

ARCHAEOBOTANICAL RESEARCH ON THE LAKE OF ABUSIR AT THE EDGE OF THE OLD KINGDOM PYRAMID FIELD OF ABUSIR, EGYPT

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The former Lake of Abusir is situated on the western edge between the Nile alluvium and the pyramid fields of 5th – 6th Dynasties of the Old Kingdom of Abusir and Saqqara. Since 2005, an interdisciplinary project focusing on the environmental history of the lake has been in progress in connection with long-term archaeological activity in Abusir necropolis. In 2007, four trenches were excavated in the area dividing the Western Desert slopes from the area of the former lake.

The trenches uncovered badly preserved remains of cemetery structures. An important series of valuable environmental data has been gathered. These archaeobotanical data are crucial for the interpretation of the sedimentary layers and archaeological features. Rather poor macroremain assemblages confirm the prevailing wetland characteristics of the local environment after abandonment of the Old Kingdom cemeteries. Important stratigraphy was recorded in trench SA. At groundwater level, remains of what may have been a landing quay were uncovered. Above this level, a simple stratigraphy was recorded which consisted of layers which filled up the periodically waterfilled basin and can be dated to the medieval and modern periods.

The archeobotanical material from the mudbricks is rather poor, but some valuable finds have been recorded, for example *Citrullus lanatus* which probably represents one of its oldest finds known so far from Egypt. The research in the former alluvial zone is combined with archaeobotanical study of desert environment in the necropolis. Another interesting aspect can be seen in data from xylotomical (wood) and anthracological (charcoal) analyses, reflecting the use of fuel and wood at a local level during the Old Kingdom period.

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