The homecoming of religious practice: an analysis of offering sites in the wet low-lying parts of the landscape in the Oer-IJ area (2500 BC-AD 450)
Kok, M.S.M.

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4. THE WET LOW-LYING OFFERING SITES WITHIN THE OER-IJ AREA: AN ANALYSIS FROM A LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE

The focus on landscape within the Oer-IJ project of the Amsterdam Archaeological Centre has led to excavations in areas outside the direct settlements and this has given new information on the wet low-lying areas and fields. This new information has not yet been fully integrated into the habitation/land-use models of the area. The main aim here is to comprehend the ritual use of the low-lying parts of the Oer-IJ area and relate these practices to the wider landscape. This is done in order to integrate the low-lying parts of the landscape into land-use models, which can be used in archaeological prospection and the decision making process. In this chapter the land-use model will be formed and in the next chapter the implications for archaeological survey and the decision-making process will be put forward.

4.1 THE APPROACH TAKEN IN ANALYSING OFFERINGS IN WET LOW-LYING AREAS

Two theoretical standpoints from chapter 1 form the basis for the analysis of the ritual use of the wet low-lying areas in the Oer-IJ area. It is taken that people intensively ordered, perceived and used their landscape in accordance with their worldview. And ritual practices affect and relate to the everyday world of people. This means that, although, the focus here is on the ritual use of the wet low-lying areas of the Oer-IJ because they have received less attention, these areas can only be fully understood in relation to other elements in and use of the landscape.

As the wet low-lying areas are viewed from a landscape perspective it is relevant to look at the different character of these areas. In an estuary environment not only the shape and size but also the quality of the water differs over relatively small distances. There is salt, brackish and fresh water, tidal and seasonal influences on the water levels, flowing and stagnate water, and open water and wet-land/peat. The different kinds of water also relate to specific natural cycles that could be of importance for their choice as a place of offering. The question should therefore not only be ‘where’ in the wet low-lying parts of the landscape, but also in ‘what kind’ of wet places were these ritual practices performed.

Several conclusions are drawn in chapter 2 which will be taken further here. The main observation is that the offering sites are highly variable in their content and appearance. This high variability diminishes the usefulness of a checklist for the determination of a site as an offering site. Along a different route Fontijn reached a similar conclusion. He summarized and analysed the main literature written on the subject of ways to distinguish between ritual and non-ritual deposits. He concluded that there is no consensus on which elements are of a determining nature and that only when an economic-functional explanation is unsatisfactory a ritual explanation is brought to the fore. Other methods have to be applied as there is no checklist against which the data can be analysed. Stjernquist’s method of asking more general questions appears to be the most fruitful way to analyse the offering sites. Her questions are, however, related to the analyses of already recognised offering sites. A new set of questions is necessary for the determination whether a site is an offering site. In chapter 1 an offering is defined as a material exchange between a human and a CPS-agent and this exchange takes place because of a specific reason at a certain time and in a certain place and within a specific worldview. This definition does not describe the specific appearance of an offering. This unspecific character of the definition can be seen as a drawback, but at the same
time it can avoid constraints, which would exclude many offerings that do not fit into a tight pattern, like some of the offerings mentioned in chapter 2. Offerings in pre- and protohistoric northwest Europe take place within the context of a religion with many CPS-agents. This is very different from the later monotheistic religions that have written proscriptions for the manner in which many rituals should be performed. Furthermore, the term offering, as used in the above manner is broadly applicable. More neutral terms as ‘ritual deposition’, which in archaeology often leads to the neglect of the religious aspect can be left aside.

The main issue with the analyses of depositions in relation to offerings is whether they were the result of a material exchange between humans and CPS-agents. What is of importance here is that there is every reason to assume that the people of the Oer-IJ area held a worldview, which incorporated CPS-agents. The difficulty is to establish whether the people in the Oer-IJ gave objects to these CPS-agents in these specific places, namely the wet low-lying areas. In chapter 2 the type of depositions in wet places discussed were interpreted as offerings. Ritual depositions in wet places within the Oer-IJ will be interpreted in a similar line as offerings.

The elements of an offering as defined above that we can analyse are location, placement, time, and similarities and differences with other find-complexes. And questions should focus on these elements. The analyses take place on the assumption that, although the appearance of an offering is not defined, the specific practices involved in an offering could be discernable.

The question of location is concerned with the different kinds of wet places in low-lying areas. In chapter 2 it was shown that wet places are suitable for offerings in the Germanic world. Here the aim will be to see whether specific kinds of wet places were preferred for (specific) offerings. Placement involves the manner in which objects were placed within the wet low-lying areas. All social exchanges have some tradition of performance. Objects can either be set in an arrangement or hurled towards someone or something, to name but a few possibilities. Here the question of time also comes into play. This not only involves the duration of the practice but also the moment of the exchange. Are there preferred periods or seasons in which the exchange takes place? The influence of seasonality on ritual depositions in specific pits and watery places has been demonstrated in the Oer-IJ area. Finally, the question of similarities and differences with other find-complexes can give insight in the selection of objects. Even though all objects could be considered as an offering a preference for specific objects is to be expected. This preference leads to selective practices that could make it possible to distinguish between different assemblages. But also the condition of the object could make it possible to distinguish between different practices.

In the Oer-IJ area 499 sites are known within the date range of the Late Neolithic Period to the Roman Iron Age. These sites can encompass a single sherd or settlements and fields spanning several hundreds of years and anything in between. All sites were analysed according to the above questions. A large number of sites were in an early stage of the research disqualified on the basis of several criteria. For example, about 250 sites contained only pottery sherds that were collected mainly during surveys. The lack of information on the context of the sherds made it impossible to give these sites an interpretation as offering sites or any other uses for that matter. Over twenty sites were disqualified as they consisted only of plough marks or arable layers with few to no artefacts. Other sites were disqualified as they were not (partly) situated within wet parts of the landscape. The more complex sites were not considered to be offering sites in low-lying wet areas mainly as the location, placement, and/or selection of artefacts did not indicate an offering practice. These sites could contain offerings of other types, such as house-offerings, not associated with low-lying wet areas.

Eventually this has led to the selection of 22 sites as (probable) offering sites. The data of these 22 sites will be presented below. They are grouped according to the different kind of wet low-lying area. After the descriptions of the sites further analysis will take place in which the relation with the wider landscape, other land-uses and practices and the embedding in the wider northwest European practice of offerings as described in chapter 2 are investigated.

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11 Appendix 3.
12 Two sites are situated in peat that is not low-lying in relation to its direct surroundings, see section 4.1.2.
THE WET LOW-LYING OFFERING SITES WITHIN THE OER-IJ AREA

4.2 THE OFFERING SITES IN THE WET LOW-LYING PARTS OF THE OER-IJ AREA

The different kinds of wet low-lying areas are peat/marshy areas on or next to (former) coastal barriers, peat areas at a distance from the coastal barriers, creeks, and low-lying parts on the side of the Oer-IJ main streambed. For every type of wet low-lying area the sites are placed in chronological order. A description of the site is given in which questions of locality, placement, time, and choice of objects are answered and a final assessment why the site is considered an offering. The site name is a combination of the municipality followed by a toponym or a designation given by the excavators or a designation as used in the literature. The references given next to the site name are the main sources of information for the descriptions. Figure 4.1 shows the site names, their location in the Dutch coordinate system and their central archaeological archive number.

4.2.1 PEATY/MARSHY AREAS ON OR NEXT TO (FORMER) COASTAL BARRIERS

The peat/marshy areas on or next to the (former) coastal barriers are bordered by dry land that is within visual range of a person standing at the offering sites. These areas are not necessarily small but have a human scale in the sense that the extent can be grasped directly. These are wet areas bounded by dry land. The size ranges from a few metres to two kilometres across. Accessibility depends on the water table and the weather. In wet seasons parts can become inaccessible and the reverse occurs during periods when an ice cover is established. At the moment of deposition there could be open water in these low-lying areas. Figure 4.2 shows the location of the nine sites discussed here.

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Figure 4.1 Reference points of the offering sites in wet low-lying areas.

Figure 4.2 Location of the nine sites discussed here.
4.2.1.1 UITGEEST-ACHTERLOET

In 1926 J. Twaalfhoven discovered a stone axe and some cattle teeth during digging activities in his bulb-field at a depth of approximately 2.5 m. The complete axe (figure 4.3) is made of Smaland Porphyry and is dated by Halbertsma and van Regteren Altena to the transition of Late Neolithic to Early Bronze Age. The reason Twaalfhoven dug holes in his field was that in a specific area the rain would not drain off easily. The cause of this problem was a layer of peat at 1.65 m. depth. In 1971 the AWN-group Zaanstreek excavated a small area and they determined that there were two peat layers, which did not extend across the entire field. This indicates a small depression within the coastal barrier. This spot must have been wet place from an early date on. This is considered an offering as an axe together with cattle teeth are placed in a small bog area.

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13 Helderman 1972.
14 Helderman 1972, 242.
4.2.1.2 LIMMEN

A complete saddle quern dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age has come into the possession of the AWN-group Baduhenna (figure 4.4). The quern stone had lain in the garden of Mr. D. Baltus who found it years earlier. Enquiries made by R. Duyndam and M. van Raay made it possible to locate the find spot in the southeast side of Limmen. This would situate the find spot at the south end of the former beach barrier. The nearest possibly contemporary site is an axe deposited at the Zuideinderweg just over 300 m to the east. The saddle quern is made of two different types of granite. Core boring at the find spot by the AWN-group ‘Baduhenna’ has not led to any further insight into the date or other archaeological remains. On the map of De Roo the presence of peat is indicated. This is considered an offering as a complete saddle quern and its matching rubber are placed on the side of a beach barrier and probably in bog.

15 Personal communication Ron Duyndam.
16 The saddle quern was dated by specialists at the ROB.
17 § 4.2.1.4.
18 De Roo 1953, appendix 1.
4.2.1.3 VELSERBROEK-WESTLAAN

Velserbroek-Westlaan is situated at the old dunes, which formed on top of the northern part of the coastal barrier of Haarlem. On a narrow old dune and a small dune to the north bordered by tidal areas three areas which are approximately 150 to 500 m apart were excavated by the AAC. The area contains features dating from the Late Neolithic to the medieval period. I will focus on the Bronze Age features as a small pool with ritual depositions is dated within this period (figure 4.5). Probably, the earliest sign of land use on the narrow dune is a multi-phased barrow of 18 metre in diameter constructed around 2130-1900 BC. The earliest phase consists of the burial of a flexed, footless man between oak planks. The barrow with an initial height of 0.20 m was heightened three times and several deposits were made, including the head of a child, and several pits with cremated remains. After the barrow was partly covered with peat ritual practices continued to take place here indicating that it was a meaningful and remembered place until the Early Medieval period.

Forty metres to the south of the barrow in a marshy pool ten pits were dug into the fill and a stake row was set up. The row of thirteen stakes was aligned in a north-easterly direction towards the barrow. The pits contained the remains of offerings and were filled in shortly after the depositions were made. The pits are filled with peaty material sometimes combined with sand or clay. Most of the pits were dug in the same layer (7) of the marshy pool, but two came from a different layer (4 and 6). The pits are dated on the basis of pottery and C14 to the period of 1800-1500 BC. Thus over a period of time several discrete events of pit digging and deposition took place in the marshy pool. The content of the marshy pool and pits will be given here:

- **marshy pool 534**: pieces of radius, humerus, shoulder blade, tibia and a tooth from cattle, a piece of skull from a medium mammal, and a right jaw of a piglet, a white stone, and a piece of willow.
- **pit 536**: wattle work of alder and willow, a 40 cm long stick at the bottom, some indeterminable bone, a piece of a cattle shoulder blade, and a bone awl. The wood is dated 1530-1410 BC.

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19 Therkorn and Van Londen 1990 and Besselsen 1996.
20 Oak plank: C-14 (GrN-16893) 3635 ± 30 BP: 2σ 2130-1900 BC (Therkorn and Van Londen 1990).
21 Therkorn forthcoming.
22 Pit 540 is dug into layer 6 and pit 543 is dug into layer 4.
23 Pit 536 (C14 date in note below) is stratigraphically one of the youngest pits. Besselsen 1996, 8.
24 The description of the pits is taken from Besselsen 1996.
25 Pit 536: C-14 (GrN-16896) 3215 ± 30 BP; 2σ 1530-1410 BC.
gully 535 leads to pit 536 it contains a bowl made of oak, cattle bones and the jaw of a horse.
pit 538: alder twigs, ‘Hoogkarspel’ or ‘Laren’ sherd, and quartz pebble.
pit 539: a piece of a cattle teeth and a right tarsus.
pit 540: possibly a sod lining, cattle bones, two pebbles, two worked pieces of hazel, pieces of yew and sweet cherry.
pit 541: pieces of a skull of a medium mammal and a radius of a sheep/goat.
pit 543: bones and a shoulder blade of both cattle and sheep/goat, piece of wood angled upright.
pit 544: possibly sods, and a square piece of alder.
pit 545: nearly complete cattle skeleton without skull, some fish, duck and pig bones, black flint scraper, sticks of alder of which one is sharpened are placed on top of the skeleton, and some willow. This pit cuts pit 544.

pit 546: a left radius, parts of a skull of a bull, a right radius of a dog and sheep/goat bones, alder, willow, and hazelnut.

pit 547: bones of cow and fox, skull of a bull with a basket made of willow and bark stuck on its horn, pieces of alder, hazel, oak, and willow (figure 4.6).

pit 548: 50 cm long pointed stick of juniper, and forked willow twigs.

Figure 4.6 Detail of pit 547: the skull of a bull with a basket stuck on its horn.
North and east of the marshy pool many small rows of stakes and ard marks were excavated that have been dated to the Early and Late Bronze Age. These features do not over cut the marshy pool. The small rows of stakes are probably the remains of movable fences. It is unclear whether the ard marks indicate fields or land reclamation. In the area of the fences and ard marks several pits were dug. The pits do not cluster as the pits in the marshy pool and appear to be distributed relatively even across the area. The pits contain few artefacts and their function is unclear. Forty metres east of the marshy pool a rectangular structure can be seen whether this is an enclosure remains uncertain.

Around 1400 BC a new barrow was constructed in the south-western area on a small dune top approximately 150 m west of the marshy pool. This barrow is nearly completely destroyed, but as younger features avoid the area surrounding the surviving grave it can be assumed that the barrow was visible for quite some time, at least into the Iron Age. Fontijn has categorized this grave as a Middle Bronze Age B warrior grave. Less then forty metres to the northwest of the barrow two three-aisled buildings were constructed. These buildings are dated Middle Bronze Age and little can be said about contemporanity. The two buildings lie on a similar line and have a northeast-southwest orientation. The buildings are just ten metres apart and have gullies along the long sides and the southwest side. The smallest northern building is 12 m long and is viewed as an outbuilding, even though the size does not foreclose an interpretation as a house. The larger building of 20 m has as least two phases and the depth of the post setting indicates a living area and a byre.

The pool is considered an offering site as specific objects are placed within pits in the pool.

4.2.1.4 LIMMEN-ZUIDEINDERWEG

A fragment of a stone axe (figure 4.7) was found on the southeast side of the old dunes on the coastal barrier in 1963 after the deep ploughing of a field. The axe was probably deposited in the bog that is still present as a thick peat layer. The axe is broken in the middle, but on the drawing and photograph it looks like the broken end has been used and/or modified after its original function. The axe is dated to approximately 1700 BC. This is considered an offering as a possibly modified axe is placed in bog.

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Bosman and Soonius 1990, 4.

Fontijn 2003, 228-229. The warrior graves are not interpreted as representing a warrior aristocracy, but a warrior ideology. The graves are exceptional and are therefore linked to specific events, like claiming territories or the formation of a new group. As the warrior grave in the Velserbroekpolder lies within an area that was already occupied, we have to be carefull with generalizing interpretations as given by Fontijn.

Bosman and Soonius 1990, 3.


Cordfunke 1969, figure 12 and 14.

De Ridder 1995, 12.
4.2.1.5 VELSEN-NOORDZEKANAAL

A bronze socketed axe (figure 4.8) was found during dredging activities in the Noordzeekanaal. The axe is dated to the ninth century BC. Although it was found in a nowadays wet context this does not mean it was deposited in water. During the Bronze Age the location was situated on the old dunes. Whether there was a small wet depression in the Bronze Age can no longer be investigated geologically due to the construction of the Noordzeekanaal. Its position on the map does, however, favour the idea that it was deposited in a low-lying area within the old dunes, which was probably filled with peat. The nearest known occupation traces are 2200 m to the east. This is considered an offering as a complete axe is placed in a wet environment.

