

## INVENTORY OF ROCK INSCRIPTIONS FROM NAGA EL-GIRGAWI IN THE NÁPRSTEK MUSEUM

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**ABSTRACT:** Following its participation in the UNESCO International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Lower Nubia, the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology received a donation of a share of finds acquired during its course by the Egyptian government. These objects are presently kept as a part of the collections of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures. Most of the finds from the UNESCO campaign have already been thoroughly examined and published. A set of several rock inscriptions removed from the area of Naga el-Girgawi, located a few kilometres downstream from Korosko, was published by Zbyněk Žába in his publication titled *The Rock Inscriptions of Lower Nubia. (Czechoslovak Concession)* in 1974. However, this publication is lacking, due to objective reasons, a proper correlation with the Náprstek Museum's inventory. The aim of this paper is to supplement the original publication in this regard as well as provide further documentation of the pieces.

**KEYWORDS:** UNESCO International Campaign to Nubia – rock inscriptions – Naga el-Girgawi

### Introduction

In 1959, the Egyptian government initiated the construction of the Aswan High Dam to boost the country's industrial and agricultural sectors. This ambitious project, however, endangered the rich archaeological heritage of Lower Nubia, as it would flood the entire historic region.

Since the mid-1950s, plans for a new dam at the First Cataract had been underway. In this context, Zbyněk Žába (1917–1971) proposed creating the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, and initiated Czechoslovak excavations in Egypt.

In 1959, UNESCO launched an international Campaign to Save the Monuments of Lower Nubia, with the construction of a new dam starting a year later. Czechoslovakia joined international efforts through the agency of the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology, established at Charles University's Faculty of Arts in 1958. Its Cairo branch opened a year later. Between 1961 and 1965, the Institute organised five expeditions to Lower Nubia, the southernmost region of Egypt, then officially named the United Arab Republic.

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The first two expeditions (1961–1962) aimed to locate the so-called Southern Temple at Tafa (sometimes spelled as Taffeh) and document the nearby Roman fortified complex at Qertassi. In the subsequent years (1963–1964), the focus shifted to the areas known as the Northern and Southern Czechoslovak Concessions.

The Northern Concession covered about 30 km along the Nile, from Kalabsha in the north to Gerf Hussein in the south. The Southern Concession stretched from Wadi es-Sebua to the area between Korosko and Derr. In these concessions, a detailed epigraphic survey revealed 243 rock inscriptions, with significant findings near the village of Naga el-Girgawi, and 5,000 pieces of rock art.

Additionally, archaeological investigations uncovered five burial sites, seven rock tombs, a series of watchtowers guarding the southern border of the Roman Empire, as well as one quarry.

The final expedition in 1965 focused on the archaeological exploration of two burial grounds in Wadi Qitna and Kalabsha-South, at the northern edge of the Northern Concession. Mounds discovered at the burial grounds belonged to the X-Group populations who occupied Lower Nubia from around 350 to 550 CE.

At the end of the Campaign, the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology, like other participating institutions, received a share of finds.

## **Czechoslovak share on finds from the UNESCO Campaign**

Following the division of finds, the Czechoslovak share passed on from the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology to the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, a section of the National Museum in Prague.

In a letter dated to 10 December 1965, Zbyněk Žába, the then director of the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology, formally handed over the objects in question to the Náprstek Museum. The transfer was accepted by means of a letter dated to 15 December 1965 that Dr. Erich Herold (1928–1988), the then director of the Náprstek Museum, addressed to Žába. The correspondence only formalised the existing situation, as the objects had already been in the Náprstek Museum since their arrival from the United Arab Republic in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the summer of 1965.

The finds from the UNESCO Campaign<sup>2</sup> were registered under two accession numbers following the progress of cataloguing the items. The first part was registered under Acc. No. 74/[19]65, and the second part under Acc. No. 80/[19]74, as donations of/through the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology. The two accessions were registered in two series of inventory numbers, namely Inv. Nos. P 653 – P 1419, and P 2910 – P 3770.

Most of the material collected during the campaign and transferred to the Náprstek Museum has already been published by Zbyněk Žába (1917–1971),<sup>3</sup> František Váhala (1911–1974), Pavel Červíček (1942–2015),<sup>4</sup> Eugen Strouhal (1931–2016),<sup>5</sup> Břetislav

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2 For the publications see footnotes below.

