1) Introduction

From October 23, 2012 until December 05, 2012 and from March 03, 2013 until March 07, 2013 work on surveying and salvage epigraphy on rock inscriptions and rock art 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") and at a rock art site in Wadi Berber on the West Bank of Aswan was completed.

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1 Members of the team were: Dr. Fathy Abu Zeid (head of the mission, MSA), Dr. Abd el Hakim Karrar (head of the mission, MSA), Prof. Dr. Stephan Seidlmayer (head of the mission, DAI Cairo), Linda Borrmann M.A. (field director, DAI Cairo), Adel Kelany (field director, MSA), Rebecca Döhl M.A. (sub-project “Rock Art in Wadi Berber”), Shazli Ali Abd el Azim, Alexander Juraschka, Anita Kriener M.A., Mahmoud Mamdouh Mokhtar, Ahmed Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, Heba Saad Harby, Elisabeth Wegner (members of the collaborative team), Mohamed Abdu Ali, Salah el Deen Ismael Abd el Raof, Yosra Khalf Allah el Zohry, Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed (trainees of the MSA). The MSA was represented by the inspectors Mr. Ahmed Mohamed Hassan Mohamed, Mr. Mahmoud Mamdouh Mokhtar, and Mrs. Heba Saad Harby.
2) The site of the Royal Stelae south of Aswan

In the southern part of modern Aswan there can be found a group of four royal rock stelae, which are amongst the most recognized historical texts of ancient Egypt and apparently well-known.² First published by Lepsius in the 19th century, these so-called Royal Stelae since then have been often quoted in literature and have been the subject of various specific studies. But although numerous researchers have examined the monuments in detail, and some have also visited the archaeological site in order to revise the existing copies, the texts have never been reproduced in facsimile. Neither has their setting within the ancient landscape been a matter of scientific interest.

![Western group of granite boulders bearing three royal rock stelae and the inscription of Heby, mayor of Memphis (New Kingdom).](image)

Because the inscriptions today are also in great danger of being built over or even destroyed during the construction of modern buildings of the rapidly expanding city, a team of our project visited this area in 2011 and began the epigraphic documentation of the inscriptions, which was completed two years later.

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); De Morgan, J., Bouriant, U., Legrain, G., Jéquier, G., 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 1894, 2-6; Urk. IV 137-141,9, 1663,7-1665,4, 1665,5-1666; KRI II 344-345; and Klug, A., Königliche Stelen in der Zeit von Ahmose bis Amenophis III., Monumenta Aegyptiaca 8, Turnhout 2002, 83-87, 418-421, 422-424.
a. Setting
Amidst modern multi-storey houses, perfume shops and jewelry stores, two groups of massive granite boulders are lying in the center of a squared plaza and are now bordered to the west and south by an unpaved modern road.

![Fig. 2: The site of the Royal Stelae south of Aswan (March 2013).](image_url)

At the site ten pharaonic rock inscriptions, mostly dating to the New Kingdom, are carved into the stone surfaces and mostly facing each other across a broad path.

b. Stelae
On the western row of these rocks, we find four inscriptions that differ from the smaller surrounding texts not only in their length and content, but also in their design as stelae. Proceeding from north to south they are found within just a few steps from each other as follows.

Covering the northern face of an isolated boulder to the north-west of the central group the large stela of Ramesses II, dating to the second year of his reign, depicts a double scene, wherein the king is smiting the enemies of Ta-Seti in the presence of Amun on the left
and Khnum on the right side. But whereas the titles of the scenes actually refer to the “great ones of Lower Nubia” (ptpt wr.w n.w tl-ztj), the stela’s main text is mostly phrased in very general terms of political rhetoric and does not concentrate especially on Egypt’s southern neighbors but mentions several times “the nine bows” and the “sea peoples”.

A little further to the south, the three remaining royal inscriptions in combination with the natural arrangement and shape of their granite boulders form a kind of niche. There the first two inscriptions on the right side, both belonging to Amenhotep III, also show the king in the presence of different divinities, while he is smiting one or more foreign enemies. Similar to the previous inscription, the accompanying texts again bear a more general eulogic character praising the military prowess of the king. The northern text reports on a military campaign which took place against Nubia in year 5 of Amenhotep III’s reign, and on the king’s success in putting down that rebellion, while the southern one is designed as a speech of Amun, who presents a series of foreign countries to his son, the Egyptian king.
Finally, the most southern stela, dating from the first year of Thutmose II (c. 1516 B.C.), depicts the king receiving life from Satis, Amun-Ra, Khnum and Anukis. The stela’s text, the only one of that group that really addresses a specific historical event, commemorates the suppression of a Nubian revolt which immediately arose after the previous king, Thutmose I, had died and his son succeeded him.

c. Further inscriptions
But as mentioned above, the royal texts do not stand independently. In fact they are embedded in a local network of public communication, which nowadays can only be guessed from that remnants still situated in situ.

