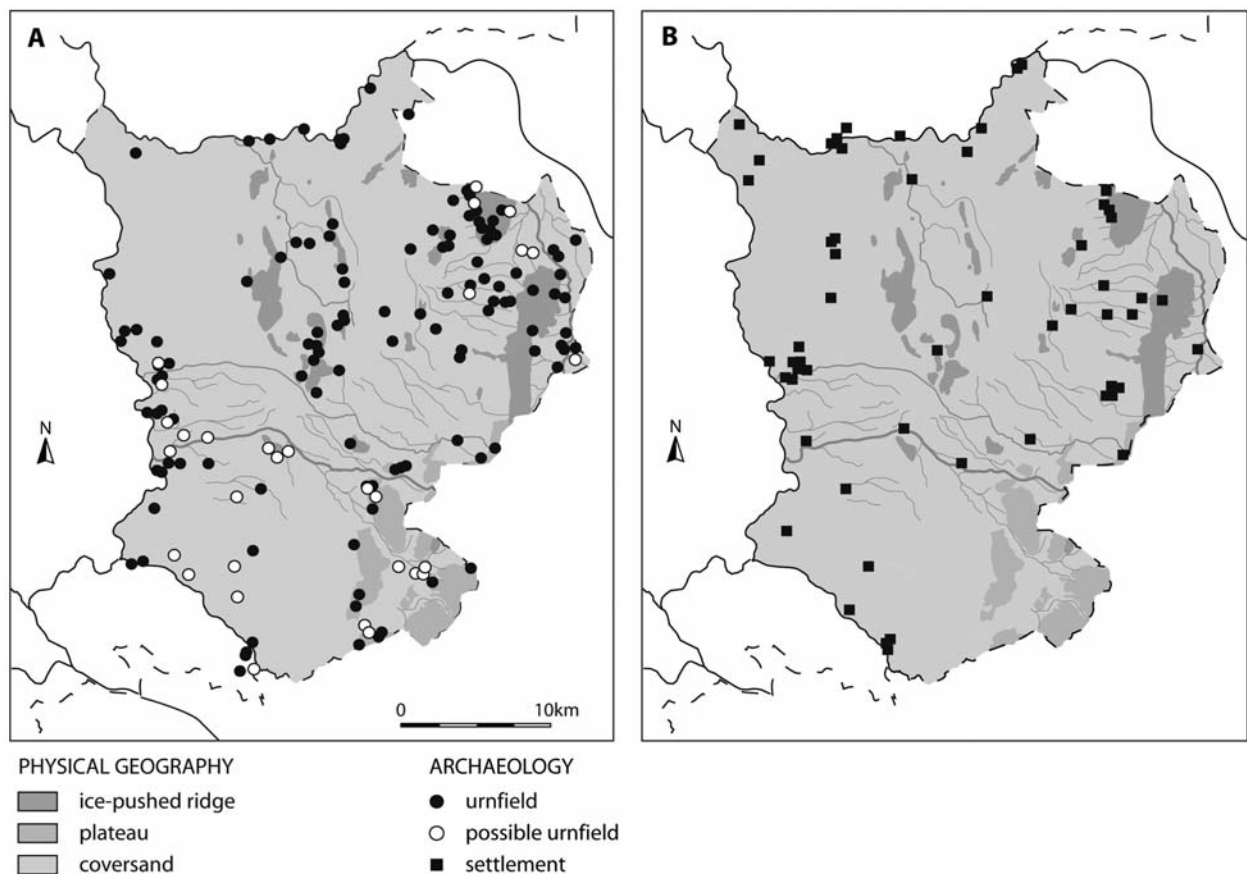


Fig. 5 Distribution pattern of urnfields (A) and settlement sites (B) dating to the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in the eastern Netherlands. – Burial sites in Overijssel are largely based on Verlinde 1987; settlement sites are mainly based on a quick scan of the national Dutch archaeological database »ARCHIS«.

In the Achterhoek a relatively large number of urnfields is known from the vicinity of the city of Zutphen (prov. Gelderland; van der Kleij 2003; see also next section). Some of these sites are situated near the Berkel valley. Further upstream more sites have been discovered on coversand ridges and ice-pushed ridges along this important river and its tributaries. The eastern Netherlands plateau steps forward as a region with a high density of urnfields as well. Some of these burial sites are situated on the western part of the plateau and near the transitional zone towards the adjacent coversand landscape of the central Achterhoek. The stream valleys and dry valleys that transect the plateau seem to have been an important pull factor. A final, somewhat more modest cluster follows the coversand ridges and riverdunes along the Oude IJssel river. Hardly any sites are known from the generally low-lying and moist central part of the Achterhoek, which was covered at least partly with peat during late prehistory (van Beek 2009, 470-476).

In addition to the distribution pattern of urnfields, an attempt was made to map the settlement sites that date to the same period. Since published overviews of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlements are not available yet, the archaeological databases of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands are once more an important source. Unfortunately, the picture that emerges after a quick scan of these databases (fig. 5B) is nowhere near as detailed and reliable as the burial data. Only a relatively small percentage of catalogued settlement finds in our research area is dated precisely, and detailed investigations would be needed to assess the reliability of the sites concerned. Furthermore, we might note that urnfields in general have a higher chance of discovery than settlements because of the presence of urns, ring ditches and sometimes barrows that are still visible in the landscape. Discovery chances of settlements are far more strongly influ-

enced by professional research intensity. This is probably borne out by the fact that only a few urnfields have been excavated in Overijssel since 1987, while the number of settlements has increased significantly. Especially the discrepancies between the distribution patterns of burial sites and settlements provide us with some interesting additional data (fig. 5A-B). As mentioned above, urnfields are not known from the central part of Salland yet, whereas settlement sites are. Furthermore, judging from settlement sites alone, one would be tempted to describe the eastern Netherlands plateau and its immediate surroundings as a region with a very low habitation density. The distribution pattern of urnfields, however, proves this assumption to be erroneous.

