

The village "sacred environment" - defined here as the totality of sacred places, sacred times and sacred ceremonies- formed a kind of socio-religious and political grid which interwove with the "profane" environment and acted as an egalitarian force for the unity of this muslim community (chapter 6).

The women of Deir Ghassaneh, who were totally excluded from the village's two main centres of activities - the village plaza and mosque - found in the main spring ('ain el-jdeideh) a communal centre for women where they met daily and exchanged news.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND SPATIAL HIERARCHY

Since Deir Ghassaneh was the throne village of the Bani Zaid district, social stratification in this village was much more distinct than that in any other neighbouring Bani Zaid village. Deir Ghassaneh was socially as well as spatially divided into two main groups of clearly unequal status, namely the Barghouthis and the fallaheen. The dominance of the Barghouthis and the subordination of the fallaheen was manifested by the fact that almost all village disputes over power occurred between the different Barghouthi families, (particularly between the Saleh and Abdul Aziz families, both from the Daher subclan) and not between the Barghouthis and the fallaheen. The fallaheen were divided, tacitly supporting one or the other of the Barghouthi rival groups. It was understood that the fallaheen of the lower quarter had allegiance to the Dawood sub-clan, while the Shu'abis had allegiance to the Daher sub-clan.

Kinship "clustering" in living quarters was based on social "homogeneity". The criterion for homogeneity was belonging to the same ancestor. The ideology of genealogy played an important and active role in the unity of kins i.e., the unity of members who believed themselves to be the descendants of the same agnatic ancestor. While "common origins" strengthened unity amongst members of the same clan, it set them apart from other clans. In most cases, claims of origins could hardly be demonstrated by members of the clan; not only that, they mostly lacked any logical sequence in time