

Archaeological Ethnography in Western Iran

Patty Jo Watson

VIKING FUND PUBLICATIONS
IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Number Fifty-seven

WENNER-GREN FOUNDATION FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH, INC.



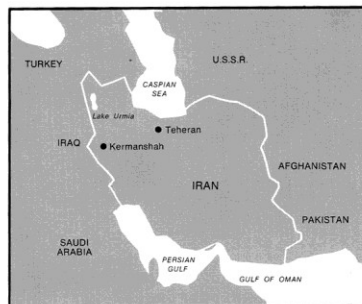
View of Hasanabad from the northwest. A threshing area is visible in the foreground, midden heaps may be seen to the right of the tent and in the center of the photo to the right of the small tree. The tent belonged to one of the better-off villagers who moved into it late in June as being more pleasant than his mud house at that time of year. Very few Hasanabad villagers own such tents.



Clues to

Iranian Prehistory in Modern Village Life

By PATTY JO WATSON



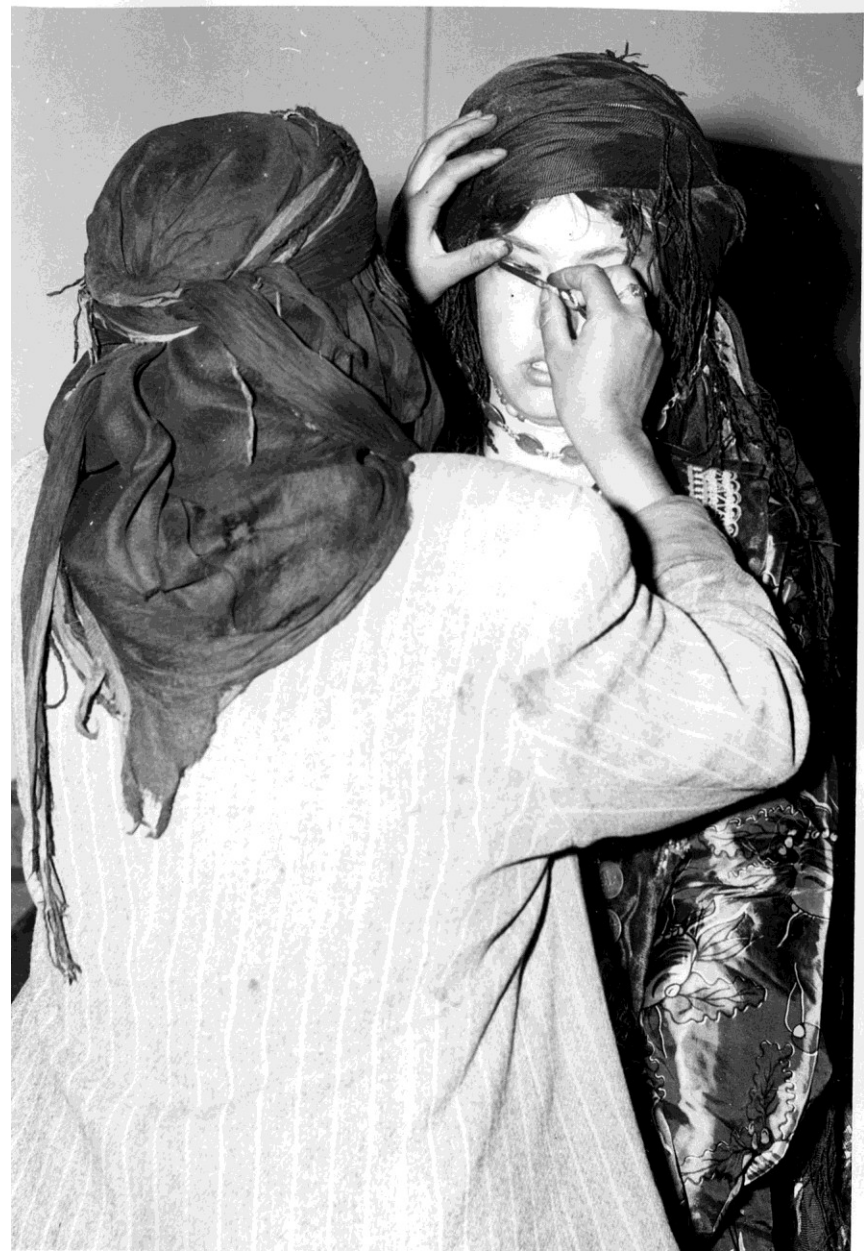
In 1956, while both graduate students in anthropology at the University of Chicago, Maxine R. Kleindienst and I wrote a short article for the departmental journal. It appeared under the title "Action Archeology: The Archeological Inventory of a Living Community." In 1959-1960 I had a chance to put some of the suggestions made in that article into practice. At that time I spent several months in Iran conducting an ethnographical study for archaeological purposes. The work was supported by a National Science Foundation Regular Post-doctoral grant and was carried out under the auspices of the Iranian Prehistoric Project of the University of Chicago and University of Teheran (directed by Professor R. J. Braidwood). The major focus of this study was a village in western Iran which may be called Hasanabad, though that is not its real name. It lies beside a large river not far from a sizable provincial administrative center. The population of Hasanabad is about two hundred and is made up almost exclusively of sharecropping peasants. The principal focus of the study was the economy and material culture of Hasanabad, but it was also concerned to some extent with the documentation of social organization.

Various practices and objects which are in daily use in many rural Near Eastern communities today originated some eight to nine thousand years ago during the early village era of

SPRING, 1966

CASE STUDY – Hasanabad (Faraman), Iran

- From September 1959-June 1960 (53 years ago)
- Carried out by Patty Jo Watson as PhD dissertation fieldwork, published as book in 1979
- Part of Braidwood's Iranian Prehistoric Project, which involved survey and excavation of Paleolithic and Neolithic sites.
- One of the first explicitly ethnoarchaeological studies





Faraman Village

- 200 people, mud houses, with fields nearby
- The setting is along a seasonal tributary to a permanent river, at the edge of hills, in a valley flanked by high mountains.
- Drinking water is from a nearby spring
- Mountains are now deforested, but trees along the river
- In winter, travel is difficult because of snow and mud
- Wild sheep and goats commonly seen; wolves come to the village; bears in the mountains



Watson's Assumptions and Goals

- “The past cannot be understood without reference to events and processes occurring in the present” 8
- Traditional patterns of life are changing very rapidly and need “rescuing”
- 1. To record and make available data on technology and subsistence in a traditional village.
- 2. To contribute to understanding the relationship between (a) settlement pattern, domestic architecture and equipment, and (b) population size and economic and social organization.

Watson's Fieldwork

- Village of Laki-speaking sharecropping tenants near Kermanshah, Iran.
- Village in desperate straits owing to four years of crop loss due to insects (*sün*).
- She stayed in nearby orphanage managed by American missionaries.
- Worked without an interpreter, but had help from missionaries and their workers
- Went to village early morning each day and stayed until dark.
- Had hepatitis for more than a month in the spring.
- Also shorter studies of two other communities, both Kurdi



The Village

- “Each household usually consists of an open court with the family’s quarters, animal stables, and storerooms opening off it.” 34
- An irrigation canal *jub* crosses north end and irrigates fruit trees – apple, plum, mulberry, apricot and almond
- Formerly several *qanats*, but only one not dried up.
- Houses built of *chineh*, *tauf* in Arabic. These are layers of mud dug from borrow pits
- Hearths cleaned out every day and the ash dumped in middens, which hold all sorts of stuff from bones to pottery, cloth and old shoes
- Dung is kept for making dung cakes

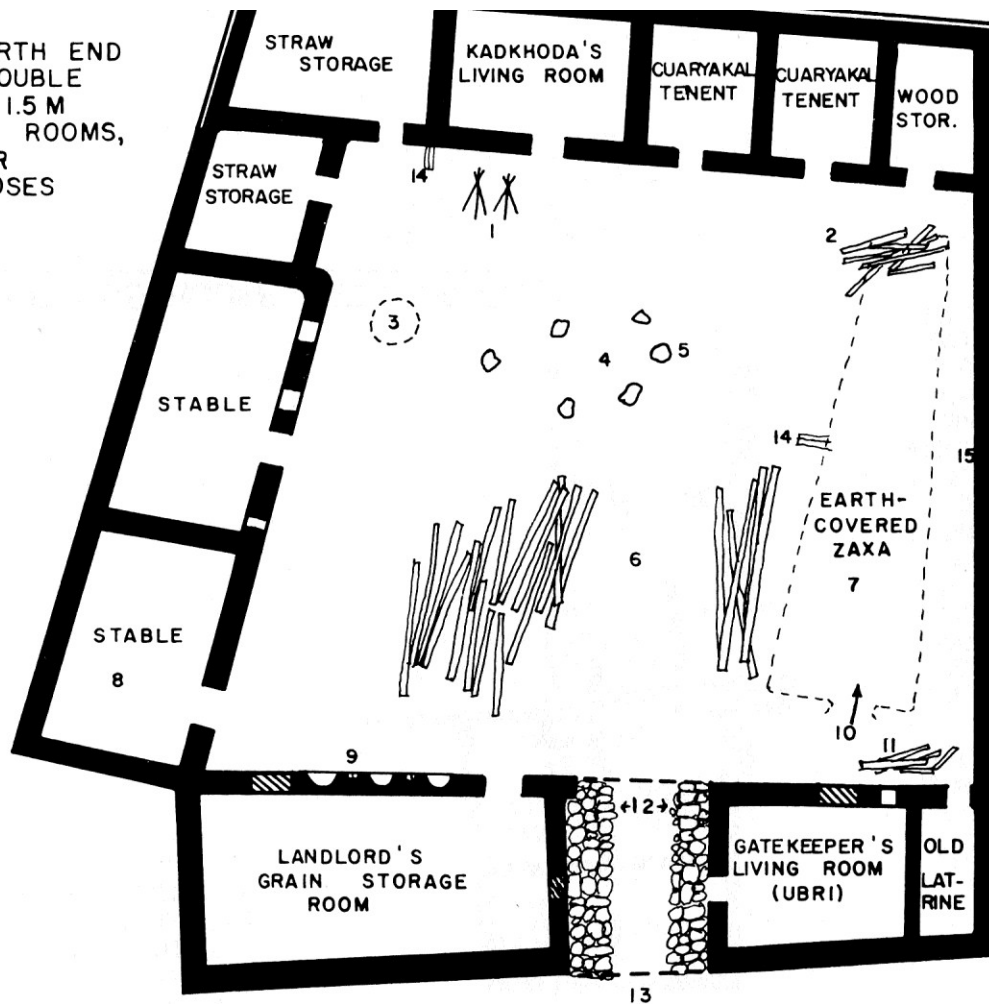
Activity Areas

- 1. middens
- 2. Borrow pits
- 3. Streets/lanes/latrines
- 4. Common open area
- 5. Courtyards for daily tasks, weaving, etc
- 6. Threshing floors
- 7. Springs to gather water, wash things
- 8. Cemetery, apart from village.



The Qala – old fort and headman's house

PARAPET
WALL ALONG NORTH END
INDICATED BY DOUBLE
LINE RISES 1.5 M
ABOVE ROOF OF ROOMS,
PRESUMABLY FOR
DEFENSIVE PURPOSES



- 1 2 DUGH- CHURNING
TRIPODS
- 2 WOOD
- 3 GRAIN OR CHICK-PEA
STORAGE PIT, NOW
EMPTY 1.75 M DEEP
- 4 ROCKS WITH SALT ON
& AROUND THEM FOR
SHEEP & GOATS
- 5 SAJ WITH SALT ON IT
- 6 POPLAR POLES
- 7 COVER 2.20 M HIGH
SLOPES TO GROUND
LEVEL AT NORTH END
- 8 WOODEN THRESHING
MACHINE STORED HERE
- 9 MANGERS & HITCHES
- 10 ENTRANCE TO ZAXA
- 11 WOOD
- 12 STONE PLATFORMS
1 M HIGH AT NORTH
& 1.5 M HIGH AT SOUTH
- 13 GATE TO ROOFED-OVER
ENTRY WAY
- 14 WOODEN DRAIN SPOUT
- 15 WALL 2.7 M HIGH

QALA

APRIL 28, 1960

0 5m.

Fig. 5.29.







House Construction

- Wall trench 90 cm x 60 cm deep. Bottom course has rocks.
- Each course of chineh is about 50cm thick.
- As wall gets higher it gets narrower . Walls are about 2-2.5m high and .75-.50 wide at top.
- Borrow pits everywhere and trash is often incorporated into mud.
- Walls plastered inside and out with mud.



Construction

- Roofs are wooden poles, usually poplar embed into upper course of chineh.
- Smaller cross branches laid on the beams, then twigs, reeds, mud, dirt and then a layer of mud and chaff plaster on top.
- Interior walls plastered to 3-4cm thick; sometimes with white topping – a natural source near the village. Mixed with cattail fuzz and smeared on with a cloth by women and children.
- Most houses have an entrance chamber, *avian*
- Some wattle and daub used on doors; sometimes wattle and dung.





Chineh house walls



Pl. 5.1. Hasanabad. Footing trench for mud wall. Trench is 90 cm wide and 60 cm deep.

Footing trench

Typical House

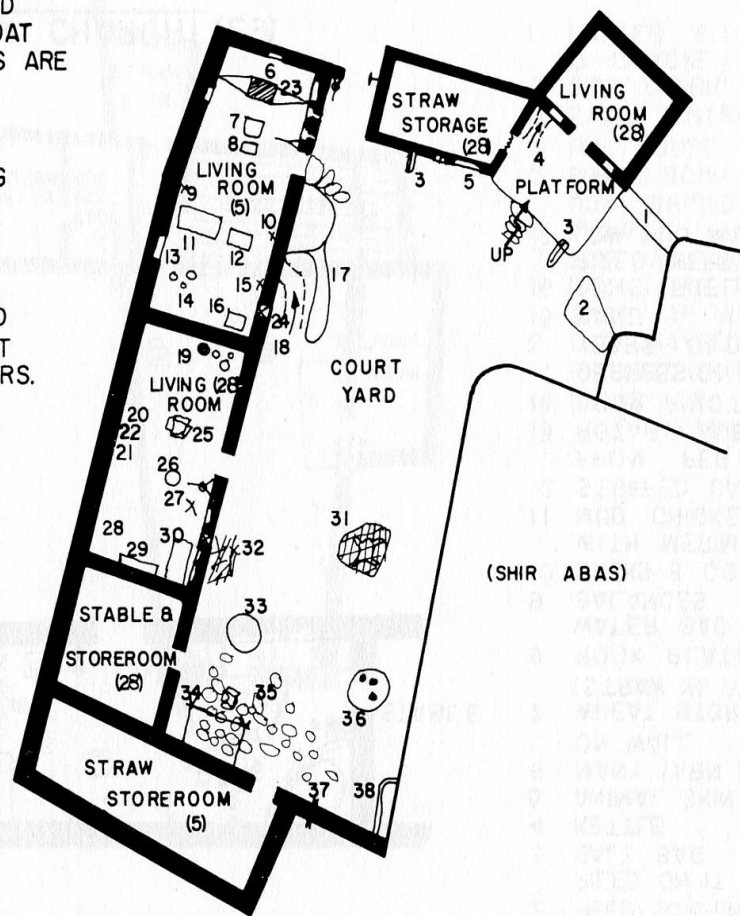
- Walled courtyard in front. *Aivan* opens into court. Door from *aivan* leads to living room, the stables, storage rooms for straw and dung, and stables (both above and under ground).
- Courtyard walls typically 2-2.75m high. A gateway leads to the street. Most have pole bars to close at night.
- Houses can last 50+ years with maintenance.

Notes:

WALLS ON S,E, & W SIDES OF COURTYARD ARE 2.5-3 M. HIGH, ABOUT 8 COURSES ABOVE GROUND. THE COURTYARD FLOOR SLOPES NOTICEABLY TO THE SOUTH, THE SURFACE IS VERY UNEVEN AND LITTERED WITH SHEEP AND GOAT DUNG. CEILINGS OF LIVING ROOMS ARE 2.2M (5) & 2.5M (28) HIGH.

- 1 LOW WALL 1.20M. HIGH
- 2 BLANKET ON STICK BLOCKING OFF THIS CORNER
- 3 WOOD DRAIN SPOUT
- 4 ENTRY TO ZAXA
- 5 MANGER AND HITCH
- 6 HAMMOCK- CONTAINS 3WK. OLD BABY- IS SUSPENDED BY GOAT HAIR ROPES TIED TO RAFTERS. THE HAMMOCK IS A PIECE OF COARSE CLOTH 1M. SQUARE.
- 7 STOVE
- 8 HEARTH
- 9 SALT BAG
- 10 CLOTHING
- 11 BEDDING ON WOOD CHEST
- 12 TIN CHEST
- 13 TIN SUITCASE IN NICHE
- 14 PANS WITH MILK, DUGH, MAST
- 15 SIEVE ON PEG
- 16 KANU
- 17 LOW MUD WALL CA.1.20M
- 18 RAMP DOWN CA. 1M. TO STABLE UNDER LIVING ROOM
- 19 BASKETS, MILK PANS
- 20 KEROSENE LANTERN

- 21 SAJ AND FIRE TONGS
- 22 TIN LAMP
- 23 TIN SUITCASE, SAMOVAR & GAS TIN IN NICHE
- 24 BEE HOUSE
- 25 KETTLE & IRON STAND
- 26 BREAD DOUGH IN PAN WITH CLOTH LID
- 27 SKIN CHURN SUSPENDED
- 28 PANS, TRAY, GAS TINS
- 29 KURSI WITH BLACK TENT ON IT
- 30 COT & BEDDING
- 31 GOATSKIN WATER BAG COVERED WITH BURLAP
- 32 2 PLOWS & MISC. WOOD FRAGMENTS
- 33 WHEAT STORAGE PIT NOW HAS OLD BASKET, WOOD FRAGMENTS, & A GAS TIN IN IT
- 34 POLES IN WALL AS A FRAMEWORK FOR BRUSH SHELTER USED AS A SUMMER KITCHEN
- 35 ROCKS USED TO CUT DOWN MUD
- 36 POPLAR TREES PLANTED IN STORAGE PIT
- 37 DRAIN HOLE
- 38 MUD MANGER .60 M HIGH



