

A Typology of Peasant Huts in Tuscany

INTRODUCTION

Since S. Erixon's article in *Folkliv* 2/3 (1937), no other equally important work has, in our opinion, been published on the subject of the most elementary buildings in rural Europe. Various and diverse works on rural or vernacular architecture which have appeared since, merely touch the subject of the simplest and most basic constructions, such as some farm outbuildings or shelters of a more or less temporary nature, built with crude timbers or rough stones and covered with thatch or slate.

The possible relationships between these constructions and the earliest dwellings of mankind on one hand and more advanced vernacular buildings on the other, are seldom postulated by scholars and never sufficiently discussed.

More exhaustive works, such as that of D. Brusadin on the buildings of Valcamonica (1958—59), the brief essay by J. Close-Brooks and S. Gibson on a shepherd's hut near Rome (1966), or the small hand-book by A. Rapoport (1966) get closer, in their method, to a more satisfactory view of the problem of disclosing these little explored areas in the origins of architecture.

Experimental archaeology in Britain and Northern Europe is, and has long been, using ethnographic models in the reconstruction of prehistoric or medieval buildings of which only the plan was known through excavations (Coles 1973). In these countries, however, only literature and old pictures are available of what once were simple and perishable huts. Shepherds, peasants, and charcoal burners have long gone and with them the masterly ability of handling utensils and raw materials. This ability the archaeologist does not have and cannot learn. As a result some of these reconstructions, however rigorously achieved, do not always convince us.

In Italy, on the other hand, many specimens of these constructions still exist and are being built by shepherds and peasants who are there for the archaeologist to observe and interview. Yet no scholar who writes on rural buildings has ever used this invaluable source of information. It is clear that in Italy, more than in Northern Europe, (due to the existence of a peasant population that was only recently influenced by technological change) one could gather valuable information both on buildings and on rural settlements through the observation of the methods and principles still practiced.

Simple pastoral and agricultural constructions show distributions and typologies which have the same ethnological value as those we have attributed to ploughs and vehicles (Caselli 1975 and 1977). The ethnological value of these simple and characteristic structures is, in fact superior to that of the more advanced and sophisticated vernacular buildings, the latter being not exclusive products of a local tradition, but the result of various experiences and techniques; these are so strong in cases, that their original character is frequently obliterated.

What do I mean by "elementary" architecture (sometimes called "primitive") and by "vernacular" architecture? Leaving aside all the buildings which frequently serve only to impress people by showing the power of a ruler or ruling class, or to impress designers and educated people by showing the skill of an architect or the good taste of the people who commissioned the monument, popular tradition represents the translation of a culture into physical form. The needs, the values and wishes as well as the dreams and passions of a people, manifest themselves in the buildings which are the product of a collective culture (Redfield 1965, Rapoport 1969).

In this popular tradition we must make a distinction between "elementary" buildings and "vernacular" buildings. The term "vernacular" defines both pre-industrial and modern buildings which were built by specialized craftsmen such as master masons, following regional or national patterns which may have been of recent origin. These always fall outside the category of buildings designed by an architect as an expression of his talent and of his personal technological and social concepts. "Elementary" (or "primitive") architecture is easier to identify in that it refers to all constructions built by tribal or peasant societies where no specialization exists. R. Redfield writes that in tribal and peasant societies a general knowledge of all by all exists and every aspect of the life of the community is known to all. No technical vocabulary only known to specialists exists because there is no specialization beyond the limits imposed by age and sex. Only in the field of religion and magic special knowledge exists as a privilege of those who are initiated. This means that everyone is, in these societies, capable of building his own dwelling by himself and generally does just that (Redfield 1965). Each member of the community can build the buildings and the artifacts that the community needs, even if in many cases, for technical or social reasons, buildings will be erected by a group of individuals. In any case every dwelling can be built by the person or persons who will inhabit it. This is a fundamental point.

The buildings we shall see below belong to this class, even when the builders are not members of primitive or tribal societies. However, the same structural features which identify those societies are also responsible, as in our case, for the persistence through time of primitive constructions and ancient patterns, whichever purpose they may serve today. On the other hand, such dwellings as, for example, those simple houses found in mountain villages (the Parma Apennines, the Lunigiana, the Garfagnana, or the Casentino) which will be discussed below, remain outside this class because the economic and social context in which they are produced makes them part of the class of vernacular buildings.

When professional masons play a part in the construction of a building we can say that elementary architecture is replaced by "vernacular", "pre-industrial", or "popular" architecture. Even when every member of this society could build the house, the mason does the job much better, more speedily and employing less energy. The peasant can and does take part in the planning of his house as well as in defining the details of the finishing stages together with

the mason. We still have a specialization even when a mason is himself a peasant who only seasonally, according to necessity builds houses for the community. Farmhouses and popular architecture in general are the products of a combination of regional and national models, generally of urban or "educated" origin with the inclusion of cultural traditions of a more local character.

