

**A NEW APPROACH OF IDENTIFYING THE
FUNCTION OF THE ELEVATED BEDS AT
DEIR EL-MEDINA**

by

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A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (B)

Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity
The University of Birmingham

11/06/09

June 2009

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ABSTRACT

This research consists of a different approach to the investigation of the elevated beds at Deir el-Medina. It identifies the underlining factors considered during their construction, where they were positioned, how they were orientated and what the surviving iconographies suggested about their original usage.

It concludes with identifying the front rooms at Deir el-Medina as gardens. The frontal room is where the elevated beds were positioned and therefore link to the gardens symbolic meaning of resurrection and the afterlife.

The elevated beds were orientated to symbolize the deceases' connection with Re and Osiris. It also signifies a change after the Amarna period with an influx in Osiris worship.

The iconographies surviving upon the elevated beds convey the deceased being reborn within the field of reeds signifying that the elevated beds were possibly used for altar purposes.

DEDICATION

For my parents, Peter and Lesley, for their guidance and loving support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
BES	<i>Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar</i>
BIFAO	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire</i>
IFAO	<i>L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
MDAIK	<i>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo</i>
MIO	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</i>
MMS	<i>Metropolitan Museum Studies</i>
SAK	<i>Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur</i>
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Alterumskunde</i>

INTRODUCTION

1. Preface

The function of the elevated bed ('Lit Clos') has puzzled Egyptologists for the past eighty years.¹ It is a unique mud brick structure found only in the front rooms of the houses at Deir el-Medina.² After much deliberation various interpretations of these structures have been presented. The most frequently discussed proposal implies that the functions of these beds were possibly connected to childbirth. As the debate continues this research shall try an alternative approach, presenting a different perspective to the function of the elevated beds.

Unlike previous researches, this study shall revert back to the underlining factors considered during their construction. By analysing these evidences it shall produce a conclusion as to whether previous proposals can be substantiated, or whether an alternative suggestion needs to be addressed.

2. Methodology

Details of the site, a brief history of house layout, and the utilization of the room spaces at Deir el-Medina shall firstly be identified by using tomb representations, house models and archaeological remains.

Previous ideas of the elevated beds function shall be addressed and analysed.

¹ Koltsida 2006:167.

² Bruyère 1939:56.

Unlike other studies this research shall commence by investigating the possible utilization of these frontal spaces which housed the elevated bed. In order to approach this, house models, tomb depictions, textual evidence and archaeological remains shall be used to produce a clearer understanding of these spaces.

The orientations of the elevated beds have never been addressed. This research shall therefore be the first to acknowledge whether there is any underlining significant meaning in the placement of the elevated beds to a specific orientation.

The iconographies remaining upon the elevated beds have been used selectively to explain their function. This research unlike other studies shall identify every representation which has survived and the context to which the imagery is usually portrayed. These contexts shall provide an underlining symbolic meaning for the usage of that particular imagery.

The collated evidence shall be analysed in order to present a feasible proposal for the purpose and function of the elevated beds.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND EVIDENCE

1. The History of Deir el-Medina

Deir el-Medina was an ancient workers village positioned on the West Bank of the ancient city of Thebes, presently known today as Luxor.¹ It was constructed within a valley close to the royal tombs. To the southwest of the village lies the Valley of the Queens whilst beyond the hills to the northwest is the Valley of the Kings (see **Fig. 1**). Deir el-Medina was purposely built to accommodate a close-knit community which were utilized as a skilled workforce for the construction of these nearby royal tombs.²

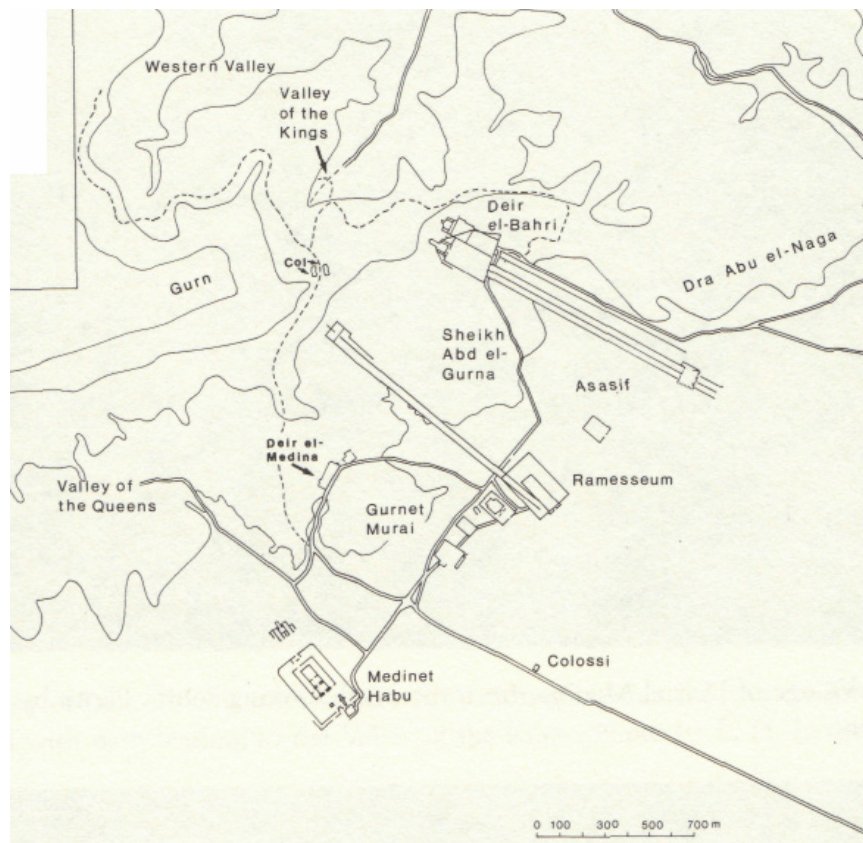


Fig. 1. Map of the West Bank of Luxor. Source: Lesko 1994:3.

¹ The title Deir el-Medina is an Arabic name. In ancient Egyptian times it was known as the 'place of truth'.

² Lesko 1994:2.

During the New Kingdom the western bank of Thebes was known as the *Place of Truth*.³ It was a phrase commonly used for an area which was consecrated, as Deir el-Medina was positioned in the western sacred Necropolis it was also bestowed with the same title *Place of Truth*.⁴

The village was inhabited from the 18th Dynasty until the end of 20th Dynasty.⁵ Initially it was Thutmose I who established the workers and their families within the village.⁶ It has been suggested however that it may have been commissioned in the reign of Amenhotep I and Ahmose Neferetari who were deified at Deir el-Medina.⁷

The construction of the main village was confined by the contours of the valley, consequently producing a long rectangular shape.⁸ It was surrounded by an enclosure wall retaining sixty eight houses covering on average 6418m².⁹ Subsequently the village was extended producing an additional fifty houses which were created outside the main enclosure.¹⁰

³ Černý 1973:34.

⁴ Černý 1973:34-35. The title *Place of Truth* was also known to have been utilized in other areas of Egypt for example at Memphis, Abydos and Elephantine. For more details see Černý 1973:62-64.

⁵ Lesko 1994:7.

⁶ Valbelle 1985:2.

⁷ Lesko 1994:7.

⁸ Valbelle 1985:114-115.

⁹ Koltsida 2007:7. Alternatively Valbelle has proposed that the village covers 5600m², see Valbelle 1985:114. More importantly however Koltsida (2007:7) and Valbelle (1985:115) both suggest that the village contains 68 houses where Bruyère (1939:9) suggests there are 70. This research recognizes Deir el-Medina as containing 68 houses.

¹⁰ Bruyère 1939:9.

2. The Community of Deir el-Medina

The workers who lived at Deir el-Medina were known as the *Servants in the Place of Truth*.¹¹

The workmen were assigned to different tasks. The majority of them worked within the tombs and were known as *the gang* who were divided into two teams each overseen by a *deputy*.¹²

These individuals were all commanded by *foremen*.¹³

These occupational skills were also exercised in Deir el-Medina for private tomb projects with the assistance from other tradesmen within the village.¹⁴ Consequently internal trade flourished within the community.¹⁵ Even though internal trade was extensive, due to the villages secluded location major resources such as fuel, water and food had to be obtained through the aid of outside personnel.¹⁶

Houses were designed specifically with family aspirations. The concept of family has been identified and practiced throughout various civilizations.¹⁷ According to Whale the Egyptian house usually contained a nuclear family.¹⁸ The ideal Egyptian family can be identifiable from tombs usually portraying husband and wife with their children.¹⁹

¹¹ Černý 1973:29.

¹² Černý 1973: 99 and 133. The two teams would work on either sides of the tomb.

¹³ Černý 1973:121. There were also many other occupations within the valley. For more details see Černý 1973-guardians (149-160), doorkeepers (161-173), serfs (183-190), scribes (191-230) and captains (231-243).

¹⁴ McDowell 2001:67.

¹⁵ McDowell 2001:73.

¹⁶ Roik 1988a:14.

¹⁷ Whale 1989:240.

¹⁸ Whale 1989:272.

¹⁹ Whale 1989:272.

The houses at Deir el-Medina were almost certainly utilized by a family unit. According to Samuel it is quite possible that some houses at Amarna shared equipment.²⁰ Whether this occurred in Deir el-Medina is uncertain however there were strong family connections between houses.²¹

3. The Excavation of the Village

Mud brick was a main constituent used within the construction of Deir el-Medina. This enabled the preservation of the village's layout. According to Kemp:²²

The mud-brick ruins which have been most accessible to archaeologists have principally been constructions on new sites, frequently in the desert and including the brickwork of tombs.

Due to its location the ancient village today is presently exposed to arid conditions. As suggested by Kemp this desert environment has enabled the preservation of the houses. Waterlogged conditions such as found in the floodplain would have destroyed any traces of the mud brick settlements.²³

Individuals who constructed houses upon the floodplain for agricultural reasons needed to reconstruct their houses during periods of high inundation.²⁴ Houses therefore constructed

²⁰ Samuel 1999:138-139. These sharing houses consisted of West Street 24 and Long Wall Street 12, Main Street 8 and Gate Street 9, Main Street 8 shared with any of its neighbours, and Main Street 10 and 11.

²¹ Valbelle 1985:231. For further additional information see McDowell 2001:51-52.

²² Kemp 2000:78.

²³ There are other reasons why ancient Egyptian houses have been lost in the archaeological record. Fairman suggests that houses were destroyed by the high Nile, by modern development and by individuals using the ancient bricks as a fertiliser, see Fairman 1949:33 for more details.

²⁴ Pinch: 1995:364.

outside the floodplain had more chance of survival, contributing towards their preservation in the archaeological record today.²⁵

The village of Deir el-Medina was discovered during the 1840s when a huge amount of papyri was unearthed close to the village.²⁶ This discovery enticed archaeologists to excavate the area.²⁷ Schiaparelli excavated the site between 1905 and 1909, uncovering various assemblages of papyri and ostraca (**see Plate 1**).²⁸ In 1906 he focused upon the chapel of Seti I.²⁹ In 1912 Baraize decided to excavate a chapel within the northwest section inside the enclosure.³⁰

During 1917 Bruyère endeavoured to undertake the huge amount of material culture at Deir el-Medina.³¹ Between 1922 and 1951 Bruyère conducted an excavation of the complete site, excavating the entire village including numerous cemeteries and the village dump.³² He also managed to uncover thirty-two religious structures.³³

²⁵ For more information on soil types, preservation, construction of mud bricks, laying of bricks and the general use of mud within the house, see Kemp, B. 2000. 'Soil (including mud-rick architecture)', in P.T. Nicholson and I. Shaw (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*. Cambridge, 78-103.

²⁶ Lesko 1994:7.

²⁷ There were numerous Egyptologists who excavated the area which have not been included. They consisted of Möller who excavated in 1913, Gauthier and Leconte Dunoüy who both excavated from 1917-1918 and Kuentz who also excavated a section of the village in 1921 (Bomann 1991:54). For further details see Bonnet and Valbelle 1975:429-430. Also for additional information on the details of excavations of the surrounding graves see Valbelle 1985:5-17.

²⁸ Lesko 1994:7.

²⁹ Bomann 1991:39.

³⁰ Bomann 1991:39.

³¹ Lesko 1994:7. Material culture is a piece of primary evidence constructed in the past by an individual. For further information on archaeologist's interpretations of archaeological finds see Hodder, I. and Hutson, S. (eds) 2004. *Reading the Past*. Cambridge.

³² Lesko 1994:7.

³³ Bomann 1991:39.

In 1967 the IFAO allowed Castel to continue excavations at Deir el-Medina.³⁴ He continued to complete the works of Baraize, Schiaparelli and Bruyère.³⁵ His focus of excavation however was on Gurnet Murai to its north and south.³⁶ Excavations by the French mission are still on going to this day.

4. A Brief History of Ancient Egyptian Houses

The ancient Egyptian transliteration for house is *pr*. There are three known different categories of housing used in ancient Egypt.³⁷ The first were palaces, used to house the royal family, an example being Merenptah's palace at Memphis.³⁸ The second types of housing were large villas located within towns such as Amarna.³⁹ They were constructed to accommodate the wealthy.⁴⁰ The last types were small houses which can be found at Elephantine dating from the 2nd intermediate period.⁴¹ These houses according to Koltsida were usually inhabited by poorer individuals.⁴² This research focuses upon everyday dwellings rather than royal households, therefore palaces shall not be discussed.

A brief history of house development prior to the New Kingdom shall be addressed in order to produce an account of the origins of house designs. The evidence shall propose that the house plan continuously evolved to suit its owner's requirements.

³⁴ Castel 1980:3.

³⁵ Castel 1980:3.

³⁶ See Castel 1980:1-4.

³⁷ Koltsida 2007:2.

³⁸ Lacovara 1997:24. For more details on Merenptah's palace see Lacovara 1997:28-29, for palaces in general see Lacovara 1997:24-41.

³⁹ Lacovara 1997:57-60.

⁴⁰ Koltsida 2007:3.

⁴¹ Von Pilgrim 1996a:253-264.

⁴² Koltsida 2007:3.

Over the years the house design has developed. Pre-dynastic house construction has produced limited evidence, however there are traces of pre-dynastic structures located north of the temple of Satet on the island of Elephantine.⁴³ The small settlement was dated approximately to the Naqada period.⁴⁴ They were constructed using two posts to support the roof and possibly wicker for its roof and sides, items such as leather were also possibly used within its construction.⁴⁵ Based upon its reconstruction it can be suggested that the Naqada pre-dynastic houses were rectangular (see **Fig. 2 below**).⁴⁶

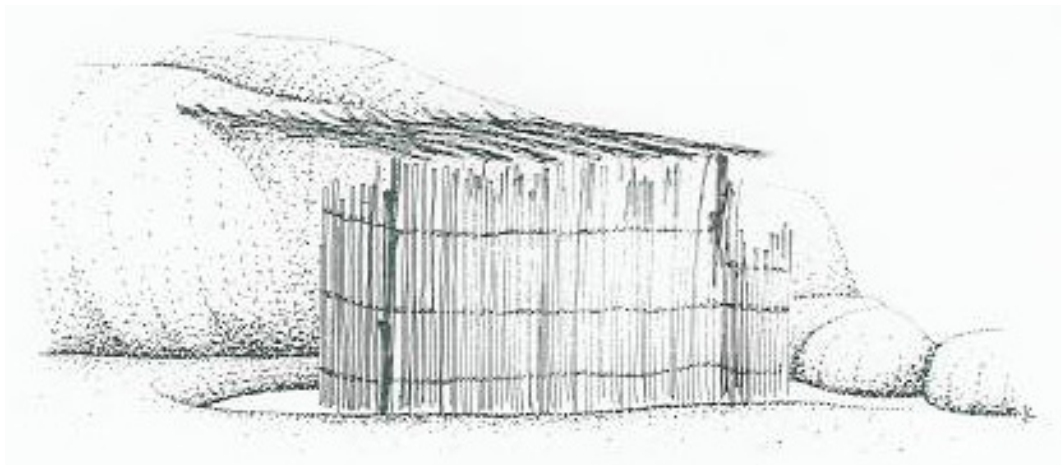


Fig. 2. Pre-Dynastic rectangular house reconstruction of Elephantine. Source: Lindemann, J 1988: 143.

During the Old Kingdom wicker building materials became less common in house construction and were replaced by mud brick which was sturdy, fixed and an easy

⁴³ Lindemann 1988:141.

⁴⁴ Lindemann 1988:142.

⁴⁵ Lindemann 1988:143.

⁴⁶ For further detailed information on pre-dynastic settlement upon the island of Elephantine see Lindemann 1988:141-144. According to Fairman however there were predynastic settlements within the delta (Merimde and El Omari) which have shown evidence for round house construction, for more details see Fairman 1949:34.

maintainable material.⁴⁷ There were two types of house construction, royal commissioned and communal construction. The majority of houses were built without royal intervention, other constructions were overseen by royalty such as the priestly houses at Dahshur.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ According to Fairman mud brick was also used because it was cheaper than other materials, stone was expensive and was only used for 'permanent buildings' such as temples, for more information see Fairman 1949:33.

⁴⁸ Royal commissioned housing was conducted in order to house workers who assisted in royal construction projects, or for individuals who were employed to administer these royal complexes.

At other Old Kingdom sites, houses were constructed from stone for example at Dahshur (see **Fig. 3**).⁴⁹

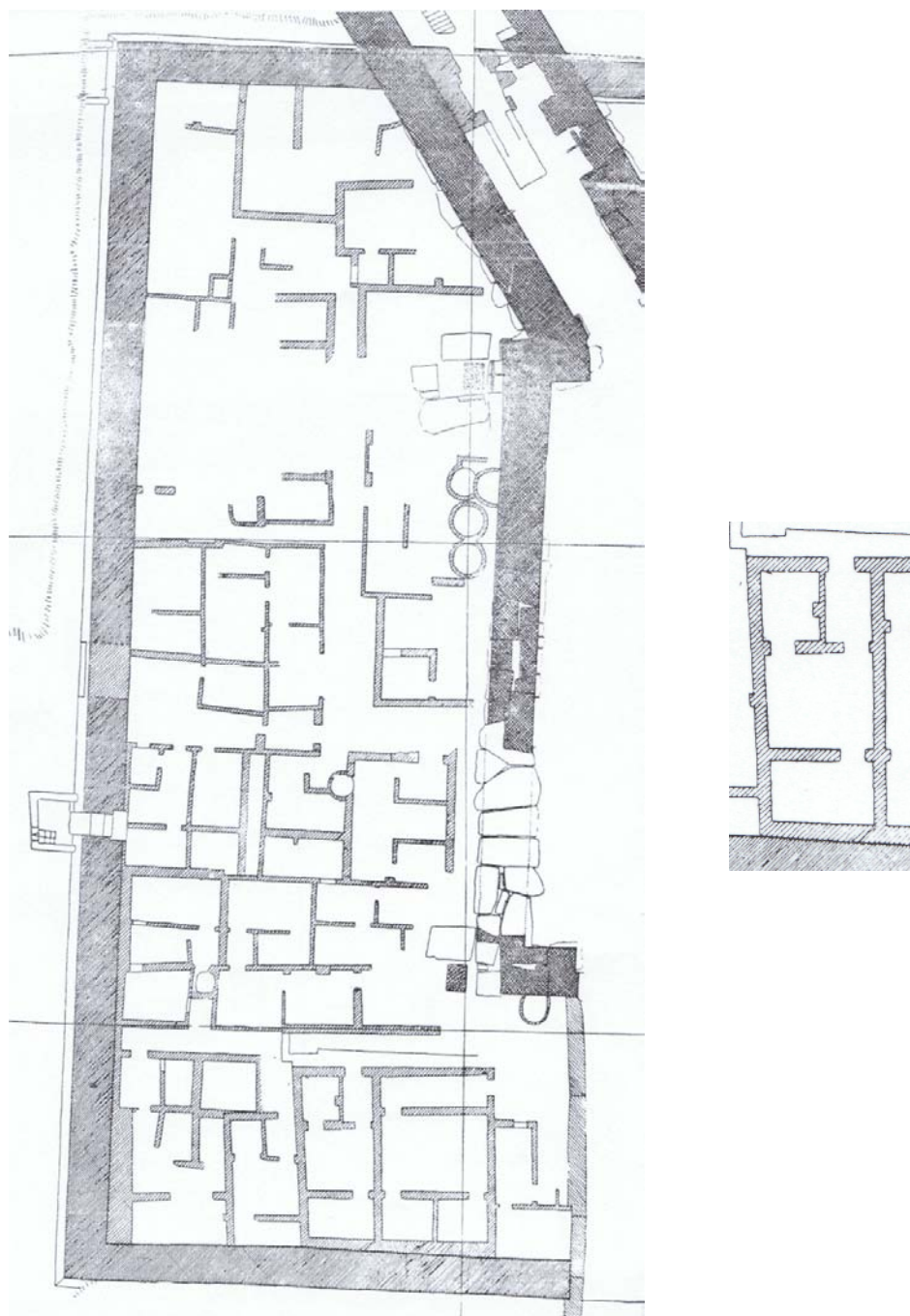


Fig. 3. Left: A section of houses from the priestly settlement at Dahshur. Right: An enlarged house located in the west of the image. Source: Fakhry 1961:Fig 4.

⁴⁹ Fakhry 1961:13. As Fairman suggested stone was expensive (see Fairman 1949:33), therefore in this case stone was used to construct houses for the priests who oversee the pharaoh's royal cult complex. It proposes that the pharaoh wanted his cult complex to be maintained for a number of years, which is why he used stone to construct their houses.

House divisions can be easily identifiable from the stone houses found at Dahshur. The houses were divided into three main sections as portrayed in the enlarged image to the right (see **Fig. 3**).⁵⁰ Two rooms were positioned at the front of the house; larger rooms were constructed within the middle and rear of the property, however as shown in **Fig. 3** not all houses were constructed using this particular layout.

During the Middle Kingdom various types of houses were being constructed. The first type can be identified at Medamud (see **Plate 2**) and consists of a frontal room with rear vaulted chambers, smaller rooms were positioned at the rear of the property.

Royal commissioned housing found at towns such as Lahun, contained smaller houses divided into three sections.⁵¹ Central rooms were possibly used as open courtyards.⁵²

At Elephantine most houses used the same layout found in House 70 (see **Plates 3, 4, 5 and 6**). An antechamber was located at the front of the house represented by the cobbled entrance.⁵³ The next room appears to be a columned room or courtyard. The private sectors were positioned at the rear of the premises.⁵⁴

To summarize in the Middle Kingdom smaller private rooms were being constructed at the rear of the property in contrast to the Old Kingdom, enabling larger frontal entertaining

⁵⁰ Bietak 1996:37.

⁵¹ Quirke 2005:85.

⁵² Quirke 2005:85. For all the different styles of houses uncovered at Lahun see Quirke, S. 2005. *Lahun*. London.

⁵³ Von Pilgrim 1996a:260.

⁵⁴ For further information on Middle Kingdom housing at Elephantine see Von Pilgrim 1996a: 253-264. Also see Von Pilgrim 1996b. For information on the development of houses during different periods at Elephantine see Krekeler 1996:107-115.

areas.⁵⁵ Housing materials evolved leading to more sturdy materials being used, mud brick being favoured due to its availability, quality and its workability.

5. Appearance and Usage of the Houses at Deir el-Medina

To identify the type of house layout used at Deir el-Medina, archaeological evidence found at Amarna shall be analysed. This shall produce an indication as to the style adopted at Deir el-Medina. Other evidences consisting of 2D and 3D representations may also prove useful in the identification of their original appearance, usage and divisions.

⁵⁵ For information on house development of the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom see Bietak 1996: 23-43.

5.1 The Archaeological Evidence

Deir el-Medina was a royal constructed village created within a valley utilizing the same house layout for most of its dwellings. According to Kemp and Rose it is unclear whether ancient Egyptian architects would have used certain methods and planning techniques for different constructions in Egypt.⁵⁶ Whatever the method used during house construction the architect would have planned the area using sketches and cubit measurements.⁵⁷ It can be argued that due to the restricted valley, some structure analysis and planning must have occurred to accommodate enough houses for the workers in such a limited space.

At the New Kingdom town of Tell el-Amarna different types of houses were being developed signifying varied social dispositions.⁵⁸ It therefore seems appropriate to use Amarna as a contrast to identify Deir el-Medina's type of housing. Although Tell el-Amarna was constructed after Deir el-Medina, the various house layouts adopted at Amarna may have originated or been practiced at Deir el-Medina firstly.

⁵⁶ Kemp and Rose 1990:126.

⁵⁷ Kemp and Rose 1990:126.

⁵⁸ According to Tietze, houses at Amarna could identify the social status of the villagers. 54-59% of housing suggested lower class, 34-37% signified middle class and 7-9% of large houses suggested upper class. For further details see Tietze 1985:76-83.

Tietze identified different types of housing at Amarna as shown in **Fig. 4** (or alternatively see **Plate 7**).⁵⁹

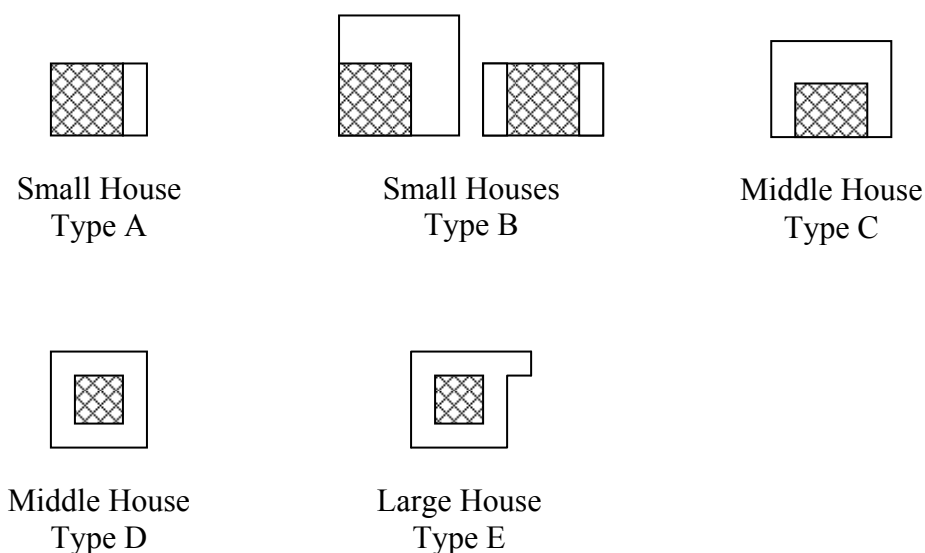


Fig. 4. The types of housing found at Amarna. Source: Koltsida 2007:9.

Type A houses are constructed as one large living space with an additional two rooms attached to its side.⁶⁰ Type B houses have an antechamber and additional rooms on both sides of the living space, whilst Type C houses have rooms attached to three sides.⁶¹ In Type D houses the living space is enclosed on all sides by rooms and lastly Type E houses are similar to Type D houses, with the exception that an antechamber was added as an extension to the house.⁶²

⁵⁹For more information on Tietze different types of houses at Tell el-Amarna see Tietze 1996:231-237. Also See Tietze 1985:48-84.

⁶⁰ Koltsida 2007:9.

⁶¹ Koltsida 2007:9.

⁶² Koltsida 2007:9.

Type E houses were the largest villas at Amarna (see **Plates 8 and 9 for examples**). When looking at houses such as Q46.1, they are easily identified by the large area in which they occupy. In this particular case it was equipped with its own granary, stables, chapel and possibly a garden.⁶³

Using R.46.3 (**Plate 8**) and Q46.1 (**Plate 9**) as examples it is easily recognizable that these villas were separated into distinct sections and were both accessed by stairs.⁶⁴ The first frontal room is elongated with evidence of one or more columns. The main living space is positioned central within the property, identifiable by the large rectangular features known as the dais.⁶⁵ This central room was surrounded by smaller rooms. According to Lloyd the east section of the villa contained the bedrooms.⁶⁶

Alternatively type B housing at Amarna was constructed for royal workers. It is easily recognizable that these houses were smaller than the Amarna villas. A good example is Gate Street 8 (see **Fig. 5**). The front room of Gate Street 8 was probably used as an open courtyard.⁶⁷ The second room was the living space where an L shaped dais and a hearth were identified.⁶⁸ At the back of the house there are two separate rooms which were probably used for sleeping and cooking.⁶⁹

⁶³ Fairman has suggested that the large villas were equipped with a garden, pond, chapel, a well, stables and granaries, for more information see Fairman 1949:39. For a good example of a grand house altar at Amarna see **Plate 24**.

⁶⁴ According to Koltsida some villas may have been entered by ramps. See Koltsida 2007:27.

⁶⁵ The presence of a hearth or dais is crucial in the identification of the living space.

⁶⁶ Lloyd 1933: Fig.3. Lloyd suggested that the masters bedroom was located in the northeast, eastern bedrooms for other family members and the southeast contained the guest bedrooms (see Lloyd 1933: Fig 3. Fairman has also suggested the same layout, see Fairman 1949:38. For more detailed information on Amarna room division and function see Lloyd 1933:1-7 and Fairman 1949: 37-39.

⁶⁷ El-Saidi and Cornwell 1986:19.

⁶⁸ El-Saidi and Cornwell 1986:5-6.

⁶⁹ El-Saidi and Cornwell 1986: 7.

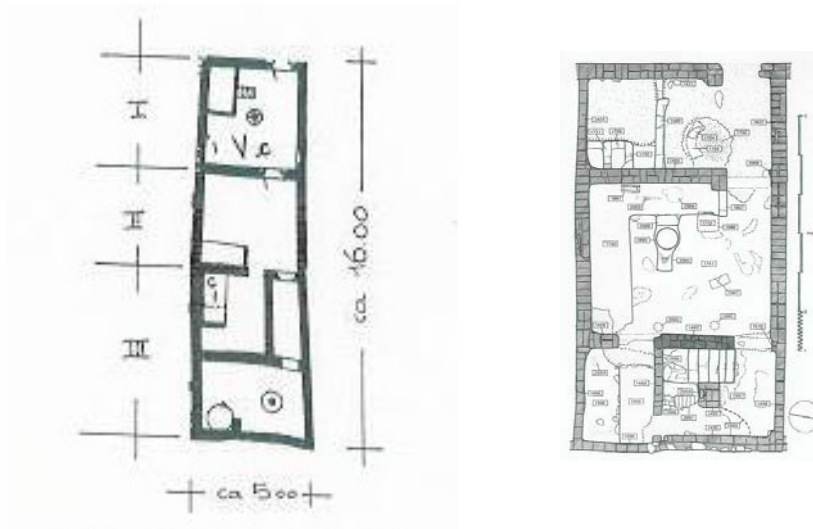


Fig. 5. Deir el-Medina house C.V. compared to Amarna workmen's village house Gate Street 8. Source: Left: Roik 1988b: Abb 1. Right: El-Saidi and Cornwell 1986:Figure 1.1.

The archaeological evidence suggests that Deir el-Medina houses belong to type B housing which appears to be a style used in royal commissioned workmen's houses. Both the properties have two large rooms at the front and smaller rooms at the back.

Although archaeological evidence can provide information on house foundations and the distribution of finds, other features, walls, roof material or material culture may have been lost in the archaeological record.

According to Koltsida daises and hearths sometimes do not preserve within the living spaces therefore making it difficult to be correct with judgements of room utilization.⁷⁰ It is also difficult to reconstruct a representation of the houses solely using physical remains.

⁷⁰ Koltsida 2007:57.

As Kemp suggests:⁷¹

We must make allowance for such buildings originally having risen to considerable heights and possessing elaborately constructed interiors which utilized a level of building skills now meagrely represented by what has survived. A modern account of soil architecture in ancient Egypt is almost bound not to do it justice.

Nevertheless archaeological remains contribute a great understanding of house layouts and room functions. By using archaeological material in relation to 2D representations and 3D models one may be able to propose the appearance of an ancient Egyptian household.

5.2 Representational Evidence

2D tomb representations shall provide an indication as to possible house usage and design. Most of the representations only focus upon external areas of the house.⁷² Examples are found in the tombs of Minnacht (TT87) (**see Plate 10**) and Nakht (TT161) (**see Plate 11**).

The tomb of Minnacht (TT87) depicts a sketched outline of a house surrounded by foliage with a lake portrayed within its forefront.⁷³ The frontal courtyard contains two trees which have been enclosed by a wall. The central building is portrayed in profile whilst rooms to the left and right of the structure are depicted in frontal perspective. Although this structure maybe interpreted as being a house Roik has suggested that:⁷⁴

Die axiale Anordnung von Hof und Räumen entspricht nicht einer Wohnhausanlage, wie sie aus Grabungen bekannt ist, sondern scheint vielmehr einer Tempelanlage entnommen zu sein.

⁷¹ Kemp:2000:78

⁷² Koltisda 2007:15.

⁷³ Roik 1988a:53.

⁷⁴ Roik 1988a:54.

Therefore the interpretation of this structure may be misconceived.

The tomb of Nakht (TT161) (see **Plate 11**) similarly depicts the exterior of two houses in profile. According to Roik they suggest a one storey house with one or two windows.⁷⁵ A similar example is represented upon papyrus Nakht from the British Museum (EA 10471/21) (see **Fig. 6**).⁷⁶



Fig. 6. A piece of Nakht's 18th Dynasty Book of the Dead. To the far right of the image is Nakht's house. British Museum EA 10471/21. Source: Stead 1991:Fig. 15.

