

The City Of Harar And The Traditional Harar House ⁽¹⁾
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Drawings and Diagrams at End of Article

The City

The small, walled city of Harar, where everything happens that is of importance to the dominant group of the town, the Harari, is divided into five quarters (map), each near one of the five classical gates (no longer in use today): in the West, Asäddim Bäri⁽²⁾ originally Asm ad-din Bäri, named after a noble warrior or general, who probably lived at the end of the 16th century;⁽³⁾ in the South, Bädro Bäri; probably named after a nobleman Badr ad-din;⁽⁴⁾ in the South-East, Suqtut Bäri; in the East, towards the Erer Valley, Argob Bäri; and in the North, Assum Bäri - translated "Axum Gate"⁽⁵⁾; it is said, however, that a spice named assu (ässu) used to be imported through the Assum Gate.⁽⁶⁾

After Menilek's conquest two more gates were added: Duk Bäri in the West, which was embellished with an arched stone structure between 1968 and 1975, and Bärbäri Bäri in the North West.⁽⁷⁾ Both gates, or road thoroughfares, are shown in the maps of Harar of the Guida⁽⁸⁾ and in Scarin⁽⁹⁾. Both maps, however, make clear that the "Scioa" Gate (Asäddim Bäri) was still more important than the Duk Bäri at the time of the Italian occupation, while the Bärbäri Bäri was destroyed during the same period.⁽¹⁰⁾

Each quarter is divided in turn into a number of neighborhoods (*toya*), which are often named after a Muslim shrine or an old tree serving as a landmark. Waldron⁽¹¹⁾ has listed 59 such neighborhoods.⁽¹²⁾

Harar has today a population of about 45,000 inhabitants⁽¹³⁾. Paulitschke⁽¹⁴⁾ gives a similar figure for 1884; however in his time the Egyptian troops were included. Paulitschke estimates that there were 24-25,000 pure Harari in town. Burton gives for 1854 a figure of 10,500 inhabitants.⁽¹⁵⁾

This population consists of several ethnic, cultural, religious and even language groups. We differentiate the Harari proper, the group with which we are concerned here, from the other groups, who are also living in Harar, or are connected with the town or are economically dependent on it. While Harari culture has its distinct features, trade contacts of centuries to Central Ethiopia and to the coast, as well as the Egyptian occupation since 1875, the presence of Arab, Indian, Greek and Italian merchants around the turn of the century, the Amhara provincial and military administration, and eventually the Italian colonial period have all left their marks in the culture of the city.

The cultural traces mentioned above will be considered only insofar as they were accepted by the Harari and integrated into Harari culture. There are of course not only traditional Harari Muslim shrines and houses within the wall, but also edifices and mosques built at the time of the Egyptians or under the early Amhara administration. We should mention here the Mohammed Ali Gr and the villa of Däazma Täfäri Mäkwännen. The mosque built under Rauf Pasha at the site of an old Muslim shrine at Färäs Mägla - a drawing of which can be found in Paulitschke⁽¹⁶⁾ - has been replaced by the church Mädhänä Aläm,⁽¹⁷⁾ which is an octagonal wooden structure with elements of Indian architecture. The residence of Ras Mäkwännen, destroyed during the Italian occupation and a ruin still in 1968, right next to the shrine of Amir Nur opposite of the Juma mosque, has since then been torn down and rebuilt in exactly the same style, though with a somewhat different pavilion on the roof; a YMCA centre was located there for some time, and it housed a small city museum in a few rooms on the ground floor.⁽¹⁸⁾ A few modern hospitals are within and outside the wall. The Italians founded a modern suburb called Butga. The whitewashed market halls of stone at the Muslim market within the wall (Gidir Mägla - Grand Market) were also built during the time of the Italians.⁽¹⁹⁾ In addition, a few Qottu have set up their round, thatched dwellings at

the edge of the town; and since about 1970 a number of Amhara have attached their small rectangular houses with corrugated iron roofs right outside the wall. A walk around the city outside the wall, which in 1968 took about one hour, though with some interruptions, is no longer possible today.

Outside the wall there are numerous small, modern bungalows, often the "second houses" of well-to-do Amhara and Harari, which were rented out. Rosen⁽²⁰⁾ mentions "zahlreiche weisse Landhäuser in arabischer Bauart" in the gardens outside the city, perhaps the predecessors of the modern bungalows.

The Town Wall and the Gates.

Burton⁽²¹⁾ describes the wall, which had been restored just before his arrival in 1854, as an irregular structure, which did not offer sufficient shelter against cannon. He mentions the five classical gates, listed above, with their crude conical watchtowers. Material for the wall and houses were rough stones of granite and sandstone from the vicinity; clay was used as mortar.⁽²²⁾ Paulitschke⁽²³⁾ gained a more positive impression of the "solid" wall, which had been rebuilt and fortified by the Egyptians. He describes it as being about four to five meters high with numerous "Thürmchen und Bastionen flankirt [.....] mit kleinen Forts an wichtigen Punkten". The water and sewage outlets at the base of the wall, which Paulitschke mentions, can still be seen and are in use - some of them have a tube-like shape and are lined with concrete. Today, there is a pipeline for the supply of drinking water in Harar; not, however, a pipeline system for sewage clearance. Bardey, who saw the wall in the time of the Egyptian occupation, mentions that it was fortified with layers of earth and thus made strong enough to keep off an attack without firearms; in addition the Egyptians had erected a small fort about 100 m North West of Assum Bāri (the Northern Gate), which was equipped with two small Krupp cannon.⁽²⁴⁾ Rosen⁽²⁵⁾ describes the town, after it had been given to Menilek's troops to plunder, with its mosques and minarets destroyed, but still surrounded by a solid wall. According to him the wall consisted of fieldstones and mud.

A somewhat more detailed description of the wall after its restoration by the Egyptians is given by Mokhtar.⁽²⁶⁾ The general height of the wall was over 3 - 4 metres, although at some spots it was not more than 1.50 m. There were 24 towers with battlements. Building material consisted of stones from Mount Hakim, the landmark of Harar, and some kind of "*ciment très adhérent fait avec une sorte de terre rouge qu'on trouve dans le pays et qu'on laisse fermenter pendant 24 heures*", probably the "red earth", *qeh afār*, which is still used to cover the floor and *nādābas* of Harari homes.

Robecchi-Bricchetti⁽²⁷⁾ gives a similar account about the building material for wall and houses: "*la mura, gli edifizii pubblici e quasi tutte le case della città sono costrutte con conglomerati di tufo calcare vegetale, fossilizzato, cementato di argilla ocracea tenacissima che si impasta facilmente e indurisce all'aria e di cui ricopronsi anche i tetti delle case a terrazzo*".

The five classical gates, described by Paulitschke⁽²⁸⁾ and later by Vivian⁽²⁹⁾ as well-guarded small entrances into the town, have fallen into decay, since today roads lead through the openings in the wall right next to the old gates in order to allow commercial vehicles and buses to pass. However, back in 1935 Comyn-Platt⁽³⁰⁾ reports that the main gate was still watched by an armed guard. Unfortunately Comyn-Platt does not mention which gate he refers to.

Despite the somewhat flashy structure of the Duk Bāri, the most impressive gate is Asāddim Bāri or Sāwa Gate, which was restored by the Italians with battlements and decorated delicately with coloured glazed tiles. The tiles are probably not typical of the old parts of the wall. Rosen⁽³¹⁾ describes this gate as a narrow tunnel and mentions the Arabic name used during the Egyptian period: Bab el Turk. He does not mention any decoration with coloured and glazed tiles. All gates, according to Rosen,⁽³²⁾ still had battlements in 1907, while only Asāddim Bāri has been restored to this shape. The Italian restoration of

Bädro Bäri was never completed; a beautiful double arch is a testimony of this period; Suqutt Bäri and Argob Bäri consist only of small houses with a rectangular, narrow gateway through each. Assum Bäri, the mighty Northern Gate, no longer exists. Paulitschke's drawing of it ("Bb el Futûch") shows a big gateway with pointed battlements, a rectangular entrance and a small house (for the guard?) beside it. The plates in Robecchi-Bricchetti⁽³³⁾ and Vivian⁽³⁴⁾, too, give an impressive picture of Assum Bäri. Today there is a broad road from which one can walk to the old Muslim graveyard outside the town.

Right next to Asäddim Bäri the wall is covered with plaster and restored with battlements like the gate; as one walks to the South, towards the gate of Bädro Bäri, the wall resumes its original shape, the way it may have looked when Burton saw it first. The height varies considerably, as it did at the time of Mokhtar.