Right next to the Royal Stelae, for instance, another accurately carved rectangular tableau displays a kneeling male figure adoring the cartouches of Amenhotep III. It belongs to Heby, mayor of the city of Memphis, who is facing towards the nearby large memorial stelae of that king Amenhotep III. According to the last two columns of the inscription this

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high-ranking official had taken part in Amenhotep 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. Furthermore, it is even possible that Heby was responsible for carving one or both of the stelae of Amenhotep III.

![Inscription of Heby, mayor of Memphis, displaying the high-ranking official adoring the cartouches of Amenhotep III.](image)

In a similar context, a further rock inscription of a contemporary official of Ramesses II is placed beneath his monumental stela, imitating in its structure the composition of the royal double scene above. It shows Nebi-nakht, overseer of the fortress, kneeling and adoring Amun and Khnum, who are mentioned within formulae to the right and to the left of him (New Kingdom, temp. Ramesses II, c. 1304-1237 B.C.).

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Fig. 6: Inscription of Nebi-nakht, overseer of the fortress, kneeling and adoring Amun and Khnum (New Kingdom, temp. Ramesses II, c. 1304-1237 B.C.)

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, and the rock cut tableau of a scribe of the fortress named Rjj, displaying a kneeling adorant accompanied by an adoration formula characteristic of the New Kingdom. While the text of Rjj is facing westwards, the single figure is more oriented towards the south. Nonetheless it can be assumed, that the unpaved path between the two rows of rocks, which until recently has been used as a passage way by the inhabitants of the residential area, probably follows the track of the ancient road from Aswan to Shellal. Following the level of the stela of Ramesses II, we assume that the level of the ancient road is probably about 1 m below the modern surface.

Two more rock inscriptions are of particular interest in the context of reconstructing the ancient use of the terrain. The first is a rather short text probably dating to the Old or Middle Kingdoms. In fact, it is the only one of the western group not facing to the east but to the west. It consists of the personal name Wep and at least two ambiguous titles, which still require further research. The second text, carved on a broken granite fragment, now lying on the ground near the other royal tableaus, presumably belonged to another monumental rock stela. It is the fragment of a rock inscription depicting Sety I wearing the

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7 Unpublished.
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 was originally a larger number of granite boulders bearing further inscriptions. Unfortunately, one must consider that over the course of time some of these earlier inscribed blocks were broken and moved away.

d. Preliminary results

During the 2012/13 season the two stelae of Amenhotep III as well as the remaining minor inscriptions could be fully documented and for the first time reproduced in a facsimile copy. As a result it was possible not only to check, correct and complete some readings of De Morgan, Kitchen and Sethe but also to study the individual paleographic characteristics of the different inscriptions.

Considering their historical value these facsimiles have, for a long time, been a substantial desideratum and it is evident that with their help in the future new research approaches can be derived. Moreover, early researchers have concentrated on the royal texts, almost paying no attention to the nearby smaller inscriptions. But these ones, in particular, are crucial in reconstructing the ancient landscape and its semantics, as well as the functional scope of the local rock inscriptions.

Mostly facing eastwards, the historical texts and the further rock inscriptions of this area 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

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military operations to Nubia and the northern present-day Sudan.\textsuperscript{12} The ancient wall running along this line and probably linking the two fortresses at Abu (Elephantine/Aswan) and Senmet (Bigeh/Shellal)\textsuperscript{13}, as well as the series of Roman watchtowers\textsuperscript{14}, also attest to the military protection of this crucial area.

At first glance the texts’ alignment along the sensitive interface between the interior and the exterior of the city area and their orientation towards the hostile terrain outside its boundaries may appear quite logical. Without much doubt the rock inscriptions had been placed here in order to mark the border and symbolically assure the defense against lurking dangers from the enemy’s territory. Clearly, in demonstrating Egypt’s supremacy over all foreign countries the texts and the depictions can be considered as having an apotropaic character.

Furthermore, based on the observation that the rock inscriptions of the New Kingdom are in general clustered around neuralgic points within the sacral landscape of ancient Aswan – as is the case at Sehel, Hassawanarti and Gebel Tingar –, it can be assumed that also in case of the Royal Stelae there may have been a small shrine at this place which would have provided a ritual framework within which the propagandistic inscriptions were set.