These representations are useful as they provide an insight into the original appearance of ancient Egyptian houses however the major concern with these depictions is they lack internal views.

There are certain tombs which depict house interiors. Tomb TT334 portrays two houses (see **Plate 12**). The top house is similar to archaeological evidence found at Deir el-Medina and Amarna. It can be identified as type B as it is divided into three sections. According to Roik

⁷⁵ Roik 1988a:60.

⁷⁶ Nakht from the Tomb TT161 and Nakht from the British Museum papyrus EA 10471/21, are indeed not the same individual. The name Nakht was commonly used during the New Kingdom and therefore these individuals should not be confused.

the first room is the courtyard, the second room is the living space, with additional private quarters at the back.⁷⁷ The second house is similar to Minnacht (TT87) which appears to be a garden chapel, rather than a house.⁷⁸

A detailed house interior has been presented in the tomb of Thutnefer (TT104) (see **Plate 13**). It has been separated into four sections. According to Roik the cellar is located at the bottom of the image, whilst the ground and first floor both portray an offering scene.⁷⁹ The flat roof appears to be used for storage and drying space.⁸⁰

The problem with these representations is that the image portrayed may actually be an idealized home of the tomb owner. According to Pinch:⁸¹

Numerous reliefs and paintings in tombs seem to depict daily life in Egypt and episodes from the private life of the tomb owner, but such evidence has to be used with caution. These scenes follow strict artistic conventions and often have an underlying religious significance. They also represent the viewpoint of the elite ruling class, rather than that of the mass of Egyptian society.

The house portrayed is considerably large and is either owned by a wealthier individual or may be a representation of the tomb owner's ideal property.

By comparing the representation to surviving house remains the reliability of this image can be analysed. According to Roik the cellar in this depiction is not feasible. Cellars discovered at Deir el-Medina were rock cut and most houses in Egypt were unable to have cellars due to

⁷⁷ Roik 1988a:60.

⁷⁸ Roik 1988a:61.

⁷⁹ Roik 1988a:54. The only different between the two floors is that the largest room has additional high windows.

⁸⁰ Roik 1988a:54.

⁸¹ Pinch 1995:363.

inundation of the Nile, inhibiting their construction.⁸² In addition Roik suggests that since the Egyptians used mud brick within their constructions this material would not be able to support the weight of the building represented.⁸³ Whether these house representations were factual or idealistic, they still provide evidence into house structures and its components.

5.3 House Models

House models provide a 3D image of ancient Egyptian house.⁸⁴ The first models being examined were discovered at Rifeh.⁸⁵ They were constructed using pottery during the 9th to 12th Dynasties.⁸⁶ The first (**see Plate 14**) Pt.43 was designed with an open court at the front of the house which contained the stairs to the roof. The door was not positioned centrally and has been placed next to the stairs. Although there is a lack of internal views, this model suggests that houses utilized spaces upon their rooftops. The second (**see Plate 15**) Pt.20 was constructed with two floors. Again the house has remnants of a frontal open courtyard. Differing from the last house model, Pt.20 has used numerous archways to the front of the property, possibly for decorative reasons. The third (**see Plate 16**) from the Louvre has an open courtyard within an enclosure. The stairs ascending to the next floor are similar to Pt.43 as they are positioned within the open courtyard. The three doorways were specifically aligned, according to Koltsida to allow privacy.⁸⁷

⁸² Roik 1988a:56.

⁸³ Roik 1988a:57.

⁸⁴ Koltsida 2007:13.

⁸⁵ Petrie 1907:16

⁸⁶ Petrie 1907:16

⁸⁷ Koltsida 2007:13.

The wooden house model from the 11th Dynasty Theban tomb of Meketre (see **Plates 17 and 18**) depicts the frontal courtyard of a house containing a porch with eight pilasters, a pool and sycamore trees.⁸⁸ Although this model does not reveal complete sections of the house, it suggests that the frontal room could have been used as a garden.

Similar to 2D imagery, models must be used with caution. According to Petrie the Rifeh models were ‘soul houses’ as they were discovered on top of burials.⁸⁹ This is similar to Meketre model which was found inside a tomb. The purpose of these models according to Koltsida is unknown.⁹⁰ Even though misinterpretations of their original functions may occur, they still contribute a better understanding of house designs.

⁸⁸ Winlock 1955:19.

⁸⁹ Petrie 1907:14.

⁹⁰ Koltsida 2007:14.

6. Houses at Deir el-Medina

When viewing a map of Deir el-Medina it is clear that the houses were compact. The only means of separation being the large central street.

When using **Fig. 4**, the houses found at Deir el-Medina belong to type B. Using an example of house N.O.XXIII (see **Fig. 7**) most of the houses adopted a similar layout. It contained two larger rooms at the front and two smaller rooms at the back (see **Plates 25 and 26 for a 3D reconstruction of houses C.VI and N.E.X**).



Fig. 7. House N.O.XXIII. Source Bruyère 1939:Pl. XXIX.

The frontal rooms measured approximately 8-24m².⁹¹ They were created 40 to 50cm lower than the outside street level.⁹² The second room was built the same level as the outside street and was usually the largest room in the house measuring approximately 14-26m².⁹³ It contained a divan, columns and a cellar.⁹⁴ The last two rooms of the house measured approximately 3-6 meters.⁹⁵ They contained stairs to the roof, ovens and a bench which was associated with the bedroom.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Valbelle 1985:118.

⁹² Bruyère 1939:54.

⁹³ Valbelle 1985:119.

⁹⁴ Bruyère 1939:65-71.

⁹⁵ Valbelle 1985:119.

⁹⁶ Bruyère 1939:71-78.

7. Function of the Rooms at Deir el-Medina

Bruyère decided to illustrate his own perception on the functions of each of the rooms at Deir el-Medina (see Fig. 8).

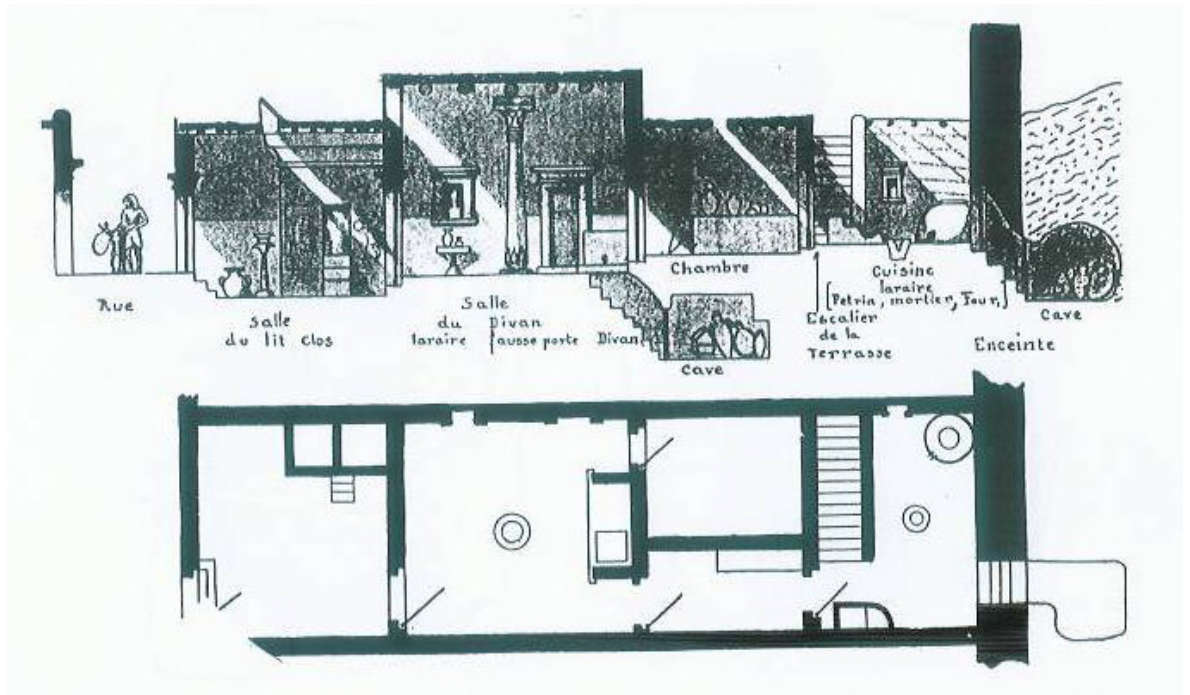


Fig . 8. Bruyère’s drawing of the inside of a typical house at Deir el-Medina. Source Bruyère 1939: Figure 15.

According to Bruyère the frontal room contained the elevated bed, the second room contained the sitting area and the back rooms were utilized as a bedroom and kitchen. Although this diagram lacks detailed information of the activities conducted within each of these rooms, Bruyère has managed to reconstruct the possible house utilization based upon remaining archaeological material.

It must be recognized however that Royal commissioned houses such as Deir el-Medina are difficult to use as a representative sample for those houses which have not survived within the

archaeological record. Royal workmen's villages were constructed using a specific layout which may not have been adopted by the country as a whole.⁹⁷ It can only be speculated as to the usage and types of houses which have been lost. Deir el-Medina housing therefore should not solely be used as a representative house for the country during the New Kingdom; different regions may have had different ideas and styles on room divisions, the usage of spaces and house construction.

Archaeological evidence provides an indication of house divisions and development. 2D and 3D representations, whether factual or idealistic, can show house layouts and structures of an ancient Egyptian home. This provides an insight into the development of the houses used at Deir el-Medina.

⁹⁷ There are other types of houses which can be used as a comparison which were not influenced by royal construction for example houses from Elephantine.

CHAPTER 2: PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ELEVATED BEDS

1. Details of the Elevated Beds

An elevated bed is a mud brick construction found only within the front rooms of the houses at Deir el-Medina (see **Fig. 9** and **Plate 19**).¹ It has been identified in twenty eight frontal rooms of sixty eight houses.² They were rectangular in shape measuring approximately 1,70m in length, 0.80m in width and 0,75m in height with a stairway of three to five steps high.³ The elevated beds were constructed with enclosing side walls and according to Bruyère most may have reached the original front room roof level.⁴



Fig. 9. Photograph of house N.E.III elevated bed. Source: Peter Brooker

¹ Bruyère 1939:55-56.

² Bruyère 1939:61.

³ Bruyère 1939:56.

⁴ Bruyère 1939:56-57.

The date when these elevated beds were constructed have been continuously debated. Bruyère suggested that they were produced after Thutmose III.⁵ Other Egyptologists such as Kemp propose that they were established after the Amarna period.⁶ It must therefore be recognized that their date is still unresolved.

2. Previous Interpretations of the Elevated Beds

The elevated beds were firstly identified by Bruyère during his 1922 and 1951 excavation of Deir el-Medina.⁷ Bruyère did not comprehend the function of these features and therefore entitled them as ‘lit clos’, an expression which is formally used today as ‘elevated beds’. Bruyère adopted the terminology ‘lit clos’ to describe their physical and practical attributes not their original function.

At first glance their appearance is similar to a bench found in the back rooms of the Deir el-Medina houses, which were classed by Bruyère as divans (**see Fig. 8**).⁸ Closer observations reveals however that unlike these sleeping benches, elevated beds in comparison were raised considerably from the floor level with a staircase and were adorned with decoration upon its enclosing walls (**see Plate 19**). Hence the structure could not be classified with the same terminology as the benches located at the rear of the property and therefore were labelled with the term ‘elevated bed’.

⁵ Bruyère 1939:61.

⁶ Kemp 1979:51

⁷ Lesko 1994:7.

⁸ Bruyère 1939:71-72.

2.1 Sleeping Beds

Meskeil has suggested that Bruyère's terminology of 'lit clos' has influenced Egyptologists various thoughts of thinking.⁹ It has been suggested that the elevated beds may have actually been utilized as sleeping benches due to their similar attributes. Meskeil proposing that it was physically possible for the feature to have functioned as a bed.¹⁰ Romano has also suggested that the elevated beds were a 'principle sleeping area of the house' due to their decoration.¹¹

The reason behind this thinking is due to the images of the god Bes commonly utilized upon certain elevated beds.¹² His character is associated with protecting individuals whilst sleeping.¹³ The raised elevated bed (see **Fig. 9 and Plate 19**) could reinforce this protective nature, as protection was important during sleep, however one would expect the sleeping benches at the rear of the property to have similar raised and decorative attributes.

Sleeping benches at the rear of the property were usually used to support wooden beds.¹⁴ If the elevated bed therefore functioned as a sleeping area it would have contained a wooden bed frame. This frame usually had square stones positioned underneath each of the wooden bed legs.¹⁵ This same technique was also utilized for chairs and tables, as it stopped the legs of the feature from sinking into the soft mud brick bench.¹⁶ According to Arnold these stones would

⁹ Meskeil 1999b:100.

¹⁰ Meskeil 1999b:100.

¹¹ Romano 1990:27

¹² Images of Bes were found on the elevated beds in houses N.E.X, N.E. XII, N.E.XIII, C.V. and S.O.VI. See Bruyère 1939:255, 257, 259, 305, and 330. In house S.E.IX a mask of Bes was discovered by an elevated bed. See Bruyère 1939:276. For more information on Bes' character also see Chapter 5.

¹³ Dasen 1993:75.

¹⁴ A good example of a surviving ancient Egyptian wooden bed is the Old Kingdom bed frame of Hetephe's in the Cairo Museum (JE53261). For more information on it see Hawass 1999:64.

¹⁵ For more information see Arnold 1989:83.

¹⁶ Arnold 1989:83.

have been present in situ.¹⁷ The stone supports however according to Kleinke were not discovered within the elevated beds at Deir el-Medina (see **Fig. 9 and Plate 19**).¹⁸

The elevated beds being utilized for sleeping is uncertain, as sleeping areas were usually positioned at the rear of the property. According to Bruyère's site report sleeping benches at Deir el-Medina were located at the back of the houses, contrary the elevated beds were placed within the frontal rooms.¹⁹ Due to limited space within the small houses at Deir el-Medina it therefore seems unlikely that areas positioned at the front and rear of the property were used for sleeping.

It must also be acknowledged that the front room was positioned on the main village street. Koltsida has concluded that the front room is a public space.²⁰ Ricke divided the house layout into three sections, the frontal section being used to separate the outer public and private inner space whilst the next rooms were private sectors for the family.²¹ The first room would have been seen as an intermediary area, therefore it would seem inappropriate to place sleeping quarters within this area, and for this reason sleeping benches would have been constructed within the rear private sectors of the house.

If it was common practice in ancient Egypt to place a sleeping area within the frontal rooms then it may have been adopted at Deir el-Medina, however evidence from Kahun, Amarna

¹⁷ Arnold 1989:83.

¹⁸ Kleinke 2007:30.

¹⁹ Bruyère 1939: 71-72 and 55-56.

²⁰ Koltsida 2006:169.

²¹ Ricke 1967:16.

and Tell el-Daba have shown no traces for sleeping benches within the front room of the houses.²²

To support this theory, the decoration upon the elevated beds is not found upon sleeping benches. Although there are numerous depictions of Bes upon the elevated beds which may symbolize protection in sleep, other images remaining upon the beds are difficult to interpret in accordance with the 'sleeping bed proposal'.²³

According to the evidence, the elevated beds being used for sleeping purposes appears to be unfounded and speculative.

²² Kleinke 2007:30. For more details see Kleinke 2007 Chapter 6.2, 66-72.

²³ In S.E.I four female feet are depicted, in S.E.VIII there are remnants of a female person playing a musical instrument and in CVII there appears to be a kneeling female figure. In N.O.XII there also appears to be a reed boat.

2.2 Female Space

An alternative interpretation considers the elevated beds use as a female space. This theory has been compiled on the basis of the numerous depictions of Bes, being the main deity associated with female sexuality.²⁴ Meskell suggested:²⁵

This first room was notionally female-oriented, centred around elite, married, sexually potent, fertile females of the household.

Meskell's approach to the front room space links to female sexuality, therefore integrating this function in relation to the elevated bed. Meskell decided to produce a table of the functions and space divisions within the areas of the Deir el-Medina housing:-

<i>Room 1</i>	<i>Room 2</i>	<i>Other Rooms</i>
Ritual fixtures	Ritual fixtures	Ovens, cooking area
Cultic objects	Cultic objects	No Cultic objects
Female imagery	Male imagery	No imagery
Birthing imagery	Ancestor busts	Undecorated
Lit Clos	Divan	Processing implements
Female space	Male space	Servile space

Table 1- Meskell's interpretation of the utilization of spaces within the household. Source Meskell 2002:125.

According to this table, Meskell proposes that the first two rooms of the household were used for religious and pictorial means. The last rooms were solely used for cooking. Surprisingly

²⁴ Meskell 1999b:100.

²⁵ Meskell 2002:111.

Meskell has separated the female and the male spaces, applying modern Egyptian house segregation to an ancient Egyptian household.²⁶

There were other ancient cultures which did restrict females to certain areas of the household. Although it is difficult to apply a different culture to ancient Egypt, by example, the classical Greeks were known to contain females within wealthy households. Athenian houses had strict female segregation, positioning women far away from the front door and placed slave porters at the entrance for extra protection.²⁷ In some cases females were allocated upstairs especially when guests arrived.²⁸ Males therefore utilized public spaces whilst females were placed within the private sectors of the household.²⁹

If segregation of the sexes occurred within an ancient Egyptian household, fertile females would be placed at the rear private sections of the property and not confined to frontal room spaces.

Furthermore it must be acknowledged that Table 1 was compiled using evidence only from Deir el-Medina. Although Bruyère conducted vast excavations of the site, various details of the original origins of archaeological deposits were left vague or unrecorded.

Tell el-Amarna on the other hand has been continuously recorded in detail and is still on going to this day. Evidence from the workers village at Amarna suggests there were no female divisions within the houses, as items relating to female presences, notably weaving materials,

²⁶ See Meskell 1998a:225.

²⁷ Murray1993:216. The front door was attached onto the outside main street.

²⁸ Murray1993:216.

²⁹ Murray 1993:216.

were found in all areas of the house. Eleven examples of spindle whorls were uncovered within the front rooms, one in a living room and eight within the bedrooms.³⁰ There were no examples of weaving sticks discovered within the front rooms however eleven examples were found within the living room, one example in the bedroom and four examples in the kitchen.³¹

The archaeological evidence from Tell el-Amarna has confirmed that female activities were distributed throughout the household, demonstrating that female presences were not just concentrated within certain rooms of an ancient Egyptian house. This is supported by the title in which most women of the New Kingdom held *nbt pr* the mistress of the household.³²

This freedom of women is expressed within the New Kingdom inscription of the *Instruction of Any*. Although there are a number of variations of this instruction, the original was discovered at Deir el-Medina dating to the 18th Dynasty.³³ It states:

Do not control your wife in her house,
When you know she is efficient;
Don't say to her: "Where is it? Get it!"
When she has put it in the right place.³⁴

This instruction advises men to allow women to have freedom within the house. What is intriguing about this text is that it was found at Deir el-Medina and therefore proposes that individuals within the village would have been familiar with these ideologies.

³⁰ Koltsida 2007:154.

³¹ Koltsida 2007:154. For more information on the number of finds discovered within the Amarna's workmen's village see Koltsdia 2007:153-156.

³² Pinch 1995:374.

³³ Lichtheim 2006b:135.

³⁴ Lichtheim 2006b:143.

The theory that the elevated beds functioned as a female space in relation to the frontal room is unsubstantiated. The containment of fertile females to frontal rooms is highly unlikely with evidence showing that women had access to all rooms of the house.

2.3 Birthing Bed

Several Egyptologists have linked the function of the elevated beds with women and childbirth. Kitchen proposed that the elevated beds were:³⁵

A special enclosed chamber in the front parlour was particularly dedicated to (and decorated for) Bes and the household deities of womanhood; it may have been a confinement room, where children might be born under the domestic protection of Bes Taweret, Isis and Hathor.

Strudwick and Strudwick also believe that the structure was constructed for the usage by a mother and her newly born baby.³⁶ Kemp additionally supports this theory suggesting that the iconographies used upon the elevated beds and the depictions discovered at Amarna both have similar meanings:³⁷

For this would make the mural decoration of the houses at both Deir el-Medina and the El-'Amarna workmen's village largely female-oriented...It might be expected that childbirth would be surrounded by customs and observances wholly the prerogative of women...

Due to further observational evidence and new interpretations, the ideas about the elevated beds being associated with childbirth are dwindling. Koltsida has suggested that due to the limitations of the elevated beds it would be difficult for a woman, aided by a midwife, to give

³⁵ Kitchen 1982:187.

³⁶ Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:178.

³⁷ Kemp 1979:53.

birth in such a small space (see **Fig. 9 and Plate 19**).³⁸ Supporting this, Meskell has proposed that imagery found throughout Deir el-Medina portrays women using bricks or stools during childbirth, not elevated beds, suggesting that birthing areas were possibly positioned upon rooftops.³⁹ Furthermore Romano suggests that it would be improbable that ten percent of the frontal floor space would be devoted to a birthing area which would only be used once per year.⁴⁰

An alternative approach to the birthing bed theory has been presented by Friedman who has proposed that after a mother has given birth they were considered unclean and impure and therefore secluded for a fourteen day period, stating that it was quite possible that the elevated bed may have functioned as a restricted area where this purification occurred.⁴¹ Meskell has also implied that this area for purification would be placed outside to aid ventilation.⁴² Kemp also supports this fourteen day restriction which is stated in papyrus Westcar.⁴³ Papyrus Westcar however must be used with caution due to its content and the context in which it was produced.

There are multiple problems when using papyrus Westcar in relation to the elevated beds. The text was composed within the Middle Kingdom and the tale is set in the Old Kingdom.⁴⁴ The text portrays a strict fourteen day cleansing but refers to the children as being of royal bloodline. It cannot be suggested therefore that this would have been habitual practice

³⁸ Koltsida 2006:170.

³⁹ Meskell 1999b:100.

⁴⁰ Romano 1990:26-27.

⁴¹ Friedman 1994:102.

⁴² Meskell 1998a:224.

⁴³ Kemp 1979:53.

⁴⁴ Lichtheim 2006a: 215.

throughout Egypt, as royal children may have been treated differently due to their royal heritage and disposition.

The theories linking the elevated beds function with purification areas are also being reassessed. Friedman proposed that the bed, if used as a seating area, would be too hot to sit during the high temperatures of the day.⁴⁵

If the elevated bed was a containment area for childbirth or purification purposes, then the majority of the houses at Deir el-Medina would have constructed one. In addition it must be acknowledged that the frontal room was an intermediary area between the outer public street and the inner private sectors of the house, therefore in a practicality sense, birthing areas would not be placed within these frontal rooms.

⁴⁵ Friedman 1994:99,117.

2.4 Altar

The most commonly accepted idea today is that the elevated beds were household altars. Arnold proposes that the design reflects a cult altar.⁴⁶ When looking at their reconstruction, it is easy to make this assumption as their appearance is unique (see **Fig. 10**).

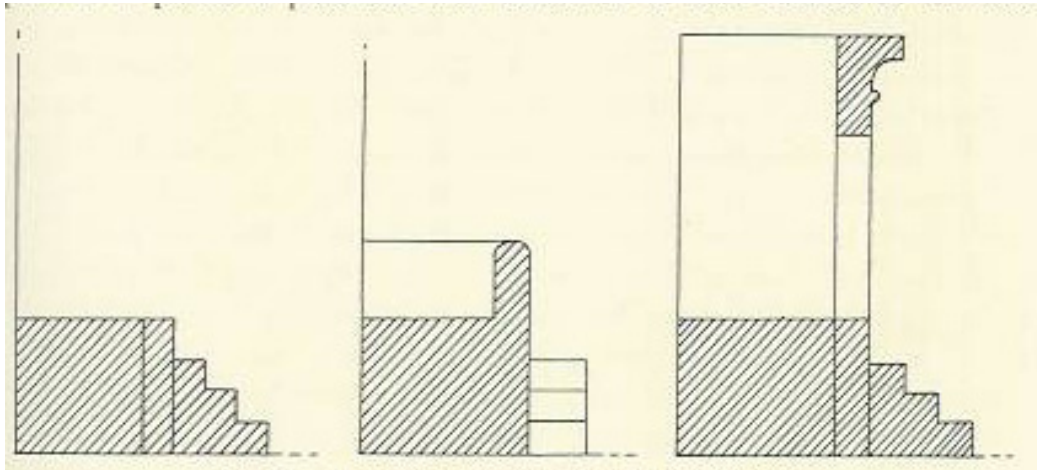


Fig. 10. Bruyère reconstruction of the height of the elevated beds. Source- Bruyère 1939:57.

⁴⁶ Arnold 2000:100.

In order to identify whether the altar proposal is feasible, Stevens decided to compare the measurements of surviving platforms of the elevated beds to the altars discovered at Amarna and concluded that:⁴⁷

It has been proposed that the Amarna altars and the Deir el-Medina 'lits clos' differed in terms of scale, the latter being larger, and in the sense that the 'lits clos' were enclosed to a greater degree, possessing more substantial perimeter walls. This comparison is based on the smaller, stepped podiums at Amarna. The emplacements in J49.1, M50.1 and O49.9 provide closer parallels as they are of similar size to those at Deir el-medina, whilst their location in a separate room possibly enhanced the sense that they were enclosed or isolated. If the interpretation of the latter as altars is correct, these parallels provide further evidence that the 'lits clos' also functioned as such.

Although altars at Amarna were placed within alternate rooms than those of Deir el-Medina, it must be taken into account that the houses at Amarna were considerably larger.⁴⁸

The altar proposal suggests that adoration, worship and offerings, were conducted within the structure but the beneficiary from these actions is debateable. Uphill suggests that the elevated bed is a bedlike shrine that links to a family cult, positioned within a public reception area.⁴⁹ Evidence to support this theory can be identified from house C.VI. It contains three niches within the front room, which according to Bruyère were used to accommodate ancestral busts.⁵⁰

An alternative suggestion proposes that the elevated beds were used for divine purposes. According to Pinch many household deities were worshipped within the elevated beds.⁵¹ It

⁴⁷ Stevens 2003:149

⁴⁸ See Chapter 1, 5.1 The Archaeological Evidence for more information on Amarna houses.

⁴⁹ Uphill 1988:26.

⁵⁰ Bruyère 1939:308.

⁵¹ Pinch 1995:367.

has been suggested by McDowell that the elevated bed altar was constructed to aid female fertility and childbirth within the household.⁵² According to Robins the main focus of divine worship centred upon Bes, Hathor and Taweret.⁵³ This theory could be feasible as numerous stelae depicting divinities were found throughout the households at Deir el-Medina, for example in the front room of house S.O.VI a cupboard was found containing a stela.⁵⁴ The stela depicts the goddess Taweret within the upper register and the goddess Hathor within the lower register.⁵⁵ Whether this stela was used in relation to the elevated bed is uncertain.

What is certain however is that the people of Deir el-Medina were constantly participating in various divine, royal and ancestral religious activities. Friedman suggested that:⁵⁶

It is well documented that workers frequently took days off to perform a variety of cultic duties in the village: brewing beer for local festivals, making libations to the dead, or preparing and assisting funerals. There were festival celebrations in honor of deified kings, most notably Amenhotep I, the traditional founder of the village and oracle par excellence.

It can be proposed therefore that Deir el-Medina was not isolated from religious participation with a close relationship to deities, deified royalty and ancestors. This could indicate no need for a private altar within the house, however this high involvement in religious activities may have actually reinforced the idea of engaging more closely with the divine compelling them to construct an elevated bed to function as an altar.

⁵² McDowell 2001:11

⁵³ Robins 2001:75.

⁵⁴ Bruyère 1939:330.

⁵⁵ Bruyère 1939:334.

⁵⁶ Friedman 1994:95.

Surprisingly house S.O.VI had an elevated bed within the front room but also an altar constructed within the second room.⁵⁷ It seems unusual that a house with such limited space would contain two altars for the same purpose, however this might possibly suggest two different structures for two different areas of religious focus such as ancestral and divine.

The altar theory appears to be the most feasible explanation, however there are some problems with this proposal which need to be clarified. At a glance the iconographies remaining upon the elevated beds, for example the boat and musician scenes, are all difficult to interpret in accordance with divine or fertility worship, as with the birthing scene which cannot be easily interpreted in relation to ancestral cults. It is therefore reasonable to accept why some Egyptologists suggest that the elevated beds had multifunctional purposes.

2.5 Multifunctional Purpose

Several Egyptologists have considered a variety of views that the elevated beds had multiple usages. According to Friedman space was limited at Deir el-Medina and therefore the elevated beds may have had multifunctional purposes to compensate for the lack of space.⁵⁸

Friedman concluded that the elevated beds may have been utilized for protection of a mother and child, for fertility assistance, for worship and a structure to connect the past, present and

⁵⁷ Bruyère 1939: 330-331.

⁵⁸ Friedman 1994:111.

future.⁵⁹ Other Egyptologists such as Strudwick and Strudwick suggested that the elevated bed functioned as an area where a mother and child would start the process of nursing, interchangeably functioning as an altar.⁶⁰

These suggestions are very contradictory, as it does not seem possible that the birth, nursing and, or the fourteen day purification period would be accommodated in a structure used for altar purposes for fear of contamination.

2.6 Chapel

The elevated beds have also been interpreted as chapels. A chapel has a similar function to an altar with the exception that an ancestral bust or figurine was placed inside.⁶¹ Egyptologists which suggest that the elevated beds were used as chapels have conflicting opinions surrounding what, if any, figurines would have been placed inside these structures.

Bierbrier suggests that the elevated beds were ancestral house chapels.⁶² Although Bruyère proposes that the beds may be linked to childbirth and goddesses associated with childbirth he also compares the elevated beds to the ancestral chapels found within the atrium of Roman houses.⁶³ Alternatively Robins suggests that the elevated bed was a private chapel which

⁵⁹ Friedman 1994:117.

⁶⁰ Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:178.

⁶¹ The figurines may represent divinities, royals, ancestors and female representations.

⁶² Bierbrier 1982:69.

⁶³ Bruyère 1939:62-63. An atrium is the frontal part of a Roman house. According to Ling (1993:718-719) the atrium was the focus of social and religious activities. It contained *alae* also known as niches/recesses to contain ancestral busts, figurines and masks. For more information see Ling 1993:718-747.

involved both ancestral and fertility cults linking past and future.⁶⁴ David also agrees with the private chapel theory however does not state who the chapels were dedicated to.⁶⁵

The chapels constructed outside the village's surrounding wall were diverse and many. One type was the tomb chapel, for example C.V.1211 which were used to remember the deceased.⁶⁶ Another type of chapel was constructed for deities, an example being C.V.1216, where fragments of stelae dedicated to Thoth and Seshat were discovered.⁶⁷ There are also main chapels dedicated to deities such as the Temple of Hathor which was constructed by Sety I.⁶⁸

According to Bomann space for cult structures outside the village was limited.⁶⁹ It therefore seems reasonable to assume they constructed a chapel within the home, however with the varied number of chapels dedicated to deities and ancestors outside the village enclosure, it is doubtful that the villagers would construct an additional chapel, unnecessarily using precious space within their small houses, and would have reutilized existing chapels outside the village's enclosure for multiple family generations use. In addition there have been no evidences to suggest that the elevated beds were used for this purpose.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Robins 1996:31.

⁶⁵ David 1986:66.

⁶⁶ Bomann 1991:41.

⁶⁷ Bomann 1991:42-43.

⁶⁸ Bomann 1991:48.

⁶⁹ Bomann 1991:39.

⁷⁰ No figurines have been found in situ inside the elevated beds, the only exception being elevated bed (N.E.XI) which contained a headrest of limestone, a section of a female limestone Ramesside statue and a wooden ostrich feather, for more details see Bruyère 1939:256.

2.7 Seating Area

Hobson proposed that the elevated bed could be just a seating area.⁷¹ Used as a place to sit where there were no animals faeces.⁷² The elevated bed therefore may have been used as a place to sit and to watch over the livestock. As already stated, a chair could not have been placed within the elevated bed due to the lack of stone leg supports in situ, however they may have used other means which did not require these leg supports.⁷³

House S.O.I provides evidence for both an elevated bed and animal activity within the same frontal area. In the first section of the front room there was remaining evidence of a trough and manger.⁷⁴ The elevated bed however was positioned within the second section of the frontal room, concluding that ‘animal overseeing’ by way of the elevated bed would have been impossible.

Overall the proposals for the usage of the elevated beds consist of a sleeping area, a bed linked to female sexuality, birth, nursing and purification, an altar, a chapel or a seating area. As most of the theories have not been strongly supported by evidence as a whole, these proposals are inconclusive.

⁷¹ Hobson 1990:117.

⁷² Hobson 1987:117.

⁷³ See 2.1 sleeping benches section.

⁷⁴ Bruyère 1939:313.

CHAPTER 3: LOCATION OF THE ELEVATED BEDS

The elevated beds are only found within the front rooms of the houses.¹ This suggests a commonly shared idea that the beds had considerable significance and importance. Unlike other researches, the concept behind the elevated beds will be addressed and interpreted in relation to the frontal room space.

The frontal rooms are rectangular or trapezoid shaped measuring approximately 10.5m² (N.E.IX) to 39m² (S.O.IV).² Notably the beds must have some valued meaning to forfeit such a large amount of floor space for the feature.³ In some instances up to a quarter of the overall floor space was dedicated to this structure (for example C.V).

According to Koltida the front room is a transitional area between the outer public and the inner private space.⁴ As the frontal area was interlinked to the main public street, activities conducted within this semi-private area would have been restricted, influencing its usage, whereupon private affairs would have been performed at the rear of the property.

¹ Bruyère 1939:56

² Koltida 2007:17.

³ Friedman 1994:98-99.

⁴ Koltida 2007:16.

1 Function of the Front Room

By analysing various primary evidences it shall provide an understanding to the use of the frontal room space in relation to the elevated beds.

1.1 3D House Models

Two clay house models from Rifeh can provide an insight into the function of the frontal rooms. House model Pt.43 (**see Plate 14**) has an open fronted courtyard with an attached staircase. In Deir el-Medina merely three front rooms contained a staircase.⁵ House model Pt.20 (**see Plate 15**) has two floors of frontal colonnade. Although a section of the model is missing, similar to house model Pt.43 the frontal space is utilized as an open courtyard.

In comparison, the Louvre house model (**see Plate 16**) displays an enclosure wall surrounding the frontal room. This house model clearly shows a complete enclosed courtyard, unlike the previous damaged models which can only be speculated upon.

An analysis of these models proposes that the frontal area being an open courtyard is one possibility; however the model of Meketre provides an alternative suggestion (**see Plates 17 and 18**). This 11th dynasty model shows that the frontal room was used as a garden and portrays sycamore trees and a garden pool.⁶ Interestingly Winlock suggested that the garden was created on a lower level than the house.⁷ Similarly the majority of frontal rooms at Deir el-Medina were created 40 to 50cm deeper than the outside street level.⁸

⁵ Houses N.E.XV, S.E.II and S.E.III. See Bruyère 1939:261,265,267-268.

⁶ Winlock 1955:19.

⁷ Winlock 1955:19.

⁸ Bruyère 1939:54.

The evidence obtained from the house models implies that the frontal room space at Deir el-Medina could have functioned either as an open courtyard or as a garden. The crucial evidence of lower floor levels used on the model of Meketre in relation to the lower floor levels at Deir el-Medina is important as it provides significant evidence to support that the frontal rooms at Deir el-Medina were almost certainly used as enclosed gardens.

1.2 2D Imagery

Tomb representations will also be analysed in order to obtain additional supporting evidence to identify whether the frontal room space was used as a garden.

In Thutnefer TT104 (see **Plate 13**) although the image is damaged, it is recognizable that the front room contained stairs which was not a common practice used at Deir el-Medina.

Interestingly in the tomb Nakht TT161 (see **Plate 11**) the top image portrays a house which has a front and back garden, the frontal garden depicting Nakht with a large fruit tree. The lower image also shows Nakht, again beside his house, overseeing the workers cultivating the land.

In tomb TT334 (see **Plate 12**), the house in the upper section of the image lacks any identifiable features to distinguish any of the rooms functions; it could be argued however that the frontal room represented could possibly be an antechamber or an open courtyard. The lower section appears to portray another property which is similar to the image represented in the tomb of Minnacht.

The tomb depictions of Minnacht and the lower section of TT334 (see **Plates 10 and 12**) portray the frontal room as an enclosed courtyard with trees. This can suggest that the frontal room was used as a garden. According to Roik however these images must be used with caution as the representations may possibly depict a temple garden rather than a house garden.⁹

1.3 Textual Evidence

Tomb representations portray frontal rooms being utilized as gardens. Textual evidence might provide further information on frontal room function. According to Koltsida however:¹⁰

There is no text from ancient Egypt that particularly refers to the front sector of the house or its use.

This implies that the textual evidence relating to the function of the front room is limited, however there are two genres of texts which can provide an indication of its use. The first genre consists of an instruction text. The *Instruction of Any* was originally uncovered from Deir el-Medina.¹¹ The house is mentioned within one section of the text:

Learn about the way of a man,
Who undertakes to found his household.
Make a garden, enclose a patch,
In addition to your plowland;
Set out trees within it,
As shelter about your house.
Fill your hand with all the flowers,
That your eye can see...¹²

⁹ Roik 1988a:54.

¹⁰ Koltsida 2007:39.

¹¹ Lichtheim 2006b:135.

¹² Lichtheim 2006b:139. Section 6,1.

This suggests that it was important for an ancient Egyptian to have a private garden. The houses at Deir el-Medina were so compact, with limited space, that the only feasible place to create a garden was within the front room.

The other type of text which briefly mentions usage for the front room is Love poetry.¹³ Although it is not firmly stated, the style of the text suggests that the garden is located in the front room of the house, for example Papyrus Harris 500:

My gaze is fixed on the garden gate.¹⁴

This indicates that the man is outside the house gazing beyond the garden gate implying that the garden was created within the frontal room space.

It is quite possible that most of the houses at Deir el-Medina were equipped with a small garden within the front room of the house. According to Lesko however:¹⁵

The site had no trees.

It could be argued that the tree roots would ruin the mud brick structures and although Lesko has suggested there were no trees, it does not suggest that there were no plants. On the contrary Wilkinson has suggested that at Deir el-Medina there was:¹⁶

Remains of a tree, or roots beside a basin for water.

¹³ Koltsida 2007:39.

¹⁴ Lichtheim 2006b:191. Second collection, 7.

¹⁵ Lesko 1994:2.

¹⁶ Wilkinson 1998:114.

This has proved that flora was used within the village suggesting the usage of foliage within the frontal room space.

It is quite possible that most of the houses at Deir el-Medina were equipped with a small garden within the front room. It is unlikely however that these gardens contained trees, such as shown in the tomb of Nakht (**see Plate 11**) as the roots would have destroyed the mud brick structures. It seems feasible however that a small flower garden could have existed.

1.4 Archaeological Evidence

Previously it has been acknowledged that the wooden model of Meketre (**see Plates 17 and 18**) utilized the front room as a garden, which was created on a lower level than the house (**see Plates 25 and 26**). The frontal rooms at Deir el-Medina were also created on a similar lower level giving support to the idea that it was also utilized as a garden. Bruyère interpreted this 0.40 to 0.50m descent as providing height to the roofed room.¹⁷ Eight houses did have traces of a front room column which supports this roof idea however there are no records of finding any roof material.¹⁸ Although eight of the houses at Deir el-Medina had a column within the front room, they possibly functioned similar to the model of Meketre (**see Plates 17 and 18**), where a porch was created which linked to the garden (**see Plate 25 for an example of how this would have originally looked**). The evidence therefore suggests that with or without a column the garden proposal is still achievable.

¹⁷ Bruyère 1939:54.

¹⁸ NE.V, N.E.XIII, S.E.VII, N.O.IV, C.V., C.VI and C.VII. Bruyère suggests that the roofs were probably produced from palm trees. For more information see Bruyère 1939:54.

Not all of the houses had low floored front rooms; eight houses had the same floor level as the outside street.¹⁹ Two other frontal rooms were found to be 20cm higher than street level.²⁰

Out of the twenty nine houses which had elevated beds (**see Table 2**) only four houses lacked a sunken front room floor.²¹ These houses however were positioned on the outer edges of the village which suggest that they could have been affected by the terrain or poor weather conditions.²² These numbers are in a minority suggesting strong evidence in support of the garden theory.

The houses at Deir el-Medina were not created all the same size and therefore the sizes of their frontal rooms were also varied. Four houses out of twenty-nine managed to split the frontal room into two areas.²³ N.E.II had divided the frontal room to create a separate room for the elevated bed. In this instance it appears that the first room was used as an antechamber. Rarely some frontal spaces were large enough to be divided, such as found in houses S.O.I and S.E.IV. In these cases the frontal room could have had several functions. S.O.I entrance was probably used as an antechamber, possibly a place to keep animals due to the finding of a trough and manger.²⁴ The second section of the front room contained the elevated bed.

These multifunctional frontal rooms were rare and can be identified within the 19th dynasty extensions of the village where larger houses were constructed. For further evidence to

¹⁹ The eight houses were N.E I, N.O.XIV, N.O.XXI, N.O.XXIV C.I, C.VII, S.O.I and S.O.II.

²⁰ The two examples were S.O.V and S.O.VI.

²¹ Both C.VII and N.E.I had flat floors, S.O.V and S.O.VI both had higher floors.

²² Rainy conditions within the valley could cause high silt build up around the village's enclosure.

²³ S.E.IX, S.O.I, S.E.IV, and N.E.II

²⁴ Bruyère 1939:313.

support the garden proposal, material culture discovered within these frontal room spaces shall provide additional evidence.

For this research a map was colour coded in order to identify the distribution of material culture found within the frontal rooms (**see Fig. 11**):

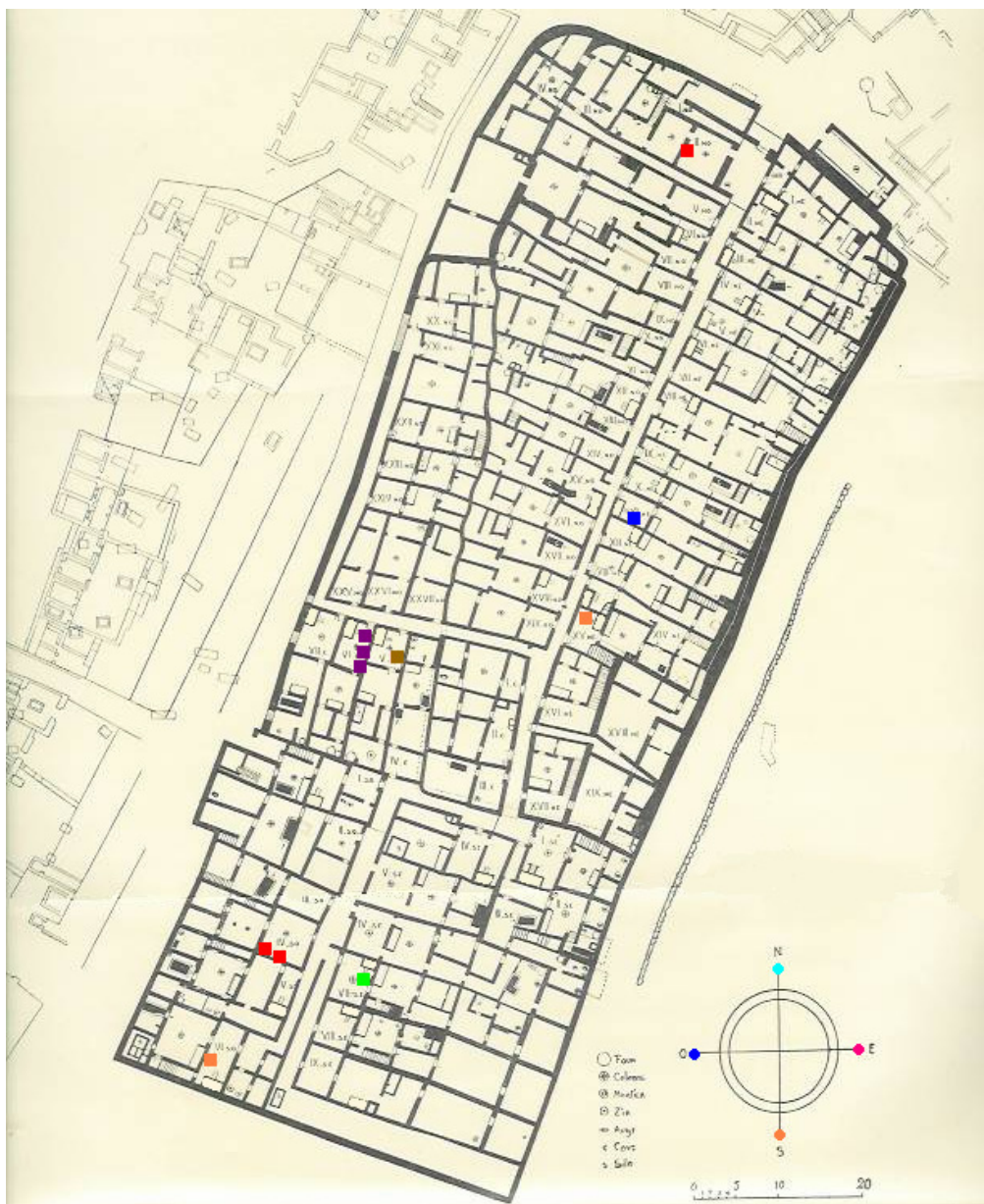







Fig.11. Distribution of the material culture found within the front room of the house. Source: Map- Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, and material culture distribution-Author.

Key

	False Door		Niche for ancestral Bust
	Niche for both stelae and ancestral bust		Cupboard
	Niche for stelae		Offering Table

These items consist of cult installations and objects relating to personal piety.²⁵ The evidence indicates that religious activities were linked with the function of the frontal room.

The idea of the front room being used as a garden can be connected to religious connotations. The garden represented resurrection and the afterlife.²⁶ This can suggest why so many religious items were found in the frontal rooms relating to ancestors. An example being in S.O.VI where a cupboard was discovered which contained a stela, an ostrakon oracle and also a duck lamp which was said to have been related to ancestral cult.²⁷

2. Conclusion

The most plausible and appropriate function of the frontal rooms at Deir el-Medina is the garden proposal, supported by primary and archaeological evidences. The archaeological evidences found within these frontal room spaces links the garden proposal to ancestral symbolism embodied in the presence of a garden.

²⁵ A cult installation is a feature used to conduct religious behaviours. Personal Piety is the close relationship between a deity and a person. See Chapter 6 for further information on Religious Terminology.

²⁶ Wilkinson 1998:99.

²⁷ Bruyère 1939:330.

CHAPTER 4: THE ORIENTATION OF THE ELEVATED BEDS

The orientation of the elevated beds is an important factor in the investigation and is worth consideration. At a glance, there appears to be no specific direction in which the elevated beds face. Friedman suggested that the elevated beds cannot be allocated to a particular corner of the front room.¹ It is difficult however to make such an assumption when insufficient research has been conducted on the elevated beds orientation. It is therefore crucial to conduct an investigation into their orientation in order to establish any significant correlations and whether it can contribute an understanding of the beds purpose.

1. Orientation

To begin the investigation, a map of Deir el-Medina was colour coded to indentify the directions in which the elevated beds face (see **Fig. 12**):-

¹ Friedman 1994:97.

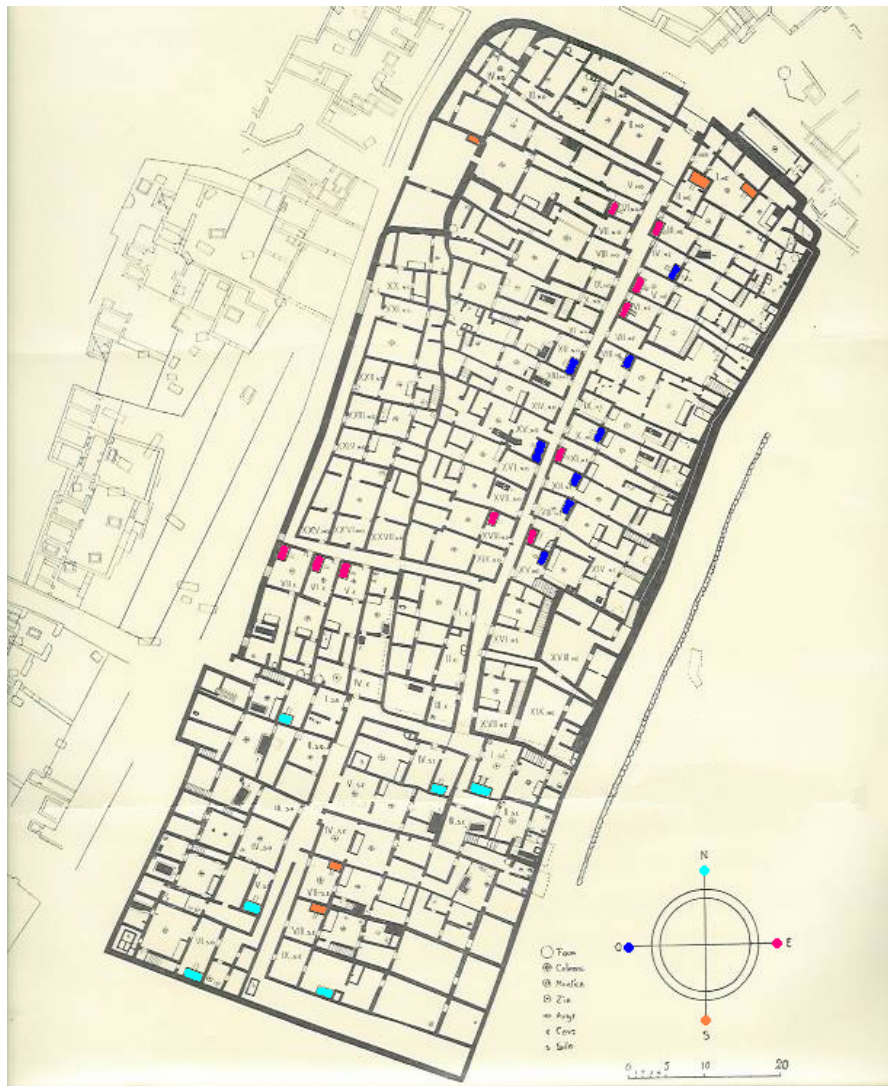


Fig .12. Orientation of the elevated beds. Source: Map- Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, and colour coded elevated beds-Author.

Orientation	Number
North	6
East	10
South	5
West	8
Total	29

Table 2. The total number of elevated beds and their orientation, (for a further analysis of the orientation of the beds see **Appendix 1**). Source: Author.

Notably there are twenty nine houses which have elevated beds. Koltsida has not included the structure positioned in S.E.IX.² It is assumed to be an elevated bed, as Bruyère acknowledged the presence of a Bes mask which was believed to be from this structure.³

On initial observation there appears to be no correlation, but upon analysing the map in **Fig. 12** the results suggest that they appear to be a highly organised feature.

The orientations of the beds appear to be concentrated within certain areas of the village. By analysing the map, east and west directions are found collectively within the middle of the village, while northern facing beds are positioned within the south and southern facing beds positioned within the north and the south of the village. This proposes a highly organised feature suggesting strong interactions between the villagers.⁴ As stated previously the village was occupied during the New Kingdom and had numerous extensions, therefore the elevated beds orientation must be interpreted in accordance to these developments.

2. The Development of Deir el-Medina

Deir el-Medina was constructed within a valley, which suggests that house constructions were restricted by the contours of the land.

² Alternatively Koltsida has suggested that there are twenty eight elevated beds, see Koltsida 2006:166.

³ Bruyère 1939:276.

⁴ Through social interaction and conformity, people were influenced by each other in creating elevated beds and possibly the direction in which they faced.

Initially the village was constructed under Thutmose I.⁵ Twenty one houses were constructed in total, consisting of two strings of ten houses with an additional house positioned in the northwest corner of the village (see Fig. 13 below).⁶

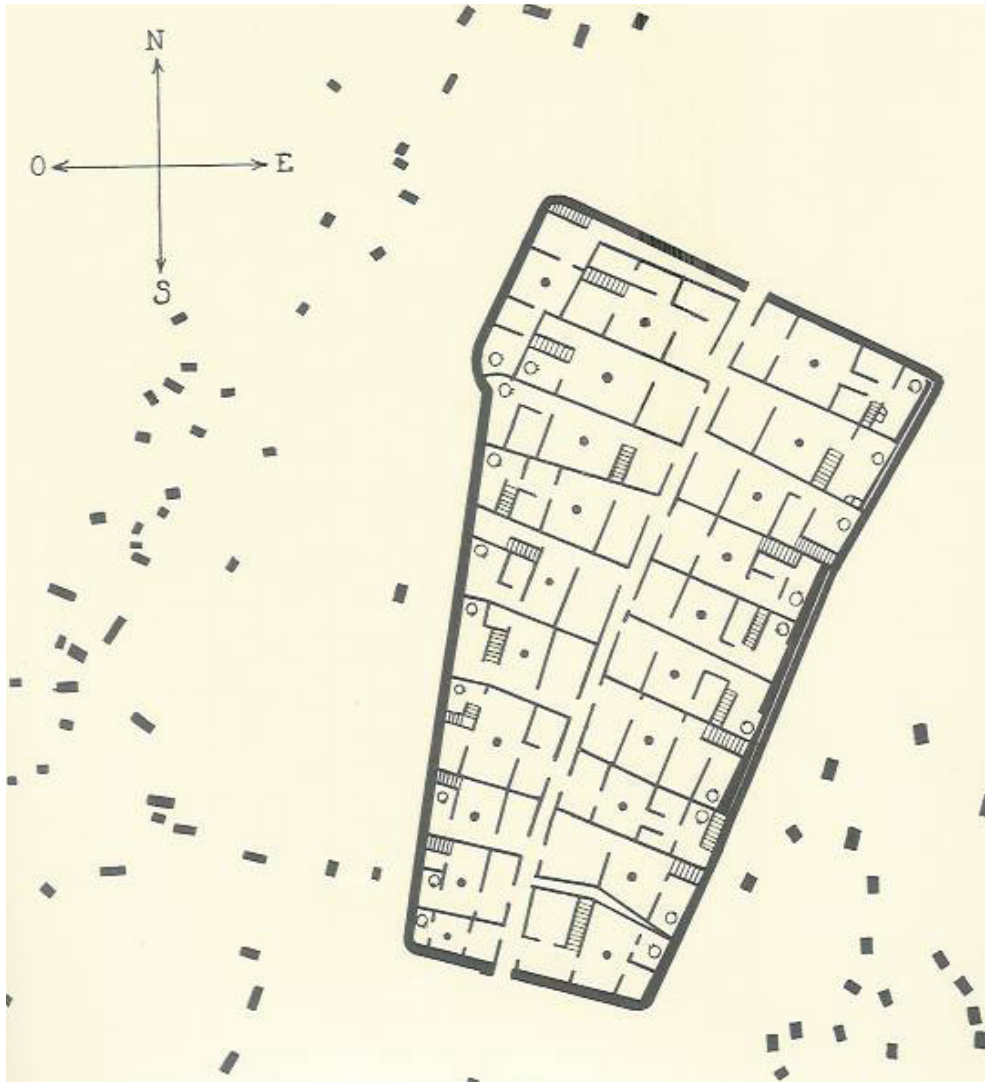


Fig. 13. Bruyère's reconstruction of Phase one development of Deir el-Medina. Source: Bruyère 1939:Pl.V.

⁵ Bruyère 1939:29.

⁶ Bruyère 1939:Pl. V

The first extension to the village probably occurred under Thutmose IV.⁷ The extension was created to the west adding an additional fourteen houses, including five more to the north of the city (see Fig. 14 below).⁸

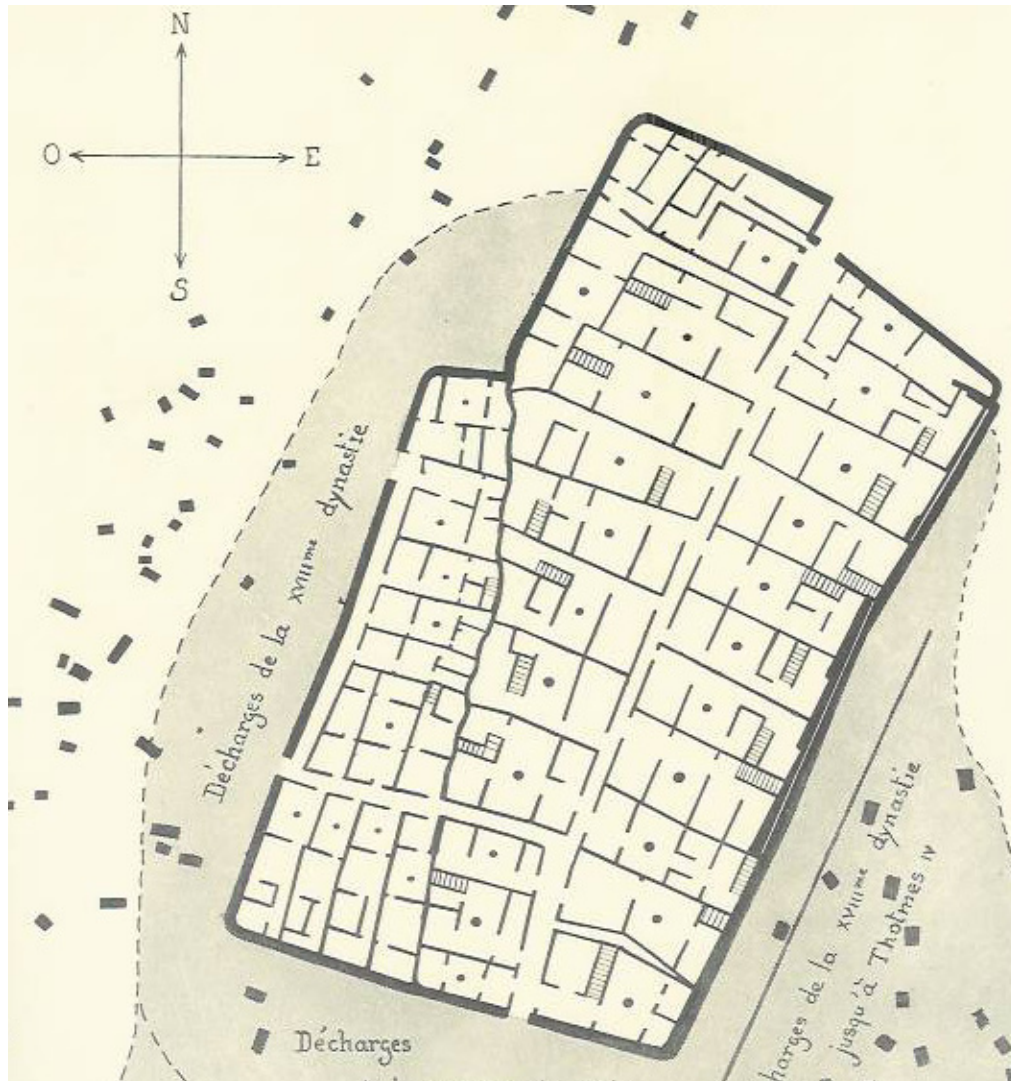


Fig. 14. Bruyère's reconstruction of Phase two village development at Deir el-Medina. Source: Bruyère 1939:Pl.VI.

⁷ Bruyère 1939: Pl. VI.

⁸ Bruyère 1939: Pl. VI.

Bricks stamped with royal names were discovered within these extensions.⁹ Pharaohs such as Thutmose I, Thutmose III, Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III were preserved, which suggests that they were involved in the construction of Deir el-Medina.¹⁰ Only one brick was stamped with Akhenaten's prenomen.¹¹ Due to the lack of activity occurring within Deir el-Medina during the Amarna period, construction efforts were possibly moved to Amarna.

During the aftermath of Amarna, Aye or Horemheb established the workers again at Deir el-Medina.¹² During the 19th dynasty sixty nine houses were added to the village (see **Fig. 15**).¹³ An extra fifty houses were also constructed beyond the village exterior walls.¹⁴ These extensions were for the extra workforce needed for constructions within the Valley of the Kings and Queens. For example, during the reign of Ramesses II he commissioned not only his own tomb but also KV5.¹⁵

⁹ Uphill 2000:325.

¹⁰ Bruyère 1939:30. Also see Bruyère 1939:Fig 2.

¹¹ Bruyère 1939:Fig 2.

¹² Uphill 2000:326.

¹³ Bruyère 1939: Pl. VII.

¹⁴ Uphill 2000:326.

¹⁵ Uphill 2000:326.

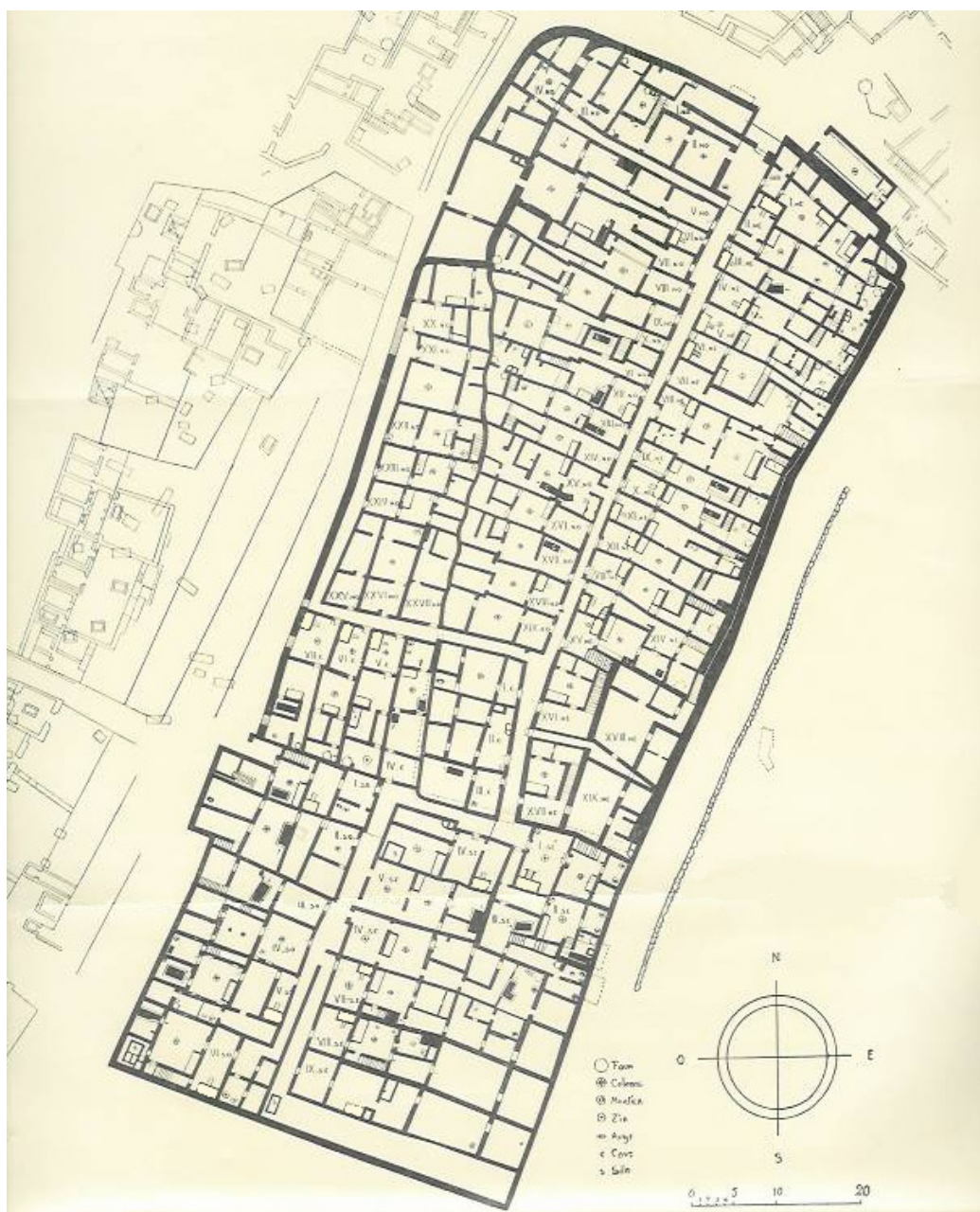


Fig. 15. Bruyère's reconstruction of Phase three village development at Deir el-Medina. Source: Bruyère 1939:Pl.VII.

3. Interpretation of the Development of the Village in accordance to the Elevated Beds

Bruyère suggested that the elevated beds were produced after Thutmose III.¹⁶ The elevated beds therefore, according to Bruyère, must have been constructed in phase two development (see Fig. 14). Nevertheless when viewing Bruyère's phase two map none of the elevated beds were depicted, however they can be found upon his third and final map (see Fig. 15).

It appears that Bruyère recorded the first two maps with omission to detail, however the third and final map was a more complex and detailed view of the site.¹⁷ This has caused confusion when Uphill used Bruyère's first map of the village's development to analyse the number of houses constructed in phase one.¹⁸

According to Uphill phase one of the village contained only twenty one houses.¹⁹ Bruyère suggested that there were thirty.²⁰ When applying phase one however to the final map, in reality the town has a total of thirty six houses (see Fig. 16 below).²¹ This confusion arises to where phase one's original northern border lies. This produces difficulty when trying to identify the date of the elevated beds constructed in this northern section.

¹⁶ Bruyère 1939:61. Other Egyptologists have alternative opinions such as Kemp who has proposed that the elevated beds were constructed after the Amarna period (Kemp 1979:51). This research however agrees with Bruyère's theory that the elevated beds were constructed after Thutmose III.

¹⁷ Bruyère probably used his phase 1 and phase 2 drawings to show a brief sketch of the extensions. The last and final map was created in detail when recording the site.

¹⁸ See Uphill 2000 for more details.

¹⁹ Uphill 2000:325.

²⁰ Bruyère 1939:241-343.

²¹ After analysing house layouts and identifying house boundaries within Chapter 1, it has been established there are Eighteen houses on the right and eighteen houses on the left along the main street.

The final map therefore shall be used to portray the three phases of the village's development in accordance to the elevated bed orientations.

Phase one can be indicated as the red eastern section of the village (see below).



Fig. 16.- Phase one of the development of Deir el-Medina. Source: Map- Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, elevated beds colour coded and phase one border-Author.

There is evidence from Bruyère's map which suggests that the first stage of the village starts at the bottom right hand corner of house N.E.XIX, where it is attached to the enclosure wall. From this point the border continues along the side of house N.E.XIX and across to house C.III. At the rear of house C.III it turns following the back of the houses positioned on the main street.

The top of phase one however was difficult to identify. According to Bonnet and Valbelle the northern border of the first phase possibly lies under houses N.O.VI, N.O.VII, and N.O.IX.²² Meskell has suggested however that house N.O.VI contains an old foundation.²³ It therefore seems apparent that the northern border for phase one does not go beyond house N.O.VI, which is drawn in **Fig. 16**.

