

# Enclosures in Human Mind



Jan Turek\*

*Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University, Czech Republic*

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**\*Corresponding author:** Jan Turek, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic,  
Email: turekjan@hotmail.com

## Abstract

Dividing the cultural space is an essential need of humans. The enclosed space is giving people feeling of security from the otherness and dividing the world into concepts of peaceful domus safe inside and wild agrios, dangerous outside. Enclosures were created to protect human communities, their properties and livestock but also to perform their cult. Walls and ditches were often acting as symbolic manifestations of unity and creating shared identity, such as when Rome was founded by Romulus ploughing the furrow outlining the future Eternal City. Walls and ditches were also created as fortifications and symbols of domination and/or segregation, such as the case of Limes Romanus or the Great Wall of China. Enclosures were, however, also defining the holy places, dividing the sacred from the profane and creating arenas of spiritual and social communication, such as ditch monuments in Neolithic Europe. Walls and ditches are dividing people even now. The Korean wall or the wall at the West Bank present the reflection of the current human behavior.

**Keywords:** Prehistoric Enclosures; Neolithic; Copper Age; Central Europe; Segregation

## Introduction

During the Neolithic era in Europe we observe the phenomenon of building prehistoric monuments as symbols of shared social identity and, by contrast, of their disappearance from human culture and replacement by individualized burials, natural shrines and beaker ideology connected with deepening differentiation of the society and possibly also with a new cult. The gradual collapse of the collective values tradition started around the middle of the 5th millennium BC. A striking change - maybe even collapse of traditional values - came however at the beginning of the 4th millennium BC. The changes that took place were not, in my view, brought about by some fundamental shift in the subsistence strategy of European farmers, nor can they be ascribed to any effect of climate or environmental changes. I believe that the root cause of the changes, which I shall summarize in the following paragraphs, was first of all the development of social relations and the transformation of the cosmology of Late Stone Age farming communities.

What were the changes then? The first was the discontinuation of the tradition of building ditched enclosures and enclosures on hilltop sites. This phenomenon had its roots in the Early Neolithic circular ditched enclosures, "rondels". Such monuments are traditionally interpreted as structures with a sacral purpose [1], but it has also been suggested that this function may have been permeated by with some other social activities [2].

The tradition of ditched enclosures, albeit with many formal changes, can be observed still in the Early Eneolithic period (4500-3800 BC) in the form of causewayed enclosures, and also in the Late Eneolithic (3800-3350 BC) as the oval or square ditched enclosures of the Funnel Beaker Culture. Another type of ditched enclosures appears in the Early Eneolithic- enclosures on hilltop sites. I believe that hilltop enclosures used to be erroneously interpreted as hill-forts, i.e. fortified centers. Such an interpretation applies to the later phenomena of hill-forts and oppidae in the Iron Age and Early Middle Ages. It is more likely that the Eneolithic hilltop enclosures follow the tradition of the ditched monuments discussed here. At the beginning of the Late Eneolithic, sometime between 2900 and 2800 BC, traces of the use of hilltop sites start fading in most traditional farming regions of Central Europe; with the arrival of the Corded Ware pottery phenomenon and later, around 2500 BC, of Bell Beakers, archaeological finds start consisting mainly of relics of a burial nature. Particular emphasis was placed during this period on the symbolic structure of the burial rite and cultic ceremonies were moved to natural shrines, whose existence is not always easy to establish archaeologically.

## Functions and Symbolic Meaning of Enclosures

Living in an enclosed area brings the advantage of a restricted space, where people can feel safe. Domestic animals

and children are kept inside such sanctuary so they do not get lost in the opened landscape. Wild animals are on the opposite prevented to get inside easily. The accumulation of people and their activities, however, causes obstacles, such as accumulation of artefacts, refuse, diseases and fire hazard. Enclosures created spatially delimited and closed areas. Dividing the cultural human space from the in humane surroundings. Enclosures are often delimiting known and safe world and isolating it from the hostile outer world. They provide space for structuring and order in human culture. The domestic space defined by Ian Hodder [3] as *Domusis* representing the mild, peaceful, domesticated and feminine principle. Such inner peaceful area is usually divided from the wild, undomesticated, aggressive and masculine space that Hodder named *Agrios*. The division between domestic and wild and sacred and profane is in human mind commonly materialized by enclosures, walls and ditches. The enclosures are, however, not only functional artefacts designed to divide human world, the also represent certain state of mind and ideology. Some Neolithic enclosures themselves represent „ditch religion“, that is a result of first farmers ideologies [4,5].

Prehistoric enclosures and fortifications can be seen as symbols used for communication. They had no important practical function in defence against potential human enemies, at least not to full extent of their explanation. The creation of enclosures for trading purposes would not require any massive fortification, a light fence as demarcation would be perhaps sufficient. From European archaeological record there is abundant evidence of prehistoric enclosures and fortifications being used for religious purposes [6]. Such ceremonies possibly represented communication with supernatural forces and as such the enclosures gain certain monumentality, as they were in fact shrines with far reaching symbolic significance.

