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**Espais de presentació del patrimoni arqueològic:
la reconstrucció *in situ* a debat**

**Interpretation spaces for archaeological heritage:
discussions about *in situ* reconstructions**

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Espais de presentació del patrimoni arqueològic: la reconstrucció *in situ* a debat / Interpretation spaces for archaeological heritage: discussions about *in situ* reconstructions

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Índex

Presentació: El debat sobre la reconstrucció <i>in situ</i>	7
Presentation: the debate of the <i>in situ</i> reconstructions	9
El debat sobre les reconstruccions arqueològiques <i>in situ</i>. El marc teòric. Joan Santacana Mestre, Maria Carme Belarte	11
Archaeological reconstruction and Architecture today: The confrontation between Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc from a twenty-first century perspective. Josep Muntañola Thörnberg, Magda Saura Carulla	25
Reconstructions as communication and provocation tools in public interpretation: challenges and benefits. John H. Jameson	29
Reconstruction of a Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari. Donco Naumovski, Elena Stojanova Kanzurova	37
On the conservation of archaeological monuments in the Archaeological Park Carnuntum and their modern presentation <i>in situ</i>. Franz Humer	43
The LVR-Archaeological Park Xanten/ LVR - RömerMuseum. <i>In situ</i> reconstructions as a means of depicting an ancient cityscape. Martin Müller	55
Guédelon : chantier d'archéologie expérimentale. Anne Baud, Maryline Martin	65
Rebuilding the past: challenges in education and public interpretation at Castell Henllys Iron Age fort. Harold Mytum	73
Experimental Archaeology and the International Perspective: The future of EXARC. Roeland Paardekooper	83
OpenArch: Archaeological Open-air Museums in Europe. State of the Art and Future. Clara Masriera i Esquerra	89
Nuevas líneas y tendencias de investigación en el campo de la Experimentación arqueológica. Javier Baena Preysler, Antoni Palomo, Felipe Cuartero	97
L'arqueologia experimental i els límits del coneixement. Francesc Xavier Hernández Cardona, Clara Masriera Esquerra	105

Reconstruction of a Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari

Donco Naumovski*
Elena Stojanova Kanzurova*

The Neolithic Era

The Neolithic culture on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, as a part of the Balkan-Anatolian complex of the lower Neolithic, represents one of the most prominent cultural and socio-economic phenomenon coming from the early Stone Age in the Balkans. Hence research on this period of the human evolution is key to the understanding of human civilisation (Zdravkovski, Stojanova Kanzurova 2008, 55-70).

Neolithic art of the Anazbegovo-Vrshnik and the Velusha-Porodin cultural group of the Early Neolithic period, (6300-5800 BC), and especially of the Middle (5800-5300 BC) and the Late Neolithic (5300-4200BC) is the most highly developed universal culture manifestation on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. Its specific cultural profile, as seen in its sculpture (fig. 1b), painted ceramics (fig. 2a, b, d), altar (fig. 1a, c, d), and the cult of the (so called) Great Mother (fig. 1e), is still a scientific challenge and an enigma.

The Site

The archaeological site Tumba Madzari is located in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. This site had its first public appearance in 1961/62 when archaeological field surveying was made before building part of the E-75 highway from Skopje to Veles. The research of the site showed that the settlement had its economic and cultural development in the VI millennium BC, within the Neolithic Period, so the Tumba Madzari settlement can be claimed as a protogenic nucleus of the modern day Skopje.

Out of the 200 Neolithic sites registered on the Archaeological map of the Republic of Macedonia territory, this particular site, besides being the only one found within an urban area, and hence accessible to anyone interested, is one of the very few that have been continuously explored since 1981.

The archaeological research from the 1980s onwards has defined the stratigraphy of the site in three cultural horizons. In total eight houses from the horizon III and one from

horizon II have been researched in full and several others partially. In these houses numerous artefacts and inventory was discovered increasing the Neolithic collection of the Museum of Macedonia. All ceramic artefacts found here, especially the representations of the cult altars like the one of the so called Great Mother-Goddess, point to the high artistic level and the aesthetic achievements of the ceramic sculpture-makers from Tumba Madzari. Artistic works with such conception and expressiveness are characteristic only of the Macedonian Neolithic Era.

The open-air museum

In 2007 with the initial help from the local government and later from the Ministry of Culture, began the realization of the idea of the reconstruction of the Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari. The initiators of this idea were the archaeologists from the Museum of Macedonia.

The site is divided into two parts, one of which is being systematically excavated and research is being carried on. In the other, where archaeological excavations have confirmed that there are no cultural layers, the Neolithic settlement is built (fig. 3a, b).

The reconstruction of the Neolithic houses in Tumba Madzari is based on relevant resources: the site's archaeological remnants, the look of the ceramic models-altars-houses from the Neolithic of the Anazbegovo-Vrshnik and Velushina-Porodin cultural groups, as well as on samples from traditional objects found in Macedonian village houses dating from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

From 2008 to 2010, with very modest financial funds made available, we have built 4 houses and visitors' facilities.

House 1

The first house was built according to the archaeological house 1 (fig. 4a), discovered in the archaeological excavation in 1981 and for whose partial reconstruction there is sufficient documentation (Sanev 1988, 9-31).

It is built using a traditional technique typical of all Neolithic agricultural civilizations on the Balkans. The walls of the house as well as of the other houses are 2 meters high

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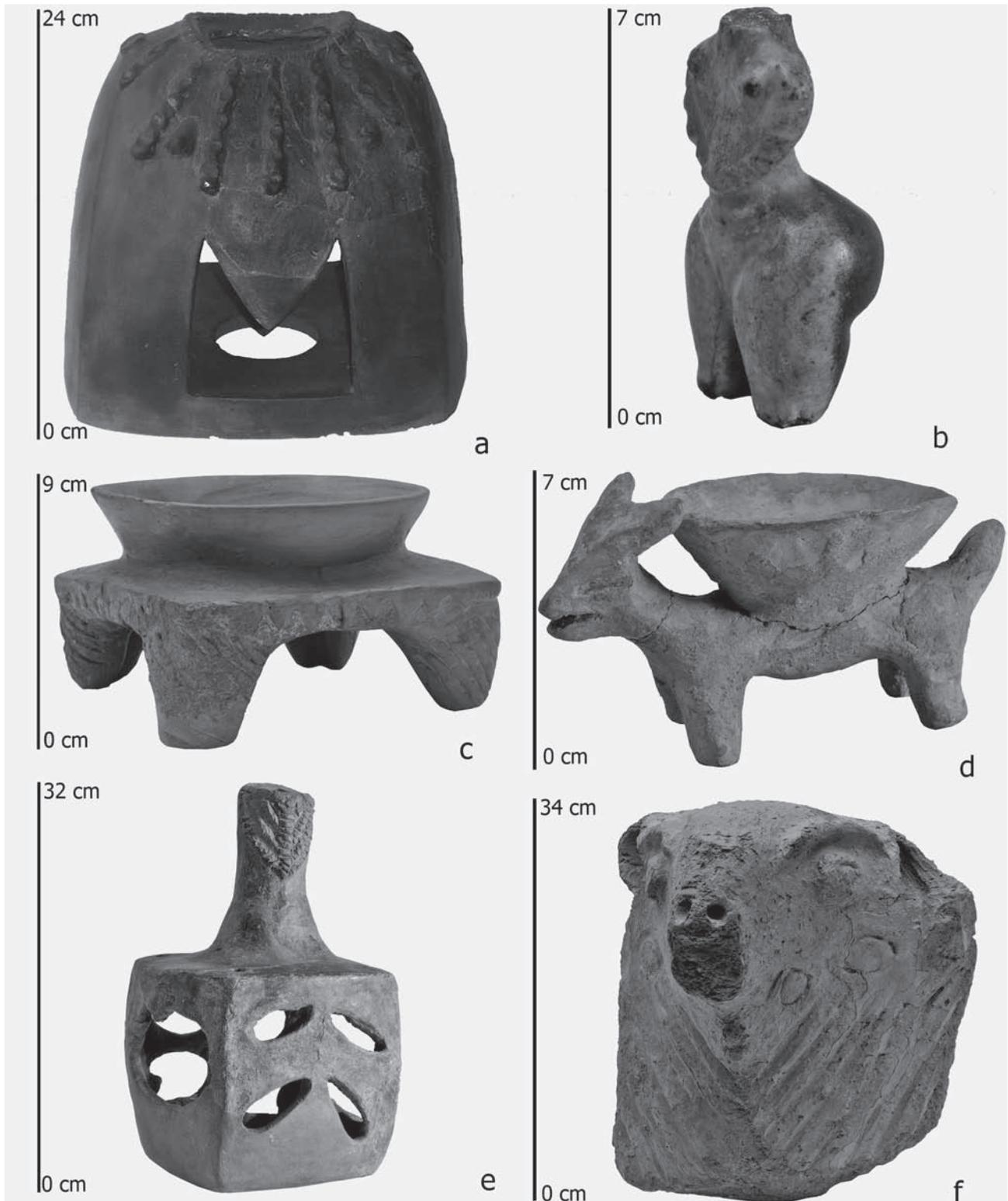


Figure 1. Various ceramic artefacts at the archaeological site Tumba Madzari, Skopje (b,c,d,e,f) and Velushina, Bitola (a).

with wooden pillars about 50 centimetres into the ground and with branches interwoven between them. They are covered with a thick layer of plaster made of clay; mud, straw and randomly animal excrements were added to it (wattle-and-daub). The pillars' thickness varies from 10 to

15 cm, so does their density. A part of the eastern wall has not been covered with clay. This way the visitors can see the building technique, the construction and the materials used in the process of the wall's creation.

The house has a two slopes roof built of pillars at every



Figure 2. Various ceramic vessels at Tumba Madzari. Amphorae (a,b), askos-water pot (c), cup (d).

2 meters and hay between them. Its height is 3 meters.

The door on the south side is rectangular. The two rectangular windows on the east-side wall have deliberately been made larger to enable enough light for the visitors to make photographs. The door and the windows are made of

branches. The floor is made of thick and sleek mud.

The western interior of the house is divided by a small 3 meter wall. The dividing wall is one meter high and made of branches and clay. In front of it there is a reconstructed bread baking oven made of stone, clay and mud. Original



Figure 3. Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari.

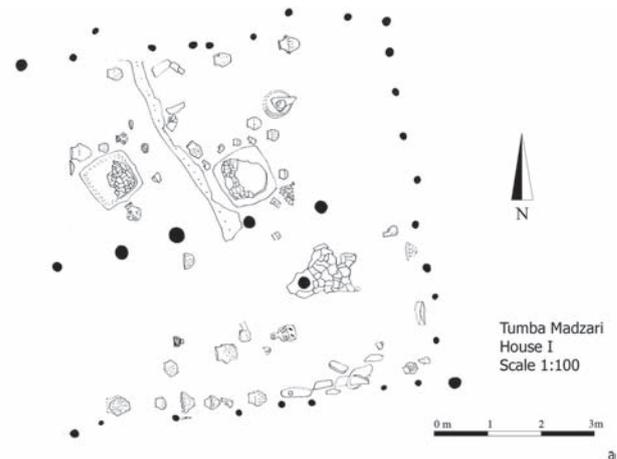


Figure 4. Basis of the house 1 excavated in 1981 and the interior of the house 1 at Neolithic village, Tumba Madzari.

oven parts found in the excavations have been built into this oven's angles and platform. The semi-circumferential top of the oven is made of wooden grid covered by a layer of mud, clay and straw on both sides. Following the results of the archaeological research, replicas of ceramic pots and a replica of the Great Mother (fig 6b) found in the very house, are placed around the oven. Following the archaeological data, an additional oven and a mill are built in the house.

A total of 45 complete pots and a lot of ceramic fragments were found in the original house. There is no other house with so many artefacts found. All artefacts are exhibited in the Museum of Macedonia. They include amphorae, cups, jugs, *pithoi*, *frutaria*, *pyxides* and other pots. A distinctive feature of the Macedonia Neolithic is illustrated by the perfectly simple form of the *askos* - water pot. Due to financial reasons only a part of the found artefacts' replicas are exhibited.

The interior of the house also accommodates representations of three everyday activities. The first one is a kneeling female figure holding a stone grinder with which she is grinding wheat grain, and at her side there is a standing figure of a young girl. The third figure is of a man who is carrying firewood, with a stone axe on his belt (fig. 4b). On his back he carries a replica of a ceramic pot for holding liquid, in the literature known as *askos* (fig. 2c). The form of these pots is another specific feature of the Neolithic art in Macedonia.

House 2

House 2 is of smaller proportions but it was built using the same building technique and material as House 1. The M-shaped entrance door for House 2 as well as the general appearance of the house is based on the ceramic altars typical of the Macedonian Neolithic (fig. 1a). Thus, an artistic interpretation is built into this type of altars, which are a symbol of the Neolithic household and are also a partial source for the look of the settlements of the time.

Inside the house we built an oven and a facility room serving as a food preparatory area. The house also accommodates replicas of the everyday inventory of Neolithic people. Two human models representing the everyday Neolithic life are added – a woman weaving on a vertical loom and a man, a carpenter (fig. 5a).

House 3

House 3 differs from all other houses in that it represents an attempt to build a house with an attic. In the archaeological excavation on Tumba Madzari and elsewhere, on other Neolithic sites, remnants of wooden planks (pillars) have been found, and are interpreted as a part of the floor of the attic. This was enough reason to attempt to reconstruct a model of such a house.

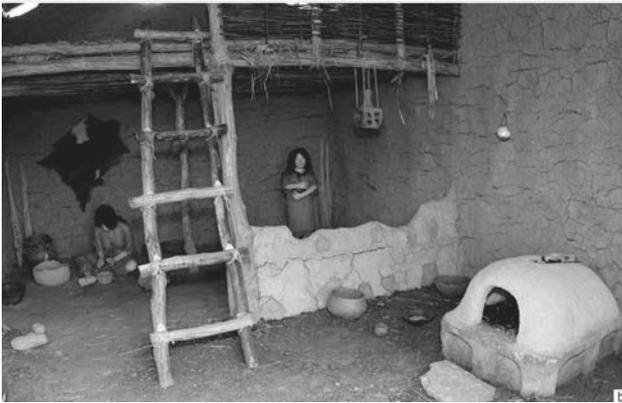


Figure 5. The interior of the house 2 and 3, Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari.

In it, a small platform made of wooden planks (pillars) covered with a plaster was set as a sleeping place ethnographically known as 'cheren'. On the same level as this platform, there is a small dividing wall of 1 meter high which separates the southern from the northern part of the house. An oven has been placed in front of the dividing wall. On the floor near the oven there are replicas of ceramic pots of various sizes and shapes. There are two female models engaged in everyday activities (pottery making) (fig. 5b). Plan is to make additional models, which will be placed in the attic of house 3.

Following the original ceramic models of altars with representations of houses, a small opening for the light to come through has been made on the southern and the northern wall. A replica of a ceramic ram's head with a protective symbol has been placed above the door on the door on the northern facade (fig. 1f). A small wall-width stock yard has been built by the southern facade, in it there are models of a cow and a milking woman, which represents the farming as one of the principal economics branch of the Neolithic Era.

House 4

House 4 is the last one to be built in this stage of the Neolithic village reconstruction according to the current



Figure 6. The interior of the house 4 and the cult altar, the Great Mother, Neolithic village at Tumba Madzari.

plan. In the interior of the house, a part of the non-movable inventory found in 2007/2008 is exhibited. It is believed that the inventory presents mini grain storage silos. A fireplace with a wooden basin is placed by it. A model of a man manufacturing stone tools complements the house ambient (fig. 6a).

In the course of the three years existence of this mini archaeological open-air museum, a reconstruction of the house 1 and 2 built in 2008 was made by completely layering the walls with plaster (clay, mud, straw). In the same time, the roofs have also been renewed with a new layer of straw, part of which grown on site and the other part purchased from the villages nearby. This step was necessary due to the damage caused by the weather in the winter period. In this way, the objects gained a more authentic look and a more distinctive expressiveness.

Additional objects

The other additional objects as the stockyard with models of domestic animals and the beehive are addition of the everyday ambient surrounding of our ancestors. For the purposes of making the animals reconstruction more successful and reliable we have contracted an archaeozoologist. The animals' models were made in a collaborative effort of the sculptors and the archaeologists, by the use of

very modest constructing material available. The visitor's reactions are positive, but some of them have suggested keeping real live animals instead of the models.

The fifth object, only partially built, functions as a class room but it may also be used for public events. For tourist development a gift shop is been constructed.

In the open space, we have also set wooden tables and benches that are being used both for resting and running clay modelling workshops for children. Greenery in the Neolithic village is being taken care according to the current capacities.

Functioning of the Neolithic village

The Neolithic village project, which is actually an archaeological open-air museum, has existed for a relatively short period of time and for now there are no conditions for total implementation of the integral ideas of the functioning of such types of institutions.

In spite of the unresolved organisational and technical difficulties in the past two years we have tried to carry out as much a large-scale contact with the public as possible in several ways. We have created a website and mini-catalogues in Macedonian, English and Albanian with promotional and educational goals. We run creative workshops with preschoolers and primary school pupils who, by experience of practical manufacturing of authentic pots, altars and clay figurines, promote knowledge about the Neolithic culture in Macedonia and of Tumba Madzari in particular. Lessons on the life of the Neolithic people are held for secondary school pupils and academic lectures are given by the professors from the Art history and Archaeology department from the St. Cyril and Methodius University. The Neolithic village actively participates in the affirmation of the Macedonian cultural heritage. Participating in domestic promotional fair of the municipality in Macedonia is one of the forms of the

public presentation of the Neolithic village.

In regard to one of the main objectives of this kind of archaeological open-air museums that stem out of experimental archaeology, several mini projects have been realized. Ceramic pots were created in the manner typical of Neolithic pottery. On the site itself, we have planted weeds that were farmed in the Neolithic period, as later on to experiment with their milling and baking some loafs. For the very reason we have planned a reconstruction of an oven that will display the whole procedure with its final result to the visitors.

In the near future, by following practice in other countries, we plan to run summer schools on archaeological research and experimental archaeology. The immediate vicinity of the city centre, the existence of an Archaeology department, the long research tradition, and the rich cultural horizons of the site, are optimal for this kind of education for the students from the country, but also from the rest of the world, which may offer an indispensable practical and theoretic experience.

The entrance to the Neolithic village is so far free of charge because of its unfinished state and because of lack of full time employees. In terms of percentage, the majority of the visitors are preschool and school children in comparison to the lower number of adult visitors.

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