

characteristics of Deir Ghassaneh. The structure facilitated desirable or wanted interactions, while controlling and hindering undesirable and unwanted intrusions. Between the village communal plaza(saha) and the interior of the house, existed a number of places varying in the degree of their privacy.

The separation between males and females was the third principle which guided the spatial organisation of the village and defined its structure. The differential status of women which characterised the village of Deir Ghassaneh influenced the spatial structure of the village as a whole, and that of each quarter. For most of the Barghouthi women who stayed at home, the high walls surrounding the interior courtyard (hosh) marked the boundary of their everyday world (except for the special festive occasions such as marriages and religious ceremonies). The fallaheen women's world extended beyond the boundaries of their courtyards only as they took part in certain well defined agricultural activities.

The network of village inter-kin solidarity was reinforced through a shared cultural and religious heritage, through the communal imposition of tax burdens, and through the collective coordination dictated by the existing cropping arrangements (discussed earlier). The villagers also spatially fostered forms of inter-kin solidarity by creating "centres of activities" which cut partially or totally across kinship lines. While some centres, like the village threshing floors (el baiader), the olive presses, cemeteries and local shops were often shared by two sub-clans, other centres such as the village plaza and guest-house, the village religious buildings, mosque and holy sanctuaries, and the village main spring ('ain el-jdeideh) cut across all kinship lines. Although these centres varied in the nature of activities that took place in them, they all played a role in strengthening village identity and unity as opposed to a strong kinship affiliation and separation. The most important and dominant centre of activity was the communal plaza(sahat el balad). This distinct and remarkable place played a significant role in the social and political life of the community (chapter 6). It was undoubtedly the basic point of reference for most of the villagers, particularly the men.