There is no evidence that the wall has ever been enlarged, nor that a second and larger wall was built to make room for an increasing population. According to Paulitschke,⁽³⁵⁾ the town and wall, when he saw them in 1884, were virtually the same as when built by Amir Nur. Paulitschke noted that the number of the buildings within the wall had since then increased rather than decreased, with houses climbing up the hill in terraces without any provision whatsoever for lanes. Consequently these had to follow the random conformation of the houses and were merely narrow, irregular pathways.

In the time of the Egyptians, however, there were already the five "major roads" leading to the five classical gates.⁽³⁶⁾ The centre of the city was, and still is, the market within the town (Suk Mägla, today called Gidir Mägla) and the adjoining meat market.⁽³⁷⁾ The "New" or "Christian Market" is outside the wall. Burton,⁽³⁸⁾ and 50 years afterwards Vivian,⁽³⁹⁾ commented on the appalling dirt in the muddy lanes. Today neighbourhood organizations (*gr afoa*) have the responsibility for clean and - if possible - paved streets or lanes, in particular in preparation for Ramadan.

Some scholars have expressed the view⁽⁴⁰⁾ that the layout of the overcrowded town of Harar with its narrow lanes and also the walled villages of the Argobba⁽⁴¹⁾ in the Erer Valley should be interpreted as part of the same tradition as the Harala ruins. If this view is maintained, then it follows that Harar with its present over-crowded layout must have developed from a settlement, which was once very much like the present Argobba villages. But as a trade centre it would have attracted far more people than the walled town had space for; and evidently the city was not willing to enlarge the wall - perhaps because a larger wall would have been more difficult to defend.

The Traditional House.

Burton and Paulitschke both comment on the density of buildings within the wall.⁽⁴²⁾ Burton, who was familiar with the refined way of life of the Middle East and India, is full of sarcasm about the poor "long, flat-roofed sheds" which served as houses and residences even for the amir. Even so he described the houses as having two storeys⁽⁴³⁾, while 30 years later Paulitschke referred to them as single-storey only.⁽⁴⁴⁾ It may be that Burton interpreted the *gala* as an upper floor, while Paulitschke did not (vid. p. 65 and ground plan). Since Burton⁽⁴⁵⁾ described the "palace" of the amir, "just another long window-less shed", as the only building whose exterior was white-washed, we may assume that, at the time of his visit, the houses in general had plain exteriors. Only one room is described by Burton⁽⁴⁶⁾ as "cleanly white-washed" in the interior.

Forty to eighty years later, at the time of Bardey⁽⁴⁷⁾, Robecchi-Bricchetti⁽⁴⁸⁾, Vivian⁽⁴⁹⁾, Skinner⁽⁵⁰⁾, Rosen⁽⁵¹⁾ and even Comyn-Platt⁽⁵²⁾, the outside of the houses was still neither painted nor whitewashed. Today, the Harari place great importance on the whitewashing of houses, and it has to be repeated at least once a year.

The ground plan of the house, "du genre arabe le plus ordinaire"⁽⁵³⁾, has been described in detail by Paulitschke and is still found today: a compound (*abi*) is surrounded by a wall; within the compound there are today several dwellings, which have to be interpreted as separate residence units, since they are not connected by doors, though they have continuous walls. (They may be compared to maisonettes within a fenced compound). Several families, who live in such house units, share one or two kitchens, which are located within the compound, though separate from the residences, often across the courtyard. Most windows face the courtyard, only a few on the upper floor facing the lane (*uga*). The wall towards the lane is a continuation of the wall of the next compound (like a continuous fence passing the front gardens of several houses.) Occasionally several compounds are surrounded by one wall, and may be compared to a block of houses. In such cases the compounds within the block are again separated by walls. Then the visitor to a second compound, when entering from the lane, has to pass through the outer gate (*uga kätämbäri*) and cross the first compound before coming to the second one. The gates towards the lanes are often simple wooden planks but sometimes iron doors; they may be whitewashed or painted; the wall rises there to form an architrave above them.

One of the few traditional houses which is an independent building within a compound is the alleged residence of Amir Yussuf (1747-1756) in Bädro Bäri quarter close to Mäkina Girgir Street.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The ground plan and side view of this house are typical of a Harari house. They are found in older buildings as well as in new ones, which makes use of modern technology and materials (diagram 1a). The building material was and still is the stone of the vicinity. Pounded stones and clay are mixed to serve as mortar; the same material is also used for plastering the inside and outside walls before whitewash is applied.

The traditional Harari house appears to be very similar to the stone houses of the Argobba⁽⁵⁵⁾, though the Argobba houses are always detached.

The ground plan of a traditional Harari house is rectangular⁽⁵⁶⁾ (diagrams B.C). A large living room (*gidir gr* or *gr qäd*) is in the centre, with several raised platforms serving as seats or beds (*nädäba*). It is permitted to wear shoes only between the door and the lower *nädäba*, but then they must be removed. There are five *nädäbas*: the big *nädäba* (*gidir nädäba*) by the main wall opposite the entrance; the small, somewhat lower one (*tit nädäba*) below the big one; the amir *nädäba* for guests of honour and for the master of the house, either to the right or to the left; the "hidden" *nädäba* (*sutri nädäba*) either to the right or to the left but always behind the protruding pillar, *maxazu*, and serving as a sleeping place; and the *nädäba* right behind the entrance door (*gäbti ähör nädäba*). This one, too, can be located either to the right or to the left according to the ground plan of the house. In the far corners of the living room there are some times one, sometimes two built-in cupboards or wardrobes (*nädäba dera*).

As one enters the main living room (*gidir gr*), there is a doorway (but no door) leading left or right into the *kirtät*, a side-room with a ceiling only half the height of the *gidir gr*. The *kirtät* also has a *nädäba*. The wall between *kirtät* and *gidir gr* sometimes has a window-screen of delicately carved woodwork. Adjoining the *kirtät*, there is a second side-room, with a low ceiling: the *dera*, used for the storage of objects which are not susceptible to attack by rats. Since it is in the *kirtät* that the womenfolk usually stay when the men have their *bära* (meeting for chewing ch'at and for meditation) in the *gidir gr*, and since it is in the *kirtät* where a young married woman used to live in seclusion for eight months after her wedding (the doorway being in that case shut with a fence of bamboo and a curtain) it may very likely be the "women's room" mentioned by Burton.⁽⁵⁷⁾

The wall at the side of the *dera* has a special niche, where the black, long-necked pottery containers (*afla*) covered with elongated basketry lids (*afla uffä*) are kept. These containers are used for the storage of the jewelry and valuables of the family; and it is said that the *afla uffä* contains the umbilical cords of the family's children. Next to this niche, opposite to the *kirtät*, there is the small door to the *dera*. Again,

next to the *kirtät* beside the entrance door and starting from the ground level part of the *gidir gr*, there is a staircase (*märkb*) of six to nine steps. In old houses it used to have no banisters, but more recent houses have one made of delicately carved woodwork. This staircase leads to a room above the low ceilings of the *kirtät* and *dra*, which is called the *qala*. The ceiling of the *qala* is at the same height as that of the *gidir gr* (which is thus as high as the *kirtät* or *dera* and the *qala* together), and formerly there was no partition between the *qala* and the *gidir gr*, but more recently a screen of pierced woodwork generally divides the two rooms. It seems likely that the *qala* was originally just another storage area (certainly in old houses agricultural tools were kept there), but some members of the family may sometimes also have slept there. Sometimes, too, it was divided into the *qala* proper and the *qutti qala*, where hay and foodstuff are said to have been kept. Since the late 19th century, however, the introduction of banisters and of a pierced wooden screen between *qala* and *gidir gar* indicates that the former has become a proper upper floor, and nowadays it often has several rooms, though no *nädäbas* or other traditional installations. But the *gidir gar* still rises to the full height of the house, confining this upper floor to the area above the *kirtät* and *dera*. The houses of the amirs have a somewhat different ground plan, i. e. an extension of *dera* and *kirtät* with the adjacent *qala* from the other side of the *gidir gar*.

