

The Eneolithic hut of Villandro-Plunacker

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ABSTRACT - According to archaeological surveys in the past, the area of Villandro/Villanders-Plunacker (province of Bolzano/Bozen) was continuously inhabited from the Mesolithic to the Middle Ages. Investigations carried out in 1992 provided evidence that this area was indeed occupied during Eneolithic times. Excavations along a slight slope in Villandro-Plunacker exposed the remains of a hut which presumably had a terraced layout. This hypothesis is based on the discovery of an artificial shelf made of backfill, the supporting wall of that shelf, a series of holes for wooden poles, remains of the roof and of the walls, and traces of a hearth located inside the hut. A hypothetical graphic reconstruction of the dwelling featuring raised wooden structures is proposed.

KEY WORDS: Villandro-Plunacker, Copper Age, Wooden hut, Hypothesis of reconstruction, Terrace

PAROLE CHIAVE: Villandro-Plunacker, Età del Rame, Capanna lignea, Ipotesi ricostruttiva, Terrazzo

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The archaeological excavations conducted (on an Eneolithic settlement) in Villandro (in the locality of Plunacker), a small centre on the hydrographic right of the mid-valley of the Isarco river, proved that the site was continually used from the Mesolithic period through to the Middle Ages (and). Evidence of human utilisation in epoca neolitica (during Eneolithic times) is confirmed here uniquely by the traces of a dwelling hut, together with ceramic findings which are presumably of this period.

The identification of the remains of a hut located within an excavated area of about 15 square metres named "zone M" (plinth 8), at a depth of more than 80cm below the Roman level (and at least 2m below the modern turf; Fig. 1) dates back to the excavation campaign which took place in Villandro in 1992 by the "Soprintendenza Provinciale ai Beni Culturali di Bolzano". In spite of the limited size of the survey some features were identified which permitted the hypothetical reconstruction of the structure (Fig. 2). This structure was located on a slight slope and presumably had a terraced layout: this hypothesis is justified by the discovery of an alignment of stones (US290) interpreted as the contain-

ment wall of an artificially created shelf for the construction of the hut in itself. Numerous post-holes (almost ten) were clearly visible on the uphill and mainly on the downhill sides of the terrace (width approximately 50cm; length not less than 4m) supporting the walls and the roof which was probably double-sloping. The post-holes clearly testify to the existence of a dwelling-place characterized by wooden structures. It is possible to imagine the existence of a similar situation with a terraced wall and post-holes in the uphill part of the structure but this, unfortunately, were not examined.

A grindstone in advanced state of wear and tear was found further uphill at the northern end of the above mentioned alignment (US290) and inside the hut were found the remains of a hearth (US293) on its original base (US30/B): its fovea was delimited by small stones. The importance of these findings is mainly tied to the results of the radiocarbon analysis (carried out on a sample of charcoal taken from the hearth) which dated the hut to the Copper Age (Rome-601, 4660+-70/yr BP/2710 BC; Laboratorio delle analisi del Dipartimento di Scienze della Terra dell'Università di Roma, Prof. G. Calderoni).

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SUMMARY - The archaeological excavations carried out in 1992 at Villandro-Plunacker by the Archaeological Assets Service of Bolzano proved that the site was used during the Eneolithic period. Utilisation stretched from the Mesolithic period through to the Middle Ages. Eneolithic remains were confined to those of a hut, located within an excavated area of about 15 square metres ("zone M") at a depth of more than 80cm below the Roman levels and at least 2m below the modern turf (Fig. 1). In spite of the small size of the survey some features were identified that permitted the hypothetical reconstruction of the structure. Located on a slight slope, the structure presumably had a terraced layout. This was suggested by the discovery of an alignment of stones interpreted as the containment wall (context number 290) of an artificial shelf created for the construction of the hut itself. Numerous post-holes (almost 10) were clearly visible on both the up and down slope sides of the terrace and would have provided supports for the walls and the roof, which was probably double-sloping (Fig. 2). These clearly testify to the existence of a dwelling-place characterised by wooden structures (Fig. 3). A grindstone in advanced state of wear was found within the alignment of stones (Fig. 4) and inside the structure there were the remains of a hearth (context number 293). Its fovea was defined by small stones (Fig. 5). This find was crucially important as it facilitated the carrying out of radiocarbon analysis which dated the hut to the Eneolithic period (Rome-601, 4660+-70/yr BP/2710; Laboratory of analysis, Rome Department of Earth Sciences, Prof. G. Calderoni).

RIASSUNTO - Le indagini archeologiche effettuate nel 1992 a Villandro-Plunacker (prov. di Bolzano) hanno evidenziato l'unica testimonianza della frequentazione del sito in epoca eneolitica, in un contesto cronologico che va dal Mesolitico al Medioevo. Si tratta dei resti di una capanna che, collocata su un lieve pendio, presentava presumibilmente una sistemazione terrazzata; tale ipotesi è stata suggerita dal rinvenimento di una platea artificialmente realizzata con del terreno riportato, del muretto di contenimento di quest'ultima e di una serie di buche per i pali in legno delle pareti e del tetto. Nell'area interna alla capanna era inoltre ben evidente un focolare. Dell'abitazione, caratterizzata quindi da alzati lignei, viene qui proposta un'ipotetica ricostruzione grafica.

