

13 Behshahr

The district of Behshahr is bounded on the south by the mountains of Hezarjarib, on the east by Anazan, on the west by Miyanderud, and extends northwards to the coast of the Caspian.

The town of Behshahr, formerly called Ashraf, was founded by Shah Abbas Safavi in 1612, who, wanting a simple country residence, built a castle with a number of large farmhouses scattered around it. Some of the original farms were built along the avenue leading from Sari. Later on Shah Abbas added on several palaces and gardens. Unluckily, it suffered several civil wars and plunders by the Turkomen and was destroyed by the Afghan invaders and the Zand army who occupied Mazandaran. Agha Mohammed Khan Qajar was responsible for instigating the final rebuilding of Behshahr.

It is occupied by many different races, including some Georgians brought by Shah Abbas from the Caucasus. There are also Talesh, Turkish and Persian (like Tat) tribes.

The shahrestan has a population of 113,182 and its 2,858 sq. km. is divided into three bakhshes and five dehestans.*

On the edge of the foothills in the narrow coastal strip west of Behshahr there are several compactly clustered, large settlements of which RostamKola is an example. This village has 1,300 households containing 7-8000 inhabitants. They are engaged mostly in agriculture (wheat, cotton, rice and soya beans) but quite a number of households are shopkeepers, salesmen and craftsmen. About fifty households are said to have immigrated to Tehran, Shahrud and Sari. The person interviewed claimed that the village was over 500 years old. Rabino mentions that in 1878 Rostam Kola was a village situated on the north side of the main road from Sari to Behshahr.

* Ludwig W. Adamec (ed.), op.cit., p.97.



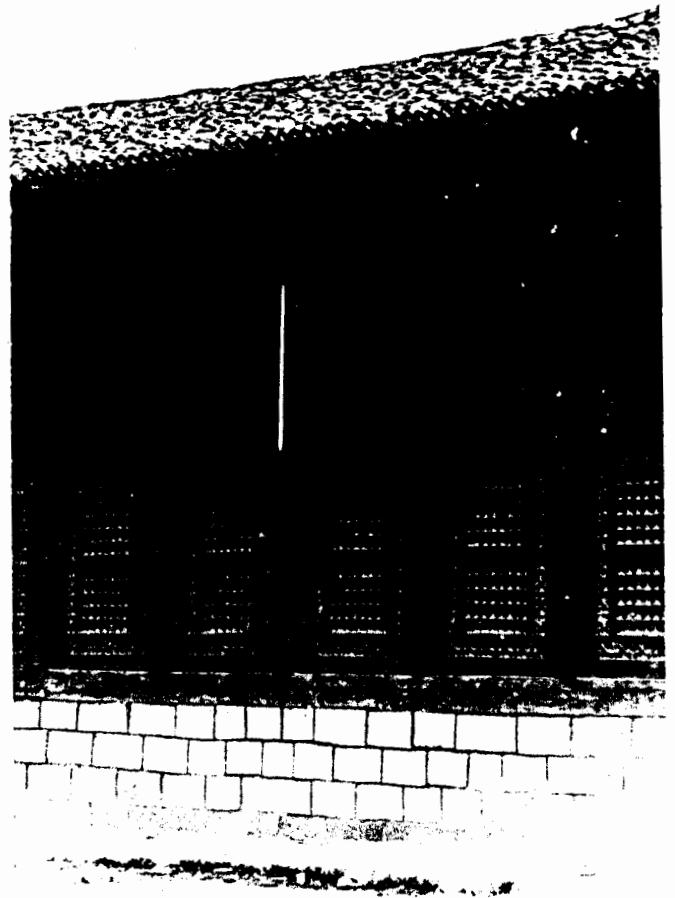
Built Environment:

Although Rostam Kola has the status of a village, its settlement pattern can be said to be a semi-urban one. Its houses in walled courtyards are compactly clustered around main vehicular streets paved with cobble stones, and narrow winding residential alleys (kouches) that lead off these streets. The courtyards are smaller than in most villages of the region, containing the main house as well as ancillary buildings, water wells, and a few fruit trees. The houses are predominantly two storey with long front aivans facing south. The walls are constructed with either chine or mud brick in the older houses while fired brick is used in the newer houses and the old public buildings. The standard of brickwork in the more important community buildings is very high and applied patterned decoration can be seen on many of them. Delicately carved wooden lattice windows and wall panels are commonly used both in private houses and in mosques, hosseinieh, schools, etc. The roofs are mostly hipped in form, with all four sides sloping at approximately 30° . About eighty percent of the roofs are covered by semi-circular tapered clay tiles (double lap tiles)*. Until quite recently (1976) there were four or five small kilns in the village that produced these roof tiles. These kilns now produce fired bricks as there is no market for tiles. This is due to the increasing use of sheet metal roofs, especially in the towns of Babol and Shahi where the second hand tiles from the roofs converted to sheet metal are resold to the villagers in Rostam Kola and Gorgi Mahalleh.

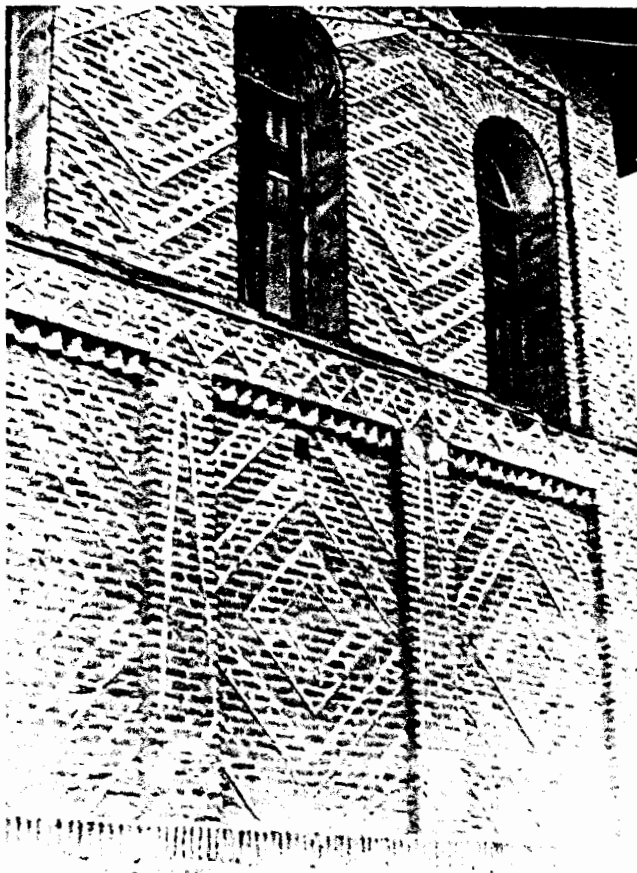
* See double lap tile in materials and technology section, also roofing tile industry section.



Timber framed buildings in Rostam Kola are in some cases enclosed by intricately carved timber lattice panels.



Double lap clay tiles which were produced in the village are the main roof covering material.



