

CHAPTER THREE

THE VILLAGE AS A SPATIAL UNIT

Superceding Lineage-based Separation

The village of Deir-Ghassaneh consisted of an agglomeration of social, economic and political groupings. These groupings, whether at the level of nuclear families, extended families or clans, interacted both in harmony and in conflict. In a situation where clan ties and clan identity were as strong as those prevailing in Deir Ghassaneh, it is crucial to examine forces which bound the villagers together and hence contributed to the formation of a village community with a strong village identity and village solidarity.

At the village level, we see the opposition of various parts and their ultimate unity. The different clans of Deir Ghassaneh, who lived in separate quarters (harat), were able to enact their spatial separateness while giving expression to their place in the whole. The different parts of the village were subordinated to the whole; clan identity was subordinated to village identity. What is to be discussed in this chapter are factors which made the village of Deir Ghassaneh an identifiable spatial unit with defined boundaries separating it from neighboring villages.

I. DEIR GHASSANEH AS A SEPARATE SPATIAL UNIT

As in other villages in Palestine, Deir Ghassaneh was spatially separated from other surrounding villages (Fig. 3.1). Both the village built-up area and its fields had clearly demarcated boundaries. Up till the 1920s, the built-up area was a compact, nucleated cluster of houses (Fig. 3.2a), as opposed to a scattered pattern, with each house surrounded by its own landed property (Fig. 3.2b).

Around this crowded settlement, a belt of privately owned gardens called hawakir separated the built-up area from its cultivated