As a philologist he was familiar with all aspects of Egyptian writing and wrote, for example, an important survey of the mechanics of Egyptian writing, *Paper and Books in Ancient Egypt* (1952), and contributed a chapter on "Writing and Language" to the revised authoritative survey of Egyptian culture, *The Legacy of Egypt*. His special interest however was Late Egyptian, the vernacular of the period 525-710 B.C.; this was characteristic of the business documents and letters which were the principal objects of his research. Because of its many differences in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary from Middle Egyptian, the "classical" form of the language spoken during the early second millennium B.C. and characteristic of literary, religious, and monumental texts to a much later date, Late Egyptian presents many problems to the scholar. Černý was a leading authority on this difficult part of the language and although he unfortunately never wrote a formal grammar (the last Late Egyptian grammar appeared many years ago and is badly out of date) his students and colleagues benefited greatly from his lectures, discussions, and specialized articles.

One most important result of his philological work was a Coptic Etymological Dictionary, which was largely in proof at the time of his death. Coptic was the language of Christian Egypt from the third century A.D. onwards and was the direct descendant of ancient Egyptian, although written in the Greek alphabet with only a few signs derived from the hieroglyphic script. Once hieroglyphic and its cursive derivatives, hieratic and demotic, had been deciphered (c. 1820), Coptic proved a rich source of information on its ancient predecessor, although inevitably it had also developed many differences from Late Egyptian. Černý's Dictionary is an invaluable summary of this information and perhaps no single work better illustrates the breadth and quality of his scholarship. A typical entry gives the Coptic word and its English translation, its equivalent or ancestor in Late Egyptian and/or demotic (the very last phase of ancient Egyptian, named after its characteristic cursive script), references to examples and important discussions of the word; in some cases he also cites related words in Arabic and other Semitic languages. The Dictionary then is not merely a work of reference, but a veritable history of the Egyptian language over four millennia.

Černý's extraordinary knowledge of Late Egyptian was derived from the papyri and from the literally thousands of ostraca (limestone flakes or pottery sherds with ink inscriptions) which he copied, transcribed, and translated through-out his life. The difficulties presented by these documents, which were mostly of New Kingdom date, were formidable. Their study had been neglected, many lay moulder and uncatalogued in museum collections, and they were often damaged because of their comparatively fragile nature. They were in the hieratic script, a cursive form of hieroglyph, and had often been written in such haste that they were barely legible. Moreover, as they do of the minutiae of daily life (agreements, wills, letters, instructions, ration lists, etc.) these documents contained many obscure technical terms and alluded to facts and beliefs recorded elsewhere in records which had not survived or were still buried in the ground or in museum collections. However, as Černý pointed out in 1931 in his article "Les ostraca hiératiques, leur interet et la nécessité de leur étude" (*Chronique d'Égypte*, 12), it is these difficult papyri and ostraca, and not the better known and better studied monumental inscriptions of tombs and temples, which contain the wealth of detail needed to reconstitute the social, economic, and religious activities that made up the fabric of life for most Egyptians.

From the village of Deir el Medineh came many vivid sketches on limestone flakes made by the artisans whose lives Černý studied. Above is the portrait of a king, shown most unusually with an unshaven stubble on his chin.
It was to the exploration of these activities of "les petits gens" that Černý primarily devoted his work as an historian. His interest is shown clearly by a number of his publications: his editing and completion of the work of English colleagues in The Inscriptions of Sinaï, Volumes I and II (1952, 1958), a collection of the numerous graffiti and inscriptions left by working parties near the turquoisemines of the Sinai peninsula; his Late Rameside Letters (1939) and Hieratic Ostraca I (1957; with Sir Alan Gardiner); and above all, the many volumes and articles which he wrote on the activities of the officials and artisans in the royal necropolises of the New Kingdom at Western Thebes. The vast and elaborately decorated tombs of most kings and queens of Dynasties XVIII to XX (ca. 1570-1067 B.C.) are located in deep valleys within the limestone plateau at Western Thebes. These royal tombs were cut and decorated by a community of artisans who lived, with their families, at a place now called Deir el Medineh. The well-preserved remains of the artisans' village, and of their tombs surrounding it, were excavated primarily by the French Institute of Archaeology in Cairo and yielded large amounts of inscribed material and many artifacts, all richly illustrative of the life of this community over four hundred years. Černý had already shown a deep interest in the artisans' community by writing his doctoral thesis upon it and subsequently had greatly increased his knowledge of the area's history by publishing a catalogue (1930-1935) of the hieratic ostraca in the Cairo Museum. Most of these ostraca came from the valley in which the king's tombs lay and many were related to the activities of the artisans of Deir el Medineh.

