II

REGIONALISATION

Regionalization

The study area has been divided into fifteen subregions, each displaying different characteristics in their built environment (see study regions map). The divisions have been made where major changes in house form and building materials were noted to occur.

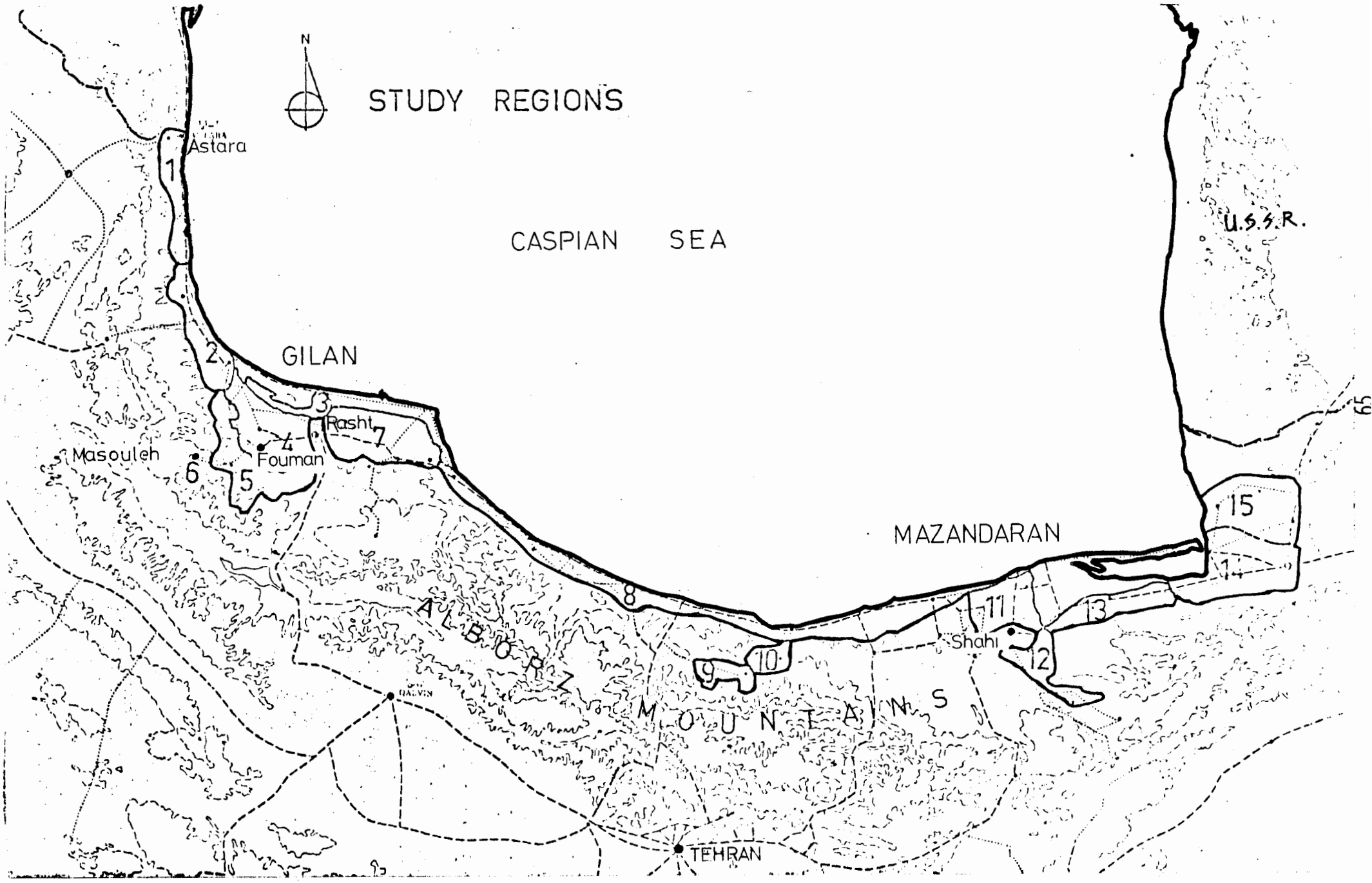
Each subregion is described in terms of:

i) General socioeconomic history
ii) Built environment
iii) House case studies

The socioeconomic history has been taken largely from the documentation research and refers mainly to the twentieth century. The built environment describes the settlement pattern, house form, and building materials and methods of each subregion while the houses surveyed in each settlement are illustrated by drawings, photographs and text in the house case studies.

The subregions are from west to east as follows:

1) Astara and Kerganrud
2) Masal and Shanderman
3) The Mavazi Coastal Strip
4) Fouman Plains
5) Fouman Foothills
6) Masouleh
7) Sefid Rud Delta
8) The Central Coastal Strip
9) Kojur
10) Kodir
11) Sari Plains
12) Sari Foothills
13) Behshar area (Rostam Kola)
14) West Gorgan
15) Turkomansahra


N
STUDY REGIONS
CASPIAN SEA
U.S.S.R.
Astara
GILAN
Rasht
Fouman
Masouleh
MAZANDARAN
Shahi
TEHRAN
ALBORZ MOUNTAINS
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15

1 Astara - Kerganrud

Boundaries: N=Astara and the Namin
W=Ardebil and the Khalkhal
S=Asalem and the Kalfarud
includes Astara, Lemir, Hevik, Lissar, Hashtpar, Asalem.

The district of Kerganrud, a particularly mountainous region with a narrow coastal plain, extends from Astara in the north to the Asalem district in the south. Forest covered, northern ranges of the Alborz mountains which in certain areas descend to within two to three and a half kilometres from the sea, cover the western part of this district.

Kerganrud is divided into three sub-districts: Otaksera in the south; Lisar and Heredacht north of Otaksera; and Hevik and Chubar north of Lisar and Heredacht, extending to the border of Astara.

The people of this district are Talesh and, according to Rabino, mostly Sunnites, with the exception of those in Lisar and Heredacht who are Shiites.* The population in the coastal plain are engaged in agriculture while those in the hills live by animal husbandry. Taleshi and Turkish are the most commonly spoken languages.

The products of the area are: superior quality rice, honey, fruit (especially quince, pears and apples), wood and forest fuel. Higher up are wheat and barley and abundant dairy products. The rivers are rich in fish.

History:
Historically the Astara and Kerganrud area had a close economic relationship to Russia. Exports of the region consisted of timber, firewood, boxwood, charcoal, rice, honey, silk and foodstuffs. Imports from Russia in turn included salt, sugar, cotton products, wool, linen and hemp. Trade was carried out through custom houses in Direkeri, Kerganrud and Alalan in Asalem. Products were marketed in Kergan-

*H. Louis Rabino, Les Provinces Caspiennes de la Perse, 1917. p.92.

rud, Direkeri, Lisar and Hevik.

Rural people of the remote upper parts of Kerganrud have had an unsettled history. Particularly those involved in animal husbandry have been exposed to periodic raids from their tribal neighbours, the Shahsavand. According to Rabino (1906 to 1912) the government at that time was unable to provide effective security to the outlying pasturelands. It is assumed that this defensive problem has also affected the housing and settlements in this area.

