
The North Ibis Catacomb at Saqqara

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Résumé

This paper summarises the work undertaken by W.B. Emery and his team along with that done by Nicholson *et al.* in the 1990s (which is being prepared for publication) and makes comparison with the work carried out by Professor G.T. Martin at the South Ibis Catacomb. During the 1970-71 season at North Saqqara Professor W.B. Emery and his team unearthed a second catacomb of ibis burials. In order to distinguish it from their earlier find in the south this site has subsequently become known as the 'North Ibis Catacomb' and remains largely unpublished. Its lack of publication followed Emery's untimely death during that final season of work at the site. It was surveyed by Ken Frazer but virtually no other work was done on it until the 1990s when Nicholson and his team made a new survey, discovering several new galleries in the process. The work showed that this very badly damaged site had originally contained some imposing architecture and showed some differences to the South Ibis Catacomb and to the Falcon Catacomb. As with the other bird catacombs the Northern Ibises were buried in pottery jars but it has been discovered that this rite was not universal and that substantial numbers of these birds were buried without pottery containers. One particular gallery provides compelling evidence that this unpotted-rite may have been much more prominent than expected. The location of the site near the Lake of Abusir may support the view that the lake was a major source of many of the birds which found burial in the catacomb. This paper will summarise some of the evidence for the lake and for captive breeding of the ibises.

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