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Review of the doctoral thesis of Mgr. Katarína Arias – ‘Social dynamics on the material culture – Pottery of the late Old Kingdom from the complex of Princess Sheretnebty at Abusir South’ (Prague, Charles University, 2017)

Doctoral thesis of Mgr. Katarína Arias is composed of two volumes. First volume is divided into seven chapters: Introduction, Chapters 2-6 devoted to various aspects of analysed ceramic material, and Conclusions followed by abbreviations along with relevant bibliography. Second volume contains illustrations solely. Studied material has been presented and analysed in original, somehow unconventional way using methodology and documentation system that Mag. Arias has created working on pottery from Abusir.

It is an excellent scientific work that not only presents and analyses pottery material in a detailed and reliable way, but above all in an innovative. The Author went far beyond standard research and proposed a new methodology what resulted in conclusions not to find in most ceramics publications.

Ceramics analysed in the thesis by Mag. Arias form a vast assemblage of nearly 20,000 vessels fragments. Such a huge and varied collection is a challenge for any ceramologist, even a very experienced. Nevertheless, it may offer to the scientist the perfect opportunity to establish and elaborate her/his own methodology suitable to the needs of the archaeological site she/he works. Moreover, it should be stressed that such individualized approach to ceramic material may allow not only to pose genuine questions but what is even more important, to find answers for these questions. Indeed, the Mag. Arias had exploited this opportunity very well.

At the beginning, the Author offers an introduction (Chapter One) to the problematic and places the complex of Princess Sheretnebty within Abusir necropolis.

Chapter Two presents methodology of documentation, quantification and general analysis of the potter against methodologies applied by archaeologists generally in clear and lucid way. She describes among others various quantification methods applied in the Egyptology

revealing their advantages and disadvantages (see pages 26-27). There is, however, one method not mentioned by the Author, *i.e.* surface measurement of spread pottery fragments. The method, which was once applied in several archaeological sites *e.g.* Middle Kingdom – Second Intermediate Period settlements sites Tell el-Dab'a (Awaris) and Kom Rabia (Memphis).

Chapter Three starts with a rather unconventional (in a very positive sense) presentation of pottery. In any other conventional pottery publication one would expect in this place a detailed description of various clays, surface treatment, decorations types, methods of shaping etc. followed by a classical shape typology of vessels. Meanwhile, the Author begins in an 'avant-garde' way the presentation of the ceramics with its distribution throughout the whole funerary complex. This is a very crucial, if not the most crucial part of the material presentation (see pages 35-152). The comprehensive description and in-depth analysis of all ceramic units from various parts of the complex (burial shafts, embalming and ritual shafts, corridors, niches, burial chambers etc.) gives the work a high degree of credibility. What is also significant, it proves the Author's mature sense of responsibility for the archaeological material she works with. Most often, similar studies show general information that does not allow the reader to track the author's analysis nor verify the conclusions reached.

Chapter Four is an attempt to define, analyse and interpret specific types of archaeological contexts connected with various activities on the necropolis. Essential for the analysis of deposits is the precise distinction (therefor-refined definition) between particular types of contexts/deposits: burial goods, sealing ritual deposits, burial shafts and other deposits, cult pottery etc. (see pages 154-156). In addition to detailed descriptions of specific deposits, based on their own analysis and secondary sources, the Author also proposes reinterpreting the function of certain deposits, such as those from ritual shafts (see pages 192-193). Particularly interesting is the attempt to reconstruct the precise depositional process (see pages 215-217).

Chapter Five presents the typology of the vessel consisting of nine main classes: six classes of vessels and further supplemented by ancillary and technical classes such as lids, mud stoppers and tools. Classification is based on Mag. Arias own research at Abusir. In addition, the Author discusses interpretation of other ceramologists. In a convincing way, she gives other interpretative possibilities concerning dating, evolution, as well as the morphology of particular types, such as the carinated bowls of the VI dynasty (see pages 239-240). It is entirely innovative to include in the ceramics study (in my opinion absolutely correct) two

classes most often ignored by ceramists, namely mud stoppers (see pages 300-307) and tools (see pages 307-309).

Chapter Six deals with the relationship between the analysed ceramics and the socio-economic status of the tomb owners, and particularly the dating and chronology of tombs and/or shafts. The Author clearly achieved to demonstrate that ceramics in the late Old Kingdom contrary to early epochs were not regarded as burial goods of special value. The chapter contains also chronological study of the ceramics and proposes based on this study a chronological sequence of particular tombs, structures and shafts, which is a very good proof how important dating marker pottery is. At the end, the Author compared analysed pottery with ceramics from the whole Memphite region.

Each of the Chapter Three- Six contains clearly defined conclusions.

Chapter Seven contains the final conclusions of the individual chapters.

The argumentation used by Mag. Arias is lucid, and it is always clear what she attempts to express. The dissertation contains 396 pages of main text (Volume I) and 128 pages of illustrations (Volume II). The work is rich and excellently illustrated which is an extremely important aspect of any ceramological work. Bibliographic Harvard references in the text are supplemented with footnotes where it is necessary.

The work is based on an impressive bibliography and most relevant works are included. There are only few papers which might be added there, *e.g.* Svetlana Malykh 'Vessel and its contents: on the interpretation of some Egyptian Tomb Scenes of the Old Kingdom' (in Russian) 2012, by the same author contribution on pottery in: Kormysheva, E., Malykh, S., Lebedev, M., Vetokhov, S. *Giza Eastern Necropolis III. Tombs of Tjenty II, Khufuhotep, and Anonymous Tombs GE 17, GE 18, GE 47, GE 48, and GE 49.* Moscow, 2015.

The language of the dissertation is correct and clear, lacking any colloquial expressions. The Author works transparently with all relevant primary and secondary sources in a methodologically correct manner. All the individual steps in data analysis are well executed. Mag. Arias employs the primary and secondary sources to propose an original, organically formulated contribution to the field.

The Author wrote 'The main aim of the presented thesis is to analyse and interpret the ceramic finds from the complex of Princess Sheretneby (AS 68) at Abusir South in a wider context of the known development in the Memphite necropolis.' (p. 4) and she has achieved this goal with full success.

The thesis of Mag. Katarina Aria is an extraordinary piece of scientific work meeting all standards required for a doctoral dissertation. It has to be granted as 'pass' with recommendation for the public defence.

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