3 Žába 1974 (rock inscriptions from Czechoslovak concessions).

4 Váhala and Červíček 1999 (rock art from Czechoslovak concessions).

5 Strouhal 1984; Strouhal 1990 (tombs at Naga el-Fariq); Strouhal 2020 (X-Group cemeteries at Wadi Qitna and Kalabsha).

Vachala (1952–2020),<sup>6</sup> Miroslav Verner,<sup>7</sup> and last but not least Lenka Varadzinová, née Suková.<sup>8</sup>

Selected items were presented to both the scholarly and general public by means of exhibitions, which were accompanied by catalogues and exhibition publications.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, the UNESCO Campaign collection has been studied and published by foreign scholars, including Hans Barnard<sup>10</sup> or Joanna Then Obłuska<sup>11</sup> to name a few.

Despite great effort, some sets of objects still remain unpublished, e.g. objects discovered during the excavations at Tafa and Qertasi (their publication is currently being prepared by Verner).

Most of the above-mentioned publications provide reference to the Náprstek Museum's inventory numbers. However, since six rock inscriptions from Naga el-Girgawi which now form part of the Náprstek Museum's collections were registered in the museum's inventory only within the second batch, only after, Žába published his *The Rock Inscriptions of Lower Nubia. (Czechoslovak Concession)* in 1974, the text of the publication could not provide such correlations. The publication only informed readers that the inscriptions Nos. 12, 17, 21, 24, and 25 'are now deposited' in the Náprstek Museum and that they represented the 'gift of the Government of of the U[nited] A[rab] R[epublic]'.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, Žába's list of rock inscriptions in the Náprstek Museum is incorrect. He likely confused Inscription No. 11 for No. 17, and No. 10 (of which only two minor fragments were transported to Prague) is omitted from the list.

The following inventory aims at providing a correlation between Žába's publication and objects in the Náprstek Museum and a documentation of original pieces kept in the Náprstek Museum.

## Rock inscriptions from Naga el-Girgawi

The rock inscriptions from the area around Naga el-Girgawi, located a few kilometres upstream from Korosko, were initially documented by the German Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894) in 1875. Brugsch subsequently published one of these texts, which detailed an Egyptian military campaign against Nubia in Year 29 of King Amenemhat I of the Twelfth Dynasty (reigned circa 1939–1910 BCE). Despite efforts of Brugsch's followers in finding the inscriptions, many attempts failed, primarily due to Brugsch's inaccurate determination of its location.<sup>13</sup>

Žába's team at Naga el-Girgawi documented approximately eighty other inscriptions dating back to the early Twelfth Dynasty, namely to the reigns of King Amenemhat I and his son Senusret I (reigned circa 1920–1875 BCE). These inscriptions detail military campaigns against rebellious inhabitants of Lower Nubia, who were part of the

6 Vachala 1987 (tombs at Naga el-Fariq).

7 Verner 1973 (petroglyphs from Czechoslovak concessions).

8 Suková 2011a; Suková 2011b (rock art from Czechoslovak concessions).

9 e.g. Onderka, Vrtal *et al.* 2014; Strouhal 1975.

10 e.g. Barnard 2008; Barnard and Strouhal 2004.

11 Then-Obłuska 2019.

12 Žába 1974, p. 343.

13 Žába 1974, pp. 31–35, No. 4.

pastoralist populations known as the C-Group,<sup>14</sup> residing in Lower Nubia between the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> and mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BCE.

The inscriptions varied in complexity, with simpler ones taking the form of a single column or line of hieroglyphic text, often in cursive script. Longer texts, including Brugsch's inscription, comprised multiple columns or lines. Some inscriptions were accompanied by images depicting people or animals.

