

The Neolithic site of La Vela: the 1987-88 excavation campaigns. Preliminary notes on the stratigraphic sequence

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ABSTRACT - Authors present the stratigraphic sequence of "La Vela" (Trento). Several prehistoric occupations have been detected starting in the Mesolithic and ending in the so-called phase II of the Square Mouth Pottery Culture.

KEY WORDS: "La Vela", Trento, Mesolithic, Square Mouth Pottery Culture

PAROLE CHIAVE: "La Vela", Trento, Mesolitico, Vasi a Bocca Quadrata

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The Neolithic site of "La Vela" occupies part of a vast alluvial cone of the La Vela torrent, situated on the left side of the River Adige, north-west of Trento.

From the 60s onwards, this area was highly developed and it was thanks to building works that the site was discovered and that excavations and rescue operations were undertaken. The general plan (Fig. 1) shows the vast extent of the archaeological remains, their different phases and use (dwellings or cemetery), as well as the interaction between the archaeological levels and natural agents (erosion, flooding and colluvium).

The excavation carried out in 1987-88 in the section called Vela VII, cut into two by a large erosion channel after prehistoric occupation, yielded the most complex sequence starting in the Mesolithic and ending in the so-called phase II of the Square Mouth Pottery Culture (meander-spiral style) (Fig. 2).

After the sporadic encampments of the Mesolithic hunters-gatherers, who exploited the alluvium covered sandy banks, the settlement of completely Neolithicized groups developed a close interaction between natural processes and human activity, thus "domesticating" a valley bottom con-

text which was continuously subject to erosion and flooding.

The phase datable to the Early Neolithic yielded a limited amount of archaeological deposit, which had been extensively damaged by ancient erosion. This was dotted with scattered unaligned shallow post-holes, mainly towards West, and with a straight SE-NW cut, probably a trench (Fig. 3). This structure is full of natural sediments and overlapped by the first phase of a Square Mouth Pottery Culture settlement, which develops - without stratigraphic pauses - directly on the Early Neolithic surface.

Evident traces of the first phase of settlement referable to the Square Mouth Pottery Culture (stratigraphically identified and confirmed by the analysis of the decorative syntax of the ceramics) are preserved above all in the southern area. In the Northern area there is a stratigraphic continuity with the Early Neolithic levels.

The following phase (distinguished by the appearance of elements in a meander-spiral style) is characterised by the overall restructuring of the area, including extensive pebble paving and the re-use of the Early Neolithic ditch for the insertion of large vertical wooden elements wedged by large

stones. It is during this period that the area of La Vela VII becomes a burial site, as all the tombs are systematically covered by the following levels of settlement.

