



Fig. 6.2: Map showing the location of the village mosque

been an ancient church, constituted the northern boundary of the communal saha (plaza). It comprised an important complementary element in this male-dominated arena; plaza, guest-house and mosque. In this communal place the community acted out a significant element of its own religious identity. A strong sense of belonging to a Muslim Community (ummat al-muslimin) was symbolized by the religious ceremonies of the Friday prayer, as all male members of the community stood before God as equals and for a common purpose. This was also symbolized by its orientation towards Mecca, the centre of the Muslim world.

In contrast to the majestic and finely elaborated buildings which surrounded the village main plaza, the mosque of Deir Ghassaneh was built out of rubble stones and was a very simple and relatively insignificant looking building. The simple door which separated the mosque's sacred domain from the profane saha outside, also contrasted strongly with the elaborate arched gate of the sheikh's dwelling (chapter 4).

The mosque's rectangular structure itself also separated the village saha from the mosque's courtyard. To the north of the courtyard lay the mosque's well, which was used for ablutions by those preparing to pray. As one entered the relatively dark interior from the two doors facing north, one faced the direction of Mecca marked by the mihrab (prayer niche), an arched recession in the southern wall. The imperfectly rectangular space was roofed by four crooked cross vaults