In the most detailed inscription, the so-called Stela of Vizier Antef-iqer (Inscription No. 73), we learn of the fate of the Nubians who faced the military expedition:

This fortress was built. Then the Nubians were defeated in the land of Wawat. Afterwards, I sailed triumphantly up the river, defeating the Nubians along its banks, and then sailed downstream, uprooting their crops and felling their remaining trees. I set ablaze their dwellings, as is fitting for those who rebel against the king. I have never heard of any other soldier accomplishing such feats.<sup>15</sup>

## **Inventory of rock inscriptions and rock art from Naga el-Girgawi in the Náprstek Museum**

The rock inscriptions currently kept in the Náprstek Museum include Inscriptions No. 10 (Inv. No. P 3498ab), No. 11 (Inv. No. P 3499ab), No. 12 (Inv. No. P 3500), No. 21 (Inv. No. P 3501), No. 24 (Inv. No. P 3502), and No. 25 (Inv. No. P 3503) [Tab. 1].

**Tab. 1.** Correlation between the numbering of the inscriptions in Žába 1974 and the inventory numbers in the Náprstek Museum.

<b>Inscription No. (Žába 1974)</b>	<b>Náprstek Museum, Inv. No.</b>	<b>Notes</b>
No. 10	P 3498ab	Two isolated fragments
No. 11	P 3499ab	Broken in two fragments
No. 12	P 3500	Complete
No. 21	P 3501	Complete
No. 24	P 3502	Complete
No. 25	P 3503	Complete

All the inscriptions originate from a single location, namely the north-western summit of Gebel el-Girgawi, above the village of Naga el-Girgawi,<sup>16</sup> located close to the southern tip of the Southern Czechoslovak Concession of the UNESCO Campaign, several kilometres west of Korosko.

14 On C-Group see Hafsaas 2020.

15 Adjusted from Žába 1974.

16 Žába 1974, pp. 38–39.

When discovered and documented by the Czechoslovak expedition, all six inscriptions were inscribed on loose stones, which made it possible to remove them from their original location, while the inscriptions in solid rocks forming the slopes of Gebel el-Girgawi were documented by means of casting.

Besides six genuine rock inscriptions and their parts, the collection includes thirteen gypsum casts made from latex imprints taken by the expedition while documenting these inscriptions (including the inscription that had already been recorded by Brugsch and the Stela of the Vizier Antef-iqer). In some cases, more than one copy of an inscription was stored in the Náprstek Museum. The items are registered as 'replicas', as indicated by the 'R' in the alpha-numeric code representing the registration number [Tab. 2]. None of the casts document another inscription from the northwestern summit of Gebel el-Girgawi.

**Tab. 2.** Correlation between numbering of inscriptions in Žába 1974 and registration numbers in the Náprstek Museum.

Inscription No. (Žába 1974)	Náprstek Museum, Reg. No.
No. 4	R 32
No. 6	R 33
No. 7	R 34
No. 51	R 35
No. 54	R 36
No. 56	R 37
No. 57	R 38
No. 58	R 39
No. 61	R 40
No. 62	R 41
No. 71	R 42
No. 72	R 43
No. 73	R 44

Four pieces of rock art possibly attributed to the C-Group people (Inv. Nos. P 3494 – P 3497) supplement the rock inscriptions from the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 2000–1800 BCE) [Tab. 3]. They represent an animating counterpart for the Egyptian texts. Three of the four specimens can be identified in previous publications, while one still awaits to be found in excavation records.

Tab. 3. List of C-Group rock art in the collections of the Náprstek Museum.

Náprstek Museum, Inv. No.	Previous publication
P 3494	Suková 2011a, No. 915.
P 3495	Váhala and Červíček 1999, No. 937B.
P 3496	Suková 2011a, No. 934A.
P 3497	<i>not identified.</i>

**1) Inv. No. P 3498 = Inscription No. 10 [Pl. 1]**

*Dimensions:* (a) 13 × 13 cm; (b) 21 × 25 cm

*Comments:* Originally, seven fragments of a loose slab with an extensive rock inscription were discovered at the north-western summit of Gebel el-Girgawi. When the Czechoslovak expedition returned to collect the fragments forming the inscription, five fragments had already been lost, and only two were removed from the site. The texts captured on the one of the fragments are marked in blue in both transliteration and translation, which covers the entirety of the text. The second fragment appears to be unscrubbed.  
The inscription dates generally to the early Twelfth Dynasty, similarly to other inscriptions in the area.