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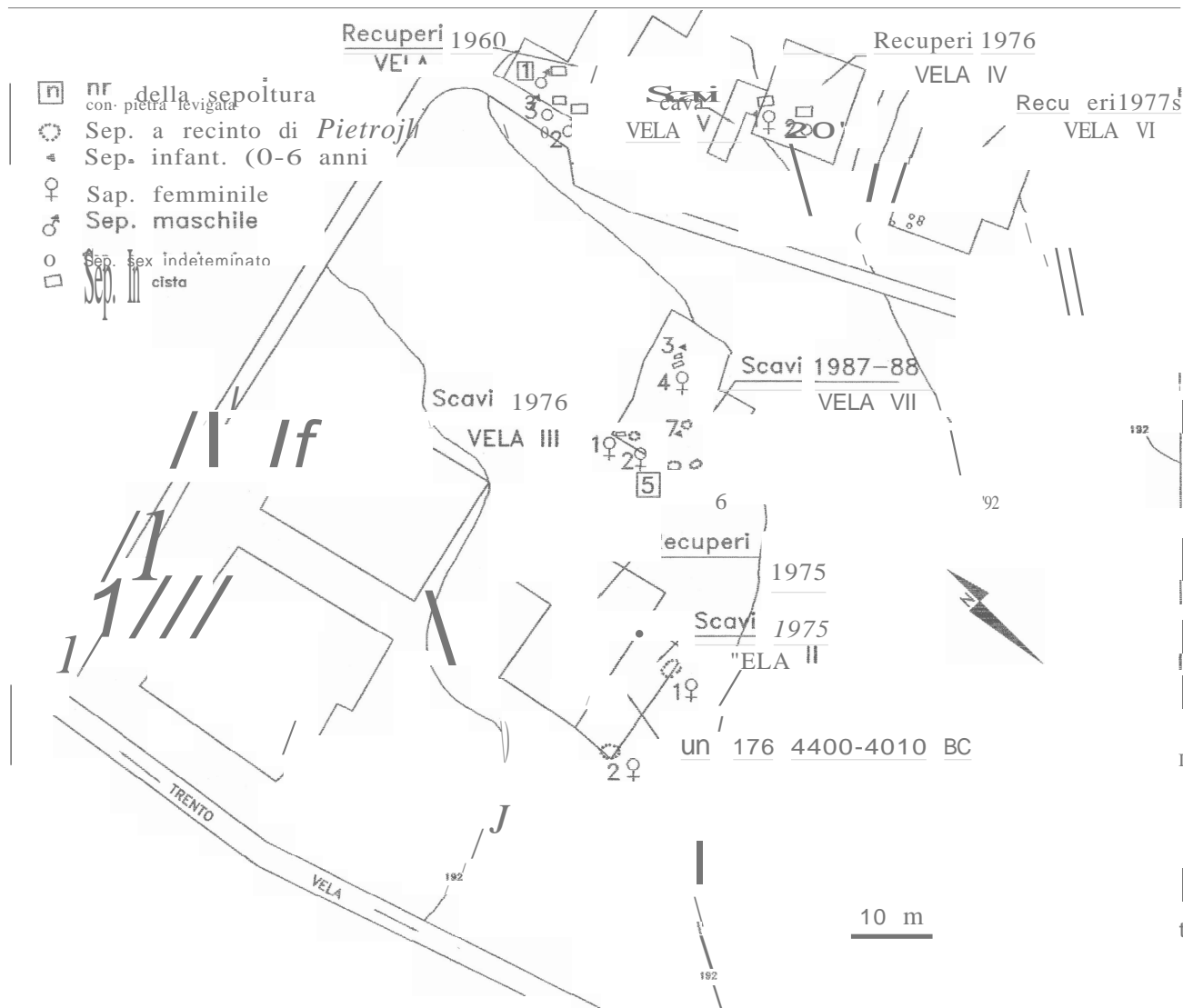
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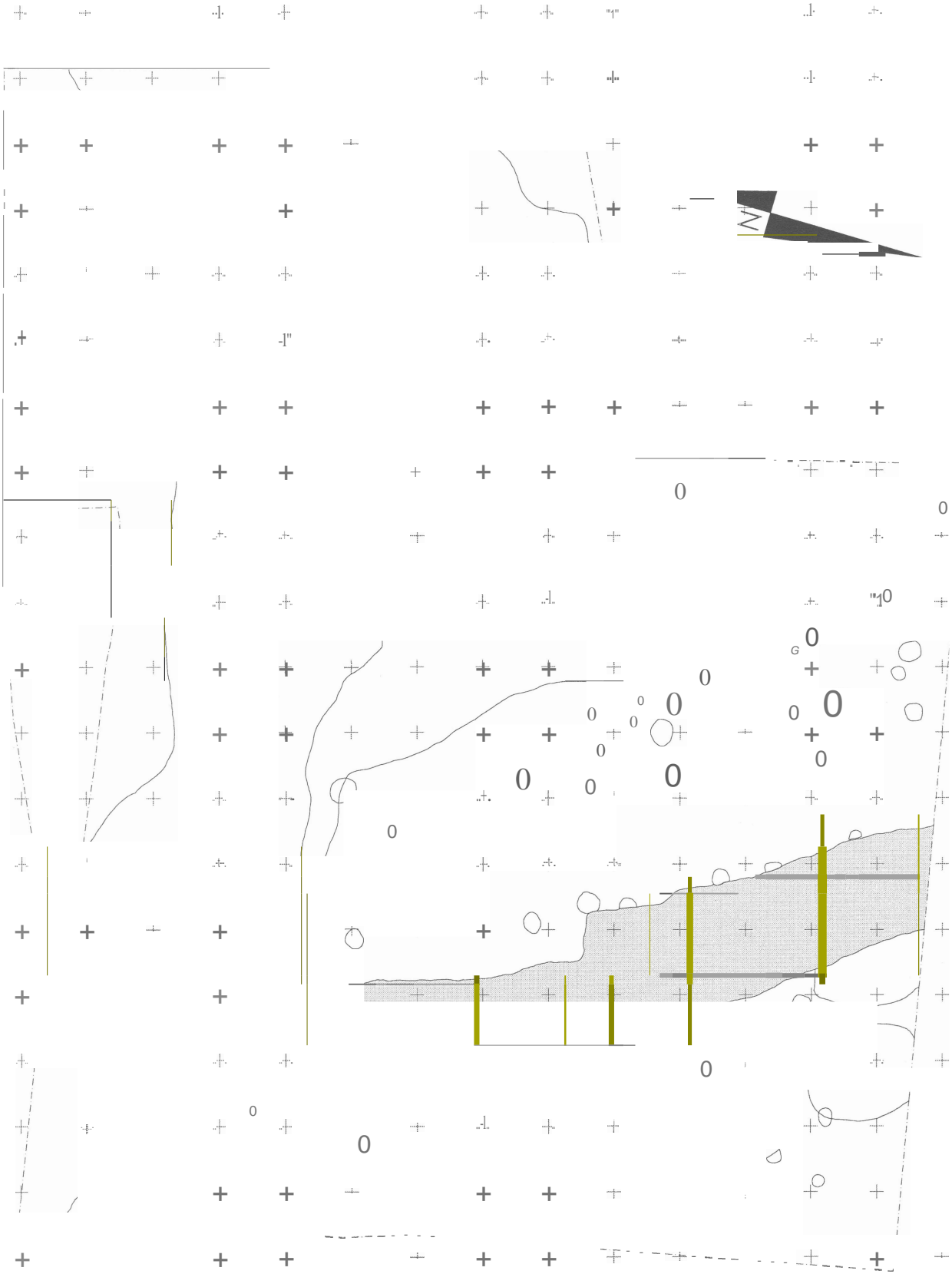