Unfortunately, in its present situation surrounded by modern houses, this important site was in acute danger of being used as a rubbish heap, being damaged or even being built over by further housing. Therefore, in the 2011/2012 season, a wall and a solid metal fence were 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). That fence now not only protects the group of rock

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inscriptions but also 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.

3) Rock art in Wadi Berber on the West Bank of Aswan

a. Setting

The Wadi Berber lies on the West Bank of Aswan, opposite the islands Harun Narti and Salujah. It is the second wadi south from Wadi Saman, about 5 km north of the Aswan High Dam. Starting at the Nile it leads for about 1.5 kilometres in a north-northwesterly direction until it merges into the Sandstone Plateau.

Fig. 7: Wadi Berber opposite the town of Aswan.
The rock art in this area was first mentioned by Adolf Miethe\textsuperscript{15}, a German chemist and pioneer of photography, who travelled on an expedition to the Aswan area in 1908. He was also the first one who took pictures and published a colour photography of part of the rock art found in Wadi Berber. Relying on these pictures and on his own travels in this area, Georg Schweinfurth\textsuperscript{16} was the next to report about rock art in Wadi Berber in 1912. While he was investigating Wadi Abu Agag he also turned to Wadi Berber, presenting the first chronological classification for the rock art in this area. Some of these classifications, however, had to be revised later on. In the framework of the Quarryscapes Project, which was carried out from 2006 until 2008, Per Storemyr\textsuperscript{17} was the latest to present rock art from Wadi Berber. During this project which covered the huge area from Wadi Kubbanieh to the “Wadi of Dwarfs” close to the Western Desert, he and his team detected one geometric picture in Wadi Berber and several more in its vicinity.

Through visits and surveys undertaken by Stephan Seidlmayer and other scholars in the 1980s it became obvious that still more rock art than mentioned before was situated in the Wadi and near it. Therefore it appeared worthwhile to look at the pictures in this Wadi in greater detail and to record the pictures mentioned by Miethe and Schweinfurth more thoroughly. Furthermore it was intended to record the landscape surrounding and embedding of the rock art, because this spatial setting forms a considerable part of the pictures’ significance.

As part of the project “Aswan: A Universe of Media” of the German Archaeological Institute, Cairo this area was investigated again during seasons from 2010 till 2012. Altogether an area of about one square kilometre was surveyed, which included the Wadi Berber and its immediate surroundings. As a result it was possible to distinguish three geographical units with rock art. The first area comprises the stone outcrops at the ridge of the hills bordering the Wadi Berber in the north, starting some 300 metres inland and stretching around 800 metres along the wadi. This area is characterized by large boulders

\textsuperscript{15} Miethe, A., Das Land der Pharaonen. Ägypten von Kairo bis Assuan, Bonn et al. 1925.

\textsuperscript{16} Schweinfurth, G., Über alte Tierbilder und Felsinschriften bei Assuan, in: Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 44 (1912), 627-658.

\textsuperscript{17} Storemyr, P., Prehistoric geometric rock art at Gharb Aswan, Upper Egypt, in: Sahara 19 (2008), 61-76.
scattered along the ridge. The second area, which is further down the wadi at its junction with the Wadi Saman, consists of horizontal rock slabs which already form part of the sandstone plateau leading into the Western Desert. The third area consists of the entrance of the Wadi Berber and the slopes of the hills bordering the Nile. Here isolated heaps of boulders or outstanding cliffs are covered with pictures.

Fig. 8: The three different geographical settings with rock art.
b. Rock art

There is a very distinct patterning of rock art or inscriptions, which not only differs in its geographical setting, but also in the kind of rock art which has been found here. The first area, the ridge, shows archaeological traces of quarrying for grinding and ornamental stones.

Correspondingly it is mainly quarry marks and some Greek inscriptions, which have been found in this part of the survey area. All of them show rather deep incisions and a very light colour. Further there are some modern Arabic and other inscriptions with Latin letters.

In the next area mainly geometric rock art is found. This area has already been mentioned by the Quarryscapes Project as one of many geometric rock art clusters, which are to be found here, west of Gebel Sidi Osman and further north. The part investigated in this survey comprises an area with up to 45 horizontal sandstone panels spread out over the plateau. The rock art is mainly geometric, showing, for example, spirals, circles and dotted lines. But also a few figurative pictures are to be seen, such as crocodiles and possible footprints or animal tracks. The pictures are all badly worn, probably due to their horizontal positioning, which, in combination with the soft sandstone, led to an abrasion by wind and sand.

