

ONE

INTRODUCTION

Changing Practices and Perception of the Body

By the later Bronze Age, almost all of Europe had ‘converted’ from inhumation to cremation burial practices. Although this change began a few hundred years earlier, it is commonly associated with the spread of the ‘Urnfield Culture’, the beginning of which is dated to c. 1300–1250 BC, depending on the region investigated. By then, cremation had become a dominant rite as witnessed by thousands of cremation burials in urns located within flat cemeteries, ranging in size from a few to many hundred burials. Although poorly understood, the change raises significant questions about alterations of cultural practices at the most fundamental level of society – its attitude towards death and the status of the deceased body. It is the nature of these changes that this volume aims to address.

Most earlier approaches to this change have searched for explanations in either religious conversion or external influences. In contrast, we argue that the changes were an expression of the working out of fundamental ontologies and that they were, therefore, as much about new understandings of the body as about ‘religion’ or ideological convictions. We also posit that rather than just causing ruptures, external influences were transformed and translated in terms of pre-existing attitudes to the body and death and thus were integral to and interwoven with local cultural dynamics. The arguments we put forward have been influenced by body-centred approaches within the social sciences during the last decades, but they do not rest there. Although informed by such theories, this volume is primarily an attempt at engaging with the complexity

of the evidence, of pursuing questions about what was actually going on in Middle Bronze Age cremation burials and asking what this reveals about the attitudes of different Bronze Age communities, who altered their ways of dealing with death. The central question considered is: what did it mean to go from a world in which the dead body was buried intact and displayed with fineries, tools, and clothing to one in which the dead body is cremated and the remains then collected and buried in an urn? Moreover, what does this transformation tell us about the period specifically and about the nature of change more generally?

To answer these questions, we have investigated a substantial number of bi-ritual¹ Middle Bronze Age cemeteries or burials. They were selected because each in its way informs about what characterised the early stages of the conversion to cremation. They reveal aspects of how cremations were performed at a time when there was not an already existing tradition of how to do them, a local 'know-how' of ideas and practices. This, therefore, provides insights into how this transition happened and what decisions were made that involved or resulted in changes to customary burial practices. The investigation shows, as discussed in the following chapters, that rather than being a swift and coherent horizon of change, as commonly presented, the full adaptation of cremation took time and explored different trajectories. The adaptation of cremation is throughout affected by a concern with finding a new physical form for the burials and with the redefinition of the cremated bones as still constituting some kind of corporeal substance. There was, therefore, considerable local experimentation with what these new forms may be. The expressions of these concerns vary, but they form a persistent theme in all the regional studies during this period of change.

Two features stand out in these processes. One is the recurrent evidence of how the attempts at formulating a proper, but new, burial tradition drew on existing local traditions – clearly such traditional ways of doing things provided familiar practical 'answers' and mental templates for how a burial should be built and shaped. The other is how the drawing of associations between the characteristics of the living and the deceased body, such as the ability to use jewellery or the need for clothing, helped to reconstitute the fragmented cremated bones as a corporeal body. These insights are significant. We believe that the patterns and trends we have distilled, and the arguments they give rise to, are important for understanding major aspects of the changes that took place during the end of the Middle Bronze Age in temperate Europe. They help to show this as a period during which new ideas about death, and through that the living, were being formulated and enacted, and how in the process new cultural conventions and traditions were being made.

¹ We use the term bi-ritual to refer to burial sites in which inhumations and cremations were used at the same time.

The changing attitudes to and treatment of the body during the Middle to Late Bronze Age is, therefore, the focus of this volume. The analysis and arguments are explicitly concerned with the concrete observable consequences and impacts of the new burial rites. The classic question of the spread of cremation is accordingly discussed through a radically altered lens of inquiry with a resolution at the level of local communities: what did *they* do? However, while our observations and interpretations are contextualised in terms of the cultural milieus in which the changes were shaped, our aim is still comparative. The resulting comparison is concerned with common trends and tendencies, aiming to reveal underlying similarities in cultural reasoning. The chapter structure aids this comparison, as each analytical chapter relates to a particular stage in the burial ritual, enabling detailed comparative discussions of particular kinds of decisions.