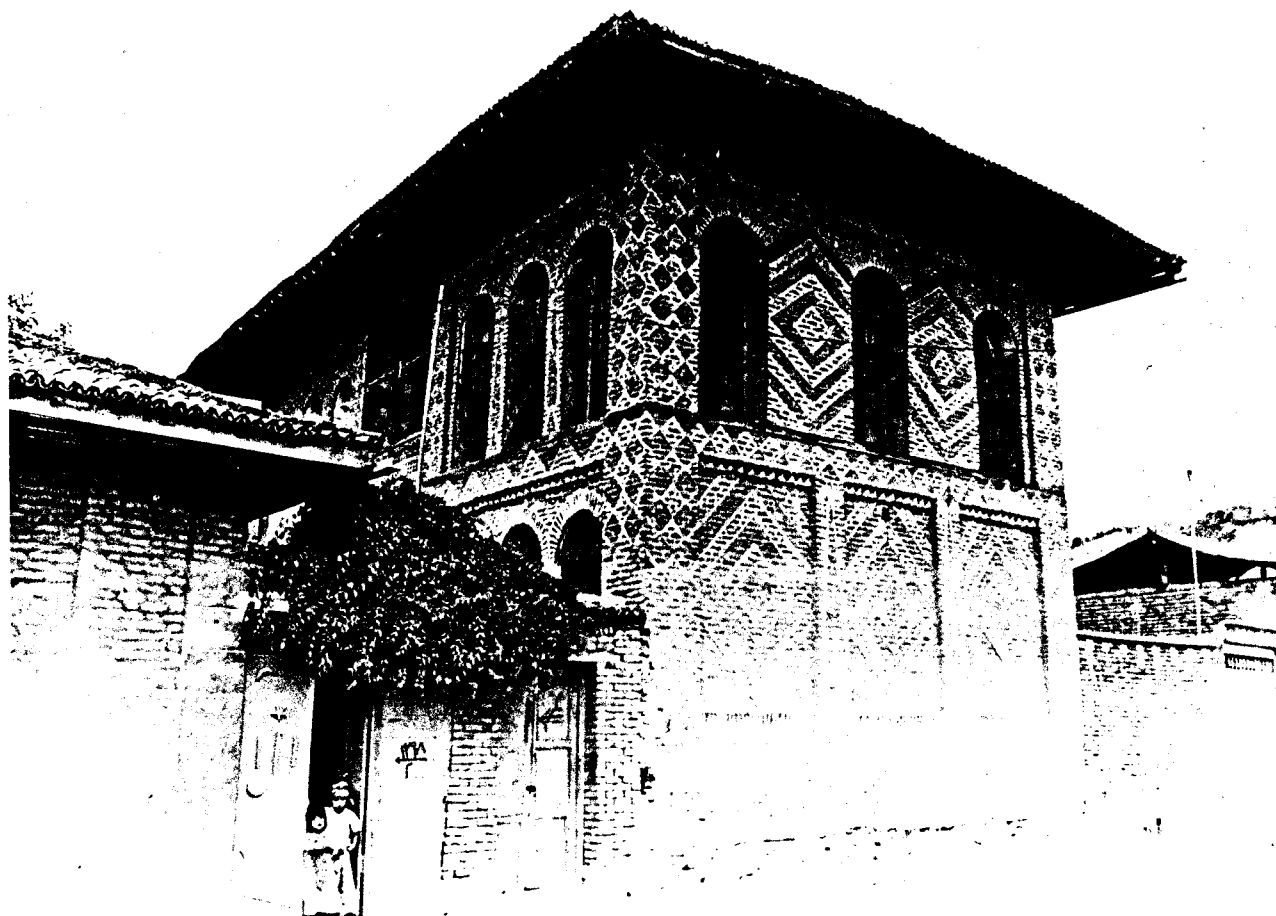
Load bearing brick walls are decorated with patterned motifs.



Many street front buildings contain shops on their ground floors.



Many buildings in Rostam Kola display fine architectural techniques, detailing and motifs.



Rostam Kola: house 13.1

Houses are mostly single or two storeys with verandah and balcony on the south side, particularly on the two storey houses. The house surveyed illustrates both types. The two storey part is a newer addition.

Roofs are predominantly hipped with a pitch of about 30° , covered by semi-circular tapered clay tiles. The roof has a timber truss framework. Walls are of chineh in the old section and mud brick in the new. Windows are mainly on the north and south sides, and there is a high proportion of openings in ratio to the wall area.

The house stands at the northern end of a walled courtyard, with outbuildings for animals and storage at the southern end. Against the western wall of the courtyard is a winter kitchen and another store, with a shelter of branches for animals. All permanent buildings are tiled.

The courtyard has trees, a well and two outdoor cooking areas. On the north side of the house is a latrine. The house is lived in by three households, each with clearly divided spaces. There is a total of ten people, who live by growing wheat, cotton, sunflowers. They also own some cows and chickens.

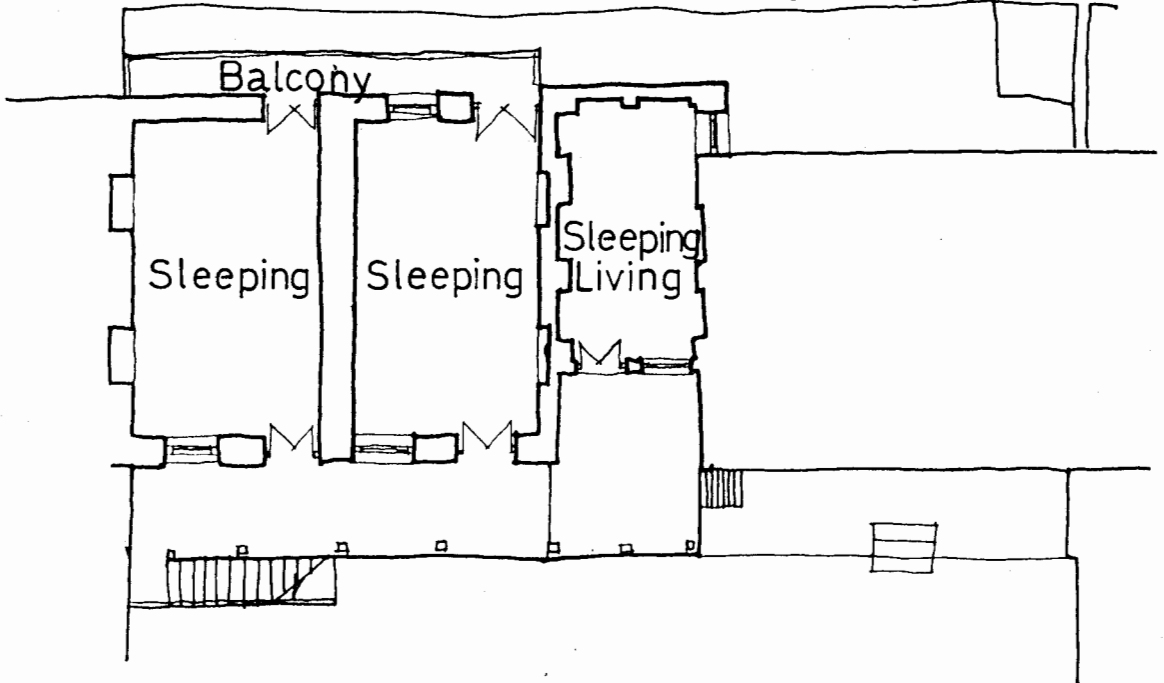
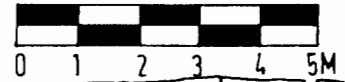
C2d2

C1s

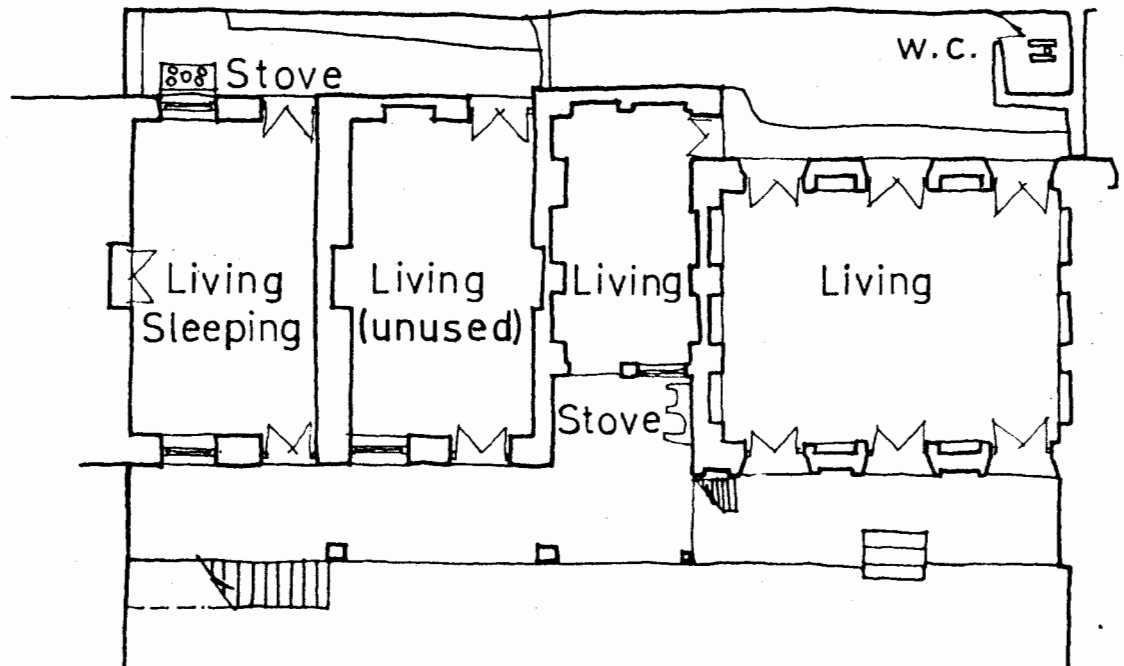


Elevation

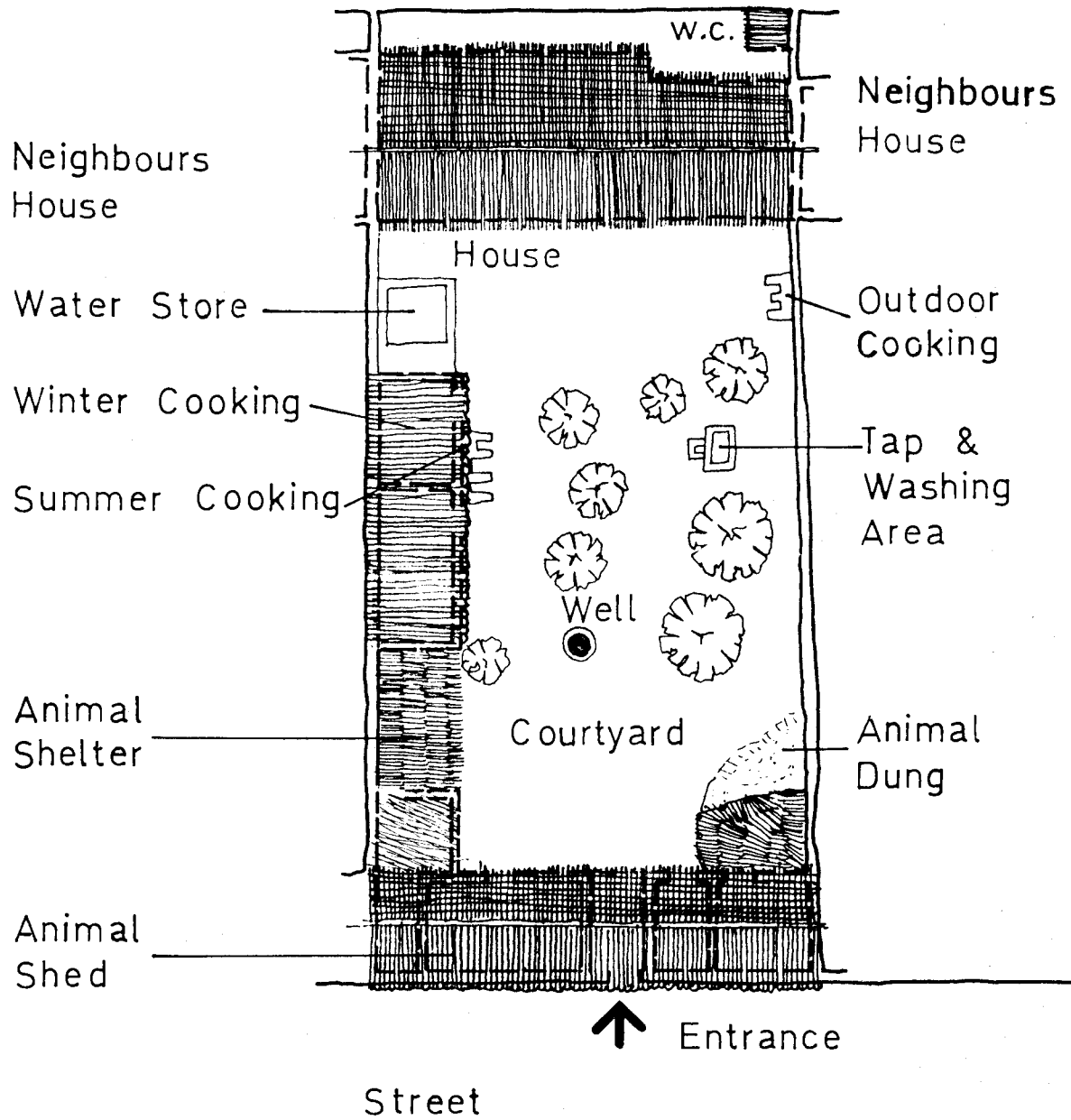
Scale



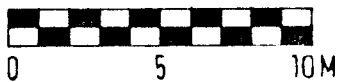
Upper Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



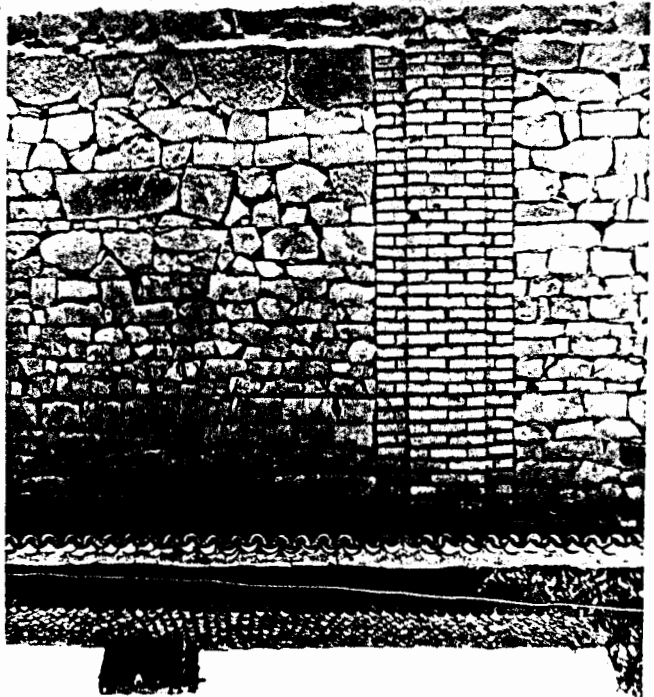
House 13.1 Site Plan
Rostam Kola
Scale



Shows detail of a double lap tile roof.



Houses in Rostam Kola are inward looking, more urban than rural.



Older houses are single storey.



Recent houses in Rostam Kola usually have two storeys.



The coastal plain between Galugah and Kordkuy is only about seven or eight kilometres wide until it reaches the expansive Gorgan plains. The villages here are mainly to the south of the road along the edges of the plain and the foothills. This area has a lower population density than the rest of Mazandaran (less than twenty-five persons per square kilometre).

History:

At the turn of the century the area was covered in forests within which the cultivated clearings where the villages were located made little impression. Until about 1899 most of the inhabitants in the coastal villages owned horses and worked as "charvadars" between Bandar Gaz and Astarabad (Gorgan). They found, however, that cultivation of cotton was more remunerative and so they sold their horses and settled into an agricultural life. Thus cotton, rice and grain production became their primary economic activity. The inhabitants of western Astarabad, composed of Tajiks, Qajars, Seyyeds, Tati, and Girayli Turks^{*2}, spend the summer months in the yeylaks of Hezarjarib. This area was subject to raids by the Jajar-bey Turkomans who camped on its northern borders. There was also considerable trade carried out with the Turkomans who received fruit, cotton, silk, arms and other manufactured goods by trading their felts, cloths, carpets, packing bags, etc.^{*3}

Built Environment:

The villages here are composed of dwelling units in groups of two or three scattered amongst the fields and sheltered by trees. The houses sit in private garden plots fenced by logs and brushwood. The buildings are almost exclusively

*1 Rabino, Mazandaran & Astarabad, 1922, p.68.

*2 ibid, p.70.

*3 Fraser, Travels & Adventures..., 1826, p.15.



Gorgan exhibits a relatively dense urban pattern with public and private courtyards.