²² Bonnet and Valbelle 1975:435.

²³ Meskell 2000b:259.

Phase two can be identified as the green western section (see below):-

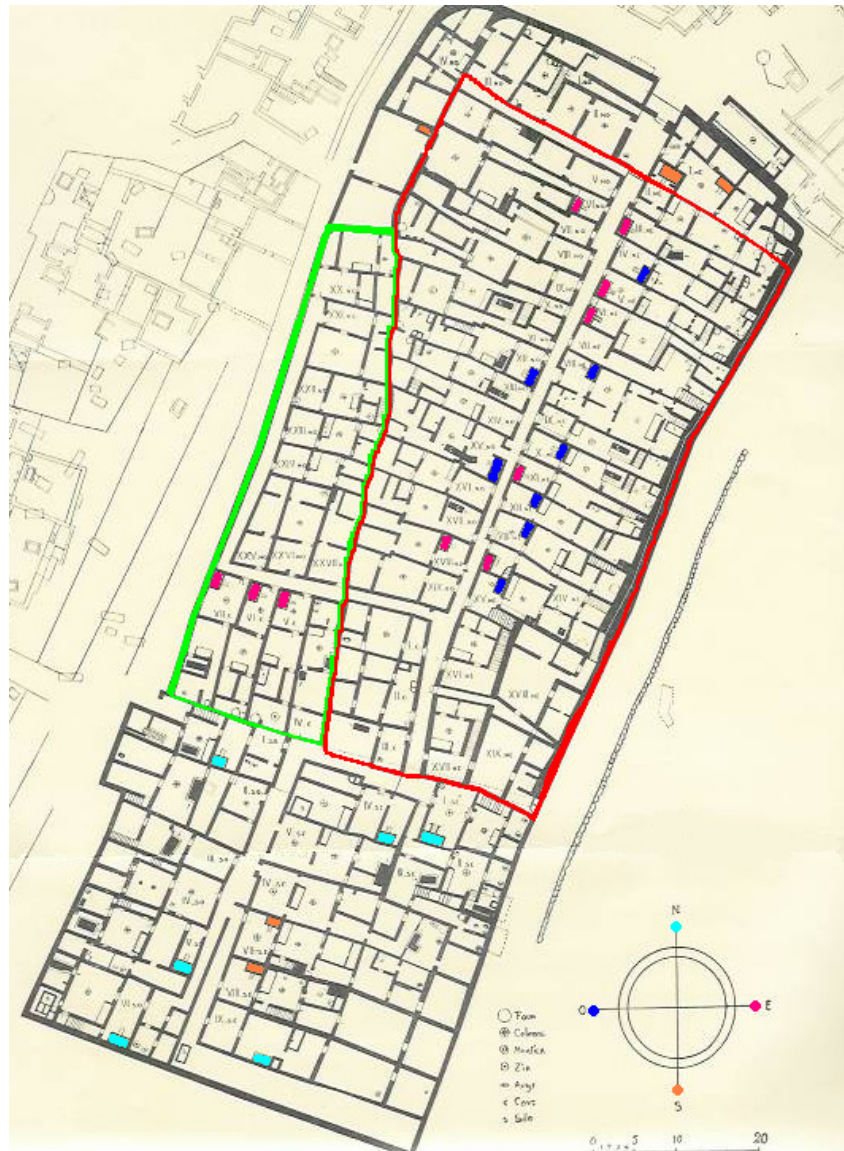


Fig. 17. A map indicating developing phases, phase one in red and phase two in green. Source: Map-Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, elevated beds colour coded and phase one and two borders-Author.

Elevated beds can be identified within phase one and phase two development. According to Bruyère, the elevated beds were produced after Thutmose III and as phase one of the village was constructed under Thutmose I it suggests that the elevated beds could not have been constructed during the early occupancy of the village, signifying they were probably

constructed late phase one, early phase two.²⁴ It could be argued that the elevated beds in both phase one and two were constructed simultaneously or alternatively the first elevated beds were constructed late phase one, which suggests that the idea was already being practiced before phase two development.

It is recognizable that the elevated beds in phase one were constructed to face east or west. Seven face east and eight face west. (see **Fig. 16**). Although this does not seem significant, when viewing phase two there are an additional three eastern facing beds (see **Fig. 17**).

During the 18th Dynasty within phase one and phase two developments of the village, the inhabitants focused upon constructing an east or west facing elevated bed.

²⁴ Bruyère 1939:61, 29.

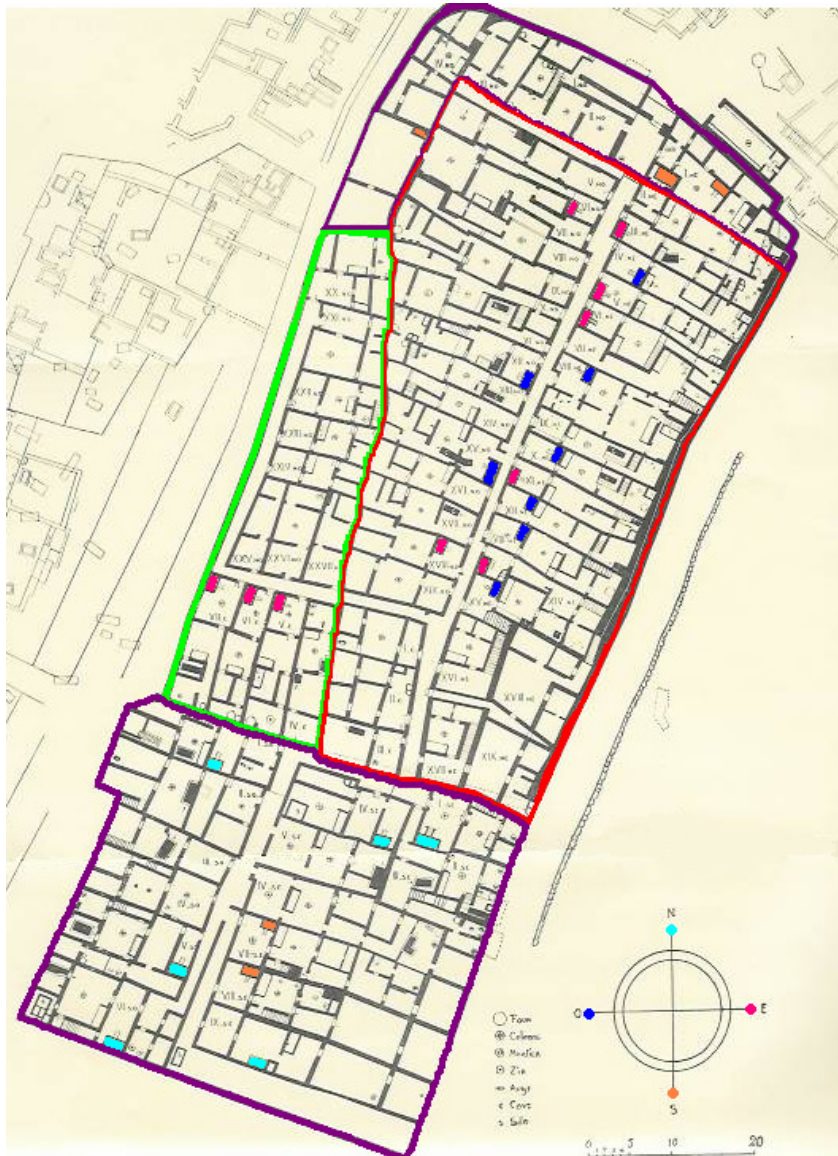


Fig. 18. A map of the three phase developments of the village, the last 19th Dynasty phase is indicated in purple. Source: Map-Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, elevated beds colour coded and phase one, two and three borders-Author.

Within the 19th and 20th Dynasty the village was extended to the north and south. This is supported by Bonnet and Valbelle who both suggest that the northern section of the village was constructed at a similar time as the southern section of the village.²⁵ The elevated beds in these sections were constructed to orientate north and south, contradictory from the 18th

²⁵ Bonnet and Valbelle 1975:435.

dynasty where they orientated east and west (see **Fig. 18**). It can be suggested that the Amarna period brought about a change in ideas regarding the orientation of the elevated beds, however this is debatable.

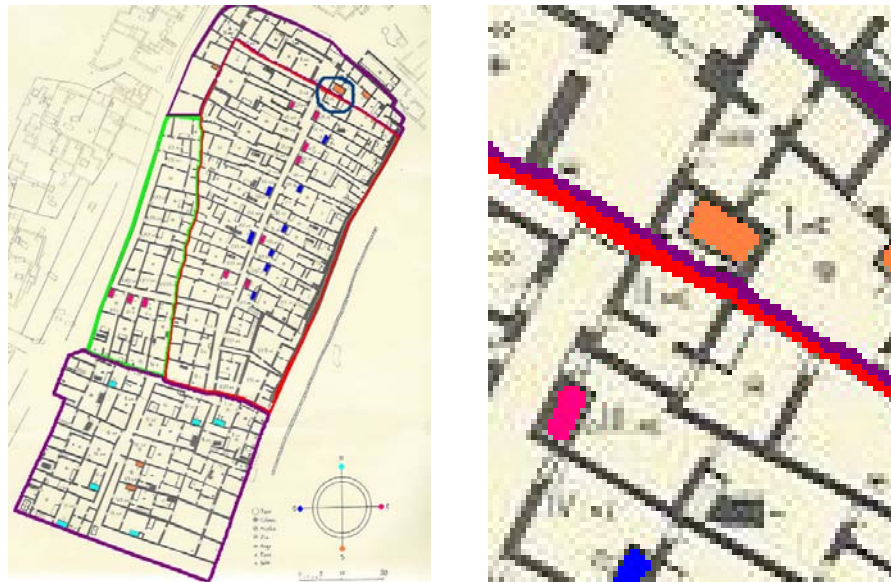


Fig. 19. The elevated bed in house N.E.II. Source: Map-Bruyère 1939: Pl VII, elevated beds colour coded and phase one, two and three borders-Author.

According to the map, house N.E.II is positioned upon the border between phase one and phase three development, its elevated bed being orientated towards the south, similar to those found in the phase three development. It has been established that the elevated beds change direction to face south during the 19th dynasty, it is therefore reasonable to suggest that this house was extended during the northern expansion of the village after the 18th Dynasty, and not during the 18th Dynasty as Uphill and Bruyère have suggested.²⁶

In conclusion the information indicates that the orientation of the elevated beds change direction from east to west facing during the 18th dynasty, to north and south facing after the 18th dynasty. The reason for this change appears to be puzzling, producing more questions as

²⁶ See Uphill 2000:325 and Bruyère 1939: Fig. 14.

to why this occurred. Whether this change came about during the aftermath of Amarna is uncertain, however this shall be investigated further.²⁷

²⁷ See Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5: ICONOGRAPHY ANALYSIS

The existing iconography remaining upon the elevated beds at Deir el-Medina seem insufficient when trying to evaluate their overall function within the frontal room space. According to Kleinke most of their iconography has been destroyed with only remaining lower sections being investigated.¹ Even though the surviving depictions seem negligible these iconographies shall be examined in further detail. By comparing their representations to similar imagery, it will enable to distinguish what context they were usually portrayed in resulting in a satisfactory conclusion of the elevated beds use.

1. Description of N.O.XII (Orientated West)

Elevated bed N.O.XII has two separate surviving images. The one depicts a lower section of a boat whilst the other has fragmentation of patterns.

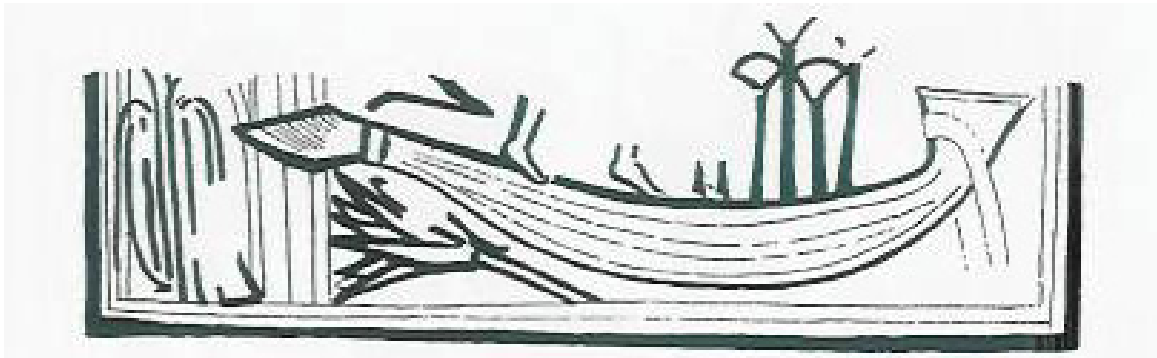


Fig.20a. - N.O.XII . Image of a boat depicted on an elevated bed. Source: Bruyère,1939: Fig. 157.

¹ Kleinke 2007:18.

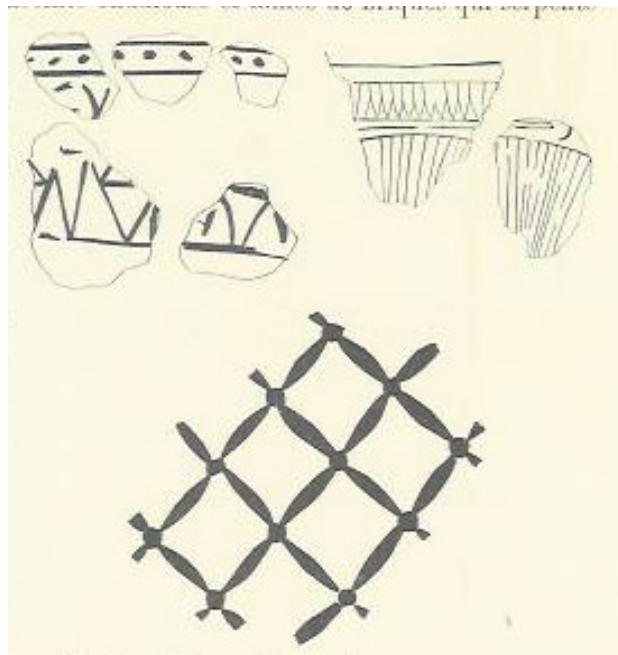


Fig. 20b. Patterns on elevated bed N.O.XII. Source- Bruyère 1939: Fig. 158.

The fragmentary decorative patterns (**Fig. 20b**) remaining upon the elevated bed do not contribute much information to the overall scene being depicted. It is therefore important to concentrate on the more valuable descriptive scene portrayed in **Fig. 20a**.

The remainder of this image portrays a boat with an oarsman (see **Fig. 20a**). To the right of the person's feet are papyrus reeds, notable by their distinct fan appearance. The lower section of the boat shows the characteristic lotus flower. The flora represented to the left of the image appears to be bowing papyrus reeds.

By using Kemp's boat diagram (see **Fig. 21**) which represents many diverse types of boats used in ancient Egypt, it can be identified that the boat portrayed upon the elevated bed is a fishing boat. It is a reed boat distinguishable by its distinct lines along the length of the boat, and ties at either ends (see **Fig. 20a**).² Unlike other vessels the fishing boat is smaller, with no compartments and lacking an oar, and as expressed in its title was usually used in conjunction with fishing (see **Fig. 21 and Plate 20**).

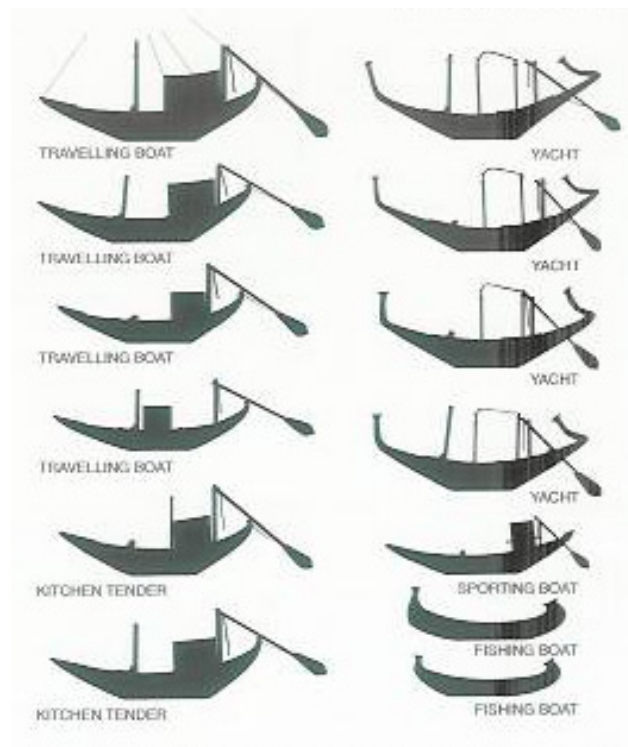


Fig. 21. Diagrams of the wooden boat models of Meketre (TT280 Thebes). Source: Kemp 2006: Fig.108.

² They are created from bunching reeds together and tying them at either end in order to produce a strong watertight body.

It must now be established what activity the individual is conducting upon the boat. According to Bruyère's interpretation, it depicts young Horus within the delta.³ It appears unlikely however that this scene would have been used within a house context.⁴

Alternatively Meskell has suggested that the person represented upon N.O.XII is a female.⁵ It can only be deliberated whether the figure is male or female as there are no distinct features.

By looking at various evidences, it can be identified what the image would have originally portrayed and the symbolic meaning behind the imagery. It is clear that the image represents a boat in the marshes. Reed boats are usually depicted in funerary contexts, such as in fishing scenes or represented upon funerary objects.

1.1 Examples of the Context in which this Iconography is Used

A faience bowl found in Gurob (E.14235) depicts a marsh scene (see **Fig. 22**).⁶ Even though the date of this faience bowl is inconclusive, faience wear was popular during the New Kingdom.

³ Bruyère 1939:286.

⁴ The New Kingdom hymns to Osiris, never speak of Horus' childhood, only his attainment of kingship. See Louvre C286 Stela of Amenmose.

⁵ Meskell 1999b:102.

⁶ Rogers 1948: 157-158.



Fig. 22. Blue faience bowl. Source Rogers 1948: 158.

This faience bowl portrays a female travelling through the marshes upon a reed boat. The scene is encircled by a curved dome pattern and dotted rim. What is intriguing is that the pattern can be likened to pattern designs upon elevated bed N.O.XII (**Fig. 20b**).

This object would support Meskell's proposal that the image upon N.O.XII probably represents a woman.⁷ Although there are similar comparisons to the elevated bed, the meaning behind the faience bowls is debatable.

According to Friedman, several of these faience bowls are thought to have been used as offerings to the goddess Hathor, and were usually utilized within temple or shrine contexts.⁸ Bianchi however has also suggested that other bowls, such as the faience bowl of Leiden, was thought to have been discovered at Deir el-Medina within a tomb.⁹

Whether used for divine or ancestral purposes this bowl could suggest that the elevated bed N.O.XII could depict a woman. There is one problem with this proposal however in **Fig. 22** the female is holding a pole in order to steer the boat. Upon the elevated bed (**see Fig. 20a**) there is no pole represented.

The 'fishing in the marshes scene' was a popular choice in tomb contexts. It was an everyday hunting activity in which the deceased wanted to perform in the afterlife within the field of reeds.¹⁰ It was a place where the fish and fowl were plentiful and could be seen to nourish the deceased. It usually portrayed a tomb owner holding a particular type of throw stick for catching fowl or fish within a marsh environment.¹¹ There is no long, spear shaped throw

⁷ Meskell 1999b:102.

⁸ Friedman 1998:211. An example being faience bowl EA 4790.

⁹ Bianchi 1998:212.

¹⁰ Assmann 2005:276-277. Especially see Assmann's table p277. Re came to visit the field of reeds during the ninth hour of the day. See Assmann 2005:233 for more details.

¹¹ Hartwig 2004:104.

stick represented upon the elevated bed which would suggest that a fowling scene is more likely.¹²

A good example of a fowling scene is portrayed upon a section from the tomb-chapel of Nebamun (see Fig. 23).



Fig. 23. An 18th Dynasty fishing in the marshes scene from the tomb chapel of Nebamun. The British Museum EA 37977. Source: Parkinson 2008: Fig. 137.

Nebamun is standing upon a reed boat catching fowl within the marshes. Similar to N.O.XII there are lotus flowers beneath the reed boat and bowing papyrus reeds. Although the stance

¹² Throw sticks can be represented as long spears for catching fish or as small snake-like clubs for catching fowl.

of the individual upon N.O.XII is not as wide as Nebamun, it provides the most feasible proposal for their activity.¹³

According to Parkinson the use of fishing and fowling has deep religious undertones:¹⁴

These allusions combine to produce a reading of the scene as an image of erotic re-creation, rebirth and eternal entertainment triumphing over chaos, disorder and, implicitly, death.

In conclusion the image represented upon N.O.XII is a fowling scene which is usually used within a funerary context to express the tomb owner's desire for an eternal afterlife.

¹³ Normally smiting scenes and fishing in the marshes scenes usually represent the individual with a large stance in order to give the character force behind their swing or throw.

¹⁴ Parkinson 2008:132.

2. Description of S.E. I. (Orientated North)

The elevated bed discovered within S.E.I depicts the remaining feet of four females, one being portrayed from a different ethnic origin. One of the females appears to be sitting down upon a stool and resting her feet upon a cushion. Two females face her whilst the other stands behind. Surrounding the figures is a convolvulus which shall be investigated later.¹⁵ There are also remnants of two columns enclosing the four females.



Fig. 24. S.E.I . Image of four females depicted on an elevated bed. Source: Bruyère 1939:Pl. X.

¹⁵ See section 3. The Convolvulus.

The stool represented upon the elevated bed is a birthing stool.¹⁶ It can be assumed therefore that this female would be holding a child. Whether these females are divine or human is uncertain, however Bruyère interpreted this scene as portraying both humans and deities (see Fig. 25).

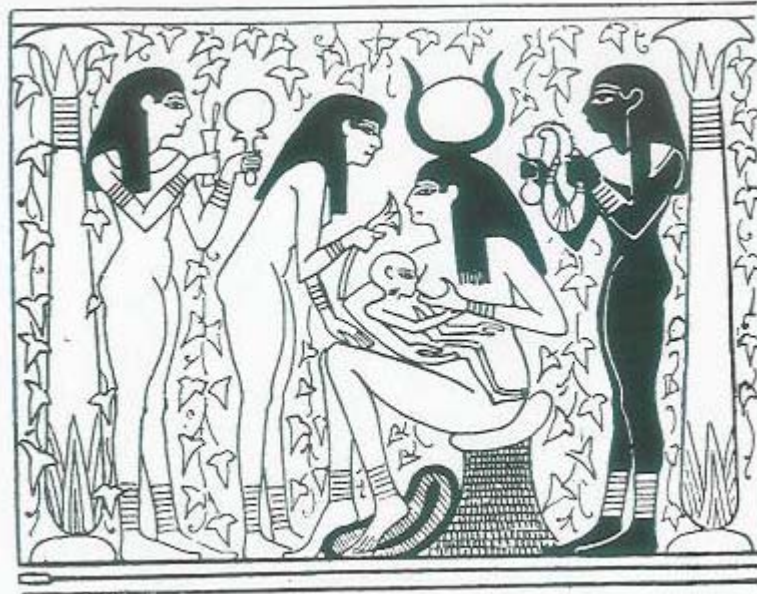


Fig. 25. -Bruyère's reconstruction of the image found upon elevated bed S.E.I. Source: Bruyère 1923:Figure 5.

Bruyère's reconstruction shows a central seated female as a deity, identifiable by her headdress. The attendants however appear to have no distinct divine qualities. This is problematic as a deity would not be portrayed in this manner with mortal females.

From the remaining lower section of S.E.I there appears to be evidence which can resolve this problem. By looking closely at the females ankles, they have been adorned with a particular type of bangle. Ankle bangles portrayed upon all the females on S.E.I are distinctive and are

¹⁶ Meskell 1999b:100.

represented as several consecutive lines. Goddesses however are usually portrayed with a different type of bangle (see **Fig. 26 and Plate 21**).

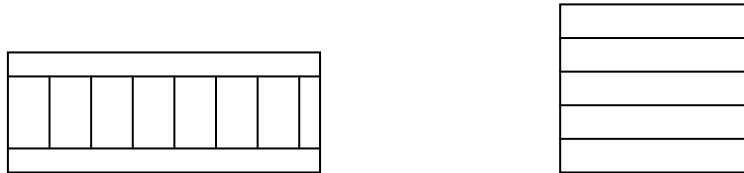


Fig. 26. Two types of bangles used to adorn female ankles. Source: Author.

The left image shows bangles which are synonymous to female deities; the right image shows the bangles worn by females represented upon elevated beds S.E.I. This signifies that the seated female portrayed upon the elevated bed cannot be a goddess.

It can be established therefore that the S.E.I representation depicts mortal females in a possible birthing scene. Further comparable evidence to support this shall be identified from various pieces of ostraca which portray similar birthing scenes.

2.1 Examples of the Context in which this Iconography is Used

An example of one of these ostraca is from the British Museum BM EA 8506 (see **Fig. 27**).



Fig. 27. Depiction on Ostrakon BM EA 8506 of a mother and baby. British Museum EA 8506. Source: Peck 1978 : 89, Fig.14.

This ostracon portrays a seated female breastfeeding her baby. She is seated upon the same style stool and uses a cushion for her feet. Interestingly she has also been adorned with identical ankle bangles, and has been surrounded by the same style convolvulus plant as found upon the bed S.E.I.

It appears that the female has been portrayed naked. According to Rosalind and Janssen, nudity was usually used to portray girls which have not reached puberty.¹⁷ Within this instance however the female is not entirely naked and has been adorned with a hip belt and a necklace. Archaeological excavations have found evidence of these hip girdles, an example being from the tomb of Merit where a possible hip girdle of shells was discovered.¹⁸

According to Meskell, this particular type of dress indicates a relationship to Hathor:¹⁹

Lotuses, hip girdles, make-up, kohl jars, musical instruments, convolvulus leaves, sistra, menat necklaces, and mirrors.

When a female is depicted naked with the addition of any of these items stated, it suggests a strong connection with Hathor, the goddess of procreation (**see Plate 28 for another example**).

¹⁷ Rosalind and Janssen 1990: 31.

¹⁸ Meskell 1998b:368.

¹⁹ Meskell 2004:171-172.

Another alternative piece of ostracon is BM EA 2339 (see Fig. 28).



Fig. 28. Depiction on Ostracon BM EA 2339 of mother, baby and female attendant. Source: Bruyère 1939. Figure 52.

This depiction, unlike the previous ostracon, portrays a mother with an attendant. This female attendant is facing the mother offering her a mirror and possibly another toiletry item. These objects are related with the females who are again adorned with the Hathor style dress. The convolvulus surrounds the scene once more.

It must be acknowledged that these particular types of ostraca were found in abundant numbers at Deir el-Medina and were probably the work of artists who were practicing their

skills for use on bigger projects.²⁰ The images represented upon these ostraca express a commemoration of childbirth. The symbolic meaning of this image however can change depending upon where this image was eventually utilized.

Brunner-Traut investigated the images depicted upon ostraca in order to reconstruct the image portrayed upon the elevated bed S.E. I (see **Fig. 29**).²¹



Fig. 29. A representation of Brunner-Traut's opinion of the image depicted upon elevated bed S.E.I. Source: Brunner-Traut 1955: Fig 5.

Brunner-Traut's recreation of the image portrayed upon S.E.I is feasible being compiled from similar drawings found upon pieces of ostraca. Although it is difficult to identify the activities conducted by the three women surrounding the mother it is quite possible they were all attendants.

²⁰ Brunner-Traut 1979:1,7. Unfortunately Brunner-Traut does not mention the précised number of ostraca fragments discovered at Deir el-Medina and simply states they were discovered in their thousands, see Brunner-Traut 1979:1.

²¹ For more ostraca images, see Brunner-Traut. 1979.

The representation found upon elevated bed S.E.I has strong connections to childbirth. Although the upper section is missing, it could be speculated the female figures would have been adorned with the same style necklaces and hip belts represented upon the figures in the ostraca (**Fig. 27 and 28**).

The principle objective was to find a connection, using the existing iconographies on the beds, to provide an understanding of their original function and purpose, however by comparison, when analysing the two beds already discussed, there seems to be no apparent correlation between the fowling scene N.O.XII (**Fig. 20a**) and the birthing scene represented on S.E.I.

The only symbolism which has been adopted by both iconographies is centred on birth, S.E.I portraying *birth* whilst N.O.XII suggests *rebirth*. Given that N.O.XII cannot suggest birth due to its funerary nature it is quite possible that S.E.I has been misinterpreted and in actual fact has the alternate meaning of *rebirth*.

The evidence for this rebirth theory may lie in the significant presence of the convolvulus surrounding the birthing scene and also found upon the ostraca.

3. The Convolvulus

This characteristic convolvulus is easily recognizable, with its vine like appearance and its heart shaped leaves which are similar to ivy.

Manniche has suggested that this mysterious plant is *Aristolochia clematis* and was used for childbirth.²² She has also suggested that it was used in scenes relating to intercourse.²³ Manniche uses the Turin erotic papyrus to support her intercourse theory. The original context of the papyrus however was never recorded.²⁴ It is difficult therefore to produce such an assumption when the meaning behind its original construction is unknown. The scenes do appear to depict explicit sexual actions, perhaps the result of artist(s) recreational sketches for amusement rather than drafts for significant projects.

There are however several images which do portray the convolvulus in relation to childbirth. As noted before elevated bed S.E.I (**Fig. 24**) and upon ostraca (**Fig. 27 and Fig. 28**).

Aristolochia clematis, also known as Birthwort has been recorded to have chemical properties.²⁵ *Aristolochia* has been used orally to promote menstruation, to help cure snake bites and has also been known to be used as an aphrodisiac.²⁶ The reality of taking this orally during pregnancy and periods of lactation however is considered unsafe.²⁷ This therefore suggests that it would seem unsuitable to surround birthing scenes such as S.E.I (**Fig. 24**) with

²² According to Manniche the stem juice was used in order to encourage childbirth, for more information see Manniche 2006:84-85.

²³ Manniche 1991:110.

²⁴ Russmann 2001:167. Papyrus number 55001.

²⁵ Therapeutic Research Faculty 2007:82.

²⁶ Therapeutic Research Faculty 2007:82.

²⁷ Therapeutic Research Faculty 2007:82.

a flora that could affect the mortality of the mother and child. What is interesting however is that the plant may have been used as an aphrodisiac to stimulate sexual desire.

Although this convolvulus appears to have been used in relation to birth and intercourse, there are two other elevated beds which portray the same convolvulus but in an alternative manner. Elevated bed S.E.VIII (**Fig. 34**) depicts the convolvulus surrounding a musician, which seems difficult to interpret in accordance with the birth theory. Similarly elevated bed C.VII (**Fig. 37**) has a convolvulus represented in a scene that lacks any reference to sexual or birth activity.

There are many instances where this convolvulus has been represented in funerary contexts, in tomb art, funerary equipment, notably sarcophagi and offerings to the deceased. Although it has been suggested that the convolvulus has been used to indicate childbirth, because of its funerary context it is more likely to be used to signify rebirth.

The tomb of Kynebu is a good example of the convolvulus being used within a tomb context (Fig. 30).



Fig. 30. Amenhotep I (left) and Ahmose-Nefertari (right) from the 20th Dynasty tomb of Kynebu. British Museum. Left EA 37993, Right EA37994. Source: Left- James 2005: Fig. 98. and Right- British Museum 2009.

These sections from the tomb of Kynebu portray the deified Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari being surrounded by the convolvulus. There is no indication within these scenes to imply that it represents childbirth. It is more appropriate in this context to suggest that it signifies rebirth. At the time of the tombs construction both Amenhotep I and Ahmose

Nefertari were deceased and deified, therefore the convolvulus has been utilized as a symbolic meaning to promote their rebirth and renewal within the afterlife.

The convolvulus can also be identified represented upon the female sarcophagus. More importantly however, similar to the ostraca, this particular sarcophagus was also discovered at Deir el-Medina but within a tomb (see Fig. 31).



Fig. 31. Sarcophagus of Isis (JE 27309). Source: Tiradritti, F. 1999: 272.

The front of this sarcophagus depicts Isis in a long linen dress with a lotus flower upon her headdress. Usually female sarcophagi depict crossed hands placed over the chest, sometimes holding items such as knott, djed pillar or an ankh, in order to signify the protection of the remains. In this particular case however she holds a convolvulus.

The convolvulus therefore, in this instance, is not utilized to suggest birth, but has been represented to symbolize the resurrection, rebirth and everlasting renewal of the occupant.

The convolvulus can be identified upon faience bowls which contained offerings for the deceased (**Fig. 32**).²⁸ This faience bowl has been decorated with a male holding a jar, whilst beside him to his left is the convolvulus.²⁹



Fig. 32. Blue faience bowl. Source: Rogers 1948:155.

Rogers suggested that this was a servant who was helping at a banquet.³⁰ Whether this male was an attendant at funerary banquets is uncertain, however it can be established that the person represented upon the bowl would have been the recipient of its contents. The unique presence of the convolvulus could indicate the rebirth and the renewal of the male represented, however it can also be interpreted in this case as the renewal of food placed within the bowl.

²⁸ Reeves and Quirke 1999:29.

²⁹ Rogers 1948:155.

³⁰ Rogers 1948:155.



Fig. 33. Faience Bowl ECM 821. Source: Reeves and Quirke 1999:Fig 31.