The importance of a distinction between these two types of architecture does not only help description and classification, but there are further considerations to be made.

First of all, the difference between the two classes clarifies the reasons why even the humblest dwellings of peasants and shepherds in the region in question are often very different from the structure of the simplest huts still in use, as well as from the dwellings uncovered by archaeologists in the vicinity. This is to say that present day dwellings are different from those of the same area before the impact of civilisation and the political and the economic colonization of that particular community.

This is clear from archaeological evidence all over the world. In the ancient Mediterranean empires or in America we see that house design changed, sometimes dramatically, when a community went through a phase of incipient civilization toward urbanism. We note that circular plan huts are replaced by square structures (Ucko et al. 1973, Coppa 1968). This transformation is, sometimes, interpreted as a sign of ethnic invasion or cultural and economic conquest by alien peoples. These and similar assumptions are, in the majority of cases, wrong. The truth is, that in the process of civilization occupational specialization took place in Egypt, Jericho, Rome, Peru, and elsewhere. Architecture ceases to be everybody's business and becomes a specialized trade, as do many other aspects of culture. A rationalization of design takes place and becomes apparent both in the design of the single buildings as well as in the overall plan of the settlement. With civilization and the resulting rationalization of productive techniques, communities free themselves from many restrictive rules, as well as from absolute respect for tradition and enter the field of invention and technological adventure — a characteristic of every society in progress. Only where civilization does not reach, or where it arrives too late, in a stage too advanced to be grasped and digested by all, do primitive patterns linger on. This seems to have been the case in Central and Northern Europe which remained in a situation of tribalism and collectivism until the early centuries of the Christian Era or even, in cases, until modern times.

It should not be of any surprise to us if peasants of the Roman Campagna, of Egypt, Palestine or Peru still build, for various purposes, the only house they know how to build and can build with their own hands.

THE SURVEY

Following the work I have published on ploughs and rural transport, the present paper attempts to set the subject of elementary buildings in Italy in the right order of importance within the context of our ethnographic studies

(Caselli — Guerrini 1978). The structure and some characteristics in the design of any elementary building, erected by a tribal or peasant community are conditioned by three factors: a) environment, b) economy, and c) ethnic origin of the community. All three elements must be taken into account during a field survey.

I have already pointed out that, if the construction under survey was not, at the moment of the enquiry, used as a dwelling (which is quite likely nowadays), it might nevertheless have been built for that purpose without undergoing substantial alteration. Alternatively, it might also be that the building in question was originally conceived as a stable or something else and in this case it might show a design which makes it different from other buildings of the same area which did, in fact, derive from dwellings.

The description of types itself presents some difficulties, as we do not have as yet a well established method of research and a terminology. Nomenclature is yet to be established, the names of the parts of a building vary from area to area according to dialect and we do not have Italian versions which can be generally understood.

Classification problems must be solved with regard to the plan and superstructures of buildings. It is not clear whether the circular plan is earlier than the square one, and the evolutive stages of the frame and roof have never been described.

In the area of our survey we have yet to study the relationship between buildings not used today as dwellings and those which are. I shall not attempt to solve these problems here, as this paper is nothing but a description of facts and problems encountered during a field survey which extended to all agricultural artifacts in Tuscany.

During a field research it often happens that the informant says that the building in question (but it can be any artifact) was built by him using scraps and any materials at hand, without any particular design in mind. One should treat such opinions with scepticism and check their validity. Obviously, such attitudes must be taken as an integral part of the culture which is being studied. On the other hand, there are areas where peasants show great zeal and enthusiasm in saying that any artifact is "traditional" and that in the area this has always been the way to do things.

There are rare cases in which a building does not follow any particular design pattern, mainly in the vicinity of urban centres, in the outskirts of cities. Here one often encounters people who have broken their ties with the land, workers of peasant origin, who never really learned the culture of their fathers, having gone to work in factories early in life.

Sometimes the builder of a hut is an immigrant from another region and he may go on using the design which is more familiar to him. Foreign elements may have an influence on local customs only in cases where the number of immigrants is large in proportion to the number of natives. Otherwise, in a

generation or two, any outside element is eliminated completely and the immigrant's children will become well integrated into the host culture.

The economy plays a great role in the geographical distribution of types. When in a valley we find scattered farmhouses and small holdings, and in the mountains we have a compact village pattern with scattered fields and common pasture, almost certainly we will find that buildings present different designs. On the mountain we may find buildings more suitable for the storage of husk, straw, and agricultural implements, these being more conspicuous in the plains. However, when people from the mountains move to the plain they will still build the mountain hut, and vice-versa, even if their economic system changes.