The supraregional distribution pattern of urnfields provides a background for the following research steps. In order to arrive at a more detailed analysis of settlement-urnfield relations it is now necessary to zoom in towards more detailed levels. With this goal in mind, four test areas have been selected:

1. southwestern Salland;
2. northwestern Achterhoek;
3. southwestern Twente;
4. northeastern Twente.

Taken together these test areas, whose locations are depicted in **figure 3**, cover the most important physical geographical landscape types present in the research region. It has recently been demonstrated that significant regional differences existed between the occupation histories of coversand landscapes on the one hand, and of ice-pushed ridge landscapes on the other hand (van Beek 2009, 410-440). These discrepancies will be highlighted here as well. To generalize: test areas 1 and 2 represent coversand landscapes, 3 and 4 ice-pushed ridge landscapes.

It has to be stressed beforehand that the discovered archaeological sites in these four regions do not offer us complete images of the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age communities living there. Obviously, not all settlements and urnfields have been found yet, and not every site has been investigated as detailed as one would like. However, full site recoveries are not always necessary to make significant observations on, for instance, site location and landscape organization. It is also important to mention that the research history and therefore level and composition of knowledge vary from region to region (van Beek 2009, 19-44). Several large-scale excavations have taken place in test areas 1 and 2 during the last decades, providing high-resolution data on late prehistoric habitation development. Especially these well-investigated micro-regions will be highlighted in the next section. Large-scale settlement excavations of relevance are virtually lacking in test areas 3 and 4. Instead, these areas are far richer in barrows and urnfields. Analysis of their distribution pattern, combined with excavation data, demonstrates that landscape organization in these ice-pushed ridge landscapes differs in interesting ways from coversand landscapes.

REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

Southwestern Salland (prov. Overijssel)

The southwestern part of Salland is built up of a series of elongated, east-west oriented coversand ridges which are separated from one another by valley-like depressions. This also applies to the most intensively investigated microregion of this area, which is situated near the village of Colmschate (fig. 6). Several excavations have taken place on a large ridge known as the Weteringer Enk (Verlinde 2000). It has probably been occupied continuously from 1500 BC onwards. During the Urnfield period this settlement consisted of a single farmstead that shifted location frequently. South of the Weteringer Enk we find a series of

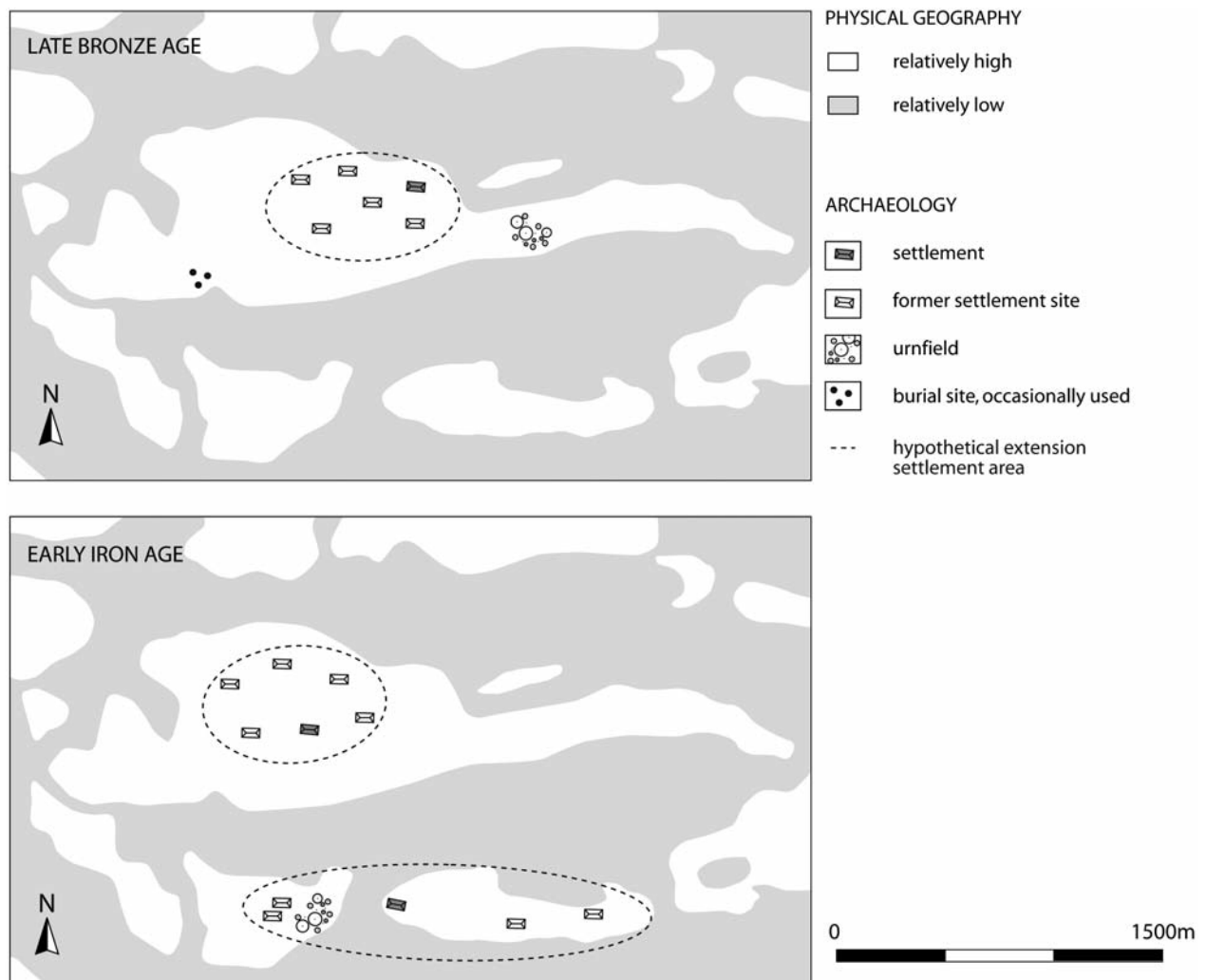


Fig. 6 Schematic overview of the spatial relations between settlements and burial sites in the microregion of Colmschate (prov. Overijssel) during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The Weteringer Enk is situated in the centre of this illustration.