![Figure 4.8 Bronze socketed axe from Velsen-Noordzeekanaal. Length of the axe is just over eleven cm, after Van Heeringen 1992, figure 28.]

4.2.1.6 LIMMEN-1

Pottery was discovered approximately one metre below the surface in 1950 during the construction of a PWN conduit. A complete Ruinen-Wommels I vessel was reconstructed (figure 4.9). This pot was probably deposited as complete. Four sherds also of the Ruinen-Wommels type did not belong to the vessel. The vessel was found on the east side of Limmen at the western side on the slope of old dune sand on beach sand at the point where peat appears underneath the dune sand. It appears that the pot was placed at the base of the bog, but the vessel could have been dug into the sand under the layer of peat. Van Regteren Altena dates the vessel to the sixth century BC. However, van Heeringen in his more recent study has dated the vessel to the fourth century BC.

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33 Van Regteren Altena 1969, 61.
34 PWN: Provinciaal Waterleidingbedrijf Noord-Holland is the province’s waterworks.
35 De Roo 1953, map 1.
36 Van Regteren-Altena 1969, 62.
37 Van Heeringen 1992, figure 58.
Just fifty metres to the south in 1938 a complete thirteenth century AD cooking vessel was found in the sand at a metre below the surface. A peat layer is not mentioned here. The Ruinen-Wommels vessel is considered an offering as a complete vessel was placed in a wet environment.

Figure 4.9 Ruinen-Wommels vessel from Limmen-1.

4.2.1.7 VELSERBROEK-B6

In advance of building activities 1.75 ha were excavated by the University of Amsterdam. The excavation revealed a two metre deep stratigraphy with features ranging from the Early Bronze Age to the 19th century. Nine phases of use were established that are described below (figure 4.10).

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38 Cordfunke 1969, 53.
40 Therkorn 2004, 107-117.
1. Bronze Age concentrations of charcoal on the top of the slope of a dune indicating incidental use.
2. During the Middle Bronze Age a depression with open water partly filled with clay and plant dust and slowly accumulated reed peat. No uses are identified. In the Middle or Late Iron Age over twenty reworked beams were deposited in open water. The beams, of oak and alder, formed two axes.
3. The beams were covered by silts and plant dust. Between 200-100 BC bundles of peeled juniper trunks and branches were pinned down with stakes on the bottom of the pool. The bundles must have been under water as they were still well preserved when excavated. The bundles were arranged in near north-south linear patterns of up to 45 metres of which one line of bundles was set at a right angle. Possibly every 20-30 years a line of bundles was pinned down.41
4. Plant dust silts covered the juniper branches and the surface of the raised swamp had dried up. In the first century BC on top of this surface a long mound of 103 metres was constructed of two slightly curved parallel ditches running northwest-southeast. The ditches were a metre deep and the material from them was used to heighten the area in between and was covered with hundreds of oak branches. On top of the branches cut reed peat was deposited, which was covered by sand. The recovered height of the long mound was 55 cm. Its visibility was heightened by the placement of three vertical oak posts at the northwest end. No burial was found but several deposits were made including elements of dog and horse skulls, a human thigh bone, a metal and an antler spear head, and a triangular piece of oak with an iron nail.

41 Bloemers and Therkorn 2003, 27.
5. Sedimentation and at least two floods took place which covered the long mound. Two more human thighbones were deposited. In the Roman Iron Age a number of linear banks were constructed on top of the long mound, although with a slightly different orientation. The best preserved bank consisted of two banks about 75 cm apart covered with cut sods with the grass side up. The space in between was filled with re-deposited white sand. This bank was at least 120 metres long with open water at its eastern end. Bronze fastenings, fibulae and a human thighbone were deposited here. The connection to the somewhat further peat area could not be established due to a modern ditch.

6. In the peat accumulation a northwest-southeast channel, 27 metres wide and at least 100 metres long, was dug to a depth of the sandy sediments. Varied deposits, mainly of wood and metal were made into the water, which gradually filled up with plant dust and sand (figure 4.11). The area to the east, in the second or third century AD, was marked by pits forming the constellation Horse.

7. The area with the covered long mound and banks was used for small fields, a cart-way and pit alignments. These features could be contemporary with phase 6.

8. During the Medieval period the place of the pits forming the constellation Horse was remarked. Over position H11 five horseshoes and a near complete shoulder blade of a horse were deposited on top of which a round mound of cut turfs covered by white sand was constructed. Thin unpeeled juniper branches were deposited at the edge of the mound. Near position H8 a pit was dug in which a horseshoe was deposited. Here similar juniper branches were found alongside the pit.

9. In the nineteenth century again a horseshoe was deposited in a pit. A well contained a foot bone and a pseudo-pocket watch showing the eleventh hour. Furthermore a field system and three pits with standing whale bones were recovered.

Other sites dating to the Middle to Roman Iron Age within a kilometre distance are Velserbroek-Hofgeesterweg, Santpoort-Spanjaardsberg and –Hagelingerweg. The first two sites consist of settlements and fields and the last site has fields. Several sites dated to earlier periods are just as close by, such as Velserbroek-Westlaan, – area 2, and – Rugbyveld.

This is considered an offering site as there is a continuous shaping of the landscape involving the placement of specific wood species, human bones and specific objects in a sometimes wet environment and the placement of specific objects in the dug canal, especially metal, bone and wood.

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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nail</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 4.11 Artefacts recovered from the dug channel at Velserbroek-B6.

42 The north-western side went further than the excavated area but could not be investigated due to a road.
43 Chapter 3 § 3.5.5.
4.2.1.8 IJMUIDEN-DUINVLIET

Several artefacts (figure 4.12) were found in a peat layer at a depth of five metres in 1921 during digging activities for the construction of a ship lock. The peat layer was embedded in the old dune sands indicating a low-lying area within the old dunes. The find consisted of a bronze neck ring, 34 amber beads, 10 glass beads and a human jaw set together in the peat. The neck ring is dated to the Late Iron Age. The location and combination of artefacts suggests this is a single deposition. The nearest site Velsen-Noordzeekanaal is 1 km away and is dated much earlier. This is considered an offering as the human jaw and foreign ornaments are placed together in a non-burial context.

Figure 4.12 Bronze neck ring of Ijmuiden-Duinvliet. Inner diameter of the neck ring is just over thirteen cm, after Van Heeringen 1992, figure 30.

44 Van Heeringen 1992, 174-175.
4.2.1.9 LIMMEN-DUSSELDORPERSVAART

A complete vessel (figure 4.13) was found at the bottom of a peat layer in 1969 during digging activities on the Dusseldorpervaart. The 40 cm thick peat layer was situated on top of the old dunes and beach sands. The vessel is of the ‘streepband’ type and can be dated to the last century BC. This is considered an offering as a complete vessel is placed in a wet place.

![Figure 4.13 'Streepband' vessel from Limmen-Dusseldorpervaart.](image)

4.2.2 LARGE PEAT AREAS IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE OER-IJ AREA

The large peat areas lie in the eastern part of the Oer-IJ area and changed from reed peat into oligotrophic peat. The blankets of oligotrophic peat have a diameter of over 30 kilometres in both directions and are intersected by rivers and tidal areas. These blankets, some even bigger, occur in the entire western part of the Netherlands. The extent of the peat areas would have been known as either first or second hand knowledge, but could not be seen directly. For the eye the peat seems to go on forever. Accessibility of especially the oligothropic peat could be difficult, but dry seasons and ice could change that. The top of the peat blankets are not low-lying because the peat growth could rise to several metres above the surrounding landscape. These sites are added to the analysis in order to get a more complete picture. Figure 4.14 shows the location of the two sites discussed here.

4.2.2.1 ASSENDELFT-51

A rough-walled bipartite bowl that originally had three legs was found in 1972 by the AWN-group Zaanstreek in lumps of peat. The bowl is dated to the seventh century BC. It is situated in the middle of the reed peat zone. It could originally have been placed in a pit, but these are difficult to distinguish in peat. The house of Assendelft-Q is situated 1100 m to the southwest. In the direct vicinity Iron Age and Roman Iron Age sherds were collected by the AWN-group Zaanstreek. This is considered a possible offering as it is a single pot placed in peat, possibly in a pit, or water. It is incomplete, but the removal of legs may be significant as legs have a symbolic value in the Oer-IJ area and NW-Europe.

4.2.2.2 ASSENDELFT-42

A wooden leg (figure 4.15) was discovered in 1968 during an excavation by the AWN-group Zaanstreek of a peat site in the corner of the trench with a Roman Iron Age farmstead at a depth of 40 cm. The excavators did not distinguish whether it was found in a pit. But pits in peat are difficult to establish and the depth of the artefact indicates the presence of a pit. The small leg is described as found in a peat layer and is broken at the upper leg end. Although toes are not carved, it appears to be a right leg. The leg part is 12 cm and the foot 6 cm long. In the vicinity a small pointed post and some charcoal were found, but no sherds. Due to its position it is dated to the Iron Age, but the Roman Iron Age should not be excluded. The site lies 150 m south of Assendelft-39, a possible salt-production site, and is situated in the same reed peat zone. This is considered a probable offering as the leg is placed (possibly in a pit) in peat and legs have a symbolic value in the Oer-IJ area and NW-Europe.
4.2.3 CREEKS

Creeks would cut through the entire Oer-IJ area and mainly drain towards the streambed of the Oer-IJ. The creeks could contain saltwater, brackish or freshwater depending on their origin and degree of closeness to the tidal water. If under the influence of the tides the water level and the direction of the flow of the water would change with the tides. The possibilities for boating and/or crossing these creeks would vary with the daily rhythms of the tides. The fresh water creeks outside the influence of the tides would have a more constant character with water level changes especially related to seasonal influences. Figure 4.16 shows the location of the six sites discussed here.
The archaeological remains in the Assendelver polders were in danger due to deep ploughing and the artificial lowering of the water table, which would lead to peat oxidization. On request of the ROB the AAC undertook several excavations starting in 1978. Assendelft-N is situated at the same creek system as Assendelft-B and -C, but lies at the western end 500 metres from the Oer-IJ. In 1981 Assendelft-N (figure 4.17) was excavated as part of the Assendelver Polder Project. Eight phases of occupation were distinguished in an area of approximately one hectare.

Assendelft-N is situated at the southern creek system of the Assendelver Polders that is part of the Uitgeesterbroek layer (Duinkerke I). The final phase of this creek system is dated to the fourth century BC by artefacts found at the bottom of the creek. This final phase coincides with the first phase of use of the site, on focus here.
environment was still marshy and diatom analysis indicates that the water in the creek was brackish, but levees were already formed.

No features belong to phase 1 and there is no evidence for habitation on the levees. Although the conditions were rather wet in the area, habitation nearby cannot be excluded. The creeks started to fill up and a layer of a metre thick was formed at the bottom. The layer is thinner at the sides of the creek and its deepest point lies at approximately -2.15 m NAP. The artefacts were found at the base of this fill and the artefacts consist of two bone pestles, a haft from a metatarsus, whalebone, other bone, pottery, two pottery discs, sixteen stones, three cinders, and a whetstone. On the basis of both pottery and C-14, phase 1 is dated to 400 - 350 BC. As the artefacts are not spread throughout the fill and the dating range is fairly small, a short period of deposition can be assumed.

The second phase of use is dated to about 100 BC and consists of at least two post-built houses and ditches. House N1 had a human femur placed in a posthole. Phase 3 consists of ditches and a wall ditch house. In phase 4 four platforms are formed and on the two north-eastern platforms a wall ditch houses was built. At the north-western platform a channel was dug in which a complete pot and some bones were deposited. At the location of house N1 a piglet was buried. In phase 5 the area is slightly raised again and a wall-ditch house was built at the north-eastern platform. In a channel to the east a horse skull was deposited. Phase 6 consists of some gullies, which are still open when peat starts to form. The last phases 7 and 8 are dated AD 300 – 1100 and consist of a field system with plough marks on oxidized peat.

About 3-400 metres south of Assendelft-N are two settlements, which are not situated at levees but in the former tidal plain.

The deposition in phase 1 is considered an offering as a selection of specific objects is placed together at the bottom of the creek.

4.2.3.2 UITGEEST-UITGEESTERBROEKPOLDER-18-1

Figure 4.18 Plan of Uitgeesterbroekpolder 18 phase 1 and 2. The shaded areas are remnants of creeks, after Therkorn 1989, figure 8.

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53 Van Gijn 1987, figure 7.1.
55 C-14 (GrN 11477) 2300 ± 30 BP: 2σ 410-350 BC (69%) and 300-230 BC (26,3%).
56 Therkorn 2004, § 4.4. The site will be referred to as Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-1.
In 1987-88 the AAC excavated two hectares at the Uitgeesterbroekpolder due to the relocation of the Motorway A9. The site is situated at the levee deposits on the northeast side of the Oer-IJ. Three main phases of use have been distinguished (figure 4.18). During phase 1, which is dated to the Late Iron Age, complete vessels and bone were deposited in small creeks. These creeks were connected to the Oer-IJ in the west. After the deposition the creeks silted up. Phase 2 consists of enclosures probably for livestock, field systems and pits and gullies forming the star patterns of Cow and Horse\(^{57}\). On the raised banks of the, now less active, Oer-IJ were possibly contemporary farmsteads. To the southwest was a border zone between a dry and a wet area, which will be dealt with in section 4.1.4.1 on Uitgeest-Uitgeesterbroek-18-2. The depositions in phase 1 are considered an offering as it consists of complete vessels and bone placed at the bottom of a creek.

4.2.3.3 UITGEEST-DORREGEEST\(^{58}\)

The early settlement of Uitgeest-Dorregeest was discovered during the levelling of a Late Medieval heightened

\(^{57}\) See last section § 3.5.4.

\(^{58}\) De Koning 2000.
area in 1952. 28 years later the ROB excavated about 3 ha of the site over a period of three years in advance of building activities related to small industries and sporting facilities. The site has features from the Late Iron Age until the medieval period, possibly representing continuous occupation (figure 4.19). The settlement of Uitgeest-Dorregeest, consisting of at least sixteen (consecutive) houses, is situated on a former coastal barrier at the south-eastern side of an early creek of the Oer-IJ system. The creek itself was also excavated. It already contained fresh water in the Late Iron Age and filled up during the Roman Iron Age but remained a low-lying area. Along and on the edge of the creek are five human burials and from the creek some skull fragments were recovered. In the creek and on the banks masses of pottery were deposited, but due to the excavation techniques used not a single complete vessel could be reconstructed. Only two small vessels were not destroyed. Besides pottery, some remarkable metal artefacts came from the creek fill (figure 4.20 and 4.21). Among them a small bronze flask with three types of herbs and 1302 denarii from the second century AD probably deposited in a container of perishable material. Of interest here are the deposition of both Roman and Germanic (parts of) military equipment. Roman (roof) tiles were also found but their location is not clear from the publication. Part of the deposition in the creek is considered an offering as it consists of specific artefacts placed in the creek depression. Furthermore there are human burials along and at the edge of the creek.

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Figure 4.20 List of the main artefacts from the creek at Uitgeest-Dorregeest.

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60 Woltering 1982, 204.
64 Abbink 1999, figure 8.12.1 (34-3) and 8.12.2 (33-3).
65 Vons 1987, 123-124.
4.2.3.4 ASSENDELFT-NOORD-56

Trial trenches were executed by the AAC in order to establish the archaeological potential and its management in 1996 in advance of a large, Vinex housing project. In 1997 1.8 ha were excavated. This is the largest peat excavations and involves a farmstead and its surroundings. This makes it possible to view offerings and farmstead as one complex (figure 4.22). The stratigraphy of the site consists of a Deposit of Wormer (Calais IV) with its top at 3.85 m below NAP. On this lies a nearly two metre thick layer of reed peat with an occasional small discontinuous band of heavy clay and a weathered top. This weathered top at –2.1 to 1.9 m below NAP is the prehistoric level. At some spots an original oligotrophic peat layer is preserved. A thin layer of black peaty clay and topsoil up to 35 cm thick covers this prehistoric level. The zone of reed peat is less then a kilometre wide. 150m to the east of the site is bordered by oligotrophic peat and 300 m to the west the former tidal flats begin with the first levee at a distance of 800 m.

