

A KHO FARM*

JANET POTT, LONDON.

The present Kho are a handsome and cheerful people, very largely dependent on their own resources and skills; mostly farmers living in villages along the valleys.

The farms are freehold' passed down from father to sons with an occasional share of the harvest or stock to the married daughters, and the houses may be inherited by the youngest son if he is the one to look after his ageing parents.

The farms are intensely family affairs and it is unusual to sell land, but when this happens a man must offer the land firstly to neighbours owning the adjoining fields, secondly to his brothers, thirdly to other people in his village, and lastly to outsiders. To sell land is rather shameful, particularly when it has been in the family for several generations or has been sold to pay off debts. Land belonging to the family can be thought of as the brithright of the owner's sons.

Koghozi is a village of about 180 houses (900 inhabitants) with a mosque, school, shop and rest house. Here the farmers can harvest two crops a year from their one or two acre holdings. The main crops are wheat and barley, followed by maize and rice, with some beans and clover for fodder. Cattle, sheep and goats wander on the hillsides under the care of young shepherds. Walnuts and apricots are abundant and we were lucky enough to come in the autumn when the hospitable villagers offered us handful of shelled nuts and dried apricots and mulberries as we walked along.

In the farmhouse which I visited, there lived the owner, who had built it himself eight years ago, and his family, consisting of two other men, five women and four children, while his brother, wife and child lived in the adjoining guest-house. All took a share in the running of the farm. The women were in

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Purdah, but they worked in the fields or were busy in the yard, preparing meals, spinning, pounding rice, etc.

The courtyard was carefully arranged for the life that went on in it. A small stream trickled across the yard, and close to the house a little tank had been formed and flat stones were set in the water to make a cool covered larder for milk and butter. In an airy and shady corner of the yard was the raised summer living-space with its spinning wheel and a special stone used for kneading and softening goat or sheepskins to be into grain bags or shoes. Nearby was the outside hearth for summer cooking. The transference of the household cooking from indoors to out of doors in the spring is a special occasion.

An open shed contained the treddle for pounding rice and a rack for farm implements. On the roof of this shed, as on the roof of the house and in the crotches of the trees, maize stalks and fodder were stored out of reach of the goats.