The traditional houses are nowadays whitewashed with some sort of limestone (*nacih afar*). The floor, which Burton described as of smoothed mud, is covered with red earth (*qeh afar*), and the visible parts of the *nädäbas* are painted red with oil paint (as a reminder of the bloodshed at the battle of Ch'elenqo, it is said). The *nädäbas* are covered with mats - purchased from the Somali - or with oriental rugs brought back from a pilgrimage to Mecca. Both oriental rugs and mats were mentioned by Burton. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

The walls of the *gidir gar* have eleven niches (*taqet*), five of which are in the main wall opposite the entrance. The two rectangular niches (*eqad taqet*) in the centre are theoretically reserved for books the Quran in particular. Their rectangular shape is to remind man of death and his grave. The small triangular or ogee-arch shaped niches (*tilli taqet*) are used to put up porcelain and other niceties. Rectangular niches in the other walls are named after the *nädäba* to which they belong. There is thus an amir *nädäba taqet* and a *gabti ahar nädäba taqet*. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ There are sometimes niches inside the *nädäbas* themselves, where an incense burner may be placed or shoes are kept. Documents of importance are kept in a chest in the *nädäba dera* (built-in cupboard in the *gidir gar*) ⁽⁶⁰⁾

Right in front, next to the *nädäba* of honour (amir *nadaiba*) which is either on the right or the left of the living-room, there is a protruding pillar (*maxazu* = house pillar, ⁽⁶¹⁾ in which are two fittings which together make up a spear holder. (*waram moraga* drawings 1a; 1b). Spears are rare nowadays; in olden times they were there ready for the master of the house whenever need arose to defend the house or the city.

Above the entrance door to the living room on the inside there is a shelf (*wantaf inci*: = "wood for mats") made of tree trunks, the bark of which has been stripped. Here the mats for the trousseau of the daughter are stored.

The ceilings in older houses are also made of thin tree trunks stripped of their bark, which today are whitewashed like the rest of the house. One beam exactly above the edge of the first *nädäba* (the *tit nädäba*) has a special importance, it is distinguished by its larger size and special shape: the *hamil*. Today neon lamps are affixed to it; in olden times an ostrich egg (*gurannet aquh*) was hung there, which was believed to protect the house from lightning.

Occasionally there is next to the living rooms, with a *nädäba*, a window and an entrance door of its own, often no connecting door, the *tit gar* or "small house" (see diagram B). This room is usually reserved for the younger people of the family; sometimes it is rented to tenants.

A 20th-century addition is a storey above the *tit gar*, which then is connected with the *qala* by a door and has its own entrance via an external staircase. The houses described by Wilding ⁽⁶¹⁾ are of this type.

A room for a farmhand or servant was always within the compound though not within the house proper. Such a room had neither a *nädäba* nor built-in cupboards nor side-rooms. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

Within a compound there are also one or two separate kitchens (or "kitchen-houses") with a fireplace at ground level, three hearthstones and several wall-shelves made of trunks to store kitchen utensils. The kitchen in most cases had no windows. So the smoke eventually left layers of black soot on the walls, although it was supposed to escape by the door. Stables for cows and donkeys used also to be within the compound. ⁽⁵⁹⁾

Twice a year - shortly before Ramadan and again before the Aräfa Festival - the houses are whitewashed. ⁽⁶⁰⁾ At the same time household items and baskets are thoroughly cleaned and washed.

Modern Harari houses in Harar stick to the traditional ground-plan and the layout of the rooms; the floors and visible parts of the *nädäbas*, however, are often tiled (in which case they must have spots of red colour or paint), and the walls are oil-painted outside and inside, any colour - though often green - being used. The rails for occasional outside staircases to the second floor are often made of metal and no longer or wood. The ceiling is today of varnished planks; the *hamil*, however, is still distinguished by its larger size and a special shape.

Furniture was hardly known. Occasionally (as everywhere in Ethiopia) simple wooden chairs in European style can be found, very much like the one shown in Paulitschke. ⁽⁶¹⁾ Metal bedsteads (once again, as all over Ethiopia) have been introduced, covered with kapok mattresses. They are put up on the *sutri nädäba*. Paulitschke ⁽⁶²⁾ mentions low wooden bedsteads covered with blankets, but gives no further information. Burton himself set up his sleeping place on a *nädäba* "with the cushions which my companions used as shabracques" ⁽⁶³⁾ and the mats he found in the room; he does not mention bedsteads in a Harari household. The same sources do not indicate whether the Harari ever used wooden chairs similar to the ones made by the Argobba today of several joined planks. The back of such a chair is adorned with carved and painted geometric ornaments and simple rosettes; the front legs are turned or rather imitation-turned. Nor do the sources tell us whether wooden bedsteads of similar make, which are now often found in Ethiopia, were known previously.

The Argobba today often carve chairs for the tourist trade.

Carving on door, windows and banisters.

Burton ⁽⁶⁴⁾ describes the doors or gates to compounds and houses as simple planks made of one piece of wood, which were, however, highly valued, since the amir simply confiscated the doors of his subjects should they fail to come to one of his audiences. ⁽⁶⁵⁾ This type of wooden plank door with a simple frame and sometimes a semicircular or ogee arch above it (1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g,) is still found today. They are mostly whitewashed, sometimes oil-painted. At bedtime of Burton, openings for windows were high above the ground and "decorated with miserable woodwork" ⁽⁶⁶⁾ from which it follows that carved woodwork must have been known in Burton's times. Paulitschke mentions only that the craft of woodcarving (as well as several others) were in decline at the time of the Egyptian occupation, ⁽⁶⁷⁾ but he does not indicate what kind of woodcarving he meant. Possibly prior to the Egyptian occupation the art of

woodcarving was of a certain standard. It is difficult to judge today the date of the woodwork found in old houses.

The visitor to Harar will also find a number of elaborately decorated carved wooden doors to the gidir gar. These are not of the same style as the ones of older Harari houses, like the one of Amir Yussuf mentioned above. They are found rather in houses built in post-Egyptian and modern times.

An Indian woodcarver called Mistri (72) is still remembered. He worked in Harar around the turn of the century and he undoubtedly left his mark on the city. A number of doors are said to be by his hand. He particularly worked for Abd el Muslimano and his son Ahmed Bomba. The entrance to the residence of Tafari Makwannen was very probably carved by him.

Whenever a family was able to afford the luxury, they ordered carved doors for the entrance to the gidir gar and for the built-in cupboard (*nadaba dera*), a carved banister and a carved partition between the *qala* and the gidir gar; also a small grid for a window in the wall between the *kirtat* and the gidir gar. Some of the modern doors have a rectangular, others a semicircular or ogee arch over them. The ornaments are elaborate, sometimes unduly so for Western taste. Leaves and flowers prevail in both bas relief and high relief. Not only the door frames but also the panels are carved. Decorative motifs include ropes, pearls, palmettes, rosettes, flowers, vases, and others. Verses of the Qurman are often carved into the woodwork of the upper lintel. The last specialist for this type of woodwork died about 1972. This and the recent impoverishment of the city, contribute to the decline and perhaps the end of the art of woodcarving for interior decoration. The preference for decorated doors, in particular for the entrance to the gidir gar, has, however, remained. Recent door-frames may be found which are surmounted by a semicircle decorated with oilpaint in several colours, and simple, incised rosettes or flowers.

The Argobba, south of Harar, who still have enough space for detached rectangular stone houses within their settlements have decorated wooden doors. Doors and door frames are rectangular, the door may be plain or, should the house be white-washed, it may also be white-washed. The door frame is adorned with carved ornaments; simple geometric patterns and rosettes, the same as can be found on the back of their wood-carved chairs.

The Interior.

Burton mentions the "varnished porringers", which he found hanging on the wall in the house of the "vezir". (73) These were very probably the simple, wood-carved *gabata*, bowls which are today painted with black oilpaint, but were formerly tarred. These *gabata* were used to bring or serve food. and were made by Qottu artisans. They can still be found, but are rarely made, since the basketry bowls, *dirat*, which are covered with dyed red leather. are used to serve food at feasts, and in daily use the *gabatas* have been replaced by imported cheap enamel ware from China or Japan. The name "*gabatas*" has been kept, however, for the present of food which a bride's family sends to the family of the bridegroom on Tuesday after Wedding Sunday: this is called *inay gabata* (lit. "honourable food bowl "), even if a *gabata* proper is not used.

The interior decoration of a room is the women's affair. The housewife takes care that the *nädäbas* are covered with rugs, mats and pillows and the walls are adorned with examples of typical Harari basketry. (This incidentally, is made only by women.) In addition to baskets, enamel plates and bowls are now hung upon the walls. Traditionally baskets used for wall-decoration always had to be hung up in pairs and in absolutely preserved places.

However with the sporadic appearance of new designs of baskets, there is always a chance for rearranging the decoration, which would normally follow a symmetric pattern. Thus every household has its own style, and it is not uncommon for women visitors to express their appreciation of it.

