

FAUNAL REMAINS

Salima Ikram

PRELIMINARY REPORT

The faunal remains from the site belong to *B. taurus* in the majority, the rib being the most common element found. It is interesting that in each area identified as an "offering site", ribs are invariably found. It is the most common type of bone recovered from the site. In this faunal assemblage, a hind leg of the animal is also represented, as is the head. There is one confirmed identification of part of a foreleg. Certainly, in ancient Egypt, cows/oxen were highly regarded as offerings, especially in the earlier periods of Egyptian history. Most of the animals found were quite young: about two years old or so. Animals of this age are quite tender and relatively small.

Bird bone fragments, mainly from the long bones, are the next most commonly encountered type of faunal remains from the site. For the most part these seem to represent wild fowl that died here by accident, rather than deliberate deposits. There is what might be a duck, a bird which commonly figured in ancient Egyptian offering lists.

Sheep and goat are the next most commonly found animal species at the site. These animals were commonly consumed in ancient Egypt and are well attested in other funerary contexts. The appearance of

pig bones at the site is extremely unusual as the animal is not part of the canonical funerary food offerings. One of the pigs was quite young, about 1.5 years old, if that, while the other one was a bit older – about 2.25 years or a bit more. The appearance of fish in a funerary context, although unusual, is by no means unprecedented, especially in the Early Dynastic period (see Emery's *An Ancient Egyptian Funerary Repast*).

The large, medium and small mammal fragments are bits of bone that can in some case be attributed to an element, but not to the taxon, and are thus left in loose groups. It is more than probable that the large mammal fragments belong to cows/oxen, and the medium mammal fragments to sheep and goats.

The snake eggs are not ancient.

One very curious type of bone (awaiting identification) seemed to be highly worked and polished, and at some point time exposed to fire (?) which turned it light pink right through in places. The discoloration might be due to some other factor, such as fungus. The bone might be the scapula of a large mammal; it seems to have been worked around the outer edges to give it a rounded shape.

<i>Bos taurus</i>	<i>Oms Capra</i>	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	<i>Large mammals</i>	<i>Medium/large mammals</i>	<i>Medium mammals</i>	<i>Small mammals</i>	<i>Fish</i>	<i>Bird</i>	<i>Snake eggs</i>	<i>Unknown</i>
37	7	3	3	7	11	2	1	12	2 areas	1