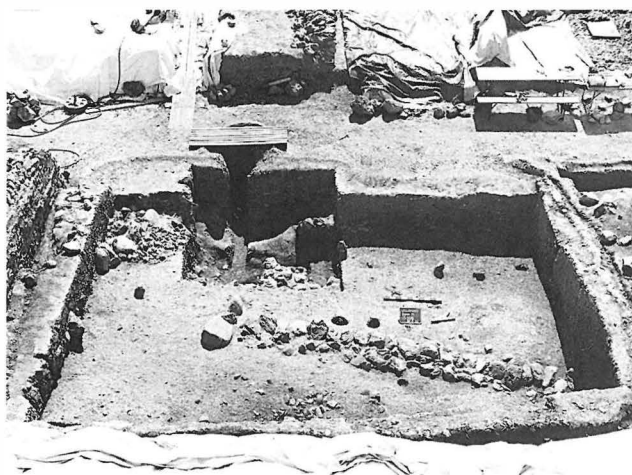


Fig. 1 - Partial view of the excavation of Villandro-Plunacker (eastward): the "M zone" and the location of the Eneolithic hut



Fig. 2 - The remains of the stone alignment, the post-holes which can be identified because of their darker colour, and of the hearth

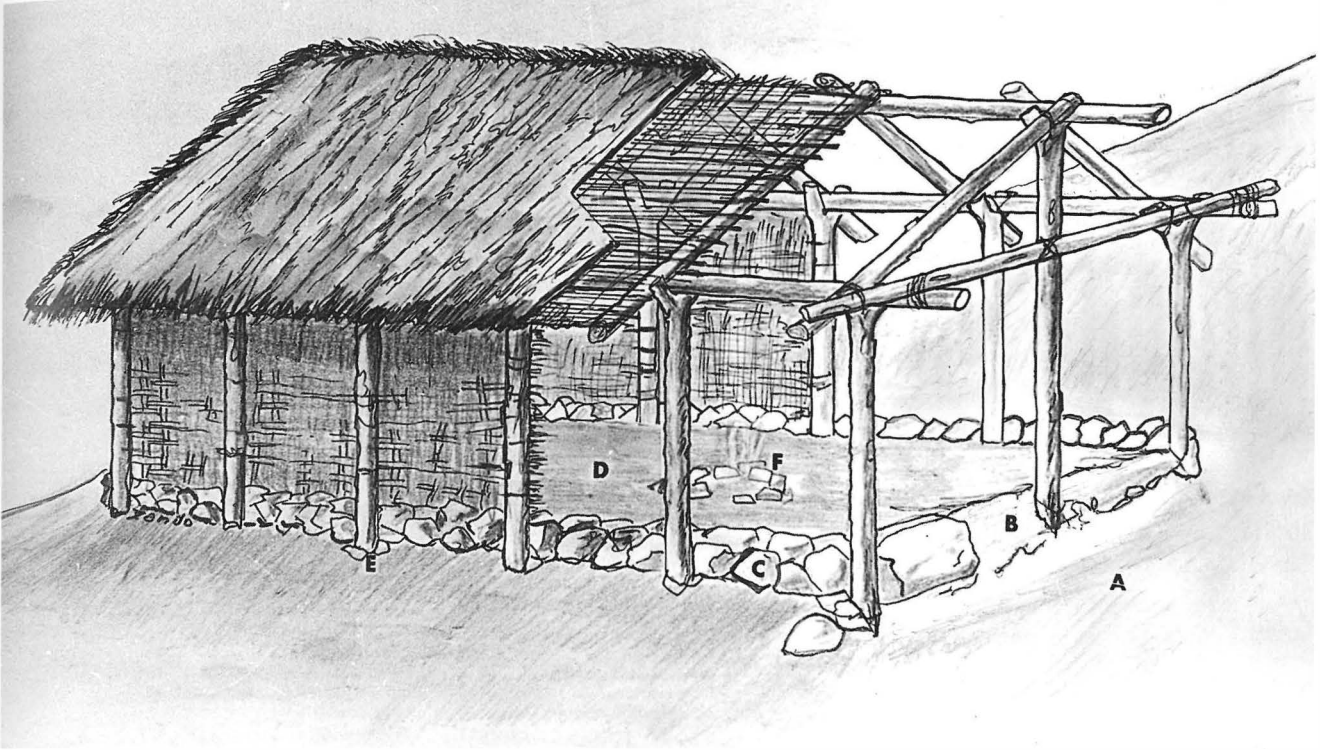


Fig. 3 - Proposed reconstruction of the hut according to the evidence found at the excavation. A) original slope; B) terracing; C) containment wall; D) pounding level; E) post-holes (wooden structures); F) hearth

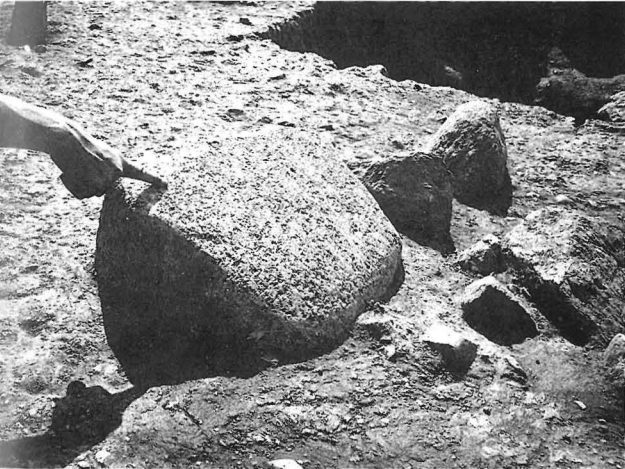


Fig. 4 - The grindstone



Fig. 5 - The remains of the hearth defined by small stones