

organised. Archaeology is not merely about collecting every piece of data but about presenting it in a coherent and structured manner.

In conclusion, Schaefer-Di Maida's publication on the Mang de Bergen cemetery is an impressive achievement. However, the disorganised documentation in the second volume detracts from its otherwise high scientific value. Whether the concept of "transformation phases" offers new insights to archaeological research will depend on the perspective of the reader. The change from inhumation to cremation and the end of the practise of building barrows is a phenomenon, that could be observed throughout central Europe and there are a lot of competing concepts (e.g. BÉRENGER et al. 2012). Nonetheless, Mang de Bergen will undoubtedly remain a central point of reference for future research on Bronze Age cemeteries in northern Germany.

## References

- BÉRENGER et al. 2012  
D. BÉRENGER / J. BOURGOIS / M. TALON / St. WIRTH (eds), *Gräberlandschaften der Bronzezeit. Internationales Kolloquium zur Bronzezeit*, Herne, 15.–18. Oktober 2008. *Bodenalt. Westfalen* 51 (Darmstadt 2012).
- RANDBORG 1968  
K. RANDBORG, Von Periode II zu III. *Chronologische Studien über die ältere Bronzezeit Südkandinaviens und Norddeutschlands. Acta Arch. (Copenhagen)* 39, 1968, 1–142.
- RANDBORG 1972  
K. RANDBORG, From period III to period IV. *Chronological studies of the Bronze Age in Southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany (Copenhagen 1972)*.
- DE – 38126 Braunschweig  
Husarenstr. 75  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6669-2256>
- Michael Geschwinde  
c/o Niedersächsisches Landesamt  
für Denkmalpflege  
Regionalreferat Braunschweig

**TOBIAS MÖRTZ, Spätbronzezeitliche Waffendeponierungen Nordwesteuropas.** Logos Verlag GmbH, Berlin 2024. € 89.00. ISBN 978-3-8325-5660-0. 507 pages with 92 figures.

Hoard finds appear throughout the European Bronze Age with distinct chronological and chorological peaks. Their meaning has been discussed controversially for more than 150 years, fluctuating between the polar opposites of profane metal collections and votive offerings. During the last three decades, following seminal works like those by Svend HANSEN (1994) or Christoph SOMMERFELD (1994), a growing number of studies have shown that hoards are constituted due to regionally and chronologically differing rules on the categories and conditions of objects included, the arrangement of objects within the hoard, the placement of hoards in the landscape, and others more, thus providing arguments for hoards as evidence of a social praxis rooted in religious beliefs.

This opens the way for new questions regarding the intentions behind selection, accumulation and deposition of metalwork. The work by Tobias Mörtz, a revised version of a doctoral dissertation supervised by S. Hansen and defended at *Freie Universität Berlin* in 2019, focusses on one specific group of hoards from northwestern Europe to approach these questions: depositions of weapons. The area addressed in the monograph includes the British Isles and Ireland and a part

of continental Europe delimited by the Rhine delta in the north, the estuary of the Loire in the south, the Ardennes and the Forest of Argonne in the east, shortly the northern zone of the Atlantic circle (chapter 2, pp. 13–16). The time frame is the Late Bronze Age, with an older Horizon ranging from about 1150–1000 BC (hoarding phases Wilburton / Roscommon / Saint-Brieuc-des-Iffs) and a younger one between 1000–800 BCE (Ewart Park / Dowris / Plainseau). The start and end dates and the correlation of these local find groups (and research traditions) are not always easily determined. Large scale-radiocarbon dating programmes (NEEDHAM 1996) have produced a growing number of radiocarbon data that help to fix the northwestern European bronze hoards in time (chapter 3, pp. 17–37). In other regions of Europe, particularly the southeast, research is still struggling with defining and dating hoarding horizons – direct absolute dating of organic rests, e. g. in socketed bronze objects, would be a way forward here. The resulting solid chronological framework, a high frequency of finds and a long research history (chapter 4, p. 39–73), resulting in much of the material already being catalogued, are major arguments for choosing northwestern Europe for complex studies on metalwork deposition. Reading the detailed discussion of the history of western European research on hoarding, the reviewer cannot escape the impression that this discussion has to some degree become decoupled from that on the rest of the continent. The long road to the recognition that “scrap metal hoards” are not necessarily profane accumulations of old material to be recycled, e. g., could have been shortened by a wider reception of central European research.

