

Again, unlike regional saints such as Nabi Musa, Nabi Rubeen and Nabi Saleh which were honoured at annual religious festivals, all holy shrines in Deir Ghassaneh except al-Khawwas were honoured and revered on a daily basis. As we will see below al-Khawwas was especially honoured by the women of Deir Ghassaneh and neighbouring villages during the festive day of mawsam el-banat (the season of girls).

#### THE KHAWWAS SANCTUARY (makam al-Khawwas)

Located on top of a nearby hill, al-Khawwas occupies a prominent and conspicuous location (Fig. 6.6). This makam marks the hermitage site of al-Khawwas, a holy stranger, believed to be from Egypt, who often appeared to the villagers of Deir Ghassaneh.

The small rubble stone building with its two relatively big domes can be seen from a distance as it stands alone against the blue



Fig. 6.6': The Khawwas sanctuary

background of the skies. The isolated and distant location of the shrine not only added to the tranquillity of the place, but made it accessible to all visitors from Deir Ghassaneh and neighbouring villages. Its location in the fields, i.e., outside village male or kinship domains made it possible for women to reach it whenever needed. The ritual act of honouring al-Khawwas was enhanced by the long up-hill trip that one took to reach it.