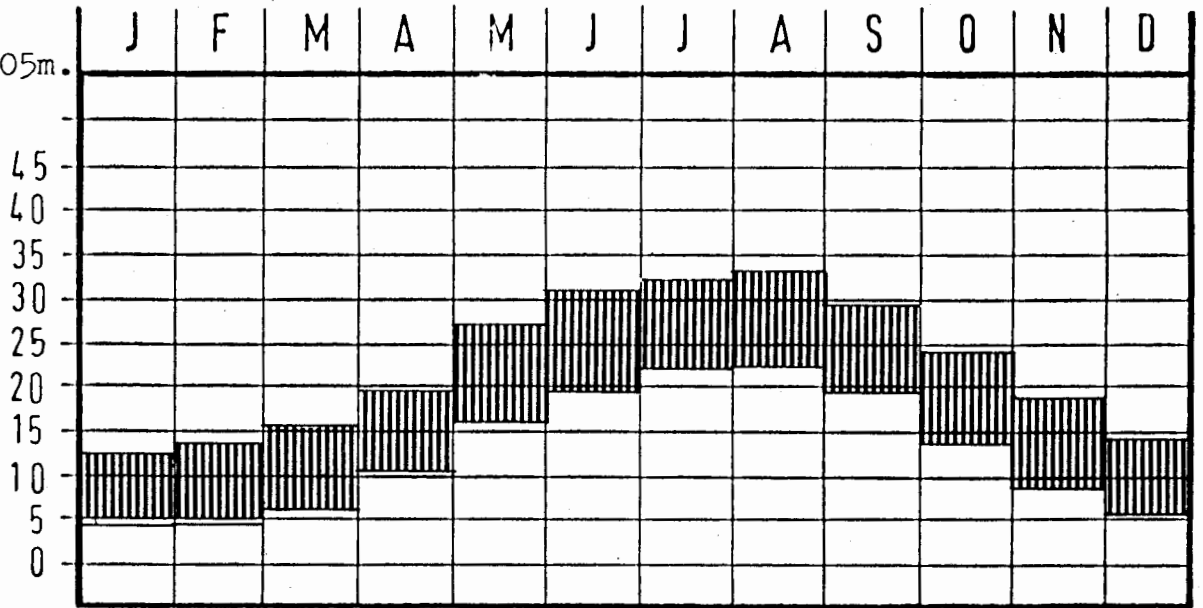
Buildings are two or three stories with brick walls and tile

single storey, with the older houses following the front verandah (aivan) form while the relatively newer houses are "L" shaped in plan and contain a corner aivan.

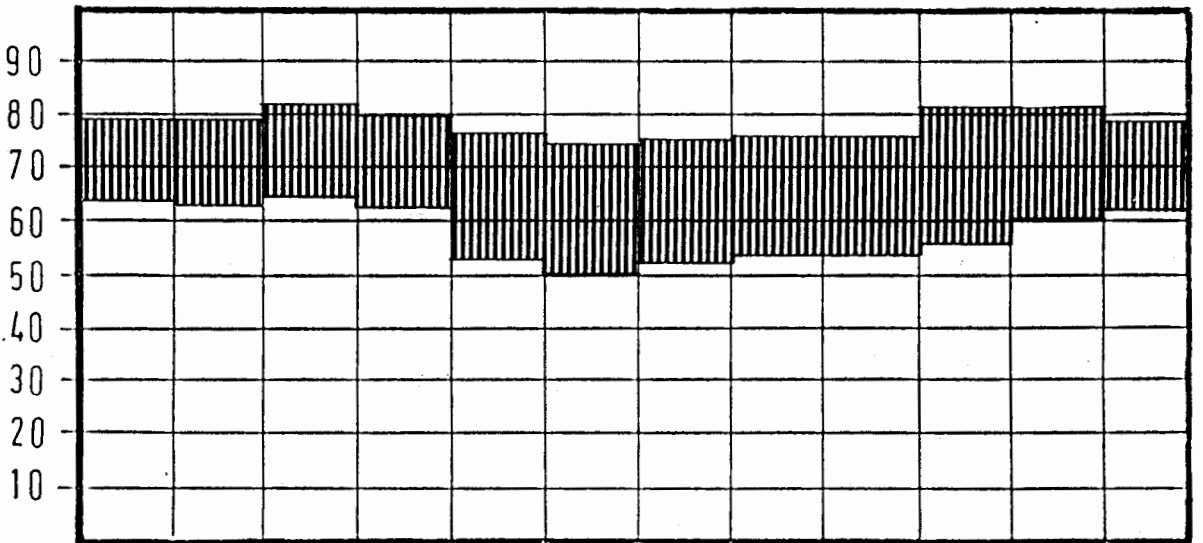
The most notable change in the built environment east of Galugah is the disappearance of red clay tile covered roofs. Whereas in the village of Tirtash, just west of Galugah, eighty percent of the buildings are tile roofed, in Galugah and the villages further east they give way to a clear predominance of sheet metal roofs. Some older houses and ancillary buildings are covered by rred thatch roofs. The walls of the houses are normally constructed with timber frame, lathing and mud plaster. Chinch walls were also noted. Some of the more traditional houses possess wide aivans both in front and on one side of the house, where the family spends most of the summer days. The rooms are used for sleeping and are lived in during the winter months.

GORGAN
Elevation 105m.

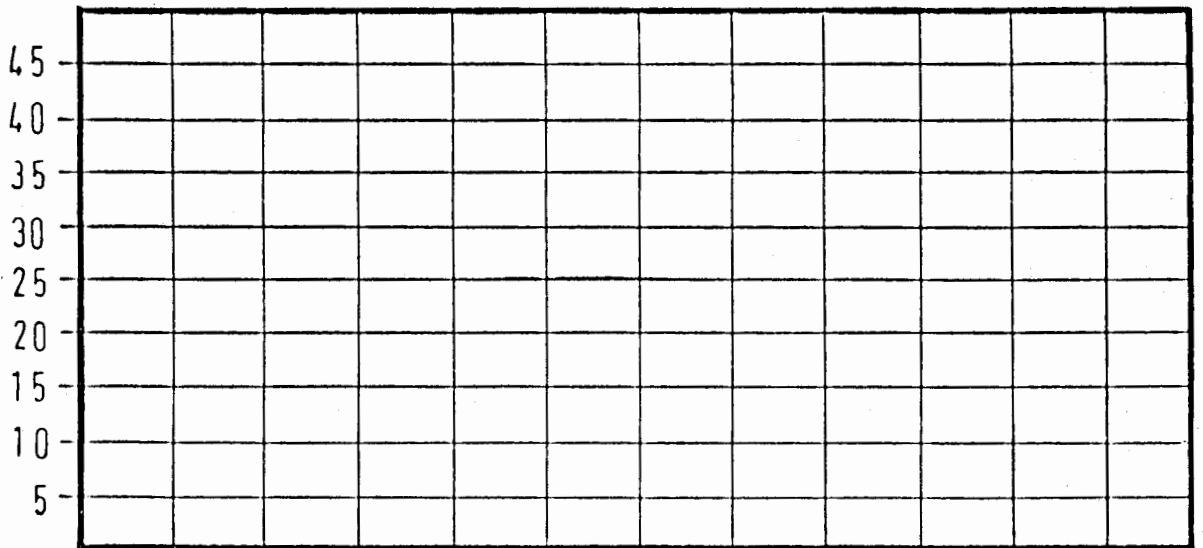
AIR TEMPERATURE °C



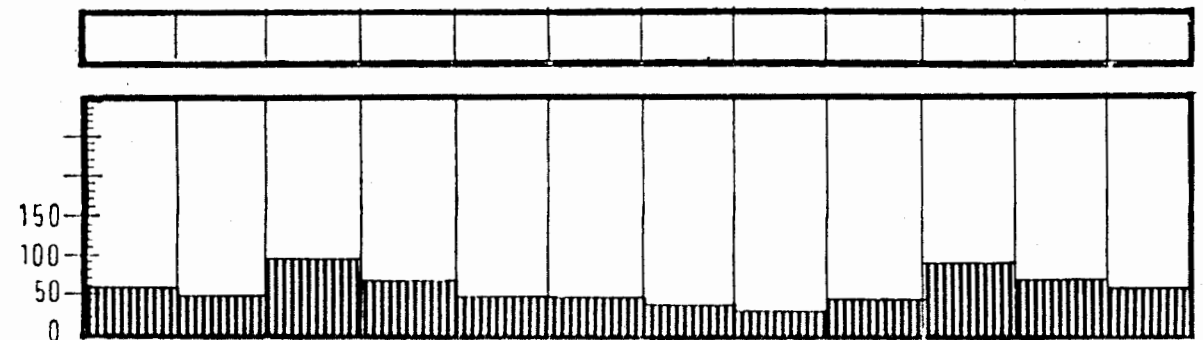
RELATIVE HUMIDITY %



WIND EFFECTIVE TEMPERATURE °C



RAIN mm.