The largest type of baskets hung on the wall is the type used for serving bread or sweets during meetings of women's associations, and these have high, conical lids which are hung above and overlapping them. Rows of these baskets occupy the area immediately behind the gidir nädäba and below the niches (although there is sometimes a second row of baskets below the niches, which are quite high up). The four big baskets have to be arranged in alternate pairs, as do their lids, although the design of the baskets need not be the same as that of the lids. Between the niches in the centre reserved for books there is a vertical line of three tiny basketry-work plates (sägri), also with lids. Two of these must be of the same pattern and design. These small plates are used to serve coffee beans at a wedding or a funeral feast. The wall towards the dra next to the amir nädäba, where the spear-holder is sited, is also adorned with basketry plates in pairs. These are of about the size of a breakfast plate, and they were used in the past to serve the bread (uxt.) Two of them are known as "basket for the mother-in-law" (hamt mot), which the family of the bride or bridegroom present to the in-laws after a wedding. Here are also the first pieces of basketry made by the young girls, who start making baskets at a very young age.⁽⁶⁸⁾ There are a number of other rules governing the disposition of these and other baskets.⁽⁶⁹⁾

It is said that young housewives take greater care to adorn their homes than older ones⁽⁷⁰⁾ and that young couples cover the floors of their rooms with red earth once a week, while among older ones this is done normally not more than a few times a year.⁽⁷¹⁾

Water Supply and Sewage System.

The supply of drinking water is secured by a pipeline system to Lake Alemaya. However, not all houses have access to the system. Taps are found in a limited number of compounds, which have to provide the drinking water for about 20 families each. The owner of such a compound has to pay a fee to the city authorities. He in turn demands payment for the provision of water. In 1975 the charge was 5 Eth. cents for 3 buckets of water, that is, about 30 liters.

At the times of Paulitschke there was no pipeline, and the women went out to a creek outside the wall to fetch water;⁽⁷²⁾ the evening - just before the gates were shut - was the favourite time.⁽⁷³⁾

There is, however, still no proper sewage system today (1975). The traditional lavatory was a fenced place within the compound. The night soil was removed every morning⁽⁷⁴⁾ and carried out of town every three to five days. A modern latrine is set up the following way: a deep hole is dug into the ground of a compound; the place is fenced, or perhaps a little hut is put up there. When the latrine is full, it is covered with mud. A horizontal opening is dug from a nearby hole to the base of the latrine, which is no longer used. A few metres away a second one is dug. The earth removed from second latrine is used also for filling up the first one. Once the second one is full, it is treated the same way as the first one, while the first one is re-opened and its contents, which by this time have dried out, are used as manure for fields and gardens (drawing 1h.)

Title Deeds.

Every owner of a house has a title deed, which was originally written in Arabic, but in the time of the Italian occupation an Italian translation, and later an Amharic one, was required.⁽⁷⁵⁾ The title deeds were registered with a city official designated for this purpose.

Once they leave the city, the Harari very soon acquire influential positions in trade and commerce, banking and in certain crafts. Outside Harar they are able to dispense with the strict traditions which rule (and restrict) life within the city. Harari emigrants tend, however, to stick to the traditional layout of their homes, even in modern residences. A gidir gr is indicated, rugs and pillows serve as some kind of a nädäba, and the walls are adorned with traditional Harari basketry.

According to Waldron the Harari are very much attached to their houses and would only in extreme case of need sell or leave them.

FOOTNOTES

1. My studies in Harar were encouraged and assisted by many scholars, students and institutes, and I wish here to express my gratitude to all of them. I wish to mention Ato Abdurrahman Qorram (1975 District Administrator, Harar), Dr. Richard Caulk (now Camden College, Camden, N.J., USA), Dr. A. Drewes (University of Leiden), Dr. W. Leslau (UCLA, Los Angeles), Dr. E. Wagner (University of Giessen), and the Harari Ato Abdurraman Yaya and Ato Abdul Mueimen Nasser. The Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Professor S. Chojnacki and Dr. R. Pankhurst gave me every help in Addis Ababa. Mrs. Ingeborg Lass-Westphal kindly let me have her data regarding the Italian governorate in Harar. Dr. E. Haberland and Dr. U. Braukämper of the Frobenius Institute in Frankfurt/Main added valuable information, and the Frobenius Institute permitted me to check its slide collection and sent me copies of its maps of the city of Harar. The architect Mr. Chr. Fischer of Bonn, and Mr. John Ochieng, British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, prepared the plans of Harari houses. Mr. Otto Asmuss prepared drawings of Harari doors and house interiors. I owe particular gratitude to Dr. W.R. Waldron (State University New York College at Cortland, USA), who-with his profound knowledge-gave me every assistance and the guidance I needed; and it is due to his good help that I gained an insight into the social structure of the Harari right at the beginning of my stay, which was of great value for the collection of information and data. Dr. Waldron also kindly let me use his maps of Harar. And I owe deep gratitude to my former interpreter and assistant Miss Fatuma Abdul Kerim (now a student at Donetsk University, USSR), without whose continuous and tactful co-operation my interviews could not have been carried out. Also I am indebted to Ato Abdurrahman Yaya for commenting and correcting the paper while it was in the press.

A generous grant by the German Research Foundation provided the financial basis for my studies in Harar in mid-1975. I wish to express my gratitude here.

2. The orthography of the terms is based on Stephen Wright, The Transliteration of Amharic, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1, (Addis Ababa Jan. 1964), and Wolf Leslau, Etymological Dictionary of Harari, *University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies No. 1*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1963).

c = ch

c = glottal ch

g = as in Italian giardino and J as in English Judge

x = hard ch, as in German machen

h = soft ch, as in German ich

q = glottal k

n = as n in Spanish

s = as in say

s = sh

t = plosive t

w = as in well

y = as in yes

z = as in horizon

z = as in French journal

a e I o u = long vowels

e = very short, as in German machen

ä = as in German Fässer

3. Enrico Cerulli, "La Lingua e la Storia di Harar", *Studi Etiopici I* (Roma, 1936), p. 55, and "Gli Emiri di Harar dal Secolo XVI alla conquista Egiziana", *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici II*, 1 (Roma, 1942), p. 7.

4. *Ibid.* 1936, p. 55.

5. Richard F. Burton, *First Footsteps in East Africa* (London 1856), p. 321, and Philipp Paulitschke, *Harar. Forschungsreise nach den Somal und Galla-Ländern Ost-Afrikas* (Leipzig, 1888), p. 201.

6. Cerulli 1936: 54 "assu = sale" (English: salt); Leslau 1963: 32 "assu = pepper prepared with other spices".

7. Wolf Leslau, *Ethiopians Speak. I. Harari*, (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1965) p. 4, Sylvia E. Pankhurst, "A Visit to Harar", *Ethiopia Observer Vol. II, No. 2* (Addis Ababa, 1958), pp. 38-40, and S.R. Waldron, *Social Organization and Social Control in the Walled City of Harar, Ethiopia*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ann Arbor (University of Microfilms, 1975), map 2 p. 77.

8. Guida dell'Africa Orientale Italiana (Milano 1938), map. 2.

9. E. Scarin, *Hararino* (Firenze, 1942), p. 114.

10. Pankhurst, S.E., *op. cit.*, p. 38.

11. Waldron, *op. cit.*, pp. 91 and 197.

12. Cerulli (1936:45), who gives very detailed and reliable information, mentions a neighbourhood (toya?) "Ammar-Garac = le case di Ammar" in Bädö Bärei quarter. This neighbourhood is named after a saint ex Ammar. The people living in this neighbourhood are said by Cerulli to follow the Hanafi rite rather than the Shafi one generally observed by the Harari. Waldron does not mention such a neighbourhood in his list to toya (Waldron Diss, 1975: 93-96).

13. According to the Ethiopian Central Statistical Office (CSO) in 1965 Harar had a population of 41,150 inhabitants. cf. Alula Abate, "Studien zur jüngeren Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft im Hochland von Harar", Dissertation, (Bonn, 1969), Table 6 p. 144.

14. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8.
15. Richard F. Burton, *Fist Footsteps in East Africa*, edited with an introduction and additional chapters by Gordon Waterfield, (London 1966), p. 187, and Alula Abate, *op. cit.*, Table 6, p. 144.
16. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
17. Pankhurst, S.E. *op. cit.*, p. 41.
18. Felix Rosen, *Eine deutsche Gesandtschaft in Abessinien*, (Leipzig, 1907), p. 57.
19. Yusuf Ahmed, in Leslau 1965, p. 15.
20. Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
21. Burton, *op. cit.*, 321f.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
24. A. Bardey, "Notes sur le Harar", Extrait du *Bulletin de Géographie historique et descriptive No. 1* (Paris, 1890), p. 22.
25. Rosen, *op. cit.*, pp. 53f, 55, 56 and 65.
26. Mohammed Mokhtar, "Notes sur le pays de Harar", *Bulletin Société Khédivienne de Géographie du Caire* (1876), pp. 361-2.
27. L. Robecchi - Bricchetti, *Nell'Harar* (Milano, 1896), p. 110.
28. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
29. Herbert Vivian, *Abyssinia* (London, 1901), p. 110.
30. Sir Thomas Comyn-Platt, *The Abyssinian Storm* (London, 1935), p. 72.
31. Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
32. Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
33. Robecchi, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
34. Vivian, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
35. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-3.
36. Bardey, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
37. *Ibid.*

38. Burton, 1856, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

39. Vivian, *op. cit.*, pp. 111 and 112.

40. U. Braukämper, Mündliche Überlieferungen als Quellenmaterial für die Rekonstruktion der mittelalterlichen Völkerverhältnisse in Südost-Äthiopien, *Paideuma* (1976), Bd. 22, p. 92.

