

Provisioning vs. Household Economy at the Old Kingdom Settlement of Tell Edfu

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Textual and archaeological evidence have shown that the town of Edfu developed into an important regional center during the 3rd millennium BCE--serving as a provincial capital. But with the onset of the First Intermediate Period (2160-2055 BCE), which is often perceived as a time of widespread famine and economic crisis, limited textual evidence and a dearth of archaeological material have obscured the realities of daily life for the inhabitants of this influential site.

Investigation of the oldest settlement remains at Tell Edfu began in 2015. While excavation of the Old Kingdom area is on-going, a great deal of archaeozoological material has already been uncovered from late 6th Dynasty domestic contexts, as well as contexts that appear to have served administrative functions--probably related to a royal domain dating to the late 5th Dynasty. This paper addresses the results of the diachronic analysis of faunal remains from the excavations of the Old Kingdom settlement area, and discusses the role of provisioning by the state versus a household economic system as it pertains to animal production strategies at the site. The results of this study are pertinent not only to questions relating to the evolution of occupation and food production /consumption at the site, particularly as changes in its nature occurred prior to the First Intermediate Period, but also to how the animal economy at Tell Edfu compares to other Old Kingdom settlement sites with administrative functions and showing varying degrees of urbanization and proximity to centers of power.

Sasha Rohret is an Egyptian Archaeology PhD candidate at the University of Chicago with a specialty in zooarchaeology. Her research interests include domestication and animal husbandry in the ancient Near East, and the link between production strategies and the political economy. In addition to working as a teaching assistant and lecturer at UChicago, she has been actively involved in museum education at the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago and the Fernbank Museum in Atlanta where she has given lectures and created innovative school and family programming. She is passionate about promoting educational equity for students of all ages and increasing diversity in higher education, with the goal to enhance students' lives and build community through education, outreach, and service.