
The role of wild and domestic animals at the Predynastic elite cemetery of Hierakonpolis (Upper Egypt)

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Résumé

The excavations in the elite predynastic cemetery HK6 at Hierakonpolis yield the remains of animals that were buried as part of large mortuary complexes surrounding large elite tombs. The cemetery was in use for elite burials of the Naqada IC-IIB period (3800-3650 BC) and then used again in the Naqada III period (3300-3050 BC), but the animal burials appear to occur only in the earlier phase. The site is unique for the number and variety of wild animal taxa that occur. An overview will be given of the finds from the excavations which revealed both domestic and wild animals buried in tombs of their own or occasionally with human accompaniment. Among the domestic animals are numerous dogs and several well preserved male and female individuals of Egyptian Longhorn cattle, as well as very large goats and sheep. Wild species include baboon, young hippo, elephant, aurochs, hartebeest, crocodile, leopard and ostrich. The pathologies observed in some of these animals indicate that they had been held in captivity for an extensive period of time before their burial.

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