

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

The villages we visited were actually 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 Gournna).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.

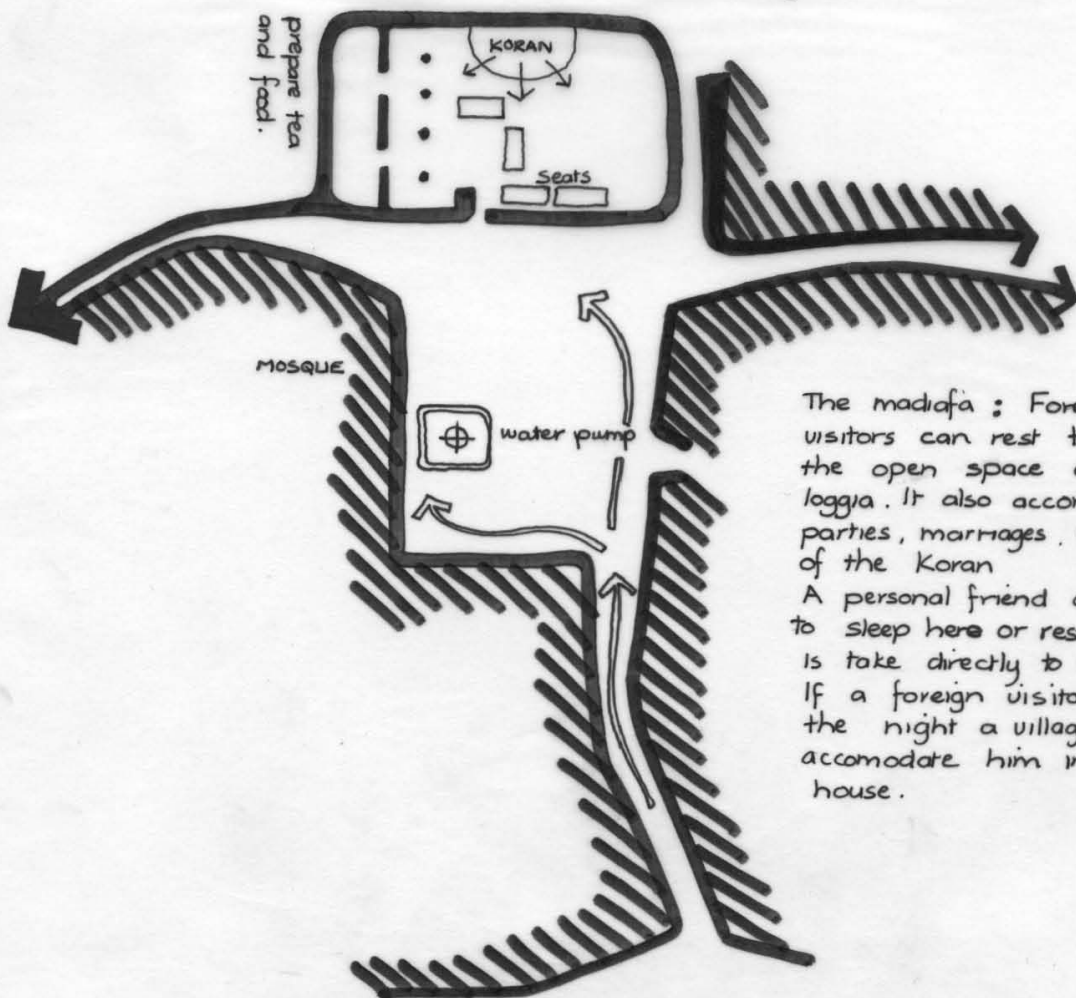
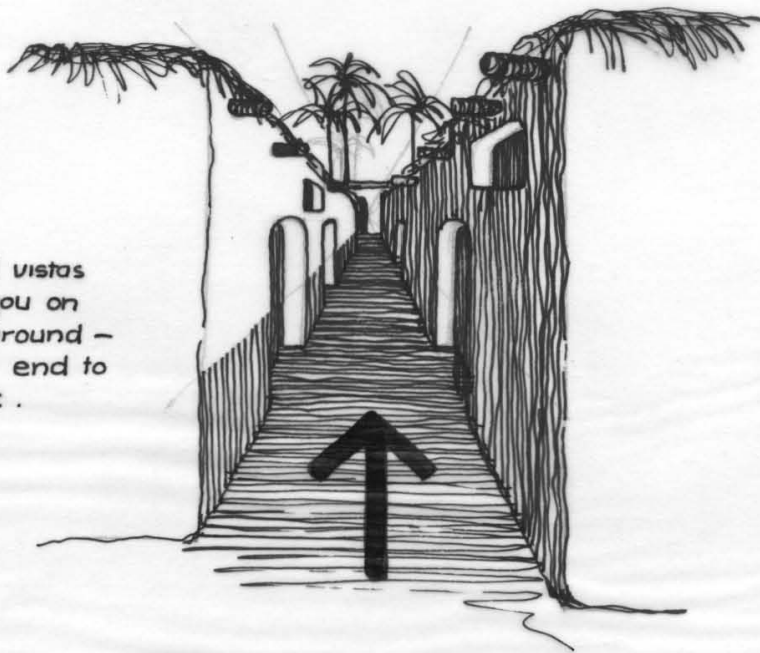
Baerat has a chief who keeps law and order and punishes people in his own way when they do wrong.He chooses a man from each part of the village who acts as a deputy and keeps him informed of events in his particular area.