Astara:

There is little mention of Astara in old geographic documents and some historians believe that the town was not of any importance until relatively recent times. The earliest written documents that call this region by the name of Astara dated 1002 Hejira (1623 A.D.).* Abbott, the British traveller who passed through Astara in 1843, names the town as Dahaneh Kenar, which had 50 to 60 households and contained stores which exported goods to other countries. There was no port in Astara and ships transferred their goods to smaller boats that carried them ashore. In the hills there was no settled population and in the coastal plain, other than the village of Astara, there were four villages.* The Astara river separates the Iranian part of Astara from the Russian Astara, and thus the boundaries of this township (shahrestan) are defined by the Astara river to the north and the Chilvand river in the south. The town of Astara has a population of 10,537 and is the administrative and commercial centre of the shahrestan, which contains a population of 28,090 in 69 villages.

Built Environment:

This wooded, narrow coastal strip contains a number of small towns and villages distributed at every five to ten kilometres along the main asphalt road from Astara to Lisar. The markets of these settlements form rows of shops, workshops, and cafes along both sides of the main road, but the

---

* M.Sotudeh, From Astara to Astarabad, 1349 A.H. p.8-10.

majority of the dwellings are scattered in small clusters at some distance from the market. The houses sit in their garden plots which are in clusters of three or four along a winding, mostly unpaved road through the wooded country. The predominant house form in the Astara-Lisar region is composed of the 'L' shape plan. The basic two room house with a corner aivan (loggia or verandah) are built on a solid platform raised 50cm.to 1m. from the ground. The larger houses of the area are normally composed of two 'L' configurations mirroring each other, thus forming a three or four room house with a central aivan.*1 It has been suggested that the 'L' shaped house plan is a relatively new form, introduced into the area in the past 50 years. In the foothills near Lisar some older houses were observed that were built with the aivan extending right across the front of the house. In many cases such houses were built on two storeys with a semi. open ground floor, similar to house types found in the southern Talesh foothills of Shanderman, Masal and the foothills of Fouman.

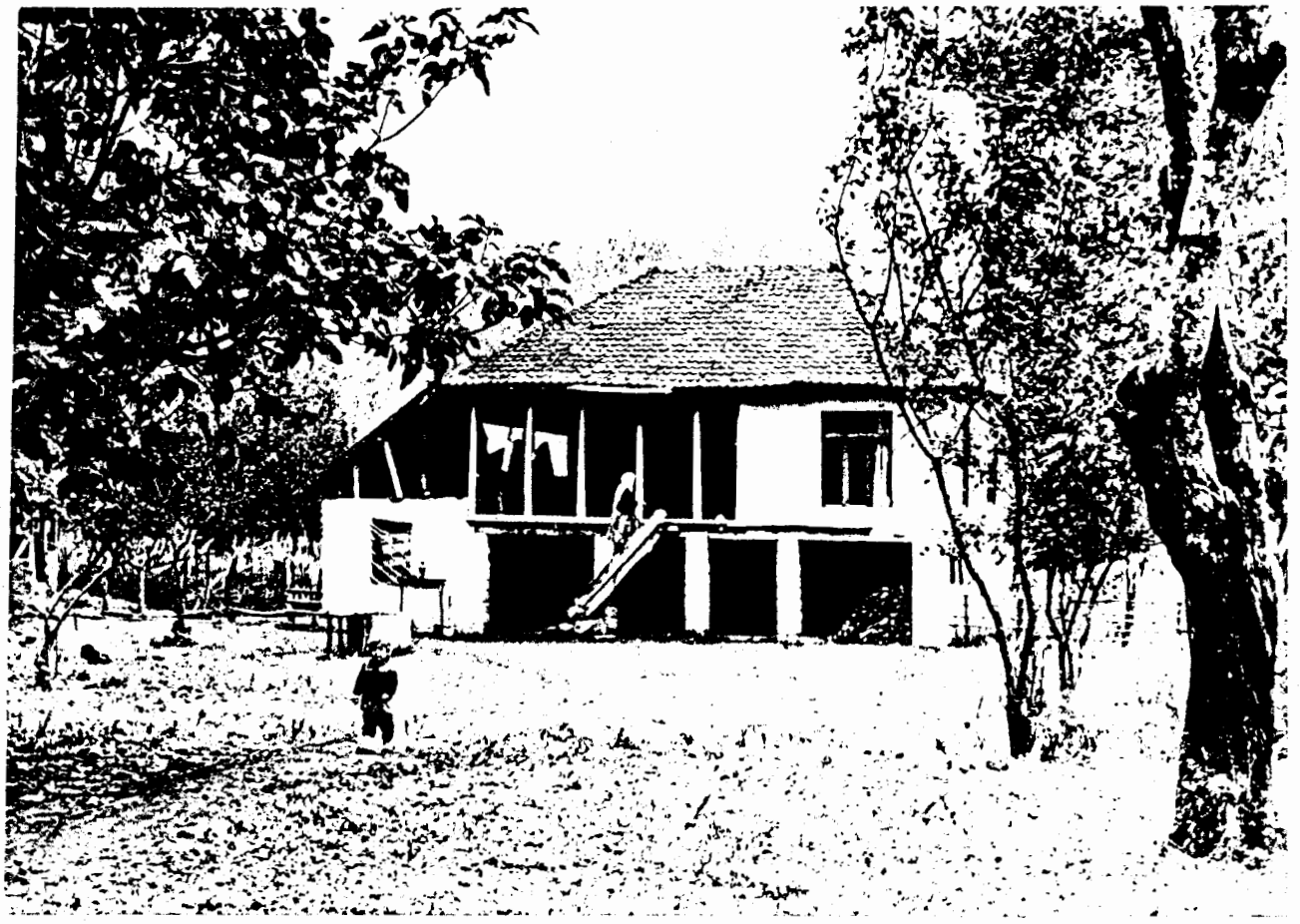
From the town of Astara to Lisar there are about 50 active kilns that produce roof tiles*2. The tiles produced here have a shallow profile, unlike those used in Rasht and parts of Mazandaran, and the great majority of buildings in this region use these tiles as their roof covering material*3. The roofs are hipped with all four sides being pitched at approximately 35°. The tiles are supported by the timber battens on the roof truss and are cemented on the ridges*3. The walls of the buildings are either brick, or timber lathing plastered with mud. There are a few log walled buildings nearer the hillsides. Sheet metal roofs can also be found on some houses but they are less frequently used here than in other parts of the Caspian, due to the local people's belief that sheet metal is less resistant than tile to the high rainfall and strong winds of the area.