Another Bowl ECM821 (see **Fig. 33**) depicts a female upon a seat, being surrounded by papyrus plants with a convolvulus encircling the bowl.³¹ The way the convolvulus has been encircled around the female representation signifies a symbolic cycle of renewal and rebirth.

The theory of the convolvulus in the bowl can be supported by Reeves and Quirke who have interpreted this convolvulus as a symbol of rebirth within the afterlife.³²

³¹ Reeves and Quirke 1999: 28-29.

³² Reeves and Quirke 1999: 29.

In conclusion the usage of a convolvulus, which had an aphrodisiac nature, suggests it was a fertility symbol being utilized in representations in order to signify rebirth. The evidence for this convolvulus, as used upon S.E.I, reinforces the idea of rebirth.

4. S.E.VIII (Orientated South)

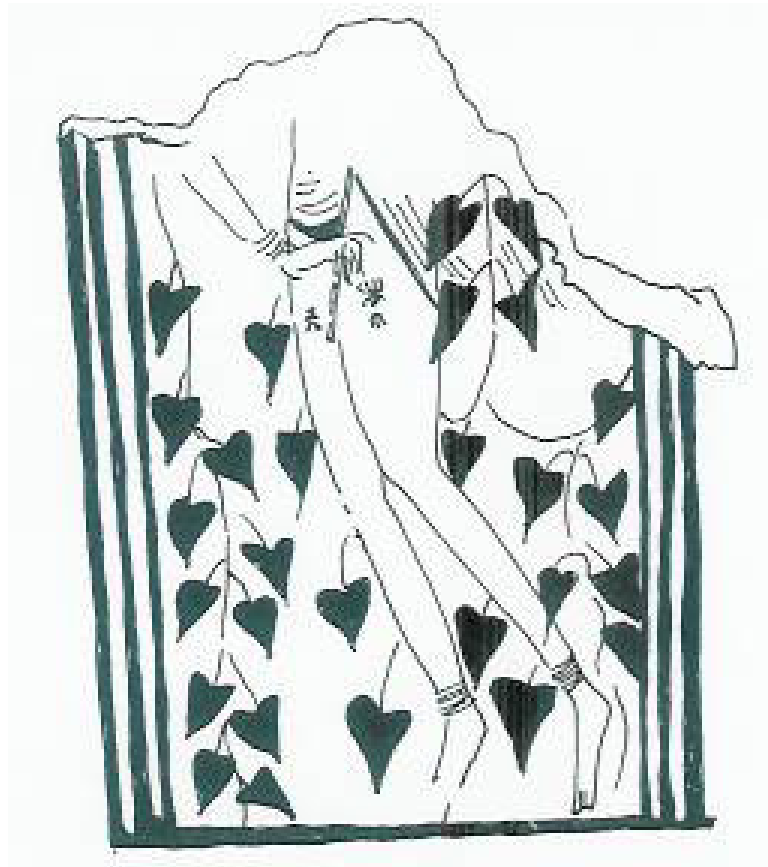


Fig. 34. S.E.VIII . Image of a female musician depicted on an elevated bed. Source: Bruyère 1939. Fig.145 and Pl. X.

The image from the elevated bed S.E.VIII depicts a female in a dancing pose. She has been adorned with bangles, tattoos upon her thighs and is surrounded by the convolvulus. Her hand is bent and her fingers curved which when portrayed in this fashion usually indicate the playing of a musical instrument, in this instance her fingers have been placed upon an oboe. Female musicians and dancers are usually portrayed within funerary contexts, notably celebrating at banqueting scenes.³³

³³ Manniche 1991:40.

The figure is identified as female due to her slender figure and nudity. It can be assumed that she is adorned with the same style hip belt and necklace as used upon the ostraca. Presumably she would have looked similar to the female models from Abydos and Gebelein (see **Plate 22a and b**). These models depict the traditional hip girdle and an iconic ‘bell shaped’ hairstyle. Whether these models were used as dedications or for fertility uncertain however it does propose that this dress was also widespread outside of Deir el-Medina. This style, according to Meskell, was known as the Hathor dress which was linked to sexuality.³⁴ It therefore suggests that the style was used to convey female eroticism.

The presence of the convolvulus indicates that the scene must be connected to rebirth. How it relates to the musical instrument and its player is unclear, however by investigating the role of the female musician during the New Kingdom, it might become apparent.

³⁴ Meskell 2004:171.

4.1 Examples of the Context in which this Iconography is Typically Used

An example of female musicians can be identified within tomb 38 of Zeserkaresonb from Thebes (see **Fig. 35** below).³⁵

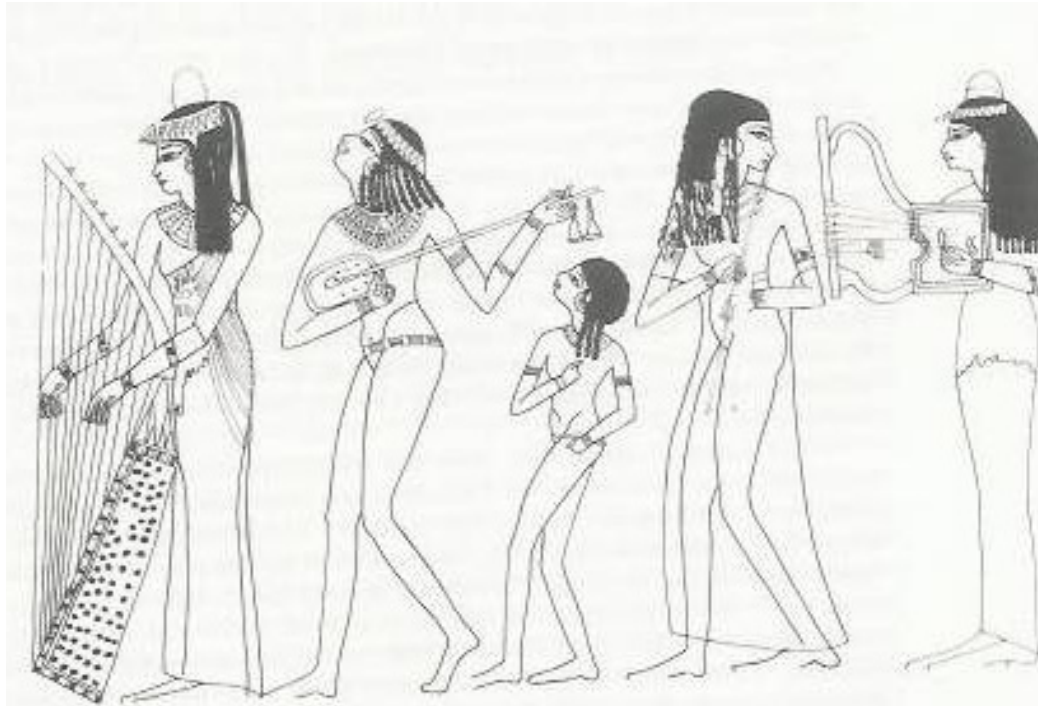


Fig. 35. A depiction of female musicians from the tomb of 38 Zeserkaresonb at Thebes.
Source: Manniche 1991. Fig.21

This scene represents four females and a female child walking in a procession. Four of the females hold various musical instruments whilst the younger female dances. The second female is wearing the symbolic Hathor dress. It is difficult to distinguish whether the younger female wears the Hathor dress or whether she has been portrayed naked to symbolize her youth.

Although the female represented upon S.E.VIII (**Fig. 34**) is nude, she possibly wears the Hathor dress similar to the second female portrayed in the musical procession (**Fig. 35**), her

³⁵ Manniche 1991:42-43.

instrument however is more comparable to that held by the fourth female which also appears to be an oboe.

A similar example of a female musician can also be found upon a New Kingdom faience bowl from the Leiden Museum.³⁶

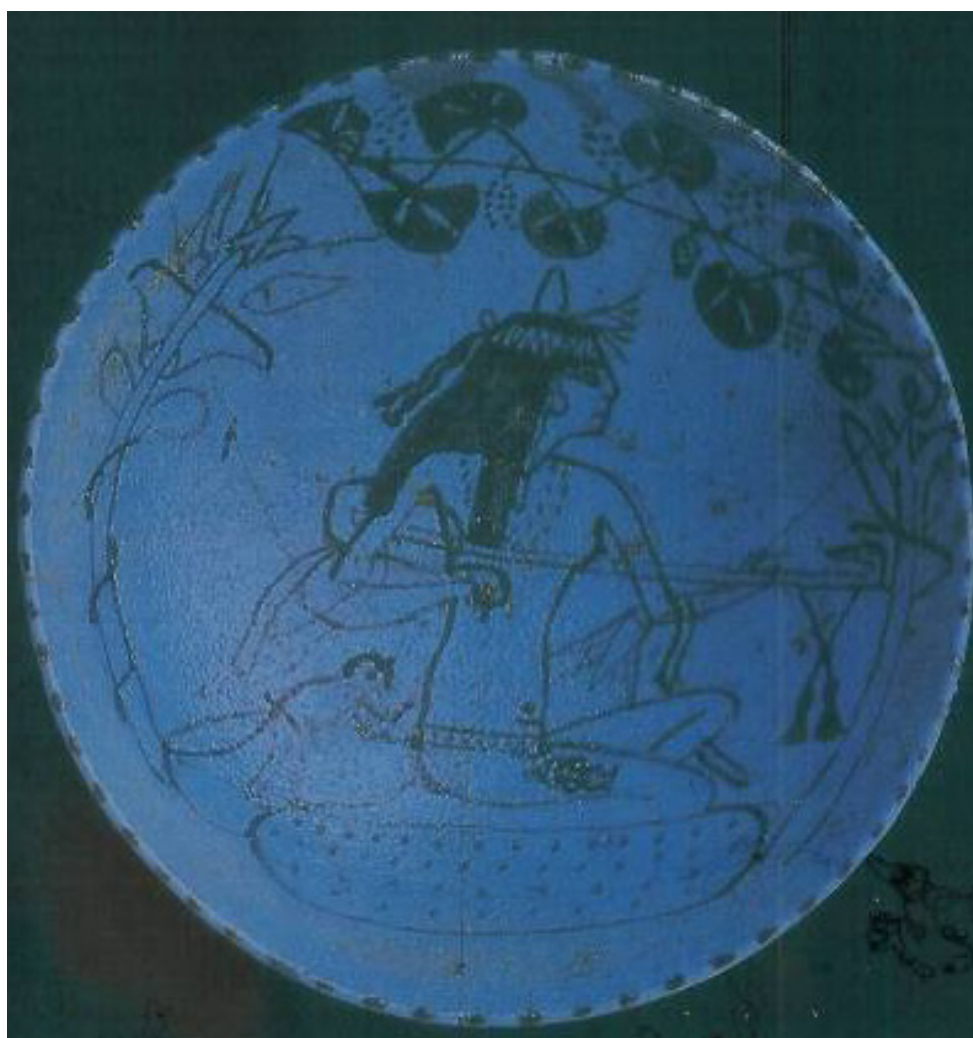


Fig. 36. Depiction of a female musician represented upon an 19th to 20th Dynasty faience bowl. Source: Bianchi 1998:212.

³⁶ Bianchi 1998:212.

The bowl depicts a female musician in the Hathor style dress (see **Fig. 36**).³⁷ Sitting on a large cushion she is surrounded by grape vines with a papyrus plant to the left.³⁸ A lotus flower draped over her left and right arm is also recognizable. She has been portrayed with a tattoo of Bes upon her right thigh.³⁹ Notably the female represented upon S.E.VIII also has tattoos upon her thighs.

Bianchi has suggested that the faience bowl (**Fig. 36**) depicted erotic imagery which was offered to the deceased in order to revitalise the deceased abilities to reproduce and has concluded that the female image was used not only to re-sexualise but also resurrect the deceased.⁴⁰

Whereas the bowl in Leiden was intended to revive the deceased's procreative abilities, thus linking him or her to the god Osiris and insuring resurrection in the Hereafter.

This is reflected in the symbolic items that the musician wears, for example in the dome and the lotus flower upon her head. According to Hartwig the lotus flower symbolized regeneration and the continuation of life, whilst a collar however symbolized rebirth.⁴¹ The cone was used to symbolize resurrection, vindication and rebirth.⁴²

The usage of the female musician imagery upon the bowl (**Fig. 36**) and Tomb 38 (**Fig. 35**) have been utilized within a funerary context. The proposal of the nude females to convey eroticism in order to re-sexualise the deceased is unsubstantiated however the resurrection and

³⁷ Bianchi 1998:212.

³⁸ Bianchi 1998:212.

³⁹ Bianchi 1998:212.

⁴⁰ Bianchi 1998:212.

⁴¹ Hartwig 2004:99.

⁴² Hartwig 2004:99.

rebirth symbolism surrounding the musician scenes is significant in relation to the representation upon S.E.VIII.

According to Manniche there is a relationship between sexuality and music.⁴³ A good example of this is from the erotic Turin papyrus. Certain women depicted within the papyrus were in fact musicians identifiable by their instruments.⁴⁴ Although this papyrus implies that these sexual pleasures and musical activities were important during this life, Manniche suggests that these musical ceremonies were also important during death and rebirth.⁴⁵

The evidence therefore suggests that the female portrayed upon S.E.VIII is a musician typically used in funerary processions in order to reawaken the deceased. The presence of the convolvulus used in relation to the nude female musician upon elevated bed S.E.VIII signifies the resurrection and rebirth of the deceased and suggests that the musical instrument had certain elements which could be used in this process.

The playing of musical instruments could in fact symbolize the resurrection of the deceased through the music, reawakening their senses within the afterlife.

⁴³ Manniche 1991:114.

⁴⁴ Manniche 1991:109.

⁴⁵ Manniche 1991:119.

5. Description of C.VII (Orientated East)

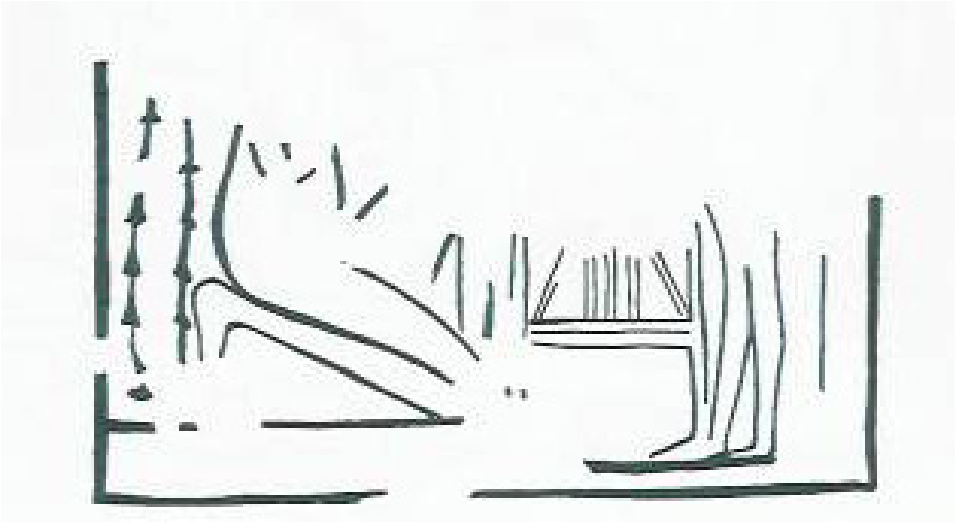


Fig. 37. – C.VII . Image of a two figures upon an elevated bed. Source: Bruyère 1939. Fig. 182.

This image portrays two disproportioned females, the larger female is kneeling upon a raised platform whilst the smaller female is represented standing behind a seat. These figures have been categorized as females due to their slender female attributes. They appear to be naked suggesting female sexuality as nudity was very rarely used for male representations.

The item between the two figures appears to be a chair as one of its legs can be identified. It is evident that there must have been a seated figure for a chair to be portrayed.

To the far left of the image there is a vague loop representation, although lacks detail, it suggests another convolulus.

Kneeing in this manner usually represents an ‘adoration scene’. Hands are usually raised towards the recipients or sometimes one hand is raised whilst the other holds an offering. There are remnants of the left female’s bent elbow, suggesting that this is a possibility.

Adorations scenes are not performed in nakedness, there is however a possibility that the females were originally clothed, the faint thin line indicating the outline of their dresses may not have survived.

5.1 Examples of the Context in which this Iconography is Used

The stela of Penbouï from Deir el-Medina presents a good example of adoration stances.

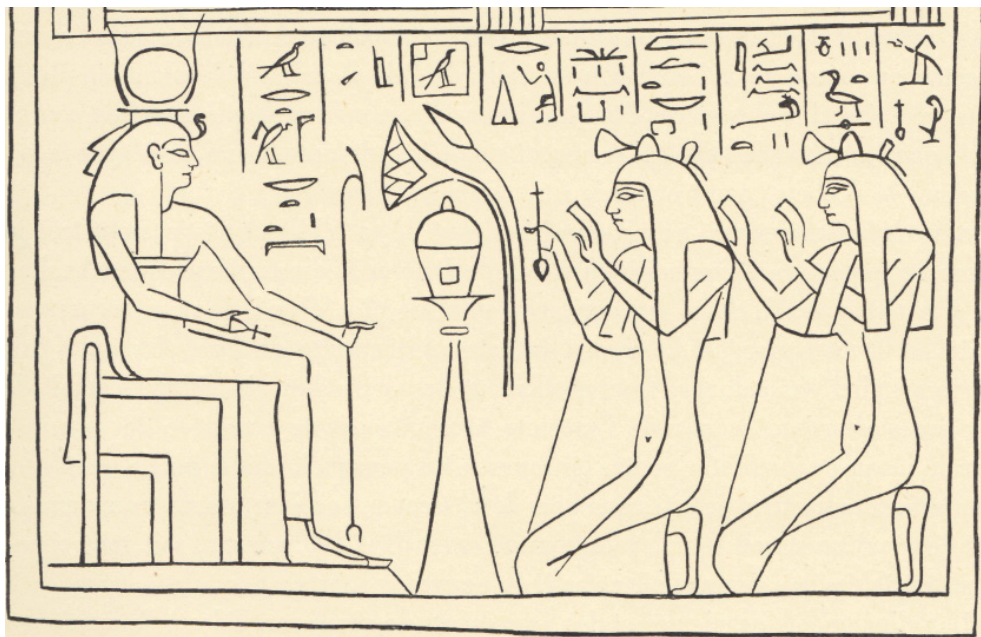


Fig. 38. Lower section from the stela of Penbouï. Source: Bruyère 1939: Fig. 206.

The two females are represented kneeling in adoration towards the goddess Hathor.⁴⁶ They both have dresses in which are very fine and appear see-through and similar to C.VII they are both larger than the recipient. In C.VII it shows two recipients receiving the adoration, but more importantly is the style of the chair. The chair utilized upon the stela is usually portrayed as being a chair used by deities.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bruyère 1939:334.

⁴⁷ The square box shaped chair with a curved back rest..

A square fragment of linen discovered upon the mummy of Taourt at Deir el-Medina provides an indication as to who was usually portrayed adorning this seat (**Fig. 39**).⁴⁸



Fig. 39. Linen of Taourt. Source: Bruyère 1939:Fig.116.

Although it portrays a lone figure seated at an offering table, Taourt's chair is similar to that found upon C.VII. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the seated individual is person not a divinity (**see Plate 27 for another example of this type of chair being used**).

C.VII represents a seated and a standing individual. It can be suggested they are deceased individuals who were being given adoration and offerings by the kneeling female. This scene conveys a sense of continuity, which the homeowners wanted to maintain the remembrance of the deceased. The presence of a circular convolvulus reflects the continuous cycle of rebirth and renewal of the recipients.

⁴⁸ Bruyère 1939:227.

6. Bes Representations

Bes was commonly depicted at Deir el-Medina being present on six elevated beds. He is easily identifiable by his lion's mane, feathered hat and his grotesque form.⁴⁹ He wears a distinctive skirt which has a central elongated piece of material. The role of Bes was multifunctional. In royal contexts he appears within the Litany of Re.⁵⁰ On an everyday level Bes protected those during childbirth.⁵¹ He was also known as the god who protected those who were asleep.⁵² In the New Kingdom he was especially associated with protecting the household.⁵³ His most frequent roles however were related to music and dance and protecting the deceased.⁵⁴

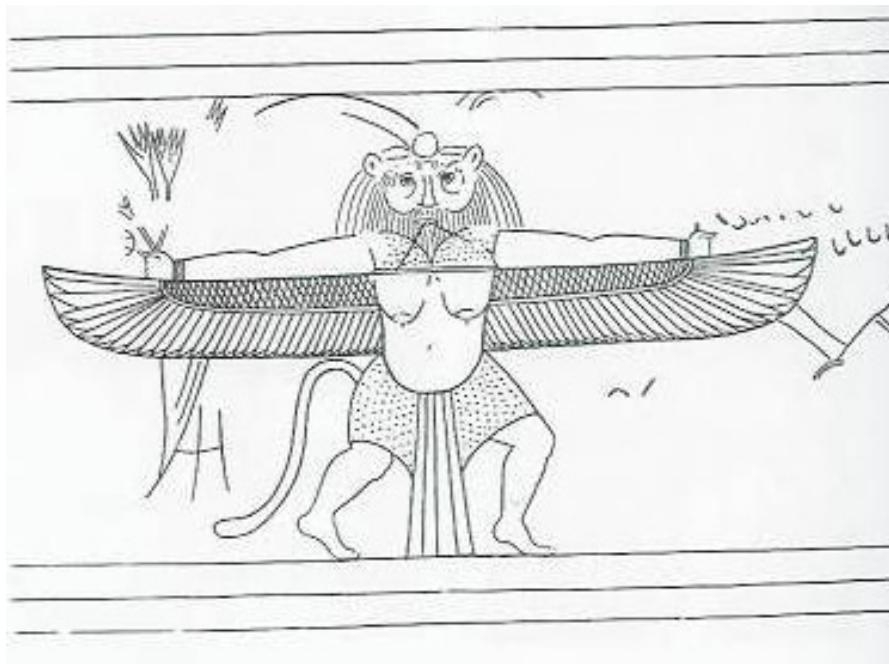


Fig. 40. N.E.X . Frontal image of Bes. Source: Bruyère 1939: Fig. 131.

⁴⁹ Dasen 1993:55.

⁵⁰ Dasen 1993:64.

⁵¹ Dasen 1993:68.

⁵² Dasen 1993:75.

⁵³ Dasen 1993:55.

⁵⁴ Dasen 1993:77.



Fig. 41. N.E.XII . Fragment images of Bes. Source: Bruyère 1939: Fig. 133.

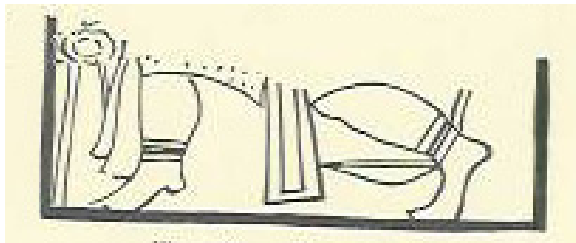


Fig 42 and 43. Left: N.E.XIII and right: S.E.IX . Lower section of Bes and a frontal mask feature of Bes. Source: Bruyère 1939:Fig. 136.and 148



Fig. 44. C.V. Image of a male. Source: Bruyère 1939:Fig. 172.

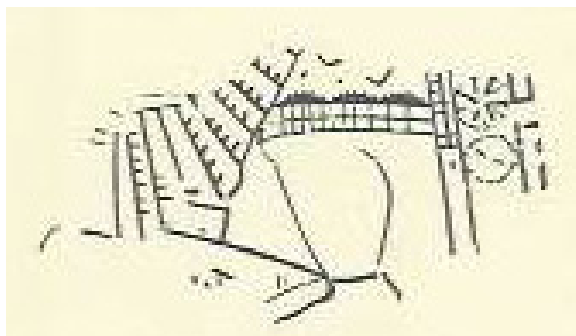


Fig. 45. S.O.VI. Partial image of Bes. Source: Bruyère 1939: Fig. 202.

6.1 Description of N.E.X (Orientated West), N.E.XII (Orientated West), N.E.XIII (Orientated West), S.E.IX (Orientated North), C.V (Orientated East), and S.O.VI (Orientated North).

All these depictions represent Bes, except for C.V. One cannot identify Bes upon this bed, however according to Bruyère there was a winged image of Bes on the lower section of the elevated bed, which unfortunately is not recorded.⁵⁵

N.E.X portrays a complete image of Bes. He is standing in a protective stance with outstretched wings, a feathered hat and holding flora, unusually he also appears to have female breasts. Due to the significant amount of damage N.E.VIII and S.O.VI only depict Bes' legs, N.E.XII illustrate Bes' head in profile and S.E.IX contained only a clay mask of Bes. C.V. has a representation of a male which has been preserved. According to Kleinke this male's activity is difficult to interpret.⁵⁶

6.2. Examples of the Context in which this Iconography is Used

There was an abundance of Bes images found throughout the village of Deir el-Medina. He was notably drawn upon numerous pieces of ostraca. One piece in Bruyère's report clearly shows Bes holding two snakes.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Bruyère 1939:305.

⁵⁶ Kleinke 2007:19.

⁵⁷ Bruyère 1939:96.

Bes was also represented upon items which were used on a daily basis within the household. In one instance Bes was carved into the four legs of a bed, being represented holding a double flute.⁵⁸ He can also be identified upon the 19th Dynasty headrest of Qeniherkhepeshef (BM 63783) from Deir el-Medina (see **Plate 23**), clasping a spear on one hand and a snake in the other. These two items must signify Bes' importance to protect those who were asleep. More importantly however Bes faience amulets were discovered at Deir el-Medina which suggests an everyday need for his protection.⁵⁹

He can also be identified upon various toilet articles such as mirrors and kohl vases.⁶⁰ This shows he had a significant role in femininity. As noted before he is especially known to be important during childbirth.⁶¹

These evidences indicate Bes' importance during the everyday lives of the people at Deir el-Medina. Although his role was predominantly used in an everyday context, Bes also had a significant role within a funerary context.

There have been two examples at Deir el-Medina where Bes has been used within a tomb context, identifiable inside tomb 48 and tomb 99.⁶²

⁵⁸ Bruyère 1939:98.

⁵⁹ Bruyère 1939:102.

⁶⁰ Bruyère 1939:102.

⁶¹ Dasen 1993:68.

⁶² Bruyère 1939:107-108.

Bruyère has suggested that in tomb 99 of Sennefer Bes has been portrayed within a bedroom (Fig. 46).⁶³ The object located to the left of Bes appears to be a box, which is usually depicted as a funerary offering. The two rounded objects above this appear to be ovens (see Fig. 47).



Fig. 46. Bes represented within tomb 99 of Sennefer. Source Bruyère 1939:Fig 39.

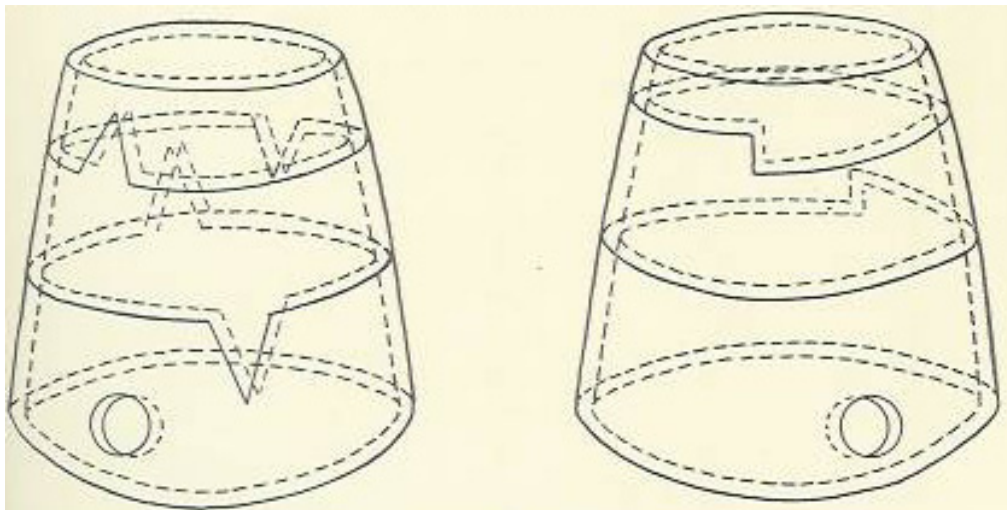


Fig. 47. Depiction of Ovens. Source Bruyère 1939:Fig 21.

⁶³ Bruyère 1939:108.

The female positioned to the right of the image appears to be grinding flour or barley to make bread or other foodstuff (see **Fig. 48**).



Fig. 48. A woman grinding flour. Source Bruyère 1939:Fig 27.

This scene therefore probably portrays a kitchen, where deceased offerings were being prepared.⁶⁴ Bes was known as a protector, and in this particular case is seen as a protector of the offerings for the deceased.

This may suggest that the presence of Bes upon the elevated bed could represent his protection over offerings to the deceased, his role however did not solely focus upon protecting offerings but crucially upon the protection of the deceased themselves.

Bes' role to protect the deceased was important. He was known as a protector of the dead.⁶⁵ By this he helped the deceased body to remain intact and helped the deceased to be reborn within the Fields of Reeds.⁶⁶ The deceased body needed to remain intact so their *Ba* could return to its corpse during the nocturnal journey of the sun. Bes' role in the rebirth within the

⁶⁴ It is difficult to identify whether the food being prepared is for offerings to the deceased or to be placed within Sennefer's tomb.

⁶⁵ Dasen 1993:67.

⁶⁶ Dasen 1993:77.

field of reeds was also crucial as he was responsible for this process and the protection of the deceased during this transitional period.

In comparison to the other elevated beds, the presence of Bes must be connected to his ability of protecting the deceased. This is expressed in N.E.X (**Fig. 40**) where Bes is seen with his protective outstretched wings.

Conclusion

The iconographies discovered upon the elevated beds express the desire for the deceased to be reborn. This endless cycle of rebirth conveys a sense of renewal. This cyclic occurrence however has the constant threat of being broken and therefore the god Bes was portrayed in order to protect this cycle.

CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETATION OF THE ELEVATED BEDS

The evidence gathered from the iconography expresses that the elevated beds were connected to the deceased. The theories surrounding the functions of the elevated beds such as the sleeping area, birthing bed, female space, seating area and multifunctional linked with everyday activities of the workers at Deir el-Medina, but the evidence obtained propose the beds were connected to funerary purposes.

The only proposals which relate in anyway to the funerary bed theory are the chapel and altar ideas. The main concern with the chapel theory is with the substantial and diverse amount of chapels positioned outside of the village's enclosure, it is unlikely that chapels dedicated to the divine or deified royal would be constructed within the household and were more appropriately placed outside the village.

Chapels dedicated to the deceased were interconnected to the tomb itself. A house chapel therefore would be ineffective in comparison to the tomb chapel which would have a direct link to the deceased. In addition it seems unlikely that space within the house would be sacrificed for a house chapel when there are adequate chapels outside the village.

It is quite feasible for the elevated beds to have functioned as altars. Stevens stated that the house altars found at Amarna were comparable to those at Deir el-Medina, suggesting they functioned similarly.¹ The altars placed within the Amarna houses however may not have functioned as those found at Deir el-Medina. It must be acknowledged that Deir el-Medina

¹ Stevens 2003:149

was constructed first, and most of its elevated beds were constructed before the Amarna period.

If one was to make a comparison of the elevated beds at Deir el-Medina to the altars found at Amarna, the underlining idea behind the elevated beds are not equivalent to the Amarna house altars but are more comparable to the Amarna garden altars. If a contrast is made between them, the difference being the garden altars at Deir el-Medina are smaller to those found at Amarna.²

What needs to be addressed is the religious terminology which conveys the actions executed upon the elevated bed, or ‘garden altar’ at Deir el-Medina.

1. Religious Terminology

The terminologies used to describe religious activities conducted by individuals have been continuously discussed. Baines has suggested:³

Practical religion- religious action in an everyday context- and piety- here loosely defined as relationships between individuals and deities.

Baines has tried to distinguish between offerings of material culture, which proposes ‘practical religion’ and ‘worship’ indicating an action conveyed during public festivals.⁴ Piety

² This is due to the extensive space at Amarna, where larger garden altars were constructed. For more information on the garden altars at Amarna see Ikram 1989: 89-101.

³ Baines 1987:79.

⁴ Baines 1991:182.

however is expressed in, for example texts, which envisage a personal relationship between the divine and an individual.⁵

Kemp proposes that the archaeological remains of a feature, which was used for religious purposes, should be acknowledged as 'religious behaviour'.⁶ This terminology links together the 'belief' and 'behaviour' of an individual.⁷ Kemp's theory however relies heavily upon the survival of archaeological material.

Stevens has proposed new terminology 'domestic religion' to suggest the conduct of religious behaviours within the house.⁸ This suggestion however is broad and does not expand upon the physical or personal conduct of a religion within the household.

None of these terminologies is incorrect but they are dependant upon the circumstances in which they are applied. 'Practical religion', 'religious behaviour' and 'worship' shall be used. 'Domestic religion' shall be used as a general term to describe the religious actions conducted within the household. 'Piety' shall not be used as it is an emotional expression used to convey a personal desire. Archaeological evidence can suggest a physical conduct of a religious action, however one can only assume what physical action was conducted at a religious feature.⁹

⁵ Look at Hymns from Deir el-Medina, such as those found in Lichtheim 2006b 104-110.

⁶ Kemp 1995:25.

