

RITUAL AND DOMESTIC  
LIFE IN PREHISTORIC  
EUROPE

*Richard Bradley*

 Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

**Also available as a printed book  
see title verso for ISBN details**

## RITUAL AND DOMESTIC LIFE IN PREHISTORIC EUROPE

Ritual is often invoked as a way of accounting for the apparently inexplicable, and is contrasted with the routines of daily life. This book contests that view.

Richard Bradley argues that for much of the prehistoric period, ritual was not a distinct sphere of activity. Rather, it was the way in which different features of the domestic world were played out with added emphasis until they took on some of the qualities of theatrical performance. Farming, craft production and the occupation of houses are all examples of this ritualising process.

Successive chapters discuss the ways in which ritual has been studied and presented, drawing on a series of examples ranging from Greece to Norway and from Romania to Portugal. They consider practices that extended from the Mesolithic period to the Early Middle Ages and offer a series of studies of the ways in which ritual and domestic life were intertwined. Richard Bradley's argument will be of importance to prehistorians and field archaeologists alike.

**Richard Bradley** is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Reading, and is the author of *The Significance of Monuments* (Routledge, 1998), *An Archaeology of Natural Places* (Routledge, 2000) and *The Past in Prehistoric Societies* (Routledge, 2002).



RITUAL AND DOMESTIC  
LIFE IN PREHISTORIC  
EUROPE

*Richard Bradley*



Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2005  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group*

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to [www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk](http://www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk).”

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Bradley, Richard, 1946–

Ritual and domestic life in prehistoric Europe / Richard Bradley.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Rites and ceremonies, Prehistoric—Europe. 2. Architecture, Prehistoric—Europe. 3. Agriculture, Prehistoric—Europe.
4. Tools, Prehistoric—Europe. 5. Human remains (Archaeology)—Europe.
6. Antiquities, Prehistoric—Europe. I. Title.

GN803.B659 2005

936—dc22 2004019540

ISBN 0-203-02371-4 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-34550-2 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-34551-0 (pbk)

FOR COLIN RENFREW



# CONTENTS

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xiii

## **PART I**

### **The importance of ordinary things** 1

1	Death and the harvest: how archaeologists have distinguished between ritual and domestic life	3
2	The consecration of the house: how domestic buildings took on special qualities	41
3	A duty of care: how everyday activities assumed a special significance	81

## **PART II**

### **Where the stress falls** 121

4	A house with a pool: rituals and the materials of farming	123
5	Multiplication and division: the problem of utilitarian bronze hoards	145
6	The rites of separation: domestic rituals and public ritual in the Iron Age	165
7	What remains to be seen: some implications of the argument	191

<i>Bibliography</i>	211
<i>Index</i>	231



# FIGURES AND TABLES

## Figures

1.1	The Galician hórreo and its decoration	4
1.2	Early drawing of a group of Inca qollqas	7
1.3	The areas of Europe considered in Chapter 1	10
1.4	Henge monument at Durrington Walls	11
1.5	Iron Age enclosure at Gussage All Saints	13
1.6	Burials in storage pits at Gussage All Saints	13
1.7	The siting of Viereckschanzen in Central Europe	17
1.8	The archaeological sequence at Holzhausen	18
1.9	Evidence of iron working at Mšecké Zehrovice in relation to the later Viereckschanze	22
1.10	Ard marks and a long house beneath a round barrow at Handewitt	25
1.11	Plough marks around the edge of a Bronze Age cairn at Diverhøj	27
1.12	The dates of publications relating to ritual in anthropology and archaeology	31
1.13	Two conceptions of ritual, and their areas of overlap	32
1.14	The areas of Europe considered in Chapter 2	36
1.15	The areas of Europe considered in Chapter 3	37
1.16	The areas of Europe considered in Chapters 4 to 6	38
2.1	Excavated post holes beneath the cathedral at Gamla Uppsala	42
2.2	Reconstructions of the pagan temple at Gamla Uppsala	43
2.3	Reconstruction of an Iron Age feasting hall	44
2.4	Elite dwellings at Tiryns and Thermon	45
2.5	Plans of a Maori marae and meeting house	49
2.6	Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age house urns in Italy	51
2.7	Late Bronze Age houses and associated deposits at Pryssgårdén	54
2.8	Late Bronze Age and Iron Age round houses at Bancroft	55
2.9	House and associated enclosure buried beneath an Iron Age burial mound outside the Heuneburg	58

