

Sasanian Epigraphic Collection

The Sasanian Epigraphic Collection represents the *only* complete holding in the world of Royal and Private inscriptions pertinent to the rule of the last pre-Islamic Iranian empire, dating back to the 3rd and 4th century C.E. The Silicone imprints, supplemented by digitized photographs made from the inscriptions *in situ*, are being currently used towards the preparation of a new comprehensive critical edition of the Sasanian epigraphic corpus. More importantly, they will provide a unique tool for our qualified under- and graduate students to deepen their philological training by gaining first hand knowledge of paleography.

The Sasanian inscriptions consist of royal proclamations that were commonly inscribed next to rock reliefs of Sasanian rulers, with the great majority belonging to the second half of the 3rd century and the early decades of the 4th century C.E., beginning with short accessory inscriptions (*Beischriften*) to rock reliefs by Ardašīr I at *Naqš-e Rostam* and *Firuzābād*, to extensive narratives by Ardašīr's successors Šābuhr I and Narseh.

The Silicone holding, which has been tabulated according to the chronology of Sasanian rulers, may be summarized as follows:

(1) Ardašīr at Firuzābād	66 x 55 = 363 cm ²
(2) Ardašīr at Naqš-e Rostam	57 x 76 = 433 cm ²
(3) Ōhrmazd Bay at Naqš-e Rostam	60 x 33 = 198 cm ²
(4) Šābuhr at Naqš-e Rajab (Parthian and Greek)	41 x 50 = 205 cm ²
(5) Šābuhr at Naqš-e Rajab (Middle Persian)	44 x 37 = 162 cm ²
(6) Šābuhr at Ka'be-ye Zartušt (Parthian)	381 x 110 = 4,191 cm ²
(7) Šābuhr at Ka'be-ye Zartušt (Middle Persian)	297 x 102 = 3,029 cm ²
(8) Šābuhr at Ka'be-ye Zartušt (Greek)	217 x 160 = 3,472 cm ²
(9) Šābuhr at Naqš-e Rostam (Greek)	90 x 53 = 477 cm ²
(10) Šābuhr at Tang-e Borāy	104 x 144 = 1,497 cm ²
(11) Šābuhr at Hajiābād (Parthian)	132 x 127 = 1,676 cm ²
(12) Šābuhr at Hajiābād (Middle Persian)	122 x 128 = 1,561 cm ²
(13) Bahram II at Barm-Delak I	48 x 51 = 244 cm ²
(14) Bahram II at Barm-Delak II	53 x 31 = 164 cm ²
(15) Narseh at Tang-e Čogān (Bišāpur)	110 x 142 = 1,562 cm ²
(16) Kerdīr at Sar Mašhad	550 x 294 = 16,170 cm ²
(17) Kerdīr at Naqš-e Rostam	298 x 278 = 8,284 cm ²
(18) Kerdīr at Naqš-e Rajab	157 x 112 = 1,758 cm ²
(19) Kerdīr at Ka'be-ye Zartušt	312 x 67 = 2,090 cm ²
(20) Šābuhr II at Tāq-e Bostān	—
(21) Šābuhr III at Tāq-e Bostān	—
(20) Mihrnarseh at Firuzābād	87 x 53 = 461 cm ²

(21) Abnun in Nārenjestān	33 x 13 = 429 cm ²
(22) Afsāy at Bišāpur	190 x 98 = 1,862 cm ²
(23) Cursive of Bišāpur	37 x 30 = 111 cm ²
(24) Persepolis I and II	51 x 68 = 346 cm ²
(25) Persepolis Column (Bāy-e Lardi)	60 x 46 = 276 cm ²

The mission in charge of making the silicone molds during a period of three months in the fall of 2003 in Iran, comprised a crew of trained sculptors, and were led by M. Rahim Shayegan in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage Organization, represented on the field by Dr. Cyrus Nasrollahzodeh. The project, which was sponsored mainly by a generous grant from the Harvard Milton Fund, was able to make complete imprints of all know Sasanian inscriptions, and what is more, led to the discovery of two minor (a royal and a funerary) inscriptions.

The silicone imprints, which are at present time deposited at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History under the supervision of Dr. Wendy Giddens Teeter, the Curator of Archaeology at Fowler Museum, shall be used towards the preparation of a new critical edition of the Sasanian inscriptions by M. Rahim Shayegan, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Chair of Iranian, Prods Oktor Skjærvø.

It remains the Iranian Studies' *desideratum* that in no remote future, funds will be made available to the program to preserve these important documents for future generations to come, as well as to make them available, through exhibit, to the larger public.