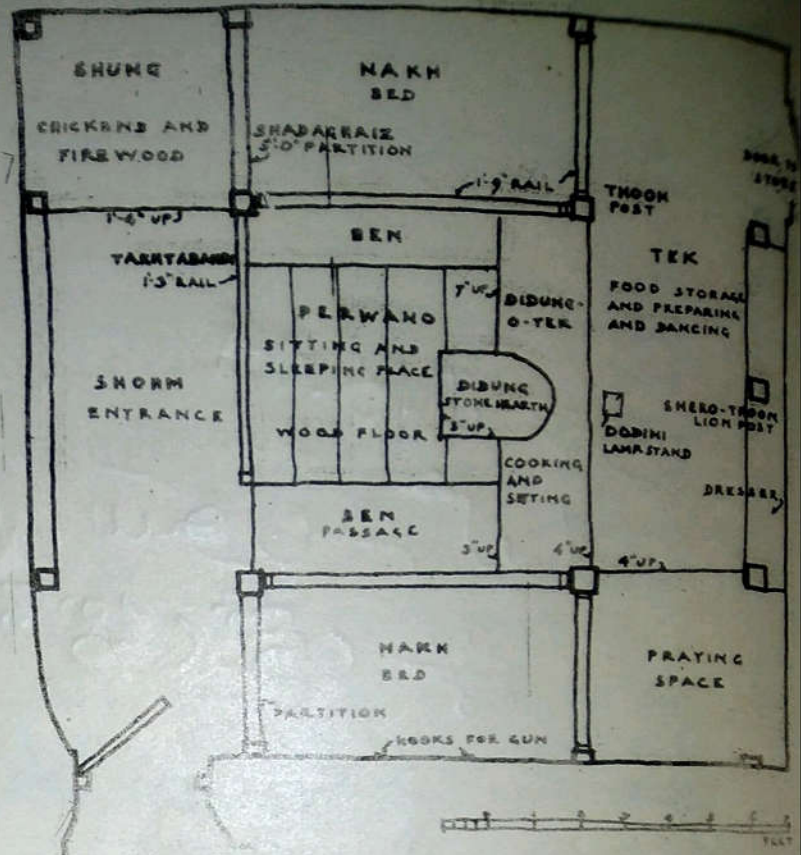
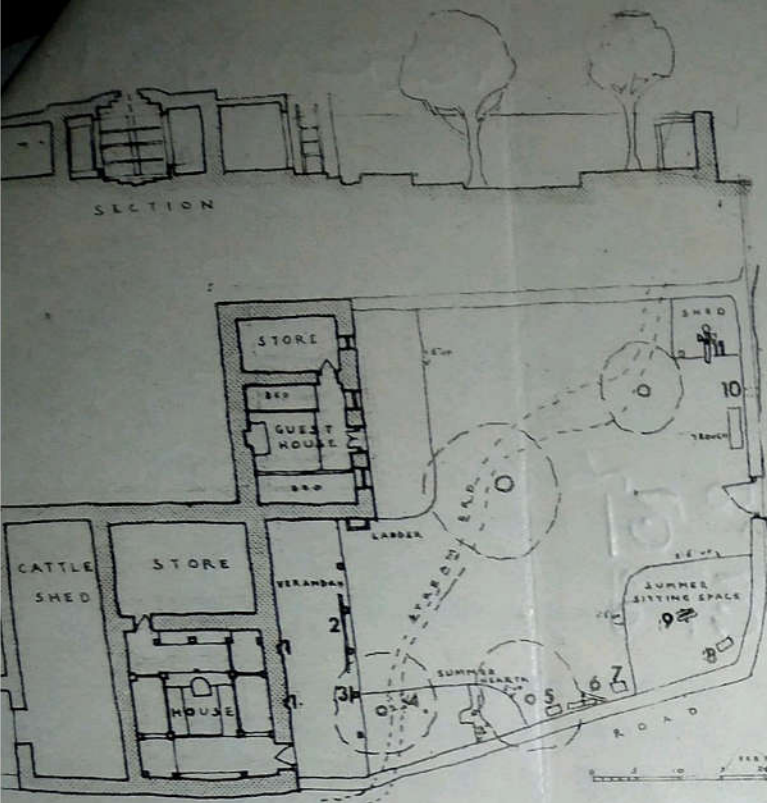
The inside of the house was as well arranged for its purpose as the courtyard. All the Kho houses which I visited, whether they had been built a hundred years ago or were still under construction, followed the same plan.

The house has rough stone walls with no windows and the only light is from the door or the smoke hole in the roof. The floor is mainly earth, but the hearth is of stone, and the space in front of it is boarded.