FIGURES AND TABLES

2.10	Timber long house buried beneath a Bronze Age round barrow at Trappendal	61
2.11	Early Neolithic round and rectangular houses in Northern and Western France	63
2.12	Neolithic long cairn and associated structure at Stengade	64
2.13	Large rectangular buildings at Balbridie, Antran, Acy-Romance and Verberie	66
2.14	Copper Age palisaded enclosures and associated buildings at Pléchéâtel-La Hersonnais	68
2.15	Bronze Age cult houses at Sandergergård and Hågahögen	71
2.16	Bronze Age and Early Iron Age long-beds in Northern Europe	72
2.17	Late Neolithic timber buildings at Trelystan, Durrington Walls and Woodcutts	74
2.18	Iron Age timber buildings at Navan Fort	77
2.19	Iron Age enclosure at Zeijen and a long house at Fochteloo	79
3.1	Human bodies in Northern Europe	82
3.2	Wooden ard from Vebbstrup	83
3.3	Carving of a ploughman at Litsleby	87
3.4	Raised storehouse in the Trobriand Islands	91
3.5	Carved bucrania at Escoural	94
3.6	Scenes of ploughing at Mont Bégo	96
3.7	Structures identified as houses at Valcamonica	97
3.8	Bronze Age house urns in Northern Europe	99
3.9	Decorated rotary quern from Ticooly-O'Kelly	101
3.10	Passage grave and Neolithic quarry at Beorgs of Ulyea	105
3.11	Stone setting beneath a Bronze Age burnt mound at Rinkeby	106
3.12	Late Bronze Age well and associated deposits at Frankfurt-Lossow	109
3.13	The contexts of Bronze Age metal finds in the Southern Netherlands	110
3.14	The decorated cave sanctuary at El Pedroso	112
3.15	Copper Age and Bronze Age enclosure at Castelo Velho	114
3.16	The Neolithic enclosure at Sarup	115
3.17	Bronze Age enclosure at Odensala Prästgård	117
4.1	Locations of the Neolithic settlements at Skumparberget and Skogsmossen	124
4.2	Plans of Neolithic houses at Skumparberget and Dagstorp	125
4.3	The Neolithic house and nearby pool at Skogsmossen	126
4.4	Neolithic houses, graves and pits at Tofta and Dagstorp	133
4.5	Pit houses in the Neolithic settlement at Åby	135
4.6	Deposits of burnt flint axes at Svartskylle	137
4.7	Neolithic palisaded enclosures at Rispebjerg	140
4.8	Plan of the Neolithic platform at Alvastra	141

## FIGURES AND TABLES

5.1	Bronze Age sickles showing traces of use from Auvernier	149
5.2	Sickle fragments from the hoard at Uiorara de Sus	152
5.3	Axe fragments from the hoard at Uiorara de Sus	153
5.4	Sword fragments from the hoard at Szentgálóskér	154
5.5	Principal sources of the artefacts in the hoard at Le Petit Vilatte	156
5.6	Principal sources of the artefacts in the hoard at Venat	157
5.7	Location of the metal finds from the Ría de Huelva	158
5.8	Complete and broken weapons from the Ría de Huelva	160
6.1	The siting of the successive shrines in the hill fort at Danebury	166
6.2	The distributions of house urns and storage pit burials in North and North-West Europe	171
6.3	The contexts of iron sickles in the Roman Iron Age	173
6.4	The contexts of iron sickles in the Migration Period	174
6.5	Burials in Iron Age storage pits in Northern France	176
6.6	The Iron Age sanctuary and associated buildings at Acy-Romance	178
6.7	The Iron Age settlement and sanctuary at Montmartin	181
6.8	The evolution of the Iron Age temple at Hayling	183
6.9	Plan of the first Iron Age settlement at Gallows Hill, Thetford	185
6.10	The first sanctuary and associated structures at Gallows Hill, Thetford	186
6.11	Plan of the latest sanctuary at Gallows Hill, Thetford	187
6.12	Plan of the shrine and other timber buildings at South Cadbury	189
7.1	A scheme for comparing excavated assemblages	201
7.2	The scheme in Figure 7.1 applied to four key sites	202

