



Original article

BED GEM 14276 OF TUTANKHAMUN ETERNAL PROTECTION AND REBIRTH

Tawfik, T.

Egyptology dept., Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo Univ., Giza, Egypt

E-mail address: tarektawfik@cu.edu.eg

Article info.

Article history:

Received: 3-1-2025

Accepted: 1-3-2025

Doi: 10.21608/ejars.2026.499291

Keywords:

Tutankhamun bed

Bes

Ipet

Taweret

Annexe

Yuya

EJARS – Vol. SI (1) – April 2026: SI 41-SI 50

Abstract:

From the beds found in the tomb of king Tutankhamun only one shows images of two protective deities: a hippopotamus-goddess and Bes figures. The re-examination and detailed analysis of the decoration of this gilded bed GEM 14276 (JE 62015, Carter No. 377), comparing it to the beds from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya (KV46) provide new insights about the functions of this specific kind of bed as a possible place for the intimate royal marital relations and the ritual use for eternal protection and rebirth. Furthermore, the function of the location of discovery, which Howard Carter called the annexe and labeled as merely a "store room" is reevaluated according to the nature of its contents serving as chamber housing the provisions needed for the afterlife in connection with perpetual rebirth.

1. Introduction

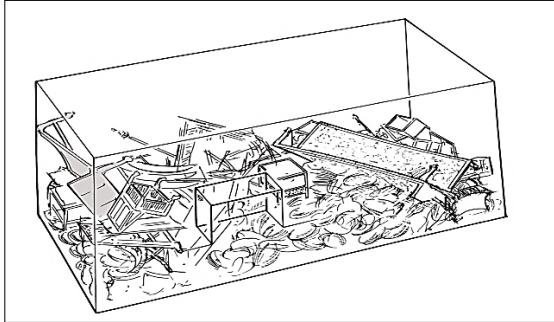
The tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62), which was discovered in the year 1922, still contained the majority of its original contents. Among the furniture were six beds, three funerary couches and a bier. They were distributed in three of the four rooms of the tomb. The question has been raised whether these beds were actually used during the lifetime of the king or if they were used only or mainly as funerary equipment [1]. The gilded bed GEM 14276 (JE 62015, Carter No. 377) stands out through its decoration depicting two protective deities: a hippopotamus-goddess and Bes.

2. Location of Discovery

The gilded bedstead (Carter No. 377) was discovered in the annexe of the tomb of Tutankhamun and is described by Carter on his object cards as follows: "Resting on its side upon a heap of divers objects S. end of chamber" [2], fig. (1). With dimensions of 4.35 m by 2.6 m and a height of 2.55 m the annexe is the smallest of the four rooms making up the tomb of Tutankhamun. Its entrance is in the south half of the west wall of the antechamber and

was hidden behind a ritual couche. Obviously, the order of contents in the annexe was violently disturbed by robbers, who had entered the tomb sometime soon after Tutankhamun's burial. The tomb had to be reclosed twice and sealed by the guards of the necropolis [3]. Different than in the rest of the tomb, little care was given into placing the objects in the annexe back in their original position before they had been tampered with by the looters. All entrances in the tomb were blocked again, plastered and stamped with the name of the king and the seal of the necropolis except for the entrance to the annexe where the hole made by the robbers in the lower half of the blocking had not been repaired [4]. The bed did not need to be dismantled and reassembled to be placed in the annexe as it fits through the entrance opening which is 0.95 m wide and 1.3 m high. There is no reason to doubt that the bed was part of the original inventory of the annexe and that it was placed in the south side of the room on top of a pile of boxes, baskets, game boards, boat models, alabaster vessels, etc. It was probably one of the final objects to be put in the room right before it

was closed and sealed. Presumably the robbers turned it on its side to have more room in the confined space of the annexe to look for their preferred loot. Their chief objectives were precious metals, oils and unguents [3].



**Figure (1)** a cutaway diagram of the annexe, showing the position of bedstead GEM 14276 *in situ* at the time of discovery. (Modified After: Reeves, N. 2009).

### 3. Methodology

Following a descriptive investigative approach, the form, construction and decoration of the gilded bed GEM 14276 is examined in detail. Then an analytical study of the artistic characteristics and the religious aspects of the bed is conducted. Through detailed examination and analysis of the decoration, this article attempts to explain the function of this bed as a platform to ensure eternal protection and rebirth taking into consideration the location of discovery and the comparison to other beds of similar shape from the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

### 4. Description of the Bed

Although gilded, the bedstead (Carter No. 377) did not draw much attention or interest from Howard Carter. Aside from the brief documentation on the object cards, which Carter professionally made for nearly every piece discovered in Tutankhamun's tomb, he mentions the bed only briefly and without much details in any of his publications. The workmanship and decoration did not impress Carter, he understating describes it as "the second specimen, of ebony gilt, although of not very fine work, was in fair condition" [4]. On his object cards he further notes "In general the workmanship of the bedstead is rough – possible for sepulchral purpose" [2]. Later publications [3] and catalogs have also remained brief about this bed and its decoration.

