M. Bardoňová, *Grain Storage in Ancient Egypt (2600–1650 BC). Typology and socio-economic implications*, PhD dissertation, Charles University, Faculty of Arts, Czech Institute of Egyptology

**Report of the supervisor of the thesis**

The topic of Martina Bardoňová’s thesis is rather wide and complex, analysing various types of evidence on grain storage in ancient Egypt during the period from the Old to Middle Kingdoms. For the ancient Egyptians, grain constituted one of the most important parts of their life, one of the basic commodities of their economy. Therefore, the production and storage of grain was of high importance for the crown, state institutions as well as for individuals. Despite the evidence on grain storage documented in various archaeological sites, iconographic evidence as well as textual sources, we lack until now a larger summarizing study of grain containers and storage facilities, reflecting their development as well as their social and economic importance.

The dissertation of Martina Bardoňová seeks to improve this situation. It collects the available evidence in the fields of archaeology, iconography and texts – as a PhD this is a huge enterprise. The candidate took the following steps:

In the introductory chapters explaining the scope of the subject and the state of research, the candidate provides a very wide overview of published works on economy, administration and archaeology related to grain and grain storage in the studied periods, and explains the direction and aims of her own study. The following section on the methodology explains the methods and tools of her work, and it also contains an introduction to the various sources, which were collected in a Source Database. The Source Database includes not only information on the individual pieces of evidence, but also references and figures. In light of this, it is a pity that the Source Database is not attached to the dissertation, possibly due to the inclusion of unpublished material(?).

Chapter II focuses on the archaeological evidence on grain and grain storage. The remnants of grains attested in various sites is discussed first, followed by the classification of storage facilities into the following categories – circular, orthogonal, magazines, pits and containers, baskets and bags. The details given in the discussion are highly dependent on the state of publication of the evidence – as some of the earlier works and excavations do not provide many details on the finds. Another complication is that it is often not easy during archaeological
excavations to distinguish grain storage facilities from storage facilities for other types of products. The candidate includes in this chapter some of the recently uncovered evidence from excavation at Qubbet el-Hawa (with permission of the head of the Spanish mission) in which she herself participated.

In Chapter III the candidate focuses on the evidence in iconography, including the 2-dimensional depictions as well as models of storage facilities and containers. The candidate is aware of the limitations of the evidence, which comes mostly from funerary/ritual contexts. She provides a classification of the depictions and an overview of their development, clearly illustrating a preference of certain types in different periods. This chapter also presents some of the newly uncovered evidence.

The focus of Chapter IV is the written evidence related to the names of cereals, the designations of storage facilities and the appellations of various containers. In this part of the thesis, the candidate built upon the recently published work of J. Flores (Les céréales: analyse d’une gestion au Protodynastique et sous l’Ancien Empire, Hamburg 2015), which she considerably extended and complemented. The material is of course biased due to the prevalence of institutional and funerary contexts in the preserved evidence. Evidence from the later part of the studied period is more varied than in the former part, which also influences the general picture.

While the previous chapters summarised the available evidence from archaeological, iconographic and textual sources, Chapter V offers an extension to this subject, namely a thorough discussion of the grain storage facilities in regards to socio-economic models and the organisation of agricultural production. This is the main synthesis of the dissertation and it provides an insight into the development of grain storage during the Old Kingdom, First Intermediate Period and Middle Kingdom, reflecting the attested evidence during the individual periods. The candidate touches upon economic and sociological questions; she also discusses the extant economic models as applied to the ancient Egyptian society of that time, especially the patrimonial household model, and offers her views concerning the economy of grain production and storage, rural landscape and taxation models. She discusses in more detail the evidence from individual sites of the studied period, including above all Elephantine, and other Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period–Middle Kingdom sites, such as Heit el-Ghurab, Abusir, Lahun, Tell el-Dabaa, Ezbet Rushdi, Nubian fortresses, etc. This chapter thus provides an extremely useful overview of the situation in the most important explored sites, and a detailed discussion on the development during the studied period.

The conclusion in Chapter VI summarizes succinctly the whole thesis.
Despite the fact that the Source Database was not included as a part of the dissertation (for the above-mentioned reasons), the candidate provided a high number of figures in her text, which facilitate the understanding for the reader. The quality of some of the figures might have been better but these often depend on the quality of figures and photographs in the original publications. The candidate is very well able to combine different types of evidence and discuss them as one large subject. During the preparation of this thesis, she also made excellent use of her general historical background, which allowed her to provide a slightly wider view on the discussed problems than usual in Egyptological literature. Some parts of the text are not easy to follow, mostly due to the large quantity of information. However, in no point does one get the impression that the candidate loses control of the amount of the material that was processed. The candidate managed rather well the wide scope of this study as well as the uneasy situation due to the different level of quality of the available publications. She offers new perspectives, provided a fine piece of scholarly work and proved very capable of conducting academic research.

In every respect this thesis fulfills the standards and requirements of a PhD dissertation. I recommend Mrs. Martina Bardoňová’s thesis to be accepted as a PhD dissertation at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. The thesis passes with excellence.

Prague, 29th of April, 2019

Assoc. Prof. Hana Vymazalová, Ph.D.
Czech Institute of Egyptology
Faculty of Arts, Charles University