The rather good background for studying western European hoards already provoked two earlier extensive monographs written by German scholars on the topic (HUTH 1996 and MARASZEK 2006). While much of the interpretations of Christoph Huth, who had argued against a cultic interpretation of hoards, is seen critically in the reviewed work, as clear rules apply to the selection, inclusion and exclusion of objects, Regine Maraszek's identification of such rules behind the depositions, which are accordingly seen as witnesses of ritual, is affirmed. A second part of the research history is concerned with evidence for war in the Bronze Age (pp. 62–73). While interpersonal violence is clearly attested, not least by the discoveries in the Tollense valley (JANTZEN et al. 2011), the intensity and scale of conflicts remain unclear. T. Mörtz stresses that intentional selection of weapons for hoarding might lead to a biased, increased, archaeological visibility of violent behaviour.

Chapter 5 (pp. 75–96) addresses the definition of weapon hoards. A weapon hoard is composed to more than 75 % of swords or spearheads and weapon-related items (chapes, fittings or rings from scabbards, ferrules, etc.). There are smaller, pure sword or spearhead hoards and smaller hoards that contain both weaponry and objects related to weaponry. Both categories of finds concentrate regionally in Ireland and northern Great Britain, outside of the distribution area of larger (25+ to more than 200 items) hoards with a higher degree of fragmentation of the objects. Due to composition and chronology, two classes of characteristic hoards can be differentiated: the older, 11<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century BC Wilburton hoards are made up of swords and pikeheads, while the younger, 9<sup>th</sup> century BC, Broadward hoards are characterised by barbed spearheads. Fragmentation and intentional damage to objects become more frequent with the overall number of objects included. Axes are not included under the weapons, due to theoretical thoughts on their usefulness in combat, differing use-wear and deposition patterns. Arrowheads, defensive weapons and evidence for clubs etc. made of wood are absent from the hoards. That this may not be the realistic scenario of Bronze Age combat is shown by the weapons discovered at the Tollense battlefield site, where wooden arms play an important role, while they are, similar to northwestern Europe, not detectable in regional hoards. A problem regarding the assessment of the weapon hoards under study here is their partly early and often not well-documented discovery. Their completeness remains doubtful in many cases.

Chapter 6 (p. 97–119) addresses the circumstances of discovery, again emphasising the lack of information on many finds. Use of metal detectors and the implementation of the “Portable Antiquities Scheme” led to a considerable rise in recorded finds but information on contexts and arrangement of the objects inside hoards remains poor. Already Ch. Huth had pointed at a correlation of hoard size with the date of discovery – hoards found earlier are smaller, i. e. very likely incomplete. The same is true for fragmentation – early finds are more likely made up of complete objects. The consequence is a focus on the groups of large hoards with fragments and damaged objects throughout the study. Most of the finds were deposited in a wet milieu, be it rivers or lakes or bogs; the depositions are thus not necessarily completely irretrievable, but at least meant to be definite.

Chapter 7 starts with a detailed discussion on the finds focusing on typology, distribution, and chronology (p. 121–215). It is followed by the evidence that then becomes key to the interpretation of the finds: traces of use and destruction of the weaponry (p. 216–247). Most of the more completely preserved weapons show traces of wear. These traces were documented exclusively macroscopically, resulting in the finding that the weapons were used in combat and not repaired before deposition. This leads the author to assume a short period of time between fighting and deposition. Additionally, refitting of fragments, here performed for the first time on a large sample of bronze hoards, shows regular destruction of a selection of weapons, swords more often than spearheads, followed by deposition of all fragments. This is in contrast to middle and eastern European heterogeneous “scrap hoards”, where for the most part only one or a few fragments of an object are included. Intensity of damage and the selectivity of destruction speak against a step in the process of recycling of the objects.