VELA I	153.110 mq	VELA V	32.3981 mq
VELA II	284.5426 mq	VELA VI	263.8976 mq
VELA III	426.6415 mq	VELA VII	229.4325 mq
VELA IV	141.8426 mq	TOTALE	521.8481 mq

Fig. 1 - La Vela: plan of the position of the excavated sections at La Vela (I-VII) and of the tombs

LA VELA

settore VII 1987- 88



PLANIMETRIA DELLA FASE
NEOLITICO ANTICO

Fig. 2 - La Vela VII: plan of the Early Neolithic phase

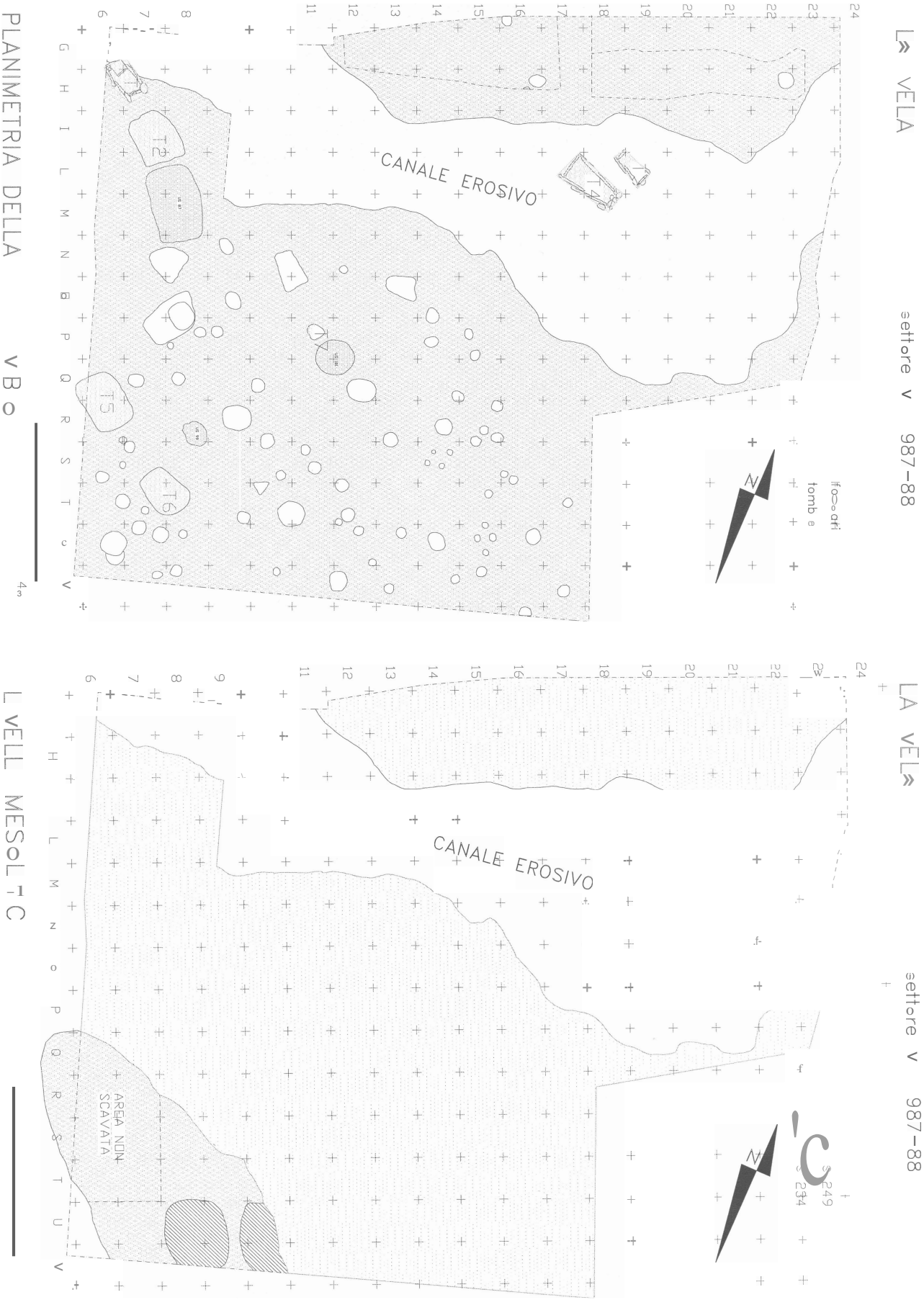




Fig. 4 - La Vela **VII** potsherd found in the sedimentary deposit of the tomb decorated in the meander-spiral style.