The first traces of land use are peat cuttings in the area, at that time still covered with raised bog and a naturally filled creek running northeast/southwest that are dated to the first century AD. At right angles to and along the creek long narrow peat cuts were situated. Turf was dug from the southern part of the creek to a depth of 1 m. As a consequence a hole (f130) was created and one side was packed with broken vessels in order to strengthen it. The fill of amorphous lightly clayey peat indicated standing water inside the hole. The hole was marked with two deposits. At the south-western end two upright near complete vessels were deposited. At the north-eastern end a platter made of alder was placed with above it short lengths of branches and worked wood. Along the western side of the re-opened creek hearth material, burnt lumps of peat, quern fragments, two spindle whorls, a fragment of a loom weight, a crucible fragment and calcinated bones were deposited. In this area were also the remains of turf stacks. An oval hearth/pit (F125) is associated with the activities carried out here. At the bottom of the pit was a complete vessel of unusual type covered by thin layers of ash and potting clay. On top of this was a layer of vessel-halves set close together. This was covered by layers of turf, reed and potting clay.

67 Therkorn, Besselsen and Oversteegen 2006. In the text the site will be refered to as Assendelft-56.
68 A small post is dated C14 (GrN 23573) 1890 ± 20BP: 2σ AD 60-180 (92%) and AD 190-210 (3%).
Figure 4.22 Plan with main features of Assendelft-56, after Therkorn et al. 2006, figure p.85 and plan 1.
A top layer of sherds covered with clay was the surface on which a fire was lit. Round pit 123 has a diameter of 1.5 m and is 1.45 m deep. The first deposit was an alder branch in a partial vessel. The fill consisted of cut turf and contained branches, worked wood, wood chips, a quern fragment, a triangular stone and a vessel. Towards the east the remains of a farmstead were indicated by a rectangular distribution of sherds, a hearth and stall debris. The farmstead was 5 x 13 m and had a northeast-southwest orientation. Associated with the dwelling are a path and seven pits. The pits contained several deposits and were filled with turf shortly after the deposits were made. Between the farmstead and the activity area were two deposits of wood. One consisted of the roots of a juniper tree (possibly natural) and the other of an ash, alder, willow and bog myrtle. In the second century AD a low platform was made at the eastern side of the excavated area. On the platform a hearth and a hearth/pit with deposits were constructed. There were also some paths. In the north-western area part of another raised surface was situated possibly indicating another farmstead. The depositions in the peat-cutting hole are considered an offering as they consist of the placement of complete vessels and wood.

4.2.3.5 KROMMENIE-21

Figure 4.23 Plan of Krommenie-21.

A = location first phase
B = location second phase after Mooijman and Van Roon 1983, figure 1.

Feature 15, 16, 64, 65, 68, 84 and 86.

Mooijman and van Roon 1983.
Local protests stopped the building activities as a depot for mud was created. The AWN-group Zaanstreek investigated the partly dug up terrain during 1981 and 1982. The site is situated on the west side of a relatively small oligotrophic peat blanket of 4.7 km$^2$. The reed peat is less than 100m away. Two phases of use could be established (figure 4.23). The first phase consisted of a rectangular, split oak post setting of 7 x 13.5 m with an east-west orientation. It was partly excavated due to the destruction of the north-eastern part. The oak posts were not set close together. The old surface of oxidized peat is somewhat disturbed possibly due to trampling. On the south-eastern side was a creek of 1.5 m wide and 0.5 m deep. At the bottom lay half a vessel with an alder branch and some wood above. The wood included a post with a hole, a long stick or handle and part of a possible yoke made of oak. A second phase consisted of several round posts at the now filled in creek. No structure could be established. Both phases are dated to the first century AD. A total of 9000 sherds, including a miniature vessel, were found mainly in six large concentrations that were not hearths. Of the six concentrations only twelve sherds were of Roman origin. Artefacts further included many small pieces of daub, some stones – including four whetstones and a quern fragment – calcinated bones (cattle bones and a pig’s tooth could be identified), eight spindle whorls, two playing discs, a blue glass bead and two small linked bronze rings. The deposition in the creek is considered an offering as it consists of half a vessel with an alder branch and wooden artefacts placed at the bottom of the creek.

4.2.3.6 KROMMENIE-14 (‘T HAIN)

A trapezoidal enclosure made of a single row of split alder posts (figure 4.24) was excavated in 1964 and 1965 by the AWN-group Zaanstreek in cooperation with the ROB. The close-set posts were driven into peat that was covered with a thin clay layer. At the western side was an entrance of 14 m wide. Four pairs of heavy wooden posts (18-25 cm in diameter) were set in a square, bordered on the northwest side by a rectangular setting of

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Figure 4.24 Plan of Krommenie-14, after Helderman 1971, figure 11.

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smaller posts inside the enclosure. Small patches of the original surface were found near the posts at a depth of 1.68 m below NAP. The enclosure was situated on the northern bank of an early creek with still standing water. It could be that the creek was already filled in and a hole was dug as the palisade crosses the creek towards the west. In the creek, up to a depth of two metres, a large amount of local pottery, including two complete vessels, Roman pottery, cattle bones, six coins and an iron adze were deposited. A lesser amount of sherds and some hearth pits were recovered inside the enclosure, especially in and near the post structures. At the northern edge of the light post structure was a concentration of 19 slingshots. All but two posts of the enclosure were upright even though they would have been easy to push over. When the site was no longer in use the posts just slowly rotted away.

The structure is dated in the first century or first half of the second century AD, based on the Roman pottery. The site is situated in the middle of the read peat zone, which is only 400 m wide at this point. The oligotrophic peat is 200 m towards the east and the nearest levee lies at 800 m towards the west. At this levee lies also the nearest known contemporary sites.

The deposition in the creek is considered an offering as a selection of objects including two complete vessels, six coins and an iron adze are placed at a considerable depth. There is the possibility that the offerings are mixed with the deposition of debris.

4.2.4 LOW-LYING PARTS ON THE SIDE OF THE OER-IJ STREAMBED

The degree of wetness in the border zones of the Oer-IJ would at first have depended mainly on the difference between high and low tide. The difference between high and low tide fluctuates over time and could be over a metre and a half during dynamic periods and just twenty centimetres near the closing of the estuary system. The border between wet and dry would shift in a daily rhythm. Salt water would have entered the area. After the closing of the estuary at the end of the Late Iron Age tidal influence was absent and a more stable border between wet and dry would have existed. Occasional storm floods could enter deep into the former estuary, but the wetness of the area would now be under the influence of the seasons. Water flowed towards the (south)east after the closure of the estuary. Figure 4.25 shows the location of the five sites discussed here.

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72 Mooijman 2005, 70.
73 Vos 2000, table 3.
4.2.4.1 UITGEEST-UITGEESTERBROEKOLDER-18-2

In 1987-88 the AAC excavated two hectares at the Uitgeesterbroekpolder due to the relocation of the Motorway A9. The site is situated at the former mud flats on the northeast side of the Oer-IJ. Three main phases of use have been distinguished. During phase 1, which is dated to the Late Iron Age, complete vessels and bone were deposited in small creeks. These creeks were connected to the Oer-IJ in the west. After the deposition the creeks silted up. Phase 2 consists of enclosures probably for livestock, field systems and dug features forming the patterns of Cow and Horse. Farmsteads were possibly on the raised banks of the now less active Oer-IJ. To the southwest was a border zone between a dry and a wet area (figure 4.26). This zone was demarcated with ditches that were sometimes under water. In these ditches deposits were made of two complete horse skulls, of which one had a horn pit in it, bones, two clay dice, a pit with cremated bone and the roundel of a human skull, and a vessel base containing ash and an ox astralagus, and a pit with bones and an ox skull.

In the last phase the area of the border zone became swampy and the features were covered with silts. In this wet layer deposits were made of twelve fibula, three coins, and a complete rotary quern. Due to preservation conditions wood, if deposited would have decayed. Although the artefacts could have been deposited at once, it is likely that they were deposited on several occasions.

These are considered offerings as there is a distinct placement of specific artefacts including both parts of a complete rotary quern, fibulae, coins, human bone, and a horse skull with a cow’s horn pit in small pits and gullies in a wet place.

Figure 4.26 A selection of black features and artefacts at Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2 used for offerings. Grey features show the intensity of ditch digging across the site, after Therkorn 2004, figure 42 and Gerritsen 2000, figure 3.9.

4.2.4.2 VELSEN-FORT-1

In 1972 the site of Velsen-1 was discovered, the site could not be preserved due to the construction of the ‘Wijkertunnel’. Between 1974 and 1990 excavations executed by the AAC and the AWN-group Velsen have taken place. Additional observations were made in 1994, during the construction of the tunnel. The remains of a Roman fort and a harbour (figure 4.27) were uncovered over the years. The fort and its harbour are dated to the period AD 15 to 30. There is some evidence of earlier use of the site, such as Bronze Age plough marks and

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74 Therkorn 2004, chapter 4.4. The site will be referred to as Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2.
75 See also § 4.2.3.2.
Late Iron Age pottery, including a complete pot from the Oer-IJ. Diverse excavation strategies and unequal preservation, especially erosion, influence the recovered distribution of artefacts. An overview of the site will not be given here; instead there will be a focus on some aspects that might be of interest for the research question related to depositions in wet contexts.

Figure 4.27 Plan of the Roman fort and harbour at Velsen, after Morel and Bosman 1990, figure 15.

The fort and harbour are situated at the south bank of the Oer-IJ, which during this period was no longer connected to the sea at Castricum. The main connections to the sea were now the Flevo-lake in the east. During an early phase the harbour was deepened through dredging. The dredging activities have led to the formation of a so-called ‘bagger’ layer in which artefacts were recovered. On top of this ‘bagger’ layer was an undisturbed Roman layer also with artefacts. A natural sand layer without finds was deposited after the use of the fort and some of the harbour posts were extracted. Large artefacts, including cattle skulls were found in some of the postholes of the pulled out posts. Objects with religious depictions found at Velsen 1 are a bronze statue of

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77 Bosman 1997, 96.  
78 For an overview see Morel 1988 and Bosman 1997.  
79 Bagger is Dutch for dredgings.  
80 Bosman 1997, 33.
Hercules Bibax and 65 gems of which, all but three, had religious or charm signs. Several complete vessels were deposited in the harbour. There was also a complete vessel deposited with human remains in well 2. Several single human bones were recovered and in addition human hands from at least three individuals and possibly feet were deposited in a well. Two concentrations of respectively four metacarpals and four vertebrae of different individuals were found in the harbour. There is, however, no clear pattern in human bone distribution in the Roman layer in the harbour. The partial remains of several individuals were also recovered from the harbour and included women and children. Their bones were scattered due to water movement as they were on the upper part of the Roman layer, which dates them to the final phase or after use of the fort by the Romans. Parts of the deposits in the harbour are considered offerings as there is a placement of a cattle skull in a posthole, complete vessels, many gems and human bones. The complete vessel from the Late Iron Age could also be considered (part of) an offering.

4.2.4.3 BEVERWIJK/HEEMSKERK BROEKPOOLDER

12.5 ha were excavated over a period of three years (1999-2001) due to the building of a housing estate at the ‘Vinex’ location Broekpolder. Five ha has been saved as an archaeological monument. This monument is based on core boring alone which indicated a stacked landscape with use traces. Both at the northern and southern side farmsteads are partly located in the monument, indicating living areas.

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Figure 4.28 Schematic overview of the Broekpolder with the three offering sites indicated by their number, after Offenberg 2003, figure 7.1.

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81 Bosman 1997, 47.
82 Therkorn et al. forthcoming.
There is, however, a long stretch in between that is bordered at both the eastern and western side with traces of fields and gullies/ditches. The exact use over time is therefore not known. 70 percent of the excavated area was in the direct vicinity of this monument. The location of the remaining trenches was guided by scientific interest and mainly focused on the low-lying areas.\textsuperscript{83} Excavations revealed a stacked landscape with human traces dating back to the Bronze Age up to recent times. Settlements and fields were located on a tidal ridge on the west side of the Oer-IJ. Three locations have ritual depositions in a wet context (figure 4.28) on the east side of the tidal ridge at the transition to the Oer-IJ. These three locations will be the focus here. The locations are numbered from north to south, 1 to 3.

4.2.4.4 BEVERWIJK/HEEMSKERK-BROEKPOOLDER-1\textsuperscript{84}

The main reason for excavating this specific area was the seven ditches that converged at one point.\textsuperscript{85} The area was still one of the wettest spots in the Broekpolder at the time of the excavations and was sometimes even totally submerged in water. Previous research in the Velserbroekpolder had indicated that this type of area could be of interest. Broekpolder-1 was excavated in two seasons. The first season focused on the southern side and the second on the northern side. A modern ditch separates these parts and a ditch runs along the eastern side. Small trenches were excavated on the other side of the eastern ditch in order to determine the extent of the area with artefacts. At the western side of Broekpolder-1 is the archaeological monument.

Broekpolder-1 is situated at the northern side of a creek going through the tidal ridge and the border zone of the remnants of the Oer-IJ. At the tidal ridge directly adjacent to a pool were some gullies and two round gullies of Late to Roman Iron Age and a small area of plough marks (figure 4.29). The low-lying area was flooded over periods of time forming a pool with a maximum extent of about 1.6 ha and a maximum depth of 70 cm. The stratigraphy of the pool consists mainly of two layers: f4112 grey-blue clayey sand forming the bottom of the pool and f4111 light brown clayey sand with sandy wash lenses formed from the Roman Iron Age to the Early Medieval period. The absence of soil horizons or vegetation lenses indicates that there were no extensive dry periods. Due to the slow silting of the pool it was difficult to distinguish layers that were confined to specific areas. Water in the pool came from the creek cutting through the ridge and the overflow from the former streambed of the Oer-IJ during very wet conditions. The botanical evidence indicates that the water in the pool was slow moving to still standing fresh water. There is no evidence for peat accumulation in the pool during the medieval period.

Different types of structuring of the area have taken place. The earliest traces in the pool area are the remains of depressions, probably cattle paths as indicated by some hoof prints. The first deposit consists of the concentration of bones of an infant in a short curved gully at the border zone between the pool and the ridge.\textsuperscript{86} This border zone is covered with small gullies. These short gullies are dug and redug consecutively starting from the south. The clear endings of the gullies could indicate openings from the ridge towards the pool. In the pool at least eight stake rows were placed in a (south)south-eastern direction. Broken off points indicate that some of the rows were taken down. Two rows were dated to the Early Medieval period.\textsuperscript{87} One row of stakes dated around AD 1700\textsuperscript{88} had three pits at the end. In two of them a lower leg of a horse was placed vertical. The depositions cluster along the edge of the pool and the rows of stakes. Over a long period of time depositions have been made into the pool consisting of pottery, bone, wood, stone and metal (figure 4.30). Therkorn et al. date the depositions in the pool to the Early Medieval Period. I am of the opinion that from the deposition of the small infant onward depositions took place as local pottery was present. The pottery was badly preserved but seemed to occur in concentrations. The pool – not fully flooded then – was at that time probably not yet the focus of the ritual depositions. This focus was probably the creek running east-west. As this creek was under a road and part of the archaeological monument it was not excavated. Artefacts from the Roman Iron Age were,

\begin{itemize}
  \item C-14 (KIA 14282) 1879 ± 29 BP: 2σ AD 68-232.
  \item C-14 (KIA 9995) 1468 ± 30 BP: 2σ AD 539-652 and (KIA 9998) 1493 ± 30 BP: 2σ AD 533-641.
  \item On the basis of stratigraphy in combination with C-14 (KIA10000) 87 ± 32 BP: 2σ AD 1681-1955.
\end{itemize}
however, found in the mole holes along the road above the creek.\textsuperscript{89}

In the northern part of the area a large pit (13.5 x 8.5 m and 1.8 m deep) was dug. The pit is dated to the ninth and tenth century AD. At the bottom of the pit several beams and split trunks of beech, some of at least 4 m, and a sheep/goat tibia were deposited. The pit filled up naturally under wet conditions and 4 stones, 5 sherds and a nail were deposited. At two-thirds from the north the pit was partitioned by a wattle wall supported by posts. The wattle followed the edge of the pit and at the western end was finished with some wooden planks that could have been part of an old building or structure. The northern end was re-dug and immediately back-filled with lumps of clay and sand that did not originate from the immediate surroundings. No artefacts were found in this fill. Over a hundred posts and stakes had been rammed into the north-western half of the pit and adjacent areas and several gullies were dug. The gully leading towards the southwest was lined with close-set post, planks and stakes. Here five stones, four sherds and an ox sacrum were found. The pit and its surrounding area were probably most of the time under water or very wet. The last use of the large pit can be dated by the deposit of a scatter of bones of a horse.\textsuperscript{90}

Broekpolder-1 is considered an offering as a distinct selection of artefacts in comparison to the contemporary and somewhat earlier settlement has been placed in a pool, which also has gullies, rows of stakes and a large pit with partitioning.