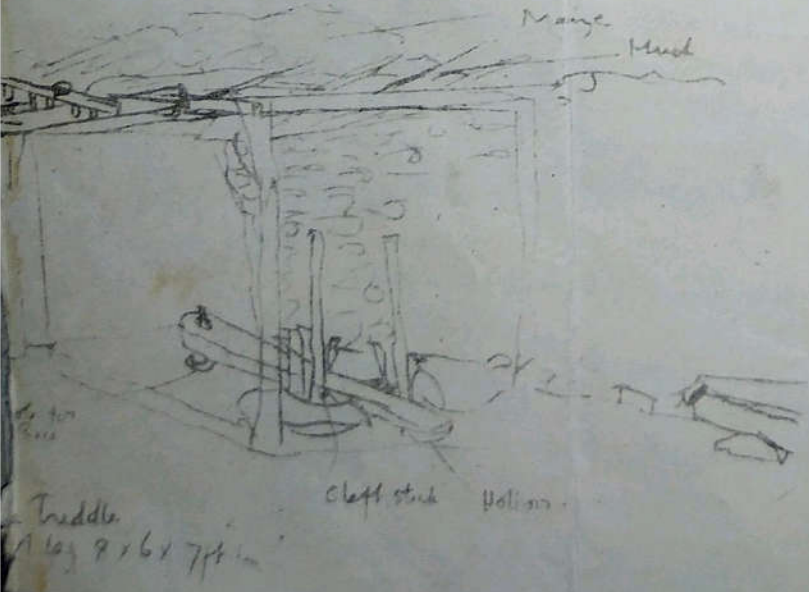
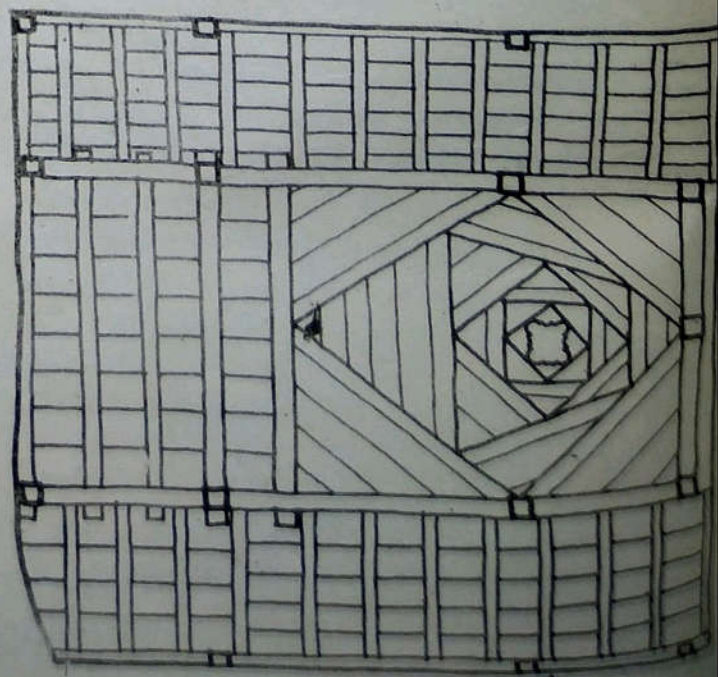
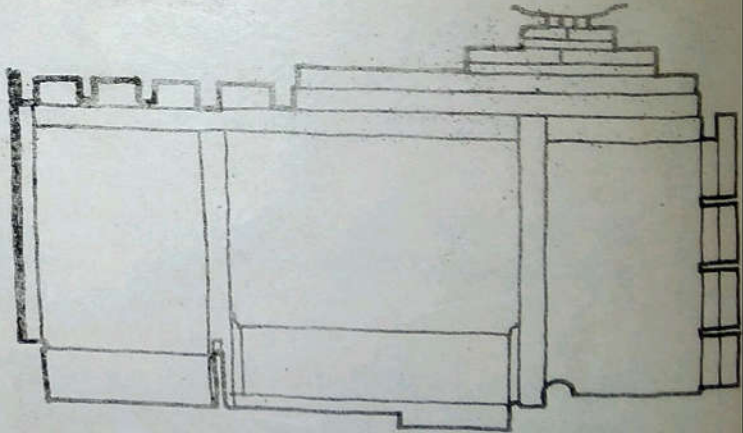
The roof is supported by five 6 in. \times 6 in. stout deodar posts and eight free-standing posts against the walls. These carry 7 in. \times 7 in. beams and over the outer parts of the house there are 5 in. \times 4 in. joists and wide boards. But over the central area the beams form a diamond-shaped ceiling, stepped up in four levels of about 6 in. each, culminating in the carved sides of the square smoke-hole. The vertical steps of this ceiling are sometimes decorated in spring, when spring-cleaning takes place, with a floral pattern applied in dry flour.

Grass or brushwood is laid on the roof timbers 'to preserve the wood', and this is covered with about nine inches of clay, rising to a mound around the smoke-hole. Rafters project slightly outside the top of the walls and a rough parapet is formed of flat stones at the edge of the clay roof. The roof slopes to the back of the house where a wooden spout carries away the little rain that falls.

In wet weather a sort of three-legged table 2½ ft. high is set above the smoke-hole. This comparatively large smoke hole, about 14 in. square, is an



oghozi, Chitral, West Pakistan
 es for Lamps:
 used for airing bedding
 s bows and arrows
 stones for keeping milk and butter cool
 opping-block
 ce and plough
 arpening stone
 n-kneading stone
 inning wheel
 it for chickens
 eddle for pounding rice



indication of settled conditions in the area. In neighbouring regions, where blood-feuds were rife, the smoke-holes, if they exist at all, have to be much smaller in case the enemy should shoot down them.

In some houses the verandah was a later addition, but here it had been built with the main house. Its special features include niches for lamps beside the front door, pegs in the posts for the pole over which the bedding is aired, and a hook for the boy's bow and arrows.

The door, which is only 5 ft. high, leads into the 'Shohm' or entrance space, where visitors or servants may enter without removing their shoes. This is as far as the dog may come, and there is proverb which says, 'If there is a dog in the Shohm, a fox will not come to the smoke-hole'.

At the end is the 'Shung'—a space with a raised floor used for storage of wood and chickens. The shohm is divided from the central area of the house by the 'Takhtabandi', an 18 in. board which may be sat on but may not be stepped over. The central area, surrounding the fire on three sides, and at the lowest sitting level, is the 'Perwano' where boys of the household sit. If the house is crowded, children may have to sleep here. Running down each side of the Perwano is the 'Ben', on one side a passage, and on the other, an additional sitting space. Beyond the Ben, on either side, is the 'Nakh' enclosed by an 18 in. board and cut off from the Shohm and Shung by 5 ft. partitions hung over with goat-hair ropes and tools. Each Nakh is filled with chaff or straw and covered with goat-hair rugs and bedding on which the family sleeps.

At the rear of the Perwano is the centre of the house—the 'Didung' or hearth. It has a step down to the stone hearth level, and a semi-circular niche at the back. On either side nearest the fire sit the oldest people, including the owner of the house, while the next step up, the 'Didung-O-Tek', is occupied by the mistress of the house who supervises the cooking and distribution of food. Here, or on the 'Tek' above, sit the other women and the cat.

The back portion of the house is the 'Tek' a space raised another step, used for preparing food and also for dancing and story-telling. As a bad English workman will blame his tools for shoddy work, so a bad Kho dancer will excuse himself by saying 'The Tek is sloping'. On the Tek, just behind the hearth is the 'Dodini', a little clay mound or stone on which to set the lamp—originally a pine-wood flare. Also on the Tek may stand chests for storing family possessions and bins for flour and grain. In the old days rice was a great luxury, especially for children, who used to say, 'When there is rice for supper the Tek looks more beautiful'. A dresser stands at the end of the Tek

and on it are samples of almost the only imports into Koghzi - cigarettes, sugar, salt and tea, also metal cooking vessels and handle-less tea-bowls.

At one corner is a door to a small store-room and in the other corner, at highest level and always in the direction of Mecca, is the 'Praying Place'.

In this dry climate there seem to be no problems with unseasoned timber or of damage by insects, and floor-boards are laid straight on the ground.

The walls of the house are not necessarily load-bearing. They are about 2 ft. thick, of rough stone set in mud mortar stabilised by horizontal logs at heights of about 3 ft. In districts where wood is plentiful these logs are only about 1 ft. apart. The walls are then plastered, outside and in, with clay mixed with chopped straw.

The main structural posts of the house are called 'Thoon'. The single one at the back is the 'Shero-Thoon' or Lion's Pillar, and in times of earth-quake the women will run and cling to this post. In one old house the post was 16 in. square, carved by adze with interlacing geometric patterns reminiscent of Celtic designs. The beams and posts are all tenoned together, with no pegs. Nails have only fairly recently become easily obtainable, and traditional building techniques still persist, without the use of nails or screws. In fact the only metal in the house apart from cooking pots was the padlock and chain on the door, and innovation, and a piece of wire used for raising the wooden latch, from the outside.

We were shown proudly some brass hinges in a new house which was being built, but the traditional door was of heavy vertical boarding, the end board being cut to form a pivot, set into sockets in the lintel and threshold.

None of the woodwork had been stained but smoke and time had weathered it to a pleasant dark red-brown. The inherent decorative craftsmanship of the Kho people was apparent in the simple moulding of shelf-edges, posts, fretwork on the lintel of the verandah and elsewhere.

Throughout the house and the courtyard there was a sense of the suitability of every detail of plan and construction to its purpose, which gave a rare satisfaction to sophisticated Western visitors.