Material Culture, Artifact System, Rituals, and Symbolic Meanings in the

Vernacular Architecture of Masulih, Iran

By

Ehsan Daneshyar

School of Architecture
McGill University
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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to illustrate the interconnections between the local culture and vernacular architecture of the Iranian town of Masulih. My research will explore the connections between the rituals, artifacts, and beliefs of the inhabitants of Masulih and their distinctive vernacular architecture in order to demonstrate that the landscape of Masulih is a powerful symbolic-ritual space that represents their identity. The cultural production of Masulih's inhabitants forms an essential part of their identity. It includes the settlement pattern, architecture, and material culture such as blacksmithing, shoemaking, baking, carpentry and textiles. I argue that in order to understand the cultural specificities of place, one needs to focus holistically on cultural phenomena. My approach therefore requires an examination of the everyday activities of people, their rituals, beliefs, artifacts and the built environment.

Résumé

Le principal objectif de cette étude est de démontrer les liens entre la culture et l'architecture locales de la ville iranienne de Masulih. Ma recherche explorera les connexions entre les rituels, les artéfacts et les croyances des résidents de Masulih et leur architecture locale distinctive afin d'interpréter le paysage de Masulih en tant que puissant espace symbolique-rituel représentatif de leur identité. La production culturelle des résidents de Masulih constitue un élément essentiel de leur identité. Cette production comprend les modèles de peuplement et l'architecture ainsi que la culture matérielle exprimée par l'ouvrage de forge, la cordonnerie, la boulangerie, la charpenterie et les textiles, parmi d'autres. Je soutiens qu'une compréhension des spécificités culturelles d'un lieu doit passer par l'analyse holistique de ses phénomènes culturels. Par conséquent, mon approche entreprend l'examen des activités quotidiennes des gens et de leurs rituels, leurs croyances et leurs artéfacts, ainsi que du cadre bâti.

List of Figures

1.1. The four climatic regions in Iran.

1.2. Aerial photograph of Gilān province.

1.3. The vernacular *shakili* house.

1.4. A *kanduj*, raised beside the *shakili* house.

1.5. Haj Hūsiyni's house in Sālik village, Lāhiyjān.

1.6. Plan of the first floor.

1.7. Plan of the roof.

1.8. Perspective of Haj Hūsiyni's house.

1.9. Perspective of Haj Hūsiyni's house.

1.10. Elevation of Haj Hūsiyni's house.

1.11. Bandar-i Kūng.

1.12. The courtyard houses of Bandar-i Lingih.

1.13. The *badgiyr-ha* of Bandar-i Lingih.

1.14. The traditional courtyard houses of Bandar-i Bushihr.

1.15. Rashidi's courtyard house in Bandar-i Bushihr.

1.16. The ground and first floor plan of Rashidi's house.

1.17. Plan of the ground and first floors of Tabib's house in Bandar-i Bushihr.

7

5.7. The process of making a lock for a door.

5.8. The process of making a vegetable cutter.

5.9. Making the head of a hoe.

5.10. Inserting the wooden handle into the head of the hoe.

5.11. Making the head of a slasher.

5.12. Carving the wooden handles of a slasher.

5.13. Completing the slasher.

5.14. The plan of the knife workshop.

5.15. Photograophs of the knife workshop.

5.16. Kitchen knives.

5.17. The process of attaching the knife blade to the bolster and wooden handles.

5.18. Knives that Jabbar makes.

5.19. Pocket knife.

5.20. All the parts of a pocket knife.

5.21. A bell.

5.22. Various tongs.

5.23. Plan of the *chamush* workshop.

<u>Chapter One: Introduction</u>

<u>1.1 Research Objectives</u>

This dissertation is about the artifact system and material culture of Masulih.[1] In this

dissertation, the artifact system is taken to denote the totality of the town. In part, the

artifact system consists of the physical aspects of Masulih, such as topography, paths

inside and outside the physical boundaries of the community, neighborhoods, the bazaar,

public areas, tea houses and dwellings. The artifact system also embraces rituals, religious

beliefs, and symbolic meanings that are grounded in the physical built environment of

Masulih. The artifact system further comprises the study of the artifacts which the master

craftsmen of Masulih make in their workshops or home workshops. The entire

community, with its surrounding landscape, its inhabitants, and their practices and values,

is a complex artifact. There are significant social, economic and religious connections

within the totality of this artifact system. The aim of this dissertation is to make these

significant connections visible. By studying the totality of the artifact system of Masulih,

we can learn about the lives and culture of these people as well as the roles of their built

environment and objects they use. This study also reveals that a gradual and inevitable

shift in the overall lifestyle of the inhabitants from the eighteenth century to the current

era has evolved.

One important outcome of this study of the artifact system of Masulih is to reveal

the importance of paths in the town. Like the textile weavers of the community, the paths

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[1] For the spelling of Persian words and names I have used the transliteration table recommended by the International Journal of Middle East Studies. In order to be close to the actual pronunciation of some of the local terms, I have modified the transliteration table slightly (see appendix A).

knit the entire community together. The neighborhoods, bazaar, tea houses, houses, shrines and workshops are woven together by paths. The paths also extend beyond the physical borders of the community into the landscape in the vicinity of this town. They connect Masulih to the nearby grazing lands, shepherds, herds, wood dwellers and mountain dwellers, as well as to small villages and towns. By following the path in and outside the community, the social, economic and religious ties of the community are revealed. The paths also contribute to the wholeness and unity of the community. The paths gather everything together. Without a path, the physical built environments such as houses, mosques, shrines, the bazaar, tea houses, springs, and workshops on the one hand and the inhabitants on the other could not gather and form a unified totality. It is by walking the paths that one can observe the wholeness of the artifact of Masulih and the role of paths in the formation of this community.

The rest of this chapter provides further details on the specific research contributions of this study, as well as the theoretical background to this thesis in the fields of material culture, cultural landscapes and vernacular architecture. Chapter two introduces the community of Masulih, its geography, historical background, occupations of its inhabitants and difficulties facing this town. Chapters three, four and five of this dissertation deal with the totality of the artifact system in Masulih. This investigation commences by describing the communal ground and settlement characteristics of the community in chapter three, focuses on the houses in chapter four, and finally covers the production of smaller crafts and the lives of their craftsmen in chapter five.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis does not follow a specific research question or series of research questions and it is not based on a problem solving approach. Focusing on one or a series of research questions limits the scope of the research. As a complex artifact system Masulih demands to be considered holistically. During my fieldwork I collected crucial data which supports the analysis of the complex interactions between the culture, built environment, crafts, and ways of life in Masulih, allowing me to build up a picture of this complex artifact system as a whole.

Although this thesis does not answer specific research questions it does define a fundamental theme: the integrated totality of the artifact system of Masulih. This artifact system is not fixed and static but it is changing. Social, religious and economic connections matter in this artifact system, and this thesis tries to find out the connections between the largest aspect of the town – the surrounding landscapes and grazing lands –, the town itself with its inhabitants, and the artifacts that the artisans make. Artifacts, built environment, landscape, places and individuals are not separated from each other, as this thesis shows. One might assume that artifacts which are made in the blacksmith shop, knife workshop, or shoe workshop, or textiles woven by the weavers, are separate entities of their own, not connected to anything, but this thesis reveals the ways in which all these crafts are part of the totality of Masulih. Artifacts, built environment, landscape, places and individuals are connected and together constitute the artifact system of Masulih.

What makes Masulih distinctive from other mountainous towns and villages in Iran is the fact that in Masulih the totality of the artifact system is intact, whereas in many other villages and towns in Iran the artifact system is broken. In Masulih one can still see a whole artifact which is working, from the grazing lands and its shepherds to the town

27

and its built environment and inhabitants, to its artisans who forge, knit and make various crafts. Unfortunately, in many villages and communities in Iran the tradition of making local artifacts has already vanished. This means that the inhabitants' ties to the land and landscape are shifted and the totality of the artifact system in those places is broken. Masulih offers a rare chance to observe a largely intact artifact system, and that the scope of this thesis is defined by the attempt to analyse the nature of this whole.

A vital issue which should be pointed out is that of the relationship of Masulih to the rest of Iran. Masulih was located on a major trade route, which begins from Rasht in Gilān province and continues via Fuman, Masulih to Khalkhal in Azirbaiyjān province, and Dārām in Zanjān province. The inhabitants of Masulih were traditionally merchants, muleteers and miners; however, due to the introduction of a modern road system in the 1920s, the town's commercial merchant activity began to experience a decline. Originally, the merchandising network of Masulih was limited to Gilān, Azirbaiyjān and Zanjān provinces. Masulih merchants used to visit neighboring villages and towns on a regular basis, utilizing existing mountain paths. During the last three decades, however, merchandising and commercial economic activity of Masulih gradually became dependent on tourism; annually, an approximate 200,000 individuals visit the town during the Iranian New Year holidays, which last two weeks. The situation currently is one where tourists from various provinces, towns and villages regularly visit the town instead of the traditional visits by Masulih merchants to neighboring villages and towns. It can be said that the nature of the relationship of Masulih with the rest of Iran is based on tourism.

1.3 Methodology

During several field trips between 2008 and 2013, I engaged in techniques for data collection that are used in qualitative research methods. These included in depth interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, field notes, audio recordings, drawings, analysis of artifacts, and research into historic photographs and the accounts of travelers.

In depth and unstructured interviews are used extensively in this thesis; these are fundamental means of interaction between the interviewer and the informant that provide crucial data. Interviews help comprehend the insider's perspective of the people of Masulih, their thoughts, perceptions, feelings and experiences. By observing the world through the participants' perspectives, I was enabled to ground insights into their everyday life. Interviews were started with introductory or opening questions, after which I let the informants talk, which usually resulted in rich descriptions of their lives and environment. I tried to speak as little as possible during the interviews in order to let the informants present their views without my influence. I either audio recorded or transcribed the interviews.[2]

In understanding a place, it is the inhabitants and their narratives and knowledge of the place that matter; without these, the place cannot be comprehended holistically. One could visit an abandoned village or community in Iran and engage in measuring the physical built environment, and this measuring of the place might provide the researcher

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[2] In depth interviews are most commonly used in qualitative research method. Through interviews, the interviewer can get to know the informant and learn how the informant perceives the world. The interview is a face-to-face interaction. For further information on interview techniques, see Pranee Liamputtong, ed., *Qualitative Research Methods*, 3rd edition (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42–62. See also Kathryn J. Roulston, "Open-Ended Question," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 2, ed. Lisa M.Given (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 582–83.

with a basic knowledge of its physical layout; however, it is the inhabitants of the place, their narratives and local knowledge landscape, patterns of work, customs, rituals and oral traditions that are vital and can provide the researcher a solid ground for understanding the place.

Participant observation, which is extensively used in ethnography, is another method used extensively in this thesis, predominantly in chapter five. I visited the workshops of various artisans in Masulih and observed how they make their crafts. This method assisted me to get inside the process of making each craft in its workshop, including the blacksmith's, shoe maker's, scissor maker's, knife maker's and weaver's workshops. This technique also supported me in presenting a deeper insight into the lives of the artisans.[3] I also used periodic observation technique to observe the ritual of Ashurā, an important event which happens every year in Iran. I managed to have a field trip in November 2011, when the ritual was performed in Masulih.

One of the difficulties of doing fieldwork and interviewing people is gaining participants' trust and support. This demands time, patience and establishing friendships with the local people. It took me time to gain the support and trust of the Masulih people; eventually during my field trips, after the people had come to know me and had seen some of my initial pen and ink drawings of Masulih, the process of doing fieldwork improved. My friendship with Muhammad Askar-pur, a local resident, also assisted me during my various field trips.

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[3] For more information on participant observation in ethnography, see Pranee Liamputtong, ed., *Qualitative Research Methods*, 3rd edition (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 155–58. See also Lynne E. F. McKechnie, "Participant Observation," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 2, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 598–99.

Doing fieldwork demands that researcher be ready to confront unexpected events and situations. For example, informants may not agree to be interviewed, a household may not allow the researcher to enter the house, some individuals may demand not to be photographed, or one may confront watch dogs when approaching shepherds on the grazing lands or climatic hazards such as rain and snow. These issues force the researcher to be flexible, and this flexibility proved to be helpful in comprehending the complexities of the artifact system of Masulih. During my fieldwork I tried not to limit myself to just one aspect of my research; I attempted to engage in conversation with the inhabitants, observe their lifestyle and be open to all possibilities. It was on my last field trip in July 2013 that I met by chance the last gun-maker in Masulih. He occasionally lives in Rasht and Masulih and he informed me about the abandoned practice of hunting and gun making. During that field trip, if I had limited my scope of research to just what I initially planned to do, I would certainly have missed interviewing the gun-maker.

In addition to interviewing and participant observation, I measured the workshops, tea houses and houses and photographed artifacts during my fieldwork. I used this data to create drawings illustrating the interior arrangements of the buildings and their scale as well as patterns of movements and how the inhabitants use the places. I attempted to demonstrate the context of the objects of these drawings: for example, in the case of the workshops, the drawings illustrate the way the artisans arranged their workshops. These drawings are a primary source of information, for they inform us about the vernacular architecture of Masulih, as well as about how these spaces are used. In future, if some of the buildings deteriorate or are destroyed, or if the way these spaces are used changes, these drawings could be a source of data. These drawings accompany the text of this thesis and are part of the methodology.

The drawings presented in this thesis are also part of the methodology. The long process of transforming all the data gathered during the fieldwork to analytical drawings helped me to see details which are usually neglected by scholars in the field of vernacular architecture. Drawing the patterns of a sock or the parts of a knife or of a leather shoe reveals how crafts are assembled and how various parts are unified to form a thing. By observing various drawings of crafts, one should gain an idea of how crafts are made in Masulih. A drawing is a medium for studying certain things. Like the written words, the drawings are vital to this thesis and its attempt to provide a holistic and detailed analysis of the artifact system of Masulih. Studying artifacts, buildings, historic photographs and the accounts of travelers helped me comprehend changes which happened in this community during the last two centuries.[4] Historic photographs and accounts of travelers depict a different picture of this community which belongs to the past. Comparing the artifact system of Masulih in the past with its present situation adds to the complexity of our understanding of this place.

1.4 The Contributions of this Study

This thesis suggests that instead of studying only the physical built environment of a place, researchers in architecture, particularly in the field of vernacular architecture in Iran, should recognize the connections between vernacular architecture, inhabitants, landscape and artifacts. The connections between these factors are usually neglected, and as a result the place is not understood holistically or in all its complexity. This thesis

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[4] As Karen E. Norum indicates, an artifact informs us about the artisan who made it, how it is utilised, the user, and the values and beliefs associated with the artifact and the larger society. In fact artifacts are rich source of data. See Karen E. Norum, "Artifact Analysis," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 1, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 23–24.

32

emphasises that the things in a place are all connected to each other; it investigates the entire artifact system in a specific region. A researcher needs to comprehend many things about the everyday life of a place; it is not only the physical built environment that matters. Things are woven together and interconnected, from the largest to the smallest level, with many things happening in between. Merely describing material objects without examining the context of their use, history, production, and significance(s) does not give an adequate or complete picture of a place. Researchers in the field of vernacular architecture in Iran should redefine their scope and perspectives on vernacular architecture in order to account for the important interconnections between artifacts, people and their environment.

This thesis follows anthropologist Barbara Bender in claiming that things, places, people and landscape are always in process and the boundaries between them are not fixed but permeable. Understanding a place in its entirety requires looking at the shifting connections between the various aspects of a place, and how its buildings, objects, and their use have changed over time. Researchers in the field of vernacular architecture in Iran should recognize the gradual changes in a region and ensure that their research recognizes these changes.[5] This thesis thus contributes to research into vernacular architecture in Iran by providing analysis of a place enriched by a consideration of its culture and history, etc.

Another contribution of this thesis to the field of vernacular architecture in Iran is its recognition that Masulih houses as large-scale artifacts are based on the complexities

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[5] Barbara Bender, "Place and Landscape," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Kuchler, Michael Rowlands and Patricia Spyer (London: Sage Publications 2006), 310.

of the local culture. This cultural complex is based on the beliefs of the inhabitants and

their manifestations in their built environment, social relationships, artifacts, memories,

stories, poems and other cultural items. In order to understand this complexity the

accounts of the actual users of the houses are incorporated into the analysis presented in

this thesis, instead of just describing the physical aspects of the houses.

By studying small-scale artifacts such as textiles, knifes, scissors, slashers and

other crafts, which are not usually the concern of architects studying vernacular

architecture, we can gain original insights crucial for understanding a place and/or the

people within a specific region. The way a craft is made and used can inform us about a

people's occupations, knowledge of their surrounding landscape, and daily tasks. This

thesis tries to show the ways in which artifacts connect the user with the artisan. As

socialogist Karen E. Norum indicates, the scholar's task is to work between the past and

the present or between various examples of artifacts looking for relationships, themes,

patterns and refrains.[6] In fact, as this thesis shows, the maker, user, artifact and the

environment are not separated from each other; together they form the artifact system of a

place.

The changes to the way of life, crafts, and build environment of Masulih that this

thesis reveals demonstrate that there is a need to document this place before the totality of

its artifact system is broken. The artifact system in many historic medieval Iranian cities

and communities in Iran are in danger of destruction or have already been destroyed by

modernization. Due to the intense industrialization and modernization which started

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[6] Karen E. Norum, "Artifact Analysis," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 1, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008), 24.

during the Pahlavi era and has continued to the current day, many vernacular buildings have been destroyed to make room for new development.[7] The construction of new road systems and infrastructure has meant that many traditional houses and other historic buildings across communities and regions in Iran have been destroyed. Preserving and restoring the remaining vernacular buildings in Iran is absolutely critical.

An important step in this direction is to document the remaining historical vernacular buildings, and this is one of the most important contributions of this thesis. Although the help of the National Heritage Organization has enabled the structure of some houses in Yazd and other places to be preserved, there is an almost complete lack of documentation of the everyday life of their inhabitants and important cultural elements related to this, such as domestic routine, gender roles inside the house, religion and beliefs, rites and ceremonies, values and norms, symbolic meanings, tales and stories (oral traditions), and interior organization. Today there is little of the cultural elements embedded in these courtyard houses left to us. As a result, the traditional ways of life that informed these buildings may also be in danger of slipping from memory. In addition to the crucial work of recording and restoring the physical features of the remaining courtyard houses in Iran, the documentation of the deeper cultural issues that are integral to Iranian vernacular architecture will be instrumental in preserving these important cultural and historic sites.

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[7] Unrealistic policies also were one of the reasons for abandonment of historical villages and communities in Iran. Traditionally the villages in Iran used to be owned by a single person or *khūrdih-malik*. Some landlords even used to own dozens of villages. Each village used to have an agent who worked for the landlord. This ancient system of landownership was shifted during the land reforms of 1941–1959. Limiting land ownership, fixing the conditions of tenancy, and establishing agricultural cooperatives were part of the land reform project. These policies forced the majority of peasants to abandon the land and their villages and migrate to the larger cities in search of manual jobs. These people created informal settlements on the peripheries of the cities. See Balland and Bazin, "Deh."

This thesis contributes to these objectives by providing a detailed analysis of elements of the historical vernacular architecture in Masulih, placing the architectural elements in the context of the culture and traditions from which they emerged. This is the first consideration of the people, culture, and analysis of the built environment of Masulih. Although this research is only a first venture and is by no means intended to be comprehensive, it is hoped that the work will stimulate further interest in the study of this historic community and, more generally, in the vernacular architecture of Iran.

The intended audience of this study includes researchers in the fields of cultural landscape, vernacular architecture, material culture, and heritage conservation. The primary contribution of this thesis to these fields is to represent the everyday life of the inhabitants of Masulih and its relation to the totality of Masulih's artifact system. Although the future may hold great changes for the community of Masulih, at least a part of its everyday cultural routine will be preserved in this work and will provide a potential basis for future studies, hopefully contributing to its preservation.

1.5 On Material Culture

This thesis is about material culture and artifacts. Material culture is a vast field with diverse scholars and approaches. Material Culture Studies is widely recognized for its interdisciplinary collaborations. In fact, numerous disciplines coexist for the collective purpose of interpreting and identifying man-made objects or artifacts.[8]

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[8]Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry, "Introduction to Material Culture Studies: A Reactionary View," in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, ed. Dan Hicks and Mary Carolyn Beaudry (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2; Daniel Miller, "Why Some Things Matter," in *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, ed. Daniel Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4–19; W. D. Kingery, introduction to *Learning from Things: Method and Theory of Material Culture Studies*, ed.

Material culture is the expression of culture through artifacts. It can be defined as the study of material to comprehend culture, to determine the values, beliefs, attitudes, ideas and assumptions of a specific community at a particular time.[9] We need to study the artifact profoundly in order to gain a rich, complex, and significant interpretation of culture.[10] Material culture is crafted from tangible things which have shaped, changed, and been used across time and space.[11] Beliefs, ideas and values of the makers and users of objects can be read by slowing the process of analysing the objects.[12] The object which is made, utilized, modified and improved reflects the individual who made it, the user who purchased and used it, and by extension the very same object reflects the larger society as well. Objects or artifacts reflect culture and society.[13] The artifacts represent and signify us and they are chiefly emblems or symbols that stand for the individual.[14] By investigating culture as generated and lived through artifacts we can better comprehend human actions, emotions and meanings.[15] Analysing an artifact reveals intrinsic meanings

W. D. Kingery (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 1; Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (California: Sage Publications, 2007); Ann Smart Martin and J. Ritchie Garrison, "Shaping the Field: The Multidisciplinary Perspectives of Material Culture," in *American Material Culture: The Shape of the Field*, ed. Ann Smart Martin, J. Ritchie Garrison, and Museum Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur (Winterthur, DE and Knoxville: Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1997), 1–2.

[9] Jules David Prown and Kenneth Haltman, "The Truth of Material Culture: History or Fiction," in *American Artifacts: Essays in Material Culture*, ed. Jules David Prown. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 11; Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1–19.

[10] Jules David Prown, "Material Culture: Can the Farmer and the Cowman Still Be Friends?" in Kingery, *Learning from Things*, 21.

[11] J. Simon Bronner, *American Material Culture and Folklife* (Ann Arbor: Utah State University Press, 1992).

[12] Kenneth Haltman, introduction to Prown, *American Artifacts*, 9; Kingery, introduction to *Learning from Things*, 9.

[13] Prown, "Mind in Matter," 1–19; and Victor Buchli, introduction to *The Material Culture Reader*, ed. Victor Buchli (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002), 9.

[14] Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 10; and Akiko Busch, *The Uncommon Life of Common Objects: Essays on Design and the Everyday* (New York: Metropolis Books, 2005), 7–21.

[15] Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 4.

and leads to original interpretations.[16] Discerning the object's meaning is the primary task

of material culture scholars.[17] They take an artifact in hand, in order to comprehend its

meanings, context and associations.[18] It is the principal assertion of material culture

studies that artifacts have the capability to establish meanings.[19] The primary task of the

scholar is to interpret the artifact with words, texts, myth and poetry.[20] In the book *The*

Uncommon Life of Common Objects, Akiko Bush is interested in transforming everyday

objects into words.[21]

Scholars are attempting to apprehend the history more overwhelmingly through the

study of artifacts, as an example in the book *A New Nation of Goods,* the author focuses

on provincial artisans such as chair maker, clock maker, portrait painter and book

publisher to establish the transformation from preindustrial American society to the

Modern era. Artisans, consumers, and specific artifacts could reveal the broad narrative of

cultural change in the Post-Revolutionary Era. This book demonstrates how the meaning

of objects changed over time.[22] The historical study of artifacts provides access to the

lived experience of ordinary individuals in bygone eras. Knowing about an individual's

possessions is vital to comprehend their know-how of everyday life and the way they

define themselves in regards to their peers and their relations to their society in which

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[16] Haltman, introduction, 7.

[17] Martin and Garrison, "Shaping the Field," 14–15.

[18] Steven M. Beckow, "Culture, History and Artifact," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 117.

[19] Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, 4.

[20] Haltman, introduction, 4; and Kingery, introduction, 1–15.

[21] Busch, *Uncommon Life*, 1–15.

[22] David Jaffee, preface to *A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), X–XV.

they lived.[23] Artifact can be a historical source.[24] Artifacts are facts, and facts are raw materials that scholars can use to assemble an account of the past.[25]

Within the scope of this research are ethnographic studies such as Simon J. Bronner's study of Anna Bock's paintings in *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society in America*. Bronner is interested in the way Anna Bock paints the daily activities of the Elkhart County Mennonite settlement in Northern Indiana. Her paintings typically involve traditional communal farming activities, the picturesque Mennonite material culture or material symbols of Mennonite identity such as buggies, windmills, plain clothing, white houses, and green window blinds.[26] An accurate perception of craft cannot be achieved without intensive personal interviews and some grasp of the craftsmen's background, progress and ideals within their private world.[27] Scholars can comprehend such societies directly through the pioneering technique of participant observation over extended periods of time.[28]

Artifacts could be an expression of individual lives and how people construe themselves by means of their possessions. Based on this idea, Daniel Miller interviews the residents of one street in contemporary London, in order to achieve insight into their lives. Miller demonstrates that objects such as decorations, photographs or collections

[23] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, introduction to *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings*, eds. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (Farnham, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 1–23; and Carl Knappett, preface to *Thinking through Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

[24] John Chavis, "The Artifact and the Study of History," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 7, no. 2 (1964): 158–63.

[25] William B. Hesseltine, "The Challenge of the Artifact," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 93–100.

[26] S. J. Bronner, "Making Things," in *Grasping Things: Folk Material Culture and Mass Society in America* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 124–36.

[27] Willard B. Moore, "An Indian Subsistence Craftsman," in Schlereth, *Material Culture Studies in America*, 259–68; and Miller, "Why Some Things Matter," 12.

[28] Buchli, introduction, 1–9.

could reveal stories of household life.[29] For Miller, it is the material culture within our home that depicts the world within our private domain. Miller believes that ethnographic enquiry could lead us to original, in-depth insights.[30]

1.6 Intrinsic Meanings in Artifacts and Material Culture[31]

Henry Glassie is one of the principal scholars that have influenced this research. Glassie's studies on material culture began in 1968 with his first book *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States*. In this text Glassie argues that culture is intellectual, rational, and abstract. Material culture embraces those fragments of individual learning which present an individual with plans, methods, and reasons for creating things which can be seen and touched.[32] For Glassie material culture includes the objects that human beings have learned to make through tradition. He limits the scope of his research to "folk society." He is essentially interested in the origins of folk objects, that is, of objects that are part of the tradition of the society in question. In order to understand the origins of any folk object, Glassie suggests that material objects should be broken down into their fundamental components: form, construction, and use.[33]

An object's origins can be discovered by studying its form. One of Glassie's examples is a distinctive building form, a rectangular room with a gable roof. Originally

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[29] Daniel Miller, prologue to *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity, 2008) 1–7.

[30] Daniel Miller, "Behind Closed Doors," in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller (New York: Berg, 2001), 1–19.

[31] The term "intrinsic meaning" is derived from Robert Plant Armstrong's book *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

[32] Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1968), 2.

[33] Ibid., 5–8.

rooted in central Europe and Scandinavia then brought to America by settlers, it is found in New York and western and southern Pennsylvania.[34]

Glassie is also interested in the construction process of folk items. A material culture student must be involved with both the form and construction, which can be observed from the finished products. The best way to learn the process of construction is through a close observation of the process in progress.[35]

Glassie also analyses the use of folk objects. For Glassie an object which was not "folk" when it was produced cannot become "folk" via usage or association, and a folk-manufactured object does not lose its folk origins when employed in a non-folk manner. For example, a guitar produced in a Kalamazoo factory is not a folk object even when played by a bluesman from the Mississippi Delta.[36]

In *Pattern*, Glassie investigates not only the making, history, and distribution of a folk object, but also its role in the culture of its producer and users. He studies the products of farmers, rural tradesmen such as blacksmiths and house carpenters, and non-agricultural rural groups.[37] His analyses of the artifacts lead him to the origins of these objects. For instance, he traces the origins of the banjo to African antecedents, *sgraffito* (a type of pottery) to Germany and Switzerland, and "I type" houses to England.

In *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (1975), Glassie reveals the story of Virginian artifacts. Through a synthetic study of historic artifacts, including houses, Glassie attempts to interpret and understand the past. For him, the "silent artifact" is a direct expression of the past culture and a representation

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[34] Ibid., 8–9.
[35] Ibid., 11.
[36] Ibid., 11–12.
[37] Ibid., 16–35.

of the ideas of its producers. The historic houses of Virginia provide basic insights into the minds of their producers and those who lived in them. Thus, Glassie argues that the artifact is always genuine because it is an expression of its maker's mind.[38] According to Glassie, the objective of *Folk Housing* is to comprehend the land, the people, and their houses by analysing what they have left behind. The aim is to let "the silent artifact" speak.

Glassie claims that the everyday life of the majority of the illiterate population could be better understood with information about artifacts. Although on the surface artifacts carry no information, it is the job of the scholar to obtain the necessary data. Glassie argues that any artifact that can be provided with associations in space and time, either by being accompanied by a document or, better, as with gravestones or buildings, by being set into the land, is a valuable source of a great quantity of information.[39]

In his analysis of historic houses, Glassie puts this claim to good use. He uncovers certain rules which the local master builders followed. The square as a geometric entity which provides a scale and the yard as an essential unit of measurement, form the basic units of the houses. The basic house plan included a square, and all other dimensions were determined by adding to or subtracting from this square. Through a detailed description, Glassie develops a systematic model with a complete set of rules for describing the design ability of the local builder, and the architectural grammar, like the structure of a language, which governed the design of the houses in Middle Virginia.

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[38] Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 10.
[39] Ibid, 11–12.

Glassie shifts from a structuralist approach in *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (1975) to a humanistic anthropology in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* (1982). In the latter text, he claims that "[W]e study others so their humanity will bring our own into awareness, so the future will be better than the past. The others I studied and choose to describe to you do not occupy some misty island from distant days. They live in a hard corner of the same world you and I inhabit. Money is scarce there, work is ceaseless. Their skies crack with storms and pound with bombs. Ulster. The sacred heart of their community has been split by political terror. Despite it all, they remain good people. We have much to learn from them."[40]

Ballymenone is a small place of green hills and white houses, lying by upper Lough Erne in County Fermanagh, seven miles north and nine miles east of the border dividing Ireland. In Glassie's words, Ballymenone "is a place of endless wet and work, of great gentle hospitality, open and easy to enter. Ballymenone is a place of ancient, constant tension, complex and impossible to know completely."[41] Glassie believes that the people of Ballymenone are his teachers in this book. He tries to integrate the study of "material culture," "oral literature," folklore, and folk life. He is searching for meanings. He writes that our study of architecture must push beyond mere things to their meanings and grope through meanings to values.[42] He writes, "This is not an archive in book's clothing from which folklore items can be handily retrieved. My purpose is not to present forms for

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[40] Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), XIV.
[41] Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, XVIII.
[42] Ibid., XIII, XVIII, XIII, XV, XIV.

others to set in historic-geographic constructs, but to search through forms for meanings, which leads me to embed art in life's thickness."[43]

Glassie studies artifacts which people have left behind; he tries to analyse their remaining artifacts such as historic houses, and he believes that this approach let him to comprehend and expand history. Glassie did not approach the people with a clear hypothesis since he believes that culture is not a problem with a solution. There are no conclusions for Glassie. Studying people involves refining understanding, not achieving final proof. He is interested in interacting and collaborating with the people of Ballymenone. He converses intimately with them. He tries to turn the interviews into conversations so he can record the text which was created by those people. By recording them exactly, Glassie attempts to find a base for study that is created not by him but by Ballymenone's people.[44]

Glassie is interested in seeing people as they are, and so his principal concerns are their daily activities, the quality of their social life, the nature of their work, the meanings of their oral literature, how they form their own lives, and what they do with their time.[45] He collects people's stories, and these stories lead him to context and meanings. He writes:

> As I thought about the stories, life began to arrange itself around them as context. Context is not in the eye of the beholder, but in the mind of the creator. Some of context is drawn in form the immediate situation, but more is drawn from memory. It is present, but invisible, inaudible. Contexts are mental associations woven around texts during performance to shape and complete them, to give them meaning. Most crucially, meaning is that which

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[43] Ibid., XIV.
[44] Ibid., 11–14.
[45] Ibid., 15.

joints people through things, transforming forms into values, values into forms. Understanding values is the purpose of study. The tale in the ceili is central, situationally, contextually, philosophically. It emerges in the middle of the night time's conversations. It draws widely from life to make itself meaningful. Its meaning lead into confrontation with fundamental values.[46]

Oral tradition is the key issue. In *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, stories lead Glassie into the culture of Ballymenone, and fit together into a system constructed by those who tell the tales. For Glassie documenting those stories is a way to comprehend the community.[47]

Glassie was deeply influenced by Robert Plant Armstrong's idea of "affecting presence."[48] Armstrong's approach to the study of artifacts is more humanistic than Glassie's. He writes, "One must have a theory about the nature of the affecting work [of art] if he is to say something meaningful about it and about the inner reality of culture."[49] Harold Osborne defines the idea of affecting presence, from Armstrong's 1971 book *The Affecting Presence*, in the following way: "some works of art present us a strong illusion that they acquire a life of their own; others may appear to us as exact likenesses of living things and yet are devoid of life. It is this quality that Armstrong makes central to his scheme of aesthetics, and naming those things which possess it as '*works of affecting presence*.'"[50]

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[46] Ibid., 33.

[47] Ibid., 34.

[48] Ibid., XV–XVI. See also Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence*; and Robert Plant Armstrong, *Wellspring on the Myth and Source of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

[49] Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence*, 36.

[50] Harold Osborne, review of *The Power of Presence: Consciousness, Myth, and Affecting Presence,* by Robert Plant Armstrong, *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1982): 122–24.

Armstrong believes that the work of art has its own significance, incarnated within its own being. The work of art is a thing in itself. The work of art is the actual presentation of the artist's feeling; the universe of feeling of human beings is opened to the perceiver by the work of art itself. The work of art has an affecting presence and it is the significance of this affecting presence that affects us when we enter into

Henry Glassie was also influenced by James Deetz's book *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (1972). Glassie reflects on the role of Deetz's ideas in his own work when he writes, "to James artifacts are evidence of social patterning and expression of culture. My work is now happily intermixed with his. Together we are using old objects to discover our past."[51]

Deetz maintains that a survey of objects left behind by people can tell us much about their past and their world. He argues that in the telling of the past, one may gain insights that would have been very difficult to obtain if one were to rely solely on the written record.[52] For Deetz, material culture is the most objective and instant resource of data. He writes, "[i]t is terribly important that the "small things forgotten" be remembered. For in the seemingly little and insignificant things that accumulate to create a lifetime, the essence of our existence is captured. We must remember these bits and pieces, and we must use them in new and imaginative ways so that a different appreciation for what life is today, and was in the past, can be achieved. The written document has its proper and important place, but there is also a time when we should set aside our perusal of diaries, court records, and inventories, and listen to another voice. Do not read what we have written; look at what we have done."[53]

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transactions with the work of art. The work of art is not a representation but a presentation: it is self-contained and wholly committed. In the case of the Yoruba sculptures described by Armstrong, the affecting presence of these objects receive special care and attention such as bathing, clothing, feeding, burying, and being killed, sickened, deprived and wounded. The sculptures are treated like living individuals due to their affecting presence. See Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), xvi, xix, 1–11, 24, 25.

[51] Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, XV.

[52] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 253.

[53] Ibid., 259–60.

As a historical archaeologist, Deetz's goal is to study past peoples based on the things that they left behind and the ways that they left their imprint on the world. For him artifacts carry messages from both their makers and users. It is the archaeologist's task to decode their messages and apply them to our understanding of the human experience. In the abovementioned work Deetz is not only interested in the written record but also in the countless objects left behind by Americans for over three and a half centuries.[54]

Deetz approaches historical archaeology not only by digging archaeological sites but also in his interest in artifacts which have survived aboveground, including old houses, collections of pottery, weapons, bottles, glassware, cutlery, and textiles. In order to construct the past Deetz uses tax lists, interviews, historical photographs, birth, marriage, and death records, church documents, diaries, court records, land records and land deeds. Another key source of information is probate records, which list the contents of houses and properties of persons taken for tax purposes at their deaths.[55]

In chapter four, Deetz demonstrates that stylistic changes to artifacts can be related to value changes in the society that manufactures them. One example is the gradual stylistic change in the design of New England colonial gravestones due to specific cultural reasons, including the new Englanders' new way of viewing the world in which they lived.[56] Another example is Deetz's analysis of Anglo-American pottery and his sketch of the development of its cultural context. The excavation of archaeological sites along the eastern seaboard has recovered a vast ceramic collection representing virtually every type known to have occurred in the Anglo-American world from around 1610

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[54] Ibid., 4–5.
[55] Ibid., 7–11.
[56] Ibid., 89–122.

through to the mid-nineteenth century. Deetz follows the origins and types of pottery that have been found on historic Anglo-American sites. For example, he traces the origins of earthenware pots back to England and the origins of stoneware pots to the two European cities of Siegburg and Cologne. By analysing these ceramic remains Deetz attempts to understand part of the living totality of the people in the days in which the ceramics were made, and the functional and symbolic role of ceramics in the ways of the people.[57]

The analysis of ceramics allows Deetz to identify trends in Anglo-American life between the early seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries. He shows the apparent connection between the early ceramic evidence and patterns of ceramic use as seen in the culture of the English yeomen, including the manifestation of greatly personalized sets of dishes, cups, and chamber pots after 1760. This confirms the trend from the earlier, corporate mode of ceramic use to the later, individualized one.[58] A one person/one dish bond highlights the great importance of individuality within the society after 1760.[59] The shift could also represent the emergent world view that was characterized by an emphasis on order, control, and balance.

Following Deetz, in *Turkish Traditional Art Today* (1993) Henry Glassie argues convincingly for the necessity of Turkish material culture studies. Glassie believes that artifacts balance the world to provide a more comprehensive, enriched view of human beings than the study of written records alone. His principal aim in this text is to record and write about masters of various artifacts, their processes of making artifacts, and their artifacts themselves. In doing so he attempts to decode intrinsic meanings. He tries to

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[57] Ibid., 69–73.
[58] Ibid., 87.
[59] Ibid., 86.

comprehend meanings in technology, geometry and form as they are applied to the production of various crafts.[60] Glassie is interested in how the master, or *ūstad*, creates an orderly society in the organization of the profession: for instance, how the *ūstad* welcomes the younger generations into the workshop, or his social concern for preserving a cooperative spirit among masters who are in apparent competition.[61] Glassie's analysis of the artifacts investigates a number of factors that reveal aspects of their social context, asking what was made in the workshop, what was sold in the workshop (including objects that were traded in the workshop but not made there), to whom the artifacts were sold, how the artifacts were used, and the origins of types of artifacts. He is interested not only in the technical process of making artifacts, but also in the attitudes of the craftsmen toward their creations, the nature of art as explained and defined by various masters, the relationship between the master and his artifact, the master's oneness with his crafts (aesthetics), and the skill, utility, and materials revealed in the artifacts.[62]

In *Art and Life in Bangladesh* (1997) Glassie follows a similar approach when documenting the lives of artists such as potters, painters, metalworkers, and carpenters in Bangladesh. The principal focus of his study is the Bangladeshi ceramic industry: potters, pottery, clay techniques, and markets, as well as clay products including pots, figures, holy icons of gods and goddesses, and decorated rickshaws. His approach focuses on the contexts of both artist and artifact. He analyses artists' discourses on life, religion, the relationship between their art and the divine order, and the meanings of their artifacts. Also within the scope of his research are the relationships between artist and their

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[60] Henry Glassie, *Turkish Traditional Art Today* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 5, 9, 53, 58, 71.
[61] Ibid., 71, 72.
[62] Ibid., 2–219.

artifacts and their manufacturing process.[63] Glassie meets the artists and documents their workshops, encouraging them to express their thoughts about their work, families, and religious beliefs. He demonstrates the interconnectedness between artifacts and the master of the craft.[64]

In his 1999 publication *The Potter's Art*, Glassie expands this approach to analyse the potter's life and artifacts in Bangladesh, Sweden, Georgia, New Mexico, Turkey, and Japan. For Glassie, pottery represents the complexity of the human condition. He demonstrates that in pottery, as in other arts, there must be devotion, concentration, an instant of aloneness – a moment of devotion when the self is given, sincerely and completely, into the creation of a new artifact.[65]

Glassie is interested in the values of common clay. He argues that art disturbs nature to embody values. The more values that a creation contains, the more enriched its display of purpose and the more it is to be addressed as a work of art. For Glassie, one way to describe the study of art is to say that it is the procedure of discovering, through artifacts, the values of their creators and consumers. As in his previous works, in this study Glassie is interested in the deeper meanings of artifacts produced by contemporary potters.[66]

Gerald L. Pocius is similarly interested in the meanings of artifacts. Throughout the essays in his 1991 book *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American approaches to Material Culture*, Pocius attempts to show that artifacts are actual demonstrations of

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[63] Glassie, *Art and Life in Bangladesh* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), see chapter 6, "Shankharibazar: Sacred Clay," 307–351.

[64] Glassie, *Art and Life in Bangladesh*, 128–68.

[65] Glassie, *The Potter's Art* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 17.

[66] Ibid., 18–19.

behaviour that can disclose fundamental meanings. Indeed, material culture studies can inspect the interrelationship of individual identity, aesthetics, and the object within a particular cultural framework. Pocius believes that an individual is able to construct the world through objects, and interacts with others through these objects. He argues that scholars should interpret artifacts more carefully and meaningfully in order to more fully understand the human beings who fashioned them.[67]

In "The Meaning of Objects" (1991), Jean-Claude Dupont uncovers meanings by analysing a simple tool—the poker—as used in rural Quebec. Dupont reveals the multi-functionality of the poker in its ability to perform tasks outside the house, to be used as a striking tool, as a means of communication, or to do household tasks. He demonstrates that the poker has secondary functions that, although foreign to its primary purpose, are devoted to sustaining the material life of the family. Furthermore, there are symbolic meanings attached to the poker. Such symbolic functions, considered useful or enriching for the individual, the family, and the community, are practiced when needed. As an iron object, the poker was symbolically associated with powers that worked on liquids, plants, and the human body and spirit. The poker could thus be a religious and magical medium for preserving biological, spiritual, and social harmony. Dupont uses examples such as this in order to demonstrate that a device such as the poker may participate in numerous correlated roles in folk society, and take the position of several tools. Furthermore, a tool may reach the point where it presents a group of secondary technical activities for which it was not uniquely destined, and these extra functions may differ according to the

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[67] Gerald L. Pocius, introduction to *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture* (Newfoundland: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991), XIV, XVIII, XIX.

professions of the consumers. Since material life is so closely connected to spiritual culture, the meaning of an artifact takes on additional importance when one observes its presence in the rituals of life and its use as a signifier in popular language.[68]

1.7 On the Craftsman and His Workshop

Craftsmanship is a crucial human impulse. It is the longing to do a task well for its own sake. The occupation of the craftsman is to achieve quality through skilful work. In this process, there is an association between the hand and the head: every noble craftsman conducts a discourse between the skilled hand and thinking. The historical life of the craftsman can suggest ways of working with tools, organizing bodily movements, and contemplating artifacts while providing viable proposals on how to conduct life with skill.[69] In reality, the craftsman can be seen signifying the distinctive human state of being engaged.[70]

The cultural historian Richard Sennett argues that the contemporary craftsman faces two difficulties. The first hazard is "workers demoralized by command and by competition": here, the craftsman's aspiration for good quality work is undermined and dampened. Sennett demonstrates this phenomenon in modern times by comparing the Japanese working system to the Soviet one. Whereas the Japanese system is open to criticism and bound to its local community, the closed system of the Soviet USSR was governmentally centralized and intolerant of criticism. As a result, the craftsmen in the Soviet system had no aspiration for good quality work. They were poorly motivated

[68] Jean-Claude Dupont, "The Meaning of Objects," in Pocius, *Living in a Material World*, 1–16.
[69] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 1–15.
[70] Ibid., 20–21.

workers, and this poor motivation could be seen in the construction details of every poorly-constructed concrete building. The second factor that Sennett identifies is the division between the hand and the head. Sennett compares drawings done by hand to software, like CAD, that is widely used in architectural firms. In the process of drawing the project by hand, the architect is involved deeply in the project and the project becomes ingrained in the architect's mind. Working with CAD can abort this engagement and contribute to a disembodied design practice. Sennett suggests that architects needs to think like a craftsman whose head and hands are not intellectually and socially separated.[71]

In the words of the architect Juhani Pallasmaa, in our contemporary society the hand, thought and action have become separate entities. Pallasmaa is interested in the substance of the hand and its task in the development of human skills, intellect and conceptual abilities. He argues that the hand has its own skillfulness, awareness and intentionality. The focus on the importance of the hand leads the reader to realize the significance of embodiment in human existence.[72]

In chapter one of *The Mysterious Hand*, Pallasmaa mentions that the hand has its own comprehension, desire, will, unique appearance and features in line with its own distinct personalities. The hand can even disclose one's occupation and reveal the inner character and intentions of its master. Pallasmaa describes the numerous meanings and

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[71] Ibid., 28–45.
[72] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 2010).

symbolizations attached to the hand in social communication, art and religious iconography.[73]

The workshop is the house of the craftsman. Chapter five of this research will document the last workshops of Masulih, in which various artifacts are crafted. In chapter two of *The Craftsman*, "The workshop," Sennett contextualizes the medieval workshop, its system of guilds, the issue of authority and autonomy within the workshop, the impact of religion on the craftsman, the hierarchy of master, journeyman and apprentice practiced in the workshop, the religious bond between the master and the apprentice, the gradual pace of skill development and rank progress of the apprentice, the affiliation of the guild and the craftsman, the way the workshop establishes a decent reputation and honesty, and the importance of conducting ethical behavior.[74] Sennett suggests that the workshop can be a social place, where people are bound through work, ritual and face-to-face communication.[75] The history of the workshop confirms that the workshop is capable of uniting people collectively, and that in medieval times in Europe the ritual and ethic of work was the basis for connecting people. Renaissance and later eras substituted these values with originality and branding, and in so doing established a new form of authority in the workshop.[76]

Following Richard Sennett, chapter five of this research analyses the Masulih workshop on the basis of several factors, including apprentice practice within the workshop, skill development, the reputation of the workshop, the types of crafts forged in the workshop and social communication in the workshop.

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[73] Ibid.
[74] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 53–63.
[75] Ibid., 65–80.
[76] Ibid., 80.

1.8 Cultural Landscapes: J. B. Jackson and His Followers

One of the principal interpreters and critics of the cultural landscape is John Brinckerhoff

Jackson. As Paul Groth states in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (1997), the

ordinary American cultural environment can reasonably be said to have begun in 1951—

the year in which John Brinckerhoff Jackson produced the first issue of *Landscape*

Magazine.[77] Since then, Jackson and his followers have expanded and developed the

study of common landscape.[78]

Following the publication of his magazine, in his 1970 publication *Landscapes:*

Selected Writings of J. B. Jackson, Jackson promotes the idea of a humanized landscape.

He views the landscape as a realm in which humanity, social and political values, and the

land are interconnected. The humanized landscape is founded on the human-to-land bond,

and his crucial concern is the connection of human beings to the world and their

compatriots. Jackson argues that a coherent, practical landscape develops where there is a

coherent explanation of these connections.[79]

In *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics*, published in 1980, Jackson follows

the concepts that he developed in Humanized Landscape while emphasising a sensory

experience of landscape, and its indispensability for establishing an environmental

awareness. Jackson believes that by participating in the world through the senses and by

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[77] Paul Groth, "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2.

[78] Paul Groth and Chris Wilson, "The Polyphony of Cultural Landscape Study," in *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson*, ed. Paul Groth and Chris Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

[79] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J. B. Jackson* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 1–9.

sharing the senses with and distinguishing them in others, one can bear in mind one's humanity. Jackson proposes that a sensory experiment of landscape could found a sense of belongings to a particular place.[80]

Paul Groth and Chris Wilson point out Jackson's concern with phenomenology and its emphasis on "sense of place" as a way of putting individual experience back into the scholars' debate.[81] In most of his essays, Jackson is concerned with recording everyday sensory experiences of the landscape.[82] He believes that by documenting the landscape with sensory insight, one can shift an entire landscape into a vivid and memorable experiment.[83]

Jackson is a landscape interpreter and critic interested in the everyday life of the American people. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz believes that Jackson's greatest contribution was to reintroduce Americans to their vernacular landscape, to teach them to see again the

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[80] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 1–16.

[81] Groth and Wilson, "Polyphony," 15–16.

[82] Like Jackson, Orhan Pamuk and David Abram are fascinated by sensory methodology concerning landscape. In his book *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, Orhan Pamuk establishes a sensory approach towards understanding the distinct landscape of Istanbul. In chapter ten he tries to sketch out a sense of the melancholy that exists in Istanbul, its landscape, and its people. He tries to explain the *huzun* of the entire city and its inhabitants. They absorb *huzun* with pride and share it within the community. To feel this *huzun*, one must experience the city firsthand. As Pamuk explains, the very essence of the *huzun* can be sensed in Istanbul's cobblestoned streets, old Bosphorus ferries, bus stops, empty boathouses, tea houses, broken seesaws, wooden buildings, pashas' mansions, mosques, city walls, markets, dervish lodges, movie theaters, etc. See Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 90–107; During his visits to Indonesia, Nepal and small Himalayan communities, David Abram learned to open his body-mind to nature and other organic forms of sensitivity. According to Abram humans experience their own consciousness as only one type of awareness in addition to many others. Abram believes in delicate reciprocity with the earth and a sensory engagement with it. See Abram, "The Ecology of Magic: A Personal Introduction to the Inquiry," in *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 3–29. In his book *Becoming Animal*, Abram also indicates the importance of embodied participation in the world for enhancing the wellbeing of humans and nature. He is interested in a phenomenological description of embodied experience. *Becoming Animal* calls for humans to pay more attention to their senses and re-establish the involvement of their animal bodies in the living earth. See Abram, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3–56.

[83] Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins,* 119.

common elements of roads, houses, yards, and towns.[84] In *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (1984), Jackson is interested in the vernacular landscape: the widespread physical and spatial aspects of the present-day landscape such as the street, the house, the field, and the workplace. He believes that the vernacular landscape can educate us a great deal about ourselves and the way we observe the world.[85] His goal is the study of the commonplace and its elements, including boundaries and public spaces such as market places, bazaars, or plazas, roads, and monuments.[86] By analysing such elements Jackson attempts to interpret their meanings. He approaches boundaries as political landscapes, public spaces as reminders of civic privileges and duties, roads as providence of access to political power and networks of the society, and monuments as sacred spaces which bear symbolic meanings.[87]

Following Jackson, in his 1997 text "Hallowed Grounds and Rituals of Remembrance: Union Regimental Monuments at Gettysburg" Reuben M. Rainey analyses the symbolic meanings preserved in war memorial battlefields and monuments dedicated to the Civil War era in the United States. Rainey writes that these monuments

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[84] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "J. B. Jackson as a Critic of Modern Architecture," in Groth and Wilson, *Everyday America*, 37.

[85] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), IX–X.

[86] Tim Robinson, among many other landscape writers, is interested in mapping the vernacular landscape. In *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage*, Robinson engages in an intensive study of the island of Aran. He walks the island's coast "sun-wise" or clockwise, surveying, measuring, interviewing and recording the vernacular landscape of this place. Stone is the primary material as recorded in dry stone-walls, tombs, *cashels* or stone ring forts, megaliths, cells, chapels, barns, houses, watch towers and so forth. See Robinson, *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2008), IX–XIV. In *Stones of Aran Labyrinth*, Robinson is engaged in Aran's interior vernacular landscape. See Robinson, *Stones of Aran: Labyrinth* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009).

[87] Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 11–38.

not only educate us about the great historical incidents of our culture but also remind us of present and future social and political commitments.[88]

Peirce Lewis approaches the vernacular landscape as a special kind of document. In "The Monument and the Bungalow: The Intellectual Legacy of J. B. Jackson " (2003), he mentions that the commonplace landscape is the only long-lasting record written by the mainstream of the earth's inhabitants who do not write. This record is "written" on the face of the earth.[89] Lewis argues that scholars should study landscapes in order to achieve insight into the lives of common, unlettered individuals. If we believe that landscape is a lens that allows us to glance into the lives and societies of ordinary folk, then we must necessarily pay special attention to the landscapes that those ordinary people created.[90]

In his essay "On Vernacular," Jackson critiques contemporary modern environments, regarding contemporary environments as almost entirely without content while on the contrary he views vernacular landscapes as being enriched with symbolic meanings and values, as environments related to the divine and cosmic order.[91] Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz indicates that opposition to the modern movement in architecture and planning and an appreciation of the vernacular is one of the characteristics of his writings.[92] She maintains that what Jackson was interested in was architecture that is responsive to the needs of the present. According to Horowitz, Jackson believes that architecture's true purpose is to organize space so as to enhance human existence in

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[88] Reuben M. Rainey, "Hallowed Grounds and Rituals of Remembrance: Union Regimental Monuments at Gettysburg," in Groth and Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscape*, 67–80.

[89] Peirce Lewis, "The Monument and the Bungalow: The Intellectual Legacy of J. B. Jackson," in Groth and Wilson, *Everyday America*, 86.

[90] Ibid., 89.

[91] Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 87–112.

[92] Horowitz, "J. B. Jackson," 37.

structures expressive of domestic and social life. What Jackson opposed was an architecture devoted entirely to the beauty of pure geometric forms.[93] Denise Scott Brown agrees that Jackson wishes to place our faith in conventional buildings that are properly derived from the cultural landscape and resemble buildings, not sculptures. Jackson wants us to believe in the vernacular.[94]

A collection of Jackson's essays published in 1994, called *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time*, demonstrates his interest in the symbolic interpretation of landscapes. Jackson emphasizes the importance of recognizing everyday symbols in American landscapes.[95] In "The Accessible Landscape," he demonstrates how roads can be connected with ethical values and various cultural practices such as rites of passage. His primary concern is to comprehend the symbolic values attached to a landscape.[96] In "Seeing New Mexico," Jackson visits a Spanish-American settlement in New Mexico and describes the landscape of the people there. He describes the Rio Grande region with its small agricultural villages and communities, approaching the Rio Grande Valley villages with the aim of having, and expressing, a sensory experience. He describes the stillness of the landscape in the winter, the silence in the homes and villages, the smell of coffee inside the houses, roasting chilli and wet clothes drying near the stove, the sound of the church bell and the heat of the small stove in the corner of the church.[97] Like Jackson, Rina Swentzell suggests that the Pueblo people believe in the relationship between humans, land, the natural environment, and the cosmos, which are synonymous in the

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[93] Ibid., 44.
[94] Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Brick," in Groth and Wilson, *Everyday America*, 59–60.
[95] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), VIII.
[96] Ibid., 7–10.
[97] Ibid., 18–23.

Pueblo world. For these people, humans exist within the cosmos and are an integral part of the functioning of the earth community. For Pueblo inhabitants, the mystical nature of the earth is recognized and honoured.[98]

In his essay, "A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time," Jackson searches for a sense of belonging to a place. For Jackson a sense of place is a sense of being at home in a town or city. It grows as one becomes accustomed to a place and acquainted with its peculiarities. A sense of place is something that one generates over the course of time. It is the result of habits, rituals, repeated celebrations, events, or customs shared with other members of the same locality. The ritual, the event and the celebration at all times carry us back to that particular locality and remind us of the past occasion. What is vital is to set up a sense of fellowship with those who share the equivalent experience, and the longing to return and establish a routine of repeated ritual.[99] In other words, for Jackson a sense of place is derived from a ritual repetition and a sense of fellowship based on a shared experience with others in a particular location. The event is the product of human action which happens in a specific place. This entire network of human action provides the basis for a sense of place.[100]

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[98] Ibid., 29–37; Rina Swentzell, "Conflicting Landscape Values: The Santa Clara Pueblo and Day School," in Groth and Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscape*, 56.

[99] Jackson, *A Sense of Place*, 151–59.

[100] Ibid., 158–60.

1.9 Vernacular Architecture

1.9.1 Defining the Field

Vernacular architecture (VA) is a vast field which is still in the process of finding a proper definition.[101] As Nezar Al Sayyad indicates, VA is always assumed to be defined as "native, unique to a specific place, produced without the need for imported components and processes, and possibly built by the individuals who occupy it."[102] As culture and tradition become less place-rooted and more information-based in the twenty-first century, these viewpoints towards VA should change and are in the process of doing so.[103] The Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) website attempts to define VA as comprising ordinary buildings and landscapes. The VAF acknowledges that there have been and continue to be debates on defining the nature of vernacular architecture.[104] As Camille Wells indicates, the VAF was established in 1980 to promote the study of vernacular buildings through various and multiple approaches; in fact, because of the Forum's origins, most of its members resist placing limits on acceptable topics or ways of working.[105] Dell Upton, Marcel Vellinga, and Camille Wells identify the term "vernacular architecture" as varied, difficult to define and applicable to traditional domestic and

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[101] As Camille Wells writes, a number of scholars continue to be faithful to the conservative view that vernacular buildings must be old, rural, handmade structures built in traditional forms and materials for domestic or agricultural use. There is the idea that vernacular buildings are the delicate remains of a preindustrial time when life was more collaborative, more human, and things were made through physical labor, and in one way or another nobler than modern substitutes. Even though it benefits from longevity, this is becoming ever harder to defend against charges of romanticism, nostalgia, and even ethnocentricity. Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 1–10.

[102] Scholars in the field should be confronted with alterations which are happening in VA. As Nezar AL Sayyad believes, we should no longer assume that vernacular builders are illiterate, unskilled, technologically ignorant or isolated from the world of global communication. See Al Sayyad, foreword to *Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-First Century* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006).

[103] Ibid.

[104] See the Vernacular Architecture Forum website, accessed Auguest 9th 2012, http://www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org/.

[105] Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands," 4.

agricultural buildings, industrial and commercial buildings, twentieth-century tract houses, settlement patterns, and "landscape," among many other things. They indicate that in such a youthful and rising field of study, the premature solidifying of definitions would be a severe mistake.[106] Paul Oliver, meanwhile, is interested in defining VA based on a cultural approach. He contends that it is better to regard VA within the cultures of the societies which develop it. Oliver proposes that culture could be a defining "tool" which we may use when arguing about the buildings of diverse cultures that come within the range of our concern and studies.[107] Oliver bases the entries of his 1997 *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* on the cultures that produce the building traditions of specific regions.[108]

1.9.2 Cultural Approaches in Vernacular Architecture Studies

Paul Oliver is more concerned with the various approaches to studying VA than with the numerous disciplines (to name a few: architects, anthropologists, folklorists, historians, archeologists, political theorists, antiquarians, geographers) represented by researchers in this field. Among the many approaches to VA, Oliver is mostly concerned with embedded cultural issues. He believes that VA is most worth studying for its embodiment of values. For Oliver VA symbolizes much more than apparent aesthetics,[109] but should

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[106] Dell Upton, "The VAF at 25: What Now?" *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 7; Marcel Vellinga, "The Inventiveness of Tradition: Vernacular Architecture and the Future," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 115; and Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands," 1–4.

[107] Paul Oliver, *Built to Meet Needs: Cultural Issues in Vernacular Architecture* (New York: Architectural Press, 2006), 18.

[108] Ibid., 31.

[109] Paul Oliver believes that the fascination with VA is derived from an appreciation of its aesthetic merits, for example the plainness of line and purity of form that is to be discovered in small dwellings in the small Greek island towns. See Oliver, *Built to Meet Needs,* 13; Marcel Vellinga mentions that the

be viewed as the result of the social, ritual, and spiritual life of societies, which VA is still practicing.[110] Cross-cultural and interdisciplinary studies could be done in VA, as Oliver suggests, and by doing so, one could gain new insights into the habitations of mankind. Such insights can lead to support and assistance for surviving vernacular traditions in all continents.[111] Suha Özkan argues that we should admit the influential impact of globalization on every facet of our lives at the beginning of the twenty-first century, from music to food and from lifestyle to architecture. We may as well declare that there are no areas of our existence that have not been influenced by global forces and values. Convenience in both living and communication, as consequences of globalization, have a homogenous effect and threaten to reduce the meaning of architecture and the built environment we live in. The idea of cultural appropriateness raised by Oliver is a possible resolution for homogenization. In line with Oliver, Suha Özkan calls for the conservation of cultural values. He argues that in a world in which the insufficiency of energy resources and synthetic materials has been raised, there should be a tendency to make use of abundant local resources and a desire to respect and engage with the complexities of cultures. This tendency, he believes, will most certainly give rise to a VA which is culturally responsive.[112]

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vernacular's relations to honesty, simplicity, craftsmanship, and, significantly, *the past*, still dictate the framework of the debate on the probable prospect of the field of vernacular architecture studies. See Vellinga, "The Inventiveness of Tradition," 115.

[110] Oliver, *Built to Meet Needs*, 6, 15, 16, 19.

[111] Ibid., 26.

[112] Suha Ozkan, "Traditionalism and Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-First Century," in *Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 108–109.

1.9.3 The Past, Present and Future of Vernacular Architecture

1.9.3.1 The Vernacular Architecture Forum and VA Studies

The Vernacular Architecture Forum was one of the primary organizations devoted to the study of vernacular architecture. As Dell Upton states, it was established in 1980 at a distinguishing moment in American socio-cultural history and at a particular stage in the intellectual history of both art and architectural history and material culture studies.[113] Since the VAF was established, scholars in the field of VA studies have shifted from studies related to individual artifacts – buildings – to an interest in landscape broadly construed. Under the influence of cultural-landscape studies, the scholars' field of specialization has also expanded, and their interpretive goals and strategies have been further complicated. Since 1980, several VAFers have accepted further analytical strategies originating from the fields of history, folklore, geography, art history, cultural studies, and other disciplines. In short, scholars' comprehension of the built environment has developed into more complex analyses.[114]

1.9.3.2 New Approaches to VA Studies

Dell Upton and other notable scholars call for the development of new approaches in VA studies. Upton, Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga raise the issue that the majority of scholars working at the VAF pursue particular themes that they think persist in vernacular architecture studies. These themes include a faith in cultural authenticity and a tendency

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[113] Upton, "The VAF at 25," 7.
[114] Idem.

to look to the preindustrial past to find it.[115] In Upton's terms, what we need instead is an entirely reimagined terrain. Our current task is to think about the human environment in ways other than through conventional categories, including architecture.[116] Nezar Al Sayyad agrees that our conception of VA as an unchanging inheritance of a past, and as a framework of precise determined cultural meaning, should be altered.[117] Warren R. Hofstra and Camille Wells similarly argue that VA studies can no longer be restricted to the original, traditional frameworks. In a reimagined terrain or alternative approach VA studies could be conditional on time, place, and culture, but also on the constant process of historical alteration.[118] Following Upton, Vellinga points out that in a time in which numerous fields and disciplines are progressing and looking ahead, VA scholars, regardless of their speciality or where they work, are encouraged to limit their scope to the intuitively identified conventional framework of VA. The field of the vernacular is generally still defined with reference to history, tradition, pre-modernity – in other words, to the past.[119] Marcel Vellinga suggests that the tendency to focus on a restricted category of traditional buildings, viewing the challenge as being to preserve these buildings from modern changes and in their historical state, has restricted the scope and progress of the field of VA studies.[120] In line with Upton's suggestion for an entirely reimagined terrain, Vellinga recommends an approach that focuses on building traditions rather than

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[115] Ibid., 9; Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga, introduction to *Vernacular Architecture in the Twenty-First Century*, 1.

[116] Upton, "The VAF at 25," 10.

[117] Nezar Al Sayyad, foreword.

[118] Warren R. Hofstra and Camille Wells, "Embracing our Legacy, Shaping Our Future: The Vernacular Architecture Forum Turns Twenty-Five," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 4.

[119] Vellinga, "The Inventiveness of Tradition," 115.

[120] Ibid., 117.

buildings.[121] This approach recognizes the dynamic character of vernacular traditions by trying to comprehend how such traditions, through human agency, alter and adjust to the cultural and environmental challenges not just of the past, but of the present and future.[122] Vellinga writes that VA is the outcome of cultural expressions of people who live in or feel attached to a particular place. For Vellinga, vernacular buildings which have undergone modification in construction, use, and meaning by combining modern and traditional elements are still rooted in tradition and place, regardless of their modern appearance. As examples, a modernized Cotswold barn can still only be found in the Cotswolds, and a modernized Minangkabau house only in West Sumatra. For Vellinga, these modernized vernacular buildings represent the dynamic and inventive aspect of VA.[123] He points out that these modernized vernacular buildings are worthy of academic and professional attention. Such buildings may educate scholars how, in time, traditions become recognized, altered, adjusted, and eventually carry on or vanish.[124] By integrating these buildings into the vernacular dialogue alongside the historical and traditional buildings that scholars are already studying, the field of VA research will be expanded.[125] This new approach makes it possible for us to avoid the current historical entrapment of the vernacular and, in so doing, allows us to predict a future for VA studies. Acknowledging the dynamic and adaptive character of vernacular traditions lets us develop the scope of VA studies by integrating the emergence of new traditions and the way in which current traditions fuse with modern building practices into the field. By

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[121] Idem.
[122] Ibid., 118–24.
[123] Ibid., 124.
[124] Idem.
[125] Ibid., 125.

understanding the ways in which vernacular traditions dynamically react to the challenges of the present and future, it is possible to imagine the ways which VA may contribute to the provision of sustainable future built environments.[126]

1.9.3.3 VA in the Twenty-First Century

As Paul Oliver points out, the predicted global population growth of 3 billion by the mid twenty-first century means that approximately 500 million dwellings should be built by 2050. Such demands cannot be accomplished without reliance on self-builders: community builders who still construct the majority of the world's dwellings.[127] Oliver believes that the revival of vernacular traditions is a solution to the future of housing demands. Buildings that use natural materials such as earth, stone, timber, bamboo, palm, and grasses in accordance with the socio-environmental and symbolic requirements of the cultures that produce them, could be the answer to future housing demands. In other words, vernacular builders are capable of contributing to the future of housing demands.[128] Oliver suggests that each culture has its specific identity, expressed in numerous ways, but of which dwellings and other buildings, whether social or functional, are of exceptional importance in relating to its values and pursuits. Various cultures are able to construct their own houses to meet their own needs in accordance with their own

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[126]Asquith and Vellinga, introduction. Following Dell Upton, Nezar Al Sayyad, Lindsay Asquith and Marcel Vellinga's call for new approaches to VA.

[127] It has been predicted that the world population would stand at 6.8 billion in 2009, would reach 7 billion in late 2011, and 9 billion in 2050. Most of the additional 2.3 billion people expected by 2050 will be encountered in developing countries. This estimation was done by the population division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (http://www.un.org/esa/population/). The number of 500 million new dwellings to be built assumes that the average occupation per house is six individuals. See Oliver, *Built to Meet Needs*, 266.

[128] Ibid., 418–20.

traditional norms by deploying their local skills and building know-how. He concludes

that these factors indicate that VA could contribute to the predicted future housing

shortage.[129]

1.10 Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Iran

In this section, I provide an overview of vernacular architecture in various regions of

Iran.[130] Iranian vernacular architecture, especially dwellings, demonstrates extensive

regional variation based on local traditions, knowledge, culture and architectural practices

as well as climate conditions, available local materials and construction technologies. The

vernacular architecture of each regional community in Iran is thus the final result of

several cultural, environmental, social, economical and technological factors. This part of

my proposal is based on works of other scholars.[131]

This overview describes the vernacular architecture of four major regions in Iran:

1) the plateau of Gilān; 2) the northern shore of the Persian Gulf; 3) the hot and arid

central region; and 4) mountain settlements. The distinctions between these four regions

is based on climate variation and will be discussed as follows (figures 1.1, 1.2).

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[129] Ibid., 420–21.

[130] This essay is based on the existing literature on the subject matter. This is not a comprehensive study of domestic architecture in Iran, but is intended to give the necessary context for a detailed description of the architecture of Masulih and its unique characteristics.

[131] Although the scholars' work in many cases are valuable contributions to our knowledge of architecture in Iran, the research as a whole suffers greatly from a lack of documentation of cultural issues including material culture, domestic routines, gender roles, religious beliefs, common beliefs, oral history, and local traditions, as well as household production such as the making of handicrafts in home workshops. Most scholarly attention regarding domestic buildings focuses on their construction methods and materials, the typology of houses, and the impact of the environment on domestic buildings. There is consequently a need for a deeper understanding of the cultural landscapes of vernacular architecture.

1.10.1 The Plateau of Gilān

Beyond the heights of the Albūrz mountain range and beside the southern shore of the

Caspian Sea lies Gilān province. A perennially green plateau, Gilān has the highest

average annual rainfall in Iran. The principal climatic characteristics of this region

include the extreme rainfall, (which occurs to the greatest extent in the fall and winter),

the constant high humidity, and the slight temperature variation between day and night.

A "house" in Gilān province refers to a complex set of structures on a defined piece

of land near *shālizār* or rice fields.[132] Various outbuildings are usually built separate

from, but close to the house (figures 1.3, 1.4).[133] Usually the house and its outbuildings

have thatched roofs to shed rain.[134] As Ghulām hūsiyn Miʿmāriyān points out, on the

Gilān plateau, roofs usually have a slope of 30 to 45 degrees in order to protect the

buildings' masonry walls from rain. The sloped roofs cover the entire building and *ivan*

or balcony on the raised ground floor. They also cover the façade, which usually faces

west and is exposed to heavy storms and cold winds during the fall and winter. A house

can be one storey with an *ivan* on one, two, three or four sides of the house, or it can be

two storeys with first-floor *tālār-ha* or balconies on one, two, three or four sides.[135]

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[132] Peasant houses are scattered around the rice fields and are defined by fences which mark the boundaries of the domestic enclosures and protect the livestock. Christian Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2010, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Gilān-xii-rural-housing.

[133] These outbuildings could include a *taviylih* (stabling for mules), a toilet, kitchen, a *gargeh doneh* (shelter for domestic fowl), a *tanur* (oven), a *tālāmbar* (room where silk worms are kept), a *kundij* (room where rough rice is kept), and a *garm khānih* (room where tobacco leaves are dried), as well as storage for *shaltuk* (rice) and *kāh* (straw). See Ghulām hūsiyn Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni-i Irani Gunih Shinasi Burongara* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i ‹lm va Sanat-i Iran, 1384), 87,108, 109. See also Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."

[134] Gilān and Māzandaran provinces are the only regions in Iran in which the roofs are sloped; in other parts of the country roofs are flat or arched. Traditional roof coverings include rice straw, rush and tiles. See Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."

[135] Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 108–109. See Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."
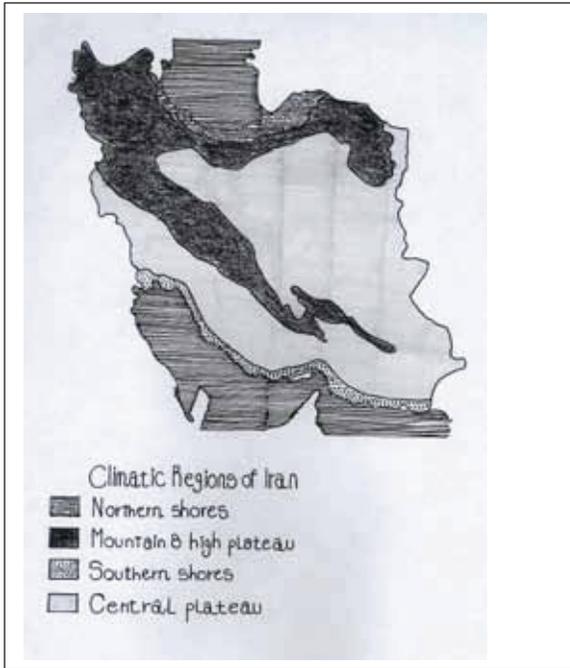
Fig. 1.1. The four climatic regions in Iran: the southern shores of the Caspian sea; the mountains and high plateau; the southern shores; and the central plateau. Adapted from Qubādiyān 1384, 36.

Fig. 1.2. Aerial photograph of Gilān province depicting agricultural lands, urban areas, and the southern Albūrz Mountains, 1996. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.

Fig. 1.3. The vernacular *shakili* house on the plateau of Gilān. Adapted from Qubādiyān 1384, 64.
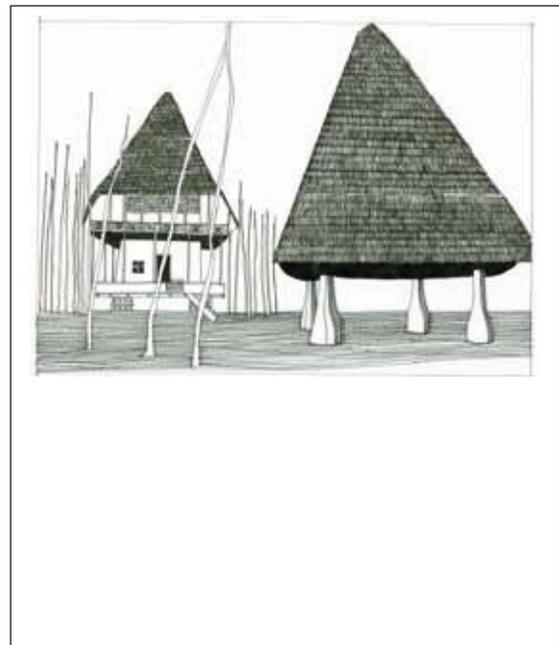
Fig. 1.4. A *kanduj* (a room where rough rice is kept), raised beside the *shakili* house. Adapted from Ahāni 2008, 96.

The maximum utilization of natural ventilation by the use of large openings is common in domestic buildings in this region. Ali Akbar-i Sārimi and Shahram-i Gūl Amini, two scholars who have researched domestic architecture in this region, point out that these houses do not have basements and are mostly raised off the ground, due to the high humidity.[136]

Thus a traditional house in Gilān province can be one storey consisting of one or two rooms and it can also incorporate an *ivan* or balcony on one, two, three or four sides. In a single-room house, this room is multifunctional, and is the setting for most household tasks.[137] Two-storey houses can be built with one or two rooms on the raised ground floor and one or two rooms on the upper floor. On both floors the *ivan* and *tālār* may be anywhere on one to four sides of the house. Access from the ground floor to the first floor is by a wooden stair from the *ivan* to the *tālār*. This stair is usually located beside the wall or beside the wooden *ivan* columns.[138] The room on the first floor or *bālā-khānih* is used as a summer room and during the summer months most of the household tasks are done here (figures 1.5 to 1.10).[139]

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[136] See Ali Akbar-i Sārimi and Shahram-i Gūl Amini, "Mimari Gilān" in *Kitab-i Gilān* (Tehran: Gūruh-i Pazhruhishgārān-i Iran, 1374), 329–33.

[137] The room could be used as a sleeping space, living room and guestroom. During the summer most of these functions usually move to the *ivan* or outside in the open air. See Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 111, 113, 119, 120.

[138] The use of timber means that the role of carpenter-joiner or *najjar* is vital in this region. See Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."

[139] Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 123. As Christian Bromberger indicates, the rooms are not differentiated according to gender but season. The passage from cold to the hot season is the base for migration of the family from ground floor to the first floor and from inside to the outside. See Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."
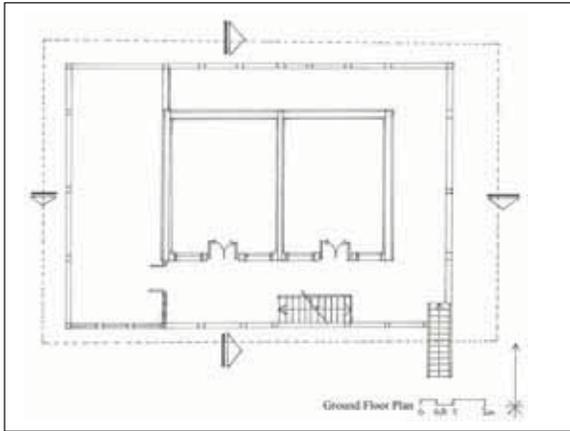
Fig. 1.5. Haj Hūsiyni's house in Sālik village, Lāhiyjān: plan of the ground floor. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 173.
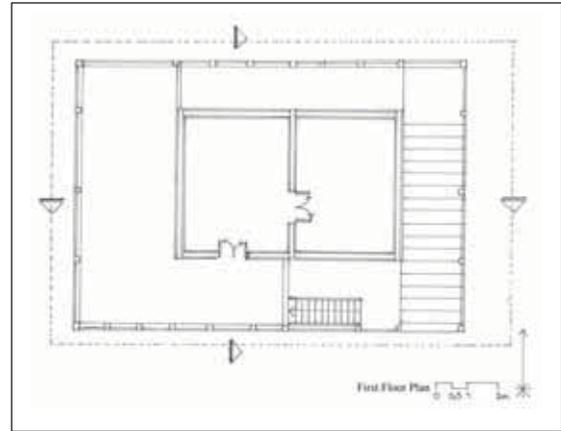
Fig. 1.6. Plan of the first floor. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 174.
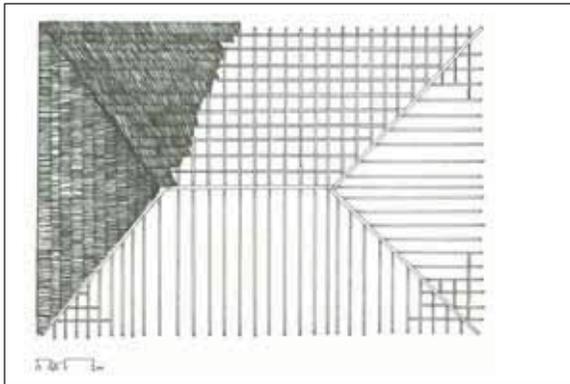
Fig. 1.7. Plan of the roof. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 175.
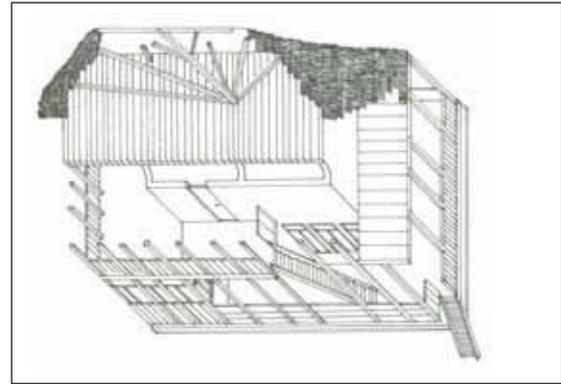
Fig. 1.8. Perspective of Haj Hūsiyni's house, illustrating the structure of the house. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 181.
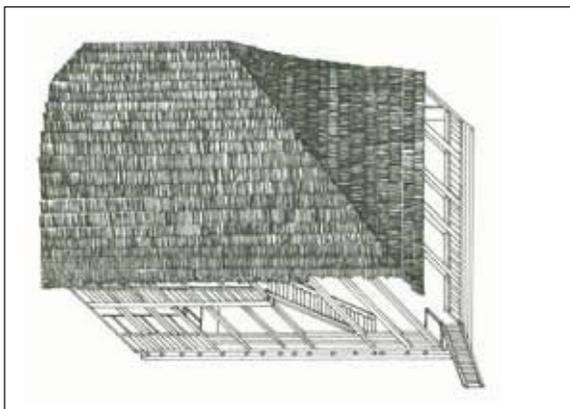
Fig. 1.9. Perspective of Haj Hūsiyni's house. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 180.

Fig. 1.10. Elevation of Haj Hūsiyni's house. Adapted from Miʿmāriyān 1384, 176.

1.10.2 The Northern Shores of the Persian Gulf

Iran's narrow coastline along the Persian Gulf stretches more than two thousand kilometres from the Arvand Rud River in Khuzistan province to the Guatir Gulf in the southeast of the Sistān and Baluchistān provinces. There are principal *banadir* or ports in this narrow coastline.[140] The inhabitants of these ports earn their living through fishing, trading or very limited animal husbandry. David. E. Long writes that since the beginning of history the waters of the gulf have provided a route for communication and commerce as merchants sailed south with the monsoons to the Indian subcontinent and East African coast. A change in the winds six months later was the sign for sailing back home.[141] Life has generally been harsh in the small communities and ports in this region since the decline of trading sea routes (figures 1.11 to 1.14).

1.10.2.1 Traditional Courtyard Houses in Bandar-i Bushihr

As in the central part of Iran, the traditional domestic courtyard houses in Bushihr are defined by courtyards surrounded by rooms on all sides. Large houses, usually belonging to merchants, consisted of a complex of courtyards for different purposes. Usually one courtyard is dedicated to the merchant's office. Visitors including customers, strangers, and male guests are served within this courtyard, while a second courtyard is the private domain for members of the household, and the merchant's very close relatives. All family activities occur in this second yard, and only the merchant's family can access it. In some

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[140] These include Bandar-i Chah-bahar, Bandar-i Jask, Bander-i Minab, Bandar-i Gunavih, Bandar-i Diylam, Bandar-i Abbas, Bandar-i Khamir, Bandar-i Kong, Bandar-i Lingih, Bandar-i Siyraf, Bandar-i Dilvar and Bandar-i Bushihr.

[141] David E. Long, *The Persian Gulf: An Introduction to its Peoples, Politics, and Economics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 4.

Fig. 1.11. Bandar-i Kūng, a small fishing community, date unknown. Adapted from a photograph in the Qubādiyān archive.
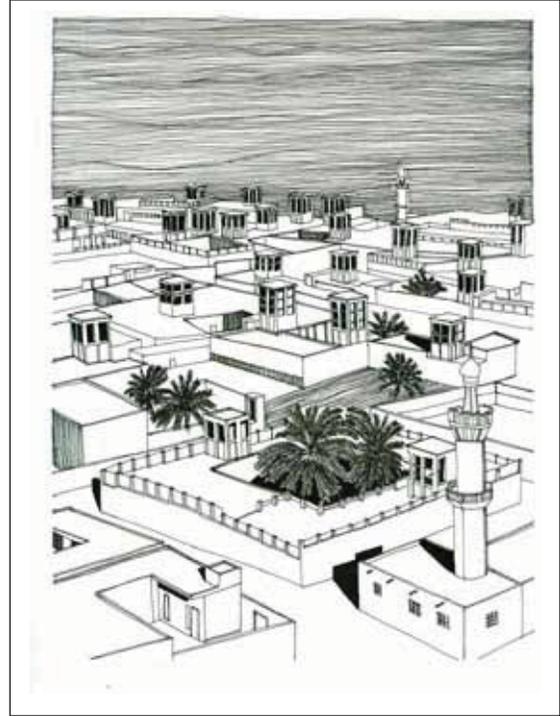
Fig. 1.12. The courtyard houses of Bandar-i Lingih, with *badgiyr-ha* or wind catchers oriented toward the sea breeze, date unknown. Adapted from a photograph in the Qubādiyān archive.
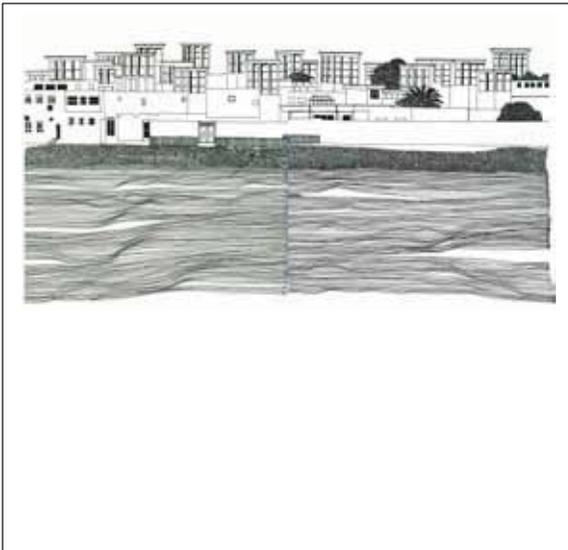
Fig. 1.13. The *badgiyr-ha* of Bandar-i Lingih. Adapted from Ghazban-pur 1375, 14–15.
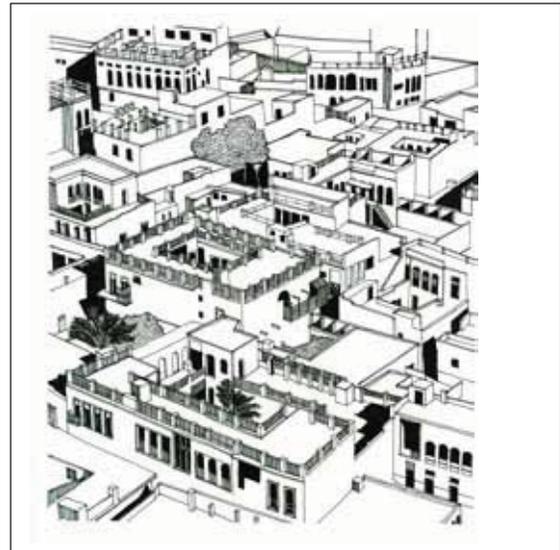
Fig. 1.14. The traditional courtyard houses of Bandar-i Bushihr, with courtyards surrounded by rooms on all sides, date unknown. Adapted from a photograph in the Qubādiyān archive.

houses of well-to-do families, a third courtyard is dedicated to servants, stables and storage (figures 1.15 to 1.18).

Not only does each courtyard have its own primary function, but each floor of the house has its own function as well.[142] According to Qūbādiyan, in the private courtyard house, the first and second floors are usually used as family living quarters. The height of the ceiling is up to four meters or higher, with high *shanāsil* or screened windows opened to the street and high doors opening to the central courtyard.[143] The majority of the houses have multifunctional flat roofs. These are usually used as spaces for food processing, such as the drying of grain or fruits, and during the hot season as sleeping platforms for the inhabitants.[144]

1.10.3 The Central Hot and Arid Region

The traditional mud-brick courtyard house is a form of architecture that has stood on the hot and arid central plateau of Iran for thousands of years.[145] Behind the thick mud-brick walls are the inward-looking *maskan* or houses which shelter the traditional Iranian family from the harsh outside realm. Open to the sky, the central courtyard is a quiet,

[142] For example, in a courtyard the ground floor could be dedicated to storage, the kitchen and the water reservoir. See Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 72; and Vahid Qūbādiyān, *Climate Analysis of the Traditional Iranian Buildings* (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1384), 79, 81.

[143] By opening the *shanāsil* located on one side of the room and the doors in the other side, desirable cross-ventilation can cool down the room. During hot afternoons the inhabitants can sit inside the *ivan-ha* or balconies with shading devices and benefit from the natural breeze which flows from the sea, while doing their domestic activities. See Qūbādiyān, *Climate Analysis*, 81–82.

[144] Usually during the summer months, the inhabitants use the roof as a sleeping platform. For privacy, there are *janpanah-hayi mūshabak* (screened parapets) around the roof edge to prevent the neighbours from viewing the roof. See Miʿmāriyān , *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 105; and Qūbādiyān, *Climate Analysis*, 81–82.

[145] The principal materials used in vernacular architecture of Iran are *kāh-gil* (a mixture of levigated earth, water and chopped straw), unbaked bricks, baked bricks, stone and timber. The main types of roofs are flat roofs or *pūsht-i bām*, the barrel vault or *tāq-i zarbi* and the dome or *gūnbad*. See Christian Bromberger, "BANNĀʾĪ," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1988, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bannai-construction.
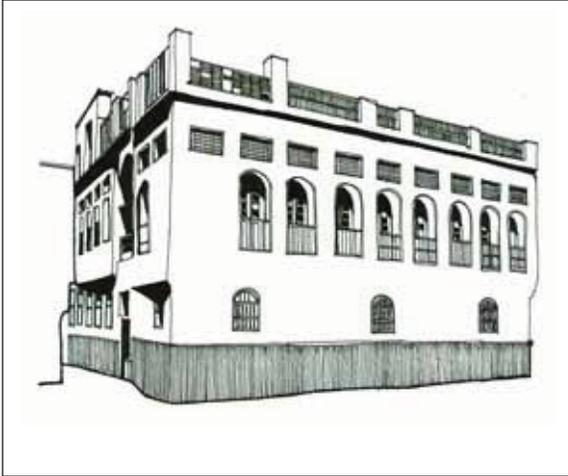
Fig. 1.15. Rashidi's courtyard house in Bandar-i Bushihr. Adapted from Ghazban-pur 1375, 24.
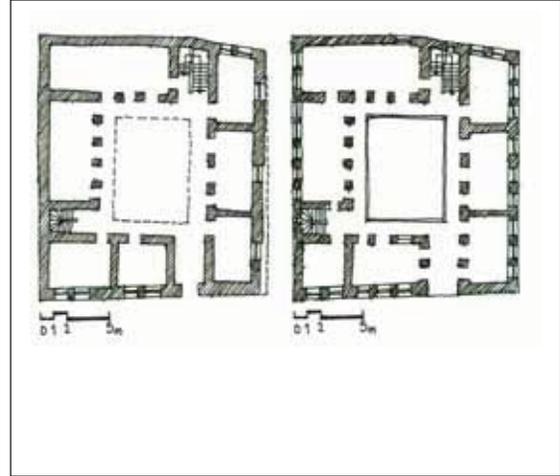
Fig. 1.16. The ground and first floor plan of Rashidi's house. Adapted from Ghazban-pur 1375, 24.
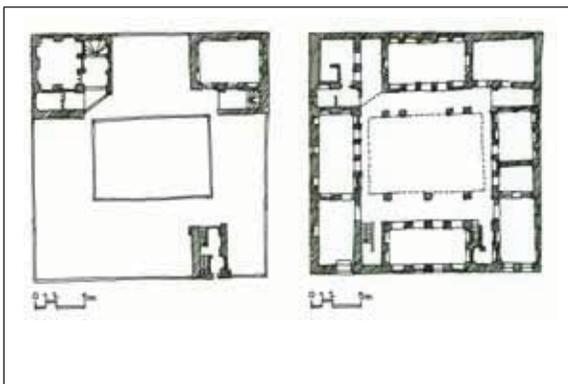
Fig. 1.17. Plan of the ground and first floors of Tabib's house in Bandar-i Bushihr. Adapted from Ghazban-pur 1375, 30.

Fig. 1.18. All the rooms are arranged around the central courtyard. Adapted from Ghazban-pur 1375, 31.

peaceful place protected from the eyes of strangers and the public gaze. It is a climatically

moderated working environment containing a pool and a fountain or series of fountains.

This is the place where the family passes most of its time. The fountains, planted trees,

and interior pools are designed to create a favourable microclimate inside the courtyard

and the house in contrast to the dry, hot streets outside.[146]

Traditional Iranian courtyard houses are a sophisticated complex of various spaces

based on seasonal and gender-specific uses. The courtyard house is usually divided into

the public, the *biruni*, and the private, the *andaruni*. Male visitors are generally received

in the public part, while the family remains in the private part. In larger houses, the *biruni*

and *andaruni* are usually separate and surround two different courtyards.

The various rooms and other parts of the traditional courtyard house, including the

basement, yard and roof, are used in various ways according to the season and time of

day.[147] When one steps into the house of a well-to-do family, one can see the incredible

care and effort which have gone into decorating the interior with plaster, mirrors and

panjarih-hayi mūshabak or screened windows. By contrast the outside facade is humble

and simple.

1.10.3.1 The Components of the Medieval Iranian Urban Fabric

Medieval Iranian cities are a complex network of public and private buildings. These

components include: the *masjid-i jūm'ih* (principal mosque), *miydan-ha* (squares), the

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[146] The best examples of courtyard houses still could be seen in Yazd, a medieval city in the central part of Iran. The large courtyard houses of Yazd mostly belong to merchants and date back to the Qajar dynasty (1794–1925 AD).
[147] For example, during the summer months when the midday temperature is extremely warm, the residents rest in the *sardāb*, a room in the basement.

hūsiyniyyh (a public square dedicated to the mourning ceremony for the martyrdom of

Hūsiyn Ibn Ali), the *tikiyh* (a public square dedicated to religious ceremonies) and the

bazaar (figures 1.19 to 1.22). The most important sector of the city is the *arg-i shahr* or

administration sector, which includes the army base, government offices, grain storage,

the state treasury, the provincial governor's private and public palaces, the courts of

justice, and several *mahalih-ha* or neighbourhoods. High walls, parapets, towers,

banquettes and ditches usually fortify Iranian communities.[148] It was within this

sophisticated medieval urban fabric that the Iranian courtyard house emerged and was

sustained for thousands of years.[149]

1.10.4 Mountain Settlements[150]

Many small communities are based on the high slopes of the Albūrz and Zagrūs mountain

ranges. The slopes of these mountains support mostly tiny communities, while major

cities such as Shahr-i Kūrd, Arak and Hamidān are located at lower altitudes (2078m,

1759m, and 1747m above sea level respectively). The winter cold has a major influence

on the layout of mountain settlements. The streets and public buildings and spaces are

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[148] Mahmud-i Tavasūli, *Urban Structure and Architecture in the Hot Arid Zone of Iran* (Tehran: Miʿrāj, 2001), 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, 22, and 23. In fact *fortified settlements* in Iran are evolved to meet the defensive needs of the settlers. These types of settlements are usually square or rectangle enclosed by a mud brick wall with round towers at each corner. There could be additional towers along the walls as well. Dwellings are usually built against the inner face of the wall, with interior courtyards. See Daniel Balland and Marcel Bazin, "Deh," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/deh.

[149] ʿaqda, Na'iyn and Zavārih are good examples of small medieval communities in central Iran, with a majority of the components mentioned above (fig.71–75). The city of Tabas used to be the finest example of earth architecture in Iran. It is very unfortunate that Tabas and all of its inhabitants (15,000 in 1978) were lost in a dramatic earthquake which took place on September 16th 1978. The only remaining witnesses of that tragic accident are underground *āb-anbar-ha* (water reservoirs) and palm trees. Yaʿqub-i Danishdust, *Tabas: The Town That Was* (Tehran: National Heritage Center Publication, 1376), 20–79, fig. 76–79).

[150] This summary of the domestic architecture of mountain settlements in Iran is based on Qūbādiyān, *Climate Analysis*.

Fig. 1.19. The *Masjid-i jūm'ih* (congregational mosque) in the compact urban fabric of Yazd. Adapted from Tavasūli 1381, 12.

Fig. 1.20. The historic city center of Simnan, a medieval city: the integrated urban elements of the *Masjid-i jūm'ih*, bazaar, Masjid-i Sūltani, *tikiyih-i pāhnih* (closed square) and the Imāmzādih Yahya. Adapted from Tavasūli 1381, 15.

Fig. 1.21. The compact urban fabric of Yazd: the *miydan* (square) is one of the city's vital urban spaces. Adapted from Tavasūli 1381, 19.
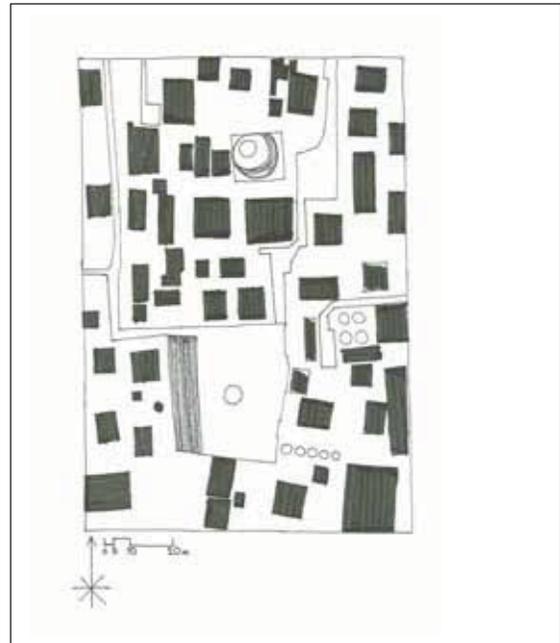
Fig. 1.22. The *hūsiyniyyih* (public square dedicated to the mourning ceremony for the martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali) in the city of Taft. Adapted from Tavasūli 1381, 19.

enclosed and the buildings are connected to prevent the cold winds from penetrating the urban fabric. Connections between most of the buildings result in a dense urban area.[151]

The majority of the mountain settlements are based on southern slopes, avoiding the cold shade of the northern ones. The villages are not built too close to the riverbanks in the valleys due to possible seasonal floods and not too close to the summit because of the cold and strong winds. They are usually located in the middle of the southern slope where flat land is available.[152] The lower land close to the river bank is used as agricultural land and for animal husbandry (figure 1.23). Masulih, Kanduuan, Abiyanih and other mountain communities are based on this principle (figures 1.24 to 1.27).[153]

1.11 Concluding Remarks on the Vernacular Architecture of Iran

The traditional architecture of Iran is in a period of transformation and is currently at risk of deterioration and even destruction. The traditional vernacular architecture of Iran is based entirely on locally available materials, which are more convenient for the master builder and more affordable for the inhabitants. Unfortunately, tremendous change is currently evident in the move from traditional local practices and the use of local materials to the use of whatever outside materials can be obtained.[154]

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[151] Ibid. 98–101.

[152] These villages are built on the slopes of the mountains overlooking irrigated valley bottoms. See Balland and Bazin, "Deh."

[153] Qūbādiyān, *Climate Analysis*, 101, 102, 110, 114; Muhammad-i Fatih and Babak-i Dariyush, *Mimariy-i Rustai-i 1–2* (Tehran: ʿlm va Danish, 1389), 42–43.

[154] In the case of Gilān plateau, as Sārimi and Gūl Amini have indicated, during the last three decades traditional construction methods using rice straw, timbers, mud, and straw are being replaced by cement, concrete, and galvanized iron sheets. This new type of construction is not specific to the regional climate. Sārimi and Gūl Amini, "Gilān Architecture," 335. Bromberger mentions that building operations are no longer in the hands of the master builders such as carpenter-joiner and thatcher. It is very unfortunate that the vernacular architecture of Gilān has almost vanished. See Bromberger, "GILĀN xii. Rural Housing."

Ali Abad   Village   Bank of River   Seasonal Lake   Road

Tomanak   Village   Bank of River   Village

Ya Seh Cha   Road   Village   Agricultural Fields   River   Gardens

Dorki
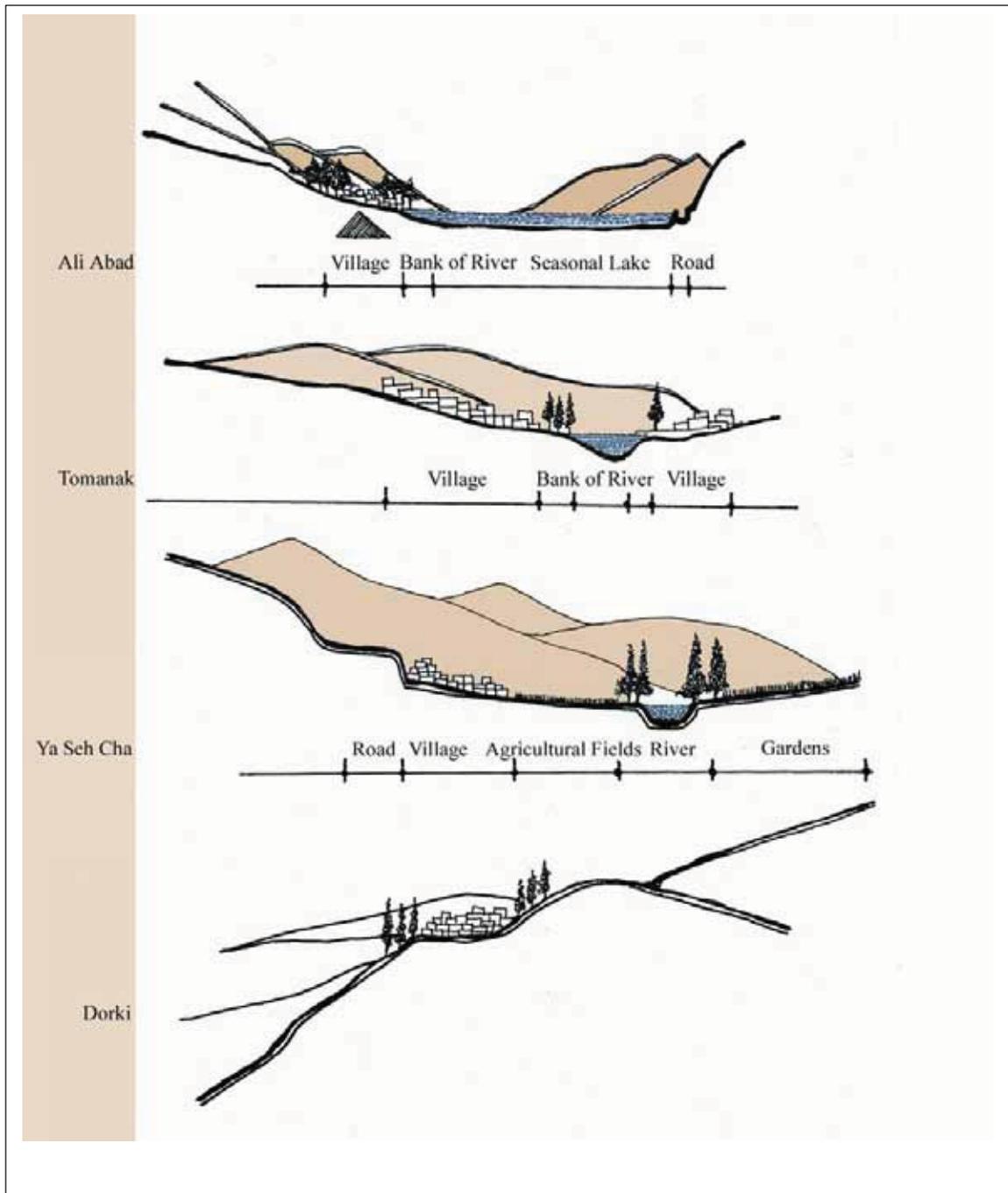
Fig. 1.23. Cross sections of various mountain settlements. Adapted from Fatih and Dariyush 1389, 42.
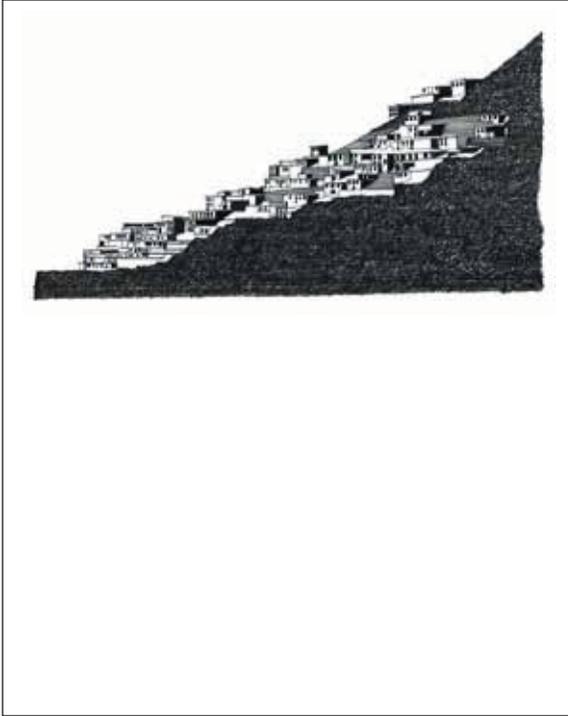
Fig. 1.24. Kamalih village near the Hurāmān region in the province of Kurdistan in Iran. Adapted from Aznāvih 1384, 52–53.
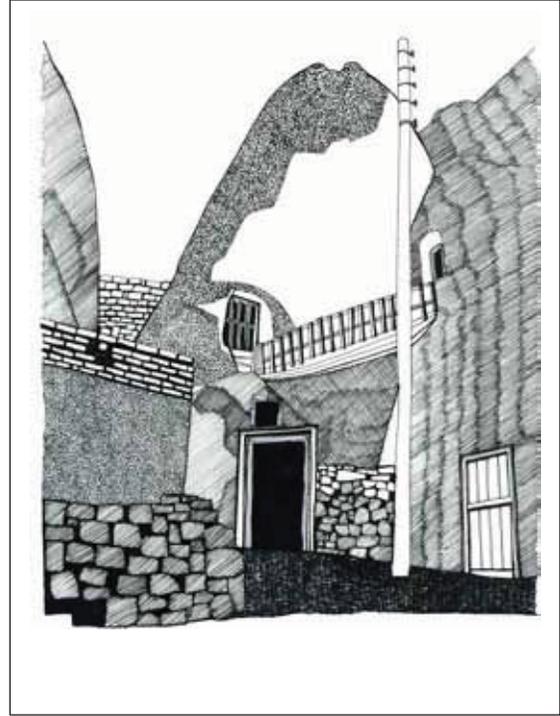
Fig. 1.25. Kandūuan in Eastern Azerbaijan near Usku. Drawing by author, 2009.
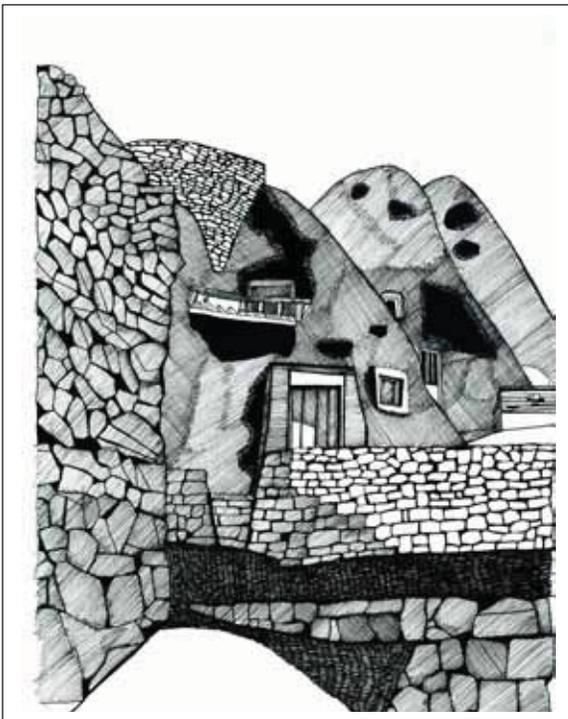
Fig. 1.26. Historic houses in Kandūuan. Drawing by author, 2009.
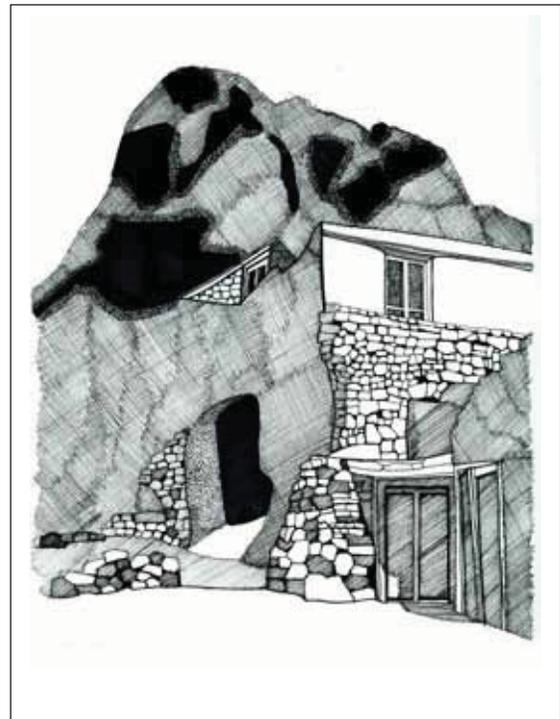
Fig. 1.27. Kandūuan and its historic houses. Drawing by author, 2009.

The master builder's knowledge of local materials used to mean that a house could be

built with the least expense, so that even the poorest could own a house. Unfortunately

the current trend is changing traditional ways of building and making newly built houses

less affordable and less culturally and environmentally specific.[155]

Recently the Housing Foundation of Islamic Revolution, HFIR, is attempting to

restore and conserve villages and communities. HFIR restored the texture of the villages

in numerous ways including plastering the walls with mud straw, proposing new

functions for public buildings, restoring and consolidating them, paving streets with local

materials, renovating public facades, plastering exterior walls of houses, and limiting

accessibility to pedestrians in some alleys.[156] Currently the HFIR are executing

restoration, rehabilitation and conservation projects in various villages and small

communities.[157]

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[155]In the province of Gilān houses were once built with rice straw, timber and mud. During the last three decades many gated communities have been constructed by architects and developers who are not familiar with traditional ways of construction and the domestic vernacular architecture of the region. Unfortunately those gated communities have eroded the memorable character of the domestic vernacular architecture as well as the culture of this region. Many city dwellers are the temporary residents of these gated communities, mainly during the summer, New Year holidays in March, and on weekends. During the rest of the year most of these modern villas sit empty on the Gilān plateau. Since these gated communities are only open to members of the community, they are constantly watched by guards. My own experience of one of these gated communities revealed it to be lonely place, isolated from the city and everyday life. The only time I could sense life was on the weekend, when city dwellers occupied the villas.

[156] See the following publications by the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution (HFIR), *Kazaj: A Memorial of Ancients a Heritage to Posterities*, (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1388), 3–28; *Zyarat: A Memorial to Ancients a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1388), 3–28; *Kang: A Memorial to Ancients a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1386), 3–25; *Laft: A Memorial to Ancients a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1388), 3–39; *Qal-Eh No: A Memorial to Ancients a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran, Iran, 1388), 3–28); *Islamieh: A Memory of the Past, a Heritage of the Future* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1384), 3–43; *Agda: A Memory of Ancients, a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1388), 3–28; *Fahraj: A Memory of Ancients a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1384), 3–43; *Abyaneh: A Memory of Ancients, a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1384), 3–29; *Verkaaneh: A Memory of Ancients, a Heritage to Posterities* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 1384), 3–28.

[157] A review of HFIR's reports and templates reveals a main concern with the use of local materials during restoration projects. In their research report, the HFIR emphasizes that using local materials can strengthen the local identity of the village or the community under restoration. Housing Foundation of

The National Heritage Organization is also another office that has recently attempted to restore historic houses across the country. In the case of Masulih, this organization has an office with the principal goal of restoring and preventing the destruction of the remaining historic houses.

Vernacular architecture scholars use three main approaches to studying vernacular architecture in specific regions and communities in Iran. The first approach is focused on documenting housing typologies. This approach also describes the interior of houses and construction techniques, focusing on foundations, walls, roofs, columns, stairs, doors and windows, followed by drawings of construction details.[158] Quantitative surveys of the use of various local and modern building materials and the effect of using modern building materials in vernacular architecture are also within the scope of the first approach.[159] The second approach focuses on climate as a principal factor in the formation of traditional settlements. Scholars interested in climatic analysis usually choose a settlement as a case study. The effects of local climate on the overall layout of the traditional settlement, neighborhoods, public buildings, the interior arrangement of houses and their details are studied.[160] Scholars using the third approach focus on principal factors in the formation of

Islamic Revolution (HFIR), *Appropriate Methods of Using Local Building Materials* (Tehran: HFIR Publisher, 2011), 5–6.

[158] Sāʿyd Mir Riyāhi and Rumina Mājidi, "Shinākht-i Fārāyānd-i Shikl Giri-i Kālbūd-i Rūstāi-i Sāngān," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 30.134 (1390): 105–116; Timur Amār and Fārshād Nāʿiyj, "Tāhlil-i Jūghrāfíāi Māskān va Miʿmāri dar Dihistān-i Miānbūd-i Shāhristān-i Nur," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 30.135 (1390): 43–56; Abbās Shākiri Zād, Sārā Misgāri Hūshyār and Hāsān Miri, "Bāz Shināsi-i Khānih Dar Abyānih," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 29.131 (1389): 13–26; Sāshā Riāhi-i Mūqādām, "Nigāhi bar Tānāuʿ-i Miʿmār-i Māskuni dar Rustāi-i Tārikhi-i Sār-i Yāzd," *Māskān vā Mūhit-i Rustā* 27.123 (1387): 56–67.

[159] Nāhid Ṣādiqi Piy, "Tāamūli dar Māsālih-i Bum Avārd-i Rustā," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 31.139 (1391): 17–32; Sūhrāb Viysih et al, "Irāʾih-i Rāvishhā-i Mūnāsib dar Istifādih-i az Māsālih-i Bum Avārd," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 28.126 (1388): 2–19.

[160] Yusif-i Gūrji Mūhlibāni et al, "Bārāsi-i Tāʾsir-i Iqlym bar Miʿmāri va Bāft-i Zāvārih," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 30.136 (1390): 17–32; Sāʿyd Nuruziān-i Māliki, Bāqir Hūsyni and Māhmūd Rizāi, "Miʿmāri dār ʿsr-i Tāghiyr-i Iqlim," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 29.129 (1390): 20–31; Māhbubih Pur Ahmādi and Mūhāmād

vernacular settlements. These factors could be categorized as geography, local culture, accessibility to natural resources, trade routes, access to other settlements, agricultural land, defense and other factors. Studies using the third approach are, like those in the second approach, based on case studies of various settlements.[161]

As I mentioned before, this thesis calls for new approaches to vernacular architecture in Iran. Instead of studying only the physical built environment of a place, researchers in architecture, particularly in the field of vernacular architecture in Iran, should redefine their scope and recognize the connections between vernacular architecture, inhabitants, landscape and artifacts. The connections between these factors are usually neglected, and as a result, the built environment is not understood holistically or in all its complexity. The analysis of material culture, artifact system, rituals and symbolic meanings in Masulih provides a case study demonstrating a new approach in studying the vernacular architecture of Iran.

Hūsiyn Ayāt Allāhi, "Rāhkārhāi Bāzkārāy-i Bādgirhāy-i Rustāi ʿqdā," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 31.140 (1391): 29–38; Yūsif Gūrji Mūhlibāni and Ilmirā Sānāʾi, "Miʿmāri-i Hāmsāz ba Iqlym-i Rustāy-i Kānduvān," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 29.129 (1390): 2–19; Mānsurih Tāhbāz and Shāhribānu Jāliyliān, "Shākhisih Hay-i Hāmsāzi ba Iqlym dar Māskān Rustāy-i Ustān-i Gilān," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 30.135 (1390): 23–42; Khūsru Mūuāhid and Kāvih Fātāhi, "Bārāsi-i Nāqsh-i Iqliym va Mūhit dar Shikl Dihiy-i Fūrm-i Sāzih-i Māskān Rustay-i Ustān-i Fārs," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 32.141 (1392): 37–50.
[161] Abbās Saʿidi, "Bārkhi Miʿyārhāi-i Sūkūnātgāh Hāy-i Rustāi," *Māskān va Mūhit-i Rustā* 27.124 (1387): 2–11; Rizā Sirus Sābri and Hāsān Firidun Zādih, "Bārāsi-i ʿavāmil-i Muāsir bār Shikl Giri-i Bāft-i Rustāi Mūtāliʿih-I Muridi: Rustāi-i Pā Qālʿih-i Khuzistān," *Māskān vā Mūhit-i Rustā* 31.138 (1391): 105–114.

Chapter Two: The Town of Masulih

Before focusing on the material culture, artifact system and rituals of Masulih, this chapter will introduce the community. The plateau of Gilān and its geography is the opening topic of this chapter, followed by the origins of Masulih and its historic background. The chapter will then discuss the economy and occupations of the inhabitants, as well as its history, including through the accounts of travelers who passed through this community from the eighteenth century onward, and finally the closing topic for this chapter is an account of the current difficulties which Masulih faces.

2.1 Geography

Masulih is a community located in the northern Iranian province of Gilān (figures 2.1 to 2.4). The surrounding region includes the northwestern mountains of the Albūrz range and the western Caspian lowlands. The deep valley of the Safidrud between Manjil and *Imāmzādih* Hashim near Rasht (the largest city in this province) cuts through the Albūrz Mountains. To the Northwest, the Tālish Mountains separate Gilān from Azarbaiyjan. [162] The whole province of Gilān has a "Hyrcanian" climate, resulting in a humid environment characterized by luxuriant indigenous vegetation. [163] The whole Gilān plateau has a high rural density. Unlike villages in central Iran, the rural settlements in this province consist of loose groupings of houses surrounded by orchards and gardens.

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[162] The highest peaks in the Tālish Mountains include Baqrow Dagh (3197m), ʿajam Dagh (3009m), and Shah Mūallim or Masulih Dagh (3050m). See Marcel Bazin, "GĪLĀN i. Geography and Ethnography," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/Gilān-i-geography.
[163] Idem.

Fig. 2.1. The location of Iran. Adapted from Google Earth.

Fig. 2.2. Map of Iran. Adapted from Google Earth.

Fig. 2.3. The location of Masulih in Gilān province in northern Iran. Adapted from Google Earth.

Fig. 2.4. The location of Masulih in Gilān province. Masulih can be reached via Rasht and Fuman. Adapted from Google Earth.

Each village has several *mahalih-ha* or neighbourhoods, coffee houses and weekly markets, which are the most distinctive feature of the central plain of Gilān.[164]

The town and district of Masulih is sixty kilometres southwest of central Rasht and thirty-two kilometres west of Fuman (coordinates: 37°9′ 13″ N 48° 59′ 14″ E). On the eastern side of Masulih is the Fuman district, on the western side the district of Khalkhal, and Māsāl and Tārūm-i Uʿliyā to the north and south respectively. The community has an area of 16 hectares and is 1,050m above sea level, deep in the misty Tālish Mountains in the Albūrz mountain range, near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. The difference between the highest and the lowest elevation of the town is 120m. Masulih lies at the bottom of a valley where the Masulih Rudkhan and Khalil-Dasht rivers meet, which emanates from the second highest peak of the Tālish Mountains, Masulih Dagh. This region is mild and humid during the summer and cold and humid during the winter. The average temperature is 12°C / 53° F and the average humidity is 87%. Average annual rain totals 700mm and average annual snow totals 800mm. Annually, there are around 35 days below freezing, and more than 100 days of thick fog. In total, the climate of the community is mild (figures 2.5 to 2.14).[165]

Thick fogs are peculiar to this district. The author witnessed many misty afternoons during fieldwork carried out from 2008 to 2013. The fogs are due to the town's location deep in the Tālish Mountains and the gradual movement of air currents from the lower plateau to higher ground (figure 2.15).

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[164] Idem.

[165] Nikruz-i Mūbārhān-i Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," in *Kitāb-i Masulih*, ed. Nikruz-i Mūbārhān-i Shafiyʿi (Rasht, Iran: Nashr-i Farhang-i Illia, 1386), 10–11.
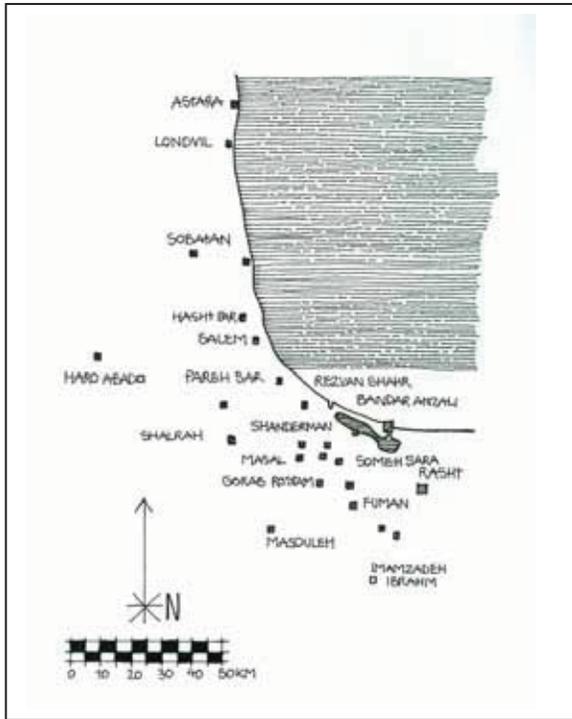
Fig. 2.5. Masulih and other important cities in the province of Gilān. Adapted from Google Earth.
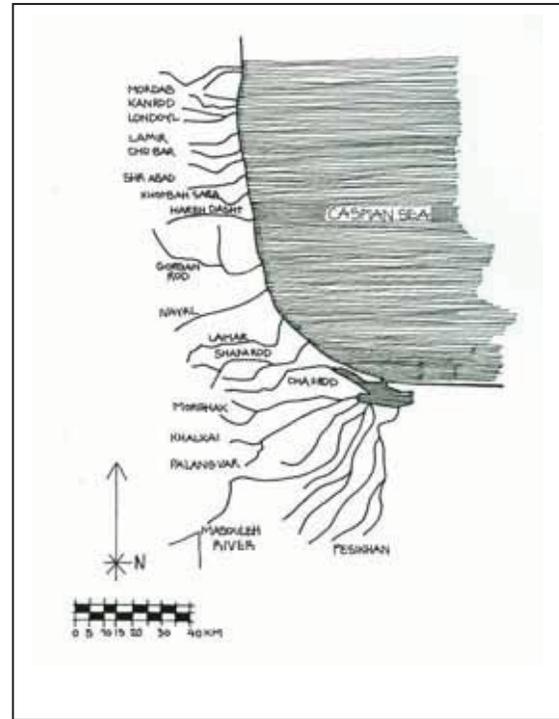
Fig. 2.6. Map of the rivers in the province of Gilān. Adapted from Google Earth.
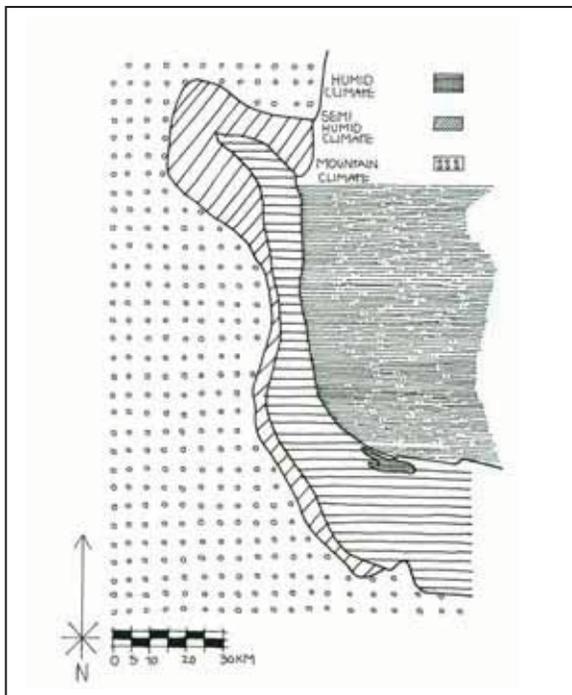
Fig. 2.7. Humid, semi-humid and mountain climates in the province of Gilān. Adapted from Google Earth.
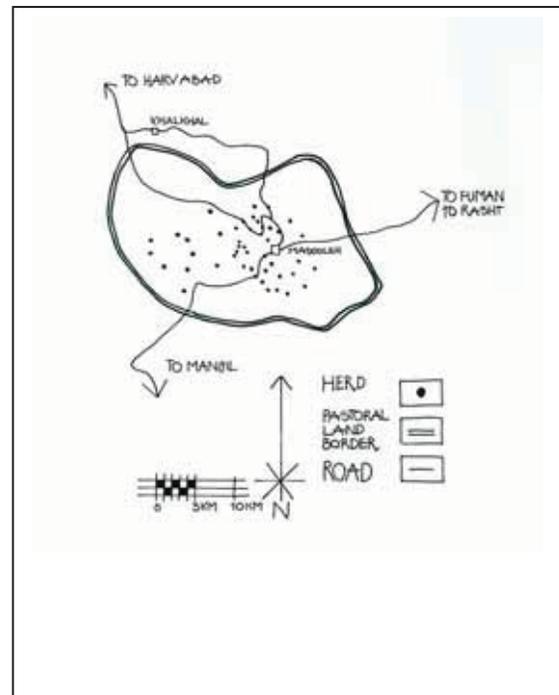
Fig. 2.8. The town of Masulih with its nearby pastoral lands. Drawing by author, 2010.
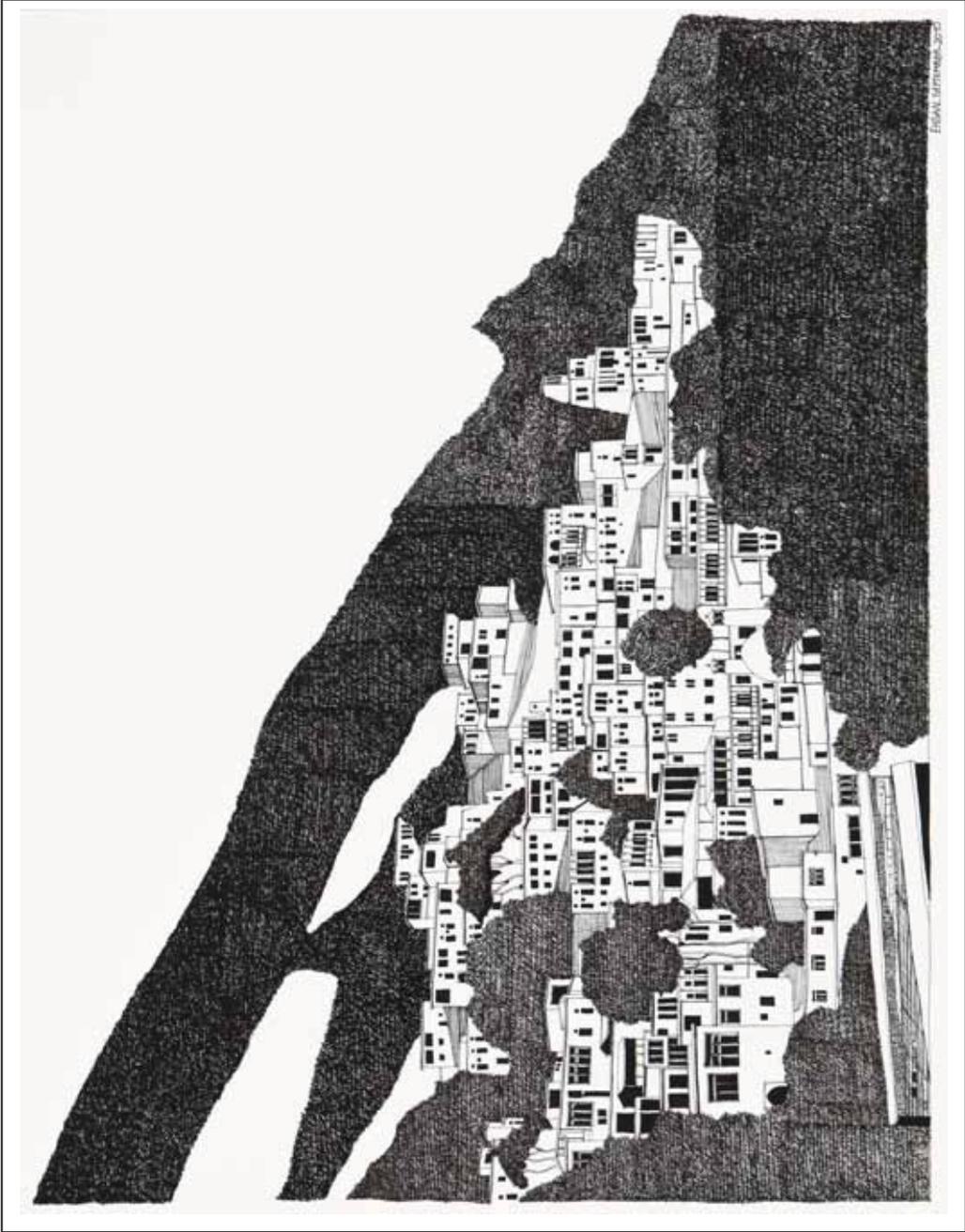
Fig. 2.9. The historic city of Masulih. Drawing by author, 2010.
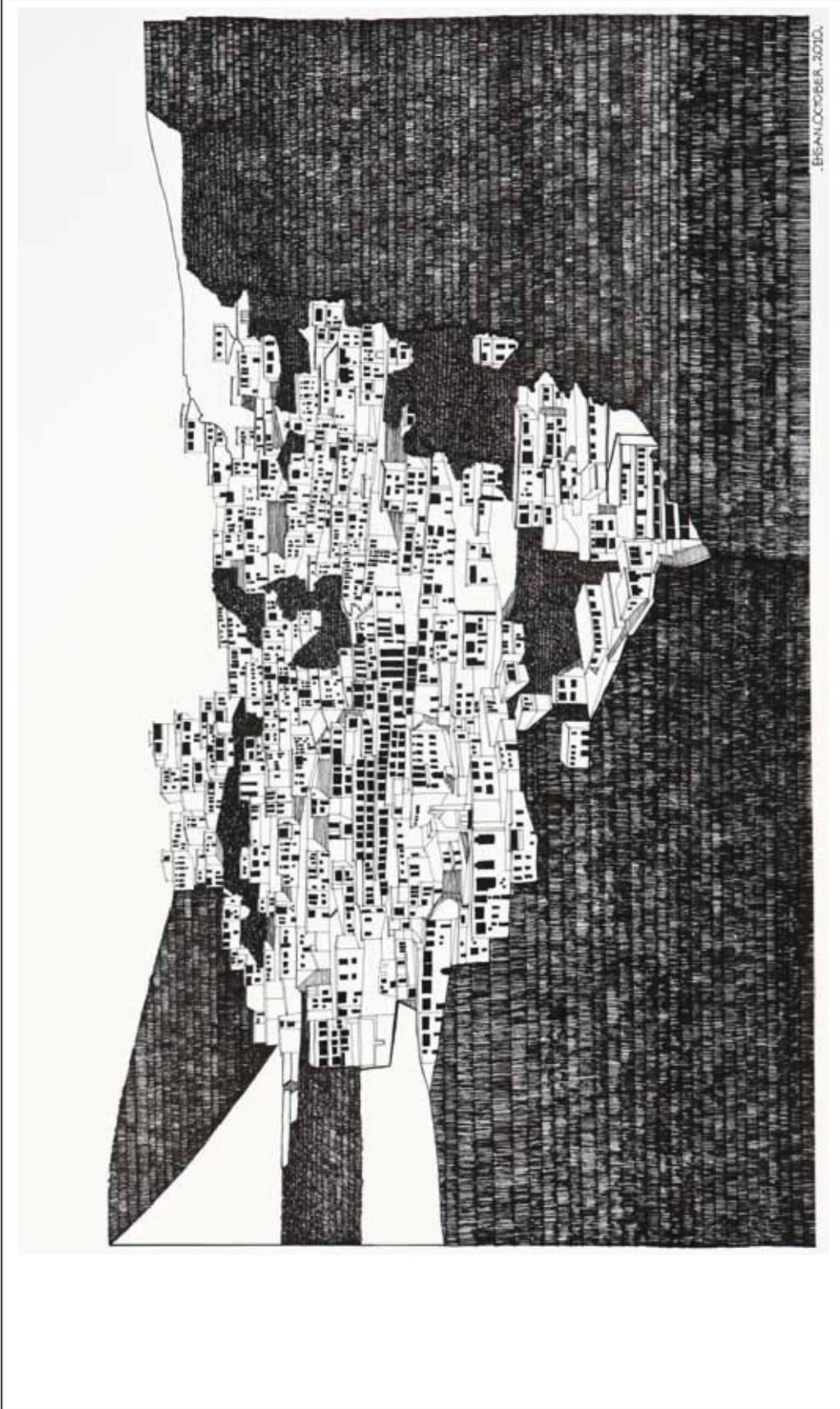
Fig. 2.10. Terraced houses in Masulih. Drawing by author, 2010.
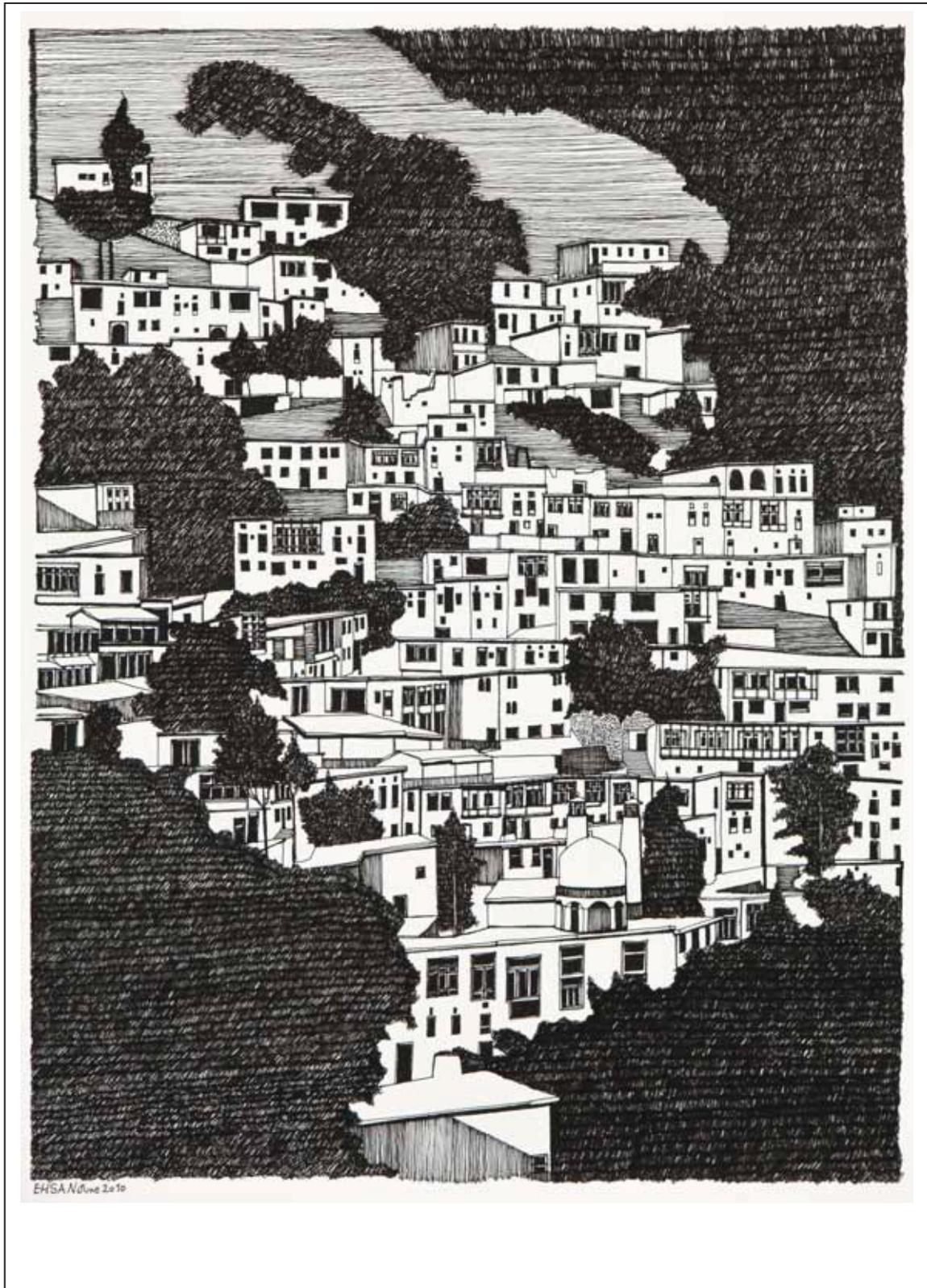
Fig. 2.11. Terraced houses in Masulih, with the *imāmzādih* at the bottom of the illustration. Drawing by author, 2010.
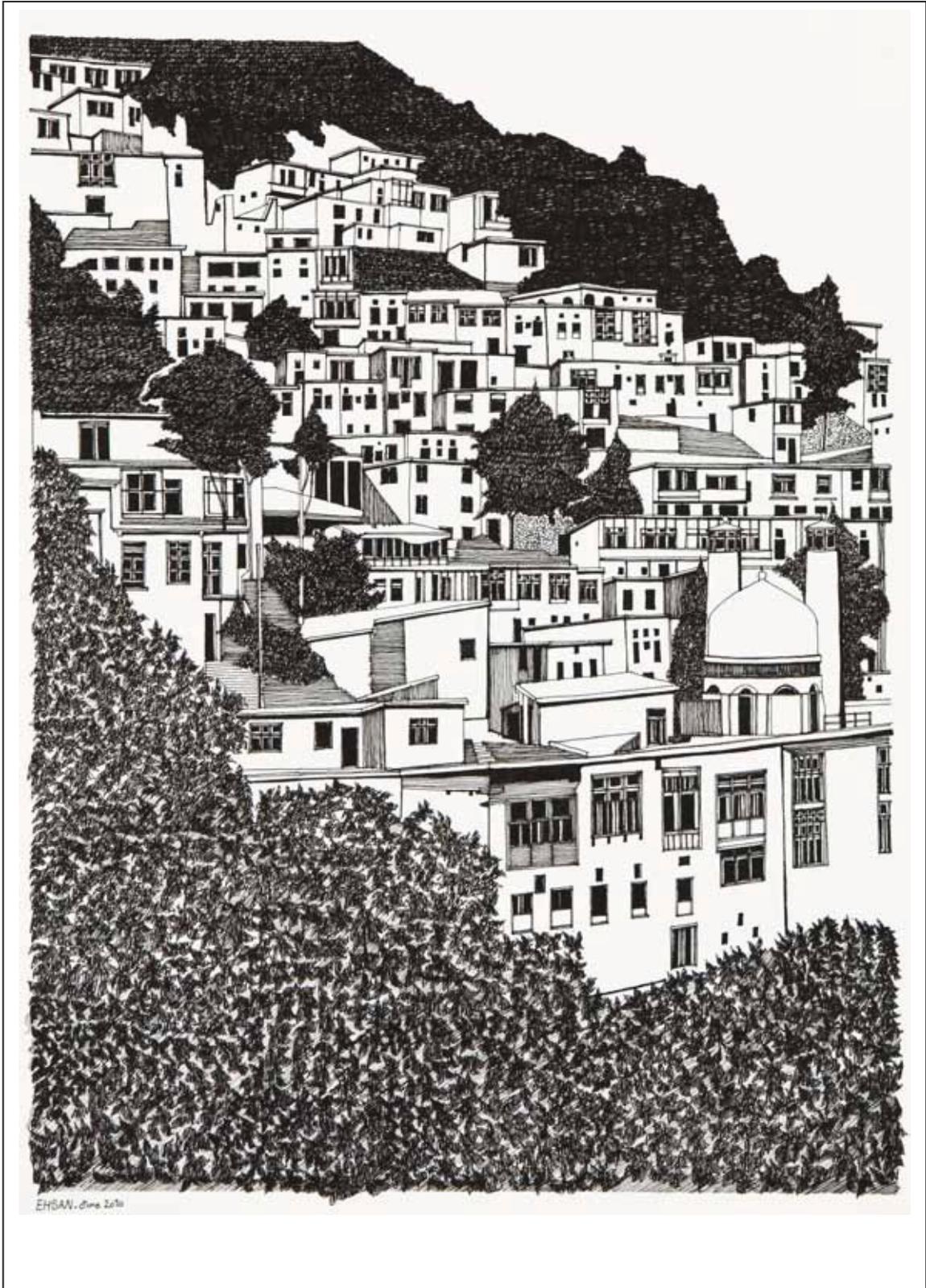
Fig. 2.12. Masulih. Drawing by author, 2010.
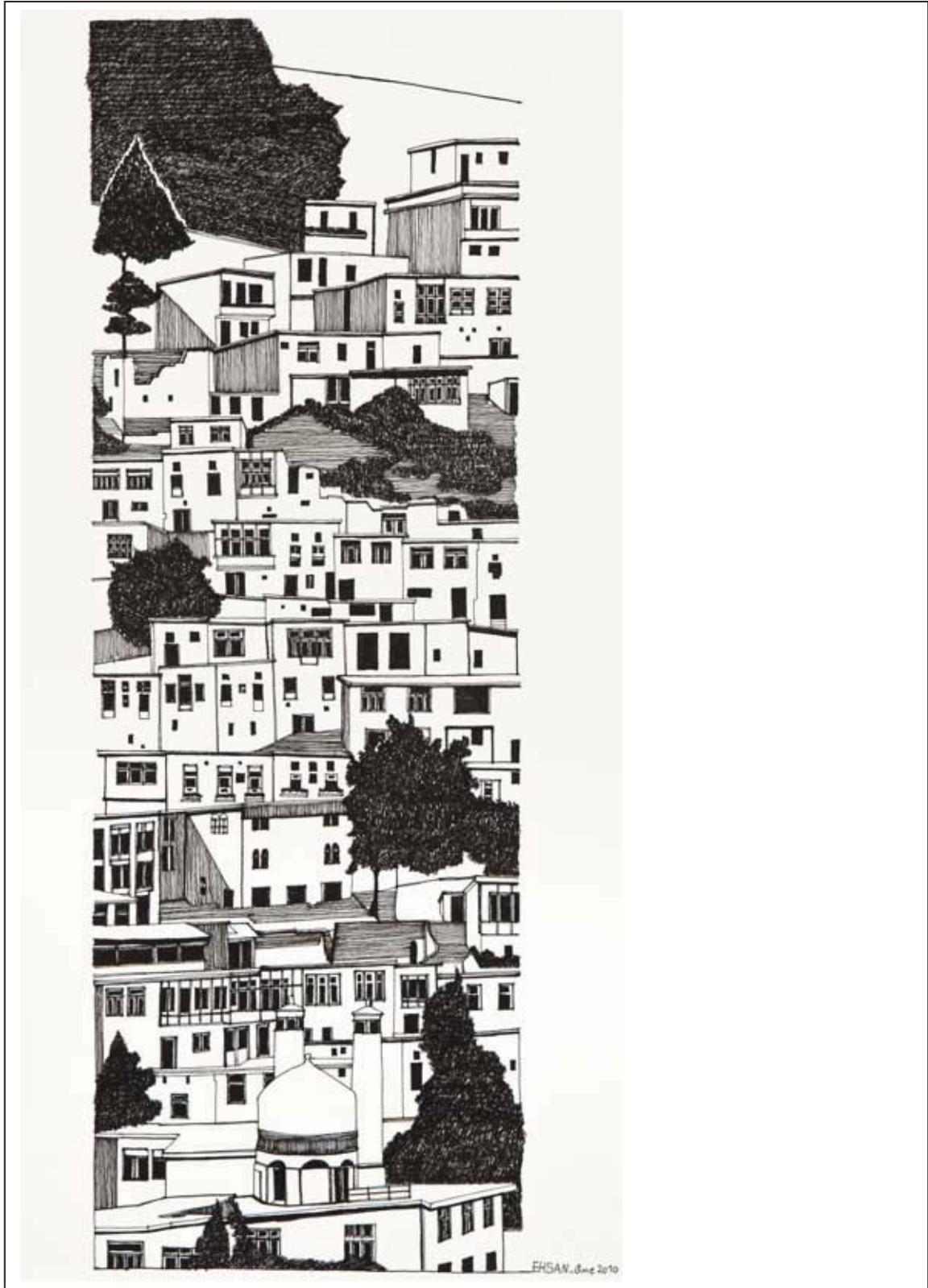
Fig. 2.13. Terraced houses in Masulih dating back to the tenth century. Drawing by author, 2010.
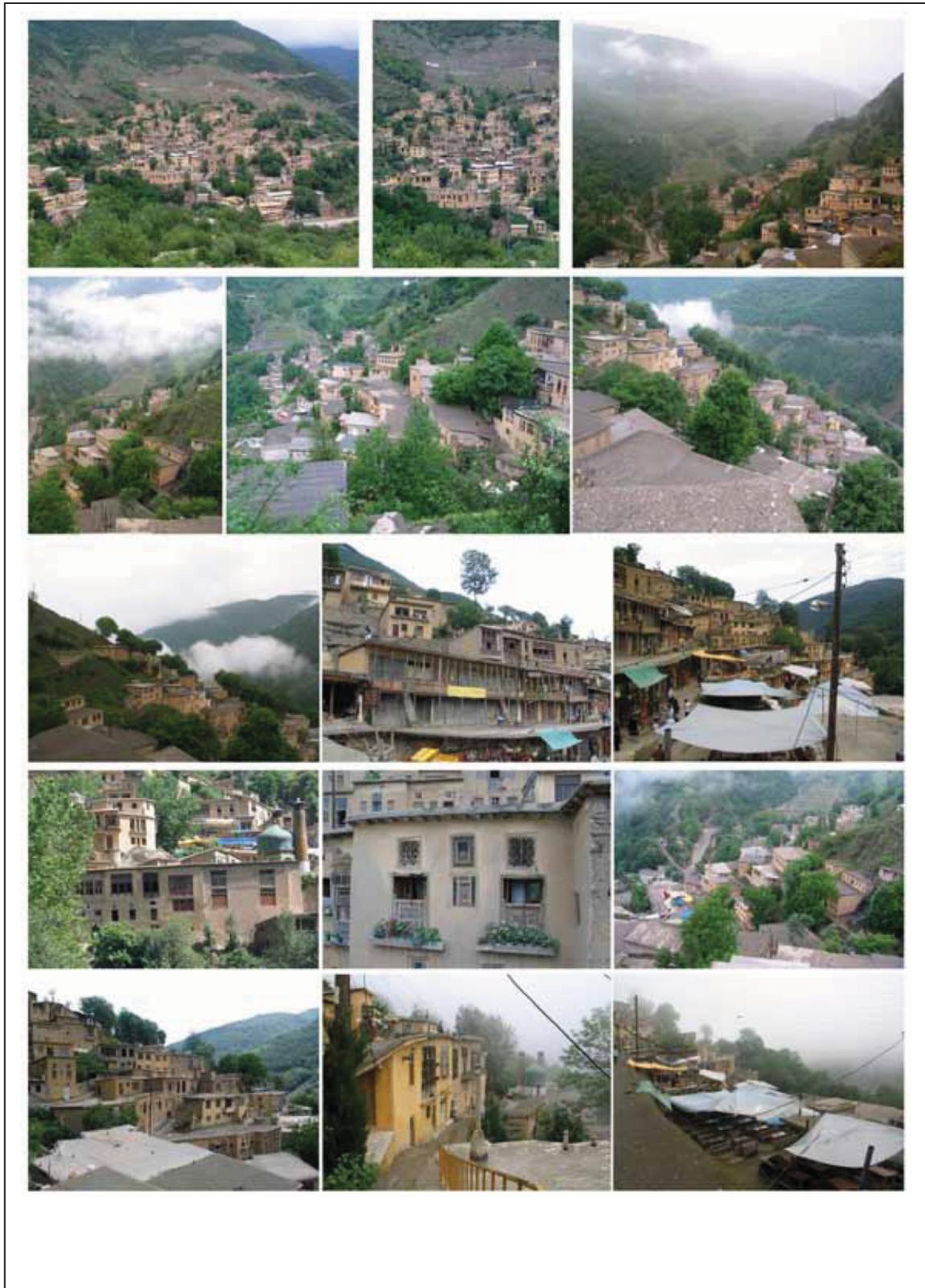
Fig. 2.14. Photographs of Masulih showing the community, houses and bazaar. Photographs by author, 2008.

Fig. 2.15. Photographs showing Masulih in mist. Photographs by author, 2008.

2.2 Historical Background

The origin of the town of Masulih is still unknown. Existing accounts include an archaeological excavation report, oral narratives and gravestones. Ali Mūghiyri, the head of the team of archaeologists who conducted a series of excavations in September 1997, suggests that the origins of this community date back to a millennium ago (figures 2.16 to 2.19). The original inhabitants lived approximately 6km northwest in a place called Kūhnih Masulih or Old Masulih. Ali Mūghiyri indicates that the inhabitants of *Kūhnih Masulih* migrated to lower grounds with all of their belongings. This migration would explain why the excavation team only found small items such as nails, knives and broken pots on the earlier site.[166] Based on Mūghiyri's hypothesis, the inhabitants of Kūhnih Masulih migrated with all their belongings and they did not leave anything behind apart from small items, which they possibly forgot.[167]

The archaeological remains of these forgotten objects indicate that Old Masulih was commercially active from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries AD (4–8 AH). The inhabitants of Kūhnih Masulih were blacksmiths during this period. The archaeological team found traces of iron ore, charcoal forges or *Kurih-hayi Ahangari* for melting iron, leftover iron pieces, and a local mine nearby. Based on these discoveries, it is evident that the inhabitants of Old Masulih knew all the processes of iron-ore melting and manufacturing and were experts in making iron tools, handicrafts and guns. After transferring the cut stone from Khalil-Dasht Mine to Old Masulih, the iron ore was heated in kilns to its melting point at 1538°C. Once obtained from this process, the pure iron was

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[166] Ali Mūghiyri, "Gūzārish-i Barasi Va Gamanih-Zani," in Shafiyʻi, *Kitab-i Masulih*, 112.
[167] Idem.

Fig. 2.16. Old Masulih, 1995. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
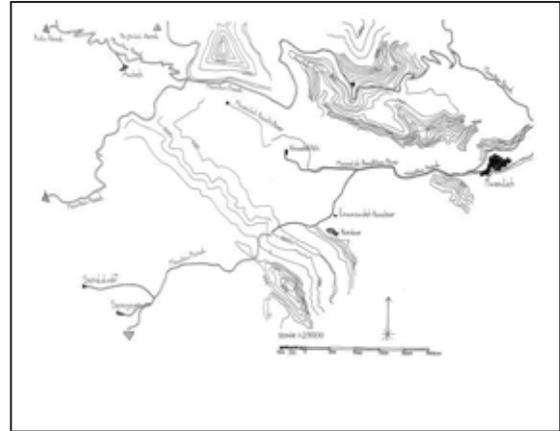
Fig. 2.17. In the past, there were commercial mountain roads between Gilān, Khalkhal and Zanjān. Adapted from a map of Masulih, 1993, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

Fig. 2.18. Aerial photograph of Masulih, 1965. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.
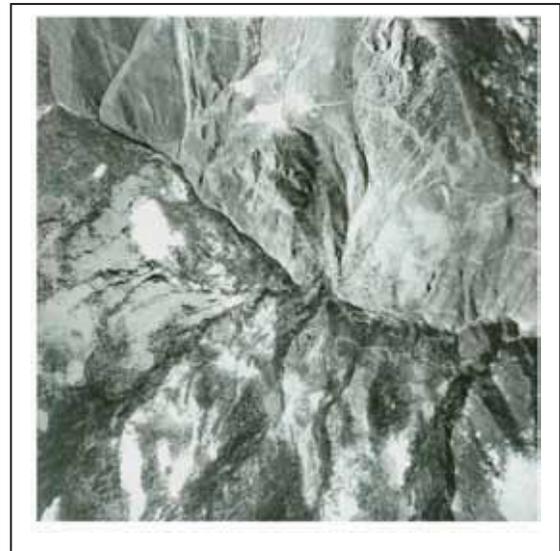
Fig. 2.19. Aerial photograph of Masulih, 1995. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.

transferred to a community blacksmith to be made into various tools. These products were then exported to other cities or communities in the province of Gilān or in Azarbaiyjan (figure 2.20).[168] Excavations at the historical site of Old Masulih led to the discovery of pots from the same period. Inhabitants were possibly forced to migrate to the lower altitude of present-day Masulih (1050m) eight hundred to one thousand years ago by harsh living conditions at 3000m above sea level. Other possible factors that might have contributed to the move include the spread of pestilence, attacks from nearby tribes or villages, cold weather, and long winters.[169]

For unknown reasons, people also moved to Masulih from various parts of Iran, Khūrāsān, Kūrdistān and Azarbaiyjan during this period. Some inhabitants from Old Masulih were displaced to the new settlement.[170] Ali Mūghiyri believes that the Kūhnih Masulih people, after migrating to the current site of Masulih, continued their occupations as blacksmiths and manufacturers of iron tools (figure 2.21).[171] According to M. H. L. Rabino, who lived in Rasht from 1906– 1912, it was "during the Fath Ali Shah, Qajar Dynasty, that Masulih was producing cannon balls for the army."[172] Based on Rabino's account, although these people were displaced to the current location of Masulih they continued their tradition of blacksmithing up to the late nineteenth century.

Narratives regarding the origins of Masulih are based on mythic and religious oral traditions. Travellers recorded these narratives during the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, on their journeys along the caravan or pedestrian route linking

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[168] Ibid., 98–112.
[169] Idem.
[170] Shafiy'i, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 11.
[171] Mūghiyri, "Gūzārish-i Barasi Va Gamanih-Zani," 112.
[172] Rabino, M. H. L. *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān* (Rasht, Iran: Būnyad-i Farhang-i Iran, 1350).
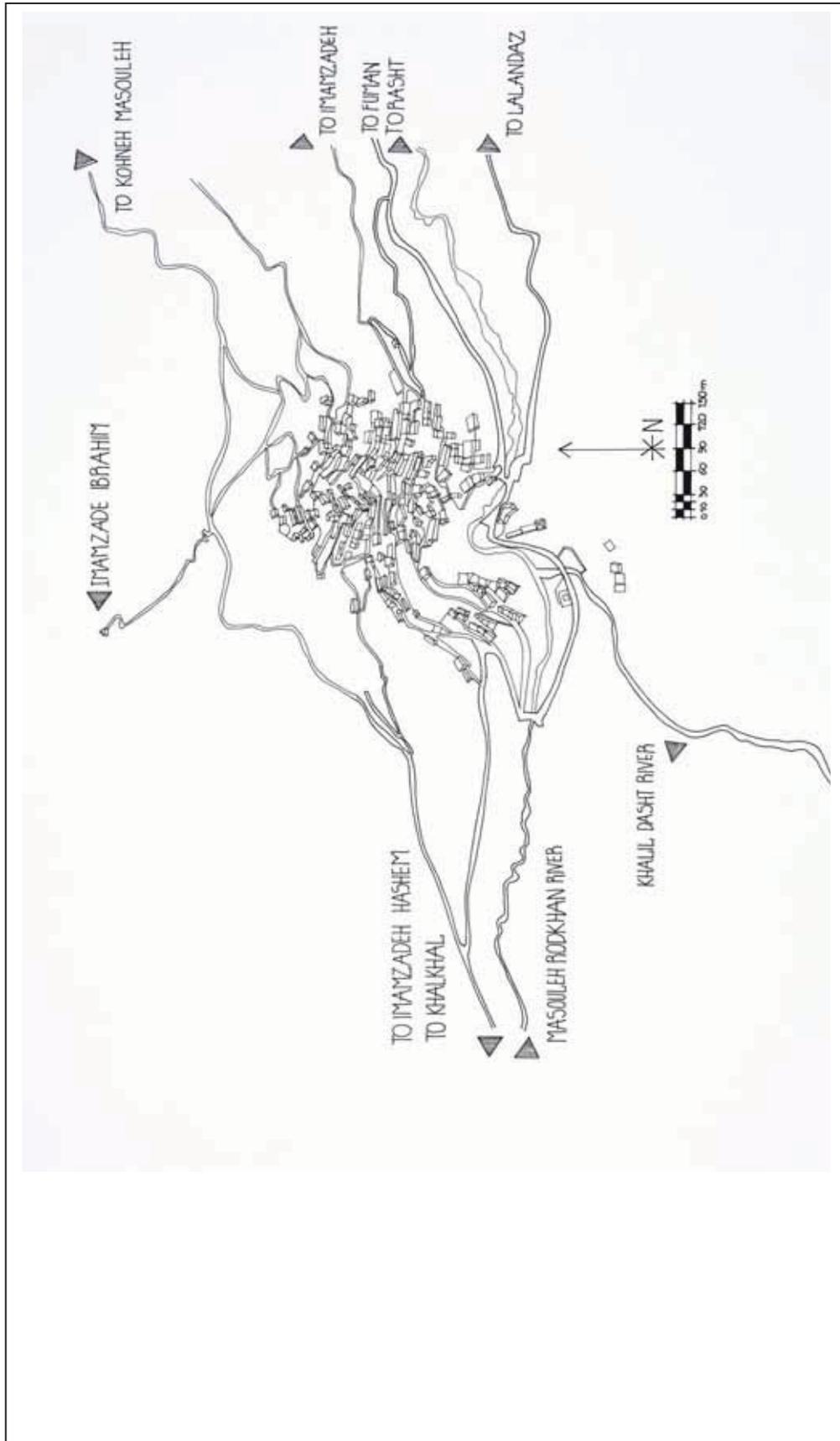
Fig. 2.20. In the past, there were commercial mountain roads between Gilān, Khalkhal and Zanjān. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

Fig. 2.21. Aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.

Khalkhal and Fumanat.[173] Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin was one of the foreign travellers who visited Gilān province in 1770 and 1774 AD. Gmelin recorded one of the narratives regarding the origins of Masulih:

I have not been able to learn from where the name Masula hails. I also do not know in which century the place was built. About this issue old inhabitants relate the following stories. Jamshid Khan (Simschit Chan), whom I just have mentioned, is said to have ridden around hunting from Jambu into the region where Masula is now situated and to have been aware of only one person who was going around there. He thought he was suspicious and had him caught and brought to him. When he was asked who he was he replied that he was a poor inhabitant of Fumen (Fomin). Seven years ago he had lost a cow and to find it again had come here a few days ago and had met a person who had seven cows, and it had appeared to him as if one of them was similar to his. He therefore made his suspicions known to this person who replied, not only one, but all of them belong to you, because your cow has been here for six years and each year it has calved. He was amazed at this and asked the person whom he was. He received the answer that he was a holy man and had gone there because he wanted to end his life in tranquility and he who, after his death, would settle here and would erect a stone tomb could be assured that any request from God would undoubtedly find a hearing. The holy man had died shortly thereafter and the Fumen inhabitant had buried him and since that time he has lived there likewise as a settler to tread into the footsteps of the holy one.

　　When Jamshid Khan heard this he ordered the man from Fumen to take him to the place where the holy one was buried. When he and his companions arrived it was said that the grave opened by itself and he found that the deceased had a white cloth wound about his head. He is said to have unwrapped it and then to have seen that a large amount of blood had come forth from the holy one's head. To staunch the flow of blood he bound the wrap of his turban around the head of the deceased, but to no effect, because the blood was said to have gushed forth until Jamshid Khan bound the head of the deceased again with the band with which it had been wrapped before, whereupon he was convinced of the truth that it had to be a holy person who was buried here. Thus, he ordered that a stone tomb be built for the holy man immediately and instructed that some of his subjects settle in this place and build a small fort. This, as told by the inhabitants of Masula, was the reason for the construction of this town. Jamshid Khan traveled back after having completed his affairs, went into his castle, which he had built in the

[173] Marcel Bazin, "MĀSULA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/masula.

neighbourhood where Rasht is situated, and was buried there after his death.[174]

M. H. L. Rabino indicates that in the third century after the Hegira (10 AD), Sayyid Jālāl al-ddin Ashrāf, son of Imām Musā Kāzim, whose mausoleum is in Astānih-i Ashrāfiyh, was defeated in a battle near Tarūm, and that ʿun ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Ali, one of his wounded companions, met a shepherd while approaching Masulih and asked him to have his body buried wherever they found it. It was then that the population of Old Masulih gradually began to migrate to its current location. Shepherds also started migrating to the current Masulih and built their houses there in order to be closer to the shrine and burial place of *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn-i Ali.[175] Rabino also writes about a manuscript telling the story of Sālik Mūʿallim. After his defeat, two brothers among his disciples, ʿiyn ibn-i Ali and Ziyn ibn-i Ali, came to Masulih district and converted the local inhabitants to Islam. Their tombs in the hamlet of Ishkāliyt became a center for pilgrimage.[176] These shrines are less than a one-hour walk from Masulih. The shrine of Ziyn ibn-i Ali is in the village of Ishkāliyt while the shrine of ʿiyn ibn-i Ali is in a nearby forest, mostly disregarded and abandoned.

Manuchihr-i Sūtudih travelled in northern Iran from Astārā to Istar-Abād in order to document historic villages, hamlets, sites, buildings, monuments, castles and bridges, as well as the gravestones in Masulih. While citing the oral narratives on the origins of

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[174] Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia 1770–1774*. Trans. Willem Floor (Washington: Mage Publisher, 2007) 216–18.

[175] Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 214.

[176] Idem. See also Bazin, "MĀSULA."

Masulih, Sūtudih considers the historical gravestones as a finer source of evidence.[177]

According to Sūtudih, the remains of ancient graveyards near the *Imāmzādih ʿun ibn-i Ali*

are evidence of the longevity of this place. There is a white marble gravestone on the

right entrance wall of *Imāmzādih ʿun ibn-i Ali* dated 1060 AH (1650 AD); another white

marble gravestone dated 1262 AH (1845 AD) stands beside the entrance to the shrine of

the *Imāmzādh*. A third gravestone, dated 1052 AH (1642 AD), is located on the second

floor of a mosque connected to the *Imāmzādih* and another on this same floor is dated 997

AH (1588 AD). After some recent renovations in the portico of the shrine, some

gravestones were relocated on the southern wall of the *Imāmzādih*. These stones show

969 AH (1561 AD), 1167 AH (1753 AD) and 1195 AH (1780 AH). One of the columns

near the entrance of the shrine bears the date 1224 AH (1809 AD).[178] From these dates it

can be concluded that there have been permanent residents living around the *Imāmzādih*

since the mid-sixteenth century (969 AH). It is unknown if there were people living in

Masulih before this. The gravestones furthermore demonstrate that the origins of this

settlement are based on the sacred site of the *Imāmzādih* and that further settlement

evolved from this site.

2.3 Economy

One of the most important factors for the development of Masulih was its strong, active

economy. In the past, this community was a center of commerce and a hub for

merchandising and transporting goods to neighbouring provinces. Masulih was located on

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[177]Manuchihr-i Sūtudih, *Az Astārā Ta Istar Abād* (Tehran: Anjūman-i Asār va Mafākhir-i Farhangi, 1349), 130.
    [178]Ibid., 135, 136, 137, 138.

a principal trade route between Gilān, Zanjān and Azarbaiyjan. Each year merchants traveled between these vital trade centers by mule, horse and camel.[179] As Muhammad Miyr Shūkrāi points out, the mountain roads were vital for commercial exchange in Gilān. Safidrud Valley, the coastline route and the Tālish and Albūrz mountain routes were used mainly as trade routes with neighbouring provinces. Usually the villages and hamlets among these routes steadily grew into centers for commercial activities, as in Masulih.[180]According to Shafiyʿi, there were three major mountain roads for commercial activities and trade from Masulih to Gilān, Khalkhāl and Zanjān. The community was prosperous as a result.[181] Rabino points out that a number of inhabitants are muleteers or *chārvādār* who do transport and commerce along the caravan road between Gilān and Zanjān. Others are merchants who do commerce with Rasht and Zanjān.[182] Anthropologist Marcel Bazin points out that the shortest route from Tabriz to Rasht is the caravan route linking Gilān to Khalkhal, taking 15 days instead of the 23 it takes caravans following the route via Qazviyn and the Safidrud valley. When caravans of camels from the lowlands of Persia got to Masulih, their loads were transferred onto mules, who would carry them to Gilān.[183] Marcel Bazin and Christian Bromberger rely on the fact that the mountain road from Rasht via Fumanat to Masulih and Khalkhal and finally Tabriz was an essential trade route.[184]

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[179] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 219.

[180] Muhammad Miyr Shūkrāi, "Mardūm Shināsi va Farhang-i ʿāmih," in *Kitab-i Gilān*, ed. Ibrahim Islah-i Arabāni (Tehran: Gūruh-i Pazhruhisgārān-i Iran, 1384), 424–25.

[181] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah."

[182] Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 217.

[183] Bazin, "MĀSULA." See also Jaʿfar-i Khamāmi Zādih, "Jūghrāfiyāi Tārikhi Gilān," in Islah-i Arabāni, *Kitab-i Gilān*, 492.

[184] Marcel Bazin and Christian Bromberger, *Gilān et Azarbayjan : Oriental cartes et documents ethnographiques* (Tehran: Institut Francais de Recherche en Iran, 1987), 184–85.

Shafiyʻi considers that modern road development was the major basis for the decline of this community. After several centuries, the construction of a modern road system from Tehran via Qazviyn to Rasht at the beginning of the Pahlavi dynasty (1920s) led to a shift of the traditional trade routes away from the mountains. They are rarely used today for commercial activities. This shift in trade routes had a severe impact on the economy of Masulih. During the last sixty years, many commercial activities have been abandoned, and the majority of the residents have had no choice but to leave the community. The large-scale migration of the inhabitants of Masulih to larger cities in search of better jobs and higher income has led the community's decline, especially after the 1960s.[185] According to the government census, Masulih's permanent inhabitants numbered 1,942 persons in 1956, while in 1986 the population had decreased to 1,132 individuals. The principal reason was migration to larger cities.[186] According to Shafiyʻi, the highest migration rate occurred after the earthquake of 1990, and in 2003 there were only 811 individuals living in the town.[187] In 2006, this figure declined to 554.[188]

2.4 Occupations

Masulih is built on the slopes of Masulih Dagh Mountain. Due to this steep topography there is a lack of flat land suitable for agriculture. Inhabitants of Masulih are therefore led towards occupations as merchants and blacksmiths rather than as farmers. The tradition of metalwork is rooted in the nearly forgotten days of Old Masulih, where the town's ancestors were occupied with mining and transporting iron ore and smelting to make iron

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[185] Shafiyʻi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 11,12.
[186] Habiyb Allah Zanjāni, "Jamʻiyyat," in Islah-i Arabāni, *Kitab-i Gilān*, 291.
[187] Shafiyʻi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 11,12.
[188] Bazin, "MĀSULA."

crafts. The continuation of that tradition, making knives, spades, axes, scissors, and scythes, can still be seen in the blacksmith workshop of Jalil-i Ashjāri in present-day Masulih. Ali Mūghiyri, an archaeologist who supervised excavations in Old Masulih, believes that these blacksmithing and trading traditions have continued from the days of Old Masulih.[189] M. H. L. Rabino, British consul in Gilān from 1906–1912, also indicates that the people of Masulih were engaged in either blacksmithing or making a certain type of leather shoe called a *chamush*. Some inhabitants are muleteers who travel on the road between Gilān and Zanjān.[190] Others are merchants who trade with Rasht and Zanjān. Women are mostly engaged in knitting socks, shawls, or black tents to be sold to nomads. Some inhabitants also do animal husbandry.[191] Marcel Bazin, anthropologist, points out that the major occupations today are in transport and commerce, including muleteers, petty traders or *durih-gārd-ha*, blacksmiths and shoemakers.[192]

During his visit to Gilān (1906–1912), Rabino observed that there was a distinct seasonal division of work. The majority of inhabitants, both craftsmen and merchants, would leave the village during winter to work in the villages and towns of Gilān, especially Fumanat, while the women remained at home spinning wool, knitting socks, and weaving *shāl* or scarf. During spring and summer, the men would return to Masulih and provide goods and services to shepherds scattered over summer pastures.[193] In the eighteenth century, Gmelin writes the following in his diary about the occupations of the inhabitants of Masulih:

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[189] Mūghiyri, "Gūzārish-i Barasi Va Gamanih-Zani," 98–112.
[190] Based on Rabino's account of the early years of the 20th century, some inhabitants of Masulih were muleteers. This is not the case anymore. Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 217.
[191] Idem.
[192] Bazin, "MĀSULA."
[193] Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 217.

> The fort of Masula is situated in the middle of the district, which is 4 *farsakhs* long and 2 wide. There are no villages in it, but only here and there some scattered cattle farms. It is in particular famous for its iron ore. The ore, from which iron is extracted, is red and saffron-yellow ochre, which around Masula lies in large quantities frequently in the mountains in the open air. At Fumen, 3 Persian miles from Masula, situated at the foot of the mountain, it outcrops. The ochre is good and rich; the iron extracted from it is, however, brittle, because they do not know how to handle it. The iron works are private. Everyone has permission to build them and need not pay any special taxes. The inhabitants of Masula pay the Khan an annual tribute of 2,000 rubles; often the latter receives this in the form of shotguns, iron, etc. That part of the population not involved with the iron works and surely the smallest part lives from animal husbandry and tanning oxen, sheep, and goat skins.[194]

Gmelin's description confirms that the inhabitants of Masulih were engaged in blacksmithing; however, the account of another visitor, James Baillie Fraser, who traveled via Masulih to the town of Tabriz in 1833, saw no indication that the Masulih people were blacksmiths or miners. In Volume II of his journey diary, letter XVII, he describes his journey through the marshes between Rasht and along the mountainous road which passes by Masulih. After travelling fifteen miles of mountainous road in thick downpours, he reaches Masulih and describes it as "one of the most romantically situated and curious places I have seen."[195] Muleteers and merchants are the professions that he mentions in his diary. He writes that "The people of Massouleh are all muleteers, or petty merchants, who trade with the neighbouring districts, and between the low and high country; and we had abundant proof of the attention they pay to the main chance. They cultivate no grain, nor indeed anything else except a few vegetables; but they are rich in flocks and herds, as we had occasion to see. Indeed, we observed blue smoke curling up

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[194] Gmelin, *Travels*.

[195] James Baillie Fraser, *A Winter's Journey (Tatar) from Constantinople to Tehran with Travels through Various Parts of Persia*, vol. 2 (London: Samuel Bentley 1838), 496.

from various spots in the jungle, where the shepherds or cow-herds of the Massouleh proprietors were feeding their charges."[196]

Adam Olearius, who travelled to Iran in 1637 AD (1047 AH), passed through Gilān in 1638 AD en route to Germany. He indicates that the principal iron mines of Persia were located in Ganjih and Masulih and the inhabitants of this place were primarily blacksmiths who manufactured necessary iron devices for Masulih and neighbouring villages and cities.[197]

A similar description of Masulih to Gmelin's can be found in Mirza Ibrāhim's diary, which was completed during his travels in northern Iran in 1276–1277 AH (1859–1860 AD). Mirzā Ibrāhim observed blacksmiths and merchants in Masulih, and he mentions them as follows: "From Fuman to Masulih is 4 *farsakh* distance. It has 250 households. The tax is 1000 Tumān. Ali Akbar Biyg is the *nāiyb (deputy)*. There are iron mines in Masulih. Masulih has no agriculture and is located on top of mountains. The inhabitants of Masulih are blacksmiths, makers of horseshoes and nails and some are merchants. Provisions are brought from the vicinity and consumed there."[198] Bina Melkonof, writing in 1860 AD (1277 AH), mentions that Masulih has 25 (*sic*, must be 250) households who pay 1000 Tumān Tax.[199]

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[196] Ibid., 497.
[197] Mahmud-i Niykuiyh, *Gilān Dar Sāfārnāmih-Haiy Sayyāhān-i Khariji* (Rasht: Farhang-i Illia, 1386), 17–18.
[198] Masʿud-i Gūlzāri, *Sāfārnāmih-i Istār Abād, Māzandaran Va Gilān Va…* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Būnyād-i Farhang-i Iran, 2535), 194.
[199] Muhammad Gūlban and Fārāmārz-i Tālibi, *Sāfārnāmih-i Iran Va Rusiyh* (Tehran: Dūnyāi Kitāb, 1363), 189.

2.5 A Descriptive Account of Masulih as Seen by Travelers

A description of the town of Masulih is given in Gmelin's *Travels through Northern Persia 1770–1774*:

> Masula is the only place subjected to the Gilāni ruler that has the exterior appearance of a town, because the others, when they have this appellation, are nothing but ample villages with dispersed housing, and they are only called so because of their population and their trade. On the other hand Masula is situated in the middle of the mountains and because of its inclined situation it is like a diminutive Darband. It has been more in width than that Alexandrian masterpiece; therefore, it constitutes a more beautiful sight. Nevertheless, Masula has neither towers nor walls; it is however surrounded by mountains, which only allow access by two or three narrow roads, and thus it has acquired a natural fortification that craft hardly can supply it with. The houses have been built both with mud and bricks, and are glued together with clay. The roofs are flat and have the comfort that one may conveniently walk around, but when it rains the rainwater remains on them. All houses are surrounded by an earthen wall and consist of two parts, of which, according to Oriental manner, one is the prison of the women and the other dedicated to the usual dwelling. For notables these are composed of one or two large rooms at whose wings there are small side rooms. The large room serves as dining room and the room to receive visitors. The harem always occupies the back room in which only the master, or those whom he allows, may go.[200]

Fraser gives another description of the way to Masulih and the town itself. He describes them as follows:

> About 7 A.M we took a cup of tea and a bit of bread in an *Imaumzadeh*, at the foot of the mountains, which an hour after we began to ascend. This ascent for a time was gradual, keeping pace with the bed of the stream. The road was all stones of course, and the scenery resembled entirely that which other such mountain passes afford. After following the glen for ten miles or more, the mountains closed in, and we had some desperate rises and plunges over jutting rocks, the stream having burst its way, as it appeared, through the solid mountain for a space of about five miles more. This brought us to the forks of the river, up one of the streams of which we turned, mounting a sharp rocky

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[200] Gmelin, *Travels*, 216–18.

cot,hul, which brought us to the village of Massouleh, one of the most romantically situated and curious places I have seen.

It is built in terraces rising on the almost perpendicular slope of the western mountain, with a tremendous wooded peak towering over it, and a fine lofty ridge varied with wood, and rock, and pasture, opposite; while a dozen of little streams "descend from their hills" in lines of foam to form the small river beneath the village, which goes roaring away towards the low country. The houses of this village differed entirely both in internal and external appearance from those of any other I had seen. They were, many of them, three stories high, the two upper ones having each two tiers of windows, the one tall, the other low, over each other, which produces rather a lively appearance, resembling European buildings. I was told they are built on the Lesghee model.[201]

2.6 Difficulties Facing Masulih

While Masulih does not suffer from extremes of heat and cold, the community has other environmental hazards to contend with. There are two rivers in Masulih, named Masulih Rudkhan and Khalil-Dasht (figures 2.22, 2.23). Due to flooding, for many years there was no construction or development on the banks, but unfortunately during the last 25 years several structures have since been built on them. As Abuzar Janali Pur, the principal architect who works in the National Heritage Office in Masulih points out, after the earthquake of 1990 many inhabitants intended to leave Masulih.[202] In an attempt to keep them in the community, the government set a special budget for constructing new public buildings such as a new police station, a library, a clinic, Hotel Mūnfarid, Hotel Mihrān and the municipal offices. Unfortunately, these new buildings were constructed outside the town itself, without any proper relation to the community or respect for the traditional architectural unity of the community. The new buildings were designed with modern

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[201] Fraser, *A Winter's Journey*, 496–97.
[202] The earthquake of June 20th 1990 almost destroyed the two towns of Manjiyl and Rudbār. Around forty thousand inhabitants were killed and several hundreds of villages were severely damaged. See Bazin, "GĪLĀN i. Geography and Ethnography,"
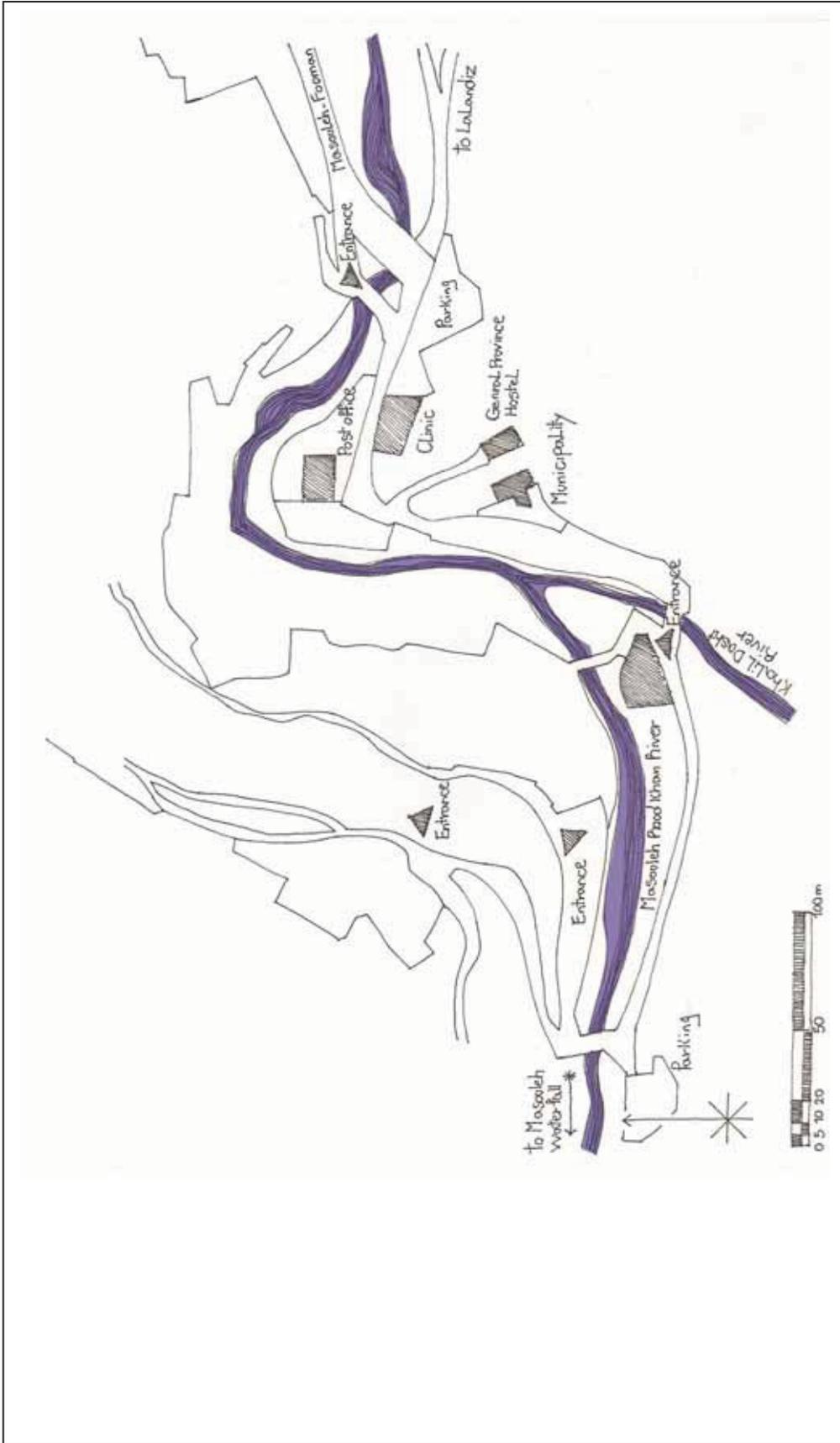
Fig. 2.22. The two rivers Masulih Rudkhan and Khalil-Dasht. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

MOSQUE

MOSQUE

MONFARED HOTLE

TOFUTIAN _ RASHT

CLINIC

GILA PROVINCE HOSTEL

MASOULEH MUNICIPLITY

MOSQUE

NATIONAL HERITAGE OFFICE

MOSQUE

IMAMZADEH

MEHRAN HOTLE

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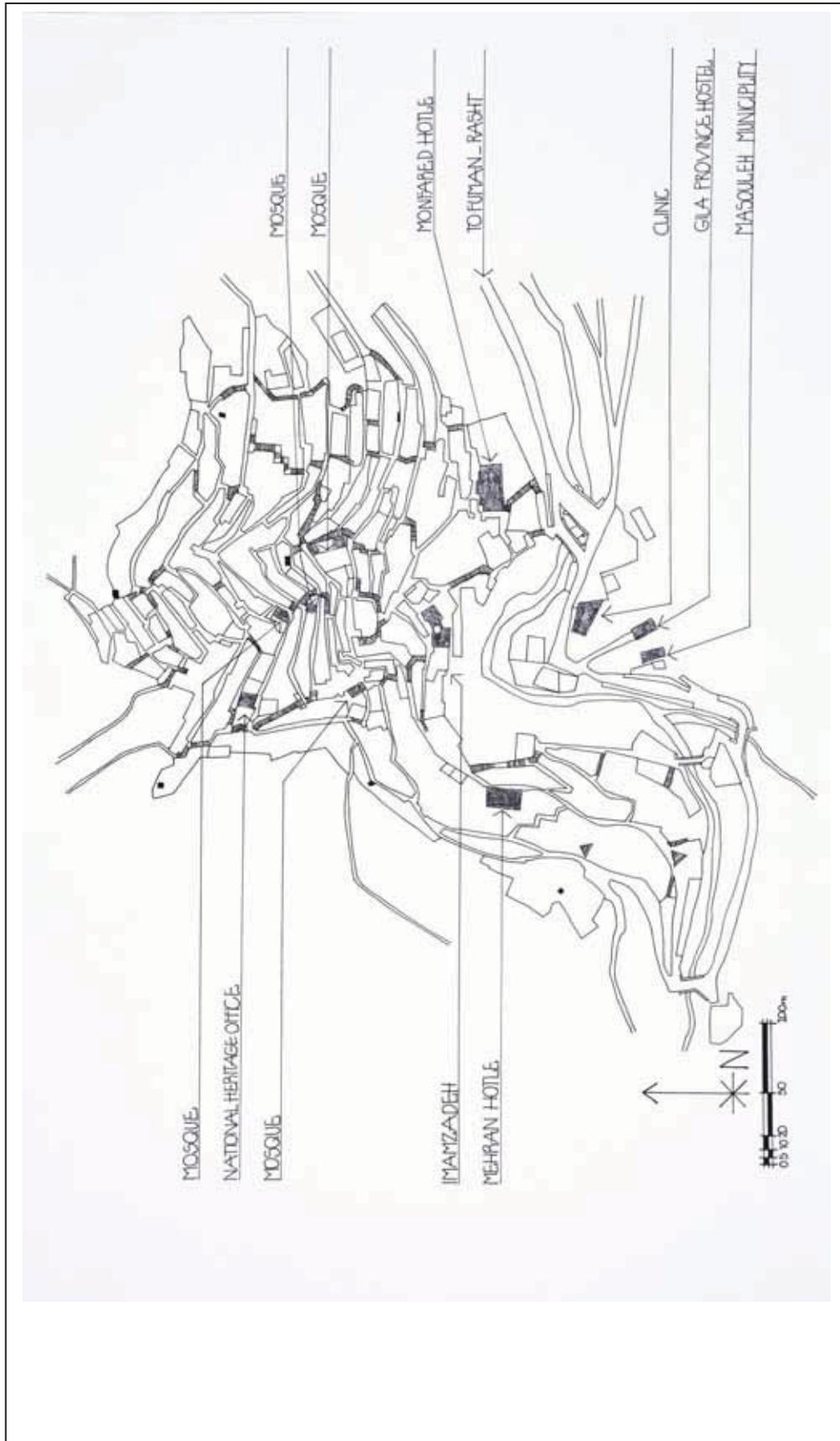
Fig. 2.23. The Masulih Rudkhan and Khalil-Dasht rivers. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

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elevations. However, the worst mistake made at that time was the selection of a site near the bank of Masulih Rudkhan River, incurring a risk of heavy floods. There have been several floods in the last few decades, and the police station, clinic, and Hotel Mūnfarid have been hit every time (figures 2.24, 2.25).[203] Mayor Yahyā Yusif Pūr points out that the historic houses and neighborhoods are located on higher ground, while the main road on the banks of the river and the nearby buildings, as well as tourists using these main thoroughfares, are in the flood zone.[204]

As Nikruz-i Mūbārhān-i Shafiyʿi, the head of the National Heritage Office in Masulih points out, one of the strongest floods occurred in August 1996 and killed 53 visitors to the community; buildings on the bank of the river and more than 40 cars were damaged and washed away.[205] Another flood occurred in September 17, 2009 that hit the bus terminal and washed away ten cars.[206] In an interview with Cultural Heritage News (CHN), Sādiq Sālihi, the head of a local NGO, points out that the municipality constructed the bus terminal on the bank of the river, causing the Masulih people to complain about the selected location of the bus terminal which is located in a high flood risk area. Recently, the municipality provided permission for tourists to camp near the terminal. It was fortunate that the recent flood occurred during *rāmāzān*, or Ramadan, when the majority of people were fasting and few tourists were in Masulih, otherwise it could have been much more tragic. Sālihi points out that the municipality are planning to

[203] Abuzar Janali Pur, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.
[204] Hamshahri Online, "Masulih Niyāzmand-i Tarh-i Jāmiʿ Mūtāliʿāti," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/details/105948.
[205] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 14.
[206] Cultural Heritage News, "Siyl Dubārih Dar Masulih Jāri Shūd," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=68213&Serv=3&SGr=22.

renovate the terminal within the same high flood risk area.[207] In an interview with CHN, Shafiyʿi argues that wood dwellers having cut the trees along the banks of the river in the mountainous part of the region might have caused the flood.[208] During my fieldwork in May 2012, the municipality began working to reduce flood damage, deepening the river by excavating the soil and constructing stone walls as levees along the river. By my next visit to the community in July 2013, the construction of the stone walls along the river had been completed.

In 2003, the Office of Construction and Maintenance of Rural Roads (which belongs to the Ministry of Roads and Transportation) launched a project to widen the mountainous road that leads to Masulih. In an interview with CHN, Shafiyʿi specifies that widening the road could lead to more rockslides, causing both road and river blockage and the gradual increase of water levels in the upper parts of the river.[209] Sālihi point out that due to rockslides the road is unsafe to commute on during the winter.[210] During the Iranian New Year holidays or *Nuruz* (March 20th–April 2nd) and the summer months, the abovementioned mountain road is crowded with tourists. As Yahyā Yusif Pur, the mayor of Masulih, stated in an interview with Fārs News Agency, 212,000 tourists visited

[207] Cultural Heritage News, "Muasisih Hifz va Tusiʿih Pāydār Masulih: Shahrdari bih Fikr-i Jan-i Mardūm Nist," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=68200&Serv=3&SGr=22.

[208] Cultural Heritage News, "Siyl Dubārih Masulih ra Tahdid Mikūnad."

[209] Cultural Heritage News, "Taʿriyz-i Jādih Fuman bih Masulih Mujib Riyzish-i Kuh Shūd," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=93096&Serv=3&SGr=22.

[210] Cultural Heritage News, "Jādih-i Fuman bih Masulih Jān Ahali va Gardishgarān iyn Shahr-i Tarikhi ra Tahdid Mikūnad," accessed August 09th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=66061&Serv=3&SGr=22.

Masulih during the 2012 New Year holidays.[211] This figure indicates the extent to which non-locals use this mountain road.

Earthquakes are another major threat to Masulih. As Shafiyʻi indicates, earthquakes can cause rockslides, which can destroy homes. A written agreement exists among the residents of Masulih prohibits the felling of trees that help prevent rockslides from the slopes of the mountain above the village. In the 1960s a strong earthquake seriously damaged many residential buildings in the province. Another strong earthquake happened in 1990.[212] Unfortunately in that earthquake a big rock broke off from the mountain peak above and destroyed one house with the inhabitants inside (figure 2.26). According to Muhammad Askar-pur, although the displacement of the solid rock from the mountaintop caused the deaths of the inhabitants, life still goes on around the stone.[213] The rock remains, lying above the destroyed house, as a reminder of the tragedy. As Shafiyʻi mentions, the center of the 1990 earthquake was at Rudbar and Manjiyl in Gilān, but it was powerful enough that seven inhabitants were killed and three houses destroyed in Masulih. It is perhaps surprising that none of the traditional buildings were seriously damaged in Masulih, with only 10% of traditional housing damaged slightly. This can be attributed to the wise use of suitable wooden reinforcements inside the buildings.[214]

Abuzar Janali Pur mentions the accelerated deterioration of Masulih during the last 50 years. After the strong earthquake of 1990, the community found itself in an emergency situation. In the last two decades, all but 100 of over 400 original houses have

[211] Fars News Agency, "Bāzdid-i 212 Hizār Gardishgar-i Nuruzi Az Masulih," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13910114001086.
[212] Shafiyʻi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 14.
[213] Muhammad Askar-pur, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.
[214] Shafiyʻi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 14.

been destroyed. The surviving houses, and especially their roofs, are in need of

restoration. There are also magnificent wooden doors and windows in some of the

surviving houses that desperately need restoration. Although the inhabitants of Masulih

are interested in modern and up-to-date restoration methods, usually restoration does not

keep up with the rate of deterioration.[215] When we compare photographs of Masulih taken

in 1931 and 1952 to the current situation of Masulih's houses, it is clear that many two or

three storey houses have been destroyed. The principal reasons for the deterioration of

buildings are the migration of inhabitants to larger cities and vacancy for that and other

reasons; the accumulation of excessive humidity inside the buildings; and the deliberate

destruction of the roofs of the houses by their owners, because they are no longer

interested in living in traditional buildings and prefer a modern house. Finally, the roofs

of the houses are usually the weakest part, and the process of destruction is accelerated if

they are not maintained properly (figure 2.27). In some cases, owners of historic houses,

desiring to live in a modern house rather than their vernacular one, leave the roof without

any maintenance, water the roof during the night in order to accelerate the destruction

process, or just let the rain wash over the roof.[216] In such cases, the Iranian National

Heritage Organization tries to prevent the destruction as much as is possible through legal

means, by buying the property or, if the owner cannot afford restoration, offering free

restoration. However, unfortunately in some cases it is not possible to preserve the

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[215] Janali Pur, interviews. See also Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 15.
[216] Since the National Heritage Office is against any illegal demolition of the historic houses, these people are forced to demolish their houses illegally and in secret. One of the ways to demolish a house is by watering the roof, since this is the weakest part. In fact the roof demands constant renovation, maintenance and attention.
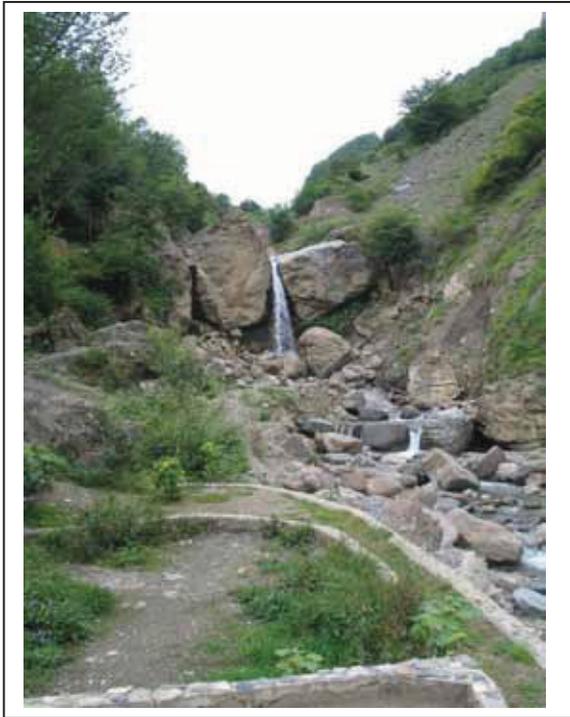
Fig. 2.24. Masulih Rudkhan river. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 2.25. Flood in Masulih, 1996. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
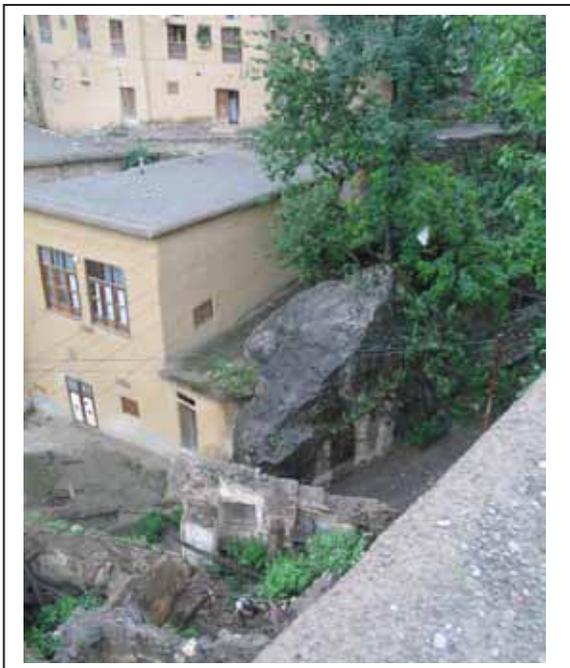
Fig. 2.26. The rock which killed or displaced the entire family inside the house. Photograph by author, 2008.
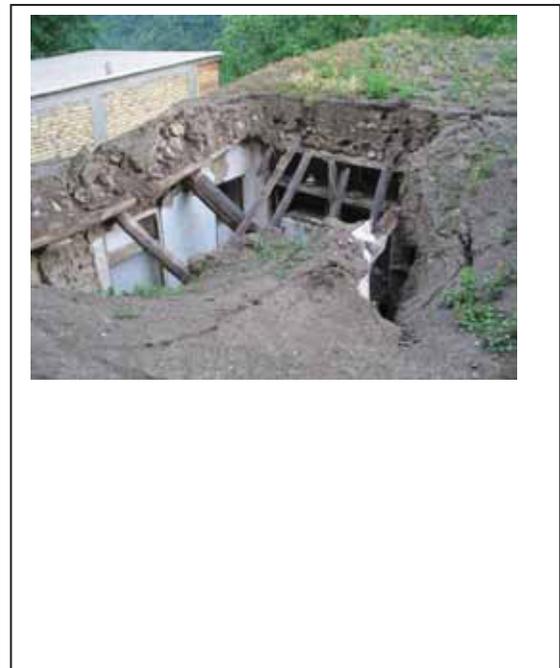
Fig. 2.27. The roof of a house: the point where destruction of the house usually begins. Photograph by author, 2008.

property.[217] According to a CHN reporter who visited Masulih on the 16th of November 2008, the roofs of twenty-six historic vacant houses were severely damaged by recent rainfalls. In some cases, fallen beams, stones and bricks blocked the passageways.[218]

One of the difficulties of the National Heritage Office is raising funds and budgets for renovating the houses: approval of the proposals for renovation projects can take a long time, plus there is the issue of entering vacant houses without the legal permission of the owners.[219] In an interview with CHN, Fariybūrz-i Dulat-Abādi, the deputy of the National Heritage Organization in Gilān province, points out that usually these houses are inherited by an entire family and none of the family members alone can afford to renovate the house: as a result they abandon the house as it is. The National Heritage Office, in association with the municipality and the city council of Masulih, are attempting to enter the houses with court permission and commence the necessary renovations. Some of the owners of the houses assume that if they let the houses collapse they can later build a new, modern house. Dulat-Abādi states that this cannot happen in Masulih and that the National Heritage Office will prevent it.[220] During my field work in May 2012 and July 2013, I observed that the roofs of the houses mentioned in the CHN article cited above remain untouched and in need of urgent renovation.

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[217] Janali Pur, interviews.

[218] Cultural Heritage News, "Khānih-haiy Tarikhi-i Masulih Fūru Rikhtand," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=66330&Serv=3&SGr=22. See also Hamshahri Online, "Khānih-haiy Tarikhi-i Masulih Fūru Rikhtand," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/details/68617.

[219] Cultural Heritage News, "Iʿlām-i Vazʿiyat-i Iztirāri Bārāi Bāqi Māndih Khānih-Haiy Tarikhi-i Masulih," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=65557&Serv=3&SGr=22.

[220] Cultural Heritage News, "Bā Dastur-i Qāzi Dar-i Khanih-haiy Tarikhi-i Rahā Shūdih Masulih Bāz Mishavand," accessed August 9th 2012, http://www.chn.ir/NSite/FullStory/News/?Id=66544&Serv=3&SGr=22.

Janali Pur indicates that all the restoration in this community is under the supervision of the National Heritage Organization, and the principal occupation of this center is to preserve historical houses.[221] The policy of the National Heritage Organization is to maintain traditional construction techniques; however, some builders do not respect traditional methods of construction. The National Heritage Organization tries to keep the height of all new buildings to a two or three storey limit, with wooden doors and windows and a yellow clay skin on the elevations, so the new building will be in harmony with the existing historical buildings. The elevation of the buildings is important in order to maintain the aesthetic unity of the town; however, the organization and design of the interior space is completely up to the builder. Even so, it is difficult to convince every builder who is about to start a new construction in the community to design a traditional elevation with a wooden door and windows. There are also difficulties in teaching the inhabitants of historical houses that their houses are valuable architectural objects and should be preserved (figures 2.28 to 2.32).[222] In an interview, Ūmid-i ʿaziyzi, the head of the National Heritage Center Organization in Gilān, points out that the

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[221] According to Abuzar Janali Pur, the principal engagement of the National Heritage Organization Center in Masulih is preserving buildings which are in danger of destruction. Although there are difficulties in achieving their goal, they are determined to succeed. They have been successful in restoring the Kafã Bazaar, which is a two storey bazaar with a wooden balcony on the front elevation and external stairs. In the past, the first storey was the wholesale section while the second floor was dedicated to offices and rooms for resting. The part of the bazaar that has been restored consists of nine two storey shops. The principal elements of this section of the bazaar are its wooden stairs, front balcony, and wooden doors and windows, which operate in a unique way. There are wooden shutters in front of all the doors and windows, and every time a shop was opened or closed, the shutters would be removed manually. Due to vacancy and the accumulation of excessive humidity, the roof of the bazaar was in danger of destruction. With the help of the community's Islamic Council, the Municipality, and the National Heritage Organization Base, this part of the bazaar was restored and returned to use. See Janali Pur, interviews.
[222] Ibid.
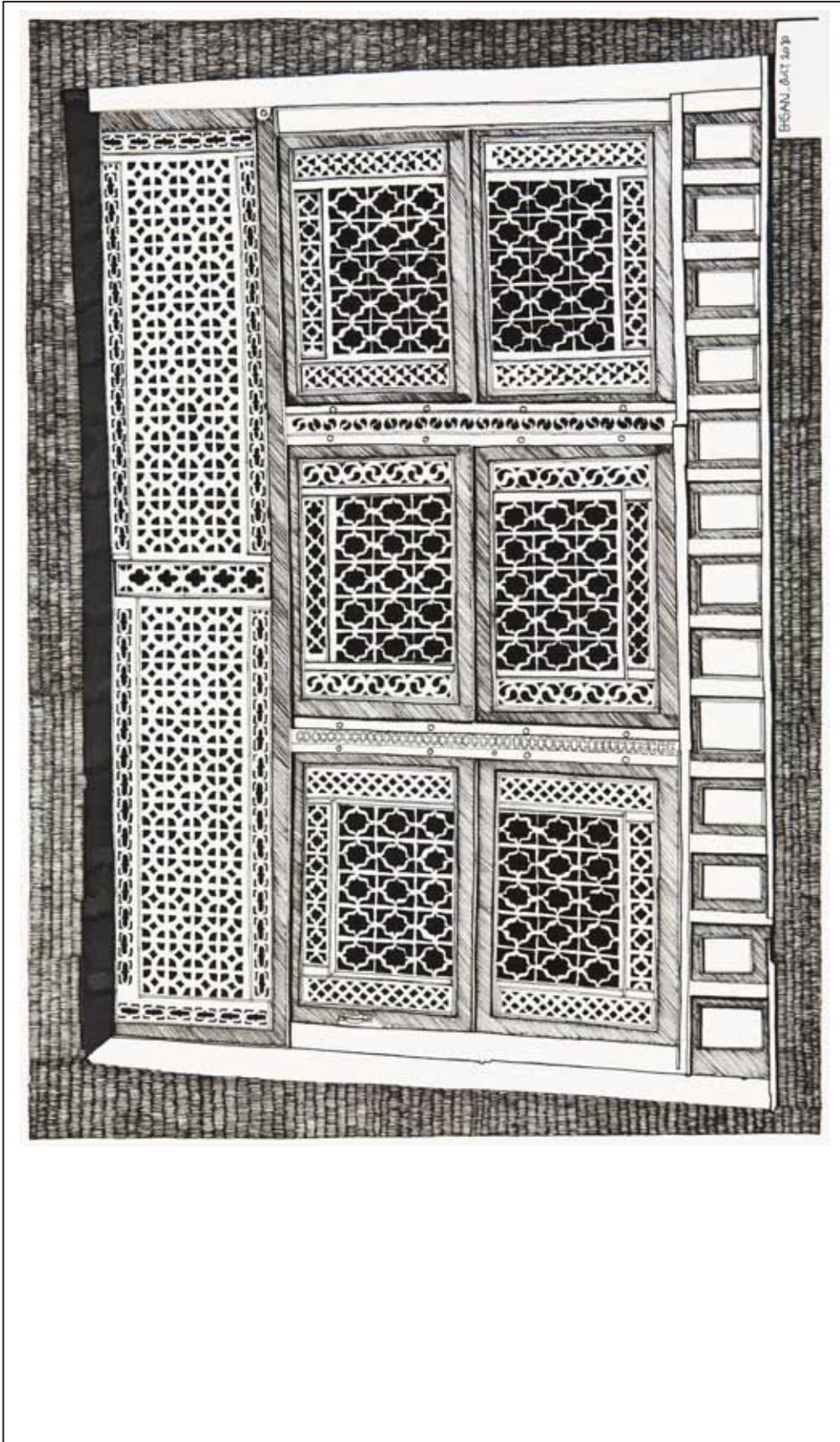
Fig. 2.28. A wooden window. Drawing by author, 2010.
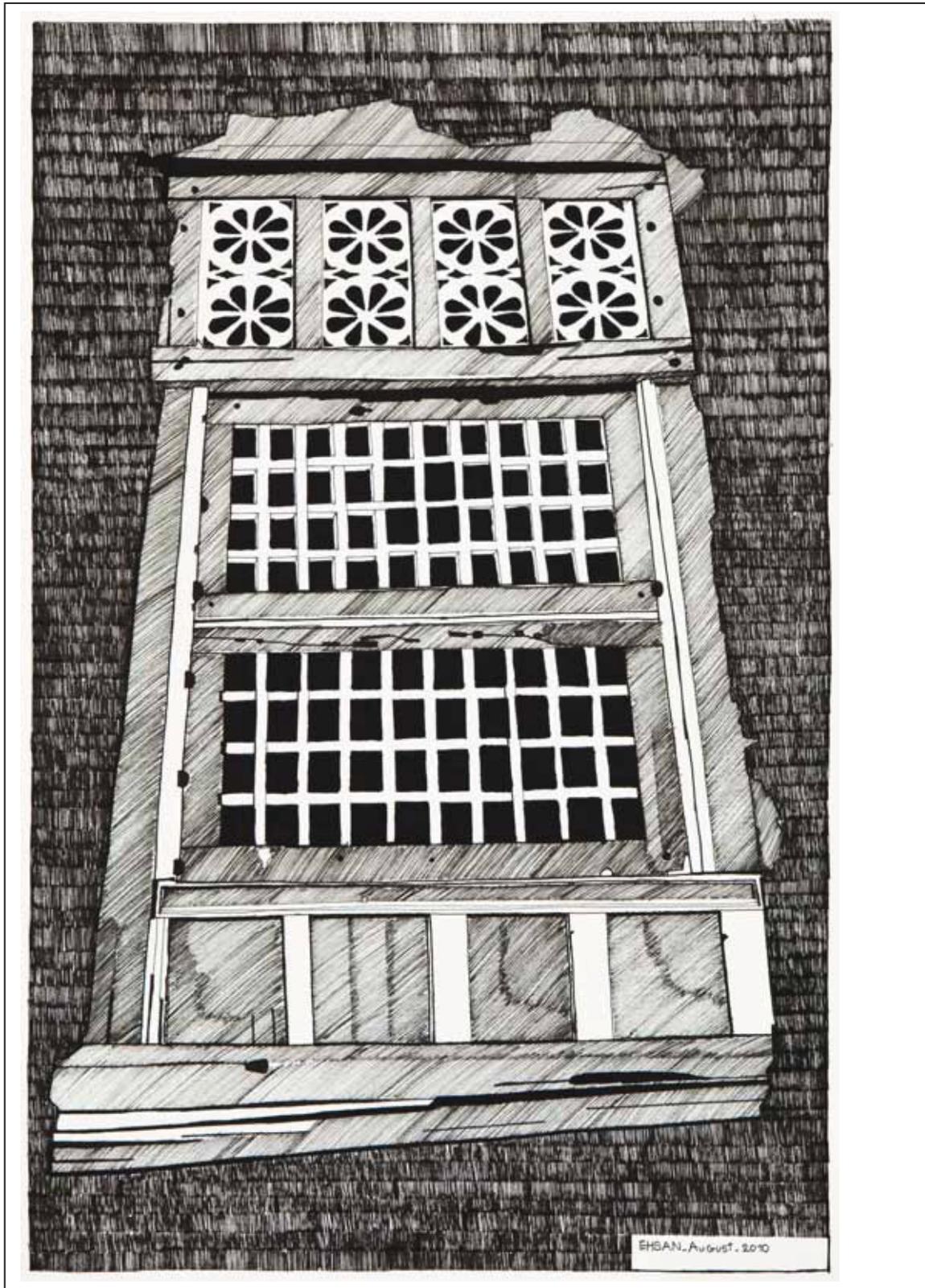
Fig. 2.29. A wooden window. Drawing by author, 2010.
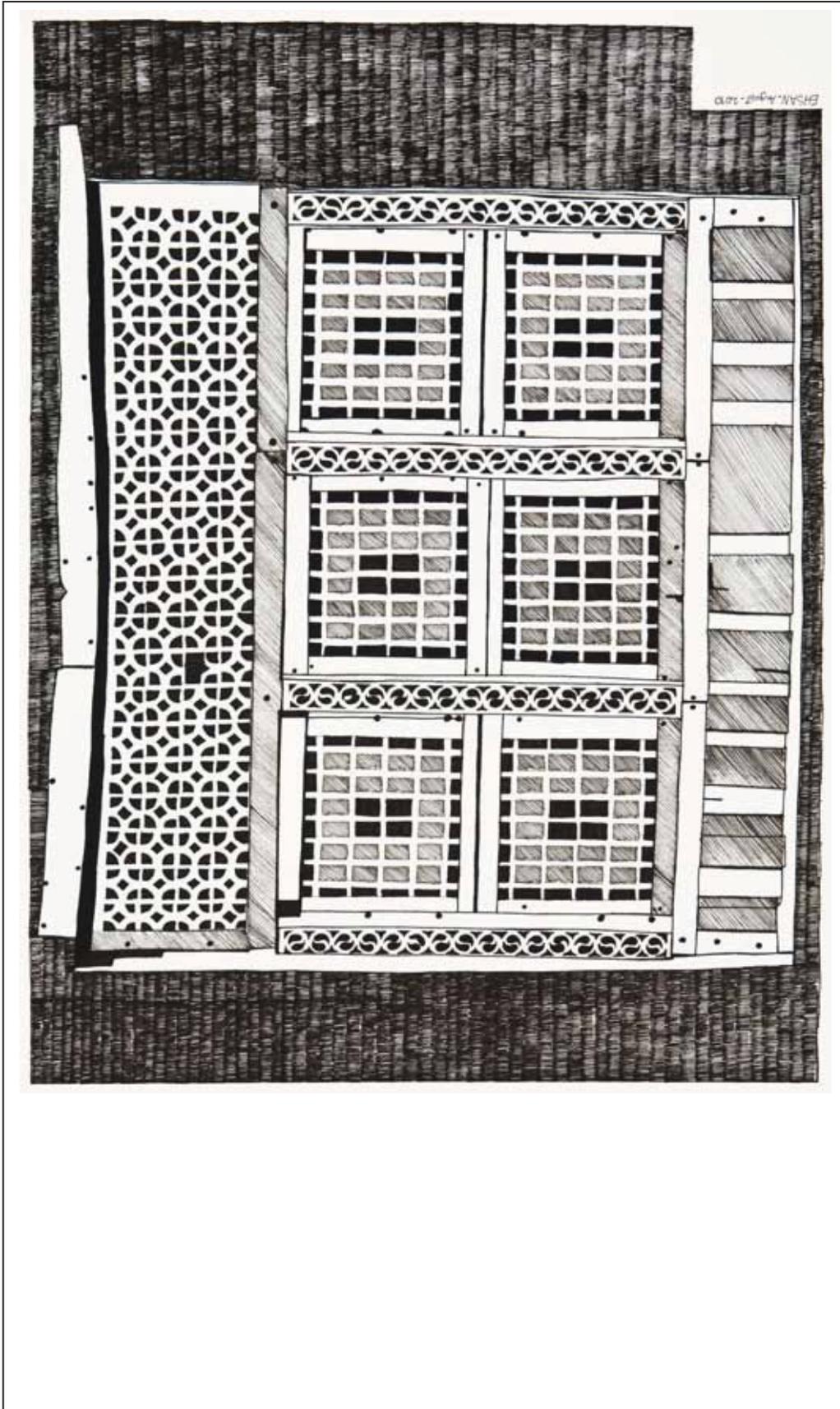
Fig. 2.30. A three unit wooden window. Drawing by author, 2010.

Fig. 2.31. A wooden window. Drawing by author, 2010.
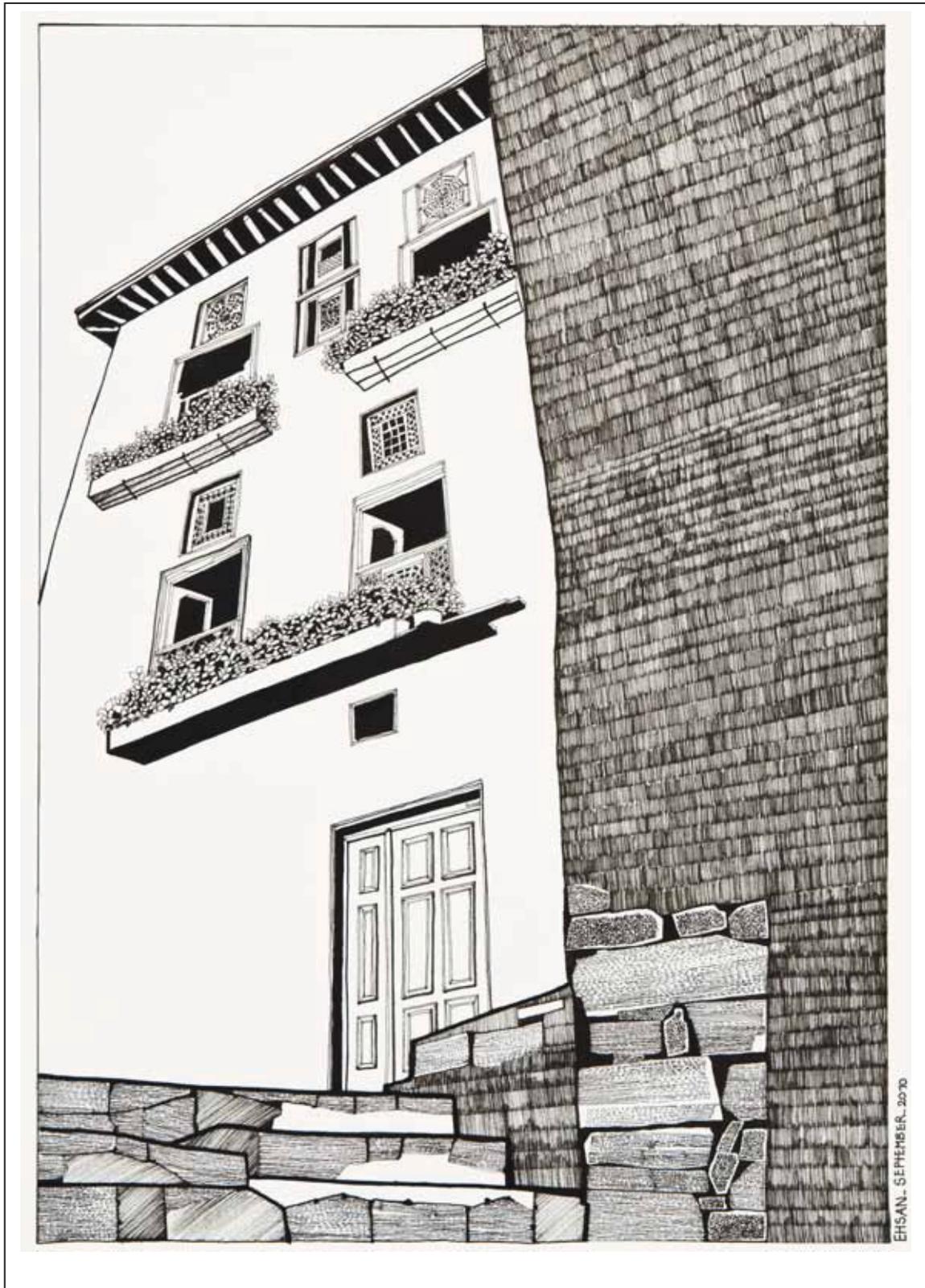
Fig. 2.32. A house with wooden windows. Drawing by author, 2010.

Masulih Heritage Center Office attempts to renovate the historic houses with local

materials such as *āzād* timbers for the beams of the roofs rather than iron beams.[223]

Shafiyʿi points out that new construction without regard for traditional construction

techniques or design constitutes another threat to Masulih's historic buildings. During the

last few decades, 250 new buildings have been constructed in the historic community,

using new materials and modern construction methods, and both private and

governmental constructions are ongoing within the community. These buildings could

negatively affect the appearance of the community as a whole, which currently contains

around 100 historic buildings that still function well. The introduction of bylaws

encouraging consideration of the typology of each neighbourhood's architecture in

designing new forms and elevations, and also in choosing the right materials for

buildings, is the principal action which could save the urban context of the community.

Such policies, if introduced earlier, could have saved the remaining historic buildings

while unifying new development with the traditional architecture. Their speedy adoption

will be necessary to save what remains of this historic town. Applying new construction

materials such as concrete, iron and brick instead of clay, timber and stone has had and

will continue to have negative effects on the appearance of the community (figures 2.33

to 2.35).[224]As Shafiyʿi notes, there are many architectural, urban, economic and social

difficulties in Masulih. All these hardships are a challenge for authorities in the National

Heritage Center, who hope to find a way to solve all these problems.[225]

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[223] Iran Newspaper, "Marimat-i Khānih-haiy Tarikhi-i Masulih bā Masālih-i Asiyl," accessed August 10th 2012, http://www.iran-newspaper.com/1391/4/4/Iran/5109/Page/11/?NewsID=194366.
[224] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 15–16.
[225] Ibid., 16.
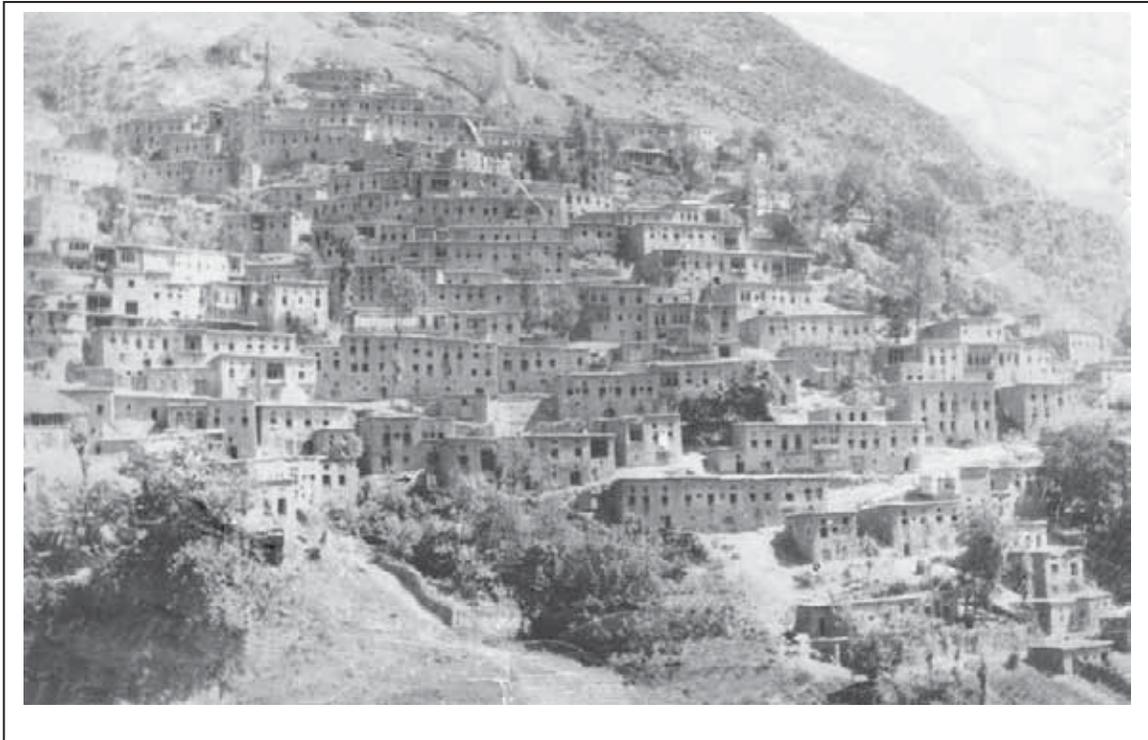
Fig. 2.33. Masulih with its houses, 1931. Unfortunately, many of the historic houses have been destroyed. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
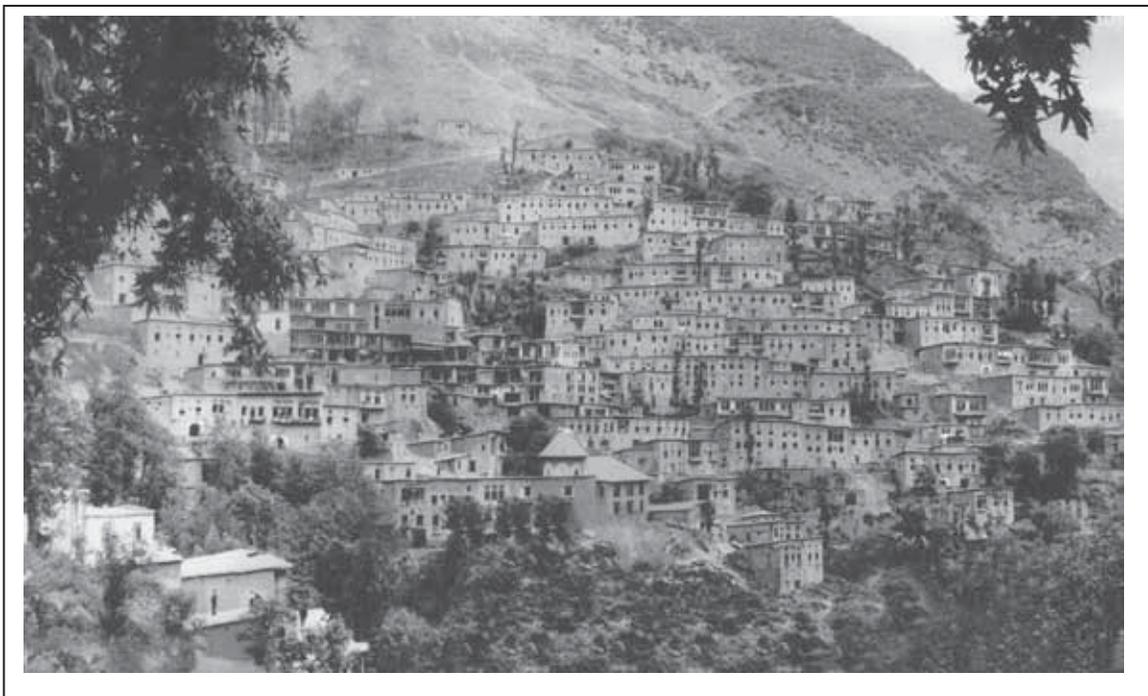
Fig. 2.34. Masulih with its houses, 1931. Unfortunately, many of the historic houses have been destroyed. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
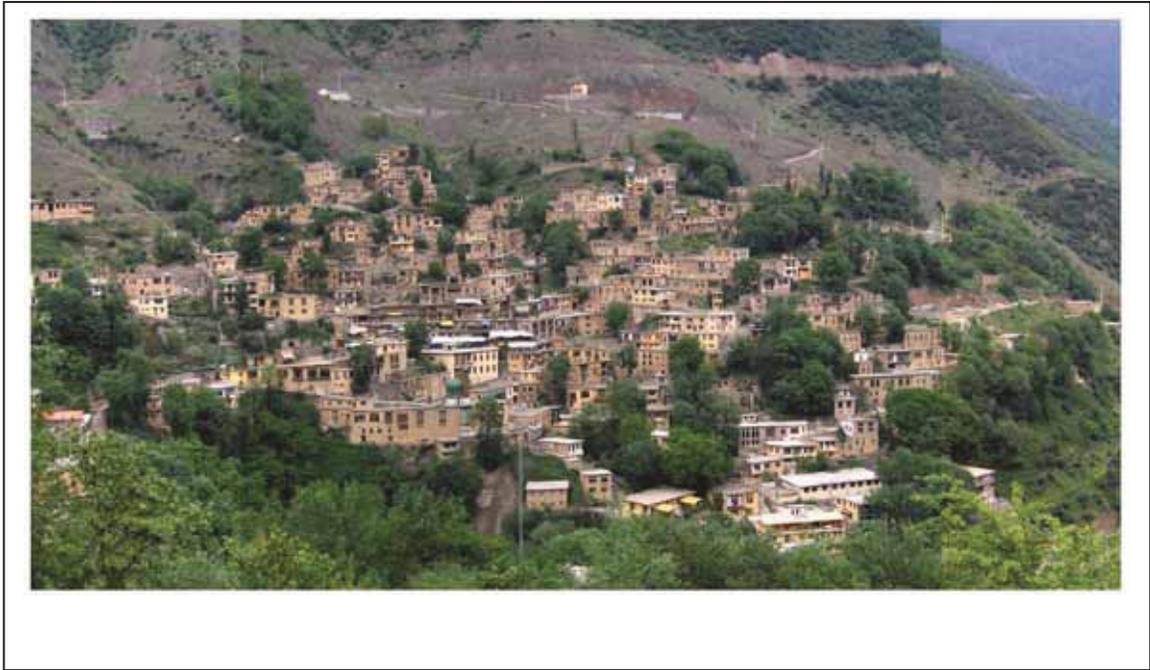
Fig. 2.35. The current situation of the community of Masulih. Unfortunately, many historic houses have been destroyed. Photograph by author, 2008.

<u>Chapter Three: Communal Ground and Settlement Characteristics of Masulih</u>

In chapters three, four and five I investigate the artifact system and material culture of Masulih (as defined in the introduction, the artifact system denotes the totality of this town). In this chapter, the topography, neighborhoods, bazaar, tea houses, sacred grounds and grazing lands will be studied as part of the artifact system of Masulih. In The next chapter, chapter four, I present more detail on Masulih's houses as large scale artifacts, and in chapter five I provide a detailed investigation of the artifacts which the master craftsmen make in their workshops or home workshops, which also form part of the artifact system of Masulih. It is my aim in these three key chapters to illustrate that the entire community with its inhabitants and its surrounding landscape is a complex artifact. I will attempt to reveal the social, economic and religious connections within the totality of this artifact system.

It is by following the paths of Masulih that one can walk through the neighborhoods, the bazaar, the tea houses, houses and mosques within the community and the sacred grounds and grazing lands outside the community. The paths connect distant lands and individuals to Masulih.

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[226] By walking the paths within and outside Masulih, I attempted to understand the cultural and socioeconomic relationships within this artifact. The connections between Masulih and the shrines around the town, the grazing lands, the shepherds, wood dwellers, mountain dwellers and villagers around Masulih are based on the paths which lead to the community. These connections are not simply revealed to outsiders, visitors and tourists. It is by interviewing the inhabitants, walking on the paths, observing the work patterns of the individuals and recording their memories that one may gradually comprehend these connections. Paul Oliver, a scholar of vernacular architecture, reached a similar conclusion when he visited Asante villages in the Kumasi rainforests in Ghana in the 1960s. What Paul Oliver initially observed and comprehended was a collection of villages in the middle of "rainforests" or a "jungle environment" in Ghana; however, after walking the paths and conversing with the chiefs and members of the tribes, he realized that what he assumed as "rainforests" or the "jungle environment" was in fact farms belonging to the Asante tribes. The Asante cultivate mangoes, bananas, tropical fruits and root crops. Over many generations the Asante tribes developed a sophisticated comprehension of the land and its cultivation and they passed this know-how on to the next generation. By spending an extended period of time with the

3.1 The Evolution of the Town

Unlike many scholars who often describe a city as a natural phenomenon such as a tree or a leaf, Joseph Rykwert claims that the origins of most ancient towns are based on rituals, sacrifices and religious ceremonies. Rykwert believes that the majority of ancient cities are founded with rituals and sacrifices to respect or reveal the power of the place. Extravagant procedures are often followed in accord with the divine to found a city. An ancient city has its own calendar and celebrates its own date of foundation.[227] According to Rykwert, the choice of the land and where the actual plot is located would always be left to gods. There would be rituals, sacrifices and religious ceremonies for founding an ancient city and the founder of the city would be considered a hero and usually buried within the city.[228] The founding spot for an ancient city such as Rome was very important and considered sacred. Usually the gods or a holy person founded the city and revealed it to the builders and priests.[229]

There is little reliable historical data to trace how Masulih was founded (figure 3.1). The exact date when the settlement was founded is unknown, although its founding can be traced back in oral traditions and in the accounts which foreign travellers documented. As I described in an earlier chapter, on the basis of these narratives the origin of Masulih is related to the sacred shrine of ʿun ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Ali. Both M. H. L. Rabino

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Asante tribes, Oliver thus discovered the relationship between the land and the tribe, its built environment, rituals and issues in Asante culture. By engaging in fieldwork, patterns that were hidden at first sight were gradually revealed. See Oliver, Paul. *Built to Meet Needs: Cultural Issues in Vernacular Architecture*. New York: Architectural Press, 2006, 47-54.

[227] Joseph Rykwert, *The Seduction of Place: The City in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), 13.

[228] Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 23–44.

[229] Tony Atkin and Joseph Rykwert, "Building and Knowing," in *Structure and Meaning in Human Settlements*, ed. Tony Atkin and Joseph Rykwert (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2005), 10.
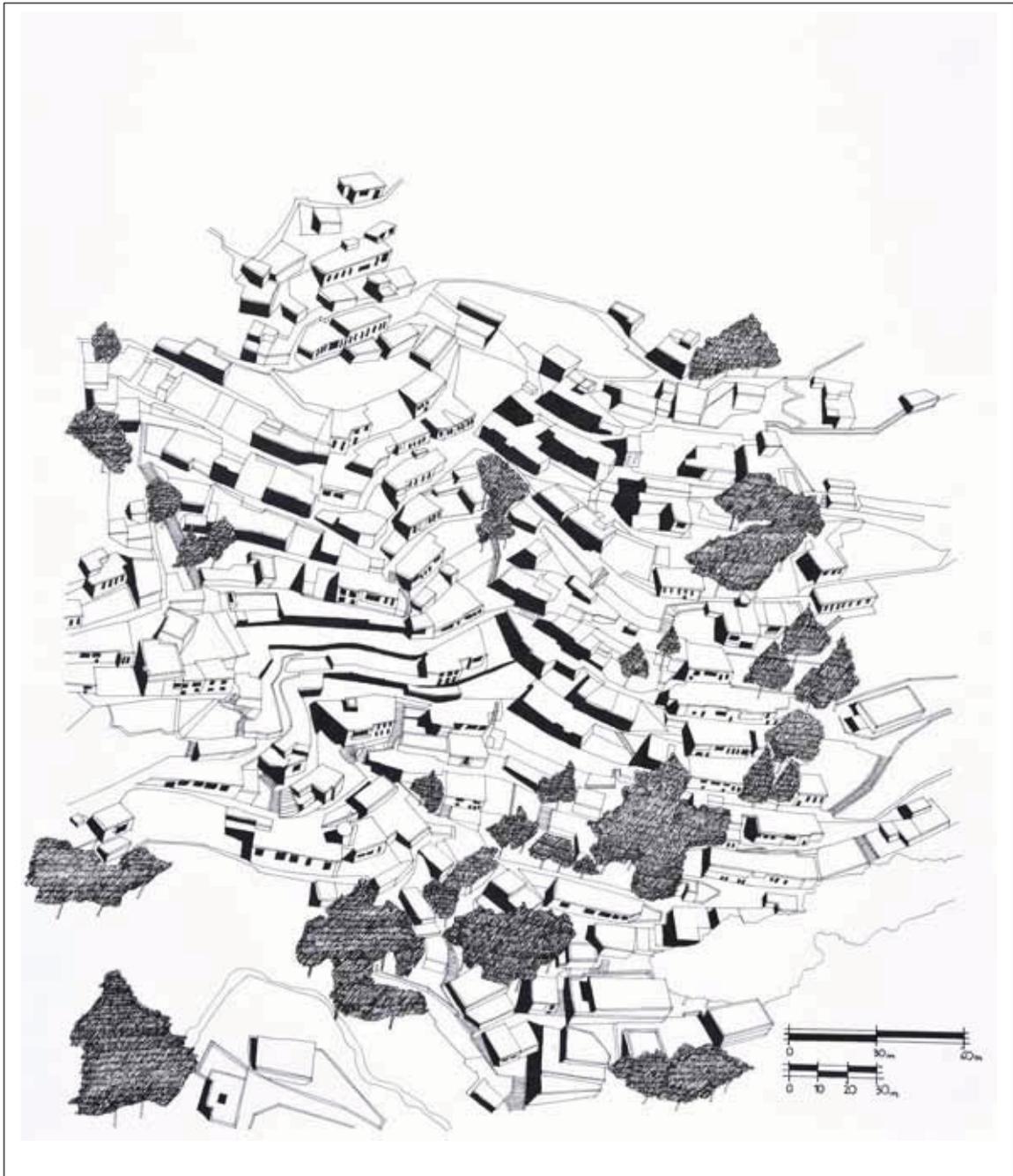
Fig. 3.1. The historic community of Masulih. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

and Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin describe the origins of Masulih based on oral traditions in their travelling diary. In Rabino's record, ʿun ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Ali, who was wounded in a battle, met a shepherd while approaching Masulih and asked him to have his body buried wherever he found it.[230] The shepherd found the body in the current location of the shrine and buried him there. Gradually people began to migrate to his burial place and settled there. Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, as mentioned in previous chapter, indicates in his diary how a holy person approached Masulih and was buried there by a shepherd. In this story, it is Jamshid Khān who heard the story of the shepherd, approached the burial place and examined the holy one's head; later, he became convinced that ʿun ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Ali was a holy person who revealed the truth, and ordered that a tombstone be built for him and that some individuals settle in this place.[231] Both accounts, based on oral traditions, indicate that the founding of this town originated in a sacred shrine rather than physical factors such as appropriate land, availability of resources or climate conditions. Arash-i Khūdābakhsh also believes that the town of Masulih was founded with a sacred shrine. It is possible that the first inhabitants of the community settled there to be in closer proximity to the burial ground.[232] The importance of the burial ground as a sacred place can still be seen in the daily pilgrimage or *ziyārat* of the inhabitants to the shrine.

Although the founding of Masulih may have been based on sacred ground, there are likely to have been other influential forces and factors in the process of settlement evolution. As Amos Rapoport points out, we should avoid a physical determinist approach or any attempt to reduce settlement formation to a single cause. In fact many

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[230] Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 214.
[231] Gmelin, *Travels*, 216–18.
[232] Arash-i Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," in Shafiyʿi, *Kitab-i Masulih*, 75.

factors influence the formation of a settlement, such as religion, rituals, beliefs, economy, site, material, technology and resources.[233] Joseph Rykwert and Tony Atkin also indicate that the patterns of settlements are based on subtle and nearly indistinguishable factors.[234] Stefano Bianca points out that a settlement can be formed and evolved based on geographic considerations, the availability of natural resources, the religious significance of the settlement and its closeness to vital trade routes.[235]

Masulih was built on the land with the least steep slope of the mountain and with access to grazing lands nearby. The existence of sufficient drinkable water from various springs and exposure to sun were also key factors in the formation of this community.[236] The location of the community in the center of major trade roads, especially the mountain trade roads which existed between Zanjān, Khalkhal and Gilān, was another significant factor (figure 3.2).

The formation of Masulih may have been like this: at the very beginning, there may have been some rows of shops, plus the *Imāmzādih* with some houses at the periphery. Gradually, due to migration, there could have been further construction and developments. Khūdābakhsh suggests that the community may have begun with the *Imāmzādih*, and then the immigrants built houses and some rows of shops. It is also possible that merchants and local residents regularly traveled back and forth between the community and other cities along the trade routes mentioned above. Nonlocal merchants

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[233] Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 18–45.
[234] Atkin and Rykwert, "Building and Knowing," 1.
[235] Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000) 137.
[236] Water can be a very influential factor in the formation of the oasis settlements. The oasis society is able to live in harmony with the surrounding environment and to make use of its resources. Water is precious in oasis and as a result it is carefully transferred and distributed. See Pietro Laureano, "The Oasis Model," in *Structure and Meaning in Human Settlements*, ed. Tony Atkin and Joseph Rykwert (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2005), 219–40.

1. TO FUMAN AND RASHT
2. HOTEL MONFARED
3. CLINIC
4. TELEPHONE POST
5. ELECTRICITY POST
6. MUNICIPLITY
7. POLICE STATION
8. BED & BREAKFAST
9. IMAMZADEH
10. FRIDAY MOSQUE
11. LIBRARY
12. MOSQUE
13. BAZAAR
14. MOSQUE
15. MOSQUE
16. MOSQUE
17. OLD HAMMAM
18. HERITAGE OFFICE
19. TO OLD MASOULEH
20. TO IMAMZADEH EBRAHIM

N

0 10 30 50m   60m   90m
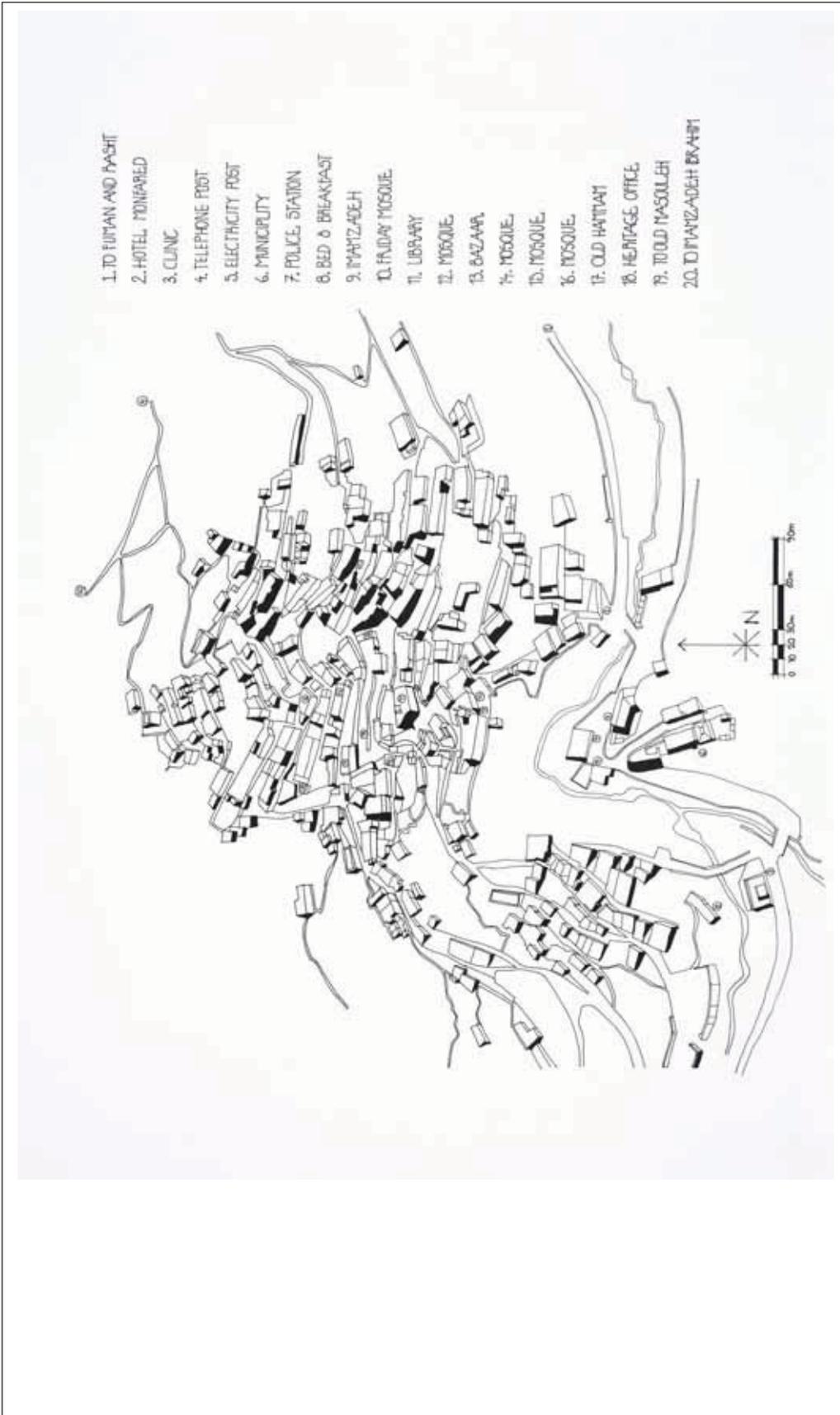
Fig. 3.2. All the public buildings in Masulih. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

may have needed rental rooms or a tea house to rest,[237] and these buildings may therefore also have been built there in the early days of Masulih's formation.

It is also possible that due to the spread of disease in the humid plateau of Gilān, the displacement of people from other parts of the country for unknown reasons, and the pleasant weather conditions of the region around Masulih by comparison to the plateau, there may have been migration to the community, increasing the local population. However, the exact date or dates of migration is unknown to us. The increase in population may have corresponded to an increase in economic and religious activity. Certainly commercial activity contributed tremendously to the settlement evolution of Masulih, and led to the construction of rows of shops in the bazaar, pedestrian paths, public buildings such as mosques, baths, caravansarais, and schools.[238]

3.2 Topography

In this section, the topography and the paths inside the community will be investigated.[239] The paths outside the physical built environment of Masulih will be discussed in sections 3.7 and 3.8, which focus respectively on the sacred shrines and on the grazing lands around the community. A casual visitor might assume that the boundaries of the community are limited to the physical built environment of Masulih; however, the community extends beyond the actual town. It is by walking the paths inside and outside

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[237] Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 75.
[238] Idem.
[239] The descriptions of the topography and the paths in this section are inspired by the following texts: Allan B. Jacobs, "Making Great Streets," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 6.3–1, 6.3–2; Peter Calthorpe, "The Regional City," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus and Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 1.5–1, 1.5–8; Kevin Lynch, "The City Image and Its Elements," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 2.9–1, 2.9–8.

the town and the surrounding landscape that the boundaries of the town and the significance of the paths become meaningful to the visitor or the walker.

Masulih is a settlement strongly influenced by topography (figures 3.3 to 3.6). The topographical lines and slopes of the mountain have shaped the town's layout, in particular leading to the creation of concentrated rows of houses. As Ghulām husiyn Miʿmāriyān indicates, all the streets in Masulih follow the topography. The settlement is located on the southern slope of a mountain, and all pedestrian paths are horizantal. These pedestrian paths usually change direction by a gentle turn at the end of each narrow street. There are stairs which connect the lower paths with the upper paths.[240] As Shafiyʿi notes, creative, hard-working individuals constructed the community in a way which takes maximum advantage of the land, taking account of the slope of the mountain and the shortage of flat land. Because of this shortage, the roofs of the houses are used as pedestrian paths (figure 3.7).[241] Miʿmāriyān suggests that this use of the roofs of houses as public pedestrian paths is a distinctive characteristic of Masulih. Usually, a narrow path runs between the roofs of the houses on the lower levels and the neighbours' houses at the upper levels. Sharing the neighbour's roof for daily activities is a common routine in Masulih.[242]

At the beginning of its formation, the town had few paths; when it began to develop there emerged further paths at various heights and levels. The houses and rows of shops were built in line with these paths. With further development of the neighborhoods in the vicinity of the bazaar, more paths emerged. For quicker access to various levels of the

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[240] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 223.
[241] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 10.
[242] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 223.
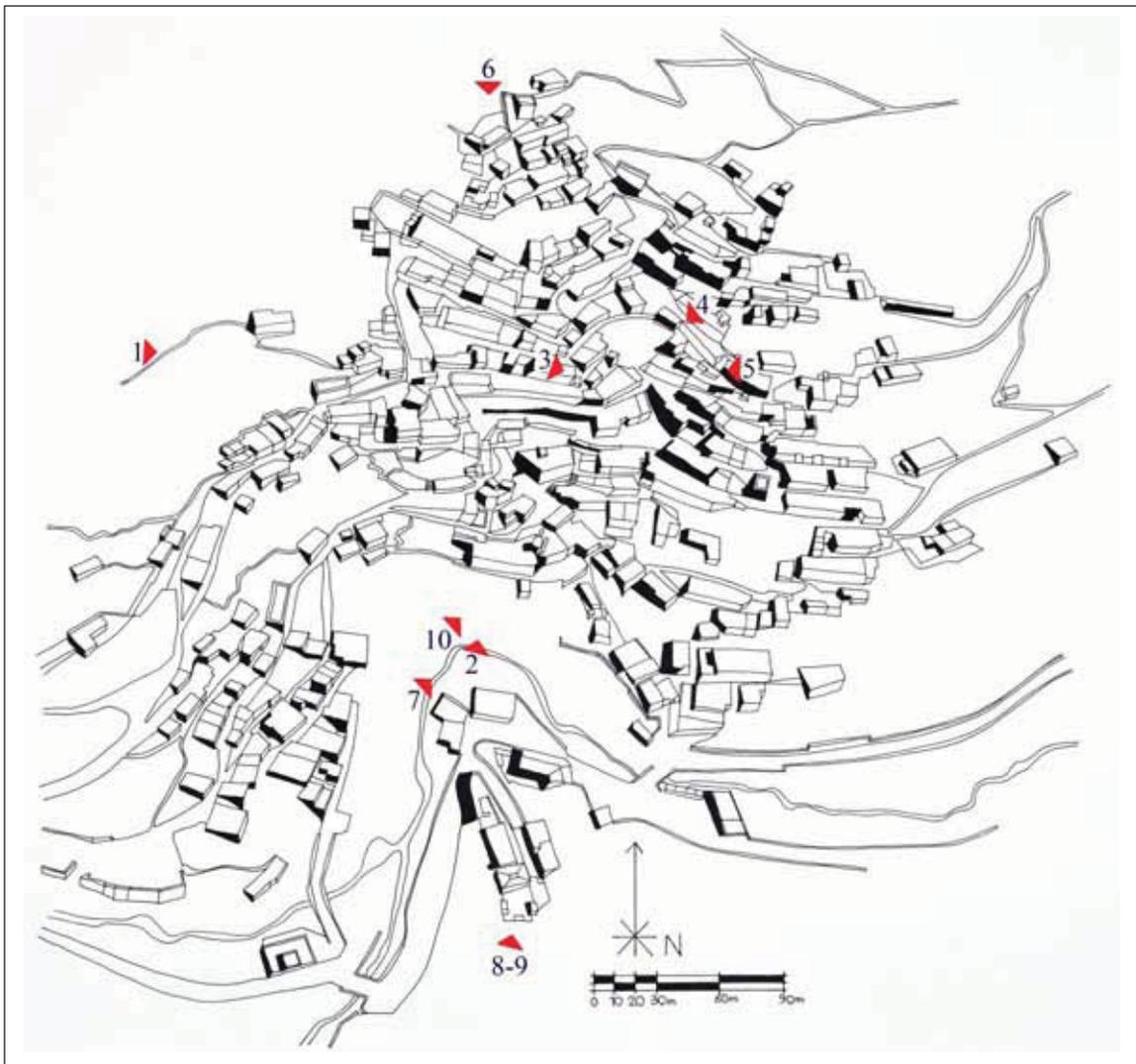
Fig. 3.3. The locations of pictures on the map. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.
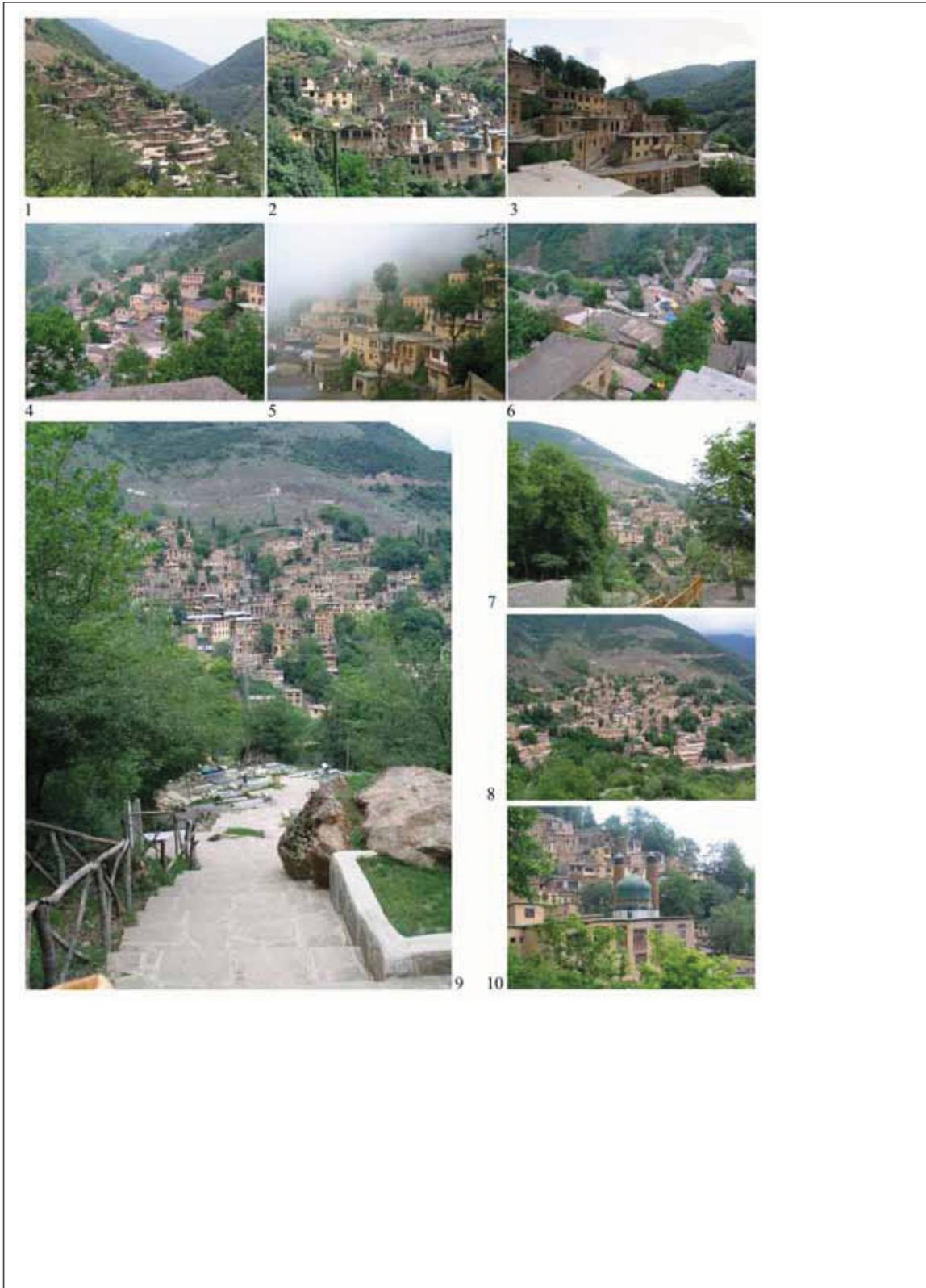
Fig. 3.4. Various photographs showing Masulih's topography. Photographs 1–10 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.3. Photographs by author, 2008.

Fig. 3.5. Topography lines. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

Fig. 3.6. Topography has influenced the overall layout of the community. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

Fig. 3.7. The connected roofs of the terrace houses. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

town, stairs were built.[243] It is difficult to distinguish Masulih's paths from each other:
they are all connected to each other by stairs, and each path has a consistent connection to
upper and lower paths. All the paths can be seen as a total unified network which the
pedestrians use. The paths are the skeletal structure of the community and the total layout
of the town is defined by the paths (figures 3.8 to 3.11).

There are three paths which are mainly used by tourists in Masulih (figure 3.12).
Fewer tourists usually walk the other paths on the various terraces. Two of these three
paths require climbing stairs; one has no stairs but it has a slope. All three reach the
bazaar. Tourists usually reach Masulih by driving the main road, which is the road from
Rasht via Fuman to Masulih. They park their car and they walk one of the three paths
towards the bazaar. The first path is the shortest path to the bazaar and has stairs in
various parts; it passes by the *Imāmzādih* and the public library and reaches the bazaar.
The second path is a combination of stairs and a sloped path and is longer than the first. It
passes by Riyhānih Bar neighborhood and ends up at the bazaar. The third path is the one
most often used by tourists; it is the longest path and has no stairs. This path is the
continuation of the main road which reaches Masulih, and tourists follow it. The main
road is wide enough for two cars to pass by while the path is narrow enough for two
persons to walk shoulder to shoulder. The continuation and transition from the main road
to the path helps visitors to walk into the town; the path leads the strangers. Visitors walk
the path to the bazaar, a place in which activities happen. While walking the path, tourists
can visit the shops, walk by the rows of shops, sit on the benches of the tea house inside
or outside, or continue their walking. Tourists usually end their walk in front of Mr.
Qāsim Khārābi's house and take pictures of the windows, and then they turn back along

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[243] Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 74.

Fig. 3.8. Aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996: the location of section lines. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.

SECTION A

0 5 10 10 20 30 40 50m
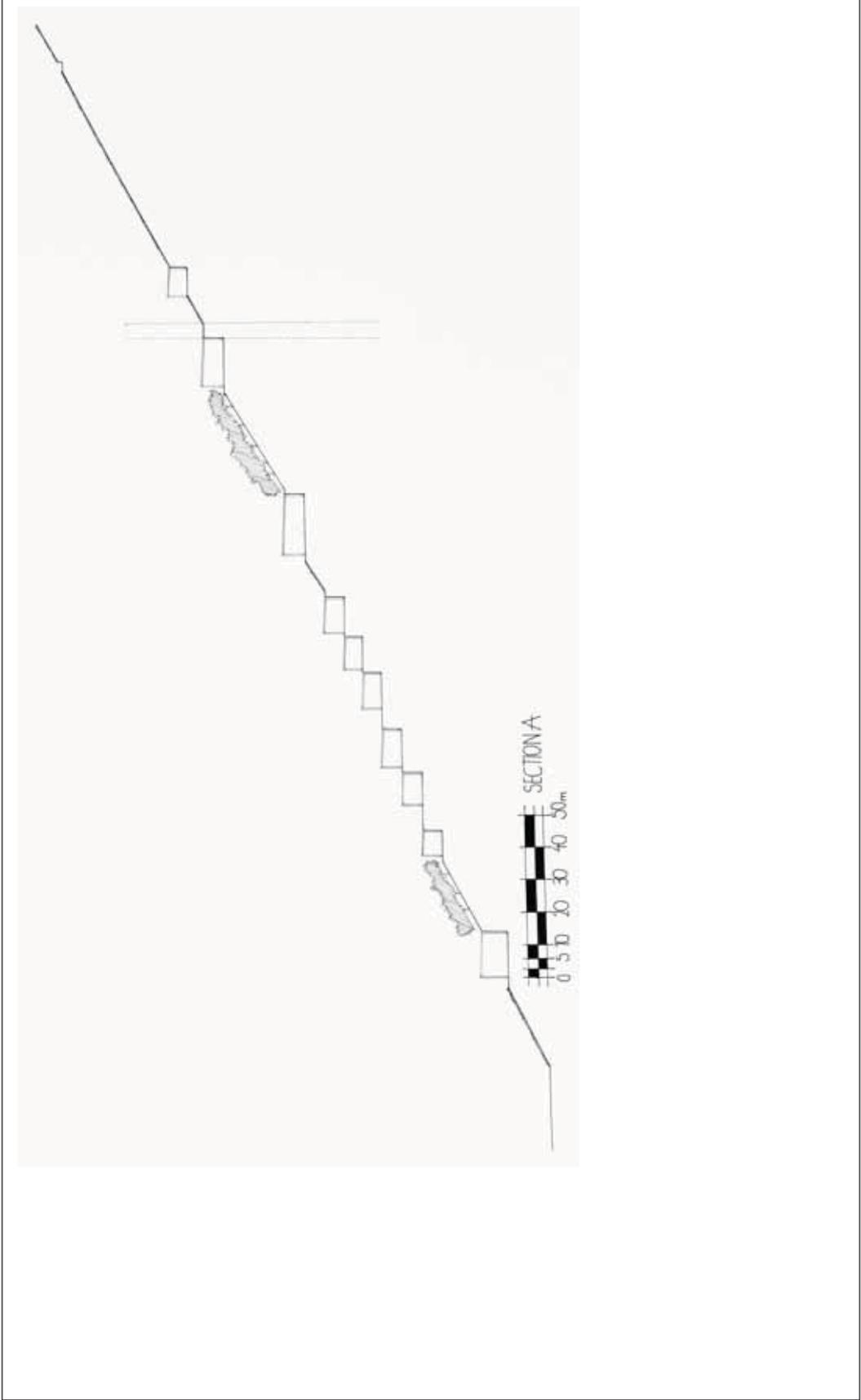
Fig. 3.9. Section A. Drawing by author, 2013.

143
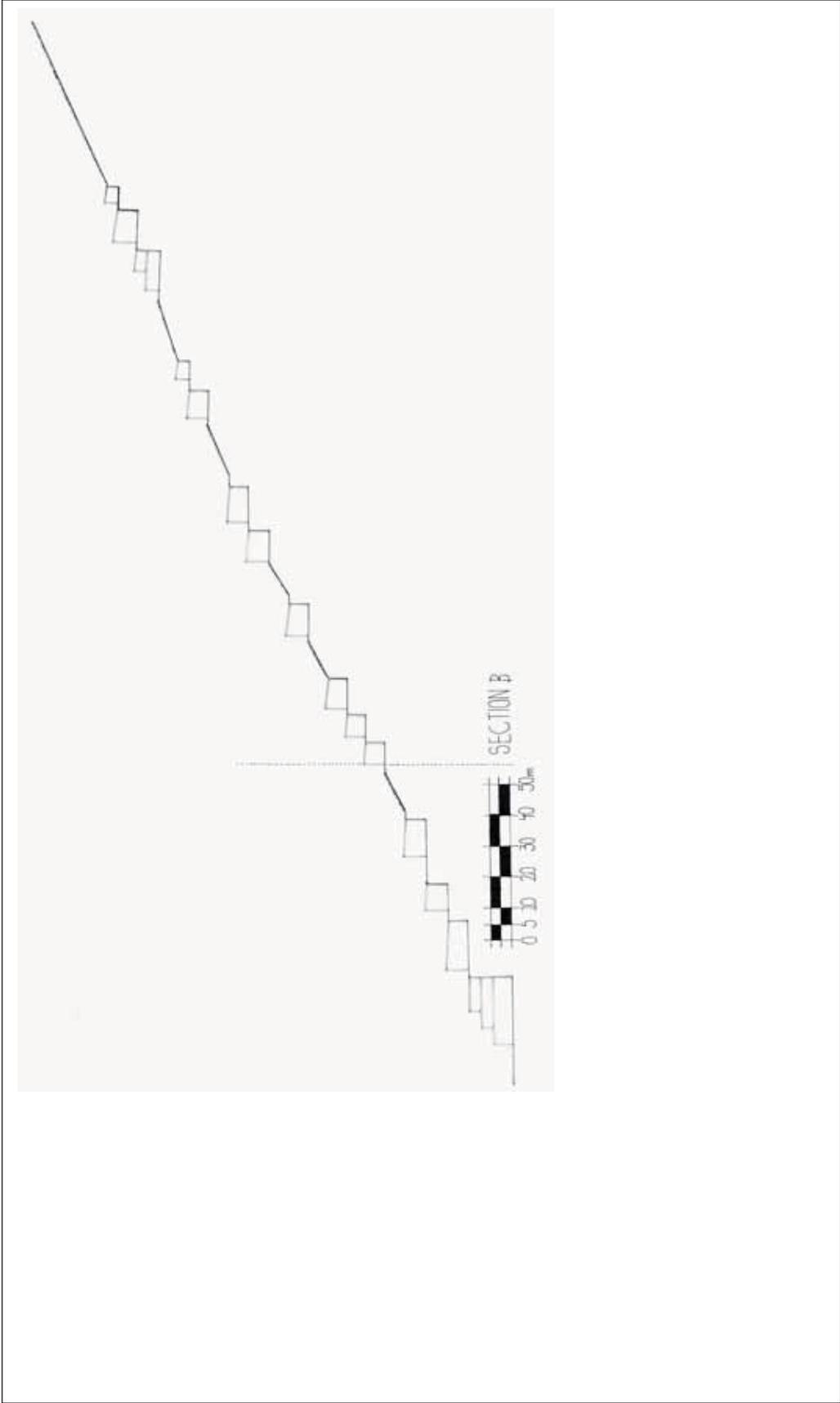
SECTION B

Fig. 3.10. Section B. Drawing by author, 2013.

144

SECTION C

0 5 10 20 30 40 50m
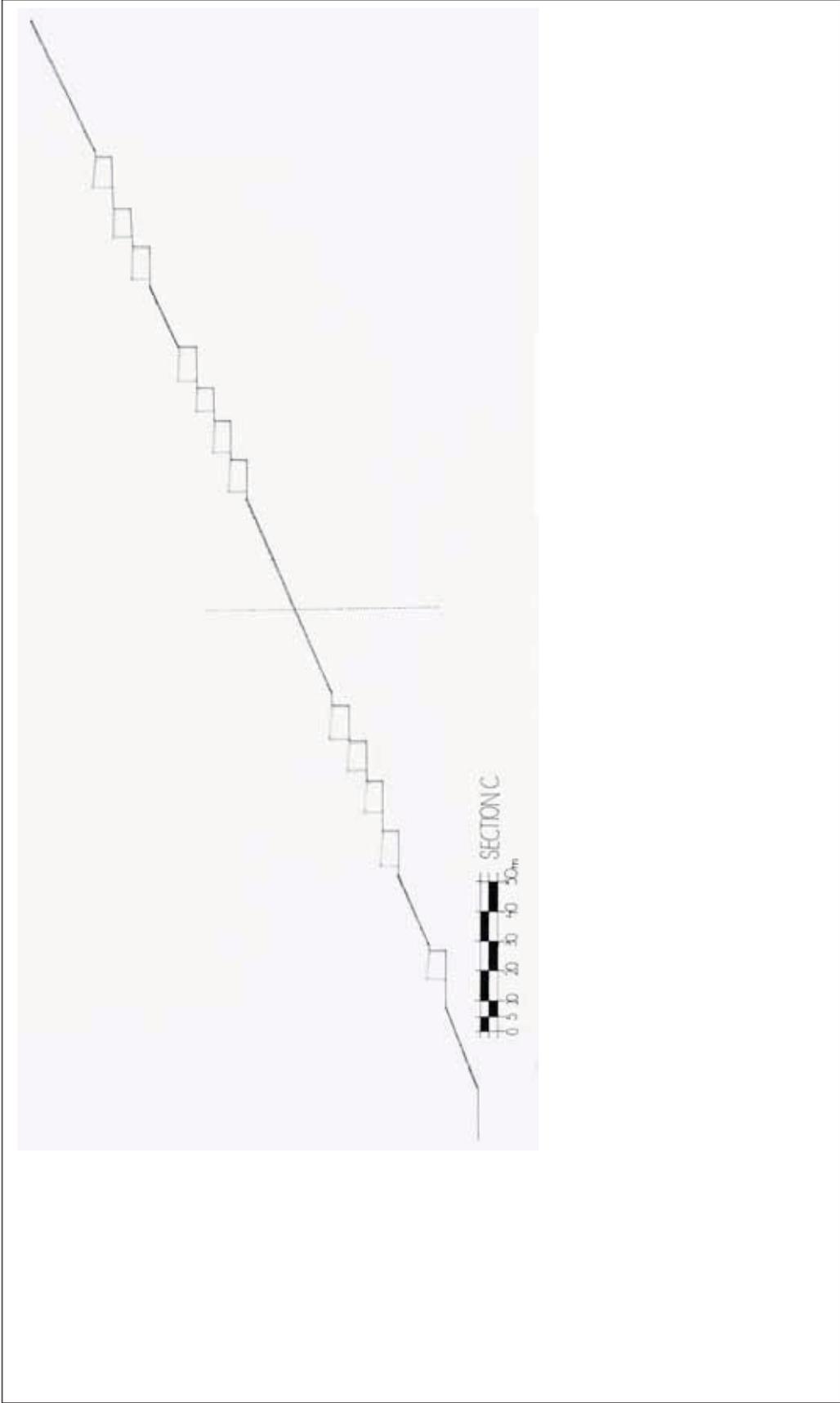
Fig. 3.11. Section C. Drawing by author, 2013.

145
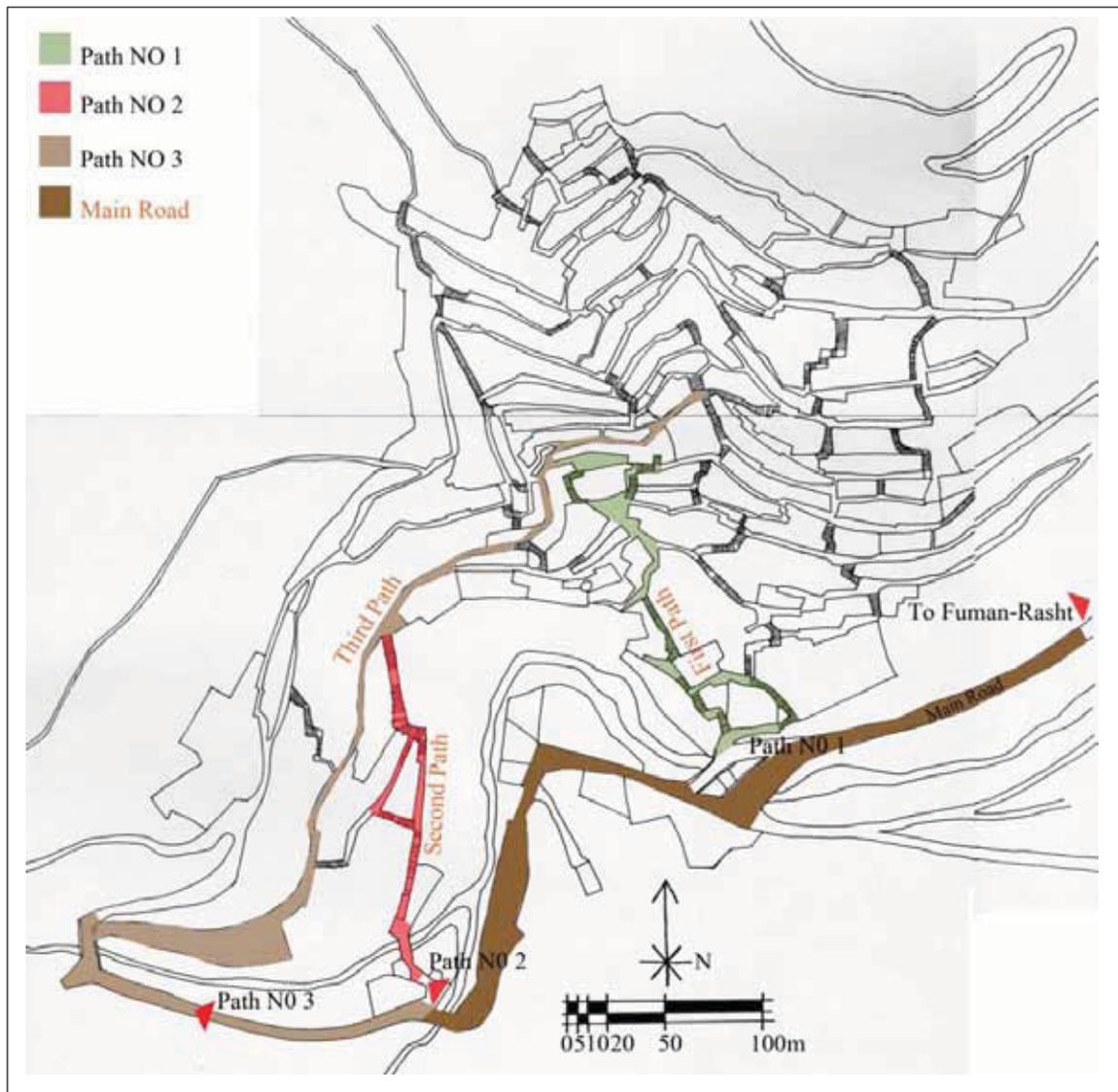
Fig. 3.12. Map of the three touristic paths. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

the same path that they already walked. The house of Mr. Qāsim Khārābi, at the end of the touristic path, is the center of attention, especially in the spring and summer during the holidays, when the third path is usually very busy. (Mr. Qāsim Khārābi's house will be discussed further in chapter four).

