

# Preliminary Report on the University of Pisa 8<sup>th</sup> campaign (2008) in TT 14 and M.I.D.A.N.05

by Marilina Betrò



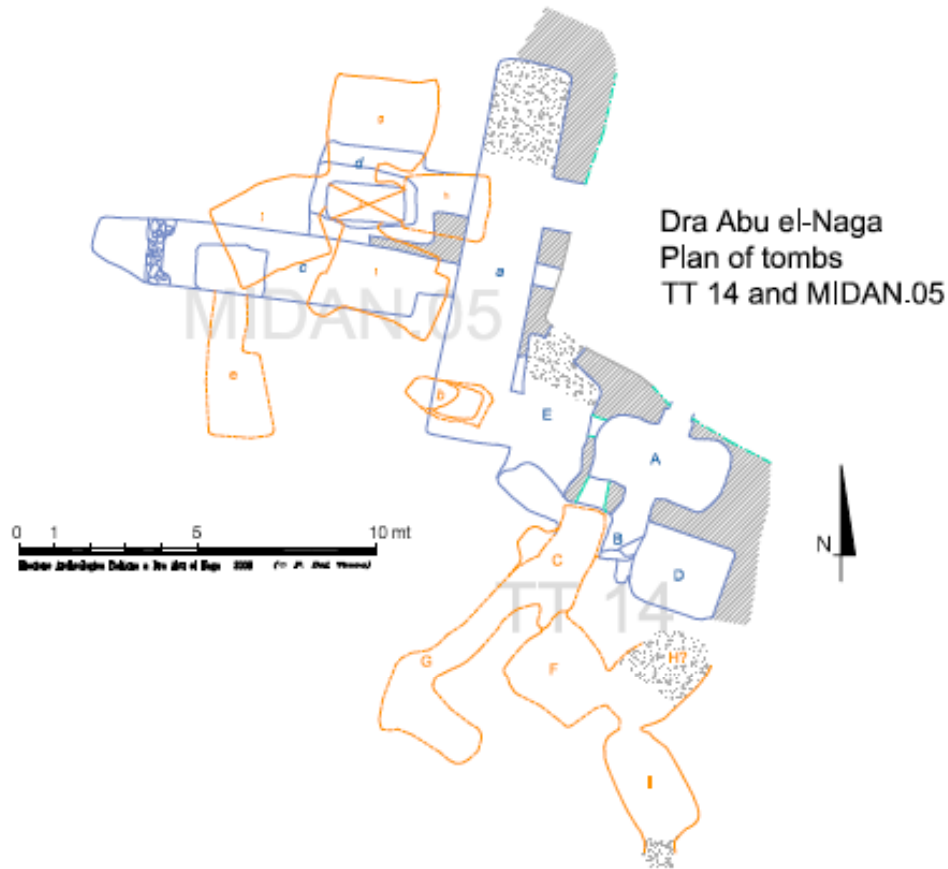
The Archaeological Expedition of the University of Pisa at Dra Abu el-Naga -Thebes West (M.I.D.A.N. Missione Italiana a Dra Abu el-Naga), under the direction of prof. Marilina Betrò<sup>1</sup>, has carried out from November 2 to November 25, 2008, the 8<sup>th</sup> field season at Dra Abu el-Naga, in Theban Tomb 14 and M.I.D.A.N.05, the new tomb discovered in 2004 west of TT 14.

View of the area of excavation.

Primary goal was the continuation of the archaeological exploration in the sloping passage of TT14 and in the hall of the new tomb M.I.D.A.N.05. Study and documentation of the finds from TT 14, presently housed in the Supreme Council of Antiquities storerooms in Gurna, were also planned in view of the first publication on TT 14, expected to be printed out in the first months of 2009.