Outside the agricultural economy we may find other types of buildings such as temporary shelters of charcoal burners, woodcutters, quarrymen, fishermen, hunters, etc. (Biasutti 1977).

Finally, there is that group of lesser constructions seen around small holdings, farms, and country cottages such as poultrys, kennels, pigsties etc. (Scheuermeier 1943—1956; E. Jaberg and Jud 1928—1940). Since in the area of the small holdings (the area of the "mezzadria" system of tenure) the majority of farm outbuildings were improved and the old wooden buildings replaced by stone or brick-and-mortar barns and porches, the former traditional buildings have almost vanished. This makes the solution of imminent distribution problems very difficult. Such a change took place in Tuscany, starting in the second half of the 18th century; there are, however, few pictorial records from that period (Biasutti 1977).

Any attempt to postulate "original" distributions is very risky and difficult, since it requires an accurate study of all movements of population. Any demographic change which may have taken place in the region must be traced as far back as possible. In short, we must trace the ethnohistory of the region.

In those historical periods in which a decrease in the rural population of the "contado" or of unhealthy areas (e. g. in the case of Maremma and the Val di Chiana) was later followed by reclamation and re-population with peasants from the mountains of the hinterland (as is the case with some areas around Florence), mixtures and superimpositions which entangle the threads of regional ethnohistory are to be discerned (Caselli 1978).

THE CYLINDRO-CONIC HUT

R. Biasutti noted in his work that the ethnological importance of the cylindro-conic hut was not to be overlooked given the significant design and distribution of this type both geographically and historically. He referred to a building which is still common in eastern Tuscany (Biasutti 1977).

The circular plan hut is the oldest of human dwellings, according to archaeology. In the Oldvay Gorge of East Africa, L. Leakey uncovered a circle

of stones which, he believes, was the base of a simple shelter built by "homo habilis" around 2,000,000 years ago (Leakey 1963). At Nice in the residential area of "Terra Amata", H. De Lumley of Marseille University excavated the elliptic floor of a hut built by elephant hunters around 300,000 years ago (De Lumley 1969).

However, already towards the end of the Palaeolithic we find square plan buildings. In Europe, these were probably tents covered with skins, supported by a pyramidal structure consisting of four poles (Jelinek 1976). The circular or elliptic structure is the most natural, the most obvious and as a consequence it is the oldest and the most widespread, not only in antiquity, but also among many tribal cultures of the present day (Coon 1976).

The cylindro-conic hut found in Tuscany and neighbouring regions is a rather complex structure and cannot be dismissed as another of the many manifestations of peasant ingenuity. It differs greatly from the square plan huts of the surrounding areas and of the greater part of Italy. The affinities between this type of hut and many ancient buildings all over Europe and of present day Africa have long drawn the attention of ethnographers and archaeologists. For the former, such distributions may indicate the survival of particular cultures and postulate the existence, past or present, of particular social structures. For the latter, this type of building gives an idea of the superstructure of some circular hut floors from archaeological excavations (Bradford 1954).

The hut in question presents a perfectly circular plan; its dimensions vary from 3 metres to 8 metres in diameter. The wall forms a low cylinder of about the height of a man and the roof is covered with a solid cone of straw arranged around a central post, in the same fashion as the top of the local haystack. The structure is made of poles that are easily available in the area, and supported by the central pole which is the thickest and tallest. The walls are often covered with heather brooms or straw. In some cases they are made of reeds placed vertically all around the cylinder, leaving a gap which serves as a doorway. The central post and the conic roof, which is supported by poles arranged in radial fashion, are characteristic features of this type of building.

This hut is still very common in eastern Mugello (communes of Vicchio, Dicomano, Sangodenzo, Rufina, Londa and Pelago); in the Romagna it is extant only south of the rivers Bidente (commune of Santa Sofia), to the south in the Montefeltro, in the upper Tiber valley, in the Casentino, but excluding the mountain areas above 5—600 metres altitude (here huts are of the quadrangular type), in the Valdarno Superiore or upper Arno valley only on the right bank of the river; in the Val di Chiana and throughout Southern Tuscany, south of the River Ombrone, but excluding the lower hills and plains of the Maremma.

The cylindro-conic hut is built by smallholding peasants of the area just described, whereas the shepherds and peasants of the higher villages of the Etruscan Apennines, the Pratomagno and the Tosco-Umbrian Apennines build a square or rectangular plan hut which will be described below.

In its simplest form the cylindro-conic hut is at present used to store the husk and other refuse which results from the threshing of cereals and legumes. From such use derives the name of "polaiolo", from "pula" (husk) in Casentino, or "lollaio" from "lolla" (husk) in the Monte Amiata area. On the Monte Labbro of the Mount Amiata group, we have also found the name "loggia" for the same hut. In this version the walls of the buildings are the simplest, sometimes only made of wire netting, which is sufficient to hold straw or husk under the conical roof.

In Casentino, particularly on the alluvial plain we find, instead, much larger huts, called simply "capanne" (huts) whose walls are made of vertically arranged timbers and planks. This type is used to store crops, agricultural implements, vehicles, and machines; they are also used as shelter for various kinds of farmyard animals, such as rabbits, pigeons, and hens. We also find inside these buildings some low partitions arranged radially from the central pole to the walls. This hut shows, in all probability, the character of the dwellings which sheltered families of peasants before the lowland was completely reclaimed. Since this building is the only one peasants can build with their own hands, it may have been this "capanne", inhabited by peasants in the 18th and 19th century, that is reported by documents of that period, which tell of families who "... vivono nella piccola capanna di legno ..." (Archivio di Stato di Firenze 1756).

We find similar huts used as garages for vehicles and farm equipment in Romagna, the Valdarino, the Val di Chiana and the hills of Montalcino, south of Siena. These "capanne" have walls made of vertically arranged reeds and also shrubs of heather and broom. The type is uniform throughout the area. We have been unable, so far, to map the distribution of the cylindro-conic hut in Umbria and in the Marches, but knowing its distribution in Tuscany and in the Romagna we note, that the pattern fits the ancient Umbrian culture area. This type of building is unique to this area in Italy. Circular plan huts exist in many regions and are made of a variety of materials. In Italy, as elsewhere in Europe, some are built entirely of dry stones. These are found in Apulia (in the Tavoliere and the Gargano), in the Abruzzi (on the Majella mountains), in the area around Trieste, in Liguria (between Cervo and Savona), and in Sicily (on the slopes of the Etna); in Sardinia they are found in the north of the island.

Outside Italy, according to some archaeologists, the distribution of such buildings seems to fit the area of the Megalithic Culture (Walton 1969). In Spain, circular plan buildings made of stone are found in eastern Galicia and northern Leon; here farmhouses still have an elliptical plan, perhaps a survival of Celtic patterns (Daniel 1978; Houston 1967). In England, Wales and Scotland, as in Ireland, circular plan buildings are common and well documented from archaeological findings. The early inhabitants of the British Isles had, with few exceptions, a circular plan house. The Roman and the Germanic invasions later introduced rectangular plans throughout Britain. The majority of prehistoric buildings of Mediterranean and Western Europe had an elliptical or circular plan. The foundations and the lower part of the walls were made of dry stones

and in some cases the roof was corbelled. This pattern can be seen in Etruscan tombs of the "tholos" type. We must not regard this type of construction as a characteristic of one homogeneous culture; we can, however, certainly regard its distribution as a link which unites Mediterranean and Western Europe with Africa.

Beginning with the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods we find rectangular and square plans throughout Central and Eastern Europe, a feature common throughout Asia.

This is, of course, the case for all settled cultures, nomads always having tents or temporary huts with circular plans. The square or rectangular plan spread in Italy together with eastern cultural trends.

THE QUADRANGULAR PLAN HUT

In contrast with the cylindro-conic hut, we find in Northern and Central Tuscany the square plan hut, as in Romagna, in Emilia, and most of Italy. The materials used in its construction vary from area to area and within the same area; the use of this building is, however, the same everywhere. This structure is common along the Etruscan and Tosco-Aemilian Apennines. South of the Arno these huts are rare, but are the only ones found between this river and the river Ombrone.

These buildings are on the other hand numerous, although in the majority of cases now unused and dilapidated, in the Garfagnana and in the province of Arezzo in those regions that lie above 5—600 metres. In Central Tuscany, between the rivers Arno and Ombrone, smallholders used to build rectangular plan huts employing the same materials and for the same purposes as the round huts built elsewhere. The Central Tuscan version is also common in the west of the Mugello. It has a flat roof frame, but the straw thatch which covers it, is arranged in a way as to form a two or a four slope roof. In the mountain areas, among the shepherds and the peasants of the villages (in the Garfagnana and in the Casentino), the building is more sophisticated. We find it in two versions which differ only in the materials used for covering the walls. There is one type with a framework of chestnut wood poles and a gabled roof made of lighter hazelnut poles. The roof is thatched with straw or rushes arranged in horizontal bands. The walls are covered with heather, broom or branches of beech with leaves all held in place by long thin poles which run along the wall outside and inside the building.

The hut often has two rooms, one of which is the loft underneath the two slopes of the roof. When the building is situated on a mountain slope one can enter the loft "palco", directly from the back of the building since this is at ground level. Otherwise one finds a step ladder inside the building.

The other version has a similar frame but the walls are entirely covered with planks, the roof either covered with slate or thatched. Large wooden pegs hold

the large timbers of the construction together. These huts are mainly used as barns and as stables for the herds which graze the highland pastures; they also serve to store implements and crops. These huts are found within the villages or outside, sometimes quite far away from the houses; the sites of the buildings are always traditional and the same site is used for generations.

Houses are usually small and humble in the mountain villages and are seldom provided with the necessary rooms and outbuildings as is the case among lowland smallholders. This fact has, indeed, contributed to the development and widespread use of more sophisticated huts in areas which are economically more backward.

The existence of huts of similar design in areas as far apart as the Garfagnana and the Casentino, the latter in the territory of the cylindro-conic hut, leads inevitably to some hypotheses of a similar kind as those which I made concerning vehicles and ploughs. Chief among them is that the population of the higher parts of Northeastern Tuscany shares many cultural traits with that of the valleys of the Etruscan Apennines to the north-west of the region, whilst it differs from the population of the surrounding hills and plains.

If we accept that there is a congruency of the distribution pattern of the cylindro-conic hut with the ancient Umbrian culture area, we must also note that the distribution of the quadrangular hut of the Northern Apennines corresponds to the Ligurian culture area.

Unfortunately, neither of these types of huts appears in ancient pictures with sufficient clarity to allow a secure identification. In archaeology, too, we do not find any similar construction in the region, but this must be attributed to a lack of settlement excavations. Settlement and rural archaeology are practically non-existent in Central Italy. It would be of great interest to dig up the Neolithic and Proto-historic sites which were identified not long ago by the late A. Tracchi in the upper Arno valley (Tracchi 1978).

It is not my intention to extend the present survey to all types of constructions encountered in Tuscany during a decade of field research. It is, however, important for the purpose of a more complete explanation to add some further observations, particularly concerning a very interesting version of the pastoral hut of the Tosco-Latial Maremma, already known through S. Erixon's work.

THE MAREMMA HUT

In the village of Vetulonia, the site of an ancient Etruscan city, we studied and photographed some local huts called "capanni" which seem very relevant for the archaeology of the Etruscan house.

The Vetulonia huts belong to the Maremma type, with an elliptical plan and without central roof supporting poles. One specimen among three which were investigated, seemingly the most typical, is made of dry stone walls, about one metre high, upon which rests the frame of the roof. This is made of slender poles

and reproduces the elliptical shape of the wall. The roof is thatched with a local type of thin reed arranged in rows across the sloping roof.

Inside the hut, the floor is paved with slabs of stone sunk in the earth, as we often see in Etruscan tombs. The construction is 4 to 5 metres long. These "capanni" bear a close resemblance to the early cinerary urns of the Tosco-Latial Iron Age and probably represent a survival of the house of that time in this area. If we look at the reconstruction of the hut called "la casa di Romolo" made by A. Davico according to the evidence of the excavations on the Palatine hill in Rome, we see this likeness very clearly (Davico 1950).

About this reconstruction we may say that if the archaeologist had taken notice of the huts still being built in the area he may have found it less difficult to reconstruct this building and the result may have been more convincing. The two post holes inside the building may have received a different interpretation.

Very likely, the Vetulonian huts represent the survival of the Etruscan house of ancient Vetulonia. Nowadays these huts serve as storerooms, but some years ago they were used as stables for donkeys; some of them were built in the fields and vineyards away from the village, peasants and labourers used to spend the night here during the pruning and harvesting seasons.

The larger huts once used by the transhumance shepherds of the Maremma which George Dennis suggestively described (Dennis 1978) and which S. Erixon published had an elliptical or circular plan, but never had central poles as a support for the roof. These constructions represent a form of seasonal dwelling which has analogies with that of other areas, sometimes far away from the Maremma (such as in the Camargue). A study of these dwellings would involve several disciplines.

Amongst the aspects yet to be clarified are the reasons why the huts built in the Maremma differed from those built at home. Nobody has yet answered this question, the solution of which may prove that transhumance was never interrupted since it started in prehistoric times (Barker 1977). Excavations at Luni and San Giovenale, in the Latial Maremma, have revealed huts with elliptical plans similar to modern ones (Coppa 1968).

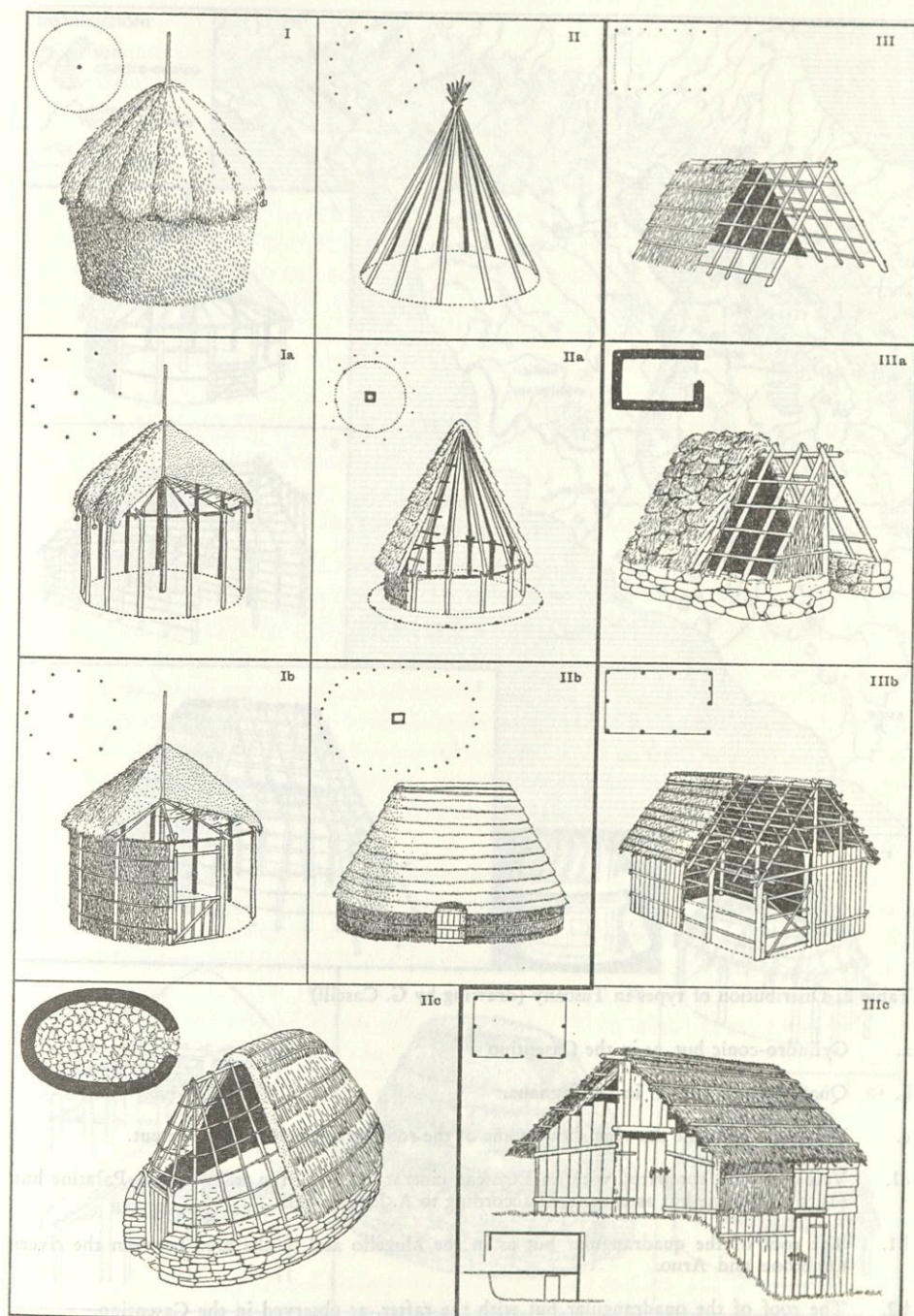
This type of hut is also not represented in ancient art or visual records; the only representation which comes to mind and which may represent such a construction is from the 15th century: "The punishment of work" by Lorenzo Ghiberti in "The doors of paradise", in the baptistery of Florence. The hut there represented is of the circular base type and seems a close reproduction of the modern. Other types of buildings will be dealt with in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The cylindro-conic hut of the Umbrian culture area, however peculiar to this area, is a type of building of considerable age. We may draw the conclusion that this type ceased to be a dwelling early in history for the greater part of the

Table 1: A typology of the buildings (drawing by G. Caselli)

- 1) Cylindro-conic hut
 - I. haystack
 - I a. hut without walls
 - I b. hut with walls of heather
- 2) Maremma hut
 - II. Conic structure from which may have evolved the Maremma hut. This is also the first stage in the construction of this type of hut.
 - II a. Maremma hut with circular plan completed. The plan shows the position of the hearth and the relationship between the diameter of the initial conic structure and the completed building.
 - II b. Maremma hut with elliptical plan, of the type observed by S. Erixon at Anzio.
 - II c. Vetulonia hut. The last remaining specimen as observed in 1978.
- 3) Quadrangular hut
 - III Simple two slope shelter from which may have evolved the quadrangular hut. This version still exists in Tuscany.
 - III a. Charcoal burner hut, with a low dry stone wall and covered with turf. As observed in the Mugello.
 - III b. Hut from the Casentino.
 - III c. Hut from the Casentino, with a room in the loft.



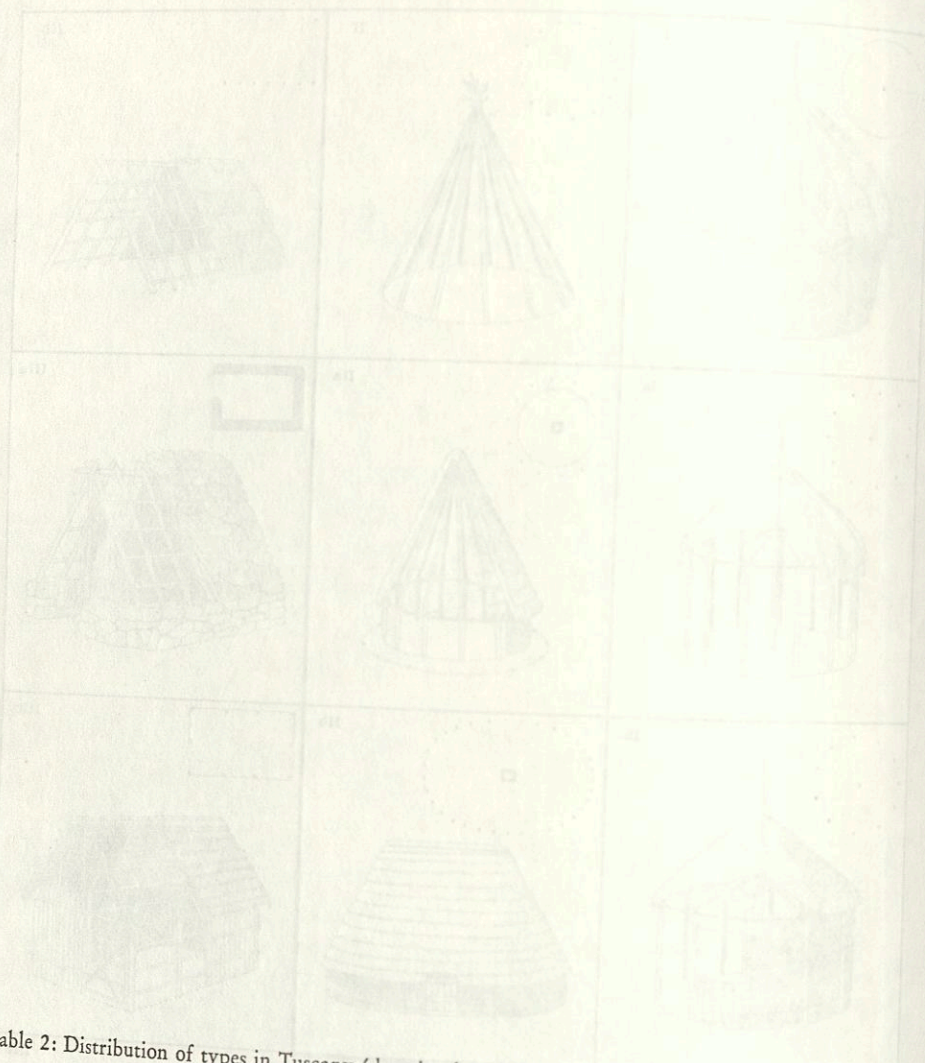
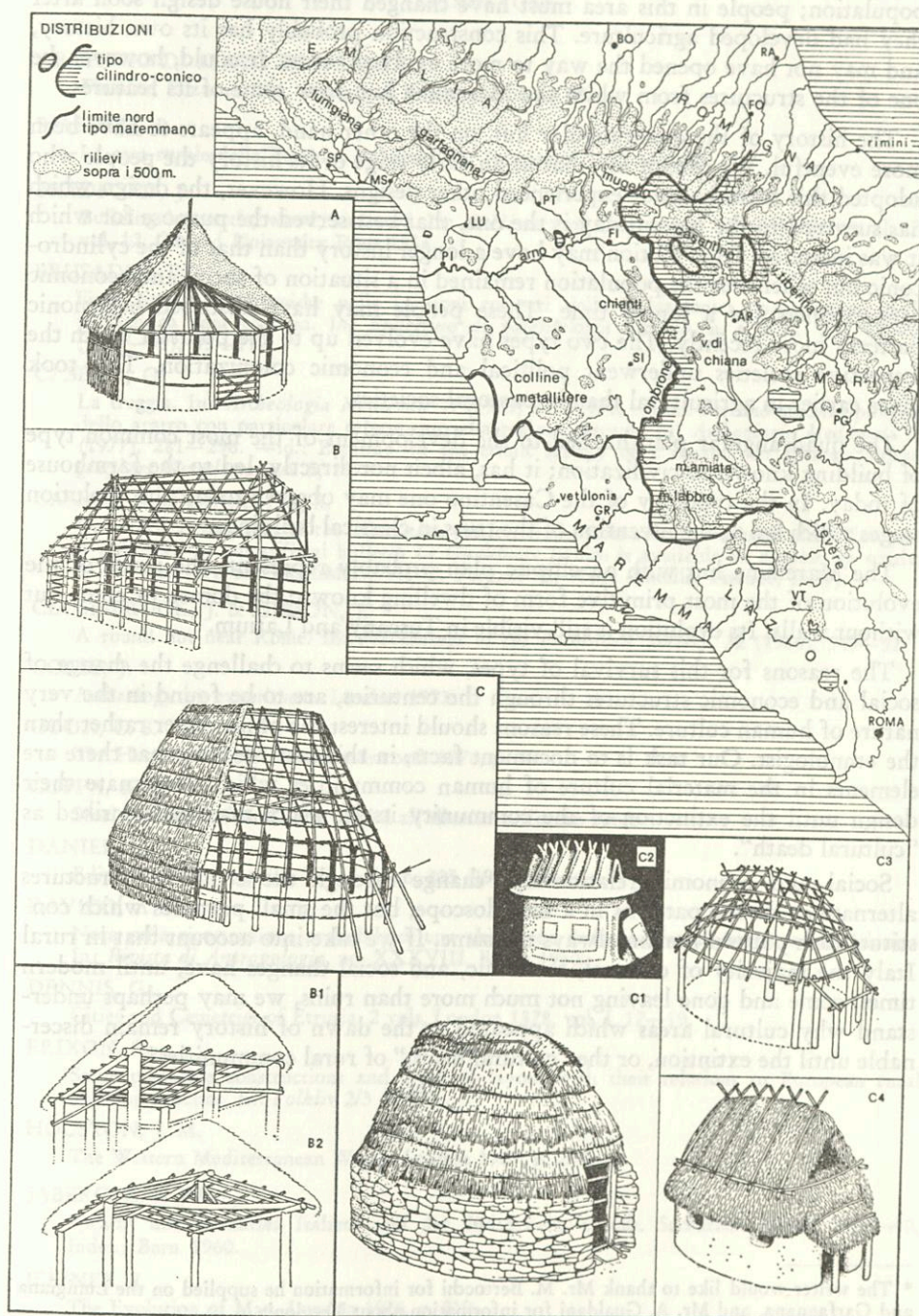


Table 2: Distribution of types in Tuscany (drawing by G. Caselli)

- a. Cylindro-conic hut, as in the Casentino
- b. Quadrangular hut, as in Garfagnana.
- c. Maremma hut. The drawing shows some of the roof rafters before they are cut.
- c1. Vetulonia hut, compared with an Etruscan cinerary urn (2), the frame of the Palatine hut (3), the Palatine hut as completed according to A. Davico (4).
- b1. The roof of the quadrangular hut as in the Mugello and in the area between the rivers Ombrone and Arno.
- b2. The roof of the quadrangular hut with the rafter, as observed in the Casentino.



population; people in this area must have changed their house design soon after they had developed agriculture. This construction probably has its own history, and may not have opened the way to more evolved forms. It could, however, be one of the structures from which the Maremma hut drew some of its features.

The history of the quadrangular hut, on the other hand, appears to have been more eventful. We cannot say that at an early stage of its history the people who adopted this form had not experienced other designs. However, the design which has survived to the present day is the one, that best served the purpose for which it was intended. Its evolution may have a longer history than that of the cylindro-conic hut whenever the population remained in a situation of social and economic backwardness for a longer time. These people may have absorbed hegemonic patterns more recently. The two types have evolved up to the point in which the respective societies underwent political and economic colonization. This took place earlier in agricultural than in pastoral societies.

The quadrangular plan has led to the development of the most common type of building known to civilization; it has, albeit not directly, led to the farmhouse of today. In the typology of the Casentino one may observe today the evolution stages which led to the invention of the truss in classical buildings.

The Maremma hut with an elliptic plan probably represents the result of the evolution of the most primitive form of dwelling known: the domed or conic hut without walls. Its evolution is still visible in Tuscany and Latium.

The reasons for this survival of types, which seems to challenge the change of social and economic structures through the centuries, are to be found in the very nature of human culture. These reasons should interest the philosopher rather than the ethnologist. Our task is to document facts, in this case the fact that there are elements in the material culture of human communities which perpetuate their design until the extinction of the community itself, which may be described as "cultural death".

Social and economic relationships change through the centuries, structures alternate as do the patterns in a kaleidoscope, but the small particles which constitute each pattern remain always the same. If we take into account that in rural Italy the majority of cultural, economic, and social changes have, until modern times, come and gone leaving not much more than ruins, we may perhaps understand why cultural areas which appeared at the dawn of history remain discernable until the extinction, or the "cultural death" of rural communities*.

* The writer would like to thank Mr. M. Bertocchi for information he supplied on the Lunigiana and Garfagnana, and Mr. A. Gualdani for information about Vetulonia.

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