
Interpreting faunal remains from tombs at the Temple of Millions of Years of Amenhotep II in Western Thebes: funerary practices, ritual practices or, perhaps, something else?

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Résumé

Recent research undertaken by the *Centro di Egittologia F. Ballerini* has revealed the complex history of the area occupied by the Temple of Amenhotep II in Western Thebes. During the excavations, a large quantity of animal bone was recovered from various contexts, primarily from the fill levels and the chambers of Third Intermediate-Late Period shaft tombs.

Amongst these remains, we should pay particular attention to a few specimens found anatomically connected and with - sometimes - traces of painted stucco: these were intentionally buried. Analysis of the spatial and stratigraphic distribution of these faunal remains, along with the study of other related archaeological finds, will allow us to propose an interpretation of their deposition.

The zooarchaeological analyses were focused on the faunal remains found in two funerary shafts dating to the Late Period: C6 and L13. In the first, three animals - a dog and two sheep - were buried in the shaft, under an *in situ* deposit of Ptolemaic pottery. Was this a ritual deposition? In the second, a newborn ovicaprid and a bird, found together covered by painted stucco, were lying in the funerary chamber. Traces of stucco were also found on the complete skeleton of a crocodile. These data may suggest that the animals from L13 were "pets", buried along with their human owners.

A preliminary analysis of about 3000 identified bones from these tombs will also be presented in order to offer a complete picture of the *corpus* of faunal remains.

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