REFLECTIONS ON AIMS AND SCOPE

We explore how ideas and understandings arising from the recent focus on the body within the Social Sciences and Humanities can be used to investigate the fundamental change in burial activities, which the widespread introduction of cremation represents. The change from inhumation to cremation is not simple. Although cremations occasionally appear in earlier periods, two features make the transformation that led to and characterised the Urnfield Culture burial practices significant and distinct. One is that cremation became the absolute dominant rite in most of Europe, rather than simply being an additional burial form. The other is that the introduction of urns at some stage in this transformation must have affected the ontological status of the cremated remains in a manner never seen before, as the cremated body became ‘containable’ as matter or fragments in a vessel. Burial practices were also altered in other ways, such as through the introduction of large cemeteries (the so-called urnfields) and the changing role of grave goods.

It has been common to present this change in burial practice as accompanied by a new and widely shared iconographic language (reflected by the use of the bird-sun-boat symbols, see also Chapter 4), intensified ritual practices (in particular the deposition of large amounts of bronzes in hoards), and changes in settlement pattern. It is thus possible that the shift in burial practices took place in tandem with broad social and political changes, including a remarkable change in how the individual is expressed within various social contexts, as further discussed in Chapter 4. The connections between these changes do, however, remain very poorly understood. Presenting them as a ‘package’ carries the risk of reiterating the notion that this was a horizon of cultural change, whilst downplaying the evidence of more fragmentary processes of change.

Earlier research primarily approached the differences between inhumation and cremation as reflecting two alternative rituals, creating an almost mystical sense of cremation expressing new beliefs and novel social needs. Until recently, interpretations of the introduction of cremation were accordingly commonly dominated by a concern with explaining why this change happened, leading to much debate about whether, for example, this development was linked to the idea of a soul (see Chapter 2) or arguments about cremations being associated with ideas about 'essence' (e.g. Barrett 1994). We believe, and this position has become strengthened through our research, that this focus has resulted in a neglect of the equally important question of how the transformation happened, in other words, what people did. It is surprising, and a substantial challenge, that we do not have a well-developed, theoretically informed understanding of what these changes and transformations actually were about. Interpretations, typically, have not linked the question of why this transition took place to investigations of how communities changed their ways of practising burials; and they usually pay little attention to variations in the actual responses to the body that can be seen within burial practices. Greater clarification of the nature of these changes and the way they unfold is therefore called for, especially since within them we may be able to locate processes and mechanisms that can contribute to more general debates about the nature of societies and their capability of change.

The opportunity to conduct the research presented here arose as part of the project 'Changing beliefs of the human body: a comparative social perspective', a cross-disciplinary research initiative, based at the University of Cambridge from 2005 to 2010. The project addressed the question of why and how humans change what they believe about the human body (Robb and Harris 2013). It approached this question within a long-term perspective covering different cultural contexts including literate and non-literate, high-tech and traditional, as well as ancient and modern societies. The investigation of the spread of cremation in Europe during the second millennium BC was a case study within the project. The aim was to study the changes in attitudes to the body (and associated beliefs) that must have been behind this example of a radical change in the treatment of the dead body. The research focus arose from the recognition that the archaeological data linked to these changes suggest much greater complexity, in terms of variation and transitional stages between different forms, than was normally presented in discussions of the period. A return to the question of the spread of cremation was timely. Renewed research needed, however, a change of focus. We argued that the concern must be the mechanisms through which new practices were emulated and adapted within local settings, the relationship between local and general processes, and whether and how these changes in burial practices imply alterations in beliefs. Research should aim to elucidate the variations in the

performance and ritualisation of cremation and the specific changes observed in the shift from the use of inhumation burials to cremations in urns. Since the project began, other scholars have responded to the same challenge (e.g. Becker 2007, Cerezo-Román, Wessman, and Williams 2017, Hofmann 2008, Kuijt, Quinn, and Cooney 2014, Lochner and Ruppenstein 2013), and our collective understanding of the transition is gradually becoming more contextual and nuanced.

