

## Posudek MA thesis (Diplomová práce)

vedoucí práce       oponent

Autor: <b>PhDr. Bc. Jan Rovenský, Ph.D.</b>	
Název práce: <b>The Land to its Limits: Borders and Border Stelae in Ancient Egypt</b>	
Rozsah: <b>89</b> stran celkem, z toho: <b>72</b> stran textu, <b>11</b> stran bibliografie, <b>0</b> stran příloh	
Posudek vypracoval: <b>Doc. PhDr. Filip Coppens, Ph.D.</b> (oponent)	

### General Evaluation

The topic of the MA thesis, “The Land to its Limits: Borders and Border Stelae in Ancient Egypt”, and relevant related issues and research questions are very clearly defined in the introduction to the volume. The subject is appropriately positioned within its historical context as well as in the context of previous research. In the analysis of the available evidence, whether ancient inscriptions, material culture or modern scholarship, the author clearly shows his ability to work with the material in a scientific manner, being well aware of the many pitfalls and limitations inherent in working with only partially preserved remains of the material culture as well as the usage of modern terms to define ancient concepts. He likewise demonstrates that he is very capable in obtaining all relevant information from the material at hand. Different points of view on specific issues are identified and presented in a logical manner, with the author showing not only the capacity to convincingly argue his chosen point of view, but even to redefine and further our understanding and perspective of concepts such as “border” and “frontier” in ancient Egypt. Overall the study indicates that the author is more than capable of working in a scientific and critical manner with historical documents and modern research, as well as appropriately express his findings and thoughts in a systematic, lucid and logical manner.

**The study not only conforms, both in form and content, but exceeds the requirements expected of a MA paper. As such I would recommend that the study should be accepted for defence in front of the appropriate committee and rated as “excellent” (“výborně”).**

## I. Formální kritéria

	výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	dostatečně	Nedostatečně
<b>Vědecký aparát</b>					
Jednotnost citací, bibliografie a poznámkového aparátu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citování použitých cizích myšlenek (dobrá vědecká praxe)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Formální stavba práce</b>					
Obsahové členění	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formální členění (Obsah, nadpisy apod.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Popisky k tabulkám a obrázkům	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Jazyk</b>					
Stručnost a srozumitelnost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ortografie, gramatika, diakritika	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Odborná terminologie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Vzhled a přehlednost</b>					
Layout, písmo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Výběr a kvalita obrázků a dalších příloh (včetně tabulek a grafů)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Komentář k formální stránce práce

The paper is written in a very clear, lucid style, making it easy for the reader to follow the argumentation and train of thought of the author. Throughout the thesis, the author demonstrates a high-level, excellent command of English in all its aspects, as well as an in-depth knowledge of the specific terminology associated with the topic of his research.

The study is organised in a comprehensible manner, with individual chapters and subchapters marked in a coherent and logical style. The layout of the entire volume is very clean, the bibliography and the reference system implemented according to expected standards and formatted correctly. In regards to the referencing, the only remark that I would like to make is that as a scholar of Ptolemaic texts, I would

have liked to see precise references to the Edfu temple inscriptions (mentioned on page 16, note 3) as is standard practice (e.g. E III, 145, 7) not to the study in which the texts are mentioned.

The limited number of images (plans and stelae) are well chosen and of decent quality, but I would still have liked to find more. For instance, the four (even though fragmentary) statues of Senusret III at Uronarti and Semna-West (pages 56-58) would not have been out of place in the volume.

## II. Obsahové hodnocení

	Výborně	velmi dobře	dobře	Dostatečně	nedostatečně
<b>Struktura a členění práce</b>					
Přehled předchozího bádání (popř. teoretické pozadí)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logická struktura textu a jeho prvázanost	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preciznost argumentace	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Práce s literaturou</b>					
Rešerše a výběr odborné literatury	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zohlednění relevantní literatury v argumentaci	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kritické zhodnocení odborné literatury	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Metodologie</b>					
Formulace otázek a hypotéz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Výběr pramenů	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transparentnost kritérií výběru pramenů	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Přiznání možností a hranic práce s materiálem	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Výsledky</b>					
Jasná stavba hypotéz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zdůvodnění hypotéz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Začlenění do stavu bádání	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Komentář k obsahovému hodnocení

The overall structure and organisation of the paper is well thought out, clearly unified and very appropriate to its purpose as the author always kept track of the main research questions. The topic of the paper ("Borders and Border Stelae") and the research questions posed are clearly outlined in the introduction and very satisfactorily worked out throughout the volume. Leaving aside internal frontiers, such as existed between nomes or marked the boundary of specific properties and (sacred) territories,

the thesis focuses almost solely on the external political frontier (with the exception of the Old Kingdom sacred space markers found in a fragmentary state as filling material in Netjerykhet's funerary complex; chapter 2). The focal point is on five ("border") stelae (three from the Middle Kingdom, two from the New Kingdom), all located along the Nile in Nubia. These documents are analysed in detail (historical and topographical context, appearance, inscription, find spot and original location). It concerns the Year 8 stela of Senusret III from Semna-West and the Year 16 stelae of the same ruler from Semna-West and Uronariti, as well as the tableaux of Thutmose I and Thutmose III at the Hagr el-Merwa, near Kurgus.