41. Although, if Braukämper (1976: 93) and Paulitschke (1888:209) are correct, the Argobba villages would not have been founded until many centuries later, after Harar itself.

I personally visited the villages Esakoy, Gända Adem and Hurdi.

42. Burton, 1856, *op. cit.*, p. 322, and Paulitschke, *op.cit.*, p. 202.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

46. Burton *op. cit.*, p. 301.

47. Bardey, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

48. Robecchi, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

49. Vivian, *op. cit.*, pl. 110.

50. P. Robert Skinner, *Abyssinia Today* (London, 1906), pl. p. 28.

51. Rosen, *op .cit.*, pl. 67.

52. Comyn-Platt, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

53. Bardey, *op .cit.*, p. 22.

54. This statement can be considered as very reliable. The present (1975) inhabitant, an old lady, is a member of the amir *gàra* (descendants of former amir dynasties) and is a relative of Fatuma Abdul Kerim (cp. Note 1). The amir *gàra* reside all over Harar, predominantly, however, in Assum Bãri. At certain ceremonies, where prestige and riches have to be displayed, they have special privileges as well as duties. A bride from an amir *gàra* family used to have twice as many companions as a Harari girl from an ordinary family to accompany her when going from house to house to invite her girlfriends to her wedding.

55. Some Argobba have taken over the round thatched hut of the Oromo (cp. Alula Abate 1969: 30, note 1).

56. Rectangular stone houses are also found elsewhere in Ethiopia and Somalia. This is documented by, among others, Stefanini-Paoli/Stefanini-Puccioni, *Resultate Scientifici delle Missioni Stefanini-Paoli* (1913) e Stefanini-Puccioni (1924) in Somalia. Serie III. Vol. III. Etnografia e Palentologia (Bologna

1936), Tav. IV, No. 2 "Garese" of the "Mullah a Belét Uén", Shebele; and confirmed by the rectangular two-storey stone dwellings of the Tegreñña near Mäkälle, which I have seen myself, Easter 1970. I am indebted to Dr. D. Bauer for making this visit possible.

57. Burton, 1856, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

58. Burton, *op. cit.* pp. 302-3, 345 and 346

59. Yusuf Ahmed, in Leslau , *op. cit.* 1965. pp56-57.

60. Ibid.

61. Leslau, etym, Dict of Harari , p. 107, Richard Wilding, Harari Domestic Architecture, AARP, 9, 1976

61a. Richard Wilding, Harari Domestic Architecture, AARP, 9, 1976

62. Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.* pp. 58

63 Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p 58-9.

64 Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

65 Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

66 Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

67. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

68 Burton, 1966 *op. cit.*, p. 322.

69 Burton, 1856 *op. cit.*, p. 297.

70. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

71. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

72. "Mistri" is a term for "carpenter" or "craftsman" in Gujarati (R.K. Trivedi, Wood Carving of Gujarat, 1965: 33. IN: Census of India 1961, Vol V., GUJARAT, Part VII-A(2). New Delhi) I am indebted to Mr. J. De V. Allen for informing me about the meaning of the term and bringing this work to my attention.

73. Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

74. Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

75. A manuscript on Harari basketry is being prepared by the author.

76. Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

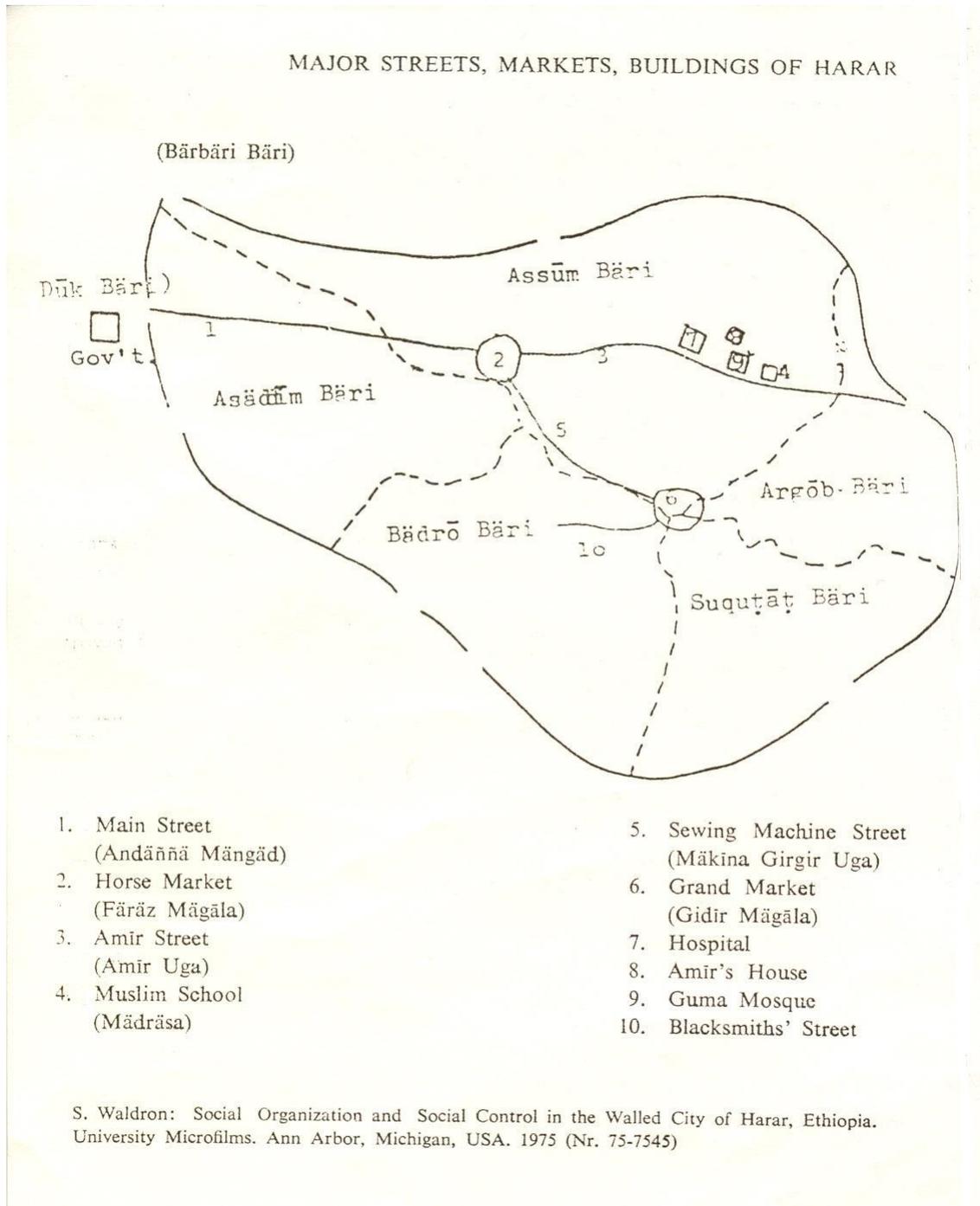
77. Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

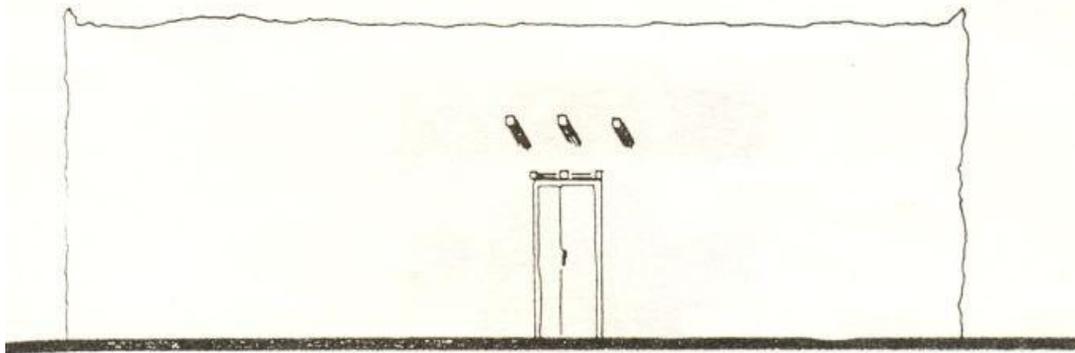
78. Paulitschke, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