---

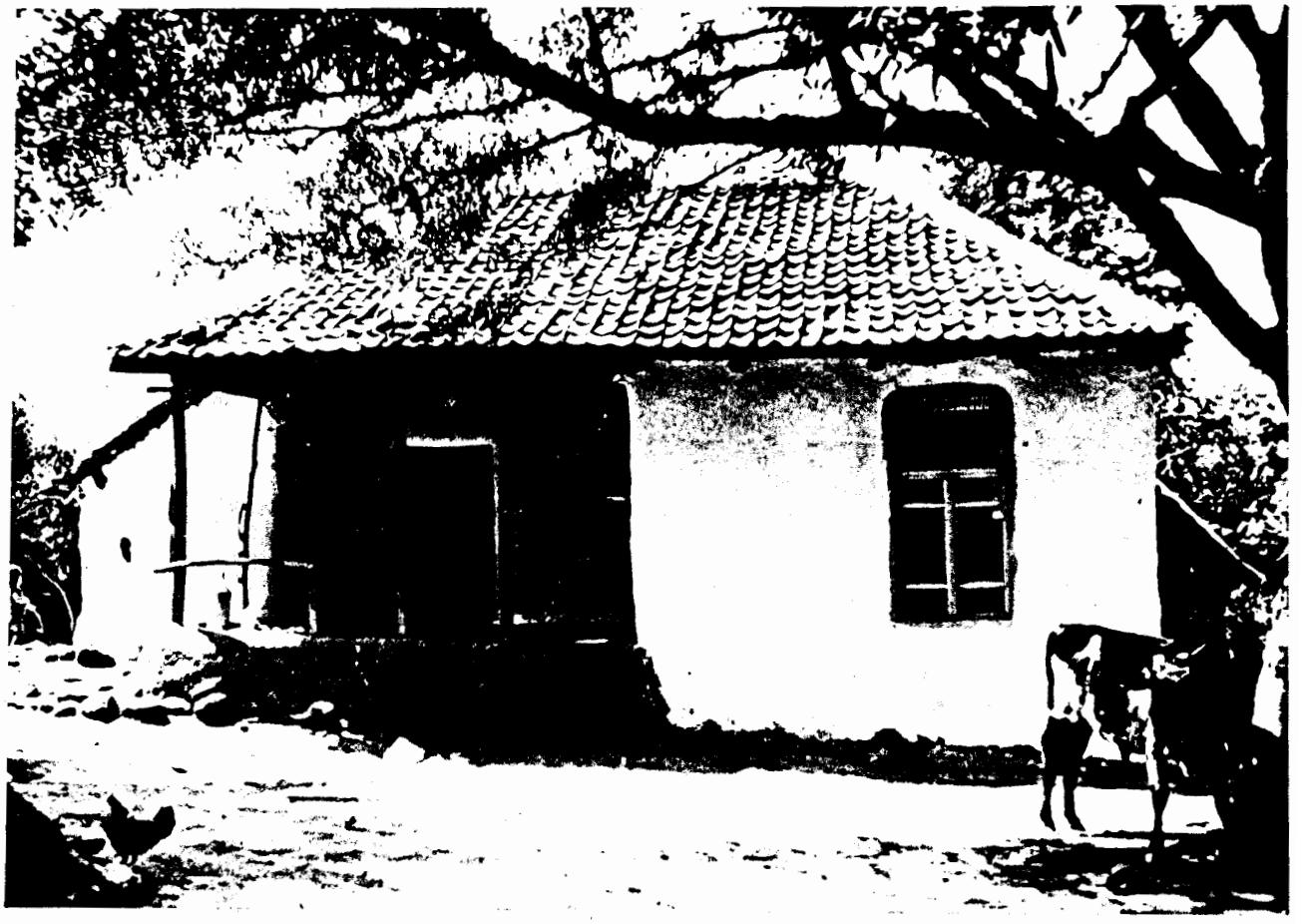
*1 see morphology of house form in typology section.

*2 see single lap tile production.

*3 see materials and technology section.



Houses in the Astara area are predominantly "L" shape in plan with corner aivans and pantile roofs. Above: two storey house in Chubar village.



Ancillary shelters are added as lean-to structures to the basic "L" plan house in Kashfi village.

Kashfi (Astara): house 1.1

This type of house is commonly found in the Astara-Lisar area.

The house has an "L" shape plan with a corner aivan facing south, and stands on a 60 cm. high plinth. The roof is hipped in form, all four sides being pitched at approximately 35^{o}, with a ridge at the top. The covering is shallow profile overlapping clay tiles* supported on a timber truss framework.

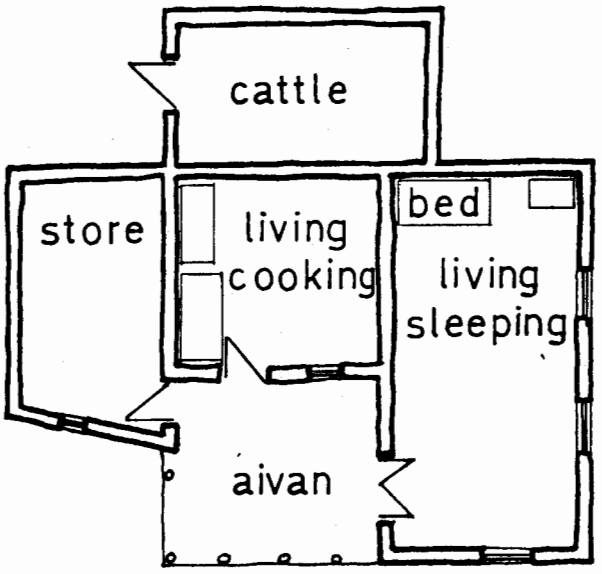
The walls of the initial two rooms of the house (within the basic square of the plan) are of log construction. The attached additional rooms and outbuildings are of timber lathing or branches supported by a timber framework and plastered.

Openings face south and east. The house stands in a small fenced plot of land with trees and three outbuildings - one with tile roofing (a bread oven), one with thatch and one with a sheet metal roof. The latter two are for animals and rice storage.

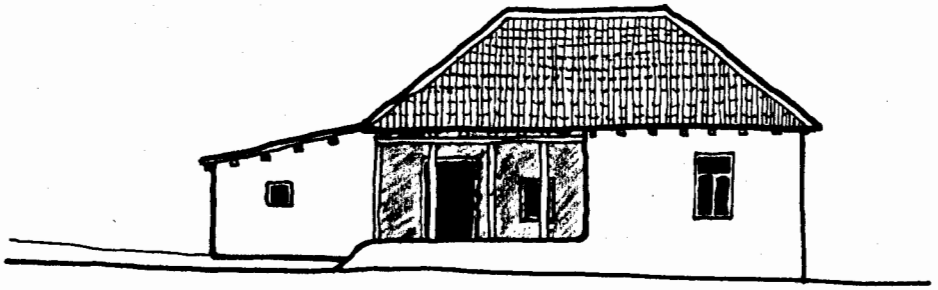
The house is lived in by one family of nine people. Their primary occupation is rice growing.

The settlement is a small loose cluster of houses, situated on the wooded hillside above the Astara Chay River. The climate is temperate, humid in summer, with a high rainfall of approximately 1500mm. per annum.

* In English these tiles are known as Pantiles.