\textsuperscript{89} Therkorn personal communication.

\textsuperscript{90} C-14 (KIA 13675) 1119 ± 26 BP: 2σ AD 886-990.
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Figure 4.30 List of all the artefacts found at Broekpolder-1.
Broekpolder-2 is situated about 230 m south-south-east of Broekpolder-1. East of the ridge in the low-lying area the first traces of use are cattle paths going along the streambed of the remnants of the Oer-IJ. Next, three strip fields are made from the eastern edge of the ridge extending 120 m into the low-lying area. The fields were marked by gullies. The main feature was a double gully with a low bank in between. Up to eight cm in height were still present at the time of excavation. The gully/bank led from the ridge towards the east and on the eastern side at right angles splits into two directions (figure 4.31). The southern extension ended after 29 m. The northern extension could be followed for about 170 m and it probably ended on the southern side of the creek that later ran into pool at Broekpolder-1. The northern end was not straight and curved through the landscape. This field system is dated to AD 26-128. From the east of the gully/bank some material was dug and deposited on the fields. This activity left a small depression. At a later date a stake row of at least 25 stakes, is placed a few metres east of the gully bank from the height of the junction into a northern direction. This stake row is stratigraphically older then the natural sedimentation to the east from which a number of finds were excavated. The sedimentation had taken place under wet conditions. A bronze fibula, an iron spike, two corroded metal objects, 6 bones, a piece of flint and 99 pieces of wood were deposited in the water (figure 4.32). The wood consisted mainly of branches with the bark and side twigs taken off. One of the branches is dated to AD 260-431. Between the stake row and the gully/bank a semicircle of 2.5 m was made out of small sticks placed 25 cm apart. This feature is contemporary with the deposits. There are no later traces of use in this specific area. This is considered an offering as a selection of different species of wood was placed, sometimes in specific configurations in the water. And some metal artefacts were placed in a small area in the water.

Figure 4.31 Plan of Broekpolder-2. The offering site is situated east of the small embankment.

a = cow paths
b = gullies of embankment
c = later pits
d = wooden posts
e = loose wooden sticks and pieces

After Therkorn et al. forthcoming.

91 Therkorn et al. forthcoming, the area will be referred to as Broekpolder-2, here.
92 C-14 (KIA 10005) 1916 ± 28 BP: 2σ AD 26-132 and (KIA 12279) 1935 ± 27 BP: 2σ AD 4-128.
93 C-14 (KIA 10004) 1784 ± 37BP: 1σ AD 210-270 (32.2%) AD 280-330 (22.6%), 2σ AD 131-377.
94 Complete fibula dated to the first to second century AD.
95 The Iron spike probably has an early medieval date, indicating a long use of this area.
96 C-14 (KIA 10003) 1669 ± 31 BP: 1σ AD 340-415 (68.2%), 2σ AD 250-440.
Broekpolder-3 lies at the east flank of the tidal ridge. It consists of feature 683, a marshy layer dated to the Roman Iron Age (figure 4.33). The bone assemblage (119 bones) includes human, cattle, dog, horse, sheep/goat, and pig bones. Leg/foot and head elements are over represented (82 bones). Besides 30 unidentified bones, only three bones are ribs and four are parts of the pelvis. Vertebrae are absent in this marshy layer. Five species of wood in both worked and unworked form were found, consisting of alder, juniper, spruce/larch, Scotch pine and willow. Nearly 200 sherds were in the layer of which eight were exposed to high temperatures. Sixteen stones including flint and two parts of quern stones were present. No metal was found. During the Early Medieval period some paths with wood remains are in this area. This is considered an offering as a specific selection of bone, including human bone (2), with an emphasis on skull and leg bones, a selection of wood, stones and relatively few sherds are placed in a marshy environment.

Therkorn et al. forthcoming, the area will be referred to as Broekpolder-3, here.
4.3 OFFERINGS IN THE LANDSCAPE

In the previous section the twenty-two sites in wet low-lying areas with offerings of the Oer-IJ area have been described. In chapter 2 the offering sites of North Germany, Denmark and South Sweden were analysed through the themes of what, when, where, who and to whom. These themes are still important but are approached in a different way with the aim of achieving a more coherent view of the offerings within the landscape. As a starting point the different practices or absence of practices in the wet low-lying areas and the surrounding landscape will be mapped. This is done so that possible preferences and rejections of specific parts of the landscape become visible. The time dimension is added to see whether these preferences and rejections change through time. Furthermore the sequence of use is analysed so that possible patterns in long-term cycles of land-use can come to the fore. This is done in combination with the time frame of the offerings to see if there is a relation between the sequence of land-use and the duration of the practice of offering at a specific place. The organisation of the landscape will also be used to put forward the likely performers of the offerings. Then the materiality of the depositions will be viewed in order to analyse their connection to the landscape and other practices. Followed by a comparison between offerings in wet low-lying areas and the ritual practices in settlements as these practices are performed by the same people, who held a worldview that encompassed
the entire landscape. Finally a land-use model for the Oer-IJ area with an emphasis on the wet low-lying areas will be constructed.

4.3.1 WHAT AREAS WERE USED FOR OFFERINGS?

![Figure 4.34 Number of offering sites per landscape type.](image)

The offerings are situated in four types of wet low-lying areas (figure 4.34). There seems to be a slight preference for peat/marsh on or next to the (former) coastal barriers as over a third of the offering sites are situated in these areas. But open creeks and the border zone of the Oer-IJ are not far behind as they both contain one in four of the offering sites. The vast expanses of peat in the east of the Oer-IJ area seem to be nearly empty of offerings. The offerings sites that were discovered are all situated at the western edge of this large area close to the settlements and consist of one object. Although this picture of the large peat areas in the east could be distorted by a research bias, surveys have found little to no evidence from the periods before the Middle Ages. In comparison to the offering sites in chapter 2 the number of sites situated in peaty areas is less than expected as in chapter 2, two in three sites were associated with peat. This seems to point to a more diverse placement of offerings in the landscape in the Oer-IJ area. However, if a chronological perspective is taken the diversity diminishes dramatically (figure 4.35). Until the end of the Bronze Age depositions only take place in peat/marsh on or next to the (former) coastal barriers. The use of these places continues into the Roman Iron Age. The Iron Age is the only period in which offerings are made in the large peat area in the east. From the Middle Iron Age onward offerings in creeks occur. And only from the Roman Period are offerings in the border zone of the Oer-IJ known. In other words, through time the offering sites were placed closer to the streambed of the Oer-IJ as it became less active.

The smaller creeks connected to the Oer-IJ, but still at some distance, were first taken into use for offering practices. The creeks with offerings all silted up directly after the depositions were made. It can be assumed that the tidal influence was ending at these places while the Oer-IJ itself was still under tidal influences. After the Oer-IJ was cut off from the sea and the tidal influence ended its borders were used for offerings. At this time the Oer-IJ starts to flows in the opposite direction towards the southeast. To summarize, offerings were made in fresh water in places with a bounded character. The large peat areas further than a kilometre away from the former tidal area and the tidal waters were avoided.

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98 For example, H.C.J. Visscher 1987.
99 It is not the case that there is little peat in the Oer-IJ area. If we follow the estimates Van der Sanden (1996, 33-34) makes for Denmark than the Oer-IJ area has a much higher percentage of peat than Denmark.
100 Only depositions that occur within the peat itself are considered here. Depositions in creeks within the peat area are considered as part of a different type of landscape element.
In order to understand the placement of offerings within the wider landscape it is useful to look at other practices taking place within the same area and the direct vicinity. In this way the degree of exclusion of certain practices, either religious or non-religious, can be determined. The degree of connectedness between different practices that are performed at the same time or sequentially can give insight in the placement of offerings within the landscape.

Fortunately, thirteen offerings in wet low-lying areas are part of larger excavations, which enables a more comprehensive picture of the relation between offerings and other practices than is the case with chance finds. The offering sites that are found during large scale excavations can be used as a framework in which the chance finds might be fitted. The offerings discovered during excavations are, however, not evenly distributed over the different kinds of wet areas. Only two of the eight offering sites in a peaty / marshy area near or next to the former coastal barriers and one of the offerings in the large peat area in the east have been discovered during an excavation. All the sites in the other kinds of wet low-lying areas are part of excavations (figure 4.34). Here the excavated offering sites will be discussed in relation to other practices. The offering sites found by chance will be reviewed in the light of the excavated sites in order to understand their place within the landscape.

To start with the two offering sites found during excavations in the peat on the former coastal barrier, the oldest depositions at Velserbroek-Westlaan in pit 547 belongs to the early phase of use. This deposition is placed after the construction of the barrow. The total of depositions can be separated into at least four episodes of use on the basis of stratigraphy and all are dated within a three hundred year range. When the period of use of the pool and barrow is taken into consideration it is highly likely that contemporary use with the ard marks, other pits and fences must have taken place. Some of the features avoid the pool with pits and the barrow indicating that they were probably of a somewhat later date. The barrow and the houses west of the pool were in use when the depositions in the pool came to an end. About 500 m to the northwest at Velserbroek-B6 the first traces of use are very ephemeral and dated to the Bronze Age. From the Middle to Late Iron Age onwards depositions, monument building and the eventual digging of the channel for depositions take place. At the time of the dug channel directly to the east the constellation horse was laid out using pits. At this time or somewhat later the
area north of the dug channel with the monuments was used for fields, a cart-way and pit alignments. During the Medieval period the area with the horse figure was remarked with a small round mound. And among the last traces are a well and a pit dated to the nineteenth century. The nearest known remains of contemporary prehistoric habitation are 800 m to the west, but probably habitation was also situated closer by on the edge of the excavated area.

The offerings in creeks all seem to be part of the first phases of use of sites. And especially at Assendelft-N and Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-1, the offerings are made in a place with no other features, such as pits or gullies. If other activities took place they would have been of a transient nature. The creeks silted up shortly after the offerings were made. Some time elapsed before these places were taken into more permanent use. These areas were, however, probably used as grazing grounds in between. At both sites first fields were made followed by houses. At Assendelft-N platforms were constructed on which new houses were built. At Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-1 the star signs cow and horse were constructed and one of the last uses of the area was offerings at the border of the Oer-IJ, see below.

The two sites, Krommenie-14 and -21, have offerings in creeks that run through the peat. The first phase of both sites consists of an offering in a creek and the construction of an enclosure. These enclosures with no definite function are however different in character. The enclosure at Krommenie-14 is made of close-set alder posts in a trapezoid shape with a rectangular post setting in the inner space. The enclosure at Krommenie-21 has wide set oak posts in a rectangular shape. Both enclosures are at the north(west)ern bank of the creeks. At Krommenie-14 there are no subsequent phases of use and the enclosure was left to rot. Here, however, debris and offerings might be deposited at the same spot. At Krommenie-21 posts were set in the creek after it filled in and considerable depositions of material took place at the bank. It is unclear whether these concentrations of material are settlement debris or represent specific activities.

At Assendelft-56 the creek has filled up with peat. The first use is some general peat-cutting. Later peat-cutting in the southern part of the creek formed a hole, which was used for the offering. Around this time a settlement is created with a house, pits and activity areas. In a final phase of use two platforms are created with on the one hearths and pits and on the other indications for a possible house.

These five sites all seem to be part of a distinct first phase of use. The last site with offerings in a creek, Uitgeest-Dorregeest differs in this respect. Here the creek runs through a former coastal barrier and started to silt up from the Iron Age onward. The first depositions in this creek took place during the Late Iron Age and continued into the Middle Ages. And at the southern bank of the creek the remains of settlements dating to the same period have been found. Probably because of the closeness of the settlement it appears that the creek contains both settlement debris and offerings. In the Roman Iron Age the border of the creek was marked by four human burials and two cattle burials. This seems to be a preferred position; only one other human burial is situated about 25 m away close to two human burials. Other animal burials cluster south of the two human burials. Here in this cluster in the Early Medieval Period also burials of humans take place. De Koning proposes that the burials first take place at the border of the settlement and in a later phase are located in a specific place within the settlement. A pattern also attested for Castricum-Oosterbuurt. At Uitgeest-Dorregeest, however, not only the boundary of the settlement but also the presence of the creek seems to be important. The creek is of course a natural boundary, but it is at the same time a place used for the disposal of debris and the placement of offerings. It is a boundary in the sense that it divides the former coastal barrier, but it is not impenetrable. Here different practices were performed one after the other and again.

Five offering sites are situated in the low-lying areas at the border of the Oer-IJ and date to the period when the Oer-IJ was cut of from the sea and carried fresh water eastward. Of these sites Velsen-Fort-1 has the most built elements as the depositions take place in the harbour with wooden piers next to a Roman fort. The placement of this fort and the harbour on the south bank of the Oer-IJ will be based on a different set of ideas than the other sites. Little is known of previous use of the area as only some sherds inside the fort and a complete local pot in the Oer-IJ streambed were found. At the time of the use of the fort in its harbour depositions of debris and offerings took place. It is possible that some of the human remains in the harbour were deposited there after the Romans left. At this time at least the fort was visited by the local inhabitants for the collection of a variety of materials. There is no evidence for habitation or other land use in later periods. The other sites are situated

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in the area where the Oer-IJ has a more or less north-south direction. Three are situated at the west bank and one at the east bank. The most southern site Broekpolder-3 is the least elaborate; here in a marshy layer several artefacts were deposited. Just 25 m to the west on the former tidal ridge many traces of earlier land use, mainly field systems have been found and to the east were some cow paths along the Oer-IJ. Although no contemporary house was discovered, the features are similar to settlement features. In the Early Medieval Period the marshy layer is covered by many paths leading towards the Oer-IJ.

Broekpolder-2 is situated about 125 m towards the northeast and about 125 m east on the edge of the former tidal ridge. Here the first signs of use are cow paths and later strip fields with small embankments. The offerings that took place here are part of the last phase of use of this specific area. 250 m to the north on the other side of a small creek going through the former tidal barrier lays Broekpolder-3.

Next to Broekpolder-3 at the ridge some gullies of a Late Iron Age date are known. In the low-lying area the first signs of use are cow-paths. The offering site has a long (discontinuous) use period. As the offering site lies adjacent to an archaeological monument little can be said about specific contemporary use although a settlement area is expected. Only a few hundred metres to the west the remains of houses from the Roman Iron Age and field systems from the Medieval period are known. Medieval habitation is probably situated a few more hundreds of metres to the west or within the area of the archaeological monument.

Two kilometres to the northeast on the other side of the Oer-IJ lies Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2. As shown above at this site already all kinds of land use are taken place when southwest of the fields and star sign horse gullies are dug along the border of the Oer-IJ. Therkorn relates the position of the depositions in water to the Milky Way over which the constellation horse moves from east to west102, see also Velserbroek-B6 above and figure 4.36. At the final phase of use when the border zone becomes swampy again offerings are made at this place.

![Figure 4.36 The location of the star pattern Horse in relation to the offerings in wet context at Velserbroek-B6 and Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2.](image)

To summarize the excavated sites, the offerings in peaty areas in the former beach barrier and creeks all most likely take place during the first phase of use. At Velserbroek-B6 and Broekpolder-1 the first depositions are in natural open water and the last phase consists of a large dug feature, respectively a channel with water and a large pit. The offerings in the border zone of the Oer-IJ are part of the last phases of use, except Broekpolder-3.

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102 Therkorn 2004.
Most sites, except two, have the remains of other uses of the landscape in their vicinity. The most common other uses are fields and houses, besides the two enclosures. It seems, however, in most cases that the fields are positioned closer to the offerings than the houses. At two sites the placement of the offerings seems to be connected to the position of the constellation horse in the fields, horse is situated to the northeast of the offerings. The stake row in the pool at Velserbroek-Westlaan also points in a north-easterly direction towards the barrow. And the enclosures are positioned on the north bank of the creeks with depositions. The placement of the fields and houses in relation to the different offerings shows, however, no other pattern, except that they are a short distance from each other. Only three sites have other practices mixed in with the offerings. This means that offerings were made in specific but not necessarily separate or distant places.

