



GOURNA SURVEY



III WORLD STUDIES
ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
36 BEDFORD SQUARE
LONDON W.C.1

The work presented here is the result of two months field work carried out in Egypt as part of the III World Studies Program. The aim was to re-evaluate indigenous planning, design and construction techniques for contemporary application.

Under this aim 4 subject areas were studied:

1. Climatic evaluation of traditional houses in old Cairo and of test rooms at the Cairo building research centre.
2. Survey of old Cairo.
3. Comparative studies of New Gournah, an architect designed village and vernacular villages in the Luxor area.
4. Mud-brick, vault and dome construction; including building a dwelling unit applying the construction method.

The group worked in Egypt from 25th March to 10th May 1973 and then in London wrote the reports and mounted an exhibition of the work done.

Those participating were:

Omar El Farouk
John Norton
Wendy Etchells
Jocelyn Levaux
Allan Cain
Farroukh Afshar

VILLAGE STUDY, NEW GOURNA

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INTRODUCTION

"Architectural Feedback", that is analysing the performance of a project after it has been in use for some time, is an exercise whose value is widely accepted but seldom carried out.

Studying a rural situation to establish guidelines for designing in such areas is an even rarer event. Our stay at New Gourna provided us with an opportunity to do both.

New Gourna is a village designed and built by Prof. Hasan Fathy in 1948. It is built entirely out of mud brick, using vault and dome roof construction. We spent four weeks living in New Gourna, building a dwelling unit and carrying out this survey.

A lot of our background information on the subject was gathered through a book Professor Fathy wrote on his experience in building the village.* This was complemented by long talks with Professor Fathy while we were in Cairo prior to going to the village. The simple experience of living in the village amongst people who were friendly, always ready to invite us into their houses, talk about their problems and take us to friends in the neighbouring villages who were equally friendly, and ready to show us around, helped us to build up a good picture of life in the area and how the villages we studied met, modified and were modified by these life styles.

* "A tale of two villages" - Professor H. Fathy - Ministry of Culture, Cairo.



LUXOR SKYLINE - from across the Nile.



TYPICAL HOUSE - by the road between Luxor & Gournah.



On the Luxor-Gournah road - OLD GOURNA in the background.



OLD GOURNA.

NEW GOURNA

BACKGROUND - 1945-1973

The village of New Gourna is now about 28 years old. It differs from the neighbouring villages in that it was built according to a specific plan drawn up and following the concepts of Prof. Hassan Fathy. We spent three weeks living in one of the houses in the village, building a small mudbrick house and carrying out a visual survey of New Gourna, in particular eight of the houses within it. The idea of the survey was primarily to compare New Gourna as it is today with (a) New Gourna as it was 28 years ago according to Prof. Fathy's design concepts.

(b) Neighbouring, traditional, unplanned villages e.g. parts of Baerat.

(c) Old Gourna, 1 km. away, still growing out of the Tombs of the Nobles and which by now should have been evacuated and all the inhabitants moved to N. Gourna, if all had gone according to the governments original intentions. (see map).

This brings one to mention the history of New Gourna, why it was designed and why only a quarter of it was eventually built.

Old Gourna, as stated above, is sited on the hillsides comprising part of the Cemetery of Thebes. At the time of construction, 7000 people lived in the five hamlets which make up Old Gourna. These people almost entirely depended for their existence on tomb robbery, which had been started by their fathers fifty years before.

New Gourna as designed in 1945

The immediate environment is arid and hot and could not support all these people and adjacent farmland was mostly farmed by rich landowners and inaccessible to the Gournis.

Because of the loss of a great number of priceless treasures which were found by the villagers and sold off cheaply to the dealers in the city, the Dept. of Antiquities responsible for the Cemetery of Thebes, decided that the whole village had to be moved and the area taken over completely by the Government. It was estimated that 1 million Egyptian pounds would cover the cost of designing and building a new village 1 km. away towards the river and Luxor, on a field kept permanently free from flood waters by a system of dikes. The new village was to house 900 families, which meant that in the time allocated, 30 houses, or at least 3 family neighbourhoods, had to be built per month. This was to be New Gourna.

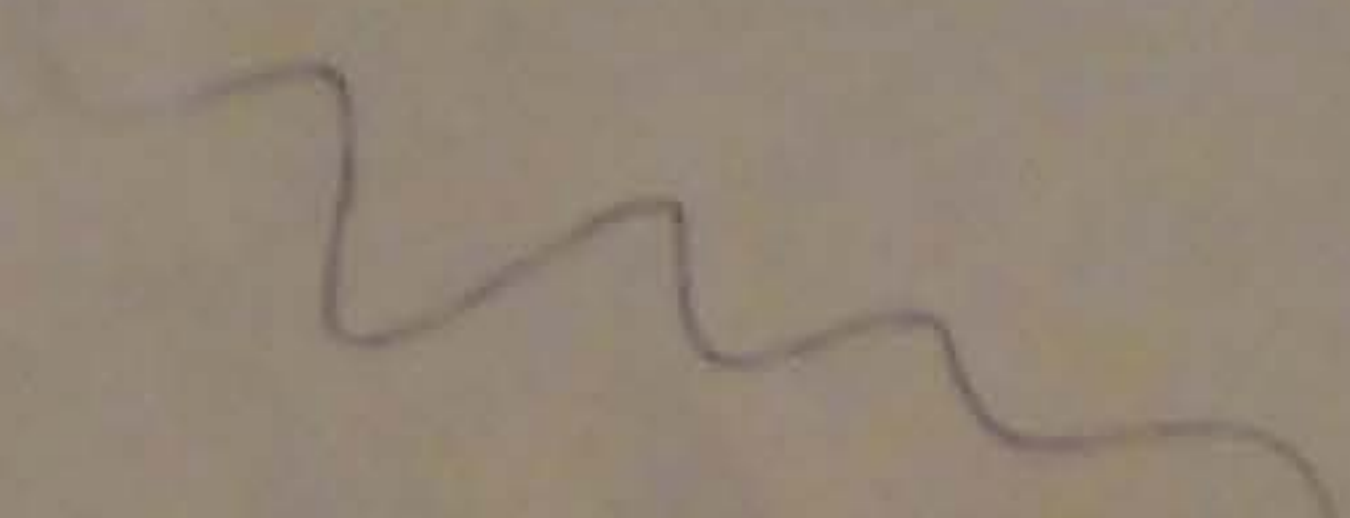
a decision *as if the fault is with the plan*

However, making plans and carrying them through are two different things. The inhabitants might not necessarily wish to move as one would want them to and perhaps the reasons given do not satisfy them. *There was a ministerial decree but never put into action.*

Is it right to move people from their homes and familiar surroundings to a totally new environment? *year! These were tomb robbers and they were relieved from registered tombs.*

Professor Fathy explains the reasons for the villagers' reluctance to move in his book, Gourna - a tale of two villages. "First the patriarchal system is very strong and everybody obeys the heads of families, who, in Gourna, were tomb robbers. They were both feared and respected by the people, and they used

New Gournia as surveyed in 1973



4

their power to preserve their trade. They had no intention of giving up their nice, profitable, squalid houses in the cemetery with treasure waiting to be mined under their floors, to move to a new, hygeinic beautiful village away from the tombs. Second, the Gournis are all closely inter-related and no-one would fail to support a family chief in any enterprise".¹

All this opposition led to the village being flooded twice by breaking the dike and letting the Nile waters in.

This had a great effect on the land Gournia was being built on, which ^{is of the swelling soil type and} had been dry for thirty years, so that the earth was hard and compact. After the flooding, enormous cracks (at times three metres deep and fifty cm. wide) appeared on the land.

"Since the subsoil water rises every year to within 2 metres of the surface and the foundations of the houses in Gournia were of the customary strip type, made of rubble masonry and earth mortar, laid in trenches 1m 50cm deep, each house would be sitting on a thin crust of soil floating on liquid mud. The cracks would allow the soil to slide laterally and the houses themselves would certainly crack."²

¹ Gournia - a Tale of Two villages" - H. Fathy, pub. Ministry of Culture Cairo, 1969 (limited copies) pps 225.

² Ibid. p.228



A. STREET VIEW
SHOWING ADDITIONS.

B. GENERAL VIEW SHOWING BLOCKED WINDOW & DISUSED PUMP.



This ~~is~~ fact did happen, to most of the buildings in Gournna. *Cracks Hassan Fathy* *But These*

Apart from the difficulties with the Gournis, Prof. Fathy encountered increasing obstruction from the Antiquities Dept. It seems as if all interest in the project had died and as much as possible was done to stop the continuation of Gournna. After repeated attempts by Hassan Fathy to obtain support from various other departments for the continuation of the project work eventually ground to a halt.

Only a quarter of the village had been built. A large number of the completed buildings were public buildings; mosque, Khan, crafts school, market place, boys and girls primary school, theatre - these now stand deserted and unused and decayed, a total waste of the materials and the money gone into building them! As for the rest of the village, the few houses that had been built were taken over largely by families for whom they were not originally intended for and have been changed and adapted over the years to suit the needs of these families. (see maps: Gournna 1945 x 1973)

Prof. Fathy had conceived of building up new crafts and self-sufficiency within the village. For a time, while he was there to supervise the proceedings, his ideas were carried out. New crafts were established and public buildings were used. But on his departure no-one continued this work and the crafts died out.

Now after so much time, no more houses have been put up, the village has not grown and Old Gournna still exists.

not a penny was spent on repairs - on the courtyards

The school courtyard was intentionally flooded after a committee of university professors advised to keep the irrigation ditches and agriculture 20 yds from the buildings



C. STREETS ARE OFTEN USED TO STORE STRAW AND OTHER ANIMALS.

The study of Gournna necessitated on the one hand walking through the streets of the village with camera and pad, noting structural additions, use of space grouping of families and success or failure of original concepts. On the other hand it meant drinking down innumerable glasses of syrupy sweet tea whilst trying to communicate in very broken Arabic and very broken English and much gesticulation with the 8 families whose homes we studied in detail.³

On our survey of the village we had to bear in mind the fact that so few houses had been built and that most of them were not occupied by families they were not specifically designed for. Also, due to the floodings⁴ most of the buildings had cracked and had subsequently been plastered over in those places, giving the impression of a certain amount of dilapidation.

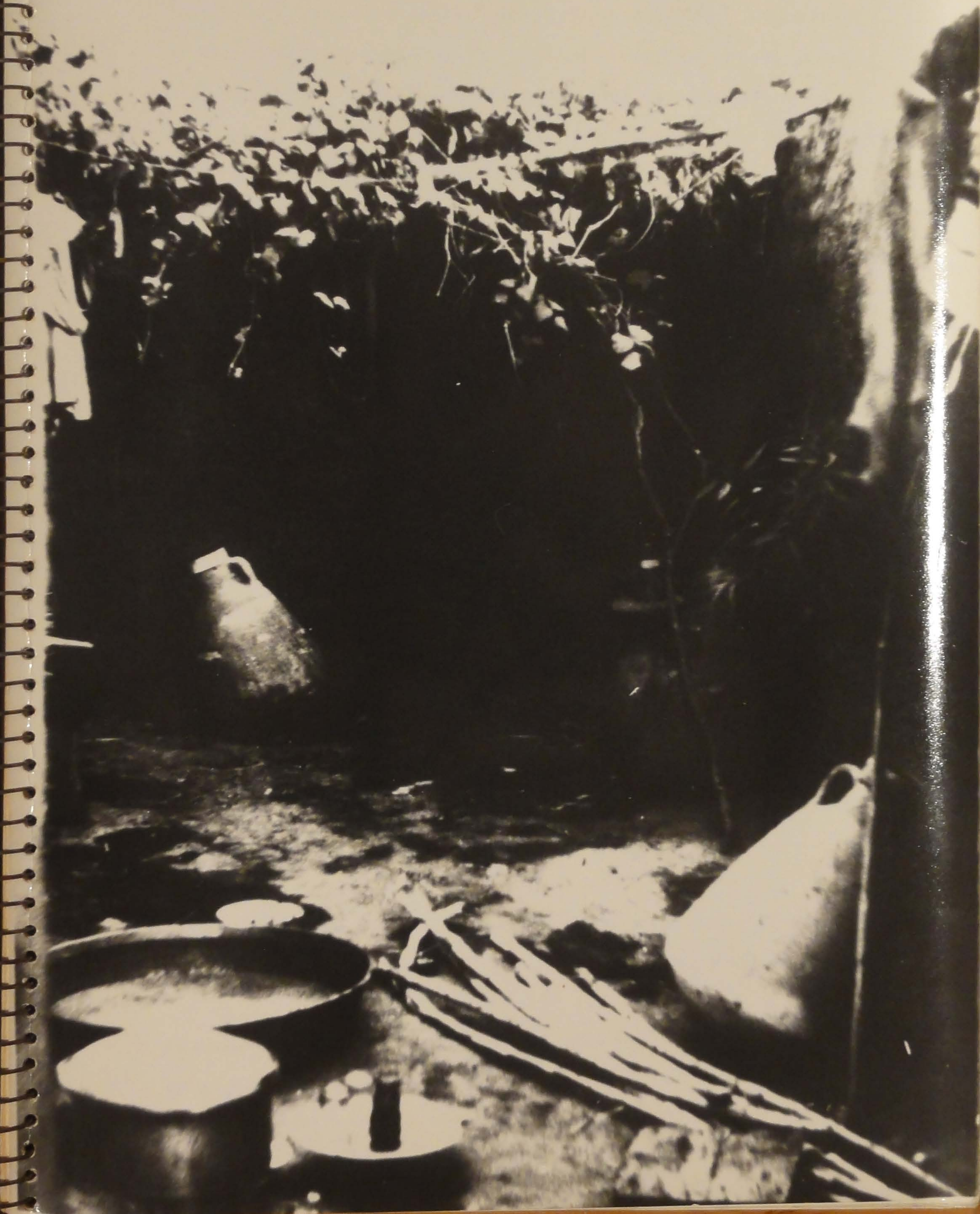
Soil mechanics engineers and structural engineer should have been invited to determine the causes scientifically so as to avoid mistakes in the future if there were any not to blame mud-brick

We did observe that most of the families had extended or added on to their houses, either by constructing a mud brick wall outside their door and making an external courtyard, which usually housed animals, or acted as an extra cooking and washing area, or by adding on another level to their house or merely by building a small mastaba or seat outside their entrance so that that piece of street outside their house somehow became an integral part of their house. This they could very easily do, as, seemingly contrary to his concepts, Prof. Fathy had designed extremely wide streets and large open spaces which did

³ Some of the time we had an interpreter in Mohd. Ali one of the richer village members who had been educated in Cairo University and now worked for a sugar-cane factory. He also owned land.

⁴ According to Mohd. Ali the whole village had not been flooded. He offered another reason that may have contributed to the cracking. The site had been agricultural before and still moist when built on. Therefore it began to dry out and contract under the buildings causing them to crack.

INTERIOR OF ADDITIONAL COURT NEW GOURNA



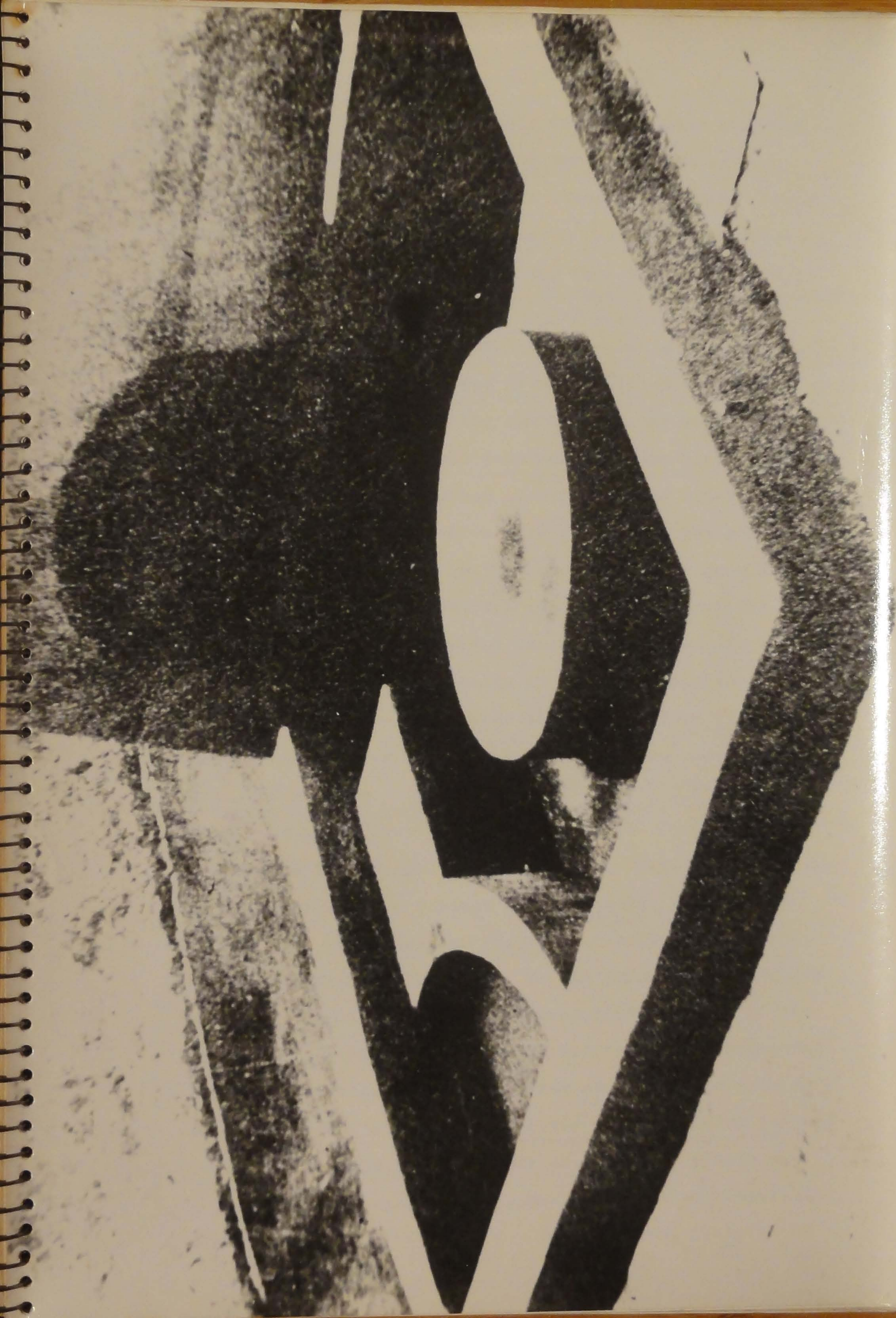
7.

not work well climatically or environmentally - most open spaces were very hot and dusty and consequently very empty (this fact can also partly be attributed to only a quarter of the village being built). Another very important point that we noticed was the great number of animals tethered outside in the streets and living inside the houses, at times occupying what Hassan Fathy had designed as the guest room and even at times occupying the whole of the upper floor. This led to a great many environmental offshoots, e.g. an insupportable number of flies and many great mounds of straw and accumulated shit all over the place.

For some reason it seemed that some families had not used the special mangers or stables Hassan Fathy had provided in the design of each house, or else needed to extend these into other parts of the house. Consequently many of the windows on the ground floor had been blocked up - as these corresponded to the rooms where animals were kept. There were also other reasons for blocking up openings; view, privacy, sun and wind. (When the houses were built it was assumed that the villagers would fill in the windows themselves using wooden shutters. However, most of them are too poor to afford the very scarce wood and it is more convenient for them to just block up the windows and doors permanently.

It was actually a fantastic experience coming out of the blinding midday heat and entering a totally blocked up dark, cool room.

The specially designed pump house was not used and was decaying slowly and filling up with straw. We asked why.....'its broken..' and presumably no-one could fix it. As it was, the two



NEW GOURNA WASHING ARRANGEMENT

community water supplies were a tap and a pump situated out in the open in the heat and were switched on by the authorities only at certain times of the day. Other pumps, 3 or 4 of them, belonged to individual families who allowed other families to use them if they needed to.

A special study of the families living in these houses, their origin, when they occupied the houses? how? i.e. with any permission and from whom, or without permission etc. Their occupations, number of members etc.

The carefully designed washing arrangements inside the houses were not used by any of the families we visited, or, it seems, by any of the families in the village, and were also filling up with pots and pans and straw. The

in the beginning and for 10 years one family had been using these but now they left the house behind was inhabited by a squatter etc.

where did they dispose of the waste water?

easiest and simplest method of carrying and storing water is still in the large water jars carried by the women on their heads. It seems that if one is to introduce a new, more hygienic system into the traditional lifestyles of people, it is of fundamental importance to educate them into realising the advantages to be gained and to accept it. If this is not done then it seems obvious that these people will return to their much used, more secure and reliable methods.

The words secure and reliable are value judgements in the wrong sense - approving of the messy ways of throwing out the waste water in the courtyards and streets etc.

