From November 13, 2011 until December 08, 2011 and from February 27, 2012 until March 25, 2012 work on surveying and salvage epigraphy on the rock inscriptions in the Aswan area was continued in the framework of the joint project between the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) and the Ministry of State for Antiquities (MSA). During this field season work on a group of New Kingdom royal stelae situated south of the town of Aswan (behind the workshop "Turquoise Joaillerie") was begun and the work at the site of Gebel Tabyat al-Sheikh was completed.

Fig. 1: Western group of granite boulders bearing three royal rock stelae and the inscription of Heby, mayor of Memphis (New Kingdom).

I. Group of royal stelae south of Aswan

Amid modern multi-storey houses, some perfume shops and jewelry stores two groups of massive granite boulders are lying in the center of a square plaza and are now framed to the east and

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1 Members of the team were: Dr. Fathy Abu Zeid (project director), Dr. Abd el Hakim Harrar (project director), Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer (project director), Linda Borrmann M.A. (field director), Adel Kelany (field director), Mohammed Abd el Baset, Alyaa Abd el Monsif Reshwan, Iris Dölle, Anne Herzberg, Alexander Juraschka, Mahmoud Mamduh Mokhtar, Asja Müller, Heba Saad Harby, Elisabeth Wegner, Stefan Ziegler (surveyor). The MSA was represented by the inspectors Mrs. Alyaa Abd el Monsif Reshwan, Mr. Adel Kelany, and Mrs. Heba Saad Harby.
to the north by an unpaved road (Fig. 1).

On these rocks a total of nine rock inscriptions were carved into the stone surface, mainly dating from the New Kingdom. Among them are four large royal stelae\(^2\), famous not only for their size and the figurative decoration of their lunettes but also for the content of their extensive and detailed texts which deal with the suppression of the people of foreign countries in general and/or, more specifically, of military actions against Nubia. Proceeding from south to north there can be found:

- A stela of Thutmose II (year 1), in whose upper part the king is depicted, accompanied by Amun-Ra, Satis, Khnum and Anukis, receiving life from the gods. The text, the only one of that group addressing a specific historical event, commemorates the suppression of a Nubian revolt which arose after the previous king, Thutmose I, had died and his son succeeded him (Fig. 2).

\[\text{Fig. 2: The monumental rock stelae of Thutmose II (left) and Amenhotep III (right).}\]

- Two stelae of Amenhotep III (one of the texts dates from year 5 of his reign), each of which shows the king in front of different divinities (Amun-Ra, Khnum and Ptah; Amun-Ra and Anukis), while he is beating one or more foreign enemy/enemies. These inscriptions bear a more general eulogic character praising the military prowess of the king.

\(^2\)These texts are already published in LD III 16a; LD, Text IV, 119 (6b); LD III 81h; LD, Text IV, 119 (6c); LD III 81g; LD, Text IV, 120 (6d); LD III 175g; LD, Text IV, 119 (3), in De Morgan, J., U. Bouriant, G. Legrain, G. Jéquier, and A. Barsanti, Catalogue des Monuments et Inscriptions de L'Égypte Antique, Première Série: Haute Égypte, Tome Premier: De la Frontière de Nubie a Kom Ombos, Wien 1984, 2-6, in Uruk IV 137-141,9; 1663,7-1665,4; 1665,5-1666, in KRI II 344-345, and in Klug, A., Königliche Stelen in der Zeit von Ahmose bis Amenophis III., Monumenta Aegyptiaca 8, Turnhout 2003, 83-87; 418-421; 422-424.
Finally a huge rock stela of Ramesses II (year 2), displaying the king smiting the enemies of “wretched” Kush in front of the gods Amun and Khnum, while the text again is phrased in very general terms of political rhetoric (Fig. 3).

Although these texts were already documented at the turn of the 20th century and ever since repeatedly discussed in Egyptological literature, a full epigraphic documentation of the originals was never carried out. Therefore a number of minor and major issues relating to the texts and, in particular, to the depictions in the lunettes and their accompanying inscriptions remained unclear.

During the 2011/12 season two of the stelae, those of Ramesses II and Thutmose II, could be fully documented and for the first time reproduced in a facsimile copy. As a result it was possible not only to check and correct some readings of De Morgan, Kitchen and Sethe but also to study the individual paleographic characteristics of the different inscriptions. Considering the historical and cultural importance of the texts such a close epigraphic study is obviously indispensable and will open new lines of research, in particular, with respect to the topographic setting of the stelae.

Next to these royal texts another accurately carved rectangular tableau displays a kneeling male person who adores the cartouches of Amenhotep III. It belongs to Heby, mayor of the city of Memphis (Fig. 4), who is facing towards the direction of the nearby large memorial stela of that

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king. According to the last two columns of the inscription this high-ranking official had taken part in Amenhoteps III’s first military campaign to Kush. After his return the king presumably rewarded him with certain benefits and he was allowed to place his inscription in the immediate vicinity of the royal stelae; it is possible that Heby was even responsible for carving one or both of the stelae of Amenhotep III.

