



Fig.6.9: The tree of esh-sheikh Deeb

sheikh Berri, was never associated with a holy shrine. This tree, which unfortunately died a few years ago, was located to the north of the village, on the path to the village main spring ('ein ed-Deir). This huge oak tree was honoured by the women of the village who made vows in its name and tied long white cloths (baftah) to its branches. As the women approached it, they loudly recited verses from the Koran to drive demons away. When they became tired after work, they would sit in the shade of this tree to get some rest and at the same time gain barakeh (blessings).

The sidreh tree (*Zizyphus Spina Christi*), next to the sheikh 'Asfur shrine, was thought to be the abode of demons and hence was feared by the villagers. In cases of sickness, a relative of the ill person - usually a woman - would pile a few stones around the trunk, probably to prevent more djinn or spirits from leaving the tree to hurt the sick. Once the person was cured, the same person would take away the pile of stones and water the tree so as to pacify the spirits in it. (Women from the lower quarter, interview: 1985).

Not all kinds of trees were inhabited by djinn. They had their preferences. For example, carob and black fig trees seemed to be attractive to them (Cana'an; 1928: 162).

"It is thought that these trees are not only preferred by the demons as a home, but that they assemble [there] for time to time" (Cana'an; 1927: 36).

A few of the water springs surrounding Deir Ghassaneh were also believed to be inhabited by djinn and spirits. Certain attributes of the source of springs, such as their darkness and the fact that