New Gourna has changed over the years. This change, which started out of such strange circumstances, has been an alteration, addition and adaption to various elements of the village and the home. We ask ourselves what would have happened and what would Gourna look like now if the whole village had been built and all the people had moved in and everything had been started and continued according to Hassan Fathy's concepts, instead of ideas being cut off

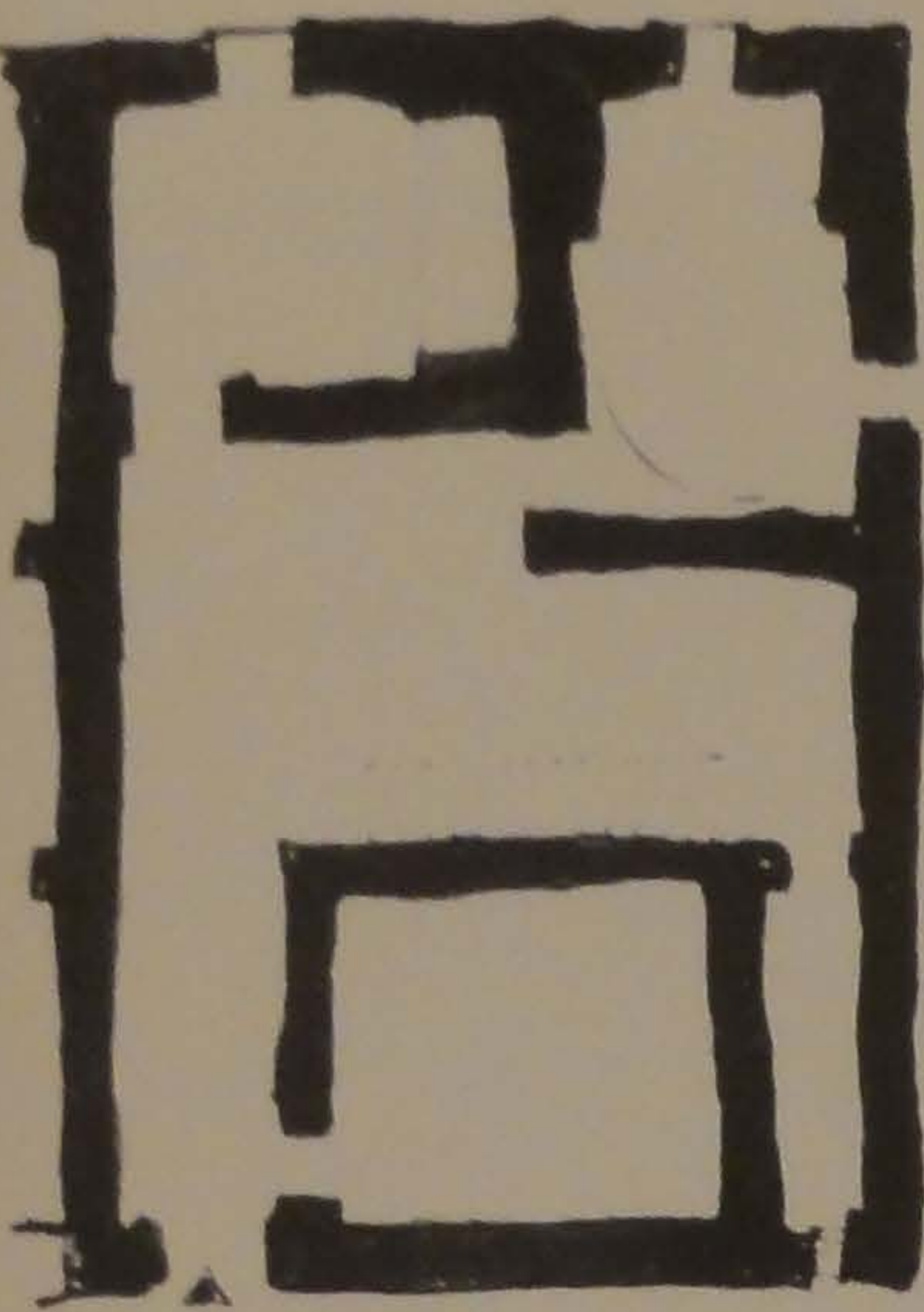
usurpations of

before they could really be put to the test. There are a great many lessons to be learnt from Gourna, especially from the people living there. For in actual fact, it is

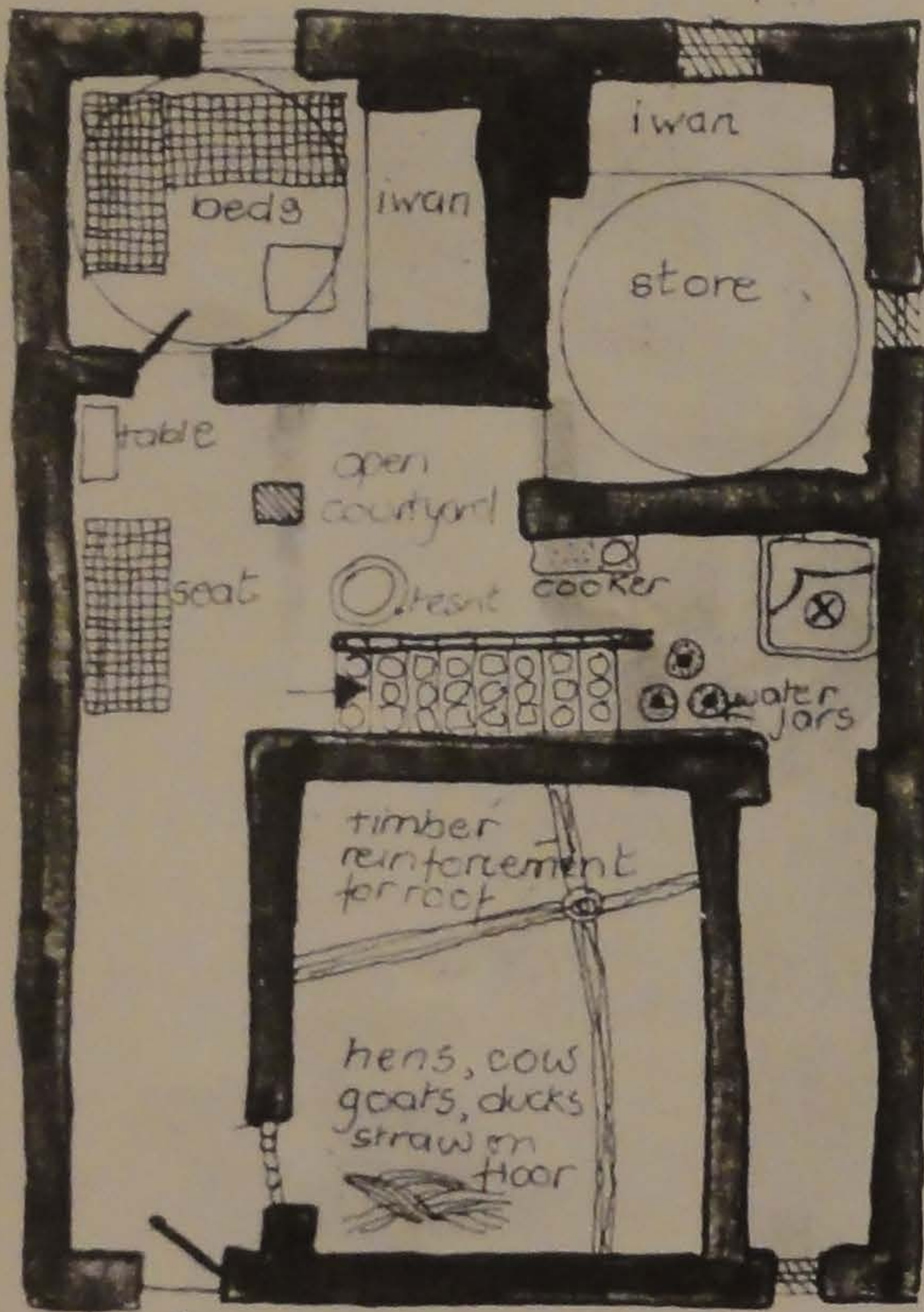
what are these ideas? They are clearly seen in the book - so to be fair to the research and give them credit to be taken one by one and judged together.

with the pro-squatters behaviour and reactions. If they didn't use a latrine and shit in front of the house on the street or in the courtyard of

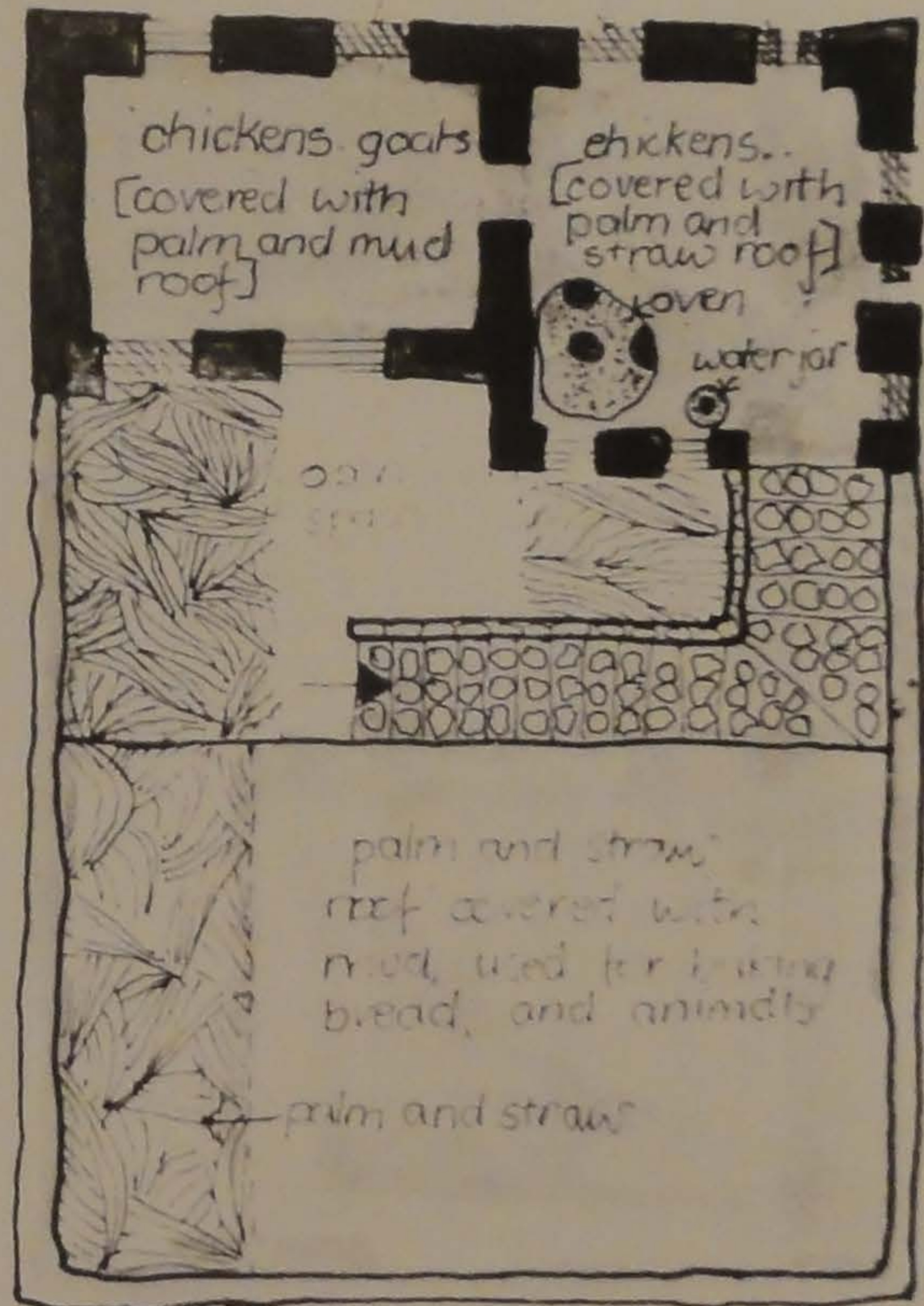
AHMEDS HOUSE



D. AHMED'S TERRACE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

HOUSEHOLD 1.

HOUSEHOLD 1.

Ahmed is the village guardian and earns £10 E a month for his work. He and his wife, Ferrida were very helpful making sure that we were alright in our house. They have four little boys - two of them were blonde - with very cheeky grins, and always dirty, and up to mischief, a real handful for their mother.

Ferrida was always up to her eyes in work and wasn't particularly house-proud. Animals were all over the place, and like all the other houses, the rooms given over to them were always clean and had fresh straw on the ground, and they were well looked after.

Nearly all the villagers are very poor and rely on their animals for food, as well as flour. On one of my visits to Ferrida she was making a sweet with her flour instead of the normal sun-baked bread.

She mixed the flour and water into a dough, and rolled it very finely on a round wooden table with a long, thin wooden rolling pin. She then folded it like a pancake, and shredded it extremely finely.

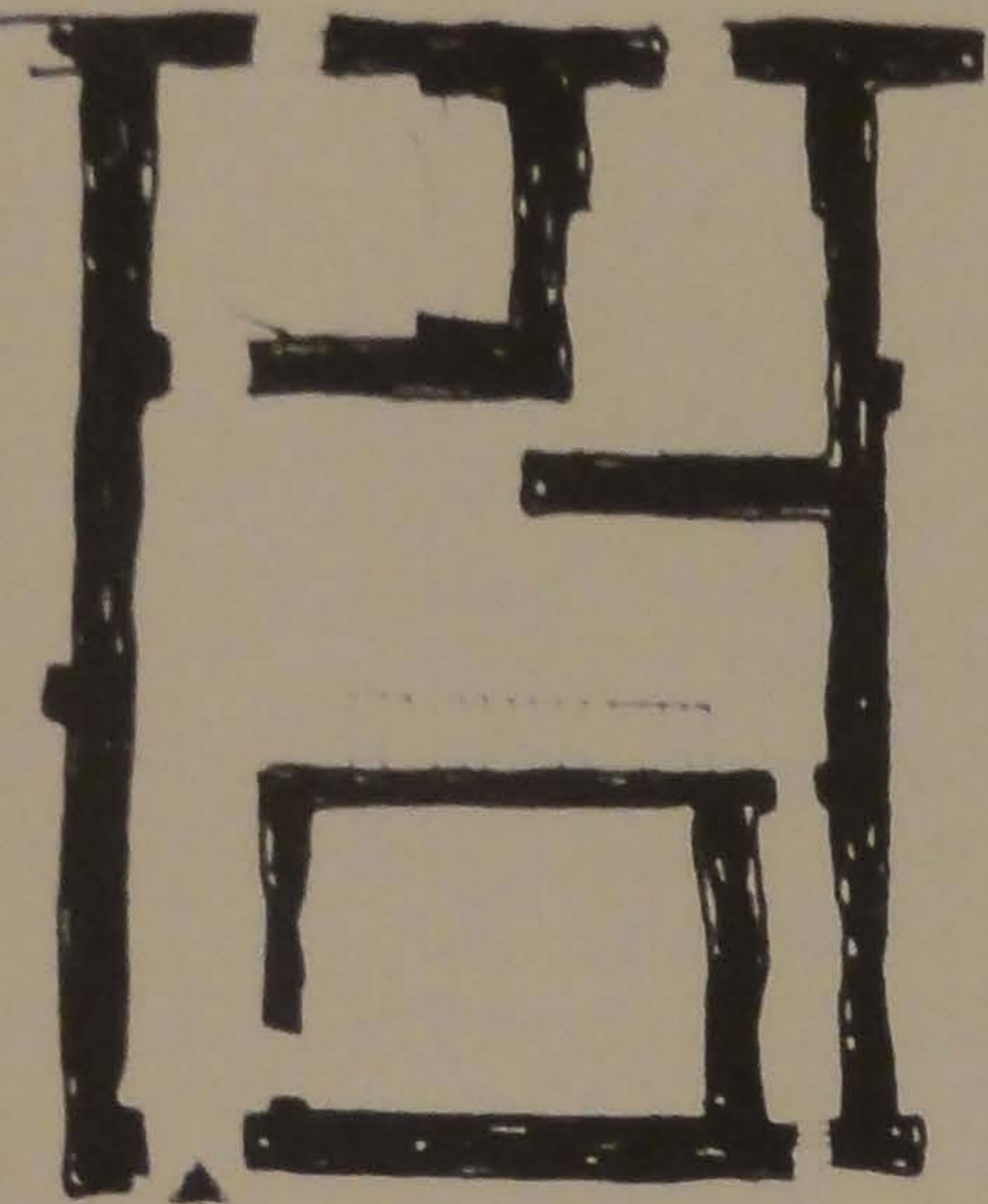
She put a bowl of water on the primus stove and placed the shredded dough in a pan on top of it, covered with a damp cloth, letting it steam for a few minutes. It was then mixed with sugar and eaten with a spoon. The baby loved it!

The baby was allowed to crawl all over the place and no-one seemed to notice the flies all over his face, in his eyes and mouth, as with all the other young children in the village.



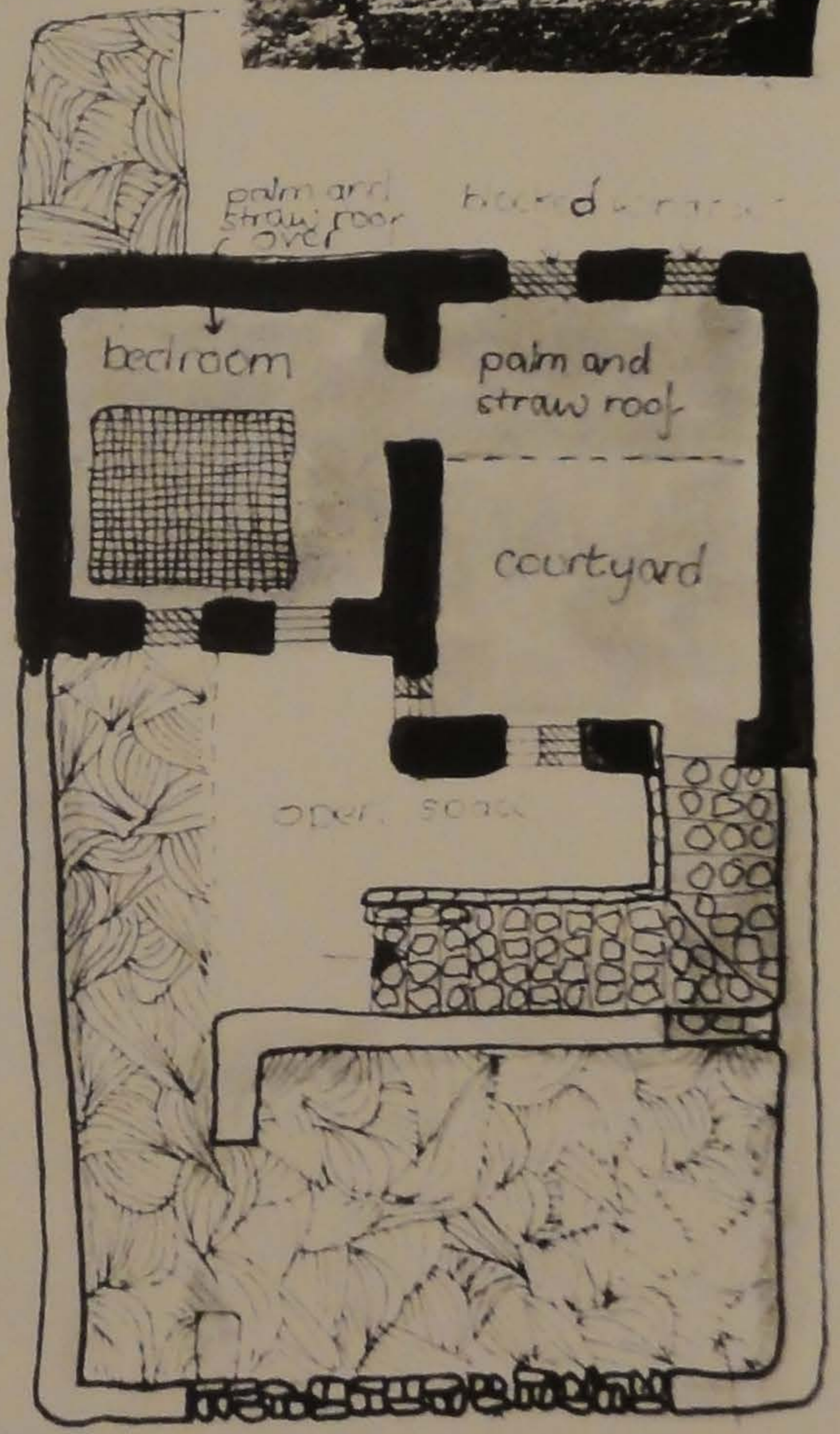
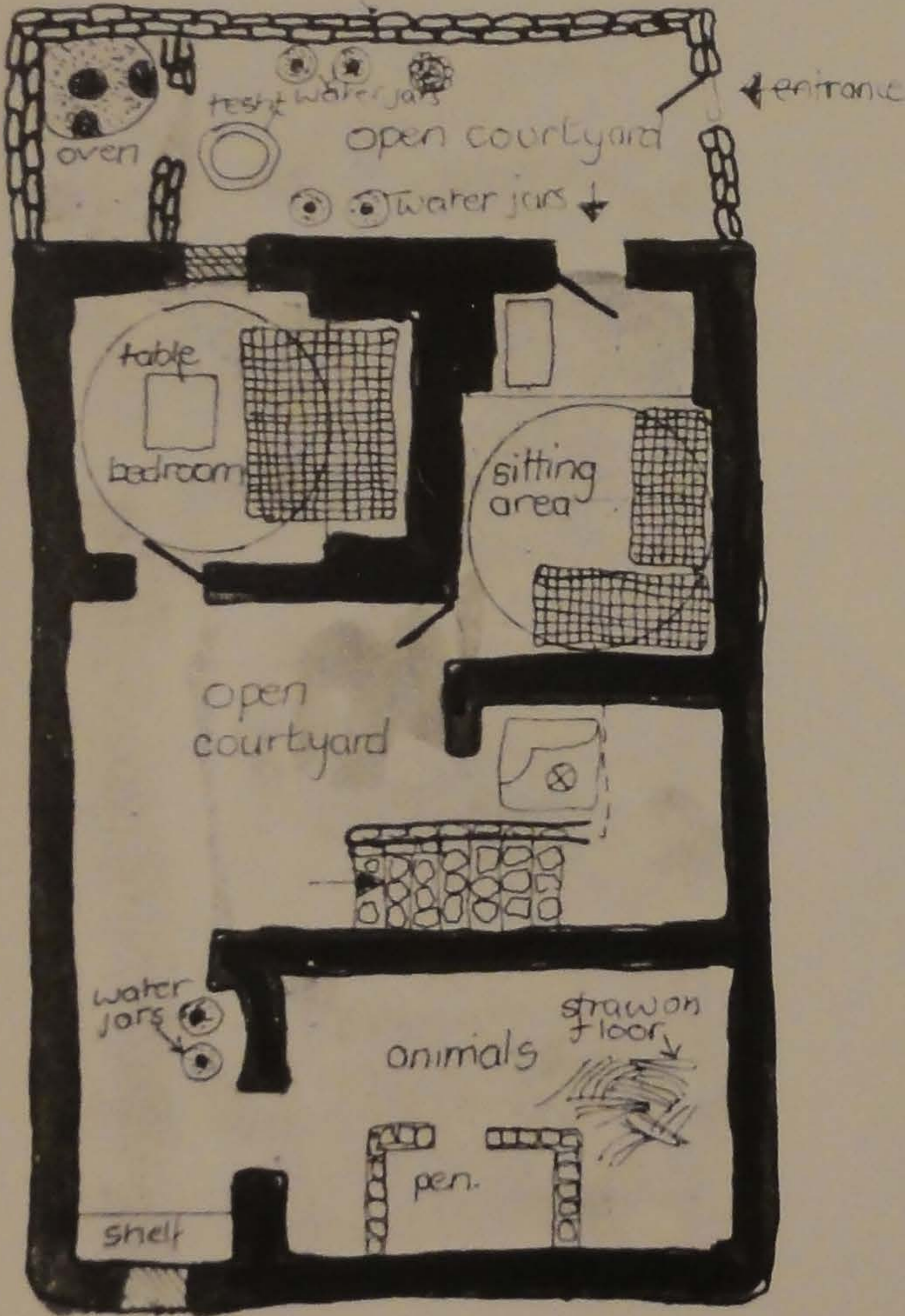
E. ADDED
COURTYARD

REZG'S HOUSE



entrance

open courtyard



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

HOUSEHOLD 2.

HOUSEHOLD 2.

Razq works at the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor. He is married and has four sons. The eldest is Nasser who is 9 years old, a very happy boy who we nick-named "gird" - meaning monkey. His mother is a very domineering woman, obviously the head of the household in domestic matters.

