

Hypothetical reconstruction of the Early Neolithic hut of Villandro Plunacker (Bolzano)

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ABSTRACT - Between 1979 and 1997, a Neolithic settlement was identified at Plunacker, in the municipality of Villandro/Villanders (province of Bolzano/Bozen). The survey provided elements that were useful to reconstruct the layout of a hut whose remains were sealed by a stratigraphic sequence of layers containing finds from the first and second phase of the "Vasi a Bocca Quadrata". Numerous pole holes were found, penetrating sterile ground. They were arranged according to a complex geometric pattern: "semi-crescent" toward the mountain and straight on the valley side. Two slightly wider, internal holes probably correspond to large poles which supported the saddle roof. The construction was based on a surface that was artificially levelled on the slope and supported by earth piles. According to the positions of the poles, and with the help of computer-processed elements, some theoretical models of the hut were created. Preference was given to the model presented in this paper.

KEY WORDS: Villandro Plunacker/Villanders-Plunacker, Neolithic hut, Settlement, Reconstruction based on excavation data

PAROLE CHIAVE: Villandro Plunacker/Villanders-Plunacker, Neolitico, Capanna, Insediamento, Ricostruzione su dati scavo

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Between the years 1979 and 1997 the "Soprintendenza Provinciale ai BB.CC. di Bolzano" carried out various surveys in Villandro in the Plunacker area, a field on a western fluvial terrace of the Isarco Valley. A Neolithic settlement which covered an area of more than a hectare was revealed in this point. In particular, the survey of a sufficiently wide area (survey C, 10x9m) (Fig.1) revealed useful elements (treading grounds, post holes, hearths) for the reconstruction of the layout of a hut datable back to the Early Neolithic Age (lithic industry and ceramics similar to those of the "Gaban Complex"). The 7x5m construction was located on a slight slope where an artificial shelf had been adequately made from gravel and pebbles. The part of the shelf facing the mountain coincided with the natural slope while the part looking towards the valley was about 10 cm higher so that the base resulted as being flat. A thick stratigraphic sequence, measuring about eighty centi-

metres, contained finds of living phases of more recent Neolithic periods (first and second phase of the Square Mouth Pottery), and sealed the levels of the Early Neolithic hut. A carbon sample taken from nearby layers contemporary with the sterile backfill is dated to 5555 ± 75 BP, that is 3605 years BC (C14-Rome-600; Prof. G. Calderoni, "La Sapienza", Rome University).

The numerous post holes were stratigraphically related to the Neolithic hut and penetrated into the sterile backfill and had a complex semi-curved shape towards the mountain because the wall on this side was a "semi-crescent" shape (Fig. 1). On the other side, towards the valley, the post holes coincided with the border of the terracing or they extended along a straight line at a right angle to the maximum inclination of the slope. In this case the wall towards the valley could only be but flat. Two slightly wider post holes corresponded to big posts that supported the saddle roof. A third

post hole on the downhill slope probably held up a small roof that protected the flat façade.

The position of the poles and other elements elaborated by the computer have led to the suggestion of some theoretical models (Fig. 3-6) in which certain elements became important, as for example, the facility in constructing, the optimal

flow of rain water and the expelling and disposal of smoke produced in the hearth, the position of which was identified. Among the various possibilities, preference was given to the constructive hypothesis hereby introduced, the model of which (Fig. 2) is to be confirmed in further similar research.

SUMMARY - Excavations spanning from 1979 to 1997 by the Cultural Assets Service of Bolzano/Bozen at Plunacker, in the commune of Villandro/Villanders (BZ) revealed a Neolithic settlement (Fig.1). It stretched for more than one hectare. The survey was carried out over an extensive enough area (survey C, 10x9 metres, Fig.1) to provide elements such as a pounding level, postholes and hearth that, together, could be used to reconstruct the layout of a hut dating to the Early Neolithic Age (with lithic industry and ceramics similar to those of the Gaban Complex). The building (7x7 metres) was located on a slight slope on which an artificial shelf had been formed with backfilling. A stratigraphic sequence (80cm thick) contained finds of Later Neolithic phases (phases I and II of the Square Mouth Pottery Culture) that sealed the levels of the Early Neolithic hut. A carbon sample, taken from layers contemporary with the sterile backfill is dated to 5555 ± 75 BP, that is 3605 BC (C14-Rome-600; Prof. Calderoni, La Sapienza University). The numerous post holes were stratigraphically related to the Early Neolithic hut. These holes cut the sterile backfill and had a complex arrangement: "semi-crescent" towards the mountain and straight on the valley side. Two slightly wider holes within the hut probably contained large posts which supported a saddle roof. A third external hole on the down slope side was evidence of a post that would have supported a small canopy. The positions of the post holes and other computer-processed elements have led to the creation of some theoretical models generating the hypothetical reconstruction presented in this paper (Fig. 2-6).

