

The highland site of Isera (TN): preliminary notes on the structures

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ABSTRACT - Excavations at the site of Isera "La Torretta" (TN) brought to light an imposing stratigraphic sequence that documents the occupation of the hillock from the Late Neolithic through to the beginning of the Copper Age. A first examination of the excavation data and the typological study of the materials helped to identify five different phases of occupation

KEY WORDS: Isera "La Torretta", Trento, Late Neolithic, Copper Age

PAROLE CHIAVE: Isera "La Torretta", Trento, Neolitico recente, Età del Rame

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Excavations undertaken in 1990 at the highland site of Isera "La Torretta" (TN) by the Ufficio Beni Archeologici of the Autonomous Province of Trento, brought to light, in an area occupied by a basalt quarry, an imposing stratigraphic sequence that documents the occupation of the hillock from the Late Neolithic through to the beginning of the Copper Age. A first examination of the excavation data and the typological study of the materials helped to identify five different phases of occupation (DE MARINIS & PEDROTTI, 1997).

The more ancient phase of occupation refers to the Berico Euganeo aspect of the Square Mouth Vase Culture and preserves the remains - unfortunately ruined by quarry excavations - of three dwellings built on the southern slope of the hillock using a mixture of techniques, basement/rampart, and facing different directions. The three structures are not contemporaneous and the stratigraphic data suggest various phases of restoration and reconstruction.

Dwelling 2, most definitely cut by dwelling 3, is about 3m wide, has a conserved length of about 8m and is in a NW-SE direction. As there are hardly any post holes (a short alignment was found in dwelling 1) and the constant presence of bounda-

ries consisting of small sub-rectilinear ditches are elements which lead to at least two reconstruction hypothesis of the dwelling: a) a "heavy" construction with horizontal timber welded with the block-bau technique (a technique amply documented in the alpine settlement context); b) a "light" wattle and daub construction placed on horizontal wooden supports. The abundant concotto daubing tends to confirm the second hypothesis.

The flooring is made simply with pounded earth and various structures of hearths are present, all circular and positioned along the central axis of the dwellings. The hearths in dwelling 2 (diameter 80-90cm) are built inside a small preparation trough with an insulating loose stone foundation of basaltic stones and small pebbles and further layers of clay mixed with sand, with raised borders; one of the hearths had a trough with a sub-circular perimeter.

The hearths of dwelling 3 (85cm diameter) were on the contrary made of a medium-sized loose stone foundation (exclusively angular basaltic stones) with layers of clay without raised borders but slightly convex.

The widespread presence of both a diffused charcoal layer and abundant remains of daub coat-

ings hardened by fire, suggest that dwelling 2 was destroyed by fire. Proof of such a traumatic event is confirmed by the finding *in situ* of 5 ceramic vessels, that can be completely reconstructed, which the long wall had caved in upon while the structure was still inhabited.

Of particular interest among the concotto findings in the collapsed strata are some large fragments decorated with spiral-forms, engraved grooves with crescent-shaped sections; the engraved grooves of some of the fragments were covered with a sort of cement-like whitish paste,

presumably used to enhance the colour of the decorative motifs.

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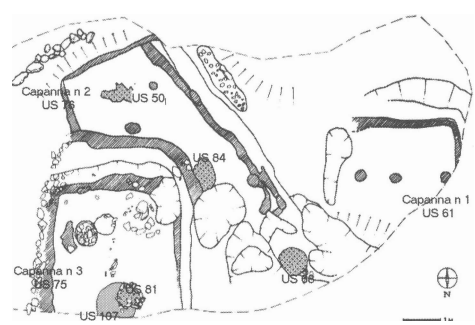


Fig. 1 - Plan of the dwellings 1-3 referring to the incision and engraved style of the Square Mouth Vase Culture (Graphic elaboration by N. Degasperì).

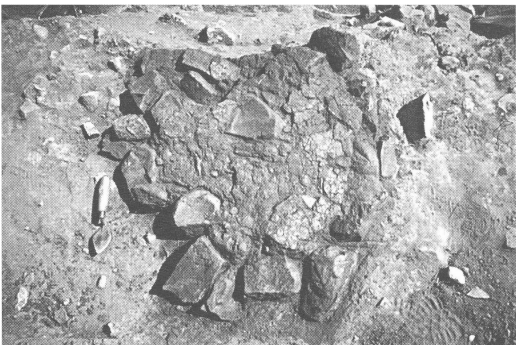


Fig. 3 - Dwelling 3 hearth; top layer with basaltic stones and layer of clay (US81).

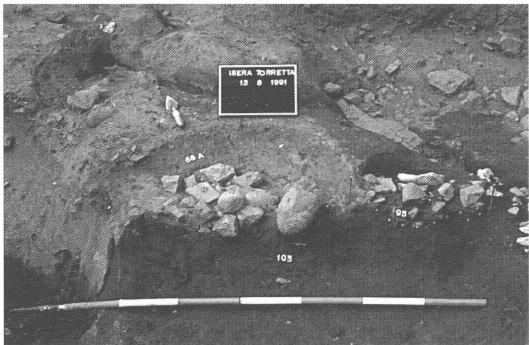


Fig. 2 - Preparation hole of the hearth in dwelling 2 (US68 a).

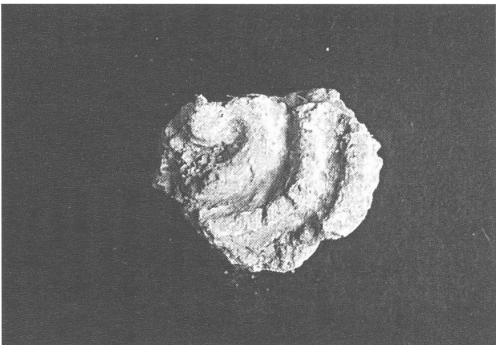


Fig. 4 - Concotto spiral-form engraving found in dwelling 2.