The reasons for this change during the Bronze Age, the social mechanisms through which the new burial practices could spread so widely and seemingly so rapidly, and the extent to which this reveals alterations in beliefs about the body (and thus potentially also fundamental views about the world) are core questions that may provide us with insights into some aspects of the capacities and workings of Bronze Age societies. In particular, documenting change in how local communities organise seminal social activities as well as respond to and absorb general trends and external influences is an important contribution as it helps to shed light on cultural dynamics at two distinct levels: the local and the grander scale. This concern with differential scales of practices and impact echoes the principles underwriting Fernand Braudel's influential notion of different times (Braudel 1973 [1949]), and has been recognised as a dynamic underwriting long term history (e.g. Hodder 2000, Hodder and Preucel 1996). Recognising different scales of practice has, nonetheless, remained surprisingly under-explored in the investigation of major transitional periods in prehistory.

In response to these aims, we have constructed an analytical framework that is focused on how the essential changes unfold – at various levels from single sites to regions. Through this, we aim to look at how people, through their actions, interpretations, negotiation, and discursive experimentations with forms and reasons, make the changes rather than merely being subjected to change. This approach has been borne out by the type and range of variations we have observed within individual sites and by how overarching tendencies and structural changes are manifest locally in a range of different ways.

THE BODY: AS MATERIALITY AND THE LOCATION OF DEATH

The body has been a central thematic focus in the Social Sciences and Humanities since the 1980s. The reasons behind the intensified debates are many and interwoven, being formed both within the academic environment created by first post-structuralism and then post-modernism as well as feminism, and being reinforced by the individualising tendencies of modernity (Latour 1993, Robb and Harris 2013). In this development, the role of the body has changed from a foundational condition taken for granted to an object of study and discourse. The potentials of the body as a new analytical platform from which we can initiate investigations of society as well as individuals have

been laid out. In this development, the body has proved to be a powerful analytical ‘lens’, whether in a social, metaphorical, or phenomenological sense or when referring to its physical constitution. These concerns have been influential for our engagement with the Middle Bronze Age body, and in Chapter 3 we briefly reflect on how we may use these arguments to investigate the dead body and the way societies react to their deceased members.

The varied cultural responses to death suggest that its interpretation is in some ways usually linked to attempts at understanding life, however abstract and reified these reflections may appear. We suggest that interpretations of death are limited by our imagination, which in turn is restricted by language and experiences. From this position, death is essentially incomprehensible; but despite or because of this incomprehension, people, community, and society need to and do make sense of death in their own ways. They tend to incorporate it into their ontologies, and through this life and death become mutually intelligible – one becomes understandable through the other. Death is an obvious, to some extent necessary, foundation of ontology – we need to be able to place ourselves including our death into the ‘grand scheme of things’; we need to be able to make death imaginable and thus to formulate our responses to it. In the formulation of responses, in the forms of death and burial rituals, communities construct order and propriety, dressing the unimaginable in a cloak of reasons and thus understanding.

In Chapter 3, we pursue this point a bit further, proposing that the varied responses to the dead body all in their ways are informed by understandings of the world and that they, in turn, become fundamental to such understandings; they reveal ways of reflecting and reasoning about the body and its relationships, meditating on causalities. The study of the treatment of the dead body therefore obviously involves issues of beliefs. However, it seems to us that Bronze Age² belief about death was largely constituted in the act of burying, so that it was through performing a particular act according to prescribed conventions that belief was formulated and experienced socially, rather than necessarily having to do with faith in a modern conventional sense (Sørensen 2012). Apart from burials we see little, if any, evidence of formalised reflection on death during this period; there are no temples or shrines, nor any deities that we can recognise in contexts linked to death. This also suggests that whatever changes in belief cremation was introducing, understanding what it was about would have been worked out and articulated through the gradual development of cremation as a formal burial rite; meaning was generative of and generated through practice. This argument is also supported by the archaeological data as the variations

² Throughout we are referring to the Bronze Age in temperate Europe, unless otherwise specified.

observed suggest that the understanding of what burial 'stood for' and the status of the deceased was far from uniform but rather was being 'worked out'.