15 Turkomansahra (Pahlavi Dej, Altentakhmaq, Gomishan)

The part of the extensive flat steppes of Turkomansahra, that lies around the Gorgan River close to the eastern coast of the Caspian, is occupied by the Yamut Turkomans. Although today the majority of the Iranian Turkomans are settled cultivators, the Yamut herdsmen used to migrate some fifty kilometres^{*1} between camps and were traditionally tent dwellers. Since the Atrek river became the frontier with Russia, the distance of migration was reduced for the more agricultural groups to fifteen to twenty kilometres^{*2} from their winter camp to their summer camp on the Gorgan River. The pastoral yamut kept their camp throughout summer and autumn near the Gorgan River while their shepherds moved the sheep to the grazing grounds.

The towns in this area are Pahlavi Dej, eighteen kilometres north of Gorgan, and Gomishan, about thirty kilometres north of Bandar Shah. Pahlavi Dej is a Yamut Turkoman market and administrative centre where on Thursdays horses, textiles, carpets and tribal jewelry are sold^{*3}. Gomishan is referred to by Rabino* as Gomishtappa, which contained a thousand Turkoman families and was on the bank of the Gorgan River's original channel, diverted in 1890 at Band-e-Amir. He also states that Gomishtappa used to be an island before 1814. Gomishan has a population of about nine thousand, which is said to have been decreasing in the past several years. The houses are nearly all free standing in fenced enclosures, and in many cases they are ten to fifteen metres apart, allowing unobstructed air movement through the town. The distinctive architectural style of Turkomansahra is clearly exhibited in Gomishan. The buildings are painted bright colours with the door frame, corners and windows picked out in white. The houses are two storey with verandahs on the west and south sides.

*1 Abbot Hall, The Turcoman of Iran, 1971, pp.8-9.

*2 S.Matheson, Persia: An Archaeological Guide, p.67.

*3 Rabino, Mazandaran & Astarabad, 1922, p.94.

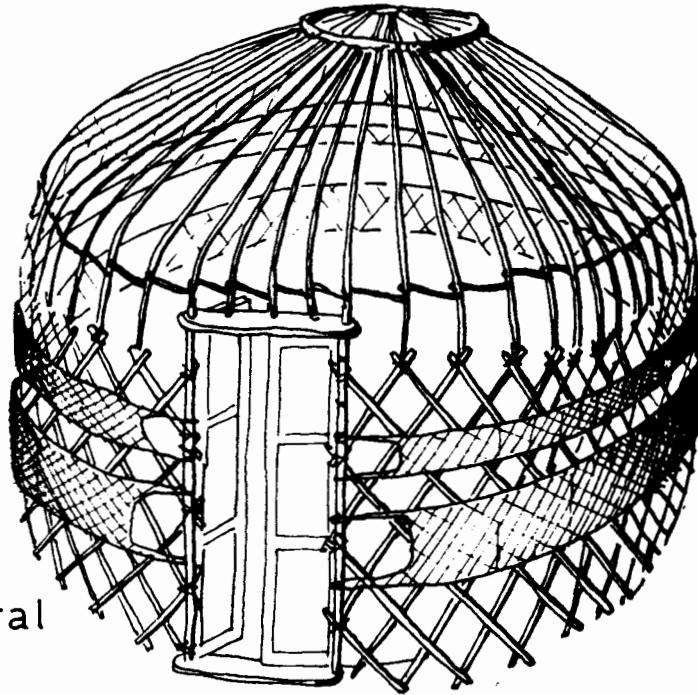
Although largely settled, the Turkomans still take pride in their fine horses.



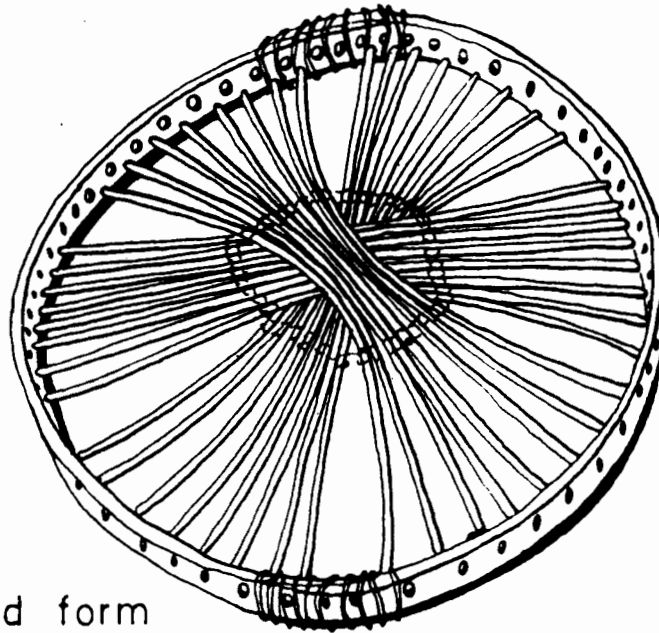
A small Turkoman öy (yurt) now used as a store.



Structure of Turkoman Öi (Yourt)



structural
frame

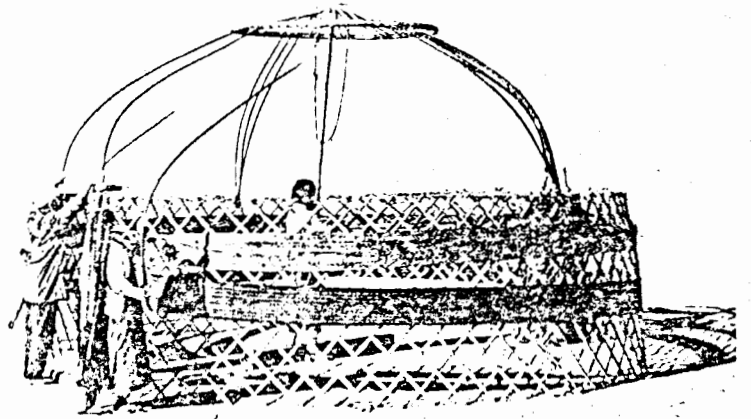


collapsed form
for transportation

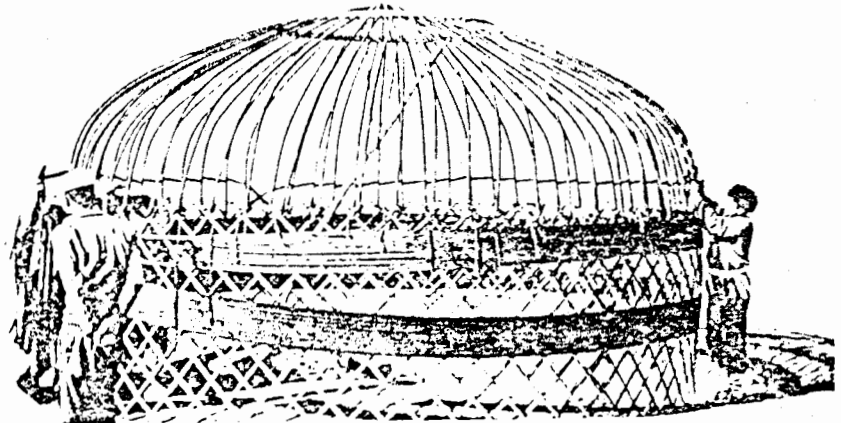
from Rainer - Traditional Building in Iran.