(SHIR ABAS)

HOUSEHOLD OF KULI SULTAN (28) & HIS SON ALI HUSAIN (5)

APRIL 6, 1960

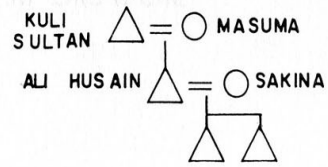
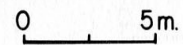
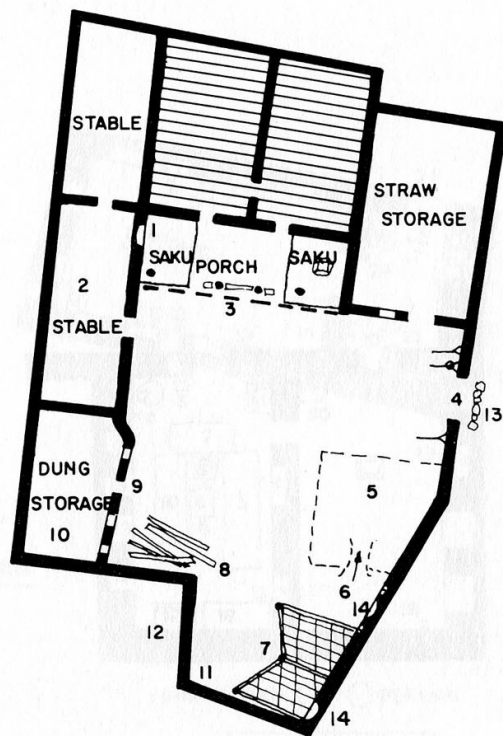


Fig. 5.20.

Notes:

PORCH ROOF 2.75 M. HIGH

ON COURTYARD FLOOR ARE
DUNG & URINE OF ANIMALS;
1 PORCH PILLAR SUPPORTS ITS
CROSS BEAM ON AN IRON WHEEL
FROM SOME OLD PIECE OF
MACHINERY, REST OF PILLARS
HAVE WOODEN CROSS PIECES



- 1 SHELF IN CORNER OF PORCH & ONE OVER FIREPLACE
- 2 KURSI, PLOW STORED HERE
- 3 2 ROCKS & A LOG HALF BURIED IN DIRT DEFINE LOW PLATFORM UNDER PORCH ROOF
- 4 GATE OF WOOD & CORRUGATED IRON, WOOD FORKS IN WALL TO BAR GATE, WALL CA. 2.65 HIGH
- 5 LOW DIRT PLATFORM OVER ZAXA
- 6 ZAXA ENTRANCE
- 7 KULA-SUMMER SHELTER OF LEAFY BOUGHS ON WOOD FRAMEWORK
- 8 POPLAR WOOD
- 9 SHUTTERS ON WINDOWS
- 10 PROBABLY ONCE A LIVING ROOM
- 11 LATRINE AREA
- 12 WALL 1.75-2.0 M HIGH HERE
- 13 STONE THRESHOLD
- 14 ANIMAL HITCHES AND MANGERS

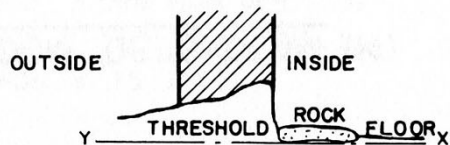
[139]

HOUSEHOLD OF HUSAIN REZA (20)

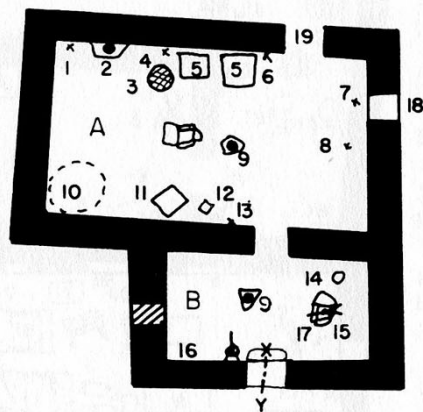
APRIL 5, 1960

0 5m.





DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION THROUGH
AYWAN DOOR (X-Y)
(NOT TO SCALE)



- 1 OX YOKE
- 2 ROCK SUPPORTING ROOF COLUMN
- 3 BASKET
- 4 KEROSENE BOTTLE ON WALL
- 5 KANUS - SMALLER CA 1M. HIGH,
LARGER 1.25 M. HIGH WITH DESIGN
LIKE TAMAS' (44)
- 6 SAJ AGAINST WALL ON FLOOR
- 7 BROOM
- 8 SHOVEL
- 9 ROOF COLUMN ON ROCK
- 10 GRAIN STORAGE PIT - TOP DIAM. 1.07 M,
BOTTOM DIAM. 1.30M, 1.08 M DEEP
INSIDE IS AN OLD PITCHER, LEAVES,
RAGS, A DRIED GOURD WITH A
BROKEN NECK
- 11 TIN BOX WITH BEDDING ON TOP
- 12 TIN BOX
- 13 SPOON BAG ON WALL
- 14 TEA KETTLE
- 15 PANS & TEA THINGS NEAR HEARTH
- 16 TOOLS, OLD PANS ON FLOOR
- 17 TONGS
- 18 ROUND WINDOW NEAR CEILING
- 19 DOORWAY 1.25 M HIGH

[136]

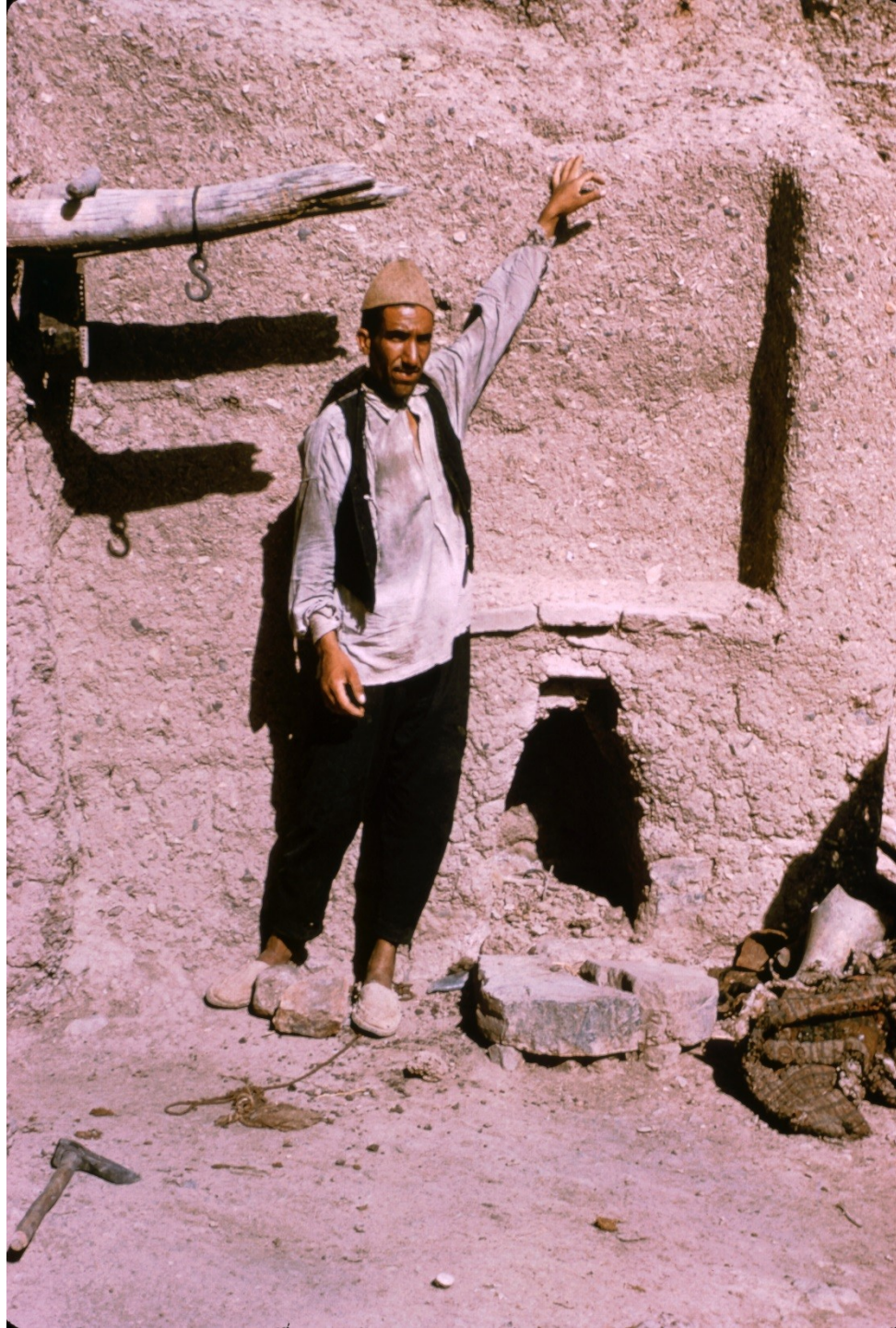
LIVING ROOM & AYWAN OF HASAN (16)

APRIL 25, 1960

0 2.5m.