It is difficult to determine other practices than offerings which could have been performed at the same place of the offering sites that were discovered by chance and were not part of an excavation. Little to no evidence is available for their direct surroundings and often the focus has solely been on the artefacts. Whether this is due to the absence of other features or due to the disinterest in features such as gullies or pits is difficult to establish. At the few sites where additional information was gathered after the chance discovery of the artefacts no other features were discovered. Of this group the artefacts dating to the earliest periods are the most problematic as they are often the only artefacts or features from a similar date known within a radius of several kilometres. The other offering sites, discovered by chance, have contemporary sites at a distance of around one kilometre, a 10-15 minutes walk. The archaeological remains within this radius are most often plough marks and sherds, some gullies or pits. And only one house is known within this radius of this kind of offering site.

To summarize, the lack of data from the offering sites found by chance or within very small excavations allow no statements to be made about other uses in the direct vicinity. However, it seems that the offering sites are situated within viewing and/or easy walking distance of other kinds of sites, such as fields and settlements. If the evidence from the large scale excavations is taken into consideration this assumption is highly probable. There is no evidence that alterations to the landscape have been made at the place of the offerings. And the offering sites seem to appear during the first general periods of use of an area.

4.3.3 TIME

As shown above, fifteen of the offerings are performed during the first phase of use of an area. The duration of the use of the offering sites differs considerably: from a one-time event to a continued use of the same place over centuries. But even the simplest offering takes more time than just the actual deposition: a vessel has to be made, wood collected, or artefacts have to be curated.

Thirteen offering sites are categorized as used for a short time. At these sites there is no accumulation of material and/or the offerings seem to have been covered by sediments shortly afterwards.

Five sites appear to be used for a longer time, but probably not exceeding one to two human generations. These sites have an accumulation of artefacts and/or discrete events can be discerned, which indicates multiple performances of practices associated with the offerings. Krommenie-14 and Velsen-fort-1 have large structures. At Velsen-fort-1 the different offerings that are spatially separate are probably small-scale events, probably performed by single persons or small groups. The deposition of debris across the harbour was a continuous process, in the sense that there probably was little thought involved and it could be seen as a routine action.

At Krommenie-14 the use of the enclosure is unclear and therefore also its frequency of use. Whether the enclosure was kept clean or was built just for a specific event remains unanswered. It could be that the offerings are mixed in with debris or that the debris is also part of the events connected to the offerings. At Broekpolder-

103 Assendelft-N and Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-1.
104 Krommenie-14, Uitgeest-Dorregeest and Velsen-Fort 1.
106 Assendelft-Q lies 1100 m southwest of the pot found at Assendelft-51.
107 These sites have a larger dating range, but I think this is due to our inability to give more precise dates.
some discrete events can be distinguished: the construction of the post row, the construction of the little fence, depositions of wood, and some artefacts. Uitgeesterbroekpolder 18-2 has at least two phases of use, starting with gullies and small pits being dug in which offerings were deposited. As these were covered with silts and the area became swampy new offerings were made. As the site is situated in the border zone of the Oer-IJ the silting up and changing water table could have happened within a relative short period. Broekpolder-3 is less differentiated, only the amount of material seems to point to use over a somewhat longer period than a discrete event.

![Figure 4.37 Use periods of the offering sites.](image)

Four offering sites have been used for several centuries. These sites are all situated on or next to natural features that had been dry for hundreds of years, the stable elements in the landscape. The areas in the (direct) vicinity of these sites have also seen other land-uses over a longer period of time, such as settlement, fields and burials. Uitgeest-Dorregeest is situated closest to a settlement and this could well explain the mix of offerings and debris in the creek. The offerings are probably linked to small-scale discrete events, which take place when the need occurs. The deposition of 1200 coins could, however, be related to a group of people exceeding a household. At Velserbroek-Westlaan there are at least four phases of use, based on the stratigraphy and twelve discrete events, when counting the pits and the stake row, taking place within a period of three hundred years. 500m to the northwest lies Velserbroek-B6 at which five phases of use could be established concerning offerings and/or monument building taking place over 500 years. Most of the events would have taken considerable effort and probably exceeded the household and involved the local community. Generation after generation must have been aware of the significance of the place and they have restructured it in their own and at the same time in a traditional way. The offerings in the dug channel would have taken a long time to accumulate and is the result of many small performances. The offerings at Broekpolder-1 are also the result of many small performances. The digging of the gullies would not take much time. It seems that per generation the offerings shifted somewhat towards the northeast. It is, however, much more difficult to distinguish between the different phases of use as over time the same practices were performed again and again at the same spot. Only the large pit at the end of the use of the offering site can be understood as a clear separate phase.

To summarize, most of the offering sites, except the mound and bank at Velserbroek-B6, and the large pit at Broekpolder-1, are the result of small-scale events. The repetition of these events at the same spot led to the stable significance of some of these places and their long-term tradition.

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108 If the pallisade at Krommenie-14 is part of the offering site this would also take a considerable effort.
4.3.4 THE USERS OF THE OFFERING SITES

In chapter 1\textsuperscript{109} it was shown that for understanding an offering it is important to know who made the offering. This human agent can not be directly inferred during the prehistoric period. In chapter 2 it was suggested that no special human agent was necessary for the performance of these ritual practices.\textsuperscript{110} In the Oer-IJ area the nature of the burial practice also leaves little evidence of the actions specific persons were associated with.\textsuperscript{111} In order to draw some conclusions on who used these offering sites it is necessary to look at how the local community was organised. The statements on who used the offering sites will have a general character.

On the basis of different lines of research there are some reasons to assume that the offering sites were used by local households and that both women and men participated. To begin with, the offering sites are close to the settlements and have an open character. Most ritual practices taking place would have been visible from some distance as the deposits are made in a fairly open landscape. Seclusion seems not to be an important factor in the location of the offering sites. The lack of built structures that would limit the openness points in the same direction. Furthermore, one of the features of the Oer-IJ area is that the landscape was dotted with single farmsteads with fairly self-sufficient households.\textsuperscript{112} There is no substantial evidence on which we can assume what the influence of gender perceptions were on the way the society was organised. The division between jobs inside the house (private) as female and outside the house (public) as male seems not adequate and a mere projection of more recent perceptions.\textsuperscript{113} It would therefore be inadequate to propose that only males took part in the outdoor offerings. The single farmsteads do lead one to assume that the work of women and men could not have been totally separated and, although some task division probably existed, a certain amount of equality between the adult members of a family can be suggested. The diversity of the offerings and the lack of emphasis on a specific type of activity may also point to the use of the offering sites by all the members of a household.

As different ritual practices took place in and around the farmstead,\textsuperscript{114} which do not point to the need of a separate class of ritual specialist, it can be argued that most people held sufficient knowledge to perform offerings. From this it follows that ritual practices were probably centred on the household as a unit and could involve both women and men.

4.4 THE SYMBOLIC RELATIONS OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE OFFERING SITES

In chapter 1 it was argued that offerings always relate to the everyday world people live in. When the choice is made what to offer, the associations made with use, origin and symbolic relations will play a part. In other words, the biography of the thing offered is important in the decisions made.\textsuperscript{115} Here I will look at different aspects of the things offered and the material used in structuring the place itself. First, I will look at the elements taken from the landscape itself, namely raw materials (natural objects), plants, animals and humans. Then the incorporation of the world outside the Oer-IJ area through the use of imports in the offerings will be discussed. And last, the relation between offerings and the everyday world will be viewed through the use of household objects.

4.4.1 RAW MATERIAL (NATURAL OBJECTS)

In recent years there is a growing interest in raw materials. Not so much for the study of artefact production and exchange networks related to stone axes, metal objects and pottery, but for the (symbolic) qualities these raw materials can obtain within a society.\textsuperscript{116} In the United Kingdom this new emphasis on raw materials has

\begin{thebibliography}{16}
\bibitem{109} § 1.4.2.2, § 1.5 and § 1.5.6.
\bibitem{110} § 2.5.1.
\bibitem{111} § 3.5.3.
\bibitem{112} § 3.5.1 - 3.5.4.
\bibitem{114} See for example, § 3.5.2, § 4.7.1 and § 4.7.2.
\bibitem{115} Chapter 1 § 1.6.2.
\end{thebibliography}
led to several studies that not only looked at the form of monuments, especially barrows from the Neolithic and Bronze Age, but also at the materials that were used to create them.\footnote{For example, Bender 1998, 46-55, Owoc 2002, Tilley 2004, and Brittain 2002.} The use of specific soils, stones and colours is recognised as an integral part for the understanding of the process of creating the monuments and their meaning. Therkorn shows for North-Holland also the use of soils and their colour in a symbolic manner, especially in pits.\footnote{Therkorn 2004, 193-197 and figure 64.} She relates the use of light and dark colours of soils in pits to the stars in the night-sky and the seasons.

In the Oer-IJ area one offering site, Broekpolder-1, has redeposited soil.\footnote{This action took place during the late phase dated to the ninth and tenth century.} In half of the large pit (4468) north of the wattle work great lumps were deposited in a short time. This was not a clean soil, but a rough mix up of different sediments. As this soil was totally different from the natural fill south of the wattle work it must have been gathered somewhere else. Why they choose to mix up material is unclear, especially as the general pattern in the Oer-IJ area seems to be a preference for fairly clean soils. Soils were not deposited in water at other sites, but on two occasions soils were used to construct earthworks. At Broekpolder-2 the small embankment was made up of peat turfs covered by white sand\footnote{This white sand was different from the sediments found in the direct vicinity of the small embankment.} (figure 4.38). Wet peat was covered by dry sand/land and the embankment was constructed at the border between wet and dry land. As the sand seemed eroded at some spots it is likely that the embankment was not covered with sods or other material. It therefore must have

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Figure 4.38 Embankment at Broekpolder-2.
been a marked white feature in the landscape at the time of construction with a straight south side with side branches and a meandering north side, going towards Broekpolder-1. Broekpolder-1 was at that moment still in its earliest phase of use with the creek as its main body of water. The difference between the straight side and the meandering side may have to do with the degree of alteration that took place within the landscape. The straight part of the embankment and its side branches formed strip fields to the west. Although the northern area was not fully excavated and only had some test trenches, the meandering embankment went through a less cultivated part of the landscape maybe following a more natural border. It was east of the cultivated side that the depositions took place. This means that they are more associated with the constructed environment then the nearly unaltered landscape.

![Figure 4.39 Impression of the wavy bank looking towards the dug channel at Velserbroek-B6.](image)

At Velserbroek-B6 a long barrow was created with the soil from its ditches. This layer was covered by oak branches and a final layer of cut reed peat. Here the opposite of the construction of the embankment at Broekpolder-2 had happened. First sand was deposited, which is light in colour here and this is in turn covered by branches and a brown black layer of reed peat. Reed peat could be collected at a close distance. At Velserbroek-B6 the dry land is covered by wet peat. The appearance of this long mound would have been totally different from the embankment at Broekpolder-2. The dark colour would make it look smaller than it actually was. It could be seen in one look and it is relatively straight. The long barrow would merge more into the total landscape than the embankment at Broekpolder-2. This is countered somewhat by the erection of three oak posts at the north-western end. It is concealed and made visible at the same time. After the long barrow was covered due to sedimentation a new embankment of at least 120 m was created. It consists of two small wavy banks of sand covered by sods with the grass side up and the area in between was filled with white sand. The visual impact of this green and white wave through an area that has little plant growth ending in a watery area would be drawing attention (figure 4.39). It would lead the gaze towards the watery area that received many offerings from that time onward. Here the dry and the wet are bound together. At the moment of deposition the same wavy monument would lead the gaze towards the old dune area and its long occupation.

To summarize, the soils and sods used in earthworks created in the Oer-IJ area bind wet and dry parts of the landscape. This was done through the layering of the one on top of the other and/or through a physical connection in the landscape. The colours of the soils and sods were used to visually enhance the earthworks and especially the wavy elements drew the attention towards water in which mostly at a later date offerings were made.

Note that Velserbroek-B6 is of an earlier date than Broekpolder-2.

The marshy area had dried out and oak grows on relative dry sandy grounds in the Oer-IJ area.
CHAPTER 4

4.4.2 PLANT

Over a third of the offering sites contain plants. This is a marked difference with the sites in chapter 2 where one in seven of the offering sites contain plants. The relatively higher number of plant remains in offering sites in the Oer-IJ could be a local preference but it could just as well be related to preservation conditions or the research interest.123

The ontological category plant, as described in chapter 1, encloses all plant life, including trees and small herbs that are not made into use-objects. Sticks and poles are included but beams and parts of constructions are not. Although this is an arbitrary distinction, it is based on the idea that sticks and poles are used as representations of certain trees/plants as beams and constructions are transformed into tools. The symbolic aspect of certain plant and tree species does not disappear when used in tools, but may constitute other types of relations, extending the symbolic meaning into specific use-areas.

Plants and trees can have meanings associated to specific parts of the landscape where they grow, but they can also have symbolic meanings on the basis of specific qualities related to use and/or mythology. Because of extensive ecological research in the Oer-IJ area, the spectrum of plants and trees and their location is relatively well known. Most of the trees and plants were not evenly distributed throughout the Oer-IJ due to the geological circumstances.124 Specific types of trees and plants can therefore be connected with different parts of the landscape. The symbolic meaning of plants and trees is less directly manifest, but early written sources, (pre)historic selection and deposition can give us some insight into this aspect. From the written sources it becomes clear that the Germanic people venerated specific trees and forests and used wood in religious practices, such as divination.125 Therkorn has shown for the Oer-IJ area that wood was used in different ritual depositions.126 In northern mythology the tree ‘Yggdrassil’ was seen as the centre of the world sometimes harbouring people, and humans were created from and equated with specific types of trees.127 The many connotations of trees and plants and the general lack of interest for plant remains in archaeological interpretations beyond an ecological view or species list is therefore all the more curious. Especially, as Garthoff-Zwaan already in 1983 showed the potential for this type of research. Therkorn has demonstrated that the people in Noord-Holland were very much concerned with the passing of the seasons, measured in the night-sky.128 In the daytime landscape this changing of the seasons would be most easily recognised in the changing outlook of most trees and plants. Only evergreens would be defying the passing of the seasons. In the next section the wood in the different offering sites will be discussed. Examples of possible symbolic links with plants, religious practices and CPS-agents are given to indicate the importance of plants in religious views without putting forward conclusions about these symbolic links, but to suggest possibilities for future archaeological research.

In the Oer-IJ area a total of 27 different species of wood/shrub and three herbs were deposited in eight low-lying wet offering sites. Velserbroek-B6 has the largest deposits of the ontological category plant.129 It may be said that this is the major focus of deposition in the early phases of use. After the deposition of twenty reworked oak (Quercus) and alder (Alnus) beams, four separate tracks of deposited bundles of juniper (Juniperus) branches and sometimes trunks, were pinned down. The largest track is 45 metre long and the tracks are undisturbed, excluding the interpretation of paths. They must have been under water as they were still well preserved when excavated. After this, in a drier phase, a long-barrow was constructed, made up of two ditches, sand, read-peat and a layer of thousands of mainly oak branches. Later oak posts were placed at the north side of the pool, that was redug, and different wood species were deposited, also in the form of objects and pointed stakes of juniper. Both oak and juniper were available in the old dune area. Juniper was very common in the old dunes before 500 BC but was replaced or pushed to the west by forest after this period.130 Velserbroek-B6 lies at the eastern

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123 As noted in chapter 2 not all wood is analysed. It is still not a general practice in Dutch archaeology to record or analyse all wood remains, even from pits.
124 See chapter 3, § 3.4.
125 For examples, de Vries 1956, §200-201, Dowden 2000, 66-77, and Tacitus Germania 9, 10, 39, and 40.
126 Therkorn 2004.
128 Therkorn 2004, for example, 29-35 and 206-212.
129 Therkorn and Oversteegen 1994.
At Broekpolder-1 twenty-three different species of wood were found. During excavations in the entire being of the household, and possibly the creation and sheltering of humans.

Deposits of wood were made that have strong associations with the warding off of evil or misfortune, the well being established that they are part of a wider north European symbolic plane. To conclude, on separate occasions although the exact meaning of the use of oak beams, branches, tenons and posts cannot be determined, it can be envisaged that juniper was seen as an important tree/shrub that could have symbolic relations to different domains. Oak is connected in northern mythology to sacred forests, thunder, the god Donar/Thor and the high-seat pillar that supported the house. Thor was the protector of homes, and the community, land boundaries and the law. In relation to this, it is interesting that the first deposition consists of reworked building material, possibly a former home. The three oak posts erected at a later date at the end of the long mound could relate to the idea of the pillar, known from other ritual places in northern Europe. But here the picture becomes muddled as the long bed contains objects that could be associated with Wodan/Odin, such as spears, and horse and human bone. This makes it apparent that it is not clear-cut to connect specific CPS-agents to material categories. There could be an overlap in associations between CPS-agents and material categories, but also different CPS-agents could be connected to the same place where ritual practices took place.

