

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of

Diana Míčková

“Translation, analysis and interpretation of texts of the inner side of the outer sarcophagus from the tomb of priest Iufaa at Abusir ”

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at the Charles University, Faculty of Arts , Czech Institute of Egyptology

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The thesis consists of the publication of the hieroglyphic texts engraved on the inner walls of the outer sarcophagus of the tomb of Iufaa at Abusir, discovered in 1995 by the Czech mission led by L. Bareš. The main interest of these inscriptions is that they contain hitherto unpublished texts of great interest in terms of Egyptian mythology, as well as new attestations of texts relating to the gods of Pharbaithos. Each text, provided in hieroglyphic transcription, is accompanied by a transliteration and a translation.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

Diana Míčková's thesis is distinguished by the exceptional effort made to understand, translate and analyse texts that have no known parallels, involving a number of hitherto unparalleled divine actors. The author has achieved a very advanced level of overall understanding of the texts, which makes it possible to grasp the overall logic of the sarcophagus decoration. This requires a mastery of Egyptian philology in all its aspects (graphic system, grammar, phraseology) as well as an in-depth knowledge of Egyptian religion and its rich textual traditions. The large number and the wide range of new texts to be studied necessarily imply that certain aspects can still be studied in greater depth, but the essential work has been carried out in a very satisfactory manner.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

1. *Structure of the argument*

The thesis is easy to read because it is clearly structured and logically organised. In addition, the author sticks to his line of argument without digressing, which makes the text flow smoothly.

2. *Formal aspects of the dissertation*

The formal presentation of the thesis is correct and does not call for any particular comments. The bibliographical apparatus is satisfactory. Typos and omissions in the text are relatively rare. (eg. p. 16 : « *ḥrj-sšt3 nswt sšt3.f nb* » > *ḥrj-sšt3 nswt m sšt3.f nb* (cf. *Abusir* XVII, p. 93 ; p. 21 : in a retrograde <direction> ; p. 265 : Brookly > Brooklyn ; p. 270 : Cooppons > Coppens).

In my opinion, it would be preferable to unify the method of referencing by putting all the

references in the footnotes and not including long bibliographical incises in the text. In the orthographic and grammatical analysis (p. 26-32), it would also be necessary to specify the exact reference of the sentences quoted. It would certainly also be useful to include a 'philological commentary' on each text. An index of the Egyptian terms would also be precious.

Not being a native speaker myself, I can't make a definitive judgement on the English used, but it seems to me that a revision would be useful, although the level of expression is generally correct and understandable. In certain cases, fortunately few in number, more attention needs to be paid to the level of language, in order to remain within the framework of academic expression: (e.g. p. 24 : the texts are **pretty** damaged / p. 32 :the individual spells are **pretty** short).

The most disturbing aspect for the reader from a formal point of view is the absence of a general diagram of the distribution of the texts on the sarcophagus that would provide the layout of the columns and their numbering. I understand that it was technically impossible for the candidate to produce a complete facsimile within the framework of this thesis, which is planned for publication, but the absence of any system of graphic, even schematic, location on the monument is detrimental to understanding.

3. Use of sources and/or material

In tackling texts that are completely new and, for the most part, have no known parallels, the author is faced with a difficult task, even for highly experienced Egyptologists. She achieves a very satisfactory understanding of the text, without sidestepping the most serious obstacles. The usual tools as well as the most recent bibliography are used. The teamwork within the Czech mission working at Abusir gives her direct access to all the documentation relating to the tomb of Iufaa and the rest of the necropolis. In addition, the author was able to obtain unpublished information from international researchers to complete his documentation.

However, it is clear that the philological work can still be perfected, and this is only natural, given the extent and complexity of the texts. I will list below a few examples of improvements that I feel could be made or, in any case, some suggestions for refining the commentary so as to justify the author's interpretation. I would, of course, like to point out first of all that these are just a few points of detail taken from a whole which, moreover, meets with approval on many points.

- Transcription

On this point, it is difficult for me to be categorical, since I cannot verify the original signs on a photograph. But certain passages make me doubt the transcription of certain signs.

Ex : p. 98 , col. 31-32. 

As the usual formula is *zḥ m pt / wsr m t3* , I would like to check if the second sign of the sky

is really correct.

- Transliteration and translation

For some signs or sequences, the transliteration can be improved (or at least questioned).

E.g. :


- p. 49

Text accompanying Bastet



{n} hm n=j ph.tj=k

so turn your strength from me!

Instead of *ph.tj* (which is not totally excluded), the transliteration of  is preferably *zt* « attack, strength » (cf. *hm zt.k* in Pap. Bremner-Rhind, 31,19).