Due to the tourists' visits in spring and summer, the paths in the town are more crowded than in autumn and winter. In autumn and winter, the inhabitants of the town are the main walkers of the paths. The fact that the paths are for pedestrians and people can walk freely on them contributes to the liveliness of the paths; by contrast, there are streets and roads in towns that are not pedestrian friendly and as a result one can hardly meet anyone walking on them. As Allan B. Jacobs indicates, one can hardly meet anyone while driving a car or in a bus or trolley; it is on foot, walking, that one sees, meets and experiences people: public socializing and community enjoyment occurs in this way. In fact it is on foot that one can be most involved with the urban environment, including stores, houses, and people.[244]

Weavers usually sit beside the paths along which tourists mainly walk and sell their textiles. They sit either on the roof of their house or in front of their house, which is part of the path, or they sit on the path itself while weaving and selling their crafts. The weavers purchase wool from the shepherds around the community, and these paths connect the shepherds outside the town to the weavers, who spin the wool and make yarn, then weave their textiles and sell it on the paths inside the community.

The paths inside the town are covered with stone and they are narrow: two or three people can walk the paths beside each other. In autumn and winter, the paths inside the

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[244] Allan B. Jacobs, "Making Great Streets," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 6.3–1, 6.3–2.

town are exposed to the cold winds which blow from the heights of the Andarih grazing lands; one should be cautious walking the snowy paths and stairs in winter. Meanwhile in summer the paths are exposed to the direct sun and humidity. In the cold of the winter and hot humid days of summer, individuals drink tea in the tea houses in order to escape the harshness of the season.

In Masulih, the pedestrian paths in the neighbourhoods of the community are less crowded than the bazaar and the central area. When walking on those paths, one can hear the sound of one's steps and the echoes of buildings and the sounds of their inhabitants. Hearing these echoes helps us to understand and experience the environment in a more profound way. Juhani Pallasmaa claims that "the echo of steps on a paved street has an emotional charge because the sound reverberating from surrounding walls puts us in direct interaction with space; the sound measures space and makes its scale comprehensible."[245] He adds that each town has its own echo which is based on its streets, the scale of its paths and the prevailing architectural style and materials.[246] Walking in the narrow alleys of Masulih, anyone has the chance to hear his or her steps and the echo of the buildings and the environment (figures 3.13 to 3.15) .

Abuzar Janali Pur specifies that you should know how to walk in Masulih. If one is not familiar with walking in Masulih, the fatigue of climbing stairs could easily overcome one physically and psychologically. Inhabitants, especially seniors, have developed a sophisticated accessibility network for their own ease. In a community with so many steps, climbing stairs is necessarily an everyday routine. When the necessity arises of climbing very long staircases, seniors usually climb one stair, then walk the

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[245] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, and Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 51.
[246] Idem.

Fig. 3.13. The locations of pictures on the map. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.
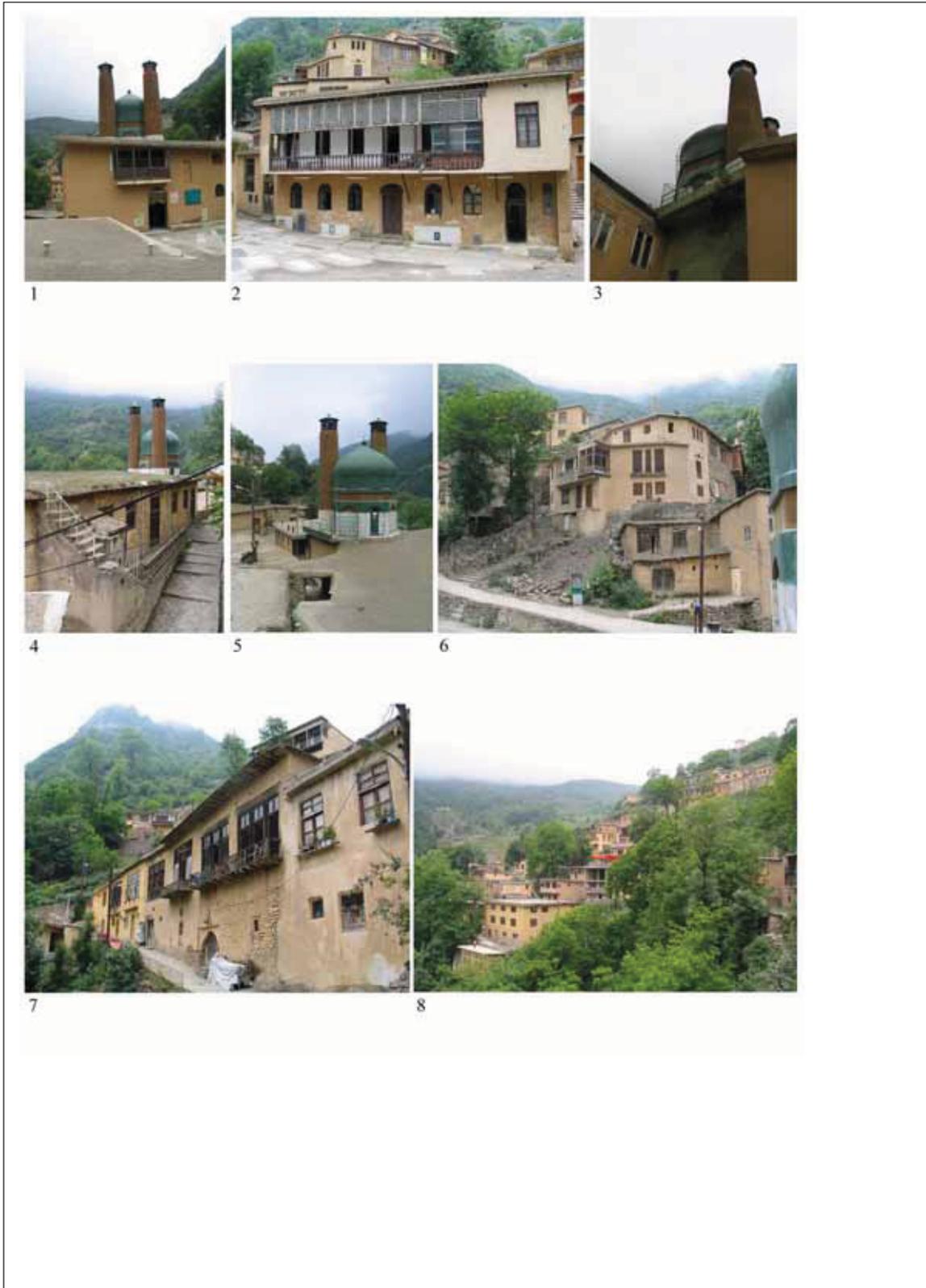
Fig. 3.14. The paths in the town. Photographs 1–8 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.13. Photographs by author, 2008.

150
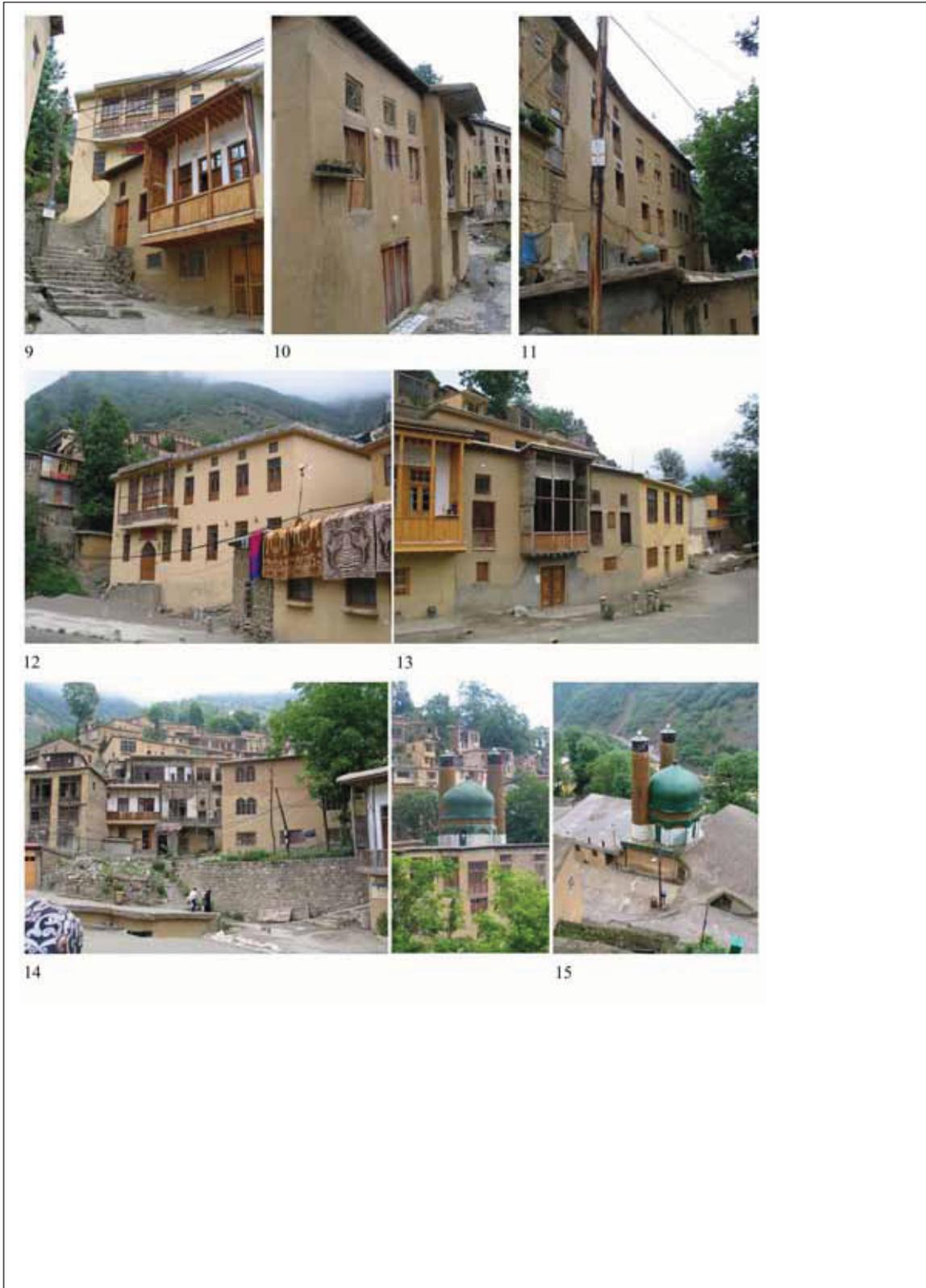
Fig. 3.15. The paths in the town. Photographs 9–15 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.13. Photographs by author, 2008.

entire width of the stair before climbing the next stair and then walking back along its width. Although this is time consuming, it is less tiring. For generations, the members of this settlement have been able to pass on their shared rules and knowledge for peaceful existence that are crucial for their survival. Their settlement in total is a physical manifestation of their co-existence with their natural surroundings.[247] Stairs in Masulih can be seen as the noblest settlement element, seeming to symbolise an individual's desire to rise above the physical boundaries of the community. As any visitor can observe, stairs in Masulih are more than climbing features; they are perfect places for gathering. They are ideal places to sit down, converse, greet and engage in the social life of the community. Walking inside the town, one's field of sight is always interspersed with individuals ascending or descending from the lower or upper neighbourhoods.

It seems that climbing and observing the environment is a distinct human desire. In this regard, Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein write that "the instinct to climb to some high place, from which you can look down and survey your world, seems to be a fundamental human instinct."[248] They argue further that "these high places have two separate and complementary functions. They give people a place to climb up to, from which they can look down upon their world. And they give people a place which they can see from far away and orient themselves toward, when they are on the ground."[249] An important element of the town of Masulih is the view corridors that the street layout affords from a pedestrian perspective. One can see most of the elevations of the community from almost all the paths and the windows of the houses. As

[247] Janali Pur, interviews.
[248] Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 316.
[249] Idem.

Khūdābakhsh points out, one can observe magnificent vistas by walking inside the community. It is rare in a city or even in a small community to be able to see general vistas of the city while walking on pedestrian paths, going to work, or from inside one's house.[250] As I mentioned before, the neighborhoods, bazaar, tea houses, mosques, *Imāmzādih*, springs, public library and houses inside the community, as well as the grazing lands and sacred shrines outside the community, are arranged, linked and related by the paths of Masulih. These paths are channels that individuals can walk; the purpose of the path is to enable one to get from one point to another, one place to another, and to knit various places together (figure 3.16).[251]

3.3 The Neighborhoods

The concept of community is vital in Islam, which supports the commitment to being a unified community. Speaking of the community, the Quran claims, "And, verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood. And I am your Lord and Cherishers: therefore fear me (and no other)."[252] A unified community requires the enhancement of the basic social units such as neighborhoods and family. Hisham Mortada specifies that Islam exceptionally regards neighborhood as the backbone of the community. This is manifested in the ethics of Masulih regarding neighborliness.[253]

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[250] Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 72.
[251] See the accessibility section in Allan B. Jacobs, "Making Great Streets," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 6.3–9.
[252] Quran, Su. 23:52
[253] Hisham Mortada, *Traditional Islamic Principles of Built Environment* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 26–27.
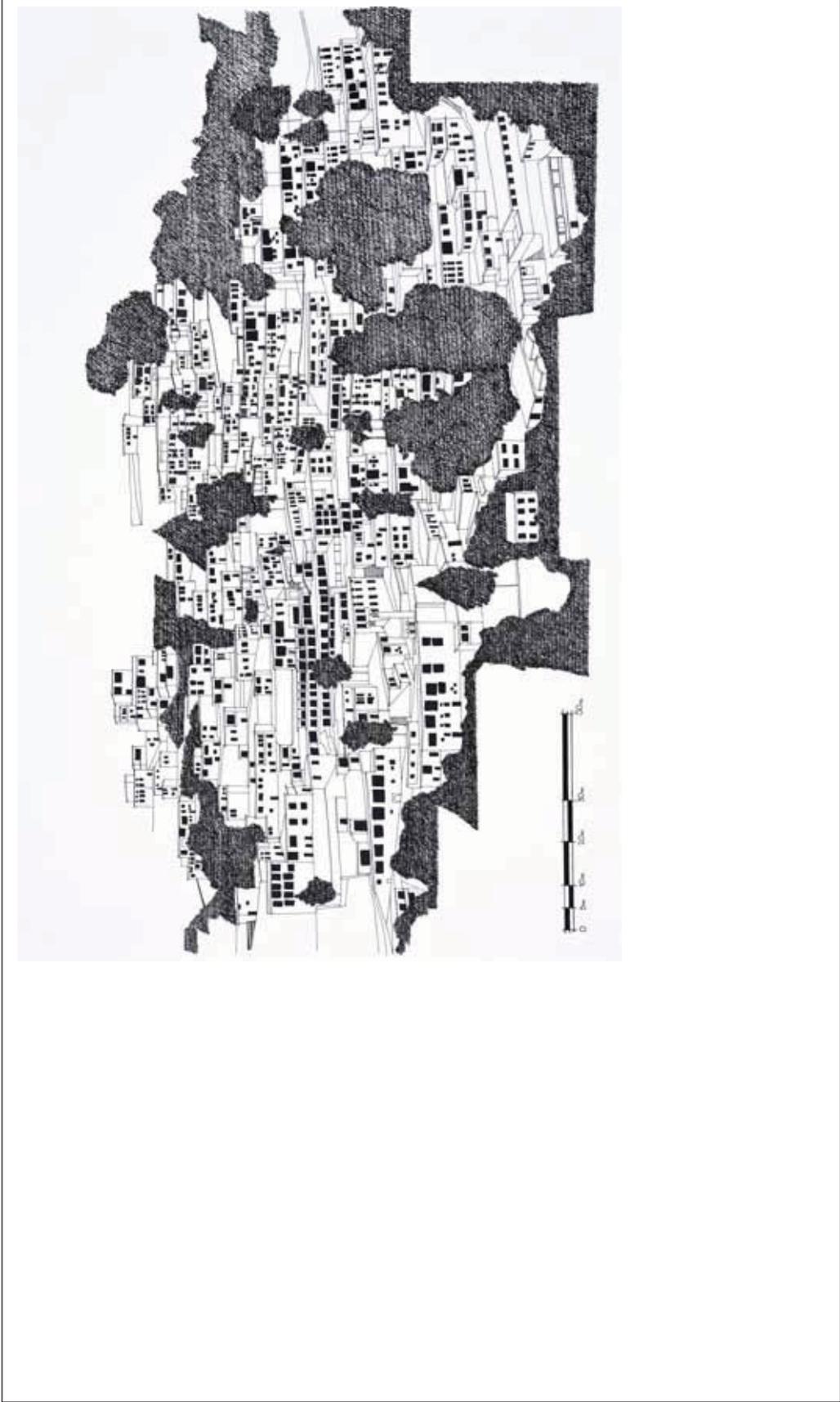
Fig. 3.16. An elevation of the community. Drawing by author, 2010.
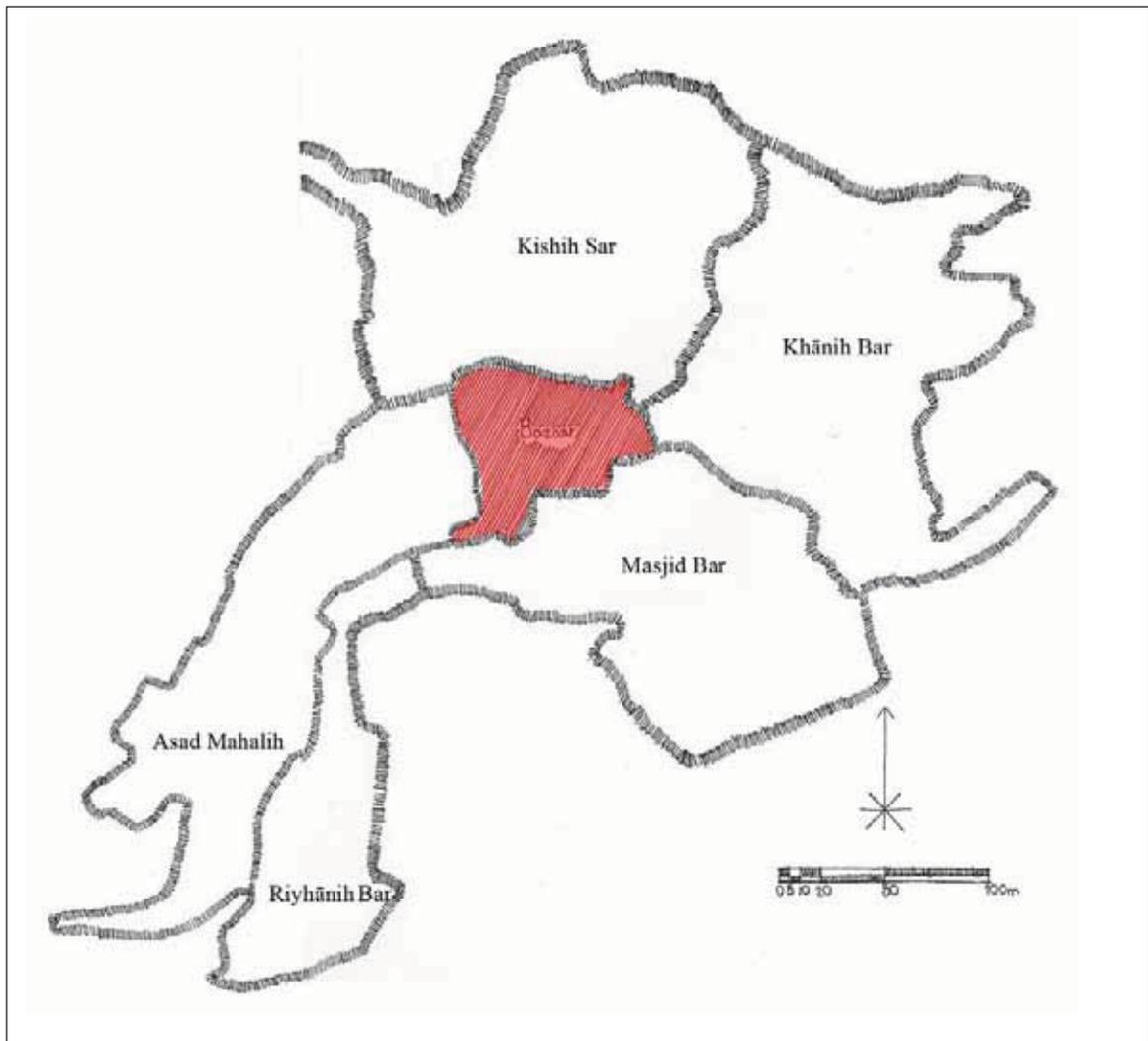
Fig. 3.17. The bazaar and different neighborhoods in Masulih. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

Masulih has five neighborhoods: Masjid Bar, Khānih Bar, Kishih Sar, Asad

Mahalih and Riyhānih Bar (figure 3.17).[254] In traditional Iranian and Arab cities,

including Masulih, a *mahalih* or neighborhood could belong to various ethnic groups;

mahalih-ha are not divided based on categories of "rich" and "poor." Usually migrants

who belong to a certain ethnic background settle in their own ethnic's neighborhood, and

this is also the case in Masulih. Each *mahalih* has its own mosque.[255]

Khūdābakhsh argues that in Masulih, cultural differences between migrants resulted

in the formation of different neighbourhoods. From the beginning, each ethnic group

settled in a certain area and gradually developed it as a neighbourhood. Immigrants from

Sabzivār and Khūrāsān settled around the *Imāmzādih* and developed the Masjid Bar and

Riyhānih Bar neighbourhoods. Kurdish and Turkish ethnic groups shaped Asad Mahalih.

Neighbourhood boundaries were important. Each ethnic group had its own mosques in its

neighbourhood.[256] For daily prayers, each neighborhood's residents attend the

neighborhood mosque, while for Friday prayers, feasts and religious mourning they

attend the Friday mosque beside the *Imāmzādih*. Social interaction and strong

neighborhood relationships are vital in Masulih, and the compact residential

neighborhoods with their connected terrace houses are successful in supporting these

ideas.

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[254] Mi˓māriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 223; Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 73.

[255] Friedrich Ragette, *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Arab Region* (Sharjah: American University of Sharjah, 2003), 51; Norbet Schoenauer, *6,000 Years of Housing*, vol. 2, *The Oriental Urban House* (New York: Garland Stpm Press, 1981), 35; Bianca, *Urban Form*, 15; Andre Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no. 1 (1994): 3–18.

[256] Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 76.

3.4 The Bazaar

The bazaar, the mosque, the public bath, the tea houses and the *Imāmzādih* are the principal public spaces in Masulih (figures 3.18 to 3.20). However, according to Khūdābakhsh, analysing the location of the town's public spaces, pedestrian paths and network of streets reveals a dominant town center which influences the access, functions and locations of the various neighbourhoods. This center is the bazaar, which is a landmark that helps everyone to determine their location. Andre Raymond indicates that the fundamental feature of traditional Irano-Afghan cities is the central market.[257] In the case of Masulih's bazaar, the topography and the human need for concentrated urban form suit each other perfectly. The residents' demand for an accessible commercial zone and the natural topographical condition of the region both required a central bazaar.[258]

The economic activities of the inhabitants of Masulih have tremendously affected the community's settlement form. The bazaar is situated in the densest, central part of the community, forming its core. All important pedestrian paths, perspectives, ceremonial, social and even cultural issues are related to the bazaar. Although the importance of economic activities in Masulih has declined since the town's heyday, the bazaar has remained central, and is still considered an active and vital urban space. Most of the town's public events and activities take place here despite the unfortunate fact that recent development of the community has neglected its centrality and left new government buildings scattered around the periphery of the town. The centralization of Masulih's bazaar has also affected the hierarchy of urban spaces in the town and the location of the

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[257] Raymond, "Islamic City, Arab City."
[258] Khūdābakhsh, "Kālbūd Shināsi Shahr-i Masulih," 71.
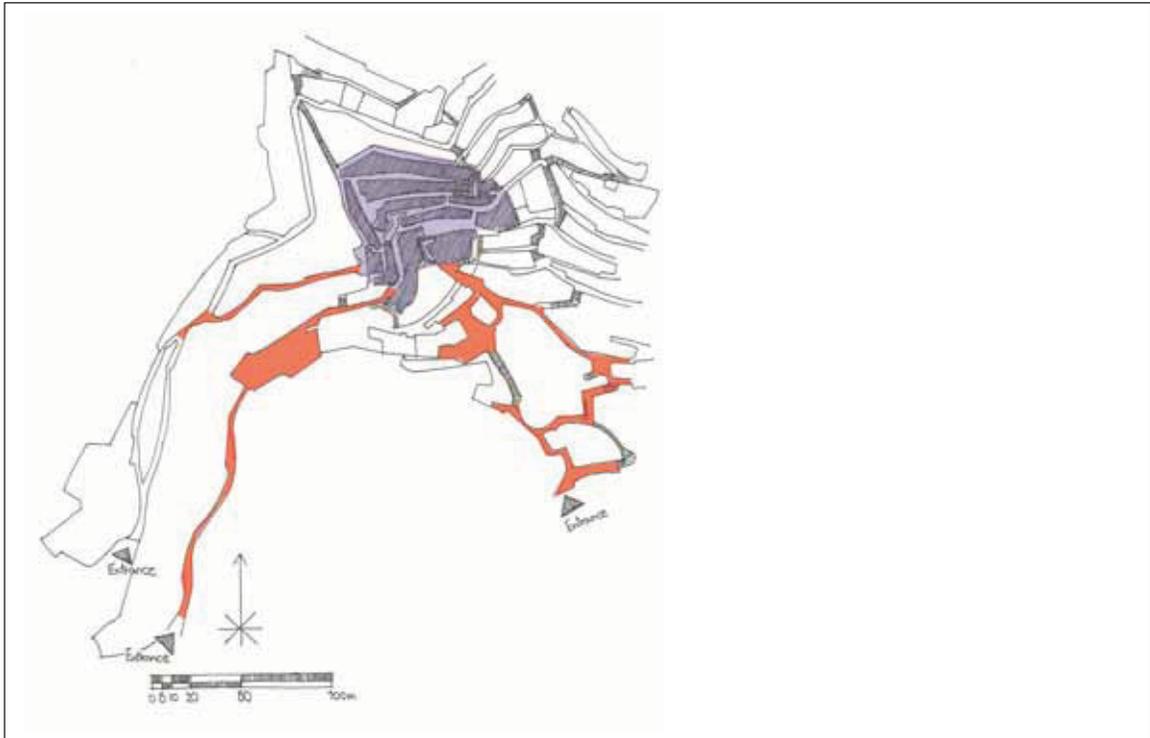
Fig. 3.18. The location of the bazaar in the central part of Masulih, and the paths which lead to the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
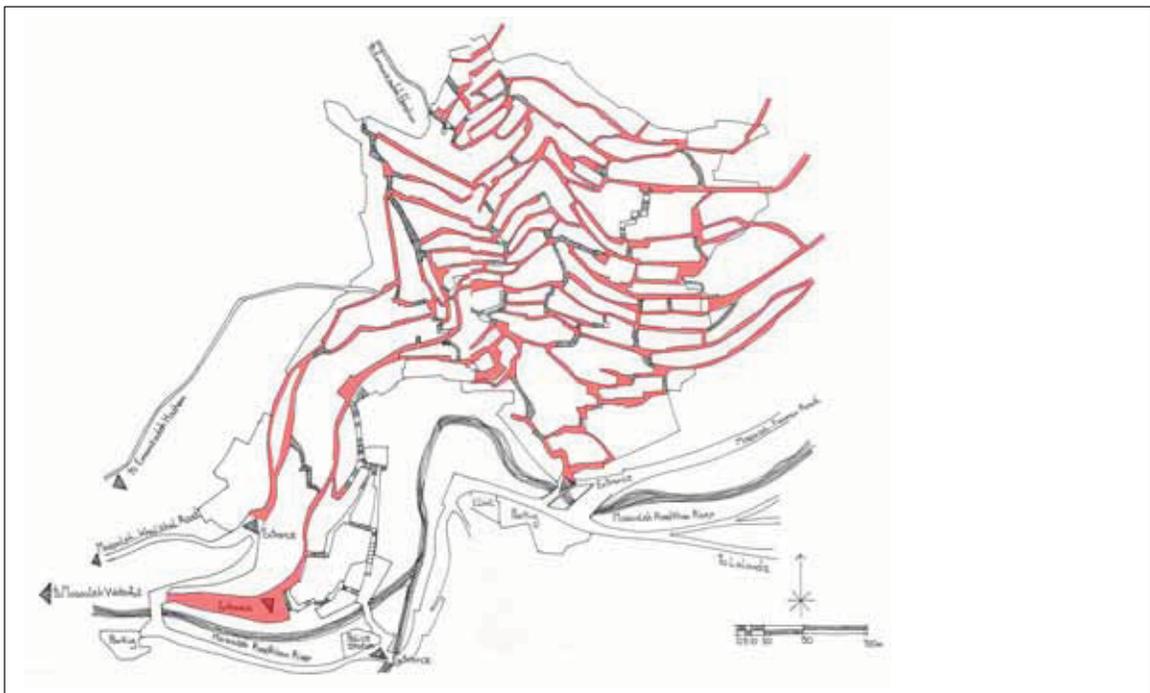
Fig. 3.19. All the pedestrian paths lead to the bazaar in Masulih. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

Fig. 3.20. The bazaar, *imāmzādih* and various mosques. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

different neighbourhoods of the community (figures 3.21, 3.22).[259] With regard to the former, the bazaar is a public space surrounded by houses, which are considered to be private spaces, although there are some semi-public spaces, such as mosques, within the neighborhoods and in the bazaar. The bazaar is a dividing point for the neighbourhoods, including the five principal neighbourhoods or *mahalih-ha*, that surround it. According to Khūdābakhsh, the bazaar therefore belongs to all the neighbourhoods.[260]

The neighbourhoods comprise about 350 houses, although in the past there were more than 600 houses. The Khānih Bar neighbourhood is the largest and is located to the east and north of the bazaar. Kishih Sar neighbourhood is to the north, while Asad Mahalih lies in the north-west, and Masjid Bar to the south and south-east. The small neighbourhood of Riyhānih Bar is in the west and southwest. Today, the borders between the neighbourhoods are not very clear.[261] The way that the topography, the roofs of the houses and the pedestrian paths harmoniously interact with each other is aesthetically interesting. The main pattern of each neighbourhood is formed by the rows of houses in line with pedestrian paths.[262] The position of Masulih's neighbourhoods around the seven storey bazaar in the heart of the community indicates that the bazaar and the commercial activity that took place there was one of the most important elements of the settlement evolution of Masulih. This is also evident in the fact that the most vital pathways of the town lead to the bazaar. All the paths in Masulih are pedestrian paths, but until about 50 years ago during spring and summer the merchants of nearby villages used the paths

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[259] Ibid., 72.
[260] Ibid., 73.
[261] Ibid., 77.
[262] Ibid., 78.

Fig. 3.21. Aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, indicating the location of the bazaar in the center of the community. Courtesy of the National Cartographic Center.
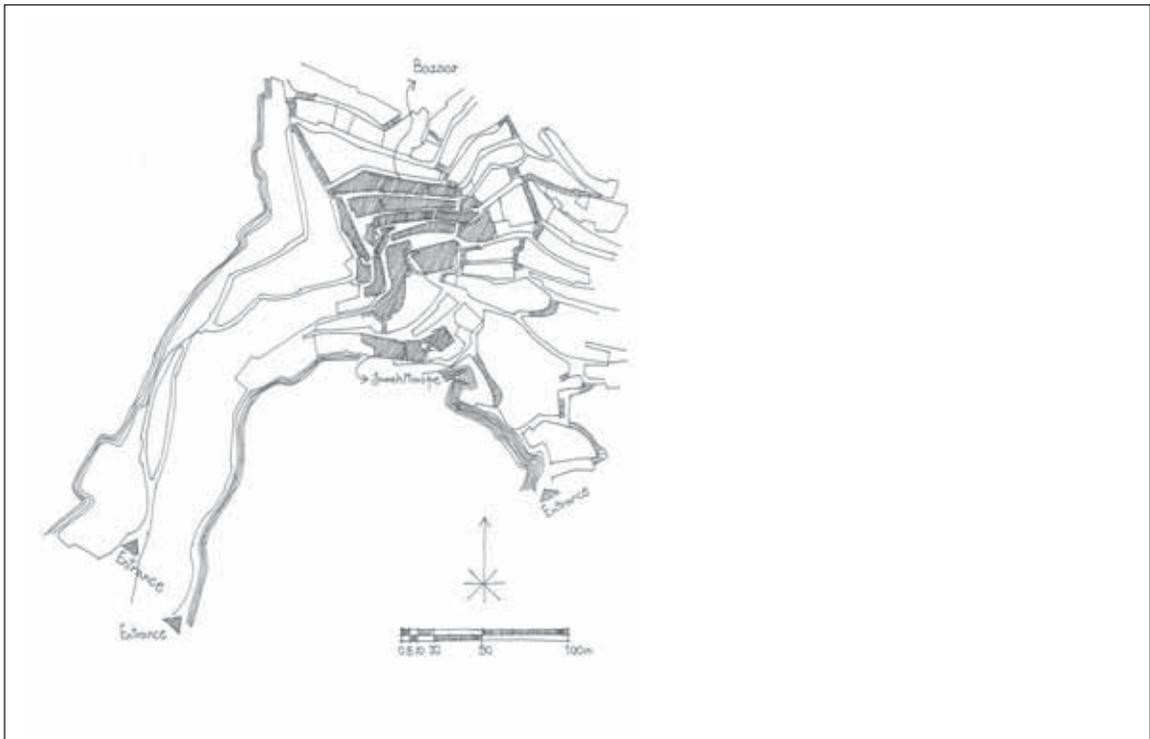
Fig. 3.22. The location of the bazaar in the urban environment. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

inside the community to transport people and goods to and from the bazaar by mules, horses and in some cases even camels. Today, individuals transport their goods by carts.

The bazaar consists of rows of 400 small modular shops on seven floors. The seventh level functions as the wholesale section (figures 3.23 to 3.25).[263] There are shops on both sides of the pedestrian pathway on the ground floor of the bazaar, but on the first, second and third levels the shops are located on one side of the path only. Some of the shops are two storeys and have access to the main path by a wooden ladder.[264] The bazaar was divided into several sections or *rāstih*, each presided over by merchants of a particular trade. There were a shoemakers' *rāstih*, a knife-makers' *rāstih*, a blacksmiths' *rāstih*, and a *rāstih* for selling charcoal. These *rāstih-ha* are either abandoned or few masters are working there. Currently, there is only one shoemaker, one knife maker, one scissor maker and a black smith. The rest of the artisans have either passed away or migrated to the larger cities. Chapter five of this research will attempt to survey the last craftsmans and their artifacts.

The bazaar takes the form of a narrow path defined by narrow shops on both sides. When the bazaar is closed one sees rows of shops with closed wooden doors; when the bazaar is open and active, by walking along the path one can see inside the shops and observe the shop keepers and commodities. The openness of the small shops matter: this invites the walker inside. There is a quality of transparency to the bazaar: there is no barrier between the paths and the interiors of the shops; when the shops are open, the paths and the shops are unified (figures 3.26, 3.27).

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[263] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 10; Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 216; Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 229; Sūtudih, *Az Astārā Ta Istar Abād*, 132; Marcel Bazin, *Le Talech : Une region ethnique au nord de l'Iran* (Mashhad: Astan Qods Razavi Publication, 1367), 568.
[264] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 229.
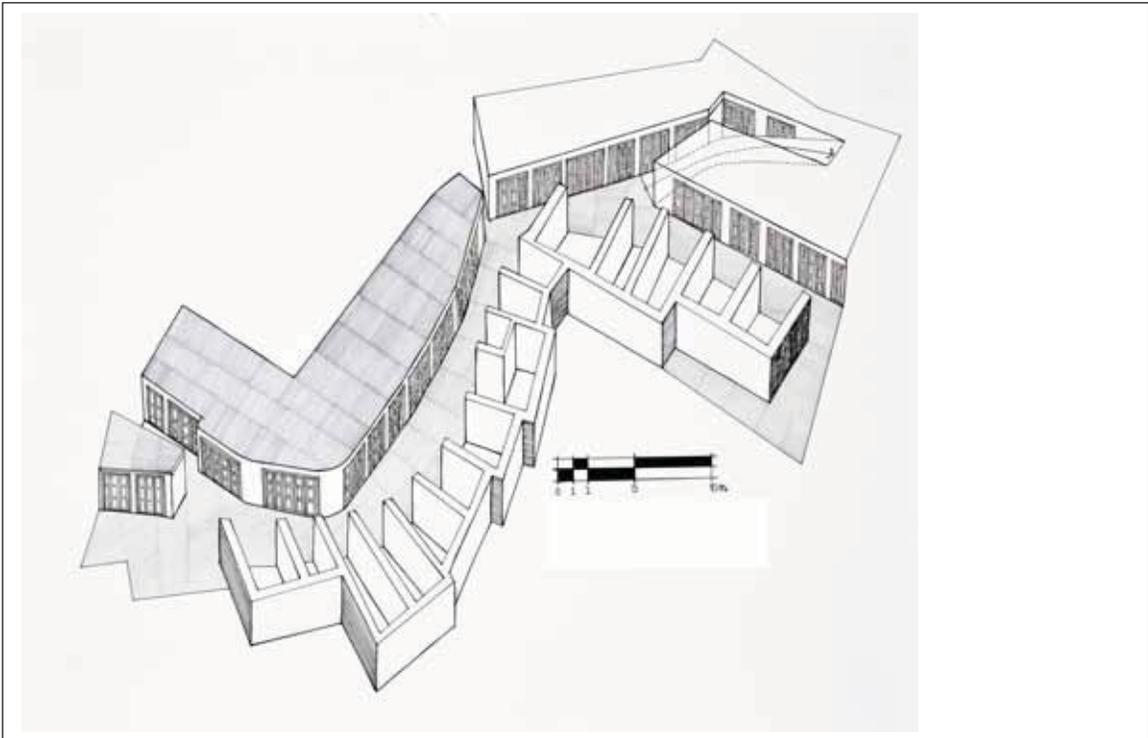
Fig. 3.23. Perspective of the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
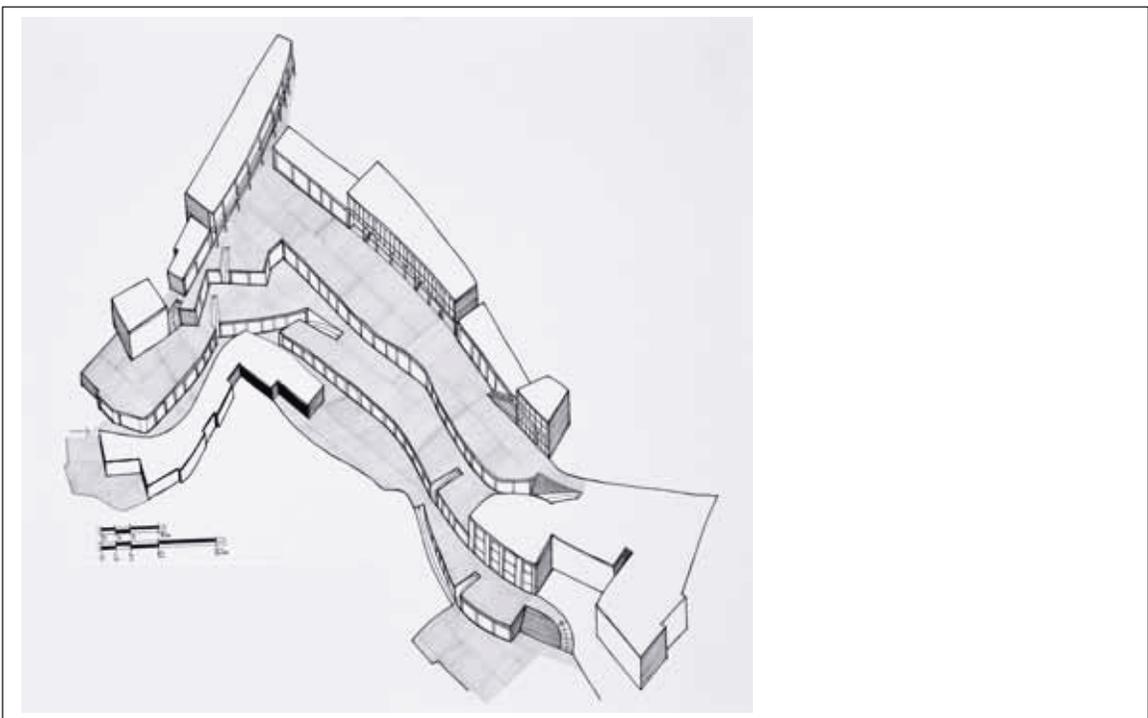
Fig. 3.24. Masulih's bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
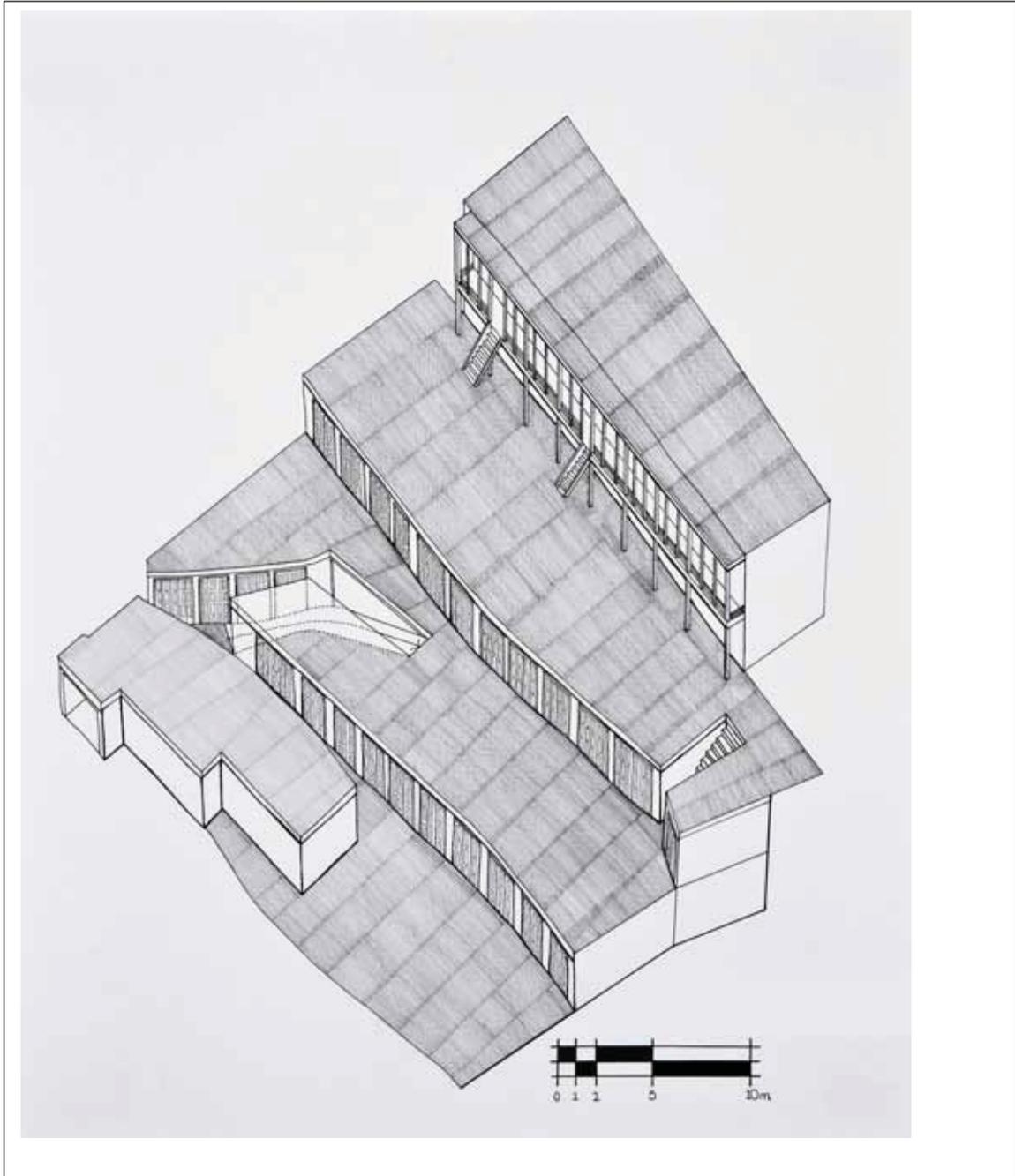
Fig. 3.25. Perspective of the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
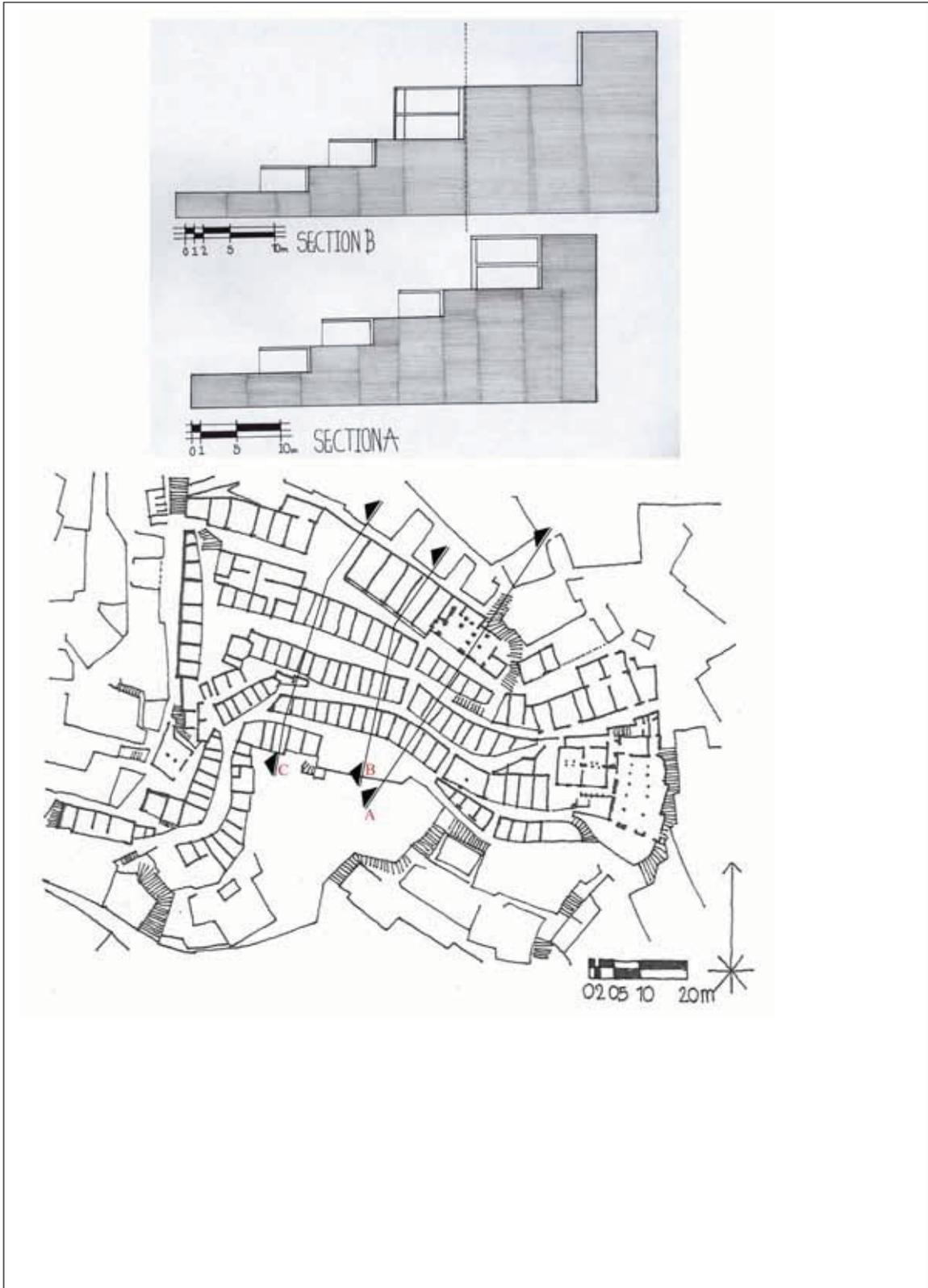
Fig. 3.26. Sections of the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

SECTIONC

0 1 2   5   10m

0 2 05 10   20m
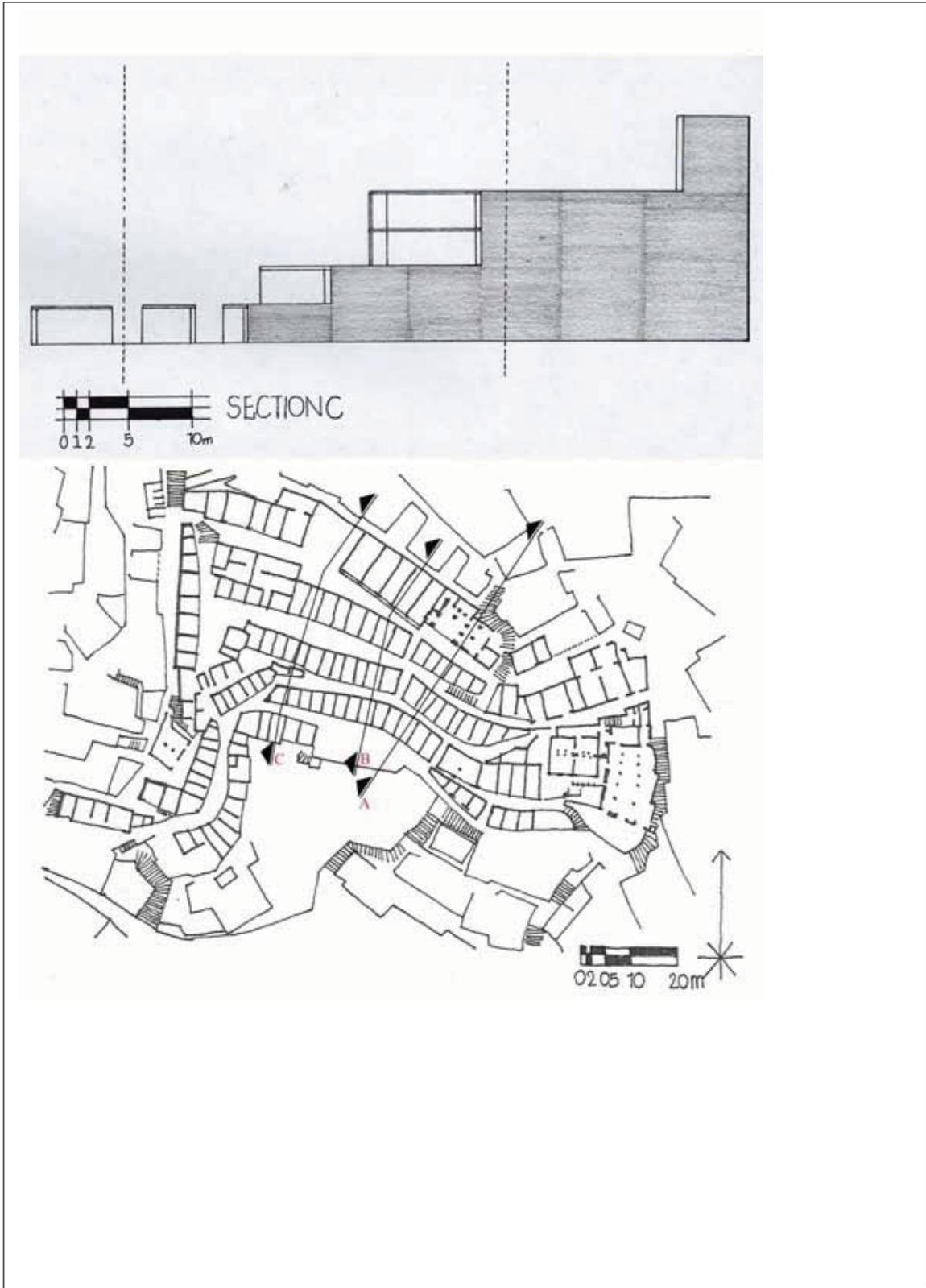
Fig. 3.27. Section of the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

Inside the bazaar, there is a hidden system for transportation, merchandising activities, storing, and going back and forth. The path through the bazaar is wide enough for three people to walk shoulder to shoulder, or for a mule or line of mules. When the bazaar is crowded the crush of people is unavoidable.[265]

The shops share the same characteristics with each other: they have the same height, and in details such as doors they are similar. All the shops have wooden doors, with almost the same height, width, proportions, material and color. The way the doors of the shops open and close is also similar. All the shops are rectangular in plan. It is hard to distinguish one shop from another; they are all connected and share the same features (figures 3.28 to 3.30).[266]

Bill Steen, Athena Steen and Eiko Komatsu believe that in traditional societies the street is a place where life happens. It is a place where people walk, converse, rest; where children play and explore the world of adults. The forms of transportation present on any streets may vary, including bicycles, animals, carts or people on foot. The street is a place where houses and shops extend into the street. People sit in front of their houses or shops while selling, chatting and drinking. The street is the place for shops, food stands, small cafes, public and religious buildings. It is a place for various events.[267]

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[265] See the transparency section in Allan B. Jacobs, "Making Great Streets," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003), 6.3–5.

[266] See the complementarity section in Allan B. Jacobs, "Making Great Streets," in *Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design*, ed. Donald Watson, Alan Plattus, Robert Shibley (Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill Professional, 2003). 6.3–5.

[267] Eiko Komatsu, Athena Steen, and Bill Steen, *Built by Hand: Vernacular Buildings around the World* (Layton, Korea: Gibbs Smith Publishers, 2003), 385–86.
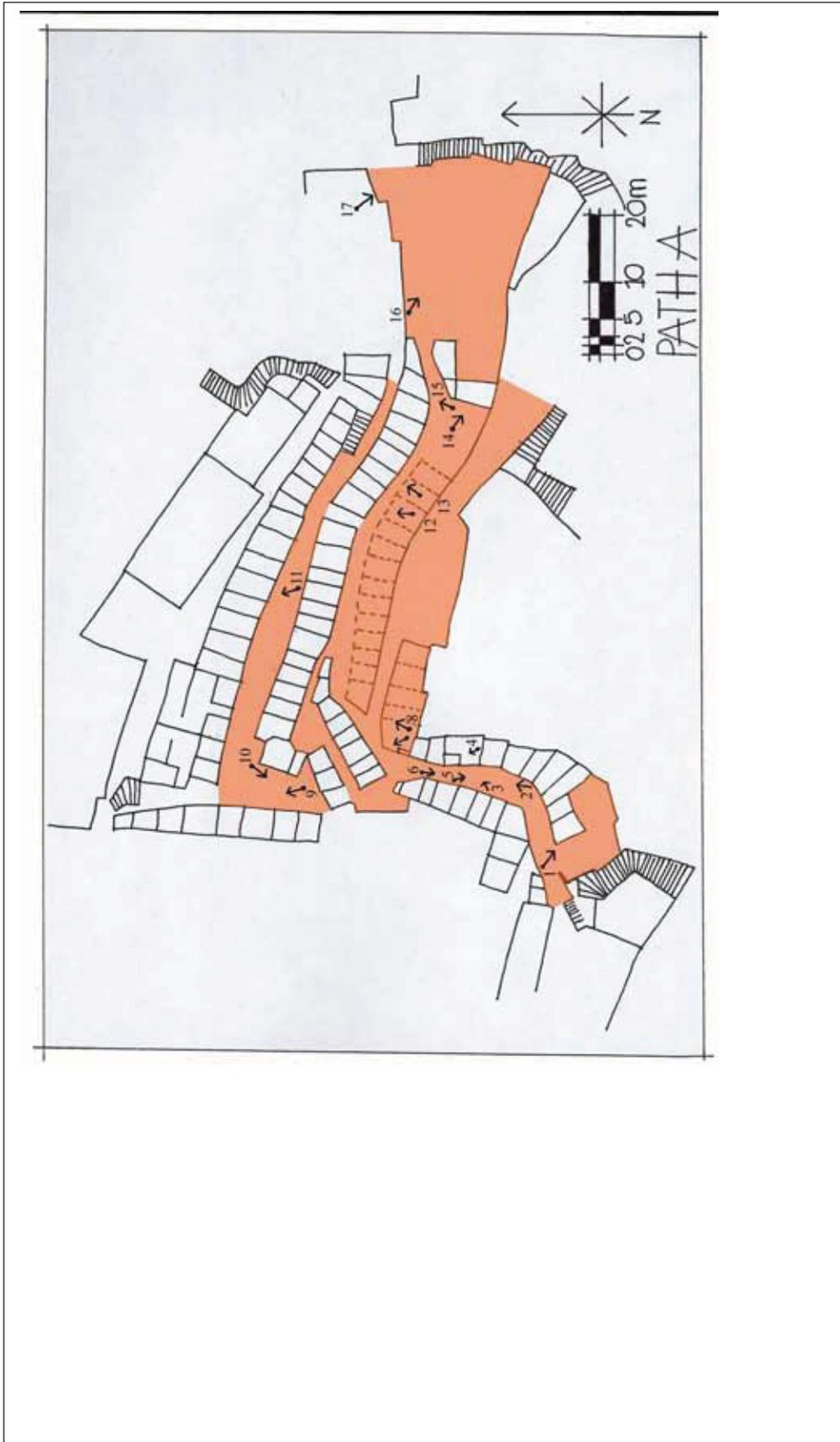
Fig. 3.28. Path A, which passes through the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
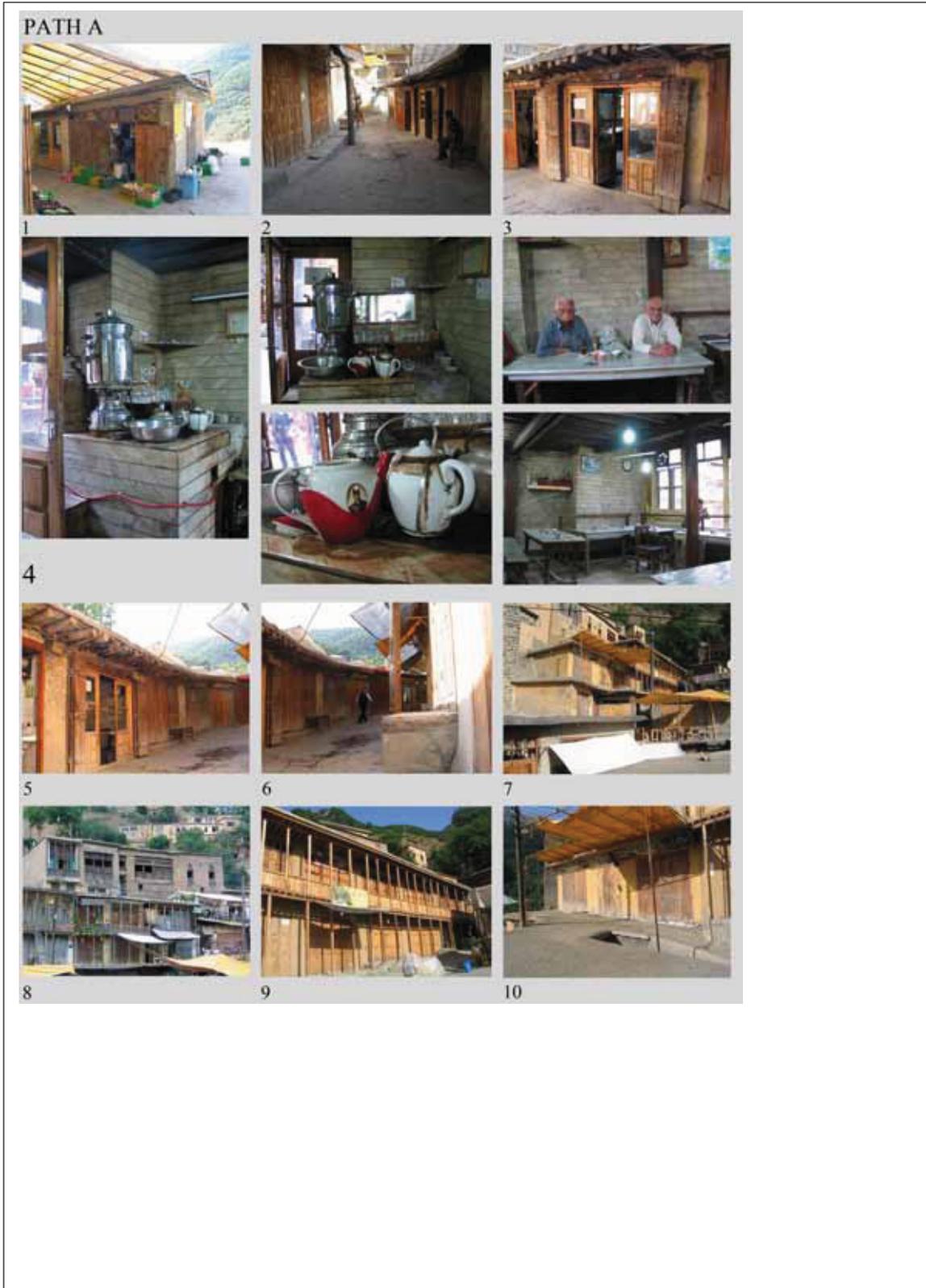
Fig. 3.29. Photographs showing path A. Photographs 1–10 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.28.
Photographs by author, 2010.
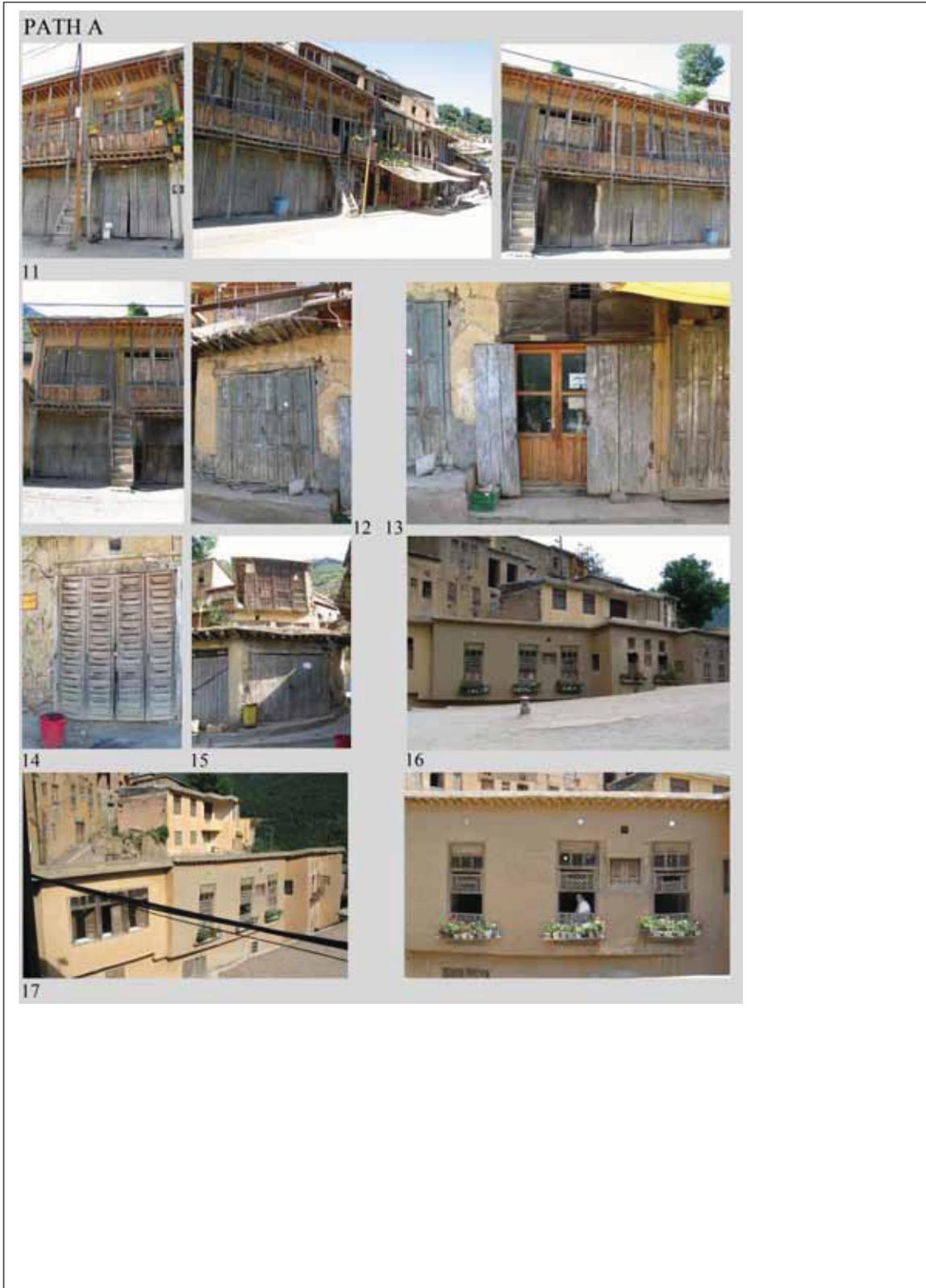
Fig. 3.30. Photographs showing path A. Photographs 11–17 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.28. Photographs by author, 2010.

The bazaar of Masulih is not solely a commercial center.[268] On religious holidays (celebratory or mourning) the bazaar converts to a social space where individuals devote themselves to their religious beliefs. Despite the ongoing religious events, on these occasions people hang around, buying and selling. The bazaar functions as the center of the community, both physically and culturally, and provides a powerful demonstration of the ability of the built environment to manifest the ways of life of its inhabitants. Not only are all the important pedestrian paths of the town connected to the bazaar, but it seems that all the news and events flow there like a powerful stream (figures 3.31, 3.32).

3.5 The Tea Houses

The origins of the first tea houses in Persia date back to Shah Abbs I of the Safavid dynasty (1577–1629). During this era and later, tea houses were places where idlers, intellectuals, artists, poets, musicians, high officials and well-to-do individuals or even the *shāh* would gather. Until the introduction of TV and radio in the large cities, tea houses continued to provide places where people could gather to communicate, obtain news, play games, and listen to recitations.[269]

A traditional tea house is a place where soft drinks such as tea, light meals and water pipes are prepared. Smoking water pipes is considered enjoyable in the tea house; usually there are many water pipes bubbling. Tea houses are usually decorated with photographs, paintings, pictures of athletics, city scenes, historic places, portraits of kings

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[268] The bazar is not only a marketplace. The bazaar functions as a social institution, including commercial, political, social and religious activities. It is a center for communication, commerce and transactions. See Willem Floor, "BAZAR ii. Organization and Function," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1989, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bazar-ii. See also Michael E. Bonine, "BAZAR i. General," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1989, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bazar-i.

[269] See Ali Al-e Dawud, "COFFEEHOUSE," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 1992, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/coffeehouse-qahva-kana-a-shop-and-meeting-place-where-coffee-is-prepared-and-served.

Fig. 3.31. The locations of the pictures on the map. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.
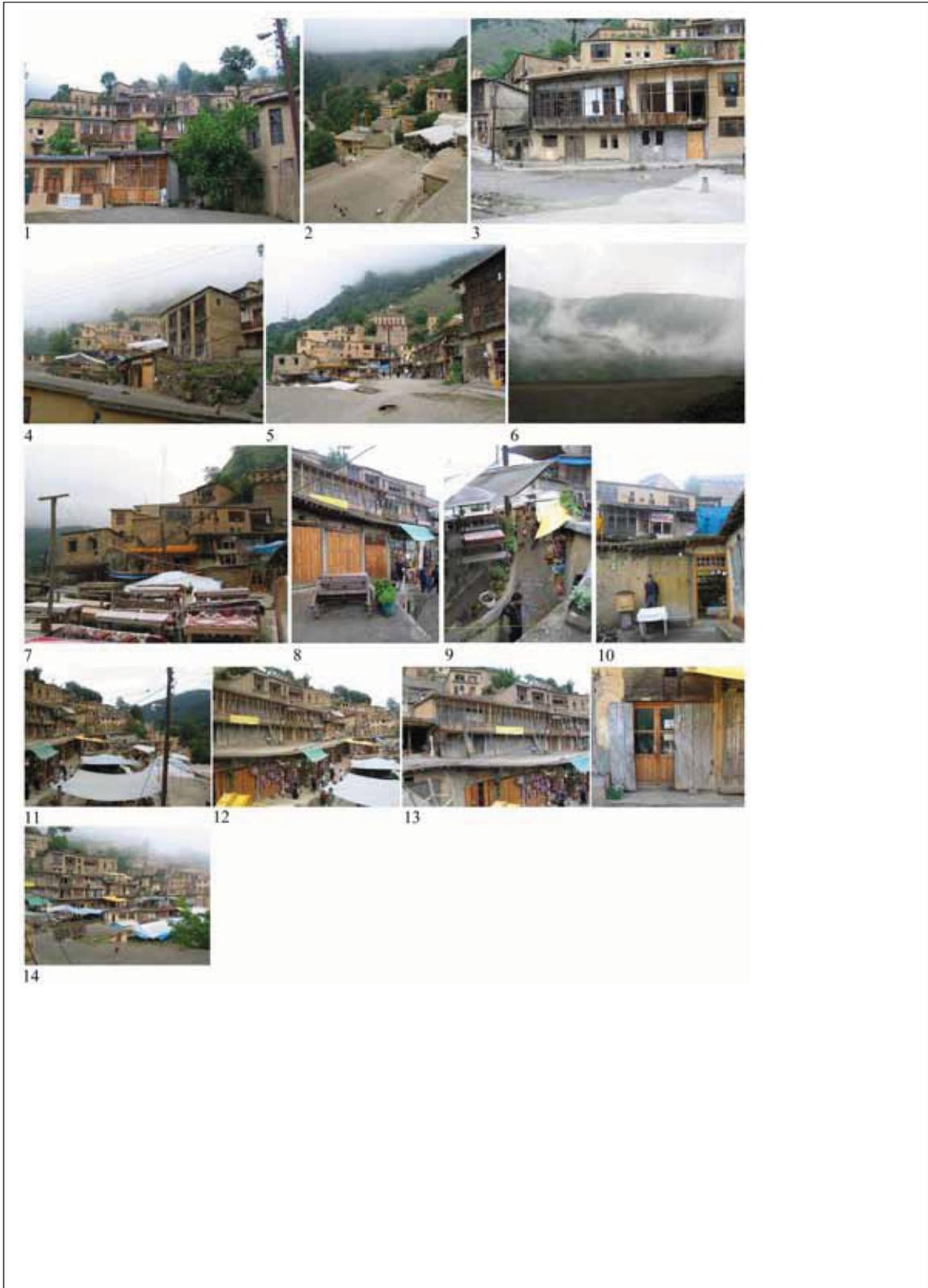
Fig. 3.32. Bazaar of Masulih. Photographs 1–14 are keyed to the map in fig. 3.31. Photographs by author, 2010.

and high officials, palace scenes, as well as teapots, lights, bells, bowls, pipes, guns and other decorative items. Ali Al-e Dawud, a scholar of Persian tea houses, believes that a tea house can be a meeting place to drink, listen to poets, poetry-reciters, and story-tellers, and play games such as chess. The tea house operates from morning prayer time until late in the night. Usually during the afternoons and sunsets the tea house is crowded with customers.[270]

Reading poems was an important ceremony in the tea house. Shahri points out that poets used to exchange their poems with each other inside the tea house. Young poets had the chance to enter the discussion and show their abilities in literature and reciting poetry. During such events the audience listened to new poems and stories. Many new poems based on the creativity of poets were narrated. There were usually special hours for such events. Master poets and teachers gathered in the tea house and disciples or new poets presented their poems. The person who was presenting his poems should be really talented, otherwise his work would not be accepted by the masters or the audience.[271] Al-e Dawud writes that the poet used to sit in the center of the tea house, on a wooden bench covered by Persian carpet, reciting their own work as well as pieces from *Shāhnāmih* or *The Book of the Kings* by Ferdowsi, excerpts from *Rūmuz-i Hamzah, Iskandar Nāmih, Hūsiyn-i Kūrd* and others. In a large tea house, sometimes two or three poets used to perform. After finishing their performance, the poets received rewards from customers. A *mūllā* also used to sit in the tea house and advise people about Islamic Law, morals and prayers. Sometimes he entertained people with poetry or historical tales. Dervishes also performed sermons about the temporality of wealth, fickleness of the world, and

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[270] Idem.
[271] Ja'far-i Shahri, *Tarikh-i Ijtimā'i-i Tehran Dar qarn-i Sizdahūm*, vol. I (Tehran: Muasisih Khadamāt-i Farhangi Risā, 1378), 402.

worthlessness of pleasure. In the month of Mūharram mourners would perform the martyrdom of Imām Hūsiyn in the tea house. The *ruzih-khān* or the narrator of the martyrdom would recite the story. He would stand in front of a large painting or *pardih* and narrate by pointing to the scenes illustrating the story of the martyrdom.[272] Another significant ritual that used to be performed in the tea house was *lūng bandān*, a ceremony in which a journeyman was accepted as a master of a trade. The transition from journeyman to master marked an elevation in social status, and Shahri writes that this improvement from the position of journeyman to master had be approved by masters in the same guild or *sinf*. In this event, a disciple in, for example, a bakery would be advanced to a perfect baker or a journeyman carpenter would be announced and recommended as a master in carpentry. All the masters would be invited and would celebrate this significant event by distributing pastries and soft drinks such as tea. After this event, the former disciple would be called a master.[273]

As Jaʿfar-i Shahri, another scholar of Persian tea houses, indicates, the tea house keeper should be socially well-behaved and have a sense of respect for everyone. Usually tea house keepers are retired soldiers or athletes or respected individuals within the neighborhoods. One of the vital characteristics of a tea house keeper is that if a person does not pay for his tea for a month or even for a year, the tea house keeper should not object to the customer, given his generosity, even if the customer invited ten guests without paying for their tea. He should keep the account and ask for payment whenever the customer is able to pay. He should respect and behave towards everyone equally. He should also respect seniors, aristocrats, and descendants of the prophet Muhammad or

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[272] See Al-e Dawud, "COFFEEHOUSE."
[273] Shahri, *Tarikh-i Ijtimāʿi-i Tehran*, 405–6.

sayyid.[274] The other principal employees who used to manage the tea house were the

ūstād or cashier, the *chaiy-bidih,* who was responsible for the supplies of tea and pouring

tea, the *vardast,* or assistant to the *chaiy-bidih,* the *istikan jam'-kūn,* who collected the

used tea cups, the *jārchi,* who took the accounts of the customers and the *qandi*,

responsible for sugar supplies.[275]

There were three reasons for the decline of the tea houses in Persia: the introduction

of radio in 1940, the increasing popularity of television after 1958, and the introduction of

modern cafes and restaurants. As a result, the custom of listening to stories and poems

gradually disappeared and the number of active tea houses in large cities began to

decline.[276]

However, tea houses in Masulih are still vital places for the inhabitants to gather.

Approaching the bazaar of Masulih from the main path, one sees that among the small

rows of shops there are restaurants and tea houses. Here, visitors can settle down and

enjoy the atmosphere of the bazaar while having a cup of tea. Stepping into a tea house,

the first impression is of a place with plenty of wooden benches and tables covered with

farsh-hā or carpets. Sitting on one of the benches, customers have a view of the

pedestrian path and the green slope of the mountain. In addition to visitors, the inhabitants

of Masulih are also attached to the tea houses. It seems that every inhabitant owns a cup

in the tea house for morning and afternoon tea (figure 3.33).

The tea houses contribute greatly to the quality of daily life in Masulih and take

maximum advantage of open-air spaces. The tea houses of Muminiyān, Qanbar Abād and

Gūzar use pedestrian terraces for their wooden benches. Muminiyān's kitchens are part of

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[274] Ibid., 398–400.
[275] See Al-e Dawud, "COFFEEHOUSE."
[276] Idem.

1 Qanbar Abād's tea house

2 Gūzar's tea house

3 Muminiyān's tea house

4 Hājī 'izat's tea house

5 Shūjā'-i Askar-pur's tea house
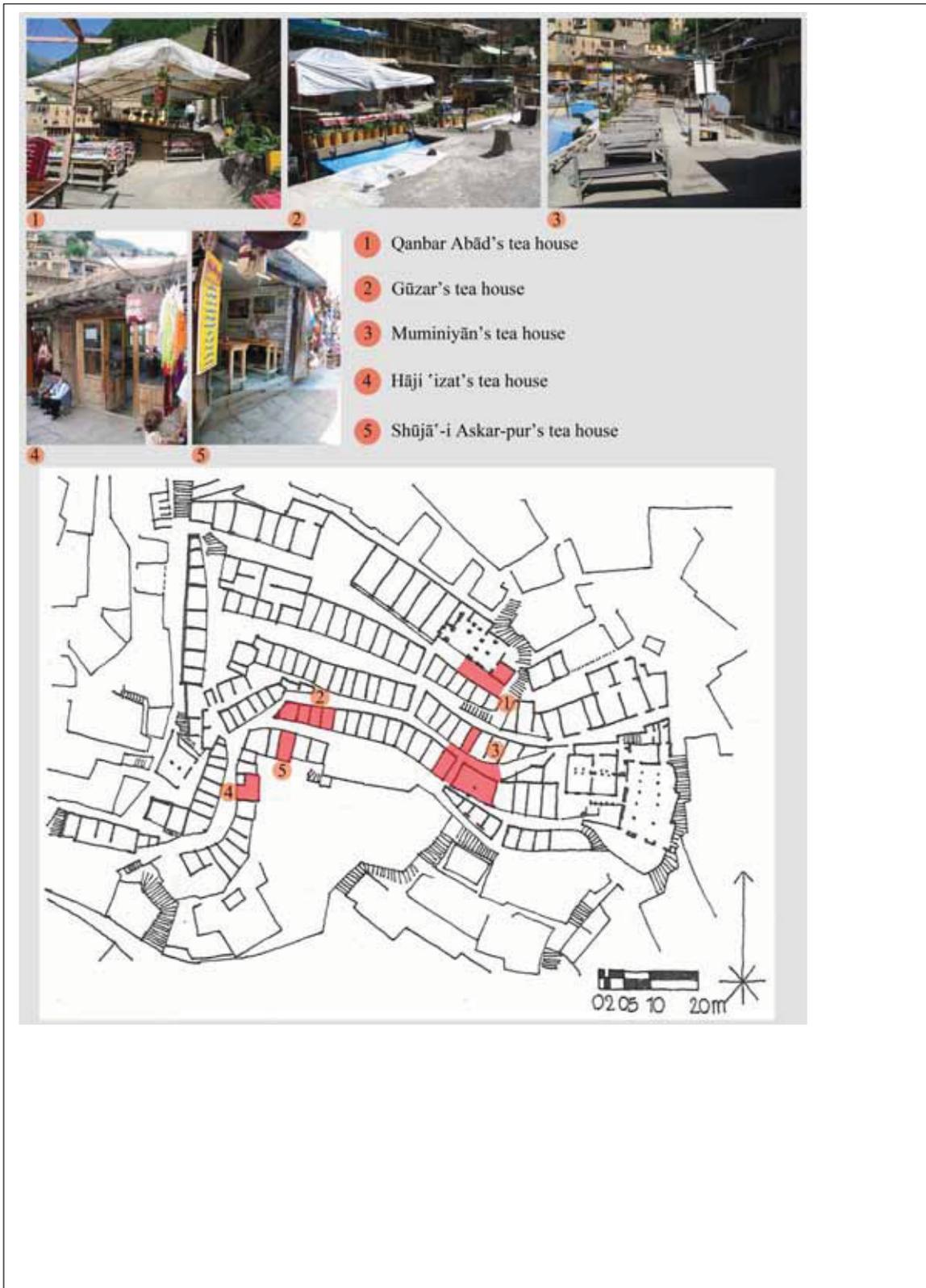
Fig. 3.33. The location of various tea houses on the map. Photographs 1–5 are keyed to the map.
Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

177

the rows of shops, Qanbar Abād's kitchen is beside the Mosque of Qanbar Abād, and Gūzar's kitchen is part of the terrace. The sitting areas of all the three are shielded only by a cloth for sun protection. During the winter every effort is taken to make the sitting areas comfortable by warming them. All three tea houses burn charcoal and timbers to warm the customers who sit on wooden benches (figures 3.34, 3.35). The tea houses of Hāji ʿizat and Shūjāʿ-i Askar-pur are part of the rows of shops and customers sit inside the tea house.

The tea house of Hāji ʿizat is located on a major pedestrian path of the bazaar (figure 3.36).[277] After entering the town and walking along the path past rows of small shops, the tea house becomes visible. The entrance is a wooden door that the passage of time has weathered significantly. Stepping inside, the visitor finds that the tea house consists of one small room. All around are wooden benches with tables in front. In the middle of the room is a black cast iron heater. From the heater, one exhaust pipe goes all the way to the ceiling. There are dark brown wooden beams on the ceiling. One wooden column stands beside the heater in the middle of the room and supports the roof. On the left is a small kitchen containing a cabinet with a stone covering. There is a big, yellow samovar on the cabinet and on the shelf above the cabinet are many small glasses, saucers, steel plates and sugar-cube pots. Hāji ʿizat is always standing there, busily arranging glasses on trays and pouring hot tea into the glasses. Regarding his profession ʿizat claims:

> My father Muhammad Hasan Dabāghi was a *chamush* (a type of shoe) maker, he was a respected man within the community. His hand-made *chamush* used to be sold in Fuman, Kasmā, Rasht and Māklavān. He taught how to make

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[277] "Hāji" is an honourable title given to a person who has successfully completed the Haj to Mecca. This title is generally reserved for an elder since it takes time to afford the trip to Mecca.

1. WORKING STATION
2. REFRIGERATOR
3. REFRIGERATOR
4. BARBEQUES
5. SITTING AREA

+0,00

+0,30

0 50 100 200cm
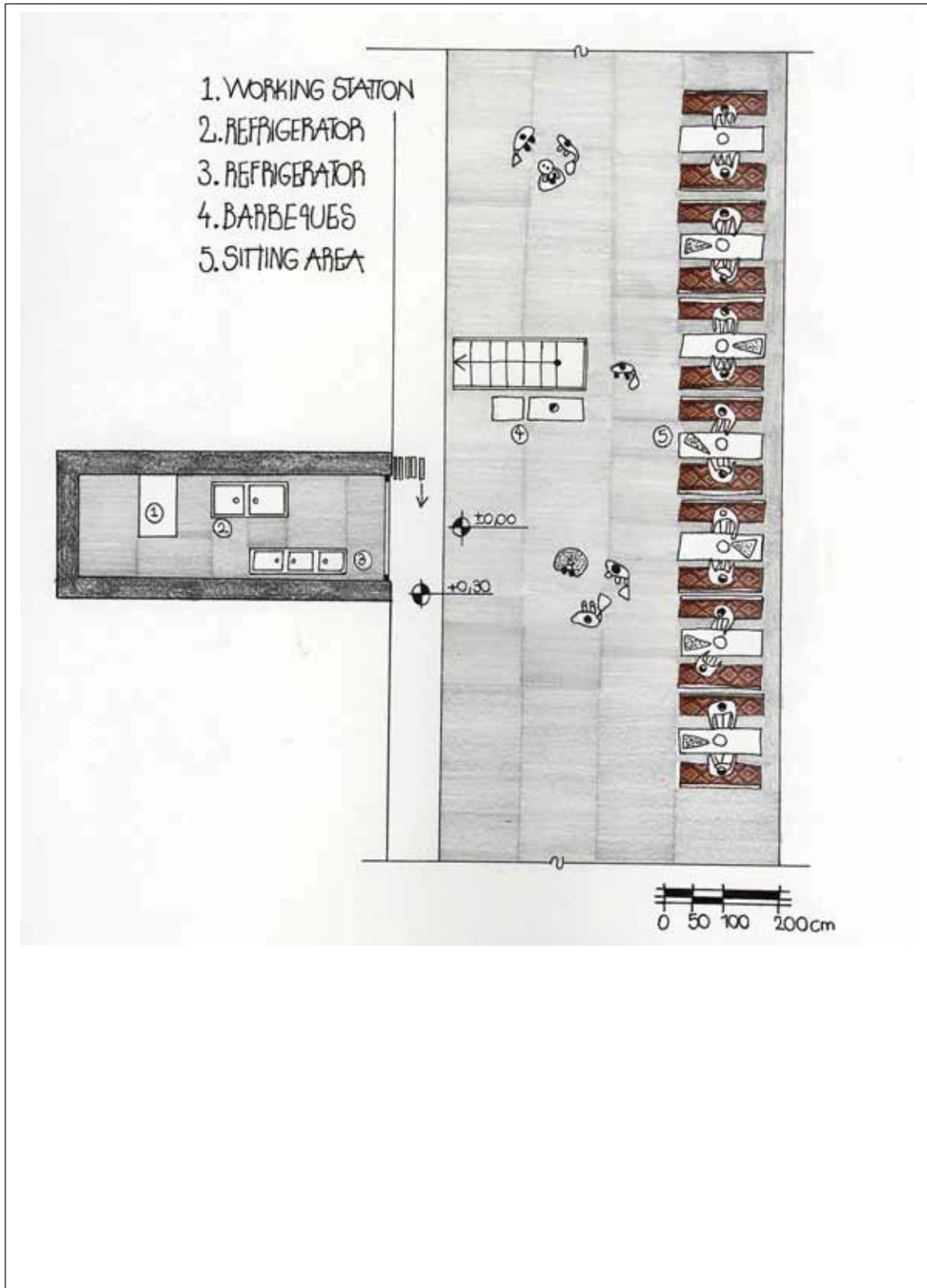
Fig. 3.34. Mihrān Muminiyān's tea house. Drawing by author, 2013.
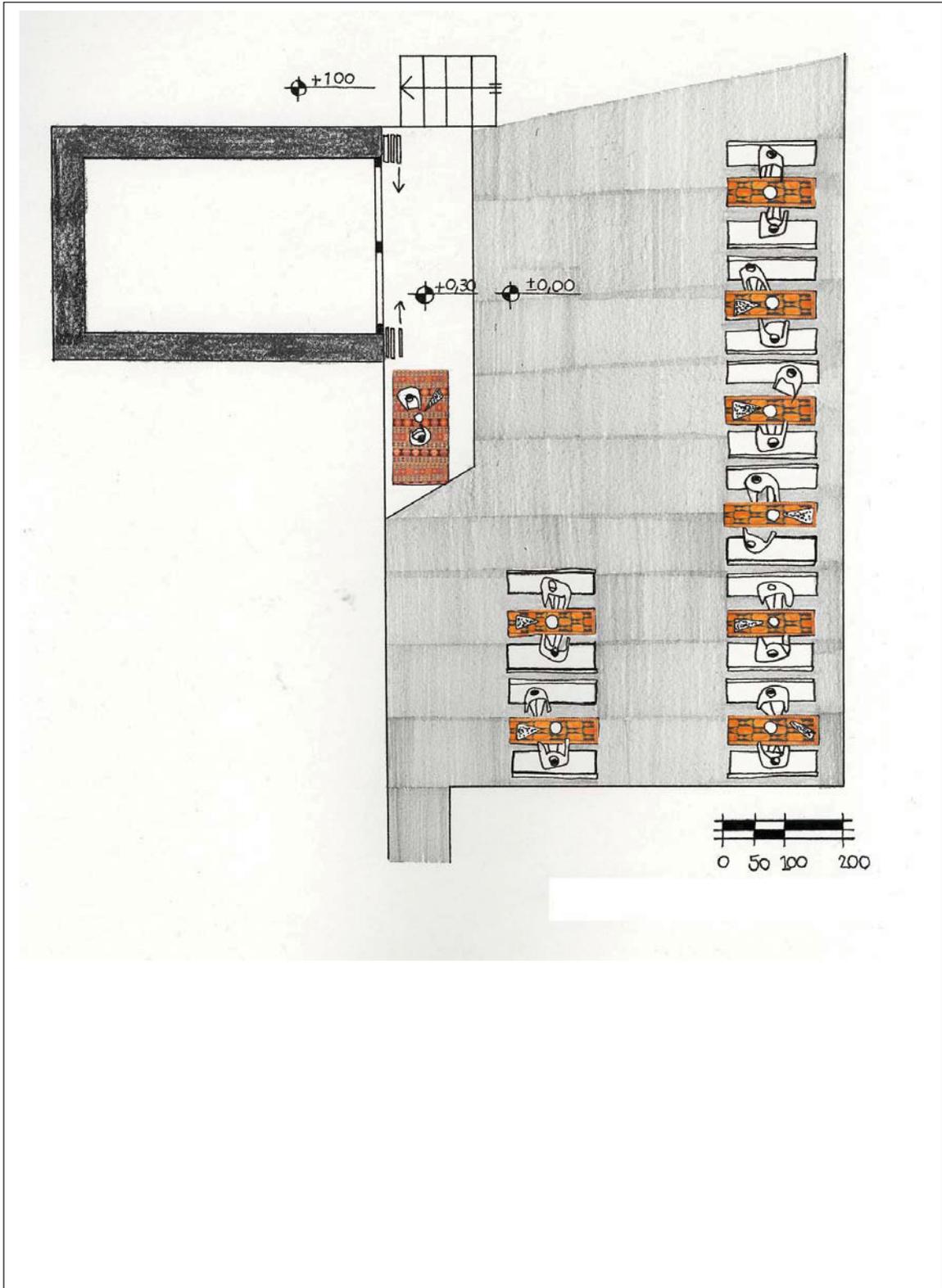
Fig. 3.35. Qanbar Abād's tea house. Drawing by author, 2013.
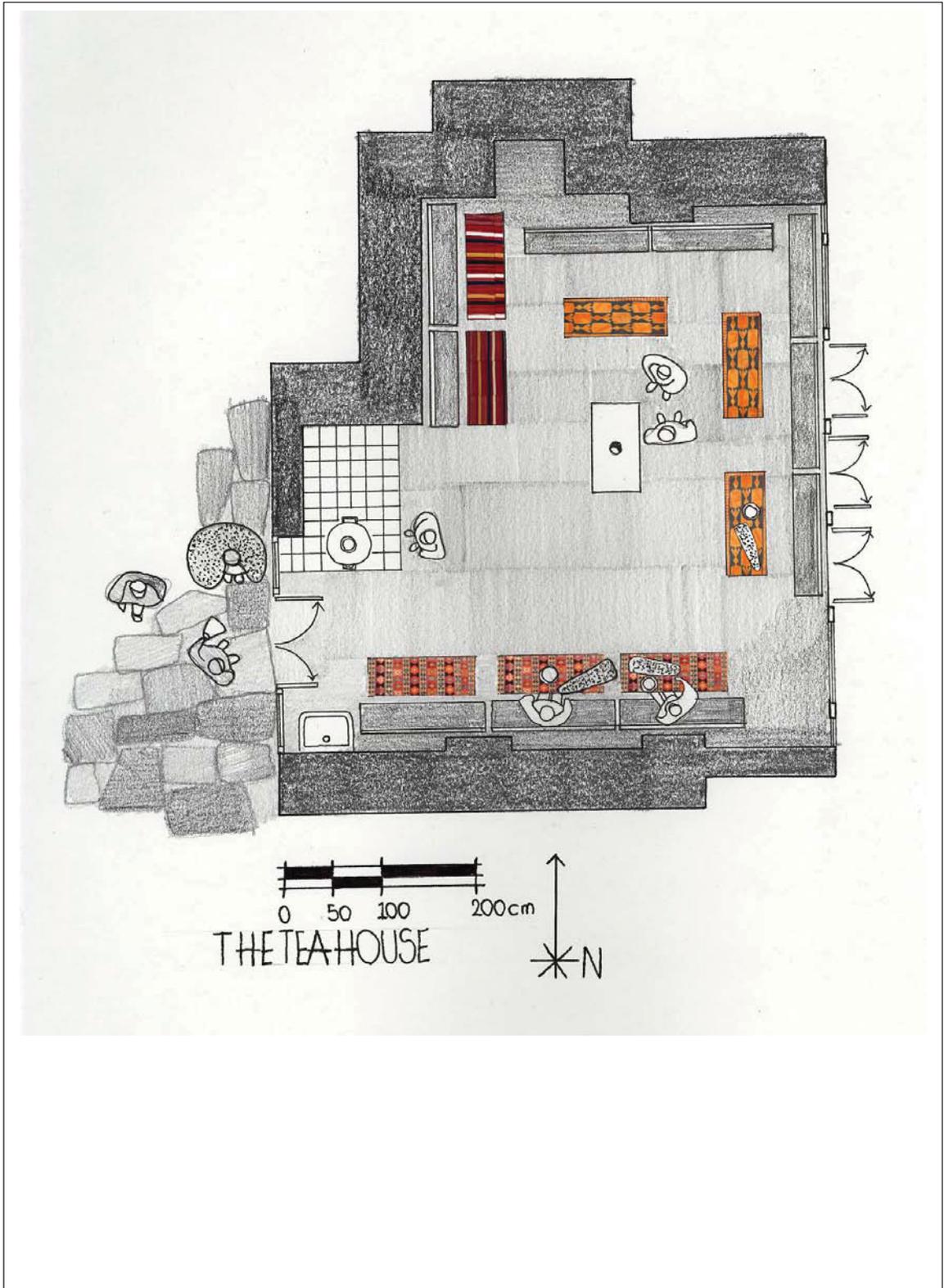
Fig. 3.36. Hāji ʿizat's tea house. Drawing by author, 2013.

chamush shoes to the grandfather of Majid-i Farniā, Ali Akbar Farniā, the last *chamush* maker of Masulih. Until his last days, he worked as a shoemaker. I was not interested in following his occupation: the work was so hard and the income was not sufficient. Before the introduction of plastic shoes, people used to wear leather shoes, especially shepherds, mountain dwellers, but gradually the demand for *chamush* declined. So I decided to open this place; this tea house has been open more than six decades. My son, Muhammad, who is an apprentice, is cleaning and washing the dishes, glasses and saucers. After me, he will continue this profession.[278]

The sound of hot tea being poured into glasses, glasses tinkling against their saucers, and low conversation are the symphony of the tea house. Sitting inside the tea house on a late afternoon in May, the natural light fades gradually and the two flourescent lamps illuminate the room. One elderly client leans against the wall while sitting on a bench. Another sits on a small wooden chair, conversing with someone else. The tea house is not too crowded, so the owner has a chance to talk to the clients, which is a treat for him. After I sit in a corner, a hot, fresh cup of tea is brought to my table. After a while, another two seniors enter. Late in the afternoon, around seven o'clock, another group of six men step inside. They discuss the latest news and events happening around the community. Some of the visitors bring fresh bread from the nearby bakery. They put the bread on steel plates and eat it while drinking sweet tea. After a long day of work everyone stretches out on the hard wooden benches while conversing quietly. From time to time, Muhammad gathers, washes and dries the glasses, steel trays and plates. There are calls for tea from various shops, and Muhammad also delivers trays of hot tea to shops in the bazaar. More customers enter the room with freshly baked bread, sitting and eating while having sweet tea. Hāji ʿizat walks around the room from time to time and fills the sugar pots with cubes of sugar. By late in the evening the tea house is full of customers and Hāji ʿizat and

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[278] Hāji ʿizat Dabāghi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.

Muhammad are very busy, so that the regular customers must pour their tea themselves.[279] Khūsru Shiyrzād Biyg, a merchant and one of the customers, recites some poems by Aʿbd-alvahāb Sharafi, whose nickname was Mūʿiyn Masulih. He was a poet from Masulih; two of his famous poems about love are as follows:

خزان رسید و تاراج شد چمن ایدوست   هزار حیف که گل رفت و یاسمن ایدوست
نگرگ مرگ بیافشاند گرد پیری را   به زمرّدین ارم سبز پیرهن ایدوست
شکسته بال و عزادار واشکریز وغمین   شد عندلیب که می‌خواند در چمن ایدوست
بیا ببین که بجای گل است خار سیاه   بریز اشک بر آن غنچه دمن ایدوست
بیا که عرصه جولان بوم شوم به باغ   کند چو ما و منت در غم و محن ایدوست
بیا و نگر بر سریر پاک ملک   نشسته‌اند همه دیو و اهرمن ایدوست
ولی به عشق تو سرسبز و خرم است دلم   ز دست رفت اگر آب و رنگ من ایدوست
قسم به جان تو آید بهار و خواهد شد   حدیث بلبل عشق نقل انجمن ایدوست
زهجر روی تو خون گشت قلب زار معین   بیار باده تا کم کنم سخن ایدوست

The autumn has come and the grasses have been plundered. One thousand times a pity that the flowers and jasmine are gone, my friend.
The hailstones of death pour the grains of the elderly into the garden of emerald with its green cloth, my friend.
The nightingale who sang in the grasses is sad, weeping, mourning, and his wings are broken.
Come and see that instead of a flower, there is black bramble; cry for that flower my friend.
Come and see that the ominous owl is flying in the garden; he makes you and us sad, my friend.
Come and see that on the pure throne, all the satans, devils and ahrimans are sat, my friend.

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[279] The author was inspired to write a descriptive account of Hāji ʿizat's tea house by reading Henry Glassie's *Turkish Traditional Art Today*. In the month of Ramazan Glassie visited a tea house in Karagomlek Village. He visited the tea house in sunset, while the men were fasting. The men of the village sit on benches in the tea house waiting for sunset so they can break the fast. They have onions, black olives and bread baked in the earthen oven that day. When the television proclaims that the sun has set, they calmly eat. Afterwards, the men attend prayers in the mosque. They gather again in the tea house and finish their bread, olives and onions. As Glassie also indicates, the tea house is a place where the common men would gather while the women in the village sit at home in groups and have their meals. See *Turkish Traditional Art Today*, 745–46. Another source of inspiration was the diary of Le Corbusier. In his visit to Istanbul in 1911, he entered the tea house of Mahmud Pasha by chance. He was fleeing anywhere to escape the crowd of bazaar. He climbed the stairway and entered the courtyard which had a central fountain. In his travel diary, he provides a description of the crowded tea house, a place where people converse in low voices. See Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, *Journey to the East*, ed. and trans. Ivan Zaknic (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 133–36. Michael Carroll also describes the tea house in his travel diary. During his visit to Isfahan, Iran, in late summer, Carroll stepped inside a tea house for the first time. The tea house was full of people and smoke. There were benches on each side of the main passage. Oil lamps hung from the ceiling's rafters, the men sat shoulder to shoulder on the carpeted benches. There were no places in Persia like the tea house, which is full of life and movement. Carroll also describes the tea house as the gathering place of the "common-man." See Carroll, *From a Persian Tea-House* (London: John Murray, 1960), 1–8.

But because of love of you, I am renewed and youthful in heart, although my face is pale, my friend.

I swear to your life that the spring will come and everyone will talk about the nightingale of love, my friend.

The miserable heart of Moein is full of sorrow because you are away, bring wine so I will say no more words.

Another poem of Mūʿiyn Masulih, which is about love, is the following:

<div dir="rtl">

ما عاشقیم و نیست به کف اختیار ما   ضایع شده است عمرو سیاه روزگار ما

ما عاشقی عوض به دو عالم نمی‌کنیم   تا عاشقی وعشق بود اختیار ما

جز روی زردی و دل خونین نمانده است   از عهد عشق در بر ما یادگار ما

از فیض عشق قسمت ما نا امیدی است   اه و فسوس بر دل امیدوار ما

</div>

We are in love and we do not have any choice, our lives are wasted and our times are dark.

We will not exchange love for this world and the next one, until the time that we can choose love and to be in love.

Except for a pale face and a heart full of sorrow, nothing remains for us from the days of love.

Love generously offered to us disappointment, love offered to our hopeful hearts regret, pity and sighs.[280]

Shūjāʿ-i Askar-pur's tea house is also an indoor place (figure 3.37). It is like other shops in the same row. It is accessed from the front. The customers can sit inside on two rows of wooden benches along the walls. About his occupation Shūjāʿ says:

> I used to be a baker and this tea house was a bakery. Me and my father, Askar-i Askar-pur, used to bake *nān-i lavāsh* [lavash bread]. My father began to bake in the 1970s and he continued the profession up to the year 2007. He aged gradually and he could not operate the bakery with me anymore so he quit the bakery. On the other hand the bakery guild used to supply the bakery with flour based on the governmental rate which was affordable for us to purchase; later they cut it off, the work was tough and the profit was declining so I lost my enthusiasm to carry on the career. As a baker, I had to wake up before morning prayer times during the winter and summer and prepare the *lavāsh* dough to be baked. This meant that I had to wake up four in the morning. The work demanded physical labour so I decided to turn the bakery into a tea house.[281]

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[280] Khūsru Shirzād Biyg, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 12.
[281] Shūjāʿ-i Askar-pur, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 12.

① GLASSES
② SAMAVAR
③ OVEN
④ REFRIGERATOR
⑤ WOODEN BENCH
⑥ WOODEN TABLE

N

0 10 20   50   100 cm
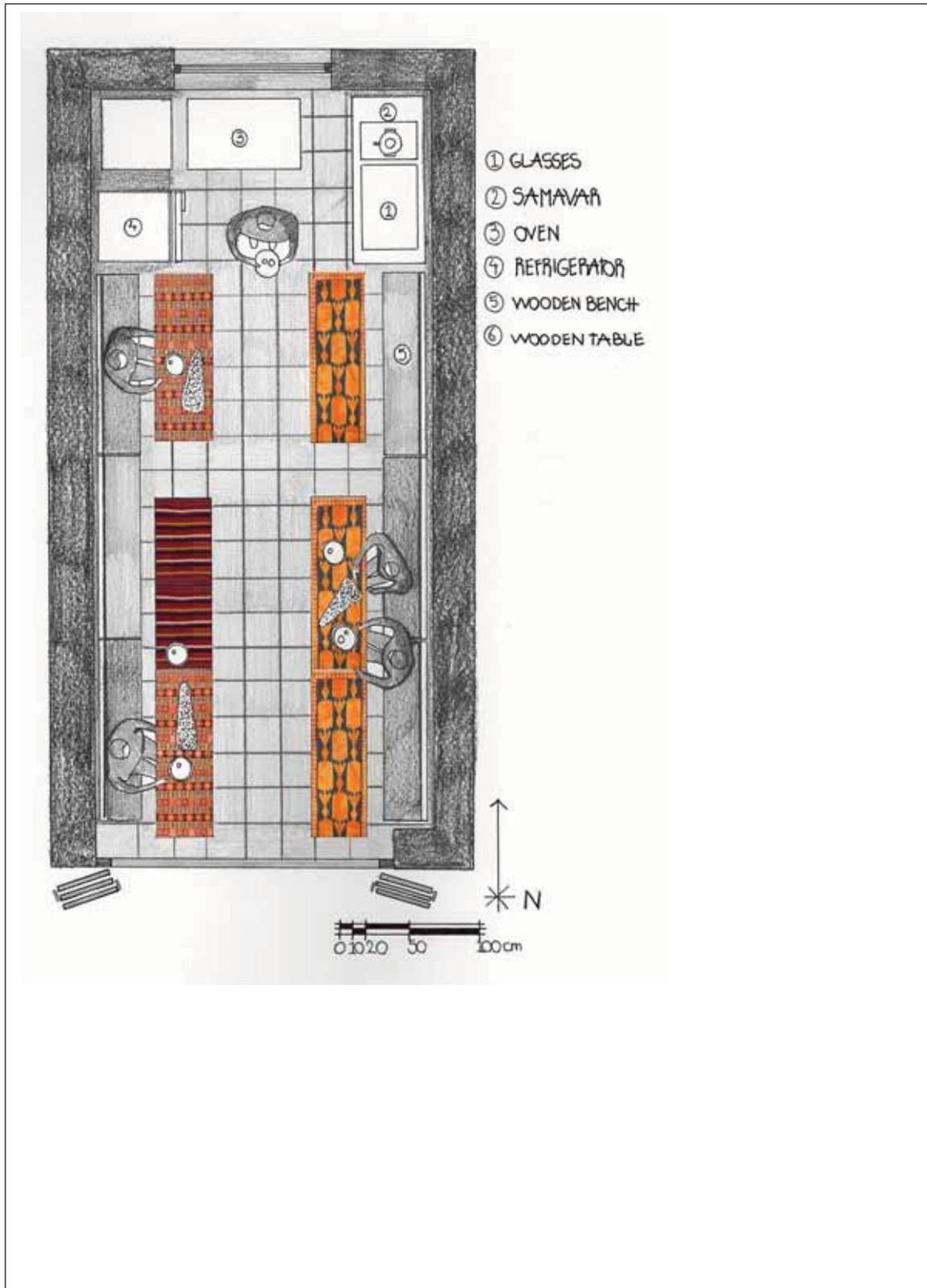
Fig. 3.37. The Askar-pur's tea house. Drawing by author, 2013.

Unlike tea houses in major cities, the tea houses in Masulih are still the chief public

spaces for social interaction. Although most dwellings in the community have TV sets

and radios, the tea house functions as a place for the inhabitants to discuss, analyse, share,

and argue about political and social news with each other. This function reveals some of

the ways that tea houses contribute to the social value of the bazaar, and also that, despite

the bazaar's primary function as a place for buying and selling, there are deeper social

issues attached to it.

3.6 The Ritual of Ashurā and the *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn-i Ali

It is by following the paths in Masulih that one can reach the *Imāmzādih*. The *Imāmzādih*

with its shrine is a religious artifact in the center of the community. The ritual of Ashurā,

which occurs annually, is mainly performed on the paths in Masulih. Every neighborhood

has its own path to follow while performing the ritual. The Ashurā ritual is part of the

path and integrated with the totality of this community. A detailed account of the ritual of

Ashurā and the *Imāmzādih* will be presented in this section.

The *Imāmzādih*, Friday mosque and the graveyard are sited beside the bazaar in the

center of Masulih. *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn Ali is the sole sacred site within the town. The

Friday mosque and the *Imāmzādih* comprise one building and this complex can be seen

from virtually everywhere in Masulih. It functions as a landmark (figures 3.38 to 3.41).

As Abuzar Janali Pur, the principal architect in the National Heritage Office in Masulih,

specifies, "It is not clear to us when the complex was constructed; no archeological

excavation has so far been done in Masulih. The only reliable dates that we have are the

Fig. 3.38. The four entrances and paths into the center of Masulih and the bazaar. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
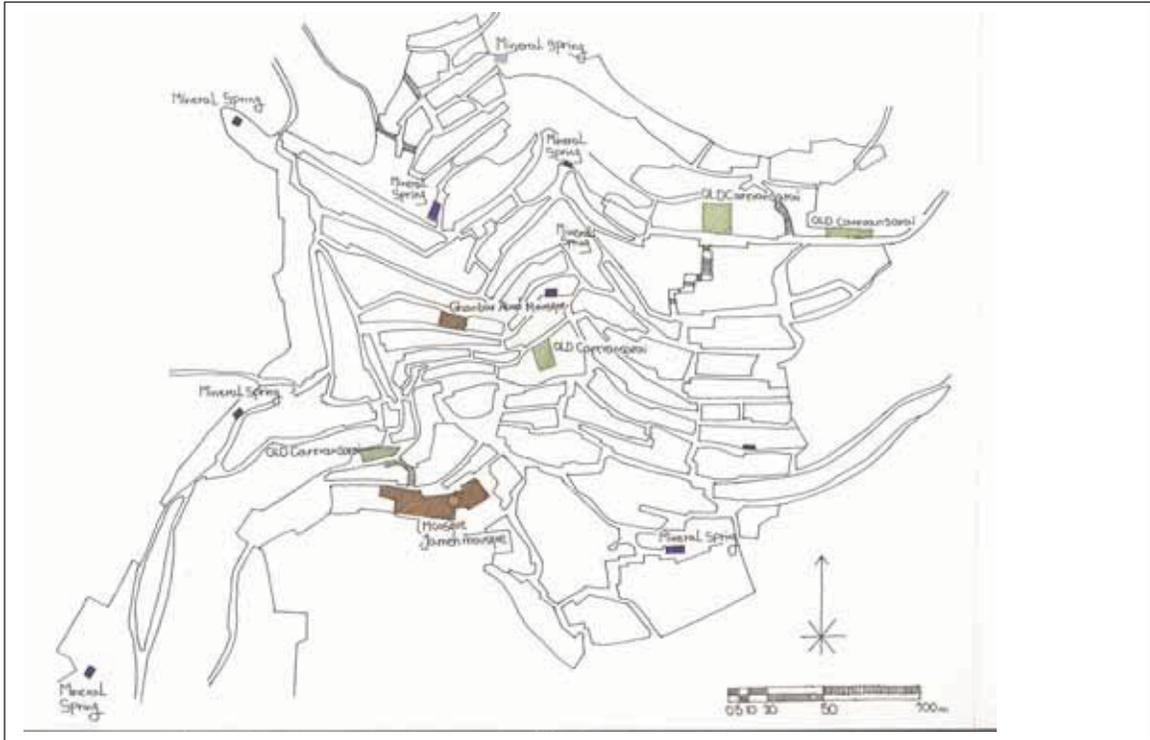
Fig. 3.39. The location of mineral springs, the *imāmzādih* and the Jāmiʿ Mosque. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
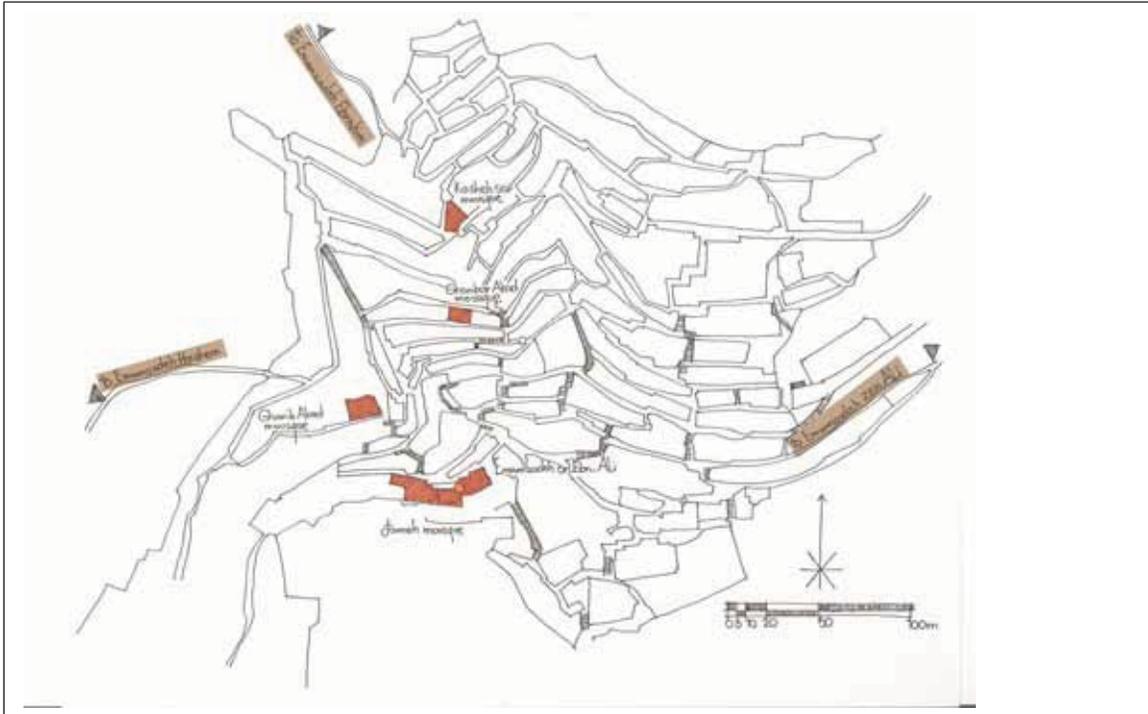
Fig. 3.40. The location of various mosques and the *imāmzādih*. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
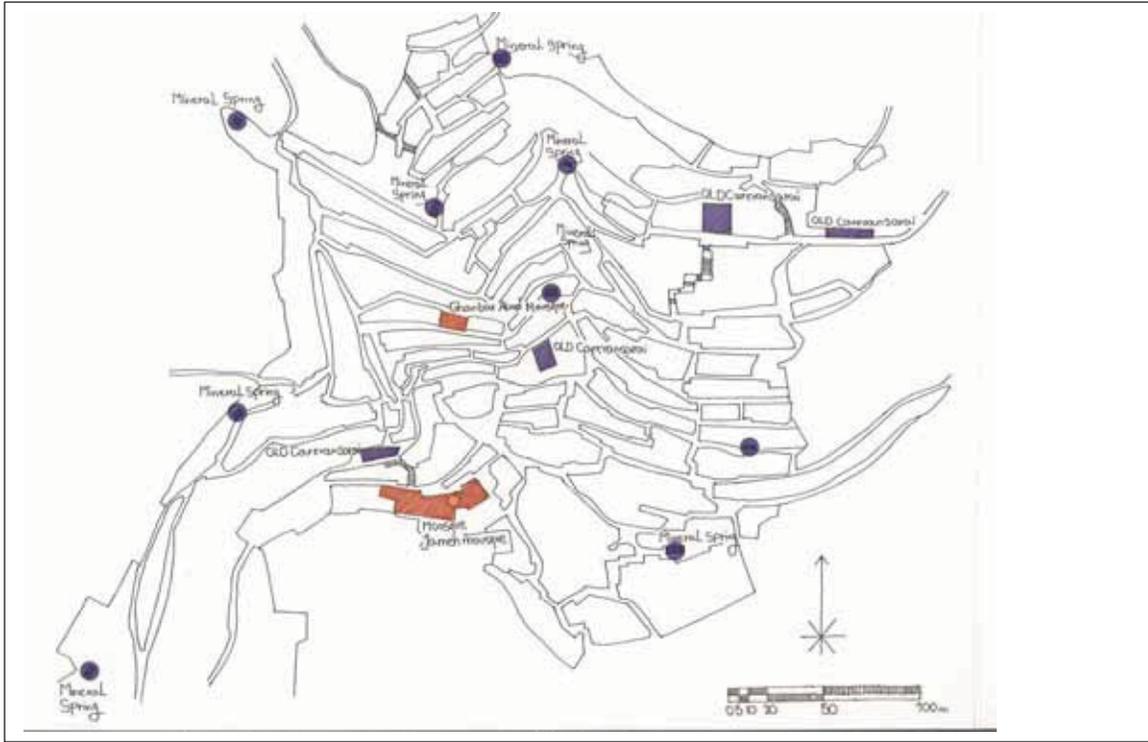
Fig. 3.41. The location of various mosques, caravanserais, the *imāmzādih* and mineral springs. Adapted from a map of the touristic town of Masulih, 2004, provided by the National Heritage Center of

188

inscribed dates on the gravestones beside the *Imāmzādih*. The historic gravestones beside the *Imāmzādih* refer to 15th to 19th and 20th AD."[282]

On the eastern side of the complex, we have the graveyard. During the mourning ceremonies, especially the ritual of Ashurā in the month of Muharram, pilgrims frequently use the yard as part of their ritual. Like every other building in Masulih, the sacred site and the Friday mosque are part of one building and are connected together. The oldest available historic photo, which belongs to the beginning of the last century, also reveals to us that the complex is part of one building. The photo also illustrates that, instead of a reinforced concrete dome with two minarets, at that time there was a eight sided brick tower on top of the *Imāmzādih*, covered with iron sheets or *halab* as a roof (figure 3.42). As Abuzar Janali Pur states, "The roof of the *Imāmzādih* in the north of Iran used to be covered with brick towers and iron sheet roofs. They were also ornamented with bricks."[283] In the picture, the roof of the Friday mosque is made of *lat* or wooden roof shingles instead of having a flat roof and the size of the windows are different from the current situation. Another photo, from the 1950s, illustrates that the roof of the Friday mosque was at that time covered with iron sheets (figure 3.43). Janali Pur points out that "During the 1970s the brick tower was demolished and the concrete dome with two minarets replaced on the roof of the *Imāmzādih*, while the roof of the Friday mosque remained the same (figure 3.44). In 1978, the roof of the Friday mosque was replaced with a flat roof, the same as the roofs of the houses. In fact, the roof of the Friday mosque should have remained untouched; the original Mosque with its wood shingle roof could be distinguished from residential and commercial buildings while the Friday mosque with

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[282] Janali Pur, interviews.
[283] Janali Pur, interviews.

its flat roof could not be straightforwardly distinguished from other buildings. The reinforced concrete dome is also not part of the vernacular architecture of Masulih. In fact none of the *Imāmzādih* in the vicinity of Masulih have RC domes; traditionally the roofs of all the *Imāmzādih* were made of either wooden shingles or iron sheet roofs. Also, the historic photo which was taken at the beginning of the last century shows that the windows in Masulih were rectangular and perpendicular with a proportion of one to three. The same photo demonstrates that the Friday mosque windows follow the same proportion as every other window; however in the process of gradual renovation the window's proportions changed to the square.[284] The historic photos also indicate a shift from using local materials to using non-local materials in the *Imāmzādih's* roof. This indicates that Masulih people used to be fairly independent from the outside world. Usage of local materials displays the value of being fairly independent that informs life in Masulih, although this value is already shifted to dependency on the outside (figure 3.45).

Beside all the changes and renovations, the *Imāmzādih* and the Friday mosque are still considered as a sacred site (figure 3.46). Pilgrims visit the shrine and pray there; for them, this is an inner and individual journey from the physical world to the spiritual world. The journey starts from the graveyard, where the graves of the important figures of the community and those who were killed during the Iraq-Iran war rest. These individuals were buried in close vicinity to the *Imāmzādih* so that on the day of resurrection they will be rescued by the holy one. Not everyone in the community has the chance to acquire a grave there; the majority are buried in the graveyard outside the community. The grave of

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[284] As Janali Pur indicates, the National Heritage Office is trying to convince the municipality, the city council and the residents to replace the RC Dome with the former iron dome. Also the proportions of the Friday mosque windows should be changed based on the original ones. The steel columns which were added to hold the flat roof should be replaced with wooden ones while the roof should be constructed based on the original condition, which was either wood shingles or iron sheets. See Janali Pur, interviews.
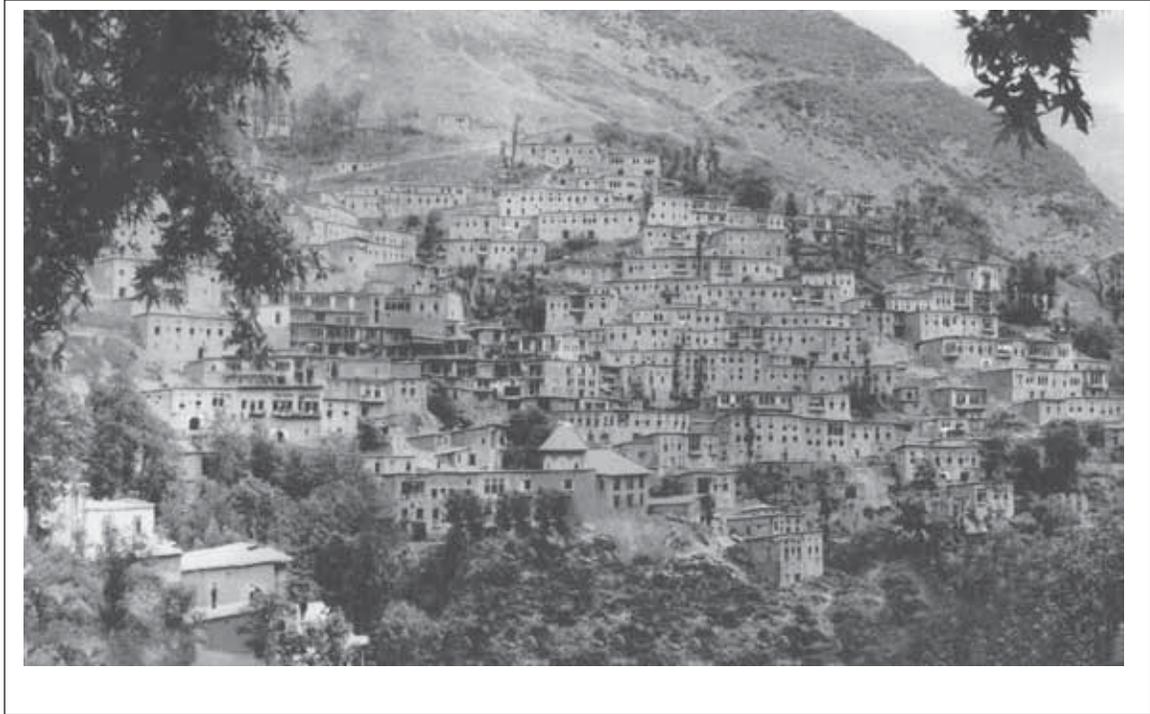
Fig. 3.42. An historic photograph illustrating the iron sheet roofs of the *imāmzādih* and the Friday mosque, 1931. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
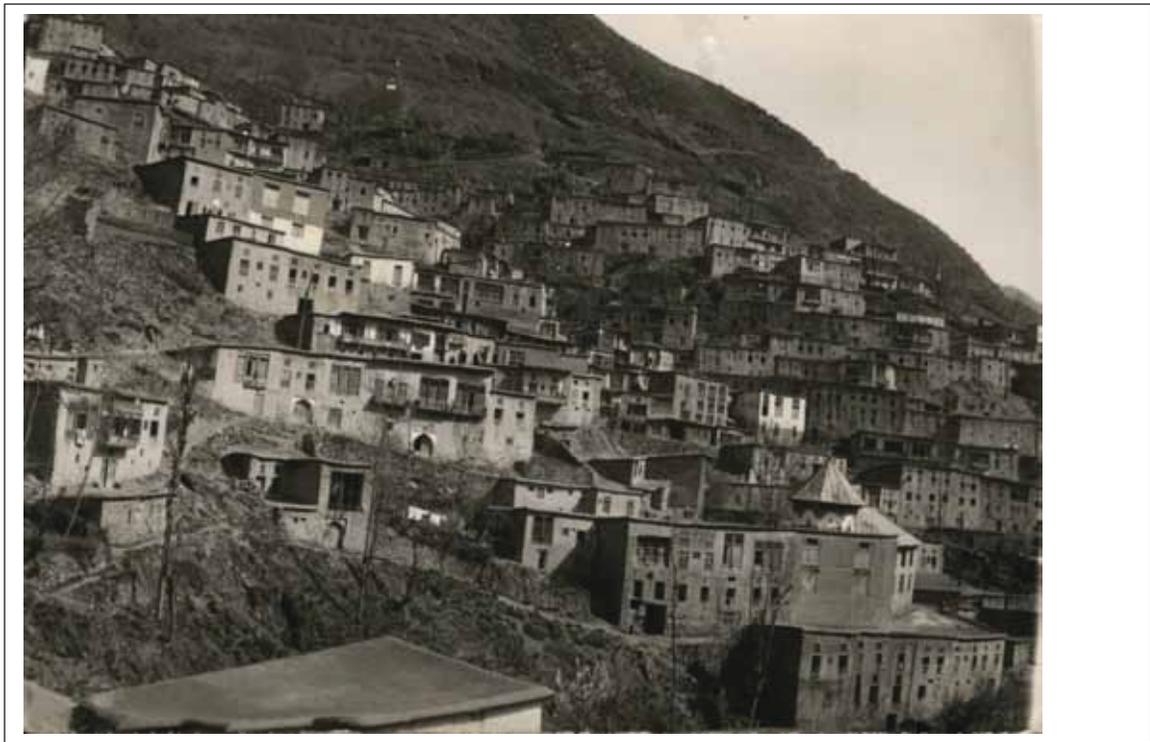
Fig. 3.43. An historic photograph illustrating the iron sheet roofs of the *imāmzādih* and the Friday mosque, 1950. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
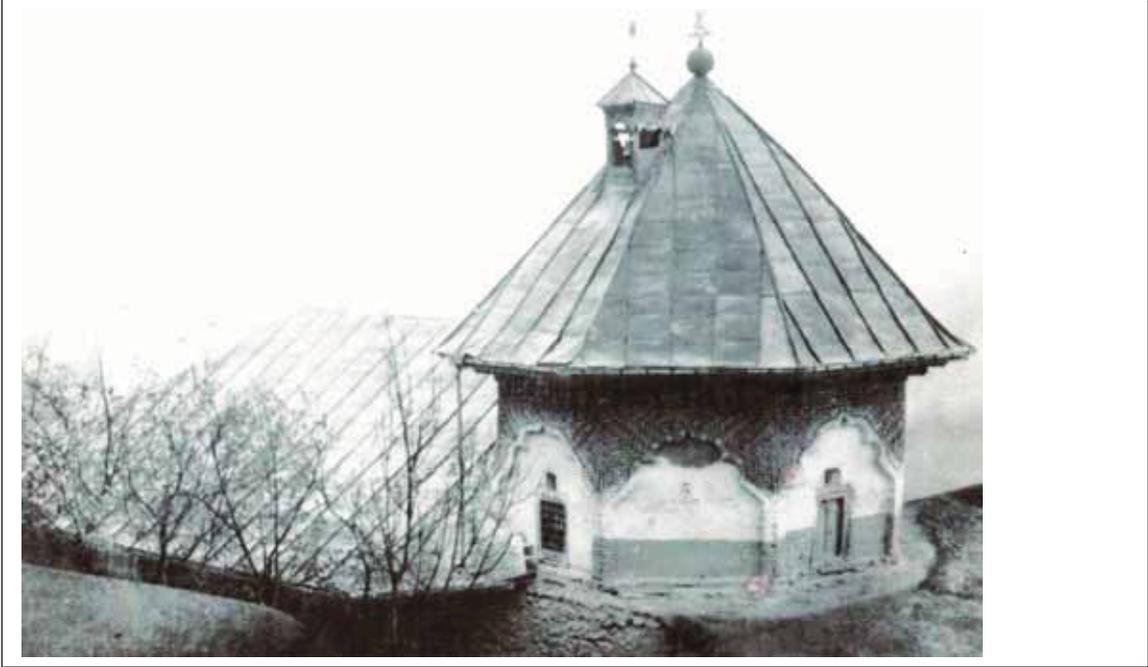
Fig. 3.44. An historic photograph of the *imāmzādih*, date unknown. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
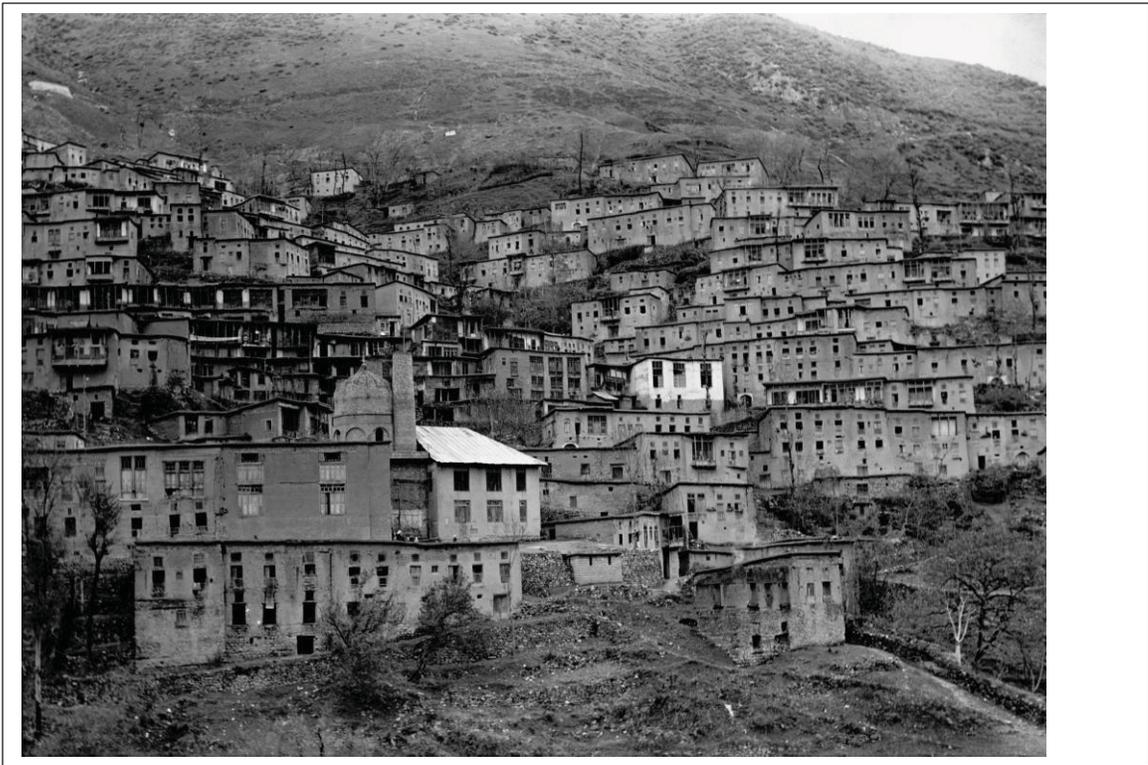
Fig. 3.45. An historic photograph of the *imāmzādih* with RC dome, 1970. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih.
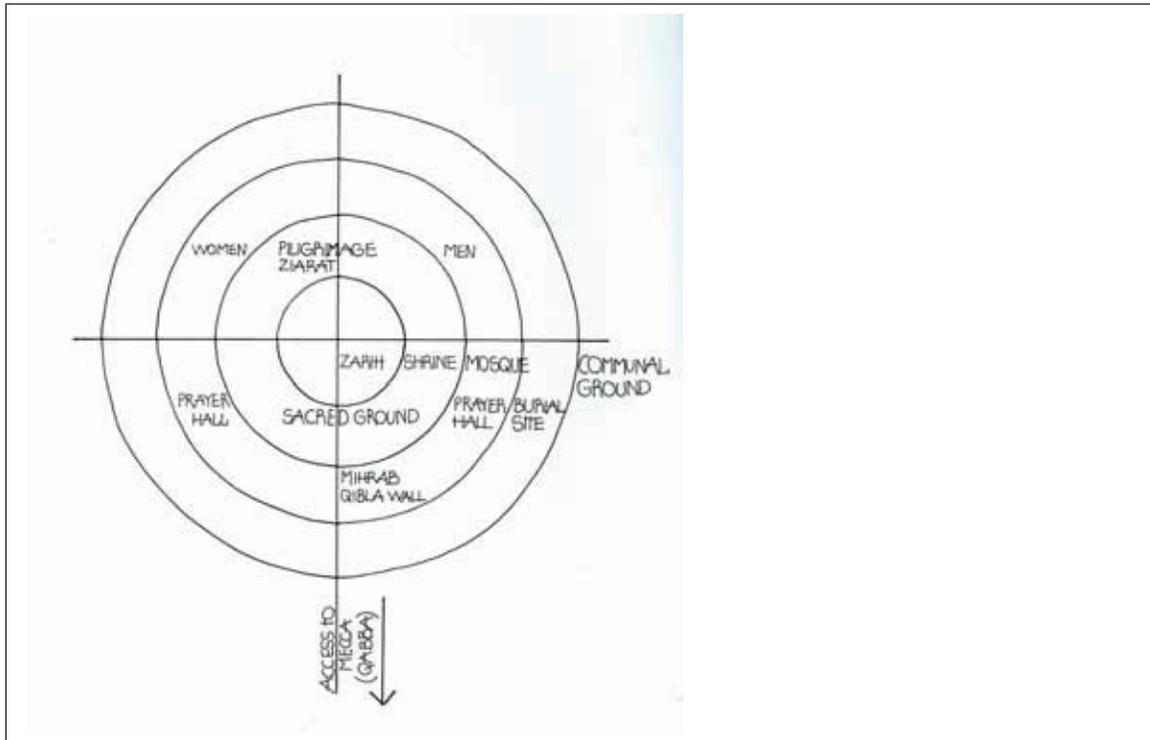
Fig. 3.46. The communal ground and the sacred ground. Drawing by author, 2010.
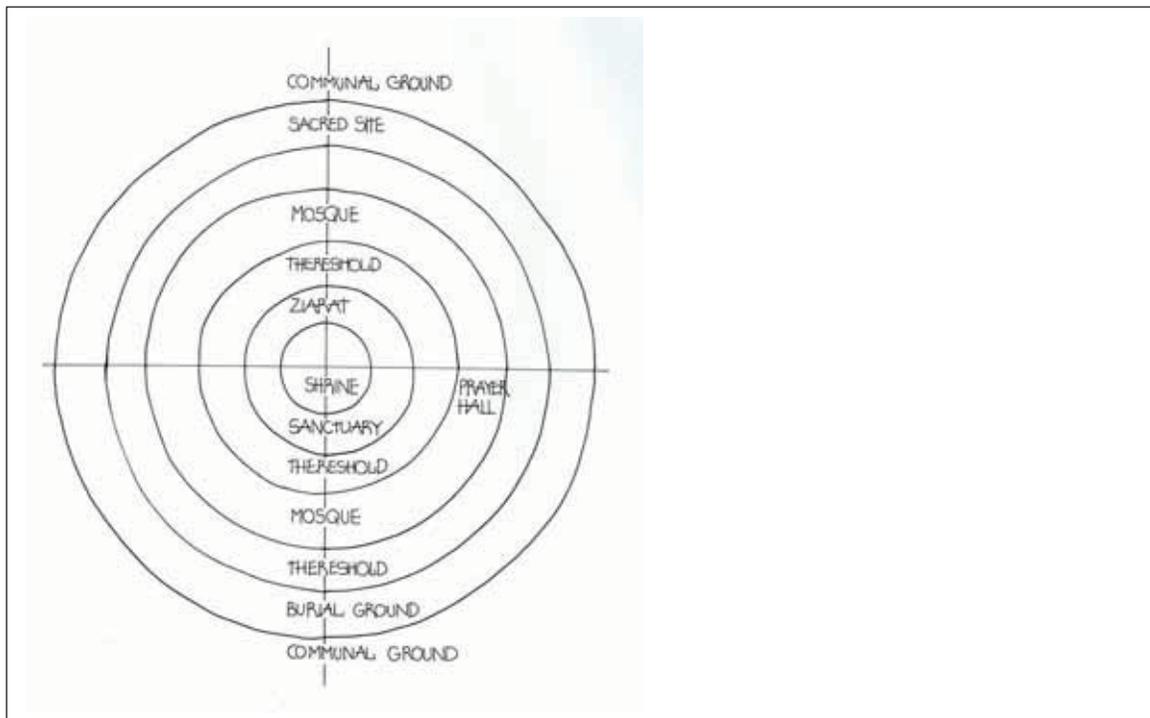
Fig. 3.47. The process of entering the sacred ground. Drawing by author, 2010.

the last master builder of the community, Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, is also beside the

Imāmzādih: he had the respect of the inhabitants and the inhabitants decided that he could

be buried there.