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *h3b.tw htm.w bjty shtp-r<sup>c</sup>*  
<sup>(2)</sup> *[j]r[y]-p<sup>c</sup>.t h3ty-<sup>c</sup> htm.w bjty smr w<sup>c</sup>.ty rh-nswt m3<sup>c</sup> jrr hss.t*  
<sup>(3)</sup> *nb=f r<sup>c</sup> nb [j]m[y]-r3 <sup>c</sup>h<sup>c</sup>.w [empty space] rdjs rnp.t 20 r*  
<sup>(4)</sup> *jw.t pr.t r r w3w3.t n [j]m[y]-r3 njw.t B.ty s3b B.ty*  
<sup>(5)</sup> *jn-jt=f-jkr*  
<sup>(6)</sup> *[empty column]*  
<sup>(7)</sup> *jn-jt=f nsw-mntw jb-jy-fl*  
<sup>(8)</sup> *[empty column]*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> One sent the royal seal-bearer of Sehetepre (?)  
<sup>(2)</sup> and the hereditary prince, local prince, royal seal-bearer, sole-companion, true royal acquittance, one who does what his lord is praising  
<sup>(3)</sup> everyday, overseer of the fleet [empty space] Redis (during) 20 years in order  
<sup>(4)</sup> to come and advance against Wawat on behalf of the overseer of the city,  
<sup>(5)</sup> Antef-iqer.  
<sup>(6)</sup> [empty column]  
<sup>(7)</sup> Antef's son Nesu-Mentu's son Ibiyfekh.  
<sup>(8)</sup> [empty column]

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, pp. 39–44; Obsomer 1995, pp. 648–649, No. 99.

**2) Inv. No. P 3499 = Inscription No. 11 [Pl. 2]**

*Dimensions:* 38.0 × 39.0 cm

*Comments:* Two adjoining fragments of the inscription were discovered, while the Czechoslovak expedition searched for the lost fragments of the previous Inscription No. 10. It was discovered in a heap of stones which formed a kind of shelter above the north slope of Gebel el-Girgawi. 'Year 9' refers probably to the reign of King Senusret I, as did other dated rock inscriptions at Naga el-Girgawi, which corresponded to Year 29 of King Amenemhat I.

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *rnp.t-sp 9*  
<sup>(2)</sup> *hnnw*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> Year 9  
<sup>(2)</sup> Henenu.

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, p. 44; Obsomer 1995, pp. 649–650, No. 101.

**3) Inv. No. P 3500 = Inscription No. 12 [Pl. 3]**

*Dimensions:* 31.5 × 22.5 cm

*Comments:* Five metres to the south from Inscription No. 10, a detached stone with a short inscription was discovered. Unlike the other cases, the surface was not dressed. It is generally dated to the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty.

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *mntw-ḥtp(.w)*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> Mentuhotep.

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, pp. 44–45.

**4) Inv. No. P 3501 = Inscription No. 21 [Pl. 4]**

*Dimensions:* 25.0 × 20.5 cm

*Comments:* The fragment was found atop a small heap of stones. It was probably associated with the campaign in Year 18 of King Senusret I.

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *ʕnh=f(-)mnt[.w ...]*  
<sup>(2)</sup> *rn=f(-)ʕnh (?)*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> Ankhef(-)Mentu (?) [...]   
<sup>(2)</sup> Renefankh (?)

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, p. 50.

### 5) Inv. No. P 3502 = Inscription No. 24 [Pl. 5]

*Dimensions:* 49.0 × 68.0 cm

*Comments:* A flat loose stone with the inscription was discovered circa 9 metres south of Inscription No. 10. The surface of the sandstone rock is rather hard, which posed difficulties for its author to carve the text carefully. Latinised modern Arab names, Bakry and Hassan or Hussein, were written over the three lines of the rock inscription. Paradoxically, the rock inscription, namely its third line contains a threat to those who would destroy it. The inscription undoubtedly comes from the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty.

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *mr.n-hnm.w s3 mn(tw)-nht*  
<sup>(2)</sup> *jj=t(j) mn(tw)-nht hr 7 nt šm<sup>c</sup>w*  
<sup>(3)</sup> *jr gr.t hd.tj=fj sw mt=f n dr.t n nm.tjw*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> Meren-Khnum's son Mon(thu)-nakht;  
<sup>(2)</sup> Mon(thu)-nakht arrived at No. 7 (*i.e. a location in Lower Nubia*) of the south!  
<sup>(3)</sup> Furthermore as for the one who would destroy this (*i.e. this inscription*), he will die by the hand of the executioner!

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, p. 52.

### 6) Inv. No. P 3503 = Inscription No. 25 [Pl. 6]

*Dimensions:* 39.5 × 19.5 cm

*Transliteration:* <sup>(1)</sup> *hwy*  
<sup>(2)</sup> *hw-w(j)-hnm.w s3 mn(tw)-htp(.w)*

*Translation:* <sup>(1)</sup> Khuwy  
<sup>(2)</sup> Khuwy-Khnum's son Mentuhotep

*Comments:* Associated either with the campaign of Year 29 of King Amenemhat I or Year 18 of King Senusret I. The inscription was found in fragments which are currently glued together.

*Bibliography:* Žába 1974, pp. 52–53.

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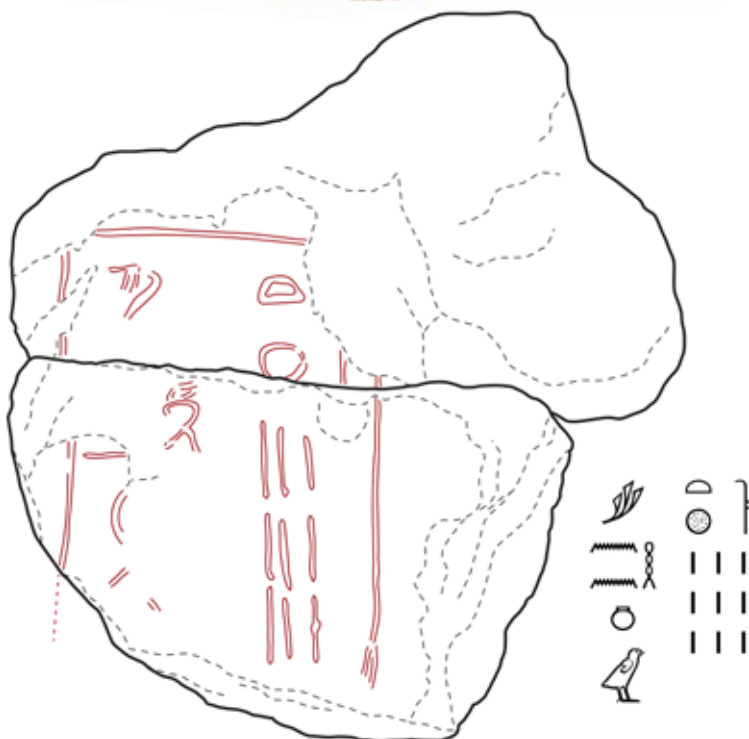


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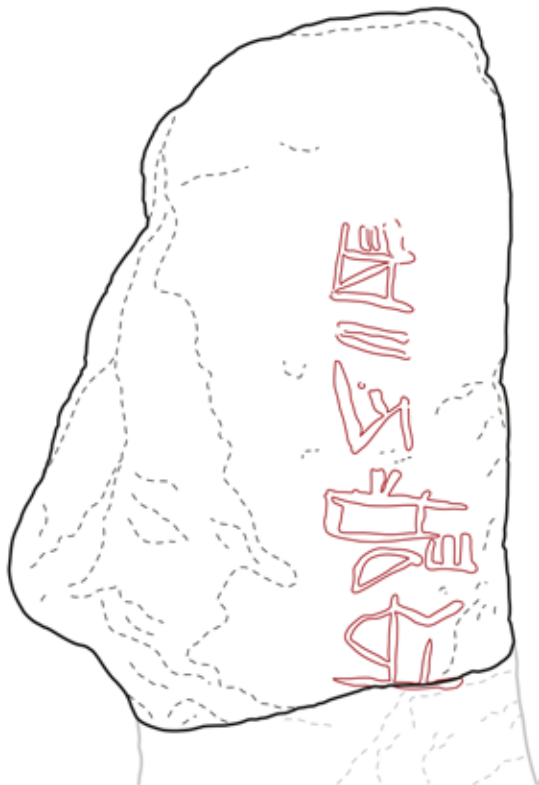




Pl. 2. Inv. No. P 3499 = Inscription  
No. 11 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk; Illustration:  
Vlastimil Vrtal).