### Tables

2.1	The structure, development and associations of houses in Northern Europe, compared with the evidence from Britain and Ireland	57
5.1	The treatment of the main types of bronze artefacts from the Ría de Huelva	160



## PREFACE

This book has a simple premise. Archaeologists have been writing about ritual for many years, but their discussion has often reached an impasse. Nowhere is this more obvious than in accounts of prehistoric Europe.

There are two main reasons for this situation, and each results from a different source of confusion. Some writers have been influenced by studies of state religion, but these have little relevance for the simpler societies that characterise the prehistory of Northern and Western Europe. At the same time, archaeologists working in these areas have made much of the distinction between rituals and practical affairs. Human behaviour seems to be governed by pragmatic concerns, whilst ritual follows a logic of its own. It stands out through its difference from the norm. This has led to the disagreements I discuss in Chapter 1.

My book takes a different approach. In these studies ritual is viewed as a specialised form of behaviour which emphasises some of the concerns of daily life through a kind of performance. It is not opposed to domesticity, and often it grows out of it. Successive chapters discuss some of the areas in which this happened. I consider such basic activities as food production, the building and occupation of houses or the making of artefacts. How were these such tasks ritualised during prehistory, and how can they be studied in the present?

This book has two main sources. It is one of a number of works which attempt to devise a framework with which to interpret the prehistoric archaeology of Europe. In that sense it is a sequel to *The Significance of Monuments: An Archaeology of Natural Places* and *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*. At the same time, it has developed out of a single lecture I delivered in Cambridge in November 2002. This was concerned with 'The ritualisation of domestic life in later prehistoric Europe'. Although that paper was published not long afterwards, it kept growing in my mind until it assumed the proportions of a book.

The final version is in two parts. The first introduces the problems that have arisen in studying this subject and illustrates the ways in which everyday activities were ritualised in prehistoric Europe. The second supports that argument with case studies taken from Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age

societies, before discussing the wider implications of this research. The title of Chapter 3 – ‘A duty of care’ – recalls my days as a law student. ‘Where the stress falls’ – the title of Part 2 – refers to a book by Susan Sontag.

I have many people to thank for their assistance. I am grateful to Chris Scarre, the editor of the *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, for encouraging me to elaborate the original lecture and for allowing me to reuse short extracts from it here. I am grateful to the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research for inviting me to talk about this subject and, in particular, to Anthony Snodgrass who introduced me to work of Mazarakis-Ainian discussed in Chapter 2. I must thank all those who commented on the original lecture or who have discussed my work at later presentations in Amsterdam, Kalmar, Leiden, Porto and Stockholm. I am grateful to Martin Henig and Tim Phillips who suggested improvements to the text and to Heinrich Härke and Eva Theate for help with the bibliography. Aaron Watson prepared the illustrations with his usual flair and attention to detail.

Wherever possible, I prefer to discuss places that I have visited, and here again I have many people to thank. I am grateful to my colleagues on the excavation of El Pedroso, Ramón Fábregas and Germán Delibes, and to Stefan Brink, Per Karsten, Kirsten Lidén, Lars Larsson, Mats Larsson and Michael Olausson for showing me sites in Sweden. I am also indebted to Susana and Vitor Oliveira Jorge for a memorable excursion to Castelo Velho, to Maria de Jesus Sanches for showing me Crasto de Palheiros, and to Lara Bacelar Alves for arranging a visit to Escoural.