DISCUSSING BELIEFS

The change to cremation has in various ways and for a number of reasons often been linked to ideas of changes in the belief system. Although we assume that belief³ was relevant to how burials were performed, this is not our focus of interest. Nonetheless, it is helpful to briefly clarify our understanding of the term. The concept of belief has been much debated within anthropology (e.g. Needham 1973). Critique has been raised against the use of the concept, arguing that it too easily implies an essentialism that is misleading and analytically counter-productive, or that its character as an internal state cannot be expressed in language without compromising the experience of belief. Eradicating the world from our vocabulary risks, however, that a veil is pulled over a particular range of human reactions and behaviours, which, however varied and differently argued and formed, relates to how people think about and make the world understandable in their own terms. It risks ignoring how people create order and reason about aspects of their world, which, although affecting them, are beyond their control (see also Sørensen 2012). Rejecting the idea of beliefs as an integral part of cultures is a reactionary move, in the sense of being an almost predictable reaction and response to the shortcomings and ideological burden of functionalist anthropological arguments of the twentieth century, which gave rise to an anthropological approach to belief that made it an almost definitional matter in terms of the recognition of cultural groups. A terminological rejection, however, risks denying that people 'have' beliefs. Of course, beliefs cannot be approached simply as an integral, almost definitional, part of cultures. But we must nonetheless acknowledge that people behave as if they 'share beliefs' and that this is often used by them to understand and articulate their social and cultural belonging and to rationalise their behaviour.

In this volume, we are not concerned with beliefs understood as some kind of internal state, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard's 'interior state' (Barnard and Spencer 1996: 64) beyond language and maybe even as part of cognition. However, we think there is merit in investigating the formation of shared practices formed around shared understandings or agreements about challenging aspects of how one experiences the world and reflects on its causalities.

³ The format of Bronze Age beliefs, as indeed our own, probably ranged widely from mundane, momentary assumptions of causalities (e.g. 'We will be blessed because the sun shone when the fire touched her') to beliefs that have become ritualised and turned into conventions (e.g. 'Our beliefs dictate that the cremation must be over before the sun sets').

In this sense, the concept of belief that underwrites our approach is not limited by language, as a means of describing and sharing beliefs, but indeed resides in language, as a form of and a complement to bodily practice: belief is, we propose, imminently social. Belief in that sense is constructed through communication (not compromised by it) and enacted by society. It should be noted that beliefs in this sense should not automatically be coupled to the concept of religion.

Against this background, it becomes obvious that substantial changes in how societies react to and deal with the deceased bodies of their members may show radical transformations and changes in belief systems. In turn, it follows that changes in beliefs, however generated, will often influence thinking about death. The introduction of cremation as a common and dominant burial practice in Bronze Age Europe constitutes a ‘horizon’ of change, during which, we argue, beliefs in the form of fundamental attitudes towards and understandings of the nature of bodies and their status when dead, are being challenged and reworked.

ABOUT BURIALS AND CREMATIONS

Burials are cultural and social events. They are also important archaeological evidence. Archaeological discussions about burials have intensified over recent decades, reflecting a growing recognition of the importance not only of the data burials provide but also of how they offer evidence of important social practices and evidence of the lives of individuals as well as groups. In particular, attention has been drawn to how burials, in addition to embedding responses to death, are also situations of social upheaval and restructuring as well as confirmation of social bonds (e.g. Barrett 1994, Parker Pearson 1999, 2014, Tarlow and Nilsson Stutz 2013). Moreover, it has become ever more clear that

... burials can be understood as deliberate and intentional constructions in which objects and space are used together to make important social statements. This means that graves often are potent semiotic spaces. Values and meanings of importance to their communities were being worked out through their construction and embedded within them (Sørensen 2004: 168).

The change from inhumation to cremation is an important example of the roles of burials, providing evidence of how fundamentally they can change. Within the Middle Bronze Age, the change in burial practices must have constituted a major social and socio-psychological rupture as cremation treats the body in a manner that is radically different from that of inhumation. In contrast to earlier occasional uses of cremation, what we see with the introduction of cremation during the Middle to Late Bronze Age is a change in

burial rite that led to a new dominant practice – ways of doing things were being transformed and the new practice was transmitted, copied, and imitated so that it spread widely within Bronze Age communities. Moreover, the change was obvious, it was not just a matter of nuances and slight alteration. In terms of the deceased body, this was a fundamental change. This leads to challenging questions: why did it happen, and how could such a change take place over such large areas and during such a short time? We gain some insights into how radical this change in the treatment of the dead body is through some of the debates linked to the reintroduction of cremation in historic times. There was, for instance, an intense debate in Europe during the nineteenth century about whether within a Christian belief system, cremation could be acceptable, with particular concerns expressed about the necessary state of the corpse on the day of resurrection (Ebner 1989, Jupp 1990, Thalmann 1978). Even today, such discussions surface in the public domain. For instance, when in 2008 the Greek government made cremation legal, this provoked considerable public critique and resistance from the Orthodox Church.

OUR POSITION

In response to the issues raised, we wish to place the agency in people and to stress that this really does mean investigating them as people who respond, think, and negotiate about meaning through the materiality of dead bodies and grave constructions. How did they formulate their ‘right’ way of performing burials as social activities, what were the roles and potencies of existing forms, and how did they respond to the potentials and challenges arising from creating new conventions?

As a starting point, we found it necessary to provide a historiographic background in order to make it clear how the change to cremation has been conceptualised and conventionalised. In a very literate sense, our research is investigating how different communities in Europe during the Middle Bronze Age worked out and developed new norms of burial practices. It is based on observations of the various ways they constructed graves and of the different ‘things’ they did to the body. The cultural practices we have investigated have, however, been studied and discussed since the late eighteenth century, so while our analysis pursues a new angle of investigation and shifts the focus of attention, it is both embedded within and reacting to the research traditions that have shaped this data. Previous work is both the point of departure and the positions against which we have constructed our field of vision. In Chapter 2, we, therefore, identify the roots of our questions through a historiographic review. We aim to trace two formative aspects. One is the realisation that pots found underground were graves and how through the eighteenth and nineteenth century these ideas were formalised leading to an

increase in evidence about this burial form. The other is the concomitant erection of the intellectual scaffolding in the form of chronologies, terminologies, and explanatory models that was needed to make sense of these observations. The chapter demonstrates how the labelling of the period and the definitional emphasis on the shared practice of burying the cremated remains in urns over the centuries have concretised a concept of the Urnfield Culture and placed the change to cremation as its starting point. This concretisation has happened in two ways. On one hand, an understanding of the Urnfield Culture and its link to cremations have become part of how we 'know' the Bronze Age and this understanding has been stabilised through the continued use of the terminology and assumptions established by the canon of this research (Kimmig 1964, Kossack 1954). Certain ways of thinking about the phenomenon have become relatively unquestioned praxis. On the other hand, the increased tendency for researchers to work on single cemeteries or within well-defined but small regions means that they tend to interpret their data as local variants of the general scheme rather than reflecting on how their data may also challenge it. Only in recent years have we returned to monographs that deal with larger regions of the Urnfield Culture more comprehensively (e.g. Hofmann 2008). The hugely varied local versions of how cremations were performed and new grave forms invented have therefore not been fully explored, nor have the variations been used to further develop our understanding of these changes. There has been little attempt at reflecting on, for example, what it means that these changes appear different when we use a local rather than a metaperspective.

Our theoretical position we spell out in Chapter 3. We aim to clarify our understanding of scientific knowledge claims and discuss how we pursue body theories. As discussed above, our analysis is built around two mutually reinforcing interpretative propositions, and we explain these in that chapter. One is about death and our proposition that death and the attempt at understanding it are of fundamental importance for how societies formulate themselves. The other point we make is that the body plays a central role in the construction of worldviews. We argue that burial practices, as an expression of the practitioners' sense of order and propriety, relate to and are framed within such understandings. Investigating burial practices can, therefore, help to better reveal how communities construct their understandings of the world and, in particular, how changes within these domains can be initiated, transmitted, and widely accepted; or in other words, how change becomes possible.

Some general cultural background to the transformation in burial practices was also needed, which we provide in Chapter 4. The intention is to provide a rough contextualisation of the practices and people studied through a sketch of the period.