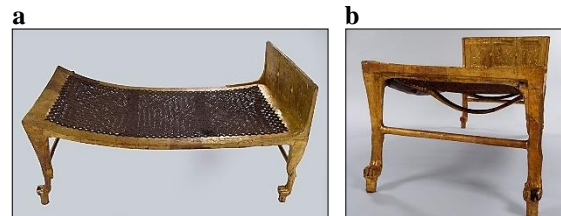
#### 4.1. Materials and dimensions

- **Material:** *Acacia* and *Tamarix* wood (not ebony as Carter had suggested), gesso stucco, gold leaf, linen of flax fibers (*Linum usitatissimum*) [5].
- **Dimensions:** max. L. 180.5 cm; max. W. 79.5 cm (foot panel): max. W. 80.5 (head- end), H. from ground 71.0 cm, H. above frame 27.5 cm; H. top of frame from ground: foot-end 43.5 cm, head-end 49.0 cm, center 36.5 cm [2].

The bed received its first restoration and conservation treatment by Alfred Lucas inside a temporary laboratory, that was set up in the tomb of Seti II located close to the tomb of Tutankhamun [6]. It was then transported to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, where it was subject to a long-term storage in room no. 55. In 2012 it was transferred to the Grand Egyptian Museum-Conservation Center (GEM-CC) where its overall state, materials used for manufacturing and the early conservation were carefully examined using modern technology. The materials (paraffin wax, resin and bees wax) and methods of early and subsequent restoration and conservation were carefully investigated and analyzed [7] before the bed received professional state of the art conservation and restoration treatment to be ready for the display in the new Tutankhamun Galleries at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM).

#### 4.2. Form and construction

The bedstead consists of a wooden frame supported by four legs in feline/leonine form on cylindrical supports. They take the shape of forelegs at the head-end and hind legs at the foot-end, being connected to the frame by means of tenons and wooden angle brackets. Cross rods connect between the pairs of legs in the front and the back providing stability to the structure of the bedstead. The two long sides of the frame are convex and have cross bars inserted between them at the front and rear. Around the interior surface of the frame, holes have been drilled at equal distances for the threading of the plant fibers forming a woven elastic webbing for sleeping comfort, fig. (2-a). The intentional convex form of the bed has its highest point at the head-end, the lowest point in the center and rises again slightly towards the foot-end [1]. Two broad downwards curved slats were attached to the frame in order to stay clear of the webbing should it sag under the weight of the laying person [8] and to give support to the bed's side rails, fig. (2-b) [9]. An upright panel/footboard occupies the entire width of the foot-end. The panel is attached to the frame at the two short sides with wooden angle brackets. The footboard is subdivided into three framed panels showing the main motifs of decoration.

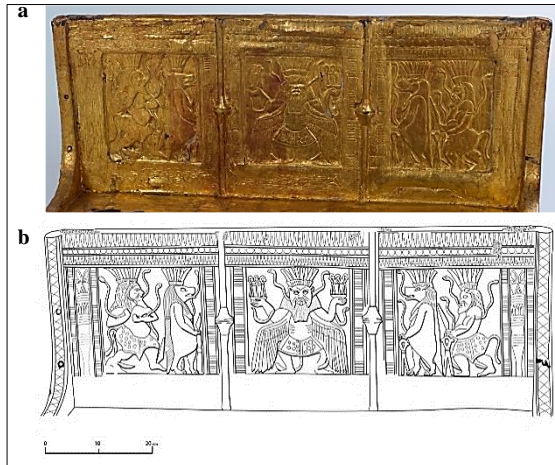


**Figure (2)** a. bedstead GEM 14276 (JE 62015, Carter No. 377), b. bedstead GEM 14276 showing the two downwards curved slats attached to the frame.

### 4.3. Description and artistic analysis of the decoration

#### 4.4.1. Front of footboard

The three framed panels forming the footboard show representations of protective deities. On each side of the middle panel projects a raised representation of two vertical papyrus plants with their blossoms touching in the center and the stems directing upwards and downwards. At the top of the framing there is a frieze consisting of two rows of stylized petals with a band of roundish fruits, probably mandrakes [10] in between. The panels are each flanked by broad borders, which are decorated with repetitive horizontal stripes and rectangles. On both of the two short sides a floral bouquet with papyrus and lotus flowers is depicted flanked by the same kind of broad borders. One of the boarders being shared with the adjacent panel, fig. (3-a & b).



**Figure (3)** a. front of the footboard of bedstead GEM 14276, b. line drawing of the front of the footboard of bedstead GEM 14276.

##### 4.4.1.1. Central panel

The central panel is occupied by a bandy-legged achondroplastic dwarf [11] figure of the god Bes [12] shown *en face* with a bearded grimace face, lion's ears and mane. His grotesque enlarged mask-like head features large eyes, a broad nose and large lips with a protruding tongue. In each of his raised hands he holds a  $\text{nb}$ -sign basket with an  $\text{nh}$ -sign flanked by two  $\text{s3}$ -signes to be read giving 'all life and protection' [13]. Two angled wings grow out of his back. On each side of the belly there are four lines indicating ribs. Two snakes project from his face. A third snake seems to be partly hidden behind his back with its front part hanging down the left arm of the Bes figure and the rear part being squeezed by the elbow of his muscular right arm and projecting towards the right. This scene has also been interpreted as showing two snakes, one wrapped around each arm of Bes [14], but no wrapping around is actually

indicated and the snake to the right of Bes would not have a head. Bes wears a floral headdress, identified by Carter as a lotus headdress [4] and a short animal skin kilt with a tail hanging down between his legs, fig. (4).



**Figure (4)** central panel of the front of the footboard GEM 14276.

##### 4.4.1.2. Right panel

This panel shows a hippopotamus-goddess and a Bes figure in profile heading left towards the central panel. The hippopotamus-goddess is shown as a hybrid creature with a full belly and pendulous breasts. A tripartite wig aesthetically combines the hippopotamus face and ears with the upright standing hippopotamus body and the back and tail of a crocodile. She has the legs and paws of a lion but the arm looks rather human yet ending in a lion's paw resting on a large  $\text{s3}$ -sign. Her floral headdress is similar to the one worn by Bes in the central panel. The goddess bites a snake with her sharp teeth and another snake is reared up in front of her belly appearing from above the paw resting on the  $\text{s3}$ -sign. It is unclear whether she is holding the snake with her other invisible paw or if the snake is growing out of her body. She holds a knife in the paw of her left hind leg, fig. (5). Behind the hippopotamus-goddess is a corpulent Bes figure with the same general features and headdress as described before in the central panel. Different to the frontal representation here the wings are absent and he holds a knife and a snake in his hand while resting it on a  $\text{s3}$ -sign. There is also no protruding tongue between his lips, instead he seems to be biting the snake held in his mouth. Another snake is projecting from beneath his left arm. This shortened arm representing the physical features of a dwarf is shown with powerful muscles. The foot towards the back is slightly raised and from both feet unfamiliar long spikes project, that have been interpreted as small blades [14].

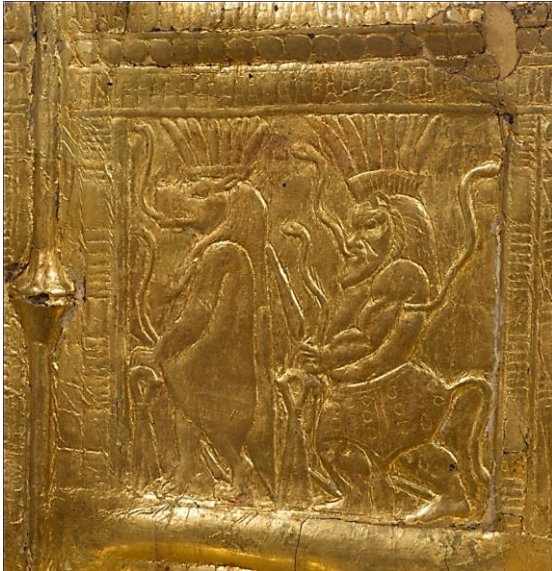


Figure (5) right panel of the front of the footboard GEM 14276.

#### 4.4.1.3. Left panel

At first glance it seems as if the scene on the left panel mirrors the scene on the right panel to provide a symmetrical image. The same two deities are shown with similar floral headdresses facing this time right towards the central panel. After a thorough inspection several differences appear. The hippopotamus-goddess bites a snake in a way that its upper part stands up-wards in front of the face and headdress, whereas the rest of the snake's body hangs down in front of the belly of the hippopotamus. Only one snake is shown here not two as on the right panel. Not enough space was left between the goddess and the frame for the  $\text{ankh}$   $s3$ -sign, so it was squeezed in and the goddess seems to be holding a very faintly visible knife. A very corpulent image of Bes takes nearly two thirds of the space. He holds his hands in front of his chest. With the right elbow he squeezes a snake rearing up in front of him and with his other fist he holds the tail of another snake standing up looking towards the left. Like on the right panel he seems to be biting the snake raising out from his mouth. No knife and no  $\text{ankh}$   $s3$ -sign were depicted here. The foot towards the front is slightly raised with a knife sticking out of it. This could possibly explain the two mysterious spikes projecting out of the two feet of the Bes figure on the right panel. In comparison they might be interpreted as representations of knives, although the knife in the fore paw of the adjacent hippopotamus-goddess is shown much clearer, fig. (6). Looking at the animal skin kilts of the Bes figure it can be noticed that they all are decorated with little circles and a dividing stripe running down the center of the kilt between the legs, regardless if it is shown from the front or sidewise. The circles might represent spots and suggest that it is the represent-

tation of a leopard skin. Later in the New Kingdom, Bes appears wearing a leopard skin with its head hanging down his chest [15]. The circles on the kilt on the right panel seem to have been a last-minute addition as they were only hastily incised, presumably in an effort to have a kind of uniformity between the scenes (see fig. 5). The general composition of both side panels is still rather similar but by close observation it can be noticed that for instance the crocodile back and tail have stripes that are missing on the right side. The dimensions of the figures and their placing in the available space is much more professional in the right panel than in the left one. Further the features of the hippopotamus-goddess and Bes are of much finer workmanship and show clearer details in the right panel. These obvious differences in craftsmanship and style suggest that there were at least two different artisans at work here with a different level of skills who seem to have been under time pressure to complete their work probably to have the bed ready in time for the funeral of the king.



Figure (6) left panel of the front of the footboard GEM 14276.

#### 4.4.2. Rear of footboard

The rear of the footboard is also subdivided into three framed panels. A stand of heraldic water lilies (conventionally called lotus) occupies the panel in the center, emerging from a plot of land divided by irrigation canals, implying the natural environment of lotus in the South of Egypt. The two side panels on the other hand show clusters of papyrus growing out of large leaves at the base [8]. On each side of the panels is a floral bouquet with papyrus and lotus flowers. A frieze, similar to the one at the top framing on the front of the footboard, is also found on the rear but without the lower row of petals, fig. (7-a, b & c). It is again noteworthy that the floral bouquets flanking the left panel (the rear of the right panel of the front side) are of much finer workmanship and

show additional details than the ones flanking the right panel, fig. (7-d). The later ones looking more like hasty scratches than skilled carvings. The papyrus clump on the right panel is also of lower artistic quality than the left panel, fig. (7-e). As on the front of the board obviously more than one artisan were working on the decoration. Seemingly the same skilled artisan did the front and the back of the central and left panel together with the flower bouquets flanking the left panel. As on the front side, the right panel (the rear of the left panel of the front side) with its flanking bouquets show much less artistic skills and modest quality in addition to probably being finished in a haste.



**Figure (7)** **a.** rear of the footboard of bedstead GEM 14276, **b.** line drawing, **c.** central panel, **d.** right panel, **e.** left panel.

#### 4.4.3. Decoration on the bed frame

On each corner of the head-end of the bed frame there is a depiction showing the head of the god Bes. There are further four squares on the upper surface of the frame of the bedstead which mark the connection points of the side rails of the frame with the two curved slates under the linen cord webbing. The decoration here imitates in a stylized way the weaving pattern of the webbing, as if to virtually strengthen and secure the webbing for the person who will lay on the bed. It should be noted that the two images of the face of Bes on the two corners of the head-end show them wearing a headdress of ostrich feathers [16], fig. (8-a & b). Different to the images of Bes on the footboard, which have floral headdresses, probably representing lotus, the headdresses here show detailed feathers. This shows that the floral lotus headdress was a contemporary 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty variant to the more common feather/plumed headdress of Bes.



**Figure (8)** **a.** & **b.** the right and the corners of the head-end of the bed frame of GEM 14276 showing the head of the god Bes.

## 5. Results

The five bedsteads found in the tomb of Tutankhamun taking the same shape as bed GEM 14276 (JE 62015, Carter No. 377) were used for several functions. Foremost for sleeping, further in the funerary context assimilating death with inactive sleeping, but also for procreation [1] and the idea of rebirth. Only two of these five beds were decorated with protective divinities. Beside the gilded bed GEM 14276 also the ebony bed with open work figured footboard (JE 62016, Carter No. 47) shows Bes and rampant lions. They wear similar lotus headdresses as the ones worn by the Bes figures and the hippopotamus-goddess on the footboard of the gilded bed.

### 5.1. Religious analysis and interpretation of the decoration

The origins of Bes go back to early dynastic times, he then appears noticeably on the "magic knives" of the Middle Kingdom [17] but he becomes increa-

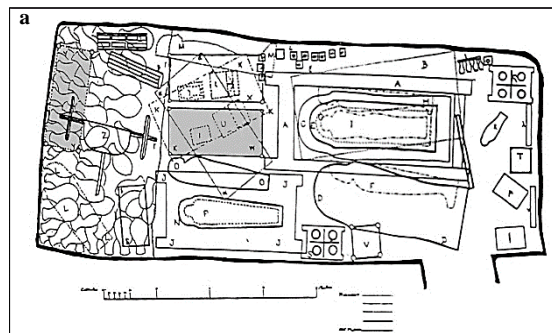
singly popular and his images as well as his figures widespread starting from the New Kingdom. Bes was deemed by all classes of ancient Egyptian society as a powerful apotropaic god or demon. He was a protector of the pregnant and the woman giving birth as well as for the child against evil spirits [12] [18]. Prominently Bes played these roles also for the divine royal birth depicted in temples like for Hatshepsut at Deir El-Bahri and for Amenhotep III in the Luxor temple as well as later for gods in the so-called Mammisi, especially in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods [19]. Several of the aspects of the image of Bes on the gilded bed GEM 14276 were innovations that appeared during the reigns of Amenhotep II and Amenhotep III. They include a corpulent body, muscular limbs and anthropomorphizing the Bes-image by showing him wearing a skirt for the first time during the reign of Amenhotep II [14]. The bed (JE 62016, Carter No. 47) is the only of the five beds similar in shape from the tomb of Tutankhamun that has a hieroglyphic inscription [20]. Tutankhamun is addressed in the text as *ntr nfr*. As the title *ntr nfr* refers to the living king [21] it can be assumed that the bed (JE 62016, Carter No. 47) was a bed that was actually used by Tutankhamun during his life. It should be noted that Bes is shown here without knives and snakes. Only the two rampant lions rest their front paw on a large  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3* -sign. The mere grotesque appearance of Bes seems to have been sufficient protection from evil creatures and spirits during the lifetime of the king. This bed was placed on top of the couche in the antechamber and in Carters opinion that was its original location [4]. The hippopotamus-goddess is missing on this bed. Although on neither of the beds of Tutankhamun nor on the similar beds from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya (KV46) [22] no inscription mentions explicitly the god Bes or the goddess Taweret, Carter assumed that the hippopotamus-goddess appearing with the rather characteristic Bes figure was Taweret [4]. Literature dealing with the hippopotamus-goddess mostly state that the name Taweret starts appearing in the New Kingdom and becomes a collective term for a number of previously known hippopotamus-goddesses, including Ipet/Opet, Reret, Hedjet, Shepset and Duat [23]. Without inscription It is difficult to try to differentiate between them according to appearance as all of them can be shown as an upright standing composite creature with a hippopotamus face, its full belly and pendulous breasts with the back and tail of a crocodile in addition to leonine fore and hind legs. Apparently, the female hippopotamus aggressive way of protecting her young [24] made her an appropriate symbol for the protection of women during pregnancy and childbirth as well as for nursing mothers.

## 5.2. Comparison to two beds from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya (KV46)

In the tomb of Yuya and Thuya (KV46) two bedsteads were found, that bear great resemblance in their form and decoration to beds GEM 14276 and JE 62016 (Carter No. 47) of Tutankhamun. They date earlier as Yuya and Thuya were the parents of queen Tye and the father and mother-in-law of king Amenhotep III. The hippopotamus-goddess and Bes appear frequently on the furniture found in this tomb (KV 46), including two chairs of princess Sat-Amun, who later took the title of great royal wife of Amenhotep III (CG 51112, 51113). In the case of the decorated beds from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya one is having a silver color decoration (CG 51109) and the other one is partially decorated with gold leaf (CG 51110). There are no textual inscriptions on these two beds so it cannot be determined to whom which bed belonged, yet the location of discovery of the beds in the burial chamber might give an indication of the user. The gilded bedstead (CG 51110) (W in fig. 16) was placed behind the large wooden outer coffin of Yuya (CG 51001) and beside the outer coffin of Thuya (CG 51005) as if connecting and serving both of the married couple, fig. (9-a). Beside this bed was another modestly decorated bed without figures (CG 51108). The bedstead with the silver color decoration (CG 51109) (Y in fig. 9) was perched on one of the wheels of a chariot (CG 51188) sat on a heap of clay vessels in the sunken northern section of the burial chamber [25]. The decoration on the front of the footboard of the partly gilded bed (CG 51110) is divided in the same manner as the gilded bed of Tutankhamun into three framed panels. On the front side in the central panel two hippopotami- goddesses, each with a knife in one of its front paws which is resting on a large  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3* -sign, are shown flanking a rampant lion also resting its front paw on the same large  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3*-sign as the hippopotamus- goddesses he is facing. The panels to the right and left both show a slightly different motive: two hippopotami- goddesses, with knife and  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3* -sign, are flanking a Bes figure, shown *en face*. All figures wear a lotus headdress with three circles at the bottom of the lotus petals and each figure stands on a  $\text{𓆎}$  *nbw* -sign, fig. (9-b). The decoration of the rear side depicts in the central panel a winged Bes figure that looks very similar to the one on the central panel of the front side of the footboard of the gilded bed of Tutankhamun. The differences are mainly, that Bes here on each of his spread arms holds a  $\text{𓆎}$  *nb* -sign basket with a  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3*-sign flanked by a  $\text{𓆎}$  *nh*-sign and a  $\text{𓆎}$  *w3s*-sign, to be read giving 'all life, protection and power'. From each of his hands hangs down a  $\text{𓆎}$  *s3*-sign with a  $\text{𓆎}$  *nh*-sign beneath and no snakes are shown. The panel to the right of the center shows two Bes figures

facing each other. One is playing the tambourine and the other is holding a knife in his left hand and a snake in his right hand which is also resting on a  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign. A different motif can be seen on the panel to the left of the central panel. In this case Bes plays the tambourine with a  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign hanging down his left arm facing a hippopotamus-goddess with a knife in one of her front paws which is resting on a large  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign. Again, all are wearing a lotus headdress with three circles at the bottom of the lotus petals, except for the two Bes figures on the panel to the right of the central panel, where only one large circle can be seen. Also, different than the other headdresses, which all show five lotus petals, here seven petal-like shapes are depicted but with some faintly visible horizontal strokes that might indicate that here the ostrich feathers are meant to be shown, fig. (9-c). The bedstead with the silver color decoration (CG 51109) only shows Bes figures on the front side of the footboard. In the central panel he is shown standing *en face* holding up a knife in each hand with a  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign hanging down from both arms. Blades are also projecting from his feet. In the two flanking panels the Bes figure is represented sidewise heading towards the central panel with knives in each hand and each foot and a  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign in front of them. The lotus headdress with the three circles seems to indicate that the daily rebirth of the sun out of the lotus flower is hinted at (Book of the Dead Spell 81A) [26], herby anticipating and preparing the right environment for the person laying on the bed to be reborn like the sun. The same idea can be applied to the gilded bed of Tutankhamun GEM 14276, with the difference that no circles are shown at the bottom of the lotus petals. What further supports this hypothesis is that the Bes figures represented on the chairs found in the tomb of Yuya and Thuya are shown with tambourine and knives but without headdress as they are in this case protecting and not facilitating rebirth. As the silver color decorated bed shows the Bes figures without headdress this might mean that it was a bed provided with protection for daily use and not necessarily intended for sexual activity and reproduction. The gilded bed with the frequent depiction of Bes joined by the hippopotamus-goddess wearing the lotus headdress with the circles together with the location of the bed connecting the two outer coffins of Yuya and Thuya suggest it to be a bed for the marital couple, where they come together to conceive new life as yet another way to insure eternal rebirth. The same concept would apply to the gilded bedstead of Tutankhamun GEM 14276. This could be further supported by the appearance of the mandrake on the bedstead, which has been interpreted for the Amarna interlude as a plant symbolizing the union (hierogamy) of the royal couple [27].

