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Sommario/riassunto

When studying later prehistoric societies, it is evident that shared practices, as well as variations, exist in the settlement record. Traditionally, the emphasis has mainly been on the elements shared on large scales, the widely shared norms. Variations in material culture have received little attention. This is regrettable, because through the study of both norm and variation in material culture, it is possible to understand how people are part of larger communities and, at the same time, express their affiliation to smaller social groups. In this book, housebuilding practices, general deposition practices and special deposition practices from (Roman) Iron Age (800 BC-AD 300) settlements in the northern Netherlands are studied on different scales as practices that can be similar and different at the same time. Based on the analyses, normativity and variation in material culture can be understood in different ways. For the whole period of research, housebuilding and (special) deposition practices are best understood as nested practices, in which spatial and social scales played different roles throughout the period of research. In addition to this, it has become evident that the degree of normativity, and thus of variation, visible in the archaeological record differed between subperiods, but could also vary between the practices within one subperiod. This means that, at the same time, large-scale affiliations could be stressed in one practice, while the importance of the smaller social group was emphasised in another practice. More than just searching for a better understanding of the (Roman) Iron Age societies in the northern Netherlands, this thesis also aims to understand how the use of typochronologies and the choices researchers make influence our understanding of the past. This thesis is therefore not only of interest for researchers studying later prehistoric settlements but also for those interested in archaeological methodology in general.

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