79. Yusuf Ahmed, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

80. Abdurahman Yaya, Personal Communication, (June, 1975).

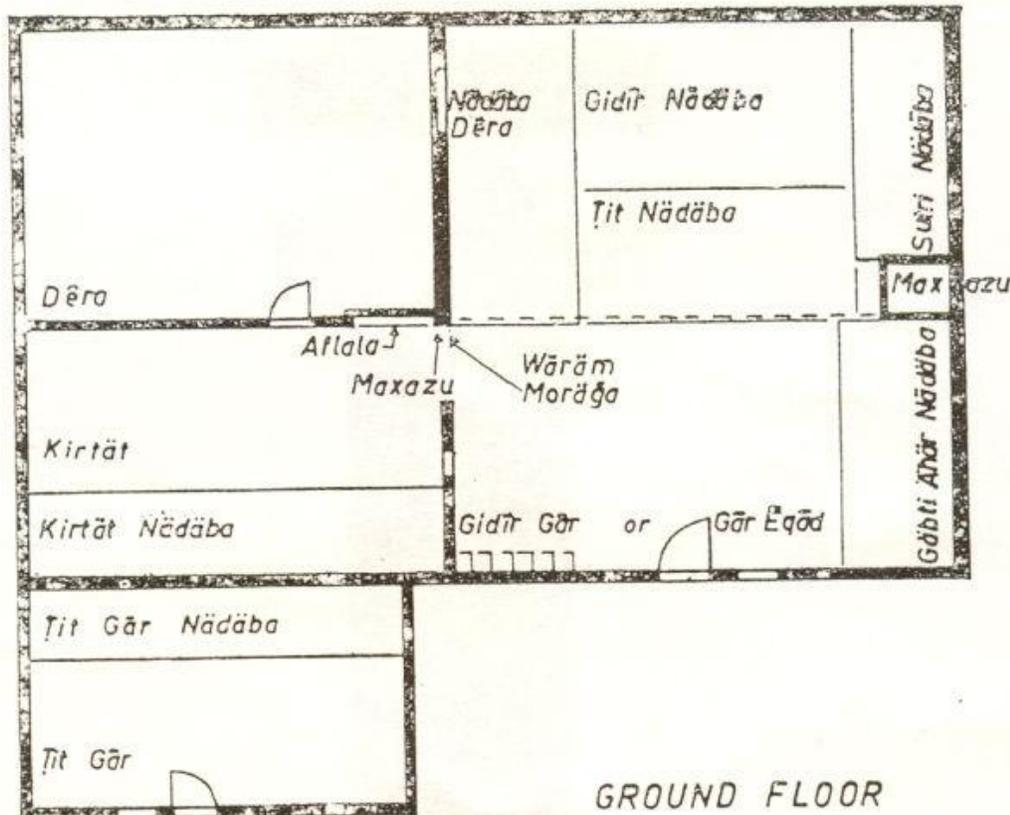
81. Waldron, Personal Communication (July, 1975).





