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**External Examiner’s Report on the Dissertation of Maria Peterková Hlouchová
“Gods with Solar Aspects during the Old Kingdom”
Submitted in 2020 at the Czech Institute of Egyptology**

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The present work, structured in six chapters with three exkursus with particular studies, deals with the study of five particular deities (Atum, Shu, Kheprer, Nefertum, Weneg) and their solar characteristics, contexts, and functions. For such an analysis, the candidate made use of two very different types of evidence: on the one hand, she collected, studied, and interpreted the presence of these five deities in the so-called Pyramid Text corpus, where references to these gods demonstrate the solar influence of the early Old Kingdom culture in the composition of the corpus and the role of these gods in relation to solar practices and beliefs; on the other hand, the candidate makes use of a variegated group of sources of various natures (tomb decoration and equipment, funerary domains, offering formulae, royal and personal names, royal annals, and administrative sources), from which it is clear that references to these gods were not so common. In any case, from both categories of sources, the candidate collects and studies the major evidence to acquire an informed knowledge on each of these five gods. In addition, in three exkursus the candidate investigates on: i) a particular composition known as the Cannibal Hymn; ii) the meaning and forms of the god/plant Weneg; and iii) the origins of the solar cult and beliefs in ancient Egypt.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

The present dissertation is a valuable work of research dealing with a complex topic, which the candidate seems to have developed very carefully. The idea of discussing the notion of solar cult in ancient Egypt, the practices and beliefs connected with it, is a difficult one; however, Maria Peterková Hlouchová achieves to discuss the matter with the sound caution of a good scholar, taking into consideration all aspects of these deities even when the interpretations, approaches, and ideas did not favor her analysis. In fact, she has been very comprehensive in incorporating all positions about the solar cult in ancient Egypt, enriching enormously her dissertation work. The chapters of analytical nature, such as chapter 5 and the three exkursus, demonstrate that the candidate has capacities and knowledge to develop research work with excellence, and therefore her dissertation is manifest evidence of her excellence and capacity, as well as of her entitlement to receive a doctoral degree.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

In the following paragraphs, I have incorporated my notes from the reading of Marie Peterková Hloučková's dissertation, considering the fundamental aspects of structure of the argument, formal aspects of the dissertation, use of sources and/or material, and personal contribution to the subject.

Chapter 1 constitutes, in my opinion, a clear, well-structured, and necessary chapter for the introduction not only into the main topic and the practices of sun worshipping in ancient Egypt but also into matters to be taken into consideration for the rest of the chapters, such as the general scope and foci of the dissertation research, the structure of the work, and the use of names in it.

In the case of **Chapter 2**, State of Research, the collection of previous studies and various positions referring to these deities –at a general level– is indeed complete and offers a comprehensive description of the state of research on these deities. Two points are of significant value here, and both are to be praised at this early stage of the dissertation of Ms. Peterková:

- 1) On the one hand, the doctoral candidate manifests her idea that several deities have not been sufficiently studied (see, of instance, p. 28 for the case of Nefertum: “A comprehensive treatise on the god Nefertum is missing”; and p. 29 for the case of Weneg: “Similarly to the previously mentioned deities, even the minor god Weneg has not been discussed by many scholars”).
- 2) On the other hand, the candidate shows no dismay on approaching the studies of these gods with the incorporation of interpretations from multiple scholars, in many cases with incompatible views. Here the candidate enriches the collection of interpretative alternatives –a common circumstance in studies on cultural, religious, and social matters– by transferring into her study all the positions. Being a fundamental aspect of research, many studies lack of these thorough recopilation of positions within the interpretative frame.

Concerning **Chapter 3**, the doctoral candidate of this dissertation assume a difficult approach, in my opinion, since the categories of sources is wide and variegated. In other words, she collects a large collection of sources of different types, which *per se* is a positive aspect, but she herself is aware of the difficulty of analyzing all these types of sources together. As she says in p. 31, “[t]he source base for studying the topic of this thesis is rather wide, as the attestations for the gods appear in various types of evidence”. In certain a way, this comprehensive approach is what forces her to analyse and present the materials for each god in the form she did (see contents: Chapter 5, sections 5.1 to 5.6). A worthy point for the candidate is that she analyzes at the beginning of Chapter 3 the types of evidences as they have been considered in Egyptology (see, e.g. “There were some attempts to categorise the Egyptian documents. It was, for instance, Sigfried Morenz [...] who distinguished between direct (textual and archaeological) and indirect evidence”).