---

<sup>1</sup> Members of the mission were: Marilina BETRÒ (director, University of Pisa); Paolo DEL VESCO (deputy director, University of Pisa), Gianluca MINIACI (Research assistant, University of Pisa), Gianluca BUONUOMINI (Restorer, University of Pisa), Cristina GUIDOTTI (Director of the Egyptian Museum of Florence, ceramologist), Federica FACCHETTI (PhD student, University of Pisa), Monica HANNA and Daniele SALVOLDI (PhD students, University of Pisa);, Barbara LIPPI (anthropologist, University of Pisa); Angelo GHIROLDI (Archaeologist), Lucia GRASSI (Egyptologist and Draughtsman); Domenica DIGILIO (expert of ancient textiles), Matjaz KACICNIK (Photographer).



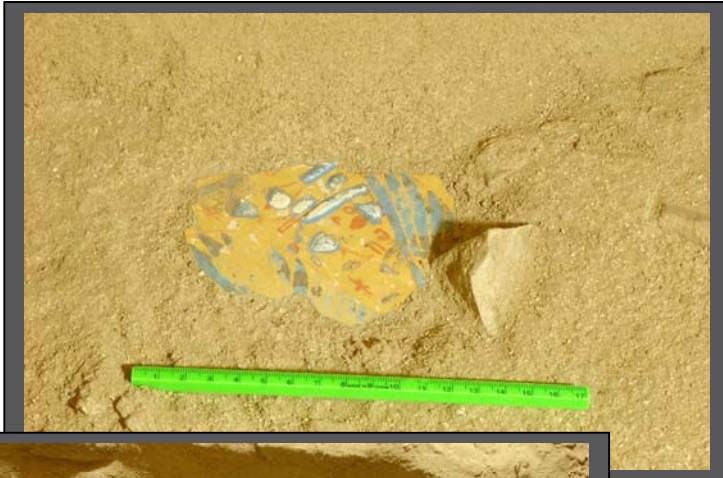
Plan of the two tombs.  
 . Blue: ground level.  
 Orange: funerary underground sector.

## TT 14

The sloping passage of the Ramesside tomb of Huy (TT 14) appears at the moment to be composed by a main branch (C, F, H, I) going toward South-East and turning then to South, and a later branch (G), with a narrow tunnel North-East – South-West oriented, ending with a small chamber. This secondary branch had been pillaged by ancient robbers and later invaded, after the tomb had been abandoned, by three flash-floods coming from the desert. Nonetheless, it was not touched by the 19<sup>th</sup> century plunderers, which never dug out the thick layers of mud and debris of its flash-flood deposits.

Its investigation, started in 2004 and provisionally left aside in 2005 and 2006 for focussing our efforts on the clearance of the new tomb, was supervised by Paolo Del Vesco and completed during the present season. It gave clear evidence of a Third Intermediate Period usage, with great abundance of 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> burials in its layers (end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. – beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> mill. B.C.). Coffins here appeared to have been opened and pillaged by ancient robbers, with bodies thrown out and often lying on the remains of their lids and/or cartonnages. The action of water and mud was devastating

on the organic material and only fragments of wood and wonderfully decorated and painted stucco coating survived of the originals coffins and cartonnages .