Fig. 9: Possible quarry mark in shape of hieroglyph.

Apart from the abraded parts of the pictures which show a lighter colour, most of the pictures have a dark varnish, which points to a possible Neolithic date as dark varnish assembles during wetter environmental conditions\(^19\).

The third area displays a different picture again: here on scattered rocky outcrops and isolated heaps of boulders figurative rock art is found. All together five rocky outcrops with pictures at the mouth of the Wadi Berber have been identified and three further spots with rock art were discovered along the hills north of the Wadi entrance leading to a smaller unnamed wadi in the north.

It is this area where the pictures mentioned by Miethe and Schweinfurth were situated. Unfortunately at some point between 2006 and 2010 this area has been used for private stone quarrying, to which also this rock art fell victim to. A similar stone quarrying took place at the stone faces of the northern cliffs of the wadi and along the Nile. The pictures which are still found today consist mainly of depictions of animals and humans and range in age from about the 5\(^{th}\) to the 4\(^{th}\) millennia until the Graeco-Roman period, with the

main part of the pictures belonging to the earlier date. Some of these pictures are today covered by deep modern incisions so that they are hardly visible anymore.

Fig. 11: View of two of the rock art places at the entrance of Wadi Berber.

Fig. 12: Figurative rock art showing ibexes covered by modern incisions.
This small overview of the landscape and the distribution of rock art already shows that there is a spatial relationship concerning the geographical setting and the kind of rock art or inscriptions executed in this area. The reasons for this could be chronological as well as socio-functional in character. It is rather obvious that the Pharaonic, Greek and Roman marks left at the boulders on the ridge are connected to the nearby quarrying activities. But then the question arises, why the geometric rock art is mainly to be found inland while figurative art is close to the Nile. Is this a chronological phenomenon and/or is it connected to different activities conducted in the different areas, probably by culturally differing groups?

c. Landscape and spatial recording

As mentioned at the beginning, one of the aims of this survey was to include the landscape setting into the research. For this purpose a laser scanner was used. As it was not possible to record the landscape of the whole area, a key area of interest had to be singled out, which is the wadi entrance and its vicinity.\(^{20}\)

With the Leica ScanStation 2 the whole area in front of the wadi entrance and part of it was scanned resulting in a very dense point cloud showing in detail not only the terrain but also the rocky outcrops on which the pictures are placed. This point cloud served as the base for a Digital Elevation Model of this wadi which will be used to quantify impressions which have so far only be obtained on a very personal, subjective level, like the relative height or visibility of the rock art spots. It will further be used to answer more precise questions concerning the relationship of the rocks and its landscape.

\(^{20}\) The laser scanner was kindly provided by the Cluster of Excellence 264 TOPOI - The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations of the Free University Berlin and Humboldt University of Berlin. The German Archaeological Institute supported and managed the transport of the laser scanner from Germany to Aswan.
Furthermore, the rock art places themselves, which are usually recorded by measuring and drawing the rocks and panels, were also recorded via the laser scanner. That way a 3D model was created, which, on the one hand, has the advantage of being movable, showing every side of the rock and thus reproducing the plasticity of the complete rock assemblage. On the other hand, this is an - admittedly insufficient – way of conserving at least digitally the whole rocky outcrop against the still existing threat of being destroyed accidentally in the course of stone procurement in this area.
By scanning the models already got the actual colour of the rocks giving a very lively reconstruction of the natural object. But still the disadvantage persists, that the rock art itself, faded as it is, is hardly visible. Therefore in yet another step photographs showing the enhanced rock art were combined with the point cloud creating in this instance a better visual representation of the whole rock.

During this scanning of the rock art places it became obvious that one of the boulders would stay out of reach of the laser scanner because of its steep surrounding which made it impossible to get a firm stand for the machine. Therefore another technique was used to record this boulder - the so called “Structure from motion”. Similar to photogrammetric approaches this technique looks for corresponding points in a given set of digital photographs, creates a spatial relation and translates the pixels to a 3D point cloud. This method works on the basis of ordinary digital photographs. Thus, in a similar way as done with the lasercan data before, this rock boulder was reconstructed as a 3D model.

![Fig. 15: Rock art place with steep and difficult access.](image)

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21 For more detail see Döhl, R., Digitale Aufnahme von Landschaft und Felsbildgruppen mit Laserscanner und “Structure from Motion” im Wadi Berber, Ägypten, in: eTOPOI 2013, forthcoming.
Fig. 16: 3D model of rock art place created via “Structure from Motion” (source: MeshLab).
APPENDIX 1: THE SITE OF THE ROYAL STELAE