In the discussion of Pyramid Texts inscriptions for women, the author could have precisely considered the paper by the present examiner, A.J. Morales, “Pyramid Texts as ritual icons: Mechanisms of monumentalization and adaptation in the chambers of the Old Kingdom queens”, in J.F. Quack and D.C. Luft (eds.), *Praktische Verwendung religiöser Text- und Bildträger als Artefakte im Alten Ägypten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike*. The article is still in press but it has been referred by other authors and could have been easily accessible, although I understand that the candidate might not be informed of it. This article might have been appropriate for the discussion on the use of wooden chests –such as in the case of Meritites II, commented in p. 33). In addition, I would have expected a reference to the work of *Baines 2004*, since he was one of the first authors to refer to the queen chest as a piece of furniture that might be expressing the use of Pyramid Texts by queens before the VI Dynasty in the form of texts attached to furniture. Furthermore, the doctoral candidate makes good use of her knowledge on the debate on some of the objects and monuments dating to the First Intermediate Period, avoiding –with functional flexibility– to fix them in a particular period: “examples of Pyramid Text spells in non-royal contexts, dated to the end of the Old Kingdom or to the beginning of the First Intermediate Period [...] can be found on other provincial sites (for instance, Dendera, Mendes) and at the Memphite necropolis (South Saqqara) [...] However, the dating of these finds is ambiguous”. Regarding the discussion of the Pyramid Texts and parallel texts with the label *pṛt m hrw*, although of a later date, the sarcophagus of Ipi at Deir el-Bahari (TT 315) from very early Twelfth Dynasty also presents a religious spell with the beginning *pṛt m hrw*, as other Coffin Texts spells (such as CT 225) do. Indeed, the candidate could have also made use of A.J. Morales, *The Pyramid Texts of Nut* (Hamburg: Buske Verlag, 2017), *BSAK* 19, for her discussion on Hays' group E in pp. 45-46. As for the rest of the categories in Chapter 3, it is important that the candidate was able to integrate into her dissertation the discussion on the earliest papyri collection studied and published by Pierre Tallet. However, the evidence proceeding from these materials in terms of the discussion of the five deities is not clear to me. In p. 253, in the analysis of the papyri, the candidate expresses that “[a]lthough it has to be kept in mind that the documents are preserved fragmentarily, the absence of any reference to a deity is particularly thought-provoking”. The fact that *3h.t-Hwfw* and *Iwnw* are present has to do with, as the author herself refers to, “practical and logistic reasons”, so I do not think there is much discussion on the lack of solar deities since the general function, context, and goals of these writing was not religious oriented.

As for **Chapter 4**, the main characteristics of the gods are somehow described in the general analysis of the sources and the approaches in Chapter 2. Here, the description is more detailed, but still I think it could have been more useful in Chapter 2 where all these are being commented through the interpretations presented by the scholars, or at the end, once the entire analysis of the sources have been completed and one can really jump into presenting hypotheses, interpretations, and criticisms. Somehow, I feel that this chapter could have been presented before or later, but not just with the mere purpose to present a general description of each god before it is analysed in the sources. Thus, I am not saying –please, do not misunderstand me– that the analysis is not worthy, but that the positioning of such an analysis after introducing the reader into the various gods and how they have been understood, and the analysis of the sources, where again the candidate is going to build up her own rationale behind the sources to describe how the gods are to be understood, has in my opinion not much sense at this point but in Chapter 6.

Regarding the Pyramid Texts analysis in **Chapter 5**, although I agree that each text presents notions, concepts, features, characteristics, and details of each god that need to be analysed, I would have tried better for a discussion of the gods with several characteristics in mind and not the textual evidence as the main argument for the collection, study, and presentation of the materials. In fact, in this analysis of the Pyramid Texts, I find interesting the references to the groupings and the continuous awareness of the position (i.e. pyramid, chamber, wall, register), but still find more useful the tables at the end of each section rather than the discussion itself. In this sense, the materials incorporated into pages 95-227 are truly valuable, but I would have presented the discussion on the basis of the characteristics, looking for common patterns and distinctions between the gods instead of lineal (allow me the expression) analysis of the texts. In a way, the summaries of the various sections referring to the five gods is what really serves the final objective of understanding the positioning, groupings, and real functions of each deity in connection with the various religious traditions. An example of the approach I indicate above can be found in the following section, 5.2 Tomb decoration and equipment (pp. 228-236) where the author comments on the lacks of references to three deities, then she goes onto comparing the uses of two gods in two different concepts, combining different gods in her analysis within the same evidence.

Finally, beyond the summarizing valuable comments in **Chapter 6**, I would express that *Excursus I to III* are, in a way, the kind of analyses I was previously emphasizing, with in-depth reading of the texts. In fact, in the first analysis, the candidate can present the material in a much different way, as a detailed analysis not only of the sources but also of the interpretations proposed for understanding the possible meanings of the Cannibal Hymn (five major points in pp. 286-287: prehistoric cannibalistic practices, gaining power by the king, resurrection of the king, ritual of slaughter, and astronomic theory). The same is applicable to the second analysis, the exkursus on the so-called *wng*-plant, where the author presents up to four different types of interpretations on the basis of the aspect of the plant and the meaning of the word. Likewise, in *Excursus III*, although “what has to be admitted is the fact that it might seem quite unusual to deal with beginnings or origins of a phenomenon at the end of a thesis” (p. 296), the candidate makes a valuable use of the experience working with the sources, the awareness of the contexts, functions, and meanings of the various deities, their nuances in the various religious traditions, and their cultural symbolism, significance, and value, having the capacity only at the end of the dissertation of dealing with such a difficult topic: *the origins of the sun notions in ancient Egypt*.

