

# THE NECROPOLIS OF DRA' ABU EL-NAGA AT THEBES A PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> SEASON (2004-2005)

Daniel POLZ and Ina EICHNER

According to the permission given by the Permanent Committee of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, the 14<sup>th</sup> excavation season in the Necropolis of Dra' Abu el-Naga / North has been conducted by the mission of the German Archaeological Institute Cairo, from October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004 until May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005.<sup>1</sup>

During this 14<sup>th</sup> excavation season at Dra' Abu el-Naga, the following activities took place:<sup>2</sup>

- A. Continuation of the excavations in Area H: shaft-tombs K03.4 and K03.5.
- B. Extended test trench excavations in the court of tomb TT 232 (Area H).
- C. Further excavations in the Coptic monastery of Deir el-Bakhit.
- D. Removing and rebuilding of the wall of the tourist-pathway leading to tombs TT 13 and TT 255.
- E. Conservational and photographic work on the coffins of Imeny and Geheset in the SCA magazine.
- F. Recording of objects in the Institute's magazine behind Carter-House.

## A. Continuation of the excavations in Area H: shaft-tombs K03.4 and K03.5

This first part of the 14<sup>th</sup> season at Dra' Abu el-Naga was devoted to the continuation of excavations in shaft-tombs K03.4 and K03.5 in the excavation Area H (Fig. 1, general plan of Area H).<sup>3</sup> The excavation of both tombs was already started in the fall season of 2003 but could not be finished then. This season, both shafts and their chambers were completely excavated.

The shaft of tomb K03.5 is approximately 10 meters deep and opens in an ante-chamber to the west which is followed by the burial chamber. Shaft and chambers of K03.5 contained numerous objects of the original burials, but all utterly destroyed and broken. Nevertheless, the existing pottery and other small findings allow for a preliminary dating of the tomb and its burial(s): according to the analysis of the pottery, the tomb seems to date to the earlier part of the Second Intermediate Period, i.e. probably the middle of the Thirteenth Dynasty. Of the original coffin(s) only very destroyed pieces remain, none of which seem to include

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<sup>2</sup> Members of the mission were: Daniel Polz (director), Ute Rummel (deputy director), Günter Burkard (co-director Deir el-Bakhit), Ina Eichner (field director Deir el-Bakhit), Anne Seiler, Susanne Voss, Susanne Michels, Constanze Holler, Eman el-Sayed Ali, Melanie

Flossmann, Konstantin Lakomy, Ruth Zillhardt, Katrin Fischer, Claudia Maderna-Sieben, Johanna Sigl, Thomas Beckh, Anna Rudschies, Georg Herdt, Anja Stoll, Catherine Jones, Pieter Collet, Erico Peintner, Peter Windszus, Manja Maschke, Walter Barth.

<sup>3</sup> For details of the area and previous work at Dra' Abu el-Naga cf.: D. Polz and A. Seiler, 'Die Pyramidenanlage des Königs Nub-Cheper-Re Intef in Dra' Abu el-Naga. Ein Vorbericht', *SDAIK* 24 (Mainz, 2003) (henceforth abbreviated: *Pyramidenanlage*). See also the reports on the excavations at Dra' Abu el-Naga, in: *MDAIK* 48 (1992), 109-130; *MDAIK* 49 (1993), 227-238; *MDAIK* 51 (1995), 207-225; *MDAIK* 55 (1999), 343-410; *MDAIK* 59 (2003), 317-388; *MDAIK* 59, 41-65; *MDAIK* 61 (2005) (Deir el-Bakhit, in print). For specific topics see the articles in: *Egyptian Archaeology* 7 (1995), 6-8; 10 (1997), 33-35; 14 (1999), 3-6; 22 (2003), 12-15.



the name of the owner of the tomb. However, it seems that originally the deceased was buried in a large rectangular wooden coffin which must have been partially decorated with colored paintings and with inscriptions. Besides these fragments, a large number of other objects of the burial equipment were discovered, all in a very fragmented and broken state. Especially, it seems that the burial equipment included an unusually high number of sticks and staves (e.g. at least one *w3s*-scepter-shaped stick), some of which are beautifully decorated, some may have been inscribed.

The architecture of shaft-tomb K03.5 shows two unusual details: the original entrance to the first chamber at the bottom of the shaft was once blocked with a massive stone wall consisting of well-hewn limestone blocks. The two lower most layers of this wall were found to be still in situ. In the filling of the shaft and the first chamber, many more of these limestone blocks were found which enabled us to reconstruct the original wall up to a certain height (see Fig. 2). The other unusual detail is the fact that the burial chamber proper is not on the same axis as the shaft and the antechamber, but bends at right angles to the south.

Shaft-tomb K03.4 which is only a few meters to the northeast of K03.5, is also ca. 10 meters deep and opens to an ante-chamber to the west. From this ante-chamber, a further small chamber on a much higher level opens, which was once probably used for the storage of parts of the burial equipment. The most unusual feature of this shaft-tomb, however, is the existence of a third chamber exactly in the axis of the shaft. This, the original burial chamber contained an almost completely preserved wooden sarcophagus which was discovered on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2004. In this chamber the sarcophagus of enormous size had once been assembled and positioned (Fig. 3). The sarcophagus still contains a smaller wooden inner coffin. The chamber is only slightly larger than the sarcophagus itself, which hindered any grave robbers' attempts to remove the coffin from the chamber. The thieves therefore broke a hole through the panel at the foot end of the sarcophagus, removed the foot panel of the inner coffin and were able to take the mummy through this hole and possibly other objects from inside the coffin. The foot panel of the inner coffin was discovered outside the burial chamber in the small chamber above the ante-chamber.

The ca. 2.5m long, 1m wide and 1m high, box-shaped sarcophagus has been decorated on its outer walls with a running horizontal line of inscription, which names the title of a high dignitary (*sab*) and the name of its owner, Imeny, in an offering formula. The coffin's most remarkable aspect is the extremely well preserved decoration of its inner walls, which have been entirely adorned with religious texts and polychrome representations of ideal burial equipment (*frise d'objets*). The inner coffin, which was still inside the sarcophagus and is also box-shaped, is similarly outstandingly well fashioned, but has a band of inscription only on its outer sides. Notably these inscriptions name not the title and name of Imeny as would be expected, but of his 'beloved' wife, the 'mistress of the house', Geheset (Gazelle). A vertical column of inscription, which had been added to the foot panel of the outer coffin at a later stage, explains this unusual feature (Fig. 4): here Imeny's wife Geheset is also referred to. An initial interpretation of the feature allows for a provisional reconstruction of events that led to the burial: the large sarcophagus and the chamber provided for it had been prepared or rather made during the dignitary Imeny's lifetime. His wife Geheset probably died unexpectedly early and was buried in a smaller coffin, which had been made for her and then placed inside the larger sarcophagus of her husband. The shaft-tomb, which had originally been planned for Imeny, therefore became the burial place of his wife.



The discovered coffin ensemble is remarkable not only due to its state of preservation and decoration program, but also as a result of another aspect: a first analysis of the pottery that belongs to the burial shows that the ensemble dates to the first half of the Thirteenth Dynasty (ca. 1795-1720 B.C.), which is scarcely attested in southern Upper Egypt. Apart from one other example, no other coffin ensemble of this kind and furthermore, which has been found in situ, is known from the Theban necropolis.

In the ante-chamber, on two small benches (mastabas) in front of the burial chamber, several pottery jars of the 'beer-bottle-type' were found in situ, as well as the skull and the foreleg of an oxen – typical parts of a funerary equipment of the period.<sup>4</sup>

After the recovery of the sarcophagus ensemble from its chamber and shaft on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004, the coffins were transported to the magazine of the SCA behind Carter-House for further conservational treatment.

### B. Extended test trench excavations in the court of tomb TT232 (Area H)

Already in the fall of 2002, a small test trench was made in front of tomb TT 232,<sup>5</sup> in order to clarify the ownership of this extremely large Saff-tomb.<sup>6</sup> This test trench yielded in the discovery of 5 funerary cones of the type no. 245 (according to the catalogue of Davies/Macadam)<sup>7</sup> which seemed to point to the Highpriest of Amun, Min-Month, called Seni-res as the original owner of TT 232 (Fig. 5). During this fall season, a large trench was opened along the north side of the forecourt of the tomb. Besides the remains of several disturbed and destroyed New Kingdom burials, a large number of funerary cones of Min-Month were discovered. The altogether more than 70 cones of this type definitely answer the question of the ownership of TT 232: without doubt, this Saff-tomb which is one of the largest known tombs of this type in the Theban Necropolis, was originally built and decorated by the Highpriest Min-Month. This new identification of the tomb's owner also contributes considerably to our understanding of tomb development in the Theban Necropolis: TT 232 is now one of the very few Saff-tombs in Thebes whose original construction can be safely dated to the early Eighteenth Dynasty and is not a reused tomb of Middle Kingdom times.

