

the house which was closed to outsiders. Its placement at the Daher compound kept the visitors away from the village living quarters, hence maintaining minimal contact between visitors and the village inhabitants. This location also allowed for the identification of strangers, and control over their movements when entering and leaving the village.

The guest-house was placed very close to the mosque with easy access through the village saha (Fig. 5.2). With such a location one can observe a sharp division between the space occupied by the "public" unit, on the one hand, and the domestic unit, the extended family courtyards, on the other. Peddlers, gypsies, and Beduin, but mostly peasants from neighbouring villages, came to Deir Ghassaneh to sell their produce. They were allowed access to the saha, which functioned as the village marketplace. In addition, some women who came from other villages carried their produce and went to sell it among the village houses.

The guest-house with its size, scale, furnishings and the food served in it, was seen as bringing prestige to Deir Ghassaneh. Every adult male in the village contributed towards the expenses of the guest-house in order to keep up a "respectful" image for Deir Ghassaneh. An annual sum of money referred to as mal-al-wasat was collected from each family during harvest time. This money was spent on communal ceremonies and obligations. Invited to a wedding in a neighbouring village, the sheikh and council of elders gave the bridegroom a wedding present (nqout) on behalf of the village as a whole. When paying their condolences, they took with them bags of rice and one or more sheep to give to the family of the deceased. The entertaining gypsies who visited the village were also paid from mal-al-wasat. Omar Saleh El-Barghouthi writes that the expenses of the guest-house were covered by the income of special land assigned for the madafah. "Up to some sixty years ago, emirs used to give special land to the madafat, (Madafat is the plural of madafah), the income of which would be spent on the guest-house" (Barghouthi, 1924: 180).

The daily expenses of the guest-house visitors were also paid in turn by the adult males of the village. Each paid more or less according