RIASSUNTO - Tra il 1979 e il 1997 nel comune di Villandro (BZ), in località Plunacker, è stato individuato un insediamento neolitico. L'indagine ha restituito elementi utili per la ricostruzione della pianta di una capanna i cui resti erano sigillati da una seriazione stratigrafica contenente reperti della prima e seconda fase dei V.B.Q. Le numerose buche di palo messe in luce, penetranti il terreno sterile, seguivano una complessa geometria: "semilunata" verso monte e rettilinea sul lato a valle. Due buche interne leggermente più larghe corrispondevano probabilmente a grandi pali che sostenevano il tetto a due falde. La costruzione basava su un piano artificialmente livellato nel pendio con apporti di terra. Le posizioni dei pali e di altri elementi elaborati per via informatica hanno permesso di proporre alcuni modelli teorici tra i quali è stata data preferenza all'ipotesi costruttiva qui presentata.

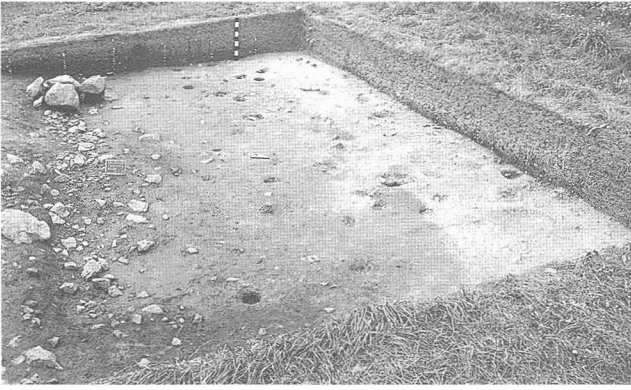


Fig. 1 - View of the excavation site toward the end of the research activities; the dimensions of the Neolithic hut are traced out by several pole holes penetrating sterile ground



Fig. 2 - Presentation of the modelled reconstruction of the neolithic hut from various perspectives

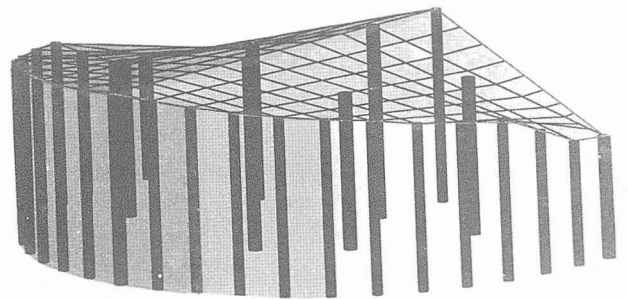
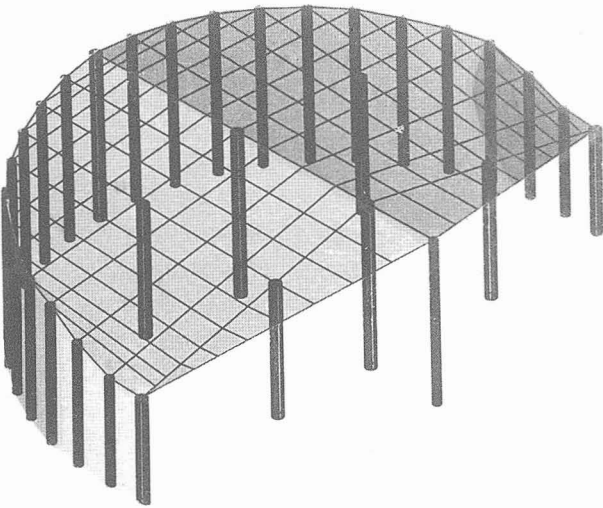
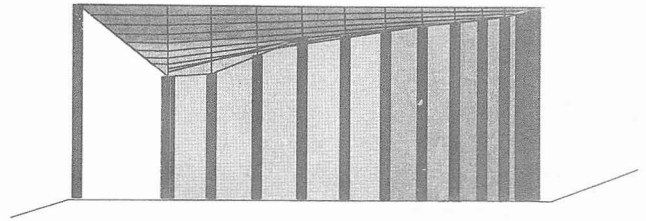
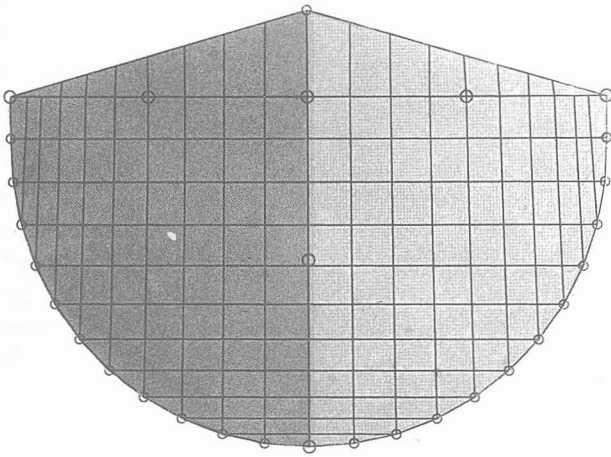


Fig. 3-6 - Best fitting graphical reconstruction of the Neolithic hut.