ELEVATION

Figure 1a



GROUND FLOOR

Figure 1 b

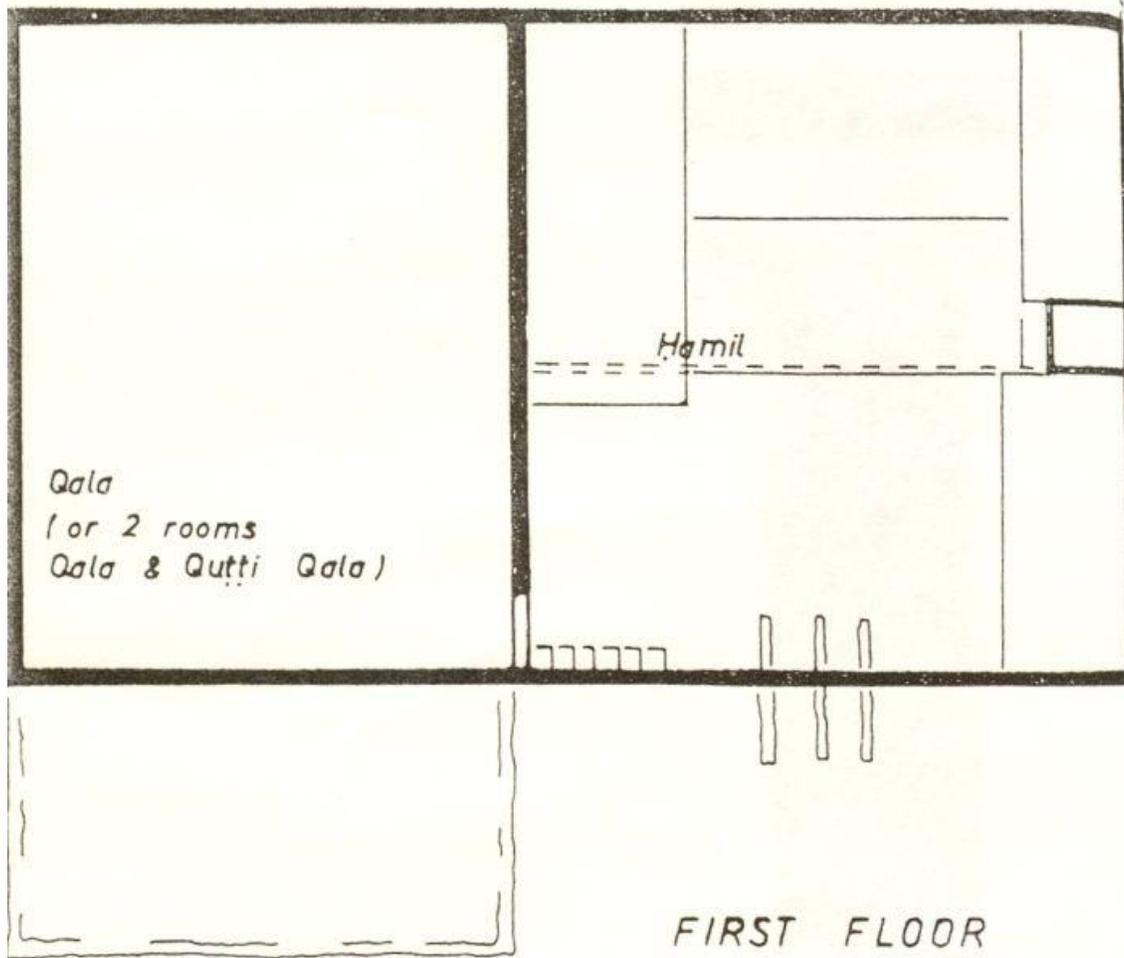


Figure 1c

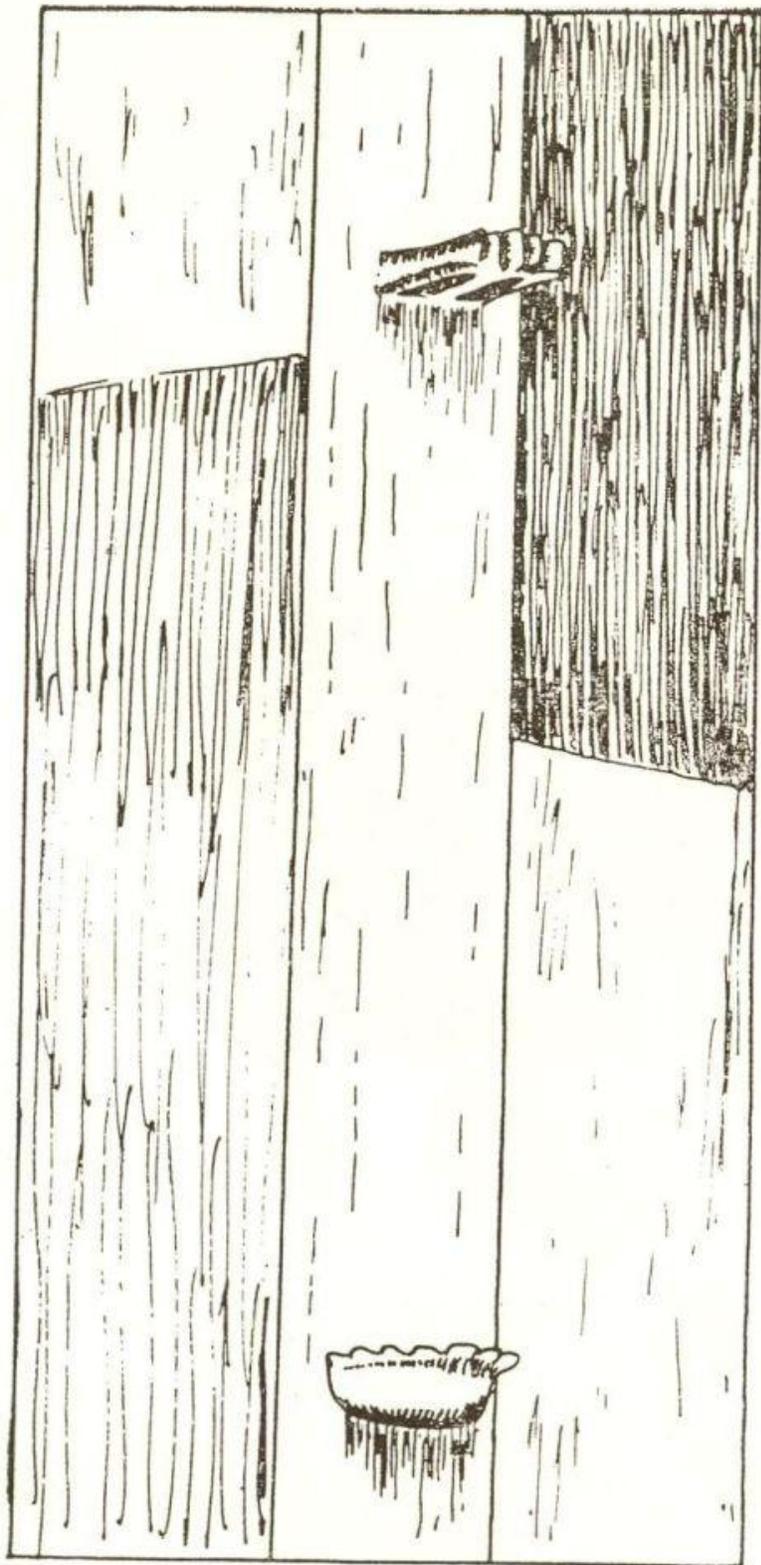


Diagram 1 a

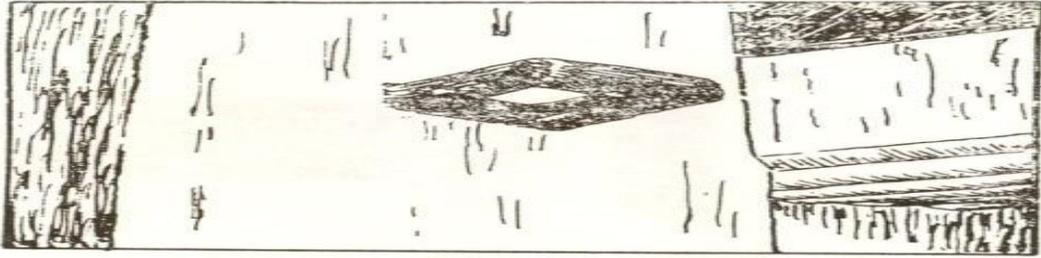
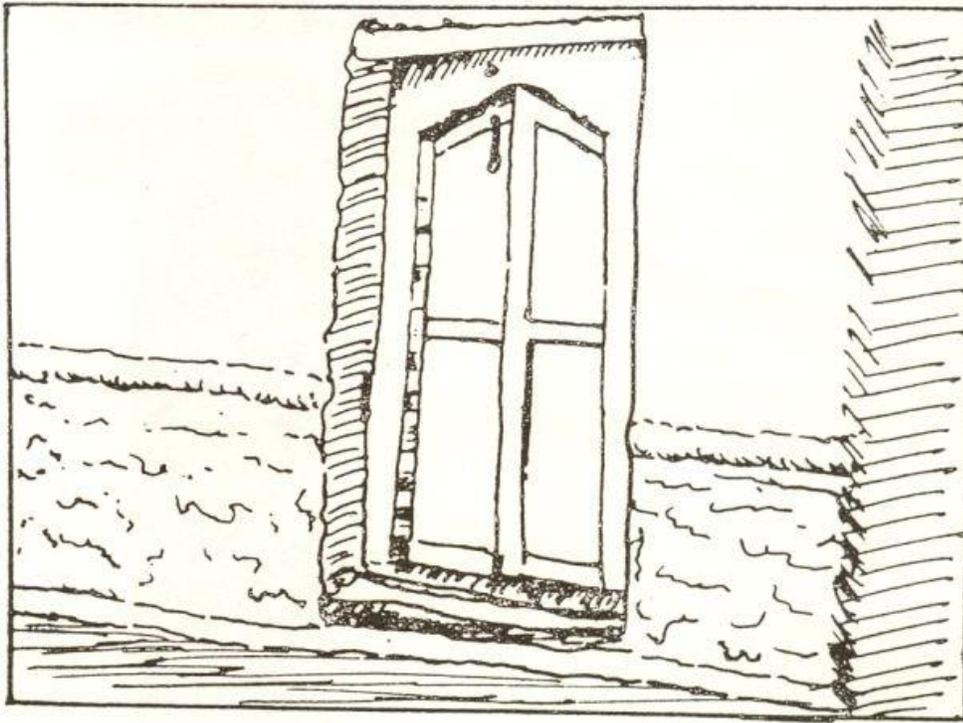