smaller coversand ridges, where at four locations single Early Iron Age farmsteads were discovered. These are interpreted as the remains of a relatively short »colonization phase« consisting of a single farmstead that was moved a number of times (ten Bosch / Groothedde / Groenewoudt 1997).

During the Late Bronze Age the community living on the Weteringer Enk used two burial sites (**fig. 6**). East of the settlement an urnfield was partly excavated. Several urns were found and some ring ditches were documented. The exact life span of this urnfield has not been established (van Tent 1974). West of the settlement a smaller burial site was found, which exclusively consists of cremation burials without ditched structures. This site was used intermittently during the Late Bronze Age, the Middle/Late Iron Age and the Roman period (van Beek 2009, 172-174). Only one of the four Late Bronze Age burials included an urn. This remarkable site clearly does not resemble the »classical« urnfield image and was merely used incidentally. Interestingly, neither of both burial sites took a central position within the settlement area. Landscape organization changed drastically in the Early Iron Age. The small burial site remained unused and the urnfield in the east was abandoned. A new urnfield was founded on one of the smaller ridges (Verlinde 1997). It contained approximately 100 burials and was probably used by two settlements: the first situated at the Weteringer Enk, the second at the southern sandy ridges.

Several other urnfields are known from southwestern Salland (Verlinde 1987, 9-21). We will only discuss two sites near the village of Epse. Recently, the largest part of an Early Iron Age urnfield was excavated on a narrow river terrace. It probably consists of 40-50 burials (Hermsen 2006). The small size of the elongated ridges makes continuous habitation during the Urnfield period unlikely, which is confirmed by the fact that only a small number of Early Iron Age settlement features were found. Settlement and urnfield were located on separate landscape units for most of the time this burial site was in use (**fig. 7C**). The second burial site was found during research of a Middle/Late Iron Age settlement (Prangmsma 2002). Nine or ten cremation burials were discovered, and four more burials were documented at a later stage. The burials were ascribed to the younger Iron Age, because only one ring ditch and hardly any urns were found. ¹⁴C analyses, however, date this burial site in the Late Bronze Age, illustrating that such »deviating« Urnfield period burial sites might actually be more common than expected (van Beek 2009, 174-175).

Northwestern Achterhoek (prov. Gelderland)

The physical geography of the northwestern Achterhoek is largely comparable to southwestern Salland, even though the east-west structure of ridges and valleys is less distinct. During the last decades several excavations have taken place southeast of the city of Zutphen, which provide detailed insights into the late prehistoric occupation of this microregion. We focus on these data rather than on the low-resolution information on urnfields in other parts of the northwestern Achterhoek (but see van der Kleij 2003). The most interesting area consists of a series of three adjacent riverdunes called Looërenk, Leestense Enk and Ooyerhoek, separated from one another by stream valleys and depressions. Significant observations have also been made at a fourth riverdune near Bronsbergen (**fig. 8**).

Excavations have shown that the northern part of the Looërenk riverdune was inhabited continuously from the later Middle Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age (Bouwmeester / Fermin / Groothedde 2008). This settlement consisted of a single farmstead, which shifted location frequently. About 400 m south a burial site was partly excavated (Bouwmeester 2002, 46-54). Its exact life span has not been established yet, but it was certainly used during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The settlement and burial site are situated at the same riverdune, but continuously remained at separate locations (**fig. 7A**). Even though the Leestense Enk has been investigated less intensively, it is clear that this landscape unit was inhabited during the Urnfield period (Groothedde 1996). As no burials have been found yet, this community might have used the Looërenk urnfield as well. The Ooyerhoek displays a strikingly different pattern. Large parts of this riverdune have been excavated, but apart from an isolated Harpstedt pot not a single Urnfield period settlement feature was discovered (Groothedde et al. 2001). However, two isolated cremation burials were found. One of these contained sherds of a Late Bronze Age bowl and fragments of a horse skull (Bouwmeester 2000, 16). Apparently, this riverdune was incidentally used as a burial site.

In the early 20th century urns were found at two separate locations on the riverdune of Bronsbergen (van der Kleij 2003, 12-13). Both burial sites are situated near the edges of the dune. Even though neither location has been excavated, it seems likely that they rather reflect a movement of burial site instead of simultaneous use (**fig. 7B**). Prospective research has demonstrated that a settlement was situated in the same landscape unit (Oude Rengerink 2003).

To summarize, this microregion illustrates that within short distances very different settlement-burial site relations can be encountered. In one case settlement and urnfield are situated at separate locations at the same landscape unit (Looërenk). A second riverdune was only incidentally used as a burial location (Ooyerhoek), whereas a third one even housed a settlement as well as two burial sites in »peripheral« positions (Bronsbergen).

