

Behind this second gate lay the private domain of the compound's females. The courtyard (el hosh) was the main constituent of the compound with the various single-space houses gathered around. This was the focus of all female domestic activities and the centre of their being. Privacy (and to a lesser extent security), which was highly valued, acted as a crucial factor which influenced the seclusion of the courtyard. The backs of rooms on both the ground and first floors fenced off this private domain from the communal space laying outside its walls. The lack of windows located on the first floor and the screening of windows located on the second floor (shown in figure 4.19) expressed what the place wanted to be in relation to its surroundings. The use of bent entrances and vestibules mentioned above and the back location and scale of the women's entrance also reflected a need for privacy and seclusion. The high walls of the roofs also blocked any glimpses into this private domain. Cana'an writes;

"In Deir Ghassneh no tree may be planted in the courtyard if the doings of the neighbour can be observed from such a tree. No new window may be opened in a house if it overlooks neighbours. If such windows already exist, no male may look through it. The rigid customs of the Orient forbids a man to stand on the roof of his house if it observes the home of his neighbours" (1933: 53).

The compound was the co-residential unit for the Saleh extended family groups based on agnatic kinship. Up until 1905, the compound contained sheikh Saleh, his wife, his five married sons and their descendants. The sheikh's two daughters, Salha and Hakimeh, left the compound upon their marriage. Once the sheikh died, each one of his five married sons formed their own separate domestic unit. Each domestic unit was usually composed of the head of the family, his wife (wives), his unmarried daughters and sons, and the family(ies) of his married sons. The single unit houses(dour) located around the courtyard, housed the domestic units which were the eating group, the shelter group, the hearth group, and also the production group (Lunderstorm, 1982: 130).

The head of the family had the dominant position; he had total control over the resources and labour of his sons. The sons depended