

storing cooking utensils, clothes, small amounts of food and other family belongings. The kos was a big arch recessed in the wall ; in it mattresses, blankets and pillows were stored during the day.

The fireplace (mawqed or udjak) was always located on the same wall as that of the entrance door (Fig. 4.42). This was the focus of all activities which took place at the mastabeh during the cold and rainy winter season. It was the only source of heat in the cold winter days. It served as a kitchen around which women sat and prepared and cooked the family meals. In the evenings, the whole family normally gathered around the fireplace as they chatted or listened to the bickering between husband and wife or, frequently, between the mother and her daughter in-law.



Fig. 4.42: The fireplace

At night, mattresses were rolled out of the qaws and spread out, covering almost the whole area of the mastabeh. Although there did not seem to be a strict method for sleeping arrangements (Fig. 4.43) (at least not from the description of the fallaheen), still invisible partitions divided the parental sleeping area from that of their children or other elderly members (aunt, grandmother, etc.) living in the same house. The husband and wife normally slept on one or two separate mattresses; next to them slept their children. While young sons and daughters slept together on one mattress, older daughters and sons tended to separate and sleep in groups. Unlike other fallaheen where married sons and their wives lived with the in-laws, the Shu'aibis were very strict about having the newly married couple live in a separate house. The bridal chest (sandouq), which the daughter-in-law usually brought with her from her father's house played, a significant role in defining the parental sleeping space. The chest in which the wife kept her clothes and belongings belonged exclusively to her and she alone had the key to it. Not even her husband had the right to open it. This chest symbolized her ties