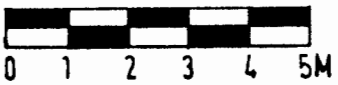
Plan

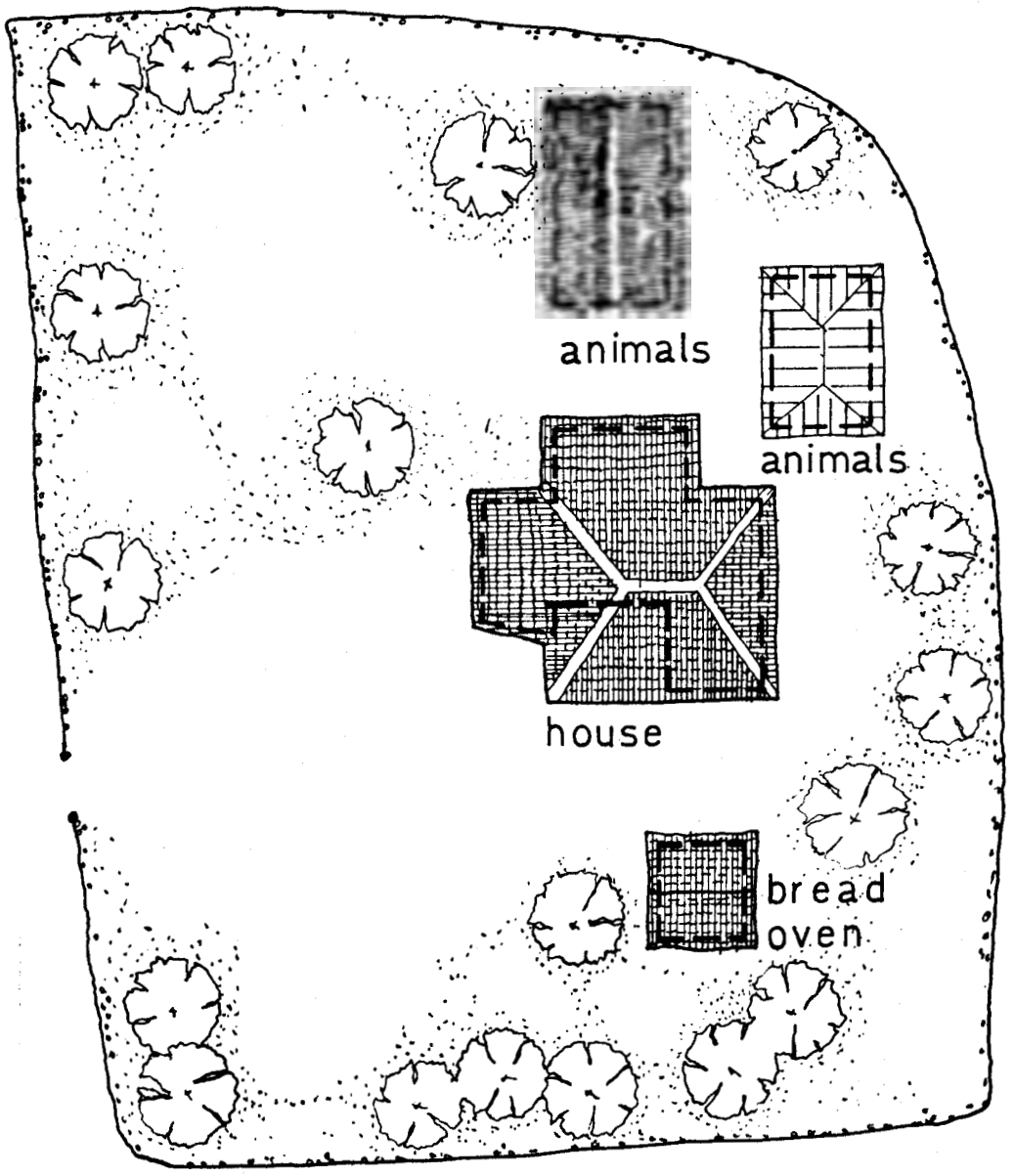


Elevation

Kashfi 1.1 **B2s**

Scale





Site Plan

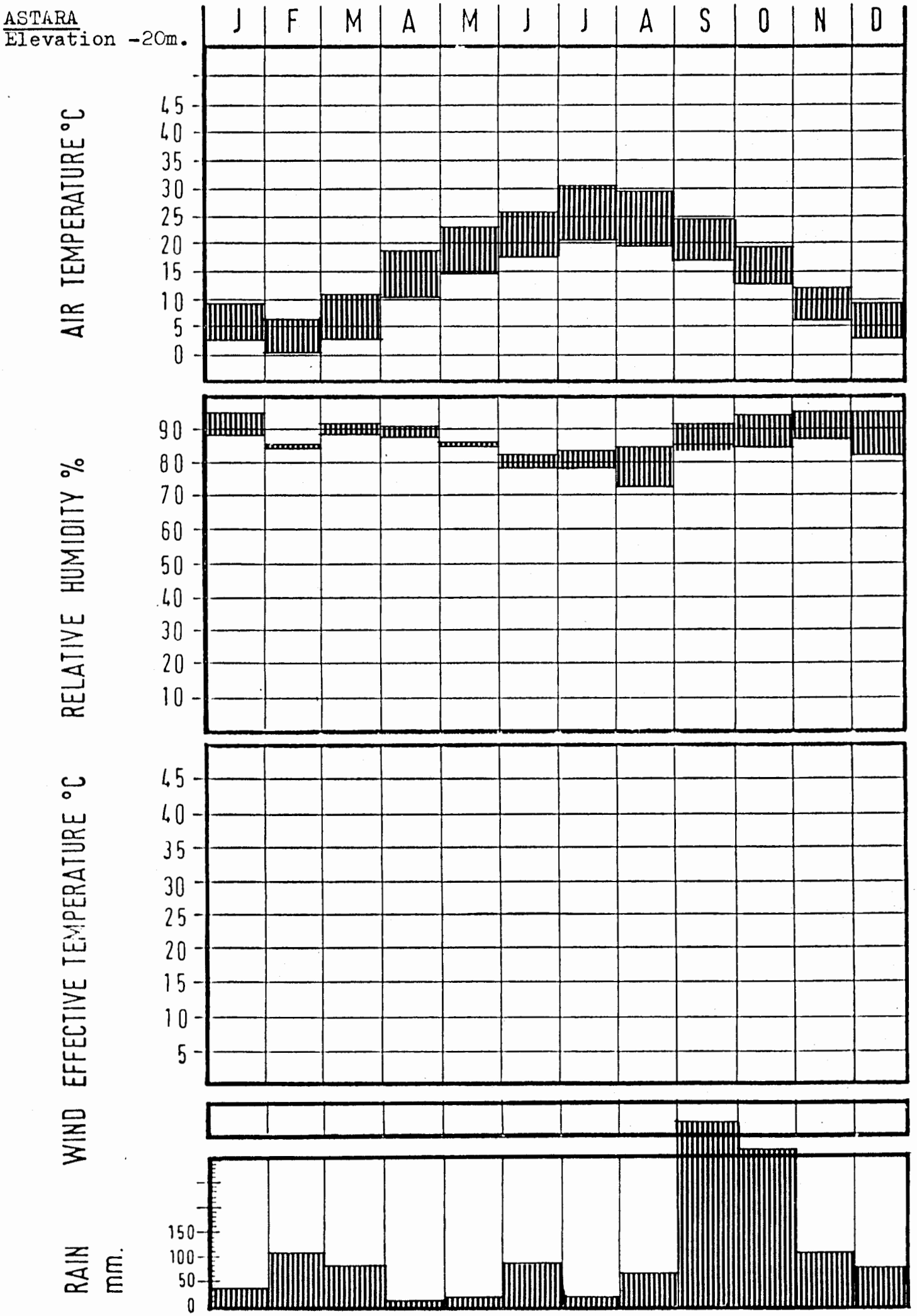
N

Kashfi 1-1

Scale

0 5 10M

ASTARA
Elevation -20m.