The mandrake fruit is also shown on the rear side of the footboard of GEM 14276. There, in association with the lotus flower, which is connected with the idea of rebirth, the man-drake can also be interpreted as a symbol of regeneration [10]. Concerning the role of the rampant lion with protruding tongue, whom we find on the gilded bed from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya and on the bed (JE 62016, Carter No. 47) of Tutankhamun. For lack of more accurate explanation this motive has been simply described as a rampant lion or called lion-Bes [1]. A similar depiction of a rampant lion resting its foreleg on a  $\text{𓆎 s3}$ -sign can be found much later in the Greco-Roman Ipet/Opet temple in Karnak, fig. (9-d). A scene shows the rampant lion and a hippopotamus-goddess flanking a Horus falcon emerging from the papyrus swamps. The accompanying text [28] is interesting as both the lion/lioness and the hippopotamus-goddess are referred to as Isis but once with the determinative of a lion's tail and once with the determinative of a standing hippopotamus-goddess. Recent excavations have revealed that the beginnings of the temple of Ipet/Opet go back as far as Thutmose III. This shows that the hippopotamus-goddess Ipet/Opet gained great importance at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty in Thebes to receive an own temple in the holy precinct of Karnak. The temple from the Greco-Roman period was built in the same area with blocks from the New Kingdom temple in its foundations [29]. It is possible that the artisans in the Greco-Roman time were inspired by scenes from the ruins of the earlier temples. In any case Ipet/Opet as hippopotamus-goddess and the rampant lion/lioness both as protective representations of Isis secure the birth of the royal Horus falcon/the king. So, it is suggested here that the images of the hippopotamus-goddess on the gilded bed from the tomb of Yuya and Thuya and the gilded bed from the tomb of Tutankhamun represent the goddess Ipet/Opet rather than Taweret. Accordingly, the rampant lion/lioness, who appears on bedstead (JE 62016, Carter No. 47) of Tutankhamun together with Bes, was also supposed to offer protection and to facilitate royal birth of a successor and rebirth after sleep like the sun for Tutankhamun.





**Figure (9)** **a.** plan of the tomb of Yuya and Thuya (KV46) with the tomb's contents *in situ*. (Modified After: Quibell, 1908), **b.** the decoration on the front of the footboard of the partly gilded bed (CG 51110) (After: Davis, 1907), **c.** the decoration on the rear of the footboard of the partly gilded bed (CG 51110) (After: Davis, 1907), **d.** a scene from the Greco-Roman Ipet/Opet temple in Karnak.

### 5.3. The role of the unguent jar (JD 62114, Carter 579)

A calcite unguent jar (JD 62114, Carter 579) taking the form of a rampant lion/lioness with its tongue hanging out between its teeth was also found in the so-called annexe. One front paw rests on a  $\text{K s3}$ -sign and the other is raised. The open lotus flower head-dress is the stopper of the ointment container. On the chest of the lion/lioness the names of Tutankhamun and his wife Ankhesenamun were incised [30], fig. (10). Interestingly this unguent jar was found standing on the floor on the south side of the annexe together with many other objects with the gilded bed GEM 14276 laying on top. The ointment container in the form of the rampant lion/lioness with the names of Tutankhamun and his wife on it under the gilded bed can be seen as a further indicator that this bed was supposed to serve the young couple in the second life after death to ensure protection and eternal rebirth.



**Figure (10)** a calcite unguent jar (JD 62114, Carter 579) taking the form of a rampant lion/lioness from the tomb of Tutankhamun. (After: Edwards, 1978)