The introduction to the volume and the first chapter focus partially on the concept of the border in ancient Egypt. The author clearly distinguishes and confronts Egypt's natural borders with its political ones, but also delves into the question as how this was likely conceived and perceived by the ancient Egyptians themselves. Concomitantly, he also points out the numerous problems and many pitfalls as well as the implications involved in labelling ancient designations and concepts with modern terms. Both introduction and the first chapter revolve in part around the precise definition and differentiation of the terminology related to "border", "frontier", "boundary" etc. as (mis)used in Egyptological literature. The author clearly defines these terms within his own research and meticulously adheres to its correct usage throughout the text, allowing the reader to clearly follow the author's reasoning and meaning when mentioning any of these terms (e.g. the difference between a "border stela" such as Senusret's year 8 stela and a "frontier marker" as the tableaux of Thutmose I and Thutmose III). In a similar vein the author discusses two ancient Egyptian terms (*t3š* and *dr*). In this perspective, it would still be interesting to find out the author's thoughts on why the phrase *swsh/iri t3š* appears to have become obsolete on royal monuments after the reign of Ramesses III.

The first chapter also contains a historical overview of the overall development of Egypt's western, southern and (north-)eastern border. Here, I must disagree with the author's statement that the southern border did not shift (politically, at least) after the Twenty-sixth dynasty and remained at Elephantine (page 24). Throughout the Ptolemaic period, the Ptolemaic administration controlled and occupied 'Lower Nubia', from Aswan/Elephantine to the Wadi Allaqi (the so-called *Dodekaschoinos*). The region of 'Upper Nubia', from Wadi Allaqi to the second cataract (the so-called *Trikontaschoinos*) was granted to the Merotic kingdom with Ptolemaic royal approval. This state of affairs continued well into the Roman imperial period, with troops occupying over a dozen sites in Lower Nubia, building new settlements or reoccupying Pharaonic and Ptolemaic fortresses and temples. At least ten major sites of Roman date are known in the area between Aswan and Maharraqa/Hiera Sykaminos. Overall, in the Roman period, the border appears to have been moved first towards Qasr Ibrim/Primis, afterwards to

Maharraqa/Hiera Sykaminos and finally, under the reign of Emperor Diocletian, re-established back at Aswan/Elephantine. In a similar vein, one could likewise argue that Egypt's north-eastern political border regularly shifted over the course of the Ptolemaic era (especially the period 323–168 BC) and was for decades located much beyond the Pelusiac branch of the Nile.

The next three chapters, divided per major historical era (Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, New Kingdom), are all organised in the same manner. The author has wisely taken a holistic approach to each individual document, covering its general appearance, the inscription present (in transliteration and translation), an in-depth analysis of the individual texts and a discussion of its find spot and original location (when different). He also takes into account the historical (regional) context as well as other relevant information and data. While the author is to be commended for having provided his own transliteration and translation of the stelae, one would have wished to see more clearly (and immediately) when, where and why his reading differs from previous ones, both in transliteration and translation (without having to consult the different versions by placing them next to one another) and whether this had any impact on the interpretation of the text and its function.

In these three historical chapters the author not only investigates the material remains of stelae labelled as “border stelae” or similar, but also takes it further by exploring the concept, the very notion and idea of the border/frontier as perceived by the ancient Egyptian mind as far as one can establish on the basis of the preserved textual and material culture. The overall result is fascinating as the author establishes in his scrupulous analysis that all monuments labelled as border stelae, one exception notwithstanding (the year 8 stela of Senusret III at Semna-West), are undeniably a misnomer and based on a longstanding misinterpretation of the intrinsic meaning and function as well as the historical and topographical context of these monuments in question. In this, the author clearly demonstrates that he is not only extremely capable in investigating ancient sources and documents, but even to further and redefine our understanding of concepts related to border and frontier. These main findings of the research are gathered and summarised once more in a brief conclusion at the very end of the volume, followed by an extensive bibliography.

**The study not only conforms, both in form and content, but exceeds the requirements expected of a MA paper. As such I would recommend that the study should be accepted for defence in front of the appropriate committee and rated as “excellent” / “výborně”.**

**Hodnocení:**<sup>1</sup> Výborně (1)

Datum: 26.05.2021

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<sup>1</sup> Škála: výborně – velmi dobře – dobře – neprospěl