Painted and stuccoed fragment from coffins emerging from the sand

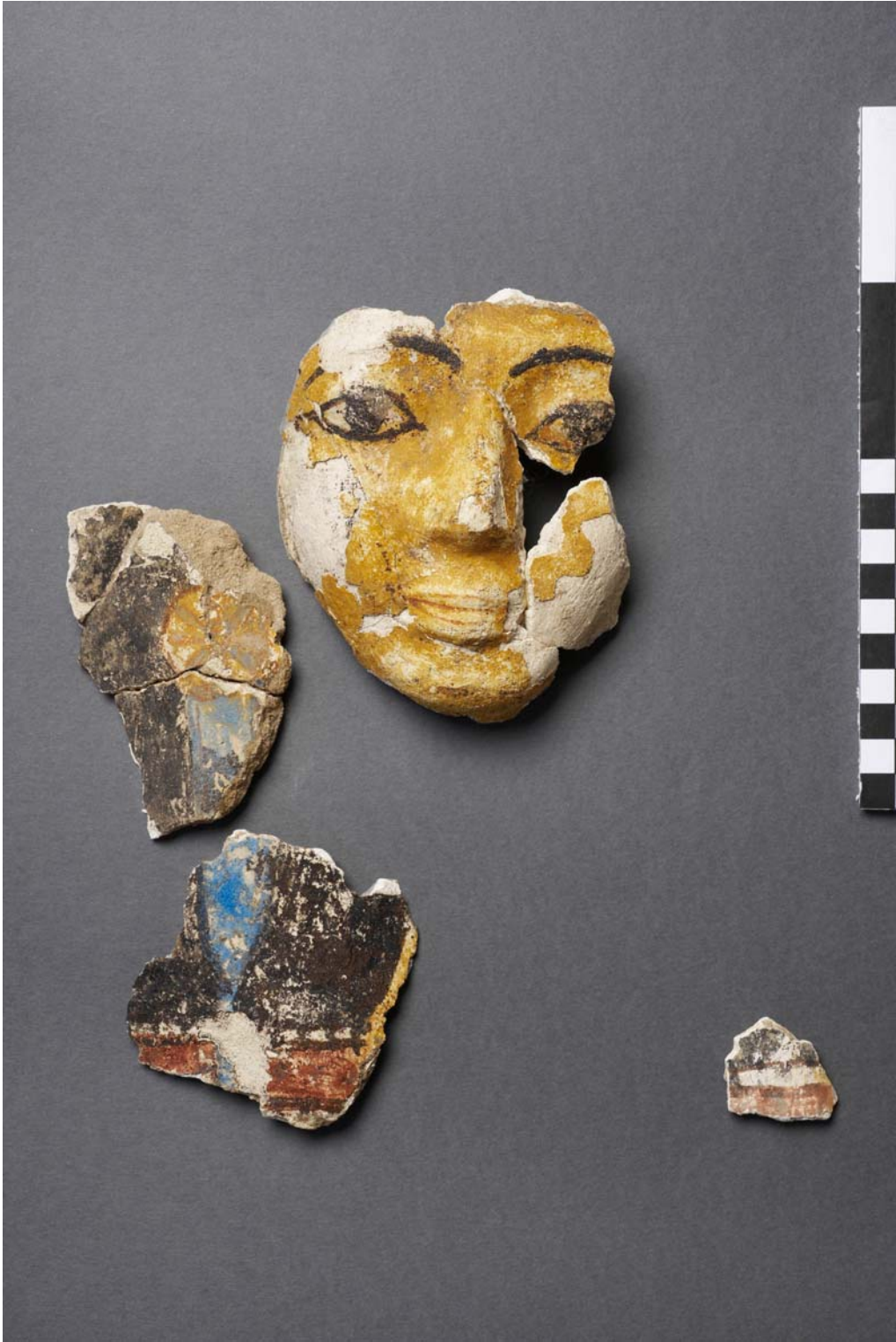
These fragments are sometimes consistent but very fragile. They were always photographed and often consolidated by our restorer Gianluca Buonomini on the site, before being removed.



Painted fragments from coffins

Among these finds, there are two masks, made by gypsum and painted.





Female mask with fragments of its wig from G.

Together with coffins, cartonnage, and pottery, some interesting votive objects were found too, evidence for popular beliefs and cults: they completed a painted terracotta set,

composed by a votive bed with a fertility figurine (the so called “concubine”, a woman lying on the bed and, in this case, suckling a baby on her side) and two small stelae, with geometric decoration.



. Fertility figurine on her bed from G.

Some parts had already been found during previous seasons and joined by our restorer in the storerooms of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. It was now possible to add the new parts.



The votive set from G.