## 6. Discussion

The joints of the gilded bed GEM 14276 do not show signs of wear and tear. The thin layer of plaster on which the gilding was applied is mostly still intact. This, together with what has been established earlier about haste in manufacture, support the conclusion that this bed was produced solely for the use in the afterlife and was equipped with all possible means of divine protection from evil as well as support for child conception and royal eternal rebirth. In tomb TT 217 at Deir El Medina a hippopotamus-goddess, resting her front paw on a large  $\text{K s3}$ -sign, is depicted behind a Bes figure playing the tambourine. The two divinities are depicted twice approaching the cartouche of king Amenhotep I [31]. This is part of a scene showing the production of a shrine for Amenhotep I openly showing a bed with headrest. At the foot end behind the footboard a personified djed-sign grows arms to hold up a sun disk (interpreted by Nina De Garis Davies as a mirror) indicating eternal rebirth. On the other side beside the head end of the bedstead there is seemingly a stand with food, possibly fruits (figs?). TT 217 dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty but the owner Ipy here depicted the production of a shrine for a deified king of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. It is possible that the decoration typical for the time of that king was recalled here, fig. (11). Ipet/Opet and Bes would be providing protection and ensuring the environment for rebirth that takes place on the bed leading to the result of the deceased being reborn like the sun (the personified djed-sign holding up the sun) and being provided for in the afterlife (the stand with food). Already in the pyramid texts (PT 381, 382) the king wants to be nourished by his mother Ipy/Ipet/Opet, so that he does not thirst or hunger eternally in the afterlife [32]. Later in the Book of the Dead papyri she is called 'mistress of protection'(Spell 137 B) [26]. In Theban theology Osiris, the dead sun god, is transformed in the womb of Ipet/Opet into the moon

god Khonsu, thus it is not surprising that the temple of Khonsu at Karnak lies right next to the temple of Ipet/Opet [23]. This fits well with the role of Tutankhamun as the Lunar Osiris. Jewelry and bodily ornaments from the tomb of Tutankhamun utilized lunar iconography to express his divine relationship with the moon and to emphasize the repudiation of the solar cult of Aton. This lunar aspect conveyed on Tutankhamun at the same time, according to Corcoran, a "perpetual cycle of *heb sed* celebrations". She further argues that a large granite statue of Khonsu with the facial features of Tutankhamun from Karnak (CG 38488, now in the NMEC) could also embody "Osiris in his lunar form" [33]. It is interesting to note that the floor of both the burial chamber and the treasury as well as the so-called annexe lay more than a meter below the floor level of the antechamber [3]. This could be interpreted that the Osirian sphere in the tomb of Tutankhamun was cut lower into the bedrock intentionally. The plan and decoration of the tomb in general mark the return to the Osirian cult after the Amarna interlude [34]. The Antechamber on the other hand was housing the three ritual couches, all guaranteeing for the king the eternal solar rejuvenation cycle [1]. The gilded bedstead GEM 14276 was discovered in the so-called annexe, which makes up the southwestern part of Tutankhamun's tomb. It is also the room that extends most towards the west, the realm of Osiris. One of the seal-impressions on the remains of the plastered outer surfaces of the blocking erected at the entrance of the annexe reads clearly: "*Nebkheperure, who made images of Osiris and built his house as in the beginnings*" [4]. This strongly supports the hypothesis that the annexe was part of the Osirian sphere in the tomb and that it was equipped with all the tools and provisions to ensure eternal rebirth both in an Osirian lunar and in a solar way, having quantities of food and drink ready for the afterlife. Accordingly, the simple word annexe does not do this chamber justice and a new name explaining its functions is proposed: the eternal rebirth and provisions chamber.



**Figure (11)** production of a shrine for deified king Amenhotep I in TT 217. (After: Garis Davies, 1927)

## 7. Conclusion

The careful reexamination of the gilded bedstead GEM 14276 of Tutankhamun has revealed that the decoration of the footboard was hastily executed by at least two artisans with an obvious difference in skills. It could also be established, that in the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty the Bes figures are shown simultaneously wearing the lotus headdress or the ostrich feather headdress. By means of apotropaic motives of decoration depicting a hippopotamus-goddess and the god Bes eternal protection was provided. Noticing that the hippopotamus-goddess Ipet/Opet apparently is associated mainly with royal and divine births it is advocated that the images of the hippopotamus-goddess on the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty beds represent Ipet/Opet and not Taweret as was previously assumed. The annexe as part of the Osirian sphere in the tomb of Tutankhamun was equipped to secure rebirth both in an Osirian lunar and in a solar way. It is proposed that the name of the annexe should be changed to reflect its functions to become the eternal rebirth and provisions chamber. Concluding the gilded bedstead GEM 14276 was one of the essential tools to ensure eternal protection and the perpetual rebirth of Tutankhamun.

## Acknowledgments

My gratitude goes to the Grand Egyptian Museum. I would also like to thank Bassem Ezzat for taking the professional photographs of the bedstead GEM 14276 and Ahmed Abd El Halim for the line drawings of the front and rear of its footboard. Special thanks also to Dr. Mostafa Al-Sagheer for taking the photo in the Ipet/Opet temple in Karnak.

