

washing, and preparing the food. Whenever necessary, women left the house to the water well in the Rwais valley to fill up their jars. They also went to the fields to collect brush-wood for fuel and grass for the animals, or carried the meals for their fathers, sons or husbands working out in the fields. During the olive picking season, women spent most of the day out in the fields helping the males of their family. These clearly demarcated roles in the sexual division of labour prevailed in the Palestinian village until the 1950s (Nasir, 1974: 77).

The Shu'aibi houses (Fig. 4.38), like most other fallaheen dwellings, were massive stone structures. The single floor, horizontally-expanding houses sat solidly on the rocky landscape. The adjacently-built houses, with rounded vaults protruding on the roofs, were made out of quarry-faced masonry or rubble stones with wide joints (unlike the vertical two or three storey Bargouthi houses, built with smoothly cut square stones with hardly visible mortar joints). Sometimes the whole front elevation was white-washed or plastered.

Although the qiblah (direction of Mecca) has a symbolic meaning for all muslim communities, and a number of acts must be performed with one's face directed towards Mecca (such as prayers, turning the body of the dead, directing the head of the slaughtered animal, etc.), there does not seem to be an "ideal direction" or a symbolic importance accorded to the orientation of the house. As figure 4.32 illustrates, entry doors to the different houses were directed towards all cardinal points. However for climatic reasons, it was recommended to avoid the strong western winds and rains. But again this consideration did not seem to take priority in directing the house (Abu-Nada, interview: 1986).

In most cases, the location of the door was shifted to the side of the front elevation, hence giving the family maximum space, but more important, providing maximum privacy. The one entry door to the house gained significance by being the single element which marked a critical transition to the private family space. The arch of this only door, or its post and lintels, were often white-washed in order to accentuate its importance and differentiate it from the solid