⁷ Kemp 1995:25.

⁸ Stevens 2003:143.

⁹ Firstly one must rely upon the archaeological evidence surviving in the archaeological record.

2. Types of Worship

The focus of the elevated beds use as a garden altar could have several possibilities.

2.1 Royal

Royal religious practices consist of an individual worshipping a living or deceased royal. As with the Amarna garden altars, the elevated beds may have also focused upon the reigning Royal family.¹⁰ The iconographies however suggest a funerary context, which signifies that a living royal is not a possibility.

Archaeological remains at Deir el-Medina has provided evidence to suggest that royals were adored after their death, for example a chapel was constructed for Thutmosis III as a place to offer devotions.¹¹ The workers also constructed a ‘palace like’ sanctuary for the worship of the *Ka* of Ramesses II.¹² Although various deceased pharaohs were worshipped at Deir el-Medina there is one predominant deified pharaoh which had great importance to the villagers, Amenhotep I.

The worship of Amenhotep I was popular during the New Kingdom.¹³ He and his mother were both deified during the 18th Dynasty and were seen as the patrons of the village.¹⁴ Numerous documents uncovered from the site clearly show Amenhotep’s importance at Deir

¹⁰ See Ikram 1989: 89-101 for information on the garden altars at Amarna.

¹¹ Valbelle 1985:315.

¹² Valbelle 1985:315.

¹³ Von Lieven 2001:42.

¹⁴ Meskell 2004:99.

el-Medina.¹⁵ Due to his high popularity the worship of Amenhotep continued into the 21st Dynasty signifying the continuation of his importance after the abandonment of the village in the 20th dynasty.¹⁶

His popularity can be identified by various festivals dedicated to Amenhotep I in Deir el-Medina.¹⁷ A statue of Amenhotep could be addressed for oracles either inside his chapel or when he emerged during his festivals.¹⁸ This was recorded in several tombs found at Deir el-Medina, such as the tomb of Khabekhenet (TT2) from the 19th Dynasty which depicts the procession and adoration of the images of Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Neferari.¹⁹

Devotion to Amenhotep I was important to the villagers. This is expressed in a text from Deir el-Medina, translated by Wente:

Please [may you have] a concern for Amenophis [I].p.h., and cause there to be prepared for him [...] date-brew of (the type of the land of) Kode, it being in a *menet-jar*, and writings (?) [...] before him. And cause this portion (?) of flour to be made [...] into *pat*-cakes and fetch this basket [and fill(?) it] with herbs and vegetables [...] for Amenophis in the [...], day 27, as well as these two bowls of luby beans.²⁰

The offerings signify great devotion to the deceased patron.

¹⁵ Von Lieven 2001:42.

¹⁶ Von Lieven 2001:42.

¹⁷ Meskell 2004:99.

¹⁸ Bomann 1991:72. For more detailed information on the variety of festivals devoted to Amenhotep I see Valbelle, D. 1985. *Les Ouvriers de la Tombe*. Cairo. 318-331 and Table 5- 332-335.

¹⁹ Betrò 2007:91.

²⁰ Wente 1990:138. O. Brussels E. 6781 (Dynasty 19:Ramesses II).

The villagers expressing their devotion, commissioned a chapel to commemorate Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari to the north of the village.²¹ This main chapel is Chapelle D.²² Their presence can also be identified within chapels dedicated to deities, for example the chapel of Hathor, which depicts the goddess Hathor, Amun, Amenhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari.²³

According to Valbelle the villagers at Deir el-Medina had features within their houses dedicated to Amenhotep.²⁴ In house of Khabekhenet (S.O.V) a false door was constructed with a connecting depiction of Amenhotep I and Ahmose-Nefertari.²⁵ This suggests that the homeowner wanted to welcome the patrons into his house to possibly receive offerings. More importantly is that house S.O.V. additionally constructed an elevated bed, even though they were positioned within different rooms of the house, the false door and the elevated bed could have been used simultaneously for the religious practices of Amenhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari. Amenhotep was known as ‘Amenhotep of the garden’.²⁶ Amenhotep therefore may have been connected to the garden altar within the frontal room.

The elevated beds may therefore have been utilized for the worship of the deceased patron, Amenhotep I, as shown in **Fig. 30** it shows the villagers wanted this particular deified royal and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari to be reborn and have continuous renewal as shown by the presence of the convolvulus upon the two images.

²¹ Meskell 2004:100.

²² Bomann 1991:72.

²³ Bomann 1991:71-72.

²⁴ Valbelle 1985:314.

²⁵ Bruyère 1939:68.

²⁶ Betrò 2007:88.

There are several iconographies in which suggest his worship within the elevated bed. S.E.I might have portrayed Amenhotep I as a baby. The black female positioned behind the seated female, could be seen as the deified Ahmose-Nefertari. Although one would expect Ahmose-Nefertari to be seated upon the birthing stool, the female holding Amenhotep maybe his royal nurse. The problem with this theory however is that 'deified' implies his godly nature and therefore one would expect divinities to be portrayed, not mortal females.

The remaining images represented upon the elevated beds however are difficult to interpret in accordance with Amenhotep worship.

2.2 Animal

An alternative type of worship which was important and popular at Deir el-Medina was gods who were represented in animal forms.²⁷ These consisted of geese, snakes (Renenutet), cats, the triad of Elephantine (Anukis, Satis and Khnum) and many more.²⁸ Most animal worship was conducted by royal and priestly intervention, therefore in relation to the elevated beds usage, animal worship seems unlikely.

²⁷ Bomann 1991:73.

²⁸ Bomann 1991:73.

2.3 Divine

Divinity worship may have been the function of the elevated beds purpose, the altar being used for everyday assistance and requests to the divine.

The main crucial element of the ancient Egyptian religion focuses upon divine entities. The area north of Deir el-Medina's village enclosure was the location of private chapels for worshipping popular and lesser deities.²⁹ These gods consisted of Hathor, Amun, Ptah, Meretseger Taweret and many more.³⁰ The number of chapels devoted to a variety of divinities is evident.

This close relationship with the divine can be identified within village tombs. During the 18th Dynasty there is an influx of tomb depictions representing the deceased worshipping Osiris without any mediation.³¹ This demonstrates the increasing relationship between the human and the divine.³²

People had the choice to conduct domestic religion in the privacy of their own home suggesting a need for intimate devotion to certain deities.

Further evidence to support this is the two stelae which were unearthed within the frontal rooms in close proximity to the elevated bed. One stela was discovered in house S.O.VI

²⁹ Bomann 1991:73. Also see Bomann 1991: illustration 25.

³⁰ Valbelle 1985:313-317. For more usual deities see Valbelle 1985:317-318.

³¹ Hartwig 2004:112. The pharaoh is not used as a mediator.

³² There are other evidences which suggest a close relationship with the gods. Texts such as the *Instruction of Amenemope* emphasize that the gods affected people's everyday lives (Baines 1991:194.) which can also be identified within votive stelae from Deir el-Medina. In stela of Nebre dedicated to Amun it suggests that if one becomes ill it is the god who is inflicting ill-health upon the individual, in which only mercy from the god can eradicate the illness. See Lichtheim 2006b:105-107.

within a cupboard.³³ It depicts goddesses Taweret and Hathor.³⁴ The other stela discovered in C.VI which portrays an individual adoring two divinities represented upon two sides of the stela.³⁵

The elevated beds may have functioned as an area to conduct religious behaviours to particular deities. Elevated beds S.E.I and S.E.VIII could signify a devotion to the goddess Hathor. The symbolic elements representing Hathor within the scenes consists of the iconic Hathor dress code, the musical instrument and the presence of birth related scenes.³⁶ Similarly beds N.E.X, N.E.XII, N.E.XIII, S.E.IX, C.V. and S.O.VI may express a desire for Bes' protection.

Due to the iconographies upon the elevated beds being from funerary contexts, the divine theory is improbable. If the divine theory however is connected to a funerary context, by means of ancestral worship, then this theory becomes a possibility. It seems appropriate therefore to investigate the elevated bed in relation to ancestral worship as not only did people turn to the gods, they also turned to their deceased ancestors.³⁷

³³ Bruyère 1939:330.

³⁴ Bruyère 1939:334.

³⁵ Bruyère 1939:308.

³⁶For example S.E.I could be a request for Hathor's protection in the safe delivery of a child within the household.

³⁷ Friedman 1994:95.

2.4 Ancestral

Ancestral religious practice is the conduct of religious behaviours towards ancestral entities which was conveyed through remembrance and devotion to deceased family members. This was deeply expressed in Deir el-Medina during the Beautiful Feast of the Valley when the dead could reunite with the living.³⁸

The deceased were seen as being so powerful that they could help the living.³⁹ A lack of devotion could have changed positive assistance to negative effects on the family.⁴⁰ This is expressed within the *Instruction of Any*:-

Satisfy the ancestral spirit, do what he wishes.
Keep yourself clear of what he abominates,
That you may remain unscathed by his many hurts.⁴¹

Ancestor worship was therefore central to everyday lives. This can be identified as a form of domestic religion within the houses at Deir el-Medina. Stelae representing the deceased were uncovered from various houses.⁴² In one example house S.O.II contained a stela within the second room depicting a female seated in front of an offering table.⁴³ It represents the ancestor as an *3h iqr n R'*.⁴⁴ At Deir el-Medina this was a common title used for the

³⁸ Bell 2005:136.

³⁹ Assmann 2005:162.

⁴⁰ Meskell 2004:66.

⁴¹ Assmann 2005:163. Papyrus Boulaq 4, 22, 1-3.

⁴² Various houses contained similar stelae within the houses. These examples are C.VI, S.O.II, and S.O.V. For more information see Demarée, R.J. 1983 *3h ' iqr n R'* - Stelae on Ancestor Worship in Ancient Egypt. Leiden. For C.VI see 29 and 67, for S.O.VI see 102 and for S.O.II see 110.

⁴³ Bruyère 1939:164-165, 318, fig.187.

⁴⁴ Bruyère 1939:318.

deceased, describing the dead as ‘belonging to Re’ or more commonly referring to them as an ‘able spirit of Re’.⁴⁵

Various offering tables were also discovered within certain houses to provide the deceased with offerings. In the house C.VI two offering tables were discovered within the second room and in house N.O.X.V an offering table was also discovered within the second room.⁴⁶ Additionally false doors were also discovered within various houses at Deir el-Medina. False doors were usually constructed to allow the *ba* or *ka* of the deceased ancestor to accept offerings.⁴⁷ A false door was discovered within houses S.EVII, S.E.VIII and N.O.XII.⁴⁸ Unusually in one case, the bedroom of house N.E. XV had two niches and a false door with an interconnecting offering table positioned in front of it.⁴⁹

Ancestors were found to be recreated as figurines; sixty eight ancestral busts were uncovered in Deir el-Medina.⁵⁰ They consisted of chalk, sandstone and wood.⁵¹ These busts were discovered within houses and tomb chapels.⁵² In 1913 Möller uncovered five busts from houses, one from a tomb chapel and the other was left unrecorded.⁵³

⁴⁵ Demarée 1983:275-276.

⁴⁶ Bruyère 1939:310, 292.

⁴⁷ Assmann 2005:210. It enabled the deceased to enter through the door, in order to receive their offerings but also allowed them to return back to the underworld.

⁴⁸ Bruyère 1939:272, 275 and 286-287.

⁴⁹ Bruyère 1939:261.

⁵⁰ Friedman 1985:82. For further details on the different types of ancestral busts see Friedman, F. 1985. ‘The Meaning of some Anthropoid Busts from Deir el-Medina’, *JEA* 71, 82-97.

⁵¹ Kaiser 1990: 270.

⁵² Kaiser 1990: 271. For more information on the usage of busts through Egypt see Kaiser, W. 1990. ‘Zur Büste al seiner Darstellungsform ägyptischer Rundplastik’, *MDAIK* 46, 269-286.

⁵³ Keith-Bennett 1981:47.

Although their usage is difficult to identify Keith-Bennett suggested that:⁵⁴

I think that there is every likelihood that the anthropoid busts may have had more than one meaning for their users and that the very absence of inscriptions may have contributed to their multifarious character.

Regardless of their original function, the need for creating these statues suggests the importance of having an image of the deceased ancestor within the households.

The remembrance of ancestors therefore appears to be significant. From the moment when a family member died workers were excused in order to help at funerals or help manufacture libations for the deceased.⁵⁵ When burying the dead, tombs containing more than one individual became widespread. Collective tomb burials became popular especially in the aftermath of Amarna and started to contain father and son burials, an example being Tomb 291 of Nw and Nakhtmin.⁵⁶ Tomb such as Sennedjem's contained a whole family generation.⁵⁷ This suggests the importance of being in the company of ancestors during life and in death.

⁵⁴ Keith-Bennett 1981:50.

⁵⁵ Friedman 1994:95.

⁵⁶ Meskell 1999a:188.

⁵⁷ Meskell 1999a:182.

3. Ancestral Religious Behaviours in Relation to the Elevated Beds

The idea of domestic religion conducted towards ancestor remembrance appears likely, the elevated beds purpose being a crucial element in this process, functioning as an altar for the deceased. It must be acknowledged that the altar involves not only the deceased but also the divinities associated with their protection.

3.1 Location

The frontal rooms of Deir el-Medina houses were used as miniature gardens which in ancient Egypt had strong connections with the deceased. According to Assmann in the New Kingdom the deceased wished to see their garden more than the house itself.⁵⁸ It is evidently expressed in texts that the deceased wanted to return to their garden describing it as the field of offerings and reeds.⁵⁹

The garden was associated with Re and Osiris which symbolized resurrection and the netherworld, connecting the ancestral to the divine.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Assmann 2005:221.

⁵⁹ Assmann 2005:221-222. An example of these texts see Assmann 1995:221.

⁶⁰ Wilkinson 1998:99.

3.2 Iconography

The imagery used to decorate the elevated beds can be linked more towards ancestral worship than to divine or royal practices.

Elevated beds N.E.XII, S.E.IX, S.O.VI, and C.V. all portray an image of Bes. Due to the amount of depictions one could suggest that Bes was seen as the protector of the deceased.⁶¹ There are supporting evidences from N.E.X, N.E.XII and N.O.XII which reinforces an explanation for his presence. In N.E.X and N.E.XII Bes is holding flora, possibly reeds, where N.O.XII boat scene is envisaged within the marshes. The fishing and fowling in the marshes scene occurred within the Field of Reeds along side Re.⁶² The three images conclude that Bes helped the deceased to be reborn within the Fields of Reeds.

In conclusion they suggest that the elevated beds were used to conduct domestic religion to the ancestors in the hope they had transcended to the field of reeds and that everyday when they left as a *Ba*, they may be able to return with the help of Bes.

The image represented upon elevated bed C.VII appears to be a large female kneeling in front of two individuals. The scene portrays the adoration and offering to possible two deceased family members, which suggests that this elevated bed was used for ancestral religious practices. The presence of a convolvulus suggests a sense of rebirth, to provide the deceased with a strength of renewal and expressed the continuous cycle of rebirth.

⁶¹ Dasen 1993:67. The wings represented upon N.E.X, suggest protection.

⁶² Assmann 2005:276-277.

The male and Bes figure depicted upon elevated bed C.V. appears to be inconclusive. In Bruyère's depiction only the male has been portrayed. It is difficult to identify his activity as sections are unclear. The stance of the male and the fact that he has one closed hand raised above his head signifies he once held an object.⁶³ He may be holding a tambourine which according to Manniche symbolized rebirth.⁶⁴ This is debatable however as tambourines are normally depicted in frontal perspectives.

Elevated bed S.E.VIII portrays a female musician. Although one might suggest sexual connotations for her presence, musicians were used to symbolize the resurrection of the deceased. The presence of an oboe as an instrument connotes rebirth.⁶⁵ In connection with the presence of a convolvulus this is intriguing.

As Spencer suggested, female dancers and musicians were used within funerary processions to assist the deceased to pass to the netherworld.⁶⁶ Females equipped with the Hathor dress were used to reawaken the deceased through music and dance, S.E.VIII therefore symbolized the reawakening of the deceased within the afterlife.

The birth related scene positioned upon elevated bed S.E.I can also be associated with the deceased. The convolvulus symbolizing rebirth in relation to the scene portrayed could either symbolize the safe deliverance of a family member into the netherworld or the rebirth of infant mortalities within the afterlife. The black female represented behind the mother might

⁶³ The stance is crucial to the identification of this male's activity. In **Fig. 23** Nebamuns back heel is raised slightly and it is his left hand which is smiting the fowl. In C.V. this is not a hunting stance or a particular active role. Whatever he is holding does not require too much strength.

⁶⁴ Manniche 1991:118.

⁶⁵ Manniche 1991:118.

⁶⁶ Spencer 2003:114.

not be Nubian, but could in fact symbolize resurrection. The colour black is usually utilized to indicate fertility or resurrection. It is used in conjunction with Osiris, deriving from the black fertile soil of the Nile.

3.3 Material Culture

In elevated bed N.E.XI Bruyère uncovered various remaining pieces of material culture consisting of a headrest of limestone, a section of a female limestone Ramesside statue and a wooden ostrich feather which he believes to be from an Atef crown of a divinity.⁶⁷ These items can be seen as offerings to the deceased. The wooden Atef crown is especially significant as the deceased would be associated with Osiris and therefore would want to have a crown of Osiris.⁶⁸ The feather however may not have originally been apart of an Atef crown and may have just symbolized Maat. According to Assmann Maat symbolized:⁶⁹

Temporal connectivity, of permanence, endurance, and remembrance, of the continuity of past and future.

This suggests that whether the feather symbolized Osiris' crown or Maat, it still had significant meaning to the deceased.

⁶⁷ Bruyère 1939:256. Bruyère believes the Atef crown belonged to a crocodile, hippopotamus or possibly Osiris.

⁶⁸ Osiris' crown symbolized eternal life, as when Osiris wore this crown it suggested salvation from death. For more information see Assmann 2005:69.

⁶⁹ Assmann 2005:55.

Additionally house N.E.XI also had a limestone offering table constructed in front of the elevated bed dedicated to Aapehti.⁷⁰ This offering table seems more likely to have been used in conjunction with this elevated bed.

A great number of niches have been found within the front rooms of the houses.⁷¹ According to Friedman some ancestral busts were placed in niches opposite the elevated beds.⁷² In house C.V. a niche for an ancestral bust was discovered within the south east corner of the room, adjacent to the elevated bed.⁷³ Next door house C.VI had three niches upon the opposite wall of the elevated bed.⁷⁴ Below the niche, directly opposite the bed, an ancestral bust was found on the floor.⁷⁵

In two examples instead of constructing an elevated bed, a false door was created instead.⁷⁶ Out of the eight houses which had false doors within the living space, five of them had an additional elevated bed.⁷⁷ House N.E.XV had a false door with two niches and an offering table within the bedroom, but more importantly it also had an elevated bed in the front room.

These archaeological evidences suggest that the elevated bed must be linked to religious practices relating to deceased relatives.

⁷⁰ Bruyère 1939:256.

⁷¹ Koltzida 2007:19.

⁷² Friedman 1985:83.

⁷³ Bruyère 1939:305.

⁷⁴ Bruyère 1939:308.

⁷⁵ Bruyère 1939:171 and Fig.66.

⁷⁶ House N.O.II and S.O.IV.

⁷⁷ The houses which had no elevated bed but had a false door in the living space was houses N.O.IV, N.O.XX (2 had false doors) and S.E.V. The houses which both had false doors in the living space and an elevated bed were N.O.VI (had 3 false doors), N.O.XII, S.O.V. (had 4 false doors), S.E.VII and S.E.VIII.

3.4 Orientation

The orientation of the elevated bed must have some significance. At first it seemed likely that the elevated beds may have faced the burials of their deceased relatives. Meskell has suggested that during the 18th Dynasty east and west burials were divided between males, females and children, however during the 19th and 20th Dynasties all individuals were buried in the west.⁷⁸ This shows there is no link between the actual placements of the burials in regard to the elevated beds orientation.⁷⁹ There maybe however a connection to the freedom of movement attained by the deceased within the afterlife.⁸⁰

The frontal garden where the elevated beds are found had an underlining symbolic meaning. The garden was usually identified with Re and Osiris as it symbolized resurrection and the netherworld.⁸¹ Re and Osiris were both crucial within Egyptian mythology, interconnecting during the nocturnal journey of the sun, when Re and Osiris combined to form the ‘United Ba’ (see **Plate 21**).⁸² Wilkinson therefore suggests that the garden also symbolized the mythology of both the sun god Re and the myths of Osiris.⁸³

⁷⁸ Meskell 1999a: 181. During the excavations of Gurnet Murai (the large steep hill located on the east side of the village) the northeast produced burial 1455. It suggested a tomb that was cut during the New Kingdom but Meeks suggested that the area was used for tomb construction during the Middle Kingdom and therefore should be acknowledged (Meeks 1980a:60). The pottery found in the tomb date to 19 to 20th dynasties however the tomb contained sarcophagi from the late 25th dynasty (Meeks 1980a:61). This might suggest that burials were positioned to the north of the town during the New Kingdom and were reused later however to the south east of Gurnet Murai three tombs were discovered, 701, 702 and 703 show signs of 21st to 26th dynasty characteristics (Meeks 1980b:40). It can therefore be suggested that southern burials were after the villages inhabitation.

⁷⁹ The orientation of the elevated beds faced east or west during the 18th Dynasty whilst in the 19th and 20th Dynasties the beds change direction to face north or south.

⁸⁰ The deceased must receive justification and glorification after completing the weighing of the heart during the interrogation from Osiris and his fellow judges at the end of their journey through the netherworld. Only then can they have movement to visit the living world or wherever they wish to go.

⁸¹ Wilkinson 1998:99.

⁸² Assmann 2005:188.

⁸³ Wilkinson 1998:99.

Re and Osiris were both crucial to the deceased. The deceased wanted their *ba* to have the freedom of movement like Re but also to have a mummy like Osiris which would be everlasting.⁸⁴ It therefore seems appropriate that Re and Osiris must be related to the ancestral religious practices conducted within the elevated beds

East to west is usually linked to the solar cycle of Re. The *ba* of a deceased wanted to follow the course of the sun god.⁸⁵ The elevated beds therefore could have been designed east to west facing to adore the deceased who would have been present with Re. During the Amarna period however the netherworld was not recognized due to the rise in monotheism.⁸⁶ No netherworld implies there was no Osiris to govern or to oversee this realm. As Assmann suggested:⁸⁷

Those aspects of it which Akhenaten had particularly persecuted and excluded were now placed center stage and elaborated on.

After the Amarna period the dedication towards Osiris intensified and relationships with Osiris became increasingly popular. During the Ramesside period the elevated beds change their orientations from east and west to north and south facing. This change therefore could be linked with the increasing popularity of Osiris. Whether this is because Osiris is associated with the Nile or simply because he manifests into a form of the deceased Re is uncertain, however Re and Osiris were both the main divinities crucial to the salvation of the deceased.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Assmann 2005:373

⁸⁵ Assmann 2005:92.

⁸⁶ Assmann 2005:15.

⁸⁷ Assmann 2005:15.

⁸⁸ The Nile is oriented south to north and since Osiris is a component of Re, if Re travels east to west then Osiris would be associated with north to south. Assmann has identified Osiris' numerous roles and one is his association with the Nile. See for further details. Assmann 2005:69.

Overall the elevated beds functioned as an altar to conduct religious behaviours towards the deceased enabling them to be 'reborn' reawakening them within the field of reeds.

CONCLUSION

The function of the elevated bed ('Lit Clos') has puzzled Egyptologists for the past eighty years producing numerous proposals of their original purpose.¹ This research was aimed to produce an in-depth analysis of the elevated beds, using an alternative approach, in order to provide a feasible explanation to their construction and understanding.

After gathering various evidences from the background history of the site, including house developments, structure and design, and the ideas proposed by various Egyptologists, this has produced the building blocks on which to base the final conclusion on the usage of the elevated beds.

Deir el-Medina was inhabited by a productive workforce used by the reigning pharaoh for the construction of the nearby tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Queens over the course of the New Kingdom. They were a close knit community living in close proximity with each other. For the period in which the village of Deir el-Medina was inhabited, it has produced an invaluable vast assemblage of material culture and information. This has produced an insight to the culture, ideas and beliefs of the people who lived there, demonstrating their ideologies of life but also more importantly their perceptions of death.

The ancestors were a crucial constituent in the villager's lives. The ancestors were seen as powerful beings which could affect the fortune of the homeowner. The homeowner wanted to

¹ Koltsida 2006:167.

be seen as pleasing the ancestors and provided offerings in order to be favoured. In return the ancestors would generate good fortune for the home and its occupants.

The ancestors were seen as influential in the everyday lives of the people at Deir el-Medina, and they recognized that they too would become a deceased ancestor someday. The construction of the elevated bed for the ancestors therefore was not only dedicated to first deceased family members, but would also benefit, and be used by, each future family generation. When the homeowner entered the afterlife, this structure could be therefore used by their children, and their children's children for the dedication, worship and offerings to the deceased. This conveys the belief of an ancient Egyptian, that life was a preparation for death.

The elevated beds were used as altar for the remembrance of the deceased. Its shape and design is unique, but can be comparable to the garden altars at Amarna. It was constructed with three to five steps, with an enclosing wall suggesting a sense of privacy. Unfortunately one can only guess what religious practices would have occurred within the structures, however it is likely that the elevated bed would have been seen as a place of reflection, and an area in which one could privately worship their ancestors and ask for requests and assistance in their lives.

The elevated bed was specifically designed according to its main focus of worship. It was placed within the frontal room of the household in order to reflect the underlining symbolism of the connection between the garden and the deceased.

The front rooms of the houses at Deir el-Medina were created as enclosed miniature gardens, sometimes with an additional porch. The garden had symbolic connotations which supported the elevated bed being used as an altar for the deceased. It represented Re and Osiris which symbolized resurrection and the netherworld.²

The garden also had a huge importance to the deceased themselves. It was so important that the deceased wished to see their garden more than the house itself.³ Expressed in texts, the garden represented their own field of reeds in which they had created within their earthly lives.⁴

The orientation in which the elevated beds were created was also significant in relation to its purpose. The elevated beds were orientated specifically to represent Re and Osiris. Re symbolized the east and west oriented beds during the 18th dynasty whilst Osiris symbolized the north and south facing beds in the 19th dynasty. The main reason behind this ideology was that both of these gods were recognized as the main divinities vital to the salvation of the deceased ancestor. The change in the elevated beds orientation during the 19th dynasty probably occurred due to an increase in Osiris popularity, which had been stifled during the Amarna period.

It was important for the *ba* of the deceased to follow the solar cycle of the sun god but also to have an eternal body like Osiris, where their *ba* could rest.⁵

² Wilkinson 1998:99.

³ Assmann 2005: 221.

⁴ Assmann 2005: 221-222.

⁵ Assmann 2005:92, 373.

The iconographies drawn upon the elevated beds reflect the homeowner's desire for the ancestors to be reborn within the fields of reeds. The underlining symbolic meanings behind the elevated beds existing iconographies reflects this desire.

The depiction of the female musician represented upon S.E.VIII can be linked to the symbolic idea surrounding the funerary procession. Female instrumentalists were utilized in funerary processions in order to reawaken the deceased within the afterlife. These celebratory processions not only had musicians, but also had bearers carrying food offerings for the deceased, incense was burned by priests, and numerous people were dancing to the music whilst women were mourning.

These convey the reawakening of the senses. This could be seen as the 'smell' of the incense, the 'taste' of the offerings, the 'sight' of the erotic Hathor dresses worn by female dancers and musicians, and upon the 'hearing' of the music. These main components were used to 'reawaken' the deceased through the revitalization and the heightening of their senses.

There is also however another important symbolic element for the usage of a female musician. The oboe in which she carries, and the nakedness combined with the Hathor dress, suggests rebirth. This could also be seen, not only as the rebirth of the person but also of the senses within the afterlife.

The rebirth of an ancestor within the afterlife was crucial, so it was important to do whatever was necessary to help their transition into the netherworld.

The convolvulus can be identified upon three of the elevated beds which have remaining iconographies. Although it is a plant usually associated with childbirth, it is a fertility symbol used to convey rebirth. It has been portrayed upon offering bowls, sarcophagi and even surrounding Amenhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari in the tomb of Kynebu (See Fig. 30). In these instances the convolvulus has been utilized to suggest not only the rebirth of the individual within the afterlife, but the continuous cycle of the properties associated with rebirth, such as youth, strength, and power.

This importance of rebirth is expressed explicitly in the image represented upon elevated bed S.E.I. The most effective way they could convey rebirth is by portraying a birth related scene. It reflects the wish of the ancestors to be reborn within the afterlife, providing them with the ability to return to their home. These transitions were protected by the god Bes, who was habitually used to decorate a majority of elevated beds, therefore expressing an importance to individuals in life and in death.

Bes had numerous roles which were necessary to the people at Deir el-Medina. Although he was popular in everyday affairs such as childbirth, he also had a main role within the afterlife of the deceased. Due to his grotesque form and the weapons he held, Bes was associated with protection. This protective role is clearly indicated upon elevated bed N.E.X where Bes has been depicted with outstretched wings.

Bes also had an additional important role however, which is also depicted upon the elevated beds. In both instances upon elevated beds N.E.XII and N.E.X Bes is holding reeds, not weapons. These reeds represent the field of reeds. It is a constituent of the afterlife in which

the deceased ancestor wished to attain to. It was only after the judgment of Osiris that the deceased was granted access, however Bes' main role consisted of enabling the deceased to be reborn within the field of reeds. Not only did Bes protect the deceased when they first entered into the field of reeds, after their successful judgement, but also during every transition when the ancestor passed from the human world back into the field of reeds. This is undoubtedly depicted upon N.E.X where Bes has been portrayed with female breasts conveying a motherly role during this rebirth transition.

The field of Reeds is where the leisure activities of the deceased occurred. The most famous are known as the fishing and fowling in the marsh scenes. These scenes are usually portrayed within a tomb context. The deceased is usually portrayed doing both these activities, however whether they conducted these actions in life is uncertain but it was important for them to aspire to these roles within the afterlife. According to Hornung the deceased did not wish to do chores of menial or manual labour in the next life.⁶

According to Parkinson, the fowling scenes symbolized the deceased ability to conquer death.⁷ More importantly however the scenes also represented rebirth.⁸

C.VII represents the main purpose and focus for the use of the elevated bed. It portrays an individual giving praise though adoration and possibly providing offerings. Adoration scenes do not depict the participants as being naked, this suggests that in their first stage of development they were depicted as being fully clothed.

⁶ Hornung 1990: 139.

⁷ Parkinson 2008:132.

⁸ Parkinson 2008:132.

This scene proposes that the elevated beds were indeed used for adoration purposes. The added presence of the convolvulus suggests the continuous cycle of rebirth and adoration towards the deceased ancestors.

The elevated bed therefore was a garden altar positioned within the frontal room, signifying a connection to the deceased. The garden was identified with Re and Osiris who symbolized the resurrection and the netherworld.⁹ The elevated beds or 'garden altars' were used for religious practices towards reawakening the ancestors and in order to praise the rebirth and the continuous renewal and everlasting salvation of the deceased.

⁹ Wilkinson 1998:99.

