

its social geography. It examines the Sheikhdom of Bani Zaid, one of the twenty-one principalities that constituted the districts of the central highlands in the nineteenth century. The relationship between the twenty Bani Zaid villages and the dominant role of Deir Ghassaneh is examined.

Chapter three introduces the village of Deir Ghassaneh, the focus of this study. The historical background and the social organization and social hierarchical order between the dominant Barghouthi clans and other subordinate groups, provide the necessary setting to the more detailed study of the spatial organisation of the village.

Chapter four introduces the strictly spatial analysis of this thesis. After a discussion of the governing rules of separation and unity, the three main living quarters (harat): the Barghouthi quarter, the Shu'aibi quarter, and the lower quarter are discussed at length. The dwellings of the dominant Barghouthis and the subordinate fallaheen are analyzed. An account of the communal and ritual aspects of house construction is also given in this chapter. This section leads directly to a related theme which deals with the symbolic meanings attached to some "decorative" elements: Koranic verses, and floral and faunal designs.

In chapter five two of the village's spatial features (the village plaza and the guest-house) that transcended kinship lines and articulated the village's ultimate unity are discussed in detail. The two places together functioned as the focal point or centre of the village as a whole. As they 'gathered' the different village components around them, they gained a multiplicity of meanings.

Chapter six looks at the sacred environment of Deir Ghassaneh, defined here as the totality of place, time and the ceremonial. The sacred environment acted as an egalitarian force uniting this exclusively muslim village community with the "community of the faithful" at large (ummat al-muslimeen).

Part two of this thesis examines the process of transformation and change that took ^{place} in the village of Deir Ghassaneh in the last seventy