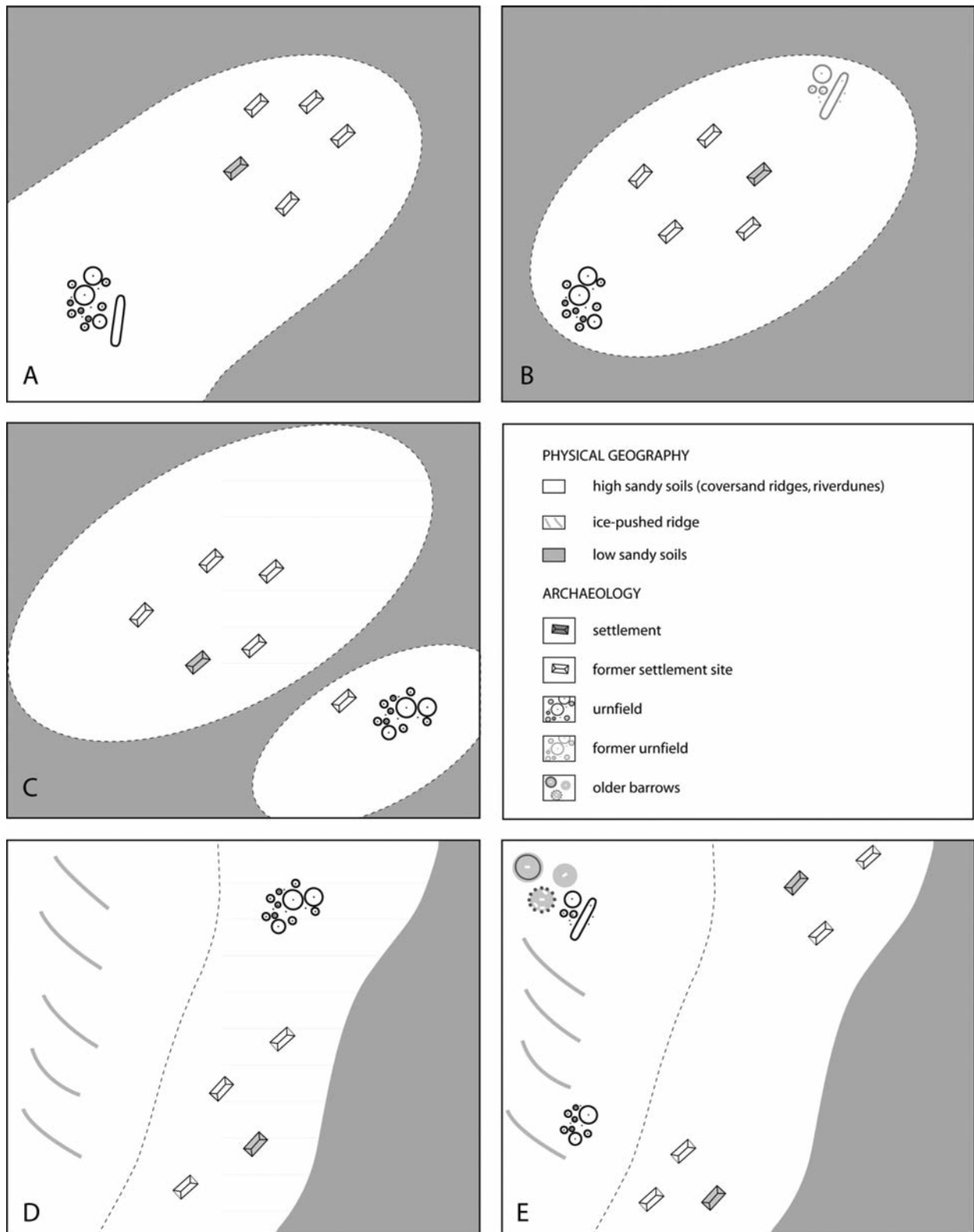


Fig. 7 Schematic »snapshots« of urnfield-settlement relations documented in different parts of the eastern Netherlands: **A** Settlement area and urnfield situated in different parts of the same, relatively large sandy ridge. – **B** Settlement area and urnfield situated on the same sandy ridge. The burial site, which is located in the »periphery« of this landscape unit, is moved at a certain point in time. – **C** Settlement area and urnfield situated on separate sandy ridges. The landscape unit in which the urnfield is located might occasionally be used for short-term habitation. – **D** Settlement area and urnfield situated on the same coversand ridge deposited on/alongside the lower slopes of an ice-pushed ridge. – **E** Settlement area situated on a coversand ridge deposited on/alongside the lower slopes of an ice-pushed ridge. Some of the burial sites (used by different communities) are located near older barrows on higher parts of the adjacent ice-pushed ridge. Other urnfields appeared on »new« places within the same landscape unit.