APPENDIX 1

Position in accordance to the axis of the Household	Number
North Wall	0
North-East Wall	2
North West Wall	11
East Wall	1
South Wall	0
South East Wall	10
South West Wall	3
West Wall	1
Total	29

Phase One Development:

Position in accordance to the axis of the Household	Number
North Wall	0
North-East Wall	2
North West Wall	6
East Wall	0
South Wall	0
South East Wall	5
South West Wall	2
West Wall	0
Total	15

Phase Two: The addition to the west:

Position in accordance to the axis of the Household	Number
North Wall	0
North-East Wall	0
North West Wall	0
East Wall	0
South Wall	0
South East Wall	3
South West Wall	0
West Wall	0
Total	3

Phase Three: North addition:

Position in accordance to the axis of the Household	Number
North Wall	0
North-East Wall	0
North West Wall	3
East Wall	0
South Wall	0
South East Wall	0
South West Wall	0
West Wall	0
Total	3

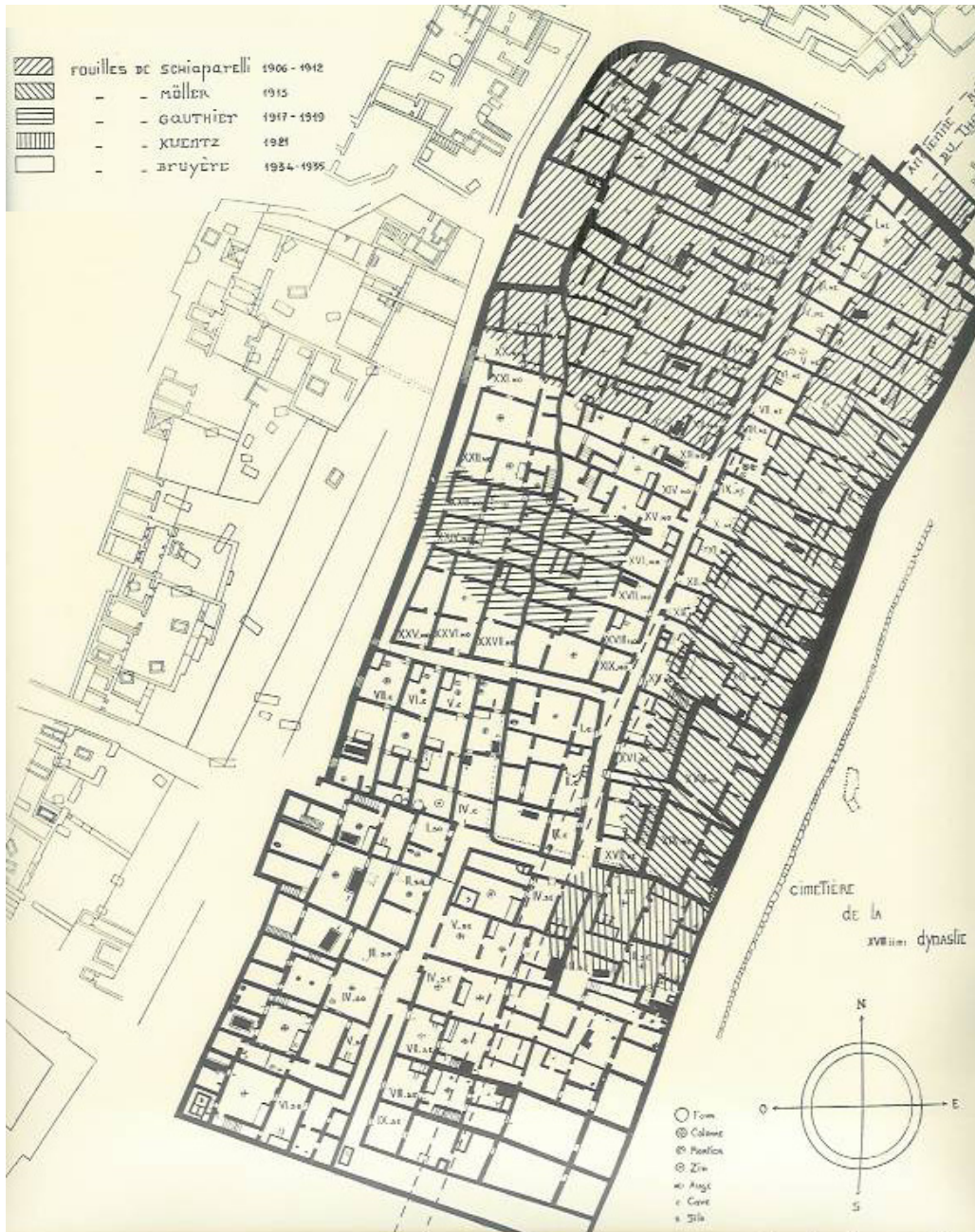
Phase Three: South addition:

Position in accordance to the axis of the Household	Number
North Wall	0
North-East Wall	1
North West Wall	3
East Wall	0
South Wall	0
South East Wall	2
South West Wall	1
West Wall	1
Total	8

Five tables of the orientations of the elevated beds within the houses at Deir el-Medina.

Source - Author

PLATE 1

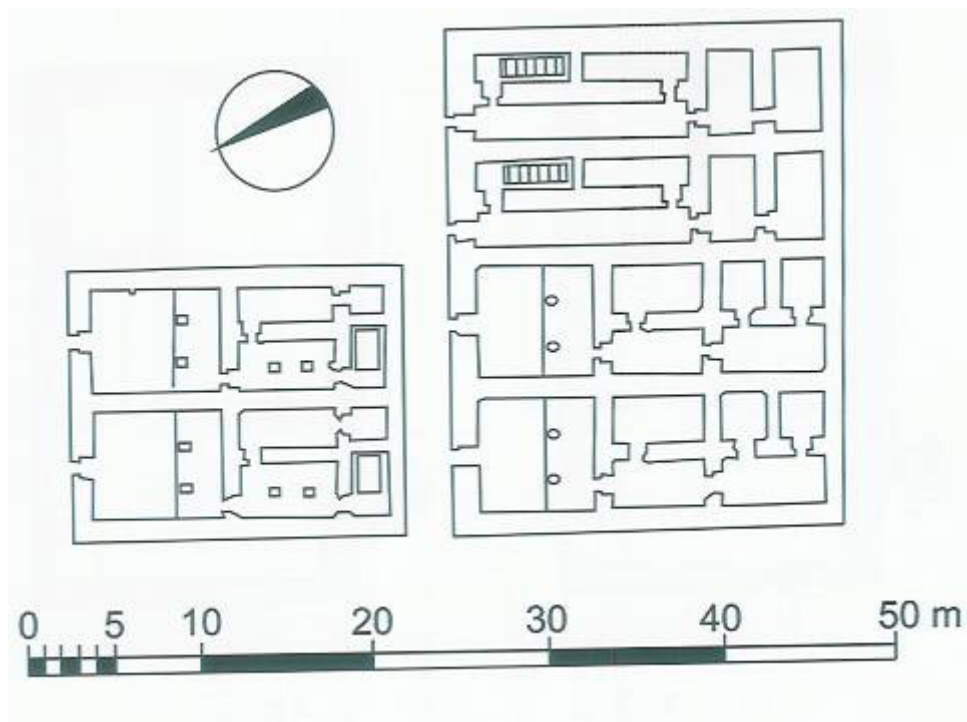


Map of the areas excavated by different Egyptologists.

Source - Bruyère, B. 1939. 'Rapport sur les Fouilles de Deir El Médineh 1934-35', *Fouilles de L'Institut Français D'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, vol. 16. Cairo.

Plate XXVI.

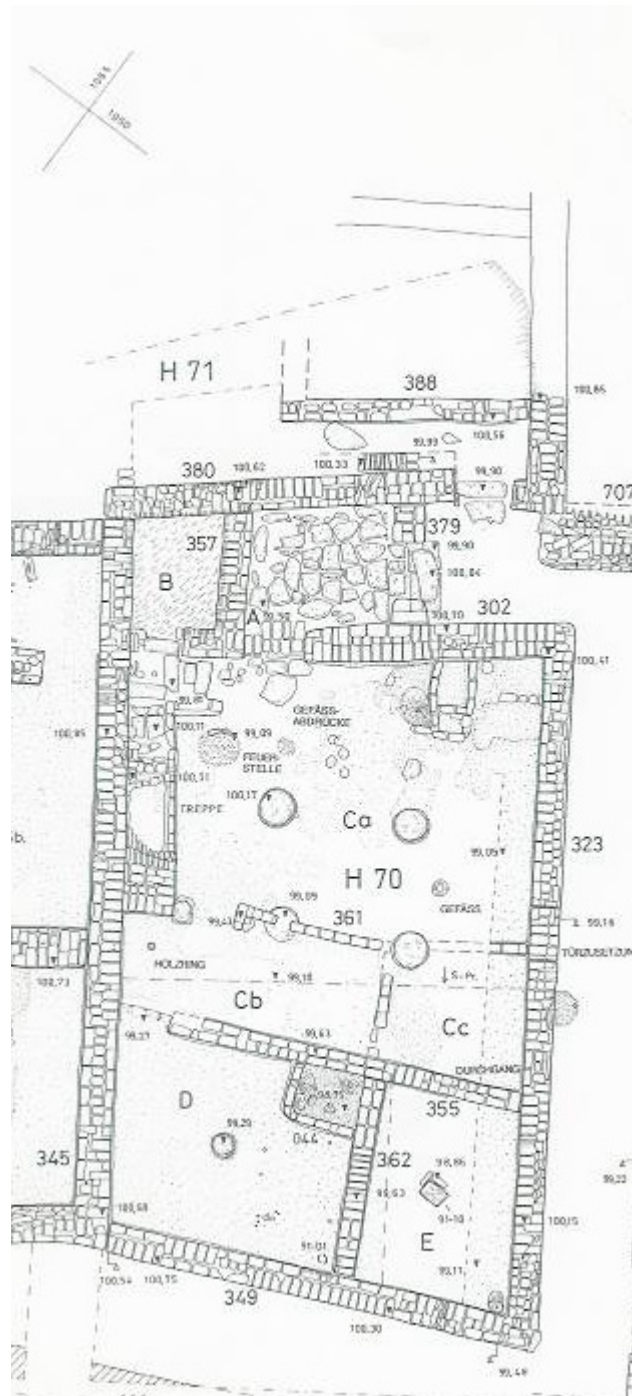
PLATE 2



Middle Kingdom houses at the Temple of Medamud.

Source – PKG 15, Vandersleyen, C., (Hrg.). 1975. *Das alte Ägypten, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, Bd. 15*. Berlin.

PLATE 3



Map of the Middle Kingdom House 70 at Elephantine.

Source - Von Pilgrim, C. 1996b. 'Untersuchungen in der Stadt des Mittleren Reiches und der Zweiten Zwischenzeit,' *Elephantine* 18. Cairo, Abb 48.

PLATE 4



Photograph of House 70 second room at Elephantine.

Source - Photographer Peter Brooker.

PLATE 5



Photograph of the two rear rooms in House 70 at Elephantine.

Source - Photographer Peter Brooker.

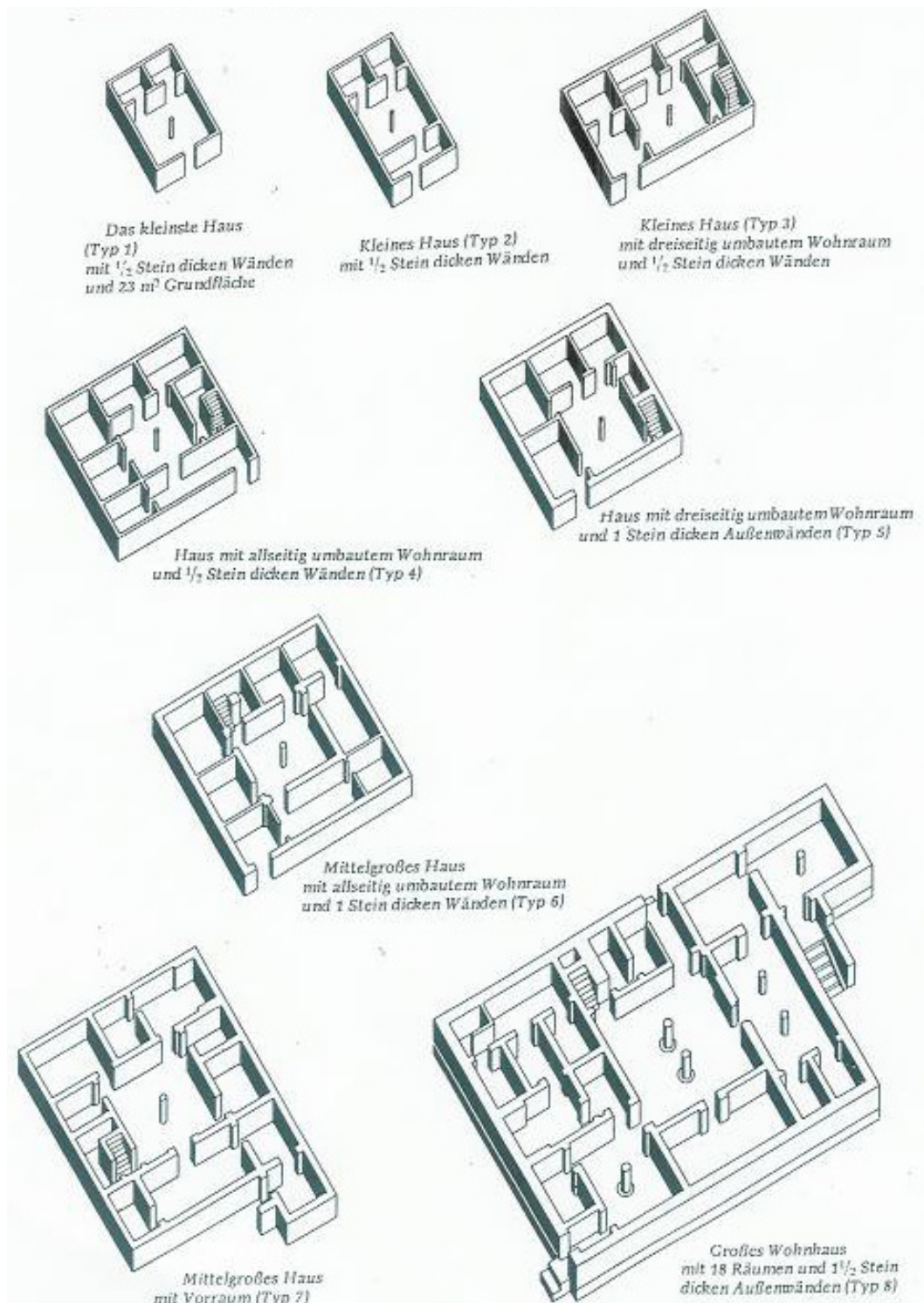
PLATE 6



Photograph of the far left back room of House 70 which contained a column.

Source - Photographer Peter Brooker.

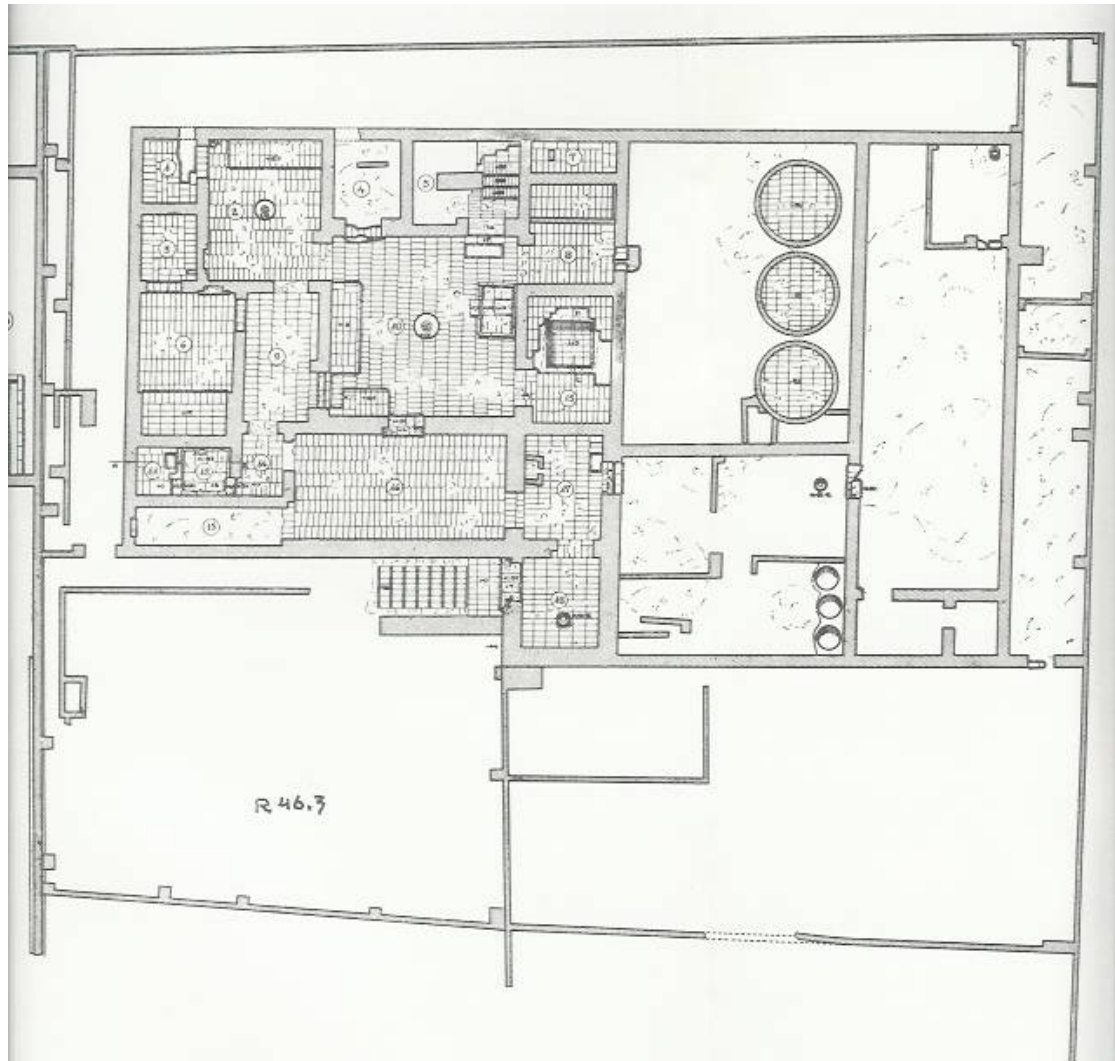
PLATE 7



Tietze categories of the different types of houses found at Tell el-Amarna.

Source - Tietze, C. 1996. 'Amarna, Wohn- und Lebensverhältnisse in einer ägyptischen Stadt', in M. Bietak (ed.), *Haus and Palast im Alten Ägypten*. Cairo, Abb 4.

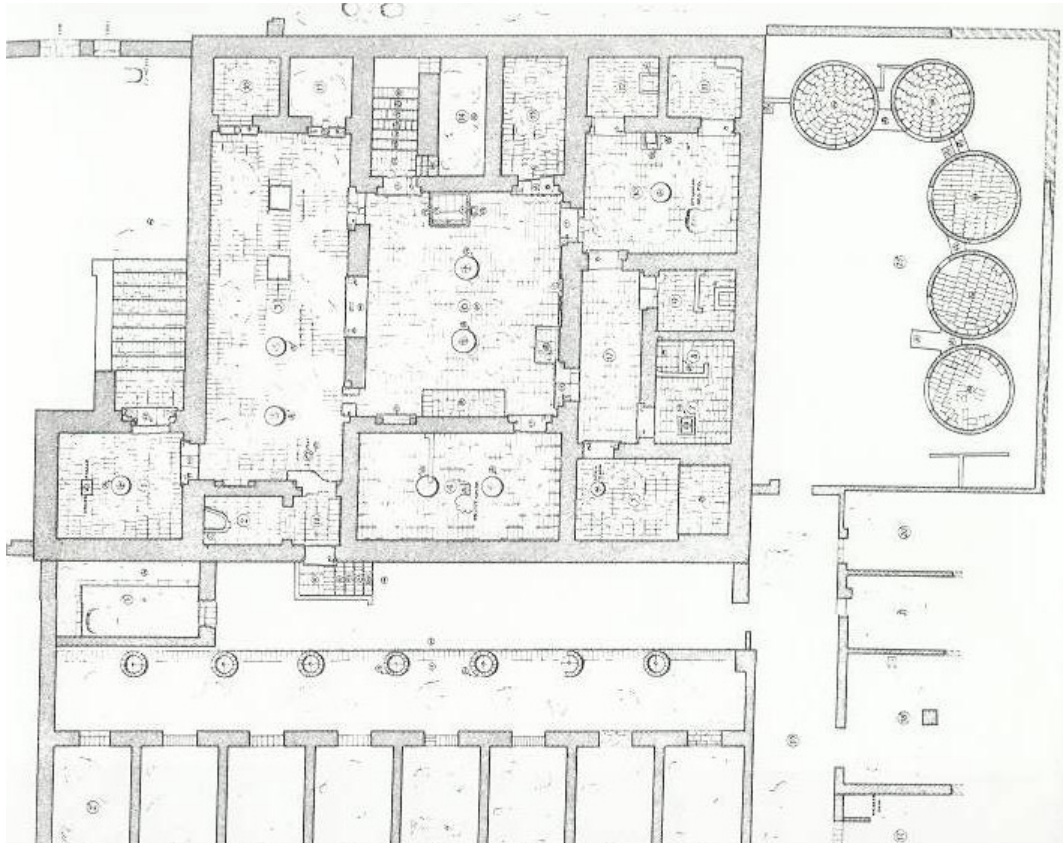
PLATE 8



Plan of Amarna villa R.46.3.

Source - Borhardt, L. and Ricke, H. 1980b. *Die Wohnhäuser in Tell el-Amarna 2*. Berlin, Plan 12.

PLATE 9



Plan of Amarna villa Q46.1.

Source - Borchardt, L. and Ricke, H. 1980b. *Die Wohnhäuser in Tell el-Amarna 2*. Berlin, Plan 2.

PLATE 10

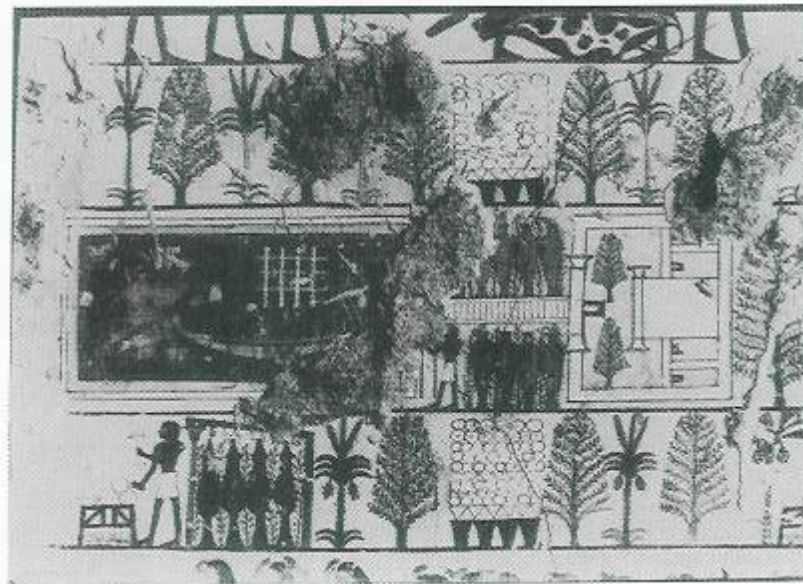
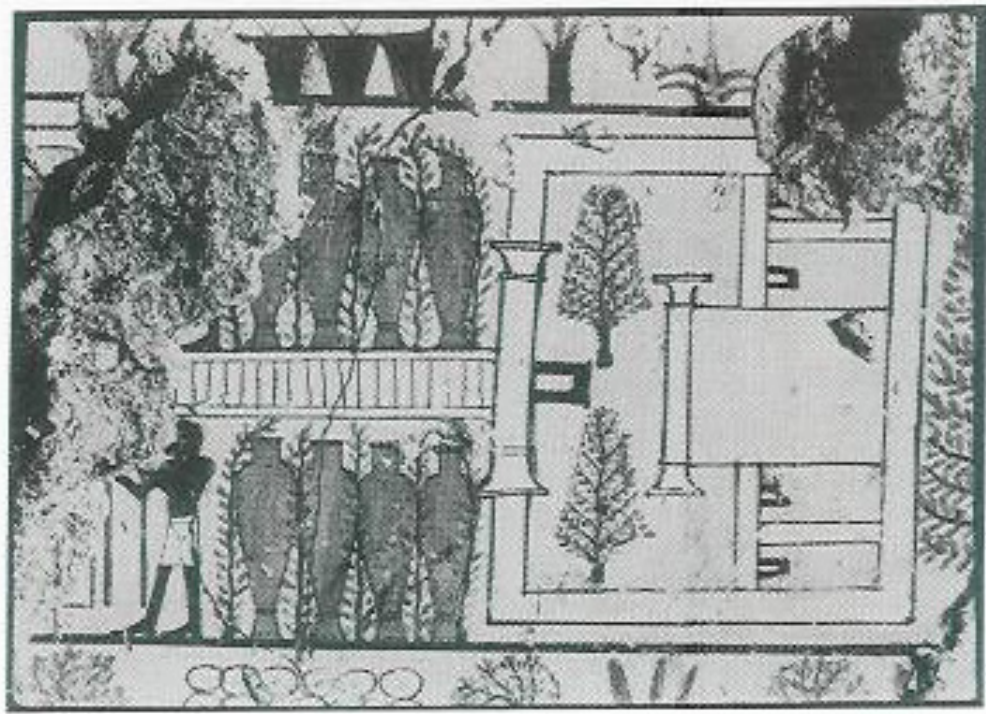


Image of a possible house from the tomb of Minnacht TT87.

Source – Top image-Roik, E. 1988b. ‘Das altägyptische Wohnhaus und seinē Darstellung im Flachbild. Teil 2: Abbildungen’, *Reihe XXXVIII Vol 15*. Frankfurt, Abb 85a and Abb85b.
Bottom image-Wreszinski, W. 1923-38. *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte I*. Leipzig. 278.

PLATE 11

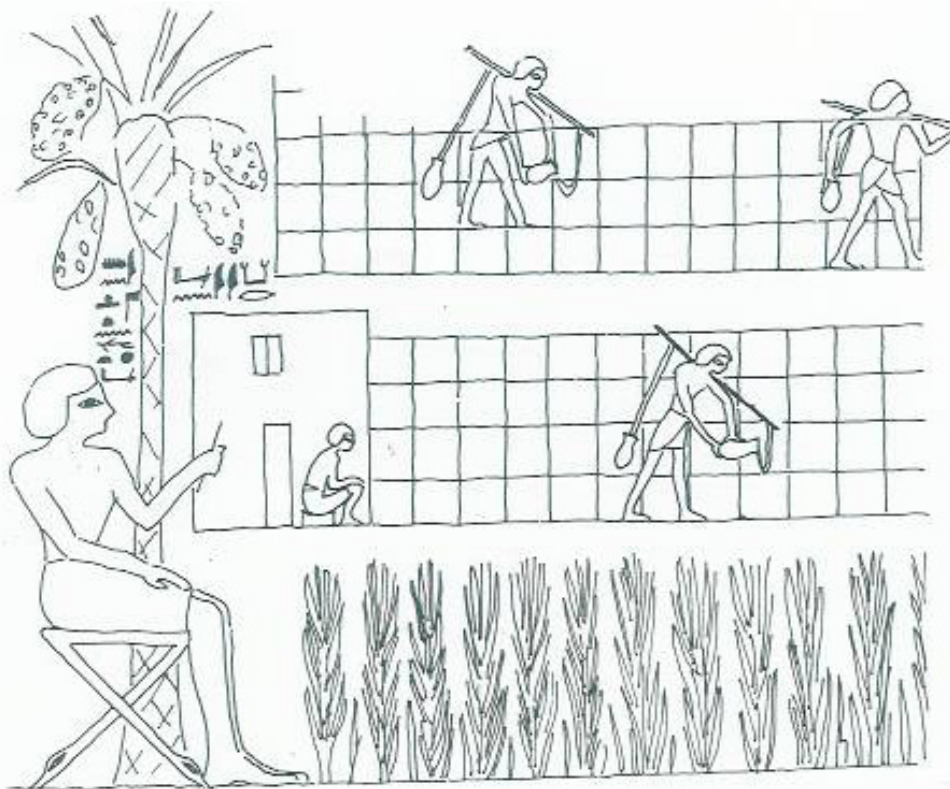
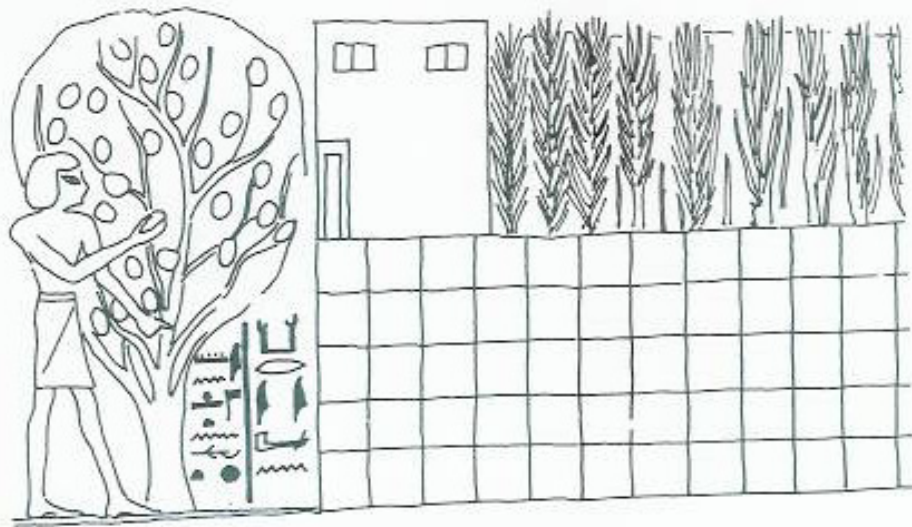
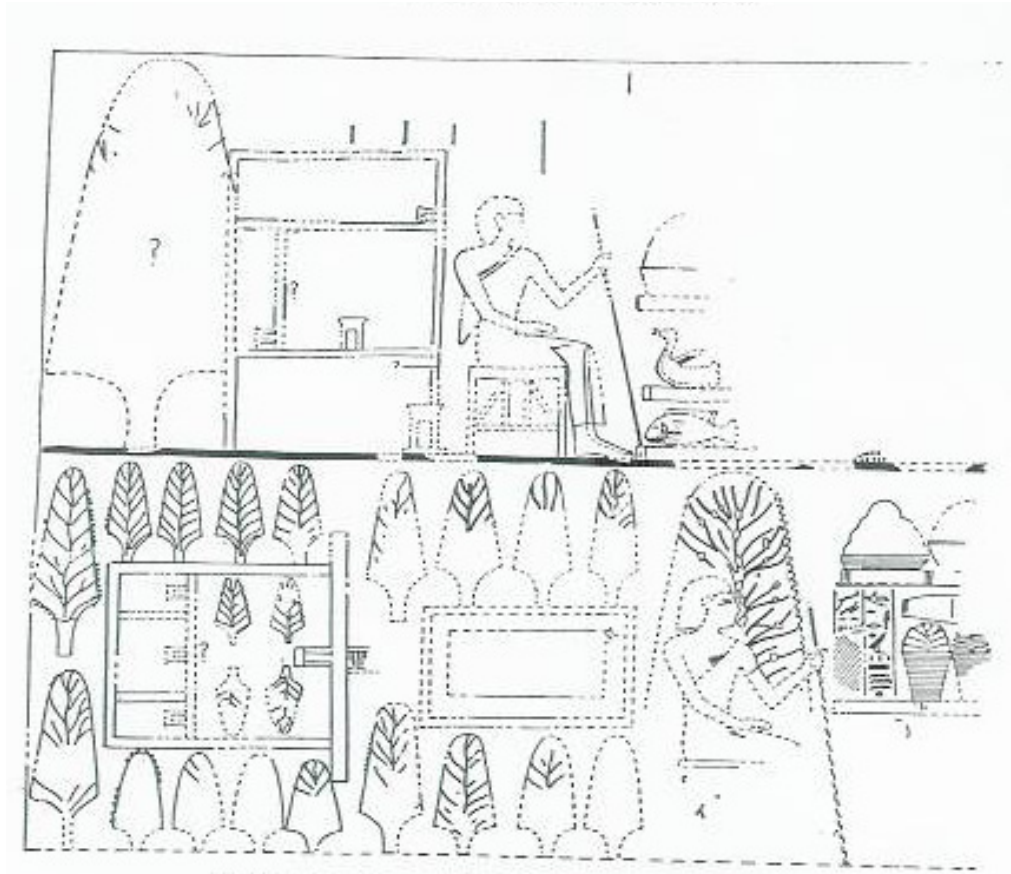


Image of a house from the tomb of Nakht TT161.

Source - Roik, E. 1988b. 'Das altägyptische Wohnhaus und seinē Darstellung im Flachbild. Teil 2: Abbildungen', *Reihe XXXVIII Vol 15*. Frankfurt, Abb 93a and Abb93b.

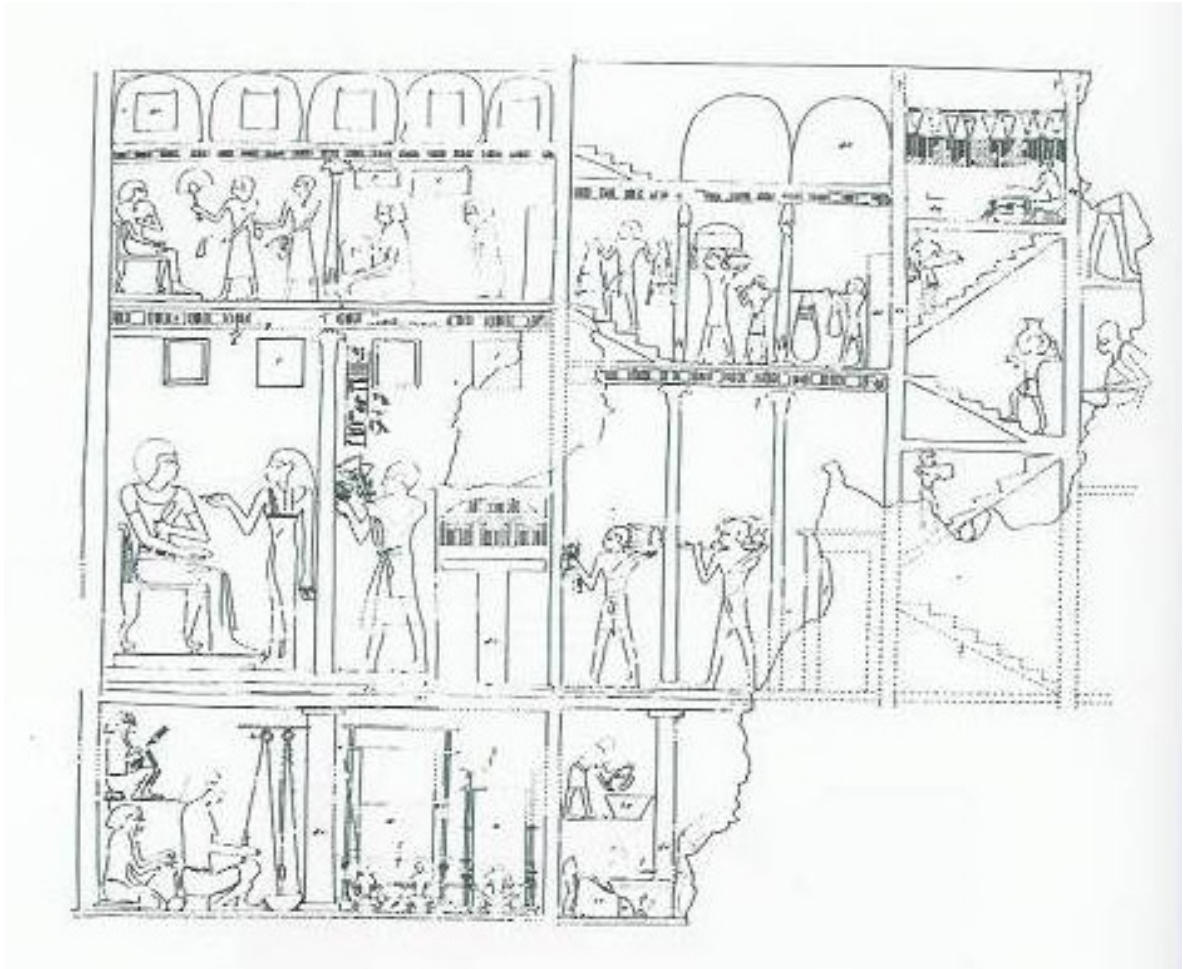
PLATE 12



Two house depictions within tomb TT 334.

