

which did not necessarily require a fixed sacred place.

2. The lack of a hierarchical or specialized clerical order among the village's religious men.
3. The relatively limited role which the village mosque played in the community life, especially if compared with the role played by the holy shrines or the village guest-house, (see Chapter 5).

The mosque was basically the place where Muslim males of the community performed their daily prayers. However, except for the Friday noon prayers, the fallah could perform his prayers wherever he happened to be. The place where he prayed became "temporarily sacred". This direct relationship with God minimized the need to perform his prayers in a mosque.

In addition to prayers on feast days and funerals, the Friday noon prayer (salat el-jama'a, the "prayer of the gathering") was a public social and religious event for the village. The Friday prayer was performed in the mosque and was led by the village imam. Shortly before noon-time, the village adult males started gathering at the mosque courtyard; they stood in small groups exchanging greetings and chatting as they proceeded to form several long rows, one behind the other. All stood behind the imam who faced the mihrab. The spatial ordering of men in the mosque was very different from that of the guest-house. In the mosque the position occupied depended primarily on the time of arrival (Abu-Adnan, 1985: interview). It by no means reflected social or political status. Ideally, the mosque was the place where men faced their one God as equals; hence there was no place for "higher" or "lower" status. In contrast, arrangements in the guest-house stressed the hierarchical social order, and men had to re-order their seating as new arrivals entered.

However, Tomas Gerholm in Market, Mosque and Mafraq, describing a mosque in a Yemeni village, argues that social hierarchy outside the mosque was in one way or another carried into the mosque, but perhaps in a very subtle manner: