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**Review for the Faculty of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, of the doctoral dissertation by Agnieszka Ryś-Jarmużek (“the candidate“)**

**Title:** Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Household Functioning in Third Intermediate Period (1070–664 BC) Egypt: A Case Study of Tell el-Retaba

**Research Scope and Questions and Contents**

The reviewed doctoral dissertation has three main research aims: (1) Identifying function of household equipment, (2) Identifying patterns of activity inside households and (3) Understanding economic and social relations in the Tell el-Retaba (Retaba hereafter) community. The candidate uses use-wear analysis and a techno-functional analysis of the material excavated at Retaba in recent years as a basis for the formal evaluation of activity area analyses throughout the study areas. A detailed catalogue which contains the data on the objects discussed in the text forms an appendix to the dissertation. I have summarised the main positive and negative aspects of each chapter, which led me to form my conclusion on the dissertation, below. I also enclose an appendix with a list of more specific aspects which I have encountered throughout the text as a guide for corrections.

In order to pursue the above aims, the dissertation has been subdivided into nine chapters, some of which are more extensive in nature than others:

**Chapter I** forms the introduction to the dissertation and outlines the key objectives as well as providing a summary of each chapter. In this context, a geographical and chronological overview would have been useful, especially since this chapter fails to provide any dates for the Third Intermediate Period (TIP) and/or the period during which the site of Retaba was in use. This chapter could have easily been combined with Chapters II and III to form a more holistic introduction.

**Chapter II** provides a comprehensive overview of the methods used in household archaeology and microhistory together with a good description of the analytical approaches and methods used in the dissertation and how these steps fit into the theoretical framework of the dissertation.

The historical and environmental background to the site is presented in **Chapter III**. The candidate uses environmental and historical data, which is compared with observations made by Hilda Petrie in 1905 and thus provides information on the living conditions of the inhabitants. **Section III.4** lacks a general overview over the history of excavation of Retaba: when was the site excavated and by whom, and what were the aims and objectives of these excavations? Where do the modern cuts shown in the plans (Chapter VII) originate?

**Chapter IV** is generally a good and detailed overview of the ancient Egyptian economy, although it is too general. The candidate does not sufficiently distinguish between the different chronological periods and their political contexts. In this context, depictions of the described tomb scenes of markets would have been useful.

**Chapter V** comprises the techno-functional analysis of the stone tools and other relevant objects from the focal areas at Retaba, including both an overview of raw materials and the observable use-wear traces. The candidate demonstrates a good understanding of the subject matter and the analysed material.

The functional classification of the tools and other object groups deemed suitable for the intended activity area analysis is presented in **Chapter VI**. The candidate introduces her approach and meticulously follows a standardised description of each functional class/type. She thus provides the necessary detail for understanding the resulting typology. While the candidate's classification of the functional groups of stone tools works well in the context of this dissertation, she does not provide a clear argument as to why she has developed her own system (adapting only some terms used by other authors), instead of following an existing classification system.

**Chapter VII** comprises the main activity area analysis of the site, which is based on the above functional analysis of the excavated material. A brief overview of the relevant types of remains (including the encountered types of refuse) and formation processes forms the introduction to this chapter, before the various activities observed at Retaba are described, together with the archaeological indicators for each activity. In this context, the descriptions of the individual crafts would have benefited from some more recent, specific literature. **Section VII.4** proceeds to a detailed description of the architectural remains and the archaeological evidence of the various activities encountered in each of the occupation phases in each building. These are accompanied by useful, colour-coded maps of each area. Here (or in the introduction chapters), it would have been useful to include some information regarding the buildings excavated at Retaba before they are described in detail: when were they excavated and over what sort of time period? Why were they excavated and how? In the same context it would have been interesting to compare and contextualise the houses with known house types of the same and preceding/later chronological periods to determine whether they fit into any existing house typologies. In addition, the maps showing the activity areas in the eastern part of Area 9 (Figs VII.26 and VII.29) have not been described in the appropriate sections. More specifically, the information regarding the pit yielding the weights in building {2640}, phase C2b2 (neither marked nor labelled on the plan) should have been placed into the archaeological description. Finally, **Section VII.5** (mislabelled VIII.5) outlines the activity patterns observed in each house and area for each phase. This section could have formed a separate chapter as it comprises the analysis of the material presented before. It lacks an explanation regarding the definition of the indicators/factors defining the (un-) certainty of the reconstruction of activity areas: It would have been useful to know whether these are based on the candidate's own decision or if they have been taken from the literature. With regard to this section, in the evaluation of activities encountered in the houses (p. 274–5), the definition of "heating" based on a hearth or fireplace is slightly difficult as this type of structure may also have been used for craft activities. Also, there is a notable difference between Tables VII.37 and VII.42: the former refers to the objects by their functional type while the latter defines them as types of refuse.

The management of food supply, waste, and work organisation are the central aspects of **Chapter VIII**. The candidate has included a careful calculation of the storage capacities of the grain bins

excavated at Retaba, which leads to conclusions regarding self-sufficiency and – possibly – social hierarchies at the site. In this context, it would also have been beneficial to include some information as to how and by whom the storage capacities of the grain bins discussed in the chapter were calculated. The evaluation of waste management at the site has been carried out carefully. Other (not necessarily contemporary) settlement sites in Egypt and Nubia are used for comparison and contextualisation, while other TIP sites are not mentioned in this context; the explanation for this is missing. Costin's (1991) theoretical framework for the classification of craft organisation is unfortunately used uncritically, while later work by the same author has not been taken into account. Nevertheless, the candidate concludes with a classification of craft production at Retaba as "household production" without any noticeable specialisation with regard to craft production.

**Chapter IX** forms the summary and outlook of the dissertation: While this chapter (e.g., p. 358) does contain some statements about the ecological and socio-political situation of Retaba, these are very brief. In this and other chapters, statements included in the text are too general in nature, e.g., p. 43 the sentence "Overall, redistribution seems to be universally accepted as a key feature of the ancient Egyptian economy and some researchers even reject any notion of market activity." in Chapter IV, and on p. 332 "The ancient Egyptians not only resided within their households but were also part of a network of connections between patron and dependent households.". Such statements lack chronological sensitivity and ought to be revised with regard to the period in question (unless they were generally applicable, in which case this ought to be clarified).

### **Formal aspects**

The **structure** of the dissertation generally follows a clear thread, although the length of the chapters varies significantly. While Chapters I–III could have been combined to create a more cohesive introduction and background chapter, Chapter VII could have been split up to form two individual chapters. Some chapter headings are missing from the Table of Contents (e.g., Chapters I and VIII).

**Spelling and grammar:** The language is good and in general easily understandable. Although the language has been checked, the text contains numerous easily detectable spelling and grammatical errors, which give the impression of a somewhat rushed submission. The same is the case with the occasional note in the text that ought to have been deleted or spelled out. In many cases, an unnecessary space precedes the period at the end of a sentence, or no space after a comma, and double spaces appear throughout the text. Specific examples have been provided below, although the candidate is advised to conduct a thorough review herself.

Furthermore, inconsistencies in spelling have been observed. For example, in the descriptions of the archaeological material excavated at Retaba, the words "Building" and "Room" are inconsistently capitalised. In addition, the term "mud brick" is occasionally spelled "mudbrick". Archaeological context numbers are not formatted consistently throughout the text. Inconsistencies also exist with regard to the numbering of pages in bibliographical references and numerous formatting errors have been observed. For example, italicised and non-italicised headings of the same level occur throughout the dissertation and in some cases text that should be justified is instead aligned to the left.

**References and literature:** Although the bibliography is well-populated, and most statements are supported by references, in a few instances references are missing (see appendix for details). In addition, several core publications on the site are neither listed in the bibliography, nor are they referenced in the text. These include, for example:

- Petrie, W.M.F., Duncan, J.G., 1906. Hyksos and Israelite Cities. British School of Archaeology in Egypt 12, London: this includes the general plan of the site forming the basis of Fig. VII.1, though it is not cited as a source.
- Publications on Wadi Tumilat by John S. Holladay.

Furthermore, the book by James E. Bennett (2019) is briefly mentioned in Chapter II but not further discussed: this volume could have provided useful material for further contextualising the buildings encountered at the site.

**Illustrations:** The photos and drawings of the objects, both in the main dissertation and the catalogue, are of high quality and illustrate the material well. However, the scale bars should have indicated the units of measurement used. The plans illustrating the excavated structures across the site's history are highly useful. The colours are well-chosen, and the labels are, in most cases, accurate and complete. However, the individual house plans (for each phase) lack captions and credits and are not cross-referenced in the text. Additionally, more photographs of the site would have offered greater insight into the nature of the excavated archaeological material. Images of tomb scenes and comparative material referenced in the text would have been beneficial to the reader. A map of Egypt and/or the Egyptian Delta showing the site's location, including its relation to other sites, is notably absent, while some figure cross-references are incorrect and others are missing.

### General remarks and conclusion

Overall, this dissertation constitutes a careful analysis of the archaeological material excavated at Retaba in recent years. It has resulted in the successful identification of activity areas and, subsequently, a better understanding of how the inhabitants lived at the site. The candidate demonstrates a strong knowledge and understanding of site formation processes, use-wear analysis of stone tools, and the theoretical models and frameworks applied to the analysis of activity areas, storage systems, waste management, and the socio-economics of ancient Egyptian settlements and beyond. She has conducted the work with great attention to detail. However, several issues with the execution of the work, as highlighted above, constitute shortcomings in the academic standard of this research.

In light of the observations, both positive and negative, outlined above and in the appendix, I believe that the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree have been **conditionally** fulfilled. I recommend that this dissertation be revised and resubmitted following the necessary corrections.



Dr. Anna K. Hodgkinson

## Appendix: Specific remarks (in addition to the problems listed above)

- Juan Carlos Moreno García: Ensure name is consistently spelled correctly (e.g., p. 44).
- p. 56: The reference to Klemm, Klemm and Klemm 2008 is incorrect, as is the reference to Klemm and Klemm 2018 (which does not exist). Both references should be corrected to „Klemm and Klemm 2008“.
- The 2010 publication by Kemp and Stevens is frequently referenced throughout the dissertation, although the volume (I or II = 2010a or 2010b) is not specified, although page numbers are provided.
- p. 46: The statement by Kemp regarding temple economy is presented as general, though it may be specific to a certain chronological period.
- p. 46: The candidate needs to specify how one can distinguish between voluntary and compulsory labour. The nature of "voluntary" labour is unclear, especially since work was required for survival.
- p. 56: The candidate mentions harder varieties of limestone but neither specifies these varieties nor indicates where they can be found, nor whether they were used at Retaba.
- p. 58: The difference between "Levelling" and "Pits and grain extraction" is not made sufficiently explicit in the description.
- p. 65, section on Bronze: The term "copper alloy" is more commonly used and should be applied here. Additionally, the reference to "Odler et al." should not be "n.d.," but "in press," as per the bibliography. A reference to the material choice (hardness) is missing. Furthermore, the candidate states that objects were cast but does not specify whether or not they were processed further (e.g., through hammering).
- p. 65, section V.5 (summary): The statement "The wide variety of stone tools suggests a broad range of potential uses." does not fit within the context of the material presentation.
- p. 67: There is a discrepancy in the sentence "The classification includes tools made of three types of materials – stone, metal, bone, and clay." (There are four materials listed).
- p. 72: The figure reference to Q3 Querns is incorrect (it should be fig. VI.6, C).
- p. 73: The figure reference to Mortars is incorrect (it should be fig. VI.6, C, D).
- p. 76: The sentence "Apparently the most important factor influencing tool design is whether it will be held with one or two hands." lacks a reference or a detailed explanation.
- p. 77: The sentence "Significant surface levelling with smoothing areas and overall grain rounding, observed on G1 grinders, indicating use for grinding cereals." is grammatically incorrect.
- p. 94: The German terms for tools are spelled incorrectly.
- p. 95, section on "Abraders with grooves": the candidate does not specify where the groove originates.
- p. 109, section "Conical/pyramidal": This should read "pyramidal".
- p. 110, on Bent/folded weights: The sentence "As a result, only metal elements are found in archaeological contexts." does not make sense on its own and should include a statement about the string not surviving in the archaeological record.
- p. 112: The preserved net in Liverpool needs an inventory number and a reference.
- p. 120: The brackets in the sentence "Ceramic scrapers, which are frequent finds at settlement sites (Radler, Stevens, Ain Asil ..) from different periods, functioned in a different way." appear to be a note.
- p. 123: There is inconsistency between "spatulae" and "spatulas".
- p. 124: The sentence "Voids on the surface that this could have been organic temper." is missing a word (e.g., "indicate").
- p. 124, on crucibles: A reference regarding the improbability of the complex shape being used at Retaba is missing.
- p. 130: The brackets "(all human activities such as construction new structures, abandonment, refuse disposal)" are missing a word.