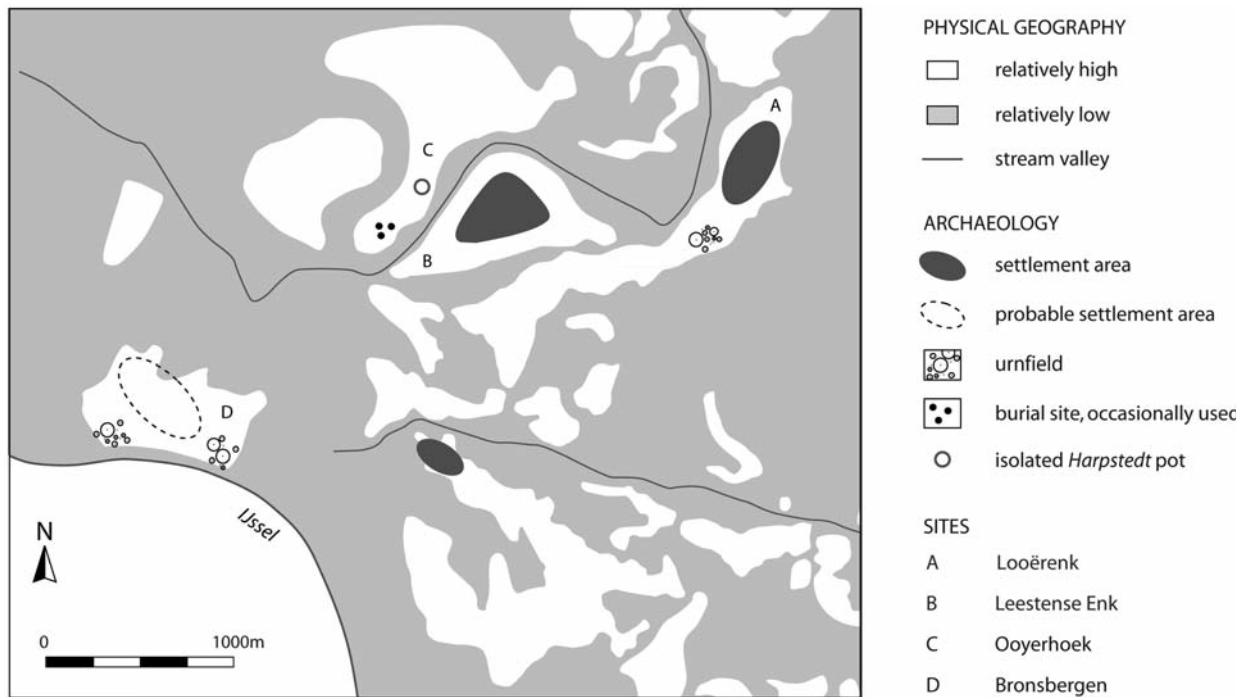


Fig. 8 Schematic overview of the most important Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age sites on a series of large riverdunes south and southwest of the city of Zutphen (prov. Gelderland).

Southwestern Twente (prov. Overijssel)

Southwestern Twente is part of the ice-pushed ridge landscape of Twente-west. Its physical geography is far more diverse than both regions discussed above, and its late prehistoric landscape organization was quite different as well. This can be illustrated by focusing on a large ice-pushed ridge complex situated between the towns of Rijssen and Markelo (fig. 9). No large-scale excavations have taken place here yet, and only two Urnfield period settlement sites are known. Both date to the Late Bronze Age and were found close to each other south of a moraine ridge (Groenewoudt / Thomas 1979). They probably represent different habitation phases of one settlement. Far more interesting observations can be made by the analysis of burial sites.

The ice-pushed ridge complex of Rijssen-Markelo stands out for the presence of a large number of barrows predating the Late Bronze Age (van Beek 2009, 307-319). Approximately 70 tumuli are known, most of which cluster in groups on the highest parts and western slopes of the ridge. Hardly any of these monuments have been professionally exca-

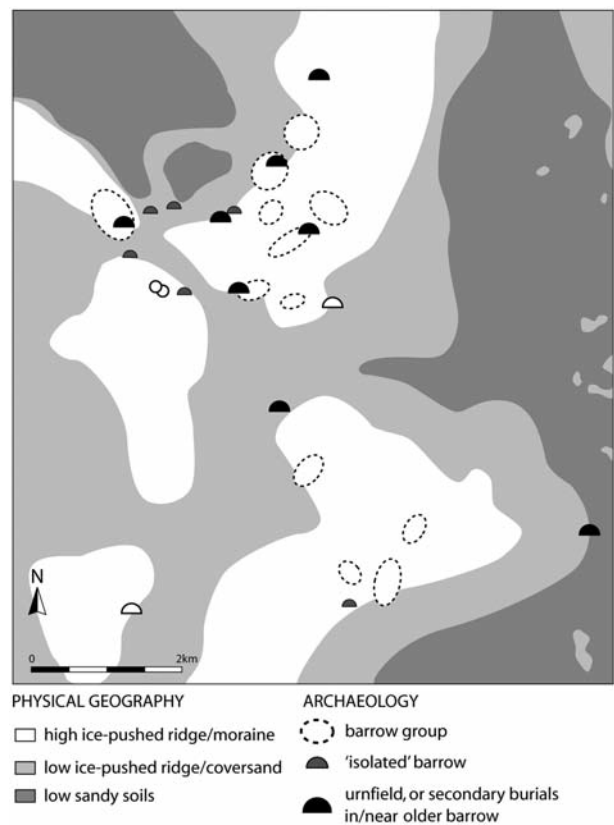


Fig. 9 Schematic overview of the position of barrows and urnfields/secondary burials on the ice-pushed ridge of Rijssen-Markelo (prov. Overijssel).

vated. Therefore, detailed information on individual barrows is lacking, let alone insight in the genesis of barrow groups. It is clear, however, that these monuments partly determined the structure of the late prehistoric funerary landscape. At least eight Urnfield period burial sites are known, three of which are situated adjacent to older tumuli. A fourth site consists of a Late Bronze Age cremation burial placed in an older barrow and a second one near the base of this mound. Therefore, the site location of at least half of the burial sites has been influenced by older monuments, even though continuity of use of such funerary landscapes cannot be proven (see also Fontijn 1996). Similar patterns of reuse are unknown from the regions discussed above.

On average, the remaining four burial sites are located at slightly lower positions than the barrows dating to older phases. The settlements discussed above are situated at a distance of 800m from the nearest urnfields. Their location is relatively low-lying compared to the urnfields and barrows on the slopes and higher parts of the neighbouring ice-pushed ridges (fig. 7E). The latter are unsuitable for long-term habitation because of the presence of gravelly morainic sediments in the subsoil. One urnfield is situated on a coversand ridge deposited alongside the lower slopes of the ice-pushed ridge. In the vicinity of the town of Enter, located on a small ice-pushed ridge near the microregion discussed here, three urnfields as well as a number of settlement sites were found in a very similar geophysical setting (van Beek 2009, 318-319). In these cases, both settlement and burial site are placed on the same sandy ridge adjacent to an ice-pushed ridge (fig. 7D).

