

Review of a BA Thesis

Supervisor

Reviewer

Author of the thesis: Irena Kalfas Benešová	
Title of the thesis: Foreigners in the Old Kingdom royal reliefs (Zobrazení cizinců na královských reliéfech Staré říše)	
Number of pages: 126 pages in total, including: 80 pages of text, 27 pages of bibliography, 19 pages of plates	
The review author: Assoc. Prof. Filip Coppens, Ph.D., Czech Institute of Egyptology FF UK	

Brief evaluation of the thesis:

(The selected subject, the structure of the thesis, the author's argumentation and critical assessment of the subject)

The topic of the paper, the portrayal of foreigners in specific sets of royal reliefs from the Old Kingdom, and related issues and questions are clearly defined in the introduction to the volume. The subject is appropriately positioned within its historical and social context as well as within the framework of previous research.

The author presents, throughout the study, her thoughts in a clear and logical manner, making her line of reasoning easy to follow. The argumentation is moreover duly supported by appropriate and detailed evidence. Different point of views on specific issues are identified and presented in a lucid manner, with the author showing the ability to convincingly argue her chosen point of view.

Overall the study clearly indicates that the author is capable of working in a scientific and critical manner with historical documents as well as modern research and publications. The study conforms, both in form and content, to all requirements for an excellent BA paper. As such I would recommend that the study should be accepted for defence in front of the appropriate committee and rated as **"výborně/excellent"**.

I. Formal criteria

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient
Scientific aspect of the thesis					
Unified form of references, bibliography and notes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient referencing to other scholars' works (suitable scientific practice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal aspect of the thesis					
Structure of the thesis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity of form (Table of contents, division of chapters, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Captions to figures and tables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language					
Clarity and comprehensibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orthography, grammar, diacritics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scholarly terminology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Form and visual aspect					
Layout, font size	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection and quality of figures, tables and graphs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Commentary on the formal aspects of the thesis:

The paper is written in a very clear style, making it easy for the reader to follow the argumentation of the author and concomitantly unnecessary to reread passages several times. Throughout the author demonstrates excellent knowledge of the specific terminology associated with the topic of research.

The study is organized in a comprehensible manner, with individual chapters and subchapters marked in a coherent and logical style. The layout of the entire volume is very clear-cut. The bibliography and the reference system are used according to expected standards, although it was uncommon to find the footnote references in the main body of the text before and not after punctuation marks.

The text contains some lapses in the orthography as well as misspellings, but they are limited in number and do not detract from the overall quality of the paper or interfere with the communication of ideas. One can for instance mention the following examples of misspellings and other minor oversights in text and layout:

- The writing for Borchardt on page 62 occurs as Borchardt, Borchard and Borchart.
- The number of the dynasties are commonly written out, but occasionally not: e.g. 6th Dynasty instead of Sixth Dynasty on page 35.
- Teti II on page 58 should be Pepi II.
- *h3swt* should be *h3swt* on pages 57 and 62.
- The footnote numbers in the main body in the text are sometimes in italic (e.g. notes 280, 341 or 356), very strikingly with notes 316 and 317 on page 47, or notes 375 and 376 on page 57, and sometimes the references are not in superscript (e.g. note 277 on page 38).

A few other formal points worth mentioning:

- * Table 1 on page 41 contains two columns for the act of the ruler smiting the enemy, but lacks information what each column represents. The reader only finds out when carefully reading the text that the first column most likely refers to occurrences of the scenes in the Wadi Maghara, and the second to the occurrences in the pyramid complexes.
- * Occasionally terms are mentioned but only explained several pages later. One example is the so-called “second style”, first referred to on page 21, but only elaborated upon on page 29.

One major formal objection concerns the limited number of illustrations provided in a series of plates following the conclusions to the thesis. In a paper that focuses first and foremost on the description and subsequent analysis of specific scenes and iconographic features, ideally every single scene described would have been included among the plates (or preferably in the main body of the text where each relief is described). It also might have been worth considering to provide plans of every single pyramid complex with the different types of scenes clearly marked on the plan. This would have provided a visual overview of the precise location of the various scenes within the complex, possibly resulting in more easily observing recurring positions within the complex or the relation of thematic scenes to the cardinal points.