If this project has grown out of a lecture given in Cambridge, it has also been influenced by a seminar at the McDonald Institute of which Colin Renfrew was one of the organisers. His name appears frequently in the text. His contribution is apparent to every student of the period, but many of my generation owe him a special debt for his personal interest and encouragement, extending over many years. Because this is less tangible, it is less often acknowledged. Ritual is one of the fields that he has studied in detail, and no doubt he would have written about it in a different way. But I doubt whether I would have embarked on this book without his example to follow. For all these reasons it is dedicated to him.

Part I

THE IMPORTANCE OF  
ORDINARY THINGS



# DEATH AND THE HARVEST

## How archaeologists have distinguished between ritual and domestic life

### **Introduction: granaries and shrines**

Rituals and symbols permeate everyday life, but all too often they escape the attention of archaeologists. The agricultural history of Spain provides a good example of how this happens.

For many years the rural economy of Galicia has been a source of inspiration for prehistorians working in other parts of Europe. It is the raised storehouses or *hórreos* that have attracted most attention (Figure 1.1; Frankowski 1918; Martínez 1975), for they are often quoted as parallels for small timber buildings discovered in the excavation of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and France (Fowler 1983: 183; Gransar 2000). The prehistoric buildings are most often represented by four large post holes and are conventionally referred to in English as ‘four posters’ or in German as ‘Speicher’ (granaries). That may not be their only interpretation, but it finds some support on sites where wooden structures of this kind had been burnt, as they are sometimes associated with carbonised grain.

The existence of the Galician *hórreos* provides a structural parallel that is very helpful, as are similar comparisons with farm buildings in Central Europe, but the archaeological analysis of four post structures has extended much more widely, so that in some respects it typifies one type of economic archaeology. The distribution of these buildings, like that of storage pits, is used to map the extent of a distinctive economy (Gent 1983; Gransar 2000). Their locations are interesting, too. Four post granaries can be found in several different settings within open settlements, enclosures and hill forts. They may be attached to individual houses, they can be grouped in distinctive zones within the settlement area, and occasionally ditched or palisaded enclosures contain these buildings to the exclusion of other kinds of structures, suggesting that they played a part in the large-scale mobilisation of grain (Müller-Wille 1966; Schindler 1977; Gent 1983).

One reason why the Galician parallel has been so popular is because this area is linked to North-West Europe by sea (Cunliffe 2001: chapter 8), and it is only too easy to suppose that here farming methods survive unchanged from

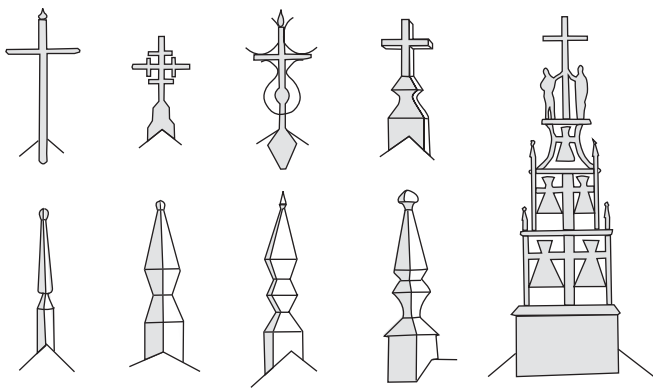
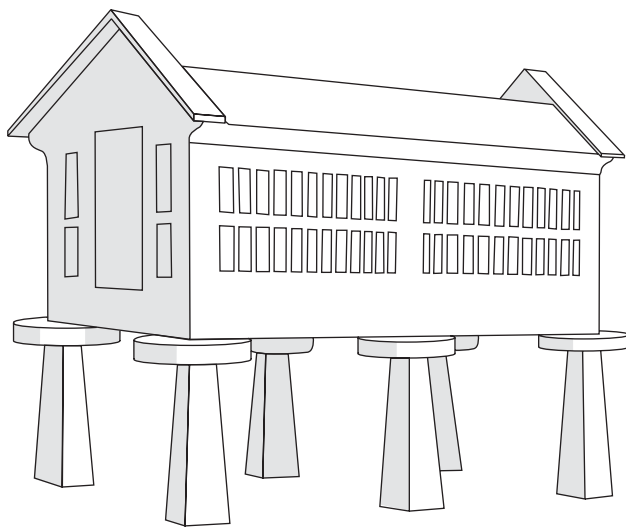


