

to enjoy; they often sat with women of the next households, drank coffee and relaxed.

Single Family Houses

Beyond each open-yard was the private domain of each house hold. As figure 4.20 illustrates, sheikh Mahmoud and his descendants, each had two or three single square spaces (beyout, single beit) on the ground floor, and one private bed-room ('allieh) located on the first floor, and is used by the sheikh and his wife only. Each one of the four brothers had one house (beit) on the ground floor and one bed room on the first floor. The single space unit house was considered the private domain separating the different households sharing the same central courtyard. These units were not directly connected to one another, hence expressing the independence of each domestic unit. The thick stone wall with ventilation whole-like opening (taka or hilal), acted as a strong boundary defining the territory of the domestic unit. There was also no direct connection between the beit and the street. A solid wooden door connected the beit to the courtyard which mediated between this private family domain and the outside public area. The mediation of the hosh between the two areas symbolized the family's mediation between the individual and the village as a whole. During daytime, the doors, were kept open, allowing for the interaction between the interiors of the houses and their outer open-yard spaces. At night, the houses' doors were shut permitting closer interaction between members of the same domestic household. Hence, functionally and symbolically, the door expressed the nature of relationship between the five domestic units. Cana'an writes:

Doors play a part in the life of the Palestinians. They enjoy a peculiar sanctity and importance, and the difference between the inside and the outside is that of different worlds. If a guest speaks to a fallah, while he is outside the threshold, he is invited to the house, the kingdom of the peasant. To refuse to enter except for some serious reason, is to refuse hospitality and friendship (1933: 69).

Both the threshold ('atabeh) and the door keystone (shashieh)