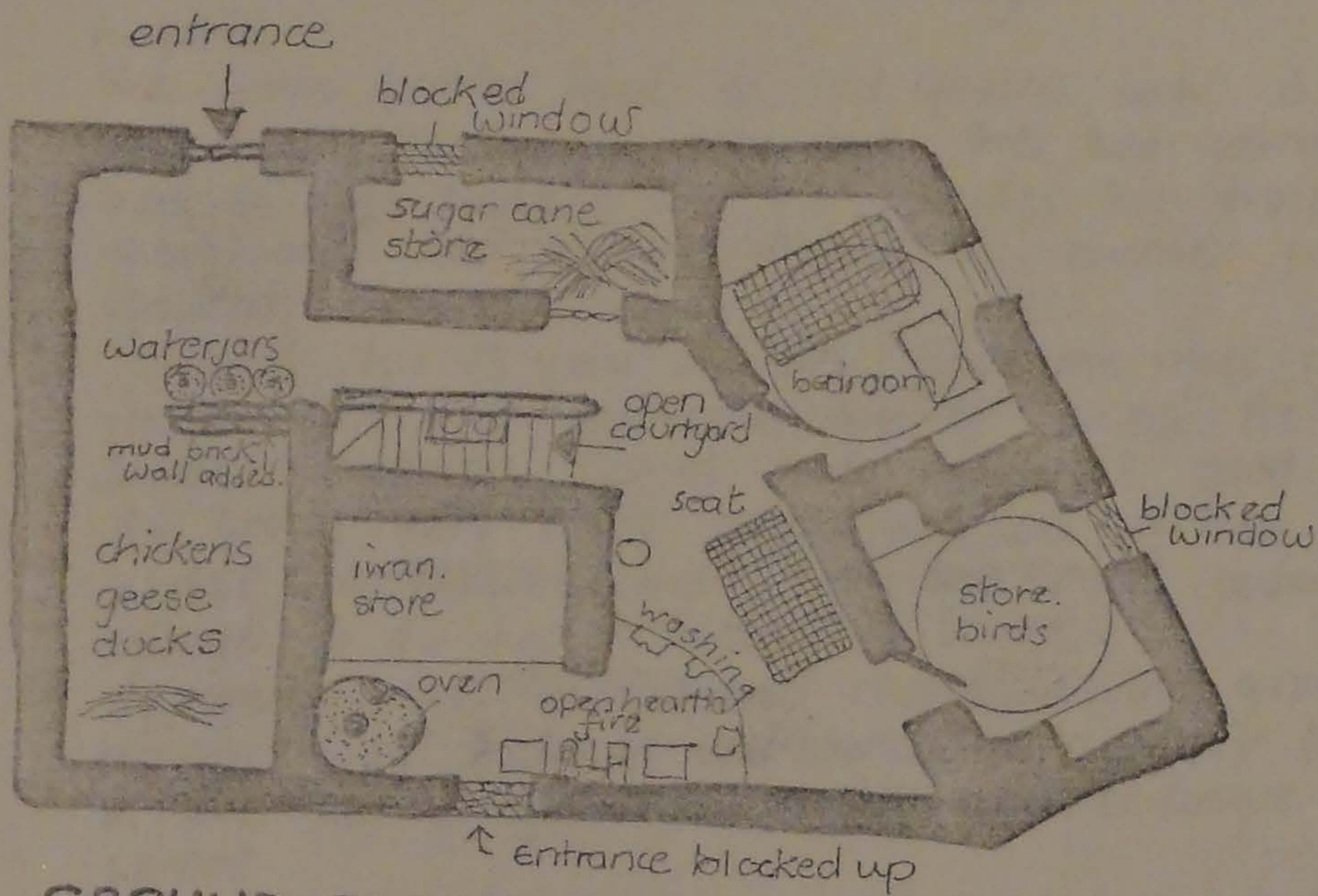
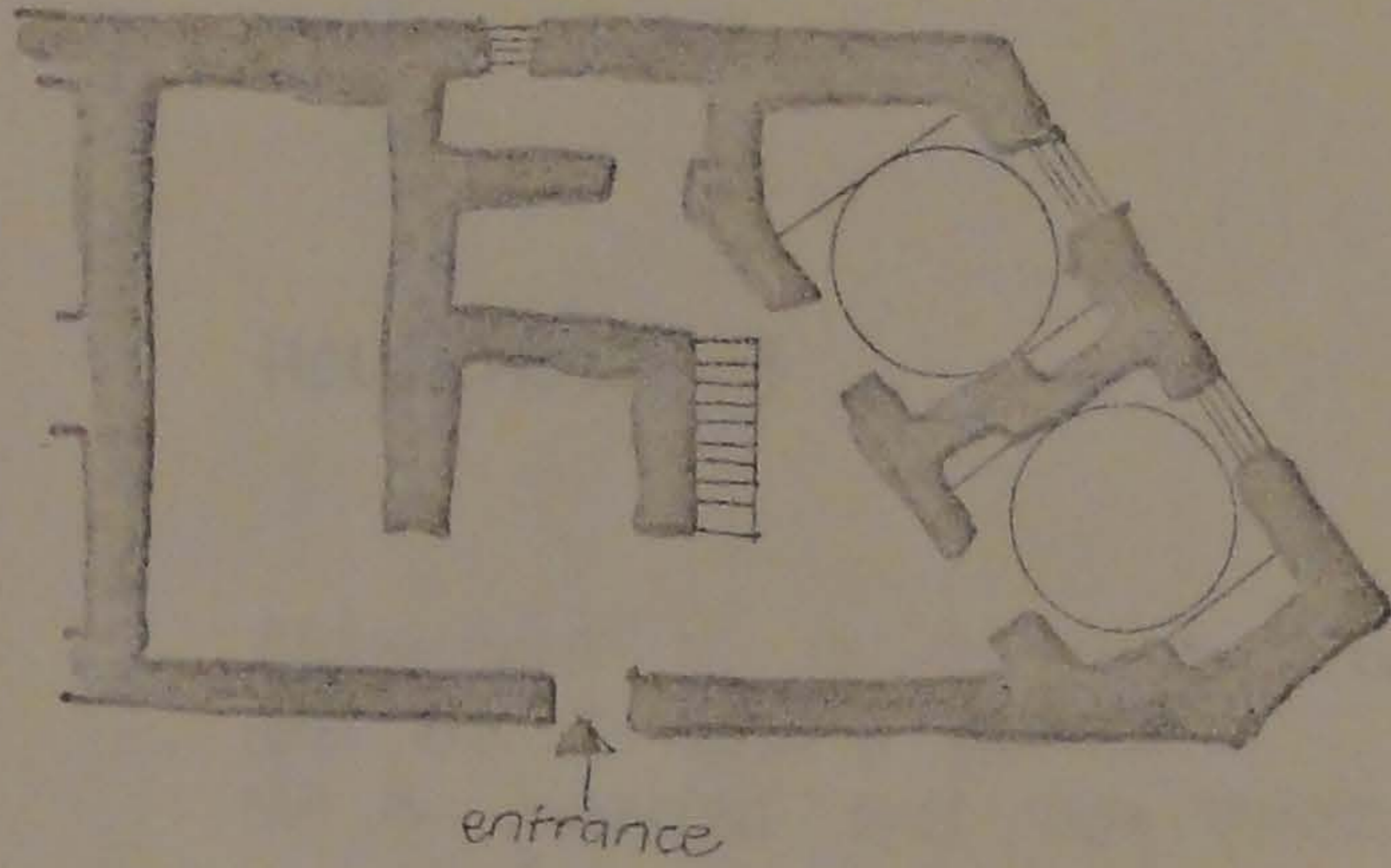
This house was quite an exception - it had electricity and was spotlessly clean, and organised. Rooms had a specific purpose, and the animals had their own space, and kept apart from the living areas.

The entrance to the house was changed to the other end, and a large courtyard was added in which the family virtually lived during the day-time. Here the cooking was done and the washing. As in all households, the provided washing arrangement was obsolete, and a ~~tent~~ - a circular metal bowl - was used instead.

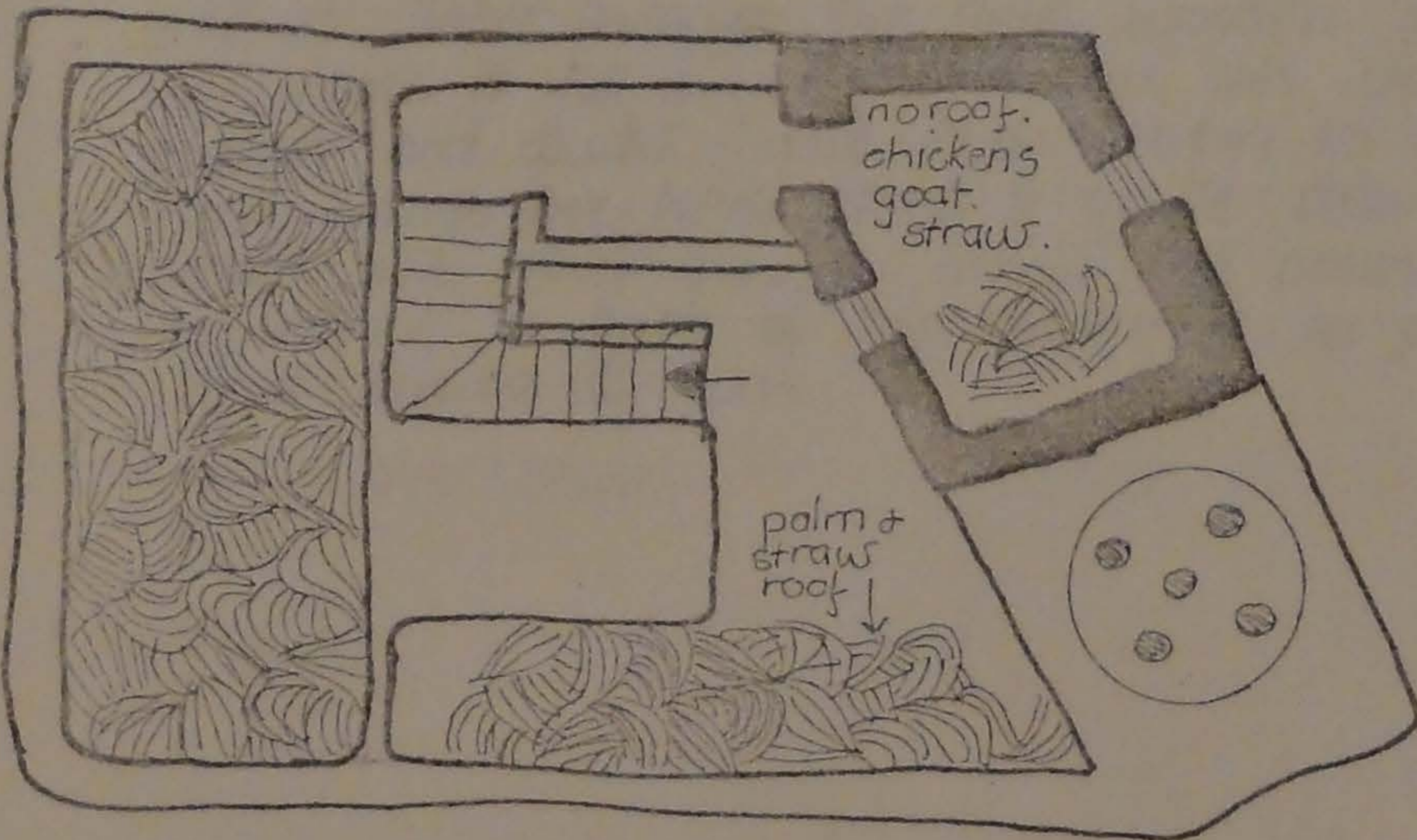
The parents had their own bedroom on the first floor, and the children slept on the ground floor. They were always clean and washed, and their mother seemed to spend all her time washing clothes or cooking.



MOHAMED OMAR'S HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

HOUSEHOLD 3.

HOUSEHOLD 3

Mohamed is a guardian at the Valley of the Queens and he is also a farmer.

He is married and has three sons, and one daughter who is married.

The eldest son is at Cairo University training to be a doctor. His wife is a nurse and works 3 days a week at a nearby hospital.

The whole family lived in Old Gournah until 3 years ago and now Mohamed's wife and the two younger sons live in this house, and he divides his time between them and his mother's house in another part of New Gournah.

Gamal, his 13 year old son gave me most of this information over numerous cups of "shea". He goes to Luxor Secondary School and is quite good at English. He works very hard and joins a group of boys under the electric lights on the road outside the village to do his homework.

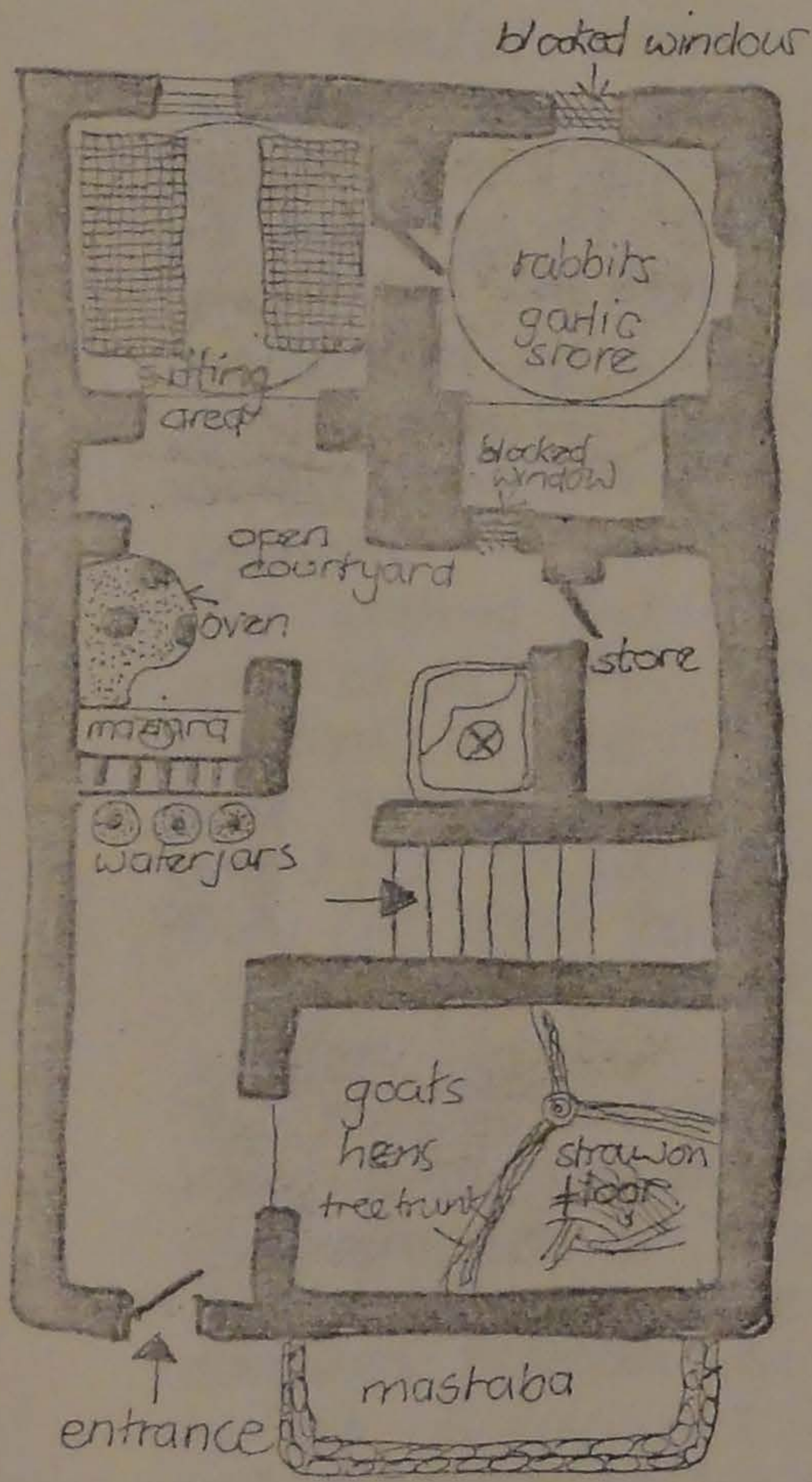
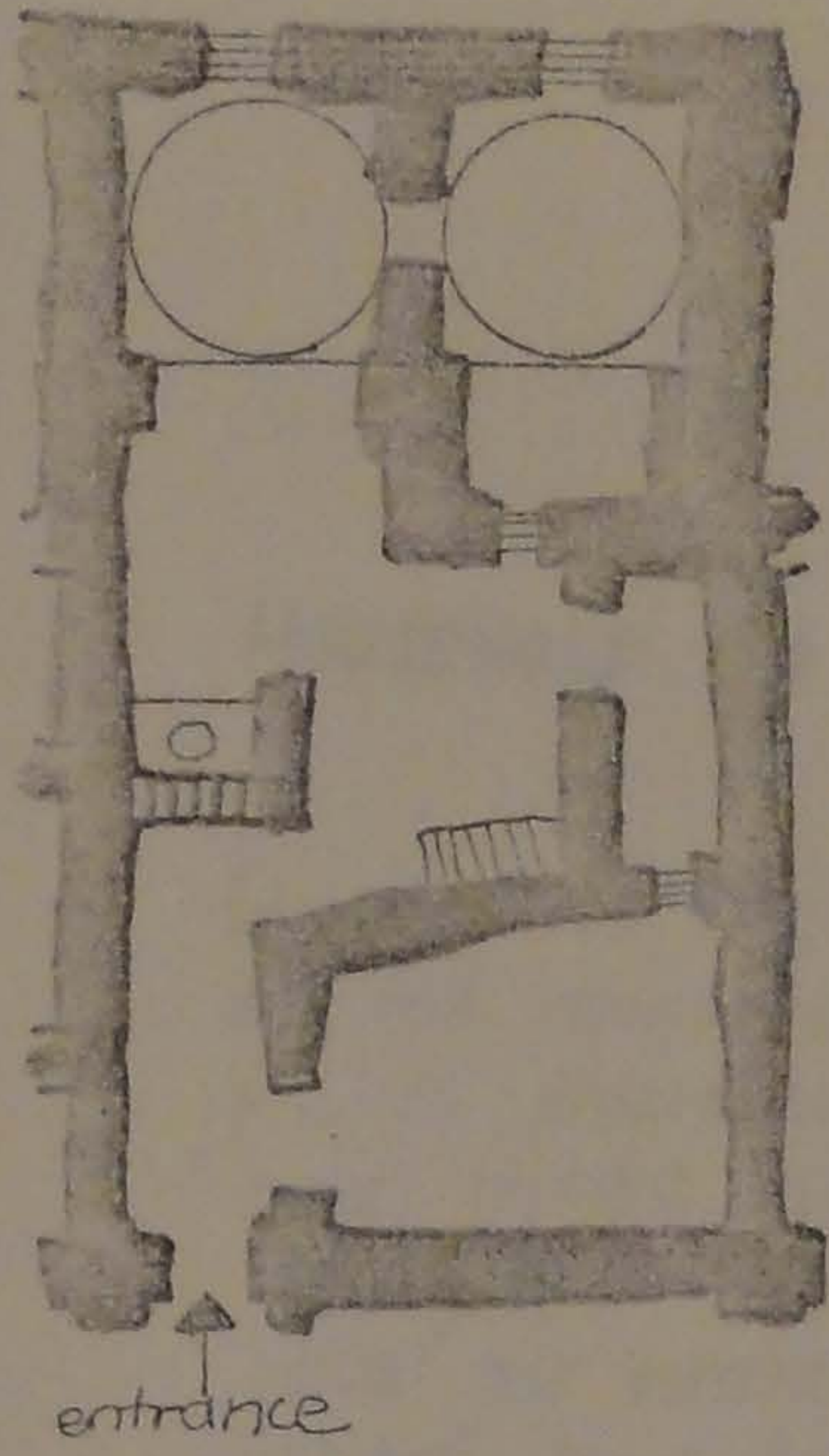
Apparently the two domed rooms on the ground floor alternate as bedroom and store - in summer they sleep in the room of greatest height, and change for the winter.

The entrance has been moved right over to the other side of the house, facing the fields at the back of the village. One has to climb over a foot-high mud brick step to enter through the thick wooden door.

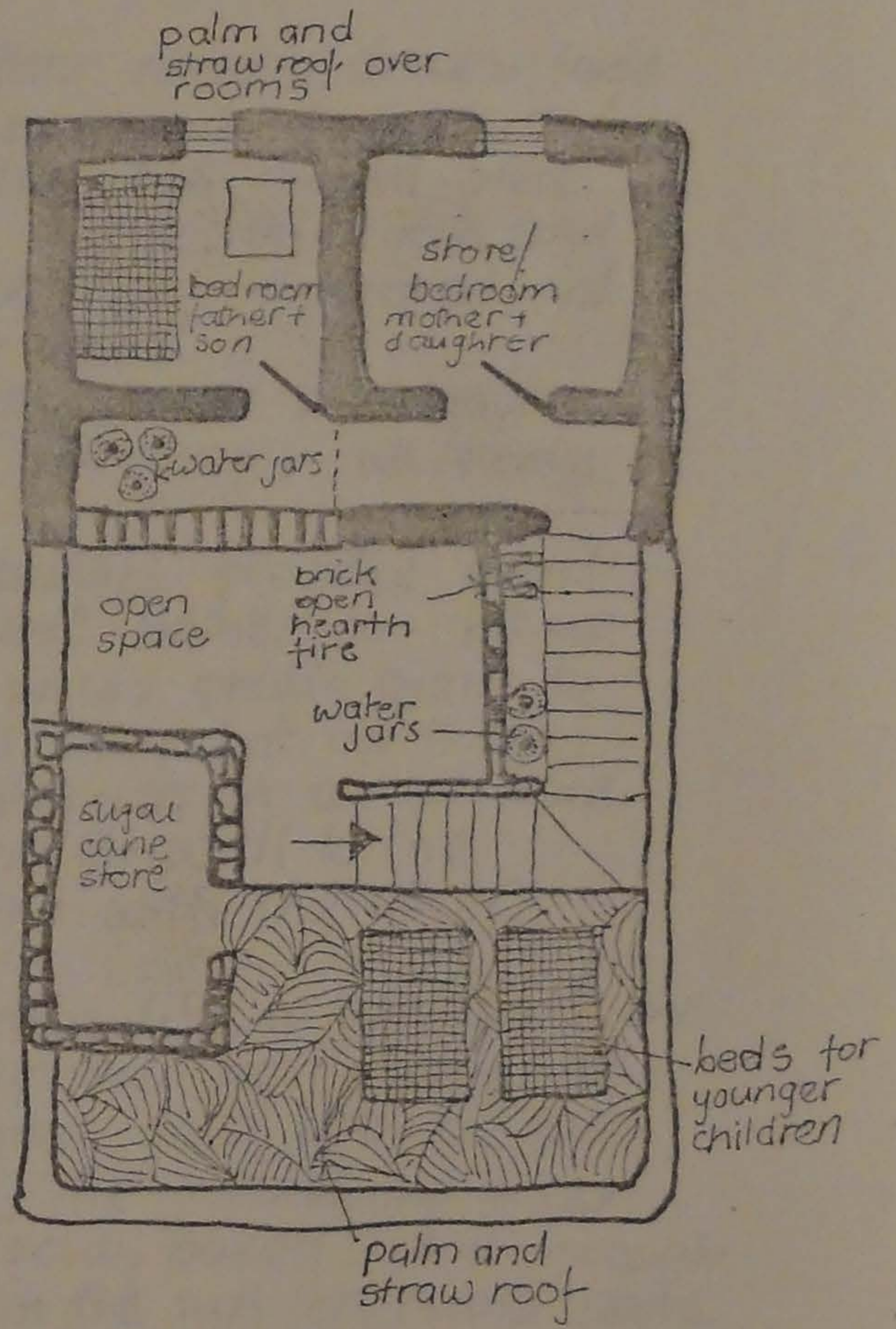
The place is full of animals - dogs, cats, chicken, geese, goat, pigeons and ducks, and they seem to be everywhere even though the house itself is quite clean.

Like the other houses straw and palm have been used to cover a part of the courtyard to provide shade and make it cool.

HAWARI'S HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

HOUSEHOLD 4.

Hawari is a policeman who works at the Police Station on the main road outside the village.

He is married and lives with his wife, three sons and three daughters.

We got to know the whole family very well as they were our nearest neighbours, always wanting to give us "shea" and food, and several times had supper with them.

This entailed sitting on the floor round a circular table on which was bowls of hot soups with tomatoes and potatoes and spinach in them. We dipped pieces of home-made bread into these. Fried rice and pieces of chicken and goat then appeared, and we ended up with cups of "shea".

Lunch usually consists of the bread with goats cheese and an oily sauce, and eggs, all home produced.

The washing and laundry facilities provided are not used at all. The women do not bother to fill up the tank on the roof which would enable them to have running water [it gets very hot up there] and keep all water in water jars in a cool place. They like going backwards and forwards to the village pump and chatting with the other women.

The Hawari household is really like a farmyard, one room taken over by rabbits, another by goats & hens. One afternoon a mummy goat gave birth to four kids while we were there. The mother and eldest daughter's bedroom was full of newly baked bread - enough to last 4 days - it's baked in the sun on round pattis, and reheated in the oven.

None of the girls go to school, the eldest son is training to be a Lathe operator, and the other two are at school.

They moved here from Luxor 3 years ago

ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Ahmed Abdel Rassoul neighbourhood was intended for a specific family group, the head of whom decided he preferred another part of the village when it had already been built. The people who live there now just moved in. We surveyed four houses, the fifth being locked up because the owner was away.

House A. belongs to Om Hasan. She is a widow who lives here alone, and has one son who has lived in Aswan for 7 years. She came from Old Gourna.

House B. belongs to Hassan, son of Ahmed. He is a farm worker who moved from Old Gourna when he married. He lives with his wife and little girl.