Diagram 1 b



Drawing 1c

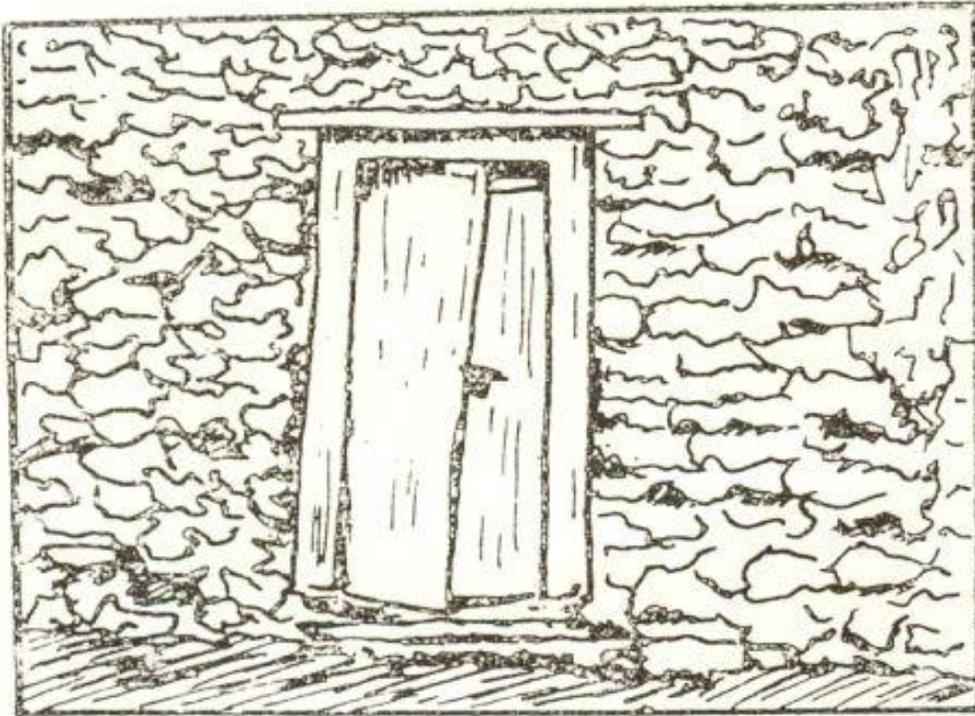


Diagram 1 d

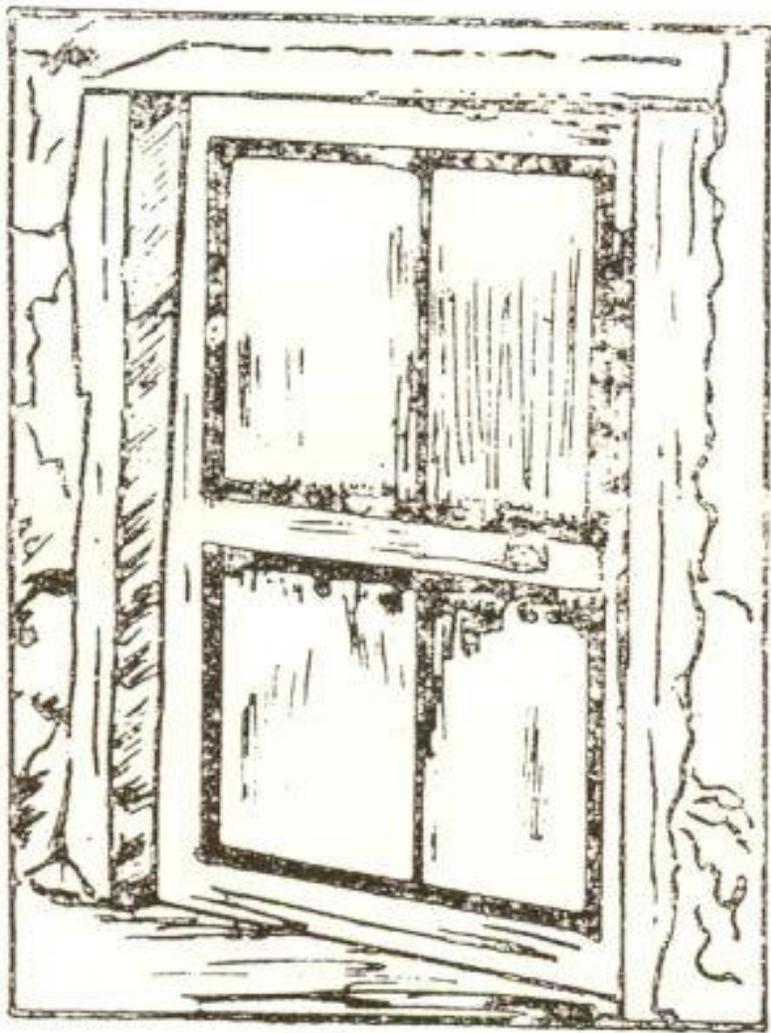
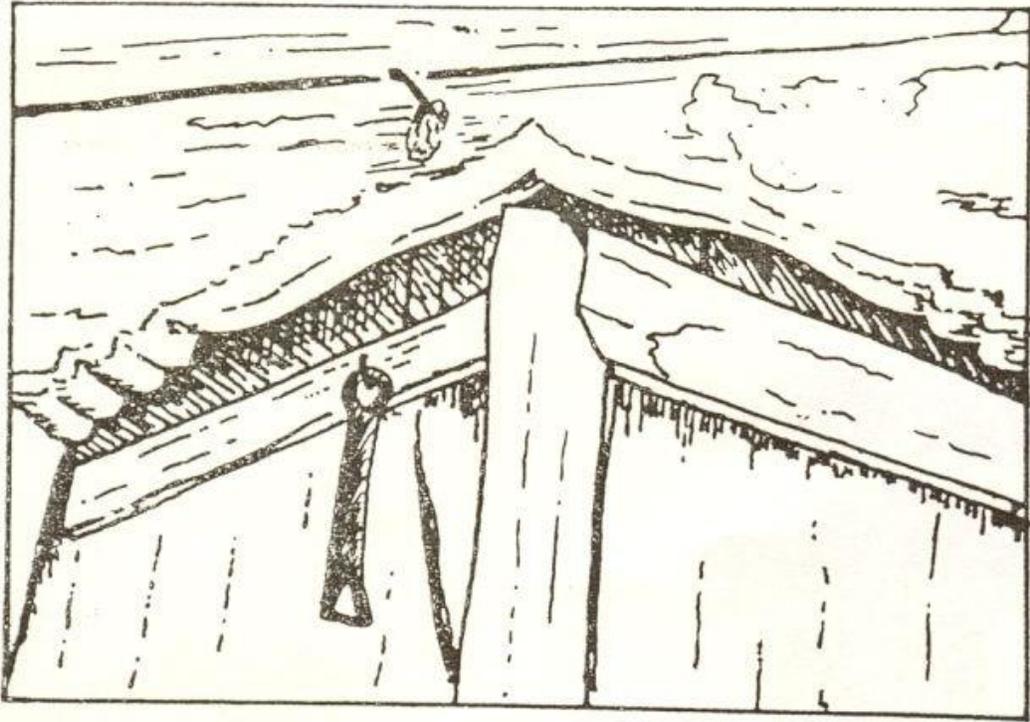
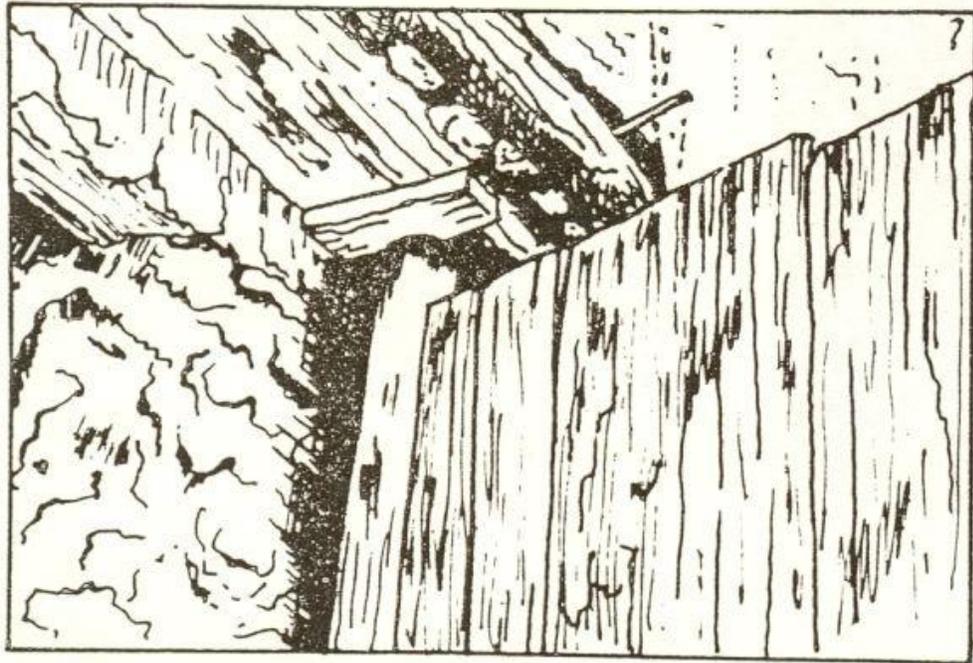


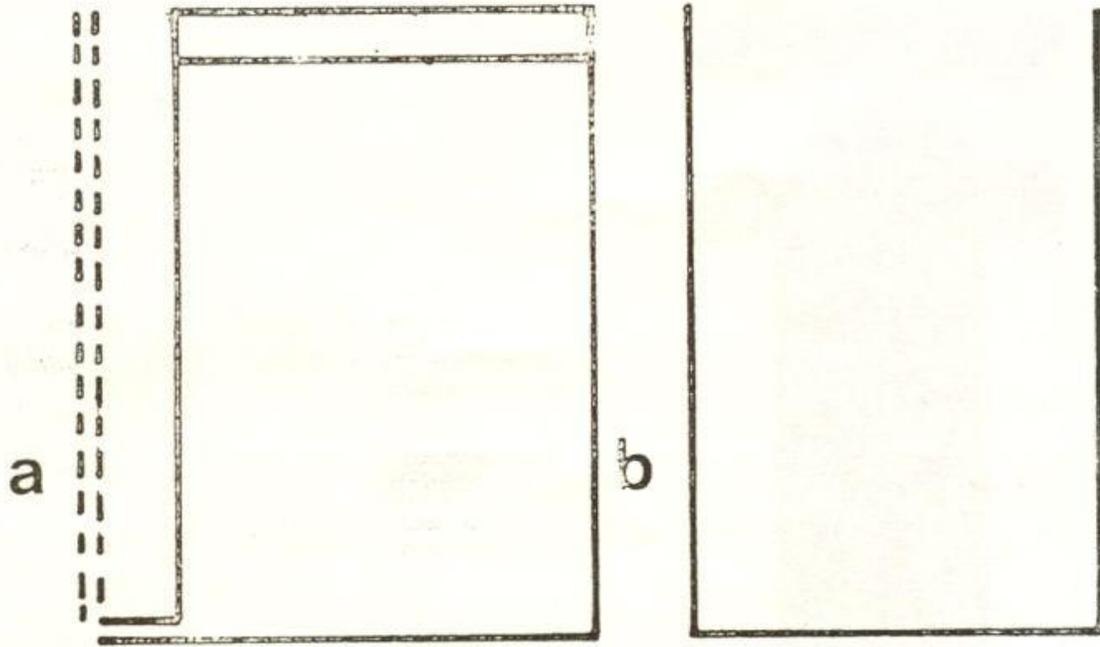
Diagram 1 e



Drawing 1f



Drawing 1g



Drawing 1 h