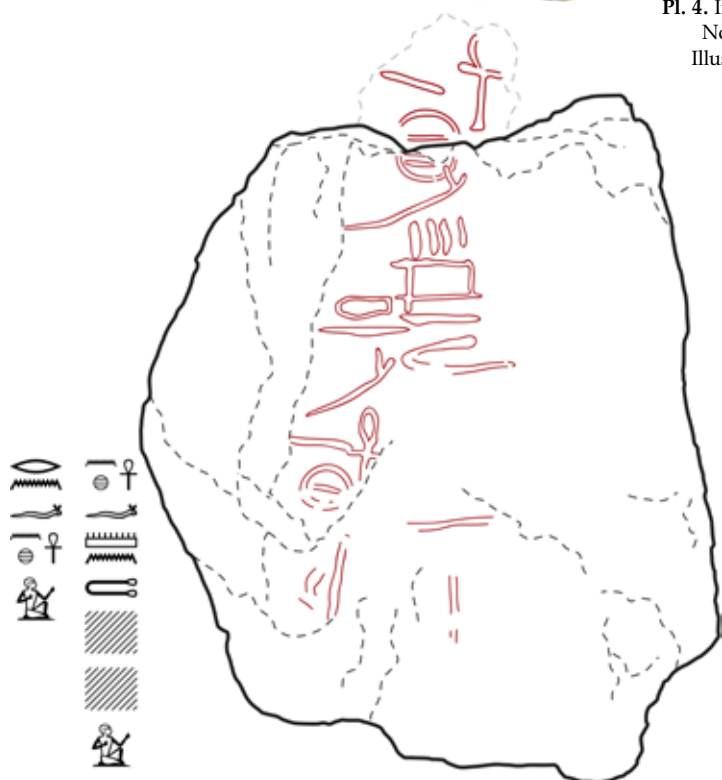


Pl. 3. Inv. No. P 3500 = Inscription  
No. 12 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk;  
Illustration: Vlastimil Vrtal).



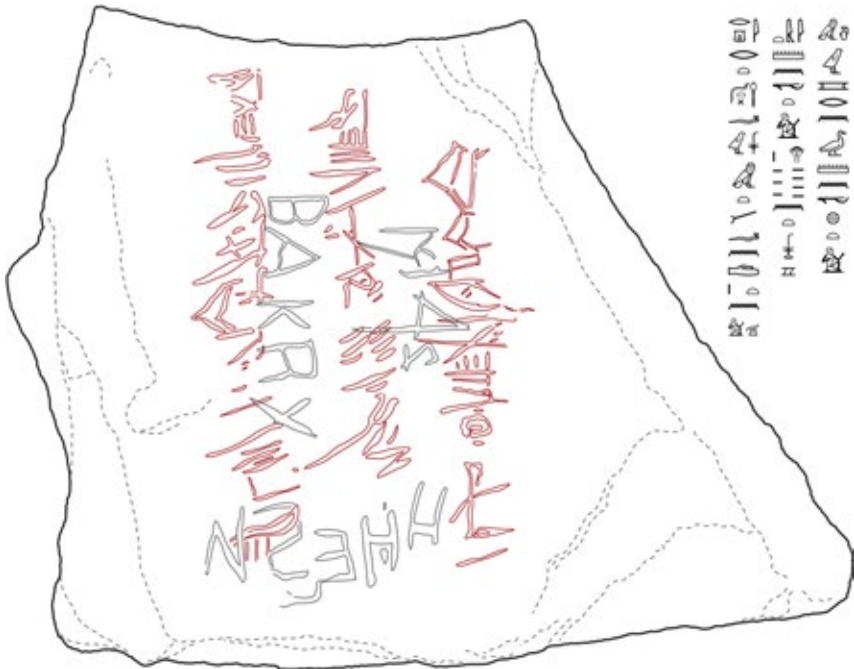


Pl. 4. Inv. No. P 3501 = Inscription No. 21 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk; Illustration: Vlastimil Vrtal).





Pl. 5. Inv. No. P 3502 = Inscription  
No. 24 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk;  
Illustration: Vlastimil Vrtal).





Pl. 6. Inv. No. P 3503 = Inscription  
No. 25 (Photo: Jiří Vaněk;  
Illustration: Vlastimil Vrtal).