Deir el Medineh itself also yielded thousands of ostraca, some of which were "literary" (i.e., were parts of famous literary texts copied by student scribes) but the bulk of which were "non-literary" and concerned with the daily life of the community. Černý, invited to study the non-literary ostraca, published many of them in seven volumes (1935-1951); he also published (1949) a repertory of names, titles, and relatives of the individuals buried nearby, thus supplying much of the information necessary to reconstruct the genealogies and interrelationships of the families occupying the village. In 1956 he published a collection of the graffiti left by the artisans in several parts of the royal necropolises.

From this published, and much unpublished material, Černý patiently reconstructed the social relationships existing within the community, the religious practices of its members, the prices and wages of the period, and a variety of other matters which made up the life of this small village. In 1965 he summarized the main aspects of this life in his contribution to the revised Cambridge Ancient History (Vol. II, Ch. XXXV; currently appearing as fascicle 27). At the time of his death he was working on a detailed study of the community; one volume is in proof, a second requires minor editing, and the final volume remains to be written. It is greatly to be hoped that his colleagues will complete this study, which is a major contribution to our understanding of ancient Egypt.

Černý was also very conscious of the broader historical and cultural environment of the artisans' village, the activities of which revolved around the burial of the god-kings and were closely supervised by the state. As Černý demonstrated in an important essay (1963), "The contribution of the study of unofficial and private documents to the history of Pharaonic Egypt" (in Denadoni's Le fonti indirette della storia egizia), ostraca and similar material contain information on dynastic chronology and historical events. His specialized articles, as well as his chapter in the Cambridge Ancient History, show Černý's outstanding ability to reconstruct history from a variety of "non-official" as well as more conventional sources.

The study of Egyptian religion benefited greatly from Černý's work. He was, of course, an authority on the cult practises of the Deir el Medineh community, practises which were dedicated to a series of local "forns" of the great gods and deified dead rulers and which illustrated the poorly-known religion of the Egyptian lower classes. Amongst these practises was the custom of placing written questions concerning personal decisions or community disputes before an image of a local god while it was being carried in a religious procession; the image indicated "yes" or "no" by making its carriers move towards, or recede from, the petitioner. It is typical of Černý's sensitivity to the spiritual environment of an ancient people that he pointed out that such "oracles" involved no "clever or deliberate deception" but rather "suggestation and auto-suggestion."

Oracles were also used for deciding important questions of state during the New Kingdom and Černý explored the entire subject in a major study, "Egyptian Oracles" (in R.A. Parker's A Suite oracle papyri from Thebes in the Brooklyn Museum, 1962). Černý also wrote several articles on Egyptian religion for the Encyclopedia Britannica and in 1952 published a concise and authoritative survey, Egyptian Religion, in which a mass of significant and complex data was treated with great clarity.

Throughout his life Černý also contributed to the development of Egyptology by generously providing information and thoughtful criticism of their work to other scholars. In later years he was also instrumental in securing financial support for the publications of his peers and of younger scholars. Consequently, the many contributors to the 1968 Festschrift volume of the Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, celebrating Černý's seventy birthday, wrote in a spirit expressed by I. E. S. Edwards as being "as much in personal affection for very many years of Černý's friendship as in admiration for his scholarship."

Černý's colleagues and students at this Museum and University soon felt a similar affection for him and his wife Manya, and it is with a sense of personal, as well as scholarly, loss that we mourn his death.

—DAVID O'CONNOR.