Conclusions seem well presented, comprehensive, and summarizing well the main positions expressed in the rest of the dissertation. I would comment on a statement in p. 321, when the candidate says that “the geographical distribution of the sources allows us to find out that none of the deities in the interest of this thesis was attested in the sources found outside the Memphite area which were selected for this study (i.e. Wadi el-Jarf papyri, Gebelein papyri, sealings from Elephantine)”. It is evident that a major focus of religious, cultural and literary development of the solar traditions come from the north, although it is also equally important to emphasize that the archaeology and findings of the Memphite area (Memphis, Giza, Saqqara, Abusir) are much more developed than the archaeology in other sites, which might be biased in some way the final results. The consideration that the only large comprehensive narrative composition of the period is the Pyramid Texts and it really combines traditions mainly existing in the Memphite region (although with various materials from other places), should make us notice that the sources might yet indicate other matters when discussing particular findings in Old Kingdom cemeteries from all over the country. Even like this, considering the northern Memphite tradition reflected in the sources for these gods, it is really difficult to find them in a complex or developed form (texts, for instance) outside the regions where they are already attested and known.

Minor modifications

- The thesis, although it is well written, requires a native English speaker to edit it, fundamentally in the case the author is considering its publication in the near future.
- Bibliography lacks the entry for Peterková Hlouchová 2019. See p. 13, n. 15 where reference to Hlouchová 2019 is present.
- In p. 287, when the author says that on the basis of Hans Goedicke’s understanding of the temporal frame, “is it, therefore, possible to assume that both kings were buried approximately at the same time?”, I would understand that Goedicke’s idea reflects what priests and editors did at preparing the composition for Wenis

and, simply, Teti's editors picked up the materials and transfer this particular spell into the king's pyramid on the basis of their preference for their materials, as a monumentalized object itself, beyond any temporal reference, I think.

IV. Questions for the author

a) In page 79, the candidate notes that “[t]he author of the thesis is aware of the fact that the analysed sources are reasonably selective which might lead to incomplete results. However, taken into consideration the huge amount of the Old Kingdom documents, any attempt to study them completely is beyond the scope of this thesis”.

Considering these words, don't you think that it might have been more valuable, perhaps (from my point of view) to study these gods in a more complete in the frame of a single type of evidence (such as the Pyramid Texts, for instance) and to have presented a more comprehensive analysis of a single category of source such as this corpus with around 800 texts? It is not a criticism or judging, only an impression that I have in mind on the basis of the huge amount of materials that, in some cases, forces the candidate to establish a quick superficial analysis instead of going into it in depth and getting a more complete description from the very same source.

b) Considering the amount of evidence related to the solar deities beyond the Pyramid Text corpus -such as “no reference to three deities” in the decorative program of the Old Kingdom (p. 236), “no reference to the five deities” in the administrative papyri from Wadi el-Jarf (p. 253), “no reference” in the Gebelein papyri (p. 253) and in the Abusir papyri (p. 254), or “no reference at all” in the offering formula type of evidence- don't you think that it might have been more interesting to focus on the religious aspects in the Pyramid Texts and leave the minor references in other sources for other kind of study or a later study in connection with the Pyramid Texts? I know that this is a question much related to question a, but I have seen how much efforts you have dedicated to the understading of the gods in the religious corpus of the Pyramid Texts and see much worthier to focus on that part of the study first and mainly. That does not infer that the information provided by the other sources were no important at all, of course.

c) Although the solar deities discussed in your dissertation are mainly related to the Memphite area, and we can take for granted that archaeological circumstances have not allowed to recover all the information, still so one can see difficulties on the appearance of new extensive references to these gods in unexpected sites of the country in the Old Kingdom. However, is there any reasons why you think the solar notions -the ones you are explaining in Exkursus III- might have appeared in a northern center such as in Memphis and not in other places of the country with such an impetus? Do you consider any geological, geographical, topographical, and/or stellar reasons why Memphis and the northern area might have been more related -in terms to the construction of a narrative, I mean- than other areas to the solar cult. This does not reject or ignore the existence of other centers (since ancient times, such as Nabta Playa) where solar observation, solar cultic practices, or beliefs might have existed, but they did not ended up in a complete narrative in which solar gods and solar notions coalescen as in the Pyramid Texts corpus.

d) Have you noticed any difference in the references to the five solar gods attested in the Pyramid Texts in relation exclusively to the genre of the pyramid owner? I mean that if, on the basis of your research, you could take in detail your materials from chapter 5 and discuss differences in the association of the gods with the queens and the association of these solar gods and the kings? For instance, in my analysis of the Pyramid Texts of the queens' pyramids I notice a certain rejection of spells in which the deceased is associated with Horus, clearly because in the case of the queens the owner of the pyramid is not a king and, therefore, was not the incarnation of the falcon god upon earth.

V. Conclusion

On the basis of the abovementioned notes, and considering that they will be taken into consideration for the final defense/examination of the candidate, I would like to express that the structure of the argument, formal aspects, quality in the selection and analysis (of both primary and secondary sources), and personal contribution have reached the expected **excellence of a doctoral candidate for the PhD degree and, therefore I recommend the submitted dissertation with the tentative grade of PASS.**

23 February 2020

Antonio J. Morales