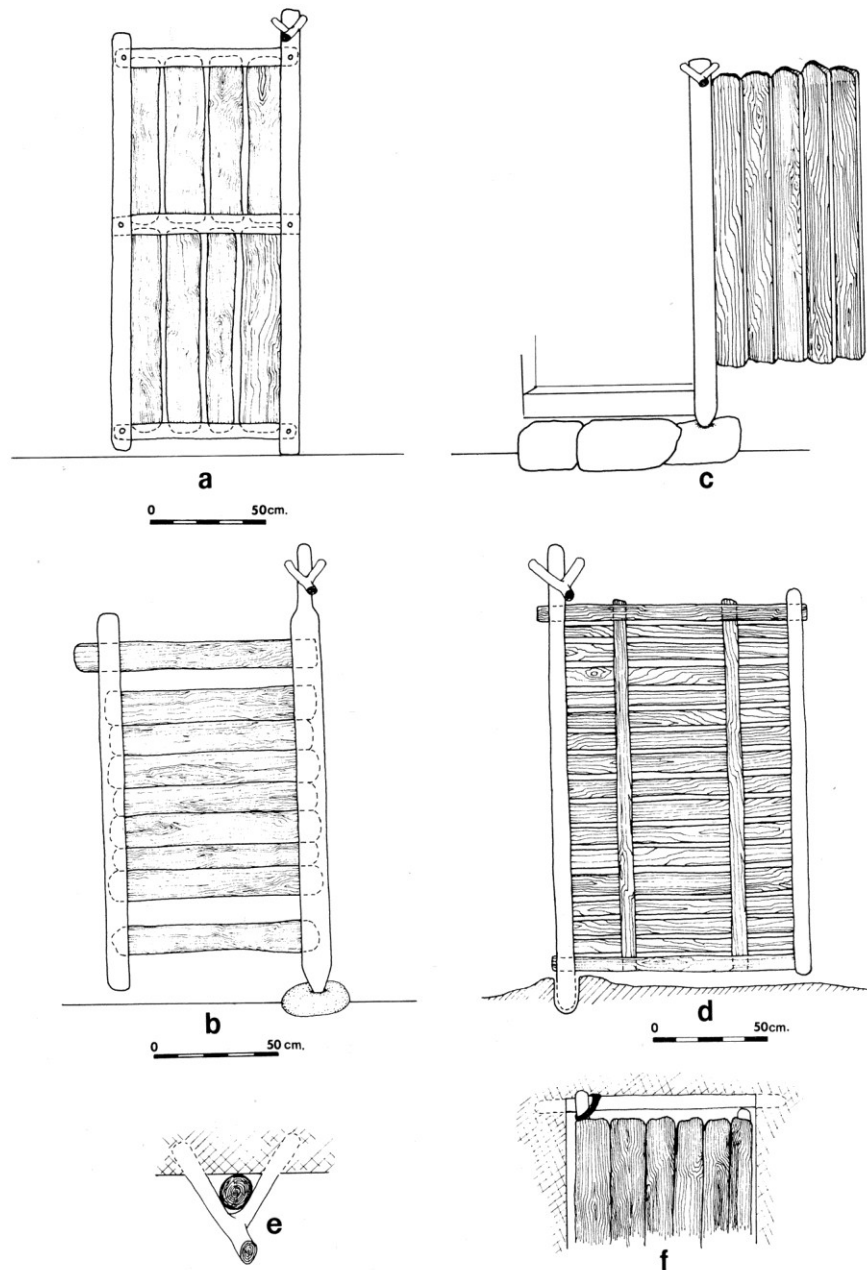


Fig. 5.1. Hasanabad doors. *a*, *b*, and *c* are house doors; *d* is a courtyard door; *e* and *f* are details to show two ways of anchoring the top of the doorpost. See also Plate 5.4.

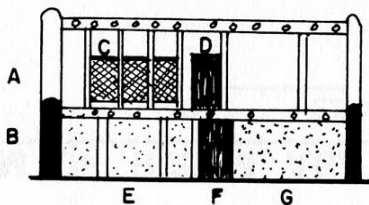
Courtyards

- Not paved but hard from use. May have rock “paving” but rare in Faraman. In spring and summer is often covered with dung and urine because animals are now above ground. Dung cleaned out daily, as it is from underground stables. Women load it onto their skirts.
- Features in courtyards: grain pits, wooden troughs for dogs, limestone slabs on which salt is spread for the animals, hearths for outdoor cooking, agricultural implements, brooms, rocks platform for water bags, mangers, “trees”
- A few have kulas, leafy bowers over summer hearths



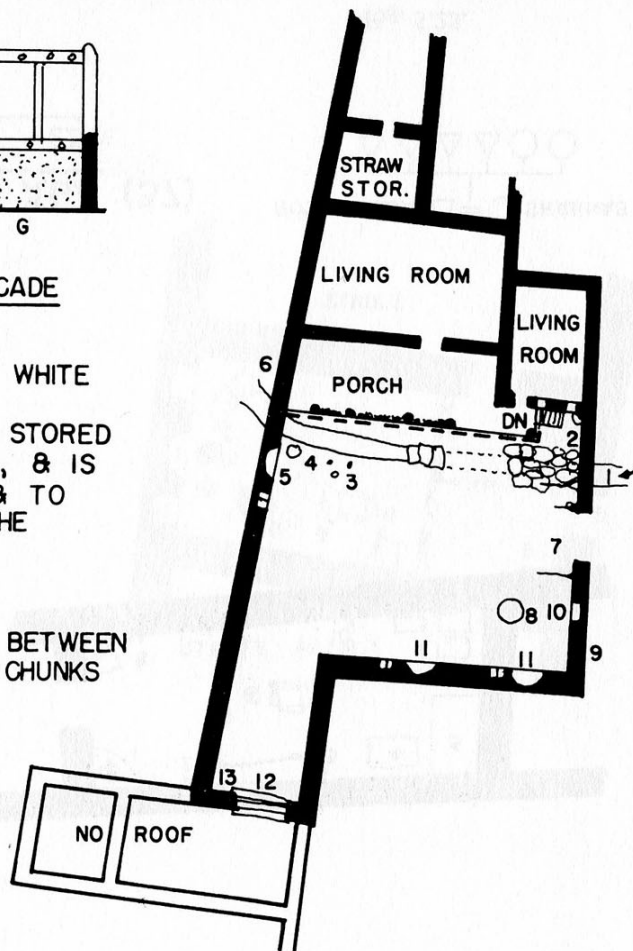


Pl. 6.1. Hasanabad. A newly remodelled second-story room (*balaxaneh*), a sign of relative affluence. Note chickenhouses on the far left of the balcony.



ELEVATION OF HOUSE FACADE

- A BALAKHANA - FRONT IS WHITE WASHED
- B ZHIRKHANA - CONTAINS STORED WOOD, HAS A HEARTH, & IS ENTRANCE TO ZAXA & TO STABLE UNDERLYING THE LIVING ROOMS
- C REED SCREEN
- D LIVING ROOM DOOR
- E POSTS WITH SPACES BETWEEN FILLED WITH MUD & CHUNKS OF STABLE FLOORING
- F DOOR
- G MUD WALL .50 THICK

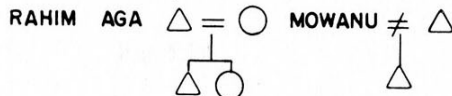


- 1 JUB
- 2 MUD CHICKEN HOUSE
- 3 POPLAR SAPPLINGS
- 4 POPLAR STUMP
- 5 HORSE MANGER AND HITCH
- 6 WALL 3 M HIGH
- 7 GATE IS TIN ON WOOD FRAME, 1.65 M HIGH
- 8 PAN WITH MILK FOR LAMBS & KIDS
- 9 WALL 2.40 M HIGH
- 10 BEE HOUSE IN NICHE
- 11 MANGERS AND HITCHES
- 12 LOGS PILED ACROSS DOORWAY
- 13 WALL 1.20 M HIGH
- 14 STEPS FROM COURTYARD UP TO BALAKHANA

Notes:

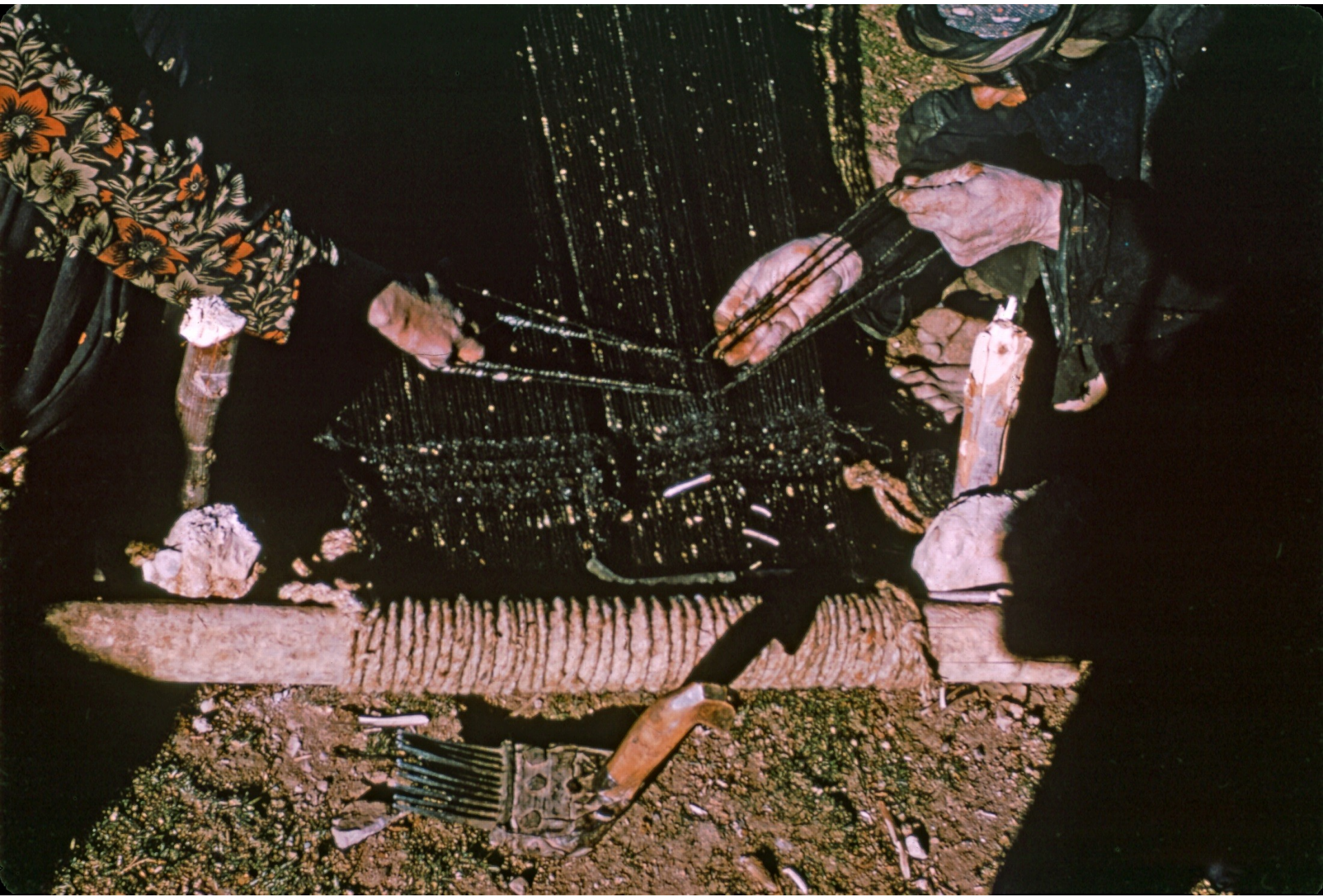
GROUND SURFACE IN COURTYARD UNEVEN & SLOPES DOWN TO THE SOUTH, MUCH DUNG & URINE FROM ANIMALS (PROBABLY LAMBS & KIDS WHICH WERE IN COURTYARD DURING SKETCHING)

HOUSEHOLD OF RAHIM AGA (36)

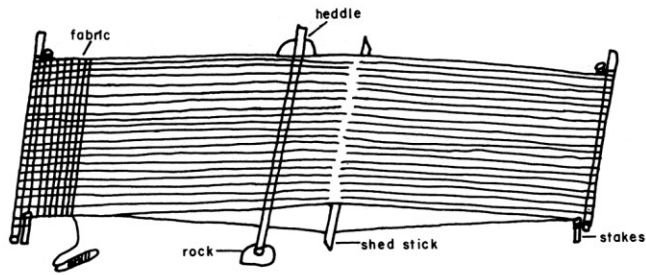


APRIL 8, 1960

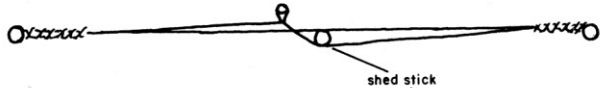
0 5m.



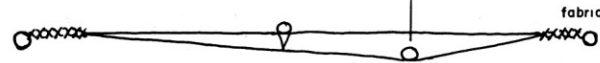




heddle raised

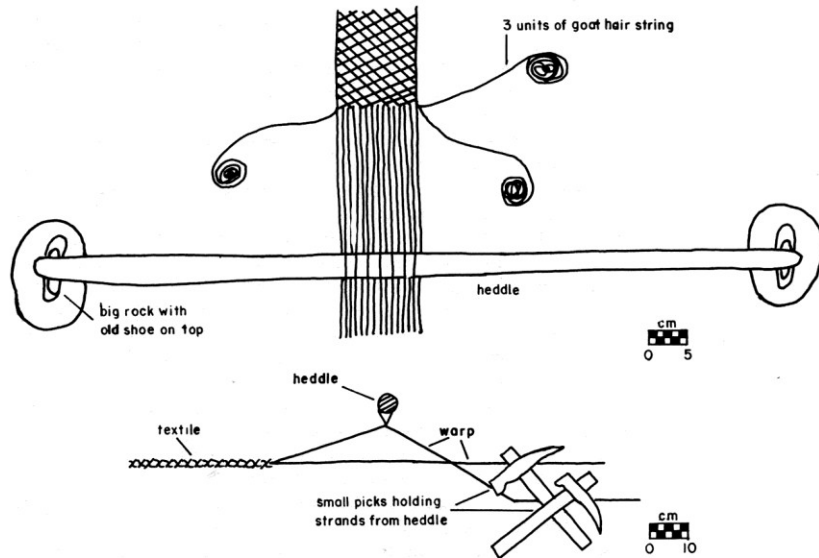


heddle at rest



0 20cm.

Fig. 5.58. Hasanabad. Horizontal loom for weaving goatshair tent cloth.



cm
0 5

cm
0 10

Fig. 5.59. Hasanabad. Horizontal loom for weaving goatshair binding strip for reed screen.

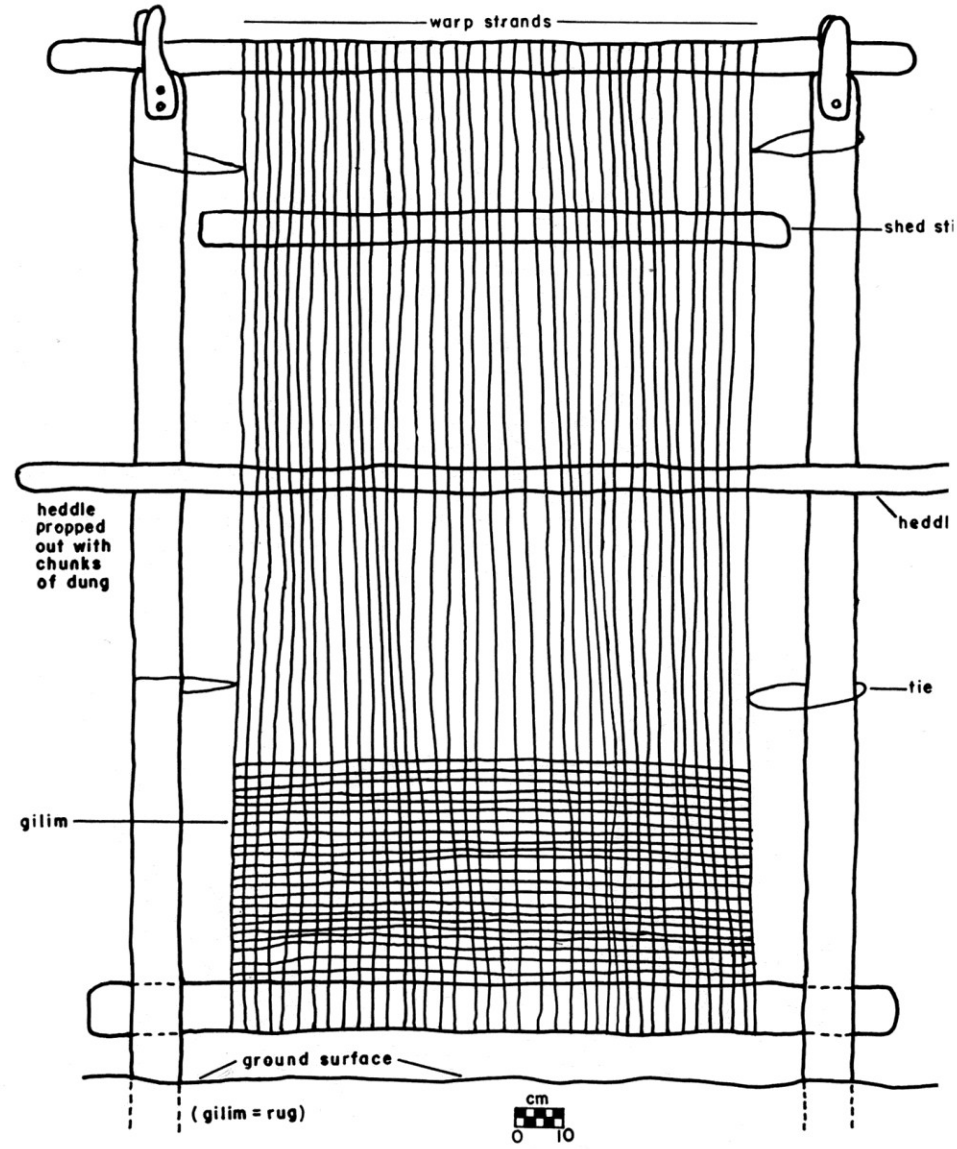


Fig. 5.54. Hasanabad. Diagram of vertical loom for weaving rugs (*gilim*).