Evžen Neustupný argued that one of the important concepts of the past was the movement in vertical dimension [7]. This movement in vertical direction is in Neustupný's verticality concept a candidate for symbolic significance. Our prehistoric ancestors may not have realised the movement in the vertical dimension as a particular act connected to the sacred and creation of holy places. The early prehistoric enclosures in Central Europe (5th and first half of 4th millennium BC) later 4th and beginning of the 3rd millennium BC) moved to elevated places and in their forms they get more inspired by the hill top morphology. But then, probably in 29th Century BC something changed in the ditch religion continuity and people abandoned enclosures and hill-top sites for more than thousand years.

### Collapse of Copper Age enclosures

We have to ask a question whether the changes in the society and cosmology of Central European farmers that started at the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC can be considered a collapse of the traditional order of the human world. What is certain, however, is that the changes were truly significant. The Eneolithic society went through a number of deep changes in that period,

leading to considerable individualization of social principles and thus also to a deeper differentiation of the society of the emerging Bronze Age. The Neolithic collective idea of burials and monuments probably became definitely obsolete. The cause of such a collapse could have been the rapid deepening of social differentiation and the emergence of new elite in connection with the growing social and symbolic significance of copper smelting. What also happened, however, was a paradigm shift in the use of land, building of settlements and handling waste.

### Major factors of change

The departure from the Megalithic idea of collective burial together with the demise of the ditched enclosure tradition and use of hilltop sites are not however proof of merely changing social relations, but also of deep changes in the cosmology of our ancestors. A departure can be observed from the long Neolithic tradition of cults of a farming nature and the creation of monumental structures (rondels, causewayed enclosures, enclosed hilltop sites), which had apparently served to demonstrate collective identity and joint cultic activities. A new cult following the already existing sun worship appears to have prevailed. In their ritual communication with the spirits of the ancestors, now in the underworld, people focused especially on individualized burial ceremonies and their symbols - mainly to demonstrate and confirm the hierarchical social order and consolidate the genealogical system of inheritance of the social status of individuals and families. The ideology, linked inter alia with the ritual drinking of alcoholic beverages from prestigious beakers, may have spread in Europe specifically for the sake of consolidating the new order of social relations. It may be observed that at the end of the Eneolithic, European regions that were very far away from each other and often had very different cultural traditions came to share a common cultural uniformity, symbols, ritual practices and maybe also religion. Many other aspects, like for example the Eneolithic-Bronze ceramic complex tradition [8] or arable farming with a fallowing system [8], may serve as examples of a significant continuity throughout the Eneolithic period. The collapse of traditional values at the beginning of the third millennium BC thus applies especially to changes in the structure of the society and in the interlinking of the new ideology with the changing cult. The consequence of the collapse of the ditched enclosure religion in the end of the Eneolithic was the beginning of the formation of the foundations of a later deeply stratified European society and its cosmological archetypes.

### Current Mental and Political Enclosures

As we observed above dividing the cultural space is an essential need of human beings. The enclosed space if giving people feeling of security from the otherness and dividing the world into us and them. Enclosures were created to protect human communities, their properties and livestock but also to perform their cult. Walls and ditches were often acting as symbolic manifestations of unity and creating shared identity.

Mentally was same as important the Romulus's plowed furrow as massive ramparts. Walls and ditches were also created as fortifications and symbols of domination and/or segregation, such as the case of Limes Romanus or the Great Wall of China. Enclosures were, however, also defining the holy places, dividing the sacred from the profane and creating arenas of spiritual and social communication, such as ditch monuments in Neolithic Europe.

Walls and ditches are dividing our world even now. The Iron Curtain dividing Europe into democratic West and Soviet east does not exist for more than quarter century, but mentally it still exists and not only in mind of politicians. The recent landscape projects suggest that the former existence of Iron Curtain high voltage electric fences is coded in animal's memory and even the present day herds of rain deer avoid this now only virtual border. And of course there are still existing enclosures of segregation. The South Africa is more than two decades without Apartheid, and people can leave their homelands, but private walls with barb wire fences and armed response service still persist. The West Bank wall is dividing the poor Palestinian occupied territories from rich Israel and new walls are mentally projected between USA and Mexico and European Union and Balkan refugees passage. These new enclosures of segregation are unfortunately reflection of the evil in our minds, which now in the unfortunate era of Trumps, Putins, Erdoğan and Xi Jinpings sets the material evidence of the current human behaviour (Figures 1 & 2).



**Figure 1:** Kly (Central Bohemia) 2015 Excavations of the Michelsberg Causeway Enclosure (photograph by J. Turek).



**Figure 2:** Prague-Bubeneč, Michelsberg Culture Tulip-shaped beaker. Typical sacrificial offering from the Early Copper Ageritual Enclosures (photograph by J. Vrabec, MMP).

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