Our approach is hermeneutic and heuristic. Our initial starting point was the dramatic transformation of the burial rite and what this may tell us about

Bronze Age communities specifically and cultural change more generally. As we became more deeply embroiled with these questions, it became obvious that the necessary first step was to gain detailed insights into what people actually did in terms of ‘doing’ cremation burials – we had to engage in a kind of ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973) aiming to describe and through that identify the nuances (and thus shifts and transformations) in cultural action. An analysis of all Bronze Age cultural practices, however, would be too wide-ranging, lack focus, and prevent us from a detailed scrutiny of practice. A further limitation of the subject had to be made. The focus we developed was that of tracing the activities and decisions taking place in connection with the treatment of the dead body – the *chaîne opératoire*, so to speak, of preparing the body and making the grave. This provided us with two axes of analysis: the range of activities involved with the physical treatment of the body itself (Chapter 6), and the various activities involved with the construction of a place/container for the body as its place of burial (Chapter 7). In addition, in Chapter 8 we consider the range of evidence that suggests some kind of continuous interaction with the deceased after burial; this richly documents the extent to which the transition was progressed through the development of distinct local practices and experimentation with forms.

We did, however, need to create some further limitations on our data to make a coherent investigation feasible, and for this, we selected to use a case study approach with evidence from other sites used more sporadically. The case studies, which are described in Chapter 5, are distributed widely in time and space; nevertheless, they share a common narrative of how the body is being responded to during the introduction of cremation at a particular location. This means that actual, contextualised examples of what people did, and how within this we find common themes as well as great variation, inform and direct the investigation. The purpose of the case studies, which work as ‘thinking-platforms’ and documentations, is not to use them as explanatory models, but rather to use them to build up better knowledge about the process through which cremation developed as a different type of burial, in which the construction of meaning had shifted, and the concerns were altered. We did not find it useful to approach this in terms of one set of actions being replaced by another, as this clearly would mask the transformative mechanisms that affected local communities’ ability to (adopt) change. We accordingly focused on transformation rather than change.

The case studies are used as the ‘means’ of dissection of what this transformation was about and how it became articulated. They bring with them an awareness of scale, with the possibility of a new type of dialogue opening between the study of the locally specific and that of general trends. This turned out to be extremely helpful in terms of discerning underlying structural similarities and appreciating what the variations relate to. The case studies vary from

single sites to regions, making it possible to engage with variations of cultural practices at different scales of social action and interaction. In other words, the volume aims to provide an embedded explorative ‘reading’ of these changes in terms of the agency of communities, individuals, objects, and constructions.

Through the analysis, it became clear that the traditional interpretation of Bronze Age cremation being caused by a package of ideas and practices that spread rapidly is unsupportable. Throughout the area investigated we find there is strong evidence for a distinct temporal dimension to the change, and that the full transformation from inhumed bodies to cremations placed in urns commonly takes place over a period of three to four generations with considerable alterations and experimentation taking place during that time and with much attention still focused on the wholeness of the body. Indeed, we can identify a transitional stage within most sites and regions. This is the time it takes within each community to change their burial practices to one in which the cremated bones are no longer treated in a manner that focuses on re-creating likeness to the skeleton or fleshed body or in other words maintains their likeness to inhumations. We do not propose this as a ‘period’ in the traditional sense of archaeological chronologies that divide timelines into successive blocks, or as a horizon in absolute time; rather, we aim to stress that there is a temporal dimension to all action and that the development of particular forms of new normative practices ‘takes time’. It is, therefore, to be expected that the length of the transitional period will vary and unfold in different manners when sites are compared, although they share having a period of transformation as well as the general direction of change.

For the cremation burials constructed during this transitional period, we identify three phases⁴ of body manipulation during which concerns can become articulated and materialised; this is the theme of Chapters 6 to 8. The first phase we label the transformative phase. During this phase, the body is cremated, through which it appears to gain a status of mixture: it becomes ash and bone fragments and there is a sense of a disembodied-bodiness. In the next phase, the reassemble-phase, the remains are commonly manipulated to regain bodiness during their burial; this may include the use of objects and placing the bones to imitate shape and involves placing the remains in some kind of resting place. The third phase, the re-integration phase, is expressed through secondary interaction with the bones (or their place of burial) or the removal of associated objects. Through the transition period, each of these phases lessened (more or less) in intensity and in terms of how explicitly they

⁴ Although there are obvious similarities between these phases and those traditionally linked to arguments about *rite de passage*, namely separation, liminality, and incorporation (van Gennep 1960 [1909]), we selected to use terms that arose directly from our interpretative engagement with the practices we could discern.

are stated. Whereas variations of the first two phases either are observed or can be inferred throughout the areas of study, the third is only found on some sites and there is considerable variation in how it is expressed. This may suggest that of the three phases of the transformation of burial practices, it is the relationship to the body after it is buried that is most locally specific and least likely to involve imitation and influences from other groups; this scenario is further discussed in Chapter 8.

