

In memoriam prof. PhDr. Petr Charvát (12. 1. 1949 – 17. 9. 2023)

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Shortly before his 75th birthday, Professor Petr Charvát, a long-time friend and collaborator of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, passed away. Although his life and career were, for the most time, connected with cuneiform studies and early medieval archaeology and history of the Czechia, he left a significant trace in the field of Egyptology as well.

Starting from 1967, he studied prehistory and history at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University, moving later to prehistory and cuneiform studies (with prof. Lubor Matouš, himself a pupil of František Hrozný, the decipherer of Hititte language,¹ and Vladimír Souček as his teachers). Since 1971, he began to attend the Egyptological classes as well, specialized courses of Egyptian archaeology and material culture above all. For hi, M.A. thesis, he chose a rather large and heterogenous set of pottery that had been found during the Czech archaeological work in the Fifth Dynasty mastaba of Vizier Ptahshepses at Abusir during the previous years (from 1960 to 1970) and were unpublished until then (Charvát 1973).

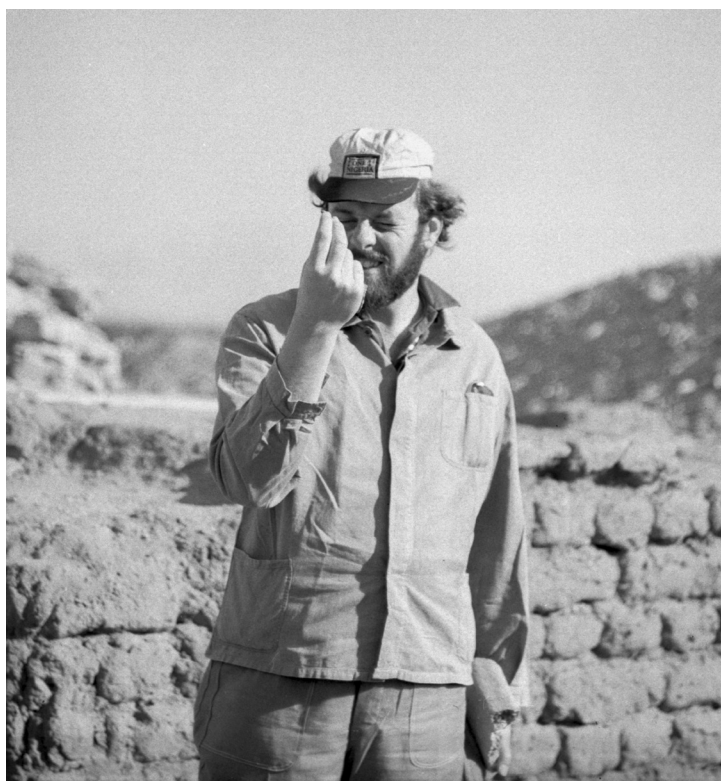


Fig. 1 Petr Charvát examining a small pottery vessel during his work in the mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir in 1974 (Archive of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, photo Milan Zemina)

1 On Lubor Matouš, see, *e. g.* Hruška (1985) and Vavroušek (2008).



Fig. 2 Petr Charvát (watched by the author of this paper) counting miniature ceramic vessels during the excavations of the south-western outer corner of the mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir in 1974; his “personal best” reached to 948 such vessels in one day (Archive of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, photo Milan Zemina)



Fig. 3 Petr Charvát with other members of the Czech archaeological team during a visit in the Saqqara South pyramid field in 1974. From the left to right Petr Charvát, Jean-Phillipe Lauer (the host), František Váhala and Miroslav Verner in front of the Pyramid Texts in the burial chamber of Pepy I (Archive of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, photo Milan Zemina).



Fig. 4 Reis Abdo el-Kereti offering some food to Petr Charvát during a meeting organized by the el-Kareti family for the members of the Czech archaeological team in 1974, with the author of this papers watching (Archive of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, photo Milan Zemina)

Graduating from the faculty in 1973, he got a one-year study stay in the Czechoslovak Institute of Egyptology at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University. During that time, he prepared a PhDr. thesis dealing, this time, with the finds of the decorated pottery coming from the mastaba of Ptahshepses as an important source for the study of the development of this type of pottery during 2nd and 1st millennia BC (Charvát 1974). In 1974, he took part in the last and final season of the archaeological work in that tomb. Using his thorough theoretical background and his experience from the field work at Abusir, he prepared not only a brief chapter on pottery for the *Preliminary Report on the Excavations at the Mastaba of Ptahshepses at Abusir* (Charvát 1976), but two papers on Egyptian pottery (Charvát 1980; Charvát 1982) as well. His preoccupation with this kind of material from the tomb of Ptahshepses resulted in publishing a thorough and detailed analysis of it in *The Mastaba of Ptahshepses. The pottery* in 1981, a volume useful and valuable until now (Charvát 1981).

Since 1975, he pursued his career at the Institute of Archaeology and, since 1990, also in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Czechoslovak/Czech Academy of Sciences. He took active part in a number of archaeological missions in the Near East, such as the British mission in Djemdet Nasr in Iraq (1989), the Czech archaeological mission in Lebanon (since 1996) and the Spanish archaeological mission in the south-eastern Turkey (for a number of consecutive years starting from 1996).² For several years (1982 until 1984) he participated – as

² He co-authored several papers (see e.g. Gil Fuensanta – Charvát 2004; Gil Fuensanta – Charvát 2006; Charvát – Gil Fuensanta 2005; Gil Fuensanta – Charvát – Crivelli 2008).



Fig. 5 Postman bringing the long-awaited letters to the members of the Czech archaeological team on their return back from Abusir to Giza; from left to right Petr Charvát, the postman, Miroslav Verner and the author of this paper (Archive of the Czech Institute of Egyptology, photo Milan Zemina)

an archaeological consultant – in the UNESCO project in the Abhayagiri Vihara monastery in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka; as a result of his activity there he published a unique find of an Egyptian scarab coming from that remote place (Charvát 1984). Although his attention was mainly concentrated on archaeology and history of the Czech lands in the early medieval era (before 1000 AD, in principle) at that time, he was able to follow the contacts of that area with Egypt (Charvát 1986) or the Czech archaeological activities in the Near East (Charvát 2021).

For many years, his main research interest was connected with the formation of the early states in Mesopotamia and in the ancient world in general (Charvát 2002; 2013), based, among other sources, on seal imprints (Charvát 2005; 2017; 2018; see also Charvát 2011). To recognize

his immense efforts and knowledge, as well as his unflagged friendship and co-operation, his friends, and colleagues from the Czech Institute of Egyptology and from the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences prepared a volume in his honour on the occasion of his 60th birthday (Maříková Vlčková – Mynářová – Tomášek 2009).

In our minds, Petr Charvát will always be remembered as an excellent, internationally renowned scholar. At the same time, he was one of the most modest and unselfish friends and tutors, always prepared to share his immense knowledge, based on a brilliant memory and a master grasp of a number of languages – ancient and modern, with everybody who needed it and asked him for help.

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