As in Gournna,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 Gournna where the min. space is 6 metres wide.The narrow and winding streets are very pleasant and interesting to walk in 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 streets.Open,close,open,close.....

The streets of the whole area seem very clean,unlike New Gournna.There are no animals or straw,mainly because the animals are kept in private court-

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



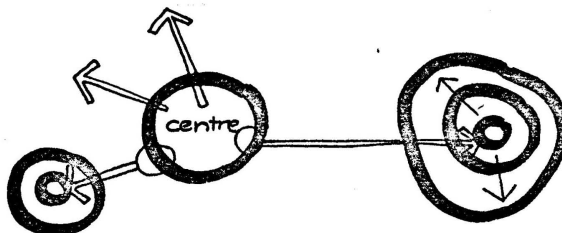
The madifa : Foreign (strangers) visitors can rest there - in the open space and in the loggia . It also accomodates parties , marriages , the reading of the Koran . A personal friend does not need to sleep here or rest here but is take directly to the house . If a foreign visitor stays the night a villager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

yards 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 onto 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 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



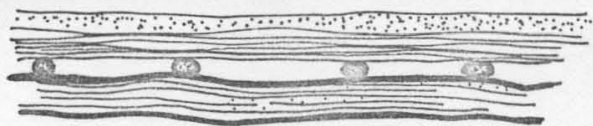
to build on his land.

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 live-stock and cooking and washing, wholly or partly roofed over with straw. 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 stripped palm stalks and straw, sometimes covered with a layer of mud eg.

leave space.

branch or $\frac{1}{2}$ palm trunk on end.



mud layer
straw
palm leaf stalks
 $\frac{1}{2}$ palm trunk

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

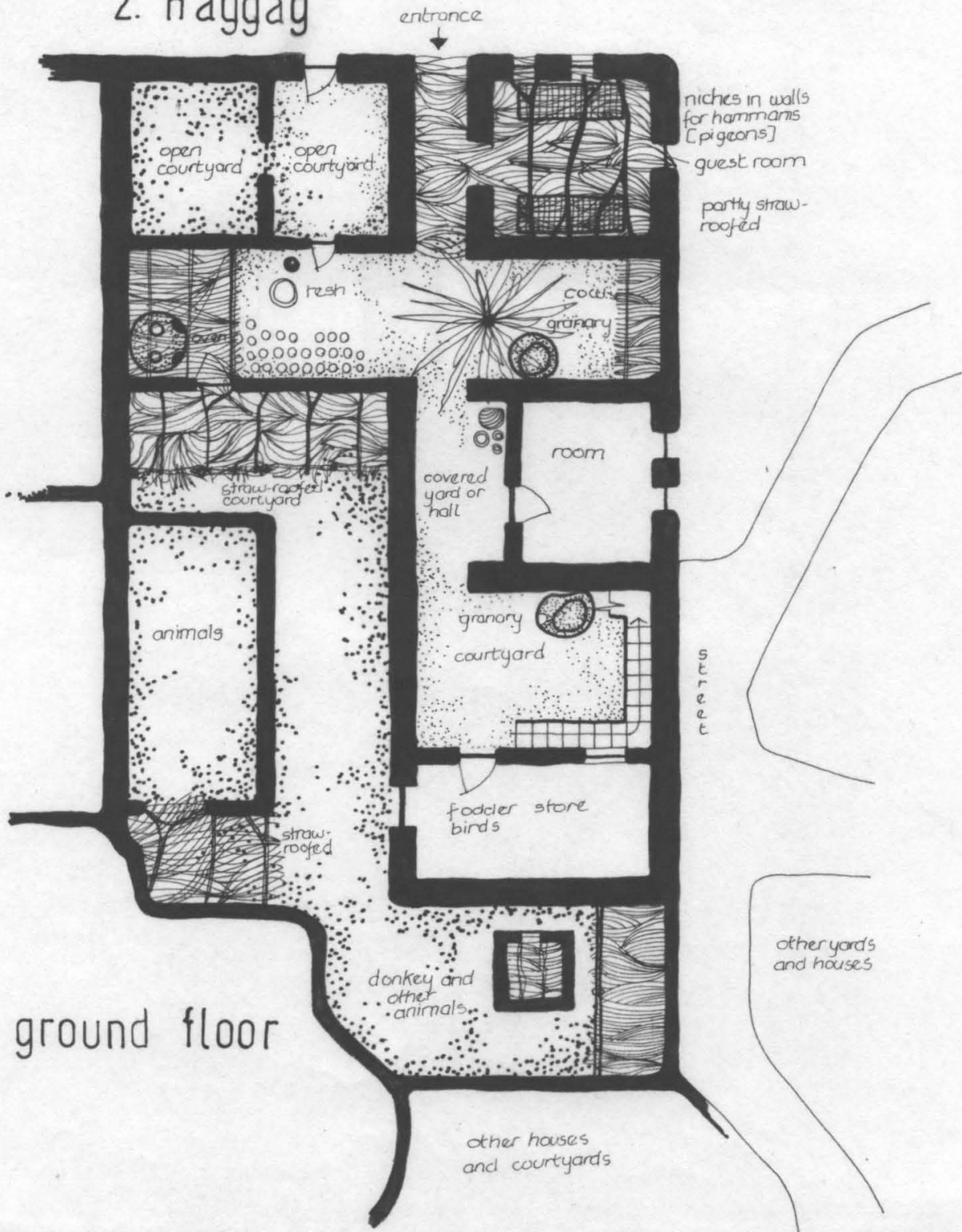
The whole appearance of the house inside is fairly spacious and very much cleaner and more organised than in Gourna. Animals are absent from the living areas and guest room--they have their own area.

