

Courtyard Houses (Ahwash)

Although each quarter had, and still has, its own character, its own spatial organisation and built-form (which will be discussed at length later), they all consisted of a number of contiguous courtyard houses (ahwash, sing. hosh). Each hosh usually contained the houses (dar) of one patrilineal extended family, which contained blood-related men, usually brothers and cousins, and the descendants of their married sons, forming a sub clan. The house (dar) was a single space containing the domestic unit i.e., a man, his wife, children, and perhaps his mother and one of his married sons, depending on the size of the family and the size of the house. In general, there was a strong relationship between genealogical and spatial closeness; while married brothers lived either in the same house or in two adjacent houses, cousins often occupied nearby courtyards. In addition to these courtyard compounds (ahwash), one found single family houses. These houses were some times the nucleus for the formation of new compounds. Due to the lack of sufficient space, married sons often left their father's compounds for new sites.

Different locations and spaces, such as empty lots, alleys and the back of buildings separated the houses in the different quarters, and formed physical boundaries which separated the harat from one another. The nature of such boundaries i.e., whether strong, weak, vivid, sharp, permeable or non-permeable, obviously depended on the group's needs to maintain its integrity as a social group, and on the group's sense of unity and their sensitivity to outside intrusions. The Barghouthis had a very strong sense of isolation and inwardness which was reflected in their spatial organisation. (Each Barghouthi compound was an inward-looking unit and formed an independent, isolated entity); the fallaheen of the lower quarter had much less defined boundaries. The Shu'aibis, who also had strong exterior boundaries, had less sharp boundaries between the different courtyards. The three Shu'aibi courtyards were interconnected, hence allowing for interaction amongst the members of the same clan. With their houses jammed together in a sprawling pattern, the fallaheen of the lower quarter had the least defined boundaries. The different kinship groups residing there showed the least fear of opening up to