Erection of Öi

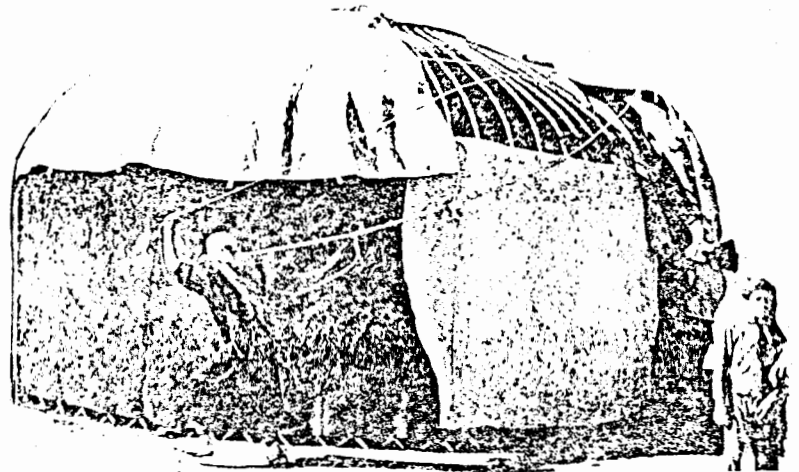
positioning of
roof wheel



frame complete

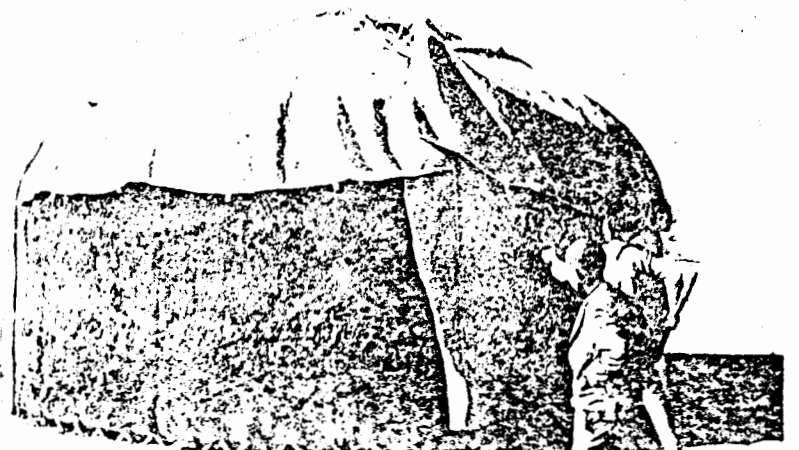


attaching felts



adjusting
felts

Illustrations from
P. A. Andrews
Turkoman of Iran



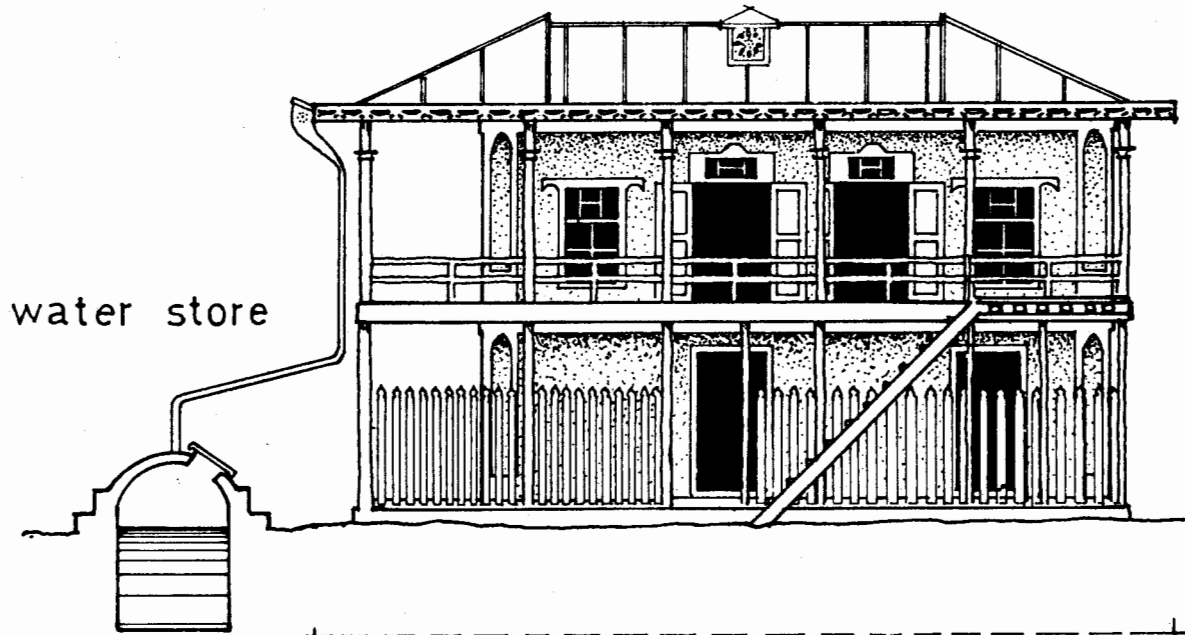


The architectural style, roof forms and detailing of buildings in Turkomansahra reflect the different socio-cultural characteristics of the inhabitants in this region.