Figure 1.1 The Galician hórreo and its characteristic decoration. Information from Frankowski (1918).

later prehistory. Hórreos are one example, the use of ards is another, whilst the third is provided by the existence of ‘Celtic’ fields in the modern landscape (Leser 1931; Fowler 1983: 95–119). That wholly inappropriate term reveals the hidden assumptions, for these comparisons assume that the agriculture of North-West Spain preserves the working practices of the Bronze and Iron Ages (P. Reynolds 1981).

Such similarities can be exaggerated. Ards are certainly used for cultivation, but the ‘Celtic’ fields in Galicia are farmed by slash and burn techniques and are sown once every twelve years (Felipe Criado pers. comm.). Similar systems

do not seem to be associated with prehistoric sites, and in any case the comparison is anachronistic. The traditional Galician landscape has a quite specific history, and it is a history that has little to do with Iron Age Celts. In fact many of these developments date from the post-medieval period, for it was with the introduction of maize from the New World that the economy seems to have changed. The *hórreos* probably developed to store the new crop.

This might seem to dispose of the problem, but in fact it suggests a another way of viewing this comparison. One of the weaknesses of modern field archaeology is its obsession with adaptation, but another is the emphasis on what survives below ground. The stone pillars that support the *hórreo* are the structural equivalent of the post holes found in excavation, but few prehistorians are interested in the rest of the building. They have given too little thought to the visual impact of such structures and need to consider their place in the local topography and their impact on the people living among them. Archaeologists have preferred to treat such buildings as an index of one kind of agricultural regime.

The architecture of the Galician *hórreos* has certain distinctive features (Frankowski 1918; Martínez 1975). These buildings are made of granite and often they are massive constructions. They may also occupy conspicuous positions in the farms and villages so that they overshadow both the houses and the church. They may be placed on higher ground than those buildings or they are attached to prominent outcrops. Some of the granaries are balanced precariously on top of the walls surrounding farms and gardens, and they gain still more height in this way. In other cases they are placed beside roads so that they catch the eye of the passing traveller. They are not just agricultural buildings; they are also monuments.

Their sheer size can be important and individual buildings may be far longer than the norm. Alternatively, they can be grouped in clusters which dominate the local terrain. Galician rural architecture may be divided into a number of regional styles, some of which mirror the abrupt changes of climate in different parts of the country, but there are other breaks in the distribution of *hórreos* which seem to be independent of ecological considerations (Martínez 1975). These regional groups are often quite small and their boundaries are as tightly defined as those of any style of prehistoric pottery. Their distribution does not cover the entire country, yet there are no fewer than ten regional groups among the supports on which these buildings were based, and eighteen among their superstructure. On one level people obviously saw these buildings as an expression of local identities. Their siting ensures that strangers would be immediately aware of these distinctions. This is a classic example of the way in which material culture is used to communicate information.

One feature is all-important. These distinctions concern the above-ground structure of the *hórreo*; apart from differences of size, their foundations would have remained more or less the same. That has obvious implications for those archaeologists who wish to use them as parallels for prehistoric buildings. The

easiest way of recognising regional differences among the hórreos is to consider the details of their architecture. They are of two different kinds. There are parts of the buildings that highlight these local differences and there are purely symbolic features of the design.

The supports consist of granite pillars. Usually, these are plain, but occasionally they are decorated, in which case the embellishment includes the kinds of baroque moulding that are found on churches and houses. The walls may be either of stone or of wood and the roofs are built of granite, tiles or thatch. The stonework can be either roughly or finely finished and may also be used to decorative effect. The height of the hórreos varies. Sometimes the superstructure is tall and narrow, and in other cases the floor is raised further above the ground. Some of the more impressive hórreos are approached by a flight of stone steps. The gable ends of certain of the buildings are decorated, and this makes them look more like houses and churches. The roof may be enhanced by pinnacles, of no functional significance whatsoever. Again some of these features echo the decoration associated with other kinds of architecture.