2 Masal and Shanderman

a) Masal

Boundaries: SE & E = Fouman
N = Gaskar
W & SW = Khalkhal

Masal is a dehestan composed of sixty villages, and has a total population of 14,404*[1] .

The inhabitants of the Masal district are mostly Talesh but have become mixed with the Khalkhali. They speak Taleshi as well as Turkish and Farsi. Most people are Shiites, but there are some Sunnites in Masal.

The mountains are covered with forests but the pasturelands were increased by felling the trees; these trees being used for constructing log houses and making timber planks.

The principal product of the area is rice. In rice production women do most of the work, other than ploughing which is done by the men using oxen. According to Rabino, the amount of land a man possessed depended on the number of women in the household who could work on the land. The area has fruit trees - apples, wild pomegranate and quince - but the land is best used as pasturage. In the mountains of Masal, horses, cattle and sheep are raised. Traditionally, the owners rented livestock to shepherds and paid the herder in rice and clothing (26 kg. of rice and a pair of local trousers per cow per year, in return for 3 mann of butter; the Talesh mann was 6.96 kg.*[2]).

Formerly the largest plots of land belonged to the Khans and the people of the country. But the Khans ruined themselves and the people became victims of oppression. The custom was to sell the land unbroken up to some important man in Rasht who could protect his tenants. At the time of Rabino, many of the buyers were Russian subjects, despite breaking the Turkomanchai treaty forbidding their owning land, and since they were only interested in the annual revenues the farmers became prey to the governor and the robbers from Shanderman*[3] .

---

*[1] Ludwig W. Adamec (ed.), Historical Gazetteer of Iran: Volume 1: Tehran & NW Iran, 1976. p.441.

*[2] H. Louis Rabino, Les Provinces Caspiennes de la Perse, 1917. p.125.

*[3] Ibid. p.123.

b) Shanderman

Boundaries: N = Talesh-Doulab
S = the Masal
E = the Gaskar
W = Khalkhal

Shanderman is a village and dehestan composed of sixty-three villages, having a total population of 11,635.*

In 1860 Shanderman was a poor district with villages in ruins dating from the time of Hedayat Khan.

In 1880 it had 16 villages of which four were in ruins and the rest little populated. The district had then 1,250 population. At the turn of the century Rabino said that there were 3000 people in Shanderman who lived on agriculture, raising animals and beekeeping. Most were nomadic and, according to the season, wandered to the mountains.

The Ma'af villages are inhabited by Ma'af Kurds, of the Daoudi sect, originally from Zanjan or the Khalkhal.

The others are Shiites except for a few Sunnites.

The language is Taleshi.

According to Christian Bromberger, the Talesh from Shanderman are simultaneously cultivators and migrant animal breeders. They either settle at an intermediate level of pasturage, between 600 to 1200 metres, or down in the valleys. From there they attend to the animals above and during the summer look after the wheat and/or corn cultivation below.

Built Environment:

As in the northern Talesh districts, the settlements of Shanderman and Masal consist of either small groups of three or four houses or individual buildings amidst small clearings scattered amongst the forested terrain. The houses in the foothills of Shanderman and Masal are predominantly two storey, changing to single storey nearer to the coast (Ardejan, Rezvandeh). The aivans of these houses extend across the length of the house, which normally faces south except on the foothills where they face the plain (north). The roofs which are pitched at approximately 30° and have the

---

* Ludwig W. Adamec (ed.), op.cit., p.598.

eaves at the same level all around the building, are covered by wooden shingles near the hillside, whereas houses closer to the plains are normally thatch roofed. Rabino (1906-12) observes the use of both thatch and shingle as a roof covering material in this area:

"Houses are usually two storey, made of mud-straw and covered in thatch. Some are covered by wood planks from 45-50 cm. long by 30 cm. wide... In the valleys and mountains sometimes the houses are made from tree trunks, and the Khans have some very beautifully constructed houses of mortised boards. Ordinary houses are made of willow (wicker) fixed to posts driven into the ground. The floor is generally earthen and carpets are spread on it if possible....One cowherder's house was made of branches interwoven between poles imbedded in the ground, the floor being earth, the roof having wooden planks held down with stones, and the house divided into two rooms. It was about 6 m. by 3 m. and had no chimney."*

Timber lathing and mud plaster walls are most common in this area. In the foothills walls of stone laid in layers of mud were observed as well as log walls which Rabino refers to as "tree trunks".

The single storey houses close to the coast have a south-east orientation, and sheet metal is becoming increasingly a dominant roof covering material in the coastal plain areas. This is partially due to the prohibition on cutting timber from the forests, thus restricting the production of shingles to the use of only naturally fallen trees. There are also prestige reasons for the increasing popularity of sheet metal roofs.

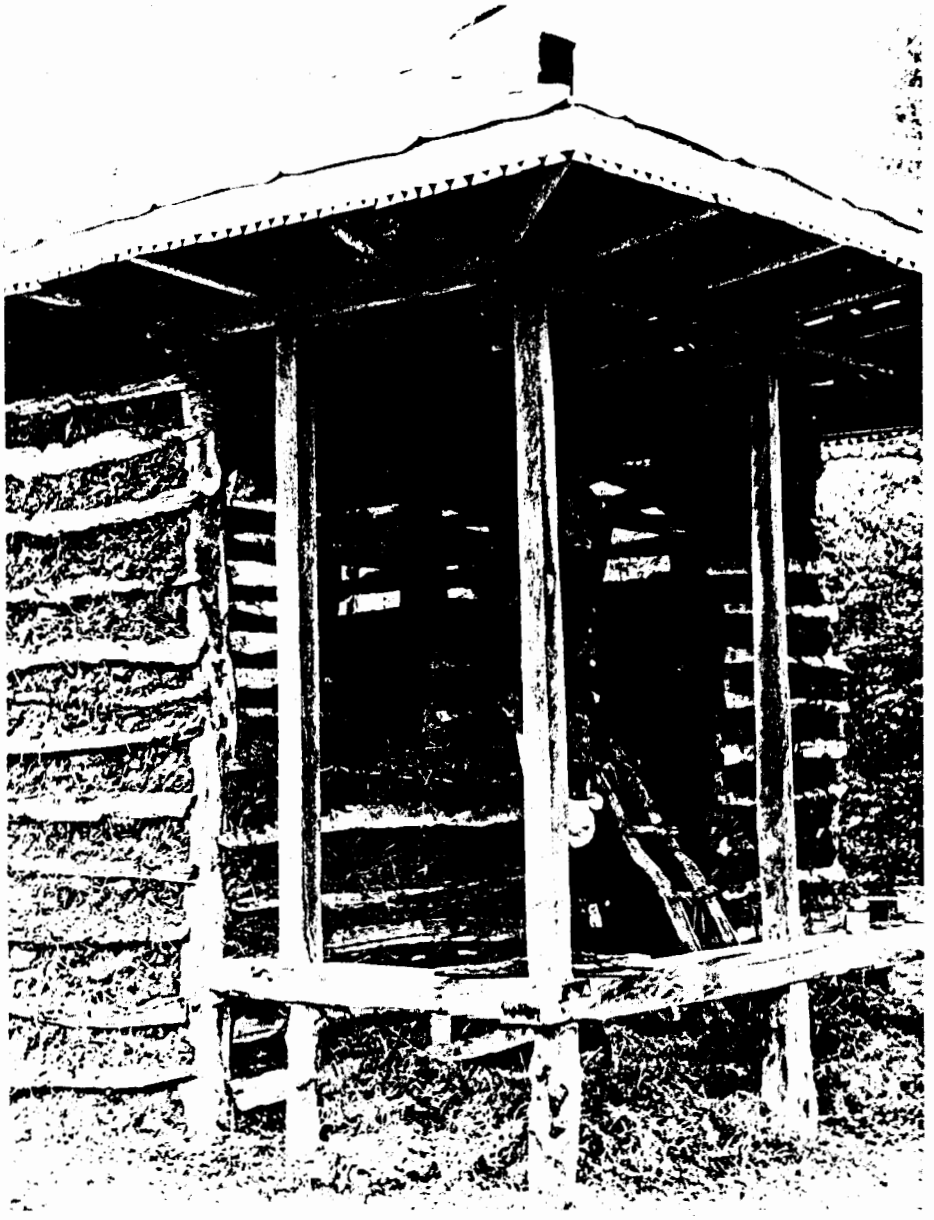
In terms of house types, this area seems to be a transition between the Asalem (central Talesh) coastal strip and the foothills of Fouman (Heydaralat and Maklavan) which shall be described in detail in the following sections. The houses in the plains and nearer the coast are similar to those of Asalem area, and the two storey buildings higher up are a version of the Heydaralat-Maklavan house types.