In the final chapter 8 an interpretation for the northwest European weapon hoards is proposed, starting with a substantial contextualization in time and space. Weapon hoards first appear in the Middle Bronze Age in the region under review, there is little evidence for comparable finds from the rest of Europe (p. 249–275). Then, three case studies of weapon collections with comparatively well-known formation processes are discussed: weapon dedications in Greek sanctuaries, in Celtic cult sites, and the Germanic bog finds of northern Europe (p. 275–280). The reasons behind Greek votive dedications are to some degree reconstructible from written sources. Between the Celtic cult sites some, like Gournay-sur-Aronde (FR), were excavated with modern methods leading to a wealth of information on their formation, and the same is true for some of the about 30 known Germanic bog depositions containing hundreds to thousands of weapons and items of warrior equipment.

A selection of used arms was dedicated in Greek sanctuaries following battles, by the victors. They were kept within the sanctuary and could not be reused, however, deposition when the storage areas were full or remelting and keeping of a fragment *pars pro toto* were practiced. Activities in the cult places of the Celtic world included the accumulation of booty over longer periods of time. The arms were exhibited for some time, and then intentionally damaged and buried. The sanctuaries also included display and burial of humans, with burial rites possibly differing between victors and defeated. The Germanic depositions with sometimes thousands of weapons scattered over larger areas in bogs / former lakes have been interpreted as the equipment of defeated warrior groups, as displays of power by the leaders of victorious armies, reinforcing their political power. The number and structure of the finds that sometimes include boats have been used to estimate group sizes, and the quality differences of the included weaponry were a starting point to reconstruct the structuring of armies. These three cases of “post-conflict ritual sites” (p. 308) form the base line for the interpretation of the Late Bronze Age weapon hoards. Between them, the author

sees the clearest structural connections between the Germanic bog depositions and the Late Bronze Age finds: Deposition shortly after a violent clash in a wet environment including intentional damage to many objects (p. 308–309). A difference is the lower number of weapons in Bronze Age hoards, which may be explained by bronze weaponry being reserved for just some fighters, and also lower overall numbers of combatants. The large Late Bronze Age weapon hoards would then hint at distinct historical events, which, however, cannot be reconstructed further, as battlefields are not known yet in northwestern Europe, contemporary graves have no weapons, and hoards are not clearly associated with human remains.

Drawing on anthropological models and ritual theory, particularly concepts of rites of passage, *communitas*, and memory established by Arnold VAN GENNEP (1909), Maurice HALBWACHS (1925), and Victor TURNER (1969), it is emphasised that socially sanctioned violence constitutes a disruption of normal life, which needs to be accompanied by *rites de passage* and by alienating the enemy to overcome killing inhibitions. Following combat, the state of sanctioned violence has to be ended, for the group as a whole and each individual warrior. Individual destruction of enemy arms may be a coping mechanism on the level of those individual warriors, channelling aggressions and relieving trauma. The deposition of enemy weapons and material is on the other hand seen as a grand ritual marking the end of violence and reintegrating the group of warriors into society. At the same time, it provides a platform to enhance group identity by once again highlighting the differences with the now defeated enemy group and reinforcing social boundaries.

The monograph closes with short summaries in German and English, lists of radiocarbon data, metal analysis, a table on the composition of the large hoards discussed, find lists, and bibliography. There are no plates with finds in addition to the 92 figures in the text.

The book under review represents an in-depth study of a clearly described group of weapon hoards and attempts, based on the circumstances of discovery, use-wear and intentional damages, an anthropologically informed interpretation that locates the destruction of arms in individual coping strategies following violent clashes and the deposition as a collective act reinforcing group identities and ritually marking the end of an episode of socially sanctioned violence. The proposed interpretation for the formation processes of the large Late Bronze Age weapon hoards of northwestern Europe is consistent and well-argued. In the past, a one-size-fits-all-explanation has been frequently applied to the large Late Bronze Age hoards of fragmented and damaged metalwork throughout Europe: they were seen as metal collections for remelting. The present work reveals how this seemingly uniform group of finds includes in fact very different phenomena, whose meaning can be detected by in-depth studies on a regional level. Hopefully it will be widely read and inspire similar studies in other regions.