Passing the graves is the entry to the Friday mosque; entering the complex requires

its rite of passage which is the removal of the shoes, bowing to the holy one and entering.

As Thomas Barrie points out, the threshold is the separation point between the sacred and

the profane and there is a rite of passage associated with this passage.[285] The Friday

mosque is the place of congregation, especially each Friday at noon. The ground floor is

the men's praying hall while the first floor is the women's praying area. Each time they

pray, the members of the congregation face toward Mecca. Like every other mosque, the

Friday mosque has a *mihrāb* and a *minbar*.[286]

As Yousif Akhavān, a local merchant who has a shop on the seventh floor of the

bazaar, points out, "each Friday's noon, we gather in the mosque for the prayers. After

the prayer, we head to our homes for lunch. This is the time that I have the chance to see

my friends. We also listen to the *khūtbah* or the sermon which is said by the *imām*.

During the holy days I buy cookies from Rashid Askar-pur and distribute them between

the prayers. Sometimes others prepare sweet tea for the members. During the weekdays,

merchants usually attend the bazaar mosque or they pray in their houses. Anyone who

had a problem or difficulty in life and prayed for the relief of this trouble to the

Imāmzādih, and if the trouble was over then the *nazr* will be brought to the *Imāmzādih*

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[285] For Thomas Barrie the threshold is a passage from one mode of existence to another; a doorway or a gate could be a symbol for spiritual transformation, purification and even sacrifices. See Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1996), 55–58.

[286] For more information about architecture of mosques see J. A. Davies, *Temples, Churches and Mosques: A Guide to the Appreciation of Religious Architecture* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1982), 118–43. See also Schoenauer, *6,000 Years of Housing*, 27; Ragette, *Traditional Domestic Architecture*, 51; Mortada, *Traditional Islamic Principles*, 87–88; Bianca, *Urban Form*, 101–9.

and circulated between the pilgrims. The *nazr* could be food, cookies, pastries, cakes, or dates accompanied by tea."[287]

Passing the prayer hall of the Friday mosque one reaches the sanctuary room of the *Imāmzādih*. Pilgrims travel to the *Imāmzādih* to pray and receive blessings from the holy one; this ritual is called *ziyārat*. The room is covered with geometric mirrors and a delicate chandelier. The mirrors reflect the light: the light is everywhere in the sanctuary. Muslims believe that God is light and that this should be reflected in their sacred architecture. The Quran points out that, "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His Light is like a niche wherein is a lamp; the lamp is in a crystal, and the crystal, shining as if a pearl-like radiant star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west. The oil would almost give light of itself though no fire touches it. Light upon light! God guides to His Light whom He wills. God strikes parables for people. God has full knowledge of all things."[288]

As J. G. Davis describes, in the architecture of mosques and burial places light is appreciated and distinct attention is paid to it. Shiny floors, mirrors, tiles and windows are reflective of light.[289] The shrine is located in the middle of a cube; each side of the cube is made of windows with small silver lattices decorated with Quranic verses. The graveyard sits silent in the middle of the cube. The pilgrims, women and men, hold on to the lattices of the windows and pray, and the room is filled with their silent prayers.[290] As Barrie

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[287] Yusif Akhavān, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.
[288] Quran 24.35.
[289] Davies, *Temples, Churches and Mosques*, 133.
[290] Karima Alavi beautifully describes her spiritual journey to the resting place of Sayyid Amir Ahmad, a saintly man whose shrine is located in the city of Shiraz. Alavi provides a description of the shrine and the pilgrims who are engaged in praying to the saintly man, which was an inspiration to the author. See Alavi, "In the Realm of Mercy," *Sufi Journal of Mystical Philosophy and Practice*, no. 64 (2004–2005): 20–23. Thomas Barrie also describes a personal experience of the sacred places that he visited during the writings of his book. The experience of the monastery and *madrasa* of Sulemaniye, the tomb of Clytemnestra, the

points out, the act of pilgrimage is very personal. It is an individual inner journey and the reason for this journey could be spiritual healings, special requests, or a moment of solitude from everyday life. Pilgrimage puts the person in contact with God (figure 3.47).[291]

As Barrie points out, sacred architecture is a built myth and it is based on the culture and spiritual needs of the people who built it. It also facilitates the enactment of shared rituals and values. A sacred building should be understood in terms of its religious and mythological context. Meanwhile, sacred architecture bears meanings for each community member and helps them to identify themselves with the place. Put conventionally, sacred architecture has assisted in founding a sense of meaningful place and expressing people's beliefs.[292] Sacred architecture, as a communicative media, expresses a complex matrix of symbolic, cultural, mythological and historic content.[293]

The ritual of Ashurā is one of the shared rituals that the inhabitants of Masulih hold in and outside the *Imāmzādih* in the month of Muharram (figure 3.48, 3.49). The first ten days of Muharram are dedicated to commemorating the murder of the prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hūsiyn ibn Ali ibn Abitalib, and his companions. This is one of the most vital annual religious rituals in Shi'ih Islam. In the year 61 AH / 680 CE, Yazid

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Korean Monastery and the meditations he witnessed are depicted in his descriptions. He believes that a sacred place can lead one to another perspective and another way of being in the world. The sensory sacred architecture can engage one in the moment-to-moment awareness of being alive in this world. See Barrie, *The Sacred In-Between: The Mediating Roles of Architecture* (New York: Routledge 2010), 228–30.

[291] Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, 28–31–36.

[292] For Barrie one of the goals of architecture is to provide meaningful environments, a type of built environment which leads us to a better understanding of who we are. See Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, 6–9–19–52–260.

As Karsten Harries writes, a building is not only an aesthetic object; it can satisfy all its functional needs but human beings need deeper meanings in their built environment. Buildings should provide shelter for the soul and the body. For Harries, instrumental thinking cannot provide a shelter as described. It is the task of sacred architecture to provide that. Harries, "Untimely Meditations on the Need for Sacred Architecture," in *Constructing the Ineffable: Contemporary Sacred Architecture*, ed. Karla Cavarra Britton (New Haven, CT: Yale School of Architecture, 2010), 50–59.

[293] Barrie, *The Sacred In-Between*, 213.

1. FRIDAY MOSQUE
2. IMAMZADEH
3. BURIAL GROUND
4. MOSQUE
5. BAZAAR
6. MOSQUE
7. MOSQUE
8. MOSQUE

Fig. 3.48. The location of the *imāmzādih*, mosques and bazaar. Adapted from an aerial photograph of Masulih, 1996, provided by the National Cartographic Center.

197
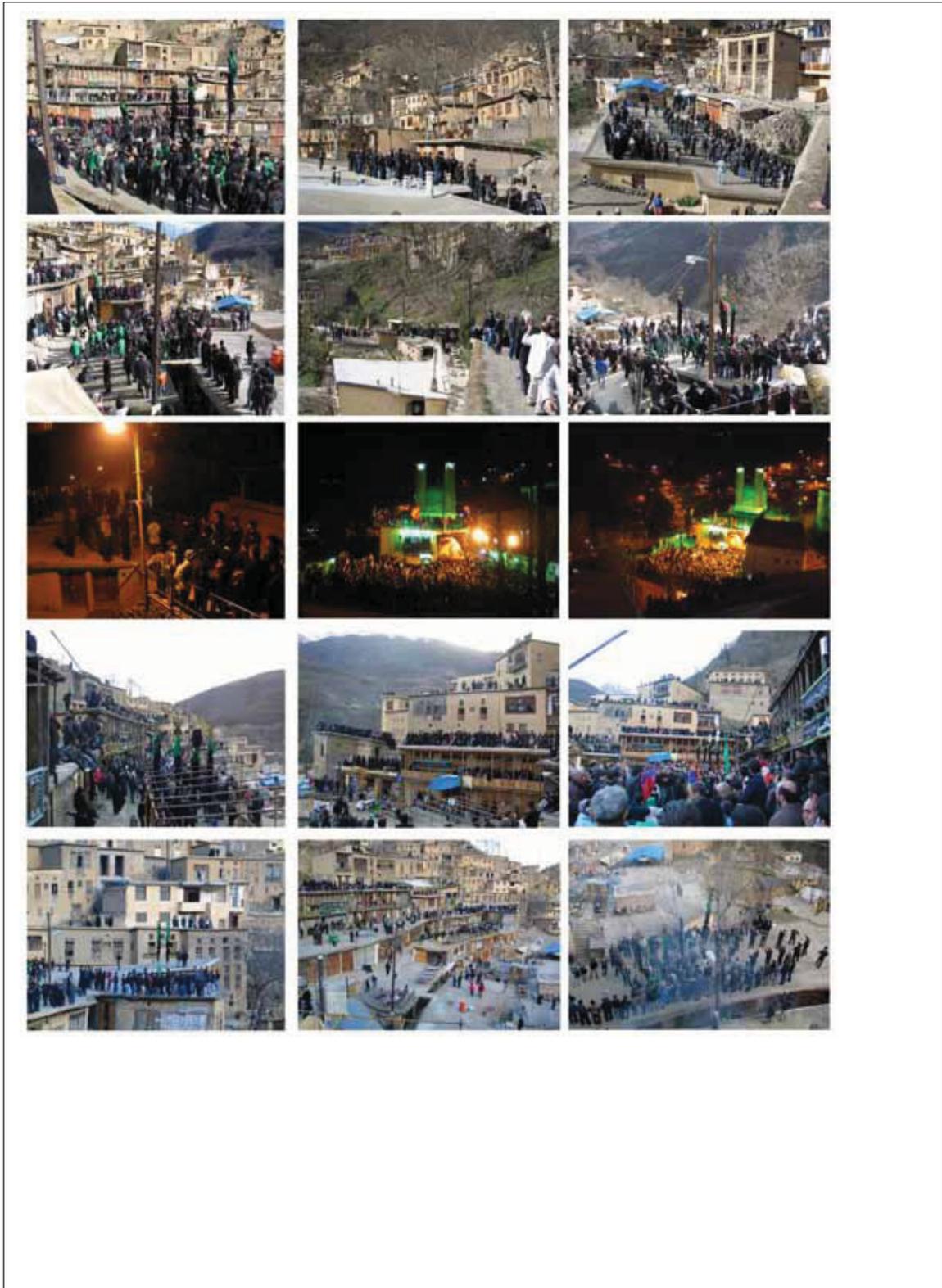
Fig. 3.49. Photographs showing the ritual of Ashurā. Photographs by author, 2011.

ibn Mū'āviyh was appointed by his father to be the next caliph, and Hūsiyn ibn Ali ibn Abitalib refused to accept Yazid as the next caliph. This was the first time in the history of Islam that a caliph was appointed by dynastic succession. The previous caliphs were appointed by the majority of Muslims. Many at that time regarded this appointment to be unlawful. In fact, Yazid established the Umayyad dynasty which was the first dynasty in Islam. Hūsiyn and his followers protested this illegal appointment and rejected Yazid as the next caliph of the Islamic World. The followers of the Imām Hūsiyn believe that the next caliph should be one who is from the house of the prophet. The supporters of the Imām in Kufih invited Hūsiyn to become their leader to revolt against Yazid rule; Imām Hūsiyn accepted the invitation and commenced his journey to Kufih. Hūsiyn left Kufih with about seventy men and his family. In response to his journey, the governor of the Kufih, 'ūbiyd allah ibn Ziyād set up an army of four thousand men. After a week of negotiation, 'ūmar ibn Sa'd, the head of the army, besieged the Imām and his followers and their women and children on the plain of Karbalā near the banks of the Euphrates River. On the tenth day, the day of Ashurā, Hūsiyn and his followers were killed and the women and children were taken prisoners. The Shi'ih Muslims see the Imām as a holy figure and Yazid as a corrupted man, and the followers of the Imām as individuals loyal to the prophet's family against the military forces of Yazid. For Shi'ih, the Imām is a symbol of compassion, self-sacrifice and courage, and his life a model for self-sacrifice in the way of God, a revolt against wrongdoing. The story of Hūsiyn's defeat against the Yazid army is a sad drama. During the Umayyad, Abbasid and especially Safavid dynasties the commemoration rituals began to be popular among Shi'ih Muslims. Fourteen centuries after the death of the Imām, this ritual is widely practiced in Lebanon,

Iraq, Bahrain, India, Kuwait, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.[294] In Iran, during the first ten days of the month of Muharram, this ritual is practiced in the majority of cities and villages. As Elias Canetti describes, during these ten days the whole of Persia is in mourning.[295]

In Masulih, on the last night of Zil-Hijjah, the month before Muharram, the inhabitants begin to prepare for Muharram. Four neighborhoods are responsible for holding the ceremony. In each neighborhood, one person is responsible for beating cymbals in order to declare that the month of Muharram has arrived: this ritual is called *sinj-zani*.[296] The first *sinj-zani* or cymbal-beating should start in Masjid Bar neighborhood, from respect for the *Imāmzādih*, and then the rest of the neighborhoods commence the cymbal-beating. This is an indication of the beginning of the ceremony for the next ten nights. In each neighborhood, a group of chest beaters or *dastih-i sinih-zanān* gathers in front of the mosque of their neighborhood and start to walk towards the *Imāmzādih*. The history of the martyrdom and bravery of the Imām and the deeds of the martyrs are retold to the mourners on the path to the *Imāmzādih* in a tone of intense sorrow by a *nuhih khān* or reciter. The *nuhih khan* tries to arouse the emotions of the attendants. He then walks in front of the clergy, or *piysh namāz*, of the mosque, followed by a group of chest beaters. These men are aged twelve and above and arranged according

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[294] For more information regarding the history of Ashura, the following articles are recommended: Ali J. Hussain, "The Mourning of History and the History of Mourning: The Evolution of Ritual Commemoration of the Battle of Karbala," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 1 (2005): 78–88; Augustus Richard Norton, "Ritual, Blood, and Shiite Identity: Ashura in Nabatiyya, Lebanon," *The Drama Review* 49, no. 4 (2005): 140–55; Lara Deeb, "Living Ashura in Lebanon: Mourning Transformed to Sacrifice," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 1 (2005): 122–37; M. Ayoub, "ASURA," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 1987, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asura; Peter J. Chelkowski, "DASTA," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 1994, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dasta; J. Calmard, "AZADARI," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition,1987, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/azadari.
[295] Ellias Canetti. *Crowds and Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 148.
[296] This section is based on my personal fieldwork which was done in November 2011.

to the height; they strike their chests with their hands rhythmically based on the chanting of the *nuhih khān*. Each group has a loudspeaker, a microphone, drums and cymbals so their sound will be heard in the entire neighborhood. The remembrance of the martyrdom of the Imām is filled with excessive emotion, weeping, lamenting and mourning. After all of the neighborhood's group has arrived at the *Imāmzādih*, the mourners are offered sweet tea and cookies.

During the first four days of Muharram, each neighborhood has its own mourning day. On the first day, Masjid Bar neighborhood is responsible for the mourning ceremony. This is due to respect for the *Imāmzādih*. The second day belongs to Khānih Bar, Kishih Sar has the third day and the fourth day is dedicated to Asad Mahalih. During these four days, at noon, the group of chest beaters which belongs to the relevant neighborhood gathers in front of their neighborhood's mosque and walks in all the streets of all the four neighborhoods; their final destination is the *Imāmzādih*. While they walk, they distribute sweet drinks or *sharbat* to the inhabitants. The ritual of Ashurā is a drama that is performed in all the streets in Masulih.

In the afternoon of the fifth day, after the afternoon prayer which is held in Qanbar Abād Mosque, the group of chest beaters or *dastih-i siynih-zanān* meets in front of the Kishih Sar Mosque and walks towards the house of Muhammad Askar-pur. Muhammad stands in front of the house with a large bowl which is covered with black textile. The vessel is for those who desire to dedicate money for sustaining the ceremonies or for those who have a *nazr*. The concept of *nazr* is as follows: If one has a difficulty in life, one may pray to God and ask for relief; if the difficulty is removed then the person should

pay the *nazr*.[297] When the chest beaters arrive at Muhammad's house he hands the bowl

to one of the mourners and the group walk in the streets of Masulih, visiting house to

house. Any person who has a *nazr* or wishes to dedicate financially to the ceremony puts

money in the bowl. The chest beaters walk in the streets while a *nuhih khān* chants the

story of the Imām. The mourners end the walk in the Mosque of Kishih Sar.

On the sixth day, the ritual of *alam bandi* is held In Masulih. In the afternoon of this

day, the board of trustees of the four mosques of the four neighborhoods, who are the

seniors of the community, carry their *alam* to the *Imāmzādih*. An *alam* is a large wooden

pole with a metal emblem or a sign on top. The sign may be in the shape of the palm of

the hand, which is called *panjih*, and represents the prophet Muhammad's family.[298] It is

the flag of Muharram and every mosque has its own *alam*. The trustees bring the *alam* to

the *Imāmzādih* and wrap it with green textile. Green is a sacred color and represents

Shi'ih Islam. Afterwards, the four groups of chest beaters walk from their mosques to the

Imāmzādih while mourning; they pass the bazaar and reach the *Imāmzādih*. Then the

seniors of each neighborhood pass their *alam* to the mourners of their neighborhood. This

should be done in the sacred site of the *Imāmzādih*. The person who carries the *alam* is

called the *alamdār*. This is a privileged title and act. The first neighborhood that gets its

alam is Masjid Bar, followed by the rest of the neighborhoods. After this the mourners

walk back behind the *alam* of their neighborhood to their mosque. Each neighborhood's

group is accompanied by an *alamdār*, a *nuhih khān*, the seniors of the neighborhood, a

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[297] The *nazr* can be provided in any form. It can be accomplished by cooking food and distributing it freely to people in need or by dedicating money to a charity or a religious institution. In the month of Muharram, those who have *nazr* usually cook free meals and distribute them to people in need.

[298] For Shi'ih Muslims, the prophet's family includes Imām Ali, Imām Hūsiyn, Imām Hassan and Fatima, the daughter of the prophet. For more information regarding *alam* see: J. Calmard, "ALAM VA ALAMAT," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 1985, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/alam-va-alamat-ar.

drum beater, a cymbal beater and the chest beaters, and on their way the individuals who have *nazr* or would like to donate financially to the ceremony stand by the window or balcony of their houses and wait for the *alamdār* and the group to approach. When the *alam* draws near they ask the *alamdār* to discontinue so they can place their donation inside the wrapped textile. They hold the *panjih* of the *alam*, kiss it, and put their money inside the wrapped bowl. This occurs frequently during the ninth and tenth day and endures until the afternoon of the tenth day.

On the ninth day, mourners from all the neighborhoods gather in front of the Riyhānih Bar neighborhood mosque and walk behind the *alam-hai* of the four neighborhoods carrying metal chains with which they flail themselves in an activity called *zanjir zani* (chain beating). For these people, the pain that they inflict on themselves is in fact the pain of Imām on the plain of Karbala. They pass the bazaar and walk towards the *Imāmzādih*, and after they finish their mourning in the *Imāmzādih* they walk back to their mosque.

After morning prayer time on the day of Ashurā, which is the tenth day of Muharram, the inhabitants of the four neighborhoods gather in front of their mosques and walk towards the *Imāmzādih* behind their *alam*. The mourners are offered sweet tea with cookies. Rashid Askar-pur's cookie shop customarily prepares the cookies. The mourners are also offered breakfast in the *Imāmzādih*. At noon prayer time, the inhabitants cook *qiymih* – a common food for Ashurā, consisting of chickpeas, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, cooked red meat and spices and served with rice and *lavāsh* – in the mosque. Tens of kilos of *qiymih* are distributed free to the people.

In the afternoon a drama performance called the *ta'ziyih* takes place in the bazaar. The *ta'ziyih* is a drama which depicts the death of the Imām. The major characters of this

play are the following: Shimr, the commander of the enemy; Ibn Saʿd, the second

commander in chief; Ziynab, sister of the Imām; Imām Hūsiyn; Rūbāb, Hūsiyn's wife;

Harmalih, one of the opponents; and Abdullah, young nephew of Hūsiyn. The actors wear

costumes to identify the character. All the female roles are played by men, who wear

black garments that cover them from head to toe. The enemies wear red costumes while

the heroes wear green. All the inhabitants of and visitors to Masulih gather on the roof of

the bazaar and the bazaar's passageway to watch the *ta'ziyih*, a very sad drama. They are

deeply affected by the *ta'ziyih*. They weep in silence, groan, and beat themselves. Their

Imām has just been martyred in front of their eyes. For Peter Brook the *ta'ziyih* is the

most living form of mystery play that exists today. In the *ta'ziyih* there is no difference

between past and present; an event which happened fourteen centuries ago becomes a

reality at the moment. For Brook, the *ta'ziyih* was the strongest play that he ever saw in

theater.[299] The drama ends and the crowd gradually disappears to their houses. It is the

end of the tenth night and the ritual of Ashurā has just ended. In fact, the ritual of Ashurā

is a sad drama which is performed by the inhabitants for ten nights and days. During this

distinct period, the paths in Masulih unify the ceremony and its performers. It is the path

that connects every house and individual to the *Imāmzādih* as a religious artifact.

3.7 Sacred Shrines Around the Community

As I mentioned before, a casual visitor to the town might assume that the boundaries of

the community are limited to the physical built environment of Masulih. However, by

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[299] Peter Brook, "Leaning On the Moment: A Conversation With Peter Brook," *PARABOLA* IV, no.2 (1979): 51–52. For more information regarding *tazieh* see Rebecca Ansary Pettys, "The Taziyeh of the Martyrdom of Hussein," *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (2005): 28–41; Peter J. Chelkowski, "Time Out of Memory: Taziyeh, the Total Drama." *The Drama Review* 49, no.4 (2005): 15–27.

walking the paths in the surrounding landscape of Masulih the complex network of paths

outside the community gradually reveals itself to the walker. The outside paths are mostly

hidden in the greenery of the landscape. By walking the paths outside the town one can

visit the shrines around the community. The shrines are tied to the community by these

paths. It is the role of the path to extend to the surrounding landscape and unify the

shrines with the community. Currently, the majority of these pilgrimage paths are

forgotten and abandoned, merely used by shepherds and flocks. There are four shrines

around Masulih; these four shrines are religious artifacts and used to be visited by

pilgrims. They are: *Imāmzādih* Hāshim, *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim, *Imāmzādih* ʿiyn ibn-i Ali

and *Imāmzādih* Ziyn ibn-i Ali in Ishkāliyt. *Imāmzādih* Hāshim and *Imāmzādih* ʿiyn ibn-i

Ali's paths extend into woods. *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim is located in the upper part of Masulih,

on the slope of the mountain, looking down towards Masulih. It has a mountainous path.

Imāmzādih Ziyn ibn-i Ali is located in Ishkāliyt village and the path to it is the main road

to Masulih.

It was in July 2013 that the I walked the narrow path leading to *Imāmzādih*

Hāshim (figures 3.50, 3.51). It takes approximately an hour to reach the *Imāmzādih* from

Masulih. The path passes through the woods. The *Imāmzādih* consist of the shrine, a

graveyard and two abandoned houses. Hāmid Pākdaman, who is a merchant in Masulih,

indicates that for generations the custodianship of the *Imāmzādih* has belonged to his

family members, and one of his family members usually takes care of the *Imāmzādih*. The

two abandoned houses belong to Khādim Hāshimi's family and Pazhuh's family. The

grandfather of Hāmid Pākdaman, Mūllā Zaʾiyr Khādim Hashimi, used to live in one of

them. He was the guardian of the *Imāmzādih*. Mūllā Zaʾiyr used to keep bees, goats and

cows. In the time of Mūllā Zaʾiyr, people who wanted to travel to Zanjān passed by the
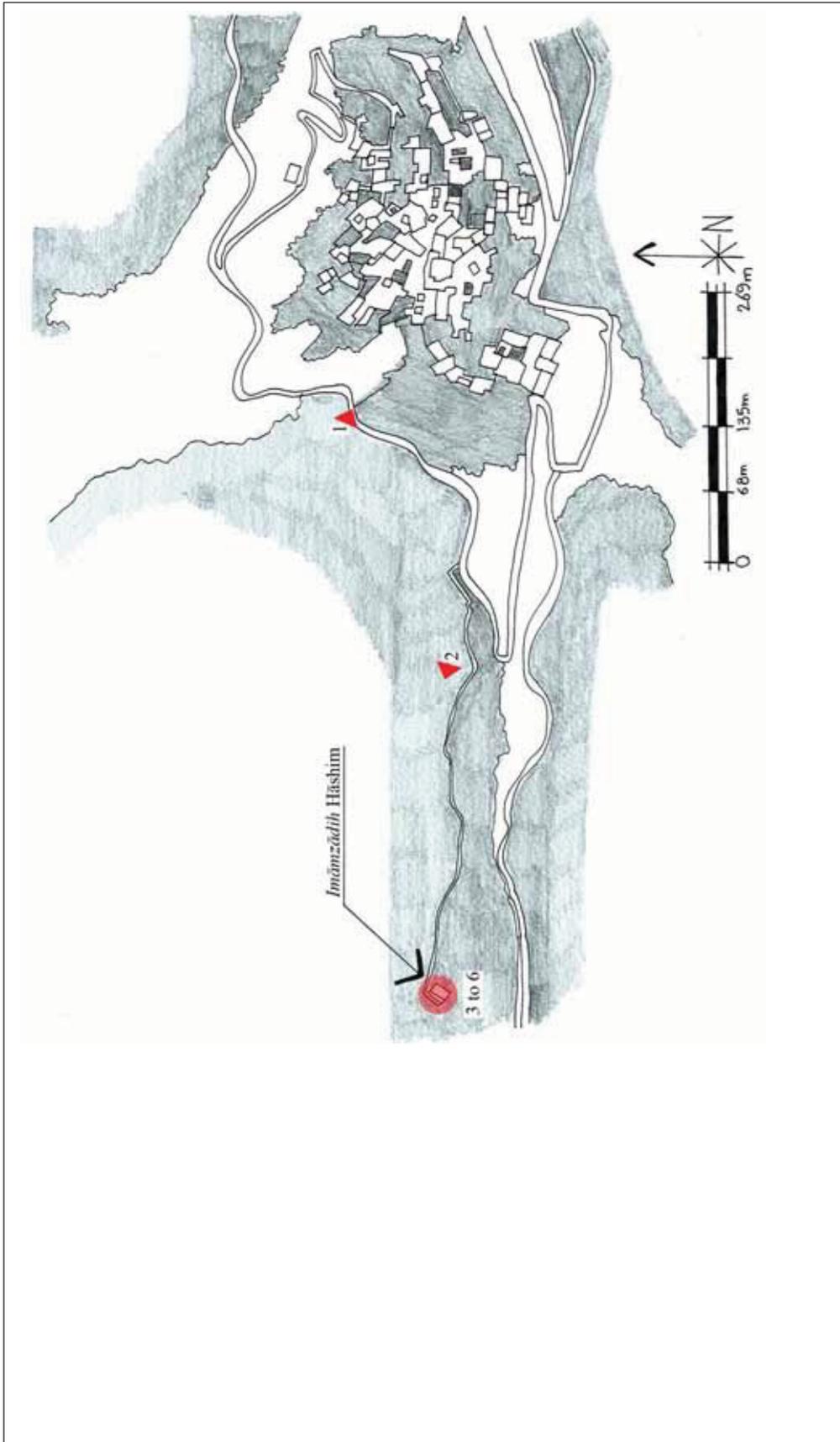
Fig. 3.50. The location of Imāmzādih Hāshim. Adapted from Google Earth.
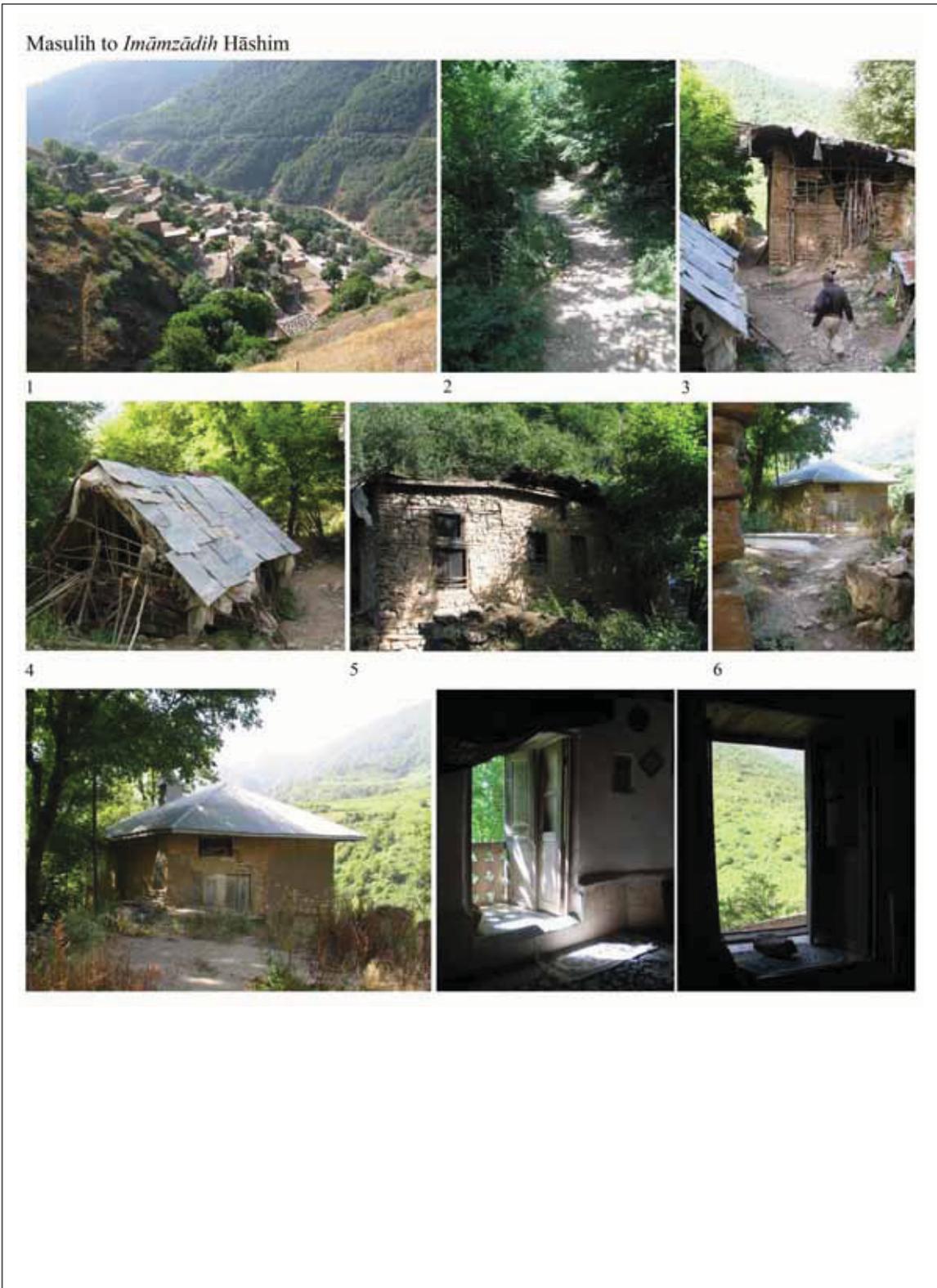
Fig. 3.51. The path to Imāmzādih Hāshim. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.50. Photographs by author, 2010.

207

Imāmzādih Hāshim, while those who wanted to travel to Khalkhal used to pass by *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim. Mūllā Za'iyr had two sons and they used to live there too, but their sons left the *Imāmzādih* and migrated to Tehran. Pazhuh's family also migrated to Masulih. The last one from Pazhuh's family who lived there was 'ināyat Allah Pazhuh, who migrated to Masulih in 1983.[300]

According to Hāmid Pākdaman, the *Imāmzādih* Hāshim used to have a lot of pilgrims, especially during the month of Rajab. In Mūllā Za'iyr's time, the inhabitants of Masulih used to visit the shrine more often than these days. Up to a decade ago, some people wished to be buried beside *Imāmzādih* Hāshem and the other shrines, but after the construction of Masulih Cemetery people abandoned the practice of burying their deceased in close proximity to these sacred sites. In the past, the inhabitants of each neighborhood in Masulih would bury their dead beside a particular one of these shrines. The Kishih Sar people used to bury their dead in close proximity to *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim; the Asad Mahalih people buried their deceased in *Imāmzādih* Hāshim; the Khānih Bar people had the custodianship of *Imāmzādih* 'iyn ibn-i Ali and they would bury their dead there. Since the construction of Masulih Cemetery and the cessation of this practice there are fewer pilgrims to these sites. Currently, the custodianship of *Imāmzādih* Hāshem is with Mahmud Khādim Hāshimi, who lives in Tehran.[301]

'ināyat Allah Pazhuh, who lived beside *Imāmzādih* Hāshim until 1983, says that his father Aman Allah Pazhuh, his grandfather Ali Pazhuh, his ancestor Muhammad Quli Pazhuh, and the father of his ancestor Riza Quli Pazhuh, used to live in the same house beside the *Imāmzādih*. 'ināyat Allah was born in 1939. He and his father lived and

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[300] Hāmid Pākdaman, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
[301] Hāmid Pākdaman, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.

worked beside the *Imāmzādih*. They had goats, cows, bees and sheep there. ʿināyat Allah himself also used to practice animal husbandry. He used to sell cheese, wool and meat to the merchants in Masulih. His father, Aman Allah and ʿināyat used to have a furnace for making charcoal in the woods. They used to bring the charcoal by mules to the bazaar and sell it to the merchants – ʿināyat Allah used to sell a pack of charcoal for 1 tuman. In the time of his father Aman Allah and before, people traveled by horses and mules to Fuman, Zanjān and Khalkhal. It usually took them two days to reach Fuman; they had to stay the night in Maklavan. In those days, before the times of cars, roads and gas capsules, all the cooking and heating were done by charcoal. Around three decades ago, the practice of animal husbandry and charcoal making in the woods was banned by the Office of Natural Resources. As a result, ʿināyat Allah had to sell his flocks and migrate to Masulih. If he could have kept his flocks and his charcoal making practice, he would have stayed by the *Imāmzādih*. Sometimes ʿināyat Allah visits the shrine and his house there.[302]

The Office of Natural Resources is against practicing animal husbandry in the woods and mountains in the province of Gilān. As Riza Sālih, a scholar on wood and mountain dwellers, indicates, this office believes that shepherds destroy the national resources in the woods and mountains by building huts, grazing herds, making small edible agricultural plots for family use near their living places, and constantly cutting the trees for domestic use and to provide leaves for the herd. The peak of the destruction of the trees is in winter, when the shepherds are trying to provide leaves for the herd from the branches. The Office of Natural Resources also argues that some shepherds choose a piece of land in the forest with minimum slope, burn the trees and plant wheat and barley. Due to the richness of the soil, for one or two seasons this practice is successful, but

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[302] ʿināyat Allah Pazhuh, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.

eventually due to the harshness of the work, lack of tractors, and water shortages the shepherds abandon the land, so in this way the forest turns into a wasted land. In 1990, the Office of Natural Resources issued a bylaw that shepherds must abandon the woods and mountains in Gilān province. The Office believes that they can minimize the negative impact of deforestation by forcing shepherds to move out of the forest. This policy of forceful relocation of shepherds away from woods and mountains began in 1990, and continues to our present day.[303]

Imāmzādih Ibrahim is another site which is accessible to the community by a steep path (figure 3.52). The road to Kūhnih Masulih or Old Masulih passes above the last rows of the houses: this road is the continuation of the main road to Masulih. The narrow path to *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim is an extension of this road. Tāhir Haniyfih Zādih, who is a merchant in the bazaar, indicates that for two centuries and half his family has kept the custodianship of *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim. Before Tāhir, the custodianship belonged to Abdullah Haniyfih Zādih, Muhammad Haniyfih Zādih, Darvish Haniyfih Zādeh, Hiydar Ali Haniyfih Zādih, Ghūlam Ali Haniyfih Zādeh, Ashur Haniyfih Zādih and Abidiyn Haniyfih Zādih. Shepherds used to live above the *Imāmzādih* in a place called Dulih Chāl, and those shepherds would visit the *Imāmzādih* often. Gradually the shepherds abandoned the grazing lands due to new legislation regarding animal husbandry. Pilgrims from Masulih and wood dwellers and mountain dwellers also used to visit the *Imāmzādih*.

The Haniyfih Zādih family used to live beside the *Imāmzādih*. They are the guardians of the Imāmzādih and their family had four houses beside it. Tāhir also was

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[303] Riza Sālih, "Jangal Nishiynān," In *Kitab-i Gilān*, ed. Ibrāhim Islah-i Arabāni (Tehran: Gūruh-i Pazhruhishgārān-i Iran, 1384), 370–76.
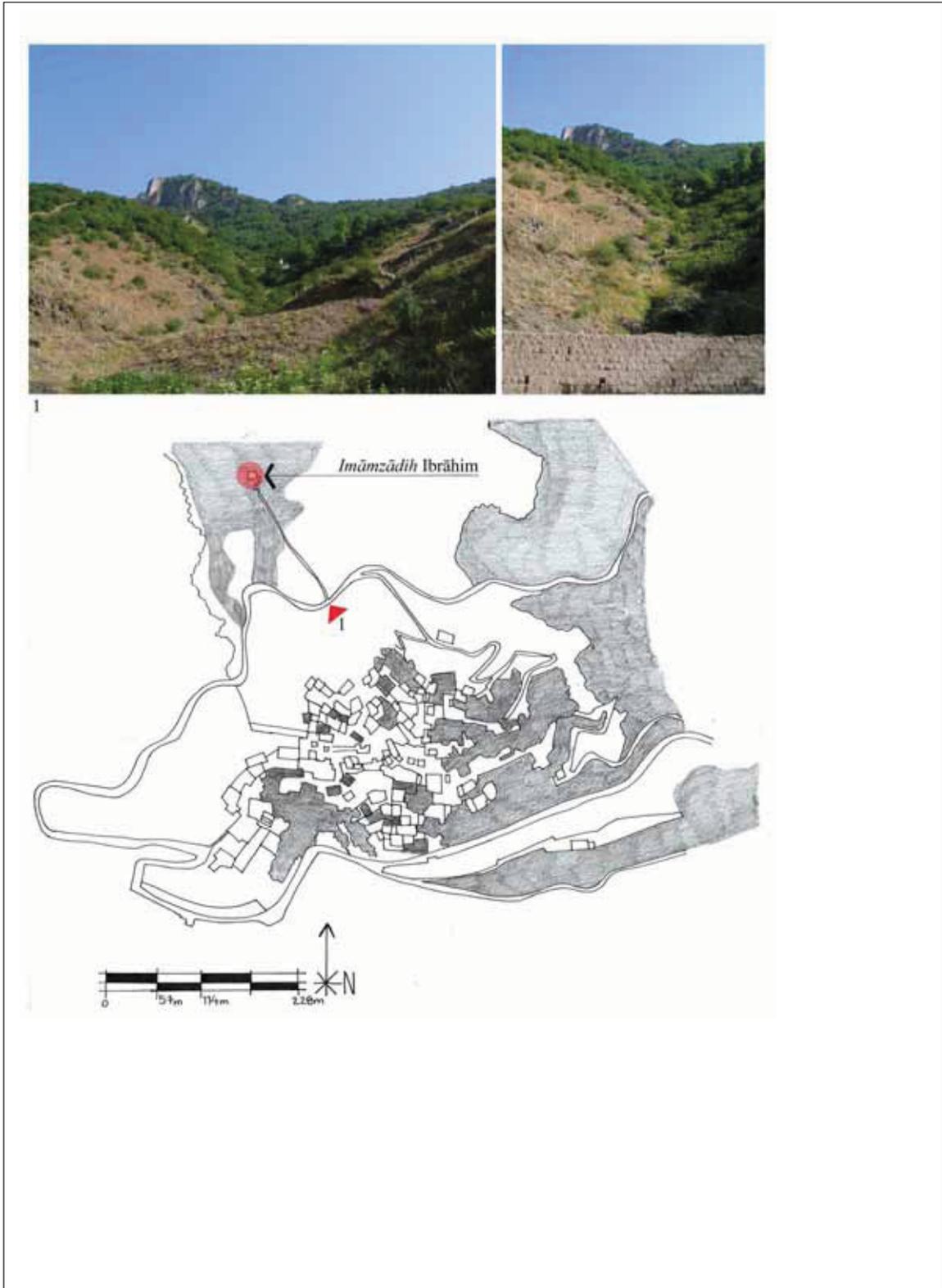
Fig. 3.52. The location of Imāmzādih Ibrāhim. Photographs are keyed to the map. Adapted from Google Earth. Photographs by author, 2010.

born beside the *Imāmzādih*. Haniyfih Zādih's family moved to Masulih about four decades ago, around the time that the population of the community was decreasing due to migration to larger cities. Their houses beside the *Imāmzādih* were abandoned and gradually destroyed. The *Imāmzādih* and its surrounding site were demolished, then reconstructed, and the site is currently locked. In fact, no one lives there to open the door to visitors.[304]

Like the path to *Imāmzādih* Hāshim, the path to *Imāmzādih* ʿiyn ibn-i Ali passes through the woods (figures 3.53, 3.54) . It takes an hour of walking to reach the *Imāmzādih*. The *Imāmzādih* consists of a building with a dome on top, in need of interior and exterior restoration. This site is currently abandoned and left to its fate. The last shrine, that of *Imāmzādih* Ziyn ibn-i Ali, is in Ishkāliyt village, the last village before Masulih, 2.5 km from the town. The path to this *Imāmzādih* is the same as the main road to Masulih. The custodianship of *Imāmzādih* Ziyn ibn-i Ali is with Tahriyri's family. Ghafār Tahriyri, who was born in Ishkāliyt, is now the guardian of the *Imāmzādih*. His father, Muhammad Fazil Tahriyri, and his grandfather, Mashhadi Sālih Tahriyri, were also guardians of this *Imāmzādih*.[305] In his diary, Rabino writes about these two *Imāmzādihs*. After the defeat of Salik Muʿāllim, two brothers among his disciples, ʿiyn ibn-i Ali and Ziyn ibn-i Ali, came to Masulih district and converted the local inhabitants to Islam. Their tombs in the hamlet of Ishkāliyt became a center for pilgrimage.[306]

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[304] Tāhir Haniyfih Zādih, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
[305] Ghafār Tahriyri, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
[306] Rabino, *Vilāyāt-i Dar Al Marz-i Gilān*, 214. Marcel Bazin, "MĀSULA," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/masula.

Fig. 3.53. The location of Imāmzādih ʿīyn Ibn-i Ali. Adapted from Google Earth.
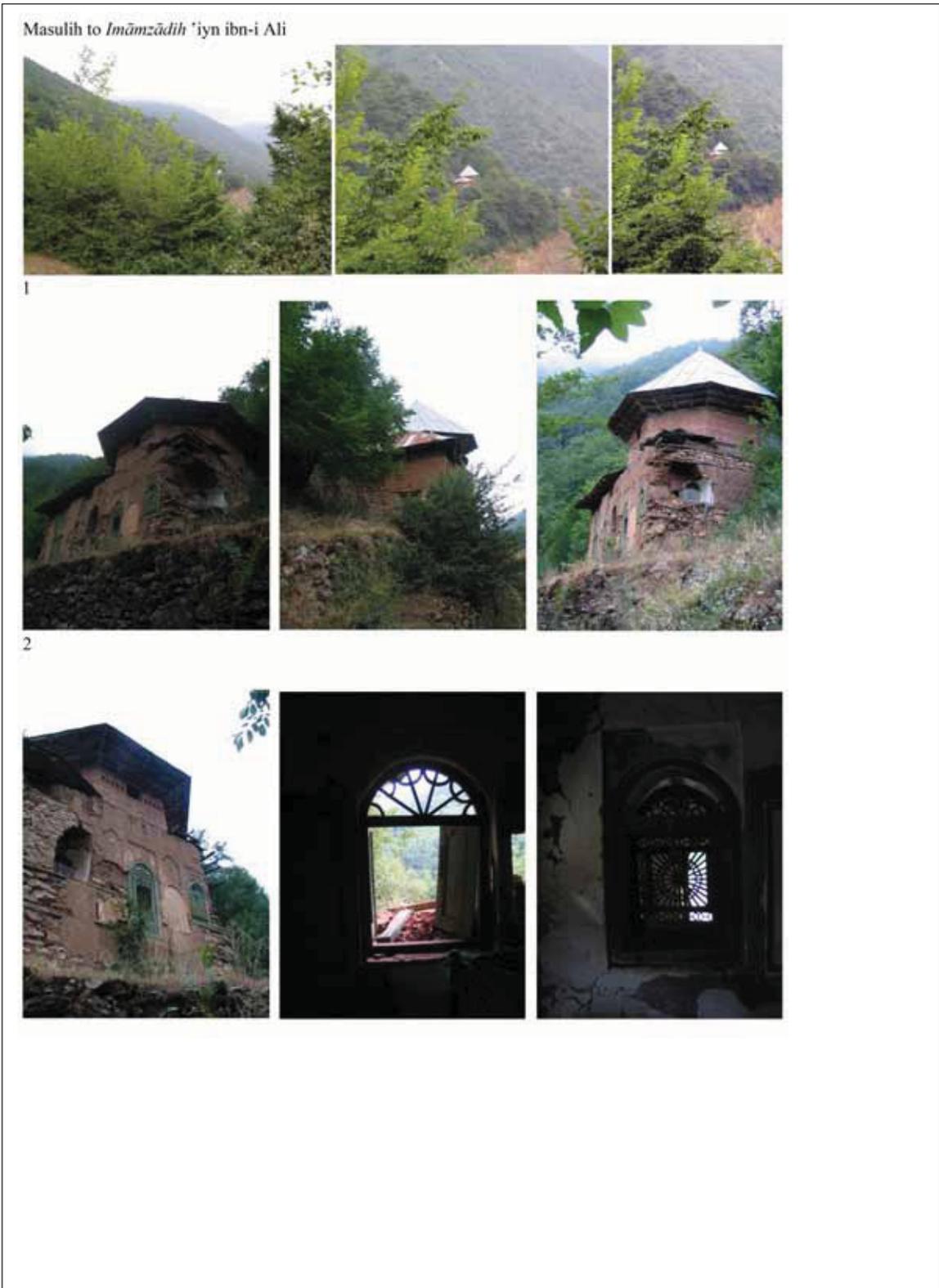
Fig. 3.54. The path to Imāmzādih ʿIyn Ibn-i Ali. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.53. Photographs by author, 2010.

Ghafār Tahriyri has the last tea house before reaching Masulih; although his family members migrated to larger cities, Ghafār Stayed in Ishkāliyt. Beside his tea house, he also purchases honey in late spring and autumn from the beekeepers and sells it. He opened the tea house because he did not want to abandon Ishkāliyt. Tahriyri's family also used to keep sheep and goats, but after the new legislation about animal husbandry, they abandoned this practice.[307]

3.8 On Grazing Lands and Animal Husbandry

The paths around Masulih are vital for the traditional practice of animal husbandry and for accessing the grazing lands. Like the paths within the town, the paths around the community developed over time through the movements of Masulih's people, shepherds, wood dwellers and mountain dwellers. This section begins by describing the various scenes and vistas that one can see by walking the paths around Masulih. The grazing lands will then be introduced and discussed in relation to their users. Finally, the hidden cultural and religious significance of these paths will be discussed.

Since the town of Masulih is located in the Tālish Mountains, the paths outside and inside the town ascend and descend at various levels. The main road from Fuman to Masulih commences at the level of the plateau, which is at sea level, and progressively rises to Zudil, which is 700m above sea level. Masulih itself is at a height of 1,050m. From Masulih various paths extend into the landscape at various heights. The Andarih grazing lands are located at the highest point at 2000m; the Lalandiz grazing lands are at 1370m. The paths which reach *Imāmzādih* Hāshim, *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim and *Imāmzādih* 'iyn ibn-i Ali are at 1140m, 1211m and 857m respectively (figures 3.55, 3.56). From the

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[307] Ghafār Tahriyri, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
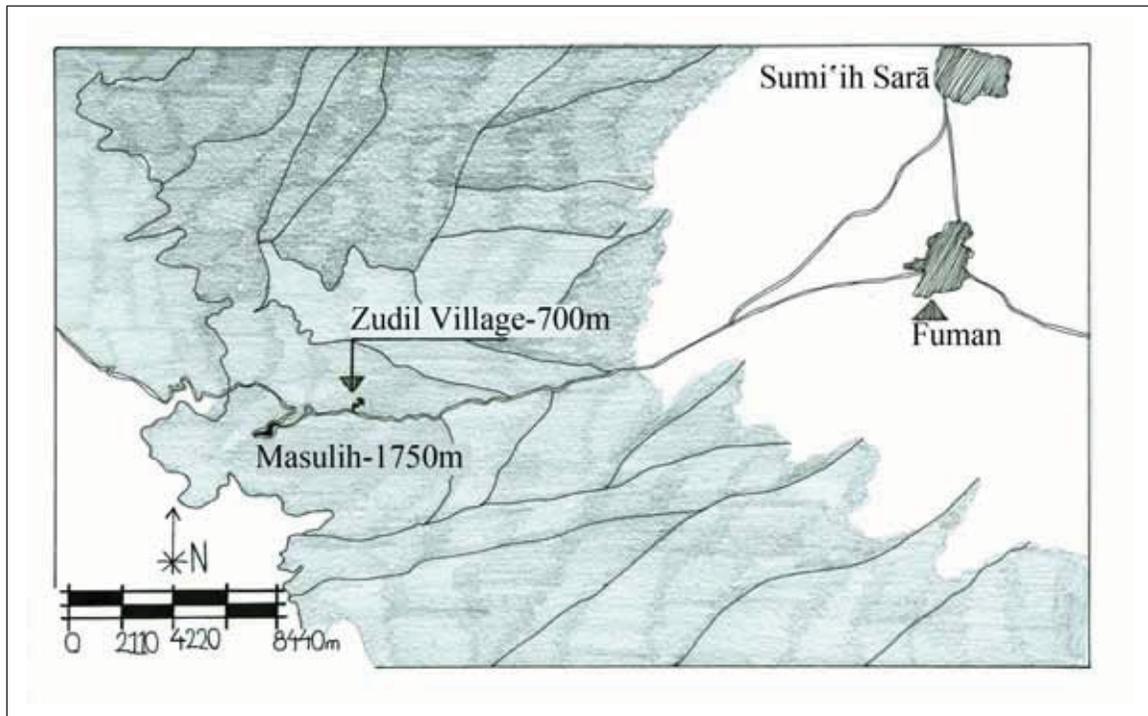
Fig. 3.55. The locations of Masulih, Zudil village and Fuman. Adapted from Google Earth.
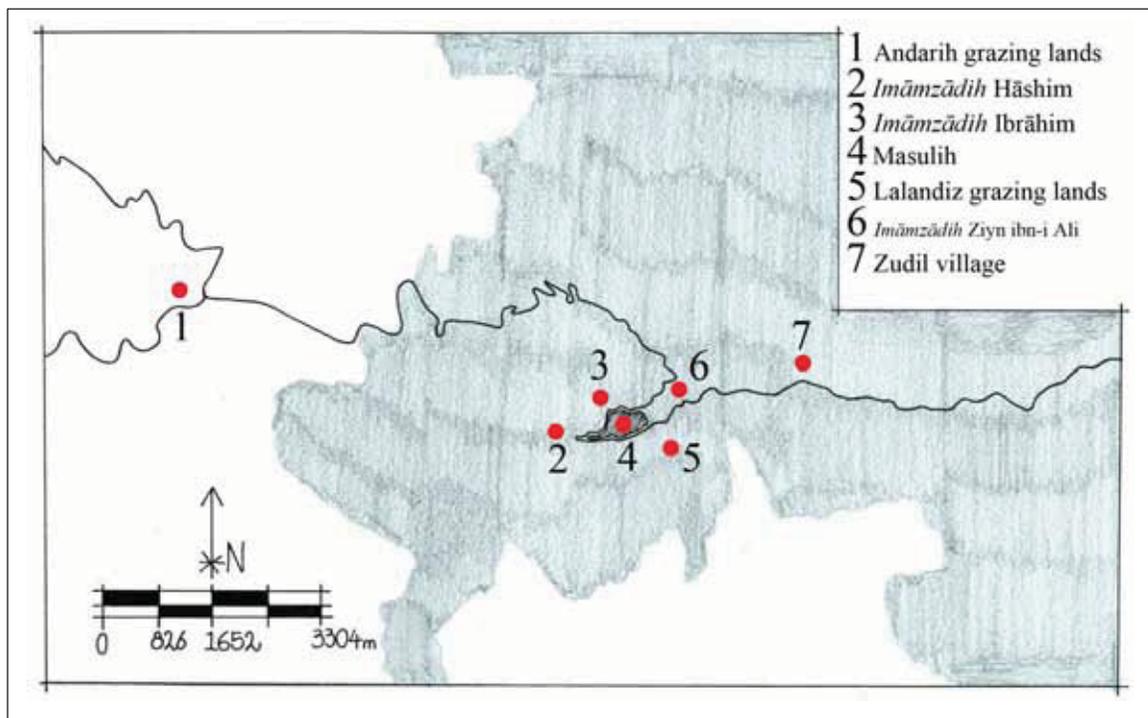
Fig. 3.56. Map of various locations in the vicinity of Masulih. Adapted from Google Earth.

windy Andarih grazing lands one can see the Tālish Mountains, the sloping grazing lands, and, on clear days, the plateau of Gilān and the Caspian Sea. During humid days, one can watch the formation of fog on the plateau and its gradual ascent to the higher ground. It is at the beginning of the path that leads to the Lalandiz grazing lands that one can see the elevation of the community. From the Lalandiz grazing lands, one can see the Tālish Mountains, Zudil village and the plateau of Gilān. The views from *Imāmzādih* Hāshim and *Imāmzādih* ʿiyn ibn-i Ali are limited to their surrounding woods: one sees only greenery. From the pedestrian paths inside the town one can see the entire town and the greenery-covered slopes of the Tālish Mountains. The scenery is limited to the town and the slopes of the mountains, whereas from the Andarih grazing lands the scenery is wide and open to the horizon (figure 3. 57).

One can experience various vistas by driving the main road from Fuman to Masulih (figures 3.58, 3.59). Fuman is a town located on the plains of Gilān surrounded by flat agricultural lands: the view here is horizontal with mountains in the distance. By contrast, driving towards the Tālish Mountains the view is limited to the mountain slopes covered with trees. The road descends gradually to Masulih. Standing at the main road at the bottom of Masulih, one can see the elevation of the community at the northern side, and the slope of the mountain and the grazing lands at the southern and western sides. Standing at the top of the town, one can see the slope of the mountain, the main road to Masulih, the roofs of the houses, the paths inside the town, the *Imāmzādih*, the bazaar and the houses. In spring and summer, the view can be limited in the misty afternoons. On misty days one can hardly see the slope of the mountains around the town or the entire town.

VIEW FROM LALANDIZ GRAZING LANDS .

VIEW FROM PATH TO LALANDIZ

ZOODEL VILLAGE

VIEW FROM LALANDIZ

PLATEAU of GILAN FROM LALANDIZ

FUMAN-MASOULEH ROAD

IMAMZADEH Ayn Ibn ALI

VIEW FROM LALANDIZ GRAZING LANDS
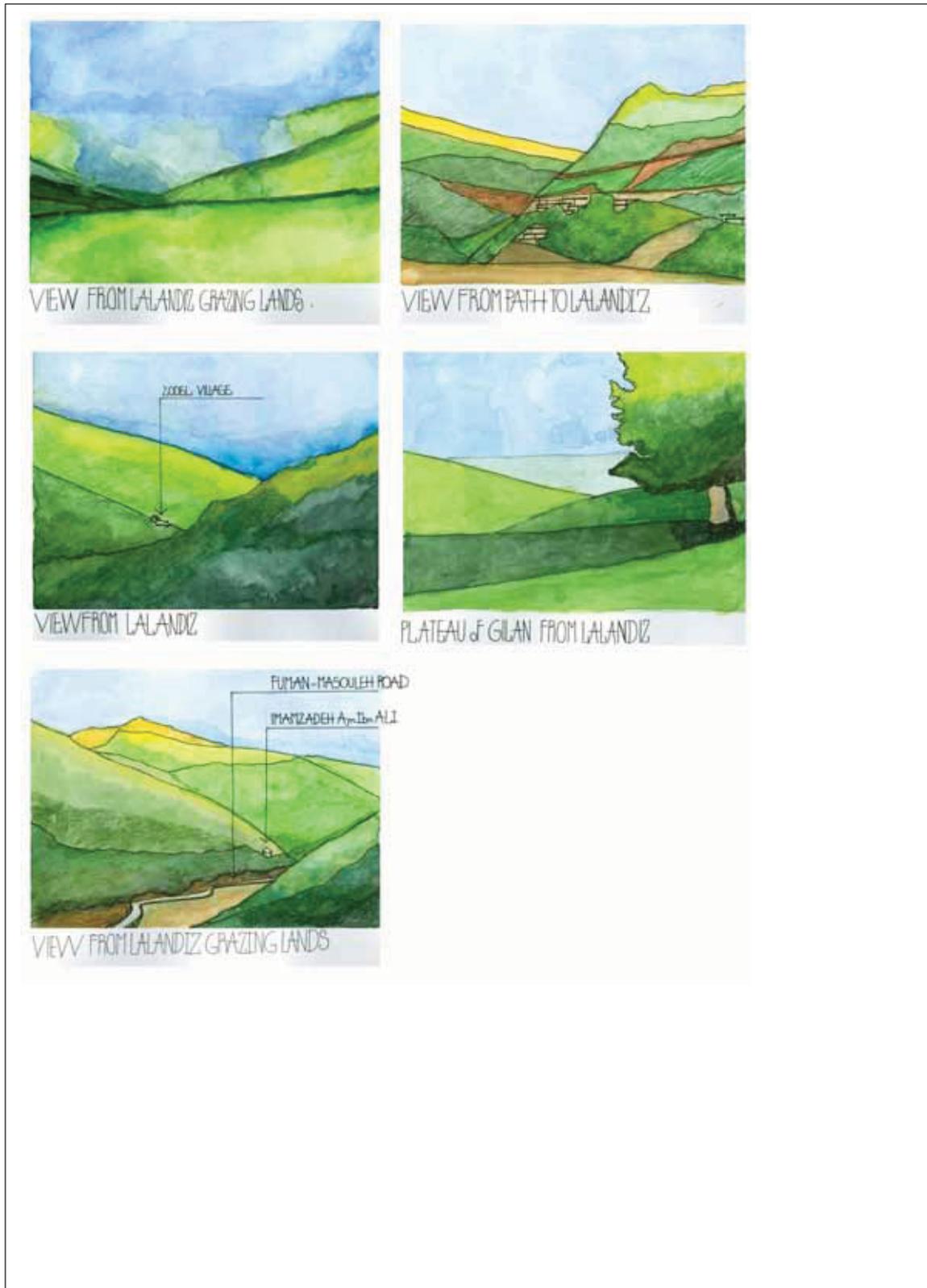
Fig. 3.57. Views of the Lalandiz grazing lands. Drawings by author, 2013.
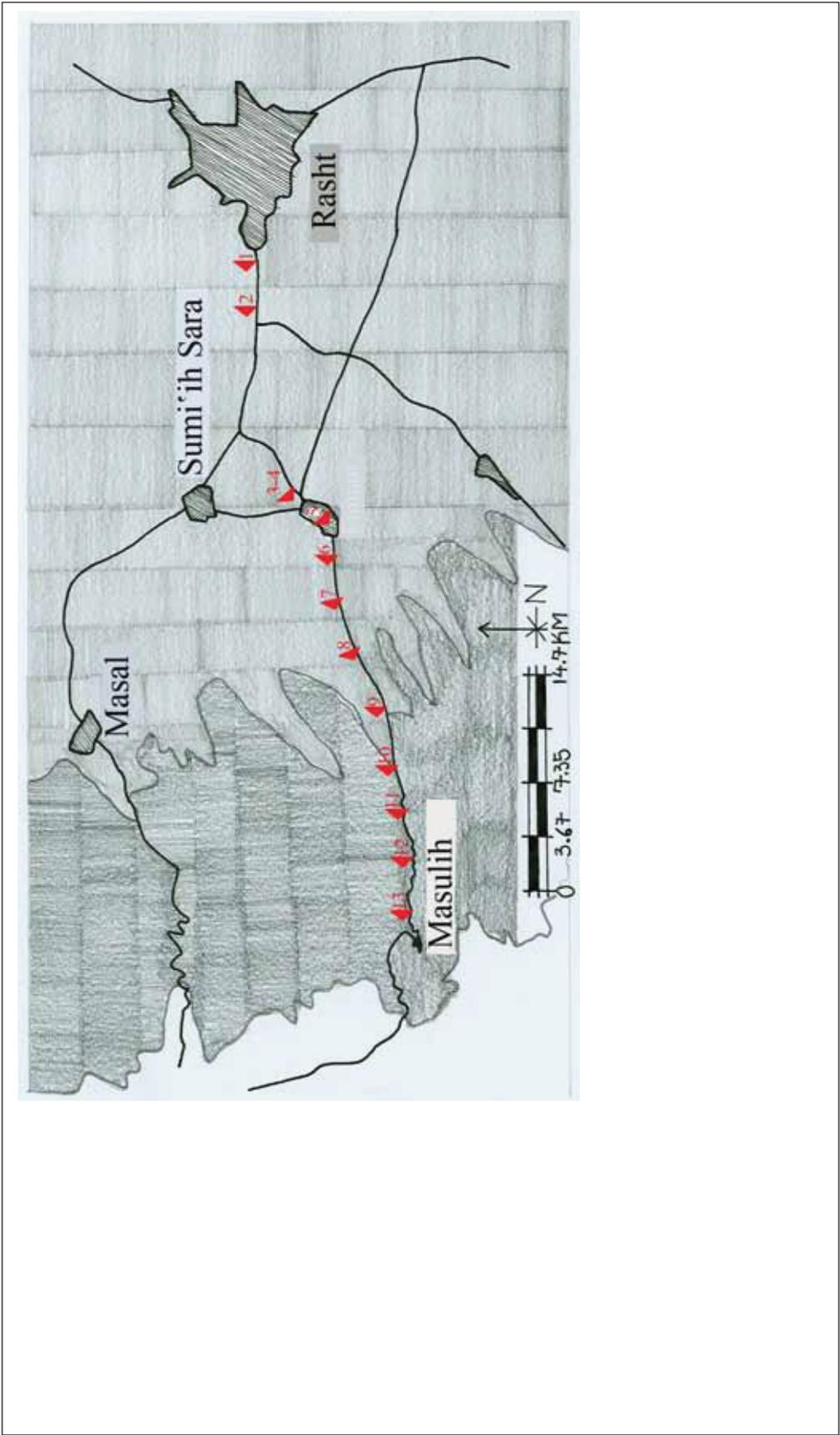
Fig. 3.58. Map of the road from Rasht to Masulih. Adapted from Google Earth.
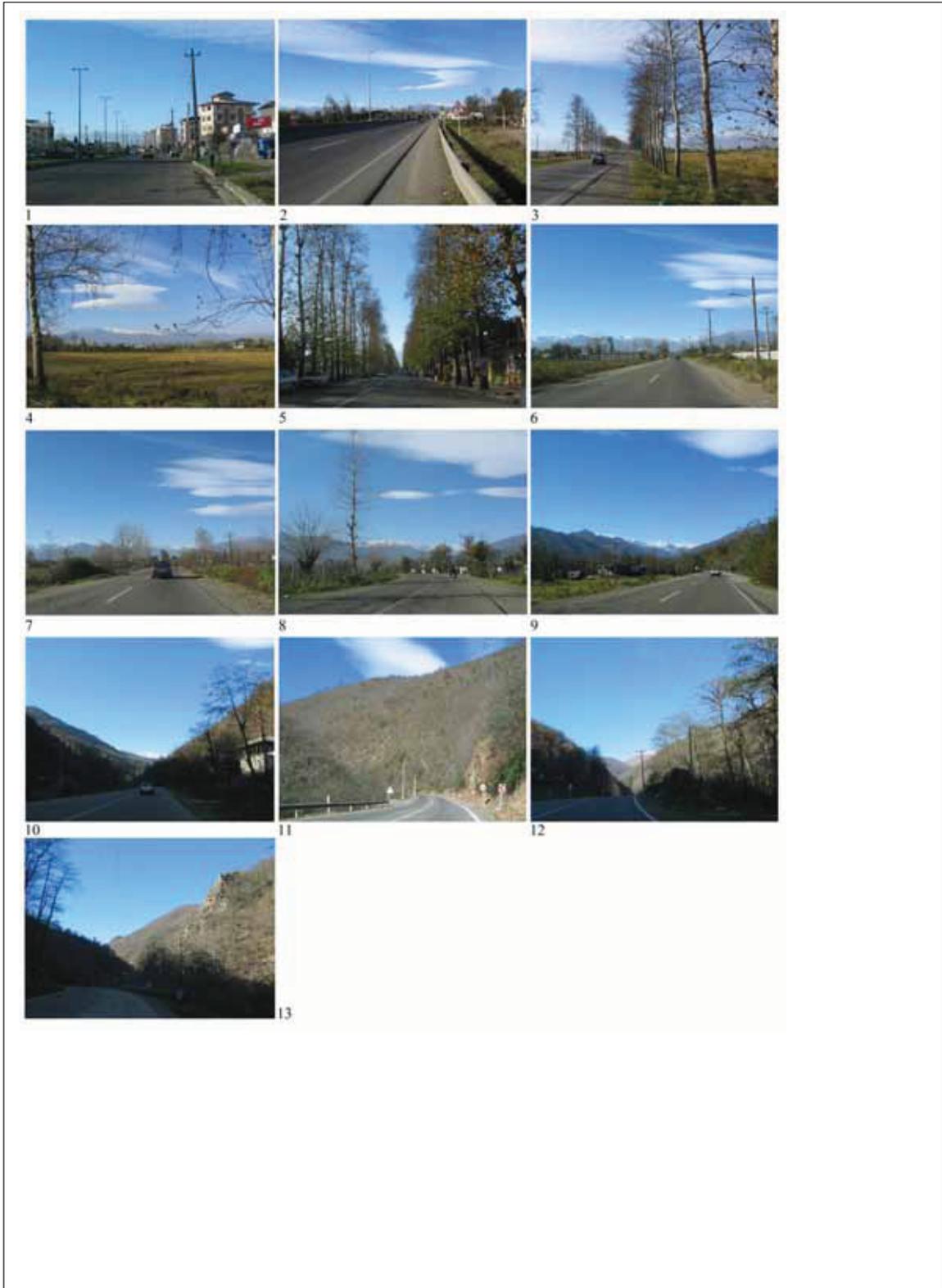
Fig. 3.59. Various photographs taken on the road from Rasht to Masulih. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.58. Photographs by author, 2011.

Masulih's paths have various widths. The main path, which passes through Fuman, Maklavan and Zudil and reaches Masulih, is wide enough for two cars; after reaching Masulih the road shifts from asphalt to a dirt road. The dirt road passes by grazing lands in the upper part of the town, including the Andarih grazing lands, Mājilān and finally Khalkhal. The paths that reach the Lalandiz grazing lands, *Imāmzādih* Hāshim and Imāmzādih ʿiyn ibn-i Ali have been developed in the landscape over time by shepherds and herds. The paths extend into woods, passing through the trees. These paths are invisible from the town; they merge into the greenery, become one with the woods. Eventually, all the paths outside the town from the villages, mountains and woods reach the community and turn into the pedestrian paths within the town. The pedestrian paths and stairs inside the community are covered with stone while the paths outside are dirt paths. On rainy and snowy days the paths outside the town are muddy and hard to pass (figure 3.60).

Rahmat Farahmand and Muhammad Ali Farahmand, who live in the woods, have to walk a narrow path every day in order to reach Masulih. During the autumn and winter, it is difficult for them to walk the muddy path. The path which reaches the Andarih grazing lands, Mājilān and finally Khalkhal is rarely used during the winter. In winter, the only active paths are the main road that reaches Masulih and the pedestrian paths inside the community. In the spring and summer, the paths outside the town that extend into the landscape are used more often.

By following the paths outside the town, one can visit the grazing lands and shepherds around the community. The grazing lands are connected to the community by paths, which have developed as an artifact of the traditional way of life of the people. It is the role of these paths to extend from the town to the surrounding landscape and unify the

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ASPHALT ROAD TO MASOULEH

PATH TO LALANDIZ GRAZING LANDS
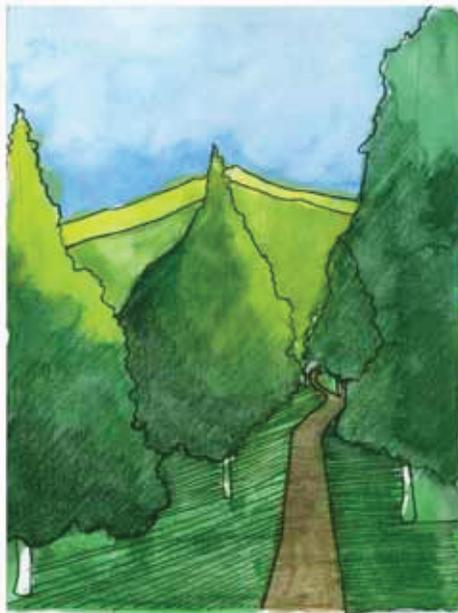
PATH TO LALANDIZ

Fig. 3.60. Various path-views. Drawings by author, 2013.

individuals who live and work there with the community. The shepherds who work and live on these grazing lands sell their products, mainly salted cheese and butter, to the merchants in Masulih. Due to recent legislation regarding animal husbandry in the woods, many shepherds have already left the region; the remaining ones live in the heights with their flocks. In Zudil village, people have abandoned animal husbandry, but in the Andarih and Lalandiz grazing lands shepherds still observe this practice.

Samad Ali Safar Zadih, who was born in 1942 and used to be a shepherd and a flock owner, currently owns a tea house in Zudil village (figures 3.61, 3.62). Zudil village is situated beyond Ishkāliyt village, 4 km from Masulih. The shepherds from this village used to sell cheese and butter to Masulih. Currently, seven families live in Zudil: the Safar Zadih, Sūbhāni, Bahrāmi, Haft Khāni, Fadavi, Hasani and Shāhbazi families. Until 1961, charcoal making was popular in this district, and all these families used to make charcoal to sell in Masulih as well as keeping flocks. The father of Samad Ali, Niˈmat Allah, used to burn branches, make charcoal and sell it in Masulih with Samad Ali. There was a section in the bazaar in which charcoal was sold. Samad Ali used to have one hundred goats, fifty sheep, and more than fifty cows, and would sell butter, cheese, wool and eggs to Masulih merchants. His father and his grandfather, Nagar Ali Safar Zadih, were also flock owners. Samad Ali used to visit Masulih frequently, traveling by mule or horse or walking.[308] He kept his sheep, cows and goats in a stable for five months a year during the cold season, but for the rest of the year, the flock could use the woods. Hay, chaff, grass and leaves from the trees were the food of these animals. In those days, animal husbandry was the main source of income for the people of Zudil. After the new

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[308] Samad Ali Safar Zadih, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
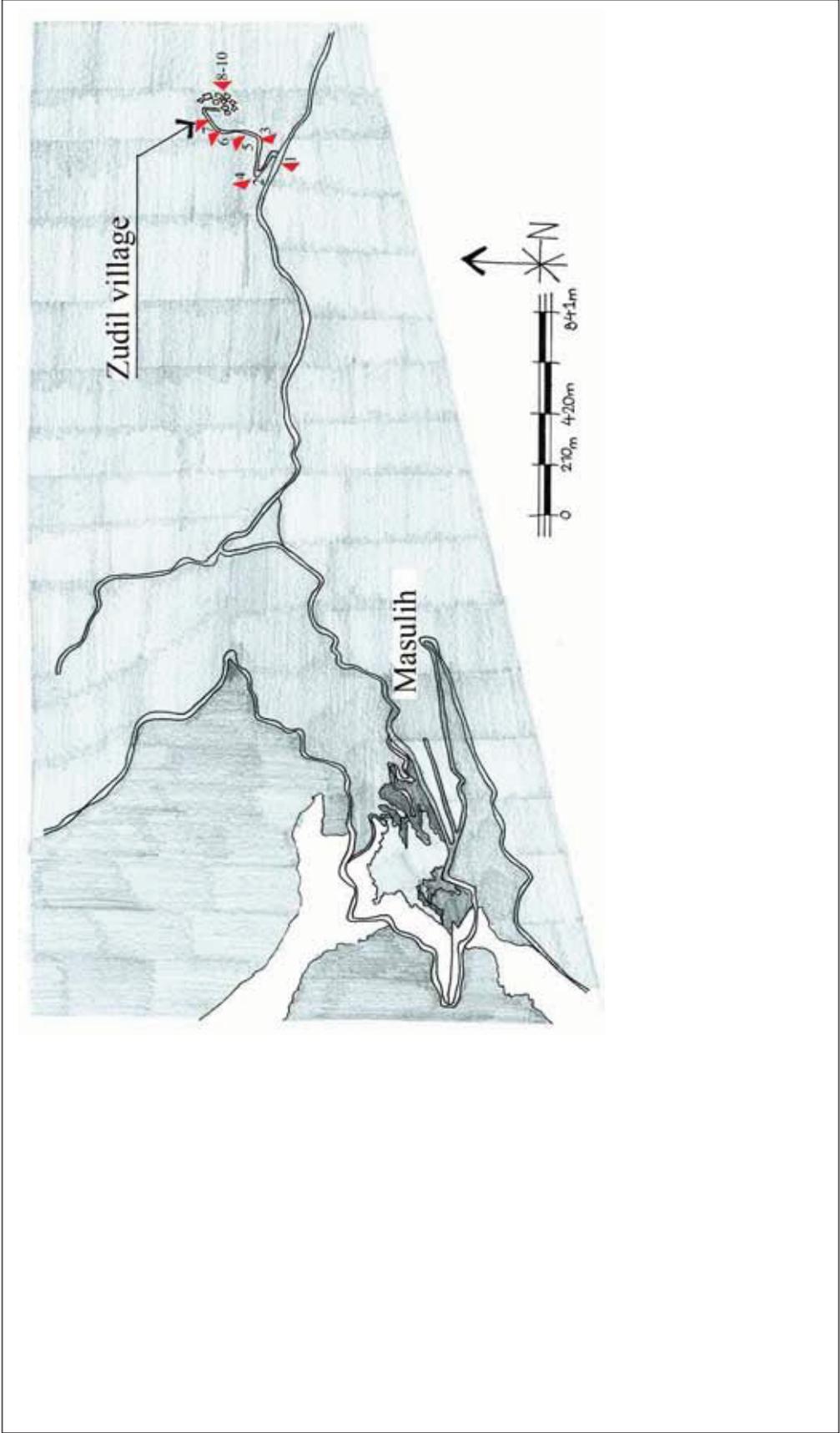
Fig. 3.61. The location of Zudil Village. Adapted from Google Earth.
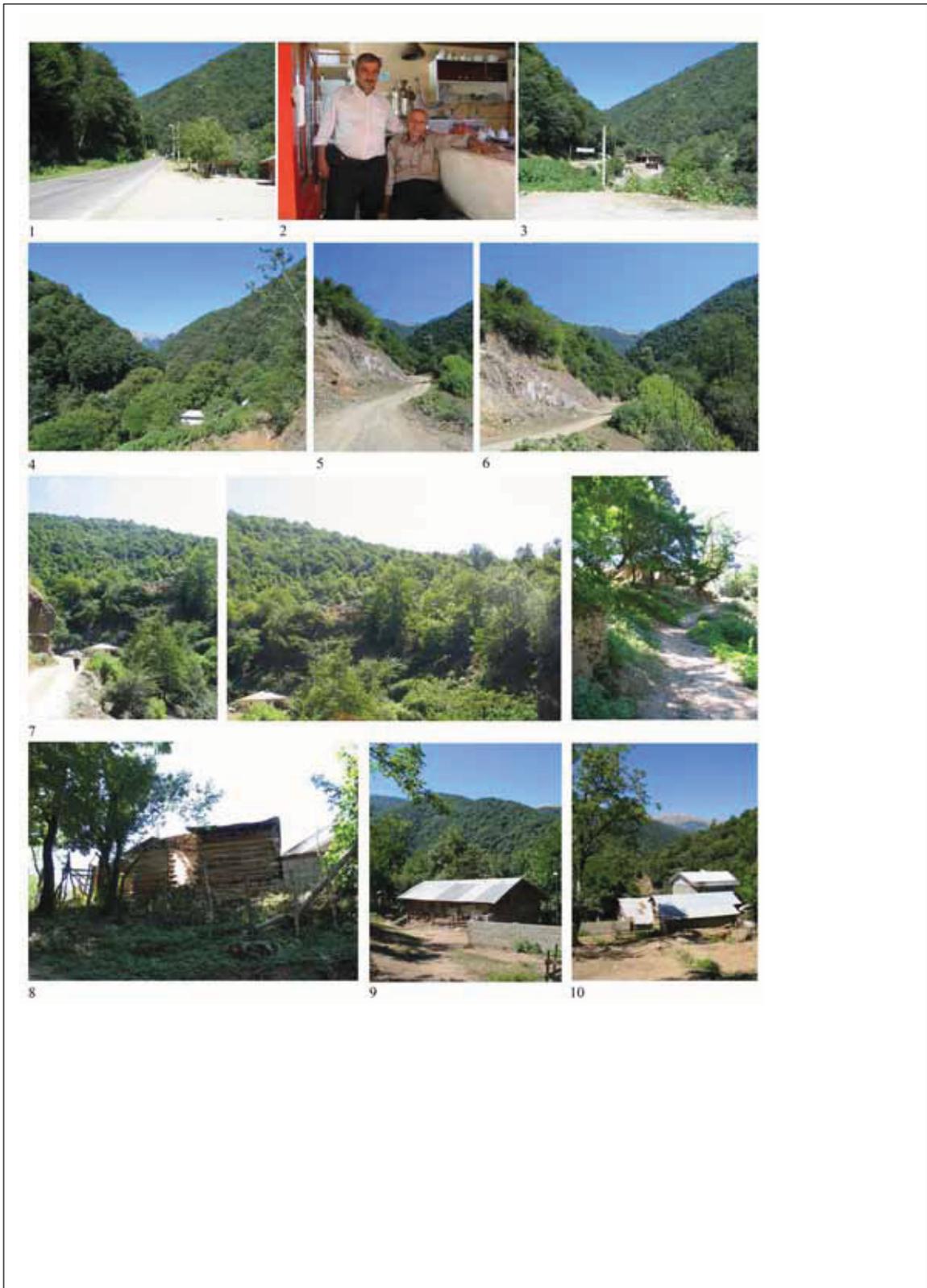
Fig. 3.62. Various photographs taken on the path to Zudil Village. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.61. Photographs by author, 2013.

legislation, this source of income was cut and many left the village for the larger cities in search of jobs.[309]

The Lalandiz grazing land is around 3km above the Farahmands' house; it is located along a mountainous path which takes around one hour to hike (figures 3.63 to 3.65). In Lalandiz, the woods are less dense and the fields are more open. It is suitable for grazing herds. There are a few scattered wooden huts which belong to shepherds. These shepherds keep their flocks there and purchase all they need from Masulih. They have horses or mules and they pass along the mountainous paths with these animals. Traditionally, the shepherds move their flocks to Fuman for winter while for spring, summer and autumn they move their flocks back to Lalandiz. During the winter, they can purchase food for their flock in Fuman and for the rest of the year they use the grazing lands in Lalandiz.[310]

The Lalandiz grazing lands are accessible from Masulih by a path which is located on the southern slope in front of Masulih. The path is a walking path and leads to the woods on the southern slope. It is by walking along this path, on a hot and humid day in July, that I reached the house of Muhammad Ali Farahmand in the woods. Muhammad Ali works in the blacksmith shop of Jalil-i Ashjāri and his son Rahmat practices animal husbandry. They live in a house that Rahmat's grandfather, Allah Bakhsh Farahmand, built in 1973. Around their house, there are woods with no physical barriers, so grazing the flock needs constant attention; sometimes foxes and wolves attack the flock, although Rahmat keeps two guard dogs. Rahmat and Muhammad Ali have no electricity or water pipe connection; they use the spring beside their house. Every day, Rahmat and

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[309] Samad Ali Safar Zadih, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013
[310] Rahmat Farahmand, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
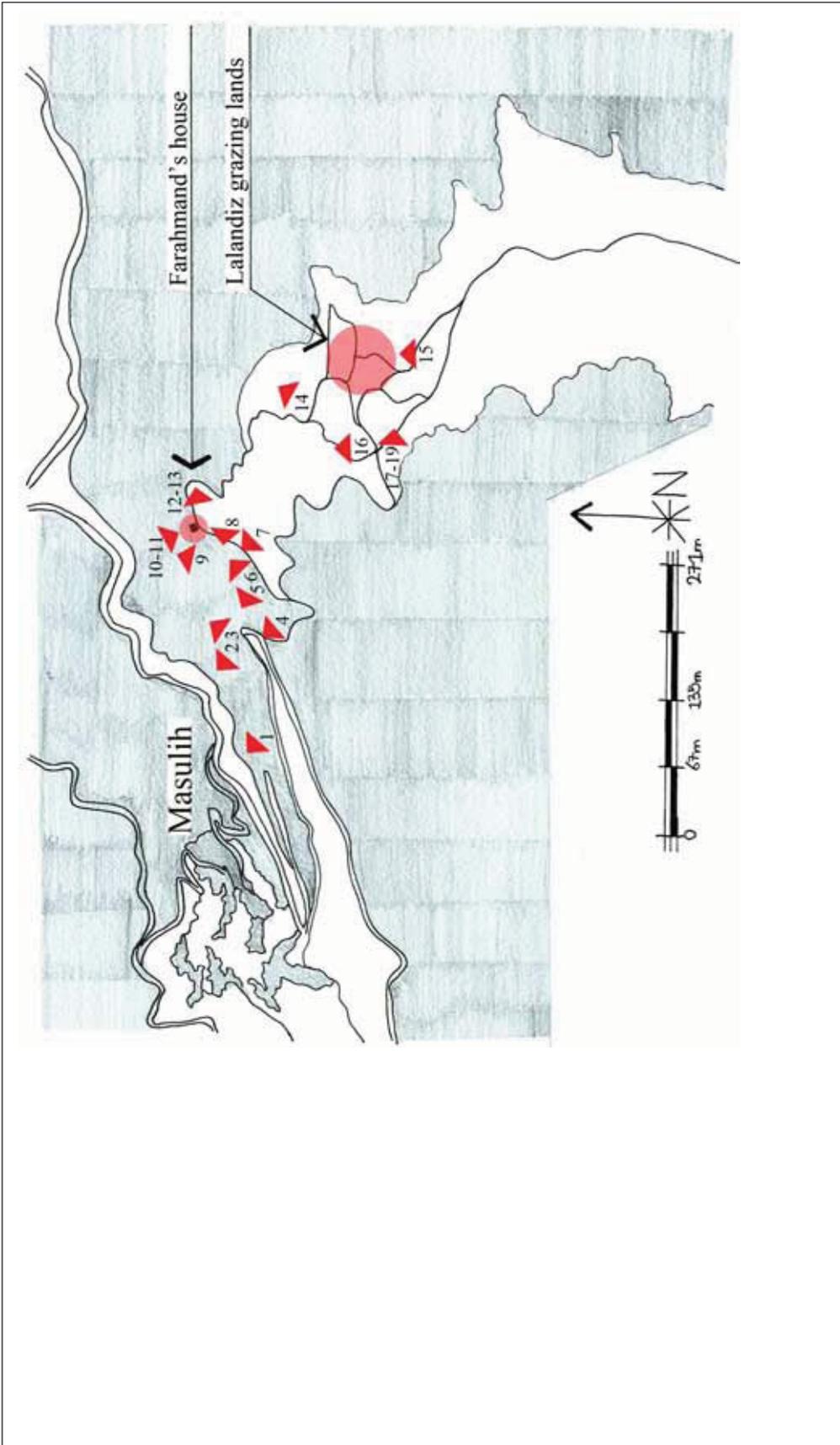
Fig. 3.63. Map of the Lalandiz grazing lands. Adapted from Google Earth.
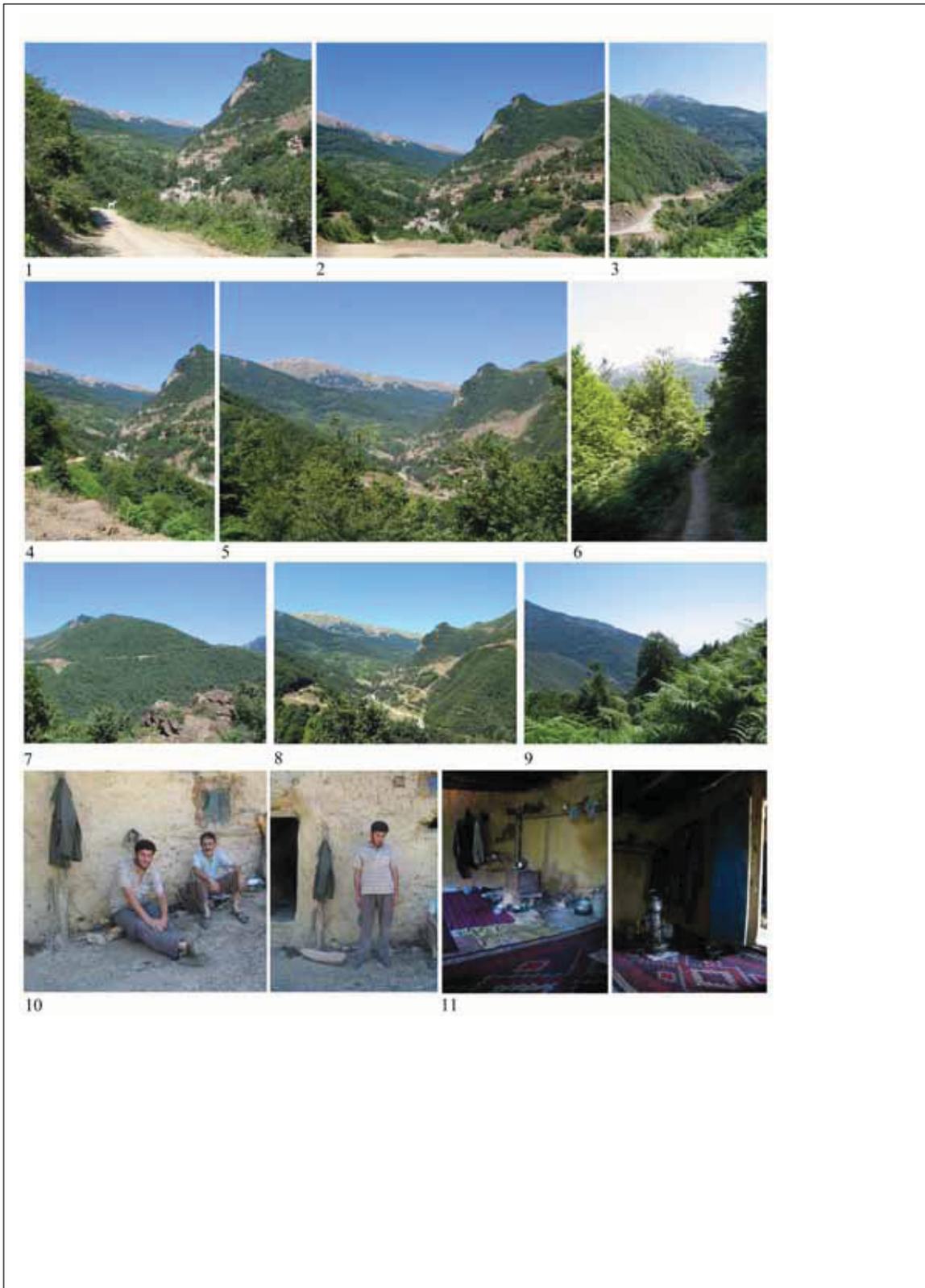
Fig. 3.64. Various photographs taken on the path from Masulih to the Lalandiz grazing lands. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.63. Photographs by author, 2013.

Fig. 3.65. Various photographs taken on the path from Masulih to the Lalandiz grazing lands. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.63. Photographs by author, 2013.

Muhammad Ali have to walk the almost 3km path to reach Masulih. The Office of Natural Resources does not allow them to widen the path so they can use a motorbike. They have to walk the path in the harsh days of winter and the hot days of summer. It is very demanding for them to transfer all their essentials from Masulih to their house by foot. They keep cows, goats and sheep for their personal consumption. They sometimes sell salted cheese and butter to merchants if they produce anything extra to their own needs. In fact, living in the woods has its difficulties. Like many others, Rahmat's brothers left for Tehran in search of jobs. They compared the harsh lifestyle in the woods with the lifestyle in Tehran with all its opportunities, and they decided to move there.[311] If the Office of Natural Resources were to ban them from animal husbandry, Muhammad Ali and his son would have to move to Masulih.

The Andarih grazing lands are located on the northwest of Masulih at an altitude of 2200m (figures 3.66 to 3.68). In order to reach the Andarih grazing lands, I rented a car and took the Kūhnih Masulih road a distance of 16.5 km from Masulih. The mountainous path is a different path to Kūhnih Masulih road, being closer to Masulih. It is approximately 10km long and can only be hiked or ridden by horses or mules. The shepherds in Andarih live there with their flocks, mules and horses from the beginning of spring to late summer, traveling twice per week to Masulih during this time. They cannot stay in those heights for autumn and winter due to the harsh climate, and they usually move to the plateau of Gilān for the winter.

Tāhir Armand is a shepherd who lives in the Andarih grazing lands during the spring and summer; he visits the town to sell wool and salted cheese. He occasionally

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[311] Rahmat Farahmand, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.
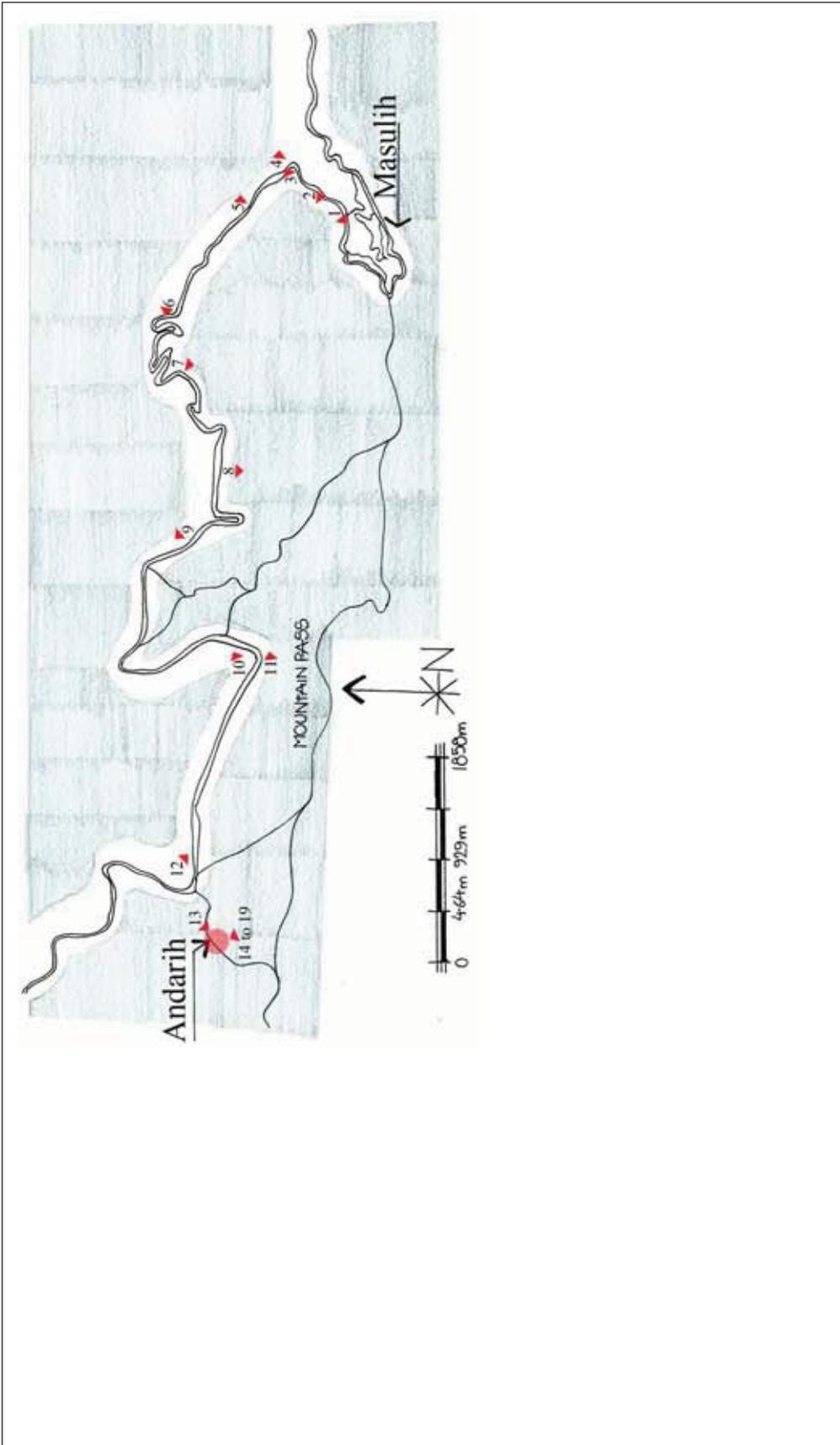
Fig. 3.66. Map of the path from Masulih to the Andarih grazing lands. Adapted from Google Earth.
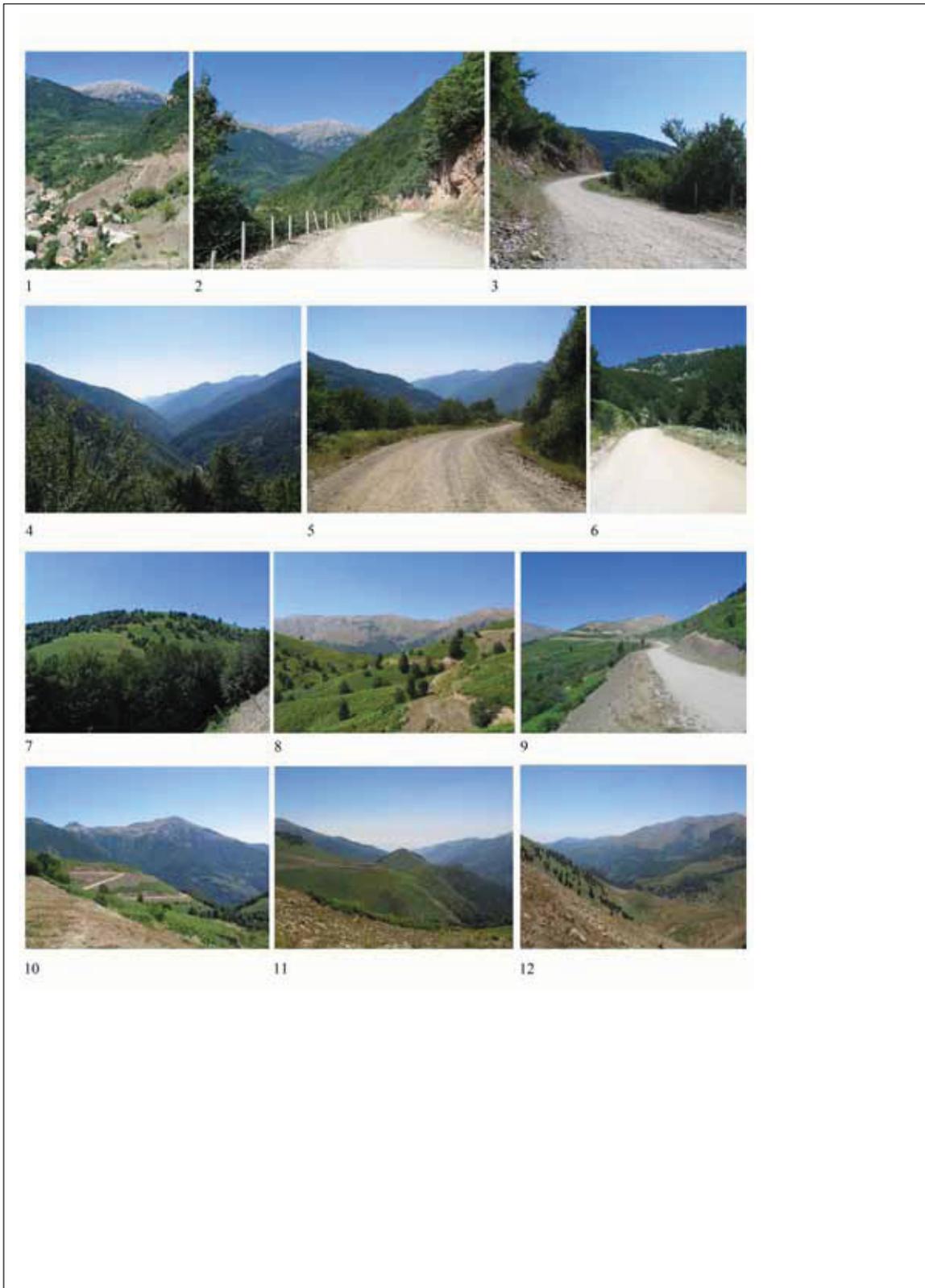
Fig. 3.67. The path from Masulih to the Andarih grazing lands. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.66. Photographs by author, 2013.
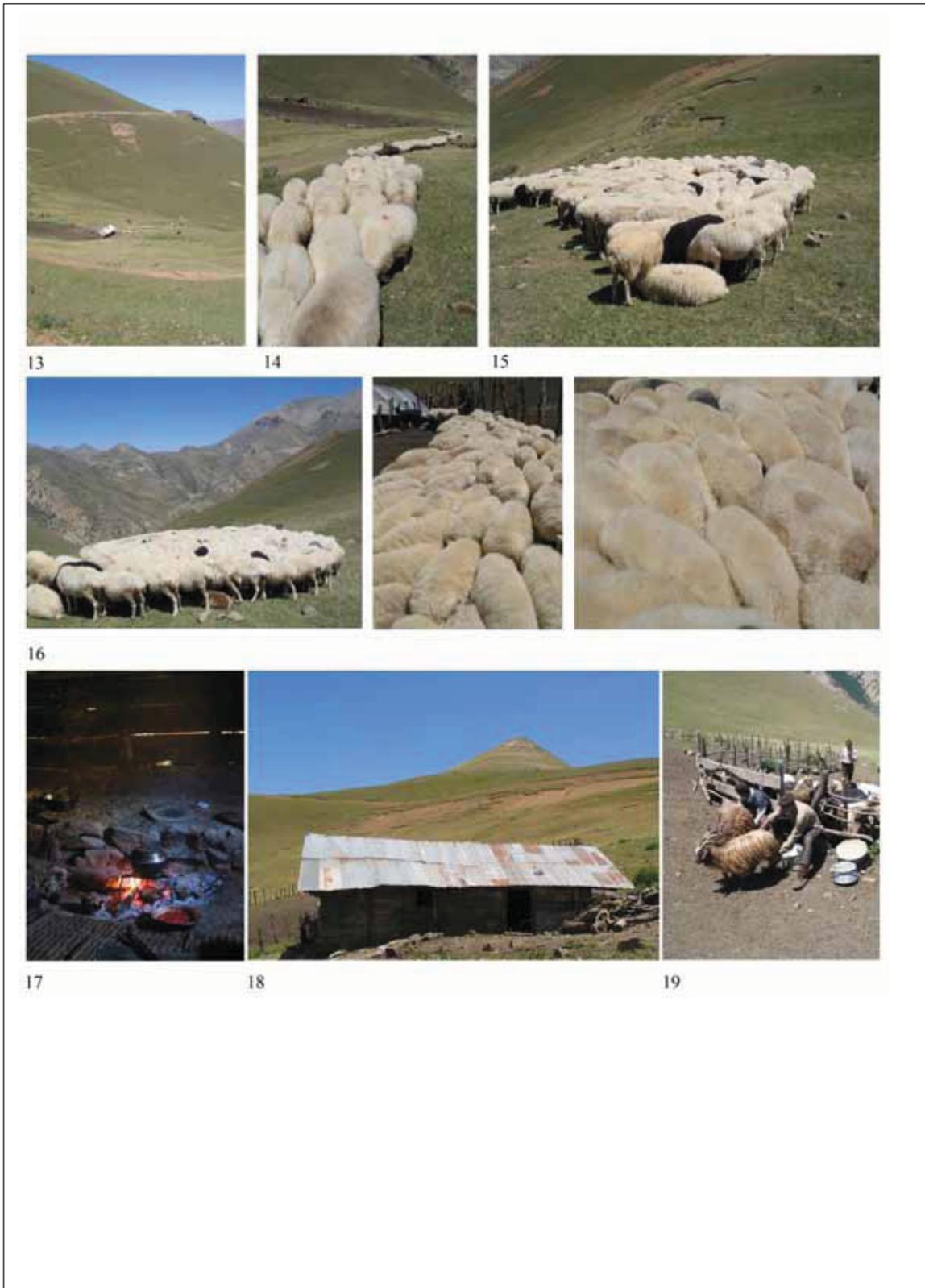
Fig. 3.68. The path from Masulih to the Andarih grazing lands. Photographs are keyed to the map in fig. 3.66. Photographs by author, 2013.

visits Hasan-i Gūlshan, who makes and repairs scissors.[312] Shearing the sheep's wool demands its own tool: the scissors or *qiychi*. Tāhir visits Hasan to repair or purchase new shearing scissors. The tasks of shearing the sheep and selling the wool connect a shepherd and a maker of scissors. Occasional visits establish friendship in the long term. Tāhir and Hasan are friends. What Hasan-i Gūlshan forges in his workshop is used in the woods and mountains around Masulih. The maker, user, artifact and the environment are not separated from each other; they are part of the artifact system of Masulih. However, the Office of Natural Resources is abandoning animal husbandry in this region, and as a result the demand for Hasan's scissors will be over in the future, as will be the practice of animal husbandry.[313]

My exploration of the paths of this community revealed that they have a significance beyond their merely utilitarian function as routes for travel. By walking the pedestrian paths in the town and in the bazaar, observing the ritual of Ashurā and its use of the town's paths, walking the paths to the sacred grounds and the grazing lands, and driving the main roads, the vital importance of the paths to Masulih is gradually revealed. For example, I initially assumed the woods around Masulih to be "plain woods," but after interviewing the inhabitants and walking the paths, I gradually grasped the networks of accessibility in this community. The paths in Masulih are not limited to the town itself but extend to the surrounding landscapes. In the past, these networks of paths were intact and used by individuals from within and outside the province, but gradually, due to shifts that were mainly imposed by authorities outside the community, many have been abandoned. The gradual migration of the inhabitants, the decline of trade to other villages and cities in

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[312] Hasan's workshop and his crafts will be discussed in chapter five.
[313] Tāhir Armand, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, July 2013.

and outside the province, the banning of animal husbandry around the community, and the forcing of wood and mountain dwellers to abandon national lands have been the main reasons for the decline of the paths outside and inside the community. Despite this gradual decline, the paths are still there, although the paths outside the community are hidden in the surrounding woods. The outside paths are not revealed to the tourist, but with care and by asking the inhabitants of the area they can still be found.

The path does not solely connect various places and people together; the path is a stage for performing rituals, connecting the people of Masulih to their religion. In particular, the paths of Masulih are connected to the ritual of Ashurā. During this ritual, for ten days and nights the participants walk the paths of Masulih, forming a line. They usually start from their mosque and end in front of the *Imāmzādih*. The black line of people moves along various paths at different heights. The ritual is performed on the paths. The pedestrian paths also lead the line of mourners to the *Imāmzādih*, mosques and bazaar. The performance of the ritual is not concentrated on one spot but moves along the paths while it is being performed. The path leads the performance.

In the past, the paths outside the town were also important for religious proceedings. People used to visit the four shrines outside the town more often. Currently, *Imāmzādih* Ibrāhim is locked and the path which leads to it is abandoned; *Imāmzādih* Hāshim and its path are hidden in the woods so the shrine is rarely visited by local people or tourists; *Imāmzādih* ʿiyn ibn-I Ali's building and its path are completely abandoned; and *Imāmzādih* Ziyn ibn-i Ali is maintained by Tahriyri's family, who live in Ishkāliyt, and rarely visited by Masulih people.

By studying topography, neighborhoods, the bazaar, tea houses, the ritual of Ashurā, the sacred shrines and the grazing lands, the vitality of the paths in this

community becomes clear. As I mentioned before, the paths connect the entire town together. The grazing lands, the shrines outside the town, the tea houses, the bazaar, the *Imāmzādih* and the houses are merged by paths. These have been developed over time by shepherds, mountain dwellers, merchants, and the people of Masulih, and reflect the way of life of these people. The paths outside and inside Masulih are part of the artifact system of Masulih, and walking the paths can assist us in understanding the complexity of this large-scale artifact.

Chapter Four: On Houses

This chapter focuses on Masulih houses as complex cultural artifacts, investigating the houses as parts of the artifact system of Masulih. By walking the paths in the community at various levels one can visit the houses: the largest artifacts that have been built by local master masons. Tourists who visit Masulih are usually attracted to the aesthetics of the elevations of the houses; however, Masulih houses are not merely picturesque elevations but as large-scale artifacts they are based on the complexities of the local culture. This cultural complex is based on the beliefs of the inhabitants and their manifestations in their built environment, social relationships, artifacts, memories, stories, poems and other cultural items. This chapter incorporates the accounts of the actual users of the houses in an attempt to comprehend this cultural complexity, instead of just describing the physical aspects of the houses.

Masulih's terraced houses are in complete unity with the topography and are one of the most significant symbols of the community. Nikruz-i Mūbārhān-i Shafiyʿi maintains that all the houses in Masulih are connected with each other, joining up with different paths and at different levels depending on the topography and the slope of the mountain. More than 70% of the houses in Masulih are two storeys. Usually the ground floor consists of a summer room, entrance area, storage space, washrooms, and a staircase. The principal material for the construction of the walls in the ground floor is stone. The first floor usually consists of a main room (usually a living room), a winter room or *sumeh*, a staircase, a kitchen, a storage room and a washroom. Brick is the principal material used for the walls on the first floor. The smallest house in Masulih is about 60m² on two floors, and contains all the spaces mentioned. The biggest house is 300m² with larger spaces plus additional rooms and balconies. The houses are unified

with the surrounding environment and topography. Usually the houses face towards the south or the southeast, and their most important characteristics are their maximum utilization of the sun, efficient collection of rainwater from the roof, use of the roof as a pedestrian path, connection to neighbours' houses, and easy access to pathways.

[314] For this reason, Miʿmāriyān characterises houses in Masulih as multifunctional. They serve as part of a public pedestrian pathway at the roof level as well as dwelling spaces.[315]

The local master builders and residents paid special attention to the quality of the houses, particularly the exteriors. They created wooden *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* or windows and doors in a variety of forms. Master carpenters in Masulih were familiar with the specific characteristics of the local timber. The economic situation of the client also dictated the extent of decoration applied to windows and doors. Some big houses have large wooden *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* with small colourful panes in red, green, blue, and yellow glass. All decorative forms used in *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* and doors are geometric forms inspired by tiles from central Iran.[316]

Although describing the typology and physical characteristics of the houses are vital, the most important factor – the inhabitants – is usually neglected. Scholars in architecture usually describe houses in a specific region while the voice of the actual users is overlooked. Like others, Shafiyʿi and Miʿmāriyān overlook the individuals who live in Masulih houses in their research. In this section, the discussion of the houses is influenced by a more humanistic approach used by Henry Glassie in his descriptions of

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[314] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 12–13.
[315] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 229.
[316] Shafiyʿi, "Masulih Dar Yik Nigah," 13.

houses in Ballymenone. Glassie pays special attention to describing the houses based on the accounts of the actual users, building a valuable framework for documenting houses in a specific region that can be used for other case studies as well. Chapter four, tries to incorporate Glassie's research framework in describing the houses.[317]

Most of the houses in Masulih are two storeys. The exterior surfaces are mud plaster made from a mixture of mud and straw. The mud plaster facades have a brown color with the texture of straw and are weathered by the passage of time and natural forces (figure 4.1).[318] The houses are unified in color and texture. No decoration or excessive materials are applied to one elevation to distinguish one house from the others or one particular building from the rest. All the elevations are plain and simple. Regarding the simplicity of the exterior of buildings, the prophet Muhammad said "Every building is

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[317] In the chapter "Home" in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone*, Henry Glassie describes the houses in Ballymenone based on the descriptions of the people who lived in the houses. Glassie explains the arrangement of each house he visited in detail. He pays special attention to the religious artifacts inside the houses, such as icons of Christ or Maria or prints of the crucifixion. The ritual of guest serving is one of the vital activities in the house. The guest would enter the house without knocking the door and walk straight towards the chimney where the warmth and the light were. A chair would be put in front of the chimney, greetings would be exchanged and the conversation would begin. In describing the house, Glassie uses a sensory explanation of the activities within the house such as sleeping in a cold and damp room. He recorded the celebrations and festivities that were held within the houses. Glassie describes which rooms are utilized the most and which not, which are clean and which are muddy from muddy boots, which are tidy and which are not. Glassie explains how the front doors of the houses are not locked and are opened in good weather and how people converse with each other by the side of their chimneys. Glassie also engages in conversation with the inhabitants and builds his explanations based on these local informants. He carefully describes the positioning and orientation of the houses toward the sun. Based on the informants, the most important part of the house is the fire in the chimney. It is where family meets friends, distant news is told, friendships strengthened and stories told. The way Glassie conducted his research has influenced this chapter. See Glassie, *Passing The Time in Ballymenone*, 327–400.

[318] Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrrow argue that weathering is an influential force and eventually destroys buildings. In fact over time, natural forces weather the outer surfaces of a building in such a way that its underlying materials are broken down. Rain, wind and sun weather the corners, surfaces and colors of the elevation of a building over time. Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow believe that there is a romantic appreciation of the appearance of building that have aged. Weathering demonstrates the rightful claim nature has on all buildings and can be seen often in vernacular architecture. When the construction of a building is finished, gradually the building is influenced by the qualities of the place where it is sited. The colors and surface textures of the building are modified by the surrounding landscape. Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering The Life of Buildings In Time* (London: The MIT Press, 1993), 4–71.

Fig. 4.1. Masulih houses. Photographs by author, 2010.

an offense to its owner, except what is essential and necessary."[319] According to Hisham

Mortada, a scholar in the Islamic built environment, the interpretation of this *hadis* or

saying of the prophet is that any exaggerated, self-advocating decoration applied to a

building's façade which does not benefit the building structurally should be avoided.

These decorations involve unnecessary spending and this extra financial burden should be

avoided, and it could also hurt the feelings of the less wealthy.[320]

The elevation contains wooden *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* with small panes. These

panjarih-hayi mūshabak with their floral motifs are distinctive to Masulih and are

therefore a symbol of the community. While I was sitting in the *kah* or room of Mr.

Qāsim Khārābi's house, the owner told me that his house with its wooden *panjarih-hayi*

mūshabak is one of the tourist attraction points in Masulih. He mentioned that the

majority of the tourists park their cars near the riverbank and then walk towards the

bazaar and end up in front of his house, taking pictures of the *panjarih-hayi mūshabak*.

They stand on the roof of the mosque in front of the house and take pictures day and

night. The provincial media, national media (IRIB) and the foreign media such as BBC

Persian, Voice of America (VOA) Persian and CNN broadcast images of the house.

Mahramiat or visual privacy is important to Qāsim Khārābi and his family would like to

maintain the *mahramiat* while sitting inside the house. Qāsim Khārābi's concern is the

protection of female members from the eyes of male strangers. For maintaining visual

privacy, the Quran states "O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own,"[321]

and regarding the visual privacy of the house the prophet said "He who pulls the curtain

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[319] Mortada, *Traditionl Islamic Principles*, 122.
[320] Ibid., 123.
[321] Quran 24:27.

and looks into a house before he is granted permission to enter has committed an offense."[322] Despite media and tourist attention, Qāsim Khārābi is determined to keep the house in its original layout. He has no intention of abandoning the house to be ruined. Qāsim mentions that on many occasions his father, Hāji Fiyz Allah Khārābi, told him that if his house in Masulih were ruined, then his name would be ruined with it (figures 4.2, 4.3).

Wooden balconies are another prominant feature of the elevations, although not all of the houses have them. Mr. Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah's house has a balcony (figures 4.4, 4.5). The balcony with its *panjarih mūshabak* or window is adjacent to the guest room. It is Mr. Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah's sitting spot. In Muhammad Ali Ruhi's house the family members also sit on the balcony during the long summer afternoons. The balcony in Mr. Ruhi's house is connected to the living room. Passing by Masulih's houses, such as the houses of Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah, Yad Allah Shahiydi, Qāsim Khārābi, Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, Mūrad Shab-ru, Mūʿiyn Fāzili, Muhammad Ali Ruhi and Fatimah Azargūshasb, one can see that the wooden *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* or windows are the principal element of the elevations.

The entrances to the houses are through wooden doors. The front door functions as a transition from the street: outside the door is the public realm, while the inside represents *mahramiat* or privacy. The threshold between these two realities is the physical wooden door. This door has a significance beyond its most obvious function: it is a presence that protects the inhabitants. The doorway is both a transition from the public to

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[322] Mortada, *Traditionl Islamic Principles*, 97.
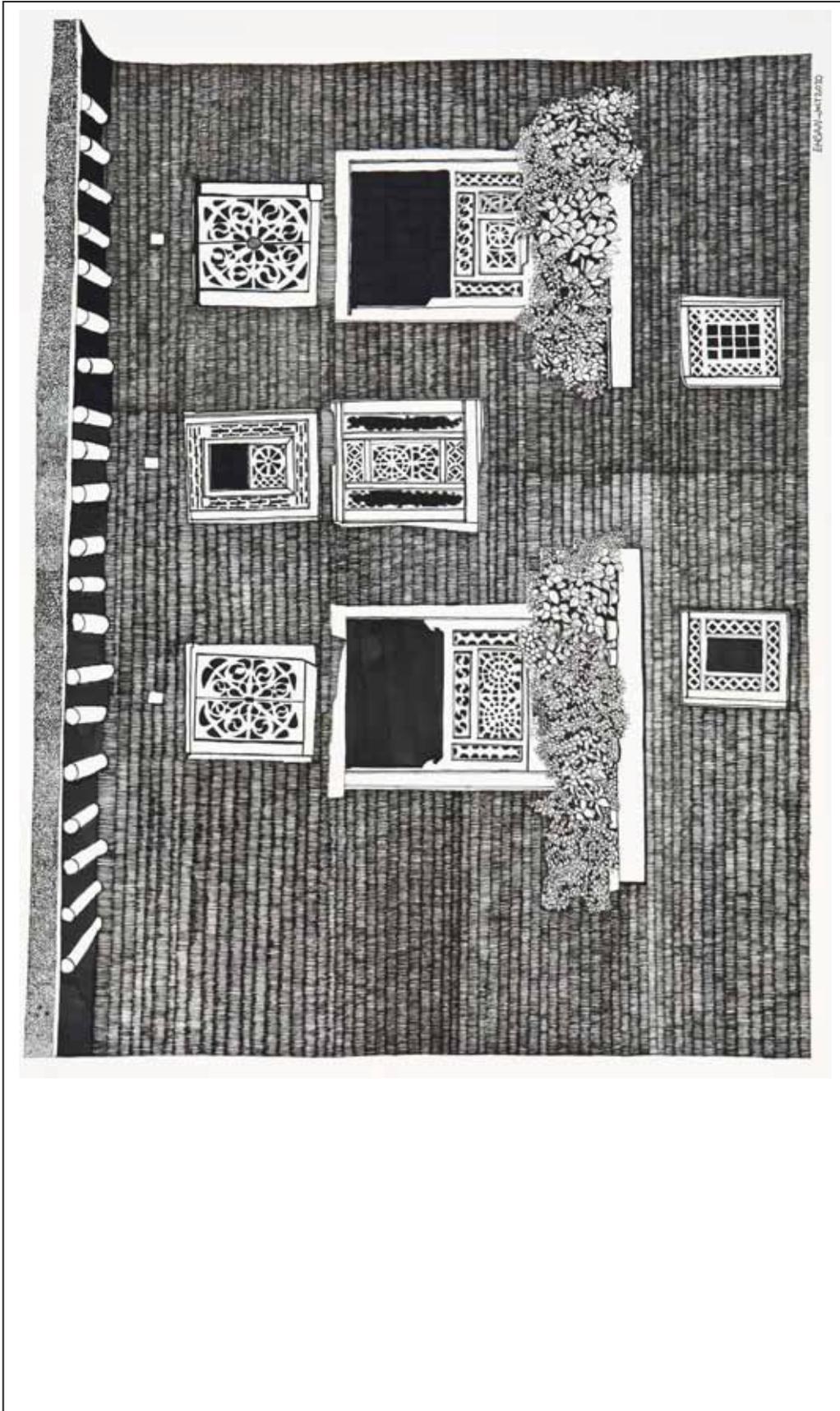
Fig. 4.2. The wooden *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* of Qāsim Khārābī's house. Drawing by author, 2010.
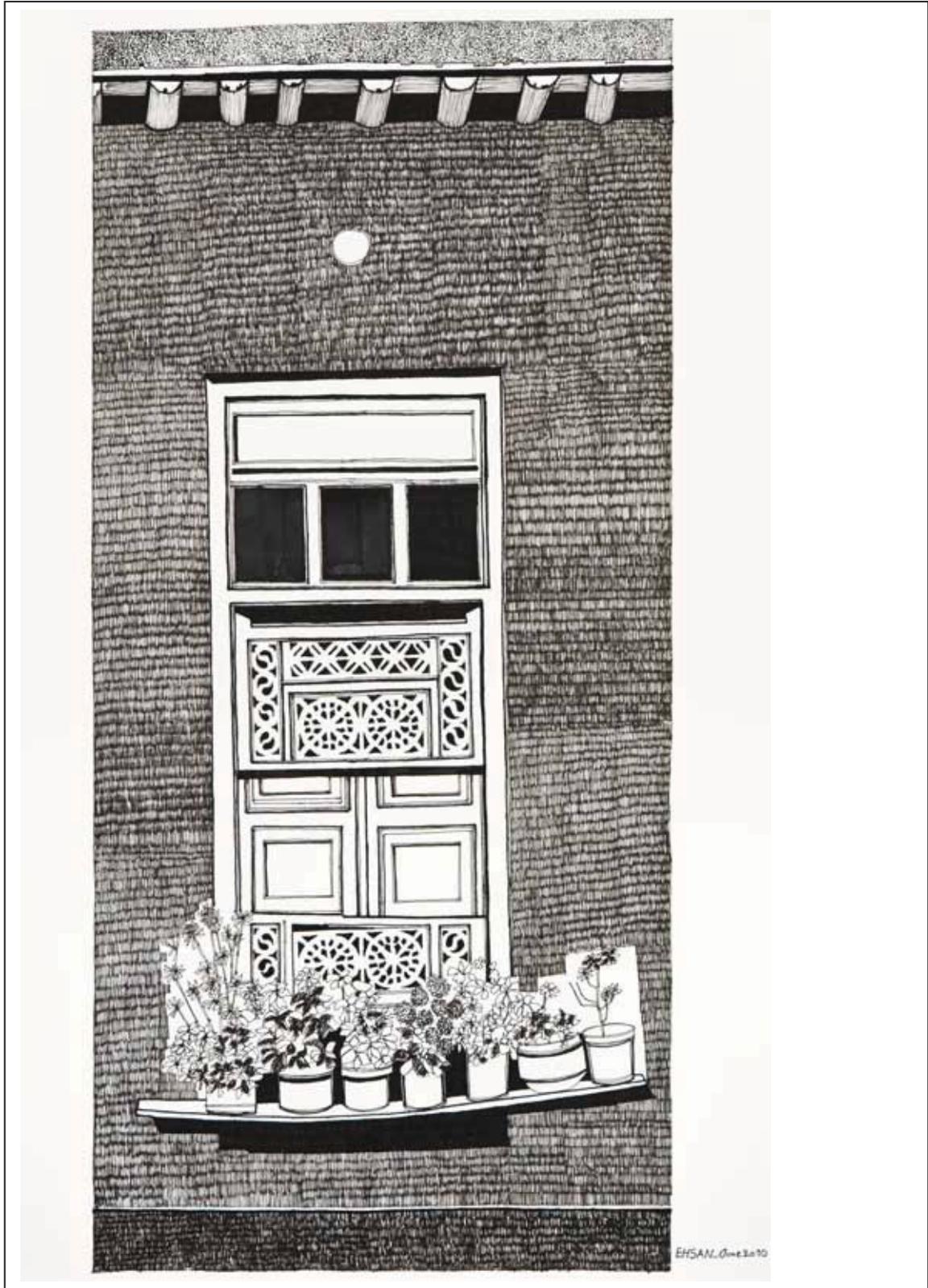
Fig. 4.3. A wooden *panjarih mūshabak*. Drawing by author, 2010.
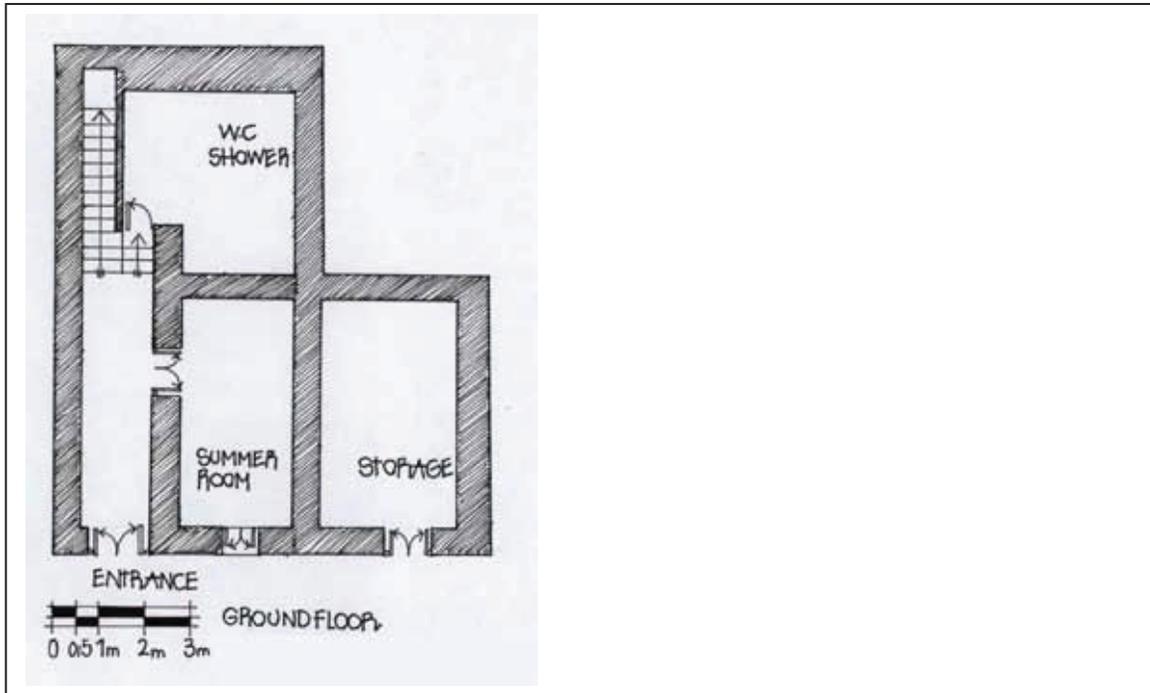
Fig. 4.4. Ground floor plan of Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah's house. Drawing by author, 2013.
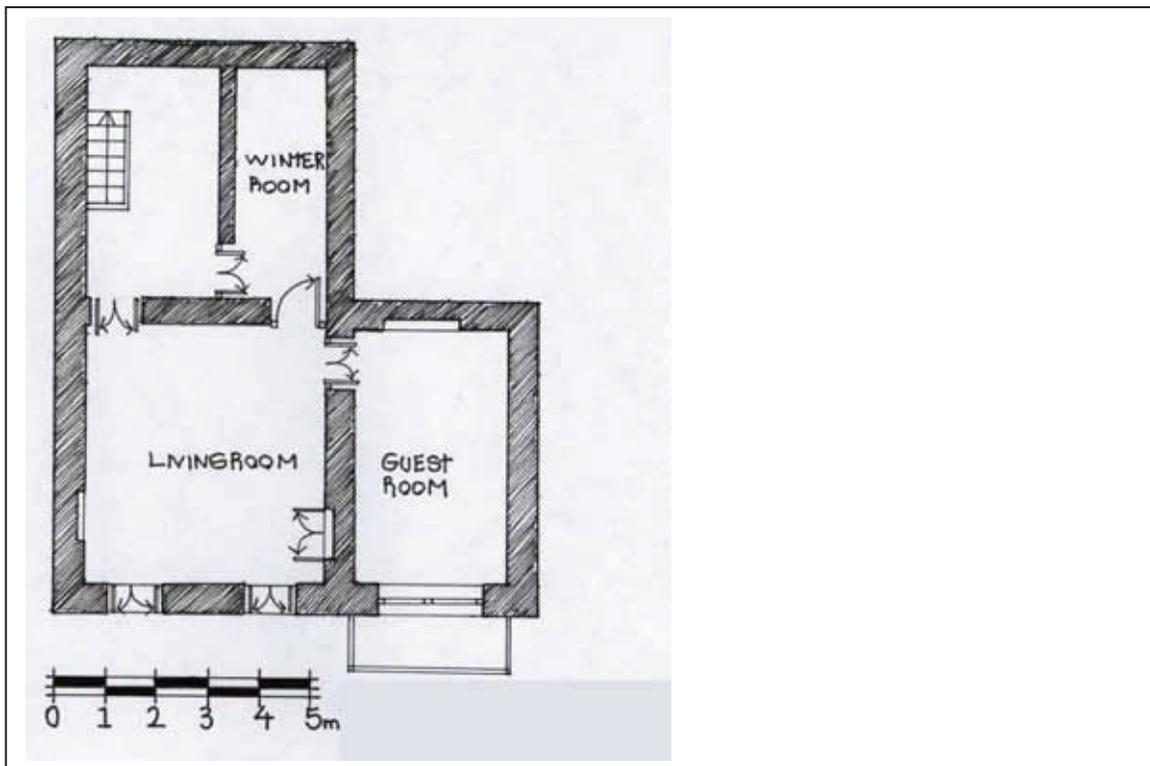
Fig. 4.5. First floor plan of Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah's house. Drawing by author, 2013.

the private and a barrier for strangers, due to *mahramiat*, or the sacredness of the house. The door is a barrier between public and private, dry and wet, against the heat of the summer and the windy nights of winter. It is a barrier between the single fire in the *sumeh* or summer room and the cold outside. It stands between the gaze of the tourists and the comfort of the family. The doorway can also double as a workshop for weaving various crafts and is therefore an intermediary space between private and public. For example, the doorway in Fatimah Azargūshasb's house is also a weaving workshop, and in Mr. Mūrad Shab-ru's house his wife Khadiyjih Nasiyri often sits in the doorway weaving her crafts (figures 4.6 to 4.13).