### C. Further excavations in the Coptic monastery of Deir el-Bakhit (by Ina Eichner)

The second excavation season in the Late-Antique/Coptic Monastery of Deir el-Bakhit<sup>8</sup> lasted from October 3<sup>rd</sup> until November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004 and from February 5<sup>th</sup> until April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

Since 2004, the excavation of Deir el-Bakhit has been financed by the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).<sup>9</sup> The main focus on the fieldwork of the season of 2005 was to investigate those parts and buildings of the monastery, which lie to the south of the so-called central building, which was excavated in 2003. These southern parts of the monastery were not visible until the beginning of this year's campaign and have therefore not been drawn in the map of the site. A second focus was the excavation in the Coptic graveyard about 10m southeast of the enclosure wall of the monastery. Four trenches in the southern part of the monastery were opened and one trench in the southwest-corner of the graveyard.

South of the so-called Central Building, which lies nearly exactly in the center of the monastery and must therefore have had an important function three rooms were excavated

<sup>4</sup> Cf. similar features in previously excavated shaft-tombs of Area H, Polz and A. Seiler, *Pyramidenanlage*, pls 8-10.

<sup>5</sup> PM I, 2, 328-329.

<sup>6</sup> See Polz, *MDAIK* 59 (2003), 384-85.

<sup>7</sup> N. de Garis Davies and M. F. L. Macadam, *A Corpus of inscribed*

*Egyptian Funerary Cones* (Oxford, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> For a preliminary report on the first season's work at Deir el-Bakhit see: G. Burkard, M. Mackensen, and Polz, *MDAIK* 59, 41-65.

<sup>9</sup> I. Eichner and U. Fauerbach, *MDAIK* 60 (2005) (in print).



this season (Fig. 6). They contain economic installations. In the western wall of the first room, room 41, are three built-in cupboards with vaulted roofs. The room had four doors. The main entrance was from the north, directly from the southern circular passage of the Central Building. In front of the door are three steps, leading up to the higher level of the circular passage (Fig. 8). One of the steps consists of a hieroglyphic inscription of the pharaonic period.

In front of the eastern wall there is a huge oval mudbin, which was set in the mudfloor. Three similar mudbins have been excavated in the different strata above the floor level. The exact position of these three mudbins cannot be reconstructed, and all of them have been found at different levels, but must have something to do with the function of this room. In front of the southern wall there is a much smaller mudbin and besides that a fireplace, which burned the wall and coloured it black. This is the result of a second phase of usage, which may belong to the same period, in which the door of the southern wall was walled up. In this second phase also, two waterjars were set in a layer of rubble, directly in front of the walled-up southern door. The jars were covered with a plate of mud and a bowl, which was reused and originally not intended for this purpose. The plate and the bowl were covered with a mat of raffia.

Room 41 was connected by a doorway in the southeast-corner with room 40, which lies to the east of it. This room shows – as the aforementioned room 41, too – two different phases of occupation. In the first phase the room had six built-in cupboards, three in the western wall and three in the eastern wall, which were covered by a vault. In a second phase, these cupboards were no longer in use, but in front of them three large storage bins made of mud were built (Fig. 6). It is probable, that they have been used for the storage of grain, because the same kind of bins have been excavated in the nearby monastery of Epiphanius from the seventh century AD at Sheikh Abd el Qurna.<sup>10</sup> The bottoms of these storage bins were set in a layer of ash. Over it was a layer of limestone-chips, mixed with sand, which enclosed the storage bins and perhaps kept the interior cool. This layer of mixed limestone chips and sand was limited by a wall at the south side. The remaining parts of the room have been excavated down to the rock. The floor consists of mud, which was directly put on the rock.

South of room 40 there lies the room 44, which contained a pavement of irregular limestone plates. In this room a staircase, which was supported by a half barrel vault, led originally up to a second floor, which is no longer preserved. The excavation of the room 44 and especially its continuation to the south is not yet finished, but we hope to continue the excavation here next season.