In the dug channel eleven wooden tenons are deposited of which six are of oak and two of juniper, the others species are: hazel (Corylus), willow (Salix) and elm (Ulmus). Hazel is associated with magical practices, including divination. Willow is associated with infertility and power over others through the use of the branches. And elm is in northern mythology possibly associated with the creation of the first woman. Although the relation between Embla – the first woman – and elm is not firmly established, the first two humans were created from two pieces of wood. Elm is a rare species in archaeological context. The constellation horse laid out in pits to the northeast of the dug channel Therkorn associated with Wodan/Odin. Here again many pieces of wood were deposited, especially in the form of tenons and standing oak stakes in pits. Of the tenons oak is again the main species (42%), but eleven other species are also present. Although the exact meaning of the use of oak beams, branches, tenons and posts cannot be determined, it can be established that they are part of a wider north European symbolic plane. To conclude, on separate occasions deposits of wood were made that have strong associations with the warding off of evil or misfortune, the well being of the household, and possibly the creation and sheltering of humans.

At Broekpolder-1 twenty-three different species of wood were found. During excavations in the entire Broekpolder a total of 43 species of wood/shrub were discovered. This means that although a wide variety of species were deposited it was still a selection. Just as much as certain species were deposited, others were not. There are six species that are only deposited in the offering site – silver fir (Abies a.), spindle tree (Euonymus e.), honeysuckle/privet (Lonicera/Ligustrum v.), apple-like (Pomoidae), and elderberry (Sambucus). These – except silver fir that is imported – are species associated with the old dunes. The berries of spindle tree make people throw up. Apple-like trees are fruit bearing, which makes them into a food source, although not as tasty as our modern apple. In Roman texts sticks made of fruit/nut bearing trees are used for foretelling the future. Elderberry has edible berries and is associated with ‘vrouw Holle’ in the Medieval period and its branches were used in magical practices while honeysuckle/privet is an evergreen. Four of the six wood-species that are only found in the offering site have special properties, associated with ritual practices and medicine. This gives

133 Davidson. 1988, 135.
134 For example, in Saxony at Eresburg. Davidson 1988, 21.
135 Davidson 1990 [1964], 140-149.
136 Schuyf 1997, 41.
138 Groenman-van Waateringe (1988) found elm in the pollen samples but not in the wood species from excavations in the Oer-IJ area. And for example in Beverwijk/Heemskerk Broekpolder less than one percent of the 1876 wood finds were elm and eight of them came from features with an Early Medieval or later date.
140 Tacitus Germania X.
141 Schuyf 1997, 41.
some insight in their selection. The other wood species are also found in other contexts. This does not exclude that some of the wood in the offering site has special properties. For example, hazel is associated with magical practices including foreseeing the future.\textsuperscript{142}

It appears that some wood species were deposited together, indicating another type of selection. cornel/cornelian cherry (Cornus) is always found directly north of birch (Betula). Only one piece of birch is found without cornel/cornelian cherry in its vicinity.

Broekpolder-2 is second in diversity of wood species and contains seventeen species of wood. Of which only Viburnum is not found in Broekpolder-1. Although there are less species of wood, this offering site mainly consists of wood. A post row, a small half circular wattle fence, and many pieces of wood are its main characteristics. Some of the wood seems to be placed in lines, a rectangle or simply placed together. Again there are several fruit bearing species and evergreens. And just like Velserbroek-B6 and Broekpolder-1 this is one of the few sites that contain elm. Cornel/cornelian cherry is also present, but not in combination with birch.

Broekpolder-3 has only five pieces of wood of which three are evergreens.
At Assendelft-56 nine species of wood were deposited in the peat cut above the vessels. These consisted of trees/shrubs associated with wet areas, such as alder (Alnus), willow (Salix) and especially bog myrtle (Myrica gale) and species associated with the dryer areas, such as oak (Quercus), birch (Betula) and especially juniper (Juniperus). Oak could have grown on dry levees but grew probably mainly in the old dunes and juniper had to be gotten from the western part of the old dunes. Again, as at Velserbroek-B6 the selection of woods from the old dunes consists of oak and juniper.

At Krommenie-21 oak (Quercus) and alder (Alnus) were deposited. The oak was mainly formed into tools of which only parts remained. The alder was a branch set in half a vessel. This configuration of an alder branch within half a pot was also made at Assendelft-56 in pit 123, also considered an offering by me. As there are many other species of wood available and complete pots, this must be viewed as a specific recurring set of deposition.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{142} Schuyf 1997, 41.
\textsuperscript{143} See also chapter 2 §2.2.2.1.
At Velserbroek-Westlaan seven different species of wood were deposited in the pits in the marshy pool. Again juniper (Juniperus) and oak (Quercus) are present, but also the evergreen yew (Taxus), the nut/fruit bearing hazel (Corylus) and wild cherry (Prunus avium), and species associated with wet conditions alder (Alnus), and willow (Salix).

At Dorregeest a Roman bronze flask filled with seeds of radish or ramenas (Raphanus sativus L.), wild marjoram (Origanum vulgare L.), celery (Apium graveolens L.) and mallow (Malva sylvestris L.) was deposited (figure 4.40). Janneke Buurman examined the seed remains and concludes that they are probably of a non-local Roman origin. She interprets the content as medicine, because of their curing properties that were known during the Roman Period. Although the seeds derive probably from a Roman context, the wild variations of these plants were likely present in the Oer-IJ area and at least marjoram was found at the nearby Early Iron Age site Assendelft-Q. The date of the flask in the second or third century and its pristine condition appear to indicate trade instead of a pick-up, as has been suggested for the earlier Roman metal finds. It can therefore be assumed that the people of Dorregeest obtained the flask with a local medicinal knowledge of the content. The relation between offerings and curing are well known for the Roman Period and are based on traditions going back into the Iron Age. In the creek the remains of wood and plants have been found that are not yet published and are therefore left out of the discussion. This should make us aware of the fact that wood and plant remains are not a priority in most research and thereby leaving out an important source of information.

To summarize, plant material and especially trees and shrubs were part of the offerings in the Oer-IJ. There is a preference for willow and alder that are associated with wet parts of the landscape and juniper and oak that are associated with the dry parts of the landscape. Of these species oak is known in the religious worldview of the Germanic world as associated with Thor/Donar, thunder, sacred groves and the high seat pillar in the house. For the other three species the associations are less direct but juniper, alder and willow have medicinal and magical properties in medieval sources. Alder also colours orange-red just after felling, like the tree is bleeding. The use of elm in three offering sites stands out because of its rarity in other archaeological contexts. The indicated symbolic links should be researched in a more comprehensive manner in the Netherlands to broaden our perspective, which at the moment mainly has economic aspects and landscape reconstructions in view.

4.4.3 ANIMAL

In the Oer-IJ area just over half of the offering sites (12) contain the ontological category animals. This is about the same percentage as the sites in chapter 2. The mobility of animals makes it more difficult to place them in specific parts of the Oer-IJ area. General associations can be made of fish and water, birds and sky, and mammals and land. In the mythology of northern Europe especially the domestic animals take part, with the exception of the snake, wild boars and birds. Some of the animals are directly associated with specific CPS-agents, such as Odin’s horse Sleipnir, Thor’s cart drawn by goats, and the siblings Freyr and Freya with a wild boar, respectively named Gullinbursti and Hildisvín. Odin and Freya are both also associated

144 Woltering 1982, 207.
146 M. Garthoff-Zwaan 1987, 337.
147 Martin Meffert 1998, 95.
149 For examples, Green 1986, 138-166.
150 Woltering 1982, 206.
151 Davidson 1990, 86-88.
154 Garthoff-Zwaan 1986, 47.
155 Silke Lange personal communication.
156 In one story of Snorri Sturluson, Gylfaginning 43. Descriptions of statues of Thor with cart drawn by goats in Davidson 1990, 75-76.
157 Davidson 1990, 142, 74-76 and 98.
with birds. Odin’s ravens Hugin (memory) and Muninn (future) are associated with battle and the dead but also with foreseeing.\textsuperscript{158} Freya can take on a falcon shape; interestingly she is also associated with divination.\textsuperscript{159} Cattle is not directly associated with any CPS-agent, but the cow Audhumla seems to take on this role herself as she plays an important part in the creation of the world.\textsuperscript{160} Furthermore, there are some indications that in the Germanic world cattle were seen as a very valuable asset.\textsuperscript{161} This value appears to be supported by the archaeological evidence as cattle forms the largest part of the animal remains. It is also thought that the so-called ‘woonstalhuis’ represents the value of cattle as they are kept under the same roof as humans.\textsuperscript{162} Here it has to be remembered that all livestock would probably be sheltered under the roof at one time or another.

Eight of the ten sites without animals are chance finds of recognisable mostly single artefacts. The two sites that have been excavated, Assendelft-56 and Krommenie-21, have deposits that focus on pottery and wood. At these two sites bone is deposited in other artefact concentrations and/or pits. Twelve sites have animals as part of the offerings. In the reports of two sites the deposition of bones are mentioned but are not further explicated and of five sites only part of the set of bones is mentioned.\textsuperscript{163} This puts a restraint on what can be put forward, but some suggestions can be made for the sites of which at least some animal remains are published. When animal bones occur there are always cattle bones present. Horse forms a second large group, overshadowing the species dog, pig and sheep/goat. If we compare these amounts of bone to the bones found in settlements, choices can be analysed.\textsuperscript{164} The high number of cattle bones is mirrored in the settlements where they form the largest part of the bone assemblage. The amount of sheep/goat bones in the offerings is, however, lower than expected. Although sheep/goat is an important animal in the animal husbandry as it takes second place after cattle, sheep/goat is not represented in equal amounts in the offerings. It has to be kept in mind that the low number could also be due to the absence of publication of the complete bone assemblages. The under representation of sheep/goat in offerings is, however, probably due to practice as pig bones show a different picture. Pig is only present in settlements in very low numbers, around five percent of the total bone assemblage. In the offerings pig occurs almost as often as sheep/goat.\textsuperscript{165} Pig is thus over represented and favoured in offerings. This seems to be in contrast with Jankuhn’s analysis of the presence of pig in offerings for northern Europe.\textsuperscript{166} He finds that pig is scarcely present in offerings even though it is considered a sacred animal in later periods.\textsuperscript{167}

There are two other animals that are over represented in offerings, horse and dog take respectively second and shared third place. This overrepresentation of horse and dog in offerings in comparison to settlements was also established in northern Europe.\textsuperscript{168} What is of interest for the Oer-IJ area is that the three species of animal that are most often found in offerings are cattle, horse and dog in a lesser degree. These are the animals that are also represented in the pit-star constellations of cow, horse and greater dog as described by Therkorn for the western Netherlands.\textsuperscript{169} These three animals took a special place in the worldview of the people and it is therefore not surprising that they also occur in offerings.

All sites, except Uitgeest-Achterloet\textsuperscript{170}, have more than one species of animal in the offerings. The selection consists of a range of animals. This seems to be especially the case at Krommenie-14 Velsberbroek-Westlaan and Broekpolder-1. Here are, besides the domestic animals, a selection of wild animals present, including

\begin{itemize}
  \item Davidson 1990, 146-147. Translation of the names of the ravens Jarich Oosten personal communication.
  \item Davidson 1990, 117.
  \item Davidson 1990, 27.
  \item For example, Tacitus, Germania V.
  \item Therkorn 1987a, 102.
  \item For examples of bone assemblages from settlements: van Wijngaarden-Bakker 1988, table 4.1, Meffert 1998, 85 and Hagers and Sier 1999 table 8.1 and 8.2.
  \item Pig and goat occur respectively four and five in offering sites.
  \item See chapter 2 § 2.1.3.
  \item Jankuhn 1967a, 145.
  \item See chapter 2 § 2.2.3.
  \item Therkorn 2004.
  \item This is one of the oldest offerings dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age.
\end{itemize}
fish, birds, and small mammals. These animals are associated with water, sky, and land. Although some of the fish and birds at Broekpolder-1 could have died naturally, at Velserbroek-Westlaan this could not be the case. Therefore fish and birds have to be considered as appropriate for offerings. At Broekpolder-1 besides all the domestic animals it seems that a considerable part of the birds and fish are also present. Six different species of fish, including flat fish from the sea or small inlets and nine different birds: ducks, goose, cormorant, crane, swan, and stork are present. The crane, stork and goose are migrating birds, of which goose could be present throughout the year. Crane and stork would have been associated with specific times of the year. The offerings of the different animals, however, did not take place at once. The diversity of species accumulated over time. During a generation at least there must have been knowledge of the previous offerings. When the offering of specific animals was associated with the seasons, the diversity could come into place by offerings made at specific times in the year.

4.4.4 PERSON

Eight of the wet low-lying offering sites contain the ontological category person, once in the shape of a small wooden leg and in the other cases as the deposition of human bones. From the Early Bronze Age until the first part of the Roman Period cemeteries or multiple burials are unknown in the Oer-IJ area. This is the case for the entire western part of the Netherlands. On the higher sandy areas in the south and east of the Netherlands this period is marked by urnfields. These urnfields are seen as a structuring element in the perception and construction of the landscape. The absence of this structuring element in the landscape of the Oer-IJ and the rest of the western Netherlands may be the result of the same cultural rules that prevented the conglomeration of houses into small hamlets. This absence of urnfields does, however, not mean that human remains were not used in a specific manner in the landscape. In the offering sites, with the exception of the Roman fort Velsen\textsuperscript{171}, a specific selection of elements were deposited, namely arm, leg, and head bones. This selection of human bones is similar to the selection of animal bones, but practiced in a stricter manner. Only at Broekpolder-1 the first deposition consists of most of the upper part of a baby skeleton.\textsuperscript{172} The divergence from the pattern may be due to the young age of the person and/or the time frame as it is one of the first deposits made in this place. Some of the offering sites have one type of single bone deposited. At Velserbroek-B6 only thighbones are deposited and at Uitgeest-Dorregeest in the creeks two skull fragments were found. Although there is no evidence to suggest what treatment the body received after death, some bones appear to have been kept over a period of time before being deposited. For example, a human kneecap at Broekpolder-1 is dated hundreds of years earlier than the deposits surrounding it.

4.5 IMPORTED MATERIAL IN THE OFFERING SITES

In the offering sites in the Oer-IJ area all different kinds of imported goods are present. These objects refer to the wider world of which they are a part. These objects refer to different peoples and different landscapes. Whether their knowledge of these distant places and people was first hand is difficult to establish, although some travelling can be expected, especially along the rivers\textsuperscript{173} and the coast. At least stories would have travelled with the objects.\textsuperscript{174} An important element of the biography of these objects would be that their origin lay outside the Oer-IJ area. For specific materials, such as stone and bronze the Oer-IJ area has always been depended on exchange.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{171} The human remains in the top fill of the harbour are not dated and could be part of the later Roman Iron Age when clusters of burials re-appear in the area.
\item \textsuperscript{172} As ribs were present it seems unlikely that the bigger leg bones have decayed.
\item \textsuperscript{173} The canoe in Nigtevegt (about 25 km to the southeast) with pottery from the Oer-IJ area indicates that the waterways were used.
\item \textsuperscript{174} Thomas 1999 [1996], 154-155.
\end{itemize}
Stone is one of the natural objects that do not naturally occur in the Oer-IJ area. Therefore, all stones were imported from at least 50 km away and most from even a greater distance, like the volcanic rock made into quern stones that came from a few hundred kilometre to the southeast. Many stones were imported for the manufacturing of tools from an early date. More striking is the number of unworked stones that have been brought in to be part of the offerings in the low-lying wet sites. Four sites give a total of 419 stones, of which Broekpolder-1 with 398 stones makes up the largest part. Of all the stones only a third is made into and used as a tool, the other 279 stones were offered simply as stones. Three of the four sites are situated in the Broekpolder, the other site is Velserbroek-Westlaan. This means that the stones were deposited in different periods, but the main part took place in the Roman Iron Age and Early Medieval Period in a restricted area, no more then 450 metres apart. This could be defined as a localised practice. The deposition of stones is, however, well known in northern Europe and fits in the practices described in chapter 2. Furthermore in several medieval texts and folklore the worship of specific stones is described. Especially at Broekpolder-1 the effort must have been considerable in bringing these stones to the Oer-IJ area. As the unworked stones comprise 23 different types of rock, these must have come from different sources. The physical qualities of the stones may be an important factor during the choices made to consider them as offerings. The hardness of stones is a quality that is not present in the Oer-IJ area in itself. The Oer-IJ area could be defined as a soft landscape; the ground is soft, local pottery is easily broken, metal can be melted and trees can be chopped down, cut and burned. Stones can be broken, although this would not have been easy, it would only lead to smaller stones. Therefore stones have a durability, a permanence that cannot be found in the natural occurring elements of the landscape. Besides the large amount of unworked stones at Broekpolder-1, 140 stone tools – of which 109 were broken – were offered. Completeness seems not to be a criterion, but at the same time the tools do not need to be broken. Another characteristic of the stones that was of importance could be their colour (figure 4.41). 90 percent of the stones are grey or white. Gerritsen and Therkorn have shown the importance of colour in depositions in the Oer-IJ area for the Roman Iron Age.