The ovens used for baking bread and the whole technique of baking the 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.

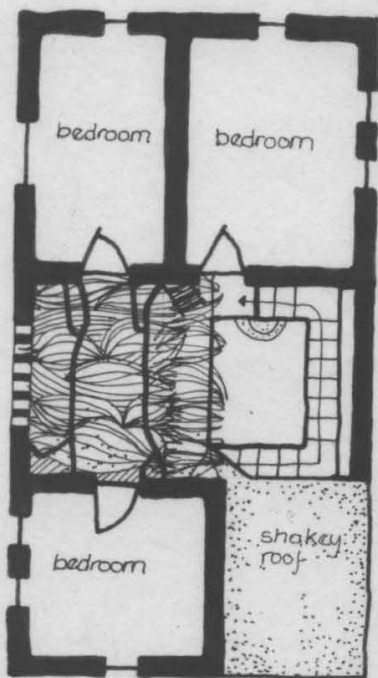
2. Haggag



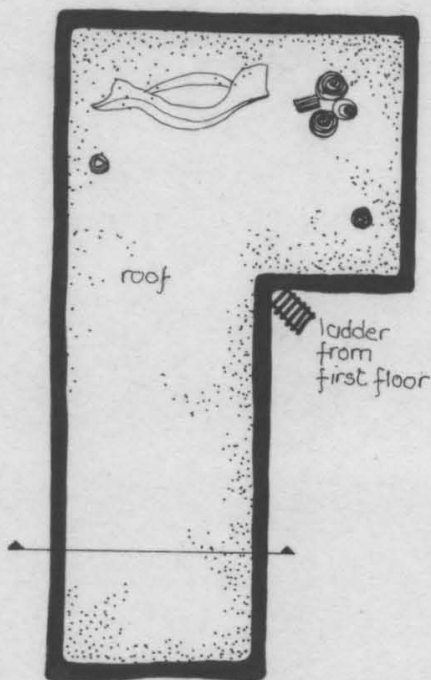
A very strange and wonderful phenomenon exists of passing from a street through a courtyard, archway, house, courtyard to a street again. There seems to be no transition between public and private spaces, which seem to drift from one to the other.

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. *

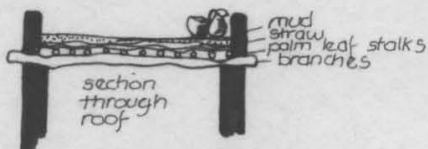
- Three houses were studied in detail
1. The house of Ahmed Hussein
 2. The house of the Magistrate
 3. The house built by Haggag, the mason.