One last point shall be addressed here: language. The monograph is written in German with only a very short summary in English. Particularly in Bronze Age studies, German once was a *lingua franca*, not least due to fundamental editions of finds like the “Prähistorische Bronzefunde” series or the corpus on “Die Funde der älteren Bronzezeit in Dänemark, Schleswig-Holstein und Niedersachsen” and the crucial work on the hoarding phenomenon during the 1990s. This importance has diminished over the last decades. German prehistoric archaeology is more and more forced to publish in English or to give up on a wide reception of its results. Not least expanding fields inextricably entangled with the natural sciences, like archaeogenetics, demand English publications as a prerequisite for access to high impact journals, which then secure access to funding and job opportunities. Given this situation, long monographs on northwestern European finds written in German, even good ones like the one at hand, are clearly facing the danger of a minor impact on discussions conducted nowadays mostly in English. Many German scholars adapt to this situ-

ation by publishing frequently or completely in English. By doing so, we accept a major setback. Language is not a purely technical means of communication. It also determines what is thinkable. As Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, and I cite this in German here, “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen”. There are concepts of thought that lose important nuances in translation, and others cannot be translated at all. This is not a plea for re-regionalization. However, it must remain legitimate to write a complex scientific work in one’s native language (not necessarily German), possibly accompanied by an English paper to sum up the main results (MÖRTZ 2018). Otherwise, science will suffer a reduction in schools of thought and will remain with what is thinkable and expressible in English. The loss would be enormous.

## References

HALBWACHS 1925

M. HALBWACHS, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris 1925). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1522/cla.ham.cad>.

HANSEN 1994

S. HANSEN, Studien zu den Metalldeponierungen während der älteren Urnenfelderzeit zwischen Rhônetal und Karpatenbecken. *Univforsch. Prähist. Arch.* 21 (Bonn 1994).

HUTH 1996

CH. HUTH, Westeuropäische Horte der Spätbronzezeit. *Fundbild und Funktion*. Regensburger Beitr. Prähist. Arch. 1 (Regensburg 1996).

JANTZEN et al. 2011

D. JANTZEN / U. BRINKER / J. ORSCHIEDT / J. HEINEMEIER / J. PIEK et al., A Bronze Age battlefield? Weapons and trauma in the Tollense Valley, north-eastern Germany. *Antiquity* 85,328, 2011, 417–433. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00067843>.

MARASZEK 2006

R. MARASZEK, Spätbronzezeitliche Hortfundlandschaften in atlantischer und nordischer Metalltradition. *Veröff. Landesamt Arch. Sachsen-Anhalt* 60 (Halle [Saale] 2006).

MÖRTZ 2018

T. MÖRTZ, Violence and ritual in Late Bronze Age Britain: Weapon depositions and their interpretation: In: C. Horn / K. Kristiansen (eds), *Warfare in Bronze Age Society* (Cambridge 2018) 168–188. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316884522.012>.

NEEDHAM 1996

S. NEEDHAM, Chronology and periodisation in the British Bronze Age. In: K. Randsborg (ed.), *Absolute Chronology. Archaeological Europe 2500–500 BC. Conference. Acta Arch.* 67 (Copenhagen 1996) 121–140.

SOMMERFELD 1994

CH. SOMMERFELD, *Gerätegeld Sichel*. Studien zur monetären Struktur bronzzeitlicher Horte im nördlichen Mitteleuropa. *Vorgesch. Forsch.* 19 (Berlin, New York 1994, Reprint 2012). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110857948>.

TURNER 1969

V. TURNER, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago 1969).

VAN GENNEP 1909

A. VAN GENNEP, *Les rites de passage* (Paris 1909).

DE – 06114 Halle (Saale)  
Richard-Wagner-Straße 9  
odietrich@lda.stk.sachsen-anhalt.de  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7013-3317>

Oliver Dietrich  
Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie  
Sachsen-Anhalt –  
Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte