



Fig. 4. — Arrangement of poles in a large round hut. A. Side view. B. Front view. C. Front of a large round hut.

Construction Ritual: Before the construction of a Vārli hut begins a small ritual and a blood sacrifice are performed. The lower end of a building post is buried in a 2' pit. Around this are tied wreaths of *āsopālo* (*Saraca indica-Linn.*) and *āmbā* (*Mangifera indica-Linn.*) leaves. The upper end of the post is covered with *sindur* (red-lead) or *haldi* (turmeric), obviously substitutes for blood. A small clay pot is turned upside down on the upper end of the pole, probably as fertility symbol. Then rice is planted around the sacred pole. A goat or a fowl is sacrificed, the head is dedicated to the post, while the body-flesh is shared by all the tribal members. When the construction is completed, the sacred offerings are removed and thrown away into a river. The sacred post automatically becomes a part of the hut, usually the central post.

Before the house is occupied, a similar ceremony is performed. Both the rituals are performed by the tribal *bhagat* in the presence of a tribal carpenter. The occupation ceremony is followed by a simple feast of rice, *nāgli* (*Eleusine coracana-Gaertn.*) bread, rice beer and *mahudā* (*Madhuka indica-Gymel.*) spirits.

All the material for the Vārli dwellings is found locally in the forests, and a small house costs very little. This makes it possible for the poorest family to own at least a small round hut. The style and construction of the round hut is very primitive and has a close similarity to the African negro *cupola* or beehive huts.