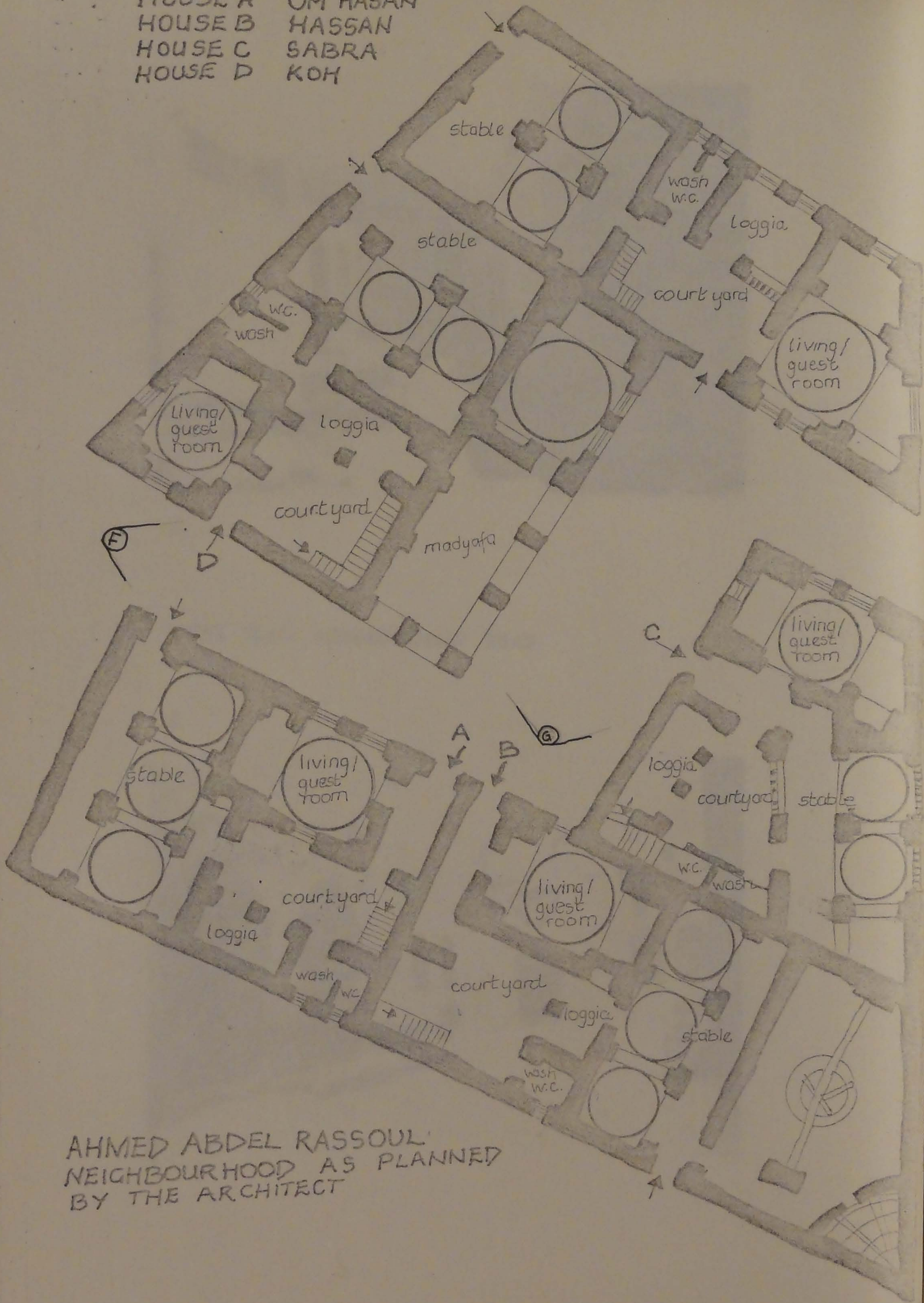
House C. belongs to Sabra. Her husband died, so she came to New Gourna from Old Gourna. Her husband's second wife had a son who is in the army, so his wife came to live with her and her four children.

House D. belongs to Koh. He is married and has three children. He gathers bird droppings and sells them as fertilizer.

None of the houses have running water and toilets as intended - they were never finished as planned. All washing is done in keshts, and water kept in water jars.

As all the people are poor the guest rooms cease to function.

HOUSE A OM HASAN
 HOUSE B HASSAN
 HOUSE C SABRA
 HOUSE D KOH



AHMED ABDEL RASSOUL
 NEIGHBOURHOOD AS PLANNED
 BY THE ARCHITECT



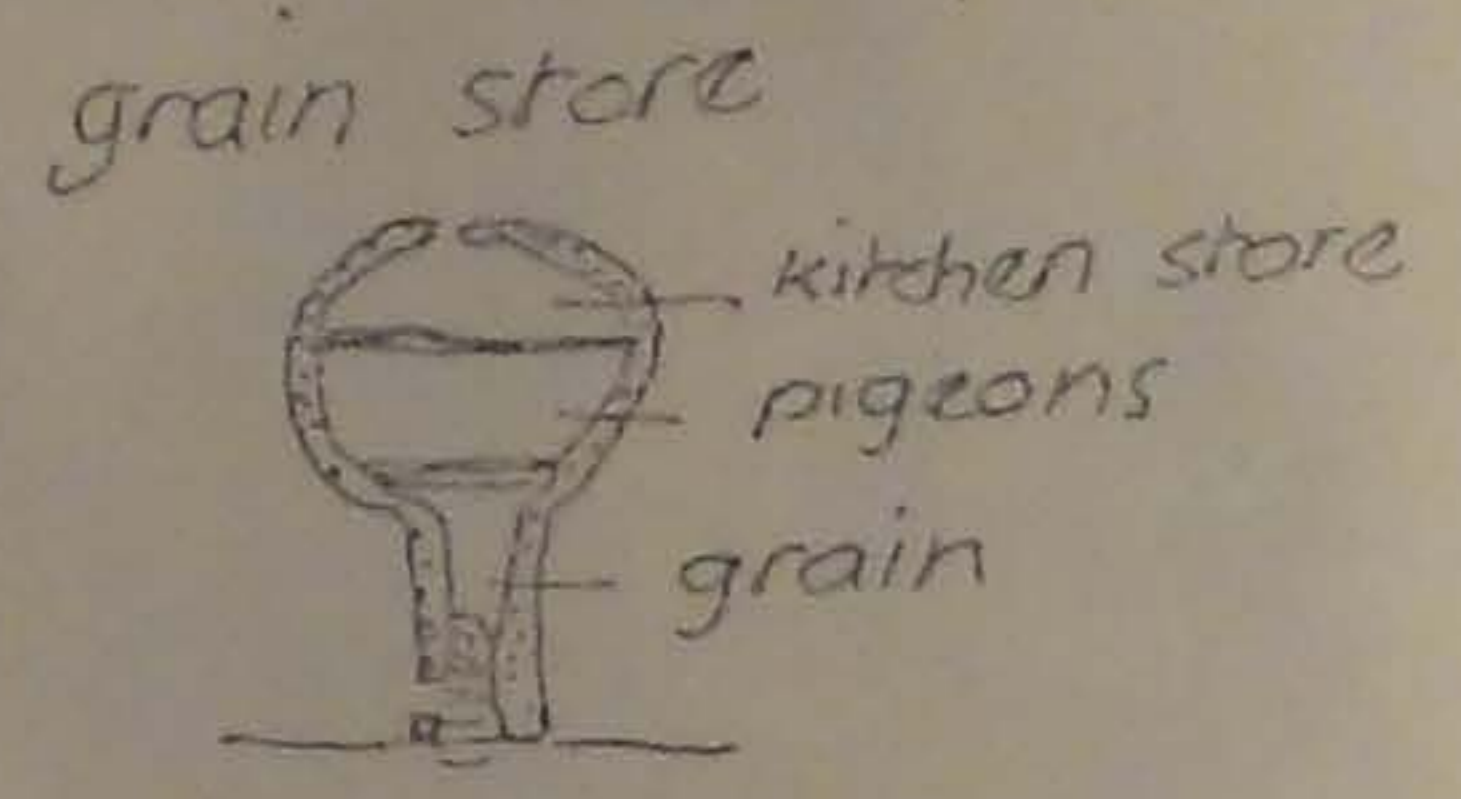
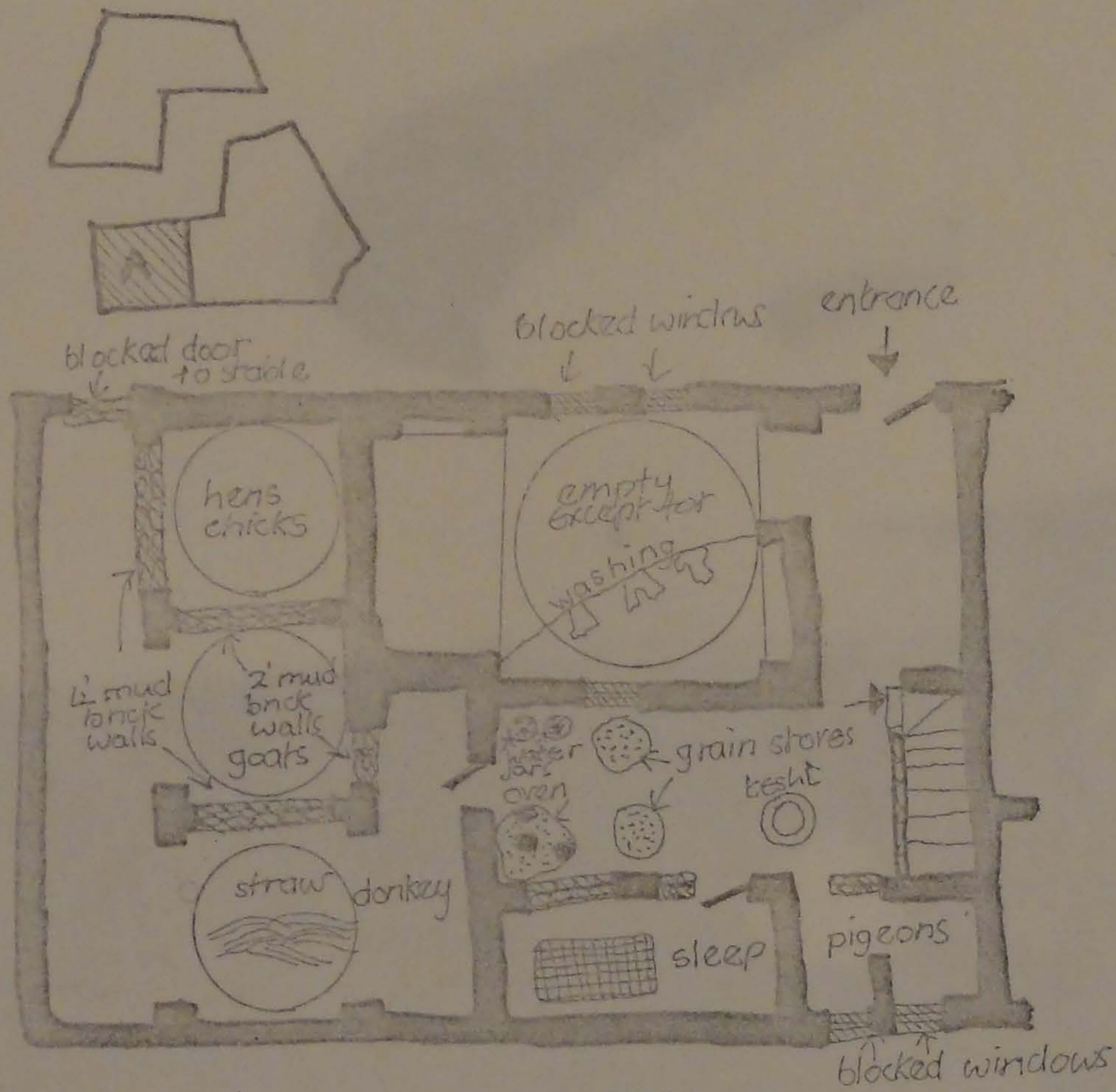
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VIEWS DOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD ROAD

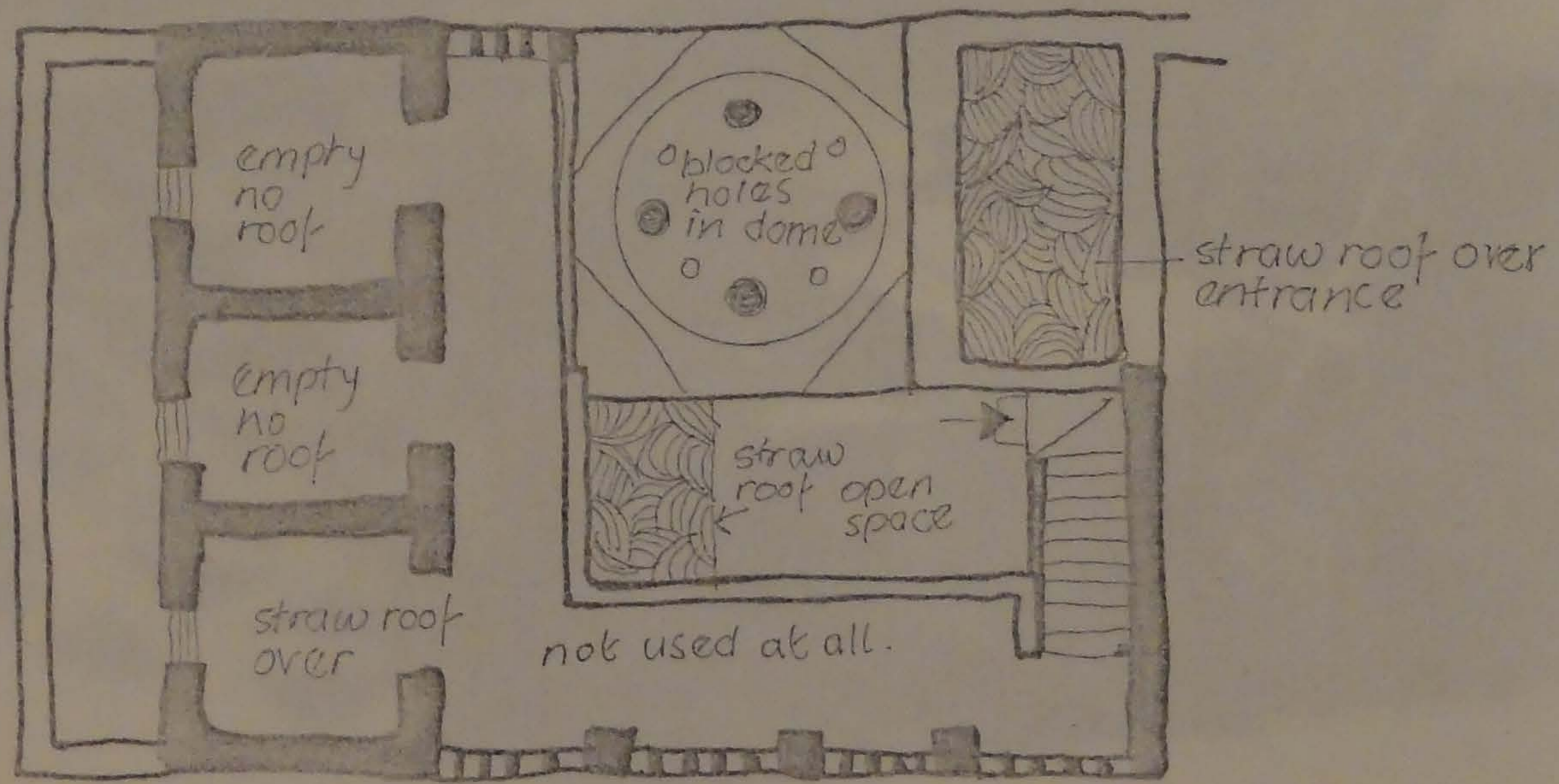
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OM HASAN'S HOUSE

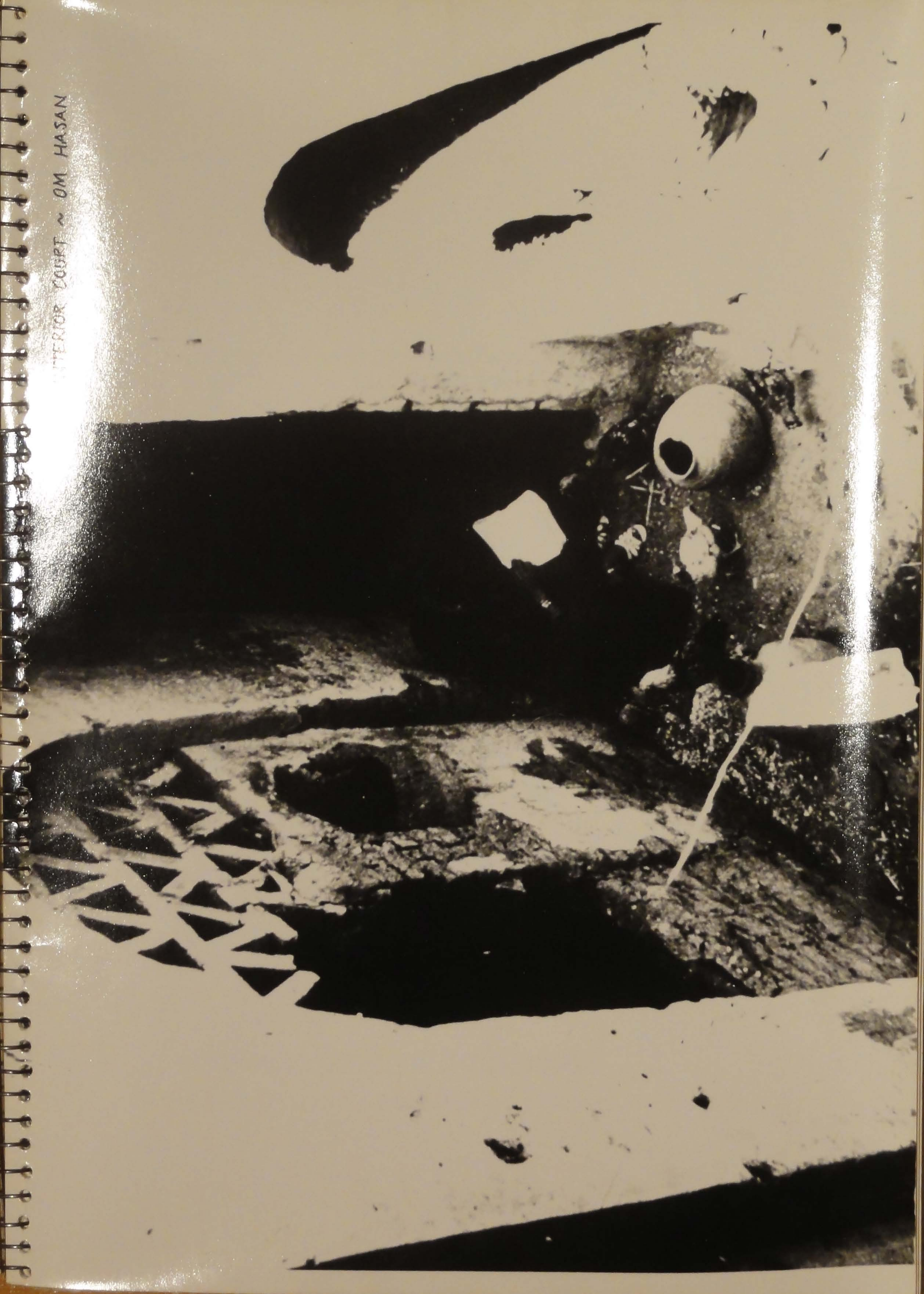


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

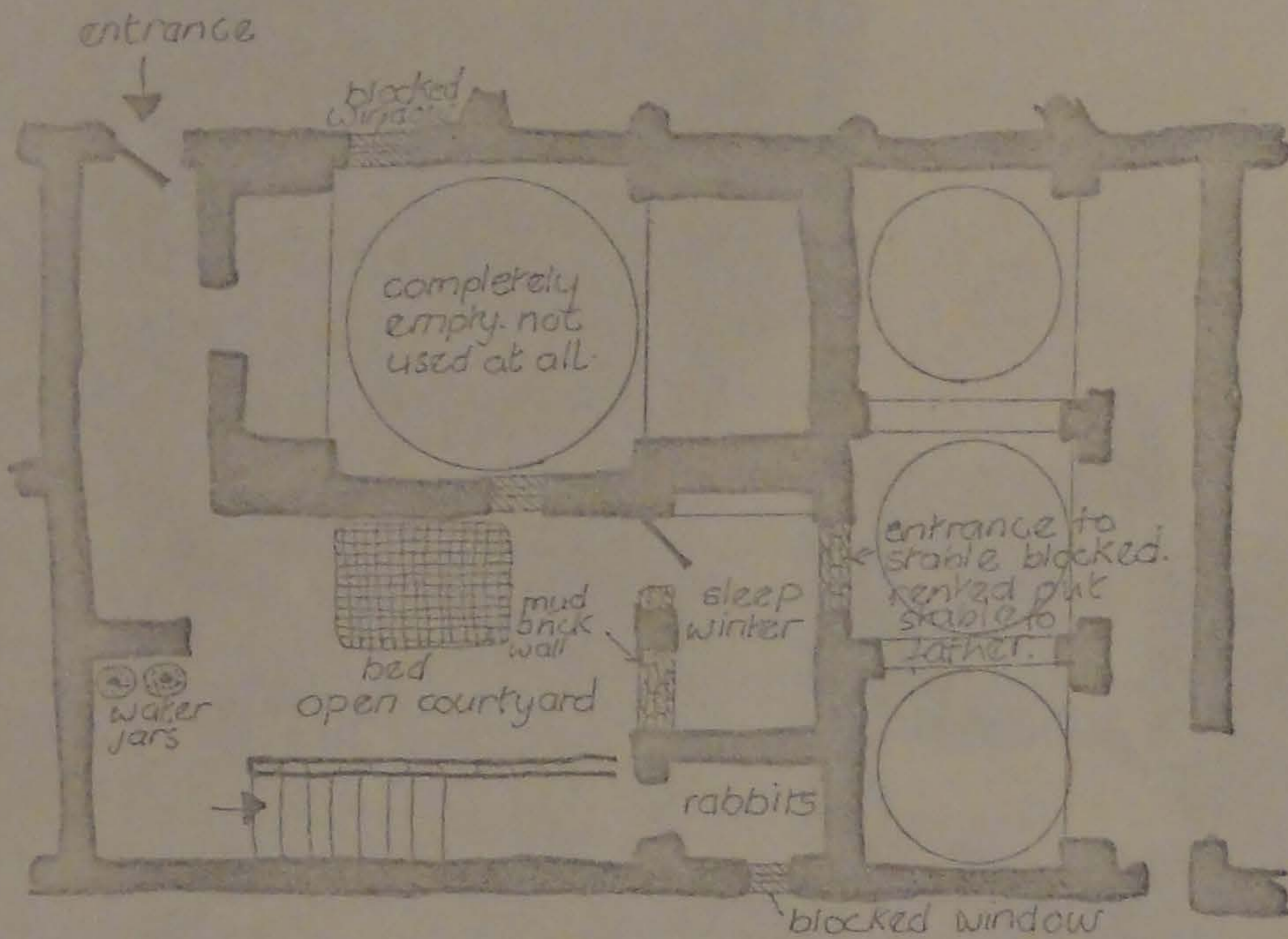
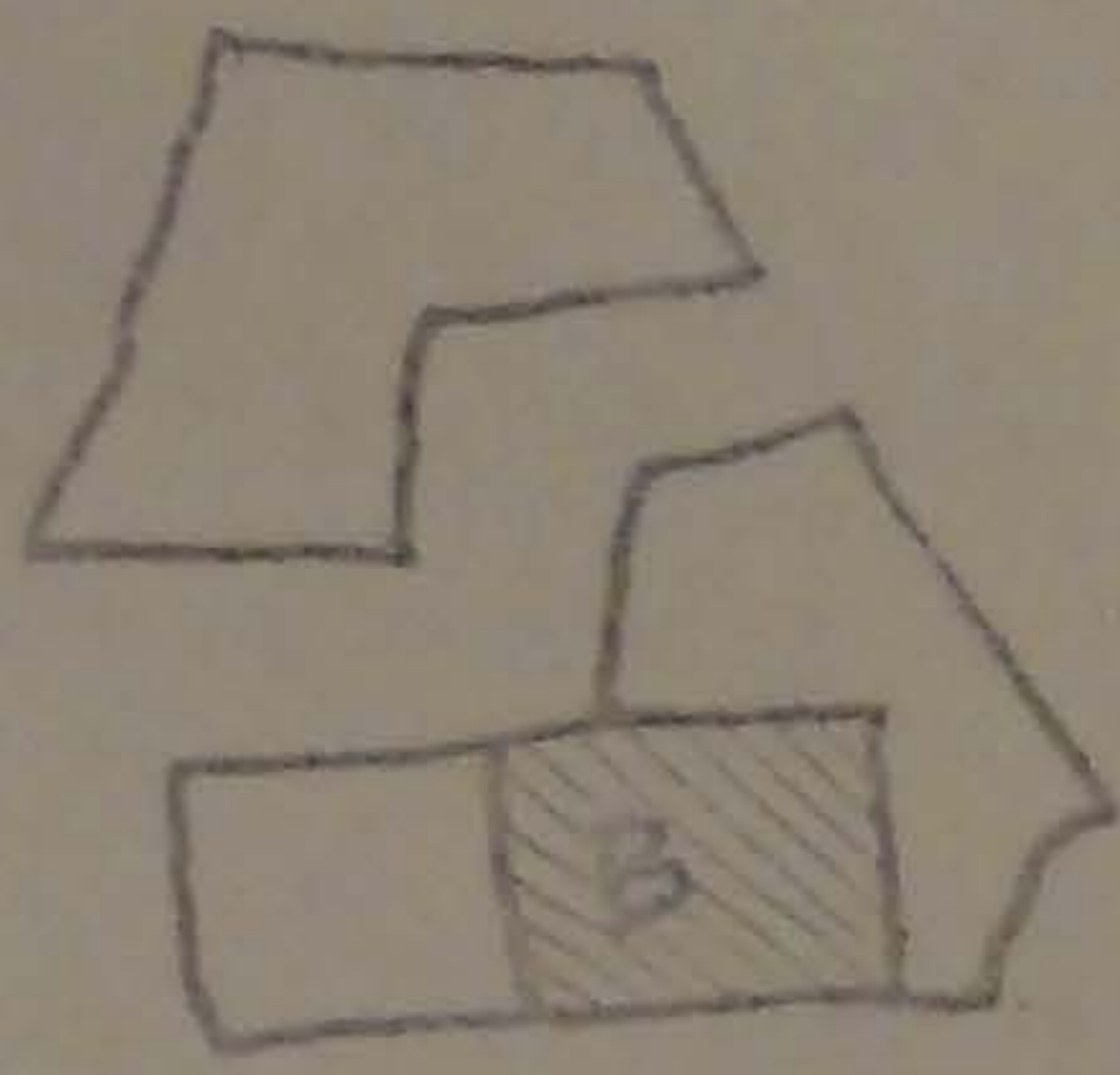