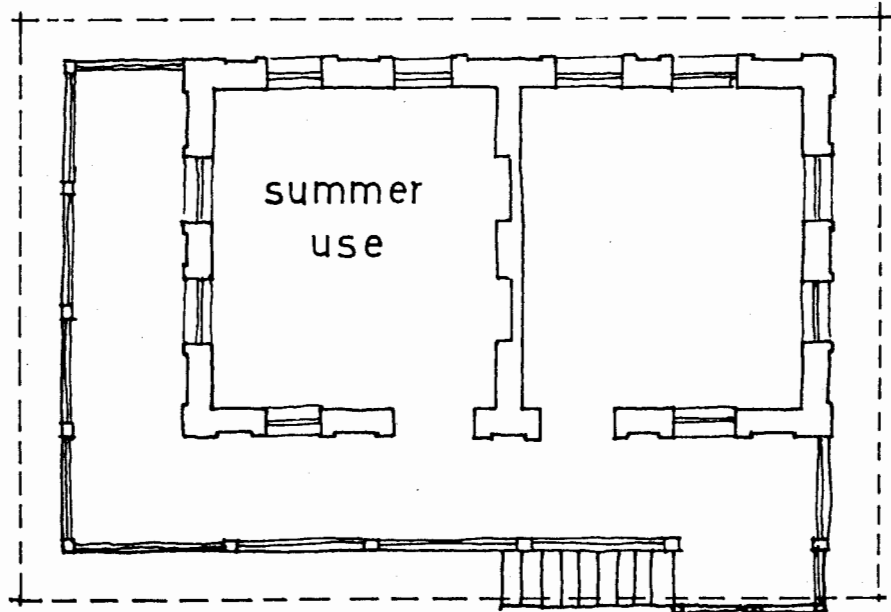


House 15.2 Gomishan , Turkoman-Sahra

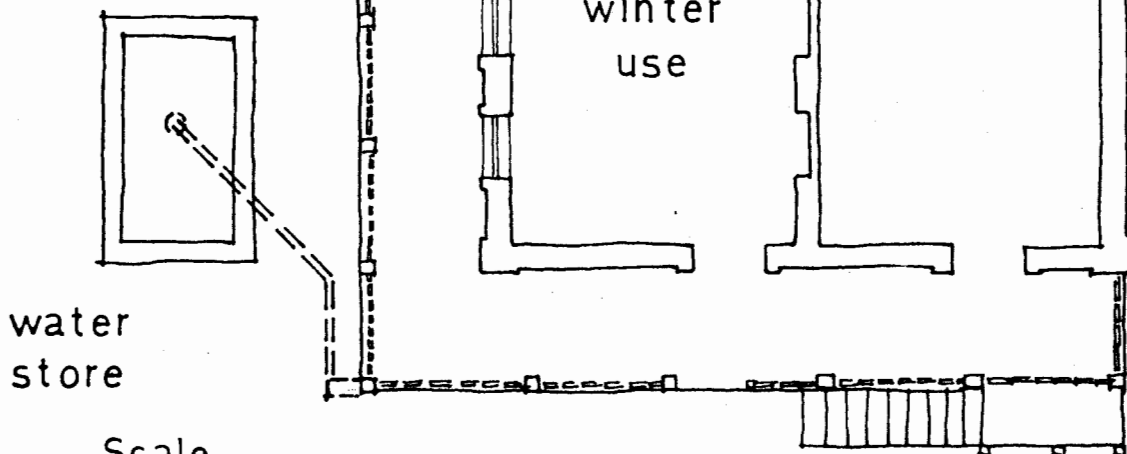
D2d2



Upper Floor Plan

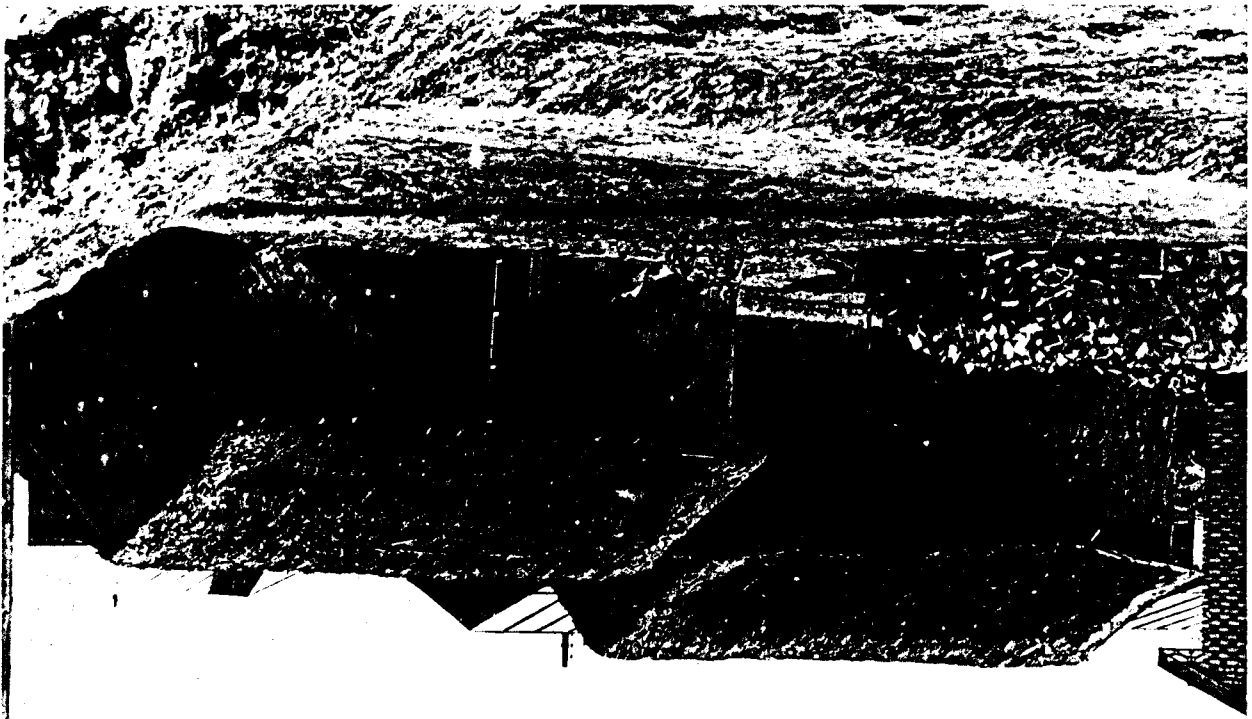


Ground Floor Plan



Scale





Early forms of permanent shelter in the Turkomansahra. The buildings above have walls of woven branches.



Some older houses are walled with timber planks, while the newer buildings are brick. The roofs that possess the H shaped ridge peculiar to this region (see diagram) are covered with sheet metal. This roof formation is partly due to the need for the collection of rain water in vaulted reservoirs for drinking purposes.

Altentakhmaq (case study)

Altentakhmaq is situated on the flat fifteen kilometres north-west of Gomishan. It is a small village of about a hundred and fifty people and thirty households, and is a permanent settlement of the Yamut Turkomans. The people grow wheat and barley and are also engaged in animal husbandry. A few families (five or six) migrate for two to three months in summer to Bnadar Shah or Pahlavi Dej for work. It was claimed that the village is fifty to sixty years old.

The settlement is divided into three clusters, but all houses are set apart, divided by individual small plots of land within which each house stands. The village has water from a well which is not drinkable. Drinking water comes from each individual rainwater storage tank.

House 15.1:

This surveyed house is commonly found in this area: a basic three room "L" shaped house with a corner aivan standing on a one and a half metre high plinth. Larger houses in this settlement are a development of the corner aivan form, having a central aivan with rooms on either side as well as at the back.

The roof is unique to this region (from Pahlavi Dej to Gomishan), and is a derivation of the hipped roof form, but with ridge in an H configuration - see diagram of roof. The roof

is covered with sheet metal and supported by a timber truss framework.

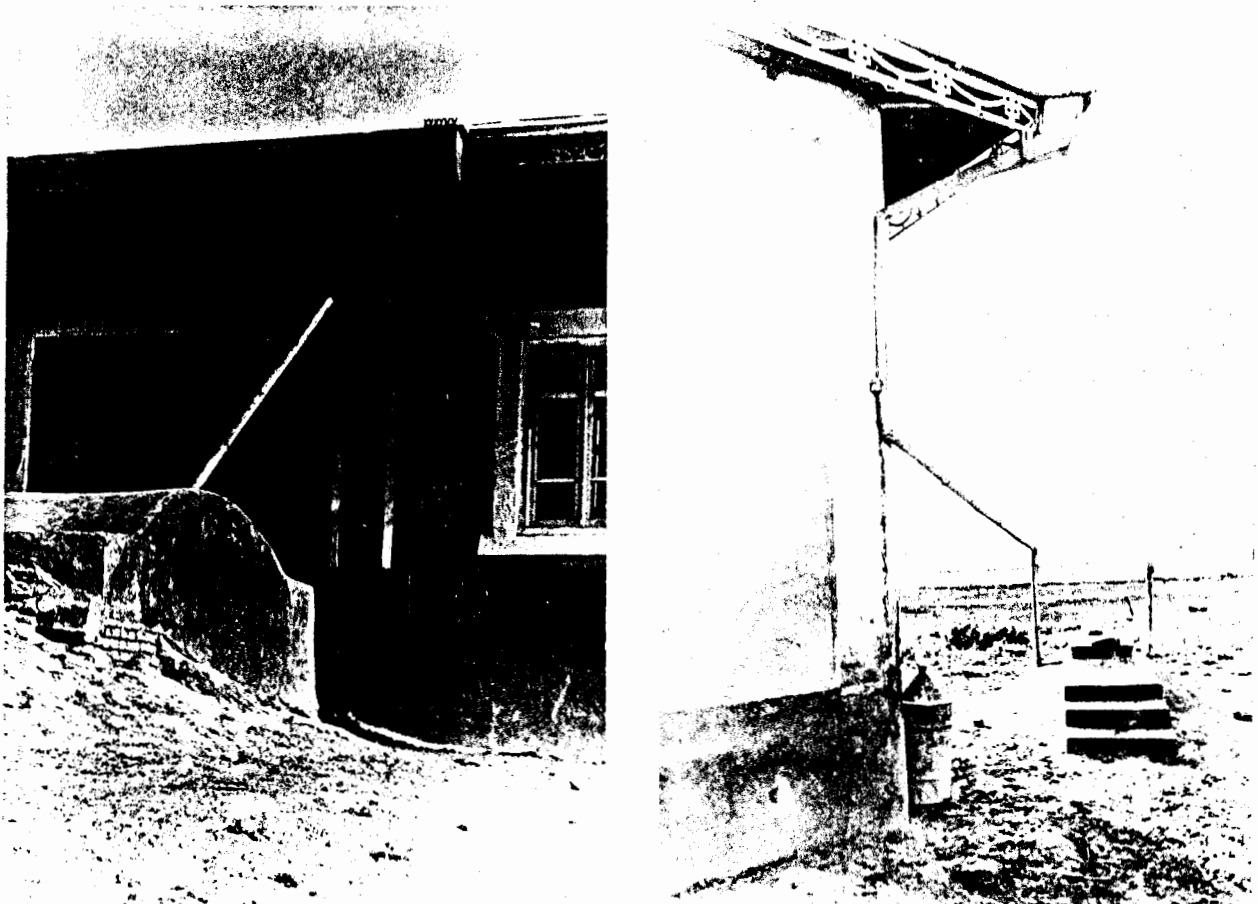
The walls are fired brick, laid with a mud mortar, and rendered with cement. This house is ten years old.