175 See chapter 2 § 2.2.2.1.
177 Gerritsen 2000, 42-43 and Therkorn 2004, 193-197 and figure 64.
4.5.2 POTTERY AND (ROOF)TILES

In the Oer-IJ area the handmade pottery has a style of its own. Van Heeringen has shown that there are influences from the northeast and south, but that a distinctive pottery style can be established. All pottery was produced locally. With the appearance of the Romans at Velsen an influx of Roman pottery came about. This pottery is, however, not found outside the two forts in complete forms and this has led to the pick-up theory. Only after the Romans left the Oer-IJ area complete Roman pottery has entered the local settlements, although in limited numbers. The locally produced pottery remained the most important form in daily use. In seven of the offering sites Roman imports are present. Again we are dealing with small pieces instead of complete objects that fit into the pick-up theory. It is obvious that these Roman sherds were not deposited as pottery in the sense of a vessel with possible contents. The Roman pottery does have some physical qualities that could be important, such as its hardness and colour. The red terra-sigillata and the whitish smooth and rough walled pottery are very striking in appearance when compared to the local pottery. In this sense the same selection criteria as used for the stones at Broekpolder-1 seems to be present when selecting pottery, e.g. hardness and colour. This selection practice is emphasized when the tiles are considered. At Broekpolder-1 and Uitgeest-Dorregeest several Roman tiles were deposited. These tiles are all red and at Broekpolder-1 they were about the same size as the unworked stones (figure 4.41).

4.5.3 METAL

Bronze and gold had to be imported into the Oer-IJ area. Iron could be made from bog-iron, but was probably imported as no production sites are known in the area. There is little evidence for imported raw material; it seems that the metal was imported in the form of objects. Crucibles and metal slag from several sites in the Oer-IJ area indicate that metal objects were also produced locally. Nine offering sites ranging from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Medieval Period contain metal objects. A Late Bronze Age bronze axe at Velsen-Noordzeekanaal is in good condition and fits into the pattern of axe depositions as described by Fontijn. The Late Iron Age bronze neck ring at IJmuiden-Duinvliet is the most spectacular object in the sense that no other from the northeast and south, but that a distinctive pottery style can be established. All pottery was produced locally. With the appearance of the Romans at Velsen an influx of Roman pottery came about. This pottery is, however, not found outside the two forts in complete forms and this has led to the pick-up theory. Only after the Romans left the Oer-IJ area complete Roman pottery has entered the local settlements, although in limited numbers. The locally produced pottery remained the most important form in daily use. In seven of the offering sites Roman imports are present. Again we are dealing with small pieces instead of complete objects that fit into the pick-up theory. It is obvious that these Roman sherds were not deposited as pottery in the sense of a vessel with possible contents. The Roman pottery does have some physical qualities that could be important, such as its hardness and colour. The red terra-sigillata and the whitish smooth and rough walled pottery are very striking in appearance when compared to the local pottery. In this sense the same selection criteria as used for the stones at Broekpolder-1 seems to be present when selecting pottery, e.g. hardness and colour. This selection practice is emphasized when the tiles are considered. At Broekpolder-1 and Uitgeest-Dorregeest several Roman tiles were deposited. These tiles are all red and at Broekpolder-1 they were about the same size as the unworked stones (figure 4.41).

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179 See chapter 3 § 3.5.4.
180 Castricum-Oosterbuurt and Uitgeest-Dorregeest are the only known sites with a reasonable amount of Roman pottery that probably entered the settlement in complete form.
181 Broekpolder-1 and –2, Krommenie-14, Uitgeest-Dorregeest, Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18, Velsen-fort-1, and Velsbroek-B6. The exact number of (Roman)sherds is not published for all sites.
182 See chapter 3 § 3.5.4.
183 At Uitgeest-Dorregeest the location of the tiles is not clear, but at least these tiles were thought of as worth picking up and carrying to the site.
184 For example, Assendelft-F, -8 and 17, Beverwijk/Heemskerk-Broekpolder, Castricum-Molendijk and –Oosterbuurt, Driehuis-Westerveld, Krommenie-3, Limmen-Pagelaan, and Uitgeest-Dorregeest.
185 Fontijn 2003, 187. With the difference that sickle depositions are only known from dry contexts in the Oer-IJ area, for example Heiloo-Kromme Laan. The designation of this site as bog hoard by Butler (1990) is not correct (Butler personal communication).
186 Bronze neck rings are also rare in other parts of the Netherlands.
187 Velsen-fort-1 is left out.
case in the Oer-IJ area, here the coins are deposited separately or in a hoard. Of interest is the deposition of two antoniniani at Broekpolder-1, a coin not well known in Germanic contexts. According to Vons these coins were not accepted as currency beyond the imperial frontiers, due to their lesser silver content and they are therefore scarcely found beyond the frontier. This idea appears to be refuted by the excavation of Castricum-Oosterbuurt, where 41 antoniniani from the end of the first to the end of the third century AD were found. It is an indication that these coins circulated in the Oer-IJ area over a period of time and were considered appropriate for deposition. The question remains if the coins were deposited in the water as currency or in relation to their imagery. The scarceness of coins from most sites dated to the Roman Iron Age suggests that although, their monetary value may have been known, coins were not widely used as currency in the Oer-IJ area. Although not all coins have mythical figures both antoniniani from Broekpolder-1 show mythical figures: Hercules and Aequitas. And of the seventeen coins at Velserbroek-B6 five have depictions of horses with mythical figures, four of sitting goddesses, one of Europe and a Bull, one of Victoria and two with altars. When we compare the coins in the offering sites with the coins at Velsen-fort-1 it becomes clear that there is a marked difference. For example the main group of coins at Velsen has an altar or the mark of a minter depicted, whereas this is the smallest group of coins in the offerings. At the same time three coins at Velserbroek-B6 depict two brothers on horses, whereas only one of the same type is found at Velsen-fort-1. Furthermore, in the offerings is the relative amount of silver coins in relation to copper coins higher then in Velsen-fort-1; at Broekpolder-1 and Velserbroek-B6 1:1.5 and at Velsen-fort-1 1:5.2. This leaves aside the 1302 silver denarii at Uitgeest-Dorregeest. When we look at the offerings of coins outside the Oer-IJ, the preference for silver coins is similar to Bad-Pyrmont outside the Roman provinces and dissimilar to the temple of Empel, Coventina’s well or Bath inside the Roman provinces. To summarize, although the people in the Oer-IJ area were probably aware of the monetary use of coins from at least the second century AD onward as reflected at Castricum-Oosterbuurt, they used coins in a selective manner, which favoured silver and certain mythical depictions. The practice involved with the single coins does not fit in the northern European tradition nor the Roman provincial tradition, but appears to be connected to its place outside the Roman Empire yet at the same time close enough for selective practices.

4.6 HOUSEHOLD/AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND THEIR RELATION TO EVERYDAY LIFE

In chapter 1 it was explained that offerings relate to the everyday world, that they have effects in the real world. These relations are of a symbolic nature. Therefore, these relations can be less than straightforward. It can, however, be assumed that household/agricultural tools used in offerings in some way refer to their everyday use. At the same time as these tools are used in everyday life there will be a link with the offering practice and the place of these tools in their worldview. These links can express themselves in aspects, such as where and/or at what time to perform certain task, where to store objects, or who should perform a task. Probably not all elements of daily life would have the same significance in religious practices and therefore it is interesting to analyse which elements were chosen to be deposited in wet low-lying areas.

Nearly all the offering sites (20 of 22) contain household/agricultural tools. This is 91 percent of the sites, whereas 75 percent of the sites of chapter 2 contained these kinds of tools. As the percentage of the ontological

188 Vons 1987, 146 and 150.
189 The deposition of coins in Broekpolder-1 could date to the Early Middle Ages.
190 For the coins of Velserbroek B6: Bosman 1997, 286-287.
192 Bosman 1997, table 5.
193 Normal relative amount for Roman settlements is silver:copper 1:3 to 1:35, Bosman 1997, 250.
194 Of the 1186 coins that could be identified less than 10 coins pictured the head of an emperor. Most coins depicted mythical standing or seated figures.
195 Bad-Pyrmont 3 silver coins (Müller 2002, 83) Bath 12000 coins mainly of small denominations (Cunliffe 1985, 12) or Coventina’s well over 16000 coins mostly of bronze (Allason-Jones and McKay 1985, 69), at Empel (southern Netherlands) the Pre-Roman first phase consists of especially gold and silver coins (60 of 72), whereas the Roman second phase consists purely of 738 bronze coins (Roymans, 1994, 113).
196 See chapter 1 §1.5.1.
category tool found in sites of the Oer-IJ area and the sites in chapter 2 is equivalent, there must be a marked difference in the composition of the ontological category tool between both areas. This difference is partly due to the inclusion of older sites\textsuperscript{197} with single axes in the Oer-IJ area. Sites with single axes are also present in Northern Europe, but were not included because the Bronze Age has a very specific, but large field of study concerned mainly with bronzes.\textsuperscript{198} The main difference between sites of the Oer-IJ area and chapter 2, however, is the number of sites in chapter 2 with weapons sometimes in combination with other tools besides household tools, and the number of sites with structures and other ontological categories besides tool. Furthermore, although in both areas sites with only ornaments in the ontological category tool occur, this is the case for one site in the Oer-IJ area and eight of the sites of chapter 2. And finally, in the Oer-IJ area household/agricultural tools appear as single deposits, something that is absent in the sites of chapter 2.\textsuperscript{200} For the Oer-IJ area four types of household/agricultural tools, namely pottery, axes, quern stones, and nails will be discussed.

In the Oer-IJ area the group of single deposits comprises just under a third of the sites with household/agricultural tools counting, three pots, two axes and one quern stone. These were all chance finds. The axes are ambivalent as they can be used both as a weapon and for woodworking. As there is no evidence for violence in the Oer-IJ area\textsuperscript{200} contemporary to the axes, but there is evidence for woodworking, it is plausible to see the axes as household/agricultural tools. As was shown above in the paragraph on plants, trees were important in the people’s worldview. The actual cutting down of trees for building houses or clearing areas for fields, could have had specific meanings. Especially alder would have a dramatic effect as it bleeds red liquid when cut. The offering of the tool associated with this activity is therefore not surprising. At two other sites wood working tools have been deposited. At Krommenie-14, an adze is placed next to a wooden enclosure and at Velserbroek-B6 a chisel is placed in the filled up pool about 15 metre from the long mound. Velserbroek-B6 has as one of its main features the deposition of large amounts of wood.

The pottery and the quern stone are associated with work inside or near the house, mostly food preparation and storage of produces. Only one of the pots is incomplete, as the legs are taken off.\textsuperscript{201} The other pots and quern stone are fully functional.

Pottery is the most offered type of household/agricultural tool that is present in sixteen of the offering sites. A total of at least seven complete vessels, five near complete vessels and seven sites with only sherds\textsuperscript{202} makes it clear that the pottery used in offerings could be handled in varied ways. The complete vessels possibly held some sort of food, but little analyses on this aspect have taken place at the offering sites. Abbink 1999 has analysed the residue on pottery for Uitgeest-Dorregeest mainly from outside the creek. The pottery she held some sort of food, but little analyses on this aspect have taken place at the offering sites. Abbink 1999, especially §8.13.4.

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For several vessels the everyday usability seemed not to be the main point of interest, as these vessels are partly broken before deposition. In these occasions it can be imagined that vessels had symbolic meanings referring to other things than purely their use. As suggested in chapter 1 broken object can bring people, objects and places together.\textsuperscript{205} And possibly different parts had different symbolic meanings, like the broken of legs of the bowl from Assendelft-51. Several researchers make a link between the use of sherds or fragmented objects in ritual contexts and regeneration and the life-cycles.\textsuperscript{206} In this perspective sherds are not just viewed as the end of a vessel, but also as the beginning of a new vessel as sherds can be used as grog. Furthermore, clay for pottery is taken from the (wet) landscape and the returning of sherds to the landscape can be viewed as an act of replenishing.

\textsuperscript{197} The sites in chapter 2 date to the (Roman) Iron Age and Migration Period, whereas the sites in the Oer-IJ area also include the Late Neolithic and Bronze Age.
\textsuperscript{198} For example, Levy’s (1982) study of ritual hoard finds.
\textsuperscript{199} Abbink also points to the use of reddish brown pigment on some vessels, applied after firing, and she associates this with a possible symbolic value.\textsuperscript{204} The vessel from Limmen-Dusseldorpervaart appears to have some streaks of pigment at the bottom (figure 4.13).
\textsuperscript{200} With the exception of human remains at Velsen-fort-1.
\textsuperscript{201} Assendelft-51, this is a rare type of pottery.
\textsuperscript{202} Assendelft-N and especially, Uitgeest-Dorregeest could have several complete pots.
\textsuperscript{203} Abbink 1999, especially §8.13.4.
\textsuperscript{204} Abbink 1999, 294.
\textsuperscript{205} § 1.6.

175
CHAPTER 4

Five offering sites contain quern stones of which two sites have complete ones, including the upper part of the quern stones. These stones are used to grind the wheat into flour and in this way form a necessary link transforming the grains into the main ingredient for bread. As these quern stones are heavy it is unlikely that they were moved around a lot. The grinding of the grains would have been a labour-intensive task, which kept a person bound to a specific place in a specific posture for quite some time each day. It seems unlikely that this aspect would not be of influence when the quern stones were finally deposited in the water.

Another group of household/agricultural tools deposited in water are nails. These nails do not seem to be attached to something, but are deposited as objects in themselves. Nails are used to bind things together, just like tenons that were also found in two offering sites. Therkorn shows in her study the importance of binding in northern mythology and material. Schuyf names certain nail-trees (spijkerbomen) and nail offerings for the more modern times. The use of nails here is associated with healing powers. The general symbolism seems to be associated with attaching something permanently, whether this is a sickness or a promise, in the hope that a CPS-agent will help with the healing process or the enforcement of a promise.

It is striking that in none of the offering sites tools are placed which are directly related to agricultural use, such as ploughshares or harrows. In the sites of chapter 2 agricultural tools do appear. These tools are used in the Oer-IJ area as the many plough marks and some finds show, but seem not be considered suitable as offerings in the wet low-lying areas. It could be that ritual practices directly associated with agriculture took place on the fields and are therefore absent from the low-lying areas where no remains of fields are known.

4.7 COMPARISON OF THE OFFERINGS IN WET LOW-LYING AREAS AND THE HIGHER PARTS OF THE LANDSCAPE

Ritual practices did not only take place in the wet low-lying parts of the Oer-IJ area. In the settlements and fields a diversity of ritual practices took place, such as house-offerings, offerings in pits and wells and the marking of space with pits and gullies. As the number of finds indicating ritual practices outside the wet low-lying areas is quite large, only those aspects will be considered that are directly related to the topics discussed above.

4.7.1 CREATED WATER WITHIN SETTLEMENTS

Water is not only present in the low-lying areas, however, in the higher parts of the landscape the accessibility of the water is often created by humans. In some of the created water offerings are made, which indicates that water in itself was a suitable element for offerings. Something that could also be seen at Velserbroek-B6 where the main offerings were deposited in a dug channel. Wells and pits were favoured for offerings.