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

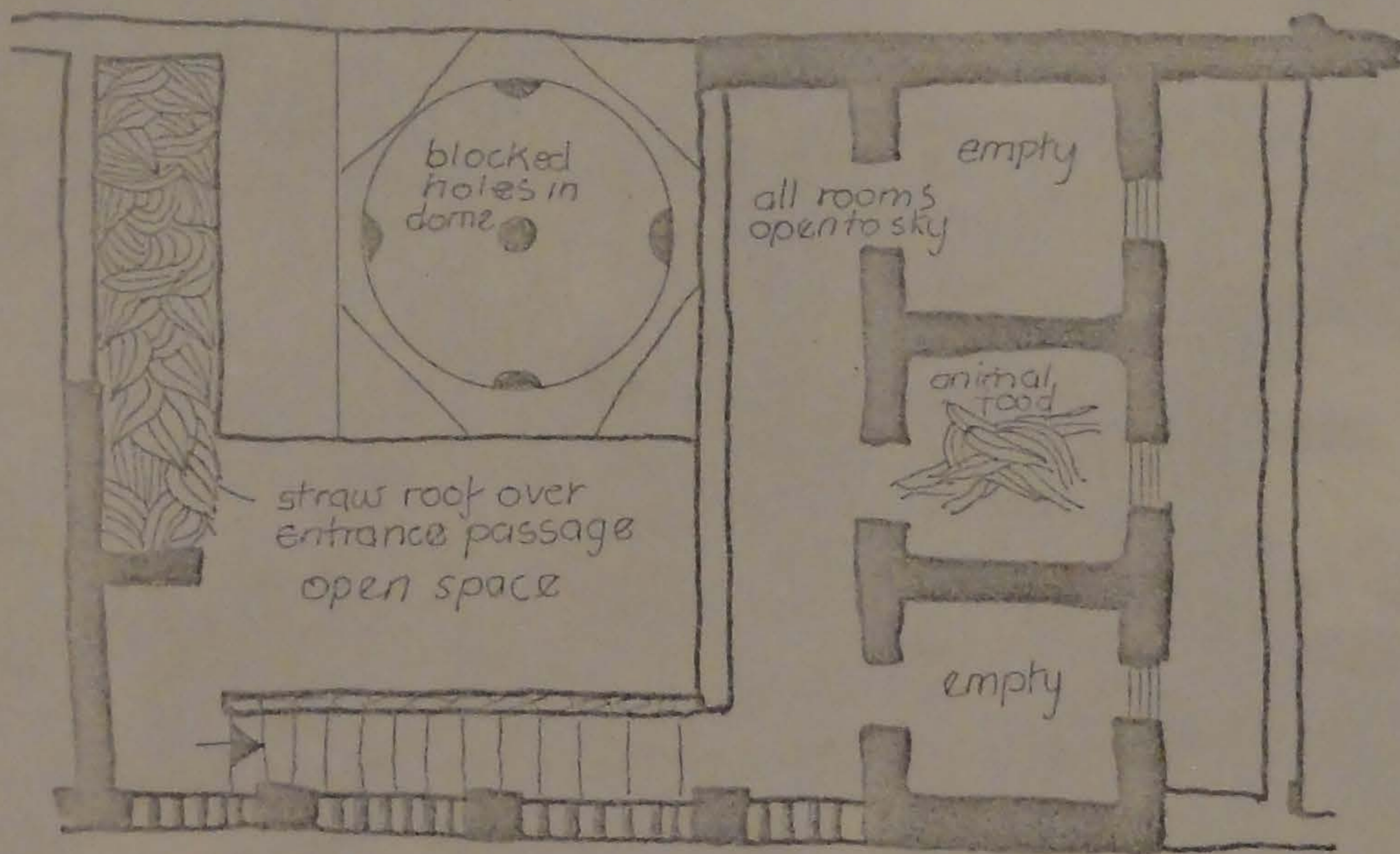
INTERIOR COURT ~ OM HASAN



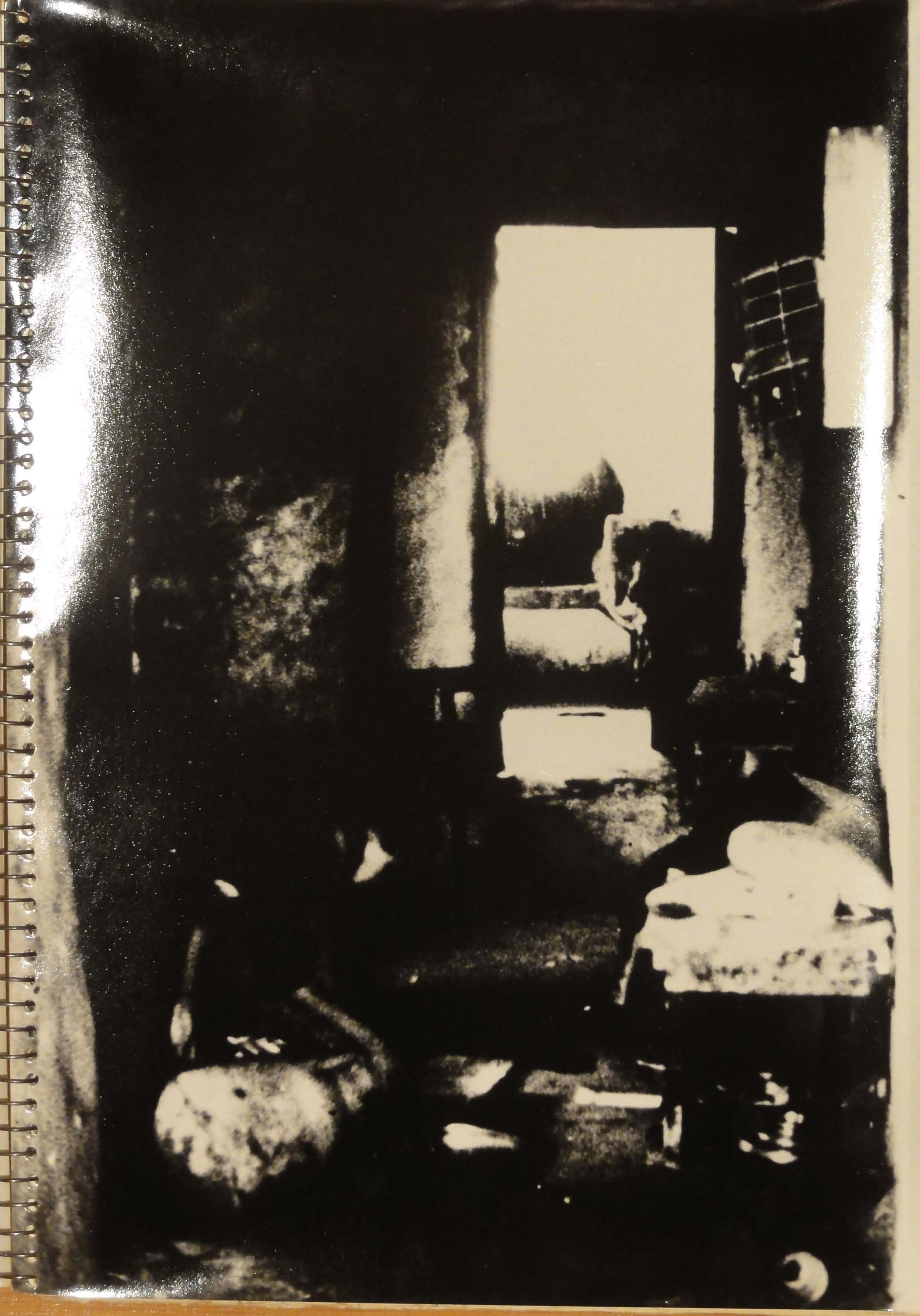
HASSAN'S HOUSE



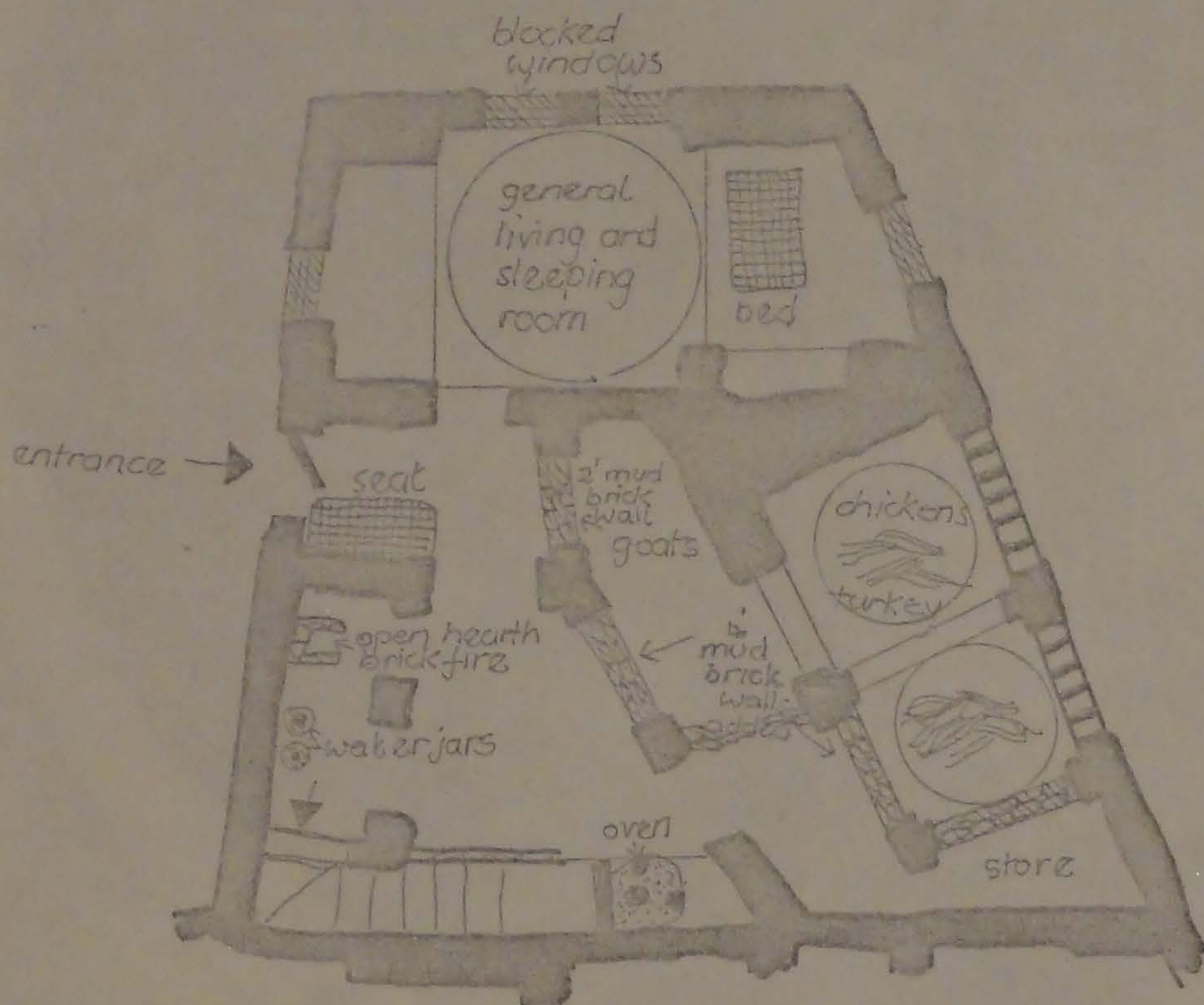
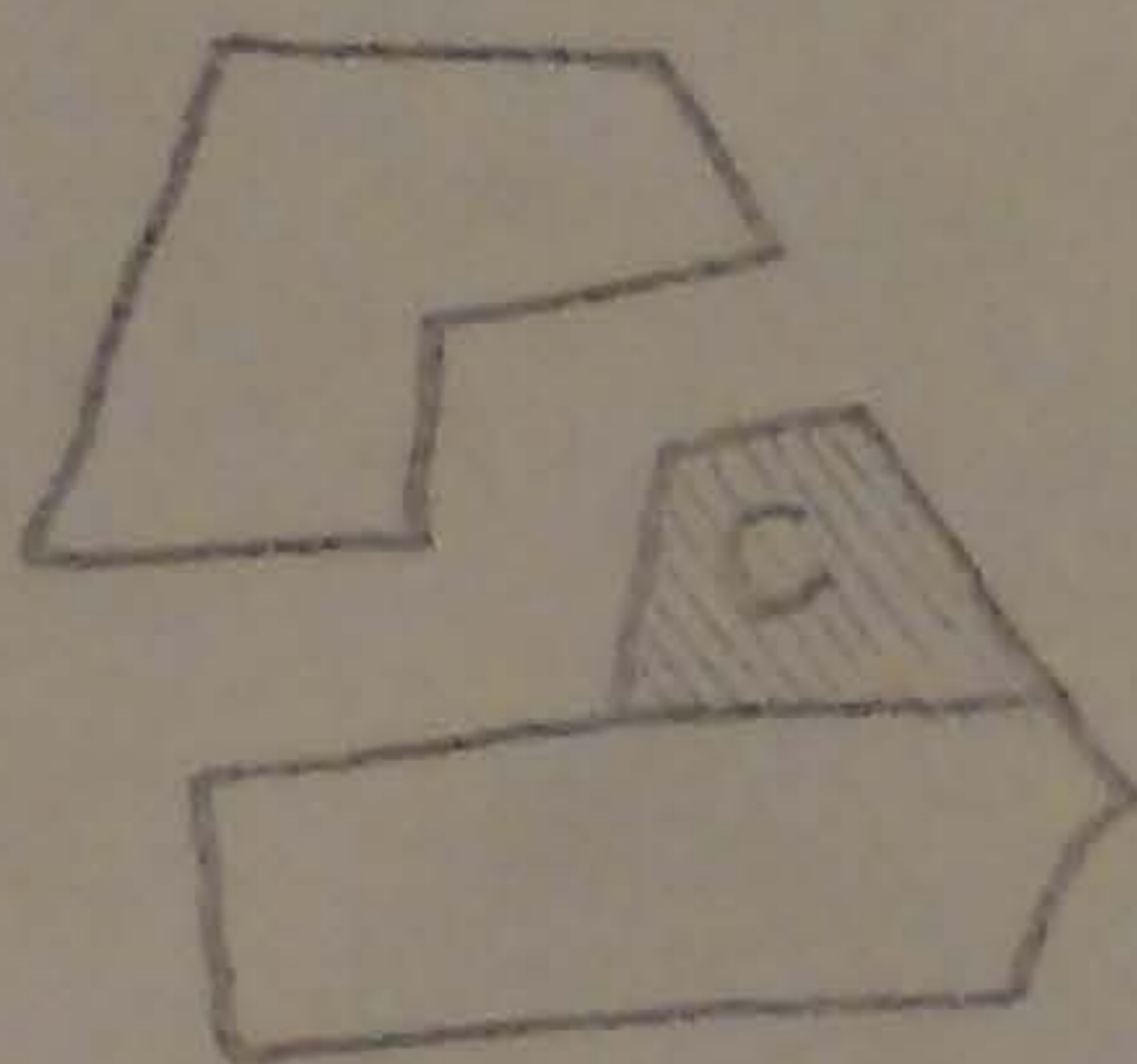
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



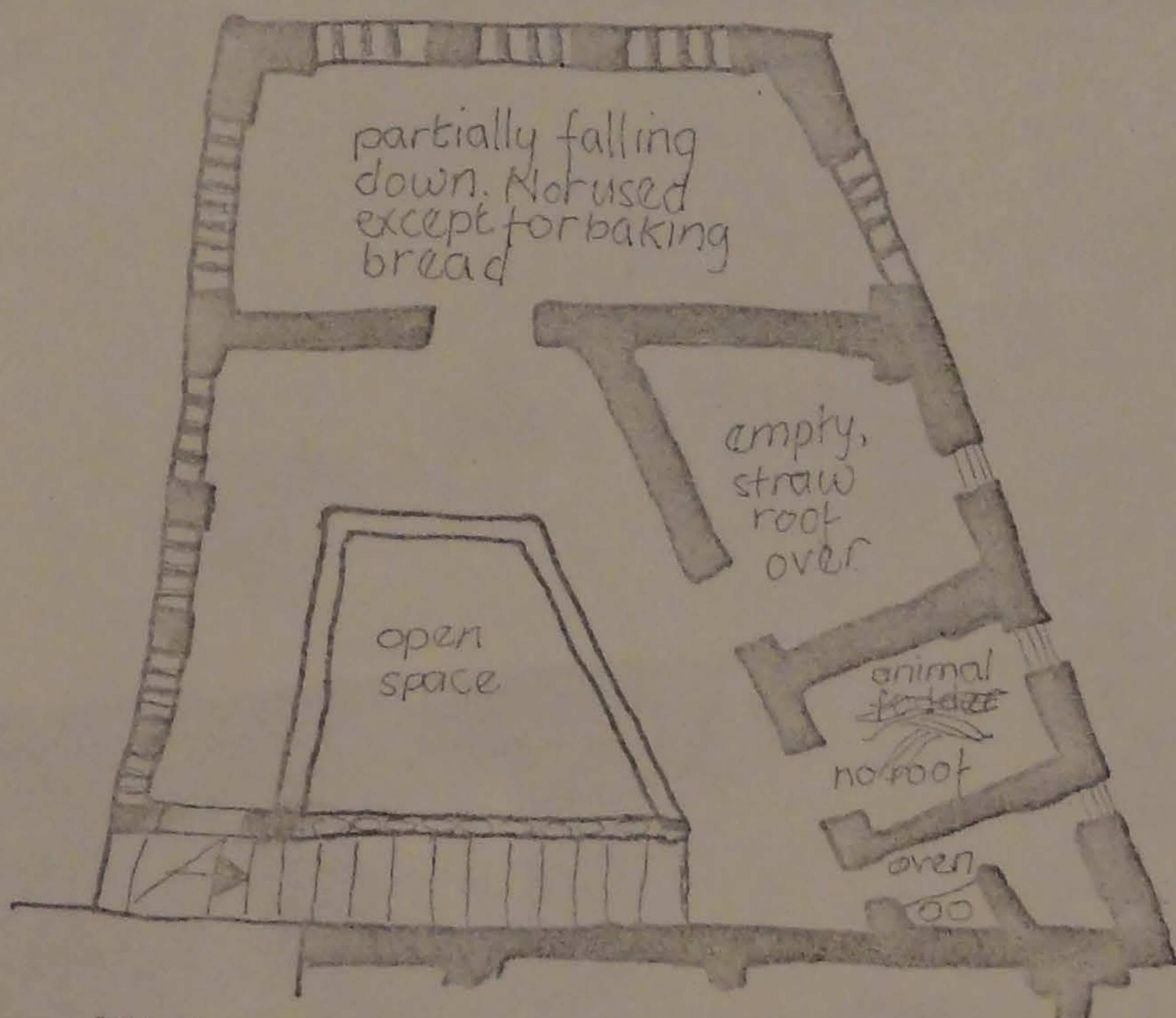
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SABR A'S HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

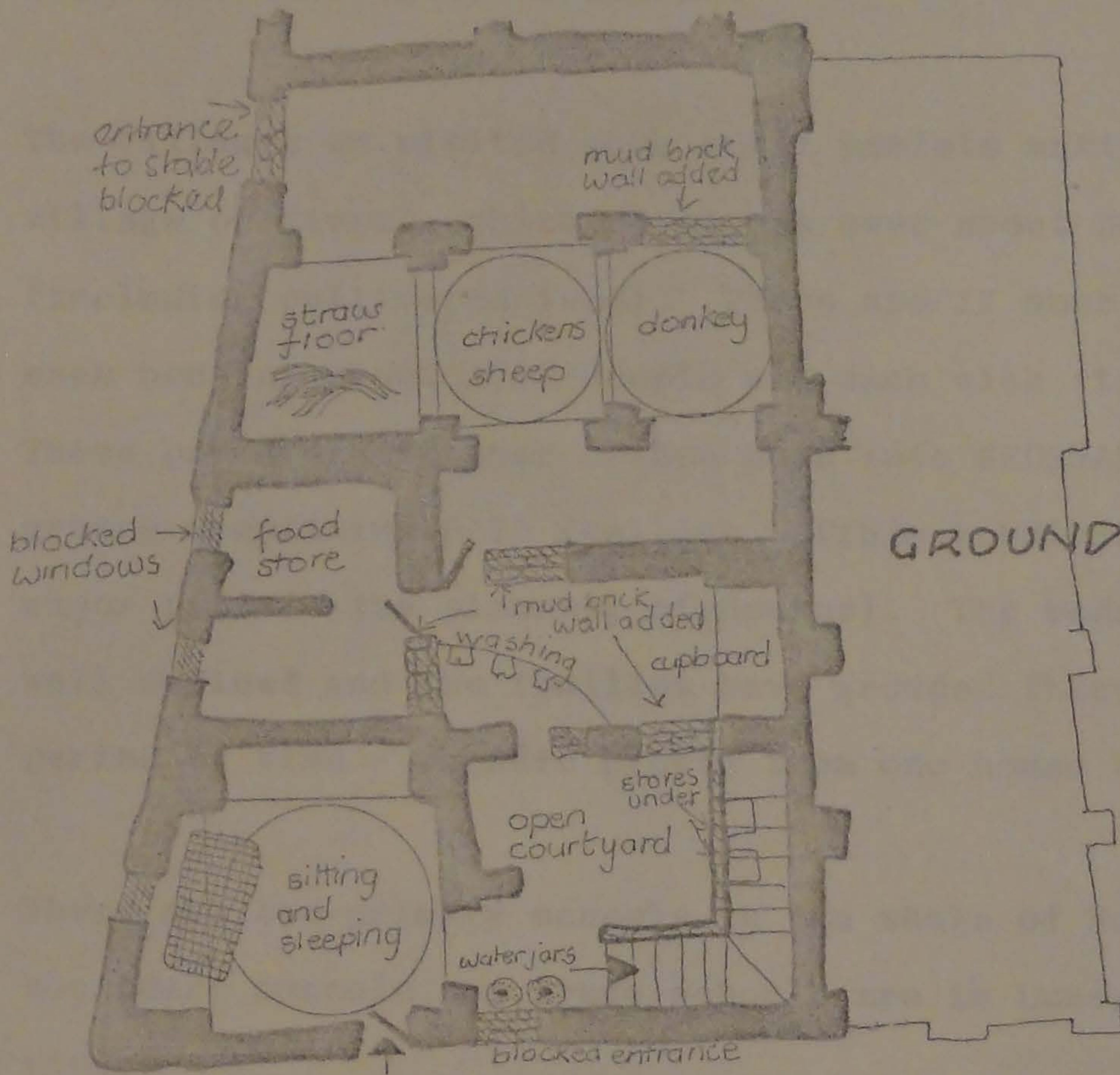
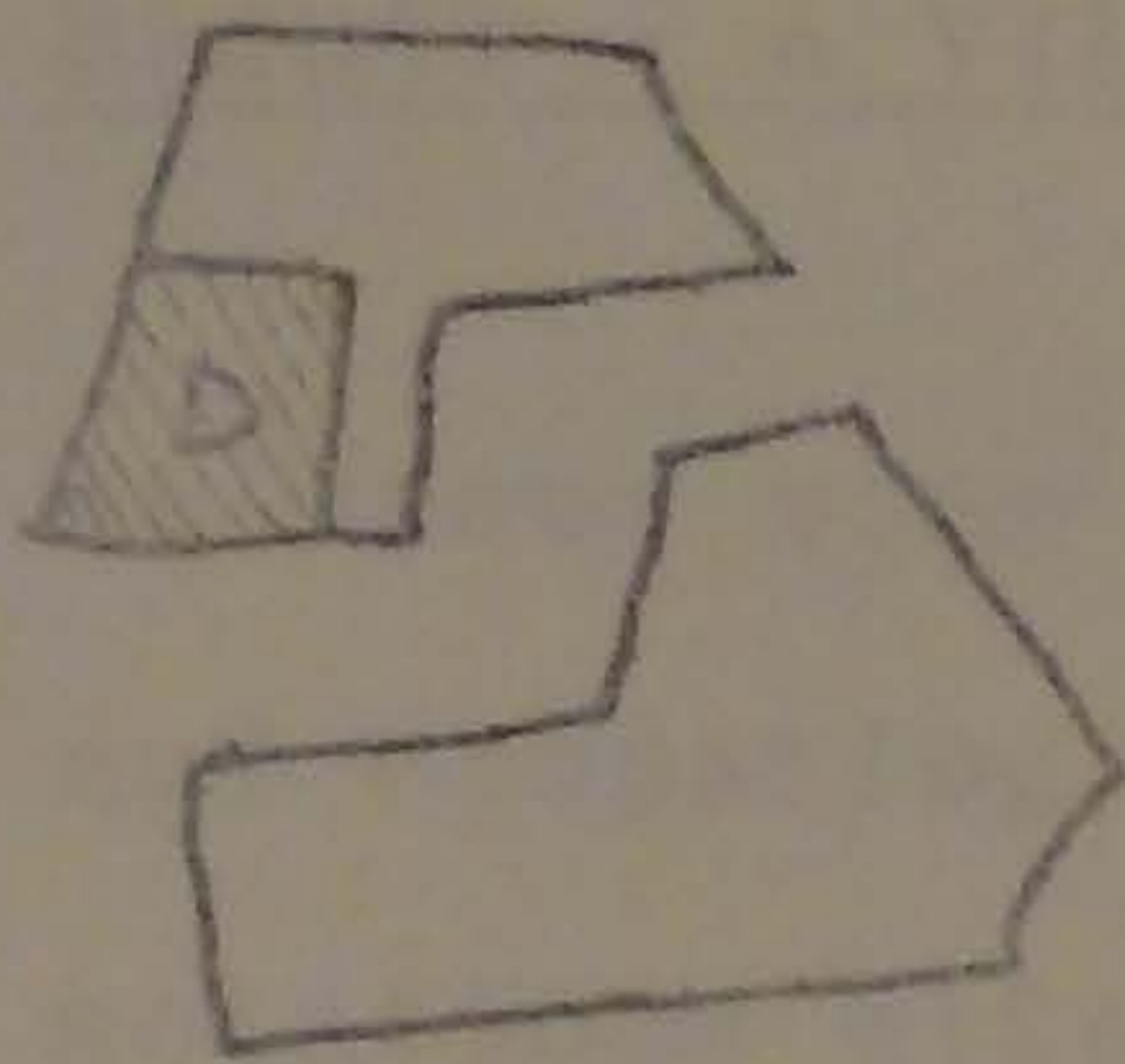