Fig. 4: Inscription of Heby, mayor of Memphis, displaying the high-ranking official adoring the cartouches of Amenhotep III.

Facing eastwards, the historical stelae as well as the rock inscription of Heby were most probably oriented towards the ancient road between the bay of Aswan and the harbour at the upper end of the cataract in the plain of Shellal. Obviously that road played an important role as a transportation route both in trade and in the context of military operations into Nubia and the northern Sudan. The ancient wall running along this line and probably linking the two fortresses at

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Abu (Elephantine/Aswan) and Senmet (Bigeh/Shellal), as well as the series of Roman watchtowers, attest to the military protection of this crucial area. In addition, there may have been a small shrine at this place which would have provided a ritual framework within which the propagandistic inscriptions were set.

Vis-à-vis the first group of the above mentioned texts, a second granite boulder is inscribed with the single figure of a standing male person and a rock cut tableau displaying a kneeling adorant accompanied by an adoration formula characteristic of the New Kingdom (Inscription of Rjj), both facing westwards (Fig. 5). Thus the unpaved path between the two rows of rocks, which is currently being used by the inhabitants of the residential area as a passage way, probably follows the track of the ancient road from Aswan to Shellal. The level of the ancient road, however, according to the level of the stela of Ramesses II, probably lay about 1 m below the modern surface (Fig. 6).

Fig. 5: Eastern group of granite boulders bearing the single figure of a standing male person and the inscription of Rjj, displaying him kneeling and accompanied by an adoration formula (New Kingdom).

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9 Cf. LD, Text IV, 120 (7), where a small ruinous shrine in the vicinity of the royal stelae, bearing no inscriptions, is described as follows: „Auf der Mitte des Weges, an dem kleinen Tempel (ohne Schrift, in Ruinen) ein wenig vorbei, ist links am Wege eine Anbetung vor Menephthah Siptah."

Of particular interest in the context of reconstructing the ancient use of the terrain are two more rock inscriptions, which have been drawn, described and documented during this season. The first is a rather short text probably dating from the Old or Middle Kingdom. It consists of the personal name Wep (Fig. 7) and at least two ambiguous titles on which further research is required.

The second text, a broken granite fragment now lying on the ground near the other royal tableaus, presumably belonged to another monumental rock stela (Fig. 8). It is the fragment of a rock inscription depicting the king wearing the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and smiting a kneeling enemy. According to the dimensions of the figurative decoration it should have been similar in size to the nearby huge memorial stela of Ramesses II. The state of preservation of this stone fragment, as well as a series of wedge-holes and some other traces of destruction, document the use of the place as a quarry (supposedly in the Late and Graeco-Roman Periods). It is likely that there were originally a larger number of granite boulders bearing further rock inscriptions. Unfortunately one must consider that some of these earlier inscribed blocks were broken and moved away.

Fig. 7: Inscription of the scribe Wep, displaying his titles and name (probably Old or Middle Kingdom).

Fig. 8: Fragment of a monumental royal rock stela displaying Seti I smiting a Nubian (?) enemy.

To support the epigraphic documentation of the stelae and rock texts a detailed topographic
survey of the complete site was carried out by Stefan Ziegler (surveyor) using a total station as well as a DGPS device in order to produce a map of the area showing the positions of all rock inscriptions and images.

Unfortunately, in its present situation surrounded by modern houses, the important site of the royal stelae was in acute danger of being used as a rubbish heap, being damaged or even being built over by further housing (Fig. 9). Therefore, to protect these historical monuments, a wall and a solid metal fence was built around it to mark the antiquities area. This work could only be carried out thanks to special funding provided by the German Foreign Office and in close cooperation with the Ministry of State for Antiquities (MSA).

![Fig. 9: The site of the Royal Stelae before cleaning and preparing for construction of the fence.](image)

This fence (Fig. 10-11) now protects the rock inscriptions of this area and makes it recognizable as a major archaeological site in the Aswan area worthy of being visited by the local population as well as by Egyptian and international tourists. To assist visitors in understanding the importance of the site, information boards explaining the historical background and the significance of the local rock inscriptions will be installed. In addition a leaflet providing closer information both in English and in Arabic will be provided.
2. Rock inscriptions at Gebel Tabyat al-Sheikh

At Gebel Tabyat al-Sheikh, a site with inscriptions dating from the Middle Kingdom situated to the north of the bay of Shellal, work was continued.

The last remaining unedited and yet unpublished inscription, a large tableau of a high-ranking official called Iyi-seneb, has been photographed, described and reproduced in facsimile (Fig. 12). It consists not only of a date mentioning “Year 24 under the majesty of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt Ni-Maat-Ra (Amenemhat III), who may live like Ra eternally.” (first line of the
text) but also of an offering formula and quite a long list of family members, who are also depicted as standing male and female figures.

Fig. 12: Inscription of Iyi-seneb, displaying an extended offering formula with following systematically arranged family list and matching depictions of them (Middle Kingdom).