

In remembrance of Jaromír Málek (5. 10. 1943 – 23. 5. 2023)

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I met my classmate Jaromír Málek – Jarda, as we called him – at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague at the start of the academic year 1960/1961. Both of us were just starting the first year of Egyptology and Prehistory, together with other classmates. The study discipline of Egyptology had just been reopened after a long break, in relation to the newly founded Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology. The institute was faced with many tasks, especially in connection with the salvage excavations and surveys organized by UNESCO that aimed to save the monuments in Nubia threatened by the High Dam in Aswan.

Under the leadership of Professor Zbyněk Žába, all of us got down with zest to the study of Egyptology, but also Archaeology, English, Arabic, and other world languages. We were hoping to use all the knowledge that we acquired for the documentation and salvage of the



Fig. 1 Portrait of Jaromír Málek during the *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2015* conference in Prague (photo M. Frouz)



Fig. 2 Jaromír Málek during the exploration of the Old Kingdom tombs at Abusir Centre (photo M. Zemina)

Nubian monuments. Jarša was an excellent student, with a very friendly demeanour and a sporty disposition. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise that he was, already in his third year, selected by Professor Źába as one of the first students to take part in the Czechoslovak expedition to Nubia. Similar to other Egyptian and foreign missions, our team was tasked to discover, document and salvage the monuments in Nubia. It was later in Nubia, during the expedition and in difficult working conditions, that I had the chance to get to know Jarša in more depth. This short remembrance relates to this period of our cooperation.

Jarša enjoyed his time in Nubia and was always full of energy. He took part in the archaeological survey in the concession area assigned to our expedition and was helping to uncover and record the remnants of prehistoric and ancient structures in the already abandoned Nubian landscape. Thanks to his dexterity, fitness and courage, he was able to climb the hot jagged rocks in order to search for rock art, and he subsequently drew and described them. Despite the tiredness, he was always in a good mood. He did not lack positive energy even after the evening return to our catamaran, named Sadiq el-Nuba (“The Friend of Nubia”). In the evening we were all tired, sweaty and dirty, sitting on the deck and waiting for our turn

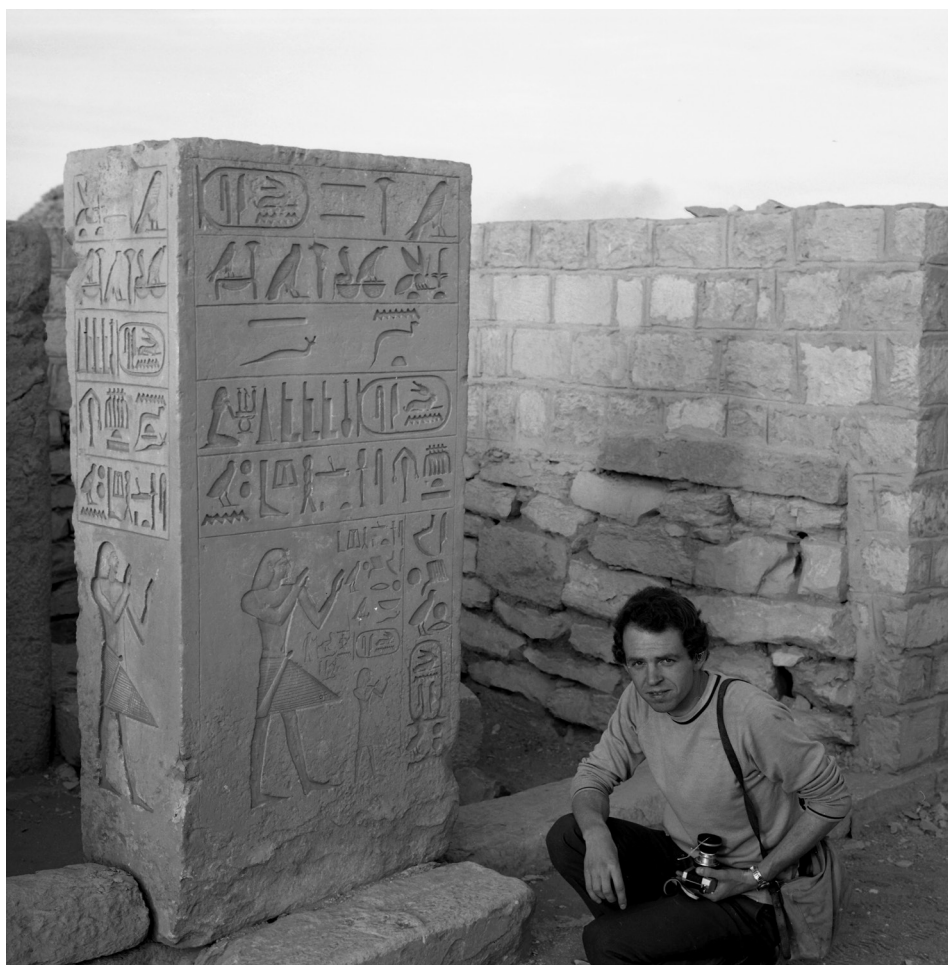


Fig. 3 Jaromír Málek in one of the private tombs at Saqqara (photo M. Zemina)

in the improvised shower, and Jarda was often entertaining us with his stories, jokes and funny, pertinent remarks.

The everyday life on the catamaran was not easy, as the small area had to fit ten adult men of very various ages and social standing, from Professor Žába to students. From time to time, it was difficult to avoid cabin fever, but there was never any serious conflict. It was during such tenses moments that another character trait of Jarda came to light: he was able to stay calm and he helped to resolve the situation with cool and pragmatic advice.

Later, it was the knowledge acquired in Nubia that let Jarda to choose an interesting subject for his Master thesis, namely the importance of the rock art depictions of boats and ships on the Czechoslovak concession sites in Nubia. After the conclusion of his studies in 1967, Jarda had an unprecedented opportunity through the means of Jaroslav Černý, Professor of Egyptology, who used to visit the Griffith institute in Oxford University. Černý suggested to Dr. Rosalinda Moss, who needed an assistant to help with the preparation of the new edition of *The Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Statues, Reliefs and Paintings* (also known as *Porter & Moss*), to contact Professor Žába in Prague and ask him to



Fig. 4 A discussion between Jaromír Málek and Miroslav Bárta (photo M. Frouz)

send one of his students, and Žába suggested Jaromír Málek. Jarda first acquired the position of an assistant and later also the director of the whole project. For decades, he systematically enlarged and enhanced the data and worked on the newly updated editions of *The Topographical Bibliography*; and he also provided scholars with its modern, on-line edition.

After the conclusion of the international salvage work in Nubia, the completion of his studies and his departure for Oxford, our paths have separated. Nevertheless, our acquired knowledge and experiences from the expeditions in Nubia have impacted our whole lives. Thus, most of my memories with Jarda are also recollections of Nubia. Sadly, these are only memories now.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Internet resources

DTB Digital Topographical Bibliography (<http://topbib.griffith.ox.ac.uk//index.html>)

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