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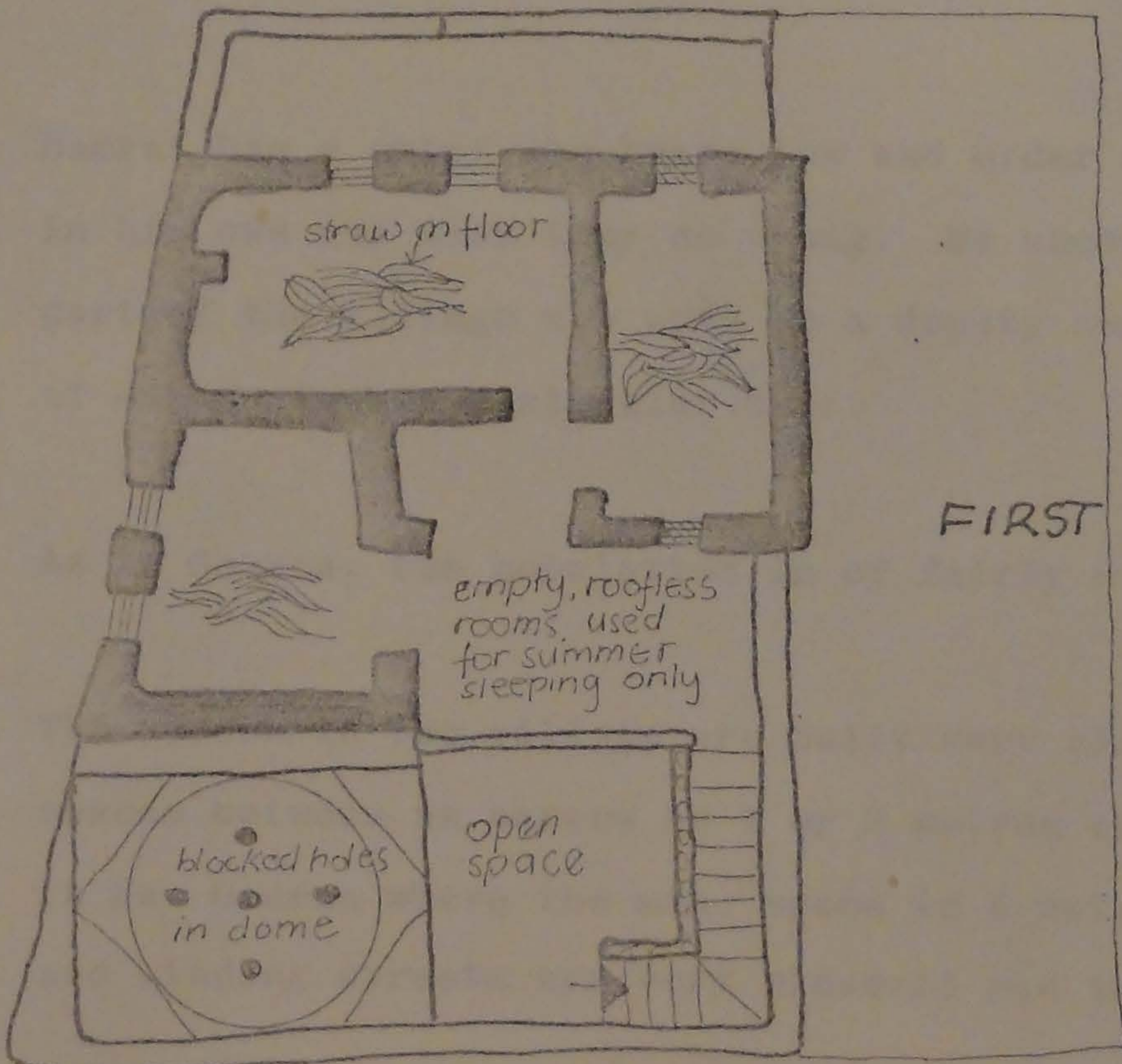


INTERIOR OF SABRA'S HOUSE.

KOH'S HOUSE



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

BAERAT - A VILLAGE NEAR GOURNA

We spent some time while at Gourna, visiting adjacent villages and comparing houses, lifestyles, planning and climatic solutions with those of Gourna.

The villages we visited were small hamlets making up the large village of Baerat, which stretches over about 5000 feddans* (including cultivated land). There are 11 such parts to Baerat, each housing about 1000 people and each with its own mosque. These parts are further broken down into BEDANAS or neighbourhood groups comprising 5-10 families. (This subdivision played a major part in the planning of Gourna). The bedanas are fairly well defined and the families have grouped themselves over a period of time - organic growth from one house to another.

There are two primary schools in the whole of Baerat, secondary schools and trade schools are in Luxor, across the river.

Baerat has a chief who keeps law and order and punishes people in his own way when they do wrong. He chooses a man from each part of the village who acts as a deputy and keeps him informed of events in his particular area.

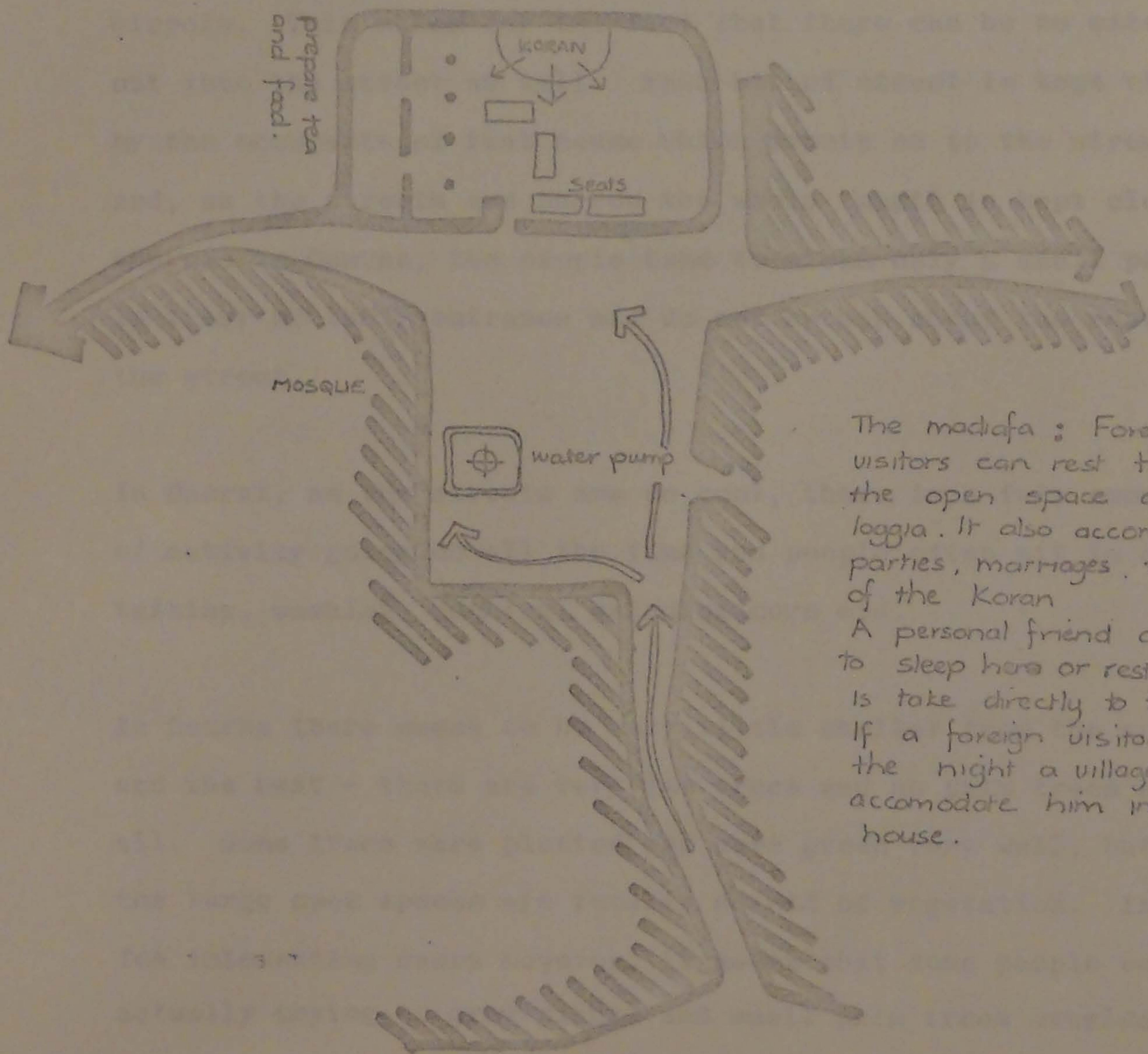
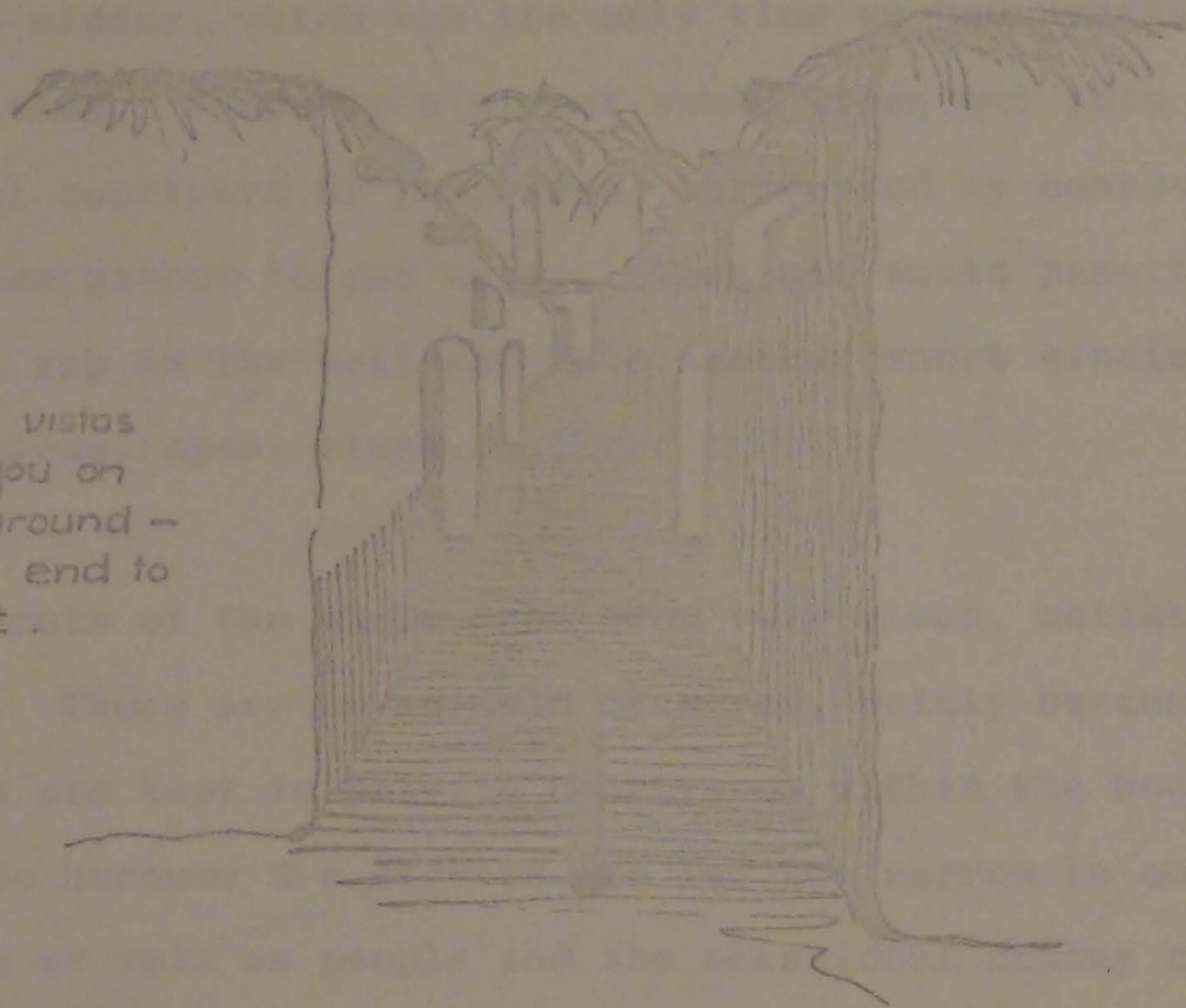
As in Gourna, the population is of fairly mixed occupation.

The houses in the village are built very close together with spaces between as narrow as 1 or 2 metres and much closer than in New Gourna where the min. space is 6 metres wide. The narrow and winding streets are very pleasant and interesting to walk in



BAERAT ROOF SCAPE

closed vistas
lead you on
and around -
blind end to
street.



The madiafa : Foreign (strangers) visitors can rest there - in the open space and in the loggia. It also accomodates parties, marriages, the reading of the Koran. A personal friend does not need to sleep here or rest here but is take directly to the house. If a foreign visitor stays the night a villager will accomodate him in his own house.

as the houses and walls completely shade them from the sun, even at midday, which was the only time we had available to go visiting. Suddenly a street would widen out into a small communal courtyard or pump area, surrounded by houses, where the women gather to get water. Then one would pass through a small gap in the wall and into another short winding street. Open, close, open, close.....

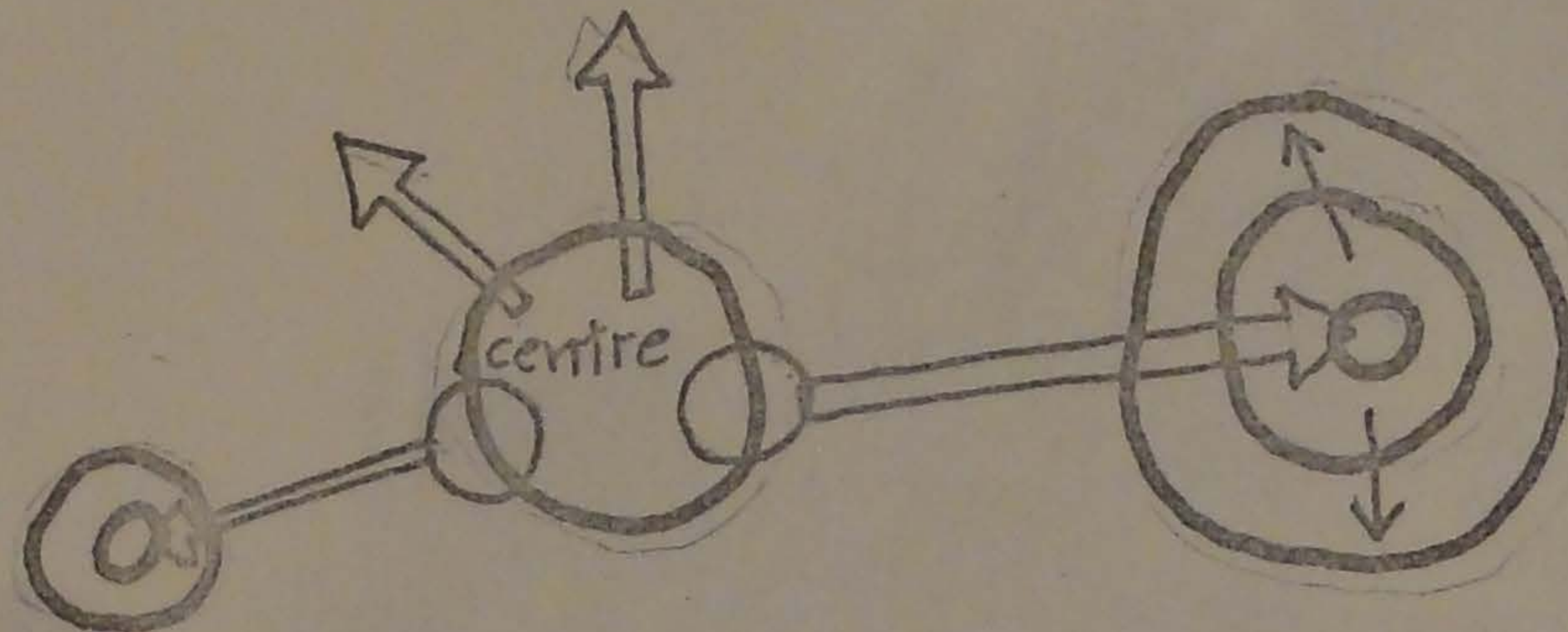
The streets of the whole area seem very clean, unlike New Gourna. There are no animals or straw, mainly because the animals are kept in private courtyards within the house complex and also because the streets are far too narrow to contain animals as well as people and the occasional donkey cart or bicycle. This makes for the fact that there can be no extensions out into the street as well. Each bit of street is kept clean by the occupants of that house which fronts on to the street, and, as the streets are narrow the whole length is kept clean, whereas in Gourna, the people tend to clean only a small patch in front of their entrance and do not bother about the rest of the street.

In Baerat, as the streets are so cool, there is a fair amount of activity going on all the time and people often sit in doorways talking, washing, cooking, grinding corn etc.

In Gourna there seems to be very little shelter from the sun and the heat - there are very few trees and no palm trees at all. Some trees were planted and have grown very well, but the large open spaces are totally devoid of vegetation. In a few interesting cases however, it seems that some people were actually trying to grow plants and small palm trees outside

12.
their homes. In the adjacent villages there is an abundance of palm trees growing in courtyards, houses, streets, and public spaces, so that there is always greenery and shade.

If the village is too big or too crowded and claustrophobic, or because of family quarrels or petty jealousies or marriage, the villager looks for somewhere else to build his house and moves to or starts a 'suburb' or small hamlet nearby.



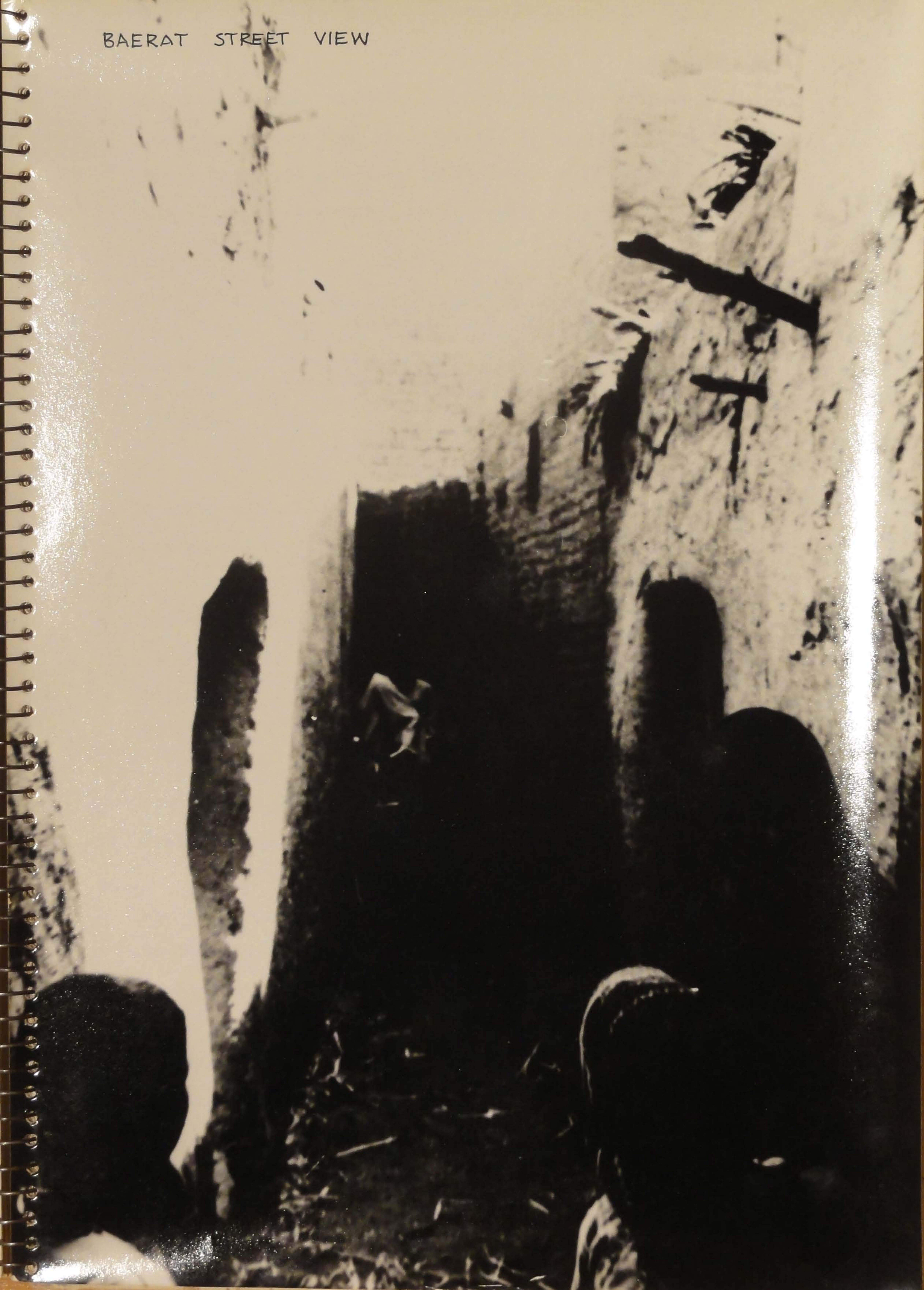
If the land belongs to him the man can build what he wants where he wants and need not ask for permission from the chief.