Living Rooms

- Open hearths toward centers of room, simply stone-lined.
- Niches in walls to store items.
- Grain pit may be in corner of living room. Usually bell-shaped about 1m deep and at opening. May also have these in the courtyard.
- Chicken coops in some living rooms and courtyards.

Domestic Equipment

- *Saj*, flour sifter, bread board, mixing pan, tongs or poker, small tripod, pot lids, metal bowls, tablespoon, wooden spoon, tea kettle and tea pot, sugar bowl and adze, basketry tray for cleaning rice, flour chest.
- A few mortars and pestles and even querns.
- All houses have a chest in which valuables can be locked.
- Vertical loom for kilims. Horizontal loom for tent covers.

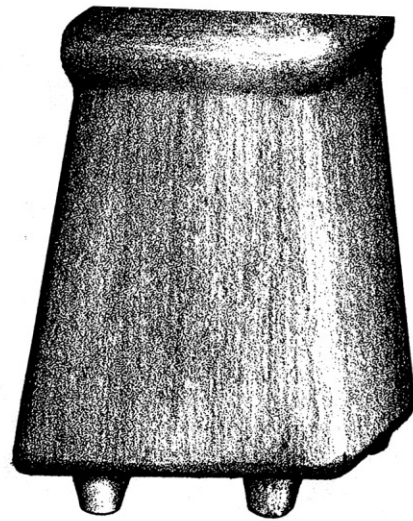


Fig. 5.43. Hasanabad. Undecorated adobe flour storage chest approximately 1 m high.

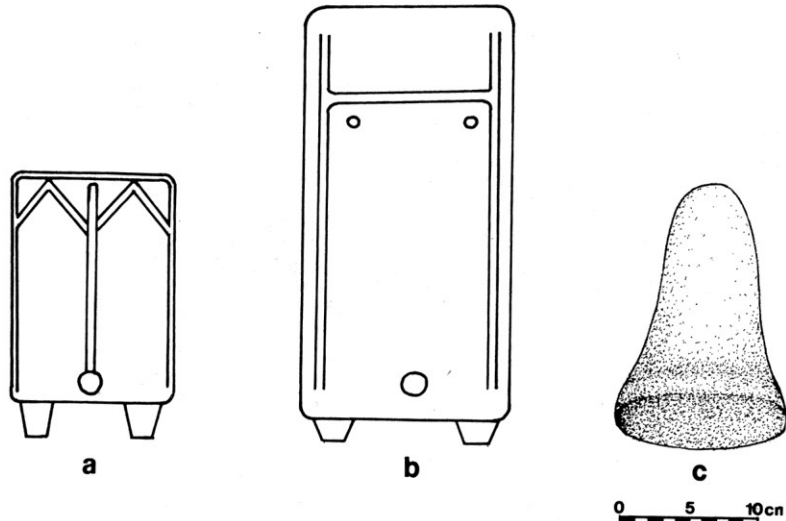


Fig. 5.44. Hasanabad. Adobe flour storage chests, and adobe plug for closing the opening of such a chest. The heights of these chests vary from 1 m to 1.3 m or so and they are usually .40 m to .65 m in width and depth.

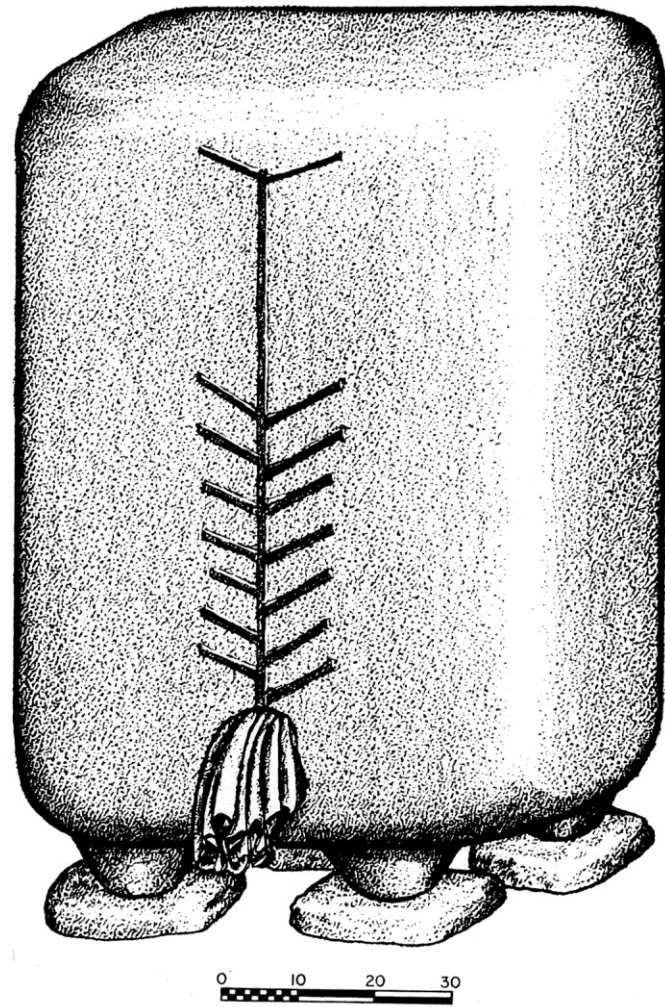


Fig. 5.42. Hasanabad. Flour storage chest (*kenü*) with opening stuffed with a rag. Design is bas-relief adobe applique, the feet rest on small flat stone slabs.

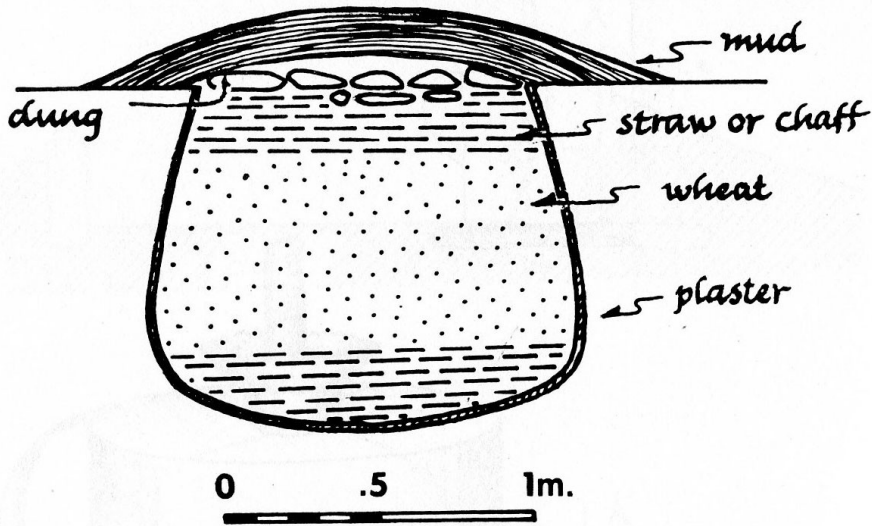


Fig. 5.4. Hasanabad. Grain storage pit.

Grain Storage pit

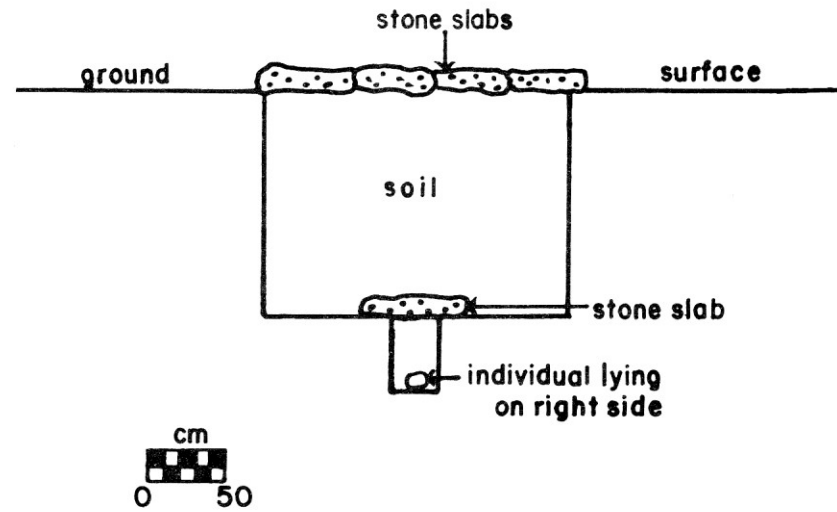


Fig. 5.67. Hasanabad. Diagrammatic section of adult's grave.