— p. 70-71, col. 13



h_nw.t⁽¹⁴⁾ dw3 t_n r^c sq3 t_n h_nw m m3=f r^c
<m> h_nw=f

Mistress, Ra praises you, He of the *henu*-
barque⁹² exalts you when he sees Ra <in> his
barque.⁹³


This sequence should read : *sq3 t_n h_nw m mfh.f*. The *Henu*-bark on its sledge exalts you (*mfh* : sledge TLA 69350)

— p. 70-71, col. 16



h_nw.t⁽¹⁶⁾ snb t_n h3 h{jb}<nw>.t m grh⁹⁷

Mistress, may you be healthy, ho, mistress in
the night!

⁹⁷ For reading  as *grh*, see e. g. Kurth 2010: 174 or Wilson 1997: 1104. The night could symbolise danger, or it could also refer to some ritual activity.

As the second sign is the sky (and not the night sky), I would suggest : *rmn(t) pt* « the one who supports the sky » LGG IV, 670 b-c., which fits with the context of the beginning of the text (Your four columns will be the four supports of the sky, making Maat ascend to Ra!).

In some cases, I am unable to understand the translation.

E.g. : p. 48 Texts accompanying Sekhmet, The translation of *p{w}3 hrw* « loud of voice » (col. 5) needs to be justified.

- Commentary

Although generally very relevant, the commentary can be improved on certain points by drawing on more comprehensive sources.

E.g.

p. 38/43 : "To be recited: "The Ennead kept silence for me, the Ennead suffered for me on that night of happening of the massacre in Heliopolis, of slaughtering of the Apis bull, of quenching (thirst by) the milk of the Sekhat-heru-cow, on that day of the great fight in Heliopolis."

The author's commentary explains that the « slaughtering » of Apis is « a bit problematic » : « the passage of the text could refer to the embalming of the sacred bull ». This « slaughtering » of Apis seems to me to correspond more to an event conceived as a cataclysm for the Egyptians, as was later recounted by Greek authors who attributed the murder of Apis to the Persian invader Cambyses.

In fact, this image is found in *Urkunden VI*, and the link can be established with the mention of Sekhat-Hor later in the text, which uses of the same phraseology.

3.1.25 31. Frevel – Fang des Apisstiers (Urk. VI, 23, 15f.)

*m=k jr=f sph.n=f Hp
r-hft-hr n jry wnn.t*

Look, he has lassoed Apis in the presence of Him who creates that which exists.

3.1.26 32. und 33. Frevel – Die heiligen Kühe (Urk. VI, 23, 17f.)

*hm.n=f jr.t.³³² n.t Sh3.t-Hr
sbn.n=f³³³ Hs3.t³³⁴ mw.t-ntr*

He has dried up the milk of Sechat-Hor, he has overturned Hesat, the Mother of God.

Cf. V. Altmann, *Die Kultfrevel des Seth. Die Gefährdung der göttlichen Ordnung in zwei Vernichtungsritualen der ägyptischen Spätzeit*, SSR 1, Wiesbaden, 2010, p. 51-52.

So it seems fairly certain to me that the slaughter of the Apis bull did not refer to its embalming but to the possibility of its murder.

- p. 47, n. 27 : *pd nmt.t* : « It usually appears in a positive context ». But the expression can also be used to describe the attitude of the god Seth, who showed no respect in sacred spaces (Urk. VI, 19, 18). V. Altmann, *Die Kultfrevel des Seth. Die Gefährdung der göttlichen Ordnung in zwei Vernichtungsritualen der ägyptischen Spätzeit*, SSR 1, Wiesbaden, 2010, p. 19.

- p. 143 : For That *wj jnr* : The epithet is rare, but it is associated with King Djoser "who inaugurates the stone" in a New Kingdom graffito at Saqqara. See J. Yoyotte, in *Les pélerinages*, Sources Orientales, 1960, p. 58 ; D. Wildung, *Die Rolle ägyptischer Könige im Bewusstsein ihrer Nachwelt I*, 1969, p. 72-74 ; S. Aufrère, *BIFAO* 104, 2004, p. n. 12.

- p. 85-94 : The text mentions several Heliopolitan places, the 't *wḏ'* and the *j3t pg3*, which is

otherwise known to be in the Horbeit / Shédenou area. On these toponyms, see J.-P. Corteggiani, "La 'butte de la Décollation' à Héliopolis", BIFAO 95, 1995, pp. 141-151, but the meaning of "decollation" given to *wḏ'* by Corteggiani does not seem to be corroborated by the Iufâa inscriptions, as it clearly refers to judgment.

4. *Personal contribution to the subject*

The candidate's contribution is extremely valuable, and we can only praise the work she has done on these abundant and difficult texts, which she has managed to turn into a useful edition rich in perspectives for the study of Late Period religion.

IV. **Questions for the author**

I will invite the candidate to respond to the reading suggestions I have made above.

I would also like to ask her what steps she now considers essential before publication of her work.

V. **Conclusion**

Diana Míčková's work is impressive for the wealth of unpublished data it presents and analyses. She has succeeded in producing an edition that comes close to the final state of the publication. She offers the scientific community a set of new texts that will considerably advance our knowledge of Egyptian myths and the theology of the Heliopolitan region.

I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as *passed*.

September 27th, 2023

Laurent Coulon