East of room 40 there was a larger room, which was obviously also used in two different phases. From the first phase comes a pavement of irregular limestones, but in this pavement three further hieroglyphic inscriptions of pharaonic time have been set and were reused as spolia. To the east and to the south of the pavement there are two regular hollows, about 20cm in depth, which belong also to the first phase and have been paved by mud, which was put directly on the rock. The entrance of this room was – as the forementioned room 41 – through a doorway and steps from the circular passage south of the Central Building. For the construction of the staircase the monks used two stones with hieroglyphic inscriptions of the pharaonic time as spolia. Some fragments of two or more hieroglyphic inscriptions have been found spread over a wide area during this entire excavation season and may

<sup>10</sup> Similar storage bins: H. E. Winlock and W. E. Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes I* (1926), pl. XIV A.



belong to these or to different inscriptions, which were reused by the Coptic monks to build their monastery. Since they are not complete, we hope to find the remaining pieces during the next seasons of work.

This room was later, in a second phase, reused as a stable, because we found a layer of excrement and straw nearly 30cm thick above the pavement. In this phase a trough of mud bricks was built at the northeast-corner of the room. Over this layer of excrement was laid in a third phase a floor, consisting of mud, which covered the excrement and also the limestone pavement beneath it. The function of this room in the last phase is not easy to recognize.

There was an additional room east of the forementioned room, which was excavated down to the rock. The excavation of this room is not yet finished, especially its extension to the east remains open until we continue its excavation in the next season. In the original phase the rock was covered with mud. Later the room was filled with rubble and covered with sandstone-plates and burnt bricks. In the layer of rubble we found numerous Coptic ostraca, which we brought to the study-magazine. They will be translated and examined next season. Two large storage vessels in the southern part of the room show that it was used also for storing before it was reused and paved with sandstone plates.

In addition to the forementioned rooms we excavated also in front of the southern wall of the Central Building and uncovered the western part of the circular passage. In the southwest-corner of the circular passage were five steps, consisting of roughly dressed limestones (Fig. 8, background). The pavement of the remaining parts of the circular passage was paved by burnt bricks, but they are preserved only in the northern part.

This year we started for the first time with the excavation of the Coptic graveyard, which lies to the east of the enclosure wall of the monastery (Fig. 7). We opened a trench at the southeast corner of the necropolis, because this was the area next to the monastery. Only six hollows were recognizable on the surface before the beginning of the excavation, because the whole area had been plundered intensely and burrowed through in modern times.

After the beginning of the excavation it soon became clear that there are many more tombs preserved: about 18 tombs have been identified in the area. Two different burial layers were recognizable, the oldest burials of course deeper than the younger ones. We did not expect complete mummies and therefore it was a great surprise to find four of them intact (Fig. 9).

Because of some significant bones of the skeletons, it is now certain that Deir el Bakhit was a monastery for monks and not for nuns. The mummies were laid to rest with their heads in the west and with their feet in the east. The monks have been buried without any additions. They are wrapped in shrouds, which were tied up with bands. The binding was very complicated, but was similar to those of the mummies of the monastery of Epiphanius. The tombs were laid in very regular rows in a North-South direction (Fig. 7). The northern tombs are the older ones, the southern tombs are younger. The rows of tombs were divided by paths.

Further investigations in the future, especially the examination of the Coptic ostraca, will provide information about the name of the monastery and the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

The further analysis of the pottery this season proved that the high peak of inhabitation was the sixth and seventh century.



#### **D. Removing and rebuilding of the wall of the tourist-pathway leading to tombs TT 13 and TT 255**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005, the German Archaeological Institute Cairo re-started work in Dra' Abu el-Naga. According to an agreement reached during a visit at Dra' Abu el-Naga on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2004 of Zahi Hawass, Ali Radwan, Sabri Abd el-Azis, and Ali el-Asfar, the southern modern wall of the tourist-pathway leading to tombs TT 13 and TT 255 was removed. The wall was rebuilt at a distance of between 5 and 8 meters northeast of the old wall to prepare the site for further excavation which shall be started in the fall of 2005. (See Fig. 10) where both the old and the new walls are indicated as well as the intended excavation area. The rebuilding work was finished on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

#### **E. Conservational and photographic work on the coffins of Imeny and Geheset in the SCA magazine**

From January 15<sup>th</sup> until March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the restorer and conservator Erico Peintner was carrying out conservational work on both the lid and the bottom of the outer coffin of Imeny. During this work it turned out that the preservation of both the wood and the paintings of Imeny's coffin was excellent. There was almost no restoration-work proper necessary; therefore, the paintings and of some parts of the wood were only cleaned carefully and consolidated where necessary. Work on the outer coffin was finished during the above period; it is intended to continue conservation work on the inner coffin of Geheset and the fragments of the destroyed foot-part of the outer coffin during the fall of 2005. From April 16<sup>th</sup> until May 4<sup>th</sup> of 2005, the photographer of the Institute, Peter Windszus started with a detailed photographic documentation of the two coffins. This work could also not be finished during the season and has to be continued in the fall of 2005.