- p. 140–1: It is unclear why modern types of fishing nets are described here. The candidate does not specify whether or not she believes these nets date back to the Third Intermediate Period.
- p. 142: The sentence “Grinding activity seems to have been portable and did not necessarily take place in just one spot.” requires a reference or further explanation.
- p. 150: A reference to the potting scene from the tomb of Kenamun is missing.
- p. 151: The cross reference “(see above, Chapter VI.?.?).” is incomplete.
- p. 151: The reference to “(Roux 112)” is incomplete.
- p. 152: The period is missing at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.
- p. 155: The reference to “(Duberuil table 3)” is incomplete and the name of the author is misspelled.
- p. 157: The reference “(Harrell, Brown, and Masoud, 2000; Bloxam, 2011).” is underlined.
- p. 176: Building {1607} is shown in the north-western part of the area, while the text says that it lies in the “easternmost part of Area 9.”
- pp. 176–7: Line break mid-sentence across two pages.
- p. 181: The statement “However, while there is no certainty as to which species of animals was kept here, it is unlikely that the building was a stable for horses.” requires a reference or further explanation.
- p. 187: The sentence “Several changes were made to building {3111} during.” is incomplete.
- p. 211, plan of building {2640}: Room labels are missing. Also, the cut containing the weights is neither marked nor labelled.
- p. 251: A reference is missing for “(Petrie’s Wall 2 or 3)”: see above, this should be Petrie and Duncan 1906.
- p. 256: The shape of room 1 of building {3664} resembles that of a corridor more than an actual roofed space. This ought to be addressed.
- p. 267: “((objects in the set may vary))”: The double brackets should be deleted.
- p. 266–7: A figure reference for fig. VII.16 is missing.
- Table VII.37: The word “installation” is consistently misspelled and the final entry appears to be incomplete.
- p. 284 and fig. VII.22: The food processing activity encountered in room 1 of building {991} is not marked on the plan, although it is alluded to in the text (14 objects).
- p. 292: A reference to the archaeobotanical from the floor layers in building {1095} is missing.
- p. 308, section VIII.1.1.2: A reference to the ethnographic analogies from modern Egypt is missing.
- p. 310–1, Table VIII.1: Information appears to be incomplete with several fields remaining empty.
- p. 316: Relevant references are missing for the statement “Examples of bins were found in various periods in places like Elephantine, Tell el-Amarna, and Memphis.”
- p. 318: Although “House 2” is referenced it would have been useful to briefly state where this was located.
- p. 334: Author Dixon’s first names are David M. (not Tom).
- p. 335: The reference to Hodgkinson 2021 is indirect, as this article cites two other (primary) sources regarding the use of ash.
- p. 344: Hodgkinson referring to a blog post by Doherty: This is outdated and the building in question has been discussed by other authors. In addition, the post by Doherty should have been referenced directly.