The symbolism of these structures can be rather more explicit. Sometimes the granary is surmounted by a simple cross. As a result, foreign visitors can easily mistake these buildings for shrines. The significance of the cross is hardly given a second thought, but that is only because it is still possible to interpret that symbol. It speaks about very basic notions of death and regeneration, scarcity and abundance, which are entirely appropriate to a building that is constructed to store crops. Farming provides a whole series of metaphors in the Christian religion, from the parable of the sower to the Harvest Festival, and similar equations have been formed in many other parts of the world. Having said that, it is important to remember how rare it is to have an insider's view of symbolic systems in the past. Rituals and symbols will always be easier to recognise than they are to interpret.

The Galician hórreo, perched on a farmyard wall, resembles another kind of structure in the countryside. This is the stone-built cemetery where individual tombs are displayed in a strikingly similar manner. That is supposed to happen because the dead are buried in a confined space – it is not possible for some of these cemeteries to increase their area – and yet this may be a rationalisation of a still more basic relationship. The visual resemblance between granaries and tombs is so striking that it cannot have gone unremarked, even if it was not originally intended. The presence of these constructions in the landscape helps to establish a parallel symbolism to the Christian cross on the roof of the hórreo, for here again the imagination equates the cycle of death and rebirth with the fertility of the land. Symbolic systems of this kind are found in many different cultures, and such notions are nicely captured in the title of Bloch's and Parry's edited volume *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Bloch and Parry 1982). The sowing and harvesting of crops form an unbroken sequence that goes on from one generation to the next. The appearance of these buildings tells the faithful that similar processes extend to human society.

If the *hórreo* developed in order to store crops that were first introduced from the New World, it is hardly surprising that a similar symbolic system should have existed in the archaeology of South America, although there is no suggestion of a direct link between these two phenomena (Sillar 1996). One of the most striking features of the Inca state was the creation of raised storehouses or *qollqas* (Figure 1.2). These are stone structures that were designed to hold foodstuffs such as potatoes and maize, as well as a variety of other goods. They seem to have been constructed by the state in order to feed and equip large numbers of people who were working on specific projects. The principle was a simple one. The structures were erected on raised ground where air could circulate freely so that their contents would be kept both dry and cool. The use of these buildings seems to have played an important role in the Inca political economy.



*Figure 1.2* An interpretation of a contemporary drawing showing two figures amidst a group of Inca *qollqas*. Information from Moseley (2001).

Sillar has compared these distinctive buildings with another kind of structure. These are the *chullpahs* which take the form of stone towers. Again they were built on hills or on other raised ground, but in this case they were used to store the remains of the dead. These worked in much the same manner as the *qollqas*, for they made use of the way in which air circulated through the structure. But in this case the effect was very different, for where the *qollqas* had been used to keep foodstuffs, the *chullpahs* were where human bodies were dried. The two buildings seem to be mirror images of one another. As Sillar says, they 'share a common technical function to store and preserve their contents' (1996: 282), but what is the relationship between death and the harvest?

In South America there seems to have been a cosmological link between human remains and the storage of grain. This continues to the present day with the festival of the dead when ancestral skulls are provided with drink and decorated with flowers. Before the *chullpahs* were erected, it was evidenced by the burial of bodies in disused storage pits, a practice that also occurs in prehistoric Europe. Indeed, Sillar suggests that the mummified corpses may have been removed from the *chullpahs* and moved around the landscape during the period whilst the crops were growing, in the same way as Christian crosses are taken from the churches to shrines among the fields. He suggests that Inca storehouses developed because similar buildings were already used to preserve the dead:

If my understanding is correct, the technological innovation of *qollqa* storage was inspired by the experience of *chullpahs*, but this is not just the transfer of a technique between two entirely separate spheres of activity. The pre-existing link between the dead and storage would have made the transfer of the technique conceptually possible and, in making the link, the *qollqas* would have acquired some of the meanings of regeneration and reciprocity with the ancestors that *chullpahs* expressed. Both the *qollqas* and *chullpahs* represent a bond between the people and the land, a continuing commitment to plough, to sow, to fertilise and to offer some of the harvest in sacrifice.

