



Preliminary Report on the University of Pisa 12th campaign (2012) in the Theban necropolis (Dra Abu el-Naga)



The Archaeological Expedition of the University of Pisa at Dra Abu el-Naga (M.I.D.A.N. Missione Italiana at Dra Abu el-Naga), under the direction of Prof. Marilina Betrò, has carried out from October 8 to October 24, 2012, the 12th field season at Dra Abu el-Naga, in the area of Theban Tomb 14 and tomb M.I.D.A.N.05.

To this field season contributed the following members of the expedition: Marilina Betrò; Gianluca Miniaci; Federica Facchetti; Gianluca Buonomini; Paolo Marini; Anna Giulia De Marco; Ilaria Rossetti (University of Bologna). The Supreme Council of Egyptian Antiquities was represented by our inspector, Sana'a Yussef Ahmed Ali, who always assisted us with competence and helpfulness.

The program of the afore mentioned field season focussed on the following objectives:

- Continuation of the clearance of the sloping passage in TT 14;
- Continuation of the 3D laser scanning campaign of the two tombs, partly carried on in past years, for monitoring and recording;
- Study and documentation of finds of the previous seasons.

Clearance of tomb E

During the last season (2011), the opening of the tomb E (discovered in 2004 and partially cleared - south-western sector- in 2005) had been brought to light revealing the original entrance to the tomb, which had been, in antiquities, closed with a mud-brick wall lined by a plaster coating on both inner and outer sides. The wall was found partially collapsed in the courtyard of MIDAN.05, just in front of the entrance of the tomb E. Tomb E was almost completely filled both with alluvial deposits brought in by flooding and with loose filling produced by modern human action (see archaeological reports years 2005 and especially 2011). Exactly behind the inner face of the closing wall of the entrance of E, a robbery pit was detected inside thick compact layers of mud and sediments running to the bedrock. The pit stopped once it reached the bedrock



and clashed against the side walls of the room or the mud-brick wall itself, at the time of robbery invisible because covered by the alluvial deposit. Inside the robbery pit whole and fragmentary mud-bricks have been found; with all probability they all belong to the original closing-wall broken during the modern exploration. Only a thin layer of the original deposit was found in the main room of E, covered with the compact sediment of flooding. The lowest layer shows part of the original burials which probably originally occupied the room. In the west part of the room, remains of an infant burial were found. The body of the infant had been completely destroyed by robbers during the excavation of the pit and only the skull was preserved. In fact, many bones had been found during the previous excavations in the loose filling produced by the robbery action. The burial of the infant was separated by other burials by a row of mud-bricks. Other two burials (parts of them) were identified inside the room: one burial preserves only the bones of the two legs and it appears to lie as it was set down, although it clearly suffered of damage or injuries, lying on the floor with many faience elements along the body, part of an original mummy-net, and many burnt pieces of plaster and wood forming part of the coffin. The other interment is too much disturbed to make any clear statement and perhaps it was already broken when the first flooding had sealed the burial. The burials detected in E seem to have occupied the space approximately at the same time, or at least have suffered some disturbance (hints of burning) at the same time, because parts of the small retaining wall surrounding the infant had collapsed over the coffin of the other body and vice versa fragments of coffin had found over the wall.

Clearance of room I of TT 14

During the season 2008, chamber I of TT 14 had been partially cleared. In fact, as time went by, it had been filled up to its roof by several alluvial deposits. Inside room, 3 intact interments were found lying in one of the lowest layers of alluvial deposit. The bodies of interments had been found perfectly preserved and partially wrapped by bandage, pieces of cartonnages and parts of coffins (preserved only in small fragments), which preserved the bodies by the action of flooding. During this season, room I has been completely cleared and several fragments of coffins and cartonnages belonging to the depositions have been brought to light. The fragments were covered by an alluvial deposit and they were scattered all around the chamber, lying in a layer below the preserved bodies, and they were badly preserved, being overlapped each other, piled up, pressed and twisted inside the compact sand deposit. The clearance of the fragments has revealed the original decoration of the coffins to some extent in different points. At first sight, the coffins seem to belong to the anthropoid (part of wig and eyes were identified) type developed during the Third Intermediate Period.



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In the southern corner of room I, a cut in the bedrock has been brought to light, revealing a shallow pit and a narrow passage to a new room, called J. The passage was flanked by two sandstone jambs with a groove apparently shaped to locate a wooden door. However, no traces of such a wooden door were found, possibly it disappeared due to the water effects. The passage was partially closed up to its middle height by a thick mud-brick wall, still preserved in place. Part of the deposit preserved in the shallow cut and the surface of the closing wall were covered by the same flooding layer which had covered the coffin fragments in room I. This flooding might have carried with it also part of the material lying there, including several coffin fragments. Below this layer, the cut was filled by scattered materials, which include a mixture of items amongst them a small fragment of coffin covered by gold foil. This deposit lay over a filling of pure limestone chips and sand containing no objects at all. At this preliminary strand of investigation, it can be assumed that this layer had been poured down in the cut during or after the construction of the closure wall. Indeed, it lay directly above a mud layer pressed over the bedrock which seems to be the original surface and it ends against the wall itself without continuing in room J.



