



Fig. 4.39: Main facades and entry doors were often white-washed

closed walls. White-wash was also an expression of delight and cleanliness; "White is happiness, white is light, white is delight" says Muyassar, one of the Shua'ibi women. "Walla latrushek ya dar ba'd el shied bel hennah en 'ado lehab". ("I promise to paint you, O house, with hennah after I white-wash you, if the beloved comes back"), goes the fallaheen song that women sang during festive occasions.

In addition to its symbolic meaning and its effect, the fallaheen believed that white-wash, which was made out of lime (shid), kept insects away. The wooden door panel was in some cases painted bluish-green, a sign of prosperity and blessings. The white-washed arch and blue painted panel together gave emphasis to this very important element of the house (Fig.4.39). The elevated threshold, with the symbolic meaning accorded to it, defined clearly the boundary between two worlds; that of the open public and the closed, private, intimate and private world. Both the post of the door and the threshold played a doubly significant role during marriage celebrations. The bride stuck sour dough (khamireh) and a green leaf on the post of her in-laws' house before she entered the house. The dough, made of the "sacred" grain, symbolised a fertile bride as it fermented and swelled (Granquist, 1931: 101). A decorated water jar was put over the bride's head before she stepped over the threshold into the house. "Water is life", said Muyassar. "A