It is likewise rather unfortunate that the reference to specific plates is only given in the tables at the very beginning of each subchapter on individual themes in the representation of foreigners, and not in the main body of the text. This makes it more difficult for the reader to check whether the figure exists in the plate section and which figure exactly one is looking for.

II. Subject matter

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Sufficient	Insufficient
Structure of the thesis					
Overview of previous studies on the subject (and theoretical background)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Logical interconnections within the structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity of argumentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work with literature					
Selection of scholarly literature on the subject	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using relevant literature in argumentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Critical assessment of the literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Methodology					
Formulations of questions and hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selection of sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transparency of the criteria for the selection of sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acknowledgment of the limits of the study of the sources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Results					
Clarity of the hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasoning of the hypotheses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integration into scholarly studies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Commentary on the subject matter:

The topic of the paper – the depictions of foreigners on specific set of royal reliefs dating to the Old Kingdom (i.e. in pyramid complexes and rock carvings) – and the questions posed by the author on the theme are clearly established in the introduction (pages 1–10). The author is to be commended for defining in detail the source material that forms the core of her research (as well as convincingly arguing her case for what not to include – like inscriptions, sealings and statues – given the limitations in time and

space of a BA paper), the subsequent methodology followed, and the inherent limitations of the approach taken. The author has managed to organize the work in a very logical manner, always keeping track of the main research questions. As a result, the paper represents a unified text with lucid argumentation supported by apt and comprehensive evidence and source material.

It is well worth mentioning that the author did not limit herself to a mere description of individual scenes, but has placed this source material in a much wider historical and social context. This includes a detailed overview of the occurrence of depictions of foreigners on objects and in reliefs from the Predynastic and Early Dynastic period (pages 11–20), followed by a general overview of the development of the royal relief program during the Old Kingdom (pages 20–30). The first section is a most important historical outline as it already provides crucial insight into the development of specific iconographic elements and topics that will become standard during the following Old Kingdom period – and without which it would be much harder to appreciate and fully comprehend the occurrence of certain motives in the Old Kingdom royal relief decorative program.

Before delving into specific topics within the relief decoration and describing individual scenes (pages 41–78), the author is to be praised for tackling a series of crucial notions associated with the research (pages 30–37). This includes discussing and clearly defining the terminology used, not in the least the meaning of “ethnicity” in an ancient Egyptian context, or differentiating between historical reality and royal propaganda, or defining the importance of the relief carrier – such as a pyramid complex – and the cosmological and mythological notions associated with it, as it all affects the nature and specific function of the individual relief.

Following the introduction of several classifications in existence for the various reliefs engraved upon the walls of royal pyramid complexes (pages 37–40), the author provides a detailed overview of the occurrence of foreigners in royal reliefs according to different themes (pages 41–78). Individual scenes are described for each motif, while at the end of each section a brief, yet important overview is provided of its main characteristics. The main findings are subsequently gathered in a brief conclusion (pages 79–80), followed by plates (pages 81–99) and a very extensive bibliography (pages 100–126), indicating the detailed research that lies at the basis of this paper.

Upon perusing the paper, a few questions still came to mind:

* Does the author agree with the notion (page 29) that the increase in the number of reliefs depicting the king smiting and trampling his enemies (and the contemporary increase of prisoner statues) towards the end of the Old Kingdom is connected to the changing political situation at that time, or could there be another explanation (e.g. limited amount of evidence from earlier periods of the Old Kingdom)?

* Does the author consider the occurrence of only Asiatics as the enemy in the scenes from Wadi Maghara (page 58) accidental (i.e. only by chance these specific scenes survived) or functional (and what might be the reason for it)?

* On page 78, it is unclear which deity is meant with the expression “the Nubian origin of this god”. Is the god Min intended in this case and what is the argumentation for a Nubian origin of this deity?

