

ANIMAL BONE REMAINS FROM FASSUṬA

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A total of 39 animal bones were recovered from the Middle Bronze Age I tombs at Fassuṭa (see Gershuny and Aviam, this volume). Animal taxa represented were: domestic sheep (*Ovis aries*), goat (*Capra hircus*) and fallow deer (*Dama mesopotamica*). The single limb bone

of the fallow deer, a tibia, was found in Tomb 2; the other bones are all from Tomb 1 and represent caprines (Table 1).

It was impossible, for most remains, to separate sheep from goats, as the bones belong to immature animals and are unfused or are fragmented and missing critical morphological features. One bone could, however, be positively identified as that of a sheep (*ovis aries*; Table 1). A minimum number count (MNI) for sheep/goat in Tomb 1, based on the distal radius, was three animals. Age estimation using bone fusion (Silver 1969) denoted the presence of at least two immature animals—one aged less than 10 months, another older than 10 months, but younger than a third animal, an adult sheep, aged more than 3.5 years.

Sheep/goat in Tomb 1 are primarily represented by trunk and upper limb bones, while bones of the lower leg and foot (metacarpals, carpals, metatarsals, tarsals, and phalanges) are missing (Fig. 1). As the upper limbs and trunk are considered elements rich in meat, this probably reflects intentional selection and interment of prime cuts.

The animal bone sample from Fassuṭa, although small, closely resembles fauna recovered from contemporary Middle Bronze Age tomb complexes in Israel, for example Jebel Qa'aqir in the Negev and Giv'at Massu'a on the outskirts of Jerusalem (Horwitz 1987; 1989). At these sites, as well as in other Middle Bronze Age tombs throughout the country, the remains of domestic sheep and goats are the most common, with immature animals predominating (Horwitz 2001). Choice meat cuts in the form of upper limb and trunk elements, as found at Fassuṭa, are the most

Table 1. Animal Bone List from Tombs 1 and 2

Location	Animal	Bone Type
Tomb 1, rock shelf	Sheep/goat	2 left complete femur, both epiphyses unfused
		1 thoracic vertebra, unfused epiphyses
Tomb 1, interior	Sheep/goat	1 left maxilla with PM2-M3; M3 is unworn, M2 just in wear
		1 left scapula blade fragment
		1 left distal humerus, fused epiphysis
		1 left distal humerus, unfused epiphysis
		1 left proximal humerus shaft, unfused epiphysis
		1 right distal radius, fused epiphysis
		1 right and 1 left distal radius, unfused epiphyses
		1 left distal radius, unfused epiphysis
		1 ilium of a pelvis
		1 left distal femur, unfused epiphysis
		10 proximal ribs
		11 thoracic vertebrae, unfused epiphyses
		3 cervical vertebrae, unfused epiphyses
	Sheep	1 right distal radius, fused epiphysis
Tomb 2	Fallow deer	1 left proximal tibia, fused epiphysis



Fig. 1. Drawing of a sheep/goat skeleton; the bones of the Fassuṭa sample are marked in black (duplicate bones are not shown).

frequent skeletal parts. Overall, Middle Bronze tomb fauna conform to a specific pattern with respect to species selected, age and sex classes

represented, as well as body parts interred, and differ from the more variable faunal assemblages found in domestic sites (Horwitz 2001). The intentional selection and manner of interment of these elements reflects the ritual and symbolic world of the Middle Bronze Age.

The presence of fallow deer in Tomb 2 at Fassuṭa finds a parallel in an isolated fallow deer antler fragment found in a Middle Bronze Age tomb at Jebel Qa'aqir (Horwitz 1987). At this site, as at Fassuṭa, no foot bones were present; however, they were recovered from Giv'at Massu'a (Horwitz 1987; 1989). In contrast, no sheep/goat cranial remains were discerned at Jebel Qa'aqir, yet they were present both at Fassuṭa and at Giv'at Massu'a.

These inter-site differences in body part representation may be related to disparities in bone collecting methods or preservation between the sites, and the use of tombs during more than one period, resulting in chronological mixing of bone assemblages. By and large, MB II and Late Bronze Age tomb fauna exhibit a wider spectrum of species, age classes and skeletal elements than those dated to EB IV/MB I (e.g., Horwitz 2001; Lev-Tov and Maher 2001; Vila 2004; Weissbrod and Bar-Oz 2004).

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