Windows open to the north, west and south, but predominant orientation is to the south, toward the aivan faces. The house stands in a rectangular, fenced plot of land, 45m.x45m. There are three small animal shelters and a Turkoman yurt (oy) which is used for storage. There is a water reservoir behind the house for collecting runoff rainwater from the roof.

The house is lived in by a family of five, while occupation is animal husbandry and agriculture, growing wheat and barley.

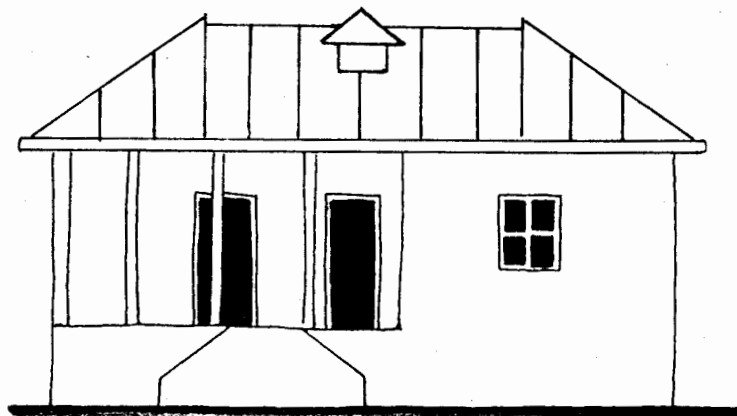


The traditional nomadic Turkoman dwelling, the öy (yurt), is seen together with their present houses.

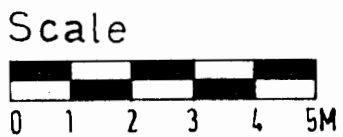
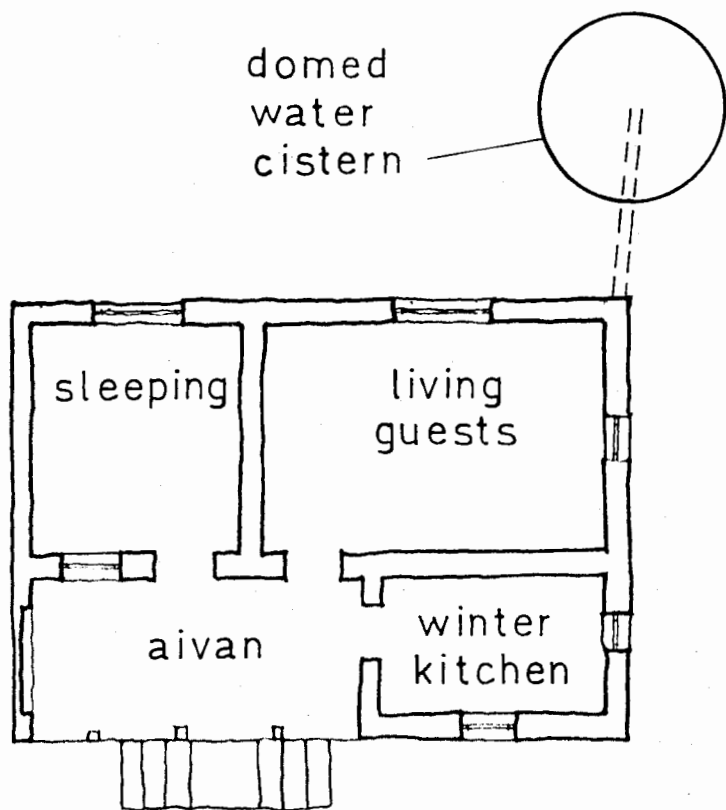


The sheet metal roofs collect rainwater which is channelled into vaulted cisterns and used as drinking water.

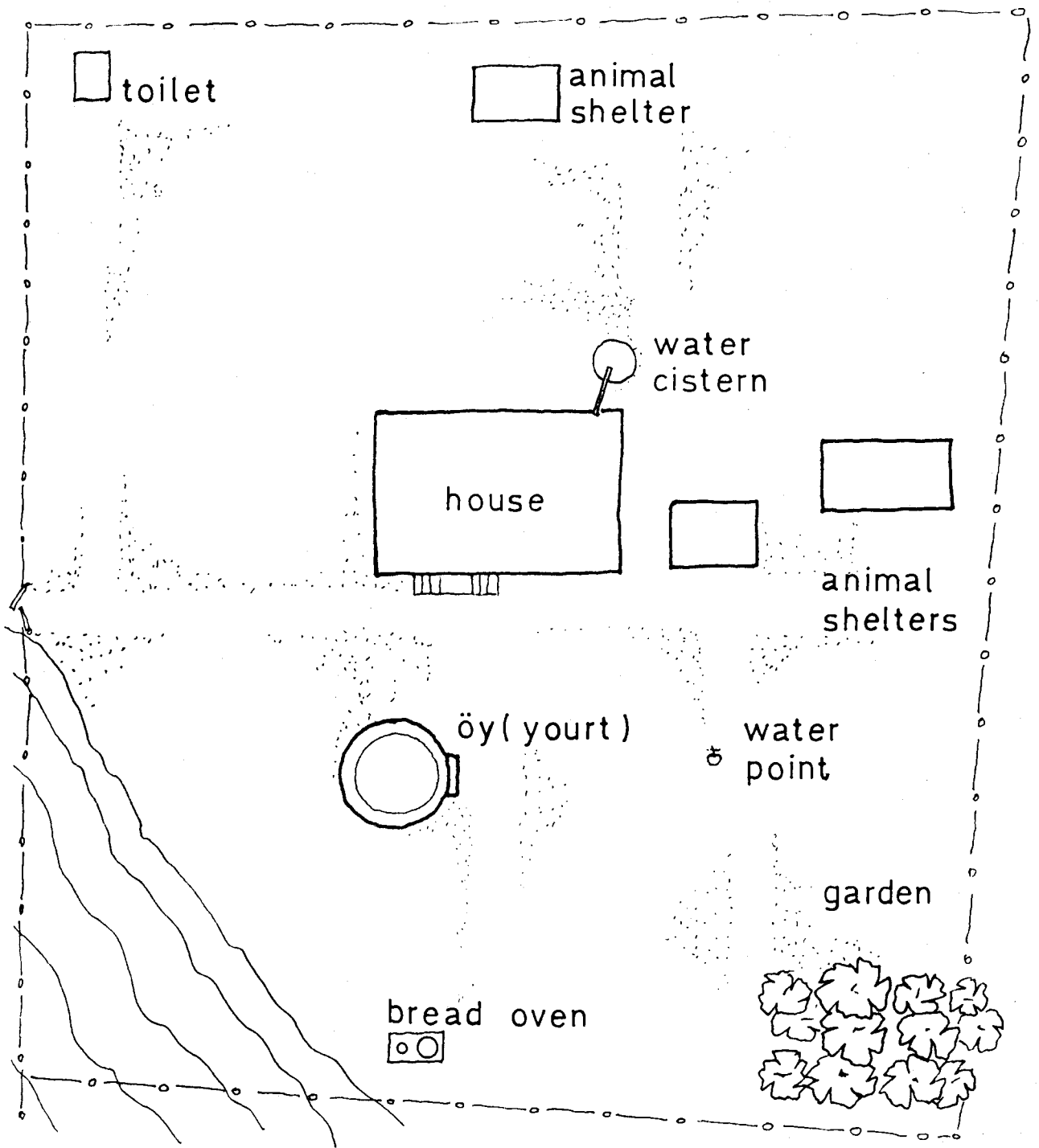
House 15.1 Altentakhmaq **B2s**



Elevation

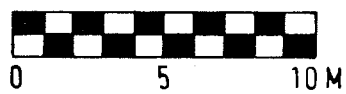


Plan



House 15.1 Altentakhmaq

Scale



Rainwater Catchment and Storage System
Turkomansara Region