---

* H. Louis Rabino, op. cit. pp.23-4.

Single storey houses with timber lathing and mud packed walls were traditionally roofed with wooden shingles in the Shanderman area.

Sheet metal is now replacing shingles as a roof covering material.



In the foothills of Shanderman and Masal, the roof heights increase appreciably, resulting in tall structures.

The main owners of livestock construct animal shelters known as "vaneh". The sheep and goats are kept in the attic below the roof. The vaneh usually has two rooms: one for the lambs and another which is shared by the shepherd and the calves.

3 The Coastal Strip

The buildings along the Bandar Pahlavi- Bandar Faranaz coast have in response to the harsh climatic conditions (high rainfall and onshore-offshore winds) to which they are exposed, acquired certain specific characteristics. The case study of Shijan is presented here in order to illustrate the settlement pattern, house forms and technologies of this region.

Rasht Coastal Strip - Shijan:

Shijan is a village approximately six kilometres NW of Khomam in the Rasht Shahrestan (township). Its population of 1275 is Gilak. Their primary economic activity is rice cultivation, while about ten percent of the population migrate to Rasht in the summer and autumn for work. The villagers believe that Shijan is 300 to 400 years old.

Built Environment

The village is situated along a gravel road that follows the banks of the Shijan River from Khomam towards the marshes and the flood plains of the coast of Bandar Pahlavi. The settlement follows the course of this road in a linear pattern that stretches for nearly four kilometres. The houses are dispersed along this length, some being adjacent to the road while others are located at some distance from it and are connected to the road by narrow paths.

All the houses sit in fenced plots that contain animal shelters, water wells and rice stores. The houses face south to southeast. Shijan displays a transition in house form along the length of the village. The houses in the southeast are of the type found more commonly in the Fouman plains, and contain a mezzanine level with the latter (talar) being an open platform (House study 3.1; see Dogoor for further details). Further along the road towards the marshland in the NW, the

buildings acquire the coastal strip house form (House study 2). These houses are of the front verandah (aivan) type with usually two rooms facing onto a two metre wide aivan. The whole house is raised on solid platforms of about 80cm. to 1m. high. The roofs, due to high rainfall (1600mm/annum) are more steeply pitched (50^{o}-55^{o}) than those further inland and descend down to 1.5 metres above the ground level on two or three sides (north and west or NW, NE and SW) of the house. Short walls made of reed mats with timber framing are constructed around these lower eaves of the roof, forming an enclosed space 1 to 1.5 metres wide, which is sometimes used as an animal shelter. This extension of the roof protects the house against high on-shore-off-shore winds and heavy rain. On some houses the roofs increase in steepness halfway along their height. Reed thatch is the predominant roof covering material in the area with a layer of rice thatch sometimes used at the eaves (rice straw is used for animal fodder). The walls are of reeds within a timber framework and are plastered with mud. The long overhangs of the roof protect these walls on all sides.

House Study 3.1

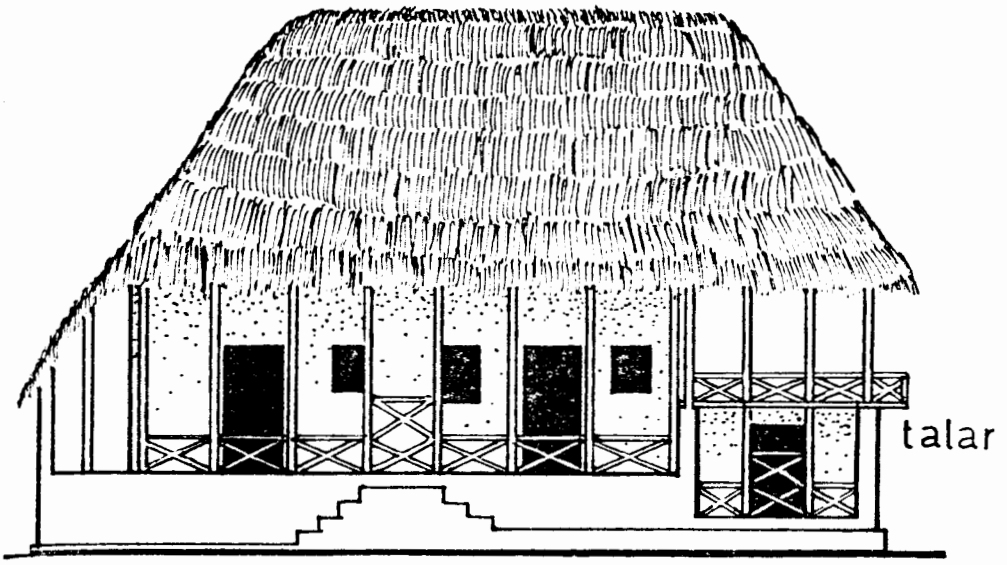
The house surveyed contains two rooms facing the front aivan with a third room below the talar (platform). It is a relatively large, well constructed house built 35 years ago in place of a single room dwelling. The roof is reed thatch and the walls are timber frame with reed panels plastered with mud. A household comprised of three persons engaged in rice cultivation are the present occupants of the house. The building is situated within a large plot containing four ancillary shleters (store, sheep and cattle sheds) a lavatory and a water well. This house is located near the beginning of the village in the southeast of the marshlands.