Northeastern Twente (prov. Overijssel)

The physical geographical structure of northeastern Twente is roughly comparable to southwestern Twente, especially with regard to its diversity and the dominance of ice-pushed ridge complexes. A very large number of barrows and urnfields are known from this area (Hijzeler 1961; Hijzeler 1966; Verlinde 1987, 59-162; Louwen 2010). Most are situated on and near the high ice-pushed ridge of Ootmarsum. We will briefly discuss this microregion that displays some patterns that are similar to the previous test area. One of these parallels is the small number of Urnfield period settlement sites that are known. Most of these have been discovered through chance finds and hardly provide detailed information (but see de Wit et al. 2002). Burial sites supply a far better impression of late prehistoric landscape organization. The numerous barrows predating the Urnfield period display a preference for positions alongside dry valleys, as well as for the highest parts of the landscape. Some of these monuments are aligned along the central axis of the ice-pushed ridge.

18 urnfields are known from the ice-pushed ridge and its adjacent moraine and coversand landscape, as well as five possible urnfields. Most of them are situated on the ice-pushed ridge itself or in its immediate vicinity. Some of them are incorporated into larger »funerary landscapes« with origins in the Late Neolithic and Early/Middle Bronze Age, whereas the site locations of others do not seem to have been influenced by older monuments. This pattern compares well to the site location of urnfields on the ice-pushed ridge complex of Rijssen-Markelo. Urnfield period settlement sites are not likely to be present in the highest parts of the ice-pushed ridge, but rather on its lower sandy slopes or adjacent moraine and coversand landscape (fig. 7E). It has to be stressed that reuse of older burial sites during the Urnfield period is not restricted to ice-pushed ridges. We find similar patterns in coversand landscapes in Twente as well. The urnfield of Oldenzaal-De Zandhorst is situated adjacent to a Late Neolithic barrow, for example (Hijzeler / Verlinde 1975).

SITE VARIETY AND GENERAL APPEARANCE OF URNFIELDS

The third scale level of analysis concerns the individual urnfield. Research of individual burial sites can provide valuable information on demography, period of use and the degree of site continuity. Unfortunately, only a limited number of eastern Netherlands urnfields has been professionally investigated, and (almost) completely excavated urnfields are rare (Verlinde 1987, 170-171). Despite this relatively low level of knowledge the available data do give rise to some very interesting observations, especially if we broaden our views to other parts of the Netherlands. Special attention will be given to the population size of the local community, the life span and general appearance of urnfields.

First of all, we will focus on estimations of the size of the local community that made use of an urnfield. A. D. Verlinde already attempted to make such calculations by utilizing five burial sites that have been almost fully excavated. Four of these are situated in the ice-pushed ridge landscapes of Twente, the fifth on a coversand ridge along the Vecht valley. The latter site, near the hamlet of Mariënberg (prov. Overijssel), actually consists of three small urnfields that were likely utilized by the same community. A. D. Verlinde estimated the size of the populations making use of the burial sites in these five microregions to vary between 10 and 20 persons (Verlinde 1987, 324-326). These figures correspond quite well with those obtained in other parts of the Netherlands, which roughly vary between 5 and 25 persons (Hessing / Kooi 2005, 647-649). We might conclude that an »average« urnfield in the Netherlands was used by the inhabitants of between one and three or four farmsteads occupied by nuclear families. The only exception to this rule is the extremely large urnfield of Weert-Boshoeverheide, situated in the southern Netherlands (prov. Limburg). This urnfield might have contained up to 1000 burials and was used by a population of 37-39 individuals (Bloemers 1993; Hessing / Kooi 2005, 648).

The next subject to be addressed is the life span of burial sites. Of the urnfields in Overijssel for which reliable dates are available, 33 date to the Late Bronze Age and 14 to the Early Iron Age. Only twelve were in use during (parts of) both phases (Verlinde 1987, 322-323 with recent additions). The difference between both periods is partly a consequence of the fact that in A. D. Verlinde's chronology the Late Bronze Age lasts 350 years and the Early Iron Age only 200 years. Far more important is the observation that apparently only a very limited number of burial sites was in use during the whole time span of the Urnfield period. The same pattern is visible in the catalogue of urnfields in the northern Netherlands published by Kooi (1979, 153-156), and Verlinde / Hulst (2010, 80-82, 90) recently described a similar trend with regard to the central Netherlands Veluwe region. Obviously, it is important to take into account the fact that urnfields with long time spans are likely to be underrepresented, because only relatively few sites have been completely excavated. All evidence, however, points to the conclusion that displacements of burial sites were quite normal events. At this moment, by far most of our chronological observations are based on the typology of pottery and burial monuments. A recent study of urnfields in a large part of Belgium and the adjacent part of northern France by de Mulder (2011) has proven that systematic use of ¹⁴C analysis can lead to important new insights. G. de Mulder argues, for example, that a small number of urnfields in his research area were already founded during the final stages of the Middle Bronze Age.