#### **F. Recording of objects in our magazine behind Carter-House**

From February 27<sup>th</sup> until March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005, U. Rummel and S. Voss continued the documentation and recording of finds in our magazine behind Carter-House. On this season's agenda was the recording and documentation (drawing and photographing) of the finds of last year's fall season in Area H of Dra' Abu el-Naga, especially the finds from tombs K03.4 and K03.5. Again, the main objective of our work was the digital photographing of almost every single object to incorporate the photo in our database of finds which has been established in the course of the last seasons.



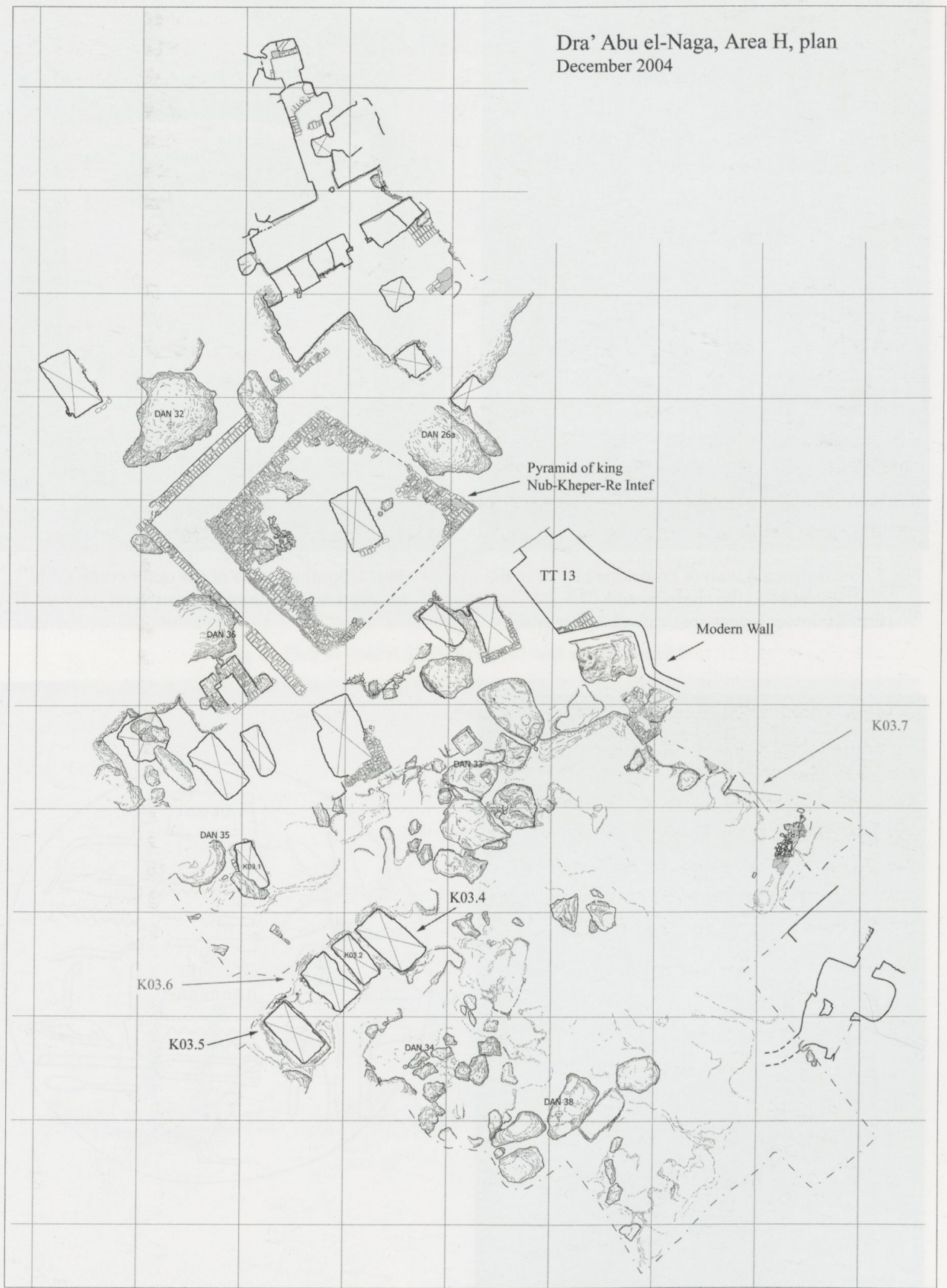


Fig. 1. Dra' Abu el-Naga, Area H, general plan (December 2004).