Usually a guest invited to the interior of the house would be a friend or a relative of the household, due to *mahramiat* or privacy constraints. Several verses in the Quran emphasize the individual's and householder's right to *mahramiat* or privacy. The most important of these are two verses speaking explicitly of privacy. In one of these, the Quran states: "O you who have attained faith! Do not enter houses other than your own unless you have obtained permission and greeted their inmates. This is [enjoined up on you] for your own good, so that you might bear [your mutual right] in mind. Hence, [even] if you find no one within [the house], do not enter it until you are given leave; and if you are told, 'turn back,' then turn back. This will be the most conducive to your purity; and God has full knowledge of all you do."[323] The interpretation of this verse is that one should not enter a house unless permission is obtained. One should be sure that his or her presence inside the house is welcomed by the family members. The Prophet Muhammad

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[323] Quran 24:27–28.
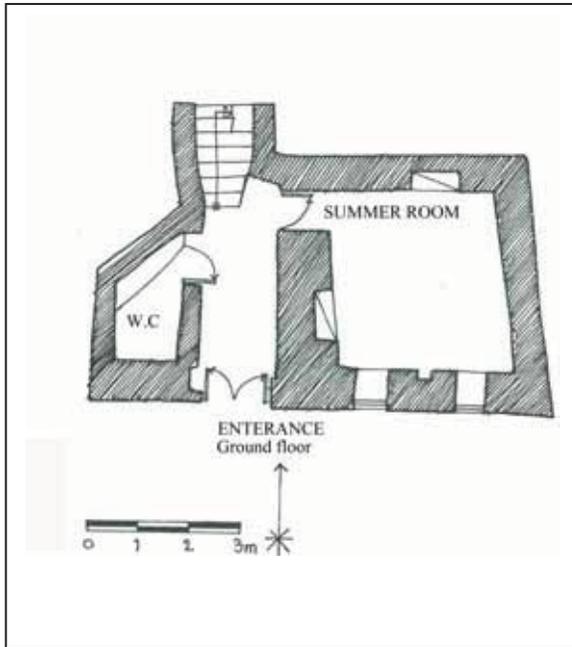
Fig. 4.6. Ground floor plan of the Azargūshasbs'
house. Drawing by author, 2008.
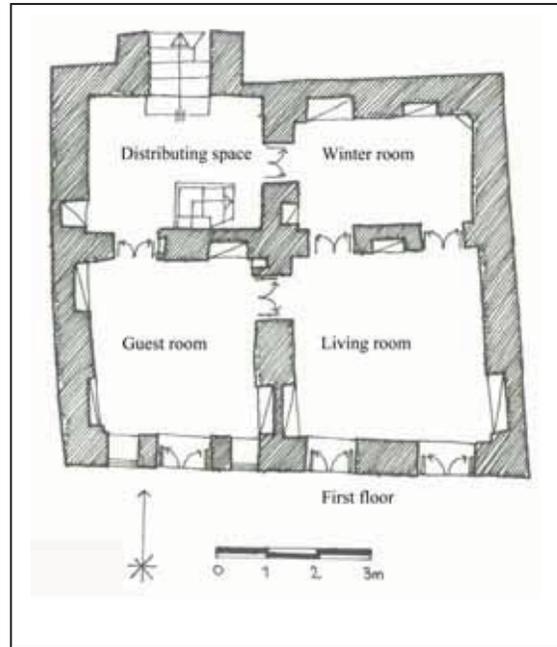
Fig. 4.7. First floor plan of the Azargūshasbs'
house. Drawing by author, 2008.
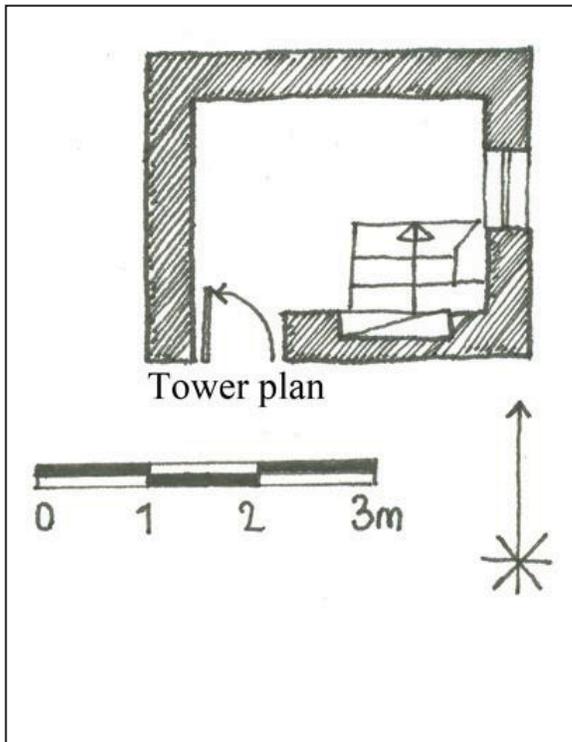
Fig. 4.8. Plan of the tower of the Azargūshasbs'
house. Drawing by author, 2008.
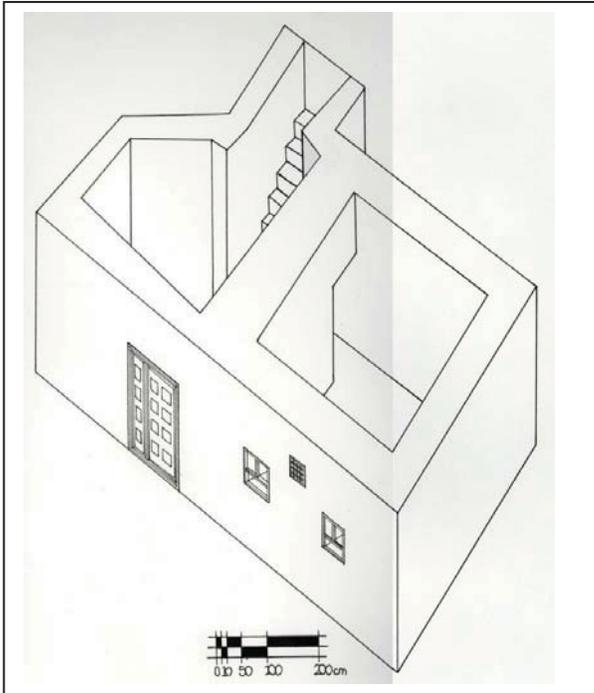
Fig. 4.9. Perspective of the Azargūshasbs' house. Drawing by author, 2013.
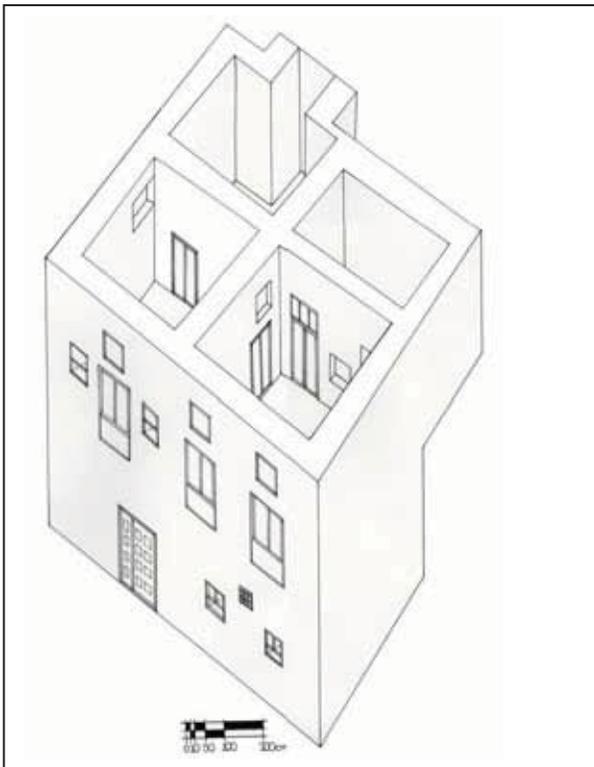
Fig. 4.10. Perspective. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 4.11. Front door of the Azargūshasbs' house. Photograph by author, 2008.
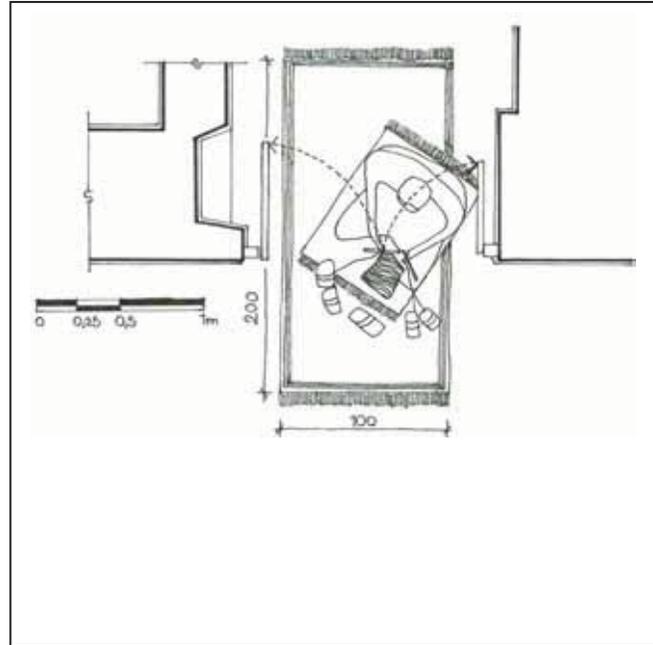
Fig. 4.12. Plan of the house workshop. Drawing by author, 2008.
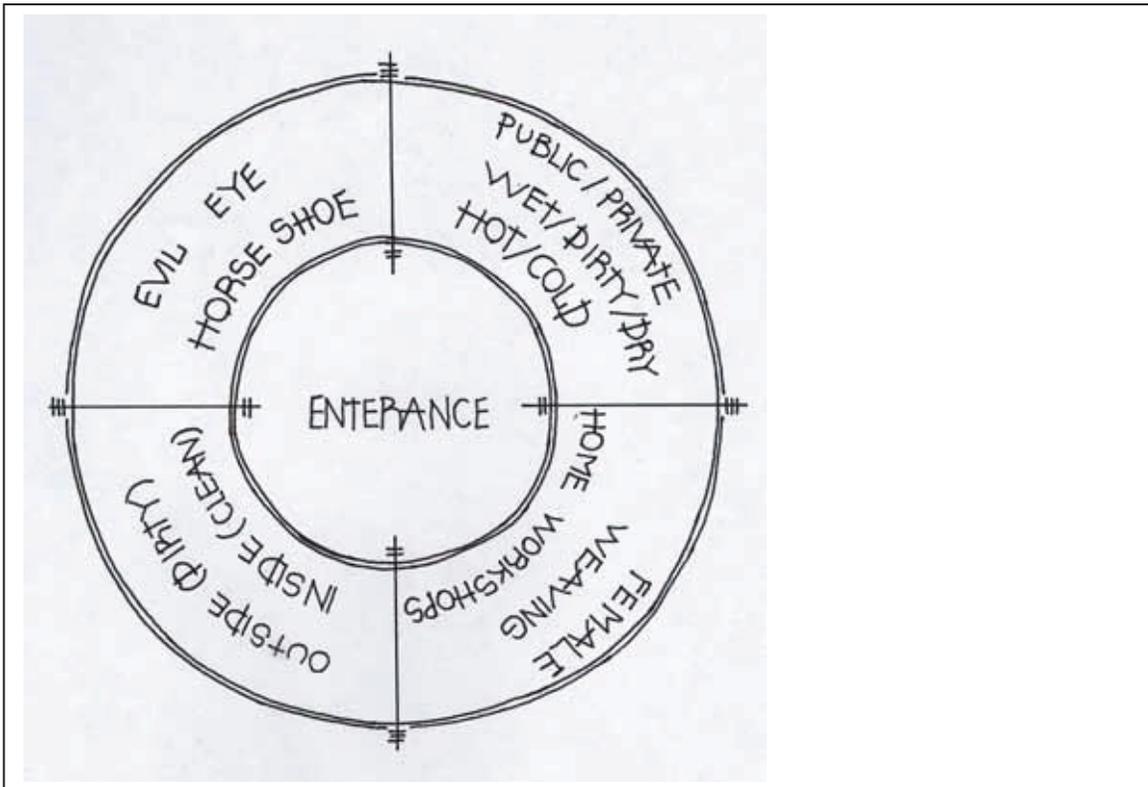
Fig. 4.13. Different aspects of house entrances. Drawing by author, 2013.

said, "permission [to enter the house] should be sought three times, and if permission is granted to you [then go in]; otherwise go back."[324] Entering the house is associated with symbolic meaning. In the doorway of the house of Qāsim Khārābi there is a horseshoe nailed to the ground as a protection from the evil eye. Qāsim Khārābi confirmed that a million tourists visit Masulih annually and as a result of the constant attention he nailed the horseshoe in the doorway.

Upon entering the house one is required to say aloud *"Ya Allah"* so that the family members will be aware that a stranger is entering. In order to show respect for the purity of the domestic space and for the owner, the visitor must remove his or her shoes. It is feared that the dirt carried by the shoes might soil the interior. Cleanliness in both physical and spiritual terms matters. Physically, this refers to the body, clothes, the house, and the entire community. In the Quran, God commands those who are accustomed to cleanliness: "Allah loves those who turn to him constantly and he loves those who keep themselves pure and clean."[325] The subject of cleanliness within Masulih's houses is vital. The inhabitants are often seen cleaning their houses. They believe in the *Hadis* or saying of the prophet Muhammad that states that "Islam is cleanliness, so clean yourself for no one will enter the heaven except those who are clean."[326] After entering the doorway, removing one's shoes, and placing them on the shelves beside the door, one can enter the house.

Next to the entryway is the summer room (figure 4.14). Not all the houses have a summer room. However, the houses of Fatimah Azargūshasb, Mūrad Shab-ru, Ibrāhim

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[324] Mortada, *Traditionl Islamic Principles*, 95.
[325] Quran 2:22.
[326] Hūsiyn Ansāriyān, *Hygiene in the Family Structure*, accessed August 9th 2012, http//www.duas.org/family/12.htm#83.

251

Fig. 4.14. Photographs of the summer room. Photographs by author, 2008, 2010, 2011.

Hāshimi Khah, Niˤmat Allah Maˤsumi, Abbas and Mihrān Muminiyān and Mihrān Farāmarzi have summer rooms. Stepping inside the summer room, the thickness of the interior wall is obvious. The exterior walls are thick enough and with small enough windows to insulate the interior in summer. Also due to the thickness of the exterior walls, the deep windowsills provide sufficient storage space. In the summer rooms of Fatimah Azargūshasb, Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah, Mūrad Shab-ru, Mihrān Frāmarzi, and Abbas and Mihrān Muminiyān the sills are utilized for placing bulbs of garlic, jams, pickles and other stuff. In the summer room of Fatimah Azargūshasb, below these two windows are small storage spaces in the form of two small niches in the wall with small wooden doors in front (figures 4.15 to 4.18). These little doors pivot from bottom to top and, like the windows, have blue frames. Various household belongings are placed inside these niches. Fatimah Azargūshasb, Khadiyjih Nasiyri (the wife of Mūrad Shab-ru) and the wife of Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah, Aziyz Hāshimi Khah do most of their weaving either in the summer room, the doorway of their house, or the winter room. During the spring and summer, they gather with other weavers outside the house, sit on the ground with their needles and weave (figures 4.19 to 4.24).

The summer room in Abbas and Mihrān Muminiyān's house is a multi-functional room. They watch TV, serve guests there and use the room for sleeping. Although they have a living room upstairs, they use the summer room for their daily activities. They can heat the summer room with an oil heater in winter, although it consumes a lot of oil per night and the room just fills with the smell of the burning heater. The electric heater cannot heat the room – it is not powerful enough. The oil heater can heat only one room in winter so the rest of the house remains cold. It is easy to heat the summer room; the

Fig. 4.15. The summer room of the Azargūshasb's house. Photographs by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.16. The blue wooden window of the summer room. Below the window is a storage space. Drawing by author, 2008.
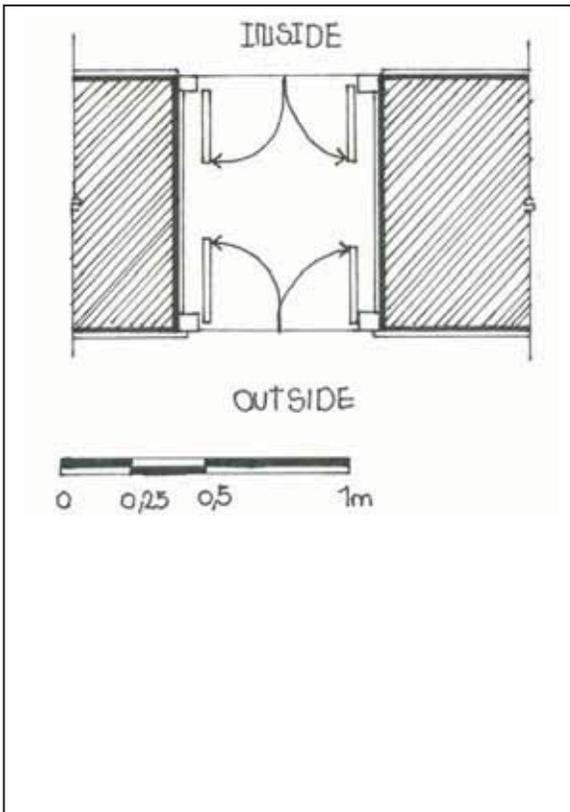
Fig. 4.17. Plan of the wooden window of the summer room. Drawing by author, 2008.
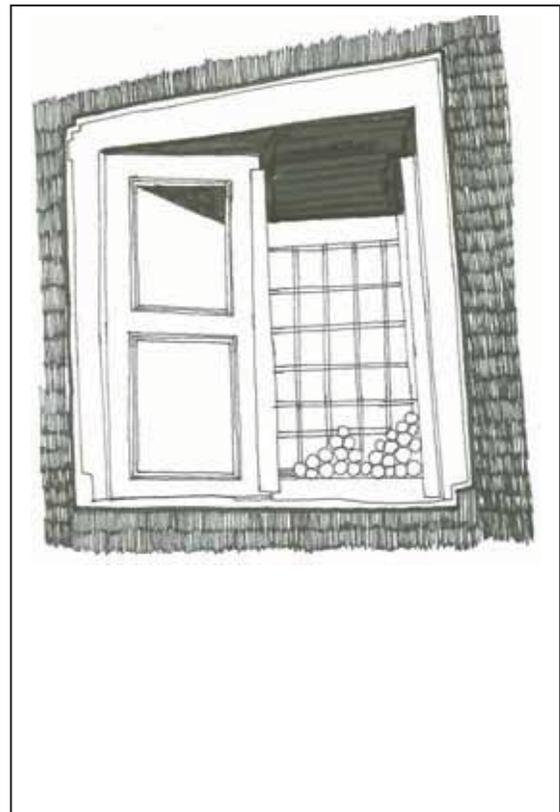
Fig. 4.18. The wooden window of the summer room. Drawing by author, 2008.

254
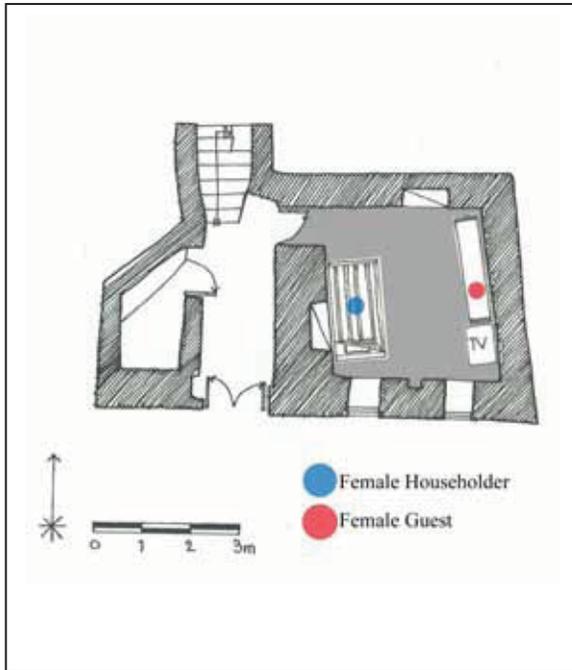
Fig. 4.19. Plan of the summer room, indicating that when there is one female guest the householder serves the guest in the summer room while the guest sits on the ground and the householder sits on the bed. Drawing by author, 2008.
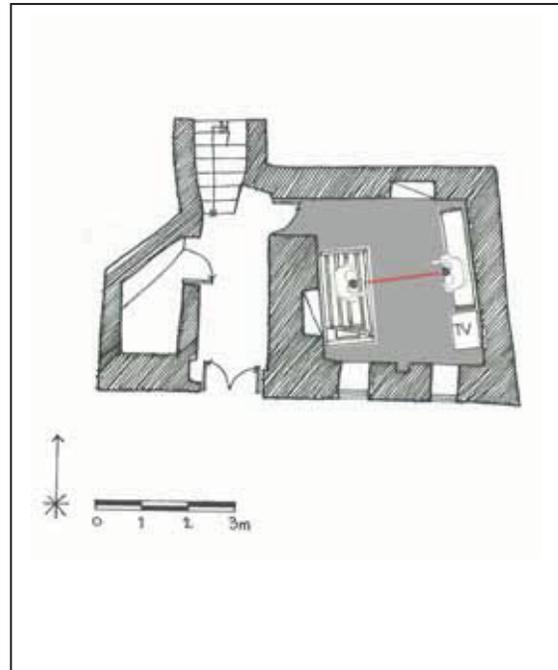
Fig. 4.20. The householder and the guest converse while the guest sits on the ground and the householder sits on the bed. Drawing by author, 2008.
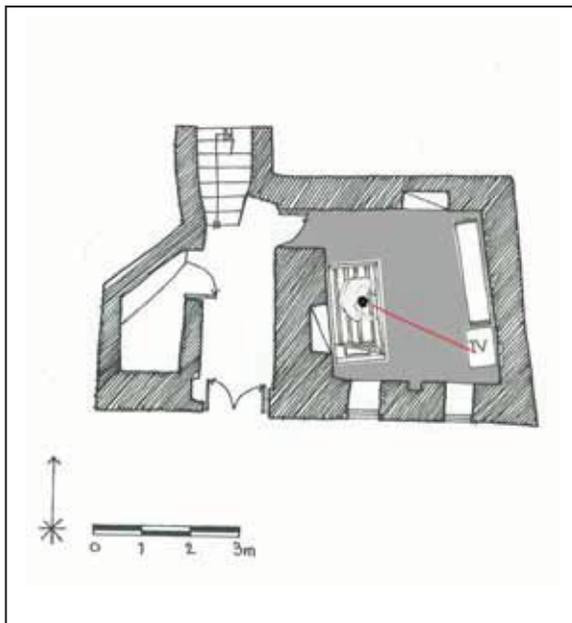
Fig. 4.21. The householder watches TV while sitting or lying on the bed. Drawing by author, 2008.
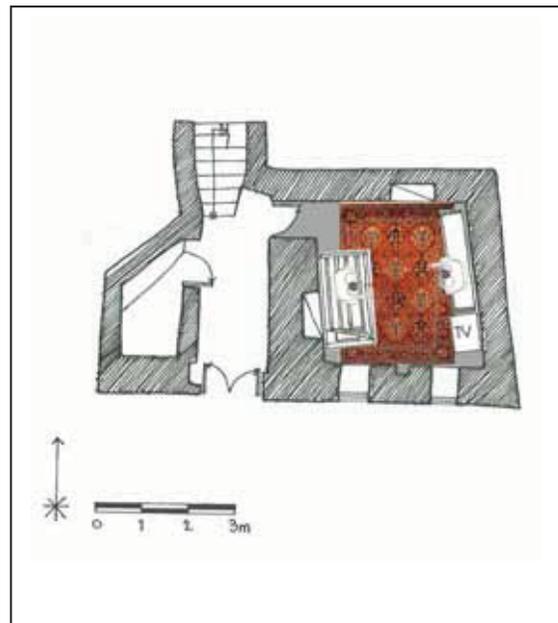
Fig. 4.22. The *farsh* or carpet on the floor of the summer room. Drawing by author, 2008.

255
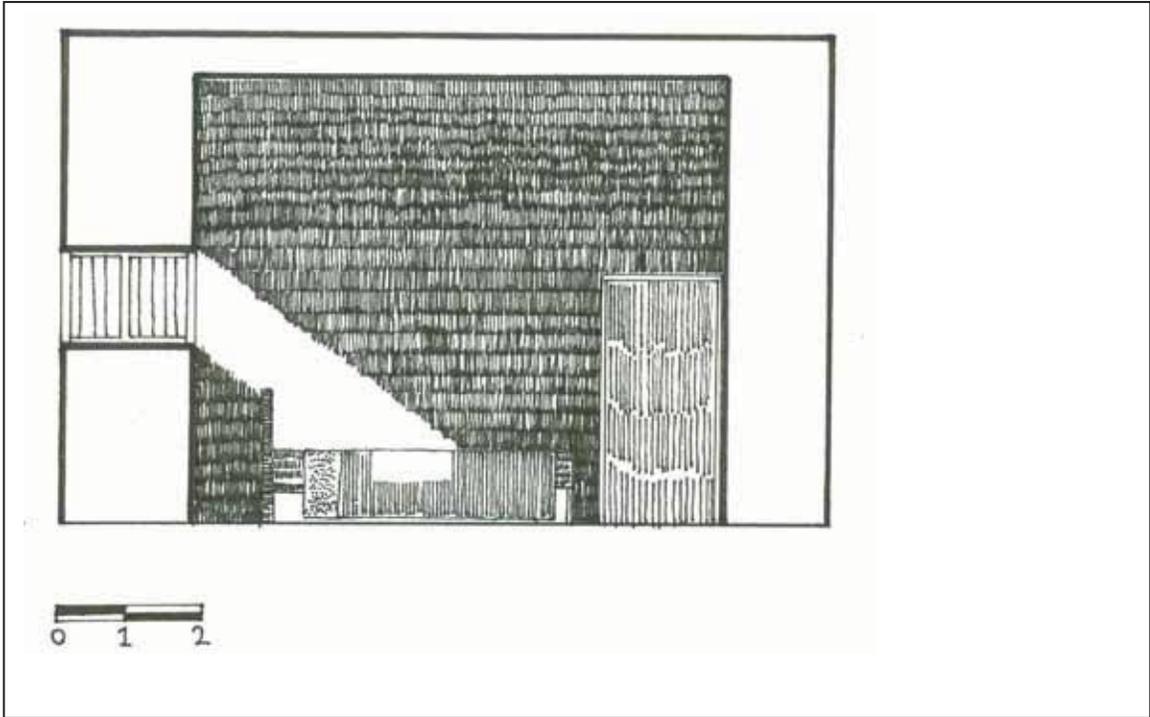
Fig. 4.23. Light and shadow in the summer room. Drawing by author, 2008.
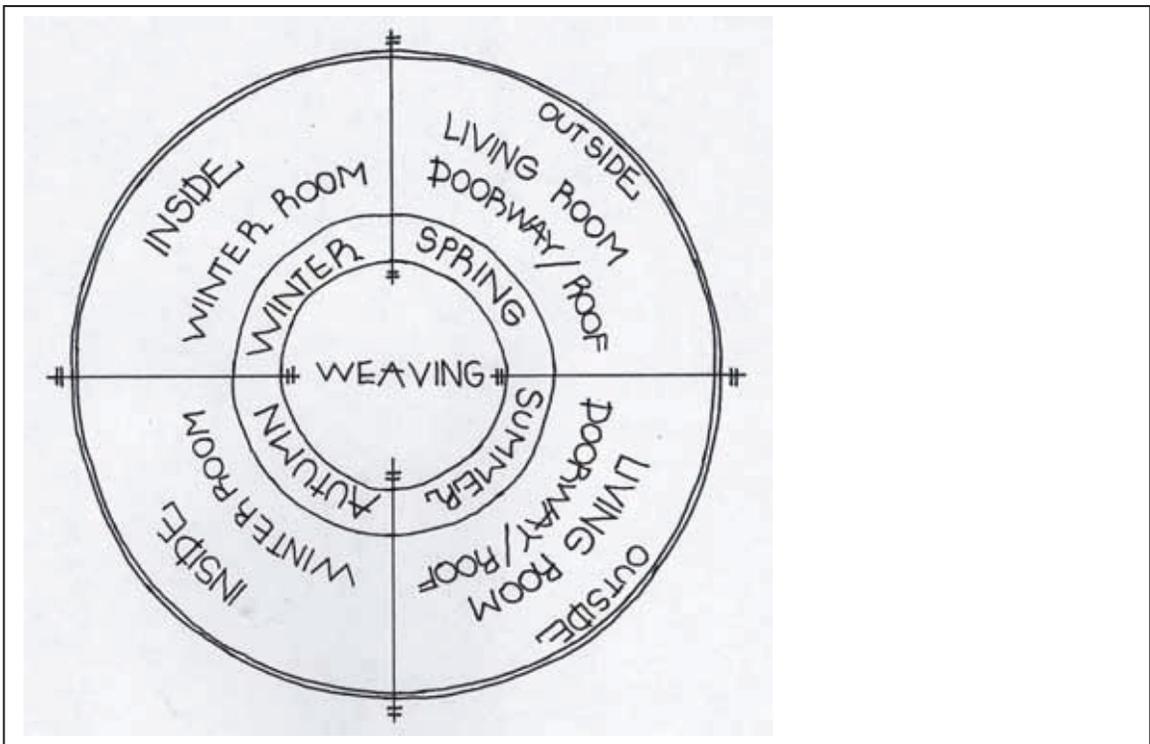
Fig. 4.24. Various places in the house in which weaving is done. Drawing by author, 2013.

windows of the summer room are small so the heat cannot escape easily, but the family has to close the door as well so the heat stays in the room. It is difficult to heat the living room upstairs in winter. Whenever they leave the room in winter they feel the cold in the rest of the house.

Outside the summer room, in the entry room, there are wooden or stone stairs which connect the ground floors to the upper floors. In the houses of Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi and Fatimah Azargūshasb there are trapdoors at the top of the stairs which divide the floors. During various ceremonies and special circumstances, the ground and upper floors are culturally separated by these trapdoors according to traditional gender roles. The floors can be dedicated to either women or men depending on the nature of the ceremony. In addition, the trapdoor can be closed in order to completely separate off the upper floor if the women desire privacy. The trapdoors open into the *chūghūm* or distributing room, which usually provides connections to the guest room, living room and *sumeh*. The house of Mihrān Frāmarzi used to have a trapdoor but during the renovation process it was removed (figures 4.25 to 4.32).

The *chūghūm* might include a small kitchen. For cooking, inhabitants use gas cannisters. The water heaters also use gas cannisters. Regarding cooking and bathing Mihrān Muminiyān says: "We do not have gas pipes in Masulih. We have to purchase gas cannisters from a shop in front of the police station and recharge it there every time it finishes. A full gas cannister is enough for four baths and then it needs to be recharged. Usually every week we need to recharge a cannister. The inhabitants would like to have gas pipes but The National Heritage Office in Masulih is against the distribution of the
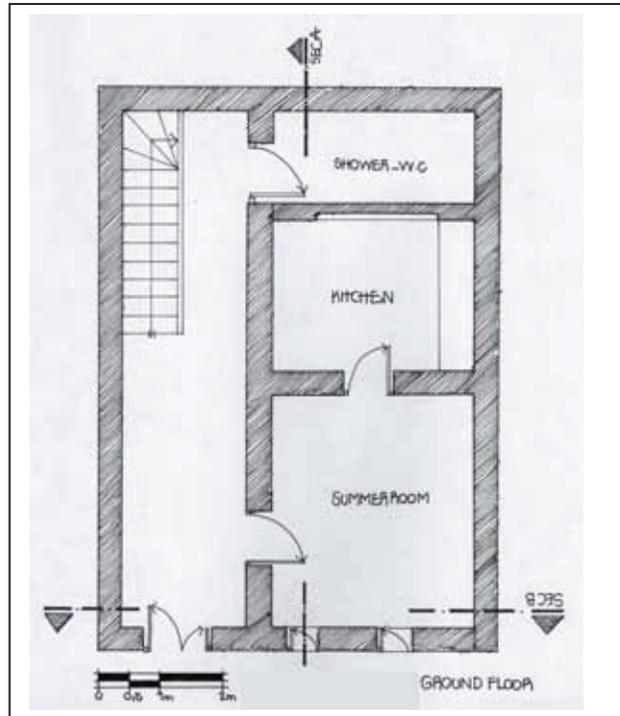
Fig. 4.25. Ground floor plan of the Frāmarzis' house.
Drawing by author, 2013.
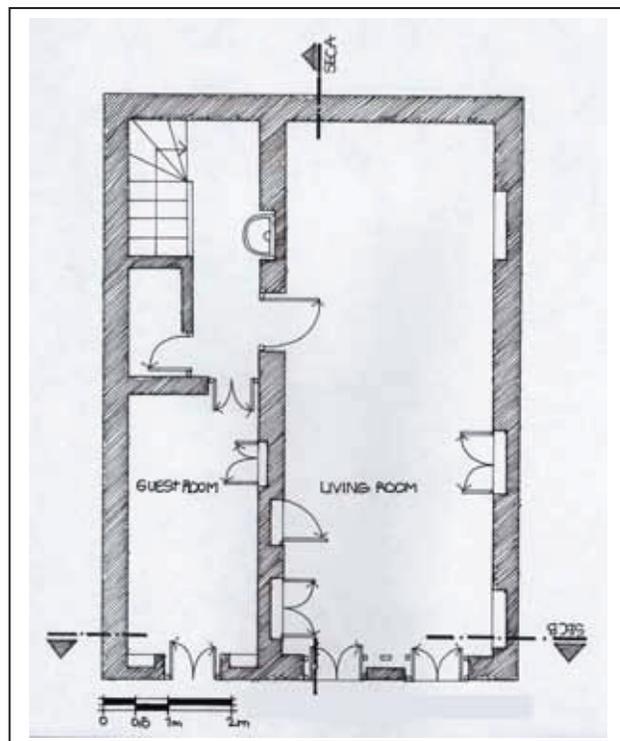
Fig. 4.26. First floor plan of the Frāmarzis' house.
Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 4.27. Section of the house. Drawing by author, 2013.
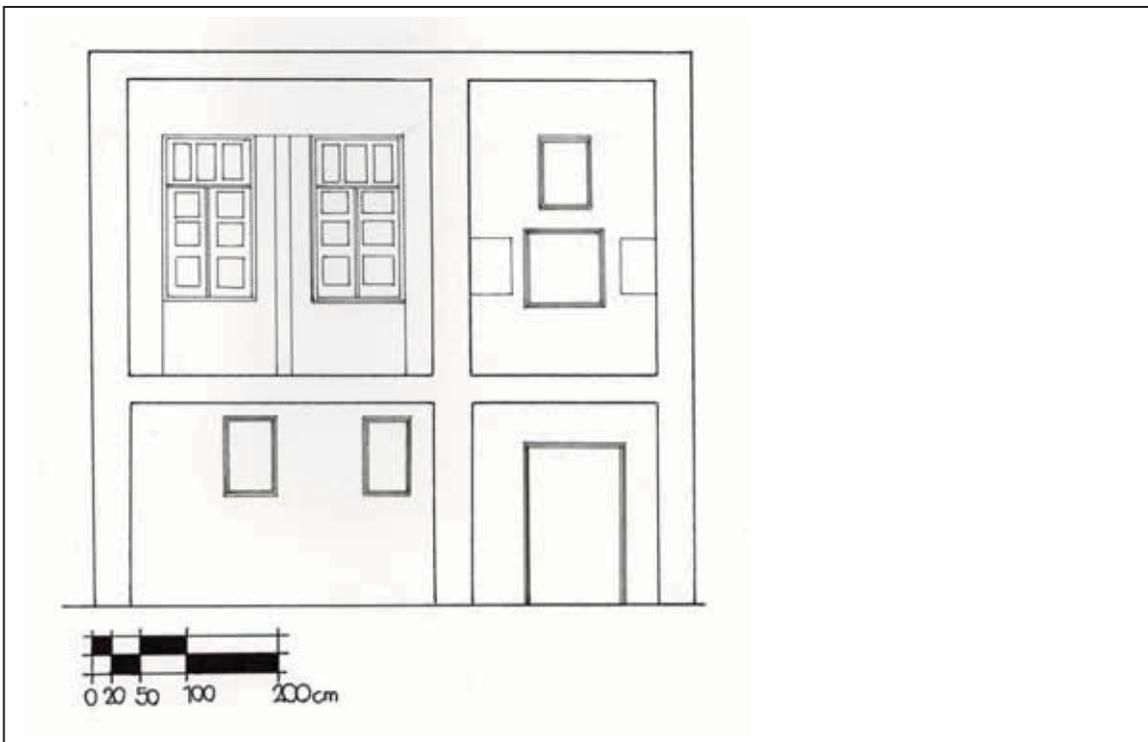
Fig. 4.28. House section. Drawing by author, 2013.

259
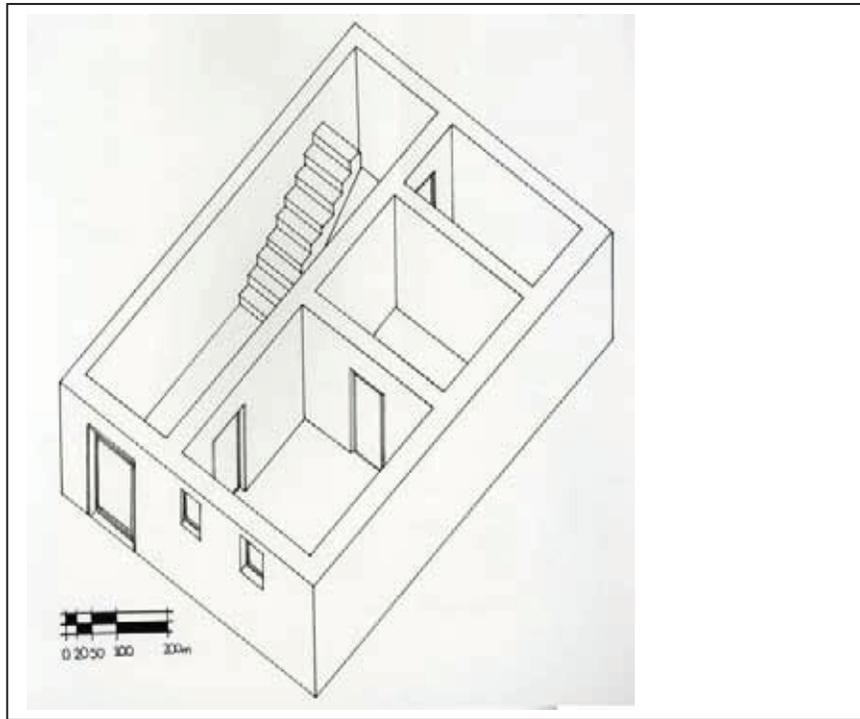
Fig. 4.29. House perspective. Drawing by author, 2013.
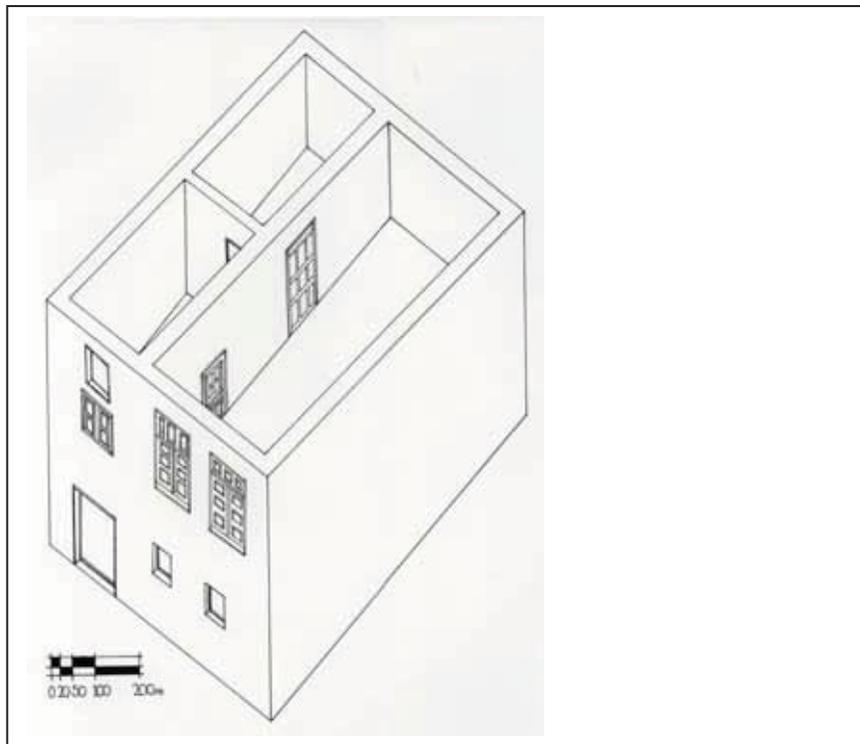
Fig. 4.30. Perspective. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 4.31. A trapdoor in Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi's house. Photograph by author, 2010.
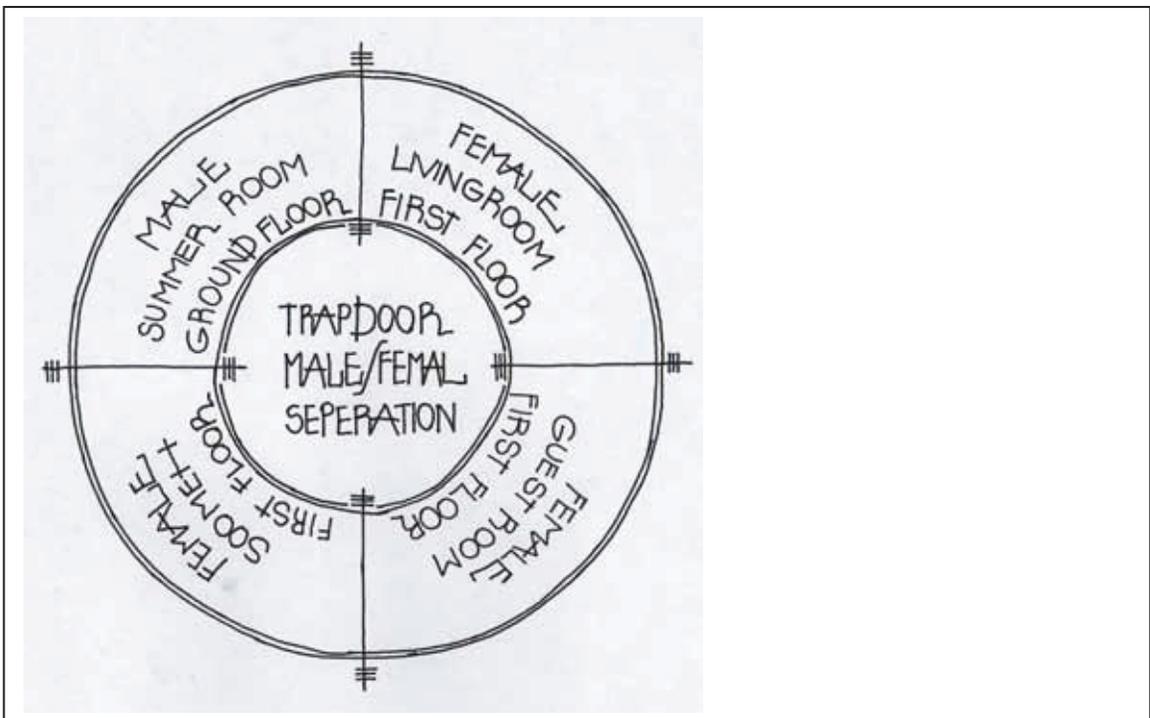
Fig. 4.32. A trapdoor separates the floors based on the gender of the inhabitants. Drawing by author, 2013.

gas pipes. Gas pipes could damage the façades of the historic buildings of Masulih as they say."[327]

Originally cooking would be done on the fire in the fireplace and charcoal and timber were used for cooking. Kitchens, as rooms for cooking, washing, and storing plates and appliances, are new additions to the houses that were added gradually during the last three decades. Some of the residents of Masulih described the changes associated with this transition. Concerning cooking, Mihrān Muminiyān says, "before gas cannisters, we used to cook with charcoal and wood. There was a section in the bazaar where we could purchase charcoal. There were chimneys in the *sumeh* and everyone used to cook under the chimneys so the smoke would be absorbed by the chimneys. We used to put a pot on a metal tripod and burn charcoal under it. God bless her soul, my mother used to cook rice in a pot like that. It was very different from our kitchen today. Nowadays we have kitchen cabinets, heaters, boilers, stoves, refrigerators and other items [figures 4.33 to 4.37]."[328] Regarding the kitchen more generally, Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah says, "we used to cook with charcoal and timber. I used to take a bucket and fill it with water from the spring and bring it back to the house. Now we have hot and cold water inside the house and we added some cabinets to our kitchen. Instead of charcoal we use gas cannisters."[329] About his kitchen, Mihrān Muminiyān says, "I built the open kitchen myself. It used to be storage for charcoal and timber. We call it *aleston*. For cooking my mother needed charcoal but when we shifted to gas cannisters for cooking we decided to demolish the storage and built an open kitchen. The kitchen is much cleaner than a charcoal storage.

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[327] Mihrān Muminiyān, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.
[328] Ibid.
[329] Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.

262
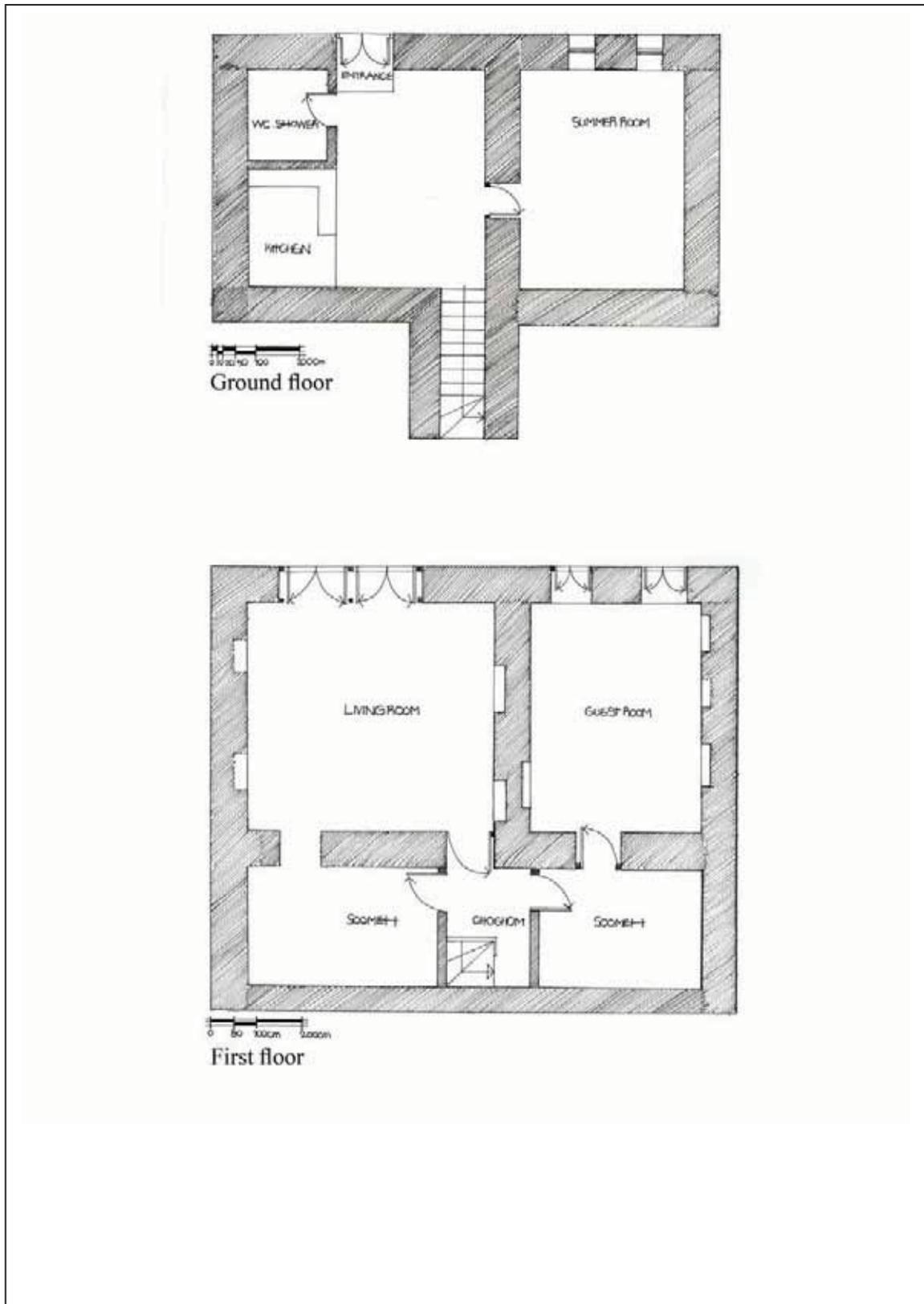
Fig. 4.33. The ground and first floor plans of the Muminiyāns' house. Drawing by author, 2013.
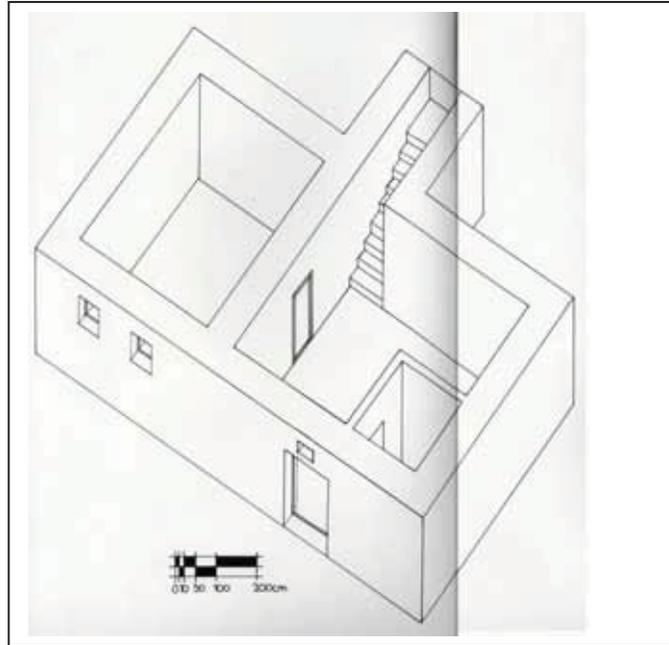
Fig. 4.34. Perspective of the house. Drawing by author, 2013.
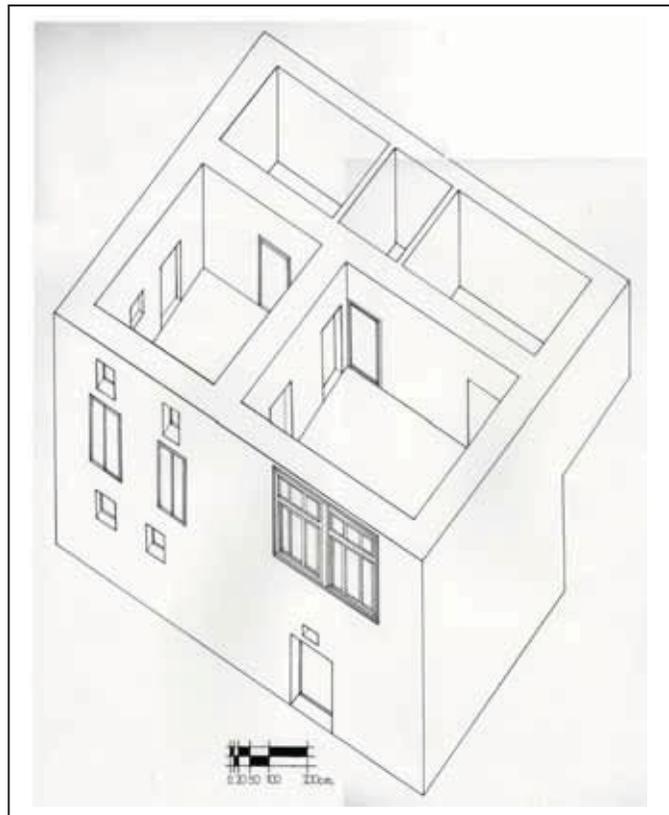
Fig. 4.35. Perspective. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 4.36. The association of fire with local knowledge, communal work, gathering and conversations. Drawing by author, 2013.
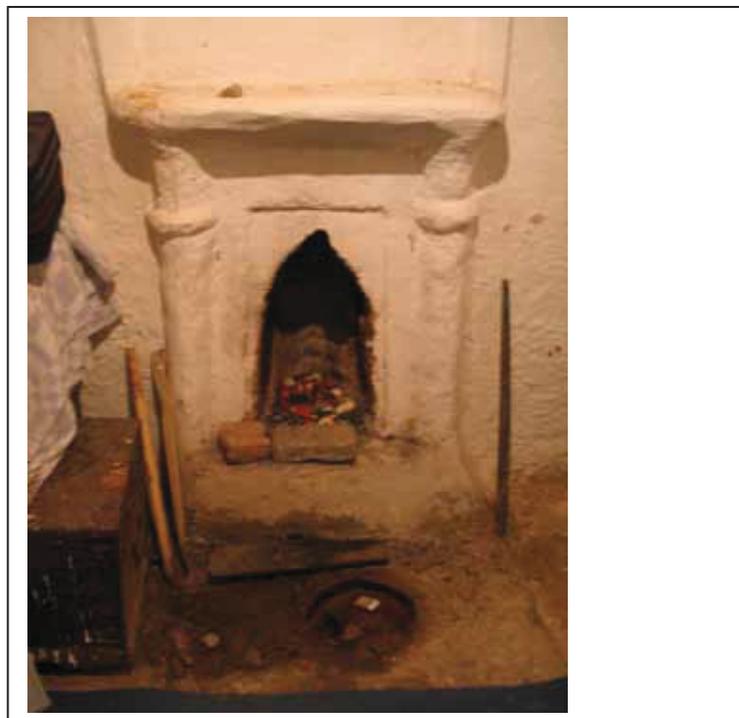
Fig. 4.37. A chimney in the Muminiyāns' house. Photograph by author, 2011.

When I was a kid, whenever my father wanted to punish me, he used to lock me inside the charcoal storage. It was a dark place."[330]

Fire was not only a means for cooking food; it was used for warming the house and gathering people around. Like the houses described by Henry Glassie in Ballymenone, where the inhabitants used to gather around the fire as the heart of their house, in the past the fire was the heart of the houses of Masulih.[331] As in Ballymenone as described by Henry Glassie, the inhabitants of Masulih used to sit, cook and converse beside the chimneys in their *sumeh* or *chūghūm*. In Masulih, the path would bring charcoal to the bazaar. The wood dwellers and mountain dwellers would cut trees and make charcoal and then transfer it to the bazaar. The inhabitants would purchase charcoal and burn it in their homes, warming their chilled interiors. The fire did much more than just protect the inhabitants by providing warmth; it was a presence that protected and gathered the inhabitants, helping to keep the family together and connecting them to the community.[332]

After I walked the paths to the grazing lands, interviewed the community members, asked about tree cutting, visited the houses, and inquired about the old ways of cooking and warming the houses, I gradually grasped the connections between the paths, charcoal, wood dwellers and mountain dwellers and the fires in Masulih. The fire

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[330] Muminiyān, interviews.

[331] See chapter thirteen, "Home," in Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 327–424. Like Glassie, Frank LIoyd Wright was interested in the centrality of the hearth in his design for the Jacob's house. For Wright, the moral core of the house was the hearth, which kept the family together. The hearth offered the Jacobs family warmth and a setting for daily gathering, conversation, entertainment, and intimacy. See Michael Cadwell, *Strange Details* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2007), 49-84.

[332] Fire is a "Thing": it gathers everyone. Martin Heidegger discusses the characteristics of a "Thing" in his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1971), 143–59.

connects the people of Masulih to their environment. Fire demands know-how of the environment. Samad Ali Safar Zādih and ʿināyat Allah Pazhuh, who used to bring charcoal from Zudil and *Imāmzādih* Hāshim, have the knowledge of cutting the trees, sawing and burning them and making charcoal from them.[333] Fire demands a network of transportation, which in Masulih is based on mules and paths, so the charcoal can be transferred to Masulih's bazaar and from there to the homes and workshops of the town. The fire used to connect the people of Zudil to Masulih, so the workshops could run their routines and in the heart of the houses food and warmth could be provided. The workshops and tea houses still burn charcoal, which is now provided by giant trucks from Qazviyn, far away from Masulih and Zudil. This leaves no reason for Samad Ali Safar Zādih to visit Masulih anymore. Samad Ali Safar Zādih and ʿināyat Allah Pazhuh used to visit Jalil-i Ashjāri, the master blacksmith, to sharpen and repair their slashers; with slashers they would cut the trees for making charcoal. The fire demands communal work: Jalil, Samad Ali, ʿināyat Allah and others would work together so the supply of charcoal kept flowing and the fires kept burning, alive. The introduction of gas cannisters and the supply of charcoal from outside the town have shifted the pattern of communal work.[334]

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[333] See chapter three, section 3.8 on the grazing lands and animal husbandry.

[334] See chapter three, section 3.8 on the grazing lands and animal husbandry. The narratives of Samad Ali Safar Zādih and ʿināyat Allah Pazhuh, whom I interviewed in Masulih, demonstrate the changes to the grazing lands and practices of their users which have happened over time. Like the narratives of Samad Ali and ʿināyat Allah, the narrative of Madam Marie from the Croix-Rousse Neighborhood in Lyons indicates the changes which happened in this neighborhood. Madam Marie remembers the time when there were small and large shops in the neighbourhood, such as a dairy store, a bakery, a butcher and a grocer. There used to be a milkman, grinders, glaziers, locksmiths, olive merchants, retail wine merchants, and other tradespeople, and people would bring their demands to them to keep them running. The multiplicity of shops and merchants contributed to the strongly unique sociability in this neighborhood. The narratives of Madam Marie reveal this past era. See Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, ed. Luce Giard, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1998), 72, 73.

Like many other Iranian cities, towns and villages Masulih used to have public

baths. There were no hot and cold water pipes in the houses. After the distribution of

pipes to the houses, showers and bathrooms were gradually added to their houses.

Concerning bathing, Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah says "we all used to go to the public bath or

hammām. In recent years, private bathrooms inside the houses became popular and

inhabitants started to add bathrooms to their houses. In the past, none of the houses had

bathrooms."[335] About bathing, Mihrān Muminiyān says "The public bath used to be

active until 1998. Some of the people still did not have bathrooms in their house so they

used the public bath; gradually those people also built bathrooms in their houses and as a

result the public bath closed."

The *chūghūm* connects to the *sumeh* or winter room. In Fatimah Azargūshasb's

sumeh there is a small chimney in the corner and niches around the walls. Some of the

niches are divided into three sections by wooden dividers, and most are decorated with

various handicrafts, including handcrafted dolls. The *sumeh* is connected to the living

room by two doors. The doorways are divided into three sections and all sorts of bottles

are put inside. Above connecting doors between the *sumeh* and the living room there are

further storage spaces, decorated with kitchen pots. These pots function as a decorative

element (figures 4.38 to 4.41).

In Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah's house, the *sumeh* is used as storage room. In the house

of Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, it has been converted to a kitchen. As a result there is more

room in the *chūghūm* or distributing space. In Mūʿiyn Fāzili's house, the *sumeh* is still

intact and serves its original purpose. In the house of Abdullah Askar-pur, the *sumeh* is

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[335] Hāshimi Khah, interviews.

Fig. 4.38. A niche in the Azargūshasbs' house. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.39. Winter room in the Azargūshasbs' house. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.40. Winter room. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.41. Winter room. Photograph by author, 2008.

269

the place where the family members spend most of their time (figures 4.42 to 4.46). A

farsh or carpet is laid on the floor of the room, and in the corner of the room, beside a

wooden chest of drawers, is folded a red blanket so that the householder can sit on the

blanket while leaning against a *mūtaka* or cushion covered with a fine white blanket.

Beside the *mūtaka* is the fireplace, used to heat the room. Beside the sitting area a tray is

placed on another gray blanket. A samovar is set on another big tray with a bowl in front

of it. Beside the samovar, at the edge of the blanket, there is a place for setting glasses,

saucers, and the tray. The samovar is the heart of the room and the daily activities are

arranged around it. The guest and the family members drink tea prepared in the teapot on

the samovar. The women sit in a circular format in the *sumeh* and produce various

handicrafts such as socks. Like many other home workshops, the invisible workshop for

producing handicrafts in Askar-pur's house is shaped by the circular arrangement of the

women sitting near the samovar. From time to time the samovar serves the workshop.

Above the samovar and sitting area, there are three niches set into the wall.

Various decorative objects are put in the niches. One niche contains two oil lamps. In the

wall which separates the *sumeh* from the living room are big shelves which store the

living necessities of the householder. In front of each shelf is hung a big curtain to hide

the contents of the shelf. Usually the inhabitants of the house store blankets, pillows, rugs,

and other personal belongings on these shelves. Such shelves for belongings can be seen

in the houses of Mihrān and Abbas Muminiyān, Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah and Mūʿiyn

Fāzili. The shelves and niches represent a way that the *sumeh* has been personalized by

the inhabitants. The inhabitants used to store their rice, which they purchased from

merchants visiting Masulih, in a wooden rice box in the *sumeh*. In the houses of Askar-

pur and Khārābi the rice box is still in use, although instead of rice they store their

270
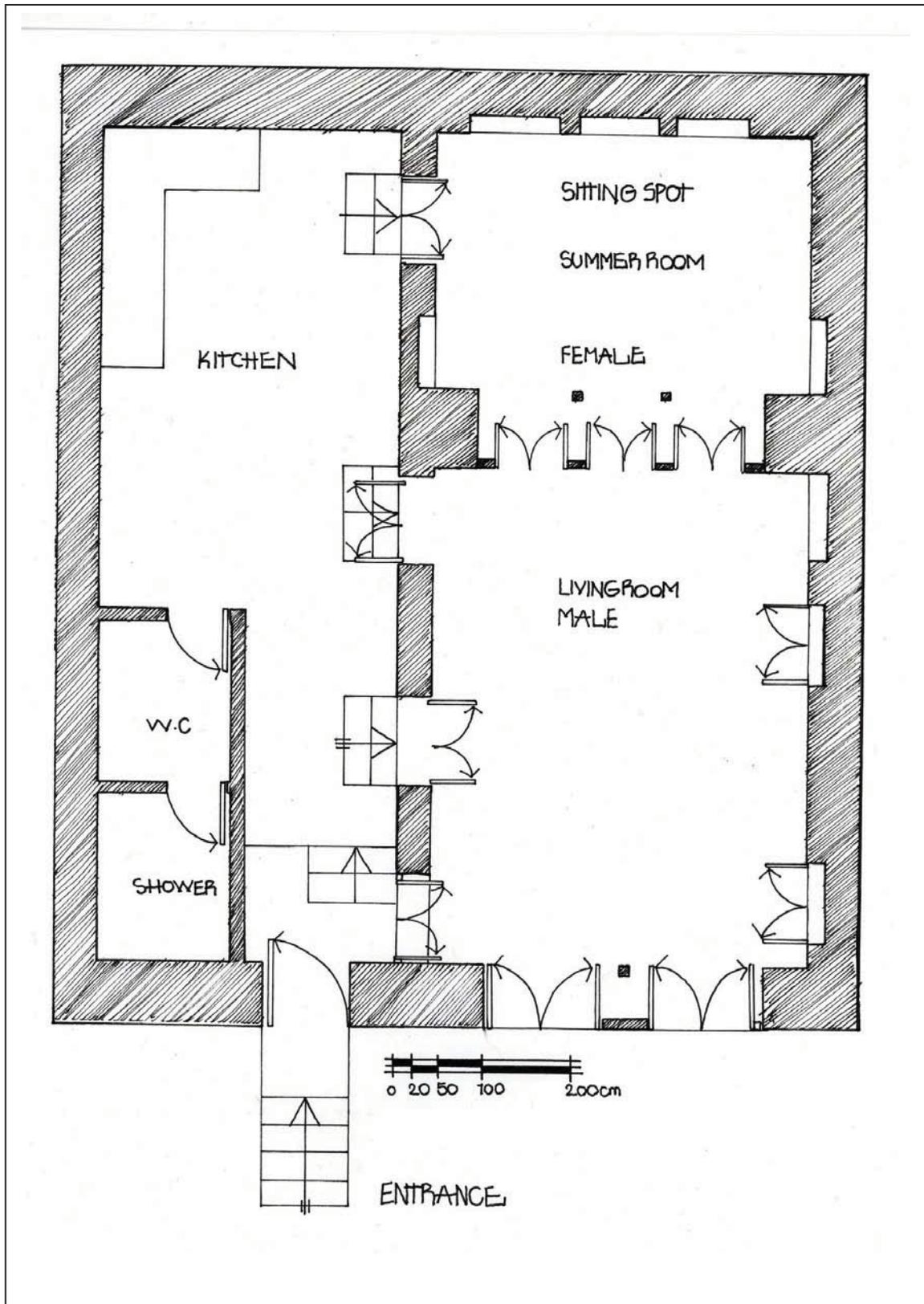
Fig. 4.42. Plan of the Askar-purs' house. Drawing by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.43. Winter room in the Askar-purs' house. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.44. Winter room. Photograph by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.45. The weaving workshop in the winter room. Photograph by author, 2011.

Fig. 4.46. Three niches. Photograph by author, 2011.

belongings inside the rice box (figures 4.47 to 4.51). Originally, the rice box used to be a keeper, it used to keep the rice dry. The box would sit in the niche close to the fire, where the rice is cooked. The family would sit on the ground and consume the rice beside the fire. The rice would come from the rice fields of Gilān, from the field to the plateau, to the Tālish Mountains, to the bazaar of Masulih and from there to the rice box and finally it would be consumed.

The living rooms are usually more elegant than the *sumeh*. The floors are usually covered with *farsh-ha*. There are niches in the walls, usually above the doors and in the walls around the room. A wide range of decorative objects are arranged in the niches. These items serve as memories of a relative's or friend's gift on a particular occasion or ceremony. Consequently these items are not mere objects, but memorials representing a particular situation or event (figure 4.52). About these objects Fatimah Azargūshasb claims "Once, I went for pilgrimage to Mashhad and once to Syria. After I returned to my house, my neighbors and relatives gathered one night in my house, I prepared some food, tea and pastries and they brought plates and pots for me. I put them in the niches in my living room. Whenever I see them it reminds me of the trip and the relatives and neighbors who brought those gifts for me."[336]

Mrs. Fatimah Azargūshasb in Masulih shares with Mrs. Ellen Cutler in Ballymenone a particular value: cleanliness. Every week Mrs. Ellen Cutler washes the ceramic plates, mugs and cups, which she calls "Delph," from her dressers and then sets

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[336] Fatimah Azargūshasb, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.

Fig. 4.47. The rice box in the winter room of the Askar-purs' house. Photograph by author, 2012.

Fig. 4.48. The rice box. Photograph by author, 2012.
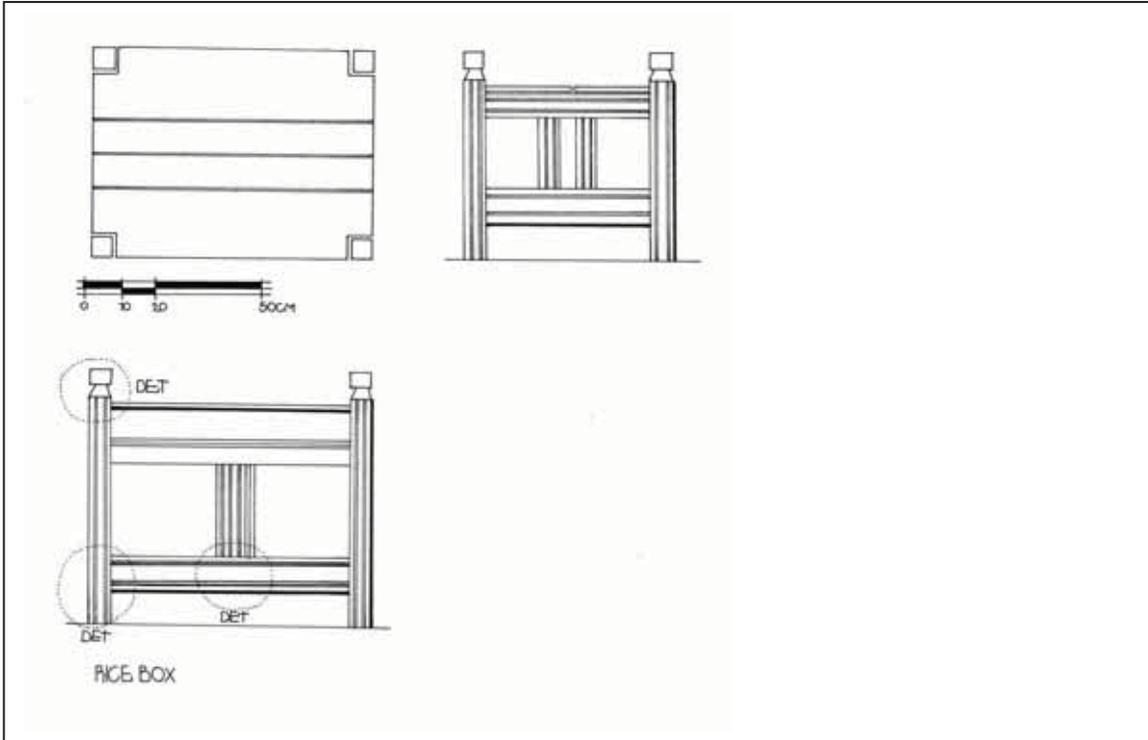
Fig. 4.49. Plan and elevations of a rice box. Drawing by author, 2012.
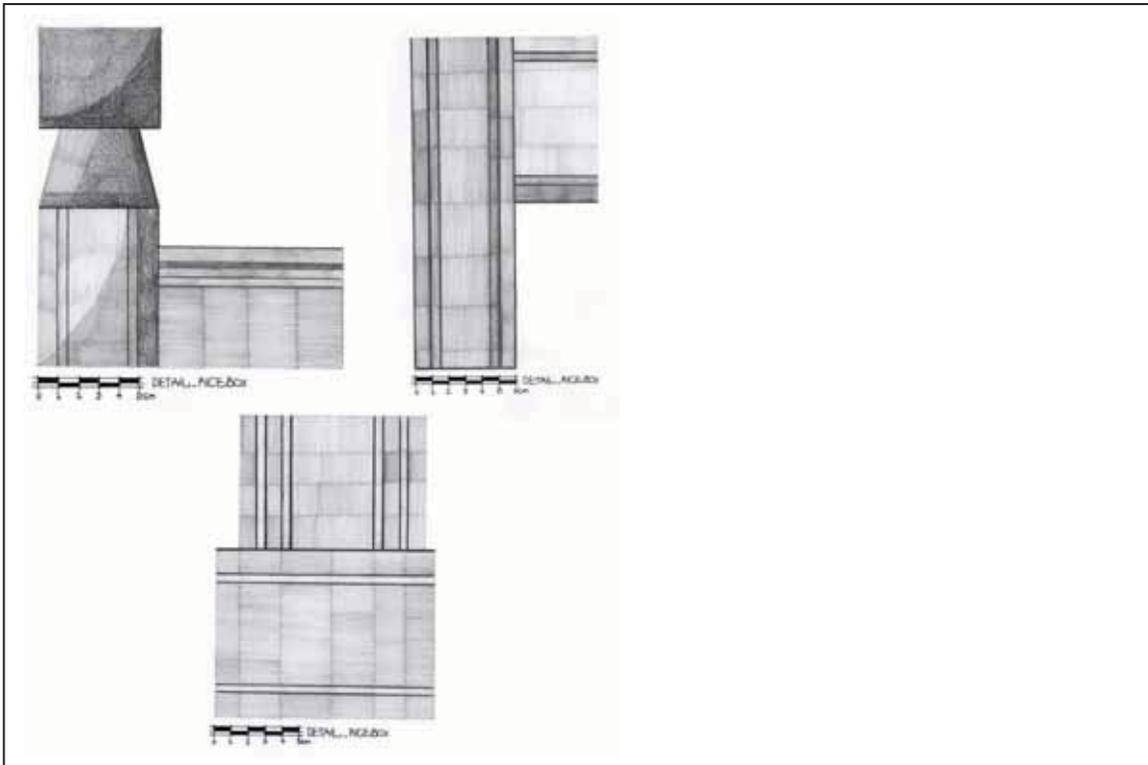
Fig. 4.50. Details on a rice box. Drawing by author, 2012.

275
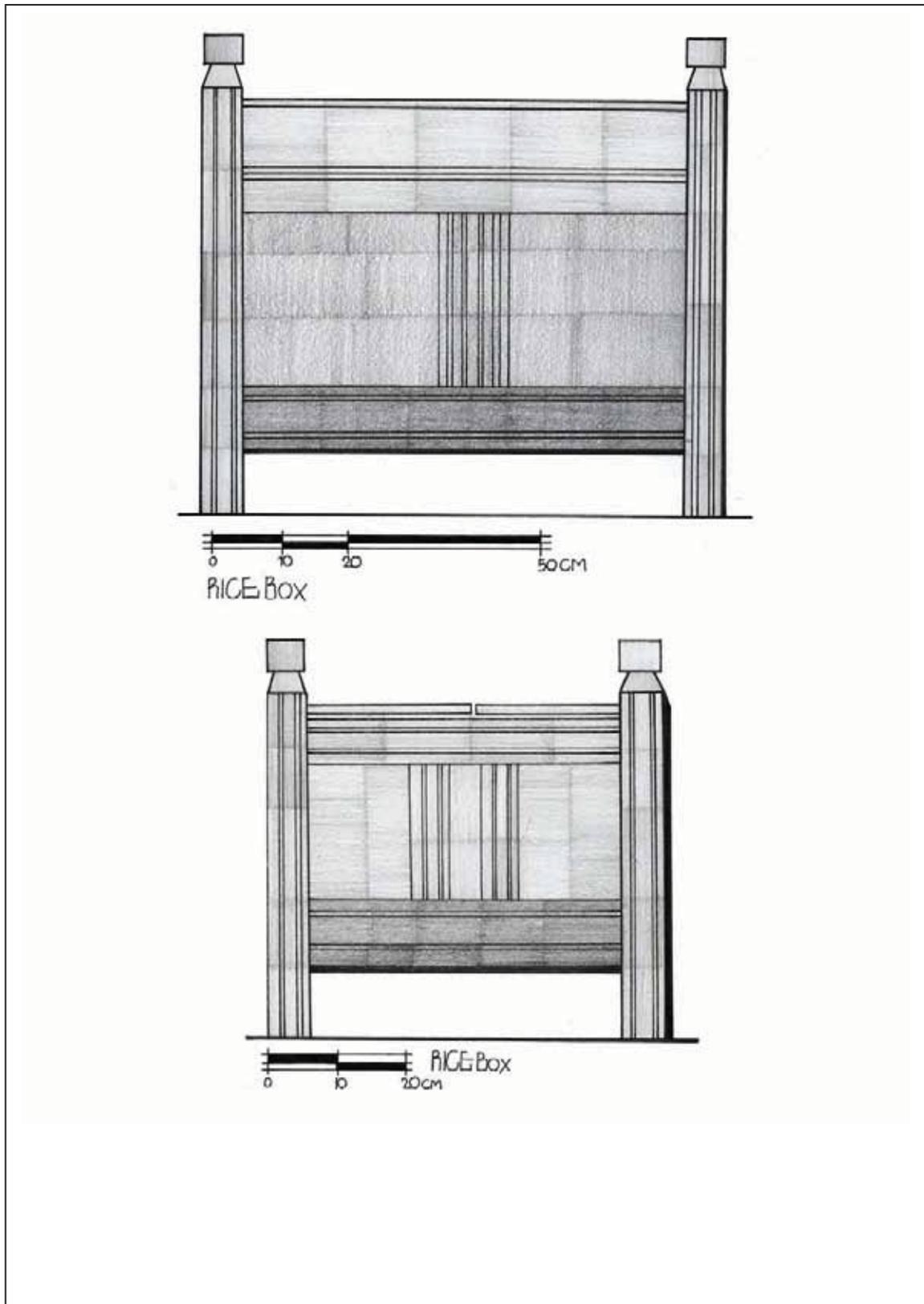
Fig. 4.51. Elevations of a rice box. Drawing by author, 2012.
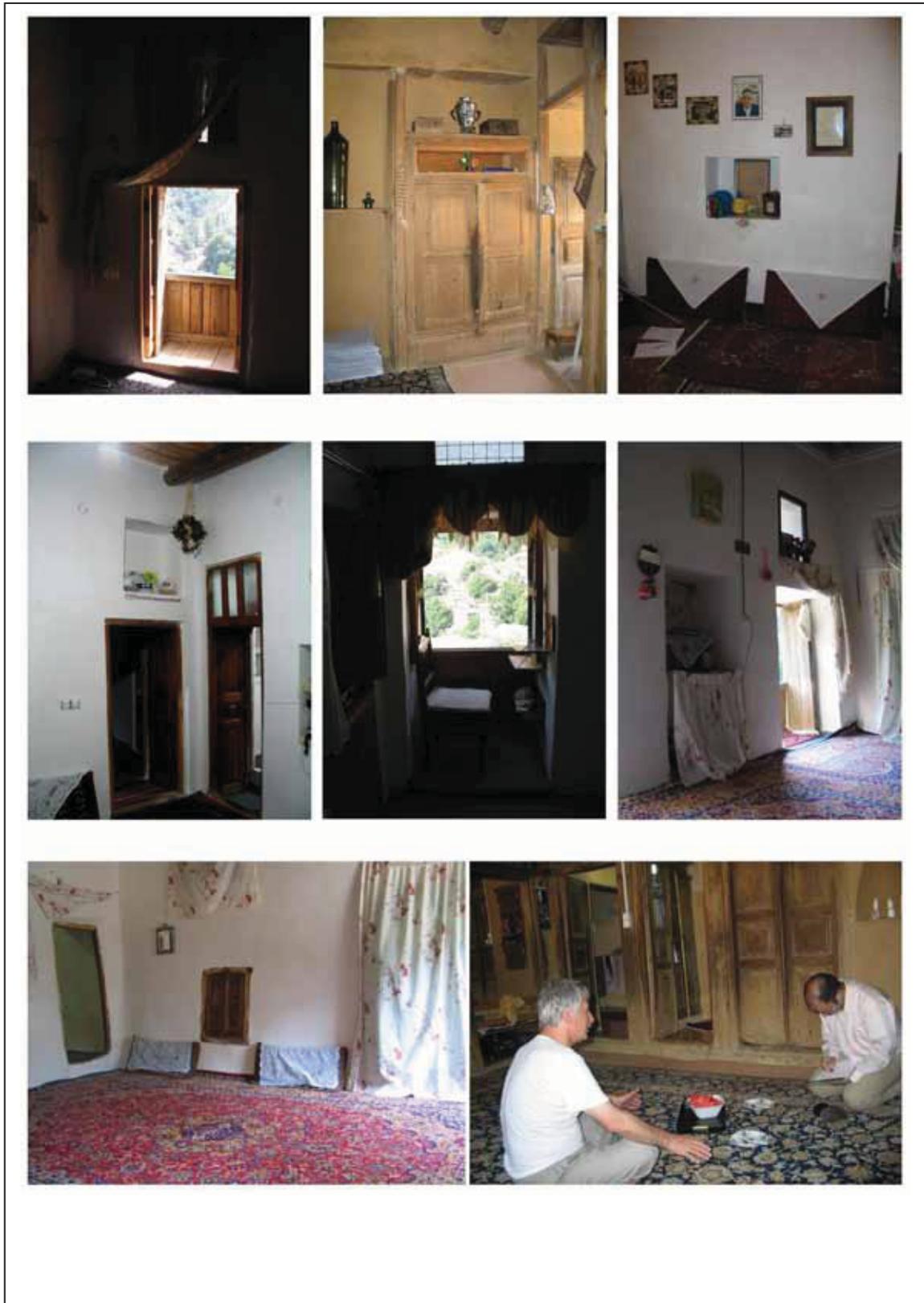
Fig. 4.52. Various photographs of the living room. Photographs by author, 2010.

them back in their places or perhaps in new places in the dresser.[337] Mrs. Fatimah Azargūshasb also cleans the plates and pots in her living room and her guest room every week. The plates, pots, mugs and cups in both Mrs. Cutler's and Fatimah's house are for display; they are not for daily usage. However, they are not merely for display; they are signs of social order, they are part of the social fabric of the house. Each one of the plates, pots, mugs and cups is a gift from a friend, neighbor or a member of the family for a certain occasion such as pilgrimages, weddings and other events. Mrs. Cutler and Fatimah put them on display so they always remember their friends. Washing their plates every week demonstrates care of these artifacts, and in doing so they revisit the memory of their social networks.[338]

White blankets are folded up on the *farsh-ha* so that the inhabitants can sit comfortably while leaning against *mūtaka-ha* or cushions. In fact Islam disapproves of Muslims filling their houses with items of luxury and extravagance.[339] In Hisham Mortada's opinion, the Islamic scholar, the dominant use of the floor in the house is a response to the Quranic verse which describes the people in paradise: "They will recline on carpets, whose inner linings will be of rich brocade: the fruit of the Gardens will be near (and easy to reach)."[340] In Masulih sitting on the floor is both a sign of humiliation and respect and reminds them of the holy verse. Only Mū'iyn Fāzili's and Vajih-i Gūlzār's houses have furniture in the living room.

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[337] See Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 365.
[338] See Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Philadelphia and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 63.
[339] Mortada, *Traditional Islamic Principles*, 120.
[340] Quran, 55:54. See also Mortada, *Traditional Islamic Principles*, 121.

In most living rooms, some of the niches have doors. The houses of Yad Allah Shahiydi, Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, Mūʿiyn Fāzili, Fatimah Azargūshasb and Abdullah Askar-pur include this type of niche. Televisions are usually inside the niches so that the inhabitants of the house can sit on the ground and lean against the *mūtaka-ha* to watch them. Such an arrangement can be seen in the houses of Fatimah Azargūshasb, Yad Allah Shahiydi and Abdullah Askar-pur.

It was in the living room of Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi that Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār Masulih, a poet and retired teacher, told me about the last master builder of Masulih. Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār was born in 1952 in Masulih; his ancestors migrated from a city called Biyhaq in Khūrāsan province to Masulih approximately seven hundred years ago. Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār is the descendant of Mūllā Hādi Sabzivāri, who was a poet and Islamic scholar (1797–1873 AD). Like Mūllā Hādi, Muhammd Ibrāhim is interested in poetry. When Muhammad Ibrāhim was a child, ūstād Maʿsumi worked as a master mason. Years later, when Muhammad Ibrāhim began teaching in the Iymān School in Masulih, Ūstād Maʿsumi's children were his students. Later on, Muhammad Ibrāhim married Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi's daughter.

Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār Masulih claims, "Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi always tried to build his houses based on the vernacular tradition; he disapproved of modern ways of construction. The materials that he used to work with were timber, clay, straw, brick, stone, plaster, wood and other local materials. He was against using concrete, metal bars, steel beams, cement and other factory made materials. He resisted

using these materials all his life. In my opinion he made a wise choice."[341] Once Ūstād

Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi told Muhammad Ibrāhim the following:

> [A]ll my life I looked at Masulih houses. I devoted my life to renovating, reconstructing the ruins and taking care of the houses as a master builder. I always looked at those beautiful buildings. But nowadays with these worthless, poorly built buildings I do not know where I should look. Every morning when I come outside my house, I just look at the mountains and the sky. I cannot bear to look at these worthless buildings. The person who built these buildings is less trained and knowledgeable than an unskilled new worker in a construction site. These people are not builders. They have an illusion that they are the master builders.[342]

After the famous earthquake of 1990, many of the traditional houses were renovated by

master masons who were interested in modern materials. It was in that earthquake that a

large stone parted from the mountain and landed on the empty plot beside the house of

Ūstād Maʿsumi. The head of the stone broke the external wall of the second floor and

around 1.5m of the head broke into the house, so Ūstād Maʿsumi diverted the stream from

the spring above his house towards the underside of the stone. Gradually the stone rolled

and the head of the stone shifted outside the external wall of the house.[343]

Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi was a kind and honest person. He was very fond of

guests. Sometimes Muhammad Ibrāhim's father and mother would visit Ūstād Niʿmat

Allah Maʿsumi's house. Before their visit, Ūstād himself would go to the bazaar and

purchase fruit, pastries and refreshments and he would do everything to amuse the guests.

Ūstād was a serious man at his work; he and his construction crew would do their best in

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[341] Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār Masulih, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012
[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.

all their projects. Ūstād Niʿmat Allah used to say, "when the owner comes to see the finished house, he should be fulfilled and blissful so he will pay us with approval."[344] He used to stay longer than the other construction crew on the site and, if he could, he would finish any incomplete tasks. He used to say, "maybe the owner has a limited budget and we should not extend the process of construction further than the necessary time." Masulih people remember Ūstād Niʿmat Allah for his honesty and hard work. When he passed away the inhabitants buried him beside the *Imāmzādih*, which is a privilege not granted to everyone. The inhabitants respected Ūstād Maʿsumi a lot, so they decided to bury him in sacred ground. Muhammad Ibrāhim wrote this poem for his death:

<div dir="rtl">

چه سود است چون نیست ما را دوامی   جهان گر چه دلکش سرای است اما

ولیکن ندارد گل شادکامی   عجب گلشن است این زمین با طراوت

به هر سوی در زیر خاک هست دامی   من پای بر خاک ای صید غافل

</div>

Although the world is an attractive house   what is the benefit when there is no lastingness for us?
This earth is like a fresh flower-garden   but it doesn't have the flower of happiness
My feet are on soil oh you negligent hunted   Oh, everywhere under the soil, there is a hunted one

Muhammad Ibrāhim wrote another poem for the Masulih flood:

<div dir="rtl">

چنین رعد و طوفان دو چشمی ندید   هوا تیره شد گرد بادی وزید

بلای به دنبال آن دیده شد   تگرگی به ناگاه باریده شد

زمین دیده خلق دریا گریست   پس از گریه ابر دلها گریست

شقأیق به دریای غم شد غریق   شنو از من این داستان ای رفیق

تن و دست و پاها چه شد ای خدا؟   سر از پیکر لاله‌ها شد جدا

قدر گل ز گلزار زیبا زدود   قضا ناگه آرام دلها ربود

دیاری که رنگش تر و تازه بود   به شهری که نامش پر آوازه بود

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[344] Ibid.

به ناگه در سال ۷۷   غمین گشت ماسوله شادی برفت

به ماسوله آمد بلای بزرگ   درنده تر از جنگ و طوفان و گرگ

سیمایش ز ابر سیاه شد نهان   زمینش زسوگ عزیزن خزان

که در روز نهم زمرداد ماه   شد آدینه میهمانان سیاه

رها گشت سیل از کمینگاه خویش   شتابان شد و پای بنهاد پیش

عجولانه جانهایی مردم ستاد   به دم زی حیاتی مسیرش نمان

قد افراشته سرو سیمین روخان   زمرد و زن و کودک و نوجوان

از این لشگر شوم بی جان شدند   درون گل و لای پنهان شدند

The sky darkened and a tornado blows   No eyes have seen such thunder and storm
Suddenly hail starts   and a disaster happened after that
After the cry of the hail, the hearts cried   the earth cried and the sea cried
Listen to my story my friend   corn-poppy is drowned in the sea of sadness
The heads of the tulips are detached from their bodies   O God, what happened to bodies, hands and feet
Suddenly faith rubbed the calmness of the hearts   it rubbed the merit of the flower from the flower garden
It happened in a well-known city   a region with fresh colors
Suddenly in the year of '77   Masulih became sad, happiness departed
A disaster came to Masulih   worse than wars, storms and wolves
The dark cloud darkened its face   autumn came to its lands in mourning of its dear ones
In the ninth day of the month of Mūrdād   the holiday of the guest turned black
The flood set free from his ambush   it became hasty and set a foot ahead
It took the lives of the people with haste   no living person remained in its way
The flood was like a tall, handsome man,   took man, women, child and young
All these folks became dead   they became hidden inside the mud and dust.

Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār has a poem about poverty and richness, and some short

poems as well:

کودکی جامعه لطیف به تن   آمد و بر نشست بر توسن

دست برد و گرفت افسارش   به سوی کوه راند و دشت و دمن

بر سر راه کودکی دیگر   که نبودش لطیف جامعه به تن

دید آن کودک منقش را   در دلش داد صد هزار سخن

بارالها گونه من چه بود   همچو پژمرده گل شدم به چمن

چه کنم دست روزگار برید   این چنین جامه ای به قامت من

A child with glorious clothes came and rode a horse
He took the bridle and rode to the mountain, plateau and plain.
On the way another child who did not have glorious clothes
Saw the rich child and said to himself one thousand remarks
Oh God, what was my fault, I am like a dead flower in the garden
What can I do, this is the fate that made me such clothes.

به نام نقشبند صفحه خاک   خدای شمس و ماه و انجم و تاک
رحیم بی نیاز جاودانه   انیس و مونس هر کوی و خانه
خداوند کریم دادگستر   جز او تو فریاد راس کس را تو منگر

In the name of he who shapes the dust, the God of sun, moon, stars and vine
Compassionate, independent and immortal; the companion in every street and house.
God who is generous and just; except God you should not look for any other savior.

شنیدم که چون قوی زیبا شبی را   غمی همچون کوهی به سویش روان شد
به یک لحظه پرهای ناز و قشنگش   که از این غم فرو ریخت گوی خزان شد
سراغش برفتم به کنجی لمیده   ز تنهای خویش پژمرده جان شد
از این سوگ عظما برادر ندانی   یکی اخگر سرخ سویم روان شد
درونم ز فقدان این قوی ریش است   فتادم ز پا قامت من کمان شد

I heard that one night a beautiful swan, a sadness like a mountain came to the swan like a
stream.
All her gentle and beautiful feathers were lost from this sadness like leaves in autumn.
I came to her and she was lying in a corner, and from her loneliness she aged.
Oh my brother, this great sadness was like a red ember that rolled towards me.
Without this swan, I am very sad, I cannot walk and my back is broken.

ای که تو را عیب بود بی شمار   بر دگران عیب نهادی هزار
پرده دری را ز که آموختی   عیب بگیری همه لیل و نهار

Oh, you who have countless faults, you who make one thousand excuses for others
From whom you learned to make excuses, from morning until night you make excuses

For Muhammad Ibrāhim Gūlzār inspiration is the key point in poetry; he has to be

inspired. Once he was in Rasht and he wanted to return to Masulih. He was in a square

and he saw a gardener watering the flowers; the gardener watered all the flowers except

one bunch of flowers in a corner. Muhammad Ibrāhim asked the gardener why he did not

water those flowers. The gardener replied that those flowers were dying so there was no

point in watering them. Then Muhammad Ibrāhim said to himself that this is not justice,

and he was inspired to write a poem about justice:

گل به چمن از چه سبب زرد شد   او ز چه رو جفت غم و درد شد؟
شمس نتابیده به وی یک دمی   تر ننمود است تنش شبنمی؟

283

سایه دیوار تنش سرد کرد سردی دیوار رخش زرد کرد
باغ مصفا همه جا پر گل است بر سر هر گل به نوا بلبل است
بلبل شیدا به پی دلدار خویش گشت روان، پای بنهاد پیش
پس متعجب بشد از دلبرش به دل خود گفت چه آمد سرش
گفت آیا دلبرک بی نوا ای که تو نبودی به ما بی وفا
زردی رخسار تو از بهر چیست سردی بازار تو از بهر کیست؟
واله و شیدای تو بینی منم آن تو باشد سر و جان و تنم
گل حرکت کرد و تکانی بخورد سرد تنش را به دو دستش فشرد
زردی من بابت مهتاب نیست بی بریم از عدم آب نیست
گردش ایام رخم زرد کرد فکر سر انجام تنم سرد کرد
رنج من از رنج جماعت بود مردنم از مرگ عدالت بود

Why has the flower in the garden turned pale? Why has the flower become the companion of sadness and pain?

For a while, the sun did not shine on the flower? The dew did not water the body of the flower?

Maybe the shadow of the wall chilled the body of the flower or maybe the chillness of the wall paled the face of the flower

The flower garden, everywhere is full of flowers, there is a nightingale on each flower

The frenzied nightingales are searching for the beloved

When the nightingale saw the flower, the nightingale wondered and asked himself, what happened to the flower?

The nightingale said, oh poor sweetheart, you who were not unfaithful to me

Why is your face so pale? Why do you not have any companion?

I am your lover, my body and soul belong to you

The flower moved her body and enfolded her body with her hands

The paleness of my face is not because of the moon; my thirst is not because of drought

The passage of time turned my face yellow, my body turned chilled because of thinking about my fate

My pain is due to everyone's pain, my death is due to the death of justice

The ritual of Ashurā merges the public and private domains. The ritual is carried out not only in the streets and public parts of the town, but also in some of the houses, like the house of Abdullah Askar-pur. In this house the ritual of Ashurā takes place for ten nights every year in the living room and winter room. The living room of the house becomes a public place for men to sit, gather and mourn. The men sit all around the room on white blankets while leaning against *mūtaka-ha*. There is a small pulpit or *minbar* formed by a wooden stair with five steps in the corner of the room so the Imām can climb up, sit on top, and address the audience from there. When the house is crowded, the

minbar allows the Imām to see all the people. The *sumeh* of the house is used by the women for mourning. The women sit on the ground and listen to the speech like the men. The house is no longer a house during these religious ceremonies; instead, it becomes part of the event, which takes place in Masulih during the first ten days of Muharram.

The individuals who perform the Ashurā ritual on the paths enter the house to continue the ritual inside. The paths and the house are connected, and this communion can be seen during this ritual when the path leads the mourners to the house. I visited Masulih in December 2009 at the time when the annual ritual was being held. I visited the house of Abdullah Askar-pur one afternoon. The line of mourners – women and men – walked towards the house and then entered the living room and the *sumeh*. The public merged into the private. The house turned into a public place so the mourners could perform their ritual inside the house as they perform it outside on the paths.

We can learn about Abdullah Askar-pur and his family on the basis of this room, the ceremony which is held every year in the house, and the material culture associated with the ceremony. The transformation of the living room and guest room at a certain time of the year into male and female spaces for the mourning ceremony of Ashurā is a cultural phenomenon that tells us about the lives and values of the inhabitants of the house. This transition, necessitated by the involvement of the whole community in the Ashurā commemoration and their requirements for particular spaces in which to observe this ceremony, demonstrates not only the importance of the Ashurā event in particular for the owner of the house and for the inhabitants of Masulih, but also the centrality of religion in their lives.

The artifacts which are utilized inside the *sumeh* and living room of the house are also a representation of the religion and beliefs of the inhabitants. A poster with the name

of God and the names of the Prophet Muhammed and his family is hung on the wall. The latter include the names of the prophet's daughter Fatimah, his cousin and son-in-law Ali, and his two grandsons Hasan and Hūsiyn. The poster represents the belief of the Askar-purs in the prophet and his family. Another religious artifact is a carpet hung on the wall with Quran verses on it: "And those who disbelieve would fain dislodge thee from thy God given station with their angry looks when they hear the Reminder; and they say, 'He is certainly mad.'"[345] Askar-pur believes that this verse is for protection from the evil eye. By hanging this verse on the wall, their family will be protected against the evil eye and wicked people. A carpet with a prayer to the daughter of the prophet, Fatimah, is also hung on the wall of the living room of Askar-pur's house. These religious artifacts are manifestations of the religious beliefs of the inhabitants of the house. The same religious artifacts can be seen in the living room of Yad Allah Shahidi.[346] In the living room of Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi there are three framed pictures. The pictures were taken on their trip to visit the city of Mashhad and the sacred shrine of Imām Riza. One of the pictures shows Ūstād Niʿmat with his wife standing in front of a large painting illustrating the Imām Riza shrine. Another one shows Ūstād Niʿmat and his wife standing in front of the shrine of Imām Riza itself. They did not have cameras with them so they went to a

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[345] Quran, 68:52.

[346] In his book *The Comfort of Things*, Daniel Miller, anthropologist, attempts to understand how people express themselves through their possessions. In Miller's opinion, the closer and stronger our relationship gets with objects, the closer and stronger our relationship are with the people who own them. Miller attempts to discover the lives of certain individuals behind the closed doors of their private homes. He gets to know the lives of selected individuals by asking them about their possessions, such as decorations hung on the walls, items of clothing, photographs on display and their collections in their houses. Miller discovers that some of the items in their display are gifts from close friends and family members or objects retained from the past. The important fact is they have decided to put them on display and live with them. In Miller's opinion these artifacts are not random collections; they are an expression of someone's life. If we can learn to listen to these artifacts then we have access to an authentic other voice. Miller indicates that people collect a vast range of artifacts and there are reasons for collecting those items. See Miller, *The Comfort of Things*, 1–7.

photography studio in Mashhad to take these pictures. Regarding the devotion of Ūstād Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, Muhammad Ibrāhim says "Ūstād Maʿsumi was a faithful devoted person. Every year he and his wife would go to Mashhad for pilgrimage to Imām Riza's shrine. The framed pictures depict those spiritual trips."[347]

Not all the houses have a guestroom. In those houses with one, it is adjacent to the living room. The guests usually sit on the white blanket laid on the *farsh* while leaning against *mūtaka* and conversing with the inhabitants of the house. When there is a large number of guests, there will be a separation between males and females. As Hisham Mortada indicates, there is a duty in Masulih of maintaining strong relationships with members of society, neighbors, relatives, friends and distant family members. In fact generosity and hospitality towards guest are highly recommended by Islam, which allows the invitation of guests, although mixing the male guests with the female members of the family is not allowed.[348] It is written in the holy Quran: "Worship Allah and join none with Him in worship, and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the neighbor who is near of kin, the neighbour who is a stranger, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and those (slaves) whom your right hands possess."[349]

While the guests are sitting, the owner begins the ritual of serving tea. Usually the tea is made in the kitchen. There is a strong connection between the samovar in the kitchen and the guestroom. The householder serves the guest with tea freshly poured from the samovar and replenishes it from time to time. In every ceremony, the householder goes back and forth from the samovar to serve the guest.

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[347] Gūlzār Masulih, interviews.
[348] Mortada, *Traditional Islamic Principles*, 104–119.
[349] Quran: 4:36

The guest should respect the owner of the house. This concept of respect is transferred to the structural entity of the house. In Masulih, the moment of passing through entrances is very important, especially when the guests enter the guestroom. The door of the guestroom is usually smaller than other doors in the house, so that just before passing through the doorway to enter the room, the guest should bow. This is a metaphor for honouring and glorifying the housekeeper. Through this action the house becomes not merely a house, but also a sacred place which should be respected by bowing. Stepping inside the most important room of the house requires a moment of silence, a pause, and then a bow in order to enter in the name of the Lord (figures 4.53 to 4.56).

By conversing with the inhabitants, the usage of the windows from the inside of the houses becomes clearer. Usually each window consists of a wooden *mūshabak* or patterned parapet and two internal doors and curtains (figures 4.57 to 4.58). The *mūshabak* provides *mahramiat* or privacy, while the internal doors sometimes have glass panels to allow light to enter. A curtain is used to control light and *mahramiat*. Lighting conditions inside the room are changed by opening and closing partly or entirely the doors and the curtain. The room can be fully illuminated or the light can be dimmed down to a minimum. The play of light and shadow is remarkable inside the house. The ability to control the position of the windows reflects the importance of privacy considerations in Masulih and suggests a desire to control the aesthetics of the room. The first time that I realised the importance and beauty of light and shadow was during my fieldwork in Masulih, when I stayed in a hotel which used to be a house. The design of the *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* and curtains created fascinating lighting conditions. A decorative set of small panes functioned as a window parapet or *mūshabak*. There was a heavy curtain for controlling the light inside the room. Taking so much care to control the opening is
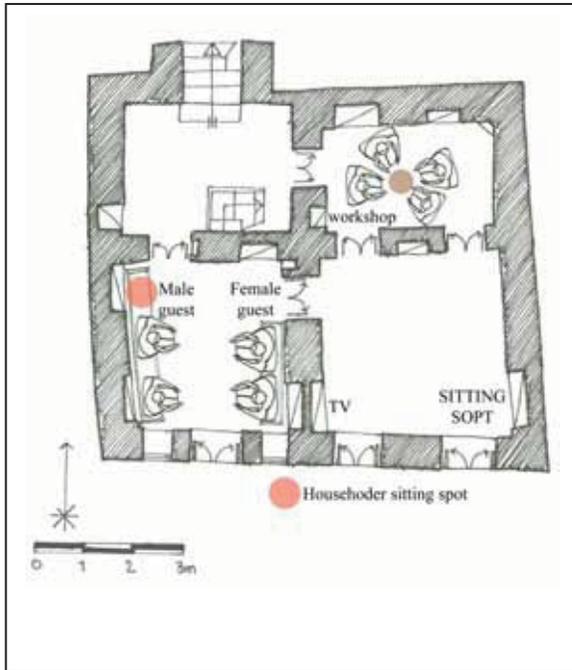
Fig. 4.53. The women's workshop. Drawing by author, 2008.
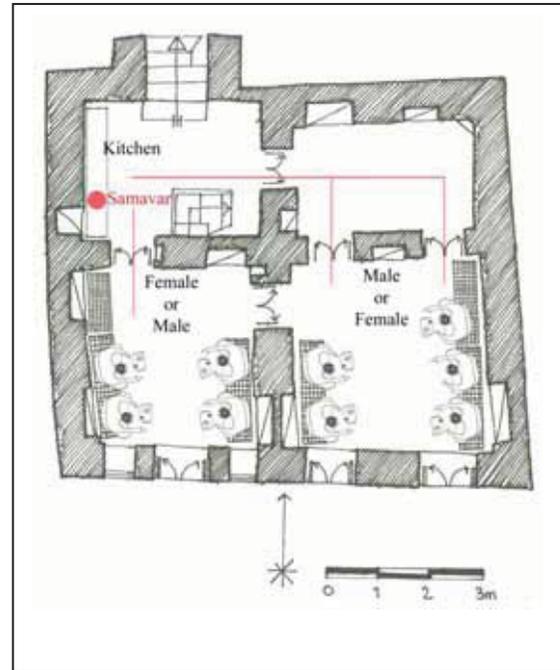
Fig. 4.54. During big ceremonies the men sit in one room and the women in another. Drawing by author, 2008.
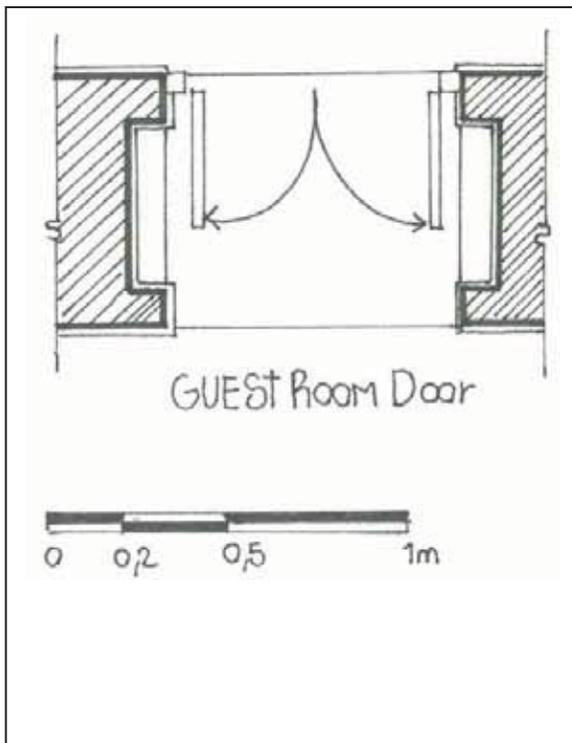
Fig. 4.55. Plan of the guest room door. Drawing by author, 2008.
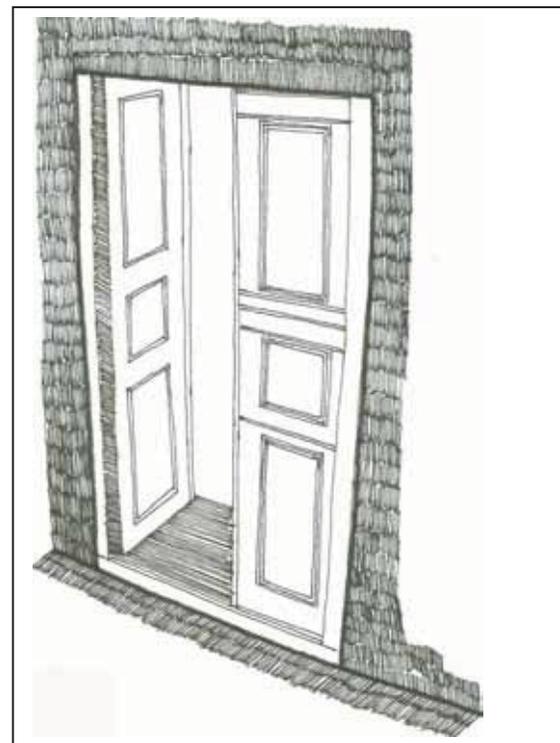
Fig. 4.56. Sketch of the guest room door in the Azargūshasbs' house. Drawing by author, 2008.
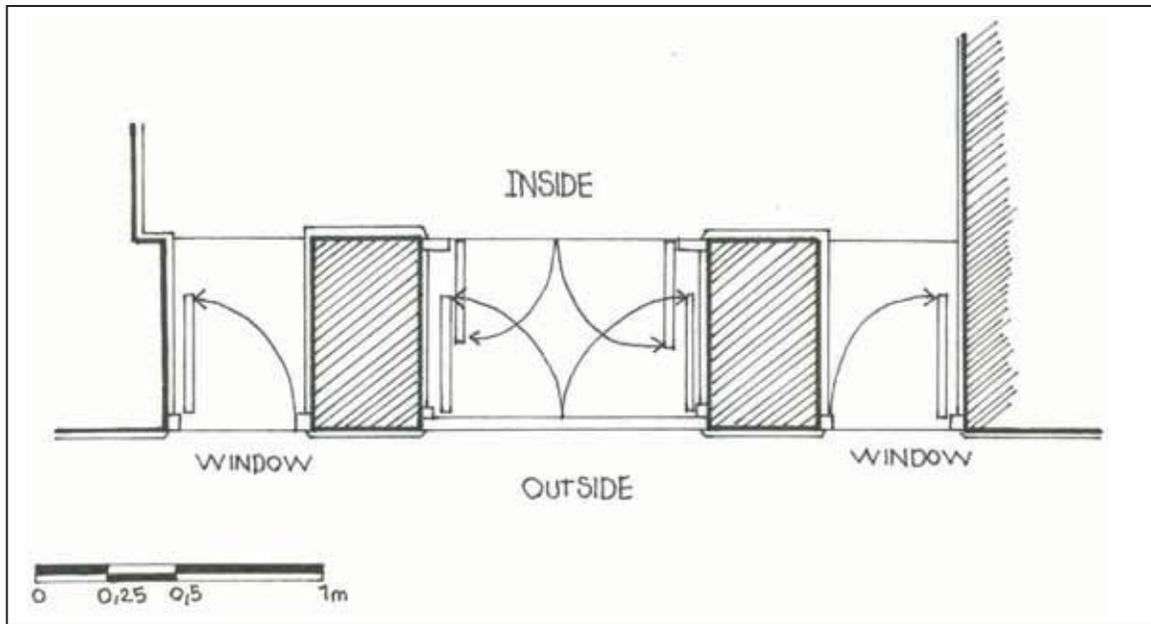
Fig. 4.57. Detail of the guest room *panjarih mūshabak* in the Azargūshasbs' house. Drawing by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.58. Two small windows with flowers in their sills. Photograph by author, 2008.

related to the cultural importance of privacy. The small fixed panes above, the wooden window parapet with small panes on the bottom or *mūshabak*, the wooden *panjarih* and the curtain also created a variety of lighting possibilities (figures 4.59 to 4.61).

Like the *panjarih mūshabak* in my hotel room, the *panjarih mūshabak* in the guest rooms and living rooms of Ibrāhim Hāshimi Khah, Qasim Khārābi and Fatimah Azargūshasb embody the importance of both aesthetic appreciation and control of privacy for the citizens of Masulih. Further evidence for this can be seen in the family members' use of the *panjarih mūshabak*. They usually put chairs beside the wooden *panjarih mūshabak*: many *panjarih-hayi mūshabak* in Masulih have a low sill with a chair nearby. From there the inhabitants can observe passersby, greet acquaintances and enjoy the view. The *panjarih mūshabak* is a critical communication link with the surrounding environment. From the *panjarih mūshabak* one can watch and feel one's surroundings.

From a window in a room in the town, the view is framed: it is limited to part of the town and mountains. By contrast, by walking on the pedestrian paths the entire town and its surrounding landscape can be seen. During the winter, the inhabitants use the *sumeh* or the summer room in their houses, which have small or no windows to the outside, and the view to the outside is therefore limited in this season, whereas during the spring and summer the large windows are used as sitting spots and the views to the town are more often seen and appreciated. The shopkeepers also half close the doors of their shops in winter so they can keep their shops warm, while during the spring and summer the doors of the shops are fully opened. The view of the shopkeeper to the path in the bazaar is limited by the half closed doors during the winter while this view is fully open in spring and summer.
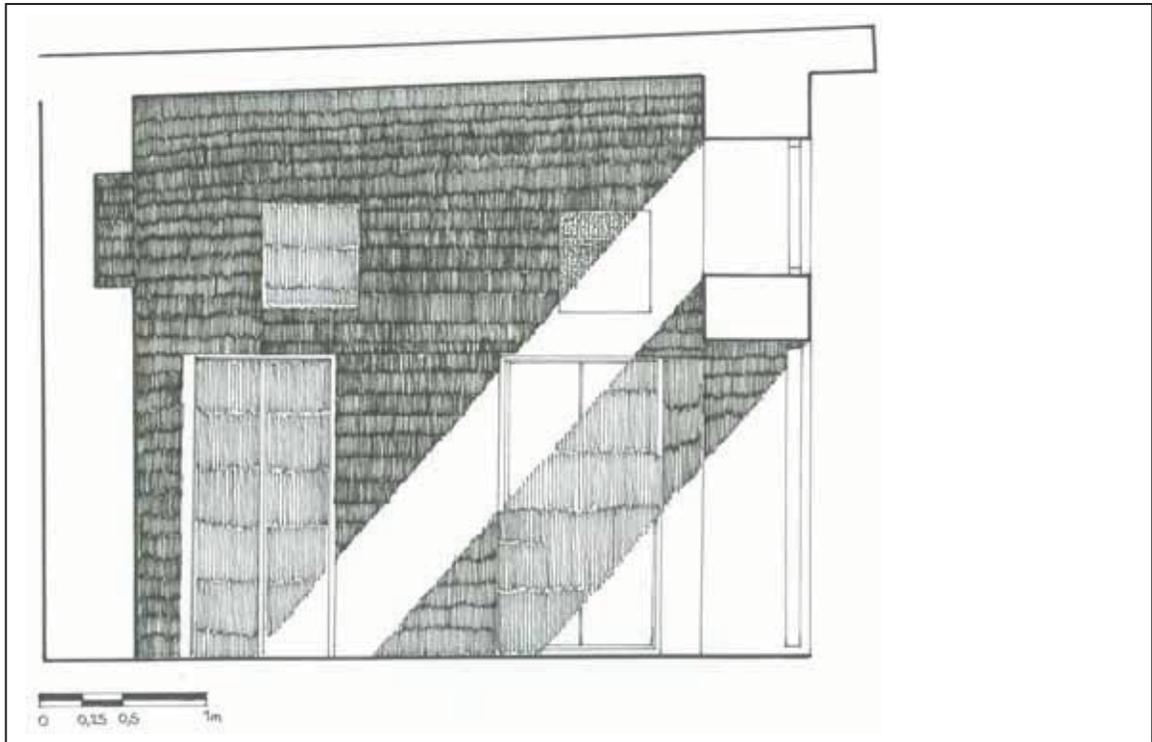
Fig. 4.59. Light and shadow in the guest room of the Azargūshasbs' house. Drawing by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.60. Light and shadow in the hotel room where I stayed in Masulih. Drawing by author, 2008.

292
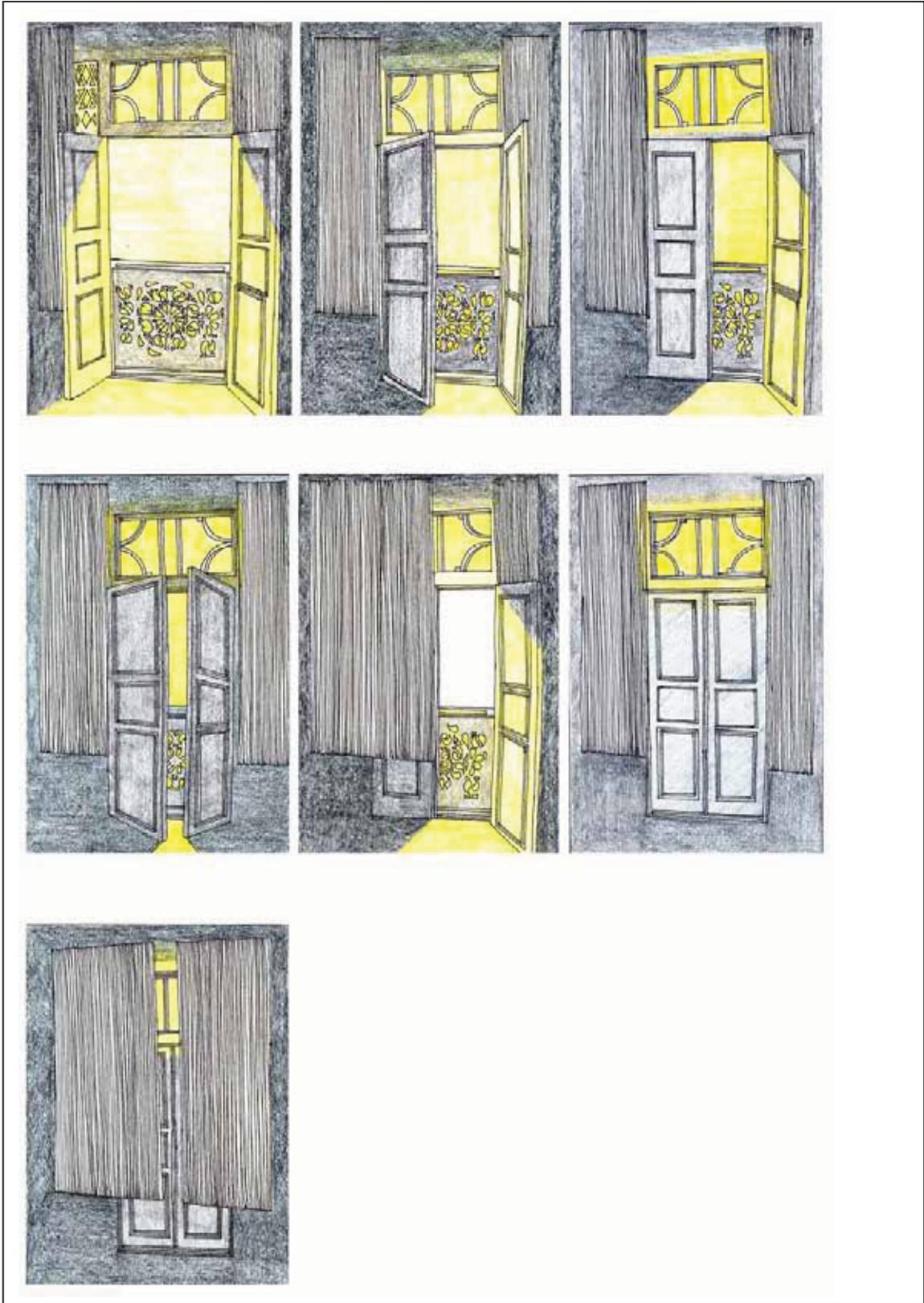
Fig. 4.61. Lighting conditions. Drawing by author, 2008.

The guest room is not the only place for socializing with people, as this can also take place in the window seat, in the *sumeh*, or on the roof of the house in the spring and summer. Conversations with neighbors often take place while the family is sitting by the window and socializing with a neighbor or neighbors passing by the house on the path. Greetings will be passed and then conversation follows. In the process of making the window, the carpenter could have completely blocked the window with wooden lattices or *mūshabak-ha*; instead, the carpenter blocked just a third of the window's height so the family could sit beside the window, look outside, and converse with those passing by (figures 4.62 to 4.65).

Small flowerpots are placed on the windowsill of the windows in most of the houses in Masulih. Due to the thick external walls the windowsills are wide enough to provide sufficient space for flowers. The beauty of flowers is manifest in the houses of Qāsim Khārābi, Fatimah Azargūshasb and most of the balconies and windowsills of the community (figures 4.66, 4.67).

The discussion of the houses cannot be completed without describing their construction method (figure 4.68). The local master builders such as Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi used local materials and construction methods to build. The key elements for the long term endurance of Masulih's buildings are the construction technology and the wise use of local materials. If these had not been taken seriously in Masulih, none of these historical buildings would remain for us. Miʿmāriyān writes that the construction materials of the houses in Masulih are cut stone, clay and timber. Foundations and walls
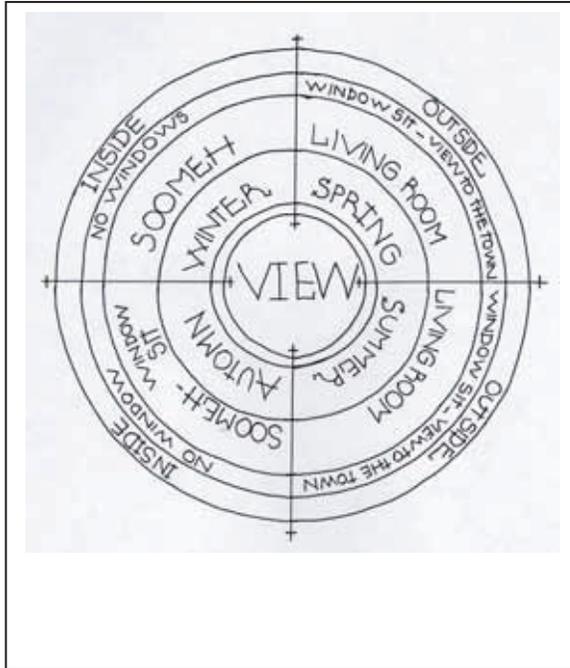
Fig. 4.62. The view to the outside from the house during the year. Drawing by author, 2013.
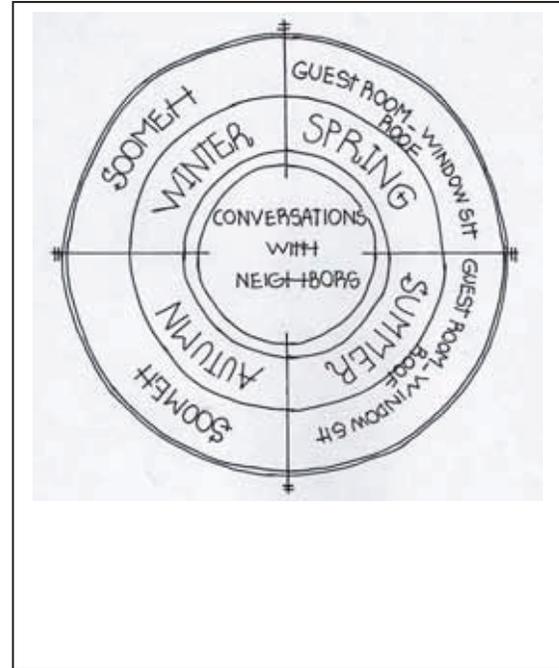
Fig. 4.63. Various places in the house in which conversations with neighbors take place during the year. Drawing by author, 2013.
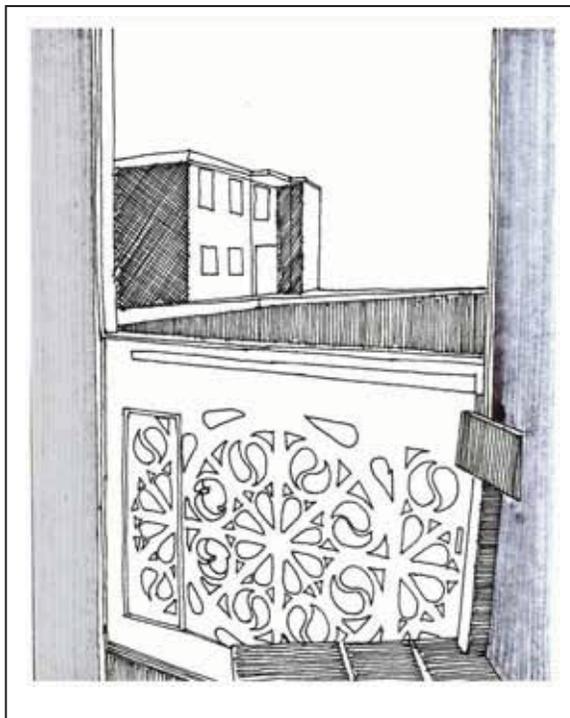
Fig. 4.64. The window seat in my hotel room. Drawing by author, 2008.
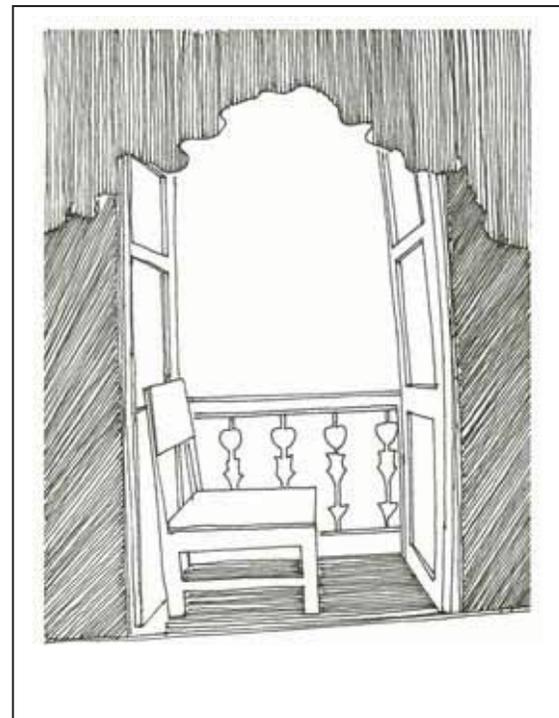
Fig. 4.65. The window seat of the guest room in the Azargūshasbs' house. Drawing by author, 2008.

295
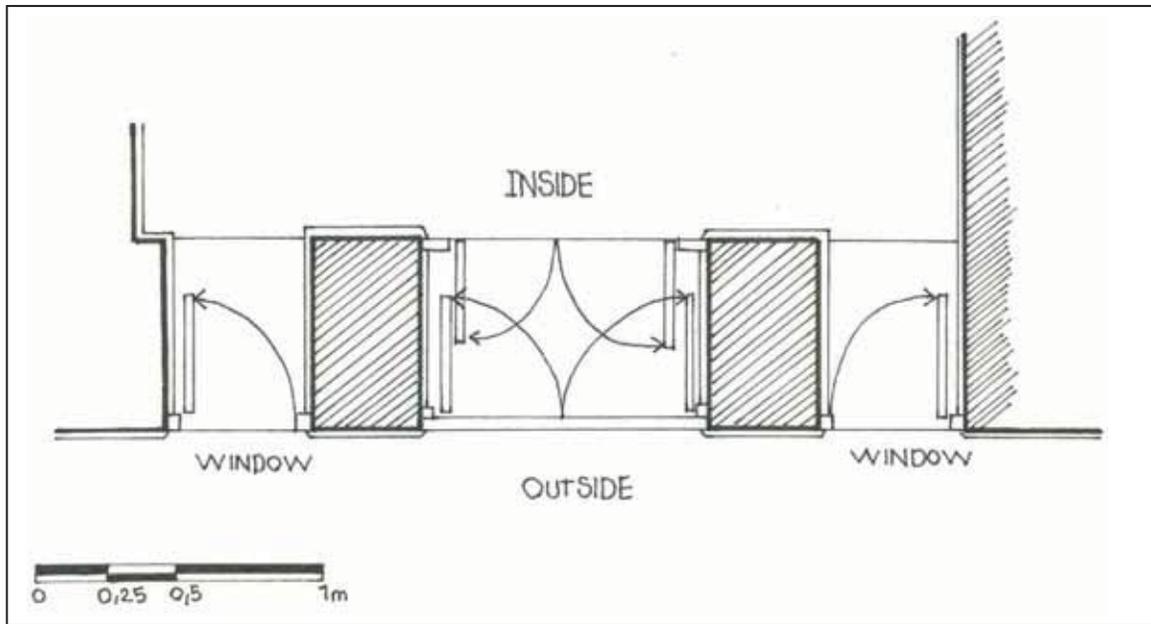
Fig. 4.66. Two small windows beside a *panjarih mūshabak*. Drawing by author, 2008.

Fig. 4.67. The windowsill, with the flower pot resting on it. Photograph by author, 2008.
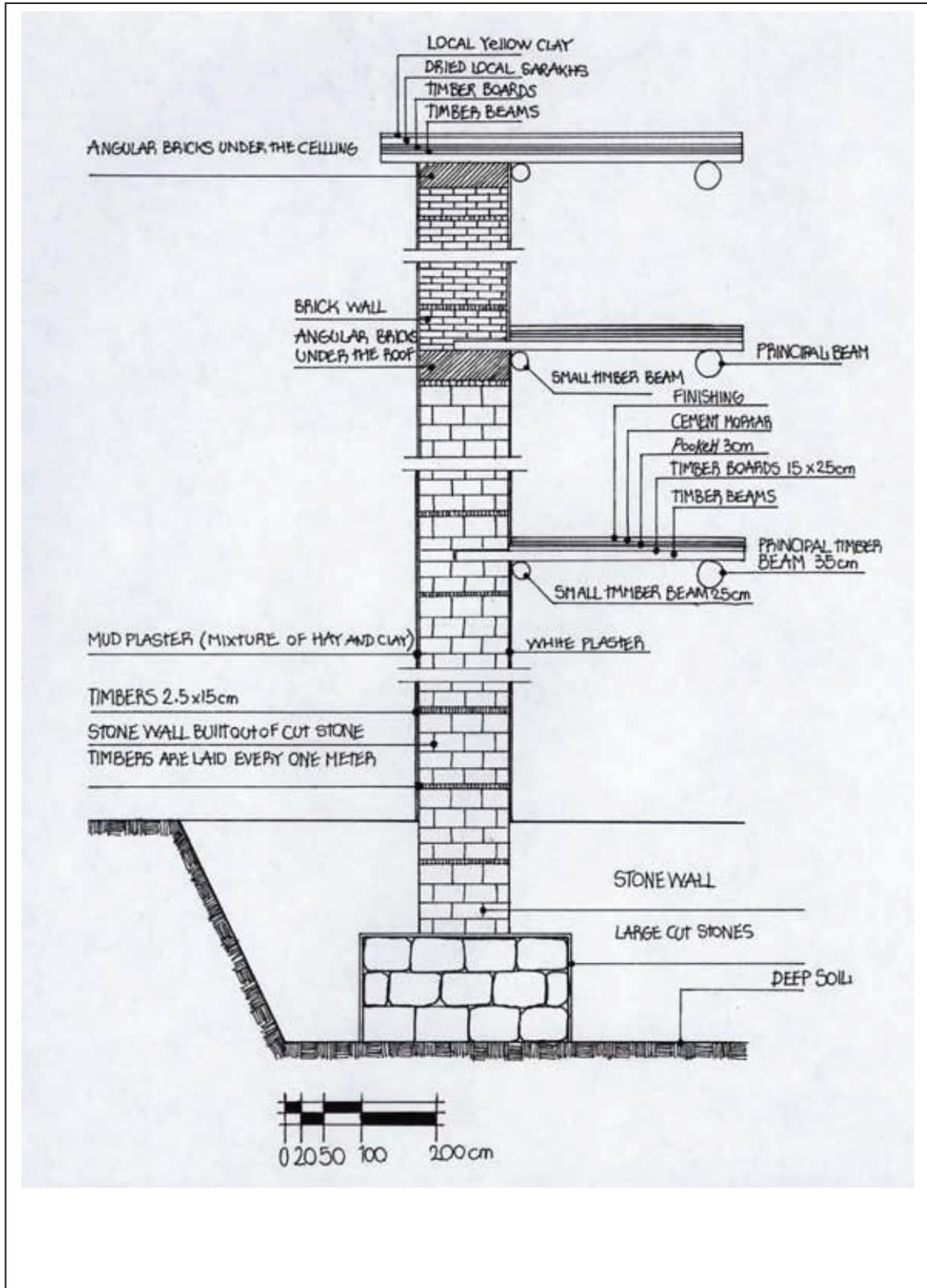
Fig. 4.68. Construction detail. Drawing by author, 2013.

are usually laid in deep soil, and are constructed with large cut stones.[350] Regarding the vernacular construction, Sādiq Sālihi, the head of a local NGO, indicates that:

> The walls of the ground floor are also made of cut stones, and the width of the walls above the foundation is about 80 to 120 centimetres. The walls of subsequent floors are between 60 and 100 centimetres in width. Reinforcement of the walls by building in timbers was done every one metre, starting above the foundations and extending to the roof of the building. These timbers help the buildings to be flexible against earthquakes. In the earthquake of 1990 none of the traditional buildings were seriously damaged for this reason. The walls of the first floor are constructed from a combination of stones and bricks. A layer of bricks is used in the ceiling of the second floor. The walls of the second floor are made from brick, which extends until one metre below the roof of the building. An angled layer of bricks is also used under the roof. The dimension of each brick is usually 8 centimetres by 30 centimetres by 30 centimetres.[351]

About roof construction, Sādiq Sālihi says:

> In Masulih, the roof is a separate element from the rest of the building. The roof is light in order to make the building more resistant to earthquakes. Depending on the length of span, one or two wooden beams from the *āzād* tree are installed inside the roofs. Light boards are fixed to those beams. Dried local *sarakhs* [a local grass] are usually spread on top in large quantities. Above the *sarakhs* is laid a layer of local yellow clay and another layer of dark blue clay above the yellow clay layer. After the first rain, using a special heavy piece of wood the surface of the roof is compacted and compressed to extract moisture from the ceiling. The walls are able to stand for five to six centuries, but the roofs must be changed every 20 to 30 years.

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[350] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 232.

[351] Sādiq Sālihi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012. See also Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 232. Ali Mūghiyri, an archeologist, believes that there are similarities between the construction methods used in Old Masulih and in current Masulih. After a series of archaeological excavations in Old Masulih, rectangular stone houses were discovered. The walls of these houses were built from cut stone with clay mortar. The archaeological team concluded that the roofs of the houses were wooden frames with layers of clay mortar mixed with *sarakhs* (a local grass) for insulation. The materials for the construction of the stone houses are locally available. The cut stone came from the peak of the mountain, the timber for the roofs from the nearby woods, and the *sarakhs* from all around the community. It seems that these methods of construction were transferred from Old Masulih to the current community. See Mūghiyri, "Gūzārish-i Barasi Va Gamanih-Zani," 98–112.

The strength of the roof depends on how often the inhabitants maintain it, but in general the roof is the weakest part of a house. In most of the destroyed houses, the process of destruction started with the roofs of the houses, and not from the walls.[352]

There has been a shift from using local materials to using non-local materials in the construction of the roofs of the houses and other buildings. Instead of timber beams, steel beams are used; reinforced columns, cement, steel bars and reinforced concrete, tar, gunny sack textile, cement and light pebbles are other non-local materials which are used for roof construction. The local master mason assembles different layers on top of each other in order to construct the roof of a house. First, steel beams are laid in position; the next layer is a series of smaller beams on top of the large beams, then boards are nailed to the beams, and layers of, successively, gunny sack textile, light pebbles, cement, gunny sack, tar, gunny sack and cement are applied to finish the roof. Like the roofs of the houses that were constructed with local materials, the roofs of the mosque and the *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn Ali were once wooden roof shingles with brick towers; however, over time, these buildings have been renovated with modern materials. This shift from local materials to non-local ones shows a change in the values of the people, from being fairly independent to relying on the outside world.

In Masulih the roof of a house is not a separate entity, a thing of its own, but is connected to its house as well as to other roofs, forming a path. This is one of the characteristic features of Masulih domestic architecture. The paths and the roofs of the houses are not separated from each other but are connected, with the roof of each house joined with its neighbors' roofs. People can walk or sit on the roofs of the houses. As I

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[352] Sālihi, interviews.

mentioned in chapter three, the weavers sit on small carpets or blankets and weave on the roofs, usually during the spring and summer; they usually put wooden frames beside their working spots and hang their woven crafts from the frames. Socks, large and small dolls and gloves are arranged for display on the frames. When tourists pass by, the woven textiles are on display and the weavers may sell their crafts. The households also dry their herbs and vegetables, such as coriander, parsley, basil, fenugreek, dill and leeks, on the roofs during the spring and summer.