That displacements of burial sites were normal events becomes increasingly clear if we also bring the number of burials in urnfields into the picture. The eastern Netherlands provide us with 22 burial sites for which the exact number of burials is known, or which at least allow general estimations (fig. 10). Three more sites consist of >100 burials but do not permit more detailed statements. The size of the burial sites varies considerably. At least five of them are composed of only one or a few burials and were clearly used for short periods of time by the inhabitants of single farmsteads. Only one site, Haarle (prov. Overijssel), indisputably consists of >150 burials. It seems that urnfields as large as this site are actually quite rare. The

Site	Estimated number of burials
Colmschate-'t Bramelt	90-100
Baalder	1
Marienberg I	40
Marienberg II	10-15
Marienberg III	20
Noord-Elsen	150
Elsen-Friezenberg	100
Goor-De Whee	15-20
Losser-De Aust	140
Oldenzaal-De Zandhorst	120
Denekamp-De Borchert	3
Tubbergen-Hilbertshaar	90
Haarle	300-350
Manderveen	30-40
Mander III	80
Vasse	2
Colmschate-Hunneperweg	2
Oldenzaal-De Tij	> 100
Weerselo-Hondeveld	> 100
Rossum-Oranjestraat	> 100
Woolde-Schild Es	33
Zutphen-Ooyerhoek	2
Zutphen-Looërenk	100
Epse-Olthof Noord	40-50
Epse-Waterdijk II	20-30

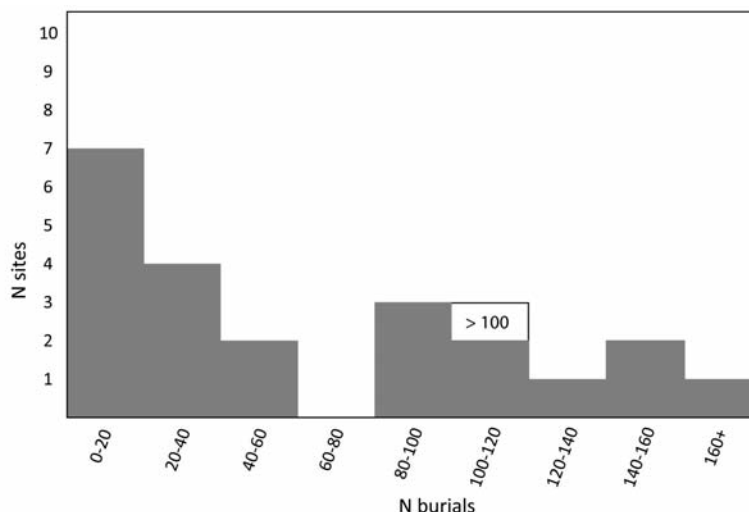


Fig. 10 Estimations of the numbers of burials in eastern Netherlands burial sites dated to the Urnfield period. – Site estimates in the table that are exactly on the boundary of two histogram categories have been classified in the upper categories. The three sites consisting of >100 burials have been depicted as well, but cannot be placed in a more specific category.

number of burials in more than half of the sites listed does not even exceed 60. These urnfields have been used for no longer than a few centuries, and often probably even shorter. Is this pattern typical of the eastern Netherlands?

Verlinde / Hulst (2010, 75-76) divide the Veluwe urnfields in three categories: small (1-9 burials), medium-sized (10-100 burials) and large (>100 burials). No less than 33 out of 37 sites are »small« or »medium-sized«. These authors also mention that gradual regional differences might have existed in the size of urnfields, but this statement is not underpinned by statistical analyses (Verlinde / Hulst 2010, 75). It is clear though that Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age burial sites consisting of no more than a few dozens of cremation burials have existed in large parts of the Low Countries and beyond. A detailed discussion of those sites goes beyond the scope of this paper, but we might refer to research in the southern Netherlands (Gerritsen / Jongste / Theunissen 2005, 7; Schinkel 2005, 524), Belgium and northern France (de Mulder 2011; Bourgeois / Talon 2009).

As mentioned above, urnfields are generally perceived as large, collective funerary sites that were used for centuries and consist of large numbers of urn burials with ditched structures. However, many burial sites do not conform to this »traditional« view at all. That a large variety existed in the life span of urnfields has been demonstrated above. Furthermore, a number of sites that have been discussed, for example, almost completely lack urns, yield striking grave-goods or are situated in remarkable places in the landscape. Most of these »strange« burial sites have been found relatively recently during large-scale settlement investigation in the most intensively studied parts of the research area. It is in these regions that a more detailed view of burial site variety starts to emerge, shedding some light on what might still be expected in other regions.

DISCUSSION

In this paper it was attempted to systematically assess the validity of the generally accepted models on settlement-urnfield relations by using data from the eastern Netherlands. In these models, which mainly

have their origins in large-scale excavations and intensive microregional research in different parts of the southern Netherlands, the large and collective urnfields that appeared at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age are interpreted as fixed reference points in the landscape. Urnfields are believed to have structured the movements of settlements (Roymans / Fokkens 1991; Roymans / Kortlang 1999). Our research, however, demonstrates that the situation actually is far more complex. For this statement there are spatial, chronological and ideological arguments.

First of all, our analysis of four regional test areas in the eastern Netherlands has shown that the spatial relations between urnfields and settlements are in fact very diverse. It turns out to be impossible to capture them in a single spatial model (fig. 7). This observation in itself is not very surprising. Obviously, one might expect to encounter regional discrepancies in late prehistoric landscape organization, which at least partly stem from physical geographical differences. It is very remarkable though that literally none of the urnfields discussed in our case studies is situated at the centre of a settlement area. Settlements and burial sites are frequently found in separate landscape units. If they are located on the same coversand ridge, for instance, it is actually quite common for the burial sites to be positioned at the »periphery« of this landscape unit.

In a chronological sense, our research has demonstrated that there was not such a strict dichotomy between »fixed« burial sites and »dynamic« settlements. Even though some of the largest urnfields known to us might indeed have stayed in use throughout the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, there are numerous indications that movements of burial sites were quite common as well. Evidence from the central and northern Netherlands reveals the same pattern. As burial sites with relatively short life spans are known from large parts of the Low Countries, it is clear that we cannot dismiss this phenomenon as a regional deviation. Both spatial and chronological observations discussed above indicate that landscape organization during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age was far more varied and dynamic than existing models make believe.

