

"There is no organized maintenance of social hierarchy within the mosque. But I also believe that it would be going too far to describe the interaction in the mosque as a truly egalitarian counterpoint to the hierarchical melody played on the other side of the walls..... watching the men assembling in the precincts of the mosque just before prayer, one senses an order not very different from that of the market... and since there is no active re-arrangement inside the mosque, the status groups tend to be reproduced as a consequence of men's arriving in these groups, as it were carrying the outside order with them" (Gerholm, 1977: 176).

Although this was probably true in Deir Ghassaneh, it is also true that the social order there, which was very strictly observed in daily activities, was intentionally relaxed during prayer time.

In the mosque, there was only the imam (the leader of the Friday prayers) who also functioned as the khatib (preacher). His role and status had always been limited both in function and in authority, and did not embody any "real powers". On the contrary, in most cases the imam was socially deprived and dependent on the contributions and charity of the villagers. His status derived from his being one of the very few literate men in the village, and he functioned as the sheikh of the kuttab (village school) (Granqvist, 1947: 148-149). In a separate building from the mosque, the imam met every morning with the boys to read and recite the Koran. Everyday the boys took a loaf of bread to the kuttab's sheikh. After two years of studying, the boys graduated from the kuttab (once they had recited all of the Koran). They would celebrate the completion of their study by going around the village with their fellows singing and praising their sheikh. Once they had gathered enough food for their teacher, they would go back and give him his present. The imam was also responsible for marriage contracts in the village, and took care of the funerals by preparing the grave and sometimes washing the body of the dead.

Altogether, the functions of the imam or the khatib illustrated a lack of hierarchical or clerical divisions among religious functionaries (unlike specialized clerical orders existing in Christian churches or among Shi'ite Muslims). Here there was no "priesthood" of any kind. In the same manner the direct relation