The roofs of the vernacular houses constantly demand attention. Every winter, after each heavy snow, they need shoveling. Mihrān Muminiyān does the shoveling for his roof and the roofs of other inhabitants of Masulih. Every winter Mihrān has to shovel the roof of his house several times. The families who leave Masulih during the autumn and winter ask him to shovel their roofs as well. Before leaving, they show Mihrān their roof so he knows the exact roof that he has to shovel. Last winter, twelve families asked him to shovel their roofs. They were away during the winter. After every heavy snow, he had to shovel his roof plus twelve other roofs. Each time, it took him three days to shovel all of them. Last winter, they had four heavy snow falls. It kept him busy with shoveling. This is another way in which the roofs of the houses connect the inhabitants to each other socially.

Concerning the construction of the balconies, Miʿmāriyān says "The construction of the balconies has its own specific characteristics. First, a timber of 2.5m in length must be sited on a wall. 1.5m of the timber is cantilevered, and 1m of the beam is laid on the thickness of the wall. Two or more wooden columns support the roof above the balcony,

and two or more columns support the entire structure of the balcony. Above the joists, timber pieces are nailed to the joists. 90cm balustrades run all around the balcony."[353] An interesting characteristic of traditional construction methods in Masulih is the combination of materials. Buildings use several materials, which both increases the performance of the components and produces beautiful results. As Bill Steen, Athena Steen and Eiko Komatsu point out, some buildings demonstrate the use of earth, stone and timber in balanced proportions.[354] The variety of textures, colors and shapes, as well as the order and rhythm in their use, can create a harmonious effect in the elevations of the buildings. In Masulih, the essential characteristics of the building materials are preserved in the construction process. Timber, brick and clay are used in a logical way, displaying them to their best advantage. As a result, the buildings are not only maximally functional, but also celebrate the various materials of which they are made.

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[353] Miʿmāriyān, *Ashnai ba Mimari-i Maskuni*, 240–41.
[354] Komatsu, Steen, and Steen, *Built by Hand*, 213.

Chapter Five: On Material Culture

This chapter focus on smaller elements of the artifact system of Masulih, that is, on the hand-made objects that are forged, baked, built, and woven in Masulih. By analyzing these artifacts we can understand their users and the people who built them. The methods used in this study for analyzing these artifacts were to interview the craftsmen in their workshops, observe the way the craftsmen build their artifacts, and interview the actual users. The workshops where the artifacts are built were also visited and measured during various fieldtrips. The extensive interviews with craftsmen are valuable primary sources and demonstrate how they make their crafts. These craftsmen are the last builders and makers in Masulih and this chapter attempts to document their occupations. I attempt to analyze the structural, formal and physical characteristics of the artifacts on the one hand and, on the other, to engage in contextual analyses, connecting the artifacts with their users and the society in which they are used. By analyzing artifacts we can understand the way the artifact is built and its significance within the community. With the artisan's narration, we break down all the parts of the artifacts described in this chapter and assemble them. We also become familiar with the lives of the builders. Artifacts connect us to the social and economic issues which surround them, and through studying artifacts we get to know the social and economic hardships connected with producing and selling them. By analyzing an artifact we can understand the meaning of an object in its society and what it means for the artisans and the people who build and use them. Artifacts can deliver original insights crucial for understanding people within a specific region. [355] The workshops discussed in this chapter are not separated from the rest of the

community; they are part of the artifact system of Masulih (figure 5.1).

5.1 The Blacksmith Shop of Jalil-i Ashjāri

The blacksmith workshop or *kārgāh-i ahangari* of Jalil-i Ashjāri is located in the Kishih

Sar neighbourhood beside the Qanbar Abād Mosque. This workshop belongs to Master or

Ūstād Jalil-i Ashjāri, who is retired now but visits the workshop occasionally. His

apprentice or *shāgird* Muhammad Ali Farahmand runs the workshop. Muhammad Ali has

been working in this workshop for the past thirty-seven years. When I visited this

workshop in May 2012, Ūstād Jalil was sitting in a chair beside the workshop door while

Muhammad Ali was at work. Ūstād Jalil recalled that he had worked in this workshop for

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[355] Vera Mark's vision of the central role of objects in our everyday social life has influenced the writing of this chapter. Vera Mark is interested in the complex semiotic nature of objects and in finding the connections between the objects and larger social issues. She tries to establish the semiotic path between a series of objects, their recipients, and their creator. Mark describes Pierre Sentat, a shoe maker in Gascon town in southwestern France. Over the years Mr. Sentat was recognized by the people as a skilled artisan. He was a master builder of airplane models, religious crosses, ropes and animal figures. In interviews, Mark demonstrates deep insights into the social issues which are connected with the life-story of Pieer Sentat. She tries to understand the connections between the personal possessions of Mr. Sentat and his memories, and to focus on the material objects that Mr. Sentat created within the framework of the society which he worked.

Vera Mark provides a detailed survey of Mr. Sentat's workshop and back workshop where he used to repair and weave shoes. Mr. Sentat's back workshop is the place where he and his customers engaged in private conversations. Outsiders think that Mr. Sentat's workshop is unordered and filled with random objects and equipment, but for Mr. Sentat the workshop is organized and ordered, although its system of order is hidden. During various fieldwork, Mark documented the gradual changes in the organization and arrangement of the workshop. She also explains various gifts that Mr. Sentat's friends gave to him which he displayed in his workshop. The association of Mr. Sentat's helmet and his memories about World War I and II is one of the interesting connections that Mark documents. Mr. Sentat's objects are multiply encoded: At one level they connect to various social issues, at the second level they are gifts, souvenirs and artifacts which carry meanings for their owner, and at the third level they create social relations with the wider community. As an example Vera explains the way the people in the community collect their plastic water bottles and pass them on to Mr. Sentat for him to use to make Concorde airplanes. For Mr. Sentat and the people of the community the plastic Concorde airplanes are honored artifacts which resemble the actual Concorde airplanes manufactured in France and considered objects of national pride and honor. Vera Mark, "Objects and Their Makers: Bricolage of the Self," in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. Stephen Harold Riggins (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 63–100.
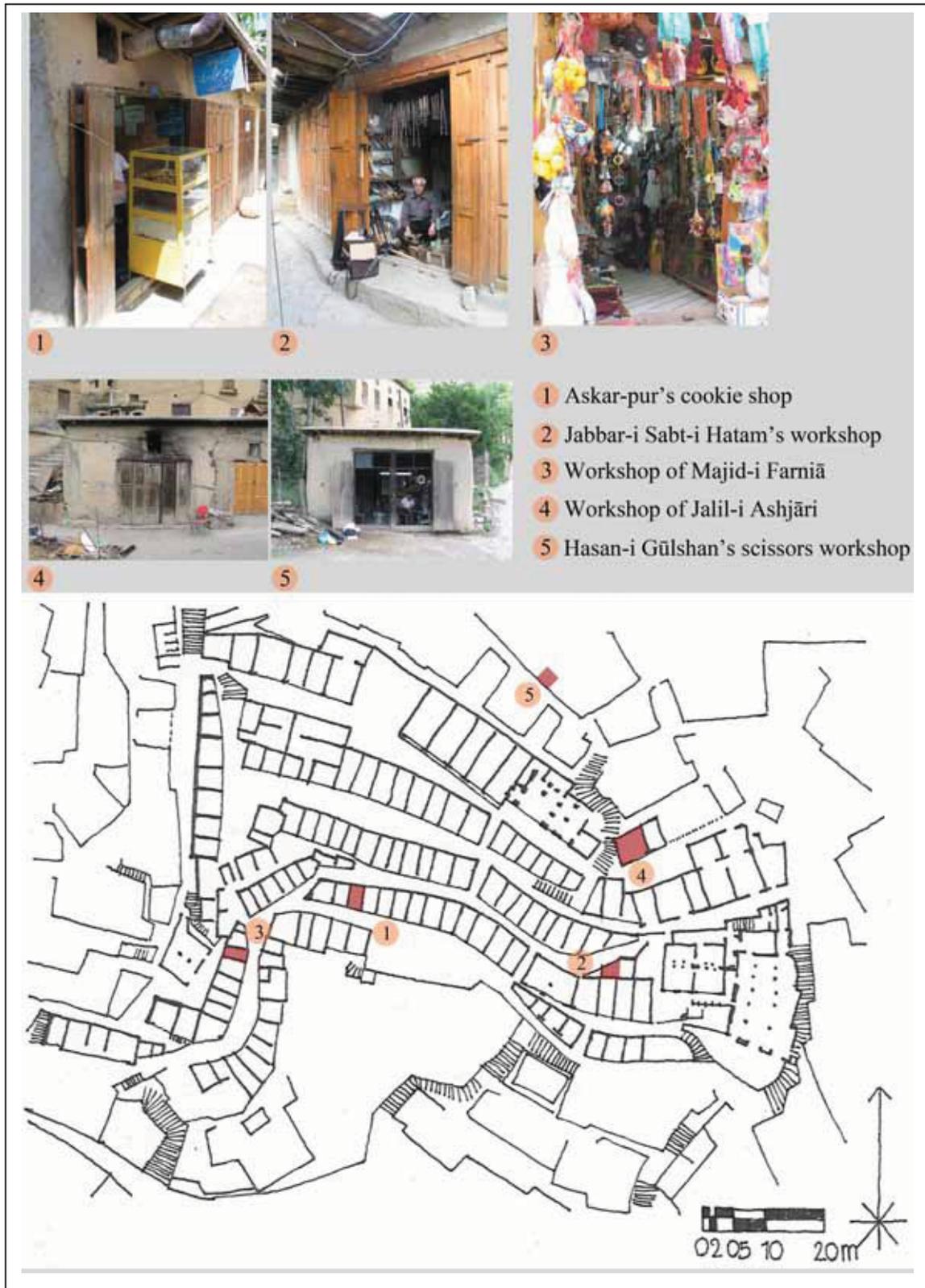
Fig. 5.1. The location of various workshops in the bazaar. Photographs are keyed to the map. Adapted from a map of the bazaar, 2008, provided by the National Heritage Center of Masulih.

more than five decades. Before him there were other masters of blacksmithing or *Ūstād-i ahangari*, who produced steel crafts in the same workshop. As he was told by the seniors of the community, the workshop has been active for around 130 years (figure 5.2 to 5.5). Jalil-i Ashjāri claims that "The seniors of Masulih recall the state of blacksmithing as it was decades ago: several workshops were active in the bazaar with their smiths [*ahangar*]. Those workshops have all vanished. Masulih people look at the subject of blacksmithing with nostalgia: an almost lost profession; we are the last ones."[356]

Following Ūstād Jalil's path, Muhammad Ali produces slashers or *dās*, hoes or *kaj biyl*, nails or *miykh*, locks or *chiftih*, door knockers or *gum*, vegetable choppers or *sabzi Khurd Kūn*, chains or *zanjir*, horseshoes or *na'l-i asb* and other iron crafts based on personal demands. Muhmmad Ali Farahmand states:

> Someone should teach you all the techniques to become a blacksmith master and that was the case for me. All I have are my skills as a smith. Once you learn a trade, it remains with you for the rest of your life. It took me thirty-seven years to reach this stage. Me and Jalil-i Ashjāri are the last remaining experts on blacksmithing in Masulih. When Jalil-i Ashjāri hired me, he hired me as a wage labourer [*kargar-i ruz mūzd*] to assist him in the workshop. He taught me how to work with steel [*fulād*], files [*suhān*], hammers [*chakūsh*], drills [*matih*], cutters [*gaz*], anvils [*sindan*] and how to handle the fire [*atash*] in the forge [*kurih*]. A smith should handle fire in the forge, steel plates [*varaqih fulād*] purchased from second hand suppliers, the forge and the blower.[357]

Based on Farahmand's statement, in order to be a blacksmith one needs to apprentice under the supervision of a master. It takes times and dedication to become a master in a trade like blacksmithing. The principal material that Farahmand works with is iron. He

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[356] Jalil-i Ashjāri, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, May 2012.
[357] Muhammad Ali Farahmand, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, May 2012.
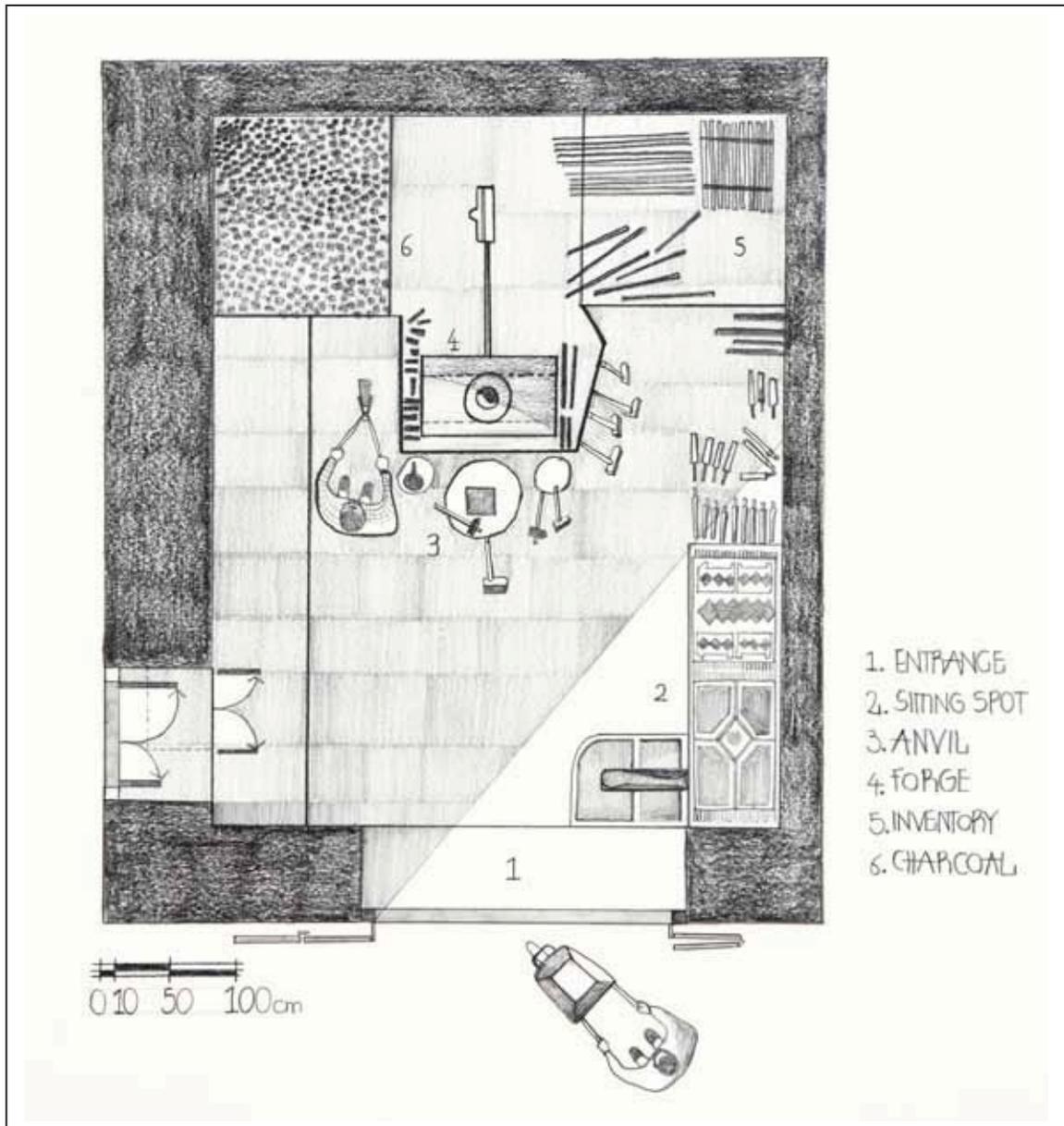
Fig. 5.2. The plan of the blacksmith workshop of Jalil-i Ashjāri. Drawing by author, 2013.
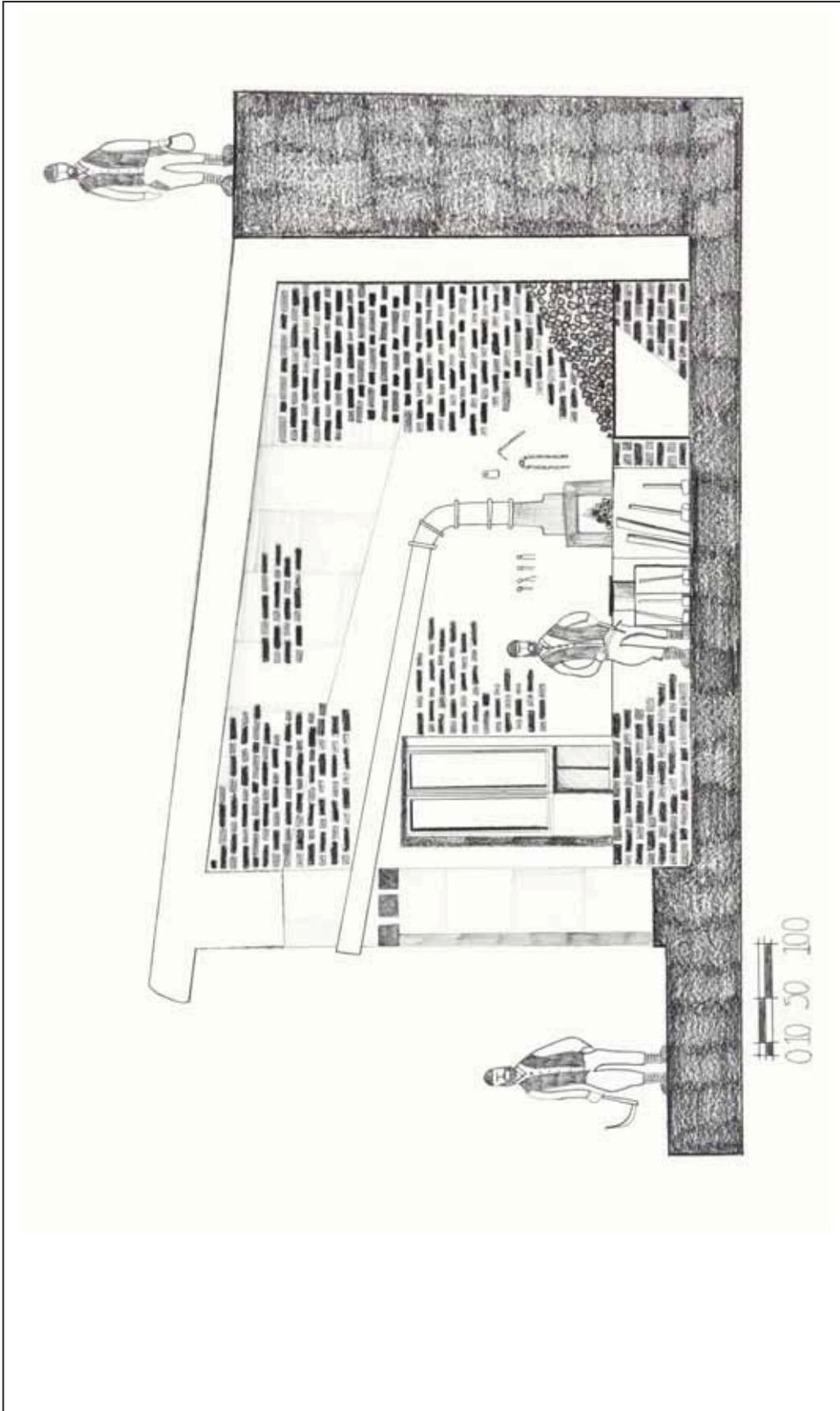
Fig. 5.3. The section of the workshop. Drawing by author, 2013.

CEMENT
TAR
TEXTILE - GUNNY
CEMENT
PEBBLES
BOARD

BEAM

MAIN BEAM

0   50   100
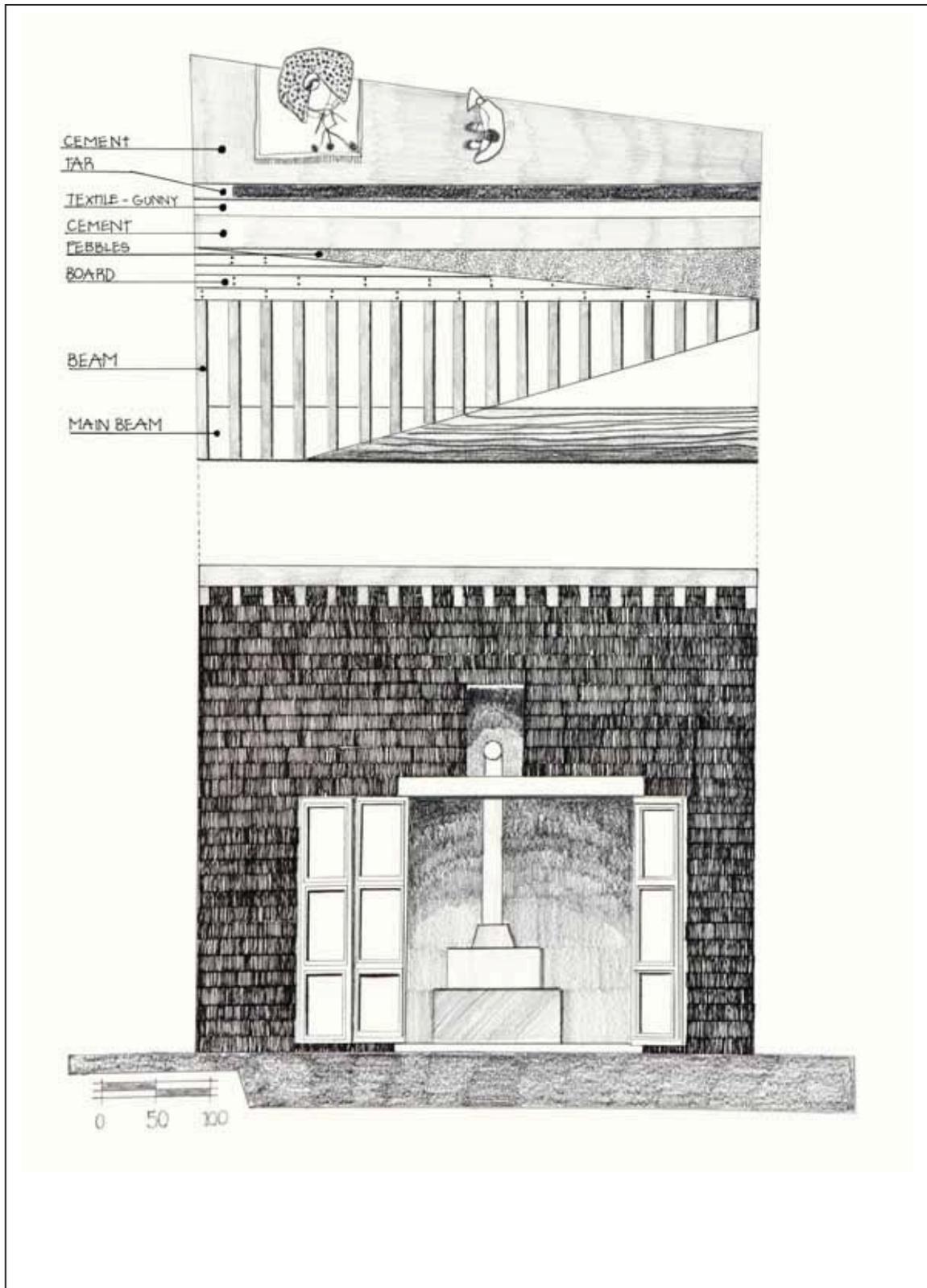
Fig. 5.4. Workshop elevation. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.5. Photographs of the workshop, its interior and the artifacts. Photographs by author, 2012.

purchases iron or *ahan* and steel or *fulād* for the workshop. He purchases steel in variety of shapes and sizes: steel bars with rectangular and circular sections and in different sizes, and steel plates. Part of the job is to search for second hand metal objects and purchase them for the inventory. Farahmand usually buys steel from second hand dealers who sell used home utilities such as metal pipes and heaters. Building workshops and car repair shops are two other key sources. He acquires steel plates from steel structure buildings. Farahmand usually searches for small pieces of plates in construction workshops, purchases them on the construction site and transfers them to the workshop. Used car parts are likewise a worthy source of supply for him, particularly second hand shock-absorbers and car springs. A pile of leftover second hand steel pieces are kept in his workshop. If something is needed for a piece of work Farahmand searches in the inventory: it could be nails, bolts, horseshoes, wires, old screwdrivers, chains, etc. While I was in the workshop, whenever Farahmand wanted to forge a piece, he searched in his inventory for the best possible second hand material to turn it into the desired piece.

The tradition of iron working is not something new to the people of Masulih. As discussed in chapter two, it dates back to the time when their ancestors lived in Kūhnih Masulih. The inhabitants used to acquire their own ore from the mine above the current town. Farahmand indicates that "[w]orking with iron has a long tradition. Jalil-i Ashjāri once told me that the inhabitants of Kūhnih Masulih used to dig the mine and transfer iron ore to Kūhnih Masulih, afterwards dig a pit in the ground and fill it with charcoal. Put the iron ore on top of the charcoal and set a fire, at the same time blow air in to a channel which was connected to the pit under the fire. When exposed to high heat iron ore loses

its iron. From the pit they could get their iron and build their tools."[358] In Jalil-i Ashjāri's opinion, there is no difference between the blacksmith workshops in Kūhnih Masulih and his forge, where the iron pieces are melted and objects are forged. Farahmand sees himself as continuing the same tradition without break.

There are certain units within the workshop that must work together in order to have a successful forging operation. The workshop has a central forge with a blower or *dam* connected to it and to a chimney to exhaust the fumes. There is an inventory or *anbār* of second hand steel objects behind the forge at the end of the workshop. There is a wall where all the products are hung, two anvils beside the forge fixed on two separate logs, a vise or *giyrih* attached to a log, an electric bench grinder or *charkh-i sūmbādih* and a handful of tools such as hammers, tongs, cutters, chisels or *qalam*, flatteners or *sar chakūshi*, files and a drill. Creating each artifact begins by putting the steel plate, rod or *miylih* or other object in the forge. One of Farahmand's tasks is to handle the forge. Every forge requires a chimney to carry out the smoke or *dud* and fine ashes or *gard-i zūghāl*. The forge in this workshop still operates with charcoal pieces or *zūghāl*. The charcoal must be ordered from Qazvin. Every six months two thousand kilograms or two tons of charcoal must be purchased and brought in a truck. Farahmand puts it in the inventory in the back of the workshop or beside the workshop. Whenever a fire is set in the forge, the entire workshop just fills with smoke. The ashes are everywhere and usually remain inside the workshop. There is an electric blower which is connected to the forge by a metal pipe. It blows air into the forge, under the pile of burning charcoal. The forge should always be cleaned of ashes and iron pieces to have a clean fire. For making a new

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[358] Ibid.

object, the forge has to be cleaned with a shovel and the fire managed with a poker or

miylih. Farahmand says "You should know the approximate amount of charcoal required

for heating each object. You need a certain amount of charcoal to set a fire for small and

large objects."[359] He has to be cautious whenever he wants to heat a steel object: He must

check the color frequently: the color of the heated steel should be yellowish red. He

usually takes a tong and holds the object with it in the darkness of the chimney above the

burning charcoal and checks the color of the heated piece. Afterwards he can work on the

heated piece and convert it to whichever shape he prefers. It can be welded, twisted, bent,

thinned or thickened. By hammering or *chakūsh kāri* and repeated heating the piece can

be made smaller, and by welding a piece of steel to the object it can be made bigger. To

make an object the piece should be heated several times and that means that the fire in the

forge must be kept burning during the process. The electric blower, forge and charcoal

should be prepared and maintained. The temperature of the red-hot object should be

frequently checked and the fire should be maintained. Once I was in Farahmand's

workshop when the electric current of the town cut off, and as a result Farahmand was

forced to stop his forging procedures because the electric blower stopped working and as

a result the forge could not generate sufficient heat. Without sufficient heat, it is

impossible to work on the iron pieces.

The second process of forging is usually done on the anvil and involves working on

the iron piece. The anvil should be close to the forge; the heated steel must be transferred

to the anvil fast, not more than two or three seconds in order not to lose the heat. Because

the anvil is put close to the forge, Farahmand can just turn from forge to the anvil to work

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[359] Ibid.

on the object. The anvil is like his working table; most of his work is done on it. A piece of heated iron can be bent on the conical shape of the anvil which is called a beak or *minqār*. If a sharp ninety degree bend is needed, the edge of the anvil is used; a hardie or *gūvih* can be put in one of the two holes at the end of the anvil and a piece can be cut with it. For hammering the object another rectangular anvil is used. A chisel may be used for cutting the piece as well, but the surface of the anvil should not be hit directly with a chisel; it could damage the surface. Farahmand usually puts a plate of steel on top of the anvil's face and then applies the chisel. When he works on a piece, the object gradually loses its heat so he must put it back in to the forge to reach the required heat again. A complete set of tongs is kept in the workshop. The tongs are used to grasp, lift, hold and put objects in and take them out of the forge. Small and long tongs are available; the long ones keep Farahmand's hands safe from the fire. The shape of the tongs' heads are also different for holding various objects. Based on the object's shape, Farahmand knows which tong he should use. Beside the anvil a bucket of water is kept to cool down the object.

There are several ways to work with a red heated steel piece; different types of crafts are made in this workshop and the method of working depends on what Farahmand wants to make. In the case of door nails, a car spring is taken and cut with a chisel; the piece is then put into the forge and heated (figure 5.6). Once it has been heated, with a tong the piece is taken and hit with a hammer on the anvil. The rod's round section must be flattened and formed into a pointed nail. By hammering on all the faces and heating it in the forge, the nail will gradually be shaped. To make the circular end of the nail, the beak of the anvil is used and the end of the nail is hammered to shape it to be circular. For making a hole at the end, heat is applied to the nail and using a round bar or a chisel a

313

STEEL PLATE

0   1   2   5cm

STRIKE WITH HAMMER

STRIKE WITH HAMMER

STRIKE WITH A ROD

0   1   2   5cm

0   1   2   5cm
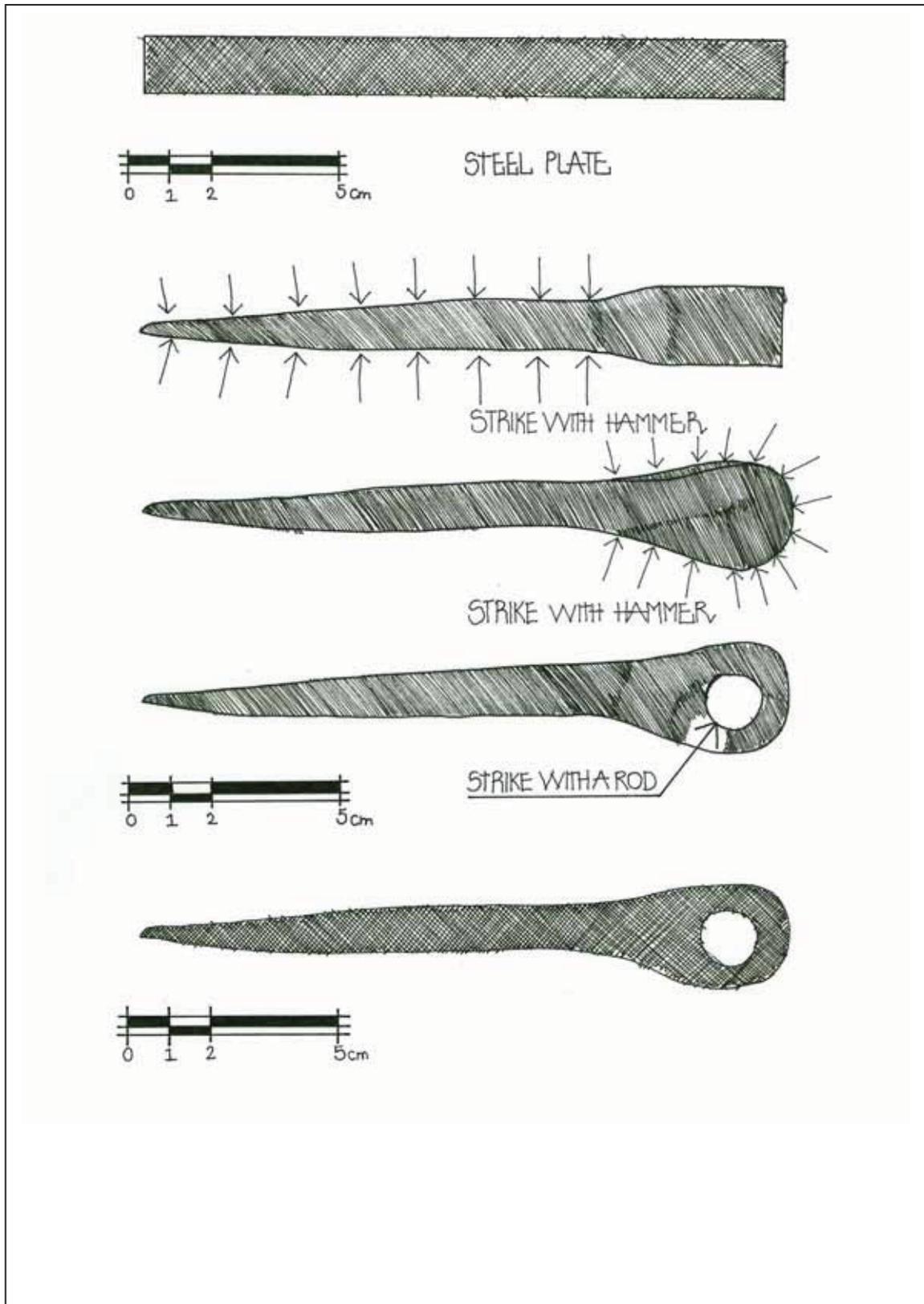
Fig. 5.6. The process of making a nail for a door. Drawing by author, 2012.

hole for the nail is made. This type of nail is used in Masulih doors. It could also form part of a lock. Farahmand forges traditional locks or *chiftih* – many households and merchants still prefer to use the traditional locks for their house and shop doors. Farahmand often makes another type of nail which can also be used as part of a lock. A long steel rod is taken and heated in the forge. If a steel rod is not available in the inventory then a second hand screwdriver or a narrow steel plate or a used shock-absorber is used. The piece is heated and then cut. The objective is to have a narrow steel bar. The bar should be hammered to have a rectangular section; afterwards it has to be turned and bent using the beak of the anvil. Different lengths of door nails are made for the locks.

Jalil-i Ashjāri and Farahmand used to forge nails for the master mason to use in the vernacular roofs. In Masulih, the structure of the main roof of the houses consists of beams and boards, and the boards have to be nailed to the beams. The nails used to be forged in the workshop and the local master masons used to purchase them. This leads us to the fact that Masulih people used to be fairly independent from the outside world. They used to utilize local materials in the construction of their houses. Nails forged by Jalil-i Ashjāri and Farahmand show us the value of being fairly independent that informs life in Masulih, although this value is shifting over time. This shift from using local materials to using non-local materials is a vital one, and can be traced by inquiring about the artifacts that are made in the workshops.

Farahmand forges locks as well. The traditional lock or *chiftih* has three parts in total: an upper nail which is fixed at the top frame of the door; a lower nail which is nailed to the door; and the main body of the lock, which is a long flattened steel plate with a hole at the end of the bar. When one wants to lock the door, the bar should be grasped and put inside the upper nail and locked using a lock (figure 5.7). For forging the

315

main bar, a red-hot steel plate should be hammered to shape the plate. Afterwards, two holes at the end of each side are made with a chisel. At the end a nail is attached to one side of the plate. If the work needs polishing, a table grinder or *charkh-i sūmbādih* is used to polish the surface of the plate and its edges. A whetstone or *sang-i ma'dan* is kept beside the entrance of the workshop. For grinding, the object is put in water and polished manually with the whetstone. The quality of the final edges and surfaces depends on the type of work: a lock does not require very fine finishing.

When Jalil-i Ashjāri hired Farahmand, nail-making was a major part of his occupation. There was a lot of demand for nails or *miykh-ha* in the community, especially in building construction. He used to make a lot of nails for doors or *dar-ha*, windows or *panjarih-ha*, joining beams or *tiyr-ha* and boards or *takhtih-ha*. Nails were in demand on construction sites. Nowadays, there is much less demand for handmade nails. Most of the nails used in Masulih are factory made ones.

Nails can have variety of heights, thicknesses and head shape. The shape of the nail is entirely up to Farahmand and the demand of the customer. For making a nail, a steel rod is heated in the forge, then put on the beak of the anvil and hammered. The goal is to thin the head of the rod by hammering until it is pointed. After it has been hammered to the required size, the rod is heated in the forge again. Then the red-hot steel rod is put on a hardie and the end of the nail is cut from the rest of the rod. There are round and square holes for shaping the heads of the nails. The diameter of the round and square holes determines the thickness of the head of the nail and the shape of the head. Farahmand puts the cut pointed rod in either the square or round holes and then in one of the anvil's holes. For the last stage, the head of the nail is hammered to be shaped and then the nail
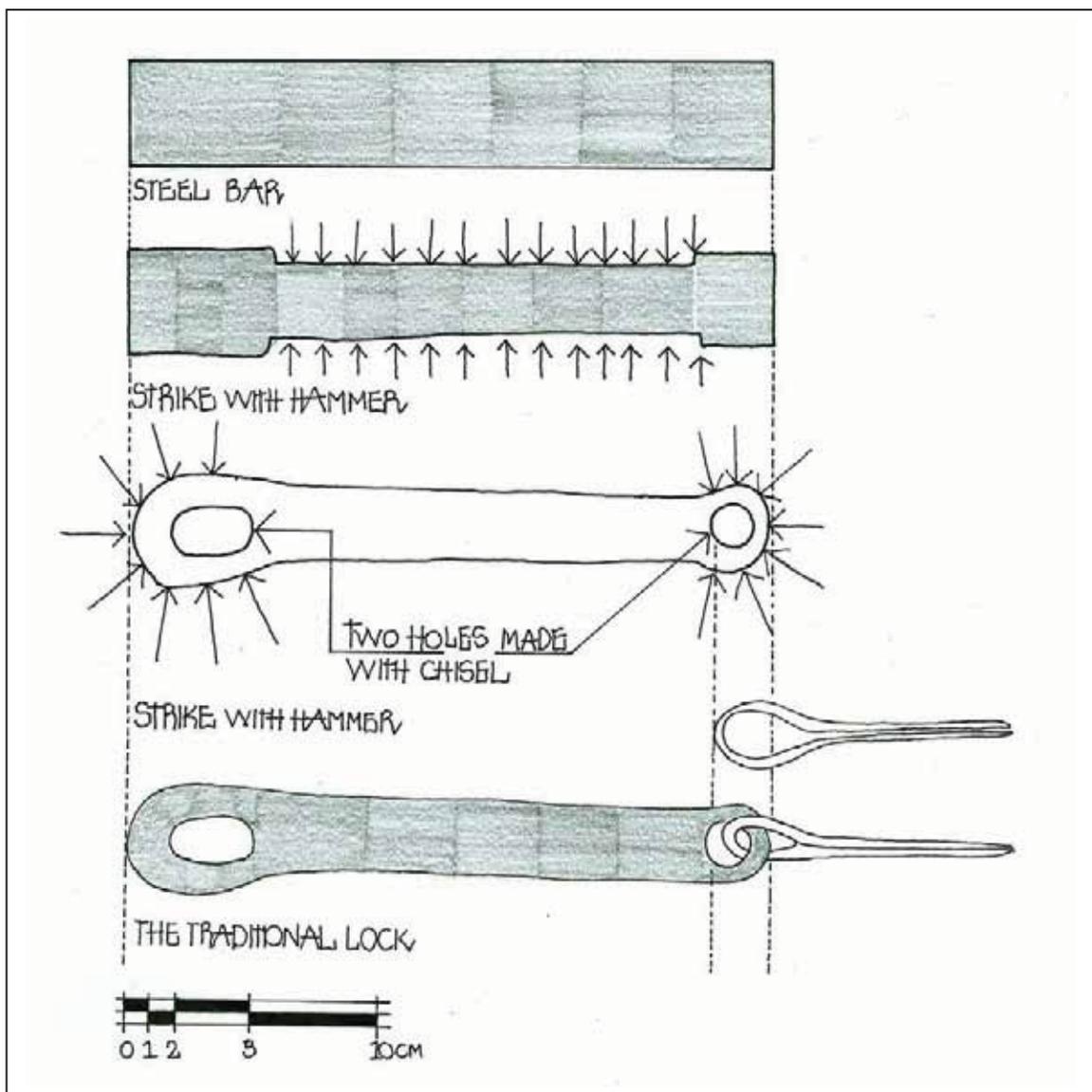
Fig. 5.7. The process of making a lock for a door. Drawing by author, 2012.

and the head are held with a tong and put in water to be cooled. Farahmand personally prefers square nails over round nails: they are easier to work and stronger in practice.

Farahmand also makes door knockers in this workshop, to be fixed on the entrance doors of houses. A door knocker has two parts; a ring and a nail. The first step for making a door knocker is to forge a ring. A long rod or a car spring should be heated in the forge. The objective is to have a ring with a circular section, so it is better to use a rod with a circular section. Once it has been heated, the rod should be hammered on the beak of the anvil so that it gradually bends. Afterwards both ends of the rod must be treated to be ready for the welding process. The two ends must be hammered at an angle so that they can fit each other when formed into a ring. Sometimes a chisel is used to cut the two ends so they fit. Once the two ends have been formed, the ring is heated in the forge and hammered on the beak of the anvil to form a complete circle with the two ends fitted to each other. For welding, both ends of the ring must reach welding heat: the ring should be put in the center of the heat to turn light yellow. It has to have sparks: the sparks are a sign that the ring has reached welding heat. Once it has done so, the ring is put on the beak of the anvil and beaten with a hammer to be welded. The ends have to be hammered on all sides to make sure that the ring is well welded. Sometimes the ends need to be reheated and hammered again so the welding can be completed. The ring has to be transferred quickly from the forge to the anvil to be hammered due to the heat lost. If the shape of the ring is not perfectly circular at this stage the ring is reheated and hammered to form a complete circle, then put in the water to be cooled. At this stage the ring needs some polishing so it is fastened to a vice and with a file its surface is polished; if the surface is rough, the table grinder is used to polish the surface. Once the ring has been finalized, a nail is attached to the ring. This is the way a door knocker is made.

One of the other types of craft that Farahmand forges is vegetable cutters, or *sabzi Khurd Kūn*. Most cutting tasks in the kitchen can be done with a vegetable cutter. The vegetable cutter consists of three parts: the blade, the handle and the joining part. Farahmand likes to make the height of the blade deep; by contrast Jalil's blades' were not as wide as his, although it is heavier than Jalil's vegetable cutters. He makes the blade high so he can cut a pile of vegetables such as spinach and lettuce easily. The blade is the first part that should be forged. A ten centimeter by ten centimeter steel plate with a thickness of not more than one millimeter is needed. The piece should be heated in the forge and the blade's edge hammered. The aim is to have a curve at the two ends of the blade, so those parts should be hammered. The beak of the anvil is used to shape the blade's curve. Afterwards, the blade is reheated and its surface struck with a hammer to get a flat surface. The thickness of the surface should be entirely uniform. If there are any extra pieces, a chisel is put in one of the anvil's holes and the blade is reheated and its extra surface cut by hammering it on the chisel. For shaping the blade's edge, the blade is reheated and the edge hit with a heavy hammer and then with a thick hammer. The edge should become thin while the spine of the blade becomes thicker. Various hammers should be used to shape the edge of the blade by striking it. Once the overall shape of the blade has been formed the blade is reheated and put in a bucket of sand to cool slowly. In this way, the blade will be workable; Farahmand can work on it with a grinder or *sūmbādih*, sandpaper or *varaqih suhān*, or files or *suhān*. The blade's edge is polished with a table grinder and then files are applied for the edges. Sharpening the edges is finalized with a whetstone. Farahmand sits where his whetstone is and slides the edge over the surface of the whetstone while he uses water. The water eases the vegetable cutter to easily slide on the whetstone. For the handle, a timber from an *āzād* tree is

needed. It should be fastened to the vice and sawed to the required length, usually twenty centimeters. Subsequently, the handle is polished with a piece of sandpaper. The head of the handle is cut smaller so the head and the handle can be joined together. For the joining part a rod is taken, heated and bent by hammering and then welded to the blade. The blade is attached to the handle by inserting the rod in the handle. In this way a vegetable cutter is made (figure 5.8).

Farahmand also makes hoes or *kaj biyl* in his workshop. There is always a demand for hoes. With a hoe, one can dig rows for planting seeds. The hoes are sold to the garden equipment suppliers in Fuman, Kasmā, and even Rasht. Those who have agricultural land or a garden purchase a hoe for their work. A hoe consists of a long handle or *dāstih* and the head or *kalih*. For making the head a steel plate is usually needed to work with. The initial shape of the head and its base should be drawn with a piece of chalk on the plate. Then the plate should be hit with a chisel to mark the edges that should be cut; afterwards Farahmand puts the plate in the forge to be heated. Then the plate is taken out of the forge and the extra parts are cut with a chisel on the anvil. Once it gets the initial shape and all the additional parts are removed the plate is reheated. By hammering the edges and the surface, the shape of the hoe is refined. If the edges need trimming, the table grinder is used to polish the edges. In order to attach the bottom of the hoe to the handle a hole is made in the bottom part. Heat is applied to the bottom part, then the plate is put on the hole of the anvil and with a steel bar the bottom is hit to make a hole. The hole should fit the nail. At this stage, the plate needs bending so the plate is reheated in the forge and bent with a hammer. The head needs to be turned ninety degrees and the bottom parts need to be turned so they can fit the wooden handle. The length of the wooden handle can be from thirty to eighty centimeters, depending on personal demands. Once forging the

STEEL PLATE

CUT EXTRA PARTS

POLISHING

WELDING

ASSEMBLE THE HANDLE

FINAL STAGE

0 1 2   5cm   20cm
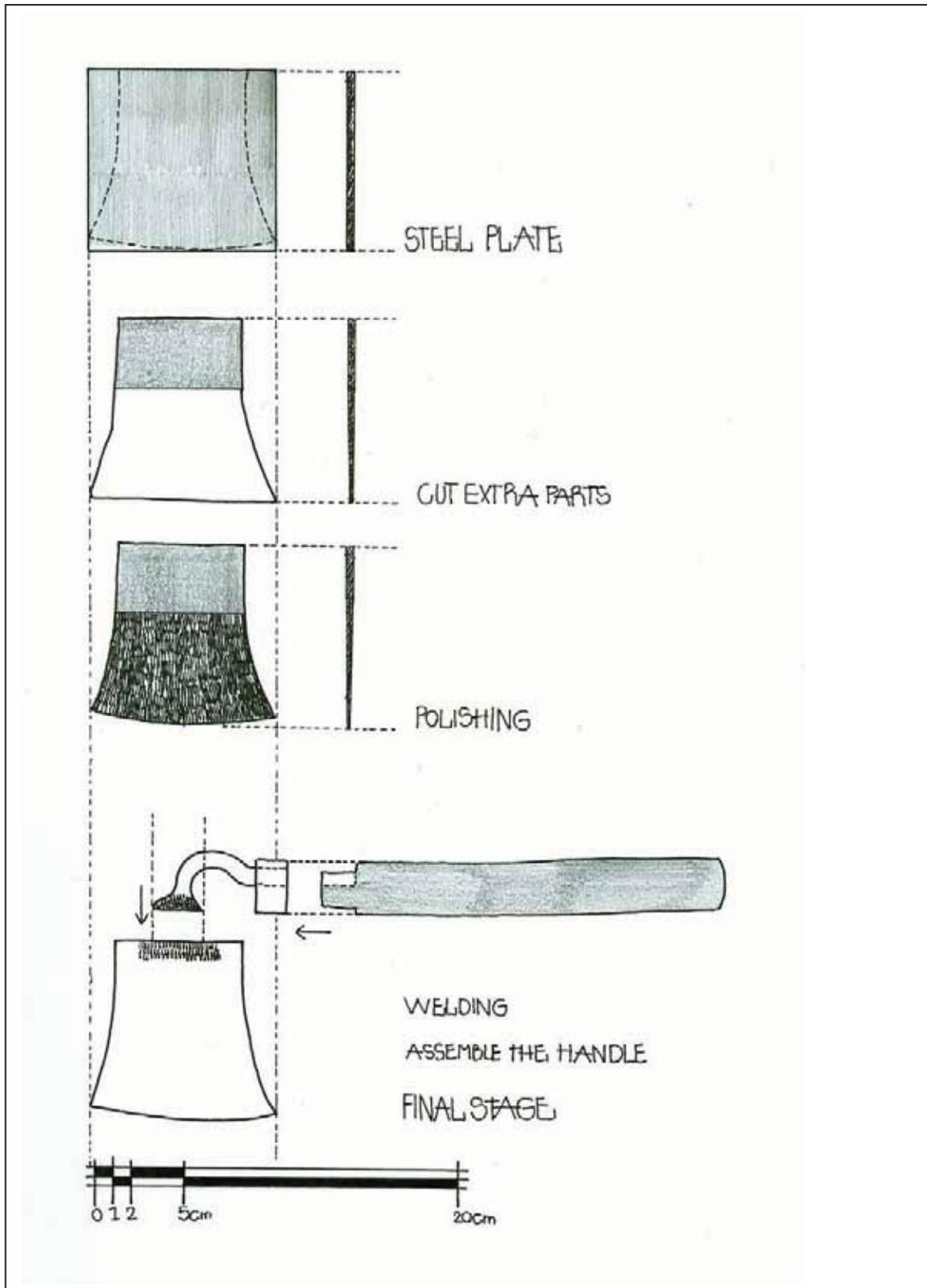
Fig. 5.8. The process of making a vegetable cutter. Drawing by author, 2012.

hoe is finished, the edge of the hoe should be shaped. To form the edge, the edge is reheated and then stroked with a hammer to shape it. The hoe doesn't need refined edges so the edges should just be stroked with a hammer and polished with the bench grinder. For the last stage, the handle should be inserted in the bottom and the nail hammered into the hole. At this point the hoe is ready (figures 5.9, 5.10).

Farahmand also makes chains in his workshop. He used to make a lot of chains for Masulih, Kasmā, Fuman and even Rasht, but not any more. He forges chains based on customer requests. Chains are tough to sell; consequently he does not make one and wait in case one day a customer may buy it. The suppliers in Fuman and Kasmā are not interested in purchasing chains from him; they sell factory made ones. These days the majority of demands are for decorative chains, for instance to suspend pots from ceilings. For making a chain several rods are needed. The dimension should be twelve to fifteen centimeters long, depending on the size of the chains, and the first step is to decide about the chain size. Then the steel rod is heated in the forge and two steel bars attached to a base or a *du shākh* put in one of the holes in the anvil. Once the rod has been heated the color is checked and with a tong the rod is taken and put in the *du shākh*. The rod is struck with a heavy hammer to bend it. The *du shākh* supports the rod as it bends. At that point the rod is put in the forge to reheat, then taken and the bending is completed by using the beak of the anvil and a hammer. For forging the two ends of the rod, the rod should be heated to welding point, then hammered fast to weld. Once the first ring has been forged another rod is taken and heated and bent, and then the new ring is put in the first one and the two ends of the new chain is welded together. This process should be carried on to complete the required length for the chain. This is the way a chain is made.
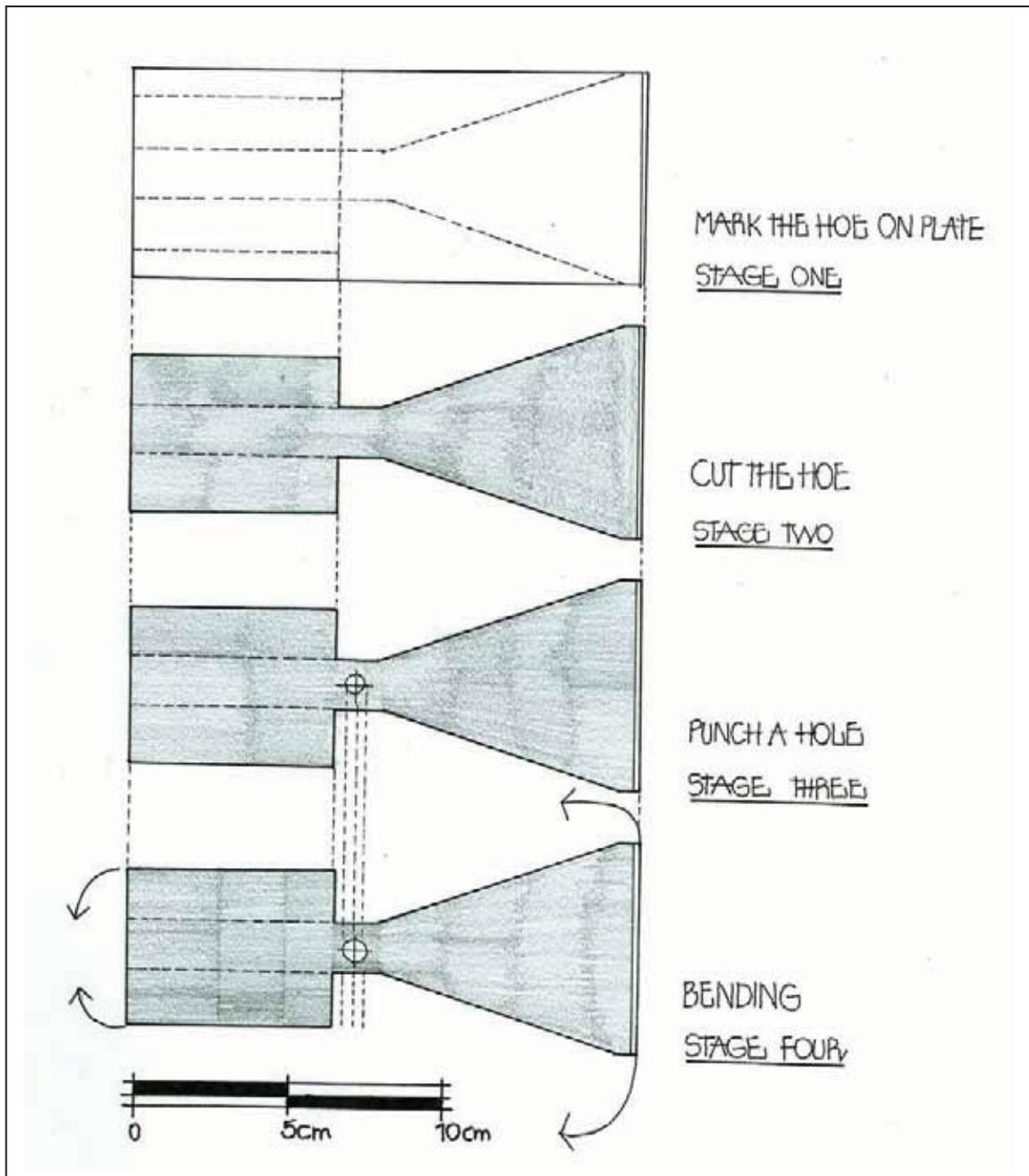
Fig. 5.9. Making the head of a hoe. Drawing by author, 2012.
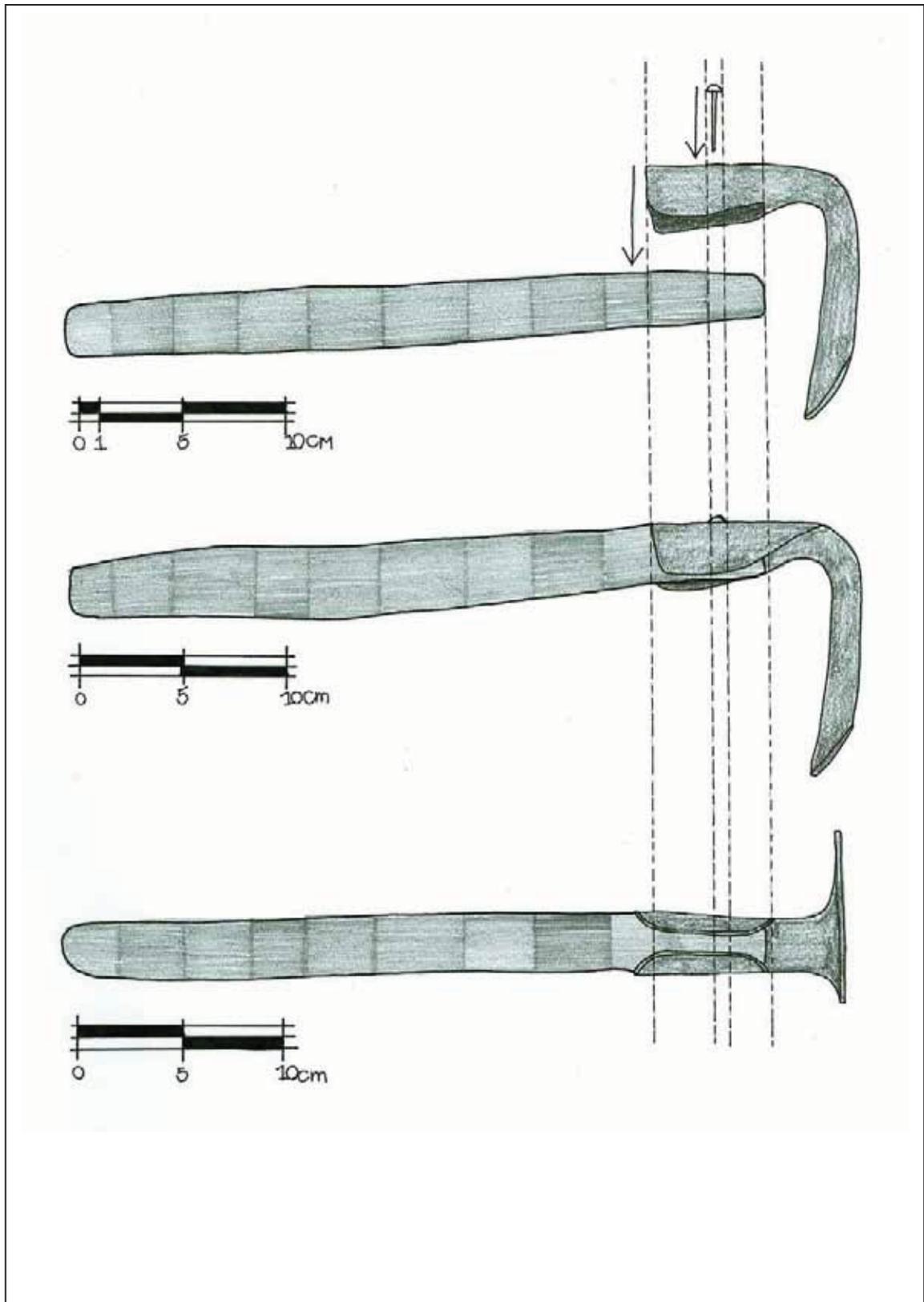
Fig. 5.10. Inserting the wooden handle into the head of the hoe. Drawing by author, 2012.

Another type of craftwork that Farahmand makes is slashers or *dās*. The slashers consist of a handle or *dāstih* and the blade or *tiyghih*. The blade is usually eighteen to twenty centimeters long, the steel part of the handle is twelve centimeters long, and the actual wooden handle is twenty centimeters long. For forging the blade a thirty-five by five centimeter steel plate is needed. It should be heated in the forge, and once it gets to the right temperature placed on the anvil and any extra parts cut with a chisel. Then the bottom part of the plate, which will be the handle, should be reheated and bent on the anvil by striking it with a hammer. Next the blade must be worked. The blade's head should be reheated and stroked on the edges and both faces with a heavy hammer to become pointed; this should be done on the beak of the anvil. Then the head is reheated and bent on the beak; only the head should be bent. At this point, the rest of the blade should be worked; the edges of the blade and the face have to be stroked with a hammer to be shaped. If there are still any extra pieces left, a chisel is put in one of the anvil's holes and the red-hot blade is put on the chisel and hammered so the extra part is cut off. If the blade's head demands more work it should be reheated and worked to be finalized. The blade's surface must always be stroked with a hammer to ensure it stays flat. Then the blade should be reheated again and the edge of the blade stroked with a hammer to make it thinner and pointy. Both sides have to be hit with the heads of various hammers to shape the edge. Subsequently, the blade is reheated and the edge stroked with a small hammer. The edges have to be worked with more care and attention. Finally, the entire blade is reheated in the forge and then put in sand to cool down slowly before the blade's edge is polished with a table grinder, whetstone, files and sandpaper. The edges have to be cleaned and polished with these tools. To complete the slasher, a hole is made in the

handle with a drill and the handle is bent by being struck with a hammer, then the wooden

handle is inserted into the metal handle and fixed with a nail (figures 5.11 to 5.13).

Farahmand signs his slashers: he reheats part of the blade, puts it on the anvil,

marks a point on the blade, takes a chisel and hits on the marked point four times at

different angles to shape a star. The star is his signature. Wherever in Gilān he sees a

slasher with a star sign on it, he recognizes his craft. There is always a demand for

slashers in the plateau of Gilān; also among the wood and mountain dwellers. He sells a

lot of slashers. The agricultural suppliers in Kasmā and Fuman are interested in buying

slashers from him. Most of the time, he makes slashers. As I mentioned in chapter one

and at the beginning of this chapter, artifacts can deliver original insights crucial for

understanding people within a specific region. For example, Muhammad Ali Farahmand

makes slashers; the slasher is used to cut trees, and by shepherds who walk the paths

which pass through dense greenery. In July 2013 I walked with Rahmat Farahmand

towards the Lalandiz grazing lands; while Rahmat walked along the path, he cut the

greenery which covered the paths, clearing the path with his slasher. The slasher is used

for cutting trees as well. After living for a long time in the green Tālish Mountains, the

blacksmiths developed the slasher to use in their daily life, and its design reflects the way

of life and the environment of these people. The forging of a slasher would be

unnecessary in the dry central region of Iran. About his profession Farahmand says:

> This is a hard job. I have stayed in this profession for a long time: the young
> generation are not interested in this job so I am not sure if someone will
> continue to work in this workshop or not. I am the last one who works here. I
> know Hāmid and Kamrān who worked here for less than a year and left. Their
> names are carved on the door frame. One day Hāshim, who is one of Ūstād
> Ashjāri's relatives, visited the workshop and took a knife and carved the
> names of Hāmid, Kamrān, himself and Ashjāri on the door frame. My name is
> too long so he could not carve it there. Some months later, Hāmid and Hāshim
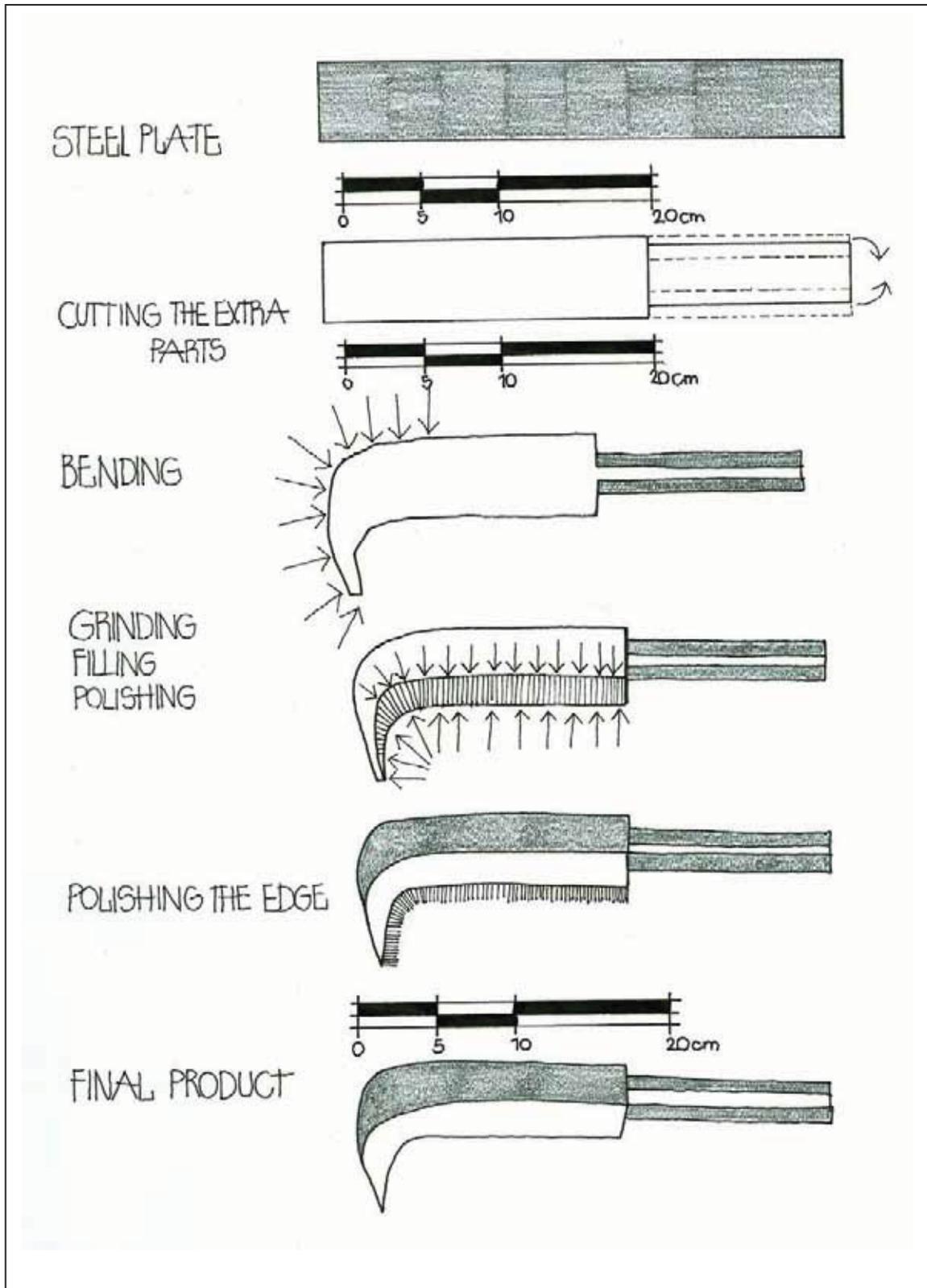
Fig. 5.11. Making the head of a slasher. Drawing by author, 2012.
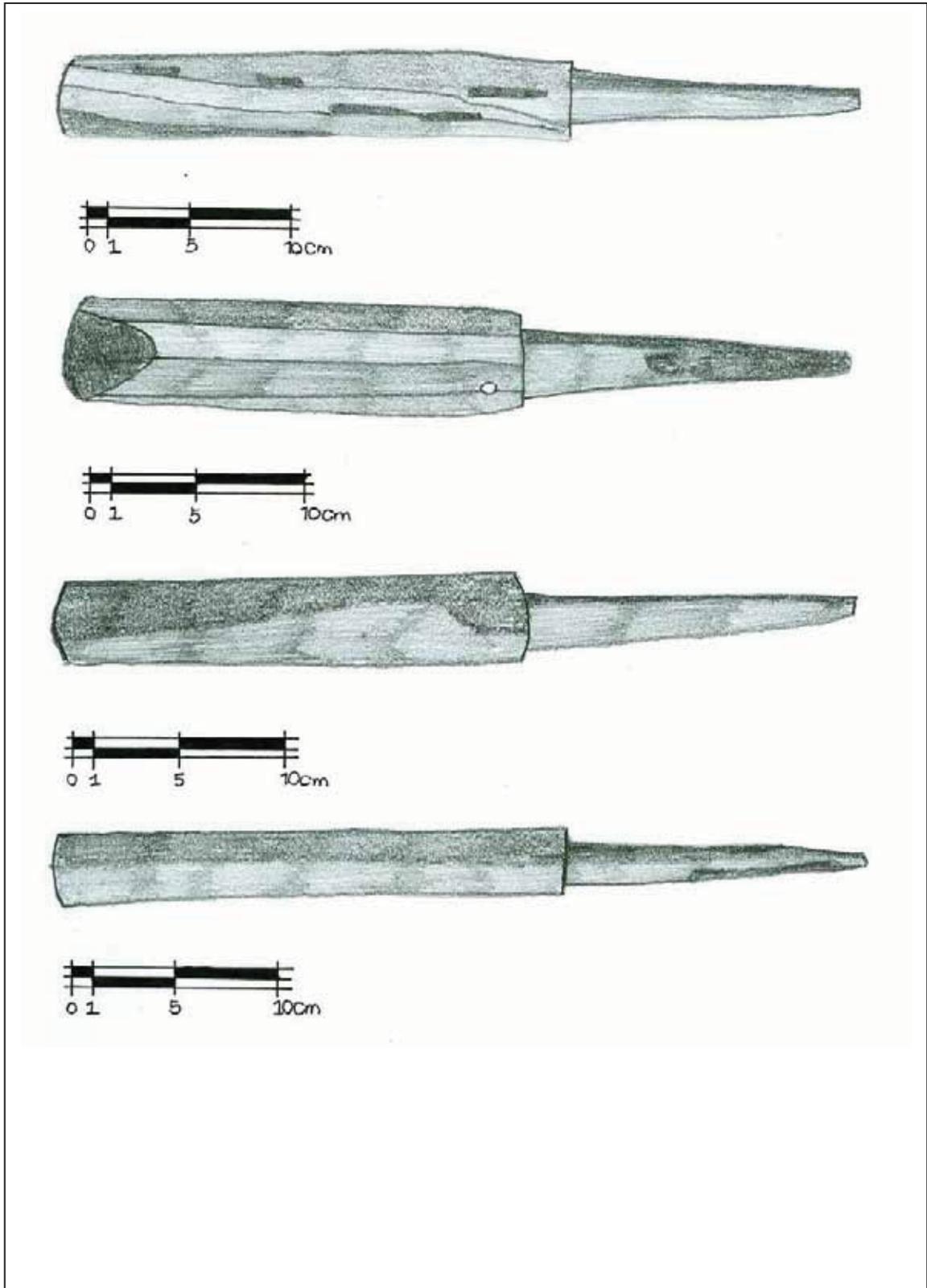
Fig. 5.12. Carving the wooden handles of a slasher. Drawing by author, 2012.
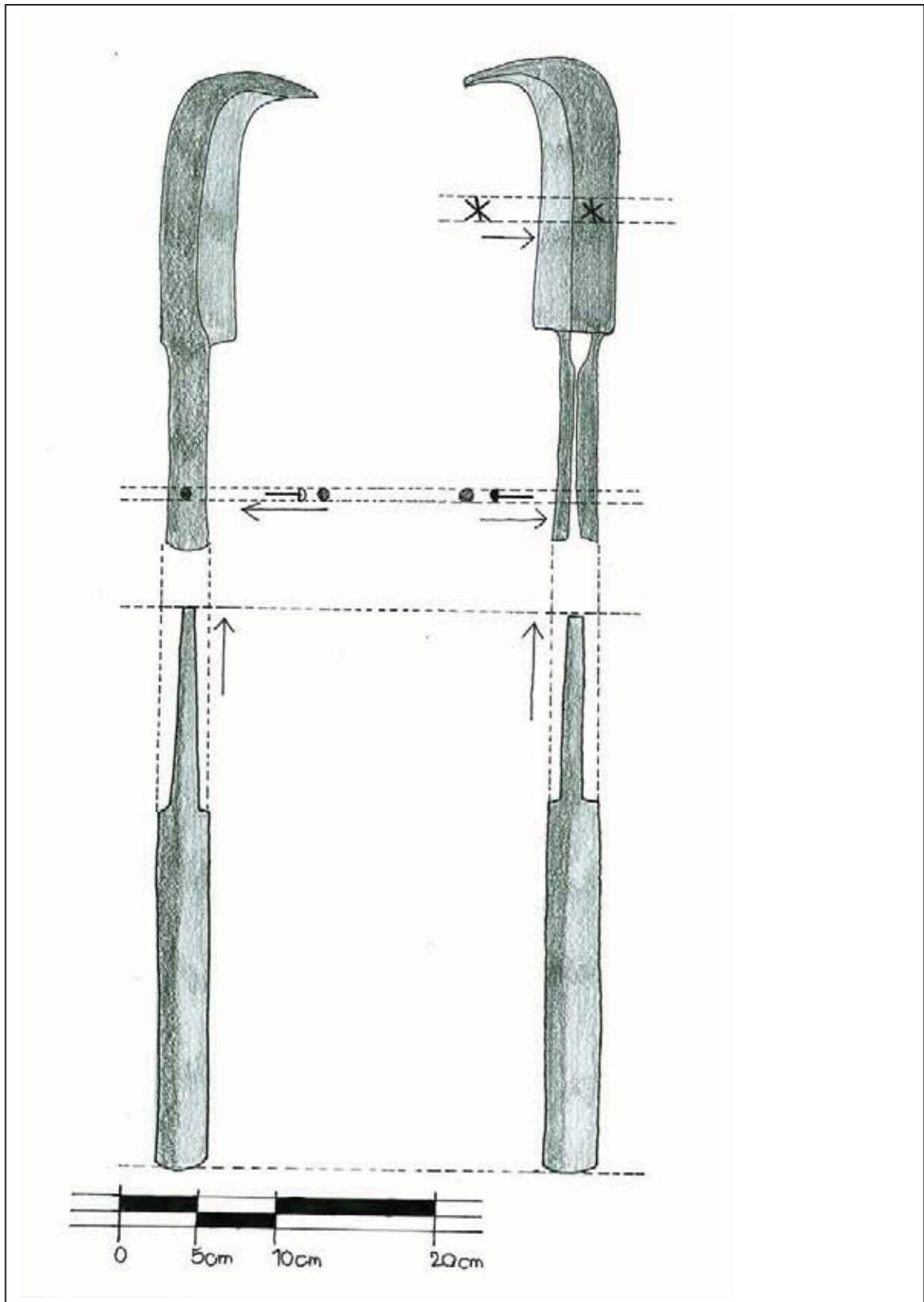
Fig. 5.13. Completing the slasher. Drawing by author, 2012.

left the workshop: they said that the income is not great and the work is demanding. The first weeks that they started their apprenticeship here, they were eager and courageous to learn the profession; nonetheless they lost hope due to the low income and the hardship. They could not save enough capital to start a new workshop of their own. They left for Tehran in search of better job opportunities and a better life. So far I am the sole person who has lasted a long time here. I cannot open a workshop of my own; I do not have the cash to purchase a place – it is too much to rent a place and the income is not permanent and secure. Sometimes, I wonder whether I should have abandoned this workshop years ago and like Hāmid and Hāshim just fled to Tehran. But I do not know any other occupation; blacksmithing is what Ūstād Ashjāri taught me. It is a hard occupation but I have to be hopeful and carry on. Whenever these hardships come to my mind, I remind myself that I should have reliance on God [*tavakkūl*]. It is written in the Quran that وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ [*And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him*]. I am not worried; this is the path which is planned for me by God and no one knows what will happen, only him.[360]

About his income, Farahmand says:

One day I have a decent income and one day there is none. It is God who provides each person with a certain income. It is the will of God to decide who should have a higher or lower income. Ūstād Jalil-i Ashjāri once told me this story about the income of each person. Once, many years ago, there was a king who was curious to know about the well-being of his people. Were they wealthy and happy under his rulership or not? So one night he decided to wear the typical clothes of the beggars and head to the bazaar to talk to people and witness the reality himself. Late in the night, he wore a beggar's clothes and acted as if he were a beggar and went unknown to the bazaar. As a beggar he walked and he saw an open shop. He went and asked the shopkeeper if he was receiving any guests in his shop that night and the shopkeeper welcomed the beggar to his shop. The shopkeeper did not realize that beggar was the king. They began to talk to each other and the shopkeeper said that "my income is in hands of God." The shopkeeper said that "one night I saw a vision in my sleep, that an old man and I were walking in a desert and I saw a high mountain in the desert. There were different streams running from the mountain to the desert. Some were huge like rivers and some were tiny streams and some were springs where only water dripped. I asked the old man about the streams with dripping water and the rivers. He said that God provides for his people various incomes and a certain amount of wealth. A person like you is meant to have an income like a stream with dripping

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[360] Ibid.

waters. Some people are meant to have a good income like a stream of water, and rivers belong to the ministers, court officers, queens and kings. It is their responsibiylity to take care of their people." The beggar heard this and he thanked the shopkeeper and went back to his court. The day after he ordered the court chef to cook rice with chicken and he ordered that the chicken should be stuffed with gold coins, diamonds and amber. The chef cooked the chicken and they sent the rice and chicken dish to the shopkeeper in the bazaar. The shopkeeper took the dish and smelled it and he said to himself "this food is too much and too good for me. My food is plain bread with dates and water. This food is too much for me." So he decided to pass the dish on to his friend who purchased goods from him as a tribute and thanks. The shopkeeper's friend received the food and ate it, and he saw gold, diamond and amber inside the food. Once he saw the treasure, he decided to leave the city and change his life, so he washed the dishes and brought the dishes back to the shopkeeper and thanked him and left the city with the treasure.

The next night, the king again wore the clothes of the beggar and visited the shopkeeper. He asked the shopkeeper if he had received any good food recently. The shopkeeper replied "Yes, but I did not eat it and passed it on to my friend who is a good merchant." The king asked the shopkeeper if he had touched the chicken or eaten from it. The shopkeeper replied that the food was too much for him and he only smelled the good food and passed it on to his friend. So the king said to the shopkeeper "Your vision was right. You are meant to have an income like a spring with dripping water, not more, not less." So the king thanked the shopkeeper and went back to his court. God decides for my daily income. That's why I remind myself that I should have reliance on God.[361]

5.2 The Knife Workshop of Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam

The knife workshop or *kārgāh-i chāqu sāzi* of Jabbar Sabt-i Hatam is located in the seventh storey of the bazaar beside a bakery and close to Mihrān Muminiyān's tea house (figures 5.14, 5.15). He has been working in this workshop since 1971 when he purchased this workshop. His father, Aziyz Sabt-i Hatam, was a knife-maker or *chāqu saz*. He taught Jabbar this profession. Jabbar was Aziyz's apprentice since he was a kid; his father used to pay him every day as a wage labourer. Jabbar was apprenticed to him from 1961 to 1971 and that is how he learned this profession. He sees no other way to learn. Jabbar

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[361] Ibid.
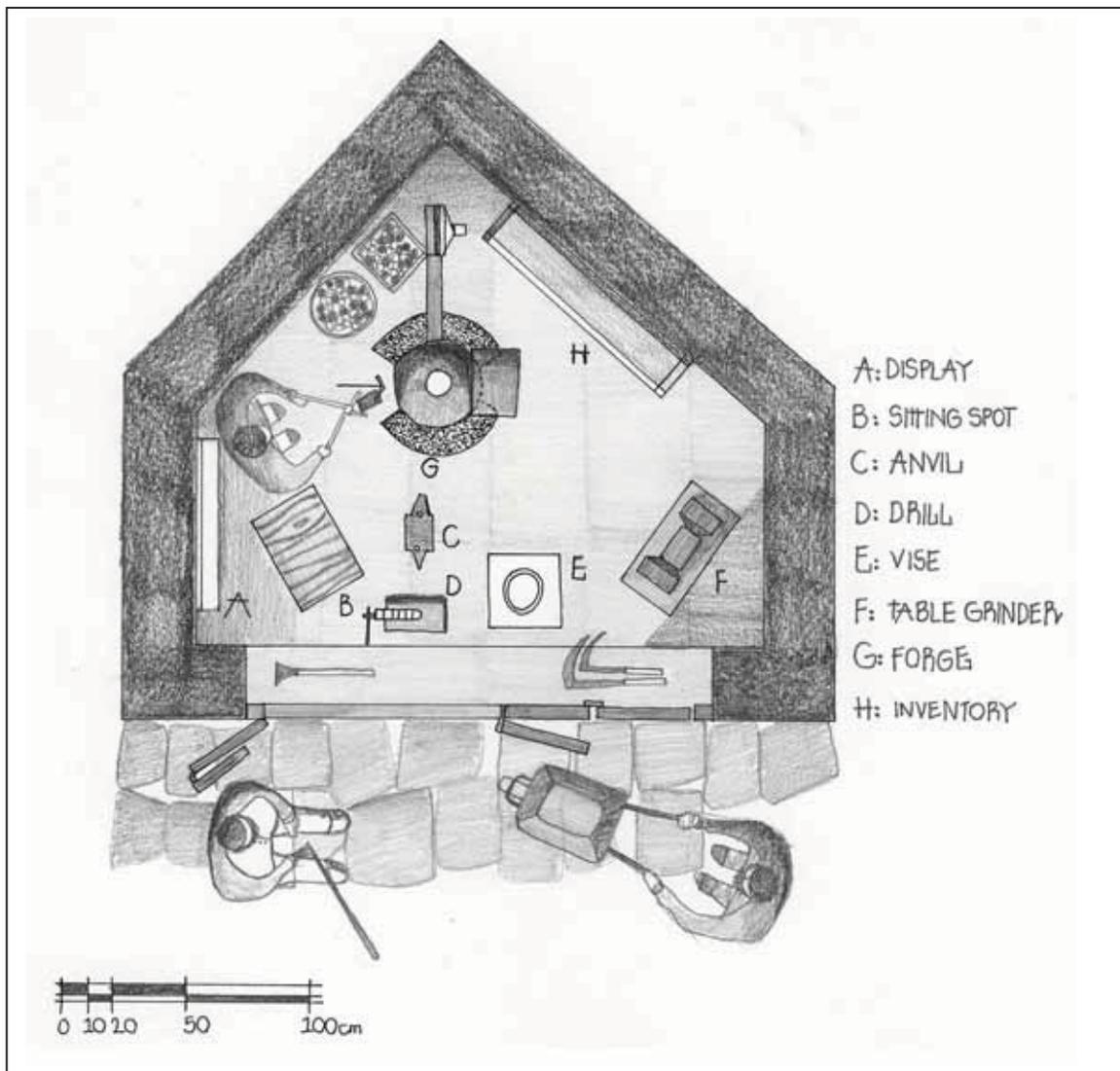
Fig. 5.14. The plan of the knife workshop. Drawing by author, 2013.

A: DISPLAY
B: SITTING SPOT
C: ANVIL
D: DRILL
E: VISE
F: TABLE GRINDER
G: FORGE
H: INVENTORY

0 10 20   50   100 cm
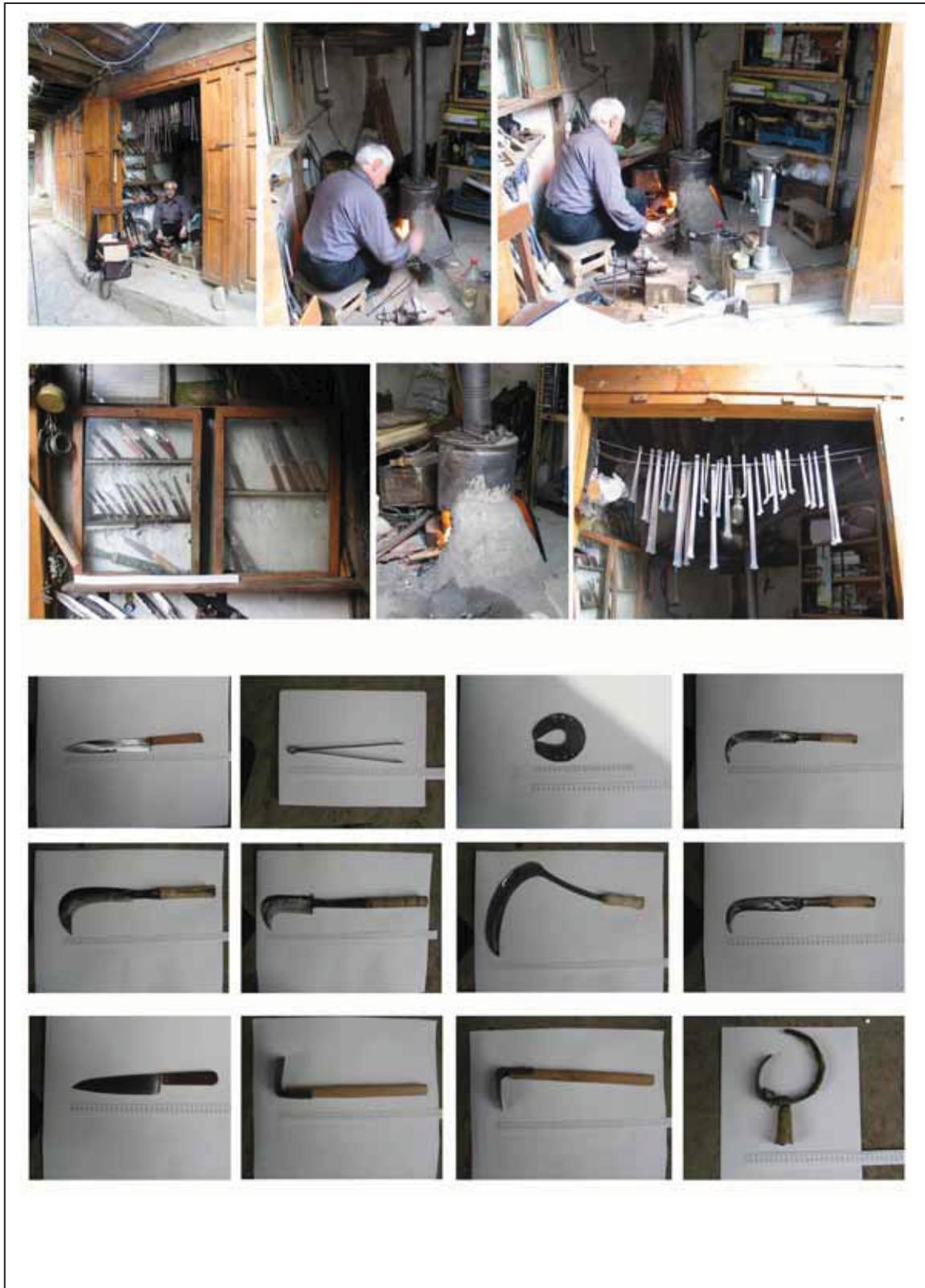
Fig. 5.15. Photographs of the knife workshop, its interior and its artifacts. Photographs by author, 2012.

says "I was lucky that I had a serious master [*Ūstād*], who was my father; he could not tolerate any mistake so I had to be very cautious when he was teaching me something. As a kid, I was free to play outside the workshop; nonetheless once I was in the workshop I had to concentrate on the job and the given task. Ūstād Aziyz was a serious man. Under no circumstances would he advise me straightforwardly; he used to address the issue to himself and it meant that he was conversing to me."[362] For ten years Jabbar apprenticed and worked with his father. When he accumulated sufficient capital, he paid for this shop or *kārgāh* and became a master.

Jabbar's shop is beside the path which leads to the house of Qasim-i Kharabi, and tourists who want to take pictures of Kharabi's house pass by Jabbar's shop. Jabbar has fixed his display on the wall so the tourists and passersby can see the display while passing his shop. Jabbar sits on a low stool in front of his forge and anvil while working on a piece. Customers or passersby usually stand in front of his shop conversing with Jabbar. There is a low stool beside the wooden folding door on which a customer can sit. During the spring and summer Jabbar's workshop's doors are completely open while during the winter he closes the doors to keep the workshop warm. As with other shops and workshops in the bazaar, Jabbar's view from his working position is limited to the path and the shops in front of his workshop.

Everyone calls Jabbar a knife-maker whereas in fact he makes supplementary crafts in addition to knives. His main concern is knives or *chāqu*– he makes kitchen knives in various sizes and shapes. One can do all the tasks in the kitchen with his kitchen knives. He makes four kinds of small knives: a pocket knife or *chāqu jibi*; a knife for sharpening

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[362] Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, May 2012.

the pen used in traditional calligraphy or *chāqu qalam tarāshi*; a grafting knife or *chāqu piyvandi* for grafting two trees together, which is widely used for agricultural purposes in the plateau of Gilān; and a decorative knife or *chāqu tazini*, which can be used for light tasks. Beside knives, Jabbar forges slashers or *dās*, sheep bells or *zangulih* for shepherd's herds in the nearby woods, hoes or *kaj biyl* and horseshoes or *na'l-i asb*. Jabbar says "I do whatever metalwork people demand. I sharpen the blades of pocket knives, kitchen knives; I repair the wooden handles of any knife. Sometimes a customer desires to change his or her knife's blade or sharpen it."[363]

Knives are Jabbar's foremost product, although he used to make more of them. Concerning knife selling, Jabbar says "[i]n Masulih I can still sell and repair knives but in cities such as Rasht or Fuman it is harder to work. The majority of knives are factory made ones and it is tougher to compete with them in the market. The Chinese's knives are cheaper than mine; nevertheless the quality is very poor. Some of my customers say that Chinese knives can only stand kitchen tasks for a month and then must be thrown away, while my knives can handle the expectations of the owners for years."[364] All his knives are traditional types; they have simple wooden handles while the factory made ones have plastic handles. The reason that Jabbar has been able to survive so far is the good workmanship of his knives. All his knives' parts are prepared, joined and fitted together perfectly. This is very important so that he can sell his knives. Jabbar can forge one or two good quality knives per day and if he is fortunate he can sell two or three in a day, although there are days when he does not sell anything. Jabbar does not have any

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[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.

apprentices; his children are not interested in this job. One reason is the low income.

About his income and job he says "[s]ometimes this idea comes to my mind that I can sell

this workshop with its entire utilities, buy a car and become a taxi driver. At least the

income is more decent but I am sixty-four years old and it is almost impossible to shift to

a new job. For five decades I have made various crafts with my hands every day; now I

cannot simply leave everything behind."[365] Unfortunately, there is not that much demand

for handmade knives and as a result, it is a tough time for Jabbar.

Jabbar forges kitchen knives in his workshop. Each knife consists of several pieces.

A knife has a wooden handle or *dastih*, blade or *tiyghih*, cutting edge or *labih tiyghih*,

bolster or *tiyghih band*, rivet or *miykh dāstih*, butt plate or *var band*, tip or *sar-i chāqu*

and tang or *fanar*. The blade is the most vital part of a knife (figures 5.16, 5.17). A good

blade is the result of a good workmanship: it has to be straight, sharp, hard and resistant

to corrosion, rusting and darkening. Jabbar's blades are made of steel plates, old knife

blades, old saw blades, car springs, files or steel plates obtained from construction

workshops. It is not easy to modify and reshape a steel object; it takes a while to gain the

necessary experience making knives with all the steel objects just mentioned. Jabbar says

"[y]ou must know how to reform the steel article into a knife's blade."[366] First a steel

object is needed, its surface should be ground, polished and cleaned of any rust.

Afterwards the knife outline should be drawn on the surface with a pen and the outline

marked with a needle. The forge and the blower are used to heat the piece. The red-hot

piece is held with a tong and with a chisel the outline of the knife is cut on the anvil. The

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[365] Ibid.
[366] Ibid.
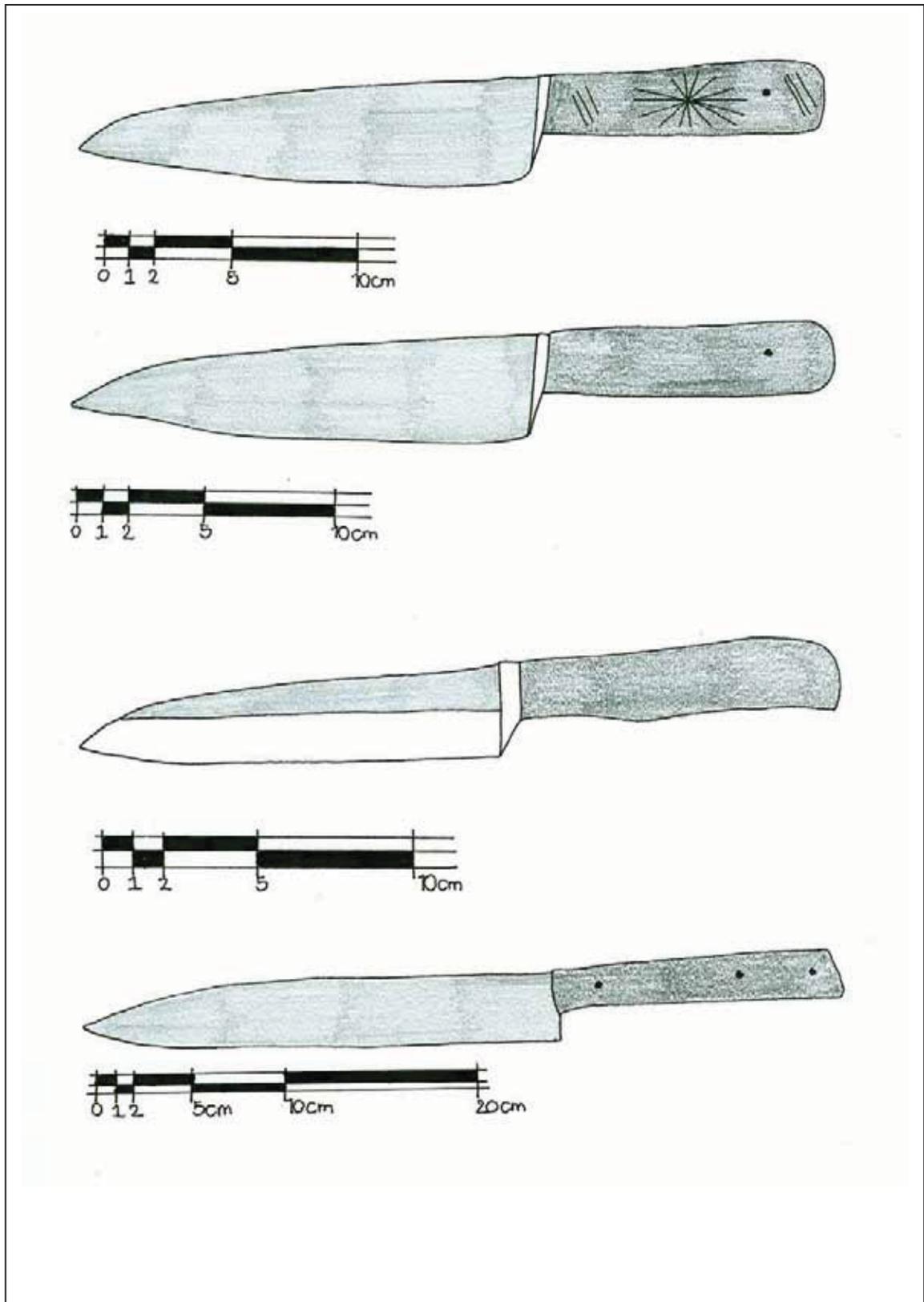
Fig. 5.16. Various kitchen knives. Drawing by author, 2012.
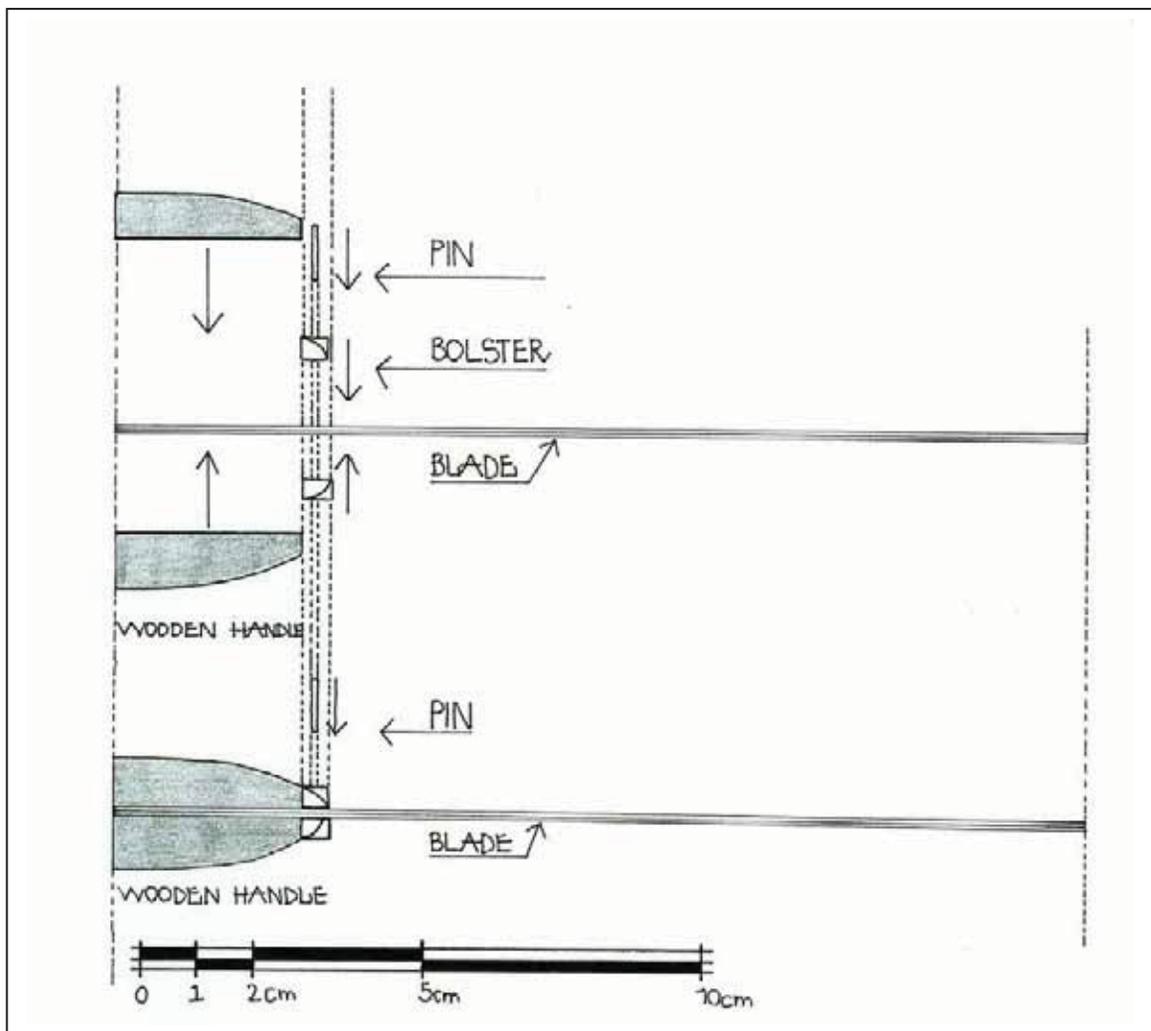
Fig. 5.17. The process of attaching the knife blade to the bolster and wooden handles. Drawing by author, 2012.

knife edges are square-shaped and rough. It should be ground on the bench grinder or *charkh-i sūmbādih*; several times the knife's silhouette and edges are examined to check if it is straight. Jabbar has to be sure that the overall knife's shape is right. To cut the blade's edge, the edge should be moved slowly on the disk of the bench grinder, and this should be done on both sides of the blade. The edge should be cut straight: too much should not be cut from one spot or any thick or thin spots left on the surface. In order to examine the blade, Jabbar says, "I put the knife in water and take it out and run my fingers on the blades' edge so I can feel the convex and concave surfaces; in this way I can polish the edges. At this stage, I grind the left and right sides of the blade's surface. Once I have polished all the edges, I regrind them and eventually I get the desired edges."[367] The size of the blade depends on the type of the knife. The kitchen knives have a wide blade – it enhances the cutting and chopping of meat and vegetables and protects the fingers. Jabbar forges large knives with a long blade (twenty five centimeters). The mountain and wood dwellers and shepherds use this knife a lot. They do multiple tasks with it such as cutting trees, slaughtering, chopping, slicing and skinning sheep and lambs, even protecting themselves.

Jabbar has to harden his knife-blades. The blades are heated in the forge until they turn red-hot and are then kept there for some time. Enough charcoal has to be left inside the forge. Regarding hardening, Jabbar says: "First, in a small bucket I mix diesel oil with crankcase oil. I put the small bucket in a larger bucket filled with water; afterwards with a tong I take the blades and put them in the oil bucket to cool. I repeat this process by reheating the blades in the forge and leaving the blades in a bucket filled with water. This

[367] Ibid.

is the way I harden the blades."[368] After this stage the blade should be worked on. The blade should be reheated and the edge stroked with different hammers, and then the edge of the knife has to be sharpened with a grinder. The blade's edge must not be damaged in this process. A table grinder, files, sandpaper and a whetstone are used to sharpen the blade's edge. The edge should be checked several times to make sure it is straight. It takes some time to work on the blade and sharpen it. Then the blade should be polished with files and sandpaper to finalize the blade.

After finalizing the blade, Jabbar makes a bolster. A bolster is a piece of metal which is fixed between the end of the blade and the wooden handle. The bolster prevents accumulation of moisture, small pieces of food, dirt and dust under the wooden handle. A bolster is also a very effective finger guard. For fixing the bolster to the blade two pins are used. Two holes are cut in the bolster with a drill and the blade is cut. A vise or *giyrih* is used to hold all the pieces together. Each pin is inserted in one of the holes by striking the pin with a hammer. The pins should fit; the bolster will be fixed to the blade if it is done properly. The pin's end should finally be ground to smooth the bolster's surface.

The next stage is making the handle. Wood is used for the handles. Not every type of wood can be used for the handles; it must be a kind that resists moisture. For a kitchen knife, wood from the *āzād* tree is used. Jabbar says "[a] wooden handle has a warm color and a natural texture and appeals better to the eye than plastic handles. I buy wooden handles from a carpentry in Fuman. The wooden piece should not be too heavy; it should be affordable. I am interested in both dark and light colors for my work."[369] For making

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[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.

the handle, a wooden piece is chosen and sawed into two parts; each part should be divided equally and the wood should be sawed straight. Jabbar says "once I ruined a very good piece of wood by not sawing it straight."[370] Then the outline of the handle should be drawn on the two wooden pieces and the pieces ground to initially shape the handle. No gaps should occur between the handle and the tang; both should fit each other. In fact there should be no gap between the wooden handle, bolster and the tang. The handle should be trimmed slightly bigger than the actual size while the handle is still being ground with a bench grinder. When the handle is fixed to the tang and bolster, filing should be applied and both carefully fitted together. In this way the handle can be fixed with no gap. At this stage, some holes in the handle and tang should be drilled. Afterwards, glue should be applied to the tang and handle, then the handle fixed in a vise and the pins should be struck into the holes with a hammer. Once it has dried, all the surfaces should be polished with sandpaper. If the pin heads are out, the heads are ground down with the grinder. For the last stage oil should be applied to the wooden handle and it should be polished. This is the way Jabbar makes a kitchen knife.

In addition to the larger kitchen knife, Jabbar makes four types of small knives, as described above. All four have folding blades which can fit inside the wooden handle; as a result the knife can fit inside the pocket (figure 5.18). The parts are same as the kitchen knife: a wooden handle or *dāstih*, blade or *tiyghih*, cutting edge or *labih tiyghih*, bolster or *tiyghih band*, rivet or *miykh dāsteh*, butt plate or *var band*, tip or *sar-i chāqu* and tang or *fanar*. The sole difference is that the blade can turn and fit inside the handle. The process

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[370] Ibid.
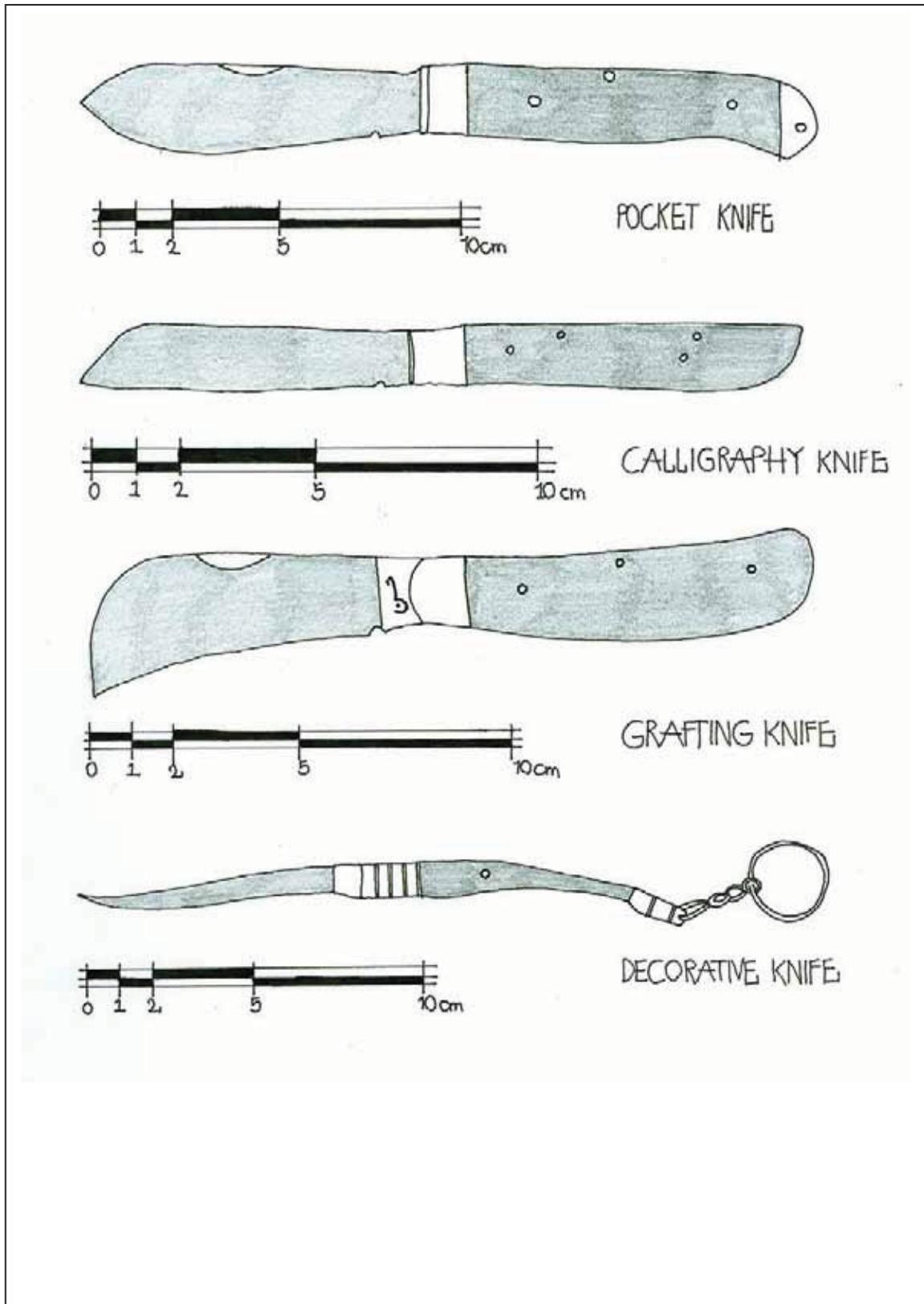
Fig. 5.18. Various knives that Jabbar makes. Drawing by author, 2012.

of making these knives is also similar to the kitchen knife, although the dimensions of the pieces are smaller than the kitchen knife.

For a pocket knife or *chāqu jibi*, the blade, two metal bases with bolsters and butt plates, a tang and two wooden handles need to be forged. The process of making the blade is the same as for the kitchen knife. To make a metal base, a steel plate is forged and ground; some parts should be cut out of it by grinding, in this way making room for the wooden handle. Neither the head nor the bottom of the steel base should be cut, and these untouched parts become the bolster and butt plate after grinding the steel base. A tang is made out of a steel bar, and two wooden handles are made which will be attached to the two steel bases. Pins are used to fit all the pieces together. One hole is drilled through the two bolsters and the blade and a pin is hammered through. The blade will turn around the pin and fix between the two steel bases. At this stage four other holes should be drilled: one for fixing the tang, two for fixing the wooden handles, and one for fixing the butt plate, and then pins are hammered through the holes. Jabbar has to be cautious when he is drilling the wooden handles. They are very thin on the edges and thicker in the middle and have a convex shape, and the wood must be drilled slowly or it will crack. The thinnest crack in the wood eventually deepens and splits the handle into two parts. A cracked piece of wood accumulates dust and dirt. If a crack occurs during the drilling process the two handles must be replaced with a new piece of wood. Polishing and oiling a cracked handle and selling it to a customer is risky because eventually the handle will break and Jabbar's reputation as a good knife-maker will be ruined. This is how Jabbar makes all his small knives.

Jabbar's small knives are very similar to each other. The principal difference between a pocket knife or *chāqu jibi*, a knife for sharpening the calligrapher's pen or

chāqu galam tarashi, a grafting knife or *chāqu piyvandi* and a decorative knife or *chāqu tazini* is the blade's size and the special and designated task of the knife itself. The blade of a pocket knife has a pointed head which is different from the blade of the calligrapher's knife or the grafting knife. The blade of the decorative knife is very thin, pointed and narrow. It is ideal for peeling cucumbers, oranges and apples. The decorative blade is also very light. Jabbar purchases the bolsters, butt plates and wooden handles for these knives. There are carvings on the bolsters and the butt plates. The handle may be made out of wood or *chub*, bones or *ūstūkhān-ha*, stones or *sang-ha* and even ivory or *āj*. It all depends on the price and affordabiylity for customers. Jabbar personally prefers wood for handles; it is nice to touch and hold and can last a long time. When wood ages it becomes more valuable. The handles are usually made out of the local *āzād* tree, but Jabbar also sometimes purchases wood pieces of ebony or *ābnus*, cherry or *gilās*, pear or *gūlābi*, and peach or *hūlu*. Walnut or *girdu* and almond or *bādām* are the most luxurious woods. Which wood is used is based on customers' individual demands. The customer orders the desired knife with specifications in advance and Jabbar buys the pieces and forges them. This is the same for bone, stone and ivory handles. These types of handles are more expensive than the wooden ones and demand more work, particularly the grinding and drilling part (figures 5.19, 5.20).

About his workmanship, Jabbar says: "Forging good quality knives provides me a good sense of satisfaction. The customers who step into my workshop to purchase a knife demand fine quality, adequate appearance and good finishes. Every single knife that I make in my workshop should be the best knife that I have forged so far; otherwise it is
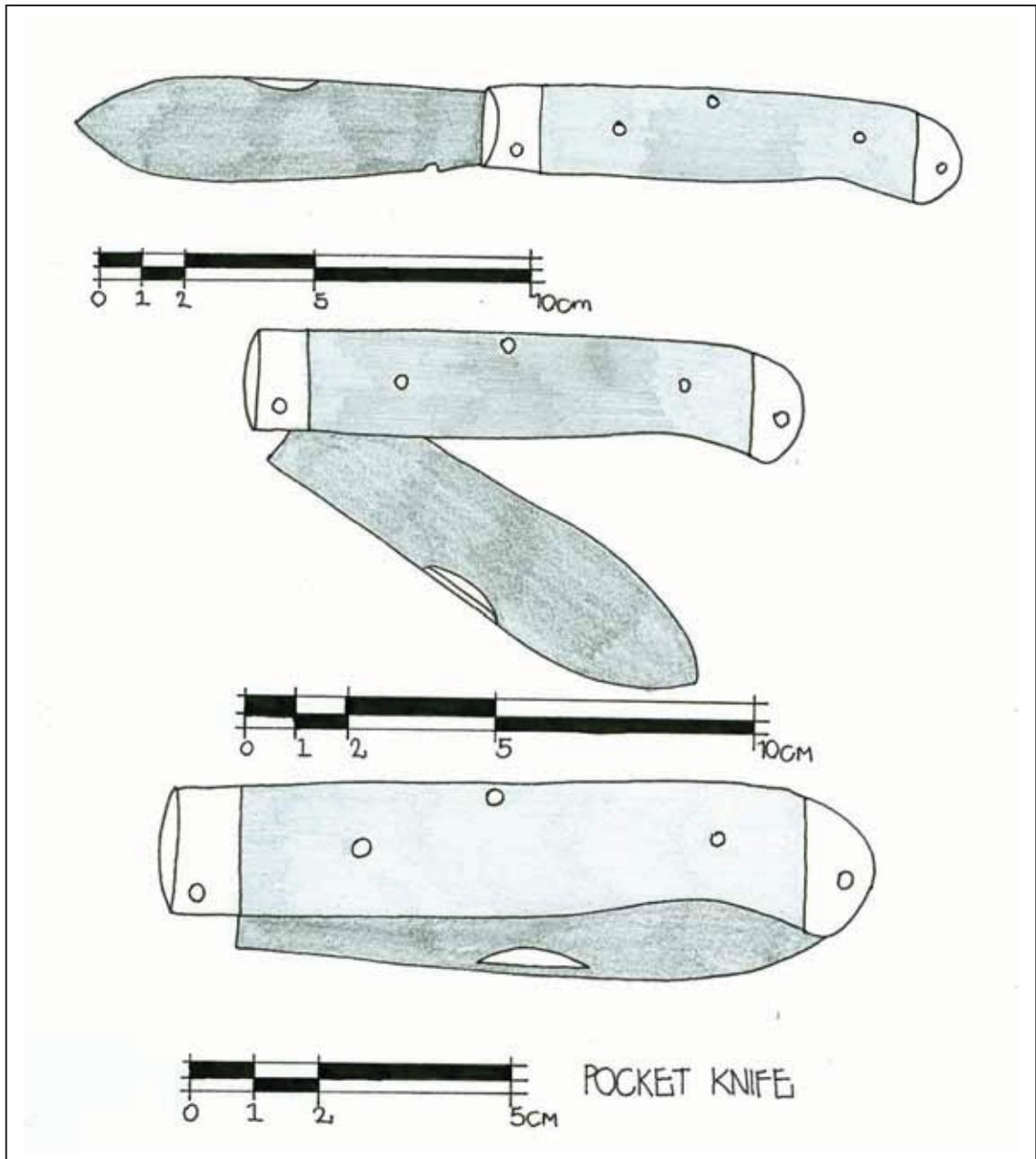
Fig. 5.19. Pocket knife. Drawing by author, 2012.
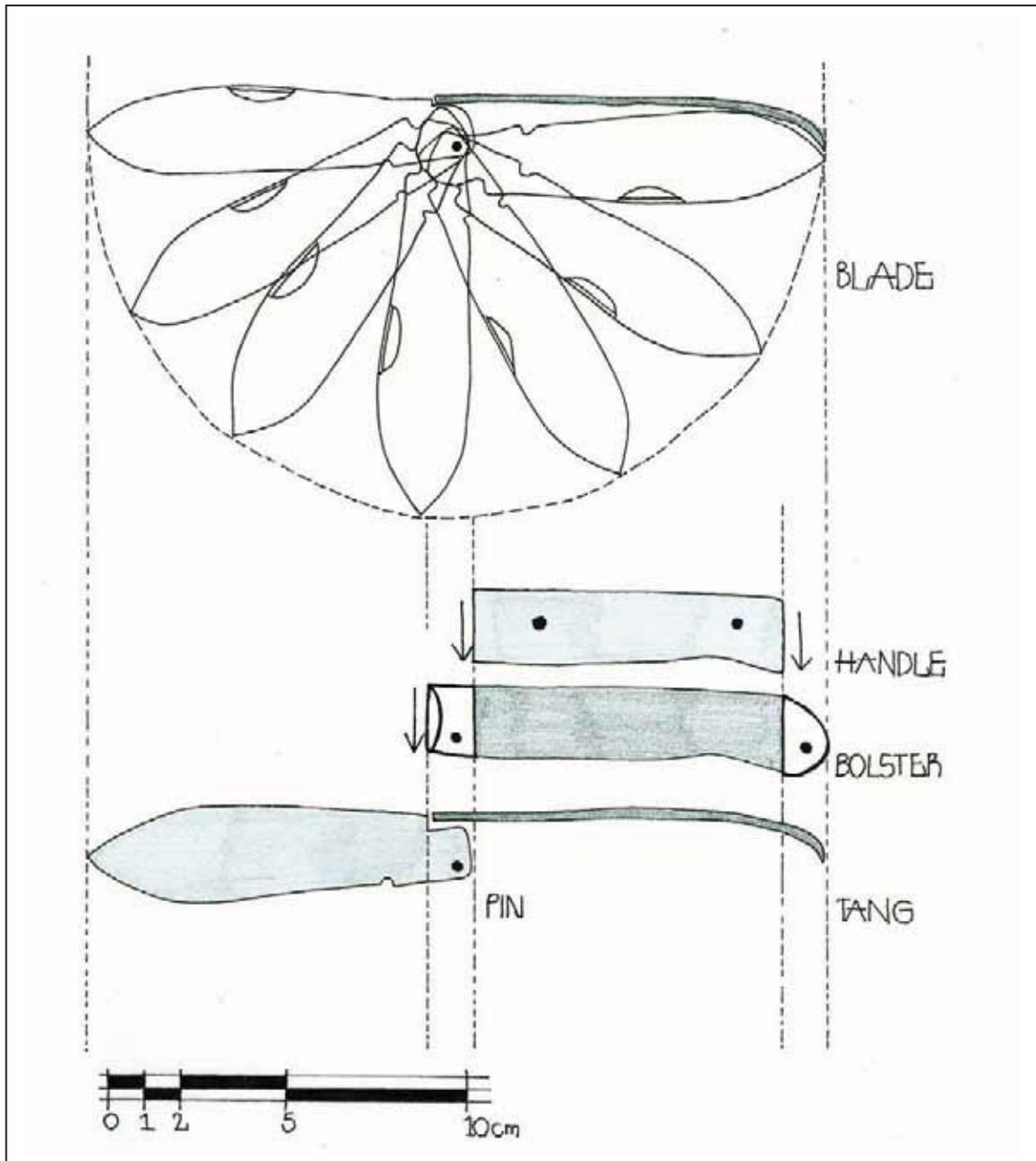
Fig. 5.20. All the parts of a pocket knife. Drawing by author, 2012.

hard to sell a poor quality one. Customers usually have their own comments and criticism regarding my knives."[371] The customers demands good quality. They search in the display, select, take and hold a knife, examine it, ask for the specific function of the knife and maybe finally purchase the one that they like the most. In Jabbar's opinion they search for quality.

Jabbar also makes bells or *zangulih* for sheep and goats, which are purchased by shepherds who have flocks in the vicinity of Masulih. Bells are made from large pipes or steel plates, but Jabbar personally prefers pipes. Each bell has a head or *kalih*, waist or *kamar*, mouth or *dahanih*, clapper or *zang* and two rings or *halgih*. First, the pipe is heated in the forge and cut with a chisel on the anvil to the appropriate length expected for a bell. Then the piece is reheated, taken with tongs and put on the beak of the anvil, and the end of the pipe struck with a hammer so the bottom part, which is on the beak of the anvil, will be widened. The widened part will be the mouth of the bell. The objective is to have a conical shape. This process has to be repeated several times to reach a conical shape. Jabbar continues striking the head of the conical pipe until it is closed; if it is necessary a red-hot piece is welded to the end to close it. The bell has to be reheated and all the surfaces hammered to have a unified surface. At this stage the conical bell is left in the water to cool down. Later, two half rings are welded inside and outside the head of the bell. A narrow steel rod is taken and heated in the forge and bent on the anvil to become a half ring; at that point it is welded to the bell. The clapper is made out of metal pieces. Small metal pieces are taken and heated in the forge, then hammered to be shaped almost

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[371] Ibid.

like a ball. Then a rod is welded and fastened to the end of the rod attached to the ring inside the head. In this way, a bell is made for the shepherds (figure 5.21).

Another of Jabbar's crafts is horseshoes or *na'l-i asb*. Inhabitants of Masulih believe that horseshoes bring luck to the owner and protect from the evil eye. They fix them either on the ground in their doorways of their houses or in their shops. The sole purpose of the horseshoes is protective. Sometimes tourists buy horseshoes to decorate their rooms. Jabbar's horseshoes are smaller than practical horseshoes. He used to make functional horseshoes based on personal demands, mostly for the inhabitants, but he says: "Once I was in Tehran and I visited an antique shop, full of old objects: there I saw a customer who purchased a horseshoe. I said to myself that maybe in Masulih the tourists would be interested in items such as horseshoes. Once I got to my workshop I made one and put it in my display beside my knives. Soon I sold it to a tourist. After that incident, I began to forge horseshoes and put them in my display."[372]

Another type of craftwork that Jabbar forges is a barbeque tong or *anbūr mangal*. A barbeque tong is for holding, striking and managing the charcoal or *zūghal* inside the barbeque grill or *mangal*. Jabbar makes three kinds of barbeque tongs: a long one, a shorter one and a fancy one. Restaurants in Masulih typically purchase long ones to use for their large barbeque grills. The length of the long one is about fifty centimeters. All the grills consume charcoal for fuel and the tong is beneficial for managing the charcoal. The smaller tongs are for home use and fit the tinier grills. The fancier tong has the shape of the head of a dragon or *Izhdahā* at the head of the tong (figure 5.22). A barbeque tong can connect us to the local lifestyle and the environment. Burning charcoal demands

[372] Ibid.
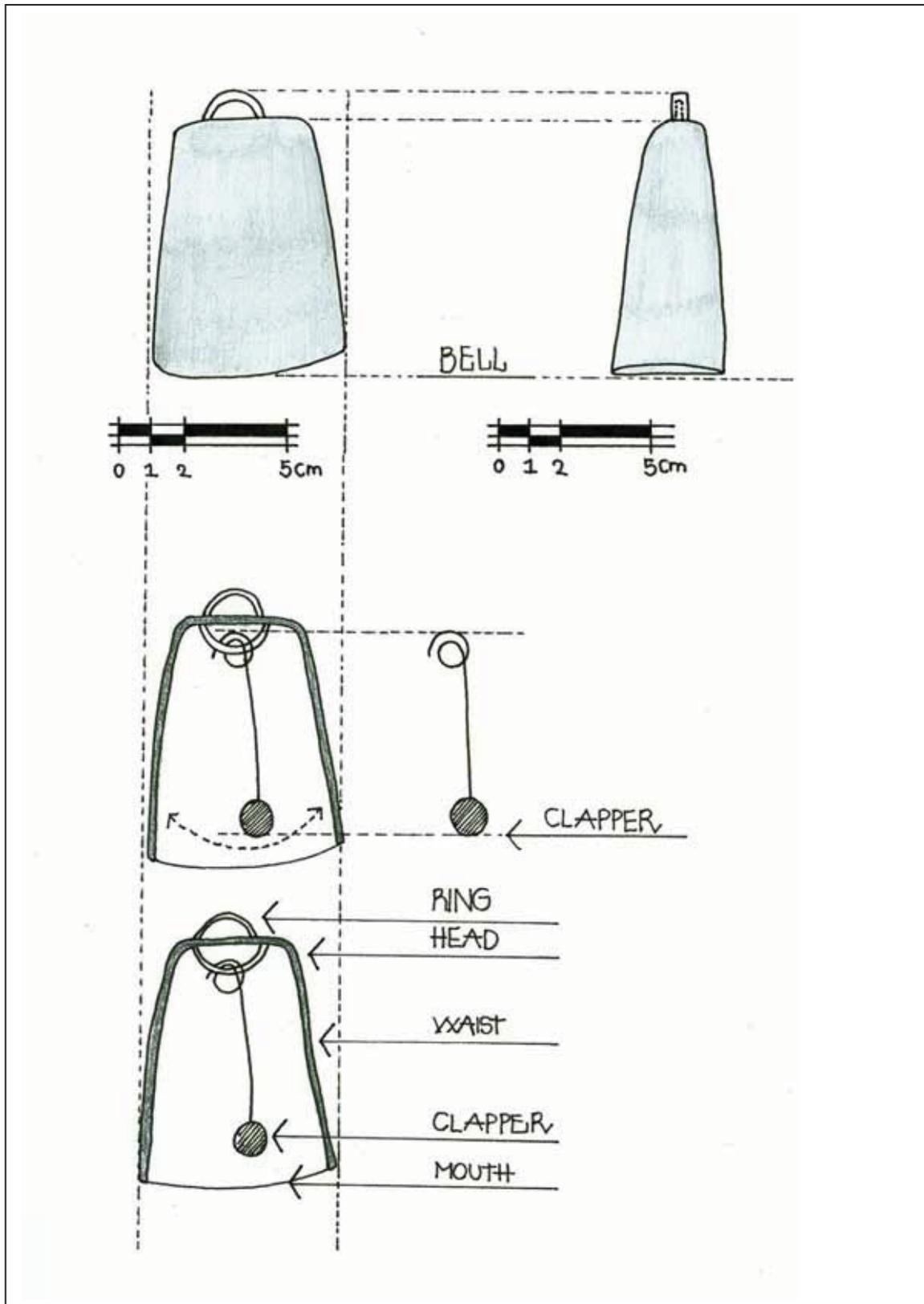
Fig. 5.21. A bell. Drawing by author, 2012.

SMALL TONG

FANCY TONG
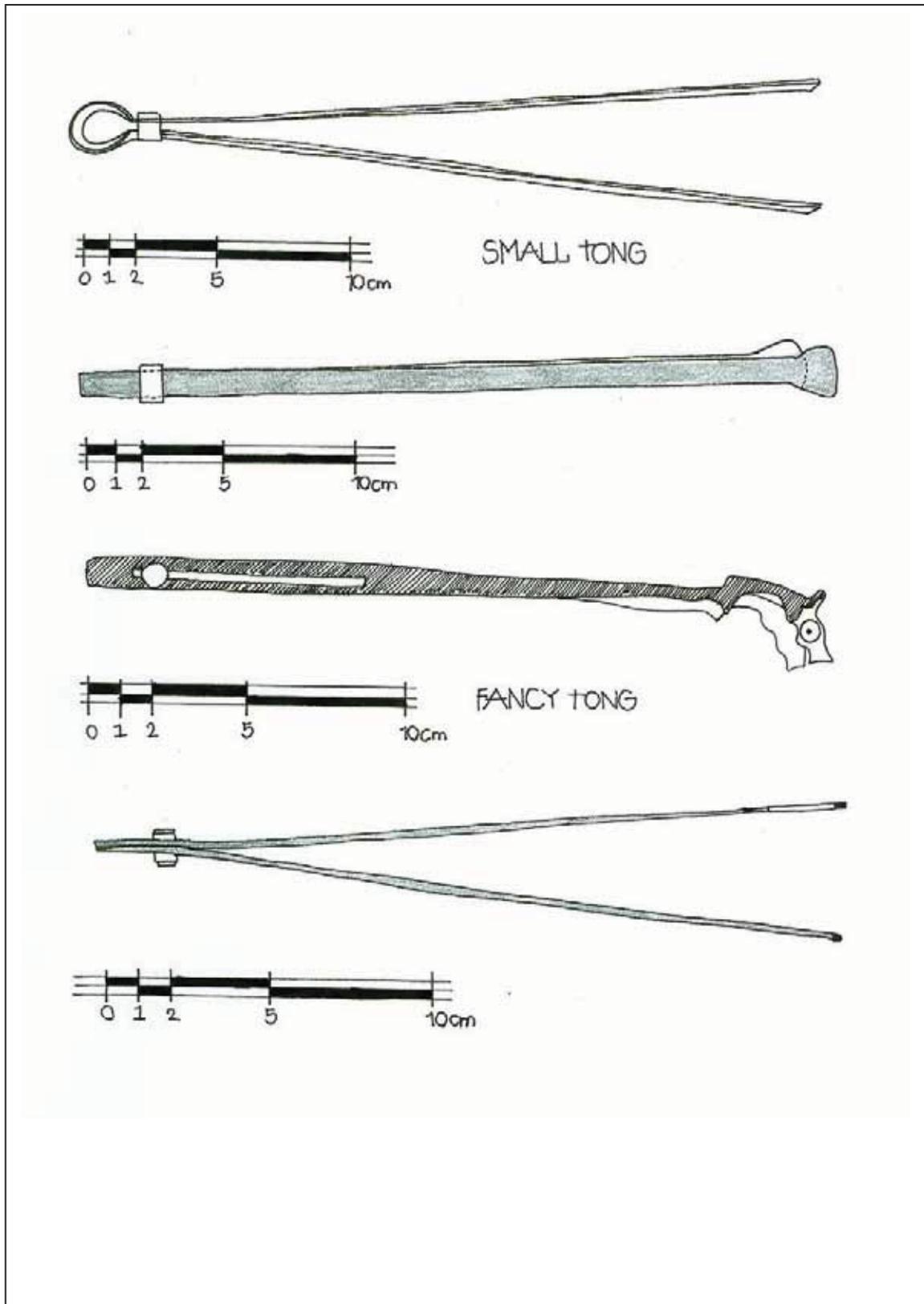
Fig. 5.22. Various tongs. Drawing by author, 2012.

tongs to hold and manage the charcoal in the barbeque, which is widely used in the tea houses and restaurants of Masulih. It is in this context, in which there is a demand for tongs, that Jabbar Sabt-i Hatam makes them. A tool like the tong reveals to us the fact that the people of Masulih still gather around a fire in tea houses, and shows the value within this community of socializing around the fire.

Like Muhammad Ali Farahmand, Jabbar is faced with the hardship of maintaining his profession. Although the thought of parting from Masulih lingers in Jabbar's mind, he is still working in this workshop. Concerning his profession, he says "I have held a hammer in my hand, watched the fire in the forge and forged objects since I was a kid and I am still doing the same thing. Sometimes, I wonder if I can stay longer in this profession. Competing with Chinese products is not easy. My rosary and my praying carpet were made in China. We are so dependent on Chinese stuff. I am curious if one day we will be forced to speak Chinese. We did not used to sell Chinese products in Masulih but during the last decade they gradually filled the shops."[373] Jabbar asked me why someone would travel all the way from Tehran to Masulih to visit this place and then buy an ugly Chinese plastic toy for their children as a souvenir.

