



Prof. PhDr. Břetislav Vachala, CSc. (27th July 1952, Jaroměř – 24th June 2020, Praha)

Břetislav Vachala was born (rather by happenstance) in Jaroměř, but he spent his childhood and youth in Hradec Králové, and for his entire life remained a passionate local patriot of Hradec, where he found his final rest. In his youth, he was an active volleyball player. In his early childhood, under the influence of the Czechoslovak participation in the international UNESCO campaign to salvage the monuments of Nubia at that time, he became interested in Egyptology and ancient Egypt, and when he was nine years old, he began exchanging letters with the then director of the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University, Professor Zbyněk Žába.

In the years 1970–1975, he studied Egyptology and Arabic at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University. Later on, after a nine-month fellowship spent at the Faculty of Archaeology of Cairo University, he joined the Czech (then Czechoslovak) Institute of Egyptology, FA CU, in 1976. He continued working here until his death, with the exception of the years 1993–1997, when he held the position of ambassador of the Czech Republic to the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Sudan. Between the years 2000 and 2005, he was the director of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, FA CU.

In the course of his entire life, he tirelessly acquainted both the Czech and the international public with the

ancient Egyptian civilization and its heritage and also with the results of international Egyptological research, both in lectures for the general public and in the Czech and international media. He also authored several books directed at the general public, in which he introduced the entire scope of the Egyptian written culture in Czech translations; his books obtained several prestigious Czech book awards. His translations into Czech include the *Book of the Dead*, one of the most important works of ancient Egyptian religious literature, but also other genres of ancient Egyptian writing – the so-called instructions, as well as tales and love poetry, or the treatises on ancient Egyptian medicine (co-authored with Eugen Strouhal and Hana Vymazalová). Until his last days, he worked on the Czech translation of the famous Ebers medical papyrus but did not live long enough to see this volume published.

He also frequently participated in the excavations at the ancient Egyptian necropolis of Abusir and the publication of their results. He published, among others, a voluminous treatise on the fragments of reliefs from the mastaba of Vizier Ptahshepses. In the reliefs of the tomb of the judge Inti, he identified the oldest love song. He also published a number of ancient Egyptian objects in Czech and foreign museums and collections. At the same time, he largely reviewed titles



Fig. 1 Břetislav Vachala as a car driver in the Egyptian desert (photo K. Voděra)

on Egyptology for *Archiv orientální* and *Bibliotheca Orientalis*. Altogether, his bibliography totals almost six hundred works.

He played an important role in the education of new generations of Egyptologists and experts in related professions at Charles University in Prague and at Masaryk University in Brno. As a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin and a member of The International Association of Egyptologists and The International Society for Nubian Studies, he actively participated in a number of international Egyptological, Nubiological and Meroistic congresses and conferences. At the same time, he was also a member of the editorial boards of several journals, namely *Anthropologia Integra*, scientific journal of Masaryk University in Brno, and the more popular orientated *Dějiny a současnost* [“History and Present Times”, in Czech] and *Nový Orient* [“New Orient”, in Czech]. He was especially diligent in writing for the general public, considering this to be essential for academics. He also contributed to a number of encyclopaedias and school textbooks. His lifelong interests included philately, focussing especially on stamps from Egypt and stamps with ancient Egyptian motifs from the entire world.

He was known and well-liked among his colleagues and students, but also among the colleagues and co-workers of the Czech Expedition in Egypt, for his happy and optimistic nature, which even his long, severe illness could not cloud.



Fig. 2 Břetislav Vachala with guardman Sayyed in front of the entrance into the chapel of Inti (AS 22) at Abusir South (photo K. Voděra)



Fig. 3 Břetislav Vachala with Alexandra Kosinová restoring a polychrome statue from the tomb of Shepseskafankh (AS 39) (photo K. Arias)