“Grain Storage in Ancient Egypt (2600-1650 BC). Typology and socio-economic implications”
Submitted in 2019 at the [Department of Egyptology, Faculty of Arts]

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The topic of this submitted PH.D. dissertation is the storage of grain in Ancient Egypt from the beginning of the Old Kingdom (3rd Dynasty) until the end of the Middle Kingdom (13th Dynasty), (2600-1650 BC) with the focus on the typology of grain distribution facilities and installations and its socio-economic implications. Ancient Egypt was an agrarian society in which the storage and distributions of cereals was an important part of the economy and society. Grain was the principal ingredient for bread and beer, which were the main food sources in Ancient Egypt. The distribution of grain thus is a crucial factor in understanding Ancient Egypt. In this PH.D. dissertation the continuity and change in modes of grain storage is investigated, a typology of grain storage facilities and institutions is established using all available sources this sentence sort of repeats the second sentence with reference to the typology i.e. archaeological, textual and iconographical sources. In a second step, patterns of grain distribution are analysed, and in a final step compared with the “patrimonial household model”.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

This is an excellent dissertation. Although the analysis of grain and its impact on Ancient Egyptian society is a popular subject of interest within the field of Egyptology it has never been undertaken as a holistic study. Thus it is particularly noteworthy that this is undertaken for the first time here. The dissertation is well structured. The research interests, methods and aims are
clearly presented. The typology is logically structured. The analysis of the patterns of grain distribution within Egyptian society in connection with the “patrimonial household model” is especially important. The reviewer considers the application of this model, which was developed from studies of Ancient Near Eastern societies, to Ancient Egypt to be highly problematic and definitely agrees with the author of this dissertation that the economy and society of Ancient Egypt is complex and that it is not possible to apply an overly simplistic model.
III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

1. Structure of the argument

The basic premise and aim of the thesis is clearly laid out, and the author is highly successful on focusing on this objective throughout. The PH.D. thesis is clearly structured, it is divided into two main parts: analysis and interpretation (part I) and catalogue (part II). Part I (analysis) consists of chapter I, I introduction, state of research, sources and method, followed by chapters II-IV archaeological evidence, iconography and written sources, then chapter, then chapter V Grain storage facilities: socio economic models and the organization of agricultural production, followed by the final chapter: conclusions. Part II (the catalogue) is also well structured and clearly arranged. It is commendable that the base of this catalogue is a file maker data base. Thus the catalogue can be expanded for future studies.

The argumentation in this PH.D. thesis is lucid throughout, and clearly and logically expressed. Her mode of analysis, which is closely followed throughout the text is first to present the existing evidence and theories, and then the author’s analysis is undertaken.

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The author is coherent in the use of abbreviations, syntax of bibliographical references, transcriptions of foreign terms, using transliteration of Egyptian texts and in depicting the Hieroglyphical signs. The footnotes are formatted correctly. The language of the dissertation grammatically seems to be correct (note: The reviewer is not a native English speaker) and mostly free of linguistic infelicities. It was noticed that some colloquial terms were used which should not appear in a written text (s. page 28: “Even though I'm not interested in deeper analyses of iconographic evidence, it is necessary to clarify what exactly I am going to describe in the case of images of storage facilities – a reality, an ideal or a symbol?”

The dissertation is visually well-presented, the photos and illustrations are of good quality and the illustrations and tables are graphically well-formatted.

3. Use of sources and/or material

The author works very transparently with secondary sources, and makes a clear distinction between secondary sources and her own thoughts. All relevant sources are addressed. The primary sources are used properly and reference made to their original language wherever appropriate in a very thorough way. All sources are employed in a methodologically correct
manner. The methodology used for data collection and analysis is coherent, and the individual steps in data analysis are justified and well executed. The method of data collection and processing in line with the main research question or hypotheses is tested. The interpretation of the results proposed by the author follows from the results of the empirical research and sources on which the work relies.

4. Personal contribution to the subject

The dissertation gives an excellent overview on the state of research of this topic. It is not merely a compilation of information but makes original, organically formulated contributions to the field. The typology of storage facilities will be widely useful to both field archaeologists and possibly also economic historians. Especially remarkable is the analysis of the patterns of grain distribution within Egyptian society in relation to the “patrimonial household model”. The reviewer considers the application of this model which was developed from the neighbor field studies on Ancient Near Eastern societies on Ancient Egypt by mostly American scholars highly problematic and more than agrees with the author of this dissertation that the economy and society of Ancient Egypt is more complex and it is not possible to apply an overly simplistic model. Especially in this aspect the author of the PH.D. thesis has made an important contribution to the understanding of the underlying structure and impact of grain distribution to the economy and society of Ancient Egypt.

I highly recommend the submitted dissertation with a clear pass

Cairo, 17th of April 2019