About living in Masulih, Jabbar says: "Living in Masulih is different than living in a large city. We help each other a lot. I would sharpen or repair a knife for the butcher and he would give me some meat. I would sharpen a knife for a lady and she would bring me some food or knit something for me. I would repair the oven of the baker and he

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[373] Ibid.

would send me some loaves of bread for a while. These things happen here but not in the

city. I am sure you barely know your neighbor in your city."[374]

5.3 The *Chamush* Workshop of Majid-i Farniā

It was in May 2012 that I stepped into the narrow workshop or *kārgāh* of Ūstād Majid-i

Farniā, where he was surrounded by leather shoes called *chamush* (figures 5.23, 5.24). As

indicated by this *chamush* master weaver or *Ūstād*, "[c]hamush were the traditional shoes

of the Masulih people and worn by everyone. Nowadays they wear plastic *gālesh* or

modern shoes. Merchants of Masulih used to trade *chamush* with Khalkhal and

Zanjān."[375] Majid learned this occupation from his grandfather Ali Akbar Farniā. Ali

Akbar Farniā learned the art of *chamush* weaving from Muhammad Hasan Dabāghi, who

was the father of Hāji ʿizat Dabāghi who has a tea house. Hāji ʿizat Dabāghi was not

interested in learning this profession and became a tea house keeper although his father

was against it. He wanted his son to continue his profession. Majid, however, is interested

in working with leather. About the way he learned shoe making he says "I used to go to

school in Masulih. I spent my afternoons in this workshop with my grandfather. He taught

me everything. My grandfather was a wise person. During his life, he taught this

profession to four people: Karbalai Fath Ali, Farūkh Haniyfih Zād, me and Mashhadi

Allah Sanʿati Dust."[376] Majid is the only one alive; the rest have passed away. His

grandfather passed away in the year 2000. Within the same year Farūkh Haniyfih Zād

[374] Ibid.
[375] Majid-i Farniā, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, May 2012.
[376] Ibid.
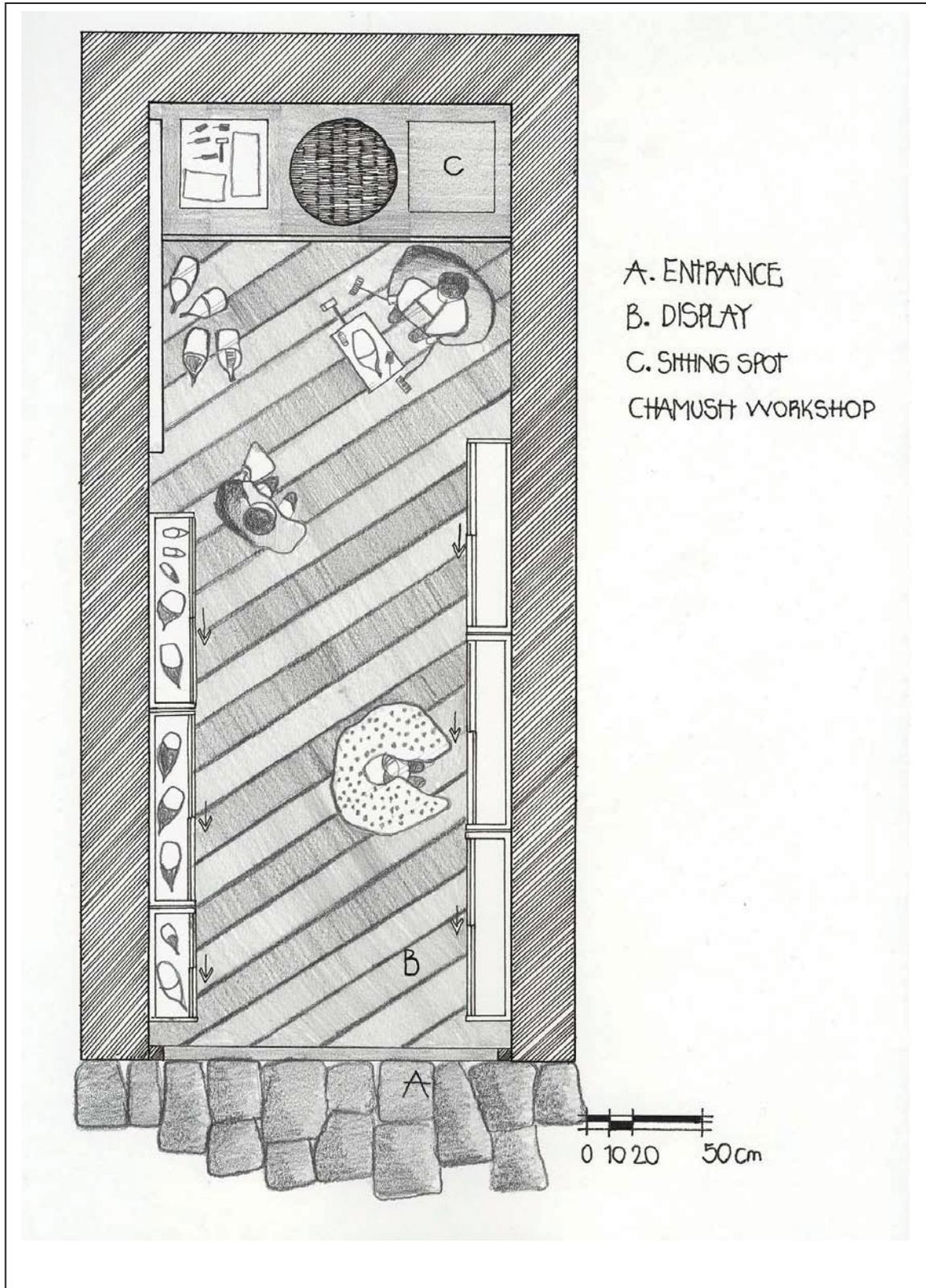
Fig. 5.23. The plan of the *chamush* workshop. Drawing by author, 2013.
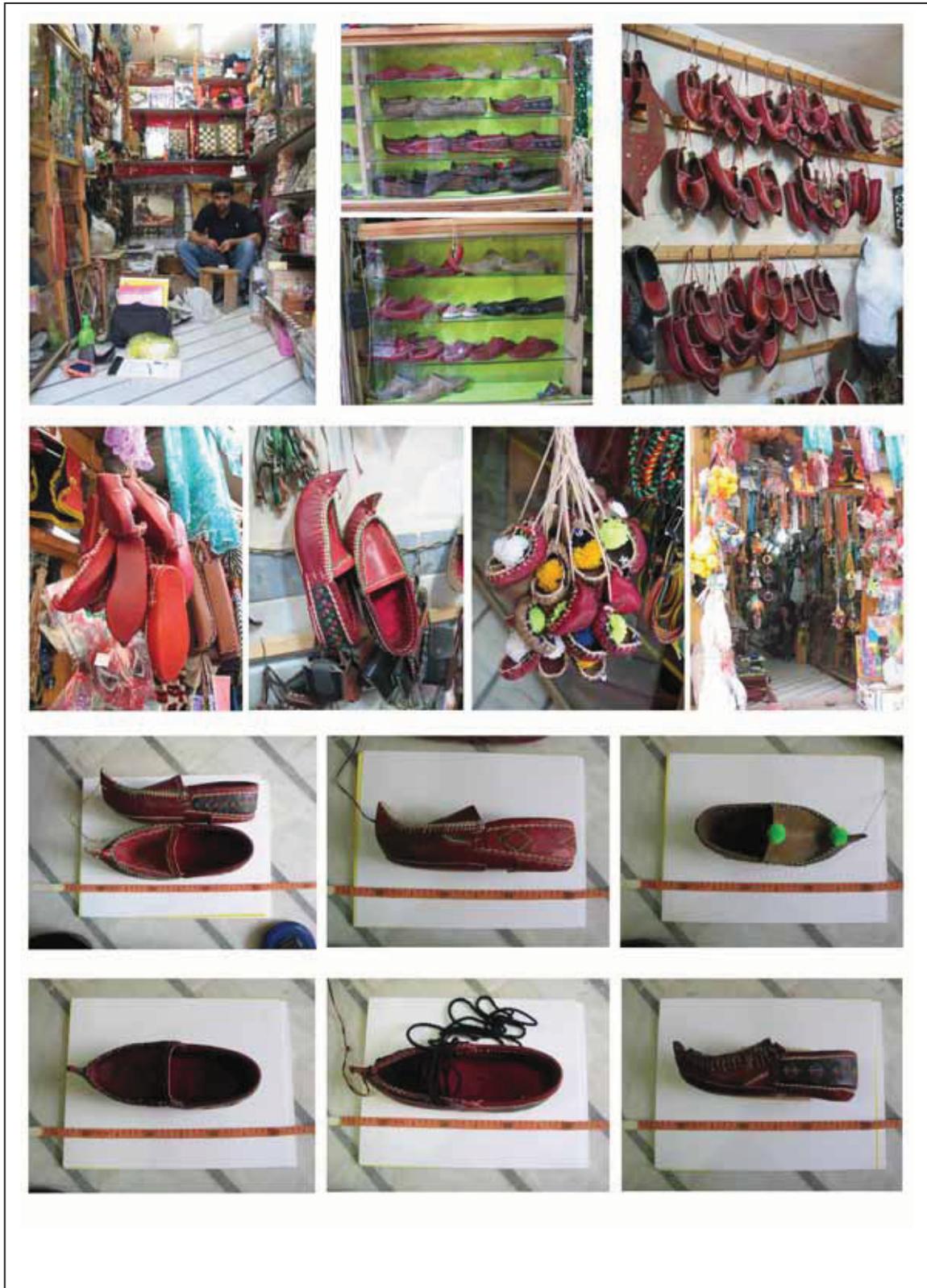
Fig. 5.24. Photographs of the *chamush* workshop, its interior and its artifacts. Photographs by author, 2012.

also passed away. Mashhadi Allah Sanʿati Dust and Karbalai Fath Ali are gone years ago. Majid is the sole master of this craft in Masulih. He was lucky that he spent his afternoons and his summer holidays with his grandfather, and if he had not, this occupation would have vanished in the year 2000. Once, there were three *rāstih* or sections in the bazaar for *chamush* making. All those artisans are gone.

Chamush is a type of shoe entirely made out of leather. It is a light shoe suitable for wood and mountain dwellers. In the plateau of Gilān there are plenty of cattle grazing so the source of leather for *chamush* is cowhide. *Chamush* are different from other shoes; there is no distinction between left and right and no glue is used to weave them. There are two kinds of *chamush*: one with lacing and one without. Traditionally, people wear woollen socks and then the *chamush* on top. During the summertime the feet remain cool inside the *chamush*. In spring and summer it is comfortable to wear *chamush*; by contrast in rain and mud the *chamush* is not an appropriate shoe. It becomes wet immediately.

All Majids' work is dependent on leather. His grandfather always purchased leather which was made in the local tannery or *dabāgh khānih*, which produced leather suitable for making *chamush*. Majid says "Hāj Faraj Allah used to be the master of the *dabāgh khānih*. My grandfather and Hāj Faraj Allah were close friends. I never saw Hāj Faraj Allah myself, but my grandfather used to talk about him a lot. In fact the focus of their occupation, which was leather [*charm*], was the cause of their friendship. My grandfather used to purchase cowhide from Hāj Faraj Allah. Leather from cowhide [*charm-i gāv*] must go through a series of operations in order to be suitable for working."[377] A cowhide has three layers: the first layer is hair and hair roots, the second layer is the main body of

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[377] Ibid.

leather and the third layer is the skin's fat. All leather workers need the main body of leather. It is the main job of tanners to produce workable *charm* for the leather workers.

About the leather from Masulih's *dabāgh khānih*, Majid says:

> Hāj Faraj Allah used to purchase cowhide from the butcher. His first job was washing the cowhides of blood, dirt and dung. The washing used to be done in Masulih Rud Khan River. The inhabitants were always complaining to Hāj Faraj Allah about polluting the river constantly, so after many negotiations he was given one day per week to wash all his cowhides in the river. On that particular day, no one would use the river. In the next step, the cowhide was treated to loosen its hairs and fat. First the cowhide was exposed to the sun for some days, so the hair roots started to rot. Afterwards the cowhide was soaked in alkaline liquor [*āb-i āhak*] and salt solution [*āb-i namak*] for some extra days to lose its hairs. Then Hāj Faraj Allah would spread the cowhides on a wooden bar and with a knife he would scrape the hairs and the fat from the cowhide. Again for fifteen days Hāj Faraj Allah would soak the cowhides in salt solution and beat the hides every day. Afterwards he would expose the hides to the sun to be dried. At this point, the cowhides were washed again to be entirely clean. For dyeing the leather, Hāj Faraj Allah used to soak the leather in a pit filled with water and ground pomegranate skins. Hāj Faraj Allah used to purchase pomegranate skins from Rasht, transfer them to Masulih and leave it in the blacksmith shop beside the forge to dry. Then he would grind the pomegranate skins and use them for dyeing. After applying pomegranate skins to the pits, gradually the leather would turn reddish. The next stage was *piy zani*, in which Hāj Faraj Allah would apply cow fat to the hides so the hides became soft and workable. The last part was beating the hides to become flat. At this stage the leather was ready.[378]

About the tannery of Hāj Faraj Allah, Majid-i Farniā says:

> The tannery of Hāj Faraj Allah was outside Masulih, because no one could bear the smell of his workshop. He always smelled terribly; everyone avoided him. When he wanted to pray in the mosque, he had to go to the public bath, take a bath and change his entire clothes. Even then, he was avoided as well. My grandfather used to say that people needed leather shoes in those days, otherwise they would certainly have expelled Hāj Faraj Allah from Masulih. His workshop was outside Masulih, beside the Masulih Rud Khan River. Every day, he used to walk along the river upstream to reach his workshop

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[378] Ibid.

with his mule. My grandfather used to visit him in the workshop and purchase leather from him. His workshop consisted of a log cabin with wooden shingles, some pits which had been dug in the ground and some wooden structures for drying the hides. He would prepare some tea for my grandfather in his cabin. They would sit on the ground on pieces of cowhide and drink some tea beside the heater. Sometimes, he had customers from Fuman and Maklavan. Hāj Faraj Allah spent most of his time in his tannery. My grandfather helped Hāj Faraj Allah to maintain the cabin every spring. They had to replace the broken wooden shingles, replace rotten roof timbers and maintain the site. Sometimes he and my grandfather used to repair the cabins of wood and mountain dwellers and in return they would be offered butter, milk, cheese and bread. Hāj Faraj Allah passed away some years before my grandfather in his house. His workshop turned into a stable for some time and was then abandoned. Some wood dwellers say that the workshop has been washed away by recent floods. I do not know any tannery around so I have to use synthetic leather. I purchase it from dealers in Tabriz. I do not know the makers; I just know that the leather is factory made. My grandfather used to purchase leather cheaper than me. My grandfather and Hāj Faraj Allah were friends; he used to help Hāj Faraj Allah to maintain his workshop and in return Hāj Faraj Allah would give him discounts on leather. By contrast, I have to deal with the selling department of a factory. The price of leather has risen due to economic hardship so I have to buy more expensive leather. More costly leather means that I have to sell my *chamush* as more expensive. An increase in price could lead me to the end of my profession since fewer people could afford to purchase my shoes.[379]

With all the difficulties that Majid-i Farniā faces, he still weaves *chamush* in his workshop. The principal tools for weaving *chamush* are waxy thread or *nakh-i sham'i*, sewing needles or *suzan*, a stitching awl or *kuk zan* for making holes in stiff leather, a wing divider or *khat zan* for marking a line on the leather, a knife or *gazan* and scissors or *giychi* for leather cutting, a rotary punch or *surakh zan* for punching holes in the leather, a *charm kub* or mallet for beating and pressing the leather, and a log or *tanih dirakht* as a working area. Majid's working spot is at the end of the shop. He sits on a low stool in

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[379] Ibid.

front of a log while he sews shoes. Majid's view from his working spot is limited to the pedestrian path and the shops in front of his workshop.

Every shoe that Majid sews in his workshop has a vamp or *ruiyh kafsh*, a heel section or *pashnih*, a seam line or *khat-i darze*, a bottom edge or *labih zir*, a top edge or *labih bala* and a sole or *takht-i kafsh*. Majid prefers to make small-scale decorative *chamush* rather than full-scale shoes due to the high cost of the final product (figures 5.25, 5.26). Customers and tourists also prefer to buy the decorative *chamush* because of the price. For making decorative *chamush* Majid needs patterns or *ūlgu*. All the parts – the sole, vamp, and heel section – need *ūlgu*. They help Majid to know the size of every part. The patterns are cut on either thick paper or aluminum foil and then assembled to see the initial shape of the *chamush*. Afterwards the patterns are fixed on a piece of leather and Majid begins to cut the leather with a knife. The pattern helps Majid to cut the pieces in their actual sizes. Once he has the sizes, he takes a wing divider to mark lines on the pieces where holes should be punched. With a stitching awl, he makes holes at regular distances. At this stage the pieces can be sewn together with waxy thread and two needles: the vamp is sewn to the heel section and the sole to the heel section. Majid makes his own waxy thread. He takes wax or *sham'* and a thread or *nakh* and slides and presses the thread over the wax surface to become waxy. This process should be repeated two or three times so the thread absorbs the wax totally. Wax increases the strength of the thread and makes it smoother and easier to work with. To sew the two pieces together, Majid takes two needles and a piece of thread and begins sewing in the center of the thread. Before sewing, he has made holes that line up with each other in the sides of the two pieces of leather. Majid holds the pieces together and starts sewing the pieces of leather together using the holes. With one needle he sews from the front of the pieces of
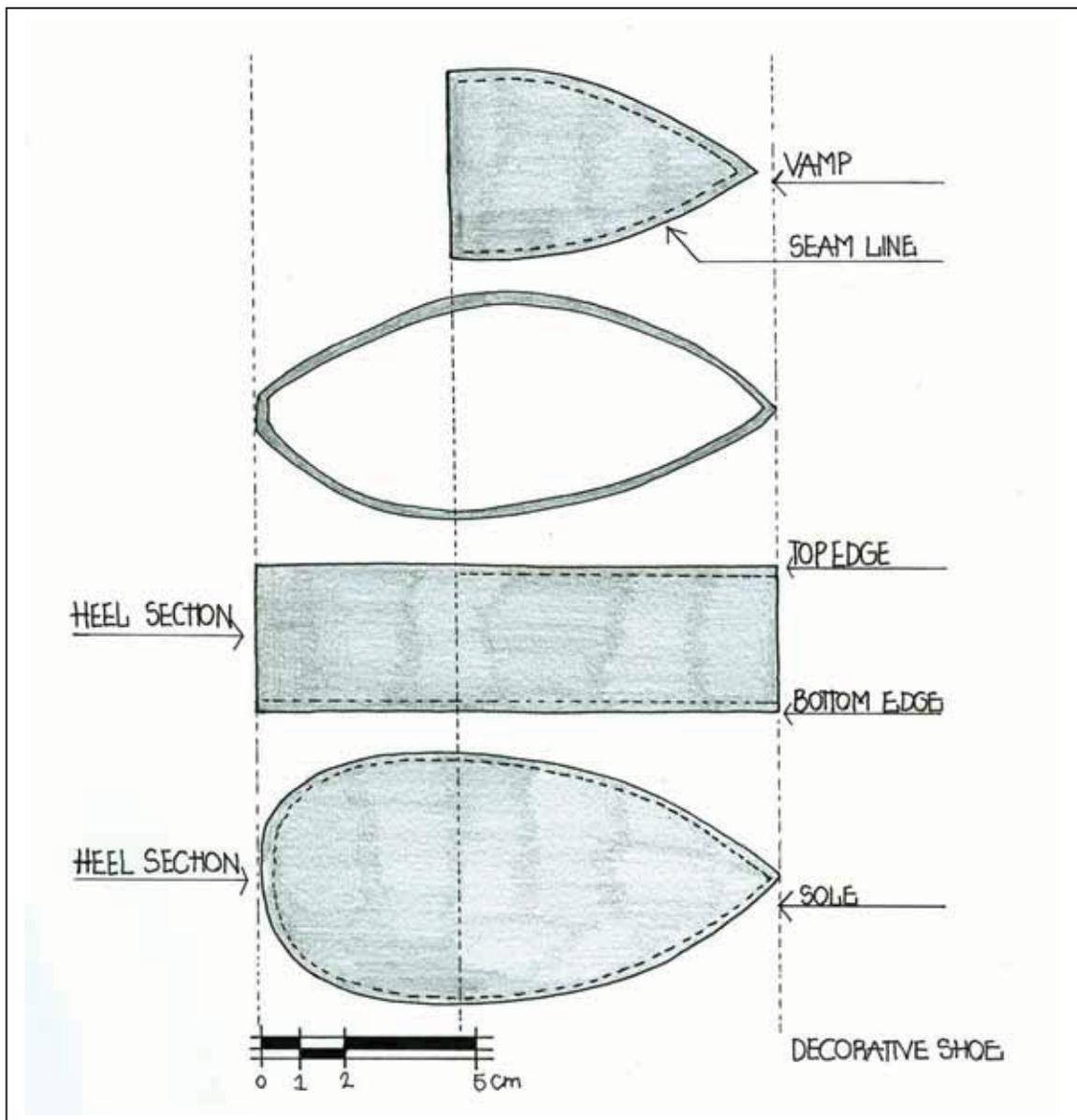
Fig. 5.25. Decorative *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
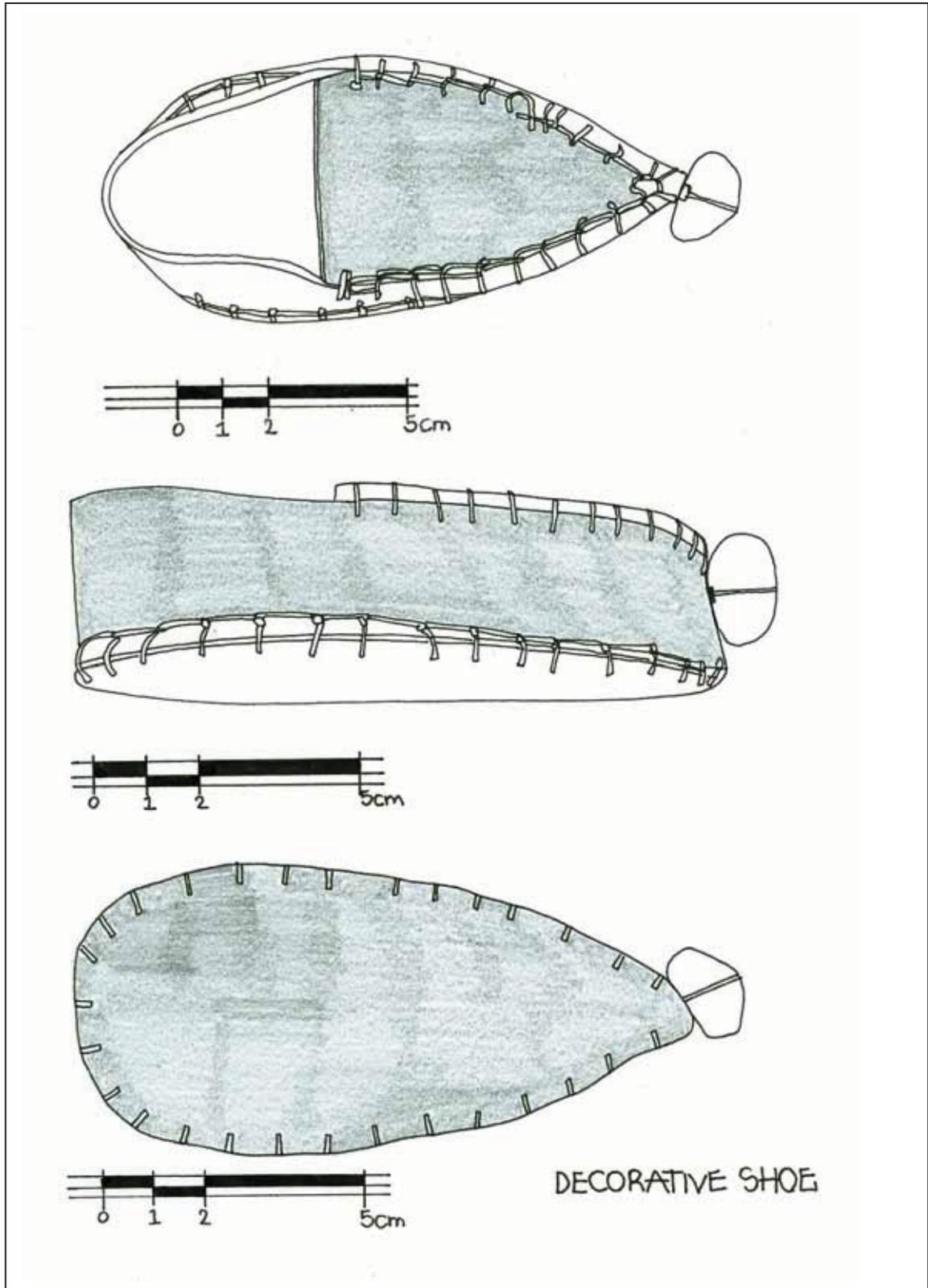
Fig. 5.26. Decorative *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.

leather to the back, then he goes to the next hole and sews from the back to the front. Then he changes the needle and sews from front to back in the second hole and again from front to back. With the same needle he goes to the third hole. Then he changes the needle and sews from front to back and repeats. Then he goes to the next hole and sews twice from front to back. He repeats this process until he has sewn the two pieces completely together to complete the *chamush*. He can make five to seven decorative *chamush* per day.

Majid Farniā also makes full-scale *chamush* in his workshop. A full-scale *chamush* consists of six leather parts. One piece of leather is needed for the main body of the shoe, which covers the entire shoe. Two pieces are needed for the sole, one for the vamp and two for the heel cover. Before making the actual *chamush*, the patterns should be cut on a board or thick paper or aluminum foil and assembled to see the initial work. Once he has the dimensions, Majid cuts the leather pieces using the patterns. First the heel cover should be sewed to the main piece of leather. Half the heel cover leather is sewed inside the shoe and the other half outside the shoe. Then the vamp is sewed to the main piece of leather, then two supportive leather pieces are sewed to the sole (figure 5.27).

Chamush have decorations or *taziynāt* so *taziynāt* should be applied to them as well (figure 5.28). Majid sews three lines of green, white and red on the vamp. He takes a wing divider and marks the three lines on the vamp. Then with a stitching awl or *kuk zan* he makes holes in the vamp at equal distances and then sews them with threads. For the heel cover green, red and white threads are sewed onto the black leather. The three threads fasten the black leather to the heel section, which also decorates the heel section. Majid has five types of decoration patterns for the heel section. All these patterns are
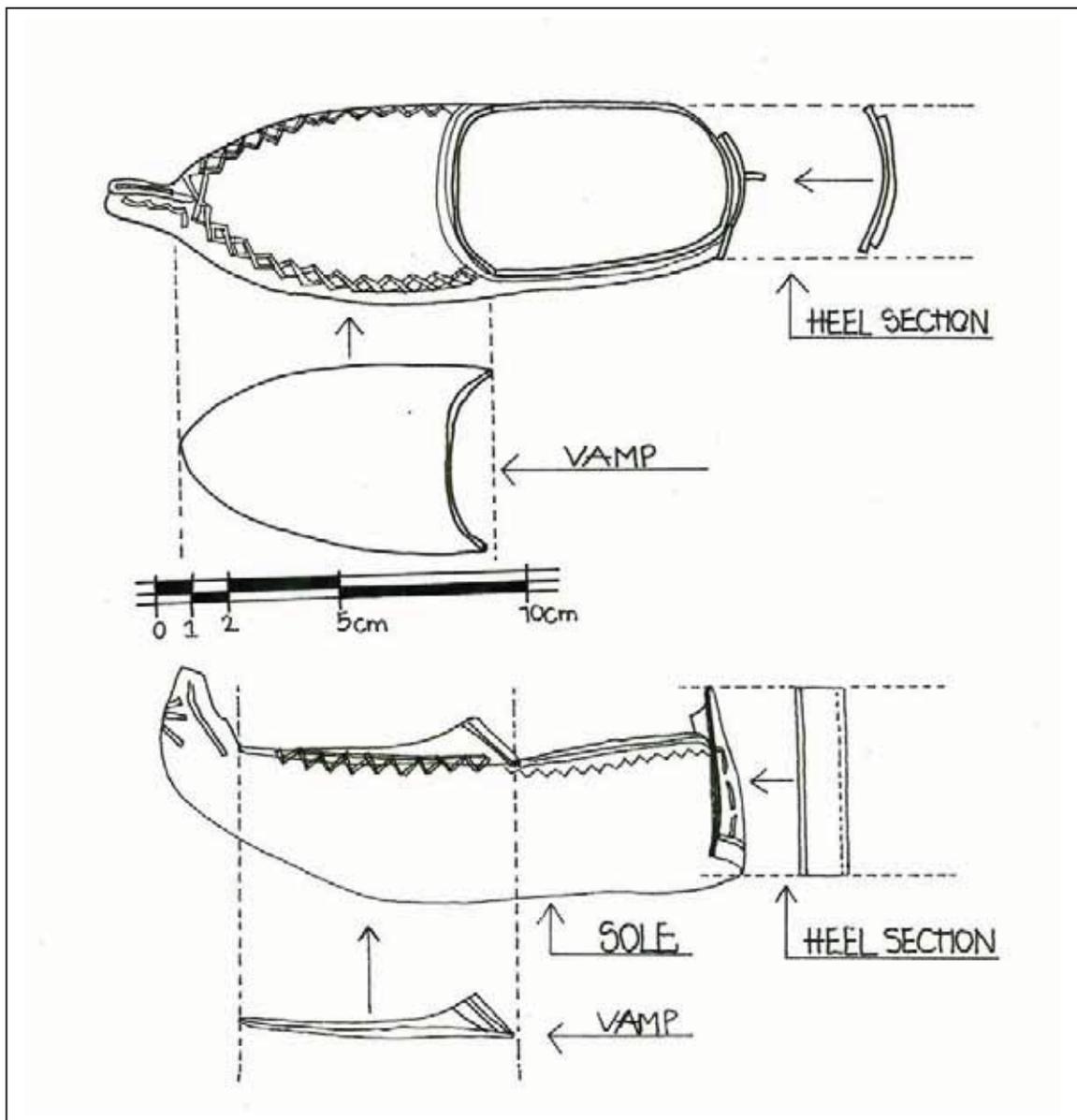
Fig. 5.27. Full-scale *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
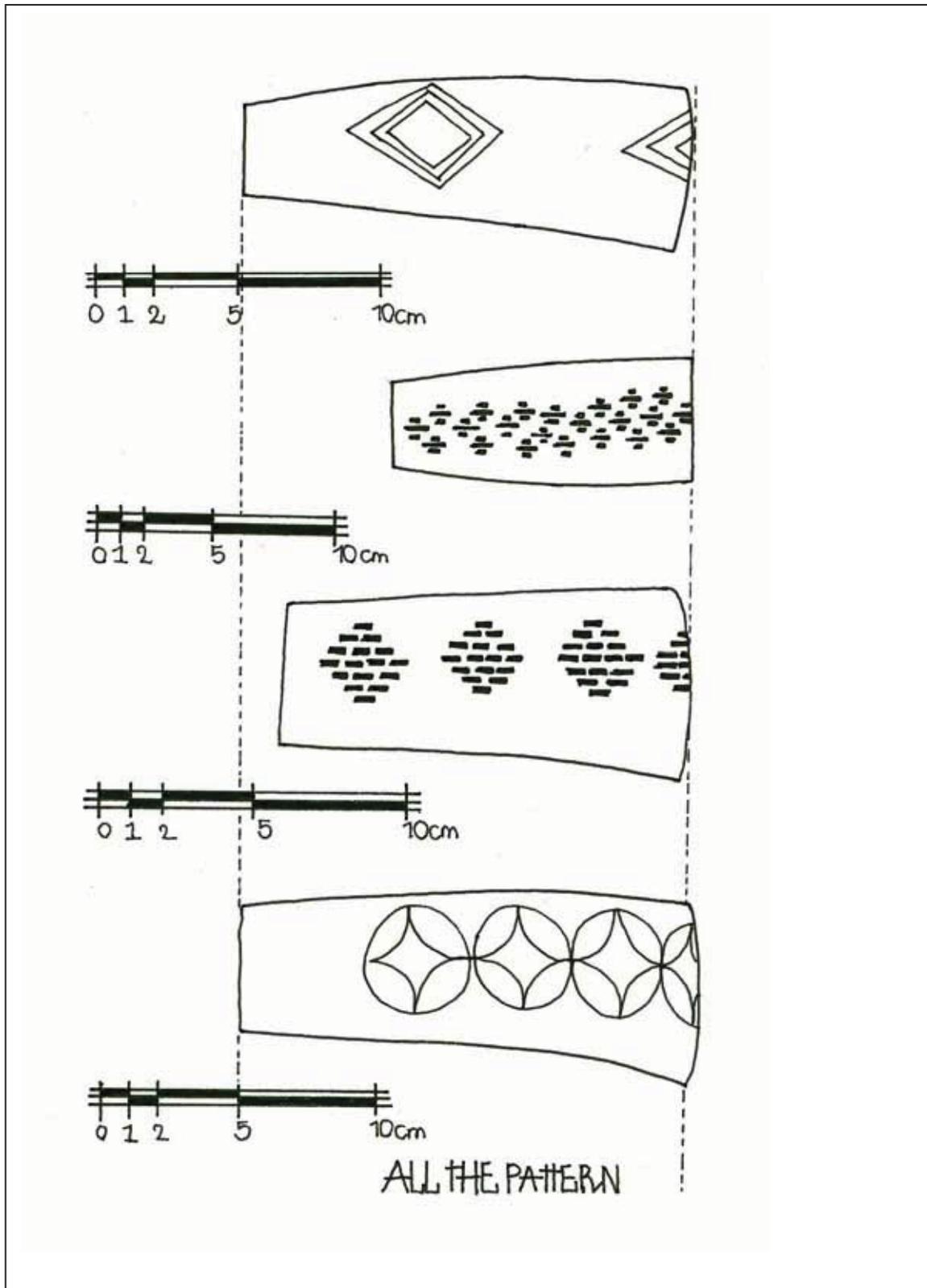
Fig. 5.28. Patterns woven on *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.

made by sewing with red, white and green threads. For the inside, glue is applied to fasten velvet fabric. Velvet is a soft fabric and suitable for *chamush*.

It takes Majid four to five days to sew one pair of *chamush* and they usually wait a long time in his display before they are sold (figures 5.29 to 5.31). About selling his shoes, Majid says "Sometimes it takes more than a year to sell a pair of *chamush*. Due to the price, only art collectors or people interested in handmade items are interested in purchasing them. Since I have been working in this workshop, I have made around thirty pairs of *chamush*, but unfortunately I can rarely sell them. To make a living I purchase small items which tourists usually like and sell them."[380]

Regarding the decline of *chamush*, Majid Farniā says that "when the plastic *gālesh* were popularized, *chamush* became decorative and declined in usage and production. As a result, the *rāstih chamush duzan* [the *chamush* weaving section of the bazaar] started to abandon the profession. Plastic *gālesh* were cheaper and lighter than leather *chamush* and required less effort to make. I am the last *Ūstād* [master] of this craft in Masulih."[381] Overall, it could be said that shoe making is no longer Majid's principal job. The front part of his workshop is filled with plastic Chinese toys, as well as rosaries, masks and so on. Majid only hangs the small decorative *chamush* in front of his shop. The larger shoes are removed to the end of the workshop or placed inside the displays in the shop. Majid either hangs his *chamush* to the hooks which are fixed to the wall at the end of the workshop or arranges them inside the displays. A stranger would hardly recognize that Majid is a skilled shoemaker without entering the shop and scanning the displays inside

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[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.
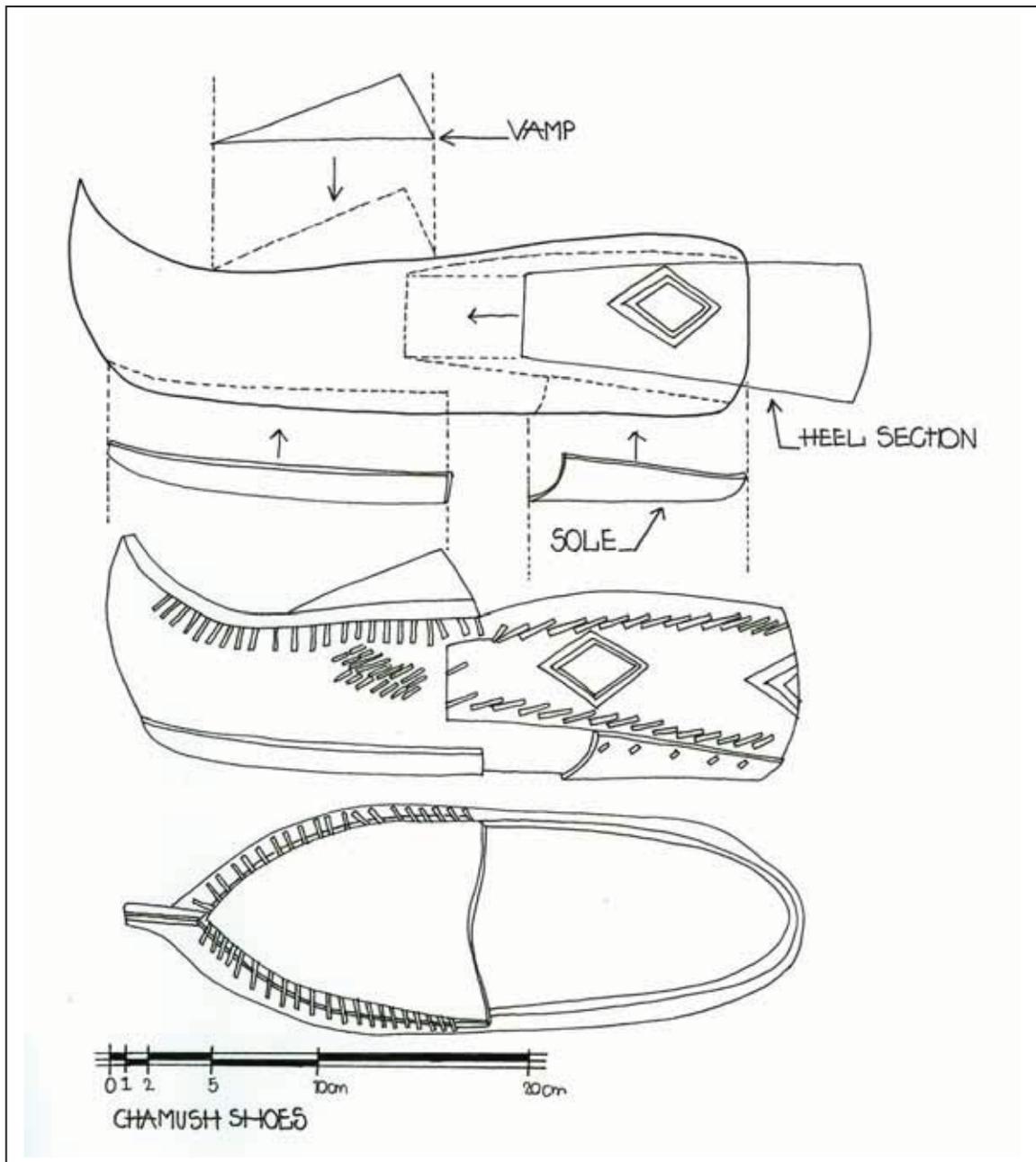
Fig. 5.29. All the parts of a *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
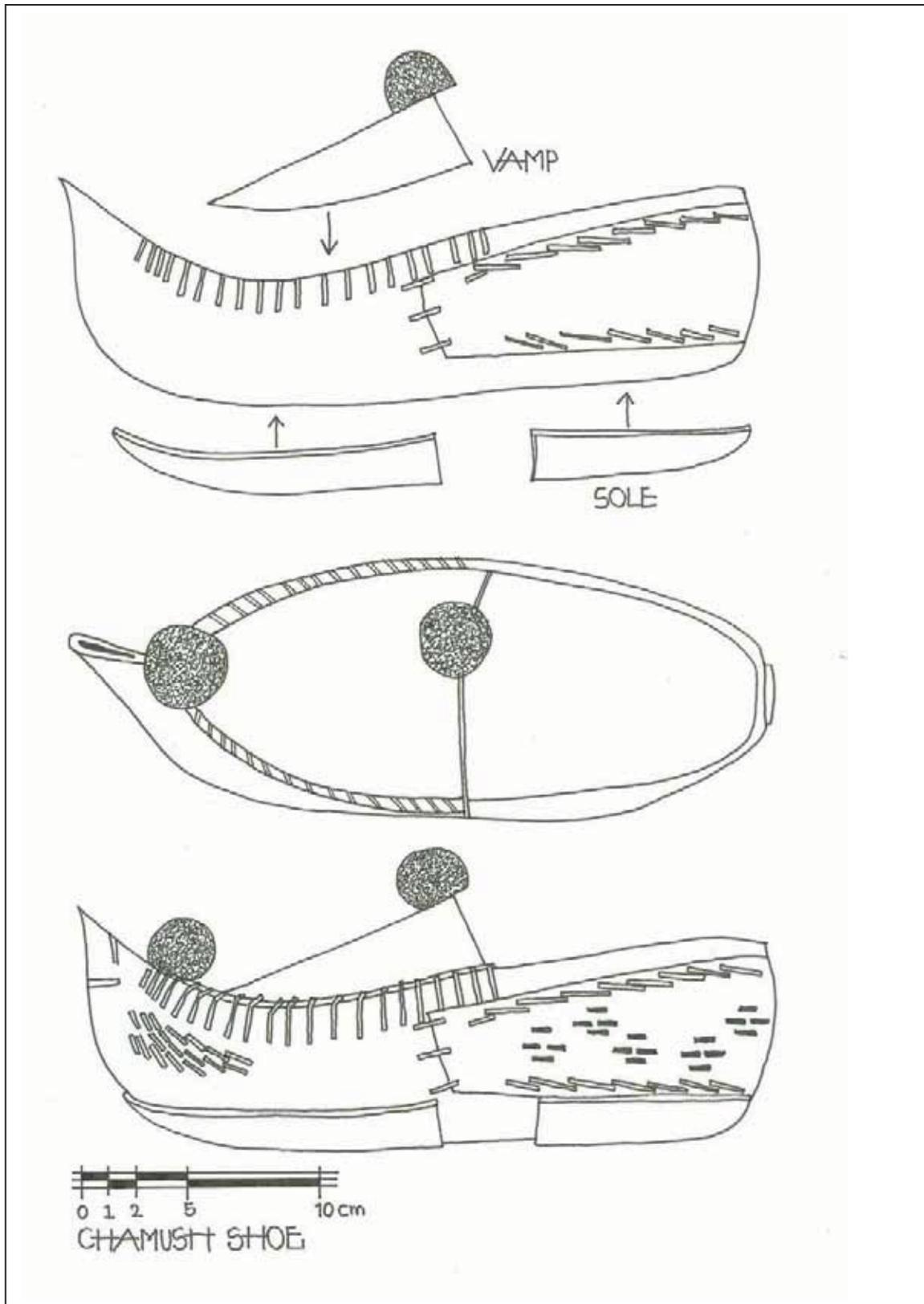
Fig. 5.30. A child-sized *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
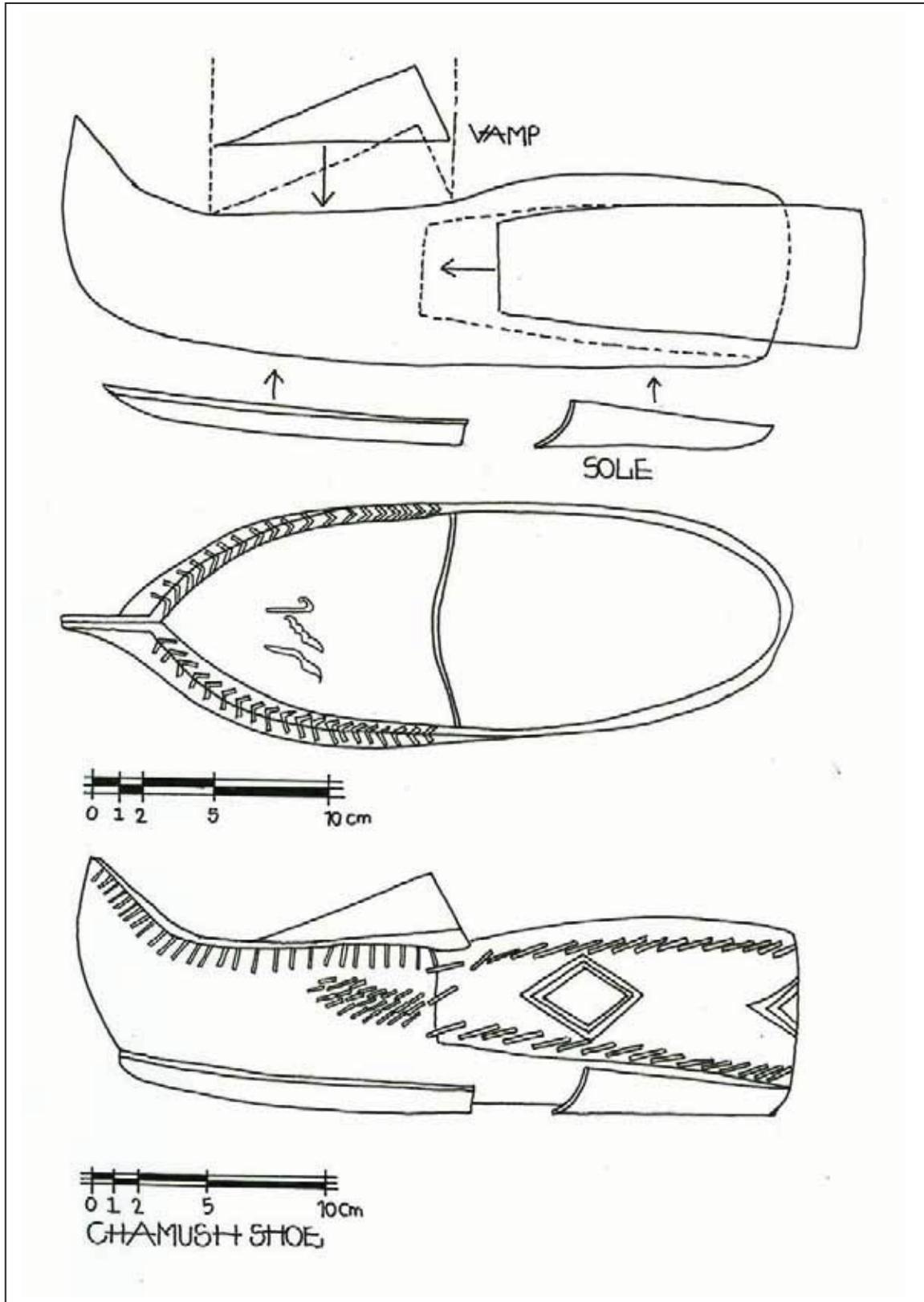
Fig. 5.31. An adult-sized *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.

or the wall at the end of the workshop. My interviews with Majid Farniā demonstrate that a shift from locally woven *chamush* to factory-made ones happened years ago. It also reveals tourists' interest in cheap Chinese products, and that the affordability and convenience of plastic *gālesh* was a major reason for the decline of *chamush*.

5.4 Rashid-i Askar-pur's Cookie Shop

Above Rashid-i Askar-pur's tiny, humble cookie shop is a small blue plaque with "NO. 439" written on it (figures 5.32 to 5.34). Another blue plaque bears the words:

Masulih presents
Rashid-i Askar-pur cookies with walnuts
Of excellent quality
The delicious cookies of Masulih

Beside this plaque is a white sheet of paper pasted to the wall with this inscription:

Cookies with walnuts
125 Tuman each

In the front wall of the shop is a narrow, metal-framed box with an opening at each end, which functions as a window to allow the exchange of products and money. The box is movable so that every day it can be transported in and out, allowing the opening and closing of the shop. There is one large wooden double door for this purpose. It opens from the middle and each part folds to one side of the shop.

It is large enough inside the shop for two people to stand. Its walls are covered with tiles. At the back of the shop there is an oven for baking the cookies. A metal exhaust pipe runs from the top of the oven to the entrance. There are usually two people running the shop: one making the cookies and the other selling them. Rashid-i Askar-pur sits on a
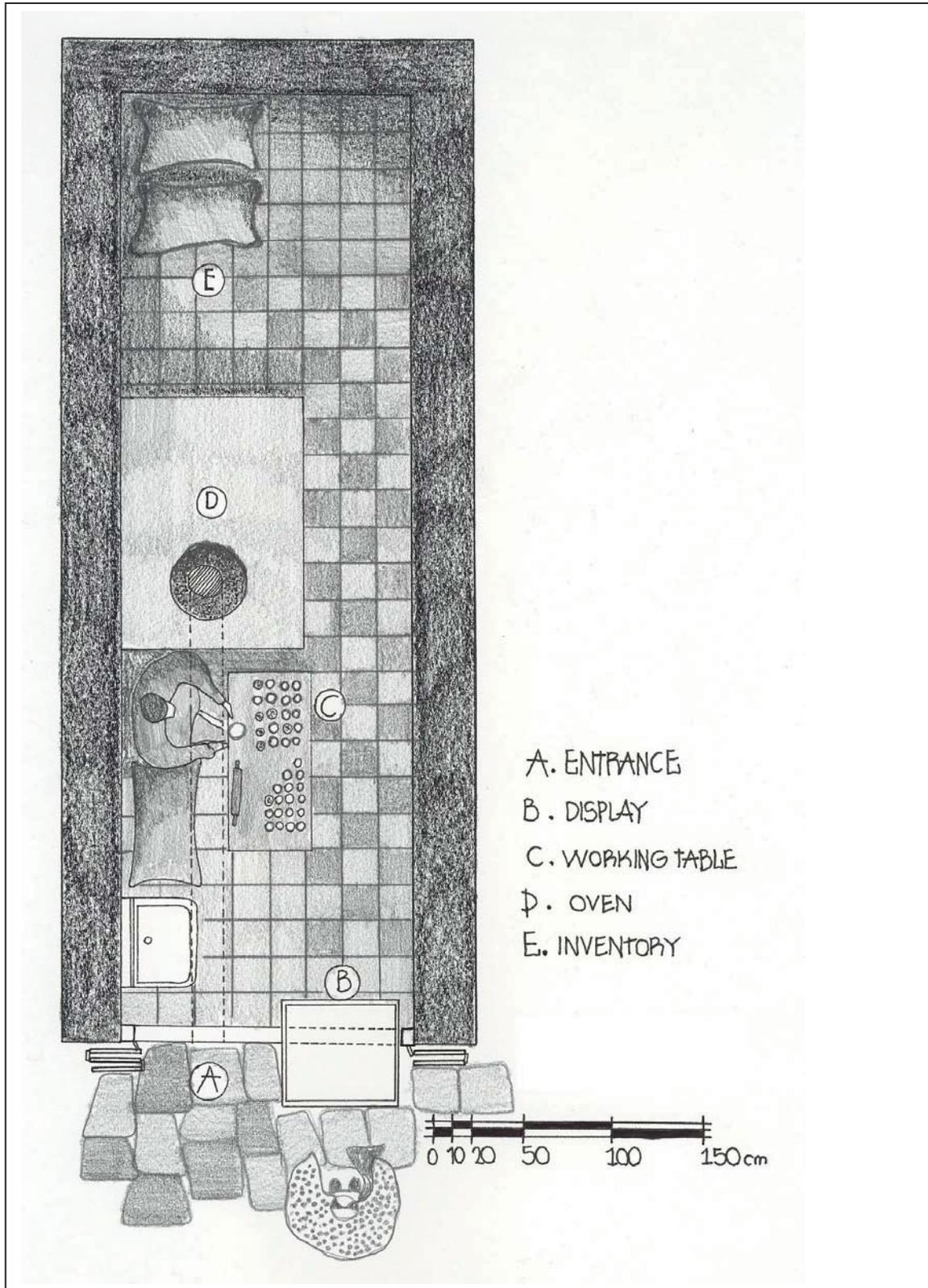
Fig. 5.32. Plan of Rashid-i Askar-pur's cookie shop. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.33. Rashid-i Askar-pur at work. Photograph by author, 2012.
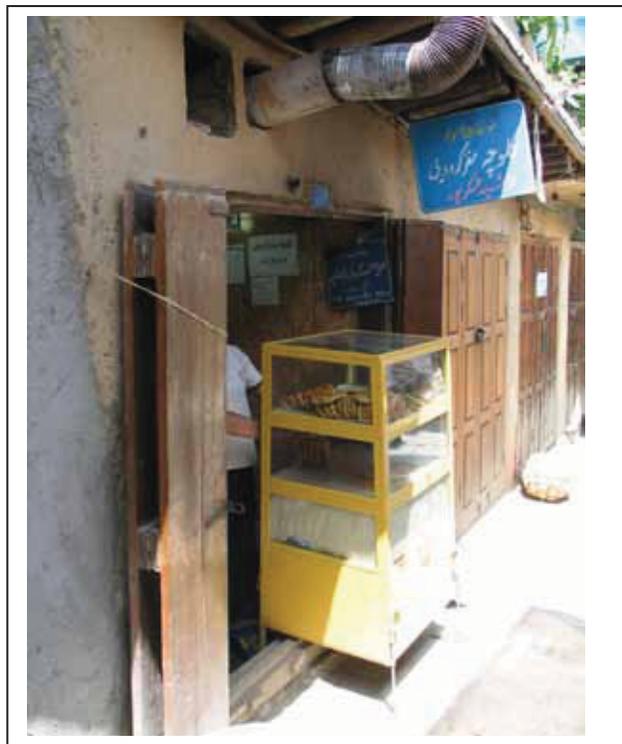
Fig. 5.34. Rashid-i Askar-pur's cookie shop. Photograph by author, 2012.

bench with a metal table with a stone cover in front of him that functions as a work area. A stool with a pot of walnut powder on top sits next to the desk. Rashid takes a certain number of cookies from another pot, lines them up in a row and flattens them with a wooden rolling pin before spreading walnut powder and some herbs on their surface and stamping the cookies with a wooden stamp with the word "Masulih" inscribed inside a circle. Finally, Rashid places the cookies in the oven for baking. After cooking, the cookies are placed in a wooden box to cool. This process continues throughout the day while Rashid-i Askar-pur stands behind the window selling the cookies. The customers purchase the final product as a package containing ten cookies or less, depending on how many they would like.

Rashid's workshop is part of the rows of shops in the bazaar: his shop is the same height as the other shops and has similar wooden folding doors to open and close the workshop. From Rashid's working table, his view is limited to the narrow bazaar's path and the shops in front of his shop. This level of the bazaar, where Rashid's workshop, Majid-i Farniā's workshop and Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam's workshop are located, is generally more crowded than the higher levels where Hasan-i Gūlshan's workshop and Jalil-i Ashjāri's workshop are located. The customers usually stand in front of Rashid's displays and purchase their cookies; sometimes with warm cookies in hand, they sit on the benches of one of the tea houses and drink tea with cookies.

Rashid has been working in this workshop for twenty-one years. Before that he worked in his father's bakery with his brother Shūjāʿ-i Askar-pur. It was in the year 1991 that Rashid purchased this workshop and began baking cookies. The workshop runs during the spring and summer when there are customers for the cookies. In autumn and winter Rashid only bakes on Thursdays and Fridays. During the New Year holidays in

March, he sells a lot of cookies. For almost two weeks Rashid works more than twelve

hours a day. He begins baking at six in the morning and continues until midnight. Rashid

bakes cookies for *khiyrāt*, especially in the first night of the month of Rajab,[382] and for

the *Imāmzādih* and mosque as well. During the month of Ramazan, when everyone is

fasting, Rashid bakes cookies for the tea houses of Shūjāʿ and Hāji ʿizat. Men sit in the

tea house and drink tea with their cookies after the *azān* which is a call for prayer. Rashid

can bake around five hundred to six hundred cookies per day. He is the only cookie-

maker in Masulih.

5.5 Hasan-i Gūlshan's Scissors Workshop

Above the Qanbar Abād Mosque is the scissor or *giychi* workshop of Hasan-i Gūlshan

(figures 5.35 to 5.37). Hasan has been working in this workshop or *kārgāh* for forty years.

His principal occupation is forging scissors for the shepherds or *chupān-ha*, but he

occasionally forges knives for customers. During the spring and summer, the herds or

galih graze in the vicinity of Masulih. The shepherds use the scissors that Hasan forges in

early spring and late summer for shearing the wool of the sheep. One of the tasks that

every shepherd should know is how to shear a sheep. There used to be a lot of herds

around Masulih but during the past three decades the government has banned grazing in

the pasturelands and woods. They claim that the mountain and wood dwellers illegally cut

trees in the reserved national parks and sell it in the villages; also their herds should not

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[382] *Khiyrāt* is a type of religious dedication. One form of *khiyrāt* is done by distributing free food to
people – usually people purchase dates, cookies, pastries and distribute them freely to everyone. They do
this to remind everyone about the souls of their relatives who have passed away. The people who eat the
cookies pray for the dead person and recite blessings for them. The month of Rajab is a special month in
Muslims calendar. There are recommended prayers for this month, and this is the time when people usually
do their *khiyrāt*.
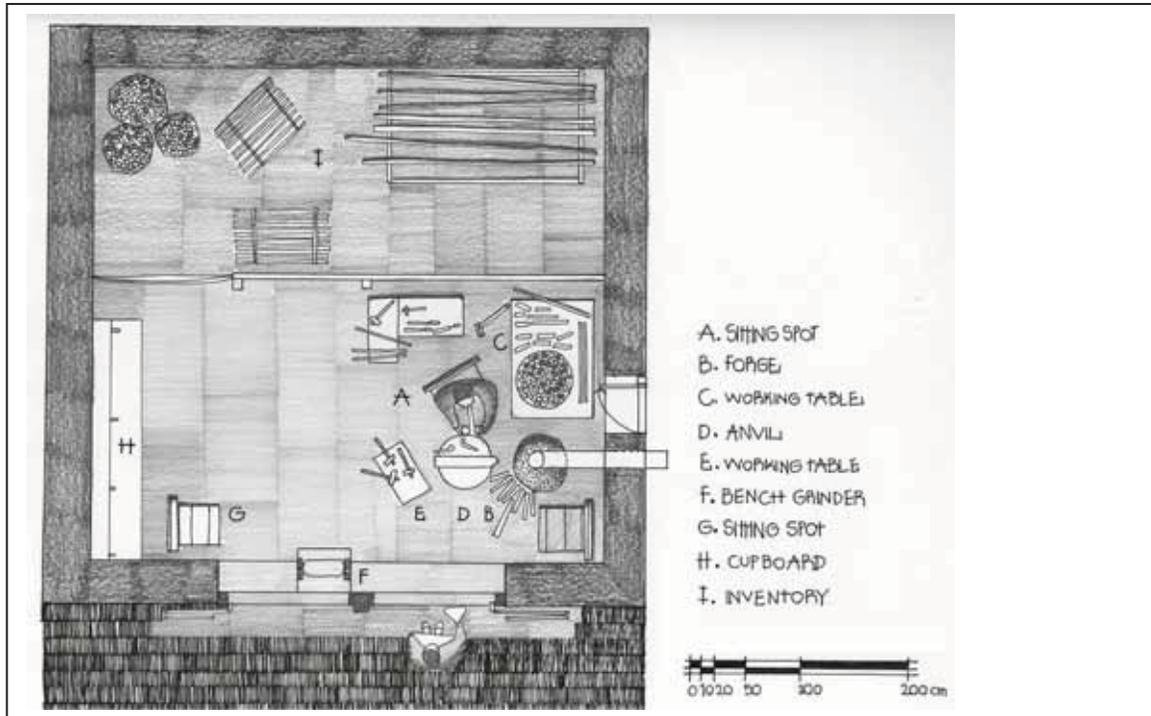
Fig. 5.35. Plan of Hasan-i Gūlshan's scissors workshop. Drawing by author, 2013.

A. SITTING SPOT
B. FORGE
C. WORKING TABLE
D. ANVIL
E. WORKING TABLE
F. BENCH GRINDER
G. SITTING SPOT
H. CUPBOARD
I. INVENTORY
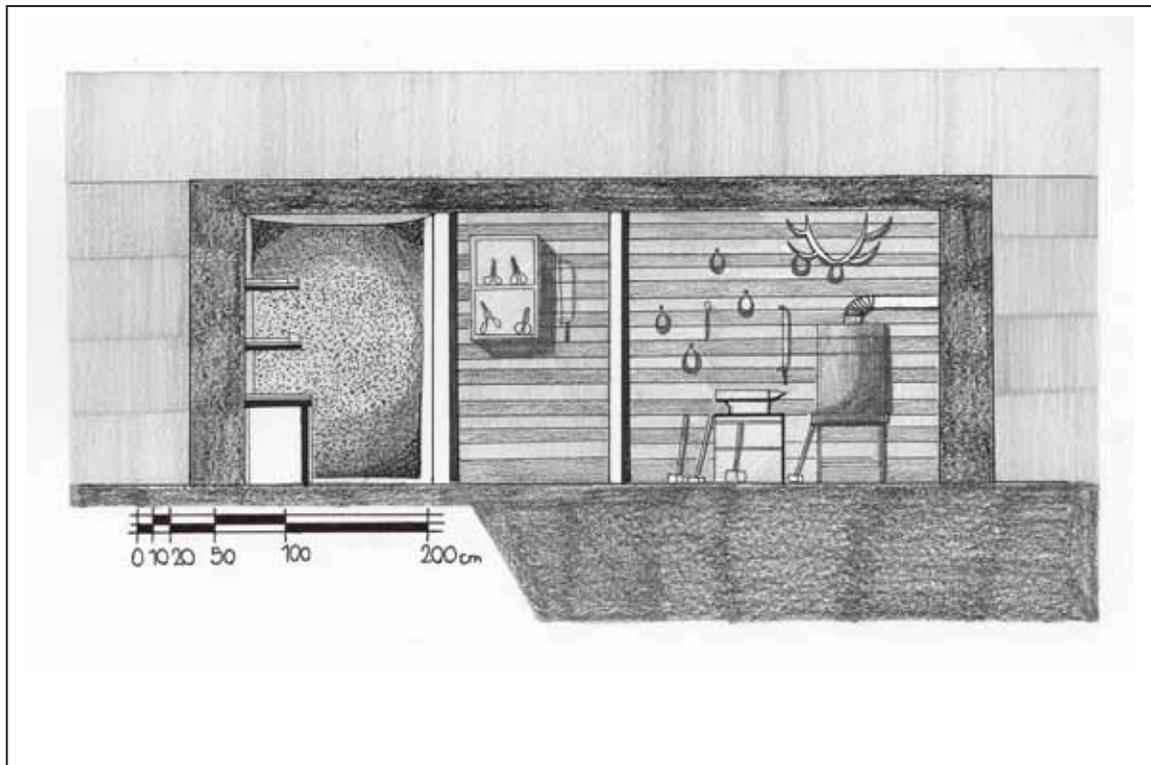
Fig. 5.36. Section of the workshop. Drawing by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.37. Photographs of the scissors workshop and its interior. Photographs by author, 2012.

graze in these reserved areas. As a result, fewer shepherds have managed to stay in the vicinity of Masulih. Hasan's occupation and his workshop are entirely dependent on the shepherds. No one else could use Hassan's' scissors; they are specifically made for shearing the wool of sheep. Whenever a shepherd visits Masulih, he brings butter, cream, milk, cheese and oil with him and sells it to the shopkeepers in the bazaar. If their scissors need any repair or sharpening, they visit his workshop.

Tahir-i Armand is a shepherd who lives 10km away from Masulih in the Andarih grazing lands. Taher visits Masulih in spring and summer to sell wool and salted cheese and occasionally visits Hasan-i Gūlshan to repair or purchase new shearing scissors. The task of shearing connects this maker of scissors and shepherd, establishing a friendship. However, the Office of Natural Resources is demanding the abandonment of animal husbandry in this region, and as a result the demand for Hasan's scissors will be over in the future, as will be the practice of animal husbandry. The changes in lifestyle imposed from outside, in this case affect the relationships within the community (figure 5.38).

Hasan learned this profession from his father Kariym-i Gūlshan. Hasan and his father used to work in this workshop together; after Karim passed away Hasan sustained the profession. He apprenticed under Karim's supervision in this workshop. Hasan says "When I was a kid, I had to clean the forge, shovel charcoal in a bucket and pile it beside the forge, arrange the tools in their places, fill the bucket with water and sweep the workshop, every day in the morning. I had to go to the spring and fill the bucket and come back to the workshop with the heavy bucket. The worst part was shoveling the
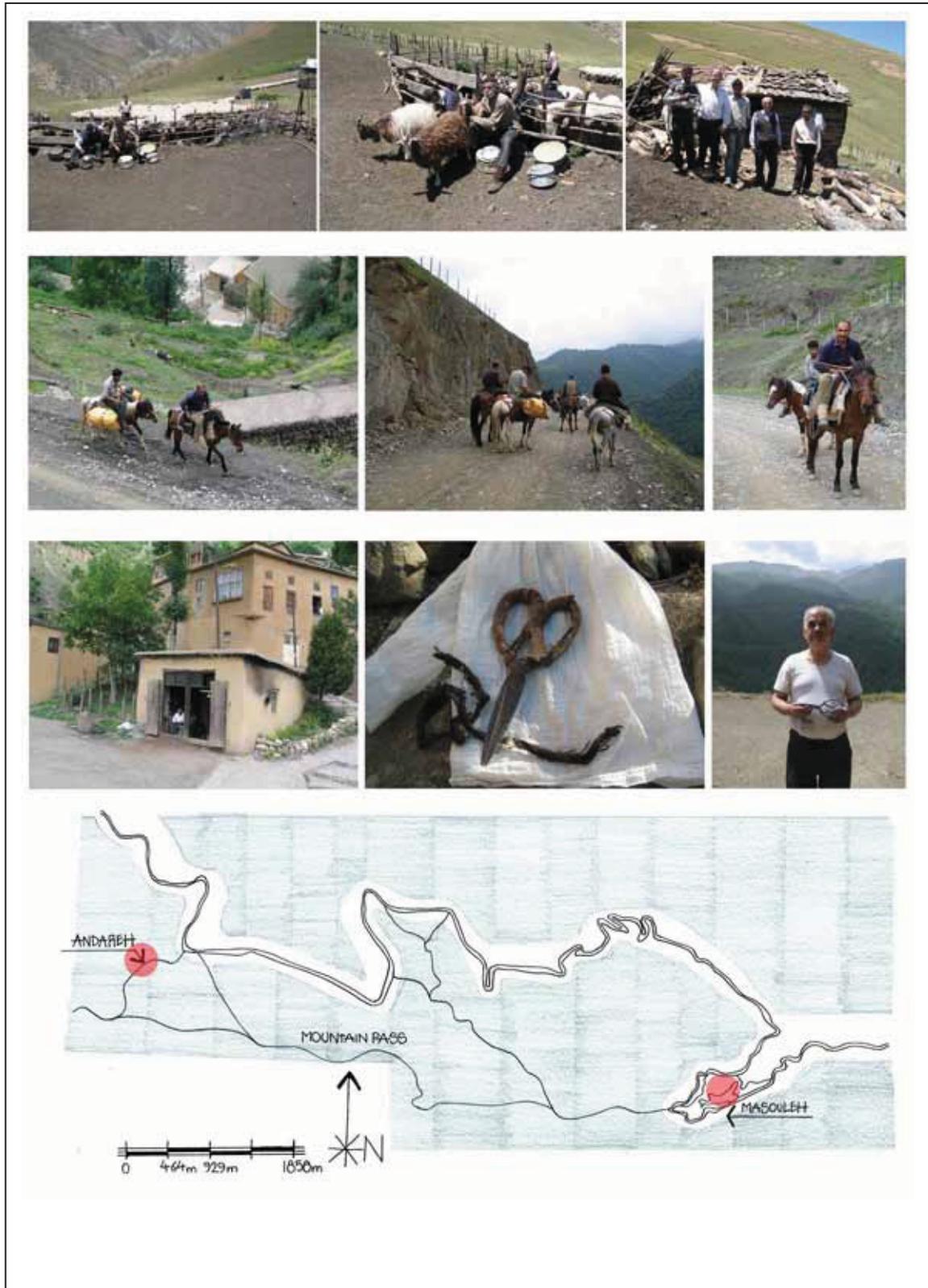
Fig. 5.38. Shepherds visiting the scissors workshop. The map at the bottom of the page is adapted from Google Earth. Photographs by author, 2013.

charcoal and filling the bucket with charcoal: all my clothes, hands and face could easily get dirty. I had to bring charcoal from the inventory to the forge."[383]

Nowadays, when Hasan contemplates all those tasks, he realizes that his father wanted to teach him discipline, devotion to the work and doing a task on time over and over. For Hasan, it was a gradual progress. He says "I first learned the names of the tools. My father would ask me to bring him and hand him various tools. After I learned to use the tools, my father taught me how to handle the fire. My father used to light and manage the fire; years later he taught me the process of scissor-making and maintaining the fire."[384] For maintaining the fire, Hasan's father taught him how to treat the heat of the forge. The heat generated in the forge depends on the intensity of the air which bellows under the pile of burning charcoal and the amount of burning charcoal.

For forging scissors, one needs skilful hands. Hasan learned to make scissors gradually. He says "As a kid I used to sit beside my father when he was working on a pair of scissors and watch him. Later on I helped him with light tasks such as holding the tongs while he struck the blade with a hammer or holding the metal piece with tongs and putting it in the forge to reheat. Afterwards, I started to heat pieces and work on them on my own. I used to see what my father was doing, imitate and repeat it. He used to correct me by supervising me."[385] By apprenticing, Hasan learned this occupation. Solely by apprentice training may one become an accomplished craftsman.

Hasan's workshop seems chaotic at first sight; however, his workshop has its own arrangements. The workshop has two big doors, and two chairs are set out beside each

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[383] Hasan-i Gūlshan, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, May 2012.
[384] Ibid.
[385] Ibid.

door for the customers. The customers sometimes have to wait for the work to be done. The work could be sharpening and polishing or repairing the scissors. Hasan's forge is near the wall, in the corner of the shop. Whenever he wants to forge something he turns the light off so in semi darkness he can see the color of the heated material. It is crucial to heat the piece up to the right temperature. Hasan needs darkness to observe the color of the piece. The forge is arranged in the corner so the smoke can be sent outside through a short chimney. The bellows are attached to the forge. The working area consists of the forge, anvil, vise, a table for tools, a stand for the tools, a bucket filled with water and a bucket filled with charcoals. Hasan sits in front of the forge; the left side of the forge is the table for the tools and he keeps the charcoal pieces under the table. Anvil, vise and stand are on the right side of the forge. The anvil is fixed on a tree stump. The bucket filled with water is beside the vise. All the scissors are kept on display. On the left side of the workshop, Hasan has built four wooden benches and he does his drilling tasks there. The shop's inventory is at the back of the shop: iron plates, iron bars, second hand iron pieces and charcoal are kept there. Iron bars are purchased by length and have circular, round and square sections. The bench grinder is beside the door frame where Hasan can get the maximum daylight and see his work. The tools are either kept on the table or on the stand or are hung from nails. Strangers always think that the workshop is disorganized, but Hasan knows the exact place of everything from a small pin up to the forge.

Like the blacksmith workshop of Jalil-i Ashjāri, Hasan's workshop is located above the bazaar; neither workshop is part of the rows of shops in the bazaar. Hasan can walk from his work table to the edge of the roof of the Qanbar Abād mosque and see the bazaar at the lower level. If he descends the stairs beside his workshop, he can reach the bazaar.

Similar to Ashjāri's blacksmith workshop and Hatam's workshop, Hasan's customers can sit on wooden chairs beside the doorframe and converse with Hasan. Like Jalil-i Ashjāri in his workshop, Hasan can see the slope of the mountain from his work table; also like other workshops he displays his products, which are his scissors, in a small display beside his working table.

Hasan forges scissors in his workshop. For forging a pair of scissors, a forty centimeter steel rod is taken and heated in the forge. The rod should turn bright yellow in the forge. At this temperature the piece is workable. First the handle and the blade should be shaped. The handle is shaped using the beak of the anvil. The curve helps Hasan to shape it. The shape of the curve of the blade depends on where on the beak the iron piece is put and stroked by the hammer. The blade consists of the point or *nuk*, back or *pūsht*, cutting edge or *labih*, inner side or *shikam* and the pivot point or *mihvar*. The blade should be heated first and then hammered to have a concave shape. The bench grinder, whetstone, files and sandpaper are used to polish the scissors' blades. After one handle and blade piece is finished, the second part of the scissors is forged. Once that part is finished, the two parts are pinned together. This is the way a pair of scissors is forged (figures 5.39, 5.40). Hasan says "I make small kitchen knives. These consist of a handle, a blade and two pins. First I forge the blade, and then hammer it to shape it. Afterwards, I make the handle. For the last part I drill two holes in the handle and the tang to pin them together (figures 5.41, 5.42). I do not sell kitchen knives often. My main focus is scissors."[386] Hasan says:

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[386] Ibid.
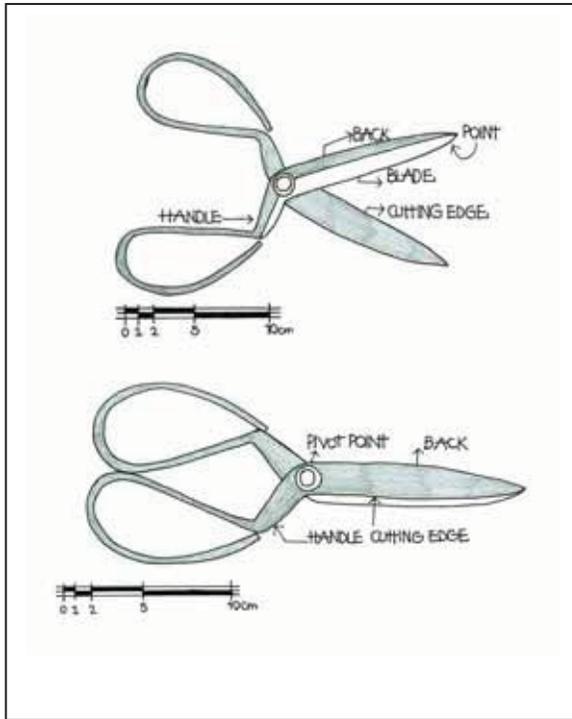
Fig. 5.39. Scissors for shearing the wool of sheep. Drawing by author, 2012.
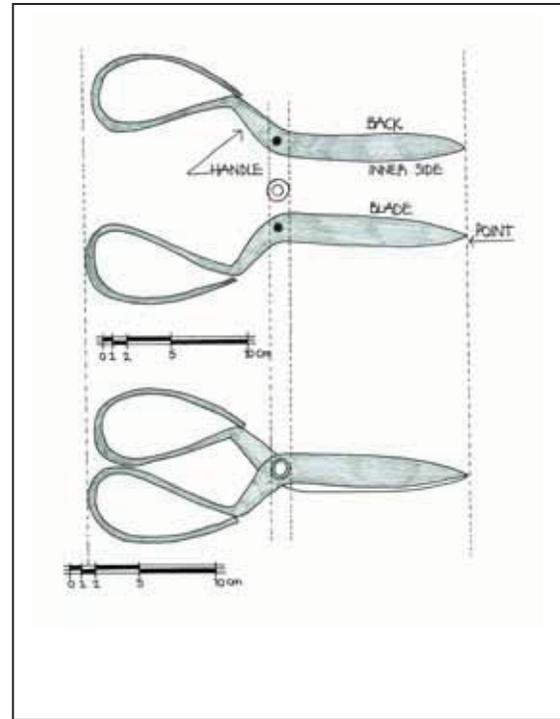
Fig. 5.40. All the parts of the scissors. Drawing by author, 2012.
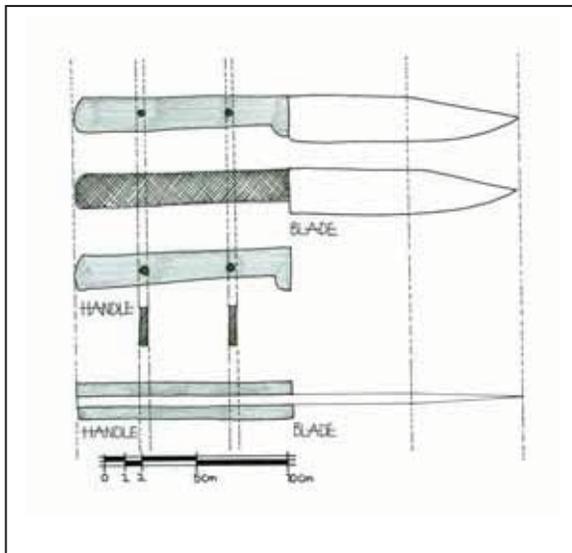
Fig. 5.41. The process of making a knife. Drawing by author, 2012.
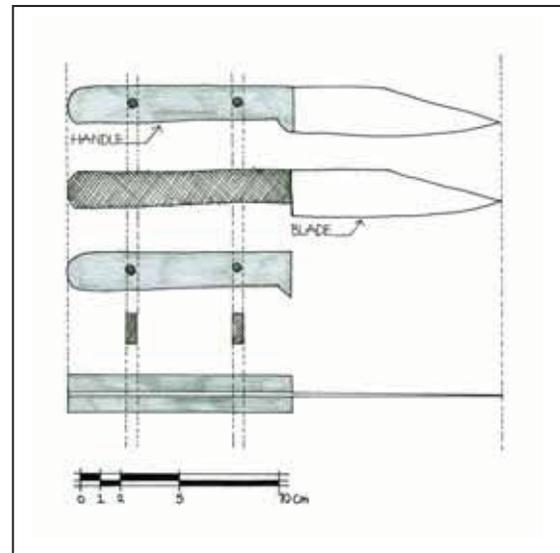
Fig. 5.42. A knife. Drawing by author, 2012.

Whenever I do not have any work to do, I close the workshop and I head towards the tea house of Hāji ʿizat to have tea and converse with my friends. These days fewer shepherds come to Masulih and it means fewer customers for me. If the government keeps banning the herds from grazing in pasturelands around Masulih I will lose my job. I am dependent upon the sheep and the shepherds. Even weavers are dependent on the sheep. For them sheep mean plenty of wool. They turn the wool to yarn and knit clothing items. They need natural wool to knit, otherwise they will be forced to purchase synthetic yarn in larger cities and it means their final product's price eventually increases. It is much better to purchase wool locally so the price of knitted items will be cheaper than using synthetic yarn. Sheep mean a lot to me and the weavers. Butter, yogurt and cheese are locally made by the shepherds and wood dwellers, but when shepherds begin to abandon their profession, people will be forced to purchase factory made butter, cheese and yogurt. The prices of those items are not flexible and increase gradually; this could lead to more hardship for those people with low income. That's one of the reasons people migrate to larger cities in search of a safe income. I do not have any young follower as an apprentice. The income is not great so no one is interested in learning this profession. The young generation usually migrates from Masulih to larger cities in search of better jobs. I am wondering if scissor-making will last after me.[387]

A general typology of the workshops could be summarized as follows. One factor that might determine the location of the workshop is its function: for example a cookie workshop sells cookies to tourists and tea houses so it should be located in a shop close to a touristic path and tea houses. A blacksmith workshop, which burns charcoal with its fumes and is filled with the sound of the hammer hitting the anvil, should be located further away from the center of the bazaar. All the workshops have wooden folding doors. The customer can either sit on a chair placed beside the doorframe or on a low stool inside the workshop. In the case of a blacksmith workshop, there is a safe distance between the chair and the central forge. The working stations are defined by the position of tools in all the workshops: for example in the case of the knife workshop, the

[387] Ibid.

arrangement of the forge, anvil, drill, vise and the stool on which Jabbar sits defines the working station. There is a clear separation between the customer's chair and the working station. The working station may be visible to pedestrians and tourists or hard to recognize: for example in the case of the *chamush* workshop, in which the working station and the small tools which are used there are at the very end of the workshop, it is hard to see the working station. This contrasts with the blacksmith workshop with its large forge, anvils, vise and other tools, where the working station can also be spotted by its sound, which can be heard from the neighborhoods around the workshop.

The working spot is where the artisan works; it is the artisan's center of attention and where the artifact is made. The working spot is the center of the workshop, although physically it is not located at the center of the workshop. Every day when the artisan enters the workshop the working spot is where the artisan skilfully makes artifacts. The working spot is where the artisan's hand, material and the tools work together; it is in this center that everything happens.

All the workshops which have forges or ovens have inventories for storing charcoal. A large forge requires sufficient space for storing charcoal. These workshops also have a pipes which end at the upper parts of the doorframes. All workshops have display or displays to demonstrate the workshop's craft. The location of the display is based on the path and pedestrians' viewpoints. The display or displays are usually fixed to a wall where the customers who are standing at the workshop's entrance or walking by the workshop can see them. The only workshop in Masulih which has a moveable display is the cookie workshop. This display is put on the entrance doorway in the morning and replaced in the workshop's interior by closing time.

The names of all the workshops in Masulih are based on the family names of the masters who own and sustain the works. Each workshop in Masulih can host one or two apprentices, although currently there are no apprentices working in the workshops. As Richard Sennett indicates, the tradition of apprenticing under one master used to be an ongoing process in Masulih in the Middle Ages.[388] For sustaining the life of a workshop, the process of apprenticeship should always be going on so the name of the master and the craft continues.

5.6 Woven Artifacts

If one walks around Masulih, one can witness the ubiquity of weaving in the local culture. Weaving, one of the oldest processes of making, is still intact in Masulih. The creators of woven goods sell crafts such as socks, dolls, gloves, and bracelets. Among their craftworks, richly patterned woollen socks are among the most excellent. The women who make these socks are the master weavers. Their weaving is the result of collaboration among the family members. Usually the women in the house sit on the ground, and then the skilled hands commence the work, forming the crafts, creating geometrical patterns by using different colors. This is a learning and teaching process for the weavers as well as a way to generate income for the household. In Masulih, the weavers are also the sellers so they sit on the ground and sell their crafts.

It was in the house of Abdullah Askar-pur that I met Fatimah Sadih-lu, Abdullah's wife. Fatimah is one of the master weavers of Masulih. Fatimah began learning how to knit when she was five. Her father, Musā Sadih-lu, the local master builder, sent her to

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[388] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 53–80.

the weaving master Nargis Maʿsumi's house in order to acquire the profession she needed

later in her life. Fatimah claims:

> I used to go to Master Nargis' house every day from morning until noon prayer time. I used to sit beside her and play with snippets of yarn, watch her knitting and imitate her actions. The colorful textile, the end result of her work, was a work of magic to me. I was anxious to knit beside her so Master Nargis let me knit a few stiches and then I would return to my play. She taught me the basics of knitting, stitching and how to knot when I was the age of eight. I used to knit a few rows of stiches alone in one color and then let her conclude the work. She used to demonstrate to me the precise motions for knitting. I started to knit my first textiles in her house at the age of twelve. I was around fourteen years old when one out of three pairs of socks which I knitted belonged to her as tribute for her teaching. In addition and as part of a compliment for her favour towards me, I used to bring water to her house by bucket from a nearby spring, clean her house and cook for her. Washing and cooking rice for her was one of my tasks.[389] In the early days of learning knitting, my pace was slow. From morning until noon prayer time I could only knit three or four rows of stiches, which typically had errors in them, but steadily I learned to knit the rows more quickly and with fewer inaccuracies. Master Nargis used to tell me that *you should be able to knit one side of a sock in one day*. Step by step, by repetition I got to the point at which I could knit one side of a sock in a day. Nowadays, if I do not have household tasks and if I knit from morning to evening prayers, I may possibly complete one sock.[390] I used to sit with Master Nargis on the ground, in winter in the *sumeh* [winter room] and in summer outside her house either on her roof or in front of her house to knit.[391]

Fatimah remembers:

> Master Nargis and I used to knit with wooden or copper needles during the '40s to '60s. Aluminum needles, which I knit with today, appeared first in Rasht Bazaar during the '70s. In the '40s to '70s, the yarn which I used to work with originated from the wool of sheep, lambs and goats. These animals

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[389] As Fatimah Sadih-lu mentions, in 1940, 1950 and 1960 there was no water pipe network in Masulih. It was years later in the 1980s when water began to be distributed by pipes to the houses. In those days water was transported by buckets from nearby springs to the houses for domestic use. Fatimah Sadih-lu, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masulih, May 2012.

[390] In Fatimah Sadih-lu's words, "usually, in the daytime I should go to the bazaar, cook and clean the house, so as a result I cannot dedicate my full time to knitting." Ibid.

[391] Ibid.

usually graze in the Masulih Mountains in herds. There was no synthetic yarn. Dyeing domestically was the only technique to color the yarn. Every spring and autumn, Master Nargis would send me to the flocks of Askar-pur to purchase the necessary wool.[392] It was at that time that Abdullah met me for the first time. He was a shepherd, grazing the herds. It was my task to convert the wool into yarn. To begin with, the wool needed to be combed with a toll named *shānih*. The *shānih* is made up of three key divisions: A horizontal board with a vertical board attached to it, and on top of the board a series of metal combs is installed. The wool-comber usually sits on the ground and pulls the wool through the comb. The combed wool should be spun to transform into the yarn; this task is done by spinning wheel [*pashim risi*]. I used to do the *pashim risi* when I was an apprentice in Master Nargis house. The wool of lamb and sheep needed to be spun by the *pashim risi* wheel.[393]

About spinning or *pashim risi* Fatimah says:

Master Nargis' *pashim risi* wheel involved a chief wheel or *charkh* which powered the whole spinning wheel while twisting. It had a base attached to the middle of the wheel shaft, a cotton band [*riysmān katāni*] which connected the wheel to the spindle [*duk*]. The spindle is the leading part on which all the spinning is done. Before spinning, I used to pull the wool forward and backward with both my hands so it would be ready for spinning. Then I used to take a thread and tie it to the spindle. By spinning the wheel, the thread would spin onto the spindle; by attaching the wool to the end of the thread and simply twisting the wool, the wool gradually turns to thread and spins onto the spindle. I twist the wool with my left hand while I pull the yarn away from the spinning wheel with my right hand. This was the way to spin the yarn. The *pashim risi* wheel had the abiylity to make fine threads for knitting.[394]

Fatimah recalls,

it was the job of Master Nargis to dye the threads. She used to dye the yarn with fruits, leaves and vegetables. She extracted yellow, yellowish orange

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[392] As Fatimah Sadih-lu puts it, "I used to acquire the required wool in early spring and autumn. Lamb's wool is ready to be cut in late summer when the herd is moved from the mountains to a lower altitude. Lamb's wool is very fine and suitable for knitting. Goat's wool is cut annually; in the case of sheep, the wool is cut twice, in early spring and late summer. Sheep's wool is also fine for knitting. Each sheep can deliver approximately 2kg of wool per year." Ibid.

[393] Ibid.

[394] Ibid.

from onion peel; brownish yellow, yellow and orange from pomegranate peel; brown and brownish gray from walnut husk; mild yellow from *zingād*;[395] black from *kocholeh*;[396] red from *runās* root or madder's root;[397] grey from raspberry;[398] green and yellowish green from *sarakhs-i vahshi*;[399] green from mulberry;[400] blue from woad flowers [*vāsmih*].[401] Master Nargis used to procure the mentioned substances either from merchants in Masulih Bazaar who had bought them from mountain and wood dwellers, or pick them up personally in the Masulih woods and mountains, or bargain them from Fuman and Rasht traders. Master Nargis used to buy the actual leaves, seeds, peel and roots and then grind them in a quern-stone, or if she could find any of the mentioned substances as powder, previously ground, she would purchase it. Then it was the turn of actual dyeing. In a copper vat, the substance was added to boiling water, and subsequently the thread was bathed in the colored water twice. The thread had to be squeezed after its removal from the copper vat so the achieved hue of the thread could be retained. Afterward, the thread was laid out horizontally on the ground so it could be sun-dried. The hue of the obtained color was determined by the length of time that the thread was in the vat and the amount of the substance. Various shades of red, yellow, orange, brown, green and blue could be achieved. With aging, the natural dyed threads have a tendency to be modified, for example, a perfect dark blue thread, by maturing, can reveal many shades of blue and this occurs merely by the transition of time. This is the essence that grants the knitted textile its aliveness compared to the synthetic yarns. Nowadays, I simply buy synthetic yarn from Fuman and Rasht's bazaar; I no longer convert wool to yarn or dye the yarn.[402]

There are three types of socks that Masulih weavers knit. *Ru farshi* or "on the carpet," *chamush* and *Mirza Kuchak Khan*. *Ru farshi* is a kind of sock which Masulih people wear inside their homes. Figures 5.43, 5.44 and 5.45 illustrate the typology of patterns used in

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[395] A *zingād* is a type of evergreen shrub which grows in the mountains around Masulih.

[396] *Kocholeh* is a type of leaf which grows around tree trunks in the forest. *Kocholeh* can be obtained approximately 15km east of Masulih towards Fuman. It is the favourite nourishment of goats and sheep.

[397] The *madder* usually grows in the mountains around Masulih.

[398] Raspberries usually grow in woods and roadsides in northern Iran. The grey color can be obtained from its shoots.

[399] *Sarakhs-i vāhshi* is a kind of vegetable which grows in the vicinity of Masulih's woods.

[400] Green can be attained from the leaves of the mulberry tree.

[401] From the leaves of the *vāsmih* the blue color can be acquired. Fatimah Sadih-lu claims that "Master Nargis used to purchase the *vāsmeh* leaves from the Fuman bazaar." Sadih-lu, interviews.

[402] Fatimah Sadih-lu claims in an interview with the author: "As I was told by merchants in Fuman and Rasht, the synthetic yarns are manufactured in Chinese and Japanese factories."
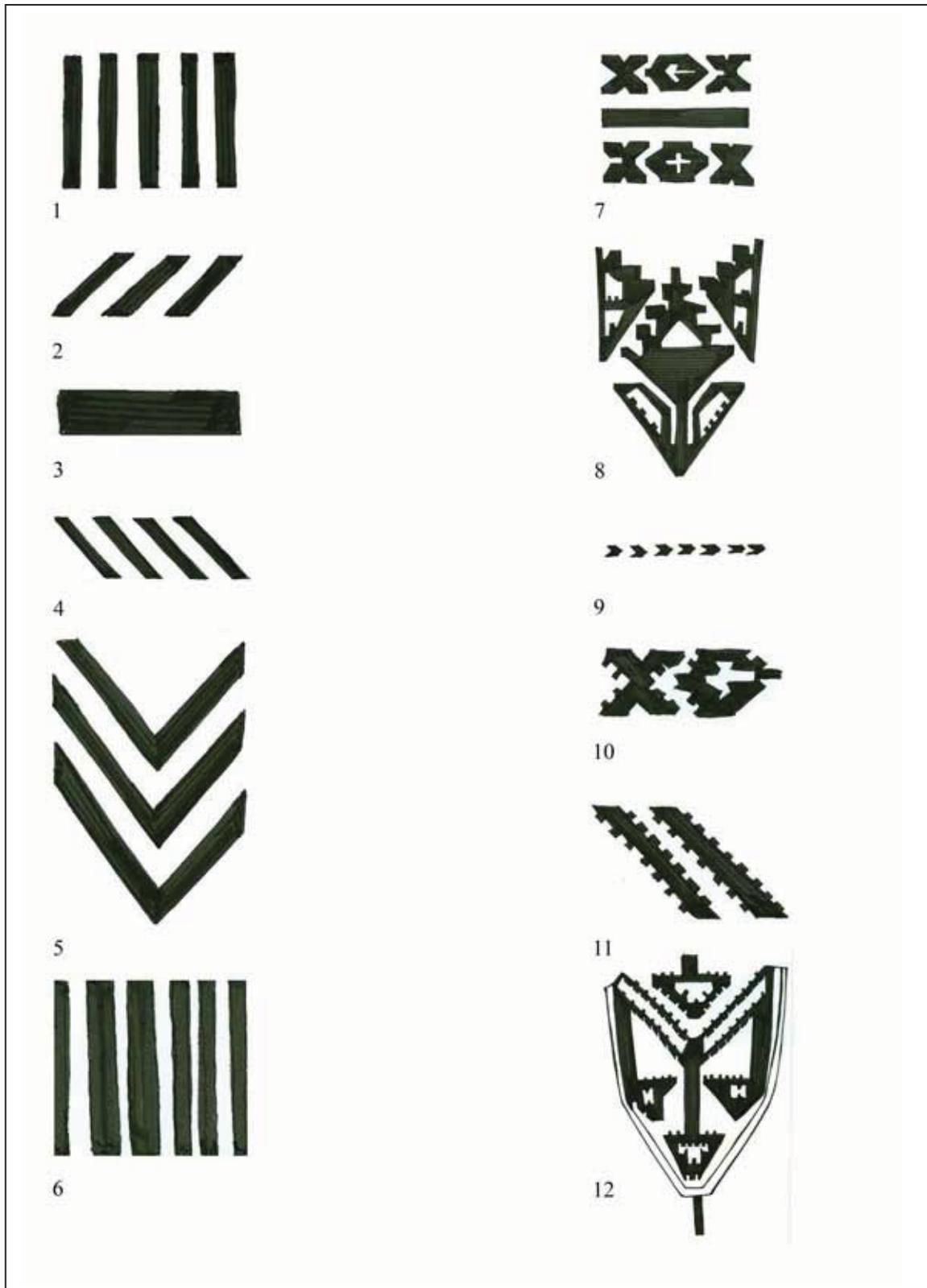
Fig. 5.43. Patterns on the socks. Drawings by author, 2012.

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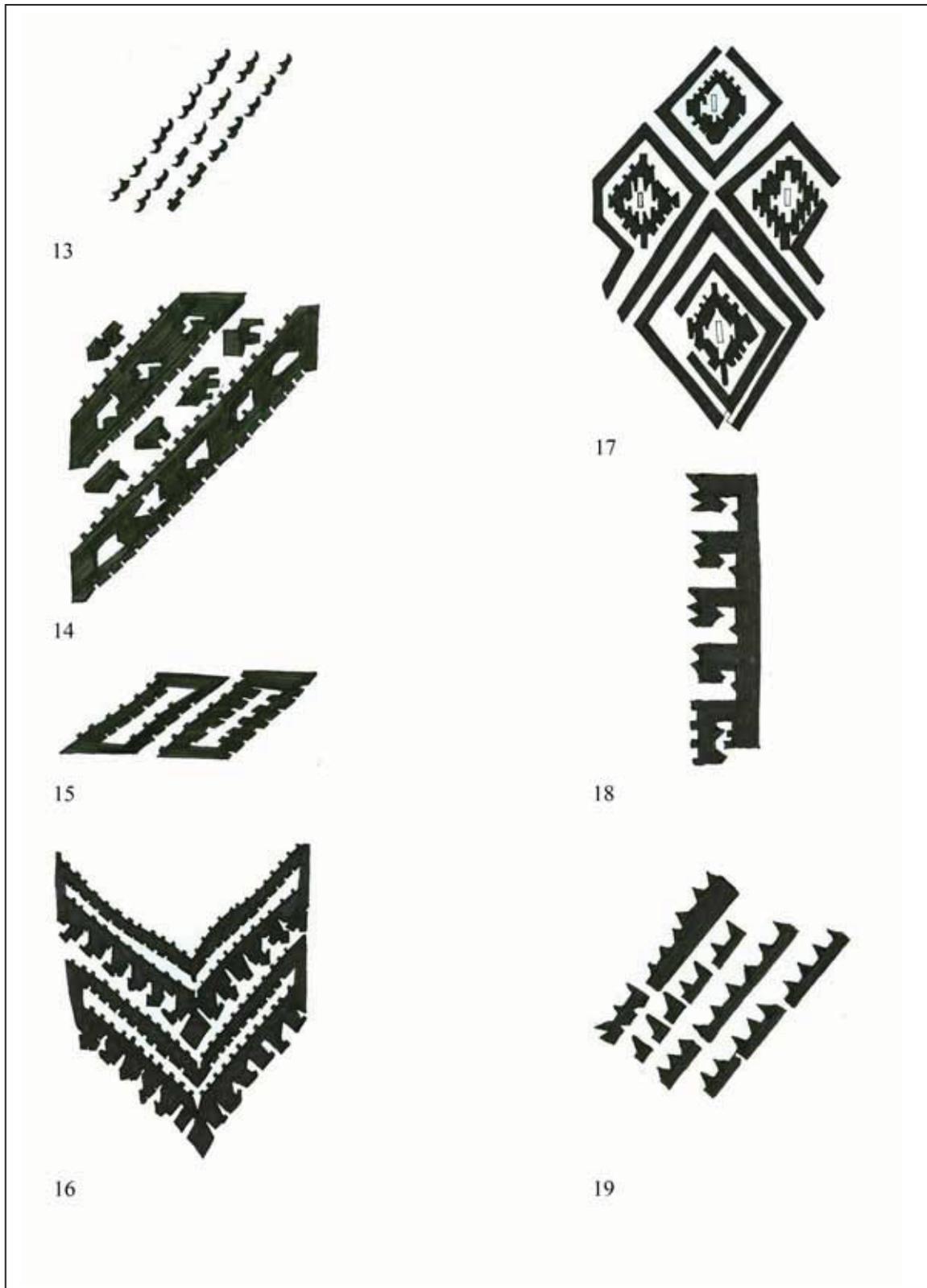
Fig. 5.44. Patterns. Drawings by author, 2012.

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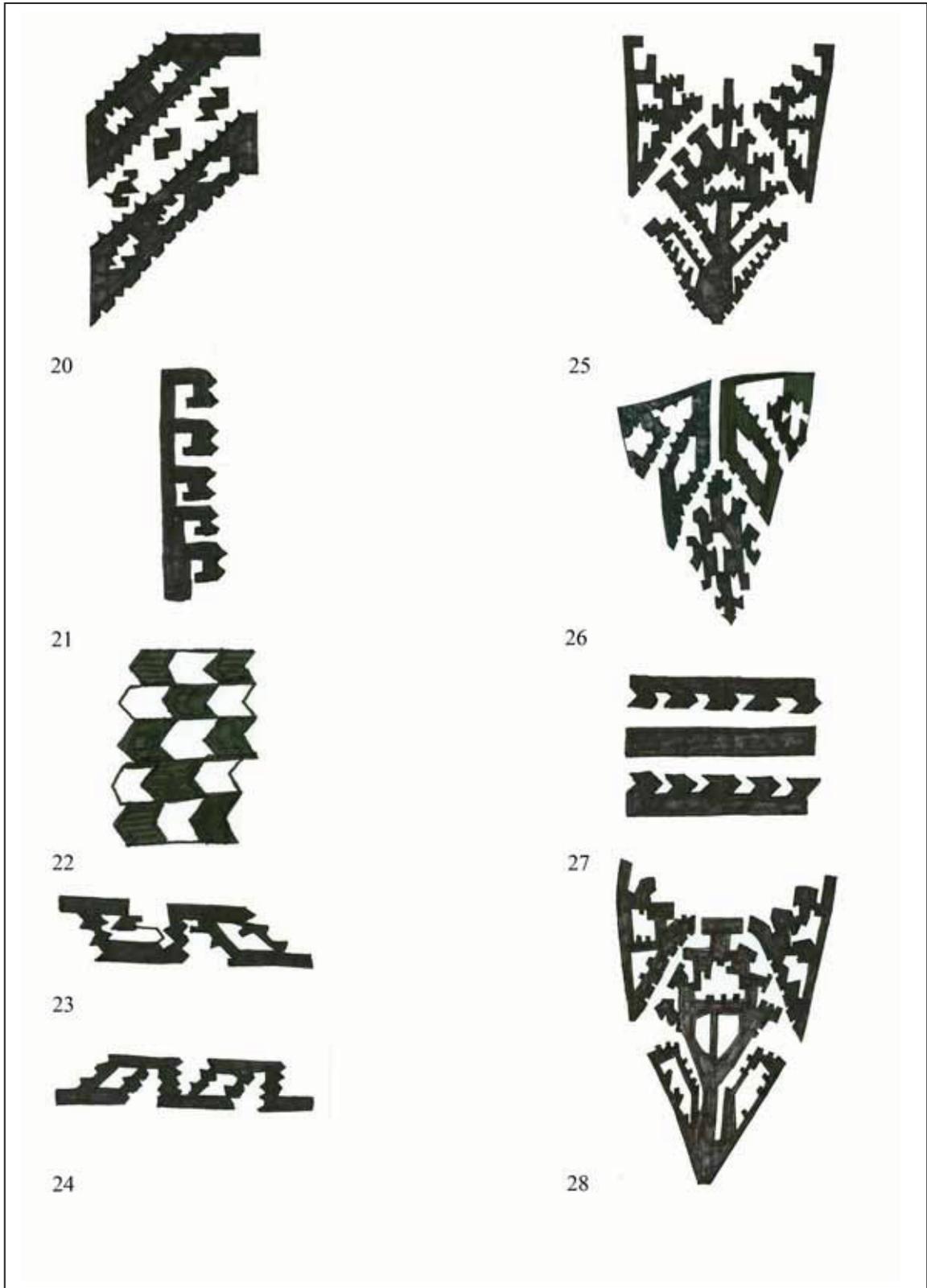
Fig. 5.45. Patterns. Drawings by author, 2012.

Ru farshi socks, which Fatimah Sadeh Lo, in line with other weavers of Masulih, weaves in her *Ru farshi* socks. In figure 5.43, patterns 1 and 6 are called *tanih* and are woven into the cuff section of the socks. Patterns 2, 4 and 11 in figure 5.43 and pattern 19 in figure 5.44 are called *arareh* and are woven in under the sole and turning heel parts of the socks. Pattern no. 3, as well as patterns 18 in figures 5.43, 5.44 and 21 in figure 5.45 are named *nakh* or "string" and used as a division line. Pattern no. 4 is titled "seven and eight" and is woven into the upper foot. Patterns 7 and 10 are called *kuleh kinar* or "fish side" and are woven in the side sections of the socks. *Gul va būtih* or "flower and leaves" is pattern no. 8, as well as 25 and 28, which is woven in the upper foot. "Candle, flower and butterfly" is the title of pattern no. 12, which is woven in the upper foot. In figure 5.44, pattern 13 illustrates *mūjak* or "little wave," which is woven into the side of the socks. Pattern no. 14 demonstrates *būtih Kerman* or "Kerman's bush" which is woven in the upper foot. *Pucheh chang* or "cat's scratch" is the title for pattern no. 16 which it is woven in the upper foot. Pattern 17 illustrates *chahār gūl* or "four flowers." Pattern 22 in figure 5.45 is termed *khishtak* or "brick" and is woven in under the sole, side and upper foot. Patterns no. 23, 24, and 27 are inspired by a carpet's border or *hāshiyh* and are woven in the side of the sock. Pattern no. 26 is named *sih par* or "three leaves" and is woven into the upper foot. Fatimah Sadih-lu claims "I can weave most of the patterns which I set eyes on. Once I saw the *hāshiyh* pattern in a carpet's *hāshiyh* and I decided to weave it on a pair of socks. I can add or subtract the patterns and their colors in my pieces of knitting. The choice of the patterns is based on the size of the socks, the number of the stiches in length and width which every pattern requires. Certain number of the patterns should be woven

in the upper foot, a number of them under the foot, some on the side and a few on the cuff."[403] She adds "I weave sixteen types of *Ru farshi* socks. There are *hasht par* [eight leaves], *chahar par* [four leaves], *nisf-i siyb* [half apple], *gūl va būtih* [flower and leaf], *papu* [butterfly], *sarakhs* [leaves], *haft va hasht* [seven and eight], *kuleh kinār* [fish side], *isliymi* [arabesque], *sham' va gūl va parvanih* [candle and flower and butterfly], *pucheh chang* [cat's scratch], *būtih Kerman* [Kerman's bush], *chapeh shāl* [flower], *khishtak* [brick], *chahar gūl* [four flowers] and *gūl* [flower]." Figures 5.46 to 5.51 show the sock typologies mentioned by Fatimah Sadih-lu.

Figure 5.46, fig. 1 is a *pucheh chang* (cat's scratch) sock with *pucheh chang* pattern at upper foot (see B), *tanih* at cuff (see C), *hāshiyh* or border at side (see E) and *arareh* under the foot (see F). Figure 5.46, fig. 2 is a *gūl* (flowers) sock with *gūl* pattern at upper foot (see B), *kuleh kinār* plus *nakh* (string) at side (see D, E) and *khishtak* (brick) under the foot (see F). Figure 5.46, fig. 3 is a *hasht par* (eight leaves) sock with *hasht par* at upper foot (see B), *kuleh kinār* plus *hāshiyh* at side and under the foot (see C to F).

Figure 5.47, fig. 1 illustrates a *gūl* sock with a *gūl* pattern with two leaves at upper foot (see B), two rows of *kuleh kinār* (fish side) at side (see D, E) and *arareh* under the foot (see F). Fig. 2 is a butterfly sock with a *parvanih* (butterfly) pattern at upper foot (see B), two rows of *nakh* (string) and *kuleh kinār* at side (see D to F) plus *arareh* under the foot (see G). Fig. 3 is a *gūl va būtih* (flower and leaves) sock with a flower and leaf pattern at upper foot (see B) and two rows of *hāshiyh* at side and *arareh* under the foot (see D to F).

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[403] Ibid.
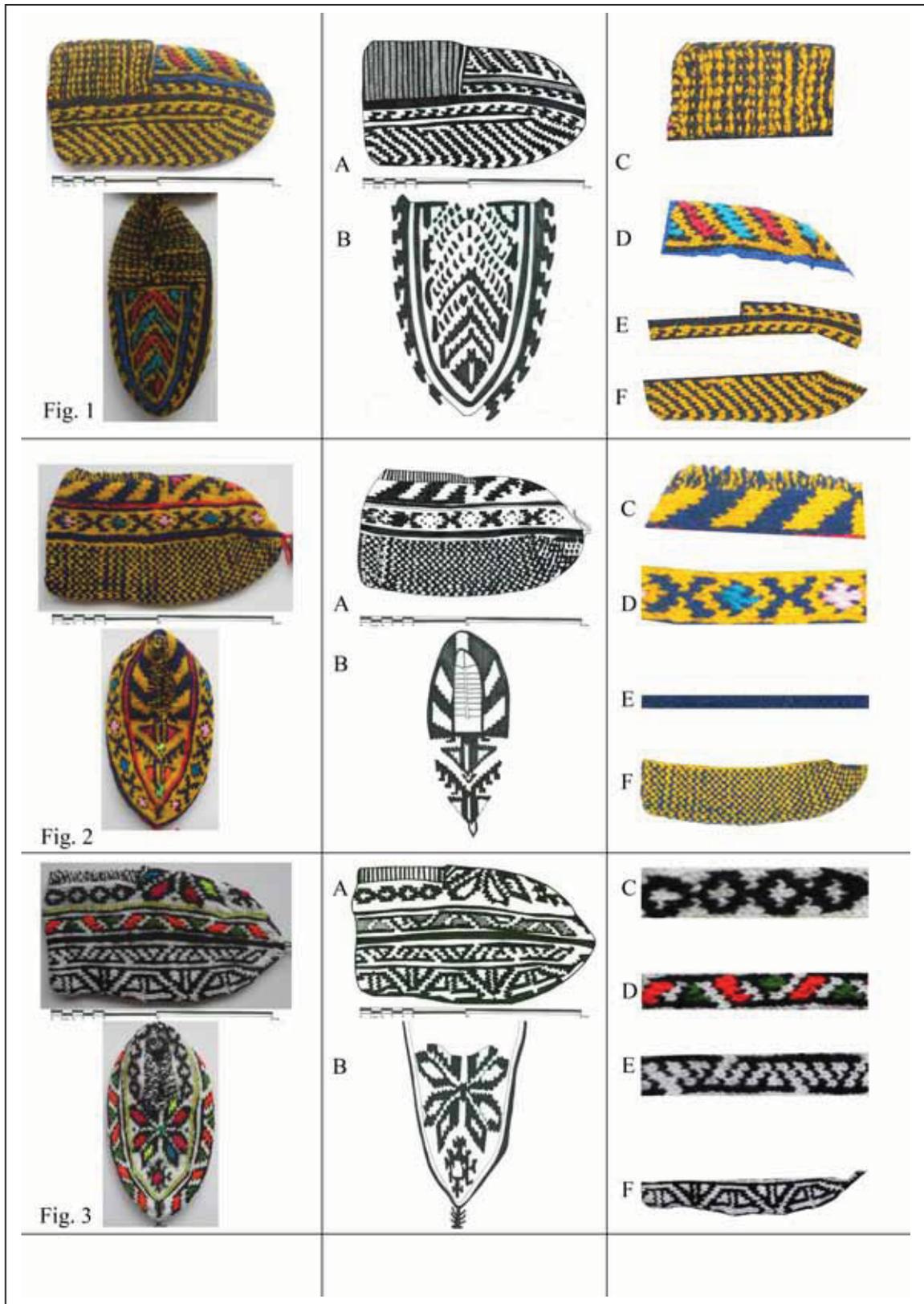
Fig. 5.46. Socks typology. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.
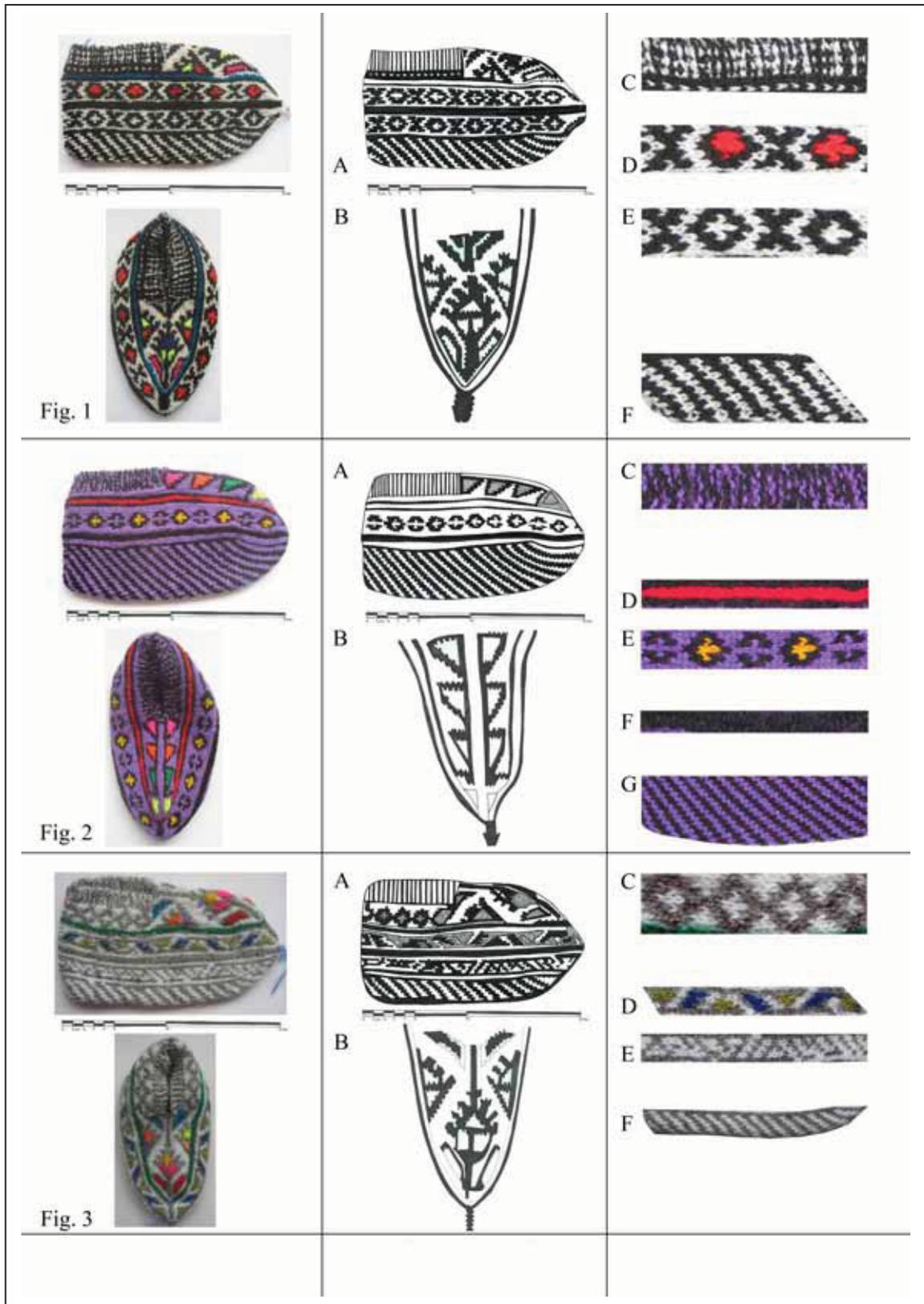
Fig. 5.47. Socks woven by Fatimah Sadih-lu. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.

393
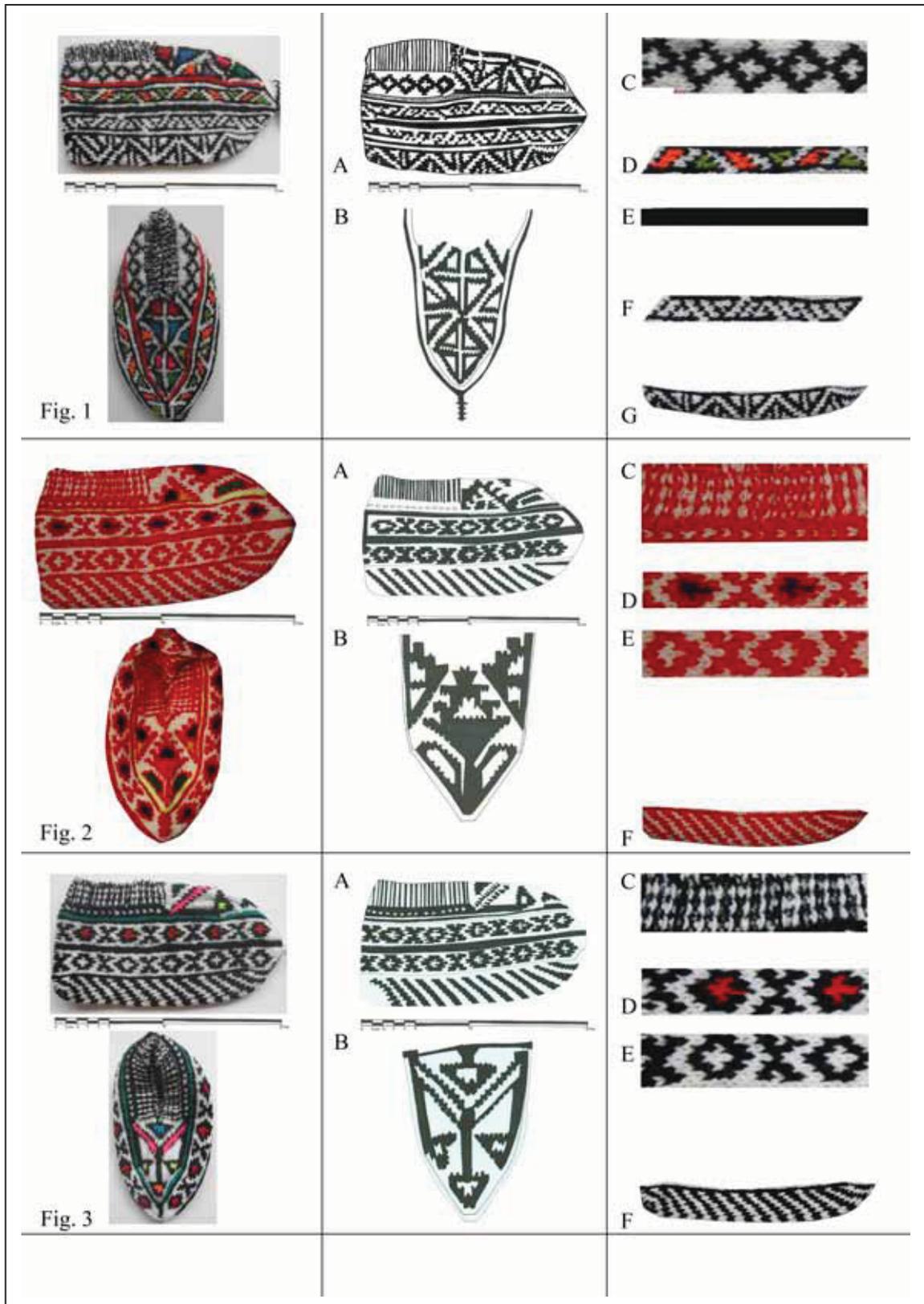
Fig. 5.48. Socks typology. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.

Figure 5.48, fig. 1 is a *nisf-i siyb* (half apple) sock with *nisf-i sib* pattern at upper foot and two Rows of *hāshiyh* at side and under the foot (see B to G). Fig. 2 is a *gūl va būtih* sock. Fig. 3 is a *sham′ va gūl va parvanih* (candle and flower and butterfly) sock with *sham′ va gūl va parvanih* pattern at upper foot, two rows of *kuleh kinār* at side and *arareh* under the foot (see B to F).

Figure 5.49, fig.1 is a *būtih Kerman* (Kerman's bush) with *mūjak* (little wave) pattern under the foot and *būtih Kerman* at upper foot (see B to D). Fig. 2 is a *sarakhs* (leaves) or *pucheh chang* (cat's scratch) sock with *pucheh chang* pattern at upper foot, two rows of *nakh* (string) at side and *arareh* under the foot (see B to E). Fig. 3 is a *chahar gūl* (four flowers) sock with *chahar gūl* pattern at upper foot and *arareh* at underfoot (see B).

Figure 5.50, fig.1 is a *chapeh shāl* flower sock with *chapeh shāl* pattern at upper foot and *arareh* under the foot (see B to D). Fig. 2 is a *khishtak* (brick) sock which illustrates the continuous brick pattern from under foot to upper foot (see B and C). Fig. 3 is a *gūl va būtih* sock with two rows of carpet's *hāshiyh* pattern at the side and *arareh* under the foot (see B to G).

Figure 5.51, fig.1 is a *chahar par* (four leaves) sock with *chahar par* pattern at upper foot, *hāshiyh* pattern at side and *arareh* under the foot (see B to F). Fig. 2 is a *gūl va būtih* (flower and leaves) sock with a flower and two leaves pattern at upper foot (see B) and two rows of *kūlih kinār* at the side and *arareh* under the foot (see C to F). Fig. 3 is a *haft va hasht* (seven and eight) sock with *haft va hasht* pattern at upper foot, *nakh* at the side and *arareh* under the foot (see B to E).

The first step in choosing a color for a *Ru farshi* sock is deciding on a major color for the *zamin* or backgRuund. The *zamin* could be yellow, white, violet (figure 5.52, figs.

395

1 to 9), green, light brown, white blue, brown, red or dark blue (figure 5.53, figs. 1 to 9).

For the patterns, black could be applied. When the *zamin* is white, black appears sharper

to the eye. The black appeals pleasantly with red, orange, dark as well as light green, light

blue, violet, yellow and purple (figure 5.52, figs. 3, 4, 7, 9). Whenever Fatimah decides

on blue, violet, green, and yellow for the *zamin*, she weaves the patterns with black

Fig. 5.49. Socks typology. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.
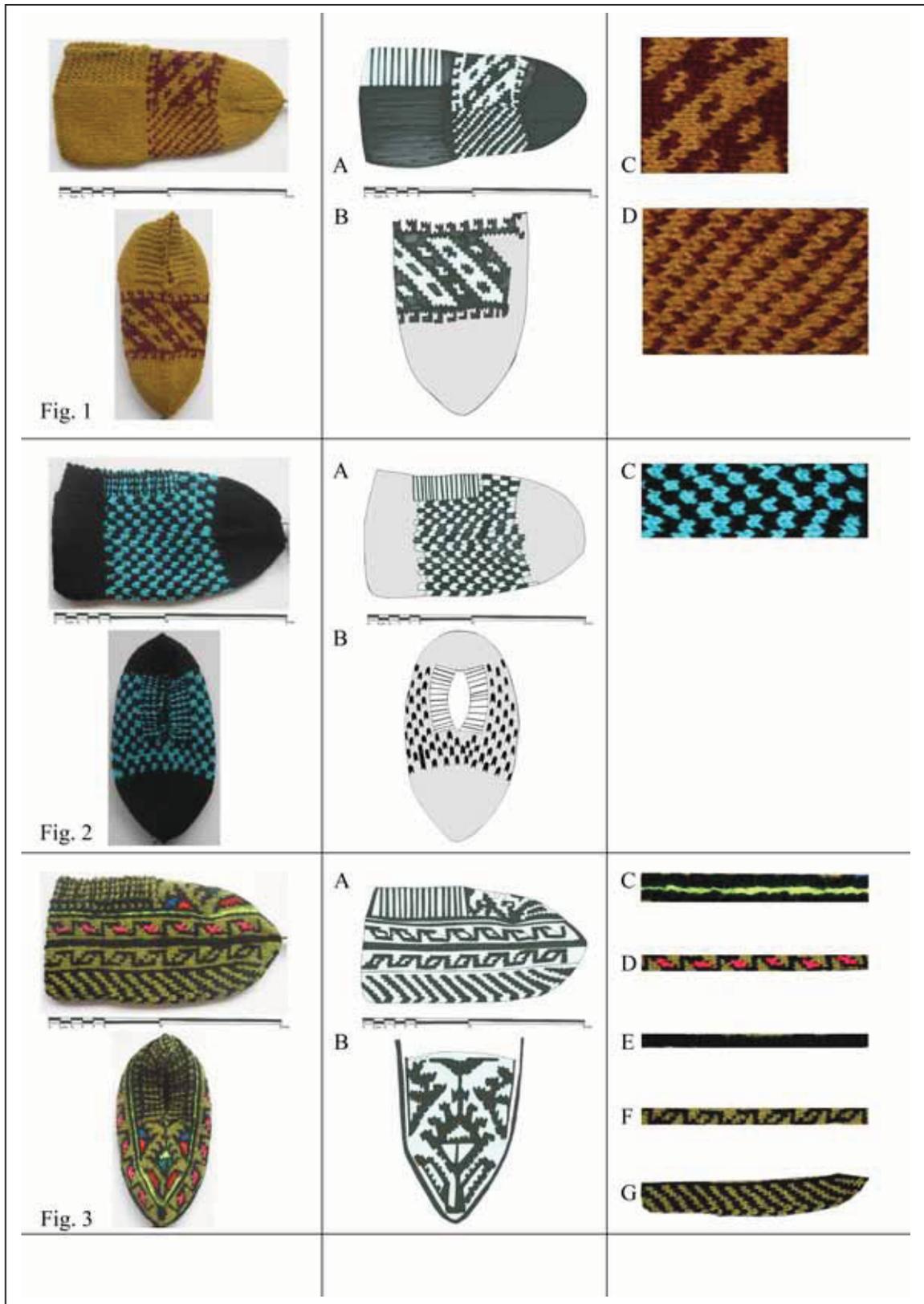
Fig. 5.50. Socks typology. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.
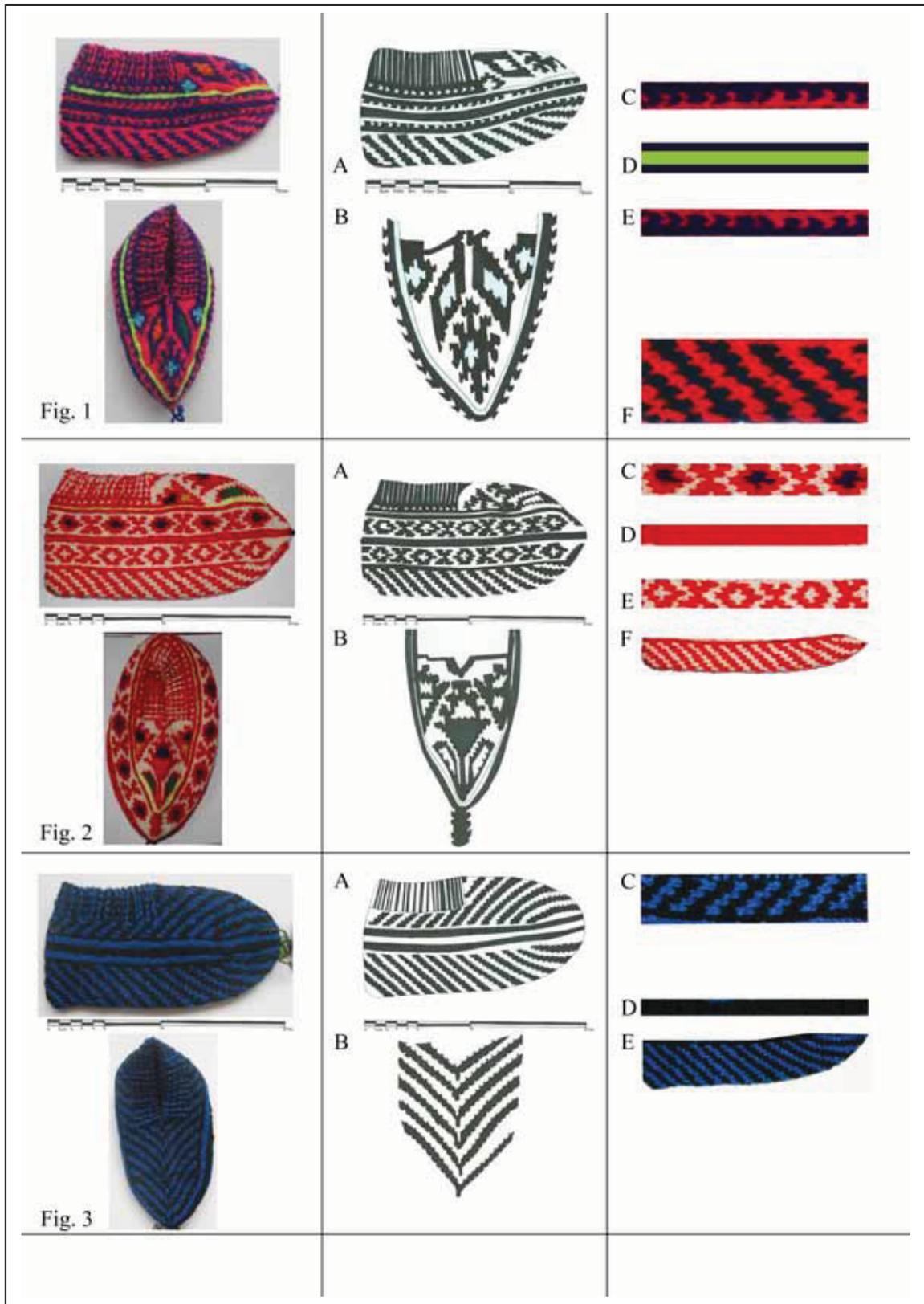
Fig. 5.51. Socks typology. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.
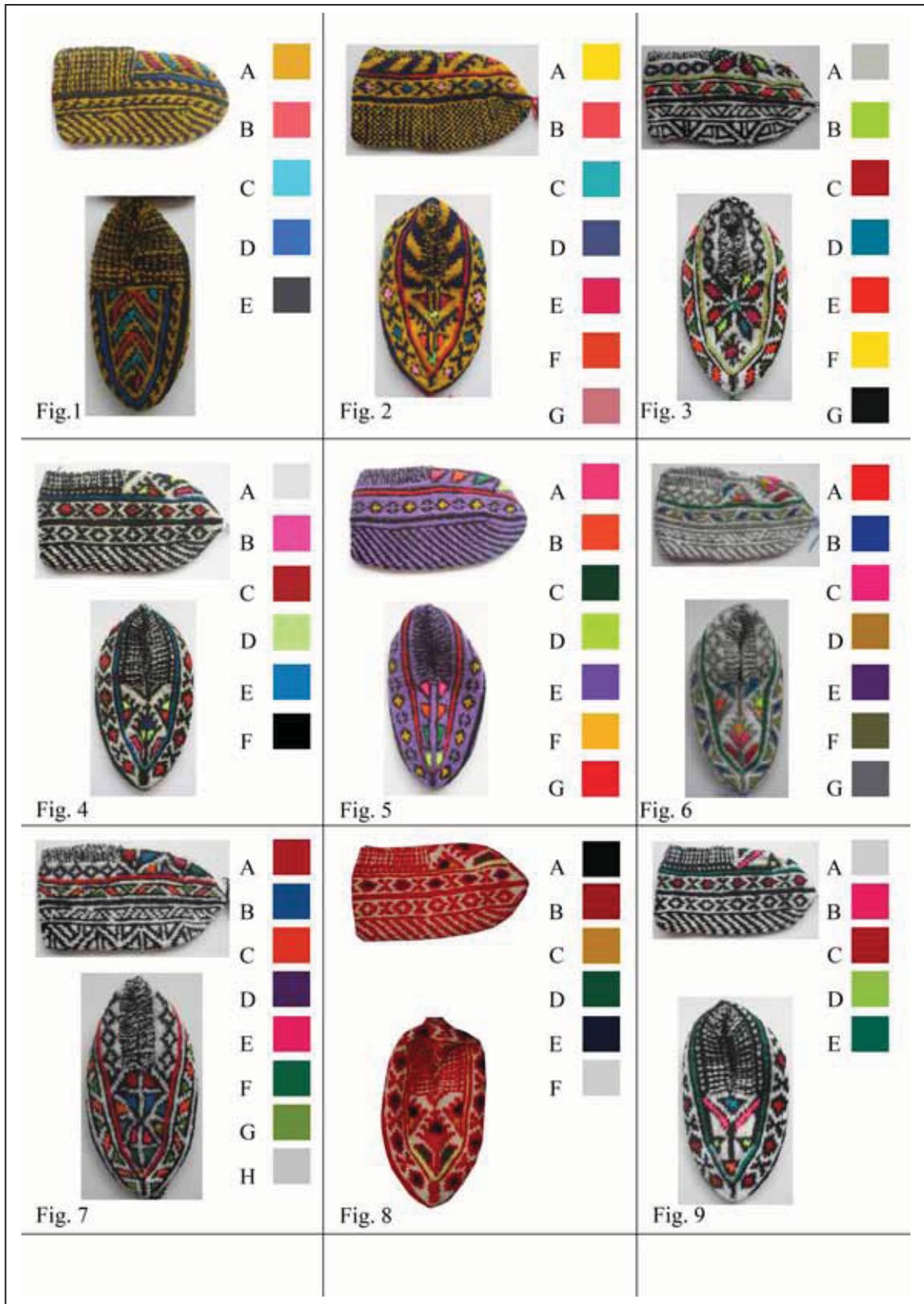
Fig. 5.52. Color analysis of the socks. Photographs by author, 2012.
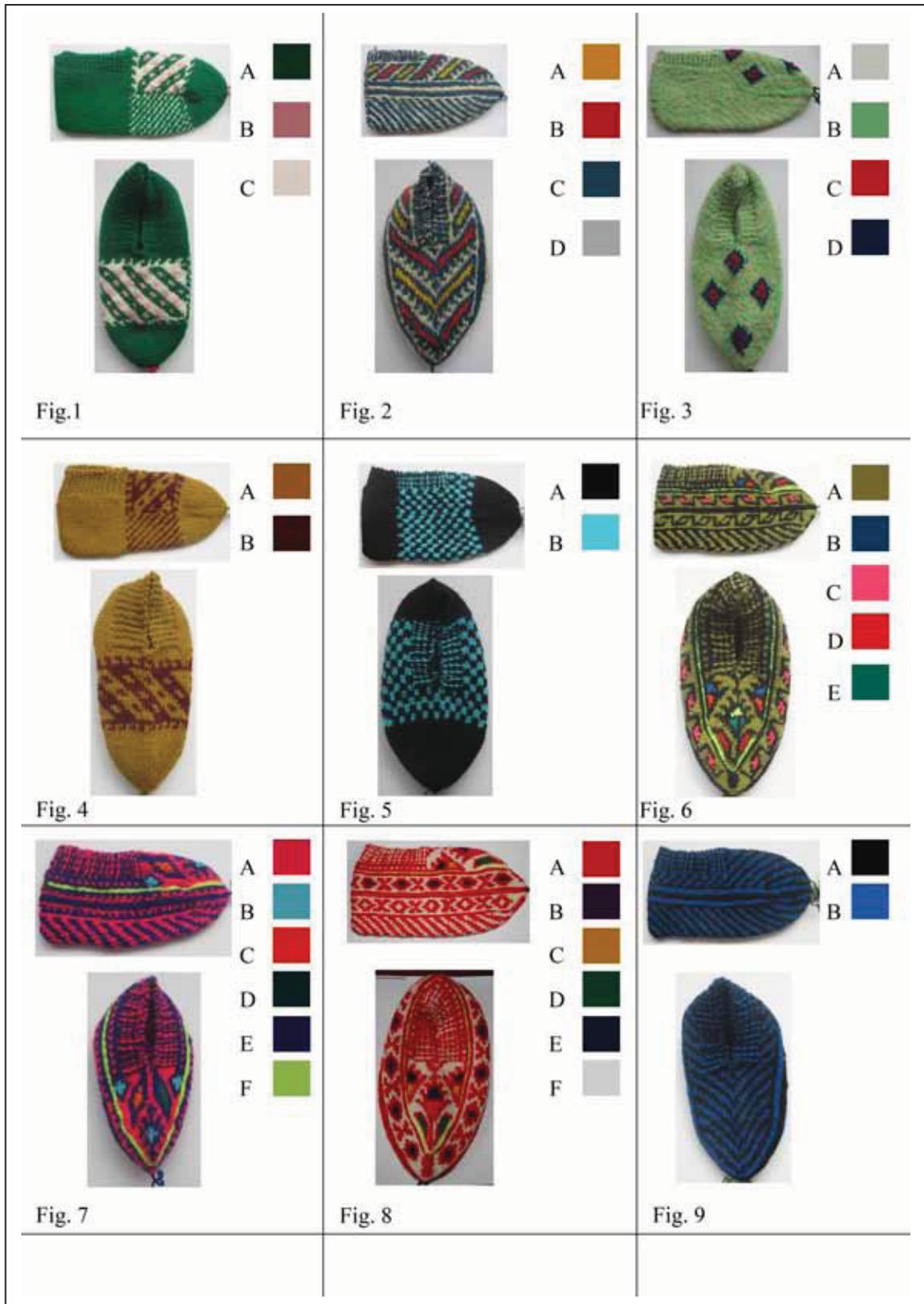
Fig. 5.53. Color analysis. Photographs by author, 2012.