first floor

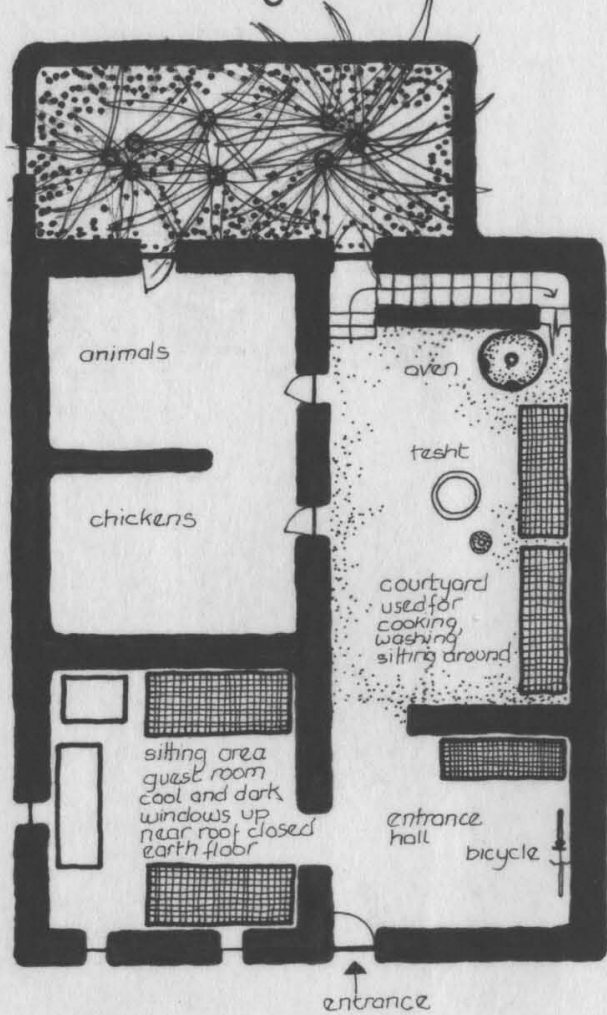


roof

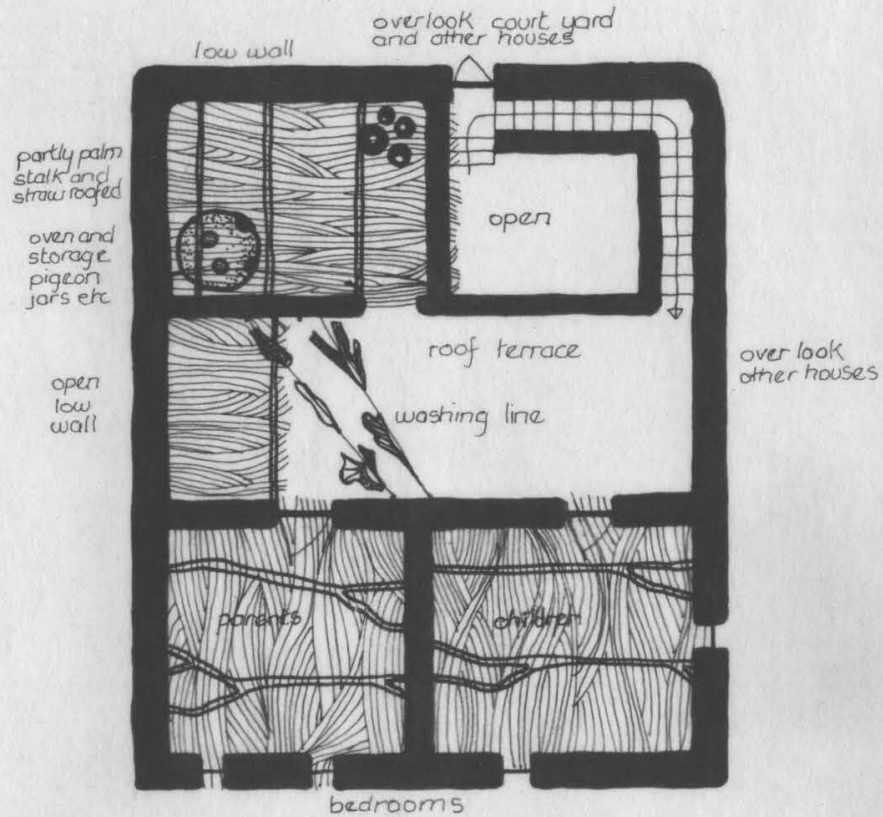


section through roof

3. the Magistrate



ground floor



first floor



What would the Gournis have left behind had they all moved out of Old Gournna 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}.

(which does not exist in the traditional villages of the area although it is very good as a construction method and is climatically very sound and not subject to fires as much as the usual straw roofed houses.)

If it were not for these factors they would probably be more ready to move to the site of New Gournna. Old Gournna 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 Gournna 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

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 much more pleasant down in the valley. ^{in fact 2134. 4.}

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 Gourna.⁵

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 Gourna still has'nt quite made it - but it's on its way there.

Technique is probably too complicated, a better alternative under the present realities. V+D techniques become a viable alternative only in comparison with modern roofing techniques often suggested for rural areas.