

be interpreted in different ways in the various social and economic structures of the societies which embraced Islam.

Our main concern here is to investigate both the meaning of Islam in the community of Deir Ghassaneh, in as much as it had substantial consequences for the ordering of the fallah's spatial environment, and the way in which Islamic laws and codes were incorporated in the fallah's everyday life.

Islam on the one hand deals with the revered world and with an order of symbolic understanding that contributes to an ideology articulating the nature of al-kawn (the cosmos). On the other hand, Islam deals with the most mundane aspects of the community's life and hence plays a significant part in the discourse and practice of everyday life (Cana'an, 1934). In the village of Deir Ghassaneh, as in other villages, religious rituals were an important component of many social occasions such as births, marriages, circumcisions and deaths (Granqvist, 1931: 35; 1965). Islamic laws and traditions also acted as the principal guide for laws of inheritance. The mahram (forbidden categories of persons for marriages), dictated by Islamic laws, affected kinship and marriage relations. The separation and interaction of men and women were based partially on the mahram (Khatib-Chahidi, 1981). However, the varying degrees of separation and interaction between men and women in Deir Ghassaneh were also influenced by the social and economic status of the different clans (chapter 4). Islamic laws and traditions were also the basis of education and learning in the village's kuttab (elementary school run by the sheikh of the mosque) which taught the young boys recitation of the Koran, basic arithmetic and the Arabic language. Rules of purity and pollution, what was forbidden (haram) and what was permissible (halal), were all influenced by religious concepts and beliefs.

The fact that Islam permeated many aspects of community social life should not compel us to think of it as a monolithic force in village life. Rather, as Gilsenan noted, it should be seen as a consciousness that "identifies varying relations of practice, representation, symbol, concept and worldview within the same society