207 Therkorn 2004, §6.4.2.
208 Schuyf 1997, 81-85.
209 See § 2.2.1.
210 700 m west of Velserbroek-B6 a plough share was found and 700 m north of Uitgeest-Dorregeest a harrow was found in a well.
211 For example, Heiloo-Kromme Laan, § 3.5.1 and §4.7.2.
For example, at Castricum-Molendijk a spindle whorl and some pieces of wood were placed near the bottom of a well made of six stacked vessels. At nearby Castricum-Rietkamp a well made of three bottomless vessels had an offering placed in the lower vessel, consisting of some sherds, bones (including bird) and a complete pedestal bowl (figure 4.42). The pedestal bowl was just small enough to be placed in the lower vessel though the hole in the bottom of the upper vessel, which points to deliberate placement. Abbink associates the pedestal bowl with ceremonial use. She also notes for Uitgeest-Dorregeest that when wells contain pottery they are mostly (near) complete vessels, including pedestal bowls. Of the pits it is more difficult to establish whether they were dug with the purpose of drawing water. For example at Broekpolder it seems that most of the large pits were closed fairly quickly after offerings were deposited, as there are no signs of sedimentation due to water. The excellent preservation of organic material shows that these pits were under the water level. There are, however, a few pits that clearly show signs of still standing water while the pit was still open.

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212 Mooij 1979, 17.
214 Abbink 1999, 313.
216 Therkorn et al. forthcoming.
At Assendelft-8 a 60 cm deep pit contained gyttja-like material. In the pit a complete vessel was placed at the bottom with two articulating calcinated cattle foot bones and some straw/grass and the upper half of a vessel was in the top fill. The pit was covered by eight birch stakes that were partly burned. Next to it was another pit with an unusual feature. At the bottom of the pit a cistern of unbaked clay was made, above it several (near) complete vessels were deposited. Some had the bottom deliberately removed and/or the remains of a brownish paint applied. Besides the vessels, bone, wood, three fragments of a quern stone, and a whetstone were deposited.

Stuurman 1978.
The high number of complete or near complete vessels in wells and pits shows a different emphasis than the offerings in wet low-lying areas (figure 4.43). Of the 16 sites with pottery only six had complete vessels, usually not more than one or two. The larger sites of Broekpolder-1 and Velserbroek-B6 altogether lack complete vessels. Furthermore, in some of the pits with offerings at Broekpolder small animals were deposited. The remains of complete animals are nearly absent in the wet low-lying offering sites, except for the later phase of Broekpolder-1. The spectrum of the offerings in higher parts of the landscape seems to follow the same pattern as the offerings in wet low-lying areas, with the exceptions mentioned above.

Offerings in ditches seem to be rarer but do occur, for example at Assendelft-F (figure 4.44). This ditch, which probably held some water, had many finds, including six complete vessels, several fragments of quern stones, slag, a crucible and import pottery and metal objects. 1300 m to the east at Assendelft-27 is another ditch with ritual depositions near the perimeter (figure 4.45). In this ditch posts and wattle of a five-sided

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218 Therkorn et al. forthcoming.
livestock enclosure were set.\textsuperscript{220} The ditch held water at different times. Forty-three possible anthropomorphic figures were placed in the ditch with their head down (figure 4.46). Besides bones, sherd, and clay a number of imported objects were deposited, including amber beads, a Roman bottom of a vessel, cut horse trappings, glass fragments and a samian sherd. The number of Roman imports sets these ditches apart from the wells and pits discussed above and places them closer to the larger offering sites in wet low-lying areas. The anthropomorphic figures are unknown in Oer-IJ area, but similar figures are known in the Germanic world at Oberdorla (figure 4.46).

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure45.png}
\caption{Assendelft-27 five-sided enclosure with the wood species specified. 1 = maple, 2 = alder, 3 = birch, 4 = hazel, 5 = beech, 6 = ash, 7 = indeterminable, 8 = crab apple figure, 9 = oak, 10 = willow, 11 = ash figure, 12 = oak figure, 13 = alder figure, 14 = indeterminable figure, 15 = birch figure, after Therkorn et al. 2006, figure 20 and 26.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{220} Therkorn, Besselsen and Oversteegen 2006, 42-45.
4.7.2 DRY CONTEXTS

Another type of offering associated with settlements is the so-called house-offering. These are offerings associated with the building and/or use of the house and are found in all parts of the Oer-IJ from the Late Bronze Age onward. Most of the depositions in small pits or postholes consist of complete pots, but a golden Celtic coin, grain, a wooden bowl, and a human femur are also known. The grain is exceptional when the other offerings are considered. The position in a dry house near or on fields may explain the use of grain in the house-offering. To the north of the Oer-IJ area a pit with about 10 kg of emmer wheat was discovered near a house. This pit is associated with the star patterns Dog and Kneeler which are not yet known in the Oer-IJ area.

Although the offerings in the wet-low-lying areas seem to encompass the whole spectrum of finds associated with other parts of the landscape, the grain but also sickles are absent from them. Sickles are found especially in the municipality of Heiloo, where a deposit of five sickles placed in a row in a field is the most elaborate and best known. These sickles were probably not used for cutting grain, but for cutting sods for the preparation of fields. These deposits seems to support the idea that offerings that use specific agricultural tools or products were not made in the wet-low-lying areas, but on the drier parts of the landscape.

221 Examples of pots Assendelft-D, -G, -F, and -Q, Castricum-Oosterbuurt, Krommenie-3, and Velsen-Hoogovens, coin at Castricum-Oosterbuurt, grain at Velsen-Hoogovens, bowl at Assendelft-K, and a human femur at Assendelft-N.
223 Therkorn 2004, figure 31b.
224 The four stone and one bronze sickles were found at Heiloo-Kromme Laan and several other (fragments of) sickles were found in the surrounding area (de Ridder 1995).
226 See also § 4.6.
4.7.3 RELATIVE AMOUNTS OF OBJECTS BETWEEN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

As the differences in spectrum of finds in the different parts of the landscape do not differ much, how can the offerings be separated from other practices? An opportunity to investigate this problem has arisen at Beverwijk/Heemskerk-Broekpolder where extensive excavations covered both settlements and offering sites. Although the northern settlement is somewhat younger then the offering site Broekpolder-1 their close proximity (300 m), similar size, and partial overlap in time makes them suitable for comparison.\textsuperscript{227} First of all, when just the number of artefacts is taken into consideration it becomes clear that the settlement has at least three times as much artefacts than the offering site.\textsuperscript{228} This is a minimum difference as due to time pressure and research choices not all sherds were collected from the gullies in the settlement.\textsuperscript{229} As archaeologists define one of the main characters of offering sites as their artefacts it is important to realise that the number of artefacts is relatively low.\textsuperscript{230} When the distribution of the different artefact categories, such as wood and metal, in the settlement and offering site are analysed a striking difference comes to the fore (figure 4.47). Around 90 percent of all the wood, metal and stone, but only around twenty percent of the clay objects and bones, and less than ten percent of other objects come from the offering site. If the category clay objects is differentiated more an even greater difference appears. All the spindle whorls, loom-weight\textsuperscript{231} and oven material come from the settlement. Of the Roman imports, 35 of the 39 (roof)tiles and 140 of the 162 sherds are from the offering site. Especially, the Roman sherds show a divergent pattern. In the offering site 7.5 percent of all sherds are Roman against 0.2 percent in the settlement. It is probably not the case that the settlement has so few Roman sherds because they ended up in the offering site. Other settlements in the Oer-IJ area show a similar amount of less than half a percent Roman sherds.\textsuperscript{232} It seems to be the case that the offering site has an above average amount of Roman sherds. As explained in chapter 3 the sherds were most likely used at a later date, sometimes centuries later, than their production and a direct consumption date would suggest.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.47.png}
\caption{The relative amounts of the different artefact types of Broekpolder-1 and trench 49 with Roman Iron Age settlement remains, after Kok 2005, figure 8.3.}
\end{figure}

The pattern for metal objects to be deposited in fewer numbers outside the wet low-lying areas that are used for offerings can be found in other sites. For example, all but one of the thirteen fibula found at Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18 were found in the low-lying area\textsuperscript{233} and De Koning remarks that nearly all the metal objects from Uitgeest-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{227} The settlement is dated in the Roman Iron Age and Broekpolder-1 has especially depositions from the Early Middle Ages. Jan de Koning (specialist of the Early Middle Ages) commented, however, that the known settlement assemblages of the Roman and Medieval Period in the Oer-IJ area are very similar.
\item \textsuperscript{228} The number of artefacts from the settlement is 13249 and from Broekpolder-1 is 4356 artefacts.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Kok 2005, 73-74.
\item \textsuperscript{230} See for example the categorizations in chapter 2 of Becker, Behm-Blancke, Geißlinger, Jankuhn and Stjernquist.
\item \textsuperscript{231} A possible loomweight made of stone was found in the offering site, but here the property stone may have been of more importance than the former use.
\item \textsuperscript{232} Kok 2005, 74.
\item \textsuperscript{233} Gerritsen 2000, 32.
\end{itemize}
Dorregeest came from the creek. Again some of the Roman imports would have been deposited at a later date than their initial use. The main points are that the amount of material is far less in the offering sites than the settlement, the spectrum of finds is similar but the relative distribution of the artefact categories is different, and specific agricultural tools and products are deposited in the higher parts of the landscape.

The dug features forming star-constellations have a close spatial association with the offerings in wet low-lying areas, as both at Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2 and Velsbroek-B6 the pattern horse is situated on the northeastern side. The pits of the horse pattern mostly contain wood and bone, and at Uitgeesterbroekpolder-18-2 the pits and gullies often have no recoverable finds. The emphasis on bones in the pits is more pronounced than in the wet low-lying areas, as they form the main part of the deposit. The selection of bones deposited, however, follows a similar pattern with an emphasis on leg and skull bones. This is especially true for Velserbroek-B6 where the only human bone in a pit is a thighbone, just like the deposits in the pool and near the long mound. Here the same emphasis in depositions seems to have been made as for the wet offering sites. In this way these elements are closely tied together in more than just a spatial sense.

4.7.4 STABILITY OF LOCATION USE

The time aspect of some of the offering sites in the wet low-lying areas is very interesting due to their length of use in comparison to the settlements. In chapter 3 it was shown that from the Early Iron Age onwards the single farmsteads that are never built at the same spot form the main spatial component in the settlement structure. During the Roman Iron Age the successive farmsteads are built more often close together but overlap is rare. Although the orientation of the houses is fairly similar, the position of the houses is changing through time. Some of the offering sites are used for a long period of time and could have become focal points in the landscape. Particularly Velsbroek-B6 and Broekpolder-1 that were used over centuries mainly for ritual purposes, but also at Uitgeest-Dorregeest offerings continue over the centuries and the southeast side of Limmen is used for millennia. In the Oer-IJ area the transition towards the Early Medieval Period is not well known. It is therefore, intriguing that the main traces of use from this period are from Uitgeest-Dorregeest and Broekpolder-1. These were the stable places in a changing world.

4.7.5 SUMMARY

Although the above account of practices associated with fields and settlements is fragmented and incomplete, it becomes clear that the people of the Oer-IJ performed ritual practices in a range of parts of the landscape. Everyday life was imbued with the religious worldview they held as movement through the landscape and different tasks of the day led them along places at which ritual practices took place. They were reminded of how objects, animals, and plants were intertwined with specific practices both of a ritual and an everyday nature. The passing of the time was visible in the plants, (wild) animals, the position of the sun on the houses, specific tasks at hand and was marked in the star-patterns while specific events were emphasised in offerings made in different parts of the landscape. Narratives were constructed binding the different, activities and parts of the landscape.

234 De Koning 2000, 32.
235 Therkorn 2004, 111-112 and 121.
236 At Limmen the single offerings are not in the same spot but close together and range from the Late Neolithic into the Late Medieval Period.
4.8 AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL LAND-USE MODEL OF THE WET LOW-LYING OFFERING SITES IN THE OER-IJ AREA

As explained in the introduction to this chapter a land-use model including the low-lying areas of the Oer-IJ area is important for the conservation and management of the sites in these areas. Here an archaeological land-use model will be presented. In the next chapter this land-use model will be analysed in relation to predictive modelling and policy. In chapter 3 the main archaeological models of the Oer-IJ area have been discussed. These models relate, especially to the habitation and therefore the focus here will be the wet low-lying offering sites.

It was established that the wet low-lying sites all lie within easy walking distance of fields and settlements. Fields appear to be closer by than settlements in the border zones of the Oer-IJ and peat/marshy areas. This could be due to the general pattern that farmsteads are built on the higher grounds with the fields on the flanks next to the wet low-lying areas. As the creek at Uitgeest-Dorregeest cuts through the high area it is not surprising that the settlement is closer here. The location of the fields in relation to the wet low-lying offering sites has no special orientation. Only when the star pattern Horse is present in the fields, the fields are situated to the northeast of the offering site (figure 4.36).

In figure 4.48 a combination of characteristics of the wet low-lying offering sites in the Oer-IJ area are set against time and landscape. Several trends become visible, which appear partly to be related to the different wet elements of the landscape and partly to be related to time.

Until the Roman Iron Age all offering sites are part of the first phase of use of a place. There are two main reasons why this could be the case. The offerings can be made at a place at some distance from the settlement and fields, outside the range of daily activities. The absence of other uses locates these finds in the first phase of use of a place. This reason appears to apply to some of the small depositions of a single to a few objects. Another possibility is that a place became useable, incorporated into the everyday world, after initial offerings were made. Especially the offerings made in creeks seem to be part of this pattern, but also some of the larger depositions. The depositions in the creeks were made at the time when the creeks started to lose their water flow and the surrounding landscape started to stabilize. The larger depositions, which take place in the first phase of use, are the sites that are a focus for ritual activity over a longer period of time. In this way they become a structuring element within the landscape to which people return over a period of time to perform similar ritual actions. At these places the water also seems to become a less prominent part of the landscape.27

The offering sites that are not directly linked to the first phase of use of that specific place all date to the Roman Iron Age. The sites are situated in the border zone of the Oer-IJ, and have a medium to long period of use. A simple explanation would be that due to two millennia of habitation there were no empty spots left close to the Oer-IJ. The border zone of the Oer-IJ has a very dynamic character; from tidal salt water, with sometimes strong eroding effects, it turned into a shallow fresh water lake reversing its flow from west to east. The border zones were becoming increasingly wet. Here the growing wetness may have led the people to see these areas as suitable places for offerings to which they could return over time when the need arose. The continuous use of the offering sites when all other activities in the direct vicinity diminished makes these places into spots that people have to return to passing older areas of activities. The degree of wetness was influenced by the seasons and could have an effect on the moments the offerings were performed.

Until the Roman Iron Age single depositions are known from peat either at a distance or close to the (former) coastal barriers. From the Middle Iron Age onward the offerings consist of a combination of objects. The offering of a combination of objects also took place during the Late Neolithic into the Middle Bronze Age. It is unclear why these combined offerings are unknown from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age as offerings in settlements in the Oer-IJ area show that different objects were used. The number of offering sites in the wet low-lying parts of the landscape from this period is small; two to three at most. It could be that during this period ritual activities focused on the fields and farmsteads as evidenced by several sites.28 The reason for this shift in attention is unclear as in all periods offerings in both the wet low-lying areas and the fields and settlements are known.

27 At Velsbroek-B6 a channel had to be dug in the last phase of use to create open water. And the open water at Velsbroek-Westlaan had turned into a marshy area.
28 For example, Assendelft-Q, Heiloo-Kromme Laan and Velsbroek-Hofgeest.
### Figure 4.48 Model of the offering sites in the Oer-IJ area.

Left bar: red means depositions in first phase of use, and orange means deposition in a later phase. Middle bar: dark blue means a single object deposited, and light blue means a combination of objects deposited. Right bar: light green means short use period, green bar means medium use period, dark green means long use period.
Increased marine activity cannot explain the lack of combined offerings as this only starts in the Early Iron Age. However, the re-appearance of combined offerings in the Middle Iron Age coincides with the decrease of marine influences. This decrease could have broadened the possibilities, as there is a clear preference for fresh water to put the offerings in.

As stated a wide range of objects could be considered suitable for offering in the wet low-lying areas during most of the periods under study. The difference between the objects in the settlements and offering sites is mainly one of relative amounts instead of specific items. Even though there is no exclusive selection, a preference for specific types of objects can be shown. Of the animals cattle, horse, and dog are preferred and especially the head and leg elements. This preference for legs and heads is even more particular when human bones are placed in the offering sites. Hard, red and white imported objects, such as stone, pottery, and (roof)tiles are placed in the offering sites. In this way foreign materials with qualities, which are of importance in a local context, are incorporated into the landscape. Different species of wood are selected from different part of the landscape binding the wet and dry areas of the Oer-IJ area in the offerings made. The binding of wet and dry parts of the landscape also takes place in the long mound and low embankment where sand, wood and peat/sods are layered one on top of the other. Through the use of specific colours, elements from the different parts of the landscape, specific body parts, and animals complex narratives were constructed in the wet low-lying offering sites.