As the author indicates that she will continue working on this topic, I would like to add a few references worth taking into account in future research:

a) In regards to the ships and boats used “for hunting in Nilotic environments, later becoming a symbol of power and dominance” (page 13) and “the king’s power is also figuratively represented by ships” (page 19), it might be worth considering that especially in later times deities take on the guise of boats to protect its crew and captain (often king or god) in perilous situations (e.g. during hunting activities). For a very late example, see the Horus temple of Edfu: Edfou IV, 18, 11: “His mother manifested herself as the warship carrying/underneath him, to protect his body from his foes” (*ḥpr sy mwt=f m ḥ3t ḥr=f ḥr ḥw ḥc=f r sbyw*); Edfou VI, 59, 6-7: “His mother is at his ship’s side/upon protecting him, and the manifestation/form of her majesty is as the warship carrying/underneath him, upon protecting his body” (*mwt=f m gs-dp(t)=f ḥprw ḥmt=s m ḥ3t ḥr=f ḥr ḥw ḥc=f*), and Edfou IV, 212, 14-213, 1: “who makes her body secret in her form of the warship” (*s3t3 dt=s m irw=s n ḥ3t*).

b) For the term *skr ḥnḥ* “Living prisoner” (Wb. IV, 307; mentioned e.g. on pages 55, 70 and 73), other translations are commonly used, such as “one who is struck and lives” or “one who is for striking alive”. The term is regularly used for prisoners brought for the specific purpose of a ritual/ceremonial execution. See in this perspective especially A. Schulmann, *Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards*, Göttingen 1988.

c) For the lion as a protector of liminal areas (e.g. pages 61 and 64), see also the use of this animal as a gargoyle in temples: B. Ventker, *Der Starke auf dem Dach: Funktion und Bedeutung der löwengestaltigen Wasserspeier im alten Ägypten*, SSR 6, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2012.

d) For future research on the ritual *sḥꜥ kꜣ shnt*, the author might consult the following publications:

* Munro, Irmtraut, *Das Zelt-Heiligtum des Min. Rekonstruktion und Deutung eines fragmentarischen Modells (Kestner-Museum 1935.200.250)*, (MÄS 41), München/Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 1983.

* Decker, Wolfgang, and Michael Herb, *Bildatlas zum Sport im Alten Ägypten. Corpus der bildlichen Quellen zu Leibesübungen, Spiel, Jagd, Tanz und verwandten Themen*, (HdO I, 14, 1–2), Leiden: Brill 1994.

* Feder, Frank, “Das Ritual *sḥꜥ kꜣ shnt* als Tempelfest des Gottes Min”, in Rolf Gundlach and Matthias Rochholz (eds.), *4. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung. Feste im Tempel*, (ÄAT 33/2), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 1998, 31–54.

* Feder, Frank, “Das Ritual “Errichten des Ka-Symbols der Sehenet-Kapelle (*sḥꜥ kꜣ shnt*)” in der griechisch-römischen Zeit Ägyptens”, in Joachim F. Quack (ed.), *Ägyptische Rituale der griechisch-römischen Zeit*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013, 47–65.

A recent overview of all known depictions of this ritual is provided in:

* Minas-Nerpel, Martina and Marleen De Meyer, “Raising the Pole for Min in the Temple of Isis at Shanhur”, *ZÄS* 140 (2013), 150–166 (esp. the table on pages 160–163).

e) For the deity *ꜣš*, see for example:

* Murray, Margaret, “The god 'Ash”, *Ancient Egypt and the East* 1934, 115–117.

* Zivie-Coche, Christiane, “Dieux autres, dieux des autres: identité culturelle et alterité dans l'Égypte ancienne”., in Alon, Ilai, Ithamar Gruenwald, and Itamar Singer (eds.), *Concepts of the other in Near Eastern religions*, (Israel Oriental Studies 14), Leiden: Brill 1994, 39–80.

f) On the Libyan family, see still: Stockfisch, Dagmar, “Bemerkungen zur sog. 'libyschen Familie'”, in: Schade-Busch, Mechthild (ed.), *Wege öffnen: Festschrift für Rolf Gundlach zum 65. Geburtstag*, (ÄAT 35), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 1996, 315–325.

In conclusion, the study clearly indicates that the author is capable of working in a scientific and critical manner with historical documents as well as modern research and publications, as well as her capabilities to contribute to a better understanding and further development of specific topics in the study of ancient Egypt. The study conforms, both in form and content, to all requirements for an excellent BA paper. As

such I would recommend that the study should be accepted for defence in front of the appropriate committee and rated as “**výborně/excellent**”.

Final result:¹ **výborně/excellent (1)**

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30.08.2023

¹ Excellent – Very good – Good – Insufficient