Typical grave

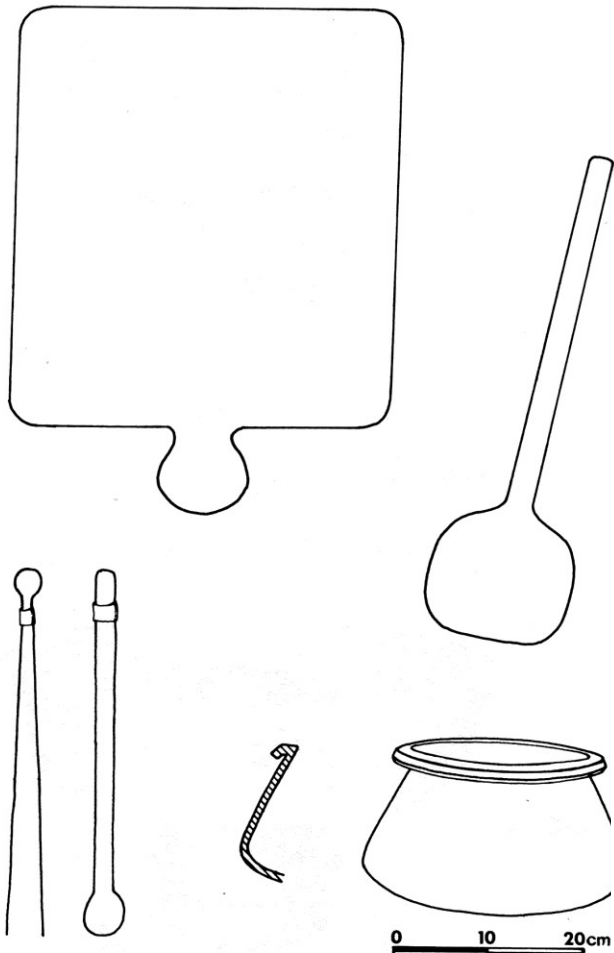


Fig. 5.34. Domestic equipment. Upper left: breadboard; upper right: spatula; lower left: tongs for picking up coals from the hearth or for handling other hot objects; lower right: cook pot (Farsi *dig*; Laki *choncheh*).

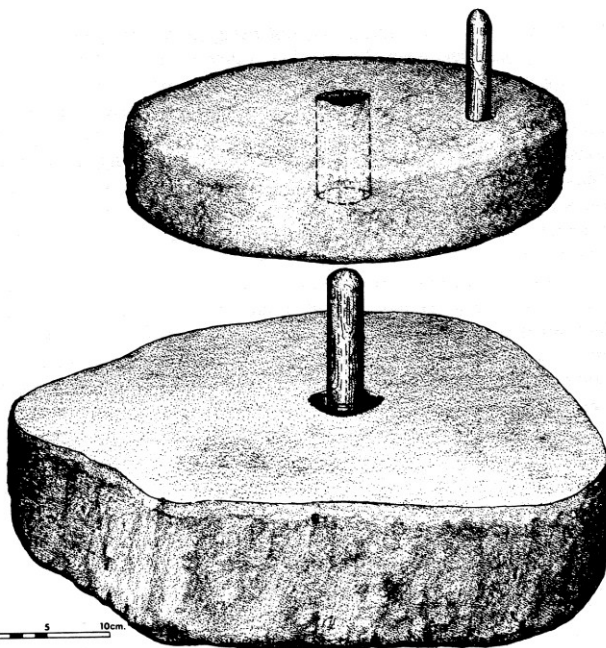


Fig. 5.47. Hasanabad. Rotary quern (see Feilberg, 1952:Fig. 63).

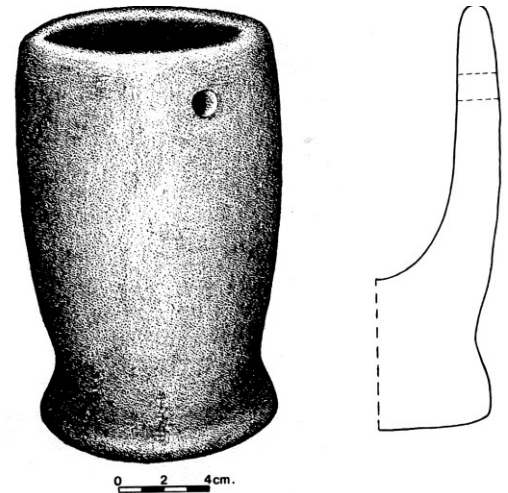


Fig. 5.45. Hasanabad. Wooden mortar. Compare Feilberg, 1952:Fig. 76.

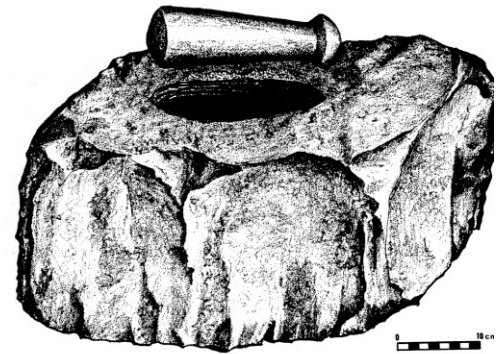


Fig. 5.46. Hasanabad. Boulder mortar, with pestle.

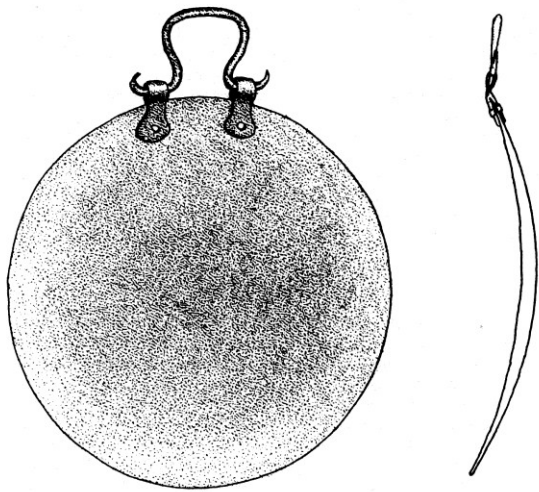


Fig. 5.33. Hasanabad. Metal plate (*saj*) for cooking bread.

*Only a few people in Hasanabad have samovars, an article widely used in Iran. I saw one in Husain Reza's house and one in Ali Husain's house, both of the cheaper tin kind rather than the heavier brass variety.

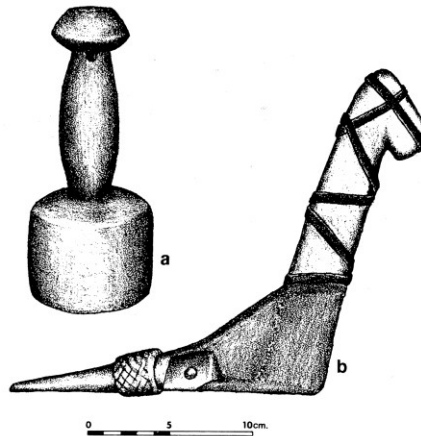


Fig. 5.40. Hasanabad. Household items. *a.* (left) Wooden meat pounder. *b.* (right) Weaving tool (*karkit*) for consolidating newly woven weft by pounding it.

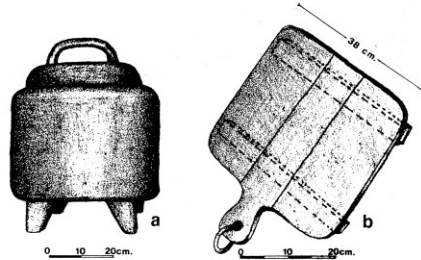


Fig. 5.41. Hasanabad. Adobe flour storage chest (*khariz*; left), and breadboard (right).

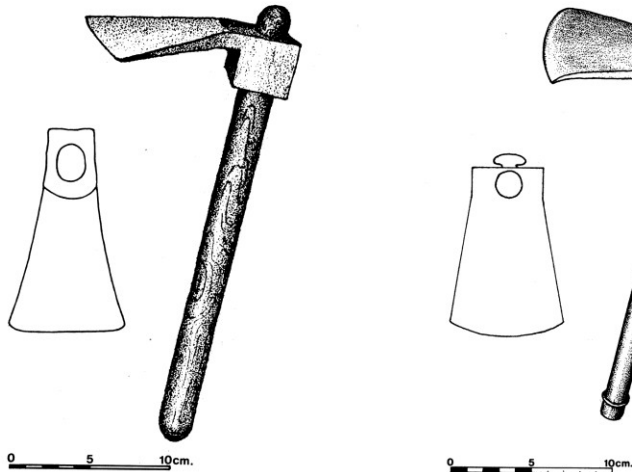


Fig. 5.38. Hasanabad. Wooden-handled sugar hatchet.

Fig. 5.39. Hasanabad. All-metal sugar hatchet.