## References

- [1] Schutz, M. (2024). The furniture that shapes our world: A re-examination of Tutankhamun's beds, chairs and throne. In: Souza, R., Pieke, G. & Bagh, T. (eds.) *Tutankhamun and Carter*, Oxbow Books, pp. 39-74.
- [2] The Griffith Institute, Tutankhamun: Anatomy of an Excavation. <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/peril/gica-qmakedeta.pl?sid=154.236.149.85-1725985448&qno=1&dfnam=377-c377-1> (5/09/2024).
- [3] Reeves, N. (2009). *The complete Tutankhamun*, AUC Press, Cairo.
- [4] Carter, H. (1933). *The tomb of Tut Ankh Amen*, Cassell and Company LTD, London.
- [5] Abdrabou, A., El-Hadidi, N., Hamed, S., et al. (2018). Multidisciplinary approach for the investigation and analysis of a gilded wooden bed of king Tutankhamun. *J. of Archaeological Science: Reports*. 21: 553-564.
- [6] Gillberg, M. (1997). Alfred Lucas. *JAIC*. 36 (1): 31-48.
- [7] Abdrabou, A., El-Hadidi, N., Hamed, S. et al. (2021). Experimental study on the efficacy of cleaning systems for the removal of previous conservation treatments from Tutankhamun's gilded wooden bed. *IJCS*. 12 (2): 403-416.
- [8] Edwards, I. (1978). *Tutankhamun: His tomb and its treasures*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., NY.

- [9] Killen, G. (1980). *Ancient Egyptian furniture*, Vol.1, Aris & Phillips, Warminster.
- [10] Casini, E. (2018). Rethinking the multifaceted aspects of mandrake in ancient Egypt. *Egitto e Vicino Oriente*. XLI: 101-115.
- [11] Dasen, V. (1993). *Dwarfs in ancient Egypt and Greece*, *Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- [12] Altenmüller, H. (1975), Bes. *LÄ* I: 720-724.
- [13] Wilkinson R. (2006). *Reading Egyptian art*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- [14] Romano, J. (1989). *The Bes-image in pharaonic Egypt*, Ph.D., UMI, New York Univ., USA.
- [15] Bonnet, H. (1952). *Reallexicon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, De Gruyter, Berlin.
- [16] Behrens, P. (1986). *Straußenfeder*. *LÄ*. VI: 77-82.
- [17] Altenmüller, H. (1965). *Die apotropaia und die götter mittelägyptens: Eine typologische und religionsgeschichtliche untersuchung der sogenannten zaubermesser des mittleren reiches*, Ph.D. Ludwig-Maximilians-Univ. zu München, München.
- [18] Wilkinson R. (2003). *The complete gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt*, Thames & Hudson, London.
- [19] Ali, A. (2023), Female hippopotami inside the shrines depicted in the Mammisi of Kom Ombo: The word *Opet* as mother goddess, birth house and festival. In: Ali A. & Budde D. (eds.) *Mammisis of Egypt: Proc. of the 1<sup>st</sup> Int. Colloquium, Cairo, IFAO, 27-28 March 2019*, IFAO, Cairo, pp.101-128.
- [20] Beinlich, H. & Saleh, M. (1989). *Corpus der hieroglyphischen inschriften aus dem grab des Tutankhamun*, Griffith Institute, Oxford.
- [21] Stock, H. (1951). *ntr nfr= der gute gott?, vorträge der orientalistischen tagung in marburg. fachgruppe: Ägyptologie, 1950*. Gebr. Gerstenberg Verlag, Hildesheim.
- [22] Davis, T., Maspero, G. & Newberry, P. (1907). *The tomb of Iouiya and Touiyou*, Archibald Constable and Co., London.
- [23] Loeben, Ch. (2021). Taweret and Bes. In: Bagh, T. & Manniche L. (eds.) *Bes demon god protector of Egypt*, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen, pp. 73-83.
- [24] Eltringham, S. (1999). *The hippos: Natural history and conservation*, Princeton Univ. Press, New Jersey.
- [25] Quibell, J. (1908). *The tomb of Yuua and Thuiu*, Imprimerie De L'Institut Francais D'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire
- [26] Faulkner, R. (1990). *The ancient Egyptian book of the dead*, Univ. of Texas Press, Austin.
- [27] Baquémanzano, L. (2005). Some iconologic notes on two representations of the mandrake plant in ancient Egyptian art. In: Aufrère, S. (ed.) *Encyclopédie Religieuse de l'univers Vegetal: Croyances Phytoreligieuses de l'Égypte Ancienne*, Vol. III, Montpellier, pp. 29-36.
- [28] Varille, A. (1955). La grande porte du temple d'Apet à Karnak. *ASAE*. LIII: 79-118.
- [29] Valbelle, D. & Laroze, E. (2010). Un sanctuaire de Thoutmosis III à la déesse Opet, édifié à Karnak par le premier prophète d'Amon Menkhéperréséneb. In: Centre Franco-Égyptien d'étude des temples de Karnak (eds.) *Les Cahiers de Karnak* 13, Presses du Conseil Suprême des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Cairo: 401-428.
- [30] James, T. (2000). *Tutankhamun the eternal splendor of the boy pharaoh*, AUC Press, Cairo.
- [31] Davies, N. de Garis (1927). *Two Ramesside tombs at Thebes*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tomb of Apy, NY.
- [32] Allen, J. (2015). *The ancient Egyptian pyramid texts (Writings from the ancient world)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., SBL Press, Atlanta.
- [33] Corcoran, L. (2023). A heb sed in Perpetuity? Tutankhamun as the lunar Osiris, In: Geisen, Ch. (ed.), *Visual Culture of Ancient Egypt* 10, Lockwood Press, Columbus, pp. 31-46
- [34] Tawfik, T. (2023). The tomb of Tutankhamun: Back to Osiris in plan and decoration. *JARCH*. 14: 295-309.