If he does not own the land he must buy land or ask the owner for permission to build on his land.

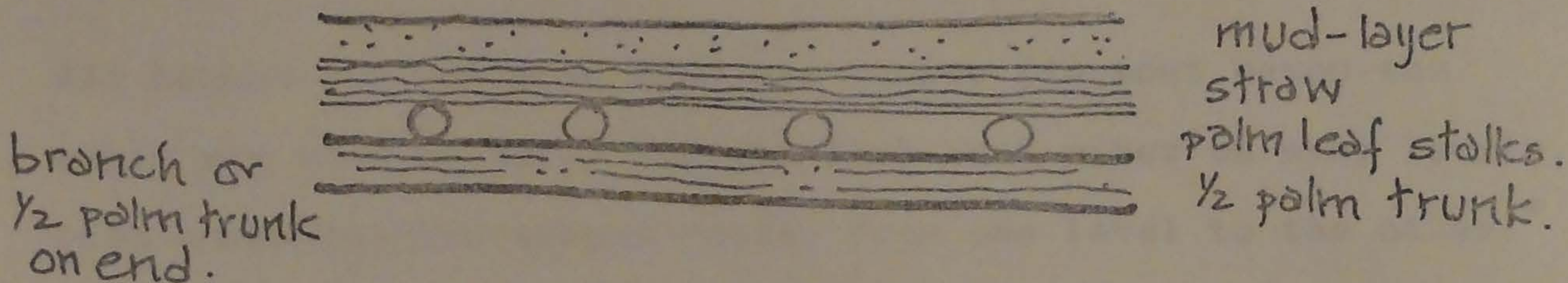
THERE IS NO PLANNING BY THE VILLAGERS other than that dictated by family clusters or bedanas or the distance from the mosque. (Each hamlet has its own mosque, with the main mosque for Baerat in the centre.)*

THE HOUSE: After having decided on his requirements, the villager will get a mason from the area to build his house for him. This is usually out of mud-brick, (sometimes out of fired brick if he can afford it) flat roofed, with small high windows, dark cool rooms and separate courtyards for livestock and cooking and washing, wholly or partly roofed over with straw.

BAERAT STREET VIEW



Any wood used in the construction usually belongs to the owner and comes from trees on his land. In many cases the roofs in Baerat are made of branches, of stripped palm stalks and of straw, sometimes covered with a layer of mud, e.g.



Sometimes the treads of stairs are wood re-inforced. Doors are made out of thick, roughly hewn pieces of wood.

The whole appearance of the house inside is fairly spacious and very much cleaner and more organised than in Gourna.

Animals are absent from the living areas and guest room - they have their own area.

The ovens used for baking bread and the whole technique of baking bread is the same as in Gourna.

The difference to Gourna is that in these villages each part of the house has a specific function which has been worked out by the owner himself and not someone else, although one must remember that Hassan Fathy had designed the houses originally for specific families.

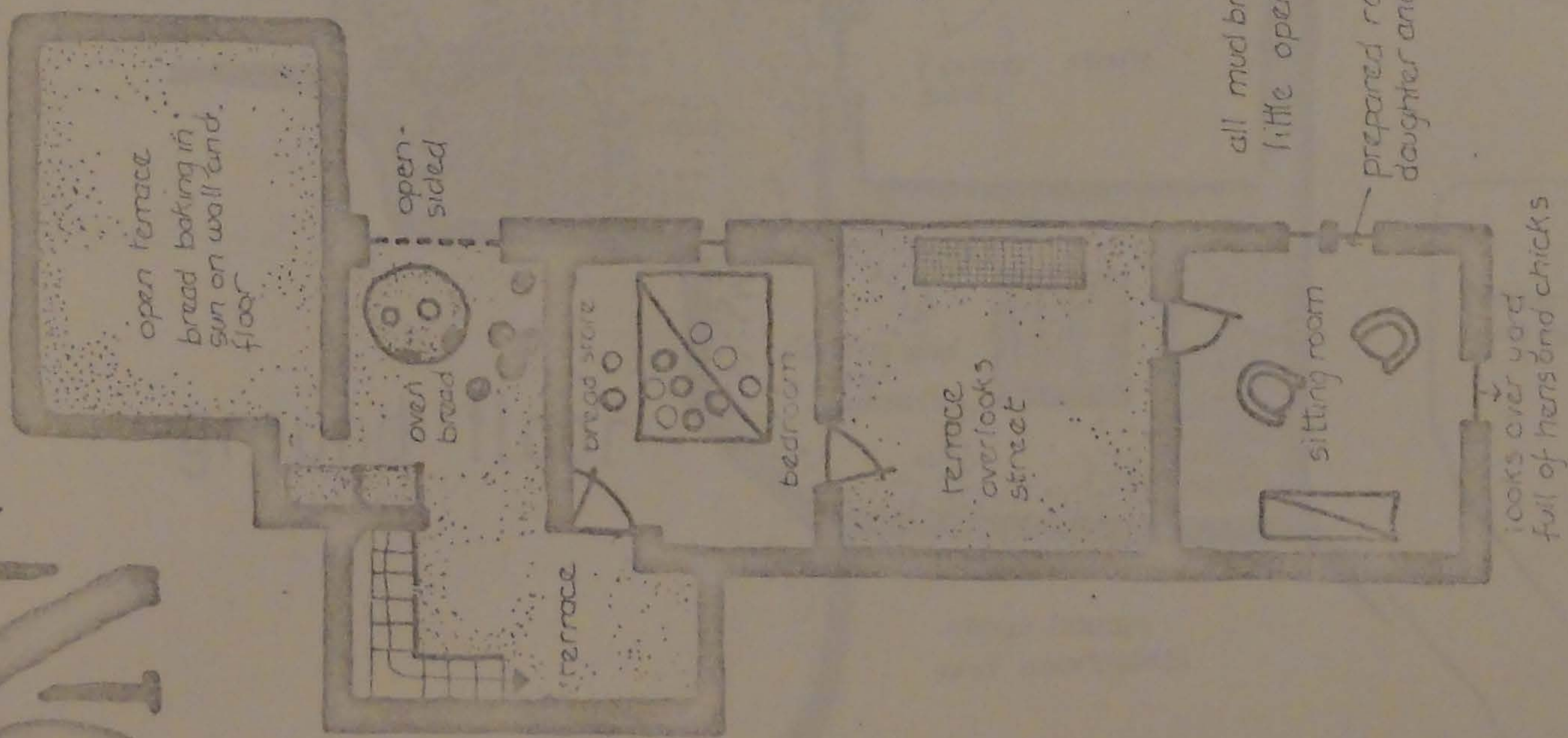
There is much more coherence in the jigsaw of roofs and courtyards and terraces and streets which make up a small hamlet than in Gourna.

1A.
A very strange and wonderful phenomenon exists of passing from a street through a courtyard, archway, house, courtyard to a street again. There seems to be no transition between public and private spaces, which seem to drift from one to the other.

All houses are not more than one storey (in most cases the roofs are used as well) and overlook each other on many levels, with communication across roofs, from one level to the other.*

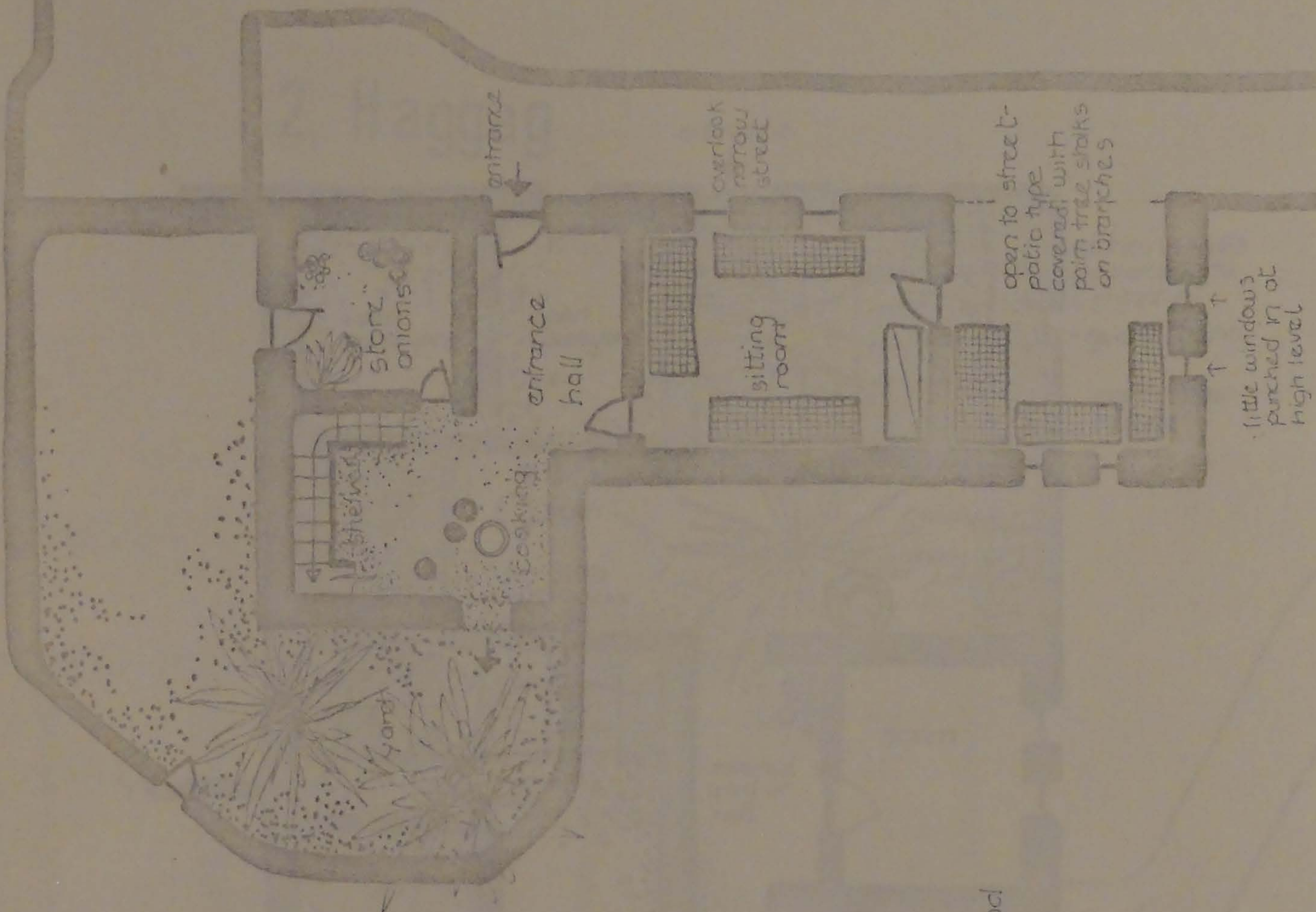
Three houses were studied in detail:

1. The house of Ahmed Hussein
2. The house of the Magistrate
3. The house built by Haggag, the mason



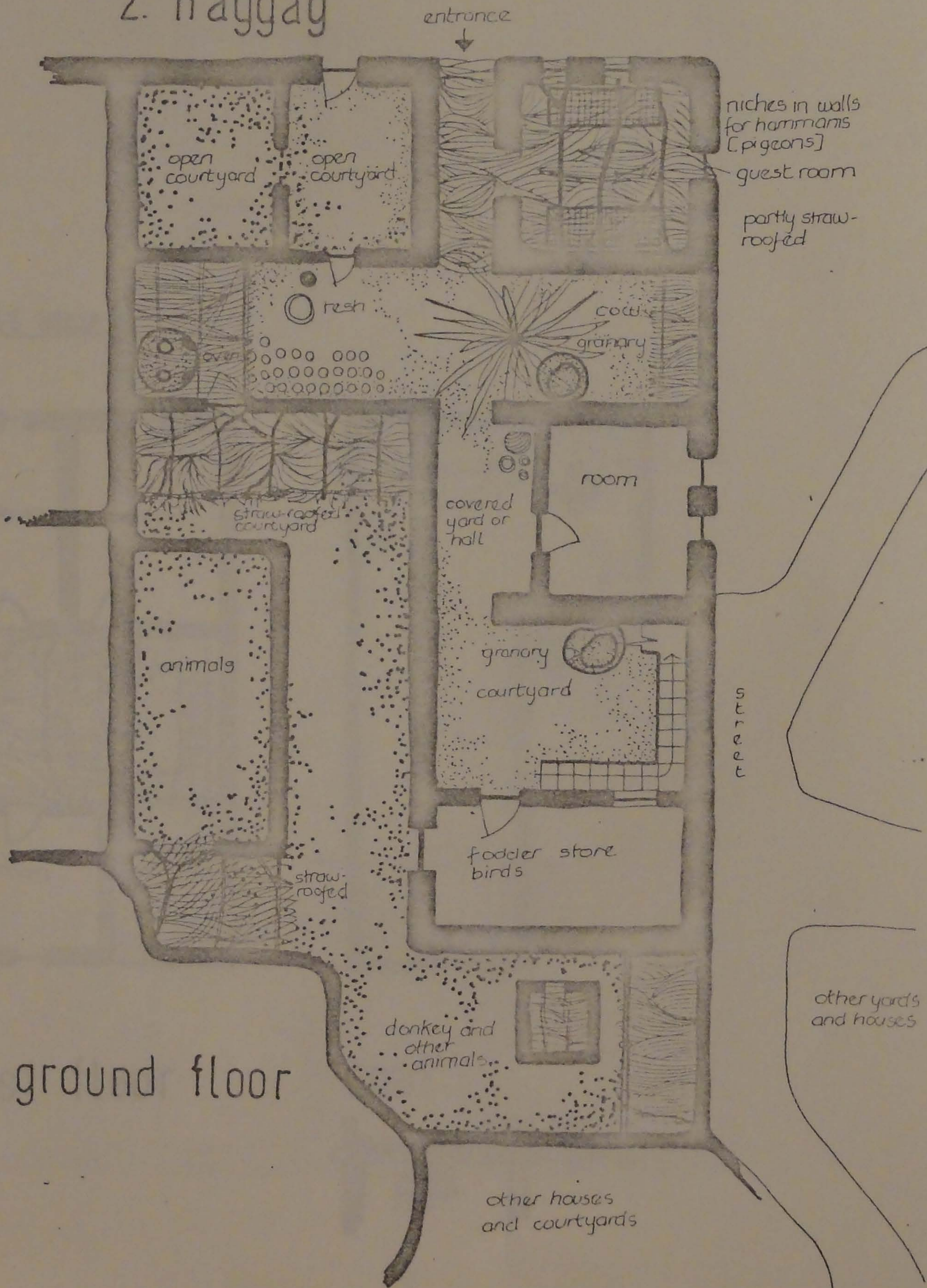
1. HOUSE OF AHMED HUSSEIN

first floor

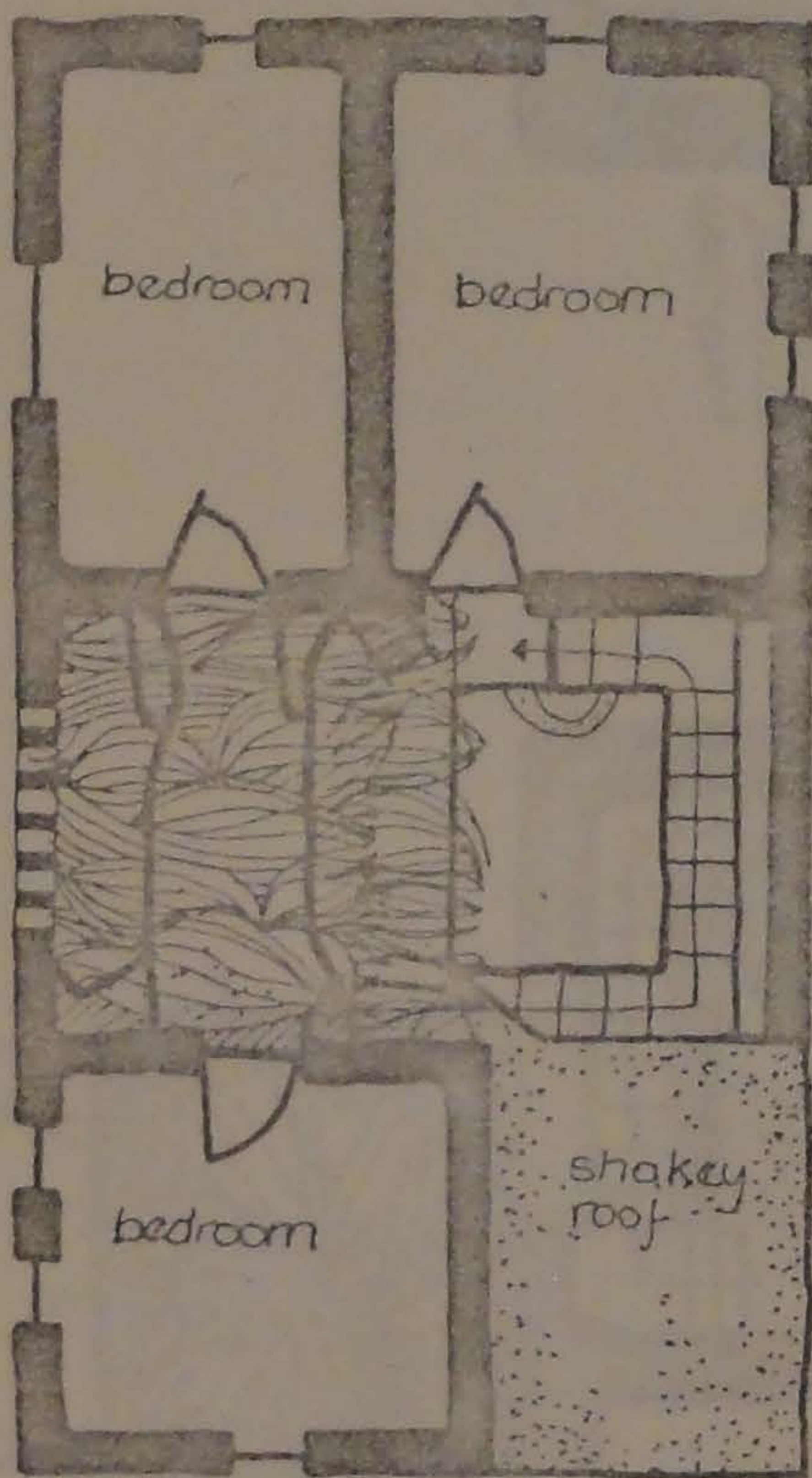


ground floor

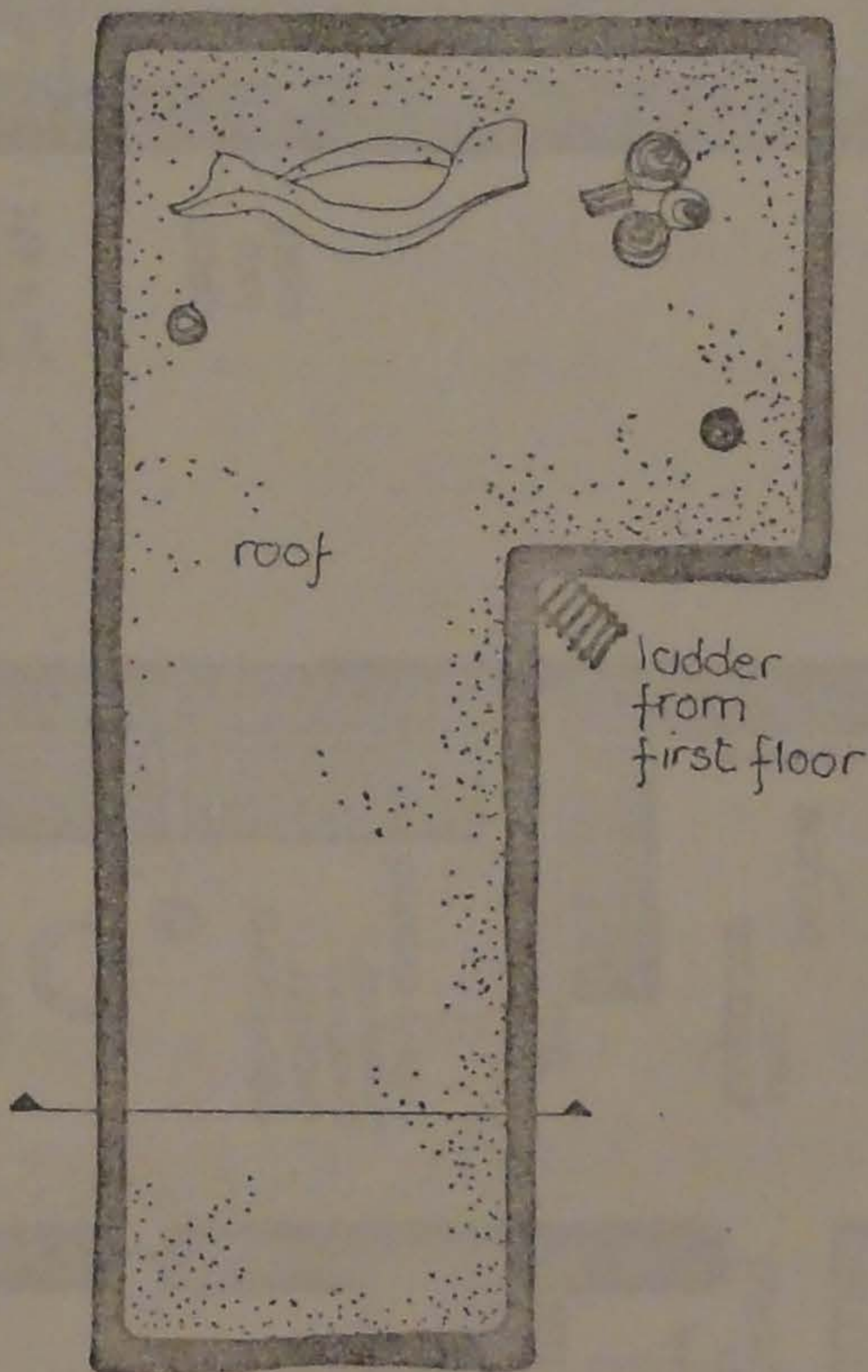
2. Haggag



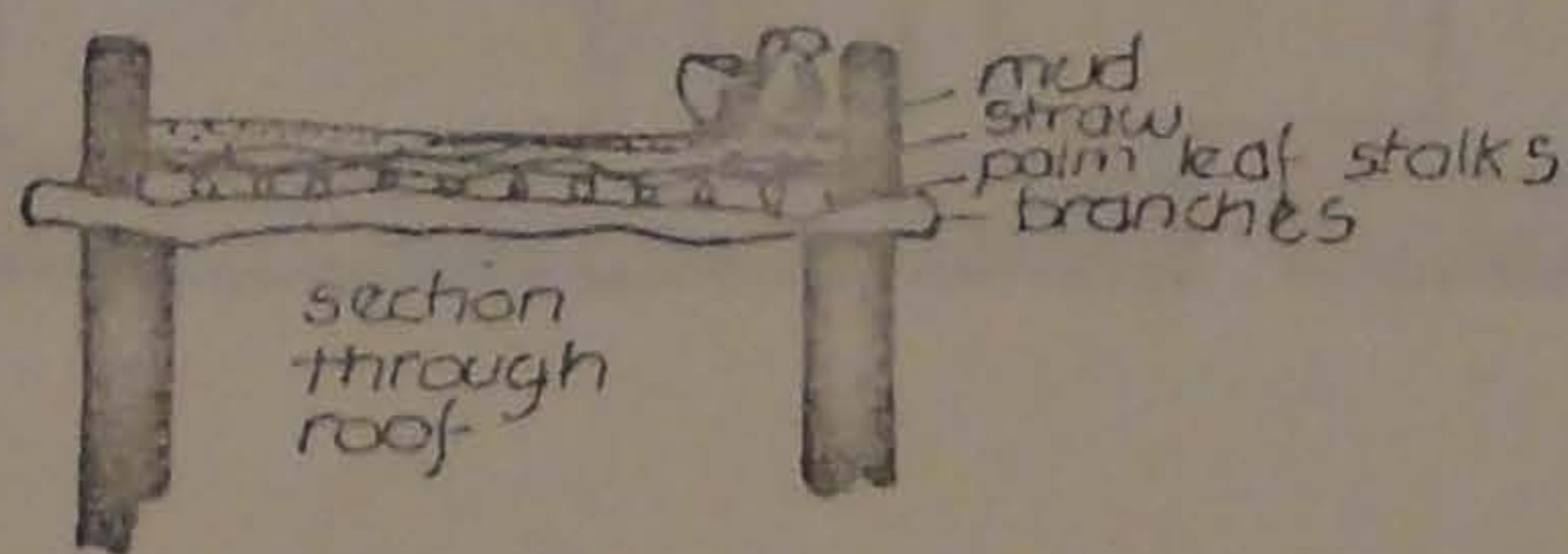
Z. HAGGAG'S HOUSE



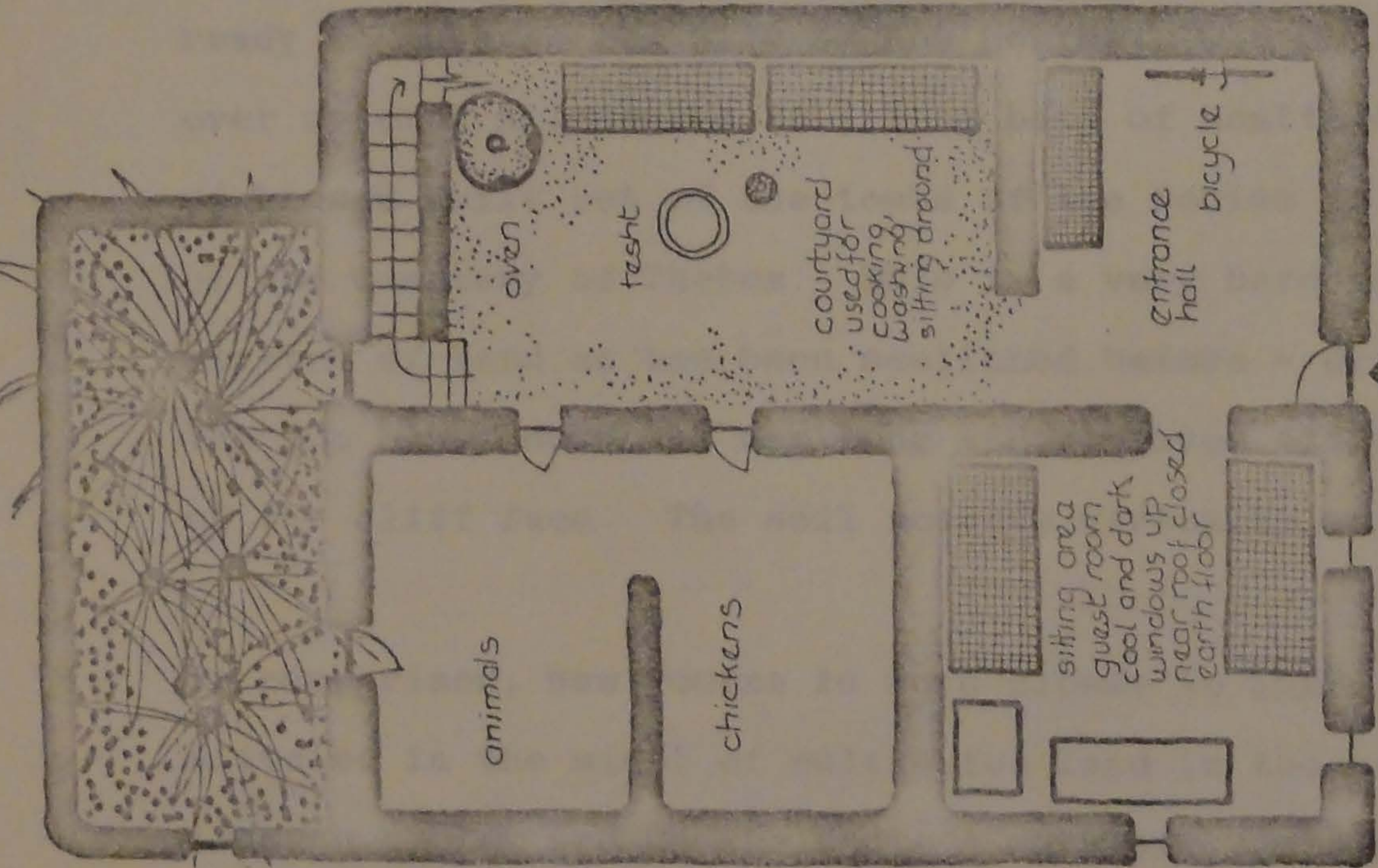
first floor



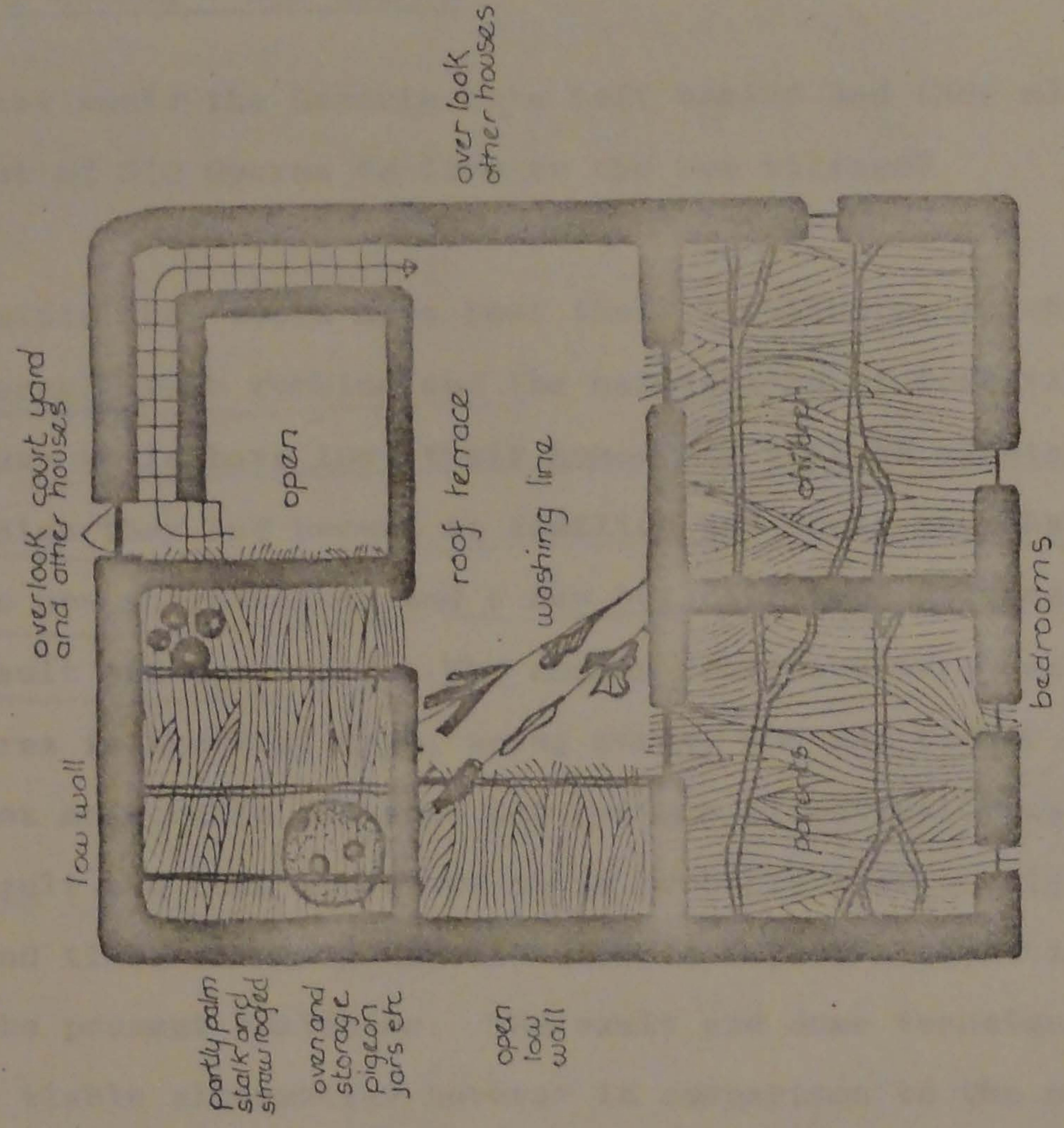
roof



3. The Magistrate



ground floor



first floor

OLD GOURNA - NEW GOURNA

What would the Gournis have left behind had they all moved out of Old Gourna to live in the new village?

Mainly they would have lost their livelihood, which was largely tomb robbing and the manufacture of forgeries. Also, they would have lost their homes and village clusters with which they had become so familiar and would have had to adapt to new surroundings and a new building type defined by the vault and dome roof. The common roof structure used in the

the social clusters were respected the dome they have seen and experienced and

area is the flat type, using straw, mud and timber. It is not as durable and does not perform climatically as well as the vault and dome roofs but it is probably less costly, complicated and time consuming and therefore a better alternative under the present realities. The vault and dome technique becomes a viable alternative however in comparison to the much costlier 'modern' roofing techniques often suggested for rural areas. If it were not for these factors they would probably be more ready to move to the site of New Gourna. Old Gourna stretches over several kilometres in a long band of scattered clusters of houses built out of the tombs of the Nobles on the hillsides of the Cemetery of Thebes. This is a very hard and rugged stretch of land as has been mentioned before - dry and hot, the sun beats down all day long and radiates off the rocks of the cliff face. The soil accepts virtually no vegetation.

In comparison, New Gourna is much closer to Luxor and is situated in the midst of cultivated land in the valley. It is much cooler and on the whole a more agreeable place.



VIEWS OF OLD GOURNA



Most people who had originally lived in Old Gournna and had moved to the new village gave as their reasons for leaving that it was too hot up on the hill and more more pleasant down in the valley. Undoubtedly a more fundamental reason would be their change in occupation from tomb-robbing in Old Gournna to working in Luxor either in kiosks selling to tourists or as guides for the Luxor temples etc. Thus close proximity to Luxor was an advantage offered by New Gournna.

As it is, nothing much has changed and Old Gournna continues as it did 28 years ago.

It would be interesting to see what would happen if the authorities opened up the remainder of the land constituting the total site of New Gournna, for people to build their houses on.

How would they build and how would they relate to the buildings already there?

We did not see any attempts at building vaults and domes other than at New Gournna.

An attempt has been made to graft something totally new into an old structure something a great deal more thought out and a vast improvement on the usual government grid-iron schemes of re-settlement. It seems that Gournna still hasn't quite made it - but its on the way there.



OLD GOURNA
BENT EL AGREB
[SCORPION BED]

What is the living pattern?
To put the W.C. on the bed?

What has got the higher income level, ^{to do} with
laundry arrangements, cooking arrangements,
bath etc.? were they designed using electrical
cooking & laundry???

CONCLUSIONS

The first essential difference between the neighbouring villages of Old Gourna and Baerat and New Gourna was that whereas the first two were expressions of the life-styles of their inhabitants, New Gourna had been designed as an expression of the architect's concept of what the life-styles of its inhabitants would be.

The second essential difference was that the 2 neighbouring villages had an economic basis from which they developed. New Gourna was designed and built with the concept of what its economic base would be but without that base ever becoming reality. The built environment went ahead to completion (or a quarter of it did) but the economic and organisational basis remained conceptual. It was a 'cart before the horse' situation.

- it was built to remove the inhabitants of the old village outside the anti-gas area. It was built for the same people, the same houses and the same economy. It was stopped before completion and before the project

From this stemmed most of the short-comings we observed in New Gourna.

Most obvious were the unused and decaying public buildings - the craft schools, bazaar, and the theatre, robbed of life when their economic and ~~one-dimensional~~ ^{organisational} basis was never realised.

← The houses were designed in a way that did not automatically flow from the existing living patterns. To be used as anticipated they presupposed a higher income level amongst the inhabitants with both the time and need for the several provisions made as well as a period of diligent education and training in their use.

For example in the logic of the stables, the kitchen and the washing areas.

would you like the stables to be in the bed-rooms?

what are they?

Even so, the realism of at least some of the facilities could be questioned. For example the requirement to carry water continually up to storage jars on the roof so that the family could have 'piped, running water'. The task was far too laborious as we experienced for it to be consistently used.

stop talking like a parrot
economy!

Realising the primary necessity of an economic base for any viable community to develop Fathy worked one out in surprising detail for the intended inhabitants of New Gourna. But then he went ahead and built the buildings as if their physical presence alone would give rise to all the activities they were to house.

Who said so? You.

no fool would design buildings for ghosts and if he did he would be better off than all insipid houses built by any modern architect
For New Gourna to have developed as planned, much more was required far beyond the capabilities of one man or one discipline.

This would especially be the case if the village was to be a prototype of a national rural development effort and not just a one-off success. Even as a pilot project it needed to develop in an integrated way. This offered an opportunity to try developing public service buildings. To say something with consequence, you should compare the old designs of houses, the designs prepared for public service buildings actually and give your verdict
In nature, the economic base once established and developing gives rise to the physical environment. In New Gourna efforts should have been made to get the crafts industries functioning first no matter in how modest a way and how modest the physical structure within which it was functioning. And then as activity stimulated need, the physical structures could have responded.

stop this economic

In new Gourna the population was to be removed from the old village in 3 years?

and is a one specific case of removing a community to another shell, plans, designs of houses and public service buildings. To say something with consequence, you should compare the old designs of houses, the designs prepared for public service buildings actually and give your verdict
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The physical action intended was to stop tomb-robbing

Some planned anticipation of how the activities, and the physical structures, could develop would of course be necessary. Their execution should however have remained in step and

developed gradually, ready to respond and change wherever necessary.

Implied in this is the importance of the integration between the ideas and the people for whom they are developed.

The strong opposition of the Gournis to the project made it impossible. But if they had been receptive it would have been necessary that the execution of the ideas one had for their development be kept reasonably in pace with their acceptance of these ideas. Taken a step further it would mean involving them in the process of their own development soon and to such an extent that the 'professional' became the server of their own expressed needs rather than both formulator and server of those needs.

what is this pace? Did you read the

this is repeating what I have been saying

to every one - and in the book. go and read it and then you can have a word in the matter.

no he can! better single handedly

But an architect cannot be all things at once, least of all single-handedly, and in the face of opposition both from those who are to inhabit his design and those who pay him to design it; from the start the Gournis opposed being moved and later the government opposed the continuation of the project. Under such circumstances New Gourna stands as a remarkable achievement.

As a life-size laboratory for the testing of indigenous design and construction techniques, it is a gold-mine of information. Studied along with the architect's book on the village it describes in detail how an architect can begin on the basis of the peasant he is designing for and improve on his artifacts of living in a sensitive manner. It also stands as testimony to the organic, aesthetic and economic appropriateness of mud-brick, vault and dome construction to

village design.

The architect had already exceeded (and rightly so) the normal brief by describing how an economic basis could be achieved for the village. It was not humanly possible for him to put it into operation as well. Today the experience of Gourna still stands as a basis for concerted action in rural development but one that requires co-operation and planning both on the national and inta-disciplinary levels.

NEW GOURNA

REFERENCE MAP 1:500



NEW GOURNA LOCALITY MAP



APPROXIMATELY 1950, THE VILLAGE OF NEW GOURNA WAS DESIGNED BY HASSAN FATHY TO ACCOMMODATE 900 FAMILIES WHICH WERE TO BE MOVED FROM OLD GOURNA, SITUATED ON THE HILLS OF THE CEMETERY OF THEBES.

THE REASON FOR THIS MOVE, INITIATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES OF THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT, WAS THAT THE GOURNAS, WHO WERE AND STILL ARE TOMB ROBBERS AND FORTUNATELY BY OCCASION, REMOVING PRICELESS TREASURES FROM THE TOMBS AND SELLING THEM TO DEALERS. I.E. THE CITY WOULD IN TURN SELL THEM TO FOREIGNERS. IN THIS WAY THE TREASURES WOULD FIND THEIR WAY OVERSEAS INSTEAD OF IN THE HANDS OF EGYPT.

IN ORDER TO STOP THIS, THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO TAKE OVER THE WHOLE AREA IN WHICH THE GOURNAS HAD BUILT THEIR HOMES.

BUT CAN ONE SO EASILY MOVE PEOPLE FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEIR LIVELIHOOD DEPENDS ON THE LAND WHICH EVEN THEIR OWN HOUSES GROW?

THE MAIN REASON OF THE VILLAGE OF NEW GOURNA WAS BUILT WAS, AS TO THE OPPOSITION FROM THE VILLAGE ELDERS THE AREA WAS CHOSEN FOR, AS THE VILLAGE WAS BEING BUILT IN AN AREA WHICH WAS, MANY OF THE NEW BUILDINGS WERE CHOSEN AND BUILT.

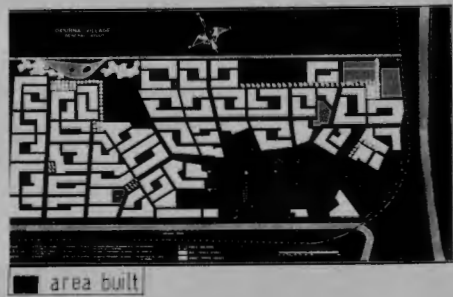
ESPECIALLY THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTIQUITIES LOST THEIR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE PEOPLE WHO WERE TO BE MOVED. ANY FORMER WORK IN THE TOMBS, UNFORTUNATELY BUILDING STRONG AND HIGH QUALITY LEFT INDIVIDUALS. THE PEOPLE WHOSE HOMES WERE MOVED TO NEW GOURNA - HAVING NEVER BEFORE HAD BETTER CLIMATIC CONDITIONS AND THE FACT THAT NEW GOURNA IS NEARER TO LUXOR WHERE THEY DO WORK - THESE PEOPLE HAVE MOVED ONLY

IN THE PAST 5 - 10 YEARS AND ANY ADDITIONS TO THE VILLAGE HAVE BEEN MADE BY THEM DURING THIS PERIOD.

HASSAN FATHY HAD TRIED TO RELATE THE DESIGN OF THE VILLAGE AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO THE TRADITIONAL DESIGNS AND WAYS OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE. HE INTRODUCED A VAULT AND DOME METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION IN RED BRICK, WHICH THOUGH NOT AS CHEAP AS THE FLAT AND STRAW ROOFS OF THE LOCAL VILLAGES, WAS SAFER, CLIMATICALLY MORE COMFORTABLE AND DEFINITELY CHEAPER AND EASIER TO BUILD THAN THE CONCRETE ROOFS ARCHITECTS FAVOURED.

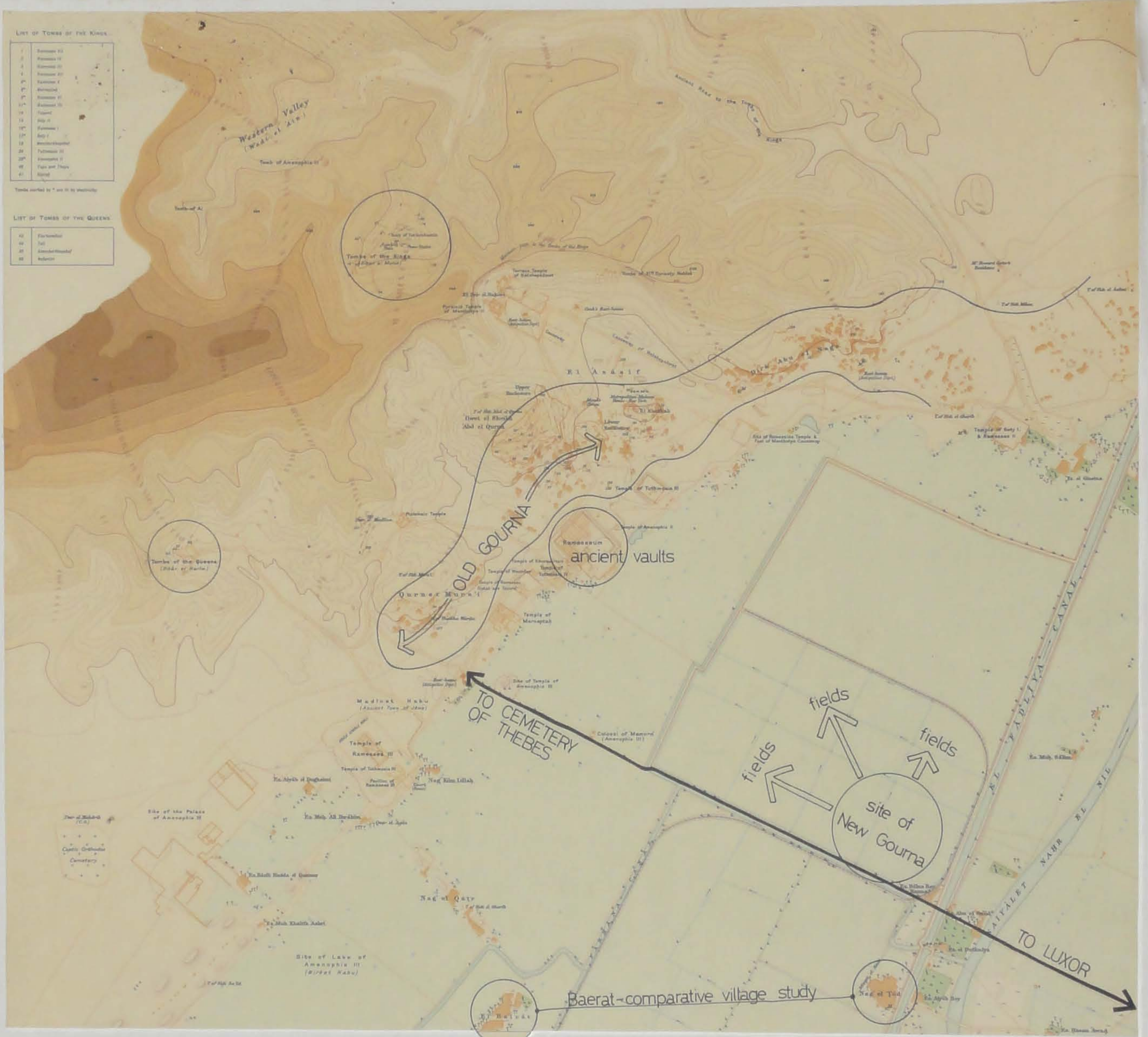
IN MANY AREAS IN UPPER EGYPT, BECAUSE OF THE ASWAN DAM SCHEME - NEW VILLAGES HAVE BEEN BUILT BY THE GOVERNMENT. THESE ARE PROVING LARGELY UNSATISFACTORY WITH THEIR GRID-IRON LAYOUTS AND CONCRETE TECHNOLOGY, UNSUITABLE TO THE CLIMATE, UNRELATED TO THE LIVING PATTERNS OF THE PEOPLE AND TOO EXPENSIVE TO IMPLEMENTATION NATIONALLY.

WE STUDIED NEW GOURNA, OLD GOURNA AND TRADITIONAL VILLAGES IN THE VICINITY IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH COMPARATIVE SUCCESS AND FAILURES OF THE DESIGN CONCEPTS OF THE PROJECT AND ESTABLISH GUIDE-LINES FOR SIMILAR PROJECTS IN THE FUTURE.



NEW GOURNA

LOCALITY MAP



APPROXIMATELY 28 YEARS AGO, THE VILLAGE OF NEW GOURNA WAS DESIGNED BY PROFESSOR HASSAN FATHY, TO ACCOMMODATE 900 FAMILIES WHICH WERE TO BE MOVED FROM OLD GOURNA, SITUATED ON THE HILLS OF THE CEMETERY OF THEBES.

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EVENTUALLY THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES LOST THEIR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE SCHEME AND REFUSED TO SUPPORT ANY FURTHER WORK ON THE PROJECT. CONSEQUENTLY BUILDING STOPPED AND NEW GOURNA WAS LEFT UNFINISHED. THE PEOPLE LIVING THERE NOW, MAINLY FROM OLD GOURNA - HAVING MOVED BECAUSE OF BETTER CLIMATIC CONDITIONS AND THE FACT THAT NEW GOURNA IS CLOSER TO LUXOR, WHERE THEY NOW WORK THESE PEOPLE HAVE MOVED ONLY

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NEW GOURNA

AS SURVEYED APRIL 1973



MUD BRICK HOUSE





NEW GOURNA

AS DESIGNED

1945