Household utensils

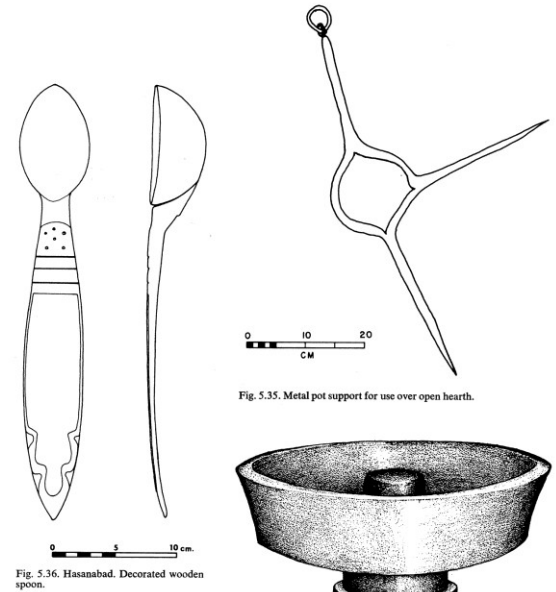


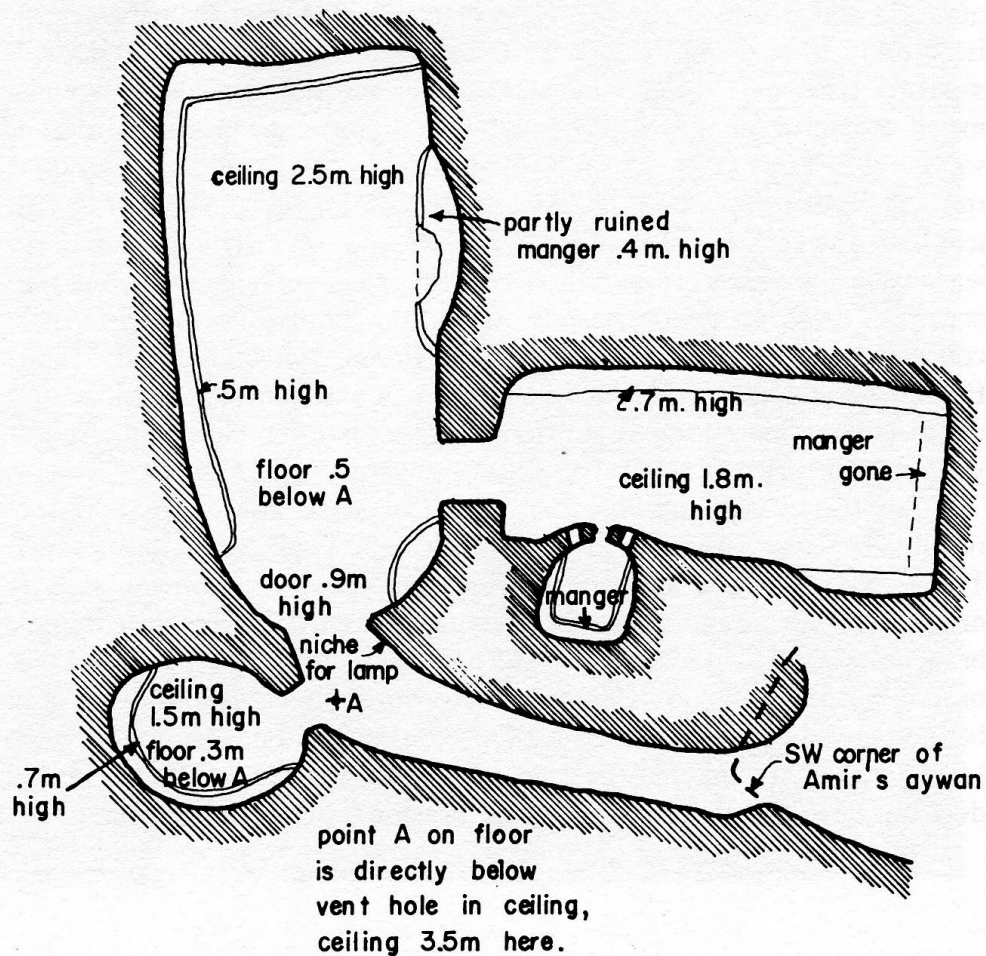
Fig. 5.35. Metal pot support for use over open hearth.

Fig. 5.36. Hasanabad. Decorated wooden spoon.



Fig. 5.37. Hasanabad. Wooden sugar bowl. These are bought from the *Kawli* or in the city bazaar. The pedestal in the center is where the chunks of loaf sugar are chopped into small pieces.





AMIR'S SUBTERRANEAN STABLE

SCALE: 1: 125

0 1.25 2.5



Fig. 5.32. Hasanabad. Amir's subterranean stable.



































Supernatural

- Evil Eye is real danger; also wicked *jins* and *peris*. 233
- “Children, animals, and even *dugh*
- Manufactured by the women of the household are protected by charms and amulets” 233
- *Mashallah* (what God wills) is invoked when praise is given to ward off evil eye.
- Charms are worn by children, blue is particularly effective, as are words from the Koran.
- *Jin* a witch-like creature (female) that can possess a person. Particularly dangerous during childbirth, but also accounts for various diseases and afflictions

Examples of charms

- *Mashallah* (what God wills) is invoked when praise is given to ward off evil eye.
- Charms are worn by children, blue is particularly effective, as are words from the Koran.
- Examples: on child's back, a brass bell, two white cowrie shells (excellent protection against Evil Eye), a blue glazed paste disc with multiple perforations, and a cloth case with Kuranic inscriptions; on his left shoulder three buttons –orange, yellow and white, on his right shoulder a red button, a blue glazed perforated disc, an old coin, two blue beads, and a large pink bead.
- Another boy had a rooster bone, a blue glazed disc, a cowrie shell, a small comb-like wooden object (*tawi*).
- Chicken bones for *mubaraki* (blessing).

















Behavioral Correlates

- Naroll (1962) estimated that there is 10m² per person of roofed area. At Faraman the average roofed area per person is 21.0m², and the average roofed dwelling area is 7.3m² with a great deal of variability (as seen in the house plans). 291 (see Figure of room sizes)
- Average number of rooms per family is 4.5 (including underground stables)
- Richer families have two living rooms (one a guest parlor). Poorer folks have smaller compounds.
- Living rooms always have a stone-lined hearth, wall niches or pegs for storage, furniture, bedding, and vessels for cooking and serving food.

Area and Function of Household Space

Household complexes in Hasanabad consist of unroofed space (walled courtyards) and three kinds of roofed spaces: living rooms, stables, and storerooms or utility rooms. In addition, there is sometimes a passageway or foyer, the *aywan*.

Average dimensions of the measured examples of Hasanabad room types are as follows:*

Living rooms (n = 25)	{ 6.25 m long 2.90 m wide }	} = 18.20 m ² in area (average of individual room areas = 18.40 m ²)
(n = 11)	2.50 m high	
<i>Aywans</i> (n = 5)	{ 3.45 m long 2.00 m wide }	} = 6.85 m ² (average of individual room areas = 6.85 m ²)
(n = 2)	2.30 m high	
Above-ground:		
Stables (n = 14)	{ 4.40 m long 2.70 m wide }	} = 11.85 m ² (average of individual room areas = 12.25 m ²)
Utility rooms (n = 3)	{ 4.90 m long 2.65 m wide }	} = 13.05 m ² (average of individual room areas = 13.00 m ²)
Storerooms (n = 13)	{ 4.95 m long 2.50 m wide }	} = 12.35 m ² (average of individual room areas = 12.40 m ²)

It is interesting that the average floor area of the living rooms is greater than that of the stables, but this is because the walled courtyard is used as a summer nighttime corral and the underground stables are used to house animals in the winter. Above-ground stables are primarily for oxen, donkeys, and horses — animals not owned in large numbers by ordinary villagers.

Land & Storage

- A family of five, has 5-6 ha of land sown annually with 150 *mann* (1500 kg) of wheat that will be ground for family use. The 41 households, therefore, require 120-125 ha of dry-farmed wheat and barley.
- Family has 1ha wheat, 0.5 ha barley, but with yearly fallow, need 3ha in all. 293
- Straw storage very important, to be used as fodder and also for plaster.
- Storerooms lack features, but usually have mud mangers.
- Storerooms are for fuel or animal fodder and not for food – pits and bins are for food.

Male and Female Artifacts and Activity Patterns

Deetz (1967) discusses the archaeological implications of sexual division of labor as it may be reflected in preserved items of material culture. This division of labor is quite clear-cut at Hasanabad. A list of male and female activities follows.

Activities Dominated by Women

1. Weaving of rugs and other homemade cloth
2. Preparing and serving food
3. Milking animals and preparing the various milk products
4. Spinning wool, yarn, and cotton
5. Sewing
6. Fetching water
7. Collecting dung and brush fuel
8. Producing and caring for the children
9. Cleaning dung out of the stables
10. Manufacturing of dung cake fuel
11. Laundering clothing

(Women also provide a good deal of the necessary labor during the grain harvesting season.)

Activities Dominated by Men

1. Animal herding
2. Heavy agricultural work (plowing, sowing, transporting grain to threshing floor, preparation of irrigation channels)
3. Securing of firewood from the hills across the river
4. Shearing of sheep and goats
5. Fish trap construction and maintenance
6. Heavy construction work
7. Manufacture of basketry
8. Manufacture of string slippers
9. Shopping or transacting other business in the city