(figure 5.52, figs. 1, 5; figure 5.53, figs. 6, 9). She regularly applies light blue, dark blue, and blue either to the *zamin* or to the patterns. If the *zamin* is white or gray, she weaves the patterns blue; on the other hand if the *zamin* is blue or light blue then she applies black for the patterns (figure 5.53, figs. 2, 5, 9). Green and light green likewise could be applied for the *zamin* and the patterns. In both instances, she uses white and gray for the *zamin* (figure 5.53, figs. 1, 3).

Fatimah Sadeh Lo says, "[c]*hamush* is the second type of sock which I weave. It is the reminder of the *chamush* shoes which are no longer used. Masulih people, especially the shepherds, woodcutters and mountain and wood dwellers in the vicinity of Masulih, used to wear leather *chamush* before the plastic shoes. That tradition has vanished but I carry on weaving the knitted *chamush*. The knitted *chamush* has a *hūzn* [melancholy] for the lost shoes."[404] Considering the types of patterns which she knits on *chamush* socks she claims "I knit *chamush* with one line or two lines on the side [figure 5.54, figs. 1 to 3 and figure 5.55]; I weave *chamush* for the kids which are smaller and have three flowers on the side or a line [figure 5.54, figs. 9 and figure 5.57]; *chamush* with diagonal lace knitting and bubbles [figure 5.54, figs. 5-6 and figure 5.56]. In relation to the colors, black with red, orange, green and pink are applied [figure 5.58, figs. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8]. I typically apply light blue and dark blue with white [figs. 1, 9]."[405]

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[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9
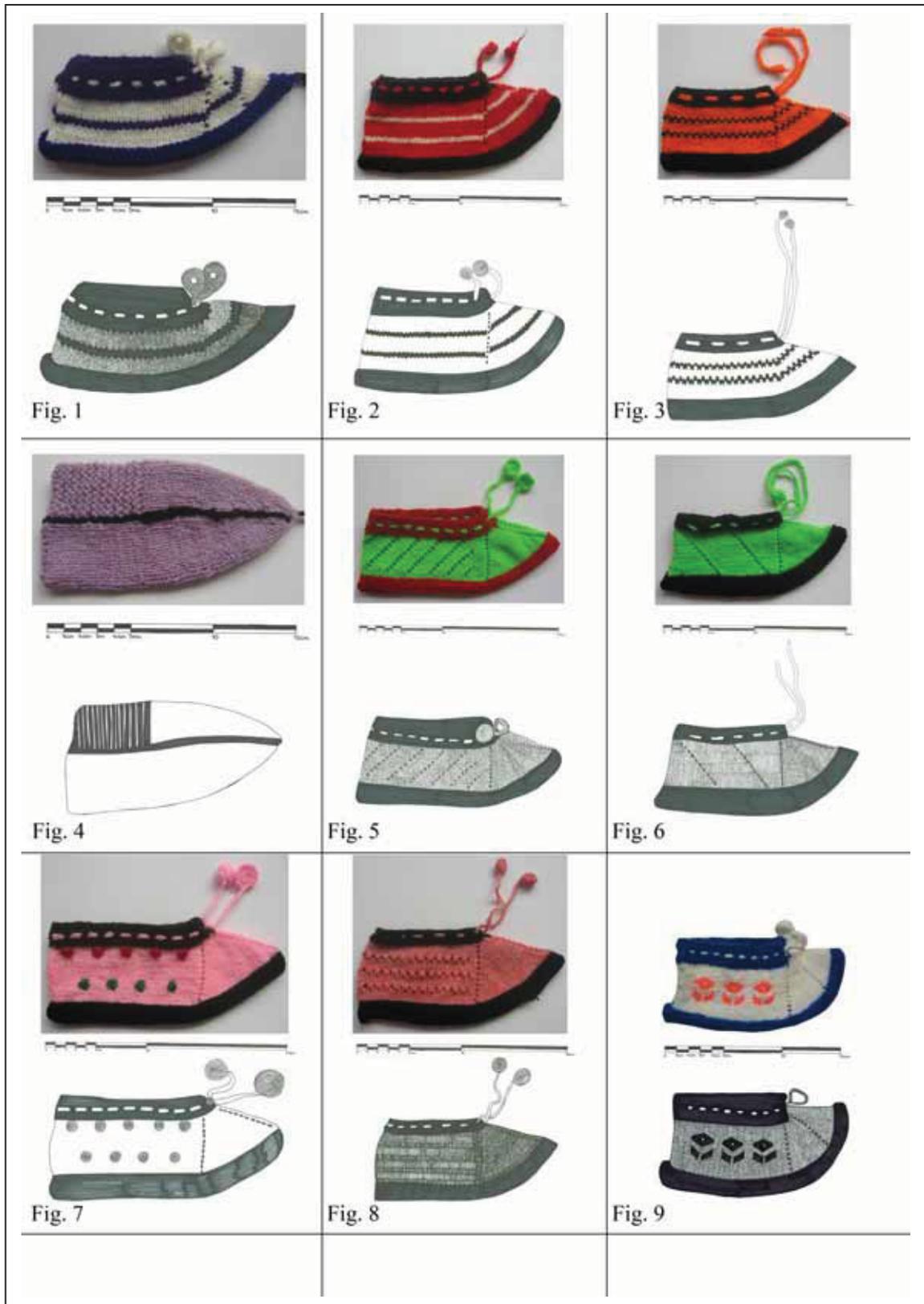
Fig. 5.54. *Chamush* socks. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.

402
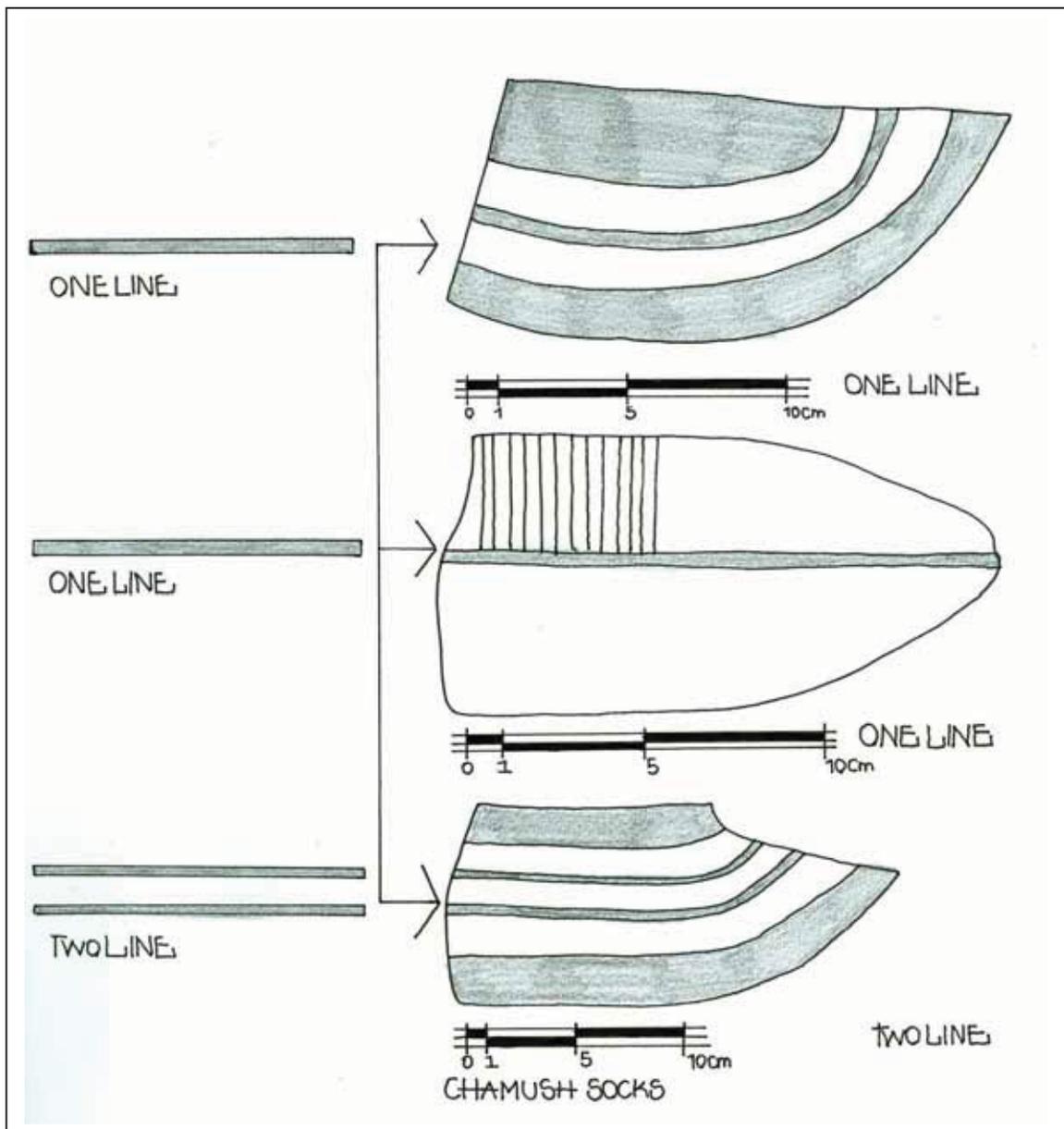
Fig. 5.55. Lines on the *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
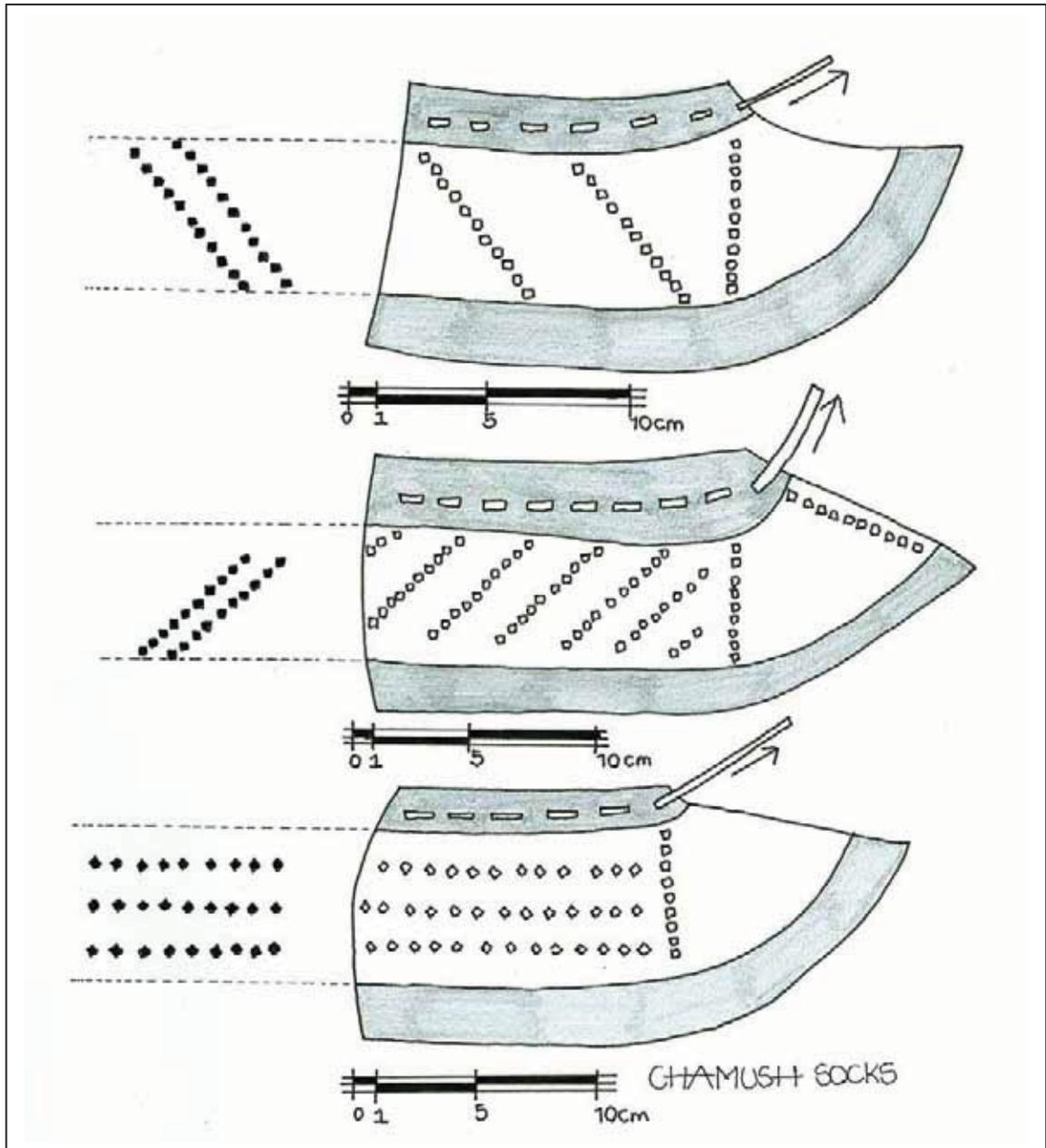
Fig. 5.56. Diagonal patterns on *chamush*. Drawing by author, 2012.
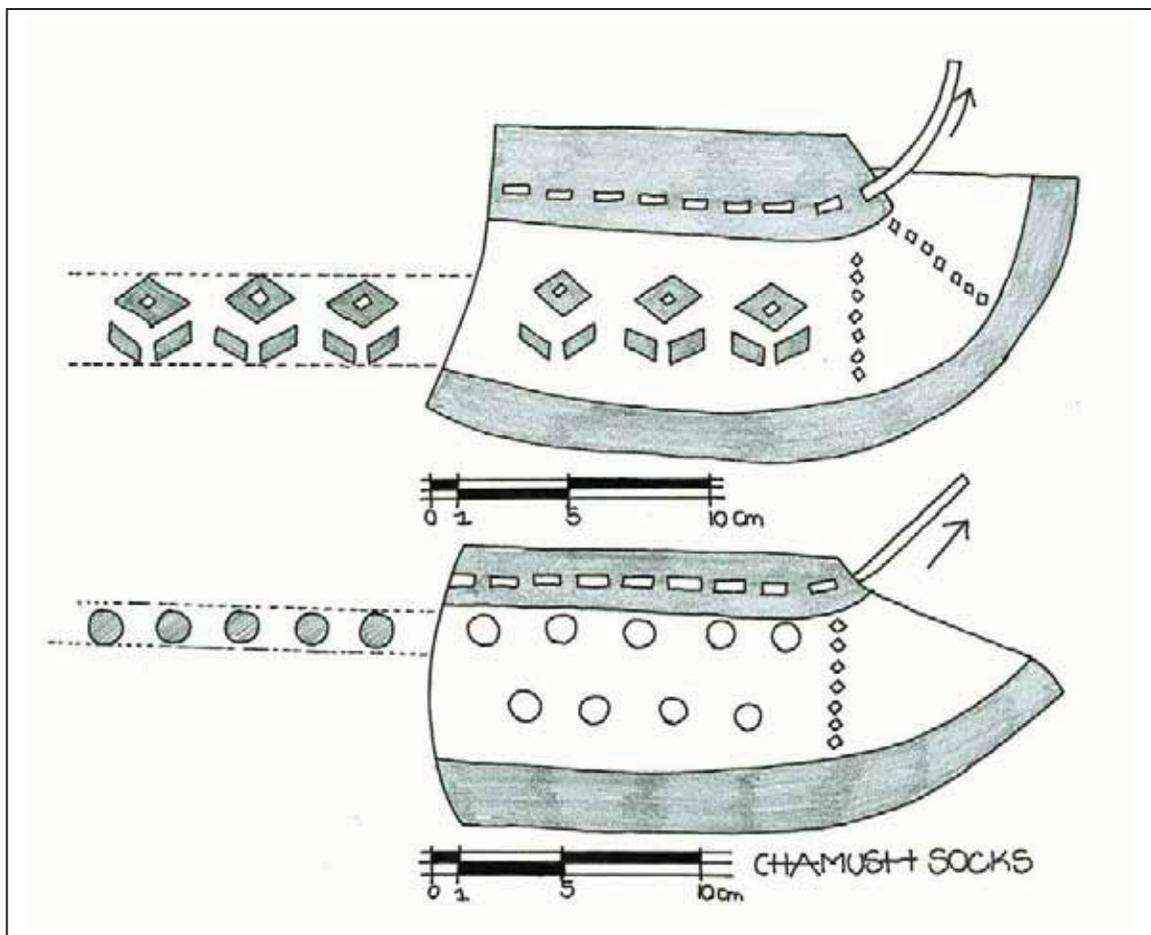
Fig. 5.57. *Chamush* for children. Drawing by author, 2012.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 5.58. Color analysis. Photographs by author, 2012.

The third type of sock which the weavers in Masulih weave is called *Mirza Kuchak Khan* socks.[406] The inhabitants call them *Mirza Kuchak Khan* socks due to the respect they have for the deceased leader of that name. For Masulih people, Mirza Kuchak Khan is a hero or *gahrimān*. He was a *mūjāhid* who fought the Russians: a defender of Gilān. He and his soldiers used to wear this type of socks. Nowadays, this type of woolen socks is used by mountain and wood dwellers. It is a knee high sock. The *chārvādār* or mule and horse owners who used to guide caravans from Rasht to Zanjān and Khalkhal also used to wear these types of socks. These socks are larger than the two others and it takes no less than two to three working days to finish a pair. Fatimah usually weaves these socks from synthetic yarn (figures 5.59 to 5.61) or natural yarn, sheep wool (fig 5.62). Concerning the texture, the woolen type is rougher than the synthetic yarn. The woolen type is itchy while the synthetic yarn is soft. The color variation is represented in figure 5.63.

Fatimah used to go the flocks to purchase wool from the shepherds when she was young and it was there that she would meet Abdullah. This would happen in the spring

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[406] This was during 1918, when the Russian Kazakh army occupied the Gilān province. During this era the central government of Iran was politically, economically and militarily weak and under the influence of Tsarist Russian and British empires. The Tsarist Russian and British diplomats had direct and indirect influence on the Iranian Imperial Court and the government. In the year 1918, Mirza Kuchak Khan organized guerrilla warfare named *Nihzate-i Jangal* or Jungle Movement, as a rebellion against central government and Russian and British influences. He gathered local combatants who were armed civilians, mostly from Gilān province, to fight against Russian occupation of Gilān province and the central government of Iran and the British forces. They used to live in the vast woods of Gilān, they had long hair and beards, and wore *chamush*, black hats made out of goat hairs called *kūlah namadi* and thick woolen coats. They were locally referred to as *jangali* or people of the jungle. These armed civilians fought, under the leadership of Mirza Kuchak Khan, with Russian, British and Iranian armies until October 1921, when Reza Khan Sardar Sipah, with a strong army named the Persian Cossack Brigade, attacked Gilān province and, as a consequence, the armed civilians surrendered to Reza Khan. Mirza Kuchak Khan planned to retreat to the Khalkhal but died due to frost bite on the 2nd of December 1921, on the way to Khalkhal in the Khalkhal Mountains. His death was an end to *Nihzat-i Jangal*. Ibrāhim Islah-i Arabāni, "Nihzat-i Jangal," in Islah-i Arabāni, *Kitab-i Gilān*, 184–238.

Fig. 5.59. A pattern on a *Mirza Kuchak Khan* sock. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.
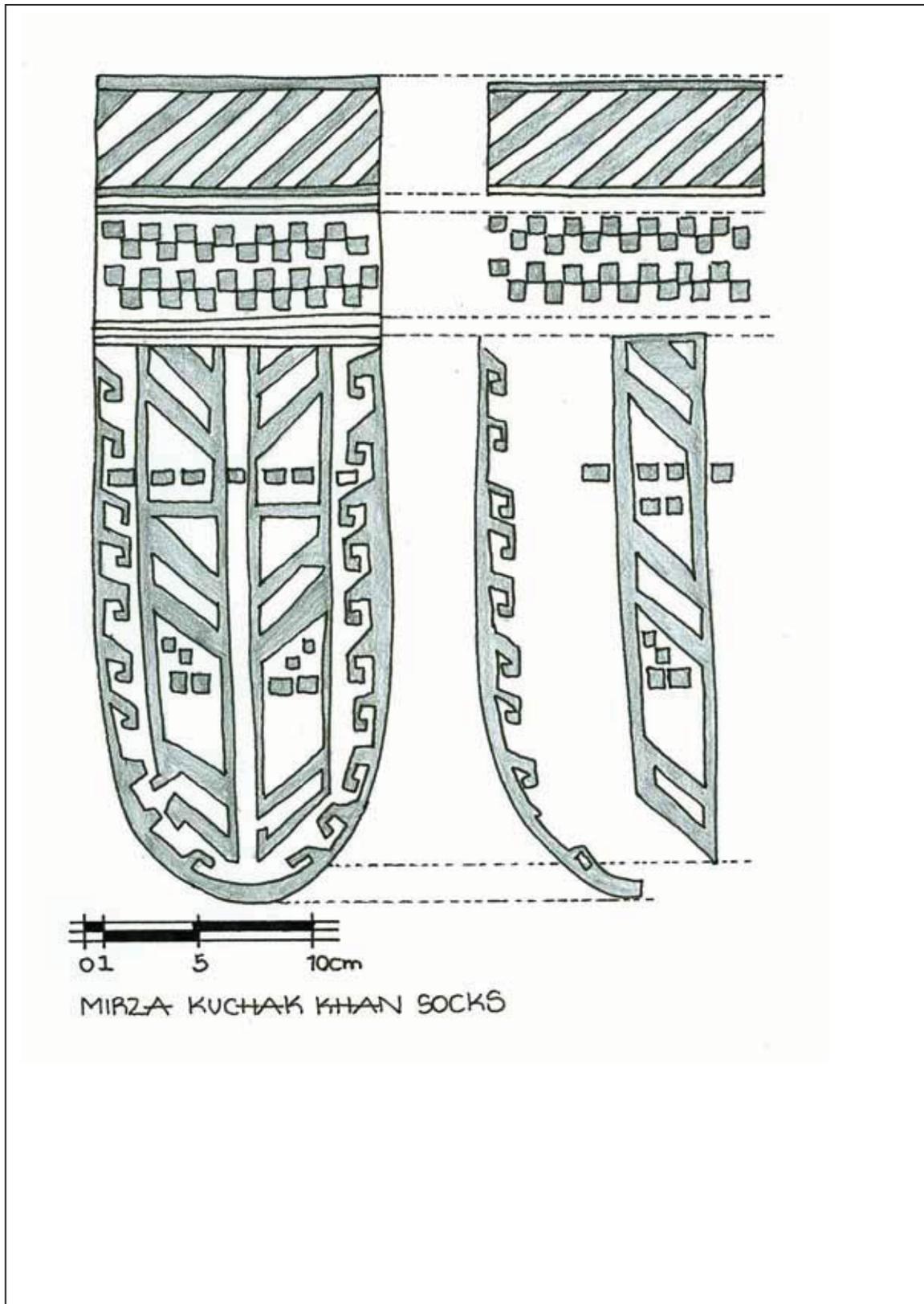
Fig. 5.60. Pattern analysis. Drawing by author, 2012.
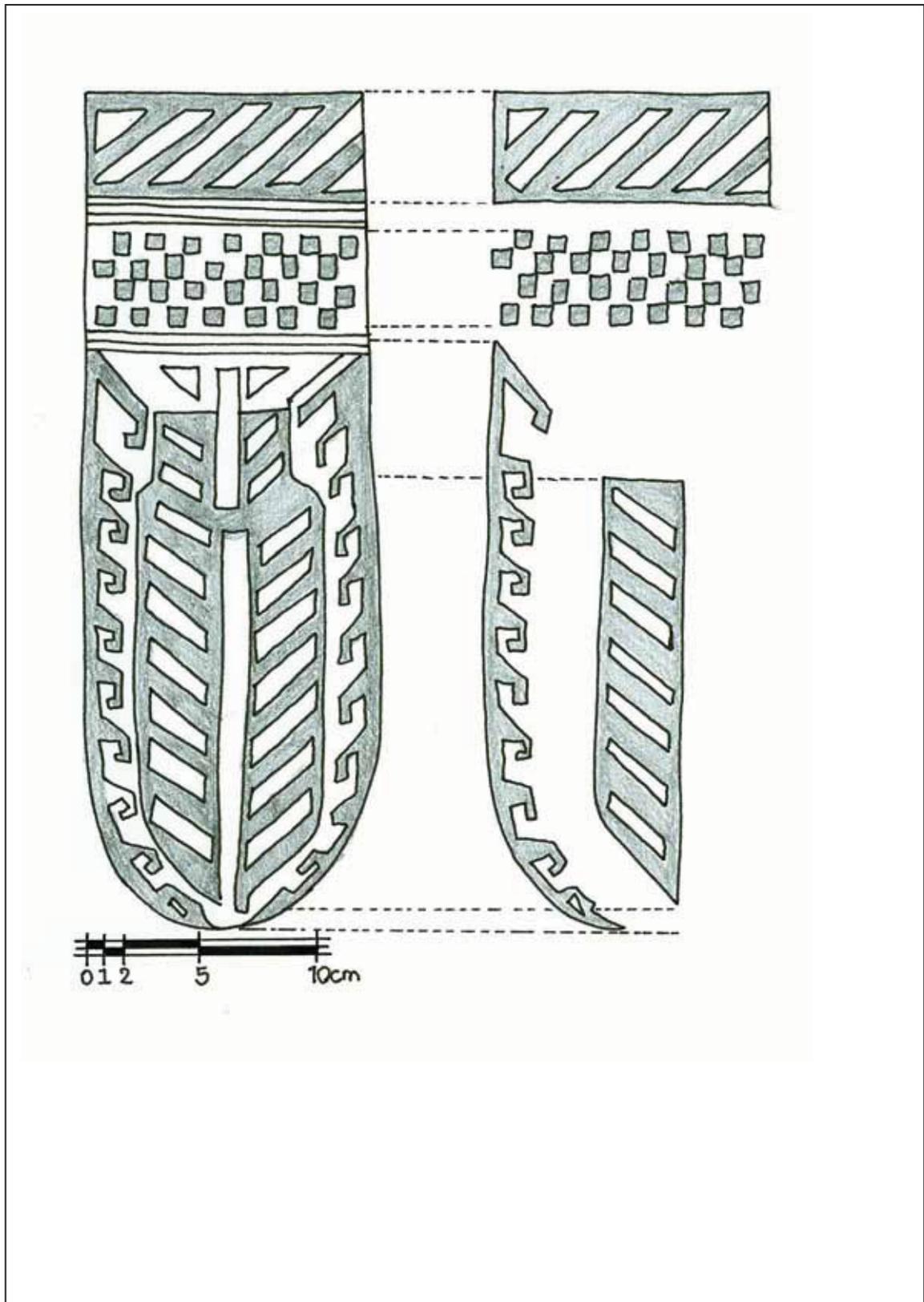
Fig. 5.61. Pattern analysis. Drawing by author, 2012.

Fig. 5.62. A *Mirza Kuchak Khan* sock. Drawings and photographs by author, 2012.

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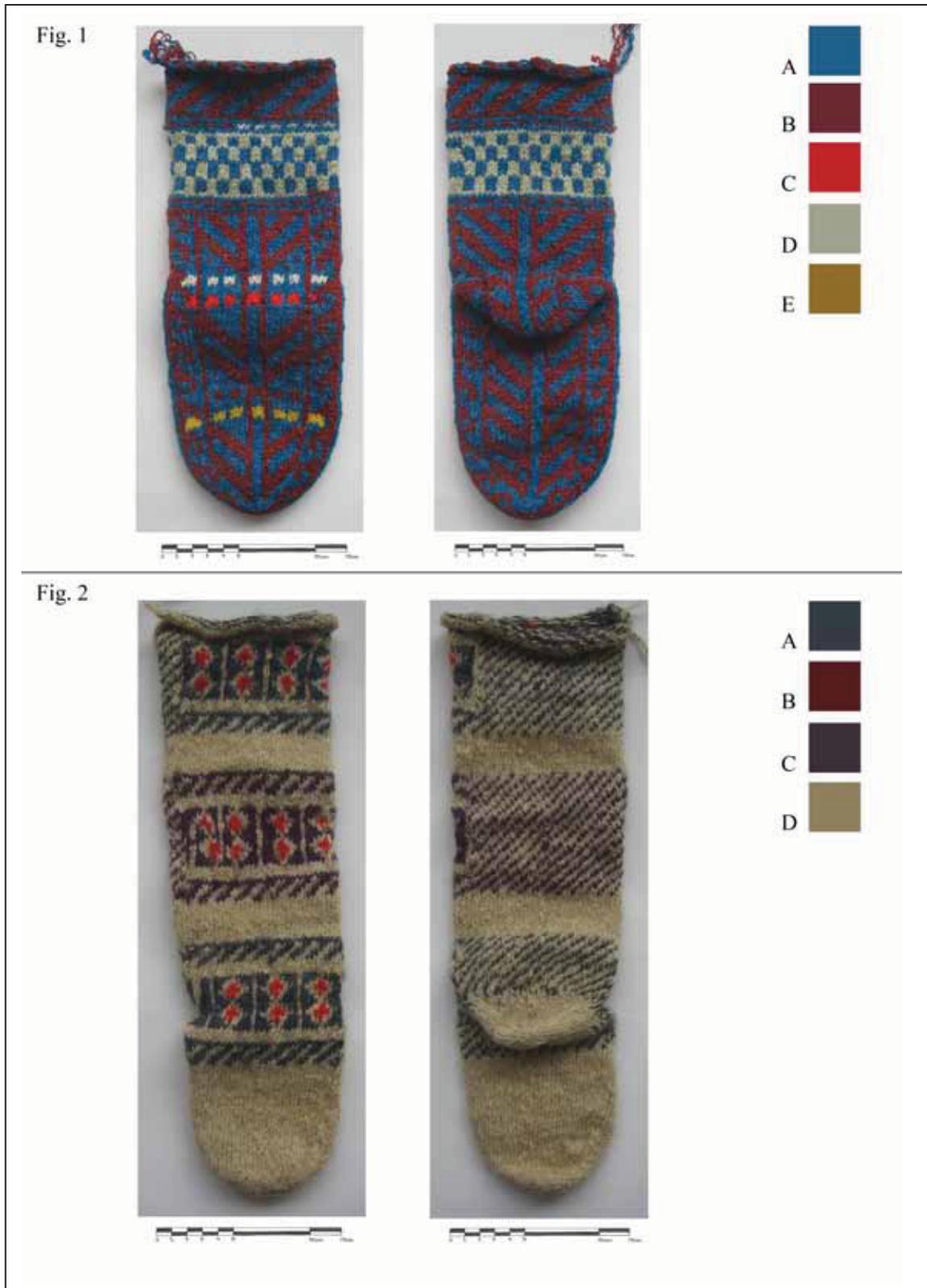
Fig. 5.63. Color analysis. Photographs by author, 2012.

and summer. Abdullah was a shepherd; he used to graze sheep. Sheep are the source of

butter and cheese, leather and meat, and he used to sell these items in the bazaar. After

Fatimah had met him two or three times, Abdullah and his family came to her father and

asked for permission to marry her. The marriage depended on their agreement. Fatimah

said nothing. Her father and Abdullah's family talked to each other and then Fatimah's

father came to her and said to her that they were going to Abdullah's house to talk more

about the marriage. There, Fatimah's family talked to Abdullah's family and they agreed

on marriage. In those days it was like that. They agreed on a marriage day. Fatimah's

family provided her with a lot of dyed and white wool to knit later in her life. They put

money, walnuts, hazelnuts, sugarcubes and pastry inside the rolls of wool. This was a sign

of *barakāt* or blessings for her. The family of Abdullah brought a horse for her and she

rode a horse to Abdullah's house. She brought some basic needs for the household with

her. Abdullah's family also provided a house for them. Everyone came to their wedding.

Abdullah's family served them rice, bread, olives and kebabs. About her life, Fatimah

says:

> Great thanks to God, Abdullah and I have six children. We have three
> daughters and three sons. In the house of Abdullah, I am always very busy. I
> used to take care of all the children, do the housework and do knitting as well.
> Part of the income of the household depends on knitting. When Abdullah was
> sick, I had to graze the flocks as well. God bless the soul of Master Nargis.
> Until the last day she was alive, I used to to cook for her, help her with her
> household tasks and take care of her. She was old and I wanted to help her as
> a tribute for all her teachings. She was my *Ūstād* [master]. I used to go to the
> woods to collect vegetables for dyeing the wools. My responsibiylities
> gradually became more when Abdullah retired as a shepherd and stayed in the
> house. I take care of him. Two of my daughters and one of my sons are
> married and they live in Rasht. One of my sons was killed in the front line in
> the Iran-Iraq War. Another son of mine and one of my daughters live in

Masulih with me. They also help me. I am more than seventy years old and I still knit.[407]

Fatimah's work unifies function and art. In the case of woollen socks, functionally they can be worn inside the house and can also be used as decoration. For Fatimah, the functionality of the craft are both vital. Craftsmanship, patterning and art are all potentially manifested in her artifacts. A single pair of woollen socks could have a variety of geometrical patterns on it – Fatimah is completely free to create any number of patterns. A pair of socks to be used as an object of art should be woven with the wilful devotion and care of the weaver. The weaver deposits something of herself in the craft. In the case of socks, each pair is unique, like Fatimah's personality. Each time Fatimah starts to weave a new pair, she alters the patterns, colors, replacing one design with another. If one wants to see all the woollen socks with their diverse colors and patterns in Masulih, one needs to meet all the weavers as well. Their craft is the representation of their personality.

5.7 The Family of Carpenters

The Gudarzi's family are known as the family of carpenters in Masulih. Faribūrz Gudarzi and Ali Gudarzi are two brothers who practice carpentry. Their brothers Farhād, Hasan and Farhud are also carpenters, although they migrated from Masulih. Their father Friydun and their grandfather Asgar Khan, as well as their uncles Yad Allah, Mirzā Hūsiyn, Hushang and Nāsir, were also carpenters in Masulih. They are all now dead. Faribūrz Gudarzi was an apprentice in his father's workshop for ten years; afterwards he

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[407] Sadih-lu, interviews.

worked with his brothers for six years. Faribūrz worked in Masulih, Fuman, Tehran, Esfahan, Gūrgān, Tabriz, Qūm, Zanjān and outside Iran in the Republic of Azerbijan and the Ukraine. He also worked for two years in the Principal Mosque in Fuman; all the doors and windows in this mosque are his work. All the wooden work in Masulih is the craft of his family.[408] More than a decade ago, Faribūrz and his brother Ali established their workshop in Masulih. Faribūrz's speciality is making windows and doors. The traditional windows that Faribūrz makes are called *girih chiyni*; they are based on geometric patterns. Every window follows a particular geometric pattern. Based on the pattern, small pieces of wood are cut and fitted together. Mortise and tendon or *zabānih va fāq*, tongue and groove or *kām va zabānih* are the two main joinery techniques used for fitting two wooden pieces together. In *girih chiyni,* nails and glue are not used for fitting the pieces. Cutting the small pieces based on the pattern is vital; otherwise, the pieces will not fit together. The windows that Faribūrz makes could have four, six, eight or twelve flowers in the center. The majority of the windows in Masulih have eight flowers in the center and Faribūrz customarily makes eight flower windows more than other types in Masulih. He uses walnut, cherry, oak and cedar; the choice of the wood depends on the budget of the customer.[409]

These days, Faribūrz's customers who reside in large cities like Rasht favor *girih chiyni* so they order them for the interior decoration of their houses. They would like to decorate their modern flats with *girih chiyni*; they decorate their living rooms or their kitchens with *girih chiyni*. These types of customers also order furniture with *girih chiyni*

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[408] Faribūrz Gudarzi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.
[409] Faribūrz Gudarzi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

on it, so Faribūrz makes sofas or dining tables with *girih chiyni*. He uses *girih chiyni* in the suspended ceilings of these modern houses as well. Originally, *girih chiyni* was used for windows and is widely used in religious buildings and sacred sites like mosques, *Imāmzādih* and religious schools. It is said that the origins of *girih chiyni* date back to the Safavid Era (1501–1736 AD). The shift to using *girih chiyni* for domestic interior decoration is an innovation in this tradition which happened during last two decades. Faribūrz's father could not have imagined that one day *girih chiyni* will be used as a means of decoration for modern flats in cities.

Ali Gudarzi, Faramarz's brother, works in the same workshop. He learned carpentry from his father from childhood. He indicates that being a carpenter in his father and his grandfather's time was much more demanding than nowadays. These days there are all kinds of modern machines for woodworking, whereas in his father's time they had to do everything manually. Once Ali measured one of the windows that his grandfather made: the width of the work at the bottom and top of the window was exactly 72.2 cm; not even a millimeter of error in the work. He wonders how his grandfather could manage to make a window with such exact dimensions. It is easy to be precise with machines, but being accurate while sawing all the pieces by hand is much more demanding; a millimeter of error could easily happen. Once, Ali tried to cut a piece of wood manually and while he was engaging in cutting the wood, he realized how difficult it was for his father and grandfather to do all the work manually. Some of the windows that his grandfather made are a century old and the windows are still intact; not every wooden window can survive for a century; indeed craftsmanship and the quality of the wood were two key points for Ali's grandfather. Ali's father Friydun used to say to him that his grandfather Asgar Khan

forged his tools in the local blacksmith workshop, whereas Ali and Faribūrz purchase their tools from Rasht.[410]

When Ali observes the old windows of Masulih, he tries to find the center of the window where the first pieces are fixed. The center is where the work of *girih chiyni* starts; from the center, all the wooden pieces are fixed together. The work of *girih chiyni* grows from the center to the frame. Sometimes, Ali repairs old windows as well. He has to open the frames and take apart small pieces and change the broken pieces for new ones and then assemble them. Ali's favorite wood is oak; it is expensive but durable and hard with great strength. Once the wooden pieces of oak interlock, it is very hard to separate them. With modern machinery, a one meter by one meter *girih chiyni* can be done in two weeks, although manually it takes much longer (figures 5.64 to 5.67).[411]

5.8 The Gun Maker

The landscape around Masulih is not merely used for grazing lands, trading routes, tree cutting and charcoal making; it used to be a hunting ground as well. The inhabitants used to purchase guns from Ahad Allah Targhibi, the gun maker, and practice hunting in the surrounding woods and mountains. Hunters used the paths outside the community in order to reach the higher ground, which was better for hunting. Although making guns and hunting have been abandoned, hunting and gun-making should be considered part of the artifact system of Masulih. Investigating them helps us to understand the changes which have happened over time to the landscape surrounding Masulih, as well as to the

[410] Ali Gudarzi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.
[411] Ali Gudarzi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

Fig. 5.64. Faribūrz Gudarzi in his workshop. Photograph by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.65. A wooden window made by Faribūrz Gudarzi, date unknown. Courtesy of Faribūrz Gudarzi.

Fig. 5.66. Two wooden windows, date unknown. Courtesy of Faribūrz Gudarzi.

Fig. 5.67. A *girih chiyni* in a kitchen, date unknown. Courtesy of Faribūrz Gudarzi.

lifestyle of the people. This landscape was once a landscape rich with animals suitable for hunting, and the inhabitants used to go to the Lalandiz and Andarih heights and the peak of Qand Kalih to hunt bears, boars, foxes and quail. However, hunting was gradually abandoned in Masulih due to over-hunting. Nonetheless, we can still learn about the making of caplock muskets and musketoon guns in Masulih and discuss these practices with the gun maker, which connects us to the hunting practices of Masulih's past as well as to the hunting grounds in Masulih's woods and mountains (figure 5.68).

In the bazaar of Masulih I had the chance to see Ahad Allah Targhibi, the last gun maker of Masulih. His father Rūstam, his grandfather Ahad Allah, his ancestor Rūstam and the father of his ancestor, Mehdi Ali Targhibi, were all gun makers. All these people were masters in making caplock musket and musketoon guns or *tūfang-i sar-pūr* and *tapānchih sar-pūr*. Ahad Allah still owns the workshop in which all his family members used to work, although he does not make muskets or musketoons anymore.

The musket and musketoon are types of gun which are loaded from the head of the barrel. It is said that the origins of the musket, its use by the Persian army and for personal use, date back to the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736 AD), although in the Safavid era the shape, size and mechanism of muskets were different from in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Muskets and musketoons were widely used in the Imperial Russia–Persian Empire wars of 1804–1813 AD.[412] In the past these types of guns were used for military and hunting purposes. Every time a hunter wanted to shoot, he would have to pour gunpowder into the barrel from the head of the barrel. The hunters had powder measures for estimating the amount of gunpowder before pouring it into the barrel. Then

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[412] Ahad Allah Targhibi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

ZODEL

LALANDIZ
GRAZING LAND

SHEPHERDS MASOULEH

HUNTING
GROUND

2897m

0   724   1448
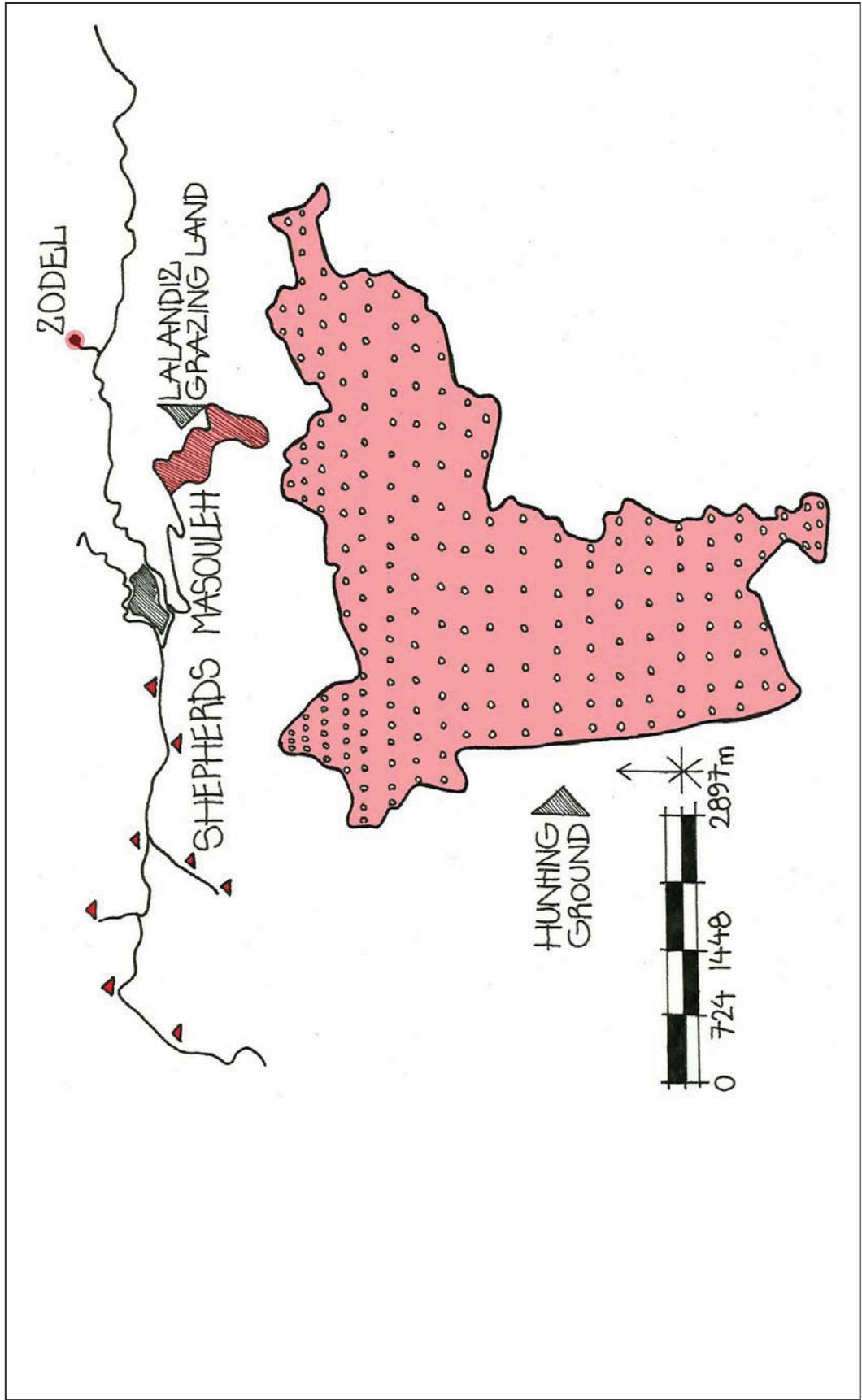
Fig. 5.68. Map of the hunting grounds. Adapted from Google Earth.

420

the bullet had to be inserted using a ramrod to shove it all the way down the barrel. The bullet had to be fixed on top of the gunpowder; no empty space could be left between the powder and the bullet. They used to hit the bullet several times by ramrod to fix the bullet. A cap or *chāshni* had to be put on the nipple; the hammer had to be shifted backward, and then the target had to be aimed and fired at. Depending on the type of bullet, the range of this type of gun is from 100 to 150 meters. Another type of bullet which was used for hunting was a small iron ball called *sāchmih*. In this method, after filling the barrel with gunpowder, a piece of textile was inserted on top of the powder, then *sāchmih* were poured inside, then another piece of textile was inserted on top of the *sāchmih*. In this method, instead of shooting one bullet, a lot of *sāchmih* or small balls would shot towards the target. A musketeer had to carry bullets, gunpowder, a gunpowder measure, textiles and caps. In the times of Ahad Allah's grandfather and his ancestor, there were merchants who used to sell gunpowder, *sāchmih*, bullets and caps in the bazaar of Masulih. In those days, there were hunters in Masulih and people used to hunt bears, boars, foxes and quails in the woods and mountains.[413]

Ahad Allah Targhibi's ancestors were skillful in forging the barrel, making the stock and assembling all parts of the gun together. They forged the barrels of their guns out of horseshoes in their workshop. They would melt the horseshoes in the forge and on the anvil, shaping the melted horseshoes into a barrel. They had a bar with a thickness of the size of the interior of the barrel or *lulih tūfang* which was used in making the barrel. The melted iron pieces were fastened around the bar and stroked by hammer all around to shape the barrel. The calibers ranged from 20mm to 25mm; the entire length of the

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[413] Ahad Allah Targhibi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

musket was around 70cm to 100cm and it weighed in total 4 to 4.5 kg. A musket has a

barrel or *lulih tūfang*, barrel bands or *bast*, stock or *qūndaq*, trigger or *māshih*, hammer or

chakūsh, nipple or *pistunak* and ramrod or *someh*. The military musket also had a

bayonet. All these parts used to be made by hand. The stock of the musket was made out

of local woods. There were three types of wood for making the stock: *kiykam*, *bāskam*

and *kih*. *Kiykam* was the best wood for the stock: it was durable and strong. The stock

was fastened to the main body of the gun by approximately seven bands, although the

number of the bands depended on the length of the stock. A gun maker had to be a skilled

carpenter and blacksmith and know how to assemble all the parts together. Ahad Allah's

grandfather and his ancestor also used to make musketoons. The process of making the

musketoon is as same as the musket, although the musketoon is lighter and easier to carry

than a musket. Ahad Allah Targhibi's grandfather used to decorate the musketoons with

cow bones and sell them to customers in Gilān province. For a skilled master, it takes

three days to make a musket or musketoon. Sometimes people used to come from other

provinces to purchase muskets or musketoons. Once, the Targhibi guns were famous, it

was like a brand name. However, these types of guns are not popular any more for

hunting as there are newer versions; nonetheless some collectors purchase them for

decoration purposes.[414]

Ahad Allah Targhibi invited me to Rasht, the capital of the province, to visit his

personal musket and musketoon collection. In Ahad Allah's house I had the chance to see

the actual artifacts: one musket and two musketoons which were manufactured in 1860 by

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[414] Ahad Allah Targhibi, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

Ahad Allah Targhibi's grandfather. The two musketoons were decorated with sea shells with all the parts discussed earlier (figures 5.69 to 5.72).

Fig. 5.69. Ahad Allah Targhibi with his musket. Photograph by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.70. Two muskets. Photograph by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.71. Ahad Allah Targhibi among his friends, date unknown. Courtesy of Ahad Allah Targhibi.

Fig. 5.72. Ahad Allah Targhibi in front of Masulih, date unknown. Courtesy of Ahad Allah Targhibi.

5.9 The Last Days of a Merchant

The memories of Shūkuh Rahbar, a merchant, in the bazaar of Masulih are part of the artifact system of Masulih. Shūkuh Rahbar's memories include his occupations, the places and paths he used to visit and travel, types of commodities that he used to purchase and sell, and a particular description of a landscape which has changed in recent years, mostly as a result of policies of the Office of Natural Resources. Shūkuh Rahbar's landscape contains mountain dwellers and wood dwellers, mules and horses as means of transportation, shepherds and migrating herds, the purchasing and selling of goods, and economic connections between Masulih and other villages and towns. The rule of paths outside the community is vital in Shūkuh Rahbar's memories: he used to travel by these paths. Shūkuh Rahbar's narrations of the past cannot be separated from the artifact system of Masulih, as his memories inform us of a landscape which has already been transformed but which has always informed the lifestyle and material culture of this community.

I met Shūkuh Rahbar, in the bazaar of Masulih. He was born in 1926, and his father Hūsiyn Rahbar, his grandfather Hāshim Gūrgin Rahbar, his great grandfather Badiyʿ Rahbar, and his great great grandfather Muhammad Hūsiyn Rahbar were all wholesalers in Masulih. Shūkuh Rahbar, his father, his grandfather and his ancestors used to purchase salted cheese, sheep's wool and butter from the shepherds and sell it in Masulih. The shepherds who used to reside in the woods and mountains around Masulih were the makers of cheese, wool and butter; Shūkuh would visit them and purchase from them. Shūkuh used to sell the wool to weavers in Masulih and Gilān. His family used to store salted cheese in clay jars and sell it to cheese merchants in Fuman and Rasht. On the Gilān plateau, it was popular to keep salted fish in clay jars and in Masulih they used to store salted cheese in such jars; years later plastic containers become popular in Gilān.

424

The shepherds used to milk the sheep and goats, boil the milk, sour it and then store it and salt it in jars to solidify as cheese. Each year in early spring the shepherds with their herds would migrate from the plateau to the woods around Masulih; in mid-spring they would migrate to higher altitudes, in midsummers to mountainous lands, and in the autumn they would move back to the plateau and stay there for the winter. There were no cars so they had to travel by mule and horse. Mid-spring and early autumn were the times to purchase wool, so Shūkuh used to travel along the mountain paths to visit the shepherds. Due to the distance, Shūkuh had to stay the night in the grazing lands and then return to Masulih the following day. For Shūkuh Rahbar it took six to eight hours to travel from the remotest grazing land to Masulih by mule or horse. Shūkuh used to visit the shepherds in Diram, Chilih Chāl, Qand Kalih, Taram, Lalandiz, Zudil, Dirih Sar, Lashkar Gah, Lasih Sar, Andarih, Khalkhal and Majilān grazing lands by his mule; except for Lalandiz, Lasih Sar, Zudil and Andarih, these grazing lands have already been emptied by the Office of Natural Resources.[415]

Shūkuh Rahbar, his father and grandfather used to purchase rice from Rasht, Fuman and Maklavan and sell it to merchants from Khalkhal and Taram. Those merchants used to travel to Masulih by mule. The rice was transferred from Rasht, Fuman and Maklavan to Masulih by mule; selling rice was very popular in Masulih. Shūkuh Rahbar's grandfather used to say to Shūkuh that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, each season around 1000 to 1500 mules and horses used to enter Masulih. The merchants would store rice bags on the roads in front of their stores. When Shūkuh was a child, he would walk between the rice bags to reach his father's shop. Merchants from

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[415] Shūkuh Rahbar, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

Majilān, Taram and Khalkhal also used to bring cherries, apples, peaches, walnuts, wheat and flour. There are fruit gardens, wheat and barley fields in Majilān, Taram and Khalkhal. There were horse mills in these villages and they used to grind wheat to flour. Wholesalers from Majilān, Taram and Khalkhal would trade these commodities in Masulih. In Shūkuh's father time around 2000 individuals used to live in Masulih and in those days the trading roads were active. Sometimes Shūkuh used to bring flour to Fuman to trade; he had to stay overnight in Maklavan. On each trip, he had twenty to thirty mules for carrying the flour bags; on the return trip he would transfer dates from Fuman to Masulih.[416]

As Shūkuh Rahbar recalls, muleteers had a difficult life: they had to travel along dirt roads between all these villages and towns; the worst part was travelling in rain and on muddy roads. Shūkuh's father Hūsiyn Rahbar used to say to him that "a muleteer is dead the very minute he decides to be a muleteer. Why he is dead? Because when in the rain, the mule cannot walk anymore or if the mule breaks his leg or if the mule becomes sick then the poor muleteer has to sit and witness the loss of his possession. This is as terrible as dying. Beside all these things he is always on the road far from villages and towns."

With the introduction of modern Roads and the prohibition of animal husbandry in the woods, Masulih's economy declined and many families migrated to cities. Nowadays Masulih is a tourist city and Shūkuh sells dolls, socks, hats and bags. In Shūkuh's lifetime he witnessed many changes in Masulih: the introduction of the modern road system, the

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[416] As Shūkuh Rahbar Indicates Masouleh used to have two river mills, one for grinding the rice and one for grinding the skin of pomagrante. Rice flour was used for baking pasteries; the skin of pomagrante is used for coloring the leather. Shūkuh Rahbar, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.

banning of animal husbandry, the decline of the population, the decline of artisans and

crafts and the gradual shift in the lifestyle of the individuals. Once he traded with the

shepherds and villages around Masulih, but nowadays he merely sells handicrafts to

tourists (figures 5.73 to 5.76). As he once said, "these are his last days as a merchant."[417]
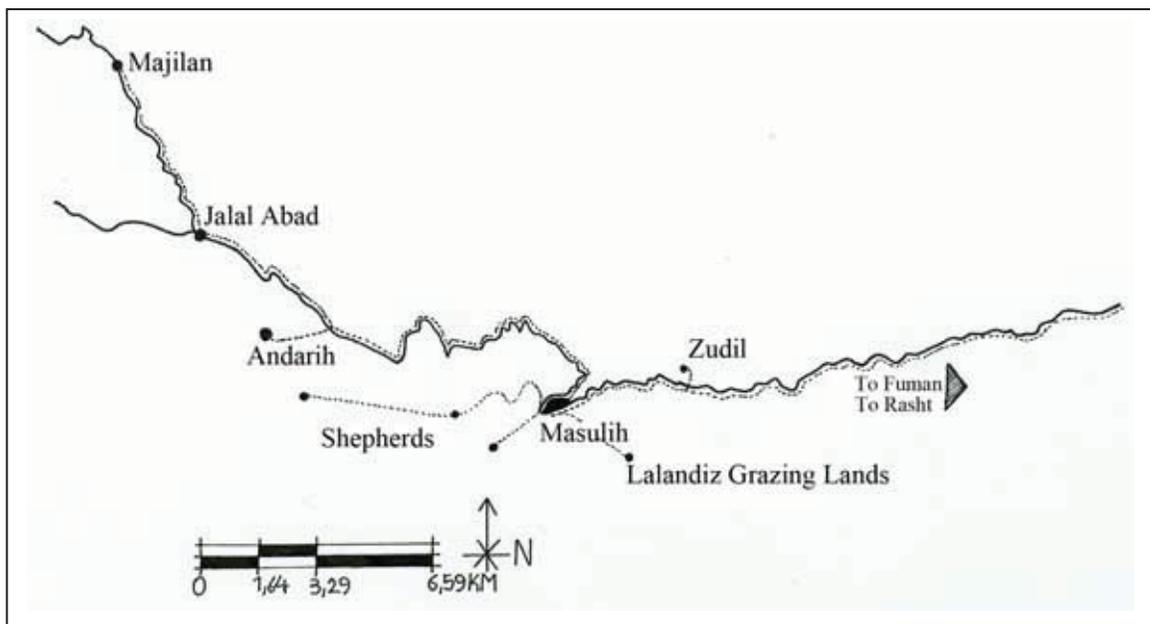
Fig. 5.73. Map showing routes used by Shūkuh Rahbar . Adapted from Google Earth.

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[417] Shūkuh Rahbar, series of interviews by Ehsan Daneshyar, Masouleh, July 2013.
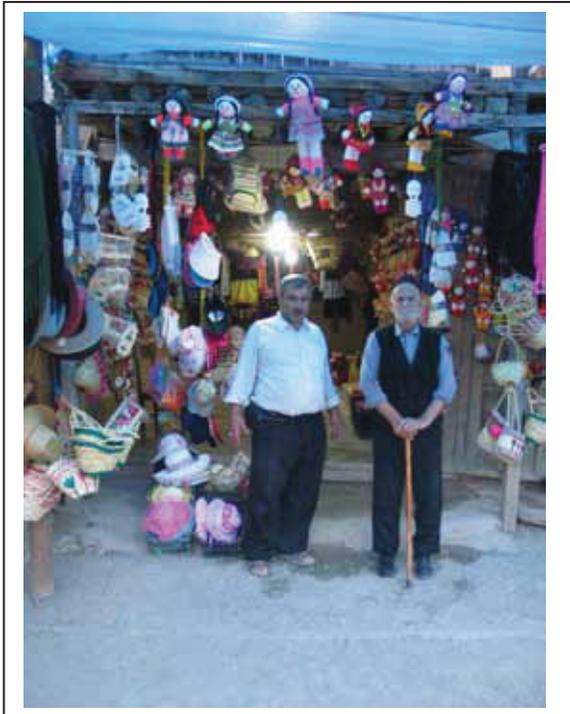
Fig. 5.74. Shūkuh Rahbar in his shop. Photograph by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.75. Ali Gudarzi and Muhammad Askarpur. Photograph by author, 2013.

Fig. 5.76. Ahad Allah Targhibi in Masulih's bazaar. Photograph by author, 2013.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The main objective of this dissertation is to make tectonic connections between artifacts at different scales, such as buildings, furniture, tools, and textiles. The entire town of Masulih with its inhabitants and its surrounding landscape is a complex, large-scale artifact. Distinguishing this fact and studying the town as such can tell us about objects in the town, their use, history, and the reasons for their design and development, as well as about the inhabitants and their ways of life both past and present, revealing the changes to their society that are taking place. As part of the study of vernacular architecture presented in this thesis, in chapters three, four and five I described the social, economic and religious aspects of life in Masulih that must be taken into consideration for a basic understanding of Masulih's artifact system. These things may not be readily apparent to casual visitors to the town. My investigative process began with direct observation and conversations with long-term local residents who could provide detailed contextual information through oral history. This process was supplemented by information from relevant texts in archives and books. I observed how artifacts are constructed and used. Perhaps one of the most important aspects of my methodology was my attempt to make sense of what I observed through the intensive development of drawings. This helped me to slow down the process of investigation, affording time for consideration of the materials I had gathered, and especially for the understanding of construction, scale, pattern, texture, light, and colour that evolves from the drawing process.

The main goal of this research is to show the significant meanings, connections and values of the artifact system of Masulih. In this chapter, the main findings will be summarized in five main sections. The first section describes the significance for Masulih

of its paths. The second section discusses the houses of Masulih. The third part discusses

the connections between workshops, artisans, artifacts, and the people of Masulih, as well

as the connections between the artifacts made and used in Masulih and the larger town

structure. The artifact system of Masulih consists of these elements and the principal

objective of this research is to analyze the connections and values between them. One

outcome of this analysis is, therefore, to identify values central to life in Masulih, and this

is the topic of section 4 of this chapter. My analysis also shows changes in the usage of

paths and of local materials, in the construction of artifacts, in the vernacular architecture

and in the lifestyle of people from the eighteenth century onward. Section 5 discusses this

issue, showing how the entire town of Masulih is an artifact which is changing over time.

As I discussed in chapter three, I initially assumed the woods around Masulih to be "plain

woods," but after interviewing the inhabitants and walking the paths, I gradually grasped

the significance of the complex network of paths inside and outside the community. The

paths outside the community are hidden in the surrounding woods, but with care and by

asking the inhabitants they can still be found. Walking the paths inside and outside the

town helped me understand and ground the town and the surrounding landscape around it.

The paths inside and outside the town are integrated with the community and the

economic, religious and social lifestyle of its inhabitants, and can tell us much about these

aspects of life in Masulih.

My exploration of the paths of Masulih revealed that they have a significance

beyond their merely utilitarian function as routes for travel. I found that the paths

contribute to the wholeness and unity of the community. The path gathers. Without a

path, physical built environments such as houses, mosques, shrines, the bazaar, tea

houses, springs, workshops and other elements could not form a unified totality. It is by walking the paths that one can observe the wholeness of the artifact of Masulih. It is not only the paths inside the town that matter; the paths outside the town connect the grazing lands, shrines, individuals and places to the community, and are also part of the artifact system of Masulih. By observing this aspect of the artifact system, one can see how the system is losing its integrity. Like the great Turkish carpets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which contain wholeness and unity within their patterns and within the entire carpet, the paths of Masulih used to be intact and whole. Like a Turkish carpet that has gradually lost its wholeness and its excellent old patterns as it faded, the paths in Masulih have also steadily declined and been abandoned (figures 6.1 to 6.9).

[418]

PATHS	
WIDE PATHS	NARROW PATHS
VISIBLE PATHS	HIDDEN PATHS
PEDESTRIAN PATHS	MOUNTAINOUS PATHS
ASPHALT/ STONE PATHS	DIRT PATHS
MUDDY PATHS	DRY PATHS
STRAIGHT PATHS	STAIRS
SUMMER AND SPRING PATHS	AUTUMN AND WINTER PATHS
SHADY PATHS	SUN EXPOSED PATHS
ASCENDING PATHS	DESCENDING PATHS
BLOCKED PATHS	OPEN PATHS
ECONOMIC/RELIGOUS PATHS	TOURISTIC PATHS

Fig. 6.1. Different aspects of paths. Drawing by author, 2013.

[418] Christopher Alexander, *A Foreshadowing of 21st Century Art: The Color and Geometry of Early Turkish Carpets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 340–50.
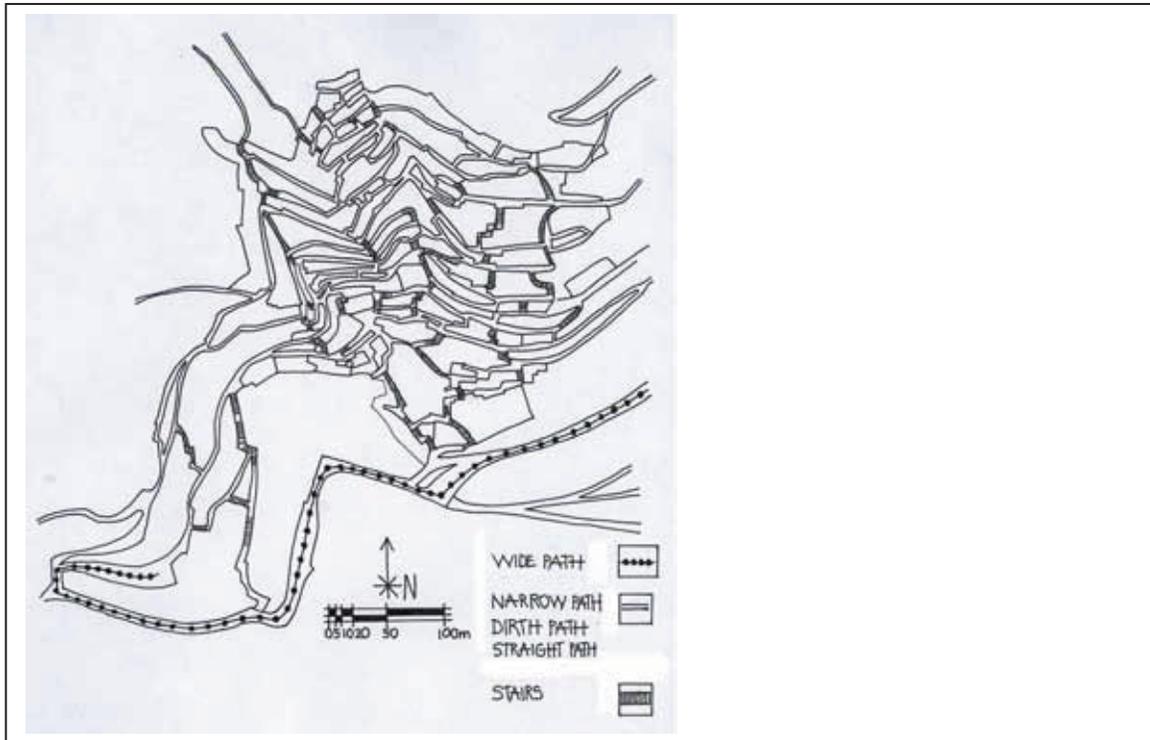
Fig. 6.2. Paths. Drawing by author, 2014.
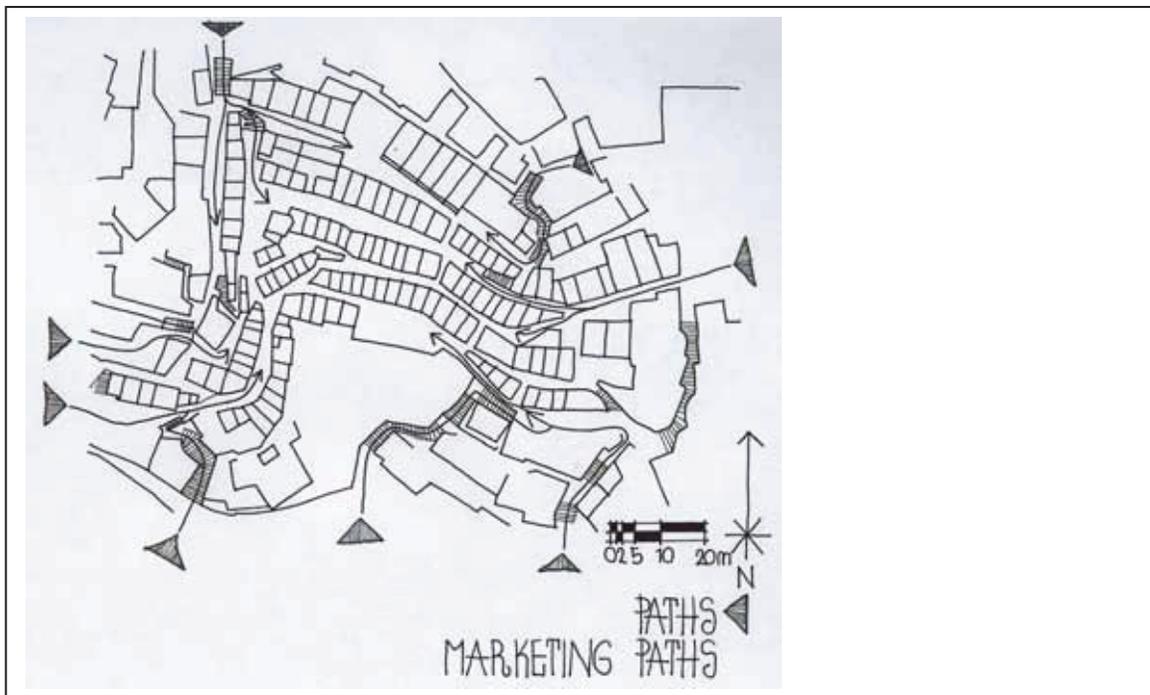
Fig. 6.3. Marketing paths. Drawing by author, 2014.
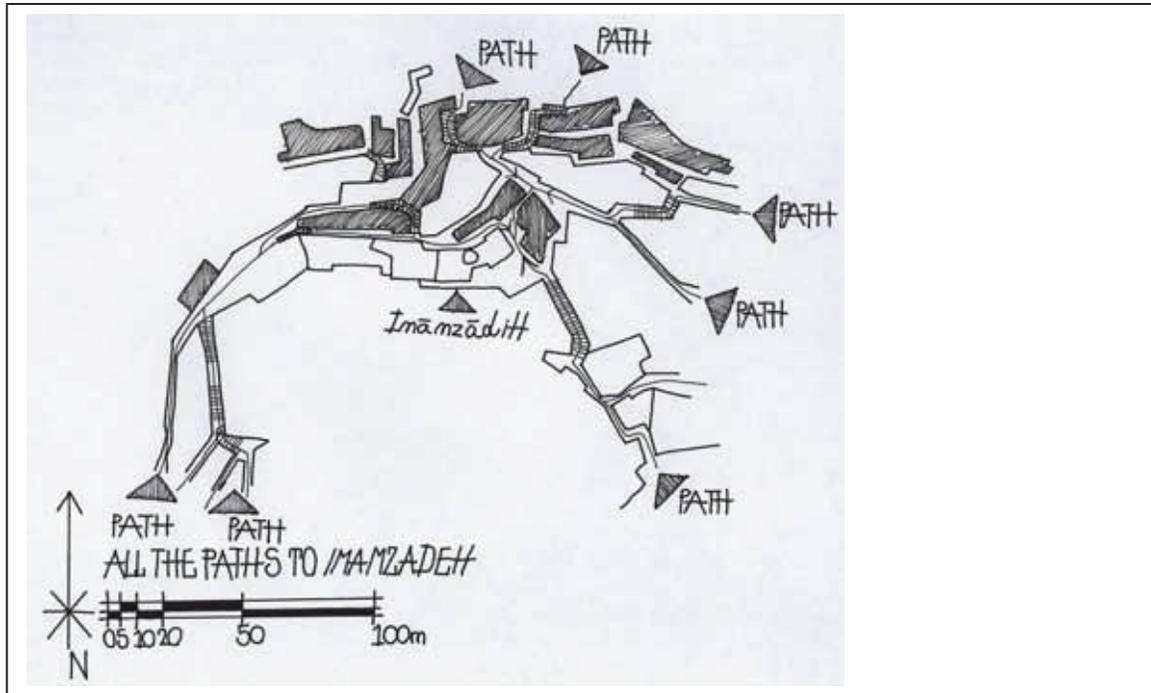
Fig. 6.4. All the paths to *Imāmzādih*. Drawing by author, 2014.
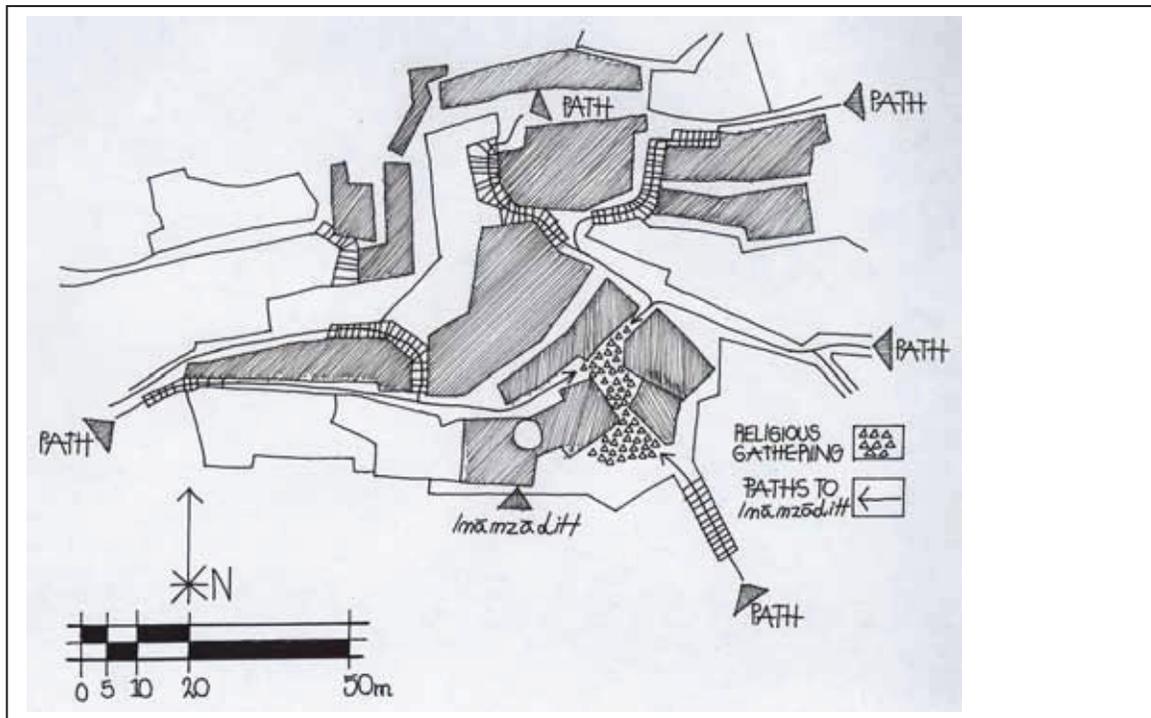
Fig. 6.5. Paths to *Imāmzādih.* Drawing by author, 2014.
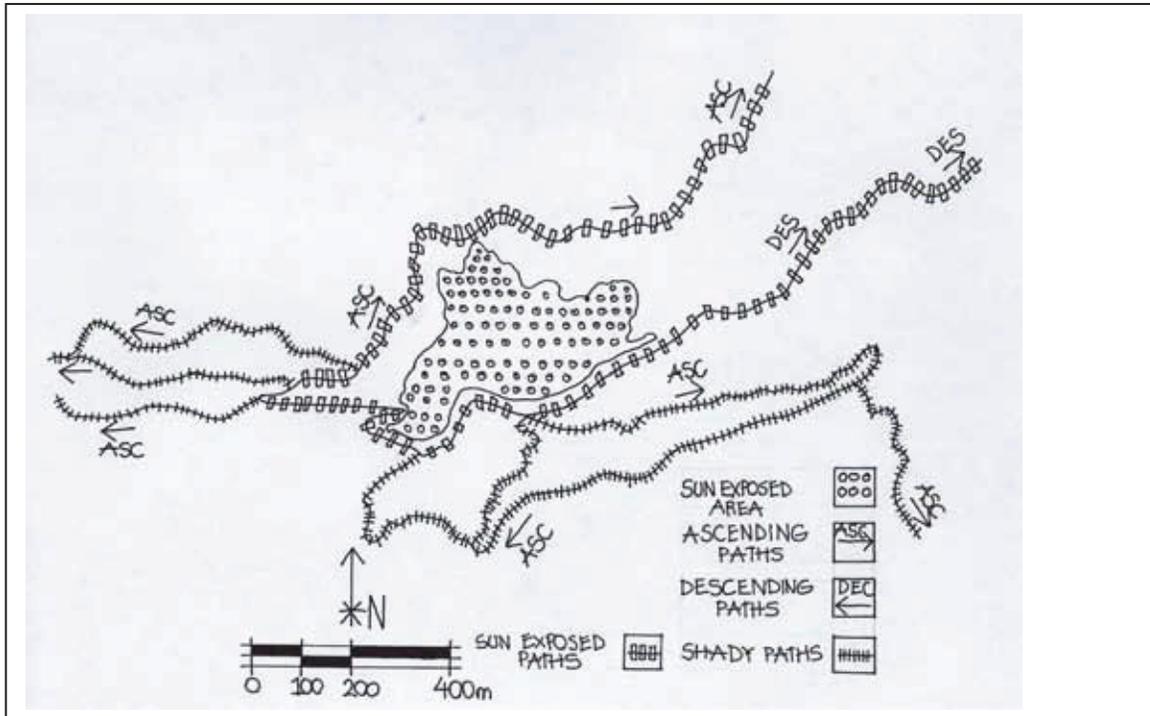
Fig. 6.6. Ascending and descending Paths. Drawing by author, 2014.
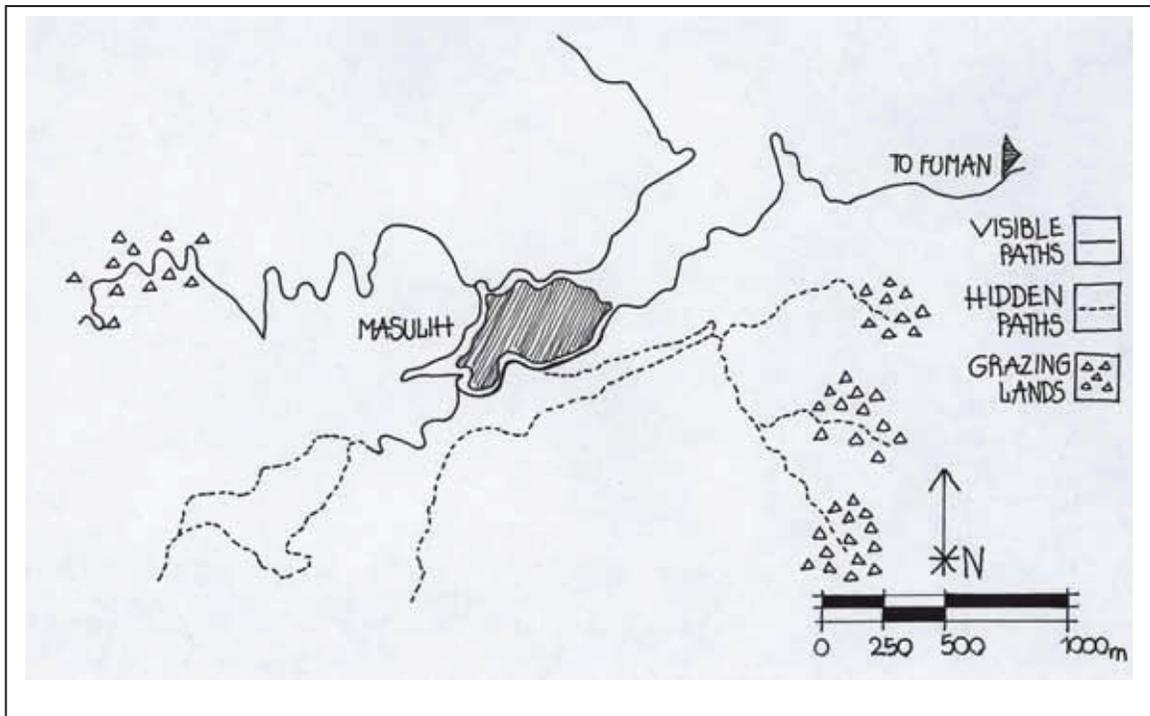
Fig. 6.7. Visible and hidden paths. Drawing by author, 2014.
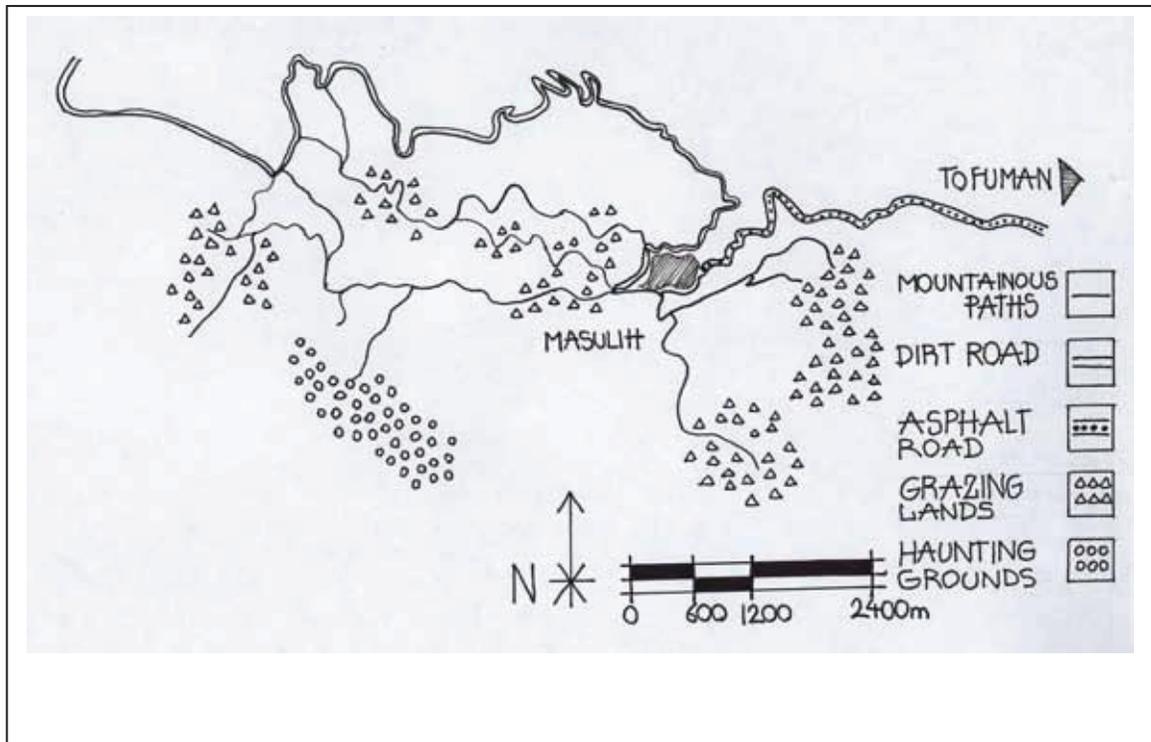
Fig. 6.8. Paths around Māsulih. Drawing by author, 2014.
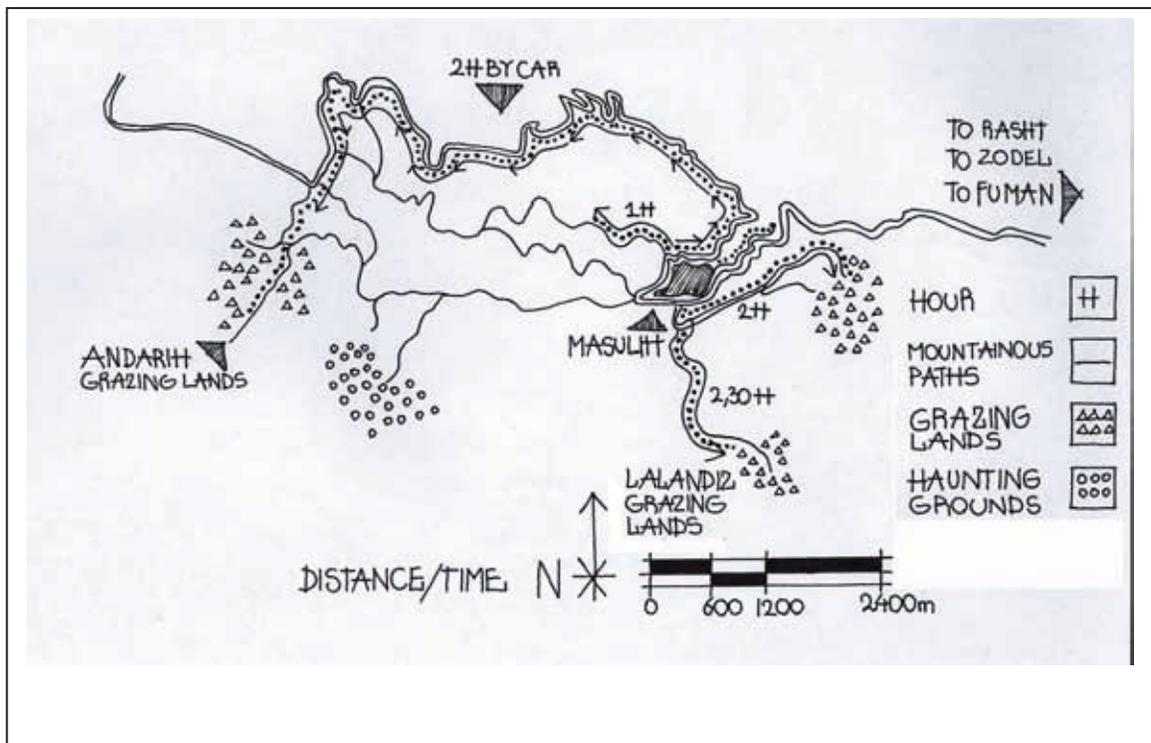
Fig. 6.9. Distance and time. Drawing by author, 2014.

The paths, which are part of the artifact system of Masulih, have seasonal shifts in their utilization, showing how the local lifestyle has traditionally depended and still depends on the season and landscape. On the rainy and snowy days of autumn and winter the muddy paths outside the town are rarely used, and the only active paths are the main road that reaches Masulih and the pedestrian paths inside the community. Nonetheless, those who live in the woods, such as the shepherds Rahmat Farahmand and Muhammad Ali Farahmand, must walk the narrow, muddy paths in order to reach Masulih. In the spring and summer, the paths outside the town that extend into the landscape are used more often. This shows that the usage of the paths around Masulih is not permanent, but depends on the season and the environment.

Masulih's paths are not only routes for travel, but also have other uses. For example, the paths of Masulih are connected to the ritual of Ashurā. During this ritual, for ten days and nights the participants walk the paths of Masulih, forming a line. They usually start from their mosque and end in front of the *Imāmzādih*. The black line of people moves along various paths at different heights, performing the ritual. The performance of the ritual is not concentrated on one spot but moves along the paths. The path leads the performance. As I indicated in chapter four, this ritual also merges the public and private domains. The ritual is carried out not only in the streets and public parts of the town, but also in some of the houses, like the house of Abdullah Askar-pur. In Askar-pur's house the ritual takes place for ten nights every year. In fact, the house is no longer a house during these religious ceremonies; it becomes part of the event. This fact demonstrates the connections between the ways the paths are used and the ways houses are used, all connected as part of Masulih's integrated artifact system.

In the past, the paths outside the town were also important for religious

proceedings, and people used to use them to visit the four shrines or *Imāmzādih* outside

the town. In researching this study, I walked the paths to visit the sacred shrines and

interviewed the inhabitants, gradually revealing the meaning of these sites. Living in a

mountainous landscape surrounded by woods had its hardships: during the winters the

paths would be blocked, floods and disease were frequent, merchandising demanded

transportation and transferring goods meant walking on the paths in the open landscape.

The merchants would rely on the blessings of nature to pass through village and town.

People needed help physically and spiritually. Physical help could come from the

inhabitants of Masulih and the surrounding areas. Meanwhile, spiritual help was the

responsibility of the *Imāmzādih*: protection, blessings and healings were their art. When

hardships occurred, the individual or individuals would take refuge by summoning

particular *Imāmzādih*: mediators who could protect them. The people of Masulih had five

guardians in and outside the community: the *Imāmzādih* Hāshim, Ibrāhim, ʿun ibn-i Ali,

Ziyn ibn-i Ali and ʿiyn ibn-i Ali. In their view, these guardians resided in an ideal

landscape, heaven, and their job was to help the people on earth.[419] For the people of

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[419] Amos Rapoport believes that the creation of cultural landscape is based on the activity of many individuals over long periods of time in a certain region; these individuals believe in a shared schemata. The shared schemata refers to ideal landscapes which may be symbolic, cosmological, or non-empirical-mythical: imaginary landscapes such as heaven, hell, paradise etc. Over time, these individuals attempt to transfer their mental schemata to their physical built environment and their surrounding landscape. That is, they try to recreate, however imperfectly, their ideal schemata in their built environment. Amos Rapoport, "On Cultural Landscapes," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 3.2, no. II (1992): 33–47.

Like in Masouleh, in Ballymenone, an Irish community that was the subject of a detailed study by Henry Glassie, the saints and sacred grounds have a special place in the shared schemata of the inhabitants. For the people of Ballymenone, saints were important: their life stories were part of the local history; saints were always remembered and their stories retold beside the fire in the inhabitants' houses. It was the saints who converted the Irish to the Christian faith and it was they who blessed or cursed the land. For the inhabitants, the saints and the land were connected: the saints knew nature's secrets and they blessed nature. The saints also protected the individuals and the land. Like the inhabitants of Masouleh, the people in

Masulih, particular sacred grounds contained meanings, and these meanings were not of this world. Rather, they were based on their shared faith in another world: a realm containing religious heroes. This meant that in times of hardship the people were not alone. The *Imāmzādih* were at work healing, protecting, and blessing people and the land. However, as I discovered, these shrines are now either completely neglected or visited only rarely, showing that the artifact system of Masulih has changed over time and is in the process of changing. Shift in use of the paths shows how the connections of the people to their environment have changed.[420]

Ballymenone traced back the origins of their place to sacred beginnings and saints. See Henry Glassie, *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 159–80.

[420] This discussion of paths is inspired by the essays of Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau poetically expresses the process of walking in his informal essays. His long walks in nature are described in a sensory way in his essays, in which he describes the scenery of the open fields, ponds, woods, streams, farmhouses and villages. He regards human beings as inhabitants of nature rather than part of society. See "AWalk to Wachusett," "A Winter Walk," and "Walking" in Henry David Thoreau, *The Major Essays of Henry David Thoreau* (New York: Whitston Publishing Company, Inc. 2001), 132–89.

   The Songlines by Bruce Chatwin is another source that should be mentioned here as an inspiration for this passage. There are invisible pathways which meander all over Australia and are known as "dreaming-tracks," "songlines" or "footprints of the ancestors." According to Aboriginal creation myths, Aboriginal ancestors wandered over the land in the dreamtime, the time of the creation of the world, singing out the names of everything that crossed their paths. This included animals, plants, birds, rocks, and springs, and so while walking the paths they sang the world into existence. The Aboriginals believe that to construct roads, railways, mines and other things is to wound the land and human beings. For them, the land should be left untouched, as it was in the dreamtime when the ancestors sang the world into existence by walking along the paths. These paths are also ways of communicating with the remotest tribes. For the Aboriginals, walking the "songlines" is a ritual journey: it is like walking in the footsteps of the ancestors, and the walk is a union of the land and the song. See Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 2, 11, 13, 28.

   Joseph Anthony Amato, in his book *On Foot: A History of Walking*, grounds a concise history of walking. He describes the vitality of paths, trails and roads in the development of civilizations. Individuals traveled the path, and the path led beings to water, food, salt, wildlife, springs, riverbanks, villages and towns. The path belonged to the villages and tribes. It served the seasonal migration of individuals. Pilgrims, scholars, students, monks, craftsmen, merchants, adventurers, wanderers, troops, messengers, authorities, peasants, shepherds and common people traveled the paths and exposed themselves to dangers involved in walking the paths. For thousands of years walking was the only way of locomotion for humanity. Life in villages and cities was mainly lived on foot; everyday tasks were dependent on feet and legs. This was the case until the emergence of the contemporary world: as Amato points out, the inhabitants of the contemporary world sit more, walk less and are mostly dependent on cars. Joseph Anthony Amato, *On Foot: A History of Walking* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 29, 30, 31, 42, 43, 49, 66, 229.

Masulih houses are the largest artifacts built by the master masons. The elevations of the houses are plain and simple. By contrast, beyond the plain elevations of the houses is built an entire cultural complex. This cultural complex is based on the beliefs of the inhabitants and their manifestation in their built environment, social relationships, artifacts, memories, stories, poems and other cultural items. This thesis incorporates the accounts of the actual users of the houses in an attempt to comprehend this cultural complexity, instead of just describing the physical aspects of the houses.

As large artifacts, houses embody values; they are not merely physical structures. These values and meanings are not obvious to outside visitors, but can be revealed gradually by interviewing the households. In chapter four, interviews with residents revealed the value of socializing with neighbors, embodied in the guest rooms, window seats, *sumeh* and the roof of the house. Another example is Mrs. Fatimah Azargūshasb's collection of plates, pots, mugs and cups in her living room and guest room, which connect us to her social order. Each one of the plates, pots, mugs and cups is a gift from a friend, neighbor or a member of the family for a certain occasion such as a pilgrimage, wedding or other occasion. Those artifacts in her house connect us to her social network

Like the people of Masouleh, Rebecca Solnit is also interested in pilgrimage. Solnit describes poetically her pilgrimage to the Santuario de Chimayo in New Mexico. For her, the Santuario de Chimayo with its saints, churches, shrines, altars, and sacraments is a powerful spiritual landscape. As Solnit describes, the pilgrimage is a mode of walking: walking in search of meanings; walking towards a goal such as self-transformation. Walking step by step on a path towards a spiritual goal is the aim of a pilgrimage. It is the hope of the pilgrim that arriving in a destination will bring spiritual benefits. See Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 45, 50, 54.

Other vital sources on the path that have informed this discussion are: Ricardo L. Castro, "Sounding the Path: Dwelling and Dreaming," in *Chora 3: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, ed. Alberto Perez-Gomez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 26–44; Joseph Rykwert, "Learning from the Street," in *The Necessity of Artifice* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 103–113; Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*, trans. Paul Hammond and Steve Piccolo (Barcelona: Editorial Gustavo Gili SL, 2002).

and show the value she places on these people, these events, and the memories evoked by the pieces.[421] Masulih houses connect us to the inhabitants of the houses and their life stories. It is by interviewing the residents, entering their houses, and studying the artifacts that they put on display in their houses that one can understand them. In chapter four this process was revealed in discussions of the life of Niʿmat Allah Maʿsumi, the last master mason in Masulih, and Ibrāhim Gūlzar Masulih and his poems.

The observations and interviews carried out for this thesis revealed other characteristics of Masulih's houses that are significant for the way of life of this community. Another important meaning embodied in Masulih's houses is the flexibility

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[421] See Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Philadelphia and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 63. As Glassie's account indicates, a house contains memories of the past and these memories are partly embedded in the artifacts that the household keeps and puts on display. The artifacts in the house contain meanings; they define who the owner is. The private collection of a person is a memorial of his or her past life. Like Henry Glassie, Anat Hecht is interested in the meanings of artifacts in a person's collection. Hecht documented the narratives of Mis Nan, a native of Edinburgh, while she described her artifacts and how those artifacts reflected her memories of her past life. Nan has surrounded herself with an impressive range of 1940s and 1950s artifacts. Hecht argues that Nan's house is a cosmos of memory enshrined in the silent artifacts. See Anat Hecht, "Home Sweet Home: Tangible Memories of an Uprooted Childhood," in *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller (New York: Berg Publishers, 2001), 123, 124, 125, 136.

The way individuals collect, save and arrange artifacts in their possessions can lead us to meanings and memories. These artifacts usually age with their owner; they are appreciated for their long companionship in their owner's lifespan. Souvenirs and mementos indicate special ceremonies, events, and individuals; they are rooted in the history of the owner's life and appreciated for what they denote. They embody sentimental memories. Such artifacts offer the interior of a person's home its domestic character. There are individuals who fill their homes with memory objects, transforming their interiors into museums and regarding themselves as curators of their own lives. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Object of Memory: Material Culture as Life Review," in *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: A Reader*, ed. Elliott Oring (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1989), 330, 331.

The past memories and experiences of each individual are usually associated with the artifacts they possess. An object could signify complex cognitive and emotional ties for an individual. Artifacts can help us understand the identity of people who cherish them. The artifacts that surround us determine who we are; they are not just tools but define us. The domestic environment contains the most exceptional objects: they are selected by the household; they shape and reflect the identity of the owner; they contain meanings for the owner. The domestic environment usually contains gifts, and gifts also create bonds between individuals. In *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, over 82 families were interviewed in their homes and the personal relationships of each family member with their objects were discussed and documented. See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), i, x, xi, 1, 16, 17, 21, 37.

of use of spaces in the home, which allows the inhabitants to modulate important social distinctions such as those between genders or between the public and private domains. For example, the front door of the house is a barrier between public and private, but the space of the front door can also be used as a weaving workshop. The weaving workshop may be arranged in the doorway like this or it may be set up outside the house, in the winter room, the summer room, the living room, or on the roof. Friends from other houses gather and weave together. In general, tasks are not fixed to one specific room: as another example, guests are entertained in different rooms depending on the time of the year. The floors or rooms of the houses may also be divided by gender, particularly on social or ceremonial occasions such as in the ritual of Ashurā. This division of space according to gender is also present when female and male guests sit on different sides of the room in the guest room or living room.

Finally, one of the most distinctive characteristics of Masulih's houses, which embodies the importance of wholeness and unity to this community, is the integration of the houses' roofs with each other and with the path system of Masulih. The roofs of the houses are connected with each other: a roof is not a separate entity but it is part of the path, joining the houses to the community. In total, the house as a craft is part of the artifact system of Masulih, and careful study of its design and uses can tell us a great deal about the culture of this town.

The connections between Masulih's artisans, artifacts, built environment, inhabitants, and culture are vital in this thesis. As well as showing us the connections within the community, studying Masulih's artisans and their workshops and crafts can teach us the vitality of working with our hands and recognizing our embodied existence in this world.

Artisans are a type of individual who inhabit the world skillfully. They are skillful and they know how to work with their tools. The way the hands of Majid-i Farniā, Muhammad Ali Farahmand, Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam, Hasan-i Gūlshan, Fatimah Sadih-lu and other artisans know the leather, steel, hammers, anvils, knives, scissors, wools and other tools with which they work is unique and reveals a unique way of life.

The objects that are forged, baked, built, and woven in Masulih can help us to understand the people who made them and their users. Interviewing the craftsmen and observing the ways they create their artifacts are valuable primary sources. These craftsmen are the last builders and makers in Masulih and documenting their occupations is vital. By analyzing artifacts, I have attempted to understand the ways these artifacts are made and used. As I demonstrated in chapter five, with the artisan's narration, we break down all the parts of the various artifacts and then assemble them. By interviewing the artisans, we become familiar with their lives. Artifacts connect us to the social and economic issues which surround them. By analyzing an artifact we can understand the meaning of an object in its society and what it means for the artisans and the people who build and use it.

Artifacts can deliver original insights crucial for understanding people within a specific region. For example, the way Muhammad Ali Farahmand makes slashers, and the way Rahmat Farahmand uses the slasher while he is walking through the dense greenery around Masulih, inform us about their occupations, their knowledge of their surrounding landscape and how they utilize a tool in their daily tasks. After living for a long time in the green Tālish Mountains, the blacksmiths developed the slasher to use in their daily lives. The forging of a slasher would be unnecessary, for example, in the dry central region of Iran. Another example of the connection between local lifestyle, environment,

and the artifact is the case of the tong: burning charcoal demands tongs to hold and

manage the charcoal in the barbeque, which is widely used in the tea houses and

restaurants of Masulih. It is in this context, in which there is a demand for tongs, that

Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam makes them. A tool like the tong informs us that the people of

Masulih still gather around a fire in tea houses, and shows the value within this

community of socializing around the fire.[422]

As I demonstrated in chapter five, nails provide another example of this

connection, which also shows us the shift in Masulih to using non-local materials in the

construction of roofs. The local blacksmith used to forge nails for the master mason to use

in the vernacular roofs. The nails used to be forged in the blacksmith workshop of Jalil-i

Ashjāri, from whom the local master masons used to purchase them. This leads us to the

fact that Masulih people used to be substantially independent from the outside world.

They used to utilize local materials in the construction of their houses. Nails forged by the

local blacksmith show us the value of being substantially independent that informs life in

Masulih, although this value is shifting over time.[423] For example, the roofs of the

mosque and the *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn Ali used to be wooden roof shingles with brick

towers; however, over time, these buildings have been renovated with modern

materials.[424] Chapters three, four and five all indicate the same pattern; a shift in the use

of non-local materials for making artifacts, from the smallest, such as knives or socks, to

the largest: the houses. This shift shows a change in values of the people, from being

fairly independent to relying on the outside world. Modernization is affecting not just the

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[422] See chapter five on the blacksmith shop of Jalil-i Ashjāri and the knife workshop of Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam.
[423] See chapter five on the blacksmith shop of Jalil-i Ashjāri.
[424] See chapter three on the ritual of Ashurā and the *Imāmzādih* ʿun ibn Ali.

physical appearance of the built environment but also the lifestyles and culture of the people.[425]

One thing that emerged strongly in this study is that traditionally in Masulih, different layers, materials and parts needed to be assembled together in order to form a whole artifact. The artisans in chapter five expressed this process in making crafts in their interviews: for example, Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam makes and assembles wooden handles, blades, bolsters, rivets, butt plates, tips and tangs in a grafting knife. All these parts become one to function as a grafting knife; when one holds or uses the knife, the totality of all the parts is visible. In the same way, the local master mason assembles different layers on top of each other in order to construct the roof of a house. In order for a roof to function as a roof and a pedestrian path, all these parts should work together as a unified craft.

Like Jabbar-i Sabt-i Hatam and the local master mason, Majid Farniā makes artifacts that consist of different layers, materials, and parts – in his case, full-scale *chamush*. The *chamush* consists of the main body of the shoe, the sole, the vamp and the heel cover. Majid sews all these parts together. Majid Farniā is the last *chamush* maker in

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[425] Like Robert Plant Armstrong and James Deetz, Henry Glassie is interested in the hidden meanings embedded in artifacts. Glassie begins by analyzing the physical characteristics of artifacts and then reaches for the deeper hidden values. For example, in analyzing the ceramics in Kutahya in Western Turkey, Glassie commences his studies with the physical characteristics of the ceramics and how the ceramics are made and then reaches the deeper values of devotion to the work, quality, material excellence, spirituality and love of God. In the process of making an artifact, the master is personally integrated with the work, socially integrated with his or her society, and spiritually integrated within the cosmos: artisan, society, craft and shared values are not separated from each other but intertwined. See Henry Glassie, *Material Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 174–93.

The scholar's task is to reveal the values in artifacts. Studying artisans in action helps the scholar maintain attention on the issue of values and how values are ordered and enacted. Studying the creation of artifacts helps us situate people as real beings in their living environment; individuals who have to deal with economic hardships, social constraints and aesthetic problems. See Henry Glassie, "Folkloristic Study of the American Artifact: Objects and Objectives," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 380.

Masulih; Fatimah Sadih-lu is a skilled weaver; both share an interest in *chamush*. Majid hardly sells his *chamush* due to their high price while Fatimah sells her textiles more often so that she can keep the *chamush* name alive, however, both demonstrate the practice of unifying various elements in the production of their craft. Majid sews the leather and makes patterns on it, while Fatimah weaves decorative *chamush* with various patterns on them, unifying the socks with these patterns. All the parts in these artifacts are connected and unified in order to shape the final product. We can see a wholeness and unity in the artifacts, from the smallest to the largest, that the artisans make in this community.

Another important contribution of this study is to show the ways in which artifacts connect the user with the artisan. In fact, the maker, user, artifact and the environment are not separated from each other; together they form the artifact system of Masulih. The case of the friendship between Tāhir Armand and Hasan Gūlshan, which is based on the production, maintenance, and use of scissors for shearing sheep's wool, is one example of this connection.[426]

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[426] At first sight, the artifact that is made in a workshop seems simple and modest; however, on the contrary it is created in a complex environment: the object has to be designed, materials gathered and purchased, tools and techniques used, the final product marketed and clients socially interacted with. An artisan's work is not separated from its social and economic context. Furthermore, personal training, skills and craftsmanship are vital in this complex process. Hidden meanings in the craft process can be uncovered through close attention to the working process and by interviewing the artisan. See John Michael Vlach, "Folk Craftsmen," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 301, 304.

      Scholars are interested in artisans because they have control over their craft and the materials of their craft and because of the way they regard the craft as their own work. The maker and the user are joined together through the artifact. In this process, face-to-face communication matters. The artisan's world is different from work in factories, which is fragmented. Workers do not have control over the final product and they are separated from the customers. The workers do not see the final product as their own craft. As an example, Henry Glassie refers us to the assembly line scene in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*. Henry Glassie, "Folkloristic Study of the American Artifact: Objects and Objectives," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 381.

The crafts/objects/tools made and used in Masulih are not just impersonal objects, but have a personal value and significance that is important for the social fabric of Masulih society. A craft which is made in a workshop is individual to the artisan and different in quality than a mass produced, factory made object. The artisan makes crafts and in this process personalizes the craft by leaving distinct marks on it. Muhammad Ali Farahmand is one craftsman who does this. He marks his slashers by making stars on the blade with a chisel. Whenever in Gilān he sees a slasher with a star sign on it, he recognizes his craft.

Currently, the artisans of Masulih cannot pass their skills to the next generation, because they do not have any apprentices in their workshop. This is a shared issue among all the artisans whom I interviewed for this study. Apprenticeship used to be an ongoing process in all the workshops but this practice is being abandoned due to the shift in values that has occurred over the last decades. Instead of engaging in demanding work, the younger generation prefers to migrate to cities in search of less demanding jobs with higher incomes. This means that the social connections and cultural meanings of these artifacts and of Masulih as a cohesive artifact system are fragmenting.

The discovery that an artifact embodies centrality, wholeness and unity is an example of moving from considering the form and esthetic appearance of an artifact to considering its meaning. Investigating the creation and use of artifacts shows networks between people and between the people and their built and natural environment. For example, the artifact is a center in the workshop: the customer and the craftsman converse about the artifact, they are drawn together and their interactions are shaped by the artifact. The artifact is the cause of this connection. When we look at the built environment of Masulih, we find that

the bazaar and the *Imāmzādih* are both central: one for commercial matters and one for rituals and spirituality. Both are located in the center of the town. The paths in the town unify the bazaar with its shops and tea houses, the mosques and houses. The paths also extend to the surrounding Masulih landscape, unifying the town with its surroundings. The paths, like the artifact, ground and centre the community. For the shepherds who live around Masulih, the town, which they only visit occasionally, is nonetheless the center of their activity. Centrality, wholeness and unity are qualities that can be seen in the physical built environment and artifacts of Masulih.

Further examples of these values of centrality, wholeness and unity can be found in Masulih. Most visibly, the houses in Masulih are not detached: by contrast to the detached villas on the plateau of Gilān that belong to individuals who mostly travel from the capital to the plateau for the sake of pleasure, the houses in Masulih are physically and socially connected. Like the rows of houses which are connected together, the rows of shops in the bazaar are joined and their roofs are used as pedestrian paths. The neighborhoods surrounding the bazaar are also not separated from the bazaar, but are accessed from and connected to the bazaar, and they are connected to each other in the same way. Smaller-scale artifacts also manifest these values. The fire is central in the workshops, houses and tea houses of Masulih: everyone gathers around the fire. The fire also unifies the whole community in a broader sense: producers of charcoal in the surrounding woods used to sell charcoal to the merchants in the bazaar, which was then bought by the artisans and inhabitants of Masulih and used in their homes and workshops. Another example is the patterns on the socks made by the craftswomen of Masulih, which contribute to the wholeness and unity of the socks. Each sock has its own pattern and the pattern repeats on the sock: the pattern unifies the sock. All the elements of the artifact of

the town of Masulih that have been investigated in this thesis demonstrate the importance

to the inhabitants of these same values of centrality, wholeness, and unity.

Centrality, wholeness and unity are values beyond the physical dimensions of the

artifacts, and are reflected in the everyday life of the people. These values are appreciated

by the inhabitants and emerge in their activities. For example, during the ritual of Ashurā

one can see the unity of the people in their careful arrangement of the ritual and the way

everyone plays his or her role in this ceremony – an example of the value of wholeness

performed by the inhabitants. The inhabitants gather to collectively complete one ritual.

In their everyday life, Masulih people gather in the tea houses to socialize. They sit side

by side on the wooden benches, as a group of customers; they are unified in the tea

houses. Weaving is also done collectively, either inside the houses or outside. Like the

ritual and people in the tea houses, the entire artifact system of Masulih is one and united

(figure 6.10).

Masulih is not an exotic place, remote from larger society and immune to changes.

The people who live there do not inhabit a utopia; they experience the same

hardships that everyone does. Working conditions are hard and obtaining money is even

harder. Traditionally, surviving and thriving economically in this challenging mountain

landscape has required cooperation and trust. One cannot live in this environment

individually, without the entire artifact system that has grown up to support life. For

example, the women teach each other to weave textiles so they can contribute

economically to the income of the household. In times when their husbands are unable to

work, the women knit. The master weaver Fatimah Sadih-lu taught others to weave, and

the women work together cooperatively, weaving and selling their work. The inhabitants

often work together, and also take care of each other's homes and belongings. For
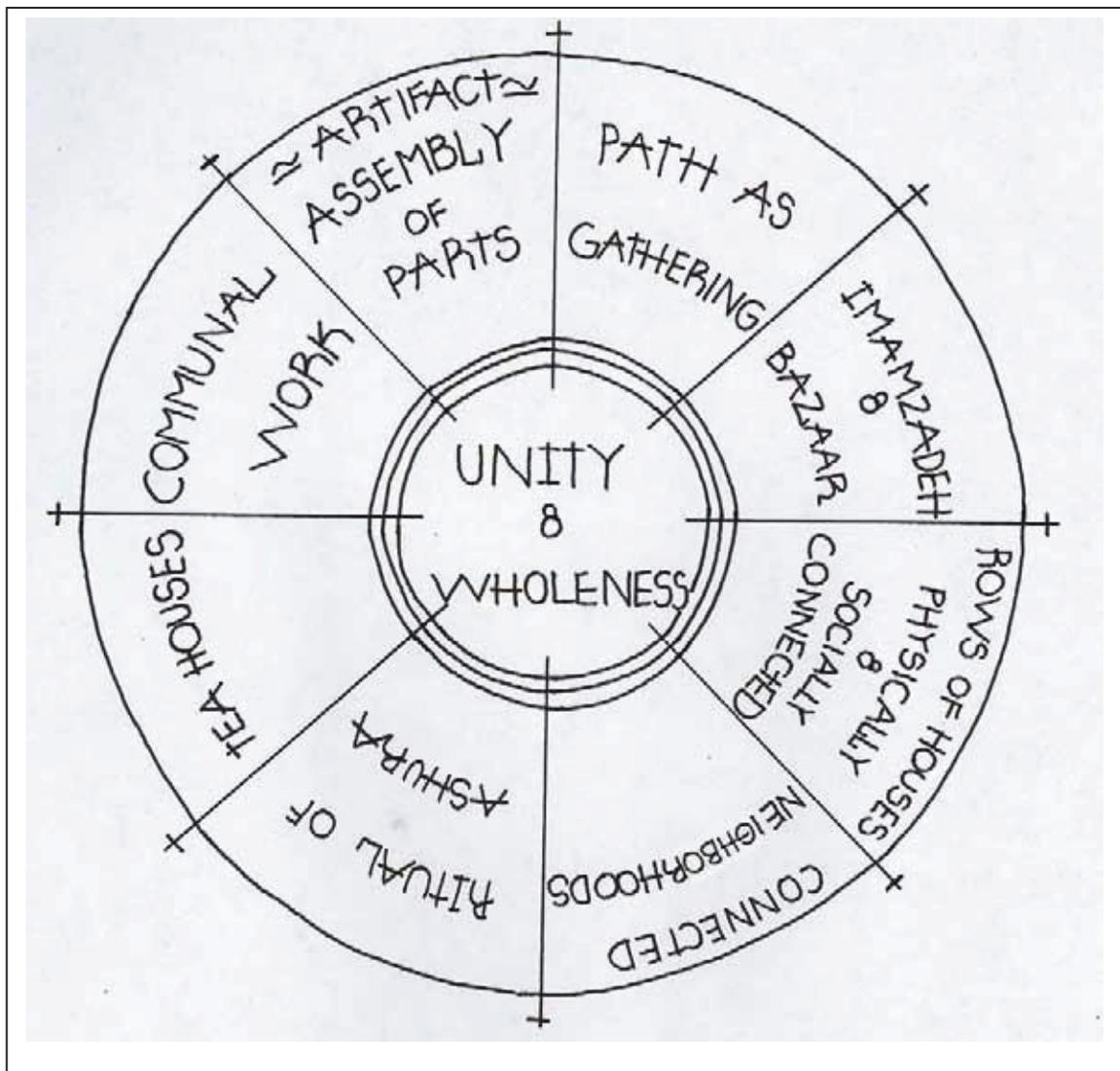
Fig. 6.10. Unity and wholeness in Masulih. Drawing by author, 2013.

example, every winter, Mihrān Muminiyān shovels the snow from the roof of his house and the roofs of the houses of those who are not in town. The flow of salted cheese and wool in the town also demands cooperation between shepherds, merchants, blacksmiths and makers of scissors: cooperation matters. Even the tourists who visit the town benefit the town economically. As explained before, Masulih's houses, shops, neighborhoods, mosques, paths, springs and *Imāmzādih* are not scattered buildings on the mountainous landscape; they are connected physically and socially. The artifact system of Masulih and its vernacular architecture reflect the value of cooperation that has sustained and shaped life in the town.

The artifact system of Masulih discussed in this thesis provides a vital account of a way of life and a set of values that is in the process of change. There has been a gradual pattern of change in the usage of paths and local materials, the construction of artifacts, the vernacular architecture and the lifestyle of people from the eighteenth century onward. The shift from traditional ways to the current situation is described in this section, which analyzes these changes as they relate to Masulih's paths, building materials, and way of life.

Originally the paths of Masulih were used for economic and ritualistic purposes; however, the economic purposes were more significant than the religious/ritualistic ones. The most important economic path used to start in Rasht and proceed to Fuman then Zudil and Masulih. Economically, the path used to connect Masulih to Khalkhal and Zanjān. The traditional trade system between Rasht, Masulih, Khalkhal and Zanjān is not active any more. This economic path has shifted to a touristic path: tourists drive their cars, reach the town, and visit the town by walking the path which passes through the

448

bazaar and ends in front of the Khārābis' house. They take pictures of themselves with the Khārābis' windows and then they turn back. The touristic path ends in Masulih; the path from Masulih to Khalkhal and Zanjān is rarely used, although the path is there. The original economic path has been divided into two parts: the path from Rasht to Masulih is still used, although mostly for touristic purposes; the other half is neglected and abandoned. Meanwhile, the ritualistic paths are the paths which allow individuals to access the shrines outside and inside the community. As discussed before, they are increasingly disused.

There has also been a gradual pattern of change in Masulih in the use of local materials for the construction of artifacts and vernacular architecture. In the past, instead of plastic *gālish* shoes, leather *chamush* were popular. The leather used to be prepared in the tannery of Hāj Faraj Allah, who would prepare the leather for Ali Akbar Farniā who made the shoes. These two men were friends, and they used to work together cooperatively to produce *chamush*. This is no more the case since factory made shoes have taken over. Another example is the socks, which in Masulih all used to be knitted by local wool which was sheared by the shepherds in the surrounding area. Fatimah Sadih-lu, a skilled weaver, still knits some of her textiles with local wool, but the majority of her textiles are woven using synthetic yarns. She used to make yarn herself, coloring it and then using it to weave textiles, but currently she purchases ready-made synthetic yarn. This is the same for other weavers in Masulih as well. The blacksmiths, knife-makers and makers of scissors also used to make tools from local iron ore, like their ancestors in Kūhnih Masulih (Old Masulih). Now they purchase their steel from second hand dealers and construction sites or even use old car parts. As discussed before, the same shift can be traced in the vernacular architecture, in the change from local materials to modern ones.

449

The patterns of life based around local materials, including the construction of artifacts and vernacular architecture, have been disrupted by change over time.

These changes are reflected in a gradual pattern of change in the lifestyle of the local people from the eighteenth century onward. People used to bury their dead in grounds adjacent to one of the *Imāmzādih* in or around the town, whereas currently they bury their dead in the town's cemetery. Ritualistically speaking, the people of Masulih used to walk the paths to *Imāmzādih* outside the community; these pilgrimages to the sacred grounds have now been abandoned. The daily activities of a merchant like Shūkuh Rahbar used to include walking in the grazing lands and visiting the shepherds around Masulih, purchasing wool, salted cheese and butter from them. He used to trade with merchants from Taram, Majilan, Khalkhal and Rasht. Currently, Shūkuh Rahbar, in his eighties, sits in his father's shop, devoid of all connections to villages and towns around Masulih; he sells dolls, socks, hats and bags to tourists. There were muleteers in the town and a network of transportation by mules in and outside the town. Over time, these networks of transportation shifted from mules to cars. The flow of tourists in town is the result of this shift. The shift is not only in the daily activities of the town's inhabitants, but also in the seasonal activities of the shepherds around the town. Shepherds in the Andarih and Lalandiz grazing lands still migrate annually from mountainous ground to the plateau of Gilān; this migration pattern used to be common among the shepherds who inhabited the woods and mountains around the town. As was explained earlier, animal husbandry has been banned in this area by the Office of Natural Resources and the remaining shepherds have had to leave the grazing lands. These are some of the examples of changes in the local lifestyle of people. The artifact system of a region like Masulih is always in the process of change; it is not a fixed phenomenon. As Barbara Bender

indicates, we should recognize that people, things and places are always in process, shifting, and that the boundaries between them are not permanent and barricaded but permeable (figure 6.11).[427]

As I wrote in chapter one, the significance of Masulih compared to other mountainous villages and towns is that the totality of the artifact system in Masulih is still relatively intact, from the grazing lands and its shepherds to the town and its built environment and inhabitants to its artisans who forge, knit and make various crafts, whereas in several other villages and towns in Iran the artifact system has significantly eroded in recent years. However, the bylaws of the Office of Natural Resources may contribute to the decline of animal husbandry in Masulih by banning the shepherds from

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[427] See Barbara Bender, "Place and Landscape," in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. Christopher Tilley, *et al.* (London: Sage Publications 2006), 310.

     Mahmoud Dowlatabadi is a contemporary writer who, in his novels, sketches everyday life in rural communities and villages in Iran. In *Missing Soluch*, he describes the patterns of changes which are happening gradually over time in a remote village. In this novel, Soluch, a well-digger and the husband of Mergan, disappears one day and it is Mergan who has to stand and provide for her kids. In a male dominated and conservative working environment, Mergan bravely works in order to sustain her family. Work is scarce so the young people are migrating to larger cities; agriculture is being mechanized; small landowners are selling their land to large landowners and abandoning the village. The big landowners are in debt to the government. The connection between the land and the families is in the process of being destroyed. This novel is a realistic depiction of what is happening in many small villages in Iran. Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, *Missing Soluch*, trans. Kamran Rastegr (Hoboken, New Jersey: Melville House, 2007).

     J. B. Jackson is another writer who is interested in writing about patterns of change over time. In his essay "The Westward-Moving House: Three American Houses and the People Who Lived There," he describes the life of three American families – those of Nehemiah Tinkham, Pliny Tinkham and Ray Tinkham – from the 16th century onward, relating how over time their lifestyle, relationship with the land, and values and beliefs changed. Along with other farmers, Nehemiah Tinkham migrated to Jerusha, New England in the 16th century and built Jerusha with his own hands. In Nehemiah Tinkham's time, life was communal. All the men helped each other to clear the land and build houses, fences, a meeting house and a home for the minister. For them the church-community was everything. Pliny Tinkham was the first family member to move west, outside New England, a century ago and build a house in Illium, Illinois. His life was much more comfortable than the lives of his ancestors. He and his family lived in a remote farmhouse and by doing so they lost the world of union, commonality and friendship that had belonged to their ancestors. Ray Tinkham, belonging to the current generation, regards the land as an investment; the relationship between the land and the farmer has been lost. His family lives away from the farm while the farming is completely mechanized. J. B. Jackson sketches the transformations within this family which happened over time. See J. B. Jackson, "The Westward-Moving House: Three American Houses and the People Who Lived There," in *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J. B. Jackson*, ed. Ervin H. Zube (Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 10–42.

PAST	PRESENT
INTACT NETWORK of PATHS	ABANDONED PATHS
TRADE	DECLINE of TRADE
INHABITING THE PLACE	MIGRATION
WOOD/MOUNTAIN DWELLERS	
VISITING THE SHRINES	LIMITED PILGRIMS
WALKING ON THE PATHS	DRIVING
LOCAL MATERIALS	NON-LOCAL MATERIALS
INDEPENDENT	DEPENDENT
HAND MADE ARTIFACTS	FACTORY MADE OBJECTS
APPRENTICESHIP	MIGRATION
COOPERATION/TRUST	INDIVIDUAL WORKING
COOPERATIVE WORKING	
ECONOMIC/RELIGIOUS PATHS	TOURISTIC PATHS
MANUAL/ANIMAL POWER	MACHINE POWER
VISITING MERCHANTS	VISITING TOURISTS

Fig. 6.11. The gradual changes which occurred over time. Drawing by author, 2013.

452

the traditional grazing lands and also by encouraging the migration of the younger generation to cities. These shifts may affect Masulih's values of cooperation between individuals, the inhabitants' relationship with the landscape, and the strong sense of place.

The analysis of the various kinds of artifact construction and use carried out in this thesis, including analysis of houses, tools, and crafts, has revealed the intricate interconnections between the physical environment and the various aspects of life in Masulih, including rituals, culture, beliefs, friendships, and the needs for food, tools, shelter, and clothing. Documenting these connections is an important contribution of this thesis to understanding the history and culture of Masulih should it change in the future. By interviewing the inhabitants and doing fieldwork in Masulih and its surrounding landscape, a gradual pattern of change from the eighteenth century onward was revealed. This change is embedded in the built environment, in the artifacts that the artisans make as well as in the narratives of Masulih's inhabitants, such as the stories about the past told by Fatimah Sadih-lu, Shūkuh Rahbar or Samad Ali Safar Zadih. By interviewing the weavers, artisans and shepherds, I learned that values such as cooperation, trust, centrality, wholeness, and unity are fundamental to the artifact system of Masulih.

A comprehensive approach to studying Masulih helped me to understand the values associated with the totality of the artifact system of Masulih. As in many other studies of particular places in Iran, I could have focused just on vernacular architecture. However, if I had done so the opportunity to comprehend the totality of the artifact system of Masulih and the values and beliefs associated with it would have been lost. I would also have missed many complex nuances that provided essential context for the understanding of the architecture. This thesis demonstrates that a comprehensive

approach can point out the relationship between individuals, a place, and its artifact system. I hope this dissertation will contribute to a deeper understanding of the vernacular architecture of Iran through its holistic methodology and through the use of extensive drawings, maps, and oral history. This approach has been essential to the objective of my research, which is to record and analyze the vernacular architecture, material culture, and cultural landscape of this community, and to demonstrate how these aspects of the artifact system are interconnected and representative of the values of Masulih's residents.

<u>Glossary of Local Terms</u>

ab-anbar. Water reservoir.

abnus. Ebony.

ahan. Iron.

ahangar. Smith.

āj. Ivory.

alam. A large wooden pole with a metal emblem or a sign on top.

alamdār. A person who carries the *alam*.

alestun. Storage for charcoal and timber.

anbār. Inventory.

anbūr mangal. Barbeque tong.

andaruni. The private sector of a traditional courtyard house.

arareh. A type of pattern.

arg-i shahr. In a medieval Iranian town, the administration sector, which includes the
   army base, government offices, grain storage, the state treasury, the provincial
   governor's private and public palaces and the courts of justice.

atash. Fire.

bādām. Almond.

bālā-khānih. A room on the first floor of a two storey house in Gilān province.

bandar. Port.

barakāt. Blessing.

bāskam. A type of wood used for gun making.

bast. Barrel bands.

biruni. The public sector of a traditional courtyard house.

Būtih Kerman. A type of pattern for socks.

chahār gūl. A type of pattern for socks.

chaiy-bidih. A person responsible for supplies of tea and pouring tea in a tea house.

chakūsh. Hammer (blacksmith).

chakūsh. Hammer (part of a gun).

chakūsh kāri. Hammering.

chamush. A type of sock.

chamush. The traditional leather shoe which is made in Masulih.

chapeh shāl. A type of pattern.

chāqu jibi. A pocket knife.

chāqu piyvandi. A grafting knife.

chāqu qalam tarāshi. A knife for carving traditional calligraphy pens.

chāqu saz. Knife-maker.

chāqu tazini. A decorative knife.

charkh-i sūmbādih. Bench grinder.

charm. Leather.

charm-i gāv. Cowhide.

charm kub. Mallet.

chārvādār. Muleteer.

chāshni. Cap.

chiftih. Lock.

chub. Timber.

chūghūm. A distributing room.

chupān. Shepherd.

dabāgh khānih. A local tannery.

dahanih. Mouth.

dar. A door.

dās. Slasher.

dāstih. Handle.

dastih-i sinih-zanān. A group of chest-beaters.

dud. Smoke.

duk. Spindle.

durih-gārd. A trader who used to walk from village to village.

fanar. Tang.

farsh. Carpet.

fulād. Steel.

gahrimān. Hero.

galih. Herd.

gālesh. A kind of plastic shoe.

gargeh doneh. A shelter for domestic fowl.

garm khānih. A room where tobacco leaves are dried.

gaz. A cutting tool in blacksmithing.

gazan. Knife.

gilās. Cherry (the wood).

girdu. Walnut (the wood).

girih chiyni. A traditional wooden window.

giyrih. Vise.

gonbad. Dome.

gūl. Flower.

gūlābi. Pear.

gul va būtih. A type of pattern.

gum. Door knockers.

gūvih. A hardie (blacksmith).

hadis. A saying of the prophet Muhammad.

haft va hasht. A type of pattern.

halab. An iron sheet.

hammām. Public bath.

hāshiyh. Border.

hūlu. Peach.

hūsiyniyyh. A public square dedicated to the mourning ceremony for the martyrdom of Hūsiyn Ibn Ali.

hūzn. Melancholy.

imām. A clergyman in the mosque.

imāmzādih. The burial place of a descendant of the prophet, considered sacred ground.

isliymi. A type of pattern.

istikan jamʿ-kūn. A person who collects the used tea cups in a tea house.

ivan. Balcony.

janpanah-hayi mūshabak. Screened parapets.

jārchi. A person who keeps the accounts of the customers in a tea house.

Jurab-i Mirza Kuchak Khan. A type of local sock.

kah. A room.

kāh. Straw.

kāh-gil. A mixture of levigated earth, water and chopped straw.

kaj biyl. Hoe.

kalih. Head.

kamar. Waist.

kām va zabānih. Tongue and groove.

kārgāh. Shop.

kārgāh-i ahangari. Blacksmith workshop.

kārgāh-i chāqu sāzi. Knife workshop.

kargar-i ruz mūzd. Wage labourer.

khishtak. A type of pattern.

khiyrāt. A type of religious dedication in the form of food and money.

kih. A type of wood used for gun making.

kiykam. A type of wood used for gun making.

kocholeh. A type of leaf which grows around tree trunks in the forest.

kuk zan. Stitching awl.

kuleh kinar. A type of pattern.

kundij. A room where rough rice is kept.

kurih. Forge.

kurih ahangari. A charcoal forge or a forge for melting iron.

khūtbah. Sermon.

labih tiyghih. A cutting edge.

lat. A wooden roof shingles.

lavāsh. A type of traditional bread.

lulih tūfang. Barrel.

mahalih. Neighbourhood.

mahramiat. Privacy.

mangal. Grill.

māshih. Trigger.

masjid-i jūm'ih. Principal mosque.

maskan. House.

matih. Drill.

minbar. Pulpit.

minqār. The conical shape of the anvil, called a beak.

miydan. Square.

miykh. Nail.

miykh dāstih. Rivet.

miylih. Rod.

mūjāhid. Soldier.

mūjak. A type of pattern.

mūshabak. Patterned parapet.

mūtaka. Cushion.

nāiyb. A deputy of a town or village.

najjar. Carpenter-joiner.

nakh. Thread.

nakh-i sham'i. Waxed thread.

na'l-i asb. Horseshoe.

nazr. Food or money dedicated to the *imāmzādih*.

nisf-i siyb. A type of pattern.

nuhih khan. The reciter of the martyrdom of the Imām.

nuruz. Iranian New Year holidays.

panjarih-hayi mūshabak. Screened windows.

papu. A type of pattern.

pashim risi. Spinning wheel.

pashnih. Heel section of shoe.

pistunak. Nipple (part of a gun).

piysh namāz. Clergyman.

pucheh chang. A type of pattern.

pūsht-i bām. The roof of a house.

qalam. Chisel.

qandi. A person responsible for sugar supplies in a tea house.

qiychi. Scissors.

qiymih. A type of food prepared for the Ashurā ritual.

qūndaq. Stock (of a gun).

rāstih. A section in the bazaar where merchants of a particular trade work, e.g., the

shoemakers' *rāstih*.

riysmān katāni. A cotton band.

ru farshi. A type of sock.

ruiyh kafsh. Vamp.

ruzih-khān. The narrator of the martyrdom of Imām Hūsiyn.

sabzi khurd kūn. Vegetable chopper.

sāchmih. Bullet.

sang. Stone.

sang-i maʿdan. Whetstone.

sar chakūshi. A tool for flattening.

sarakhs. A local grass.

sarakhs-i vāhshi. A type of vegetation.

sardāb. A room in the basement.

sar-i chāqu. Tip of a knife.

sayyid. Descendant of the prophet Muhammad.

shāgird. Apprentice.

shāl. Scarf.

shālizār. Rice field.

shaltuk. Rice.

shamʿ va gūl va parvanih. A type of pattern.

shanāsil. Screened window.

shānih. Comb.

sharbat. Sweet drinks.

sih par. A type of pattern.

sindan. anvil.

sinf. Guild.

sinj-zani. Cymbal-beating.

suhān. File.

sumeh. A room for use in the winter.

suzan. Stitching awl.

takht-i kafsh. The sole of a show.

takhtih. Board.

tālāmbar. A room in which silk worms are kept.

tālār. Balcony.

tanih. A type of pattern.

tanih dirakht. Log.

tanur. Oven.

tapānchih sar-pūr. Musketoon.

taq-i zarbi. A barrel vault roof.

taviylih. Stabling for mules.

taʿziyih. A drama performance in the Ashurā ritual.

taziynāt. Decorations.

tikiyh. A public square dedicated to religious ceremonies.

tiyghih band. Bolster.

tiyr. Joining beams.

tūfang-i sar-pūr. Musket.

ūlgu. Pattern.

ustād. A master of a certain trade.

var band. Butt plate.

varaqih suhān. Sandpaper.

vardast. An assistant or worker in a tea house.

vāsmeh. A type of vegetation.

zabānih va fāq. Mortise and tendon.

zamin. Background.

zang. Clapper.

zangulih. Sheep bell.

zanjir. Chain.

zanjir zani. Chain-beating in the Ashurā ceremony.

zingād. A type of evergreen shrub.

ziyārat. Daily pilgrimage.

zūghāl. Charcoal pieces.

IJMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM
FOR ARABIC, PERSIAN, AND TURKISH

CONSONANTS

A = Arabic, P = Persian, OT = Ottoman Turkish, MT = Modern Turkish

	A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT		A	P	OT	MT
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ʾ	—	ز	z	z	z	z	ك	k	k or g	k or ñ	k or n
ب	b	b	b	b or p	ژ	—	zh	j	j				or y	or y
پ	—	p	p	p	س	s	s	s	s				or ğ	or ğ
ت	t	t	t	t	ش	sh	sh	ş	ş	گ	—	g	g	g
ث	th	s̱	s̱	s	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ṣ	s	ل	l	l	l	l
ج	j	j	c	c	ض	d̤	ż	ż	z	م	m	m	m	m
چ	—	ch	ç	ç	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	t	ن	n	n	n	n
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	h	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	z	ه	h	h	h¹	h¹
خ	kh	kh	h	h	ع	ʿ	ʿ	ʿ	—	و	w	v or u	v	v
د	d	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	g or ğ	g or ğ	ي	y	y	y	y
ذ	dh	z	z	z	ف	f	f	f	f	ة	a²			
ر	r	r	r	r	ق	q	q	ḳ	k	ال	³			

¹ When h is not final. ² In construct state: at. ³ For the article, al- and -l-.

VOWELS

ARABIC AND PERSIAN		OTTOMAN AND MODERN TURKISH	
Long ا or ى	ā	ā	words of Arabic and Persian origin only
و	ū	ū	
ى	ī	ī	
Doubled ﻲّ	iyy (final form ī)	iy (final form ī)	
و ّ	uww (final form ū)	uvv	
Diphthongs و	au or aw	ev	
ى	ai or ay	ey	
Short ◌َ	a	a or e	
◌ُ	u	u or ü / o or ö	
◌ِ	i	ı or i	

For Ottoman Turkish, authors may either transliterate or use the modern Turkish orthography.

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Maps, Photographs and Drawings

Ahad Allah Targhibi Among his Friends, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Ahad
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Ahad Allah Targhibi in Front of Masulih, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Ahad
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Bandar-e Kong, a Small Fishing Community, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Vahid Qūbādiyān.

Courtyard Houses in Bandar-e Lengeh, with *Badgirs* or Windcatchers Oriented Toward the Sea Breeze, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Vahid Qūbādiyān.

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Girih Chiyni in a Kitchen, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Faribūrz Gudarzi.

Masulih's Bazaar. Map. Courtesy of the National Heritage Center of Masulih, 2008.

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Traditional Courtyard Houses of Bandar-e Bushehr, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Vahid Qūbādiyān.

Two Wooden Windows, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of Faribūrz Gudarzi.

Wooden Window made by Faribūrz Gudarzi, date unknown. Photograph. Courtesy of

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