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**External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Mgr. et Mgr. Lucie Vendelová
Jiràsková
'Miniature and model stone vessels of the Old Kingdom –
From Typology and political background'
Submitter in 2021 at the Department of Philosophy [Filozofická Fakulta] of
the Charles University, Prague**

1. Brief summary

The submitted dissertation deals with the phenomena of so-called miniature/model stone and metal vessels originating from the Old Kingdom burial grounds. Having collected vast amount of the material, the Author analysed it not only as a source of knowledge about ancient Egyptian funeral customs (that would be the most convenient and expectable approach), but above all as a source of knowledge about the society that produced and used these vessels.

Moreover, these in-depth studies showed undoubtedly the interdependence between the evolution of the analysed material and economic and political changes that took place in the background and had a huge impact on it.

2. Brief Overall of the dissertation

As a topic of Her dissertation, the Author choose the issue with which every ceramologist (archaeologist) studying the Old Kingdom sooner or later comes across, including the one

writing these words. The subject of 'miniature/model vessels' seems to be trivial and understandable at the first glance, but hardly anyone has looked at it as broadly and deeply as Lucie Vendelová Jiràšková did. Starting from a thorough analysis of the definition of what a miniature vessel and what a model vessel is, a sort of resume of the history of the research, a clear presentation of the vast material, to a holistic analysis of this cultural phenomenon.

The argumentation used by Mag. Lucie Vendelová Jiràšková is lucid, and it is distinct what she attempts to express. The Author employed all available sources to propose an original contribution to the field of the Old Kingdom archaeology. The dissertation contains 316 pages of text and illustrations. The work is rich and superb illustrated which is a particularly important aspect of any archaeological work. Bibliographic Harvard references in the text are supplemented with footnotes where it is necessary.

3. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

Doctoral thesis of Mgr. et Mgr. Lucie Vendelová Jiràšková is clearly structured, divided into nine chapters: Introduction, Chapters 2-8 devoted to various types/assemblages and aspects of studied material and Conclusions followed by Appendix 1 (Catalogue of assemblages), Appendix 2 (Catalogue of the Opening of the Mouth sets) along with the relevant bibliography. Collected material has been presented and analysed in original way using methodology that the Author had created for this purpose.

Chapter 1: Introduction provides important information on terminology and methodology. The Author presented here the possible meanings of various definitions of tiny vessels (stone, metal and clay): 'miniature', 'model', 'dummy' and 'miniaturized'. In this discussion, however, there is a lack of reference to the book by S. Malykh, *Egyptian votive pottery of the Old Kingdom* (published in Russian, Moscow 2010), which deals entirely with miniature vessels. This book certainly would enrich the discussion regarding the terminology and possible functions of miniature vessels in the Old Kingdom. It would be interesting and worthwhile to refer to literature from the outside of Egyptology. Tiny vessels are not only an Egyptian phenomenon, they appear in many civilizations of the Mediterranean region. A paper, worthy to mention as an example, is the article by Oliver Pilz, *The uses of small things and the semiotics of Greek miniature objects*, *Pallas*, No. 86, *The Gods of Small Things* (2011), pp. 15-30. The author considers the meaning of the word 'miniature' in ancient Greek culture along with the cultural

significance of miniature objects, both in the sacred and the profane contexts. The text is valuable especially for Egyptologists as it quotes the paper by S. Allen on miniature vessels in Egypt discussed in the dissertation.

This chapter also presents the history of the research, which became a starting point for the own studies of the PhD candidate. An important part is presentation of a 'new approach' to the material being a very methodology of the work. It should be clearly emphasized that the approach and the questions arising from it prove a certain scientific maturity of the Author.

Chapter 2 deals with the phenomena of stone vessels in ancient Egypt before the birth of models 'dummy pots' in the Fourth Dynasty and gives *terminus post quem* of the studied phenomena.

Chapter 3 presents the chronological appearance of stone vessels in the Memphite necropolis.

To sum up, it is more than safe to say that Chapters 1-3 created a sort of groundwork for the presentation of the actual material that is the subject of the dissertation.

Chapters 4-8 are related to all possible topics regarding the stone (clay and metal) miniature vessels: typology, productions, workshops, types of assemblages. This is a very core of the dissertation.

Chapter 4 presents various aspects of production of miniature stone vessels since the Fourth Dynasty (type of stone used, location of workshops, techniques of production) including the experiments performed by the Author (sic!). Chapter 5 deals with the typology of the vessels based on classical division established by B. Aston and applied in both areas of Egyptian archaeology, ceramic and stone vessels studies. The author did not limit herself on the 'open-closed vessels (forms)' classification, but extended it to include the missing 'special forms'. What is more, despite the insufficient amount of undisturbed (in situ) material, the Author made attempts to analyse what the sets of miniature stone vessels placed in the burial chambers could look like and to correlate such sets with the offering list. The chronological analysis of the evolution of miniature stone vessel assemblages and the analysis of the relationship between the production of stone and clay miniature vessels seems, however, to be a slightly weaker point of the dissertation. In the opinion of the writing these words, this is so not because of a bad methodology applied or incorrectly asked research questions, but because of the insufficient and heterogeneous material at the disposal of the Author.

The result is *e.g.* the statement 'the very end of the Fifth Dynasty, represented by the reign of Unas, shows slow weakening of the rules again (p. 127; the key word is 'again'), and noticeable decline in production.' Such a fluctuation in production (i.e. the demand-supply relationship) in such a short period seems to be difficult to explain, understand and accept. Except of the comments mentioned above, there is nothing more that could be added to the collected material or to the method of its presentation.

As to the Chapter 6 presenting correlation between pottery, copper and stone miniature vessels and Chapter 7 dealing with the material from the outside of Memphite necropolis. There is just one comment: if the Author had included the nicely preserved copper vessels set from the tomb of Ny-Pepy (West Saqqara, cf. Saqqara V, ed. K. Myśliwiec, Warsaw 2013, vol. II), Her conclusions would have been much stronger.

Particularly interesting and deserving praise for the presentation and analysis of the material is Chapter 9, which deals with objects related to the Opening of the Mouth Ritual.

And last but not least, the Conclusions, where the Author tries to precisely present the phenomenon of stone miniature vessels as an element of funerary (burial) equipment. She presents the functions the vessels performed in the funeral context as well as the social and political implications that led to the birth of this phenomenon. She is fully convincing here.

The dissertation is clearly structured. All the individual steps in data analysis are well executed. The argumentation used by the Author is lucid throughout, it is clear what she attempts to express. The use of the abbreviations, syntax of bibliographical references is coherent. The language of the dissertation is correct and clear, lacking any colloquial expressions. Mgr. et Mgr. Lucie Vendelová Jiràšková employs the primary and secondary sources to propose an original, organically formulated contribution to the field. The Author works transparently with all relevant primary and secondary sources in a methodologically correct manner.

It is an excellent scientific work that not only presents and analyses material in a detailed and reliable way, but above all in an innovative. The dissertation achieved a clearly set objective The Author went far beyond standard research and proposed a new methodology what resulted in conclusions no to find in many archaeological publications.

4. Questions for the Author

A. Does the Author see any relation(s) between the set of the Opening of the Mouth ritual and the so-called set of 7 'sacred/holy' oils? If yes, please explain.

B. How does the Author would explain a set of the Opening of the Mouth ritual and/or a so-called set of 7 'sacred/holy' oils with eight vessels or 8 holes (oils) respectively?

5. Conclusion

The thesis of Mgr. et Mgr. Lucie Vendelová Jiràšková is a remarkable 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.

(3rd November 2021)



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