(Sillar 1996: 282)

If we accept his interpretation, people on both sides of the Atlantic may have devised a similar conceptual system.

What can we learn from this example? Archaeology is impoverished unless it sheds its fixation with food production. Agriculture was crucially important to ancient societies, but it was not unproblematical, and even such simple features as farm buildings may have borne many layers of meaning which prehistorians ignore at their peril. The Incas exploited the existing symbolism of the *chullpah* in creating a network of raised storehouses as part of the economic infrastructure of the state. In Spain, on the other hand, the form of

the raised granary has been used to signal regional differences between the separate communities in Galicia. In that case its architecture seems to have stressed the spiritual links between food production and the resurrection of life promised by the Christian church. Despite their apparent simplicity, the stone storehouses built in both these areas played many different roles.

This leads to a second observation. It is because modern visitors to Galicia are able to observe the uses and settings of *hórreos* that they are able to identify so many layers of significance. That is only possible since the history of these buildings is well documented. Were they to be deprived of these sources of information, there would be more scope for misunderstanding. They might work out the connection between *hórreos* and the storage of grain, and this would help them to reconstruct the workings of the subsistence economy. Alternatively, they might focus on the structure and settings of these buildings, in which case they could easily mistake them for shrines. What they might not perceive is that these are farm buildings whose design and operation have been ritualised by their use of Christian imagery.

The same kind of confusion has caused problems in South American archaeology, for it has not always been easy to distinguish between the buildings used to keep foodstuffs and those associated with the dead. That is because their forms and operation had so much in common. As Sillar says, 'if the Inca *qollqas* are an elaboration of a previously existing domestic form of storage, it is . . . only when they are built in a regimented form and are located outside contemporary settlements that we can be certain of identifying them'. Because these structures have been abandoned and often looted, their significance is more difficult to understand than that of the *hórreos*.

The seventeenth-century statesman and philosopher Francis Bacon once wrote that 'truth comes out of error more readily than out of confusion', a sentiment that David Clarke echoed when he quoted these words in his book *Analytical Archaeology* (1978: 487). They apply to two aspects of the study of prehistory. Errors are likely to arise in the analysis of particular kinds of data, whilst the sources of confusion may go further back. They reflect the ideas behind the practice of archaeology itself.

To treat the techniques of Galician agriculture as survivals of an Iron Age way of life is an error, for it depends on a misunderstanding of history. To consider the raised granaries as religious buildings is also incorrect but in this case it results from a kind of confusion that is deeply rooted in archaeological thought. It involves our understanding of the relationship between the ritual and the practical, the sacred and the mundane. The confusion arises because they are not related to one another in a coherent manner. The same uncertainty affects the investigation of societies in other parts of Europe. The Galician example makes this point especially clearly, but such problems of interpretation are especially prevalent in prehistoric archaeology, where any studies must be based on material remains. I shall illustrate this point with three examples taken from different periods. I begin with a Neolithic henge monument. The



Figure 1.3 The areas of Europe considered in Chapter 1.

Bronze Age is represented by accounts of ‘ritual ploughing’, whilst Iron Age Viereckschanzen supply the third example. They will be considered again in later chapters (Figure 1.3).

### The sources of confusion

#### *Sacred sites and settlements: the case of Durrington Walls*

This site is a large henge monument in Southern England, part of which was excavated in the late 1960s before a new road was built. It consists of an enormous circular earthwork, defined by an external bank and an internal ditch, enclosing the head of a dry valley above the River Avon (Wainwright and Longworth 1971). It may originally have had several entrances, and geophysical survey suggests that a small circular earthwork had been built just inside one of them (Figure 1.4). A similar feature on the higher ground overlooking Durrington Walls contained six concentric rings of posts. It is why that monument has become known as Woodhenge (Cunnington 1929).