Fig. 6. Deir el Bakhit 2005. Room 41 and room east of it.



Fig. 7. Deir el Bakhit. Graveyard.





Fig. 8. Deir el Bakhit. Room 41 looking north.





Fig. 9. Deir el-Bakhit. Mummy in the graveyard.



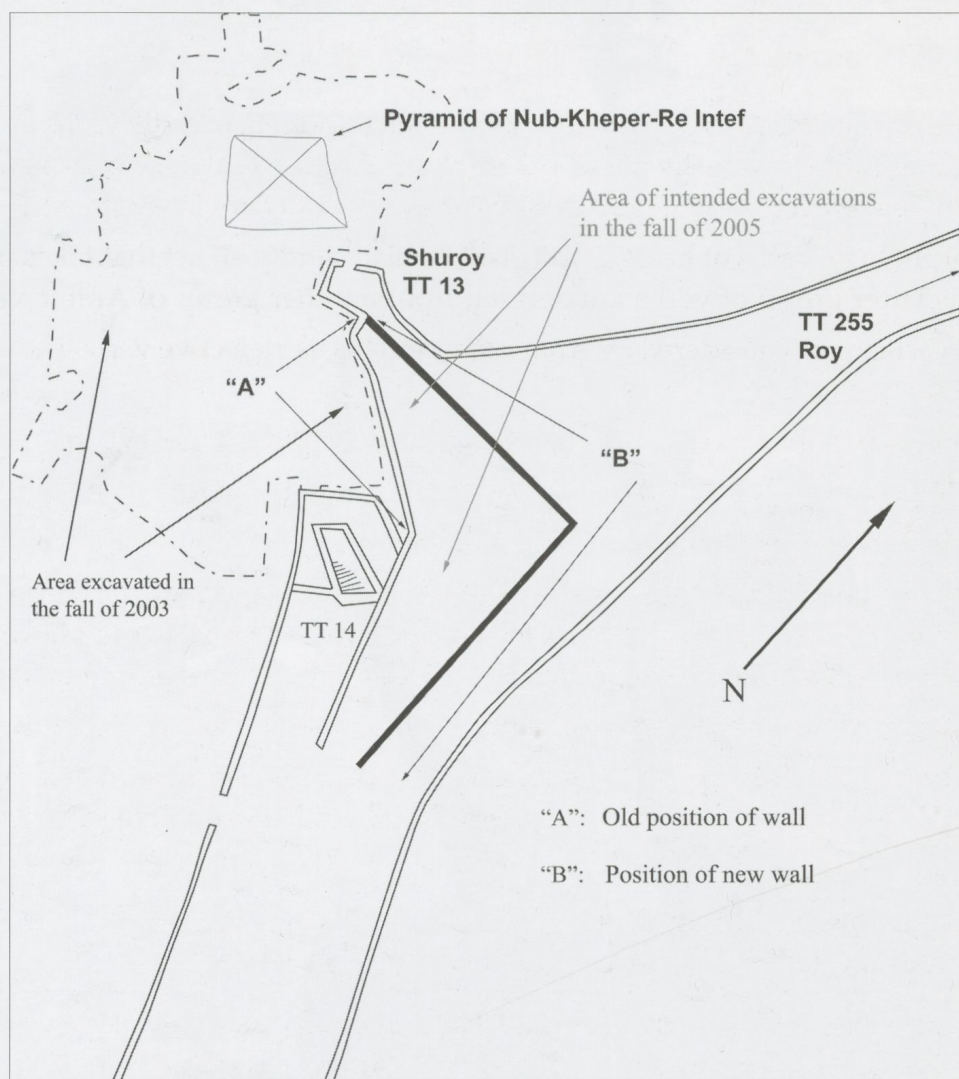


Fig. 10. Re-built wall and intended area of excavations in the fall of 2005.