

Report on Hana Navrátilová, *Egyptian historical thought: the visitors' graffiti of the New Kingdom at Saqqara and Abusir as a case study*, dissertation submitted for the doctorate at Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Arts, Czech Institute of Egyptology, May 2006

1 *General; overall recommendation*

This dissertation is constructed as a progressive approach to detailed textual evidence for Egyptian historical thought or uses of the past – both terms are used and both might apply to the material – in the New Kingdom. The first chapter ('The "shadow of the past"') deals with approaches to the theme in general, cross-cultural historiography, and theory of history, while including a little Egyptological material. The second chapter ('The uses of the past') addresses comparable themes through a survey of some what has been written in its area in Egyptology, ending with general schemas deriving from theoretical work on history. The third chapter is a general survey of 'The elite uses of the past in the New Kingdom', using a few key passages in texts and posing some basic questions. As elsewhere in the thesis, almost no use is made of archaeological and art-historical sources. There follows a short 'Excursus: The schooling of scribes', after which the author turns to the main body of material treated, the visitors' graffiti of the Memphite area. These are introduced in the next three chapters and analysed in the chapters 'Evidence and context' and 'Interpretations'. The concluding chapter of synthesis is followed by a 'Catalogue of the visitors' graffiti', which is confined to Abusir and Saqqara. A certain number graffiti are illustrated with scans from the Griffith Institute archives. Tables of graffiti are provided for a rather larger range of sites than is treated in the catalogue and for some specific questions. The dissertation concludes with a bibliography and list of abbreviations.

The dissertation covers a significant, if relatively small body of material. It uses this to address the more general issue of uses of the past. While the theoretical overview of the first two chapters does not lead smoothly into the consideration of the corpus, the concluding chapters provide some useful ideas and a synthesis and show that the author has had some success in marrying the two aspects of what she does. The use of a broader perspective improves the dissertation, but one could have wished for greater depth in the analysis of the graffiti themselves.

As received, I understand that the dissertation is a draft intended for correction and defence in a slightly more polished version. My recommendation is that the dissertation proceed for defence after revision. In the next section I give both requirements for revision and points that would improve the text and are desirable but are not required. I estimate that a month's work should be sufficient to create a version of the dissertation for the defence that can take account of the requirements set out below. After the detailed recommendations, I review other aspects of the content (section 3). Only the points made in section 2a–b below are necessary for the defence; the less specific points under 2c are not formal requirements.

2 *Detailed recommendations and comments on format*

At present, the two most defective parts of the dissertation are the catalogue and the bibliography. I therefore start with recommendations for these.

a Catalogue

The author gives strong requirements for what would constitute a proper treatment of inscriptional texts on pp. 53–6 ('Epigraphy'), but in the catalogue she does not implement her guidelines even to the extent that would be practicable in the dissertation. The following should be done as a minimum:

All graffiti should be presented in their original hieratic, if available. Where this is done from accessible archival sources, the scans should be large enough to be legible; at present, in a

number of instances this is not the case (e.g. pp. 233, 235 [note that two pages are numbered 234]). Some scans are placed within the text while others are in a section of plates at the end. All should be consistently in one or other location. Where possible, pairs of scans for a single graffito should be merged into one image.

There must be a hieroglyphic transcription of all graffiti, followed by a transliteration, as well as a translation into English of all texts for which some coherent context is present. At present, there is some confusion between the author's translations and those by others that she reproduces (this applies also to the dissertation text, as against the catalogue). Sometimes the renderings are of slightly different versions of the graffiti, because of loss of material between one copy and the next etc. It will be best to translate the fullest possible text, indicating in notes to the translation where parts of them are taken from evidence that is no longer extant or from readings by particular scholars.

The transliterations contain many typing errors. They must be reviewed carefully. (The same point applies to citations of Egyptian texts in the body of the dissertation.) Some transliteration is inconsistent, for example initial *i* or *j*. Another instance is the table of material from Dahshur, where one finds the word for regnal year transliterated *rnpt ḥsbt* and *rnpt sp/ḥ3t sp*, whereas in the body of the dissertation it is read *ḥ3t sp*. A single reading of this group should be used. Some words are wrongly transliterated, such as *r^c*, which is quite often written where the context requires *hrw* 'day'.

At present the information given about archaeological context is rather minimal. With loose blocks, little more may be available, but for inscriptions that were discovered in situ, the precise location should be given, to include position along a wall if the information can be found. If possible, a plan of the area should be included; this can be a simple outline and will take up little space; several graffiti may also be placed on a single plan. The height above ground at which a graffito is located is also important as evidence for the state of the ancient building at the time. This information is nowhere given; if it is not available for any of the graffiti so that it would not be meaningful to mention the point, the author should say somewhere that this is the case. My memory, however, is that some graffiti in the Djoser complex at Saqqara are accessible in situ, so that something relevant could be said. For the defence, the author should review what is said about the archaeological context of each graffito and supplement it as far as possible.

Personal names. At present, references are given to Ranke, but this is now very out of date. It is difficult to gather more recent discussions, but some attempt at filling out the information is desirable; the author should at least indicate that Ranke is only a rough-and-ready source.

Bibliography for each graffito should give the precise pages on which they are published (where applicable). General publications that mention the findspot but do not treat the particular graffito should be excluded; this will eliminate significant numbers of references. The author may wish to add a paragraph site by site that gives the generally relevant bibliography; this could come before the treatment of the individual graffiti.

At present, each catalogue entry has separate pages. This is unnecessary, and many pages would be saved if they were run continuous.

The catalogue uses a highly elaborate numbering scheme that makes it difficult to move between it and the text. This is especially awkward because the catalogue covers only some of the sites treated. I suggest that at the beginning of the catalogue the author add a list of the graffiti treated with the pages on which the relevant entries occur.

b Bibliography

The bibliography is not done according to an identifiable house style. The author should apply a house style rigorously, so that features such as capitalization, use of quotation marks around article and chapter titles, amount of information given about each item, punctuation, etc., are made consistent. This point applies both to the list on pp. 338–52 and to citations in the footnotes throughout the dissertation.

It is not for someone outside the candidate's institution to identify the house style that should be adopted. Instead I give the following as minimum requirements for all entries in