

to his ability. Each share was called qaws (arch), referring to the arch inside the madafah where all the men's names were hung, written on round pieces of paper. This system assured that each male participated in rotation; each knew his turn. The shares were of three categories: 1) the poorest families in the village provided food for the guest's horses (qaws mkhali); 2) middle income families were expected to cook food consisting of either chicken or meat meals for ordinary guests (qaws door sghir); 3) rich families were to cook or kill animals for important guests. This qaws system ensured that each paid according to his ability and kept his turn. (In some villages, other than Deir Ghassaneh, there was a judge for the guest-affairs who organized the expenses of the guest-house. In other villages, dues called al-ma'dood were paid by every adult male). If the guest was distinguished, men would ignore the qaws and compete to treat the guest. In such cases the sheikh had to intervene and decide who would be honoured to kill his animals in celebration of the guest (Abu-Zuhair, interview:1984).

Finally, unlike most towns, villages, including Deir Ghassaneh, did not have a khan for public night lodging; hence the guest-house lodged passing travellers who did not have friends or relatives in the village. It also housed government officials (who came to circulate government announcements) and tax-collectors, who normally spent about ten days in Deir Ghassaneh witnessing the harvest and collecting taxes.

However, more distinguished visitors were accompanied by the village sheikh to his 'allieh (elevated room) to spend the night. The 'allieh, which was located in the upper level of the sheikh's compound could be reached from the entrance vestibule without going through the "private" domestic unit of the sheikh's. In this case visitors were not only diverted away from the domestic unit on a horizontal plane, but also as far as possible on a vertical plane.

Invisible Spheres and Ranking Patterns in the Guest-House

Although both the saha and madafah had no visible partitions or levels which separated those of higher status from others of lower