

this vestibule, which was located below the guest-house, gave the strongest sense of arrival. Undoubtedly, the saha was the most important point of reference for all villagers- particularly men. It was, in Lynch's terminology, the point of "departure" and of "arrival". The saha also gave a strong sense of containment with no, or very little, directional sense. Internally, the saha was differentiated into zones. This facilitated the simultaneous presence of several activities. The area outside the guest-house was considered an extension of it and was used for communal gatherings and festive occasions. On such occasions, this zone extended to include all the plaza. The area next to the sheikh's house was considered as an extension of the semi-public male domain. And the area outside the mosque was considered an extension of the mosque, where men normally gathered before and after prayer time. The south-western corner of the saha was the area where younger men gathered, away from elderly men in the guest-house [later this corner became the Daher's guest-house]. Foot paths marked the boundaries between these differentiated sub-zones. These subdivisions were accentuated by the different architectural articulation, such as the pergulas which were erected outside the guest-house (no longer there) and the presence of two big trees which gathered people around them.

THE VILLAGE GUEST-HOUSE: General Description

The words madafah 'amumiyyeh, the common guest-house, and sahet el-balad, the village plaza, were used interchangeably to refer to the same place. Both the plaza and building were referred to as the madafah or saha. [To distinguish between the two, I use the term madafah for the building and the saha for the open space]. This is not surprising when one realizes the close structural and functional relationship that existed between the two. The one important difference, discussed at length later, was that while patterns of hierarchical orders were distinct in the madafah, they tended to fade away in the saha.

The guest-house constituted part of the east boundary delimiting