House Study 3.2 Sar-e-Shijan

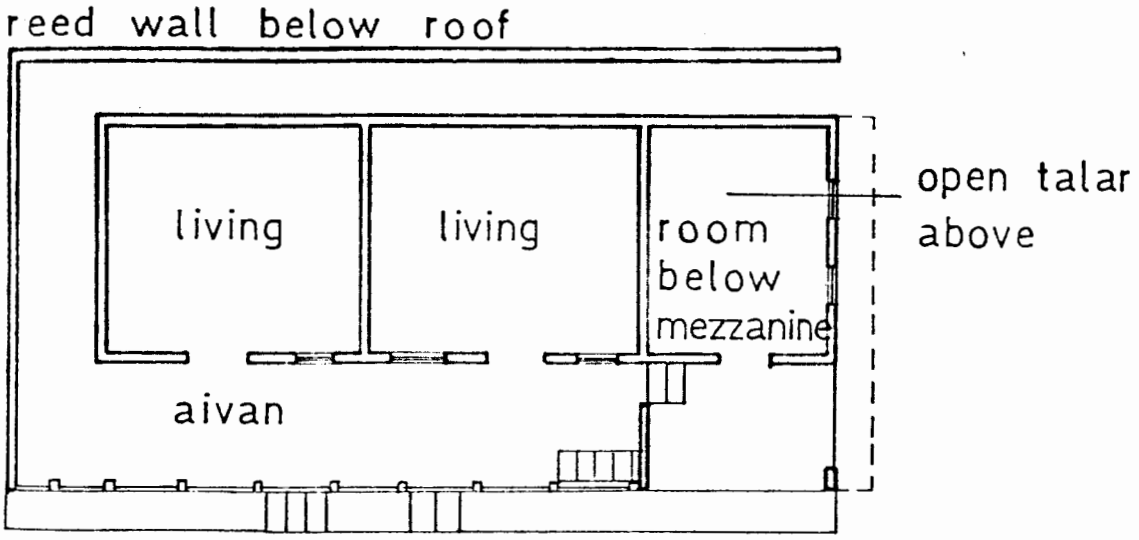
This house which is on the extreme northwest end of Shijan is

In the rice growing plains settlements a mezzanine (talar) is added to the two room front aivan house.

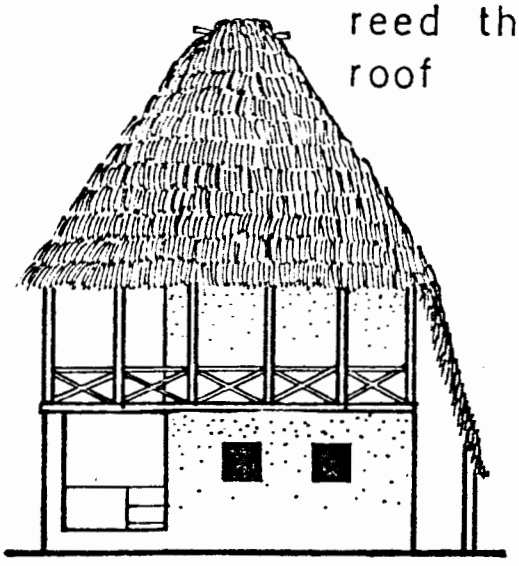
The houses are situated in garden plots containing ancillary shelters for rice storage, animal quarters, etc. (lower Shijan)