Discovery of room J of TT 14

Room J was completely filled by alluvial deposits up to the roof. After a first layer of flooding, the last one in a relative chronological sequence, which had completely filled the room, a thick layer of stone pressed up with mud and sand has been found. Below these two layers, two interments have been found resting over a lower layer of flooding. The two bodies have been not cleared during this season but they look undisturbed and perfectly preserved, although most of the bandages and the mummification processes had gone. The similarity of deposition, the state of bone preservation and the envelop (bandage of brown colour) wrapping the bodies has strong similarity with the interments found in room I. Room J was cleared only in its initial sector in order to detect the sequence of deposits and the height and the width of the room. In the lowest layer of room J under and amongst the last flooding layer a mixture of items were found in scattered position, partially



fragmented and rotten by the action of mud. However, most of the pottery although crashed can be easily reassembled, that might suggest they did not enter the room from outside (together with the flooding) but they were lying inside the room itself. Some small portions of coffins and cartonnages were found amongst the sand layer and over stones, brick fragments and pieces of wooden and plaster coffins. Their type suggests again an occupation of the Third

Intermediate Period. Amongst the range of objects found in the first sector of room J, some items could belong to a Ramesside Period, as a wooden ushabti. Below the last layer of flooding which covered the material deposited on the bottom of room J, there is a thick layer of grey sandy soil (ash?) containing small fragments of coffin decoration (mostly black varnished pieces of wood/plaster). The origin of this layer at the moment is still dubious but can be originated by decay of the original burial laying on the floor (Ramesside occupation?). The “ash” layer was completely covered by the last flooding and seems to precede it. In fact, in front of the passage, at the mouth of room J, three complete mud bricks coming from the closing wall have been found, just lying above the ash layer and covered by the alluvial deposit. This can lead to the conclusion that room J was closed a first time and reopened (naturally or artificially) before/during the first flooding reaching the chamber. As hypothetical reconstruction, room J can have hosted Ramesside burials, partially decayed (“ash layer”) when the Third Intermediate Period occupation filled the space, overlapping their own burials over the decay of Ramesside ones; the first alluvial layer can have mixed the two different occupations of J.



Clearance of room H



Room H has been cleared only in its initial sector after the consolidation interventions carried out during the season 2010. Here, at least five alluvial deposits are clearly observable, whereof one is of overshadowing extent. The lowest layer, partially cleared, encompassed many fragments of wooden coffin and cartonnage, whose colour, shape and decoration is still visible in some points. The similarity of their decoration with the fragments found in the lowest layer of room I let to suppose that they belong as well to the Third Intermediate Period. However, although the fragments are badly preserved and rotten by the action of water and mud, the degree of preservation is far better than for those found in room I.

3D laser scanning of MIDAN.05 and its courtyard

In the framework of the scientific agreement between University of Pisa and CULTNAT (Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage - Egypt), 3D laser scanning of the tomb MIDAN.05 and its courtyard has been carried out by the team of CULTNAT, Mohammed Nabil

Hussein and Mohammed Nabil Ahmed. The scanning will be used for the construction of a 3D model of the tomb and for a more accurate recording and monitoring of the monument.



Study and documentation

The study of the sculptured blocks, which had been brought to light during past seasons, has been carried out during this season, reconstructing meaningful portions of inscriptions belonging to the façade of MIDAN.05. All the fragments have been drawn by Paolo Marini and photographed. After the cleaning and the preliminary consolidation of the wall painting in room a of MIDAN.05 carried out by the restorer Gianluca Buonomini, Paolo Marini proceeded to the copy of the scenes.





List of finds

Numerous faience beads from mummy-net	exc reg. n. 3747
Some glass and faience amulets and ornaments from a necklace	exc. Reg. n. 3756, 3783, 3793, 3804, 3805, 3806 a-b, 3810, 3811, 3812, 3814
Some sun-dried clay shabties, about 12 cm height, 3821, 3822, 3825 a-b, 3829	exc. Reg. n. 3799a-b, 3802, 3807, 3809,
Very small fragments of golden foil from coffin	exc. Reg. n. 3800
Wooden mask from coffin	exc. Reg. n. 3813

Many fragments of mud and painted stucco, very badly preserved, from coffins.

Scattered faience fragments of beads and amulets.