It will not be denied here that the beginning of the Late Bronze Age marks a number of crucial changes. The genesis of urnfields is certainly one of the most essential. Their appearance indeed seems to reflect an important ideological transformation (Fokkens 1997). However, as aforementioned study of Belgian and northern French urnfields has pointed out, it is possible that a small number of the burial sites in these regions were already founded in the final stages of the Middle Bronze Age (de Mulder 2011). This observation is very interesting, as it has recently been demonstrated that contrary to prevailing ideas hardly any barrows were erected during the second half of the Middle Bronze Age in the Low Countries (Bourgeois / Fontijn 2008). Is it possible that the first urnfields in the Low Countries appeared earlier than previously assumed, and therefore close at least part of this recently discovered gap in the erection of barrows? In order to answer this question more systematic ¹⁴C analyses of urnfield burials are needed.

Furthermore, it is necessary to rethink some of the basic assumptions underneath the urnfield concept as it is used in late prehistoric archaeology. Did these burial sites actually occupy central positions in Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age communities? Both in a spatial and symbolical sense? It has already been demonstrated that a large number of burial sites were not as monumental and conspicuous as one would expect, and therefore are unlikely to have functioned as fixed reference points.

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Zusammenfassung / Abstract / Résumé

Urnenfelder in Bewegung: zum Verhältnis zwischen Gräberfeldern und Siedlungen in den östlichen Niederlanden (1100-500 v. Chr.)

In allgemeinen Modellen zur Landschaftsorganisation der späten Bronzezeit und frühen Eisenzeit (1100-500 v. Chr.) werden die Urnengräberfelder als Kristallisationspunkte interpretiert, die Siedlungsverlegungen strukturierten und eine zentrale Lage in der Siedlungslandschaft besaßen. Die Urnenfelder blieben in der Landschaft statisch, die Siedlungen hingegen verhielten sich dynamisch. Allgemein wird angenommen, dass dieses einflussreiche Modell für größere Gebiete gültig ist, was jedoch noch nie überprüft wurde. In diesem Beitrag wird genau das für den östlichen Teil der Niederlande versucht. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Beziehungen zwischen Urnenfeldern und Siedlungen viel variabler sind als bisher angenommen. Sowohl räumliche als auch chronologische Beobachtungen deuten an, dass die Landschaftsorganisation der späten Bronzezeit und frühen Eisenzeit weitaus abwechslungsreicher und dynamischer war, als es das allgemeine Modell uns glauben lässt. Zudem gibt es neue Ansichten zur Grundidee des Urnenfelderkonzepts. Urnenfelder werden im Allgemeinen als große, kollektive Gräberfelder betrachtet, die über viele Jahrhunderte benutzt werden und die aus einer großen Zahl von Urnengräbern und sie umgebenden Gräben bestehen. Viele Gräberfelder entsprechen aber nicht diesem traditionellen Bild – es scheint klar, dass die Uniformität der Urnenfelder bisher zu stark betont wurde.

Urnfields on the move: testing burial site-settlement relations in the eastern Netherlands (c. 1100-500 BC)

In general models on Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (1100-500 BC) landscape organization, urnfields are interpreted as focal points that structured the movement of settlements across the landscape, and were located centrally within the settlement area. Urnfields were fixed, settlements shifted. These influential models are assumed to be valid for large areas. However, they have never been formally tested. In this paper an attempt is made to do so by using data from the eastern Netherlands. The analysis demonstrates that relations between urnfields and settlements are far more diverse than is generally assumed. Both spatial and chronological observations indicate that landscape organization during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age was far more varied and dynamic than existing models make believe. Furthermore, new insights are gained with regard to the basic assumptions underneath the urnfield concept in itself. Urnfields are generally perceived as large, collective burial sites that were used for many centuries and consist of large numbers of urn burials with ditched structures. Many burial sites, however, do not conform to this traditional view at all, indicating that the uniformity of urnfields has been greatly exaggerated in the past.

Les champs d'urnes en mouvement: essai sur les relations entre lieux de sépultures et d'habitats à l'Est des Pays-Bas (c. 1100-500 av. J.-C.)

Dans les modèles d'interprétation des paysages de la période du Bronze tardif et du début de l'âge du Fer (1100-500 av. J.-C.), les champs d'urnes sont généralement interprétés comme les points centraux qui structurent les mouvements d'habitats à travers le paysage, et possèdent une position centrale au sein des espaces habités. Les champs d'urnes étaient fixes, les habitations mobiles. Ces modèles d'influence sont supposés être valides pour de grandes surfaces. Néanmoins, ils n'ont jamais été formellement testés. Cet essai est une tentative de test basée sur des données en provenance de l'Est des Pays-Bas. L'analyse démontre que les relations entre champs d'urnes et zones d'habitation sont bien plus variées que ce que l'on croit habituellement. Les observations à la fois dans l'espace et le temps indiquent que l'organisation du paysage pendant le Bronze tardif et le début de l'âge du Fer était beaucoup plus variée et dynamique que ce que les modèles existants nous laissent croire. De plus, de nouvelles idées sont émises concernant la définition du concept de champs d'urnes en soi. Les champs d'urnes sont généralement perçus comme de grands lieux de sépulture collectifs qui étaient utilisés pendant plusieurs siècles, consistent en un grand nombre d'urnes funéraires et dont les structures étaient enfouies. Néanmoins, plusieurs lieux de sépulture ne correspondent pas du tout à cette définition traditionnelle, ce qui indique que l'uniformité des champs d'urnes a été grandement exagérée par le passé.

Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés

Späte Bronzezeit / frühe Eisenzeit / Urnenfelder / Landschaftsorganisation / Überprüfung allgemeiner Modelle / Variabilität von Fundstellen

Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age / urnfields / landscape organization / testing general models / site variety

Bronze final / premier âge du Fer / champs d'urnes / organisation spatiale / tests de modélisation / variété de sites

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