The excavation of the main branch of the sloping passage was supervised by Gianluca Miniaci, who resumed the previous excavation left aside in 2005-2007. During the 2004 season, only the part labelled “F” had been cleared. This season work revealed two new chambers, one (?), yet unexcavated, at the end of “F”, on its north-eastern side, and a second chamber, after a short passage, oriented North-West – South-East. It is clear now that the sloping passage does not finish here, but continues after this chamber, descending further, probably with a steeper slope. As well as “G”, Room “I” was found completely filled by several layers of mud brought in by the flash-floods, and untouched by modern robbers. Buried under the flood deposits, the skeletal remains of three well preserved interments were found, while in the south corner, not yet completely, excavated, the top of two sandstone blocks appeared, flanking the entrance of what could be the funerary chamber of Huy. Its investigation will be carried on during next season.

## M.I.D.A.N.05

The clearance of the forecourt of the new tomb M.I.D.A.N.05, which had been started during last season, will be carried out in the following campaign. During the present season, a further section of the transversal hall “a” was cleared, in correspondence with the main entrance to the tomb, under the supervision of Angelo Ghiroldi and Daniele Salvoldi. This work brought to light a portion of the western wall, placed between the entrance to the corridor and the door to the nearby chapel “d”, which still preserved a part of its painted decoration: the surviving scene, although partially damaged by the flash-flood action, shows artisans working metals (?) and blowing through pipes on fire. The painting was cleaned by our restorer.



Detail of the scene while being cleaned

Its discovery adds new important information to our knowledge of the tomb: until now, only parts of its original decoration were preserved on the ceilings, together with fragments of the upper *khekeru*-frieze. The presence of this scene gives the first evidence that also the walls were decorated: the tomb therefore, although now almost completely spoiled of any decoration, was probably finished. The subject and the style of the scene indicate a probable dating of its decoration to the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty; its architecture and other elements point to a slightly earlier dating, toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty.

## Conservation and documentation

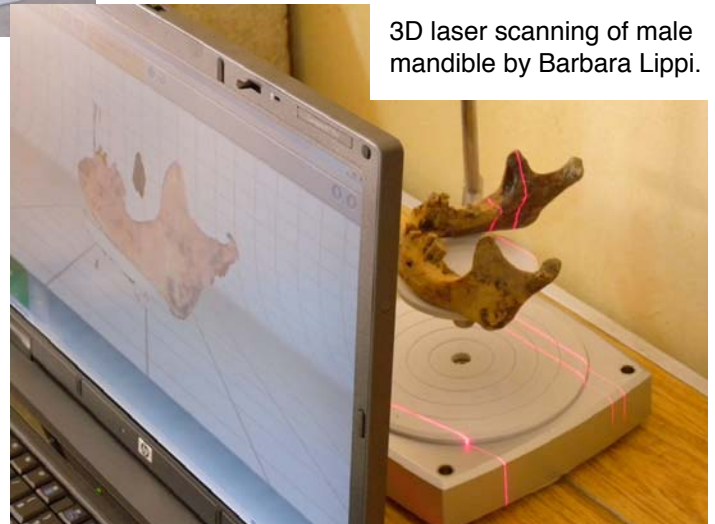
Monitoring and recording of the data concerning the conservation conditions of Room A in TT14, in view of the restoration project, were carried out by Monica Samir Kamal Kamel Hanna, Ph-D. student at the University of Pisa. During next campaign it will be



possible a thorough check of the ceiling conditions by means of 3D laser scanner, comparing the obtained scan with the ones already made in previous campaigns.

Photographic and graphic documentation of TT 14 finds in the storerooms was carried out, in view of the publication. A selection of the objects found during previous campaigns in TT 14 was drawn by Lucia Grassi, and photographed by Matjaz Kacicnik.

Textile remains of TT 14 were studied by Dida Digilio, expert in ancient textiles. Maria Cristina Guidotti and Federica Facchetti went on over the study of pottery, completing the analysis of TT 14 vessels and starting the examination of MIDAN.05 pottery. Barbara Lippi, anthropologist,



3D laser scanning of male mandible by Barbara Lippi.



continued the study of the human remains found in the two tombs.