Source - Davies N. de G. 1929. 'The Town House in Ancient Egypt', *Metropolitan Museum Studies I, (Part 2)*, Pl. 9.

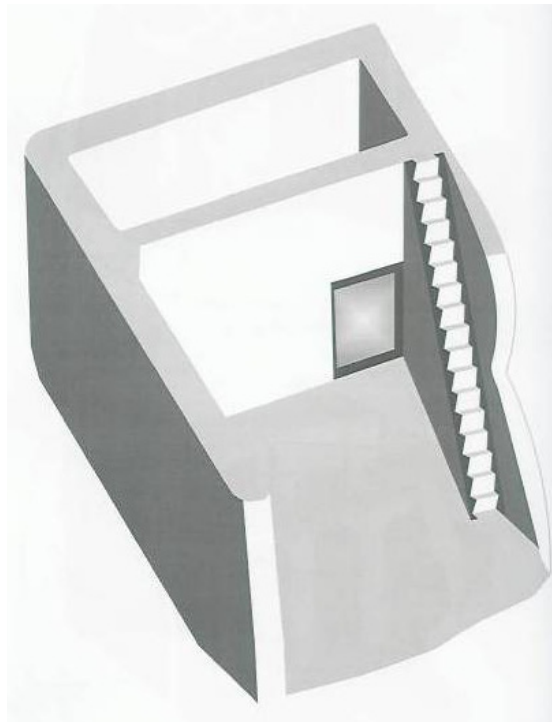
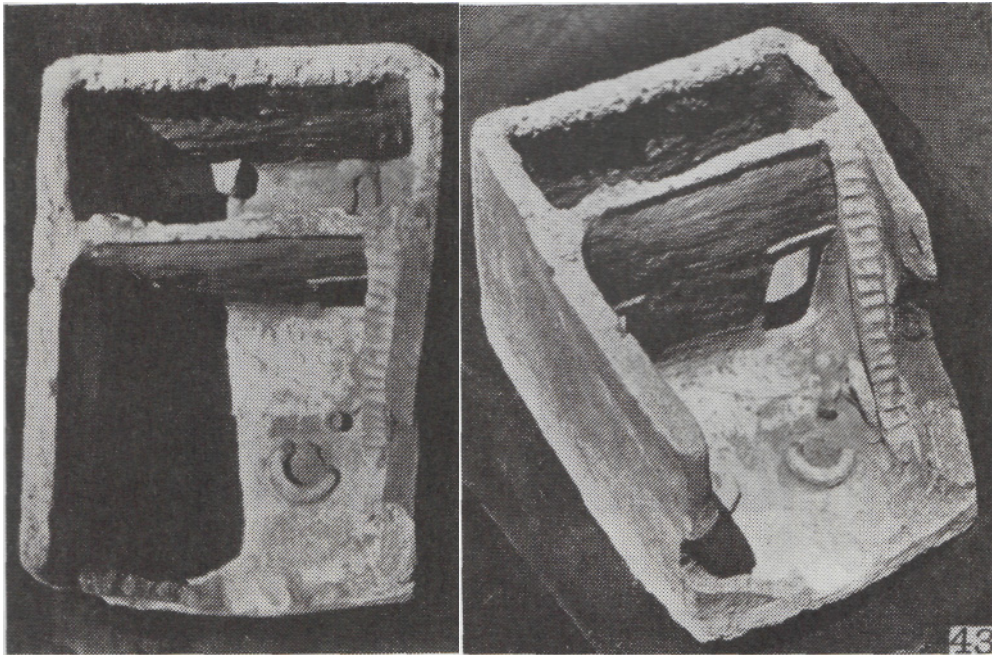
PLATE 13



Section through a house from the tomb of Thutnefer TT104.

Source – Davies N. de G. 1929. 'The Town House in Ancient Egypt', *MMS I, (Part 2)*. Figures 1-2.

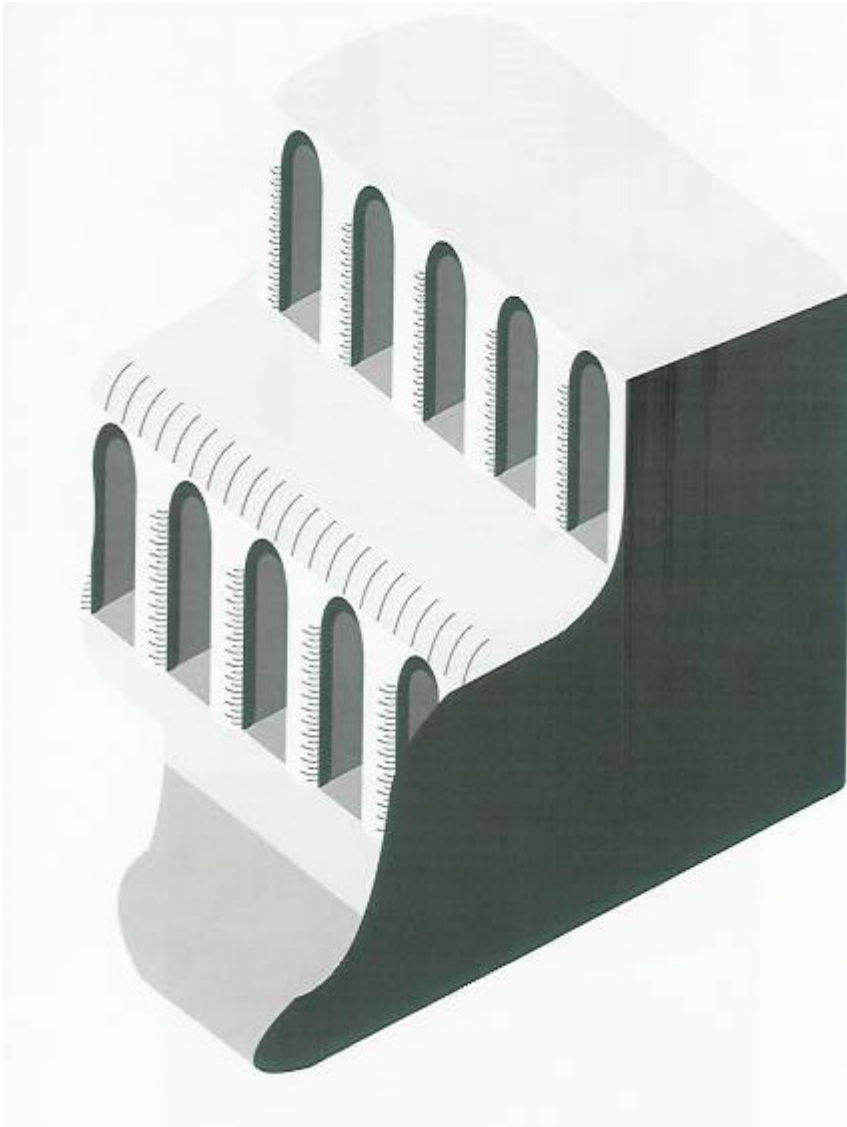
PLATE 14



Model of a house, Pt.43 from Rifeh.

Source – Top two images- Petrie, W.M.F. 1907. *Gizeh and Rifeh*. London. Plate 19. Bottom image- Koltsida, A. 2007. 'Social Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Domestic Architecture', *BAR International Series 1608*. Oxford, Plate 13.

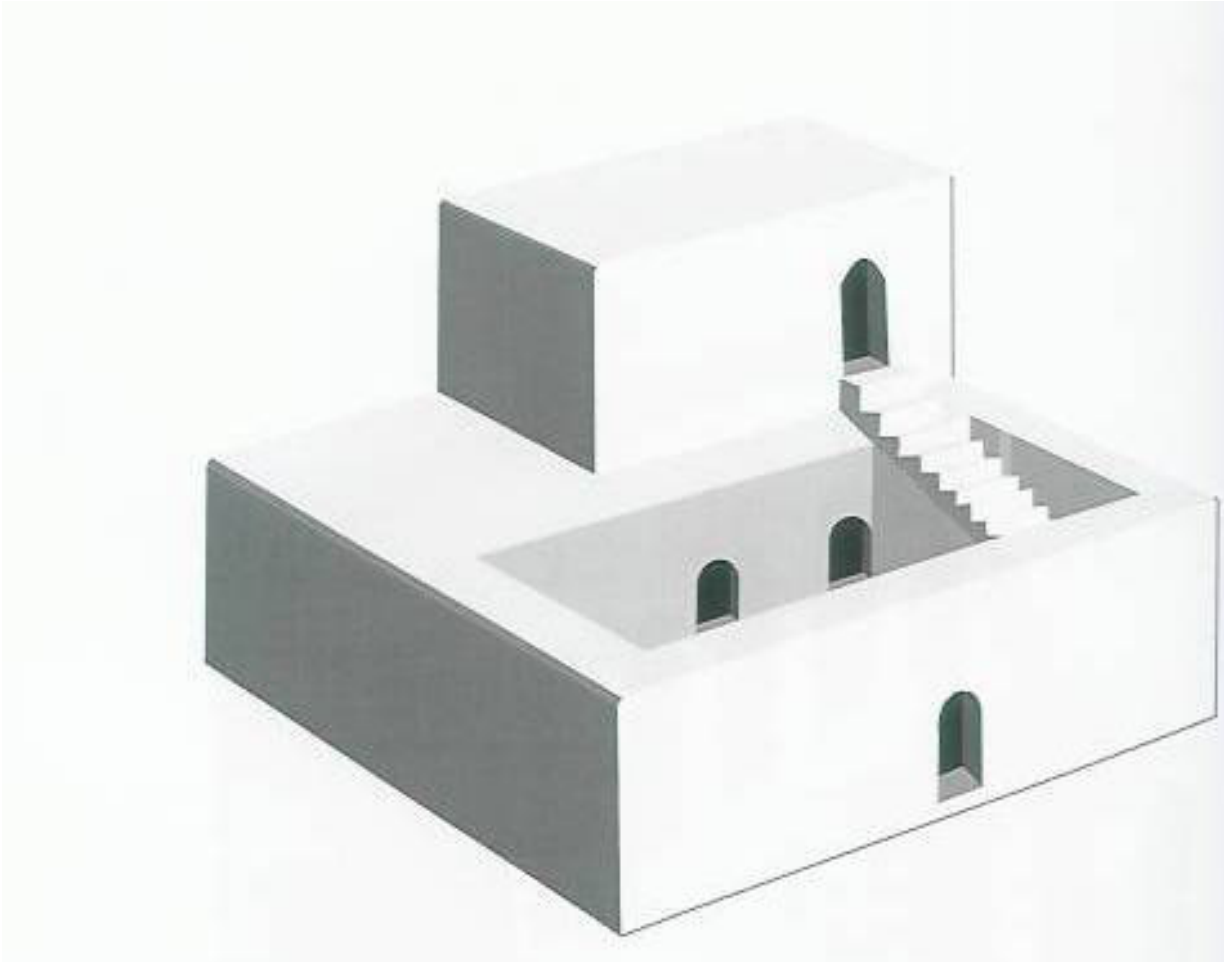
PLATE 15



Map Model of a house, Pt.20 from Rifeh.

Source - Koltsida, A. 2007. 'Social Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Domestic Architecture', *BAR International Series 1608*. Oxford, Plate 14.

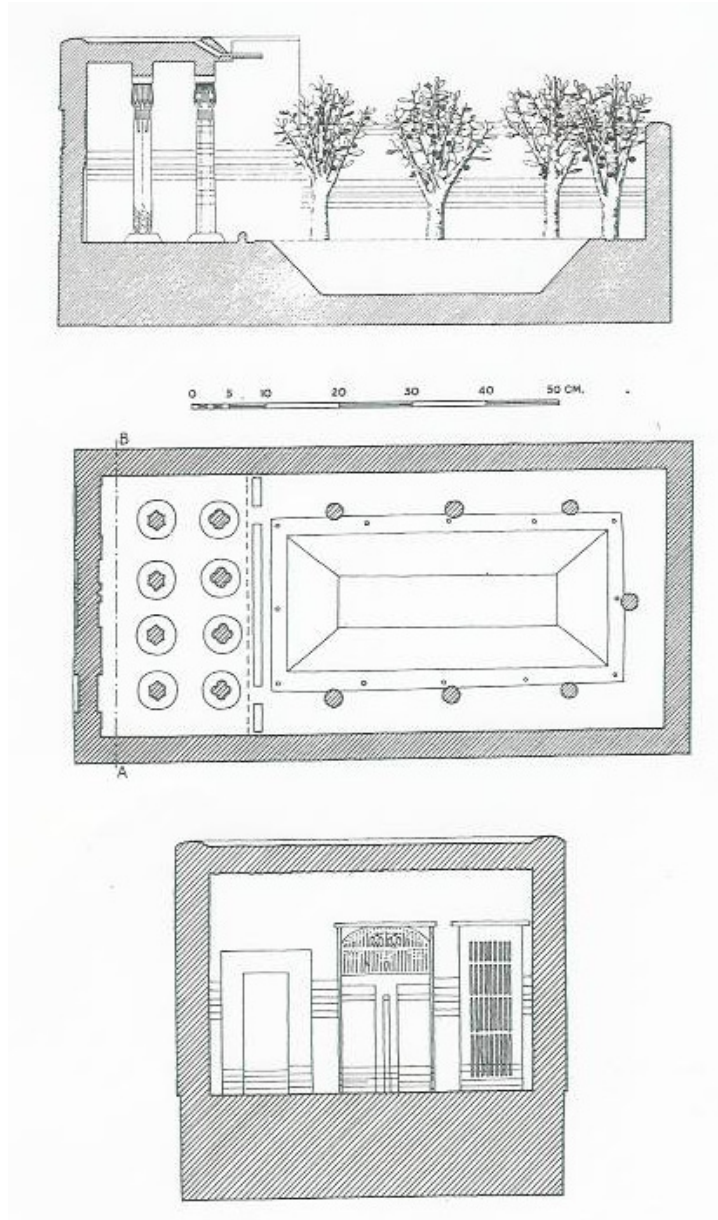
PLATE 16



Model of a house, from the Louvre.

Source - Koltsida, A. 2007. 'Social Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Domestic Architecture', *BAR International Series 1608*. Oxford, Plate 15.

PLATE 17



Model of the front of a house, Tomb of Meketre.

Source - Roik, E. 1988b. 'Das altägyptische Wohnhaus und seinē Darstellung im Flachbild. Teil 2: Abbildungen', *Reihe XXXVIII Vol 15*. Frankfurt, Abb 40a.

PLATE 18



Wooden model of the front room of a house JE 46721, Tomb of Meretre (TT280).

Source - Arnold, D. 1999. 'The Middle Kingdom and Changing Notions of Kingship', in F. Tiradritti (ed.), *The Cairo Museum Masterpieces of Egyptian Art*. London, 113.

PLATE 19



Three elevated beds from Deir el-Medina. Top: CVII, Middle: N.E.XI. Bottom: N.E.VI.

Source – Photographer Peter Brooker

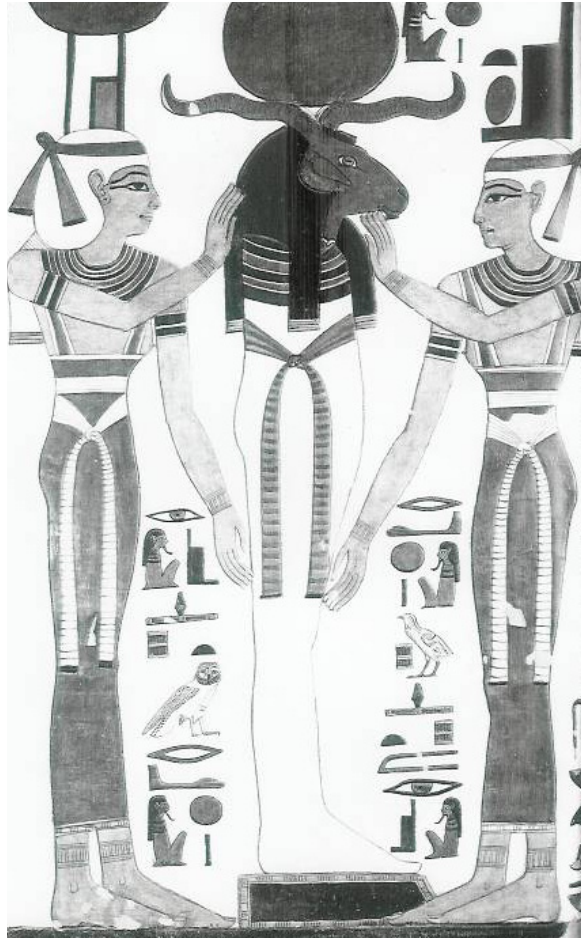
PLATE 20



A wooden model fishing scene from the tomb of Meketre (TT280). JE 46715.

Source - Arnold, D. 1999. 'The Middle Kingdom and Changing Notions of Kingship', in F. Tiradritti (ed.), *The Cairo Museum Masterpieces of Egyptian Art*. London, Fig 116-117.

PLATE 21



Tomb of Nefertari: Nephthys (left) and Isis (right) embracing the ‘united ba’, adorned with the bangles usually worn by goddesses.

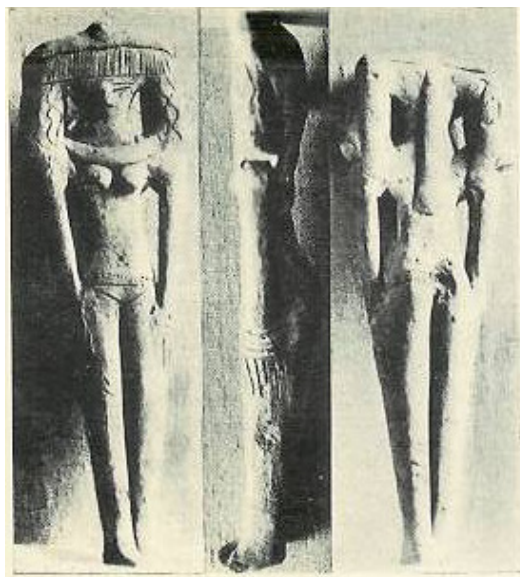
Source - McDonald, J.K. 1996. *House of Eternity: The Tomb of Nefertari*. London. 50.

PLATE 22 a and b



a. Female figurines from Abydos.

Source - Bruyère, B. 1939. 'Rapport sur les Fouilles De Deir El Medineh 1934-35', *Fouilles de L'Institut Français D'Archeologie Orientale du Caire*, vol. 16. Cairo. Fig 50- no.39766



b. Female figurines from Gebelein.

Source - Bruyère, B. 1939. 'Rapport sur les Fouilles De Deir El Medineh 1934-35', *Fouilles de L'Institut Français D'Archeologie Orientale du Caire*, vol. 16. Cairo. Fig 47. no. 41792.

PLATE 23



19th Dynasty limestone headrest of Qeniherkhepeshef from Deir el-Medina. British Museum EA BM 63783.

Source - Bierbrier, M. 1982. *The Tomb-Builders of the Pharaohs*. London. Fig. 49.

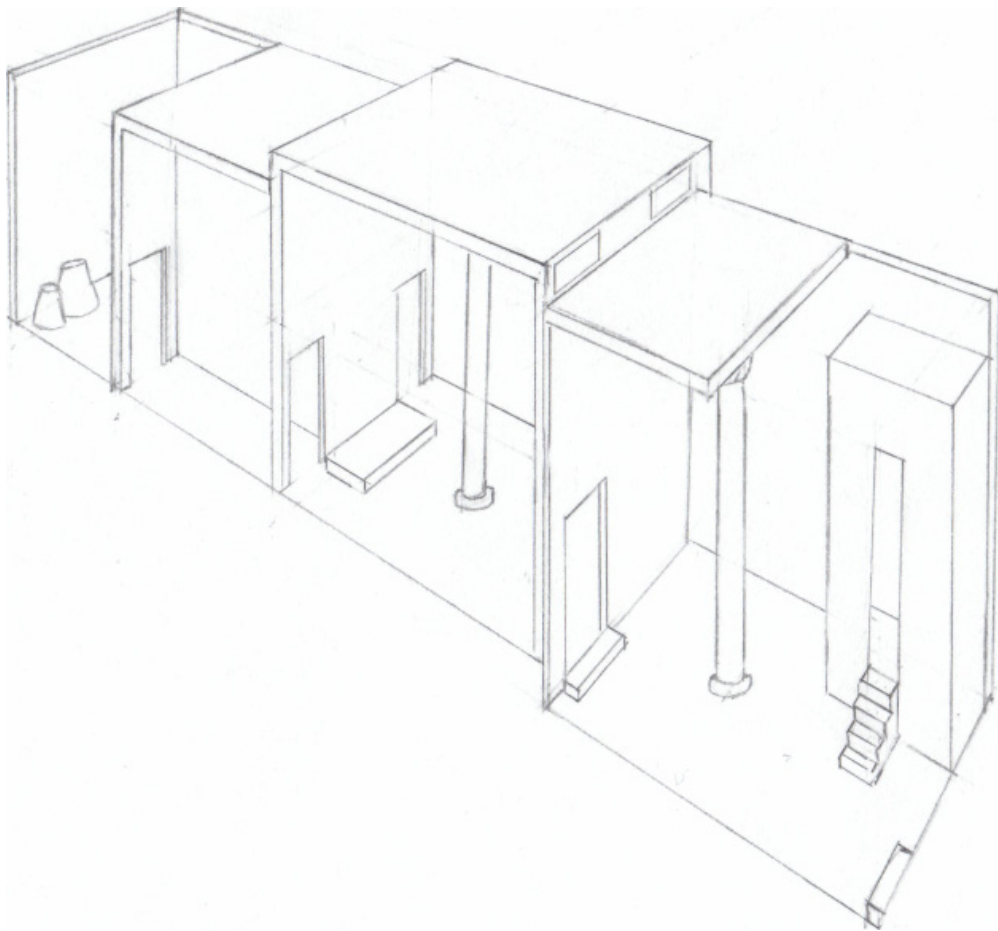
PLATE 24



Panehesy's Shrine from house T41.1 in the central city of Amarna.

Source - Stevens, A. 2006. 'Private Religion at Amarna', *BAR International Series 1587*.
Oxford. Fig II.13.2.

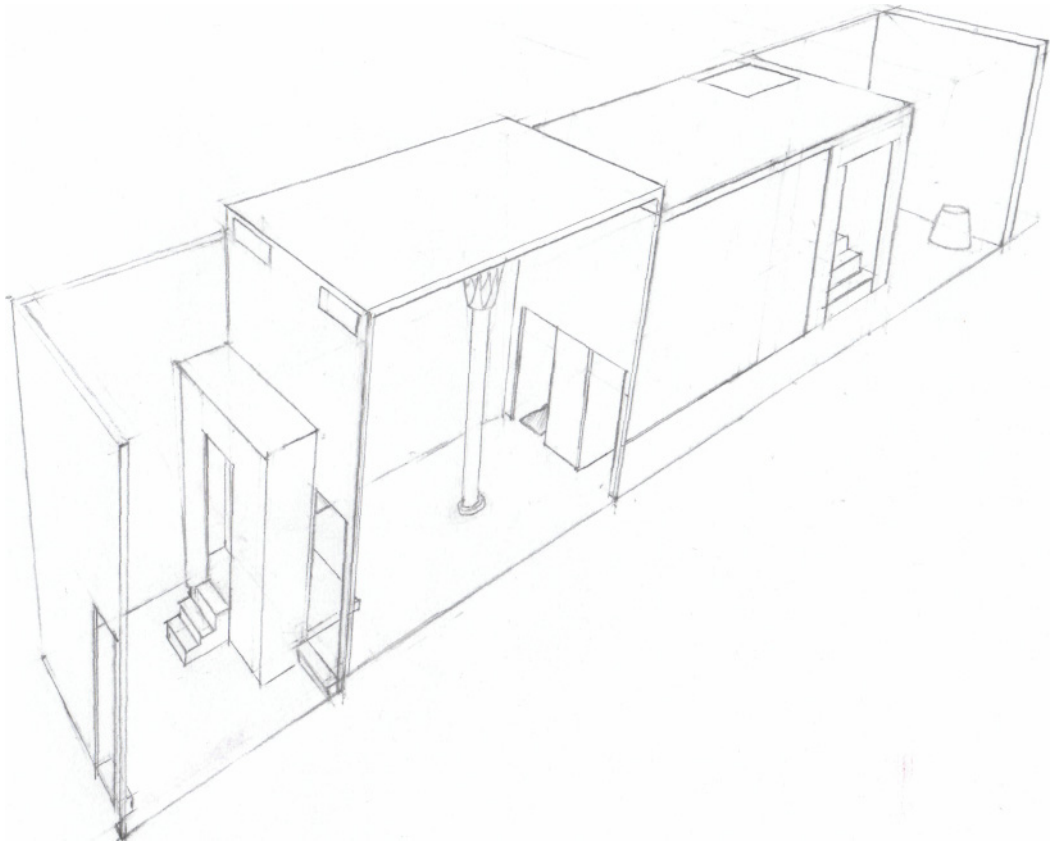
PLATE 25



A line drawing reconstruction of House C.VI

Source - Author

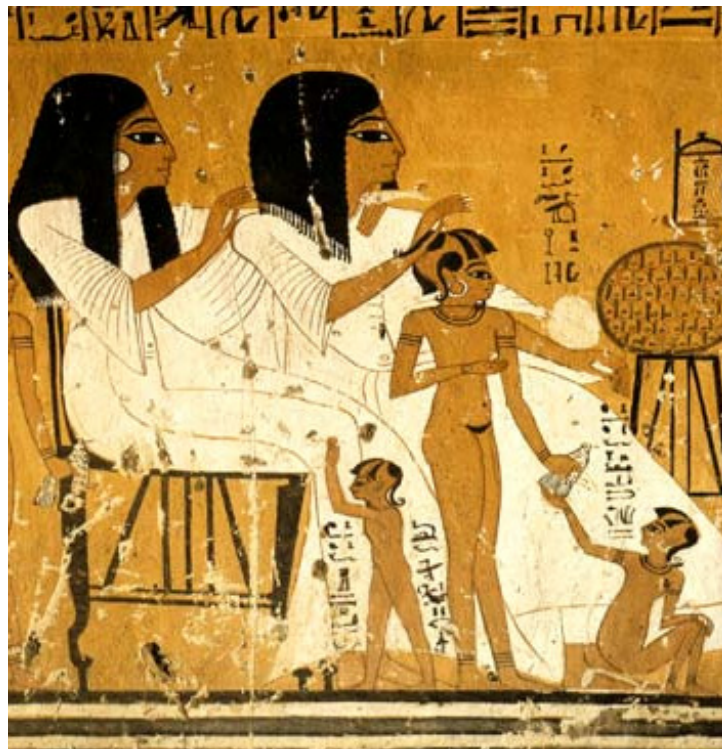
PLATE 26



A line drawing reconstruction of House N.E.X

Source - Author

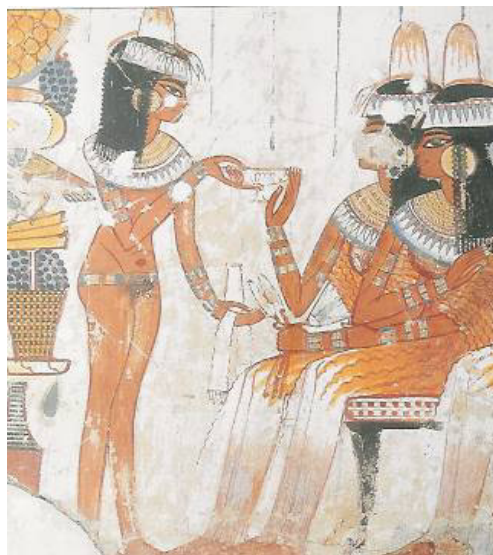
PLATE 27



A section from the Deir el-Medina tomb of Anhirkawi TT 359

Source - Bruyère, B. 1933. 'Rapport sur les Fouilles de Deir El Médineh 1930', *Fouilles de L'Institut Français D'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, vol. 8 (3). Cairo. Plate XVII.

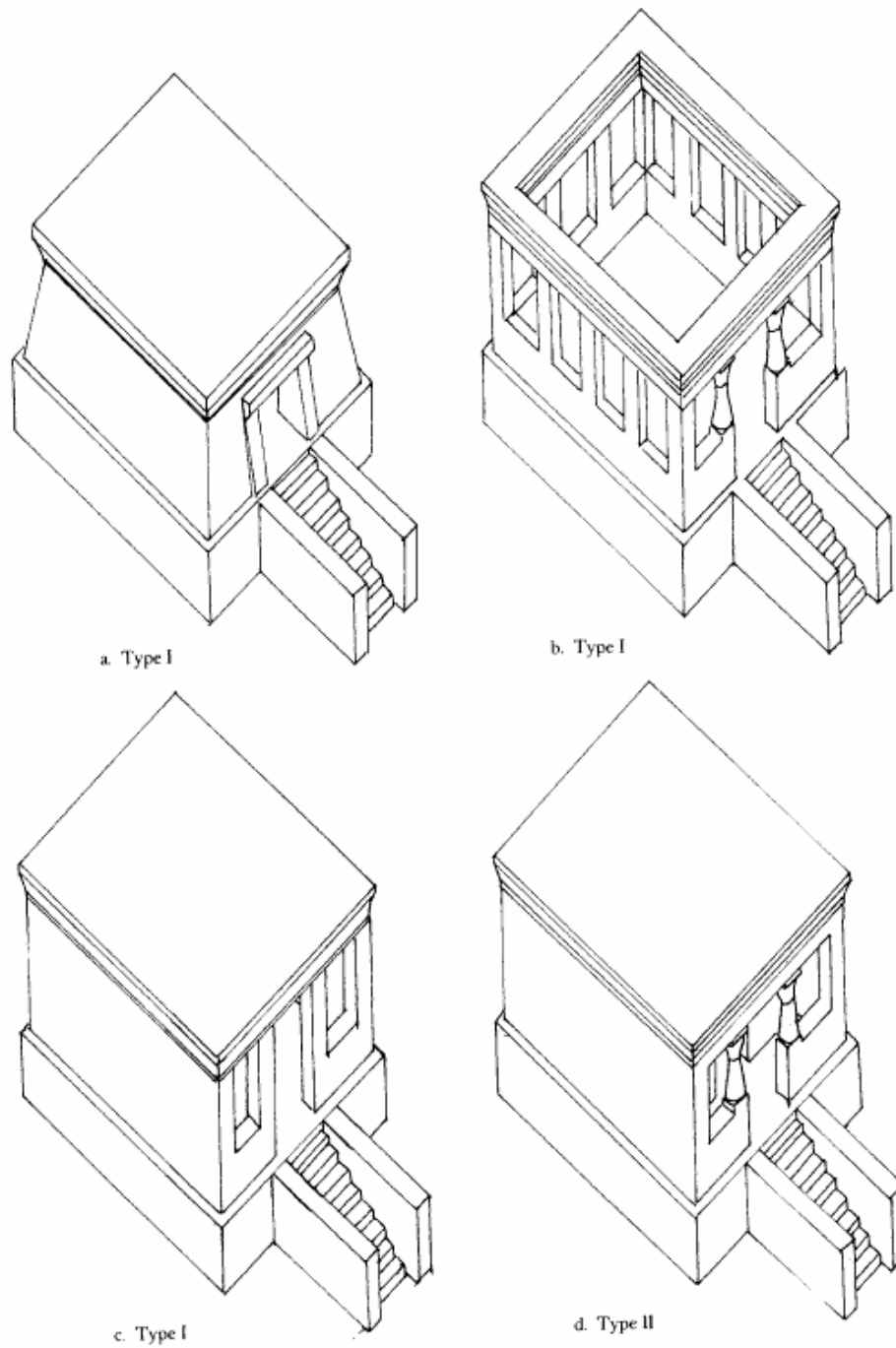
PLATE 28



Depiction of young females from the 18th Dynasty tomb chapel of Nebamun. British Museum. Top EA 37984, Bottom EA 37986.

Source: Parkinson, R. 2008. *The Painted Tomb-Chapel of Nebamun. Masterpieces of ancient Egyptian art in the British Museum*. London. Fig. 91 and 95.

PLATE 29



The Types of Garden Altars Constructed at Amarna

Source: Ikram, S. 1989. 'Domestic Shrines and the Cult of the Royal Family at el-'Amarna', *JEA* 75, 98, Fig. 3.

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