We interpret the practices dominating the second phase, the reassemble-phase, as particularly revealing of attitudes to the body and their gradual transformation. We interpret these practices as shaped around the 'body re-imagined', insofar as the physicality of the cremated bones is explored as a means of creating a link to the real (lived) body through the re-imagined or remade body. This is the starting point for the reconstitution of the cremated body as a new kind of whole. Typically, the cremated bones may be reassembled or annotated to regain similarities or similar properties to the lived body, such as shape or proportion. The body's materiality is remade after its cremation. This, for instance, commonly takes the form of a reorganisation and laying-out of the bones themselves in the shape of a body. Usually, it is a spatial presence, the dimensionality of the body shape, that is emphasised, in other words, long and slender and realistic in proportion; but in some cases, there is an additional emphasis on the different parts of the body – the head, the abdomen, and the feet. It is also common to see objects used, in particular dress fittings, to annotate the body, for example when pins are placed where the chest would be or when arm rings are placed at the sides of the cremated remains. Objects, especially pottery, may also be used to outline the space of the body or even to indicate its extreme points: head and feet. These and other characteristics suggest that the concern that had to be 'solved' during the transitional period from inhumation to cremation was about the wholeness of the body – despite the fragmentation introduced by cremation. It seems it was difficult to let go of an emphasis on wholeness. It even seems possible that this emphasis on bodiness in some cases was maintained for some high-status graves late into the Urnfield period. Thus, we see a tension between an embrace of the idea of cremation and yet a reluctance, or indeed a socio-psychological inability, to let go of the perception of the dead body as a corporal existence. Over time, the tension lessened and a different attitude to the dead body formed when cremated remains became things that could be collected up and placed in a container. However, in general, a complete change in attitudes to the body is first seen after a few generations have experimented with and altered how they conduct cremation burials. This emphasis on wholeness, furthermore, suggests that practices that involve circulation or other utilisation of the distributive qualities of body fragments or the partial body were not regularly carried out in the study regions. It is

interesting to note that this seems different in England, where it has been suggested that fragmented cremated bones were circulated amongst the living (Brück 2009, 2019), and where the introduction of Bronze Age cremations as a dominant ritual seems to have followed a different trajectory being both early and immediately linked to the use of urns.

Based on the analysis in Chapters 6–8 of practices associated with these three phases we return to the question of their significance, including what they reveal about attitudes to the dead body in Chapter 9. There we also return to the question of how transformations take place and the role of memory. We do not concern ourselves with the specific content of attitudes and beliefs, as we find the question of ‘what is going on inside people’s heads’ beyond the evidential potentials of our data; but we do propose that we can expose the underlying consistency in the practices surrounding death during this period and how substantially they were influenced by, and in turn influenced, how the body was perceived. Therefore, this volume does not aim to be an exhaustive account of why cremation was introduced and the different forms it takes in the European Bronze Age, but the range of data explored allows us to draw comparisons between the responses and practices of different local communities and through this to trace both common tendencies and distinct variations. Through this, a new kind of comparison emerges, and Bronze Age cremation practices become more nuanced and varied than usually presented, startling in their diversity and yet a more grounded practice than expected.

Due to its distinct focus and approach, the volume can argue for a different way of understanding the spread of cremation – and through this it also contributes to the reflection on how change within fundamental aspects of society can take place. It introduces the local cultural context as a crucial influence on how the idea of cremation was absorbed and adapted. It also provides a rich range of examples to support the argument that the understanding of the deceased body was articulated through contemporary embodied understandings of the human form. Lastly, it suggests that this way of perceiving the body was finally broken when cremation began to be placed in urns as a matter of routine – at that stage, the association between the living and the dead body had become dramatically altered.