

**KHOKHAH**, an ill-defined area in the Theban necropolis (25°44'N, 32°36'E). The site is named after a modern village and is located between the Asasif in the north and east and the so-called lower enclosure of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in the west. The exact meaning of the name Khokhah is unclear, although it has been translated as "peach" or "vault." In Egyptian Arabic, the term is used to describe an "opening in a wall," a "gate," or a "wicket gate," possibly referring to the entrances of the local rock-cut tombs.

The Khokhah area has never played an important role in the history of the archaeological exploration of the Theban necropolis. Nevertheless, the private tombs of the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period and several tombs of the eighteenth and the nineteenth dynasties were systematically investigated and published by Egyptian, British, German, and Hungarian expeditions.

With the exception of el-Tarif, the Khokhah area is the earliest known cemetery in the Theban necropolis. During the end of the Old Kingdom and during the First Intermediate Period, when Thebes was no more than a comparatively unimportant provincial capital, three Theban nomarchs had tombs excavated for themselves—small, single-chamber tombs—in the hills of Khokhah (tombs 186, 405, and 413). After that, Khokhah was not used as a major burial site for more than five hundred years, until the second half of the eighteenth dynasty (c.1450 BCE). Several high and medium rank officials then built their tombs in Khokhah during the time of Thutmose III and Hatshepsut. The area became quite popular during the reign of Amenhotpe III (c.1410–1372 BCE), when some of the most exceptional private tombs in the Theban necropolis were constructed. The unique tomb of the chief steward Amenemhat, also called Surer (tomb 48), was one of the largest

and most important private tombs of the New Kingdom. The inner, rock-cut part of the tomb extends for almost 60 meters (190 feet) into the rock; its four main rooms contain seventy columns and pillars to support the ceiling. The dimensions and architectural layout of the tomb closely resemble the architecture of contemporaneous royal temples; however, the majority of private tombs in the Khokhah area can be ascribed to officials of rather modest social rank. For example, the Tomb of Two Sculptors (tomb 181) is well known for the exquisite style and quality of its painted decoration.

Several other private tombs were excavated in Khokhah, which date from the reign of Ramesses II (c.1304–1237 BCE) and later. Some of the Ramessid tombs have unusually elaborate subterranean sections that represent the new religious conceptions of the post-Amarna era, exceeding by far the dimensions of the accessible upper part of the tombs (e.g., tomb 32 of Thutmose and tomb 373 of Amenmessu).

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