Front Elevation



Plan



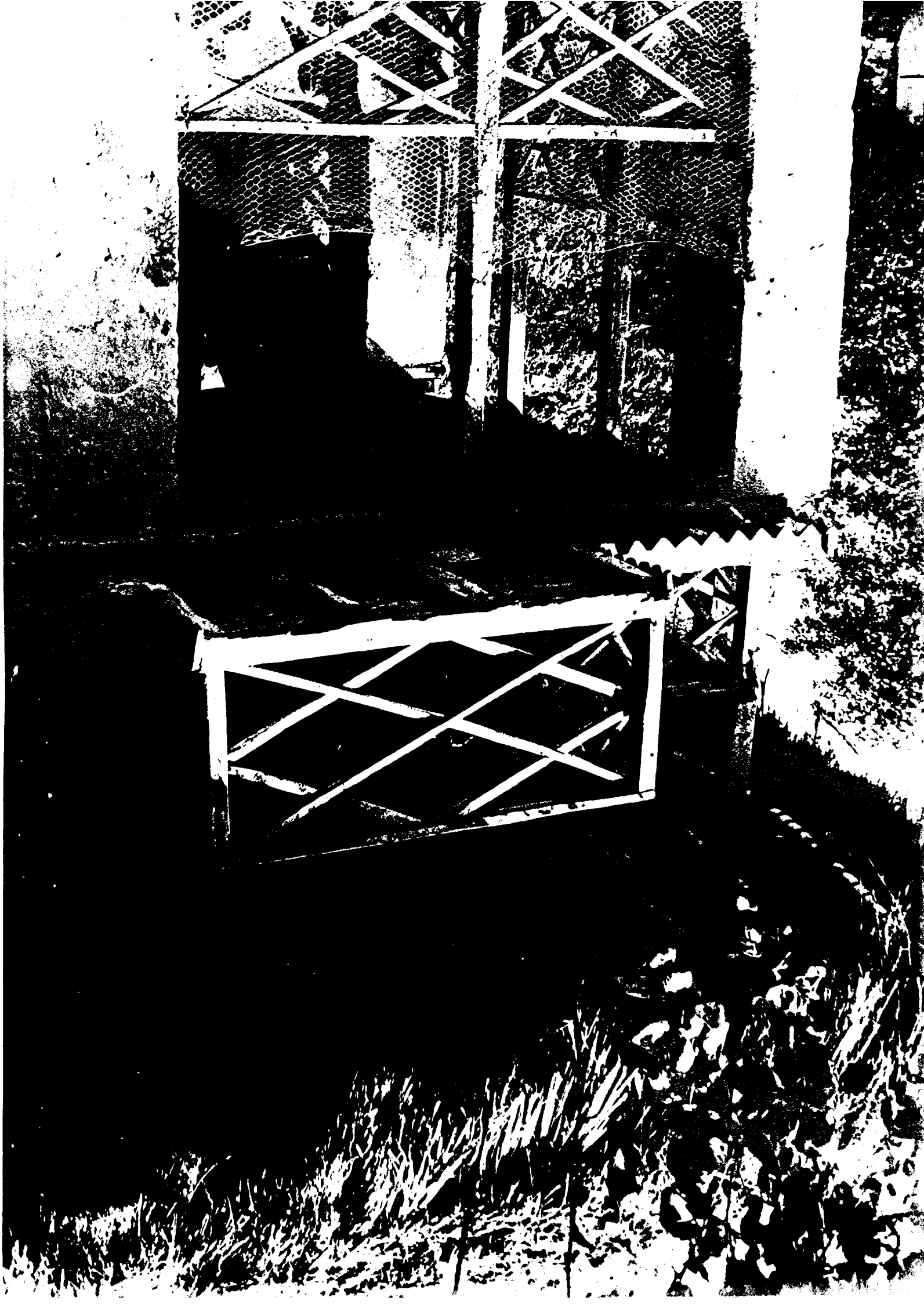
C2m

Side Elevation

Shijan Village 3.1

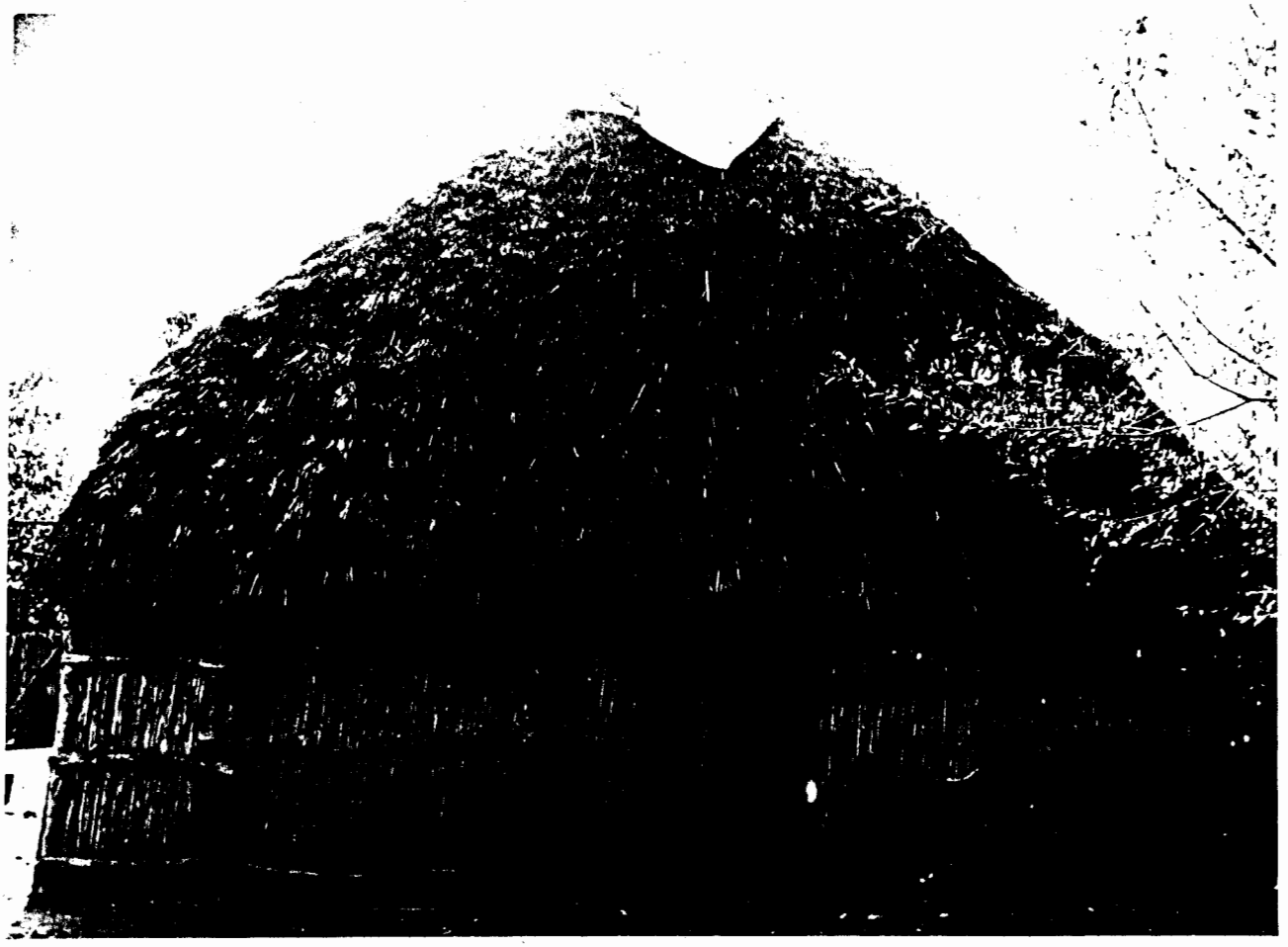
Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5M



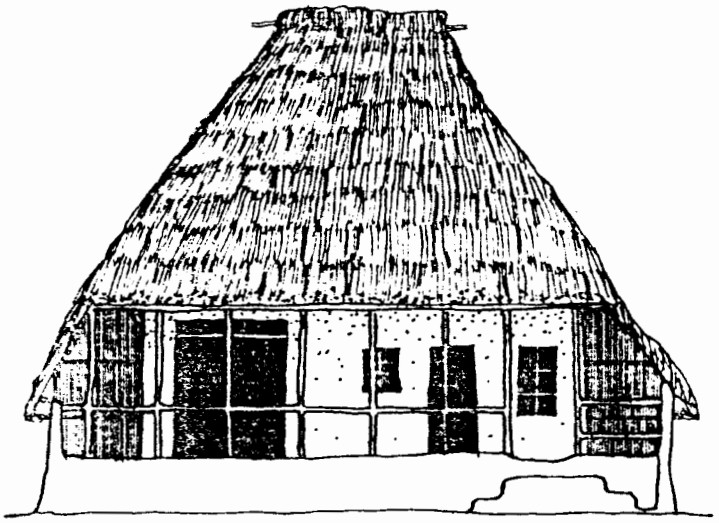
typical of many found along the marshes and the coast. One household of seven persons occupies the two room dwelling which sits in a relatively smaller plot with fenced off sections for animals, a poultry shed, a vegetable garden and a water well. The head of the household had received about one hectare of land during the land reform on which he grows rice. The house was built four years ago in place of another of the same plan. The reason for rebuilding the house was the rot in the timber frame, especially near the ground level. A carpenter was brought in to construct the timber frame of the house while the family carried out the remainder of the building work.

High pitched roofs with the eaves lowered on three sides to protect the walls against high rainfall and winds is a common feature of coastal houses.

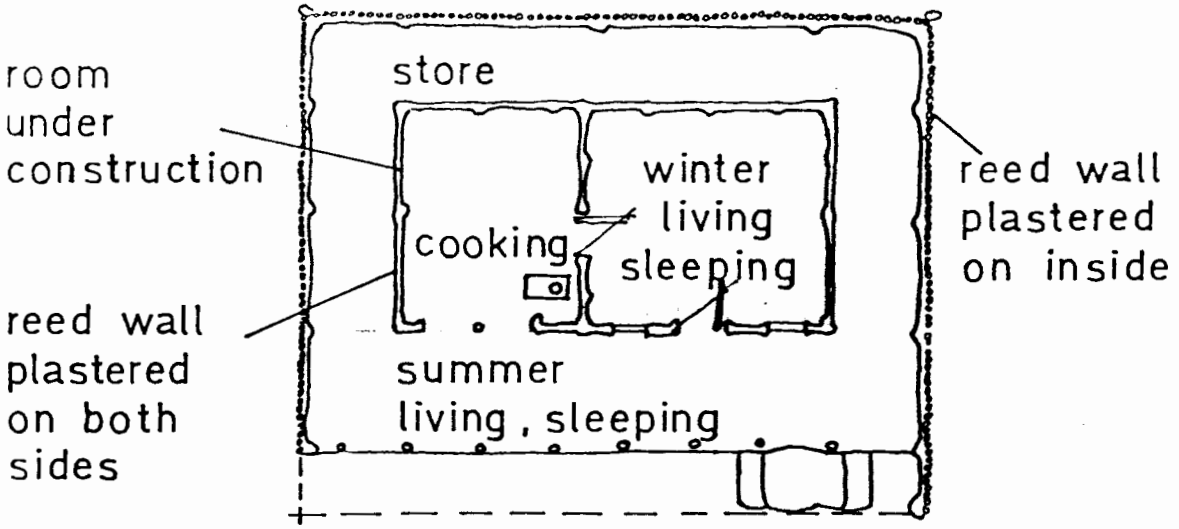


Timber framed reed walls envelop the space below the extended roof eaves (upper Shijan).

House 3·2 Shijan-Upper **C2s**



Elevation



Plan

Scale

0 1 2 3 4 5M

N

RASHT
Elevation -12m.